

PART II. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS  
DZIAŁ II. AKTYWNOŚĆ FIZYCZNA GRUP SPOŁECZNYCH I ZAWODOWYCH

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF POLES IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

AKTYWNOŚĆ FIZYCZNA POLAKÓW W ŚWIETLE BADAŃ OPINII PUBLICZNEJ

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B. Data collection/entry  
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Summary

**Background.** The article aims to make a comparative analysis of the physical activity of Poles in the last fifty years in the light of public opinion polls carried out in the years 1960-2016 by the Centres for Public Opinion Research in Poland – CBOS and OBOP. Before the study was conducted, the following questions were formulated: Do Poles do sports or get involved in other activities demanding physical effort? What motivates them? What sports skills do they possess? What is their attitude towards the persons visiting the gym? Finally, have their PA changed in the researched period, and to what extent? In the analysis, the criteria of sex, age, education and material status were considered.

**Material and methods.** The following research methods were applied: a quantitative content analysis of secondary data, a qualitative content analysis, as well as comparative and analytical-descriptive methods.

**Results.** In the analysed period, the number of Poles regularly practising sports grew by 33.5% (from 6.5% in 1960 to 40% in 2013). The percentage of those who do not follow any activity comprises a third of adult Poles (34%); however, their number was twice lower in the year 2013 compared to the year 1960 (66%).

**Conclusions.** Before conducting the research, it was assumed that, despite popular opinion and the one presented in the media concerning the low physical activity in the society, the number of Poles taking up physical activity has decidedly risen in the last half-century. Having analysed the opinion polls data, it can be stated that the hypothesis was confirmed.

**Keywords:** physical activity, Poland, public opinion polls

Streszczenie

**Wprowadzenie.** Celem artykułu była analiza porównawcza aktywności fizycznej Polaków w ostatnim półwieczu - w świetle badań opinii publicznej, przeprowadzonych przez CBOS oraz OBOP w latach 1960-2016. Na wstępie procesu badawczego sformułowano następujące pytania: Czy Polacy uprawiali/ją jakiś sport bądź inne zajęcia lub ćwiczenia wymagające aktywności fizycznej? Jakimi kierują się motywacjami? Jakie posiadają umiejętności sportowe? Jaki jest ich stosunek do osób odwiedzających siłownie oraz czy i w jakim zakresie zmieniła się aktywność fizyczna Polaków w badanym okresie? Podczas analiz uwzględniono kryterium płci, wieku, wykształcenia oraz sytuacji materialnej.

**Materiał i metody.** Zastosowano wtórną ilościową analizę zawartości, jakościową analizę treści, metodę porównawczą oraz analityczno-opisową.

**Wyniki.** W analizowanym okresie o 33.5% wzrosła liczba Polaków regularnie uprawiających sport (1960: 6.5%, 2013: 40%). Chociaż odsetek osób pasywnych ruchowo obejmuje jedną trzecią dorosłych Polaków (34%) to w 2013 roku był on prawie dwukrotnie niższy niż w roku 1960 (66%).

**Wnioski.** W procesie badawczym przyjęto tezę, iż w ostatnim półwieczu - wbrew potocznym opiniom i sądom prezentowanym w mediach na temat niskiej aktywności ruchowej społeczeństwa - zdecydowanie wzrosła liczba Polaków podejmujących aktywność fizyczną. Teza została potwierdzona. Poświadczą to badania opinii publicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** aktywność fizyczna, Polska, opinia publiczna

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## Introduction

Because physical activity, alongside good health, is considered a condition for gaining primary social and professional competences, a means to achieve a better life quality of life or even a determinant of one's social status in a consumer society [1], there appears a question how the concept itself is understood. According to Barbara Kopff, PA is any bodily movement made by any skeletal muscles, associated with the energy expenditure that exceeds the resting energy expenditure. According to this definition, it may include all forms of physical exercise, i.e. recreational activity, sports, job-related activity, running a household and travelling (transportation), also on short distances - to work, school, or to do shopping [2]. The literature on the subject distinguishes several domains. These include professional sports; housework on house maintenance; transportation; recreation, sport and leisure-time PA [3]. In the following publication, physical activity of individuals is understood primarily as recreation undertaken in leisure time. Numerous studies on its connections with health show that in the present-day civilisation, apart from regular sleep and rest as well as a proper diet, systematic involvement in some form of activity has become an integral part of life. It is a way of life, a lifestyle to follow.

