

## SOCIOLOGY

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# A sociological analysis of martial arts in Spain. A focus on the recent evolution, characteristics and social profile of judo, karate and taekwondo practitioners

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### Abstract

This article presents a sociological approach to the study of martial arts in Spanish society. With few exceptions, martial arts have not received much attention from Spanish social scientists. After carrying out a historical contextualization of the emergence and evolution of martial arts, specifically judo, karate and taekwondo, the study offers a sociological analysis of the practice of these martial arts based on data from various annual statistical directories and surveys on sport participation. These sources make it possible, on the one hand, to examine the evolution of the number of clubs and federative licenses included in the category of martial arts and, on the other, to provide a more in-depth view of the characteristics and socio-demographic profile of their practitioners.

### Introduction

From the 1960s on, the practice of East Asian martial arts has experienced considerable growth and development in Spain. At first the Japanese (judo and karate) and Chinese (kung fu) martial arts were the most popular. However, in the 1980s, a Korean martial art (taekwondo) with only three decades of history was introduced, and in a short time it reached the same popularity level as the other two.

In Spain, social sciences have shown little interest in martial arts as a research topic. Among the few studies carried out, it is worth highlighting the doctoral thesis on the practice of sumo in Japan, presented by Francisco J. Tablero at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid in 1992 and published ten years later [Tablero 2002]. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, various studies have been carried out in the specific fields of physical education, sociology and anthropology. The first one is a study carried out by Carlos Gutiérrez from the perspective of physical education, titled *Introduction and development of judo in Spain – The process of implementing an educational and combat method imported from Japan* [Gutiérrez 2004]. The second is an extraordinary

doctoral thesis by Ramón M. Gómez-Ferrer, titled *The sport practice of judo – Sociological analysis of its implementation and development in Valencian society* [Gómez-Ferrer 2005]. It offers a sociological analysis of judo practice in a Spanish region, Valencia, and addresses aspects such as the gender dimension, the transformations of judo clubs, and federated practice, as well as the division between highly competitive judo and judo oriented toward recreation and the school setting. More recently, Javier E. Martínez published a study titled *An ethnography of the martial arts – Processes of change and cultural adaptation in taekwondo* [Martínez 2011a], which addresses the evolution of taekwondo practice in a province in south-eastern Spain (Alicante). The study deals with the cultural shock and adaptation process to the adoptive society from the 1970s to the present day, focusing on the change processes experienced by taekwondo since then. Martínez's historical analysis is complemented by a magnificent ethnographic study carried out in various gyms in the province of Alicante that examines the practices and discourses, relationships of power, sociability norms and uses of the body. Along with this study, Javier E. Martínez is the author of other

articles and studies –always from an anthropological perspective– dealing with the nature of cultural construction or the role of the body in the martial arts [Martínez 2010 and 2011b].

The study presented here provides a quantitative sociological approach to the practice of judo, karate and taekwondo, the three martial arts that have developed the most in Spanish society in recent decades. In fact, each of these martial arts has its own federative organization. To date, no study has been carried out like the one proposed here. This article has four sections. The first offers an historical contextualization of the rise and evolution of judo, karate and taekwondo in Spain. Next, there is a brief methodological section that explains the characteristics and origins of the statistical sources used. The following section presents the results of the study, and the final section offers some conclusions.

### **The development and evolution of martial arts in Spain**

In Spain, judo was introduced after the Second World War, long after its practice had been established and the first clubs had been founded in the majority of the European countries [Gómez-Ferrer 2005: 217]. The first stage in its development in Spanish society took place from 1939, when Franco's regime began, until 1965, when the Spanish Judo Federation was established. At the end of the 1940s, the first gyms were set up in Madrid and Barcelona. The term jujitsu, however, was used until the 1950s, even when what was really being referred to was judo. Jujitsu, understood as an original system of Japanese combat, had been introduced in Spain at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1899 there were already references to it in the Spanish national press [Gutiérrez, 2004 and 2007]. After the First World War, however, it suffered a clear decline that lasted until the Spanish Civil War. The only exception was the interest shown by the Armed Forces or other sport institutions.

