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KEY DETERMINANTS OF POLES' VOTING PREFERENCES IN THE 2023 SEJM ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The desire to know the key determinants of voters' voting preferences is the domain not only of political scientists, but also of politicians in charge of party programmes and election campaigns. The 2023 parliamentary elections in Poland were an extremely interesting election in this respect, and the electoral preferences of Poles were very diverse and fragmented. The aim of this article is to answer the question of what factors determined the voting behaviour of Poles during the 2023 parliamentary elections. The article analyzes survey data collected after that election on a representative group of voters. The conclusions of the survey indicate that the factors determining the casting of a vote for a particular electoral committee varied among the voters of different electoral committees, but the key ones were the private political views of the respondents and the programmes of the parties and their candidates.

KEYWORDS

Determinants, parliamentary elections, voting preferences, electoral behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The decisions made by citizens at the ballot box vary widely. Each voter is guided by different factors when casting his or her vote¹. These are not always strictly political issues. As the work of various researchers shows, in Poland it is often the impulse, the election poster or the opinion of a person important to the voter that decides how to vote². This is also confirmed by studies conducted in other Central and Eastern European countries since the political transition from communism³.

Learning about the determinants of citizens' voting behaviour seems to be extremely important for the creation of a model of voting behaviour at the individual level existing in Poland. However, the author's intention is not to create a model of Poles' voting at the individual level, as it was done by Wiesława Jednaka indicating the votes of opinion, affiliation or exchange⁴. The author also does not intend to determine, as other researchers do, whether the cultural, economic or socio-economic voting pattern is crucial to Poles' voting preferences⁵. Instead, the aim of this study is to indicate a set of factors which, if subjected to further, cyclical research, may contribute to shaping the model of electoral behaviour at the individual level, in the form of voters' subjective opinions, according to the affective approach to the model of political attitudes and behaviour as presented by Leszek Sobkowiak. The point is to relate electoral behaviour at the individual level to the emotional and value-laden layer, linking the individual to the sphere of politics and exposing its subjectivising aspect, particularly at the expressive level⁶.

Such a study is even more interesting when it concerns an election in which there was a very fierce electoral struggle, which was the case of Poland's 2023 parliamentary

¹ Eric Belanger, "Political trust and voting behaviour"; in: Sonja Zmerli and Tom W. G. van der Meer (eds.), *Handbook on Political Trust* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017); Peter Schofield and Peter Reeves, "Does the factor theory of satisfaction explain political voting behaviour?" *European Journal of Marketing* 5/6 (49) (2015).

² Marcin Gacek, "Wyborca jako konsument komunikacji politycznej. Analiza socjologiczna (The voter as consumer of political communication. A sociological analysis)"; in: Urszula Swadźba, Rafał Cekiera, Monika Żak (eds.), *Praca – konsumpcja – przedsiębiorczość. Świadomość ekonomiczna młodego pokolenia (Work – consumption – entrepreneurship. Economic awareness of the young generation)* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2017); Maciej Onasz, *Inżynieria wyborcza w Polsce od roku 1989 (Electoral engineering in Poland since 1989)* (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 2017); Małgorzata Pikul, "Instrumenty komunikowania politycznego i ich determinanty (Instruments of political communication and their determinants)," *Facta Simonidis* 2 (2009); Marta Żerkowska – Balas, "Czy polski wyborca jest racjonalny? Analiza empiryczna (Is the Polish voter rational? An empirical analysis)," *Studia Socjologiczne* 216 (2015).

³ Zsolt Enyedi and Kevin Deegan-Krause, "Voters and Parties in Eastern Europe"; in: Adam Fagan and Petr Kopecký (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of East European Politics* (London: Routledge, 2017); Gábor Tóka and Andrija Henjak, "Party Systems and Voting Behaviour in the Visegrad Countries 15 Years After the Transition"; in: Pavel Šaradín and Eva Bradová (eds.), *Visegrad Votes: Parliamentary Elections 2005–2006* (Olomouc: Palacky University Press, 2007).

⁴ Wiesława Jednaka, "Zachowania wyborcze (Voting behaviour)"; in: Andrzej Antoszewski and Ryszard Herbut (eds.), *Demokracje zachodnioeuropejskie. Analiza porównawcza (Western European democracies. A comparative analysis)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1997).

