

The mission of: **IPZIN (Instytut Profilaktyki Zintegrowanej)** in Poland, **EIIP (European Institute for Integrated Prevention)** internationally, is to support the development of children and youth and prevent problems in the spirit of an integrated approach to problem prevention (...). In fulfilling their mission, both foundations conduct research on youth, devise prevention programmes, train trainers and teachers, and prepare expert opinions and reports for central institutions and local government units.

25 years of integrated prevention in numbers:

- Over **400,000 students** – participants in our programmes – have received support in their development, tools to cope with problems, and motivation to achieve their goals and aspirations in life.
- Over **108,000 parents** have received professional support in the difficult task of raising teenagers.
- More than **73,000 teachers** have been enriched with new knowledge about youth and prevention, and strengthened in their task of supporting youth development.
- **1991 schools** for which research reports have been prepared to enable more effective implementation of their tasks.
- **20 reports and expert opinions** for central government institutions (The Senate – upper house of Polish parliament; Ministries of National Education, of Health, of Justice; Centre for Education Development, ORE; The State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems, PARPA) concerning youth prevention.

For years, we have been supporting young people on their way to realizing their dreams of beautiful love and a happy family. Today, we are the ones asking for your support. In the face of growing social challenges, we need the help of individual Donors in order to continue our mission in the next school year.



Join the Donors of the IPZIN & EIIP Foundations
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Support the mission of IPZIN and EIIP. Thank you!

YOUTH – PREVENTION – FAMILY

Response of Integrated Prevention
to Contemporary Challenges

25 years
of integrated
prevention

YOUTH – PREVENTION – FAMILY

Response of Integrated Prevention
to Contemporary Challenges

This publication marks two special occasions:

- a conference organized on 17 June 2025 by the Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee and Health Committee of the Polish Senate in cooperation with the Institute for Integrated Prevention Foundation;
- 25th anniversary of integrated prevention.



A group of participants of the conference: **YOUTH – PREVENTION – FAMILY. The Role of Prevention Professionals in the Face of Social and Demographic Challenges Encountered by the Young Generation** (17.06.2025).

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Dear Reader,

It is with joy and deep satisfaction that we present to you this publication recording 25 years of development of the Integrated Prevention Model (IPM). This publication is not only a summary of a quarter of a century of scientific, educational and preventive work, but also an expression of pride in how much good we have achieved together.

When we think of the specific programmes, conferences and reports we have prepared, we see not only the big numbers – the hundreds of thousands of participants – but also the individual faces and life stories of the young people, teachers and parents who, thanks to the activities of the Institute and its network of collaborators, have been given the tools to dream bravely, make good decisions and cope with the challenges of the modern world.

Since 2000, our work has been driven not only by data and scientific models, but above all by values – respect for the dignity of each person, the importance of the family, faith in the potential of young people, and the conviction that each of us – child, parent, teacher, citizen – is responsible for building a world in which growing up becomes not only safe, but also beautiful.

Thanks to joint efforts, patient research work, empathy and hundreds of conversations with young people, we now know that effective prevention is not only about countering risks, but above all about creating space for growth. It involves accompanying young people in finding meaning, building relationships, discovering their own potential, and learning how to survive crises.

This publication is not only a calendar of facts and figures, but also a story about the need to instil hope in people in an unstable world. It shows that values such as love and mutual support in the family, kindness and acceptance in the class, and spirituality nurtured in the heart are the most effective protective factors, guarding young people from the pitfalls of modern times.

A worthy occasion for issuing and disseminating the Polish edition of this publication was the conference 'Youth – Prevention – Family. The Role of Prevention Professionals in the Face of Social and Demographic Challenges Encountered by the Young Generation' held on 17 June 2025 in the Senate of the Republic of Poland. The conference was hosted by the Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee and the Health Committee of the Senate of the Republic of Poland. The initiator and co-organizer of the conference was the Institute for Integrated Prevention (IPZIN) Foundation.

In this publication you will find:

- A summary, in the form of a calendar, of 25 years of development of research and activity based on the Integrated Prevention Model.
- A description of the key assumptions of the Integrated Prevention Model, and a description of the Seven Levers of Effective Prevention strategy that grew out of it.
- Information on the principles of developing effective integrated prevention programmes, together with information on the programmes currently implemented by IPZIN.
- A gallery of winners of the Polish Golden Link Award for Prevention Professional of the Year, presented on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the award. The award was granted solemnly, for the 5th time, by the Award Committee on 17 June 2025, during the conference in the Senate.
- A selection of the latest IPZIN research results, made with a view to the main theme of the conference 'Youth – Prevention – Family'. This theme involves a look at the prevention of problems and risk behaviours of children and youth in the context of contemporary social and demographic challenges. The research results confirm the relevance of the timeless recommendations included in the report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?* (IPZIN, 2023), cited in this publication.

We wholeheartedly thank everyone who has worked with us over the years to create integrated prevention: researchers, practitioners, volunteers, public institutions, community organizations and, above all, the young people who have allowed us to enter their world. It is thanks to you that we can proudly say today: it has been 25 years that did make sense.

With expressions of gratitude and hope for our continued journey together,



Szymon Grzelak, PhD
Psychologist, Chairman of the Board
of the European Institute for Integrated
Prevention (EIIP)



Dorota Żyro, MA
Psychologist, Vice-chairman of the
Board of the Institute for Integrated
Prevention (IPZIN)

A large wooden sailing ship with white sails is shown on a blue sea. The ship is tilted to the left, and the sails are partially unfurled. The crew is visible on the deck. The background is a clear blue sky.

Calendar of the 25 years of integrated prevention

1

25^{years} of integrated prevention

Integrated prevention has included so far:

12 prevention programmes, over 400,000 students

which are a tool for hundreds of trainers and teachers

who have received support in their development, tools to cope with problems, and a new hope of achieving their goals and aspirations in life. And this translates into millions of better and healthier decisions made by teenagers in specific life situations.

over 73,000 teachers

enriched with new knowledge about youth and prevention, and strengthened in their task of supporting youth development

1991 schools

for which research reports have been prepared to enable more effective implementation of their preventive activity

148,000 students,

parents and teachers who, by participating in the research, contributed to a better understanding of the problems and potential of today's young people and those who support them

4 national-level legal acts

in the area of health and education which have drawn inspiration from integrated prevention and research results based on it

How can we briefly summarize the effects of our work, the achievements of 25 years of integrated prevention?

Integrated prevention is an approach to the prevention of youth problems combining scientific knowledge, research and practical experience, which has been developing in Poland since 2000. For the past 25 years, we have conducted research based on the Integrated Prevention Model (IPM), written reports, developed prevention programmes, organized conferences, and built a cooperation network. This calendar of the 25 years presents the most important stages and the most significant events. What is not highlighted here is the enormity of the daily work, not so well visible, for the benefit of young people, prevention, and the family.

over 150 conferences

and as many trainings and workshops conducted in Poland and abroad, which brought integrated prevention and its tools closer to psychologists, teachers, and local and central government employees

5 years

of the Polish Golden Link Award for Prevention Professional of the Year, which provides the opportunity to publicly recognize relatively unknown but passionate prevention professionals

over 108,000 parents

who have received professional support in the difficult task of raising teenagers

20 organizations

in a cooperation network from three countries, without which none of the above effects would have been possible

20 reports

and expert opinions for central government institutions (The Senate – upper house of Polish parliament; Ministries of National Education, of Health, of Justice; Centre for Education Development, ORE; The State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems, PARPA), which have helped them to shape educational, health and social policies concerning children and youth



2000

Birth of the concept of integrated prevention

In 2000–2001, the Polish prevention journal *Remedium* published a series of nine articles by Dr Szymon Grzelak in which the need for a new, integrated approach to prevention was shown, and the assumptions of such an approach were discussed.

The concept of integrated prevention is based on the findings of the author's own research and practical experience from 1992–1999, as well as from reflection on current scientific knowledge in the area of prevention of child and youth problems (as we discuss in more detail in Chapter 2 of this publication). The first definition of integrated prevention:

Integrated prevention is an approach in which, when focusing on preventing any specific risk (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, sexually transmitted diseases/including AIDS/), we consciously support influence in other areas – or at least do not interfere with it.¹

¹ Grzelak, S. 2000, Sexuality and alcohol (Seksualność a alkohol), *Remedium* 9/2000, p. 24

2002–2003

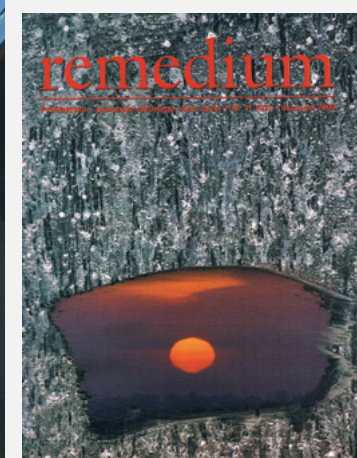
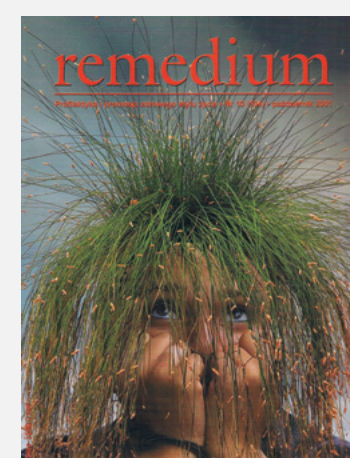
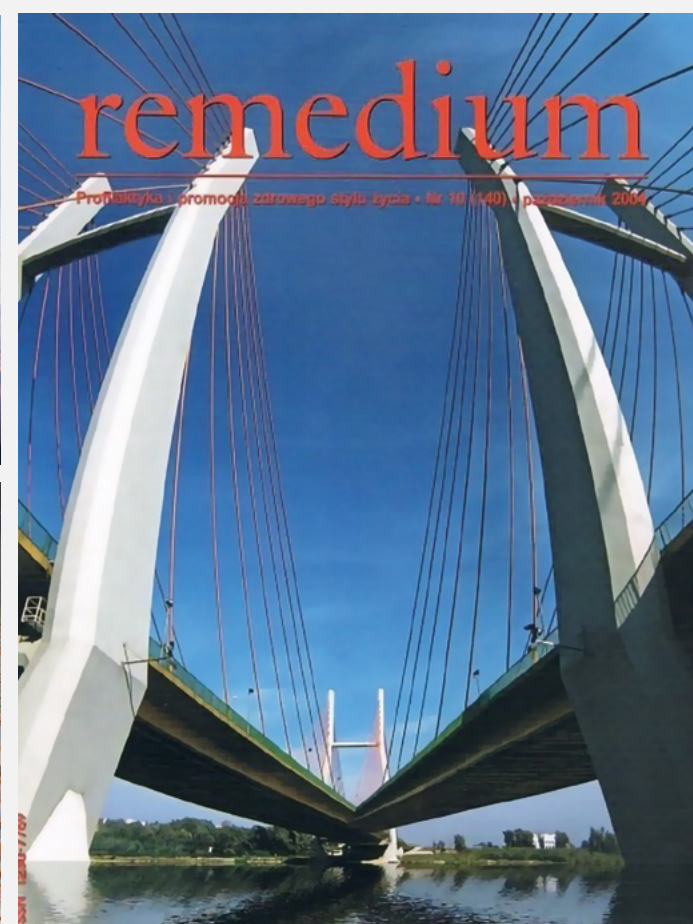
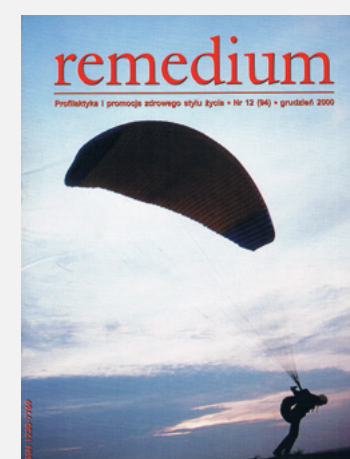
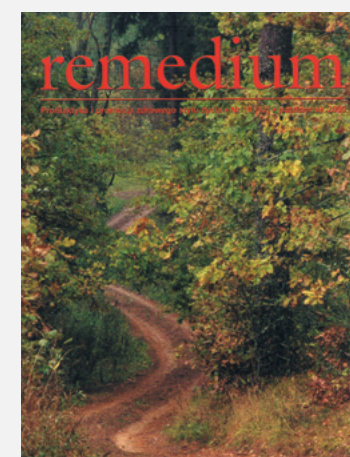
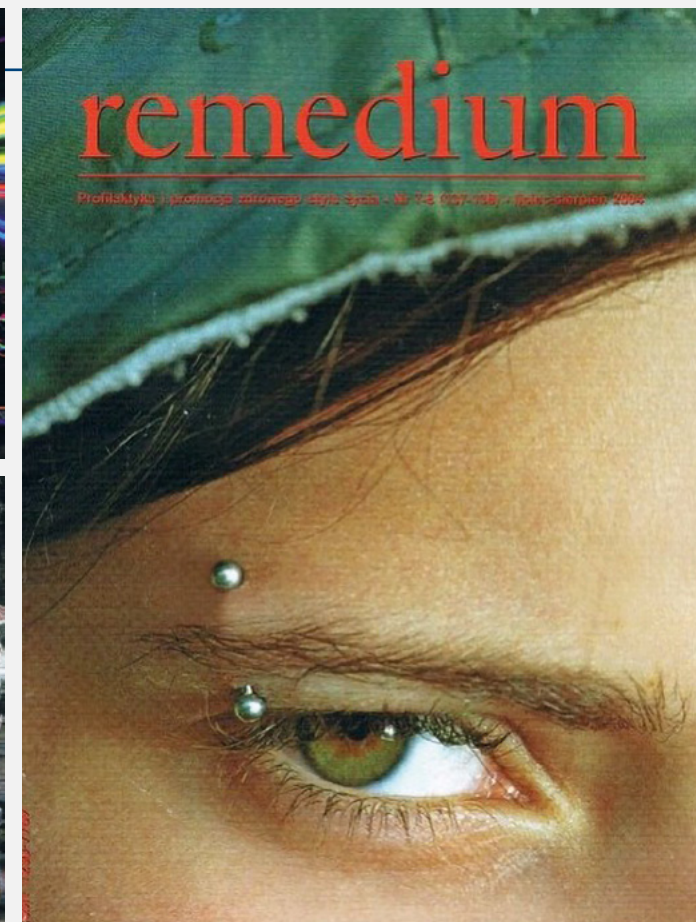
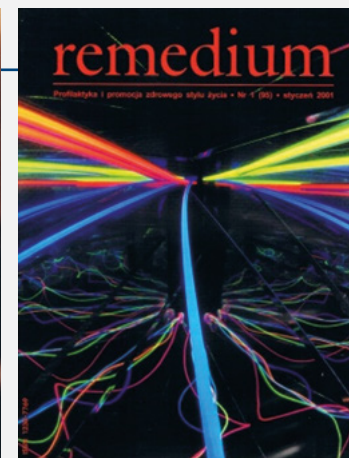
The first integrated prevention programme with evaluation studies

In 2002, the Island of Treasures (Wyspa Skarbów) programme was created for youth aged 14–16. The aims of the programme address several areas of prevention at the same time, and the content refers to topics that are both of primary interest to teenagers and important for their motivations.

Evaluation studies (in a 2 × 2 formula – with an experimental and control group, and two stages of the study) demonstrated the pro-health effects of the programme on peer violence, alcohol use, honesty in peer relationships, and attitudes and knowledge about love and sexuality.

The Island of Treasures programme and the results of research on its effectiveness were presented in subsequent articles in the *Remedium* journal (issues 7–8 and 10/2004).

The research methodology of integrated prevention requires the use of indicators of a wide range of youth problems and risk behaviours in evaluation studies, even if the objectives of the programme being evaluated are somewhat narrower. This makes it possible to detect both the phenomenon of generalization of the expected effects of the programme and its potential harmful effects which may appear in areas beyond the direct scope of the programme objectives.



2005

‘Diagnosis of youth problems and the positive potential of youth based on the Integrated Prevention Model’

The first diagnostic surveys of schools fully based on the research methodology of integrated prevention were conducted. A unique feature of this methodology is the inclusion of a wide range of variables relating to various youth problems and risk behaviours, their protective factors and risk factors, as well as various aspects of the positive potential of young people. The surveys were conducted in intermediate schools (teaching youth in the 13 to 16 age group) in the Warszawa-Śródmieście district, for which a summary report was prepared.

Since 2005, IPZIN has carried out 576 in-person diagnoses for schools and local government authorities based on the Integrated Prevention Model and completed with reports. A total of over 57,000 students participated in those in-person surveys.

2006

The Senate of the Republic of Poland: Conference on effective prevention in the area of sexuality in the light of research

On the initiative of IPZIN, the Family and Social Affairs Committee of the Polish Senate organized a conference entitled ‘Prevention of Sexual Risk Behaviours in Youth. The Current State of Research in the World and in Poland’. The U.S. Embassy was a partner of this conference, and speakers included distinguished experts from Harvard University and the University of California, San Francisco. The event was historically the first opportunity – within the walls of the Polish parliament – for an informed, research-based discussion on the effectiveness of prevention in the sensitive and important area of sexuality.



Conference in the Senate of the Republic of Poland, 24 April 2006. From top left: Dr Edward Green (Harvard University), Dr Szymon Grzelak, Dr Anna Marzec-Bogusławska (head of National Aids Centre, Poland), Dr Norman Hearst (University of California, San Francisco), and the speakers' wives



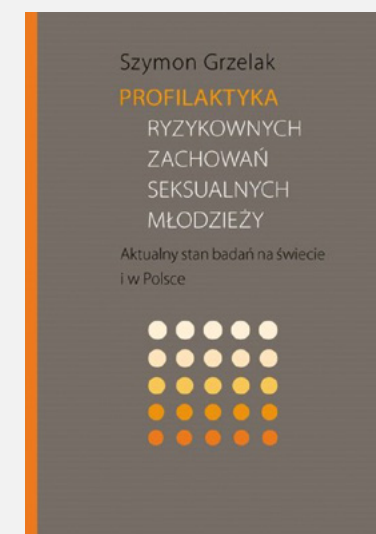
The Senate of the Republic of Poland

2006

Development of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme – the best-known integrated prevention programme



On the basis of the Island of Treasures programme, an extended and improved version was created – the Archipelago of Treasures (Archipelag Skarbów®) programme. In 2007–2008, an evaluation study of the programme was carried out, characterized by high methodological quality (three stages of research, experimental and control group of appropriate size, double-blind procedure).



In 2006–2025, more than 309,000 youth participated in the Archipelago of Treasures® programme, as well as over 71,000 parents and over 50,000 teachers.

The study showed the following effects among 14 to 15-year-olds:

- reduced use of drugs;
- reduced drinking of alcohol;
- increased assertiveness in refusing alcohol and drugs;
- increased knowledge about sexuality;
- reduced percentage of youth engaged in sexual activity;
- reduced use of pornography by boys;
- counteracting sexualization (more mature attitude towards love and sexuality);
- increased intention to have more children in the future;
- decreased suicidal thoughts among girls;
- improved class climate².

In 2010, the programme was included in the newly created national-level *Recommendation System for Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Programmes in Poland* (currently run by the National Centre for the Prevention of Addictions in cooperation with the Centre for Education Development and the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology).

² Grzelak, S. (2009). *Profilaktyka ryzykownych zachowań seksualnych młodzieży. Aktualny stan badań na świecie i w Polsce* (Prevention of Youth Sexual Risk Behaviours: Current State of Research in the World and in Poland), 2nd ed. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Rubikon.

2009

New definition of the Integrated Prevention Model

The development of integrated prevention and activities based on this approach led to the need to define and describe the model of integrated prevention as a comprehensive and fruitful scientific theory serving practical uses.

