



OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Volunteer profiles and motivations: between a love of sport and the desire to get involved

Volunteers at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games often had sound prior experience of community involvement in the world of sport. These volunteers were largely higher education graduates, with particularly high rates of commitment among those living in the Paris region. Women and the different age groups were well-represented, which had been monitored through the Paris 2024 recruitment process. Beyond the exceptional nature of the event, volunteers' motivations were split between a passion for sport, especially for volunteers for the Olympics and younger people, and altruistic involvement, particularly for older participants and those volunteering for the Paralympics. Ultimately, 97% of volunteers stated they were satisfied or highly satisfied with their experience, and 70% wished to (re)commit to a sports club or association over the course of the coming year.

**Alix Gauthier,
Lamia Kieffer-Benjankhar,
Philippe Lombardo,
Sonia Louhab, Amélie
Mauroux**, Research
managers and statistical
officers at INJEP

Who were the 36,700 volunteers living in France who gave up their time to volunteer in the Olympic and Paralympic Games? [**Focus on**”, p. 2]? What is their connection to volunteering, charity work or sport? What were their expectations? What work did they perform, and what did they think of the experience? What impact might this experience have on their involvement with sports clubs or other associations?

The *Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation populaire* (INJEP) was commissioned to carry out public surveys about the French Olympic and Paralympic Games, and sent out a questionnaire to Paris 2024 volunteers, in order to gain a clearer understanding of their profiles and connections to sport or volunteering, and to collect their feedback on the experience [**“Methods”**, p. 2].

Gender equality achieved, along with a balanced breakdown of age groups

As one of the stated objectives set by the Paris 2024 Organising Committee, gender equality was achieved among Olympic volunteers residing in France (51% of volunteers who participated in the Olympic Games were women, as were 50% of those who participated in both the Olympics and Paralympics). Volunteers who participated only in the Paralympics were, however, more likely to be men (44% women). Similarly, the recruitment process used for Paris 2024 meant that the breakdown by age was roughly equivalent to French population demographics. However, younger people appeared to be overrepresented among volunteers participating in the Olympics only (35% 20 to 29-year-olds), and were less likely to volunteer in both the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Conversely, with greater levels of participation in both events, older



focus on

The Paris 2024 volunteer programme

The Organising Committee for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games recruited 42,800 volunteers to ensure that this major event ran smoothly. The Games took place from 26 July - 11 August and from 28 August - 8 September 2024. There were 36,701 volunteers residing in France, of which 30,927 took part in the Olympic Games and 15,188 in the Paralympics; 9,414 took part in both. Since the mid-20th century, volunteers have played an increasingly important role in the organisation of major sporting events, and in the Olympic and Paralympic games in particular. The concept of the Olympic volunteer was first defined explicitly by the ICO (International Olympic Committee), ever since the Barcelona 1992 Games: *"A volunteer is a person who makes an individual, altruistic commitment to collaborate, to the best of their abilities, in the organisation of the Olympic Games, carrying out the tasks assigned to them without receiving any payment or reward of any other kind."* Volunteering, as opposed to charity work, which is based on free involvement, implies that there is a contract between the volunteer and an approved organisation that defines their assignment and its duration.

The programme was open to individuals who were of adult age as of 1st January 2024, and who were available for at least 10 days over the course of the Olympics and/or the entire duration of the Paralympics.

As part of the application process (March - May 2023), individuals answered questions on their profile about their availability, motivation, history of volunteering, etc. They also expressed their preferred roles or tasks, before being selected and assigned to Paris 2024. Their roles may be modified over the course of the Games, based on changing needs and schedule developments (for example,

highly educated (52% held a Master's-level degree, compared to 42% for volunteers from other areas of France). The strong presence of volunteers coming from the Paris region, as well as the location of Olympic sites within the country, meant that only 15% of French volunteers sought accommodation outside their own homes, or were unable to benefit from free accommodation options. Two-thirds of volunteers assigned to sites outside their home *département* were able to benefit from free accommodation options (67%), but 22% had to pay for their accommodation, with the rest having been able to use their own homes or find an alternative solution.

