

Political parties in 2020

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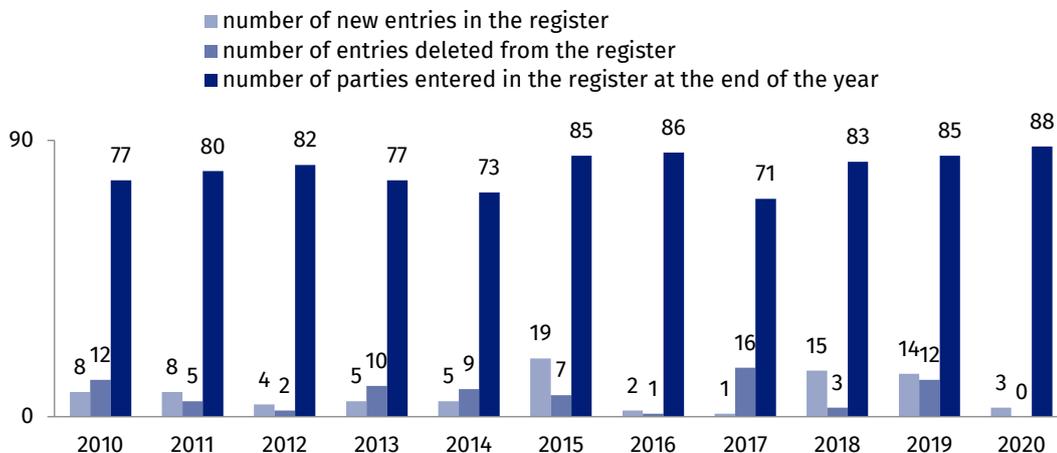
increase in the number of political parties entered into the register

At the end of 2020, 88 political parties had an entry in the register, of which 62 were active. Parties declared a total of 239.9 thousand members, and 18.0 thousand people. The party's revenues amounted to PLN 163.2 million, but only 7 parties had revenues exceeding PLN 1 million.

Number of political parties

Political parties in Poland acquire legal personality with an entry in the register of political parties kept by the District Court in Warsaw. As of December 31, 2020, 88 groupings had an entry in the register. In the years between 2010 and 2020 the average growth in the number of parties was 6 per year. The largest decrease was recorded in 2017, when the number of entries in the register decreased by 15. In turn, the largest increase in the number of groupings with entries was recorded in 2015 and 2018 (in both by 12). In 2020, the District Court in Warsaw registered 3 new political parties and did not issue any decision on deleting the entry of a party from the register.

Chart 1. Change in the number of political parties entered into the register of political parties by the District Court in Warsaw



In 2021, Statistics Poland conducted a study of political parties, during which the activity of 62 out of 88 parties entered into the register at the end of 2020 was confirmed. Further analysis concerns itself only with the groupings active in 2020.

In 2020, representatives of 17 parties participated in exercising of state authority in the parliament or in the government. Representatives of another 7 groupings sat only in local government bodies. The remaining 38 parties did not participate in the exercise of state authority at the central or local government level.

Forty of the 62 political parties had their headquarters located in the Mazowieckie voivodship and the remaining parties were located, by decreasing number, in the following voivodships: Śląskie (6), Małopolskie (4), Łódzkie and Pomorskie (2 for each.) Among Dolnośląskie,

