

## UNREGISTERED EMPLOYMENT IN THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET: CASE STUDY OF PŁOCK

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to present the opinions of local labour market participants regarding unregistered work that is performed by socially excluded people who are registered in the Labour Office in the city of Płock, Poland. The paper begins with a literature review of the theoretical issues and presents conclusions based on published studies and articles. This is followed by an empirical data analysis where the authors diagnose the causes, important advantages and disadvantages of unregistered work. The data includes the results of surveys that were distributed to 350 respondents: 195 received PAPI paper questionnaires and 155 people were surveyed using a CAWI questionnaire posted on the Internet (additionally, a campaign on Facebook) in 2018. The analyses includes the distribution of answers to the survey question together with verification of the statistical significance between the answers and specific variables, such as education, sex and age group.

**Key words:** unregistered work, socially excluded people, disadvantages and advantages of unregistered work, opinion surveys

**JEL codes:** E24, E26, J46

### INTRODUCTION

Unregistered employment is understood as work that is performed without an explicit employment relationship, such as a contract between the employer and employee. Such employment can be categorized as either a person's primary or secondary source of income. Unregistered work is a part of the "shadow economy" (grey economy), with dimensions that differ greatly within different countries, occupational fields, and economic sectors.

Performing unregistered work does not entitle the employee to social security, or to any attendant rights to social benefits since the duration of that work is not counted as a contribution from the viewpoint of the Social Insurance Administration (ZUS, in Poland). The employer does not allot contributions from the

employee's wages and salaries to the Social Insurance Institution and Labour Fund, and income taxes are not deducted from income generated through unregistered employment. Such self-employed entrepreneurs do not fulfil financial obligations to the state (e.g. taxes).

Estimates on the size of the shadow economy and its share in GDP in Poland are published by Statistics Poland (GUS) and various research centres, and differ depending on the source. GUS estimates that from 2000–2018, its share in GDP declined from 17% of the economy to 12.4%. [GUS 2015, 2019]. Long-term studies and macroeconomic data observations conducted by the Polish Institute of Economic Forecasts and Analyses (IPAG) showed a slow decline between 2016–2020, from 19% of the economy to 17.4%, which means that the shadow economy still compris-

es almost one fifth of Poland's gross economic value added [Fundowicz et al. 2020].

Economic theory notes that reasons for the existence of a shadow economy often include: tax and parafiscal burdens; bureaucracy and labour regulations; corruption; quality of public institutions; performance of regulatory bodies and level of penalties; tax morale of the population; unemployment rate and social transfers; wage inequality [Buszko 2016, Malaczewska 2019]. The research of poverty, social exclusion and inequality occupies an important place in contemporary economics. In the 1990s, the Polish Institute of Labour and Social Studies (IPISS) published two major works, „Polish poverty” and „Polish poverty II,” which contained the results of basic quantitative diagnoses. They elaborated upon the methods of measuring poverty and recommended the use of approaches and indicators that were tested and agreed upon with the Statistics Poland (GUS) office. They also strengthened the methodology of collecting information about the scale and depth of poverty in Poland, and contributed to the inclusion of more accurate methods of combating poverty and exclusion in Poland's social policy. [Morecka et al. 2008]

Since Poland's accession to the EU, research on poverty has gained new impetus. The European Commission and Eurostat propose to expand the category of poverty to include social exclusion, introduce more panel studies, combine quantitative and qualitative methods and postulate new measurement indicators. In addition, combating poverty and social exclusion has become an objective of the EU's social policy strategy, implemented jointly with the member states.

The IPISS published a “Polish poverty III” series. In these works [Golinowska 2007, Panek 2011, Szewczyk-Jarocka 2020b] the authors discuss the effectiveness of active labour market policy instruments for combating exclusion from the labour market and the types of work found outside the labour market. The studies hypothesize and prove that work is of primary importance in the process of both social exclusion and – later – social integration. Therefore, the fact of having a job, its quality, the working conditions and the income received, determine the quality of life of individuals and whole families. The research is distinguished by its approach to the analysed issues, which

took the position of two polar strategies of work-related activities: on the one hand, the strategy of the government and its agencies, and on the other, the strategies of individuals and families living outside the “normal” labour market, within socially excluded groups.

In a work titled *On Polish Poverty in 1990–2015: Measurements and Results* (English translation of Polish title), S. Golinowska refers to a rich empirical base of data, and makes an important contribution to the analysis of the socio-economic processes taking place during the post-communism transformation. It is worth noting that the author discusses the impact of the generous monetary benefit introduced by the Polish government after 2015 (the Family 500+ plan gives a tax-free benefit of PLN 500 per month for the second child and all consecutive children until they reach the age of 18), and its potential consequences [Golinowska 2018].

