

DOI: 10.15838/esc.2025.3.99.13

UDC 316.35, LBC 60.9

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Volunteering at the Modern Stage of Its Development in Russia: Dynamics and Resources of Social Capital

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Abstract. The paper analyzes the dynamics and resources of volunteering in Russia for 2016–2024. The relevance of the study is due to the growing interest in volunteering, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as active government support, including the federal project “Social Activity”. The main aim of the work is to study the involvement of citizens in volunteering and identify key resources for its development, taking into account demographic and social changes. Scientific novelty of the research lies in a comprehensive analysis of volunteering through the prism of a resource-based approach, including social capital. The transformation of forms of volunteering from traditional to digital and occasional is shown, which distinguishes the work from previous studies. Special attention is paid to gender and territorial imbalances. The methodology includes an analysis of the results of a Rosstat labor force survey (2016–2024) and a sociological study in the Tyumen Region (N=1,430). The methods of structural and

For citation: Agafonova D.Yu., Romashkina G.F. (2025). Volunteering at the modern stage of its development in Russia: Dynamics and resources of social capital. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 18(3), 236–252. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2025.3.99.13

dynamic analysis, clustering, as well as statistical criteria (χ^2 , Student's t-test) are applied. The number of volunteers in Russia has tripled, despite its population decline. Such activities as fundraising, social assistance and animal welfare prevail, but their coverage does not exceed 3% of the population. A gender bias has been identified: women make up 72% of volunteers and spend more time volunteering. Engaging in volunteering depends to a great extent on social capital (trust, membership in organizations). The limitations of the study are related to incomplete representativeness of the data and predominance of government sources. Prospects for further research include studying the motivation of men, the effectiveness of digital volunteering formats, and development of programs for young people and retirees.

Key words: volunteering, social capital, dynamics, resources, gender imbalance.

Introduction

Numerous observations and statistics from recent decades demonstrate a steady increase in interest in volunteering in Russia, which is usually associated with the intensification of volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic and the development of digital platforms to engage in this activity. Government initiatives, such as declaring 2018 the Year of Volunteers¹, and the implementation of the Federal Project “Community-Minded Activity”² in 2019–2024, have helped to increase public awareness of volunteering. According to the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, 320 new volunteer centers were organized in 2020 alone, 2.5 million people took part in the WeAreTogether³ project. According to the same sources, by 2025, more than 7.4 million people use the information system for the development of volunteering and generally 13% of Russian citizens were engaged in volunteering through volunteer support centers (communities, associations). It is also noted that among companies with state participation, the growth of volunteerism has exceeded 40% per year⁴. Large companies try to highlight their attention to volunteer activities, but such publications provide information which is

more like an advertisement rather than objective statistics. These data come into some conflict with the results of mass labor force surveys conducted by Rosstat annually since 2006, and the findings of Russian scholars. However, the scientists themselves have not reached a consensus on identifying the volume of volunteer activity in Russia. This contradiction determined the problem and scientific objectives of our research.

In general, the vast majority of Russian citizens approve of volunteer activities. However, the answer to the question about their involvement in volunteering practices is not so positive. An extensive database of Rosstat labor force surveys is publicly available, as well as the results of sociological studies in which questions were asked about the involvement of respondents in volunteering. It is important to analyze data on the resources of Russian citizens' participation in volunteering, as this allows us to assess the potential for social mobilization of the population.

Research objectives: 1) to assess the level of Russians' involvement in volunteering and its trend in 2016–2024, taking into account socio-demographic characteristics; 2) to determine significant

¹ On the Year of Volunteers in the Russian Federation: Presidential Decree 583, dated December 06, 2017. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/43027> (accessed: March 04, 2025).

² Community-Minded Activity: Federal Project. Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. Available at: https://edu.gov.ru/national-project/projects/soc_activity (accessed: May 19, 2025).

³ WeAreTogether. The official website of the project. Available at: <https://мывместе.рф> (accessed: May 19, 2025).

⁴ Corporate volunteering has become a form of investment in the brand of Russian companies. Mail.ru. Available at: <https://news.mail.ru/economics/65246351> (accessed: March 12, 2025).

resources for the development of volunteering in the context of a changing demographic structure.

Literature analysis

Historically, volunteering has been studied more in foreign than in Russian-language literature. In addition, the obvious lag in the development of the support system for such activities in modern Russia requires a study of international experience. In one of the classic works by R. Cnaan and co-authors four key features of volunteering were identified: free choice (no coercion, personal motivation), no or minimal remuneration, structure (formal and informal), and beneficiaries (from helping strangers to participating in self-help groups, where the volunteer is also a beneficiary) (Cnaan et al., 1996). In this definition, volunteering is one of the types of economic activity and ranges from purely altruistic activities without remuneration to more flexible forms, including self-help and support for loved ones. Phenomenologically, volunteering is considered as a conscious and planned action involving prior consideration, long-term commitment, and an organized form of assistance (Wilson, 2000; Penner, 2004).

M.L. Salamon and co-authors noted that, despite volunteering is carried out in free time and without monetary remuneration, it is a form of work that brings both tangible and intangible benefits not only to the help receivers, but also to the volunteers themselves (Salamon et al., 2003, p. 222). Volunteering is often motivated by a sense of personal, cultural, religious, or moral obligation and is determined by personality traits such as altruism, a need for learning, and a focus on the present, but not by a need for activity. It is also driven by a number of functional motives, including helping others, learning, social connections, self-affirmation, career growth, and self-defense (Mowen, Sujan, 2015). The early 2000s were marked by a shift from a collective to a reflective style of volunteering (Hustinx, Lammertyn, 2003). The former is characterized by stability and long-term involvement of volunteers, whereas the

latter reflects an individualized, flexible approach based on personal interests and the desire for self-realization. Modern volunteering is becoming sporadic and fragmentary: participation is increasingly temporary, in a project format with an emphasis on visible results and freedom to choose tasks. The ontology of volunteering, as uncoerced, conscious and long-term assistance carried out without expectation of reward, often through official organizations and aimed at the benefit of others, relies on organizational and personal resources (Snyder, Omoto, 2008, p. 3).

