

## CULTURAL AND SPORTS ACTIVITY OF SENIORS IN THE MAŁOPOLSKIE VOIVODESHIP

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**Purpose:** The discussion of issues related to the seniors' participation in cultural life. An indication of the possibilities of free time management, the current level of participation of older people in culture, sport and recreation, and comparing them with the point of view of communes.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The seniors' cultural activity was presented from the perspective of data from the Polish Central Statistical Office. A survey conducted in 2018 among the communes of the Małopolskie Voivodeship in cooperation with the Regional Audit Chamber in Kraków was used to develop detailed analyses.

**Findings:** The surveyed local government units positively assessed their activities in the area of culture and entertainment of the elderly. The vast majority of the LGUs surveyed have no problems with the low level of participation of older people in cultural, recreational and sports life.

**Research limitations/implications:** The survey was conducted in the Małopolskie Voivodeship. The research could be extended to the whole country. In the future, the point of view of officials could be correlated with the opinion of residents.

**Practical implications and social implications:** Paying attention to the seniors' low cultural and sports activity. The result of this study is to draw attention to the differences in the perception of the issues of seniors' cultural and sports activity in terms of statistical data and surveyed local government units. The consequence should be a re-analysis of the problem in communes and the correction of relevant documents in this field.

**Originality/value:** The questionnaire research in which the author participated presents the issues of seniors' cultural and sports activity from the perspective of local government units in the Małopolska region. The article is addressed to all people who have an influence on making decisions in the field of promoting seniors' active lifestyle.

**Keywords:** seniors, social activity, physical activity, culture and entertainment, free time.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper, case study.

## 1. Introduction

Participation in culture and entertainment is one of the many possibilities of spending free time. Recently, a lot has been said about it, especially in the context of the additional amount that society has gained as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation in culture and entertainment or sport can be a supportive element in the fight against the effects of social exclusion. However, in order to present the topic in an appropriate way, it is necessary to consider what the participation of Poles in culture and entertainment has looked like so far. At what level it was shaped, what they were more willing to participate in and what they did not feel like doing. These considerations can be a starting point for local government units in the context of making decisions on allocating funds for tasks in the field of culture and entertainment, as well as sports. Due to the growing negative demographic changes, the data analyses carried out in this study refer to the cultural activity of the elderly. In the face of the problem outlined, among others, the research question appears about the role of the commune – as a local government unit that is closest to the local community – in promoting activities aimed at supporting the participation of older people in all social activities, which include cultural, entertainment and sports activities. Relevant statistical information of the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) was used to present selected statistical data on the use of free time. The source of data for the detailed analyses presented in the study is a survey conducted in 2018 among the communes of the Małopolskie Voivodeship in cooperation with the Regional Audit Chamber in Krakow.

## 2. Literature review in the field of activity

Activate, that is, make active, stimulate to action, enliven. Activity itself means the ability to act intensively; activity, active participation in something (Słownik wyrazów obcych, 2002). People's activity, according to P. Sztompka, is the only inspiration that causes that something constantly happens in society." Society exists only as long as some people act in relation to each other. " This interconnected community, which is constantly changing, does not exist without acting people. Everything that exists in it is a symptom or result of human activity (Sztompka, 2021). The mere activation of elderly people may be a chance for successful aging (Kaczmarczyk, Trafiałek, 2007). For this to happen, all possible steps should be taken that may contribute to reaching old age with a low risk of diseases and infirmity, with high mental and physical efficiency and sustained life activity (Gryglewska, 2006).

The inevitable process of aging of the population has many consequences. One of them is the increasing attention given to seniors. There are more and more studies on the issues of older people, also in the context of ensuring them appropriate leisure time management. The article by A. Jakubowska et al. (2015) was based on the nationwide research project "Why do seniors need culture?" The research focused on the diagnosis of the cultural needs of seniors as well as the types of activities and places preferred by seniors. The forms and methods of activating the elderly are discussed, among others, by K. Pędziwiatr (2015), pointing to, for example, senior clubs, Universities of the Third Age or the functioning of Social Time Banks. Activities undertaken by the elderly and their lifestyle represent a great research potential, which is reflected, for example, in the publications of A. Błachnio (2019) or T. Róžański (2016, 2020).

