


**State Management in Times of Crisis: Perception of
the Government's Policy of Counteracting the
COVID-19 Pandemic in Poland**

Political Preferences
2022, vol. 30, no. 1: 19-34
journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/PP
Submitted: 20/08/2022
Accepted: 1/09/2022
DOI:10.31261/polpre.2022.1.19-34




Maciej Szostak

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9922-3682>

Agata Olszanecka-Marmola

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0382-2267>

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought entirely new challenges to state crisis management. Until then, none of the governments had faced the need to stop almost all social and economic life. The fight against the pandemic required the introduction of numerous restrictions limiting mobility and interpersonal contacts. Initially, people did not widely deny their necessity, but over time parts of society protested increasingly against further restrictions. In this article, we check whether party preferences and socio-demographic features influenced the assessment of the Polish government's actions to counter the pandemic's spread. For this purpose, we develop a 10-item anti-COVID-19 activity (ACA) scale consisting of a general assessment of COVID-19 counteracting activity and evaluation of its various dimensions (e.g., online education, health care system, vaccination system and help for entrepreneurs). The research confirms a significant difference in how government activities are perceived in relation to political preferences and gender. The study participants negatively assessed the anti-COVID policy. Furthermore, men and voters of the Confederation turned out to be particularly unfavorable to the government's actions.

Keywords: state management, governance, COVID-19 policy, COVID-19 restrictions, anti-COVID-19 activity (ACA) scale

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has changed almost every aspect of society's everyday life. It prompted researchers not only to undertake research strictly related to the medical aspects of COVID-19, but also to show the impact of the pandemic on the social behavior of individuals as well as the media (Mach et al., 2021; Olszanecka-Marmola, 2021) and political reality (Lalot et al., 2022; Woods et al., 2020). The pandemic forced government officials almost all over the world to introduce various types of restrictions to reduce the spread

of the virus. Research conducted in Western democracies shows that political preferences play a role in compliance with restrictions (Howard, 2022; Kiviniemi et al., 2022; Leventhal et al., 2021) and willingness to vaccinate (Cowan et al., 2021; Fridman et al., 2021; Milligan et al., 2021). Similar relationships are also diagnosed in Poland, where particular party preferences determine the approach to the pandemic and anti-COVID-19 restrictions. Among the party electorates, voters of the right-wing Confederation show the greatest aversion to preventive behavior (Maj & Skarżyńska, 2020), vaccination (Głowacki, 2021) and COVID-19 restrictions (Roguska, 2021). They also indicate least trust in the recommendations of scientists (Sadowski et al., 2021) and extensive confidence in COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs (Czech & Ścigaj, 2020; Pankowski, 2020). Thus, MEPs from this party have consistently tried to capitalize on these sentiments by not respecting restrictions, denying the danger of a pandemic, and participating in demonstrations against the COVID-19 limits (Sitnicka, 2021).

In this article, we propose a slightly different approach to analyzing the perception of government actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrary to other studies, we do not treat the assessment of government policy as a one-dimensional variable. Instead, we create the anti-COVID-19 activity (ACA) scale. This 10-item measure consists of an evaluation of general COVID-19 counteracting activity, as well as an assessment of various dimensions (e.g., online education, health care system, vaccination system, help for entrepreneurs). The main goal of the research was to determine the public sentiment toward the Polish government's COVID-19 pandemic response policy in relation to party preferences, gender, and place of residence. At the beginning of the article, we present the legal basis of the crisis management system in Poland and the schedule of restrictions introduced by the government in 2020-2021. This reflection is the background to the section presenting the research results relating to assessing of government policy in COVID-19 counteracting.

Crisis management in Poland

According to article 2 of the *Crisis Management Act (2007)*, crisis management can be defined in the light of Polish law as follows: “Crisis management is the activity of public administration bodies that is part of the management of national security, which consists of preventing crisis situations, preparing to take control over them by means of planned actions, reacting in the event of crisis situations, removing their effects and restoring resources and critical infrastructure.” Crisis management usually refers to a situation resulting from a threat, leading as a consequence

to the rupture or significant weakening of social ties, while at the same time seriously disrupting the functioning of public institutions, but to such an extent that the measures used to ensure and restore security do not justify the introduction of any of the states of emergency provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

Crisis management in Poland at the central level is carried out by the Council of Ministers. In special situations, they are exercised by the minister of internal affairs, using the Government Crisis Management Team and the Government Centre for Security. The government appointed local representatives respond to crises with help from provincial teams and crisis management centers. At the local level, elected officials and the head of the executive oversee crisis management with the help of local crisis management teams and crisis management centers.

