

Republic of Poland

Country Report

Table of contents:

Executive Summary 2
 Since the end of the Communist era, Poland has made significant economic and political progress. Poland today is a democracy with a strong free-market economy. *Read more.*

History 3
 Poland’s history as a state can be traced back to the 10th century. The Kingdom of Poland was founded in 1025, and in 1569, together with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania it formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. *Read more.*

Political Situation 4
 The Republic of Poland is a multi-party parliamentary democracy, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. *Read more.*

Economic Situation 5
 Poland joined the European Union in 2004. EU membership and economic reforms have given a major boost to the economy. *Read more.*

Foreign Policy 6
 As a member of NATO and the EU, Poland is focused on further integration into European political and security structures. *Read more.*

Relations with the U.S. 7
 Since 1989, Poland has been one of the United States’ strongest partners in Europe. *Read more.*

Relationship with Israel 8
 Poland was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Israel and to establish diplomatic relations in May 1948. *Read more.*

Jewish Community & Anti-Semitism 9
 Jewish presence in Poland was first recorded in the 11th century. By the mid-16th century, about 80% of world Jewry had settled in Poland. *Read more.*

Executive Summary:

Since the end of the Communist era, Poland has made significant economic and political progress. Poland today is a democracy with a strong free-market economy. The country joined NATO in 1999, and the European Union in 2004. Poland is focused on further integration into European political and security structures.

Poland has established good relations with its immediate neighbors, including Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, and Ukraine. In recent years, however, relations with Russia have worsened. Poland's criticism of Russian actions in the 2008 Georgia crisis, the Crimea annexation, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and Poland's pro-Western orientation have contributed to tense diplomatic relations with Russia.

Since 1989, Poland has been one of the United States' strongest partners in Eastern Europe. The U.S. and Poland partner closely together in fostering transatlantic security and prosperity, and promoting democracy in the region.

Since the fall of communism in Poland, Jewish communal life has been undergoing a revival. Approximately 20,000-25,000 Jews currently live in in the country. There is no state discrimination against the Jewish community, and the community has good relations with the government and other religious groups. However, anti-Semitic incidents, in particular desecrations of Jewish sites, continue to occur.

Statistics:

Population: 38,476,000 (July 2017 est.)

Size: 312,685 sq. km.

Capital: Warsaw

Major cities: Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Lublin, Katowice, Białystok

Jewish population: 20,000-25,000

Head of State: President Andrzej Duda

Prime Minister: Mateusz Morawiecki

Foreign Minister: Jacek Czaputowicz

Ambassador to United States: Piotr Wilczek (since Jan 2017)

U.S. Ambassador to Poland: Paul W. Jones (since Oct. 2015)

Freedom House Rating: Free

History:

Located in central Europe, Poland is bordered by the Czech Republic, Germany, Belarus, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and the Baltic Sea.

Poland's history as a state can be traced back to the 10th century. The Kingdom of Poland was founded in 1025, and in 1569, together with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania it formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