In the 2nd edition of the scientific monograph *Prevention of Youth Sexual Risk Behaviours...*, a 40-page chapter entitled 'Integrated Prevention Model' was included, which described the theory and its assumptions in their entirety. The chapter includes the most frequently quoted definition to date:

The Integrated Prevention Model is the author's interdisciplinary synthesis of (1) scientific theories, (2) results of empirical research and (3) practical experience, enabling the creation of prevention programmes that **effectively prevent a wide range of youth problems at the same time** (e.g., the use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol; violence; depression; teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections) **with the best possible ratio of costs to effects**.

2009

Starting to build a cooperation network of people and organizations involved in integrated prevention



13th National meeting of integrated prevention trainers (August 2022)

The dynamic development of integrated prevention created a need to train new trainers, interviewers, and regional coordinators of activities and research. The collaborative network now includes more than 70 certified trainers and over 20 prevention organizations and labs. The cooperators meet regularly for frequent supervision, training sessions and annual conventions.

2012

Establishment of the Institute for Integrated Prevention



For the first 11 years of the development of integrated prevention, there was no institution that would take this prevention concept as the basis and centre of its mission. Activities were developed within the framework of the Charles de Foucauld Homo Homini Foundation, for which the Integrated Prevention Model was an important inspiration, but did not constitute a common denominator for all its activities.

Between 2006 and 2012, several dozens of national, regional and local conferences were held in Poland to promote the concept of integrated prevention. The innovative approach was very well received by parents, teachers, psychologists and local authorities. The general public perceived integrated prevention as a concept with three fundamental assets: a strong scientific basis, compatibility with common sense, and wide-ranging practical applicability.

The creation of the **Institute for Integrated Prevention** (Instytut Profilaktyki Zintegrowanej, **IPZIN**) was a response to the needs reported from various sources and to the rapid expansion of activity.



The **Institute for Integrated Prevention** is a foundation overseen by the Minister of Health. The **mission of the Institute for Integrated Prevention** is to support the development of children and youth and prevent problems in the spirit of an integrated approach to problem prevention, and to cooperate with families, schools, local authorities, NGOs and other institutions for the benefit of youth development support, health promotion and prevention.

In fulfilling its mission, the Institute:

- conducts research on young people,
- develops prevention programmes,
- evaluates the effectiveness of its programmes and monitors their quality,
- trains trainers and teachers,
- prepares expert opinions and reports for central institutions and local government units.

2013

The Sejm of the Republic of Poland: presentation of IPZIN research results on sexualization and pornography

In March 2013, on the initiative of the Polish Your Cause Association (STS), the **Sejm of the Republic of Poland** (lower house of Parliament) hosted a conference entitled 'Innocence Robbed: The Sexualization of Women and Girls in the Media and Advertising. Causes, Effects, and Possible Scenarios'. This was the first public event at this level, during which Polish and foreign experts presented scientific arguments illustrating the dangerous consequences of two phenomena: unrestricted access to pornography by children and youth and sexualization in the media and advertising.



Prof. Eileen Zurbriggen (second from right), author of the *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*, with representatives of IPZIN – from right: Szymon Grzelak, Agata Balcerzak and Przemysław Chojnacki



An important contribution of integrated prevention to this conference was an extensive presentation prepared and given by IPZIN, with research results that showed sexualization as a common risk factor for a number of other problems (suicidal thoughts, getting drunk, drug use, violence, and early sexual initiation). IPZIN was the first research institution to systematically include in its research the problem of sexualization and the use of pornography by children and adolescents.



2013

The Senate of the Republic of Poland: presentation of IPZIN research results on fatherhood



The Senate of the Republic of Poland

In November 2013, the results of IPZIN research were presented at a conference on the role of the father and the importance of fatherhood entitled 'Letters to Dad', held in the Senate of the Republic of Poland. The conference was organized by the Family and Social Policy Committee, and initiated by the Cyril and Methodius Foundation and the Tato.Net Team.

On this occasion, commissioned by the Family Committee, Dr Szymon Grzelak prepared an expert opinion entitled *The Role of the Father in Counteracting Children and Youth Risk Behaviours and Problems. Research Results and Recommendations (Rola ojca...)*. The document shows the father's involvement in upbringing as one of the key factors fostering proper development of children, increasing their resilience to various risks and problems, as well as reducing their engagement in risk behaviours.



2014–2015

Participation of IPZIN in the Educational Research Institute study of the school subject Family Life Education



In 2014–2015, commissioned by the Minister of National Education, the Educational Research Institute (Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, IBE), a state agency, conducted in-depth research among 18-year-olds and among parents of school-aged youth. The aim was to find out the needs of students and parents in the area of Family Life Education and to support youth's psychosexual development. At the invitation of the IBE, IPZIN experts actively participated as consultants in the preparation of the study, and Dr Szymon Grzelak was one of the reviewers of the final report entitled *Opinions and Expectations of Young Adults (18-Year-Olds) and Parents of School-Aged Children Concerning Education in the Area of Psychosexual Development and Sexuality*.

To this day, this study remains the only representative and comprehensive study of the Family Life Education school subject. One of the most important results of the research was the discovery of a huge convergence between parents' expectations concerning sex education and the content of the FLE curriculum and its distribution over subsequent years.

Publication of *Vademecum for Effective Prevention of Youth Problems*

(later published in English as *The Guidebook to Effective Prevention of Youth Problems*)

In the summer of 2015, the Polish ***Vademecum skutecznej profilaktyki... (Vademecum for Effective Prevention of Youth Problems. A Guide for Local Authorities and Practitioners Based on the Results of Scientific Research)*** was published on the basis of an extensive report prepared by IPZIN, as commissioned by the Centre for Education Development, a state agency. The publication was issued by the CED thanks to co-financing from the European Social Fund.

The ***Vademecum*** was developed by a broad team of IPZIN co-workers, with the participation of 17 invited experts, on the basis of a search for current scientific knowledge and IPZIN's own research among more than 15,000 students and more than 1500 parents, teachers and local government officials, as well as the experience of IPZIN's practical prevention activities among more than 150,000 recipients. The publication was a response to a serious gap in Polish prevention, i.e. the lack of in-depth publications that would discuss the challenges related to a broad spectrum of various youth problems, and would at the same time propose strategic, well-thought-out and comprehensive solutions.

The *Vademecum* first described the Seven Levers of Effective Prevention strategy – the mature fruit



of the Integrated Prevention Model. In subsequent years, the strategy became the basis for many preventive initiatives and activities.

In mid-2015, the *Vademecum* was published and distributed by the CED to all local governments in Poland, and a reprint and another stage of distribution, with the support of the Ministry of Health, followed in the autumn of the same year. In September 2015, on the initiative of IPZIN, an inter-ministerial meeting was held at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (KPRM) in order to present the Seven Levers of Effective Prevention strategy and the results of studies on which it is based.

In June 2018, also on the initiative of IPZIN, a meeting of the Social Committee of the Council of Ministers was held at the KPRM. One of the important topics was to discuss the potential of the Seven Levers strategy for improving the effectiveness of social policy concerning young people.

Since 2015, over 40 conferences and workshops have been held to introduce local governments at different levels to the Seven Levers of Effective Prevention strategy. For many local governments, these workshops were the first event ever to bring together all institutions, organizations and people concerned with youth as a subject of social, health and educational policies.

The Integrated Prevention Model in the Polish National Health Programme (NPZ) and the Education Law

Thanks to the intensive involvement of IPZIN experts in the public consultations concerning the National Health Programme for 2016–2020, more than a dozen provisions were included in the Programme which indicated the need for an integrated view of prevention and public health.

The preamble to the National Health Programme for 2016–2020 includes the essence of an integrated approach: 'Operational objectives, and tasks that serve achieving the operational objectives, as specified in the National Health Programme (...), should be pursued in an interconnected manner, addressing more than one risk at the same time, particularly in areas where there is scientific evidence of a relationship between risks or correlating risk factors and protective factors'.

This fragment of the preamble, inspired by the Integrated Prevention Model, was repeated in almost identical wording in the National Health Programme for 2021–2025.

The participation of IPZIN experts in the public consultations of the Education Law, reforming the education system, led to filling the gap caused by the omission of development support and prevention from the list of the main tasks of the education system. A provision inspired by the Integrated Prevention Model was introduced into the Act (Art. 1, para. 3):

The Act of 14 December 2016, the Education Law, consolidated text of 14 May 2025: 'Chapter 1, Art. 1: The education system shall provide in particular: 3) (...) supporting the child in his/her development towards full maturity in the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social spheres, reinforced and supplemented by activities in the area of prevention of children and youth problems'.

The Vademecum was the first to describe 'the Granny effect'. Research findings have shown that teenagers who indicate both or at least one of their parents as important life guides, are significantly protected from developing mental health problems and engaging in risk behaviours.

For the 10% of adolescents who, for various reasons, cannot indicate either parent as a life guide, only one type of life guide effectively replaces the parents in their protective function: the grandmother.



Booklet about the Seven Levers... for local government authorities

2017

Publication of three IPZIN reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health commissioned the Institute for Integrated Prevention to prepare reports based on the results of research from 2014–2017, conducted in 102 schools among more than 13,000 adolescents. Three research reports were published, developed by a team of experts led by Maja Łoś, PhD:

- Report 1: **Map of Risk Factors and Protective Factors, Guarding Youth from Risk Behaviours;**
- Report 2: **How to Assess School Risk and Protective Factors?**
- Report 3: **Preventive Potential of Schools**



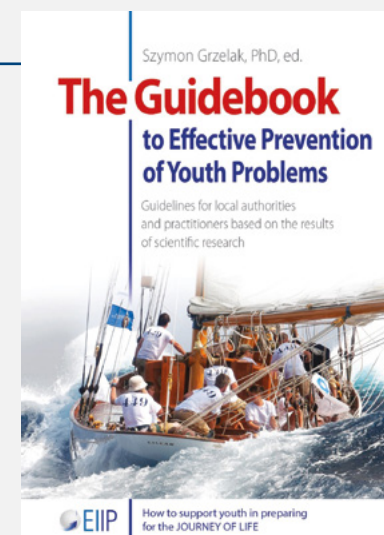
2017

Establishment of the European Institute for Integrated Prevention Foundation (EIIP)

Over the 17 years of development of integrated prevention, there was a gradual increase in interest in this approach from professionals outside of Poland. The culminating moment was the first international workshop introducing the Integrated Prevention Model, which was conducted by IPZIN in 2016. It was attended by more than 100 leaders working with youth, from 20 countries and 6 continents.



In 2017, a new foundation, the European Institute for Integrated Prevention (<https://www.eiip.institute>), was established to popularize the Integrated Prevention Model and develop research and prevention activities based on it in different countries around the world.

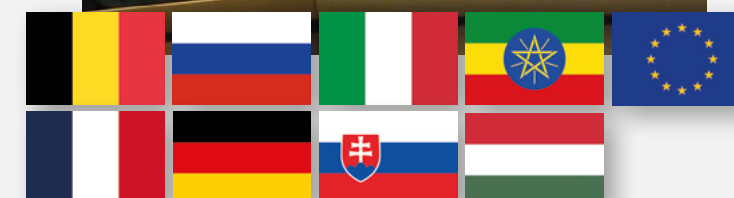


In order to establish international cooperation, the Polish *Vademecum for Effective Prevention of Youth Problems* was translated into English and published as *The Guidebook to Effective Prevention of Youth Problems*.

Among positive opinions about this publication, the opinion of a renowned psychologist stands out, as printed on the cover:

Our youth in many nations around the world are trying to cope with many risk factors in their lives and not succeeding. Fortunately, this new book, The Guidebook to Effective Prevention of Youth Problems, presents both effective solutions, and even more importantly, it lays out in clear language many empirically and practically tested strategies for prevention! I endorse it wholeheartedly for everyone who wants to make a positive difference in saving the hearts and souls of our next generation while also enriching their minds.

Philip G. Zimbardo, PhD, Prof. Emeritus, Stanford University, USA



In 2017 alone, in response to invitations, IPZIN and EIIP experts presented the integrated approach to prevention at the European Parliament in Brussels and at numerous conferences and workshops: in Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Russia and Ethiopia.



Since its inception, EIIP has established cooperation with the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCC). Our representatives actively participate in annual conferences for professionals organized by IFTCC. The aim of these conferences is to seek ways to effectively support people experiencing difficulties in the area of sexuality and sexual/gender identity. During these conferences, EIIP experts presented the results of their own research and preventive activities carried out among young people and based on the Integrated Prevention Model. At the same time, they gained new knowledge and experience by learning from psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors from all over the world about the latest research findings and new methods of psychotherapy to help people struggling with sexual identity issues.

Beginning of integrated prevention research and activity at Polish Youth Sociotherapy Centres and Youth Care Centres

Thanks to the financial support of the Justice Fund managed by the Polish Ministry of Justice, a several-year process was started of adapting integrated prevention tools to young people at risk of social maladjustment, or those socially maladjusted, living in Youth Sociotherapy Centres and Youth Care Centres. This process included:

- **extensive diagnostic surveys** at both types of centres,
- **adaptation of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme** to the needs of socially maladjusted youth,
- **68 implementations of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme at both types of centres** in 2018–2025, **for over 3000 students, more than 940 teachers and over 200 parents and legal guardians**, subject to meticulous monitoring,
- **evaluation studies** on the effectiveness of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme at Youth Sociotherapy Centres and Youth Care Centres.



The results and conclusions from the monitoring, and the results of studies showing specific pro-health and pro-rehabilitation effects of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme in working with young people from Youth Sociotherapy Centres and Youth Care Centres, were presented in articles by Maja Łoś, PhD, and Jakub Placha, MA, in the prevention journal *Remedium* (June 2024 and July – August 2024).

Pilot version of the Star of Powers (Gwiazda Mocy) integrated prevention programme



Schools and local government units that used the Archipelago of Treasures® programme expressed the need for a programme to be developed in a similar spirit and adapted to younger audiences – aged 11–13. Thanks to financial support from the Justice Fund, a new integrated prevention programme was developed: the Star of Powers – First Expedition.

The development of the programme was slowed down by the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, but the availability of the programme and the scale of its implementation is growing year by year. Between 2018 and 2025, 142 implementations of the Star of Powers programme were conducted, involving more than 8400 students, over 2170 teachers and more than 1290 parents.



Integrated Youth Policy – a proposal from the IPZIN community

In 2018, the year of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Poland regaining its independence, the IPZIN team of experts came to the conclusion that Poland lacks a comprehensive concept of youth policy that would make it possible to support the development of the young generation more effectively, protect youth's health, and shape their pro-health, pro-social and pro-family attitudes.

The assumptions of the Integrated Prevention Model, and conclusions from research based on it, were formulated in the concept of **Integrated Youth Policy**, which was expressed in the **'Declaration of 36 organizations, signatories of the agreement for Integrated Youth Policy, entitled Youth at the Threshold of a New Century of Independent Poland'**.

The Declaration was presented and discussed during the meeting of the **Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee of the Senate of the Republic of Poland** (KRPSS) on 13 February 2018.

The meeting resulted in the **'Position of the KRPSS of the Senate of the Republic of Poland on Integrated Youth Policy'**, which was **unanimously supported by senators both from the ruling camp and the opposition**.

Here are selected quotations from the KRPSS document:

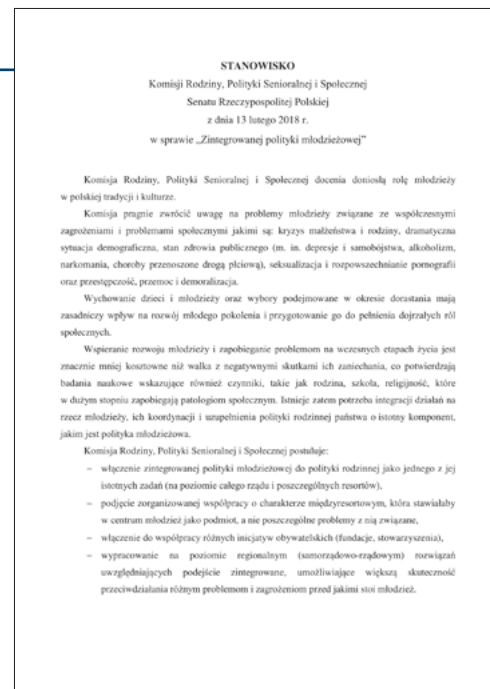
The Committee would like to draw attention to youth problems related to contemporary risks and social problems such as: the crisis of marriage and family, the dramatic demographic situation,

the state of public health (e.g., depression and suicides, alcoholism, drug addiction, sexually transmitted diseases), sexualization and the spread of pornography, as well as crime, violence, and demoralization.

Support for children and youth's development, and the choices they make during adolescence, have a fundamental impact on the development of the young generation and on preparing them to assume mature social roles. (...)

The Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee calls for:

- *incorporating integrated youth policy into family policy, as one of its important tasks (at the level of the whole government and individual departments),*
- *establishing organized inter-ministerial cooperation that would place youth at the centre, rather than individual problems related to them,*
- *including various citizen initiatives (foundations, associations) in cooperation,*
- *developing solutions at the regional (local government and government) level that would incorporate the integrated approach, enabling more effective prevention of various problems and risks faced by youth.*



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In June 2018, the assumptions and rationale for the concept of Integrated Youth Policy were presented at a meeting of the **Social Committee of the Council of Ministers**. As a result, also the **Social Committee adopted a position expressing support for the application of the perspective developed by the Integrated Prevention Model** to improve social policy relating to young people, supporting their development and protecting them from risks ('Social Committee statement of 6 June 2018 on issues related to youth, marriage and parenthood').

Here is an excerpt from the document: *Supporting the development of young people and preventing problems at early stages of life is the most natural and rational prevention strategy, and involves many times less cost than the sum of the costs incurred due to the consequences of problems. In order to comprehensively prevent youth problems, the Social Committee recommends the use of the integrated approach in family and social policy. The essence of the integrated approach is to see the complex context of dependencies and relationships between problems, where some problems increase the appearance of others, and many of them have common causes and risk factors, as demonstrated by research. (...)*

Research and prevention activity in the Legnica-Głogów Copper District in south-western Poland

(cooperation with the KGHM Foundation)

2019 marked the beginning of several years of cooperation between IPZIN, with its network of cooperating organizations, and the KGHM Foundation (a copper mining and smelting plant). Research and practical tools of integrated prevention were used for activity in the region.

The research provided an opportunity to incorporate into integrated prevention a new socio-demographic issue: the migration and emigration desires of young people, which pose a problem for localities and regions threatened with depopulation. The 'profile of a future emigrant' and the 'profile of a local patriot' (a person who, as an adult, wants to stay where he or she currently lives), developed on the basis of research, help to understand the factors that encourage emigration and the factors that counteract it. Moreover, the understanding of these factors is deepened by the context of knowledge about the current mental state of young people, their risk behaviours, and desires to have children in the future.

Integrated prevention is a concept open to the inclusion of new individual and social problems, and its research and prevention methodology facilitates such inclusion. It is an extremely valuable resource in unstable times.

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POLSKA MIEDŹ

Integrated Prevention Model as an example of a scientific approach to prevention in *Clinical Psychology of Children and Adolescents*

In the latest prestigious Polish academic book on clinical psychology, ***Clinical Psychology of Children and Adolescents*** (*Psychologia kliniczna dzieci i młodzieży*, PWN, 2020), in the chapter entitled 'Prevention of behavioural and developmental disorders and health promotion of children and adolescents', Prof. Anna Brzezińska and Prof. Iwona Grzegorzewska included a broader description of the **Integrated Prevention Model** as an example of a holistic, scientific approach to prevention (pp. 773–776).