Crisis management in the administration is an integral part of national security. It plays a fundamental role in resolving crises under time pressure. It counteracts threats and prepares the country in the event of their occurrence and maintains or restores stability. A responsibly organized and dynamically operating national security system should ensure the constant functioning of society in unexpected and crisis situations, regardless of the source of the threat.

The Polish national security system is an internally coordinated set of organizational, human and material elements aimed at counteracting threats to the state. The political responsibility for this task lies with the public authorities, in particular the government and parliament. These authorities are responsible for preparing the legal instruments, procedures and operating rules of the system. It is based on three essential pillars: diplomacy, military, and civilian readiness. Managing national security is a continuous process, involving both actions taken during the absence of threats and also when a specific threat appears.

The organizational structure of the national security management system is hierarchical. Decisions are always taken at the level of central authorities, and then they are forwarded to individual ministers, local government administration, and then to all or specific entities of local government and other organizational units included in the system of managing national security.

In the system of governing national security, every level of public authority functions. At the central level, it is made up of the President of the Republic of Poland, the Council of Ministers and central government administration bodies. At the level of the voivodship, the voivodes are the highest organs of government administration in the areas they administer, and in this respect local government elected leaders such as city presidents or mayors are subordinate to

government administration. In situations of threat to national security, all these bodies are responsible for the performance of tasks, the flow of information and the disposal of resources at the lowest executive level.

The management of national security in detail is regulated by the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the preparation of the system of managing national security (2018)*. The framework for the functioning of the national security management system is defined in the *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland (2020)*.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 is a document of the highest rank when it comes to regulating security issues. In the field of crisis management, it lists three types of states of contingency: war, emergency and natural disaster. A state of contingency should be understood as the emergence of a situation of particular danger in a state, the solution of which requires recourse to specific measures, as ordinary constitutional measures are insufficient. These states may be introduced by statute or by ordinance, which is subject to public disclosure. Separate laws define the principles of operation of public authorities and the extent to which the freedoms and rights of man and citizen may be restricted (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997*).

According to article 232 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1997)*, “In order to prevent or remove the consequences of a natural catastrophe or a technological accident exhibiting characteristics of a natural disaster, the Council of Ministers may introduce, for a definite period no longer than 30 days, a state of natural disaster in a part of or upon the whole territory of the State. An extension of a state of natural disaster may be made with the consent of the Sejm.” A state of emergency can be imposed both throughout the country and in the selected area. Its purpose is to restore conditions to the normal functioning of the state. Detailed issues related to the state of emergency were regulated in the *State of Emergency Act (2002)*.

A state of emergency may be introduced on the basis of a decree of the President – at the request of the Council of Ministers – in the event of a threat to the constitutional system of the state, the security of citizens or public order. The President may declare a state of emergency for no more than 90 days, but – in a justified case – this period may be extended by another 60 days. When the reasons for which the state of emergency has been extended cease to exist, the President may lift it before the expiry of the period for which it was originally supposed to apply. The government again requests that the duration of the state of emergency be shortened, and if the President agrees, it issues an appropriate regulation.

In accordance with article 231 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1997)*, the Regulation on the introduction of martial law shall be submitted by the President of the Republic to the Parliament within 48 hours of signing the regulation. The Parliament shall consider the President's decree and may repeal it by an absolute majority of votes in the presence of at least half of the statutory number of Deputies.

COVID-19 pandemic in Poland

The first case of COVID-19 was reported December 1, 2019, and the cause was a then-new coronavirus later named SARS-CoV-2. In Poland, from January 31, 2020, the National Institute of Public Health began a series of laboratory tests of patients suspected of being infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. For passengers arriving in Poland from China, Warsaw Chopin Airport on January 25 introduced location forms and examination of people with symptoms (*Chopin Airport Announcement, 2020*). In the face of the growing threat, the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate began systematic publication of warnings for those leaving Poland to countries with numerous infections and recommended taking special precautions and avoiding human clusters. In Polish hospitals, at the end of February 2020, the introduction of a ban on visits began. The National Institute of Public Health has been testing samples for the presence of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus since January 31, 2020, and on March 4, 2020, the then Minister of Health Łukasz Szumowski announced at a press conference that the first case of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus had been detected in Poland (*Ministry of Health, 2020a*).

