



## Young People's Vision of Professional Future – Author's Own Research Analysis by Gender

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### Abstract

A vision of the future is an expression of strategic approach to life in relation to the organization as well as people. The ability to predict and manage oneself in the professional area is defined as career path planning. The objective of the article is to present and analyse the author's own research on the identification of the state and determinants of career paths planned by young people by gender who live in Lower Silesia. The measurement was conducted by a company Ogólnopolski Panel Badawczy Sp. z o.o. [a limited liability company] using the nationwide survey panel Ariadna in June 2015. The research method was representative for a specific population, that is inhabitants of the voivodship of Lower Silesia, aged 18-28.

643 people participated in the survey. The study did not find any statistically significant differences in the attitudes towards professional future as presented by women and men in the age bracket between 18 and 28 years old. The female vision of the future relates more to the job security need. Women more frequently hold pro-social attitudes and take up social activities. In the assessment of their own competences, women judged themselves more favourably on coping with stress, while men were more likely to report here effective communication skills. It should be mentioned that surveys have their limitations, as they may reflect attitudes which are merely declarative and not real. It would be advisable to carry out a more in-depth research by developing a method based on qualitative research methods.

**Keywords:** career path, young people, vision of future, professional future.  
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## Introduction

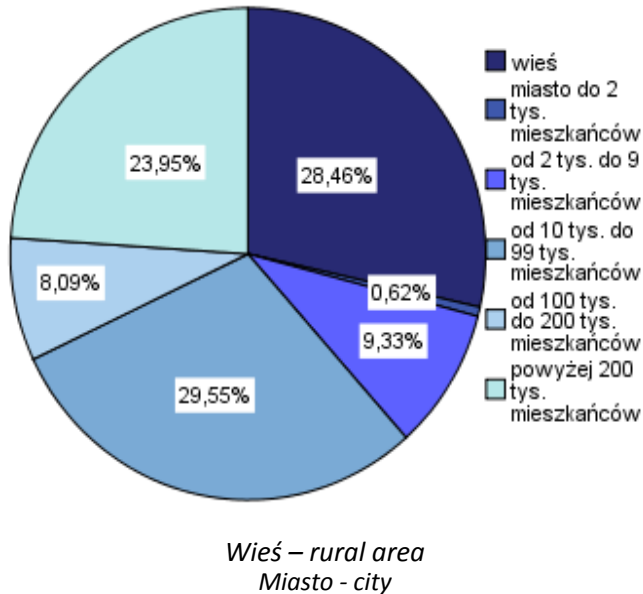
The vision of one's future illustrates a strategic approach to life in relation to the organization as well as people. Within the field of self-management it is the key success factor. People who have the ability to define their goals in the long run can stimulate their activities and encourage themselves to achieve them, which is then reflected in their feeling of satisfaction and the sense of fulfillment. The ability to predict and manage oneself in the professional area is defined as career path planning. The approach towards professional career has changed over time, with the biggest changes taking place after the 1990' in the wake of the inflows of foreign capital and a new business approach. The studies concerned with the human resources management highlight the fact that the new generations Y and Z are much more oriented on their professional development than the previous generations. With respect to these considerations, the following questions seem of interest: do young people plan their future and where do they place themselves in the area of employment? Are there any differences between young women and men as regards their visions of the future? Drawing on other surveys – Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (Centre for Public Opinion Research) (CBOS) from 2013, we can see that young people's aspirations and life goals clearly defer depending on the respondent's gender. In this respect, girls, decidedly more often than boys, emphasise the importance of love and friendship (difference of 15 p. p.), successful family life (difference of 13 p.), an interesting job – corresponding to one's interests (difference of 11 p.p), and observance of religious principles (4 p. p difference). Moreover, the aspirations reported by the males are twice as likely to be oriented towards material issues, including

making a fortune and achieving a high financial status than their female peers (19 p.p. difference). Also, boys are three times more likely than girls to be concerned with living a sexually satisfying life (13 p.p. difference) and tend to put emphasis on the importance of enjoying an entertaining social life as well as seeking political power (4 p.p. difference) (CBOS, 2013, pp. 9-10). Different employment needs depending on gender are also reported in the survey conducted by the Deloitte firm. According to its finding, both for women and men, what was predominantly important in work was that it should be interesting, provide one with the possibility of achieving "something" and further learning. For men, high wages ranked in the fourth place, whereas for women it was more important that fellow workers were nice. The most pronounced differences between the genders were recorded with respect to the importance women attached to equal treatment of people at the work place. Here the difference was nearly 20 percentage points compared to men. Moreover, job security proved to be a more significant aspect of work for women who assessed it at the level of almost 17 p.p higher than men (Deloitte et al., 2013). The subject of career planning amongst young population has been addressed in literature (Szymański 2015, Cybal-Michalska 2013, Boni et al. 2011), thus reflecting its significance. This issue was the subject of the research presented in this paper.

## Research Objective and Methodology

This article presents, from a fragmented perspective, the findings of the author's own research on career paths of young people living in Lower Silesia, accounting for gender<sup>1</sup>. The research

<sup>1</sup> The Project financed from Fundacja Santander Universidades implemented by the research team



**Figure 1. Breakdown of the surveyed group by place of residence.**

Source: Author's own study.

objective was to identify the state and determinants of career paths planned by the population of young people living in Lower Silesia.