Thorstein Veblen defines lifestyle as spiritual attitudes prevailing at a given time or the dominant concept of life [4]. On the other hand, Leon Dyczewski sees it as a specific set of needs, values, strivings, preferences and behaviours typical of some social group or individuals that make them distinct from others [5]. Accordingly, lifestyle is "a way of being" that distinguishes a given community or individuals from others. It is noticeable in everyday behaviours; that is, repeated patterns that form more definite ones. Also, Andrzej Siciński describes a lifestyle in a similar way. In his understanding, it consists of behaviours, varied in their scope and form, motivations of these behaviours, as well as the functions their results, goals or instruments of these behaviours, which due to their interconnections are also meaningful [6]. All the above-mentioned definitions underline the significance of "power" that enables distinguishing communities or individuals from one another. Accordingly, it can be assumed that successive generations of Poles, due to different socio-cultural experiences, as well as the political and economic situation, exhibit a different or slightly different attitude to PA, as one of many elements of lifestyle. The recent years have brought many changes in the Poles' way of life, but are they visible in the respondents' activity? The following questions can be asked: are the prevalent opinions and those disseminated by the media about low physical activity reflected in public opinion polls? Are they just popular observations, somewhat or utterly unjustified according to the surveys?

## Material and methods

The aim of the present article was a comparative analysis of the physical activity of Poles in the last fifty years, as indicated by public opinion polls carried out in the years 1960-2016 by the Public Opinion Research Centres in Poland, i.e. CBOS and OBOP. To come forward with justifiable findings, the following research methods were applied: a quantitative content analysis of secondary data, a qualitative content analysis, as well as comparative and analytical-descriptive methods.

At the beginning of the research the following questions were formulated:

- Do Poles practice any sport or other activities or exercises that require physical effort?
- What sports skills have they mastered?
- What is Poles' attitude to the people going to gyms and sports clubs?
- Whether and, to what extent, has the physical activity of Poles changed in the last 50 years?

Observing the growing number of participants in marathons, rallies, seeing more and more traffic on bicycle paths, or a great interest in skiing, swimming, football and other sports disciplines, one can assume that, contrary to popular opinions often conveyed by mass media about low motor activity of Poles, the percentage of those who are physically active in the society is systematically rising.

To answer the research problem, the analysis of the reports for the years 1960-2016 in the Public Opinion Research Centres archives (CBOS and OBOP) was made. The research process was divided into three stages, namely:

- Stage 1: A quantitative content analysis of the secondary data included in CBOS and OBOP reports. At this point, the primary focus was to search the archives for any report that would contain in their titles the word/keyword "activity". Then, a thorough quantitative content analysis of the reports' secondary data was carried out, and the range of the command words has been extended to include such items as "physical activity" and "sport".
- Stage 2: Qualitative and comparative analyses of the content of the reports was made to find any people's declarations and opinions on the physical activity of Poles.
- Stage 3: Discussion and conclusions indicated whether and to what extent the physical activity of Poles has changed in the last fifty years.

The publication presents comparative analyses of the declared physical activity of Poles in the last half-century, taking into account the criteria of gender, age, education and financial status.

## Results

### A quantitative content analysis of the secondary data of the CBOS and OBOP reports

By applying a quantitative content analysis of the secondary data of the CBOS and OBOP reports, the research material was collected. As indicated, the above-mentioned searches were conducted in the archives by entering the following configuration mode commands:

1. "activity",
2. "physical activity",
3. "sport".

