



STIFTERVERBAND

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ZIVIZ-SURVEY 2023

Civil Society Organizations in Transition –
Recognizing Opportunities for Shaping Change.
Strengthening Resilience and Diversity.



CONTENT

1	Executive Summary	02
2	Introduction	05
3	The ZiviZ-Survey as an instrument for continuous monitoring	07
4	Landscape of organizations	09
5	Fields of activity	16
6	Understanding of roles of organizations as part of society	25
7	Members, volunteers, and employees	30
8	Financial resources	40
9	Focus topics	48
9.1	Diversity in organizations	48
9.2	Resilience and digitalization in times of crisis	52
9.3	Collaboration and support structures	56
10	Conclusion and recommendations	61
	References	65
	ZiviZ im Stifterverband	69
	Imprint	71

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 650,000 civil society organizations in Germany

In 2022, according to a comprehensive evaluation by ZiviZ, there were 656,888 civil society organizations in Germany, with registered associations (eingetragene Vereine) making up 94 percent of these. While the pace of founding new associations is decreasing, non-profit corporations and cooperatives are experiencing a notably strong increase. The landscape of associations has been developing differently across regions: the largest growth in the number of associations between 2016 and 2022 occurred in Berlin and Bavaria, while the greatest decline was in Thuringia and Bremen. Urban centers, particularly Hamburg and Leipzig, experienced high dynamism in the founding of new associations in recent years.

Most organizations operate with very limited resources

More than half of the civil society organizations in Germany have total revenues of less than 10,000 euros. Only 27 percent of the organizations have paid employees. In recent years, the cultural sector, which highly depends on revenue from events and visitors, faced particular financial difficulties due to the pandemic. Furthermore, the overall positive employment development in the Third Sector appears to benefit primarily larger, professionally operating organizations.

New educational and environmental organizations contribute to a greater diversity in activity fields

Organizations are active in a wide variety of fields, with over half of them primarily working in sports, culture, or education. However, in the past ten years, the shares of organizations in sports and social services have slightly decreased, while the areas of education and environment have increased. Compared to rural areas, cities exhibit a greater diversity of activity fields and a stronger focus on education, science, and social issues. In rural areas, traditional fields of activity such as sports, culture, and leisure are more prevalent, especially in regions with weaker socio-economic conditions.

Changes in the understanding of roles and in the relationship with the state

The understanding of the role of civil society organizations is changing. More and more organizations want to provide an impetus for social change and participate in political processes. Expectations of the state are also changing, particularly with regard to greater financial support. The background to this is the clearly recognizable tendency for organizations to increasingly act as a gap filler for the lack of state-provided services. Organizations are becoming involved in areas that were traditionally the responsibility of the state. Despite this development, there are still many organizations that offer activities and services completely independent of state funding.

Trends in the number of volunteers reveal the winners and losers of the pandemic

The pandemic has intensified pre-existing challenges faced by organizations in recruiting and retaining members and volunteers. However, the various fields of activity are affected to varying degrees. Sports clubs are facing particularly significant problems: in hardly any other area have the numbers of volunteers declined as frequently in recent years as in organized sports. In the areas of environment, civil protection, and communal provision tasks, on the other hand, an above-average number of organizations report increases in members and engaged volunteers.

Many organizations struggle with filling leadership positions – not least due to bureaucratic burdens in leadership roles

Many organizations face significant difficulties in filling leadership positions. This is due not only to the generally decreasing willingness of volunteers to commit but also to the high bureaucratic burdens associated with work in voluntary leadership positions. Nearly three-quarters of the organizations rate the administrative tasks for their central decision making body as particularly time-consuming.

Increasing decoupling of engagement from formal membership in an organization

30 percent of organizations now have volunteers who are not members of the organization, up from 21 percent in 2012. In these organizations, the numbers of volunteers have developed significantly better over the past years than in organizations that consider membership a necessary precondition for volunteering. This increasing decoupling of membership and engagement reflects the diminishing willingness to commit to an organization and highlights the need to develop low-threshold concepts and to identify alternative sources of funding to compensate for potential revenue losses due to missing membership fees.

Civil society organizations still rarely reflect increasing societal diversity internally

Civil society is a reflection of societal diversity, offering a space for people with various interests, worldviews, and social and cultural backgrounds. However, the increasing diversity in society is still too rarely represented within the structures of organizations. Notably, nearly half of the organizations have no young individuals under 30 years in leadership positions. Moreover, only 11 percent of organizations report having volunteers with diverse cultural backgrounds, and only 21 percent report social diversity among their volunteers. Not every organization needs to display a high degree of social or cultural diversity internally. Nonetheless, promoting diversity is essential to enable civil society organizations to make effective contributions to integration and social cohesion, as well as to solve internal succession issues by opening up more broadly to new demographic groups.

Reserved sentiment on the consequences and benefits of digitalization

Many organizations have made progress in digitalization in recent years. However, only a portion of them sees substantial benefits from digital work for organizational development. Less than one in ten organizations has been successful in attracting young volunteers through increased digital work. Similarly, only a few organizations reach more people who are not on-site or involved in decision-

making processes within the organization. On a positive note, one in five organizations has seen an increase in participants in their programs and activities due to digitalization. Concerningly, however, nearly one in five organizations reports a decrease in the sense of community as a result of digital work.

One in four organizations now collaborates with at least one engagement-promoting infrastructure facility

Local contact points for civic engagement, volunteer agencies, or community foundations have become important pillars of engagement promotion in many places. These and other engagement-promoting infrastructure facilities need to be put on a solid financial basis to sustainably strengthen local engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Civil society organizations in transition

Civic engagement is deeply rooted in the daily lives of many people. This is evident in the nearly 40 percent of people over 14 in Germany who engage in at least one voluntary activity (Simonson et al. 2022), as well as in the more than 650,000 civil society organizations nationwide, along with numerous movements and groups committed to a variety of social, cultural, and political goals (Schubert et al. 2023a).

The societal benefits of a vibrant civil society are manifold. In recent years, the role of civil society in managing societal crises has been a focal point of media attention and political discourse on promoting civic engagement (Krimmer et al. 2020; Hoff et al. 2021; Hutter et al. 2021; Schrader 2021; Barreto et al. 2022). Also, the increasing importance of civil society organizations in strengthening public services, especially in rural areas (Thürling/Hanisch 2021; Butzin/Gärtner 2017; Nadler 2017), is being discussed more frequently in the context of demographic change and the creation or assurance of comparable living conditions in urban and rural areas (BBSR 2021).

Without question citizens join civil society organizations to develop local solutions for specific problems. However, focusing on the role of civil society as a gap filler for inadequate state services can underestimate the diverse societal benefits of civil society and the motives for civic engagement. Many citizens seek spaces for social exchange and togetherness in voluntary work, opportunities to express shared values and interests beyond professional work and family, as well as increasing participation in political decision-making processes. Thus, civil society organizations contribute significantly to a stronger societal cohesion and to the functioning of a modern democracy.

However, civic engagement has been characterized by a fundamental change for some time. Informal and short-term engagement increasingly shapes the face of civil society, for example, in response to sudden needs in times of crisis (Simsa et al. 2019). At the same time, traditional organizations find it increasingly difficult to retain long-term volunteers, especially from younger generations (Mutz 2011; Schührer 2019; Simonson et al. 2022), leading many organizations to worry about succession. The thematic orientation of engagement is also changing, as evidenced by the founding dynamics of environmental and educational organizations. In times of declining membership in parties and unions, political discussions and the articulation of political goals and interests are increasingly shifting to the realm of civil society organizations. Accordingly, these organizations increasingly see themselves as actors in political will formation and actively demand participation in democratic processes (Grande 2018; Grande 2021; Krimmer et al. 2022; Pornschlegel/Jürgensen 2020). In addition, with the rise of right-wing populism, civil society structures are also used by movements and organizations to pursue "uncivil" concerns with "uncivil" means. Whether it's group-related misanthropy,

discrimination against people of different faiths, cultural backgrounds, or sexual orientations, the normative image of a liberal, inclusive, and progressive civil society is increasingly being questioned empirically (Schroeder et al. 2020; Roth 2021; Frei/Nachtwey 2021; Geiges et al. 2015). Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis intensified the need for digitalization in organizations and led to the expansion of digital offerings and internal work processes (Krimmer et al. 2022).

Objective and target audience of the study

A precise understanding of the structures and developments within the landscape of civil society organizations is also necessary for the numerous current political projects promoting engagement. For example, the federal government has set the goal of developing a new engagement strategy at the federal level in cooperation with civil society to strengthen and promote civic engagement (BMFSFJ 2023a). Initiatives such as the Democracy Promotion Act (“Demokratiefördergesetz”) aim to ensure structural funding for measures in democracy promotion, diversity management, extremism prevention, and political education (BMFSFJ 2023b). Furthermore, a strategy to support social enterprises and social innovations has been developed, aiming to eliminate legal obstacles in founding social enterprises while simultaneously enabling more growth (Deutscher Bundestag 2023). Discussions about reforming the law on nonprofit status to clarify the scope and limits of political activity within the framework of nonprofit status (Schubert et al. 2023b) and to simplify engagement (Bündnis für Gemeinnützigkeit 2023) are also worth mentioning. The establishment and program of the German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering (DSEE) can also be seen as a clear signal from the government to strengthen engagement in rural areas.

Therefore, the aim of this report is to contribute to the targeted promotion of civic engagement with a new empirical database on the diverse landscape of civil society organizations in Germany. The study also provides orientation knowledge for boards and management of nonprofit organizations and associations. Finally, the study serves as a basis for further research projects for academics in nonprofit and civil society research.

First, the ZiviZ-Survey is introduced as an established instrument for continuous monitoring of civil society organizations. Subsequently, central structural features of civil society organizations in terms of fields of activity, personnel structures, and financing are presented. The report then addresses a number of topics such as diversity, crisis resilience, or collaboration with engagement-promoting infrastructure facilities, which are often at the center of current engagement policy debates. Finally, based on selected findings of the study, recommendations for action for engagement promotion are discussed.

THE ZIVIZ-SURVEY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CONTINUOUS MONITORING

The dynamics of the Third Sector and corresponding political debates highlight the need for current and robust data that allows us to illustrate current developments, understand the backgrounds of these developments, predict trends, and provide essential orientation knowledge for political initiatives. In civil society research, data-based survey methods are increasingly gaining importance. Since 2016, the Civil Society Data Forum (“Forum Zivilgesellschaftsdaten”) has served as a platform for exchange among research institutions and associations on parallel survey formats and standardization possibilities (Krimmer 2019; Kleiner 2019).

A key element in this is also considering civic engagement in a cross-sector perspective. For example, the organizational reporting of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), the Sports Development Report (Breuer/Feiler 2021), or the overall statistics of the Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare provide important insights into the developments in organized sports and welfare. However, comparative approaches that draw connections between different fields of activity and thus show similarities and differences in developments are also important.

In this context, the ZiviZ-Survey plays a key role with its broad perspective on civil society organizations. The ZiviZ-Survey is the only representative survey in Germany that captures the entire spectrum of formally organized civil society organizations. It regularly captures the essential structural characteristics of associations, foundations, non-profit corporations, and community-oriented cooperatives, where a large part of civic engagement is organized. After the first two survey waves (ZiviZ-Survey 2012 [Krimmer/Priemer 2013] and ZiviZ-Survey 2017 [Priemer et al. 2017]), the ZiviZ-Survey was conducted for the third time. The survey complements the other two central instruments of continuous reporting on civic engagement in Germany: the German Volunteer Survey (Simonson et al. 2022) and the Federal Government's Engagement Report (BMFSFJ 2020).

For the ZiviZ-Survey 2023, a database of all civil society organizations was compiled using register extracts to be as complete as possible. As of April 2022, this database included 651,605 organizations. Of these, 125,000 organizations, sorted by legal form and federal state, were randomly selected and invited to participate in an online survey by mail. The survey took place in September 2022. Nationwide, 12,792 organizations participated (see Figure 1). The net response rate was 12.6 percent. The collected data were weighted by legal form and, for associations, additionally by federal state. This ensured that the distribution of civil society organizations by legal form and federal state in the survey corresponded to the distribution in the total population and was thus representative.

Detailed information about the methodology of the ZiviZ-Survey 2023 can be found in the methodological report on the website. Additionally, the questionnaire is available for download there. For more information, visit:

www.ziviz.de/ziviz-survey

Figure 01
Method of the ZiviZ-Survey



Source: ZiviZ im Stifterverband

The ZiviZ-Survey 2023 was made possible through funding from the German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering (DSEE) and the federal states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony, Saarland, and Schleswig-Holstein. In March 2023, a first report based on the new data was published, providing an overview of trends and changes in organized civil society over the last ten years for selected indicators (Schubert et al. 2023a). In the following months, eight country reports were written, each focusing on the similarities and peculiarities of civil society organizations in various federal states.⁰¹

This report takes a step further by making more detailed differentiations for selected structural characteristics and challenges of the organization according to criteria such as fields of activity, urban and rural spaces, or age of the organization. The report also addresses specific thematic areas such as diversity, resilience, and digitalization, as well as engagement infrastructures.

⁰¹
Available at:
www.ziviz.de/ziviz-survey/bundeslaender

LANDSCAPE OF ORGANIZATIONS

In 2022, Germany had 656,888 registered civil society organizations.⁰² This is the result of extracts from the association, commercial, and cooperative registers, as well as the foundation statistics of the Association of German Foundations (“Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen”). Associations make up nearly 94 percent of all civil society organizations, with 615,759 associations registered in the association register in 2022. Since the last comprehensive inventory by ZiviZ in 2016, the number of associations has increased moderately by 2 percent, from 603,886 to 615,759 (see Table 1).

Notably, there is a dynamic founding trend among non-profit corporations. As of April 2022, 14,540 non-profit corporations were identified through the commercial register, including 12,611 gGmbHs, 1,878 gUGs, and 51 gAGs.⁰³ The commercial register extract in 2016 revealed 11,440 non-profit corporations, marking a growth of 27 percent between 2016 and 2022.

A similar founding dynamic is observed among community-oriented cooperatives, which include, according to the cooperative register reading, 284 cooperatives with recognized non-profit status, 966 energy cooperatives, and 647 community-oriented cooperatives (such as village shops, cinemas, breweries, community centers, or multigenerational houses). In recent years, it has been observed that the proportion of community-oriented cooperatives, which increasingly take on local public service tasks, is rising compared to cooperatives with primarily economic orientation (Thürling/Bayer 2023).

02

This number slightly differs from the total population of 651,605 organizations determined for the ZiviZ-Survey 2023 (see Figure 1). More information on this can be found in the methodological report for the ZiviZ-Survey 2023.

03

Currently, there are no precise figures available from the tax offices on the total number of non-profit corporations. An estimation by the IAB projected a total of 25,300 gGmbHs for 2016, see Data Report on Civil Society: www.ziviz.de/daten-report-zivilgesellschaft. The different findings are further discussed in the methodological report for the ZiviZ-Survey 2023.

Table 01
Population of civil society organizations by legal form

	2016	2022
Voluntary associations	603,886	615,759
Non-profit corporations	11,440	14,540
Public welfare-oriented cooperatives	1,322	1,939
Foundations of civil law	21,806	24,650
Total	638,454	656,888

Sources: Register of Associations (Vereinsregister); Commercial Register (Handelsregister); Register of Cooperatives (Genossenschaftsregister); Federal Association of German Foundations 2022.

There is also continued growth among foundations of civil law. Between 2016 and 2022, their number increased by 13 percent to a total of 24,650. Although the number of annual new foundations has been declining in most years since 2008, it has been rising again since 2019. In 2021, 863 foundations were newly established, of which only 473 are non-profit foundations, indicating an increasing proportion of foundations with private-benefit or at least mixed objectives (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen 2022).

