

Consequences of World War II

Looking for
human stories
behind photos
and statistics

Introduction

Map of Europe 1938

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EUROPE_1929-1938_POLITICAL_MAP.svg



Legend: Europe 1929-1938

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Persia (Iran) | 10) Albania | 19) Belgium |
| 2) British Mandate of Palestine | 11) Istria (Italy) | 20) Balearic Islands (Spain) |
| 3) Cyprus (British Crown Colony) | 12) Sicily (Italy) | 21) Andorra |
| 4) Rhodes and Dodecanese (Italy) | 13) Sardinia (Italy) | 22) Northern Ireland (UK) |
| 5) Crete (Greece) | 14) Corsica (France) | 23) Gibraltar (British Crown Colony) |
| 6) East Prussia (Germany) | 15) Switzerland | 24) Spanish Morocco (Spain) |
| 7) Free City of Danzig | 16) Liechtenstein | 25) Lithuania |
| 8) Aland Islands (Finland) | 17) Luxembourg | 26) Greece |
| 9) Gotland (Sweden) | 18) Netherlands | 27) British Mandate of Iraq |

Map of Europe after the Second World War

Source: <http://www.diercke.com/kartenansicht.xtp?artId=978-3-14-100790-9&seite=36&id=17472&kartenNr=4>



Task 1

The maps show the results of the war: border changes. Find and describe them.

Task 2

Imagine a person who lived in Breslau or in Brest Litovsk in 1938. What might have happened to him/her during and after the war. Present at least three scenarios.

Task 3

Which of the pictures presents not only results but also consequences of WWII? Justify your choice.

Dresden, partial view of the destroyed city centre across the Elbe towards Neustadt. In the centre of the picture the Neumarkt and the ruins of the Frauenkirche, 1945

Source: Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1994-041-07 / Unknown author / CC-BY-SA 3.0. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Dresden_in_World_War_II#/media/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1994-041-07,_Dresden,_zerstörtes_Stadtzentrum.jpg



Fountain “Children’s dance” on the station square, Stalingrad, after the end of the battle, 1943

Photo: <https://waralbum.ru/287859/>



Ruins of Warsaw, 1945

Photo: <https://www.pikrepo.com/fcqj/ruins-of-warsaw-in-1945-in-world-war-i>



Krefeld: Hungerwinter demonstration, 1947

Photo: Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-B0527-0001-753 / CC-BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-B0527-0001-753,_Krefeld,_Hungerwinter,_Demonstration.jpg



Minsk after the bombing, 1941

Photo: Bundesarchiv, Bild 141-2020 / CC-BY-SA 3.0. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Minsk_in_World_War_II#/media/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_141-2020,_Weißrussland,_Minsk,_Zerstörungen.jpg



Breslau after the battle, 1945

Photo: Public domain, <https://waralbum.ru/45255/>



Analysis of the source materials – group work

Group A Maps of migrations

Discussing the possible post-war biographies of the inhabitants of Breslau and Brest, you have probably considered the possibility that they moved to other places within the new borders of their old countries: Germany or Poland respectively. Descendants of a family from Breslau might now live in Cologne; descendants of a family from Brest might now be in Wrocław (i.e. pre-war Breslau). There were also other processes that resulted in post-war migrations: political decisions of the Big Three (Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin), of the post-war governments, of individuals who did not want to follow those decisions etc.

Analyze the maps that show some of the post-war migration processes.

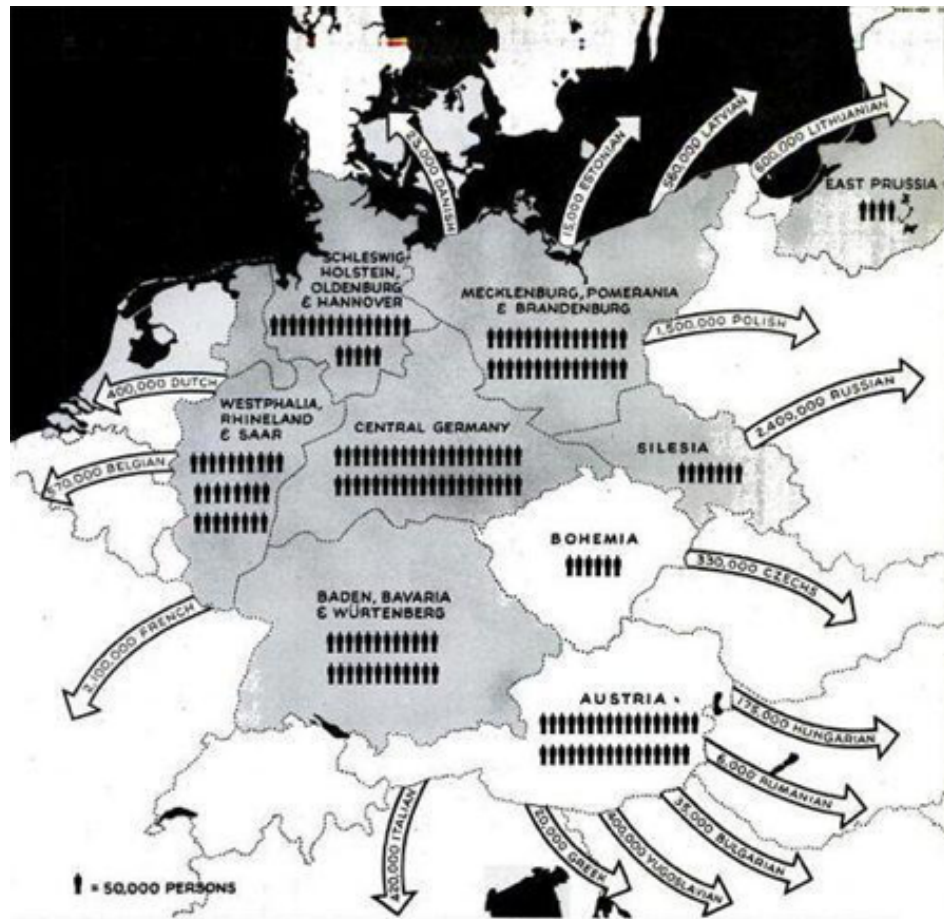
Post-war flight and expulsion to Germany

Source: Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.
<https://www.hdg.de/lemo/kapitel/nachkriegsjahre/alltag/flucht-und-vertreibung.html>



Life Magazine, May 1945.
 9,000,000 displaced
 foreigners leave Germany

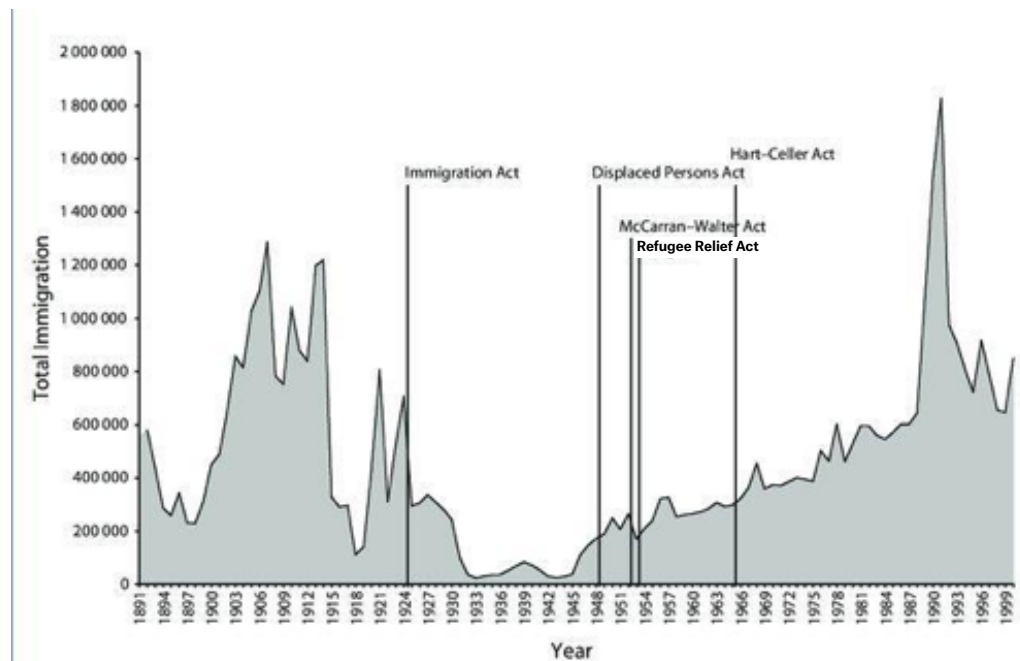
Source: demons.swallowthesky.org
<https://www.pinterest.cl/pin/482729653788619745/>