The detailed data are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Data in the CBOS and OBOP reports for years 1960-2016

Command words and keywords	CBOS Reports	OBOP Reports	Total
<b>Activity</b>	159	54	213
Including reports containing any content on the research problem	<b>4</b> [7,8,9,10]	<b>3</b> [11,12,13]	<b>7</b>
<b>Physical Activity</b>	<b>4 (4*)</b> <b>0</b>	<b>2 (1*) 1</b> [12,14]	<b>6 (5*)</b> <b>1</b>
Including reports containing any content on the research problem	<b>4 (4*) 0</b> [7,8,9,10]	<b>1 (1*) 0</b> [12]	<b>5 (5*)</b> <b>0</b>
<b>Sport</b>	39	94	133
Including reports containing any content on the research problem	<b>9 (2*) 7</b> [9,10, 15,16, 17,18,19,20,21]	<b>11 (1*) 10</b> [12,22,23,24,25,26, 25,28,29,30,31]	<b>20 (5*)</b> <b>17</b>

Source: own study: Data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [32, 33, 34, 35].

\*The data have been indicated in another field of the table

The results of the complete quantitative content analysis of the secondary data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** CBOS and OBOP reports for years 1960-2016

Command words / keywords	CBOS	OBOP	Total
Stage 1: Command: Activity	4	3	7
Stage 2: Commands:			
Physical activity	0	0	0
Sport	7	10	17
Total	11	13	24

Source: own study

As shown in Table 2, the research material contained altogether 24 reports, including 11 surveys conducted by CBOS and 13 reports by OBOP. Such rich source material on the issue may indicate that the research centres held an interest in the problem of physical activity of Poles as well as point to its rank and significance in the life of the individuals and the society.

### Qualitative and comparative analysis of the content of reports

The primary purpose of the qualitative study of the content of CBOS and OBOP reports was to try to answer the following research questions: do Poles practise any sport or other activities or exercises requiring physical effort? What are their motivations? What sports skills do they have? What is their attitude towards people attending gyms and sports clubs, and whether and to what extent has the physical activity of Poles changed in the last 50 years?

As stated above, a secondary quantitative analysis of the content was applied, which indicates that the author did not conduct the research herself but based on the results of surveys carried out by the CBOS and OBOP. This method may imply some incompleteness and patchiness of the data despite numerous possibilities that any comparative analysis of the material gathered at various time intervals may offer.

### Poles' opinions on physical activity

Having the research problem in mind, a fundamental question concerned the physical activity of Poles. Do they do any sport or exercises related to the physical effort? Seeking answers to the above question, 24 surveys conducted by the CBOS and OBOP were analysed. Table 3 presents all the data that were recorded in the studies.

**Table 3.** Do you do any sport or other activity or exercise that requires physical effort?

Year	Yes, regularly	Yes, quite often	Yes, rarely	Not at all	No data
1960	6.5	10.2	16.1	63	4.2
1974	6	12	4	78	-
1997 OBOP	20	39	-	41	-
1997 CBOS	7	7	12	73	1
2000	20	12	16	42/52	-
2001	33	12	16	39	-
2002	9	14	18	59	-
I 2003	9	12	21	58	-
VIII 2003	1	14	21	53	-
2009	13	13	20	54	-
2013	40	-	26	34	-

Source: own study: Data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 29].

The research has shown that the number of Poles regularly engaging in physical activity has changed dramatically in the last fifty years (1960-2013). An increase of 33.5% has been noted (from 6.5% in 1960 to 40% in 2013). However, the percentage of the respondents exercising quite often remained unchanged. It ranges from 10.2 to 14%. The respondents' declarations show that, since 1974, the number of people practising sport or other activities sporadically, or doing activities or exercises to maintain or improve physical fitness has been systematically increasing. An increase of 10% in this category has been noted, i.e. from 16.1% in 1960 to 26% in 2013. However, every fifth respondent cares about their physical condition sporadically, only when having more time or being motivated. As for the obtained declarations, it appears that more than half of Poles did not do any sport or did not exercise at all in the years 1960 - 2009.

