



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



MONITOR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Issue No. 2
Volunteering in Germany
1999 – 2004 – 2009
Summary of the 3rd Survey
on Volunteering



Voluntary Activities Policy

MONITOR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Volunteering in Germany 1999 – 2004 – 2009

**Results of the Representative Survey on Volunteering
and Civic Engagement**

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I.

General information on the Survey on Volunteering

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) publishes the Survey on Volunteering every five years to provide the public with comprehensive and detailed data regarding the voluntary activities (honorary office, volunteer work, civic engagement) of Germany's citizens. This Survey has so far been conducted three times, meaning that civil society in Germany can be comprehensively described over the period of the last decade. The BMFSFJ had this telephone survey of the population over the age of 14 conducted by TNS Infratest Sozialforschung in 1999, 2004 and 2009. The 20,000 interviewees in the latest round made this one of the largest surveys ever conducted in Germany. The large number of interviewees, and regular implementation according to a consistent concept and high quality standards, guarantee great reliability of the data over the past ten years. In addition to its function of providing a periodical cross-section of civil society, the Survey on Volunteering is particularly concerned with giving a correct presentation of trends in society. Statements regarding civil society also regularly make it possible to take stock of the social quality of our society. The BMFSFJ is responsible for the subject of "civil society and civic engagement" within the Federal Government and uses the Survey on Volunteering to establish a public information system that not only serves to acknowledge the services of millions of volunteers, but also functions as a societal sensor for new social problem situations and challenges.

One important reason for the elaborate format of the Survey on Volunteering is that even small, but societally important fields of voluntary activity are to be covered, i.e. not just the large-scale fields of sport, kindergarten and school, religion and church, culture, leisure time and social life, but also the smaller-scale fields of voluntary fire brigade and emergency services, extracurricular youth and education work, environmental protection and animal welfare, political and professional advocacy, health and local civic engagement. The host of smaller fields of voluntary activity reflects the diversity of opportunities for voluntary activity (and, not least, also of needs for voluntary activity) in Germany. This "fragmented" situation makes it fundamentally difficult to speak of a uniformly structured "volunteering sector" at all and calls for a major statistical effort in order to present it correctly.

Outline: 1999, 2004, 2009 Survey on Volunteering
(honorary office, volunteer work, civic engagement)

Client:	BMFSFJ
Survey period:	April–Juli 1999/2004/2009
Method:	Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI)
Interviewees:	n = 15,000 (1999, 2004), n = 20,000 (2009) members of the German-speaking residential population in private households (over the age of 14); stratified random sample according to the ADM standard
Goals:	Survey-based, regular reporting through representative recording of public participation and volunteering in its various fields, forms and problem situations

Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

Even in 1999, the random sample for the Survey on Volunteering was already designed in such a way that a minimum sample of 900 interviewees was available for many of the Federal Länder (regardless of their greatly differing populations¹), which would not have been the case with a sample proportional to the population. In 2009, it was even possible to increase this minimum number per Federal Land to over 1,000 interviewees. The idea behind this is to give the Federal Länder the possibility of performing Land-specific analyses regarding civil society and volunteering. A number of Länder have made use of this possibility since 2004² and more are expected to do so following the third round. In the framework of the third round of the Survey on Volunteering, Berlin and the Saarland increased the samples of their Länder from their own funds, by 600 and 400 interviewees, respectively. Thanks to the commitment of the Generali Zukunftsfonds and the Bertelsmann Stiftung, it was possible to conduct an additional 2,000 interviews in the framework of the 3rd Survey on Volunteering: 1,000 among the general population and 1,000 among young people between the ages of 14 and 24. As a result of the various increases, the regular sample for the Survey grew to a total of 20,000 interviews, following 15,000 in 2004. In addition, two local government units – the City of Augsburg and the Rural District of Offenbach – decided to have samples of 1,000 interviewees of their own surveyed and evaluated in the context of the Survey on Volunteering.

Figure 1 illustrates the design of the sample for the Survey on Volunteering. The magnitude reached by the Survey on Volunteering today has further improved the possibilities for evaluating smaller fields of volunteering and smaller groups of the population. For example, this can mean very finely differentiated age groups (e.g. 14 to 19 year-olds or 70 to 75 year-olds). In addition, there is the possibility of combining different attributes,

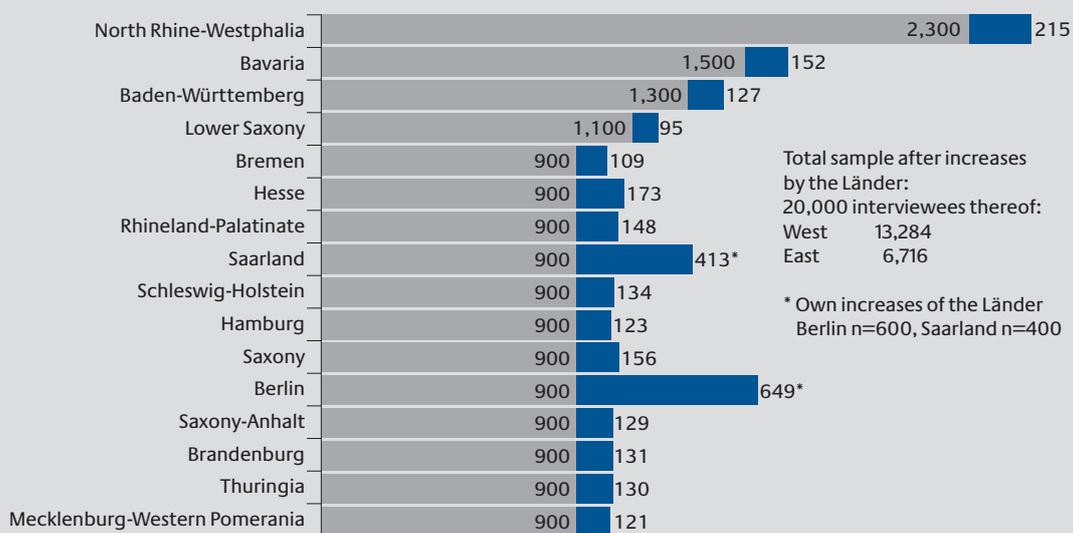
¹ The Saarland, the smallest of the non-city states, has a population of approx. 1 million, compared to North Rhine-Westphalia, which has over 18 times more. The comparison with the city state of Bremen, which has a population of approx. 660,000, is even more dramatic. Nevertheless, thanks to additional funds from the BMFSFJ, both Bremen and the Saarland have, since 2009, been represented in the Survey on Volunteering with minimum samples of more than 900 interviewees, which were further increased. Schleswig-Holstein likewise had a large sample of its own, financed by the BMFSFJ.

² They were Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Brandenburg, Bavaria, Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony and Baden-Württemberg. In 1999, Rhineland-Palatinate, Berlin and Bavaria were the first Länder to commission their own evaluations.

e.g. small age groups with gender (for instance, in order to compare 20 to 25 year-old women and men with each other, or similar). Not least, the situation of civil society in the new Federal Länder³ and the city states can be described even better in the framework of the 2009 Survey. The possibilities for analysing for smaller groups, e.g. school pupils or the unemployed, have likewise improved. For example, the current Survey on Volunteering includes a sub-sample of more than 1,000 registered unemployed persons, including approx. 600 recipients of Unemployment Benefit II. Almost 2,500 young people in the education phase were interviewed (school pupils, trainees and students), including more than 900 school pupils.

Fig. 1:

2009 Survey on Volunteering: Sample, broken down by Länder and various increases



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

3 Cf. Gensicke, Olk et al. (2009).

II.

Public participation of the population in organisations and institutions (participatory activities)

The object of the Survey on Volunteering is to depict the reality, development and future prospects of civil society in Germany. The term “civil society” is applicable to all ways of thinking and feeling, and particularly to all practical activities of the citizens, that contribute to the further development of our civil society into a **compassionate** society. Rights and guarantees of civil liberty are actively used to make society more human, more cooperative and more tolerant. Democracy and the social market economy are not taken for granted, but regarded as a process that needs to be triggered, critically examined and filled with life by active citizens time after time. In this context, compassion starts with people showing an interest not only in their own private business, but also in other people and in public things and affairs.

When describing American society in 1835, the French administrative expert and sociologist **Alexis de Tocqueville** already pointed out that a compassionate society can be most effectively and most sustainably advanced in the framework of **public associations**. Although compassionate behaviour is important in all spheres of society (economy, state) and in the private sphere, it is nevertheless the case that groups, clubs, organisations and associations acting in the public sphere, as well as public institutions and establishments, have the advantage of providing a platform for promoting civicism that is relatively permanent because it is organised and publicly accessible. It is here that interested people can make a contribution. The step from public interest to public activity preferentially takes place via contexts of this kind, which are also referred to as the “infrastructure of civil society” in the literature.

There is growing debate today about whether the term “volunteering” should also be applied to activities that take place in less organised contexts. It must be borne in mind in this respect that the Survey on Volunteering attaches relatively little importance to the degree of organisation of volunteering and also includes activities in self-organised groups, initiatives and projects. On the other hand, the Survey does not rate private assistance for family and friends as volunteering: such activity may be important in terms of quality of life and social integration, but it lacks a public nature. The term “volunteering” should not be pooled with assistance of a private nature, since it otherwise loses its special, public quality. There is a transitional area between private assistance and volunteering that needs to be investigated more closely. The Survey on Volunteering has studied this field since 1999 and will pay even more detailed attention to it in the latest evaluation.

When people decide to commit themselves to an honorary or voluntary activity in the relatively long term, there needs to be an organisational structure as a durable basis. The social sphere, in particular – which is known as the **Third Sector**, as distinct from the market, on the one hand, and the state, on the other – offers structures of this kind where people can make a contribution voluntarily, with no intention of achieving earnings and for the purpose of publicly expanding their private sphere⁴. The Survey on Volunteering regularly examines the extent to which people in Germany are reached by these structures and the extent to which they actively contribute to these contexts. The Survey on Volunteering applies a two-step method to map the reach of civil society and the voluntary utilisation of its offers by the citizens. The first, relatively broad focus addresses **participatory public activities** in 14 subject areas. Only in the second step are the interviewed citizens asked about the concrete honorary or voluntary activities that they engage in.⁵

The ratio of participants to volunteers is most easily illustrated by the example of the club sector. In the various fields of sport, there are countless teams with enormous numbers of participants, but far fewer volunteers who act as trainers, look after the grounds and the equipment, or manage the finances, administration and public relations work of the clubs. There is a comparable situation in the “leisure time and social life” sphere of public activity, e.g. in the hiking and leisure clubs of the most diverse kinds, or in the numerous choirs, ensembles, etc. in the “culture and music” sphere. The associations in the questionnaire are selected in such a way that they direct attention to public life, particularly to the offers of the infrastructure of civil society (Third Sector). This steering of attention is intensified by addressing particular forms of organisation (club, initiative group, project, self-help group) in which the activity takes place. In almost all the spheres mentioned, this is subsequently expressed more explicitly by naming specific organisational examples (e.g. sports club, music group, welfare association, youth group, citizens’ initiative, etc.).