Rising costs induce employers to hire in the shadow economy, hence its size tends to increase during an economic recession. There is a question as to whether labour rights, such as the protection of women's work, might be generating additional costs for employers. In addition to creating a form of institutional discrimination against women, research indicates that this may indeed be the case [Sielska 2017]. A similar effect is seen also with statutory increases in the minimum wage, taxes and insurance, introduced by the government regardless of the situation on the labour market and the state of the economy. It is worth noting some research that is referenced in the book *Work in the 21st Century: Formal and Informal Dimensions* [Mrozowiecki 2017], which analyses case studies on work outside of formal employment for graduates of the University of Zielona Góra in Poland, and about family carers of the elderly as a source of informal employment for migrants. This, too, contributes to the shadow economy.

## MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHOD

The most important reasons for undertaking research in this area were: to raise public awareness of the existence of an undeclared work zone on the labour market; to evaluate the role that the grey economy plays on the local market; to diagnose some of the most important advantages and disadvantages of unregistered work.

Taking into account the above objectives, the aim of the research was to identify the nature of unregistered work and analyse its economic and social role. The gathering of information on the issues under study was primarily facilitated by empirical research designed and conducted by the authors. A survey of opinions from a sample of socially excluded people who were registered at the Labour Office in Płock was also used. The analysis included the results of surveys received from 350 respondents, including 195 surveyed using a PAPI paper questionnaires and 155 people surveyed using a CAWI questionnaire posted on the Internet (additionally, a campaign on Facebook) in 2018.

The specific aims of the empirical research was:

- to understand the disadvantages as well as the advantages of unregistered work;
- the role of unregistered employment in a group of socially excluded people.

Statistical tests and descriptive methods were used. The authors present the results in tabular, graphic and descriptive form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of unregistered work

Unregistered employment is understood as work performed without an employment relationship, such as a contract between the employer and employee. Unregistered work is very often undertaken by people with lower qualifications and levels of education as well as by immigrants from less developed countries. The existence of such employment is usually in response to high labour costs, high unemployment and bureaucratic inconveniences of running a business. The famous “tax wedge”, the almost double difference between what the employee gets “in his hand” and the costs incurred by the employer for his / her employment, is an incentive to pay the employee all or part of the salary informally in cash. Due to the bureaucratic burden, high taxes and social security contributions, many people work without being registered. Despite the fact that it significantly increases the number of jobs, it is certainly not a part of social and economic progress. It is rather a method of survival both for some employers and for employees who have little to no chance on the formal labour market.

### Definition of social exclusion

The term social exclusion was probably first used in R. Lenoir’s 1974 publication *Les Exclusives* to describe people who do not participate in social or economic development [Broda-Wysocki 2012]. The concept of social exclusion includes three important dimensions [Sobczak 2016]:

- exclusion from the labour market and loss of social ties;
- loss of participation, e.g., consumption, due to lack of money;
- in a statistical sense, exclusion is a sequence of progressive changes or limitations in the possibilities of participating in economic, political, cultural or social life; it is not an irreversible process.

### Advantages of working outside of official registration

As was mentioned above, the survey results concerned a population of 350 respondents. Based on the likelihood ratio, no statistically significant correlation was found between the sex of the subjects and age,  $\chi(4) = 2.39, p > 0.05$ . Most of the respondents were between 23–35 years old. For the purposes of subsequent analyses, the respondents were divided into two age groups, i.e. a group of people up to 35 years of age, and a group of people aged 36 and over. The analyses included the answers of the respondents in the entire sample and the verification of the statistical significance of the dependence between the answers provided by gender, age, education and the length of registration in the Employment Office. The value of 0.05 was conventionally adopted as the threshold of statistical significance. The statistical significance of the analysed relationships was tested on the basis of the likelihood ratio. Selected data are presented in tables and graphs. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for assessing the benefits of taking unregistered work.

The highest values of grades were obtained for treating unregistered work as a means of subsistence, a means of improving financial condition and reducing poverty.

Table 2 presents the values of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was used to analyse the statistical significance of gender differences in the obtained scores.

