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## LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... ON YOUR MARKS, GET SET, GO! ABOUT LEISURE TIME SPORT AND THE POPULARITY OF RUNNING AMONG MEN AND WOMEN<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** This article concerns the case of popularity of running and the dominant participation of men in this sociological phenomenon. Masculinization of the hype for running is mainly visible in case of running competitions open for amateurs (e.g. on a marathon distance) – where men constitute the vast majority of participants. This can be explained with differences in culture-based models of what is masculine and what is feminine. A catalogue of stereotypically masculine features includes, among others, such characteristics as: bravery, toughness and strength. These will correspond not only with the formula of such sports as boxing, wrestling or weightlifting (traditionally considered “masculine”), but also the formula of long-distance running. Participation of men in such competitions can be a confirmation of their own masculinity. In the article the results of own surveys, performed among the participants of DOZ Marathon Lodz with PZU during 2014 and 2015 (sample 2014: N = 1078; sample 2015: N = 1086), are discussed. They document, that for women running is usually only a relatively easy way of caring for their figure and health, while for men it is, in terms of identity, an important field of affirming their masculinity. This is why men more often than women take part in such competitions, spend greater amounts of money on necessary equipment, as well as more frequently join running clubs.

**Keywords:** hype for running, sport, physical recreation, leisure time sport, gender, health.

### 1. Instead of an introduction – about gender and sport

The problem of discrimination of women in sports (in other words: the discrimination of female sports) was the topic of numerous researches and academic deliberations, carried out in perspective of gender studies. It appears, that many of the barriers for female sports (stemming from existing gender stereotypes) have already been removed and, for example, the opinion of Pierre de Coubertin, that

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the Olympic games with the participation of women would be impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic and improper, today appears as a definitely archaic and disapproved view. On the other hand, there are many indications, that male sport is still viewed as sport itself and female sport as locating below this standard. The reason for this could be a more or less conscious belief, that sport remains, in its essence, the domain of men (because such “masculine” characteristics as rivalry, striving for success, physical strength and also quite often brutality play a significant role) and is not suitable to this, what is called “feminine” (Kocemba 1995: 258–259; Kamasz 2014: 62–63). This is probably the reason for the relatively low interest of mass media in covering sports events with participation of women (Bernstein 2002: 415–428; Cooky et al. 2013: 203–230; Weber, Carini 2013: 196–203; Wensing, Bruce 2003: 387–396; Kane 2013: 231–236; Kamasz 2014: 63–64; Mikołajczyk 2003: 33; Kluczyńska 2010c: 93; Jakubowska 2014: 382–386).

The marginalization of female sport by mass media is accompanied by an insignificant representation of women among athletes, trainers and sports activists. Financial expenditures on women’s sports are also lower than expenditures on men’s sports (Calhoun 1987 after Dzik 2008: 118; Cooper-Chen 2003: 221–223; Mikołajczyk 2003: 36–39; Kluczyńska 2010c: 92)<sup>2</sup>. Polish analyses of media coverage prove, that women are also discriminated as sports newscasters. As written by Urszula Kluczyńska, “a woman, who ‘talks about sport’ is socially viewed as incompetent, and such an action as excluding emotions from such a narrative (as a stereotypically feminine characteristic) and focusing on facts and numbers leads to an opposite effect. The woman is then viewed not as unyielding to emotions, and therefore more masculine and confirming her right to ‘take interest’ in sport, but as a person, who cannot ‘switch on’ emotions and have her own opinion regarding sports events” [own translation] (2010a: 73; Kluczyńska 2010b: 383–400; see also Jakubowska 2014: 395–398). A rather obvious statement can be made, that today’s “political correctness” does not allow for blatant discrimination of female sport. Forms of this discrimination are however visible, and at their basis lie – still not fully overcome – gender stereotypes<sup>3</sup>. As Maria Mikołajczyk writes, “the thesis, that sport belongs

<sup>2</sup> Honorata Jakubowska points that women obtain lower financial prizes than men (Jakubowska 2012; 2014: 425–429). The case of marathon races in Poland is especially meaningful (organizers of „Solidarność Marathon” in Gdańsk in 2010 assumed that financial rewards for men would be twice as much as those for women) (Jakubowska 2012).

<sup>3</sup> It would appear, that the gender stereotypes are the basis of the seven barriers preventing female sport development, enumerated by authors of the report *Zaproszenie do diagnozy. Sport kobiet w Polsce (Women’s sport in Poland: an invitation to diagnosis)*. These are: 1) defining sport as a typically masculine activity; 2) lack of sports infrastructure or lack of equal access to it for both genders; 3) lack of money and sponsors for female sport (e.g. lower bonuses, awards and salaries for women, motivated by women having lower results than men; a sport undertaken by men is considered as more spectacular); 4) training system pathologies, training techniques not suited to

to the world of men, is the most worn out cliché statement of contemporary sport sociology and – to a lesser extent – sport psychology. Nevertheless the thesis is still confirmed by research results as well as sport practice. Even though civilizational transformations of the end of the 20th century rather rapidly reduced the gap between the worlds of men and women (especially in the so called Western Cultures), sport remains an island of men, to which a certain amount of women is admitted, but only those, who are willing to observe the laws established by men for men” [own translation] (2003: 24; see also Mikołajczyk 2004: 99).

Catalogs of “male” and “female” sports are determined with gender stereotypes. Those catalogs function in the “social sphere” and are reconstructed by researches. “Differentiation between ‘male’ and ‘female’ disciplines also reflects cultural definitions of gender and ways of perceiving the male and female body. ‘Male’ sports are those, which include violence, brutality, overwhelming strength of human muscles, as well as risk, extreme conditions or confronting danger. On the other hand, female disciplines are those, where the body, in a state of graceful motion and in accordance with the ideal of the feminine beauty, is presented to the viewers as an object for viewing” [own translation] (Dzik 2008: 118; see also Kluczyńska 2010c: 90–91; Schneider 2003: 79–94). A similar view concerning this matter is presented by Włodzimierz Kocemba, who writes: “numerous types of sports are treated as typically male sports (boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, etc.), but sports disciplines, that, are more in line with the essence and role of a woman, can also be distinguished e.g. rhythmic gymnastics” [own translation] (1995: 258)<sup>4</sup>. The catalog of “masculine” sport characteristics can be further enlarged by courage, toughness and speed (Włoch et al. 2012) as well as physical contact (with the element of knocking down the other competitor), using cars or motorcycles and rather team than individual status (Jakubowska 2014: 459–460). As a result, women engaged in sport disciplines considered typically “masculine” (e.g. mountain climbing, ski mountaineering or extreme adventure racing) may experience a role conflict (sports

