

UNEMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS IN POLAND

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Abstract: The deagrarization process which manifests itself through the systematic decreasing of the role of agriculture in the productive involvement of human labour, as well as providing income for maintaining the rural population is progressing in the Polish countryside. Statistical data, regardless of the source, shows an unfavourable situation on the labour market for the population residing in rural areas. In the recent years, the number of persons registered as being unemployed increased. At the end of 2011, registered unemployment in rural areas achieved a level of 874.5 thousand persons, and the residents of the rural areas constituted 44.11% of all the registered unemployed. Unemployment in rural areas is a derivative of unemployment in the entire economy, the low mobility of rural residents, as well as the limited possibilities of the labour market in rural areas. It differs from unemployment in urban areas. It is of a more permanent nature, and the labour market is not as flexible. Among the unemployed in rural areas, the non-agricultural population (not having farms) is in a much worse situation as compared to the population connected with agriculture.

Key words: unemployment, unemployment structure, rural areas, labour market

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of unemployment has been known since the times of the classical economics. The meaning of unemployment was introduced to literature on the subject by J.A. Hobson in the middle of the 1890s and was described in numerous economic works [Budnikowski 2009, Hall and Taylor 2009, Kwiatkowski 2009, Klembowska 2012]. Factors of an economic nature, and also of a political, demographic, cultural and institutional background are indicated first and foremost as reasons for the present employment crisis and mass unemployment. Globalization processes, which are accompanied by the opening of domestic markets, a rise in competitiveness, work efficiency, world production, international trade and foreign investments, have an undoubted impact on the labour market. As a result of research – technical progress, a change in the employment structure has taken place as well as in the demand for labour and its nature. Academic and infor-

mational potential, the education level of a given society as well as access to information play an increasing role in the balance of power in the economy and the terms of its functioning. Unemployment transformed from a transitional phenomenon, being the result of subsequent economic crises, into a permanent structural phenomenon, which can clearly be seen in countries possessing a market economy. Unemployment to a large extent also touches rural areas. In Poland in the year 2011, rural areas take up 93.1% of the area of the country and are inhabited by 15,152.6 thousand persons, i.e. 39.3% of the total population [Central Statistical Office 1994–2011].

Poland's political transformation brought about many new processes of a social and economic nature, and has also energized the previously occurring phenomena on many occasions. The Polish rural areas have felt these changes in an acute manner, as the agricultural farms have been treated in a manner similar to non-agricultural enterprises. The specific traits of the agricultural sector, such as low soil mobility or low pricing flexibility as well as income demand for food have not been taken into account [Czyżewski 2010]. The transformation has disclosed an excess workforce involved in agricultural production in Poland, which is not conducive to the agrarian structure as well as effective management, and the accompanying phenomenon of unemployment is not conducive to limiting employment in agriculture.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The basic objective of the article is the analysis of unemployment in rural areas in Poland. The paper concentrates on the discussion of the level of unemployment in Poland from 1994–2011, with a specific emphasis on rural areas. The reasons for its occurrence are also presented. The unemployment structure in Polish rural areas, its spatial differentiation and actions aimed at its limitation have been analyzed. An analysis of Polish and foreign literature was conducted and data from the Central Statistics Office and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was used.

It is not easy to come up with an explicit definition of the term unemployment as it is defined differently depending on the source. The occurrence of this phenomenon is connected with the lack of employment and takes place when the demand for labour is less than its supply and persons capable and willing to work cannot find employment. This phenomenon means the movement of labour resources from the production sphere to that of professional inactivity [Kabaj 1993].

Two main sources of data on unemployment exist in Poland. The first one is the reports of the labour offices on the topic of registered unemployment, which defines unemployment in accordance with the provisions of the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions [Act on the Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions]. The second source is the quarterly results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The aim of this research is to obtain information on the size and structure of the labour force. As a result of the research, the number of persons who are professionally active, meaning the number of persons working and those unemployed as well as the number of professionally inactive persons, meaning those who are not working and who are not in-

terested in working. The unemployment level is also estimated¹. The level of unemployment is also the subject of research conducted within the framework of the national census and agricultural registry. A significant problem is the fact of the existence of hidden unemployment in the households, which is a phenomenon that is difficult to diagnose².

