

**Lucia Ludvigh Cintulová**

Vysoká škola zdravotníctva a sociálnej práce sv. Alžbety, Bratislava

ORCID: 0000-0002-6448-0547

**Pavol Beňo**

University Health and Social Science in Trnava · Department of Laboratory Medicine

ORCID: 0000-0002-0522-7277

**ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
UNDER 30 TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP  
AND VOLUNTEERING**

**POSTAWY MŁODYCH LUDZI PONIŻEJ  
30 ROKU ŻYCIA WOBEC AKTYWNEGO  
OBYWATELSTWA I WOLONTARIATU**

**ABSTRAKT**

Młodzi ludzie to pokolenie, które angażuje się w aktywne życie publiczne, dlatego przyjrzelśmy się sposobom, w jakie młodzi ludzie poniżej 30 roku życia angażują się w życie prywatne i publiczne. W badaniu w 2020 r. Wzięło udział 284 wolontariuszy, którzy zostali wolontariuszami w okresie licealnym i uniwersyteckim i kontynuują wolontariat, prowadząc regularne działania dla różnych grup docelowych. Próba składała się z 57% kobiet i 43% mężczyzn w wieku 18–30 lat. Z analizy wyników dowiedzieliśmy się, jaki jest obecny profil wolontariuszy, jakie motywy skłaniają młodych ludzi poniżej 30 roku życia do podjęcia wolontariatu. Przeanalizowaliśmy

również charakterystykę wolontariuszy i ich aktywne obywatelstwo. Strategia na rzecz młodzieży Republiki Słowackiej na lata 2014–2020 określa strategiczne cele polityczne dotyczące młodzieży, z których jednym jest wolontariat. Obecnie na wolontariat znaczący wpływ mają tendencje demograficzne związane ze starzeniem się społeczeństwa i modernizacją lub cyfryzacją.

**Słowa kluczowe:** młode pokolenie. Zgłaszanie się na ochotnika. Aktywne obywatelstwo.

### ABSTRACT

Young people are a generation that engages in active public life, so we have explored ways in which young people under 30 are involved in private and public life. Research study from 2020 involved 284 people who became volunteers during high school and university and continue to volunteer and carry out regular activities for different target groups. The sample consisted of 57% of women and 43% of men at age of 18–30. From the analysis of the results, we found out what the current profile of volunteers is, which motives encourage young people under 30 to volunteer work. We also analysed the character profile of volunteers and their active citizenship. The Slovak Republic's Youth Strategy for 2014–2020 sets out the strategic objectives of youth policy, one of which is volunteering. At present, volunteering is strongly influenced by demographic trends related to population aging and modernization or digitalization.

**Key words:** Young generation. Volunteering. Active citizenship.

### INTRODUCTION

The vision of the Institute for Active Citizenship is the civil society in which it is not necessary to explain the importance of active citizenship, and needless to say that by volunteering we show solidarity with those who need it more than we do. Idealistically, we could say that being a citizen is a highly political and ethical responsibility.

Westheimer and Kahne [2004] identified three models of citizenship:

- 1) “Personally responsible citizen” is the one who is educated mainly in the field of individual rights and obligations (for example, citizen – voter),

- 2) The “citizen-participant” is the one who has knowledge of participatory structures and rights, actively uses opportunities to participate in existing structures, including the planning and provision of services (for example, initiating and signing petitions);
- 3) A “justice-oriented citizen” is the one who is educated in collective rights, has a high level of political and social responsibility, addresses issues of social justice and equality, questions power relations, promotes social solidarity and social justice, both at local level and outside it, taking into account the global context [Uličná 2018].

## 1. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING

Many young people in Slovakia are involved in volunteering. Volunteering is one of the forms of non-formal education and provides evidence for the positive impact of youth work. It has a direct impact on the formation of young people and their values, on increasing their interest in the environment and society in which they live. Volunteering also promotes active citizenship [Brozmanová Gregorová et al., 2016].

The legitimacy of volunteering is expressed in terms of priorities, which include the integration of disadvantaged groups and the elimination of social exclusion. From this point of view, volunteering acquires a European dimension precisely by enabling the involvement of broad groups in various areas of social life and thus participating in the solution of social issues. The importance of volunteering in society is also declared by the EC, which declared 2011 the European Year of Volunteering in order to strengthen its value in the euro area [Koporec, Marošiová et al., 2005].

The Slovak Republic’s Youth Strategy for 2014–2020 sets out strategic policy objectives in relation to youth, one of which is volunteering being common in European countries, but not a common part of people’s

lives. Volunteering is currently significantly influenced by demographic trends related to the aging of the population and modernization, which is reflected in the so-called new styles of volunteering, which are typical especially for younger age categories [Brozmanová Gregorová 2018].

