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## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF WORKING-AGE INHABITANTS OF THE WIELKOPOLSKIE VOIVODESHIP

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**Abstract.** The main purpose of the paper was to define the determinants of professional activity of working age population. The professional activity of the investigated population, taking into account selected demographic features, namely gender, age, place of residence, were discussed in the article. The inquiry research was carried out in 2013 on the area of the Wielkopolskie voivodeship on 386 people at production age. In addition to the primary data, the secondary data originating from the Social Security Office and Eurostat were used. The conducted research proves that the vast majority of the inquired was professionally active. Among the professionally active, the employed under a contract of employment in full-time employment dominated. Only few of the inquired undertook an additional job. Among women, the main reason for increase of professional activity was obtaining low income from the basic source of income. The investigated women obtained lower incomes than the men.

**Key words:** professional activity, working age, professional activity determinants

### INTRODUCTION

Polish labour market has witnessed a number of adverse phenomena caused by relatively new demographic processes in recent years. These include a decrease in the share of the working age population in the general population, which results in a lower level of professional activity in Poland compared to other EU countries.

According to Eurostat estimates from 2004, similarly to Lithuania and Slovakia, Poland was expected to experience the greatest decrease in the working age population, amounting to 20% (Kotowska, 2008). Although the ratio of professional activity has been increasing since 2008, a noticeable gap exists between Poland and other EU countries (28). The level of professional activity is mainly influenced by economic and social factors, including the dynamics of economic growth, demographic structure, pension system, education level, wealth, social security legislation, availability of social services (including, above all, childcare and educational services) and work culture. It is also determined by non-material benefits from work, such as satisfaction, prestige or building interpersonal relationships. Other significant factors include consumption patterns in a given society and attitudes to work (Dolny et al., 1990; Furmańska-Maruszak, 2014; Kotlarz, 2007).

An increase in the level of professional activity is a challenge which Poland is facing due to the decline in the working age population. Hence, both the analysis of professional activity and identifying its determinants, and particularly demographic factors, can be viewed as valid areas of research. The main purpose of the paper is to define the determinants of professional activity of working age population. The professional activity of the investigated population, taking into account selected demographic features, namely gender, age, place of residence, were discussed in the article.

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## DATA AND RESEARCH METHODS

The article presents the outcomes of the survey research conducted in 2013 in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship on a sample of 386 working age population representatives. The study aimed to analyse the professional activity of working age population members and to identify the major characteristics of professional work including selected demographic variables. Nonprobability sampling was used. Participants of the study had been working for at least one year and were all subjects to the state social welfare system. The choice of the Wielkopolskie voivodeship is due to several reasons. The Wielkopolska region in a representative way reflects socio-demographic and economic situation of Poland. Demographic indicators taken to analysis and evaluation of situation on labour market are at similar level as in the whole country.

In addition to the primary data, the secondary data originating from the Social Security Office and Eurostat were used. The elements of descriptive statistics were applied in the elaboration.

## RESEARCH OUTCOMES

In order to reflect the prevalence of women in older age groups, women were selected as 52% of respondents. Respondents varied in terms of their family situation. Nearly a half were married and over a third were single. Every one in ten respondents was divorced and every one in twenty was a widow or a widower. Over 60% of the surveyed provided for their family members, mostly for children.