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female capabilities; 5) insufficient number of female trainers and females in sports organizations, which prevents proper representation of female interests in sport; 6) conflict of roles between being an athlete and being a mother; 7) sexual harassment (Włoch et al. 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Jakubowska as a typical “female” sports lists: figure skating, rhythmic gymnastics and synchronized swimming. “In the above mentioned sports self-presentation, and thus a proper facial expression and mimicry, play an important role. A contestant, who is ice-skating, dancing or performing artistic gymnastics, even when her performance requires physical strain or causes pain, should express joy, contentment and – perhaps most importantly – effortlessness [...] The apparent effortlessness reinforces a belief, that women are ‘naturally’ predisposed to take up these types of sports” [own translation] (Jakubowska 2014: 463).

role *versus* female role<sup>5</sup>) (Dzik 2008: 116–135; see also Mikołajczyk 2003: 29–31)<sup>6</sup>.

An inquiry should be made at this point concerning a discipline, whose unequal popularity among women and men will constitute the principal subject of the deliberations in the presented article: namely, can long-distance running (including competitions at a marathon distance) be considered as “male” sports? Even if running does not appear as a “masculine sport in the classical sense” (such as weightlifting or strictly confrontational boxing), it still seems that the answer to this question should be affirmative. This is because taking part in long distance struggles requires such “masculine” qualifications as: strength, physical toughness (resistance to pain and fatigue) and the psychological endurance, ability to meet unfavorable (or even – in case of extreme sports events and cross-type running – extreme) conditions, as well as a strong will manifested both at trainings and during the competitions. “Extreme (or para-extreme) status of marathon events can have a crucial importance here. Practicing increasingly popular extreme sports is supposed to affirm special psycho-somatic qualifications of an individual (courage, toughness, resistance to pain and fatigue, general prowess). These qualifications belong to the catalogue of characteristics stereotypically considered ‘masculine’” [own translation] (Stempień 2014b: 177).

The deliberations so far concerned sport, as a segment of physical culture, that can be defined as: a “conscious human activity, the essence of which are: 1) individual or team competition between people [...] in overcoming time, space, natural or artificial obstacles and the opponent [...]; 2) improving physical qualities, such as strength, speed, jumping ability, toughness, dexterity and precision of action, while at the same time improving mental strength, including the strength of will and character, moral principles and tactically-conceptual skills; 3) voluntary participation; 4) adhering to the rules of the game [...]; 5) lack of direct goals not related to sport e.g. military and production” [own translation] (Lipóński 1987: 312). This area – as has been outlined – still remains the domain of men (whose sport struggles, in comparison to those of women, are more generously financed by sponsors, more willingly covered media and generally perceived as more attractive).

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<sup>5</sup> There are even analyses carried out, meant to investigate the relation between women practicing martial arts („manly”: kick-boxing, wrestling) and the aggression manifested by them in everyday life (Mazur, Organista 2015: 151–164), which can be considered an exemption from “female” behavior patterns.

<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, it may be stated that in some cases the non/normative body (i.e. hefty and muscular women training stereotypically “male” weightlifting) may be treated forgivingly and indulgently by the public opinion. This is due to the strong connection with the national sport success. The criterion of sex is then less important than the criterion of nationality (woman training “male” sport is “our”, represents “us”, and thus – is accepted) (Jakubowska 2015).

But what is the situation in case of physical recreation, understood as “various types of activities – sport, tourism, playing, walking, etc., which a person willingly undertakes, during leisure time, for regenerating strength, enjoyment and development of their own personality, creating health” [own translation] (Wolańska 1997: 55)? According to Eurobarometer *Sport and Physical Activity* survey from 2013, European women (47%) more frequently than European men (37%) stated, that they did not take up physical or sport activity at all (*Sport And Physical Activity*, Special Eurobarometer 412: 10–11). Concerning the Polish society it should be recalled, that according to the survey performed by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center) in 2013, participation in physical recreation was declared by 69% of men and 63% of women (Omyła - Rudzka 2013: 1). The *Participation of Poles in sports and physical recreation* survey by the Central Statistical Office from 2012 documents the participation in sports activities or physical recreation of 49% men (of which 22% on a regular basis/often) and 43% women (of which 19% on a regular basis/often) (Łysóń 2013: 98–99). Finally, results of the project *Social Diagnosis 2013 Objective and Subjective Quality of Life in Poland* are worth mentioning: lack of physical activity is claimed by 57% of men and 64% of women (Czapicki 2013: 212).

The above statistics significantly differ from one another, and these differences are probably connected with differences in: 1) measurement method; 2) content of questions presented to the respondents; 3) way of defining such concepts, as: physical activity (including: regular, systematic activity), sport, physical exercise. Nonetheless, it seems important and characteristic, that each of the mentioned surveys documents a slightly higher (difference of 6–7 percentage points – pps) level of physical activity of men over women. The exception is the Eurobarometer survey, where the difference reaches 10 pps. This allows to formulate a simple generalization, that men slightly more often than women take up physical activity during leisure time.

The situation looks differently in case of the recently observed in Poland hype for running (Stempień 2015a: 185–186), treated as a domain of physical recreation. Here the domination of men is more evident. The results of Runners National Census from 2014 point to this conclusion. Almost 61 thousand people practicing amateur running (not necessarily taking part in competitions) participated in this commercial *on-line* survey. Among them women constituted only 39% (*Raport Polska Biega – Runners National Census 2014*: 8). Therefore three out of five runners are men.

Especially interesting however is the percentage of female participants in running competitions open for amateurs<sup>7</sup>. This leads to the concept of leisure time sport, which remains the segment of physical recreation, where the agonistic

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<sup>7</sup> The popularity of running competitions in Poland is continuously rising: 2218 running events took place in 2012, five years earlier – 859 (Stempień 2015a: 185–186).