The research tool provided a web-based survey comprising 29 closed-ended questions and additional questions used for the social and demographic description of respondents. The measurement was conducted by Ogólnopolski Panel Badawczy Sp. z o.o. using nationwide research panel Ariadna in June 2015. The research method was representative in relation to the population defined, that is inhabitants of Lower Silesian voivodship, aged 18-28. The

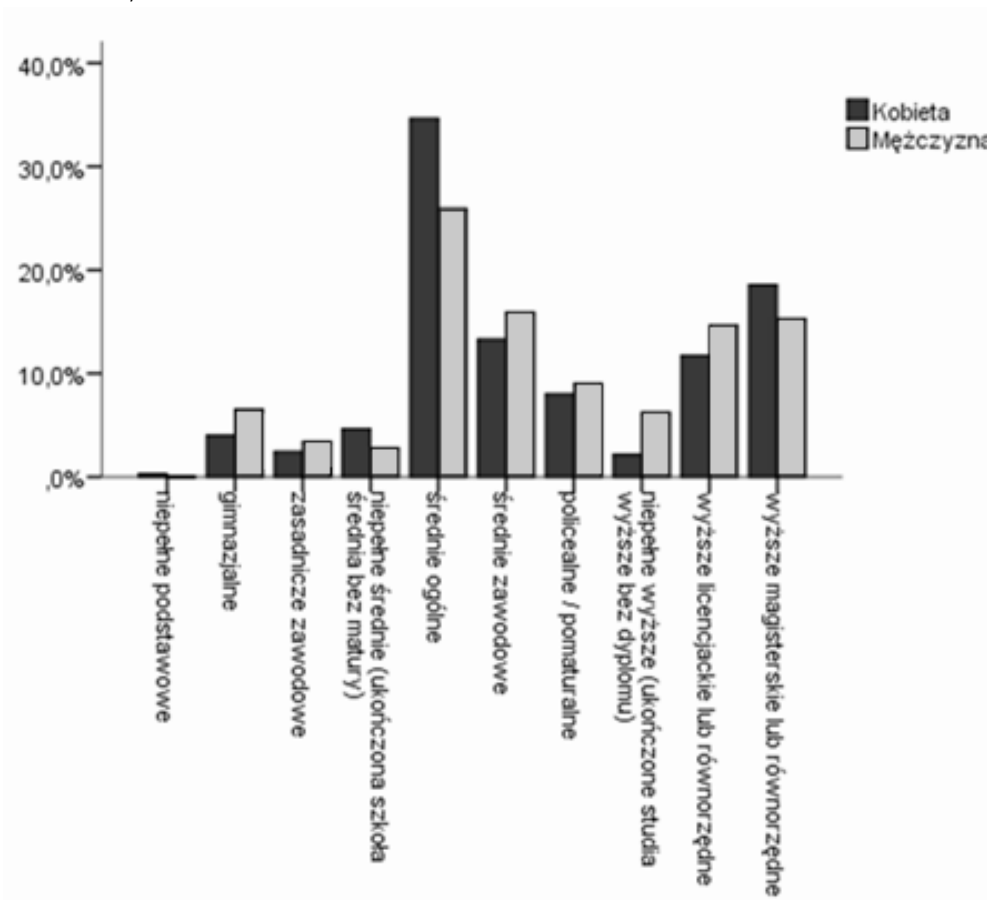
sample selection was done randomly by a means of a special algorithm<sup>2</sup>.

643 persons participated in the survey. The group included 323 women (50,2%) and 320 men (49,8%). Respondents aged 18-23 made up over half of the surveyed -53,8%, the other part, that is 46,%, encompassed persons aged 24-28. Amongst respondents, there were both people from rural areas and from the cities. The structure of the surveyed persons broken down into the place of residence is illustrated by Figure 1.

Amongst the surveyed, there were people with different levels of education demonstrated by Figure 2 as percentage, taking gender into account.

<sup>1</sup> "Przedsiębiorczość i zarządzanie" [Entrepreneurship and Management] in Wrocław, headed by dr hab. K. Safin.

<sup>2</sup> More on the subject see in: J. Pluta, K. Safin: Aspiracje zawodowe a przedsiębiorczość młodzieży.



*Kobieta – woman*

*Mężczyzna – Man*

*Słupki 1 od lewej: incomplete primary education*

*2: middle school*

*3: basic vocational*

*4: incomplete secondary education (secondary school completed without school-leaving exams)*

*5: general secondary*

*6: vocational secondary*

*7: post-secondary*

*8: incomplete higher education (without obtaining a degree)*

*9: Bachelor's studies or equivalent*

*10: Master's studies or equivalent*

**Figure 2. Breakdown of the group by education level.**

Source: Author's own study.

The analysis of the data obtained was carried out with the application of SPSS and gretl. software. In the analysis statistical methods were employed which use, for example, chi-square test of independence, Kendall's tau-b and test for proportions. The significance of the results produced was tested at  $\alpha=0,05$  significance level.

### Survey's Results and Their Analysis

Examining the current situation of respondents, one can notice that over 60% of them work, with as many as 41% having a full-time job, and 19,3 % casual work. This is a rather significant percentage, considering that respondents comprise people aged 18-28. The additional questions confirmed a high percentage of those who are both working and studying (83,18%). The outcome of the survey confirms the visible trend of combining education with gathering professional experience and entering the labour market. In comparing the responses of students by gender, no statistically significant differences were found<sup>3</sup> (Fig.3).

