

Physical education¹ in Poland in 2020

15.07.2021


14.3%

Decrease in the number of people exercising in sports clubs compared to 2018

In 2020, there were 14,245 sports clubs² and 67 Polish sports associations operating in Poland. Compared to 2018, the number of sports clubs decreased by over 2,000. Compared to the previous year, the number of registered coaches and Polish representatives increased while the number of instructors and sports judges remained at a similar level.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from mid-March 2020 a complete prohibition in engaging in activities related to sports, entertainment and recreation (included in PKD 2007, section 93) was introduced, in particular involving, among others, on operating sport meeting places, clubs, swimming pools, gyms, fitness clubs. In the summer months, easing of restrictions was introduced, and thus this increased the possibility of activity of entities related to sports and easier access to sports facilities. The autumn increase in COVID-19 cases resulted in the introduction of further restrictions, e.g. sports facilities were closed again, excluding those that operated for people practicing sports as part of sports competitions, sports classes or sports events, and for students and students as part of classes at the university or at school. At the end of December 2020, the regulations were tightened again (e.g. the facilities could only be made available to members of the national team of Polish sports associations). Restrictions in running a business activity and in universal access to sports facilities contributed to the decline in the activity of sports clubs and physical culture organizations.

In 2020, due to the pandemic, most major sporting events, both national and international, were canceled or postponed to another year, including the Tokyo Summer Olympics and the European Football Championships.

Sports clubs

The highest number of sports clubs operated in the following voivodships: Śląskie (11.5%), Mazowieckie (10.2%), Wielkopolskie (9.9%) and Małopolskie (9.5%), while the lowest number was reported in Świętokrzyskie, Podlaskie and Lubuskie, and their share amounted to 2.0%, 2.8% and 2.9%, respectively.

In 2020, there were 1,040.9 thousand members of sports clubs, and 1,010.7 thousands of people were practising in sports activities (a decrease by 14.3% compared to 2018). As in previous years, the majority of participants were men - 74.0%. Invariably, adolescents up to 18 years of age are dominant among those exercising - 70.3%.

Compared to 2018, the number of sports clubs decreased by 13.2%

¹ The source of the data used in the release are the results of survey conducted by the Statistics Poland on sports clubs (implemented every two years), Polish sports associations and physical culture organizations (implemented every year).

² The 2020 data on sports clubs was compiled using a direct estimation taking into account imputations for units that refused to participate in the survey. In order to compare the results, the data for 2018 were recalculated taking into account the above-mentioned methods and will differ from those published in earlier studies.

The decrease in the number of sports clubs took place in each of the sports divisions surveyed. In the structure of sports clubs, student sports clubs had the highest share - 33.9%. However, their number decreased by 22.3% compared to 2018. The number of sports clubs belonging to the "Rural Sports Teams" Association decreased by 18.6%, and their share in the total number of clubs amounted to 16.1%. Sports clubs that did not declare membership to any sports division accounted for 48.9%, and their number decreased by 2.5%.

Table 1. Basic information on sports clubs

SPECIFICATION	2018	2020	
	In absolute numbers		2018=100
Sports clubs	16414	14245	86,8
Members (in thousand)	1169	1041	89,0
Persons practising sports ((in thousand)	1180	1011	85,7
of which:			
females	304	262	86,3
aged up to 18	838	710	84,7
Coaching staff	62268	55396	89,0
coaches	31187	30945	99,2
instructors	22126	17383	78,6
Other persons running sports classes	8955	7068	78,9

Invariably, the most popular among the participants was football (excluding beach and indoor soccer), which was played by 37.5% of the participants. Compared to 2018, however, the number of people practicing this sport decreased by 15.6%. Sport shooting took second place and was practiced by 6.5% of people. In 2018, this place was taken by volleyball, which in 2020 came in third place (5.9% of participants). The number of persons practising sport shooting increased by 48% compared to 2018, while the number of persons practising volleyball decreased by 22%. The next places in terms of the number of participants were: swimming - 4.4%, karate (including traditional karate) - 4.2% and athletics - 3.7% and basketball - 3.5%.