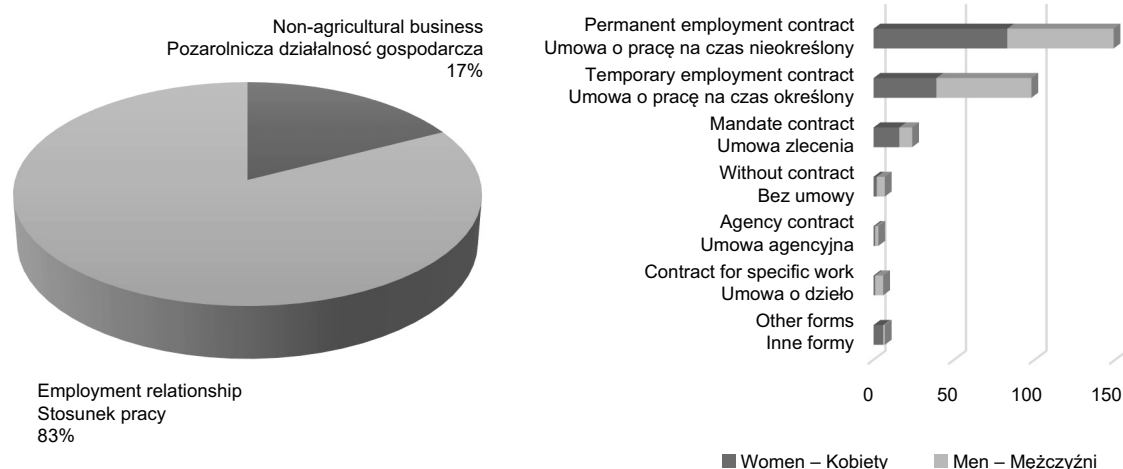
While the research was being conducted, 92% of respondents were members of the working population. Others did not do any paid work. The considerable share of working population members can be viewed as a confirmation of a prior research, Social Diagnosis, which showed that between 2011 and 2013, “the number of the working population continued to increase” (Strzelecki et al., 2013, p. 122). Women outnumbered men in the professionally inactive group and most of them were inhabitants of rural areas aged 31–40 or 51–60. Every second female respondent had secondary education while every one in six had vocational or higher education. They were mostly married with two children. The data published by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) shows that women constituted over 60% of all unemployed people between 2010 and 2012. They

cease to be professionally active mostly because they acquire pension rights (47%), because they start education or need time to improve their qualifications (18%) or because of family duties connected with running a household (16%) (GUS, 2014).

Inhabitants of urban areas constituted the majority of the working population. Single people were relatively more professionally active. While the research was being conducted, 100% of male respondents and 85% of female respondents did paid work. Since the employment ratio amounted to 67.9% (74.9% for men and 60.1% for women respectively) among the working age population (GUS, 2015), it needs to be noticed that some respondents worked “off the books”.

The lower value of the ratio for women results from a number of factors. First of all, demand for labour has fallen in sectors traditionally employing women (e.g. schooling and education). Women returning to work after a longer period of break resulting from maternity leave or child care face greater difficulties trying find employment and so do women trying to find their first job (Borowska, 2013). The number of unemployed female university graduates is also increasing, particularly among specialists in history, political sciences, pedagogy, management and marketing.

Most respondents, i.e. over 80%, had a valid employment contract (Fig. 1). Others were self-employed, 70% of whom ran non-agricultural businesses and the remaining 30% assisted entrepreneurs running their own businesses. The relatively low percentage of self-employed individuals results from a number of limitations that impede self-employment. The main barriers include complex registration and exit procedures and formal difficulties in running a business, changing labour law and high non-payroll labour costs. Also, handling two sorts of duties, i.e. professional duties and family duties and stereotypes about women’s work constitute additional difficulties for women (Borowska, 2013). Running a business, especially in its initial phase, is relatively time-consuming and may have consequences in limiting the amount of time dedicated to family duties. Balancing between professional and domestic duties is affected by a number of factors, such as children’s age, type of care involved, commonness of institutional care for little children, legal solutions regarding maternity and childcare leave, existing family models, women’s organisational skills and type of business (size and industry) (Balcerzak-Paradowska, 2014).



**Fig. 1.** Forms of employment

Source: own research.

**Rys. 1.** Formy zatrudnienia

Źródło: badania własne.