### The Values of Life and the Vision of Professional Future

Since life paths, including the professional paths, reflect the values of life, respondents were asked what was important for them in life. The universal values such as family happiness, health, respect and peace are important or very important for the young people surveyed (respectively: family happiness 87,09%, health 87,87%, respect 85,23%). Equally important is their professional work, which was reported as important and very important by 81,18% of respondents. Faith and religion proved to be the value which was reported as important or very important least frequently

(42,92%), as was active participation in political and social life (26,75%). The values which respondents indicated in the author's own research are similar to those from the survey conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Survey (CBOS) of 2013 (CBOS, 2013). It may come as a surprise considering the existing stereotype which sees young people as seeking fame and success that the importance of these values was indicated by no more than 41% of respondents.

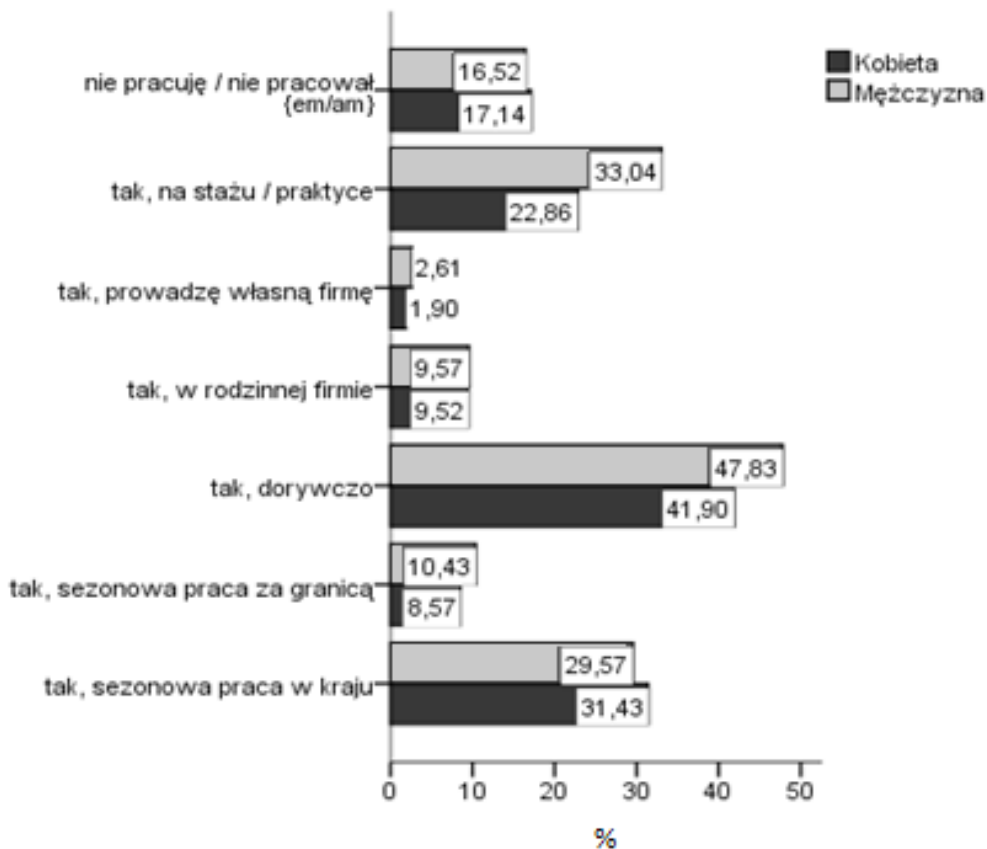
Examining the values professed by young people and taking into account gender, significant differences can only be indicated in such aspects as: honest life, professional work and respect for other people, which women were more likely to indicate as important and very important than men, with prosperity of the motherland being more frequently reported as important and very important by men than women. For other values no statistically significant differences were found<sup>4</sup>, which may indicate that the clear division between men and women as regards the social roles ascribed to them is becoming blurred. A detailed distribution of the answers provided by respondents is presented in Figure 4.

The essence of the survey was to identify potential career paths of young people. When asked *Have you had thoughts on your professional career*, a clear majority (over 92%) answered "Yes", with no significant differences between women and men.

In responding to the question, which made the visions and career path more specific, people referred positively to employment in Polish companies (two positive answers most frequently indicated). The third answer as to the question of one's vision is running one's own business (nearly 40%). In this context it is worth mentioning female entrepreneurship which is a key issue in the EU policy,

