

## Long-distance running as a social phenomenon

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### Annotation:

In recent years the leisure activities that do not require any special qualifications, equipment or talents have gained the greatest popularity. People living in a civilized, urbanized world full of growing problems need a form of escape from the daily routine, and running provides an excellent opportunity for this.

**Objective.** The objective of the present paper was to characterize a small social group going in for recreational long-distance running. Detailed information gained this way might prove helpful when organizing leisure activities for people seeking new forms of recreation. Also, they might be a precious source of information for those who already practice and are looking for new solutions when developing their training loads.

**Materials and methods.** A survey that was carried out included 68 competitors enrolled in the Metropolis marathon Bydgoszcz-Torun and running at the distances of 21,1km and 42,2km. The competitors in the 20 to 60 age bracket were examined. The research method applied was a survey questionnaire.

**Conclusions.** Long-distance running is undoubtedly a developing social phenomenon that attracts more and more followers. The results presented might provide a valuable source of information for those who already practice and are looking for new solutions when developing their training loads.

**Станкевіч Блазей, Цесліцка Мірослава, Кортас Якуб, Ермаков Сергій. Біг на довгі дистанції як соціальне явище.** Останніми роками формою проведення вільного часу, яка придбала популярність, є недороге заняття, що не вимагає спеціальної підготовки, оснащення або здібностей. Люди, що проживають в певних зростаючих цивілізаційних проблемах урбанізації миру, вимагають відпочинку від такого щоденного життя, а біг дає їм таку можливість.

**Мета дослідження** – охарактеризувати щільні соціальні групи, що займаються рекреаційним бігом на довгі дистанції. Докладна інформація, що отримана таким чином, може надати допомогу в організації вільного часу для людей, які шукають нових форм рекреації. Також це може стати джерелом цінної інформації для осіб, що вже займаються і шукають нових рішень в програмуванні власних тренувальних навантажень.

**Матеріал і методи.** Проведено анкетування 68 спортсменів, що стартують на дистанції 21,1 км., а також 42,2 км. під час марафону мегаполісів Торун-Бидгощ. Опитана група спортсменів у віці 20-60 років. Методом дослідження справжньої роботи був запитальник анкети.

**Результати.** Бігуни і аматори, які брали участь в анкетуванні, віднесли до цього дуже серйозно, також як і спортсмени. Більше 50% респондентів тренуються для поліпшення результатів в спортивних змаганнях. Майже половина досліджуваних шукає в бігу спосіб позбавлення від зайвих кілограмів. Більшість бігаючих обгрунтовує своє заняття бігом в плані, що запропоновано фахівцями. Опитувані стверджують, що біг дозволяє їм заповнити вільне місце в їх житті, дозволяє забути про проблеми, укріпити їх впевненість, стає альтернативою для щоденних проблем.

**Висновки.** Поза сумнівом, це є соціальним явищем, яке весь час розвивається і притягує кожного разу більше прихильників. Отримані результати можна представити як джерело цінної інформації для осіб, що вже тренуються і які шукаючих нових рішень в програмуванні своїх власних тренувальних навантажень.

**Станкевич Блазей, Цеслицка Мирослава, Кортас Якуб, Ермаков Сергей. Бег на длинные дистанции как социальное явление.** В последние годы формой проведения свободного времени, которая приобрела популярность, является недорогое занятие, не требующее специальной подготовки, оснащения или способностей. Люди, проживающие в определенных возрастающих цивилизационных проблемах урбанизации мира, требуют отдыха от такой ежедневной жизни, а бег дает им такую возможность.

**Цель исследования** – охарактеризовать плотные социальные группы, занимающиеся рекреационным бегом на длинные дистанции. Подробная информация, полученная таким образом, может оказать помощь в организации свободного времени для людей, ищущих новых форм рекреации. Также это может стать источником ценной информации для уже занимающихся лиц и ищущих новых решений в программировании собственных тренировочных нагрузок.

**Материал и методы.** Проведено анкетирование 68 спортсменов, стартующих на дистанции 21,1 км, а также 42,2 км во время марафона мегаполисов Торун-Бидгощ. Опрошена группа спортсменов в возрасте 20-60 лет. Методом исследования настоящей работы был вопросник анкеты.

**Результаты.** Бегуны и аматоры, которые принимали участие в анкетировании, отнеслись к этому очень серьезно также как и спортсмены. Более 50% респондентов тренируются для улучшения результатов в спортивных соревнованиях. Почти половина исследуемых ищет в беге способ избавления от лишнего килограммов. Большинство бегущих обосновывает свое занятие бегом в плане предложенном специалистами. Опрашиваемые утверждают, что бег позволяет им заполнить свободное место в их жизни, позволяет забыть о проблемах, укрепить их уверенность, становится альтернативой для ежедневных проблем.

