

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYMENT LEVEL OF PARENTS RECEIVING A CHILD BENEFIT FROM THE FAMILY 500+ PROGRAM IN POLAND

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of the article was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the employment rate of parents receiving a child benefit from the Family 500+ program. **Methods:** The study used a set of scientific methods, including generalization, theoretical and methodological analysis and synthesis. The real value of the childcare benefit was calculated. **Results:** The introduction of the “Family 500+” program resulted in an increase in spending on family policy. These transfers contributed to the improvement of the financial situation of the families. Therefore, the role of the child benefit in reducing poverty among families with children is decreasing, which can be seen especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, the total employment rate of parents fell. Households with one child were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Conclusions:** Based on the obtained results, recommendations were presented for the social policy.

Keywords: labor market participation, child benefit, family policy, rural areas, Family 500+ program, social transfers

JEL codes: J13, J21, J22, I38

INTRODUCTION

The Family 500+ program is not a new program in Polish family policy, but it still raises many discussions on many of its aspects, including issues related to its purpose, costs, impact on the labor market, and especially on the professional activity of women. In the discourse, the impact of the program on the professional activity of men was rather not mentioned, and the professional activity of parents in rural areas is less often analyzed.

A number of changes and restrictions implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced the population to immediately adapt to the new situation - the closure of schools and kindergartens, and the introduction of distance learning became a major organizational challenge for many families. The population living in rural areas for years has been characterized by a higher birth rate and a greater extent of poverty. The challenges faced by parents during the COVID-19 pandemic required a significant commitment to creating conditions for distance learning.

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Especially younger children and children with special educational needs¹ required constant help and the presence of a guardian. Working and simultaneously taking care of children who previously attended educational institutions every day was a big challenge. The difficulties and limitations that have arisen in the pandemic have affected the demand for work and the professional activity of parents.

The aim of the article was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the employment rate of parents receiving a child benefit from the Family 500+ program. The basic source of information was the statistical data from Statistics Poland (GUS). Quarterly data for the years 2019–2021 were analyzed. The analysis of quarterly data is suitable for such analyses due to the seasonal nature of the Polish labor market. The study used data from the Labor Force Survey. In addition, data from the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS), OECD Social Expenditure Database and inflation forecast data from the National Bank of Poland were used.

In Poland, the idea of paying cash to parents as a form of family benefit appeared in 2011, and the originator was Julian Auleytnier, who proposed the equivalent of EUR 100. In 2015, the Law and Justice party announced the Family 500+ program in the election campaign, which was introduced after the successful elections. The Family 500+ program was launched on April 1, 2016, and was intended to positively impact the fertility rate in Poland by “partially covering the expenses related to raising a child, including taking care of it and meeting its life needs”. The benefit is payable to the mother, father, actual guardian or legal guardian of a child aged 0–17.

In the beginning, the program was addressed only to some families, as the benefit was due for the second child and subsequent children in the family. A benefit could be obtained for the first child in the family if the net income per 1 family member did not exceed PLN 800. From October 1, 2017, additional criteria were

in force for single parents bringing up one or more children. To obtain the benefit, they were required to have an established maintenance benefit based on an enforceable title issued or approved by a court. In the case of matters related to child support that were not officially regulated, the benefit was not paid, even for the second child and subsequent children. This provision was later repealed (was paragraph 2, article 8 of the Act) [MRPiPS 2019].

The Act provided the possibility of receiving a childcare benefit in whole or in part in the form of material payments or in the form of paying for services in a situation where the parents wasted the money paid [Dz.U. 2016 poz. 195].

In April 2022, six years of the program’s operation have passed. It is the most important social program in the history of Poland, which has changed the assessment of the state policy towards the family. In the CBOS research carried out from 1996 to 2013, the actions of the state government towards the family were assessed negatively or sufficiently. Almost a year after the introduction of the Family 500+ program, the state policy towards the family was rated as good or very good by more than half of the respondents (52%). In March 2019, after the announcement of extending the program to each child, the percentage of positive assessments of the family policy was a record high, reaching 62%. In 2021, the ratings were lower – 49% rated it as good and very good, but the percentage of people assessing family policy as unsatisfactory increased (from 7% in March 2019 to 17% in February 2021) [CBOS 2017, 2021]. The Family 500+ program will significantly increase spending on family policy. In previous years, expenditures did not exceed 2% of GDP, while in 2017, they amounted to almost 3% of GDP (Table 1).