⁵ Dorota Dolińska, "Determinanty preferencji wyborczych na przykładzie elektoratu Platformy Obywatelskiej oraz Prawa i Sprawiedliwości w latach 2000–2005 (Determinants of electoral preferences on the example of the electorate of Civic Platform and Law and Justice in 2000–2005)," *Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis* 4–5 (2009); Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Richard Nadeau, "Economic voting theory: Testing new dimensions," *Electoral Studies* 30 (2) (2011); Pedro Riera and Francisco Cantu, "Electoral systems and ideological voting," *European Political Science Review* 14 (4) (2022); Kire Sarlamanov and Aleksandar Jovanoski, "Models of Voting," *Journal of Art, Science & Commerce* 5 (2014); Marta Żerkowska-Balas, Igor Lyubashenko and Agnieszka Kwiatkowska, "Determinanty preferencji wyborczych: Polska w latach 1997–2015 (Determinants of electoral preferences: Poland 1997–2015)," *Studia Socjologiczne* 223 (2016).

⁶ Agnieszka Turska-Kawa and Waldemar Wojtasik, "Postawy, zachowania i decyzje polityczne jako przedmiot badań empirycznych (Political attitudes, behaviour and decisions as a subject of empirical research)," *Preferencje Polityczne: postawy, identyfikacje, zachowania* 1 (2009); Leszek Sobkowiak, "Postawa polityczna (Political attitude)"; in: Wojciech Sokół and Marek Żmigrodzki (eds.), *Encyklopedia politologii (Encyclopaedia of political science)* Vol. 1 (Kraków: Wolters Kluwer, 1999).

elections, in which the Law and Justice party won, but the political consequences of the electoral outcome and, in particular, the distribution of seats among the groupings that found their way into the Sejm, were different from those in Poland since 2007⁷. Such a unique situation occurred at a time of strong polarisation of the political scene in Poland. It took the form – following Hubert Tworzecki typology – of top-down affective polarisation built upon pro-government and anti-government sentiment⁸, and yet the strong social divisions caused by polarisation play a major role in shaping electoral preferences⁹. For this reason, this election appears to have been a watershed, as it necessitated extensive coalition negotiations, causing a consolidation of the division of the political scene.

In this extremely interesting political reality, the author conducted a survey study, using a questionnaire survey on a representative group of adult Poles, in order to find out the factors determining their voting behaviour during the 2023 parliamentary election. The results of this survey are presented in this article, which aims, as already mentioned, to identify the individual factors that determine voting for a specific electoral committee, in the subjective opinion of voters. The main research problem was thus framed around the following questions: (1) What factors determined the electoral decision of Poles in the indicated vote? (2) Are the indicated factors differentiated? The adopted hypotheses assumed that (1) these factors were diverse; however, it is possible to indicate the dominant issues that are key for large segments of the society; and (2) the indicated factors determining voting for a specific electoral committee in the 2023 parliamentary election in Poland were diverse among voters of different political parties.

RESULTS OF THE 2023 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The 2023 parliamentary election was compelling mainly because of the slight differences in the pre-election polls¹⁰, between the Law and Justice Party (PiS), which has been in power for eight years, and almost all of the co-operating parliamentary opposition in the form of the Civic Coalition (KO), the Third Way (TD), which included representatives of the Polish People's Party and Szymon Holownia's Poland 2050 and the New Left (NL)¹¹.

In this uncertain reality, Poles decided to go to the polls in large numbers, leading to an unprecedentedly high turnout of 74.4%¹². By comparison, in the parliamentary elections four years earlier, 61.7% of eligible voters cast their vote¹³.

⁷ This is the first time that a situation has arisen where, after the political changes of 1989, the grouping that won the elections had no coalition capacity and was forced to take a place in opposition.

⁸ Hubert Tworzecki, "Poland: A Case of Top-Down Polarisation," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of the Political and Social Science* 681 (2019).

⁹ Wouter van der Brug, Philip van Praag and Cees van der Eijk, "Elections, Cleavages and Voting Behaviour"; in: Philip van Praag (ed.), *Political Science and Changing Politics* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ "Sondaże wyborcze 2023 – średnia sondażowa sprzed ciszy wyborczej (Election polls 2023 – polling average before the election silence)," *Infor.pl* (November 2024) // https://www.infor.pl/prawo/nawosci-prawne/6336878,sondaze-wyborcze-2023-srednia-sondazowa-sprzed-ciszy-wyborczej.html#google_vignette

¹¹ The exception was the right-wing Confederation (KONF), which was not part of the opposition agreement against the ruling party.