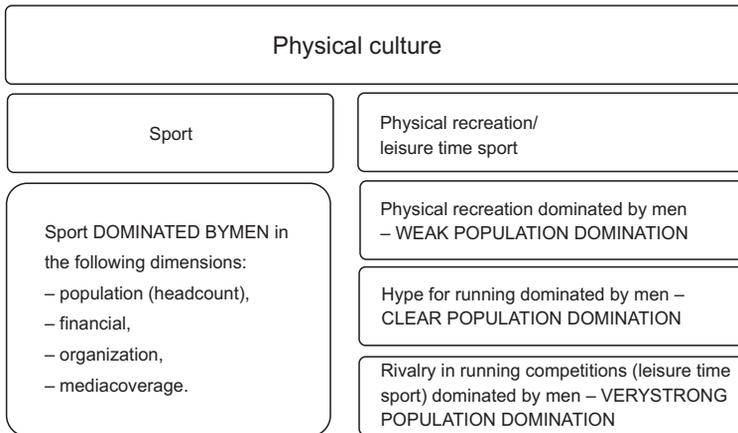
element – fundamental for the sport phenomenon – becomes visible (Krawczyk 2000: 91–92). As shown by Runners National Census 2014, “men more eagerly than women take part in competitions. Over a half of women, who practice running, never took part in a running competition (51%). This percentage is lower among men, and amounts to 37%” [own translation] (*Raport Polska Biega* – Runners National Census 2014: 54). This tendency is also confirmed by other surveys and analyses. Women constituted 26% of respondents in an *on-line* survey, conducted in 2014 by Zygmunt Waśkowski’s team, among 4406 Polish marathon runners (Waśkowski 2014a: 487). In an *on-line* survey, by Andżelika Dzięgiel, conducted among 314 participants of Toruń running events in 2012, women constituted only 13% (Dzięgiel 2014: 143). In the three editions of surveys performed by Department of Sociology at Medical University of Lodz, women accounted for: 24% (in 2013); 26% (in 2014) and 30% (in 2015). Also the analysis of lists of participants of Polish marathon races, shows that women are always in minority (Stempień 2014b: 176).

This trend is characteristic not only for Poland. More or less similar tendencies are also observed in case of other European countries. Analyses covering participation in all marathons held in capital cities in the European Union in 2014 confirm that “Running is a strongly masculine sports discipline, including leisure-time sport. The participation of women did not reach a level of 50% in any of the events, and their average participation in competitions [...] was 25%. Relatively the biggest amount of women took part in the London (38%), Copenhagen (31%), Helsinki (27%) and Stockholm (26%) marathons; the smallest amount took part in events held in Nicosia, Lisbon, Madrid, Bratislava and Vilnius. Therefore, it can be cautiously stated, that following events gather more women: 1) bigger; 2) organized in wealthier Western European countries, with an older tradition of amateur running; 3) organized in Scandinavian countries with highly developed the gender equality policy” (Stempień 2015b: 183). Nevertheless, in the dynamic perspective an important changes can be observed in the world scale since the end of the 1990s. “Before this period, it was not unusual to see more than 20 male runners for each female runner [...] During the last two decades, however, [...] male versus female ratios lowered to less than 10:1, indicating that the proportion of female runners obviously increased. Although gender parity cannot be observed yet, women have unmistakably gained ground in the running market during the last two decades” (Scheeder et al. 2015: 14; see also Scheeder et al. 2015: 247–248)<sup>8</sup>.

Summing up the above deliberations, it can be stated, that physical culture<sup>9</sup> remains the sphere of human activity, where male dominance is visible in various

<sup>8</sup> In some European countries (Denmark, Germany, Hungary) running is currently more popular among women than men (Breedveld et al. 2015: 247–248).

<sup>9</sup> The following definition proposed by Zbigniew Krawczyk is adopted here: “physical culture is a relatively integrated and consolidated behavioral system in the field of care for physical



**Fig. 1.** Masculinization of sport, physical recreation and hype for running

Source: own elaboration

dimensions (see Fig. 1). This is apparent in case of sport in the following dimensions: 1) population-headcount (small number of female athletes); 2) financial (higher earnings of male athletes vs. female athletes, higher funding allocated to male sport, higher interest of advertisers and sponsors in male sport); 3) organizational (small number of women in sports organizations and among trainers); 4) media (sports news focused on struggles and achievements of men). Male domination (in the dimension of population – disproportionate interest and participation) is also visible in case of physical recreation (slight), hype for running (distinct) and participation in running competitions open for amateurs (very strong).

The first edition of own research project (whose methodological characteristics will be presented below) from 2013 allowed for a presentation of preliminary observations concerning female and male participation in the Polish hype for running (Stempień 2014b). The research showed, that women generally treated running “less seriously” than men. Women, who are engaged in running, less frequently than men: 1) search the Internet for information about running; 2) are participants of online forums dedicated to running; 3) decide to join a runner’s club. At the same time women later than men (when controlling the time of getting started with running) decide to take part in running competitions (they are content for a longer period of time with only practicing running, without sport contests). This allowed to put forward a thesis, that “men clearly more often identify themselves with their running activities and achievements, which play a clearly more important role in

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development, mobility, health, looks, physical perfection and human expression, functioning according to models adopted in a given collective, as well as the result of such behaviors” [own translation] (1995: 28).

their lives – probably also in the context of identity. For them running is a more absorbing activity that is not exhausted in the act of training or taking part in a competition. For women, on the other hand, running remains mainly a means of caring for their health and figure, a way of spending time with their close ones in a carefree and active way” [own translation] (Stempień 2014b: 182–183).

The presented article is an attempt to enhance these findings with observations from the two subsequent editions of the project (years 2014–2015). The participation of women and men in the Polish hype for running (in the segment of running events) will be described here in an economic, sport, health, social and personal aspect. On that basis, a typology of female and male running profiles will be proposed.

## 2. Material and methods

In the article results of the research project, which is realized since 2013 at the Department of Sociology of the Medical University of Lodz, will be presented. The project aims to accurately and comprehensively identify the phenomenon of hype for running (including its sources and spread among representatives of various social categories). Motivations (health, sport) that accompany amateur long distance running are also an important matter.

In the project the traditional technique of a distributed paper questionnaire (filled by respondents) is used. The survey is performed among adult and Polish-speaking participants of DOZ Marathon Lodz with PZU (previously: Łódź Marathon “Dbam o Zdrowie”). The respondents are the participants of the main run (on a marathon distance: 42.195 km), as well as people taking part in an accompanying ten kilometer run. The survey is performed with the aid and thanks to the kindness of the Organizers of DOZ Marathon Lodz with PZU. During the three years of the project’s realization (2013–2015) a total of 3029 people took part in the survey:

- N = 865 in 2013 (33% participants);
- N = 1078 in 2014 (26% participants);
- N = 1086 in 2015 (29% participants).