From the very beginning of the program, the question was asked whether this program would have an impact on women’s labor supply. According to Ruzik-Sierdzińska [2017], this benefit resulted in 20,000

¹ Special educational needs (SEN) – these are not only students with disabilities. Individual developmental and educational needs also result from maladjustment or the risk of social maladjustment, specific learning difficulties, chronic disease, and environmental neglect related to the student’s family situation. Gifted students are also included in this group and required adaptation of teaching methods

Table 1. Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures in Poland, in percent of GDP, 2009–2017

Public spending	Years								
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total	1.77	1.75	1.67	1.71	1.78	1.74	1.93	2.94	2.99
Cash	0.75	0.78	0.71	0.79	0.82	0.78	0.93	1.80	2.00
Services	0.54	0.55	0.58	0.55	0.59	0.61	0.58	0.75	0.61
Tax breaks for families	0.48	0.42	0.38	0.37	0.37	0.35	0.41	0.4	0.38

Source: [OECD 2022].

to 33,000 women leaving the labor market in 2016. According to her, in the short term, an exit from the labor market may be neutral or even beneficial for the household, while a long break from work may make it more difficult to return to employment in the future and increase the risk of poverty in old age (shorter work experience means a lower pension in the future). The results of the research indicated a stronger impact of the benefit on the decisions of less educated women than on the more educated ones [Magda et al. 2018]. Myck's research [2016] revealed that the percentage of couples in which both partners work was expected to decrease, and the effect would be noticeable, especially in small towns and villages. The introduction of the program was accompanied by an increase in economic inactivity among people aged 18–44, including those living in rural areas, but this process began much earlier than the emergence of the idea of the 500+ child benefit. In the period when receiving the benefit for the first child depended on income, there were clear differences in the professional activity of parents. Parents receiving the 500+ childcare benefit with one child worked less frequently than parents with two children [Kmiec 2020]. The results suggest that the introduction of Family 500+ had no significant impact on the decisions of working parents [Premik 2022]. Decisions on economic activity or inactivity among parents are much more complex and are influenced by many more factors.

Changes in the Family 500+ program and the granting of a benefit for each child, regardless of family income, brought about the need to look at the behavior of entities in the labor market. The program still arouses and will arouse a lot of emotions and discussions.

Krajewski and Zalega [2020] are of the opinion that “Family 500+” should be a subject of a thorough public debate in which we will all consider the pros and cons. Michoń [2021], analyzed statements on Internet forums and distinguished fourteen dominant conventional discourses, which were divided into three groups: (1) state/individual responsibility discourses, (2) policy-making discourses, and (3) discourses of (in)efficiency and (in)effectiveness. According to Michoń [2021], the key to gaining social support, and more broadly to legitimizing the welfare state in Poland, is caring for a positive image of parents entitled to the benefit.

THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Other results of the program are also emphasized, such as the reduction of poverty among families with children. The fact is that married couples with three or more children are still in the most difficult financial situation compared to other types of households in Poland. The average monthly disposable income per person in this type of household was lower by 25.8%, and expenditure per person was lower by 24.1% than the national average (in 2020, by 28.9 and 26.3%, respectively). Introducing the Family 500+ child benefit undoubtedly improved their financial situation [GUS 2022]. The analysis carried out by Brzeziński and Najsztub [2017] suggests that even before the introduction of the child benefit, extreme poverty rates among households with children in Poland were at a comparable or lower level than among single-person households or couples without children.