The development of the practice of judo was promoted by the clubs themselves through public exhibitions and publicity in the press. The first practitioners were middle and upper class young people. In fact, when the Spanish Judo and Jiu-Jitsu Association was established in 1950, the first judo hall was created on Recoletos street, one of the upper class areas of Madrid [Gómez-Ferrer 2005: 219]. The first judo club was also created in Barcelona in 1950, although in this case judo was presented as something different from jujitsu, as it was said to capture its essence but transformed into a sport

that could include competition [Gutiérrez 2004: 252]. A short time later, judo was integrated into the Spanish Wrestling Federation, and in 1952 the Spanish Judo Delegation was created. At the time, wrestling was a more widespread sport with a longer tradition. Greco-Roman wrestling, free wrestling and jujitsu formed part of the Spanish Wrestling Federation, as well as various local home-grown wrestling modalities, such as Canarian or Leones.

Until the end of the 1950s, there was a constant but slow increase in the number of judo gyms, initially in Madrid and Barcelona and later in other cities like Valencia, Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya and Zaragoza. From the end of the 1950s, there was a sharp increase in the number of judo clubs and practitioners, as well as the number of competitions and cities where one could practise [Gutiérrez 2004: 277]. Some of the reasons for this increase were the improvement in the socio-economic situation of Spanish society, the acceptance of judo as an Olympic sport, the spread of its practice by federative authorities, its inclusion in the training of Physical Education teachers, and its permanence in the study plans of the Armed Forces [Gutiérrez 2004: 446]. Moreover, there was a strong influence of the activity of private clubs, as well as the promotion and development of children's participation in clubs and schools. Thus, the number of judo practitioners with a federated license exceeded 20,000 at the end of the 1960s. It is not surprising that, with this growth rate, the Spanish Judo Federation was created in 1965 [Villamón and Brousse 1999: 130].

Karate was introduced in Spanish society in the 1950s and 60s. Institutionally, it was integrated within judo, whose federation created a Karate Department in 1968. From that moment on, the federation was called the Spanish Federation of Judo and Associated Sports, a name that is still used today, even though karate broke away from the Spanish Judo Federation and created its own federation in 1978. At the beginning, the development of karate had some difficulties, as it was considered a dangerous practice. The first Spanish championship was held in 1970 at the National Institute of Physical Education in Madrid, marking a turning point after which its popularity increased considerably. The improvement produced by competition, the entrance of women, and the development of karate practice among children, all of which occurred in the 1980s, elevated its presence and social relevance to such an extent that Spain is currently one of the countries of reference for karate as a sport, and its national teams have been proclaimed masculine and feminine champions of the world (on four and two occasions, respectively) [Martínez de Quel, López, Saucedo 2000].

Regarding taekwondo, it was introduced in Spain as a personal defence practice in the 1960s. As in the case of the other martial arts, it was initially considered a dangerous activity that could only be taught to people over 14 years old. In 1965, the masters Jae Won Kim and Jong Sik Cho arrived in Madrid and Barcelona and made contact with the territorial judo federations [Fargas 1993]. According to the International Taekwondo Federation, however, taekwondo was not introduced in Spain until 1968, when General Choi held an exhibition [Martínez 2011a: 127].

The rapid acceptance of taekwondo by Spanish society brought the gradual arrival of Korean masters. Thus, although it had initially been integrated in the Karate Department of the Spanish Federation of Judo and Associated Sports, it soon broke away to create its own section [Fargas 1993: 16]. The Korean masters made an intense effort to promote taekwondo in the 1980s, and in the middle of the decade the number of practitioners had grown to more than 30,000 federative licenses [Martínez 2011a: 129]. This growth and the arrival of the first sport victories of the Spanish taekwondo fighters led to the creation in 1987 of the Spanish Taekwondo Federation. This initiative met initial opposition from the Spanish Federation of Judo and Associated Sports, which presented an administrative dispute to the Spanish Court. However, a few years later the petition was rejected, and the Spanish Taekwondo Federation was definitively inscribed in the Official Registry of Federations of the Superior Sports Council. At that time, taekwondo already had about 75,000 licenses and more than 1,000 clubs [Fargas 1993: 18; Martínez 2011a: 130].

## Method

The research presented in this article is based on the analysis of various secondary sources, including the latest edition of the Sports Statistics Annual Directory [CSD 2014], although editions corresponding to previous years were also consulted. This source is used for the analysis carried out in the first part of the results section, that is, the evolution of the martial arts as a federated practice in Spain. In addition, various National Surveys on Spaniards' Sport Habits conducted by the Sociological Research Centre [CIS, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010] have been used, as well as the June 2014 Barometer [CIS 2014], also conducted by the same centre. These sources are used in the second and third parts of the next section.