The authors began the description with the words: *An example of a systemic, interactional and dynamic approach to the prevention of behavioural and developmental disorders in children and adolescents is the cognitively original Integrated Prevention Model (IPM) developed by Dr Szymon Grzelak, supported by research results*

and verified in numerous practical activities. In their description of the model, the authors refer, among others, to the *Vademecum of Effective Prevention* (2015) and the collection of IPZIN reports for the Ministry of Health (2017).



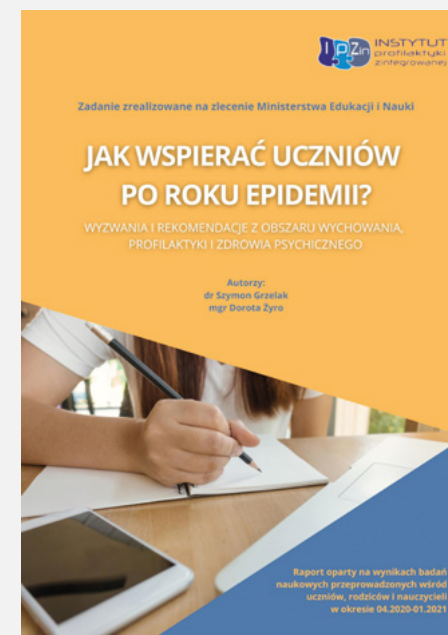
Integrated prevention and the COVID-19 pandemic – an example of a rapid response to new needs



The principle of integrated prevention is to precede every practical action with research. IPZIN was the first research and prevention institution to survey young people, with the help of a network of cooperating organizations, and compile the results in the form of two reports:

- **Youth During the Epidemic** (8 April 2020)
- **Youth During the Epidemic. Who Has It the Hardest?** (16 April 2020)

The reports and research were carried out pro bono, with no funding provided. They resulted from a social action launched by IPZIN and conducted under the name: 'Action Navigation. Protect Yourself, Support Others'. An additional effect of this rapid action was the development by the IPZIN team of experts of a framework for an online research methodology consistent with the principles of integrated prevention.



In the following months and years of the epidemic, IPZIN developed two more reports (in Polish):

- **Prevention for the Time of the Epidemic (...)** – an expert opinion commissioned by The State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems (December 2020);
- **How to Support Students After a Year of the Epidemic? Challenges and Recommendations in the Area of Education, Prevention and Mental Health** – a report based on research findings, commissioned by the then Ministry of Education and Science (2021).

The aim of the reports was to present a comprehensive picture of the current problems in children and adolescents, but also of the challenges faced by teachers and parents, who were also affected by the epidemic and isolation.

The integrated prevention perspective proved to be an excellent antidote to the widespread tendency among policy-makers to direct all their attention and resources to counteracting the COVID-19 epidemic, without understanding that doing so would increase gaps in the area of prevention of mental

health problems and risk behaviours in children and adolescents.

The recommendations in the reports indicated solutions that were realistic and could be implemented in practice by state, local and school authorities, as well as by school professionals, teachers and parents.

Some of the IPZIN recommendations were used by the Ministry of Education and Science in nationwide recommendations for schools.

The rapid response to new needs also included the development, implementation and evaluation of two new prevention programmes:

- the **Navigation in Crisis** programme – adapted for remote implementation and implemented in schools by a network of IPZIN collaborators as early as May 2020
- the **Navigation for Any Weather** programme – based on a modern web application for schools that enables a diagnosis of the school environment (surveys among students, parents and teachers) and the implementation of prevention activity based on this diagnosis. The results of the diagnosis are communicated to the school within 48 hours of completing the survey.





1. **Accept** what you feel
2. **Control** what you do
3. **Be alert**
4. **Ease up** on yourself and others
5. **Discover** sources of support
6. **Look far away**
7. **Look for what is good**
8. **Build** of what you have
9. **Reach out**
10. **Toughen up**



The **Navigation for Any Weather** programme (Nawigacja w każdą pogodę, NWKP) was developed in 2021. Financial support from the Social Responsibility of Science programme (editions 1 and 2), established and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, and later by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, enabled extensive development of the programme.

The aim of the programme is to strengthen the mental resilience of students and to improve relationships in the school environment (students, parents, teachers). As part of the programme, students learn **10 tips** for coping effectively with crisis situations. The results of evaluation studies show the effectiveness of the programme in improving the mental well-being of students (provided it is implemented as intended).

Since 2021, 1415 schools have been included in the NWKP programme, with a total of over 75,000 students, more than 36,000 parents and over 20,728 teachers participating.

In February 2025, the results of the evaluation of the NWKP programme were published in an article by Ewa Siellawa-Kolbowska, PhD, and Szymon Szumiał, MA, in the *Remedium prevention journal*. Efforts have been made to include the programme in the *Recommendation System for Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Programmes*.



2020

First edition of the Polish Golden Link Award for Prevention Professional of the Year



The year 2020, the year of the COVID-19 epidemic and lockdowns, brought new problems and challenges for children and youth, parents and teachers, and also entirely new challenges for prevention professionals. Many of them, despite the extremely difficult conditions and lack of resources, found their way into the new situation with passion and heart. In order to recognize them, the Institute for Integrated Prevention initiated a new, national-level award, the Golden Link.

2021–2022

Development of integrated prevention activity in Malta and Lithuania under Erasmus+

In 2021–2022, research and activity based on the Integrated Prevention Model began to develop intensively in Malta and Lithuania, helped by the participation of the European Institute for Integrated Prevention in the *Youth Positive Potential* project under the European Erasmus+ programme.



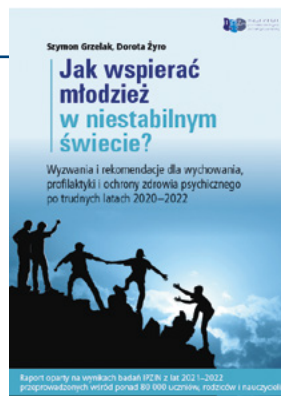
In both countries, youth surveys based on integrated prevention methodology were conducted. The reports from these surveys became the basis for the cultural adaptation of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme and the training of trainers. Since then, both in Malta and Lithuania the programme has been implemented regularly. EIIP, together with IPZIN, oversees the implementation of the programme and collects monitoring data on each non-Polish implementation.

Cooperation with professionals from Lithuania and Malta has also included the co-organization of a number of conferences in these countries.

Since 2024, the Navigation for Any Weather programme has been implemented in several Polish schools in Lithuania.

2023

Publication of the report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?*



The outbreak of COVID-19 and then the war in Ukraine became a turning point, closing a period of relative stability in the modern world. Four subsequent reports written in 2020–2021 by IPZIN experts each time referred to the latest research findings, so that the recommendations based on them would also be adapted to changing realities. In May and October 2023, two further editions were published of the report ***How to Support Youth in an Unstable World? Challenges and Recommendations for Education, Prevention and Mental Health Care after the Difficult Years 2020–2022*** (Grzelak, S. and Żyro, D.). The report was based on the results of the IPZIN surveys conducted in 2021–2022 among over 80,000 students, parents and teachers.

This time, the authors of the report aimed to develop recommendations that would not be rendered obsolete by another global upheaval. The recommendations in the report were developed, on the one hand, on the basis of the most recent research findings, and on the other hand, by using the authors' extensive research and practical experience enabling them to formulate recommendations with an increased degree of timelessness.

The report was presented at dozens of conferences and training sessions, and the accuracy of its recommendations was also confirmed by the results of subsequent IPZIN studies, conducted after its publication.

2024

Publication of the IPZIN expert opinion on the draft regulation of the Polish Ministry of National Education (...) on the repeal of Family Life Education classes and implementation of a new subject: 'Health education'

In October 2024, the Ministry of National Education published a draft regulation introducing fundamental changes in the system of children and youth development support and problem prevention. In an opinion based on a reliable analysis of the regulation, scientific knowledge and extensive practical experience in integrated prevention, IPZIN experts criticized the draft, pointing to the lack of scientific and research arguments in favour of the proposed changes, the erroneous assumptions of the new system, and the inappropriate mode of their introduction. The opinion discussed the expected negative social and health consequences of repealing FLE classes and introducing the 'Health education' subject in the proposed form.

The opinion of IPZIN was supported by more than 50 institutions and non-governmental organizations, and a group of respected experts not associated with IPZIN. It was presented at numerous conferences and discussed in the media.

2025

Conference in the Senate of the Republic of Poland held on the initiative of IPZIN, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of integrated prevention and the 5th anniversary of the Polish Golden Link Award for Prevention Professional of the Year

In 2025, the Institute for Integrated Prevention came up to the Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee with an initiative to jointly organize a national-level conference in the Senate of the Republic of Poland, entitled:

***YOUTH – PREVENTION – FAMILY.
The Role of Prevention Professionals
in the Face of Social and Demographic
Challenges Encountered by the Young
Generation.***



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The initiative was taken first by the Family Committee and then also by the Health Committee. The conference, scheduled for 17 June 2025, was held under the honorary auspices of the Director of the National Centre for the Prevention of Addictions (a state agency) and under the media sponsorship of the magazine *Remedium* and the publishing house and portal *Medycyna Praktyczna* (Practical Medicine).

The organization of the conference coincided with the 25th anniversary of integrated prevention and the 5th anniversary of the Golden Link Award. This provided the impetus for IPZIN to produce a publication summarizing the achievements of integrated prevention and presenting those of the latest research results that best corresponded with the title and theme of the conference.

The main objectives of the conference were, on the one hand, to sensitize participants to the importance of the socio-demographic dimension of prevention activity and, on the other hand, to emphasize the underestimated role of prevention professionals in shaping and building the mental and emotional resilience of the young generation in the face of the risks resulting from the developmental age of children and young people, compounded by the instability of the modern world.

A photograph of a sailboat's deck and mast, with the white sails partially visible. The boat is moving through a deep blue sea, creating a white wake. The sky is light blue with some clouds. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text. A pink circle with a white number '2' is also overlaid on the right side, partially overlapping the blue box.

Integrated
prevention –
assumptions,
strategies,
programmes

2

Integrated prevention is an effective method for preventing many youth problems and risk behaviours and comprehensively supporting youth development. Scientific research shows that individual youth problems co-occur and are interconnected. The same risk factors are responsible for the emergence of many different problems. This is because these problems are in fact symptoms, and their causes – individual, family and social – are often similar. Moreover, the same preventive factors, especially those related to the family, school and religious faith, are of key importance for effective prevention of various youth problems and risk behaviours.

The concept of integrated prevention



Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, many separate branches of specialized problem prevention developed, such as alcohol, drug and tobacco use prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention, peer violence prevention, depression and suicide prevention, and a number of others. On the basis of such specialized approach, prevention programmes were created that were narrow in scope and subjected to evaluation using a narrow range of variables.

The concept of integrated prevention stems from theories indicating that a person is a whole (Karol Wojtyła's *personalism*, the Jessor's *problem behaviour theory*, and Hawkins' *social development model*), and that it is worthwhile to look at his or her attitudes and behaviours, and their determinants, in a holistic way. Other theories used for creating the Integrated Prevention Model (IPM) included the *psychosocial development theory* by Erik Erikson, the concept of *positive youth development* (Catalano, Hawkins), the *social learning theory* (Bandura), and the *cognitive-behavioural skills theory* (Schinke).

The Integrated Prevention Model is an **original interdisciplinary synthesis of scientific theories, empirical research results and practical experience, enabling the creation of prevention programmes that effectively prevent a wide range of youth problems at the same time (e.g., the use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol; violence; depression; teenage pregnancy; HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections) with the best possible ratio of costs to effects.**

From the beginning, the essence and goal of integrated prevention was to exceed the limits of narrow, specialized prevention, and to seek effective ways of preventing **multiple risks simultaneously**. This is the essence of the term 'integrated prevention'. Effective integrated prevention activity requires good cooperation between various people and organizations (parents, teachers, specialists, institutions, local government), but it is not this dimension of 'integration' that is central to the definition of the model discussed here.

The Integrated Prevention Model has developed its own research methodology, which ensures high quality of research and meets high ethical standards. This is the result of

over two decades of continuous development of research and its adaptation to changing preventive needs and challenges. **A unique feature of the integrated prevention research methodology is its simultaneous coverage of a wide spectrum of variables related to:**

- various youth problems and risk behaviours,
- protective factors and risk factors associated with these problems,
- various aspects of the positive potential of youth.

Another significant feature of integrated prevention is monitoring gaps in the Polish prevention system, and addressing issues important to youth health and development that are rarely and reluctantly tackled by others because of the associated controversies, tensions or differences in worldviews.

A brief description of the Integrated Prevention Model can be found in the latest Polish academic book on clinical psychology, *Clinical psychology of children and adolescents* (Psychologia kliniczna dzieci i młodzieży, PWN, 2020)¹, where it was presented as a positive example of a comprehensive, science-based approach to prevention (pp. 773–776): *An example of a systemic, interactional and dynamic approach to the prevention of behavioural and developmental disorders in children and adolescents is the cognitively original Integrated Prevention Model (IPM) developed by Dr Szymon Grzelak, supported by research results and verified in numerous practical activities*.

The main assumptions of the Integrated Prevention Model:

- Perception of the specific problems and risk behaviours of youth in the broad context of many other problems and risk behaviours;
- Analysis of the interconnections between different youth problems and the search for their common causes and determinants (risk factors);
- An emphasis on protective factors in prevention, in particular those which shield youth from different problems and risk behaviours simultaneously;
- Use of a wide range of indicators concerning many different problems and risk behaviours both in diagnostic research and in evaluation research;
- Recognition and inclusion of different people in prevention, with their different impact on young people: parents, extended family, teachers, local government, NGOs, religious organizations and finally, other young people;
- The perception of the human being in the context of all of its dimensions: physical, mental, intellectual, spiritual and social;
- A pragmatic approach to prevention, expressed in the search for formulas for action which bring maximum results at the lowest possible cost.

¹ Brzezińska A., *Prevention of behavioural and developmental disorders and health promotion of children and adolescents*. In Grzegorzewska, I., Cierpiakowska, L., Borkowska, A.R. (Eds.) *Psychologia kliniczna dzieci i młodzieży*, PWN, Warszawa 2020.

Protective factors and risk factors common for multiple risks

Weakening risk factors and strengthening protective factors helps to limit the scale and intensity of youth problems and risk behaviours. From the perspective of integrated prevention, it is of key importance to identify factors common for many problems. Focusing on them in youth work creates an opportunity to prevent a wide range of problems simultaneously. This is the most rational and cost-effective approach.

Public attention is often focused on young people who engage in risk behaviours and develop various problems and addictions. However, research results show that these disturbing phenomena affect a minority of the young generation. In our research, we have been examining for years the key factors that contribute to the fact that most young people do not engage in risk behaviours and cope constructively with problems. The knowledge of these factors, i.e. protective factors, is crucial from a prevention viewpoint. It turns out that **subsequent studies conducted over many years continue to confirm the importance of the same protective factors.**

Table 1. The influence of protective factors on problems, IPZIN study from 2011–2014, sample N = 13,960, youth aged 14–16 (The Guidebook to Effective Prevention of Youth Problems, EIIP 2017)

Factor influence on problems, controlling for other variables		Suicidal thoughts	Getting drunk	Drug use	Violence	Verbal abuse	Sexual initiation	No children in the future
Protective factors	Family							
	Mother as life guide	+			+			+
	Father as life guide	+	+	+			+	
	Being heard in conversations	+			+	+		
	Faith and religion							
	Religious practice	+	+	+			+	
	Importance of faith/religion in life	+						+
	Love – models and convictions							
	Contact with model marriages	+						+
	Belief that true love exists	+			+			+
	School and class							
	Good climate in class	+			+	+	+	
	Acceptance in class	+						+
	Participation in FLE classes		+	+			+	+

At the same time, we also look for risk factors that increase the likelihood of risk behaviours and problems. Below we present how the occurrence of various factors translates into youth problem behaviours. To facilitate interpretation, the tables below highlight protective factors – those that decrease the likelihood of problems – in green, and risk factors – those increasing the likelihood of problems – in red.

Table 2. The influence of risk factors on problems, IPZIN study from 2011–2014, sample N = 13,960, youth aged 14–16 (The Guidebook to Effective Prevention of Youth Problems, EIIP 2017)

Factor influence on problems, controlling for other variables		Suicidal thoughts	Getting drunk	Drug use	Violence	Verbal abuse	Sexual initiation	No children in the future
Risk factors	Family							
	Parental divorce							–
	School and class							
	Fear of violence in school	–					–	
	Peer and environment							
	Company of alcohol drinkers	–	–	–	–	–	–	
	Company of drug users	–	–	–	–	–		
	Availability of alcohol & drugs		–	–				
	Sex-related							
	Sexualization	–	–	–	–	–	–	
	Myth of 100% condom protection from HIV						–	
	Other problems and risk behaviours as risk factors							
	Getting drunk					–	–	
	Sexual initiation	–						
	Drug use						–	
	Suicidal thoughts							–
	Other attitudes as risk factors							
	Acceptance of drunk driving		–					
	Acceptance of alcohol + dating		–					

Both in the earlier studies cited here and in the most recent ones, presented in Chapter 4, the three most important groups of protective factors are related to family, school and religious faith.

In terms of protective factors, the **family** is of primary importance. The mother and the father, as life guides, are crucial for the successful and healthy development of children. Indicating both or one of them is related to a lowered intensity or decrease in the likelihood of various problems from different areas. A very important protective factor is also the child's feeling that they have been understood and heard in conversation with their parents.

The second important group of protective factors is related to **religion**, and more specifically, to religious practice and the great significance of faith in a young person's life. One or both of these factors were significant for almost all problems. This indicates the important role of religious organizations (and potential cooperation with them) in preventing youth problems.

The third group of important protective factors includes those related with **school**. A good class climate (kindness, mutual support, sense of security) has a protective effect against problems of violence in peer relationships, lowered mood and suicidal thoughts, and also against an objectified attitude towards sexuality. The feeling of being accepted in class protects students against problems of violence, lowered mood and suicidal thoughts, and counteracts their unwillingness to have children in the future. This shows the important role of the school in preventing problems through day-to-day activity such as fostering the integration of students and creating a friendly and supportive climate in class.

Among the school factors, regular **participation in Family Life Education** classes is also important – it counteracted early sexual initiation and an objectified attitude towards sexuality, and also had a protective effect against the use of psychoactive substances (alcohol, drugs, cigarettes). This shows that Family Life Education played the part of both education in the area of love and sexuality and broader health education in the area of addiction prevention.

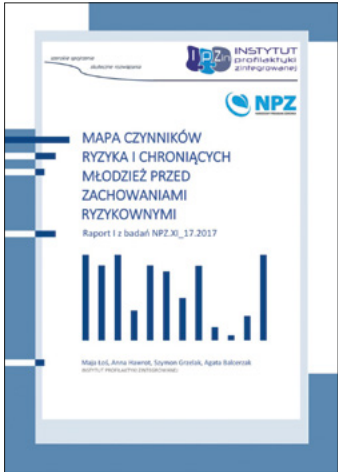


Table 3. The influence of protective factors on groups of problems, IPZIN study from 2014–2017, sample N = 13,236, youth aged 14–16 (*Map of Risk Factors and Protective Factors...*, IPZIN report for the Ministry of Health, 2017)

		Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	No children in the future
Factor influence on problems, controlling for other variables		Violence	Depression	Alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, truancy, sexual contacts	Pornography Sexualization	
Protective factors	Family					
	Mother as life guide	+	+	+	+	
	Father as life guide	+	+	+		
	Being heard in conversations	+	+	+	+	
	Wiara i religia					
	Religious practice			+	+	+
	Importance of faith/religion in life		+	+	+	+
	School and class					
	Good climate in class	+	+		+	
	Acceptance in class	+	+			
	Liking school	+	+	+	+	+
	Participation in FLE classes			+	+	

Among risk factors, a negative peer environment plays an important role. Keeping company with peers who use alcohol and drugs is associated with increased violence and psychoactive substance use, and lowered mood.

