

# Changes in volunteer preferences at Olympic festivals associated with the Covid-19 disease pandemic

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## \* 1. Introduction

A major sporting event, perhaps the biggest sporting event for the general public, which is regularly held in the Czech Republic, is the Olympic Festival which has been held every time the Olympic Games, since 2014. The Olympic Festival lasts 17 days, just like the Olympic Games, and is run by hundreds of volunteers in dozens of positions. The work of volunteers is indispensable to the organisation of major sporting events and most major sporting events, known abroad as “mega sporting events”, cannot do without their involvement.

“Large sporting events are sometimes planned several years in advance, depending on the scale and complexity. In the first place, it is important to see the process of planning a sporting event as an ongoing process, because the process of planning a sporting event only ends when the sporting event itself is over. Volunteers are specified as people who work on the event voluntarily, in their own time and for free, or possibly for a financial contribution lower than that of a paid employee” (Novotný et al., 2011).

“The contribution from volunteers represents an important input in the production of leisure activities. This certainly applies to a wide range of sporting activities such as the hosting of major

sporting events. Their assistance in planning, organization, marketing and production often represents the difference between financial deficit and surplus for local event organizers. However, the local organizers have available may vary considerably, and this certainly applies to volunteers. Thus, in a small city, the hosting of events that are of medium size can be comparable to the hosting of a mega event in a large metropolis” (Solberg, 2011).

“Determining the number of volunteers to staff a sporting event is one of the first things that takes place in volunteer management. It must involve the entire organizational team, all the people responsible for the different areas of the project implementation.” They must set the requirements for the provision of activities, whether by paid staff or volunteers. The final number of volunteers will also reflect:

- Qualified presumption based on experience from previous events and planned activities;
- The maximum number of volunteers given by the budget of the event (number of uniforms, catering capacity, etc.);
- specification of the activities to be carried out by volunteers and the decision on which activities not to carry out (to be provided by paid staff);
- The length of the event and the length of each shift. For all-day, long-term events, individual

→

- shifts should be divided into shorter units so that volunteers are not working for, even, 12 or 14 hours a day;
- The expected number of participants, both spectators and active visitors. A volunteer at an event should be a well-utilized volunteer who will have a sense of meaningful work helping to organize the event, not a volunteer without a meaning of a job well done” (Mirovský, 2018).

Volunteers who are signing up for the event, or are still considering participation, should be connected in communication from the opening of the recruitment. “An interesting theme is the discussion in terms of the ‘psychological contract’, which refers to the fact that an individual ‘trust’ is only at the beginning of an engagement on the basis of the conditions and commitments of the exchange between the individual and the organizing party. These contracts are based on expectations, often made up of the initial ‘rhetoric’ of the organisation and the belief that they will be met” (Mirovský, 2018, 2021). Failure to fulfil this psychological contract on the part of the organiser can therefore cause major problems before the event, when volunteers may disengage from participation, or during the event, when they may terminate their collaboration. Based on experience it has shown that fair communication with volunteers is an important prevention against such terminations during the event. In the Olympic Festivals project, there are always only a few individuals, who themselves terminate their cooperation, usually for reasons other than not meeting their expectations.

The importance of staying motivated throughout the engagement process is shown by the results of volunteer engagement during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Chaotic volunteer management, lack of information, failure to keep promised hours, and poor and insufficient food led to almost 30% of volunteers not coming or quitting during their work (it is said that the actual number of volunteers ended up being about 35,000). As a result, the demands on the volunteers who stayed to help increased disproportionately, especially in their

time commitment. This was, perhaps quite understandably, reflected in the final evaluation. Those who finished early, or did not start at all, or those who worked all the time and had to work more, were mostly not satisfied. (Sims, 2016).

## *2. Volunteers at the Brno 2022 Olympic Festival*

Volunteers work in many roles within the sporting event organisation. Some positions may be tied to the competencies of a particular volunteer and thus may have set requirements for that position. There may be language competences, or first aid skills, etc. However, there are also positions where no special competences are required and can be performed by anyone who meets two basic requirements: attaining the age of 17 (volunteers aged 17 must have parental consent) and having a criminal record. The required competences for clearly specified positions are then set by the members of the organising committee responsible for the area together with the volunteer management.

