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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN WARSAW DISTRICTS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

**Abstract:** Polish schools achieve their educational aims, as set out in the curriculum, within the framework of obligatory class periods. Extracurricular activities may be organised when schools receive additional funding from local government budgets. The aim of this article is to demonstrate the relationship between the socio-economic conditions of individual Warsaw districts and the availability of extracurricular activities in those districts' primary schools. The analysis carried out during this study disproved the initial assumption that more affluent districts with higher per capita incomes and a higher proportion of expenditures directed towards educational aims would be characterised by a larger offer of extracurricular activities. Rather, what distinguishes districts with the highest availability of extracurricular activities is their peripheral location within the territory of Warsaw. There, schools ensure longer hours of supervision for children and organised the time after class, which offers support to the parents. It is likely that it is the parents who, due to their relatively longer commute between home and work, support the organisation of such activities, not least financially.

**Key words:** Warsaw districts, primary schools, extracurricular activities.

### INTRODUCTION

The Polish education system comprises four levels of schooling: preschool, a 6-year primary school, and two levels of secondary education: a 3-year gymnasium and post-gymnasial schools with 2 to 4-year programs. Preschool education is aimed at children 3-6 years old, but is not compulsory in Poland.

At age 6 children must complete the so-called zero level, in preparation for primary education. Education is compulsory for all individuals between 7 and 18 years of age, as stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Art. 70). Additionally, the schooling obligation also stipulates the necessity of completing primary school and the gymnasium. The methods of fulfilling the schooling obligation are stipulated by the Education Act<sup>1</sup>. After having completed post-gymnasial education (technicum or lyceum) a student can take the Maturity examinations. The combined period of education up to the completion of the level giving access to the Maturity examination in Poland lasts from 12 to 15 years.

The present structure of the education system in Poland is the result of reforms introduced in 1999. The reforms brought in curricular changes that affected children's and youth education, as well as structural organisational changes. Responsibility for the functioning of schools and other care and educational facilities was taken over from the Ministry of Education by organs of public administration (*gminy* [municipalities] and *powiaty* [counties]). The tasks of regional and local governments now include the establishment of schools and the assurance of adequate conditions for their functioning through, for example, administrative and financial services.

Polish schools achieve their educational aims, as set out in the curriculum, within the framework of obligatory class periods. The extracurricular activities that are the subject of this study refer to activities organised within the school, outside of obligatory class periods and outside the curriculum currently in force (outline teaching plan). The aim of these activities is to expand on the students' education and to awaken and broaden their interests. Extracurricular activities offer the possibility for school students to participate, for example, in music, theatre, and dance groups. Teachers should consider the interests and needs of students when deciding on the form and content of activities.

The area of the study presented in this article is the Capital City of Warsaw, as delineated by its administrative boundaries. Since 2002, Warsaw is composed of 18 districts (Fig. 1).

Districts are responsible for public works and local affairs (at the district level) and are, therefore, also responsible for the functioning of care and educational facilities. The supporting organ for the districts in matters of educational policy is the City of Warsaw's Bureau of Education. The Bureau's tasks include monitoring the education system and the planning and carrying out of education policy within the city as a whole.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the relationship between the socio-economic conditions of specific Warsaw districts and the availability of extracurricular activities in those districts' primary schools. Data on extra-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty* [Parliamentary Act on the education system, 7 September 1991] [Dz. U. 2004 r. Nr 256, poz. 2572, Nr 273, poz. 2703 i Nr 281, poz. 2781 z zm.]



Fig. 1. Warsaw administrative divisions (as of 27.10.2002)

Source: [http://www.um.warszawa.pl/v\\_syrenka/liczby/index.php?podstrona=1](http://www.um.warszawa.pl/v_syrenka/liczby/index.php?podstrona=1)

curricular activities, obtained from the City of Warsaw's Education Bureau, date to September 2008. Statistical information on the socio-economic conditions of districts were obtained from *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, published by Poland's Central Statistical Office [Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS]. The characterisation of socio-economic conditions in particular districts was informed by indicators showing:

- district affluence (per capita income and proportion of expenditures on education);
- demographic situation (indicator of natural growth, age structure);
- social conditions (number of social assistance recipients, crime ratio).

However, complete data were not available in all cases (e.g. types of schools, districts), which limited the depth of analysis. The collected data contained information on close to 9 thousand extracurricular activities<sup>2</sup> organised in public schools. The study did not include data on activities organised by non-public schools.

