

1) Junior Volunteers in Germany

Young people are the age group the most active in volunteering even though the actual figure of engaged youths is decreasing a little. What can also be told from surveys is that youths choose to become volunteers more and more for reasons of personal interests with the intention to gain useful qualifications.

Talking about youths in this context one will consider those between 14 and 24 years, if not indicated differently.

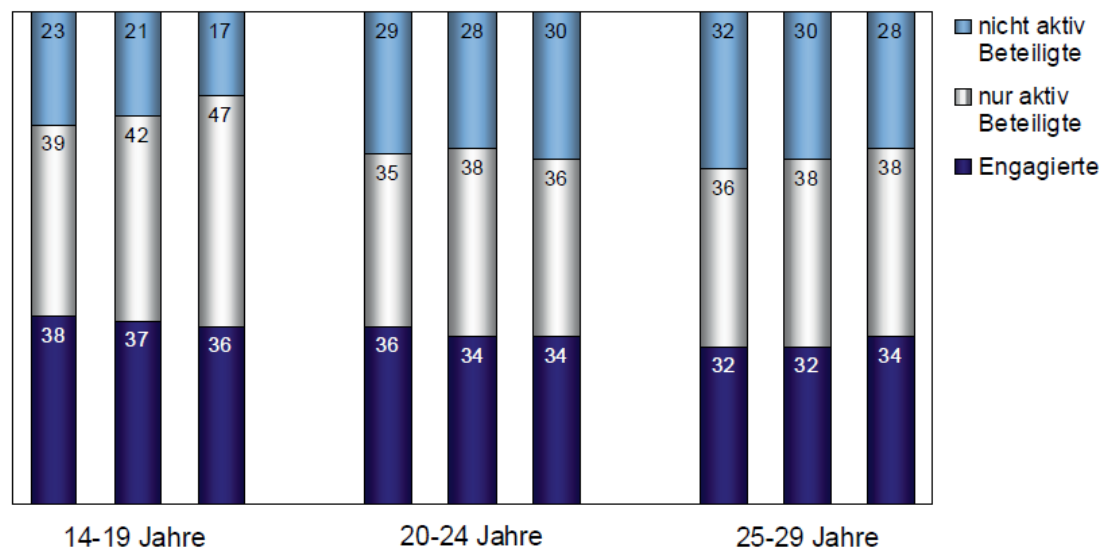
1.1) Facts

Surveys from the nineties show young people to be the most engaged ones in society. Today the actual volunteering activities of young people under 24 are decreasing smoothly to an average level which the following graphic demonstrates.

Dark blue shows the percentage of volunteering people, white stands for the people who are active but not regularly volunteering and bright blue shows the percentage of inactive young people. The bottom of the graphic indicates the different age groups.

Freiwilliges Engagement und Bereitschaft zum freiwilligen Engagement

Junge Leute im Alter von 14 bis 29 Jahren (Angaben in %)



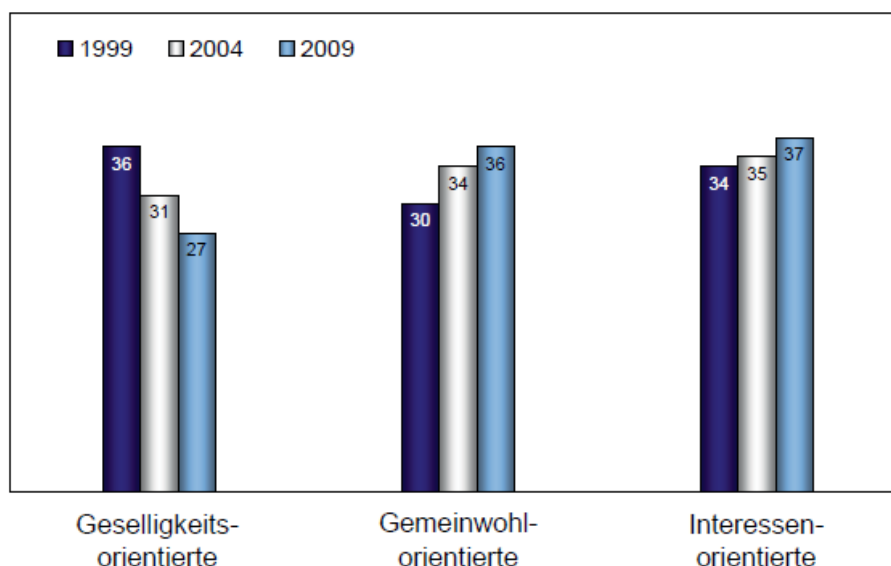
In all age groups one can recognize decline of youths who are not active at all. But this is especially connected to a rise of people being active, but not regularly volunteering. Consequently the will to volunteer is increasing, even though it is more about an unbinding volunteering.