DISPLACED PERSONS

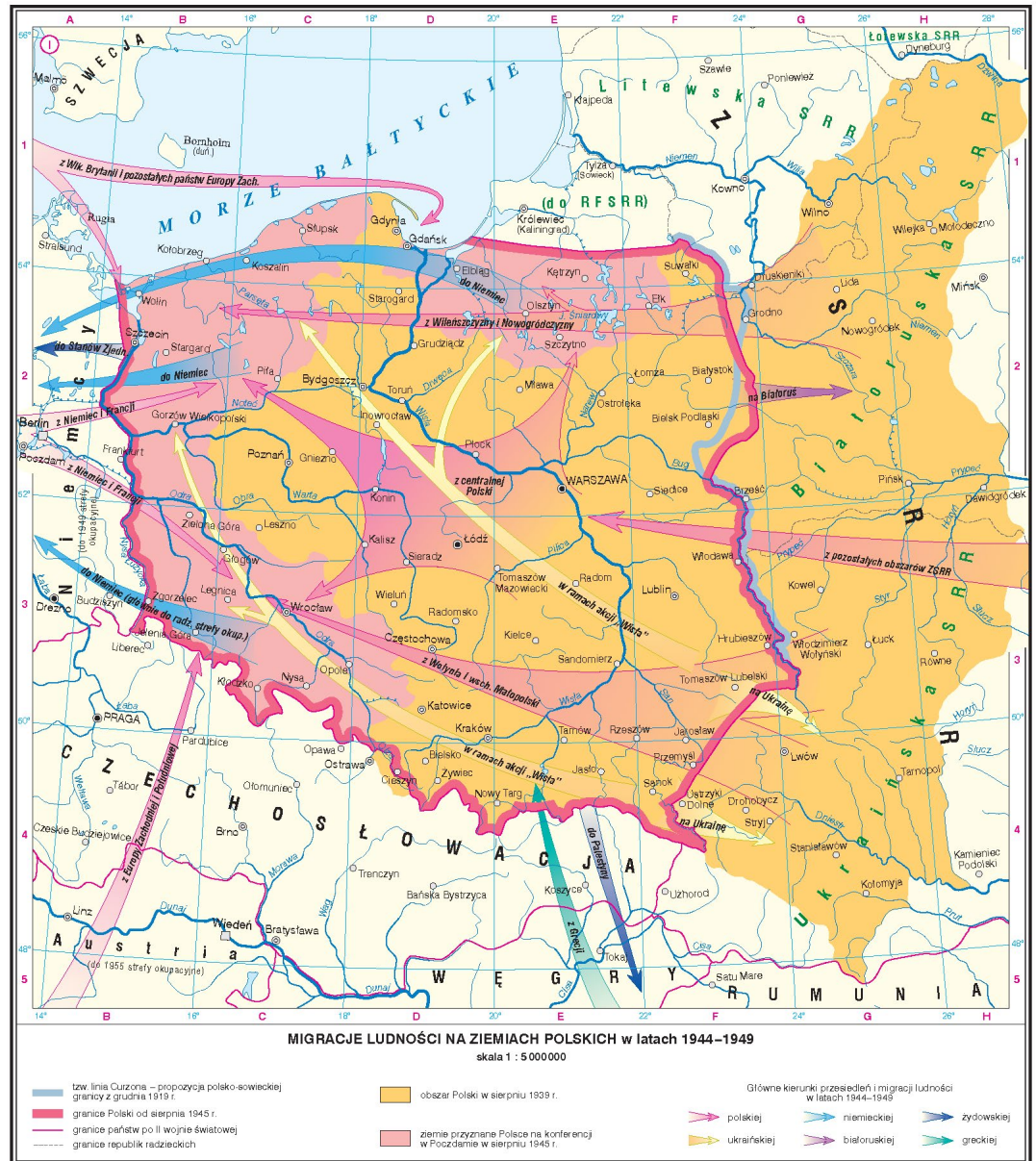
THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE THE NAZIS UPROOTED START THEIR GREAT TREK

To USA



Source: 2000 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Available at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/imm00yrbk/imm2000list.htm>. Accessed February 25, 2004.

Migration on the Polish territories in 1944-1949



Source: Courtesy of Nowa Era Publishing House, Warsaw, Poland. www.nowaera.pl

- Who created each of the sources? Whose point of view do they represent? How do you recognize it?
- How are the migrations indicated on the map? What aspects of the migrations are visible?
- Which aspects are not visible? Or: what would you need to learn from other sources to fully understand the maps?
- What is each of the sources trying to tell us, besides just presenting statistical data?

➔ **Provide** three arguments supporting the claim that limited ethnic diversity was one of the consequences of the Second World War in Europe.

➔ **Brainstorm** on other potential long-term consequences of the post-WWII mass migration flows. Provide at least three such consequences and justify your claims.

Group B

Populations: demographic statistics

Population pyramid is a form of presentation of the population of a given country (or area) distributed by age and gender at a given point in time. “A natural” pyramid is broadest at the bottom, with an almost symmetrical distribution of males and females (boys and girls aged 0-10), and gradually narrowing in older age groups. For biological reasons, there are usually slightly more boys than girls and slightly more older women than men. However, historic events, such as wars, migrations, epidemics and others may “remove” (or sometimes “add”) population in certain age or gender groups.

It is estimated that about 75 million people died in the Second World War, including about 20 million soldiers.

Indicate how this result is reflected in the population pyramids of selected countries of the following years: 1950, 1960 and 1980.

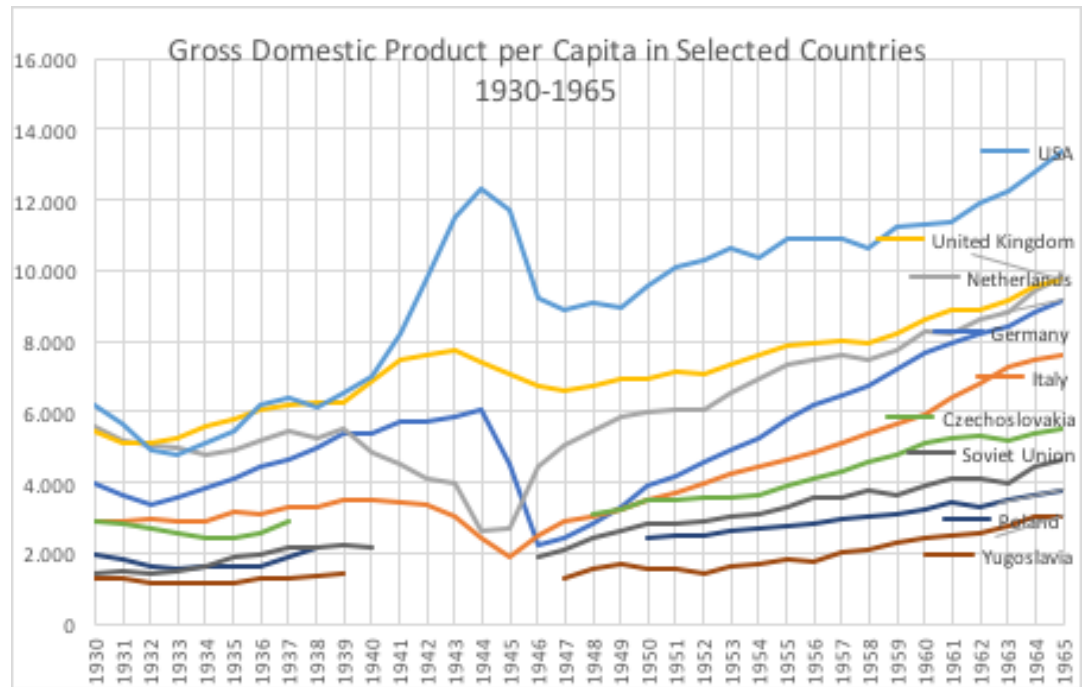
→ **Provide** three arguments supporting the claim that even though the majority of the victims of the Second World War were civilians, the share of military victims is clearly reflected in population pyramids.

→ **Trace** the generation of the post-war “baby-boomers” in the pyramids.

How can we use the pyramids as a proof of the argument that the generation of “baby-boomers” is one of the consequences of World War II?

→ **Find** two other short- and two other long-term consequences of WWII on the population of the country you are analyzing.





Source: Statistics come from Madison Project. <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/?lang=en>

Data for other countries can be quite easily generated.

Gross Domestic Product indicates the cost of all the products manufactured and services bought in a certain country in a certain period (often a particular year).

GDP per Capita is calculated by dividing GDP by the number of inhabitants of the area in question. This way, we can compare (with some reservations) the material situation of people living in larger and smaller countries.

The graph shows the changes in GDP per capita in selected countries before, during, and after the Second World War. Please notice that some data for the war period are missing.

- 1 When could the German population start “feeling” the economic hardships of the war?
- 2 When did post-war reconstruction start in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands?
- 3 How much time did it take the Netherlands to restore the material status of its citizens?
- 4 What about Germany?
- 5 How was the situation of the USA and UK different?
- 6 How is the “iron curtain” and division of Europe into “East” and “West” reflected on the graph?
- 7 **Provide** three arguments supporting the claim that economic consequences of the Second World War were tougher in Eastern Europe than in the West.

Summary

Presentation of the findings of each group, focusing on the summarizing points underlined in each group's tasks.

- 1 Additional task. Using the sources analyzed by Group A-C answer the questions: Why did many Eastern European Displaced Persons choose to settle down in the United States after World War II?
- 2 Should we use the provided indicators of GDP per Capita despite the fact that they do not take into consideration border changes and migrations?

