

Comparison of the demographic profile of volunteers at the Olympic Festivals in the Czech Republic in the years 2014 – 2022

Abstract:

The paper is devoted to the structure of volunteers who actively participated in the Olympic Parks (2014 – 2016) and Olympic Festivals (2018 – 2022) projects organized in the Czech Republic during the Olympic Games. Olympic festivals (in the years 2014-2016 the project was called Olympic Park, the work collectively uses the name Olympic Festival, abbreviated OF) last 17 days, and the organization of the event requires long-term involvement from volunteers. In 2020 and 2022, two questionnaire surveys were created, which dealt with the demographic composition of volunteers, their motivation to participate, preferences for benefits for participation and preferences for communication before and during the event.

This article compares the demographics of volunteers from 2014-2022 and 2021-2022, where there was a pause in organizing the event between these groups due to the global pandemic of the disease Covid-19. The goal was to find out whether the composition of volunteers has changed and, if so, how the organizer should respond to the sechanges.

Keywords:

Volunteers, Sport volunteering, Olympic Festival, demographic data, measurement of volunteer work

INTRODUCTION

“A large sporting event, perhaps the largest sporting event for the general public, which is regularly organized in the Czech Republic, is the Olympic Festival, which is always held during the Olympic Games, since 2014. The Olympic Festival lasts 17 days, just like the Olympic Games, and its operation is ensured by hundreds of volunteers in dozens of positions. The work of volunteers is indispensable for the organization of large sports events, and most large sports events, called “mega sports events” abroad, cannot do without their involvement“¹.

An important factor to take into account is the Covid-19 pandemic, which in 2020 and 2021 essentially stopped the organization of (not only) major sporting events around the world and changed the behaviour of people all over the world.

„Under the social distancing guidelines in the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans changed their behaviour with social ties and across different modes of communication. While most reduced in-person contact, there were variations in which technology-based communication methods were utilized. Synchronous methods increased in use with family and friends. A small group increased use of all online modes of contact, and these were partially explained by higher usage in general, suggesting the preference for technologies that are familiar. Another small group

1 MIROVSKÝ, Tomáš a Markéta ŠVAMBER ŠAUEROVÁ. Změny v preferencích dobrovolníků na Olympijských festivalech spojených s pandemií nemoci Covid-19. Scientia et Societas [online]. [cit. 2023-03-11]. ISSN 1801-6057.

*decreased all social contacts and experienced higher loneliness and emotional disconnect with friends. While we observed compensatory behaviour to overcome the lack of in-person contact, the higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness in some groups suggest that technology-based modes of contact do not fully replace meeting people in person*².

*“You need to communicate with volunteers who apply for the event, or who are just considering participation, from the moment the recruitment opens. An interesting topic is the discussion in the sense of a “psychological contract”, which refers to the fact that the individual at the beginning of the engagement “believes” only on the basis of the terms and obligations of the mutual exchange between themselves and the organizer. These contracts are based on expectations, often formed by the initial ‘rhetoric’ of the organization and the belief that they will be fulfilled*³.

*“Failure to fulfil this psychological contract on the part of the organizer can bring big problems already before the event, when volunteers can opt out of participation, or during the event, when they can end cooperation. Based on experience, it appears that fair communication with volunteers is an important prevention against such termination of cooperation during the event. In the Olympic Festivals project, there are always only a few individuals who end their cooperation on their own, mostly for reasons other than the failure to meet their expectations*⁴.

For the organizer to correctly set up good communication and benefits for participation, it is important to know which volunteers apply to participate. The motivation of volunteers to participate plays a big role here, but it is also important to know information about age, condition and other specifics. Based on this knowledge, it is possible to better target the promotion of participation, or, thanks to this knowledge, to focus on specific target groups that could be more interested in volunteering.