Active citizenship is a tool directly related to volunteering. If young people are led to active citizenship, volunteering will become a natural part of their lives, their personal high value will change, and the reasons why they will become volunteers from self-oriented to social development will change. During volunteering, young people learn new skills, develop their own talents, but are also aware of the positive effects on improving conditions in society and improving the quality of life of target groups, which benefit volunteering.

An important tool for indirect public support of voluntary programs of organizations is the allocation of a two percent income tax of natural and legal persons, which is regulated by Act no. 595/2003 Coll. on income taxes valid in 2012, if a person has worked at least 40 hours as a volunteer in the previous calendar year, it is possible to remit 3 percent of income tax for trademarks.

The Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations, which unites volunteer centres and organizations working with volunteers in Slovakia, played a key role in supporting the development of the infrastructure of volunteering and youth in the period under review. The volunteer service has also become a tool to help develop the skills of the at-risk group of the unemployed compared to the graduate internship. A higher financial contribution is provided here to increase the motivation of the job seekers to develop practical skills. Pursuant to the Employment Services Act 5/2004 Coll. § 52a.

Volunteering work has its value, which is also confirmed by the grant schemes of Norwegian funds or departmental subsidies, under which applicants can apply for voluntary work in the area of co-financing as a value of work in the amount of 2.45 euros per hour. Volun-

teering is a multidimensional phenomenon and is an important part of society's life and development. The context of volunteering has changed significantly in recent years. Social trends related to the modernization of society, such as globalization, technological development, demographic change, changes in civil society, the rise of postmodern values and changes in family and work, are changing people's attitudes towards volunteering. However, research shows that these trends are not automatically reflected in the decline in human participation, but in changes in the so-called volunteering patterns. New trends produce new patterns of volunteering.

In case of active citizenship and volunteering, the largest space for the involvement is provided by non-governmental organizations and church organizations, followed by municipalities, cities and, last but not least, state administration organizations [Radková 2011]. Most volunteers work in the field of social services for various target groups, in the field of the environment and in the field of art and culture, and religion is also an important indicator [Radková 2004].

## 2 METHODS

At present, new possibilities have opened up for young people, which often contradict each other, as it is often the dilemma of orientation towards a profession or family [Ondrejkoš, Majerčíková 2006] or orientation towards helping others. For this reason, it is necessary to know the motives of volunteers so that we can properly allocate the recruitment of volunteers. The aim of the research was to get a picture of volunteering in Slovakia and its selected dimensions and to analyse these findings in the context of current trends in volunteering in relation to understanding the motivation of volunteers.

We used a questionnaire of our own provenance to collect empirical data. In creating the questionnaire, we based on the methodology of

research on volunteering, which was conducted in Slovakia and abroad in recent years, and the questionnaire examined the following dimensions: active citizenship, motivation to volunteer, trends in volunteering, characteristics of volunteers.

The sample consisted of 284 volunteers who became volunteers during high school and university and continue to volunteer, performing regular activities for various target groups. The sample consisted of 57% women and 43% men aged 18–30, involved in volunteering in 2019–2020.

### 3. RESULTS

We mapped the situation of volunteering in Slovakia in 2019–2020 on the basis of detailed characteristics and demographic characteristics of volunteers who participated in the research, from which we abstracted the profile of current volunteers, which we present below.

#### 4. PROFILE OF CURRENT VOLUNTEERS

**Education.** It was confirmed by the relationship between volunteering and education, that the higher the education people have, the higher their involvement in volunteering ( $p = 0.036$ ). Volunteers in secondary schools have been shown to be unstable in volunteering activities, which they formally prefer over formal ones, compared to university students, who are characterized by alternating areas of volunteering with a longer engagement period of more than 12 months.

**Gender.** There is a significant difference in the level of involvement in volunteering activities ( $p = 0.040$ ), with the female gender being more involved in long-term volunteering and the male gender preferring short-term volunteering for up to 12 months. If a person decides to become a volunteer, gender is not decisive in the decision-making process, the motivating factor and the amount of free time to carry out

these activities are decisive. Respondents under the age of 30 confirmed that lack of free time is the biggest obstacle to volunteering, they expressed the feeling that they do not have enough time to perform all tasks and responsibilities and then are not interested in spending the rest of their activities, preferring hobby activities.

**Faith.** Faith has been shown to be a significant factor ( $p = 0.027$ ) in becoming a volunteer, but we are currently seeing a decline in the number of young people who actively practice faith. On the other hand, research has shown that if young people were more guided to an active faith, their prosocial values would increase, which is a prerequisite for greater involvement in volunteering and overall in building active citizenship.