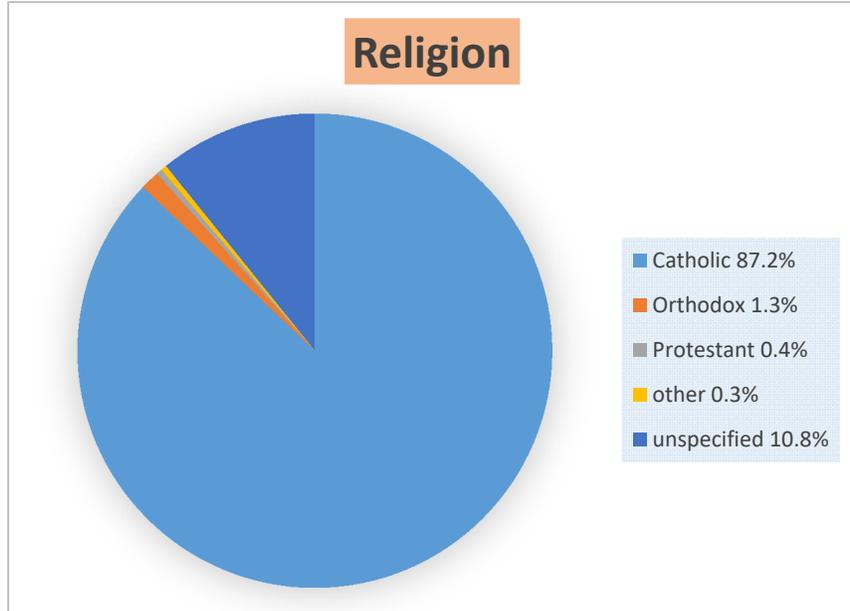
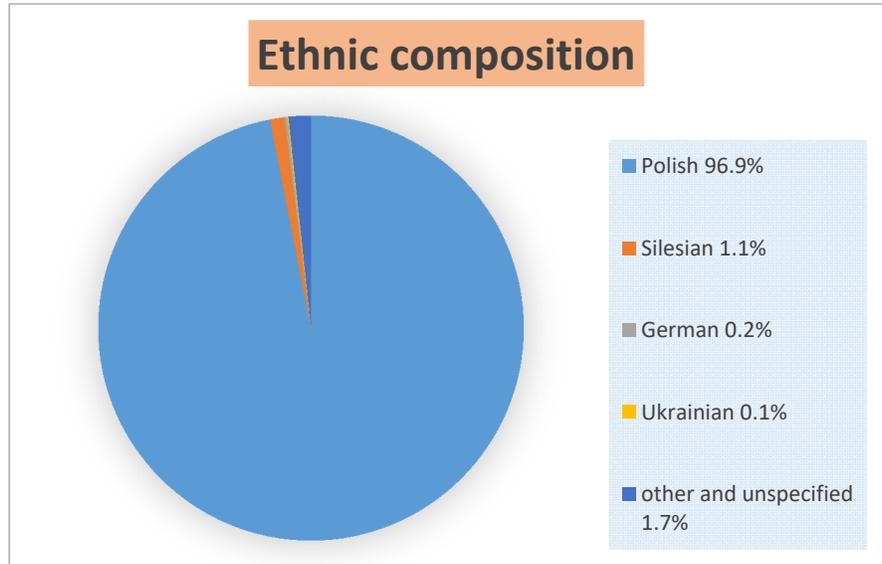
This large and powerful state dominated the region throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. At the end of the 18th century, Russia, Prussia, and Austria partitioned the country, and for more than a century, no self-governed Polish state existed.

Poland regained independence at the end of World War I, until it was overrun by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. Germany occupied all of the Poland's territory in June 1941, after the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union.

Under German occupation, Polish Jews were shipped to death camps and exterminated. Overall, about three million Jews and one million ethnic Poles died in Nazi extermination camps.

Poland became a Soviet satellite state in 1947, until the revolutions of 1989 brought the Communist era to an end, and Poland adopted a new constitution.

In 1990, Poland's government introduced a package of free market reforms. Poland became a NATO member in 1999, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary, and joined the European Union in 2004.



Political Situation:

The Republic of Poland is a parliamentary democracy, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The president heads the executive branch and represents Poland internationally, as designated by the Polish constitution. The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and can be reelected once.

The prime minister is the leader of the cabinet and the head of the government of Poland. The president appoints the prime minister, who then forms the cabinet. The office of the prime minister has greater political power than the president in Poland.

The legislative branch consists of an upper house, the Senate, and the lower house, the Sejm. The Senate has 100 seats, with members elected for four-year terms in single-seat constituencies by majority vote, and the Sejm has 460 seats, with members elected for four-year terms in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation.

The judicial branch consists of Supreme Court, Constitutional Tribunal, State Tribunal, regional and appeal courts. The president of the Supreme Court is nominated by the General Assembly of the Supreme Court and selected by the president of Poland; other judges are nominated by the 25-member National Judiciary Council, and appointed by the president of Poland; judges serve until retirement, usually at age 65, but tenure can be extended.