The percentage of passive individuals who do not undertake physical activity in any form is still high. Being inactive concerns only one-third of adult Poles (34%) and, as for 2013, the number was almost twice lower than in 1960, when 66% declared that they did not do any sports or exercise (in 1974 three-fourths of the respondents, i.e. 74%). The comparable data recorded for the year 1997 indicate that the number of inactive citizens stood at 73%. It should be noted though that the change concerns primarily those who got involved in a regular physical activity and, to a lesser extent, those who would engage in sports sporadically.

The analysed reports on Poles' involvement in sports may indicate that it is men who engage in physical activity more often than women. These differences are not significant as they range from 5% in 2009 and 2014 to 9% in the year 1997. The detailed data are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Gender and physical activity (affirmative respondents' answers)

Have you done any sport or other activity requiring physical effort in the last year?	Woman	Man
1974	-	-
1991	-	-
1997	23	32
2000	-	-
2009	43	48
2013	63	69
2014 (winter sports)	5	10

Source: own study: Data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [10, 12, 19, 31].

As for stereotypes, physical activity is claimed to be the domain of young people. Thus, the next aspect of the research was to find out whether the results of the available surveys confirm this opinion. Due to the various age ranges covered by the OBOP and CBOS studies, the results were reported separately.

**Table 5.** Age and physical activity (positive answers)

OBOP	15- 19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and over 60 years old
1974	-	-	-	-	-	-
1997	71	37	30	22	20	7
2000	-	-	-	-	-	-

CBOS	-	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 over 65 years old
1974	-	44	43	12	11	5	-
2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2003	-	74	-	-	-	-	16
2009	-	81	62	43	40	32	21
2013	-	95	81	75	60	56	35

Source: own study: Data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [10, 12, 17, 19, 22].

Table 5 shows that the physical activity of the examined persons decreases with age in all the studied periods. In the group of the youngest respondents (CBOS: 18-24; OBOP: 15-19), after the year 1997 sports were done by a vast majority of Poles, i.e. in 1974 – by 44%, 1997 – by 71%, 2003 – by 74%, 2009 – by 81% and in 2013 – by 95% respectively. The analysis of the data leads to the conclusion that PA increased twofold in the considered period. This may arouse surprise in the light of popularly held opinions on the youth's passivity and excessive involvement in mass culture and social media.

Further, the share of those who admit that they do not follow any physical activity tends to increase with the age of the respondents. In following subgroups, fewer and fewer are physically active and their numbers lower with age. Among the respondents in the 25 to 34 age group, those physically active in 1974 amounted to around 43%, while in seniors – to only 5%. Comparable trends are visible in the subsequent years and age groups. The most significant difference between the numbers who declare activity regarding physical activity in the youngest and the oldest respondents is noticeable in the year 1997. It falls within 64 percent, slightly less, i.e. 60% was recorded in 2009 and 2013. However, the smallest difference is visible in 1974 (only 39%). It should be emphasised that the question concerned all forms of physical activity that would improve physical fitness, including rehabilitation exercises. Bearing in mind the positive impact of PA on the functioning of the body in old age and the phenomenon of the so-called positive ageing, the above data may be of some concern. Physical effort delays the processes of dementia, and the course of Alzheimer's disease increases the subjective assessment of own health, provides a better frame of mind and allows for improvement in physical and psychological health [1].

The dependencies between the respondents' age and declared physical activity indicate that the respondents' PA decisively decreases with age, although, what should be emphasised as well, starting from the year 1974, the number of Poles undertaking some activity is systematically rising in all groups. An increase of 38% is visible in the 25-34 age group, 49% – in the 45-54 year-olds, 51% – in the 18-24 and 55-64 groups, and 63% – in those who are aged 35-44.