In the Russian scientific tradition, volunteering is considered as a social phenomenon with pronounced institutional, managerial, and socio-cultural characteristics (Mersiyanova, Yakobson, 2009; Kholina, 2011; Pevnaya, 2016). Researchers emphasize the connection of voluntary work with historical models: charitable (pre-revolutionary), state-organized (Soviet) and democratic (post-Soviet) (Hvorostyanova, 2017). Modern Russian volunteering is developing against the background of the active participation of the state, which contributes to its institutionalization (Zborovsky et al., 2018; Ulyanova, 2019). The paper by colleagues from the Ural scientific school shows that the greatest willingness to volunteer is observed in people with a pronounced altruistic orientation and an attitude toward social action (activism) (Pevnaya, Tarasova, 2024).

An important contribution was made to the understanding of volunteering (Wilson, Musick, 1997) by proposing an integrated model combining three key resources of activity: human, social and cultural capital. The influence of these factors on volunteering has been emphasized in both early and modern studies (Smith, 1994; Bekkers, 2003; Taniguchi, 2013). In this case, it is necessary to clarify that volunteering is not only a form of productive work, but also a kind of collective action, ethically oriented and socially regulated. From this perspective, social capital is an important resource.

R. Putnam's concept of social capital includes networks, norms, and social trust (Putnam, 1995). According to P. Bourdieu's definition, social capital can promote coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit and thus promote collective action (Bourdieu, 1986). Later, studies confirmed the positive impact of social capital on voluntary work through social networks and generalized trust (Forbes, Zampelli, 2014; Wang, Graddy, 2008).

One of the most stable ontological observations is the positive influence of the breadth of social networks on the inclination for formal and informal volunteering. Larger networks promote engagement because they increase access to information about opportunities to volunteer (Musick, Wilson, 2008). The same mechanisms apply to charity: people with broad social involvement are more likely to respond to requests for help and donate (Schervish, Havens, 1997). Extended social connections not only inform, but also develop norms of participation, creating expectations of mutual support and commitment.

Along with social networks, generalized trust is considered as an important component of the motivational base for socially oriented behavior. By definition (Gambetta, 1988; Hardin, 2002), trust is the foundation for joint action and coordination of efforts, especially in conditions of uncertainty. It creates an expectation that other members of society will also act in the interests of the common good, which increases the likelihood of participating in volunteer initiatives. A high level of generalized trust creates a sense of interdependence and willingness to cooperate (Neilson, Paxton, 2010). This is confirmed by experimental and field studies where trust correlates with volunteerism (Bekkers, 2012) and donations (Brooks, 2005).

According to Z. Wu and co-authors, institutional trust has a significant impact on the capacity for volunteering and donations, especially in politically centralized systems such as China (Wu et al., 2018). Chinese researchers have argued

with R. Bekkers, according to whom differences in charitable behavior are more related to the individual characteristics of donors than to macrosocial or regional conditions (Bekkers, 2016). Moreover, a study (Wu et al., 2018) showed that high acquaintance trust, contrary to expectations, is negatively associated with donations, although it does not have a significant impact on voluntary work. This may indicate that focusing solely on the inner circle reduces the importance of generalized norms of social responsibility and participation in a broader social context. Volunteering can contribute to the extension of horizontal and vertical social ties and the growth of social capital at the individual and community levels (Telepaeva et al., 2018; Sukharkova, 2021; Iarskaia-Smirnova et al., 2024).

Methodology and data

The study includes two sets of empirical data. The first source is microdata from the Rosstat labor force survey for 2016–2024⁵. This large-scale sample of households contains information about people aged 15 and older across Russia. For example, in 2024, data were obtained on 4366 thousand people engaged in volunteering. The following variables formulated in the volunteering section were used for the analysis: involvement in volunteering last month; number of hours spent on it last month; number of activities over the year; type of activity; form of participation (individual or through an organization); type of organization-beneficiary. Additionally, socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were taken into account: gender, age, type of settlement (city/village).

The second source is the database “Socio-cultural profile of the Tyumen Region 2023”⁶

⁵ Microdata of the sample labor force survey. Rosstat. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/labour_force (accessed: May 22, 2025).

⁶ Database of the survey “Socio-cultural profile of Russian regions – 2023”. Certificate of database registration RU 2024623834, dated August 30, 2024. Application 2024623498, dated August 15, 2024.

(N = 1430) (Agafonova, Romashkina, 2024). The sample is zoned, representative by gender and age structure, education and type of settlement, the sampling error for one parameter does not exceed 1.5%. The main studied (dependent) variable is the respondent's involvement in non-political volunteering, it is a binary indicator. The respondents were assigned one if they took part in at least one of the six types of volunteer activity during the year, and zero otherwise. The independent variables include the resources of social capital. For further calculations, all scales were recalculated on a scale from 0 (minimum) to 1 (maximum). Social capital included trust and a communicative resource. Generalized trust was measured with the question "In general, do you think that most people can be trusted or, on the contrary, should you be careful when dealing with people?" on a ten-point scale. The institutional trust index was calculated as the average value of trust ratings for ten key public and state institutions on a five-point scale. Volunteering to public organizations is represented as a binary variable: 1 if the respondent belongs to any organization, and 0 if not. A communicative resource is determined with the question "Where do you find mutual understanding?" The option "in the family" corresponds to the value 0 (the main resource of mutual understanding is limited to the family circle). Other answers (friends, neighbors, colleagues, co-religionists, people of my nationality) correspond to 1, reflecting the extended communication resource.