The founding dynamic of associations is declining

The number of associations in Germany is growing, albeit much slower than in previous years. This is shown by data published by the Federal Office of Justice, which contain the stock of registered associations from 1995 to 2021. This data shows that fewer new associations are being registered each year. In 2021, 9,957 associations were newly founded, compared to more than 15,000 ten years earlier (see Figure 2). Although the number of new registrations in 2021 was still above the number of dissolved associations (7,998), resulting in a net increase of 1,959 associations, the long-term declining trend in new registrations, along with a relatively constant number of annual dissolutions, suggests that the stock of associations could soon decrease for the first time in decades.⁰⁴

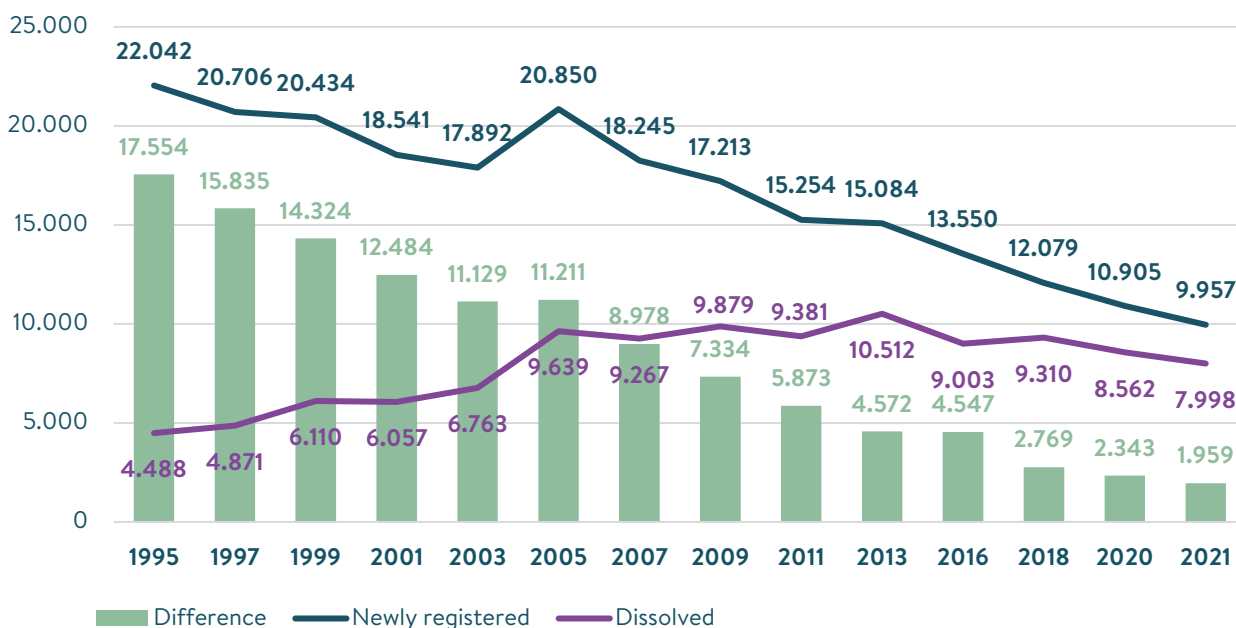
Association density is highest in Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate

The association register extract from 2022 allows us to determine the stock of associations per federal state. The most associations are in North Rhine-Westphalia (121,823 in 2022), followed by Bavaria (93,288) and Baden-Württemberg (86,355), and the fewest in Bremen (3,597), Hamburg (10,100), and Saarland (10,457).

04

Additionally, it can be assumed that there is a substantial number of inactive organizations: During the field phase of the ZiviZ-Survey, many associations informed us about that had been dissolved (some for many years) but were still marked as active in the association register.

Figure 02
Registrations and dissolutions of associations over time (1995–2021)



Sources: Federal Office of Justice 2022; ZiviZ Association Register Extract 2022.

Note: Data from the years 2014 and 2015 are excluded from the analysis (see Federal Office of Justice 2022).

Table 02
Number of associations by federal state over time

	2012	2016	2019	2022	Associations per 1,000 inhabitants (2022)	Development association numbers 2012-2022
Berlin	22,299	24,643	26,749	27,271	7.4	+22.3%
Bavaria	84,833	90,796	89,634	93,288	7.1	+10.0%
Lower Saxony	53,628	56,685	57,090	57,664	7.3	+7.5%
Hamburg	9,405	9,788	9,777	10,100	5.1	+7.4%
Rhineland-Palatinate	36,317	37,989	38,360	38,675	9.5	+6.5%
Saxony	29,080	29,777	30,794	30,926	7.4	+6.3%
Germany	580,294	603,886	608,585	615,759	7.4	+6.1%
North Rhine-Westphalia	115,257	120,207	122,846	121,823	6.8	+5.7%
Schleswig-Holstein	16,432	17,229	17,118	17,360	6.1	+5.6%
Baden-Württemberg	81,822	83,562	84,869	86,355	7.8	+5.5%
Hesse	47,680	50,283	49,674	50,270	8.1	+5.4%
Saarland	9,932	10,337	10,319	10,457	10.7	+5.3%
Saxony-Anhalt	18,458	19,142	19,145	19,254	8.8	+4.3%
Brandenburg	17,928	17,924	17,664	17,683	6.9	-1.4%
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	12,902	12,700	12,278	12,196	7.6	-5.5%
Bremen	3,877	3,727	3,329	3,597	5.0	-7.2%
Thuringia	20,444	19,097	18,939	18,840	8.9	-7.8%

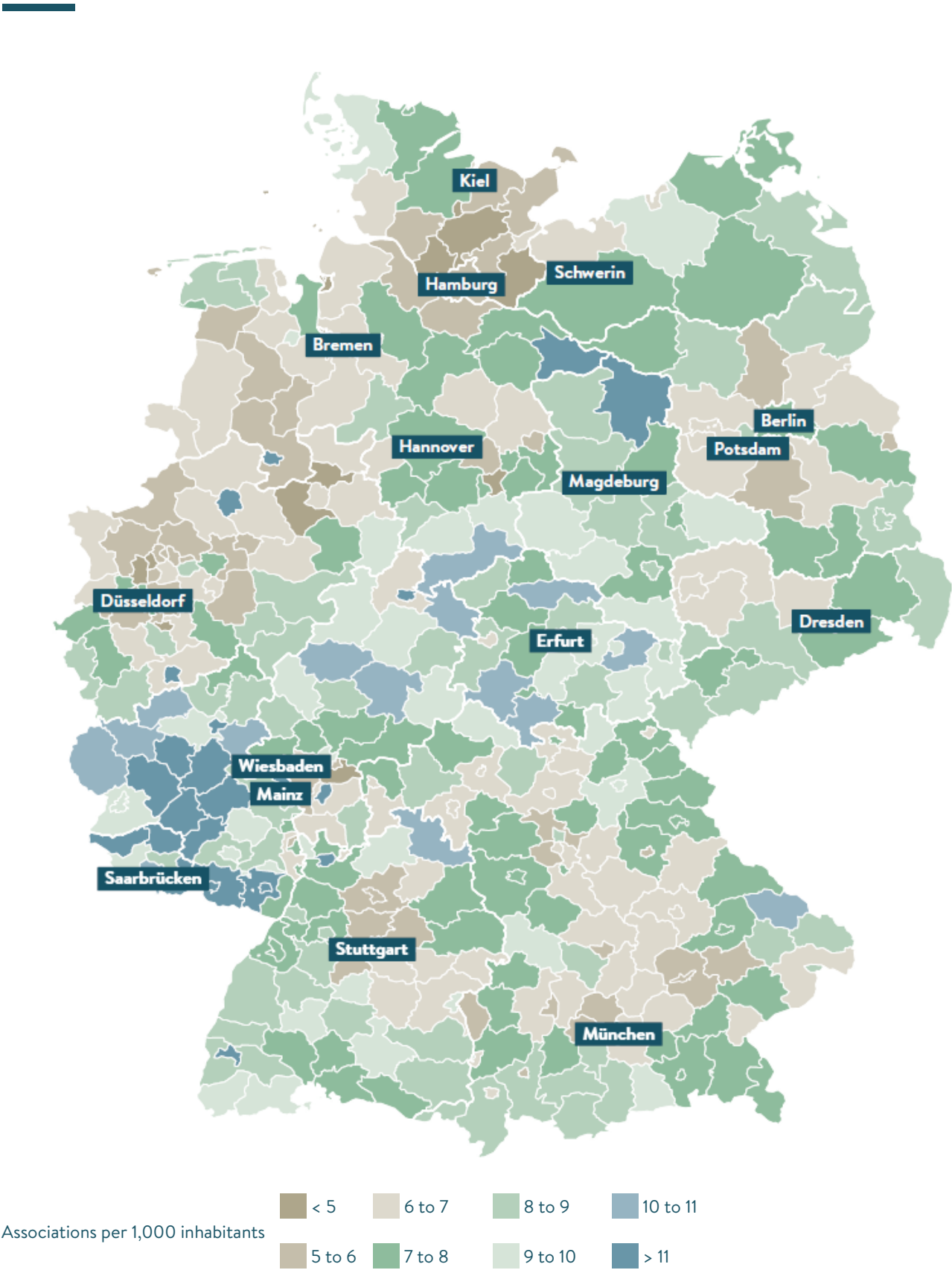
Sources: ZiviZ Association Register Readings 2012, 2016, 2019, and 2022; Federal Statistical Office 2022.

Notes: The numbers of associations for Germany as a whole sometimes differ from the figures of the judicial statistics because the register readings were conducted at different times of the year. The judicial statistics, on the other hand, always refer to the status at the end of the year.

The association density, understood as the number of associations per 1,000 inhabitants, shows that Saarland (11 associations per 1,000 inhabitants) and Rhineland-Palatinate (10) have the highest, and Bremen (5) and Hamburg (5) the lowest association density. There is no clear east-west-divide in association densities. For example, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt have above-average association densities.

However, the association density varies considerably within the federal states (see Figure 3). Not only in Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate, but also in Hesse, Thuringia, or Saxony-Anhalt, there are districts with particularly high association densities. The association densities are predominantly low in the districts of the large states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein.

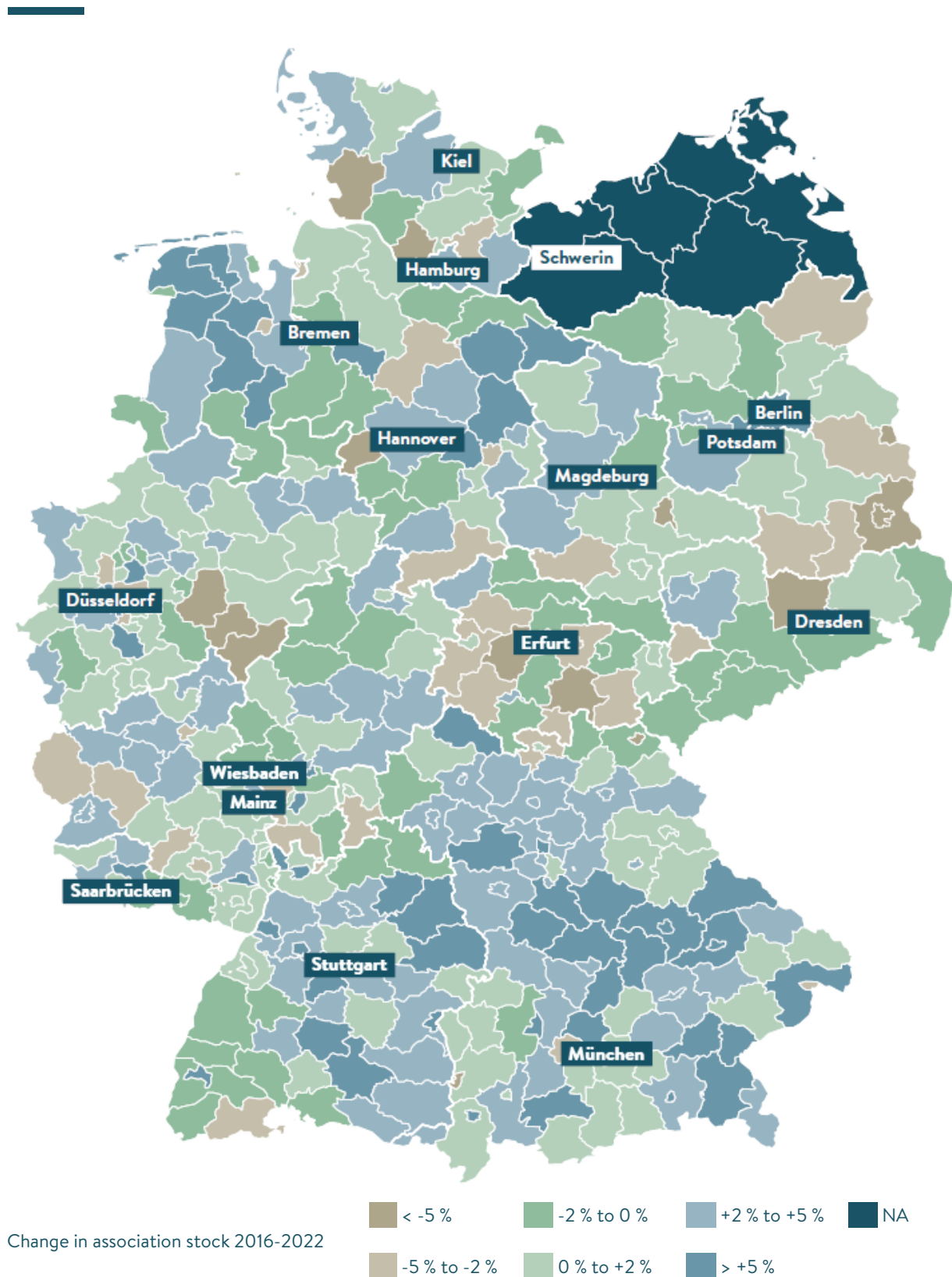
Figure 03
Association density at the district level



Source: ZiviZ Association Register Extract 2022.

Figure 04

Change in population of associations between 2016 and 2022 at the district level



Source: ZiviZ Association Register Extracts 2016 and 2022.

Note: For Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, it is unfortunately not possible to determine the development of the association stock at the district level, as not all association registers were fully digitized at the time of the ZiviZ Association Register extract in 2016. However, Figures 3 and 5 are based solely on the 2022 association list, so the density of associations and the dynamics of new formations can also be reported for districts in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

It should be noted, however, that the indicator only allows limited conclusions about the number of associations in a person's immediate environment. Although city-states typically have lower association densities, people there still have access to many associations in their local environment due to urban concentration. Calculating the association density based on the number of associations per square kilometer would show significantly higher association densities here than in rural states.

A particularly strong increase in the number of associations in Berlin and Bavaria

ZiviZ has carried out association register extracts at four different times in the past decade: 2012, 2016, 2019, and 2022. Based on this, it can be shown that the stock of associations has developed quite differently regionally. Between 2012 and 2022, Berlin recorded by far the largest increase in the stock of associations (22 percent), followed by Bavaria (10 percent) (see Table 2). In contrast, the stock numbers are declining in Thuringia (minus 8 percent), Bremen (minus 7 percent), Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (minus 6 percent), and Brandenburg (minus 1 percent).

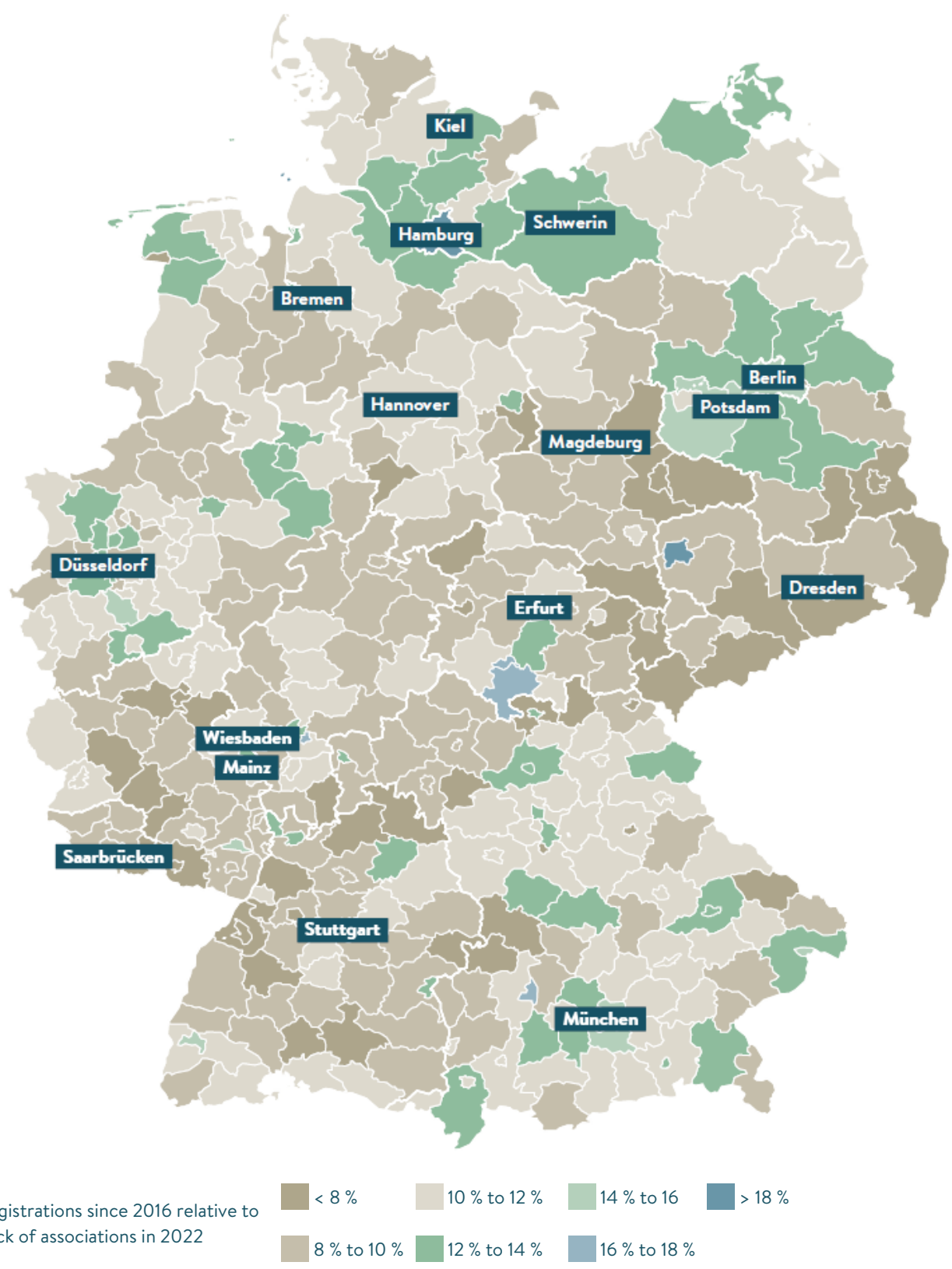
The change in the stock of associations between 2016 and 2022 at the district level shows significant differences within individual federal states (see Figure 4). For example, in Lower Saxony, there are districts with growing and declining numbers of associations. In Thuringia, the number of associations has decreased in almost all districts, while in Bavaria, it has increased. However, it should be noted that despite the declining number of associations, Thuringia still has an above-average association density (see Table 2).