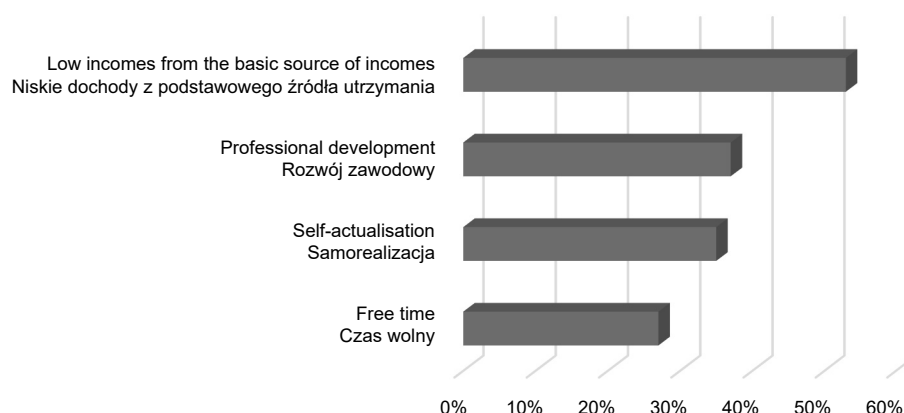
As far as employment contracts are concerned, nearly one in two was a permanent one and one in three was a temporary one. Most of these were held by women in the first group (55%) and men in the latter (60%). The proportion of temporary employment contracts is considerably higher in Poland compared to other countries, e.g. it is twice as high as in Germany and three times as high as in the Czech Republic. The share of these contracts in all employment contracts has been increasing since 2003 in all sectors, most noticeably in the construction business (40%), industry and services (25–27%) (Cichocki et al., 2013). Most working population members worked full time. Only a small fraction (10%) worked under civil-law contracts (contracts for specific work, mandate contracts or agency agreements). A similar proportion of respondents worked “off the books”. 30 respondents worked part-time. They were mostly young women aged 18–30 or older women, aged 51–60. A man as the “head of a family” decides to work in part-time job in case of lack of full-time job offers or bad health condition. Women choose flexible employment more frequently because they have to manage professional duties along with a number of social roles including bringing up children, doing household chores, taking care of other family members (Ratajczak-Tuchołka, 2010). European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) shows that 83% of Polish women and 52% of Polish men

participate in unpaid household works (including child-care and bringing up children, cooking and housework) (Kotowska et al., 2010).

One conclusion that can be drawn from Social Diagnosis is that the percentage of part-time employees decreased between 2007 and 2013 while the percentage of full-time employees increased (from 55% to 62%) (Kotowska et al., 2014). It is also confirmed by Eurostat data showing that the share of part-time employees has been constantly declining since 2005 and that it is lower than in other EU countries. In 2005, 10.8% of all employees worked part-time, while in 2013 the number shrank to 7.8%. At the same time, the average EU ratio amounted to 17.7% and 20.4% respectively (Eurostat 2015). The decreasing popularity of part-time contracts and civil-law contracts results from the threats present in the Polish labour market. Each of these forms of employment creates a potentially higher risk of threat, especially if an economy suffers from a shortage of workplaces, and can be viewed as disadvantageous from an employee’s perspective.

Among the reasons for taking up an additional job, low level of income from primary employment was the prevailing one (53%) (Fig. 2).

Proportions varied for genders as more women than men indicated the above reason (63% and 37% respectively). They mostly included people aged 41–50,



**Fig. 2.** Reasons for taking up an additional job  
\*Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

Source: own research.

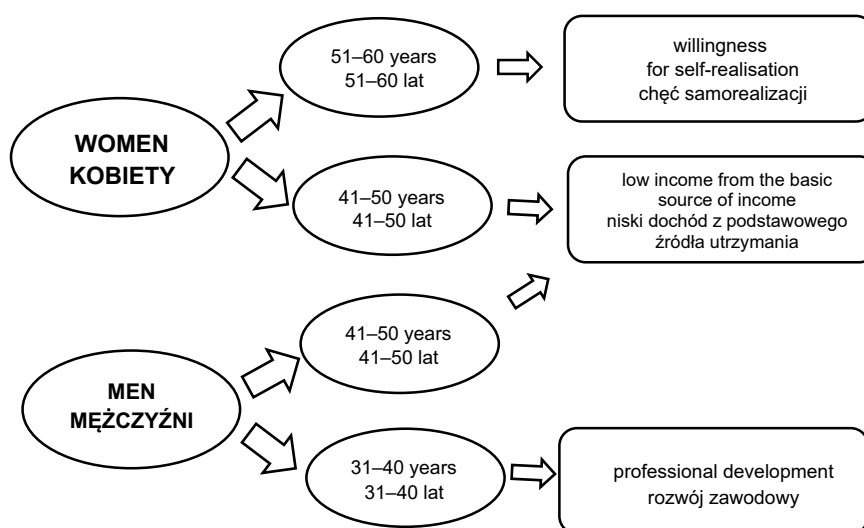
**Rys. 2.** Przyczyny podjęcia dodatkowej pracy

\*Badani mogli wskazać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź.