According to the study (Ralston, Downward, 2004), the specifics of the motivations of volunteers at large sporting events, i.e. the specifics of one-time volunteering, are shown:

“It turns out that regardless of previous experience, volunteer background and reason for participation, volunteers seek fulfilment of the promised cooperation (“psychological contract”) from the very beginning, and not only during the period of involvement of volunteers during the event. In the beginning, cooperation is based largely on trust, and these expectations must be met; We assume that there is an “ideal set” of activities that a volunteer expects from his involvement: activity planning, recruitment, training and communication, which the organizer can prepare in advance;

Experience from practice increasingly confirms that if the expectations of volunteers are not met (with a certain degree of adequacy), then greater dissatisfaction (and in some cases even termination

2 Lee, J. H., Luchetti, M., Aschwanden, D., Sesker, A. A., Strickhouser, J. E., Terracciano, A., & Sutin, A. R. (2022). Perceived changes in social contact during COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. *Personal Relationships*, 29(1), 59– 76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12413>

3 MIROVSKÝ, Tomáš. Management dobrovolníků na sportovních akcích a náklady na jejich zapojení. Praha, 2018, 67 s. Závěrečná práce MBA studia. Vysoká škola tělesné výchovy a sportu PALESTRA, spol. s r. o. Vedoucí práce Doc. Ing. Jiří Novotný, CSc.

4 MIROVSKÝ, Tomáš a Markéta ŠVAMBER ŠAUEROVÁ. Změny v preferencích dobrovolníků na Olympijských festivalech spojených s pandemií nemoci Covid-19. *Scientia et Societas* [online]. v tisku [cit. 2023-03-11]. ISSN 1801-6057.

of cooperation) can be expected. Although some volunteers have a greater tolerance for uncertainty and change, this tolerance limit should not be significantly exceeded. The desire to be part of a unique event may attract volunteers at the beginning, but it may not be a strong enough motive for greater tolerance of unfulfilled promises and expectations;

It can be assumed that sports events arouse more interest in volunteering and there is a need for effective management of volunteers at each event. These can then generate a positive wave of volunteering at other events⁵.

“Volunteers often sign up for large events even six months or a year before the event itself, based on a combination of many motives for participation. During the time between the expression of interest and the event itself, or the exact specification of the activities that the volunteers will do and other requirements for them usually takes several months, or even a year, because the final specifications of the positions provided by the volunteers are completed before the start of the event itself. But the goal of the organizer is to specify positions for volunteers as soon as possible and to offer volunteers the option of choosing a specific position that suits them already in the application form⁶.”

The main research question was whether there is a significant difference in the demographic data based on the methodology of the ‘International Labour Organization’ for the groups of volunteers from 2020 and 2022. The only circumstance that distinguishes these surveys is the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

It compares the results of a questionnaire survey among volunteers involved in the years 2021 and 2022 with the results of the same survey carried out in 2020. In 2020, 370 volunteers participated in the questionnaire survey, who participated in the OF organization in the years 2014 - 2018, or were registered to participate in 2020, when OF and the Olympic Games did not take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The second, same, survey took place in 2022, when 131 volunteers participated in the organization of OF in 2021 (postponed OF of 2020) and 2022.

Volunteers were approached via e-mail, where a link to the online questionnaire was sent, as well as via Facebook groups. These groups were created for individual projects and only registered volunteers were added to them. Communication always took place here before and during the event, and after the end these groups continue to serve as communication for other volunteer projects.

Among the respondents of the first survey were 40 volunteers from 2014 (Prague, 10.8% of the total number of respondents); 62 volunteers from 2016 (Lipno nad Vltavou and Pardubice, 16.8%); 150 volunteers from 2018 (Brno and Ostrava, 40.5%); 118 volunteers who signed up to participate in 2020 (Brno, Ostrava, Prague, 31.9%). Research respondents in 2022 were from participation in 2021 – 50 volunteers (Brno, Prague, 38.2%) and 81 volunteers with participation in 2022 (Brno, 61.8%). When filling out the questionnaire, the most recent participation in OF was decisive,

5 MIROVSKÝ, Tomáš. Motivace dobrovolníků na velkých sportovních akcích. Brno, 2019. Semestrální práce. MUNI. Vedoucí práce Doc. RNDr. Jiří Zháněl, Dr.

6 MIROVSKÝ, Tomáš a Markéta ŠVAMBER ŠAUEROVÁ. Změny v preferencích dobrovolníků na Olympijských festivalech spojených s pandemií nemoci Covid-19. Scientia et Societas [online]. v tisku [cit. 2023-03-11]. ISSN 1801-6057.

so if the volunteer participated in more than one OF during the first questioning, then his participation was recorded in the group from the last participation.