Founding dynamics are particularly high in cities

The examination of stock development does not provide sufficient information about the founding dynamics. For example, a change in the stock of associations of 0 percent in a district could mean that few new associations have been registered and few old ones deleted since 2016. However, it is also conceivable that both the number of new registrations and the number of deletions in the district have been at a high level. In the latter case, the founding dynamics would be high despite hardly any change in the stock of associations and could be an expression of a pronounced "exchange" of organizations.

Therefore, Figure 5 shows the founding dynamics per district. Based on the association list 2022, the proportion of associations founded since 2016 relative to the current total stock of associations in the district is shown. The founding dynamics are particularly high in Hamburg (20 percent of associations were founded since 2016) and Leipzig (19 percent). But even in Brandenburg, where the stock of associations remained almost unchanged from 2016 to 2022 (see Table 2), high founding dynamics are evident in some districts bordering Berlin.

Figure 05
 Founding of associations since 2016 relative to the population of associations
 in 2022 at the district level



New registrations since 2016 relative to the stock of associations in 2022

Source: ZiviZ Association Register Extract 2022.

FIELDS OF ACTIVITY

Civil society organizations are active in a wide range of different fields of activity. The more traditional fields include sports, leisure and socializing, as well as population and disaster protection. Organizations in these fields are comparatively old with a founding year in the median of 1971 (sports), 1981 (leisure/socializing) and 1986 (population/disaster protection).⁰⁵ The newer fields of activity, on the other hand, include education and upbringing, international solidarity, environmental and nature protection, and communal provision tasks. Particularly young are organizations on average in the areas of communal provision tasks (median founding year: 2005) and international solidarity (2003).

In the ZiviZ-Survey, the organizations first state all the areas in which they are active. 38 percent of the organizations are active in at least two different fields of activity. The education sector recorded the most entries with 33 percent, followed by culture (29 percent) and sports (27 percent). Subsequently, organizations were asked in which area they are predominantly active. In this question about the main field of activity, the sports sector is most strongly represented with 22 percent, followed by culture with 18 percent and education with 17 percent. The comparison between the recording of engagement fields with multiple mentions and main engagement illustrates: Many organizations that primarily locate themselves in fields other than education or culture attribute educational and cultural added value to their offers and activities. Figure 6 shows the distribution of all fields of activity in which the organizations are 1) active and 2) predominantly active.

In a ten-year comparison, there are statistically significant declines in the relative shares of the engagement fields of sports and social services (Schubert et al. 2023a). Between 2012 and 2022, the proportion of organizations in the field of sports decreased by 3.7 and in the field of social services by 1.3 percentage points. However, the decline in sports is particularly noticeable in the period between 2012 and 2016. In 2022, the value remained roughly at the level of 2016. Statistically significant increases were recorded between 2012 and 2022 in the areas of education (+3.9 percentage points) and environment (+1.3 percentage points).⁰⁶

Founding dynamics in the fields of activity

When were particularly many organizations founded in which fields of activity? The founding dynamics in the various fields of activity can be viewed from two different perspectives: On the one hand, one can focus on a fixed time span (for example, 2000 to 2010) and consider all organizations founded during this period. This determines what share the respective field of activity has in the total number of newly founded civil society organizations.

05

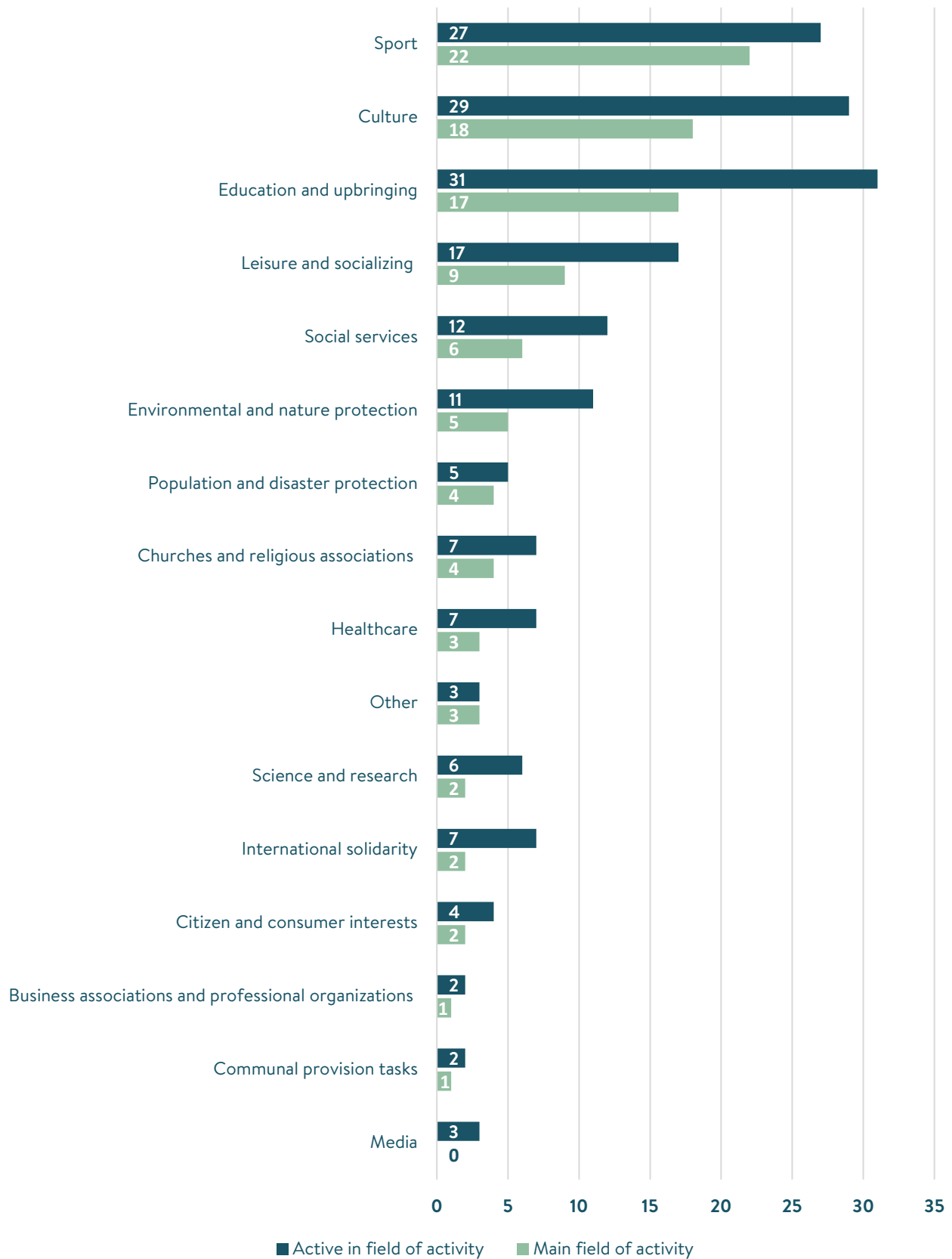
The median is the value in the middle of a distribution. A median founding year of 1971 means that 50 percent of the organizations were founded before and 50 percent after this year.

06

These analyses are based on the stated main field of activity.

Figure 06
Fields of activity of civil society organizations

Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, 12,702-12,764, weighted.

On the other hand, one can focus on a specific field of activity and observe what proportion of organizations within that field were established in a certain time span. This involves considering the total number of currently existing organizations within this field and analyzing the time frame in which they were founded. This enables a differentiated view of the historical development of the respective field. Both perspectives are useful for gaining insights into shifts between fields of activity. However, the data refer only to currently existing organizations. Organizations that have been deleted over time cannot be included in the analysis.

In Figure 7 shows both perspectives for the field of sports.⁰⁷ The bars in the chart show the share of sports organizations in all newly founded civil society organizations (across all fields of activity) for a time period. Among all organizations founded before 1950, sports organizations account for 38 percent. The line in the chart, on the other hand, shows how many of the existing sports organizations today were founded in the respective time period. 32 percent of the existing sports organizations today were thus founded before 1950. Figure 7 shows that the share of sports organizations in new foundations of all civil society organizations has decreased over time. Since 1950, about 10 percent of the current sports organizations have been founded in each decade. However, since 2010, sports organizations only make up 12 percent of all new foundations, as opposed to 38 percent before 1950.

07

The analysis of the fields of activity in Figures 7 and 8 is based on the indication of the main field of activity.

Good to know: What lies behind each field of activity

In the course of developing the first ZiviZ-Survey questionnaire (2012), the question of a clear-cut classification of fields of activity was intensively discussed. The chosen classification is based on the fundamentals of the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations, assessments of the team from the German Volunteer Survey, and findings from other research projects on civil society organizations in Germany. The now established classification was expanded in the ZiviZ-Survey 2023 questionnaire to include the category 'Media' (formerly part of culture).

The following are examples for each field of activity, to give an idea of what types of organizations may fall under each field:

Culture (e.g., choirs, theaters, concert organizers, archives, museums, monuments, cultural associations)

Sport (e.g., sports clubs, chess clubs, hiking clubs, fishing clubs, shooting clubs)

Leisure and Socializing (e.g., allotment gardens, campgrounds, breeding clubs, carnival clubs, fan clubs)

Science and Research (e.g., research institutions, promotion of science)

Education and Upbringing (e.g., childcare, daycares, adult education, general education schools, extracurricular education, political education)

Healthcare (e.g., health counseling, therapeutic facilities, hospitals, rehabilitation clinics)

Social Services (e.g., outpatient and inpatient social assistance, counseling and care services, homes, food banks)

Population and Disaster Protection (e.g., volunteer fire brigade, disaster relief, mountain rescue, water rescue)

Environmental and Nature Protection (e.g., animal and species protection, climate protection, sustainability)

International Solidarity (e.g., development cooperation, emergency aid, fair trade, intercultural understanding)

Citizen and Consumer Interests (e.g., legal advice, neighborhood management, community work, volunteer agencies)

Business Associations and Professional Organizations (e.g., economic and professional associations, societies)

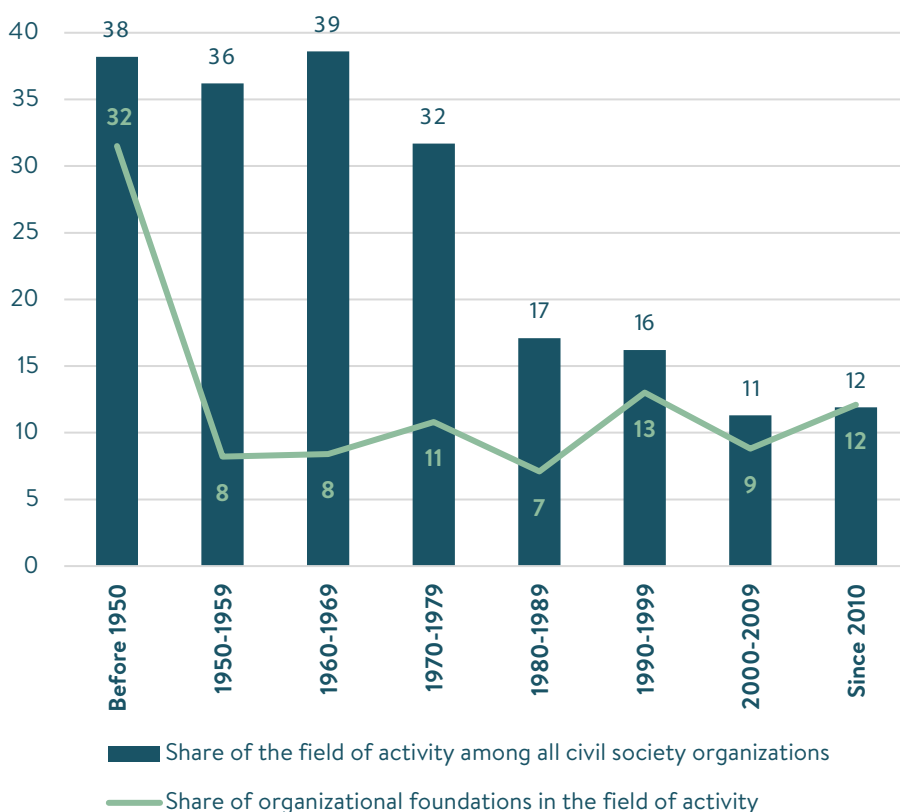
Communal Provision Tasks (e.g., energy and water supply, transportation and mobility, housing)

Churches and Religious Associations (e.g., mosque associations, cultural associations with religious reference, support associations for religious institutions)

Media (e.g., internet, digital, print media)

Figure 07
Field of activity „sport“ by founding years

Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=2,524, weighted.

The declining relevance of sports organizations in terms of new foundations is also evident when directly compared to the field of education and upbringing, where a nearly opposite trend can be observed (see Figure 8). Before 1950, education organizations accounted for only 3 percent of all new foundations. Only 3 percent of today's existing organizations also date from this period. However, their share in new foundations has significantly increased in the following decades and has been 22 percent since 2010. More than one in five civil society organizations founded today is thus primarily active in the field of education. Therefore, the proportion of young education organizations within the field of activity is also high. 27 percent of today's existing education organizations have existed only since 2010.