**Table 1.** Evaluation of the advantages of undertaking unregistered work

<b>Advantages</b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>	Min	Max
<b>Source of livelihood</b>	<b>4.17</b>	1.78	1	6
Neutralization of the effects of unemployment	3.09	1.66	1	6
Protection against loss of qualifications	2.94	1.70	1	6
A chance to gain new qualifications	3.43	1.78	1	6
<b>Poverty reduction</b>	<b>4.00</b>	1.79	1	6
Weaker pressure on using social assistance	3.16	1.74	1	6
Promoting the integration of the unemployed	2.91	1.62	1	6
Source of raising capital, which may lead to legalization of operations in the future	3.32	1.71	1	6
Type of initial selection of job candidates	2.91	1.63	1	6
Operating costs reduction	3.87	1.70	1	6
Increasing the competitiveness of companies on product markets	3.15	1.53	1	6
<b>Improving the financial condition of households</b>	<b>4.09</b>	1.62	1	6
Increasing global demand	2.92	1.45	1	6
Payment of indirect taxes	3.02	1.57	1	6
Unemployment reduction	3.46	1.67	1	6

*M* – average value; *SD* – standard deviation; min – minimum value; max – maximum value

Source: Based on data from [Szewczyk-Jarocka 2020a].

**Table 2.** Analysis of the statistical significance of gender differences in the assessment of the advantages of undeclared work

<b>Advantages</b>	<b><i>U</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Source of livelihood</b>	11320.00	0.161
Neutralization of the effects of unemployment	11013.00	0.066
Protection against loss of qualifications	11846.50	0.924
A chance to gain new qualifications	11397.50	0.197
<b>Poverty reduction</b>	<b>9304.50</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>Weaker pressure on using social assistance</b>	<b>10479.00</b>	<b>0.015</b>
Promoting the integration of the unemployed	12123.50	0.688
Source of raising capital, which may lead to legalization of operations in the future	12321.50	0.820
Type of initial selection of job candidates	11186.50	0.360
Operating costs reduction	11228.50	0.390
Increasing the competitiveness of companies on product markets	11312.50	0.452
<b>Improving the financial condition of households</b>	<b>10155.50</b>	<b>0.026</b>
Increasing global demand	10748.50	0.508
Payment of indirect taxes	11166.00	0.918
Unemployment reduction	10262.00	0.171

*U* – Mann-Whitney U test value; *p* – two-sided statistical significance

Source: Based on data from [Szewczyk-Jarocka 2020a].

Statistically significant differences were obtained between men and women as to the assessment of the benefits of unregistered work, such as poverty reduction, weakening the pressure on using social assistance and improving the financial condition of households. The average frequency assessment values obtained in the group of women were higher than the values obtained in the group of men.

Table 3 presents the values of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which was used to analyze the statistical significance of intergroup differences in the received grades depending on the level of education of the respondents.

Statistically significant intergroup differences were obtained in terms of assessments of unregistered work as a source of income, a measure to neutralize the effects of unemployment, reduce poverty, reduce operating costs, improve the financial condition of households, and reduce unemployment.

### Disadvantages of working without official registration

In the following considerations, an attempt was made to diagnose the disadvantages of the work performed outside of official work registration.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for the assessment of disadvantages in undertaking unregistered work.

The highest values were obtained for: lack of social security, risk of losing the right to old-age and disability pensions, and complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions.

Table 5 presents the values of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was used to analyse the statistical significance of differences by sex in the obtained scores.

Statistically significant differences between women and men in terms of the disadvantages of undeclared work were obtained, such as: no social

**Table 3.** Analysis of statistical significance of gender differences in the assessment of the advantages of unregistered work depending on the education level of the respondents

Advantages	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
<b>Source of livelihood</b>	<b>12.71</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<b>Neutralization of the effects of unemployment</b>	<b>11.34</b>	<b>0.003</b>
Protection against loss of qualifications	0.32	0.851
A chance to gain new qualifications	3.98	0.137
<b>Poverty reduction</b>	<b>9.26</b>	<b>0.010</b>
Weaker pressure on using social assistance	4.18	0.124
Promoting the integration of the unemployed	0.15	0.927
Source of raising capital, which may lead to legalization of operations in the future	1.83	0.401
Type of initial selection of job candidates	0.78	0.678
<b>Operating costs reduction</b>	<b>22.46</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Increasing the competitiveness of companies on product markets	5.63	0.060
<b>Improving the financial condition of households</b>	<b>6.23</b>	<b>0.044</b>
Increasing global demand	1.13	0.569
Payment of indirect taxes	3.65	0.161
Unemployment reduction	<b>6.32</b>	<b>0.043</b>

$\chi^2$  – Kruskal-Wallis H test value; *p* – two-sided statistical significance

Source: Based on data from [Szewczyk-Jarocka 2020a].