Up until the 2015 elections, Poland's political arena was dominated by center-right and center-left parties. The last presidential election was held in May 2015. As no candidate received an outright majority in the first ballot, a second round was held, between Andrzej Duda, a member of the European Parliament and candidate from the Law and Justice Party, and incumbent president Bronisław Komorowski. Duda won the second round with 51.5% of the votes.

The opposition Law and Justice Party won the October 2015 parliamentary elections, signaling a major political shift to the right for the country. The Law and Justice Party is distrustful of the EU, opposes joining the euro zone, and advocates for a strong NATO stance in dealing with Russia. In November 2015, President Duda swore in the new conservative government of Prime Minister Beata Szydło.

In December 2015, President Duda approved a controversial reform that makes it harder for the constitutional court to make majority rulings, despite large protests and European Union concerns about the implications for oversight of government decisions.

In December 2016 anti-government protests were held across Poland against the perceived illiberal agenda of the ruling rightwing Law and Justice Party (PiS) that threatened to reverse democratic gains made since 1989. A key concern of demonstrators was government proposals under consideration by the Polish parliament to restrict the right to freedom of assembly.

In January 2016, the European Commission began investigating a new media law, which allows the government to appoint heads of state run TV and radio, as a potential “threat to European Union values.”

In April 2017, Poland welcomed NATO troops deployed in the northeast, as part of efforts to enhance security following Russia's annexation of Crimea. In May 2017, tens of thousands of people took part in a march in Warsaw, to protest against perceived curbs on democracy imposed by the governing Law and Justice Party.

In July 2017, President Duda vetoed controversial laws that would have given the government extensive power over the judiciary.

Economic Situation:

Poland joined the European Union in 2004. EU membership and economic reforms gave a major boost to the economy. Between 1989 and 2007, Poland's economy grew by 177%, showing the fastest progress in Eastern and Central Europe.

Poland's economy ranks 19th out of 43 countries in the Europe and above the world average. Poland was the only EU member to avoid a recession during the 2008-2009 economic crisis, and the country's economy grew during the EU downturn.

Poland's economic strengths include its agricultural, pharmaceutical, aviation, steel, and machinery sectors. Another advantage for Poland's economy is a low level of public debt and being outside the euro zone. However, Poland's high unemployment rate and low wages have resulted in massive Polish migration since 2004, especially among younger workers. It has since decreased, although unevenly. Since 2008, the unemployment rate in Poland has consistently been below European average. The rate fell below 8% in 2015, leading to the possibility of a labor deficit.

Currency: 4 Polish Zloty = \$1.15

GDP: \$510 billion (2017 est.)

GDP per capita: \$29,300 (2017 est.)

GDP Real Growth: 3.8% (2017 est.)

Poland's real GDP growth accelerated in the first half of 2017 to 4.0% year-on-year from 2.7% in 2016. The growth rate and its structure were very similar in the first and second quarters: with strong private consumption and moderate public consumption, sizable restocking, and weak but gradually recovering investment. However, the contribution of net exports to growth turned from slightly positive in the first quarter to negative in the second one, as strong domestic demand translated into higher imports.

Private consumption remained the main growth driver, expanding by 4.8% in the first half of 2017. This was boosted by robust real income growth due to a record low unemployment rate of 5%, strong growth in real wages despite a temporary increase in inflation in early 2017, and the

stimulus from the Family 500+ benefit program, introduced in April 2016. Poverty and shared prosperity indicators are estimated to have continued to improve in 2017, driven by strong private consumption that was supported by a strong labor market and the continuation of the Family 500+ program.

Dynamic growth, together with legislative, organizational, and IT tax administration measures, led to an unprecedented improvement in value added tax (VAT) compliance. This was the first time since the early 1990s that the cash-based state budget had recorded a surplus in the first half of the year, accompanied by a surplus at the local government subsector, which reached 0.7% of GDP in the first half of 2017

The general government deficit is set to widen again in 2018–19 to around 2.6–2.7% of GDP, which is below the 3% threshold. The increase in the deficit is due to higher spending on account of the rollback of the retirement age and the higher co-financing of EU-funded capital spending.