The questions about public activities in the Survey on Volunteering apply a filter that is broad in terms of civil society, but restrictive compared to other activities in life, and has a dual function. First, it takes into account the fact that the public activities are practised **far less often** than those occurring regularly in the context of employment and family work, and also less than entertainment and recreational activities. Second, the **special nature** of these activities is to be emphasised, in order to distinguish them from other activities (at work, in the family and leisure time), with which they may well overlap. Interviewees who are not active in any of the contexts addressed are subsequently not asked any further questions on the subject of “currently practised voluntary activities”, although they are questioned about voluntary activities in the past or their willingness to volunteer.

4 As the protective and recreational sphere of the individual, the private sphere is a thing of great value in a democratic society and is not in opposition to the public activity of the citizens.

5 From here on, only the terms “volunteering”, “voluntary activities” and “volunteers” are used, which are taken to also include honorary office. This is not intended to level out the differences in self-image, but is simply sensible in the interests of consistent, internationally compatible terminology. In 2009, the self-images of people engaging in voluntary activities were distributed as follows: 42% volunteer work, 35% honorary office, 9% civic engagement, 8% work in initiative groups/projects, 6% other responses.

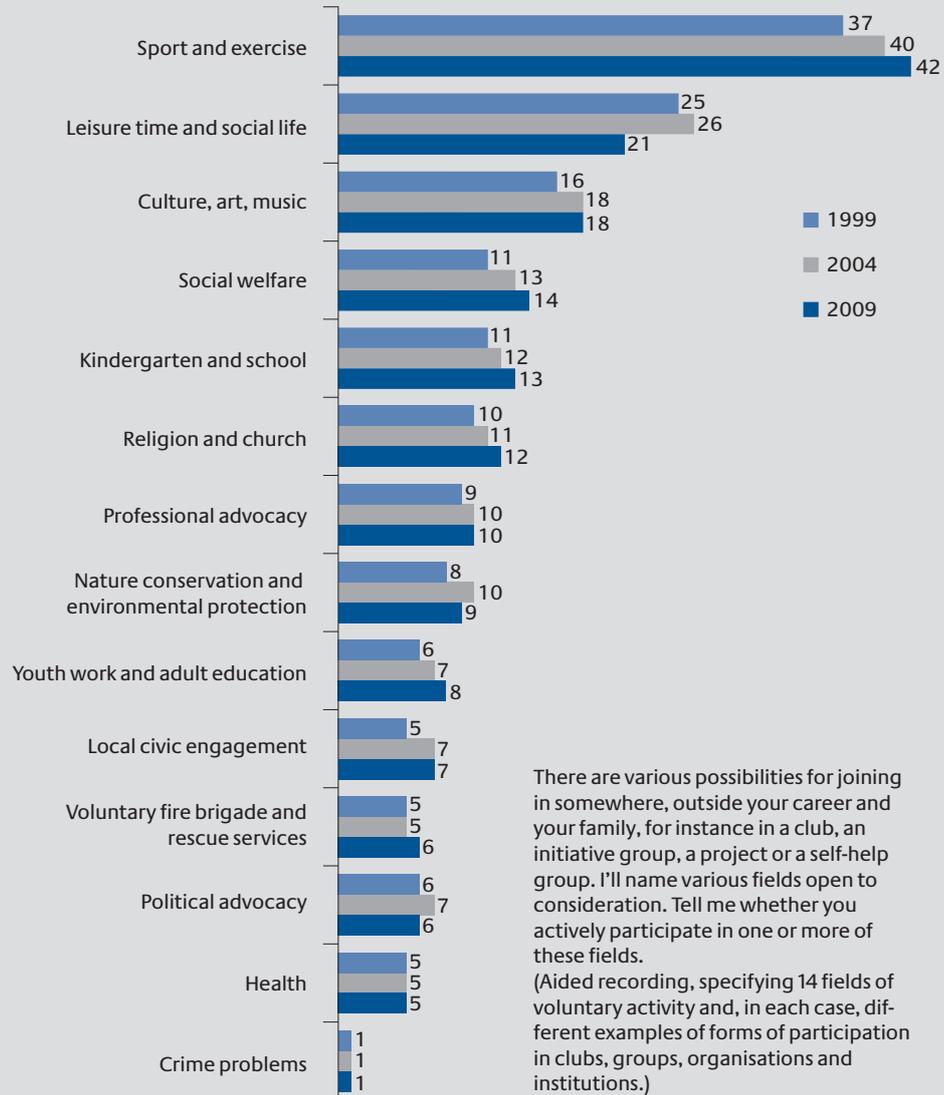
Which fields are most likely to succeed in getting people out of their private sphere and into the public infrastructure of civil society (at least) in participating fashion (Fig. 2)? The integrative and ubiquitous function of sport is revealed in the fact that, today, more than two-fifths of the population are at least loosely integrated in sports organisations, be it clubs (the vast majority) or groups. The field of organised leisure activities and cultural, artistic and musical activities in the Third Sector likewise has an important function as regards social integration, although it is declining in the leisure sector. The low social threshold that enables large popular spheres, such as sport and leisure, to involve broad segments of the population from all strata in the public sphere, deserves special acknowledgement. Without these many **club activities**, there would be no ubiquitous civil society in town and country.

The fields of social welfare, kindergarten and school, church and religion stand more for the structural and organisational forms of associations or public institutions and establishments. They have all recorded growth in the course of time. It would be wrong to play “popular”, “social” and “ethical” fields of participation against each other. The diversity of opportunities for participation is an expression of a society of different material and cultural situations in life, and of the special typology and demands of the respective phases of human life. All in all, the clubs, organisations and institutions of the Third Sector have succeeded in increasing the involvement of the population since 1999. While 66% of the population throughout the country were already reached in this way in 1999, the figure rose to 70% in 2004 and 71% in 2009. Starting from a significantly lower level (1999: 56%; 2009: 64%), the increase was particularly pronounced in **Eastern Germany**, this (and also the willingness of non-volunteers to volunteer) revealing the greatest reconciliation of the two parts of the country.

Fig. 2:

Population: participatory activities in 14 fields

Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent): multiple responses



III.

Key data on volunteering

3.1 Recording of volunteering

Public participation is an important source of the development of civil society and of our society in general, but only the action concept of **volunteering** describes the innermost core of civil society. Non-committed participation – “getting a taste” of the thematic, organisational and institutional diversity of civil society, as it were – turns into committed assumption of practical activities. Pro-social attitudes turn into public activity, which in turn transitions into permanent assumption of duties and work in civil society. That would at least be the ideal type of development, although it is certainly not always to be found in reality. People can also take on an activity voluntarily because they want to tackle a problem, or simply because they are inquisitive, and only then develop certain attitudes. The category of interaction, often fruitful in social science, plays an important role in this context, too.

In the context of the Survey on Volunteering, great importance is attached to accurately distinguishing volunteering from (“mere”) participatory public activities. This procedure was given preference over another method that is likewise designed to determine people’s relationship with the organised public sphere of the Third Sector, specifically by recording **memberships** in organisations. One of the aims in the Survey on Volunteering was to avoid counting just passive memberships. More important, however, was the circumstance that a number of public activities, and also volunteering activities of the citizens, take place independently of memberships, e.g. directly through institutions, as in the case of parents’ councils or nursing home councils, and also in the framework of municipal activities. In each of the 14 subject areas of public activities covered, the Survey on Volunteering records **concrete** honorary or voluntary activities of citizens that they perform at the time of the Survey without payment or in return for a small expense allowance.

The type of word-accurate recording of voluntary activities used in the framework of the Survey on Volunteering is unique in voluntary activities research. This method involves a major effort, both for the correct recording of the activities by the telephone interviewers and for the subsequent checking of the activities. The following overview provides a small selection of typical statements made by the interviewees regarding their voluntary activities. This gives the reader an exemplary impression of the actual information basis of the Survey on Volunteering that is necessary for determining a “volunteering rate” and to which the responses of the volunteers refer that are surveyed with the help of an extensive catalogue of questions in the course of the interview.

Overview: Selection of typical voluntary activities

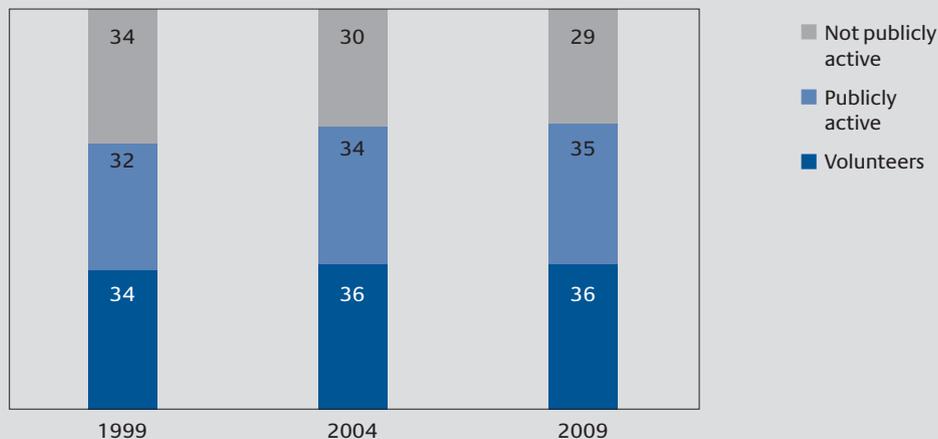
- | THW: We're responsible for fire-fighting, accident rescue and disaster control
- | I work in an allotment society: I'm the Water Steward there and look after the water installations in the society
- | Football club: Extension of the club building
- | Village improvement: Planning of conversion of the old school
- | School as working group leader: Work with children, communication of basic PC skills
- | Preparation of the children's choirs and decoration of rooms for appearances
- | Pupils' café at my school, leisure activities, such as handicrafts; break catering for the other pupils
- | Kindergarten: Parents' council
- | Animal home: Looking after animals
- | Programme for integrating the long-term unemployed: Coordination of household dissolutions
- | School for children with learning disabilities: Repair of games equipment
- | Church: Distribution of parish newsletters, odd jobs
- | Die grünen Damen (aid organisation): Visitor services (shopping, looking after residents of senior citizens' homes)
- | Theatre group: Director
- | University: Support for students with projects
- | Nursing home: Going for walks, singing, reading
- | Riflemen's club: Preparation of events
- | School: Reading break, support of the Musical Working Group
- | Society for rescuing a small Romanesque village church: Treasurer and member of the executive committee
- | Hiking club: Trail keeper
- | Senior citizens' office: In charge of finances
- | Development aid: I look after the members and deal with the correspondence
- | Boy Scouts: Organisation and child care
- | Die Tafel: Sorting and distribution of the food, cleaning of the premises
- | Sports club: Cash audit
- | Evangelical parish: Looking after the children's group, e.g. handicrafts, joint organisation and implementation of excursions, discussion of stories, singing with children
- | Library promotion society: Member of the executive committee
- | German-Greek society: Organisation of festivals and sale
- | Telephone helpline: General questions of callers from all age groups
- | Parish council: Chairwoman
- | Weisser Ring: Organisation of events
- | AWO: Looking after people with disabilities
- | ver.di trade union: Member of the executive committee
- | Deputy lay judge at the juvenile court: Lay assessor
- | Volkssolidarität: Manager, organisation
- | NABU Naturschutzbund: Ornithological stocktaking
- | Pupils' parliament: Member, representation of interests
- | Hospice society: Looking after the dying
- | Against the B519 road: Organisational matters
- | German Red Cross, multi-generation house: Caretaker activities, help with staging events
- | Mosque: Group leader