The questionnaire was divided into several parts; this work deals with the demographic data of the volunteers. Other parts, which are not part of the results published here, related to the year and place when and where the volunteer was specifically involved, as well as the answer to what position he worked for and for how long. Next, the volunteers answered the question of what was the greatest experience or impression they took away as participants. In the next part, they answered questions about their motives for participating in the Olympic Festival, what methods of communication they prefer before the event, i.e., between registering for participation and the start of the event, and what methods of communication they prefer during the implementation of the event. The last part was about what benefits (material and non-material) they prefer during their involvement and how important they consider them.

„The assured demographic data is based on the “Manual on the measurement of volunteer work”, published by the “International Labour Organization” in Geneva. “The Manual on the Measurement of Voluntary Work, published under the auspices of the ILO, is cited in almost all EU documents related to volunteering as a suitable model for conducting statistical surveys in this area. The International Conference of Labour Statisticians also drew attention to the methodological procedures presented in this manual, which identified them as an adequate basis for examining voluntary work. In accordance with the resolution adopted on October 11, 2013 at the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the statistical definition of work includes voluntary work“⁷.

The results of the survey from 2019 have already been published, and now the data is used for comparison with the post-covid results from 2022.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEYS

In the 2020 and 2022 surveys, volunteers answered questions about gender, age, status, education, type of job, average salary and children.

7 SEDLÁČEK, Aleš a Jaroslav HYNEK. Metodika evidence a stanovení hodnoty dobrovolnické práce v České republice: Projekt Systém evidence a ohodnocení dobrovolnické práce jako nástroje zvýšení transparentnosti a efektivity hospodaření NNO, č. projektu: CZ.1.04/5.1.01/B2.00024. Praha, 2015.
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Tab. 1 – Results of questionnaire surveys in the area of respondents' personal data

man	140	37,8%	50	38,2%
Age				
15-24	141	38,1%	55	42,0%
25-44	166	44,9%	37	28,2%
45-64	47	12,7%	27	20,6%
65 and more	16	4,3%	12	9,2%
Status				
single	273	73,8%	84	64,1%
married	61	16,5%	29	22,1%
widower/widow, divorced, separated	36	9,7%	18	13,7%
Education				
no formal education	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
elementary education	22	5,9%	22	16,8%
secondary education	157	42,4%	59	45,0%
university education	191	51,6%	50	38,2%
Work classification				
employed	201	54,3%	57	43,5%
unemployed	52	14,1%	27	20,6%
other job classifications	117	31,6%	47	35,9%
Income, based on the median average wage is at				
less than 50%	125	33,8%	56	42,7%
between 50 - 150%	210	56,8%	59	45,0%
more than 150%	35	9,5%	16	12,2%
Children				
no children in the household	276	74,6%	87	66,4%
there are children in the household	94	25,4%	44	33,6%

Source: author's own investigation

There were larger changes in two categories when comparing the results of both surveys. This is the age composition of the volunteers and their education.

