



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth

# Volunteering in Germany

Key Findings of the Fourth German Survey  
on Volunteering

# Volunteering in Germany

Key Findings of the Fourth German Survey  
on Volunteering

## Contents

Findings in brief .....	5
1. Introduction.....	7
2. The German Survey on Volunteering.....	11
3. Volunteering among various population groups.....	14
4. Increase in volunteering rates between 1999 and 2014 .....	19
5. Regional differences in volunteering.....	22
6. Societal areas in which voluntary work is done .....	27
7. The time spent on voluntary activities .....	29
8. Leadership roles in voluntary activities .....	32
9. Motives for volunteering .....	35
10. Volunteering among immigrants .....	39
11. Willingness to volunteer by current non-volunteers.....	44
12. Summary .....	47
Bibliography.....	51
Methodological appendix.....	53

## Findings in brief

**Today, 43.6 per cent of the resident population of Germany aged 14 and older are engaged in voluntary work, though rates of volunteering differ considerably between the country's various population groups.** With a figure of 41.5 per cent, women engage in such work a little less than men, whose volunteer rate is 45.7 per cent. The rate of volunteering is highest in the age groups 14 to 29 years and 30 to 49 years and lowest among people 65 years and older. People with a high level of educational attainment are much more likely to be involved than those with a lower level of education. People not suffering from health impairments are much more likely to be involved than those with severe day-to-day health-related impairments.

**The share of people engaging in voluntary work has grown over the last fifteen years.** Since 1999, the proportion of the population engaging in voluntary work has risen by almost ten percentage points, from 34.0 per cent to 43.6 per cent. This increase in volunteering was particularly strong in the interim between 2009 and 2014. During that period the rate grew at a faster pace than in earlier periods. The increase in the rate of volunteering can be traced back to social changes such as the expansion of educational opportunities and the enhanced emphasis on voluntary work in the world of politics and the general public. However, the methodology used in earlier waves of the survey has meant that the full scale of the increase in volunteering has not been entirely visible.

**An increase in the rate of volunteering is observed in all population groups, but the size of these increases differs between groups.** Women have increased their rate of volunteering more clearly than men between 1999 and 2014, so that it might be said that the two genders are approaching equality in terms of rate of volunteering. Volunteering by both younger and older people has increased more strongly over the last fifteen years as compared to the rate of volunteering by people in middle age bands. The differences between the groups as defined by educational attainment have increased, as the percentage of people with a higher level of education engaged in voluntary work has risen considerably more strongly between 1999 and 2014 than for those with a lower level of formal education.

**Levels of volunteering vary from region to region.** A greater proportion of people are involved in volunteering in Western Germany than in the East. In addition to this, there are also clear differences between the 16 federal states. People living in rural areas tend to be more frequently engaged in volunteering than people living in urban areas.

**People become involved in volunteering in a variety of different sectors.** At 16.3 per cent, the greatest share of volunteers dedicate their efforts to sports and exercise, followed by the school or nursery area, which involves 9.1 per cent, and the area of culture and music, with 9.0 per cent. Rates of volunteering have increased over the past fifteen years in the majority of societal areas. The increases in the school or nursery area are particularly pronounced (up from 5.9 per cent in 1999 to 9.1 per cent in 2014), as well as in culture and music (up from 4.9 per cent to 9.0 per cent) and in the social area (up from 4.1 per cent to 8.5 per cent), and in youth work and adult education (up from 1.7 per cent to 4.0 per cent).

**Volunteers now spend less time on their voluntary activities than they did fifteen years ago.**

The proportion of voluntary workers who spend six hours or more a week on their voluntary activities fell between 1999 and 2014. However, the share of those who spent up to two hours a week on such activities rose to 58.1 per cent.

**The proportion of those voluntarily engaged in leadership roles like management or board activities has declined steadily as compared with the entirety of those engaged in volunteering over the last fifteen years.** This is mainly due to a strong increase in the number of volunteers not involved in leadership functions.

**The motives of volunteers are many and various.** The most frequent reason for volunteering is that the volunteers enjoy it. Many also get involved to get together with other people in general and with people of other generations specifically, and to influence society.

**There is also a high degree of willingness among people not currently involved in volunteering to do so in the future.** Today, more than every second person not already involved in volunteering expresses him or herself willing to volunteer in the future. There is only a modest difference between men and women in relation to this willingness. At advanced ages, such willingness is less pronounced than among youths as well as among adults in the younger to middle age groups. The level of potential engagement is also greater for people with a higher level of education than those with lower or medium educational attainment. All in all, there is huge potential for future involvement in volunteering.

**Immigrants tend to involve in voluntary work to a lesser extent than people without an immigration background.** Overall, people without an immigration background are more likely to volunteer than people with such a background, and more often especially than people with personal immigration experience and without German citizenship. In contrast, willingness among immigrants not engaged in volunteering to become active in such work is more pronounced than among non-volunteers without an immigration background.

**The opportunities available for volunteering as a particular form of social participation are distributed unequally.** If we wish to encourage volunteering in the future, it can be best achieved by taking into account the fact that volunteering requires social and individual resources, and that voluntary commitments must be compatible with the relevant person's duties and activities in other areas of life, including the demands of work and family commitments.

# 1.

## Introduction

Volunteering has many aspects. In sports, people become engaged in training children and young people, and to providing such support services as refereeing sports meetings or organising events in sports clubs. In schools, mothers and fathers organise parental representation at school or work in school booster clubs. In the domain of culture and music, volunteers organise concerts and exhibitions or sing regularly in choirs to bring others into contact with music. In self-help groups, people affected by a particular issue work to represent the interests of a group and to exchange experiences with people in a similar situation to themselves.

### **Volunteering is a form of social participation that is important to social cohesion**

Voluntary work provides a valuable service in promoting social cohesion and enriching democracy. Many people get involved in their neighbourhoods through promoting a cause to which they are committed or through working in a political party. They thus become involved in the political discourse, shape the environment around them and exercise influence on decision-making processes. Students are setting up working groups to achieve better study conditions, young families engage in initiatives promoting affordable housing, senior citizens become involved in achieving improved conditions for loved ones caring for them. Volunteering can frequently also be about issues where social solidarity is called for on behalf of other people, in such causes as the struggle against child poverty, aid for flood victims, or providing assistance for refugee families.

Voluntary work is a form of social participation of central importance. The background conditions in which to become involved in social participation and public activity have improved clearly in recent times. The number of voluntary associations and organisations in existence has grown considerably in recent years. More people now have the benefit of a good education and are economically active in professional life than even just a few decades ago. On retirement, people today have an average of almost 20 years of life still remaining to them, often enjoying good health. It is therefore not surprising that more people became involved in volunteering in 2014 than ever before: 43.6 per cent of Germany's resident population 14 years of age and older engage in volunteering. Relative numbers of volunteers have increased considerably since 1999.

Over the past few decades, voluntary work has increasingly come into focus as a centre of interest in German society. To achieve a policy on volunteering that aims to promote and support the voluntary sector, it is essential to be equipped with a solid basis of information on the extent of volunteering and of any changes in how commitment to that engagement is expressed. Such

data will also be valuable to such agencies in civil society as associations, collectives, foundations and citizens' initiatives to help them to respond appropriately to social changes and to changes in the patterns of volunteering. In the following text we present selected results of the 2014 Survey on Volunteering in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The German Survey on Volunteering (*Deutscher Freiwilligensurvey, FWS*) is a representative survey on volunteering in Germany, focused on persons aged 14 and above, funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (German: *Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ*). It provides the central basis upon which to base social reporting on volunteering and holding honorary office in Germany.

In order to quantify the extent of voluntary engagement for the purposes of social reporting and to improve empirical knowledge on the topic, the first task that needs to be done is to determine what we mean by volunteering and how we should distinguish it from other forms of engagement. In concrete terms, voluntary engagement is determined for the purposes of the survey using a two-step design as follows: the first step is to ask whether a person is actively involved in at least one of fourteen societal areas, aside from the normal activities in their working and family life. If a person answers the question in the affirmative for at least one of the fourteen listed domains, the survey goes on to ask a second question to determine whether the respondent also holds honorary office or whether he or she does such voluntary work within associations, initiatives, projects or self-help groups in the domains in which he or she is involved. This question refers to engagements and work entered into on a voluntary basis, either on an unpaid basis or in return for a small allowance. The enquiry thus differentiates between activities carried out collaboratively (indicated by answering 'Yes' to the first question) and actual voluntary engagement (indicated by answering 'Yes' to the second question). While engaging in activities may simply mean just 'joining in', voluntary engagement is defined as involving the act of carrying out concrete tasks. Voluntary engagement thus largely corresponds to the idea of civil engagement as determined by the following five criteria: The relevant activities are not directed towards material profit, they are either public or take place in public space, are usually carried out collaboratively or cooperatively, oriented towards a public good and carried out on a voluntary basis (see *Enquete-Kommission, Zukunft des Bürgerschaftlichen Engagements*' (Commission of Inquiry 'The Future of Civic Engagement'), 2002).

**In this monitor, the key findings of the German Survey on Volunteering are presented, both for the population as a whole and for specific population groups**

The present study shows the survey's findings on volunteering and on the patterns and dynamic development of volunteering over time, both for the population as a whole and for specific population groups, including in particular population groups defined by gender, age, educational attainment and immigration background.

---

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive presentation of the results can be found in the main report and in the tabular appendix to the German Survey on Volunteering 2014 (Simonson, Vogel & Tesch-Römer 2017; available in German).

**Gender:** Women and men often engage voluntarily in different societal areas and volunteer in the service of different target groups. In addition, women are much less likely to hold management or board positions in voluntary organisations than men. The similarities and differences between men and women in this regard have already been discussed in earlier waves of the Survey on Volunteering. The 2014 Survey on Volunteering is useful in tracing how the volunteering engaged in by women and men compare against one another over a period of fifteen years.

**Age:** It may be the case that different contact points and opportunities for engagement are available to different individuals, depending on the phase of life such individuals are going through. People in different age groups will become engaged on a different scale, in different areas and in the service of different target groups. Throughout this monitor, a distinction is made between four age groups. 14-to-29-year-olds, 30-to-49-year-olds, 50-to-64-year-olds, and the group taking in 65-year-olds and above. These age groups reflect differing life situations in which differing opportunity structures are available for volunteering.

**Education:** It is well-known that, in addition to age and gender, the availability of resources to a particular person will influence the strength of that person's tendency to volunteer. In this regard, education plays a central role. More highly educated people are more likely to volunteer than people with lower education. There is a range of different reasons for this: people with a higher level of education are better informed of opportunities for voluntary engagement and are better equipped to represent their own interests. A lower level of education is often accompanied by a lower income and less favourable employment position. These factors may also have an adverse effect on the practice of volunteering or holding honorary office. The monitor differentiates between four categories in terms of a person's level of educational achievement: school students, persons with low educational attainment, those with a medium school education and finally people with a higher level of formal education.

**Immigration background:** Volunteering has a dual significance for immigrant residents of Germany: on the one hand, the volunteering engaged in by immigrants can be understood as a sign of successful integration and, on the other, volunteering can also be thought of as a pathway towards participation in, and towards making a contribution to, the shape of society, thus representing a path towards integration. In this monitor, volunteering by persons with an immigration background is considered as compared against the pattern of volunteering shown by persons without such a background. The concept "immigration background" (*Migrationshintergrund*) established by the Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) includes not only first generation immigrants, but also descendants who are born in Germany (second generation immigrants). It distinguishes between four groups of people with an immigration background by virtue of the precise nature of that background:

- first generation immigrants (people who have immigrated into the territory of today's Federal Republic of Germany after 1949)
  - (a) without German citizenship
  - (b) with German citizenship
  
- second generation immigrants (people born in Germany who have at least one parent who immigrated into the country or who have at least one parent without German citizenship)
  - (c) without German citizenship
  - (d) with German citizenship

The monitor is structured as follows:

- In **Section 2** we present the German Survey on Volunteering itself, which provides the underlying data for the findings presented in this document.
- In **Section 3** we report on how the various population groups studied become involved in volunteering and in what numbers they do so. Rates of volunteering are shown as grouped by gender, age and educational group as well as by health impairment.
- **Section 4** illustrates the population groups for whom the increase in volunteering was above or below the average overall increase.
- **Section 5** deals with regional differences in volunteering. The monitor shows how the proportion of volunteers differ between Eastern and Western Germany, the country's 16 federal states and between urban and rural areas.
- **Section 6** traces out the level of volunteering in a number of societal areas.
- **Section 7** explores the question of the amount of time in hours dedicated to voluntary activity by volunteers.
- **Section 8** reports on who takes on management functions as part of their volunteering and how that section of the volunteer community who take on management roles compare in terms of time spent on volunteer activity.
- **Section 9** asks about the motives that volunteers claim to have for engaging in voluntary work in the various population groups.
- **Section 10** explores the area of volunteering among immigrants. We look into the extent to which people with a variety of backgrounds in terms of immigration history are involved in volunteering and how their involvement is structured (in terms of time dedicated to it, the extent to which they exercise management functions and their motives).
- **Section 11** takes a look at the willingness of people who have not engaged in volunteering for the previous twelve months to do so in the future.
- **Section 12** makes a short summary on the current extent of voluntary engagement and on the barriers that exist to involvement in volunteering.

## 2. The German Survey on Volunteering

The German Survey on Volunteering (FWS) is a representative telephone survey on volunteering in Germany funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (German: *Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ*). It is the largest study on volunteering and holding honorary office in Germany. Data have been collected for the Survey on Volunteering on four occasions so far. The data collection was carried out by TNS Infratest in the years 1999, 2004 and 2009. Data collection for the fourth wave was carried out in 2014 by infas – Institute for Applied Social Sciences – under the scientific direction of the German Centre of Gerontology (*Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen, DZA*). The universe for the study is the resident population of Germany living in private households from the age of 14 years upward.<sup>2</sup>

### **Methodological aspects of the Survey on Volunteering were improved in 2014**

**Expansion of the sample size.** The sample sizes of the Survey on Volunteering were expanded above and beyond those in previous waves of the survey. In 1999, a total of 14,922 persons were interviewed, while in 2004, 15,000 persons were interviewed. In 2009, the number of respondents was increased to 20,005 persons. In 2014, the number of respondents was increased again to include a total of 28,690 participants.

**Interviews via land line and by mobile phone.** In 2014, interviews were also conducted by mobile phone for the first time, mainly for the purpose of reaching persons who do not use a fixed-line connection (who are often referred to as ‚mobile-onlys‘). All telephone numbers were generated randomly. A total of 20,301 land line interviews were conducted (corresponding to 70.8 per cent of all cases), supplemented by 8,389 interviews by mobile phones (29.2 per cent of all cases).

**Interviews in five foreign languages.** In order to improve the survey’s inclusiveness to people with an immigration background, in addition to speaking with respondents in German, interviewers also conducted interviews in five foreign languages (Russian, Turkish, Polish, Arabic and English). A total of 705 interviews were conducted in foreign languages (Russian: n = 326; Turkish: n = 115; Polish: n = 88; Arabic: n = 47; English: n = 129). This allowed us to increase the number of participants with an immigration background. Of all respondents in the year 2014, a good fifth of them had an immigration background.

---

<sup>2</sup> You can find a detailed description of the methodology of the 2014 survey in the methodology appendix of this monitor as well as in Simonson, Hameister & Vogel 2017.

**Extension of the questionnaire.** For the 2014 data collection wave, the questionnaire was expanded to better describe changing forms of engagement, living conditions and resources available to individuals, and the general conditions surrounding the act of volunteering. In addition to this, the questions on informal support contributions were extended. The average interview time became longer as a result – from 20 to 30 minutes. In addition, the participants were asked to give consent for the inclusion of regional data to allow us to evaluate the survey data in the context of regional differences.

**The addition of a time window in measuring volunteering.** One of the core elements in the survey<sup>3</sup> is its two-stage questioning on public activities and actual voluntary engagement. The first step is to ask whether a person is actively involved in any one of fourteen societal areas, aside from their activities in their working and family life. If a person answers the question in the affirmative for at least any one of the fourteen listed domains, the survey goes on to ask a second question to determine whether the respondent has taken on tasks or work either on a voluntary or honorary basis – i. e. on an unpaid basis or in return for a small allowance. This query was also made in the same form in the previous surveys, with the sole distinction that in the earlier waves it did not give a specific time window, the only time restriction contained in the question being the use of the expression ‚at present‘. In 2014, however, a twelve-month time window was expressly mentioned in both the public activity and voluntary engagement survey questions, as the results can only be compared with each other if everyone interviewed is providing information from within the same time frame.<sup>4</sup>

**Checking the participants' self-reported data on their volunteering.** A check is made on the self-reported data on volunteering given by respondents to assess whether or not the information given contradicts the definitions upon which the Survey on Volunteering is based. In the 2014 Survey on Volunteering, this check was made in two steps, one during and one after the interview. Everyone who had given information on their volunteering was asked during the interview (after the open-ended information had been recorded) whether their activity constituted holding an honorary office or an engagement in volunteering on an unpaid basis or in return for a small allowance. Then, after the interview was concluded, a check was made on the open-ended information given by each respondent. On the basis of a catalogue of criteria developed for the 2014 Survey on Volunteering, along with an operationalisation of these criteria, a check was made to see whether or not the activities listed by the respondents actually contradicted volunteering and to ensure that any activities that did not in fact qualify as volunteering were not mistakenly counted as such.<sup>5</sup>

---

3 The Questionnaire forms of the Survey on Volunteering are available from the DZA's Research Data Centre. For the 2014 version see, for example, Simonson, Ziegelmann, Vogel, Hameister, Müller & Tesch-Römer 2016.