The analysis includes information from the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, an analytical review of existing state programs to support volunteerism, including the implementation of the Federal Project "Community-Minded Activity"⁷ (2019–2024),

⁷ "Community-Minded Activity" within the National Project "Education": Federal Project. Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://edu.gov.ru/national-project/project/social-activity> (accessed: May 22, 2025).

and institutional measures aimed at developing the volunteering infrastructure. Types of volunteering were identified, and volunteer activities were classified and periodized. When analyzing the data, methods such as structural-dynamic analysis, calculation of variation coefficients, factor analysis, clustering by k-means, comparison of averages by Fischer's F-criterion, Student's t-criterion, and Pearson's χ^2 (chi-squared) criterion were used. The data were analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics 26, Python Data Analysis Library.

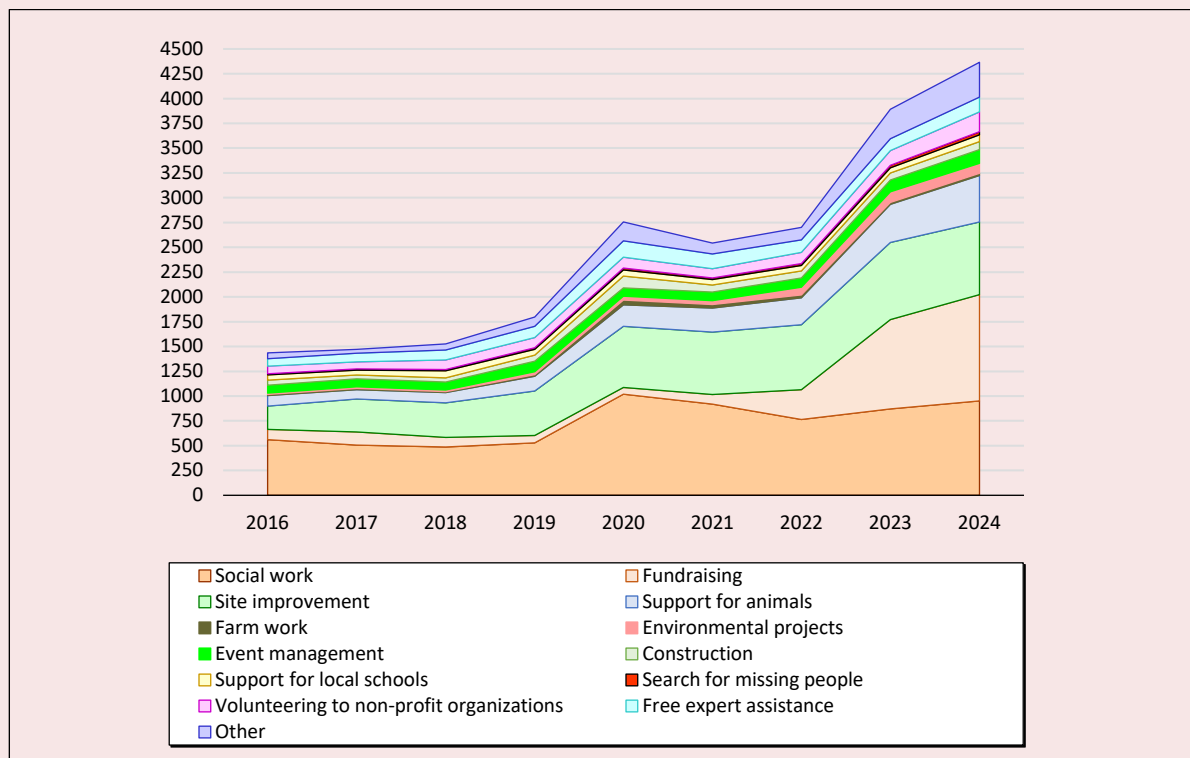
Trend of volunteering in Russia (2016–2024)

Figure 1 shows the trend of population engagement in volunteer activities for 2016–2024, extrapolated from the data of the All-Russian sample labor force surveys.

In eight years, there has been a qualitative change in the structure of volunteerism. Social work (assistance to socially vulnerable groups) has moved from the first place to the second place in the rating of volunteer activities, reaching about 1% of the population in 2024. Having experienced a surge during the pandemic, this type of activity returned to the "pre-pandemic" trend of steady growth.

The most common type of activity in 2024 is fundraising for charity or social projects. About 1% of the Russian population participated in it, most often citizens supported state or municipal social projects (25% of the number of volunteers). In 2016, only about 7% of volunteers mentioned participating in fundraising. In eight years, their number has increased 10-fold. This is where the results of government support and promotion of socially significant projects have been most evident. Since 2017, the Presidential Grants Foundation has been operating in Russia, which has funded 32 115 projects totaling over 71 billion rubles. In parallel, regional grant programs and subsidies at the local government level are being developed. Today, the main sources of income for non-profit organizations are private donations (38%), subsidies and grants from regional authorities (37%), and grants from the Presidential Grants Foundation

Figure 1. Trend of volunteering in Russia (2016–2024), number of volunteers by type of activity, thousand people



Calculated based on: primary microdata of the Rosstat Labor Force Survey for 2024. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/labour_force (accessed: May 22, 2025).

(37%)⁸. Separately, it is worth noting the social tax deduction for philanthropists, which has been implemented since 2000: individuals are provided with a personal income tax deduction for the amount of donations to non-profit organizations. Endowments (endowment funds) are actively developing in Russia: as of the end of 2023, more than 300 such funds have been registered, mainly in educational and social organizations⁹. Since 2023, the Institute of Fundraising Development

under the Social Information Agency has been operating, which offers comprehensive training programs for fundraising specialists and contributes to the further professionalization of the sector. All these measures have jointly created favorable conditions for volunteer fundraising to shift from a rare practice into one of the key tools of civic engagement. In addition, the increasing number of online platforms, crowdfunding and charity marathons on social networks, and the development of new payment vehicles (cashback transfers, points, rounding payments and percentages in favor of the organization, and QR codes) have greatly simplified fundraising.