If young people are members of a youth or church organization, their level of involvement is much higher compared to young people who come from the school environment without membership of an organization ( $p = 0.004$ ).

**Family background.** The family alone does not have a significant effect on the motivation to volunteer ( $p = 0.354$ ). The volunteers confirmed that they decided to become volunteers of their own free will and not based on the example of family members. They consider the peer environment in which they socialize ( $p = 0.028$ ), the school environment ( $p = 0.159$ ) and the family environment ( $p = 0.271$ ) to be the determining factor.

**Status.** A strong relationship between the level of involvement in volunteering and social status was confirmed ( $p = 0.002$ ). Young people under 20–25 (41%) are more likely to volunteer compared to young people over 26 (32%). People over the age of 30 (28%) volunteer only if they do not have family responsibilities and do not raise children. It has been confirmed that volunteering also involves people who have a permanent job, the number of hours of volunteering is higher compared to volunteers who have a family, their volunteering is more focused on

helping other families, organizing children's events or engaging in environmental projects and local projects, such as the revitalization of greenery or the repair of children's playgrounds. The link between volunteering and the economic position has been confirmed, with university students, workers and retired people showing the highest participation rates ( $p = 0.014$ ), while the unemployed and high school students are the least involved ( $p = 0.137$ ).

**Age.** In terms of age, it turned out that the group aged 18–25 (44%) is the most involved in volunteering, in the medium rate it is people aged 26–30 years (29%) and to a lesser extent people over 35 are involved in volunteering. years (27%). There is a significant relationship between willingness to volunteer and age ( $p = 0.014$ ).

**Area of volunteering.** Areas of preferred volunteering change with age ( $p = 0.033$ ). Younger age groups focus on the environment, culture and the arts, the IT sector, youth and education; older people tend to focus on social, health, counselling and protection.

**Value system.** The values that a person prefers influence the reasons why a person becomes a volunteer ( $p = 0.015$ ), while it turned out that young people under 30 prefer materialism over prosocial values and thus orient their lifestyle, which is dominated by the pursuit of goals, to secure oneself and then help others, which degrades society and also degrades the motives to provide help to others selflessly.

**Motivation.** There is a different motivation to volunteer based on education, gender, religion and economic status ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the long run, volunteering is a real benefit for young people. Experience from volunteering activities is extremely valued in the admission process to foreign universities, in a job interview in multinational corporations, in which corporate volunteering is a common part, in terms of career growth or prevention of pathological phenomena. One of the motivating factors is that volunteering will show you reality from a different perspective.



## ???ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING

Many young people in Slovakia are involved in volunteering. Volunteering is one of the forms of non-formal education and provides evidence of the positive impact of youth work. It has a direct impact on the formation of young people and their values, on increasing their interest in the environment and society in which they live. Volunteering also promotes active citizenship.

In the sample, we found out what importance they attach to volunteering and what active citizenship means to them. In terms of gender, we noted the differences expressed in Table 1.

Table 1 Value of active citizenship and volunteering (%)

<b>What active citizenship means for me</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Implementation of human rights	15,8	19,6
Change to do own ideas and projects	28,5	30,4
Active involvement of nonformal groups	33,1	26,7
Development of project on community level	26,6	32,8
The desire for the change and the path to change	30,2	25,3
What volunteering brings to me		
Presentation of the inherent potential for the good of others	41,2	37,4
Development of own human capital	44,6	51,7
Support for the development of a social network	36,8	42,3
Active use of resources	25,9	27,1
Helping others and ethical values	17,5	11,8
Giving and retrieving	46,7	37,3

Source: own research

Active citizenship is assessed by young people under the age of 30 as an opportunity to engage in informal groups in 33.1% of women and 26.7% of men. Men tend to evaluate active citizenship as a way to develop community projects under the auspices of young people, of which 32.8% are men and 26.6% women. More than 31% said that active citi-

zenship allows them to make changes in society, or to engage in activities that can bring positive change for community life.

In the first place, the respondents stated that volunteering means for them the possibility of their own development (52.4%) and the presentation of their own potential for a higher goal (39.6%). Volunteering for young people under 30 means giving and receiving, which more than 47% of respondents said, with giving meaning sharing their own experiences, attitudes and help, and accepting young people understand opportunities for self-development, social networking and personal development support.

Table 2 shows the differences in the preference for forms of volunteering between men and women, with no significant differences in terms of gender, but differences in the way volunteering is carried out. It turned out that young people under the age of 30 prefer local volunteering to corporate volunteering, it is formally in the background and the non-profit sector is preferred over public administration or the business sector.