**Выводы.** Несомненно, это является социальным явлением, которое все время развивается и притягивает каждый раз больше сторонников. Полученные результаты можно представить как источник ценной информации для уже тренирующихся лиц и ищущих новых решений в программировании своих собственных тренировочных нагрузок.

### Key words:

run, distance, long, time, free.

біг, дистанція, довгий, час, вільний.

бег, дистанция, длинный, время, свободный.

### Introduction

In the last few years some forms of spending free time have gained a bigger popularity. These are forms which are relatively cheap, which neither demand any specific qualifications, equipment or talents. People are surrounded by dozens of different problems, because they live in a hectic, urban world. Hence, they need an escape from their everyday lives and it is the running which gives them such an opportunity. Running is becoming a way of live and one of the most popular forms of recreation. Running is a recreation and a physical activity taken up in leisure time for rest, pleasure and self-improvement. Contemporary medicine contributed to the extension of

human live, but whether we will live longer, depends only on us. Neutral attitude to own body and the act of being subjected to different facilities is a tacit contest both on the curtailment of a human's life and a habit that we can do little motor activity. Jacek Gracz and Tadeusz Sankowski [2] recall the fact that physical activity not only strengthens physical viability, diminishes the risk of osteoporosis (the reduction of bone mineral density) and diabetes, but also strengthens the heart and circulatory system, tempers and depurates the organism, improves blood supply and invigorates the nervous system. On the other hand, the lack of physical activity is a risk factor for many disturbances [3].

Both pleasure, which is given to a human being by physical activity and the state of contents which results

from it have a soothing, however, very often underrated, influence on a human being [3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. Hence, a man should take care of their physical activity taking into consideration the needs of their organism. Regular activity should be an element of men's life because in this way a man does not degrade them [1, 4]. Running has been being a part of human life since ever. In the past it used to be a fight for survival and life. Then, thanks to the Ancient Olympic Games, running was one of the main attractions. The past and the present of running are ups and downs. It is, for instance, the heroic run of a messenger from the Battle of Marathon – Pheidippides, through such great scandals as the one of Ben Johns' start in the final race during the Olympic Games in Seoul. These are great stories written by Bronislaw Malinowski during the memorable final race in Moscow or Bikili Abebe's barefoot deed in 1960 in Rome. Simultaneously, we should think about the tragedies of numerous amateur-runners, who paid their starts in long-distance races with their own health or even with lives. What makes people take up extreme efforts? Where does the running phenomenon come from? It is undeniable that running is a social phenomenon which is still developing and attracting more and more followers. In the past, a person running at the side of a road was a joke object, now they gain respect and admiration. The promotion of healthy lifestyle, the increase of social consciousness of the positive influence of motor activities on many diseases, caused a real boom in this sphere. Running is a way of life and one of many recreational forms. Running is a recreation and a physical activity taken up in leisure time for rest, pleasure and self-improvement. Physical recreation is directly entwined with the somatic sphere, it is concerned with the body and its functions [10].

People started to meet each others in the parks, forests and at the housing estates. They walk, run, take part in competitions, in which, as in the West, a great number of runners participate (sometimes even a few thousand of people). The marathon used to be described as an exclusive competition for high-endurance participants. Today it is one of the most popular discipline in the world. What is more, a great number of people runs in the marathon. Thousands of marathons are held throughout the world every year. The participants who run in the marathon are of different sport level. Amateurs run together with the biggest masters. The professional preparation of some of them meets the lack of experience of the others. However, the aim is common for everyone – to finish the race, win, improve the result or to overcome own inaccuracies.

#### **Aim**

The aim of this paper was to characterize a tight social group which runs in long-distance races. The peculiar information gained in this way can become helpful during free time organization for people who seek new forms of recreation. The results can be a source of important information for people who already train but look for new solutions while programing own training loads.

#### **Material and method**

The research was conducted among 68 contestants who start in 21,1 kilometers races and 42,2 kilometers

races during the Torun – Bydgoszcz Metropolis Marathon, which took place on July 6th, 2010 and gathered a few hundred people at the start line.

A group of contestants who are between 20 and 60 sixty years old was examined (picture 1) by the authors. The respondents who are between 30 and 40 years comprised 34% of the population, almost 24% were people at the age between 20 and 50 years. Only 3% of the respondents were contestants who were 20 years old at that time. The method applied in this paper was the diagnostics survey. It is a technique which gathers information through independent fulfillment of special questionnaires by a respondent. This questionnaires are highly standardized, the interviewer was not present when the questionnaire was answered.

#### **Results**

It is probably the specification of long-distance races which decides about such factors. Only two participants were younger than 20. The biggest group is comprised by people between the age of 30 and 40 which is 22 people. 10 contestants were older than 50 years. There was nobody who was born before the year 1950. Among all the amateur-runners only two confirmed that they are chain-smokers.