In this article previously unpublished results of the last two editions of the project (years 2014–2015) will be used. A socio-demographic characteristic of the studied assemblage is shown in Table 1<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> The table shows a certain „overrepresentation” of people with higher education in the runner representation (when comparing to the society as a whole). This is confirmed by other research (Waśkowski 2014b, Dziegiel 2014). This overrepresentation could be (at least partially) explained by referring to the healthism ideology, which is spreading among Polish middle class (Stempień 2015b).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of surveyed participants of DOZ Marathon Lodz with PZU (in %)

Specification	2014 edition(N = 1078)	2015 edition (N = 1086)
1	2	3
<i>Gender</i>		
Women	26	30
Men	71	69
Missing data	3	1
Total	100	100
<i>Age</i>		
Participants in their twenties and younger adults	34	36
Participants in their thirties	34	37
Participants in their forties	18	18
Participants in their fifties	8	5
Participants in their sixties	3	2
Participants in their seventies and older	0	0
Missing data	3	2
Total	100	100
<i>Level of education</i>		
Basic/second stage of basic education	0	0
Basic vocational	1	2
Secondary vocational (vocational school, post-secondary school)	11	10
General secondary	16	14
Higher	68	72
Missing data	4	2
Total	100	100
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	44	48
Married	46	45
Divorced	5	5

Table 1 cont.

1	2	3
Widowed	0	0
Missing data	5	2
Total	100	100
<i>Place of residence</i>		
City above 500 thousand inhabitants	54	58
City 100–500 thousand inhabitants	10	8
City below 100 thousand inhabitants	21	22
Village	11	9
Missing data	4	3
Total	100	100

Source: own survey.

Statistical analyses were performed with usage of MS Excel package, in accordance with requirements of descriptive statistics. The following statistical indicators were used in the calculations: 1) structure indicators; 2) measures of central tendency (arithmetic mean); 3) measures of correlation between variables (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient rho, Student's t-test).

### 3. The sport aspect and the economic aspect

As shown above, hype for running remains mainly a male trend (three out of five runners in Poland are men). Even less attractive for women is the participation in running events – women constitute a very clear minority here. It must be added, that the female runners, who take part in competitions, are characterized by a relatively low, in relation to men, “level of commitment”. As shown in Table 2, men participate on average in about eight running events per year, while women in 5–6 events<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, men are willing to travel to the competitions as well as participate in such events held in places distant from their place of residence (including: abroad). Women on the other hand more frequently participate in competitions held in the locality where they reside. And so, in 2014 69% of women and 68% of men (1 percentage point difference in frequency of indications) participated in competitions

<sup>11</sup> Similar are the findings of Waškowski, who states that, in the years 2012–2013 female marathon runners were participants of road runs less frequently than male marathon runners and two out of five of them took part in no more than four events during that period (Waškowski 2014a: 488).

held in their place of residence; in competitions in “their own” voivodship – 58% of men and 55% of women (3 pps of difference), while beyond the voivodship of residence (but still in the country) – 46% of men and 37% of women (9 pps of difference). Every tenth man and every tenth woman took part in competitions held abroad (but in case of 2013 the disproportion was 7 pps “in favor” of men). A generalization can be made here, that the further running competitions are organized from the place of residence, the greater the disproportion between the participation of women and men is. The information presented here seem – at least partially – related: women participating in competitions are characterized by a lower than men average number of annually completed events because they, among other things, choose competitions close to their place of residence. The spectrum of choice is naturally narrower here. For example, according to information available on the web portal [www.maratonypolskie.pl](http://www.maratonypolskie.pl), 54 running events took place in Lodz in 2014, in the Łódź Voivodship there were 109 such events, and in the entire country – 2890<sup>12</sup>.

An interesting matter is the diet for runners and the practicing of additional (other than running) sport disciplines or physical recreation (see Table 2). In both these cases indications were more frequent from women than men (although the observed differences were not significant). A special runners’ menu is therefore more frequently used by women. It can be also assumed, that diet is perceived here mainly as a supplement of training, aimed at losing weight rather than improving sports results. This seems valid, because – as visible in the surveys – women more frequently than men (which will be discussed later) train running to lose weight. Slightly higher frequency of declarations concerning training disciplines of sport or physical recreation, other than running, can also be explained in this manner. Such “complex activity” (diet, multidisciplinary training) should lead to obtaining almost full control over one’s body (and its weight). For sport-oriented men, motivations and actions related to one’s figure seem to be of secondary importance<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> This data is consistent with more general observations of Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) concerning physical recreation. It turns out, that women (34.5%) more frequently than men (27.9%) decide to take up such sport and recreational activities, that do not require traveling. Women more frequently than men exercise at home or beyond sports infrastructure, e.g. in a park or a forest (Ł y s o ń 2013: 145–146, 149–150). This is probably related to the fact – proven by research – that women are burdened with household chores (combined with professional work) in a greater extent than men (S z c z e p a ń s k a 2006). They therefore have less leisure time and decide to take up activities, that do not require time consuming drive.

<sup>13</sup> It’s worth reminding here, that in general, women more frequently than men adapt various types of diets. Sabina K r ó l i k o w s k a, referring to the results of numerous surveys, writes: “following specialized diets for both health reasons, as well as improving figure is more frequent among women. They also far more frequently than men become victims of eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia. Undoubtedly the messages of popular culture, where images of slim, young, tanned, caring for their attire and hairstyle women are promoted, have a big influence on the perception of the body by today’s women. The tyranny of a slim body [...] has its consequences in women suffering from anorexia and bulimia. Behavior patterns propagated by mass culture overlap with stereotypical perception of the female body. According to the external appearance

**Table 2.** Participation in running competitions and additional activities related to running – by gender

Specification	Number of completed running events	Location of running events			Following a diet for runners	Practicing sports other than running	
		Place of residence	Voivodship of residence	Poland			Abroad
Arithmetic mean		In %					
<i>Measurement in 2014 (data concerns the previous year)</i>							
Men (N = 769)	7.9	66	63	51	18	25	55
Women (N = 285)	6.5	64	58	42	11	27	59
Overall (N = 1078)	7.6	65	61	49	16	25	56
<i>Measurement in 2015 (data concerns the previous year)</i>							
Men (N = 751)	8.0	68	58	46	10	No data obtained	
Women (N = 330)	5.4	69	55	37	10		
Overall (N = 1086)	7.3	68	57	44	10		

Source: own survey (edition 2014 and 2015).