## 1. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN WARSAW, OVERALL AND BY SCHOOL TYPE

During the 2008/2009 school year, 451 schools functioned in Warsaw (168 – primary, 113 – gymnasias, 170 – post-gymnasial), which accommodated

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<sup>2</sup> Number of all activities conducted in the schools outside of the obligatory teaching plan, no matter their time of duration or subject matter.

a total of 157,8 thousand students. The districts that counted the most institutions were: Mokotów (61), Śródmieście (53), Wola (48), Praga Południe (45), and Bielany (38). In Rembertów, Wesoła and Wilanów the school network is relatively small, with only 7 schools operating in each of these districts.

Among all the types of schools combined, nearly 9 thousand extracurricular activities were organised during the 2008/2009 school year, for an average of 19 activities per school. It should be noted that the number of activities varies widely according to school type. There were over 4,5 thousand activities organised in primary schools, approximately 2 thousand in gymnasia and 2,4 thousand in post-gymnasial schools. In terms of the average number of activities organised in each school type, it is primary schools that appear to host the highest number of activities (avg. 27 activities per school), followed by gymnasia (avg. 17 activities), with post-gymnasial schools hosting the lowest number of activities (avg. 14 activities).

The analysis paid particular attention to the activity of primary schools. First, because they offered more activities than the other school types, but, second, also because these schools are “regional” institutions, meaning that most of the attending children live in proximity to (that is, in the same district as) the school. It is this second characteristic that substantiates the validity of an analysis involving the juxtaposition of the educational offer of schools in a given district and the district’s socio-economic conditions.

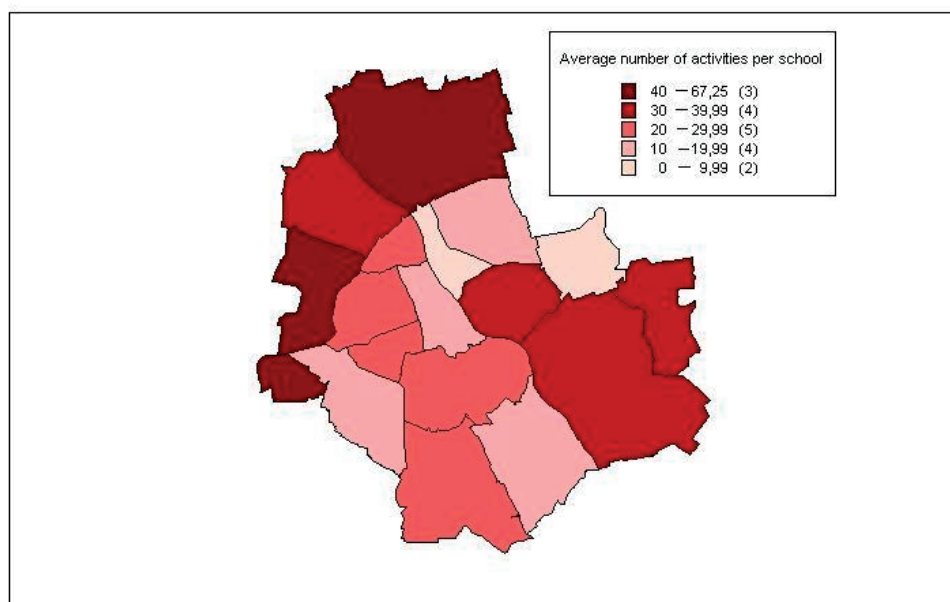


Fig. 2. Variations in the number of extracurricular activities in primary schools<sup>3</sup>  
 Source: Authors' elaboration based on data obtained from the Bureau of Education  
 of the City of Warsaw

<sup>3</sup> In the Praga Północ and Rembertów districts the occurrence value was zero.

The highest average numbers of extracurricular activities per school were recorded in the districts of Białołęka, Bemowo and Ursus (adjacent districts comprising the N and NW of the territory of Warsaw): the average number of extracurricular activities organised weekly in each school surpassed 40 (Fig. 2). A weaker intensity was recorded in the districts of Wawer, Wesoła, Bielany and Praga Południe (above 30, but less than 40 activities weekly). The lowest incidences of activities per school were recorded in the Wilanów, Targówek, Śródmieście and Włochy districts (fewer than 20 activities per school weekly).

The variations of the average number of extracurricular activities per school allows for the classification of Warsaw districts among 4 groups:

1. Ursus, Bemowo, Białołęka,
2. Wesoła, Bielany, Praga Południe, Wawer,
3. Ursynów, Ochota, Żoliborz, Wola, Mokotów (NS belt in the western section of Warsaw),
4. Targówek, Wilanów, Śródmieście, Włochy.