Human stories behind the statistics

The experiences and consequences of the war have inspired writers and poems from various countries. Match the excerpts from post-war poems with one of the issues represented by a group of sources analyzed in this lesson:

- A Photographs: Ruins
- B Maps: Border changes
- C Maps and diagrams: Migrations
- D Charts: Population pyramids
- E Chart: GDP per Capita

1 Tomas Venclova, *South of Prospect* (fragment)

It's off to the side, a quiet spot, having changed its name
that was written in so many tongues. The *locus amoenus*
of my youth sat between a brewery, wet gateways, scarred plaster
and a monument that they threaten, every decade, to remove.
The same roads to school as before the war – another country.
The February sun wastes itself on walls just as it did back then.

Source: Vilnius Review, <http://vilniusreview.com/poetry/211-tomas-venclova>

2 Czesław Miłosz, *And the city stood in its brightness* (fragment)

And the city stood in its brightness when years later I returned,
My face covered with a coat though now no one was left
Of those who could have remembered my debts never paid,
My shames not eternal, base deeds to be forgiven.
And the city stood in its brightness when years later I returned.

«And the City Stood in Its Brightness» 1963, translated by the author
and Robert Hass

Source: Classic Poetry Series, https://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/czeslaw_milosz_2013_12.pdf

3 Nikolai Mayorov, We are not blessed

We are not blessed to rot under gravestones –
To lie all stretched, – having half-opened graves,
We hear guns' roar from the battle's place
The regimental trumpet's coarse wails
From the highroads that were our own.
We know all field manuals by heart.
What's death to us? We're higher than death here.
In our graves we're in arrays, advanced,
Wait for a sign to go in a fight
And let all know that the dead do hear
The offspring's talk of them and their past.

1942

Translated by Yevgeny Bonver

Source: Poetry Lovers Page, https://www.poetryloverspage.com/yevgeny/miscellaneous/mayorov/we_are_not_blessed.html

4 Maja Trochimczyk, Slicing the Bread

Her mother's hunger. One huge pot of hot water
with some chopped weeds –*komesa, lebioda*–
she taught her to recognize their leaves,
just in case – plus a spoonful of flour
for flavor. Lunch for twenty people
crammed into a two-bedroom house.

The spring was the worst–flowers, birdsong,
and nothing to eat. You had to wait
for the rye and potatoes to grow. The pantry
was empty. She was hungry. Always hungry.
She ate raw wheat sometimes. Too green,
The kernels she chewed –still milky –made her sick.

Thirty years after the war,
her mother stashed paper bags with sliced, dried bread
on top shelves in her Warsaw kitchen.
Twenty, thirty bags... enough food for a month.
Don't ever throw any bread away, her mother said.
Remember, war is hunger. [...]

2014

Source: Writing the Polish Diaspora: Slicing the bread by Maja Trochimczyk,
<http://writingpolishdiaspora.blogspot.com/2014/07/slicing-bread-by-maja-trochimczyk.html>



5 Gyula Illyés (1902–1983), Horror (fragment)

[...] Like Moses' bushes, burning,
each shell, with rapid shriek,
burst, screaming something –
God or Fate tried to speak.

In the icy snow of the street
I saw a human head,
a bas-relief trampled flat
by some inhuman tread.

I saw a baby, still blind,
close to its dead mother:
not milk to suck but blood,
blood not wool for cover.

The baby raised its bloody face
and cried out to the dead.
His mother was –, this very place;
himself – the years ahead.

1945

Translated by Anthony Edkins

Source: Classic Hungarian Poems of the Second World War - Hungarian Review,
www.hungarianreview.com/article/20150114_classic_hungarian_poems_of_the_second_world_war?fbclid=IwAR3yGSmJOSQ4bB9xa7WWAxQzOU6-47dj6xPGOEyNMkwUDRbxbZhwKEwfOzE



Information for teachers

Introduction

The lesson starts with traditional teaching materials: historical maps and a warm-up dialogue between the teacher and pupils.

Task 1 **The maps show the results of the war: border changes. Find and describe them.**

Teacher's comment: These border changes have deeper consequences: political, military, economic, but also human.

Task 2 Imagine a person who lived in Breslau or in Brest Litovsk in 1938. What might have happened to him/her during and after the war. Present at least three scenarios.

Teacher's comment: Have you noticed that the consequences can be short- and long-term? The short-term consequences are easier to notice, while the long-term may have a more profound impact on the people.

Additional info and study material: World War II and Korean War veterans completed a questionnaire about their experiences and their current psychological reactions to the war. Nineteen percent scored above the cut-off points for both the General Health Questionnaire and the (war-related) Impact of Event Scale, demonstrating that, even over 50 years after the event, many veterans still experience problems relating to their war experiences. [...] The findings indicate that the effects of a traumatic experience such as war can persist into later life.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13607860120038393?journalCode=camh20>

Teacher's comment – continued. If a mother died during the war, her children may have experienced trauma for their whole life and may even pass it on to subsequent generations. In this lesson we will move from results to consequences of the war.

A short preliminary exchange of ideas about the results vs consequences is possible.

Task 3 **Which of the pictures presents not only results but also consequences of WWII? Justify your choice.**

More photographs could be added, especially from participants' localities, showing pre-war cities, post-war ruins [results] and with post-war changes [consequences]



Pupils are given sets of primary sources: photos of ruined cities, maps showing migrations, population diagrams, and charts showing economic developments. They are also assigned a country on which they will focus (each pupil, pair, group/row can be assigned one country, or the teacher may want to focus on the pupils' home countries, or on two selected countries).

The teacher then presents a lecture on the consequences of WWII, the main points of which are: 1. Political changes: borders and governments. 2. Population changes: deaths, migrations, baby-boom. 3. Economic consequences – from ruins to development.

While listening, the pupils should select the sources relevant to the developments in “their” country that correspond with the teacher’s lecture. As homework, they will be asked to present the consequences of WWII for their chosen country, using the sources as illustrations and presenting arguments in support of their statements.

The scheme of the teacher’s lecture: War led to many deaths, especially among the young men, but also (in the countries that had experienced occupation) among the civilian population of all ages, and especially among the Jews. The dead could not be resurrected, but we can observe a so-called “baby-boom” in many countries, when in the years following the war there was an increased number of newborn babies. These babies not only changed the lives of their individual families but also impacted the economy (e.g. a lot more baby clothes, diapers, toys etc. were needed), social life (maternity leave, daycare facilities, school buildings and school supplies) and culture (music, TV programs for kids, fashion etc.). After the economic disaster that the war brought to many places in Europe, post-war reconstruction began. The economic boom lasted for many years (this is a matter of separate analysis but is worth mentioning in the context of the consequences of the war). Border changes led to huge migrations of people. Many people were uprooted and had to find new identities. Street and city names were changed, and there were certain issues with incorporating the new territories into the country’s administration, economy, and transportation, or with overcoming the losses caused by the war. Questions arose as to what to reconstruct and what to leave, what to commemorate (see also a lesson “Remembrance and Memorialization of World War II in Different Countries”) and what to forget.

Teacher’s comment: A lot of historical research is based on narrative documents, such as diaries, memoirs, stories published in newspapers and magazines. Even official reports tell us some “stories”. But sometimes historians rely on “raw” data: numbers, factual statements, documentary photographs. These do not in themselves tell stories, but historians work hard to reveal what stories they can tell us, how they explain the past. Researchers illustrate the numbers with the help of charts and diagrams, and factual statements on maps. We should always keep in mind that – just as in the case of border changes – there are human experiences behind statistics and statements. In this lesson you will analyze various types of statistical sources and look for human stories hidden behind objects, symbols and numbers.

The class works in three groups. Each group has a working package with tasks, questions and sources (in the form of paper copies or links). The tasks are aimed at guiding the pupils to “read like a historian” (according to the methodology developed by Sam Wineburg), but referring to various types of source, not only textual sources. The pupils will then use their analysis of the sources to justify their contentions – in essence, the conclusions of their analysis become their arguments. A teacher may use this work as an opportunity to practice argumentative writing. The thesis is provided in the package. Pupils may discuss it in the work group and during the whole-class presentation, and then in their homework present it in their individual writing assignments (based on the recommendation of Chauncey Monte-Sano on developing argumentative writing)

Brainstorm on other potential long-term consequences of the post-WWII mass migration flows. Provide at least three such consequences and justify your claims.



[Most sources represent the point of view of the country where they were created. Migrations on maps are represented by arrows that point in the direction of the migration; the size of the arrows can also be significant. The arrows can tell us about geographical aspects and about the scale of the migration. They show that post-war migrations were huge in scale, and dynamic.]

Group B Populations: demographic statistics

[The pyramids for this group are placed at the end of the lesson plan. They were generated from the site populationpyramid.net. This site provides data on numerous countries of the world, starting from 1950, so a teacher might generate pyramid(s) corresponding to the local interests of the class.]

The smallest ratio of men to women in the age group 20-30 (approx.) during the war years reflects the number of soldiers who lost their lives in the war. This “narrow” group moves up the pyramid as time passes and the survivors become the older generations. Baby-boomers, on the contrary, are the “wide” generation, just below the one “lost” in the war. They also move up as time passes.