Sexualization is a commonly overlooked risk factor that needs attention. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), it involves reducing an individual's worth to their 'sexy' appearance or behaviour, sexual objectification, and imposing on a person sexual content and sexual images that are not adequate to age and situation.

Seven Levers of Effective Prevention

A ready-made tool for local authorities

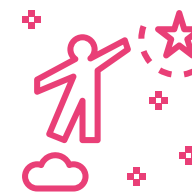


The Seven Levers of Effective Prevention strategy grew out of the Integrated Prevention Model. It has been described and scientifically justified² as a proven set of principles which largely determine the effectiveness of development support and problem prevention in the local community.

The Law of the Lever says that if an appropriate fulcrum is found, then a small force is sufficient to lift a very heavy object – so heavy that it would be impossible to lift without the lever. Thinking according to the Law of the Lever in integrated prevention, and also in the concept of integrated youth policy based on it, consists in searching for a fulcrum that enables achieving very large effects despite using limited funds and resources. The **Seven Levers of Effective Prevention are seven fulcrums, seven aspects of reality on which the effectiveness of action depends to the greatest extent in the area of youth development support, problem prevention and counteracting youth risk behaviours.**

The strategy was developed as a result of many months of work, analysis of research results and consultations with experts. Its implementation is supported not only by scientific arguments, but also by numerous positive opinions from local government officials and practitioners who have come across this strategy. The Seven Levers of Effective Prevention combine to form a comprehensive philosophy of action for local government and schools, one that will enable them to achieve the greatest effects of preventive measures in the most economical way. This provides a ready-made basis for building a vision and assumptions upon which to base the action programme of local government and the bodies, specialist institutions and educational establishments run by local government, as well as cooperation with non-governmental organizations and local social activists.

The Seven Levers Strategy can also be successfully used as part of the vision of an integrated youth policy, which was developed by IPZIN as a proposal for the national-level social policy.



LEVER 1: FOCUS ON WHAT IS GOOD (then you will find better solutions to the problems)

Positive information about youth and youth development support potential of a local community is the best starting point for seeking creative solutions to problems. The fact that most 14 to 15-year-olds do not engage in risk behaviours or run into problems is such positive information. Focusing on such facts makes us think: 'What can I do to make even more young people develop their potential, live a healthy life, and make others follow them?'.



LEVER 2: THINK IN AN INTEGRATED WAY ABOUT PROBLEM BEHAVIOURS AND PREVENTION (then solutions will be holistic and efforts economical)

Many factors are responsible for the occurrence of different risk behaviours, from various areas, at the same time. Strengthening protective factors and weakening risk factors connected with one problem should be considered in the context of these factors' influence on other problems as well. For example, using one psychoactive substance greatly increases the risk that a young person will use others, and furthermore, increases the likelihood that they will commit violence or engage in early sexual contacts.



LEVER 3: RELY ON RESOURCES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES (by respecting them you gain powerful allies)

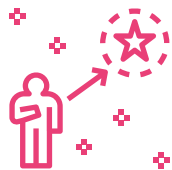
Relying on local resources is the most rational and economical approach. Relationships with parents, involvement with religion and good climate at school and in the student's class are proven protective factors that prevent many problems and risk behaviours at the same time. They are important resources of any local community. An approach based on respecting natural social resources fosters the development of social capital, prevents conflicts and builds a broad positive front around prevention and youth development support efforts. It can also become the basis for forming local teams cooperating for the benefit of youth development support.

² Sz. Grzelak (Ed.), *The Guidebook to Effective Prevention of Youth Problems*, EIIP, Warszawa, 2017.

**LEVER 4: BUILD ON YOUTH'S DREAMS AND VALUES**

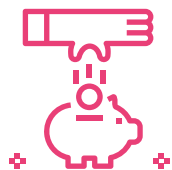
(then young people will accept a healthy lifestyle as a means to achieving their own goals)

Understanding the significance of young people's life aspirations, values and spirituality allows us to use the resulting very strong and deep motivations in prevention. Lacking support from the environment, or bitter experiences including great disappointments in life, may cover these dreams with a layer of fear and anxiety. Numerous studies show that young people's aspirations are directed, to the greatest extent, towards ultimate goals and matters – such that are connected with the most important interpersonal bonds, and at the same time with matters that can give adult life meaning and purpose.

**LEVER 5: STRUGGLE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AND PROBLEM PREVENTION TO BE A DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY**

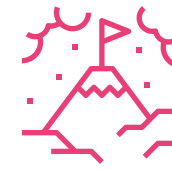
(more people are seriously concerned about youth than you think)

Treating youth development support and problem prevention as a priority is a prerequisite for development, and should be incorporated into development strategies at the local and national level. Therefore, anyone who is involved in prevention plays a crucial social role. Treating a particular area as a priority creates conditions for and gives the green light to action, facilitates finding funds, and enables the accomplishment of important goals in this field, no matter what the difficulties or barriers. That is why it is important to talk about the significance of prevention and youth development support, and to show social and financial costs of risk behaviours.

**LEVER 6: CREATING A STRATEGY, SEARCH FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT AT OPTIMAL COST**

(then the effort makes the most sense)

Optimal costs are not the lowest costs, but the cheapest way to gain maximum effects. The effect that we want to obtain in the area of prevention is to significantly restrict the scale of many different youth problems and risk behaviours throughout the local community. This effect may be gained most economically by applying the prevention economy principle. It says that the maximum effect can be gained at the optimal cost by combining two factors: comprehensive effectiveness of measures and their wide implementation. When using this lever, two practical questions have to be asked: how can a comprehensively effective strategy be devised, a strategy that will counteract multiple risks at the same time, and how can it be implemented on a wide scale in the most economical way?

**LEVER 7: INVITE PEOPLE WITH PASSION AND LOVE FOR YOUTH TO COOPERATION**

(a team of people with passion achieves great goals and does not burn out)

This strategy would not be complete, if it were not for the last, Seventh Lever. It concerns the importance for a local prevention system of people who create a vision of this system and realize the programme resulting from it. People who, if necessary, are willing to pursue their goal persistently, struggling against obstacles and barriers. A combination of the two following values is of key importance: a positive, friendly attitude towards youth and sincere commitment to acting for young people. Professionalism, high competences and suitable formal qualifications – these are the assets that may reveal to the greatest extent when they supplement the enthusiasm and commitment resulting from a friendly attitude towards youth. A bold vision realized by a team with such competences comes true and becomes a local government unit's pride.

Principles of devising effective integrated prevention programmes

Creating an effective prevention programme is a long, multi-year and multi-stage process, which becomes even more demanding when the goal is to develop a new integrated prevention programme. This is because, by definition, an integrated prevention programme is supposed to bring measurable results not in one, but in several areas of prevention.

Over the 25 years of development of the Integrated Prevention Model, several good and widely implemented programmes have been created. Below is a collection of selected principles that we have followed.

- The basic criterion to be met by an integrated prevention programme is its compliance with the assumptions of the Integrated Prevention Model and the Seven Levers of Effective Prevention strategy.
- The basic criterion to be met by an integrated prevention trainer is the consistency of their personal life with the prevention message in multiple areas of prevention at the same time. The trainer should be an example to follow – only then is he/she authentic and effective.
- The creation of each integrated prevention programme is preceded by research based on the integrated prevention methodology. The conclusions from this research help to define the objectives of the programme and adapt its content and methodology to the target audience.

- The adaptation of an integrated prevention programme to new conditions (e.g., remote activity) or a new target group (e.g., a new country; socially maladjusted youth) is preceded by surveys in these new conditions or target groups.
- Each implementation of every integrated prevention programme is monitored, and the results are sent to a national archive. This is the starting point for ensuring the quality of implementation and helps trainers to develop their skills.
- Each integrated prevention programme is subject to evaluation studies to assess its effectiveness and ensure that it does not cause harmful side effects in any area of prevention.
- The most important characteristics of integrated prevention programmes include:
 - Taking into account, in the objectives and content of the programme, particularly those protective factors and those risk factors that are associated with multiple youth problems and risk behaviours at the same time.
 - Care to include in the objectives and content of the programme those preventive needs of youth that remain unmet due to social and ideological controversies surrounding them. The task of integrated prevention programmes is to respond to these needs reliably, respectfully, and as nonconfrontationally as possible.
 - Targeting the programme not only at youth, but also at parent and teachers. The aim of integrated prevention is not only to influence young people, but also to empower and educate adults.
 - Taking into account, when developing integrated prevention programmes and training trainers, a high sensitivity to the diversity of participants – their different experiences, backgrounds, beliefs and hurts.
 - Drawing on a wide range of effective, research-proven prevention strategies in programme methodology.
 - Using current research findings in direct work with recipients (students, parents, teachers). These findings help to change the recipients' normative beliefs to more pro-health ones.
 - Adapting content and methodology to the type of programme – different methodology and content when working with small groups and with large groups; different methodology and content in a programme run by professional trainers and by teachers after a brief training.
 - Utilizing a wealth of methodological resources that appeal to different senses and prompt different forms of activity: activating exercises, music, multimedia presentations with sound, singing preventive sea shanties together, props, stage design, prevention-related gifts as rewards for activity, individual and team tasks for participants.
 - Strengthening the preventive message of the programmes by recruiting **ambassadors** both among well-known people who live in accordance with the message of the programme and among little-known 'young heroes' who are examples of fidelity to principles, coping with adversity and helping others.

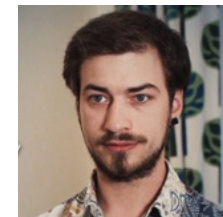
Selected ambassadors of integrated prevention programmes



Marek Kamiński
extreme traveller who has reached both Poles, philosopher



Magdalena Fularczyk-Kozłowska
Olympic champion in rowing, World Cup winner, European champion



Jan Mela
traveller, social activist, the first disabled person to reach both Poles



Zbigniew Nadolski
captain of the sailing ship *Dar Pomorza* (Gift of Pomerania)



Krzysztof Hołowczyc
rally driver, multiple Polish champion, European champion



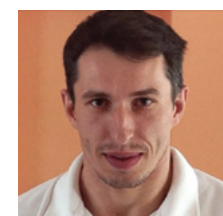
Robert Friedrich
composer, vocalist, lyricist, guitarist



Gennaro Arma
heroic captain who prevented panic on a passenger ship at the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic (February 2020)



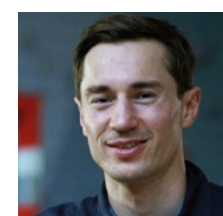
Agnieszka Grzelak
writer and artist, author of fantasy novels



Sławomir Szmal
handball keeper, world vice-champion with the Polish national team



Tomasz Wolny
journalist, TV presenter, winner of the Polish 2022 Icebreaker (Lodołamacz) award 'Journalist without Barriers' for his commitment to people with disabilities



Kamil Stoch
three times Olympic champion and multiple world champion in ski-jumping



Crew of the sailing ship *Dar Młodzieży* (Gift of Youth)
who produced preventive videos for IPZIN during their round-the-world voyage (2018)

Programmes and activity consistent with the assumptions of the Integrated Prevention Model

Programmes and activity of the Institute for Integrated Prevention



Archipelago of Treasures® (Archipelag Skarbów®) – this programme is addressed to students aged 13–17. The programme appeals to young people's dreams and desires related to happiness in love and personal life, as well as the pursuit of their passions. As shown in research, it effectively influences youth in the area of addiction prevention and psychoactive substance use, counteracts sexualization and the objectification of sexuality, motivates them to wait before engaging in sexual activity, and provides knowledge about love and building lasting relationships. The programme motivates young people to dream boldly of their future families. It may be implemented by certified IPZIN trainers.



Star of Powers – First Expedition (Gwiazda Mocy – Pierwsza Wyprawa) is a programme supporting the development of youth in the early stages of adolescence, intended for students aged 10–13, their parents and teachers. The aim of the programme is to strengthen young people's mental resilience and teach them how to cope with difficulties of adolescence. During the programme, young people are motivated to adhere to wise life principles and acquire the skills needed to choose a positive direction in life. In the course of the programme, young people learn to distinguish between ethical and unethical actions and to recognize truth and falsehood. All this is done to enable them to behave assertively in situations where they are persuaded to engage in violence, break the law, use drugs, cigarettes, designer drugs, alcohol or pornography. The programme strengthens the role of the family in the eyes of children and reinforces the authority of parents and teachers. It may be implemented by certified IPZIN trainers.



Navigation for Any Weather (Nawigacja w każdą pogodę) is a research and prevention programme for independent use by school staff. It enables self-diagnosis of the school environment and the implementation of preventive measures based on the results of this diagnosis. The programme realizes the objectives and tasks of universal prevention and mental health promotion. Its purpose is to strengthen natural resilience resources (personal, family and environmental) and the ability to cope with difficult and crisis situations.



Three Circles (Trzy Koła) is a programme designed to strengthen social bonds between teachers and students, school and parents. It is implemented by appropriately trained teachers, form teachers, school psychologists and counsellors, who conduct the programme for adolescents in primary and secondary schools. The programme was developed by the Foundation of Teachers and Youth 'Prom', which transferred its supervision and implementation to IPZIN. Although the Integrated Prevention Model was not the inspiration for the authors of the programme, it is fully consistent with the assumptions of this approach.

Princess of the Year (Księżniczka Roku) is a programme aimed at preventing eating disorders, strengthening the sense of self-worth, and helping children to cope with the problems of early adolescence. It supports the multifaceted development of the human person. It is intended for children aged 10 and older.

Diagnosis of youth problems and the positive potential of youth based on the Integrated Prevention Model involves diagnostic surveys based on original tools used in studies of youth since 2002 and continuously improved. They reveal a very broad cross-section of youth problems and of the positive potential of young people. Thanks to regular research on large groups of youth (several or even more than a dozen thousand students per year), we have a broad basis for comparison, which enables us to formulate conclusions from the surveys in a way that is useful for teachers and officials responsible for youth health, development support and safety.

Seven Levers of Effective Prevention is a training workshop for local governments aimed at rationalizing the management of youth development support and problem prevention at the local level and optimizing cooperation in this area between local government bodies, educational institutions, local communities, non-governmental organizations and state authorities.

Programmes of the Institute for Integrated Prevention for remote work

Navigation in Crisis – Protect Yourself, Support Others (Nawigacja w kryzysie – chroń siebie, wspieraj innych) is a programme created as a preventive response to the needs related to the difficult and dynamically changing situation of young people, parents, schools and society as a whole, resulting from the coronavirus epidemic. **The programme combines elements of diagnosis and prevention.**

Archipelago of Treasures – Expedition of Explorers (Archipelag Skarbów – Wyprawa Odkrywców) is a programme developed on the basis of selected elements of the Archipelago of Treasures® and Navigation in Crisis programmes, as well as the experience gained from the nationwide 'Action Navigation. Protect yourself, support others'. The aim of the programme was to support young people and help them to find their way in the complex social situation connected with the epidemic, as well as to teach them skills for coping with other crisis situations.

Programmes of other organizations inspired by the Integrated Prevention Model

Magiczne Kryształy (Magical Crystals) is a programme of early prevention of violence and screen addiction aimed at students aged 6–12.

Cukierki (Sweets) is a programme of early prevention of addiction and violence, developing students' life skills, aimed at schoolchildren aged 6–9 and older preschool groups.

Ratownicy Marzeń (Dream Rescuers) is a motivational programme. Its direct aim is to strengthen positive potential in young people and promote social integration, which translates into a better climate in peer groups, increased respect, lowered level of aggressive behaviour, and reduced risk behaviours.

CUDER is a prevention programme for young people built on values such as truth, love and freedom. The aim of the programme is to delay alcohol initiation and strengthen factors that protect students from a wide range of risks.

Spinacz (Paperclip) is a programme based on the Integrated Prevention Model, focused in particular on youth risk behaviours in the area of behavioural addictions. In addition, it supports parents and teachers in teaching teenagers rules that will help to protect young people from risks and help them to realize their deepest dreams.

Five years of the Golden Link Award for Prevention Professional of the Year



3

Modern prevention of risk behaviours in young people has been developing in Poland for over 30 years. Despite this, until 2020, there was no national-level award that would express gratitude and publicly recognize passionate prevention professionals – people who combine professionalism, creativity and perseverance in their work, and who can be models for others.

Fortunately, this has changed. For five years now, thanks to the initiative of the Institute for Integrated Prevention and the Golden Link Award Committee, we have been selecting and rewarding winners from among passionate professionals nominated in open competitions. The intention of the Award is to enhance the prestige of the prevention profession and upgrade the status of preventive and youth development support activities in the education system and in society as a whole.

When selecting the winner of the Golden Link Award for Prevention Professional of the Year, the entire work of the candidates is taken into account, with particular emphasis on their activities and achievements over the past year.

In accordance with the regulations, the Award is independent. The winner is selected by the Award Committee consisting of people with extensive and diverse experience in the field of prevention – from the perspective of schools, local government, universities, and counselling centres. The Award winner receives a symbolic chain with a Golden Link, the right to use the title of Prevention Professional of the Year, and a financial prize.

In 2025, the jubilee ceremony during which the Award and the title of the Prevention Professional of the Year were presented took place in the Senate of the Republic of Poland. The event was combined with the conference 'YOUTH – PREVENTION – FAMILY', which was co-organized by the Institute for Integrated Prevention and the Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee and Health Committee of the Polish Senate. In addition to senators, the event was attended by numerous experts, practitioners and leaders who deal with the prevention of problems and risk behaviours in children and youth on a daily basis.

Prevention Professional of the Year – profiles

2024

Lidia Kozdęba has been working in the field of addiction prevention for twenty five years. She is the head of the Municipal Addiction Prevention Centre in Wągrowiec in north-western Poland and a member of the Municipal Commission for Solving Alcohol-Related Problems and the Interdisciplinary Team. She effectively builds a broad network of cooperation, involving the entire local community. She has unique team-building skills – she can lead a team, but also listen to the opinions of others.



The prevention activities for which she is responsible in her town are based on periodic assessments of local needs and systematically implemented solutions, such as a sociotherapeutic after-school club, a free information and consulting point on behavioural addictions, and numerous prevention programmes for children, parents and teachers. She is the author of prevention programmes and initiatives such as 'Friendship Instead of Violence!', 'On the Wings of Friendship' and 'Preventive Fridays'. At the beginning of the pandemic, she organized in Wągrowiec the first online prevention activities for school youth in Poland. Both in her professional and private life, she is characterized by great passion and empathy in her interactions with other people, and by promoting values to which she remains faithful.

'Act preventively and trigger energy'.

2023

Agnieszka Jagieło (pictured on the left, next page) passionately combines the roles of school counsellor, special needs teacher, therapist conducting Social Skills Training (SST) classes for students with autism, Family Life Education teacher, and career advisor. She also serves as chair of the Municipal Commission for Solving Alcohol-Related Problems in the municipality of Łambinowice in the Opole province. She is an effective leader, able to engage the community, attract people, and cooperate with various institutions. A local patriot, she combines prevention programmes with counteracting the depopulation of the region, thus making young people feel proud of their local homeland. In implementing prevention programmes and the annual Stay Sober-Minded campaign, she uses modern and attractive methods that activate young people. She raises funds by convincing others about the importance of preventive measures, and shows others how consistency and small steps can achieve great things.