¹² State Electoral Commission, *Wybory do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2023 (Elections to the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland 2023)*, (November 2024) // <https://sejmsenat2023.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2023/pl>

¹³ State Electoral Commission, *Wybory do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2019 (Elections to the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland 2019)*, (November 2024) // <https://sejmsenat2019.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2019/>

The final results of the elections to the Sejm allowed Law and Justice to claim victory. The party collected 35.4% of the vote, which translated into 194 seats in the 460-seat chamber. However, the next three seats were held by groupings that before the elections had already decided to form a coalition in the event of the possibility of obtaining a parliamentary majority. These were, as indicated: Civic Coalition, which was voted for by 30.7% of the voters taking part in the vote, resulting in 157 seats; Third Way with 14.4% support and 65 parliamentary seats; and New Left, which was voted for by 8.6% of the voters, translating into 26 seats. The right-wing Confederation, whose support of 7.2% gave 18 seats, also entered the Sejm¹⁴.

Simple arithmetic shows that the hitherto anti-government opposition groupings amassed 248 seats and were able to form a parliamentary majority on their own to form a government. A historic situation has therefore arisen in which the grouping winning the elections was unable to form a parliamentary majority. The President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, who originated from the Law and Justice party (PiS), came to the rescue and, using his prerogatives, entrusted the mission of forming a government to Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister from 2017 to 2023. The latter undertook the task, but without success. Thus, as political practice has shown, after eight years in government Law and Justice lacked coalition capacity.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study of political behaviour has a long tradition in political science¹⁵. So too does the specific category of political behaviour that is the research on voting behaviour presented in this article¹⁶. In the scientific discourse, two scientific approaches are distinguished: the study of voting behaviour at the aggregate level and at the individual level¹⁷. Research on voting behaviour at the aggregate level focuses on social ties, while that at the individual level, on the determinants and motivations of individuals such as economic reasons, ideological reasons or the private views of voters¹⁸. It is the latter approach that has given rise to the undertaking of the present reflections because in young democracies (as Poland undoubtedly is), one looks in vain for voting patterns seen in Western democracies (such as strong family traditions)¹⁹.

After all, the decisions made by citizens at the ballot box are very diverse. Each voter is guided by different factors when casting his or her vote²⁰. These are not always

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ John Dearden, "Sex-linked differences of political behavior: An investigation of their possibly innate origins," *Social Science Information* 13 (2) (1974); Dan Farrell and James C. Petersen, "Patterns of Political Behavior in Organization," *Academy of Management Review* 7 (3) (1982); Stanley Feldman, "Economic Self-Interest and Political Behavior," *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (3) (1982); John C. Harsanyi, "Rational-Choice Models of Political Behavior vs. Functionalist and Conformist Theories," *World Politics* 21 (4) (1969).

¹⁶ Samuel J. Eldersveld, "Experimental Propaganda Techniques and Voting Behavior," *American Political Science Review* 50 (1) (1956); Samuel J. Eldersveld, "Theory and Method in Voting Behavior Research," *The Journal of Politics* 13 (1) (1951); Thomas R. Palfrey and Keith T. Poole, "The Relationship between Information, Ideology, and Voting Behavior," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (3) (1987); Seymour Sudman, "Do Exit Polls Influence Voting Behavior?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (3) (1986).

¹⁷ Agnieszka Turska-Kawa and Waldemar Wojtasik, *supra* note 6.

¹⁸ Rui J. da Silva Antunes, "Theoretical models of voting behaviour," *Exedra* 4 (2010); Wiesława Jednaka, *supra* note 4.

¹⁹ Paul A. Beck and Kent M. Jennings, "Family traditions, political periods, and the development of partisan orientations," *The Journal of Politics* 53 (3) (1991).