As the National Survey on Spaniards' Sport Habits [CIS 2010] is the source used most in the next section, some of its main characteristics are

described here. This survey was carried out during the months of March and April 2010. During the survey, 8,925 people of both sexes over the age of 15 were interviewed. The area covered was national, including the islands (Canary and Balearic Islands), Ceuta and Melilla. The survey was carried out in 632 towns in 52 provinces. A multi-stage sample with stratified clusters and primary (municipalities) and secondary (sections) sampling units was chosen in a proportional and random way. The final units (individuals) were found based on random assignment and sex and age quotas. The sampling error for a confidence level of 95.5 per cent (two sigma), a  $p = q$ , and based on a simple random sample, was  $\pm 1.06\%$ .

## Results

### Evolution of federated practice

Table 1 shows the evolution of the number of licenses registered in Spain in the judo, karate and taekwondo federations. The data stem from the license registry of the Superior Sports Council, which has information about each of the three federations from the time of their creation [CSD 2014].

The Spanish Judo Federation, established in 1965, currently has 106,466 federated licenses, although in 1980 it reached 113,000. Federated judo practice experienced a rapid expansion in the 1970s. At the end of the 1980s, it again had around 112,000 licenses, after various ups and downs which, to a certain extent, were motivated by the fact that karate and taekwondo split off and created their own federations. Since then, it has maintained about 105,000 licenses. The Karate Federation has had a different trajectory. Created in 1978, it reached its maximum number of federated licenses twelve years later (117,389). Since then, it has experienced a slow decline, with about 61,396 licenses in the year 2013. Finally, the Taekwondo Federation, created in 1987, had an enormous initial growth and reached more than 60,000 licenses, but with the exception of an upturn at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the past twenty years it has had about 35,000 licenses.

The fifth column of Table 1 shows that there are currently more than 200,000 federated licenses corresponding to these three martial arts in Spain, although at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 90s, this number was much higher, reaching 290,000 in 1990. As the last column of Table 1 reveals, during the period mentioned (1987-1995), the federated licenses for judo, karate and taekwondo exceeded ten per cent of all the licenses registered by Spanish sports federations. From the

second half of the 1990s, however, there was a progressive decline, and in 2013 their weight in the Spanish federated system was only 6%.

With regard to sex, of the 202,161 federated martial arts licenses that existed in 2013 in Spain, 74.1% corresponded to males and 25.9% to females (see Table 2). This distribution by sexes is very unbalanced in favour of males, although the difference is even greater for the rest of the federated sports (79% males and 21% females). Of the three martial arts, the one with the largest percentage of women is taekwondo, with 39.1%. In the case of karate, 29.2% are women and for judo, 19.8%.

Regarding the number of clubs that form part of the martial arts federations, the data from the Superior Sports Council reveal that there are currently 62,363, of which 906 are judo clubs, 1,376 karate and 627 taekwondo (see Table 3). In all three cases, these numbers represent a regression compared to previous years, as judo had 1,415 clubs in 1986, karate had 1,978 in 1990, and taekwondo had 4,061 in 1990.

Finally, the three federations make up 4.7% of the total number of federated licenses in Spain, and they have very different averages of federative licenses. The mean number of licenses for a judo club in Spain is 106.9, much higher than taekwondo, with 54.7%, and karate with 44.6%.

### ***The general practice: evolution and characteristics***

After examining the available information about the federated practice of judo, karate and taekwondo in Spain, the rest of this section is based on the latest Sport Habits Survey carried out in Spain [CIS 2010]. However, to perform the following analysis

of their evolution over time, it was also necessary to consult various publications and previous surveys [García Ferrando 1986 and 1991; CIS 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2014].

Table 4 shows the evolution of the martial arts practice in Spain over the past forty years (1975-2014). Given that the three martial arts studied in this article were included in the same category, it is not possible to have separate data for each. It should be kept in mind, moreover, that these data are related to general practice, going beyond the federated setting to also include recreational practice. The series begins in the year 1975, when the combined practice of the three martial arts was situated at 0.8% of the population between 15 and 65 years old. In 1985 it had increased to 1.4%, and in 1990 it reached the highest point in the series with 2.1%. A similar tendency was identified when the federated practice of these three martial arts was analysed. Beginning in 1990, a gradual decline began until reaching 0.9% in 2014. It should also be taken into account that this martial arts evolution has taken place in a context of continuous growth of the sports practice in the Spanish population, which has increased from 22% in 1975 to 47.1% in 2014, as Table 4 shows.