Strong existing connections to sport and athletic associations

Overall, volunteers at the Paris 2024 Olympics had strong existing connections to sport, either through their own participation in sports or via previous involvement in the sector. Indeed, 91% stated they had engaged in at least one sporting activity (not including compulsory classes) over the past 12 months, while this was the case for only 71% of the population aged 15 or over[4]; 14% stated that they had previously refereed a sports competition.

Reflecting the selection process used by Paris 2024, which valued previous involvement with the sporting community, 58% of volunteers stated they currently volunteered with an athletic association (active over the course of the past twelve months), and 30% had done so in the past. This was more often the case for Olympics volunteers than for Paralympics volunteers. By contrast, only one in ten French citizens volunteers within a sporting association [2]. Moreover, one in three volunteers (31%) stated they had already participated as a volunteer in a major sporting event prior to Paris 2024. By way of comparison, during the 2023 Rugby World Cup in France, 66% of volunteers stated they had previously taken part in the organisation of a sporting or cultural event. Among the volunteers, those from the Paris region were characterised by fewer pre-existing connections with the sporting community. Indeed, 32% of volunteers



method

Over 10,000 volunteers were surveyed

INJEP partnered with Paris 2024, the Olympic Organising Committee, to survey its volunteers. Data was collected via the internet from 12 September to 3 October. 10,817 volunteers responded. 9,739 of these volunteers resided in France (i.e. a response rate of 26% for those people living in France). A margin adjustment was performed in order to guarantee that the results were representative (age across five categories, gender, residence, participation in Olympics, Paralympics or both).

volunteers (those aged 60 or over), including retirees, are overrepresented among the most actively involved volunteers (38%). Finally, around 4% of volunteers were living with a disability, compared to 6% of adults in France [1].

Highly-qualified volunteers, most often resident in the Île-de-France region

In general terms, those who volunteer tend to be more highly educated than the average French citizen, notably in sports-related fields [2], but this was even truer of those people who volunteered at Paris 2024 [infographic 1, p. 3]. Indeed, 85% had a higher education degree (and 46% held a Masters' or PhD), which is the case for only 56% of sports volunteers [2]

and 42% of the French population as a whole [3]. This is partly a reflection of the high numbers of students (16%), as well as white-collar professionals (29%). However, the proportion of highly educated people, including within a given socio-professional category (e.g. those in management or executive positions), was higher than the proportion observed in the overall population.

Just over two out of five volunteers (43%) lived in the Île-de-France region where the majority of the events took place. These volunteers were most often aged 30 or over (71%, compared to 65% of volunteers residing in other regions), were most often women, in particular for the Paralympics (62% were women from the Paris region vs. 54% for volunteers from other regions) and were also more

from the Paris region stated that they had volunteered within a sports club in the last 12 months, and 28% had previous experience at major sporting events; for volunteers from other regions, these figures were 51% and 34% respectively.

A passion for sport and altruistic reasons were central motivations for taking part

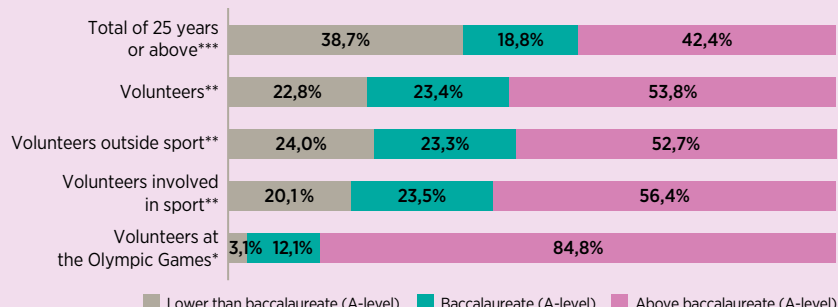
Almost all the volunteers explained that they were motivated by the unique nature of the event (92% stated they were driven to volunteer in order to “seize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and be part of a global event”), but their motivations were also split between those driven by a passion for sport and those guided by more altruistic motivations. Hence, among the secondary motivations most frequently mentioned as reasons for volunteering, “contributing to the community and helping others” was cited by 42% of volunteers, while “living out my passion for sport” was cited by 38%. Elsewhere, 12% of volunteers said they wanted to meet new people, and 5% to develop their skills.

