



Murawska, A. (2016). Differences in Unemployment Among Persons in a Special Situation on the Labour Market on the Example of Polish Provinces *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 7(3), 375-388. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/OeC.2016.022>

*Anna Murawska**

*Jan and Jędrzej Śniadecki University of Science
and Technology in Bydgoszcz, Poland*

Differences in Unemployment Among Persons in a Special Situation on the Labour Market on the Example of Polish Provinces

JEL Classification: *D12; D14; I31; J21; J64*

Keywords: *labour market; unemployment rate; unemployed person; determinants; standard of living;*

Abstract: *The unemployment level in a region and economic activity on the labour market are considered the most important determinants of individuals' standard of living. The article aims to assess regional differences in indicators characterising the situation on the labour market depending on the selected social and demographic features of the unemployed. In order to achieve this objective, information from secondary sources, primarily statistical yearbooks and other source materials, was used. General data relating to Poland and sixteen provinces was analysed. The assessment of regional differences and the relationship between them used basic indices and ratios in the form of numerical evaluation. Coefficients of intensity, structure, variation and correlation were calculated. Differences in the level of unemployment in Polish provinces depend on such factors as place of resi-*

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Date of submission: April 1, 2015; date of acceptance: April 6, 2016

* Contact: anna.murawska@utp.edu.pl, Department of Economics and Economic Law, Faculty of Management, Jan and Jędrzej Śniadecki University of Science and Technology in Bydgoszcz, ul. Fordońska 430, 85-790 Bydgoszcz, Poland

dence, age, sex, level of education of the unemployed, seniority and duration of unemployment. Residents of provinces with a favourable situation on the labour market have a notably higher income and standard of living.

Introduction

The labour market is one of the most important markets of production factors where services provided by members of society are the subject of exchange. Labour is an element of economic growth and a source of gross national income, which is later intended for individual and collective consumption (Podoski & Turnowiecki, 2001, p. 85). The efficiency and flexibility of the labour market is vital for ensuring the effective use of employees' skills across the economy (Woźniak-Jęchorek, 2015, p. 149).

One of the essential aspects analysed on the labour market is the unemployment level. Unemployment is a complex and dynamic phenomenon of market economy generated by numerous factors of varying degrees of sustainability. It is not only an economic problem, but also a social issue, and the awareness of this unity should be an important methodological prerequisite for studies (Mlonek, 2006, p. 93).

The situation on the labour market is regionally diversified (Nasiłowski, 2007, p. 329; Ratyński, 2003, p. 103). Unemployment, as a rule, is higher on the outskirts of big cities, in underdeveloped regions and regions that were restructured with regard to the raw material and processing industry. In turn, the lack of employment opportunities, poor living and environmental conditions, poverty and isolation lead to a lower standard of living, emergence of a situation in which basic needs cannot be met, loss of self-worth or threat to the sense of security.

A country's economic situation is one of the determinants of the reality of the labour market. The economic crisis that broke out in 2007 was widely reported across all European labour markets. It has been observed that the crisis accelerated the previously existing structural trends, generating increasing inequality, polarisation and atypical forms of employment (*Crisis takes its toll...*, 2014, p. 27). In the times of crisis, it is the least productive workers and workers with the lowest level of skill who lose their job first (Belan *et al.*, 2010, pp. 776-777; Tomé, 2007, pp. 338-340)

As part of a social policy, problems pertaining to the labour market, professional activity and level of unemployment should be one of the most important sectors and knowledge of tendencies, basic conditioning and determinants of the situation on the labour market should facilitate making decisions concerning the assumptions of the economic and social policy which ensures prosperity and a sustainable standard of living (Gutkowska

& Murawska, 2010, p. 71). It is therefore necessary to have knowledge of figures, including the share of unemployed persons in particular features, tendencies taking place in the structure of the unemployed and regional differences.