Polish laws encourage foreign entrepreneurs and offers various forms of state aid. Most foreign direct investment comes from Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Germany remains Poland's biggest export market, accounting for 30% of exports. Since the beginning of 2014, the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to a dramatic reduction of Poland's exports of fruit and vegetables to Russia.

Foreign Policy:

As a NATO and EU member, Poland is focused on further integration into European political and security structures. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Poland established good relations with its immediate neighbors, signing friendship treaties with Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia.

In recent years, relations with Russia have worsened. Poland's criticism of Russian actions in the 2008 Georgia crisis, the Crimea annexation, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and Poland's pro-Western orientation have contributed to tense diplomatic relations with Russia. Poland has been a strong supporter of EU sanctions against Russia. Poland has declared that it will never recognize the annexation of Crimea by Russia.

Poland consistently supports Ukraine. However, attempts by Ukrainians to glorify the World War II-era Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), who were reportedly responsible for massacre of Poles in 1940s in Ukraine, meet fierce criticism in Poland.

Poland's Civic Platform Party-led government voted in September 2015 to approve the EU's relocation plan for 120,000 migrants, agreeing to take in more than 4,000 migrants. Following the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015, the new Polish government indicated that it would not implement the plan.

Wary of any increased powers for Brussels, Poland has been lobbying for an overhaul of the EU's fundamental treaties to return some power to member states. The Eurosceptic government of the Law and Justice party (PiS) appears more cautious of late over EU matters, signaling it wants to improve ties with Germany and France that have been strained by questions of reform.

As Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski told the Sejm (the lower house of Polish parliament) in February 2017, security policy and consolidating U.S.-European cooperation are among the priorities of Poland's foreign policy. Other priorities include bolstering bilateral cooperation with the United States, Britain and Germany, pursuing a dynamic regional policy, and expanding Poland's diplomatic presence in the world.

Relations with the United States:

The United States first formally established diplomatic relations with Poland in 1919. Since 1989, Poland has been one of the United States' strongest partners in Europe. The U.S. and Poland partner closely in fostering transatlantic security and prosperity, and promoting democracy in Eastern Europe. Areas of bilateral focus include NATO capabilities, counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, missile defense, human rights, economic growth, energy security, and regional cooperation.

Poland contributes soldiers to the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, maintains troops in the Balkans, and is contributing a full battalion to the NATO Response Force. In November 2012, the United States opened a full-time aviation detachment in Poland. Waiving visas for Polish citizens visiting the U.S. is a central subject of bilateral talks. A number of bills have been introduced in Congress to include Poland in the visa waiver program. Bilateral cooperation also touches on cultural issues. In May 2004, the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and the Polish government signed an agreement to protect cultural properties in Poland associated with the heritage of Americans.

In December 2010, President Bronisław Komorowski met with President Barack Obama in Washington to discuss economic, military, and technology cooperation issues. President Obama visited Poland in May 2011, and met with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, President Komorowski, and other officials.

In July 2015, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner led a Congressional delegation to Poland. The delegation met with President Komorowski, Foreign Minister Schetyna, Marshal of the Sejm Kidawa-Błonska, and other high-level officials to discuss bilateral cooperation.

In March 2016, new Polish President Andrzej Duda visited Washington for the Nuclear Security Summit and met with President Obama.

In March 2017, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) opened an office in Poland. AJC's new branch covers Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia and Hungary.

In July 2017, President Donald Trump visited Poland on his second official international trip. He praised Poland as a defender of Western values and democracy. During the trip, he met with President of Poland Andrzej Duda at in Warsaw. The presidents discussed bilateral energy projects, and their vision of further strengthening the North Atlantic Alliance. They agreed that NATO allies have a duty to spend 2% of their GDP on defense. Cooperation in the area of security and defense, which is the foundation of strategic cooperation between Poland and the United States, is being increasingly supplemented by initiatives in other areas.