3.2 Proportion of volunteers in the population

Apart from determining the reach of civil society (scope of public participation), it is particularly important in the framework of the Survey on Volunteering to record the extent of volunteering in the population. This parameter is known as the **volunteering rate**. Since a high level of participation of the population in voluntary activities is desirable, one of the tasks of the Survey on Volunteering from the outset was to determine the volunteering rate. In addition to this estimate of the reach of volunteering, it is, of course, also of interest to ascertain how this participation of the population in voluntary activities develops in the course of time. The volunteering rate is determined by counting how many interviewees in the Survey on Volunteering named at least one voluntary activity that withstood the subsequent check. It should be noted that quite a few interviewees engage in two or more voluntary activities. However, when determining the volunteering rate, they are counted just once and not several times (based on their activities). At the start of the measurements of the Survey on Volunteering, 34% of the population over the age of 14 throughout Germany could be classified as engaging in voluntary activities, the figure rising to 36% in 2004 and remaining unchanged at 36% in 2009 (Fig. 3). A further 35% of the population were publicly active in 2009, but had not taken on any voluntary activities.

Fig. 3:

Volunteers, publicly active and non-active people over time
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

As also shown by the Federal Government Report on the Situation of Volunteering, the measurement of the Survey on Volunteering is roughly in the middle of a wide range of estimates of the proportion of volunteers, which varies between 18% and 52%⁶. The narrowness and breadth of such estimates depends on the definitions and methods applied. The rate generally turns out to be substantially lower if people in surveys are asked only about classical honorary offices, i.e. about clearly defined functions. It is all the higher, the more the measuring method permits the naming of informal or also very sporadic activities. In its estimate of the reach of voluntary activities, the Survey on Volunteering

⁶ Cf. Priller et al. (2009): p. 11.

endeavoured to maintain a justifiable degree of openness to informal activities as well. In other words, not only the classical honorary functions and offices are allowed, which are increasingly being exercised by men and people of middle age, but also less formal activities, which are reported more by women and young people. However, no consideration is given to highly sporadic forms of activity, and equally not to hardly objectifiable self-assessments.

3.3 Diversity of volunteering

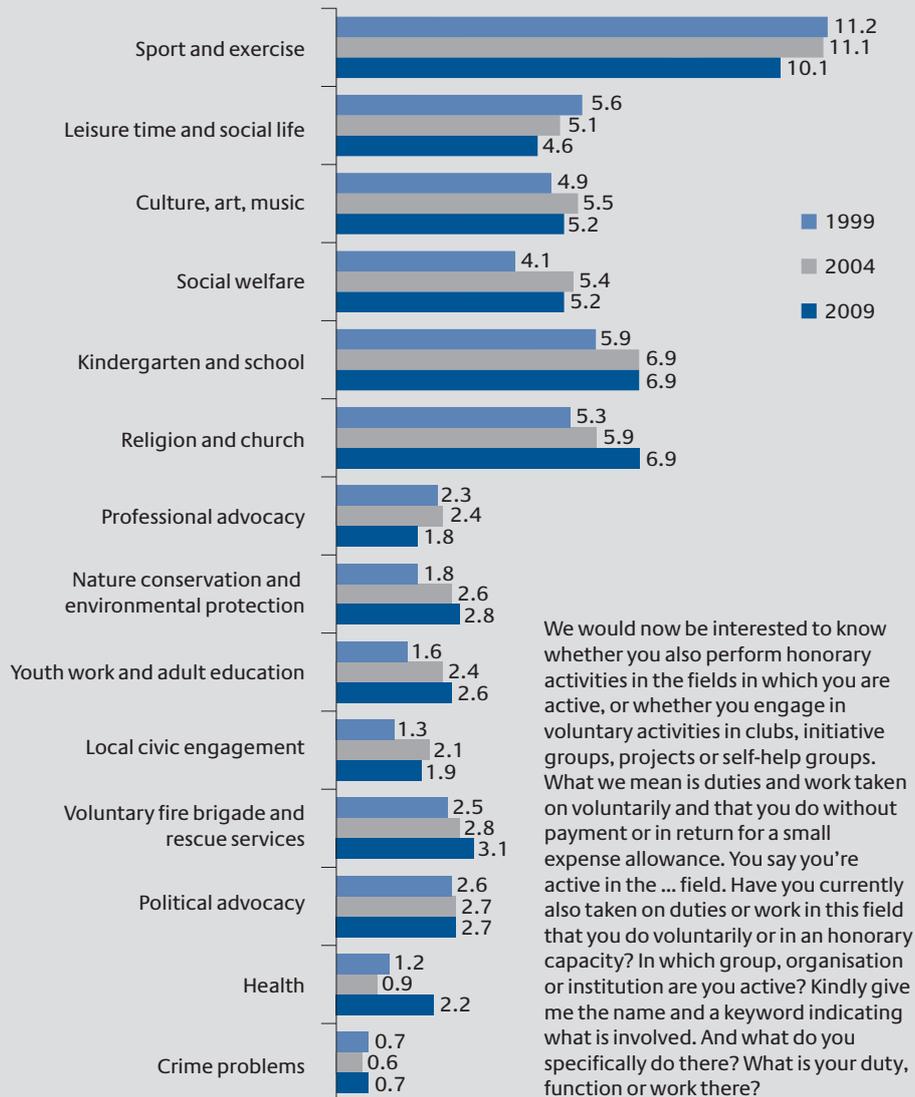
Just when reading the **original words of the volunteers** in the overview (Page 15), there is a surprising diversity of orientations of the individual voluntary activities, which ultimately reflects the enormous variety of topics in our society. Despite the wide range of content, however, it is inevitably necessary to fit this range into a simplified structure for analytical purposes. If the order of the fields is left as shown in Fig. 2, a percentage ranking of the volunteers, i.e. of the organisers and “driving forces” behind regular operation, would in fact have to be arranged very differently than that of the (at least) non-committed participants. Sport maintains its position as the leading field, but not nearly as impressively in view of the sheer magnitude of participation (Fig. 4). The proportion of committed citizens in relation to the non-committed participants is far higher in kindergartens and schools, churches and religious communities, and equally in the social sector.

It should, however, be kept in mind that those fields in which the ratio of non-committed participants and committed volunteers shows a particular shift towards the latter are also those that are particularly borne by **paid employees**. Only 28% such full-time employees are available in clubs, while their percentage in associations, churches and public institutions is much higher at more than two-thirds. This is ultimately a reflection of the fact that volunteers increasingly work in institutionalised structures that are mostly publicly financed and professionalised for their tasks. In this case, volunteers supplement the working structure, rather than actually providing it. Despite the substantially smaller percentage of volunteers in relation to the total number of participants, clubs nevertheless account for **almost half of all volunteers** in Germany. In this way, they maintain a diverse range of offers for a very large number of participants in town and country across the nation.

Fig. 4:

Volunteering in 14 fields

Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent): multiple responses



This sheds interesting light on the fields of the “leisure-time structure” (in the broader sense), if it is taken to encompass sport, leisure and culture. In the spirit of the public law of a welfare state, offers provided by committed citizens in this respect are not really “necessary” to the same extent as the mandatory tasks of publicly regulated care for children, young people and the elderly, for the socially disadvantaged, the sick and people with disabilities. Nevertheless, these (proportionally) fewer volunteers in the club field create offers that enable very many people to enjoy a higher quality of life, often also including families and people in rural areas. However, it must again be emphasised that it would be wrong to play the situations in the different fields of civil society against each other. Our society needs not only group and club-based offers, but equally institution-based offers, in order to maintain a good quality of life for the entire population. All in all, the club-based sector lost volunteers in the whole decade, especially in the sport and leisure fields, and there particularly among young people. In contrast, the importance of

institutionally rooted fields of voluntary activity has grown, especially between 1999 and 2004. This is particularly attributable to the middle and older age groups.⁷ This period likewise saw increasing importance of environmental protection and animal welfare, and of youth and education work – fields in which associations are of increasing importance. The rise in the field of voluntary fire brigade and rescue services is primarily due to increasing commitment of 35 to 55 year-olds.

3.4 Great and increasing commitment of volunteering

Although the voluntary activities of Germany's citizens have not continued to increase, as they still did between 1999 and 2004, they are characterised by a **high degree of commitment**: on average, people have already been performing their voluntary activities for roughly 10 years (32% even for more than ten years, Fig. 5). At the same time, the voluntary activity is practised with great regularity: 90% of the volunteers engage in their activity at least once per month, 56% once per week, and 33% even several times per week (Fig. 6). Other data collected in the Survey also document this great, and occasionally even growing commitment of voluntary activities: while 78% of volunteers already said ten years ago that their voluntary activity was an important part of their life, this figure had risen to 85% by 2009. The activities are also increasingly geared to the long term: in 1999, 25% of the volunteers expected their activity to come to an end in the foreseeable future, whereas the figure in 2009 was only 21%. These key figures indicate that the voluntary activities of the citizens are a dependable item on the societal agenda, displaying a positive qualitative trend throughout the decade. This finding is further supported by the fact that, over the entire period, there has been an increase in the proportion of volunteers who could even imagine expanding their voluntary activities if something interesting came up.