<sup>3</sup> Test for proportions,  $\alpha=0,05$

<sup>4</sup> Test for proportions,  $\alpha=0,05$



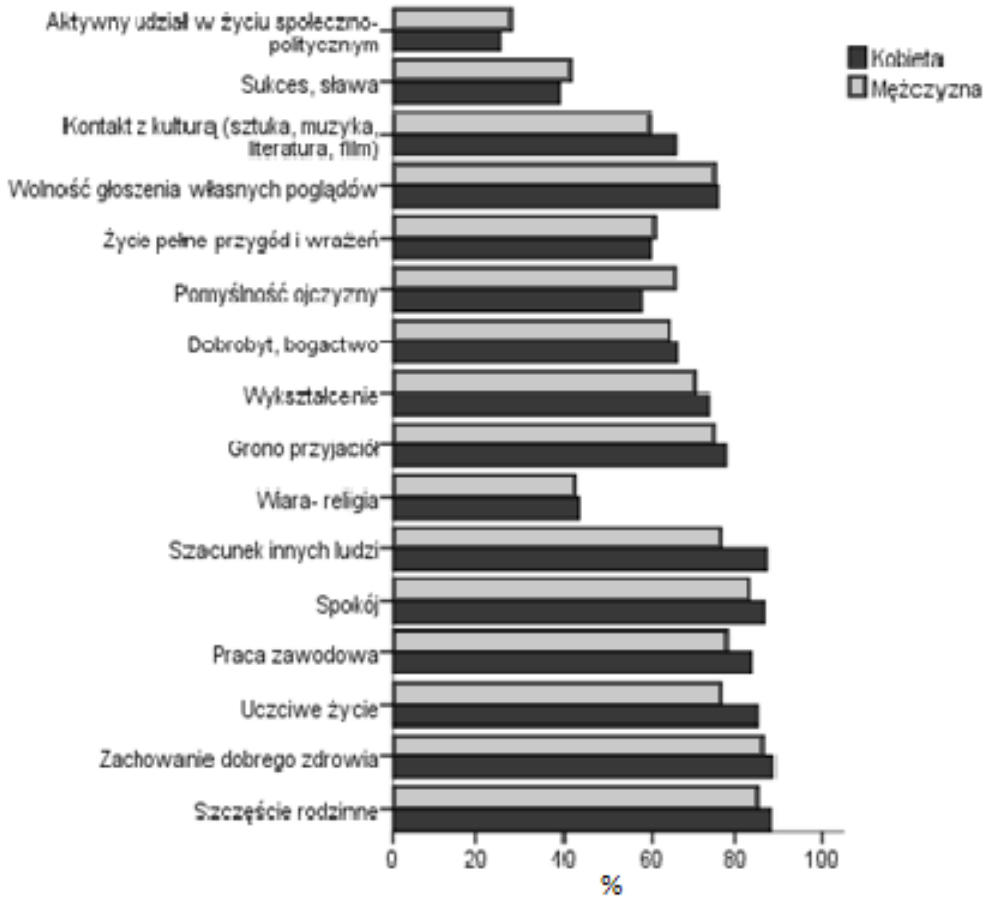
- 1 od dołu: yes, seasonal work in the country
- 2: yes, seasonal work abroad
- 3: yes, casual work
- 4: yes, at the family firm
- 5: yes, I run my own business
- 6: yes, traineeship/internship
- 7: I'm not working/I didn't work

**Figure 3. Distribution of answers as to: Did you work/are you working for reward, with the breakdown by gender**

Source: Author's own study.

and although there is a visible difference between male and female answers, no significant difference was found. The issue of women's entrepreneurship was discussed extensively in the study of the Polish Agency for

Enterprise Development (PARP) (PARP, 2012). Female entrepreneurship index in Poland (including the self-employed index) has for years been one of the highest in Europe, and also in non-European countries. The OECD



- 1 (od dołu): family happiness
- 2: staying in good health
- 3: honest life
- 4: professional work
- 5: peace
- 6: other people's respect
- 7: faith-religion
- 8: circle of friends
- 9: education
- 10: welfare, affluence
- 11: the prosperity of the country
- 12: life full of adventures and excitement
- 13: freedom to voice one's views
- 14: contact with culture (art, music, literature, film)
- 15: success, fame
- 16: active participation in social and political life

**Figure 4. Distribution of answers to the questions on the values of life which are important or very important to the surveyed, by gender.**

Source: Study based on author's own research

data on the proportion of women in a self-employed capacity among the overall working population show that Poland has been at the top (PARP, 2012). Positive attitudes among Polish women were confirmed by *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – Polska 2012*, where we can read that, “Among the European countries participating in the study and in the USA, Poland is the country in which a greatest difference in favour of women emerges in terms of identifying entrepreneurial opportunities. The indication for men is at 18%, and for women – 23% (Tarnawa et al., 2012).

Comparing the responses on the vision of the future as given by women and men in the survey on young inhabitants of Lower Silesia, statistically significant differences<sup>5</sup> regarding “yes” and “no” responses were observed for employment in public administration and higher education institute/research institute (Fig. 5). Women more frequently than men selected this type of work, which may reflect their wish to satisfy the need of security and the envisaged role of a mother.

While defining their place in 2-3 years, it is clear that young people do not see themselves as freelancers, working at research institutions or in the third sector. Over 55% of respondents do not want to have a casual work abroad, nor to work in their own profession abroad (43%), although one might think that this is a good time to gain experience at a foreign job market. At the time of the public discussion on the young population migration and the anxiety connected with it those attitudes can be perceived as optimistic. A positive answer was given by nearly 60% of respondents to the question regarding possible career development abroad. The greatest motivator to go abroad is material values – the possibility to earn better wages and to have a higher standard

of living. For both of these questions women’s and men’s answers did not differ significantly statistically<sup>6</sup>.

In the context of entrepreneurship, young people were asked about their motivation to start their own economic activity (Fig. 6).

The things that mostly motivate young people to launch their own business include: the wish to be independent, fulfillment of their own interests and greater financial benefits (over 80% positive responses). The symptom reflecting a new approach to work is respondents indicating flexible working forms as the factor motivating them to set up their own business. The most frequent negative responses pertained to family traditions. While analyzing the motivators compelling one to launch their own business, statistically significant differences<sup>7</sup> by gender were found in the following answers: greater financial benefits, flexible working hours, the wish to use their own experience and knowledge, an idea for a business, escape from unemployment, fear of having an unattractive job.

