

PUBLIC OPINION ON TRANSGENDER RIGHTS: POLAND

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SUMMARY

In Poland, findings from the 2016 IPSOS Global Advisor survey show solid public support for government protection from discrimination, the right to change the sex indicated on government-issued ID, and the right to have surgery so one's body matches their identity for transgender people. At the same time, the general public has mixed opinions on other issues, such as the right of transgender people to marry someone of their birth sex and the requirements to alter the gender marker on government-issued ID. There is also resistance to the provision of other rights, such as the right of transgender people to adopt children. Women, older people, and those who have transgender family members, acquaintances, and friends are, on average, more supportive of the rights of transgender people in Poland.

While select findings on public opinion about transgender people and their rights in Poland were presented in The Williams Institute's *Public Support for Transgender Rights: A Twenty-three Country Survey*, this brief provides detailed findings from the sample of survey participants in Poland, specifically.

METHODS

Researchers at The Williams Institute, IPSOS,¹ and BuzzFeed News collaborated in the development of a brief survey which was included in the IPSOS Global Advisor research program, a larger survey conducted monthly via the IPSOS Online Panel stem. The online survey was conducted between October 21, 2016 and November 4, 2016 in 23 countries.² The final sample included 501 respondents from Poland between the ages of 16 and 64.³

The sample is a representative, population-based sample, and estimates presented here use weights provided by IPSOS to reflect the demographic characteristics of the general population in Poland. Findings, therefore, may be applied to the general population of 16 to 64 year old adults in Poland.

Throughout this brief, the term *transgender* is used as an umbrella term to indicate those whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth, whom the survey describes as “people [who] dress and live as one sex even though they were born another.” Survey respondents were provided this definition before being asked about their views on transgender people and rights, as well as a brief example that stated, “for instance, someone who was considered male at birth may feel they are actually female and so dresses and lives as a woman, and someone female at birth may feel they are actually male and dresses and lives as a man.” This definition was intentionally broad and did not further distinguish among different gender minorities.

¹ IPSOS is one of the world's largest market and opinion research firms, with offices in 122 countries.

² The 23 countries sampled in the survey include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In-person interviews were also conducted in India where internet penetration was very low. The total survey sample included responses from 17,105 participants.

³ Unlike the sample in Poland, individuals ages 16 and 17 were not included in samples from Canada and the United States.

The survey presented respondents with a series of questions to assess their relationships and level of comfort with transgender people, as well as their views of transgender people and their rights, roles in society, and characteristics. Respondents were also asked to provide demographic data, including information on their gender (either male or female), age, household income,⁴ and education.⁵

Data presented in this report include summary statistics and discussion of the extent to which demographic factors are associated with views of transgender people and their rights. Effects that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval are presented as unadjusted odd's ratios. Additional information about the methodology can be found in The Williams Institute's original [publication](#).

PUBLIC OPINION

Proximity to Transgender People

Few people in Poland are estimated to know a transgender person. Social proximity, or the extent to which someone in one group knows someone else in another group, can heavily influence an individual's opinions about other people. To identify respondents' proximity to transgender people, one question in the survey asked respondents to indicate if they: "have seen people like this but do not know them personally," "rarely or never encounter people like this," "have acquaintances like this," "have personal friends/family like this," "myself am like this," or "don't know."⁶ Responses are depicted in Figure I.

A majority of respondents (65.8%) indicated they did not know transgender people, that they either rarely or never encountered transgender people or had seen but did not know any transgender people personally.

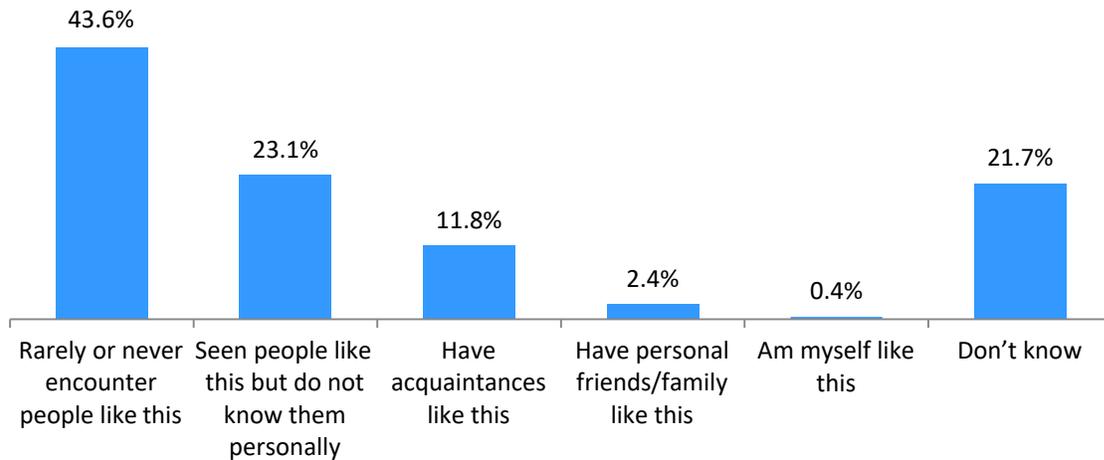
⁴ Monthly pre-tax household income was categorized as low, medium, or high based on ranges of 0-3,399 PLN, 3,400-13,599 PLN, and 13,600 PLN or more, respectively.