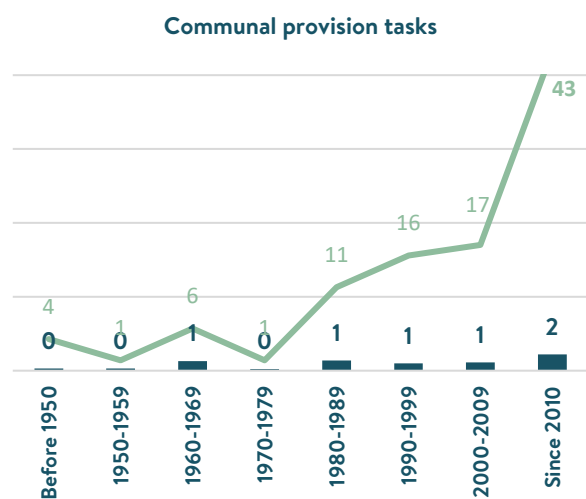
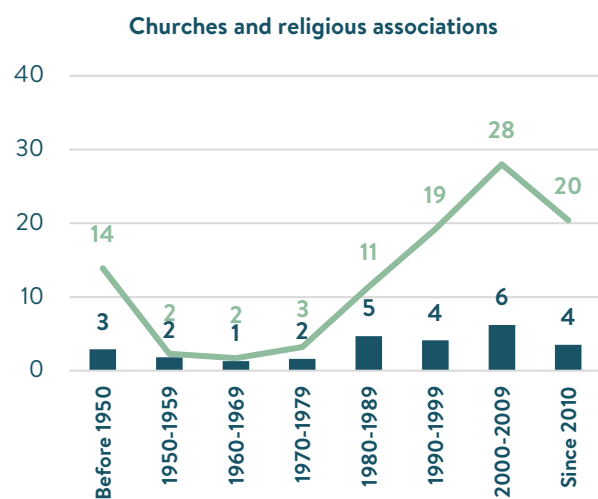
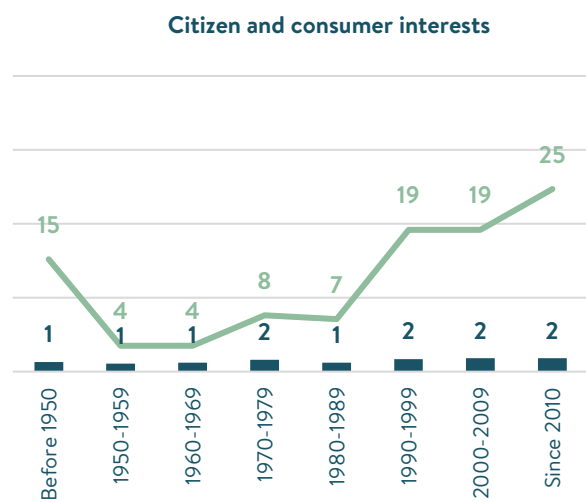
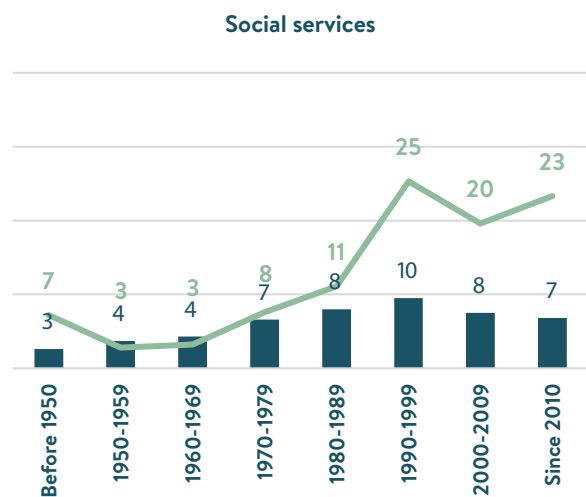
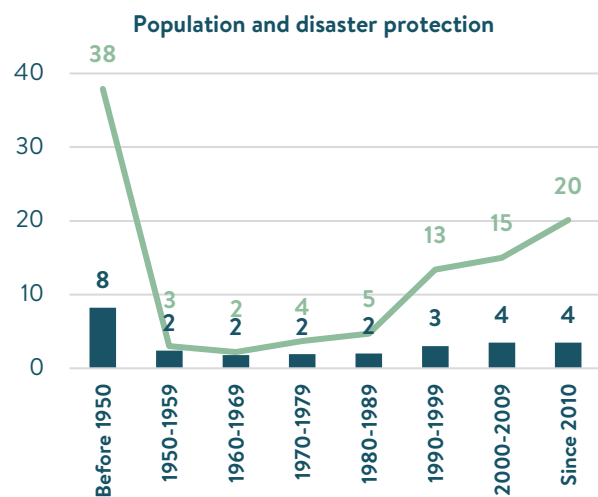
There are also fields of activity where the proportion of young organizations is very high, but the number of organizations relative to all civil society organizations is comparatively low. One such example is the field of international solidarity: more than one-third of the organizations were founded after 2010, but their share of all new foundations is only 3 percent. In the environmental sector, another field with many young organizations, the new foundations since 2010 make up 13 percent of all civil society organizations.

Figure 08
Fields of activity by founding years

Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=58-2,255, weighted.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN A SPATIAL CONTEXT

Civil society organizations are confronted with different challenges and opportunities in urban and rural contexts. For instance, urban areas usually have a higher density of funding institutions and qualified professionals. However, social disparities are often more pronounced here. In contrast, rural regions are frequently characterized by significant resource scarcity and an older population on average. Civil society organizations can play a particularly important role in fostering social cohesion in these areas. Moreover, there is an increasing need for organizations that develop and implement innovative concepts for local provision of essential services.

City and municipality types

The city and municipality types from the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) are based on the population number within the municipality. Table 3 shows how the locations of organizations that participated in the ZiviZ-Survey are distributed among the four city

and municipality types (large city, medium-sized city, small town, small municipality). Also presented are the average and the median of the founding year. These show that organizations in larger cities are somewhat younger on average.

By examining developments within civil society differentiated by types of spaces, strategies can be developed that take into account the particular local characteristics.

Therefore, this report provides a spatial differentiation for selected indicators. Initially, three possibilities of demarcation can be distinguished: 1) city and municipality types, 2) settlement structural county types, and 3) the Thünen types.

Table 03
Distribution of ZiviZ-Survey organizations across city and municipality types

	Share of organizations	Founding year	
	Percent	Mean	Median
Large city (Population 100,000 or more)	31	1983	1994
Medium-sized city (Population 20,000 to under 100,000)	22	1981	1992
Small town (Population 5,000 to under 20,000)	22	1977	1992
Small municipality (Population less than 5,000)	26	1972	1990

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12.741, weighted.

Settlement structural county types

However, the city and municipality types with their limitation to a single indicator (the population number) represent a significant simplification of spatial realities. The settlement structural county types of the BBSR address this inadequacy. Based on the 401 city and rural districts in Germany, 361 county regions are formed and used for typology creation, with criteria such as the

population share in large and medium-sized cities, the population density of the county region, and the population density of the county region without considering the large and medium-sized cities. Table 4 shows the distribution of organizations in the ZiviZ-Survey across the four settlement structural county types.

Table 04
Distribution of ZiviZ-Survey organizations across settlement structural county types

	Share of organizations	Founding year	
	Percent	Mean	Median
Independent Large Cities	28	1983	1995
Urban Districts	37	1976	1990
Rural Districts with Agglomeration Tendencies	18	1976	1992
Sparsely Populated Rural Districts	17	1978	1993

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12.792, weighted.

Thünen typology (Küpper 2016)

The Thünen Typology of the Thünen Institute has an even higher complexity and classifies regions based on the dimensions of rurality and socio-economic situation. Rurality is evaluated based on factors such as settlement density, agricultural land, and accessibility to major centers, while the socio-economic situation is assessed based on aspects such as income or unemployment rate. Thus, the typology acknowledges that rural

areas face very different economic realities. Table 5 shows the distribution of organizations across the space types according to the Thünen Typology. In this report, differentiation for certain indicators is made according to the Thünen Typology. The German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering (DSEE) also works with the Thünen Typology.

Table 05
Distribution of ZiviZ-Survey organizations across Thünen types

	Share of organizations	Founding year	
	Percent	Mean	Median
Not Rural	40	1994	1982
Rather Rural/Good Socioeconomic Situation	18	1978	1972
Rather Rural/Less Good Socioeconomic Situation	14	1995	1983
Very Rural/Good Socioeconomic Situation	9	1984	1969
Very Rural/Less Good Socioeconomic Situation	19	1993	1978

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12.792, weighted.

Table 06
Organizations categorized by fields of activity and types of spaces

	Very Rural/ Less good socioeconomic situation	Very Rural/Good socioeconomic situation	Rather rural/Good socioeconomic situation	Rather rural/less good socioeco- nomic situation	Not rural
Culture	18	19	23	19	16
Sport	26	26	24	24	17
Leisure	11	7	9	13	7
Research	1	1	1	1	4
Education	13	11	13	16	23
Healthcare	2	3	2	2	5
Social services	5	6	6	6	8
Population protection	7	9	3	4	2
Environment	6	6	5	5	4
International solidarity	1	1	3	1	2
Citizen interests	1	1	1	1	2
Business associations	1	2	1	1	2
Communal provision tasks	1	1	1	1	1
Religion	3	3	3	3	5
Media	0	0	0	0	1
Other	5	4	3	3	3

Lowest value Highest value

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12.702, weighted.

More sports, culture, and leisure in rural areas, more education, science, and social services in cities

Table 6 shows the distribution of the main fields of activity of civil society organizations within the spatial types according to the Thünen typology. For example, in very rural areas with a less favorable socioeconomic situation, the fields of sports (26 percent) and culture (18 percent) dominate, while in urban areas, educational organizations (23 percent) are particularly common. Compared to rural areas, cities display a greater variety of fields of activity, with the topics of education, science, and social issues being more in focus. In rural areas, on the other hand, the traditional fields of activity such as sports, culture, and leisure are more prevalent, especially in regions with weaker socioeconomic conditions. The numbers for population protection in Table 6 also show that volunteer fire brigades make up a significant part of civil society organizations, especially in very rural areas.

UNDERSTANDING OF ROLES OF ORGANIZA- TIONS AS PART OF SOCIETY

Civil society organizations take on different roles in society. Some serve as places for community building and pursuing specific interests of societal groups. Other organizations are more outwardly oriented: They offer services for third parties, give a voice to disadvantaged groups in public, or provide impetus for social change. In the ZiviZ-Survey, organizations' self-perceptions are regularly queried.

The self-conception as a community of like-minded people received particularly high approval in 2022, as in previous survey waves (average of 4.1 on a scale of 1 "does not apply at all" to 5 "fully applies"). This is not surprising, as the pursuit of common interests and values is a constitutive feature of almost every civil society organization, whether oriented inwardly to a closed group of people or outwardly to third parties. The self-perceptions as a member organization ($M=3.6$), interest representative ($M=3.2$), and support organization ($M=3.1$) follow behind. Smaller segments of civil society see themselves as catalysts for social change ($M=2.6$), social enterprises ($M=2.5$), or as actors in political will formation ($M=1.9$). The trend report of the ZiviZ-Survey 2023 already showed that the role understanding as a member organization, i.e., as an association primarily committed to the interests of its members, is declining. Consequently, fewer organizations are now inwardly oriented or at least the associated importance of formal memberships is decreasing. At the same time, there is an increase in understanding as a support organization (see info box on support associations), as catalyst for social change, and as actors in political will formation (Schubert et al. 2023a).

Young organizations often aim to shape society and politics

Table 7 shows that young organizations in particular see themselves in an initiating role and want to politically shape society or selected sub-areas of it. But young organizations also see themselves more frequently in a supportive role.

Table 8 provides insight into which fields of activity organizations particularly often claim to have a role in shaping society and politics. As actors in political will formation, organizations from the fields of media ($M=3.2$), citizen interests ($M=3.2$), economic/professional associations ($M=3.1$), and international solidarity ($M=2.9$) are particularly prominent. Besides these fields, impulses for social change also often come from organizations in the field of social services ($M=3.3$). Since organizations in all these fields of activity are more commonly found in urban areas (see Table 6), this is where the change in self-perception of civil society organizations is particularly evident.

Table 07
Self-understanding of civil society organizations by founding year

“We see ourselves as a...” (Mean values on a scale from 1 “does not apply at all” to 5 “fully applies”)

	Member organiza- tion	Service provider	Interest repre- sentative	Commu- nity of like- minded people	Actor in political will formation	Support organisa- tion	Catalyst for social change	Social enterprise
Before 1950	4.0	2.7	3.0	4.3	1.6	2.6	2.4	2.4
1950-1959	3.9	2.9	3.1	4.2	1.8	2.6	2.4	2.4
1960-1969	3.8	2.8	3.0	4.2	1.7	2.6	2.2	2.4
1970-1979	3.7	2.7	3.2	4.1	1.8	2.8	2.4	2.4
1980-1989	3.6	2.8	3.3	4.0	2.0	3.0	2.5	2.4
1990-1999	3.6	2.9	3.4	4.0	2.0	3.3	2.6	2.5
2000-2009	3.4	2.8	3.2	3.8	1.9	3.6	2.6	2.5
Since 2010	3.3	2.8	3.3	4.0	2.1	3.4	3.0	2.6

Lowest value Highest value

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,902–11,625, weighted.

The pronounced self-understanding as a support organization in the fields of education and population protection can be explained by the strong founding dynamics of school support associations and support associations for volunteer fire brigades (see info box on support associations).

Organizations in the fields of sports, leisure, and culture are characterized by a comparatively stronger inward orientation. They see themselves less often as political actors or initiators, but more often as member organizations (see Table 8). It is interesting to note that organizations in the field of environmental and nature conservation only moderately often see themselves as political actors (average of 2.4), although climate protection issues have strongly shaped the political discourse in recent years. The reason for this may be that this field of activity is by no means primarily made up of activist organizations. Numerically widespread are organizations such as community gardens, beekeeping clubs, or animal protection associations, which although committed to environmental, nature, and species protection, do not primarily pursue a political agenda. This shows that more differentiation between organization types within individual fields of activity is necessary.

More and more organizations see themselves as gap fillers for lacking state provision of basic services

The role understanding of organizations towards the state is also changing. While the majority of organizations see themselves as independent of the state and state that they want to perform and finance their work independently (54 percent), 40 percent now see the state as co-responsible for financing the work their organization does, compared to only 31 percent in 2016 (Schubert et al. 2023a).

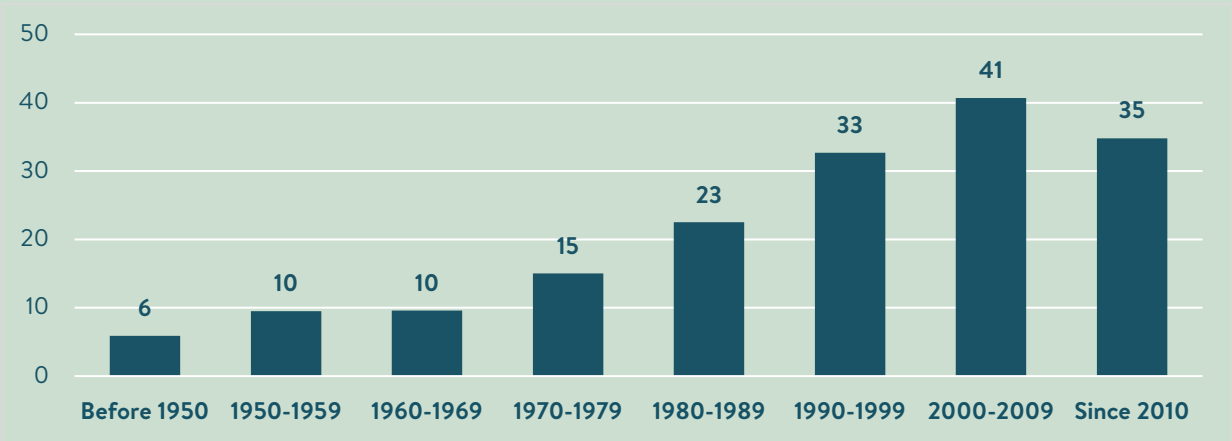
Every fourth association is a support association (“Förderverein”). This extrapolates to more than 150,000 support associations in Germany.

Support associations are not a new phenomenon, but their number has increased particularly strongly in the last 20 years. By now, 25 percent of the associations in Germany

are support association. Among all associations founded since 2010, their share is even 35 percent (see Figure 9).

Figure 09
Percentage of support associations among total association foundations

Is your organization a support association? Proportions in percent



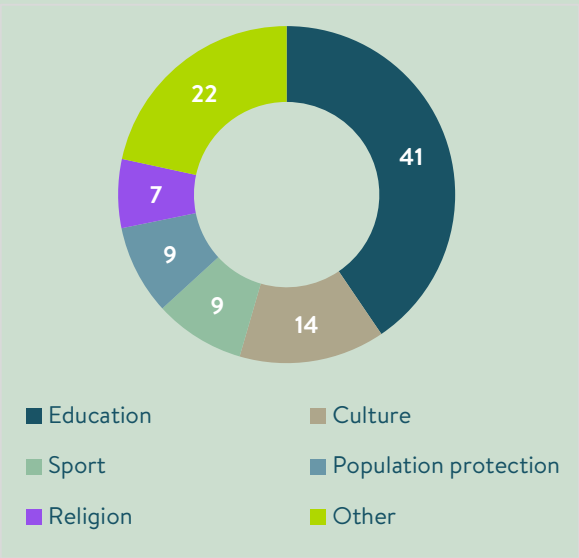
Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,632, weighted.

Of the existing support associations, 41 percent are located in the education sector (see Figure 10). Particularly common are school support associations. However, there are now significant numbers of support associations in other areas of engagement. 14 percent of the support associations are in the cultural sector (such as a support association for a museum), 9 percent in the sports sector (as a support association for a local sports club) and 9 percent in the area of population protection (support associations for a volunteer fire department). Within population protection, support associations now make up over half of all associations. Hence, in the future there might be more support associations for fire departments than fire departments organized as registered associations themselves.

The reason for the dynamic founding of support associations is not only in the funding gap of the respective supported facilities and institutions. Citizens see support associations as a suitable instrument to express their interest in tackling tasks and problems at the municipal level and to get involved through membership with low-threshold, that is, without too extensive time commitment such as taking on an formal role (Priemer et al. 2017).

Figure 10
Distribution of support associations across fields of activity

Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,586, weighted.