### **Selected Determinants of Career Paths Choices**

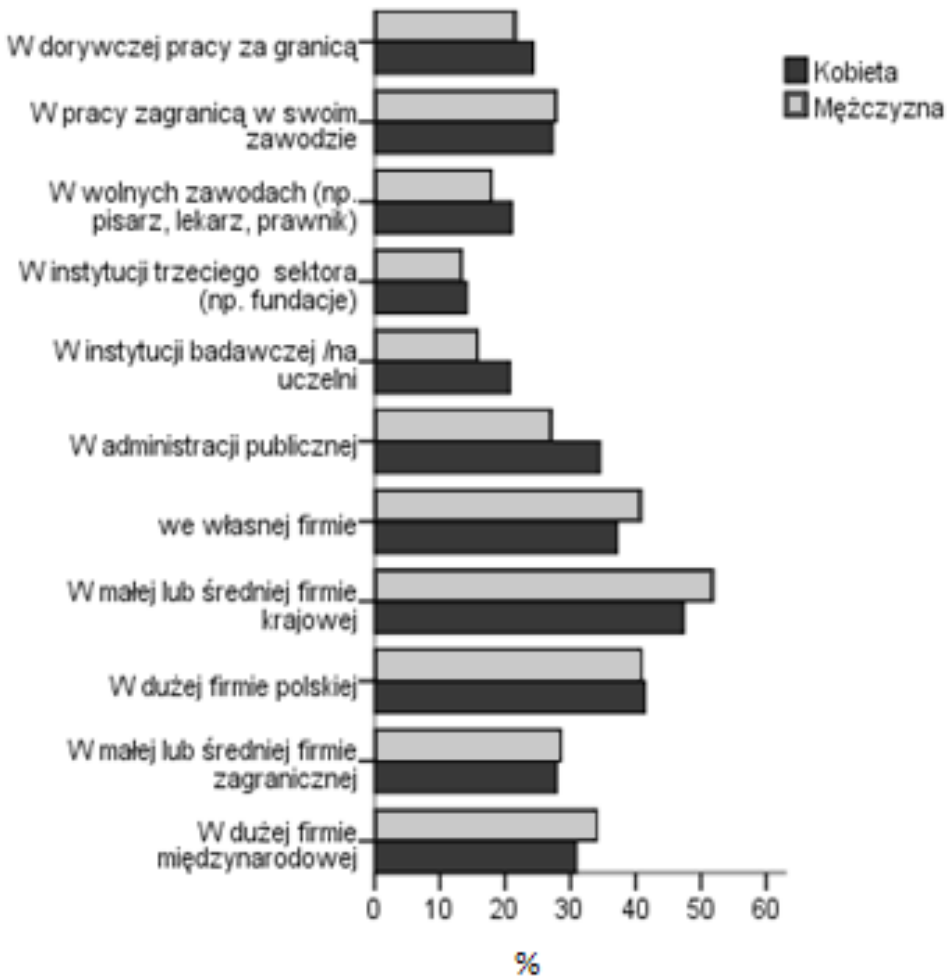
In examining the choices of young people with respect to their career paths, one should bear in mind the determinants which influence those choices. In relation to an individual, they can be endogenous and exogenous in nature (Hopper, 1971, p. 32). A subjective feeling of the influence exerted by the individual factors on the choice of the career path amongst the respondents while accounting for gender is presented in Figure 7. Young people tend to believe that the choice of a career path is their own independent decision (nearly 65% responses). A considerable impact on the decisions regarding