Group C Economy: GDP statistics

Answers to questions:

1. 1944. 2. Germany 1946, Italy and The Netherlands 1945. 3. Until 1948. 4. Until 1956, but the pre-war situation was better than in the Netherlands. 5. They did not experience an economic crisis during the war and boomed afterwards. 6. The reconstruction was much faster in the West, with real dynamics not visible in the Soviet bloc. 7. Crisis deeper, reconstruction slower, overall economic situation poorer even many years after the war, no economic boom.

Summary

Are there any consequences of the war that can be observed around us even today?
Brainstorming.

Presentation of the findings of each group, focusing on the summarizing points underlined in each group’s tasks.

It is important to explain that the analyzed data do not capture all the consequences of WWII, and that in fact the war had consequences everywhere, in each aspect of human life, and for many, many years. In fact, in accordance with the “butterfly effect”, every single small event has its historical impact, and a huge event like WWII even more so.

The elements presented in various sources were not separate but on the contrary, they were interconnected and happening all together. Moreover, there were other elements too, and most likely we will not be able to capture, understand and explain all the consequences of WWII.

Additional task

Using the sources analyzed by Group A-C answer the questions:

- 1 Why did many Eastern European Displaced Persons choose to settle down in the United States after World War II? [because the economy was booming there and the USA was welcoming immigrants, because the situation was very bad in their home countries, because their home towns were not in their home countries anymore, because they wanted to avoid living under Soviet domination and communist rule, while the Americans offered democracy and freedom]
- 2 Should we use the provided indicators of GDP per Capita despite the fact that they do not take into consideration border changes and migrations? [Yes, because there is no better data available in many cases.]

This section uses poetry (see above for selected poems) to help us consider the individual, emotional dimension of the consequences of the war.

Even if there is no time (or wish) to analyze poetry, it is still good to look for the human dimension in some way. Pupils could be asked to discuss at home what consequences of the war were experienced by their families (or neighbors), and to note down one such example and consider whether it corresponds with the large-scale consequences discussed during the lesson. A teacher may initiate this homework by bringing his/her family experiences [e.g. my grandparents used to live in a place that was in Poland before the war; that place subsequently became part of Soviet Ukraine, so they migrated to Lower Silesia (formerly German but after the war part of Poland); they settled down easily enough in their new place, and spoke proudly of the improvement in their everyday living conditions; they were critical towards the communist regime's attempts to impose the Marxist doctrine, and especially critical of the promotion of atheism and discrimination against the Catholic church, but at the same time they appreciated the egalitarian nature of higher education in communist-ruled Poland: this made it possible for their children to go to university, which would have been more or less impossible in the old days for poor farmers from a remote village].

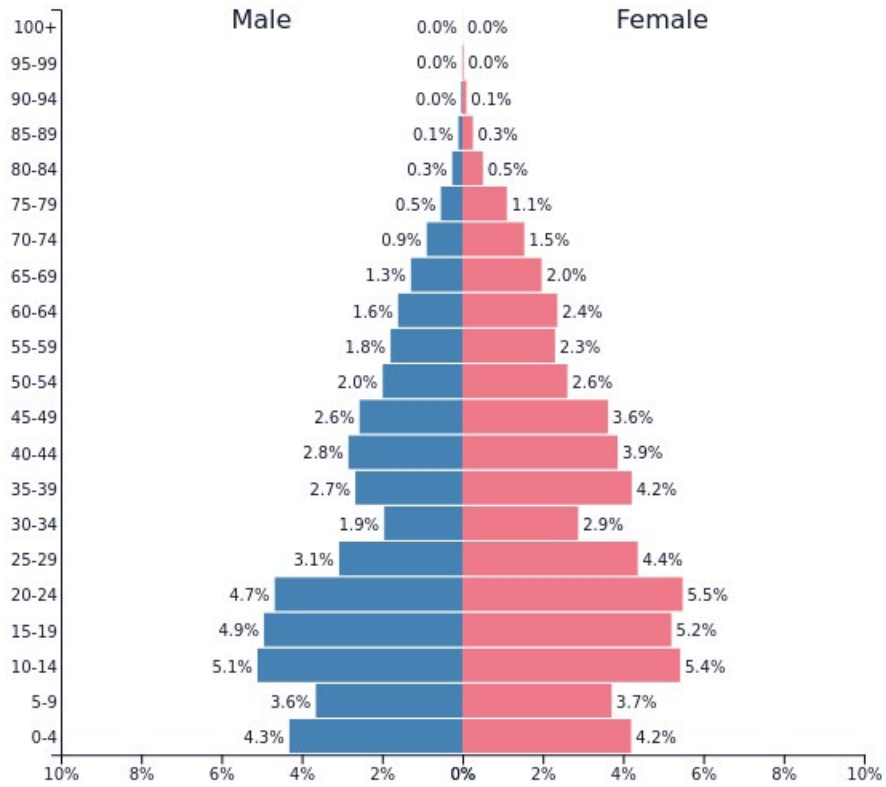
The poems move from general to individual, and from very rational to emotional. They return to the idea discussed in the warm-up, in which the pupils were interpreting border changes on the maps and considering their implications for individual inhabitants of the chosen cities, revealing the human faces and human fates behind "cold" historical processes and their visualization.

Answers: 1B, 2C, 3D (death), 4E, 5A

[The selection of poems follows. More poetry (or prose) can be added.]