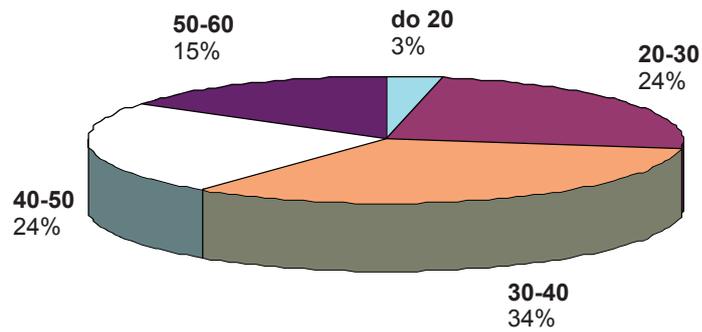
Picture 2 will present a better understanding of the meaning of running for the contestants.

Although the respondents did not represent a high sport level, which will be revealed further in this paper, almost 42% of the respondents treats running as a form of training before a start in a race, which is a serious attitude toward mass races, and are consciousness of the dangers which can emerge during running without a specific former preparation. Every fifth respondent wants to lose on weight some additional kilograms through running, every tenth respondent wants to relax after a tiring day at work. A relatively big group (24%) selected the answer *others*, which covers such statements that running is a pleasure, passion and fun derived from training, a way of spending free time, and for some of them just a kind of habit. It is important that almost everybody claims that jogging is such a form of activity that every healthy person can perform. Surely, respondents did not get their interest in long-distance running during Physical Education classes at school. More than 60% claim that classes of this type were sporadic, usually during tests and school competitions. Only 18% of the respondents recalls classes devoted to field athletics during their education at school.

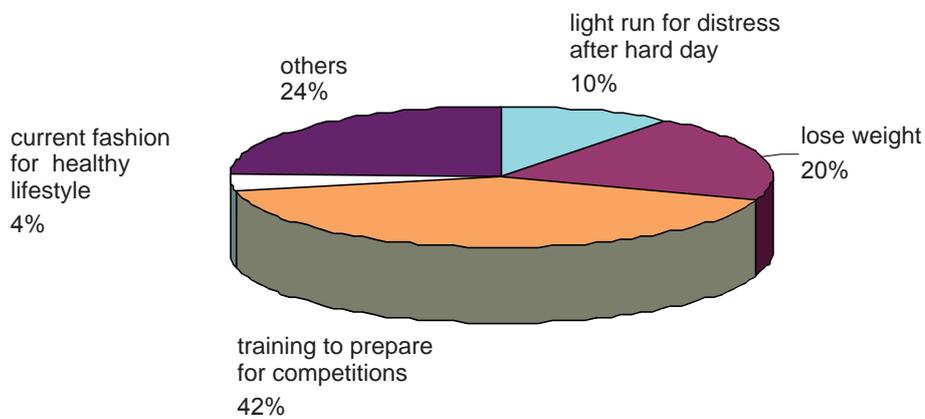
For a better recognition of the area the respondents live in, the authors posed a few questions connected with this aspect.

The question was whether our runners' parents performed any sport discipline. The majority – 91% answered negatively, and only 40% confirm that other people from their families do other sport disciplines. The situation is different in their neighborhood. Here, more than 70% confirm that someone from their closest neighborhood goes jogging.

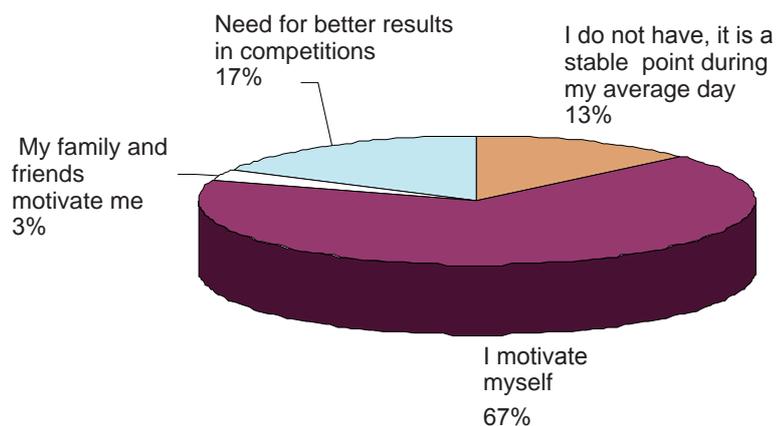
The next question is concerned with motivation. The first question concerned its source. The answers are depicted in drawing number three.