A change in fundraising goals should be considered. Since 2022, various types of assistance have appeared that are directly or indirectly related to the special military operation (SMO), such as targeted

⁸ Fundraising in 2024: what will change in the practice of collecting donations? Social Information Agency. Available at: <https://asi.org.ru/2024/02/26/fandrajzing-v-2024-godu-chto-menyaetsya-v-praktike-sbora-chastnyh-pozhertvovaniy> (accessed: June 22, 2025).

⁹ Endowment funds of higher education institutions. Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://www.minobrnauki.gov.ru/about/deps/dep/funds> (accessed: June 22, 2025).

assistance to Russian military personnel, volunteers participating in SMO, and their family members, assistance to victims and refugees¹⁰.

Site improvement (clean-up days, urban land improvement projects) is primarily carried out through local governments, the coverage of this area has increased 3-fold. One type of independent volunteering – support for animals (work in shelters, animal protection campaigns) – has quadrupled in volume, being in third place in the 2024 rating (see Fig. 1).

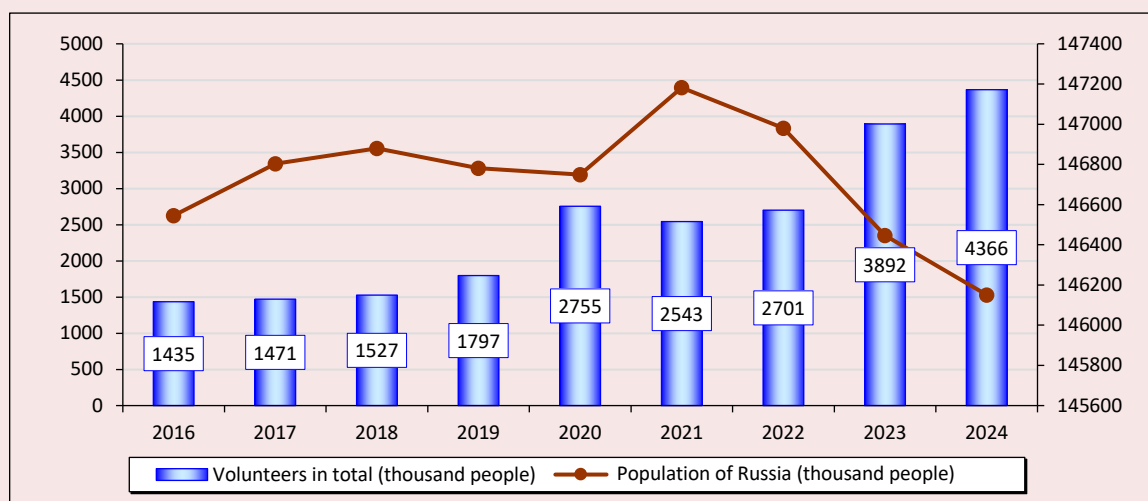
In general, the trend in 2016–2024 shows the transition from labor-intensive, offline-oriented forms of volunteerism to more flexible, indirect and digital formats. The place of traditional activities that require physical participation and long-term commitment (social and even more physically demanding work) is decreasing in the participation rating. Areas that allow a wide range of people to volunteer with a lower entry threshold come to the fore: fundraising, online activities, or emotionally attractive promotions. This corresponds to global changes in the nature of volunteerism – there is

an increase in occasional volunteering and micro-participation via the Internet. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these processes, making remote assistance and virtual platforms a common reality. This shift generates a discussion about the quality and sustainability of volunteer activities. On the one hand, the involvement of many people in at least short-term campaigns is positive, as it expands the volunteer base and the general culture of charity. On the other hand, the government's great attention to volunteerism is displacing non-profit organizations, whose activities require regularity and high qualifications.

As a result, the number of volunteers has almost tripled, from 1.435 million to 4.366 million people. This growth occurred against the background of a decrease in the population of Russia, crisis phenomena, both external and internal (Fig. 2).

The trend of volunteer activity can be divided into three periods. In the first period, from 2016 to 2019, there was stable moderate growth at an average annual rate of about 8%. In the second period, 2020–2021, there was a 53% jump in the

Figure 2. Trend of the number of volunteers and the population of Russia in 2016–2024*, thousand people



* The left axis (columns) shows the number of volunteers; the right axis (line) shows the total population of Russia. Calculated based on: primary microdata of the Rosstat Labor Force Survey for 2024.

¹⁰ Help of the distrustful. Russians donate less often to charities and more often to SMO participants. Kommersant. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6185069> (accessed: June 22, 2025).

number of volunteers due to the crisis with further stabilization. The third period, from 2022 to 2024, provided a high growth rate followed by stabilization at a new level (+44% in 2023, +12% in 2024).

These data differ from the information in the reports of the state information resources that we have provided above. Most likely, the large figures of the Ministry of Education reflect the use of information resources, primarily from state educational organizations, rather than actual volunteer activity, so they are overestimated. Nevertheless, the presence of significant positive dynamics of volunteerism in Russia is noted by almost all studies, which is confirmed not only by Rosstat data, but also by our regional data.

An analysis of the workload by type of volunteer activity shows that the largest number of man-hours spent on social work (6596 thousand hours), as well as on fundraising (3760) and site improvement (2343). In terms of the average workload per volunteer, the least common but time-consuming types are in the lead, such as search for missing people (10.6 hours per week) and