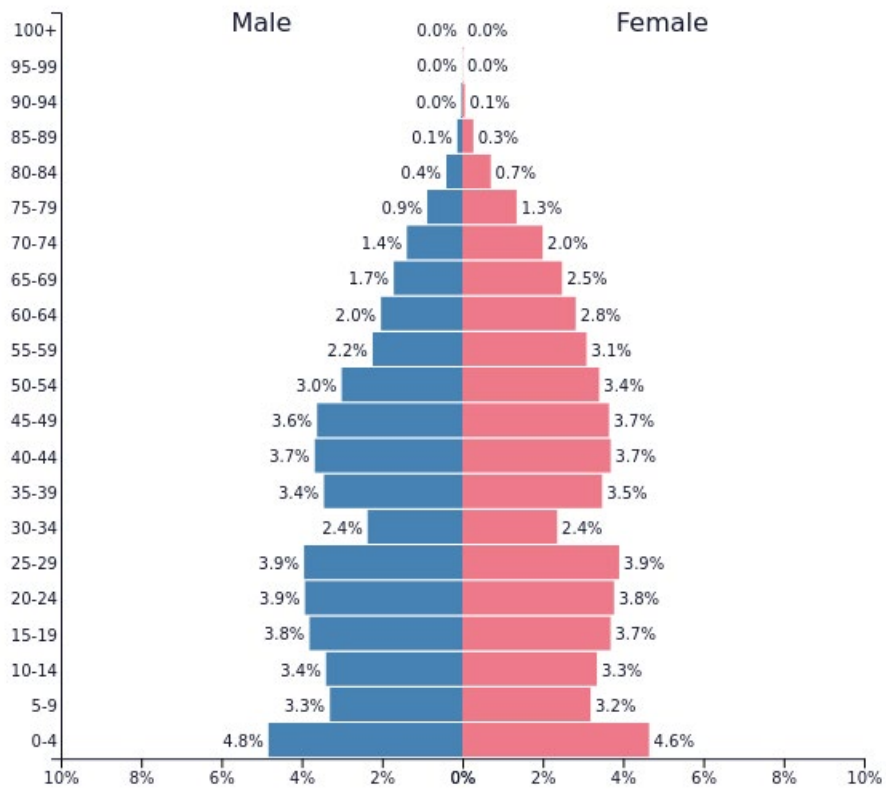


Population after World War II
1950



PopulationPyramid.net

Belarus - 1950
Population: **7,745,003**

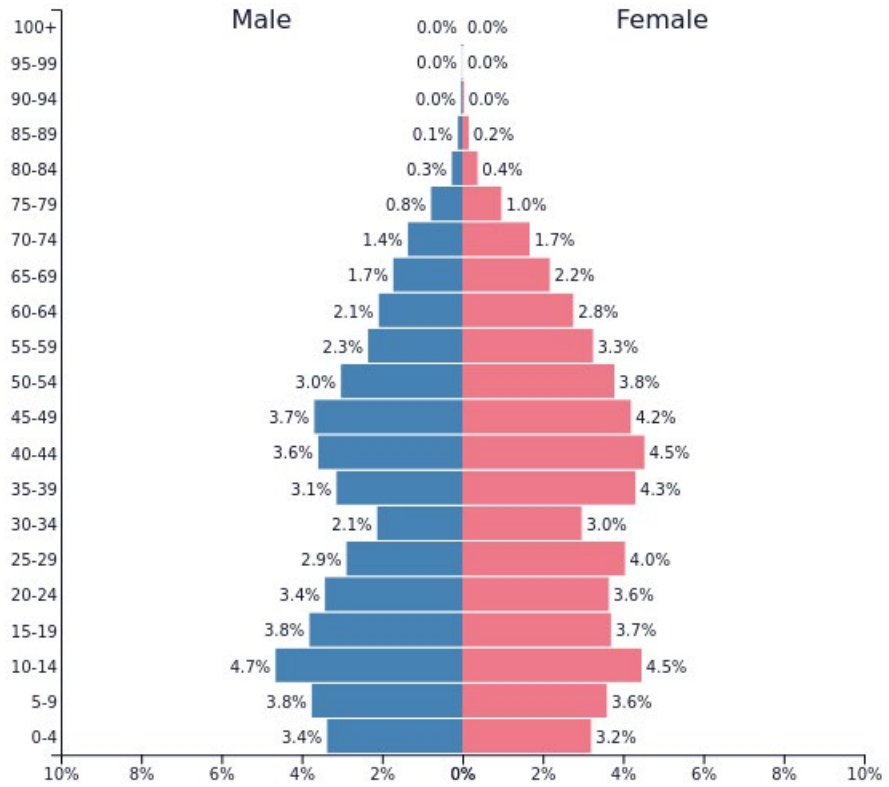


PopulationPyramid.net

France - 1950
Population: **41,833,873**

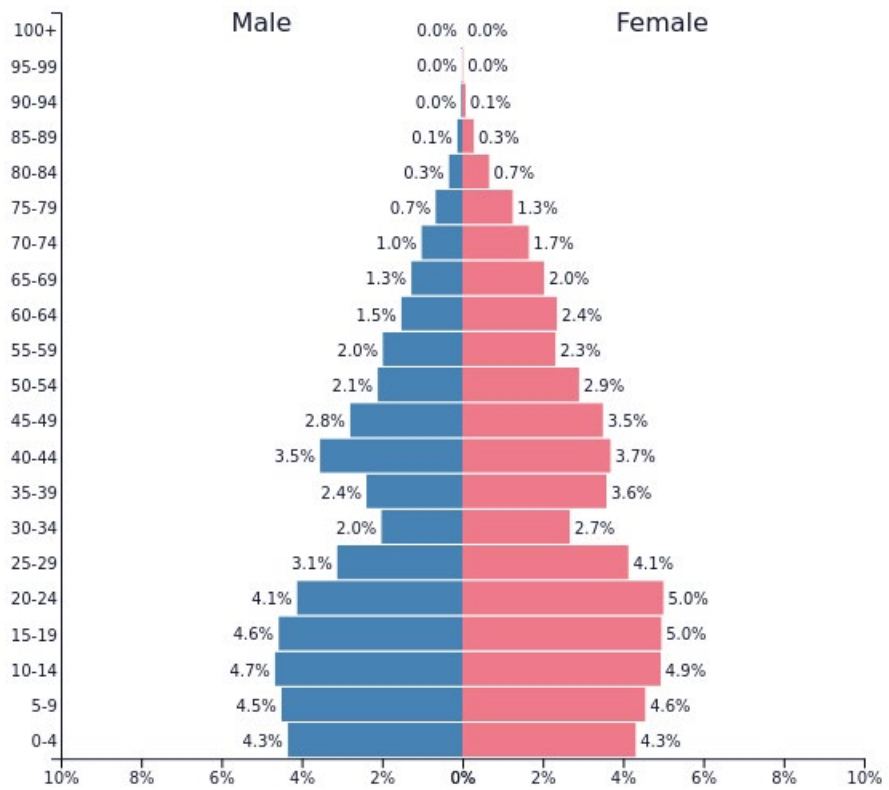


1950



PopulationPyramid.net

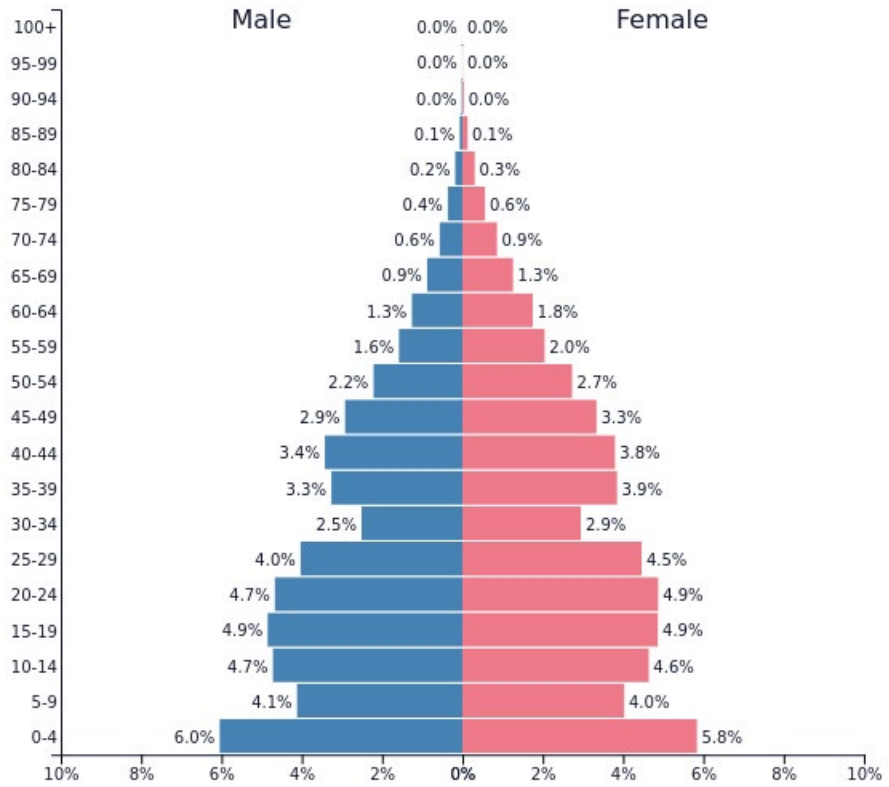
Germany - 1950
Population: **69,966,252**



PopulationPyramid.net

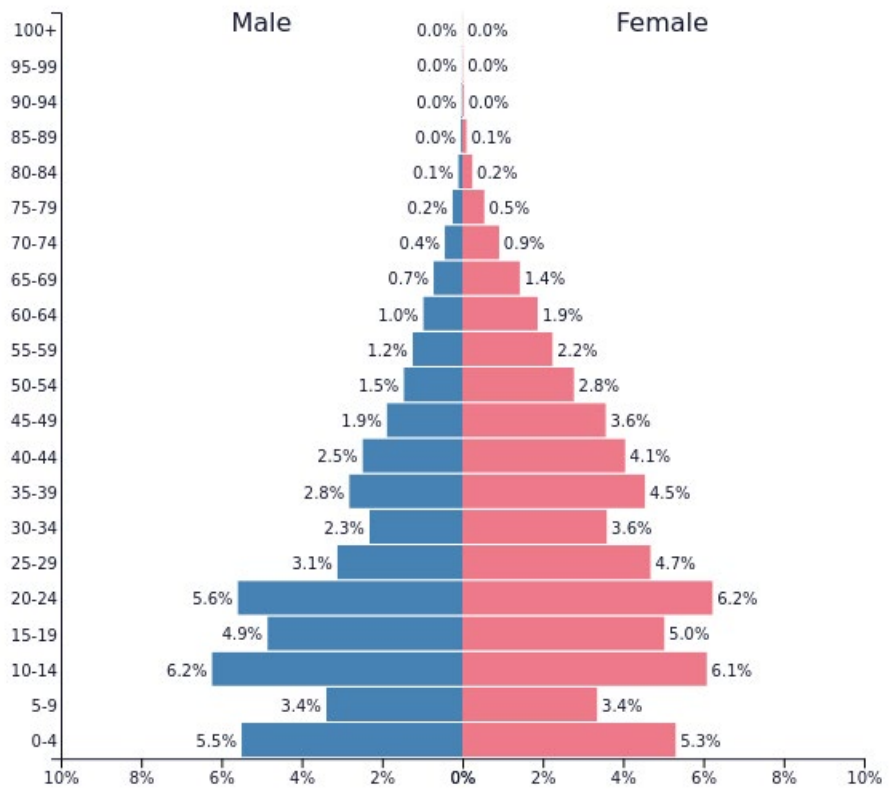
Lithuania - 1950
Population: **2,567,406**

1950



PopulationPyramid.net

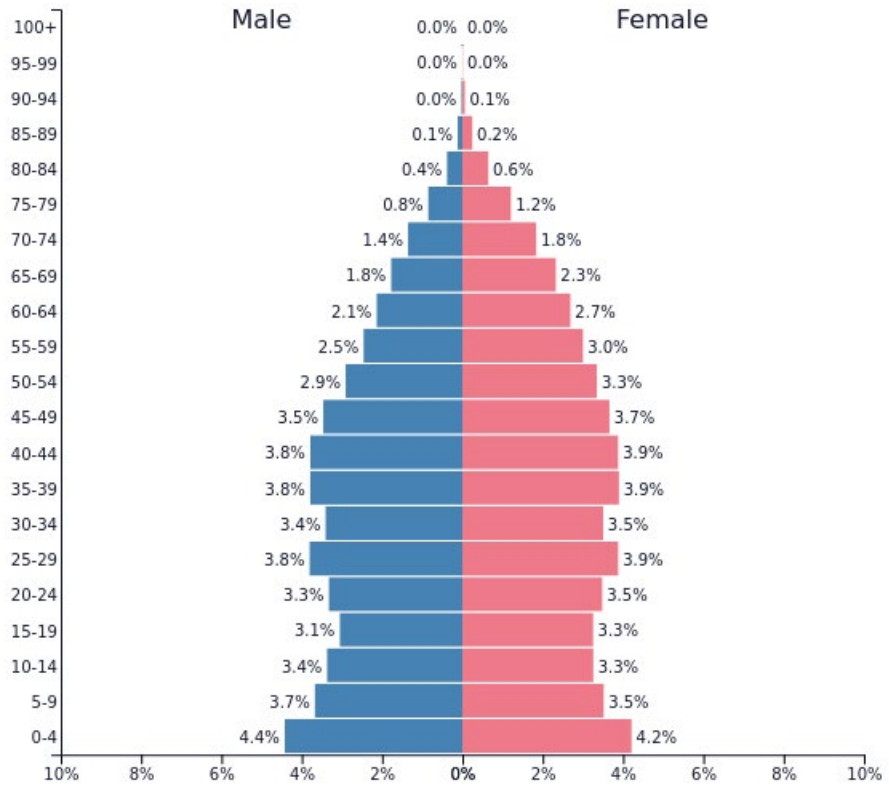
Poland - 1950
Population: **24,824,007**



