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# THE ANALYSIS OF CHANGES OF DOMINICANTES INDICATOR IN POLAND

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## Abstract

Poland is one of the most religious countries in Europe, and the number of Catholics required to attend Mass in the country is regularly analysed. The Dominicantes index, which reports the percentage of people attending Sunday Mass in relation to the number of Catholics obligated to attend Mass, is used for this study. The article analyses the variability of the dominicantes rate in Poland from 1991 to 2002. The study found that over the past thirty years, the rate of people attending Mass in Poland has been declining. In the years studied, the dominicantes rate fell from 50.3% to 28%. Although it is still one of the highest in Catholic countries. The article also analysed the differences in the dominicantes rate between different dioceses in Poland. The analysis showed that there are significant differences in the dominicantes rate between dioceses. The dominicantes index between the best and worst diocese in its range differs by 42.2%. The highest dominicantes index is characterized by dioceses located in south-eastern Poland in the Subcarpatia region. This is the region of Poland traditionally characterized by the highest religiosity.

*Keywords:* dominicantes, Poland, Catholic Church

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## 1. Introduction

Throughout Europe, one can observe a systematic decline in the importance of religious life and, consequently, changes in the area of morals. Increasingly, it is possible to observe, especially among young people, an individual approach to matters of faith. Among researchers, this is called religious selection [1-6]. The reason for such changes is the intense changes in civilization and a different approach to religiosity.

In Poland, society is characterized by the highest rate of religiosity in Europe. More than 90% of Poles declare themselves believers, and about 50% of people are regular practitioners [1, p. 13-19; 7]. However, in recent times, one

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can observe a systematic decline in the level of religiosity among the population. This is related to the dynamic socio-cultural transformations taking place in Poland [1, p. 15; 8].

This is accompanied by the phenomenon of weakening of the importance of faith and departure from the Church and abandonment of religious practices. In the Church in Poland, the problem of compulsory attendance at Mass is beginning to become apparent because one can observe a decrease in the sense of obligation of the faithful to attend Sunday Mass. According to M. Grabowska, in Poland, we are dealing with “creeping secularization” which in subsequent years may turn into “trotting secularization” [9].

Therefore, this article analyses and evaluates the participation of believers in Sunday Mass using the dominicantes index for the years 1991-2021. The dominicantes index (the name comes from the Latin dominus - Lord, dominica - Sunday), is a statistical indicator that reports the percentage of people attending Sunday Mass (on a selected Sunday of the year) concerning the number of Catholics required to attend Mass in a given area (e.g. parish, diocese, province, etc.). This indicator is used to characterize the scale of religious practices of Catholics in Poland. The survey methodology was developed by Fr. Witold Zdaniewicz and Lucjan Adamczuk in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [8, 9].

Our article asks the following research questions:

- How did the dominicantes rate (people attending Sunday Mass) change in Poland between 1991 and 2021?
- What are the differences in the dominicantes rate between different Polish dioceses?

## **2. Literature review**

Poland's society is characterized by a very high rate of religiosity as already mentioned one of the highest in Europe. According to data from ISKK (Institute of Catholic Church Statistics), there are about 32 million believers enrolled in the Catholic Church in Poland in 9666 dioceses and 666 religious parishes. Among these faithful, about 11% declare deep faith [1, 2]. The declaration of believers as to attendance at Mass is quite different. The dominicantes rate has been declining in Poland for many years. In the 1990s, the number of believers at Mass was around 50%. In recent years, the rate has dropped to about 30% [1, p. 19].

