

## **Participation of Older Europeans in Volunteer Work**

Marcel Erlinghagen and Karsten Hank

**71-2005**

May 2005

# Participation of Older Europeans in Volunteer Work

*Marcel Erlinghagen<sup>a</sup> and Karsten Hank<sup>b</sup>*

09 May 2005

**Abstract:** Today's discussion about the growing 'burden of ageing' must not neglect the substantial productive potential of the elderly population. Using micro-data from the new 'Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe' (SHARE), we explore cross-national patterns of volunteering and the relationship between selected socio-demographic characteristics and participation in voluntary work among the population aged 50 and older in 10 countries. Our analysis reveals a clear spatial pattern of volunteering (with higher participation rates in Northern Europe and lower ones in the Mediterranean countries) and shows that particularly age, education, health, and involvement in other social activities matter greatly for the individual's propensity to engage in volunteer work. Our conclusions stress the need to maintain a contextual perspective in future research on volunteering, accounting for the role of institutions and culture, and support policies and programs designed to encourage elder citizens to make use of their productive potential – for the benefit of themselves and society.

**Keywords:** volunteering, productive ageing, Europe, cross-national analysis, SHARE

---

<sup>a</sup> Institut Arbeit und Technik, Gelsenkirchen, and University of Bochum. *Email:* erlinghagen@iatge.de.

<sup>b</sup> Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Aging, University of Mannheim. *Email:* hank@mea.uni-mannheim.de.

## 1. Introduction

People's active life-expectancy is increasing steadily and an ever-growing share of workers is leaving the labour force early (e.g., Kohli et al. 1991; Wise 1997). As a result, today's elderly spend significantly more time in retirement than previous generations. Since, in parallel, birth rates have declined dramatically, the social and economic consequences of the growing 'burden of ageing' – which is to be carried by shrinking younger generations – are discussed intensively (e.g., Börsch-Supan 2004; National Research Council 2001). What must not be forgotten, though, is the substantial productive potential of the older population (e.g., Morrow-Howell et al. 2001; O'Reilly & Caro 1994). Herzog & Morgan (1992: 196) conclude that "unlike labor force indicators, the unpaid productive activities [...] show much less decrease by age. This finding documents that many older people are willing and able to stay involved in productive ways." From this perspective, the social costs of widespread early retirement, for example, might be lower than expected, since it allows individuals to engage more in non-market production. While this can take many different forms (e.g., Caro & Bass 1995b; Erlinghagen 2000), the present paper focuses on volunteer work, which can be defined as "unpaid work provided to parties to whom the worker owes no contractual, familial, or friendship obligations" (Wilson & Musick, 1997: 694).

Next to a growing literature on volunteering in general (for reviews see D.H. Smith 1994; Wilson 2000), there is a particular interest in this kind of activity with regard to the participation of older people (e.g., Caro & Bass 1995a; Choi 2003; Mutchler et al. 2003). Although it has been frequently suggested that volunteering reaches its peak in middle age, recent research provides evidence that the frequently observed decline in voluntary association memberships among elders is in fact less pronounced than indicated by previous analyses and can largely be attributed to differences in compositional characteristics between the older and other age groups (Cutler & Hendricks 2000). Still, many studies show that retirement does not

necessarily result in higher participation rates, as one might expect from continuity or role theories, for example (e.g., D.B. Smith 2004; see also Mutchler et al. 2003: 1271f.). However, “[w]hen it comes to hours of volunteering [...] older men and women actually spend more time than do their younger counterparts, even when employment status is controlled” (Gallagher 1994: 576), suggesting that older volunteers are more highly committed than other age-groups. This is attributed to the fact that volunteering should be particularly useful for older people (cf. Van Willigen 2000). Its productive nature is said to have a positive effect on various dimensions of well-being, such as life-satisfaction or health (e.g., Morrow-Howell et al. 2003; Thoits & Hewitt 2001). As far as factors determining participation in volunteer activities are concerned, the literature shows that “[o]lder volunteers are more likely than nonvolunteers to have a higher socioeconomic status, to be married, to have a religious affiliation, to be in paid work, to evaluate their health highly, to have larger social networks, and to have a past history of volunteering” (Warburton et al. 2001: 588; see also Choi 2003).

Volunteerism, though, must not be seen in isolation of the broader societal context in which it takes place: “as a cultural and economic phenomenon, volunteering is part of the way societies are organized, how they allocate social responsibilities, and how much engagement and participation they expect from citizens.” (Anheier & Salamon 1999: 43) However, cross-nationally comparable data on participation in volunteer work are scarce. Results from the European Value Survey and the Eurovol-Study, for example, indicate that on average about 28 percent of Europe’s population are engaged in some kind of volunteering within a one year period (reported in Anheier & Salamon 1999: 53; Anheier & Toepler 2002: 33). Substantial variation between countries is observed, in which, for example, the Netherlands and Sweden hold the top ranks, Germany takes a middle position, whereas Italy and particularly Spain exhibit below-average levels of participation (see also Anheier & Salamon 1999: 58; Salamon & Sokolowski 2001). These findings are largely confirmed by recent studies examining voluntary association

membership in a comparative perspective (e.g., Curtis et al. 2001: 792; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001: 808f.).

Based on some 22,000 personal interviews from the new ‘Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe’, this paper investigates whether similar cross-national patterns of volunteering can be observed when the population aged 50 and over is considered. In addition, we study the relationship between selected socio-demographic characteristics and participation in voluntary work, providing detailed descriptive statistics and estimating multivariate logistic models. Our conclusions stress the need to maintain a contextual perspective in future analyses of volunteering, and support policies and programs designed to encourage older citizens to make use of their productive potential – for the benefit of themselves and society.