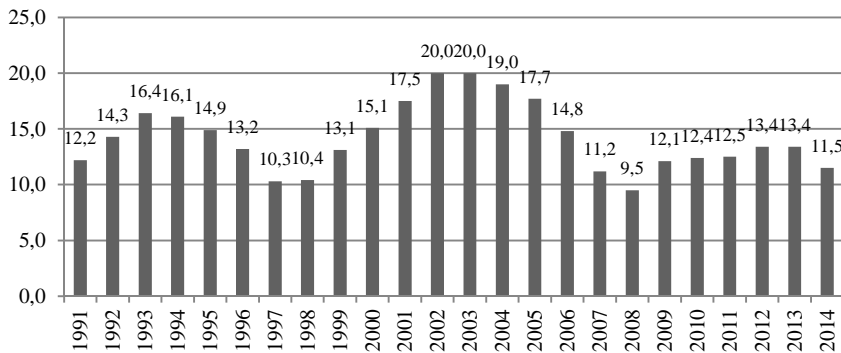
Research Methodology

The aim of the paper was to present regional differences in the level of unemployment in Poland and in sixteen provinces. It presents differences in unemployment rates depending on selected social and demographic features of the population, such as place of residence, sex, age, level of education, seniority and duration of unemployment. Additionally, efforts were made to determine whether there are any relations between indicators describing the level of unemployment and the standard of living. The average monthly income per one household member was adopted as the measure of the standard of living. In order to achieve the objective, the latest information from secondary sources, primarily household budget surveys, statistical yearbooks and other source materials, was used. Sixteen Polish provinces were analysed. The assessment of regional differences, relationships and correlations between them used basic indices and ratios in the form of numerical evaluation. Coefficients of intensity, structure, variation and correlation were calculated. The analyses were carried out based on data from the years 2010–2013.

The Level of Unemployment Among Persons in a Special Situation on the Labour Market in Poland

One of the most visible undesirable phenomena that emerged in Poland in the period of market economy development after 1990 was not only the increase of the average price level of consumer goods, but also mass unemployment.

The principal measure used to assess unemployment is its rate. The unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed as compared to the total labour force. The scale of unemployment is variable in time and regional space. This is confirmed by statistical data pertaining to the unemployment rate in Poland in the years 1990–2014 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Unemployment rate (in percentage) registered in Poland in the years 1990–2014

Source: own work based on <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/stopa-bezrobocia-w-latach-1990-2014,4,1.html> (06.02.2015); data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Whereas the unemployment rate in Poland in 1990 was 6.5%, in 1994 and 1995 it exceeded 16%. Its scale was all the more shocking given that prior to 1990 it was practically nonexistent. In fact, it was quite the opposite: the labour demand exceeded the labour supply. The transformation quickly demonstrated the fictitious nature of this situation. In the following years, through appropriate measures and efficiency of the market mechanism, the unemployment rate started to decline and in 1997 and 1998 reached 10%. Unfortunately, over the next five years unemployment was increasing dynamically as a consequence of enterprise restructuring (1998–2003) and reached a record peak at 20%.

In 2004 Poland joined the European Union and the situation on the labour market has improved since then. The lowest unemployment rate was recorded in 2008 (9.5%). Regrettably, the economic crisis in the United States in 2007 echoed all over Europe and reached Poland. Starting from 2009, the number of unemployed started to rise. In recent years, the economy has stabilised. In 2014 the unemployment rate dropped by 2% in comparison to the two previous years and amounted to 11.5 (Figure 1).

The unemployment rate differs at a national, regional, provincial, district and communal level, especially depending on social and demographic features. Article 49 of the Act on Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions distinguishes persons in a special situation on the labour market. Thereby, various measures aimed at activation of these persons should be taken.

In 2013, individuals in a special situation on the labour market comprised: the long-term unemployed, unemployed persons under 25, unemployed persons under 50, women who did not return to work after having a child, unemployed persons without work experience or secondary education, single parents with at least one child under 18, persons who after serving a prison sentence did not take up employment, the disabled and unemployed after termination of a social contract (*Terytorialne zróżnicowanie...*, 2013, p. 5).