GENDER

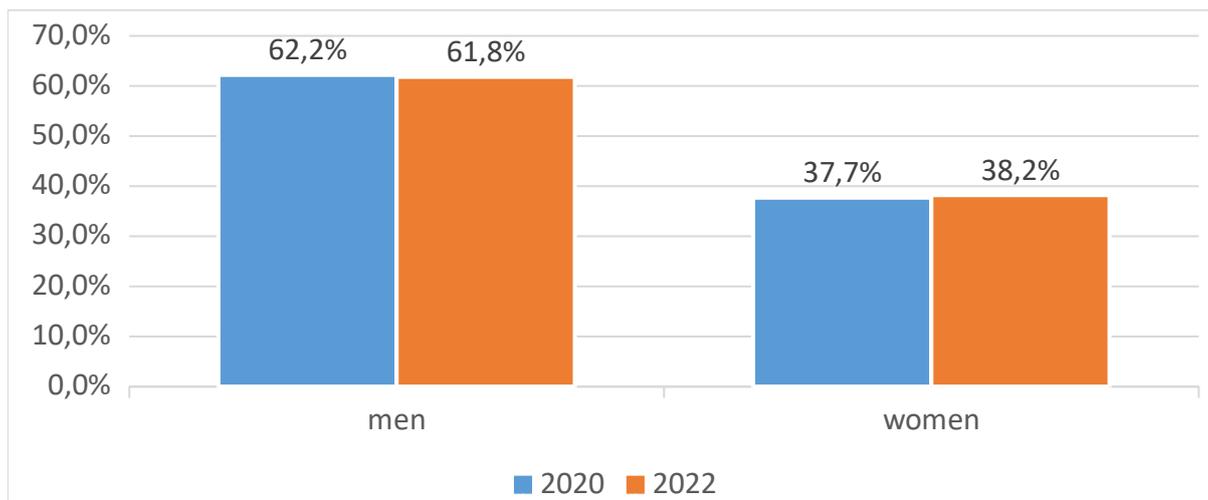


Chart 1 - Gender

Source: author's own investigation

Among the categories in which there are no significant changes in the results of the survey, the ratio of men and women is primarily included, which is essentially the same in both surveys, i.e. a 60/40 split. This category is important for the organizers from a very practical point of view, and that is the order of volunteer clothing, which is one of the material rewards for volunteer work. Volunteer uniforms are ordered up to a year in advance, and at a time when the exact composition of the volunteers is not known, both the sizes and the percentage of clothing that will be for men and how much for women must be estimated. This knowledge will help the organizers to better set the number of clothes to order and thereby reduce costs with possible unnecessary ordering of extra clothes.

AGE OF VOLUNTEERS

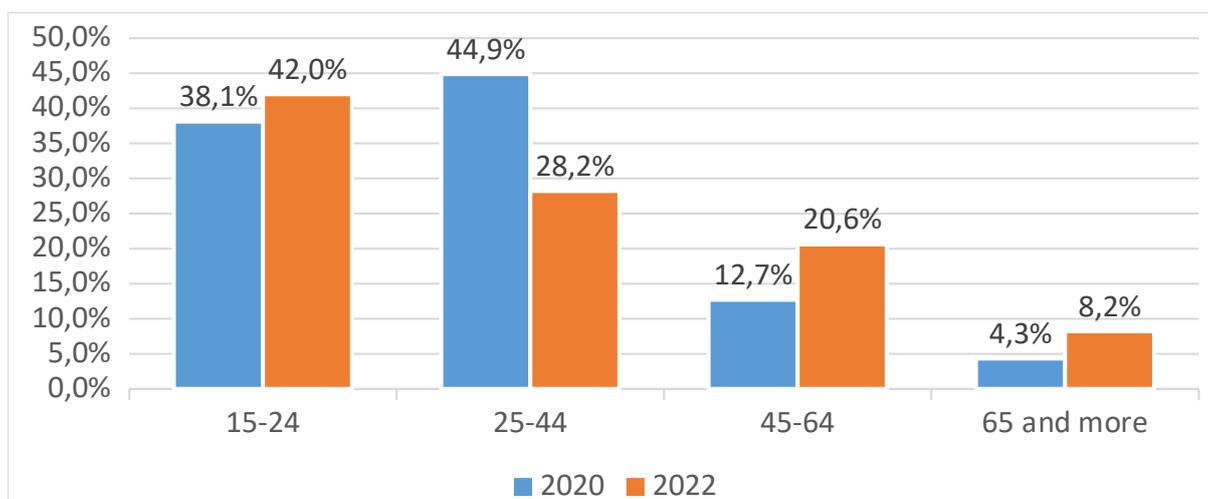


Chart 2 - Age of respondents in the 2020 survey

Source: author's own investigation

In the survey carried out in 2020, the 25-44 age group was the most represented with 44.9%, in the survey in 2022 this age group made up only 28.2% of all volunteers. The difference of 16.7% was equally replaced by an increase in volunteers in all three age groups, specifically by a 3.9% increase in the 15-24 age group (which with its 42% percentage became the most heavily occupied group), a 7.7% increase in age group 45-64 years and an increase of 4.9% for the group 65 years and older.