4 To discuss the extent to which the 2014 changes may have impacted on measurements of volunteering, see the methodological appendix at the end of this report, as well as the comments in Simonson, Hameister & Vogel 2017.

5 For more details on the check see: Simonson, Hameister and Vogel 2017. The engagements described by respondents were also checked in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 survey waves, albeit in a process that yielded different results. In 2014, fewer engagements were recoded as „not voluntary“ than in the previous years. From 1999 through 2004 to 2009 the number of engagements being recoded had steadily increased over time. This may have led to an underestimate of the rate of volunteering for the year 2009 in particular. In this monitor, therefore, we report on rates both before the data has been checked and afterwards when comparing levels of volunteering over the years. In later sections of the monitor we report only on the rates after the check has been made.

**Weighting the data.** The findings reported in this monitor on the basis of the Survey on Volunteering are based on weighted analyses. For all years of the survey, the same features were considered as the basis for the weighting. To ensure comparability with the reports published for the 1999, 2004 and 2009 waves of the survey, we have refrained from adding any further weighting features, such as the level of educational attainment for the purpose of the 2014 survey.

### 3.

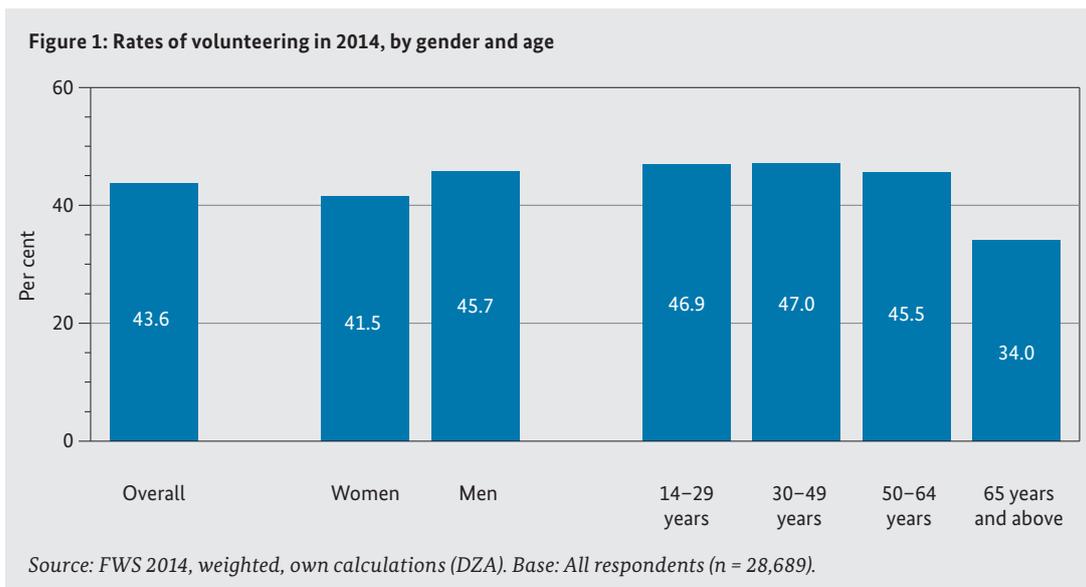
## Volunteering among various population groups

Of the resident population of Germany aged 14 and above, 43.6 per cent stated that they had engaged in volunteering within the last twelve months. The forms of volunteering that they engaged in are extremely varied in terms of the organisational framework in which the volunteering was done, the degree of formality with which their function was defined and the actual tasks carried out. Among the voluntary engagements mentioned by the volunteers were the following:

- Advertising for new members, providing support services in the library of the Polish cultural association
- Organisation of an open day for the beekeepers' association
- Supervision of children at the youth centre
- Activities as election worker in the municipality
- Mentor in the youth fire service
- Helping out with blood donation promotion campaign
- Trainer in football club
- Public relations work in the AIDS assistance programme
- Lay judge in juvenile court
- Treasurer at skittles club
- Animal feeder in sanctuary
- Concert preparation and press relations work in choir
- Board member, conducting German lessons for the association for refugees
- Support for ill and vulnerable people in the local church community
- Chairperson of the booster club for a secondary school

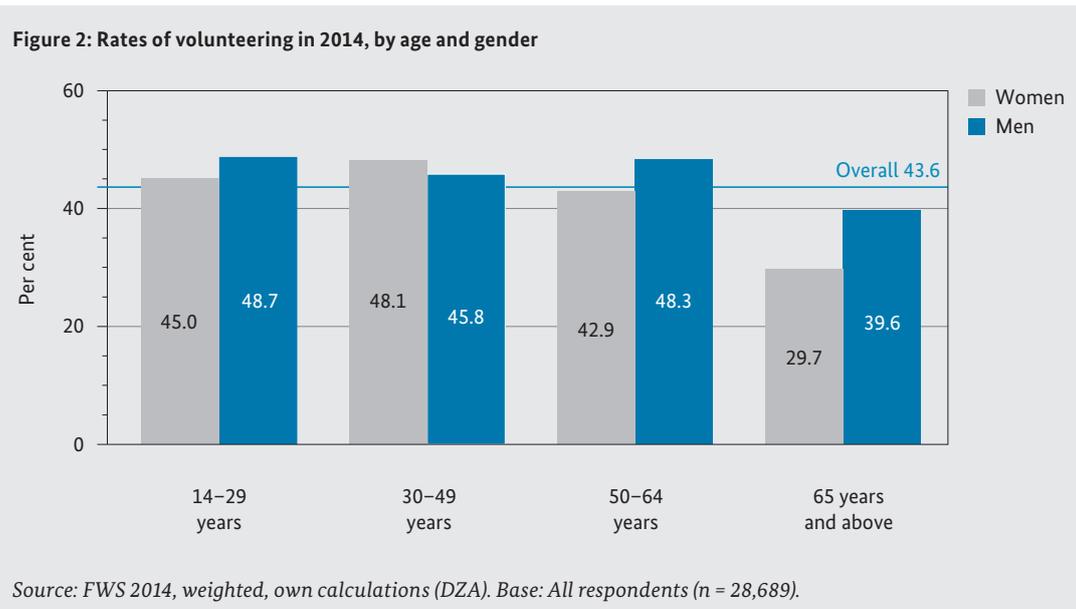
#### **Patterns of participation in volunteering differ from age group to age group, but also between women and men**

With a figure of 41.5 per cent, women engage in such work a little less than men, whose rate of volunteering is 45.7 per cent (Figure 1). However, the difference between the genders, at 4.2 percentage points, is relatively small in comparison to the substantially greater differences that we observe between the various age groups. The rate of volunteering is greatest in the 14-to-29 and 30-to-49 age groups. 34.0 per cent of people in the 65-or-above age group are engaged in voluntary work, though it should be said that the increase seen in this age group is particularly large. The differences between age groups in terms of participation in volunteering may also be understood as an expression of differing life situations. Retired people thus are comparatively less likely to volunteer than people still attending school or training, or than people in the working and/or family phase of their lives.



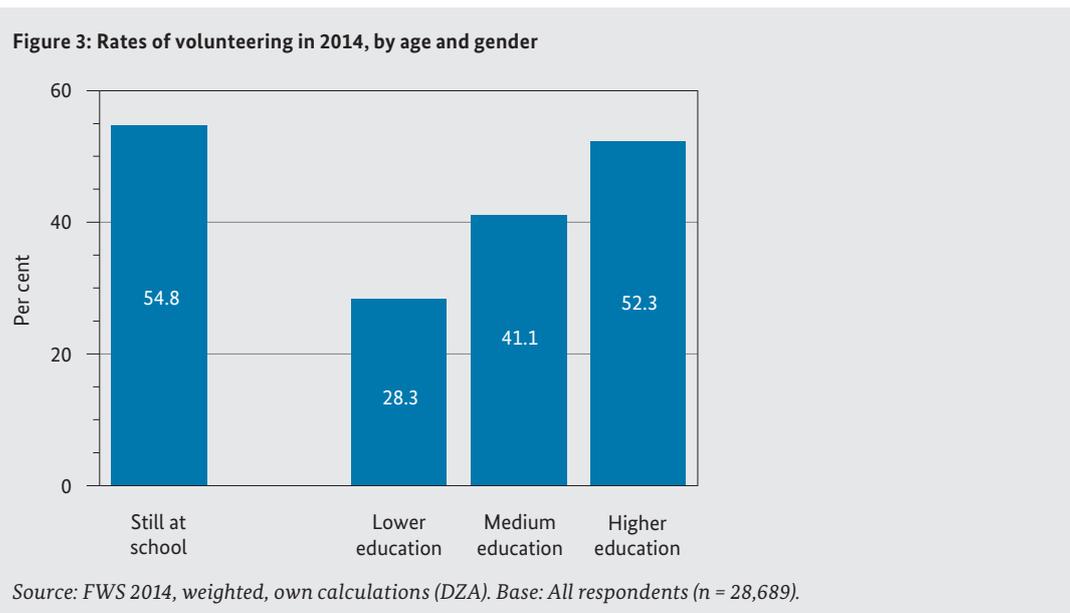
If we bear down into respondents' rates of volunteering, differentiating them by age group, we find very large differences in participation rates, especially among younger people, but also in the older age groups (no illustration). The figures show that the group with the highest rate of volunteering of all is the 14-to-19 age group, over half of whose members (52.3 per cent) are involved in volunteering. While the 20-to-24 age group also has an above-average rate at 48.4 per cent, the next youngest age groups 25-to-29 (40.1 per cent) and 30-to-34-year-olds (41.2 per cent) are less involved in such engagements. It may be that the volunteering engaged in by people starting out in their professional and family lives are subject to greater time restrictions than both younger and older age groups. The rates of volunteering in middle and older age ranges are higher and comparatively more uniform: only at the age of 70, and even more clearly from 75 years upwards, do the comparative numbers of volunteers begin to drop substantially. The rate among the 70-to-74-year-olds is 39.9 per cent, while for those 75 and older the figure is 26.1 per cent. This tail-off may be connected with increasing health impairments, but it could also be influenced by age limits that exist on some types of social engagement.

Looking at the figures in relation to age and gender, the study reveals that the lowest level of volunteering for both women and men is found among those aged 65 years and above (Figure 2). However, it is also in this age group that the gender difference is at its greatest. While the proportion of men who have engaged in volunteering in the last twelve months in this age group is 39.6 per cent, the same figure for women of the same age is only 29.7 per cent, almost 10 percentage points lower. The difference between women and men does not reveal itself so strongly in younger age groups. In the case of the 30-to-49-year-olds, women actually have a rate of volunteering that even slightly exceeds that of men. For this age group, the rate of volunteering among women is at its highest, with almost half (48.1 per cent) of women aged 30-to-49 years being so engaged (Figure 2). The explanation for this may be found in the fact that the participation rate of mothers with children of kindergarten or school age is higher, as such educational institutions create opportunities for voluntary engagement by parents that tend to be taken up more frequently by mothers than by fathers.



### Education is an important resource for the participation in volunteering

It is a well-recognised fact that education constitutes an important social resource – one that contributes to the achievement of shared political goals, for example. The results of the 2014 German Survey on Volunteering show just how strongly level of education (as measured by highest school qualification) shapes participation in volunteering (Figure 3). The lowest rate of volunteering is found in the group of people with the lowest level of educational attainment, i. e. the group whose members possess either no school leaving certificate at all or only a low-level school qualification. Only 28.3 per cent of the group with low-level educational attainments have engaged in a volunteering in the last twelve months. The rate for people with a higher-level educational qualification is much higher: more than half of this group (52.3 per cent) have volunteered in the last twelve months. However, the very highest level of engagement is found among the group of people who have not yet completed their schooling: no less than 54.8 per cent of school students engage in volunteering.



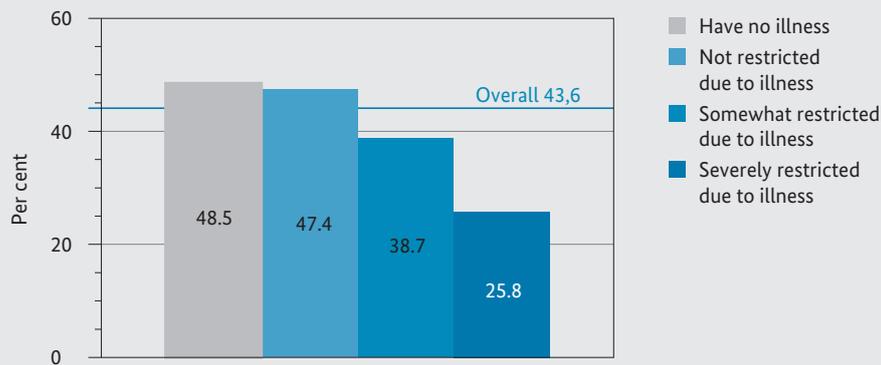
Having access to other resources can also be an important prerequisite for volunteering. For example, there is a clear link between self-reported financial security and volunteering. People who rate their financial situation as 'very good' volunteer almost twice as frequently (50.0 per cent) as people who regard their financial situation as 'very bad' (whose rate is 26.9 per cent). In addition, employment situation also plays a role, as one's employment can provide points of connection through which to engage in voluntary work, though it can also impose time constraints on it. People in gainful employment or in training become involved in volunteering at a considerably higher rate than non-employed persons, while people registered as unemployed, with a volunteer rate of 26.1 per cent, are the group with by far the lowest levels of engagement. Retired people (with a rate of 35.3 per cent) and other economically inactive persons (with 38.5 per cent) become involved in slightly greater numbers, though their level of participation remains below average. People working part-time and the marginally employed (with 51.1 per cent) show higher rates of volunteering than full-time employees (whose rate is 46.7 per cent), a phenomenon presumably due to the greater time resources available to part-time employees, accompanied by a similar situation to full-timers in terms of opportunities for engagement.<sup>6</sup>

### People in good health are more likely to volunteer than people with health impairments

People not suffering from any illness or health-related impairment get involved in volunteering at a higher rate than those suffering from illness-related day-to-day impairments (Figure 4).<sup>7</sup> The rate of volunteering of those not suffering from any illness is 48.5 per cent. So almost half of all people in this group are engaged in volunteering – a figure considerably higher than the average for the total population (43.6 per cent). The rate of volunteering is similarly high among the group of people whose illness does not cause them any impairment: the rate of volunteering for the latter group is 47.4 per cent. The rate of volunteering for people suffering to some extent from a health-related impairment is substantially lower (38.7 per cent), as is the rate for people severely impaired by illness (25.8 per cent).

<sup>6</sup> For the dependencies between socio-economic status and volunteering, see also Simonson & Hameister 2017.

<sup>7</sup> On the interrelationship between state of health and volunteering, see also Müller & Tesch-Römer 2017b.

**Figure 4: Rates of volunteering by groups with various levels of day-to-day health-related impairments, 2014**

Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents (n = 28,549).

In this context, the rate of volunteering among older age groups is particularly low in persons who have to deal with illness-related impairments in their day-to-day lives. For people with higher levels of educational attainment, impairments on their day-to-day lives have less of an impact on the likelihood of volunteering. Similar differences are found between groups enjoying varying quality of life in terms of subjective – i. e. self-reported – health. 48.5 per cent of people who rate their health as ‚good‘ or ‚very good‘ are involved to volunteering, while the rate of volunteering is only 34.5 per cent for people with a moderately good state of subjective health, a figure that drops to as little as 28.9 per cent for people who assess their health as ‚bad‘ or ‚very bad‘.

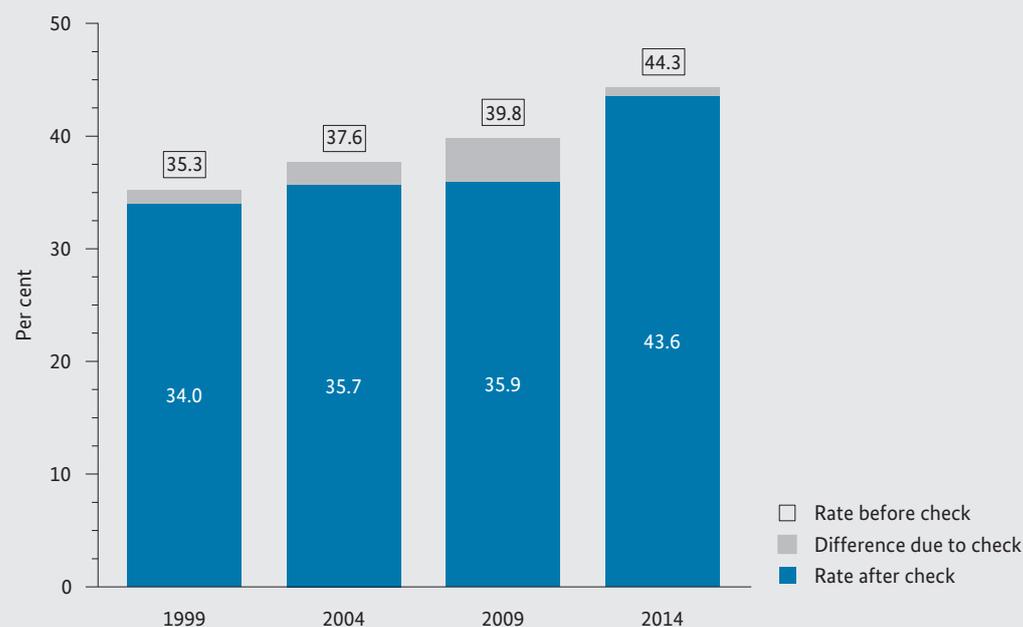
## 4.