**Table 3.** Expenses incurred in relation to practicing running and entering competitions – by gender

Specification	Expenses for running competitions in 2013 r.	Expenses for running equipment in 2013 r.	Overall expenses related to running (PLN)
	Arithmetic mean (PLN)		
Women (N = 285)	346.67	582.91	929.58
Men (N = 769)	448.81	661.59	1110.40
Overall (N = 1078)	431.82	642.52	1074.34

Source: own survey (2014 edition).

Sport predilections of men, who practice running, materialize not only in their eager participation in running events, but also – what is related – in significant expenditures incurred in relation to the running hobby. These expenditures amount on average to 1110.40 PLN annually and are higher than the average expenditures of women by 180.82 PLN<sup>14</sup>. The highest portion of this (60%) is buying running equipment (shoes and other elements of attire, stoppers, pulse watches, running backpacks, etc.). On average men annually allocate 661.59 PLN for these expenses (women: 582.91 PLN). Men on average spend 448.81 PLN annually (women: 346.67 PLN) on competition entry fees. It's not surprising, that the costs related to participating in running competitions, as a portion of the general expenditures for the running hobby, is slightly higher in case of men (40%) rather than women (37%).

#### 4. The health aspect

Running is commonly associated with health and the so called healthy lifestyle. The organizers of running competitions among the goals of these ventures (described in the event's terms and conditions) – except things like promoting the

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stereotype, a woman should be petite, delicate, light, which corresponds with health behaviors and health related behaviors practiced by women. They choose such physical activities, ways of nutrition, specialized diets, to match the image of a slim, neat woman" [own translation] (2011: 392).

<sup>14</sup> Waśkowski (2014a: 489) arrived at the same conclusions. His research shows that, expenditures related to running of up to 1000 PLN are annually incurred by 78% female marathon runners and 75% male marathon runners. The others (usually men) contribute larger sums.

region – eagerly and quite often point to popularizing healthy lifestyle (Stempień 2014a: 206–209). It can be therefore assumed, that the health motivation drives people to undertake running exercise. Is that really the case? What other factors are present here? Are the motivations of men and women similar?

Research results confirm the primary character of the health motivation (see Table 4). Exactly half of the women (50%) and almost half of the men (48%), in the own survey (2014 edition) asked about the reason for starting running, answered: “Desire to care for my health.” This was the most frequently chosen answer, from the answers presented in the questionnaire. In Runners National Census 2014 almost all participants (94% – the same frequency for both women and men) declared that they run to maintain health and (or) condition (*Raport Polska Biega – Runners National Census 2014: 31–32*)<sup>15</sup>.

The motivation of men and women seems (at least partially) similar. Answers organized according to the frequency of indications in two rows (for women and men) allowed to calculate Spearman’s rho coefficient of rank correlation (which has its value between 0–1). In the own survey  $\rho=0.89$ , while in case of a question from Runners National Census 2014  $\rho = 0.95$ . Every time, this points to a very high level of concurrence in arrangement. Therefore the popularity of specific motivations (their sequence, importance) seems the same for women and men. The same factors proved to be the most important (and vice versa – the least important) for men and women. Nonetheless, various factors would receive – depending on the gender of the respondents – a different percentage of indications. The analysis of these disproportions leads to interesting conclusions.

First of all, women clearly more frequently than men (difference in frequency of indications on a level of 14 pps) declared, that the impulse to begin practicing running had been the example of close ones and/or friends, who had started running before they did. Accessibility of running was also more important for women than for men (difference of 8 pps). This accessibility has various dimensions. First of all, in general, everyone can run and one does not need to spend time learning it. Second of all, running also seems to be an inexpensive sport (one can use already owned shoes and a “general sports outfit”, without the need to buy expensive accessories). Only later practice – which was described above – shows, that runners in reality are willing to allocate substantial funds for their sports passion. Thirdly, the accessibility of running means that one can run anywhere and at any time: no sports infrastructure is necessary (a park, a forest, or even the neighborhood is enough). It seems that this might be suitable to women’s preference, because – as shown by the already discussed Central Statistical Office of Poland

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<sup>15</sup> A rarely encountered high frequency of indications here can be explained by: 1) the possibility of choosing any number of proposed answers; 2) including two elements in one category: health and physical condition.

(GUS) observations – women prefer such forms of physical activity, that do not require time consuming journeys.

Interestingly, a “bent for sport” is becoming visible in case of women. They more frequently than men (difference of 6 pps) declared, that the reason of starting running exercise had been the desire to test themselves and a hope for an adventure. This result is important, though ambiguous, because men on the other hand more frequently (difference of 8 pps) admitted, that they had started running motivated by a dream of finishing a marathon. Representatives of both genders reported with the same frequency (28%), that they had begun running to lose weight.

The question asked to respondents in Runners National Census 2014 (different than in the case of own research) did not concern the reasons for beginning running exercise, but the contemporary motivation for running. Even though the health motivation was observed equally frequently among both women and men, in the case of other motivations there were significant differences. A hope for losing weight has proven more important for women than for men (difference in frequency of indications on a level of 12 pps). Women also more frequently than men admitted that, the stress relief factor of running (11 pps) and the fact, that running is the most accessible sport (10 pps) were important. Men on the other hand far more frequently declared, that they practiced running to improve their sports results (*Raport Polska Biega – Runners National Census 2014: 31–32*).

At this point it’s important to make a certain comment. In case of Runners National Census 2014 the “bent for sport” of women is less visible than in case of the presented own survey. This can be explained with the differences in the groups of surveyed people. As has already been pointed out, the census surveyed people who practice running (both those who start in competitions, and those – and these were mainly women – for whom taking part in running events is not attractive). The own research on the other hand includes participants of a competition, who by definition should display a sports passion, which should in turn be reflected in the answers given in the survey.

To sum up, it can be stated, that health reasons are equally important for women and men, as a motivator to undertake and continue running exercise. For women the following factors are also important: desire to lose body weight, example of close ones already practicing running, and the accessibility of running, as well as the desire to test themselves and a hope for an adventure. In case of men an important role is played by those elements, which are related to rivalry in sports (finishing the marathon, improving results). It could be stated, that men who practice running become “competitors” and “athletes”, while women – even if they decide to take part in competitions – remain women, who first of all want to care for their health and figure.

