

Figure 9.3
Indicators of Health Care in Poland

	1991	Increase/Decrease over 1989	Rate per 100,000 of population
General hospitals	677	+2	—
Hospital beds	218,560	+1,753	57.2
Doctors	81,641	+2,394	21.4
Dentists	18,205	+253	4.8
Pharmacists	15,110	-850	4.0
Nurses	207,767	+9,887	54.4

Source: Raport o Stanie Państwa, 1991.

wealthier industrialized nations. It should be noted as well that these countries enjoy a per capita GDP that is 8 to 10 times greater than that of Poland.

Poland's medical care system, along with the rest of the economy, is being severely tested as constrained financial resources make it impossible to maintain let alone modernize the existing medical infrastructure. The government is addressing the problem through measures designed to transform the system from an exclusively state-run model to a more decentralized and flexible structure run by members of the medical profession. The government would like to finance medical care not from the state treasury but from a nation-wide system of health insurance similar to that in many West European countries. But these are long-run objectives. Over the short term, efforts will be made to rationalize and economize, eliminating unnecessary services and procedures and focusing on essential priorities.

Employee Benefits

Poland's workers have access to a wide range of benefits and social services. The most important of these are social insurance, free medical care, maternity leave, and old age pensions.

Social Insurance: Social insurance is funded out of contributions made from workers' income. In the case of state employees, these contributions are deducted automatically from the funds the state assigns to its enterprises. In the case of private sector employees, contributions are paid into the social insurance fund by the workers themselves. In 1989, the average retirement or disability pension paid to former employees or their dependents amounted to roughly 50% of the

expected average earnings of those working in the public sector. The figure for 1988 was 52.2%.

Unemployment Insurance: Created recently to deal with the growing number of unemployed, the Labour Fund is a national unemployment insurance pool. Initially funded directly from the State Treasury, the fund is increasingly supported by a system of payroll deductions. It is expected that the system will eventually be self-financing.

Maternity Leave: Women have the right to 16 weeks of paid maternity leave for their first child, 18 weeks for the second and later children, and 26 weeks for multiple births. They may also receive state allowances to cover additional leave for child rearing and for the care of sick children. Special assistance is available for low-income families with children, and for disabled children.

Pensions: Various types of state pensions are provided to individuals who have retired for age or disability, as well as to war veterans and invalids. Individuals who work in especially difficult conditions are entitled to earlier retirement. Current statistics indicate that there are only 17.5 spaces available in retirement homes for every 10,000 Polish citizens, compared to 22.3 in Canada.

Other Benefits: Other social benefits provided by the state include scholarships and a guaranteed income, or stipend, for students, reflecting Poland's commitment to higher education. Out of the total funds available to the student population, 10.6% go to those in vocational training courses, 5.4% is given to high school students, and 63.2% is disbursed to full-time university students.

Holidays: Workers are entitled to 14 days of paid vacation after one year of work, 17 days after three years, 20 days after 6 years, and 26 days after ten years of work. The period spent studying at a university can be counted as work time for the purpose of determining holiday eligibility. Many enterprises own holiday resorts for the use of their employees.

Work Week: Until the mid-1970s, Poland had a 46-hour work week, which included Saturday as a working day. The number of free Saturdays in a year was gradually increased, notably in 1981 when Solidarity negotiated three free Saturdays a month from the government. In practice, most Polish workplaces now operate a forty-hour work week with most Saturdays off.