The last Olympic Festival took place in January-February 2022 in Brno, where it was held for the third time without interruption (previously in 2018 and 2021), and based on the above-mentioned documents, a total of 18 positions were identified and secured by volunteers. After internal discussions, the positions were divided into sports positions (where volunteers provided sports activities for visitors) and organisational positions (where volunteers organised the running of the festival). A larger number of volunteers (34) provided sports activities, which corresponds to the overall focus of the Olympic Festival. “The aim is to bring the atmosphere of the Olympics to the Czech Republic, to spread Olympic values and ideals in society, to promote sport especially among young people as part of a healthy lifestyle.” Based on discussions, the optimal number of volunteers for all positions was determined, who from the point of view of the organising committee should provide the activity. A minimum number of volunteers was also deter-

mined, the so-called minimum required, which is the number of volunteers that must be in a given position to ensure the operation and its safety (Olympijský tým, 2022).

The following table shows the average number of volunteers who provided each position throughout the Olympic Festival. The number of volunteers in each position is rounded to whole numbers. Thus, the table shows that the average number of volunteers at each point in the event was fifty-four.

Volunteers often sign up for large events six months or a year before the event itself, based on a combination of many motives for participation. Thus, the time between the expression of interest and the event itself, or the exact specification of the activities that volunteers will do and other requirements for them, is usually several months or even a year, as the final specifications of the positions to be filled by volunteers are not finalised until before the event itself. However, the organiser's aim is to specify the positions for volunteers as ear-

**Table 1** » Average number of volunteers in each position during the Brno 2022 Olympic Festival

Position	Average number of volunteers per shift
<b>Positions of sporting character</b>	
Biathlon	4
Bobsleigh, sledge, skeleton	4
Curling	4
Ice hockey	1
Ice rink	2
Ice roads	5
Program for schools	7
Snowpark	7
<b>Positions of organisational character</b>	
Accreditation	1
Communication	1
Cross-country ski rental	2
Education	3
Fast group	3
Game cards	4
Mascot	2
Parking	1
Skate rental	2
VIP entrance	1
<b>SUM</b>	<b>54</b>

Source: materials by the author, based on the attendance of volunteers and their placement in the announced positions during the Olympic Festival in Brno 2022

*No specific competencies were required for any position at this event, and volunteers rotated through the positions. The opportunity to rotate positions and try out multiple positions during their involvement was viewed positively by the volunteers, who rated their involvement as more interesting than if they had to be in only one position.*

*Therefore, even if volunteers work for free at the event and their involvement costs less than what it would cost for paid employees in these positions, it is usually not a completely negligible expense and the organiser must consider well not only the number of volunteers needed to implement the event, but also set up their clothing, meals and other program properly.*

ly as possible and to offer volunteers the opportunity to choose a specific position that suits them already in the application form. During this time, it is necessary to communicate with volunteers continuously, inform them about the upcoming activities, keep in touch with them and thus maintain their interest in the event.

Full filling of all positions and all necessary volunteer involvement times should be at least 2–3 weeks before the event starts so that volunteers in specific positions can already be communicated with in smaller groups and smaller groups specializing in specific activities can be formed before the event starts. It is advisable that the training should also be done in smaller groups, except for basic, common training such as work safety, event organisation, catering, volunteer facilities management, first aid, etc.

In case the organiser does not have all volunteer positions filled about two weeks before the event, the remaining time until the event starts, or possibly even the time after the event starts (in the case of longer-term events such as Olympic Festivals), can be used to complete the recruitment process, with only the positions that are not fully filled being advertised during the recruitment process.

No specific competencies were required for any position at this event, and volunteers rotated through the positions. The opportunity to rotate

positions and try out multiple positions during their involvement was viewed positively by the volunteers, who rated their involvement as more interesting than if they had to be in only one position. Two weeks prior to the Olympic Festival, volunteers were offered all the positions they were filling through an electronic application system. Each volunteer was therefore able to choose which position and shift they wanted to be involved in. The moment the positions were filled, they had to choose from other positions. Further selection took place during the implementation of the event, either through the electronic form or directly with the volunteer coordinators who helped with the placement of the positions that were available and in which the volunteers were interested. This was especially the case for older volunteers who may have found the electronic system more difficult to navigate and preferred to make personal arrangements.