Table 1. Government anti-COVID actions between March and April 2020

Date of implementation	Government action
March 7, 2020	The President of the Republic of Poland signs the Act of 2 March 2020 on special solutions related to the prevention, counteracting and combating COVID-19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them. The Act provides, among other things, the possibility of introducing remote work during quarantine or payment of benefits for the time of closing schools, kindergartens and nurseries (<i>Act on special solutions related to the prevention, counteracting and combating COVID-19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them, 2020</i>).
March 10, 2020	Canceling of all mass events (<i>Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2020a</i>).
March 12, 2020	Closing of all educational institutions and universities (<i>Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2020b</i>).
April 14, 2020	Declaring a state of epidemic emergency (<i>Regulation of the Minister of Health, 2020</i>).
April 15, 2020	Closing of the borders for foreigners (<i>Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2020c</i>).
April 20, 2020	Introducing a state of epidemic in Poland (<i>Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2020d</i>).

Source: own elaboration.

A ban on public gatherings of more than 50 people, including state and religious gatherings, was introduced. Article 116 of the *Code of Misdemeanours (1971)* allowed the imposition of a fine of a maximum of 5,000 PLN. In addition, article 161 § 2 of the *Criminal Code (1997)* gave the possibility of imprisonment for up to a year for people who did not comply with the quarantine rules. Regulation of the Minister of Health introduced, among others, a nationwide movement ban (*Regulation of the Minister of Health of 24 March, 2020*). Since April 1, parks, boulevards and beaches have been closed, and the activities of hairdressing, cosmetic and tattoo salons have been suspended. People under 18 years of age were allowed to stay in public spaces only with an adult guardian. In all supermarkets and service points from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., only people over 65 years of age could be served (*Act of 31 March, 2020; Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 31 March, 2020*). From April 3 to 11, the State Forests introduced a temporary ban on access to forests. The ban was later extended until April 19. In addition, from April 16, the obligation to cover the mouth and nose in public places was introduced. There were still restrictions on religious ceremonies, also during Easter – including the rule that no more than 5 people can be in the church simultaneously (*Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 10 April, 2020*). At a press conference on April 16, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced the gradual lifting of restrictions (*Ministry of Affairs Internal and Administration, 2020*).

Table 2. Regionalization of restrictions introduced by the government in August 2020

Yellow county restrictions	Red county restrictions
1. In public spaces, you do not need to wear masks or face shields. However, a social distance of 1.5 meters should be maintained.	1. The obligation to wear masks or face shields everywhere in public spaces.
2. Weddings and other family events: up to 100 people.	2. Weddings and other family events: up to 50 people.
3. Restaurants and gastronomy: the obligation to cover the mouth and nose and max. 1 person per 4 sq. m.	3. Restaurants and gastronomy: the rule of covering the mouth and nose applies and a maximum of 1 person per 4 sq. m.
4. Churches and places of worship: obligation to cover the mouth and nose to the exclusion of persons performing religious worship.	4. Churches and places of worship: maximum 1 person per 4 sq. m, up to 150 people outside.
5. Cinemas and other cultural events: 25% of occupied seats.	5. Cinemas and other cultural events: 25% of occupied seats.
6. Fairs, conferences, congresses, exhibitions: 1 person per 4 sqm. Obligation to cover the mouth and nose.	6. Amusement parks: prohibition of participation and organization.
7. Amusement parks: 1 person per 5 sq. m.	7. Fairs, conferences, congresses, exhibitions: no participation and organization.
8. Gyms, clubs and fitness centers: 1 person per 7 sq. m.	8. Gyms, clubs and fitness centers: 1 person per 10 sq. m.
9. Sporting events: 25% of the audience. Obligation to cover the mouth and nose.	9. Sporting events: no audience.

Source: *Regionalization – restrictions in counties with the largest increase in infections (2020)*.

