

Missionary Atlas Project

Europe

Poland

Basic Facts

Demographics:

The population of 38,626,349 is showing a growth rate of only around .02%. The birth rate is measured at 10.64 births per 1,000 people while the death rate is 9.97 per 1,000. Poles make up 96.7% of the people while Germans are 0.4%, Ukrainians 0.1%, Byelorussians are 0.1%, and other 2.7%.

The largest city is the capital, *Warsaw*, with 2,201,900 people in the metro area, but only 1,607,600 in the city proper. Other large cities include *Lodz* (778,200), *Krakow* (733,100), *Wroclaw* (632,200), *Poznan* (581,200), *Gdansk* (456,700), and *Szczecin* (415,700).

The median age of Poland is 36.2 with males being 34.3 and female 38.2. 17.1% of the people are between 0 and 14 years of age while 70% are 15-64 and 12.9% being 65 plus. Life expectancy is 74.16 years, but 70.04 for males and 78.52% for females.

Around 63% of the people live in urban areas.

Language:

Polish, a western Slavic language that utilizes the Latin alphabet, is the universal language. However, many are fluent in English, French, German, or Russian.

Society:

Religion is a major component of Polish life. Though 90% claim to believe in God, only 50% participate in their religion.

Though western dress is becoming more prevalent, handmade clothing is still common. Music plays an important role in Polish life. There are over 10 symphony orchestras. Because of a shortage of housing, many young couples live with a set of parents during the first few years of marriage. Families normally have one or two children, but rural families have three to four. Though nuclear families are the norm, single parent households are on the rise. Traditionally, fathers are stern while mothers serve as mediators between him and the children. While both parents normally are employed, the children take on tasks such as cooking, cleaning, etc.

Most families do not own cars, but auto ownership is on the rise. Hitchhiking is legal and encouraged.

Government:

The capital of *Warsaw* holds the democratic republic that has replaced the communist regime that lasted until 1989. Under the new constitution adopted in 1997, Poland is divided into forty-nine administrative districts encompassing sixteen provinces. Counties form a local government made of elected county councils. Currently, the republic is a mixture of a presidential and parliamentary system. The president is elected every five years. The parliament consists of two houses, the *Sejm* a lower house of 460 seats of members serving four-year terms, and the Senate of 100 seats of members elected on a provincial basis serving four-year terms. A council of ministers aids the *Sejm* and prime minister. Prime minister is appointed by the president. A Supreme Court constitutes the judicial branch and is appointed by the president and approved by the National Council of the Judiciary. Likewise, the Constitutional Tribunal consists of judges approved by the *Sejm* for nine-year terms. Everyone is allowed to vote after the age of eighteen.

Economy:

In the 1990s, they transitioned from a state controlled government to a market economy. Because of this drastic change, consumer prices and inflation shot up and the GDP fell. However, because of the government's fiscal policies, the economy began to turn around. The largest growth occurs in the private sector that now accounts for 70% of the GDP. Today, the GDP is \$427.1 billion. GDP equals that of the three Baltic states. However, agriculture has been held back because of problems such as surplus labor. Poland became a member of the EU union in May 2004, which should greatly increase their economic opportunities. Principal exports coal, copper, coke, sulfur, ships, foods, and chemicals. Principal imports include crude oil, iron ore, fertilizers, wheat, machinery, and electronic equipment. Germany is their primary trade partner. Poland has become one of the premier economies in Europe. Zloty is their currency, but has lost value compared to the euro. 18.4% of the people are below the poverty line. The unemployment level is around 20%.

Literacy:

For those over the age of 15, 99.8% of the people are literate: 99.8% of males while 99.7% of female. 97% of available students attend school. From ages seven to fifteen, school is compulsory and free.

Land:

Poland makes up an area of 120,726 sq miles or 312,685 sq km and has borders by the Baltic Sea to the north, north and east by Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, and the south by Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and west by Germany. Compared to the United States, Poland is a little bit smaller than New Mexico.

Most of the land consists of lowlands in the North European Plain. Moving south, the land rises into hilly uplands, which flows into the *Sudetic* and *Carpathian Mountain* ranges from which the highest location in Poland is Mt. *Rysy* in the *Tatra Mountains* of the Slovakian border. *Oder*, *Vistula*, and *Warta* are the major rivers of the country.

Around 9,300 lakes occur in the northern region of the country. Forests make up around 25% of the land.

The climate varies from maritime to continental depending on location. Mainly, it is temperate with cold, cloudy, and moderately severe winters with much precipitation while the summers are mild and include various showers and thunderstorms.

The chief resources are coal, sulfur, copper, and natural gas.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pl.html>

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/europe/pl.htm>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107891.html>

<http://www.nationmaster.com/country/pl/>

<http://www.polishroots.org/genpoland/polhistory.htm>

<http://www.poland.gov.pl>

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Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk *Operation World* Harrisonburg, VA: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2001.

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World Christian Encyclopedia ed. by Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, Vol. 2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

History of Poland

Mieszko I, a new Christian convert, conceived Poland as a nation and established the first Polish state in 966. Under him the Poles became a Christian nation. Mieszko's descendants, known as the *Piast Dynasty*, expanded Polish power. Major enemies at this time were the German Teutonic Knights and the Tatars. Later, the land became known as *Great Poland* and *Little Poland*.

Great (north) Poland was founded in 966 by Mieszko I. The tribes of southern Poland then united to form Little Poland. In 1047, Great Poland and Little Poland united under the rule of *Casimir I*, the Restorer. In 1386, *Queen Jadwiga* married *Wladyslaw II Jagiello*, the grand duke of Lithuania, uniting two powerful states. In 1410 their armies defeated the German Teutonic Knights at the *Battle of Tannenberg*. In the 16th century, Poland and Lithuania expanded eastward to annex much of the Ukraine and some Russian territory. This united Polish nation subsequently scored military successes against the (Germanic) Knights of the Teutonic Order, the Russians, and the Ottoman Turks. In addition, the Russians became one of Poland's major opponents. The greatest king of this period was *Sigismund II Augustus*.

The Polish-Lithuanian state reached the peak of its power between the 14th and 16th century. In 1572, *Sigismund II* died without an heir. Under the following *Vasa Dynasty*, Poland became involved in wars with Sweden, Russia, and Turkey.

In 1610 the Poles occupied Moscow, but this success was short-lived. Russian advances on Polish territory and a Swedish invasion in 1655 created a major crisis. The Poles fought back, however, and the Swedish invasion was checked while a truce with Russia was obtained. *John III Sobieski* defended Vienna against the Turks in 1683 and saved Western Europe from a Turkish invasion.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Poland moved from a strong country socially, strong in literature, and the arts, to a weakened nation because of in fighting.

