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## Dzieciobójstwa i porzucenia w Polsce

## Infant abandonment and infanticide in Poland

### Streszczenie

Wprowadzenie. W ustawodawstwie karnym obowiązującym na ziemiach polskich od 1932 roku dzieciobójstwo i porzucenie uznawano za przestępstwa. Literatura przedmiotu nie jest zgodna co do skali tego problemu, co uwarunkowane jest dwoma czynnikami: autorzy analizują różne przedziały czasowe, korzystają z odmiennych źródeł.

Celem pracy było określenie częstości dzieciobójstwa i porzuceń w Polsce w latach 1973-2002; pokazanie skali tego problemu w poszczególnych województwach w latach 1999-2002 oraz analiza wpływu stopy bezrobocia na częstość porzuceń i dzieciobójstw w okresie 1999-2002.

Materiał i metoda. Analizowano dane udostępnione przez Dział Statystyczny Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości (liczba prawomocnych skazań za dzieciobójstwo i porzucenie), Policyjny System Statystyki Przestępczości TEMIDA (uwzględnia informacje o kobietach podejrzanych o dzieciobójstwo i osobach podejrzanych o porzucenie – przestępstwa stwierdzone) oraz Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Bezrobocie Rejestrowane w Polsce GUS, 2004). Zastosowano następujące metody statystyczne: linia trendu wyznaczona metodą najmniejszych kwadratów, test istotności różnic U Manna-Whitney'a.

Wyniki i dyskusja. Częstość dzieciobójstw i porzuceń w latach 1973-2002 w Polsce nie jest zbyt wysoka. Od roku 1973 do 2002 liczba dzieciobójstw zmniejszała się, przy czym największa tendencja spadkowa wystąpiła w latach siedemdziesiątych. Częstość porzuceń kształtuje się odmiennie w poszczególnych dziesięcioleciach. Najwięcej porzuceń zarejestrowano w województwie śląskim, a najmniej w województwach pomorskim, podlaskim i podkarpackim. Najwięcej dzieciobójstw odnotowano w województwie mazowieckim. W województwie opolskim nie odnotowano takiego przestępstwa. Stopa bezrobocia, przyjęta jako wskaźnik stanu zamożności danego regionu kraju, nie różnicuje częstości porzuceń, a w bardzo małym stopniu wpływa na częstość dzieciobójstw w latach 1999-2002.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dzieciobójstwo, porzucenie dziecka.

### Summary

Introduction. In the criminal legislature in Poland, infanticide and abandonment have been considered as crimes since 1932. In the literature of the subject, the scale of these phenomena has been presented in different ways, which is conditioned by two factors: the authors analyse different time intervals; they base on different source material.

The aim of the following work is to determine the incidence of infant abandonment and infanticide in Poland from 1973 to 2002; to show the scale of the problem in particular voivodships between 1999 and 2002, and to establish whether the unemployment rate influenced the frequency of infant abandonment and infanticide between 1999 and 2002.

Materials and methods. The study was based on the data obtained from the Ministry of Justice Statistics Department showing the number of legally valid convictions for the crimes of infant abandonment and infanticide, from the TEMIDA crime statistics system of the Polish Police including information on people suspected of infanticide and infant abandonment (crimes confirmed), and finally from the Central Statistical Office – Unemployment Registered in Poland CSO (2004). The following statistical methods were applied: the trend line determined with the method of smallest squares, significance of differences test by U Mann-Whitney.

Results and discussion. The incidence of infant abandonment and infanticide committed in Poland between 1973 and 2002 is not high. From 1973 to 2002, the number of infanticide cases dropped, and the greatest decreasing tendency was observed in the 1970's. In contrast, the incidence of infant abandonment was different in particular decades. The voivodship that had the greatest number of infant abandonment cases was the Silesian Voivodship, and the regions that had the lowest frequency of this crime were: the Pomeranian, Podlaskie, and Subcarpathian Voivodships. The voivodship that had the greatest number of infanticide cases was the Mazovian Voivodship, and the region that had the lowest incidence of this crime was the Opolskie Voivodship, where no such case was recorded. The unemployment rate considered as an indicator of the material status in certain regions of the country does not differentiate the frequency of infant abandonment, but it might have slightly influenced the frequency of infanticide between 1999 and 2002.

**Key words:** infanticide, infant abandonment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a common phenomenon, taking place in all human societies across the ages, those primitive ones and those proud of a well-developed civilization. Cruelty towards children took various forms, dependent on social, cultural, traditional, political and legal factors [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6].