Considering the greater number of volunteers aged 45-64 and 65 years and over (an increase of 12.8%), it can be assumed that this positive change is also related to the greater number of married volunteers. This is an increase of 5.6% of volunteers. It can also be assumed that the increase in the number of children in the household is related to this increase, by 8.2%.

STATUS

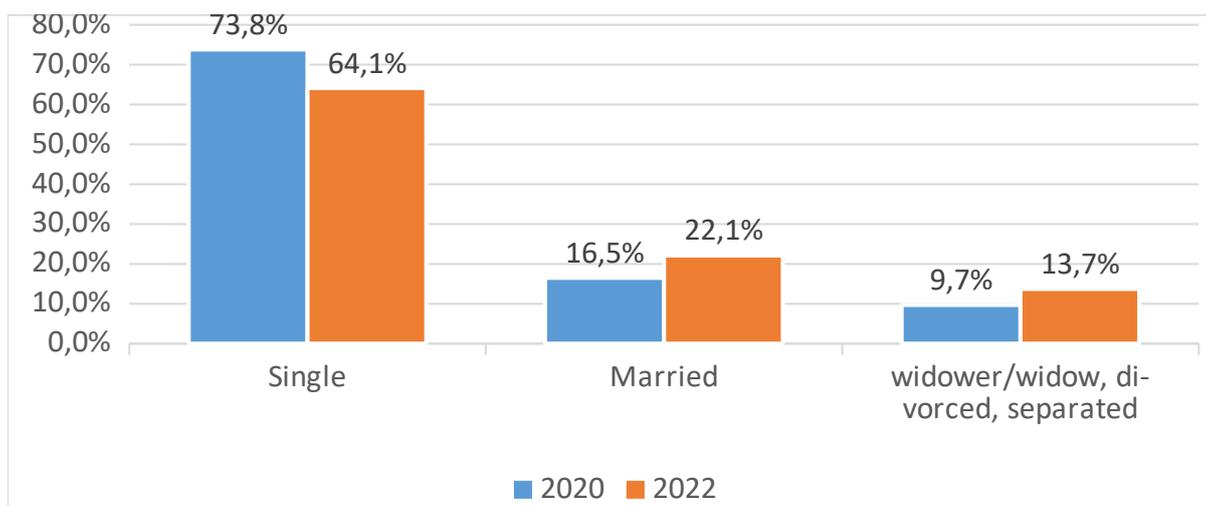


Chart 3 – Status

Source: author's own investigation

Among the volunteers in the 2022 survey, there is a significantly lower number of single volunteers, a difference of almost 10%. This difference is offset by an almost equal increase in married and divorced, widowed, and separated volunteers.

EDUCATION

The second category, where there have been more significant changes, is the education of volunteers. Not a single survey was attended by volunteers without formal education. There was no significant change in secondary education (42.4% in 2022 versus 45% in 2022). In the survey in 2022, however, there was an increase in volunteers with primary education (16.8% versus 5.9% in 2020) and a decrease in volunteers with university education (38.2% versus 51.6% in 2020). In the survey in 2020, volunteers with university education made up the largest group with more than 50% of the total number, in 2022 it was already volunteers with secondary education (45%)