During the 18th century, Poland encompassed Lithuania, Belarus, and parts of Ukraine. However, in 1772 and 1795 Prussia, Russia, and Austria all annexed parts of Poland due to the failure of the Poles to establish a strong monarchy. Later, the land stabilized under the conquering of Napoleon and the separation by Russia but only existed as sectors of certain countries rather than an independent state. The remaining small Polish state was left at the mercy of its enemies. In 1793, Poland was further partitioned among the three powers. The patriot, *Thaddeus Kosciusko*, led a peasant army in a national insurrection against the Russians. Despite these efforts, in 1795, Poland's last remaining territory was occupied by the three partitioning powers causing many Poles to flee the country. In 1807, Napoleon supported the formation of a small and weak Polish state, but after Napoleon's defeat by Russia the Russians returned to the area.

Czar Alexander I of Russia permitted the existence of a Russian-controlled Polish kingdom. Russia, however, defeated an uprising of the Poles in 1830. The Russians then began a period of suppression of Polish culture and institutions. In 1863, another insurrection resulted in the total extinction of Poland as a separate political unit. During World War I Russia fought Austria and Germany, often in Polish territory, and during this time the population suffered greatly. The Polish leaders, however, gained the support of the Allies, especially France, and in 1918 an independent Poland again appeared with *Jozef Pilsudski* as head of state. The pianist, *Ignacy Paderewski*, became prime minister.

Between the World Wars, Poland was resurrected, specifically in 1918 with *Marshal Josef Pilsudski* as the chief of state. In 1921, the Soviets and the Poles signed a peace treaty, which gave Poland substantial territories in the east that were mainly populated by Ukrainians and Belorussians. The internal political situation in Poland was not very stable, and in 1926 *Pilsudski* took control as president of the republic and head of the government becoming a virtual dictator.

After his death in 1935 political unrest again developed, but this period ended with the outbreak of World War II. During the 1930s Nazi Germany put forward demands for the annexation of the free city of *Gdansk (Danzig)* and began to organize incidents on the Polish-German border. Despite a ten-year non-aggression pact signed in 1934, on Sept. 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, forcing Britain and France (who both supported Poland) to declare war. The German campaign in Poland was short. The Polish position was made impossible by the invasion of eastern Poland on Sept. 17, 1939, by Soviet forces in accordance with a secret agreement made between the Soviets and Nazi Germany. Germany and the Soviet Union annexed parts of Polish territories. *Wladyslaw Raczkiwicz* formed a government-in-exile in France, which moved to London after France's defeat in 1940. All of Poland was occupied by Germany after the Nazi attack on the USSR in June 1941. Nazi Germany's occupation policy in Poland was designed to eradicate Polish culture through mass executions and to exterminate the country's large Jewish minority. A large segment of the Jewish population was forced into ghettos and later removed to such death camps as *Auschwitz (Oswiecim)*, *Majdanek*, and *Treblinka*. In 1943, an unsuccessful uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was brutally suppressed by the Germans. Many Christian Poles also died in the camps, while others were taken to Germany as laborers. Despite a non-aggression pact, Nazi Germany dominated the area

during World War II and killed around three million Jews. 400,000 Poles fought with the Soviets during the war. Altogether, 6 million Poles died during the war while 2.5 million were deported either to the USSR or to Germany.

The Polish government in exile in London formed a Polish army, navy, and air force composed of refugee Poles. A Polish home army of underground fighters was in radio contact with the London government. When the Soviet Army entered Poland in 1944 and was approaching Warsaw, the home army received orders to liberate the capital city from the Germans before the Soviets arrived. After two months of fighting, however, the home army surrendered to the Germans leaving Warsaw virtually destroyed. The Soviets made no attempt to help the Polish fighters. When the Soviet Army first reached Polish territory, it established a committee of national liberation in *Lublin*. This committee later became a provisional government based in Warsaw.

In 1945, the borders were expanded westward and established their present location. Later, Poland became a Soviet satellite under a communist group. Polish frontiers underwent a major shift after the Allied conference in Potsdam, Germany. The Soviets retained control of the territories that it had obtained in 1939, while Poland gained large areas of former German territory in the west, including the industrial region of Upper *Silesia*, the ports of *Gdansk* and *Szczecin*, and a long Baltic coastline. Poles from the Soviet-occupied areas were resettled on lands from which Germans had been expelled. Communist control was intensified with the removal of more liberal political leaders such as *Wladyslaw Gomulka* in 1949. In 1956, however, a major political upheaval led to the return of *Gomulka* as first secretary of Poland's Communist party with the support of Nikita Khrushchev, the new Soviet leader.

The Polish government-in-exile was replaced with the Communist-dominated Polish Committee of National Liberation by the Soviet Union in 1944. Moving to Lublin after that city's liberation, it proclaimed itself the Provisional Government of Poland. Some former members of the Polish government in London joined with the Lublin government to form the Polish Government of National Unity, which Britain and the U.S. recognized. On Aug. 2, 1945, in Berlin, President Harry S. Truman, Joseph Stalin, and Prime Minister Clement Attlee of Britain established a new defacto western frontier for Poland along the Oder and Neisse Rivers. The border was finally agreed to by West Germany in a non-aggression pact signed on Dec. 7, 1970. Previously, on Aug. 16, 1945, the USSR and Poland signed a treaty delimiting the Soviet-Polish frontier.

During the next two decades, Jews fled to Israel or the United States due to continued anti-Zionist campaigns. As a result of the war and communist occupation, there remains few ethnic groups. In 1952, a new constitution called for a people's democracy, but it was merely the Soviet type. Later in 1955, Poland became a member of the Warsaw Pact and aligned itself with the USSR. The highlight of Poland over the past one hundred years was the election of the Pope from their country. *Karol Cardinal Wojtyla* became *Pope John Paul II* in 1978.

In 1970 the authoritarian *Gomulka* government fell after the eruption of bloody riots and strikes in several cities because of rises in food prices. *Edward Gierek* was appointed party leader. Further price increases and rising inflation in 1976 and 1980 created more unrest. In *Gdansk* a committee led by *Lech Walesa*, an electrical worker, demanded the right to form independent trade unions. A national confederation of trade unions called Solidarity was formed. *Gierek* resigned and *Stanislaw Kania* succeeded him as first

secretary of the party. *Kania* resigned in 1981 and was replaced by *Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski*, who banned Solidarity. Only unions pledging allegiance to the Communist party were permitted. In 1985, *Jaruzelski* resigned as prime minister and was replaced by *Zbigniew Messner*.