Until the end of the 19th century, infanticide and abortion were the only legally punished forms of child abuse. In the 20th century, criminal acts against children also included: abandonment, neglect, beating, emotional maltreatment and sexual abuse [7].

At present, the Polish law includes several legal regulations concerning children. In this study, two types of crimes against children were subject to research: infanticide described in Article 149 of the Legal Code as follows: "The mother who puts the child to death in the period of delivery, due to its course, is liable to prison punishment from 3 months to 5 years"; and abandonment which is legally regulated by Article 210, Paragraph 1 saying: "Who against the duty of provision of care towards the minors below 15 or towards the psychically or physically disabled persons, abandons such a person, undergoes prison punishment of up to 3 years", and Paragraph 2: "If the consequence of the act is the death of the person characterized in paragraph 1, the doer undergoes prison punishment from 6 months to 8 years" [8].

In the literature of the subject, one can find varying information on the scale of this problem, which is conditioned by two factors: firstly, the authors refer to different time ranges, secondly, they base on different source materials [9, 10, 11].

The aim of the study was to establish the incidence of infanticide and abandonment in Poland over the 30-year span, from 1973 to 2002; to show the scale of the problem in individual voivodships in the years from 1999 to 2002, and to analyse the impact of the unemployment rate in specific regions of Poland on the frequency of infanticide and abandonment in the years of 1999 to 2002

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted basing on the data from the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice [12] presenting the number of lawful convictions connected with infanticide and abandonment, the data from the TEMIDA Crime Statistics System of the Polish Police [13], covering the data on women suspected of infanticide and individuals suspected of abandonment – the crimes confirmed, supported by the data from the Central Statistics Office – Unemployment registered in Poland CSO [14].

The analysis of the studied variables covers different year ranges, which is due to the accessibility of the data in the statistics archives of the Ministry of Justice and the Crime Statistics System of the Polish Police. The information obtained from the Ministry of Justice refers to the period of 1973 to 2002, and the data obtained from the Police System of Crime Statistics cover the years of 1974 to 2002. The analysis of the incidence of infanticide and abandonment in specific districts of Poland, with respect to the impact of unemployment rate, covers the period of 4 years – from 1999, which is conditioned

**TABLE 1. The incidence of infanticide in years from 1973-2002, with the distinction of the three time divisions**

Time division	1973-1982	1983-1992	1993-2002
Ministry	377	169	156
Time division	1974-1982	1983-1992	1993-2002
Police	616	467	407

Ministry – data from the Ministry of Justice; Police – data from the Police System of Crime Statistics

**TABLE 2. The incidence of abandoning cases in the years from 1973-2002, with the distinction of the three time divisions**

Time division	1973-1982	1983-1992	1993-2002
Ministry	260	170	323
Time division	1974-1982	1983-1992	1993-2002
Police	229	280	717

Ministry – data from the Ministry of Justice; Police – data from the Police System of Crime Statistics

**TABLE 3. The comparison of the incidence of infanticide and abandoning in 1973-1982 with the period of 1983-1992 and also from the time of 1983-1992 with 1993-2002**

Variable	U Manna-Whitney's difference significance test	
	1973-1982 and 1983-1992	1983-1992 and 1993-2002
The number of lawful convictions from 149 kk (Ministry)	0.000	0.595
Number of crimes from art. 149 kk ascertained by the police (Police)	0.004	0.212
The number of lawful convictions from art. 210 kk (Ministry)	0.111	0.001
Number of crimes from 210 kk ascertained by the police (Police)	0.437	0.000

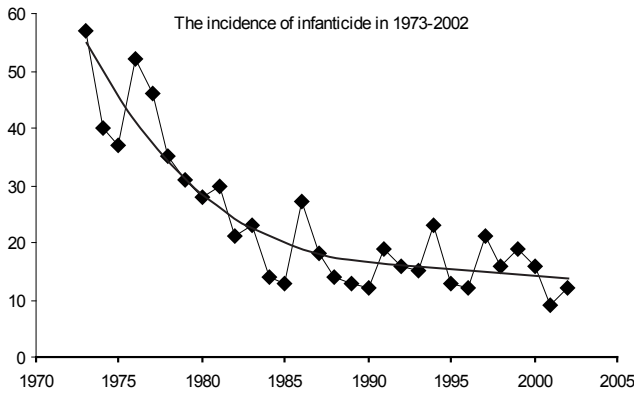
Ministry – data from the Ministry of Justice; Police – data from the Police System of Crime Statistics

by the change in the territorial system nomenclature implemented in this year. This analysis was done using the data from the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice and from the Central Statistics Office.