²⁰ Audrey André and Sam Depauw, "Too much choice, too little impact: a multilevel analysis of the contextual determinants of preference voting"; in: Ruth Dassonneville, Marc Hooghe and Michael S. Lewis-Beck (eds.), *Electoral Rules and Electoral Behaviour. The Scope of Effects* (London: Routledge, 2018); Richard Gunther, Marina Costa Lobo, Paolo Bellucci and Marco Lisi, "The Changing Determinants of the Vote"; in: Richard Gunther, Paul A. Beck, Pedro C. Magalhães and Alejandro Moreno (eds.), *Voting in Old*

strictly political. As already mentioned, in Poland, voting is often determined by an impulse, an election poster or the opinion of a person important to the voter.

Indicating the decisionist model adopted in this work, i.e. the model of electoral behaviour at the individual level, which refers to the sources of the decisions made by the voter, especially in the context of giving individual support²¹, it is necessary to point to the affective approach to the model of political attitudes and behaviour as presented by Leszek Sobkowiak, already referred to in the introduction. According to him, electoral behaviour at the individual level should be referred to the emotional and value layers. These layers connect the individual with the sphere of politics and expose its subjectivising aspect, especially on the expressive level, which may manifest itself in a change in electoral preferences and their transfer to another grouping due to subjective assumptions such as, for example, dislike or dissatisfaction²².

This is all the more important as, in the case of Poland, these behaviours change frequently. Focusing cyclical research on the electoral behaviour of Poles is justified by the fact that it can change very quickly, situating Poland as a country with a high lability of electoral preferences. The reason for this state of affairs should be sought in the specifics of the Polish political system in the context of the aforementioned lability. As indicated by the results of elections after 1989 (alternation of power after a maximum of two terms of office) and studies of recent years, the electorate in Poland is characterised by vacillation involving changes in voting preferences in the short term²³. The stability of policy preferences itself has been an issue addressed in research for many years²⁴. Some studies focus on the long term, often even a generation²⁵, while others point to changes in voter preferences over a short period of time, often even a single election²⁶. The case of Poland, through the reasons already indicated, fits precisely into the latter trend, hence it seems important to conduct cyclical research on the key determinants of voter preferences in a specific election.

and *New Democracies* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Silja Häusermann and Hanspeter Kriesi, "What do voters want? Dimensions and configurations in individual-level preferences and party choice"; in: Pablo Beramendi, Silja Häusermann, Herbert Kitschelt and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds.), *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²¹ John W. Kingdon, "Models of Legislative Voting," *The Journal of Politics* 39 (3) (1977); Sylwester Wróbel, "O pojęciach i modelu zachowań wyborczych (On concepts and the model of electoral behaviour)"; in: Piotr Dobrowolski and Mieczysław Stolarczyk (eds.), *Polityka: przedmiot badań i formy jej przejawiania się (Politics: object of study and forms of manifestation)* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2000).

²² Leszek Sobkowiak, *supra* note 6.

²³ Maciej Marmola, "Nowe partie w systemie partyjnym – specyfika Polski (New parties in the party system – the specifics of Poland)," *Polityka i Społeczeństwo* 12 (2014); Dariusz Przybysz, "The (In)stability of Voting Behaviour in Poland, 2001-2015"; in: Joshua K. Dubrow, Kazimierz M. Słomczyński, Irina Tomescu-Dubrow and Michał Kotnarowski (eds.), *Poland. Thirty Years of Radical Social Change* (Boston: Brill, 2024); Waldemar Wojtasik, "Determinanty zmiany systemu wyborczego (Determinants of electoral system change)," *Political Preferences* 12 (2012).

²⁴ Michael Dummett and Robin Farquharson, "Stability in Voting," *Econometrica* 29 (1962); Joel Lieske, "The Political Dynamics of Urban Voting Behavior," *American Journal of Political Science* 33 (1) (1989); Aron O'Cass, "Electoral Choice: The Effect of Voter Control and Involvement on Satisfaction and Voting Stability," *Journal of Political Marketing* 3 (1) (2003); Phillips W. Shively, "Party Identification, Party Choice, and Voting Stability: The Weimar Case," *American Political Science Review* 66 (4) (1972); David Wallace, "Some Functional Aspects of Stability and Change in Voting," *American Journal of Sociology* 69 (2) (1963).

²⁵ Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, "Why so much stability? Majority voting, legislative institutions, and Gordon Tullock," *Public Choice* 152 (2012).