PopulationPyramid.net

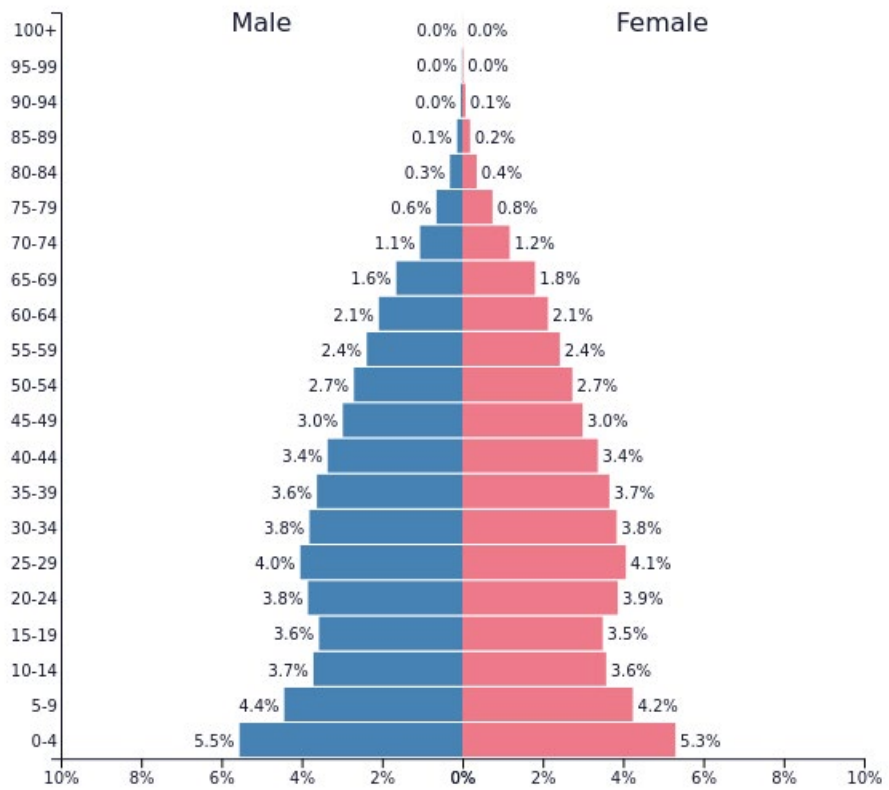
Russian Federation - 1950
Population: **102,798,649**

1950



PopulationPyramid.net

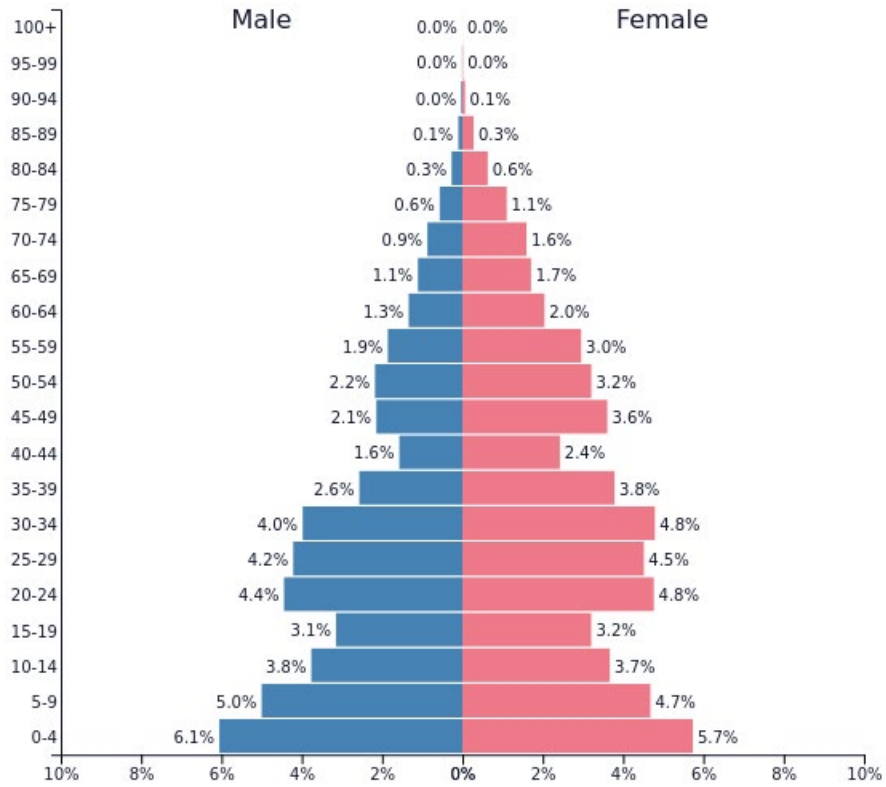
United Kingdom - 1950
Population: **50,616,019**



PopulationPyramid.net

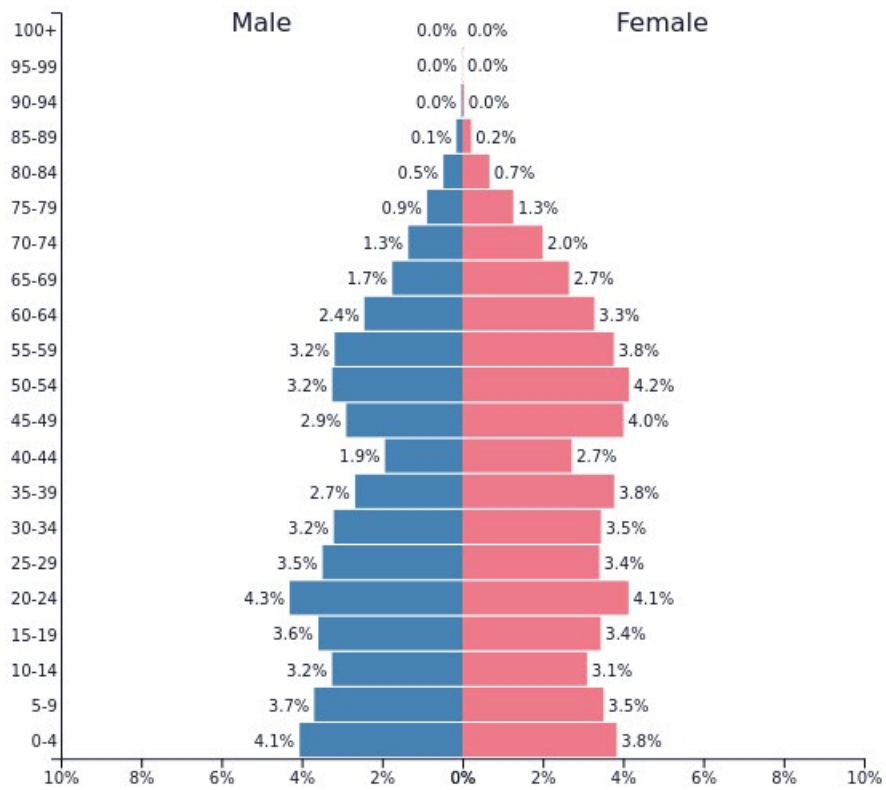
United States of America - 1950
Population: **158,804,396**