In January 2018, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Warsaw to strengthen the strategic partnership with Poland. He also attended a commemoration marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Relations with Israel:

Poland was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Israel and to establish diplomatic relations in May 1948.

Over the years, however, relations deteriorated and were severed completely after the Six-Day War in 1967. In March 1968, Polish authorities cracked down on the country's dissident movement and increased their persecution of Polish Jews, accusing them of "dual loyalty" to Poland and Israel, and urging immediate emigration. As a result, an estimated 13,000-30,000 Jews left Poland between 1968 and 1972, losing their Polish citizenship in the process.

In 1986, partial diplomatic relations were restored and in February 1990, diplomatic relations between Israel and Poland officially resumed. In May 1991, Polish President Lech Wałęsa visited Israel, and outlined a new approach to Polish-Jewish relations in a speech at the Knesset. Official visits between the countries have been frequent since then.

After talks between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in Warsaw in January 2010, the two leaders pledged to deepen and develop Polish-Israeli relations. In 2010, the Israel Council on Foreign Relations and the Polish Institute of International Affairs marked 20 years of bilateral relations between the countries with a Foreign Policy Conference held in Jerusalem.

In October 2014, President Reuven Rivlin held an official meeting with Polish Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz in Warsaw, discussing a wide range of issues relating to Israel-Poland bilateral relations. Following the meeting, President Rivlin met with hundreds of students at the Warsaw University of Technology, and held a closed meeting with the heads of Polish universities, during which he discussed academic and scientific cooperation.

In June 2016, Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski held talks with Israel's Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman during a visit to Israel. Waszczykowski and Lieberman discussed the situation in the Middle East and the NATO summit in Warsaw. Referring to bilateral relations, the

ministers voiced satisfaction with the cooperation of the Polish armed forces with the Israeli defense forces, and the prospects for further common efforts in this area in the future, especially in the context of cyber defense and, potentially, the development of modern technologies. At the end of his trip, Waszczykowski visited the Polish Institute in Tel Aviv, where he familiarized himself with activities aimed at promoting Polish culture in Israel, including increasingly popular Polish language courses.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hosted Polish President Andrzej Duda at the president's residence in Jerusalem on January 18, 2017. Speaking at a meeting organized by the Israel Council on Foreign Relations in Jerusalem on the final day of his visit, Duda said that unlike in France or other parts of Western Europe, Jews can freely walk around openly wearing religious garb. However, Duda denied his country's involvement in the atrocities of the Holocaust, saying Poles also suffered under the Nazi regime.

In late December and early January 2017, members of Poland's 'NEVER AGAIN' Association participated in a series of meetings in Israel including the international conference of senior educators on 'The Shoah and Jewish identity' held at Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.

In February 2018, Poland cancelled a visit by Israeli education minister Naftali Bennett's visit amid uproar over his remarks regarding Polish legislation that outlawed blaming Poland for crimes committed during the Holocaust.

Jewish Community:

Jewish presence in Poland was first recorded in the 11th century. After Poland suffered great losses from the Mongol invasion, the country encouraged immigration in the 13th century, and many Jews flocked to Poland from Bohemia-Moravia, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Crimea.

By the mid-16th century, about 80% of world Jewry had settled in Poland. During the 16th to 18th centuries, a Jewish Parliament known as the Council of Four Lands (Va'ad Arba Aratsot) was the governing body for Polish Jews.

From 1648 to 1649, Bogdan Khmel'nitsky led the Ukrainian Cossack uprising against Polish rule of Ukraine, killing between 100,000 and 200,000 Jews.

Toward the end of the 19th century, a great wave of Jewish emigration occurred, to the United States, Canada, Argentina, Germany, France, and the British Mandate for Palestine (now Israel), as Jews continued to be subject to anti-Semitism under the Czars and in Poland.