Table 2 Forms of volunteering

<b>Volunteering</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>
Short-term / long-term	14 : 31	35 : 21
Formal / Nonformal	9 : 35	10 : 30
Individual / Group	58 : 3	56 : 2
Non-profit sector / Private sector	61 : 13	64 : 8
Private sector / Public sector	7 : 22	10 : 24
Domestic / Foreign	75 : 8	70 : 15
Local / Corporate volunteering	13 : 2	16 : 3
Total	100%	100%

Source: Own research

Knowing the motivation of young people to volunteer is key to the development of volunteering in the future, as the value system changes

as a result of globalization, changes in market mechanisms and digitalisation, and preferences are different.

For young people under 30, the development of skills for employment and personal development is a priority, as Generation Z is fully aware that without full employment they cannot meet their own needs, so they often use volunteering as a tool to develop the necessary skills not only for life but also for the market. work. A good feeling of helping others, spiritual values or a new view of reality are secondary motives.

Table 3 Motivation to volunteering

<b>Motivation factors</b>	<b>P</b>
Development of skills for employment	0,027
Personal development and soft skills development	0,006
A sense of usefulness and a sense of responsibility	0,035
Feeling good about helping target groups	0,127
A new look at reality	0,089
Fulfilling spiritual needs and meaningfulness	0,134
Meaningful leisure time	0,141
Building new friendships	0,112

Volunteers admit that this activity brings them satisfaction, they see in it a meaning, a result that contributes to improving the situation of others. They acquire a sense of usefulness, which affects their self-confidence and overall satisfaction.

Young people under the age of 30 consider career development in the first place ( $p = 0.033$ ) and personal development ( $p = 0.041$ ) as the most important benefits. Rather, young people prefer non-formal education and experiential learning, in which they can experience real projects, their own work and positive feelings about a job well done, which is not provided by formal volunteering ( $p = 0.048$ ). Table 4 presents the benefits of volunteering according to the importance given to them by

the respondents themselves. Lastly, values were given as prevention of burnout syndrome, if a person is experiencing a difficult life situation, helping others can give them a sense of usefulness that they may have lost ( $p = 0.075$ ).

Table 4 Benefits of volunteering

<b>Concrete benefits</b>	<b>P</b>
Personal development - self-confidence, value system, a source of further motivation and a sense of outcome;	0,041
Career development - acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes are developing	0,033
Social development - increasing social status, prestige, appreciation	0,114
Experiential learning and non-formal education – acquiring new skills, critical thinking	0,048
Burnout prevention and support of psycho-hygiene	0,075
A different view of problems and life situations	0,146
A networking tool between people and organizations	0,132
Similarity of human resources, social capital and capacities for the development of society	0,159

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Volunteering is not a modern phenomenon, but volunteering is becoming a high value in society, we know from the past several activities aimed at helping the poor and needy, which resembled today's form of volunteering, although they are still changing today. Today, one can observe the orientation of motivational factors towards education, personal growth or selfless help for others, for whom people decide to become volunteers. People of different ages are involved in volunteering, while those who do not have family and career commitments have a greater precondition for longer-term volunteering. On the other hand, corporate volunteering is becoming a rising trend, as evidenced by traditional

corporate volunteering programs under the auspices of the Pontis Foundation or the Leaf program or other non-profit organizations.

In terms of assessing forms of volunteering, research has found that long-term volunteering predominates in women compared to men, who prefer occasional to short-term involvement in volunteering. The results of the research did not show differences between men and women ( $p = 0.215$ ), but differences were recorded in the way volunteer work was carried out.

From the research we can summarize the following important findings:

- Long-term volunteering is preferred by women over men, although overlap in both groups is not excluded;
- For both men and women, informal volunteering is preferred over formal volunteering;
- Volunteering is implemented as an individual form of assistance and civic engagement;
- Within volunteering, the non-profit sector is significantly preferred over volunteering in public administration, for example also in accordance with Act no. 5/2004 on employment services;
- The share of foreign volunteering is relatively low on average 9%;
- Young people prefer local volunteer projects to corporate volunteering.

Volunteering takes various forms. It is deeply influenced by the history, politics, culture and religion of the region in which it develops, and therefore there are also various views on its definition [Radková 2013].

## CONCLUSION

The importance of volunteering is declared not only by the benefits it brings to users and providers of volunteering, but it undoubtedly has a positive impact on the development of social capital in society and

human capital building in the non-profit sector, which is currently most tested by socio-economic problems.

Research has reaffirmed that volunteering in the non-profit sector is more fully fledged than in other sectors, and that active citizenship encourages young people not to remain passive but to take an interest in what is happening around them and change the conditions in their own forces, responsibilities and skills. social environment.

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