The problem of compulsory attendance at Mass is increasingly important because according to the Code of Canon Law, attendance at Sunday Mass is an obligation of the faithful [2]. In the 1983 Code of Canon Law, in canons, 1247-1248 of the Code of Canon Law, the obligation to attend Mass is enshrined. The obligation applies to all Sundays throughout the year and is mandatory for both the faithful and priests [2, 3]. According to Canon 1247, attendance at Mass must be both physical and spiritual. Physical attendance at Mass is related to being at the place where the Mass is celebrated [3-7]. The second condition for attending Mass is related to the rite. The faithful must attend a Mass celebrated

in either the Eastern or Western Catholic rite. The third condition for participation is recorded in Canon 1248, according to this notation the satisfaction of the obligation to attend Mass refers to participation on the holy day or the evening before [1-3]. According to this provision, attendance at Mass on Saturday from sixteen o'clock is counted as attendance at the Sunday Eucharist. The Code of Canon Law allows for an exemption from the obligation to attend Mass. One may be exempted in the case of illness, care of an infant or sick person, or in the case of giving aid during a natural disaster, lack of means of transportation, as well as a dispensation granted by the pastor [1, p. 184; 2-8; 9, p. 170; 10-14]. In addition to the obligation to attend Mass, the Polish Episcopate decided in 2003 those believers are also required to celebrate the following holidays: Epiphany (Epiphany), Ascension of the Lord, Easter Sunday, the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), All Saints (November 1), and Christmas [3, 4].

Even though attitudes toward religiosity in Poland are very important in society, it is increasingly evident that there is a significant weakening of faith and a decrease in Mass attendance among those who declare themselves to be practicing Catholics [1, p. 13-18; 7, 8]. Even the obligation enshrined in the Code of Canon Law to attend Mass and prescribed feasts does not cause a departure from the Church and abandonment of religious practices [1, p. 13-16; 2]. The covid-19 pandemic caused a significant reduction in religious practice. After the pandemic period, some of the faithful no longer returned to religious practices and stopped attending Mass [7, 8, 10-14].

### **3. Research methodology**

The article uses data on the dominicantes rate for 1991-2021 (thirty years) for Poland and 2016-2021 (five years) for individual dioceses. Our study used data from the Polish Institute of Catholic Church Statistics [15-21].

Dominicantes survey methodology - on one selected Sunday in a given year, a count of people attending Mass is made (usually with the help of the liturgical service). The date of implementation of the survey should not fall during holidays, festivals, frosts or other factors that disrupt the measurement, i.e. increase or decrease the attendance of people in churches. We refer to a Sunday that meets such conditions as a 'statistical Sunday' - this is usually a Sunday in October or November. The number of those obliged to attend Sunday Mass is defined as 82% of the Catholic population (living in a given area (e.g. parishes, dioceses). By 'Catholics' are meant baptized persons excluding those who have made a formal act of withdrawal from the Church. The number of Catholics in a given parish is obtained by the ISKK through the pastor.

The ratio of dominicantes is calculated according to the formula:

$$D = \frac{\textit{Attendees}}{\textit{Committed}} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

where: D - dominicantes, Attendees - the number of people attending Sunday Mass during the implementation of the survey, Committed - the number of Catholics committed to attending Sunday Mass.

The publication analysed dominicantes' data both for the whole of Poland and by each of the 43 existing dioceses. The raw data were taken from the sources provided. The data were analysed using an Excel spreadsheet. Indicators such as the rate of change of dominicantes between two consecutive years and the rate of change of dominicantes in individual dioceses for 2016-2021 were calculated from the data.

**Table 1.** Dominicantes index for Poland for 1991-2021

<b>Year</b>	<b>Dominicantes indicator (%)</b>	<b>Percentage change of dominicantes indicator</b>
2021	28.3	-8.60
2020	36.9	-1.30
2019	38.2	-0.10
2018	38.3	1.60
2017	36.7	-3.10
2016	39.8	0.70
2015	39.1	0.00
2014	39.1	-0.90
2013	40.0	0.00
2012	40.0	-1.00
2011	41.0	-0.50
2010	41.5	1.10
2009	40.4	-3.80
2008	44.2	-1.60
2007	45.8	0.80
2006	45.0	1.80
2005	43.2	-2.80
2004	46.0	0.80
2003	45.2	-1.60
2002	46.8	-0.70
2001	47.5	0.60
2000	46.9	-0.60
1999	47.5	0.90
1998	46.6	0.00
1997	46.6	-0.20
1996	46.8	1.20
1995	45.6	2.50
1994	43.1	-3.90
1993	47.0	-0.60
1992	47.6	-2.70
1991	50.3	

Source: authors own work on the basis of data from [15-21]

#### **4. Dominicantes - analysis of statistical data**

Table 1 presents data on the dominicantes index for the last 20 years - 1991-2020 for the whole country. The table also presents the dominicantes index and the percentage change in the dominicantes index between a given year and the previous year.