During the interwar period of the early 20th century, Polish Jews were *de jure* protected under the Treaty of Versailles. In reality, their legal rights were not honored by Poland and many Jews were massacred in pogroms.

When the Second World War began, some 3,300,000 Jews lived in the country, making Poland the second-largest Jewish community in the world. Poland's Jewish population after the Holocaust was approximately 200,000 Jews. Nearly 85% of Polish Jewry perished in the Holocaust, and many Jews from other countries were deported to Poland and killed in Nazi extermination camps. At the war's end, most survivors refused to return to or remain in Poland.

From 1945 to 1959 more than 150,000 Jewish Poles emigrated, mostly to the United States and Israel, to escape rising anti-Semitism and Communism. During anti-Jewish riots, hundreds of Jews were murdered in Poland in 1944-1946. The last mass emigration took place after the Six-Day War between Israel and Arab states in 1967, during a forceful anti-Jewish campaign by Polish authorities.

Since the fall of Communism in Poland, Jewish communal life has been undergoing a revival. Poland's government has implemented legal provisions to combat anti-Semitism and rebuild Jewish cultural, social, and religious life.

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation sponsor many projects and programs focused on advocacy, education, and the rebuilding of Jewish community life in Poland.

Approximately 20,000-25,000 Jews currently live in Poland. Warsaw boasts Poland's biggest Jewish community. Smaller communities are located in Kraków, Łódź, Szczecin, Gdańsk, Katowice, and Wrocław.

The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland (UJRCP) is the umbrella organization that unites Jewish communities across the country. The UJRCP provides educational activities and social aid for Holocaust survivors, operates kosher cafeterias, renovates derelict buildings, and maintains Jewish cemeteries.

Some of the synagogues are historic monuments, such as the Remu Synagogue, the Tempel Synagogue, and the Nozyk Synagogue. The 14th-century Stara Synagogue is the oldest in Poland. Before the German invasion of Poland, the Stara Synagogue was the main religious and social center of the Kraków Jewish community. It currently operates as a museum.

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, is a cultural and educational center on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. The Museum opened in April 2013 and the core exhibition opened in October 2014, depicting the thousand-year history of Polish Jewry. The core exhibition, occupying 43,000 square feet, consists of eight galleries.

In April 2017, Prime Minister Beata Szydło and other leading politicians, including the head of the opposition Civic Platform party Grzegorz Schetyna, attended commemorations at the site of the former Ghetto. Tens of thousands of paper daffodils were handed out on the streets of the Polish capital by volunteers from the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The initiative was begun by the museum in 2013, on the 70th anniversary of the rising. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

began after the Germans launched the second large wave of deportations from the ghetto, which started on 18 January 1943.

In June 2017, the 27th Jewish Culture Festival was held in Krakow's historical Jewish district Kazimierz, to promote Israel and educate participants on its traditions. For over a week tourists could ride through Jerusalem streets in a virtual taxi, taste traditional Jewish cuisine and listen to concerts by a number of folk bands. Every year the festival culminates in a giant open air concert. The festival is seen as a symbol of tolerance, pluralism and celebration of Jewish culture.

There is currently no law in Poland on Jewish property restitution. The estimated value of property nationalized by the communist regime in Poland after World War II is \$13.5 billion to \$23.7 billion. After numerous repeated appeals from Jewish organizations, draft legislation has been completed, calling for 15% of the properties' current value to be returned to family heirs.

Eastern European countries, in particular Poland, have failed to live up to their pledges to ensure the return of property taken from Jewish people during the Second World War. The study found that Poland has failed to establish a comprehensive restitution regime for property taken either during the Holocaust or communist era. The only recourse in Poland has been longstanding provisions in Polish law, rather than any specific legislation designed to help Jewish communities. If property was taken from people in a context that was legal at the time, the authorities today are powerless to help.

Anti-Semitism:

There is no state discrimination against the Jewish community. The Jewish community has good relations with the government and other religious groups. However, anti-Semitic incidents continue to occur, and often involve desecration of Jewish sites.