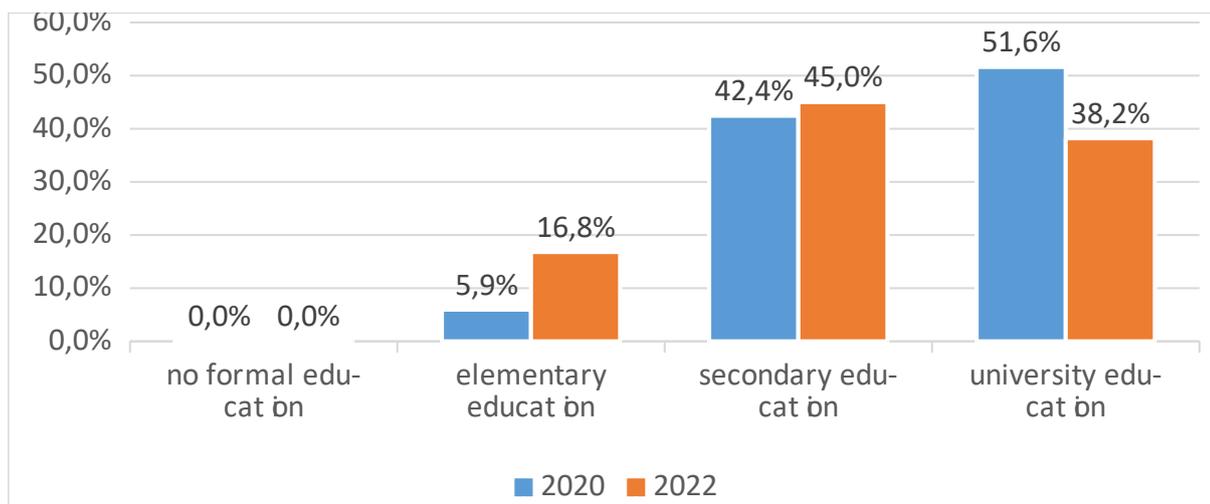


Chart 4 - Education of respondents
Source: author's own investigation

WORK CLASSIFICATION

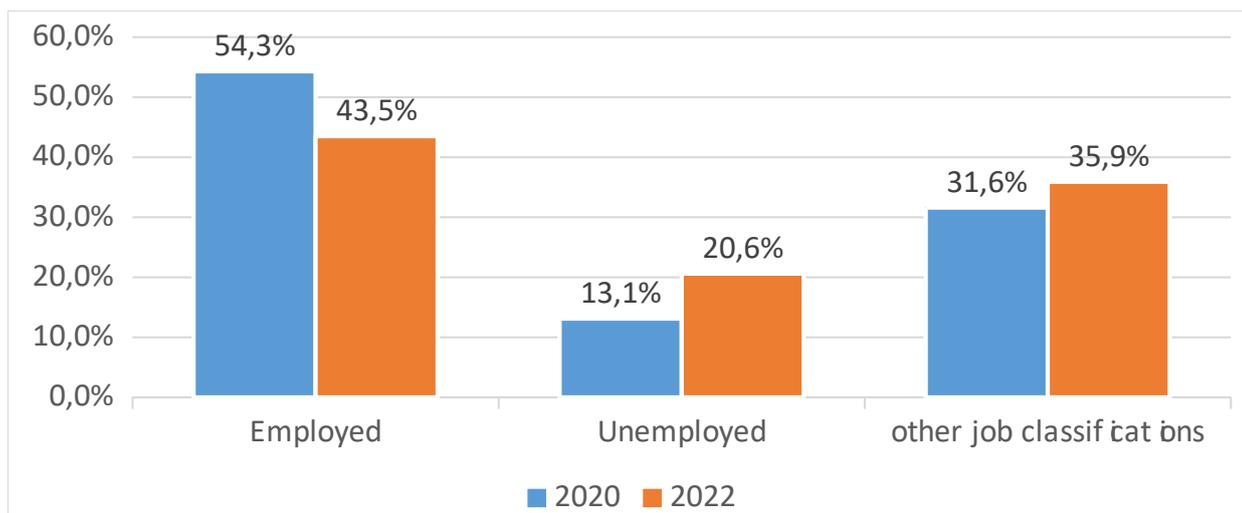


Chart 5 - Work classification
Source: author's own investigation

In terms of employment, the share of employed volunteers decreased from 54.3% to 43.5%, while unemployed volunteers, on the other hand, and increased from 14.1% to 20.6%. There was no significant change in the variant „other job classification“.