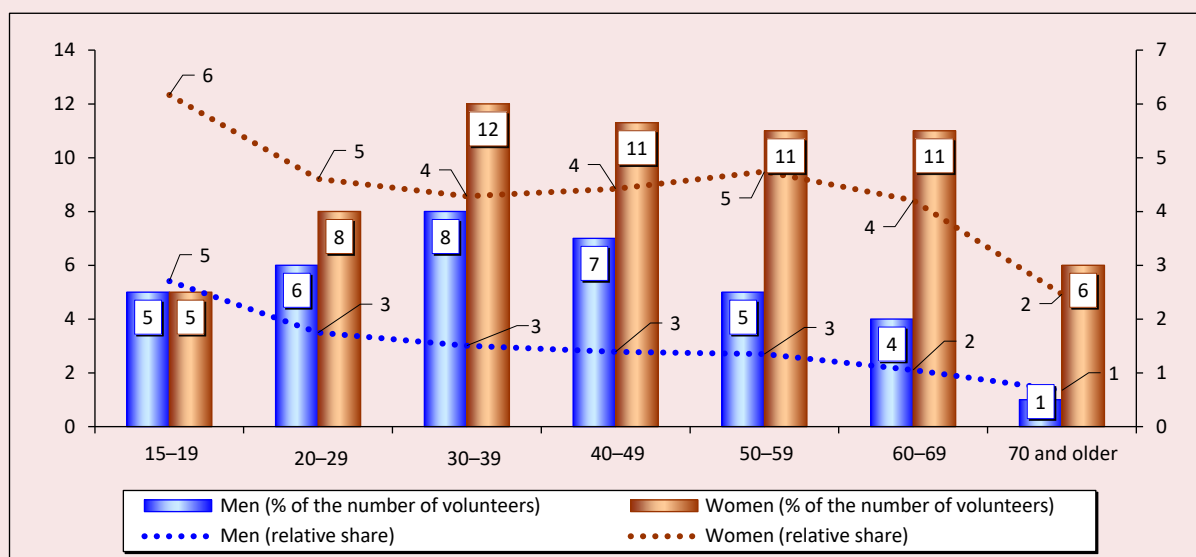
volunteering to non-profit organizations (9.9 hours per week).

We note the main effects that are important for further analysis. Firstly, there is an inverse correlation between population size and volunteer activity, confirming a significant increase in the share of volunteering. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a catalyst for civil mobilization and has led to the formation of sustainable patterns of volunteerism that require further study in the context of demographic changes. The third effect is institutional in nature and is explained by increased government support for volunteerism, especially in times of crisis, as well as the development of infrastructure for volunteer organizations.

Social resources of volunteer activity

An analysis of the demographic structure of volunteer activity showed a significant gender and age bias (*Fig. 3*). Significant differences are confirmed by statistical tests ($\chi^2 = 119.2$; $p < 0.001$). Women are not only more likely to be involved in volunteering, but also provide a longer duration of participation.

Figure 3. Structure of volunteer activity in 2024*



*The left axis (columns) is % of the total number of volunteers; the right axis (lines) is the share of volunteers in the total number of respondents, %

Calculated based on: primary microdata of the Rosstat Labor Force Survey for 2024.

The share of volunteers in Russia, according to the 2024 survey, is 4.2% among women and 2.9% among men. The gender imbalance is increasing. International comparisons show that Russia belongs to the countries with the so-called “reverse gender gap” in volunteer activities, when women spend significantly more time on volunteer work than men. For example, according to the World Values Survey, in Russia, women collectively work about 14% more volunteer hours than men, while in more gender-equal societies this difference is 0–3%¹¹. In 2024, women in Russia completed about 72% of all total man-hours of volunteer work, while men completed 28%. On average, a woman spends 8.3 hours per month volunteering, which is significantly more than a man (6.5 hours per month). The gender gap was explained by Russian sociologists by traditional gender roles, value differences, women’s greater focus on social assistance and caring for vulnerable groups, and organizational asymmetries (Ermilova, Isakova, 2021).

The distribution of forms of volunteer activity by age cohorts reflects both the life cycle of an individual and the socio-cultural characteristics of age groups. Youth cohorts (15–29 years old) are mainly involved in short-term, project-based, and initiative-based events. Volunteers aged 20–29 are more likely to participate in event management and environmental projects, and their involvement in more labor-intensive activities is also increasing. The 30–39 cohort is most involved in almost all types of volunteering. Probably, the peak of involvement is associated with a stable position in the labor market, accumulated social capital, marriage, which determine a higher level of responsibility and motivation for a systematic contribution to socially significant activities. Representatives of the 40–59 cohort volunteer relatively evenly with a focus on social assistance, but their activity is decreasing.

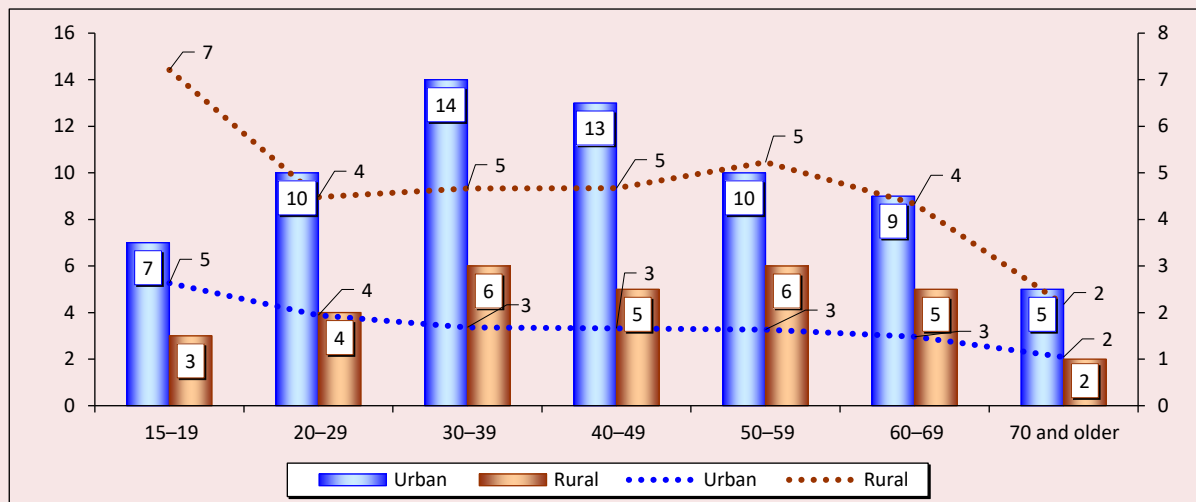
¹¹ World Values Survey Association. World Values Survey Database. Available at: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/> (accessed: May 22, 2025).