## 2. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION INVOLVEMENT

The functioning of schools depends, to an important degree, on the educational policies adopted in each district<sup>4</sup> but, most importantly, on the size of a given district's budget proportion of expenditures on education within district expenditures overall. In addition, it may be supposed that districts' educational policies are conditioned by the demographic structure (gender, age, education) of district councils. The councils of Warsaw districts did not demonstrate marked variations in terms of age and education. There were marked differences in gender ratios on the councils of various districts. This is worth noting, given existing views on the relatively greater interest and involvement in questions of education, social policy, and social affairs on the part of female councillors.

The highest per capita incomes were recorded in the Śródmieście district (avg. PLN 3500 per month). All the other districts recorded average monthly per capita incomes of substantially less than PLN 2000. In 7 Warsaw

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<sup>4</sup> In 2008 the administration of the City of Warsaw adopted an Act on the realisation of educational policies for the period 2008-2012 (Act of 3 April 2008, nr. XXVII/871/2008 *Polityka edukacyjna miasta stołecznego Warszawy w latach 2008-2012* [Educational policy of the Capital City of Warsaw for the years 2008-2012]), which had been prepared by the Bureau of Education. One of its six strategic areas of activity is the support and development of school education. Within this area, the Act pointed out numerous specific goals and directions of action, such as raising the level of instruction and supporting gifted students. These goals are to be realised through the increased number of supplementary hours devoted to selected subjects (particularly mathematics and foreign languages), the organisation of interschool extracurricular activities aimed at the development of students' interests, and the modernisation of didactic resources.

districts, the figure does not exceed PLN 1000 (Białołęka, Wawer, Targówek, Ursus, Wesola, Ursynów and Bemowo).

Higher per capita incomes in given districts may be expected to result in better living conditions for district residents, including better educational opportunities. In reality, however, we observed an inverse correlation between per capita income levels and the number of offered extracurricular activities:

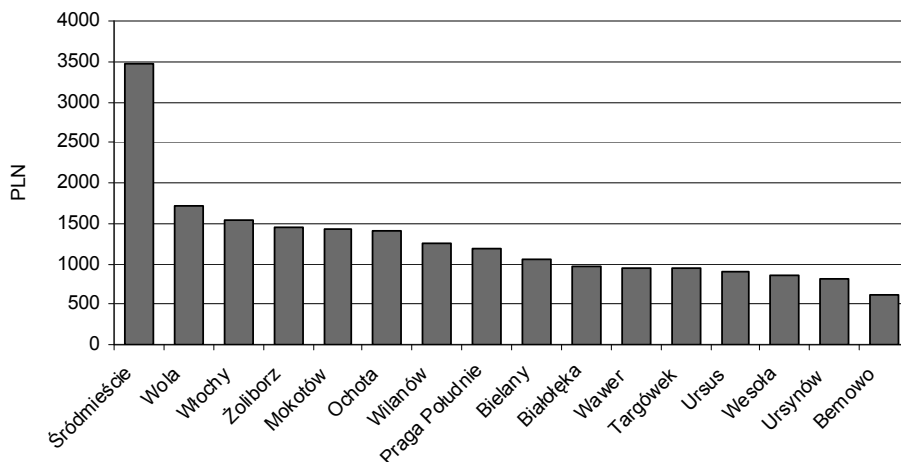


Fig 3. Per capita incomes in Warsaw districts

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, GUS

- The districts with the highest number of extracurricular activities presented the lowest per capita incomes, especially in the case of the Ursus and Bemowo districts;
- the Śródmieście district recorded the highest per capita incomes and the lowest number of offered extracurricular activities, and the situation is similar in the districts of Włochy and Wola;
- the only district corresponding to the initial assumptions was Targówek, where both indicators presented low values.

Warsaw districts exhibit marked variations in the proportion of educational expenditures within the overall expenditures of individual districts. The highest proportions of educational expenditures were recorded in Bielany (5,37%) and Ochota (4,85%). Żoliborz, Praga Południe, Wola, Ursynów, Białołęka and Bemowo accord between 3 and 4% of expenditures towards the functioning of educational institutions. Educational expenditures as a percentage of overall expenditures were lowest in Wesola and Włochy (less than 2%).