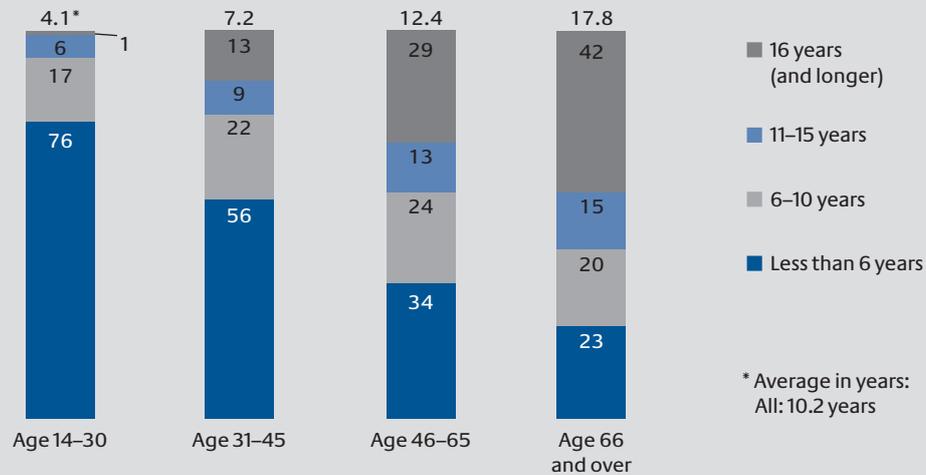
⁷ The higher values for church/religious commitment are also based on the increasing accuracy over time of the assignment of activities to the fields during analysis, i.e. of activities that the interviewees originally assigned to other fields mentioned at an earlier point in the interview sequence, but that clearly belong to the church/religious sphere (e.g. church choirs or church-based child and youth work). Generally slight growth in the church field, as recorded in the Survey on Volunteering, can be assumed, especially as regards informal activities. The picture is similar in the health field, where, above all, activities originally assigned to the social field by the interviewees had to be classified more correctly because of their clear health connections.

Fig. 5:

How long voluntary activities have been practised to date (2009)

By age of the volunteers

Most time-consuming voluntary activities (figures in percent)

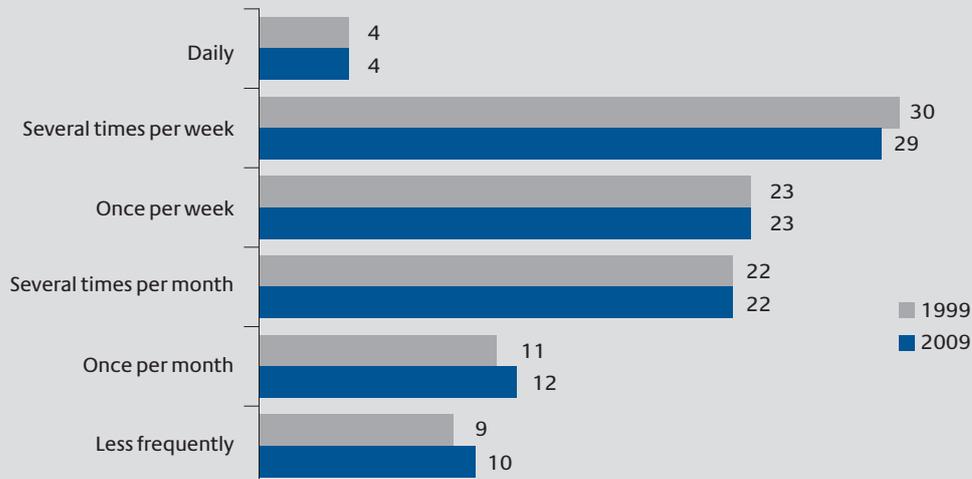


Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

Fig. 6:

Frequency of engaging in voluntary activities

Most time-consuming voluntary activities (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

In view of the comprehensive promotion activities of the Federal Government, the Länder and the municipalities, on the one hand, and of the organisations and institutions of civil society, on the other, it may seem surprising that the reach of volunteering in the population has no longer grown since 2004. It will later be seen that the principal effect of this promotion (especially in the last five years), in addition to the **stabilisation** of voluntary activities, primarily consisted in giving volunteering a much more **positive image** in public opinion. The main report on the Survey on Volunteering will devote intensive

attention to the causes of the different development of the public activity of citizens, volunteering and the climate of opinion regarding voluntary activities. At this point, the hypothesis will be formulated that, in the last five years, the long-term process of improving the public image of volunteering has been counteracted by a number of societal factors, such as the stress triggered by the side-effects of social reforms and the growing demands imposed on the population by the labour market and employers. A further factor is demographic change, which is leading to a dwindling percentage of young people and families, who are of such great importance for civil society. Moreover, the voluntary activities of young people are under pressure as a result of the increasing compactness and precariousness of the phase of education/training and starting a career, the voluntary activities of young women being under additional pressure because of their growing occupational commitments and the difficulty of reconciling family and career.

The fact that the level of volunteering has nevertheless been successfully maintained since 2004 is evidence of the strength of the trend towards the development of civil society, even under difficult societal conditions. This development is above all fuelled by the continuing increase in the standard of education of the population, and also by the increasing value attached to the public sphere in the lifestyle of many people, especially of the older generation. The trend towards civil society thus fits naturally into the general, secular trend of societal modernisation.

3.5 Volunteering potentials: willingness of hitherto non-committed people to assume voluntary activities

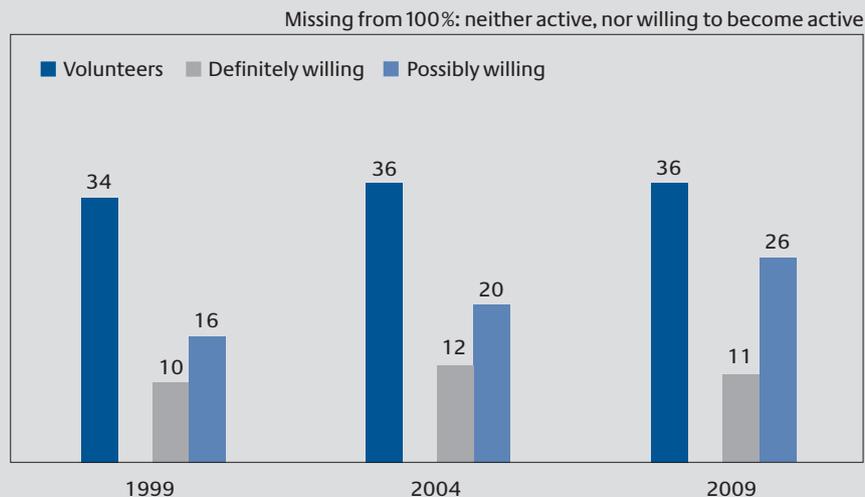
One of the most impressive developments in the decade observed by the Survey on Volunteering is the fact that the non-committed population adopted an increasingly positive attitude towards voluntary activities (Fig. 7). More and more people can in principle imagine taking on voluntary commitments. In 1999, the figure was still as low as 26%, but as much as 37% of the population in 2009. Accordingly, the percentage of people who can get little or nothing out of volunteering as a form of action, declined from 40% in 1999 to as little as 27% in 2009. It is, however, striking to note that the increasing willingness of the population to take up voluntary activities has almost exclusively remained non-committed. The size of the group definitely willing to engage in voluntary activities amounts to 11% in 2009, and is thus hardly any larger than in 1999 (10%). Nevertheless, if a substantial proportion of these people – who include a particularly large number of young people and people with a higher level of formal education – could be recruited for voluntary activities, this would constitute a major resource for strengthening volunteering.

It is striking that **regionally mobile people**, in particular, express committed willingness to engage in voluntary activities: 16% of the people who have only been living at their new place of residence for two to three years definitely want to engage in voluntary activities, as well as 14% of those who have been living there for between three and ten years. This especially applies to women. As many as 19% of those who only recently moved to their new place of residence are definitely willing to engage in voluntary activities, and 15% of those who have already been in residence a little longer. The picture is similar in Eastern

Germany: here, too, regionally mobile people are particularly willing to engage in voluntary activities. It is understandable that people moving to a new place of residence are less involved in family circles and groups of friends, clubs and organisations, on the one hand, and are particularly interested in private and social integration, on the other. They benefit both from the openness of the local club and organisation landscape to “strangers”, and also from information and counselling services that point them the way to interesting offers.

Fig. 7:

Volunteering and willingness to volunteer
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

When dealing with the data of the Survey on Volunteering regarding current and planned voluntary activities, it is advisable to work less on the basis of existing categories, and more on the basis of social processes. The 36 % volunteers in 2009 are not a fixed quantity that would simply have to be counted again in the next round of the Survey – if only because new groups of young people will have joined the population group under study (over the age of 14) by that time. Just the intensive exchange between civil society and its societal environment, along with biographic events at the individual level, repeatedly leads to volunteers terminating their activities for personal or occupational reasons and because of regional mobility. Clubs, organisations and institutions need to adjust to this flexibility of a society that has become regionally and culturally more mobile. Many of those who are definitely willing to volunteer will find a voluntary activity again and, like the volunteers themselves, are thus not an unchanging “existing category”.

The range of possibilities for engaging in voluntary activities in civil society is large and growing all the time. While civil society reacts to societal developments within the framework of its capabilities, it also reflects the diverse interests of the citizens. It is both a societal and an individual matter. However, the two aspects do not automatically coincide. The club sector, which is traditionally strong in Germany and encompasses the fields of

“sport and exercise”, “culture and music” and “leisure time and social life”, continues to hold an important position. As indicated, there has been an increase in voluntary activities in social institutions in the past ten years: social and health-related volunteering, volunteering in kindergartens and schools and in youth work. Families and older people, in particular, are the driving forces in this respect. The trend towards social commitment (in the broader sense) is apparently following the trend towards growing societal challenges. However, changing interests, demographic change, growing regional mobility and time-related stress among younger people are also leading to structural imbalances and, in some places, to problems with recruiting young volunteers.

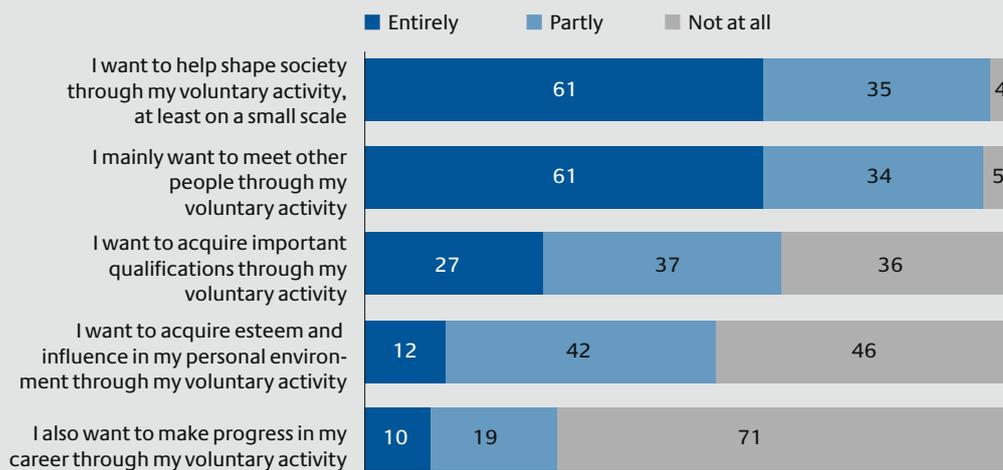
Voluntary activities cannot be prescribed: people choose their activities to suit their own motives and interests. Clubs, organisations and institutions are also increasingly acting as more or less attractive providers in a “market” for volunteering opportunities. Civil society is characterised by its voluntary approach and only susceptible to political influence within limits. Volunteers look for activities that interest them and that have something to do with the special typology of their phase of life and situation in life. The demographically induced shortage of young people and the influx of elderly people into the volunteering sector may lead to imbalances, since older volunteers often go into other areas than younger people. If there is a lack of junior recruits in fields of volunteering typically selected by young people, such as sport, the voluntary fire brigade and the rescue services, older people can only fill these gaps within limits.