Table 08
Self-understanding of civil society organizations by field of activity

“We see ourselves as a...” (Mean values on a scale from 1 “does not apply at all” to 5 “fully applies”)

	Member organiza- tion	Service provider	Interest repre- sentative	Commu- nity of like- minded people	Actor in political decision- making	Support organisa- tion	Catalyst for social change	Social enterprise
Culture	3.4	2.6	2.9	4.2	1.8	3.2	2.4	2.1
Sport	4.0	2.6	2.9	4.3	1.4	2.6	2.1	2.2
Leisure	4.0	2.3	3.2	4.5	1.5	2.5	2.3	2.2
Research	2.9	2.6	2.9	3.3	2.0	3.8	2.4	1.7
Education	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.4	2.1	4.0	3.0	2.9
Healthcare	2.9	3.5	3.5	3.4	2.1	3.1	3.0	3.3
Social services	2.7	3.6	3.3	3.2	2.2	3.1	3.3	3.9
Population protection	4.0	3.0	3.3	4.0	1.5	4.0	2.4	2.7
Environment	3.4	2.7	3.7	4.2	2.4	2.8	2.9	2.1
International solidarity	3.1	2.5	3.1	3.8	2.9	3.7	3.7	2.6
Citizen interests	3.4	3.0	4.1	3.9	3.2	2.6	3.4	2.3
Business asso- ciations	4.6	3.6	4.6	4.2	3.1	2.8	2.5	1.8
Communal provision tasks	3.8	3.7	3.4	4.0	2.5	2.7	3.2	2.5
Religion	2.9	2.6	2.8	3.9	1.5	3.8	2.7	2.3
Media	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.9	3.2	2.8	3.4	2.2

Lowest value Highest value

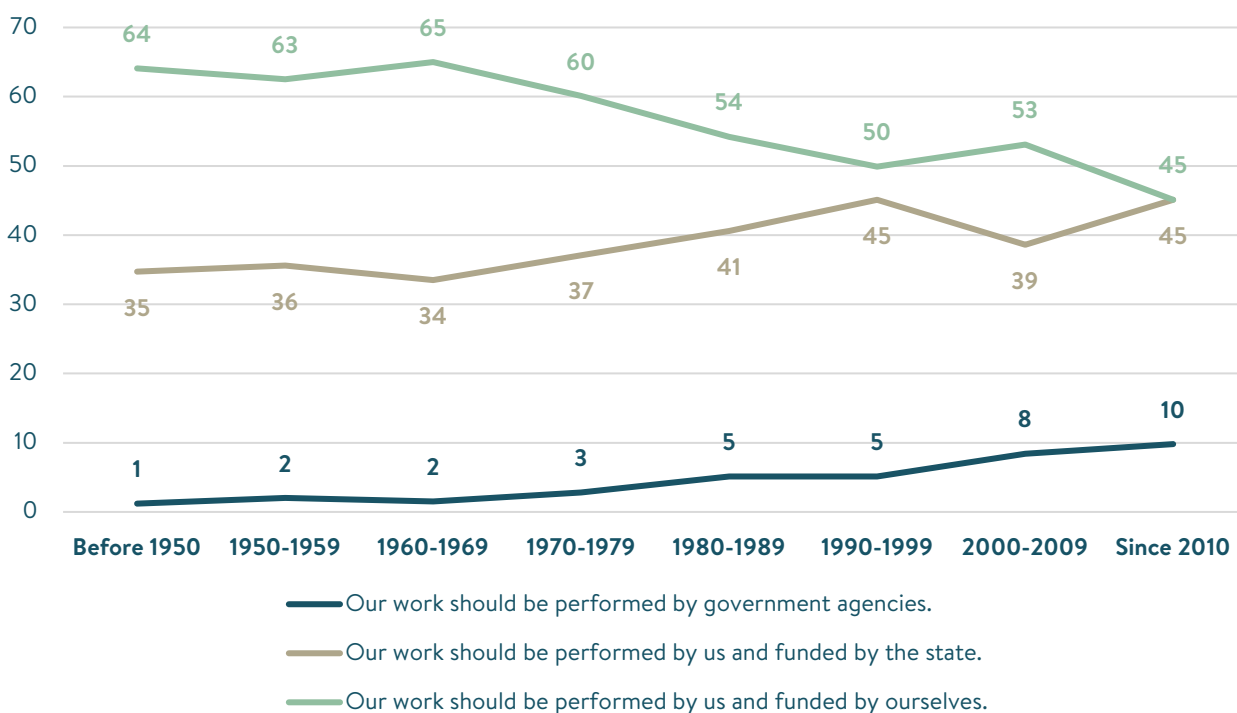
Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,902–11,625, weighted.

A relatively small proportion of organizations even consider the entirety of their work as an area that is actually the responsibility of the state (6 percent) and thus see themselves as gap fillers for missing state services. Figure 11 shows that especially younger organizations more often see the state as having financial or even operational responsibility. This development is also debatable against the background that three-quarters of the organizations with a self-understanding as gap fillers currently do not receive any state funds. The impression of taking on tasks that actually fall to the state is particularly pronounced among organizations in the areas of communal provision tasks (15 percent), international solidarity (14 percent), education/upbringing (13 percent), environmental/nature protection (11 percent), and healthcare (11 percent).

Figure 11

Role understanding of civil society organizations towards the state by founding year

Which of the following statements would you most agree with from the perspective of your organization?
Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12,592, weighted.

In the public discourse, it is sometimes argued that organizations in rural areas in particular take over tasks of basic service provision and function as gap fillers for missing state services. However, the present data rather point in the opposite direction: organizations in rural areas tend to see themselves less often in a gap filler role. However, this could also be due to the fact that in rural areas, organizations in the comparatively state-distant areas of sports and leisure are more strongly represented.

MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND EMPLOYEES

Impact of the pandemic on membership development visible

The vast majority of civil society organizations are membership-based. The organizational landscape is primarily shaped by a large number of small organizations with few members (see Figure 12). Nearly two-thirds of all organizations have fewer than 100 members, and nearly one-fifth have only up to 20. Only 13 percent of organizations have more than 300 members, with about half of these being sports clubs. In all three survey waves of the ZiviZ-Survey, organizations were asked how their membership numbers have developed over the past five years. Although membership numbers in many organizations are relatively stable, fewer organizations now report increases in membership numbers compared to earlier survey waves. About half of the organizations (49 percent) report unchanged membership numbers, 30 percent report increases, and 21 percent report decreases (see Figure 12).

Environmental and population protection often with membership gains, culture facing major challenges

There are clear differences between the various fields of activity regarding membership development (see Figure 13). In the areas of population and disaster protection, environmental and nature protection, and communal provision tasks, 37 to 42 percent of organizations recorded above-average membership gains between 2017 and 2022. The finding in the area of population and disaster protection is interesting, as many volunteer fire departments lament recruitment challenges. Although this can be partly explained by the founding dynamics of support associations for fire departments, with 46 percent reporting increased membership numbers, even among the operationally active organizations, 38 percent experienced an increase in membership.

The areas of culture and social services are the only fields of activity where slightly more organizations report decreases than increases in membership numbers. In the sports sector, membership numbers were relatively stable. However, many organizations report both decreases and increases in membership numbers. There are no clear differences in membership development between urban and rural areas.

In general, recruiting new members poses greater challenges for organizations than retaining them. Only one in four organizations currently has enough members, and only 18 percent find it easy to recruit new members under 30 years of age. On the other hand, more than half of the organizations find it easy to retain members long-term.

More organizations report declining engagement

Volunteers are the central resource for most organizations' actions. In the ZiviZ-Survey, volunteers are understood as people who undertake tasks and roles in the organizations unpaid and regularly. Nearly half of the organizations have only up to 10 volunteers, 23 percent have between 11 and 20 volunteers, and almost a third have more than 20 volunteers (Figure 14). Only 2 percent of the organizations have over 100 volunteers.

Looking at the development of volunteer numbers over the three survey waves of the ZiviZ-Survey, fewer organizations report stable numbers of volunteers (see Figure 14). Meanwhile, the proportion of organizations that experienced declines in the past five years increased from 15 to 21 percent between 2012 and 2022.

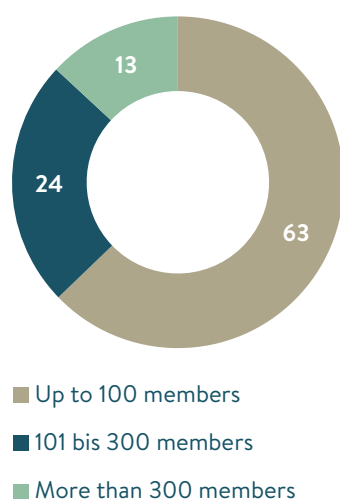
Volunteer engagement in sports clubs particularly often in decline

The reasons for increasing problems in mobilizing voluntary engagement of members are manifold. For over a decade, it has been observed that a growing proportion of citizens is more likely to engage in informal structures and initiatives than in the context of formalized, established organizations (Simonson et al. 2022). The pandemic-related contact restrictions and their consequences must also be considered as aggravating factors. However, similar to memberships, there is no general, consistent decline in engagement over time.

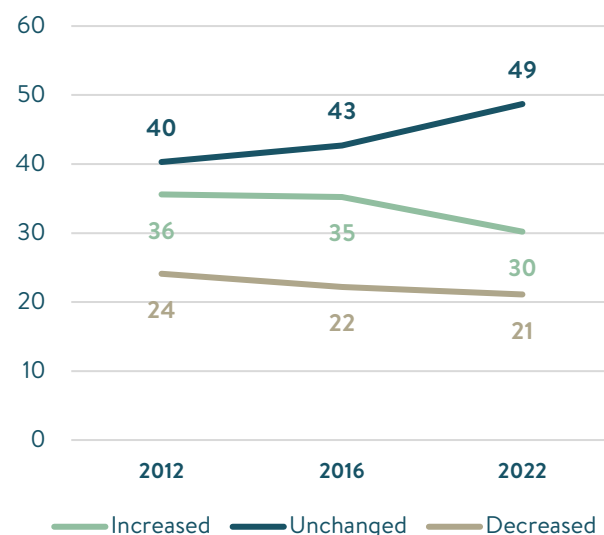
Figure 12
Membership numbers and membership development in the last five years

Proportions in percent

How many members does your organization currently have (2022)?



How has the number of members in your organization changed over the past five years?



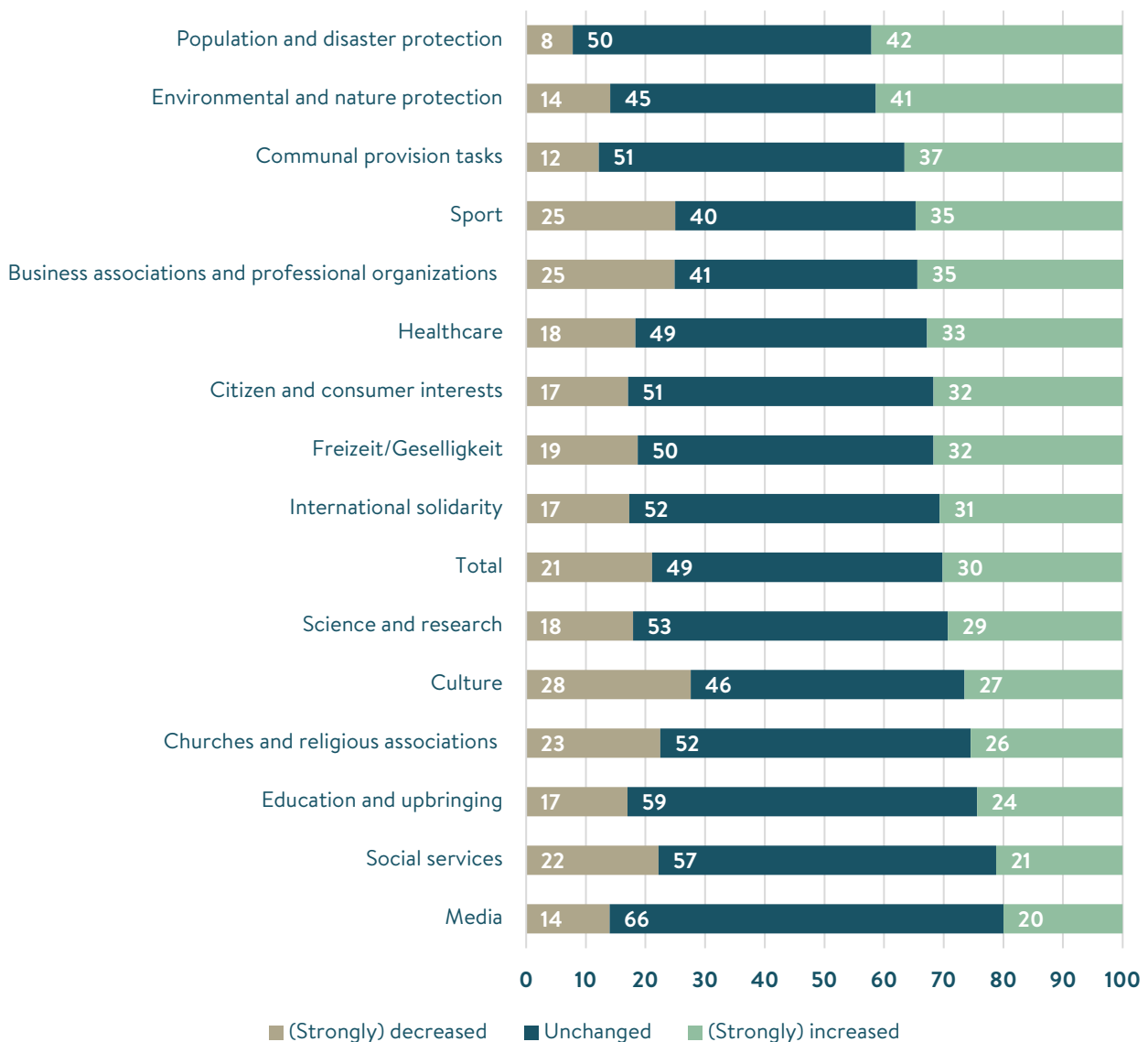
Sources: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,833, weighted; ZiviZ-Survey 2017, N=6,082, weighted; ZiviZ-Survey 2012, N=3,598 weighted.

This is also illustrated by looking at the development of engagement in various fields of commitment (see Figure 15). Similar to the development of memberships, organizations in the areas of environment, population protection, and communal provision tasks are the biggest winners in terms of engagement. On the other hand, organized sports face particular challenges: in no other field of activity do organizations report more frequently (27 percent) a decrease in the number of volunteers.

Furthermore, younger organizations find it easier to gain new volunteers: 36 percent of organizations founded after 2012 (the time of the first ZiviZ-Survey) report increasing numbers of volunteers. Among organizations founded before 2012, only 17 percent report this.

Figure 13
Development of membership numbers by field of activity

How has the number of members in your organization developed since 2017? Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=9,937, weighted. Due to rounding discrepancies, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

The development of volunteer numbers is slightly more positive among organizations in urban areas than in rural areas. Thus, 19 percent of organizations in urban areas reported declining volunteer numbers. Within the various rural area types according to the Thünen typology, the decline there varies between 20 and 24 percent.

Increasing decoupling of engagement and membership

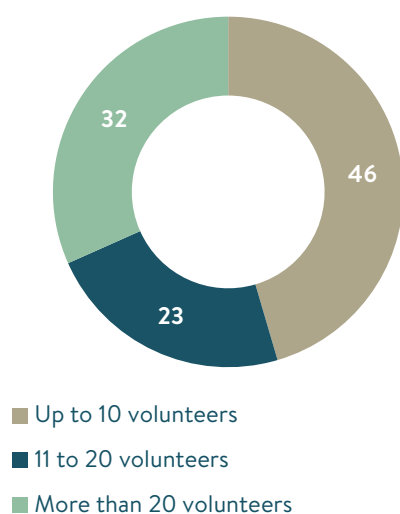
Membership in an organization is no longer as relevant for volunteering today as it used to be. The German Volunteer Survey 2019 shows that the proportion of volunteers in the population who are members of their organization decreased from 93 percent in 2004 to 80 percent in 2019. Also, the results of the ZiviZ-Survey show that while in 2012 only 21 percent of organizations stated that non-members also volunteer in their activities, this figure had risen to 30 percent by 2022 (see Figure 16). As a result of a continuing informalization of engagement, there is also an increasing decoupling of engagement from the institution of membership.

The finding in Figure 16 (right) shows that opening the organization to the non-member volunteers can be a promising strategy for organizations: organizations with non-members as volunteers more often reported increasing numbers of volunteers in the past five years. Given the evidently rising demand for opportunities for volunteering without membership ties, organizations need to develop more concepts for low-threshold offers to bind people to organizations beyond formal membership, to create new participation opportunities, but also to compensate for revenue losses due to missing membership fees with alternative sources of funding.