<sup>5</sup> Test for proportions,  $\alpha=0,05$

<sup>6</sup> Test for proportions,  $\alpha=0,05$

<sup>7</sup> Test for proportions,  $\alpha=0,05$

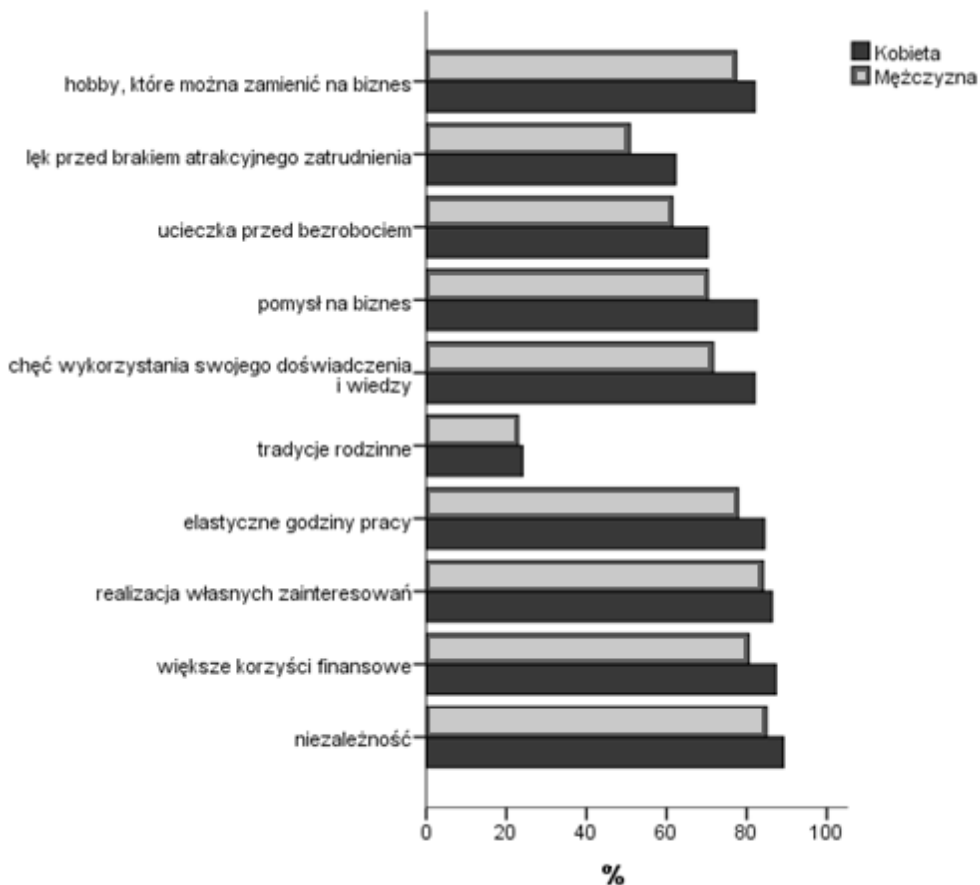




- 1 od dołu: in a big international company
- 2: in a small or medium-sized foreign company
- 3: in a large Polish company
- 4: in a small or medium-sized Polish company
- 5: in your own company
- 6: in public administration
- 7: in a research institute/higher education institute
- 8: third sector institution (e.g. a foundation)
- 9: a freelancer (e.g. writer, doctor, lawyer)
- 10: working abroad in your own profession
- 11: casual work abroad

Figure 5. Distribution of responses on the vision for the future, by gender.

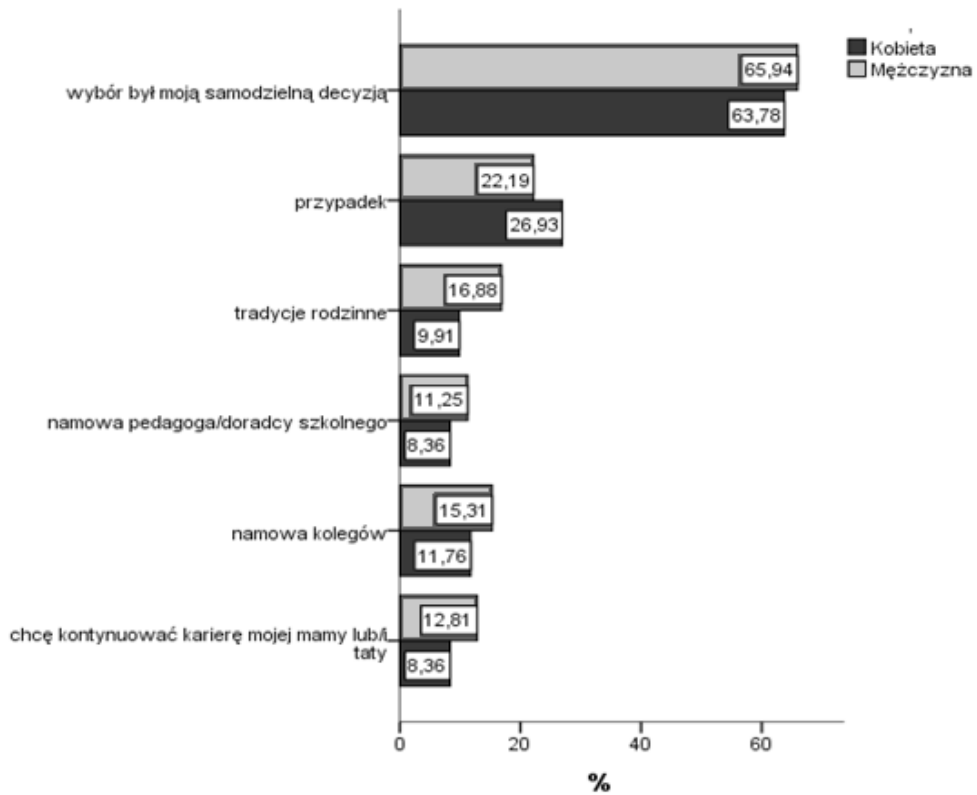
Source: Study based on author's own research



- 1: od dołu: independence
- 2: greater financial benefits
- 3: fulfilling one's own interests
- 4: flexible working hours
- 5: family traditions
- 6: using one's own experience and knowledge
- 7: an idea for a business
- 8: escape from unemployment
- 9: fear of having an unattractive job
- 10: hobby which could be turned into a business

**Figure 6. Distribution of responses to the question about motivation to set up one's own business by gender.**

Source: Study based on author's own research.



1od dołu: I want to continue my mum's or my dad's career  
 2: friends' persuasion  
 3: persuasion by school counselor/adviser  
 4: family traditions  
 5: chance/accident  
 6: the choice was my own independent decision

Figure 7. Distribution of factors influencing the choice of career path by gender

Source: Study based on author's own research

one's professional life is having the possibility to develop one's own passions and interests (59,25%) and good earning opportunities (52,41%). While analyzing the responses, a relatively high proportion of them reported

“chance/accident” as the deciding factor in the career path choice, which appears quite astonishing, especially when referring to a high percentage of “yes” responses to the question, *Have you had any thoughts on your*

*professional future?* Statistically significant differences between the responses of women and men were recorded only for such factors as family traditions or the desire to continue their parents' career. It is curious that it was the men who appeared more attached to such traditions than women.

