

# MOTIVATIONAL PROFILE OF THE YOUNG VOLUNTEERS OF THE RUSSIAN REGION: TRANSFORMATION TRENDS

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the recent changes in the motivations of young volunteers aged 18-30 in Sverdlovsk region, according to the surveys conducted in 2014 and 2018. It was found that both in 2014 and 2018, the prevailing motive was altruism – the desire to help others. In 2018, young people chose the motive of ‘improving their house, street, district, and city’ more often than in 2014. We also found a substantial reduction in the share of respondents whose dominant motivation was ‘networking’, ‘finding new friends’ and ‘getting a good job’. The share of those who engaged in volunteering to boost their self-esteem and gain respect of other people has increased by 6%. Every second volunteer has mixed motivation; 36% respondents could be described as ‘egoistic’ volunteers and 18%, as ‘altruists’. This paper also distinguishes between different groups of volunteers with mixed and egoistic motives. We built motivation profiles of young volunteers on the basis of the survey results. The results of our research can be used for designing and implementing policies for improvement of the region's human capital and social development.

**Key words:** volunteering, volunteering motivation, young people, region

**JEL Code:** L31, R58, O15

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## Introduction

Volunteerism is particularly important in the conditions of social and economic instability. In the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, volunteerism is seen as one of the key ways for showing solidarity and achieving the goals of the Agenda. There is vast literature on various aspects of the volunteering movement, and the number of research publications in this field continues to grow. A large share of studies focuses on volunteers’ motivations. There is sufficient empirical evidence to affirm that each age group of volunteers is characterized by specific types of motives. Some authors concentrate exclusively on the motivations of young volunteers, for example, college and university students (Holdsworth, 2010; Hustinx et al., 2010; Ghose, Kassam, 2014; Wu et al., 2015). For a number of objective reasons, young

people are actively involved in volunteering in many countries. According to the World Giving Index 2017 published by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), 51.5% of respondents aged 15-29 said that they helped someone they did not know (that is, engaged in informal volunteering); 21% of respondents of the same age worked as volunteers in organizations (formal volunteering) (World Giving Index..., 2017). The Centre for Research of Civil Society and Non-Profit Sector (Higher School of Economics) has found that in Russia in 2017, over the last month 26% of Russian people aged 18-30 engaged in volunteering in one form or another. Most of the theoretical and empirical studies of volunteering motivation focus on the current situation while the dynamics of this motivation remains relatively underexplored. Thus, the aim of this article is to analyze the transforming motivations of young volunteers of Sverdlovsk region in Russia.

## **1 Data and methods**

We apply the dual process model of motivation (Aydinli et al., 2016), the ABCE Model of Volunteer Motivation (Butt et al., 2017), the Motivation to Volunteer battery (Ghose, Kassam, 2014), and the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Guentert et al., 2015; Stukas et al., 2016; Erasmus, Morey, 2016) to study motivations of volunteers. The study of M.P. Sukharkova is particularly interesting in this respect as she provides a general overview of the modern approaches in this field. One of the main conclusions that she makes is that there is a diversity of opinions about the methods to study motivation of volunteers (Sukharkova, 2017). We believe that the different methods to study the motives for volunteering are in one way or another associated with the question about the role that altruism and egoism play in volunteering and how these motives combine.

We applied the methodology developed by Russian foundation 'Public Opinion' and conducted two surveys among inhabitants of Sverdlovsk region: a questionnaire survey of people aged 18-65 (N=1208, 2014, stratified random sampling) and a survey of teenagers and young adults of Sverdlovsk region aged 14-30 (N=421, 2018, stratified random sampling). All our respondents had experience of volunteering.

To reveal the motives behind volunteerism we asked our respondents to answer the question 'What benefits do you find in volunteering?' The respondents could choose from several possible answers, which, according to the methodological framework of 'Public Opinion' foundation, corresponded to one of the four groups of motives: career-related motives (gaining work experience; professional career prospects; getting an interesting job;

networking opportunities; access to useful information; work experience in social and political sphere; new knowledge and qualifications; contacts with influential people; gaining respect of other people); social motives (expanding social contacts; an interesting hobby; communication with interesting people); self-help (protection of one's civil rights; opportunity to solve personal problems, promote one's ideas and boost self-esteem); and idealistic motives (improvement of one's house, street, district, or city; helping others).

At the second stage of our study, we identified the three main groups of volunteers depending on their motives: 'altruists' (chose the motives of the idealistic type); 'egoists' (chose none of the motives of the idealistic type); and volunteers with mixed motives, that is, those who chose both 'egoistic' options, for example, career-related motives, expansion of social contacts, and self-help, but also chose at least one 'idealistic' motive.