**Table 4.** Motivation for practicing running– by gender (w %)

Specification		Women	Men	Overall
Own survey – 2014 edition	What made you start practicing running? (mark no more than three most important answers)			
	Desire to care for my health	50	48	48
	Desire to test oneself, hope for an adventure	38	32	33
	Desire to lose body weight	28	28	28
	Dream to finish a marathon	23	31	28
	Accessibility of running (running is cheap, easy-does not require learning; you can run whenever and wherever you want)	25	17	19
	The example of close ones and/or friends, who started running earlier	26	12	16
	Curiosity	15	12	12
	Desire to impress friends and/or close ones	7	6	7
	Opportunity to meet new people	7	5	6
	Boredom with other sports practiced so far	5	6	5
	Other	7	6	6
		Spearman's rho = 0.89		
Runners National Census 2014	Why do you run? Mark all the reasons that make you run.			
	For health/condition	94	94	94
	Because I like running	67	65	66
	Because it relieves stress	69	58	62
	I want to lose weight	56	44	49
	To improve sports results	26	41	35
	Because it's the most accessible sport	35	25	29
	Because people I know run	8	7	7
	Because running is trendy	3	3	3
	Other	9	6	7
		Spearman's rho = 0.95		

S o u r c e: own elaboration based on own survey (2014 edition) and Runners National Census 2014.

## 5. Social aspect

Popularity of running has its economic context and is the subject of research by economists and marketing specialists. Hype for running brings in certain profits for producers of shoes and other sports “accessories”. The beneficiaries are also the organizers of the competitions (quite often companies specializing in this specific activity)<sup>16</sup>. Another context of the hype for running is its social context. People are brought together by a common passion, and a sense of community is created in a natural way. Moreover, when people participate in road running, they become part of a human mass (Stempień 2015a: 183–185), what is sociologically inspiring and today increasingly unusual. Finally, the bottom-up nature of many running initiatives, as well as activities of numerous runner’s clubs (NGOs, whose members are amateur runners) bring about associations with such notions, as: “civil society” and “social capital”. Perhaps it would even be justified to talk about a social running movement (Stempień 2015a: 185). It is therefore worth asking about social (collective or integrational) qualities of practicing running. Are women and men in the same degree ready to share their passion with other people?

Existing research findings allow for a statement, that women and men present different patterns of social engagement in their running passions. Men – as was discussed earlier – more eagerly engage in initiatives that strengthen their sporty personality. They more willingly, than women, enter runner’s clubs and more eagerly become members of online forums dedicated to running. Women on the other hand dominate in activities, where the sport tag is less visible. “Women, in comparison to men, clearly less frequently exercise alone. As much as three quarters of men (72.0%) declared, that they run alone [...] In case of women the percentage of such declarations was only 53.1% [...] Perhaps for a man the cultural cliché of a lone long-distance runner remains more attractive, while for a woman jogging is an opportunity to meet with someone close, a friend. At the same time, women (74.4%) more frequently than men (68.5%) admitted, that there is someone else except them, in their family or among their friends, who trains running and takes part in competitions” [own translation] (Stempień 2014b: 182).

As presented in Table 5, women more frequently than men declared, by as much as 10 pps, that someone they knew or a family member was taking part in the run (where the survey was carried out). Such indications were received from 92% surveyed female runners. This is in line with the above quoted information, according to which every fourth woman and only every eighth man began their adventure with running inspired by the example set by someone close, who had

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<sup>16</sup> Marketing specialists write about a running market and about running products, such as running events (activities) and training programs. These are the so-called basic sports products. Secondary to them will be such products, as: clothes, shoes, accessories, etc., which allow practicing sports (Waśkowski 2014a: 486).

started practicing this sport earlier. Women therefore more frequently have “running close ones” and can share their passion with them, not only during training, but also during running competitions.

**Table 5.** Social surroundings of a runner – by gender (in %)

Specification	A friend or a member of the family participates in DOZ Marathon Lodz 2014	Close ones cheering during DOZ Marathon Lodz 2014		
		Family	Friends	No one
Women (N = 285)	92	50	65	14
Men (N = 769)	82	53	55	19
Overall (N = 1078)	84	52	57	18

Source: own survey (2014 edition).

Moreover, women can, more frequently than men, count on cheering from their close ones during competitions. Every fifth man (19%) and only every seventh woman (14%) admitted, that during DOZ Marathon Lodz 2014 (when the survey was performed) they would not be cheered on by any friends or relatives. Women are cheered on by family and – especially – friends, while men can, in the same degree, count on cheering from their relatives and friends.

Summing up, interpersonal-social aspects of running are important for both men and women. Runners, regardless of gender, eagerly (and generally en masse) participate in competitions together with their friends and family members. In reality, the running crowd constitutes of small, but very numerous groups of people who know each other and enjoy joint participation in such sports and recreational enterprises. On the starting line, on the finish line, and on the running route they are accompanied by supporters. Sometimes these are passers-by, but the majority of competitors (82%) knows for certain, that in the crowd of supporters they will find a familiar face of a close person. These general observations concerning “the social context of running” are related mainly to women. The research shows, that it’s more common for a man to be the lone wolf (not knowing anybody in the running crowd and not expecting cheering from any close person). Could this indicate a certain inner containment of running men, who would less frequently need external stimuli (cheering, company during the run) for their effort? Is the marathon strain so inconsistent with the stereotypical image of “fragile” femininity, that running women would deserve special appreciation from their close ones (manifesting in the presence of family members and friends as supporters during the competition)? Or perhaps men simply enter competitions so often (in comparison

to women) that it is difficult for their close ones to be on the running route every time, to cheer for the given competitor during the run? These hypotheses (not forming any organized arrangement) are worth verifying in further research.

## 6. Personal aspect

The last specified analysis aspect (after the economic, sport, health and social aspects) is the aspect of personal attitudes. Running can be a very private or even intimate experience. This would be for example the specific relation with one's own body, which can be treated as a type of tool (efficient, reliable) or an item for creation and manipulation (trained, beautified, modeled).

It is the aspect of creation of one's own body that seems interesting in the perspective of the deliberations presented here. Do runners have a sense of control over their bodies (or more precisely: a sense of being able to influence bodies)? This question seems to be a trivial one. As a basis of many years of training running, there should be a belief that one can influence the abilities or performance of own's body. This belief – aside from cases of injury – should be confirmed and strengthened with every training and – most importantly – with every subsequent competition, that individual takes part in.