The percentage share of unemployed persons in a special situation on the labour market in the total number of the unemployed in the years 2010-2013 remained at a similar level, with the largest share of the unemployed being persons not eligible for the unemployment benefit (in 2013 – 86.2%), long-term unemployed (53.7%), women (51%), persons living in rural areas (38.9%), persons without professional qualifications (29.9%) and persons with no work experience (18.2%). Persons in a special situation on the labour market also include graduates (5.6%), persons dismissed for reasons attributable to an employment establishment (5.3%), the disabled (5.4%) and single parents with at least one child aged 18 or under (9.4%) (Table 1).

Table 1. The percentage share of registered unemployed persons in a special situation on the labour market in the total number of the unemployed in the years 2010-2013

Specification	2010	2011	2012	2013
Women	51.9	53.5	51.3	51.0
Persons with no work experience	20.7	19.9	18.6	18.2
Graduates	6.3	6.2	5.9	5.6
Persons with higher education (up to 27 years of age)	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.4
Persons without professional qualifications	26.4	29.8	29.2	29.9
Persons dismissed for reasons attributable to an employment establishment	3.1	3.0	4.1	5.3
Long-term unemployed	46.4	50.3	50.2	53.7
Persons not eligible for the unemployment benefit	83.3	83.5	83.2	86.2
Single parents with at least one child aged 18 or under	8.0	8.6	8.8	9.4
Persons living in rural areas	43.8	37.7	43.9	38.9*
The disabled	5.1	5.3	5.2	5.4

Source: own work based on Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2012 (2014, p. 171); Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland (2014, p. 252).

The number of the unemployed also differs depending on such social and demographic features as age, level of education of the unemployed, seniority and duration of unemployment. Whereas 25–34 year-olds account for the largest share of the registered unemployed persons (28.4%), the lowest share were persons aged 24 or under (18.6%) and persons aged 55 and over (14.1%). Overall, in comparison with 2010, the number of unemployed persons aged 35–44, as well as 55 and over, has increased, and the number of persons aged 24 or under and 45–54 has decreased (Table 2).

Table 2. The percentage share of registered unemployed persons, by age and education, in the total number of the unemployed in the years 2010–2013

Specification	2010	2011	2012	2013
Age				
24 years and under	21.9	21.0	19.9	18.6
25-34	29.2	29.3	29.4	28.4
35-44	18.4	18.8	19.6	20.2
45-54	20.3	19.4	18.7	18.7
55 years and over	10.2	11.4	12.5	14.1
Education				
Higher	10.5	11.4	11.7	12.0
Postsecondary and secondary vocational	22.0	22.2	22.1	22.1
Secondary general education	10.9	10.8	10.6	10.6
Basic vocational	28.5	28.0	28.3	28.1
Lower secondary and lower education	28.2	27.5	27.3	27.3

Source: own work based on Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2012 (2014, p. 174); Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland (2014, p. 254).

While persons with basic vocational education (28.1% in 2013) as well as with lower secondary and lower education (27.3%) are the largest group among the unemployed, persons with secondary general education (10.6%) and higher education (12.0%) are the smallest one. The number of persons with other education remains stable (Table 2).

Whereas the largest group of the unemployed in 2013 were persons unemployed for 3 months or less (26.0%), persons unemployed for 3-6 months were the smallest group (16.8%). In comparison with 2010, the share of unemployed persons registered up to 3 months has decreased dynamically. However, a point of concern is the fact that the number of persons unemployed for 12–24 months and over 24 months is rising. By contrast, when analysing seniority one can observe that persons with 1–5 years seniority constitute the most numerous group (22.15%) and persons with

over 30 years seniority constitute the least numerous group (3.9%). As compared with 2010, the share of the unemployed with no work experience is getting smaller and the share of the unemployed with 5–10 years seniority is getting bigger (Table 3).

Table 3. The percentage share of registered unemployed persons, by duration of unemployment and seniority, in the total number of the unemployed in the years 2010–2013 in Poland

Specification	2010	2011	2012	2013
Duration of unemployment				
3 months or less	34.2	29.0	29.3	26.0
3-6 months	18.3	17.5	17.2	16.8
6-12 months	18.4	18.9	18.0	18.9
12-24 months	17.1	19.3	17.6	18.4
over 24 months	12.0	15.3	17.8	19.9
Seniority				
No work experience	20.7	19.9	18.6	18.2
1 year or less	15.1	15.5	15.4	15.9
1-5 years	22.3	22.5	22.9	22.1
5-10 years	13.3	13.5	14.1	14.2
10-20 years	14.8	14.7	14.8	15.0
20-30 years	10.6	10.5	10.4	10.6
over 30 years	3.2	3.4	3.9	3.9

Source: own calculations based on Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2012 (2014, p. 175); Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland (2014, p. 254).