During the Olympic Festivals, due to the all-day opening hours, each day is divided into morning and afternoon shifts so that the involvement does not exceed 8 hours. For the Brno 2022 Olympic Festival, the shifts were 6.5 and 7.5 hours on Friday and Saturday respectively, when the opening hours were longer (extended by two hours in the afternoon and evening). Each volunteer must work at least 9 shifts at the event. This is therefore not a

one-off participation, but an involvement over several days. Volunteers must therefore set aside extra time for their participation.

“The communication with and the recruitment of volunteers for the 2020 and 2022 Olympic Festivals took place over a shorter period of time than is usual for an Olympic Festivals project (running since 2014). This was due to the Covid-19 disease pandemic and changing restrictions on major sporting events and their ongoing changes. Normally, volunteer recruitment is initiated 10–12 months prior to the event, in 2021 and 2022 this was a period of 6 and 4 months respectively, with the possibility that events would not be allowed for the above reasons and would be banned at any time during this period” (Mirovský, 2022). It is the motivation of the volunteers for their involvement, combined with the preferences in the benefits they will receive for their involvement that is very important information for the organisers (Giannoulakis, Wang, Gray, 2007).

### 3. Objectives and methodology

Sport in the Czech Republic and the organization of large sporting events was significantly disrupted and interrupted for almost a year and a half by the pandemic of the Covid-19 disease. This pandemic not only changed the rules for organizing sporting events (if it was possible to organize events at all), but also could have changed the behaviour of volunteers and their willingness to participate in large events.

The aim of the survey was to obtain relevant data in two main areas – volunteers’ motivation to participate and preference for benefits, all related to the specific project of the Olympic Festivals, in order to better organise volunteer activities in the following years.

In view of the above, two questionnaire surveys were carried out. In total, over 500 respondents participated in the survey (370 in 2019, 131 in 2022).

The first survey was carried out in 2019, during the preparations for the 2020 Olympic Festival, in

the run-up to the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when there were no restrictions on the organisation of major sporting events. Participants included volunteers from 2014–2018 and volunteers registered to participate in 2020.

The second survey was conducted in 2022 and the respondents were volunteers who participated in the 2020 and 2022 Olympic Festivals, a period when major sporting events were severely restricted by measures against Covid-19 disease, including the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics and thus the Olympic Festival from 2020 to 2021. For this reason, in this paper we use the designation of the 2020 Olympic Festival, even though it was held in 2021. The same designation, i.e. the use of the year 2020, was used for the Olympic Games.

“Under the social distancing guidelines in the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans changed their behaviour with social ties and across different modes of communication. While most reduced in-person contact, there were variations in which technology-based communication methods were utilized. Synchronous methods increased in use with family and friends. A small group increased use of all online modes of contact, and these were partially explained by higher usage in general, suggesting the preference for technologies that are familiar. Another small group decreased all social contacts and experienced higher loneliness and emotional disconnect with friends. While we observed compensatory behaviour to overcome the lack of in-person contact, the higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness in some groups suggest that technology-based modes of contact do not fully replace meeting people in person” (Lee et al., 2022).

The main research question was whether there was a significant difference in the variables (motivation, benefits) between the two surveys. One circumstance distinguishes these investigations, and that is the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

The research questions are:

- What type of motivation is prevalent among the 2019 and 2022 volunteer group

- What benefits are preferred by the 2019 and 2022 volunteers?

The primary data collection instrument was a combined questionnaire. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale with a choice of responses: absolutely important/totally agree, rather important/rather agree, don't know, rather unimportant/rather disagree, and completely unimportant/completely disagree.

At the end of the questioning, the individual answers for each option were added up, and points were assigned to the answers according to the following key: Answers: absolutely important/completely agree on five points, rather important/rather agree on four points, don't know three points, rather unimportant/rather disagree on two points, and completely unimportant/completely disagree on one point. The values were summed and divided by the number of responses. This resulted in an arithmetic average with a possible point rating on a scale from one to five, with the higher the average value, the more importance the volunteers attached to the given claim or benefit. The results were then sorted according to the indicated average value, from the highest value to the lowest.