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unemployment phenomenon characteristics

The level of unemployment registered by labour offices in the past two decades has been subject to significant fluctuation. In the middle of the 1990s, unemployment has become a permanent structural phenomenon in Poland, and in the years 1993–1994, it reached a level of almost 3 million persons. Decreasing the level of unemployed to a level below 2 million took place towards the end of the 1990s, however in 2003 it reached a level of almost 3.2 million persons. From that moment until 2008, a steady decrease in the number of unemployed was noted, however the world economic crisis changed these favourable tendencies and in consequence, at the end of 2011 – 1,982.7 persons were registered at labour offices and the level of unemployment amounted to 12.5%. Data on the number of registered unemployed in Poland in total as well as in a division into rural areas and the urban areas in the years 1994–2011 according to the status as at the end of the reporting period indicated in Figure 1.

The unemployment in rural areas was subject to similar changes. In the middle of the 1990s, unemployed residents of rural areas in the amount of 1,157.9 thousand persons constituted 40.8% of all registered unemployed persons in Poland. In subsequent years, the rural labour market was characterized by a decreasing tendency in the number of unemployed persons (similarly as the total unemployment). The dynamic increase in unemployment in rural areas took place towards the end of the 1990s and in 2002 reached a level of over 1.3 million persons. In the years 2003–2008, a decrease in the number of persons unemployed in rural areas was noted, however this dynamic was smaller than it was in urban areas. In subsequent years, the number of persons registered as being unemployed increased. At the end of 2011, registered unemployment in rural areas achieved a

¹The level of unemployment is the percentage share of the number of unemployed in the number of the professionally active population (i.e. the employed and the unemployed). In the event of registered unemployment the definition refers to unemployed persons registered in the powiat (district) labour offices and the professionally active being the sum of the registered unemployed persons and those working in the public and private sector (the number of employed persons does not take persons performing their active military services or employees of the budget entities conducting business activities in the scope of national defence and public safety, into consideration). In the event of the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the definition regards unemployed persons and those who are professionally active in accordance with the definitions accepted in this research.

²Estimated data describing unregistered unemployment in rural areas indicate different values, even up to 1.5 million unemployed. See [Duczowska-Małysz 2009]; In Poland, owners of farms with an arable land area above 2 equivalent ha cannot register as being unemployed. In accordance with the estimate on this account, ca. 1 million persons remain without employment [Kociszewska 2012].

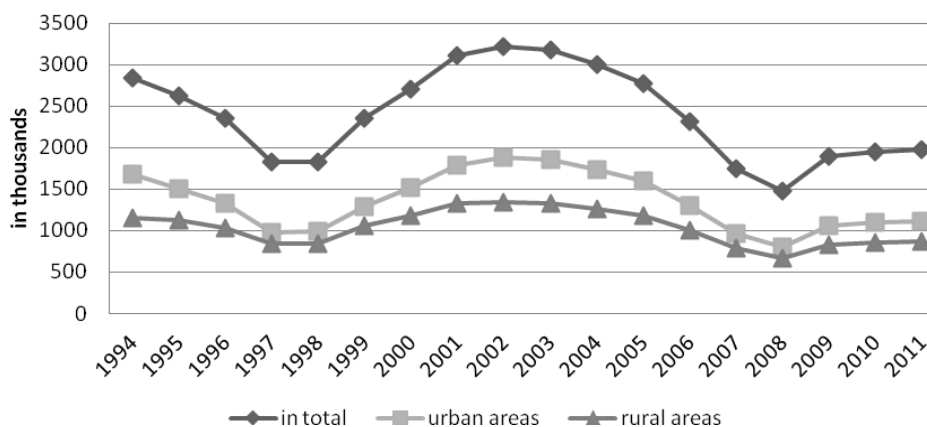


Fig. 1. The number of registered unemployed persons in Poland in 1994–2011 according to the status as at the end of the reporting period

Source: Own study on the basis of Central Statistical Office (GUS) data.

level of 874.5 thousand persons, and the residents of the rural areas constituted 44.11% of all the registered unemployed.

Results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed a slightly different level of unemployment in rural areas in the researched period. Data regarding the number of unemployed persons in Poland according to the LFS in total as well as in a division into the rural and urban areas in the years 1994–2011 according to the status as at the end of the reporting period indicated in Figure 2.