It is also worth mentioning here the publications of D. Ortenburger, A. Tsos (2021), R. Ng, et al. (2021), T. Tsuji et al. (2022) or S. Yang, S. Ye, H. Li (2022).

Physical activity is one of those possibilities of managing seniors' free time, which arouses particular interest in the Author. The literature often confirms the positive effect of physical activity on health. Systematic physical training helps to normalize, among others, diabetes, atherosclerosis, osteoporosis or hypertension, and to fight stress or obesity. It also helps to reduce pain in the locomotor system. Visual perception and psychomotor coordination are also improved. The medical community recognized regular physical activity as a universal medicine, inexpensive and accessible to all, and pleasant and without side effects. Its effectiveness has been confirmed by various studies. However, it is necessary to note the lack of scientists' agreement as to the precise indication of the type, intensity, frequency, duration and number of repetitions of "this drug" (Marchewka, 2013). For instance, Mazurek et al. (*Gereontologia Polska*, 2014), Sparling, Phillip, et al. (*Bmj* 350, 2015), Nelson, et al. (*Circulation*, 2007), Elsayy and Higgings (2010), Taylor (2014) wrote about the recommendations concerning physical activity of the elderly. In 2018, Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) were also published. The impact of physical activity on Hungarian seniors became the subject of a study prepared by K. Lampek et al. (2021).

The issue of Poles' participation in sport and physical recreation was raised, for example, in the work of Lenartowicz, Dziubiński and Jankowski (2017).

The problem with encouraging Poles to be physically active and participating in culture is still present, and the pandemic may have a variety of consequences. On the one hand, isolation can have a positive effect, because the society, hungry for contacts, will participate more actively in cultural life. On the other hand, you need to pay attention to its negative effects, including closure and other restrictions, fear of contagion, maybe depression, financial problems, etc. B. Mucha and M. Mucha (2021) express the similar opinion, noting that the time of the pandemic brought many benefits for some in terms of maintaining their form. There were also those who lost the will and motivation to be active, which in the long term may have serious consequences for human health (Mucha, Mucha, 2021). Isolation caused by the COVID-19

pandemic did not exclude the possibility of taking up physical activity at home, as indicated by, for example, K. Wolnicka (2021) or "Stay physically active during self-quarantine". Moreover, the publication by Arai et al. (2007) is important, for example, because of its links with depression, which may appear more often in a pandemic situation and be its consequence.

Seniors' activity can take many forms such as pro-social, intellectual or physical activity. This study focuses on the cultural and sports activity of the elderly. The relationship between seniors' activity and health was presented by A. Gębska-Kuczerowska (2002). The results of her research indicate, inter alia, that:

- active people assessed their health much better,
- active people used hospital care less often,
- active people were less burdened with cardiovascular diseases (or more stable in them),
- active people (physically or socially) were more physically fit, which translated into less frequent declarations of difficulty in moving around,
- activity had a positive effect on seniors' mental condition and maintaining a proper body weight.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the publication by John C, Woolcott et al. (2010), in which the authors point that the lack of physical activity is statistically significantly associated with an increase in the number of hospitalizations, length of stay and medical visits. The average cost of caring for physically inactive people was higher than the cost of health care for active people

Lack of physical activity is also associated with a higher risk of having a severe course of COVID-19 (Sallis et al., 2021).

### **3. Seniors and the level of participation in cultural life**

Demographic changes taking place in Polish society require adaptation of the conducted public policy at all levels to the growing and changing needs and expectations of the elderly. At the end of 2015, the population of Poland was 38.4 million, including nearly 9 million people aged 60 and over (almost 23%), as shown in Table 1. Observing the changes in this regard, it can be noticed that at the end of 2020 there were nearly 1 million more seniors. The results of the Population Projection for 2014-2050 show that this process is deepening. It signals that the share of people aged 65 and more in the total population in 2035 may be 24.5%, and in 2050 32.7%. (GUS, 2014). However, they did not take into account the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly contributed to the change in the world's population<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the portal <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries> discussing: Coronavirus Cases: 404,430,275; Deaths: 5,798,611, Recovered: 324,411,750. In Poland: Coronavirus Cases: 5,313,111; Deaths: 107,466, Recovered: 4,451,403 (Access: 10.02.2022).