### Increase in volunteering rates between 1999 and 2014

The number of people engaged in volunteering is growing. As of 2014, 43.6 per cent of Germany's resident population aged 14 and above do voluntary work. Over the last fifteen years, the rate of volunteering has increased by almost ten percentage points. This increase in voluntary engagement was particularly dynamic between 2009 and 2014 (Figure 5). During that period, the rate of participation grew at a faster pace than in earlier periods. The increase in engagement can be traced back to such social change as the expansion of education and the increased intensity with which voluntary engagement is being addressed in politics and among the general public.

However, the methodology used in earlier waves has had the effect that the full scale of the increase in volunteering has not been visible up to now (see methodological appendix). From 1999, through 2004 to 2009, an increasing number of self-reported engagements were classified as 'not volunteering' as a result of checks made on the data collected: while the post-check rates rose moderately over the entire period (34.0 per cent, 35.7 per cent and 35.9 per cent in each wave, respectively), the pre-check figures show a clear increase in volunteering (35.3 per cent, 37.6 per cent and 39.8 per cent). These past increases have continued on into 2014: the rate is now at 43.6 per cent (after the checks) or 44.3 per cent (before checking).

**Figure 5: Rates of volunteering over time (1999 to 2014), before and after checks of participants' self-reported data on their voluntary activities**



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents.  
 FWS 1999 (n = 14,922), FWS 2004 (n = 15,000), FWS 2009 (n = 20,005), FWS 2014 (n = 28,689).  
 The rate before the check on self-reported voluntary activities for 1999 is an estimate.

### **An increase in volunteering is observed in all population groups, but the size of the increase differs between groups**

Women increased their voluntary engagement more strongly than men between 1999 and 2014 (Figure 6a). This indicates that women's participation in the voluntary sector is catching up a little on men. This may be attributable to the increasing participation of women in the workforce, where employment is not experienced as merely a restriction on the time available to workers, but also as a creator of occasions for volunteering through additional social contacts and professional activities.

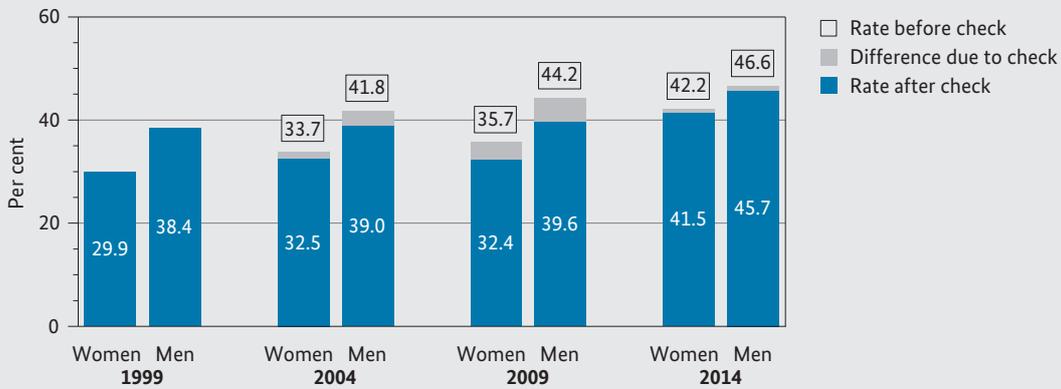
The voluntary engagement of both younger groups and of older people has increased more strongly over the last fifteen years as compared against that of middle age bands (Figure 6b). In the context of our analyses of differences in rates of volunteering by age over time, it should be noted that there has been an increase in the rate of volunteering for all age groups. In that same context, it is striking that rates for the three youngest age groups strongly approximated to each other in 2014, so that there is now no longer a significant difference between their respective rates of voluntary engagement. While 65-year-olds and above remain less likely than others to volunteer, with a rate of 34.0 per cent, their rate of volunteering has increased by 11.0 percentage points since 1999. And while the youngest age group showed a rather lower level of volunteering in the past, the volunteer rate for 14-to-29-year-olds in 2014 was 46.9 per cent, a similar figure to that of 30-to-49-year-olds (47.0 per cent) and that of 50-to-64-year-olds (with 45.5 per cent). This indicates that the level of volunteering among older teens and young adults has increased strongly.

When one makes a differentiation between various groups in terms of educational attainment, one finds a similar pattern in all four survey years. The higher the level of educational attainment, the higher the level of volunteering (Figure 6c). The lowest level of volunteering is found for people with a lower level of education, while it is somewhat higher for people with a medium level of attainment. The group with the highest qualifications showed the highest rates of volunteering. An increase in the rate of volunteering is observable for all educational groups. However, the greatest growth over fifteen years is recorded for people with a higher level of education, whose participation has grown from 40.4 per cent to 52.3 per cent, an increase of 11.9 percentage points. The volunteer rate for people with a lower level of education increased by only 3.8 percentage points to 28.3 per cent over the same time period. Thus the gap between the various education groups is widening. The already considerable differences between the education groups in relation to participation in volunteering continue to grow.

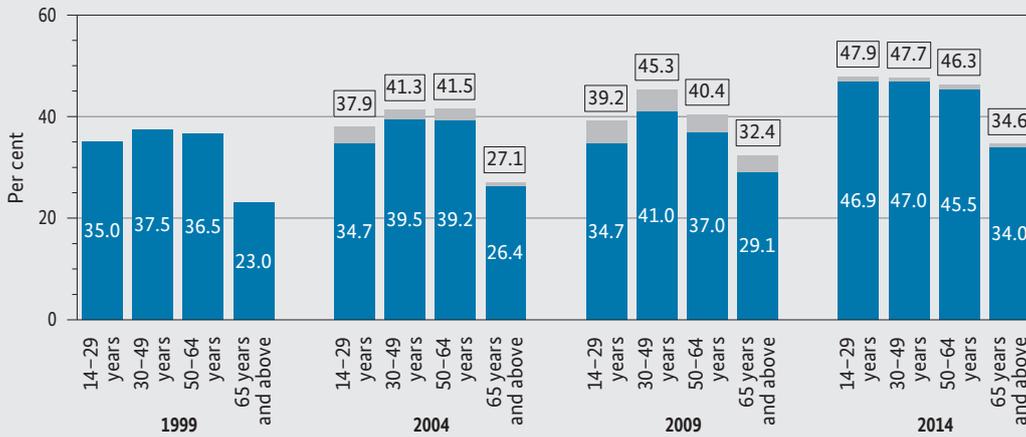
In addition to this, a particularly large increase can be seen among the school-going population. For this group, the rate of volunteering over the last fifteen years has grown by 17.0 percentage points (Figure 6c). It may be that schoolchildren are particularly attracted to and wooed by voluntary organisations, a judgement that seems to be evidenced by the higher-than-average contribution of benefits in kind provided for that group (Romeu Gordo & Vogel 2017). In addition, the number of school students attending schools run according to the German „Gymnasium“ model is increasing, a phenomenon suggesting that the proportion of school-going youths working towards a lower or mid-level school leaving certificate is shrinking. Higher rates of engagement, in a pattern similar to that of persons with high educational attainment, can already be observed among the school students set to complete their school-going days with a higher level qualification.

**Figure 6: Rates of volunteering over time (1999 to 2014), before and after checks of participants' self-reported data on their voluntary activities (a) by gender, (b) by age and (c) by educational attainment**

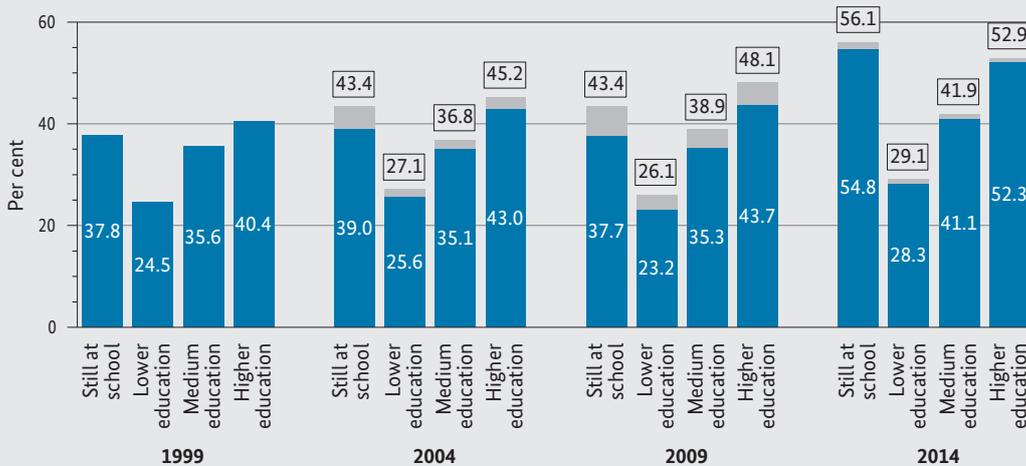
a) by gender



b) by age



c) by educational attainment



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents.

FWS 1999 (n = 14,922), FWS 2004 (n = 15,000), FWS 2009 (n = 20,005), FWS 2014 (n = 28,689).

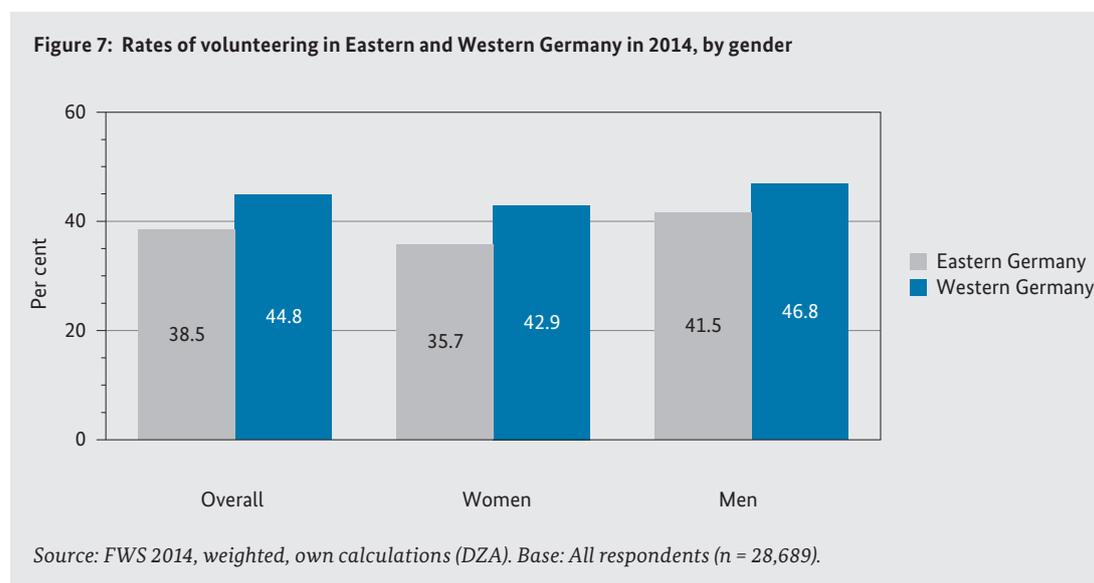
No rates before checks are given for the year 1999, as the individualised data needed for this information is not available.

## 5. Regional differences in volunteering

Whether one decides to volunteer or not will also depend on underlying conditions for such engagement available at local and regional level. The following section shows how the rate of volunteering differs between Eastern and Western Germany, between Germany's 16 federal states and between the country's urban and rural areas.

### Volunteering is more widespread in Western than in Eastern Germany

The rate of volunteering for Western Germany is higher (at 44.8 per cent) than in the East (38.5 per cent) (Figure 7). The findings show that men continue to be slightly more likely to volunteer than women in both East and West. In the Eastern federal states, for example, 5.8 percentage points more men are engaged in volunteering than women. In the Western federal states, the difference is 3.9 percentage points. There is also a difference of 7.2 percentage points between women living in the East as against the West. This difference can also be seen among men, albeit with a slightly smaller difference of 5.3 percentage points.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> For more details on volunteering in Eastern and Western Germany, see Kausmann & Simonson 2017.

What age differences are made apparent by the data? In Western Germany, 47.6 per cent of 14-to-29-year-olds, 30-to-49-year-olds and 50-to-64-year-olds actively engage in voluntary work. There is no visible difference between these age groups in relation to such volunteering (no illustration). Only for the 65-year-olds-and-above group is the rate of volunteering below that figure, at 35.5 per cent. In the Eastern federal states, one can see larger differences between the various age groups. The rates of volunteering for the two youngest age groups in Eastern Germany are also similar to one another (43.7 per cent and 44.4 per cent respectively). One can, however, see a larger difference in the rates for 50-to-64-year-olds (37.9 per cent) than for the two youngest age groups. In the 65-year-olds-and-above, the volunteer rate in the Eastern federal states is 28.9 per cent, which is a lower figure than for the oldest group in the Western federal states. The difference is even larger between 50-to-64-year-olds in Eastern and Western Germany, who have a gap of 9.7 percentage points between them. One can also see that the two youngest age groups in Western Germany also volunteer more frequently relative to the same age groups in the East.

### **Engagement rates in volunteering differ between the 16 federal states in Germany, with Germany's Southern regions showing particularly high percentages**

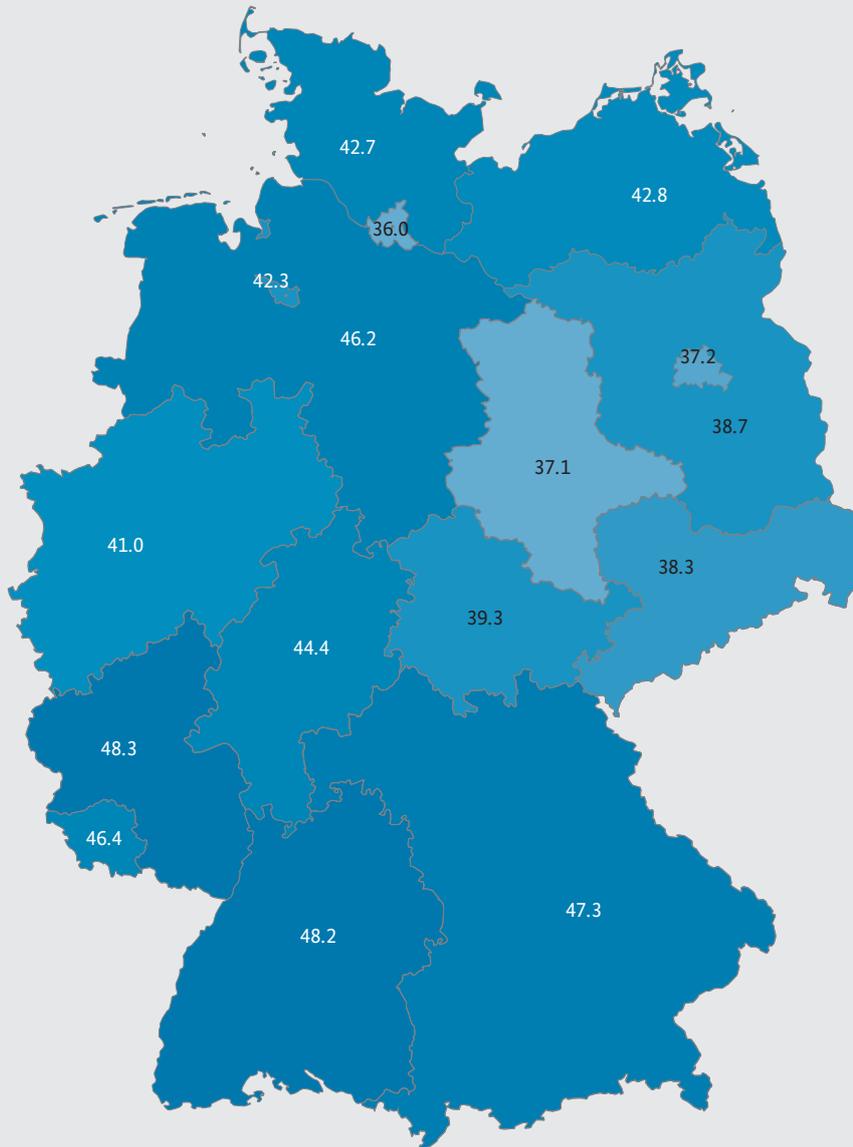
So how do the rates of volunteering differ between the country's various federal states? Comparing the country's 16 regions, the highest rates of volunteering for 2014 are found in Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Württemberg, at 48.3 per cent and 48.2 per cent, respectively (Figure 8).<sup>9</sup> These figures are more than four percentage points above the national average. A high level of volunteering is also found in Bavaria, with 47.3 per cent, followed by Saarland, with a figure of 46.4 per cent. In Lower Saxony (46.2 per cent) and Hesse (44.4 per cent) too, the rate of volunteering is above average. In Schleswig-Holstein, 42.7 per cent of the resident population aged 14 and above engage in volunteering, while in North Rhine-Westphalia the rate is 41.0 per cent. Taking the country's city states, Bremen has the highest rate of volunteering at 42.3 per cent, with 37.2 per cent in Berlin and 36.0 per cent involved in volunteering in Hamburg. Of all the Eastern federal states, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania has the highest rate, at 42.8 per cent. Rates of volunteering in Thuringia (39.3 per cent), Brandenburg (38.7 per cent), Saxony (38.3 per cent) and Saxony-Anhalt (37.1 per cent) are lower.