The questionnaire was divided into several parts; this work deals with two of them, namely, the motivation of volunteers to participate and the preferences for the benefits that volunteers receive for their participation. Other parts, which are not part of the results published here, related to the year and place when and where the volunteer was specifically involved, as well as the answer to what position he worked for and for how long. Next, the volunteers answered the question of what was the greatest experience or impression they took away as participants. In the next part, they answered the question of which methods of communication they prefer before the event, i.e., between signing up for participation and the start of the event, and which methods of communication they prefer during the implementation of the event. In the last part, they answered a few personal details, namely gender, age category, status, education, occupa-

tion, income according to the median average wage, and whether or not they have children.

The results of the 2019 survey have already been published; the data are now used for comparison with the post-covid results of 2022.

#### 4. *Motivating volunteers to participate*

The study "The expectations of volunteers prior to the XVII Commonwealth Games, 2002: A qualitative study" deals with qualitative research on volunteers' expectations related to participation in the XVII. Commonwealth Games. This research is primarily concerned with the experience of recruitment, subsequent training and communication throughout the process of volunteer involvement in the Commonwealth Games. Other factors that may have influenced overall satisfaction and meeting expectations were also discussed during the research.

"The study of Ralston, Downward, and Lumsdon (2004) on the 2002 Commonwealth Games volunteers found that volunteers expected professional management. They also concluded that it was important to understand the PC (Psychological Contract) as being based largely on trust at the initial stages of involvement, but that this had to be validated in the early contacts" (Wang and Yu, 2014).

It can be claimed with great probability that:

1. Regardless of previous experience, volunteer background and reason for participation, volunteers are looking for the fulfilment of the promised cooperation ("psychological contract") from the very beginning, not only during the period of volunteer involvement. At the beginning, cooperation is largely based on trust, and these expectations must be met;
2. There is an 'ideal set' of activities that the volunteer expects from their involvement: activity planning, recruitment, training and communication, which the organiser can prepare in advance;
3. If the expectations of the volunteers are not met (with a certain degree of adequacy), then more

- dissatisfaction (and in some cases, termination of the cooperation) can be expected. Although some volunteers have a greater tolerance for uncertainty and change, this tolerance threshold should not be significantly exceeded. The desire to be part of a unique event may attract volunteers at the outset, but may not be a strong enough motive for greater tolerance of unfulfilled promises and expectations;
4. Sporting events generate more interest in volunteering and there is a need for effective volunteer management at each event. These can then generate a positive wave of volunteering at other events.

### 5. Research on volunteer motivation – Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS)

The target group for the first survey consisted of volunteers who had participated in the 2014 and 2016 Olympic Parks projects or the 2018 Olympic Festivals, or were registered for the 2020 Olympic Festival. Volunteers were contacted through an emailing with a link to the online survey and also through Facebook groups. These groups were created for each project and only registered volunteers were added to them. Here, communication always took place in the run-up to and during the event and after the event these groups continue to be used to communicate further volunteer projects (Mirovský, Novotný, 2022).

The total number of visits to the questionnaire page was 823, of which the number of completed questionnaires is 370, the number of incomplete questionnaires is 187 and the number of views is 266. The overall success rate of completing the questionnaire is 45%.

The focus group for the second survey consisted of volunteers who had attended the 2021 or 2022 Olympic Festival. Volunteers were contacted via emailing a link to the online survey and also through Facebook groups. The total number of visits to the page where the questionnaire was available was 308, with 131 completed and 177 incom-

plete. The overall success rate of completing the questionnaire is 42.5%.

The questions were based on the validated “Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS)” and included 24 possible motivations, with respondents answering on a five-point Likert scale:

1. To help others and the community
2. To become associated with the Olympics
3. To make job contacts
4. To support my nation
5. To gain work experience which might lead to employment
6. Volunteer tradition in my family
7. Opportunity to establish contacts with experts from the same field
8. Commitment as a citizen
9. Individual challenge
10. Belonging to a team
11. To feel valued and respected
12. Opportunity to meet with elite athletes
13. Gain knowledge about the culture of the country where the Olympiad is held
14. To meet new people and make new friends
15. Passion for the Games
16. Spirit of solidarity and peace enshrined in the Olympic philosophy
17. To support the spirit of volunteerism
18. To learn new skills
19. Memories that will last a lifetime
20. For nationalistic pride
21. For materialistic rewards (e.g. official ATHOC volunteer uniforms)
22. To attend an Olympic event
23. I'm involved in sports
24. Being a volunteer at the Olympic Festival is considered prestigious