Those districts that presented the highest numbers of offered extracurricular activities (Ursus, Bemowo, and Białołęka) did not, however, record high proportions of budget expenditures on education, indeed their educational expenditures were relatively small in comparison with other districts. Similarly low educational expenditure proportions were recorded in the

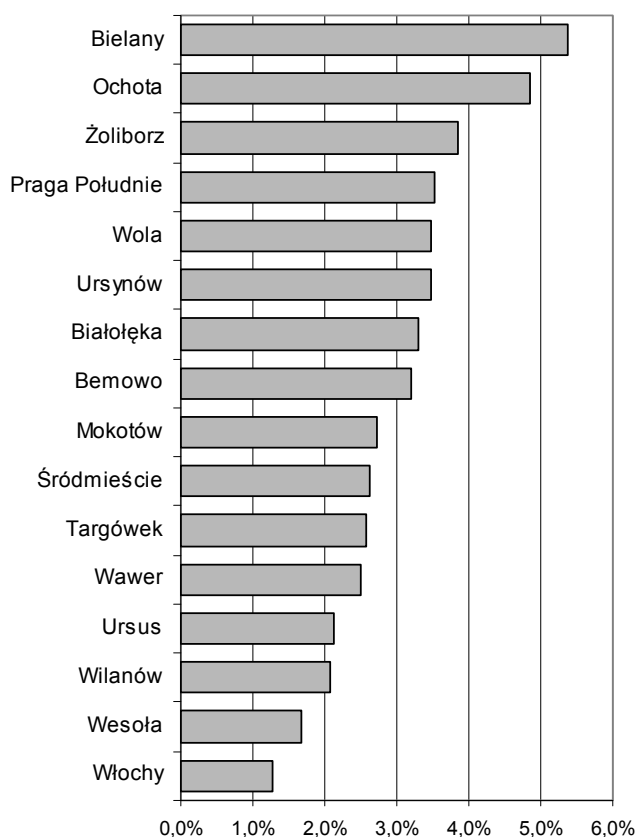


Fig. 4. Educational expenditures as % of overall district expenditures

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, GUS

districts with the lowest numbers of extracurricular activities (Targówek, Wilanów, Śródmieście and Włochy). The observed situation, therefore, prompts the question of what really determines the number of extracurricular activities in schools. These activities are, in theory, financed by districts' budgets, yet there are schools where teachers conduct extracurricular activities with no additional remuneration. It is worth noting, as well, that the districts presenting the highest numbers of extracurricular activities per school (Bemowo, Białołęka, Ursus) are situated on the periphery of Warsaw's territory. This suggests that the organisation of extracurricular activities depends also on the initiatives of parents' councils. A child attending school in one of these three districts is assured of longer hours of care at the school and organised time after obligatory classes, which is likely more important in those districts given that the parents' commute between work and home is relatively long.

### 3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Educational institutions offer of activities should follow districts' demographic evolution. The number of schools and the number of educational activities should follow such factors as the natural population growth and changes in the proportion of school-aged children, among others.

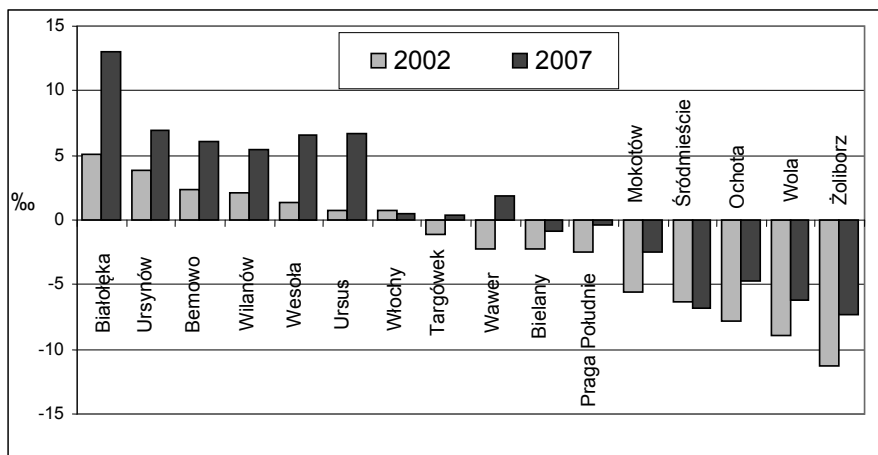


Fig. 5. Natural growth (in %) of population

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, GUS

A comparison of natural growth rates for the years 2002 and 2007 offers a glimpse into the dynamics of natural growth in Warsaw districts. Based on the data, it is possible to identify:

- demographically dynamic districts with an increasingly positive natural population growth rate (Białoleka, Ursynów, Bemowo, Wilanów, Wesoła, Ursus, Wawer, and Targówek);
- districts that exhibit an increased rate of natural population loss (Śródmieście), or decreased natural population growth rate values approaching zero (Włochy);
- districts that exhibit a decreased rate of natural population loss (Bielany, Praga Południe, Żoliborz, Wola, Ochota, Mokotów).