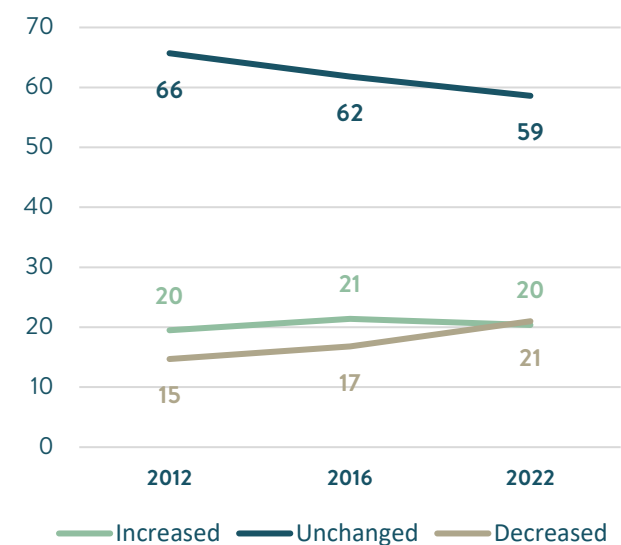
Figure 14
Development of volunteer numbers and volunteer development in the last five years

Proportions in percent

How many volunteers does your organization currently have (2022)?



How has the number of volunteers in your organization changed over the past five years?



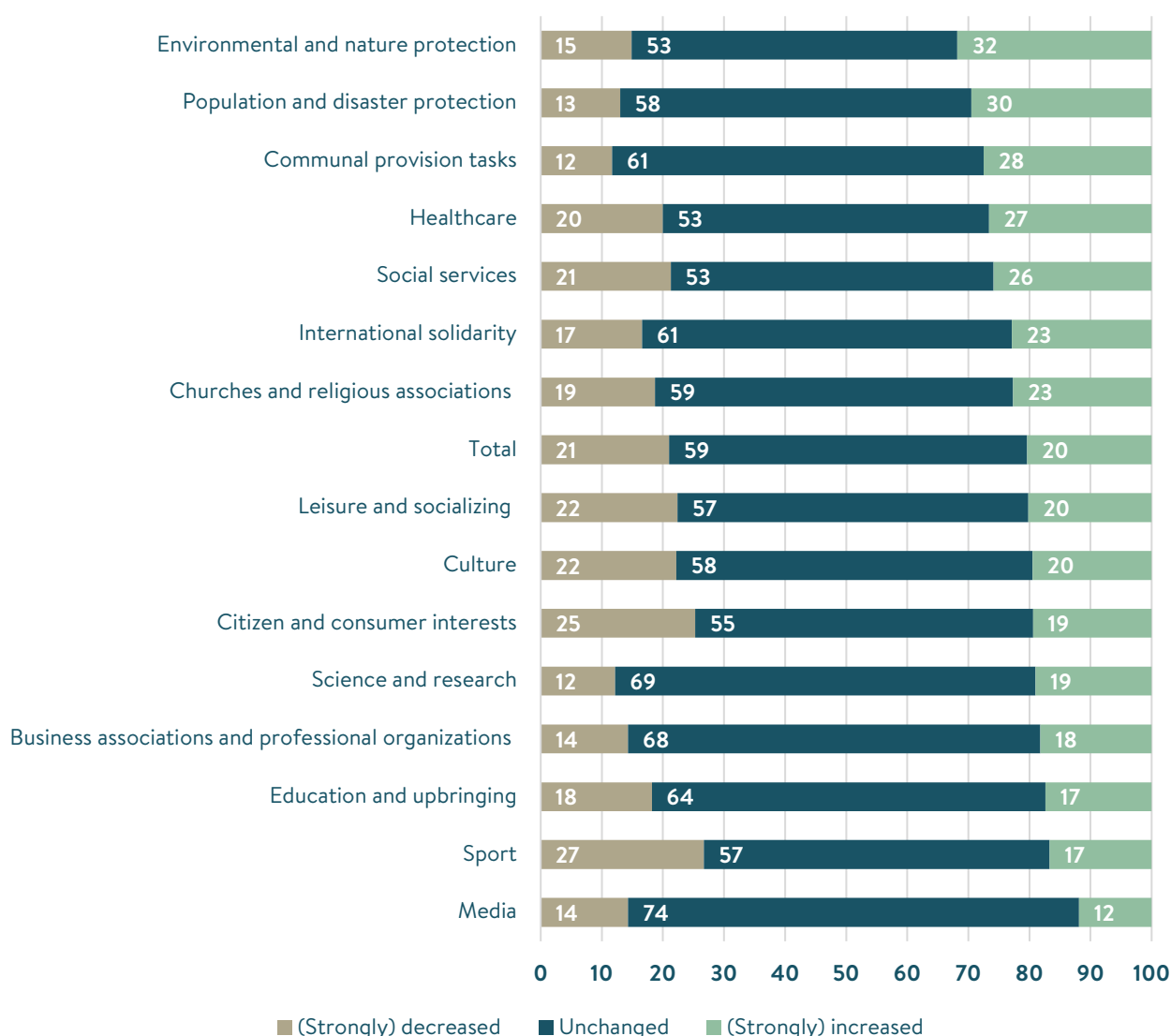
Sources: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,481, weighted; ZiviZ-Survey 2017, N=5,639, weighted; ZiviZ-Survey 2012, N=3,471 weighted.

Recruitment of volunteers for leadership roles universally challenging

More than half of the organizations find it easy to recruit volunteers for event-based, short-term engagements (57 percent). However, recruiting volunteers for long-term tasks and for leadership positions is increasingly becoming a problem that affects all segments of civil society. In 2016, 46 percent of organizations disagreed (or strongly disagreed) that they find enough volunteers for leadership positions; by 2022, this figure had risen to 53 percent. The problem is particularly severe in sports clubs (61 percent) (see Figure 17). Notably, organizations in the field of environmental and nature protection, although most often reporting an increase in volunteer numbers (see Figure 15), are at the same time notably unsuccessful in recruiting these volunteers for leadership positions (see Figure 17).

Figure 15
Volunteer development by field of activity

How has the number of volunteers in your organization developed since 2017? Proportions in percent



Sources: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N= 11.105, weighted.

Administrative burden in volunteering reduces the attractiveness of taking on leadership roles

A major entry barrier and motivation deterrent for taking on volunteer leadership positions is the significant bureaucratic effort associated with these roles. This arises from the need to maintain registers, bureaucratic grant application procedures, or the process for charitable status accreditation. In addition, there are legal uncertainties regarding personal liability in volunteering, the protection of personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the compatibility with charitable status or tax treatment of various income and expenditure categories. The Standards Control Council in Baden-Württemberg has calculated, for example, that a sports club with 500 members incurs bureaucratic efforts of 337 working hours and financial costs of about 15,000 euros annually (Standards Control Council Baden-Württemberg 2019). In the ZiviZ-Survey, about three-quarters of organizations fully agreed that administrative tasks for the organization's central leadership body are particularly time-consuming (see Figure 18). Administrative tasks are similarly often perceived as particularly time-consuming as tasks directly related to the realization of the organization's purpose, which ideally should be more prominent.

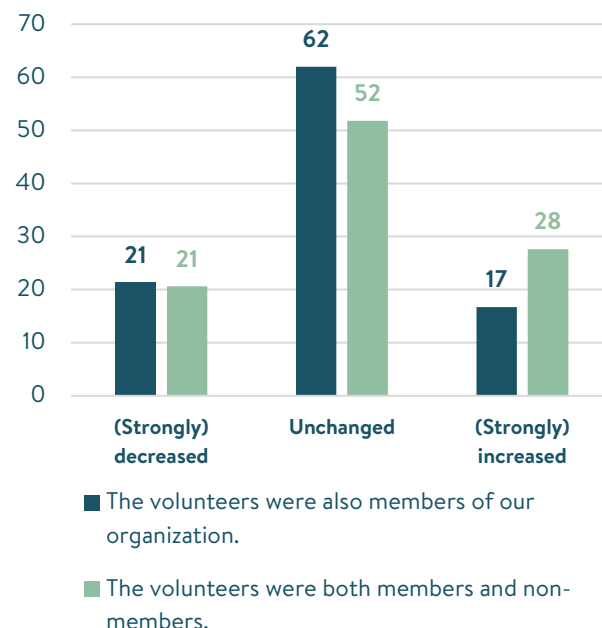
Figure 16
Engagement within memberships

Proportions in percent

How many volunteers does your organization currently have (2022)?



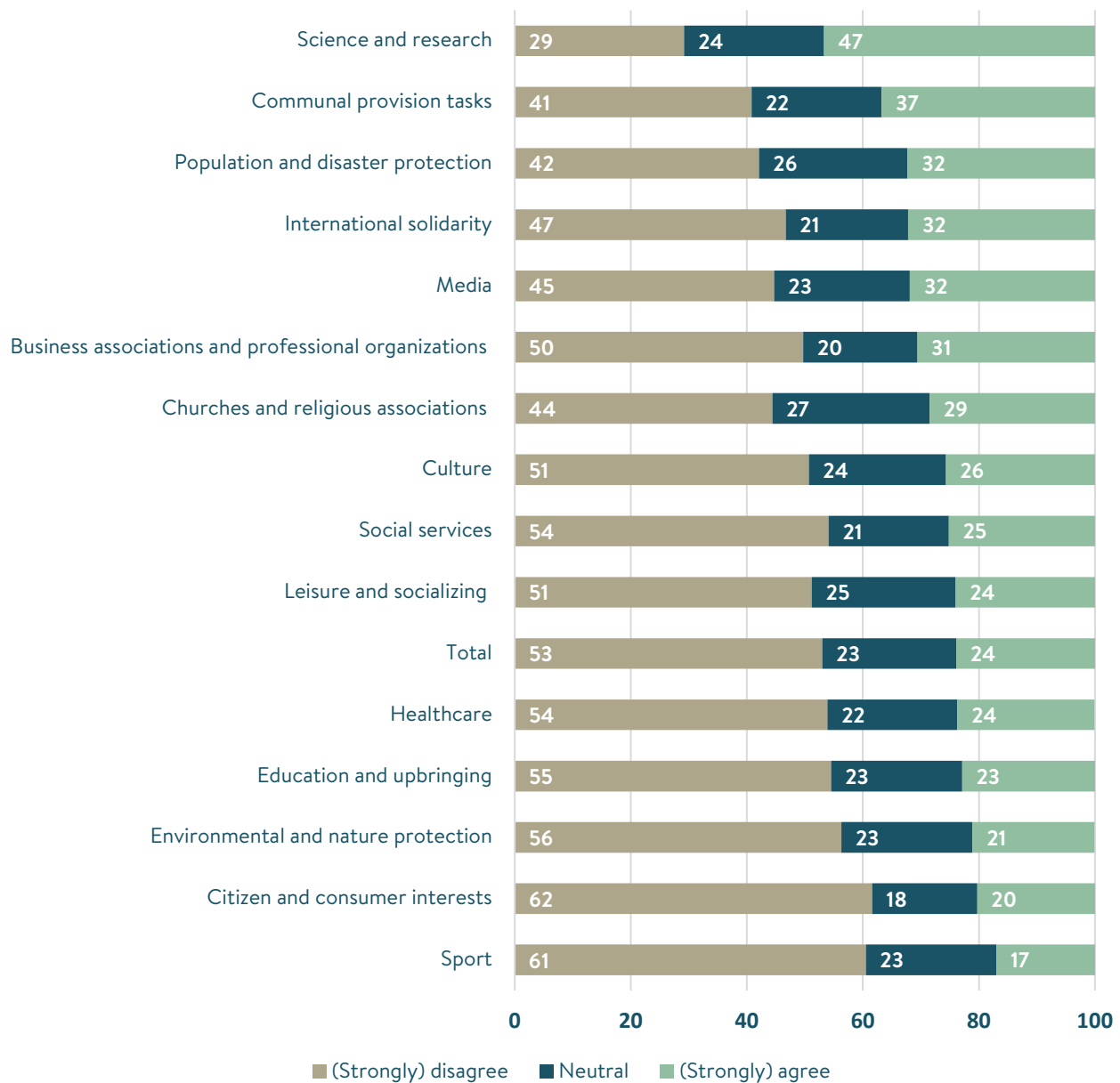
How has the number of volunteers in your organization changed over the past five years?



Sources: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,590, weighted; ZiviZ-Survey 2017, N=5,370, weighted; ZiviZ-Survey 2012, N=3,160, weighted.

Figure 17
Challenge in recruiting volunteers by field of activity

"For leadership positions, we find enough volunteers."
 Proportions in percent



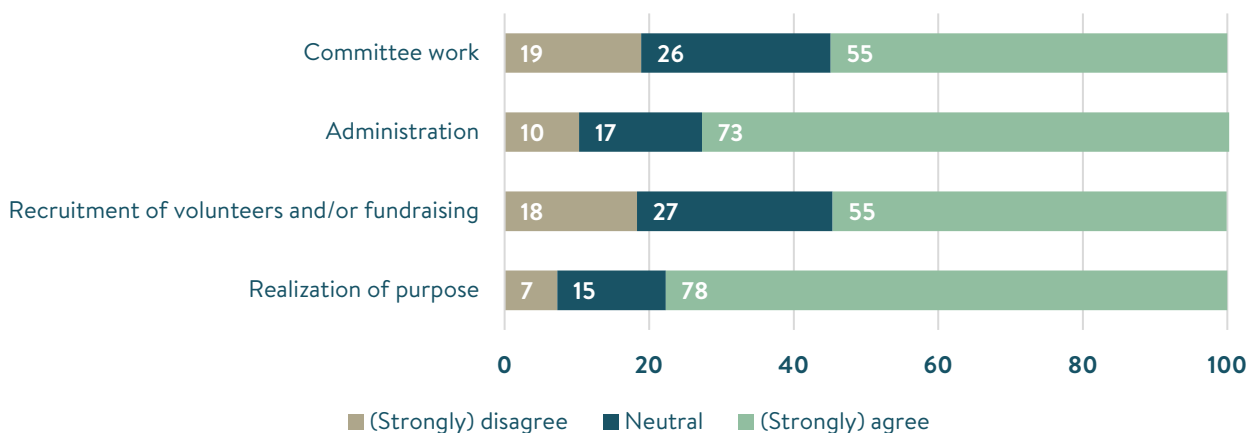
Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,746, weighted. Due to rounding discrepancies, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

Only about one in four organizations has paid employees

Despite increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers, they remain the central personnel resource for most organizations. Only 27 percent of organizations have paid employees, mostly in hybrid organizational structures where tasks are undertaken by both paid employees and volunteers. While the proportion of organizations with paid employees rose from 21 to 28 percent between 2012 and 2016 according to the ZiviZ-Survey, this value has remained at a comparable level since then (Schubert et al. 2023a).

Figure 18
Administrative burden in engagement

What tasks are particularly time-consuming for the central leadership body of your organization (e.g., the board)?
 Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,305–11,471, weighted.

One in four organizations that do not solely rely on volunteers has only one paid employee. Almost three-quarters of organizations employ a maximum of ten people. Only 5 percent have more than 100 paid employees – these organizations are found almost exclusively in the fields of social services, education, and healthcare.