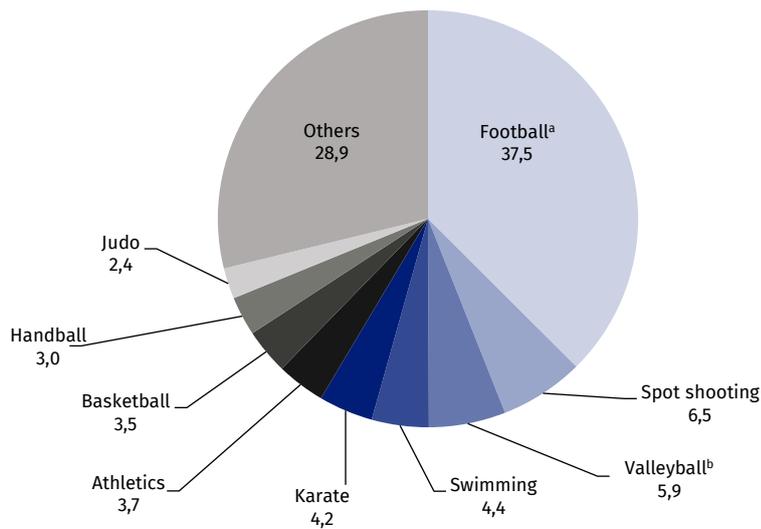
More than half of the persons were practicing in team sports. Combat sports were practiced by a total of 11.7% of people. Among them, the most popular, apart from karate, was judo. Water sports were practiced by 6.0% of people, while winter sports - by 1.3%.

In 2020, there were 55.4 thousand coaching staff employed in sports clubs (including those working voluntarily), including only 16.7% women. Coaches accounted for 55.9%, instructors - 31.4%, and other people conducting sports activities³ - 12.8%. Compared to 2018, the number of these people decreased by 11.0%. The number of instructors fell by 21.4% and the coaches remained at a similar level. The number of other people conducting sports activities decreased by 21.1%.

The number of people practicing football decreased by 15.6% compared to 2018, while the number of people practicing volleyball decreased by 22.3%

³ Persons without coach and instructor's qualifications, e.g. physical education teachers, senior players.

Chart 1. Persons practising sports in sports sections by selected kinds of sports in 2020



a Excluding indoor football and beach football. b Excluding beach volleyball.

Table 2. Sport sections and persons practising sports in sections by kinds of sports in 2020

SPECIFICATION	Sections	Persons practising sports ^a		
		total	of which	
			females	juniors ^b
TOTAL	22214	1103475	287966	765565
of which:				
Karate and traditional	670	46166	16229	36786
Cycling	452	9947	2577	6810
Basketball	893	38784	14763	33811
Athletics	1088	41164	20078	32511
Football ^c	6601	414217	23578	299589
Indoor football	331	9368	1902	5834
Handball	771	33431	14348	28754
Volleyball ^d	1930	65194	36870	54060
Swimming	649	48407	22990	45002
Sport shooting	441	71593	6855	3144
Table tennis	1001	23215	6710	15800