IV. Why do people in Germany commit themselves voluntarily?

Even today, citizens primarily commit themselves because they want to do something for other people and (particularly on a small scale) something for society (Fig. 8). The loss of confidence in top-level politics leads many people to gear their voluntary activities to manageable fields that they perceive as being open to direct influence. Voluntary activities are also a good opportunity to meet other people outside the family and the private sphere. This function of voluntary activities as a networking opportunity is particularly important for young people, and nowadays even more important than the chance to shape society. The social and sociable motives for engaging in voluntary activities have for some time been joined by new, interest-related reasons, although these do not displace the social motives. Especially for young people undergoing vocational training, and for unemployed people, volunteering is also a way of obtaining qualifications, and is occasionally seen as a stepping stone on the way to an occupational activity.

Fig. 8:

Why people engage in voluntary activities (2009)
All volunteers over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

The Survey on Volunteering records not only the basic motives for engaging in voluntary activities, but also the expectations of volunteers regarding their specific activity. It also enquires about the demands that the volunteers have to meet. These indicators make it even more clear that most people going into a voluntary activity have a mixture of needs, comprising societal, social and personal motives. For almost all volunteers, the prime maxim of a voluntary activity is that they derive pleasure from the activity, and the vast majority also achieve this subjective gain. So, it cannot be said that volunteering is primarily a self-sacrificing and selfless activity, even though many volunteers say their activity calls for great dedication and stress tolerance (Fig. 9). In most cases, only a limited degree of selflessness is expected of volunteers today, and this finding has remained stable since 1999. Even in the voluntary fire brigades and the rescue services, only 26% of the volunteers state that they are expected to demonstrate a high degree of selflessness. That is the highest value in any of the fields.

Fig. 9:

Demands on the activities of volunteers (2009)
Most time-consuming voluntary activities (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

For many volunteers, the pleasure in their activity is almost inseparable from the fact that they want to make a contribution to the common good and help other people (Fig. 10). These needs have remained very stable over time, also among young people. The diagram also shows that, for many volunteers, the voluntary activity is a field of learning where they can expand their own knowledge and experience. Young volunteers particularly often report that they learned important things through their voluntary activities. It could be shown for the first time in 2009 that the **contribution** of knowledge and experience is also an essential aspect of volunteering. It is more important for older people, while younger volunteers find it more important to expand their skills.

Another new finding of the Survey on Volunteering is that 62% of the volunteers want to come together with people from other generations in their voluntary activities. This wish was expressed by older people, in particular.

Fig. 10:

Expectations of voluntary activities (2009)
Most time-consuming voluntary activities (mean values)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

V.

Changes in volunteering – Young people

Being the time of starting a career and a family, the “youth” phase of life between childhood and adulthood is today burdened with more problems and more unreasonable demands foreign to youth than in past decades⁸ For educational reasons and from the point of view of development psychology, the youth phase should really be a relatively care-free period of self-discovery and first steps into adult life. Nonetheless, young people today are stressed by high performance demands at an ever earlier stage, while a booming leisure industry transports them ever sooner into a virtual adult world that can ultimately overtax them. Volunteering in civil society is not only a major public service of many people, but also an opportunity for acquiring important social and emotional skills outside the private field. Particularly today, this is of special importance for the character-forming and socialisation of young people. In this context, certain offers and peculiarities of civil society definitely cater to the needs of young people. In accordance with the typology of their phase in life, young people seek community and an exchange with other young people. Voluntary activities may (e.g. in the country, but not only there) be a way of finding friends and possibly even a life-long partner. At the same time, young people see voluntary activities as an important qualification opportunity, enabling them to acquire skills that they can also put to use in working life.

5.1 Slight decline in volunteering

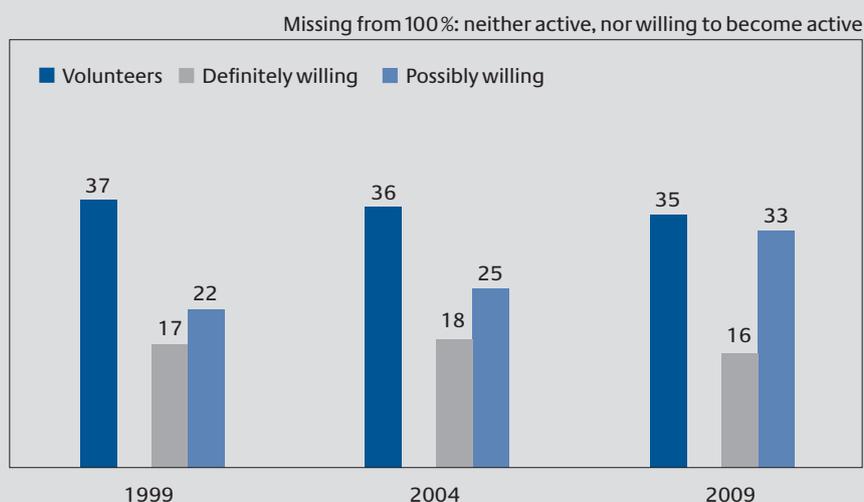
The Survey on Volunteering shows that many young people contribute to civil society. However, their committed contributions (relatively long-term assumption of voluntary activities) have declined in the past ten years, from an above-average level to an average level (Fig. 11). This decline is equally attributable to both sub-groups of young people, i.e. both the 14 to 19 year-olds and the 20 to 24 year-olds. The former group primarily covers those young people who are for the greater part still at school or undergoing vocational training, while the latter group mainly comprises students, persons already in gainful employment and older young people in other forms of education and training.

⁸ For the purposes of the Survey on Volunteering, the term “youth” is defined in the narrower sense as the age group between 14 and 24 years. However, it is also possible to speak of an extended youth phase up to the age of about 30.

Fig. 11:

Volunteering and willingness to volunteer

Young people between the ages of 14 and 24 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteers

A characteristic feature of the youngest group is, first of all, the shift towards the group of “only” publicly active people who have not assumed any voluntary activity. This means that the percentage of very young people who have no ties to organised civil society has dropped to an all-time low, but there are far fewer young volunteers for clubs, organisations and institutions to fall back on (see Table below). While marked declines in this respect are recorded both among secondary modern and secondary school pupils, grammar school pupils have remained highly committed. This magnitude and stability of voluntary activity over time also applies to students. Young people undergoing company training showed a marked increase in voluntary activity, albeit starting from a low level.

Table: Volunteering in different groups of young people

	1999	2004	2009
Age 14–19	38	37	36
Age 20–24	36	34	34
Secondary modern and secondary school pupils	*	32	27
Grammar school pupils	*	46	47
G8 (8 years)	*	*	41
G9 (9 years)	*	*	51
Half-day school	*	39	39
Whole-day school	*	**	31
Company training	28	33	34
Vocational school/Technical college	36	33	29
University of applied sciences/University	40	40	43
Age 20–24	45	42	40
Age 25–29	36	38	47
Young people in employment	34	32	31
Age 20–24	38	34	32
Age 25–29	33	31	30

Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering; volunteering rates in percent; *not recorded; **too few cases

Since the different educational channels have a socially stratified background, the example of volunteering must be seen as indicating growing social differences among young people.⁹ However, another fact is also to be seen in the school sector: the volunteering rates among pupils at whole-day schools¹⁰ and eight-year grammar schools are substantially lower, which suggests a **more difficult time schedule** for voluntary activities.¹¹ Greater consideration and incorporation of voluntary activities is recommendable at whole-day schools¹² while more free time for voluntary activities would be advisable for eight-year grammar schools. Further insights regarding more recent developments in education policy are obtained when examining the voluntary activities of the “older young people” between the ages of 20 and 24. The decline in voluntary activities can particularly be explained by the decreasing values for young people in employment, and also for students, who have substantially reduced their voluntary activities at a high level in this age group. This may indicate that the effects of the “Bachelor System” impede the voluntary activities of students. Among young people in employment, too, pressure of time and greater demands are probably the factors that prove to have a negative impact on engaging in voluntary activities.

5.2 Continuing great willingness to volunteer

The declining volunteering rate among young people is not a result of a lack of willingness to engage in voluntary activities. Nor has the image of voluntary activities in this age group deteriorated. On the contrary, it has improved greatly. Even in 1999, young people were a particularly receptive group as regards civil society, and this typology has become more pronounced since then (again Fig. 11). However, growing time-related stress, triggered by increasing demands imposed by education, vocational training and starting a career, competes against committed voluntary activity. This can also be seen from the fact that only non-committed willingness to assume a voluntary activity has increased since 1999. Occupation with the virtual sphere of the electronic media, induced by technical curiosity, but also by stress, can be an obstacle in this context, although it does not have to be. Nonetheless, Fig. 12 shows that, when it comes to the leisure-time activities of young men, occupation with electronic media already frequently competes with their social contacts with friends and acquaintances and (in contrast to young women) by far outweighs reading or other creative activities. Among young people, there is nowadays a type of one-sidedly media-oriented young person (roughly one-third of all young people) where the dominance of electronic and virtual activities is to the detriment of social contacts, and particularly of reading, other creative activities and volunteering.