Źródło: badania własne.

married or divorced (Fig. 3). Another explanation of the increased level of professional activity was opportunity for professional development. This was mostly indicated by men aged 31–40. A slightly lower proportion

indicated that the decision to do additional work was driven by self-fulfilment. Among these respondents, unmarried women (single and divorced) aged 51–60 prevailed. 27% of respondents pointed to free time as the



**Fig. 3.** Demographic profile of respondents increasing their level of professional activity

Source: own research.

**Rys. 3.** Profil demograficzny respondentów zwiększających aktywność zawodową

Źródło: badania własne.

reason for taking up extra work. This was mostly the case of single people aged 51–65.

Every one in four professionally active respondents obtained income from additional resources. A relatively significant proportion of respondents with additional sources of income, i.e. 40%, worked “off the books”. Men constituted a considerable majority in this group (76%) while women only amounted to 24%, which results from a stereotype that man as the “head of a family” should ensure means of subsistence for its members. Work “in the black” was conducted mainly by cities residents with professional and secondary education. Having a profession is an advantage, which at some level may compensate low education level.

Almost one in four respondents obtaining additional incomes worked under a civil-law contract. This type of employment prevailed among single women aged below 31. Tenant rental was another significant source of income. It was the case of over 21% of respondents who were mostly married women aged 51–60. Over 10% of respondents ran non-agricultural businesses. They were mostly young male university graduates. Other sources of income included private lessons, which were mostly taught by single women aged below 30.

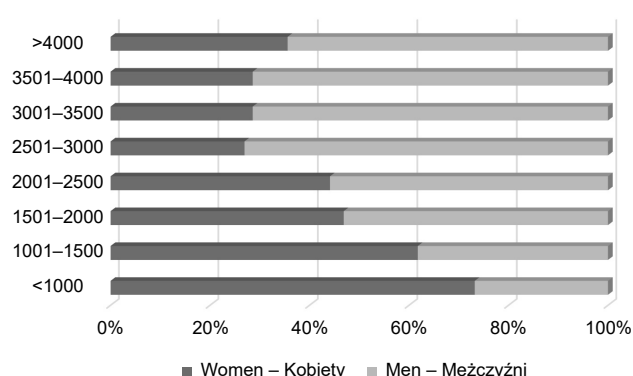
Nearly 20% of respondents who were professionally active while the study was being conducted managed to obtain incomes 1 001–1 500 PLN (Fig. 4). This was mostly the case of women aged below 30, graduates of vocational or secondary schools, mostly inhabitants of towns or cities. This band was the case of 11% of

self-employed and 21% of employees who were office clerks, sales assistants or physical workers. Four respondents worked for more than one company and nine obtained incomes from other sources.

Almost 18% of respondents obtained incomes between 1501 and 2000 PLN. They were mostly men above 50 living in rural areas. Over 93% of respondents from this group were employees, of whom 30% received additional incomes. A relatively low proportion of respondents, i.e. 1.5%, obtained low incomes, not exceeding 500 PLN. 70% of them were inhabitants of rural areas doing various kinds of physical work. A third of the surveyed obtained incomes between 2 001 and 4000 PLN. They were mostly university graduates aged 31–50. Most of them were employees (82%), a considerable proportion of whom were office clerks (24%). Over 20% of respondents in this group were employed by more than one company and nearly one third had an additional source of income. Almost 17% of all respondents obtained incomes higher than 4000 PLN. They were mostly male university graduates aged 31–40 and 51–65. One in three respondents in this group worked for more than one company and a half of them had additional sources of income.