The information on the preliminary results of the 2021 National Census of Population and Housing (GUS, 2022) shows that as of March 31, 2021, 21.8% of the population was in post-productive age (60/65 and more), and in 2011 it was 16.9%.

**Table 1.**

*Changes in the population of Poland in 2015-2020 (as of December 31)*

Specification	60-64 years	65-69 years	70 and more years	Total	Total population of Poland	change in the total population	share of seniors in the total population	population share aged 65 and over in the total population
2015	2 726 536	2 161 758	3 914 660	8 802 954	38 437 239	-	22,9%	15,8%
2016	2 751 811	2 272 891	4 030 514	9 055 216	38 432 992	-4 247	23,6%	16,4%
2017	2 773 345	2 353 970	4 166 277	9 293 592	38 433 558	566	24,2%	17,0%
2018	2 776 033	2 412 936	4 319 424	9 508 393	38 411 148	-22 410	24,8%	17,5%
2019	2 756 726	2 462 437	4 484 582	9 703 745	38 382 576	-28 572	25,3%	18,1%
2020	2 680 248	2 505 595	4 614 390	9 800 233	38 265 013	-117 563	25,6%	18,6%

Adapted from: Baza Demografia Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego; <https://demografia.stat.gov.pl/BazaDemografia/CustomSelectData.aspx?s=lud&y=2020&t=00>.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused great confusion in economic and social life. Long-term isolation has continuous and unfavourable psychological and social consequences. The loneliness of the elderly, which was a problem before, is now becoming an increasing challenge. The answer to this state of affairs should be extensive activities for the broadly understood activation of the elderly, i.e. social, civic, educational, cultural and sports activity. There is a need to take care of society as a whole, but special measures should be directed at the elderly due to the growing number of people belonging to this group. Actions to reduce this loneliness can be carried out in various types of social projects developing bonds in communities. People participating in such activities can acquire knowledge, skills and social competences through practical training. Older people may also become involved in the activities of various organizations, self-help groups, or fulfil new family and social roles. Daily activity gives energy, creates an opportunity to meet other people. Being active gives the elderly a sense of being needed in the local community or a sense of acceptance. For this reason, all measures to avoid loneliness and social isolation are so badly needed. Table 2 presents various forms of cultural activity of seniors along with the data on their response.

**Table 2.**

*Participation of people aged 60 and more in forms of cultural activity organized by senior citizen houses, centers and cultural centers, clubs and community centers in 2016-2020*

Specification	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>members of artistic groups in senior citizen houses, centres and cultural centres, clubs and community centres:</b>					
total	50 212	52 345	54 402	54 656	48 011
including: theatrical	3 767	3 634	4 192	4 084	3 729
musical, instrumental	4 030	4 227	3 927	4 192	4 234
vocal and choirs	20 430	20 869	21 492	22 088	18 547
folkloristic	17 622	18 310	18 923	18 220	16 831
dance	2 957	3 618	3 616	3 589	2 668

Cont. table 2

<b>members of circles/clubs/sections in senior citizen houses, centres and cultural centres, clubs and community centres:</b>					
total	169 901	185 483	199 005	210 406	169 758
including: artistic / technical	6 678	7 640	8 212	8 800	6 881
dance	4 194	4 590	4 793	5 985	4 169
musical	-	-	-	4 300	3 445
IT	2 449	2 244	2 681	2 265	1 268
photographic and filmmaking	949	995	1 061	1 414	770
theatrical	2 113	2 305	2 644	2 037	1 773
tourism and sports and recreation	12 408	17 253	16 580	17 812	14 723
senior / Third Age Universities	95 173	99 254	108 168	114 150	88 240
discussion clubs	2 157	2 644	2 875	2 285	1 286
rural housewives' circles	32 174	33 549	35 062	37 056	36 153
literary	1 572	1 607	1 807	1 612	1 316
<b>graduates of courses organized by senior citizen houses, centres and cultural centres, clubs and community centres:</b>					
total	17 266	17 520	18 491	19 886	10 776
including: foreign languages	3 721	4 622	5 469	4 664	3 285
arts	2 166	1 988	1 925	2 096	1 164
learning to play instruments	179	476	151	171	186
practical knowledge	1 948	1 534	1 670	2 116	953
dance	2 765	1 732	2 093	2 348	1 190
IT	4 652	5 110	5 428	6 471	2 594

Adapted from: „Informacja o sytuacji osób starszych w Polsce za rok 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020” by Ministerstwo Rodziny Pracy i Polityki Społecznej.