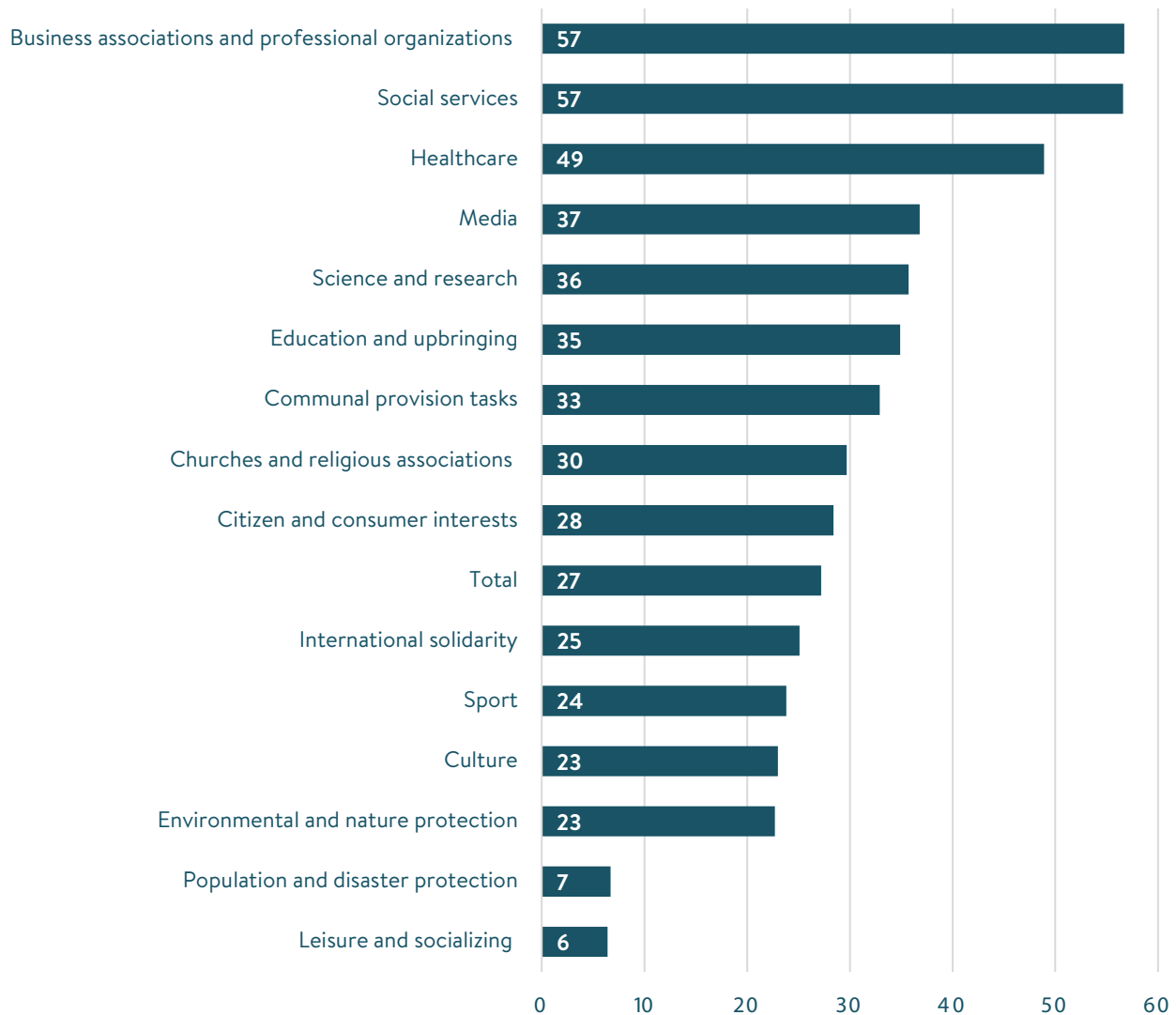
The ZiviZ-Survey also asked organizations with paid employees about the existing employment relationships within their structures. It shows that 69 percent offer social security-contributing employment, 64 percent have minor/marginal employment, 40 percent employ freelancers, and 19 percent have volunteers in service (“Freiwilligendienstleistende”).

Figure 19 shows the significant variation in the proportion of organizations with paid employees by field of activity. This is particularly high in the areas of economic/professional associations (57 percent), social services (57 percent), and healthcare (49 percent). In contrast, organizations in the areas of population/disaster protection (7 percent) and leisure/socializing (6 percent) rarely have paid employees.

Reflecting the stronger presence of employment-intensive fields of activity in education and social services in urban areas, there are clear spatial differences in the proportion of organizations with employees. Organizations in urban areas have paid employees in 36 percent of cases. The proportion is particularly low in very rural areas with poorer socioeconomic conditions (17 percent) according to the Thünen typology. In other rural area types, the proportion varies between 22 and 24 percent.

Figure 19
Proportion of organizations with paid employees by field of activity

Does your organization employ paid staff? Proportions in percent



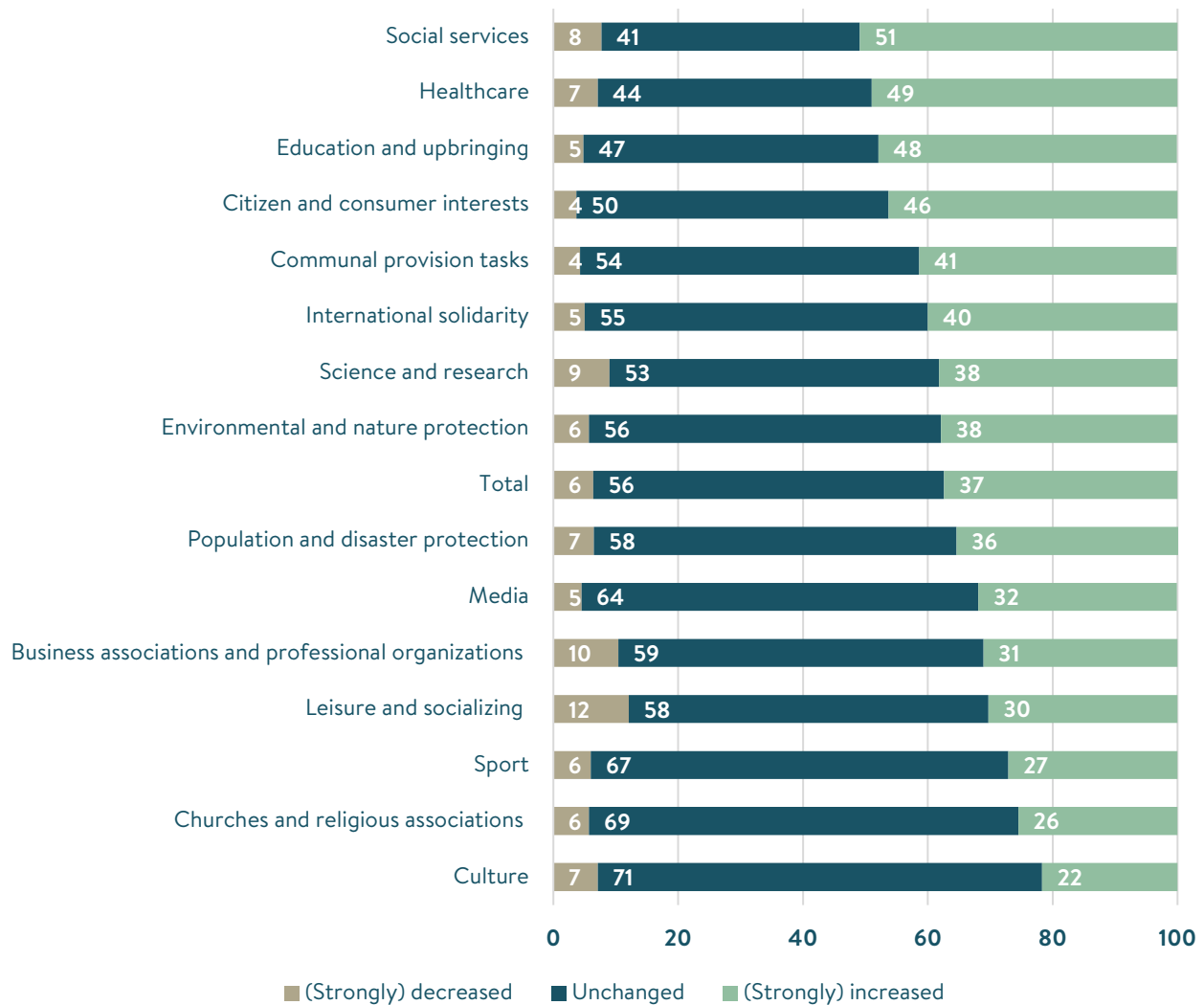
Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12,660, weighted.

Employment growth is unevenly distributed in favor of large organizations

Although the proportion of organizations with paid employees has remained stable in recent years, this indicator does not yet provide information about overall employment development in the Third Sector. Analyses of the IAB have shown that the number of people employed in the Third Sector on a social security-contributing or minor basis continuously rose from 2.9 million in 2007 to 3.7 million in 2016 (Hohendanner et al. 2019). The ZiviZ-Survey data confirm this trend insofar as organizations with paid employees often report increases in employment numbers over the past five years. Figure 20 shows that this applies to all fields of activity.

Figure 20
Development of employee numbers by field of activity

How has the number of paid employees in your organization changed since 2017? Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=3,610, weighted. Due to rounding discrepancies, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

However, as the trend report for the ZiviZ-Survey 2023 already showed, large organizations with many employees benefit more frequently from this development than organizations with few employees (Schubert et al. 2023a). Overall, there is an increasing decoupling in the Third Sector between organizations based solely on volunteerism and those operating professionally. Professionalization continues to occur only in a subset of civil society, but does not lead to increasing professional support for engagement across the board.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Civil society composed mainly of associations with very limited resources

A look at the financial resources confirms the picture of an organized civil society primarily made up of many small associations. More than half of the organizations (54 percent) had total revenues of less than 10,000 euros in 2021, 11 percent between 10,000 and 20,000 euros, 19 percent between 20,000 and 100,000 euros, 12 percent between 100,000 and 1 million euros, and 4 percent more than 1 million euros.

Although financially strong organizations with total revenues of more than 1 million euros are relatively rare, they have significant economic and labor market importance. According to the ZiviZ-Survey, they account for about three-quarters (73 percent) of all paid workers in the Third Sector. Based on estimates from the IAB, this equates to about 2.7 of the 3.7 million employees in the Third Sector (Hohendanner et al. 2019). Almost two-thirds of these financially strong organizations are active in the fields of education and social services. They are primarily free welfare institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, day-care centers, etc.), large foundations, or educational providers. More than 60 percent of these organizations are located in urban areas. Financially strong organizations are much less common in rural areas. This is certainly related to resource mobilization opportunities, but also to the more pronounced need for social and educational services in cities.

When looking at total revenues, there are significant differences between the various legal forms (see Figure 21). Associations often have low income, while non-profit corporations more often have high income. The foundation sector is also characterized by a large number of small foundations: one-third generate only up to 10,000 euros in revenues annually. Organizations in the fields of population/disaster protection (77 percent) and leisure/socializing (75 percent) are especially often financially weak with annual total revenues below the 10,000-euro threshold. This is also reflected in the low proportions of paid employees in these areas (see Figure 19). However, even within the financially strong fields of education (54 percent) and social services (30 percent), there are many small organizations with annual total revenues of up to 10,000 euros.

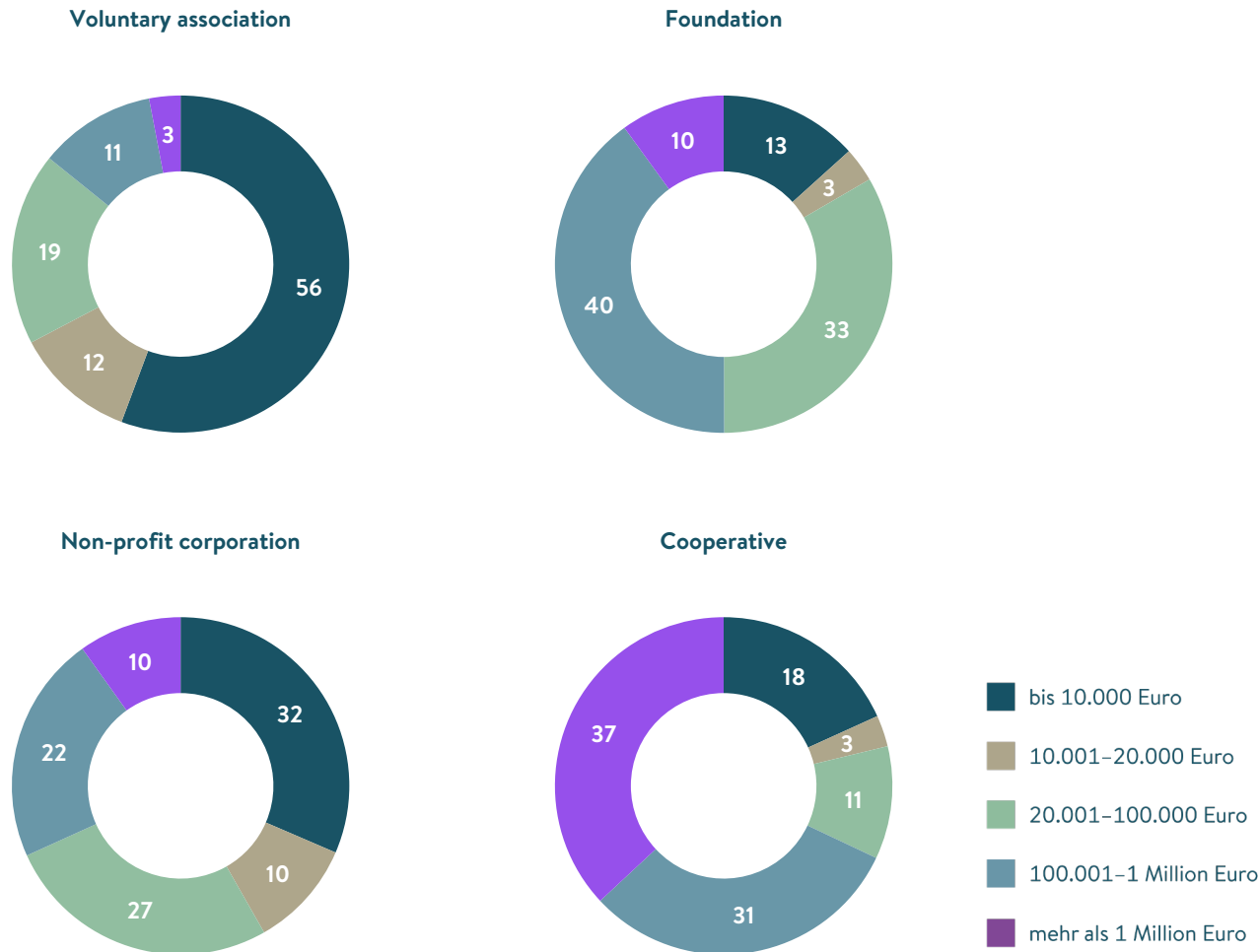
Internal financing dominates across all legal forms

Civil society organizations can draw on many different sources of income, such as membership fees, self-generated funds from business operations, public grants, or donations from individuals and companies. Often, a mix of different income sources is characteristic, with the composition depending on the type of activities offered. 83 percent of organizations receive their income from at least two of the various sources captured in the ZiviZ-Survey (see info box), with an

average organization having three sources of income. The most common sources of income for organizations are membership fees (85 percent), followed by donations (66 percent), and self-generated funds (49 percent). 38 percent of organizations receive public grants.

Figure 21
Total revenue by legal form

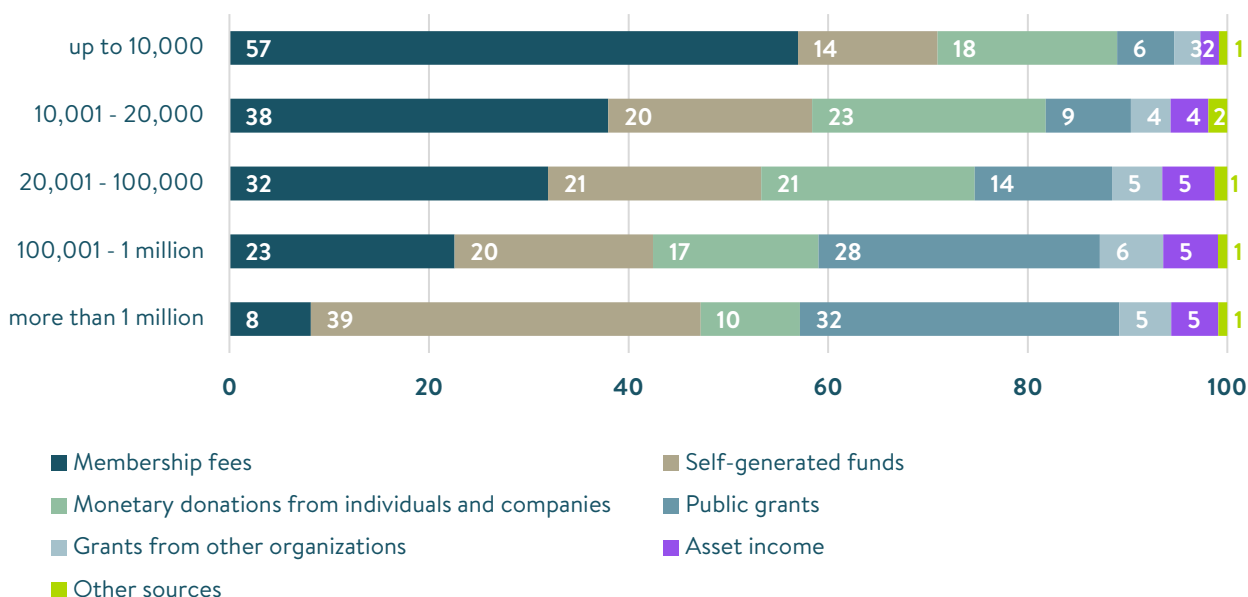
What were the total revenues of your organization in the fiscal year 2021? Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, NAssociation=8,893, NFoundation=956, NCorporation=479, NCooperative=165, weighted. Due to rounding discrepancies, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

Figure 22
Financing mix by total revenues

How are the total revenues composed? Average percentages



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=9,408, weighted. Due to rounding discrepancies, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

For associations, membership fees are the most important source of income, accounting for an average of 46 percent of financing, followed by donations (19 percent), self-generated funds (17 percent), and public funds (11 percent). Corresponding to their economic orientation, non-profit corporations and cooperatives rely more on self-generated funds. For corporations, these represent an average of 46 percent of total income (followed by 25 percent public funds), and for cooperatives, even 62 percent. Foundations of civil law rely on average 53 percent on asset income. Donations account for 28 percent. Overall, the data shows the high importance of internal financing (membership fees, self-generated funds, asset income) for the functioning civil society organizations (Schubert et al. 2023a).