To summarise, rates of volunteering in both the Eastern federal states and the city states are lower than in most Western federal states. However, there is also a North-South difference, with higher rates in Southern German regions and lower rates in Northern ones. The state of Lower Saxony, with a comparatively high rate of volunteering, represents an exception to this observation.

---

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed explanation of the federal states results, see Kausmann & Simonson 2017 and Kausmann, Simonson, Ziegelmann, Vogel & Tesch-Römer 2017.

Figure 8: Rates of volunteering in the 16 federal states, 2014



Federal state	Rate of volunteering	Federal state	Rate of volunteering
Rhineland-Palatinate	48.3	Bremen	42.3
Baden-Württemberg	48.2	North Rhine-Westphalia	41.0
Bavaria	47.3	Thuringia	39.3
Saarland	46.4	Brandenburg	38.7
Lower Saxony	46.2	Saxony	38.3
Hesse	44.4	Berlin	37.2
Mecklenburg-West Pomerania	42.8	Saxony-Anhalt	37.1
Schleswig-Holstein	42.7	Hamburg	36.0

Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents (n = 28,689). Image created in-house (DZA), Map created using EasyMap.

### Volunteering is more widespread in rural than in urban areas

When we look at the region type as indicated by the terms 'urban' and 'rural', we see that rural rates, at 45.5 per cent, are higher than for urban areas (42.7 per cent) (Figure 9).<sup>10</sup> In rural regions there may be a greater need, greater support and more opportunities to engage in voluntary work in addition to one's professional and family duties than there are in urban regions.

Figure 9: Rates of volunteering by region type, urban or rural, 2014



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents for whom valid information on region is available ( $n = 25,475$ ).

If one differentiates within the region types 'urban' and 'rural' by gender, it can be seen that in rural areas there is a greater difference in participation rates between women and men than there is in cities (no illustration). While in urban areas the difference in rates between the genders is 2.7 percentage points (women: 41.4 per cent, men: 44.1 per cent), the gender difference in rural areas is about 7.0 percentage points (women: 42.0 per cent, men: 49.0 per cent). In the case of women, the difference in level of volunteering between city and countryside is only small (urban women: 41.4 per cent, rural women: 42.0 per cent), while for men the difference is more substantial (urban men: 44.1 per cent, rural men: 49.0 per cent). While the rates of volunteering by women in cities and the countryside seem to be similar, men in the countryside are much more involved in volunteering than their urban peers.

The positive correlation between rural areas and volunteering is also reflected in differentiation by age group (no illustration). In the three youngest age groups, the rate of volunteering is larger in the countryside than in the city. Only in the oldest age group does the opposite picture appear. For people aged 65 and above, the rate of volunteering in rural areas, at 33.0 per cent, is lower than in urban areas, where the rate is 35.4 per cent. This suggests that the structures promoting voluntary work among older people in urban areas are better than they are

<sup>10</sup> The term 'region type' is used to indicate whether the relevant district or county borough is rural or urban. All large county boroughs and urban districts are defined as urban areas, while all rural districts are placed in the rural category. See also Hameister & Tesch-Römer 2017.

for older people living in rural areas. It is possible that the structure of supply in rural areas is more focused on younger people. It may be, however, that these findings can be attributed to mobility restrictions among 65-year-olds and above in rural areas, including the insufficient presence of public transport infrastructure.

## 6.

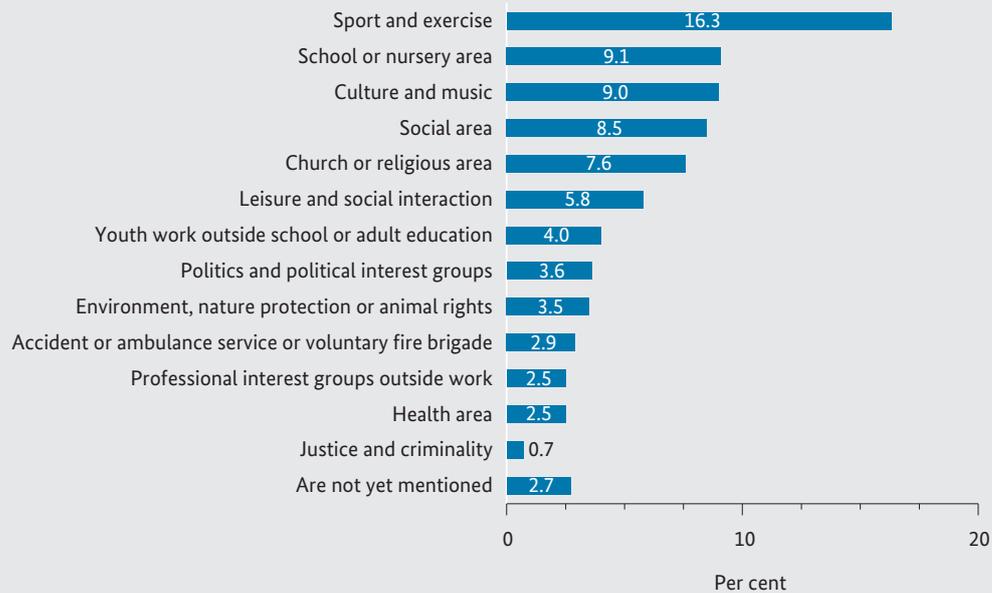
### Societal areas in which voluntary work is done

People get involved in volunteering in a variety of different sectors.<sup>11</sup> The sector that enjoys the highest rate of volunteering is the area of sport and exercise: 16.3 per cent of people aged 14 or above living in Germany volunteer for sport and exercise (Figure 10). Further major sectors to which volunteering is dedicated include the school or nursery area (e. g. parents' committees, student representations, school booster clubs, etc.), which has a sector-specific rate of 9.1 per cent, culture and music (e. g. theatre or music groups, choirs, cultural associations, booster clubs), the social area (e. g. welfare and relief organisations, neighbourhood assistance clubs) with a figure of 8.5 per cent, and the church or religious area (e. g. parish committees, church organisations or religious communities), which enjoy a rate of engagement of 7.6 per cent. Among the least prominent areas of involvement are justice and criminality-related issues (e. g. acting as lay magistrates or caring for delinquents or victims of crime), the health area (e. g. acting as an assistant in nursing care, visiting services, associations or self-help groups), or professional interest groups outside work (e. g. in unions, professional associations or initiatives for the unemployed). 2.7 per cent of German residents volunteer in the area referred to as „other“. This category takes in both volunteering in areas not within any of the above-mentioned areas and any other volunteering that was not originally specified by the respondent.

---

11 You can find a comprehensive description of these areas in Vogel, Hagen, Simonson & Tesch-Römer 2017.

Figure 10: Rates of volunteering in societal areas, 2014



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents (n = 28,689).

### Rates of volunteering have increased over the past fifteen years in the majority of societal areas

Areas in which the rate of volunteering has grown most in the past fifteen years include for example: the school or nursery area (up from 5.9 per cent in 1999 to 9.1 per cent in 2014), culture and music (up from 4.9 per cent to 9.0 per cent), the social area (up from 4.1 per cent to 8.5 per cent), and youth work and adult education (up from 1.7 per cent to 4.0 per cent). On the other hand, one can see a certain stagnation in the area of leisure and social interaction (1999: 5.6 per cent, 2014: 5.8 per cent), in representation of professional interest groups outside the workplace (1999: 2.3 per cent, 2014: 2.5 per cent) and in justice and criminality-related issues (1999: 0.7 per cent, 2014: 0.7 per cent). The increase in volunteering in the area of accident or ambulance service or voluntary fire brigade was below average (1999: 2.5 per cent, 2014: 2.9 per cent).

# 7.

## The time spent on voluntary activities

In addition to the question of how many people become engaged in volunteering, it is also worth looking at the question of how much time volunteers spend on such activities and how that length of time has changed over the period studied. A global figure of 58.1 per cent indicates that much more than half of the total number of people involved in voluntary activity spend up to two hours per week on their voluntary work (Figure 11). A smaller share of volunteers (23.8 per cent) spend three to five hours on such work, and even fewer (18.1 per cent) engage for six or more hours per week.<sup>12</sup>

### **Volunteers now spend less time on their voluntary activities than they did fifteen years ago**

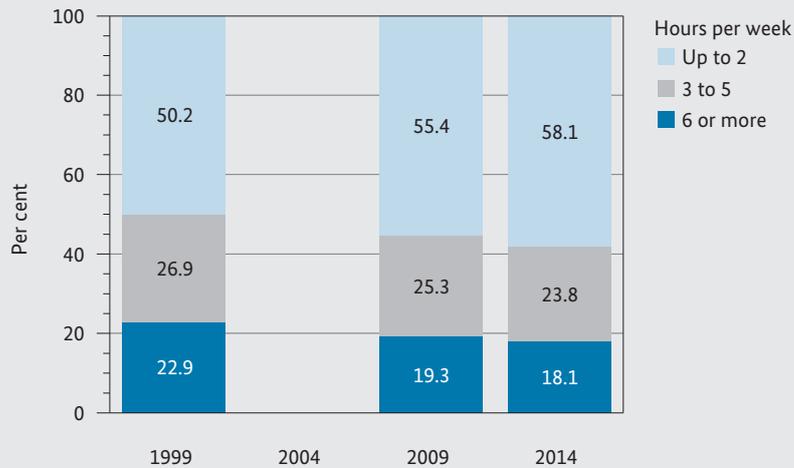
In 1999, only roughly half of volunteers and in 2009 only 55.4 per cent spent up to two hours per week for their voluntary activities, while the figure is now 58.1 per cent of volunteers (Figure 11). Against this, the proportion of voluntary workers who spend six hours or more a week on such activities fell a little between 1999 and 2014, from 22.9 per cent to 18.1 per cent.

The findings presented in this section are based on the entries given for the most time-intensive of their activities by respondents who declared that they engaged in more than one activity, or simply on the time spent on sole voluntary activity in the case of those who engage in just one. But if we take a look at more than simply the time required for one voluntary activity, and instead derive the figures for the entirety of a person's voluntary activities, the findings remain largely similar: the proportion of those engaged in voluntary activities who invest long hours has also reduced slightly over the time period (no illustration). This observation is also of interest in view of the fact that in 2014 a good half the people engaged in volunteering are involved in more than just one activity, and often take on two or more voluntary roles (Vogel, Hagen, Simonson & Tesch-Römer 2017).

---

<sup>12</sup> On the amount of time spent in voluntary activities see also Hameister, Müller & Ziegelmann 2017.

Figure 11: Time spent on voluntary activity over time



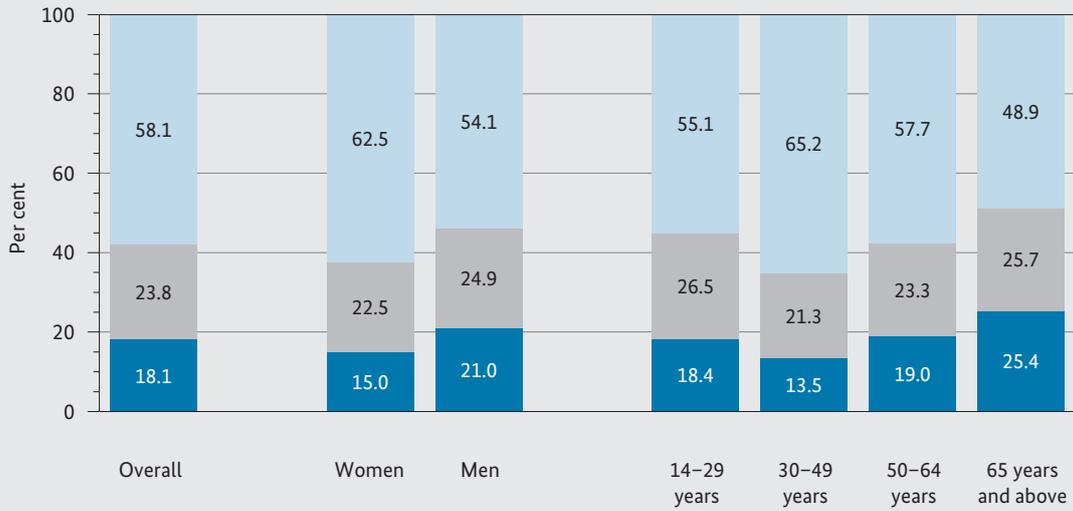
Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers FWS 1999 (n = 4,440), FWS 2009 (n = 6,740), FWS 2014 (n = 11,799). The time spent on voluntary work was not recorded in 2004.

The individual expenditure of time by volunteers on their voluntary activities varies between the population groups. Comparing between genders, we see that men are more likely to spend more hours per week on their voluntary work than women (for example, 21.0 per cent of men spend six hours or more on such work, while among women the rate is only 15.0 per cent, Figure 12a). When comparing by age group, one can see that younger and older voluntary workers (i. e. persons under 30, and aged 50 or older, respectively) spend more hours per week on their voluntary activities than people in the middle age group of between 30 and 49 years (Figure 12a). People from 65 years up spend the highest amount of hours on voluntary work per week, while the 30-to-49-year-olds spend the least amount of time per week on their voluntary activities.

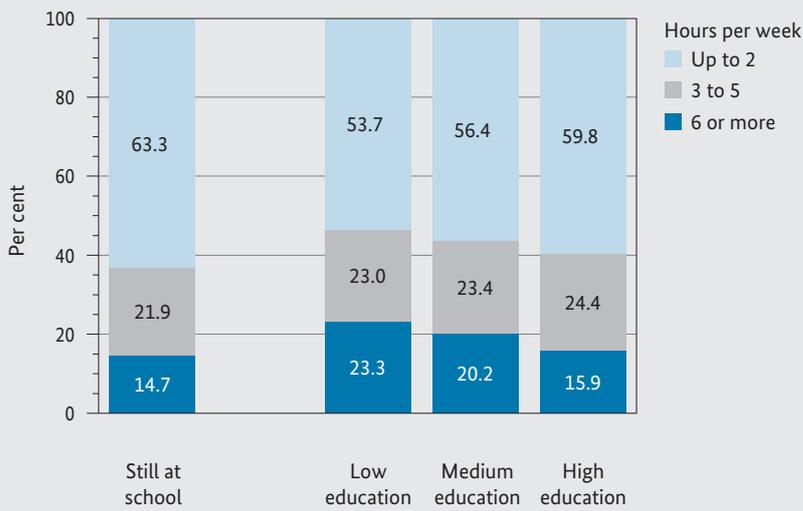
The group representing school students is the collective whose members most frequently spend up to two hours per week on their voluntary activities (with a rate of 63.3 per cent). People with a high level of educational attainment spend a similarly small amount of time on volunteering. In the case of people with lower or mid-level educational achievement, the category 'up to 2 hours per week' is somewhat less prominent than in other groups (Figure 12b). Against this, a much more pronounced tendency towards six or more hours per week can be seen in those with lower (23.3 per cent) and mid-level education (20.2 per cent) than among the more highly educated (15.9 per cent).

Figure 12: Time spent on voluntary activity 2014 (a) overall, by gender and age and (b) by educational attainment

a) overall, by gender and age



b) by educational attainment



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers, by gender and age (n = 11,799), educational level (n = 11,798).

## 8.

### Leadership roles in voluntary activities

Involvement in management functions is relatively widespread among volunteers. More than a quarter (27.5 per cent) of all people engaged in volunteering take on leadership roles like management or board activities.<sup>13</sup> However, this figure has reduced substantially since 1999.