In the years 2016-2019, an increase in the interest of seniors in various forms of cultural entertainment can be seen. Older people took an active part in them not only because there was a suitable offer near their place of residence. An important reason was also the access to public facilities (cultural centers, senior citizen houses and centers as well as clubs and clubs) adapted to seniors' needs, in which classes could be conducted. These types of activities enable support. In 2020, less participation in classes is visible. The reason was probably the spread of the SARS-COV2 virus.

Table 2 presents the number of members of tourist and sports and recreational circles/clubs/sections in senior citizen houses, centers and cultural centers, clubs and community centers. In the years 2016-2020 it was respectively: 12,408, 17,253, 16,580, 17,812, 14,723. The topic of sports activity will be raised in the next part of the study.

According to the Social Cohesion Survey conducted in the first half of 2018, 92.2% of people aged 60+ watch TV every day, of which 42.2% of them over 4 hours a day. 34.4% of seniors spent watching TV for 2 to 4 hours a day, and 15.6% less than 2 hours. Only 2% of the respondents have never or almost never watched TV. 62.9% of respondents listen to the radio every day, and 13.4% of the respondents a few times a week. In the group of people aged more than 60, 11% read books every day, and 47% never or almost never (GUS, 2021b). The data collected in Table 3 reflect the fact that seniors are not always eager to take advantage of other opportunities to participate in cultural life.

**Table 3.***Share of people aged 60 and more using selected forms of participation in culture in 2019*

<b>Specification</b>	<b>Cinema</b>	<b>Theatre, concerts</b>	<b>Matches/ sports competition</b>	<b>discos/ dances</b>	<b>Museums/ Art Exhibition</b>
At least once a month	4,3%	2,8%	2,8%	1,2%	1,5%
Less often than once a month but at least once a year	23,0%	20,10%	10,60%	6,20%	21,60%
Never or almost never	72,7%	77,20%	86,60%	92,50%	76,80%

Adapted from: „Sytuacja osób starszych w Polsce w 2019 roku by Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS), Warszawa, Białystok 2021.

#### **4. Seniors' sports activity**

Movement is extremely important due to the impact it has on seniors' health and fitness. The Act on sport considers sport as all forms of physical activity which, through ad hoc or organized participation, influence the development or improvement of physical and mental condition, development of social relations or achievement of sport results at all levels (Act on Sport, 2010). Physical activity is one of the inseparable elements of maintaining a satisfactory state of health and functional fitness of the elderly. The broad definition of physical activity includes all forms, i.e. not limited only to recreational activity (e.g. sport, dance, fitness), but also professional activity and activities related to everyday movement (for instance, transport) (GUS, 2021c).

One should carefully analyse the information according to which in the fall only 14% of people aged 60-69, 11% aged 70-79 and 7% aged 80+ decided to engage in sports, fitness or other physical recreation (activity requiring at least moderate exercise). On average, 51, 46 and 30 minutes a week were spent on exercises, respectively. In the case of the society as a whole, the data indicate that slightly more than a quarter of people aged 15 and more spent their free time in this way, and it lasted about 63 minutes a week (GUS, 2021c).

It turns out that 74.7% of them never or almost never play sports, and only 12.2% once a week and more often. There are also people who never or hardly ever go for walks and do not spend their free time outdoors. They constitute 18.6% of the respondents. In contrast, 55.1% do it once a week and more often (GUS, 2021 b). This information basically coincides with the results of the survey of the participation of household members in sports and recreational activities in 2016. In the 60+ group, 10.6% regularly/often exercise, and 14.5% of seniors occasionally (GUS, 2017).

Meanwhile, the WHO recommends that adults 18-64 years of age engage in at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week, or 75 to 150 minutes of high-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of these. On the other hand, adults aged 65 and over should take up 3 or more days a week of physical activity that emphasizes functional balance and moderate or greater intensity strength training to increase functional capacity and prevent falls (World Health Organization, 2020).