INCOME

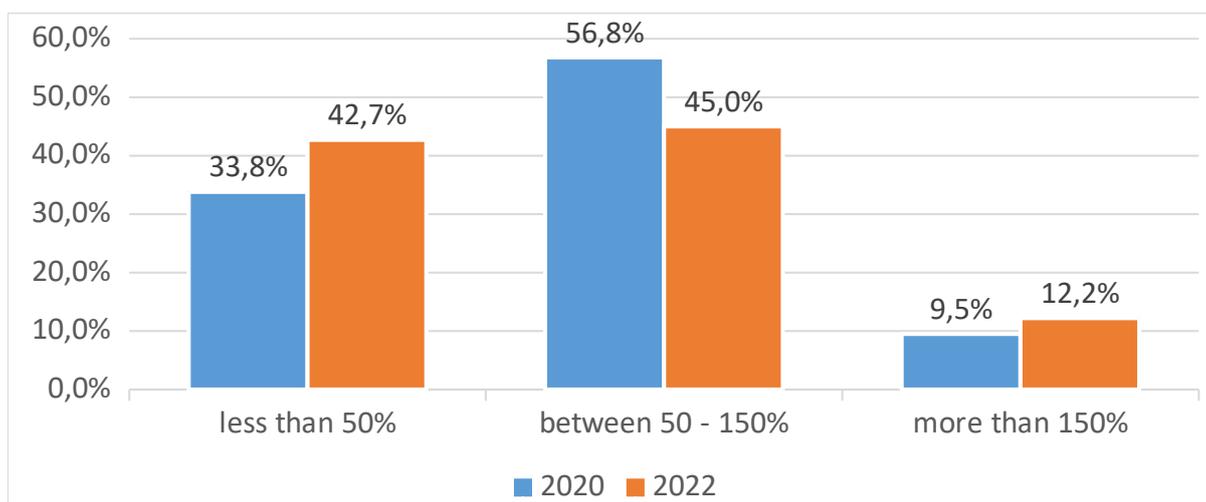


Chart 6 - Income, based on the median average wage, is at
Source: author's own investigation

The amount of the median average gross monthly wage is set by the Czech Statistical Office, and at the time of the first survey, it was CZK 29,123; in 2022, it was CZK 32,929.

Regarding the income of volunteers, there is a noticeable increase in the number of volunteers with income less than 50% of the median average wage (from 33.8% to 42.7%) and a decrease in the number of volunteers with income corresponding to 50-150% of the median average wage (from 56.8% to 45%). The ratio of volunteers with an income higher than 150% of the median average wage did not change significantly (9.5% or 12.2%).

CHILDREN

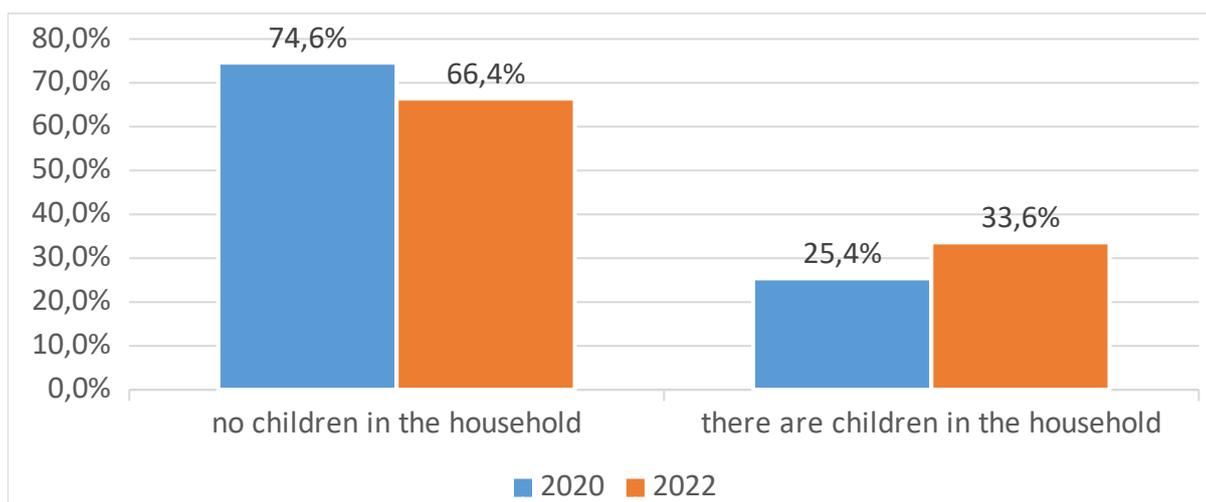


Chart 7 - Children
Source: author's own investigation

The number of volunteers who have children in the household increased from one-quarter to one-third.