In 1980, the Solidarity movement, led by *Lech Walesa*, began to overcome the chains of Russian influence. Because of unrest with the workers party, the government placed martial law in effect between 1981 and 1983, arresting and banning members of the *Solidarity movement*. However, the following years brought more opportunities for unrest, mainly due to increased prices of consumer goods.

In September 1988, *Messner* and his cabinet resigned amid growing furor over the economy. *Mieczyslaw Rakowski* became prime minister. On April 5, 1989, Solidarity was legally restored. In the July parliamentary elections, Solidarity won the majority of seats in the new Senate and all of the seats allocated to opposition parties in the Sejm, or lower house. *Jaruzelski* became president. *Rakowski* resigned in August and Communist attempts to form a government failed.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Solidarity then became Poland's first non-Communist prime minister in more than 40 years. The second half of 1989 was dominated by a growing economic crisis brought on by the government's introduction of market pricing for agricultural products and skyrocketing inflation. Soon the economy was transformed into one of the strongest in Europe. The Communist party disbanded and reorganized as the Social Democratic party, an opposition party to Solidarity in 1990. The country's first fully democratic elections since World War II were held on May 27, when the local councils were chosen. Soviet troops exited Poland in 1992. On December 9, *Walesa* won the presidential election with 74% of the vote. However, a few years later, the October 1993 election restored many former Communists to power with *Waldemar Pawlak* became prime minister. Solidarity's popularity and influence continued to wane. In 1995, *Aleksander Kwasniewski*, leader of the successor to the Communist Party, the Democratic Left, won the presidency over *Walesa* in a landslide.

In 1999, Poland became part of NATO, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary. In Sept. 2001 parliamentary elections, former Communists, reconstituted as the center-left Democratic Left Alliance, won 41% of the vote. The election seemed to mark the demise of Solidarity, which did not win a single seat. Poland staunchly supported the United States and Britain during the 2003 Iraq war, and sent 200 troops to Iraq (60 were combat soldiers). In Sept. 2003, Poland became the leader of a 9,000-strong, multinational stabilizing force in Iraq. It contributed 2,000 of its own soldiers. On May 1, 2004, Poland joined the EU. Prime Minister Leszek Miller resigned on May 2, 2004 after his popularity had plummeted to 10% because of the country's continued economic troubles and because of a number of corruption scandals.

<http://print.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107891.html>

<http://www.polandonline.com/history.html>

<http://www.stat.gov.pl/english/index.htm>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107891.html>

Christian History

Before Poland became Christian under the reign of *Prince Mieczyslaw* during 962 to 992, Christians from Moravia had already come into the country. However, no organized church existed. When *Mieczyslaw* married the Catholic daughter of the Bohemian prince, he embraced Christianity. In order for the priesthood to be independent of Germany, *Boleslaw the Great* (992 to 1025), established protection and patronage to the priests. The pope promptly appointed Bishops. In 1006, the Benedictines migrated to Poland. Between 1025-34, a revolution occurred against the church and its ministers.

Nevertheless, *Casimir I* restored Christianity by building churches and convents. By 1079, the Church had grown in stature. They stood up to the corrupt king gaining esteem and influence in the political realm that continues today. The following years brought continued growth in political matters. Over the next one hundred years, debates raged between the state, the pope, and the church over power and rules.

During the 14th century, bishops were elected by the State. Much of this influence came from German missionaries moving eastward. Battles were conducted during the Reformation over the church and state influence. For instance, in 1518, Lutheranism spread to Poland. In addition, Calvinism came in 1548. The debates included arguments over celibacy, Mass in the vernacular, and communion. However, in 1587, Catholicism was given official recognition while Protestants were restricted.

Jesuits came to Poland to open schools. The 1700s brought oppression on Protestants who were considered heretics. Over the years, the laws were loosened on toleration of Protestants. Because of World War II, Poland was transformed into a single religious state. Communism had little effect on the Catholic Church's efforts. After years of Catholic influence, the state-sponsored atheistic propaganda only served to bond most to the church's appealing message.

Today, the people are tied to the Church leadership through love and confidence. The Catholic Church continues to dominate political aspects of Poland. Without question, Poland is one of the most strongly dominated Roman Catholic countries in the world. The highlight of the Catholic Church in Poland was the election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla who became Pope John Paul II in 1978. Interestingly, never in their history has there been a foreign missionary movement emanating from within their country mainly due to political pressure. Though many Polish Catholics are involved in the worldwide mission of the Catholic Church, this mandate was established by the Catholic Church and not from within Poland. Protestant beliefs are allowed, but evangelicals are discriminated against and considered sectarian by established denominations.

Over one hundred and thirty-eight registered churches and religious associations serve in Poland. The biggest numbers of members are in the Catholic Church that boasts of approximately 95% of the religious segment of Polish society. Four branches of Catholicism, however, exist in Poland: the Byzantine-Ukrainian, Neo-Uniate, Armenian, and Roman Catholics. The last-mentioned is the biggest, and in 1998 numbered over 25 million (9,990 parishes and some 28 thousand priests).

In 1996 *Pope John Paul II* issued a bull which reformed the territorial division of the Church in Poland. There are now 40 dioceses and 13 Latin metropolitan archdioceses, and one Byzantine-Ukrainian metropolitan archdiocese. The head of a diocese is its bishop. All the bishops together constitute the Episcopate of Poland. Since 1981, the head of the Conference of the Episcopate has been the current Primate of Poland, *Cardinal Józef Glemp*. Numerous religious organizations and institutions operate throughout the country

as well as abroad (e.g. Polish Catholic missions, operating mostly in Third World countries), together with catechist groups (involved in the teaching of religious instruction in schools) and a vast number of monastic orders and congregations, for both monks and nuns (e.g. Franciscans, Jesuits, Michaelites, Salesians, Redemptorists, Sisters of St. Elisabeth, Ursulines, and Sisters of Charity, etc.).

Several large Christian churches and a few score smaller churches and religious groups serve along with the Catholic Church in Poland. The *Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church* is the second largest official religious organization with about 550 thousand laypersons and 320 priests. Most of the Orthodox Christians in Poland are members of the Byelorussian minority in the eastern part of the country. Protestantism, divided into several denominations, is the third largest branch of the Christian religion in Poland. The *Augsburg Evangelical (Lutheran) Church* accounts for over 85 thousand (with a large number with German ethnic relations). The next largest churches are the *United Pentecostal Church* (ca. 17 thousand members), and the *Seventh Day Adventist Church* (10 thousand members). The remaining Protestant churches have up to 5-6 thousand members each. Poland also has several Old Catholic churches (viz. not in communion with Rome). They include the *Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites*, the *Polish National Catholic Church of Poland*, and the *Catholic Church of the Mariavites*. Their combined congregations amount to over 88 thousand people.