## **2. Data and variables**

*Data source.* The data for our study are drawn from the first public release version of the 2004 ‘Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe’ (SHARE; for an overview see Börsch-Supan et al. 2005). SHARE is the first data set to combine extensive cross-national information on socio-economics status, health, and family relationships of Europe’s elder population. The data contain information on some 22,000 individuals aged 50 and older from 15,000 households in 10 countries (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Spain, and Greece – further data are currently being collected in Belgium and Israel); see *Table 1* for details. Probability samples have been drawn in each participating country; the average household response rate is 55 %, ranging from 38 % in Switzerland to 69 % in France (a thorough description of methodological issues is contained in Börsch-Supan & Jürges 2005).

*Dependent variable:* While many studies focus on membership in voluntary associations (e.g., Cutler & Hendricks 2000; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001), we

exploit information on whether the respondent has been actively engaged in voluntary or charity work during the month before the interview. Although membership is highly correlated with activity, the former measure might lead to an overestimation of actual engagement, particularly if less ‘voluntary’ memberships (e.g., in churches or unions) are included (cf. Curtis et al. 1992). Since volunteer work is often performed on a rather irregular basis and other studies’ retrospective questions regarding participation cover a longer period of time (e.g. the last year), our figures are even more likely to give a very conservative estimate of the prevalence of volunteering in the SHARE countries.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, we cannot distinguish different kinds of voluntary work (e.g. coaching at a sports club, distributing food or clothes, serving in committees or boards), nor do we know how many hours a respondent has volunteered. Thus, a simple binary indicator of volunteering (including charity work) is used for the analysis, complemented by information on the frequency of engagement (‘almost daily’, ‘almost every week’, ‘less often’) and the individual’s motivation to do so.

*Explanatory variables.* We consider a broad set of covariates in our analysis, namely:

- binary indicators of other social activities, such as informal help or care and participation in activities of an organisation (e.g. a sports club, church, or political party), in the last month,
- binary indicators of sex, age (three categories), and partnership status,
- binary indicators of education (three categories based on the International Standard Classification of Educational Degrees) and current employment status (three categories), and

---

<sup>1</sup> Anheier & Salamon (1999: 53) report figures according to which only two out of three volunteers engage at least once a month. If this ratio would hold for the SHARE population, too, our study would underestimate annual participation rates by about one third.

- binary indicators of current self-perceived health (based on a scale ranging from ‘very good’ to ‘very bad’), self-reported chronic diseases, and depression symptoms in the last month (based on the Euro-D scale; cf. Prince et al. 1999).

[Table 1 about here]

### 3. Empirical findings

#### 3.1 Descriptive findings

*Volunteering – levels, frequency, motivations* (see *Table 2* for details): With regard to levels of volunteering, the SHARE countries may be divided into three groups (*Figure 1*). First, the Mediterranean ‘low participation’ countries, where 7 percent of the Italian and only 2-3 percent of the Greek and Spanish respondents engaged in volunteer work during the preceding month. Secondly, with 9-14 percent volunteers in the population 50+, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria exhibit medium activity levels. The remaining ‘high participation’ countries are, thirdly, Sweden and Denmark (where 17 percent report to have volunteered) and the Netherlands with almost 21 percent volunteers in the older population.

[Figure 1 about here]

Among those who report to have volunteered in the last month, almost one fifth (18 percent) has done so almost daily, nearly half of the volunteers have been engaged almost every week (45 percent), and slightly more than one third has worked less often (37 percent). There appears to be no clear correlation between the overall level of volunteering in a country and the frequency of engagement. Everywhere, the two most frequently mentioned motivations to volunteer are the desire to contribute something useful (70 percent) and the joy derived from volunteering (61 percent). Beyond the social value of their activity, the majority of volunteers apparently expects an additional, non-monetary personal gain.

*Other social activities and volunteering* (see Table 3 for details): The spatial pattern of the provision of informal help or care<sup>2</sup> is very similar to the one observed for volunteering. On an overall higher level – 20 percent of the respondents report to have helped in the last month – we find substantially lower activity rates in the Mediterranean countries (from 7 percent in Spain to 17 percent in Greece) than in the Nordic countries (34 percent in Denmark and 40 percent in Sweden), for example. Moreover, 27 percent of the SHARE sample participated in activities of an organisation. Despite significant cross-national variation, there is no clear spatial pattern of participation, though. While, for example, only 12-19 percent of Italians and Spaniards took part in some kind of activity, almost half of the Greek and Swiss respondents (45-50 percent) were involved in an organisation's activities.

With regard to the relationship between volunteering and other social activities, it is interesting to note that in all countries the share of volunteers among those who have helped or cared is between 1.4 (Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands) and more than two times (Italy, Greece) higher than in the general population. When turning to participation in organized activities, the respective factors are in most cases even somewhat larger. The association suggested here is also reflected in similarly higher shares of helpers and carers (participants, respectively) among those who report to have volunteered.

*Demographic characteristics of volunteers* (see Table 4 for details): Gender differences in volunteering are generally small (in the order of 2 percentage points on average). While there is some tendency of men to be more active than women (more significantly so in Sweden and France), there are also exceptions like the Netherlands and Switzerland, where slightly higher shares of women engage in voluntary work. Variations in volunteering by partnership status are somewhat larger, but still small (i.e.

---

<sup>2</sup> The focus here is on helping friends or neighbours. Family support is covered in detail elsewhere in the SHARE interview (see Attias-Donfut et al. 2005).



not exceeding 4 percentage points), with some indication of a greater engagement among those who live with a partner versus those living alone.