The Social Diagnosis study shows that men claim to have earnings exceeding women’s earnings by more than 30% and university graduates obtained incomes which were higher than incomes received by people with basic education by over 120% (Czapliński, 2013). The conducted survey research confirmed income discrepancies due to gender and level of education. The surveyed women obtained lower incomes than their male counterparts. They constituted the prevailing group in the group of respondents whose incomes were lower than 1500 PLN. Lower incomes were also obtained by people whose level of education was relatively lower. At the same time, university graduates obtained the highest incomes, but their incomes did not often come from a single source.

Most respondents considered their income levels to be average (38%). Those claiming to receive either high or low incomes both constituted 28% of the studied population while 6% felt they received very high incomes. In respondents’ opinions, income below 1 000 PLN can be called low. This level of income was obtained mainly by married women whose education was basic, vocational or secondary, living in rural areas. Respondents claiming to receive average incomes belonged mostly



**Fig. 4.** Level of the respondents’ incomes  
Source: own research.

**Rys. 4.** Poziom dochodów respondentów  
Źródło: badania własne.

to the group whose incomes ranged from 1001 to 2500 PLN, 90% of whom were employees and 12.5% of whom worked for more than one company. Respondents believe that incomes exceeding 2500 PLN can be viewed as high. Over a half of all respondents whose incomes exceeded this level obtained additional earned incomes or incomes from other sources. Respondents who viewed their incomes as very high included mostly people whose incomes exceeded 5000 PLN (77%). They were mostly male university graduates. Not only does a high level of education create an opportunity for high incomes, but it also increases the probability of employment meeting other, not payroll-related employees' expectations. In the long run, it increases job security and creates an opportunity to remain professionally active after reaching retirement age (Czajka, 1997; 2003).

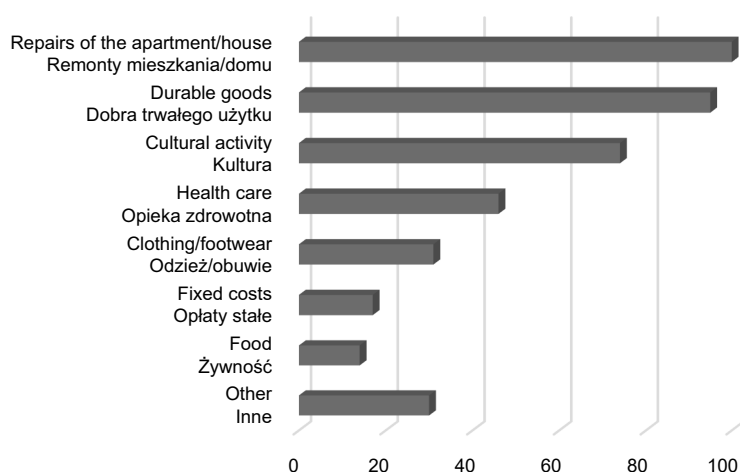
The question *Is your monthly net income sufficient to satisfy all your basic needs?* got affirmative answers from over 55% of respondents. Respondents who claimed that their incomes were insufficient to cover their basic needs mostly belonged to the group whose incomes were below 2000 PLN. Most of them were married and had basic, vocational or secondary education. They also had at least two children (53%). The

expenses which could not be covered by respondents mostly included house/flat refurbishment, purchasing durable goods, cultural expenses, healthcare, shoes and clothing (Fig. 5). 11% could not afford to pay their bills and 9% could not afford to buy the necessary food.

A considerable proportion of the studied population obtained incomes which were insufficient to fulfil even the most basic needs, which made some respondents plan to change their jobs, which was expressed by 33% of respondents, most of whom were male graduates of secondary schools aged below 40. They were also employees whose incomes did not exceed 2000 PLN.

The willingness to change jobs was mostly driven by low level of remuneration (62%) (Fig. 6).