Internal determinants are an important prerequisite in determining the professional path, and at a later stage – implementing it. Asked to perform a self-assessment of the strength of the competences listed (Fig. 8), respondents assessed best their stress resilience (24,57%). The question arises whether this is really the case, or whether it is likely that young people have not yet experienced any stress. Over 11% of respondents sees themselves as entrepreneurial persons, with only 8,5% as creative. Comparing the self-assessment of competences according to gender, statistically significant differences<sup>8</sup> were recorded only for stress resilience and effective communication skills. Women assessed their stress resilience better than men, with men more frequently reporting their skills of effective communication (Fig. 8).

While referring to the research results of *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – Polska 2012*, it is worth highlighting that within the scope of positive self-assessment of the knowledge and skills necessary to run an economic activity “the difference in favour of men in Poland is one of the highest in Europe (22 p.p.). Amongst men, 65% of respondents assess positively their knowledge and skills, while the same was reported by only 43% of women (Tarnawa et al., 2012).

Young people's out-of-school activity can be seen as a determinant of the conscious choices with regard to their professional future (Fig. 9).

It is worth drawing attention here to the fact that women are more likely

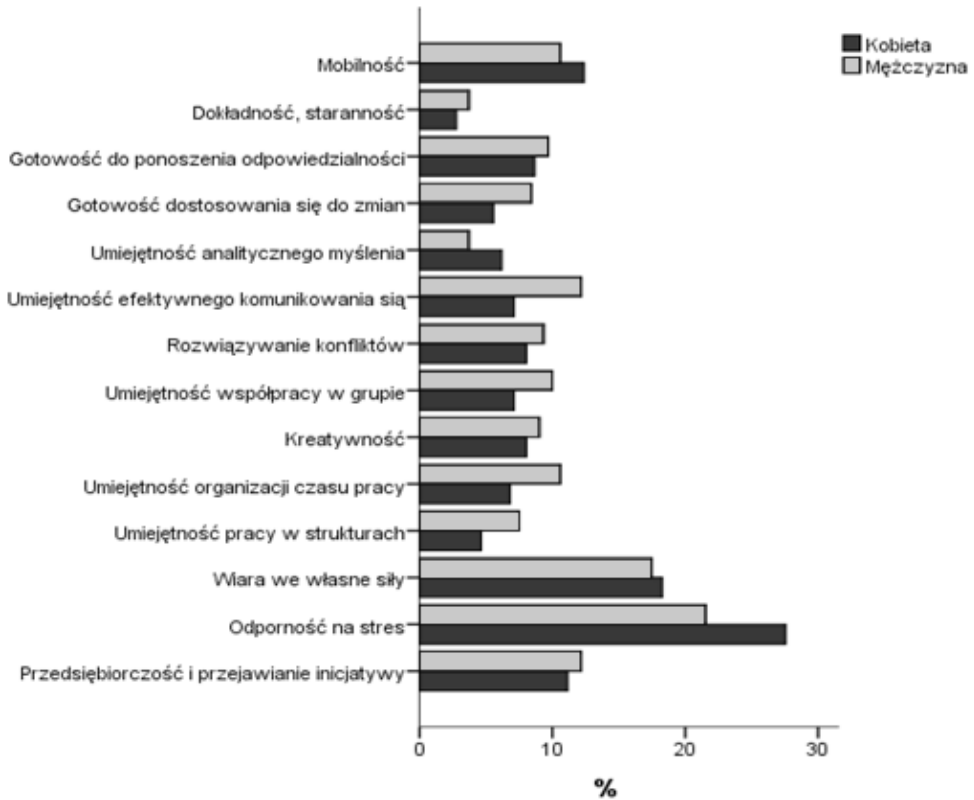
than men to undertake social activities, particularly in the field of voluntary work or scientific group participation.

## Summary

In summing up, it is worth emphasizing that in the survey no statistically significant differences were found in terms of the attitudes towards professional future espoused by women and men, aged 18-28. The female vision of the future is more linked to the need of job security which may be reflected in that they are more likely than men to choose their work place in public administration and higher education institution/research unit. Moreover, women, more often than men, show pro-social attitudes, being more likely to undertake social activities, in particular in such areas as voluntary work or scientific groups.

Comparing the choices with regard to certain values of life, women were more likely than men to choose honesty and respect for other people, while men focused more on the prosperity of their mother country. With respect to the self-assessment of one's competences, women perceived themselves better in terms of stress resilience, with men being more likely to point to effective communication skills. It should be noted that surveys have their limitations, as they might show merely a declarative attitude and not the real one. One should carry out a more in-depth study by developing a method based on qualitative research methods. This notwithstanding, the studies on the development and attitudes of young people towards career paths may prove to be of use when designing the strategy of staffing policy directed towards attracting and keeping talented individuals. In the sphere of education, such studies may be useful in designing the teaching programmes suitable to satisfy the development needs.