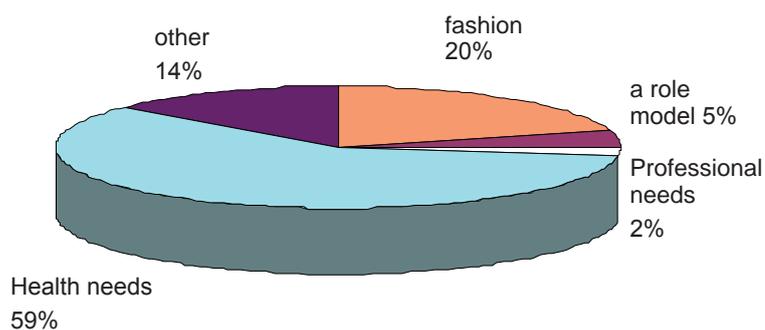
*Drawing 1. The age of amateur-runners who participated in the research*



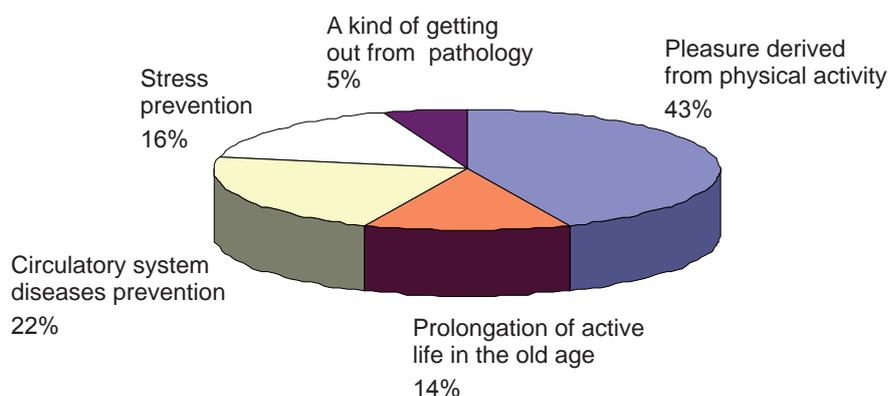
*Drawing 2. The meaning of jogging for the participants*



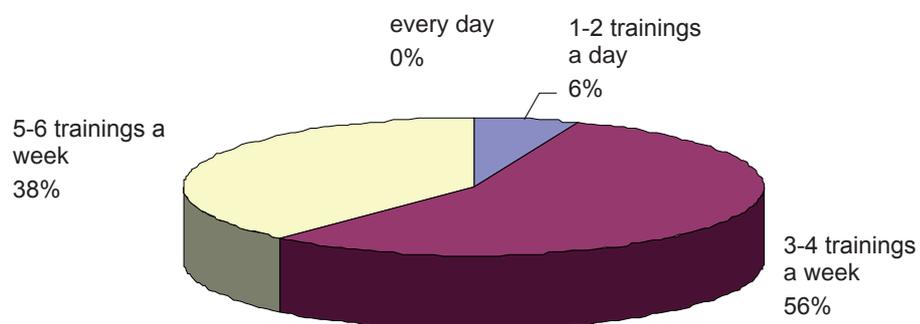
*Drawing 3. Motivational sources for recreational training*



*Drawing 4. What is, in your opinion, the main reason for starting healthy running training?*



*Drawing 5. Factors which convinced respondents to go jogging*



*Drawing 6. The frequency of trainings performed by the sportsmen asked in a micro period of one week realized by the runners surveyed.*

Among all respondents, almost 52 people said that they motivate themselves on their own. The need for better results in competitions and everyday habits gained only, respectively, 17% and 13% of all voices. Only three people say that they are being motivated by their friends or family members. The question whether someone encouraged the respondents to take up recreational training, was answered by 74% of the respondents in a negative way. Similarly a high level of negative answers (68%) was obtained when the authors asked about sport success achieved by people from their closest companionship. It is the television and mass media which influence the respondents in a direct way. Almost 53% of the respondents derives motivation from these sources, identifying themselves with the success of family sportsmen. It is really positive that 100% of the respondents surveyed is not ashamed of their appearance while going jogging in sport outfit.

The next question posed was the following: Which factor is, in your opinion, the biggest cause of starting and continuation of health running training? The answer is visible in picture 4.

Drawing 4 points to health needs, as the main cause for starting a running training. It is a factor which confirms the thesis about high consciousness of health importance in the society. Every fifth respondent is steered by fashion. Only four people take pattern after public people, two are modeled by the improvement of health condition from professional reasons. Twelve people said that such factors as good mood, need for competitive behaviors and a way of spending free time are the main reasons for starting physical activity.

Pleasure derived from physical activity is a sentence which found the biggest number of followers (43%). Sixteen people are convinced by the statement that running will help them prevent different diseases connected with the circulatory system. Smaller groups of respondents are in favor of the remaining answers. Only four people claim that the jogging training is an aid to fight with different kind of pathology.