In the following study, the analysed period of time – 30 years – was divided into equal time intervals, each covering 10 years, which allows to acquire information on the dynamics of changes in the frequency of the discussed crimes in the successive decades over the time span of 30 years. The following statistical methods were applied: the trend line determined with the method of smallest squares, significance of differences test by U Mann-Whitney.

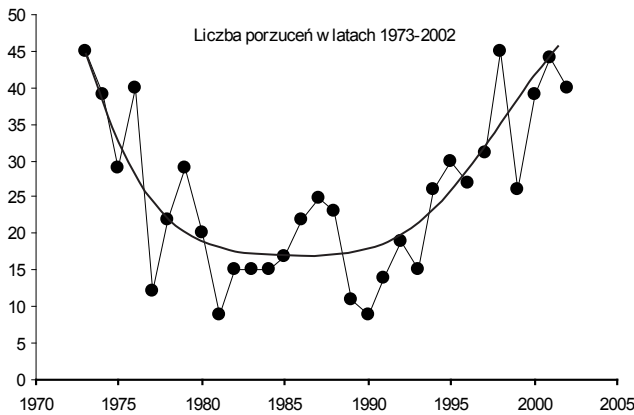
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Infanticide is not a frequently committed crime, but the definite description of the incidence of this act is difficult due to the fact that the police forces are rarely inform about the crime, and because cases are often closed owing to the lack



Source: Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice

FIGURE 1. Graphic presentation of the incidence of lawful convictions for infanticide in years of 1973-2002; the trend line designed by the method of the smallest squares – MNK.



Source: Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice.

FIGURE 2. Graphic presentation of the incidence of lawful convictions for abandoning in years of 1973-2002; the trend line designed by the method of the smallest squares – MNK.

of evidence. There is a great difference between the number of initiated legal proceedings in cases of infanticide and abandonment and the number of persons actually convicted for these crimes. The researchers claim that the real proportions of these crimes are greater, which is confirmed by the data from the Crime Statistics System of the Polish Police.

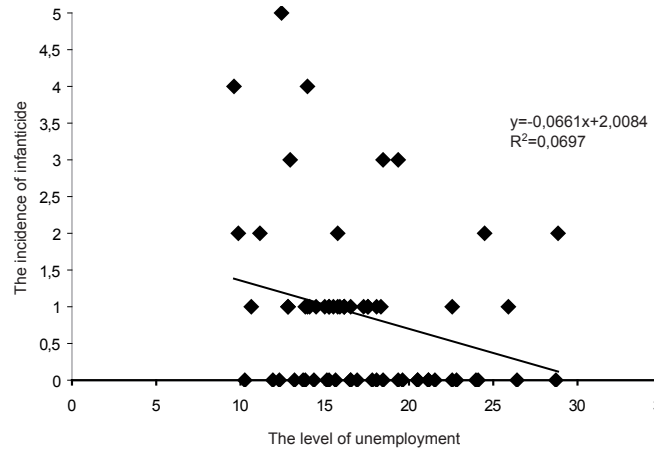
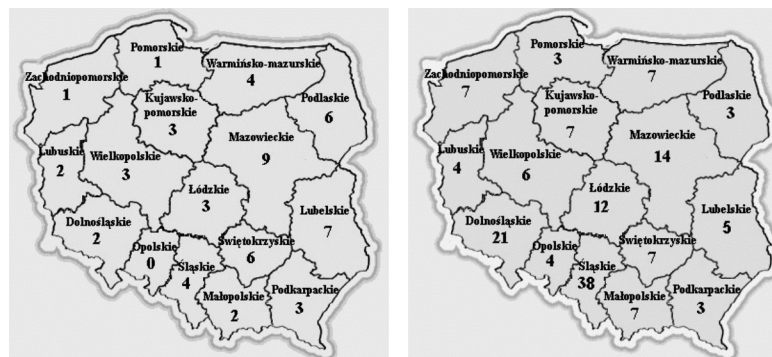


FIGURE 4. The incidence of abandoning cases in specific districts in the years of 1999-2002 depending on the level of unemployment registered in specific districts – the dispersion curve.

Basing on the data from the Ministry of Justice and the Crime Statistics System of the Polish Police presented in Table 3, one may conclude that in the number of the committed crimes of infanticide in the period 1973-2002, the statistically significant differences were reported in the decades 1973-1982 and 1983-1992, and a significantly lower increase in the phenomenon intensity was observed after 1983. No statistical differences in the number of infanticides in the decades of 1983-1992 and 1993-2002 were reported.