From the collected data, it is clear that over the past thirty years, starting from the political transformation, the rate of people attending Mass in Poland has been declining. In the years under study, the dominicantes rate fell from 50.3% to 28%. For the entire period under study, the rate fell by 22%.

It is worth noting that the decline in the rate was initially mild, as the dominicantes rate fell by only 2.8 between 1991 and 2001. In the next 10 years, the decline in the rate accelerated to 6.5% for 2001-2011, to reach its highest value over the last 10 years - the dominicantes rate fell by as much as 12.7% between 2011 and 2021.

Over the past 30 years, the ratio increased in 10 years, remained unchanged in three years, and decreased in the remaining 17 years. It is worth noting that the increases in the index, in the years in which they occurred, were small - only once did the increase exceed 2% - this occurred in 1995 when the index increased by 2.5%, and three times the index increased by more than 1%: in 2018, when the index increased by 1.6%, in 1996 (an increase of 1.2%) and in 2010 (an increase of 1.1%).

Declines in the dominicantes index as mentioned occurred more often than increases in the value of the index, also they were much stronger. The largest decrease in the index occurred in the last year of 2021 - the dominicantes index fell by 8.6% this year. Also, high decreases in the dominicantes index were recorded in the years: 1994 (down 3.9%), 2009 (down 3.8%) and 2017 (down 3.1%).

Analysing the reasons for the described situation of the declining number of people attending Sunday Mass in Poland, it is worth noting that many factors affect this decline. An important factor is the secularization of society; with technological progress and social changes, in Poland and around the world, more and more people are losing interest in religion and the Church [*Mostly true: Catholic Church loses members - Europe wide*, <https://eufactcheck.eu/factcheck/mostly-true-catholic-church-loses-members-europe-wide/>, accessed on 17.04.2023; *Pandemia COVID-19 spowodowała spadki w praktykach religijnych katolików*, 2022, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1521318%2Cbadanie-pandemia-covid-19-spowodowala-spadki-w-praktykach-religijnych>; *Catholic Church attendance on the decline in Poland*, 2023, <https://cne.news/article/2402-catholic-church-attendance-on-the-decline-in-poland>; L. Coppen, *How steep is Poland's drop in Mass attendance?*, <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/how-steep-is-polands-drop-in-mass-attendance>; *Wierzę w Kościół Chrystusowy - program duszpasterski na rok 2022/2023*, 2022, <https://episkopat.pl/wierze-w-kosciol-chrystusowy-program-duszpasterski-na-rok-2022-2023/>; M. Gambino, *Half of Catholics attending Mass 28 years ago no longer do, figures*

show, 2019, <https://catholicphilly.com/2019/09/news/local-news/half-of-catholics-attending-mass-28-years-ago-no-longer-do-figures-show/>; 22-24]. As time passes, fewer and fewer people identify with religious values and traditions, leading to a decline in the number of believers. Secularization is changing people's attitudes and values. People are becoming more inclined to seek the meaning of life in other areas, such as Science, art or politics, and less in religion. As a result, many people are losing interest in religious practices, including attending Mass [P. Orlikowski, *Kościół liczy wiernych. Z roku na rok jest ich coraz mniej. To już kryzys?*, 2021, <https://www.money.pl/pieniadze/kosciol-liczy-wiernych-z-roku-na-rok-jest-ich-coraz-mniej-to-juz-kryzys-66863-31430410784a.html>].