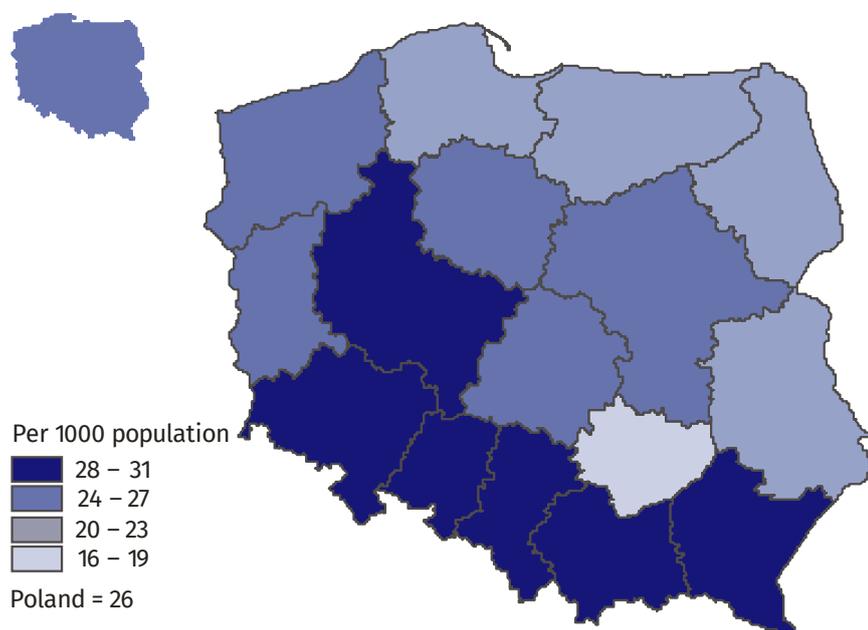
a A persons practising sport is indicated as many times as the number of sports he/she practises. b Total juniors, younger junior "cadets", sub-juniors and children. c Excluding indoor football and beach football. d Excluding beach volleyball.

The highest number of coaches and instructors worked in sports clubs in the Śląskie voivodship (13.4% and 12.3%, respectively) and in the Mazowieckie voivodship (12.7% and 12.2%), while the lowest number in the Świętokrzyskie (1.9% and 1.8%), Lubuskie (2.7% and 2.4%) and Opolskie voivodships (3.4% and 2.4%).

In 2020, for every 100 persons practising in sports in Poland, there were 5.5 members of the training staff (instructors, coaches or other people conducting sports activities). This indicator achieved the highest value in the Podlaskie voivodship - 6.6, while the lowest in the Mazowieckie voivodship - 4.9. In 2018, this ratio amounted to 5.3.

The number of persons practising in sports per 1000 population of Poland in 2020 amounted to 26. The highest value of this indicator was recorded in the following voivodships: Podkarpackie, Dolnośląskie and Opolskie (31 each), and the lowest in the Świętokrzyskie voivodship (16). Above the average (apart from the above-mentioned voivodships) were also the following voivodships: Małopolskie, Śląskie, Wielkopolskie and Zachodniopomorskie.

Map 1. Persons practising sports in sports clubs by voivodship in 2020



Polish sports associations

In 2020, a total of 67 Polish sports associations⁴ and 537 regional sports associations were active. The status of the Polish sports association was obtained by the Polish Lacrosse Federation - Polish Sports Association, while it was lost by: the Polish Ju Jitsu Association, Traditional Karate Federation of Poland, the Polish Kendo Federation, the Polish Bodybuilding, Fitness and Powerlifting Federation and the Polish Association of Sleddog Sports.

Polish sports associations selected 10.7 thousand members of the national team, of whom 37.0% were women. There were 54.2% of Poland's representatives in junior categories. Compared to 2019, the number of Polish representatives increased by 21.1%. Both the number of women (by 13.1%) and juniors (by 39.7%) have increased. On the other hand, the number of representatives who are members of foreign clubs has slightly decreased (from 304 in 2019 to 300 in 2020).

In 2020, Polish sports associations selected 10,703 members of the national team

⁴ According to the list of Polish sports associations announced by the Minister of Sport - Statement of September 22, 2020. The survey does not include the Polish Amp Football Association, which in 2020 has not yet started its activity.