The age gradient of volunteer activity among the elderly is more pronounced, showing remarkable cross-country differences if the two ‘younger’ age groups are compared. While the share of Swiss, Austrian, and Italian volunteers aged 65 to 74 is 4-6 percentage points lower than the respective portion in the age group 50 to 64, the reverse is true in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and France, i.e. in these countries volunteering even increases (by about 3 percentage points) in the middle age category. However, when respondents age 75 or older are considered, activity rates drop by at least one third everywhere (in the Netherlands, starting from a very high level, even by two thirds), to an average of 5 percent. Still, in the Nordic countries as much as 12-13 percent of the population 75+ continue to be engaged in voluntary work – which is more than the SHARE average across all age groups.

*Education and employment status of volunteers* (see Table 5 for details): The share of volunteers varies substantially between educational groups. Participation rates generally increase by 5 percentage points – in Italy even by more than 7 percentage points – when respondents with a low degree (6 percent) are compared to those with a medium degree (11 percent). The share of volunteers increases to an average of 18 percent, i.e. by another 7-8 percentage points, when the highest educational group is considered; this increase is less pronounced in Switzerland and Austria (plus 3.5 percentage points).

In most countries, the share of volunteers differs only moderately between working, retired, and other non-working respondents (in the order of 2-3 percentage points). In Austria and Switzerland, though, rates of volunteering are up to 5 percentage points (i.e. about one third) lower among retirees than among those who are engaged in market work. In Switzerland an exceptionally high share of 23 percent in the heterogeneous group of ‘other non-working’ report to have been active during the last month, which is more than double the share of volunteers among Swiss retirees.

*Health and volunteering* (see *Table 6* for details): Turning to volunteer work and health, we find much lower activity rates among those who perceive their current health status as fair or worse (about 6 percent), compared to those who report a good or better health condition (12 percent). This negative association – which, in relative terms, seems to be somewhat less pronounced in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands – is corroborated by our Euro-D mental health indicator. In almost all countries, the share of volunteers among respondents who showed symptoms of depression in the last month is 4-5 percentage points lower than among those who were not bothered by such problems. A similar, though weaker, relationship seems to exist between volunteering and chronic physical health problems. With regard to causality, it is important to keep in mind that “[v]olunteering improves health, but it is also most likely that healthier people are more likely to volunteer. Good health is preserved by volunteering; it keeps health volunteers healthy.” (Wilson 2000: 232)

[Tables 2 – 6 about here]

### *3.2 Multivariate results*

A multivariate logistic regression confirms the relevance of the socio-demographic characteristics discussed above for the individual’s propensity to engage in volunteer work (see *Table 7*, Model 1, for details). Particularly if the respondent is more than 75 years old, if he or she is working, or perceives his or her health as relatively poor, the probability of volunteering decreases significantly. Factors that are positively related to voluntary work are a higher education, a steady partnership, and one’s engagement in other social activities.

The coefficients of these ‘Model 1’ variables remain basically unchanged, when a set of country indicators – referring to clusters of countries with similar levels of volunteering – is added to the regression. Compared to the previous model, Model 2 exhibits a significantly better fit and underlines the necessity to account for the macro-level context in which the individual decides whether to volunteer. Calculating marginal

effects (not displayed in *Table 7*) shows that – compared to respondents living in Germany, France, Switzerland, or Austria – the Mediterranean population 50+ is 5 percentage points less likely to have volunteered in the last month, while Swedish, Danish, and Dutch respondents are 5 percentage points more likely to have been engaged.

Eventually, we estimated interaction models between the three ‘country cluster’ dummy variables introduced above and the most relevant individual characteristics (Models 5-10). The results provide further evidence of the important role of the country context for older people’s propensity to engage in voluntary work (see *Table 8* for details). For example, Mediterranean respondents younger than age 75 are less likely to volunteer than older individuals in ‘medium participation’ countries – while men and women aged 75+ in Sweden, Denmark, or the Netherlands exhibit an even higher propensity to volunteer than their younger counterparts in Germany, France, Switzerland, or Austria. The suggested ‘context effect’ is similarly obvious when interactions with education, other activities, and health are considered.

[Tables 7 – 8 about here]

#### **4. Discussion**

Our analysis of the SHARE data shows that cross-national patterns of volunteering observed for the general population in Europe – with higher participation rates in Northern Europe and substantially lower ones in the Mediterranean countries – largely persist when the older population is considered. This is consistent with findings indicating that an individual’s previous engagement in volunteering is a good predictor of his or her current activity (e.g., Mutchler et al. 2003); thus, older volunteers might just be “volunteers who have aged” (Gallagher 1994: 569). However, while this may help to understand the persistence of the observed spatial pattern across age groups, it does not explain its existence or shape.

When controlling for socio-demographic characteristics in a multivariate logistic regression, there is no indication that the observed between-country differences are due to a different distribution (i.e., population composition) or due to country-specific effects of relevant individual characteristics, such as age or health. Our results rather suggest that the broader social, institutional, and cultural background matters greatly for private voluntary engagement. While this particular macro-micro relationship clearly needs further investigation, some promising approaches have already been put forward. Curtis et al. (2001: 783), for example, present evidence suggesting that voluntary association membership “tends to be particularly high in nations that have: (1) multidenominational Christian or predominantly Protestant religious compositions, (2) prolonged and continuous experience with democratic institutions, (3) social democratic or liberal democratic political systems, and (4) high levels of economic development.” More specifically, Salamon & Sokolowski (2001) show that the size of the non-profit sector (in terms of paid full-time non-profit staff) and the level of government social welfare spending are both positively correlated with private voluntary action (see also Anheier & Salamon 1999). However, the relationship between non-profit regime types<sup>3</sup> and the amount of volunteering is not one-dimensional. In order to explain the observed variation in levels of voluntary engagement across countries, one also needs to take into account the different ‘roles’ that may be attributed to volunteer activities. Salamon & Sokolowski (2001) find a higher prevalence of volunteering in countries where the ‘expressive’ role of volunteering dominates, for example in Sweden or in the Netherlands, but also in Germany. In these countries, voluntary work is mostly