Scandals in the Church are also an important factor in the decline of the number of believers in the Church. In Poland, in recent years we have had many scandals involving sexual abuse in the Church, which has negatively affected the faithful's trust in the Church and the clergy. These scandals have alienated many people from attending Sunday Mass.

The number of people attending Mass is also affected by changes in lifestyle. In Poland, a lot of people work on Sundays, and more and more people are going away on weekends. As a result, many people have less and less time to attend Sunday Mass. Technological advances are also a major factor. The Internet, television, smartphones and other technological devices have become commonplace and have introduced changes in the way people spend their time. More and more people are spending time in front of a screen and less in the church [<https://cne.news/article/2402-catholic-church-attendance-on-the-decline-in-poland>].

Poland is experiencing demographic changes, including an aging population and declining birth rates. As a result, fewer and fewer young people are attending Sunday Mass. All of the aforementioned factors are contributing to the decline in the number of people attending Sunday Mass in Poland. However, it is worth noting that Poland is still one of the most religious countries in Europe, and most Poles still identify themselves as Catholics.

The secular media often tends to portray any decrease in the practice of Catholicism in Poland as a critical evaluation of the Church's position on controversial political matters, including the nation's laws on abortion and same-sex partnerships, as well as the crisis of sexual abuse by clergy [<https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/how-steep-is-polands-drop-in-mass-attendance>].

However, in analysing the causes of the phenomenon, it is worth noting that the precipitous decline shown earlier, which occurred between 2020 and 2021, may be due to the covid-19 pandemic that occurred during that time. The pandemic resulted in restrictions on congregations and church services. In March 2020, the Polish government introduced the first lockdown, which banned public gatherings, including the celebration of mass with the faithful. In the months that followed, numerous restrictions were introduced, such as a limited number of

people who can attend mass, a requirement to maintain social distancing, disinfecting hands, and wearing masks.

These restrictions significantly affected the number of people attending Mass. During the lockdown, Mass was only celebrated online, so only a few people could attend. After churches reopened on a limited basis, many people still felt unsafe because of the risk of covid-19 infection and avoided attending mass. Although churches in Poland were already open as of late 2020, further restrictions and uncertainty about the pandemic caused many people to continue to avoid attending mass [<https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1521318%2Cbadanie-pandemia-covid-19-spowodowala-spadki-w-praktykach-religijnych>].

As a result, the number of people attending mass in Poland dropped significantly during the pandemic period. At the same time, however, the pandemic caused an increase in the number of people using online mass streaming, which may indicate changes in the way people participate in religious practices.

The coronavirus pandemic has undoubtedly left its mark on the religiosity of Poles. This can be seen primarily in the exodus from the Church of those who previously practiced regularly, and the increase in the percentage of respondents declaring that they never go to church. The issue that divides Poles more is the attitude toward the Church as an institution or community, rather than the attitude toward God or personal faith. Thus, it can be assumed that the weakening of some people's religious practices was also influenced by events that came to light during the pandemic (such as scandals involving the Church hierarchy). At the same time, the prolonged restriction of the ability to attend mass, caused by the coronavirus, among people who attended church before the pandemic for cultural reasons, to preserve customs passed down from their parents, caused some of them to change their habits - to cease their practices. Those who returned to church after the pandemic were mainly those who had a bond with the church stronger than the tradition itself [*Zmiany religijności Polaków po pandemii*, 2022, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K\\_085\\_22.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_085_22.PDF)].

For this reason, it is worth analysing the situation regarding the dominicantes rate in Poland in a few years to see how much of the recent decline was caused by the covid-19 pandemic and how much is due to the factors described earlier. It should be noted here that even if the pandemic had an impact on the decline in the dominicantes index, the index shows a decreasing trend over the entire period under study, so it can be presumed that if there had been no covid-19 pandemic the index would also have declined, only the dynamics of the decline might have been smaller.