²⁶ Ruth Dassonneville, "Volatile voters, short-term choices? An analysis of the vote choice determinants of stable and volatile voters in Great Britain," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 26 (3) (2016); Gerald H. Kramer, "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964," *American Political Science Review* 65 (1) (1971).

METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY

In the face of the cited data, it seems very important to explain the reasons for the variation in Poles' electoral preferences in the presented election. Indication of the factors determining voting for a particular political grouping is not only an empirical contribution to the study of the model of electoral behaviour of Poles, but also provides a pragmatic answer for political parties shaping election campaigns, reaching out to different segments of the electorate in search of support.

In an attempt to identify the factors determining the electoral preferences of Poles in the 2023 parliamentary elections, the author conducted a survey study using the direct survey technique. The survey, according to the author's initial assumption, was conducted after the 2023 parliamentary elections in Poland. This election took place in accordance with the date resulting from the electoral calendar, and therefore also in accordance with the research author's assumption. The period during which the study was conducted was 1st December 2023 – 26th April 2024. The research sample comprised 1,069 people. This number was calculated on the basis of the annual reports of the Central Statistical Office concerning the population of Poland. The surveyed population was divided by stratified-quota selection. The stratified selection included place of residence by voivodeship and urban-rural, while the quota selection included variables such as gender and age. The percentage of each of these variables in the survey sample corresponded to the percentage of each group in the entire adult population, as expressed in the annual publications of the Central Statistical Office, in this case for the year 2023. The survey was conducted using the accessibility method, with face-to-face questionnaire interviews. In the course of the survey, 1,712 questionnaires were distributed, of which 1,371 (80.1%) were completed. Of these, 1069 (62.4%) were qualified for analysis.

The sample consisted of 561 women (52.5%) and 508 men (47.5%). The age structure was as follows: 93 (8.7%) were in the 18-24 age bracket, 173 (16.2%) were in the 25-34 age bracket, 212 (19.8%) respondents were in the 35-44 age bracket, 178 (16.7%) respondents were in the 45-54 age bracket, 159 (14.9%) were in the 55-64 age bracket, and 254 (23.8%) respondents were voters aged 65 and over.

In terms of place of residence, 421 (39.4%) respondents reported living in a rural area, while 648 (60.6%) reported living in an urban area. In the latter group, a city of up to 20,000 inhabitants was inhabited by 203 (19.0%) respondents, a city of over 20,000 but up to 50,000 inhabitants was inhabited by 77 (7.2%) respondents. A city of over 50,000, but up to 100,000 inhabitants was inhabited by 46 (4.3%) respondents. A city of more than 100,000, up to 500,000 inhabitants was inhabited by 240 (22.5%) respondents and cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants by 82 (7.7%) respondents.

The breakdown of respondents by province of residence is presented in Table 1.

The metric section of the questionnaire also examined other variables, which, however, were not representative strata of measurement. These were in particular the education of the respondents.

The political views declared by respondents varied. 5 people (0.5%) chose not to answer this question. 242 respondents (22.6%) declared having right-wing views. Centre-right views were closest to 140 respondents (13.1%). 136 respondents (12.7%) declared holding centrist views. 110 respondents (10.3%) held centre-left views and 123 (11.5%) held left-wing views. The largest group of 313 respondents (29.3%) indicated the answer 'don't know/can't tell'.

Table 1. Respondents' place of residence by province (voivodeship)

Province (voivodeship)	Number of respondents	% of respondents
dolnośląskie	83	7,8%
kujawsko-pomorskie	57	5,3%
lubelskie	61	5,7%
lubuskie	34	3,2%
łódzkie	70	6,5%
małopolskie	97	9,1%
mazowieckie	140	13,1%
opolskie	29	2,7%
podkarpackie	60	5,6%
podlaskie	35	3,3%
pomorskie	65	6,1%
śląskie	126	11,8%
świętokrzyskie	33	3,1%
warmińsko-mazurskie	38	3,6%
wielkopolskie	96	9,0%
zachodniopomorskie	45	4,2%
In total	1069	100%

Source: Own study.

As for the electoral preferences presented by respondents in 2023, they seem to mostly coincide with the official election results presented by the State Electoral Commission. This is evident in Table 2.