---

<sup>3</sup> Salamon & Anheier (1998) identify four regime types to characterize non-profit sectors in cross-nationally comparative analyses: the liberal (e.g. in Great Britain), the corporatist (e.g. in Germany), the social democratic (e.g. in Sweden), and the statist model (e.g. in Japan). The authors’ argue that a high prevalence of voluntary engagement is to be expected under social democratic and liberal regimes, while moderate (low, respectively) levels of volunteering are expected under corporatist (statist, respectively) regime types (see also Anheier & Salamon 1999).

performed in the cultural or recreational domain. A lower participation in voluntary activities is observed, where the primary role of volunteering is ‘service’ oriented, such as in the social sector. This is the case in Italy or Spain, among others.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond all cross-national differences, a significant share of up to 20 percent of Europe’s population aged 50 or older does engage in voluntary work – and its productive potential might not even be used to its full possible extent yet. This has also been recognized by policy makers (e.g., Baldock 1999), and the European Union, for example, has thus taken initiative to promote greater participation in voluntary work (cf. Commission of the European Communities 1997). Although such efforts should be welcomed, one should not forget the limitations of the elder population as a ‘reserve army of volunteers’ (Warburton et al. 1998). We find a clear negative association between participation in volunteer work on the one hand, and age and poor health on the other hand. Moreover, conflicts between societal expectations concerning the voluntary engagement of retirees and individuals’ own concept of an ‘ideal retirement lifestyle’ might evolve (cf. D.B. Smith 2004). Empirical evidence suggests that the old rather disengage from obligations to care than from caring itself: “To the extent, then, that the new volunteerism attempts to ‘reobligate’ the elderly in caring for those who are neither family nor friends these policies may result in greater resistance within the very population they are intended to mobilize.” (Gallagher 1994: 577)

With regard to future developments and policies, it will be important to what extent people will be able to age healthy, and in how far it will be possible to create ‘tailor-made’ work opportunities for older (and frailer) volunteers. A first step to

---

<sup>4</sup> In our data, a somewhat larger share of Mediterranean volunteers stresses the wish to “contribute something useful” as a main motivation for their engagement, while Swedish, Dutch, and German respondents rather tend to stress the “joy” they derive from volunteering (see *Table 2*). Although these cross-country differences in motivations are not very large, they may still be treated as further evidence in support of the suggested differences regarding the primary role and meaning of volunteer work in those societies (see also Anheier & Toepler 2002: 36ff.).

achieve the latter could be to set up local institutions that match volunteers to organizations which might need them, as, for example, in the Netherlands or in Germany (Anheier & Salamon 1999: 45; see also Baldock 1999). Since people usually do not begin their volunteering career in later life, efforts to attract ‘new’ volunteers should also usefully focus on individuals in midlife who have not yet reached retirement age: “Despite attrition from volunteering throughout later life, it may be easier to retain a volunteer who is already experienced with and committed to the activity than to recruit a retiree.” (Mutchler et al. 2003: 1288; see also D.B. Smith 2004) As a final point, Siegrist et al. (2004: 13) note that “[c]reating systems and opportunities in which motivations, efforts and rewards are marked by reciprocity seems to be of vital importance [...] in increasing meaningful participation, not least in view of their powerful implications for well-being and health.” It is therefore crucial to always keep in mind the beneficial aspect of volunteering for those who volunteer: older people shall not be ‘exploited’ for the benefit of others, but will hopefully experience a higher quality of life themselves through their active participation in society!

## **Acknowledgements**

The two authors contributed equally to this paper. Financial support for this research was provided through the European Community’s Programme ‘Quality of Life’ (5<sup>th</sup> Framework) under the EC Contract No. QLK6-2002-002426 (AMANDA). We are grateful to James Banks, Hendrik Jürges, Anja Lemke, James Nazroo, and participants of a seminar at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) for helpful comments and suggestions.

This paper uses data from the early Release 1 of SHARE 2004. This release is preliminary and may contain errors that will be corrected in later releases. The SHARE data collection has been primarily funded by the European Commission through the 5<sup>th</sup> framework programme (project QLK6-CT-2001-00360 in the thematic programme

‘Quality of Life’). Additional funding came from the US National Institute on Aging (U01 AG09740-13S2, P01 AG005842, P01 AG08291, P30 AG12815, Y1-AG-4553-01 and OGHA 04-064). Data collection in Austria (through the Austrian Science Foundation, FWF) and Switzerland (through BBW/OFES/UFES) was nationally funded.

## References

- Anheier, H.K. / Salamon, L.M. (1999): Volunteering in Cross-National Perspective: Initial Comparisons, *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 62 (4), 43-65.
- Anheier, H.K. / Toepler, S. (2002): Bürgerschaftliches Engagement in Europa [Civic Engagement in Europe], *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B9/2002, 31-38.
- Attias-Donfut, C. / Ogg, J. / Wolff, F.-C. (2005): Family Support, in: A. Börsch-Supan et al. (eds.), *Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe – First results from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe*, Mannheim: Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Aging, 171-178.
- Baldock, C.V. (1999): Seniors as Volunteers: An International Perspective on Policy, *Ageing & Society*, 19 (5), 581-602.
- Börsch-Supan, A. (2004): Global Aging: Issues, Answers, More Questions, *MEA Discussion Paper 55-2004*, University of Mannheim.
- Börsch-Supan, A. / Brugiavini, A. / Jürges, H. / Mackenbach, J. / Siegrist, J. / Weber, G. (eds.) (2005): *Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe – First results from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe*, Mannheim: Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Aging.
- Börsch-Supan, A. / Jürges, J. (eds.) (2005): *Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe – Methodology*, Mannheim: Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Ageing, forthcoming.
- Caro, F.G. / Bass, S.A. (1995a): Increasing Volunteering among Older People, in: S.A. Bass (ed.), *Older and Active: How Americans over 55 Are Contributing to Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 71-96.
- Caro, F.G. / Bass, S.A. (1995b): Dimensions of Productive Engagement, in: S.A. Bass (ed.), *Older and Active: How Americans over 55 Are Contributing to Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 204-216.
- Choi, L.H. (2003): Factors Affecting Volunteerism Among Older Adults, *The Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 22 (2), 179-196.
- Commission of the European Communities (1997): *Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organisations in Europe*, Luxemburg.