All the districts counting the highest numbers of extracurricular activities were among the group of districts with the most dynamic natural population growth, with markedly accelerating, positive growth rate values. We may consider that that the offer of extracurricular activities in these districts' primary schools is responsive the changing demographics. The Włochy district recorded a natural population loss, while Targówek seems to be barely beginning to register positive growth rate values – these two districts had the lowest number of extracurricular activities on offer (lack of demand). The Wilanów district exhibits an interesting phenomenon. The period 2002–2007



registered an increase in the positive natural growth rate values, yet the schools of the district have the lowest number of extracurricular activities. Possible factors include residents' affluence and attitudes: they may prefer to organise supplementary activities for their children through their own means and are, therefore not interested in the offer of extracurricular activities in the schools; another potential mitigating factor is that many children in this district attend private schools.

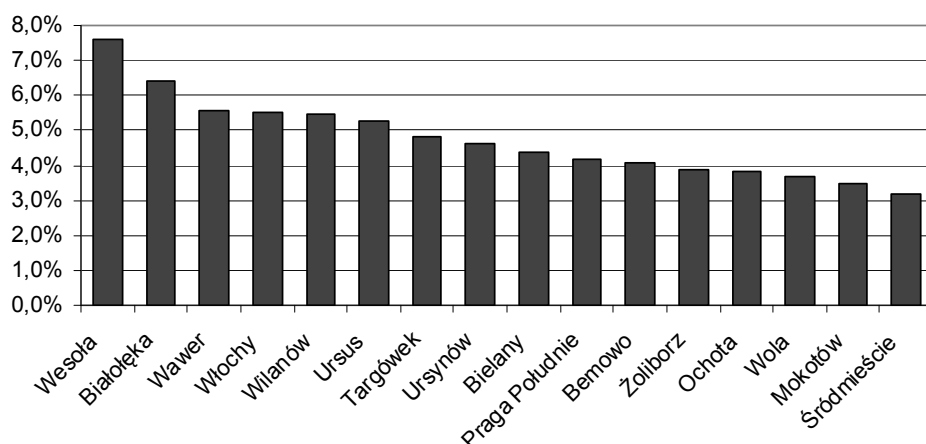


Fig. 6. Proportion of children aged 7-12 years within the overall district population  
Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, GUS

Another indication of the adaptability of the offer of extracurricular activities to demographic characteristics of districts is a comparison of the number of offered activities and the proportion of children aged 7-12 years within the overall district population (Fig. 6). The districts with the highest offers of extracurricular activities (Białoleka, Ursus) register high proportions of school-aged children. An exception is the district of Bemowo where, although the proportion of school-aged children in the population is comparatively low, the offer of extracurricular activities is one of the highest among Warsaw districts. In districts where the demand (number of school-aged children) is likely to be low, extracurricular activities are organised on a markedly smaller scale (Śródmieście, Mokotów, Wola). Districts that call particular attention are Wilanów, Targówek and Włochy, where schools organise very few extracurricular activities despite the high proportion of children aged 7-12 years within their populations, particularly in Włochy.

#### 4. DISTRICTS' SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Extracurricular activities in primary schools perform many functions. They allow students to develop their interests, support their skills, and help to level differences in the case of less naturally apt children. These activities also serve to structure young students' time beyond the duration of the day's obligatory classes. This becomes particularly important in cases where parents have long commutes from work, but also in cases where the school is situated in a district where residents' level of security and standard of living may be low. Attending extracurricular activities is one way for students to avoid various dangers (assaults, automobile accidents, spending time in the company of people involved in pathological behaviours).