The next part of the research was concerned with the training itself. According to 75% of the running respondents, their activity is not planned in a special training schedule. However, a half of the whole population follows a previously outlined plan. Such a plan is usually created by themselves. They take into consideration information gained from different publications or via the Internet (48%), 28% plan their training taking into account their previous experience. It is alarming that the smallest group is comprised by people who seek professional advice of former participants or professional trainers, so people who are conditioned to give professional advice about the running training.

The frequency of trainings performed by the sportsmen asked in a micro period of one week is presented in drawing 6.

The number of training units realized by the respondent confirms the recreational attitude towards long-distance running, the majority of them (56%) practices jogging 3 or 4 times a week. Almost 40% trains 5 or 6 times a week. Nobody does the training every day or several times a day,

and only four respondents train once or twice a week. The time devoted to a particular unit is illustrated in picture 7.

Almost a half of the competitors devotes 60 minutes every time to each training. Almost 40% of the population surveyed always trains about 90 minutes. 12 runners trains more than 90 minutes, and only 2 runners train about 30 minutes. Drawing 8 presents the average volume of each training unit among amateur-runners who participate in our survey.

The training of nearly a half of the interviewees is between 10 and 20 kilometers on average. Only two of the people surveyed declared that their training is not longer than six kilometers. Only a little more then 30% of the respondents runs distances between 6 and 10 kilometers. Comparatively a big group of respondents runs more than 20 kilometers at once as their training. Two respondents claim, that they run more than 30 kilometers during each training.

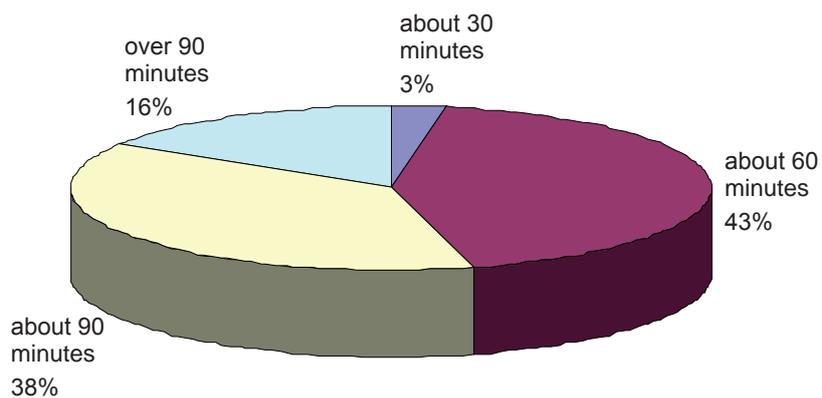
The next very interesting information is included in drawing 9 which shows the week volume expressed in kilometers.

Weekly loads tend to space proportionally. 34 of the respondents (50%) realizes between 30 and 60 kilometers during each week. 14 interviewees run up to 30 kilometers a week, and 16 run between 60 and 90 kilometers. Among the whole population surveyed there were only four people who train up to 120 kilometers in one micro period of one week. Nobody declared loads exceeding 120 kilometers each week. It should be indicated that the loads of professional runners who prepare for participation in the marathon seldom amounts less than 200 kilometers a week. It is a next confirmation for amateur attitude towards this tough sphere of the marathon.

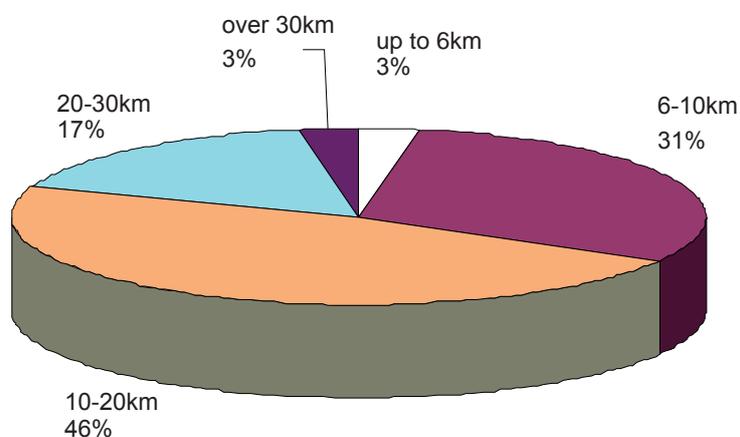
The character of work done at different trainings by the runners surveyed are presented graphically in picture 10.

A half of the sportsmen surveyed diversifies their exercises and very often trains changing the distance and the route. 35% of the respondents realize their trainings according to the sport training theory and does exercises which involve elements of special endurance, speed and strength. Only 16% of respondents claim that they train on the same route with constant or changeable speed.