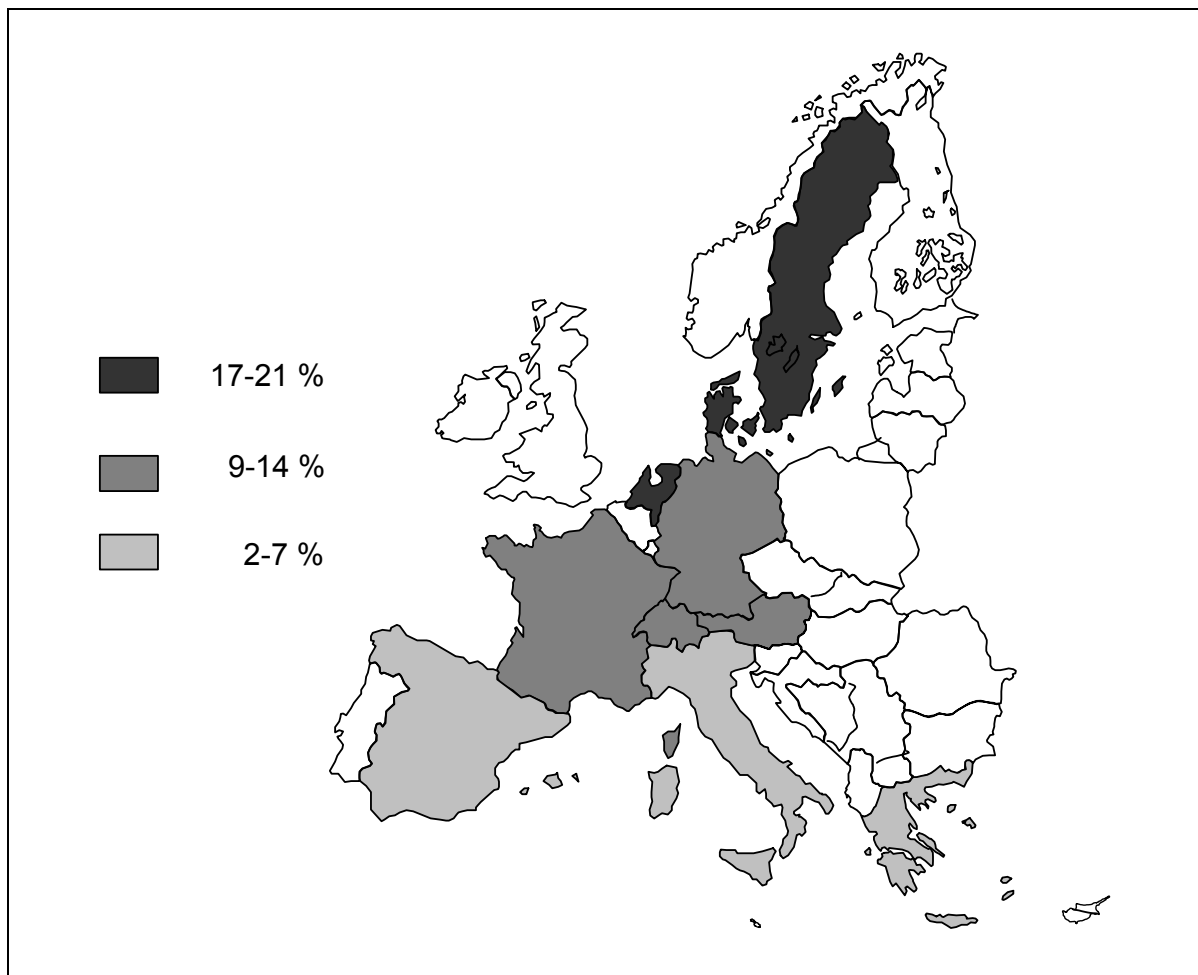
- Curtis, J.E. / Grabb, E.G. / Baer, D.E. (1992): Voluntary Association Membership in Fifteen Countries: A Comparative Analysis, *American Sociological Review*, 57 (2), 139-152.
- Curtis, J.E. / Bear, D.E. / Grabb, E.G. (2001): Nations of Joiners: Explaining Voluntary Association Membership in Democratic Societies, *American Sociological Review*, 66 (6), 783-805.
- Cutler, S.J. / Hendricks, J. (2000): Age Differences in Voluntary Association Memberships: Fact or Artifact, *Journal of Gerontology – Social Sciences*, 55B (2), S98-S107.
- Erlinghagen, M. (2000): Informelle Arbeit – Ein Überblick über einen schillernden Begriff [Informal Work – A General View on a Dazzling Concept], *Schmollers Jahrbuch – Journal of Applied Social Science Studies*, 120 (2), 239-274.
- Gallagher, S.K. (1994): Doing Their Share: Comparing Patterns of Help Given by Older and Younger Adults, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56 (3), 567-578.
- Herzog, A.R. / Morgan, J.N. (1992): Age and Gender Differences in the Value of Productive Activities, *Research on Aging*, 14 (2), 169-198.
- Kohli, M. / Rein, M. / Guillemard, A.-M. / van Gunsteren, H. (eds.) (1991): *Time for Retirement: Comparative Studies of Early Exit from the Labor Force*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morrow-Howell, N. / Hinterlong, J. / Sherraden, M. (eds.) (2001): *Productive Aging: A Conceptual Framework*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Morrow-Howell, N. / Hinterlong, J. / Rozario, P.A. / Tang, F. (2003): Effects of Volunteering on the Well-Being of Older Adults, *Journal of Gerontology – Social Sciences*, 58B (3), S137-S145.
- Mutchler, J.E. / Burr, J.A. / Caro, F.G. (2003): From Paid Worker to Volunteer: Leaving the Paid Labor Force and Volunteering in Later Life, *Social Forces*, 81 (4), 1267-1293.
- National Research Council (Ed.) (2001): *Preparing for an Aging World*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- O'Reilly, P. / Caro, F.G. (1994): Productive Aging: An Overview of the Literature, *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, 6 (3), 39-71.
- Prince, M.J. / Reischies, F. / Beekman, A.T. / Fuhrer, R. / Jonker, C. / Kivela, S.L. / Lawlor, B.A. / Lobo, A. / Magnusson, H. / Fichter, M. / van Oyen, H. / Roelands, M. / Skoog, I. / Turrina, C. / Copeland, J.R. (1999): Development of the EURO-D scale – A European, Union Initiative to Compare Symptoms of Depression in 14 European Centres, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 174 (4), 330-338.
- Salamon, L.M. / Anheier, H.K. (1998): Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Non-Profit Sector Cross-Nationally, *VOLUNTAS*, 9 (3), 213-248.
- Salamon, L.M. / Sokolowski, W. (2001): Volunteering in Cross-National Perspective: Evidence from 24 Countries, *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project No. 40*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies.