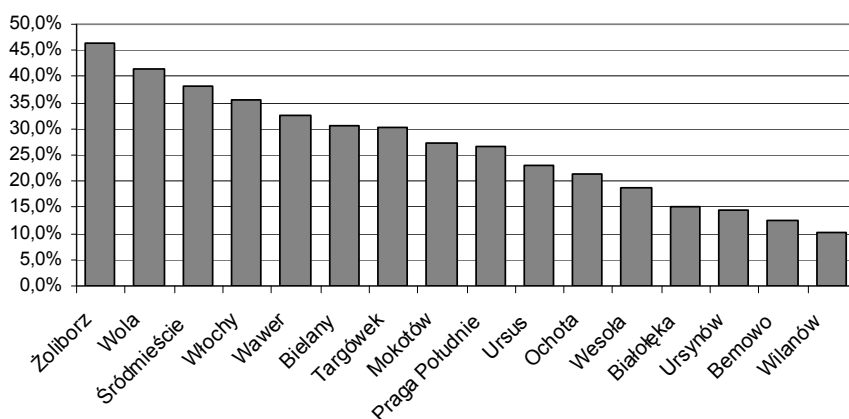


Fig. 7. Social assistance recipients per 1000 district residents

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, GUS

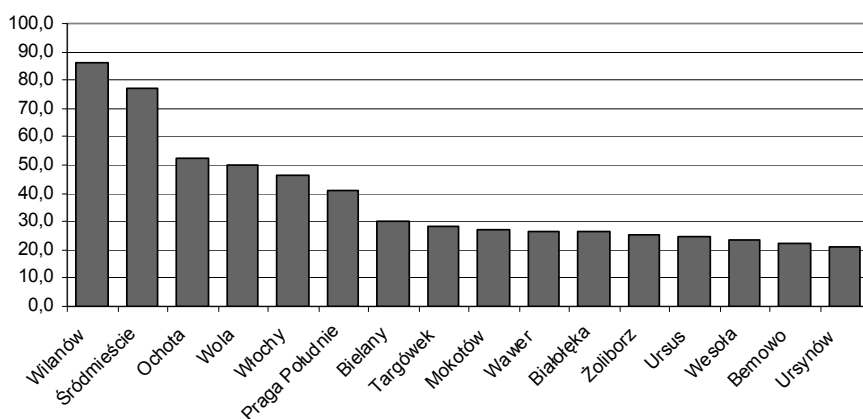


Fig. 8. Number of crimes per 1000 residents

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in *Panorama of Warsaw Districts in 2007*, GUS

The phenomena mentioned above most frequently threaten the residents of Żoliborz, Śródmieście, Wola and Włochy, where over 35% of residents receive social assistance (Fig. 7). Śródmieście and Wola present the highest number of crimes per 1000 residents (Fig. 8). However, particularly in Śródmieście and Włochy schools, students do not benefit from a wide offer of extracurricular activities. Schoolchildren in the Targówek, Ursus and Praga Południe districts benefit from significantly more structuring of their time after class, parallel to which, fewer than 25% of residents in those districts benefit from social assistance. In districts that exhibit high numbers of extracurricular activities (Ursus, Bemowo, Białoleka) there are fewer social assistance recipients than in other districts. The districts seek first and foremost to meet their residents' needs and ensure good living conditions for less affluent people and those unable to independently meet their own needs. Consequently, the majority of districts' budget expenditures are directed at precisely those needs. Educational concerns, particularly extracurricular activities, are not counted among priority objectives.

## CONCLUSIONS

The clearly distinguishing characteristic of districts registering the highest average numbers of curricular activities per school (e.g. Bemowo, Białoleka, Ursus) is their peripheral location within the territory of Warsaw. It may be hypothesised that it is the parents of the school-aged children in these districts who, because of their long commutes between work and home, initiate the organisation of these activities and financially support their children's schools. Consequently, the schoolchildren in these districts benefit from longer hours of supervision at school and structured time after obligatory classes.

All the districts registering the highest numbers of extracurricular activities fall within the group of districts whose demography is most dynamic, as evidenced by clearly rising positive natural population growth rate ratios. We may assess that the offer of extracurricular activities in primary schools in these districts adequately reflects the evolving demography. It must be noted that these districts are also among those with the lowest per capita incomes. Thus, high per capita income levels do not result in a wider offer of extracurricular activities in schools. The same non-incidence was noted in the case of educational expenditures as a proportion of overall district budget expenditures.

Lower average numbers of extracurricular activities were observed in districts where the crime rate per 1000 residents and the proportion of social assistance recipients were high. Consequently, children attending schools in districts where residents' level of security is relatively low, have fewer opportunities to attend extracurricular activities, that is, to benefit from

longer hours of school supervision (i.e. in the care of teachers, tutors, or psychologists).

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*English translation: Maciej Janicki*