The *Jehovah's Witness Religious Association* has a membership of approximately 130 thousand. There are several other religious groups operating in Poland, including the Muslim Religious Union (Islam), the Union of Jewish Religious Communities (the Judaic religion), the *Karaite Religious Board* (a religion which combines elements of Judaism and Islam, and is observed predominantly by the Karaite ethnic minority of Turkic origin), and quite a number of organizations related to Oriental religions, e.g. the International Krishna Awareness Society and the Buddhist Society.

The characteristic feature of Polish religious movements is a fondness for traditional practices and Christian ceremonies such as pilgrimages to holy places, liturgical processions (e.g. for the feast of Corpus Christi), Advent and Lent retreats, and fairs for parish feast-days. Special significance is attached to the cult of Virgin Mary, revered especially at Częstochowa (the shrine of the Black Madonna of Jasna Góra), at Licheń (the shrine of Our Lady the Sorrowful Queen of Poland), as well as in innumerable smaller shrines dedicated to the Virgin Mary and scattered throughout the country.

Religion in Poland gained a new dimension in 1978 following the election of *Karol Cardinal Wojtyła*, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, to the papacy. The Polish Pope, who adopted the name of John Paul II, revolutionized the Catholic Church, opening it up to the problems of the contemporary world. Within Poland, the person of John Paul II is viewed in a special light, and his activities are regarded as linked to the enormous socio-political changes of the 1980's. John Paul II remains an unquestionable moral authority, not only for the religious part of society.

The Catholic Church in Poland is an institution which has always been associated with the concept of Polish statehood. The first important date in the history of the Polish state was the adoption of Christianity by the Polanian *Prince Mieszko I* in 966. The creation of state structures was connected with the spread of Christianity and establishment of an ecclesiastical administrative network in the Polish territories. Since that time, the Church has supported Polish unity and independence, which proved especially significant in

partitioned Poland (1795-1918), during the Second World War, and in the period under Communist domination.

Non-Christian Religions

Jewish

Jewish people make up 4,990 of Poland's population. Before World War II, over three million Jews lived in Poland, more than in any other country. However, three million were killed by the Nazis, a majority of those perishing in Auschwitz. Only 55,000 remained at the end of the war. Though some returned after repatriations, many migrated to Israel after its creation.

Islam

Muslims count 2,000 members in Poland. Most trace their descendents from the Tatars, a Turkish-Mongol tribe that interacted with Poland over 600 years ago. They were granted refugee status by Lithuanian kings during the 17th Century. Today, they reside in small indigenous colonies. As Muslims, a majority belong to the Sunni sect. 80% of the converts are women.

<http://www.planetaislam.com/poland/muslimsinpoland.html>

<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/poland/fbis122804.html>

Non-religious

Over 2,650,000 people profess to be non-religious.

Roman or Orthodox Catholic

Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church has been the evident and dominant church since 966 AD. Catholics make up around 36.29 million people and 9,500 congregations, which equates to 95% of the population, however, only 75% of those claim to be practicing. Likewise, only 55% regularly attend services. It consists of 21,462 priests, 42 Dioceses, and 10,036 Parishes. The church has attempted since 1989 to shape Poland through Catholic principles and theology. For years, Catholicism has formed a link between nationality and religious belief. During the 1970s and 80s, the church fell behind the social unrest of the country and supported the Solidarity movement against communism. Another example is that abortion was banned due to their influence. Likewise, tighter restrictions on birth control were passed and the church attempted to forward laws against pornography, but failed. Because of this dominant influence, the people of Poland have begun to be alienated from the church. However, Roman Catholicism remains the civil religion of Poland. The Polish Catholic Church emphasizes the Virgin Mary and saints. The Black Madonna or an image of the Virgin at Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa is a pilgrimage destination. Poles hold that this image protected them from the Tatar and Swedish invasions. Likewise, many Solidarity leaders wear replicas of the icon. In the 1970s and 80s, more than 90% of Polish children were baptized into the church. The Catholic university in Lublin and the Catholic Seminary in Warsaw serve as their primary controlled institutions. Though the church has been active in politics and religious life, most Polish are becoming nominal in their Catholic beliefs.

<http://worldconv.home.comcast.net/countries/pl/poland.htm>

<http://countrystudies.us/poland/39.htm>

<http://www.country-studies.com/poland/the-polish-catholic-church-and-the-people.html>

The Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church consists of 312 congregations and 343,750 members. Polish [government statistics](#) report that those who profess the Orthodox faith in Poland number 550,000. The [Orthodox Church](#) itself puts the number of the faithful at over 800,000. The Orthodox Church is also called the *Uniate Church*. It came about in 1596 during the Union of Brest-Litovsk. Under this agreement, Eastern Orthodox Byelorussians and Ukrainians fell under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, but retained their Orthodox rites. According to their statistics, around four million Orthodox members lived in Poland after World War I. Most were ethnic Byelorussians and Ukrainians. However, the church was directed from Moscow. In the attempt to free themselves from foreign headship, they were granted autonomy in 1924. Because of their opposition to communism, the church was greatly reduced by the government after World War II. Today, despite its roots in Ukraine and Russia, the church is implementing Polish in the liturgy. Seven dioceses are now within Poland along with eight bishops, four hundred priests, and forty deacons. In addition, they have eight monasteries. Historically, the Orthodox lived in the eastern provinces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and were primarily ethnic Belarusian and Ukrainian. During the Period of Partitions (1795-1918) the Tsarist government of Russia favored the Orthodox Church in its program of Russification of the Polish lands under its control. A symbol of this was its erection of a large Orthodox cathedral in the very center of Warsaw, the capital of the previously independent nation and a city whose Christian population was predominately Roman Catholic. Soon after Poland regained its independence in 1918, the cathedral was demolished, an indication of the difficulties under which the Orthodox Church labored, particularly as its episcopate (bishops) came under the Soviet-dominated, Moscow patriarchate. In this context both the leaders of the Church and the Polish government of the day, favored the Church becoming autocephalous, that is, independent. Steps to achieve this end were undertaken in 1921 and by 1924-25 the [autocephalous Church](#) became formally established. It retains that status to this day.

<http://www.cnewa.org/ecc-orthodox-poland.htm>

The Eastern Rite Catholic Church

The Eastern Rite Catholic Church makes up 84 congregations and 140,000 members. They consider themselves a part of the Roman Catholic Church, but not of the Orthodox Church. Eastern Rite churches are communities of eastern Christians in union with the Roman Catholic Church. Also known as Uniate churches, they retain their own distinctive spiritual, liturgical, and canonical traditions. In addition to differences in liturgy, many of the Eastern Rite churches permit a married clergy. Between 10 and 11 million Catholics are members of these churches. Like the Orthodox Church, they are divided into families; the five major families are the Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean, and Byzantine. They often originated among Orthodox and other eastern Christian communities under the political influence of a Roman Catholic sovereign.