The data presented for Poland are consistent with the results for other countries. In Western European countries such as Germany, France or Spain, for example, the rates of religiosity including the rate of people attending Sunday Mass are also at a very low level and show a decreasing trend from year to year. Even in traditionally strongly Catholic Ireland, rates of religious people and religious attendance have fallen dramatically [<https://eufactcheck.eu/factcheck/>

mostly-true-catholic-church-loses-members-europe-wide/]. Also, reports from Australia, for example, show a decline in participation by Catholics in Sunday Mass over recent years. In Australia, a rate similar to that of Poland's dominicantes has dropped from a level of about 26% in the early 1990s to current values of about 14% [24]. Similar rates are found in the case of the USA [<https://catholicphilly.com/2019/09/news/local-news/half-of-catholics-attending-mass-28-years-ago-no-longer-do-figures-show/>]. These rates are at levels much lower than the results for Poland presented in the publication. The indicators cannot be directly compared between countries because not all countries use dominicantes indicators and if they are counted each country uses its own strongly differing methodology for this purpose.

From the point of view of the Catholic Church in Poland, it is dangerous that, as mentioned, the declines in the dominicantes rate are increasing - in each successive decade the decline in the rate has been greater than in the previous decade. This indicates an impending crisis for the Catholic Church in Poland. Comparing the data to other countries, still, in Poland the level of religiosity of the Catholic Church faithful expressed by indicators such as the dominicantes index is higher than in other European Union countries. However, the declining trend over the past 30 years suggests that Poland is following the path of countries such as Spain, Portugal and Ireland, which have traditionally been countries with strong Catholic religiosity and now have low rates of religious participation in the Catholic Church. In particular, it is dangerous for the Catholic Church in Poland that the greatest decline in religious practice is recorded among the

Over a long period, we are facing transformations in sociocultural patterns. Simultaneously, Catholicism and the role of religion in the public sphere are undergoing certain alterations. The religious necessities of individuals are evolving, and how religious institutions operate is also shifting.

The Polish Church leaders are fully cognizant of the decreasing number of attendees in Sunday Mass. They introduced a fresh pastoral plan named 'I believe in the Church of Christ' for 2022-2023 in November, aimed at supporting Catholics to acknowledge that despite the challenging matters, believing in and having faith in the Church is crucial. According to Bishop Andrzej Czaja, the plan's objective is to help Catholics "realize that, despite the challenging issues, it is essential to have faith in and put trust in the Church" [<https://episkopat.pl/wierze-w-kosciol-chrystusowy-program-duszpasterski-na-r-ok-2022-2023/>].

In the next part of the study, it was decided for the last 5 years to see how the dominicantes rate is shaped for individual dioceses, the reason that this rate shows significant differences between dioceses in Poland. Table 2 shows the dominicantes rate for individual Polish dioceses in 2017-2021. Table 3 shows the change in the dominicantes rate for individual Polish dioceses and the change in the rate over the 5 years 2016-2021.