After the temporal lifting of some restrictions due to the increase in infections and deaths in August, it was decided to implement additional restrictions to 19 counties with the largest increases in infections in Poland ([Ministry of Health, 2020b](#)). Greater restrictions were in force in counties marked in red. Milder rigors occurred in counties marked in yellow. In the counties marked with green, there were no changes in restrictions.

Whole Poland was included in the yellow zone on October 10. In addition to the yellow zone, which covered the whole country, there was a red zone in 6 cities and 32 counties. In response to the deteriorating disease situation in the country, the Minister of Health announced the opening of a temporary hospital in each province ([The whole country covered by the yellow zone, 2020](#)). These hospitals were to be built in spacious places such as stadiums or halls and were to provide an additional hospitalization place for COVID-19 patients in each province. The first such hospital was organized at the PGE National Stadium in Warsaw ([Temporary covid hospitals, 2020](#)). During a press conference on October 23, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced that due to the rapid daily increases in the number of infections since October 24, the whole of Poland was becoming a red zone ([The whole Poland is the Red Zone, 2020](#)).

On October 30, 2020, the government decided to introduce several new restrictions, which would take effect the next day ([New restrictions from Saturday, 2020](#)). The new restrictions included the closure of cemeteries for three days: from October 31 to November 2, 2020. This decision was explained by the desire to prevent a large number of people from gathering in public transport and cemeteries. On November 4, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced new restrictions that came into force on November 7 and were to apply until November 29. The introduced restrictions concerned, among others: schools, shopping malls and hotels ([Further new restrictions, 2020](#)). Subsequent restrictions were a reaction to the continuous records of daily COVID-19 infections.

On 4 November, the Prime Minister presented a model for introducing thresholds for the stages of safety rules at a press conference. The stages depended on the average number of infections for the last 7 days per 100,000 inhabitants of Polish. Then came another, similar model for determining the thresholds of the stages of safety rules: the average daily number of infections from 7 days. This system was to determine the possible tightening or loosening of restrictions ([Thresholds of the stages of safety rules, 2020](#)). In addition to introducing new restrictions and extending the existing restrictions, similar to European countries, Poland introduces restrictions

on New Year's Eve. On this day, from 19:00 to 6:00 from December 31, 2020 to January 1, 2021, there was a country-wide travel ban. The exception was the necessary official activities (*National quarantine, 2020*). From February 1, 2021, the restrictions were temporarily loosened. Shops in shopping malls, art galleries and museums were opened with a mandatory sanitary regime.

School classes 1-3 from March 20 to April 9 returned to remote learning (*Lockdown in Poland, 2021*). From March 27, further restrictions aimed at combating the pandemic began to apply. They were announced at a press conference by the Minister of Health, Adam Niedzielski, on 25 March (*Tightening of restrictions, 2021*). The list of new restrictions included: the closure of all large-format furniture and construction stores with an area of over 2,000 sq. m. Shopping centers and shopping malls remained closed. Students of all grades of primary schools, secondary schools and all educational facilities were constantly learning remotely. Nurseries and kindergartens were closed for the safety of children and parents. Parents could take advantage of an additional care allowance.

All the current restrictions have been extended until April 18, which the Minister of Health announced on April 7. The extension of the limits was caused by the crisis in the number of available hospital beds due to the high number of daily hospitalizations (*Extension of restrictions, 2021*).

From 26 April, a gradual easing of restrictions began. In most voivodships, the return of children in grades 1-3 to schools in a hybrid form was allowed. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki presented the plan to lift the restrictions at a joint conference with the Minister of Health on April 28 (*Easing safety rules, 2021*). The restrictions gradually disappeared over time. The easing program began on May 1 and lasted until May 29.

Methods

In the presented study, we used an online survey method. Due to pandemic restrictions, the survey was only available to respondents through social media. We published the questionnaire on a dozen Facebook groups that gathered supporters of different Polish political parties. Respondents anonymously and independently (without an interviewer) filled out the research instrument concerning socio-demographic variables (gender, age, level of education, dwelling-place), political preferences, and 14 research questions about government actions counteracting

the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the research questions, respondents determined their positions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“definitely not” or “definitely negative”) to 5 (“definitely yes” or “definitely positive”). To pretest our questionnaire, we firstly conducted the pilot study, which took place from April 13 to April 20, 2021. After the pilot was completed, the actual research lasted from May 11 to May 31, 2021.