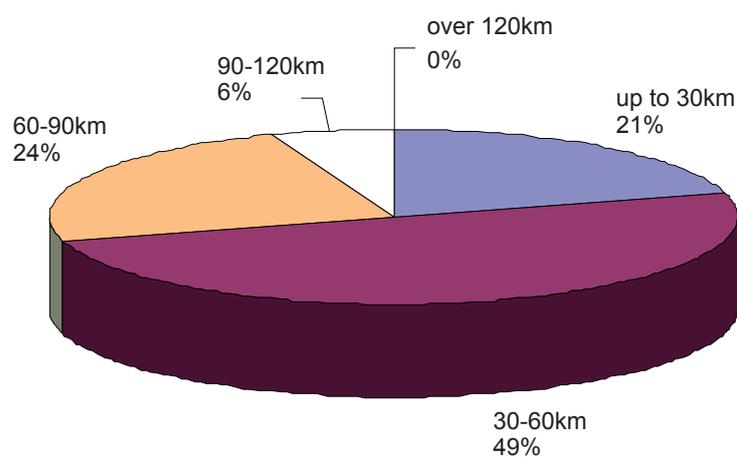
While being asked about a specific diet which should boost the number of better results 62% of the interviewees claim that they do not follow any diet, however, 38% answered this question positively. Similar proportions can be noticed while analyzing the answers about the application of special support for sportsmen. 41% of the sportsmen surveyed confirm that they use special productive supplements for athletes. Diverse proportions were obtained, when the respondents were to assess their usage of special liquids drunk during endurance trainings. 65% of the amateur-competitors drink special liquids during their endurance trainings. 35% do not make use of any supplementary elements. Satisfying is the situation presented in drawing 11 which is concerned with the amount of liquids which should be drunk during the marathon.



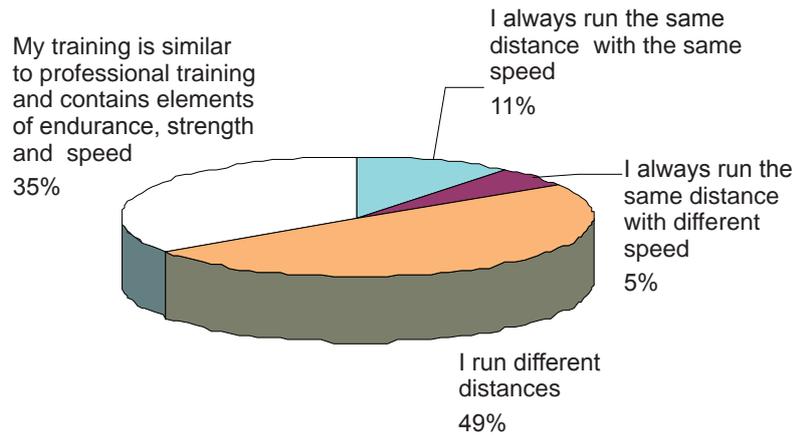
*Drawing 7. Average time devoted to one training unit by the competitors surveyed*



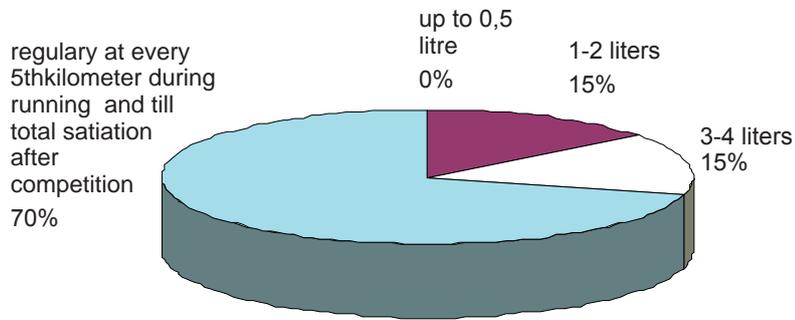
*Drawing 8. Average volume of a training unit realized by the respondents surveyed*



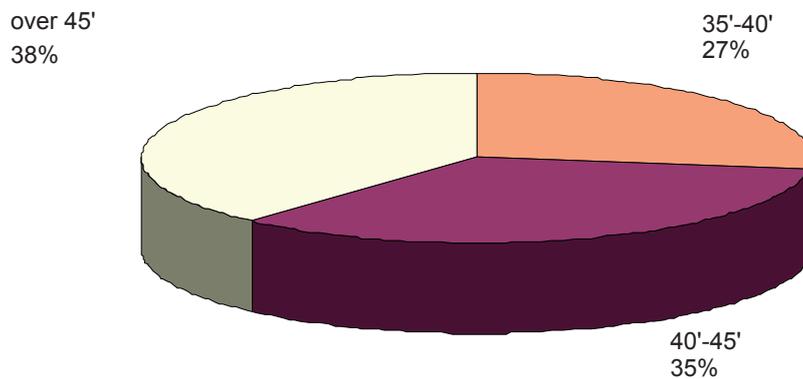
*Drawing 9. The number of kilometers run in the micro period of one week.*



