

# Abstract

When it comes to internal migrations in the country, the movements of secondary school graduates are of great importance. They result from the massification of higher education at the end of the 1990s. This issue has recently been emphasised in the studies conducted in Lower Silesia [Dolińska *et al.* 2020a] and the Opole region [Jończy *et al.* 2013], which become the inspiration for writing the present monograph. In accordance with the adopted research model, the study was guided by the scientific findings of Dolińska, Jończy and Śleszyński [2020a] who stated that the main component of the current migration movements, having a decisive impact on the demographic changes taking place in the spatial structure of Poland, are youth migrations undertaken after graduating from secondary schools, and especially of those enrolling in easily accessible and massively selected fields of study. The study formulated one application goal and three cognitive ones, which were related to:

- determining the intensity, directions and features of migration in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, with particular emphasis on the spatial mobility of young people living in the areas of the voivodeship most affected by depopulation;
- determining the specificity of post-secondary school migration of young people living in rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship;
- typological sampling of the reasons for spatial mobility of secondary school graduates from rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship;
- application of research results to be used by representatives of local government units in activities supporting education and the labour market.

The Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, which was selected as the research area, is characterised by a typical spatial structure, with a clear dominance of the capital of the region as to the concentration of educational services. In addition, this area neighbours the voivodeships where centres gathering the highest-ranking educational units in the country are located. The scope of the study covers the years 1989-2021. However, due to certain limitations and difficulties in accessing all information, the time span of detailed analyses is mainly limited to:

- 1989-2020 – for migration resources as well as the intensity and directions of registered population movements;

- 2004-2019 – for describing diversity of the socio-demographic development of the voivodeship;
- 2021 – for the survey on post-secondary migration of young people in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship.

The work was carried out with the use of a combination of various research methods and techniques. The quantitative method consisting in the analysis of data obtained from the Statistics Poland was combined with the qualitative method, *i.e.* questionnaire surveys.

As regards the identification of migratory movements of young people (with particular emphasis on the migration of young people living in the areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship most severely affected by depopulation), it was noticed that the largest unsustainable outflow occurred in the most mobile age category of the population, *i.e.* 20-34 year-olds. What is characteristic is a very strong feminisation of outflow from rural areas, but also, to an increasing extent, from cities. 2-3 times more women than men aged 20-24 migrate from particular rural communes, and, as a rule, the situation is similar for the group of 25-34 year-olds. This causes strong deformations of the age structure and reduces the probability of starting a family as well as the birth-rate. Hence, it is so important to examine in detail the migration plans and decisions of the population. Strong feminisation of the outflow from rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie region may be the result of at least two factors. The first of them has an economic and cultural background and results from a stronger need to improve living conditions among women (a push and pull factor). The second condition may result from a greater tendency of women to register, which was already indicated by the research conducted earlier in Lower Silesia [Dolińska *et al.* 2020a].

In an effort to establish the specificity of post-secondary migrations of young people living in rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie region, interesting regularities were observed and conclusions drawn. First of all, it should be noted that among secondary school graduates, the vast majority plan to continue their education (87.1%), and more than a half plan to combine further education with working. It is characteristic that women are more inclined to education. The vast majority of secondary school graduates who want to continue learning plan to study in academic centres located in the country, but outside the voivodeship (68.2%). Two cities play an important role in these educational migrations – Cracow and Warsaw – due to their overall attractiveness as well as – in the longer term – the attractiveness of their labour market. Students' educational decisions are influenced by their academic performance. Those who perform worse plan to stay in closer, smaller centres, while students having better scores leave for larger academic centres, outside the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. Thus, the higher the average score was, the greater was the share of future students intending to leave the region. In addition, when choosing the intended field of study (profession), women are more often guided by their own abilities and skills, while for men the most important is the economic factor. Moreover, secondary school graduates, when making choices regarding further education, are more often guided by their own interests (53.1%), while high earnings and their own skills are of less importance to them.

Similarly to educational decisions, also the professional ones the post-secondary youth takes are connected mainly with two centres: Cracow and Warsaw. At the same time, there is also a positive socio-demographic accent which is the fact that over one third of the graduates expressed their willingness to work in or near their place of residence. However, this group was dominated by young men who turned out to be more attached to their home region. On the other hand, women more often planned to find employment outside the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship and expressed their willingness to work abroad. This situation confirms the strong phenomenon of feminisation of the outflow, which in the long term will be an obstacle to starting a family and increasing birth-rate in rural areas. It was also noticed that the higher the average score achieved by the respondents, the greater their willingness to work outside the Świętokrzyskie region. Young people with lower scores more often declared their intention to work in their place of residence.

The decisions concerning the future place of residence were similar to the educational and professional ones. The vast majority (82.0%) of secondary school graduates declared that they would live outside their place of origin, and most of them would settle in a city outside the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. There was also a large group of those who were planning to live outside Poland. This observation is consistent with the results of the analyses made by the researchers of Polish youth mobility [Jończy *et al.* 2013; Dolińska *et al.* 2020a]. The choice of the future place of residence corresponded with the school results, as people with higher average scores showed a greater tendency to change their current place of residence. The most talented secondary school graduates most often intended to move to cities located in other voivodeships. Those who wanted to stay in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship unambiguously (80.0%) indicated Kielce as a place of their permanent settlement. In turn, those who decided to leave the region most often mentioned Cracow and Warsaw. They were also choosing Wrocław and Gdansk. Plans of staying permanently abroad were related mainly to Germany, Norway, the United States and Great Britain.

It was also important to find the main reasons why the young people from the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship would like to leave their place of origin. To a decisive extent, they are the following: a desire to improve one's own or family's financial situation or living conditions, as well as a desire to develop professionally and personally. Another important reason is the lack of work in the place of residence of the surveyed secondary school graduates. Thus, the main reasons for the migration of graduates were educational and economic.

Typological sampling of reasons for the spatial mobility of secondary school graduates from rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship confirmed that the most important regularity is the preponderance of the educational factor. This may indicate that young people attach great importance to further education, which will translate into the improvement of their living conditions, and will also enable them to get a suitable job, in line with their aspirations. This factor determines the vectors of young people displacement at the intra-regional and national level.

The present work undoubtedly extends the current knowledge about post-secondary migration in rural areas of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, as well as brings new

knowledge, showing the nature and specificity of these migrations. The obtained results of the analyses constitute a comprehensive study for representatives of local government units to be used in planning their activities supporting education and labour market. This is extremely important because the asymmetric development of the country, expressed in the accelerated development of metropolises, especially of the “big five”, caused a considerable outflow of young people from rural areas, located *inter alia* in the Świętokrzyskie region. The outflow of youth to the largest cities advanced depopulation of the periphery. Therefore, it becomes correct what Dolińska, Jończy and Śleszyński [2020a] say and namely that *it seems more and more justified to discuss the effectiveness of the current administrative division of the country at the voivodeship, powiat and commune level (...), currently not suited to the worrying, demographic challenges of the future and not reflecting the natural directions and areas of gravity (e.g. weakness of small regional and academic centres)*. Therefore, the results of, *inter alia*, the presented research should be used to develop further action strategies aimed at finding effective tools for regional, fiscal, social and spatial policy, which will translate into the reorganisation of the settlement network, especially in rural areas, as well as reduce negative demographic phenomena, including depopulation and uncontrolled outflow of young people.

**Keywords:** Demographic processes, migrations, post-secondary youth, rural areas, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships, types of migration reasons.