In August 2011, a monument in the town of Jedwabne commemorating the mass killing of Jews was defaced with Nazi swastikas and SS signs, and covered with the words, "I don't apologize for Jedwabne!" and "They were easy to burn."

Anti-Semitic incidents have occurred during sporting events. During a September 2013 soccer match in Poznan, fans of the local club shouted anti-Semitic slogans at the visiting Łódź team and its fans. Prosecutors failed to identify the fans who shouted these slogans, and discontinued the investigation the next month. In October 2013, the Warsaw district court found 17 soccer fans guilty of hate speech for chanting in German "Hamas, Hamas... Jews to the gas [chambers]" during a 2011 soccer match between the Łódź and Warsaw teams.

In February 2013, unknown persons painted over a Star of David in a Jewish cemetery in western Poland with the inscription "Kalisz without Jews."

In 2013, the Białystok district prosecutor initiated a procedure to dismiss the head of the Białystok-North prosecutor's office. After reviewing almost 30 cases involving xenophobia or racism that occurred in Białystok between May 20 and June 26, the district prosecutor determined that the local prosecutor's office made mistakes in eight of the cases by discontinuing them or refusing to initiate an investigation.

In January 2014, police arrested six people for hanging anti-Semitic posters in Lublin, charging them with operating in a criminal group promoting fascism. One of the six arrestees, who worked at the museum at Majdanek, a former Nazi concentration camp, was immediately suspended from work. The posters featured the Star of David displayed next to pictures of individuals, including the editor-in-chief of a local newspaper, the mayor of Wrocław, and several well-known civil society activists.

A national study conducted by the Center for Research on Prejudice at the University of Warsaw has found a significant increase in negative attitudes toward Jews since 2014. The research, covering the years 2014-2016, shows that anti-Semitic hate speech is becoming increasingly acceptable and enjoys a growing popularity on the Internet and on Polish television. The study took actual examples of anti-Semitic statements found in different media and asked respondents if they found these statements offensive. In all cases, the statements were found to be less offensive in 2016 than in 2014. The difference was most pronounced among young people.

In July 2016, a Polish lawmaker from the Modern Party, which has a strong anti-racism agenda, said party leader Ryszard Petru had received a handwritten, anti-Semitic death threat whose author signed it "Sniper."

Anti-Semitic incidents occur and graffiti appear regularly in Poland, though direct attacks are rare. Police investigations of cases involving anti-Semitic and xenophobic acts often do not lead to appropriate attention and some prosecutors declined to pursue hate crime cases.

Another issue is denial by some Polish officials of Polish responsibility for the massacre of Jews during World War II. In July 2016, Polish Education Minister Anna Zalewska came under fire for remarks appearing to deny Polish responsibility for the Jedwabne massacre of 1941 and the Kielce massacre in 1946. Polish President Andrzej Duda holds opposing views to the minister and openly admitted that ordinary Polish citizens participated in the Jedwabne massacre. And in 2011, his predecessor, Bronisław Komorowski, even "begged forgiveness" for the actions of his countrymen at Jedwabne.

In March 2017, a group of Warsaw residents celebrated the first day of spring by burning the effigy of a Jewish woman. A recording of a group called the Conscience of the Nation TV features the burning and drowning of the effigy in the Vistula River. The puppet symbolizes what is ugly, cold and bad, the Warsaw group wrote in describing the event. The custom of drowning a puppet depicting Marzanna, symbolizing winter, on the first day of spring is a popular element of Polish folklore practiced especially in small towns. Marzanna has never been connected to any national

minority living in Poland. The Center for Monitoring Racial and Xenophobic Behavior informed the local prosecutor's office of the incident.