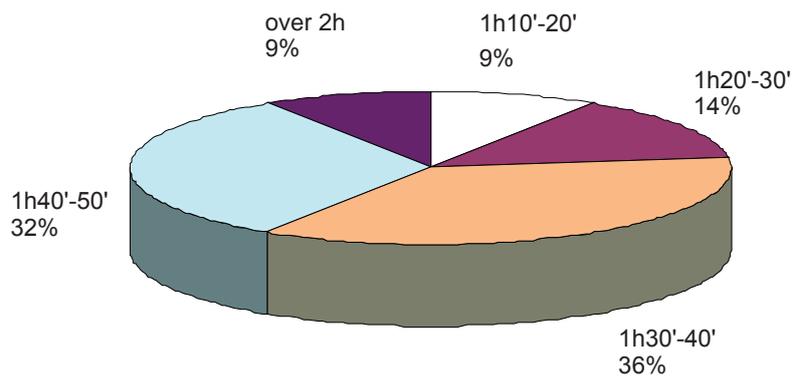
*Drawing 10. The way of realization of running training by respondents*



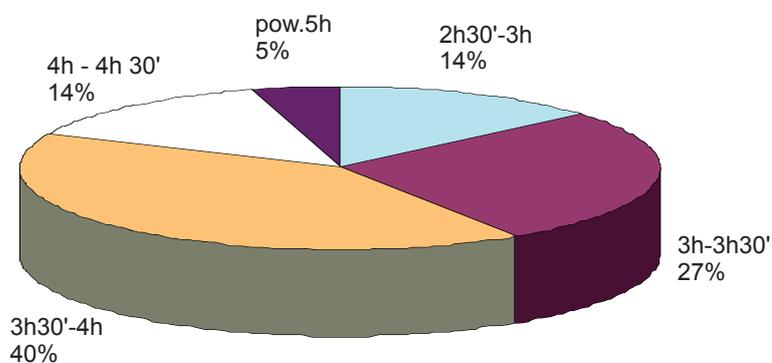
*Drawing 11. Amount of liquids which should be drunk during the marathon according to respondents' opinion*



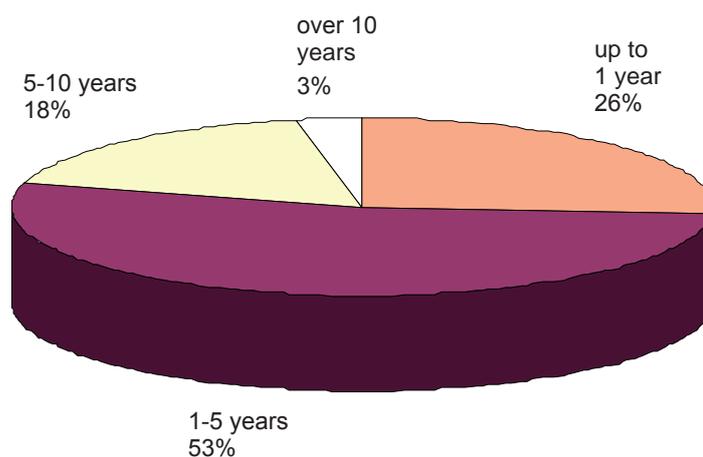
*Drawing 12. The level of results in 10 kilometers run among the sportsmen surveyed*



Drawing 13. The level of results in the race of 21,1 kilometers among the runners surveyed



Drawing 14. The level of results in the marathon race among the runners surveyed



Drawing 15. Training experience of the recreational athletes who participate in the research.

A vast majority of the interviewees (70%) think that liquids should be drunk regularly during the marathon, at every fifth kilometer, and after the end of the competition until the total satiation. Ten people claim that one or two liters drunk at this distance are enough. The same number of respondents is in favour of the opinion that three or four liters are enough during the race. There are not any respondents who claim that a runner should not drink anything during the race.

The next questions were focused on the designation of the sport level in the group examined. The first of them was concerned with the participation in competitions different than the marathon. Only 8 sportsmen answered this question negatively. They claim that they have never started in races at different distances. A group of sixty people participated in races on shorter distances. In the group surveyed there were 24 people who have participated in the marathon and in the half-marathon for the first time. Among the whole group of respondents 18 people did competitive sport before.

Drawings number 12, 13, and 14 depict the level of the results in races at distances of 10 kilometers, 21,1 kilometers and 42,2 kilometers. The distances of 10 kilometers and the half-marathon are two of the most basic elements of training in the start form, applied in the marathon training.