Table 2. Electoral preferences of respondents in 2023 against the official results of the elections to the Polish Sejm

2023		
Electoral Committee	Official election result	Respondents' voting preferences
Law and Justice (PiS)	35,4%	34,5%
Civic Coalition (KO)	30,7%	29,2%
Third Way (TD)	14,4%	17,6%
New Left (NL)	8,6%	9,9%
Confederation (KONF)	7,2%	7,6%

Source: Own study and data from the State Election Commission.

However, the declared voter turnout in the survey exceeded the actual turnout. 933 respondents (87.3%) declared their vote for a specific election committee in 2023. The actual turnout for the 2023 parliamentary elections was 74.4%.

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

In an attempt to identify the determinants of the electoral vote in the 2023 parliamentary elections, a question was prepared to address the issue indicated. The survey proposed a question on factors that may influence the respondent's vote for a particular political party or its candidate. Among the issues assessed were: the electoral programme of the party/candidate, the popularity of the party/candidate, media information, the opinion of family and friends, the opinion of a local clergyman, the respondent's private political views, the attitude of representatives of the Catholic Church towards the party supported and, conversely, the attitude of the party towards the Catholic Church. These factors were identified by the author following a pilot study using an open-ended

question on the issue under investigation. The most frequently indicated answers were selected, together with three further answers: the opinion of the local clergy, the attitude of the representatives of the Catholic Church towards the party supported, and the attitude of the party supported towards the Catholic Church. The survey was conducted as part of a dissertation on the electoral preferences of religious people in Poland, hence the introduction of the three factors cited was important to the author. However, as can be seen from Table 3, these were not factors that had a significant impact on the decision to support a particular electoral committee. Respondents rated the importance of these issues for their decision-making on a six-point Likert scale, where 6 meant the importance of a factor was very high and 1 meant it was not important for their decision to support a particular electoral committee.

After discarding missing responses, the importance of the subsequent factors indicated is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Factors of importance to respondents in making electoral decisions in %

% of indications ► ▼ Assumption	Very large	Large	Moderate	Small	Very small	Does not matter	Total
Electoral programme of the party/ candidate	32,3%	37,9%	19,6%	4,7%	2,6%	2,9%	100%
Popularity of the party/candidate	8,2%	26,7%	34,5%	14,2%	6,5%	9,8%	100%
Media coverage	10,9%	27,1%	36,5%	11,5%	6,3%	7,8%	100%
Opinion of family and friends	5,5%	17,4%	26,3%	21,4%	10,1%	19,3%	100%
The opinion of the priest in my parish	3,3%	6,1%	12,3%	12,2%	10,7%	55,4%	100%
My personal political views	54,2%	24,1%	11,9%	2,5%	1,6%	2,7%	100%
Attitude of representatives of the Catholic Church towards the party	5,4%	12,3%	14,6%	10,6%	8,8%	48,3%	100%
The attitude of this party to the Catholic Church	9,4%	17,7%	19,6%	8,7%	8,2%	36,4%	100%

Source: Own study.

As can be seen from the table above, the electoral agendas and private political views of respondents are the factors that matter most for the electoral decision in the 2023 general election.

What is important, however, is whether these issues are differentiated in terms of the electoral preferences expressed in the surveyed electorate. A cross-analysis on the indicated factors of importance for electoral decision-making is shown in the following tables²⁷.

²⁷ Three factors were not considered in the further analysis: the opinion of the local clergy, the attitude of the supported party towards the Catholic Church and the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the

Table 4: Importance of party/candidate programme in electoral decision-making in the electorates of political parties in the 2023 general election in %

% of indications ► ▼Committee	Very large	Large	Moderate	Small	Very small	Does not matter	Total
PiS	30,8%	38,3%	24,9%	5,6%	1,2%	1,2%	100%
KO	34,2%	41,2%	18,0%	2,2%	2,2%	2,2%	100%
TD	31,1%	39,6%	23,2%	3,7%	1,2%	1,2%	100%
NL	48,9%	35,9%	7,5%	3,3%	2,2%	2,2%	100%
KONF	46,5%	32,4%	16,9%	4,2%	0,0%	0,0%	100%

Source: Own study.