After examining the evolution of martial arts practice in recent decades, next an analysis of its main characteristics is performed. To do so, various indicators are examined, related to the age of initiation, form and place of practice, possession of a federated license and participation in competitions. Table 5 shows this information for the practice of martial arts (first column) and for the rest of the sport activities (column 2). This double analysis allows a better comprehension of the martial arts data.

**Table 1.** Evolution of the number of federated licences

Year	Judo	Karate	Taekwondo	Total Martial Arts	Total all Sports	%
1965	2 785	--	--	2 785	303 694	0.9%
1970	20 827	--	--	20 827	725 203	2.9%
1975	57 043	--	--	57 043	1 628 850	3.5%
1978	78 107	27 311	--	105 418	1 541 882	6.8%
1980	113 399	44 907	--	158 306	1 765 451	9.0%
1985	87 325	85 179	--	172 504	2 167 809	8.0%
1987	100 597	107 853	47 027	255 477	2 300 568	11.1%
1990	112 712	117 389	60 494	290 595	2 319 038	12.5%
1995	104 641	98 794	46 616	250 051	2 508 202	10.0%
2000	105 008	65 718	36 332	207 058	2 644 532	7.8%
2005	108 047	60 749	33 899	202 695	3 138 201	6.5%
2010	107 850	69 938	39 607	217 395	3 520 192	6.2%
2011	108 077	71 433	40 891	220 401	3 548 118	6.2%
2012	106 753	61 608	32 230	200 591	3 498 848	5.7%
2013	106 466	61 395	34 300	202 161	3 394 635	6.0%

Source: table compiled by the author using data from CSD (2014)

**Table 2.** Federated licences by sex in 2013

Year	Total	Men		Women
		Absolute	Percentage	Absolute
Judo	106 466	85 808	80.2%	21 132
Karate	61 395	44 246	70.8%	17 905
Taekwondo	34 300	20 306	60.9%	13 418
Total martial arts marciales	202 161	149 706	74.1%	52 455
Total all sports	3 394 635	2 682 608	79.0%	712 027

Source: table compiled by the author using data from CSD (2014)

**Table 3.** Evolution of the number of federated clubs

Year	Judo	Karate	Taekwondo	Total Martial Arts	Total all Sports	%
1986	1 415	925	--	2 340	45 797	5.1%
1990	1 005	1 978	1 078	4 061	66 571	6.1%
1995	1 008	890	812	2 710	67 221	4.0%
2000	995	1 449	779	3 223	57 528	5.6%
2005	990	1 085	626	2 701	85 035	3.2%
2010	927	1 355	679	2 961	97 353	3.0%
2011	945	1 405	698	3 048	60 262	5.1%
2012	901	1 395	698	2 994	62 346	4.8%
2013	906	1 376	627	2 909	62 363	4.7%

Source: table compiled by the author using data from CSD (2014)

**Table 4.** Evolution of the practice of martial arts in Spain (1975-2014)

	1975	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Martial arts *	0.8%	1.4%	2.1%	1.7%	1.5%	0.9%	1.1%	0.9%
Sport practice**	22.0%	34.0%	35.0%	39.0%	38.0%	40.0%	45.0%	47.1%
N	2 000	2 008	2 999	2 999	4 550	7 291	7 358	2 101

Source: table compiled by the author using data from García Ferrando (1986, 1991) and CIS (2000, 2005, 2010, 2014)

\* Population from 15 to 65 years old that practises martial arts (judo, karate and taekwondo)

\*\* Population from 15 to 65 years old that practises any physical or sports activity

Note: the 2014 survey does not include people under 18 years old, and so the range from 15 to 17 has been extrapolated from data from the 2010 survey.

Initiation in martial arts practice occurs much earlier than in the rest of the sport modalities. In fact, 29.1% began at the age of 5, while in the rest of the sports the percentage was only 15.7% at this age. Another important difference is that from the age of 35, no initiation occurs, while in the rest of the activities, 10.3% begin to participate after the age of 35. The frequency of the practice does not differentiate the martial arts much from other sport activities: in both cases, a little more than 90% practice weekly. There are clear differences, however, in the way this practice is carried out.