Four questions (numbers 2, 4, 22 and 24) have been worded slightly differently to reflect volunteer participation in the Olympic Festival (formerly the Olympic Park) rather than the Olympics directly, but their meaning remains unchanged. Based on the results of the 2019 survey, two questions, numbers 25 and 26, were added to the questionnaire:

→ 25. Make new friendly contacts, make more friends for my leisure activities

26. To acquire, to learn new skills that I will use in my future life.

These questions supplemented the OVMS for the research needs of the Olympic Festivals. The answers to these two questions are not part of the overall evaluation.

## 6. Results in the field of motivation

All 24 possible motives were ranked in order of frequency of responses from most to least important and were compared to the 2019 results.

The result from the questionnaire survey in 2022 is presented as the basic value, and the change in the point value and the shift in the order of all 24 motifs are related to the results from 2019.

The five most important motives were ranked as follows:

1. Memories that will last a lifetime
2. To meet new people and make new friends
3. To become associated with the Olympics
4. To attend an Olympic event
5. To help the others and the community (results compare with Kucharská et al, 2022).

Compared to the 2019 results, there were very few changes in the most important motivations for volunteers to participate. The five most important motives according to this questionnaire remained unchanged, with only two pairs swapping their positions (second and third and fourth and fifth rankings). However, the scores of the answers show changes in hundredths of a point.

The most important motive in both questionnaire surveys was 'to get memories that will last a

**Table 2 » Top five motives for volunteer participation in the 2020 and 2021 Olympic Festivals and changes compared to 2019**

2022	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
very important	91	77	78	61	57
rather important	29	43	40	55	52
neutral	5	7	3	6	17
rather unimportant	3	2	8	6	4
very unimportant	2	1	2	3	1
Total	130	130	131	131	131
	4,6	4,5	4,4	4,3	4,2
	Memories that will last a lifetime	To meet new people and make new friends	To become associated with the Olympics	To attend an Olympic event	To help the others and the community
movement vs. 2019		▲	▼	▲	▼
shift in the order		1	1	1	1
change in point value		0,1	-0	0	-0,1

Source: materials by the author, based on the results of the questionnaire survey

**Table 3** » *The five least important motives for volunteer participation in the 2020 and 2021 Olympic Festivals and changes compared to 2019*

2022	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
very important	21	14	12	9	15
rather important	34	34	24	24	16
neutral	24	37	51	32	21
rather unimportant	25	19	22	25	12
very unimportant	25	24	21	29	48
Total	129	128	130	119	112
	3	3	2,9	2,7	2,4
	To gain work experience which might lead to employment	To feel valued and respected	To make job contacts	Commitment as a citizen	Volunteer tradition in my family
movement vs. 2019	▼	▲	▼		
shift in the order	2	1	2		
change in point value	-0	0	-0		

Source: materials by the author, based on the results of the questionnaire survey

lifetime'. The top five most important motives for participation show that for volunteers at Olympic Festivals, the important motivation is the connection to the Olympic Games, the opportunity to gain memories associated with the event and to help in accordance with others, and the opportunity to meet new people.

The five least important motives out of 24 possible motives were

20. To gain work experience which might lead to employment
21. To feel valued and respected
22. To make job contacts
23. Commitment as a citizen
24. Volunteer tradition in my family

Even in the group of the least important motives for volunteering at the Olympic Festival there were no major changes, although the shift of some motives is more pronounced in this group than in

the group of the most important motives. The motivation "To gain work experience that could lead to employment" is among the last five (moving down 2 positions and losing 0.26 points), which, together with the shift of 2 positions (from 20th to 22nd) of the motive "To make job contacts", shows that volunteers do not perceive participation in the Olympic Festival as an opportunity to gain new job contacts. The last, twenty-fifth position in both surveys was occupied by "Volunteer tradition in my family". Here it can be inferred that this is a result of the political situation in Czechoslovakia after 1948, when traditional "volunteering" as we perceive it now was interrupted and only started to return after the return to democracy after 1989, therefore the volunteering tradition may now be (re)starting by our volunteers.