In 2020, 62 of the 88 political parties entered into the register were active

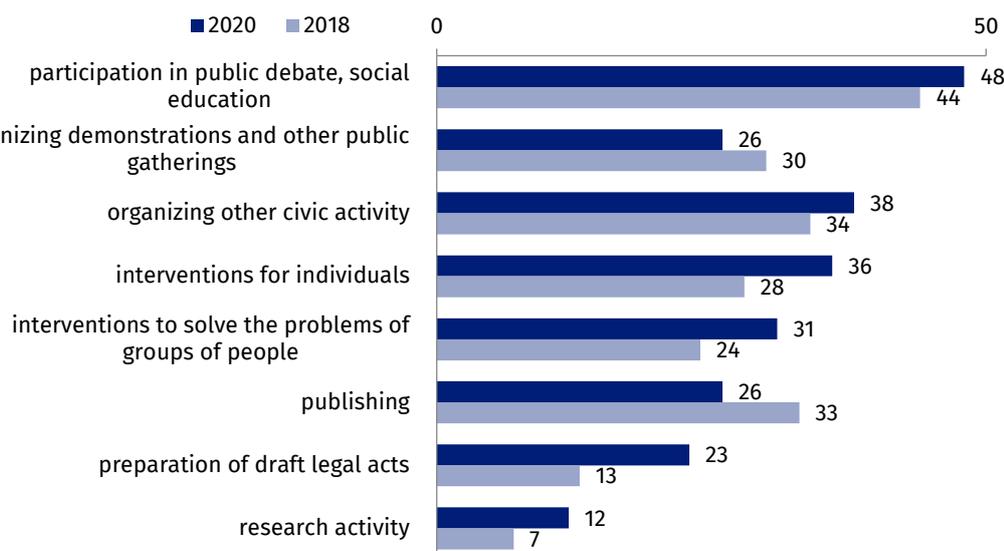
Lubelskie, Opolskie, Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodships each had 1 registered party.

Almost 2/3 of political parties had field units. In case of 19 parties, the scope of operation of the lowest field organizational unit covered gmina or a part of it, in 8 cases – both powiat and voivodship, and in 5 cases - the area beyond one voivodship. Among the groupings which had field units in 2020, the average number of the lowest-level units in operation was 170, with half of the parties having no more than 26 units.

Forms of activity

Pursuant to the Act on Political Parties, the purpose of a party's operation is to participate in public life by shaping the policy of the state or exercising state authority. These goals are achieved on the basis of the statute of a political party and may take various forms.

Chart 2. Forms of statutory activity conducted by political parties



Just like in 2018, the form of activity most frequently indicated by parties was participation in the public debate and social education. Forty eight parties declared conducting this type of political activity that consists of, among others, organizing press conferences, participating in television and radio programs, as well as conferences and seminars. Between 2018 and 2020, the number of political parties organizing demonstrations and other public gatherings decreased (from 30 to 26 parties), while the number of groupings involved in organizing other forms of civic activity increased (from 34 to 38 parties). Among their activities, numerous parties undertook interventions, both for the benefit of individuals and for the purpose of solving problems of specific groups (36 and 31, respectively). Less than half of the surveyed political parties (i.e. 26) were involved in the publication of substantive materials and publishing activities aimed at popularizing their goals and actions in the public space.

In 2020, 23 political parties involved themselves in the preparation of draft legal acts (10 more than in 2018). On the other hand, the least frequently undertaken form of activity was research – it was declared by 12 political parties.

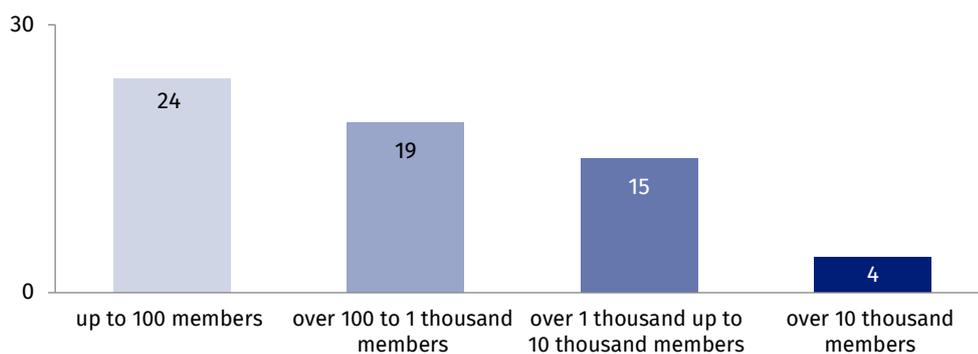
Membership base

In 2020, active political parties reported a total of 239.9 thousand members, i.e. 0.7% less than in 2018. Although they constituted only ¼ of active parties, the groupings with representatives in parliament had the highest number of members - they gathered 92.3% of all members. Those belonging to parties represented only in local government authorities accounted for 3.7% of the membership base, and for parties that did not exercise authority - 4.0%.