RESULTS

According to the results of both surveys, there were changes in the demographic data between 2020 and 2022, mainly in the area of the age of volunteers, where the share of volunteers in the age category of 45 years and older increased from 16% to 28.8%, mainly in relation to the representation of the 25-44 age group. Where the proportional representation fell from 44.9% to 28.2%, which is the biggest difference in the results of both surveys. Furthermore, the ratio of single volunteers decreased from 73.8% to 64.1%. The proportional representation of university-educated volunteers also decreased from 51.6% to 38.2%, and the proportion of volunteers with income less than 50% of the median of the average wage increased from 33.8% to 42.7%.

Based on the results of the implementation of two investigations in 2020 and 2022 and the changes that have occurred, the following steps can be recommended for the organizers of other Olympic festivals.

Considering the increase in the number of volunteers who list their job title as „unemployed“, consider a greater offer of material benefits for participation as a motivational element for participation. Material benefits, i.e. mainly the volunteer uniform, but also other material equipment, e.g. from the partners of the event, can be a reason for unemployed volunteers to participate in the event. The organizer should also promote more the usability and usefulness of the participation certificate, i.e. confirmation of participation and thanks for a job well done, which can be good in job interviews.

Another activity that the organizer can do is to prepare motivational workshops as part of the accompanying program as informal and interactive activities with a demonstration of the possibility of transferring competences to the sports environment to support the better employability of volunteers.

The increase in the number of married volunteers and the increase in the number of children in the household leads to thinking about accompanying activities for volunteers. These are non-material benefits, which are in demand among the involved volunteers. Based on the changes in the results of the survey, the organizer should consider a larger number of leisure activities for volunteers and their families, i.e. the possibility of inviting family members to the event at a specified time, or the realization of other joint activities. One of the possibilities to get more volunteers, for example to help with the morning program, would be a separate program for the children of parents who will help as volunteers during the time and their children will be taken care of as part of the program.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Thanks to the increase in the number of volunteers who state their job title as „unemployed“, it would be interesting to find out whether this is not a trend where volunteers try to obtain better conditions for applicability on the labor market through their involvement, i.e. when they want to use their involvement to obtain new work experience and contacts. If that were the case, it would be interesting for further outreach to find this target group as well and offer them the possibility of acquiring new competencies that could help them on the labor market.

A second area that further researchers could focus on is the significant reduction in the proportion of volunteers in the 25-44 age group. It would be interesting to focus on the results of this age category

and find out what their motives are for participating, what their preferred methods of communication are, and what benefits they receive for participating. Then the organizer could focus more on these areas when setting the above factors to better reach volunteers from this target group. The next Olympic Festival is planned for the Paris Summer Olympics in 2024, and volunteer recruitment is planned to begin in the fall of 2023.

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PORÓWNANIE PROFILU DEMOGRAFICZNEGO WOLONTARIUSZY NA FESTIWALACH OLIMPIJSKICH W CZECHACH W LATACH 2014 – 2022

Streszczenie:

Artykuł poświęcony jest strukturze wolontariuszy, którzy aktywnie uczestniczyli w projektach Parków Olimpijskich (2014 – 2016) i Festiwalu Olimpijskich (2018 – 2022) organizowanych w Czechach podczas Igrzysk Olimpijskich. Festiwale olimpijskie (w latach 2014-2016 projekt nosił nazwę Olympic Park, prace zbiorczo posługują się nazwą Olympic Festival, w skrócie OF) trwają 17 dni, a organizacja imprezy wymaga wieloletniego zaangażowania wolontariuszy.

W 2020 i 2022 roku powstały dwa badania ankietowe, które dotyczyły składu demograficznego wolontariuszy, ich motywacji do udziału, preferencji co do korzyści z uczestnictwa oraz preferencji komunikacji przed i w trakcie wydarzenia.

W artykule porównano dane demograficzne wolontariuszy z lat 2014-2022 i 2021-2022, w których nastąpiła przerwa w organizacji wydarzenia pomiędzy tymi grupami z powodu światowej pandemii choroby Covid-19. Celem było sprawdzenie, czy zmienił się skład wolontariuszy, a jeśli tak, to jak organizator powinien zareagować na te zmiany.

Słowa kluczowe:

Wolontariat, Wolontariat sportowy, Festiwal Olimpijski, dane demograficzne, pomiar pracy wolontariuszy