**Table 4.** Assessment of disadvantages of unregistered work

Disadvantages	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
<b>No social security</b>	<b>4.60</b>	1.78	1	6
No employee privileges	4.45	1.74	1	6
Inability to participate in the decision-making process	3.38	1.72	1	6
<b>The risk of losing the right to a retirement/pension</b>	<b>4.68</b>	1.68	1	6
<b>Complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions</b>	<b>4.77</b>	1.64	1	6
Calculation of retirement and disability benefits on the basis of contributions from the minimum permissible income	4.32	1.81	1	6
Reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system	3.50	1.79	1	6
Distortion of competition in product markets	3.36	1.64	1	6
Permissions to break the law	4.02	1.84	1	6

*M* – average value; *SD* – standard deviation; min – minimum value; max – maximum value

Source: Authors' own research based on the survey.

**Table 5.** Analysis of statistical significance of differences by sex in terms of the assessment of unregistered work disadvantages

Disadvantages	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>No social security</b>	<b>10214.50</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<b>No employee privileges</b>	<b>10198.50</b>	<b>0.004</b>
Inability to participate in the decision-making process	11960.00	0.540
<b>The risk of losing the right to a retirement/pension</b>	<b>9192.00</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>Complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions</b>	<b>10333.50</b>	<b>0,003</b>
<b>Calculation of retirement and disability benefits on the basis of contributions from the minimum permissible income</b>	<b>10130.00</b>	<b>0,003</b>
Reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system	10848.50	0,160
Distortion of competition in product markets	12096.50	0.974
<b>Permissions to break the law</b>	<b>10085.50</b>	<b>0.010</b>

*U* – value of the Mann-Whitney U test; *p* – two-sided statistical significance

Source: Authors' own research based on the survey.

security, no employment privileges, risk of losing the right to retirement and disability pensions, complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions, calculation of retirement and disability benefits on the basis of a minimum income and per-

mission to break the law. The mean values of the frequency scores obtained in the group of women were higher than the values obtained in the group of men.

Table 6 presents the values of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which was used to analyse the significance of

**Table 6.** Analysis of the statistical significance of differences by gender in terms of the assessment of the unregistered work disadvantages depending on the education level of respondents

Disadvantages	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
<b>No social security</b>	<b>22.88</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>No employee privileges</b>	<b>22.89</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Inability to participate in the decision-making process	2.02	0.364
<b>The risk of losing the right to a retirement/pension</b>	<b>13.26</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>Complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions</b>	<b>12.87</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<b>Calculation of retirement and disability benefits on the basis of contributions from the minimum permissible income</b>	<b>8.40</b>	<b>0.015</b>
<b>Reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system</b>	<b>6.44</b>	<b>0.040</b>
<b>Distortion of competition in product markets</b>	<b>7.72</b>	<b>0.021</b>
<b>Permissions to break the law</b>	<b>21.24</b>	<b>0.001</b>

$\chi^2$  – value of the Kruskala-Wallis H test; *p* – two-sided statistical significance

Source: Authors' own research based on the survey.

differences by gender in terms of the assessment of the defects of undeclared work depending on the level of education of the respondents

Statistically significant intergroup differences were obtained in terms of assessments of all defects, except for the inability to participate in the decision-making process.

The mean values obtained in the group of people with no secondary education were lower than in the group of people with higher education. This applies to the assessment of undeclared work as related to the lack of social security,  $U = 3695.00$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , lack of employee privileges,  $U = 3404.00$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , associated with the risk of losing the right to old-age and disability pension,  $U = 4131.00$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions,  $U = 4091.00$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , calculation of benefits based on minimum contributions,  $U = 4328.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system,  $U = 4051.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , distortion of competition,  $U = 3991.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and permission to break the law,  $U = 3310.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

For the majority of assessments, the average values obtained in the group of people with secondary edu-

cation were higher than the average values obtained in the group of people without secondary education. This applies to the assessment of undeclared work as related to the lack of social security,  $U = 4019.00$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , lack of employee privileges,  $U = 4385.00$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , associated with the risk of losing the right to old-age and disability pension,  $U = 4340.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions,  $U = 4530.00$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , calculation of benefits based on minimum contributions,  $U = 4663.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , distortion of competition,  $U = 4754.50$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and permission to break the law,  $U = 4168.00$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Table 7 presents the values of the Mann-Whitney U test, which analysed the statistical significance of differences between wages and salaries in terms of the obtained assessments, depending on the age of the respondents.

Statistically significant intergroup differences were obtained with regard to the grades obtained for the lack of employee privileges and the reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system. The mean values of the scores obtained in the younger age group were lower than the values obtained in the older age group.