The largest Eastern Rite church -the Ukrainian Catholic church- was formed when Ukrainian subjects of the king of Poland were united with Rome in 1596. Another large group -the Maronites of Lebanon- established ties with the papacy when their country was occupied by Western Crusaders in the 12th century. The Romanian Eastern Rite church was created under Habsburg rule in 1700.

The Ukrainian Catholic church, with an estimated 4 to 5 million members, is concentrated in the western Ukraine, especially in the areas of Lvov and Ivano - Frankovsk, which were under Austrian and Polish jurisdiction until World War II. After the war, when the region became part of the USSR, the church was outlawed and driven underground by the Soviet government. It was allowed to resume open activity in the freer atmosphere of the late 1980s.

Each of the Eastern Rite churches is headed by its own Patriarch, who has jurisdiction over the bishops, clergy, and people of that rite. All of the patriarchs are members of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which governs the relations of the Vatican with the Eastern Rites.

http://ldmuziejus.mch.mii.lt/Naujausiosparodos/The_Unites.en.htm

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0246.html>

Sects & Cults

The Jehovah's Witness Church

The Jehovah's Witness Church reports 1,624 congregations and 126,538 members in Poland. This group constitutes one of the fastest growing religious groups in Poland.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

Mormons report around 900 people in some eight groups.

Evangelical Type Churches

The Evangelical Church of Augsburg Conference

The Evangelical Church of Augsburg Conference reports 284 congregations, 64,000 members, and as many as 80,000 adherents. This Church group remains the largest Protestant group in Poland. Their history dates to the Reformation with the first Lutheran sermons being preached in Poland in 1518. During World War II, many leaders and members were martyred. After the war, the government seized much of the church's property. Today, they are maintained by supporting churches in the United States with most living in Silesia. The bishop is the leader of the church and the Church Synod aids in church rules, etc.

<http://www.elca.org/countrypackets/poland/church.html>

<http://www.luteranie.pl/eng/who.htm>

The Polish National Catholic Church

The Polish National Catholic Church claims 28,571 members and 100 congregations. Ironically, they were formed in the United States and not Poland. Communism cut off the denomination, but it was reinstated after the Solidarity movement. After World War I, Americans sent aid and missionaries back to Poland. Today, they have dioceses in Katowice, Warsaw, Krakow, and Wrocaw. They believe they hold true Roman Catholic doctrine and reject mainstream Roman Catholic tenets such as the infallibility of the pope, the Immaculate Conception, and the assumption of Mary. They belong to a world movement called the Union of Utrecht, which is overseen in the Netherlands by the archbishop there.

<http://www.pgsa.org/pncc.htm>

The Old Catholic Mariavite Church

The Old Catholic Mariavite Church ministers to 14,286 members through 53 congregations. The Church itself claims 25,000 believers in Poland and 5,000 believers in France. This church is a schismatic Old Catholic group excluded from the Union of

Utrecht because of their proclaimed unorthodox beliefs. They separated from the Catholic Church in 1906.

The Church neither enacts new dogmas nor accepts dogmas which individual Churches introduced after the separation of Christianity into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy in the year 1054. They only hold to dogmas defined by the first seven Ecumenical Councils. In addition, it believes that only an Ecumenical Council (i.e. representing the whole Christianity) may enact a new dogma which obligates all the Christians. The Old Catholic Mariavite Church does not recognize the primacy of any Bishop in the Universal Church as well as the infallibility of an individual in matters of faith and morals. This position is the same as that of the Roman Catholic Church before the First Vatican Council in the year 1870. The Old Catholic Mariavite Church received the apostolic succession from the Old Catholic Church of Holland in 1909.

The Old Catholic Mariavite Church is likewise founded on the Revelation of the Great Mercy, received by the Foundress of Mariavitism, holy Maria Franciszka Kozłowska. (her first vision occurred on 2 August 1893). The revelation calls for the worship of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Perpetual Succor of the Holy Virgin Mary that are considered the last salvation given by God to the world threatened by its sins. Therefore, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church pursues two objectives. It propagates the devotion to Jesus Christ concealed in the Most Blessed Sacrament. It also draws attention to the necessity of invoking the Perpetual Succor of the Holy Virgin Mary "because as there are perpetual efforts against God and the Church, thus is necessary the Perpetual Succor of Mary." The Old Catholic Mariavite Church teaches the indispensability of imitating the life of the Holy Virgin Mary-her solitude, humility, spirit of prayer, great love toward neighbors and readiness to fulfill the will of God. The Church recognizes seven Holy Sacraments, Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction. The Old Catholic Mariavite Church believes that God performs miracles in the soul of an individual, but it does not recognize the so-called miraculous relics, pictures, etc. The Mariavite clergy are not obliged to observe celibacy.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the entire liturgy are celebrated exclusively in the language of the people. All religious ministrations are free in accordance with the Christ's injunction: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). The clergy are permitted to accept voluntary offerings for religious ministrations but they cannot demand them.

The Old Catholic Mariavite Church is a member of organizations whose aim is to reconcile and to unify Christian denominations: the Polish Ecumenical Council, the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches. It also maintains friendly relations with churches belonging to the Union of Utrecht. The Old Catholic Mariavite Church actively participates in the work of those organizations and prays for God's blessing and assistance for any activities leading to the unity in Christ.

The clergy consist of 4 bishops, 25 priests, deacons and subdeacons. The authorities of the Old Catholic Mariavite Church are comprised of the Synod, the General Chapter, the Church Council, the Prime Bishop, the Diocesan Bishop, the Parish Assembly, the Parish Council and the Pastor. The Prime Bishop is the chairman of the Church Council and represents the Church externally. Since 1997 Zdzisław Maria Włodzimierz Jaworski has been the Prime Bishop of the Old Catholic Mariavite Church.

<http://www.mariawita.pl/htmls/indexang.html>

The Assemblies of God

12,079 members make up Assemblies of God and 180 congregations. This movement has spread in the 1990s, within older churches.

Auton Roman Catholic Parish

The one congregation of the Independent *Auton Roman Catholic Parish* consists of 6,579 members.

Church of Christ

The Church of Christ has 65 congregations and 6,500 members. Their history can be traced to Konstanty Jaroszewicz. After his conversion and Bible training in the United States, he established the first Church of Christ in 1921. In contact with Jerzy Sacewicz, they formed the foundation of the church with a group of young people. During World War II, restrictions placed on the church by Nazi Germany greatly reduced their role and members. In 1950, a government sweep resulted in the arrest of many church leaders. The 1980s brought a revival among the church and relief came in funding from the United States.