During the study, additional restrictions were lifted concurrently and the pandemic accompanied Poles for more than a year. The mood of society was noticeably changing at the time in the face of various controversies related to combating the pandemic. The survey was supposed to examine the scale of respondents' negative attitudes toward the government's actions, as well as their general attitude toward controversial issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines or feelings toward remote learning. To summarize, the study sought to determine society's position on various aspects of daily life in pandemic realities while also seeking what factors influenced them.

The main hypothesis of the study was that the vast majority of respondents would have a negative attitude towards the government's actions, the introduced restrictions, and the general situation in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we put forward three detailed hypotheses relating to party preferences and socio-demographic variables:

H1: Gender differentiates the assessment of government actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2: Place of residence differentiates the assessment of the government's actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic.

H3: Political preferences differentiates the assessment of the government's actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The total number of people who participated in the survey was 485. While analyzing the results, we removed survey fillings that presented extreme and contrasting positions that exceeded the logically acceptable norm. The study's final analysis also excluded people under eighteen and those without voting rights. Following the reduction, the number of fillings considered in the survey results fell to 401 respondents. A detailed description of the study sample is included in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of study sample

Variable	n (%)	Variable	n (%)
Gender		Party preferences	
Male	226 (56.4)	Civic Coalition (Civic Platform, Modern)	37 (9.2)
Female	175 (43.6)	Left (New Left, Left Together)	70 (17.5)
Age		Confederation	90 (22.4)
18-26	299 (74.6)	Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050	64 (16.0)
27-36	58 (14.5)	Law and Justice	11 (2.7)
37-45	26 (6.5)	Other party	11 (2.7)
46-55	11 (2.7)	I will not vote	17 (4.2)
56-65	5 (1.2)	I do not know	80 (20.0)
>65	2 (.5)	I will consciously cast an invalid vote	21 (5.2)
Place of residence		Education Level	
rural area	57 (14.2)	primary education	17 (4.2)
up to 20,000 inhabitants' city	23 (5.7)	vocational education	9 (2.2)
20,001-100,000 inhabitants' city	83 (20.7)	secondary education	223 (55.6)
100,001-200,000 inhabitants' city	73 (18.2)	higher education	152 (37.9)
200,001 and more inhabitants' city	165 (41.1)		

Source: own study (n=401).

Results

The research confirms a negative perception of the actions of the Polish government during the COVID-19 pandemic diagnosed in public opinion polls (Roguska, 2021). The respondents were particularly pessimistic about the government's general activities, help for entrepreneurs offered by the government, and the functioning of online education. They also declared little trust in government announcements regarding the number of infections, deaths, immunization, and vaccines. Although most study participants expressed a desire to be vaccinated, they criticized the existing COVID-19 restrictions, considering them contrary to the Polish constitution. Interesting results came from questions regarding the closure of various institutions due to pandemic. Study participants vehemently opposed the government shutting down of private businesses (e.g., gyms or restaurants). At the same time, however, they agreed to do that with places of religious worship. It is probably related to the progressive secularization of Polish society, especially in the youngest generations. Research shows that this secularization mainly concerns the behavioral aspect and manifests itself in lower participation in religious practices (Grabowska, 2021).

Table 4. Means and standard deviations (in brackets) for research questions

Item	Mean (SD)
<i>Q1: How do you assess the actions of the government during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland?</i>	1.77 (.94)
<i>Q2: Do you agree with the restrictions introduced by the government?</i>	2.14 (1.16)
<i>Q3: Do you think the government may shut down private businesses (e.g., gyms or restaurants) due to the COVID-19 pandemic?</i>	2.06 (1.26)
<i>Q4: How do you assess the help offered to Polish entrepreneurs by the government?</i>	1.88 (.97)
<i>Q5: How do you assess the functioning of the Polish health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic?</i>	2.37 (1.19)
<i>Q6: Do you think online education works in Polish conditions?</i>	2.01 (1.16)
<i>Q7: Do you consider the restrictions introduced in Poland (closing private businesses, the duty of wearing masks in public spaces, etc.) consistent with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland?</i>	2.21 (1.26)
<i>Q8: Do you think the government should impose financial penalties for non-compliance with the COVID-19 restrictions?</i>	2.79 (1.43)
<i>Q9: Do you trust official government messages about the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., number of infections, deaths, immunization, and vaccines)?</i>	2.13 (1.27)
<i>Q10: How do you assess the organization of vaccination against COVID-19 in Poland?</i>	2.62 (1.11)
<i>Q11: Are you going to get vaccinated against COVID-19?</i>	3.61 (1.72)
<i>Q12: Do you think that any restrictions should be introduced during the pandemic in Poland?</i>	3.64 (1.38)
<i>Q13: Do you think that places of religious worship in Poland (such as churches or mosques) should be closed during the COVID-19 pandemic?</i>	3.57 (1.54)
<i>Q14: Do you think other countries are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic better than Poland?</i>	3.67 (1.10)