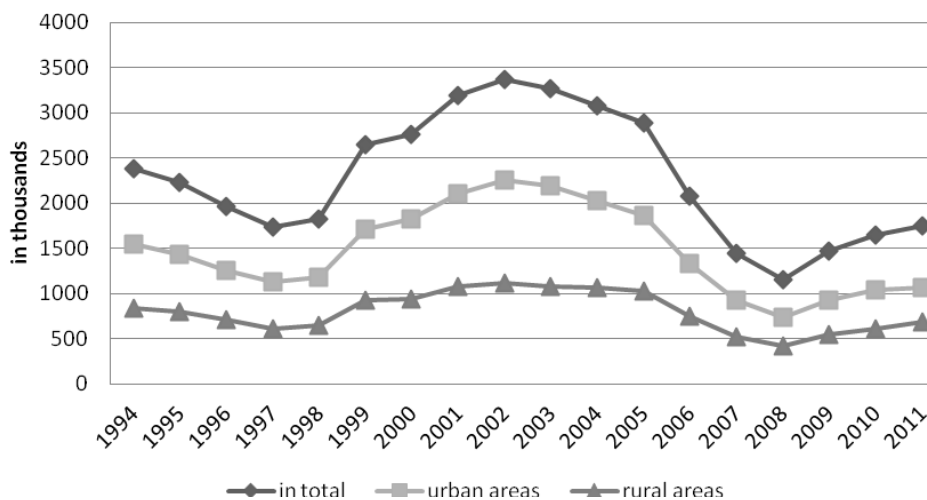


Fig. 2. The number of unemployed persons in Poland according to the LFS in 1994–2011 according to the status as at the end of the reporting period

Source: Own study on the basis of Central Statistical Office (GUS) data.

Divergence in data on the topic of unemployment according to labour offices and according to the LFS results first and foremost from the methodological differences, including the definitions of unemployed persons. The definition of the term unemployed accepted by the LFS is based on international standards, and is more rigorous and is connected with the need to register in a labour office. For example the LFS does not consider the partially redundant labour force in agricultural farms in the number of the unemployed, which in the case of Polish farms suffering from a surplus of the labour force is a significant issue. A part of the unemployment in rural areas cannot be disclosed by labour office registers, as in accordance with the provisions, an unemployed person is someone, who is not the owner or possessor of an agricultural property with an arable land area exceeding 2 equivalent ha. Both studies indicate similar tendencies in changes of the researched phenomenon, however in the periods of a favourable economic development and recovery, the unemployment in rural areas decreased at a lower rate than in urban areas, and in 2011 the share of registered unemployed persons in rural areas in the total number of unemployed increased in relation to the previous year.

Unemployment in Poland, also at rural areas, is characterized by a significant territorial differentiation, which mainly results from the asymmetrical social – economic development of the regions in Poland, the various geographic locations, and also the uneven advancement of the restructuring and privatization processes in the economy. At the end of 2011 residents of the rural areas constituted from 21.8% to 62.4%, depending on the province, in the total number of unemployed persons. The following provinces are characterized by a relatively small fraction of unemployed persons residing in rural areas in relation to the remaining provinces (voivodeships): Śląskie (21.8%), Łódzkie (33.5%), Podlaskie (34.1%) and Dolnośląskie (35.7%). However, a large fraction of unemployed residing in rural areas was noted in the Podkarpackie (62.4%), Świętokrzyskie (55.6%), Małopolskie (55.5%) and Lubelskie (54.4%). What is characteristic is that these provinces also possess the highest share of the population living in rural areas in relation to the total number of the population [Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2012].

The variance of unemployed residing in rural areas according to selected traits

Unemployment in rural areas is a derivative both of unemployment in the entire economy as well as the low mobility of rural residents as well as the limited possibilities of the labour market in rural areas [Bański 2006]. The deagrarization process which manifests itself through the systematic decreasing of the role of agriculture in the productive involvement of human labour as well as the provision of income for maintaining the rural population is progressing in the Polish countryside. An important problem of unemployment at the Polish rural areas is remaining without employment for a long period of time. According to the statutory provisions, someone recognized as being long-term unemployed is someone who remains in the district labour office registers for a total of over 12 months within the last two years, with the exclusion of periods of conducting internships and professional training and education for adults. In Poland at the end of 2011, the long-term unemployed in rural areas constituted 51.8% (452.8 thousand) of the total unemployed population in the rural areas. The level of unemployment in this category

of persons in comparison to the previous years has increased by 43.6 thousand persons, hence by 10.6% [Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2012].