'I am here so that you don't have to face difficult situations alone...'



dr Kinga Kusiak-Witek (pictured on the right) is an experienced educationalist, methodological advisor and academic lecturer. She works at the Małopolska Teacher Training Center and the University of Applied Sciences in Tarnow. She was the head of a preschool for many years. She is the author of prevention and diagnostic programmes and tools, and also of popular science and scientific publications. Thanks to numerous training and promotional projects, her work has not only local, but also regional and national reach. During her lectures and workshops, she shares her experience in prevention and youth development support and presents her own solutions. A large part of her work focuses on prevention through the development of pro-social skills in preschoolers and older children. She inspires optimism and a deep belief in the value of preventive measures. Her creative commitment and outstanding work results can be an inspiration for future generations of educationalists.

cial skills in preschoolers and older children. She inspires optimism and a deep belief in the value of preventive measures. Her creative commitment and outstanding work results can be an inspiration for future generations of educationalists.

'The greatest success is a smile and joy on a child's face. The way to achieve this is by carefully nurturing children's dreams, teaching them to pursue their goals patiently, stimulating their curiosity about the world and other people, and instilling in them a belief in the goodness of others'.

2022

Sylwia Wierzchowska is a prevention specialist, teacher, educator, trainer and tutor working in Lublin. She takes a visionary approach to prevention, teaching children creative thinking, perseverance, and mental resilience. She has co-authored prevention programmes that protect children and youth against risks and strengthen their mental state. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, she developed, together with a group of women colleagues, the 'Emotional SOS' programme, and collected films, dictionaries, exercises, games and activities aimed at restoring a sense of security to Ukrainian children arriving in Poland, and helping them



2021

to find their way in a new reality. Thanks to the funds raised, she also organized training courses for teachers in Kyiv, Odessa, Lviv and other Ukrainian cities.

'In life, I am delighted with the ORDINARY: simple faith, ordinary love, daily work, everyday gratitude, banal truth. This helps to live extraordinarily'.



Karolina Gubała, a sociologist by education, combines her passion for prevention work with children and youth with her passion for guiding visitors around Ojcow National Park and Cracow. She has co-created the social campaigns: 'Let's Be Seekers of Authority' and 'Let's Be Seekers of Love in the Family'. She is the co-author of innovative prevention programmes designed to be implemented outdoors as well as at school or remotely. Among the interesting activities for youth that she has prepared is the CUDER Behavioural Addiction prevention programme in the form of a large-format game, during which participants learn about the interdependencies between different spheres of human functioning: body, mind, spirit, emotions, and relationships. Another proven proposal is the Archezja outdoor prevention programme, a several-hour trip through the Ojcow National Park, which is also a symbolic journey towards adulthood and the path of human life.

'History teaches us that every decision can be the one that changes the world for the better'.

Tomasz Gubała is a prevention specialist with many years of experience in implementing direct practical measures, coordinating local government activities, and creating new programmes and campaigns to empower children, youth and families. He is an extraordinary creator, acting unconventionally, and a source of inspiration. He is a member of the Małopolska Council for the Prevention of Addictions. He has organized support groups for people experiencing violence and summer prevention camps for children and youth.

He has provided expert advice to schools, after-school clubs and other institutions on prevention issues. As a lecturer, he participates in numerous conferences, both for development support practitioners and academics. He is a co-founder of the Cracow Institute of Logotherapy, and a co-author of the concept of 'pedagogy of meaning' and of support groups for youth called 'Seekers of Meaning'.

'Discover meaning, and you will heal your life'.

Both Karolina Gubała and Tomasz Gubała are intensively developing an innovative approach to prevention based on Viktor Frankl's concept. It points to the loss of meaning in life as one of the most important causes of depression, and treats support in the search for meaning as a vital aspect of therapy and prevention. This is an example of extraordinary intergenerational transmission, father-daughter cooperation, and a family 'relay race' in the field of prevention and mental health promotion.

2020

Leszek Szawiński, an educationalist and prevention specialist, lives in Woźniki Śląskie, a town in the Silesian Province in southern Poland. Working with young people, parents and teachers from various locations in Poland during the coronavirus pandemic, he became one of the pioneers of remote prevention activities. He stood out for his initiative

and perseverance when prolonged isolation was sapping other people's energy. He inspired other prevention specialists with his motivation for online activities, teaching them his methods and showing them that supporting children and youth in this way is not only vitally necessary but also possible. In 2020, he co-authored the Navigation in Crisis programme developed by the Institute for Integrated Prevention. He then adapted his own programme, Dream Rescuers, to online working conditions and played a leading role in adapting the Archipelago of Treasures – Expedition of Explorers programme. He stands out for his extensive experience in working with people and his openness to others. He has experience in working with the homeless, addicted, and excluded. For over 15 years, he ran

the Good Shepherd Community Life Centre in Górale, Silesia, where he and his family welcomed people who had gone through difficult experiences and wanted to rebuild their lives.

'Be attentive, listen to young people and support them so that they can spread their wings and set their own course. Life is a fascinating journey, especially when we are not alone. Together we can do more'.



Selected challenges of youth prevention in the light of the latest IPZIN research

4

In 2023, the Institute for Integrated Prevention published a comprehensive report entitled *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World? Challenges and Recommendations for Education, Prevention and Mental Health Protection After the Difficult Years 2020–2022*¹ (Grzelak, Żyro, 2023). The report was based on the results of the IPZIN study conducted in 2021–2022, which involved over 80,000 students, parents and teachers. The recommendations in this report were formulated by IPZIN experts with a view to ensuring a certain timelessness, so that they remain relevant regardless of further sudden changes and upheavals in today’s unstable world.

The latest IPZIN study results, from the 2023/2024 school year, confirm the validity of the conclusions and recommendations of the 2023 report. Some of the new results enable a deeper understanding of problems and may help to find better solutions.

In this chapter, we will focus on selected results from the latest study, which cover three areas:

- **The current mental state of young people and related factors.**
- **The risk of a further intensification of the demographic crisis** evident in the alarmingly low level of young people’s desires and plans concerning having children.
- **The interdependence of various types of youth problems and risk behaviours and the group of factors that influence them, common to many problems.**

We focus on protective factors, omitting risk factors, because from the point of view of preventing youth problems, protective factors are of the greatest practical importance. In integrated prevention, we look first of all for those factors whose reinforcement protects young people against many risks at the same time.

¹ The report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?...* contains 62 conclusions and 33 recommendations, which remain valid in the light of the latest study. We cite only some of them here.
https://ipzin.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Raport-2023-Jak-wspierac-mlodziez-ONLINE_1.pdf

Current mental state of young people and related factors in the light of the 2023–2024 study

The deteriorating mental health of the younger generation has become a subject of particular attention and concern over the past five years. Rising rates of suicides, suicide attempts and depression were causes for concern. Long waits for child psychiatrists and psychotherapists were also worrying. The summary of the study results contained in the 2023 IPZIN report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?* included the following conclusion:

Research conducted in the first year of the COVID-19 epidemic showed a gradual deterioration in young people’s mental state (an increased number of youth coping poorly and a decreased number of those coping well), after which it remained at a similar, lower level. Studies conducted until the end of 2022 show no improvement in the situation.

As the results of the more recent study presented in this chapter will demonstrate, this conclusion remains valid in 2025. Although the study from the 2023/2024 school year shows a slight improvement, yet it is too small to change the overall picture.

Since 2020, the Institute for Integrated Prevention has been using in its research a simple but statistically and scientifically reliable indicator, namely the **Current Mental State Index (CMSI)**. It is based on youth’s answers to two questions: about their general well-being, and how they coped mentally in the last week preceding the survey².

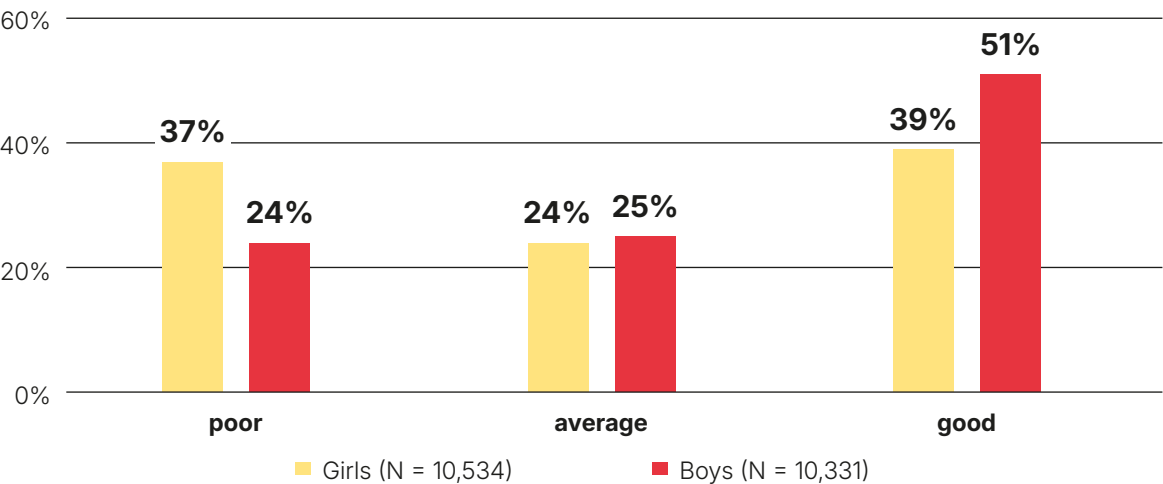
- The indicator makes it possible to assess how many of the respondents are:
- a. students with a high CMSI, who rate their current mental state as **good** (declare both their well-being as good and that they are coping well),
 - b. students in an **average** mental state (who rate only one of the above two aspects of their mental state as good),
 - c. students with a low CMSI, in a **poor** mental state at the present time (who declare poor or average well-being and cope poorly or averagely).

² Reliability coefficients for the index: Cronbach’s alpha = 0.81, McDonald coefficient = 0.81. Correlation between the components of the index: Pearson’s r = 0.68. Correlation between the index and the 8-item Affect Balance Scale: Pearson’s r = 0.61.
IPZIN experts have decided to apply the Current Mental State Index in the form of a simple and easy-to-use two-item scale. In general-population survey research, as contrasted with individual clinical diagnosis, such brief scales are commonly used due to practical considerations (Eisinga, R., Grotenhuis, M. t., Pelzer, B. 2012. The reliability of a two-item scale: Pearson, Cronbach, or Spearman-Brown? *International Journal of Public Health*, DOI 10.1007/s00038-012-0416-3), and research shows that they may be successfully used as a screening device for mental conditions like depression (Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R.L., Williams, J.B.W., 2003. The Patient Health Questionnaire-2. Validity of a Two-Item Depression Screener”. *Medical Care*, 41, 11, pp. 1284–1292.).

In the 2023/2024 school year, 20,865 students participated in the study. 71% of the sample were primary school students (7% in the fifth year, aged 11–12; 27% in the sixth year, aged 12–13; 25% in the seventh year, aged 13–14; 12% in the eighth year, aged 14–15), and 25% were post-primary (upper secondary) school students (21% in the first year, aged 15–16; 4% in the second year, aged 16–17). The remaining 4% of the sample were students at other school and age levels.

Figure 1 shows the Current Mental State Index values for youth surveyed in the 2023/2024 school year.

Figure 1. Current Mental State Index (2023/2024)



As can be seen, 61% of girls and 49% of boys rated their mental state, measured with the CMSI, as average or poor. In the IPZIN report from 2023, we formulated a recommendation that remains fully valid:

The basic condition for restoring the weakened mental health of children and youth, and at the same time reducing the number of students referred to the overburdened psychiatric care system, is strengthening the mental resilience of the entire population of children and youth.

Focusing support exclusively on those students who are already in a very poor mental state is not enough. Supporting youth development and preventing problems in youth in a poor or average mental state, in order to ensure their best possible form, will reduce the number of young people requiring specialist help. Extending development

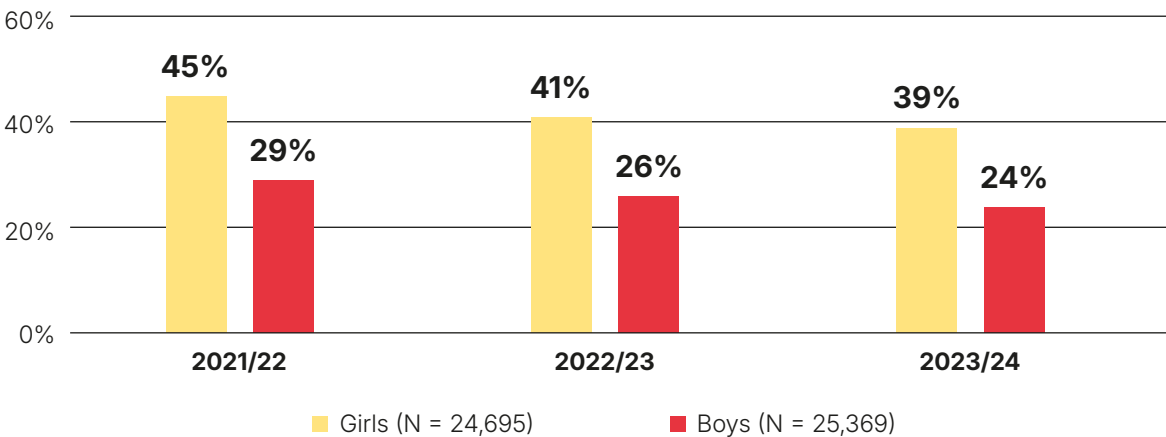
support and preventive efforts to students who are coping well increases the extremely valuable potential of peer support. The more students we help to maintain their good mental state, the better support their peers who are coping less well will find in them.

Trends in changes in young people’s current mental state over the last three years

On the basis of data from IPZIN studies conducted in the last three school years, we have attempted to estimate trends in changes in youth’s current mental state. Every year, IPZIN surveys are conducted on large samples and cover many schools from different regions of Poland, but they are not representative surveys. In order to compare the level of children and youth’s CMSI in subsequent years, information for the years 2020, 2022 and 2023 on the population structure of people aged 10–14 and 15–19, broken down by sex in individual provinces, was obtained from the Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS). On this basis, the data collected by IPZIN was weighted, which greatly increases the possibility of assessing trends, although it is still more inaccurate than comparing results for representative samples.

Taking these limitations into account, we can say that over the last three years, the studies show a slight decline in the percentage of students who cope poorly.

Figure 2. Poor current mental state (low CMSI) – last three school years



For girls, this decline is statistically significant in each subsequent year. For boys, the decline between the 2021/2022 school year and the following two years is statistically significant, while the difference between the latter two years is no longer statistically significant.

This trend offers hope that the deepest crisis in the mental state of children and young people is over. However, the improvement is very slight. It is large enough to give hope to parents, teachers, psychologists and psychiatrists, but at the same time so small that care for the mental health of children and youth should remain one of the main priorities of the education and health policies of the state and local governments.

Protective factors for youth’s mental state
– latest research findings

The search for protective factors is one of the most important tasks for researchers involved in children and youth problem prevention. Factors related to protecting and strengthening students’ mental well-being were discussed extensively in the IPZIN report from 2023. The experience of many decades of research on protective factors, conducted in Poland and in other countries, shows that once discovered, these factors remain relevant. New research helps to discover new factors, but as a rule, it does not disprove the significance of those previously identified.

In the report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?* (2023), we formulated the following conclusion:

Research findings show that the most important source of protecting students’ mental health in a changing reality (epidemics, changes in teaching methods, war in Ukraine, etc.) is the size, quality and accessibility of the support network. The closest and most basic elements of the social support network are related to parents and family, peers, and teachers. For some young people, sources of support related to religion and the spiritual dimension are an important link in this network. Another important but generally less accessible element of the support network is specialists in the fields of prevention, psychology, counselling, and psychiatry.

This conclusion, supported by study results from 2020–2022, remains valid in 2025.

Table 4 presents the results of the latest analyses in this area, which were carried out on the basis of surveys from the 2023/2024 school year. In order to compare the significance of individual protective factors over time, the table includes only those factors that were repeated both in the latest study and those conducted two years earlier, which were discussed in the 2023 report.

Table 4. Strength of relationship between protective factors and students’ current mental state (measured with CMSI) in 2021/2022 and 2023/2024 (N = 44,286)

Category	Name of factor	2021/2022	2023/2024	Change
Positive adults	Indicating at least one of the parents as a life guide	0.21	0.23	≈
	Having a teacher whom I owe a lot [who supported me, made me more self-confident or taught me something important about life]	0.14	0.16	≈
	Feeling that adult support in the current situation is sufficient	0.37	0.30	↓
School and class	Overcoming difficulty in this school year	0.40*	0.40	≈
	Being accepted in class	0.33	0.40	↑
	Belief that I can count on support from my class	0.30	0.37	↑
	Climate of kindness in my class	0.27	0.31	↑
Peers	Having friends	0.22	0.22	≈
Religious faith/spiritual dimension	Importance of faith/religion in life	0.20	0.20	≈

* for 2022, a higher degree of overcoming difficulty with the transition to remote learning and a higher degree of overcoming difficulty with the transition to classroom learning were averaged

↑ – increase in factor strength by at least 2% of the explained variance; ↓ – reduction in factor strength by at least 2% of the explained variance; ≈ – factor strength at the same level

As we can see in Table 4, factors related to the role of parents and other positive adults, school and class, peers, and the spiritual dimension have a protective function, promoting a better mental state in children and youth.

The importance of parents as life guides, and of teachers who are strongly committed to supporting youth development, remains stable. However, compared to two years earlier, the importance of general adult support has decreased.

Interestingly, the importance of another protective factor – class climate – increased over the two years, which is evident in several dimensions of class climate studied: kindness, mutual support and mutual acceptance.

This may mean that during periods of heightened crisis in 2020–2022 (lockdown, outbreak of war), the role of adult support increased, while during periods of return to relative stability (2023/2024), an increase is observed in the importance of relationships in class, i.e. peer environment where students spend most of their time.

The importance of friends and the importance of faith and religion in life are protective factors whose strength of association with the Current Mental State Index has remained unchanged.

The large number of schools included in the study made it possible to perform calculations in which the unit of analysis is not the response of an individual student, but the average for the entire school. In the analyses for the 2023/2024 study, we included 153 schools (in accordance with rules for this type of analysis, we omitted schools in which fewer than 50 students were surveyed). Schools are communities with their own specific characteristics and dynamics. There are significant differences between schools regarding the Current Mental State Index average. For some schools, the average is 4.0 (which means ‘rather good’ well-being and coping), while for others, the average is below 3.0 (which means ‘average’ well-being and coping).

Table 5 presents an ordered list of the strongest protective factors for youth’s mental state, which emerged from analyses carried out on school averages (2023/2024).

Table 5. The strongest protective factors for students’ mental state (2023/2024, N = 20,685)

Protective factors		Pearson’s r
FAMILY	Indicating at least one of the parents as a life guide	0.187
	Frank conversations with parents in the last 6 months	0.348
	Experiencing something nice from someone in the extended family (last 7 days)	0.312
SCHOOL	Good class climate (scale)	0.326
	Helpful (form) teacher (scale)	0.244
	At least 1 positive thing in contact with a teacher (last 7 days)	0.231
	Having a teacher whom I owe a lot	0.378
PEERS	Having friends	0.452
	Doing something useful with peers in the last 30 days	0.380
	Spending time outdoors with peers in the last 30 days	0.306
FAITH/RELIGION	Importance of faith/religion in life	0.487
	Turning thoughts to God	0.404
OTHER	No current burdens	0.596
	Overcoming difficulty in this school year	0.567
	Feeling that adult support in the current situation is sufficient	0.551
	Having a hobby	0.381
	Conversation that helped to resolve a problem in the last 30 days	0.189

As we can see in the table, the results of analyses carried out for schools confirm the importance of the same protective factors as the results of analyses carried out for individuals. Individual factors were discussed in detail in the IPZIN report from 2023, and conclusions and recommendations concerning these factors remain valid in 2025.