⁵ Education levels were categorized as low, medium, or high based on ranges of pre-primary education to lower secondary education, upper secondary to post-secondary education, and tertiary education or higher.

⁶ Respondents were able to respond affirmatively to multiple questions indicating different relationships with transgender people. Response rates for the different response options, therefore, cannot be summed.

Figure I. Proximity to Transgender People

Some people dress and live as one sex even though they were born another. For instance, someone who was considered male at birth may feel they are actually female and so dresses and lives as a woman, and someone female at birth may feel they are actually male and dresses and lives as a man. How familiar, if at all, are you with people like this?



Only 14.5% of respondents stated that they knew a transgender person, as an acquaintance, friend, or family member, or were themselves transgender. The proportion of respondents who said they knew a transgender person or were themselves transgender in Poland was lower than in all 10 other European countries sampled (see Table I).

Of all countries sampled in the IPSOS survey, respondents in Poland were the most likely to report that they did not know if they knew a transgender person, at 21.7%. In comparison, the average across all countries sampled was 6.4%.

There were no significant demographic differences between those respondents who said that they knew transgender people (including those with acquaintances, family, or friends who were transgender or were themselves transgender) and those who did not know transgender people (including those who rarely/never encountered transgender people, those who saw transgender people but didn't know them, and those who didn't know their answer to the question) in terms of young age (under 35), gender, education, or income.

Table I. Proximity to Transgender People Know or are a Transgender Person

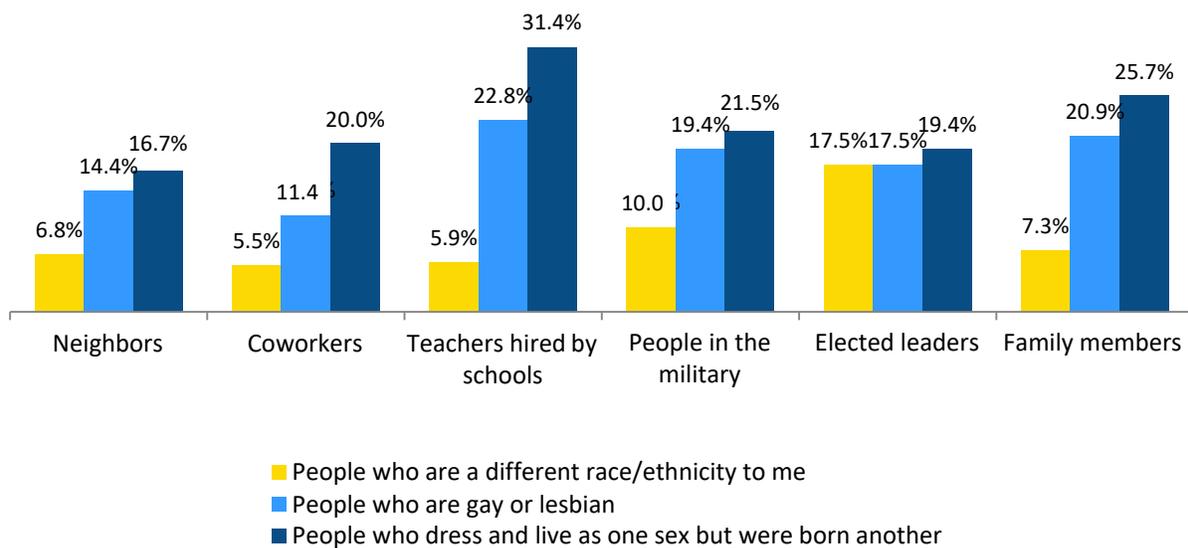
Poland	14.5%
Russia	16.3%
France	17.0%
Hungary	19.9%
Germany	20.0%
United Kingdom	21.5%
Turkey	22.4%
Sweden	22.6%
Belgium	24.4%
Spain	24.9%
Italy	32.0%