## **5. Role of the commune in activating older residents**

In 2010, the Malopolska Marshal Office prepared a document entitled *Challenges of Malopolska in the context of an aging population. Strategic approach* (Wyzwania..., 2010). The sources of the strategy are in the concept of so-called silver economy. This strategy makes ones aware that the active preparation of the economy for changed, new demographic relations is an opportunity for changes not only in terms of quality of life. It is characterized by two directions of recognition, i.e. concerning the tendency of aging and the needs of the population in various dimensions of human life, as well as resources enabling meeting the needs of the aging population at a level that generally allows the assessment of an elderly-friendly region (Szopa, 2016). The strategy uses English experiences aimed at activating the older generation, thus exposing the first type mentioned at the time, i.e. one-sided adjustment. At present, one should know the state of progress of tasks related to the second challenge.

The above message should be reflected in the local dimension of activities in this field, i.e. in "local caring regimes". They are not homogeneous, because it is difficult to introduce one common model of operation in each commune. Irrespective of the above challenges of commune in Poland – as basic local government units - are obliged to carry out various tasks that are largely related to the use of leisure time by residents. In accordance with art. 164, par. 1 and 3 of the Polish Constitution (Konstytucja..., 1997), communes perform all public tasks of local significance, not reserved for other LGUs (Local Development Units), which is reflected in constitutional laws (Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r...). In particular, the commune's own tasks include meeting the community's collective needs. The organization of society in self-government communities should therefore contribute to the implementation of "such an important social goal as comprehensive human development, which is conditioned by the development of the productive forces of society" (Piekara, 2005). In general, the commune is responsible for a number of tasks in the socio-cultural field related to social care, health care, education and culture and art at the basic level as well as social infrastructure. In particular, it concerns expenses related to the improvement of broadly defined social infrastructure, e.g., roads, street lighting, parks and greenery, community centres, common rooms, social assistance, most of which are located within the commune's own tasks, and some of them are



commissioned, of mandatory or optional nature. In practice, commune's expenditure on social purposes is characterized by great diversity. On the one hand, this is due to their financial capabilities, depending on their own income. On the other hand, it is influenced by the adopted policy of local authorities regarding the financing of various social enterprises and investments. Communes with high own income, mainly urban, are much more likely to spend money on social purposes related to education, construction and modernization of roads, lighting of streets and squares, maintenance of greenery, as well as for sports facilities, cultural institutions, or the implementation of other tasks in physical culture and sport (Zarębski, 2009). In the case of most rural communes, their income is relatively lower, which is mainly due to their lower level of socio-economic development. Such a situation usually means prioritizing expenditure directed at increasing economic potential, which enables subsequent increase in expenditure for strictly social purposes.

## **6. Activities in the field of culture and sport in the communes of the Małopolska region in the light of the survey results**

In the face of the problem outlined, a research question arises about the role of the commune – as a local government unit closest to the local community – in the promotion of activities to ensure the management of leisure time of the elderly. Are actions taken in this area present and sufficient? To achieve the set goals, it is helpful to verify three basic research hypotheses based on the opinions of representatives of local government units (LGUs) indicated in the survey used:

**H1:** Communes carry out tasks in the sphere of culture and entertainment to varying degrees.

**H2:** The level of debt has an impact on the degree of implementation of tasks in the sphere of culture and entertainment.

**H3:** The level of participation of the elderly in cultural life is low.

The surveys were carried out by the staff of the Faculty of Finance and Law at the University of Economics in Krakow in cooperation with the Regional Accounting Chamber in Krakow in September-December 2018 as part of the project "Problems and challenges of local government units in the age of an aging society". The subject of the study was the opinion of representatives of local government units on the opportunities and threats that the progressing aging of the society and the development of the silver economy bring to the implementation of commune tasks.

Within the mentioned two groups of activities in Małopolska there are, among others: adapting the cultural offer to the ways of spending leisure time by the elderly, active support for participation in various workshops, educational activities, creating clubs and senior

councils, supporting physical activity (reduced admission tickets, preferential sport hall rental, senior activity centres).