<http://worldconv.home.comcast.net/countries/pl/poland.htm>

Seventh-Day Adventists

5,542 members make up Seventh-Day Adventist's 123 congregations in Poland.

Methodist Church

4,500 members make up 46 Methodist congregations. The Church was established 80 years ago by missionary activities as well as relief by United States Methodist churches. Despite the pressures of a communist government, the church grew. The major difficulty of the church is funding because of a reduction in their budgets.

<http://www.umc-europe.org/umc/laender/e-polen.htm>

Baptist Union of Poland

Baptist Union of Poland contains 64 congregations with 4,107 members. Modern Baptist work started in 1858 while Poland was under Russian rule. The first church was formed among German-speaking Poles in Adamox. They adopted the German Baptist Confession of 1847 as their own. After World War II, only a small Baptist group existed. The Baptist Union established the Biblical Theological Seminary in Wroclaw.

http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery;jsessionid=2i5h8ooie0cjh?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Baptist+Union+of+Poland&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1&sbid=lc03a

Free Evangelical Churches

Free Evangelical Churches record 2,300 members within 33 congregations.

The Reformed Evangelical Church

The Reformed Evangelical Church claims ten congregations in Poland and 2,500 members. In addition, they hold to nine parishes. However, the average attendance during Sundays is around 800. It was formed in 1551 in Southern Poland. The church was established under the guidance of Protestant Reformers. The church suffered greatly during World War II. Many members have migrated to Germany or the Czech Republic. The negative population growth contributes to their plateau of members. They began ordaining women during 1991 being the first Polish Protestant denomination to do so. However, no missionaries are sent by the church. No congregations exist in other countries. Today, services are provided in Polish and they support the ecumenical movement.

<http://www.oska.org.pl/english/womeninpoland/priest.html>

<http://www.reformowani.pl/>

The Christian Brethren

The Christian Brethren claim 40 congregations and 1,500 members.

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous denominations (39) claim 17,400 members and 242 congregations.

The Polish Ecumenical Council

The Polish Ecumenical Council is a group of churches that began in 1974 to promote interchurch cooperation. Though founded in 1946 to promote interchurch cooperation, it contained nearly all churches except the Polish Catholic Church. In 1977, the council named a subcommittee for discussion of individual theological questions; by 1980 bilateral dialogs had begun among members sharing similar doctrine. After the fall of communism, ecumenical contacts were given more freedom and tolerance.

<http://www.country-studies.com/poland/other-churches.html>

People Groups in Poland

American, U.S. (14,990)

People from the United States live primarily in Warsaw and Krakow. Most serve in business and education. English is their mother tongue. Christianity is their dominant religion and there is evidence of a widespread, disciplined church. However, 10% are non-religious. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

http://overseasdigest.com/amcit_nu2.htm

Armenian (9,990)

Armenian people live throughout Poland, but primarily in the Mazowieckie province, Wielkopolska, Slaskie, Malopoloskie, and Lubuskie. Armenian is their primary language. Their history proceeds to the 11th century when they were captured by the Seljuk Turks in 1064. Many of those living along the Black Sea were annexed by Poland in the 14th century. These people were allowed to live under Armenian law.

Armenian communities began to assimilate in the 18th century after the unification of their churches with the Roman Catholic Church and the loss of their language. Many claim to be Poles of Armenian origin. Many Armenians are arriving from the eastern states of the former Soviet Union. Christianity is their dominant religion with 50% of the people. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

<http://galaxy.uci.agh.edu.pl/~vahe/armpol.htm>

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_1_list.html

British (3,900)

Expatriates from Britain engage in business and commerce. English is their mother tongue. Christians make up 80% of the people and there is evidence of a widespread, disciplined church. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

Byelorussian (229,790)

The Byelorussian people are located primarily in the Podlaskie province concentrated in the Bialystok District, but can be found in Mazowieckie, Warminsko-Mazurskie, Lubelskie, Zachodnio-Pomorskie and Pomorskie. Belarusian is their mother tongue. Most are white Russians that were refugees and settlers since 1917. For years, they have been torn between Poland and the Soviet Union. In 1921, Poland took most of their

homeland. They lived in fear and were not allowed to converse in their language in the churches.

Before World War II, the Soviet Union began influencing their area. However, the Germans attacked the Soviets by moving through the area. At the end of the war, the Soviet Union gained control. After independence, they were dominated by a Russian influenced government. Today, most are peasants, but because of their low self-awareness, assimilate into the Polish culture.

Most remain part of the Orthodox creed, but not Catholic. Many are involved in the local government. The remaining disagreements stem from religious beliefs between the Roman Catholic Church and the Belarusian language. Of the 70% Christians living among them, only 1% are evangelical. However, widespread church planting has taken place in the last two years and there is a reproducing church movement. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_1_list.html

<http://countrystudies.us/belarus/50.htm>

<http://www.country-studies.com/poland/ukrainians-and-belarusians.html>

<http://www.belreview.cz/articles/2755.html>

German (349,680)

These people are settlers and citizens that reside throughout the country, specifically in Pomerania, Silesia, East Prussia, and Lubus. They make up the largest national minority in the country. The history behind Germans in Poland goes back to the days when the area was called Prussia. German colonization left a distinct German influence on the area. Later, Germany attacked Poland in World War II. Then the land fell into Communist hands after the Soviets drove out the Germans at the end of the war.

Simply, the constant shifting between German and Polish control left a unique ethnic and regional group. Their culture is almost separate, but took parts of Polish and German ancestry. Many have argued for dual citizenship. Standard German is their mother language. Protestant Christians (Evangelical-Augsburg Church) make up 88% of the people with 1% of them being evangelical.