9 The second Survey on Volunteering had already pointed out this development. Cf. Picot (2006).

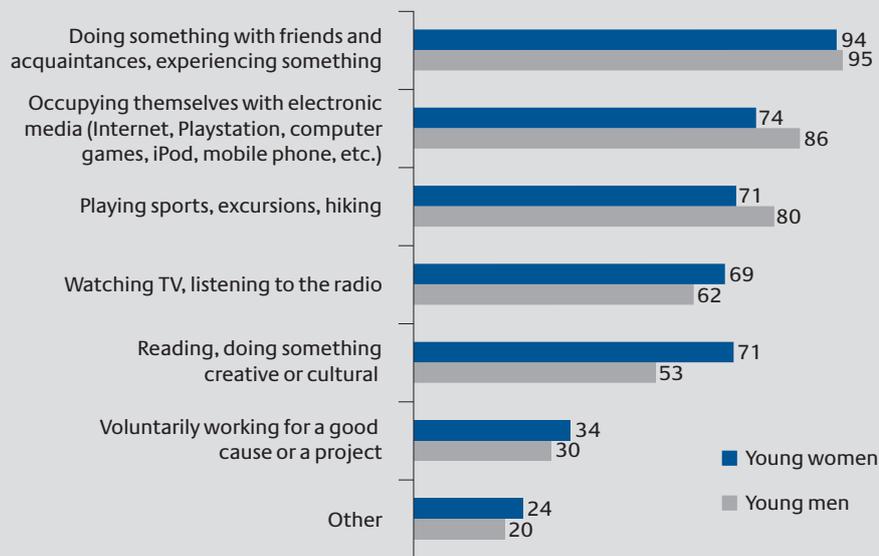
10 The phenomenon is especially prevalent in secondary modern and secondary schools, because this school type has a particularly high percentage of whole-day pupils, on the one hand, and because their voluntary activities are at a far lower level than among half-day pupils, on the other. In contrast, there are hardly any differences in this respect at grammar schools.

11 The data was controlled for Western Germany, because the situation in Eastern Germany has been different for quite some time as a result of the longer-standing tradition of the eight-year grammar school and whole-day schools. However, the data points in the same direction at those for Western Germany (at least as regards whole-day schools).

12 Owing to the relatively small number of cases, the data for whole-day schools is not wholly reliable, although in is certainly plausible and reconcilable with practical experience.

Fig. 12:

How young men and women use their time (2009)
Young people between the ages of 14 and 24 (figures in percent)

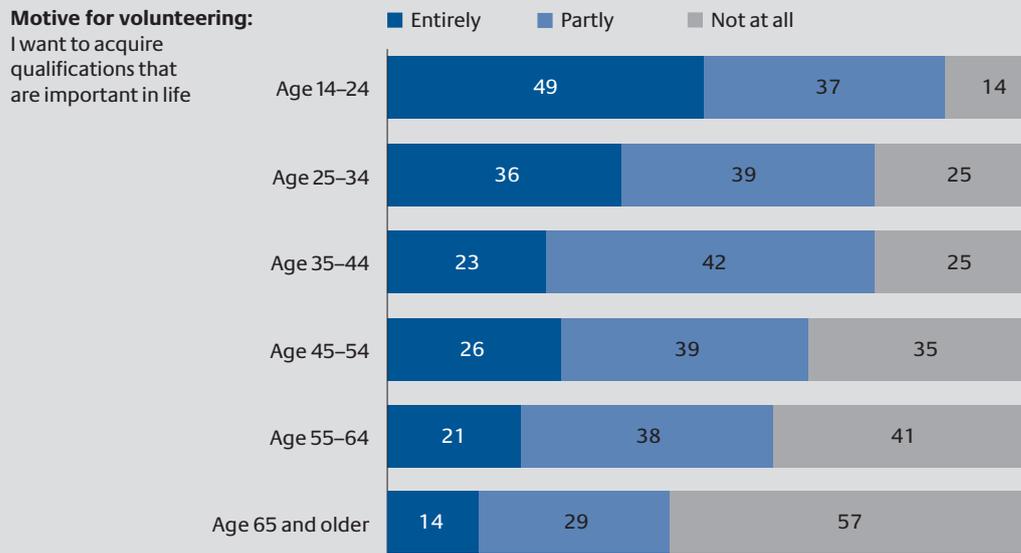


Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

If young people engage in voluntary activities, they often expect their activity to include an offer of qualification that may possibly also lead to occupational advantages (Fig. 13). This need is above all an expression of a society that today demands more and more of young people in an ever-shorter time during their period of education, vocational training and starting a career. In the case of “older young people”, this challenge additionally overlaps with starting a family, which young women particularly find a problem as they work with greater dedication than young men towards establishing their career **and** a family. The level of voluntary activities of young people in the transitional phase of the 20s and early 30s, between actual youth and the starting of a career and establishment of a family, was already substantially below average in 1999, a situation that especially affected young women and has hardly changed to this day. Offers of voluntary activities for young people should cater to the special needs of young people and give consideration to the differences between the sexes. The Survey on Volunteering has paid increasing attention to this situation of young people in the course of its three rounds to date.

Fig. 13:

Qualification needs in volunteering by age (2009)
All volunteers over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

VI.

Changes in volunteering – Elderly people

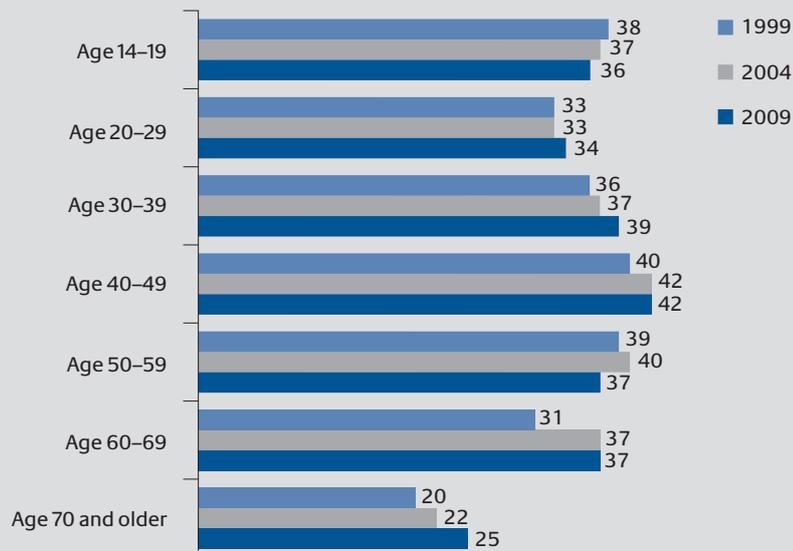
6.1 Major increase in public activity and volunteering

Between 1999 and 2004, the most striking and interesting trend in the Survey on Volunteering was already the marked rise in volunteering among elderly people. While only 23% of the over-65s had such commitments in 1999, the figure rose to 25% in 2004 and as much as 28% in 2009. One particularly impressive development is the leap among younger senior citizens between the ages of 60 and 69, from 31% in 1999 to 37% in 2004 (Fig. 14). Voluntary activities among 70 to 75 year-olds increased from 24% to 30% between 1999 and 2009 (particularly strongly up to 2004), but far more slowly and at a substantially lower level throughout the entire period among 76 to 80 year-olds (from 19% to 21%). This shows that the limit up to which elderly people still make a fairly active contribution to civil society has shifted towards an age of roughly 75. Individual people are increasingly even surpassing this limit.

Fig. 14:

Volunteers by 7 age groups

Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



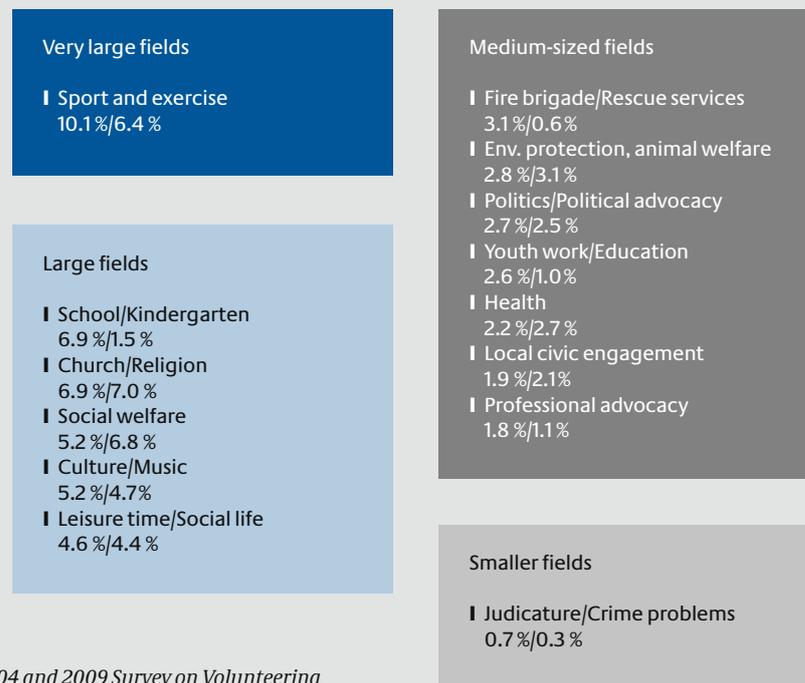
Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

The voluntary activity of elderly people is encouraged by their increasing physical and mental fitness, and it also has a positive influence on their well-being. Volunteering means activity, a challenge for physical and mental powers, and social integration. Particularly as regards elderly people, however, the fact must be emphasised that just **public participation** is very important for their social integration, even without the assumption of specific voluntary activities. If only 34 % of people over the age of 65 are today still not at all involved in organised civil society, this represents a massive boost in public activation in view of the original figure of 48 % in 1999. In thematic terms, elderly people make a strong and increasing contribution in the social welfare, health and church-related fields (Fig. 15). However, mention must also be made of their equally growing presence in the fields of environmental protection and animal welfare, politics and civic engagement at their place of residence. Elderly people are increasingly looking after other elderly people whose health is impaired or who are very advanced in years, and this is where their growing commitment encounters a problem situation triggered by the ageing of the population and medical progress. It can nevertheless be noted that the voluntary activities of elderly people are increasingly also aimed directly at helping to shape the community.