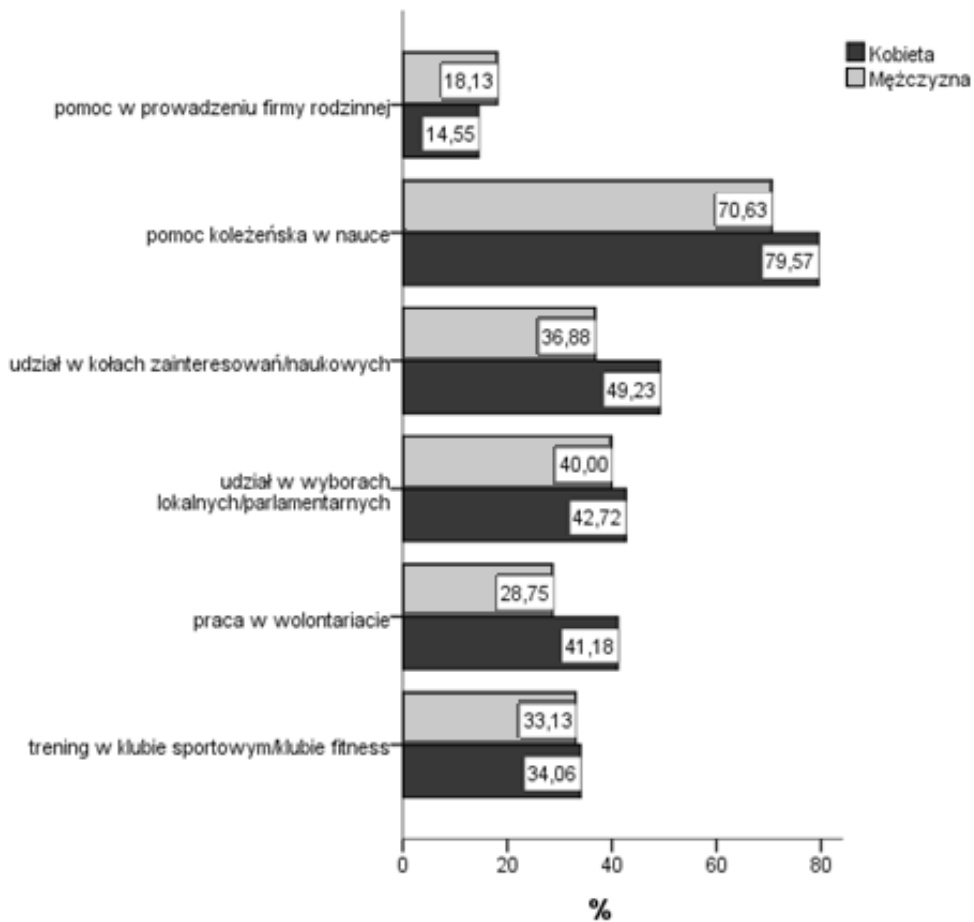
<sup>8</sup> Test for proportions,  $\alpha=0,05$



- 1od dołu: entrepreneurship and showing initiative
- 2: stress resilience
- 3: believing in one's own strength
- 4: ability to work in structures
- 5: ability to organize working time
- 6: creativity
- 7: team work skills
- 8: solving conflicts
- 9: effective communication skills
- 10: analytical thinking skills
- 11: willingness to adjust to changes
- 12: willingness to take responsibilities
- 13: precision, diligence
- 14: mobility

**Figure 8. Distribution of self-assessed competences by gender**

Source: Study based on author's own research



1:od dołu: training in a sports club/fitness club  
 2: voluntary work  
 3: participation in local/parliamentary election  
 4: participation in a scientific interest group  
 5: helping colleagues with learning  
 6: helping in running the family business

**Figure 9. Distribution of social activity types by gender**

Source: Study based on author's own research

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## Wizja przyszłości zawodowej młodych ludzi – analiza badań własnych z uwzględnieniem płci

### Abstrakt

Wizja przyszłości jest wyrazem strategicznego podejścia do życia zarówno w odniesieniu do organizacji jak i ludzi. Umiejętność przewidywania i zarządzania sobą obszarze zawodowym jest określana planowaniem ścieżki kariery. Celem artykułu jest prezentacja i analiza badań własnych na temat identyfikacja stanu i uwarunkowań planowanych ścieżek kariery ludzi młodych na Dolnym Śląsku z uwzględnieniem płci. Narzędziem badawczym była ankieta internetowa. Pomiar został przeprowadzony przez firmę Ogólnopolski Panel Badawczy Sp. z o.o. za pomocą ogólnopolskiego panelu badawczego Ariadna w czerwcu 2015 roku. Metoda badawcza była reprezentatywna w stosunku do zdefiniowanej populacji, czyli mieszkańców województwa dolnośląskiego w wieku 18-28 lat.

W ankiecie wzięły udział 643 osoby. W badaniach nie stwierdzono istotnych statystycznie różnic w postawach wobec przyszłości zawodowej kobiet i mężczyzn w przedziale wiekowym 18-28. Kobięca wizja przyszłości zawodowej bardziej związana jest z potrzebą bezpieczeństwa w pracy. Kobiety wykazują też częściej postawy pro-społeczne, częściej podejmują aktywności społeczne. W ocenie własnych kompetencji kobiety lepiej oceniały się w zakresie odporności na stres a umiejętność efektywnej komunikacji była częściej wskazywana przez mężczyzn. Należy wspomnieć iż badania ankietowe mają swoje

ograniczenia, ponieważ ukazują mogą odzwierciedlać postawę deklaracyjną niż prawdziwą respondentów. Należałoby pogłębić badania opracowując metodykę opartą o jakościowe metody badawcze

**Słowa kluczowe:** ścieżka kariery, młodzi ludzie, wizja przyszłości, przyszłość zawodowa