There is a reproducing church movement and widespread church planting has been conducted in the last two years. Around 5% of the people are non-religious. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

http://www.iridis.com/glivar/Demographics_of_Poland

<http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/poland/poland80.html>

Greek (5,000)

These people, migrants from Greece, are settlers and traders who use Greek as their mother language, specifically Saracatsan. 90% of the people profess Christianity and evangelicals make up over 5%. There is evidence of a reproducing church movement. 5% of the people are non-religious. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

Jew, Polish (14,990)

These people are remnants of the Polish Jews involved in Hitler's genocide and of assimilated Polish speaking Jews. Their history goes back to the fourteenth century when individuals and small groups migrated under the protection of local princes. During this time, they had privileges and autonomy. World War II reduced their numbers by 90%

and destroyed their continuity in religious and cultural life. The issue of Jewish influence became a political issue in the 1960s, reducing their culture and educational opportunities. Today, there are no public schools that teach Hebrew or Yiddish as a mother tongue. Mainly elderly make up the Jewish population in Poland. Judaism is their dominant religion while Christians make up .19% of the people. There are no churches, but some believers. Widespread church planting has been conducted in the last two years. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

<http://yucs.org/~jyuter/notes/weinryb.html>

<http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/poland/poland79.html>

Karaite (3,300)

These people are the smallest ethnic minority in Poland, specifically in Warsaw. Karaim is their mother tongue. They have an interesting past of adopting Judaism, in reaction to the Muslim and Christian hostility they had experienced. Today, they are considered a Jewish religious movement that does not accept the oral law (Talmud) because they claim it is a man-made law. Tradition holds that they came from Crimea in the 13th century conversing in Tatar or Turkish. Many survived the Holocaust compared to their neighboring Jews. Their religion is considered a sect of Judaism, but they claim it is the true one. No known Christians reside in this community. Portions of the Bible were translated in their language from 1819 to 1889.

<http://www.turkiye.net/sota/karapol.html>

<http://www.karaite-korner.org/>

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9044681>

Kashubian, Cashubian (199,820)

These people are located in The left bank of the Lower Vistula in north central Poland, near the Baltic coast, west of the Bay of Gdansk, and a narrow strip inland, southwest from Gdynia. Many work as fishermen and offer prayers to the Madonna of Swarzewo, the patroness of Kashubian fishermen. They believe themselves remnants of the Slavic Pomeranians, whose name means by the sea. Over the years, they have been influenced by German and Swedish people. A retro section of their culture is their music and how it plays into their culture. In the 1860s to 1890s, many migrated to the United States or Canada because of the instability of the fishing industry. After surviving the Holocaust and Communism despite losing property and some life, they began a revival in the 1990s under democracy. Most declare Polish nationality and Kashubian ethnicity. Fishing and tourism make up their economy. 90% of the people proclaim Christianity with a large group of evangelicals. Roman Catholics organize many of their religious festivals along with the fishing trade. The New Testament was published in 1995.

<http://www.iridis.com/glivar/Kashubians>

Lithuanian (24,890)

These people are settlers from Lithuania and live throughout the area. A majority are located in the cities of Punszk, Szypliszki, Krasnopol, Sejny and the province of Podlaskie. They are of Slav descent and are influenced by a union with Poland years ago and then an attack by Poland in the 1920s. However, their history proceeds to 1569 in which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was established. This Commonwealth formed one of the most populous states in Europe. This state later became the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 and is the successor of modern Poland. Lithuanian is their primary language with the Suvalkietiskai dialect. 83% of the people claim Christianity with 1%

being evangelical. There is widespread church planting and a reproducing church movement. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language. 5% are non-religious.

http://www.irdis.com/Polish-Lithuanian_Commonwealth

Macedonian (7,890)

These people are migrant workers and settlers from Macedonia. Macedonian is their mother tongue with the Western section being their dialect. Christians make up 89% while evangelicals make up more than 5% and there is a reproducing church movement. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language. 9% of the people are non-religious.

Polish (37,093,700)

(See history of the country for their background)

These people live throughout the state. Polish, Upper Silesian is their mother tongue. Roman Catholics make up a majority of the people while evangelicals are only .24%. 1.5% are non-religious while atheists are .2%. Initial church planting has been conducted in the last two years. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

Romani, Balkan (29,970)

These people primarily live in the towns of Poland. Baltic Romani is their native tongue. Their name means men in their language. They migrated from the Balkan area of Europe. Unlike other gypsies, the Balkan Romani have lighter skin and blonde hair, blue eyes. This was caused from mixing with Europeans. Jobs include fortune telling, stealing, playing instruments at festivals, entertaining, etc. However, many depend on wage labor. Education is low because of no parental encouragement. Likewise, many children go on trips with their parents. Loyalty plays a major role and one must remain loyal to the family. Extended families often live together. Marriages remain arranged and the children are married in their teens. Though many belong to the Roman Catholic Church (around 70%), only 1% claim to be evangelical Christians. The rest are Muslim. However, like many gypsies, they hold to traditions like ghosts, lizards, and snakes being capable of harming humans. The evil eye is an active way for other people to place a curse on another. No active church planting has been conducted in the last two years. Portions of the Bible were translated from 1933 to 1996.

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_prog.html

Romani, Carpathian (10,990)

These people primarily live in the towns of Poland. Carpathian Romani is their native tongue. Their name means men in their language. They migrated from the Czech area of Europe. Jobs include fortune telling, stealing, playing instruments at festivals, entertaining, etc. However, many depend on wage labor. Education is low because of no parental encouragement. Likewise, many children go on trips with their parents. Loyalty plays a major role and one must remain loyal to the family. Extended families often live together. Marriages remain arranged and the children are married in their teens.

Christians make up 80% of the people, but they still hold to many traditions like ghosts, lizards, and snakes being capable of harming humans. The evil eye is an active way for other people to place a curse on another. Evangelicals are greater than 5%. Portions of the Bible were translated from 1936 to 1996. They also have access to the Jesus Film.

http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_prog.html

Romani, Sinte (35,970)

These people migrated from Yugoslavia and reside in the towns of Poland. Sinte Romani is their native tongue. Their name means men in their language. Many were imprisoned and killed during the Holocaust. Jobs include fortune telling, stealing, playing instruments at festivals, entertaining, etc. However, many depend on wage labor. Education is low because of no parental encouragement. Likewise, many children go on trips with their parents. Loyalty plays a major role and one must remain loyal to the family. Extended families often live together. Marriages remain arranged and the children are married in their teens. 70% claim Christianity, but hold to their traditions of ghosts, lizards, and snakes being capable of harming humans. The evil eye is an active way for other people to place a curse on another. There are greater than 5% evangelicals living among them. Portions of the Bible were translated between 1875 and 1995. They also have access to the Jesus Film and audio recordings in their language.

Romani, Vlax, Lovari (5,000)

These people migrated from Romania and reside in the towns of Poland. Vlax Romani is their native tongue. Their name means men in their language. Many were imprisoned and killed during the Holocaust. Jobs include fortune telling, stealing, playing instruments at festivals, entertaining, etc. However, many depend on wage labor. Education is low because of no parental encouragement. Likewise, many children go on trips with their parents. Loyalty plays a major role and one must remain loyal to the family. Extended families often live together. Marriages remain arranged and the children are married in their teens. 60% claim Christianity, but hold to their traditions of ghosts, lizards, and snakes being capable of harming humans. The evil eye is an active way for other people to place a curse on another. The number of evangelicals are unknown. 30% of the people are non-religious while the rest are Muslim. Many of their churches are nomadic caravans. The New Testament was first published in their language in 1984. They also have access to the Jesus Film, Christian broadcasting, and audio recordings in their language.