Besides, it is also worth noting that the critical moment in the 21st century in this systematically progressive process of turning away from PA was the generation aged between 25 and 34. At this age category, the percentage of those who would follow some fitness exercise dropped almost by half. One can assume that doing sports at that time was the domain of, above all, young people who were still at schools. Later on, the activity would reduce due to age, taking up professional work and a definite change of one's lifestyle [17]. Slightly different trends are noticeable after the year 2009. Namely, a six-fold increase in fitness activity of people aged 35-44 was visible. Accordingly, over the last fifty years, this ratio increased from 12% in 1974 to 75% in 2013.

The number of people practising sport regularly increases with the level of education. In addition to taking physical activity, one's position in the professional world, as well as higher income, also play their role. The detailed data are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Education and physical activity (positive answers)

Year	Primary education	Vocational education	Secondary education	Tertiary education
1997	13	20	38	54
2003	28	-	-	53
2009	27	-	-	78
2013	42	59	73	88

Source: own study: Data in the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [10, 12, 16, 17, 19].

The patchy and incomplete data make it impossible to formulate any definite conclusions. However, Table 6 shows that people with higher education were the most physically active in the analysed period. More than half of them (54%) in 1997 and 88% in 2013 reported being involved in motor activity. Among the respondents with primary education, 58% did not do any sports. Gymnastics and sports activities were popular mainly in those professional and social groups whose work and lifestyle did not involve any significant physical effort.

It should be emphasised that during the considered period, in all the groups distinguished by education level, there is a systematic increase of approximately 30% in the number of those taking up physical activity. The highest growth was recorded among the respondents with vocational education (39%), while the lowest in those with primary education (29%). The comparable data were for the other two groups were 35% for the respondents with secondary education and 34% – tertiary.

The results lead to other questions, namely what effect the material status had on the Poles' PA and whether the respondents compensated for the absence of motor activity by passive interest in sports. The detailed data are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Material status and interest in sport and physical activity (positive answers)

Year	Good		Average		Low		Very Low	
	I	PA	I	PA	I	PA	I	PA
1996	55/68	-	48/64	-	44/60	-	38/60	-
1997	58	50	-	26	-	16	-	9
2000	49/72	-	42/64	-	29/54	-	-	-
2003	-	-	-	-	-	34	-	-
2009	-	70	-	-	-	32	-	-
2013	-	77	-	61	-	44	-	-

(I - interest in a sport, PA - physical activity)

Source: own study: Data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [10, 12, 19, 26, 28, 29, 31].

Table 7 indicates that, among the respondents assessing their material status as good, 50% in 1997, 30% in 2009 and 23% in 2013 did not do any sport. Although the ratio of physically inactive people seems high, the downward trend recorded in the recent years is optimistic. However, the numbers of those who do not take any PA in the groups with the lowest incomes are at least two times higher (except for the year 1997), i.e. 75% in 1997, 66% in 2003, 68% in 2009 and 54% in 2013). The above data may lead to the conclusion that the better the financial status of the respondents, the more involvement in physical activity and interest in sports. People with the lowest incomes show less interest in sport and doing it. It should be emphasised that in all groups tested in the analysed period - distinguished by the financial income, there is an increase in the number of those who get involved in physical activity, with the same or a slightly downward interest in sports.

To sum up, it might be noted that physical activity and care for fitness are, to a large extent, an element of lifestyle mostly for those who are well educated and represent the more affluent socio-occupational groups. Accordingly, the fittest are students and the so-called intelligentsia as well as managerial staff aged 35-44.

### Declared motives for physical activity

The analyses show that two-thirds of the surveyed Poles (66%) in 2013 (the last year with available data on the issue) did some sport or physical exercise in the previous year. Among these, 40% got involved in physical activity regularly, while 26% sporadically. Given the above data, another question arises, namely motivated people to do sports.