Attitudes Toward Transgender People

Prejudice is often reflected in self-reported discomfort with the social proximity of minority group members. Figure II shows how respondents perceived transgender people in particular roles in comparison to other populations including people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds and gay or lesbian people in Poland.⁷

Figure II. Attitudes Toward Transgender People in Society

Could you please identify any that you would not like to have as . . .



When asked what kinds of people they would not like to have in particular roles, as neighbors, coworkers, teachers, members of the military, elected leaders, and family members, only minorities of respondents indicated transgender people. Therefore, majorities of respondents in Poland did not indicate that they would not like to have transgender people in these roles. Approximately one quarter or less of respondents stated that they would not like to have transgender people as neighbors (16.7%), coworkers (20.0%), military personnel (21.5%), elected leaders (19.4%), or family members (25.7%). Opposition to the idea of transgender people serving as teachers was more pronounced (31.4%).

Respondents were consistently more likely to indicate that it was transgender people, compared to people of a different race or ethnicity, with whom they were less comfortable, in most cases significantly so. For example, while 31.4% of respondents stated they wouldn't want transgender people serving as teachers, this was true for only 5.9% of respondents regarding people of a different race or ethnicity. On some questions, respondents indicated that they would not want gay

⁷ The survey also asked respondents about their opinions regarding people with mental illnesses and people with physical disabilities in these circumstances.

or lesbian people and transgender people as neighbors, military personnel, elected officials, and family members at similar rates.

Among respondents in Poland, respondents between the ages of 16 and 34 were significantly more likely to indicate that they would not like transgender people serving as teachers (OR=1.52, $p<0.05$),⁸ elected leaders (OR=1.93, $p<0.01$),⁹ or as neighbors (OR =1.90, $p<0.05$)¹⁰ than respondents ages 35 to 64. Men were more likely than women to report they would not like to have transgender people in these roles, although these differences were not always statistically significant. Men were more likely to have reported that they would not like having coworkers who were transgender (OR=1.93, $p<0.01$).¹¹ There were no significant differences on the bases of respondents' income or education.

Those who indicated that they knew a transgender person, as an acquaintance, friend, or family member, or were themselves transgender were significantly less likely to say they would not like to have a transgender neighbor (OR=0.36, $p<0.05$).¹²

Rights of Transgender People

Respondents to the survey were also asked a number of questions about their views on the rights of transgender people. In many countries, government identification documents are required or are critically important in accessing benefits and rights, including health care, education, transportation, and others. Acquiring ID that appropriately reflects an individual's gender identity can be burdensome for many transgender people. In Poland, those who wish to update their government-issued ID with a change of gender may do so through a court procedure involving a medical diagnosis and involvement of the individual's family.¹³

A majority, 60.6%, of respondents in Poland believed that transgender people should be able to update government ID to reflect a change of gender.¹⁴ As depicted in Figure III, Nearly a quarter, 24.0%, of respondents believed that transgender people should be able to make this change with no restrictions.

⁸ Results did not remain significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, gender, low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added.

⁹ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, gender, low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=1.89, $p<0.05$.

¹⁰ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, gender, low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=1.95, $p<0.05$.

¹¹ Results did not remain significant when knowing a transgender person, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added as covariates.

¹² Results remained significant when covariates for young age (under 35), gender, low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=0.25, $p<0.05$