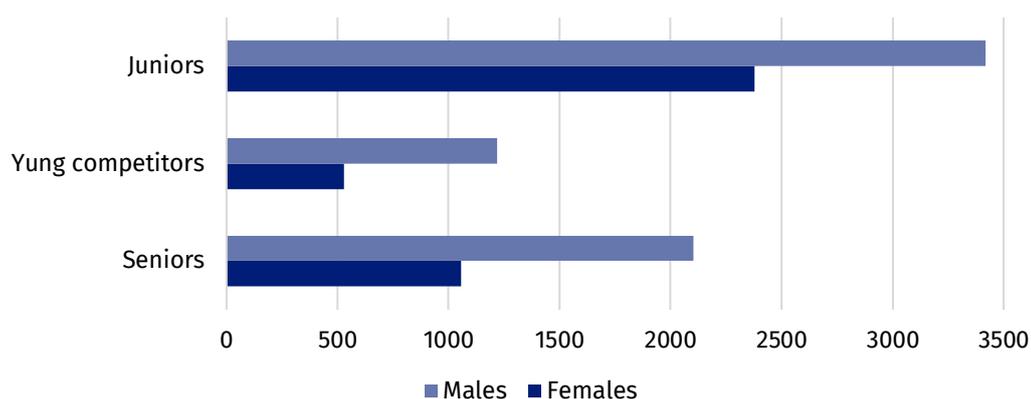
The highest number of members of the national team in 2020 was that of the Polish Karate Association (2,110 representatives), the Polish Volleyball Federation (1,628), the Polish Swimming Federation (616) and the Polish Basketball Association (462). In 2019, the most numerous team was the Polish Swimming Federation (567 representatives).

Table 3. Basic information on Polish sports associations in 2020

SPECIFICATION	Total	Of total number - women
Polish representatives	10703	3963
of which:		
juniors	5796	2378
Competitor ^a	764800	147463
of which:		
junior competitors ^b	487335	113599
Coaching staff ^c		
coaches	32913	2858
instructors	11945	2848
Judges	40413	8848
of which:		
with international class	1656	352

a Including foreign competitors performing in Poland. The competitors can be shown several times if they are licensed in several sports supervised by one sports association. b Total juniors, younger junior "cadets", sub-juniors and children. c Members of the coaching staff and judges can be shown several times if they are licensed in several sports supervised by one sports association.

Chart 2. Polish representatives in 2020



In 2020, licenses of Polish sports associations were held by 765 thousand competitors (757 thousand in 2019), of which 19.3% were women. There were 30.9% of competitors in the senior category. Competitors with licenses from the Polish Football Association dominated - 47.4%, followed by the Polish Karate Association - 7.0%, the Polish Volleyball Association - 5.8% and the Polish Sports Shooting Association - 5.3% dominated.

The number of disabled competitors with licenses in Polish sports associations in 2020 amounted to 2,532 people, of which almost 75% were men. The percentage of disabled competitors stood at 0.3% (in 2019 - 0.2%).

In 2020, foreign competitors holding licenses of the Polish sports association accounted for 0.6% of all competitors. The most popular disciplines practiced in Poland were football and squash.

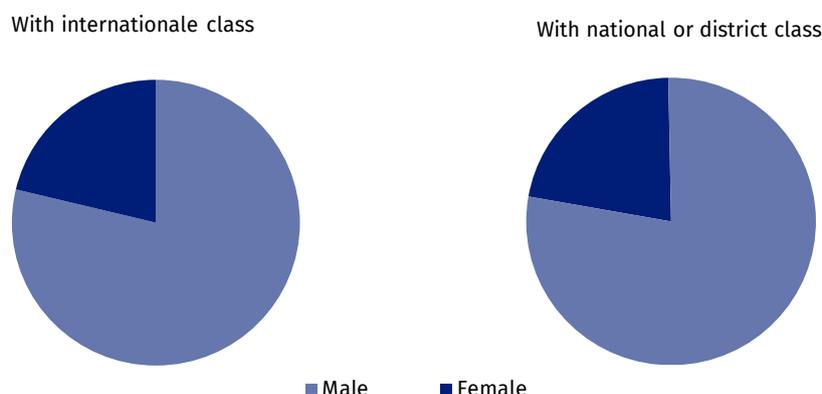
Coaching staff employed in Polish sports associations amount to 640 people. This number slightly decreased compared to 2019 (by 6 people). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the employment of medical staff (272 people in 2020, and in 2019 - 230 people).

Current licenses⁵ of Polish sports associations in 2020 were held by 32.9 thousand coaches and 11.9 thousand instructors. Compared to the previous year, the number of coaches increased by 3.6 thousand, while the number of instructors remained at the same level.