Source: own study (n=401).

To verify the research hypotheses, we created the anti-COVID-19 activity (ACA) scale. It is a 10-item measure consisting of questions regarding the assessment of government actions proposed in the study (questions *Q1* to *Q10*). Conducted Cronbach's alpha test shows that the overall score was 0.841 indicating high reliability of the research instrument.

H1: Gender differentiates the assessment of government actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic.

We conducted an independent-samples t-test to compare the assessment of government actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic concerning the gender of the respondents. As we expected, men ($M_{ACA} = 2.12$, $SD = .86$) turned out to be less favorable to government actions than women ($M_{ACA} = 2.26$, $SD = .66$); $t(399) = 1.858$, $p = .032$.

H2: Place of residence differentiates the assessment of the government's actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic.

A one-way ANOVA did not find a significant effect of respondents' place of residence on assessing the government's actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic [$F(4,396) = 1.853$, $p = .118$]. Nevertheless, all groups negatively rated the government's actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The inhabitants of the smallest cities turned out to be the least supportive of government actions. People from villages and cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants responded relatively best to these activities.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations (in brackets) of anti-COVID-19 activities (ACA) relating to respondents' place of residence

Place of residence	anti-COVID-19 activity (ACA) scale
rural area ($n=57$)	2.23 (.85)
city up to 20,000 inhabitants ($n=23$)	1.89 (.78)
city between 20,001-100,000 inhabitants ($n=83$)	2.11 (.71)
city between 100,001-200,000 inhabitants ($n=73$)	2.19 (.73)
city with more than 200,000 inhabitants ($n=165$)	2.28 (.75)

Source: own study ($n=401$).

H3: Political preferences differentiates the assessment of the government's actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the small number of voters for some formations, in this part, we only analyzed the results of the four opposition parties. A one-way ANOVA confirmed a significant effect of political preferences on assessing the government's actions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic [$F(3,257) = 40.406$, $p < .001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the

mean score for Confederation's voters ($M_{ACA} = 1.73$, $SD = .70$) was significantly lower than electorates of Civic Coalition ($M_{ACA} = 2.31$, $SD = .54$), Left ($M_{ACA} = 2.28$, $SD = .57$), and Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050 ($M_{ACA} = 2.29$, $SD = .61$).

Discussion

The results of our research are consistent with the public opinion polls, indicating a rather negative assessment of the Polish government's actions aimed at counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic (Roguska, 2021). Importantly, it may be influenced not only by objective factors but also by the feelings of the respondents who, after a year from the pandemic's beginning, were undoubtedly tired of the restrictions and wanted to return to everyday life.

We also confirmed that, similar to Western democracies, party preferences significantly differentiate the attitude to government actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic issues may generate support for some parties, in Polish conditions primarily for the Confederation. Thus, the representatives of this party in recent years have emphasized the anti-pandemic messages the most, not only denying the pandemic itself, but calling for criminal liability of the Minister of Health.

While this study marks an essential voice in scientific considerations about the political consequences of COVID-19, some limitations must be mentioned. In particular, we are aware of the sampling limitations. We used this research procedure to ensure safety in pandemic conditions. As a result, however, our sample included a few supporters of the ruling Law and Justice party. Considering the opinion polls, we can assume that if more Law and Justice voters were included in the sample, the effect of party preferences on the assessment of anti-COVID policy would be even more substantial.