1.2) Meaning and Expectations of Volunteering

There is an increasing orientation of young people to realize own interests through volunteering. Firstly they expect to gather qualifications through their volunteering activities which in a second step could improve their chances to get a job. This expectations can be especially recognized considering people younger than 30 and more intensively by female youths.

The following graphic shows the smooth rise of an expectation of youths on their own interests to become fulfilled through volunteering. Illustrated are the expectations of youths on volunteering divided in a typology of three: the first three columns show an orientation towards interests, the second three a social orientation and the last three an orientation towards common wealth. On the topic you find indicated the respective years: dark blue stands for the year 1999, white for 2004 and bright blue for 2009.

Typologie der Erwartungen an das freiwillige Engagement im Zeitverlauf Alle Engagierten ab 14 Jahre



The orientation towards interest as well as the less time young people spend on volunteering might be connected to more demands and pressure that is put on young people during their apprenticeship.

1.3) Areas of Volunteering

Youths are mostly engaged in the field of sports and movement. In the second place you find free-time activities and social affairs and in the third place engagement around school/the kindergarten. There is a development towards less volunteering in social affairs, although there are still a lot of people active. This development might correspond with a switch towards more interested-orientated volunteers (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2011: 11).

Less active are youths in (local) politics, health and professional representation of interests (ibid.).

2) Senior Volunteers in Germany

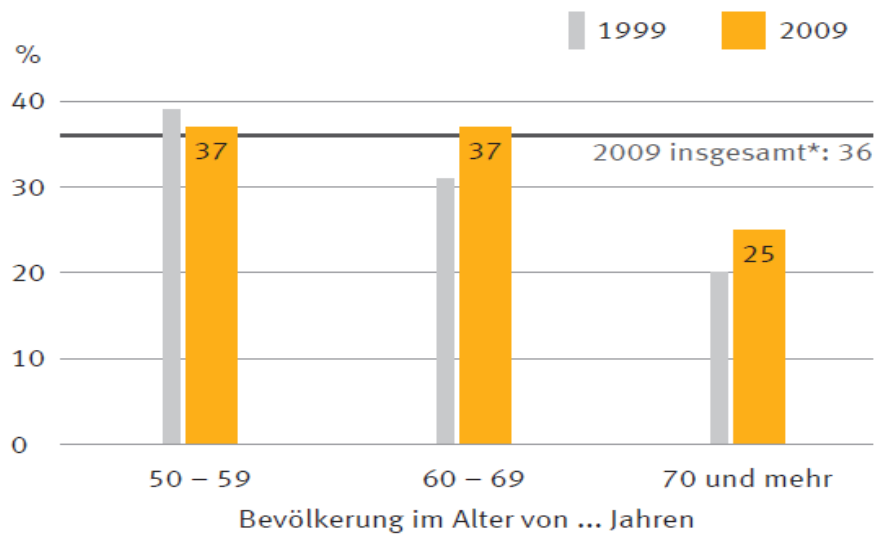
Any single person in Germany today more than any time before can expect to have a long life. The age is not any more a time of “left life”, but it is a period that can be planned and actively shaped. Today seniors are more and more into free time activities and oriented towards life, especially those younger than 80 years.

2.1) Facts

Regarding the graphic below one can recognize that volunteering by seniors has grown since 1999. The year 1999 is illustrated through the grey columns, the orange columns stand for the survey results of the year 2009 and on the bottom you find the different age groups.