In 2020, there were 40.4 thousand sports judges⁶ registered in Polish sports associations (a decrease by 0.2% compared to 2019). Of these, 21.9% were women. The percentage of judges with international class amounted to 4.1%. The most popular type of sport - football (21.3%) - accounted for the highest number of judges. A significant group constituted judges of sport shooting (18.6%) and swimming sports (9.3%). Women as judges dominated mainly in artistic gymnastics - 100% and in synchronized swimming - 97.3%. A significant proportion of them also refereed wheelchair rugby (71.4%), cheerleading (68.4%) and equestrian (68.1%).

In 2020, the number of coaches licensed by the Polish sports association increased by approximately 12% compared to 2019, while the number of instructors remained at a similar a level

Chart 3. Sports judges by class in 2020



Medallists of the World and European Championships

In 2020, the Polish national team at the World Championships consisted of a total of 384 competitors, who won 44 medals (in 2019 - 432), of which 12 gold, 17 silver and 15 bronze medals. In 2020, the highest number of medals were won in the following competitions: powerlifting, bodybuilding and fitness (22 medals), as well as motor sport and sailing (7 medals each).

Much more competitors represented Poland at sports events of the European Championship, where the Polish team consisted of 920 people. In 2020, Poles won a total of 122 medals of the European Championships (674 in 2019), including: 29 gold, 46 silver and 47 bronze. The highest number of medals were won in the following competitions: powerlifting, bodybuilding and fitness (28 medals), cycling (17 medals) and sailing (16 medals).

Disabled athletes won a total of 20 medals of the World Championships (7 gold, 3 silver, 10 bronze) and 3 medals of the European Championship (2 gold and 1 bronze).

In 2020, Polish representatives won 166 medals of the World and European Championships and 23 medals of events of the same rank for persons with disabilities

⁵ Coaching staff members may be listed multiple times if they hold a license in several sports supervised by one sports association.

⁶ Sports judges may be counted several times if they are licensed in several sports.

Table 4. Medals won by Polish competitors in the international arena in 2020

SPECIFICATION	Medals			
	total	gold	silver	bronze
World Championships	44	12	17	15
of which juniors ^a	19	6	10	3
of which in Olympic disciplines	122	29	46	47
European Championships	69	15	30	24
of which juniors ^a	20	7	3	10
of which in Olympic disciplines	3	2	-	1

^a Total juniors and young competitors.

Physical education organizations

Organizations of physical education⁷ such as: University Sports Association, Association "Rural Sports Teams", Association for the Disabled "Start" and the Society for the Promotion of Physical Education showed in 2020 a total of 6.7 thousand organizational units (a decrease by 0.2 thousand compared to 2019), 310.3 thousand members (349.8 thousand in 2019) and 282.6 thousand persons practising in sports (319.0 thousand in 2019). The most numerous, both in terms of the number of members and people actively participating in sports, was the "Rural Sports Teams" Association (200.3 thousand members, 178.9 thousand persons practising in sports). The Society for the Promotion of Physical Education also had a large membership base (75.7 thousand members, 78.8 thousand persons practising in sports). The University Sports Association showed 32.7 thousand members and 23.7 thousand persons practising in sports. Association for the Disabled "Start", in turn - 1.6 thousand members and 1.2 thousand persons practising in sports.

The largest number of members of physical education organizations was recorded in the Zachodniopomorskie voivodship (16.2%). The largest number of people actively participating in sports was registered in the Wielkopolskie (14.0%) and Zachodniopomorskie (10.1%) voivodships.

When quoting Statistics Poland data, please provide information: "Source of data: Statistics Poland", and when publishing calculations made on data published by Statistics Poland, please provide information: "Own study based on Statistics Poland data".

⁷ The study included: in AZS - clubs, in LZS - teams, sports clubs and student sports clubs in PZSN "Start" - organizational units, in TKKF - centres and clubs.

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Terms used in official statistics

[Persons practising sports](#)

[Other person running sports classes](#)

[Sports instructor](#)

[Sports club](#)

[District sports association](#)

[Organisation of physical education](#)

[Sport department](#)

[Sports section](#)

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