The analysis of the available OBOP and CBOS sources does not provide a full answer. The problem of "motivation" was examined only once by the CBOS in the survey "Physical activity of Poles. Communication BS

/ 129/2013" [10]. The obtained data indicate that Poles take up physical effort mainly for health reasons (70%) and slightly fewer for pleasure (61%). Almost half of the respondents (47%) do sports to relieve stress, improve well-being and become fit. Also, for every third Pole (34%), PA is primarily a way of spending time together with family, friends or friends. Every fourth respondent (24%) shows interest in a slim figure. It is women more often than men who declare that they play sports to improve their appearance (28% vs. 19%), for better well-being, to relieve stress (51% vs 44%), and slightly more for health reasons (72% vs. 68%). Men, on the other hand, are more likely to take up sports activities for pleasure (63% against 59%). Further, it should be noted that physical exercise is more often a way to relieve stress and improve well-being for those with higher education than for representatives of other socio-demographic groups.

It is worth noting that motivations of people following particular sports disciplines are different. Cycling, gymnastics, running, fitness, swimming are primarily done for health. As for the gym, it is most often chosen for beauty and health reasons. Finally, to get pleasure, Poles dance, do winter sports, football, hiking and volleyball. It should be noted that the last provided choice is also treated as a way to spend time together with the loved ones. The detailed data are provided in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Declared reasons for taking up physical activity

<b>For what reasons did you primarily practice this sport / these sports?</b>									
<b>Please indicate no more than two reasons</b>									
<b>In percentage</b>									
	<b>For health</b>	<b>To look good and have an attractive figure</b>	<b>To feel better, relieve stress and be fit</b>	<b>To spend leisure time with friends and family</b>	<b>For pleasure, because I like it</b>	<b>One should do some sport these days</b>	<b>It is a necessity, a means of transport (bicycle), a part of school curriculum (PE)</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Difficult to say</b>
Cycling	53	9	28	14	44	1	16	2	1
Swimming	61	12	33	19	38	0	0	2	0
Running jogging	69	22	43	9	23	0	1	0	1
Walking	40	2	24	38	53	1	0	0	0
Playing football	40	4	20	37	53	1	5	0	0
Playing volleyball	34	6	19	40	48	1	3	3	0
Gymnastics fitness, aerobics	58	38	34	10	25	0	1	0	1
Winter sports (skiing, skating), snowboard)	31	0	37	36	51	0	1	1	0
Working out in the gym, bodybuilding	55	56	19	5	19	1	2	3	0
Dance	19	10	28	28	70	0	3	1	1

The shares in lines do not add up to 100, because the respondents could choose only two options.

The table contains the most important sports, done by at least 10% of the respondents. Source: CBOS 2013 [10].

As the analysis shows, cycling is the most often taken up activity (16%); followed and running (43%) done for health and better well-being (69%). Bodybuilding and gym exercises are regarded as forms of recreation, done to look good (56%). Further, dance is chosen for pleasure (70%), whereas volleyball is favoured by 40% of the respondents who treat it as a form of spending time together with family and friends. Last but not least are football (37%) and winter sports (36%), which are slightly less frequently [10].

## Sports skills of Poles

For adult Poles, the most valued aspect of being physically active is health [36, 37]. Practical ways of taking care of own health, in addition to regular sleep, rest and proper diet, include some systematic forms of physical activity, which is conditioned by one's skills. Consequently, the next raised facet of the PA issue is the sports skills exhibited by Poles. The detailed data are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Poles and their sport skills

Sports skills. Can you:	1994	2003	2013
cycle	93	94	97
dance:			
waltz	70	-	-
disco	48	-	-
rock and roll	44	-	-
swim	57	58	64
skate	-	45	51
ride a horse	26	-	-
ski	-	23	30
sail	13	-	-

Source: own study: The data of the CBOS and OBOP reports for the years 1960-2016 [10, 24, 16, 17].