In addition to these five most important and five least important motives, the following two mo-

**Table 4 » Motives ranked 6th to 19th for volunteer participation in the 2020 and 2021 Olympic Festivals and changes from 2019**

2022	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.
very important	58	60	60	51	41	41	45	30	33	31	25	24	21	14
rather important	49	49	42	54	54	47	38	43	47	44	34	36	42	45
neutral	15	10	16	15	24	25	22	32	24	30	41	37	31	37
rather unimportant	6	8	6	6	7	9	13	9	10	9	18	20	23	18
very unimportant	2	4	5	4	4	6	10	10	14	15	10	13	12	15
Total	130	131	129	130	130	128	128	124	128	129	128	130	129	129
	4,2	1,2	4,1	4,1	3,9	3,8	3,7	3,6	3,6	3,5	3,4	3,3	3,3	3,2
	To learn new skills	Individual challenge	Passion for the Games	To support the spirit of volunteerism	Spirit of solidarity and peace enshrined in the Olympic philosophy	Opportunity to meet with elite athletes	I'm involved in sports	Being a volunteer at the Olympic Festival is considered prestigious	Belonging to a team	For nationalistic pride	Opportunity to establish contacts with experts from the same field	Commitment as a citizen	Gain knowledge about the culture of the country where the Olympiad is held	For materialistic rewards (e.g. official volunteer uniforms)
movement vs. 2019						▲	►	▲	►	►			▲	▲
shift in the order						1	1	2	1	1			1	2

Source: materials by the author, based on the results of the questionnaire survey

tives moved up two positions in the overall ranking of other motives:

- Being an Olympic Festival volunteer is considered prestigious (ranked 13th in the 2022 survey, 15<sup>th</sup> in the 2019 survey).
- For material benefits (e.g., official volunteer uniform) (in the 2022 research at position 19, 21<sup>st</sup> in the 2019 survey).

This was not a significant shift, but in line with what was stated for the five most important motives, the first of these two complement the trend of the importance of linking up the Olympic Festivals and the Olympics, and arguably the importance and reputation of the event itself. The shift in the importance of material benefits (this motivation ranked among the five least important in the first questionnaire) may indicate to organisers the greater importance of the facilities they provide to volunteers.

## 7. Benefits for volunteers

In the Olympic Festivals project, volunteers work completely free of charge and receive material and non-material compensation for their help. When communicating with volunteers, we call them “benefits”. Getting this benefits’ right is crucial from the organiser’s point of view for the overall and long-term cooperation and support from the volunteers.

In addition to the basic motivation to participate in a sporting event, these benefits can also play an important role in the decision-making process of potential volunteers. Some of the benefits that can be provided by the organiser are already included in the list of possible motivations (e.g. the opportunity to meet elite athletes, material benefits such e.g. official volunteer uniform), some are related to the security of the volunteers and others are added values to their involvement.

Among the basic benefits that the organizer must provide are volunteer clothing, meals and drinks, sufficient facilities, as well as volunteer management and service by a team of coordinators.

Among the non-material benefits that the organiser should consider, we also include the volunteers’ programme, where for example in the framework of Olympic Festivals, this includes the booking of the sports venues for their sporting activities and ensuring running of the sports venues, volunteer meetings and the final volunteer party and other activities beyond the normal scope of activities.

If the organiser knows the preferences in the area of benefits, i.e. what volunteers consider important, they can set up communication at the time of recruitment of volunteers and then the specific provision and programme for volunteers during the sporting event accordingly.

Even if volunteers work on the event for free, it does not mean that their involvement is not a budget item. At a large sporting event, volunteer recruitment prior to the event and management during the event needs to be handled by a professional team of coordinators. Volunteer uniforms need to be provided for volunteers, also meals and drinks. As well as facilities for the volunteers. And if the organiser allocates a sports field to the volunteers for their leisure activity, which is otherwise rented out commercially, this income will not be available for the duration of the volunteers’ use of the sports field. At some events and venues the organiser also pays for transport and accommodation. This applies especially to events where there is insufficient background in the number of volunteers (e.g. there is no large city close to the event from which volunteers could be recruited in larger numbers, the Olympic Park project had to deal with this in 2016) or where volunteers cannot be approached to cooperate.

Therefore, even if volunteers work for free at the event and their involvement costs less than what it would cost for paid employees in these positions, it is usually not a completely negligible expense and the organiser must consider well not only the number of volunteers needed to implement the event, but also set up their clothing, meals and other program properly.