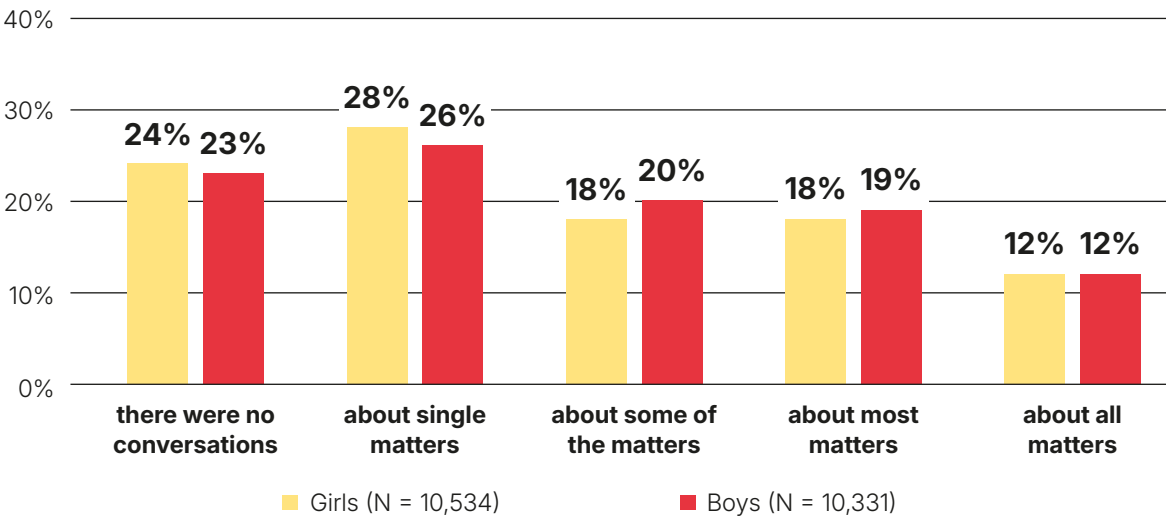
The combined reading, which includes the average Current Mental State Index of students for a given school and the strength of individual protective factors in that school, forms the basis of the **School Prevention Barometer**. Knowledge of the Barometer reading provides schools with an excellent tool for improving students’ mental health by consciously strengthening individual protective factors that comprise it. A school that knows its current Barometer reading can compare it with an averaged picture for many other schools, and thus identify the strengths and weaknesses of its own school environment. The Barometer is a tool used in the Navigation for Any Weather programme, which serves to diagnose and strengthen the mental state and resilience of young people.

The three most important groups of protective factors, whose significance is consistently confirmed by the results of subsequent studies, concern three categories: family/school/religion. Later in this chapter, we will present charts illustrating selected protective factors from each of these categories.

Relationship with parents
as a protective factor strengthening the mental state of youth

In our report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?*, we indicated three dimensions of parenthood, each of which plays an important role as a protective factor for the mental well-being of children and youth: parent – guide, parent – the trusted one (confidant), and parent showing love. In this publication, we chose the dimension: parent – the trusted one to illustrate the importance of parents. Frank conversations between parents and their adolescent children fulfil an important supportive and protective function, especially when they concern topics that are important to the child/teenager and when parents are able to not only talk but also listen in such conversations.

Figure 3. Frank conversations with parents about important matters in the last 6 months (2023/2024)



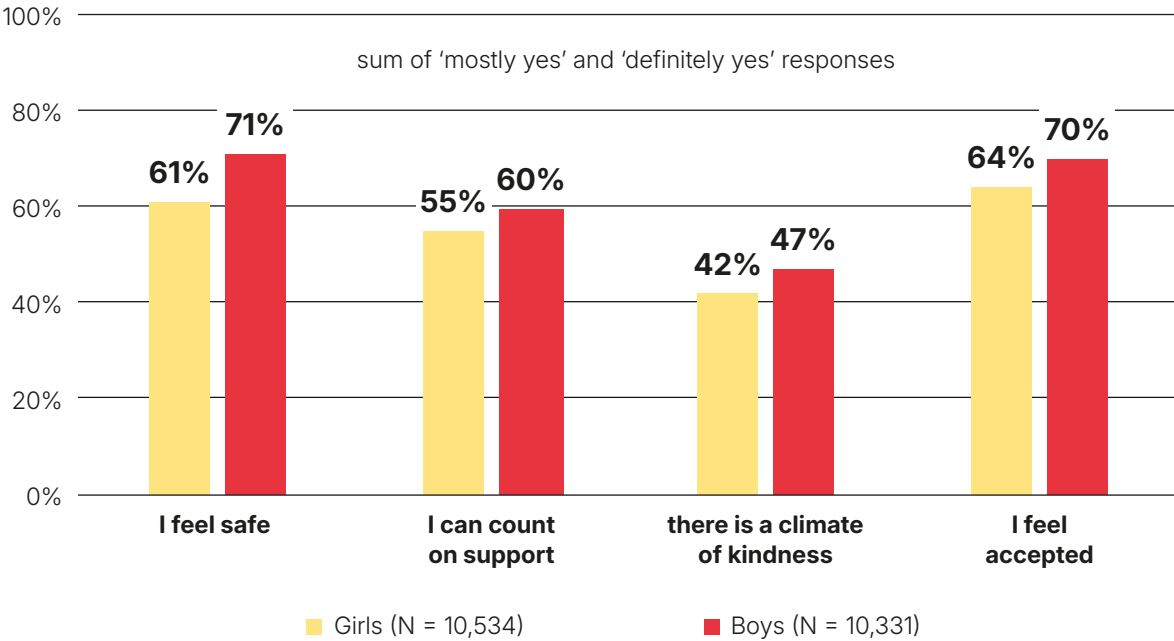
As far as teenagers are concerned, these do not have to be frank conversations ‘about all matters’, but it is good if they at least concern ‘most’ or ‘some’ of the issues that are important to the young person. Lack of frank conversations increases the likelihood that the child will be left alone with their problems and will seek advice from sources less trustworthy than their closest, loving relatives.

Climate in class

as a protective factor strengthening the mental state of youth

Among the protective factors associated with school, the climate of relationships in class is of great importance. Moreover, as mentioned above, the protective significance of this factor has increased even further over the last two years. Figure 4 shows students’ responses from the 2023/2024 school year.

Figure 4. In my class... (2023/2024)



As the chart shows, a very large proportion of youth feel good in their classes. This is therefore a protective factor that has a very broad impact on the student population. On the other hand, there are also some young people who do not assess their class climate as kind, who cannot count on support, and some of them do not feel accepted. Climate in class is something that can be influenced. Maintaining a good climate and relationships in class is an important task for form teachers, other teachers, involved parents, and for specialists conducting prevention programmes and integration activities.

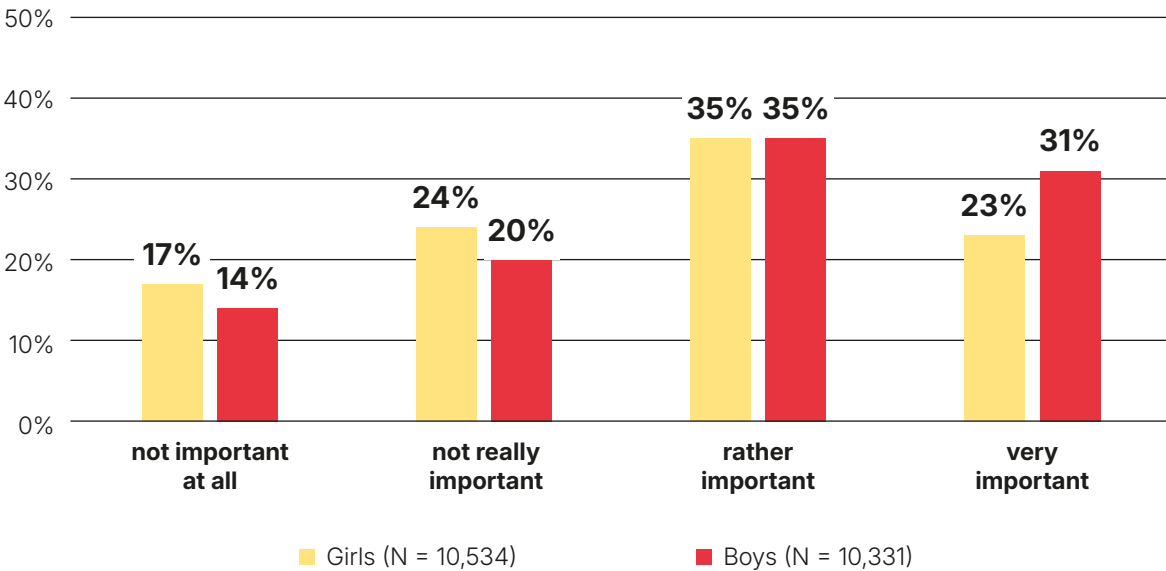
Religious faith and reference to God

as a protective factor strengthening the mental state of youth

Although the protective influence of faith and religion is evident in numerous scientific studies, it remains a little-known and underappreciated fact. It is sometimes argued that even if commitment to religious faith protects some group of youth from risks, this group is very small.

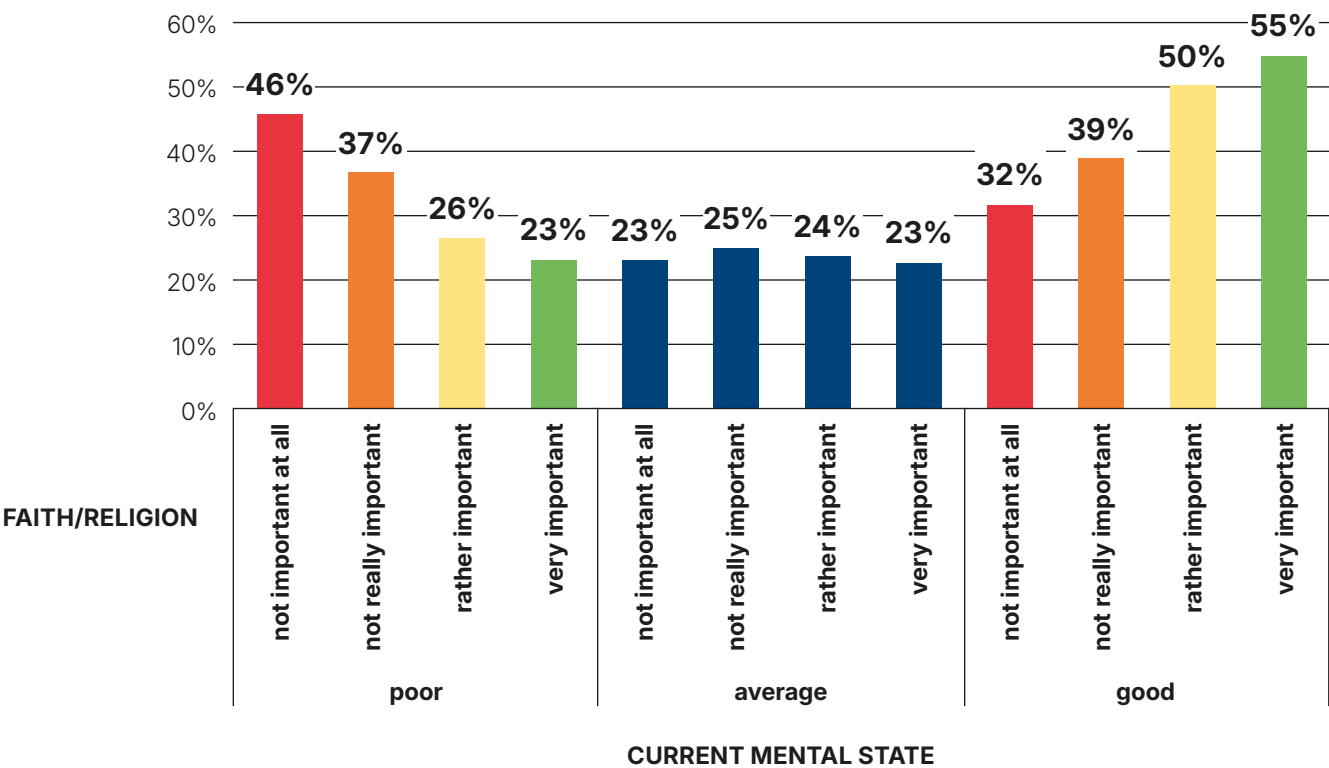
The results of the IPZIN study from 2023/2024 presented below reveal several important points.

Figure 5. Importance of faith/religion (2023/2024)



Faith and religion are very important or rather important to 62% teenagers. Only 15% declared faith and religion not important at all. The next chart shows that the greater the importance of faith in young people’s lives, the better their mental well-being. This is a protective factor – it has a visible and statistically significant effect even for youth to whom faith/religion is ‘not really important’. They have a higher Current Mental State Index than those to whom faith/religion is ‘not important at all’. Each colour difference between the bars in the chart represents a statistically significant difference. Where there is no colour change, the bars do not differ significantly.

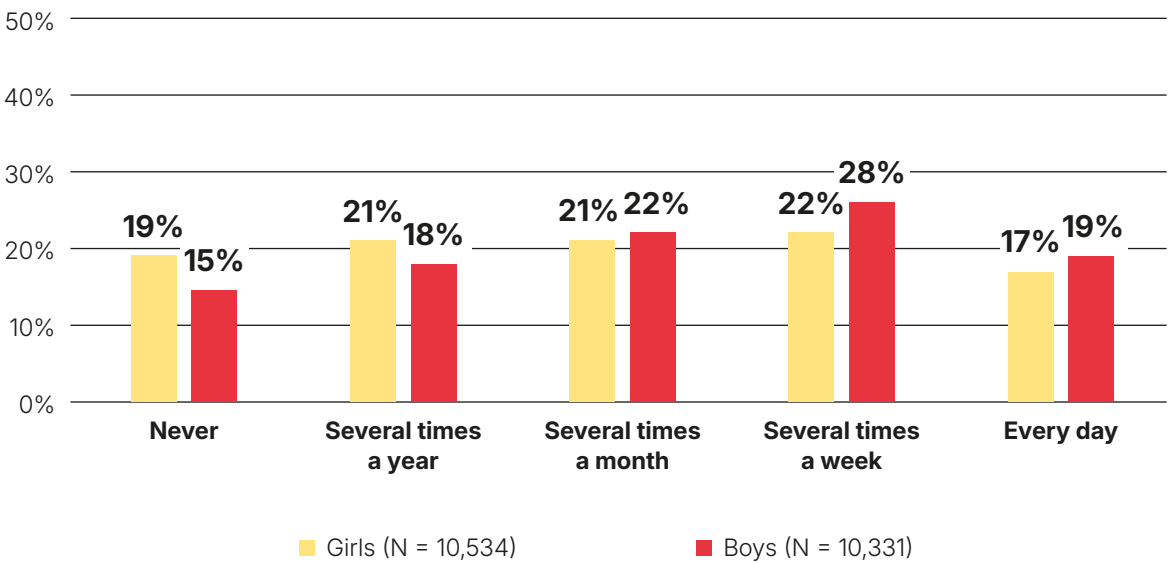
Figure 6. Faith/religion and current mental state (2023/2024, N = 20,362)



We can see that in the group of students for whom faith is not important at all, 46% are in a poor mental state, while in the group for whom faith is very important, poor mental well-being affects half as many students – 23%.

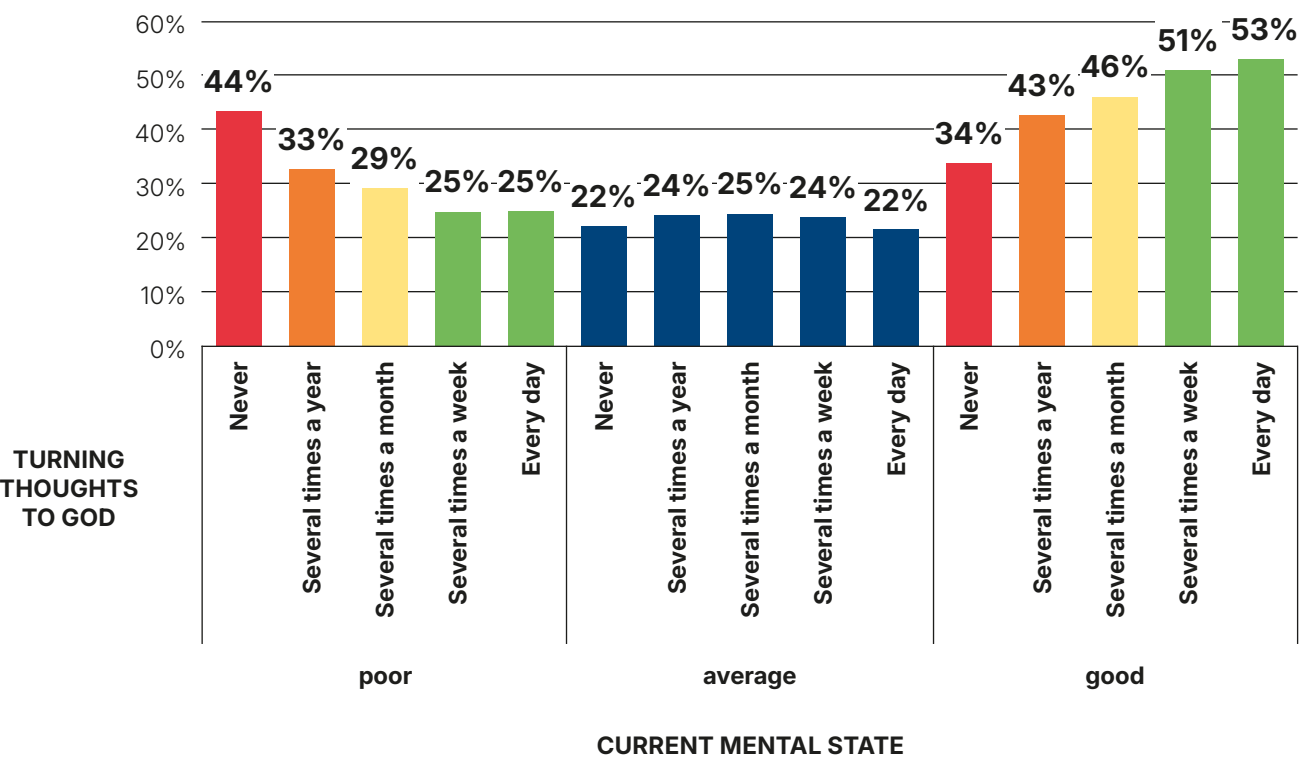
The fact that faith/religion is important in the life of a given teenager does not mean that they engage in religious practice. We are seeing a decline in the number of students attending religious education classes and participating in religious practices, but this does not automatically mean a decline in the importance of religious faith in the hearts and minds of teenagers. This is clearly shown in Figure 7, which presents an even broader, more open criterion of the spiritual dimension – namely, turning to God in one's thoughts, regardless of how one understands God.

Figure 7. Turning to God in one's thoughts (2023/2024)



The vast majority, 83%, of surveyed youth refer to God more or less often in their thoughts. This specific indicator of spiritual life is almost linearly correlated with the Current Mental State Index.

Figure 8. Turning thoughts to God and current mental state (2023/2024, N = 20,305)



In the group of young people who declared that they turn to God in their thoughts at least several times a week (green bars), there are twice as many students coping well than those coping poorly. Interestingly, the greatest jump in the strength of this protective factor is observed between the categories 'never' and 'several times a year'. A poor mental state is distinctly less common among teenagers who turn their thoughts to God several times a year (33%) than among those who never do so (44%).