Fig. 15:

Volunteering by fields of volunteering – Population and elderly people over the age of 65 (2009)

Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent, multiple responses)



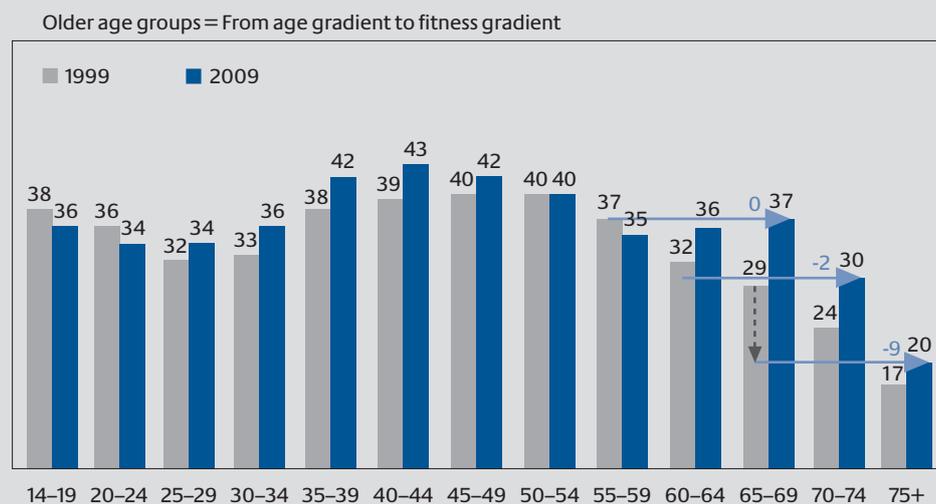
Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

6.2 Changes in the course of time

However, the marked changes in the public activity and volunteering of elderly people are not solely attributable to the steadily improving fitness of elderly people, but are also due to other causes. These primarily lie in the after-effects of **processes in contemporary history** on the current situation of the voluntary activities of elderly persons and thus of our society as a whole. A historical view is necessary in order to understand these changes. Since the Survey on Volunteering includes a large number of cases, and in the meantime covers a ten-year observation period, it permits small-scale cohort analyses¹³ of the age groups that can be of help in discovering processes in contemporary history. These can be illustrated over the past decade by again studying virtually identical groups¹⁴ of specific ages exactly ten years later. Starting in 1999, the arrows in Fig. 16 track three age cohorts and show their behaviour ten years later: how has their participation in voluntary activities changed?

Fig. 16:

Volunteering by 13 age groups (cohort effects 1999–2009)
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

In the case of elderly people, the question naturally arises as to whether and to what extent their inclination to engage in voluntary activities holds up with increasing age, or whether age-specific causes increasingly keep them from such commitments. It is fairly reasonable to assume that 50 year-olds will still engage in voluntary activities at the age of 60. But will 60 year-olds still do so at the age of 70? Looking first at the data for 1999, as a cross-section through all age groups, the impression is that, at this time, it was usual to reduce voluntary activities at a relatively early stage with advancing age. In 1999, the volunteering rates declined continuously upwards of the age group of 55 to 59 year-olds. Today, however, this is no longer the case up to the age limit of roughly 70. Up to the age

¹³ Cohort analyses monitor specific age groups at specific intervals on their way through contemporary history.

¹⁴ Virtually identical means that mortality, or also migration, brings about a certain change that can, however, be neglected as a whole.

group of 65 to 69 year-olds, there is nowadays even a slight increase, resulting in the picture of a small “retirement peak” in the cross-section. Only upwards of the age of 70, and especially upwards of 75, is there a marked decline in voluntary activities.

The longitudinal-section observation goes beyond the previous cross-sectional observation at the two points in time. It tracks the 1999 age cohorts over time, and it can be seen from the 2009 data that the two 5-year cohorts of the people aged between 55 and 64 in 1999 have apparently retained their inclination to engage in voluntary activities as they have grown older. Ten years later, both groups are found to have the same, or only a slightly lower, level of voluntary activity. This “persistence” of their commitment in older age has contributed to a major upswing in voluntary activity in the overall group of elderly people and, given the increasing weight of their age group in the process of demographic change, also to stabilising voluntary activities in Germany as a whole. This change can primarily be explained by the disappearance of the traditional role of the elderly (“age gradient”) which, in 1999, apparently still meant withdrawal from public life with increasing age. Only the cohort of persons aged between 65 and 69 in 1999 greatly reduced its level of voluntary activities, from 29% to 20%. This is primarily an indication of the age limits for voluntary activities (“fitness gradient”).

However, the data considered in the Survey on Volunteering is not concerned solely with a general cultural change that has altered the role of old age. Consideration must additionally be given to the fact that the age groups studied are also age groups with a **historically special** background of experience. The people who made a particular contribution to changing the role of old age as regards voluntary activities were born around the end of the War and up to the early 1950s. Their lives were shaped by the 1960s and 1970s. Based on the economic revival and the early stages of the expansion of education, Germany’s transformation from a political “count-me-out society” (**Helmut Schelsky**) to a living civil society had a particularly strong impact on them. This stimulation of civil society received strong impulses from the surge in the change of values between 1965 and 1975 (**Helmut Klages**). Because of its elaborate design (very large sample), the Survey on Volunteering is particularly capable of deriving this kind of discussion relating to contemporary history.

VII.

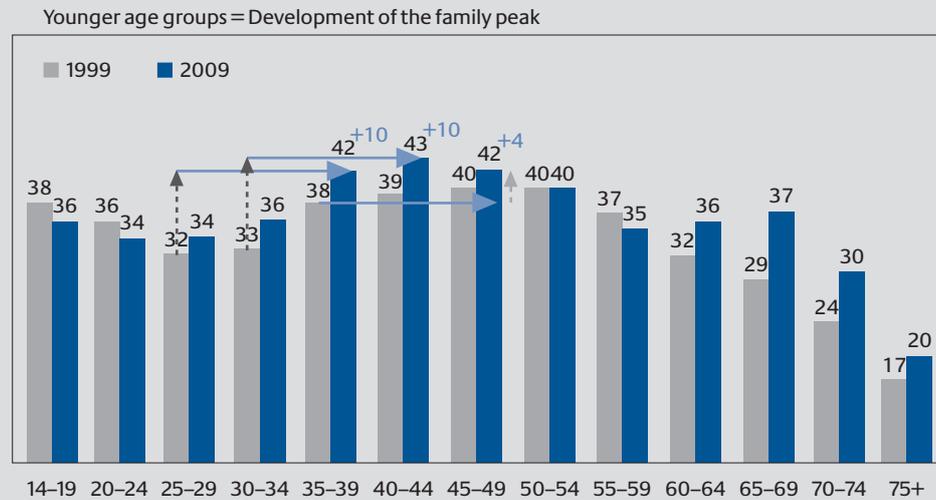
Changes in volunteering – Growing commitment of families

Not only elderly people have made a growing contribution to civil society and volunteering since 1999, but also those age groups that are of a family age. Voluntary activities among 30 to 49 year-olds have risen by approximately three percentage points. Although this trend is not as statistically impressive as among elderly people, it is all the more important in that the proportion of family age groups relative to the population has shrunk in the framework of demographic change, whereas the proportion of elderly people has increased. It can thus be said that the family age groups have compensated for their declining quantitative weight in the population, resulting from demographic change, through increased efforts in volunteering, thereby making a particular contribution to the stability of voluntary activities as a whole. Figure 17 again permits cross-sectional and longitudinal observations. The 1999 cross-section shows that, at that time, the relatively low level of volunteering among 25 to 34 year-olds initially showed a sudden increase at the borderline to the 35 to 39 year-olds (from 33% to 38%), then rising only slightly, from 38% to 40%, up to the age group of 50 to 54 year-olds, after which it again declined (“age gradient” at that time). This results in a slightly rising “plateau” of the family age groups of 35 to 54 year-olds. This situation changed substantially by 2009. A kind of “family peak” can now be seen, where the level of voluntary activity among 35 to 49 year-olds, in particular, stands out from the overall picture at well over 40%.

Based on the arrows, the longitudinal section (Fig. 17) shows that, above all, the two age groups of people aged between 25 and 34 in 1999 greatly increased the level of their voluntary activities as they grew older (even by as much as ten percentage points). Therefore, it was primarily they who were responsible for the upswing in volunteering in the family age groups – and, to a lesser extent, also those who were between 35 and 39 years of age in 1999. Explanations for this upswing still need to be found, although it is fairly certain that an important role is played by increasing worries about the successful growing-up of their own children and their education and training. Signs pointing in this direction result from analysis of the voluntary activities of 35 to 44 year-olds by fields: between 1999 and 2009, they rose from 13.2% to 16% in the kindergarten and school field, and from 2% to 3.8% in youth work. The increases from 2.8% to 4.9% in the field of voluntary fire brigade and accident and rescue services, and from 1.5% to 2.5% in the field of nature conservation and animal welfare, are, however, less specific for this explanation.

Fig. 17:

Volunteers by 13 age groups (cohort effects 1999–2009)
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

The reporting of the Survey on Volunteering needs to go into greater depth in analysing the development of volunteering among 55 to 64 year-olds. This group, which was aged between 45 and 54 in 1999, has reduced the level of its voluntary activities by between 4% and 5% since then. A more detailed analysis is necessary in order to determine whether this is an expression of a life-cycle development in the sense of the “empty nest”¹⁵, or whether part of the change is also attributable to the disappearance of the effect of contemporary history among elderly people. The possibility that the explanation lies more in negative factors of the labour market must likewise be examined. These and other aspects relating to the development of volunteering need to be pursued further.

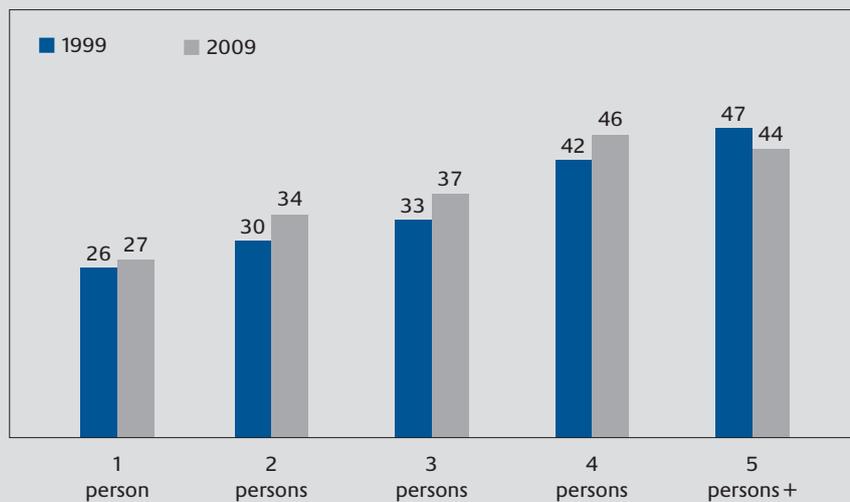
Families are thus one of the most important pillars of civil society in Germany. This importance has grown further in the last ten years. This can also be seen from the development in the various sizes of household (Fig. 18). The level of voluntary activities was already highest in households with more than two persons in 1999, and particularly in households with four or more persons. Although voluntary activities have since declined (at a high level) in the particularly large households with five persons and more, this may be due to the growing proportion of migrants in this category. While the marked increase in volunteering in three and four-person households primarily points to the growing importance of families for civil society, the increase in two-person households is attributable to senior citizens, especially the younger ones, who frequently live in this household category. As with the age groups, however, the decline in the weight of families can also be seen in the households. Today, well over half the population over the age of 14 lives in two-person households, whereas larger households with three and more persons still dominated slightly in 1999. However, this demographic shift has not led to an overall reduction in the level of volunteering, because volunteering has increased both in two-person households and also in three and four-person households.