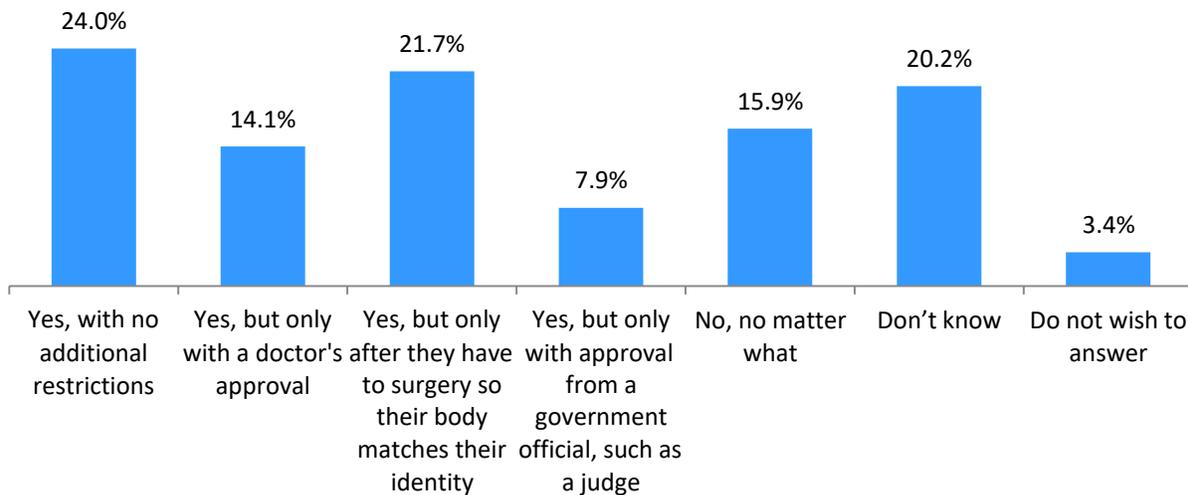
¹³ According to a report by the Trans-Fuzja Foundation and the Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law there "are no unitary standards on transsexual diagnosis in Poland." Fundacja Trans-Fuzja, Polskie Towarzystwo Prawa Antydyskryminacyjnego. (2014). Gender Recognition in Poland: A Report on Court and Administrative Procedures. Warsaw, Poland: Fundacja Trans- Fuzja. & "Legal Gender Recognition: Change of Gender." Edited by Transgender Europe, *Trans Respect Versus Transphobia Worldwide*, TGEU, 2017, transrespect.org/en/map/pathologization-requirement/#.

¹⁴ Respondents had the option to select multiple responses to this question regarding whether and, if so, how transgender people should be able to update their ID. Response proportions, therefore, may not be summed. Response options included, "Yes, with no additional restrictions," "Yes, but only with a doctor's approval," "Yes, but only after they have surgery so their body matches their identity," "Yes, but only with approval from a government official," "No, no matter what," and "don't know."

Alternatively, 15.9% of respondents stated that they did not believe transgender people should be able to update the gender on their ID, no matter what.

Figure III. Right to Change the Gender Identified on Government-Issued ID

Thinking still about people who dress and live as one sex even though they were born another. Do you think people like this should be allowed to legally change their sex on identity documents, such as government ID cards or driving licenses?



There were few differences in respondents' views on updating gender on government-issued ID based on demographic characteristics. However, low income respondents were significantly less likely to report that transgender people should be able to change the gender on their ID only with approval from a government official (OR=0.45, $p<0.05$)¹⁵ and were significantly more likely to indicate that they "Don't Know" the answer to this question (OR=2.48, $p<0.01$)¹⁶ compared to those with higher incomes.

When combining response options to this question into two categories, either in support or not in support of the right to update gender on government-issued ID, there were no significant differences in the demographic characteristics of respondents.¹⁷ However, respondents who knew transgender people, or were themselves transgender, were significantly more likely to answer that they were in support of the right to update ID (OR=2.79, $p<0.05$).¹⁸

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about their views on certain rights for transgender people and the strength of their agreement or disagreement with various statements as depicted in

¹⁵ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, young age (under 35), gender, and education were added, AOR=0.46, $p<0.05$.

¹⁶ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, young age (under 35), gender, and education were added, AOR=2.52, $p<0.01$.

¹⁷ In these analyses, response options of "don't know" and "do not wish to answer" to the question about transgender people's right to update their ID were not included.

¹⁸ Results remained significant when covariates for young age (under 35), gender, and education, and low income were added, AOR=3.06, $p<0.05$.

Table II.¹⁹ For most questions, a sizable minority of respondents in Poland, approximately one in five respondents, indicated that they did not know whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement about transgender rights. However, there was, in most instances, a greater level of support among respondents in Poland for transgender rights than opposition.

A majority agreed that transgender people should be allowed to have surgery so that their bodies match their identities (62.7%), which is already legal in the country, and that transgender people should be protected from discrimination by the government (56.3%). While Poland currently prohibits discrimination on the basis of many enumerated traits, gender identity is not one of these.²⁰ Though there was not majority support for some of the other rights of transgender people identified in the survey, respondents were more likely to indicate agreement than disagreement with the provision of many other rights, including the right to marry someone of the birth sex (41.7% vs 36.4%), use the restroom of the gender they identify with (44.1% vs 33%), and conceive, if biologically capable of doing so (45.1% vs 33.5%).