As a starting point for further considerations, it seems reasonable to note that the share of communes' expenditure on achieving these goals in total expenditure – also in Malopolska – has been decreasing over the last decade, from 3.5% in 2010 to 3.1% in 2018 in the sphere of culture and national heritage, and from 3.0% to 2.4% respectively in the field of physical culture. In rural communes – dominating in Malopolska – the decrease in this percentage concerned expenditure of the first type (from 2.5% to 2.1%), and expenditure related to physical culture was characterized by stabilization (2.1-2.3%). In the urban-rural communes in the years 2010- 2018, the downward trend of both types of expenditure was dominant (from 4.5% to 3.8% and from 3.4% to 2.0). In the least numerous urban communes of Malopolska, the decrease in the percentage concerned expenditure on physical culture (from 5.9% to 4.7%), while the share of expenditure on culture and national heritage in total expenditure increased at that time (from 4.5% to 5.8%) (Budżety jednostek...).

The study was conducted using the CAWI<sup>2</sup> method among all communes (182 +3 cities with powiat status) of the Malopolska Voivodship. 131 units provided full answers. The answers came mainly from rural communes - 7.17% - and urban-rural – 25.19% - while from urban communes there were 5.34%, and from cities with powiat rights – 2 .29%. The debt in the examined communes was in the range of 21-30% (in the case of 29.77% of respondents), 11-20% (24.42% of respondents) and 1-10% (17.55%).

In the conducted research, an attempt was made to verify the research hypotheses formulated above on the basis of an analysis of the distribution of answers to individual questions, while the answers "I do not know" or "I have no opinion" were omitted. For the analysis of results, the  $\chi^2$  independence test was used, in which the null hypothesis is tested about the lack of relationship between the analysed variables<sup>3</sup>. The H0 hypothesis should be rejected if the statistics  $\chi^2$  given by the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(E_i - O_i)^2}{O_i} \quad (1)$$

where

$E_i$  is the empirical value;

$O_i$  theoretical value<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CAWI, i.e. Computer Assisted Web Interview - conducting an online survey <https://www.webankieta.pl/blog/metoda-cawi/>; access: 26 February 2020. In a few cases, given the technical conditions, it was also possible to provide a survey in the form of a questionnaire on a paper form containing a set of questions identical to the electronic version. During the research, it turned out that in some communes, answering individual questions required the exchange of information between physically distant departments, and the survey available at one computer station hindered the formulation of reliable answers.

<sup>3</sup> This is one of the most commonly used tests in statistical surveys (Zimny, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>  $E_i$  – observed values, i.e., those obtained in the study;  $O_i$  – expected values, i.e. those assumed by the test if there were no relationship between the variables. [https://www.naukowiec.org/wiedza/statystyka/chi-kwadrat-test-niezaleznosci\\_741.html](https://www.naukowiec.org/wiedza/statystyka/chi-kwadrat-test-niezaleznosci_741.html), accessed: 20 February 2020.

exceeds the table value for the assumed level of significance and the number of degrees of freedom given by the formula:

$$r = (k-1) * (w-1)^5 \quad (2)$$

The level of significance in the studies was 0.05. During the interpretation, it should be noted that empirical values were  $>5$ .

The H1 hypothesis was verified based on the distribution of responses of the units surveyed to the question: *How do you assess the degree of implementation of tasks by the community in the following areas?* One of the studied areas was broadly understood culture and entertainment. Respondents answered this question: very bad, bad, medium, good or very good.

The obtained results indicate that the degree of activities related to culture and entertainment is assessed as very good by 24.66% of respondents. 47.95% of respondents rated the activities of communes well, and 25.34% on average. 2.05% of respondents indicated poorly implemented tasks in the field of culture and entertainment. Referring to the research hypothesis (H1), there are grounds to conclude that the degree of implementation of tasks in the sphere of culture and entertainment in communes is varied. It may result from various premises. Therefore, it was decided to check whether the type of entity may be related to undertaking activities in the field of culture and entertainment.