15 The term “empty nest” describes the phase in the life of parents when their children “take off” and leave the family household. This phase nowadays starts later because women are having children at a later age and because young people are increasingly living at home longer.

The situation in families shows that private and public life do not have to be opposites and that there is a close and lively exchange between the two, especially in the framework of civil society. Nor does employment necessarily oppose civil society in terms of time, not even as regards the committed form of activity of volunteering. There is a particularly high level of voluntary activity if parents are in employment, although only if the children are over the age of two in the case of working women. If their youngest child is between three and five years of age, as many as 47% of working women engage in voluntary activities, this percentage reaching a peak of 54% if the youngest child is aged between six and nine¹⁶ It would appear that one tie for securing the triad of employment, family work and voluntary activities (especially for women), apart from a reasonably balanced distribution of family work between the sexes, is integration in **private assistance networks**. The self-help commonly practised by families and relatives also benefits from the expansion of public support. In addition, **employers**, in particular, are called upon today to guarantee family-friendly framework conditions. There is need for further development in this respect, e.g. as regards the offering of part-time jobs for both sexes and the granting of better opportunities for young men to devote themselves more to their families.

Fig. 18:

Volunteering by number of persons in the household
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

¹⁶ This is generally more likely to be the case if the women are in part-time employment, this usually being typical for them in this situation in life.

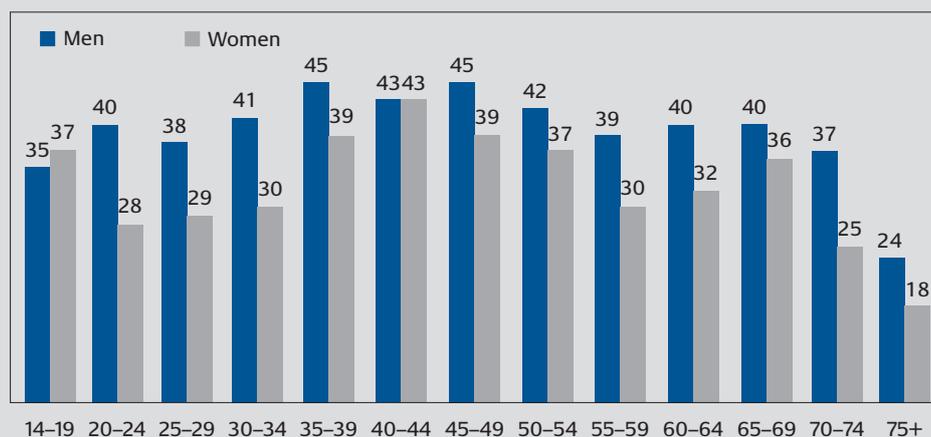
VIII.

Persistence of gender differences – Men and women

The preceding section already touched on the gender issue in connection with the situation in families. At the very start of the reporting of the Survey on Volunteering in 1999, voluntary activities revealed a marked gender difference that has changed only little to this day. With a figure of 40%, it is still the case that far more men engage in voluntary activities than women (32%). The more intensive involvement of women in civil society has thus made hardly any progress (in quantitative terms) since 2004. One striking feature, compared to men of the same age, is the much lower level of voluntary activity among women between the ages of 20 and 34, and likewise between 55 and 64 and between 70 and 74 (Fig. 19). The differences between men and women have complex backgrounds. One reason is that the voluntary activities of women are more one-sidedly governed by the **family phase with** children and young people in the household than is the case with men. This is indicated by the extreme female “family peak”, where 40 to 44 year-old women reach 43%, and thus the same volunteering rate as men.¹⁷ Among 35 to 54 year-old men, there is more a “wavy” family plateau, although it does not really stand out from the more stable profile of the male pattern. So, the family peak already visible in the overall data is a largely female phenomenon.

Fig. 19:

Volunteers by 13 age groups: men and women (2009)
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent)



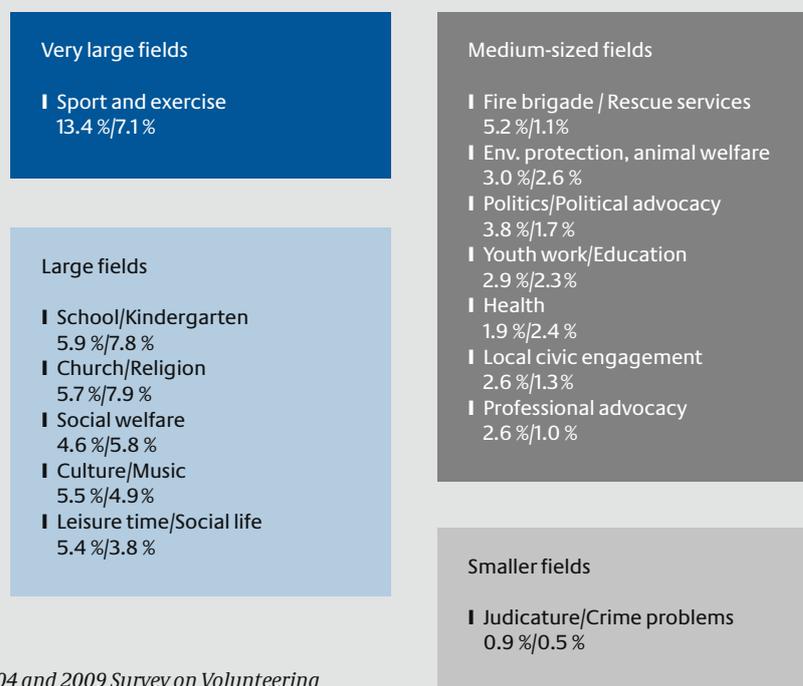
Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

¹⁷ The voluntary activities of women reach a further peak among 65 to 69 year-olds, following a major increase from the relatively low value for 55 to 59 year-olds. Like the “family peak” and the “peak” in early youth, this “minor retirement peak” is thus much more of a female phenomenon than a male one and once again illustrates the greater life-cycle dependence of the voluntary activities of women.

Women are particularly the mainstays of the social fields (in both the narrower and the broader sense) of civil society (kindergarten and school, social welfare, health, church) (Fig. 20). Nevertheless, the strong position of men in the generally dominant field of clubs (particularly as regards sport and leisure), in political and job-related voluntary activities and in the voluntary fire brigade and the rescue services, explains the generally much greater involvement of men in voluntary activities. The strong representation of men (also) in civil society continues in the preferential staffing of managerial positions in civil society with men, even in fields that are in fact determined by the voluntary activities of women.

Fig. 20:

Volunteering by fields of volunteering – Men vs. Women (2009)
Population over the age of 14 (figures in percent, multiple responses)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

The voluntary activities of women, e.g. in kindergarten and school, may be extensive, but they are often subject to time limits. The level of voluntary activities of women lags particularly far behind that of men early on, in the education/training phase and at the start of their career (except in early youth, when it is even higher), and later on, in the “empty nest” phase. In contrast, men are particularly active in fields of voluntary activity that are equally typical for every phase of life. Between the ages of 20 and 29, many young women are additionally under pressure to swiftly complete their training or studies and rapidly acquire work experience before the “family” phase of life begins. If the children are still very young, care and family work is still preferentially assigned to the women, even today. Yet the women interviewed say they can certainly see possibilities for expanding their voluntary activities: the volunteering potential of women was just 28% in 1999 and has since risen to an impressive 39%.

IX.

Outlook

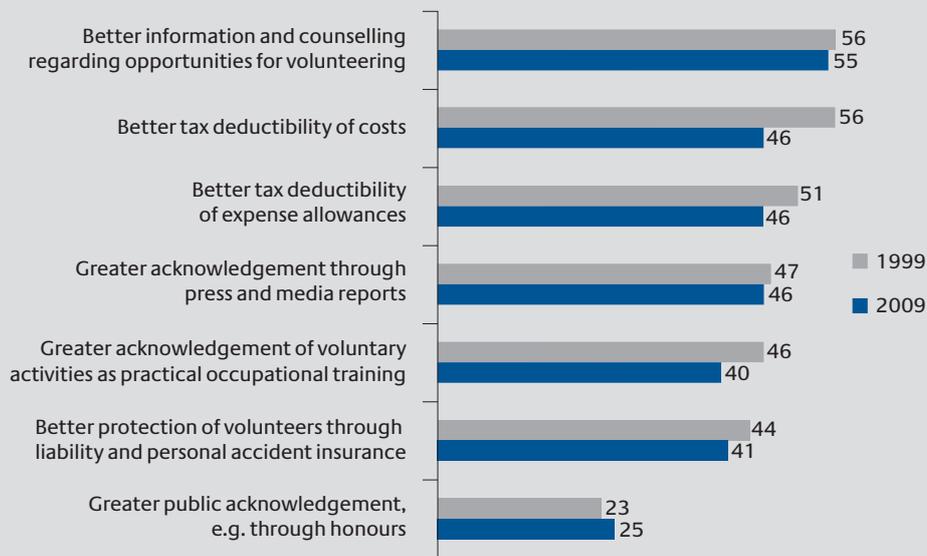
The network of civil society in Germany became more dense between 1999 and 2009, especially in Eastern Germany. The voluntary activities of the citizens proved to be a stable quantity, but have not increased as a whole since 2004. The reasons for this are complex. For one thing, demographic change is leading to a shortage in the particularly active age groups aged under 45; for another thing, education and training are imposing greater demands on young people, and gainful employment on the working population. A positive effect in the period under review arose from the major increase in the level of volunteering among elderly people and the greater involvement of the family age groups. The change of values towards the public sphere and the rising level of education of the population are further factors promoting civil society. Consequently, negative and positive influences currently balance each other.

However, this statement applies only to the voluntary sector as a whole. Things can develop differently in the individual fields. Only within limits can the voluntary activities of the elderly and of the family age groups make up for the lacking commitment of younger people and the demographically induced shrinking of the younger age groups. The elderly, in particular, often engage in voluntary activities in other fields than younger people. Problems with recruiting young volunteers are thus already on the agenda and will become worse in the future.

The framework conditions for volunteers in organisations and institutions must be further improved. It is a critical sign that volunteers were less of the opinion in 2009 (68%) than in 2004 (76%) that they had enough room for codetermination in the framework of their voluntary activities. This applies to all age groups. It is equally striking that just as many volunteers today as in 1999 call upon the public sector to provide **better information and counselling offers** for people who would like to engage in voluntary activities (Fig. 21). Similarly unchanged is the demand that the media give more coverage to volunteering in their reports. The Survey on Volunteering thus shows that, despite increased funding and promotion activities, much still needs to be done at all levels in order to strengthen and further develop civil society in Germany.

Fig. 21:

Volunteers' suggestions for improvements for the state and the public sector
Most time-consuming voluntary activities (figures in percent)



Source: 1999, 2004 and 2009 Survey on Volunteering

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