**Table 7.** Analysis of the statistical significance of differences between the sexes in terms of the disadvantages of unregistered work depending on the respondent age

Disadvantages	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>No social security</b>	11797.00	0.137
<b>No employee privileges</b>	<b>11162.50</b>	<b>0.030</b>
Inability to participate in the decision making process	11840.50	0.201
<b>The risk of losing the right to a retirement/pension</b>	12179.50	0.358
<b>Complete lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions</b>	12125.50	0.279
Calculation of retirement and disability benefits on the basis of contributions from the minimum permissible income	12419.50	0.581
<b>Reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system</b>	<b>10517.50</b>	<b>0.028</b>
Distortion of competition in product markets	11828.00	0.450
Permissions to break the law	11450.50	0.217

*U* – value of the Mann-Whitney U test; *p* – two-sided statistical significance

Source: Authors' own research based on the survey.

## CONCLUSIONS

To work outside of official registration is to work without establishing an employment relationship, i.e. without an employment contract or mandate contract. The authors analyzed selected advantages and disadvantages of performing such work according to the assessment of a group of unemployed workers registered with the Labor Office in Płock, Poland. A diversity of opinions was presented in the researched groups by sex, education level, age and period of registration in that Office. Depending on the group, various advantages and disadvantages of unregistered work of socially excluded people were indicated. Reducing poverty, weakening the emphasis on using social assistance and improving the financial condition of households were the main advantages of unregistered work mentioned more often by women than men. Assessment of unregistered work as a source of income, a measure to neutralize the effects of unemployment, reduce poverty, reduce operating costs, improve the financial condition of households and reduce unemployment are the main advantages of working outside of registration mentioned by persons with higher and secondary education. Neutralization of the effects of unemployment, favoring the integration of the unemployed, reducing operating costs and limiting unem-

ployment are the main advantages of working outside of official registration mentioned by the surveyed people aged up to 35 years and 36+. According to the respondents transferring indirect taxes is the main advantage of working outside of official registration.

The respondents also indicated numerous disadvantages of unregistered work. The most important are: the lack of social security, the lack of employment benefits, the risk of losing the right to retirement and disability pensions, the lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions, calculating retirement and disability benefits based on the minimum income and allowing for breaking the law are the main disadvantages of unregistered work, mentioned by both male and female respondents. Lack of social security, lack of employee benefits, risk of losing the right to a pension, total lack of health protection and unfavourable working conditions, calculation of benefits on the basis of minimum contributions, reduction of measures affecting the public finance system, distortion of competitiveness, and allowing for violations of the law are the main disadvantages of undeclared work mentioned by people with higher, secondary and no secondary education. The lack of employee privileges and the reduction of funds flowing into the public finance system are the main disadvantages mentioned by the surveyed people aged 35 and 36+.

To sum up, unregistered work, on the one hand, reduces poverty and the emphasis on the use of social assistance benefits, but on the other hand, in the long run, people working without registration lose their entitlement to a pension or retirement, which is a noticeable serious problem for those people. Therefore, it is important to raise public awareness of unregistered work, especially when the pandemic recession is causing the bankruptcy of so many businesses.

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## NIEREJESTROWANE ZATRUDNIENIE NA LOKALNYM RYNKU PRACY: PRZYPADK PŁOCKA

### STRESZCZENIE

W artykule, w części dotyczącej zagadnień teoretycznych, przedstawiono przegląd literatury z obszaru tematyki badawczej, w części empirycznej natomiast dokonano własnych analiz i ocen. Autorki diagnozują przyczyny, zalety i wady pracy nierejestrowanej. Celem badania empirycznego było przedstawienie opinii uczestników lokalnego rynku pracy na temat pracy nierejestrowanej wykonywanej przez osoby wykluczone społecznie zarejestrowane w Urzędzie Pracy w Płocku. W analizie uwzględniono wyniki ankiet otrzymanych od 350 respondentów, w tym 195 ankietowanych za pomocą papierowych kwestionariuszy PAPI oraz 155 osób ankietowanych za pomocą kwestionariusza CAWI zamieszczonego w Internecie (dodatkowo kampania na Facebooku) w 2018 roku. Analiza obejmuje rozkład odpowiedzi na pytanie ankietowe wraz z weryfikacją istotności statystycznej między odpowiedziami a określonymi zmiennymi, takimi jak wykształcenie, płeć i grupa wiekowa.

**Słowa kluczowe:** praca nierejestrowana, osoby wykluczone społecznie, wady i zalety pracy nierejestrowanej, badania opinii