The number of unemployed persons in rural areas is not a homogenous group. It possesses a differentiated structure, which may be analyzed from the point of view of various criteria. The rural population can be divided into two categories:

- the population connected with agricultural farms, i.e. persons residing in rural areas, being members of a household with the user of an agricultural farm or an agricultural plot;
- population not connected with agriculture – i.e. persons residing in the countryside, being members of a household in which no member is a user of an agricultural farm or an agricultural plot.

Hence, differences exist between them in the scope of labour relationships. At the end of 2006, the level of unemployed amount the population connected with agriculture amounted to 6.5% and among the population not connected with agriculture – 17.3%. In 2011, the level of unemployment for these two groups amounted to 5.8% and 13.7% respectively. One could notice favourable changes in this scope, although unemployment for non-agriculture residents in rural areas is maintained at a much higher level.

The statistical data analysis also shows that a significant differentiation of the number of unemployed persons exists from the point of view of indicated traits: age, gender, education. Significant differences between the structure of the unemployed on urban and rural areas are noticeable. The structure of unemployment from the point of view of selected traits is also changing. Selected characteristics of the unemployed in rural areas in Poland in 2006 and 2011 are presented in Table 1.

The analysis of data regarding the unemployed according to the LFS allows for the statement that in 2011, the decrease in unemployment was greater in urban areas (19.73%) than in rural areas (8.56%) as compared to 2006. In both of the researched years, unemployment in a similar scope touched women as well as men. Structural changes of unemployed persons according to age groups showed a similar direction both in rural areas as in urban areas. An especially large increase in unemployment was noted in rural areas in the 25–34 and the 55–74 year old age group. In the 55–74 year old age group noted a greater increase in the number of unemployed persons in urban areas (54.05%) than in rural areas (40.60%) in 2011 as compared to 2006. In the case of unemployed persons aged from 25–34 years, the increase in the share in 2011 as compared to 2006 was greater in rural areas (23.57%) than in urban areas (0.96%). The share of the remaining age groups in the total number of unemployed persons has decreased.

In the researched years, the greatest number of unemployed persons both in urban and rural areas had a post-secondary, secondary vocational and basic vocational education. The number of unemployed persons with a higher education increased in the largest degree. In urban areas their share increased by 50.30% and in rural areas by 68.24% from 2011 in comparison to 2006. The greatest decrease in the share of the unemployed in these years took place among persons with a post-primary, primary and incomplete primary education (by 11.79% in urban areas and by 16.61% in rural areas) as well as with a basic vocational education (by 11.94% in urban areas and 12.44% in rural areas). This phenomenon is undoubtedly connected with the process of changing the education structure the urban and rural areas residents.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of unemployed persons in rural areas in Poland compared to unemployment in urban areas in 2006 and 2011

Selected data	Structure for the year				Dynamics	
	2006		2011		urban areas	rural areas
	urban areas	rural areas	urban areas	rural areas		
The total number of unemployed according to the LFS (in thousands)	1328	748	1066	684	80.27	91.44
According to age in (%)	×	×	×	×	×	×
15–24 years old	22.44	31.55	20.92	30.41	93.22	96.38
25–34 years old	28.99	26.74	29.27	33.04	100.96	123.57
35–44 years old	19.20	19.52	18.86	16.96	98.20	86.89
45–54 years old	22.36	18.32	20.17	14.18	90.18	77.43
55–74 years old	7.00	3.74	10.79	5.26	154.05	140.60
According to gender (%)	×	×	×	×	×	×
Men	49.17	49.20	49.62	49.42	100.92	100.44
Women	50.83	50.80	50.38	50.58	99.11	99.57
According to education in (%)	×	×	×	×	×	×
Higher	11.67	6.95	17.54	11.70	150.30	168.24
Post-secondary and secondary vocational	27.11	25.13	25.61	27.05	94.47	107.61
Secondary – general studies	12.42	8.96	13.79	10.67	110.99	119.15
Basic vocational	34.94	40.24	30.77	35.23	88.06	87.56
Post-primary, primary and incomplete primary	13.93	18.58	12.29	15.50	88.21	83.39
The total number of unemployed registered in the labour office in thousands from which:	930	602	691	472	74.30	78.41
Taking an unemployment benefit in (%)	11.18	9.14	18.09	14.19	161.76	155.37
Average time for searching for a job (months)	17.9	19.4	11.1	11.2	62.01	57.73

Source: Own study on the basis of Central Statistical Office (GUS) data.