The above presented drawing confirms the not very high sport level. The biggest group which comprises 38% of all people asked, did not run the distance of 10 kilometers faster than in 45 minutes. If a competitor wants to pass the route in the time mentioned before it is inevitable to run every kilometer at least with the same speed of 4 minutes and 3 seconds. For those runners who train medium and long-distance runs, the speed at 4 minutes and 30 kilometers is a speed for training. A group of 35% passes the distance of 10 kilometers in either 40 or 45 minutes and only 27% is able to run less in than 40 minutes time.

A similar level can be observed during the half-marathon distance. While analyzing the results presented in drawing number 12, we can notice, that the biggest group of the competitors reaches the results at the level between 1 hour 30 minutes and 1 hour 50 minutes, altogether 68%. Only 23% of the amateur-sportsmen reaches results better than 1 hour 30 minutes, in this 9% run faster than 1 hour 20minutes. Also the run of 9% of the people surveyed lasts more than 2 hours.

The results obtained during the marathon race are a consequence of those which were discussed in drawing 11 and 12. The biggest group (40%), is comprised by people who obtain the results between 3 hours and 30minutes and 4 hours. Less than 30% of the runners surveyed obtain the results between 3 hours and 3 hours 30 minutes. Only 14% ended their marathon race faster than in 3 hours time. The same group of respondents has never run faster than in 4 hours time. 5% of the competitors run the marathon distance slower than in 5 hours time.

The level of the results obtained can be entwined with the training experience of the people asked. This issue is presented in drawing 14.

The above presented drawing confirms the fact that the amateur running is still a new sport discipline in our country. Only not a very numerous group of 21% runs regularly longer than five years. A vast majority of 53% has been training between one and five years, and almost 30% go jogging regularly shorter than twelve months.

For 56% of the athletes surveyed the season of the year does not influence their mobilization for a training, 38% prefer spring to other seasons, and two people prefer summer, the same number is in favour of winter, as periods which offer them optimal conditions to run. The runners asked train most likely in the forest (59%), 26% prefer paths in parks, and 15% trains on roads, mainly away from the urban area. No respondents pointed to an athletics stadium as a place for their trainings. All respondents claim amicably that systematical jogging can exert a positive influence on life expectancy, health and physical fitness.

Over 60% of the respondents are aware of the basic performance-enhancing tests, the biggest group lists the Cooper Test. However, such answers as Conconi Test or PWC 170 appeared as well. Almost 80% of the people who participated in the research can describe the pattern 3x30x130. 1% of the respondents say that the sometimes suffer from the most common health problems, among which the lower limbs trauma is the most popular. Only 9% list problems with the joints of the spine.

### **Conclusions**

As it results from the above considerations, almost 42% of the respondents treats running as a kind of preparation before a participation in a competition. It is a confirmation that the attitude toward mass running is serious and that the participants are conscious of all the dangers they can face if they are not well-prepared. Every fifth respondent would like to lose on weight some additional kilograms and every tenth wants top relieve stress, wind down after a tiring day spent in a workplace. A relatively big group (24%) selected the answer others, which covers such statements that running is a pleasure, passion, fun derived from training, a way of spending free time, and for some of them just a kind of habit. It is important that almost all the respondents surveyed recognized the fact that jogging is such a form of activity which can be practiced by all healthy people. It indicates that health needs are still the biggest motivation for starting a running training. It is a confirmation for the fact that the society is characterized by high level of consciousness about this issue. Every fifth respondent is steered by fashion.

Pleasure derived form physical activity is a statement which gained the biggest number of followers (43%). A half of the whole population of the amateur-runners diversifies their exercises and very often trains changing the distance and the route, 35% of the respondents realize their trainings according to the sport training theory and does exercises which involve elements of special endurance, speed and strength. Only 16% of respondents claim that they train on the same route with constant or changeable speed. Amateur running is still a new sport discipline in our country. Only not a very numerous group of 21% runs regularly longer than five years. A vast

majority of 53% has been training between one and five years, and almost 30 % go jogging regularly shorter than twelve months.

For 56% of the athletes surveyed the season of the year does not influence their mobilization for a training, 38% prefers spring to other seasons, and two people prefer summer, the same number is in favour of winter, as periods which offer optimal conditions for them to run. The runners asked train most likely in the forest (59%), 26% prefer paths in the parks, and 15% trains on roads,

mainly away from the urban area. No respondents pointed to an athletics stadium as a place for their trainings. All respondents claim amicably that systematical jogging can exert a positive influence on life expectancy, health and physical fitness. To sum up, we can conclude that physical activity can be done an any stage of our lives. Physical activity is, undoubtedly, a social phenomenon, which is still developing and which attracts more and more followers.

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