Thus, we were able to analyze the structure of the motivation profiles of those volunteers whom we included in 'mixed motives' group, the most numerous group of all. We divided it into the following subgroups: 'maximalists' (those who chose motives of all motive groups); 'socially oriented communicators' (those who combine career-related and social motives with altruistic motives); and 'career-oriented altruists' (those who follow career-related and altruistic motives).

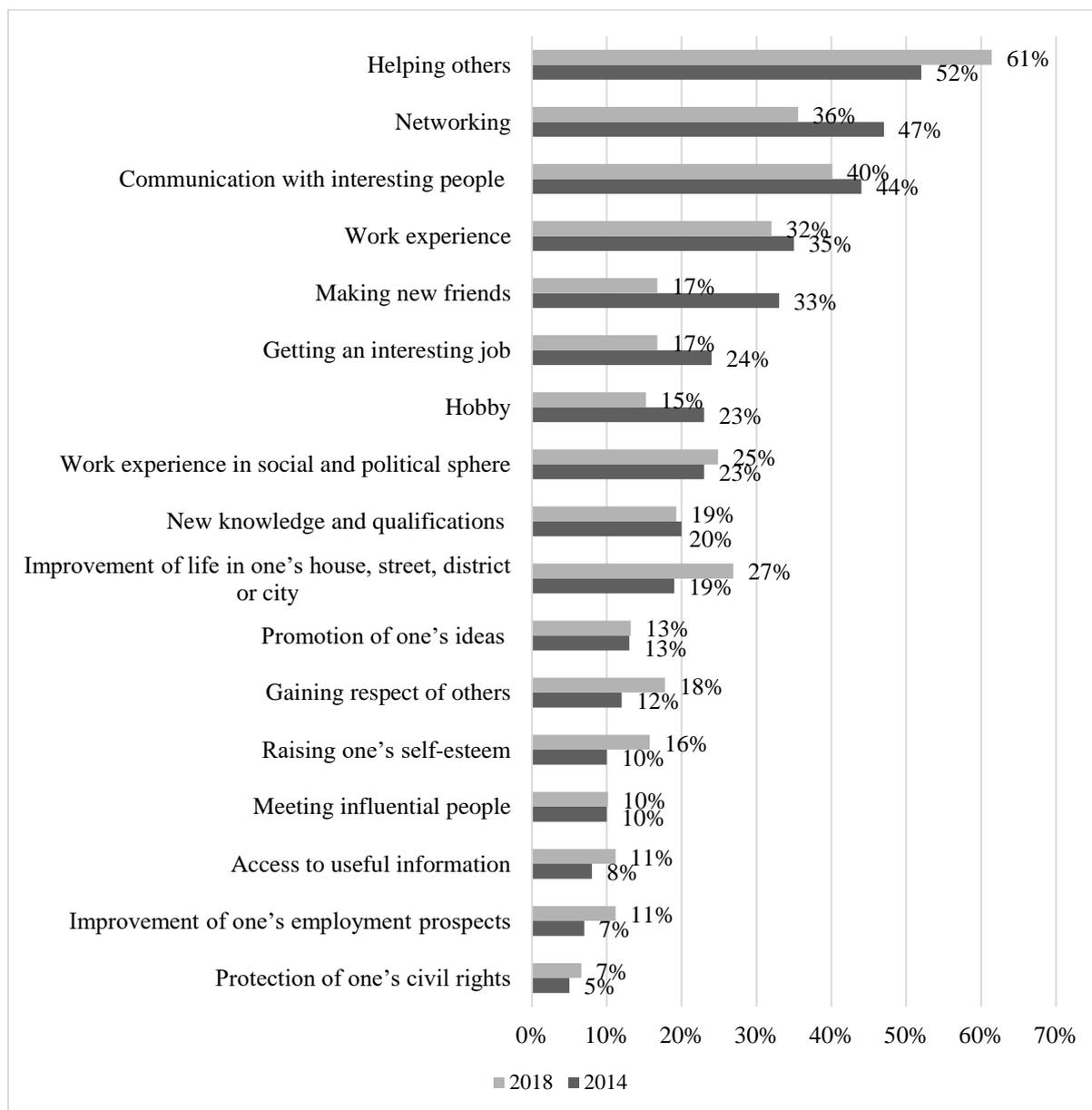
For statistical analysis, we used the following approaches: frequency, correlation, and cross-tabulation. In our correlation analysis, we measured the statistical significance of the relationship between the variables: the association between the variables was considered statistically significant if asymptotic significance (2-sided)  $< 0.05$  and if the value of the Cramer coefficient  $> 0.250$ .