Less important factors included lack of career prospects or pay increase, job insecurity and not making use of one's qualifications or skills. 11% of respondents planned to reduce the level of their professional activity. They were mostly men (64%) doing physical work. Most of them were inhabitants of rural areas (56%), aged 51–65 (51%) or 31–40 (31%). Nearly a half had additional sources of income and every one in two respondents planned to reduce the level of their activity because of health-related reasons (Fig. 7). Professional



**Fig. 5.** Expenditures which the income is insufficient to cover

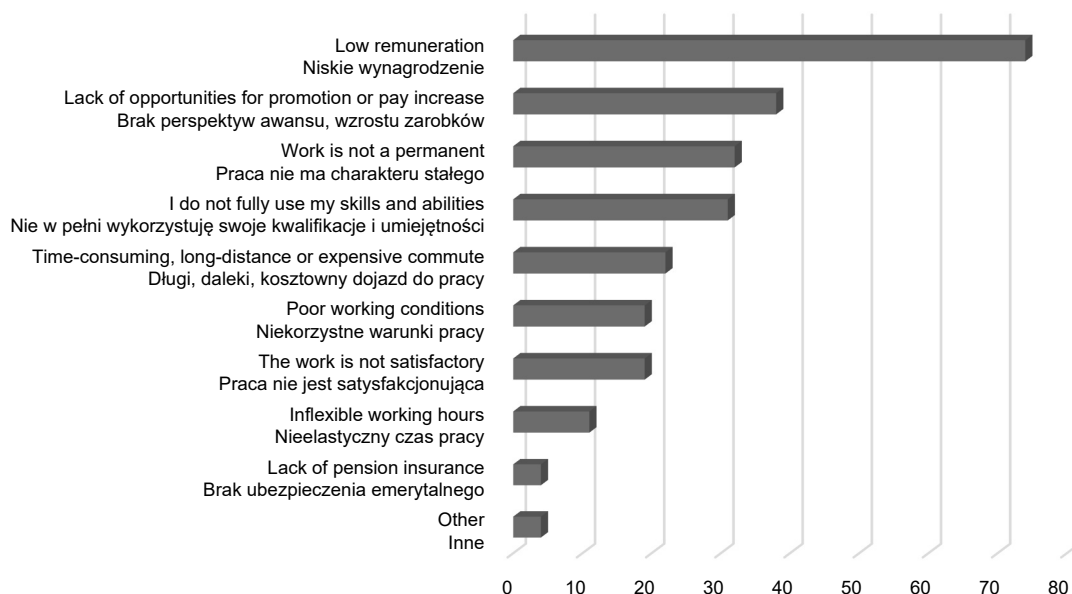
\*Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

Source: own research.

**Rys. 5.** Wydatki, na jakie dochód jest niewystarczający\*

\*Badani mogli wskazać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź.

Źródło: badania własne.



**Fig. 6.** Reasons for changing a job\*

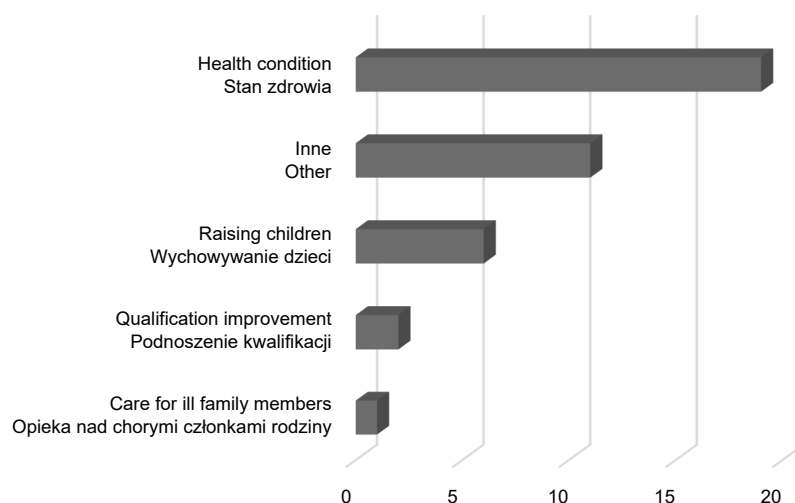
\*Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

Source: own research.