**Table 2.** The dominicantes indicator in Polish dioceses in years 2017-2021.

The Diocese	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Białostocka	42.9	45.2	45.2	45.8	37.6
Bielsko - Żywiecka	46.5	46.9	47.7	47.1	36
Bydgoska	34.2	36.1	34.0	33.5	23.6
Częstochowska	32.2	33.7	34.1	33.3	24.7
Drohiczyńska	44.5	47.0	47.4	47.7	41
Elbląska	26.9	28.4	27.9	26.5	19.2
Ełcka	31.4	32.6	33.8	32.5	23.7
Gdańska	36.8	37.3	37.2	35.0	26.1
Gliwicka	36.7	37.4	37.8	35.9	26.7
Gnieźnieńska	36.5	38.3	37.0	35.4	26.3
Kaliska	41.7	45.1	43.5	42.3	31.9
Katowicka	38.1	37.0	36.7	35.5	24.4
Kielecka	38.4	40.5	41.4	39.8	32.1
Koszalińsko - Kołobrzaska	24.4	25.6	25.0	23.8	17.5
Krakowska	48.2	49.9	48.7	46.9	38.5
Legnicka	27.3	28.5	28.6	28.1	20.9
Lubelska	36.0	39.0	38.3	37.0	28
Łomżyńska	43.1	44.0	46.5	44.7	34.9
Łowicka	29.7	30.5	31.0	30.0	22.2
Łódzka	23.4	24.6	24.5	23.6	17.2
Opolska	44.6	43.8	43.7	41.9	33.4
Ordynariat Polowy WP	34.8	35.9	34.8	33.5	23.4
Pelplińska	46.4	48.5	48.9	46.6	36.1
Płocka	28.5	32.1	32.2	29.9	24
Poznańska	38.3	38.9	38.3	36.8	26.2
Przemyska	56.4	59.8	60.4	58.5	46.9
Radomska	37.7	39.8	41.5	40.0	31.7
Rzeszowska	60.5	64.1	64.3	62.1	49.7
Sandomierska	37.0	40.0	40.7	39.8	32
Siedlecka	44.7	46.8	48.3	48.1	37.9
Sosnowiecka	25.5	27.1	26.2	25.3	18
Szczecińsko - Kamińska	22.7	24.6	24.1	23.3	16.9
Świdnicka	27.0	29.6	29.0	27.7	20.6
Tarnowska	66.9	71.7	71.3	70.8	59.1
Toruńska	35.4	35.0	34.0	31.9	24.6
Warmińska	27.3	28.2	29.0	26.3	20.3
Warszawska	26.7	27.3	27.6	27.0	19.3
Warszawsko - praska	30.9	31.9	31.7	30.5	22.2
Włocławska	32.2	35.2	35.4	32.9	24.6
Wrocławska	30.6	31.7	31.4	30.6	22.5
Zamojsko - Lubaczowska	41.5	44.3	46.2	44.4	35.4
Zielonogórsko - Gorzowska	26.9	29.4	27.3	26.5	18.2

Source: on the basis of [15-21]

**Table 3.** The changes in dominicantes indicator in Polish dioceses.

The Diocese	2017 (%)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2020 (%)	2021 (%)	2016-2021 (%)
Białostocka	-3.40	2.30	0.00	0.60	-8.20	-8.7
Bielsko - Żywiecka	-2.80	0.40	0.80	-0.60	-11.10	-13.3
Bydgoska	-2.60	1.90	-2.10	-0.50	-9.90	-13.2
Częstochowska	-2.60	1.50	0.40	-0.80	-8.60	-10.1
Drohiczńska	-3.60	2.50	0.40	0.30	-6.70	-7.1
Elbląska	-2.40	1.50	-0.50	-1.40	-7.30	-10.1
Ełcka	-3.40	1.20	1.20	-1.30	-8.80	-11.1
Gdańska	-1.80	0.50	-0.10	-2.20	-8.90	-12.5
Gliwicka	-2.30	0.70	0.40	-1.90	-9.20	-12.3
Gnieźnieńska	-2.60	1.80	-1.30	-1.60	-9.10	-12.8
Kaliska	-3.80	3.40	-1.60	-1.20	-10.40	-13.6
Katowicka	-1.60	-1.10	-0.30	-1.20	-11.10	-15.3
Kielecka	-3.90	2.10	0.90	-1.60	-7.70	-10.2
Koszalińsko - Kołobrzaska	-1.80	1.20	-0.60	-1.20	-6.30	-8.7
Krakowska	-4.00	1.70	-1.20	-1.80	-8.40	-13.7
Legnicka	-3.40	1.20	0.10	-0.50	-7.20	-9.8
Lubelska	-3.40	3.00	-0.70	-1.30	-9.00	-11.4
Łomżyńska	-2.50	0.90	2.50	-1.80	-9.80	-10.7
Łowicka	-1.40	0.80	0.50	-1.00	-7.80	-8.9
Łódzka	-3.20	1.20	-0.10	-0.90	-6.40	-9.4
Opolska	-2.70	-0.80	-0.10	-1.80	-8.50	-13.9
Ordynariat Polowy WP	-2.00	1.10	-1.10	-1.30	-10.10	-13.4
Pelplińska	-3.30	2.10	0.40	-2.30	-10.50	-13.6
Płocka	-4.90	3.60	0.10	-2.30	-5.90	-9.4
Poznańska	-2.20	0.60	-0.60	-1.50	-10.60	-14.3
Przemyska	-2.10	3.40	0.60	-1.90	-11.60	-11.6
Radomska	-1.90	2.10	1.70	-1.50	-8.30	-7.9
Rzeszowska	-3.80	3.60	0.20	-2.20	-12.40	-14.6
Sandomierska	-2.60	3.00	0.70	-0.90	-7.80	-7.6
Siedlecka	-3.00	2.10	1.50	-0.20	-10.20	-9.8
Sosnowiecka	-1.80	1.60	-0.90	-0.90	-7.30	-9.3
Szczecińsko - Kamieńska	-3.30	1.90	-0.50	-0.80	-6.40	-9.1
Świdnicka	-2.50	2.60	-0.60	-1.30	-7.10	-8.9
Tarnowska	-3.60	4.80	-0.40	-0.50	-11.70	-11.4
Toruńska	-1.40	-0.40	-1.00	-2.10	-7.30	-12.2
Warmińska	-3.30	0.90	0.80	-2.70	-6.00	-10.3
Warszawska	-5.40	0.60	0.30	-0.60	-7.70	-12.8
Warszawsko - praska	-2.10	1.00	-0.20	-1.20	-8.30	-10.8
Włocławska	-3.00	3.00	0.20	-2.50	-8.30	-10.6
Wrocławska	-2.80	1.10	-0.30	-0.80	-8.10	-10.9
Zamojsko - Lubaczowska	-3.70	2.80	1.90	-1.80	-9.00	-9.8
Zielonogórsko - Gorzowska	-1.90	2.50	-2.10	-0.80	-8.30	-10.6