It is interesting to note the relative stability of volunteering to non-profit organizations (13–18%) throughout life. In general, the age structure of volunteerism demonstrates a natural transition from events and activism in youth to institutionalized and stable practices in adulthood, followed by a shift toward individualized and less intensive forms of participation among the elderly.

Based on the results of Rosstat microdata, we conclude that there are differences in volunteering among residents of urban and rural settlements (Fig. 4). More volunteers live in cities than in villages. However, the recalculation to the total population showed that the proportion of volunteers among the rural population is higher than among the urban population (3.3% versus 4.5%). The settlement gap is particularly significant in the youth group under 20 and the pre-retirement cohort aged 50–69. When three criteria are fixed: age, gender, and type of settlement, there is a significant excess of the proportion of volunteers among women of pre-retirement and early retirement age living in rural areas over the average labor force distribution (see the lines in Fig. 4). This conclusion differs from the usual opinion that volunteerism is more developed in cities than in villages due to better infrastructure (Kholina, 2011; Hovorostyanova, 2017; Ermilova, Isakova, 2021).

The individual workload of volunteers does not depend on the type of settlement. On average, an urban volunteer spends about 7.7 hours per month, while a rural volunteer spends 7.6 hours. Probably, when people become involved in volunteering, their personal contribution does not depend on the place of residence. In general, the structure of volunteer activity is not determined by a person’s role in the labor market, but the gender bias is still there. Men are more likely to combine social activities with their main job. Non-working women (for example, retired women or those temporarily unemployed due to caring for family members) are more prominent among female volunteers.

Figure 4. Settlement structure of volunteering in 2024*

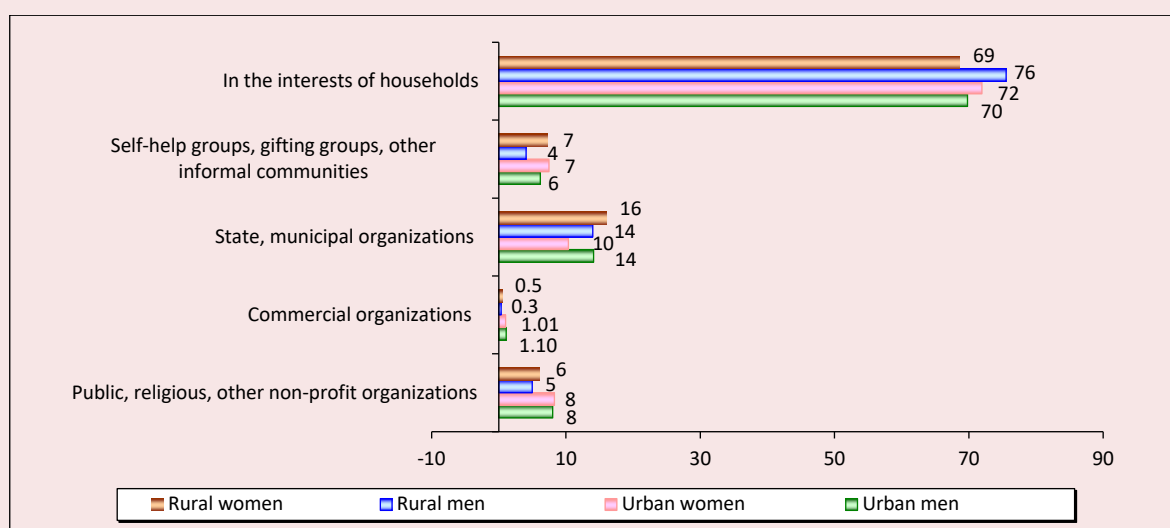


*The left axis (columns) is % of the total number of volunteers; the right axis (lines) is the share of volunteers in the total number of respondents, %

Calculated based on: primary microdata of the Rosstat Labor Force Survey for 2024.

Let us consider the structure of volunteering in the interests of specific economic units: formal (state, municipal, commercial, public organizations) and horizontal (households, gifting groups, *Fig. 5*). Formal organizations are focused on large-scale, collective actions, they take the longest time to participate, but in terms of the total share of people involved their share does not reach

Figure 5. Structure of volunteering in the interests of economic units in 2024, % of volunteers by gender and type of settlement



Calculated based on: primary microdata of the Rosstat Labor Force Survey for 2024.

20%. Informal organizations implement personal, emotionally motivated initiatives that cover about 80% of the number of gender-settlement social groups of volunteers.

Involvement patterns: cluster analysis of volunteering

To identify the structure of volunteering, we applied cluster analysis to data on the intensity of involvement in various types of volunteering. The analysis includes information on public participation in 13 types of volunteering in four categories: “weekly”, “monthly”, “several times a year/from time to time” and “once a year” (Fig. 6).

Each type of activity is presented as a four-dimensional vector reflecting the quantitative parameters of involvement. To ensure comparability of variables, all values are standardized using the Z-transform method, which eliminates the impact of differences in measurement scales. The