## **2 Results**

### **2.1 Transformations of young volunteers' motivation profiles**

Let us now take a closer look at the dynamics of young volunteers' motivations in Sverdlovsk region. The leading motive in 2014 was the altruistic 'helping others'. This motive retained its leading status in 2018 (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1: Volunteering motives of inhabitants of Sverdlovsk region aged 18-30 in 2014 and 2018, %**



Source: authors' calculations

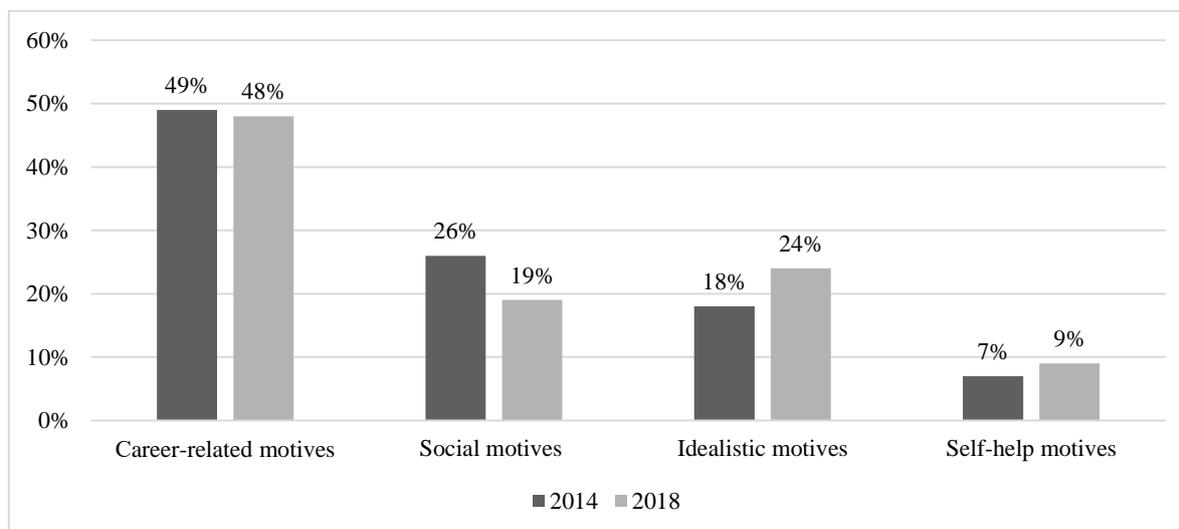
Furthermore, in 2018, this motive became even more widely spread among young people, who chose more often the answer that volunteering allowed them to improve life in their house, street, district, or city. Both of these motives – helping others and making improvements – are altruistic. The number of those respondents who see volunteering primarily as a source of useful acquaintances, contacts, as a hobby or as a way of landing a good job has dropped significantly. Another interesting fact is that the share of those young volunteers who pointed out that this kind of activity helps them boost their self-esteem and gain respect of other people increased by 6%. According to our results, 18% of young people

engage in volunteering because they would like to gain more respect of other people. This figure is slightly higher in comparison with the results of the similar national survey (according to the Higher School of Economics, 14% of Russian volunteers said that they wanted to gain respect of other people).

Such situation may be caused by increased public attention to volunteering and wide media coverage of volunteers' role in large-scale, high-profile events. In Sverdlovsk region, 2017 was proclaimed the year of volunteers; the following year of 2018 was officially declared the national year of volunteers. Moreover, in 2017, a decision was taken to establish the Day of Volunteering and celebrate it on 5th December. All these events changed the public perception of volunteering. Therefore, volunteering is considered as a way to get a certain social reward such as other people's approval and respect and enhance one's self-esteem. On the one hand, such trend shows that the ideas and values of volunteerism are quite popular in society; on the other hand, volunteering motives undergo certain transformations with primary motives of volunteering prevailing over the secondary ones.

In accordance with the typology proposed by 'Public Opinion' foundation, all motives can be divided into four groups: career-related, social, self-help, and idealistic motivation. Fig. 2 illustrates the dynamics of volunteers' motives in Sverdlovsk region. Like four years ago, the career-related motives prevail in 2018. Idealistic motives rank second. The shift from social motives, such as expanding one's social contacts and helping others, can be evaluated as a positive change although altruism is often entwined with egoism (for example, motives associated with career ambitions and self-help).