Source: on the basis of [15-21]

Analysis of the data collected in the tables shows that there are significant differences between dioceses in terms of the dominicantes rate. The dioceses with the highest rate for 2021 included Tarnowska (59.1%), Rzeszowska

(49.7%), and Przemyśl (46.9%). Also for the first year studied (2017), the same three dioceses were in the first places from the point of view of the dominicantes rate.

The dioceses for which the dominicantes rate is the lowest in Poland in 2021 include Szczecin Kamieńska (16.9%), Łódź (17.2), Koszalin-Kolobrzeg (17.5), Sosnowiecka (18%), Zielona Góra-Gorzów (18.2), Elbląg (19.2%), Warsaw (19.3%).

The study shows that the differences between dioceses are significant - the rate of dominicantes between the best and worst dioceses in its scope differs by 42.2%. Analysing the geographic distribution of dioceses with the highest and lowest rate of dominicantes, it can be seen that the highest rate of dominicantes is characterized by dioceses located in south-eastern Poland in the Subcarpathia region. This is the region of Poland traditionally characterized by the highest religiosity. Subcarpathia is considered the most religious region of Poland due to several factors. One of the most important is tradition and folk culture, which is still very important in this region. Podkarpacie is also one of the least urbanized regions in Poland, which contributes to the maintenance of traditional values and rituals. Many residents of Podkarpacie come from families in which religion played an important role, and the transmission of religious traditions from generation to generation is very strong there. Clergymen in Podkarpacie are often considered moral and intellectual authorities, and their influence on social and political life is strong [*Podkarpacie to ostoja katolicyzmu w Polsce*, 2013, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/rzeszow/podkarpacie-to-ostojka-katolicyzmu-w-polsce/tjx5nkq>; *Polacy coraz mniej religijni, ale ten region nadal się wybija*, <https://www.eska.pl/rzeszow/polacy-coraz-mniej-religijni-ale-ten-region-nadal-sie-wybija-aa-ZFHG-rdfW-ezna.html>; 25].

The lowest rates of dominicantes are found in western Poland and large cities. Traditionally, large cities and the western part of Poland are the most secularized regions, with an associated low rate of participation in religious practices.