The average political party had 3.9 thousand members in 2020, i.e. by 0.2 thousand less than in 2018. At the same time, half of the parties had no more than 0.2 thousand members, which means a decrease of the median by 0.1 thousand members as compared to 2018.

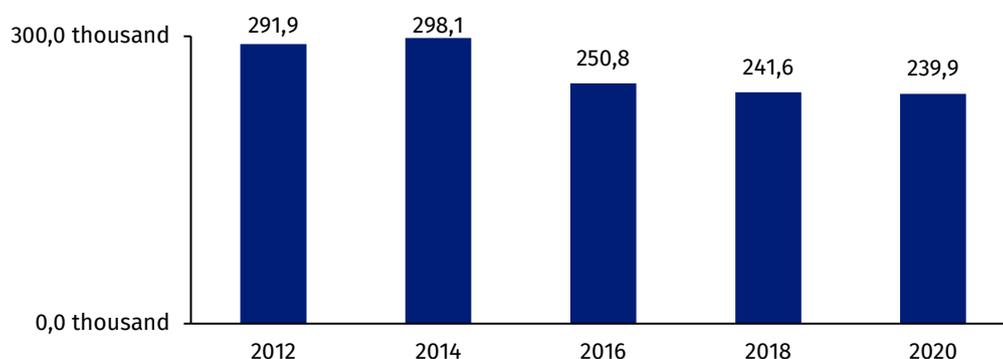
In 2020, political parties had a total of 239.9 thousand members

Chart 3. Active political parties by number of members in 2020



Between 2018 and 2020, the percentage of women among political party members grew by 1.4 percentage points and reached 32.5%. The total number of women increased from 75.2 thousand in 2018 up to 77.9 thousand in 2020. The highest percentage of women was recorded among party members with representation in parliament (33.4%), and the lowest among parties with representation only in local government authorities (19.8%).

Chart 4. Change in the number of members of political parties



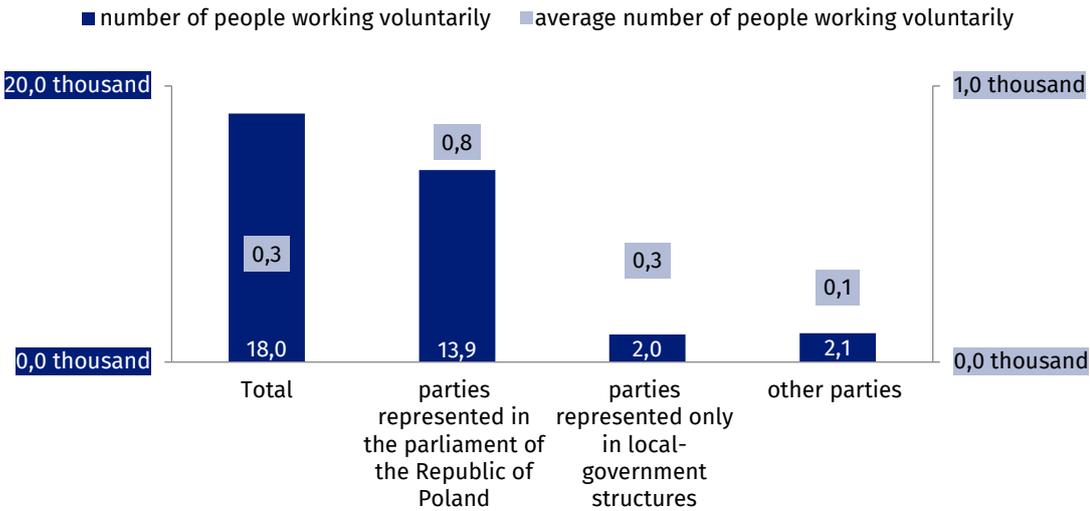
Between 2012 and 2020, the number of political party members decreased by 52.0 thousand people. The greatest involvement in the parties activity was recorded in 2014, when the number of members amounted to 298.1 thousand people. Two years later, in 2016, the number of natural persons belonging to political groups decreased by 47.3 thousand and since then we have recorded a systematic decline in the number of political party members.