The one area in which respondents indicated a greater level of opposition than support was on the question of adoption. A majority of respondents disagreed with permitting transgender people to adopt children (54.3% vs 26.5%).

Among those who responded to these questions, there were few demographic differences between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the provision of these specific rights. Respondents with less education and lower income were not more or less likely to be supportive of transgender people's rights to have surgery, marry, have children (biologically or through adoption), use the appropriate restroom, or receive protection from discrimination. Respondents under the age of 35 were significantly less likely (OR=0.58, $p<0.05$) than those ages 35 to 64 to say they agreed that transgender people should legally be allowed to have surgery.²¹ Men were also significantly less likely to say they agreed that transgender people should be able to marry someone of their same birth sex (OR=0.56, $p<0.01$) and be protected from discrimination by the government (OR=0.59, $p<0.05$).²²

Those who indicated that they knew a transgender person, as an acquaintance, friend, or family member, or were themselves transgender were significantly more likely to agree that transgender people should have the right to marry a person of their same birth sex (OR=2.15, $p<0.05$) and use the restroom of the sex with which they identify (OR=2.22, $p<0.05$).²³

¹⁹ These questions addressed transgender people's right to have surgery so that their body matches their identity, be protected from discrimination by the government, adopt, access restrooms corresponding to their identity, give birth, and marry someone of their same birth sex.

²⁰ "Anti-Discrimination." Edited by Transgender Europe, *Trans Respect Versus Transphobia Worldwide*, TGEU, 2017, transrespect.org/en/map/pathologization-requirement/#. & TGEU Transgender Europe. (2017). *Trans Rights Europe Index 2017*. TGEU.

²¹ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, gender, low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=0.56, $p<0.05$.

²² Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=0.53, $p<0.01$ and AOR=0.57, $p<0.05$, respectively.

²³ Results remained significant when covariates for gender, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=2.22, $p<0.05$ and AOR=2.43, $p<0.01$, respectively.

Table II. Attitudes Toward Rights of Transgender People

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement below about people who dress and live as one sex even though they were born another.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
They should be allowed to have surgery so their body matches their identity	32.9% (164)	29.8% (149)	9.6% (48)	9.9% (49)	17.9% (89)
They should be allowed to use the restroom of the sex they identify with	19.2% (96)	24.9% (125)	15.0% (75)	18.0% (90)	22.9% (115)
They should be allowed to marry a person of their birth sex	18.0% (90)	23.7% (119)	13.6% (68)	22.8% (114)	21.8% (109)
They should be allowed to conceive or give birth to children (if biologically capable of doing so)	19.6% (98)	25.5% (127)	12.9% (64)	20.6% (103)	21.4% (107)
They should be allowed to adopt children	9.9% (49)	16.6% (83)	18.3% (91)	36.0% (180)	19.2% (96)
They should be protected from discrimination by the government	24.7% (123)	31.6% (158)	13.6% (68)	11.6% (58)	18.4% (92)

Attitudes toward the rights of transgender people can, in part, be understood with information about how the general population views the social status of transgender people and their beliefs about transgender people. The survey included questions about respondents' perceptions of transgender people, including whether they believed that transgender people have a mental illness, are committing a sin, or are violating traditions, which might be thought to underline people's views on transgender rights (see Table III).²⁴ A majority of respondents rejected the idea that transgender people are inherently committing a sin by being who they are (57.4%). Respondents were also more likely to disagree than agree with the idea that transgender people are violating the traditions of their culture (48.7% vs 30.9%), have a mental illness (45.0% vs 31.9%) or have a physical disability (46.5% vs 29.1%). There was majority support among respondents for the belief that transgender people are a natural occurrence in society (54.0%). However, very few respondents indicated that transgender people had a special place in society (14.2%) or possessed unique spiritual gifts (13.6%).