- Schofer, E. / Fourcade-Gournichas, M. (2001): The Structural Contexts of Civic Engagement: Voluntary Association Membership in Comparative Perspective, *American Sociological Review*, 66 (6), 806-828.
- Siegrist, J. / von dem Knesebeck, O. / Pollack, C.E. (2004): Social Productivity and Well-Being of Older People: A Sociological Exploration, *Social Theory & Health*, 2 (1), 1-17.
- Smith, D.B. (2004): Volunteering in Retirement: Perceptions of Midlife Workers, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 33 (1), 55-73.
- Smith, D.H. (1994): Determinants of Voluntary Association Participation and Volunteering: A Literature Review, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 23 (3), 243-263.
- Thoits, P.A. / Hewitt, L.N. (2001): Volunteer Work and Well-Being, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 42 (2), 115-131.
- Van Willigen, M. (2000): Differential Benefits of Volunteering Across the Life Course, *Journal of Gerontology – Social Sciences*, 55B (5), S308-S318.
- Warburton, J. / Le Brocque, R. / Rosenman, L. (1998): Older People – The Reserve Army of Volunteers? An Analysis of Volunteerism among Older Australians, *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 46 (3), 229-245.
- Warburton, J. / Terry, D.J. / Rosenman, L.S. / Shapiro, M. (2001): Differences between Older Volunteers and Nonvolunteers, *Research on Aging*, 23 (5), 586-605.
- Wilson, J. (2000): Volunteering, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 215-240.
- Wilson, J. / Musick, M. (1997): Who Cares? Towards an Integrated Theory of Volunteer Work, *American Sociological Review*, 62 (5), 694-713.
- Wise, D. (1997): Retirement Against the Demographic Trend: More Older People Living Longer, Working Less, And Saving Less, *Demography*, 34 (1), 83-95.

## Figures & Tables

Figure 1: Spatial pattern of participation in volunteer work in Europe



Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors' representation.

Table 1: SHARE 2004 – achieved sample by sex and age (Release 1)

Country	Total	Male	Female	Under 50	50 to 64	65 to 74	75 +	Household response rate	Individual response rate
Sweden	3,067	1,424	1,643	57	1,595	821	594	42.1 %	83.8 %
Denmark	1,732	785	947	95	929	374	334	61.1 %	93.0 %
Germany	3,020	1,385	1,635	67	1,573	888	485	60.2 %	86.5 %
Netherlands	3,000	1,377	1,623	102	1,705	713	460	61.6 %	87.9 %
France	1,842	794	1,048	93	928	454	366	69.4 %	91.7 %
Switzerland	1,010	468	542	41	508	245	203	37.6 %	86.9 %
Austria	1,986	820	1,166	48	1,004	571	363	57.3 %	87.4 %
Italy	2,559	1,132	1,427	53	1,339	785	382	54.1 %	79.7 %
Spain	2,419	1,004	1,415	44	1,092	702	579	50.2 %	73.8 %
Greece	2,142	901	1,241	159	1,035	554	391	60.2 %	91.8 %
<i>All countries</i>	<i>22,777</i>	<i>10,088</i>	<i>12,685</i>	<i>759</i>	<i>11,708</i>	<i>6,107</i>	<i>4,157</i>	<i>57.4 %</i>	<i>86.0 %</i>

Table 2: Participation in volunteer work by country

Country	Total share of volunteers (in %)	Frequency of volunteering (in % of those who volunteer at all)			Main motivations for volunteering (in % of those who volunteer at all)	
		Almost daily	Almost every week	Less often	To contribute something useful	Because I enjoy it
Sweden	17.7	13.0	41.2	45.8	64.5	70.8
Denmark	17.1	11.3	48.8	39.9	70.3	67.4
Germany	10.0	17.5	46.1	36.4	64.3	68.9
Netherlands	20.6	16.8	59.4	23.8	66.2	77.3
France	12.9	22.4	44.5	33.1	73.1	62.5
Switzerland	14.3	(.)	40.4	46.5	71.1	59.8
Austria	8.7	(.)	42.5	54.6	59.2	64.6
Italy	7.1	17.7	42.7	39.6	79.0	31.4
Spain	2.4	(.)	(.)	63.2	74.2	(.)
Greece	3.0	(.)	39.7	44.6	67.5	(.)
<i>All countries<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>9.6</i>	<i>17.8</i>	<i>45.1</i>	<i>37.1</i>	<i>69.6</i>	<i>60.7</i>

<sup>a</sup> Weighted means across all countries, based on 21,928 observations. – (.) Cell size < 20 observations.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors' calculations.