As can be seen from the table presented, the importance of the political programme of the party or candidate supported in the elections is very high for the majority of voters of all electoral committees. Against this background, however, the voters of the extreme parts of the classic left-right axis stand out: the left-wing voters of the New Left and the right-wing electorate of the Confederation. It is these two groups that most strongly indicate the very high importance of the political programmes of the groupings they support.

Table 5. Importance of party/candidate popularity in electoral decision-making in the electorates of political parties in the 2023 general election in %

% of indications ► ▼Committee	Very large	Large	Moderate	Small	Very small	Does not matter	Total
PiS	10,6%	34,2%	34,2%	8,7%	4,6%	7,7%	100%
KO	8,1%	26,1%	38,6%	14,0%	5,1%	8,1%	100%
TD	6,1%	28,7%	40,8%	15,8%	4,3%	4,3%	100%
NL	14,1%	26,1%	25,0%	17,4%	8,7%	8,7%	100%
KONF	8,4%	19,7%	26,8%	19,7%	8,5%	16,9%	100%

Source: Own study.

Analysis of the table above yields a number of observations. Firstly, voters of all groupings indicate that the popularity of a party or candidate is of moderate or moderately high importance for their support. Against this background, however, voters of the Confederation stand out, for whom this issue is not very important, and voters of Law and Justice, for whom the indicated issue is of above-average importance.

Table 6. Importance of media information in making electoral decisions in the electorates of political parties in the 2023 parliamentary elections in %

% of indications ► ▼Committee	Very large	Large	Moderate	Small	Very small	Does not matter	Total
PiS	12,7%	29,2%	36,7%	12,1%	3,7%	5,6%	100%
KO	13,6%	26,5%	36,4%	10,3%	5,5%	7,7%	100%
TD	9,8%	34,7%	38,4%	7,3%	5,5%	4,3%	100%
NL	12,0%	27,2%	34,7%	9,8%	9,8%	6,5%	100%
KONF	11,3%	23,9%	29,6%	15,5%	8,4%	11,3%	100%

Source: Own study.

The data indicated in Table 6 show a high similarity between the electorates of all political parties on the importance of media information for their political choices.

supported party, due to the minor or even marginal importance of these factors indicated in Table 3.

Only Confederation voters indicate the lack of importance of this factor in a higher percentage than the electorates of other parties.

Table 7: Importance of the respondent's friends' and family's opinion when making electoral decisions in the electorates of the political parties in the 2023 general election in %

% of indications ► ▼ Committee	Very large	Large	Moderate	Small	Very small	Does not matter	Total
PiS	8,4%	25,5%	27,3%	21,4%	6,2%	11,2%	100%
KO	4,8%	16,2%	25,7%	21,3%	9,6%	22,4%	100%
TD	6,1%	18,9%	31,7%	19,5%	12,2%	11,6%	100%
NL	3,3%	9,8%	17,4%	29,3%	15,2%	25,0%	100%
KONF	1,4%	5,6%	21,1%	25,4%	14,1%	32,4%	100%

Source: Own study.

Analysis of Table 7 provides a number of important observations. The greatest importance of opinions and acquaintances for electoral decision-making is indicated by the Law and Justice electorate. The electorate of the Third Way is slightly lower. At the other extreme are the left-liberal groupings: Civic Coalition and New Left, and the right-wing Confederation, whose voters are least guided by the opinions of indicated family or friends.

Table 8. Importance of respondent's private political views in making electoral decisions in the electorates of political parties in the 2023 parliamentary elections in %

% of indications ► ▼ Committee	Very large	Large	Moderate	Small	Very small	Does not matter	Total
PiS	53,0%	29,0%	14,3%	1,9%	0,6%	1,2%	100%
KO	59,0%	27,3%	10,4%	1,1%	0,0%	2,2%	100%
TD	52,4%	29,3%	15,9%	1,2%	0,6%	0,6%	100%
NL	69,6%	20,5%	2,2%	1,1%	3,3%	3,3%	100%
KONF	67,7%	18,3%	5,6%	5,6%	0,0%	2,8%	100%

Source: Own study.

The above table shows that for the vast majority of voters of all political groupings, private views are of very high or high importance when making an electoral decision. Against this background, the New Left and Confederation voters stand out the most, with more than two-thirds of them indicating the very high importance of private political views in giving their support to the indicated electoral committees.