1960



PopulationPyramid.net

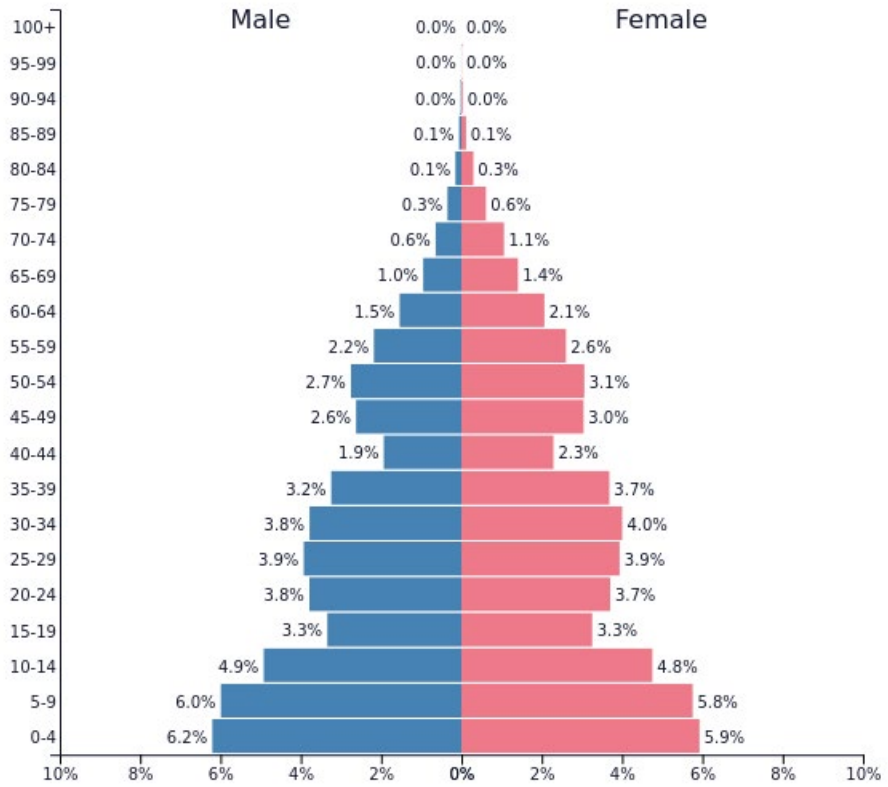
Belarus - 1960
Population: **8,124,881**



PopulationPyramid.net

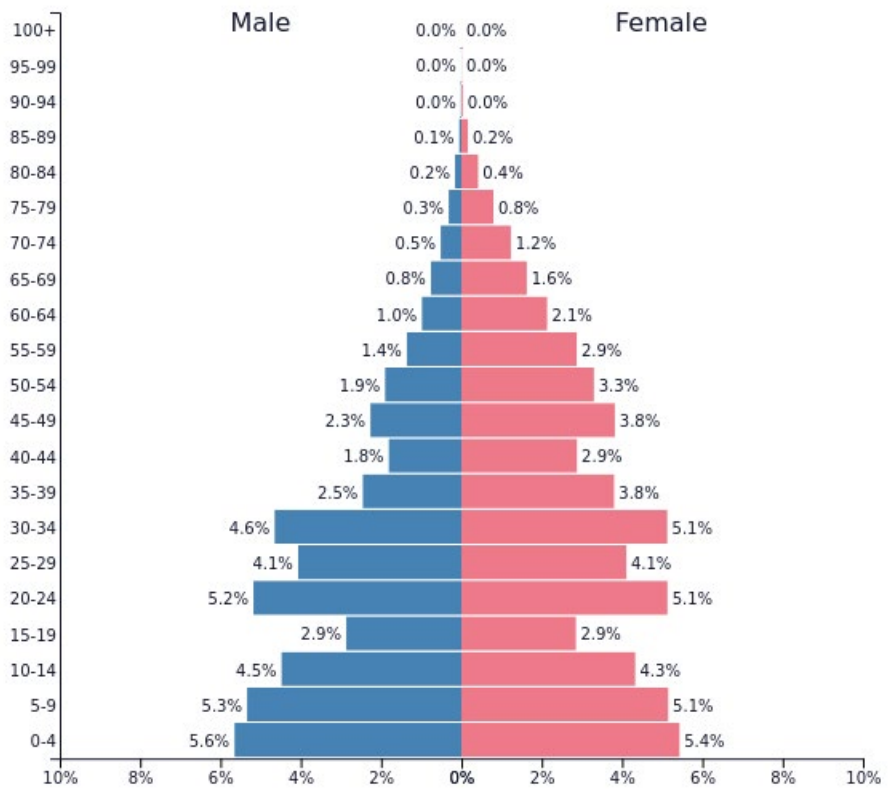
Germany - 1960
Population: **73,414,228**

1960



PopulationPyramid.net

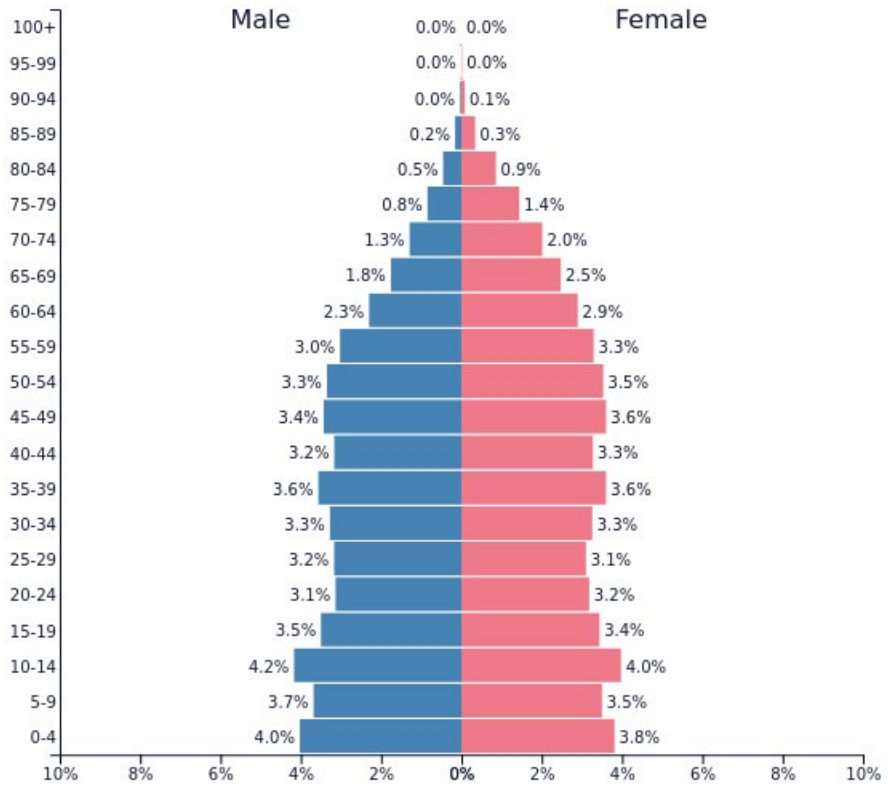
Poland - 1960
Population: **29,614,200**



PopulationPyramid.net

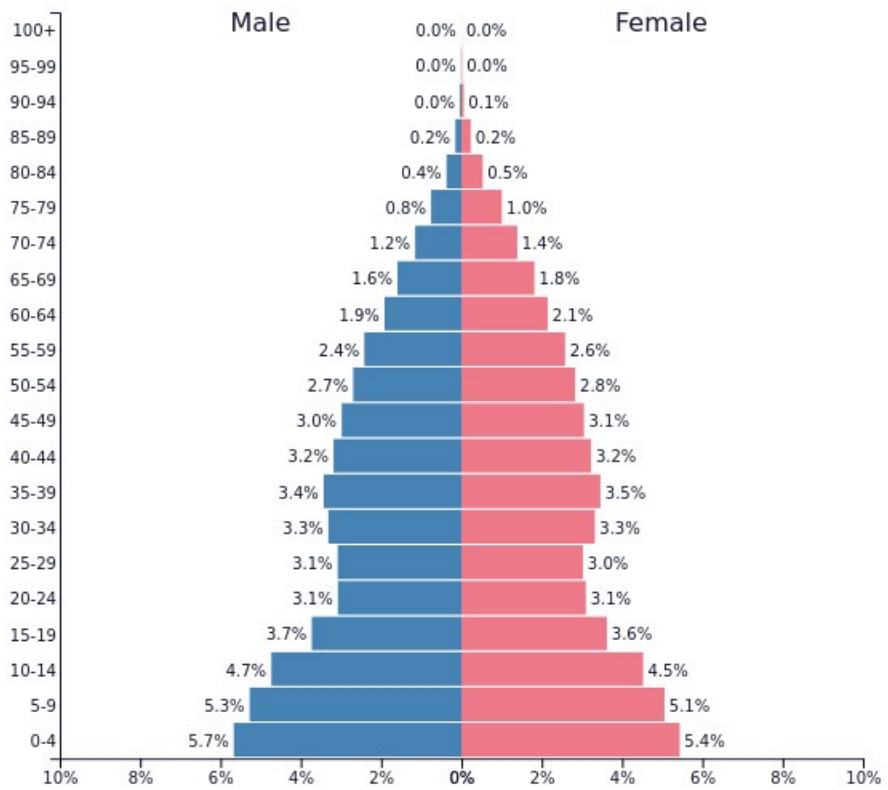
Russian Federation - 1960
Population: **119,871,699**