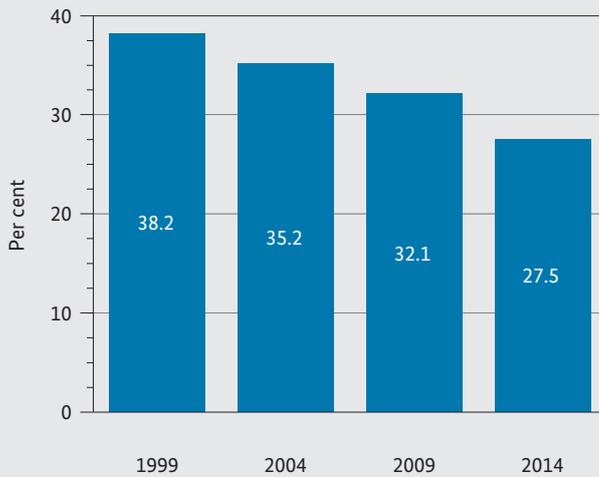
#### **More people are now actively volunteering, but proportionally fewer of them take on leadership roles like management or board activities than before**

The trend displayed in Figure 13, showing that fewer and fewer people are engaging in leadership roles like management or board activities, is based on all volunteers. According to these figures, the proportion of volunteers who take on leadership roles fell by a good ten percentage points from 38.2 per cent in 1999 to 27.5 per cent in 2014. However, if these findings are compared against the total residential population aged 14 and above, the relative decline in management or board activities within the volunteers does not reflect a decline in the absolute number of management or board activities overall. In 1999, 12.9 per cent of the total population in Germany had an active voluntary role involving leadership roles, while the figure for 2004 was 12.5 per cent, and 11.6 per cent for 2009. In 2014 the figure was 12.0 per cent, though it should be noted that small fluctuations detectible in the figures over time are not statistically significant. This indicates that the relative decline in the number of volunteers taking on leadership roles among all those involved in volunteering is mostly due to the fact that the number of volunteers not involved in such management or board functions has increased strongly.

---

<sup>13</sup> On the topic of management functions in volunteering, see Hagen & Simonson 2017.

**Figure 13: Rate of involvement in leadership roles like management or board activities by volunteers over time**

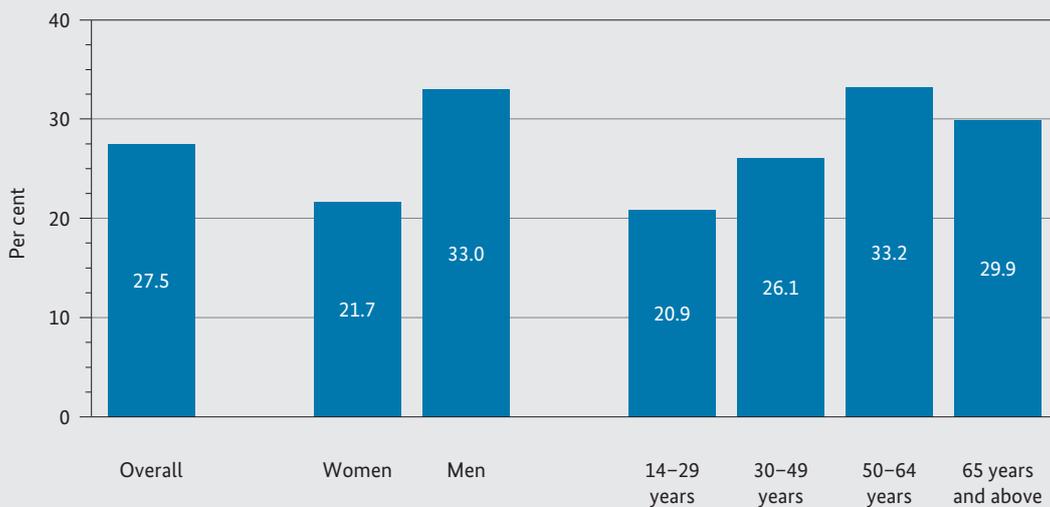


Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers. FWS 1999 (n = 4,672), FWS 2004 (n = 5,124), FWS 2009 (n = 6,986), FWS 2014 (n = 12,409).

**Leadership roles in volunteering are more widespread among men than among women; older people hold a leadership role more frequently than their younger peers**

With a figure of 33.0 per cent in 2014, men are much more likely to carry out a leadership position like a management or board function than women, for whom the figure is 21.7 per cent (Figure 14). The rate of engagement in leadership roles is highest in the 50-to-64 age group, followed by the group made up of people aged 65 and over. Leadership roles are less frequent in the volunteering of 30-to-49-year-olds and are least frequent in the youngest age group – 14-to-29-year-olds.

**Figure 14: Rate of involvement in leadership roles like management or board activities 2014, overall, by gender and by age**



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 12,409).

Leadership roles are not the exclusive preserve of more highly educated volunteers (29.3 per cent), but are also carried out by those with a low level (28.0 per cent) or medium level of educational achievement (26.7 per cent). Only school students take on leadership roles substantially less frequently, at 15.8 per cent, than people who have completed their school education.

## 9.

### Motives for volunteering

#### **The motives for volunteering are many and various, but the pleasure the volunteers themselves get out of it is of particular importance**

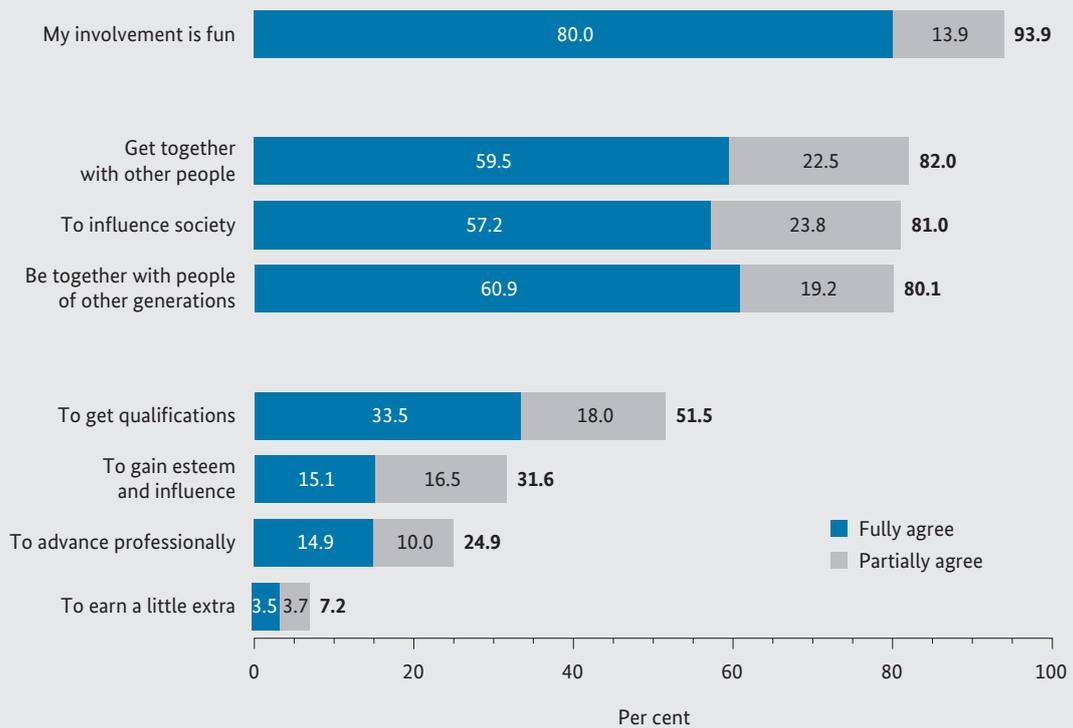
As motives for their volunteering, volunteers primarily give either facets that have a connection with their own well-being or social factors (Figure 15). At 93.9 per cent, most people agree either fully or somewhat that their volunteering is fun (80.0 per cent agree fully).<sup>14</sup> In addition, the overwhelming majority of those engaged in voluntary work express an interest in getting together with other people (82.0 per cent), in influencing society (81.0 per cent) and in being together with people of other generations (80.1 per cent). Motives relating to gaining material, professional or status advantages through volunteering are given much less frequently. But, for example, more than half of volunteers (51.5 per cent) give the desire to get qualifications that are important in life as one of their motives. Only 31.5 per cent express gaining esteem and influence as a motive, and about a quarter hope to advance professionally through their volunteer work. The least prominent motive of all is financial: a total of only 7.2 per cent indicate that they hope to earn a little extra money as a result of their volunteering.

Thus, for the vast majority of volunteers, doing something that gives them pleasure, that they can do together with other people and that can make some small contribution to society are the central motivation for their volunteering. Improving their position in society or on the labour market or benefiting financially are less important reasons for doing such work, though these motives play a role for many too, albeit a subordinate one.

---

<sup>14</sup> On motives for volunteering, see also Müller, Hameister & Lux 2017.

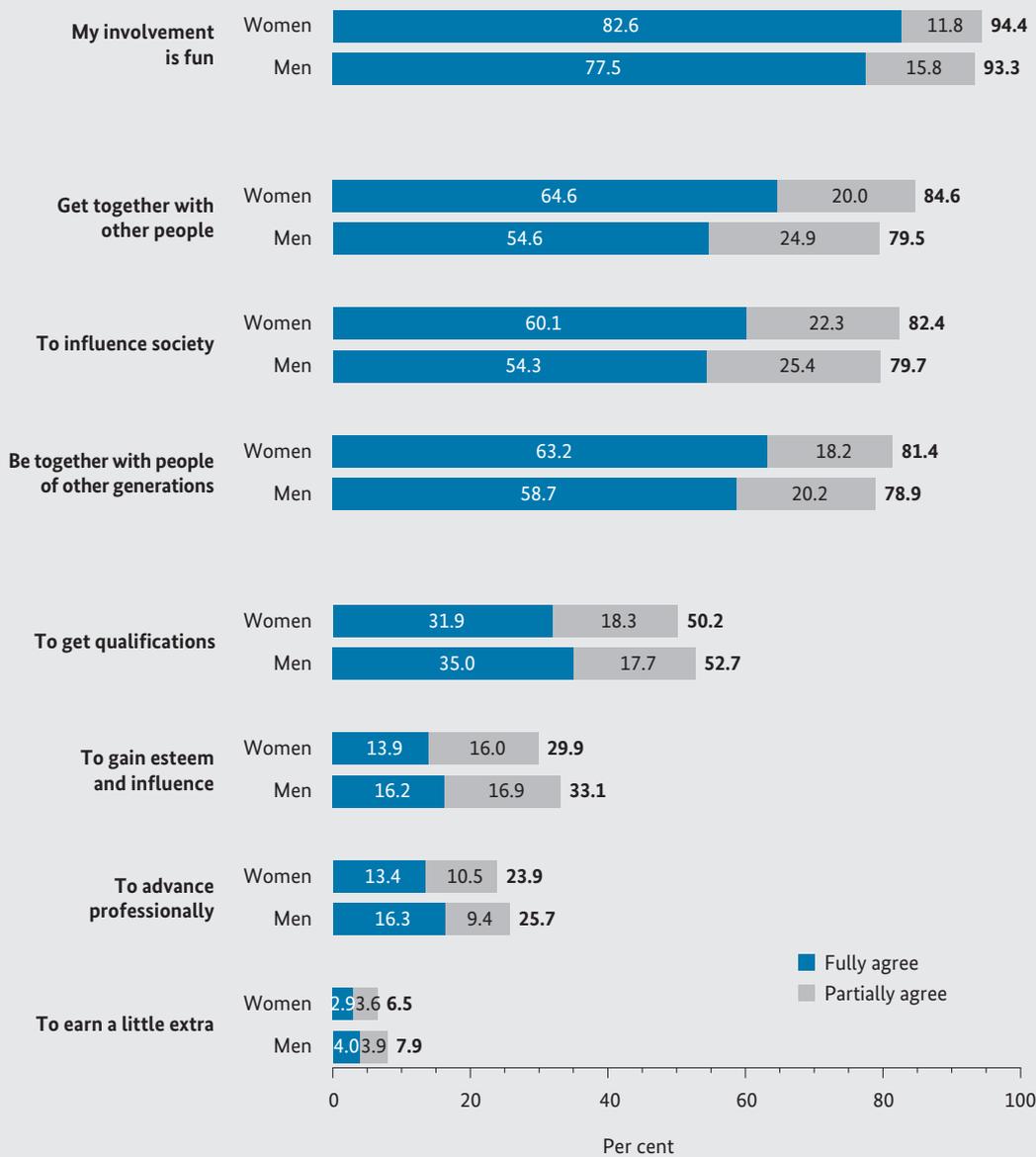
Figure 15: Motives of volunteers for volunteering, 2014



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 11,651–12,506).

When one makes a comparison between the genders, women can be seen to be slightly more likely than men to mention their own well-being and social factors, while men tend more than women to appeal to motives connected to material or immaterial utility (Figure 16). Against this, in terms of the rankings of motives in order of importance, there is very little difference between women and men. Fun is given by both genders as the most important motive, while earning a little extra income ranks lowest.

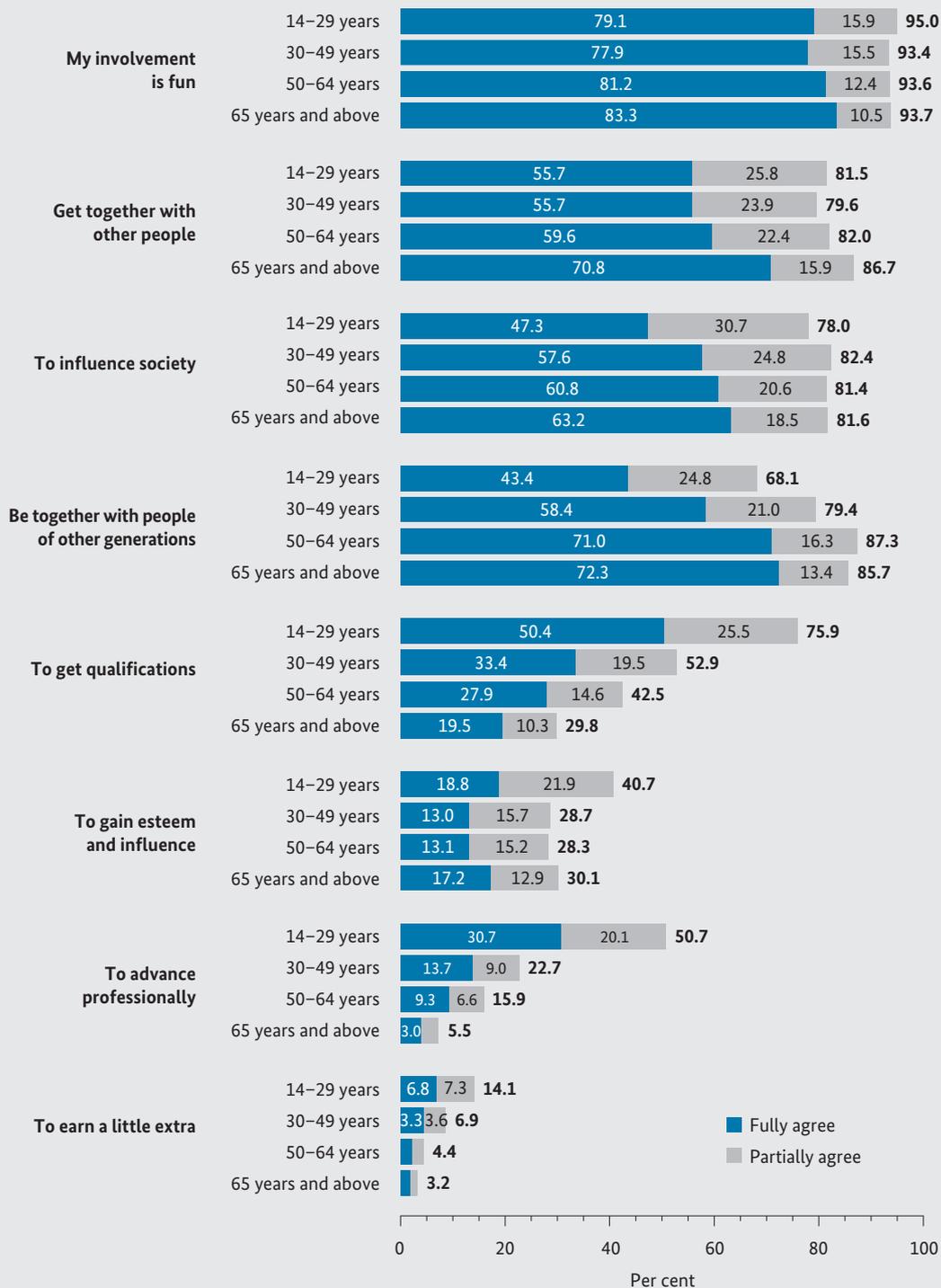
Figure 16: Motives of volunteers for volunteering, 2014, by gender



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 11,651–12,506).

A comparison of the age groups reveals that motives that are more practical are most likely to be mentioned by the youngest age group (14 to 29 years) (Figure 17). They are keen to combine their volunteering for the benefit of others with their own personal development goals. The youngest age group also gives fun as a motivation slightly more often than their elders, though age-related differences in this regard are very small. Social motives are more often indicated by the older age groups than by their younger peers. Volunteers between the ages of 30 and 49 years are the keenest of the groups on influencing society. While it seems in general important to the oldest age group to get to meet other people, 50-to-64-year-olds also often mention that they are motivated by the opportunity to mix with other generations. In this regard, it is clear that at more advanced ages, one's own image, qualifications and especially financial position are increasingly pushed into the background as motives.

Figure 17: Motives of volunteers for volunteering 2014, by age



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 11,651-12,506).