Provincial Differences in Unemployment Levels Among Persons in a Special Situation on the Labour Market (NUTS 2)

Due to methodological differences, the registered unemployment rate (according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) is higher than the one defined in BAEL (Survey of the Economic Activity of the Population). Nevertheless, its value over the years has significantly reduced.

Provincial differences in registered unemployment levels (according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) are higher as compared with BAEL ($V_s=21.2\%$ and $V_s=15.1\%$, respectively). The total and long-term unemployment rate in 2013 was the highest in the Warmian-Masurian Province (21.6% and 11.8%, respectively) and the lowest in the Greater Poland Province (9.6% and 4.5%). By contrast, according to BAEL, inter-regional differences in unemployment levels are smaller and the ranking of provinces with the highest and lowest unemployment rates is different. Thus, the lowest unemployment rate in 2013 was observed in the Mazovian Province (total – 8.0%, women – 8.2%, city – 7.1%) and the highest one in the Subcarpathian Province (total – 14.3%, women – 14.3%, city – 15.2%). As far as rural areas are concerned, BAEL showed that the highest number of unemployed persons was reported in the Subcarpathian Province (13.9%) and the lowest one in the Podlasie Province (6.6%) (Table 4).

Table 4. The provincial unemployment rate (in percentage) in 2013 in Poland

Specification	Unemployment rate in percentage					
	Registered – according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy		According to the Survey of the Economic Activity			
	Total	Long-term	Total	Including the total rate		
			Women	City	Rural areas	
Poland	13.4	7.2	10.3	11.1	10.3	10.4
Lower Silesian	13.1	6.7	11.3	12.2	11.2	11.8
Kuyavian-Pomeranian	18.2	10.4	12.4	14.2	12.1	12.9
Lublin	14.4	8.5	10.3	10.6	11.7	9.1
Lubusz	15.7	7.9	9.6	10.5	9.9	9
Łódź	14.1	7.8	11.1	11.7	12.1	9.4
Lesser Poland	11.5	5.9	10.8	11.5	11.2	10.5
Mazovian	11.1	6.1	8.0	8.2	7.1	9.6
Opole	14.2	7.3	9.4	10.7	10.2	7.9
Subcarpathian	16.3	9.6	14.3	14.3	15.2	13.9
Podlasie	15.1	8.7	9.9	10.2	11.9	6.6
Pomeranian	13.2	6.5	10.1	10.2	8.7	12.8
Silesian	11.3	5.7	9.7	11.2	10.1	8.4
Świętokrzyskie	16.6	9.1	13.0	13.6	14.3	11.6
Warmian-Masurian	21.6	11.8	11.4	12.2	11.4	11.8
Greater Poland	9.6	4.5	8.8	11.4	8.7	8.9
West Pomeranian	18.0	9.6	10.0	9.6	8.5	13.2

Table 4 continued

Specification	Unemployment rate in percentage					
	Registered – according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy		According to the Survey of the Economic Activity			
	Total	Long-term	Total	Including the total rate		
Women				City	Rural areas	
V_s	21.2	24.8	15.1	14.5	19.4	20.6
<i>Min</i>	9.6	4.5	8	8.2	7.1	6.6
<i>Max</i>	21.6	11.8	14.3	14.3	15.2	13.9
<i>Correlation (r_{xy}) with the standard of living*</i>	-0.51*	-0.54*	-0.65*	-0.69*	-0.73*	-0.19

*correlation between the unemployment rate and the standard of living defined by an indicator: average monthly income per one household member. *significant correlation at the level of 0.05.

Source: own calculations based on Statistical Yearbook of the Regions (2014).

