15 years of Poland's membership in the European Union

Support for Poland’s membership in the European Union has been very high. Since 2014, the acceptance of Poland’s presence in the EU has not decreased in CBOS surveys to a level below 80%. In March 2019, membership support reached a record high of 91%. Only one in twenty respondents is against membership in the EU.

After 15 years of membership, public assessments of the balance of integration for Poland are definitely positive. Overall, over three-quarters of respondents (78%) believe that Poland’s presence in the EU brings our country more benefits than losses. Every tenth thinks that the positive and negative effects of membership are equally strong, and only 7% think that losses prevail.

The effects of membership in the personal dimension are less clearly perceived. Nevertheless, positive evaluations (57%) prevail in this case. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) incline to the opinion that s/he has personally gained as much as lost from presence in the EU. Only relatively few (5%) believe that membership in the Union has brought them losses rather than benefits.

Similar questions about the perception of effects of integration have been asked many times, initially concerning expected results of EU accession. The results of these studies show that the perceived effects of integration have proved better than pre-accession projections. Already in the first years or even months of membership people were increasingly convinced of the positive effects of integration. During the first three years of our country's presence in the Union, the percentage of positive evaluations in the national dimension increased from 39% to 64%, while in the personal dimension it rose from 24% to 40%. Then the perception of the effects
of membership stabilized (assessments of the effects of integration temporarily deteriorated in 2013, when there was economic slowdown in Poland). The current membership impact assessments are therefore record-breaking. The proportion of people satisfied with the integration effects for Poland has increased by 16 percentage points in the last five years. The percentage of those who are convinced that they personally benefit from their presence in the Union increased by 14 points at that time.

Poles primarily see the economic benefits of EU membership, related to the functioning of the single market and the acquisition and use of EU funds. The vast majority (74%) are of the opinion that if our country had remained outside the Union, Poland would be developing worse than it actually is.

In recent years, clear symptoms of strengthening identification with Europe can be observed. Poles are more likely today than earlier to consider themselves Europeans. For the first time in our research, over half of respondents declare that they feel European (56% in total). In general, European identity is secondary to national identity, it is rarely considered more important.

Do you consider yourself as…

- **Polish only**: 52%
- **Polish and European**: 35%
- **European and Polish**: 34%
- **European only**: 20%
- **Don’t know**: 7%

**Views on this issue are related to the ideological orientation of respondents. People with right-wing views increased by 6 percentage points compared to April 2018, by 10 points compared to October 2016 and by 21 points compared to September 2012. However, it is difficult to expect that this indicator would approach the record level of March 1990, when 80% of respondents considered relations between Poland and USA as good.

**How do you evaluate the current state of relations between Poland and USA?**

![Bar chart showing changes in the perception of Poland-USA relations from 1987 to 2019.](chart)

Slightly less than half of respondents (45%) estimate that the benefits of Polish-American relations are more or less evenly distributed. About one third (32%) believe that the benefits accrue mainly to the United States. Poland is much less often indicated as the main beneficiary of the relation (7%).

**Do you think that the benefits from the relations between Poland and USA accrue mainly to…**

- **USA**: 32%
- **Poland**: 45%
- **Equally to both sides**: 16%
- **Don’t know**: 7%

**The state of Poland-USA relations**

Over half (53%) of respondents believe that Polish-American relations are good at present. Less than one-third (30%) believe that they are neither good nor bad. Only 6% of respondents say that the relationship between our country and the United States is bad.

The assessment of Polish-American relations is now better than in recent years. The percentage of respondents who believe that our relations with the United States are good...
and supporters of the ruling party more often than others are inclined to rate Polish-American relations as good, and they also tend to see them as symmetrical, i.e. important for both partners and mutually beneficial.

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: “Opinions about Polish-American Relations”, April 2019. Fieldwork for national sample: March 2019, N=982. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.