The most common sporting ability among Poles is riding a bike. In all the analysed periods, it was pointed to by over 90% of the respondents, and this index is still growing. About 70% of the respondents can dance the waltz, less than half can dance disco or rock and roll. The swimming skill scores less. In 2013, the vast majority of the respondents (64%) claimed that they could swim (an increase of 7% compared to 1994). Half of the adult inhabitants of Poland can also skate (in 2003 – 45%, and in 2013 – 51%). Relatively fewer Poles have mastered skiing, i.e. in 2003 – 23% admitted doing that, whereas in 2013 – 30%. As for horse riding, 26% of the respondents would do that in 1994.

## Respondents' opinions on people spending leisure time in the gym

What should also be emphasised is that the attitude of Poles towards those going to gyms and sports clubs has changed significantly over the last few years. Not so long ago, i.e. in 2003, the majority of the respondents were inclined to think that those who spend time in the gym focus too much on their appearance, ruin their own health with exhausting exercises and are at risk of bigorexia. In 2009, the proportions reversed; the dominant claims were that people exercising at the gym lead a healthy lifestyle, whose aim was to maintain or improve their physical fitness (table 10).

**Table 10.** Respondents' opinions on people spending leisure time in the gym

People spending their free time in the gym mostly:	Lead a healthy lifestyle by exercising	Ruin their health through strenuous exercises	Difficult to say
2003	38%	48%	14%
2009	47%	39%	14%

Source: own study based on [19].

Gyms are frequented mainly by men (36%), although every fourth woman (23%) would go there as well. In the youngest age group of the respondents (18-24), 70% would spend their leisure time there, those aged 25-34 would also take advantage of their services (over half of the respondents – 54%), whereas the older ones (35-44 years) less frequently (25%). This form of activity appealed to people with higher and secondary education (57% and 36% respectively). Gyms are very popular in the better-off Poles (with an income above PLN 1,500 per person in a family). Every second respondent in this group (50%) would visit a gym at least once. However, among those earning less than the national average, the same could be said about one in five Poles (21% -22%) [19].



## Discussion and conclusions

Starting the research process, we assumed that in the last 50 years the number of Poles getting involved in physical activity has increased. A qualitative content analysis of the secondary data of 24 CBOS and OBOP surveys, selected through the secondary quantitative content analysis, confirmed the initial hypothesis. The comparative studies showed that in the last half century (1960-2013), the number of those who took up PA regularly increased, i.e. from 6.5% in 1960 to 40% in 2013; that is by 33.5%. The obtained data may also indicate that more than half of adult Poles did not do any sport or even made any physical effort in the years 1960-2009. The percentage of passive respondents is still high; it includes one-third of adult Poles (34%). However, it should be stressed that the number of those inactive in 2013 was almost twice lower than in 1960 (63%). In 2013, the majority of adult Poles (66%) took up some form of PA. Two-fifths of the respondents (40%) did it systematically (once a week and more often), while every fourth (26%) sporadically. Slightly different data are shown by the Eurobarometer report from 2013, which states that 52% of Poles avoided physical activity, whereas only 8% would do it systematically. However, the respondents would declare being involved in some other activity related to walking or cycling, as well as working at home or garden – 61% of the polled Poles would do that regularly or at least once a week [3, 38]. Thus, it can be assumed that the discrepancy between the data collected in the CBOS and OBOP surveys and the Eurobarometer findings results from a different methodology, i.e. a joint study of physical and recreational activity in the latter case. Analogical trends are indicated by the authors of the report by the Central Statistical Office which state that, although the level of total physical activity of Poles is not low, the level of recreational activity in the Polish society is below the average of the European Union countries [3, 39].

In each analysed period, women are more likely to admit that they do not engage in sports or physical exercise. These differences range from 5 to 9% (2009, 2014 and 1997 respectively). This result should not surprise. The comparison of statistical data from the Eurobarometer, the Central Statistical Office and other studies allow for concluding that physical activity is more often taken up by men than women [3, 38, 39].