The number of unemployed persons in a special situation on the labour market in particular provinces varies considerably. This thesis is confirmed by coefficients of variation V_s calculated for the 16 provinces. The biggest difference can be found among single parents with at least one child aged 18 or under ($V_s=28.3\%$), persons without work experience ($V_s=23.2\%$), the disabled ($V_s=23.0\%$), persons with higher education ($V_s=19.4\%$), persons aged 55 and over ($V_s=16.8\%$) and persons with lower secondary and lower education ($V_s=16.0\%$) (Table 5).

The group most affected by unemployment are persons aged 24 or under. They accounted for 18.6% of the total number of the unemployed in 2013 with the highest number of unemployed young individuals reported in the Lesser Poland Province (23.4% of the total number of the unemployed) and the lowest number in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province (15.0%). Unemployed young individuals include not only persons who were dismissed or resigned from their jobs, but also graduates of basic vocational schools, schools of secondary general education and schools of higher education. This category of the unemployed is particularly strongly affected by the effects of unemployment.

Table 5. Provincial differences in unemployment depending on selected features in Poland in 2013

Specification	Value			V_s in %	r_{xy} *	
	Poland	Provinces				
		Min	Max			
Aged 24 or under	18.6	15.0 (Kuyavian-Pomeranian)	23.4 (Lesser Poland)	12.7	-0.48	
Aged 55 and more	14.1	9.9 (Subcarpathian)	18.2 (Kuyavian-Pomeranian)	16.8	0.57*	
Long-term unemployed	53.7	47.1 (Greater Poland)	59.4 (Lublin)	6.9	-0.29	
Without professional qualifications	29.9	23.7 (Lesser Poland)	34.0 (Kuyavian-Pomeranian)	10.2	0.50*	
Single parents with at least one child under 18	9.4	5.4 (Subcarpathian)	14.0 (West Pomeranian)	28.3	0.12	
Disabled	5.4	3.7 (Mazovian)	8.0 (Lubusz)	23.0	0.09	
No work experience	18.2	13.1 (Lower Silesian)	27.8 (Lublin)	23.2	-0.30	
20-30 years seniority	10.6	7.2 (Lublin)	12.7 (Lower Silesian)	15.1	0.45	
Education	Higher	12.0	7.9 (Kuyavian-Pomeranian)	15.2 (Lublin)	19.4	0.03
	Secondary vocational	22.1	18.6 (West Pomeranian)	25.3 (Subcarpathian)	10.0	-0.24
	Secondary general	10.6	9.2 (Silesian)	12.0 (Lublin)	9.0	0.15
	Basic vocational	28.1	24.1 (Podlasie)	31.4 (Greater Poland)	8.0	-0.32
	Lower secondary and lower	27.3	20.4 (Subcarpathian)	33.8 (West Pomeranian)	16.0	0.24

* correlation between the unemployment rate, defined by an indicator: the percentage share of registered unemployed persons in the total number of the unemployed depending on selected features, and the standard of living defined by an indicator: average monthly income per one household member.

Source: own calculations based on Statistical Yearbook of the Regions (2014), Central Statistical Office (2014).

Persons in a special situation on the labour market also include individuals aged 50–55 and more. In 2013, they constituted 14.1% of all unemployed individuals. Whereas the highest number of unemployed persons aged 50–55 and more was reported in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province (18.2%), the smallest number was noted in the Subcarpathian Province

(9.9%). A population ageing trend is observed in Poland. As the average age of the population rises, an increase of the share of persons aged over 50 in the Polish population is observed. In 2002, persons aged over 50 comprised 28% of the total population (*Analiza sytuacji osób bezrobotnych...*, 2012). In 2014, their number exceeded 35%. The reason for regional differences in unemployment levels of older persons in Poland can be varying economic and demographic structures of particular regions. The professional activity level of older persons often depends on the economic specificity of a region, working and employment conditions.