The percentage of people at risk of poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Since 2016, a clear decrease in the share of people living below the subsistence minimum has been observed, both in rural areas and in towns, with the exception of large cities, where an increase in this indicator was recorded (Table 2). Undoubtedly, the changes in this indicator were influenced by the good situation in the labor market and the increase in wages and agricultural income. In the case of households with children, the child benefit and parental benefit should also be taken into account. Parental benefit has been paid since January 2016 and is payable to women who gave birth to a child and were not entitled to maternity benefits, e.g., students and wives of farmers. In 2018, the extent of extreme poverty started to increase. Then, in 2019, it decreased, which was mainly due to the fact that all children were covered by the program “Family 500+”, regardless of family income. Undoubtedly, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on social and economic functioning affected the financial situation of households. In 2020, the range of extreme poverty increased, especially in rural areas and small towns, to 20,000 inhabitants (Table 2). This is a very important issue because poverty – as well as demographic potential, which in peripheral and remote regions is assessed as negative – seriously threatens the development of rural areas [Pomianek and Kapaj

2018]. The lack of adequate income causes a kind of feedback loop and is both a cause and a consequence of the deprivation of needs and also favors the unsustainable development of rural areas [Kalinowski 2018, Raczkowska and Wrzesińska-Kowal 2019].

The number of children in a household influences the risk of poverty. Statistics Poland regularly publishes data on the range of economic poverty, taking into account the number of children in a family, but without considering the division into urban and rural areas. The data shows that the risk of extreme poverty is higher in households with children. Households without children had the lowest poverty rate. In 2016, the poverty rate significantly decreased in households with at least two or three children aged 0–17 and in households with a disabled child. In 2018, 5.4% of the total population of Poland lived in extreme poverty, and the extent of extreme poverty increased compared to the previous year (Table 3). Changes in benefits introduced on July 1, 2019, related to the coverage of the first child, regardless of family income, undoubtedly contributed to a decrease in the extent of extreme poverty in 2019. However, the number of people in the most difficult financial situation increased in the following year. 2020 was a year in which there were many restrictions in the sphere of socio-economic life due to the announced state of the pandemic, which resulted in the deterioration of the financial situation of households.

Table 2. The extent of extreme poverty in Poland in 2013–2020 (in % of people in households)

Specifications	Years							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Poland	7.4	7.4	6.5	4.9	4.3	5.4	4.2	5.2
Urban areas:	4.6	4.6	3.5	2.9	2.4	2.8	2.1	2.4
– more than 500 thousand inhabitants	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.5	0.9	1.0	1.6
– 200–500 thousand inhabitants	4.6	3.2	3.2	1.9	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.2
– 100–200 thousand inhabitants	3.5	3.7	3.1	2.8	1.8	2.7	2.1	2.0
– 20–100 thousand inhabitants	4.9	5.1	4.6	3.9	2.8	3.1	2.5	2.3
– less than 20 thousand inhabitants	8.2	8.5	5.4	4	4.1	5.1	2.8	4.4
Rural areas	11.6	11.8	11.3	8	7.3	9.4	7.5	9.5

Source: own study based on Statistics Poland [GUS 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021a].

Table 3. The extent of extreme poverty in households with children in 2015–2020 (% of people in households)

Specification	Years					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Poland in general	6.5	4.9	4.3	5.4	4.2	5.2
with at least 1 child aged 0–17	8.8	5.9	4.9	6.4	5.1	6.5
with exactly 1 child aged 0–17	5.3	4.3	3.8	5.5	4	5.2
with exactly 2 children aged 0–17	8.1	5.3	4.5	5.6	5.1	6.5
Households						
with at least 3 children aged 0–17	16.7	9.9	7.6	9.7	6.8	8.7
with at least 1 child under the age of 16 with a disability certificate	10.7	8.3	4.9	5.7	5.5	7
without children aged 0–17	3.7	3.7	3.6	4	3.1	3.4

Source: own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data [GUS 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021a].

Sawicka and Stolarczyk [2018] pointed out that no one cheered the positive effects of the program related to the situation of families with children. Not only can positive changes be seen in the data of Statistics Poland, but the beneficiaries of this program themselves see its impact on improving the standard of living of families in Poland. Families, especially those with many children, appreciate the fact that the program gave them the opportunity to manage their money more freely [CBOS 2021]. After the program was introduced, spending on food and cultural activities increased, and the likelihood of experiencing difficulties in paying for utilities and medical care for treatment decreased compared to the control group, which was composed of families not eligible for the program [Milovanska-Farrington 2021]. Over the years, the approach to the program in Poland has changed. In 2016, 10% of people believed that the benefit should be directed to the poorest. In 2020, 20% of people had a similar opinion [CBOS 2021].