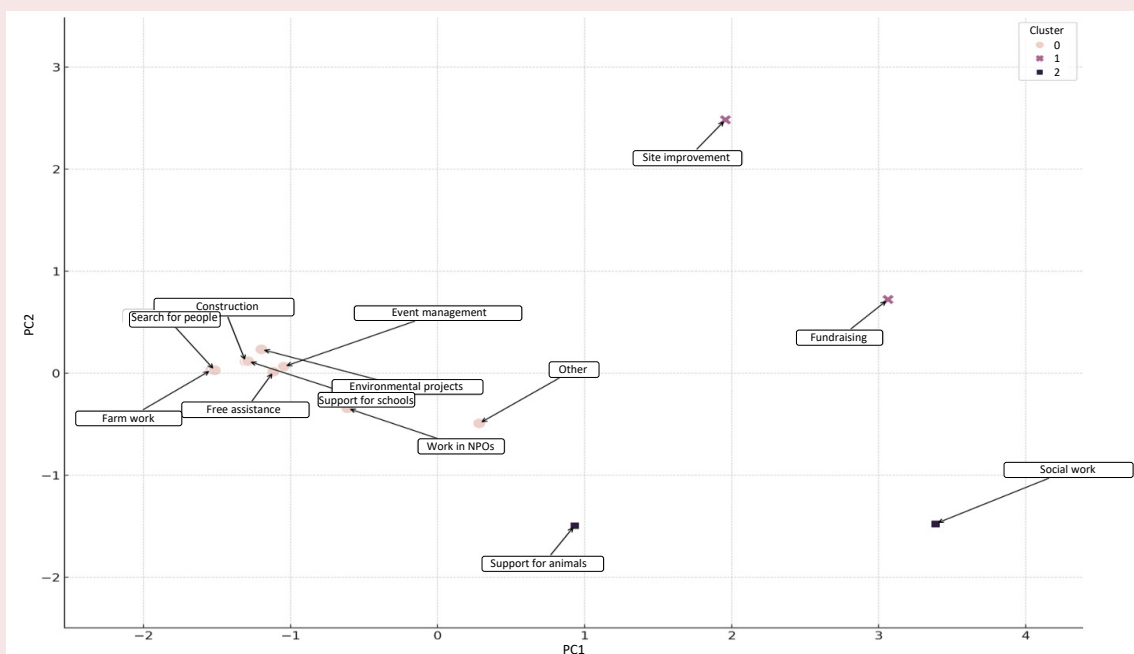
K-Means algorithm is chosen as the clustering method. The division into three clusters, providing an interpretable data structure, was empirically justified. The clustering quality was assessed using the silhouette coefficient, which was 0.59, indicating that the groups were classified quite well.

For interpretation, the principal component analysis (PCA) method is used for dimension reduction. The first two components explained the main part of the variance and allowed visualizing clusters' location in a two-dimensional space. Each point on the diagram is a separate type of activity, colored as a corresponding cluster (see Fig. 6).

As a result, three patterns of involvement were identified.

Cluster 0: occasional involvement. This includes activities with low regularity. Participation is mainly carried out “several times a year” or occasionally. It includes such types as environmental projects,

Figure 6. Cluster analysis of volunteering, 2024



Calculated based on: primary microdata of the Rosstat Labor Force Survey for 2024.

construction, farm work, event management, support for schools, search for people, volunteering to NPOs, free expert assistance (medical care, legal advice, unpaid classes, training, consulting) and more. It is characterized by infrequency and flexible schedule. A separate explanation is required for “volunteering to NPOs” where the majority of respondents answered that they do not volunteer regularly, but rather in individual projects, events, or campaigns. This does not reflect the institutional nature of NPOs, but it characterizes the respondents’ behavior – they cooperate with NPOs from time to time, not regularly.

Cluster 1: massive short-term involvement. This cluster includes work involving a large number of volunteers for a short time. Examples are site improvement and fundraising. They attract a wide range of volunteers, and are often held as actions, clean-up days, and campaigns.

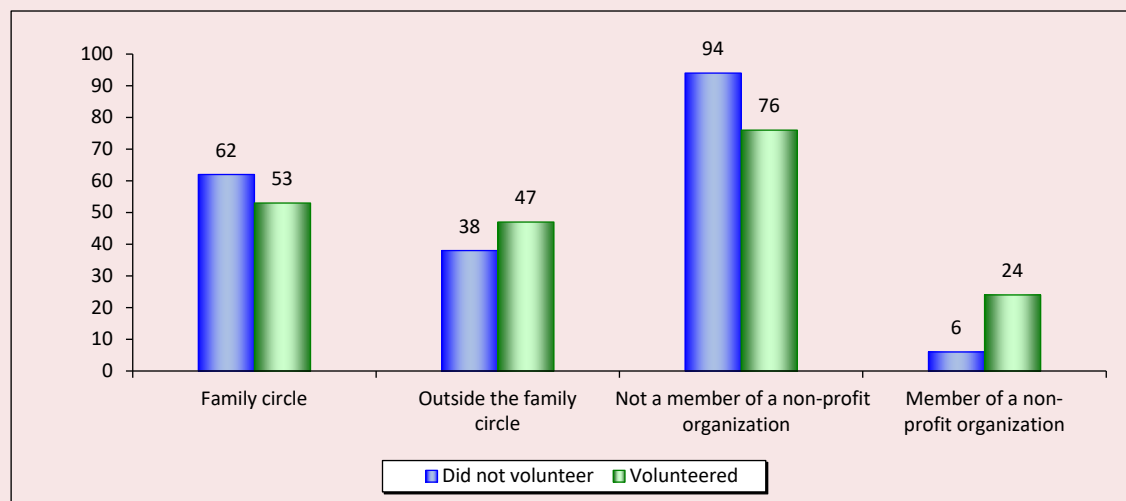
Cluster 2: regular (systemic) involvement. It includes activities characterized by high levels of weekly and monthly participation, such as social

work and support for animals. They require volunteers’ constant engagement and long-term motivation. Our results indicate that there are stable patterns of volunteering, depending on the type of activity.