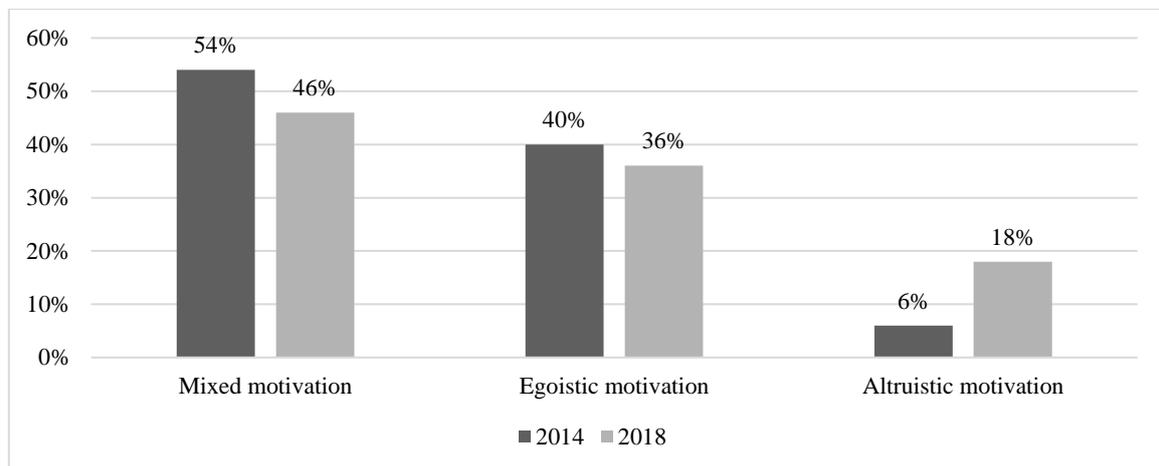
**Fig. 2: Motives of young volunteers in Sverdlovsk region in 2014 and 2018**



Source: authors' calculations

To identify the share of altruists in the sample we focused on those respondents whose answers corresponded exclusively to idealistic motives. As Fig. 3 illustrates, the share of altruists is the smallest although it has increased threefold in the last four years.

**Fig. 3: Altruistic, egoistic, and mixed motives of young volunteers in Sverlodvsk region in 2014 and 2018, %**



Source: authors' calculations

We believe that a part of volunteers who follow both egoistic and altruistic motives (mixed motivation) for certain reasons chose only those answers that corresponded to altruism. Since mixed motivation is the most widely spread type, it would be interesting to look into the reasons and factors that determined such transformation.

The share of ‘egoists’ has fallen slightly in comparison with 2014, although it is still quite significant: every third young volunteer follows exclusively egoistic motives. Empirical studies in Russia also show that of all age groups, altruism is the least characteristic of young adults aged 18-30, while career-related motives are the most widely spread among young volunteers (Mersiyanova, 2017). ‘Egoistic’ volunteers can be divided into ‘career-oriented’ (33%) and ‘efficient communicators’ (33%). Among the ‘egoistic’ motives, the prevailing ones are ‘networking’ and ‘work experience’, which correspond to career building motives.

## 2.2 Motivation profiles of volunteers with mixed motivation

Among the volunteers with mixed motivation, every third respondent is oriented towards all the groups of motives that we have identified: we shall refer to them as ‘maximalists’. 27% of the respondents are interested in building careers and in networking although they also follow some altruistic motives. Thus, we shall refer to them as ‘socially oriented communicators’. Every fifth volunteer is a ‘career-oriented altruist’, that is, follows both career-related and

altruistic motives. 'Maximalists' and 'socially oriented communicators' tend to engage in volunteering more regularly than other groups (about once a month) and are planning to continue doing so in the future. Compared with other groups, 'career-oriented altruists' are less prone to seeing themselves as doing voluntary work in the future. Only 5% work as volunteers on a regular basis. Furthermore, the share of men among 'career-oriented altruists' is higher than among other groups – 45%. Men account for 35% and 27% of 'maximalists' and 'socially oriented communicators' respectively. We found no significant socio-demographic differences, such as financial status or the city of residence, between these categories.

In the group of volunteers with mixed motivation we also found a group of those with pronounced altruistic motivation (these respondents have chosen two motives of this group) - 33%. 84% of these volunteers are planning to continue this work in the future. Almost every second respondent has taken part in environmental projects, clean-up events, and territory improvement events (47%). 44% participated in social projects, helping children, disabled, sick, and elderly people, in charity fund raising events, and similar projects. The same percentage of respondents in this subgroup assisted in organizing educational events such as conferences, forums, public lectures, seminars, and so on.

## **Conclusion**

We found that the motivation of young volunteers in Sverdlovsk region has demonstrated positive dynamics with a rise in the number of 'altruists'. The share of 'egoists', however, is still quite significant while 46% of volunteers aged 18-30 follow mixed motives (both altruist and egoistic). Our research findings can be used in policy guidelines, for example, in developing policies for stimulating volunteering activities and for enhancing the human capital of volunteers in specific regions. Further research is required, however, into the motivations of the volunteers with mixed motivation classified as 'altruism-oriented'. We need to identify the factors that contribute to the transformation of mixed motivation into purely altruistic and thus ideologically corresponding to the true spirit of volunteerism.

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