THE EMPLOYMENT RATE OF WOMEN AND MEN IN HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING CHILD BENEFITS FROM THE FAMILY 500+ PROGRAM

The data show that since 2019, more and more parents receiving child benefits have been working. There is a clear difference in the level of indicators between the first and second quarter of 2019 when the benefit was granted for the second child and subsequent

children, while for the first child, only if the income criterion was met. The changes introduced to the program from July 1, 2019, which consisted in covering children who were born first in the family, resulted in an increase in the number of benefits paid. In April 2022, the program covered more over than 6.5 million children. From the beginning of the program, PLN 178 billion was spent [Kropiwienc 2022]. At the same time, the program covered parents who previously had no right to apply for the benefit due to income; therefore, the employment rate of parents with one child also changed from 62.8% to 80.6% in 2019. It should be remembered that this increase is caused by changes in the law and not by the increase in the number of working parents with one child. Many of the barriers that affect labor supply still exist. In addition, local labor markets have their own specificity and different pace and directions of change.

The data shows that over such a short period of time, there has been an increase in the employment rate among people receiving the benefit. The introduction of lockdown in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the introduction of remote learning in schools, was a great challenge for working parents, especially for younger children or children with disabilities who require more support in learning and time management. At the beginning of the pandemic, the employment rate of parents in total and in households with one child fell but increased in the following quarters (Table 4). State intervention in the form of

Table 4. The employment rate of parents belonging to households receiving the 500+ child benefit by the number of children under the age of 18 in 2019–2021 (quarterly data) (%)

Parents	Quarter of the year											
	2019				2020				2021			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Total	77.0	78.0	81.0	82.4	82.0	81.7	83.0	83.5	84.0	87.0	85.3	85.6
with one child below the age of 18	59.5	62.8	80.6	83.9	83.5	82.9	83.9	84.7	85.4	88.5	86.3	86.7
with two children below the age of 18	82.2	83.2	83.4	83.3	82.7	82.7	84.2	84.3	85.0	87.7	86.2	86.8
with three or more children below the age of 18	73.6	73.0	74.0	73.7	72.9	73.0	74.4	75.5	74.7	78.3	77.4	76.5
Men	92.8	93.2	94.3	95.0	94.5	94.1	94.2	94.7	94.2	96.2	95.2	94.8
with one child below the age of 18	80.2	84.8	93.0	93.7	93.5	92.7	92.8	93.4	92.8	95.1	94.0	93.5
with two children below the age of 18	95.1	94.9	95.5	96.3	95.4	95.0	95.6	95.9	95.5	97.4	96.4	96.2
with three or more children below the age of 18	93.7	93.4	93.0	93.9	95.4	95.7	94.4	94.9	95.2	95.9	95.7	94.6
Women	62.9	64.3	69.0	71.1	70.8	70.6	72.8	73.6	74.9	78.9	76.7	77.7
with one child below the age of 18	45.7	48.0	70.7	75.7	75.1	74.7	76.5	77.6	79.4	83.2	79.9	81.0
with two children below the age of 18	69.9	72.0	71.6	70.7	70.8	70.9	73.2	73.4	75.1	78.4	77.0	78.4
with three or more children below the age of 18	54.8	53.9	56.0	54.3	51.6	51.2	54.9	56.7	55.9	61.6	60.5	60.8
Urban areas	79.4	79.9	82.6	84.2	84.2	83.8	85.3	85.6	86.5	90.0	88.3	88.9
with one child below the age of 18	58.4	61.8	82.7	85.6	85.6	84.9	86.7	86.9	87.1	91.0	89.0	89.7
with two children below the age of 18	84.6	85.3	85.0	85.2	84.7	84.5	86.0	86.5	88.1	91.2	89.5	90.0
with three or more children below the age of 18	75.2	74.1	72.5	73.9	74.9	74.7	74.5	76.0	76.6	79.8	79.4	79.0
Rural areas	74.3	75.8	79.1	80.0	79.1	79.0	79.8	80.7	80.7	83.0	81.2	81.3
with one child below the age of 18	60.4	63.9	77.4	81.3	80.5	80.1	79.7	81.5	83.0	85.0	82.4	82.3
with two children below the age of 18	79.0	80.5	81.4	80.9	80.0	80.3	81.8	81.6	80.9	83.0	81.6	82.5
with three or more children below the age of 18	72.3	71.8	75.3	73.8	71.0	71.3	74.1	75.2	73.3	77.2	75.9	74.5