Martial arts are practised alone (5.1% compared to 26.3%) or independently (34.2% compared to 75.3%) much less than other sports, although they are often practised within a club (54.4% compared to 3.3%). It is not surprising therefore, that federated practice makes up 59% of the total practice of martial arts, while in the rest of the sports activities federated practice only represents 16.9%. Thus, there is a greater

degree of sports associationism and membership in martial arts entities than in other sports, which is reflected in the greater use of private club facilities (47.4% compared to 17.6%) and private gyms (35.9% compared to 12.4%). Finally, compared to those who practice other sport modalities, people who practise martial arts participate more in national (17.9% compared to 2.9%) or local or provincial (23.1% compared to 10.3%) leagues and championships.

### **Socio-demographic profile of the practitioner**

This final subsection offers an analysis of the socio-demographic profile of martial arts practitioners in Spain. The variables considered are sex, age, educational level, work situation and socio-economic status. To contextualize these data, Table 6 also includes a profile of practitioners of other sport modalities and of the entire representative sample of the Spanish social structure.

**Table 5.** Characteristics of the martial arts practice

Characteristics of the martial arts practice	Practice martial arts	
Age of initiation	5 years or less	29.1%
	From 6 to 10 years	41.8%
	From 11 to 15 years	17.7%
	From 16 to 25 years	8.9%
	From 26 to 35 years	2.5%
	From 36 to 50 years	--
	From 51 to 65 years	--
	Over 65 years	--
	Don't remember	--
Frequency	Three or more times a week	46.8%
	Once or twice a week	45.8%
	Less frequently	7.4%
	Other responses	--
Social forms	Mainly alone	5.1%
	With a group of friends	35.4%
	Work or study mates	13.9%
	With a family member	5.1%
	Depends on the situation	29.1%
	Other responses	11.4%
Organizational forms	Independently	34.2%
	With a club or association	54.4%
	Work/study activity	8.9%
	Other responses	2.5%
Federative license	Yes	59.0%
	No	26.9%
	Yes, in the past, but no now	14.1%
Place of practice	Public facilities	50.0%
	Installations of a private club	47.4%
	In open public places	39.7%
	In a private gym	35.9%
	Facilities in a school	16.7%
	At home	16.7%
	Facilities at work	3.8%
Participation in competitions	Participates in national leagues	17.9%
	Participates in local or regional leagues	23.1%
	Competes with friends for fun	11.5%
	Practises sports without worrying about competing	44.9%
	Other responses	2.6%
Total	100.0%	

Source: table compiled by the author using data from CIS (2010)

With regard to sex, a much greater percentage of men practise martial arts than women (79.5% compared to 20.5%). This difference is not as large in the rest of the sport modalities (60.5% compared to 39.5%), although in the latter there is also an imbalance in favour of men. Martial arts have a greater following among the younger population: 67.1% of the practitioners are under 35 years old, while in the other sport modalities only 46.7% fall into this age group. The differences are not as great in the case of educational level, although it should be

pointed out that 46.1% of martial arts practitioners have university or pre-university studies, while the other sport modalities show a percentage of 42%. However, more martial arts practitioners belong to the upper classes (30.7% compared to 23.7%).

## Conclusions

Martial arts were introduced gradually in Spanish society in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but

**Table 6.** Practice of martial arts according to various socio-demographic variables

<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>		Practice martial arts	Practice other sports
Sex	Men	79.5%	60.5%
	Women	20.5%	39.5%
Age	15-17 years	12.7%	5.9%
	18-24 years	22.8%	14.2%
	25-34 years	31.6%	26.6%
	35-44 years	21.5%	21.4%
	45-54 years	8.9%	13.6%
	55-64 years	2.5%	9.3%
	Over 64	--	9.0%
Level of education	Less than five years	1.3%	0.7%
	Primary education	6.4%	13.9%
	Secondary education	21.8%	25.2%
	Vocational education	24.4%	18.3%
	Pre-university	24.4%	16.3%
	University studies	21.7%	25.7%
Job situation	Working	50.6%	53.0%
	Retired/Pensioner	5.1%	11.0%
	Unemployed	24.1%	17.5%
	Student	20.3%	11.9%
	Domestic work	--	6.2%
	Other situations	--	0.5%
Socio-economic status	High class/ medium-high	30.7%	23.7%
	New medium classes	22.7%	23.3%
	Old medium classes	16.0%	13.6%
	Qualified workers	25.3%	28.9%
	Unqualified workers	5.3%	10.6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%

Source: table compiled by the author using data from CIS (2010)

with some delay compared to other European countries. The institutionalization of judo, karate and taekwondo took place in 1965, 1978 and 1987, respectively, when their federations were established in Spain. In the case of karate and taekwondo, however, federated practice existed before this, but included within the Spanish Federation of Judo and Associated Sports. The period between 1987 and 1995 witnessed a greatest rise in these three martial arts, reaching a total of 290,595 licenses in 1990, which represented 12.5% of the total number of sport licenses existing at that time in the country.