Until 2009 the number of volunteers in the age group of 60 to 69 years old persons increased about 6% and the number of volunteers in the age group of 70 and older rose about 5%. The most engaged people are those between 50 and 69 where about 37% are volunteers. The German average for volunteering is on 36%.

Abb 2.20 Freiwillig Engagierte nach Altersgruppen



* Bezogen auf die Bevölkerung ab 14 Jahren.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011: 41

Male seniors are more often volunteering than women. In 2009 around 40% of men between 60 and 69 were volunteering while „only“ 34% of women were doing so. The difference is even more obvious in the age group of 70+: 31% of men and 22% of women were volunteering (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011: 41).

2.2) Meaning of Volunteering

There has been a change on the meaning that senior volunteers give to their engagement. In earlier times traditional values like sense of duty were the main motivating factors. Mainly people then became active for example in the local fire brigade or the local sports club. Today people are likely to become active when they can decide freely on their field of engagement. Consequently they enter into volunteering when they can use their competences, their creativity – shortly: when it is a positive play (FöBE, 2014: 10).

2.3) Expectations on Volunteering

Like young people also seniors want to enjoy their volunteering. In contrast to youngsters the personal interest is less important to seniors when they volunteer. They do care more about social support and common welfare. Next to that there is a great wish to share with other people, to experience community. Another motivating factor is a desire for contact between the generations. This exchange becomes the more important the less it is possible through personal relations. Consequently for a lot of seniors getting into touch with young people is an important motivation to become a volunteer (ibid. 13ff).

High qualified volunteers are especially interested in their competences to be appreciated. They want to use their experience and knowledge in a wise way. Some suffer from a “loss of status” when they leave the working environment. Here volunteering is a possibility to compensate. Good frame conditions, professionalism and a culture of recognition help to keep senior volunteers (ibid.).

2.4) Areas of Volunteering

In general the areas of volunteering of seniors do not distinguish so much from the average of the population. Still it is visible that elders are more often active in social and religious areas. For example they do care about dependent elder people. By that the volunteers do by themselves face the difficulties that one is confronted with in old age (Federal Statistical Office, 2011: 40).

Especially among the people very advanced in years also church and religion are important areas of volunteering. This is connected to a strong connection to church or religious communities among senior volunteers (FöBE, 2014: 16).

Other important areas of engagement are culture, music, free-time and society. Furthermore there is to be seen a rising interest in environment and animal protection as well as in political engagement (ibid. 40).

3) Chances for Intergenerational Volunteering?

One, maybe simple and obvious, but important point, where interests of youngsters and seniors easily come together, talking about volunteering is about using and learning competences. Seniors are interested in using their competences and sharing their experiences that they have been gathering through all their life. Especially the “new” senior generation which had put more importance on the professional life than generations before would still like to use their knowledge.

Youths nowadays become more job-oriented when considering volunteering. They would like to do something useful and while that gather competences that they might need for their professional life.

Why don't the youngsters come together with seniors to learn from their experience? Of course the labour world changes quickly, but there is some kind of basic experience and knowledge that is to get to know, especially when people are interested in the same working area.

In the same time especially seniors search for contact especially to younger generations. When doing free time activities together the youths could give something back and one could learn from each other in a personal and intimate way.

Sources (in German)

- Bertelsmann-Stiftung (Hg.): Jugend in der Zivilgesellschaft. Freiwilliges Engagement Jugendlicher von 1999 bis 2009, vorgelegt von Sibylle Picot, Kurzbericht 2011.

Country report „Junior and senior volunteers in Germany“

- Bundesministerium für Familie, Frauen, Senioren und Jugend - “National Ministry for Family, Women, Seniors and Youths” (Hg.): Hauptbericht des Freiwilligensurveys 2009; vorgelegt von TNS Infratest Sozialforschung, München: 2010.
- FöBE – Förderstelle für Bürgerschaftliches Engagement - “Research Funding Agency for civil engagement” (Hg.): Aktive Seniorinnen und Senioren im freiwilligen Engagement, München: 2013.
- Statistisches Bundesamt - “Statistical National Office” (Hg.): Ältere Menschen in Deutschland und der EU, Wiesbaden: 2011.

Author: Maria Ullrich