Russian (59,950)

These people are settlers from the Soviet Union since 1917. Russian is their mother tongue. Their history covers the time when the area was called Prussia and when it was influenced by Russian Communism (via Soviet Influence in World War II). Over the years, many Russians escaped their oppressors or came to Poland as conquerors. In the eighteenth century, they came from the Suwalskie. Today, many are located in the Mazowleckie province. Christians make up 31% of the people with most belonging to the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. 25% are non-religious. Evangelicals are greater than 5%. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

Ruthene, Ruthenian (59,950)

These people are known as Ruthenia, Ruthenians, Rusyns, Carpatho-Rusyns, and Lemkos. The term Ruthenians was used during the Austrian Empire. It was term used to describe western Ukrainian people who in the Middle Ages were absorbed into the territory of Lithuania, which in turn became Poland. Lemkos is what they call themselves in Poland. They see themselves as a Ukrainian ethnic group, but others view them as a separate national minority. These people are located in the southeastern part of Poland in the Lemkos area and into the Carpathian Mountains along the border of Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland. Rusyn is their mother tongue.

Before World War II, around 180,000 lived in Poland, but were dispersed under Nazi occupation. From 1945 to 1946, many were moved to the Soviet Union or to Northwestern Poland due to their support of Ukrainian independence groups. Music plays a large role in their culture. However, in the church no organ or instruments are permitted. In addition, art comes in the form of embroidery, dance, painted eggs, and religious icons.

Their religion revolves around the Orthodox Church. However, their ancestors believed in gods such Perun, whose name is a curse in the Carpatho-Rusyn language. In most towns, there is a Greek Catholic church and an Orthodox one. Many participate in the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. It is unknown the number of evangelicals among them. They do have access to audio recordings in their language.

<http://www.carpatho-rusyn.org/cra/chap1.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/9479/rusyn.html>

<http://www.halgai.com/ruthenian.html>

<http://www.faswebdesign.com/ECPA/Byzantine/Ruthenian.html>

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9064505>

<http://rdsa.tripod.com/peoplewithout.html>

Slovak (59,950)

These people are settlers from Slovakia, specifically in the area of Spisz and Orawa. Slovak is their mother tongue. 80% of the people claim Christianity, specifically Roman Catholic. Evangelicals are 1% while 10% are non-religious. Widespread church planting has been conducted in the past three years. The Bible, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language.

Slovincian, Slovincz (240)

These people are heavily Germanized and converse in a dialect of Kashubian. They are located on the left bank of the Lower Vistula in north central Poland, near the Baltic coast, west of the Bay of Gdansk, and a narrow strip inland, southwest from Gdynia. Christians make up 90% of the population while 10% are non-religious. There is evidence of a reproducing church movement. The New Testament was published in 1995.

Tatar (3,500)

These people came to the commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania as refugees from Crimea starting in the 14th century, but ending in the 18th century. The last wave occurred during the Bolshevik Revolution when they came as refugees around 1917. In the earlier years, many became princes in the area. Most reside in northeastern Poland. Tatar is their mother language and translates as archer. This goes back to their past experiences with Mongol invaders. Because of their contact with Muslims in the Crimea, many accepted Islam as their religion. For instance, 88% are Muslim (Hanafi Sunni) while 10% are non-religious. Only 2% are considered Christian adherents. There is one known church, but no agencies working among them. Portions of the Bible were translated from 1864 to 1995. They have access to the Jesus Film, God Story Video, Christian broadcasting, and audio recordings.

<http://www.planetaislam.com/poland/tatarnobility.html>

Muslim Peoples edited by Richard V. Weekes, 2nd Ed. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1984), p758.

Ukrainian (299,720)

These people are Slavic descendents of central and Eastern Europe and make up the second largest minority group in Poland. Much of their language (Ukrainian) is

borrowed from Polish. These people are settlers and refugees from the Ukraine, mainly living in the Carpathian Mountains. Because of their drive for autonomy, many were moved by the Soviet Union after World War II (Operation Wisla) in which 150,000 were moved or relocated from southeastern Poland to areas throughout Poland. Recently, there has been a new wave of Ukrainian immigration, especially to the cities in search of jobs which are not as available in their native Ukraine. There continues to be a level of tension between the Poles and Ukrainians due to higher standard of living. Therefore, many illegal immigrants come to find work. Likewise, many traders travel from Ukraine to Poland in order to buy goods to bring back home. Because of independence, there were also tensions over borders and land. Christians make up 69% of the people with most belonging to the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church or the Roman Catholic Church. 1% are evangelical while 9% of the people are non-religious. However, widespread church planting has been conducted in the past two years. The Bible, God Story Video, Jesus Film, audio recordings, web, and Christian broadcasting have been translated into their language

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Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians should engage in fervent prayer that the people of Poland be delivered from the tendency toward materialism to which they are being drawn by the influx of a new economy. Presently, a great desire for material gain on the part of the people is outweighing the search for God.
2. Evangelical Christians should share with the Polish evangelicals in plans for evangelizing the peoples of the nation.
3. Evangelical Christians should pray for the circumstances surrounding the Catholic Churches' influence in the government. Due to the expanding political power, the Church has become more important in popularity. People fear that Poland will become a repressive religious state. Though still sending out a large number of priests into the world, the number of applicants for priesthood has dropped 30% in the 1990s.
4. Evangelical Christians should strive to encourage a strong church planting movement among the people of Poland. For years, evangelicals have been considered a lower status. Evangelicals need to be united in their front to reach Poland for Christ. Evangelical Christians should seek means to reverse these ideas and movements.

5. Evangelical Christians should make the most of opportunities for Bible training, Bible Translations, and leadership training. New Bible translations and new printed literature needs to be published in Polish.
6. Evangelical Christians should encourage dedicated Christians to take advantage of the opportunity to serve by teaching English. Young people are eager to study English and this contact can be followed to introduce Christianity.
7. Evangelical Christians should help Polish Christians develop expertise in sharing the Gospel with Roman Catholics, especially folk Catholics.
8. Evangelicals should study the work of the Jehovah's Witnesses and New Age movements that far outnumber evangelicals and are gaining in their number of followers. Evangelicals should seek to understand the response of Polish people to these movements and possibly incorporate some elements into the evangelical witness. Evangelicals might do well to commission a study of these two groups and their advance in Poland to ascertain how they are reaching such growth.