The long-term unemployed are in a special situation on the labour market¹. Long-term unemployment deserves special attention as it creates greater social problems than short-term unemployment. Economists are of the opinion that it is primarily caused by a structural mismatch between the economy and requirements of the market, i.e. it is of a structural unemployment nature (Kozek, 2007, p. 144). In 2013, the long-term unemployed accounted for 53.7% of all unemployed persons in Poland with the least favourable situation in the Lublin Province (59.4%) and the most favourable situation in the Greater Poland Province (47.1%). Long-term unemployment is considered a social disease and is a matter of concern for the country, local authorities and social institutions. Additionally, providing for the unemployed consumes considerable state funds.

The large number of persons without professional qualifications among the unemployed also constitutes a problem in the labour market. The group accounted for almost 30% of the unemployed in Poland in 2013. The highest number of persons without professional qualifications was observed in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province (34.0%) and the lowest one in the Lesser Poland Province (23.7%). Persons with no work experience constitute a special category on the labour market, and most commonly include graduates of vocational schools, secondary schools and schools of higher education. Their share among all unemployed persons amounts on average to 18.2% in Poland. The highest share was reported in the Lublin Province (27.8%) and the lowest one in the Lower Silesia Province (13.1%).

It is also worth noting that unemployment affects mainly persons with basic vocational education as well as with lower secondary and lower education. The largest number of unemployed persons with basic vocational education was recorded in the Greater Poland Province (31.4%) and with

¹ The long-term unemployed – an unemployed person who has been registered in the District Employment Agency for 12 months or longer in the last 2 years, excluding internship and adult vocational training periods. Legal basis: Act of April 20, 2004 on Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions. Retrieved from <http://rynekpracy.org/x/310101> (06.03.2015).

lower secondary and lower education in the West Pomeranian Province (33.8%) (Table 5).

Having a job is a source of regular financial remuneration and, consequently, generation of income and allocating it on daily spending on consumer goods and services. A lack of income translates into a lower standard of living, lower quality of life as well as deterioration of physical and mental health of individuals.

There is a significant connection between the level of unemployment and the standard of living (average monthly income per one household member) of persons living in particular provinces in Poland (Table 4 & 5). Thus, there is a significant negative correlation between the standard of living and the overall registered unemployment rate, long-term unemployment, the overall unemployment rate according to BAEL, unemployment among women and in cities. Therefore, persons living in regions characterised by a high overall unemployment rate, unemployment among women and unemployment in cities have a lower standard of living.

Conclusions

Unemployment in Poland is a major social issue, and its existence has a wide range of negative effects, reduces state revenue, lowers the standard of living, quality of life and consumption level and creates social tensions and unrest as well as pathological behaviour.

The lack of employment opportunities has consequences in the form of danger of losing other values. The authorities and institutions should pay particular attention to persons in a special situation on the labour market, i.e. young persons, persons aged 50+, women, persons who have not yet been employed or have no work experience, long-term unemployed and inhabitants of rural areas.

The level of unemployment has fluctuated considerably in the last two decades. However, it has remained at the level of 11–13% since 2010. The obtained results confirmed that unemployment in Poland differs depending on the region. The unemployment rate has been the highest in the Warmian-Masurian, Subcarpathian and Świętokrzyskie Province for years. The best labour market situation can be observed in the Mazovian, Greater Poland and Silesian Province.

Unemployment among problem groups in Poland is high and varies significantly across regions. The greatest differences between provinces can be observed with respect to unemployed disabled persons, persons with no work experience and single parents with at least one child under 18. The

highest unemployment rate (in percentage) among unemployed persons aged 24 or under was observed in the Lesser Poland Province, among persons aged 55 and over and persons without professional qualifications – in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province, among the long-term unemployed, persons with no work experience and persons with higher and secondary education – in the Lublin Province, among single parents with at least one child under 18 and persons with lower secondary and lower education – in the West Pomeranian Province, among unemployed disabled persons – in the Lubusz Province, among unemployed persons with 20–30 years seniority – in the Lower Silesian Province, among persons with secondary vocational education – in the Subcarpathian Province, and among persons with basic vocational education – in the Greater Poland Province. Thus, the provincial authorities should focus support and assistance on these problem groups. Resolving labour market dilemmas effectively is a crucial task for the authorities, in particular having regard to the fact that the level of unemployment is closely connected with the standard of living of the aforementioned social groups.

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