In July 2017, the prosecutor's office in the western Poland city of Wrocław issued an indictment against former priest Jacek Międlar for "public incitement to hatred based on religious and national differences." He could face up to two years in prison. In November 2016, during Polish Independence Day, Wrocław hosted the "March of Patriots." According to the prosecutor's office, Międlar in his speech to the march, "under the guise of promoting patriotic attitudes," publicly called for hatred against Jews and Ukrainians. Międlar did not plead guilty. In his statement he stated that he defended the good name of Poles, whom he said the Jews call "worms." In April 2016, Międlar in a sermon referred to Jews as a "cancer which swept Poland." The Prosecutor's Office in Białystok later found that no hate crime had been committed. He has twice been banned from entering the United Kingdom to take part in anti-immigrant marches.

In August 2017, the museum at Auschwitz criticized a right-wing television station in Warsaw that adapted the infamous "Arbeit macht frei" sign above the gates of the Nazi death camp into an illustration for a story about German reparations. The illustration for the story on Republika TV about the call by some Polish lawmakers for Germany to compensate Poland for its losses in World War II changed the words of the Auschwitz sign from "Work sets you free" to "Reparations set you free." Following complaints, Republika removed the graphic from its Twitter account but not from its website.

In August 2017, President of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland Lesław Piżewski and Warsaw community head Anna Chipczyńska sent an open letter to Jarosław Kaczyński, a founder of the Law and Justice Party. The co-authors wrote that they are "appalled by recent events and fearful for our security as the situation in our country is becoming more dangerous." The letter came amid growing expenditure by the community on security; right-wing incitement against Jews and perceived inaction by authorities on a string of high-profile incidents featuring anti-Semitic rhetoric – including by people affiliated with the ruling Law and Justice party. Earlier that month, a lawmaker for the anti-immigration conservative Law and Justice Party, Bogdan Rzonca, wrote on Twitter: "I wonder why there are so many Jews among those performing abortions, despite the Holocaust."

In November 2017, the annual "Independence March" in Warsaw drew more than 50,000 marchers, including some from extremist groups elsewhere in Europe. The march was organized by a coalition of groups, including the extremist groups National Radical Camp and All Polish Youth. The main theme of the march was "We want God!" Most participants marched with Polish flags. Some participants displayed anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim imagery, and there were slogans calling for a "white Europe," and Nazi salutes. Polish political leaders, including President Andrzej Duda and Law and Justice Party chairman Jarosław Kaczyński condemned the racist banners and chants. A November 13 Foreign Ministry statement condemned "racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic ideas" and stated that the march was "largely patriotic."

Piotr Rybak, convicted in 2017 of burning an effigy of a Jew at a demonstration against immigration, led a separate Independence Day march in the western city of Wrocław with approximately 2,000 participants. Jacek Miedlar, a former priest who co-led the march, called on the crowd to take “extreme action” against “forces of evil,” including Jews who “threatened” the state.

On January 26, 2018 members of the Polish parliament introduced an amendment to the country’s 1998 Act on the Institute of National Remembrance that has since been dubbed “the Polish death camp law” or the “Holocaust Law”. The law, which was established in 1998 to maintain World War II-era archives, now makes it a crime, punishable by fine or imprisonment for up to three years, to accuse Poland of responsibility or complicity in Nazi atrocities during World War II. It also gives the country’s Institute for National Remembrance power to bring civil charges against anyone who defames or tarnishes the reputation of Poland or the Polish people.

On February 6, 2018 following an international outcry, Polish President Andrzej Duda expressed concern that some provisions of the bill might violate Poland’s constitution. However, instead of vetoing it, he signed the bill into law and referred the provision regarding criminal penalties for using the term “Polish death camps” to the country’s Constitutional Tribunal. The Tribunal will determine whether this provision violates free speech protections and clarify what speech can be prosecuted. The law’s provision establishing potential civil penalties took effect on February 28, 2018. The law generated significant criticism from the U.S. State Department, the Congressional Bipartisan Anti-Semitism Task Force, the Government of Israel, and numerous Jewish and human rights organizations from around the world.

In April 2018, Polish nationalists protested in front of the U.S. Embassy against the restitution of Jewish property. Protest was held under the slogan “Stop Jewish property claims” and was related to a new U.S. law on restitution.