

THE ŁÓDŹ ATLAS

Sheet XIV: Population change and distribution

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In its almost 600 years’ long history (as of 1423), Łódź has undergone several phases of demographic development. For 400 years it was a small settlement which in the early 19th century boasted no more than a few hundred strong population. The turning point was the year 1820, when the government of the Congress Kingdom of Poland listed Łódź as a so-called factory town. Within less than 100 years its population rose to 478 000 in 1914 (L i s z e w s k i 1999). In the interwar period, the city not only made up for the war losses, but nearly doubled its population from 342 000 in 1918 to 672 000 in 1939. A similar upturn was observed following the severe losses entailed by the genocide of the Jewish population and the German population’s emigration during WWII. In 1946, Łódź’s population already amounted to 497 000, to reach the level of 620 000, according to the 1950 National Census (O b r a n i a k 1997). The subsequent years saw a further systematic increase in population. The turning point in the demographic development of Łódź was 1985, when the first symptoms of depopulation occurred. Despite the highest number of inhabitants (848 000) recorded in that year, a negative growth rate was observed for the first time. Over the next 15 years the population number decreased to 793 000 (2000), i.e. by 6.5%.

Out of the five districts of Łódź, each with a different population structure and size, in the years 1960–2000 the highest population growth was observed in Widzew (by 62.6%), followed by Bałuty (31.7%), Polesie (15.1%), and Górna (14.5%). The only district that observed systematic population downturn (by 46.3%) was Śródmieście (the inner city). In the 1990’s only Widzew showed a population increase (by 2 500), while each of the outstanding districts observed population losses in excess of 10 000.

In the years 1988–2001, in the historical part of the city’s urbanised area, including the inner city and old housing estates, the population decline totalled 92 300, i.e. 13.1%. Concurrently, in the city’s rural-urban fringe characterised by loose rural type of development and being subject to ‘parcel urbanisation’ (Studium ... 2001), and in new block housing estates (Radogoszcz, Olechów) the population growth totalled almost 25 000 (16.7% on the initial population number).

Out of the 61 microdistricts the actual population number decreased in 32, in one third of which the loss was greater than 15%. The zone of population loss includes, above all, the city centre and the old apartment housing suburbs (Teofilów, Retkinia, Dąbrowa). A moderate increase in population was recorded in 15 microdistricts, mostly suburban and built in the 1980s (Chojny Zatorze, Radogoszcz, Lublinek-Pienista) and located on the south-eastern and northern outskirts of the city. Only in 6 microdistricts did such increase exceed 30%, and it was highest in small, originally rural, settlements of Ustronna and Olechów.

The population of Łódź is highly concentrated. A half of the population occupies only 10% of the city area, while the 4 housing neighbourhoods with the highest population density (Nowe Miasto, Zielona, Dąbrowa Zachodnia and Dąbrowa) which only take up 3.6% of the city area, are occupied by 21% of the entire population. Given that the mean population density in Łódź is 30 persons per 1 ha, the 29 microdistricts located on the city’s outskirts and taking up a half of the city’s total area are occupied by just 3% of the entire population.

The city’s population is basically distributed along two axes: north-south and east-west. The former, corresponding with the historical spatial arrangement, starts in Radogoszcz in the north and runs across Śródmieście to Chojny. Along this axis there live over 34% of the city’s population. The transverse axis is a new bow-shaped line which has been formed in the last three decades and starts in Smulsko, runs across the southern part of the historical inner city, to end in Olechów. This area is the home of 22% of the city’s population (M i c h a l s k i , N o w a k o w s k a 1999).

The demographic role of the microdistricts’ inhabitants in the development of Łódź’s population is illustrated by the demographic potential measured in ‘person-years’ (Vielrose 1958). The said demographic potential is relative to the population living in the given area, its age structure, and the average outstanding lifespan of each age and gender groups (Holzer 1994). A high demographic potential, exceeding the mean for the city (34.9 ‘person-years’), is found in 44 microdistricts situated mostly in the eastern part, which means that the future population development in Łódź will be determined by the natural population change dynamics in that area. On the other hand, the lowest demographic potential values are found in the older housing estates (Doly, Teofilów, Zubardź, Koziny, and Dąbrowa).

Since 1986, Łódź has observed a negative population growth rate (despite the city’s spatial expansion in 1988 from 214 to 295 km2). The main reason for this was a gradual decrease in the number of births (from 11 000 in 1985 to 5 000 in 1999) and in the birth rate (from 12.7‰ to 6.7‰), while the death rate remained relatively stable (approximately 14‰).

In 2000, the birth rates’ spatial distribution across the city was highly diversified. The highest birth rates were observed in the microdistricts located in the south-eastern part of Łódź. In the inner city, the birth rate approximated the average value, save two housing districts (ŚDM and Akademicka), where the figures were below 5‰. In five small rural settlement units no births were recorded at all.

The death rates in 6 microdistricts were lower than 6‰, with the minimum value observed in Olechów. The largest number of neighbourhoods with relatively high death rates were those in the north-western part of Łódź and in the older housing estates (Nowe Sady, Nowe Rokicie, and Dąbrowa).

The birth rate and death rate diversity is informed by the spatial structure of the natural population growth rate. Characterised by a significantly negative natural population growth is the western part of the city. The highest losses were observed in the housing districts of Nowe Sady (-14.0‰) and Nowe Rokicie (-13.6‰). Only in 11 microdistricts, mostly located in the eastern part of Łódź, observed was a positive natural population growth rate. Apart from rural settlement districts, this group also incorporated the newest block housing estates of Widzew Wschód and Olechów. These are characterised by a young age structure of their inhabitants, and a particularly high proportion of child-bearing aged women, in excess of 60% of the total female population (with the average for Łódź being 48%).

The demographic future of each part of Łódź is illustrated by the four types of demographic development identified based on the prevalence of at least two of the following characteristics: the population growth rate in the period 1988–2001, the mean demographic potential, and the natural population growth rate.

The progressive type, expected to show a positive population growth rate and a relatively young population structure, is represented by 14 housing neighbourhoods, mainly in the eastern and southern parts of the city. These are the new housing estates (Olechów, Ustronna) and rural boroughs.

The moderate type, expected to show a stable demographic development, includes 18 microdistricts clustered in the south-eastern and south-western areas.

The regressive type, primarily including 21 microdistricts in the city centre and old housing estates, located in the north-western part of Łódź (Teofilów, Zubardź, Bałuty, Doly, and Retkinia).

Whereas the demographic future of the 6 microdistricts that did not show the prevalence of any of the foregoing characteristics (mixed type) is difficult to predict.

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^[1] The birth and death rates in breakdown into microdistricts were established based on preliminary survey at the Registry Offices.

^[2] The typology is exclusive of 2 microdistricts: Park Ludowy and Zarzew Przemysłowy, for being the locations of social aid homes, which affects both the population structure and the course of the natural population change processes