**Table 5 » Ranking of the importance of each benefit for volunteers at the 2020 and 2022 Olympic Festival**

2022	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
very important	113	105	74	49	34	36	47	33	34	27	35	22	26	9
rather important	16	20	35	50	62	52	36	41	33	48	35	39	42	28
neutral	2	5	16	26	23	24	23	18	21	35	21	41	30	39
rather unimportant	0	1	3	4	7	8	10	9	10	15	17	12	24	23
very unimportant	0	0	2	1	4	5	9	7	9	2	9	6	8	17
Total	131	131	130	130	130	125	125	108	107	127	117	120	130	116
	4,8	4,7	4,4	4,1	3,9	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,7	3,7	3,6	3,5	3,4	2,9
	Catering	Drinking regime	Separate facilities Volunteers	Volunteer clothes	Accompanying program	Final party for volunteers	Free on-site transport	Arranging cheaper accommodation	Accommodation for free	A gift as a souvenir	Providing transport to and from the venue	Merchandising	Participation certificate	Financial contribution
movement vs. 2019														
shift in the order					4	4	2		2	4		1	1	
change in point value					0,3	0,3				-0				

Source: materials by the author, based on the results of the questionnaire survey

“This approach primarily concentrates on the consequences for the supply of other goods and services in the society. The hosting of a sporting event can reduce this supply if people work at the event instead of producing other goods and services. This applies to the formal as well as in the informal economic sector. At the same time, many volunteers will enjoy doing the job and receive so-called psychological rewards. A socio-economic analysis needs to consider both these impacts, although it might be problematic to measure them in monetary terms.

There is also a need for further information about the resources that is necessary to host major sporting events. Some event organizers have discovered too late that hosting the event requires more than they originally expected, and such experiences can turn out to be extremely expensive. This explains, at least partly, why quite a number of previous organizers have ended up in deep financial difficulties after the event” (Solberg, 2011).

### *8. Results in terms of benefits provided*

For the 2019 survey, a list of benefits for volunteers that can be provided by the organizer has been created. These included basic support, i.e. food and drink, as well as experiences that the volunteer can take away from the event. Based on the evaluation of the 2019 questionnaire survey, the same list of benefits was used in 2022.

In both questionnaire surveys, volunteers had the opportunity to suggest additional benefits for their participation that they would welcome. In the 2019 questionnaire survey, the volunteers did not mention any other benefit; therefore, the offer of benefits to be evaluated in the 2022 questionnaire survey was the same. Table No. 5 shows the results of the evaluation of all provided benefits. They are ranked in order from the first to the fourteenth place according to importance in 2022. The table also shows the shift in ranking and the change in the point evaluation compared to the results of the questionnaire survey in 2019.

The four most important benefits are the same in both surveys, i.e. in 2019 and 2022. These are the provision of food and drink, separate facilities for volunteers and volunteer clothing. The first three benefits are absolutely essential for volunteers, with no volunteers marking them as unimportant in the first case, and only five volunteers marking them as important in the case of separate facilities. Therefore, it can be concluded that these three benefits must be provided by the organiser.

Two benefits, i.e. the provision of an accompanying programme and a closing party for the volunteers, moved up four places in the importance rating towards greater importance. These are intangible benefits, but they support the results from the first part of the survey, i.e. the importance of meeting other people as an important motivational element.

Conversely, the importance of the benefit ‘keepsake gift’ dropped four places, which, together with the last rank of ‘financial fulfilment’ in terms of the importance of benefits, may indicate that Olympic Festival volunteers prefer to create a good volunteer programme more than financial reward or material gifts.

### *9. Limits of the study*

The results of the survey in the area of volunteering can be influenced by the personality of each volunteer in the area of socially beneficial activity – i.e. the degree of need to do well, to be part of a wider complex, to feel the meaningfulness of their life actions, etc. At the same time, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is also necessary to consider the individual capacity of each volunteer as an individual to adapt to the societal problem and his choice of specific coping strategies (standing outside the professional scope of our study); these strategies may be reflected both in the area of motivation and, in particular, in the benefits obtained from volunteering (e.g. possible decrease in interest in travel – risk associated with vaccination/covid virus, decrease in interest in free tickets due to

- high numbers of people, etc.), volunteers' uncertainty with the further development of the pandemic and various restrictions on sporting events.