Today, more than two hundred thousand people (202,161) practise federated judo, karate or taekwondo. Judo is the most commonly practised of the three (106,466 federated licenses), followed by karate (61,395) and taekwondo (34,300). Moreover, 79% of these licenses belong to men, while 21% correspond to women. Taekwondo is the martial art with the greatest percentage of women (39.1%), compared to 29.2% for karate and 19.8% for judo.

Regarding general practice (in other words, what is included in surveys on the sport participation of the entire population, whether federated

or not), 0.8% of the population between 15 and 65 years old practised a martial art in 1975. This proportion increased until reaching 2.1% in 1990. From that time on, there was a gradual decline until reaching 0.9% in 2014. The article has also pointed out that the martial arts are practised more often in clubs or associations and as a federated sport, using the facilities of clubs or private gyms. In addition, it has also shown that martial arts practitioners participate much more in local, provincial or national leagues and competitions than people who practise other sport modalities. Finally, the study has revealed that the martial arts are practised more by younger men with a high socio-economic status.

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### **Analiza socjologiczna sztuk walki w Hiszpanii. Skupienie uwagi na ostatnich zmianach, cechach i profilu społecznym praktyków judo, karate i taekwondo**

**Słowa kluczowe:** *judo, karate, taekwondo*, udział w sporcie, socjologia sportu, społeczeństwo hiszpańskie

#### **Abstrakt**

W artykule przedstawiono socjologiczne podejście do studiowania sztuk walki w społeczeństwie hiszpańskim. Z kilkoma wyjątkami, sztuki walki nie zwróciły na siebie większej uwagi hiszpańskich badaczy społecznych. Po przeprowadzeniu historycznej kontekstualizacji powstawania i rozwoju sztuk walki, w szczególności *judo, karate i taekwondo*, niniejsze studium socjologiczne oferuje analizę praktyki tych sztuk walki, na podstawie danych z różnych rocznych katalogów statystycznych i badań dotyczących partycypacji w sportach. Źródła te umożliwiają, z jednej strony, zbadanie rozwoju liczby klubów i federacyjnych licencji zawartych w kategorii sztuk walki oraz, z drugiej strony, zapewniają lepszy wgląd w pogłębioną charakterystykę i społeczno-demograficzny profil ćwiczących.

W okresie między rokiem 1987 a 1995 nastąpił największy wzrost liczby ćwiczących *judo, karate i taekwondo*. W 1990 roku wydano w Hiszpanii 290 595 pozwoleń, co stanowiło 12,5% ogólnej liczby licencji sportowych istniejących w tym czasie w kraju. Obecnie ponad dwieście tysięcy osób (202 161) ćwiczy w stowarzyszeniach. *Judo* jest najbardziej powszechnie praktykowane z trzech wymienionych sportów (106 466 stowarzyszonych licencji), następnie *karate* (61 395) i *taekwondo* (34 300). Co więcej, 79% z tych licencji należy do mężczyzn, a 21% do kobiet. *Taekwondo* jest sztuką walki z największym odsetkiem kobiet (39,1%), w porównaniu do 29,2% w przypadku *karate* i 19,8% *judo*.

Jeśli chodzi o ogólną praktykę (innymi słowy, co jest zawarte w badaniach dotyczących udziału w sporcie całej populacji, w ramach federacji lub nie), 0,8% populacji między 15 a 65 lat praktykowało sztuki walki w 1975 roku. Ta ilość wzrosła osiągając 2,1% w roku 1990. Od tego czasu nastąpił stopniowy spadek aż do 0,9% w 2014 roku. W artykule podkreślono również, że sztuki walki są praktykowane coraz częściej w klubach lub stowarzyszeniach z wykorzystaniem urządzeń klubów lub prywatnych siłowni. Ponadto dowiedziano również, że praktykujący sztuki walki dużo częściej uczestniczą w lokalnych, wojewódzkich i krajowych ligach i zawodach niż ludzie, którzy praktykują inne sporty. Rezultaty badań wykazały, że sztuki walki są praktykowane częściej przez młodszych mężczyzn o wysokim statusie społeczno-ekonomicznym.