The performed research fully supports this hypothesis. Runners asked about a sense of influence on selected aspects of their life, referring to the aspect of their "own body," on average indicated a (arithmetic mean) value of 6.3 on a seven-point scale (where: 1 – "I don't have any influence"; 7 – "I have a very big influence"). In a slightly smaller degree runners have a sense of influence on: their own health (6.1), generally: their own life (6.1), own happiness (6.0) and own welfare (5.5)<sup>17</sup>.

Women and men do not differ in terms of having a sense of influence over their lives (and its individual aspects). This is indicated by a superficial analysis of arithmetic mean values determined separately for each gender (see Table 6). This information is confirmed by Student's t-test. The test values do not give reason for rejection of the  $H_0$  hypothesis, stating the lack of statistically important differences between means, in case of none of the mean value pairs.

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<sup>17</sup> The calculated average values concerning the sense of being able to influence one's own welfare are the lowest among the presented spectrum of aspects of life. Nevertheless, they should still be considered significant, as they are clearly above the center of the given scale. This can be explained by the fact, that running remains the domain of physical recreation, which is strongly dominated by representatives of the middle class (Stempień 2015a, 2015b). It's worth noting that the percentage of people with higher education is extremely high (see Table 1). Runners are also characterized by a high percentage of people content with their financial situation (Stempień 2015a). They do have reasonable grounds for such an evaluation; as shown by Waškowski, 55% of Polish amateur marathon runners have a monthly average gross income per family member above 2000 PLN (Waškowski 2014b). In this perspective a high sense of influence on one's welfare seems to be reasonable.

**Table 6.** Sense of influence on one's own life in its specific aspects – by gender (N = 1086)

Specification		Own welfare	Own happiness	Own health	Own body	Generally own life
Women (N = 330)	arithmetic mean	5.5	6.1	6.1	6.3	6.1
	variation	1.9	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.9
Men (N = 751)	arithmetic mean	5.5	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.0
	variation	2.1	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.1
<i>Student's t-test value</i>						
empirical t		0.82	1.73	-0.24	0.87	1.45
critical t		1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96
p value		0.411	0.084	0.811	0.384	0.148
Conclusion		no reason for rejection of $H_0$				
Explanation: – hypothesis $H_0$ : no differences in arithmetic means – hypothesis $H_1$ : the mean significantly deviates from other means in at least one of the specified groups – level of relevance: 0.05 Conclusion: – no reason for rejection of $H_0$ , when $p > 0.05$ (also, when empirical $t < \text{critical } t$ ) – rejection of $H_0$ , when $P \leq 0.05$ (also, when empirical $t > \text{critical } t$ )						

Note: scale 1–7, where: 1 – “I have no influence”; 7 – “I have a very big influence”.

Source: own survey (2015 edition).

This is an interesting observation. It turns out that – women and men who are characterized by largely different motivations for practicing running and a different “style” of running (sports predilections, social surroundings, level of involvement and probably identification, etc.) – display a similar degree of conviction regarding a sense of influence on their own body, health and happiness. It can be assumed here, that the surveyed female runners, taking part in the competitions, display – at least in some aspects – psychological qualities similar to men. This would be a certain sense of autonomy, self-sufficiency or independence. It must be noted, that these are stereotypically male characteristics. Perhaps these results should not be surprising. As written by Maria Mi k o ł a j c z y k, “it has been

proven in tens of researches, that among athletes – men and women – masculine and androgenic types are far more frequent than in the general population; however no longitudinal research has been conducted, that would allow to decide, whether this is an effect of auto-selection or modeling” [own translation] (2004: 106).

## 7. Instead of a summary – male and female running profiles

The information presented in this article clearly indicate, that women and men present different models of involvement in their passion for running. Greatly generalizing, it could be stated that men realize a “sports path”, while women – a “recreational path” with a pro-health component. This is the proposition of Waśkowski (2014a: 487), directly based on one of the survey questions asking respondents for a self-assessment and self-description. As shown in Table 7, three out of five (61%) of surveyed marathon participants, practice running to be in good shape and condition. Such declarations were more frequent among women than men (difference of 13 pps). One in nine (11%) respondents described himself/herself as a recreational runner, who run for fun. In this case indications were also more frequent among women (6 pps). Men on the other hand more frequently stated that they competed with other runners and that results were important for them. Such self-assessment was made by every third surveyed male marathon runner and every seventh female marathon runner taking part in the survey.

Concerning Waśkowski’s proposition one can have two reservations. First of all, the three singled out types of runners are not separable types. Recreational running and running oriented for keeping fit seem particularly related. Secondly, the presented typology has been simplified; the differences in running profiles of men and women are more complex, multidimensional. Nevertheless, this proposition points to the existence of certain tendencies, according to which men are generally more interested in sports rivalry, while women – in an active and healthy way of spending free time.

Perhaps it would be more adequate to specify three running profiles: one male profile and two versions of a female profile (“masculine” and “feminine”) (see Fig. 2). Men’s running appears to be sport oriented running. This is clearly indicated by the results of the performed research. Most men who practice running also enter competitions. They are therefore not content with only working on their physical condition; they need to test the effects of that work in confrontation with a specified distance – marathon probably being the preferred one – and other runners. Men are also trying to emulate professional athletes, by such means as making significant investments in “professional” running equipment. Such mimicry arouses interesting associations with the theory of play. Finally, it must be assumed, in case of men, that beginning their adventure with running probably constitutes an important point in their biography and can be important

in terms of identity. Time spent on trainings<sup>18</sup>, involvement in runner's clubs activities, spending time on participation in online running forums, or finally, taking part in competitions held in locations far away from one's place of residence – all of these are indicators of a significant influence of the running passion on other spheres of life. While such a question was not asked in any of the surveys presented here, it could be assumed, that when asked “Who are you?”, man who practices running would eagerly answer: “Runner, marathon runner, athlete!”.

**Table 7.** Runner types – by gender (in %)

Specification	I run to keep fit and be in a good condition.	I compete with other runners, the result is important for me.	I run recreationally, for fun.	Total
Women (N = 1133)	70	14	16	100
Men (N = 1273)	57	33	10	100
Overall (N = 4406)	61	28	11	100

Source: Waśkowski 2014a, 2014b.