On looking at educational groups it is clear that school students find the accumulation of esteem and influence an important motive, as are the aims of advancing professionally, getting qualifications and earning a little extra money. Volunteers with a lower level of education tend to give more socially oriented motives than other groups, expressing a desire to get together with both other people in general and people of other generations in particular. Volunteers with a mid or high level of education are slightly more likely than other educational groups to state that they get fun out of their volunteering. But the fun factor appears to be very important for all volunteers, regardless of educational background. The desire to influence society is a more important factor for people with a higher level of education.

# 10.

## Volunteering among immigrants

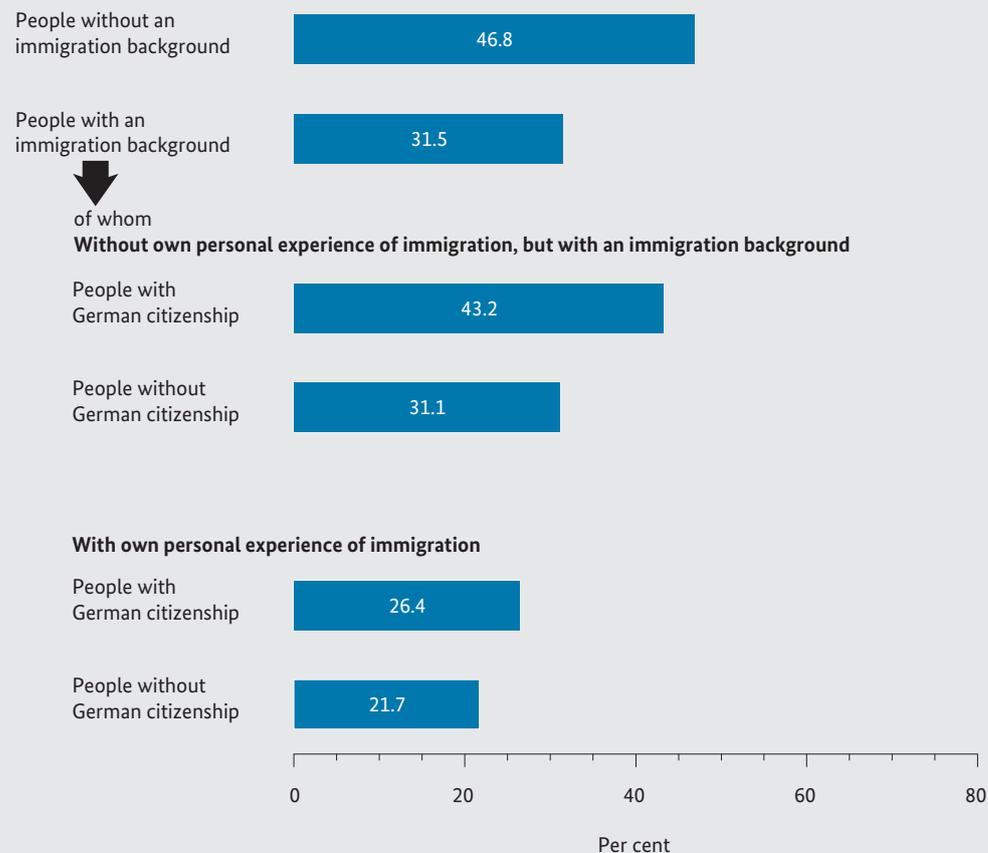
In the last decades, Germany has become the home for many immigrants from countries all over the world. To track these developments in population statistics, the Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) established the concept “immigration background” (*Migrationshintergrund*), which includes not only first generation immigrants, but also descendants who are born in Germany (second generation immigrants). It distinguishes between four groups of immigrants: (a) people with personal immigration experience and without German citizenship; (b) people with personal immigration experience possessing German citizenship; (c) people with an immigration background born in Germany but without German citizenship; and (d) people with an immigration background but born in Germany and with German citizenship.

For immigrants, voluntary engagement has a dual importance (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF*) 2010): on the one hand, immigrant volunteers take on important social tasks (their involvement in voluntary work may be understood as a sign of successful integration). On the other, voluntary engagement can also be thought of as a pathway towards participation in and making a contribution to the shape of society (so that volunteering can also represent a path towards integration). If the rates of volunteering and the types of engagement taken on by people with and without an immigration background are similar, this can also be interpreted as indicating both the integration capacity of immigrants and the integration capacity of society in the Federal Republic of Germany.

### **Immigrants have lower rates of volunteering than people without an immigration background, but there are also clear differences between different groups of immigrants**

31.5 per cent of immigrants volunteer, while 46.8 per cent of people without an immigration background do engage, an indication that the latter group are much more likely to become involved (Figure 18). However, there are clear differences between the different groups of immigrants: among the subgroup containing people with an immigration background born in Germany and possessing German citizenship the rate of volunteering is 43.2 per cent, almost as high as the figure for people with no immigration background. On the other hand, the rate of volunteering among people with an immigration background who were born in Germany but who do not have German citizenship is much lower, at 31.1 per cent. The lowest level of engagement of all is the figure for people with their own personal experience of immigration. Differences in the rates of volunteering for people with and without an immigration background can only be partially explained by differences in age, education and income (Vogel, Simonson & Tesch-Römer 2017). It appears that individual experiences during childhood and adolescence that differ in the histories of people with and without their own immigration experience play a considerable role in the likelihood of engagement. Citizenship is also a meaningful variable in rates of volunteering.

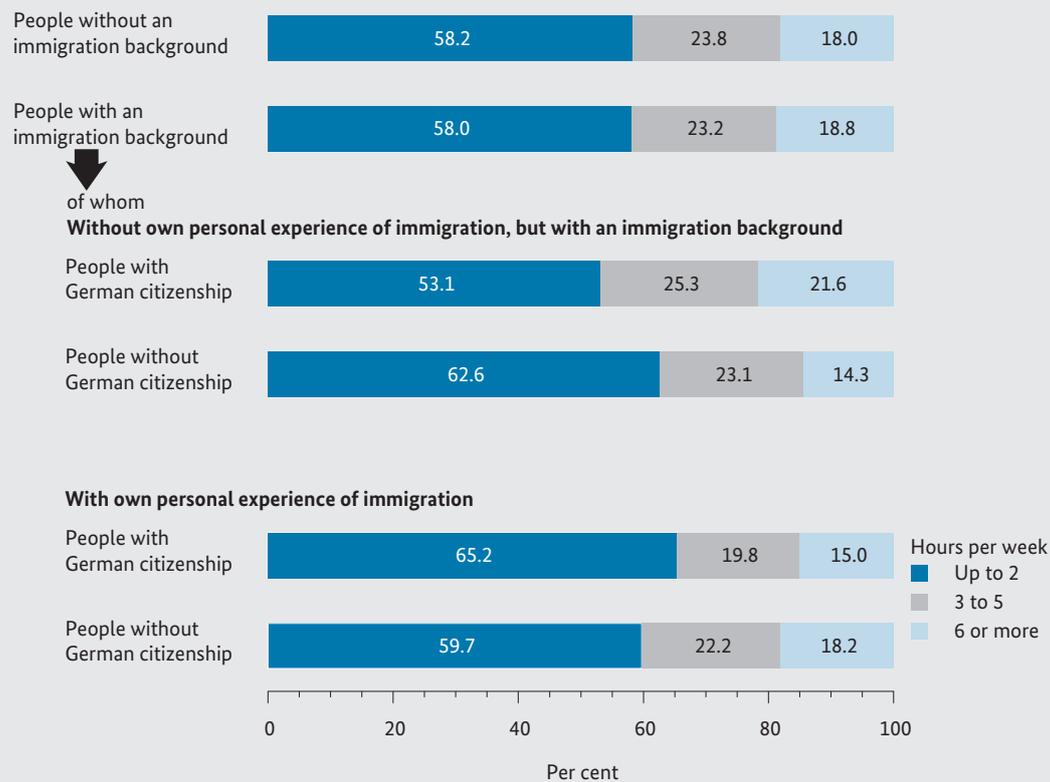
**Figure 18: Rates of volunteering in 2014, by type of immigration background**



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All respondents (n = 28,689).

Volunteers with an immigration background spend around the same amount of time on their voluntary activities as those without such a background. In both groups, more than half of volunteers spend up to two hours a week on their voluntary work (Figure 19). The greatest amount of time on voluntary activity is spent by the German volunteers with an immigration background, but without their own personal experience of immigration: more than one in five of them spend six hours or more per week on such activities. This indicates that immigrants volunteer at a lower rate than people without an immigration background do, but that the level of commitment of those who do engage in such activity is hardly different in terms of total hours expended.

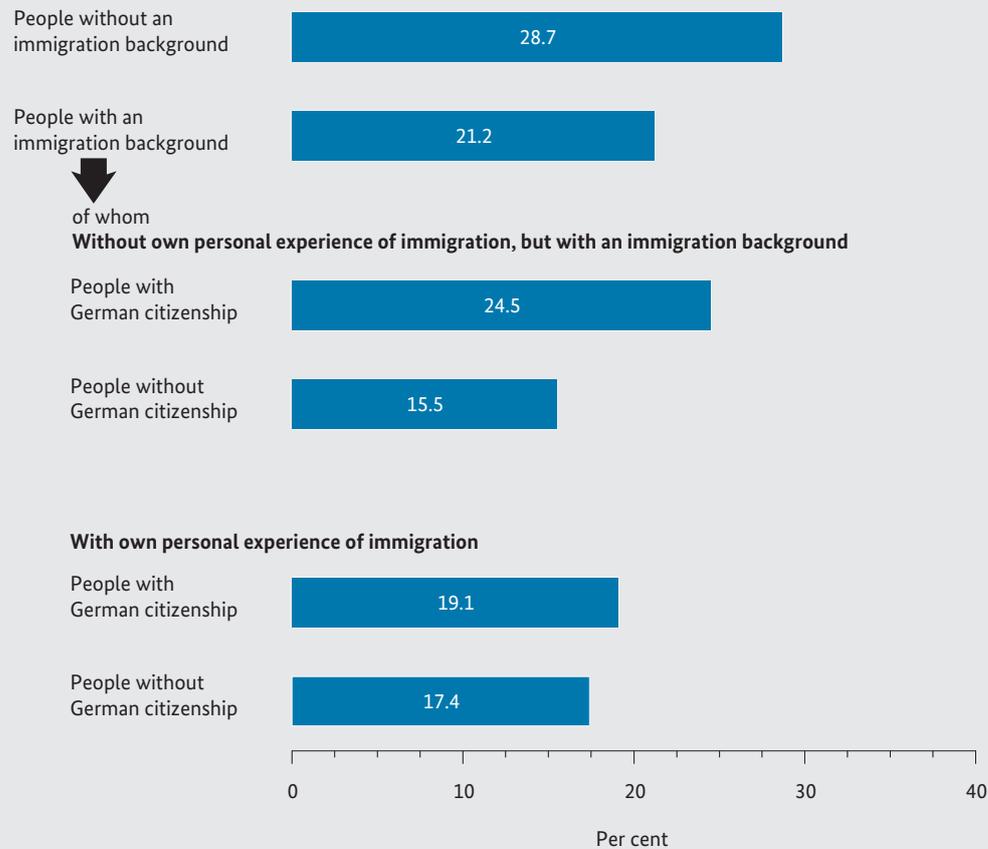
**Figure 19: Time spent on voluntary activity 2014, by type of immigration background**



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 12,516).

Volunteers with an immigration background take on leadership roles like management or board activities proportionally less frequently in their volunteering than their peers without an immigration background. The proportion of volunteers taking on leadership roles is particularly small among people born in Germany but without German citizenship. One may assume that the rate within this group is likely to rise, as its members are predominantly young, when one considers that rates of participation in leadership roles are considerably higher among people in the mid-aged groups. But the difference is nevertheless surprising: after all, almost everyone without their own personal experience of immigration has attended the school in Germany and has become acquainted through school with the structures of civil society, including its various organisations and institutions. However, it would be a mistake to discuss this difference between groups simply in terms of discrimination, as there may also be educational or professional differences between the groups, which may reduce the level of acceptance of leadership roles among some of them.

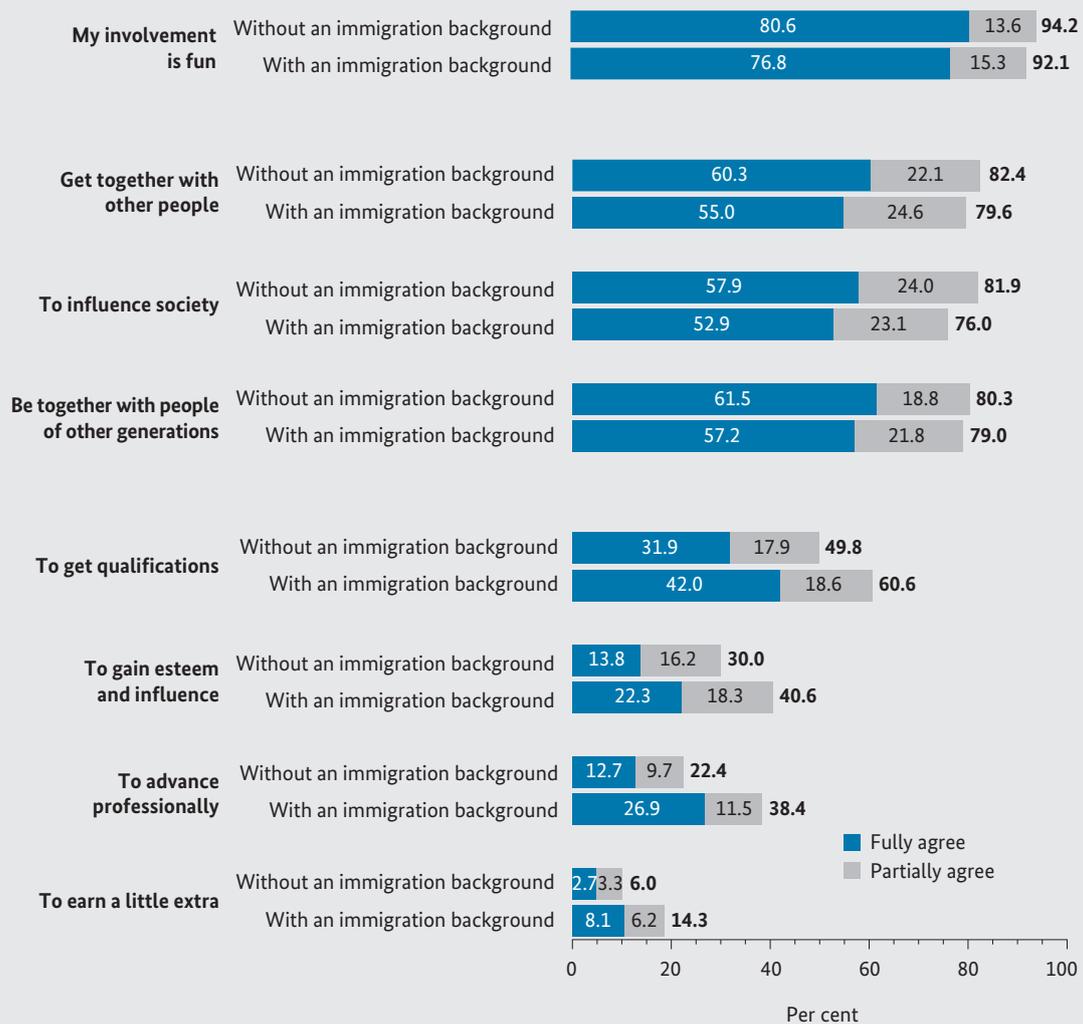
**Figure 20: Rate of involvement in leadership roles like management or board positions 2014, by type of immigration background**



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 12,516).

It is just as important for both people with an immigration background as for those without to enjoy their volunteering (Figure 21). In addition, the frequency with which socially-oriented motives are mentioned differs only slightly between people with and without an immigration background. Such motives are mentioned only a little more frequently by persons without such a background. However, substantial differences can be found in the frequency of mentions of more utility-related motives: immigrants are more likely than people without an immigration background to mention getting qualifications, gaining esteem or influence, and their intention to advance professionally through their volunteering. Also, the overall relatively rare motive of earning a little extra income through volunteering is mentioned more frequently by people with an immigration background.

Figure 21: Motives of volunteers for volunteering 2014, by immigration background



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All volunteers (n = 11,603–12,452).

If one also differentiates according to type of immigration background, it becomes clear that the utility-related motives are more often mentioned by people with an immigration background and without German citizenship, but without their own personal experience of immigration. The people making up this group are more often younger than the average. The results are in line with results already described in that utility-related motives tend to be particularly important to younger volunteers.