Volunteer work

All political parties active in 2020 declared to use the volunteer work of their members, and 18 groupings also benefited from external volunteers. Volunteer and unpaid work for the parties was provided by a total of 18.0 thousand persons, of which 23.4% were women. Compared to 2018, the number of volunteer workers decreased more than 3 times, which was related to the COVID-19 epidemic limiting the possibilities of conducting an election campaign before the presidential elections, but also to the trend of shrinking the volunteer base in parties, visible since 2014.

The average political party declared to use volunteer work of 0.3 thousand people, and for half of the parties the number did not exceed 20 people. Compared to 2018, the average dropped by 0.8 thousand volunteers and the median by 16 people.

Chart 5. Number of people working voluntarily in political parties by type of party in 2020



As in 2018, political party volunteers were mainly party members - they constituted 93.9% of all persons providing voluntary and unpaid work for political parties. The share of women among people working voluntarily in parties fell by 4.8 percentage points compared to 2018.

Paid work

The majority of political parties did not rely on paid work in 2020. Taking 62 units into account, 15 declared employing paid personnel. Of these 15 parties, 9 possessed employment contract workers and 6 paid personnel consisted of civil contract workers only. In total, by the end of 2020, 222 persons carried out their work on the basis of an employment contract, showing a reduction by 5.5% in comparison to 2018. The number of civil contract workers fell by 0.5% (to 213 in total). Women comprised 52.7% of persons working on the basis of an employment contract, while among civil law contract holders one in three was a woman (32.9%).

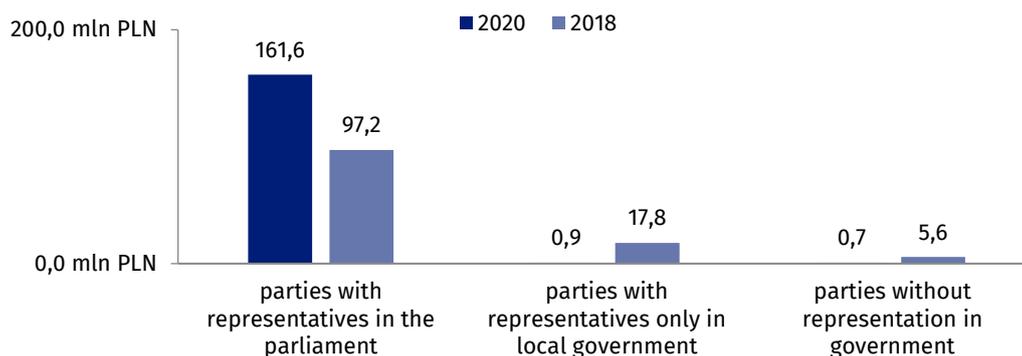
The significant majority of both employment contract workers and those employed within the framework of the civil law contract, were on the payroll of parties which possessed their representatives in the parliament (97.7% and 98.6%, respectively).

Revenues of political parties

In 2020, the sum of revenues obtained by 55 political parties which generated revenues stood at PLN 163.2 million, larger by PLN 42.7 million than the corresponding sum from 2018. A specified-user (earmarked) subsidy, paid by the state budget after the autumn 2019 Sejm and Senate elections, comprise more than a half of total revenue.

Parties with representatives in the parliament of the Republic of Poland acquired revenues equalling PLN 161.6 million, i.e. 99.0% of revenues in total - to compare, the percentage stood at 80.6% in 2018. Parties that exercised authority only at the local government level obtained 0.6% of the total revenue in 2020, while the ones not exercising power – 0.4%.

Chart 6. Party revenues by representation in government



In 2020 the average political party obtained PLN 3.0 million in revenues, but for one half of parties the number did not exceed PLN 10.2 thousand.

Among parties possessing revenues, 28 units claimed having revenues not exceeding PLN 10 thousand. There were 27 parties with the sum exceeding PLN 10 thousand. Out of these, 7 parties obtained (as of 2020) revenues which were larger than PLN 1 million.