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted here made it possible to achieve the assumed research goal, which was to indicate a set of factors which, subjected to further, cyclical research, may contribute to shaping the model of electoral behaviour at the individual level, in the form of subjective opinions of voters.

The analysis of the factors determining the expression of support for specific electoral committees in the act of voting in the 2023 parliamentary elections in Poland made it possible to indicate the private views of respondents and, to a lesser extent, the programme of the supported party or candidate. This made it possible not only to positively verify hypothesis number 1 indicating that 'the factors determining the electoral

behaviour of Poles in the 2023 parliamentary elections were diverse, but it is possible to indicate the dominant issues that are key for large segments of the society'; but also to indicate the potential of using the affective approach to the model of political attitudes and behaviour of individuals, as presented by Leszek Sobkowiak, as a way of studying electoral behaviour at the individual level.

A detailed analysis of the factors that matter for the electoral preferences of Poles in the 2023 parliamentary elections made it possible to indicate that for the voters of the New Left and Confederation, the political programme is more important than for the electorates of other groupings. An attempt to explain this phenomenon may be the fact that these groupings are located on the extreme borders of the left-right axis and, combined with a strong ideological component, they are the choice of those groups of the electorate that present strong right-wing (in the case of the Confederation) or left-wing (in the case of the New Left) attitudes, and therefore for such a committed voter the party's programme should be of great importance²⁸.

Equally interesting is the low importance of party/candidate popularity for Confederation voters. This may be related to the infrequent visits of the party's politicians to all major TV stations in Poland. At the other extreme of the issue(s) analyzed here are the voters of Law and Justice. Similarly, this may be relevant in connection with the almost monopoly of politicians of this party to participate in programmes of the Polish Television before the elections in 2023²⁹. However, this issue requires further scientific verification.

It is important to note that Law and Justice voters were guided in the highest percentage by the opinion of family and friends. Similarly, Third Way voters, but in a slightly lower percentage. Significantly, voters of these groups (especially Law and Justice) are characterised by older age and low education³⁰. These are factors that may be highly relevant to the issue under study. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the voters of the Civic Coalition and the New Left, as well as the electorate of the Confederation. An analysis of the thesis on the importance of private political views shows that the electorates of these groupings are guided by their own opinion without reaching for the opinion of others. While in the case of the Confederation's electorate, the reasons for this state of affairs should be seen in their young age and the due conviction of the rightness of their own views and postulates³¹, in the case of the KO and NL supporters, the high level of education of the electorates of both parties should be pointed out, which is combined with the conviction of the rightness of their own views³².

The above analysis thus makes it possible to verify positively hypothesis number 2, stating that 'the indicated factors determining voting for a specific electoral committee

²⁸ Sławomir Marcisz, "Wpływ programu partii politycznej na decyzję wyborczą (Influence of a political party's programme on an electoral decision)"; in: Agata Olszanecka (ed.), *Polityka-media-relacje interpersonalne. Małe formy eksperymentalne z zakresu komunikowania (Politics-media-interpersonal relations. Small experimental forms of communication)* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2014).

²⁹ Rafał Siekiera, "Komunikatywistyczna analiza genologiczna w praktyce na przykładzie badania telewizyjnych serwisów informacyjnych (Communicative genological analysis in practice on the example of a study of television news services)"; in: Anna Barańska-Szmitko (ed.), *Metody badania komunikacji i mediów. Perspektywa teoretyczna i analityczna (Communication and media research methods. Theoretical and analytical perspectives)* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021).

³⁰ Centre for Public Opinion Research, *Kim są wyborcy partii politycznych w Polsce? Komunikat z badań nr 98/2023 (Who are the voters of political parties in Poland? Research Communication No. 98/2023)* (Warszawa: CBOS, 2023).

³¹ Dawid Pieniężny, "Kim są debiutujący wyborcy? Poparcie udzielane przez młodych wyborców w elekcjach parlamentarnych w Polsce w latach 2011–2023 (Who are the first-time voters? Support given by young voters in parliamentary elections in Poland 2011–2023)," *Dyskurs i Dialog* 13 (2024).

³² Centre for Public Opinion Research, *supra* note 30.

in the 2023 parliamentary election in Poland varied among voters of different political parties'; but it also provides a reference point for further, cyclical research, the conduct of which will make it possible to enrich the model of the electoral behaviour of Poles.

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