**Table 4.**

*The results of the  $\chi^2$  test in the analysis of independence between the LGUs type and the degree of implementation of tasks in the field of culture and entertainment*

LGUs type	E <sub>i</sub>				O <sub>i</sub>			$\chi^2$ test
	Very good	good	medium	total	Very good	good	medium	
Urban and rural commune	10	17	8	35	9	17	9	2,41
Rural commune	22	48	28	98	25	48	25	
Total	36	70	37	143	36	70	37	

Adapted from: own study.

Table 4 shows the values necessary to calculate the  $\chi^2$  statistics. Due to the fact that  $\chi^2 = 2.41$  is less than the critical value of 5.99 (for significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$  and 2 degrees of freedom), the null hypothesis on the independence of variables should be confirmed. This means that the LGUs type has no effect on taking action and their diversity in sphere of culture and entertainment.

The next part of the study undertakes the verification of H2: *The level of debt affects the degree of implementation of tasks in the sphere of culture and entertainment.* It seems obvious that the amount of financial resources is important for LGUs to take action, and in particular the area related to culture and entertainment depends on them. With the need to reduce expenditure, the easiest way to achieve that is through cuts on culture and entertainment, or sport.

<sup>5</sup> k – number of columns, w – number of lines.

**Table 5.**

The results of the  $\chi^2$  test in the analysis of independence between the debt level and the degree of implementation of tasks in the field of culture and entertainment

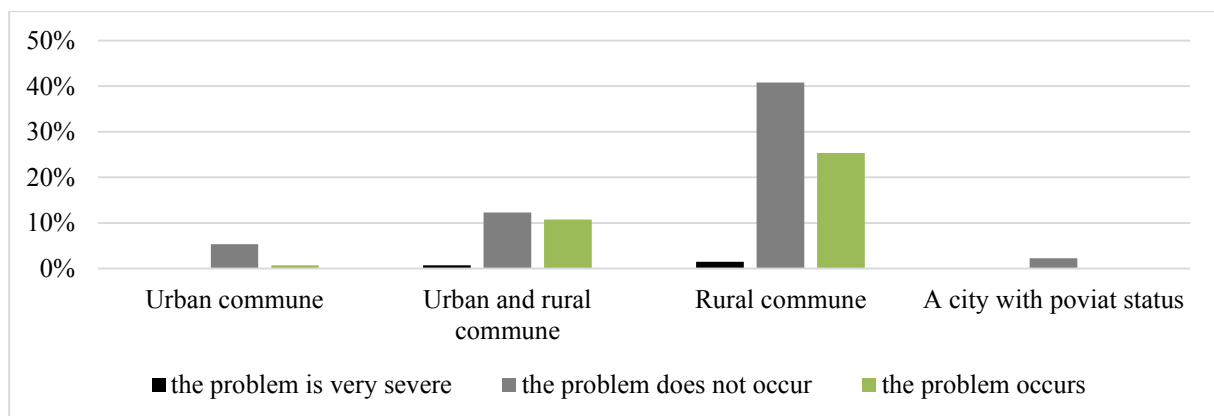
Debt level	E <sub>i</sub>				O <sub>i</sub>			$\chi^2$ test
	Very good	good	medium	total	Very good	good	medium	
11-20%	7	18	8	33	8	16	9	1,01
21-30%	10	21	13	44	11	22	11	
Others <sup>6</sup>	18	31	16	65	16	32	17	
Total	35	70	37	142	35	70	37	

Adapted from: own study.

The calculations in Table 5 indicate that the statistics  $\chi^2 = 1.01$  and it is smaller than the critical value of 9.49 (for significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$  and 4 degrees of freedom). Therefore, the null hypothesis on the independence of variables should be confirmed, which means that the level of debt does not affect the degree of implementation of tasks in the sphere of culture and entertainment. In the next stage of the study, in order to verify the H3 hypothesis, the answers to the question: How do you assess the scale of occurrence of social problems in the commune? One of them was the low level of participation in cultural life (e.g. a small number of inhabitants participating in cultural events). Respondents answered this question on a scale of 0-3, where:

- 0 - no opinion on this topic,
- 1 – the problem does not occur,
- 2 – the problem occurs,
- 3 – the problem is very severe.