The data from the Ministry of Justice on the lawful convictions for infanticide, presented in Figure 1, point to a decrease in this crime incidence in the years 1973-2002. It should also be noted that a declining tendency (a drop in the number of infanticide cases) occurred in the 1970's. Since the 1980's, the incidence of infanticide has slowed down. The comparison of the decade 1973-1982 with the decade 1983-1992 (Tab. 2) pointed to a decrease in the number of infanticide cases – 208, and the comparison of the decades 1983-1992 with 1993-2002 pointed to a decrease in the number of infanticide cases – 13.

As to the number of abandonment cases over 30 years (1973-2002), there are no statistically significant differences between the decades 1973-1982 and 1983-1992 (Tab. 3). However, the significant differences were found between the



a) b) Source: Statistics Department of the Ministry of Justice

FIGURE 3. The incidence of infanticide (a) and abandoning (b) in the territory of Poland in the years of 1999-2002 in specific districts.

decades 1983-1992 and 1993-2002 (Tab. 3), and the incidence of the phenomenon is statistically higher after 1993.

The comparative analysis of the data from the Ministry of Justice (Fig. 2) showed that in the 1970's, there was a clear declining tendency in the number of abandonment cases. In the 1980's, there was a stabilization of the indicator of abandonment frequency. However, in the early 1990's, a powerful increasing trend in this kind of cases can be observed. The comparison of the decades 1973-1982 with 1983-1992 (Tab. 2) pointed to a decrease in the number of abandonment cases – 90, and the comparison of the decades 1983-1992 and 1993-2002 points to an increase in abandonment – 153 cases.

In this study, NIR post hoc test was applied (of the smallest significant difference) for the statistical evaluation of the significance of differences between the number of abandonment cases in particular voivodships, which allowed to describe the voivodships with the lowest and highest incidence of this crime. The regions in which most cases of abandonment occurred are the Silesian Voivodship (38 abandonment cases) and the Lower-Silesia (21), the differences between these districts and the others are at the level of  $p \leq 0.01$ . Another region distinct as to the number of the crime cases, is the Mazovian Voivodship (14), and with the significantly differing number of abandonment cases ( $p=0.03$ ) as compared with the Subcarpathian (3), Podlaskie (3) and Pomeranian (3) Voivodships, characterized by the lowest number of such crimes. A statistically significant difference at the level of  $p=0.00$  was also observed between the Silesian Voivodship (38) with the highest number of abandonment cases, and the Mazovian Voivodship with 14 cases.

As for the infanticide cases in specific regions of Poland, there are no statistically significant differences. Regarding the quantitative framework required in this study, the tables with the difference significance data of the incidence in particular regions of Poland were not presented.

The analysis of the data presented in Figure 3 pointed to a weak negative statistically significant dependence between the incidence of infanticide in specific regions and the level of unemployment in these regions ( $r=-0.264$ ;  $p=0.03$ ).

In the case of crimes described in Article 210 of the Criminal Code (Fig. 4), the dependence between the level of unemployment and the cases of abandonment is statistically non-significant.

Assuming the unemployment rate in specific regions as an indicator of the material status of the given region, one has to accept that the indicator of the unemployment level does not have any impact on the incidence of abandonment cases, and only to a small degree (6.97%) influences the incidence of infanticide in the years 1999-2002.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In the time span of 30 years (1973-2002), the incidence of infanticide decreased. The greatest differences in the infanticide rate were noted between the decades 1973-1982 and 1983-1992. The strongest decreasing tendency for infanticide was observed in the 1970's.

2. The incidence of abandonment cases in the time span of 30 years (1973-2002) is different in different decades. The greatest differences in the abandonment rate were noted between the decades 1983-1992 and 1993-2002.

3. The incidence of cases of infanticide and abandonment in different regions of Poland is varied. No influence of the unemployment rate in specific voivodships of Poland on the differences in abandonment cases was proved. In the cases of infanticide, the material status of a given region has a negligible impact on this type of crime.

4. There are clear differences in the incidence of abandonment in the following regions of Poland: Silesia, Lower Silesia and Mazovia (the greatest number of abandonment cases) and the Pomeranian, Subcarpathian and Podlaskie Voivodships (a smaller incidence of abandonment).

5. The incidence of infanticide in specific regions of Poland is not so clearly different as in for abandonment cases.

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