Among younger volunteers and students, as well as those volunteering in the Olympic games only, a passion for sport was a relatively stronger motivation (cited by 53% of 16 to 19-year-olds, 49% of 20 to 29-year-olds, 50% of students and 44% of Olympics-only volunteers respectively [table 2, online]). This motivation decreases with age, and was mentioned by 34% of volunteers aged 60 or over.

On the other hand, contributing to the community and helping others was a motivation more often cited by older volunteers, as well as by those taking part in the Paralympic games: this was the case for half of volunteers aged 60 or over (compared to just one in four under-30s) and for 44% of those volunteering in the Paralympics. This age-related differentiation in motivations for volunteering was already identified during the London Olympics in 2012 [5].



Level of education attained by 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games volunteers



Sources: *Survey of Paris 2024 volunteers, Paris 2024-INJEP. **ENEAD 2021 survey, INJEP. ***2023 Labour force survey, INSEE.

Scope: people aged 16 or over residing in France.

Reading: 84.8% of Paris 2024 volunteers living in France held a higher education degree.



Assignments carried out by volunteers and their level of satisfaction

		Proportion of volunteers (in %)	Average satisfaction level regarding the assignments (out of 7)
Experience of the Games	Welcoming and guiding spectators	43	6.1
Experience of the Games	Supporting athletes and their performance	25	6.2
Streamlining the organisation of events	Welcoming and orienting accredited attendees	21	6.0
Other	Other	20	5.8
Experience of the Games	Assisting sporting delegations and dignitaries	14	6.0
Experience of the Games	Transporting the participants of the Games	12	5.7
Streamlining the organisation of events	Coordinating a team of volunteers	7	6.3
Streamlining the organisation of events	Participating in equipment distribution	6	6.0
Streamlining the organisation of events	Welcoming and supporting volunteers	4	6.1
Experience of the Games	Taking part in press activities	4	6.1
Sports performance	Helping with timekeeping and scoring	3	6.2
Experience of the Games	Providing medical assistance	3	6.0
Sports performance	Taking part in anti-doping operations	2	6.3

Source: Survey of Paris 2024 volunteers, Paris 2024-INJEP.

Scope: Paris 2024 volunteers residing in France during the Olympic and Paralympic games.

Note: it is not possible in the questionnaire to separate the mission from external constraints such as schedule

Four in ten volunteers assigned to welcoming and guiding spectators

The Paris 2024 Organising Committee strove to offer each volunteer a role that was aligned with their aspirations and skills, while taking into account

the organisational needs at play and the candidate's availability. During the registration process, individuals expressed their wishes, and the organisers of Paris 2024 proceeded to assign them. Three main types of assignments were offered: the first covered missions

pertaining to stakeholders' experience of the Games, including athletes and spectators, athletic delegations and journalists (hosting, information, transport, medical services); the second involved sporting performance (timekeeping, ball collection, score-keeping); the final type involved facilitating and streamlining event organisation (accreditation, distribution of equipment and setting up equipment or materials).

They volunteered for an average period of 13 days (12 days for those involved in the Olympic games only, 9 for those involved in the Paralympics only, and 18 days for both). Just over half of the volunteers stated they had performed a single assignment, while one in ten said they had performed three or more. In total, eight out of ten volunteers were assigned to tasks involving stakeholders' experience of the Games, three out of ten on organisational assignments, and one in twenty in performance-related tasks. In greater detail, 43% of volunteers performed an assignment that involved welcoming and orienting spectators, 25% in athlete support, and 21% in welcoming and guiding accredited individuals [table 1, p. 3].