Table 3: Volunteering and informal help or care and participation in organisations, all countries

Country	Informal help or care (total in %)	Participation in organisations (total in %)	Volunteering (in %) among those who ...		Help or care ... ... among those who volunteer (in %)	Participation ...
			... help or care	... participate		
Sweden	40.3	37.1	25.1	30.7	56.9	64.4
Denmark	34.3	39.8	23.1	27.3	46.2	63.4
Germany	19.2	33.7	15.7	20.5	30.2	68.8
Netherlands	32.1	38.4	28.8	33.5	44.9	62.4
France	27.7	24.0	21.1	29.3	45.3	54.5
Switzerland	25.4	49.0	25.2	21.6	44.9	74.2
Austria	25.0	36.3	16.0	17.4	46.1	72.8
Italy	14.1	12.3	15.0	21.6	29.9	37.6
Spain	7.2	18.6	(.)	6.6	(.)	50.9
Greece	16.6	45.0	8.8	4.8	48.8	71.8
<i>All countries<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>19.9</i>	<i>26.6</i>	<i>18.7</i>	<i>21.3</i>	<i>38.6</i>	<i>59.0</i>

<sup>a</sup> Weighted means across all countries, based on 21,928 observations. – (.) Cell size < 20 observations.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors' calculations.

Table 4: Participation in volunteer work by demographic characteristics, all countries

Country	Men	Women	Age 50-64	Age 65-74	Age 75+	Living with a partner	Not living with a partner
Sweden	20.9	14.8	18.3	21.2	12.7	19.3	14.9
Denmark	18.2	16.2	17.6	20.8	11.9	18.3	14.9
Germany	10.9	9.4	11.6	11.5	4.6	11.6	7.2
Netherlands	19.1	22.0	22.4	25.7	9.2	22.0	17.3
France	15.7	10.5	13.4	16.3	7.9	13.9	10.5
Switzerland	13.4	15.0	17.8	12.9	(.)	14.8	13.1
Austria	10.0	7.7	11.6	7.2	(.)	10.1	6.3
Italy	8.0	6.3	9.3	5.5	(.)	7.1	7.1
Spain	(.)	2.7	2.7	(.)	(.)	2.3	(.)
Greece	3.0	3.0	3.9	(.)	(.)	3.1	(.)
<i>All countries<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>10.6</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>11.2</i>	<i>10.3</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>7.9</i>

<sup>a</sup> Weighted means across all countries, based on 21,928 observations. – (.) Cell size < 20 observations.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors' calculations.

Table 5: Participation in volunteer work by education and employment status, all countries

Country	Low education	Medium education	High education	Working	Retired	Other non-working
Sweden	14.5	18.5	25.5	19.8	16.9	12.7
Denmark	12.5	15.8	23.1	17.0	17.0	21.7
Germany	5.1	9.0	16.7	10.5	9.4	11.7
Netherlands	17.7	22.8	27.3	19.6	20.0	22.6
France	8.9	15.0	24.1	12.8	14.5	11.7
Switzerland	10.7	16.4	19.8	15.5	10.7	22.7
Austria	4.9	9.5	13.0	13.5	7.9	6.7
Italy	4.9	12.4	(.)	10.6	7.3	4.1
Spain	1.5	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)	2.2
Greece	1.9	(.)	7.9	4.5	2.9	(.)
<i>All countries<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>6.0</i>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>18.3</i>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>9.7</i>	<i>8.3</i>

<sup>a</sup> Weighted means across all countries, based on 21,928 observations. – (.) Cell size < 20 observations.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors' calculations.

Table 6: Participation in volunteer work by health status, all countries

Country	Self-reported health: good or better	Self-reported health: fair or worse	Less than two chronic diseases	Two or more chronic diseases	Not depressed in last month	Depressed in last month
Sweden	19.6	14.5	18.5	16.6	18.9	12.8
Denmark	18.7	13.5	16.3	18.3	17.8	14.0
Germany	12.4	7.4	10.5	9.3	11.1	6.1
Netherlands	23.3	14.8	21.6	18.7	21.5	17.0
France	15.3	8.6	13.5	12.0	14.2	9.8
Switzerland	15.3	(.)	14.8	12.7	15.1	(.)
Austria	11.1	4.8	8.9	8.4	9.0	7.5
Italy	9.6	4.5	8.3	5.3	8.6	3.9
Spain	2.7	2.1	2.6	2.2	2.6	(.)
Greece	3.4	(.)	3.1	2.8	3.3	(.)
<i>All countries<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>8.5</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>6.3</i>

<sup>a</sup> Weighted means across all countries, based on 21,928 observations. – (.) Cell size < 20 observations.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors' calculations.