# 11.

## Willingness to volunteer by current non-volunteers

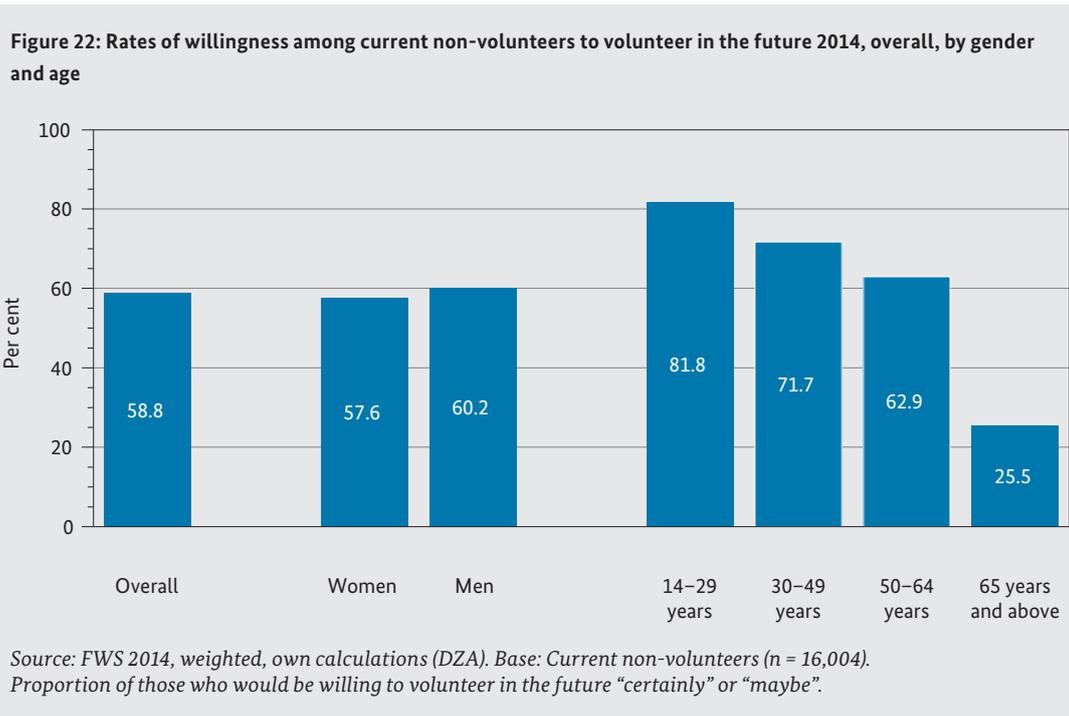
On the issue of the direction in which voluntary engagement is likely to develop in the future, it would seem useful to find out whether people not currently engaged in the voluntary sector can imagine doing so in the future. For this reason, people who have not done any volunteering during the last twelve months were asked in the 2014 Survey on Volunteering if they could imagine volunteering in the future.

### **There is a high degree of willingness among people not currently involved in volunteering to do so in the future**

Of everyone who in 2014 had not volunteered in the previous twelve months, a total of 58.9 per cent expressed themselves willing to do so in the future, a position that they expressed in the form of two categories: „certainly willing“ and „maybe willing“ (Figure 22).<sup>15</sup> There is only a modest difference between men and women in relation to this willingness. Among adolescents through to young and middle adulthood, willingness to engage is more pronounced than in older age groups. Such a willingness is also more pronounced for people with a higher level of education than those with lower or medium educational achievement. 72.1 per cent of current non-volunteers with a high level of educational attainment see themselves as maybe or certainly willing to engage in voluntary work in the future, while 58.7 per cent of people with a medium level of education and 39.0 per cent of people with lower educational achievements express such a willingness. The most active expression of willingness to engage is among current non-volunteer school students, 84.4 per cent of whom declare themselves willing to volunteer in the future.

---

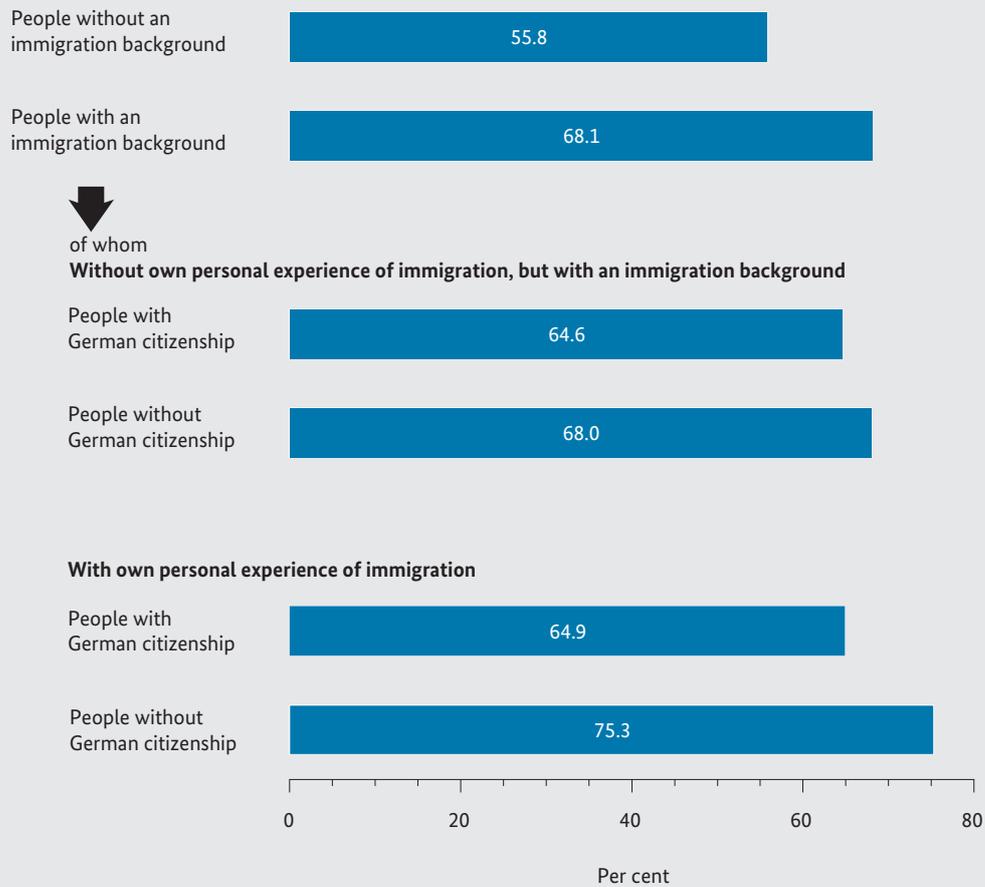
<sup>15</sup> On willingness to volunteer, see also Müller & Tesch-Römer 2017a.



### The willingness to engage is stronger among non-volunteers with an immigration background than among those without such a background

Non-volunteers with an immigration background exceed those without such a background in relation to their willingness to volunteer: 68.1 per cent of non-volunteers with an immigration background express themselves to be either certainly or maybe willing to engage in the future, as compared to 55.8 per cent for non-volunteers without an immigration background (Figure 23). This appears to indicate a potential reservoir from which civil society can recruit new volunteers. The survey data reveals further differences between the various groups of immigrants. Non-volunteers without German citizenship have an above average rate of willingness to become volunteers, whether or not they have had their own personal experience of immigration. The highest rate of willingness to engage among current non-volunteers is found among those without German citizenship and with their own personal experience of immigration. In that group, 75.3 per cent express themselves to be either maybe or certainly willing to volunteer in the future. This high level of willingness to volunteer in Germany in the future may be understood as a willingness to become involved in and to integrate into society. In the context of the comparatively low current volunteer rates of immigrants, however, it also points to the possible existence of barriers to volunteering.

**Figure 23: Rates of willingness among current non-volunteers to volunteer in the future 2014, by type of immigration background**



Source: FWS 2014, weighted, own calculations (DZA). Base: All non-volunteers (n = 16,173). Proportion of those who would be willing to volunteer in the future "certainly" or "maybe".

# 12.

## Summary

The results of the 2014 German Survey on Volunteering show that a large proportion of the resident population of Germany from the age of 14 years and above is actively involved in volunteering. The rate of volunteering has risen clearly in the past fifteen years, increasing by a total of almost ten percentage points from 34.0 to 43.6 per cent. This increase in voluntary engagement was particularly strong between 2009 and 2014. During that period the rate of participation grew at a faster pace than in earlier periods. At the same time, the pattern of volunteering has changed: thus, for example, the time spent by the average individual on voluntary activity has reduced, and a comparatively smaller proportion of volunteers take on leadership roles.

A number of societal trends are playing a substantial role in increasing the volunteer rate, such as the increasing number of people with a higher level of educational qualification, the increased participation of women in the labour force and the growing number of associations and organisations that provide an opportunity for people to engage in them. But the various actors in the field of volunteering policy, through an expansion in the social discourse and the implementation of policy measures designed to promote such engagement, have also contributed to the current situation in which volunteering has become a more important facet of the lives of many people.

Volunteering is often discussed in public and academic debate in the context of its various social functions. However, volunteering does more than simply serve the well-being of society, but can also be of benefit to the people who engage in it. People who volunteer are better tied into society through their work in their communities: they get to know other volunteers, thus expanding their social network and giving them new opportunities to enjoy shared social activities. They exchange ideas with other volunteers and learn new skills and capacities through their volunteering. From the point of view of the individual, volunteering thus provides opportunities for socialisation, participation in social policy formation and decision-making processes, in giving new enjoyment and sense to life, but also, very concretely, in acquiring new competencies and in creating new social relationships that may be beneficial and useful in various ways. Career prospects may arise through volunteering either via the acquisition of relevant competences or through contacts with potential employers. In addition, volunteering can also have a positive effect on life satisfaction and health.

### The opportunities available for volunteering are unequally distributed

Despite its overwhelmingly positive findings, the results of the 2014 Survey on Volunteering also provide indications that by no means everyone takes part in volunteering to the same extent. Indeed, there are some social groups within which the rate of volunteering is sometimes considerably lower than the average.

Voluntary engagement is linked to a number of socially structured preconditions and resources that are not accessible on an equal basis to everyone. Schools often provide a rehearsal ground for volunteering. As a rule, physical mobility is also a precondition for getting involved. For people with health impairments, doing voluntary work is therefore a more difficult task than for people not suffering from such problems. Opportunities for participation in the voluntary sector can also be restricted in the case of people with an immigration background – due, for example, to language problems or to cultural barriers that may be present within voluntary clubs and associations. However, social inequalities can lead to more than just unequal participation in volunteering, but may also be further reinforced through that same unequal participation (Böhnke 2011) – as people make professional contacts through their volunteering, for example. It is therefore very important to consider those groups whose rate of voluntary engagement is smaller than the federal average and who may find themselves encountering barriers to access to opportunities to volunteer. We have identified a total of five groups in which the rate of volunteering is below average: Considerably below-average rates of participation are found among people with a lower level of educational attainment and among people suffering from serious health problems. Both older people and people with an immigration background also volunteer less than the average. Finally, women also show a rate of volunteering that is slightly below average.

**Access to opportunities for voluntary engagement among people with a lower level of educational attainment.** People with a low level of educational attainment were evidently less likely to participate in the year 2014 (28.3 per cent) than those with a medium or high level of education (who have a rate of 41.1 per cent and 52.3 per cent, respectively). In addition, the differences between the groups as defined by educational level have clearly increased between 1999 and 2014: while among those with a high level of education, the rate of volunteering increased from 40.4 per cent to 52.3 per cent (i. e. by 11.9 percentage points), the same rate for those with lower educational attainment grew by only 3.8 percentage points, from 24.5 per cent (in 1999) to 28.3 per cent (in 2014). Aside from educational history, other socio-economic resources also have a role to play in volunteer rates. In this context, it is worth noting that people who characterise their financial position as very bad become engaged in volunteering to a far lesser extent than those who see their financial situation as very good.

**Access to opportunities for voluntary engagement among people with health impairments.** People with illness-related impairments get involved in volunteering to a lesser extent than those not suffering from illnesses or from illness-related restrictions on their day-to-day activities. The rate of volunteering for people suffering severe restrictions as a result of illness in their daily lives is around 25.8 per cent, while it is 38.7 per cent for people who suffer from moderate restrictions due to illness. By comparison, the rate of engagement for people who are not restricted by their illnesses is 47.4 per cent, while the rate for people not suffering any illness at

all is 48.0 per cent. People with disabilities or illness-related restrictions on their daily lives often themselves need support in getting on with their routine activities. Recognising and supporting this group as people wanting to get involved in voluntary activity will require a change of perspective.

**Access to opportunities for voluntary engagement among people at an advanced age.** If one considers the rates of voluntary engagement by phase of life, one can see that the rate of volunteering decreases at the higher end of the age spectrum. However, this decline is mainly attributable to the people of 70 years and older – i. e. people on the threshold of advanced old age. Up until the age of 70, the rate of volunteering is actually quite stable (50–54 years: 46.1 per cent, 55–59 years: 44.5 per cent, 60–64 years: 45.9 per cent, 65–69 years: 43.7 per cent, 70–74 years: 39.9 per cent, 75 years and older: 26.1 per cent). The rate of engagement among older people has increased more strongly over the last fifteen years as compared against the figures for the mid-life age bands. These figures allow one to conclude that volunteering has become very widespread during the „third phase of life“, but that engagement weakens substantially in the „fourth stage“.

**Access to opportunities for voluntary engagement among immigrants.** The results of the Survey on Volunteering show that immigrants do not form a homogeneous group with regard to volunteering, but will vary substantially depending on individual biographies and immigration history. While people with an immigration background, but without their own personal immigration experience, volunteer in very similar numbers to people without any immigration background, rates of volunteering among people with their own personal immigration experience are below average. However, this group's high level of willingness to become active suggests great potential for engagement in the future.

**Access to opportunities for volunteering among women.** With a figure of 41.5 per cent, women engage in volunteering a little less than men, whose volunteer rate is 45.7 per cent. The rate of volunteering among women has, however, increased more than for men between 1999 and 2014, thus approximating towards the rates for men. Differences in sorts of voluntary engagements entered into by women and by men are reflected in the forms of volunteering given by respondents. For example, female volunteers remain less likely to take on management or board functions, which suggests that gender equality has not yet been fully achieved in the voluntary sector.

## An outlook

A large proportion of people in Germany are engaged in voluntary work, and this rate of engagement has increased considerably over the past fifteen years. If one considers volunteering as an opportunity for social participation, this observation can be regarded as a very positive finding. However, the results of the Survey on Volunteering 2014 also indicate that not all people can participate in volunteering to a similar extent, as such participation requires both social and personal resources, and must be compatible with duties and activities in other areas of life, including the demands of work and of family commitments. In order to avoid exacerbating social inequality, it is important that opportunities for potential volunteers also reach

out to social groups in which rates of engagement have so far been less pronounced. The task of strengthening the phenomenon of volunteering poses challenges more than just in terms of policies to favour voluntary engagement: it also presents new opportunities for society. The participation of all social groups in voluntary work can be of use to all members of society: it can help volunteers to take advantage of the positive effects of their voluntary work. Furthermore, the participation of as many people as possible in volunteering helps society itself, through the effect of such participation in reinforcing social cohesion.

## Bibliography

**Böhnke, P. (2011).** Ungleiche Verteilung politischer und zivilgesellschaftlicher Partizipation. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 61(1/2), 18–25.

**Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) (2010).** Engagiert für Integration. Erkenntnisse und Handlungsempfehlungen aus 16 Modellprojekten zum interkulturellen bürgerschaftlichen Engagement. Nürnberg: BAMF.

**Enquete-Kommission ‚Zukunft des Bürgerschaftlichen Engagements‘ (2002).** Bericht der Enquete-Kommission ‚Zukunft des Bürgerschaftlichen Engagements‘. Bürgerschaftliches Engagement: auf dem Weg in eine zukunftsfähige Bürgergesellschaft (Bundestagsdrucksache 14/8900). Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag.

**Hagen, C. & Simonson, J. (2017).** Inhaltliche Ausgestaltung und Leitungsfunktionen im freiwilligen Engagement. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.). *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 299–331). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

**Hameister, N., Müller, D. & Ziegelmann, J. P. (2017).** Zeitlicher Umfang, Häufigkeit und biografische Dauer des freiwilligen Engagements. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.). *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 333–354). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

**Hameister, N. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2017).** Landkreise und kreisfreie Städte: Regionale Unterschiede im freiwilligen Engagement. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.). *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 549–571). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

**Kausmann, C. & Simonson, J. (2017).** Freiwilliges Engagement in Ost- und Westdeutschland sowie den 16 Ländern. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.). *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 573–600). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

**Kausmann, C., Simonson, J., Ziegelmann, J. P., Vogel, C. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2017).** Länderbericht zum Deutschen Freiwilligensurvey 2014. Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

**Müller, D., Hameister, N. & Lux, K. (2017).** Anstoß und Motive für das freiwillige Engagement. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.). *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 413–437). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

- Müller, D. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2017a).** Früheres Engagement und Engagementbereitschaft. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 153–178). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Müller, D. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2017b).** Krankheitsbedingte Alltagseinschränkungen, subjektive Gesundheit, Lebenszufriedenheit und freiwilliges Engagement. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 465–484). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Romeu Gordo, L. & Vogel, C. (2017).** Geldzahlungen, Sachzuwendungen und Kostenerstattung im freiwilligen Engagement. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 377–412). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Schiel, S., Quandt, S., Häring, A., Weißpflug, A., Gilberg, R. & Kleudgen, M. (2015).** Methodenbericht *Deutscher Freiwilligensurvey 2014*. Bonn: infas Institut für angewandte Sozialwissenschaft (Institute for Applied Social Sciences).
- Simonson, J. & Hameister, N. (2017).** Sozioökonomischer Status und freiwilliges Engagement. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 439–464). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Simonson, J., Hameister, N. & Vogel, C. (2017).** Daten und Methoden des Deutschen Freiwilligensurveys. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 51–88). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Simonson, J., Vogel, C. & Tesch-Römer, C. (Eds.) (2017).** *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014*. Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Simonson, J., Ziegelmann, J. P., Vogel, C., Hameister, N., Müller, D. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2016):** *German Survey on Volunteering – Deutscher Freiwilligensurvey (FWS) 2014. Survey instrument – English version*. Berlin: German Centre of Gerontology.
- Vogel, C., Hagen, C., Simonson, J. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2017).** Freiwilliges Engagement und öffentliche gemeinschaftliche Aktivität. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 91–151). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.
- Vogel, C., Simonson, J. & Tesch-Römer, C. (2017).** Freiwilliges Engagement und informelle Unterstützungsleistungen von Personen mit Migrationshintergrund. In: J. Simonson, C. Vogel & C. Tesch-Römer (Eds.) *Freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland – Der Deutsche Freiwilligensurvey 2014* (S. 601–634). Wiesbaden. Springer VS.

