

## Poland



**Capital City:** Warsaw.

**Background:** Poland emerged as a nation in the 10th century. Russia, Prussia and Austria partitioned the country in the late 18th century. Poland regained its independence in 1918 only to be overrun by Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II. As a Soviet satellite its government was comparatively tolerant and progressive. Labor turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent trade union 'Solidarity' that over time became a political force and by 1990 had swept parliamentary elections and the presidency. During the early 1990s the country's economy was transformed into one of the most robust in Central Europe, but Poland still faces the challenges of high unemployment, underdeveloped and dilapidated infrastructure, as well as a poor rural underclass. Solidarity was defeated in the 2001 parliamentary elections and the new leaders of the Solidarity Trade Union subsequently pledged to reduce the Trade Union's political role. Poland joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

### Geography:

- **Location:** Central Europe, east of Germany.
- **Area comparative:** 4½ times the size of Ireland.
- **Climate:** Cold, cloudy, moderately severe winters; mild summers with frequent showers and thundershowers.
- **Natural resources:** Coal, sulfur, copper, natural gas, silver, lead, salt, amber, arable land.
- **Natural hazards:** Flooding.
- **Environment issues:** Air pollution from coal-fired power plants, and the resulting acid rain has caused forest damage; water pollution from industrial and municipal sources; hazardous wastes.

### People:

- **Population:** 38,536,869
- **Birth rate:** 9.85 births per 1,000.
- **Infant mortality:** 7.22 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- **Life expectancy:** *Total population:* 74.97 years, *male:* 70.95 years, *female:* 79.23 years.



**Religion:** Roman Catholic 89.8%, Eastern Orthodox 1.3%, Protestant 0.3%, other 0.3%, unspecified 8.3%.

**Government:**

- **Type of government:** Republic.
- **Administrative divisions:** 16 provinces.
- **Independence:** 11 November 1918.
- **National holiday:** Constitution Day, 3 May (1791).

**Economy:**

- **Unemployment:** 18.2%
- **Population below the poverty line:** 17%
- **Agricultural products:** Potatoes, fruits, vegetables, wheat, poultry, eggs, pork, dairy.
- **Industries:** Machine building, iron and steel, coal mining, chemicals, shipbuilding, food processing, glass, beverages, textiles.

**Education:**

- **Literacy:** *Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write. *Total population:* 99.8%, *male:* 99.8%, *female:* 99.7%.
- **Language:** Polish 97.8%, other and unspecified 2.2%.

**Communication:**

- **Telephone lines:** Landlines: 12.458 million, Mobile lines: 29.26 million.
- **TV stations:** 40
- **Internet users:** 10.6 million

**Asylum:** Polish nationals do not need to apply for asylum in Ireland since accession to the European Union in May 2004.

**Internally Displaced Persons:** The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre at the end of November 2006 did not record an internally displaced population in Poland.

**Migration:** The Department of Social and Family Affairs have issued 174,003 Personal Public Service (PPS) numbers to Polish nationals between May 2004 and October 2006. Some Polish nationals who received PPS numbers may have left Ireland subsequently.

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**Sources:**

CIA - The World Factbook -- Poland, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pl.html>, 20/07/06.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - Statistics, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>, 30/11/06.

Department of Social and Family Affairs, <http://www.welfare.ie/topics/ppsn/>, 30/11/06.

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