**Rys. 6.** Przyczyny zmiany pracy\*

\* Badani mogli wskazać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź.

Źródło: badania własne.



**Fig. 7.** Reasons for reducing the level of professional activity

Source: own research.

**Rys. 7.** Przyczyny ograniczenia aktywności zawodowej

Źródło: badania własne.



activity is affected by health condition and the level of unearned income. Examples of the latter include social benefits (e.g. disability pensions), which can be obtained by members of the working age population and thus make work less appealing. On the other hand, low level of benefits should result in an increase in professional activity (Kołaczek, 2014; Kotlarz, 2007).

Almost one third of all respondents pointed to “other” reasons for limiting professional activity, including looking after grandchildren or work fatigue. This was mostly the case of women aged over 50. At the same time, women below 40 were willing to limit work and become more involved in upbringing children. The Social Diagnosis research shows that professional activity is becoming more increasingly influenced by bringing up children and that this is not merely the case of children under the age of 7, but also children aged 8–12. Shortage of day care places for little children poses another barrier on the way to women’s professional activity and so does inappropriate organisation of childcare in primary schools, particularly regarding early primary school education (forms 1–3) (Kotowska et al., 2014). Access to childcare is one of the most crucial instruments supporting employment policy and social cohesion policy. Social inclusion is not limited to parents, whose work is related to obtaining income, but also their children. Institutional childcare contributes to equal developmental and educational opportunities and protects families from poverty (Głogosz, 2013).

## SUMMARY

The conducted research shows that a vast majority of respondents were professionally active. As regards employment structure, the surveyed were mainly employees, most of whom were employed under employment contracts (80%). Professional activity is influenced by both health condition and the possibility to manage both family and work-related duties. Women often withdraw from work due to family reasons.

Only a small fraction of the surveyed took on additional work. Among women, the main motivation behind it was low income received from primary employment, whereas for men, additional employment was mainly caused by the drive for professional development. Research confirmed income discrepancies between genders. Women received lower incomes than men. Moreover, they were in majority in groups

reaching relatively low incomes (below 1500 PLN). Research also shows that there is a positive relationship between income and the level of education. Approximately 40% of all respondents obtained incomes between 1000 and 2000 PLN and 17% were in the top group where incomes exceeded 4000 PLN. These two groups were mainly composed of vocational and secondary school graduates and university graduates respectively. Lower incomes of women may result from the fact that women more frequently choose flexible forms of employment. These forms are recognised as less profitable, because gained incomes that are basis for social security contributions have influence not only on standards of living in the period of professional activity, but also afterwards. Therefore, proper solutions enabling linking professional and family role as well as giving sense of security should be introduced.

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## AKTYWNOŚĆ ZAWODOWA OSÓB W WIEKU PRODUKCYJNYM W WOJEWÓDZTWIE WIELKOPOLSKIM

**Streszczenie.** Głównym celem artykułu jest określenie czynników determinujących aktywność zawodową osób w wieku produkcyjnym. Omówiono w nim aktywność zawodową badanej populacji z uwzględnieniem wybranych cech demograficznych, a mianowicie płci, wieku i miejsca zamieszkania. Badania ankietowe przeprowadzono w 2013 r. na terenie województwa wielkopolskiego wśród 386 osób w wieku produkcyjnym. Oprócz danych pierwotnych w publikacji wykorzystano dane wtórne pochodzące z GUS i Eurostat. Z przeprowadzonych badań wynika, że zdecydowana większość respondentów była aktywna zawodowo. Wśród osób aktywnych zawodowo dominowali ankietowani zatrudnieni na podstawie umowy o pracę w pełnym wymiarze czasu pracy. Niewielu ankietowanych podejmowało dodatkową pracę. Wśród kobiet główną przyczyną zwiększenia aktywności zawodowej było osiąganie niskiego dochodu z podstawowego źródła utrzymania, a wśród mężczyzn rozwój zawodowy. Badane kobiety osiągały niższe dochody aniżeli mężczyźni.

**Słowa kluczowe:** aktywność zawodowa, wiek produkcyjny, determinanty aktywności zawodowej

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