Recognizing the role of faith, religion and spiritual life in protecting adolescents' mental health should encourage individuals and institutions responsible for public health to strengthen this factor by respecting the religious dimension and cooperating with religious organizations as important allies. Thanks to the fact that religion and reference to God provide partial protection to a considerable proportion of the young population, resources are saved that can be redirected to help young people who are not affected by protective factors related to faith.

Mental resilience is one of the most important competencies for the future in a complex and unstable world. The importance of teaching resilience is all the greater given that the first two decades of the 21st century (before the outbreak of the epidemic and the war in Ukraine) were a time of growing affluence and relatively high security, during which children and youth were not being prepared to cope with serious crises and adversities.

This conclusion remains relevant today. One way to strengthen the mental resilience of young people is to promote good, science-based prevention programmes. This aspect is taken into account in many programmes. This also applies to all integrated prevention programmes.

Youth and the demographic future of Poland in the light of research from 2023/2024

'Procreative aspirations' – youth attitudes in the IPZIN study

In subsequent reports and publications, starting in 2015 (the Polish *Vademecum for Effective Prevention of Youth Problems*), experts from the Institute for Integrated Prevention have been sounding the alarm about an underestimated but critical aspect of Poland's demographic problems. It is the low and still declining level of young people's aspirations regarding their future family and the number of children they would like to have in the future, for which we have adopted the term 'procreative aspirations'.

The importance we attach to this problem is evidenced by the fact that we devoted the entire separate third part of the report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?* (Grzelak, Żyro, 2023), pp. 235–327, to the topics of demography, 'procreative aspirations' and early prevention of demographic problems. The report is available in Polish both as a published book and online (e.g., on the IPZIN webpage: www.ipzin.org/raporty-i-ekspertyzy).

Let us quote one of the research conclusions included in the 2023 report:

The results of subsequent IPZIN studies conducted between 2014 and 2022 clearly show that the level of aspirations of young people aged 13–17 concerning their future number of children is significantly lower than the replacement-level fertility. The implementation of pro-family policies in 2016–2017, which involved an intensification of public messages emphasizing the importance of having children, had a slight impact on the increase in procreative desires among boys, but did not change their level among girls. The average level of 'procreative aspirations' in 2017–2018 was around 1.9 children. In 2020, the first year of the epidemic, there was a further, sharp decline in 'procreative aspirations' (to a level of around 1.5). The decline was significantly greater among girls than among boys.

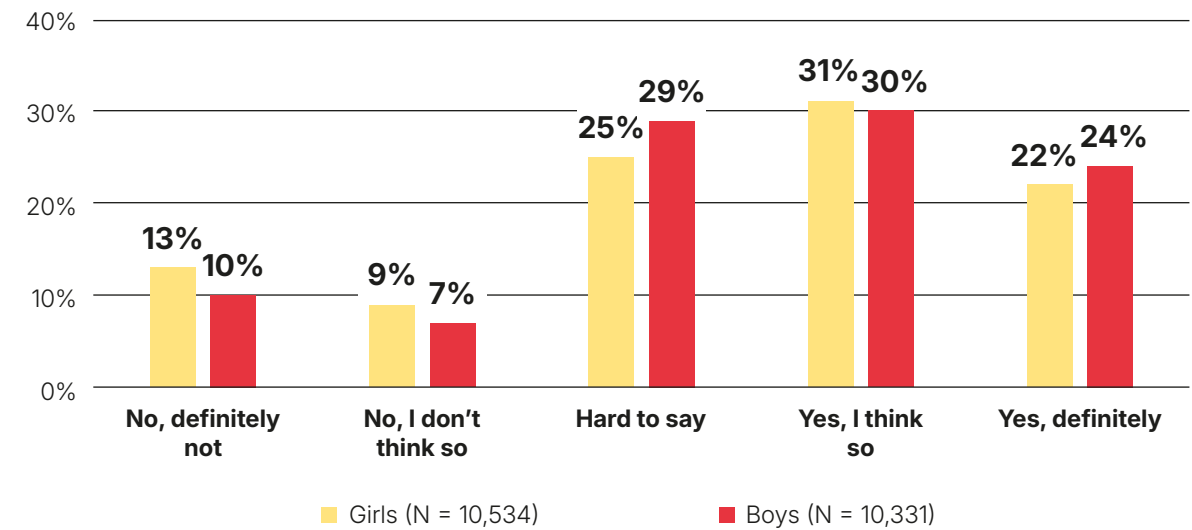
Unfortunately, the results of the latest IPZIN study from the 2023/2024 school year, conducted among N = 20,865 students aged 11–17³, deepen the enormous concern about Poland's demographic future.

The set of two basic questions used in the research methodology of integrated prevention since 2007, which concern the demographic dimension, includes a question about the willingness to have children in the future, and another one – about the preferred number of children.

Figure 9 shows the responses given by teenagers in the 2023/2024 school year.

³ In the 2023/2024 school year, 20,865 students participated in the study. 71% of the sample were primary school students (7% in the fifth year, aged 11–12; 27% in the sixth year, aged 12–13; 25% in the seventh year, aged 13–14; 12% in the eighth year, aged 14–15), and 25% were post-primary (upper secondary) school students (21% in the first year, aged 15–16; 4% in the second year, aged 16–17). The remaining 4% of the sample were students at other school and age levels.

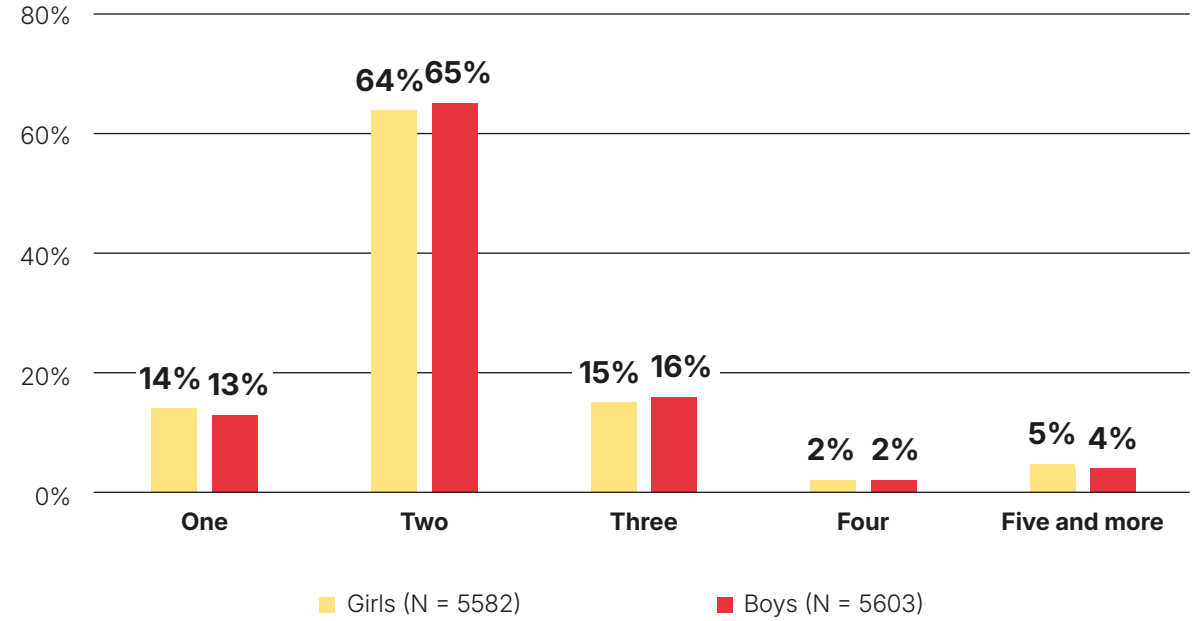
Figure 9. Would you like to have children in the future? (2023/2024)



As can be seen from Figure 9, only slightly more than half of the respondents are convinced that they would like to have children in the future. 27% have no opinion on the matter yet, and 22% of girls and 17% of boys stated that they did not want to have children.

Another chart shows the preferred number of children that those students who answered 'Yes, definitely' or 'Yes, I think so' to the first question would like to have in the future.

Figure 10. Preferred number of children (2023/2024)



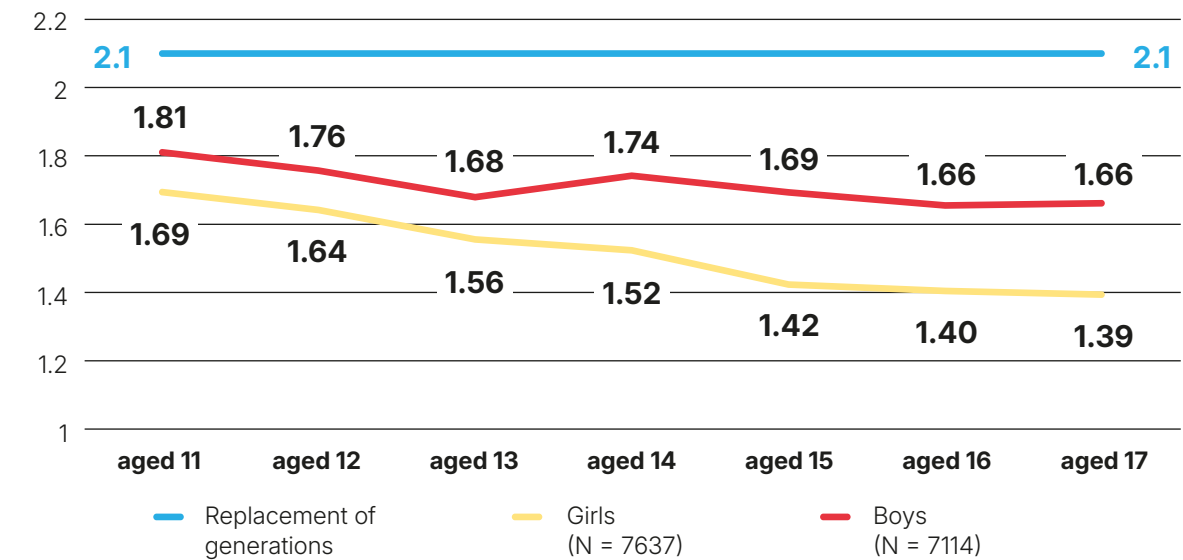
Nearly two-thirds of respondents in this group said they would like to have two children. 22% would like to have three or more children, while 14% of girls and 13% of boys would like to have one child in the future.

The rate of 'procreative aspirations' is computed on the basis of these two questions. It is obtained by calculating the average number of desired children among young people who want to have children, taking into account the percentage of youth who do not want to have children (for whom we assume the number of children to be '0'). The calculations do not include the group of young people who answered 'hard to say' when asked about their willingness to have children in the future.

In the 2023/2024 study, the 'procreative aspirations' rate is 1.63 for the entire sample. It is 1.71 for boys and 1.54 for girls.

It might be assumed that such a low level of 'procreative aspirations' is partly due to the fact that part of the sample consists of teenagers aged 11–13, who may be too young and immature to dream of family and children. The next chart illustrates 'procreative aspirations' depending on the age of surveyed youth.

Figure 11. Youth 'procreative aspirations' rate by age (2023/2024)



We see a surprising and puzzling picture here. The highest level of 'procreative aspirations' is among the youngest teenagers. The older the youth, the lower the rate. With age and maturation, the aspirations regarding the number of children in the future family of today's teenagers decrease. Among girls, future mothers, the aspirations are not only lower than among boys, but also decline more rapidly.

How should this be understood? What happens between the ages of 11 and 17? One possible explanation, which we present here on the basis of inspiring conversations with Prof. Krystyna Romaniszyn, refers to the dynamics of primary socialization and secondary socialization. Primary socialization, which takes place in childhood, mainly within the family, translates into the 'procreative aspirations' of 11 to 12-year-olds at a level of above 1.7 for boys and above 1.6 for girls. During adolescence, the process of secondary socialization takes place, in which peer groups play an important role, and nowadays also the internet and social media, along with the mass culture patterns that flow widely through them. It is to secondary socialization that we 'owe' the further decline in 'procreative aspirations'.

The latest information from Statistics Poland (GUS), the report *Poland in figures 2025*, indicates another dramatic decline in the fertility rate, to around 1.01. The rate ensuring generational replacement is around 2.1.

What will the actual fertility rate be in 10 to 20 years for the generation of today's teenagers, who, according to IPZIN research, have a significantly lower 'procreative aspirations' rate than their peers 10 years ago?

In the IPZIN report from 2023, we formulated the following recommendation:

Counteracting the deepening demographic crisis in the coming decades is an important element of the Polish national interest. Given the low and still declining level of aspirations concerning family and having children among young people, it is essential to incorporate this topic into educational, development support and preventive activity. Early prevention efforts in the area of demographic problems, directed towards children and youth, should be scientifically based, as wide-ranging as possible, and should draw on the influence that various groups of people (family, teachers, prevention professionals, cultural creators, journalists, etc.) have on the lives of children and youth.

This recommendation remains fully valid in 2025. Along with cultural changes occurring, there is a need for increasingly comprehensive and central consideration of pro-family goals in educational activity and prevention programmes. It is necessary to improve the methodology of these programmes and constantly adapt them to the changing sensitivity of young people.

In the light of the studies presented here, there is also a need for modified and improved Family Life Education classes, which would help young people to understand matters of love and sexuality, develop healthy attitudes towards themselves, their own bodies, but also towards close relationships with others, marriage, family, and future children.

The life goal 'happy family life, children' among other goals and aspirations of youth

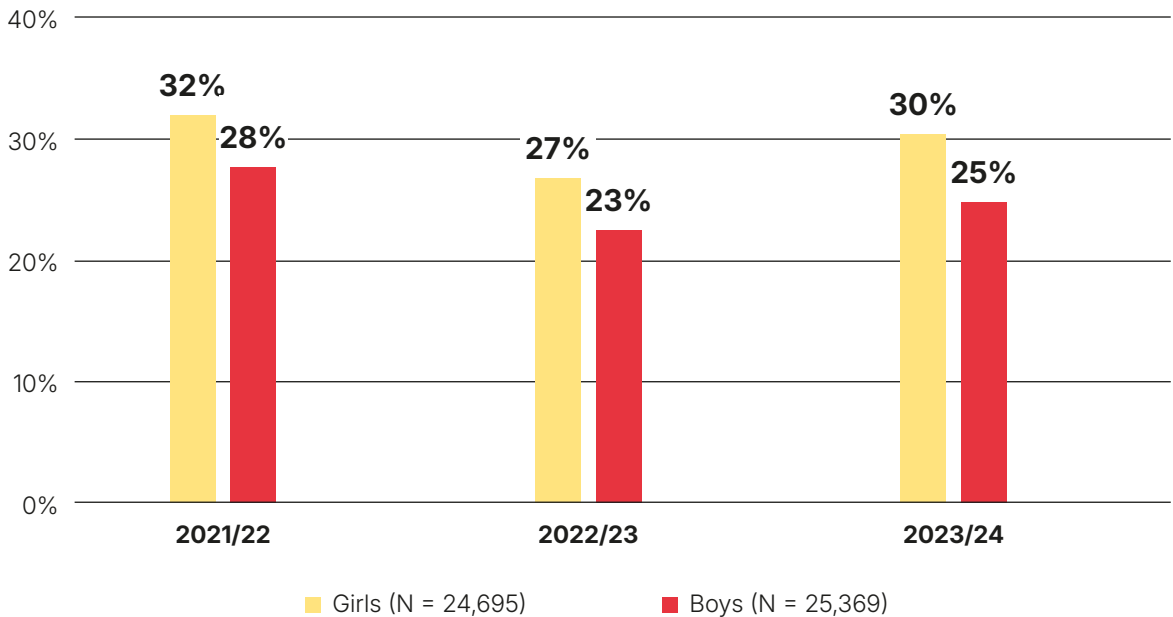
The research of the Polish Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) on the aspirations and life goals of 18-year-olds shows a clear trend in the recent years that is unfavourable from a demographic point of view. Between 1994 and 2016, the life goal 'happy family life, children' was always listed in the first or second place in terms of frequency of indications. In 2021, the last year for which CBOS survey results are available, this goal only ranked fifth.

IPZIN research shows a very similar picture of the current hierarchy of life goals among teenagers. In the last few years, the life goal 'happy family life, children' has been in fourth or fifth place in terms of frequency of indications.

We described this topic at length in the IPZIN report from 2023. This description remains largely valid, and more recent studies do not reveal any major changes.

We compared the percentage of young people who chose the life goal 'happy family life, children' as one of their most important life aspirations for the last three school years. We applied the principles of appropriate sample weighting based on GUS data presented in the subchapter on young people's mental state.

Figure 12. Dreams of family and children – the last 3 school years (2023/2024)



All the differences visible in Figure 12 are statistically significant. As we can see, the percentage of young people choosing this life goal dropped to its lowest level in the 2022/2023 school year, after which a small increase occurred. It is not yet possible to say if this is a sign of a new, more favourable trend, but looking at it in a broader context, it can be assumed that unfortunately it is not.

At this point, it is worth quoting a very important conclusion, still little known but worthy of wider dissemination, from the report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?* (2023):

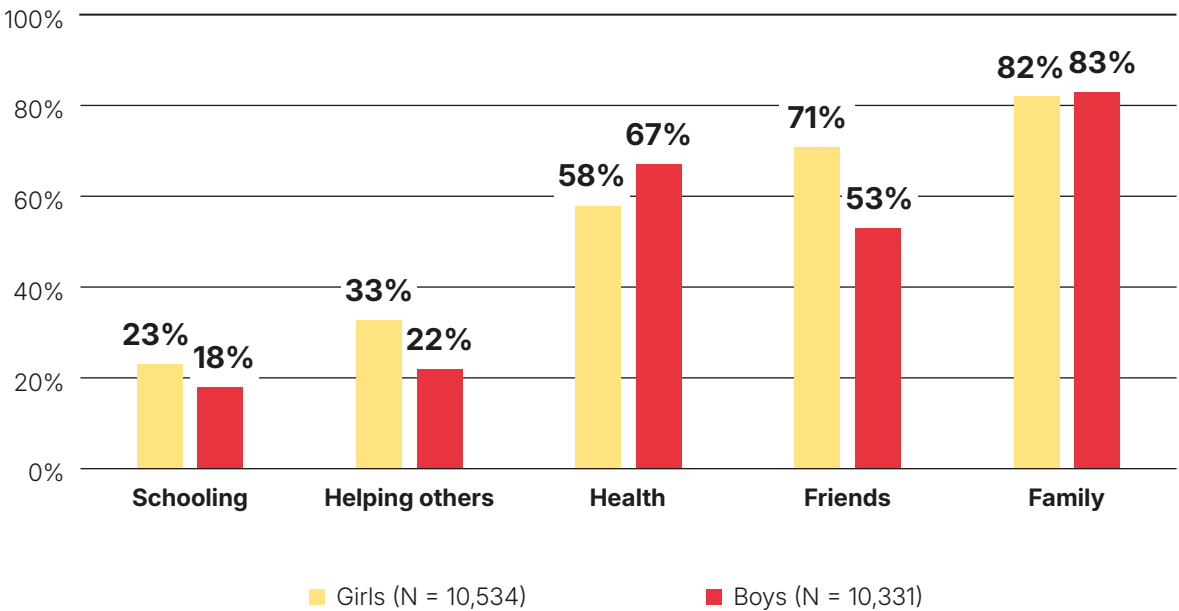
The results of Polish and international IPZIN studies indicate that having pro-family dreams is a protective factor against a range of youth risk behaviours and problems. ‘Happy family life, children’ is the only life goal whose choice has such a clear preventive dimension. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the most anti-preventive life goal: ‘life full of entertainment’. Choosing this goal is associated with an increased risk of many different risk behaviours.