The manner of combating unemployment in rural areas

A majority of countries in the world, especially those that possess a market economy take efforts to combat the problem of unemployment. Such actions are conducted first and foremost in the economic sphere, i.e. through maintaining an economic increase or maintaining and creating new jobs. In the social sphere, these actions are first and foremost aimed at reducing the level of unemployment, decreasing the level of persons without employment, and also decreasing the negative social effects caused by the occurrence of this phenomenon.

In Poland from the time of economic transformation and political changes and the occurrence of unemployment (visible) various manners of combating this phenomenon were used. At the beginning of the transformation, protective actions, meaning passive methods of fighting it were used first and foremost. With the passing of time, these actions were limited as a result of financial constraints in the public finance sector, as well as psychological aspects (encouraging unemployed persons to actively search for employment). The passive methods for combating unemployment were, with time, supplemented with active forms, which nowadays present themselves as one of the most important actions connected with combating unemployment in Poland.

The activation of the unemployed entails first and foremost in the granting of assistance in getting to the job, as well as to maintain it [Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2011]. Labour market services are of great significance in this scope. The basic services on the labour market in Poland are employment agencies, professional consultancy and professional information, assistance in the active search for employment as well as the organization of training sessions. In accordance with the act on the promotion of employment and the in labour market institutions active forms of the promotion of employment and easing the effects of unemployment are: intervention works, public works, useful social works, internships and professional training and education for adults, loans for education, training sessions, scholarships in the period of continuing education, supporting business activities, reimbursement for commuting and accommodation costs and an additional unemployment prevention allowances. Passive forms of combating unemployment used in Poland include first and foremost unemployment benefits as well as pre-retirement benefits and pre-retirement stipends³.

In accordance with the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in 2011, 466.9 thousand persons residing in rural areas in Poland took up work. 52.4 thousand persons took up subsidized employment while 414.5 persons took up unsubsidized employment. In comparison to 2010, the number of jobs taken was 5.5% lower, while the decrease regarded subsidized employment, and the increase – unsubsidized employment. Other forms of activating the unemployed were i.e. internships, training sessions, professional preparation for adults, useful social (public) works. In 2011, 90.9 thousand persons residing in rural areas took advantage of this, which constitutes 61% (142.4 thousand) persons less than in the previous year. In all of 2011, one could notice a decrease in the number of unemployed residents in rural areas, who took advantage of active forms of combating unemployment [Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2012].

In 2011, the share of the unemployed entitled to receive unemployment benefits increased in comparison to 2006 by 61.76% in urban areas and 55.37% in rural areas. Despite these changes however, there is still a small percentage of unemployed persons are entitled to receive unemployment benefits. In 2011, only 18.09% registered unemployed persons received an unemployment benefit and in rural areas this indicator was even lower and amounted to 14.19%. In 2006 these variables were of even lower value – 11.18% and 9.14% respectively. The average time in searching for employment by the unemployed did improve: in urban areas it decreased from 17.9 months in 2006 to 11.1 months in 2011 and in rural areas from 19.4 months to 11.2 months.

³Pre-retirement benefits and pre-retirement stipends were granted until the end of 2002.

The absorption of rural labour surpluses outside the rural areas is difficult. This is due to the fact that the unemployed from rural areas loose to those from urban areas on the municipal local labour markets, and investors, due to the larger mobility of the labour resources, more willingly create jobs in urban areas. A large obstacle is also the low mobility of the rural population and a worse infrastructure of the rural areas [Kociszewska 2012]. For this reason, the development of entrepreneurship in rural areas, and also the appropriately used European Union Funds in order to create new jobs in rural areas is very important.