References:

Act of 31 March 2020 amending certain acts in the field of the health care system related to the prevention, counteracting and combating COVID-19, Journal of Laws (2020), item 567 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20200000567>

Act on special solutions related to the prevention, counteracting and combating COVID-19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them, Journal of Laws (2020), item 374 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20200000374>

Chancellery of the Prime Minister (2020a). *Prime Minister: We have decided to cancel all mass events*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/premier-podjelismy-decyzje-o-odwolaniu-wszystkich-impres-masowych>

Chancellery of the Prime Minister (2020b). *Prime Minister: We have decided to close all educational institutions and universities*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/premier-podjelismy-decyzje-o-zamknieciu-wszystkich-placowek-oswiatowych-i-szkol-wyzszych>

Chancellery of the Prime Minister (2020c). *Prime Minister: We will help citizens to return to the country*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/premier-pomozemy-obywatelom-w-powrocie-do-kraju>

Chancellery of the Prime Minister (2020d). *Prime Minister: We are introducing the state of epidemic in Poland*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/premier-wprowadzamy-stan-epidemii-w-polsce>

Chopin Airport Announcement (2020), <https://lotnisko-chopina.pl/pl/aktualnosci-i-wydarzenia/0/976/szczegoly.html>

Code of Misdemeanours, Journal of Laws (1971), 2021, item 2008 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20210002008>

Constitution of the Republic of Poland, Journal of Laws (1997), No. 78, item 483 (PL), <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm>

Cowan, S. K., Mark, N., & Reich, J. A. (2021). COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Is the New Terrain for Political Division among Americans. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 7, 237802312110236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231211023657>

Criminal Code, Journal of Laws (1997), No. 88, item 553 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19970880553>

Crisis Management Act, Journal of Laws (2007) No. 89, item 590 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20070890590>

Czech, F., & Ścigaj, P. (2020). *Popularność narracji spiskowych w Polsce czasu pandemii COVID-19. Raport z reprezentatywnych badań sondażowych*. Uniwersytet Jagielloński. <http://www.ism.uj.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/covid-narracje-spiskowe.pdf>

Easing safety rules (2021), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/lagodzenie-zasad-bezpieczenstwa>

Extension of restrictions until April 18, 2021 due to small reserves of beds and respirators in hospitals (2021), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/przedluzenie-obostrzen>

Fridman, A., Gershon, R., & Gneezy, A. (2021). COVID-19 and vaccine hesitancy: A longitudinal study. *PLOS ONE*, 16(4), e0250123. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0250123>

Further new restrictions (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/kolejne-restrykcje>

Grabowska, M. (2021). Religijność młodych na tle ogółu społeczeństwa (No. 144/2021; *Komunikat z Badań CBOS*). Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

Głowacki, W. (2021, December 9). *Rząd PiS porzucił realną walkę z pandemią, bo boi się własnych wyborców? Analizujemy sondaże*. OKO.press. <https://oko.press/rzad-pis-porzucil-realna-walke-z-pandemia-bo-boi-sie-wlasnych-wyborcow-analizujemy-sondaze/>

Howard, M. C. (2022). Are face masks a partisan issue during the COVID-19 pandemic? Differentiating political ideology and political party affiliation. *International Journal of Psychology*, 57(1), 153–160. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12809>

Kiviniemi, M. T., Orom, H., Hay, J. L., & Waters, E. A. (2022). Prevention is political: Political party affiliation predicts perceived risk and prevention behaviors for COVID-19. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 298. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12649-4>

Lalot, F., Heering, M. S., Rullo, M., Travaglino, G. A., & Abrams, D. (2022). The dangers of distrustful complacency: Low concern and low political trust combine to undermine compliance with governmental restrictions in the emerging Covid-19 pandemic. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 25(1), 106–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220967986>

Leventhal, A. M., Dai, H., Barrington-Trimis, J. L., McConnell, R., Unger, J. B., Sussman, S., & Cho, J. (2021). Association of Political Party Affiliation With Physical Distancing Among Young Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 181(3), 399. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.6898>