### *10. Conclusions and suggestions for further research*

The organizer of a large sporting event should know what are the motivations of volunteers for participating in the event and set up the communication of the event accordingly when starting and during the recruitment of volunteers.

The Olympic Festival has one big advantage, and that is the connection with the biggest sporting event in the world, the Olympic Games. It is a sporting event that is known by almost everyone in the world, it has a great prestige and a large following.

In addition to this, the Olympic Parks and Olympic Festivals project already has a history in 2022, the fifth time it has been held, and therefore its popularity and prestige is growing.

Thanks to these connections, the participation in the event itself, the connection with the Olympic Games and the prestige of the Olympic Festival are already a big motivation for volunteers. And then the associated motivation to help, which is also intrinsic to all volunteers, and the desire to make new friends.

The least important motives for volunteering are the opportunity to gain new contacts and the possibility of networking. Here I see space for long-term work with volunteers so that they understand that volunteering can be one of the important factors in getting a new job. Volunteer experience, the desire to help in their free time, knowledge of the sporting environment and other benefits of being involved in the organisation of a sporting event can be very beneficial to future employers. Even the Olympic Festival organising team has several members who started out as volunteers at sporting events, so we can show specific stories of people who have gone from volunteers to managing members of organising committees and

show that this route is interesting for future employment.

Related to this are the results of the second part of the survey, which is the ranking of the importance of the benefit "certificate of participation" in the penultimate place in terms of importance (down one position compared to 2019). Thus, volunteers do not consider the certificate as an important bonus. However, this certificate can become part of their experience portfolio, which they can use when they are possibly negotiating for a new job.

Encouraging the demonstration of volunteering, including certificates for participation, as a good way to get a good or better job may be one way that institutional support for volunteering at major sporting events can go.

The results of the two surveys in 2019 and 2022 show that the preferences of volunteers at Olympic Festivals have not changed substantially. A major advantage of the Olympic Festivals is the connection to the most important sporting event in the world, the Olympic Games, and volunteers see this connection as one of the main motivations for getting involved. Similarly, the volunteer clothing that is provided at the Olympic Festivals by the Czech Olympic Committee's partner Alpine Pro is a great advantage and is of very high quality and exceptional.

What has changed between 2019 and 2022 is the greater importance of benefits that are non-material and complement the importance of the motivation to "meet new people and make new friends". Thereby is the accompanying programme and the closing party. The organiser should therefore recognise the importance of these benefits and include them not only in the organisation of the event but also in the plan when approaching volunteers to participate.

The questionnaire survey also included research on the preferences of volunteers in communicating with them before and during the event. The results of this part of the survey are not part of this material. However, there were significant

changes in communication preferences prior to the event, primarily due to the increased use of virtual environments for communication due to the Covid-19 disease pandemic.

The surveys were only conducted in conjunction with one event, the Olympic Festival. In order

to properly set motivations for participation and benefit preferences, it would be interesting to reach volunteers from other, large sporting events that do not have a similar connection to the Olympics. There is room for further research here.

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## ABSTRACT

*The contribution focuses on the motivation of volunteers to actively participate in the Olympic Festivals project organized in the Czech Republic during the Olympic Games and their preferences in terms of material and non-material benefits provided by the organizer. It describes the specific involvement of volunteers in*



→ *the Olympic Festival in Brno in the winter of 2022. It highlights the need to have knowledge of the different motives of volunteers to sign up and participate in the event itself. Olympic Festivals last 17 days and the event's organisation requires long-term involvement from volunteers.*

*It compares the results of a questionnaire survey of volunteers involved in 2021 and 2022 with the same survey results conducted in 2019. The main research question was whether there is a significant difference in the variables of interest (motivations, benefits) between the two surveys. Only one major circumstance differentiates these surveys, and that is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which completely stopped the organisation of major sporting events for a certain period of time in 2020–21, and still brought restrictions on participation in February 2022, whether related to the number of visitors or restrictions for the organising team, such as the obligation to vaccinate.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*Sport Volunteers; Olympic Festival; Psychological Contract; Motivations; Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale; Benefits; Covid-19*