Table 7: Participation in volunteer work – logistic regression results, all countries (n = 22,730)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	exp(b)	s.e.	Sig.	exp(b)	s.e.	Sig.
<i>Demographics</i>						
Age 50-64 <sup>a</sup>	1	-	-	1	-	-
Age 65-74	1.02	.06		.96	.06	
Age 75+	.72	.06	**	.63	.05	**
Sex – Female	.93	.04		.92	.04	
Living w/ partner	1.20	.07	**	1.16	.06	**
<i>Education</i>						
Low education <sup>a</sup>	1	-	-	1	-	-
Med. education	1.31	.07	**	1.19	.06	**
High education	1.84	.11	**	1.61	.10	**
<i>Employment</i>						
Working	.73	.05	**	.65	.04	**
Retired <sup>a</sup>	1	-	-	1	-	-
Other non-work.	.98	.06		1.00	.07	
<i>Other activities</i>						
Help or care	2.16	.10	**	1.78	.08	**
Participation	3.27	.15	**	3.12	.14	**
<i>Health</i>						
Fair or worse	.76	.04	**	.78	.04	**
Chronic diseases	1.09	.05		1.08	.05	
Depression	.80	.05	**	.86	.05	**
<i>Country-level of volunteering<sup>b</sup></i>						
Low	-	-	-	.47	.03	**
Medium <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	1	-	-
High	-	-	-	1.80	.09	**
Constant	-2.79	.11	**	-2.07	.12	**
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>		.11			.14	

<sup>a</sup> Reference category. – Significance: \* < .05; \*\* < .01.

<sup>b</sup> ‘Low’: Greece, Spain, and Italy; ‘medium’: Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria; ‘high’: Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors’ calculations.

Table 8: Participation in volunteer work – selected logistic regression results<sup>a</sup> from interaction models, all countries (n = 22,730)

Interaction term:			exp(b)	s.e.	Sig.
Country-level of volunteering <sup>b</sup>	x	Individual characteristic			
Model 5: Interaction 'country' x 'age'					
Low	x	Age 50-74	.46	.04	**
Low	x	Age 75+	.28	.05	**
Medium	x	Age 50-74 <sup>c</sup>	1	-	-
Medium	x	Age 75+	.53	.07	**
High	x	Age 50-74	1.73	.09	**
High	x	Age 75+	1.28	.12	*
Model 6: Interaction 'country' x 'education'					
Low	x	Low/Medium	.40	.03	**
Low	x	High	.84	.13	
Medium	x	Low/Medium <sup>c</sup>	1	-	-
Medium	x	High	1.54	.12	**
High	x	Low/Medium	1.74	.10	**
High	x	High	1.33	.09	**
Model 7: Interaction 'country' x 'work'					
Low	x	Working	.51	.07	**
Low	x	Retired/Other	.62	.06	**
Medium	x	Working <sup>c</sup>	1	-	-
Medium	x	Retired/Other	1.33	.12	**
High	x	Working	1.49	.13	**
High	x	Retired/Other	2.63	.23	**

*Continued next page ...*

Table 8 (continued): Participation in volunteer work – selected logistic regression results<sup>a</sup> from interaction models, all countries (n = 22,730)

Interaction term:			exp(b)	s.e.	Sig.
<i>Country-level of volunteering<sup>b</sup></i>	x	<i>Individual characteristic</i>			
<i>Model 8: Interaction ‘country’ x ‘help or care’</i>					
Low	x	Helping	.70	.09	**
Low	x	Not helping	.22	.02	**
Medium	x	Helping <sup>c</sup>	1	-	-
Medium	x	Not helping	.56	.04	**
High	x	Helping	1.69	.13	**
High	x	Not helping	1.06	.08	
<i>Model 9: Interaction ‘country’ x ‘participation’</i>					
Low	x	Participating	.41	.04	**
Low	x	Not particip.	.15	.01	**
Medium	x	Participating <sup>c</sup>	1	-	-
Medium	x	Not particip.	.27	.02	**
High	x	Participating	1.63	.10	**
High	x	Not particip.	.56	.04	**
<i>Model 10: Interaction ‘country’ x ‘health’</i>					
Low	x	Fair / worse	.49	.06	**
Low	x	Good / better	.68	.07	**
Medium	x	Fair / worse <sup>c</sup>	1	-	-
Medium	x	Good / better	1.47	.13	**
High	x	Fair / worse	2.17	.20	**
High	x	Good / better	2.47	.21	**

<sup>a</sup> The full models include all control variables displayed in Table 7.

<sup>b</sup> ‘Low’: Greece, Spain, and Italy; ‘medium’: Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria; ‘high’: Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

<sup>c</sup> Reference category. – Significance: \* < .05; \*\* < .01.

Source: SHARE 2004 (Release 1), authors’ calculations.

## Discussion Paper Series

Mannheim Research Institute for the Economics of Aging Universität Mannheim

**To order copies, please direct your request to the author of the title in question.**

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Autoren</b>	<b>Titel</b>	<b>Jahr</b>
60-04	Alexander Ludwig Alexander Zimmer	Investment Behavior under Ambiguity: The Case of Pessimistic Decision Makers	04
61-04	Barbara Berkel	Institutional Determinants of International Equity Portfolios – A County-Level Analysis	04
62-04	Barbara Berkel Axel Börsch-Supan	Pension Reform in Germany: The Impact on Retirement Decisions	04
63-04	Axel Börsch-Supan	From Traditional DB to Notional DC Systems	04
64-04	Axel Börsch-Supan Alexander Ludwig Joachim Winter	Aging, Pension Reform, and Capital Flows: A Multi-Country Simulation Model	04
65-04	Axel Börsch-Supan	Faire Abschlüsse in der gesetzlichen Rentenversicherung	04
66-04	Alexander Ludwig Alexander Zimmer	Rational Expectations and Ambiguity: A Comment on Abel (2002)	04
67-05	Axel Börsch-Supan Anette Reil-Held	Die ökonomischen Auswirkungen der Alterung in Hessen	05
68-05	Axel Börsch-Supan Alexander Ludwig Anette Reil-Held	Projection methods and scenarios for public and private pension information	05
69-05	Axel Börsch-Supan	Risiken im Lebenszyklus	05
70-05	Hendrik Jürges	Die ökonomische Theorie der Familie und die Erklärung von Erbschaftsregeln – ein problemorientierter Überblick	05
71-05	Marcel Erlinghagen Karsten Hank	Participation of Older Europeans in Volunteer Work	05