- Lockdown in Poland from March 20, 2021* (2021), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/lockdown-w-polsce>
- Mach, K. J., Salas Reyes, R., Pentz, B., Taylor, J., Costa, C. A., Cruz, S. G., Thomas, K. E., Arnott, J. C., Donald, R., Jagannathan, K., Kirchoff, C. J., Rosella, L. C., & Klenk, N. (2021). News media coverage of COVID-19 public health and policy information. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 8(1), 220. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00900-z>
- Maj, K., & Skarżyńska, K. (2020). *Spoleczeństwo wobec epidemii: Raport z badań*. Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego.
- Milligan, M. A., Hoyt, D. L., Gold, A. K., Hiserodt, M., & Otto, M. W. (2021). COVID-19 vaccine acceptance: Influential roles of political party and religiosity. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2021.1969026>
- Ministry of Affairs Internal and Administration (2020). *From 20 April, the gradual easing of restrictions*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/od-20-kwietnia-stopniowe-lagodzenie-obostrzen>
- Ministry of Health (2020a). *The first case of coronavirus in Poland*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/zdrowie/pierwszy-przypadek-koronawirusa-w-polsce>
- Ministry of Health (2020b). *Additional restrictions in counties with the largest increase in infections*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/zdrowie/dodatkowe-obostrzenia-w-powiatach-z-najwiekszym-przyrostem-zakazen>
- Olszanecka-Marmola, A. (2021). Techniki perswazyjne w telewizyjnych reklamach sieci sklepów spożywczych, firm telekomunikacyjnych oraz banków w początkowej fazie pandemii COVID-19. *Zarządzanie Mediami*, 9(2), 369–387.
- National quarantine* (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/28-12-kwarantanna-narodowa>
- National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland* (2020), https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/National_Security_Strategy_of_the_Republic_of_Poland_2020.pdf
- New restrictions from Saturday* (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/nowe-obostrzenia-31-10>
- Pankowski, K. (2020). Koronasceptycyzm, czyli kto nie wierzy w zagrożenie epidemią (No. 158/2020; *Komunikat z Badań CBOS*). Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.
- Regionalization – restrictions in counties with the largest increase in infections* (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/regionalizacja>
- Regulation of the Council of Ministers amending the Regulation on the preparation of the national security management system*, Journal of Laws (2018), item 474 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180000474>
- Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 31 March 2020 on the establishment of certain restrictions, orders and prohibitions in connection with the occurrence of the state of epidemic*, Journal of Laws (2020), item 566 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20200000566>
- Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 10 April 2020 on the establishment of certain restrictions, orders and prohibitions in connection with the occurrence of the state of epidemic*, Journal of Laws (2020), item 658 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20200000658>
- Regulation of the Minister of Health of 24 March 2020 amending the Regulation on the announcement of the state of epidemic in the Republic of Poland*, Journal of Laws (2020), item 522 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20200000522>
- Regulation of the Minister of Health on the declaration of an epidemic threat in the territory of the Republic of Poland*, Journal of Laws (2020), item 433 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20200000433>
- Roguska, B. (2021). Obawy przed zarażeniem się koronawirusem i ocena działań rządu w kwietniu (No. 48/2021; *Komunikat z Badań CBOS*). Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.
- Sadowski, I., Kołczyńska, M. J., Ciepielewska-Kowalik, A., & Mach, B. W. (2021). Stosunek Polaków do nauki w pandemii COVID-19. *Nauka*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.24425/NAUKA.2021.137641>
-

Sitnicka, D. (2021, September 29). *Grzegorz Braun, znów usunięty z Sejmu za brak maseczki, łowi wyborców PiS na antyсанitaryzm*. OKO.press. <https://oko.press/grzegorz-braun-znow-usuniety-z-sejmu-za-brak-maseczki/>

State of Emergency Act, Journal of Laws (2002), No. 113, item 985 (PL), <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20021130985>

Temporary covid hospitals (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/szpital-covid>

The whole country covered by the yellow zone! (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/polska-zolta-strefa>

The whole Poland is the Red Zone (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/polska-czerwona-strefa>

Thresholds of the stages of safety rules (2020), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/progi-etapow-zasad-bezpieczenstwa>

Tightening of restrictions from 27 March 2021 (2021), <https://koronawirusunas.pl/informacje/25-03-zaostrzenie-obostrzen>

Woods, E. T., Schertzer, R., Greenfeld, L., Hughes, C., & Miller-Idriss, C. (2020). COVID-19, nationalism, and the politics of crisis: A scholarly exchange. *Nations and Nationalism*, 26(4), 807–825. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12644>