The answers obtained (see Fig. 1) indicate that 60.77% of the LGUs surveyed have no problem with the low level of participation of the elderly in cultural, recreational and sport life (including all 3 cities with poviats status). In 36.92% of communes this problem occurs, and in 2.31% surveyed it is very severe (of which 2/3 are rural communes).



**Figure 1.** The level of LGUs debt and the problem of low participation in cultural life. Adapted from: own study.

The results obtained above are surprising and cannot be left without a comment. First of all, the form of the survey should be emphasized; answers were given by employees of the commune office. The text uses fragments from it mainly covering questions that require

<sup>6</sup> Others include the following indebted levels: 0%, 1-10%, 31-40%, 41-50%, 51-60% and > 60%.

evaluation, and this has caused a significant problem. It is simply a natural phenomenon that answers predominate in them, creating a dominance of positive assessments of LGUs activities in the areas of interest to us; the concentration of "flattering" assessments relates generally to the various tasks carried out by communes (see Table 6).

**Tabela 6.**

*Problems of the elderly in communes*

specification	unadjusted cultural	limited access to sports infrastructure	loneliness	poverty
are not a problem	48,63%	42,47%	5,48%	13,70%
affect modertaely	35,62%	43,15%	65,75%	68,49%
are a serious problem	4,79%	6,16%	23,97%	12,33%

Adapted from: own study.

It is therefore necessary to continue the survey – which was also planned – regarding entities located on the other side, i.e. that is the elderly using the offer of communes. Above all, however, a solid economic and financial analysis is necessary, based on specific statistical data of communes, regarding income, operating result, expenditure directed at various purposes, all the more so as surveys (so-called "soft" data) usually complement the analyses based on "hard" data. The first, initial step has been taken in this direction, and next ones are needed. It is not only about the financial condition of the commune, exposed above, but also other expenditure determinants, such as the degree of adaptation of the cultural offer to the needs of the elderly (e.g. preferences for the younger part of the community), limited access to sports infrastructure (e.g. reservation of facilities for schools or sports clubs), poverty or loneliness, which are further demotivators of participation in cultural life, thus affecting the isolation of the individual from the external environment.

## 7. Conclusions

Aging should be carried out in a way that is as least harmful to people and their surroundings as possible. Low risk of diseases and infirmity, high mental and physical efficiency, maintained life activity. It would be an ideal solution. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. It is worth doing everything possible so that successful aging is not just a scientific term, but something that can be seen in practice. In order for this to happen, it is necessary to take care of the prevention of the elderly. In 2019, 34.9% of people aged 60-69 (similarly in 2014) and 21.7% aged 70-79 (similarly in 2014) experienced good or very good health. In the oldest group of people (at least 80 years old) it was only 15.7% (an increase compared to 2014). 16.7% of people aged 60-69, 27.2% in the group of 70-79 years and 39.5% of those aged 80 and more described their health as poor or very bad (a decrease compared to 2014). Most adults (15 years of age and over) experienced high blood pressure and lower back pain (over 1/4 of the total).

One should remember about the change in the demographic structure between 2014 and 2019 and the increase in the number of people aged 60+ (GUS, 2021a). Sometimes, deteriorating health does not allow the full use of leisure time opportunities offered to seniors by the environment. There are more and more programs aimed at helping the elderly and public facilities are adapted to their needs. The results of the research carried out prove, in their opinion, the positive actions of communes.

Satisfaction with life in general in 2018 (% of people aged 16 and more) was expressed by 83% of Poles aged 16 and more (82% of men and 83.8% of women). As for the age groups, it was 79.4% in the 55-64 age group; in the group 65-74 it was 81.2%, and in the group 75 and more 76.6%. 62% of respondents felt satisfaction with the way of spending free time, and about 60% of the respondents with the amount of free time (the Polish Central Statistical Office, Quality of life and social capital in Poland. The results of the social cohesion survey 2018, Warsaw 2020, p. 240). People are satisfied, and so are local governments, but there is a problem with cultural or sports activity.

In conclusion, one should pay attention to:

1. discrepancies in the results obtained on the macro and micro scale,
2. re-examinations necessary - not only the employees of the commune, but also users,
3. the need to develop common solutions in the field of senior policy by public and non-public entities,
4. developing national recommendations for physical activity and ensuring their dissemination to key audiences.

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