High satisfaction levels overall, and particularly for those assigned to sporting events

Almost all volunteers (97%) stated they were satisfied with their overall experience of the Paris 2024 Games (76% very satisfied). Volunteers who took part only in the Paralympic Games

were more likely to state they were very satisfied than those who took part in the Olympic games only, or than those who took part in both events (82%, compared to 74% in the other two cases). The Paralympic Games generated a stronger feeling of social usefulness among the volunteers. In addition, the Paris 2024 organisers were able to draw upon the experience of the Olympic Games, so the Paris 2024 teams in charge of the "volunteer" programme were able to build upon lessons learned from the first event, and hence able to improve the volunteer experience. The lower number of spectators expected to attend the Paralympics meant that the number of volunteers was also lower, which may also have limited the feeling of excess manpower and boredom experienced by some volunteers during the Olympics.

Volunteers were also highly satisfied with the tasks they performed: when asked specifically about their level of satisfaction regarding their assignments, 75% of volunteers gave a score of 6 or 7 out of 7. Only 5% of volunteers gave a score of 3 or lower [table 1]. Tasks performed at competition sites, specifically those involving contact with the athletes (such as roles "supporting athletes and their performance"), as well as tasks coming into contact with other volunteers or spectators, were among the most popular. Conversely, assignments related to transport, therefore involving less contact with the public, further away from events and potentially more frequently subject to schedule changes, were relatively less popular.

Seven in ten volunteers planned to (re)commit to a sports club over the course of the coming year

This experience during the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics appears to have generated strong desire for future commitment, whether through athletic associations or in other sporting events. Indeed, among those volunteers who had not been volunteers with an association prior to these Olympics, 51% planned to volunteer with a sports club or association within the next twelve months (15% said this was very likely), and 62% with an association in any sector. Almost all the volunteers who had actively volunteered with a sports association (over the course of the past twelve months) wished to pursue their involvement (91%).

Almost 9 in 10 volunteers (85%) also said they were likely or highly likely to volunteer over the course of the coming year for a sporting competition or event, and eight in ten said they would do so at the next Olympiad. This was also the case for individuals participating in a major sporting event for the first time, albeit in a slightly lower proportion of cases (80% said it was likely or highly likely they would volunteer for further sporting events compared to 93% for those who had already done so). This is an expected outcome for a major sporting event, and was also the case for the Rugby World Cup in 2023 [6], although at this point it is impossible to gauge the extent to which this desire for future participation will materialise over time.

1. By way of comparison, there were 42,312 volunteers at the London 2012 games.



Bibliographic sources

- [1] DREES, Le handicap en chiffres ("Disability in Figures") DREES 'panorama reports', 2023 edition.
- [2] Lecorps Y., Les bénévoles des associations sportives : plus souvent des hommes, jeunes, et des parents ("Volunteers in athletic associations tend to be men, young people and parents," INJEP analyses et synthèses, n° 71, 2023.
- [3] INSEE, Enquête emploi en continu ("Labour force survey"), insee.fr, 2023.
- [4] Lombardo P., Muller J., Les pratiques sportives en France en 2023 ("Sport and physical activities in France in 2023") INJEP fiches Repères, December 2023.
- [5] Nedvetskaya O., Multi-dimensional framework as a new way to study the management of Olympic volunteering, European Sport Management Quarterly, vol. 23, n° 5, p. 1523-1548, 2023.
- [6] Economic, Social and Environmental Impact Study of Rugby World Cup 2023, EY for the French Ministry of Sport, May 2024.

Publication Director: Augustin Vicard.
Editorial Committee: Anne-Cécile Caseau,
 Tana Stromboni, Thomas Venet.
Editor-in-chief: Roch Sonnet.

Correction: Rachel Laskar.
Page layout: Opixido.
Print: MENJ.
 ISSN 2555-1116.