1960



PopulationPyramid.net

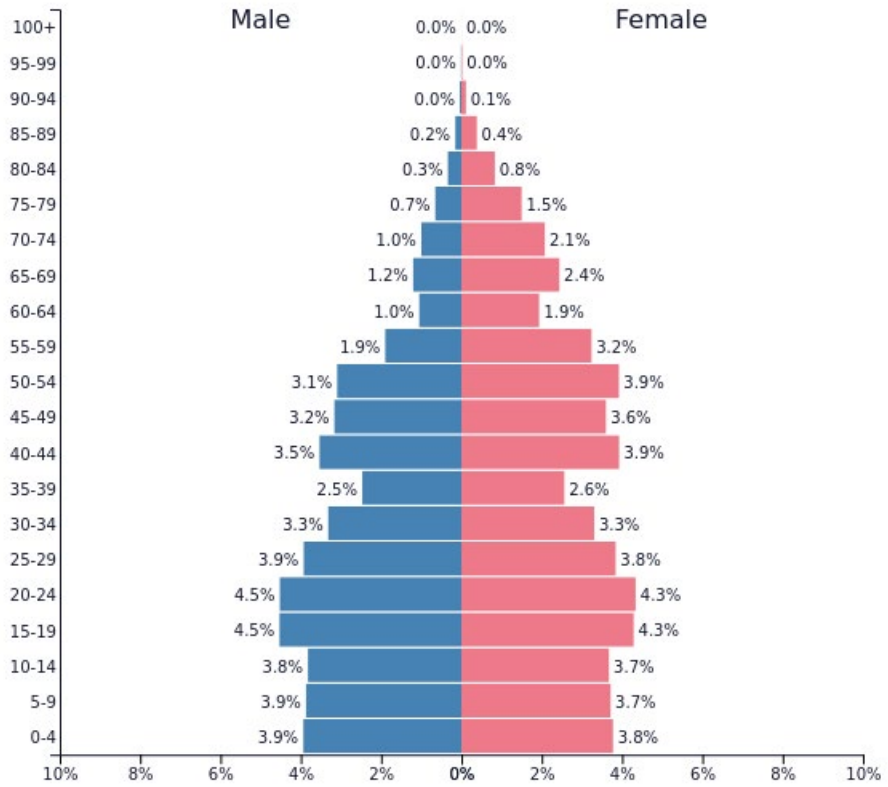
United Kingdom - 1960
Population: 52,370,594



PopulationPyramid.net

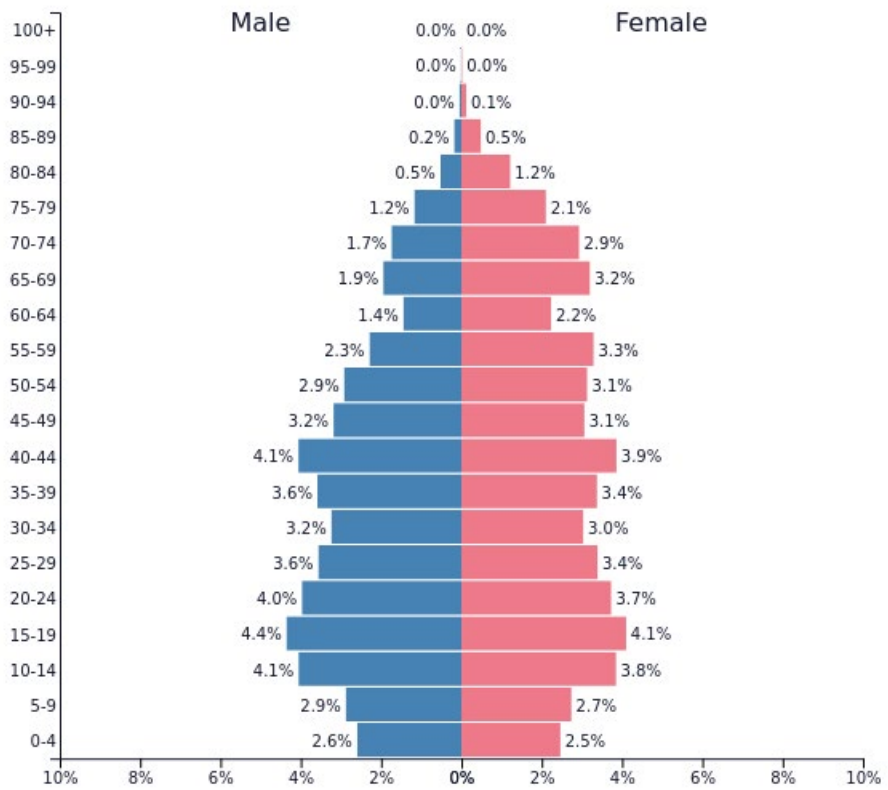
United States of America - 1960
Population: 186,720,570

1980



PopulationPyramid.net

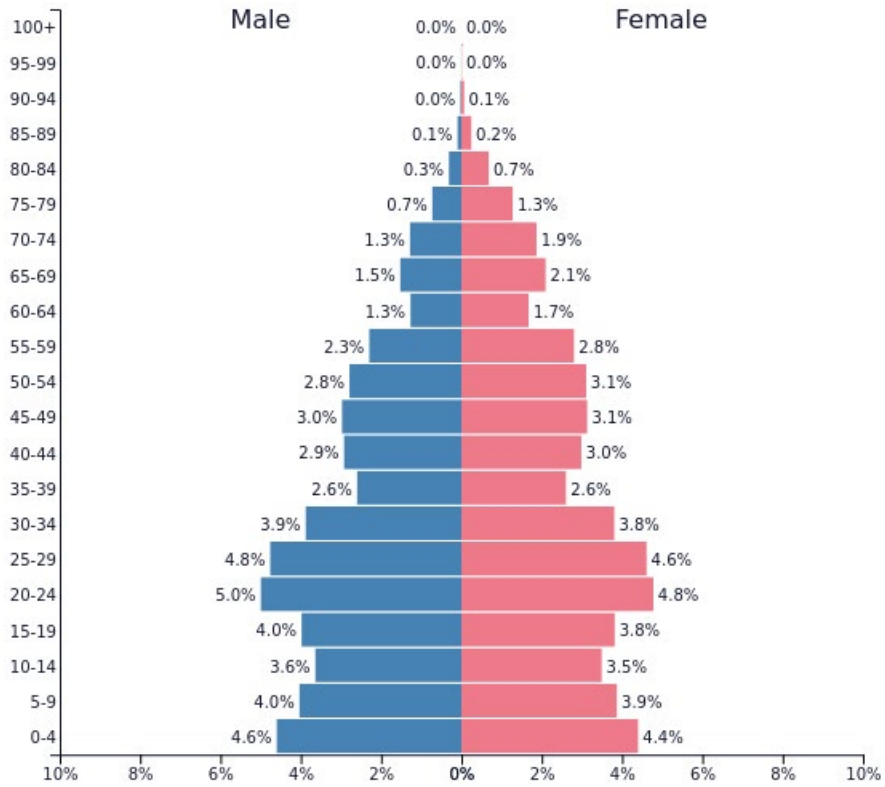
Belarus - 1980
Population: **9,569,847**



PopulationPyramid.net

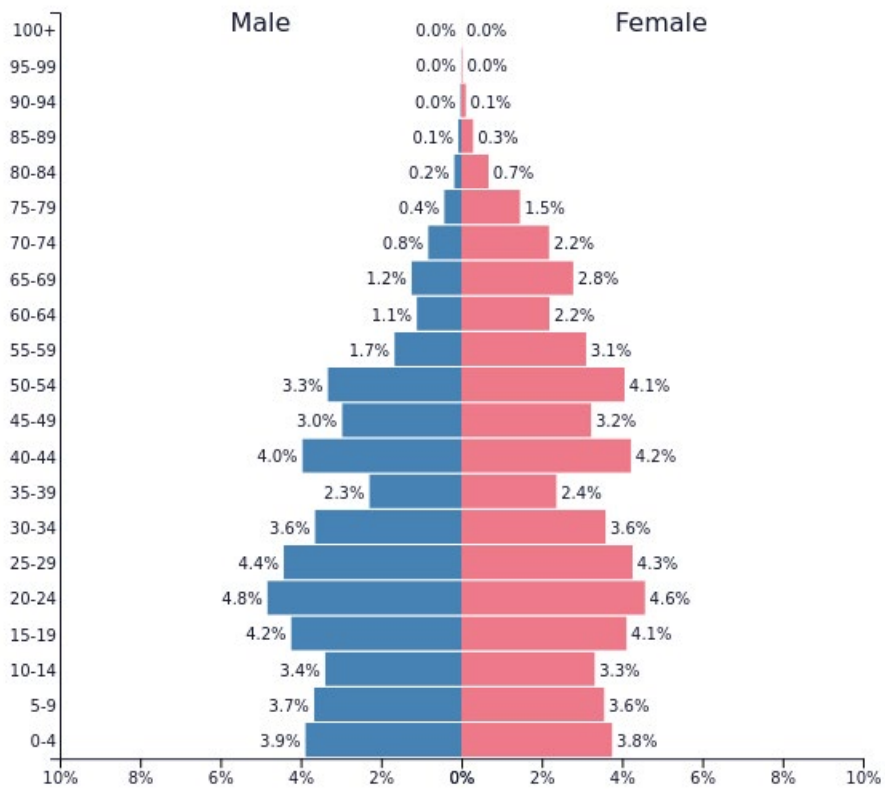
Germany - 1980
Population: **78,283,100**

1980



PopulationPyramid.net

Poland - 1980
Population: **35,539,723**



PopulationPyramid.net

Russian Federation - 1980
Population: **138,053,142**