Among those who responded to these questions, demographic characteristics other than sex and age were often not associated with beliefs about transgender people. As with other questions, men were generally more likely to hold negative impressions of transgender people than women. They were significantly more likely to say that transgender people were inherently violating the traditions of

²⁴ Respondents were asked if they believed transgender people had a mental illness, a physical disability, were committing a sin, were violating cultural traditions, were a natural occurrence, had a special place in society, and had unique spiritual gifts. Respondents were asked to indicate if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, or did not know, in response to these questions.

their culture (OR=1.81, p<0.01)²⁵ and were significantly less likely to say that transgender people had a special place in society (OR=0.54, p<0.05).²⁶ Additionally, younger respondents, ages 16 to 34, were significantly more likely than older respondents, ages 35 to 64, to agree that transgender people were committing a sin by being transgender (OR=1.78, p<0.05).²⁷

As in other instances, having transgender acquaintances, friends, or family members or being transgender yourself was a significant predictor of positive views of transgender people. Among those who responded to the questions about beliefs of transgender people, those who were or knew a transgender person were significantly less likely to say transgender people had a mental illness (OR=0.52, p<0.05)²⁸ and significantly more likely to say they were natural (OR=2.09, p<0.05),²⁹ had a special place in society (OR=2.06, p<0.05)³⁰, and possessed unique spiritual gifts (OR=3.69, p<0.01).³¹

Table III. Attitudes Toward the Identity and Societal Role of Transgender People

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement below about people who dress and live as one sex even though they were born another.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
They have a form of mental illness	11.9% (59)	20.0% (100)	22.2% (111)	22.8% (114)	23.2% (116)
They have a form of physical disability	7.9% (39)	21.2% (106)	20.5% (103)	26.0% (130)	24.4% (122)
They are committing a sin	7.4% (37)	7.9% (39)	19.3% (97)	38.1% (190)	27.3% (136)
They are violating the traditions of my culture	11.3% (57)	19.6% (98)	22.5% (113)	26.2% (131)	20.4% (102)
They are a natural occurrence	19.3% (96)	34.7% (174)	12.9% (65)	9.8% (49)	23.3% (117)
They have a special place in society	2.7% (13)	11.5% (58)	26.9% (135)	30.2% (151)	28.6% (143)
They have unique spiritual gifts	3.8% (19)	9.8% (49)	20.1% (101)	29.5% (148)	36.7% (183)

²⁵ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=1.86, p<0.05.

²⁶ Results did not remain significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added.

²⁷ Results remained significant when covariates for knowing a transgender person, gender, low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=1.92, p<0.01.

²⁸ Results did not remain significant when covariates for gender, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added.

²⁹ Results remained significant when covariates for gender, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=2.23, p<0.05.

³⁰ Results remained significant when covariates for gender, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=1.96, p<0.05.

³¹ Results remained significant when covariates for gender, young age (under 35), low household income (below 3,399 PLN per month), and education were added, AOR=4.22, p<0.01.

CONCLUSION

These findings provide evidence that there is a solid base of support for the rights of transgender people in Poland. On many issues, there are greater levels of support than opposition to the rights of transgender people, and there are majorities in support of some of these rights, including government protection from discrimination, access to surgery, the ability of transgender people to change their gender on government-issued ID, and positive beliefs about transgender people, including that they are not committing a sin and that they are natural.

When asked what kinds of people they would not like to have as neighbors, coworkers, teachers, members of the military, elected officials, or family members, a majority of people did not indicate they felt this way about transgender individuals. There were, however, consistently greater proportions of individuals indicating that they would not like to have transgender people in these roles compared to gay or lesbian people and people of different races/ethnicities. There also appears to be a heightened level of concern regarding issues related to caring for children, such as transgender people serving as teachers and the right of transgender people to adopt children.

Observed differences in support indicating more favorable attitudes towards transgender people and their rights among women and those who reported knowing transgender people or being transgender are consistent with the literature on public opinion about transgender rights.³² However, other findings, such as that people ages 16 to 34 may be less supportive of transgender people's right to have surgery and may be more likely to view transgender people as committing a sin than people 35 to 64, are not widely reflected in the current literature on attitudes toward transgender people. The question of the extent to which age cohorts hold significantly different views on transgender people and their rights in Poland would benefit from further research and analysis.

³² Flores, A. R. (2015). Attitudes Toward Transgender Rights: Perceived Knowledge and Secondary Interpersonal Contact. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 3(3): 191-221. & Kimberly, C. (2016). Assessing Political Opinions about Transgender Legal Rights Using a Multiple-Segment Factorial Vignette Approach. *Sexuality, Research, and Social Policy*, 13(1): 73-83. & Norton, A. T. & Herek, G. M. (2012). Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Transgender People: Findings from a National Probability Sample of U.S. Adults. *Sex Roles*, 68(11-12): 738-753.

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