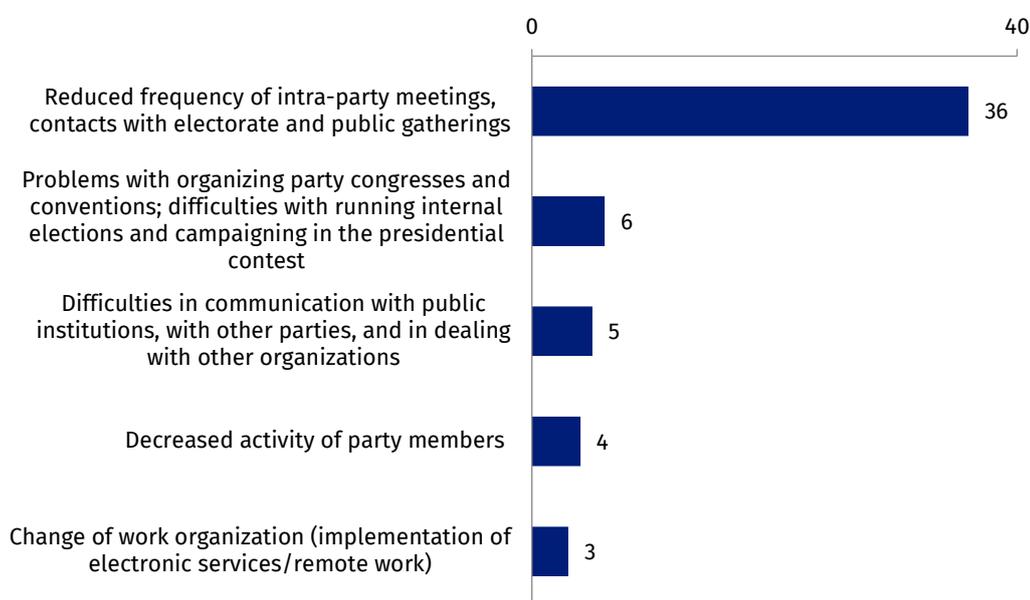
Speaking of financial means, the average sum per party in 2020 reached PLN 3.0 million; however, one half of surveyed groupings declared having revenues of PLN 10.2 thousand or lower. In 2018 the average value and the median stood at, respectively, PLN 2.1 million and PLN 10.2 thousand.

The revenue structure of political parties for 2020 differed from the one in 2018 owing to local elections in 2018 and to parliamentary elections in the subsequent year. In 2018, means from natural persons (including donations, inheritances and bequests) comprised more than one half of revenues (53.2%). In turn, 2020 saw the overwhelming revenue share coming in the form of law-specified grants and subsidies (91.4%). In total, political parties obtained PLN 149.2 million from the state budget in 2020; the corresponding figure for 2018 was PLN 52.0 million.

Impact of COVID-19 upon party activity

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, an additional question concerning the influence of the current epidemiological conditions on party activity in 2020 was placed in the survey. Taking into account parties that submitted their reports, 46 informed about the negative influence the pandemic had on their actions. First and foremost, the detrimental impact took the form of limiting the possibility of organizing public gatherings and meetings with party members and supporters - 36 parties identified this as a challenge. 6 units reported problems with party congresses and party conventions as well as difficulties with running internal elections and campaigning in the presidential contest. One party in out of nine indicated that COVID-19 brought difficulties to communication with public institutions, with other parties, and in dealing with other organizations. Decreased activity of members as well as general weariness and reluctance to undertake activity were reported by 4 parties. Meanwhile, 3 parties informed about implementing a new form of work organization.

Chart 7. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on party activity in 2020.



Methodological information regarding the survey

This news release was compiled on the basis of the Statistics Poland survey completed by the Statistical Office in Cracow in 2021 by means of the research form titled *Political parties* (SOF-3) as well as with the assistance of administrative data (from District Court in Warsaw), National Electoral Commission and Social Insurance Institution). The survey covered 88 parties present in the Register of Political Parties. As a result of survey completion and on the basis of data from the National Election Commission, it was established that 62 parties conduct activity. For these 62 entities data was obtained with the help of the SOF-3 form.

By means of the research form SOF-3 data regarding, among other subjects, the organizational structure, territorial scope and statutory form of party activity, membership, volunteer work, cooperation with other organizations and conditions, in which parties conduct their activities. On the other hand, administrative data allowed to establish information with regard to:

- the number of parties in the Register of Political Parties (data from the District Court in Warsaw),
- the revenue structure, including sums from the state budget (data from National Electoral Commission),
- the scope and type of employment (data from the Social Insurance Institution - ZUS).

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