Source: own study based on Statistics Poland data

the adoption of a number of laws creating the Anti-Crisis Shields enabled enterprises to implement solutions aimed at protecting the jobs and incomes of the population. When schools and kindergartens were closed, a working parent of children under the age of 8 could apply for a care allowance, which helped to survive this situation without having to give up work. The pandemic caused changes in the work organization of many enterprises; many employees could perform their duties remotely. In the second quarter of 2020, work from home in connection with COVID-19 in the form of remote work was regularly performed by 1,493,000 people, which accounted for 9.2% of all employed persons. After lifting some of the “COVID-related” restrictions, 520,000, i.e., 3.3% of employees, regularly worked in the home office mode. In the fourth quarter, after a renewed increase in the number of cases and the introduction of consequent restrictions in the economy, the population usually working remotely again exceeded one million people (1,009,000), and the percentage of people working in this form reached 6.1% [GUS 2021b].

The labor market in Poland is seasonal. Typically, employment increases in the second and third quarters. Due to the seasonality of the Polish labor market, it is difficult to assess how much change occurring in the following quarters of 2020 is the effect of the impact of the epidemic situation and to what extent these changes are characteristic of the difference between “seasons”, therefore it is necessary to compare the situation to the pre-pandemic period.

The economic activity of the rural and urban populations receiving the 500+ benefit increased. There is a higher percentage of the working urban population than the rural population, which results from the specific characteristics of rural areas. Due to legal changes, it is difficult to compare the first and second quarters of 2019 with subsequent quarters in the following years. The data shows that the situation of the urban population improved faster. In cities, especially medium-sized and large ones, there are more job opportunities, and the infrastructure providing care for the youngest children is more developed. In addition, the abolition of the income criterion in the program meant that some parents do not have to worry about losing the benefit if their income per person in the

family increases, so they can take up work and retain the right to child benefit. Taking into account the number of children, the employment rate is the lowest in households with at least three children aged 0–17, both in rural and urban areas. It should be emphasized that the situation during the pandemic, especially during the lockdown, was particularly difficult for many households with children, especially in rural areas. In rural areas, the rural labor market is mainly related to agriculture. Men and women working on farms and agri-food processing plants are essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic, exposed to increased health risks and physical and mental exhaustion [Zawojńska 2021].

In addition, it is important to remember that “working” and “having a job” does not mean being employed or working full-time. It should be emphasized that these are working people according to the definition used in LFS studies, where employees are: persons who, during the reference week, worked for at least one hour for pay or profit or family gain or persons who were not at work during the reference week but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent.

CHALLENGES FOR FAMILY POLICY

The first important challenge is the valorization of the benefit. As a result of inflation, the real value of income from the 500+ program is decreasing year by year. Currently, the real value of the monthly benefit of PLN 500 is PLN 436.60. Taking into account inflation forecasts [NBP 2022], it was estimated that in the next year, the real value will be below PLN 400 and in 2026, it will amount to PLN 309. In order to maintain the purchasing power of this benefit, it should be indexed (Table 5).

The second important challenge is the increase in the number of people entitled to benefits that came from Ukraine. Russia’s attack on Ukraine resulted in an influx of refugees, mainly women and children. Persons who legally crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border after February 23, 2022, in connection with warfare, obtained a PESEL number, opened a bank account in Poland, and have a Polish telephone number and e-mail address, can apply for this benefit. Only

Table 5. The real value of the child benefit from the Family 500+ program

Year	Consumer Price Index (previous year = 100)	The real value of the 500+ benefit (in PLN)	The real value of the 500+ benefit (PLN 500 = 100)
2016	99.4	503	101
2017	102	493	99
2018	101.6	485	97
2019	102.3	474	95
2020	103.4	459	92
2021	105.1	437	87
2022	114.5*	381	76
2023	113.1*	337	67
2024	105.9*	318	64
2025	103.0*	309	62

* National Bank of Poland forecast

Source: own calculations based on data from: [GUS 2022, NBP].

persons residing in Poland can receive them. Each trip longer than 30 days must be reported to Social Insurance Institution. In May 2022, the first payments from the program were made. According to the information provided by the Social Insurance Institution, 440,000 childcare benefits were granted for the 2022/2023 benefit period, which means an increase in state budget expenditure. The Social Insurance Institution withheld payment of over 80.000 for Ukrainian citizens who left Poland [ZUS 2022]. In October 2022, an agreement was signed on the allocation of USD 20 million by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for the reimbursement of 500+ childcare benefits for Ukrainian children.

CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of the “Family 500+” program resulted in an increase in spending on family policy. These transfers contributed to the improvement of the financial situation of the families. In the analyzed years, the range of extreme poverty among families with children, especially those with three children, decreased. The most numerous families are in rural areas, and extreme poverty is greatest in rural areas, so these transfers play a special role in meeting basic needs. In 2018, the extent of extreme poverty started to increase in households with children.

When participation in the program depended on the income level, the lowest employment rate was among households with one child. After the change in the law regulations, many more children were covered by the program. This was the main reason for the increase in the employment rate among parents with one child. Restrictions and barriers for parents to access the labor market have not disappeared, so there are still some people, most often women, who leave the labor market due to domestic duties.

The professional activity of parents is also, to some extent, correlated with the number of children. The employment rate was higher in households with one child and two children than in households with at least three children. Of course, we use the definition of a working person according to the definition used in the LFS and not an employed person. Research shows that the percentage of working people decreased in the second quarter, but increased in the following quarters. The decrease in the percentage of working people can be linked to the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is seasonality in the labor market in Poland - the demand for seasonal workers is increasing in many sectors of the economy, and at the same time, the legal provisions introduced to protect jobs and loss of income of employees during the COVID-19 restrictions inhibited changes in the employment of parents. From the beginning of the program, parents receive 500 PLN

a month. The benefit has never been indexed. Due to the decline in the real value of this child benefit, its role in reducing poverty is decreasing in households with children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The deteriorating economic situation and the influx of a large number of refugees from Ukraine, which was attacked by Russia, and other current and unresolved problems should prompt a discussion on the valorization of the sources of financing for this program. Studies on the impact of the “Family 500+” program on the functioning of various business entities in various sectors, not only families with children, are buried.

Refugees from Ukraine received the right to apply for participation in the program. According to Social Insurance Institution, 440,000 were awarded child-care benefits for the period 2022/2023, of which over 80,000 were withheld in connection with leaving the territory of Poland. UNICEF pledged 20 million USD to reimburse benefits for Ukrainian children, which is an important help in financing this sudden increase in expenses.

The Family 500+ program should be revalorized so that it can fulfill its goals. In recent years, many changes have taken place in the economy, so there is also a need to adapt the social policy to new challenges.

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WPŁYW PANDEMII COVID-19 NA ZMIANY POZIOMU ZATRUDNIENIA RODZICÓW POBIERAJĄCYCH ZASIŁEK NA DZIECKO Z PROGRAMU RODZINA 500+ W POLSCE

STRESZCZENIE

Cel: Celem artykułu była ocena wpływu pandemii COVID-19 na wskaźnik zatrudnienia rodziców otrzymujących świadczenie wychowawcze z programu Rodzina 500+. **Metody:** W badaniu wykorzystano zestaw metod naukowych, w tym uogólnienie, analizę oraz syntezę teoretyczną i metodologiczną. Dokonano szacunku wartości realnej świadczenia wychowawczego. **Wyniki:** Wprowadzenie programu „Rodzina 500+” spowodowało wzrost wydatków na politykę rodzinną. Transfery te przyczyniły się do poprawy sytuacji materialnej rodzin. Rola świadczenia wychowawczego w redukcji ubóstwa wśród rodzin z dziećmi jest coraz mniejsza, co widać zwłaszcza podczas trwania pandemii COVID-19. Na początku pandemii, spadł wskaźnik zatrudnienia rodziców ogółem. Szczególnie odczuły tę zmianę gospodarstwa domowe z jednym dzieckiem. **Wnioski:** Na podstawie uzyskanych wyników przedstawiono rekomendacje dla polityki społecznej.

Słowa kluczowe: uczestnictwo w rynku pracy, pracujący, zasiłek rodzinny, polityka rodzinna, obszary wiejskie, program Rodzina 500+, transfery socjalne