While analysing the relationships between the age of the surveyed Poles and the physical activity they engage in, it should be noted that it is not surprising that their physical activity declines significantly with age. It is confirmed, among others, by the General Statistical Office (GUS) and Eurobarometer [38, 39]. Although sport is young people's domain, after they finish their education, their physical activity decreases as well. What was most striking though was that, since 1974, the number of Poles getting involved in motor activity has been systematically rising in all age groups, (an increase of 38% in the 25-34 age group; 49% in 45-54 year-olds; 51% in 18-24 and 55-64 year-olds; and 63% in the group 35-44 years). Additionally, there was a change in the age categories withdrawing from PA. In the early 21st century, it was visible mainly the period between 25-34 and 35-44 years (in 1974 – a drop from 43% to 12%). After 2009, there were minimal downward trends in the above-mentioned age groups. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasise the six-fold increase of PA in Poles aged 35-44 (from 12% in 1974 to 75% in 2013). It is this age group which records the greatest decrease in PA in the previous studies (before 2000). Eurobarometer [38] did not document this trend.

Furthermore, it is confirmed by the CSO and Eurobarometer [38, 39] that the most active persons in the analysed period were those with higher education (an increase from 54% in 1997 to 88% in 2013), while the most passive were primary school graduates (an increase from 13% in 1997 to 42% in 2013). The difference in percentage between the two groups is high as it reaches 46%. Thus, it may be concluded that the number of regular exercisers increases with the level of education. At the same time, it should be noted that there is a systematic increase in the active numbers of all surveyed participants representing different levels of education. The highest growth was observed in the persons with vocational education (39%), while the lowest in the respondents who finished a primary school (29%). Comparable data were gathered for the other two groups as well (with secondary education – 35%, and higher – 34%).

In addition, doing sports is correlated with high income. The above conclusion is confirmed both by the collected data (although patchy) and other available studies [3, 38, 39]. The respondents' material status determines their physical activity as well as the level of interest in sports. In turn, in those who do not do well, the number of persons making physical effort decreases proportionally with the assessment of own financial condition. In contrast, the respondents with the lowest income show less interest in sports as well as in sporting activities. At the same time, it should be emphasised that there is an increase in the number of people involved in physical activity in all the tested groups of respondents classified according to their financial situation, although the degree of interest in sport maintains at a similar level, with a slight downward trend.

Seeking answers to what causes and determines physical activity, it should be noted that no unambiguous answer can be given. The respondents' motivation depends on gender, education, material status and sports discipline. The analysed data show that the respondents would point to the following arguments: "for health

reasons" (70%), "for pleasure, I just like it" (61%), "for better well-being, to relieve stress, be in good shape" (47%), "this is a way of spending time with friends, family, friends" (34%) and finally "to look good, have a nice figure" (24%).

The data compiled by Eurobarometer statistics [38], the Central Statistical Office (SCO) [39] and other research [3] allow for stating that the most often quoted reason for taking up physical activity by Poles is the desire to improve health. The respondents are slightly less motivated by the desire to improve their physical condition. Besides, they are often guided by pleasure and a popular motif.

The most popular sporting skill of Poles is cycling (over 90% of the respondents). Other popular skills include dancing (70%), swimming (64%) and ice skating (51%). Relatively fewer Poles mastered skiing (30%) and horse riding (26% in 1994). However, according to the GUS data, cycling and swimming are the most popular skills [39].

Finally, Poles' attitude towards gym visitors has changed dramatically in the last decade. Since 2009, the majority of respondents would indicate that people exercising in the gym (which concerns mainly men) lead a healthy lifestyle, and their aim is not a focus on their appearance but maintaining or improving their physical fitness. Apart from the analysis of the motivation of those going to gyms, it is worth noting that more and more often health reasons are not mentioned when discussing physical activity. New arguments appear, i.e. taking care of one's appearance, slim figure and aesthetic body. The consequence of this trend, as well as the commercialisation of sport, is that PA significance is reduced as it is being treated as a fashionable element of lifestyle in a consumer society [3].

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