Dreams of family and having children are associated with lower depression rates, less frequent suicidal thoughts, and with lower rates of psychoactive substance use (alcohol, drugs, cigarettes), cyberbullying (committing or being a victim), and the use of harmful online content (pornography, gambling, etc.).

Since having family and children as a life goal, a goal that is long-term and focused on the well-being of others, is good for teenagers’ mental health, it is even more worthwhile and necessary to include in preventive and pro-health activities opportunities to reflect on the beauty and value of a lasting relationship, family and children.

It is worth quoting here another result of the latest IPZIN study from the 2023/2024 school year. We asked respondents to assess the importance of several specific issues in their lives. From a five-point scale ranging from ‘very important’ to ‘not important at all’, we present the responses for ‘very important’.

Figure 13. ‘Very important’ issues to young people (2023/2024)



The three most important issues in teenagers’ lives are family, friends and health. Family clearly comes first. However, this question refers to the family in which the young person currently lives, and not the family they would like to build in the future.

Today’s teenagers highly value family. The family they live with is very important to them, more important than health and friends. The task of adults raising the younger generation is to help young people to translate their belief in the great value of their current family into a desire to create a beautiful family for the next generation.

The most important factors related to ‘procreative aspirations’

Both the earlier IPZIN studies and the latest one, from 2023/2024, show that the **two factors most strongly associated with the desire to have children in the future are: the experience of a personal contact with a married couple whose love is seen by the teenager as a good example, and faith/religion.**

Table 6 presents youth responses concerning close contacts with a positive model of marriage from over 20 years of our studies.

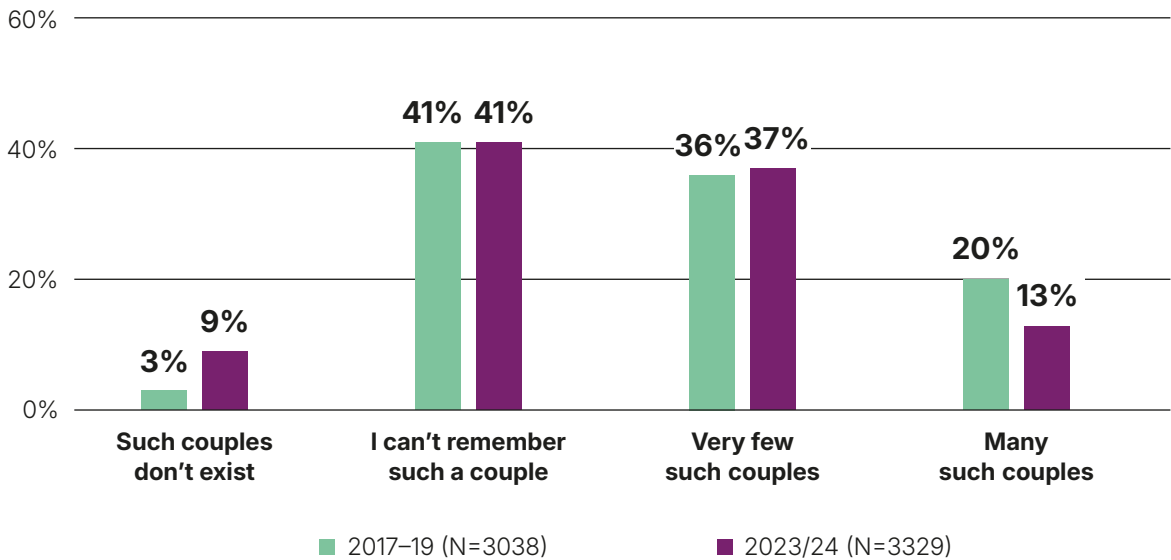
Table 6. Changes in the percentage of youth having contact with a positive marriage model between 2002 and 2024

Years of IPZIN studies	Percentage of youth who had close contact with a loving married couple
2002	66%
2007	65%
2010	64%
2011	60%
2014–2016	58%
2017–2019	56%
2021–2022	48%
2023–2024	50%

We can see how the percentage of youth who experienced such a good model gradually decreased, while the percentage of youth who never saw such a model increased.

The next chart illustrates the change that occurred in this respect in the experience of 14 to 15-year old youth between 2017–2019 and the 2023/2024 school year.

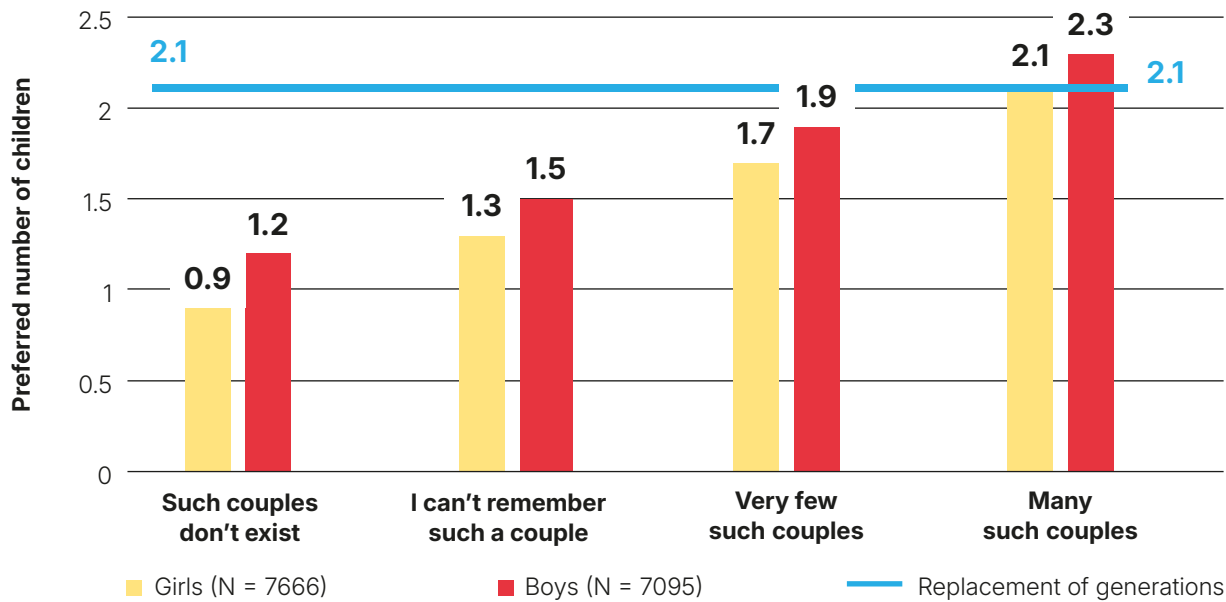
Figure 14. Contact with a married couple whose love can be a model (2023/2024)



As we can see, the number of young people who claim that such model marriages, which could be examples to follow for building a relationship, do not exist, has tripled. Similarly, the number of youth who declared that they had met many such marriages in their lives has dropped by one-third.

Analyses carried out on data from the 2023/2024 school year have shown how strongly the preferred number of children in the future is connected with teenagers' contact with a positive model of marriage.

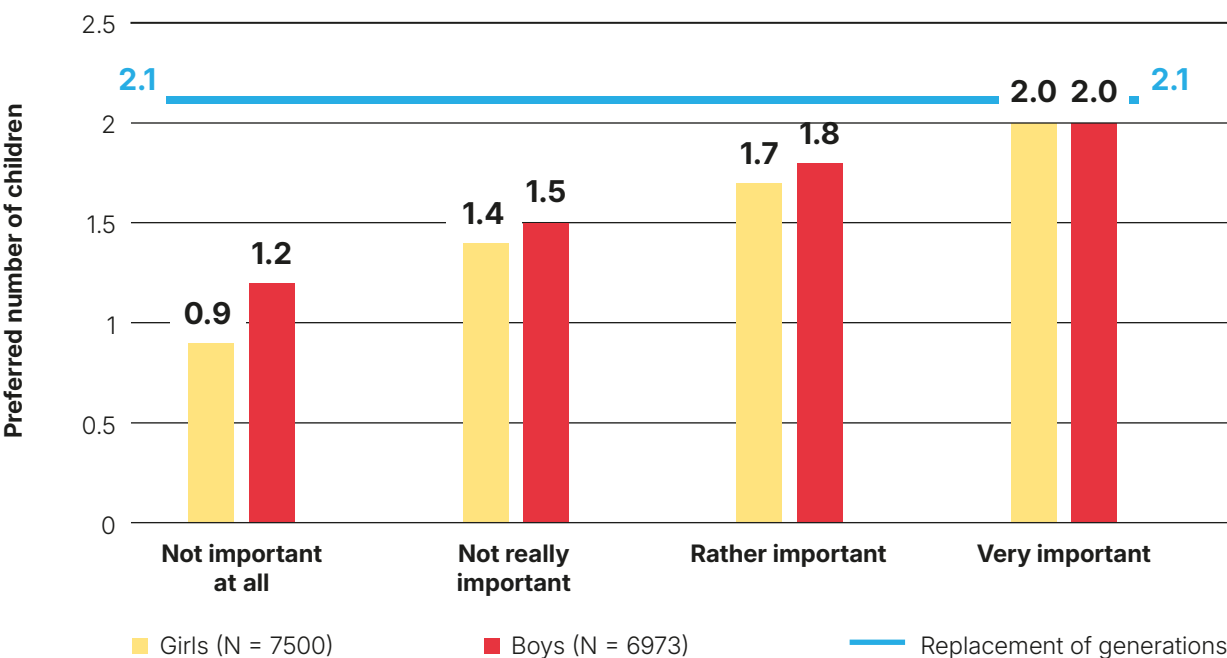
Figure 15. 'Procreative aspirations' rate and contact with a married couple whose love can be a model (2023/2024)



A level of 'procreative aspirations' that is close to the generational replacement threshold is observed only among those teenagers who have had close contact with many loving married couples. Only meeting numerous positive models of marital relationship enables young people to dream boldly of their own family with more children. This knowledge has to be taken into account in demographic strategies, prevention and development support activities, and in local government policies. Young people need to see more examples of happy marriages. There are fewer such marriages nowadays than 20–30 years ago, but still enough to create circumstances in which the love of loving couples could inspire the generation of teenagers.

The other most important factor in favour of greater 'procreative aspirations' is faith/ religion.

Figure 16. 'Procreative aspirations' rate and the importance of faith/religion in life (2023/2024)



The more important faith/religion is to a teenager, the greater their 'procreative aspirations'. From the perspective of the Polish national interest, young believers bring some hope also to the difficult area of demography gripped by crisis. However, a comparison with IPZIN study results from 2014–2015, as published in the *Vademecum for Effective Prevention of Youth Problems*, reveals a decline in 'procreative aspirations' both among believers and non-believers.

Another correlation should be mentioned here – between the age of respondents and the declared importance of faith/religion in their lives. The older the youth, the less important faith/religion is to them. We cannot claim with absolute certainty that there is a causal relationship here, but one possible explanation of the 'procreative aspirations' rate declining with age is the disappearance of reference to faith/religion in some young people. This, in turn, may be related to the already mentioned process of secondary socialization. The mainstream of contemporary mass culture, to which young people are exposed, is antireligious in many respects, and areligious in others. Similar words can be said about currently dominant intellectual and ideological trends. Religious involvement is more often ridiculed than respected. Very rarely is it treated as an element of positive potential, strengthening not only believers but society as a whole.

In the report *How to Support Youth in an Unstable World?* (2023), we included the following recommendation:

Rational and cost-effective planning of early prevention action against demographic problems requires using the knowledge of the existing interrelationships between the willingness to have children and the mental state and involvement in risk behaviours. This will ensure that early prevention of demographic problems, arousing sensitivity to the beauty of pro-family life goals, becomes not so much a separate branch of prevention, but a consciously incorporated element or aspect of integrated prevention activity.

The defining feature of the Integrated Prevention Model (IPM) is the recognition of a broad spectrum of children's and youth's problems in the context of their interrelationships, and also the relationships between various problems and their risk factors and protective factors.

Demographic questions first became the field of interest of integrated prevention in the evaluation study on the effectiveness of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme, conducted in 2007–2008. There was a chance that this programme, which addresses the issue of building lasting love, among other things, and which is run by trainers with a positive attitude towards marriage and family, would affect the development of young people's aspirations concerning family and having children. The results proved positive. Participation in the programme increased youth's willingness to have children, especially among boys. We need more similar programmes for various age groups, and more evaluation studies to verify their effectiveness. The effectiveness should be assessed not only from the perspective of the influence a programme has on mental health and protection against risk behaviours and addictions, but also regarding demographic variables.

Relationships between various problems vs common protective factors in the light of the 2023/2024 study

In Chapter 2 of this publication, we described the main assumptions of the Integrated Prevention Model. We highlighted the strong interdependencies between the occurrence of various youth problems and risk behaviours, as well as those risk factors and protective factors that simultaneously affect multiple problems. The research results presented in Chapter 2 referred to in-person studies. We carried out similar analyses on the basis of a database of the latest surveys from the 2023/2024 school year, but this study was based on the integrated prevention methodology adapted to online surveys. This implies slightly different ethical requirements, and so also a slightly different set of variables. This makes it the more interesting to look at the results.

Table 7⁴ presents the correlations between the occurrence of various problems from several prevention areas, with reference to early prevention of demographic problems.

Table 7. Correlations between various problems whose indicators were included in the 2023/2024 study (N = 20,685)

		Poor current mental state	Psychoactive substances	Violence			Internet and screens			Unwillingness to have children
				physical violence	verbal abuse	cyberbullying	harmful content on the internet	time spent on digital devices	digital fatigue	
Poor current mental state		–	0.20	0.09	0.14	0.10	0.15	0.13	0.16	0.15
Psychoactive substances		0.20	–	0.20	0.24	0.24	0.39	0.15	0.16	0.02
Violence	physical violence	0.09	0.20	–	0.51	0.36	0.23	0.05	0.14	0.01
	verbal abuse	0.14	0.24	0.51	–	0.35	0.27	0.10	0.15	–0.01
	cyberbullying	0.10	0.24	0.36	0.35	–	0.28	0.07	0.16	0.06
Internet and screens	harmful content on the internet	0.15	0.39	0.23	0.27	0.28	–	0.17	0.22	0.02
	time spent on digital devices	0.13	0.15	0.05	0.10	0.07	0.17	–	0.10	0.04
	digital fatigue	0.16	0.16	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.22	0.10	–	0.01
Unwillingness to have children		0.15	0.02	0.01	–0.01	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.01	–

As can be seen from Table 7, the relationships between different problems in the same area are usually stronger than with problems from different areas, but each specific problem is linked to some other problem, and often to many other problems. For instance, a poor current mental state correlates with keeping company with peers using psychoactive substances⁵, fatigue resulting from using screen devices, accessing websites not suitable for youth, and **unwillingness to have children** in the future. Accessing websites not suitable for youth, in turn, correlates with keeping company with peers using psychoactive substances and committing peer physical violence, verbal abuse and cyberbullying.

⁴ Pearson correlation coefficient was used in the analyses.
⁵ The ‘psychoactive substances’ variable was measured with a scale consisting of three questions about keeping company with youth who used alcohol, drugs or smoked cigarettes. For ethical reasons, we do not ask direct questions about the use of psychoactive substances in online surveys. Keeping company with peers who use them is a very strong risk factor for using these substances. Therefore, in online surveys we treat the former variable as an indicator of the latter.

Of particular practical importance are research findings that make it possible to identify protective factors that protect against many problems at the same time. Being aware of these factors and reinforcing them is one of the most rational and cost-effective measures that can be taken in prevention, and also a hallmark of integrated prevention.

Analyses carried out on the study sample also showed that individual protective factors are linked to many youth problems, which is illustrated in Table 8⁶.

Table 8. The strongest protective factors for many youth problems and risk behaviours (2023/2024)

		Poor current mental state	Psychoactive substances			Violence			Internet and screens			Truancy	Unwillingness to have children
			alcohol	drugs	cigarettes	verbal abuse	physical violence	cyberbullying	time spent on digital devices	harmful content on the internet	digital fatigue		
FAMILY	Mother as life guide	++	+	+	+	+		+		+		+	+
	Father as life guide	++	+	+	+				+			+	+
	Kind gestures from parents	+										+	+
	Frank conversations with parents	++	+		+				+	+			+
LOVE – MODELS AND BELIEFS	Contact with model marriages	+											++
SCHOOL AND CLASS	Climate in class	++	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Being accepted in class	++	+		+	+	+	+		+	+		+
	Grade average		+		+				+			++	+
FAITH AND RELIGION	Importance of faith/ religion in life	++	+	+	+				++	+		+	++
	Spiritual dimension, reference to God	+	+		+				++	+		+	++

+ correlation strength ≥ 0.1 ++ correlation strength ≥ 0.2

⁶ Correlations were computed using Spearman's ρ. Analyses were conducted on the whole sample of the surveyed youth, and with division according to sex. Because the direction and strength of the correlations were very similar for boys and girls, we present results for the whole sample.

Table 8 summarizes the protective factors associated with the greatest number of various youth problems among those included in the study. The same categories of factors can be found here as in earlier studies, discussed in Chapter 2.

In the family-related category of factors, the same three key dimensions of relationships are represented as discussed in more detail in the IPZIN report from 2023: 'parents as life guides and authority figures', 'parents as an important source of love', and 'parents as the trusted ones with whom I can talk frankly about my affairs'. In terms of the number of problems and areas, indicating mother as a life guide has the widest range of influence among the protective factors. Providing parents with knowledge about these factors is an important task, thanks to which they can become aware of their enormous role in the life of their teenager, a role that is significant regardless of what the teenager manifests in their relationships with their parents.

Among factors related to school and class, the influence of good class climate is impressive. This is the most broadly effective preventive factor in the entire table. The protective effect will be intensified if we manage to create an atmosphere in which students feel accepted. Understanding the preventive value of working towards a good atmosphere can motivate teachers to work hard and counteract burnout. The relationship between a positive class climate and the willingness to have children is very interesting. Perhaps the class is an important workshop for relationships with others, and the experience of good relationships also encourages students' dreams of family and children.

The category of protective factors related to faith and reference to God also has a very universal scope of influence. It protects youth against all the problems surveyed except for violence. This is difficult to explain, even though we also observed a similar result in the IPZIN studies from the previous decade.

Contact with a marriage model is an example of a protective factor that is not very universal. It protects youth against poor mental states and is important in terms of demography, as discussed earlier.

The report *How to Protect Youth in an Unstable World?* (2023) included the following recommendation:

The multitude and diversity of new risks emerging in today's unstable world has made the approach to prevention defined as the Integrated Prevention Model a particularly useful basis for both scientific research and practical action. The changing reality requires understanding the interrelationships between various problems and their associated risk factors and protective factors. (...)

This recommendation remains fully valid. The integrated approach to prevention continues to develop. It is open to new challenges and problems, new risks, and new research findings. An example of this openness is the inclusion of demographic issues in our research and preventive activity. We did this because it is the need of our times.

Two and a half decades of research based on the Integrated Prevention Model have taught us that it is important not only to include new issues in research and prevention, but also to find relationships and factors that are universal and timeless. Protective factors related to family, school and religion do play such a role.

In this rather short chapter, we could only tackle selected issues from the latest IPZIN research. We have chosen those that best fit the title and topic of the conference at the Polish Senate, for which we have prepared this publication: **'YOUTH – PREVENTION – FAMILY. The Role of Prevention Professionals in the Face of Social and Demographic Challenges Encountered by the Young Generation'**.

We hope that reading this publication and getting familiar with the research findings discussed in it, and the vision of prevention it presents, will become an inspiration and a platform for broad cooperation across divisions, which are particularly worth overcoming when acting for children and youth.

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