## Methodological appendix

The German Survey on Volunteering (*Deutscher Freiwilligensurvey, FWS*) is a representative survey on volunteering in Germany, focused on persons aged 14 and above, funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (German: *Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ*). The Survey on Volunteering is the largest study on volunteering and holding honorary office in Germany. It offers a central basis upon which to provide social reporting on volunteering. Data have been collected for the Survey on Volunteering on four occasions so far. The data collection was carried out by TNS Infratest in the years 1999, 2004 and 2009. Since the end of 2011, the research responsibility for the Survey on Volunteering has been entrusted to the German Centre of Gerontology (*Deutsches Zentrum für Altersfragen, DZA*). Data collection for the fourth wave was carried out in 2014 by *infas Institut für angewandte Sozialwissenschaft* (Institute for Applied Social Sciences). In preparation for data collection in 2014, pretests were carried out separately for both the German and foreign-language interviews. The main data collection phase began on 28 April and was completed on 12 November 2014.

### Sample used for the Survey on Volunteering

The Survey on Volunteering was carried out in the form of a standardised telephone survey (CATI, Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) for all survey years. Its universe is the population residing in private households in Germany from age 14 years upwards. The sample sizes of the Survey on Volunteering were expanded beyond previous waves of the survey. In 1999, a total of 14,922 persons were interviewed, while in 2004, 15,000 persons were interviewed. In 2009 the number of respondents was increased to 20,005 persons. In 2014 the number of respondents was increased again to include a total of 28,690 participants. Table 1 shows the sample sizes for the various years by gender, age and educational attainment. It proved possible to increase numbers of respondents over the years in all the groups considered in the survey. If one compares the distribution of the population groups in the Survey on Volunteering against those in the German Microcensus, one can detect a bias in terms of educational attainment fairly typical for such questionnaire-based research: people with medium and higher level educational attainment tend to be more willing to participate in surveys than people with lower levels of education. However, this educational bias within the Survey on Volunteering did not grow with time. The shifts in the percentage population distributions (the increasing proportion of older and more highly educated people and the decreasing proportion of people with lower educational attainment) reflect changes in the composition of the general population.

Table 1: Sample distribution by survey year and by population group

	FWS 2004		FWS 2009		FWS 2014			
	Number of cases	Per cent	Number of cases	Per cent	Number of cases	Per cent		
<b>Women</b>	8,366	51.7	8,350	52.0	11,347	51.7	15,621	51.3
<b>Men</b>	6,556	48.3	6,650	48.0	8,658	48.3	13,069	48.5
<b>Overall</b>	14,922	100.0	15,000	100.0	20,005	100.0	28,690	100.0
<b>14–29 years</b>	2,671	22.9	3,219	20.2	3,898	20.6	4,671	20.5
<b>30–49 years</b>	6,286	36.6	6,385	36.0	7,013	33.5	8,005	31.2
<b>50–64 years</b>	3,651	22.2	3,221	22.2	4,955	22.1	8,743	24.8
<b>65 years and older</b>	2,293	18.4	2,149	21.6	4,079	23.9	7,271	23.5
<b>Overall</b>	14,901	100.0	14,974	100.0	19,945	100.0	28,690	100.0
<b>Still at school</b>	501	4.8	784	6.1	960	5.6	1,313	4.8
<b>Lower education</b>	4,304	29.9	3,354	26.6	3,812	22.9	5,713	22.3
<b>Medium education</b>	4,910	31.2	4,917	30.8	6,408	31.6	9,560	31.3
<b>Higher education</b>	5,125	34.2	5,928	36.5	8,760	39.9	12,096	41.6
<b>Overall</b>	14,840	100.0	14,983	100.0	19,940	100.0	28,682	100.0

Source: FWS 1999, FWS 2004, FWS 2009, FWS 2014, own presentation (DZA). The absolute numbers shown are unweighted, the percentages given are weighted.

## Interviews via land line and mobile phone

In 2014, interviews were also conducted by mobile phone for the first time, mainly for the purpose of reaching persons who do not use a fixed-line connection (who are often referred to as 'mobile-onlys'). All telephone numbers were generated randomly. Two random sub-samples were used for data collection: the base sample takes in fixed and mobile phone numbers distributed all over the territory of Germany. Additional interviews were conducted using only the fixed line network for selected federal states in the supplementary sample financed by the federal states. A total of 20,301 fixed line interviews were conducted (corresponding to 70.8 per cent of all cases), and 8,389 interviews by mobile phones (29.2 per cent of all cases).

## Interviews in foreign languages

In order to improve the inclusiveness of the survey to immigrants, in addition to speaking with respondents in German, interviewers also conducted interviews in five foreign languages (Russian, Turkish, Polish, Arabic and English). A total of 705 interviews were conducted in foreign languages (Russian: n = 326; Turkish: n = 115; Polish: n = 88; Arabic: n = 47; English: n = 129). This allowed us to increase the number of participants with an immigration background. Of all respondents in the year 2014, a good fifth of them had an immigration background. Of these people, the largest group is made up of people with no personal experience of immigration and with German citizenship (Table 2). The smallest group of people with an immigration background is represented by those with no personal immigration experience but without German citizenship. For both the above-mentioned groups, immigration background is derived from at least one parent having had personal immigration experience or without German citizenship.

Table 2: Sample distribution, 2014, by immigration background

	Number of cases	Per cent
<b>People without an immigration background</b>	23,441	79.6
<b>People with an immigration background in total</b>	4,917	20.4
<i>People with no personal experience of immigration, with German citizenship (at least one parent having immigrated or without German citizenship)</i>	1,954	7.4
<i>People with no personal experience of immigration, without German citizenship (at least one parent having immigrated or without German citizenship)</i>	280	1.2
<i>People with personal experience of immigration, with German citizenship</i>	1,496	6.4
<i>People with personal experience of immigration, without German citizenship</i>	1,187	5.4
<b>Overall</b>	28,358	100.0

Source: FWS 1999, FWS 2004, FWS 2009, FWS 2014, own presentation (DZA). The number of cases are unweighted, the percentages given are weighted.

## Extension of the questionnaire

For the 2014 data collection wave, the questionnaire was expanded to better describe changing forms of volunteering, living conditions and resources available to volunteers and to non-volunteers, and the general conditions surrounding the act of volunteering. For example, questions were asked on respondents' state of health and marital status. In addition to this, the list of questions on respondents' contributions of informal support was extended. The average interview time lengthened as a result from 20 to 30 minutes. In addition, respondents were asked to give consent for the inclusion of regional data to allow us to evaluate the survey data from the point of view of regional differentiations. All data from the interview constitute self-assessments by the respondents.

## Questions on public activities and voluntary engagement

A key part of the survey is the two-stage questioning on public activities and voluntary engagement, which was formulated as follows in 2014:

*There is a range of ways of getting involved outside of work and family, for example in a club, an initiative, a project or a self-help group. I will name a few different areas that are possible. If you think of the last 12 months: Have you been actively involved in one or more of these areas? Are you or have you been actively involved somewhere...*

1. *...in the area of sport and exercise – e. g. in a sports club or in an exercise group?*
2. *...in the area of culture and music – e. g. a theatre or music group, a choir, a cultural association or an association for cultural development?*
3. *...in the area of leisure and social interaction – e. g. in an allotment garden association or a games club?*

4. ...in the social area – e. g. in a charity or a different aid organisation, in the neighbourhood help or a self-help group?
5. ...in the health area – e. g. as a helper in healthcare or in visiting services, in an association or a self-help group?
6. ...in the school or nursery area – e. g. in a parents' association, the student board or a development association?
7. ...in youth work outside school or adult education – e. g. looking after children or youth groups or running training programmes?
8. ...in the area of the environment, nature protection or animal rights – e.g. in an association or project dedicated to such topics?
9. ...in the area of politics and political interest groups – e. g. in a party, in the local council or town council, in political initiatives or solidarity projects?
10. ...in the area of professional interest groups outside work – e. g. in a trade union, professional association, unemployment initiative?
11. ...in the church or religious area – e. g. in the church, a religious organisation or a religious group?
12. ...in the area of justice and criminality – e. g. as a lay judge or honorary judge, looking after offenders or victims of crime?
13. ...in the accident or ambulance service or in the voluntary fire brigade?
14. ...in an area not yet mentioned – e. g. in citizens' initiatives or working groups on local and traffic development, but also citizens' clubs and others that haven't been mentioned yet?

These areas were also included in the previous surveys. In the 1999 Survey on Volunteering 15 areas were examined. In it, very few people declared themselves to be active in the area of economic self-help, and it was therefore not included in the subsequent surveys.

Where an activity was indicated for at least one area, this question was asked as a follow-up:

*We are interested now in whether you also do voluntary activities in the areas in which you are involved or if you volunteer in associations, initiatives, projects or self-help groups. We are looking at duties and work taken on voluntarily for little or no remuneration.*

*You said, you are [also] active [fade in area]. If you think of the last 12 months: Have you taken on duties or work in this area that you do on a voluntary basis?*

If the respondent replies to this question in the affirmative, then the following three open questions are asked (the interviewer add in sentences and key words):

*What type of group, organisation or institution is it in which you volunteer? Can you please describe it to me briefly?*

*And what exactly do you do there? What is your duty or what work do you do there?*

*Does your activity have a name? If so, what is it?*

## Adding a reference to a time window of twelve months

This query was also made in this form in the previous surveys, but on those previous occasions no specific time window was given. The questions were asked in 1999, 2004 and 2009 in such a way that respondents were left to decide whether or not to report a past activity or voluntary action – from the previous month, for example – the only time restriction being the use of the expression ,at present‘.

*There is a range of ways of getting involved outside of work and family, for example in a club, an initiative, a project or a self-help group. I will name a few different areas that are possible. Please tell me if you are actively involved in one or more of these areas. Are you actively involved somewhere...?*

*We are interested now in whether you also do voluntary activities in the areas in which you are involved or if you volunteer in associations, initiatives, projects or self-help groups. We are looking at duties and work taken on voluntarily for little or no remuneration.*

*You said, you are [also] active [fade in area]. Do you at present take on duties or work in this area that you do on a voluntary basis?*

If this question was answered in the affirmative, the two additional open questions followed (we asked three additional questions in 2014 to obtain more precise answers from the respondents):

*What kind of group, organisation or institution is it? Please tell me its name and a key word explaining what it does.*

*And what exactly do you do there? What is the duty, function or work you do there?*

In 2014, a twelve-month time window was added to the questionnaire on volunteering, as results can strictly speaking only be compared with each other if everyone interviewed is providing information within the same time frame. This applies especially to comparisons between different population groups. For example, younger and older respondents may have used differing time perspectives when asked to give information on their ,current‘ volunteering.

In order to see if the measurement of the rate of volunteering differed according to whether a twelve-month time window was specified or not, a pretest was carried out before commencing with the main survey. In this pretest, a group of people were interviewed using the question

without a time reference (160 interviews) and another group of people using the question that included the time window (155 interviews). The result yielded by this pretest was that the rate of volunteering in the two groups were of similar size (question without a reference time – current volunteering: 46.3 per cent; question including a reference time – volunteering over the previous twelve months: 42.6 per cent. These values did not show any statistically significant difference between one another). For both subgroups, rates of volunteering were significantly higher than the 35.9 per cent reported for 2009. While the number of cases surveyed in the pretest was limited, it provided a clear indication that despite the introduction of the time window we have been able to trace the development of voluntary engagement since 1999 through the Survey on Volunteering, and that the increase in the rate of volunteering observed in the 2014 survey was not an artefact of the introduction of the time window.

The time window of twelve months that we inserted was also applied to the questionnaire on community and publicly performed activities. There has been no increase in this rate since 2009. This finding may be taken as further evidence that the increase in the rate of volunteering is not an artefact of the addition of a concrete time window into the survey, as if that were the case an increase would have been reflected in the activity rate as well as in the rate of voluntary engagement proper.

## Checking the data on voluntary engagement

The data on voluntary engagement was subjected to a check on two occasions (both during and after the survey, for details see Simonson, Hameister & Vogel 2017). Self-reported data on voluntary engagement provide the basis for substantive check to assess whether or not the information is consistent with the definition of volunteering on which the Survey on Volunteering is based. The check was made in two steps, one during and one after the interview. Everyone who had given information on volunteering was asked during the interview (after recording the answers to the open-ended questions), whether their engagement constituted holding an honorary post or volunteering, on an unpaid basis or in return for a small allowance. A respondent is treated as a „volunteer“ in subsequent sections of the interview, and is thus only asked the questions relating to the content and organisation of his or her volunteering, on condition he or she has answered this query in the affirmative. After the interview was concluded, a check was made on the information given in the open-ended section. On the basis of a list of criteria developed for the 2014 Survey on Volunteering (Table 3), along with an operationalisation of these criteria, a check was made as to whether the engagements mentioned by the respondents contradicted “volunteering” or not.

Table 3: Catalogue of criteria for checks on self-reported volunteering for the 2014 Survey on Volunteering

Criterion	Activity is evaluated as volunteering as long as none of the listed statements are contradicted.	Activity is not evaluated as volunteering if at least one of the listed statements are confirmed.
<b>Active</b>	The participant's entry constitutes an activity.	The participant's entry constitutes a passive membership or a donation.
<b>Unpaid</b>	The activity is not directed towards material gain.	It constitutes a professional, paid or in-house activity conducted within work time.
<b>Public</b>	The activity is conducted in the public sphere.	It constitutes a family activity or an activity conducted privately among friends.
<b>Collaborative</b>	The activity is conducted either collaboratively or cooperatively.	It constitutes the pursuit of a hobby, without any of the features of a collaborative team effort.

Source: FWS 2014. Own presentation (DZA).

The engagements specified by respondents were also checked during and after the surveying work in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 survey waves, albeit yielding different results. The rate at which people were switched from the 'volunteer' to the 'non-volunteer' category through these two checks was 3.5 per cent in 1999, 5.4 per cent in 2004, and 10.4 per cent in 2009. In 2014 it was 1.6 per cent. The figure for 1999 is an estimate since not all the information required for the calculation was available to us. It appears that the proportion of people who consider themselves to be 'volunteers' but were rated as 'non-volunteers' as a result of the checks differs substantially from wave to wave. In 2014, fewer engagements were recoded as 'not volunteering' than in previous years. Yet from 1999 through 2004 to 2009, the number of engagements recoded to 'not volunteering' showed an increasing trend. This may have led to an underestimate of the rate of volunteering in 2009 in particular.

## Weighting the data

The findings reported in this monitor on the basis of the Survey on Volunteering are based on weighted analyses of raw results. Identical criteria were used for this weighting in all survey years (see Schiel, Quandt, Häring, Weißpflug, Gilberg & Kleudgen 2015 for a detailed description of the weighting method). The method used was design weighting to take account of the probability of selection of a person (based on household size, quantity of land line telephone numbers, as well as quantity of mobile numbers), combined with weightings to compensate for deviations in the sample distribution from the real population distribution on a number of dimensions (federal state, size-based typology of municipality, gender, age groups). We have refrained from adding any further weighting criteria for the purpose of the 2014 survey, such as the level of educational attainment, in order to ensure comparability with the reports published for the 1999, 2004 and 2009 waves of the survey.

This brochure is part of the public relations work of the Federal Government;  
it is made available free of charge and is not intended for sale.

**Published by:**

Bundesministerium  
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen  
und Jugend  
Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit  
11018 Berlin  
[www.bmfsfj.de](http://www.bmfsfj.de)

If you have any questions, use our  
service telephone: +49 30 20179130  
Monday–Thursday 9.00 a. m.–6.00 p. m.  
Fax: +49 30 18555-4400  
E-Mail: [info@bmfsfj.service.bund.de](mailto:info@bmfsfj.service.bund.de)

Public service telephone number for all government agencies and offices: 115\*  
Access to the 115 telephone service for the deaf: [115@gebaerdentelefon.d115.de](mailto:115@gebaerdentelefon.d115.de)

**As of:** February 2017, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

**Designed by:** [www.avitamin.de](http://www.avitamin.de)

\* For general questions to all government offices and agencies, the general civil service telephone number 115 is also available from Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Currently, you can reach this number from selected pilot regions, such as Berlin, Hamburg, Hesse, and North Rhine-Westphalia among others. You can find further information at [www.115.de](http://www.115.de).