Social capital as a volunteering resource

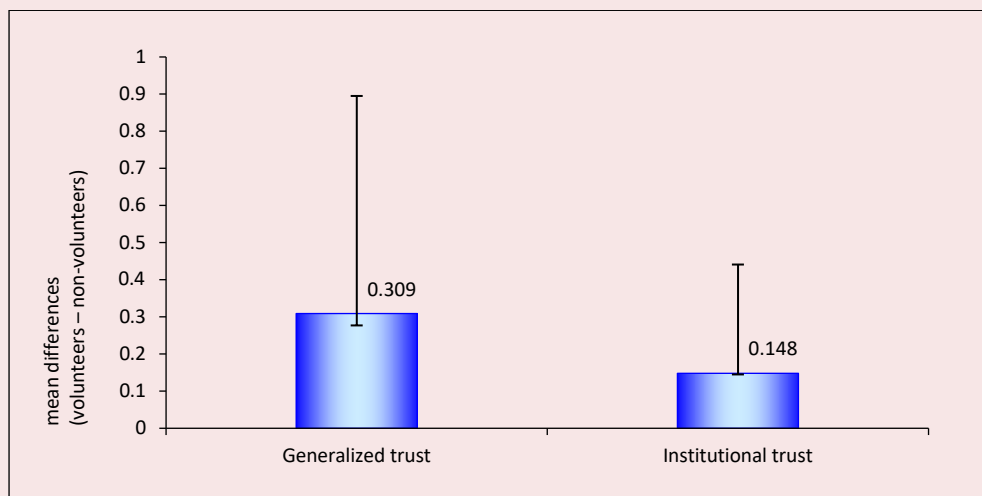
Characteristics such as age and gender have an impact on volunteering not directly, but implicitly, through the amount of available capital (Wilson, 2000). In order to assess the impact of social capital on involvement in various types of volunteer activities, we identified two groups of respondents who volunteered or did not volunteer. According to the results of a regional survey in 2023, 655 respondents volunteered over the past year, which is 45.8% of the total number of respondents. These data demonstrate a high level of participation, but unlike the labor force survey, there is no interpretation in terms of frequency and forms of volunteering, so the numbers and types of volunteering cannot be directly compared here. However, a broad range of tools allows us to study

Figure 7. Social resources of volunteering, % of the corresponding group in the column



Calculated based on: data from our sociological research.

Figure 8. Mean differences in trust (95% confidence intervals) between volunteers and non-volunteers



Calculated based on: data from our sociological research.

social resources. Next, we constructed contingency tables and evaluated mean differences by activity rate according to the χ^2 , Student and Fisher criteria. The first two groups in Figure 6 reflect the answers to the question “Where do you find mutual understanding?”: in the family (family circle), all other options (outside the family circle). We can consider these two options as a proxy-assessment of a communicative resource. Prioritizing communication outside the family circle increases the likelihood of volunteering by 9% ($\chi^2 = 10.5$; $p = 0.001$). Volunteering of respondents to public organizations reveals an organizational resource. The presence of an organizational resource for social activity increases the probability of volunteering four times ($\chi^2 = 86.3$; $p < 0.001$; Fig. 7).

Volunteering is associated with a higher level of trust. After taking into account socio-demographic factors (age, education, type of settlement), standardized mean difference in generalized trust indices is 0.309 ($p = 0.029$), while in the institutional trust it is 0.148 ($p = 0.045$). The difference is small, but statistically significant.

The conclusion is consistent with the concept of social capital: involvement in cooperative activities fosters trust in other people and is expanded by communicative resources. The most pronounced influence on institutional trust is exerted by the level of education ($p < 0.001$), which underlines the importance of educational differences in interpreting trust in institutions (Fig. 8).

Main findings and conclusion

The research revealed that in 2016–2024, though the population in Russia decreased, the number of volunteers in the country increased more than 3-fold. The largest increase was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic (+53% in 2020) and continued after 2022, underscoring the role of crises as catalysts for civil mobilization. However, this growth is not so significant in terms of personal initiatives in volunteering. The main types of volunteering are fundraising, social work and support for animals. However, according to Rosstat monitoring data, in general, no more than 3% of the population is involved in these types of activities, while their structure reflects contradictions and

constraints to volunteer. The regional study shows a much broader involvement in volunteering. All the data confirm the growth of volunteering in Russia, supported by social capital resources.

There has been a transition from traditional, labor-intensive forms (offline assistance) to digital and occasional volunteering: fundraising (increased 10-fold), and other online activities. The pandemic has accelerated the development of distance learning formats, making them part of daily practice.

External and internal volunteering resources were considered. External resources, such as government support, membership in NPOs and volunteering centers, access to information resources, membership in support structures and organizations such as trade unions, have had the strongest impact on the growth of volunteering over the past 8 years. Internal (personal) resources determine an individual's social capital. For example, generalized and institutional trust are internal resources, and their accumulation and manifestation depend on gender and age. In general, the impact of internal resources was significantly reduced compared to the external. Institutional and infrastructural gaps determine structural biases in volunteer activities.

There are gender and intergenerational biases in the Russian volunteering movement. Women and middle-aged people create the basis of the volunteer movement. Urban residents are more likely to engage in institutionalized forms of volunteering, while rural residents more often engage in local initiatives. In terms of involvement, rural residents are relatively more likely to volunteer than urban residents.

As a result of changes in volunteering, three main involvement patterns have developed. The first pattern is occasional or irregular (environmental projects, work in NPO). The second is a

massive short-term involvement (clean-up days, fundraising). The third manifests itself as regular and systematic (social assistance, support for animals).

Volunteering in the interests of formal economic units (state, municipal, commercial, public organizations) takes the longest time, but in terms of the total share of people's involvement, their share does not reach 20%. The dominance of volunteering in the interests of households highlights the need for society to develop mechanisms to support personal, occasional volunteering that does not require formal status or institutional recognition. The vanishingly small share of commercial organizations (<1%) can be considered as a potential for the development of corporate volunteering.

Let us formulate some recommendations based on the results of our analysis. It is necessary to develop flexible formats of participation, including digital platforms for involving citizens in public activities. In addition, when developing volunteer support programs, it is useful to take into account age and gender characteristics. The potential includes corporate programs based on professional skills (doctors, teachers, educational programs, civic science) (Romashkina et al., 2024).

This study opens up new questions, such as motivation of men to volunteer, evaluation of the effectiveness of various forms of involvement, which require further consideration. Limitations of the study include the incomplete representativeness of the data, predominance of government sources. There are contradictions between official statistics and research results. Volunteering in Russia demonstrates steady growth and transformation, but remains uneven along demographic and territorial lines. The development of social capital and adaptation of support institutions can enhance its potential.

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Received May 26, 2025.