Analysing changes in the dominicantes rate over the five years 2016-2021 it can be seen that there is a nationwide retreat from participation in the religious practices of the Catholic Church, which has greatly accelerated in 2021 for the reasons described previously in the publication. All dioceses surveyed, including those with the highest dominicantes rate, saw significant declines in the rate during the period studied. Declines in the dominicantes rate between 2016 and 2021 range from 8.7% to 16.6%. It is worth noting that the analysis of indicators shows that traditionally religious regions of Poland are also beginning to secularize. Taking into account the decline in the dominicantes index between 2016 and 2021, the highest was (14.6%) in the Diocese of Rzeszow, which is in second place in terms of the value of the index. In addition, the other two dioceses of the Subcarpathian region of Tarnow and Przemyśl, which are at the top of the dominicantes index, recorded significant declines of 11.4% and 11.6%, respectively, during the period under study. The research shows a disturbing trend from the point of view of the Polish Catholic Church, that even

traditionally the most religious regions in Poland are beginning to secularize. For example, K. Lesniak-Moczuk [25] wrote about the problem of the apparent beginning of the laicization of the Podkarpacie region.

## **5. Conclusions**

The problem presented in the article is very topical because it concerns the analysis of the variation of the dominicantes rate in Poland in 1991-2002. The research conducted has made it possible to present the following conclusions. Over the past thirty years, starting with the political transformation in the 1980s, the rate of people attending Mass in Poland has been declining. In the years under study, the dominicantes rate fell from 50.3% to 28%. For the entire period studied, the rate fell by 22%.

The decline in the dominicantes rate was initially mild, falling by only 2.8% between 1991 and 2001. Between 2001 and 2011, the dominicantes index fell by as much as 12.7%. The largest decline in the index occurred in the final year, 2021, with the dominant index falling by 8.6%. In addition, high declines in the dominicantes index were recorded in the years: 1994 (down 3.9%), 2009 (down 3.8%), and 2017 (down 3.1%).

Analysing the reasons for the described situation of the declining number of people attending Sunday Mass in Poland, it is worth noting that many factors affect this decline. The first major factor is the secularization of society. The second factor affecting the decline in the number of churchgoers is also scandals in the Church. In Poland, in recent years we have had many scandals related to sexual abuse in the Church, which has negatively affected the trust of the faithful in the Church and the clergy. The number of people attending Mass is also affected by lifestyle changes. In Poland, a lot of people work on Sundays, and more and more people are going away on weekends. As a result, many people have less and less time to attend Sunday Mass. Another major factor affecting the reduction in the number of worshippers in churches in Poland is demographic changes, including an aging population and a decline in the birth rate. As a result, fewer and fewer young people are attending Sunday Mass. The large decrease in the number of churchgoers in 2020 by 8.60% and in 2021 by 1.30% was influenced by the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in restrictions on congregations and the celebration of Mass in churches. In March 2020, the Polish government introduced the first lockdown, which banned public gatherings, including the celebration of mass with the faithful. In the following months, numerous restrictions were introduced, such as a limited number of people who can attend mass, a requirement for social distancing, hand disinfection, and wearing masks.

The article also analysed the rate of dominicantes in each diocese. Based on the study, it can be concluded that: the differences between dioceses are significant - the rate of dominicantes between the best and worst dioceses in its range differs by 42.2%. Analysing the geographic distribution of dioceses with it can be seen that the highest rate of dominicantes is characterized by dioceses

located in south-eastern Poland in the Subcarpatia region of about 60%. This is the region of Poland traditionally characterized by the highest religiosity. The lowest rates of dominicantes are found in western Poland and large cities.

Traditionally, large cities and the western part of Poland are the most secularized regions, with an associated low rate of participation in religious practices of about 20%. However, as the analysis showed, even in dioceses previously considered to be strongly religious, participation in Mass is also declining. This trend applies to Poland as a whole and is probably related to. However, in recent times, one can observe a systematic decline in the level of religiosity among the population and this is influenced by the ongoing socio-cultural transformation of Poland.

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