Violence and conflicts at home

More than one-fifth of Poles (22%) know personally or casually women beaten by their husbands or partners. In comparison with the results from seven years ago, we recorded a drop in the percentage of respondents declaring knowledge of victims of domestic violence, and the results obtained this year are part of a longer trend towards improvement.

Do you know personally or by casual acquaintance women who are beaten by their husband during marital conflicts?

According to the declarations, every tenth respondent who has been in a stable relationship has experienced aggression by the partner. Most often they were single events. It can be noted that in the last 17 years the percentage of people declaring that they experienced violence inflicted by the partner has been relatively stable.

In your marriage, has your spouse / partner hit you during an argument?

Analysing the results broken down by gender, women more often than men admit having hit a partner (12% v. 5%). It should be noted, however, that police statistics show that the number of female victims of violence is many times larger than male, while men tend to be perpetrators.

In your marriage, has your spouse / partner hit you during an argument?

The roles of the perpetrator and the victim are not always divided, because they may overlap. Over half of respondents hit by a partner (56%) declare that they also used violence themselves.

People who have experienced physical violence are much more likely than others to suffer from other forms of aggression. In total, almost a quarter of people currently in a relationship (24%) have experienced at least one of the other forms of aggression mentioned in the study. Among respondents who declared they were beaten by their partner, this percentage is much higher at 75%. The most common other forms of aggression are insults directed at the spouse or partner.

Men more often than women declare that they are insulted or offended, and subjected to threats or blackmail. They mention slightly more often limited contacts with family and friends.

Does it happen that your spouse (partner)...

Women more often than men admit having been beaten by partners (12% v. 8%). They also more often admit that such event occurred many times (6% v. 1%).

Every twelfth respondent (8%) admits striking a partner during an argument, usually mentioning a single event.
Poles are divided as to whether existing law protects women against domestic violence to a sufficient degree, but the prevailing conviction is that the protection is insufficient (47% v. 36%). Over the last seven years, there has been an increase in the belief that the law is appropriate (change from 28% to 36%). Women are more often convinced about the need to change regulations.

Which opinion is closer to your own view?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current legal provisions sufficiently protect women against domestic violence, they need only to be better enforced</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislation needs to be amended to ensure that women have adequate protection against domestic violence</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
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More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Violence and Conflicts at Home", April 2019. Fieldwork for national sample: February 2019, N=968. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.

Domestic violence against children

Almost nine years ago, the amendment to the law on countering domestic violence added to the family code an article prohibiting parents and guardians of children from using corporal punishment. Beating a child, if it has not caused bodily injury, does not have criminal consequences, but it may constitute grounds for limiting or removing parental authority.

Over the past seven years, disapproval of physical punishment has strengthened. Not only do more people than in 2012 believe that corporal punishment should not be applied to children (an increase of 10 percentage points, to 61%), but also there is stronger opposition to both spanking (increase from 61% to 70%), and smacking (increase from 25% to 37%). The percentage of adults accepting physical punishment has fallen to 34% (a decrease by 11 points). At present, 25% (an 11-point decrease) agree with the opinion that spanking has not harmed anyone yet, while 61% (a decrease by 12 points) think that there are situations in which you have to give a child a slap. While most Poles do not approve of corporal punishment, especially stronger beating (spanking), they still generally approve of light slapping, though less often than before.

Do you agree with the following statements?

In recent years, we have observed a gradual decrease in the scale of corporal punishment. Since 2001, the percentage of people admitting giving it has fallen from 44% to 8%, while the proportion of those who did it in the year preceding the survey fell from 21% to 2%. It should be borne in mind that decreasing acceptance of corporal punishment, as well as the ban on beating children, are not only likely to reduce the real scale of the phenomenon, but may also discourage some respondents from disclosing such behaviour.

When was the last time your child got a good spanking?

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Domestic Violence against Children", April 2019. Fieldwork for national sample: February 2019, N=968. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.