THE ŁÓDŹ ATLAS

Sheet XV: Demographic structure

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In the last decade of the 20th century, Łódź observed undesirable trends in the population's age structure. Recorded was a systematic decrease in the number and percentage in the pre-working age group (from 22.3% to 18.9%) and an increase (from 17.3 to 23%) in the post-working age group. Such changes are indicative of a significant 'deformation' of the age structure and a rapidly progressing population ageing process.

This process most severely affected the inner city and the oldest housing estates (Teofilów, Żubardź, Koziny, and Doły), where the percentage of those in the post-working age bracket totalled approximately 30%1. In demographic terms, the youngest areas in Łódź are its poorly urbanised outskirts (incorporated into the city in 1988), with rural population structure characteristics, and the new and still developing housing districts: Olechów, Ustronna, Radogoszcz, and Widzew Wschód. In all of the above described units, the share of senior citizens does not exceed 11%. In the inner city, the previously observed intensive population ageing was halted in the 1990s. In 2001 this area was characterised by locally average proportions of the various age groups. Therefore, it may be assumed that within the inner city of Łódź the grandparent generation is being replaced by that of their grandchildren (M i c h a l s k i , N o w a k o w s k a 2000).

The proportion of the population in the working age bracket is relatively little diversified, as in half of the districts it oscillates around the average value (63.8%). It is lower in the southern part of the city, however, in the demographically young microdistricts of Olechów, Radogoszcz, Widzew Wschód, and Chojny Zatorze it exceeds 70%. This indicator is most diversified in the districts surrounding the inner city.

Dependency ratios, being a synthetic measure of the population's age structure, are highly diversified. They vary from 33 to 90 persons in the non-working age bracket per 100 persons in the working age group (in Widzew Wschód and Doły, respectively), with the mean value of 57 for the whole city. The dependency ratio is average in the inner city, low in while new housing estates, and relatively high in the old microdistricts and rural areas (70 and more).

Łódź's population is one of the most feminised in Polish cities, with 120 women per 100 men. The highest feminisation ratios are recorded in the districts surrounding the inner city and in old microdistricts (Teofilów, Żubardź, Koziny, and Doły). In general, the gender ratio radially decreases from the inner zone to the city boundaries, where there exist a few rural-type settlement units characterised by male prevalence (Łagiewniki, Nowe Moskule, Wiskitno A - Las, Huta Jagodnica, and Jagodnica).

Female prevalence in the population aged 15–49 is characterised by a more balanced level, though slightly less orderly picture of its spatial distribution. While the mean ratio for the city is 107 women to 100 men, locally it varies from 78 in (Łagiewniki) to 124 (Akademicka– university campus). Female prevalence in the population in this age bracket is average in the inner city, and slightly higher in new microstates (Romanów, Lublinek-Pienista, Widzew Wschód, Olechów and Ustronna). Male prevalence is observed in 12 rural-type settlement units primarily located in the northern part of the city.

A synthetic picture of the current and future demographic structure of Łódź is reflected in the population pyramids for 2001 and 2020. In both periods their shape indicates a regressive population development type (Holzer 1989). The changes in the population's age structure, as indicated by the pyramids, reflect the so-called 'demographic oscillation', i.e. an alternation of birth-rate lows and highs. The pyramid illustrating the state of affairs in 2001 unmistakably indicates the first post-war baby boom (45–54 age bracket), the birth rate lows of the 1960s (30–39 age bracket), and the 'echo' baby boom (baby boomers' children) of the 1970s and 80s (aged 15–29, and particularly 20–24). The pyramid also clearly indicates a large gap caused by the particularly low birth rate during World War II.

In 2020, the most prevalent demographic group will be that in the 35–44 age bracket, i.e. the population born during the period of the 'echo' baby boom. The younger group in the working age bracket will comprise the children of the demographic 'low' of the 1960s, and the pyramid base, in turn, will include their children. On top of the afore-described demographic oscillations is a change in the childbearing pattern caused by women delaying the birth of their first child until after they graduate and achieve a stable professional and economic standing.

Should the natural population drop, as recorded in the 1990s and primarily caused by the childbearing rate downturn and increased death rate in the aging population, coupled with the nearly zero migration balance continue, within 20 years Łódź may lose over 80 000 inhabitants (N o w a k o w s k a 1999). This means a loss of approx. 10% on 2001. Also, the unfavourable change tendencies in the population's age structure can be expected to deepen. The drop in the child and teenage populations will be drastic (by nearly 1/4) and the proportion of this age group in the total population of the city will go down to 16%. Relatively lower drops will be observed in the working age group, whose population will go down by 20-% and its proportion in the total population will drop to 56%. On the other hand, significant increases can be expected in the post-working age group, whose population will go up by nearly 22% and its proportion in the total population will soar to 28% (K a n i e w i c z , N o w a k o w s k a 1999). Although it is impossible to determine which areas within the city space will be affected by this process more than the others, the population decrease in Łódź will have a significant impact on the city's public utilities. (M i c h a l s k i , N o w a k o w s k a 1999).

1 Excluding atypical housing units with social homes (Park Ludowy with the proportion of 73.1% in the post-working age bracket and Zarzew Przemysłowy – 80.3%) and academic campuses: Akademicka, Politechniczna, and Zielona.

Literature

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Sources

Data from the Łódź Office of Statistics and the current census PESEL as on 1.03.2001