In case of women the situation is not so unambiguous. First of all, the population of women practicing running during leisure time can be divided in two sets, almost equal in terms of number: participants of running competitions and those, who do not take part in competitions. For the latter, realizing a strictly “feminine” running profile, running remains first of all a relatively accessible way to care for their health and figure (alternatively an opportunity to meet with friends). The choice of this physical recreation discipline is therefore a negative choice – one does not choose that, which is preferred, but that, which is available and possible. Running remains subordinate to other, not related to running, spheres of life – infrequent trainings, most likely close to home (Stempień 2014b: 183–184). It's worth noting, that running is treated here in an utilitarian way – simply as a tool allowing to achieve a very specific goal: health and slim waist. Women who practice running in this manner would not especially identify themselves with this activity.

<sup>18</sup> Runners National Census 2014 showed that men run more often, more intensely, and their weekly mileage is higher than in case of women. About half (51%) of the men and only a third of the women (33%) run for 20 km or more every week as part of training (*Raport Polska Biega – Runners National Census 2014*: 26).

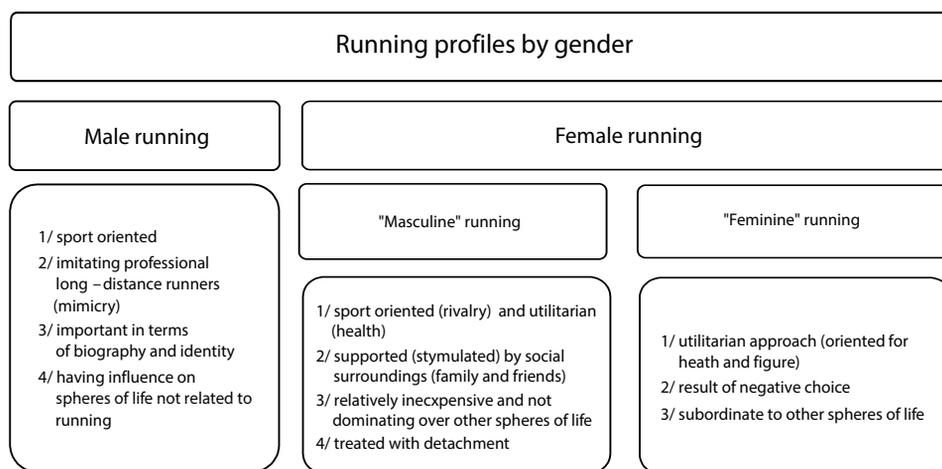


Fig. 2. Male and female running profiles

S o u r c e: own elaboration

One more female running profile is worth singling out, namely “masculine” running. Through their running passion some women seem to be realizing such needs and aspirations, which are stereotypically considered masculine. These women have a “bent for sport”, they take part in competitions, and their running related expenses are significant (almost 1000 PLN on average). These women are – in the same degree as men – convinced about the possibility of creating one’s own body. In their running struggles they can count on support from their: friends and family. It is however significant, that even these sportswomen treat their running passion “less seriously” than competition-participating men. They generally less frequently attend competitions, especially those far away from home. They less frequently join runner’s clubs. While they spend significant sums of money on running equipment and entry fees, they still spend less than men. In running they eagerly see – apart from an opportunity for self fulfillment in sport – a way of losing “unwanted pounds”.

The above theoretical attempt seems to be adequate not only to Polish runners. Similar observations and generalizations are operated regarding to the populations of runners in Belgium, Denmark and Slovenia. In Flanders women exercise rather profiles of: the social-community runner and the health-and-fitness runner than (strongly masculinised) profiles of: the social-competitive runner as well as the individual runner (B o r g e r s et al. 2015: 48–52). The same refers to Denmark – two of specified types of runners are feminine: the health-conscious runner and the social runner (running with others and enjoying their company), while the challenge-seeking runner is a masculine type (F o r s b e r g 2015: 73–74). Finally some statistics for Slovenia should be recalled. Incidental runners were 41% of surveyed men and 58% of women, while enthusiastic

runners were 50% of men and 38% of women (data for serious runners is respectively: 9% and 3%) (Doupona Topič, Rauter 2015: 218–222).

The image of the Polish hype for running presented here is consistent with the gender perspective. Running and entering competitions seem appropriate in relation, to that which is stereotypically considered masculine (bravery, toughness, strength of will, etc.). This is why the hype for running is mainly a male trend, and on a starting line of long distance runs one can observe mostly men. The gender stereotypes functioning in society seem to limit women's willingness to enter running competitions. If women do decide to practice jogging, they treat it rather as an area of physical recreation. However, one can find a minority of amateur sportswomen also among runners. It seems significant, that in terms of running practice they become similar to men, adopting their patterns. However they are not consistent in this, and always show some level of specific "feminine" distance to sports efforts and ambitions.

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## **PANIE I PANOWIE NA START! O MODZIE NA BIEGANIE I SPORCIE CZASU WOLNEGO W DOŚWIADCZENIACH KOBIET I MĘŻCZYŹN**

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł dotyczy socjologicznego fenomenu mody na bieganie i dominującego udziału mężczyzn w tej modzie. Maskulinizacja mody na bieganie jest widoczna zwłaszcza w przypadku otwartych dla amatorów zawodów biegowych (np. na dystansie maratońskim) – zdecydowaną większość uczestników stanowią właśnie mężczyźni. Tłumaczyć to można różnicami w kulturowo określanych wzorach tego, co męskie i kobiece. Katalog cech stereotypowo męskich obejmuje bowiem m.in. takie charakterystyki, jak: dzielność, wytrzymałość czy siła. Odpowiadać im będzie nie tylko formuła takich sportów jak boks, zapasy czy podnoszenie ciężarów (tradycyjnie uznawanych za „męskie”), lecz także formuła biegu długodystansowego. Udział w takich zmaganiach może dla mężczyzn stanowić cenne potwierdzenie ich własnej męskości. W artykule wykorzystywane są wyniki własnych badań ankietowych, przeprowadzonych wśród uczestników DOZ Maratonu Łódzkiego z PZU w latach 2014–2015 (próba 2014: N = 1078; próba 2015: N = 1086). Dokumentują one, że na ogół dla kobiet bieganie stanowi jedynie relatywnie prosty sposób zadbania o własną sylwetkę i zdrowie, zaś dla mężczyzn jest tożsamościowo ważnym polem afirmacji męskości. Dlatego też mężczyźni częściej od kobiet uczestniczą w zawodach, przeznaczają większe kwoty na zakup niezbędnego sprzętu, a także częściej wstępują do klubów biegacza.

**Słowa kluczowe:** moda na bieganie, sport, rekreacja ruchowa, sport czasu wolnego, *gender*, zdrowie.