CONCLUSIONS

Statistical data, regardless of the source, shows an unfavourable situation on the labour market for the population residing in rural areas. Unemployment in rural areas is different than unemployment in urban areas. It possesses a more permanent nature, and the labour market is not as elastic. From among the unemployed persons in rural areas, the population not connected with agriculture and not connected with farms is in a much worse situation. There is an insufficient number of jobs in rural and urban areas for non-agricultural population. There is also a lack of comprehensive solutions for employing persons and their families, who lost their jobs as a result of the liquidation of previously state owned farms. In accordance with data from the LFS in 2011 the largest percentage of unemployed persons from among the rural population aged 15 and above was made up of persons with a basic vocational education, a post-secondary and a secondary vocational education 35.23 and 27.05% respectively. A similar situation is noted in urban areas, where the share of the population with this level of education amounts to 30.77 and 25.61%. A higher education is possessed by 11.70% of the unemployed in rural areas and 17.54% of the unemployed in urban areas. One can also note a tendency for the systematic increase in the share of persons possessing a higher education in the total number of the unemployed. The level of education of the unemployed residing in rural areas is lower than in urban areas.

In assessing the age structure of the rural population, it should be noted that from the point of view of labour resources, it is more favourable than in urban areas. The rural areas have a higher percentage of persons in productive age as well as in mobile age (up to the age of 44), and the percentage of older persons is lower (60 years old or above). In accordance with the LFS data, a majority of unemployed persons in rural areas, are made up of, similarly as in urban areas, persons up to 34 years of age.

The economic transformation disclosed developmental delays in agriculture and in rural areas. Former employees of agricultural farms as well as persons who lost their jobs from liquidated enterprises and institution have become part of the unemployed in rural areas. Unemployment in rural areas in Poland is characterized with territorial differentiation. In 2011 the greatest concentration of unemployment from among residents of rural areas was noted in the following provinces: Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie, Małopolskie, hence, those provinces which possess the highest share of the population residing in rural areas in relation to the total number of the population and in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province, which was impacted by the liquidation of the

state owned farms. The level of unemployed persons searching for work for a long time is increasing in rural areas, and only a small part possesses the right to unemployment benefits. Hence, the realization of the concept of the multi-functional development of the rural area, and what follows, the activation of the rural areas in the direction of non-agricultural activities, which can impact the decrease of unemployment in rural areas. The state possesses a series of instruments aimed at combating unemployment. A lot of them are used in rural areas in Poland. These actions have contributed to 466.9 thousand unemployed persons in rural areas taking up employment.

The unfavourable situation in agriculture and on the rural labour market presents itself in a direct manner at the level of the rural population's standard of living. The threat of poverty indicator, expressed as a percentage of persons in households with expenditures below the relative poverty line amounted to 25% in the rural areas in 2011, and 10.9% of the countryside's residents lived below the living wage. Other negative phenomena of a negative meaning also overlap, such as the low level of education as well as the underinvestment of social infrastructure and the lack of its adjustment to the existing needs.

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BEZROBOCIE NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH W POLSCE

Streszczenie. Na polskiej wsi postępuje proces dezagraryzacji przejawiający się systematycznym zmniejszaniem się roli rolnictwa w produktywnym angażowaniu pracy ludzkiej oraz dostarczaniu dochodów dla utrzymania ludności wiejskiej. Analiza danych, niezależnie od ich źródła, wskazuje na niekorzystną sytuację na rynku pracy ludności zamieszkującej tereny wiejskie. W ostatnich latach liczba osób rejestrujących się jako bezrobotne wzrastała. Na koniec 2011 roku rejestrowane bezrobocie na wsi osiągnęło poziom 874,5 tys. osób, a mieszkańcy wsi stanowili 44,11% wszystkich zarejestrowanych bezrobotnych. Bezrobocie na wsi jest pochodną zarówno bezrobocia w całej gospodarce, jak też niskiej mobilności mieszkańców wsi oraz ograniczonych możliwości rynku pracy na obszarach wiejskich. Różni się ono od bezrobocia w miastach. Posiada ono trwalszy charakter, a rynek pracy nie jest tak elastyczny. Wśród bezrobotnych na wsi w znacznie gorszej sytuacji znajduje się ludność bezrolna w porównaniu z ludnością związaną z gospodarstwami rolnymi.

Słowa kluczowe: bezrobocie, struktura bezrobocia, obszary wiejskie, rynek pracy

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