Access to public grants difficult for small organizations

Figure 22 shows the financing mix of an average organization differentiated by annual total revenues. Membership fees are particularly relevant in small organizations with total revenues of up to 10,000 euros and account for 57 percent of the total income in an average organization. For organizations with revenues of over 1 million euros, membership fees play a subordinate role, averaging only 8 percent. Large organizations primarily finance themselves through self-generated and public funds.

Not every organization relies on public funds or fulfills tasks that meet the criteria of public funding programs. Thus, the financing mix of an organization depends not primarily on strategic decisions of the organization but on the type of services and offerings provided. Offers with a private character (e.g., services from members for members) are typically self-financed, while offers with a public character (e.g., assistance for third parties) are financed through external means such as donations or public grants (Young 2017).

Access to public grants poses significant challenges for small organizations without paid employees due to complex application procedures. For example, in the field of social services – a field where mostly publicly eligible services are provided – only 18 percent of small organizations with revenues up to 10,000 euros receive public funds, while the proportion among organizations with revenues over 100,000 euros is nearly 70 percent. Almost 80 percent of social service providers without paid employees do not receive public funds.

Financing mix varies significantly by field of activity

The financing mix strongly depends on the type of activities and services offered, as confirmed by a look at the financing within the various fields of activity (see Figure 23). An average organization in the fields of sports and leisure generates more than 50 percent of its income from membership fees. For religious associations and organizations in the field of international solidarity, donations are the main source of financing, averaging 42 and 38 percent of total revenues, respectively. Public grants account for an average of 18 percent of the highest share among educational organizations and social service providers.⁰⁸

Despite the pandemic, revenues from central sources of income – membership fees, self-generated funds, donations, and public funds – were mostly stable over the past five years. Overall, more organizations report increased revenues since 2017 than decreased. For example, 16 percent of organizations report a decline in membership fees in the last five years, while 27 percent report an increase. Also, for public grants, the proportion of organizations with increased revenues (28 percent) is higher than those with decreased (17 percent). Only for self-generated funds is the ratio between decreases (23 percent) and increases (27 percent) roughly balanced.

It can be assumed that the figures partly reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations faced significant losses in self-generated funds during the pandemic as events could not take place for an extended period (Hoff et al. 2021). An explanation for the higher proportion of organizations reporting increased public funds could be state Corona aids. In the ZiviZ-Survey, 16 percent of organizations stated they received Corona aids from the state in 2021.

08

The financing shares of an average organization in each field of activity are presented here. This does not take into account the financial volume of the organizations. Therefore, this representation does not yet provide sufficient information about the proportion of the various sources of income in financing the Third Sector as a whole.

The sources of income captured in the ZiviZ-Survey

Membership Fees: Traditional fees for memberships in associations, including admission fees; supporting membership contributions are categorized under donations.

Self-Generated Funds: Any form of service charges, including from public funds, as well as fees, admission fees, sponsorship income, revenue from catering services, lottery income, and similar earnings, including funds from statutory social insurance.

Donations from Individuals and Companies: Voluntary payments from individuals and companies, including supporting membership contributions and bequests.

Public Grants: Institutional and project-related funding from government entities.

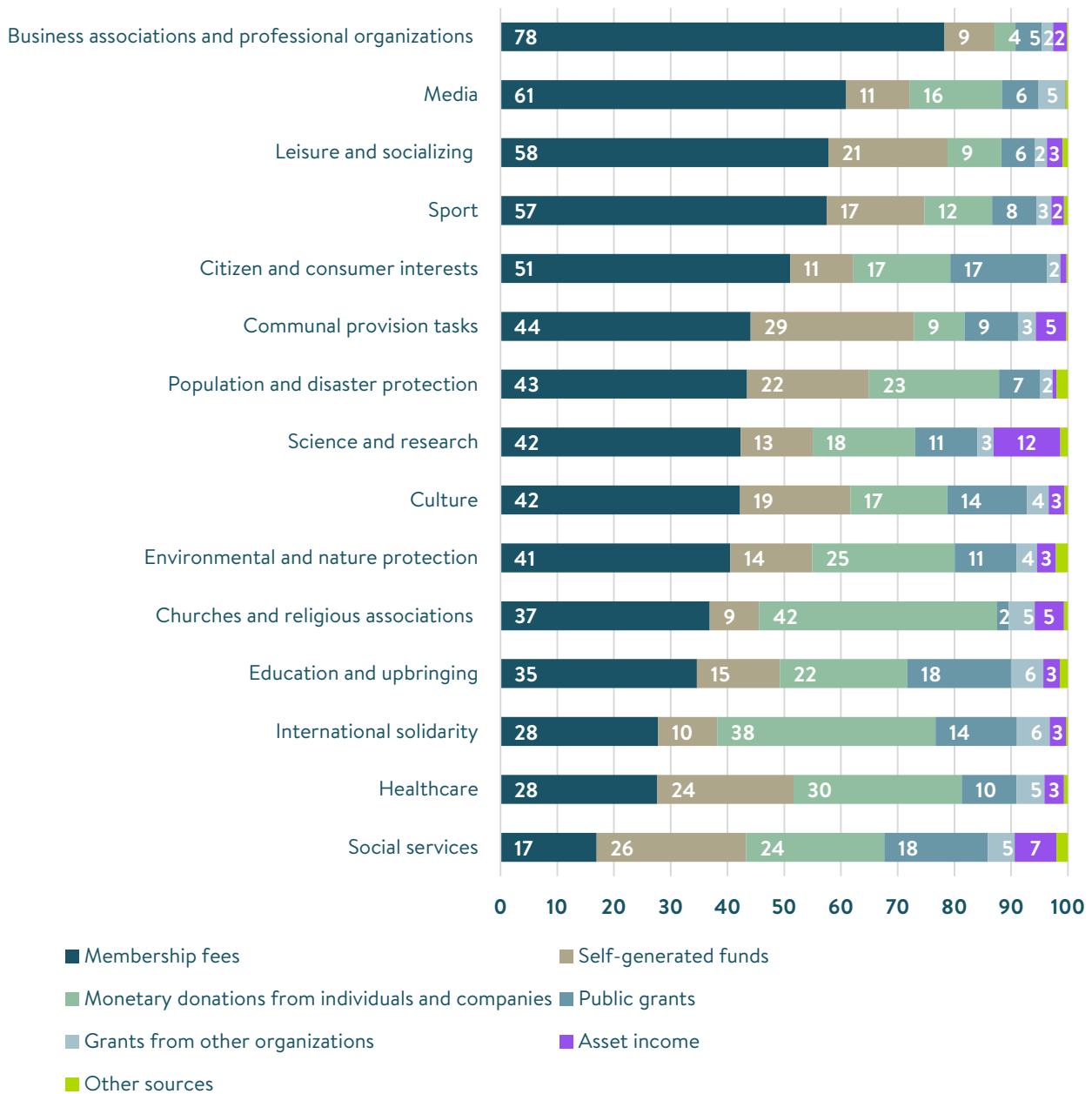
Grants from Other Organizations: Funding from foundations, associations, or churches.

Asset Income: Earnings from financial investments (interest, dividends) and from renting and leasing real estate (rents and leases).

Other Funds: Special income such as fines or carryover from previous years.

Figure 23
Financing mix by field of activity

Means in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,091, weighted. Due to rounding discrepancies, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

Figure 24 shows the proportion of organizations in each federal state that received Corona aid in 2021. With a share of 42 percent, organizations in Saarland most frequently availed of Corona aid, far ahead of others. In contrast, in Rhineland-Palatinate, only about 10 percent of organizations received such aid. However, it should be noted that Figure 24 only provides information on how many organizations received support, not the extent of the funds provided. Furthermore, the representation does not provide information on the proportion of organizations in the various federal states that had a Corona-related need for support.

Figure 24
Proportion of organizations that received of corona aid in 2021



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,692, weighted

Table 09
How have the revenues developed since 2017?

Proportions in percent

	Membership fees		Self-generated funds		Donations		Public grants	
	Decreased	Increased	Decreased	Increased	Decreased	Increased	Decreased	Increased
Culture	19	22	32	23	21	28	19	32
Sport	16	32	22	25	24	23	17	24
Leisure	12	26	25	27	21	21	21	22
Research	21	21	23	21	23	19	22	28
Education	16	25	20	28	18	35	15	35
Healthcare	17	25	18	34	21	36	19	33
Social services	18	18	16	41	19	36	13	35
Population protection	6	31	18	30	12	39	18	16
Environment	11	33	15	28	20	35	16	27
International solidarity	16	19	20	23	20	41	18	29
Citizen interests	11	35	17	22	15	33	14	33
Business associations	19	37	21	29	23	9	17	21
Communal provision tasks	6	22	12	31	11	35	17	28
Religion	19	22	24	19	18	40	19	19
Media	12	26	11	39	13	32	25	17



* Each was queried on a scale from 1 "strongly decreased" to 5 "strongly increased". Presented here are the cumulative percentage values for 1 and 2 (decreased) as well as 4 and 5 (increased).
Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=7,407–9,459, weighted.

Diverse developments in the different income sources by field of activity

The development of income from the different financing sources varies depending on the field of activity (see Table 9). For instance, organizations in the cultural sector, which are particularly characterized by the organization of events, have more frequently registered a decline in self-generated funds (32 percent) in recent years. In contrast, in the social services sector, only 16 percent of organizations reported a decrease in self-generated funds; instead, 41 percent reported an increase in income from self-generated funds. This aligns with the finding further below that organizations in the social services sector have particularly often created new activities and offers in response to the crisis (see Chapter 9.2).

Numerous organizations in the field of population and disaster protection (39 percent), religious associations (40 percent), and organizations in the field of international solidarity (41 percent) report increased donation income. This is likely related to the increase in environmental disasters and international conflicts, which have positively influenced the willingness to donate among the population and companies (Deutsches Zentralinstitut für soziale Fragen 2023). In the field of population and disaster protection, the increase in support associations for volunteer fire brigades has likely boosted the donation income of these organizations.

When examining public grants, it is noticeable that those areas where public funds form an important part of the financing mix most often report an increase in income. This primarily applies to organizations in the fields of social services (35 percent), education (35 percent), healthcare (33 percent), and citizen and consumer interests (33 percent).

FOCUS TOPICS

9.1 Diversity in Organizations

Civil society organizations are also always a reflection of societal diversity, providing a space for people with various interests, worldviews, and social and cultural backgrounds. Not every organization needs to display a high degree of internal social or cultural diversity. Nevertheless, promoting diversity within organizations is essential for the Third Sector to make effective contributions to integration and societal cohesion. Beyond this societal role, diversity promotion is increasingly seen as a key to addressing challenges in volunteer recruitment. Diversity in civil society organizations, both at the member level and among volunteers, can help attract new target groups and mobilize them for increased engagement. Moreover, diversity is now considered a central success factor for the productivity, innovation, and adaptability of organizations of any type in a dynamically evolving environment (Hummel et al. 2023).

Four out of ten organizations have no volunteers under 31 years

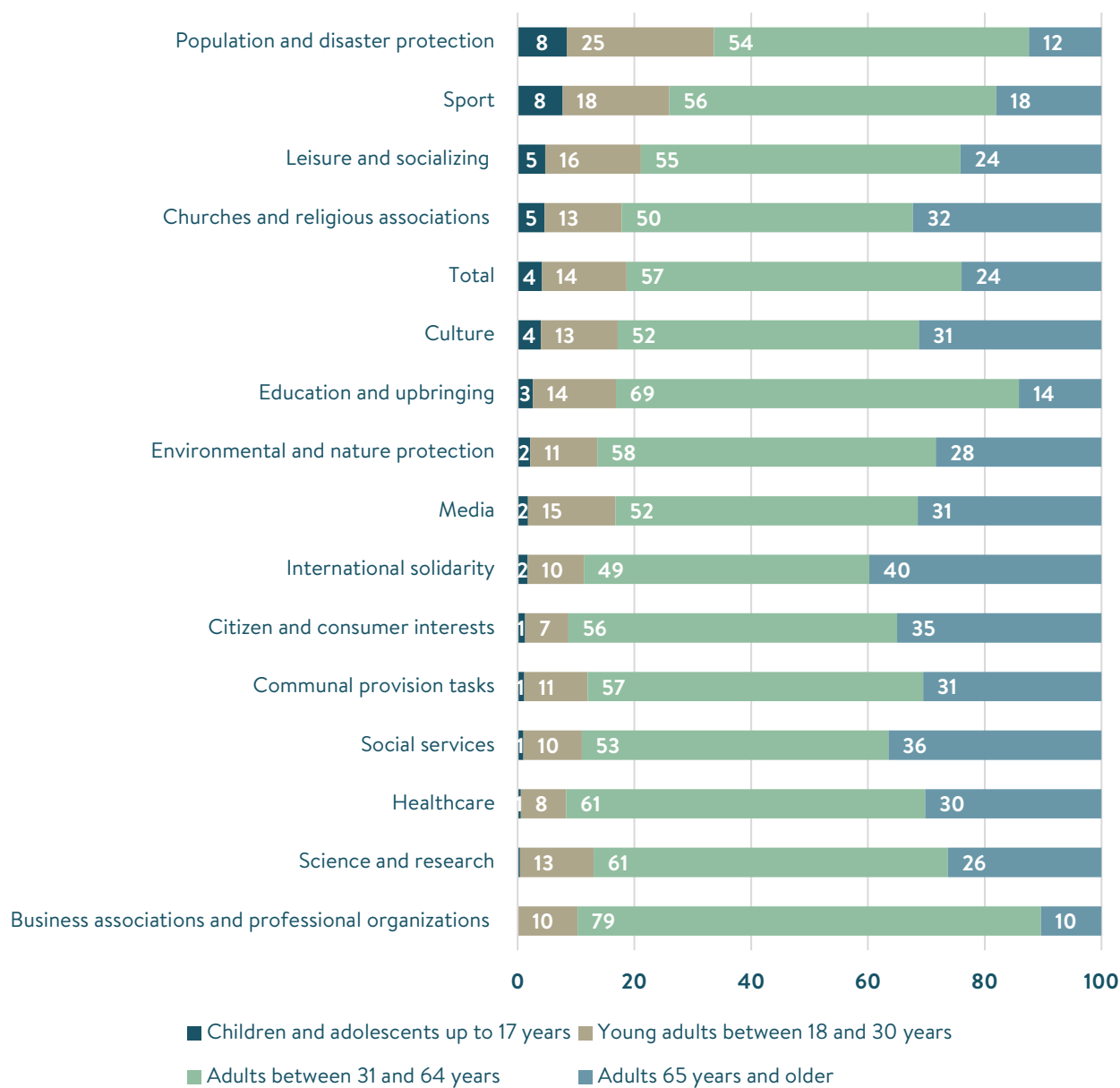
An examination of the age distribution of volunteers within civil society organizations reveals that, on average, 4 percent of volunteers are under 18, 14 percent are between 18 and 30, 57 percent are between 31 and 64, and 24 percent are over 65. This distribution highlights the challenge of attracting young volunteers: Overall, 73 percent of organizations have no volunteers under 18, and 42 percent have none between 18 and 30. Figure 25 shows that organizations in population/disaster protection and sports tend to have more young volunteers than those in other areas. In an average organization in these fields, a third or a quarter of the volunteers are under 31. This underscores the importance of sports clubs and volunteer fire brigades as learning venues for engagement. By contrast, in the fields of international solidarity and social services, there are often many older volunteers. On average, 40 percent and 37 percent of volunteers in these areas are over 65.

Sports clubs and fire brigades, as well as rural areas, as central places for youth volunteering

The ZiviZ-Survey also provides insights into how young volunteers not only sporadically contribute to an organization but also take on leadership roles. Young volunteers in leadership positions can bring new perspectives and ideas. Nearly half of the organizations currently have no volunteers under 30 in leadership roles (46 percent). Organizations in the fields of communal service provision, international solidarity, and social services particularly rarely have young volunteers in leadership roles (see Figure 26). Again, the areas of sports and disaster protection are confirmed as central learning venues for young people's voluntary assumption of responsibility. Consequently, organizations in rural areas more often have young volunteers in leadership roles than in cities.

Figure 25
Age structure by field of activity

What is the age distribution of the volunteers? Means in percent

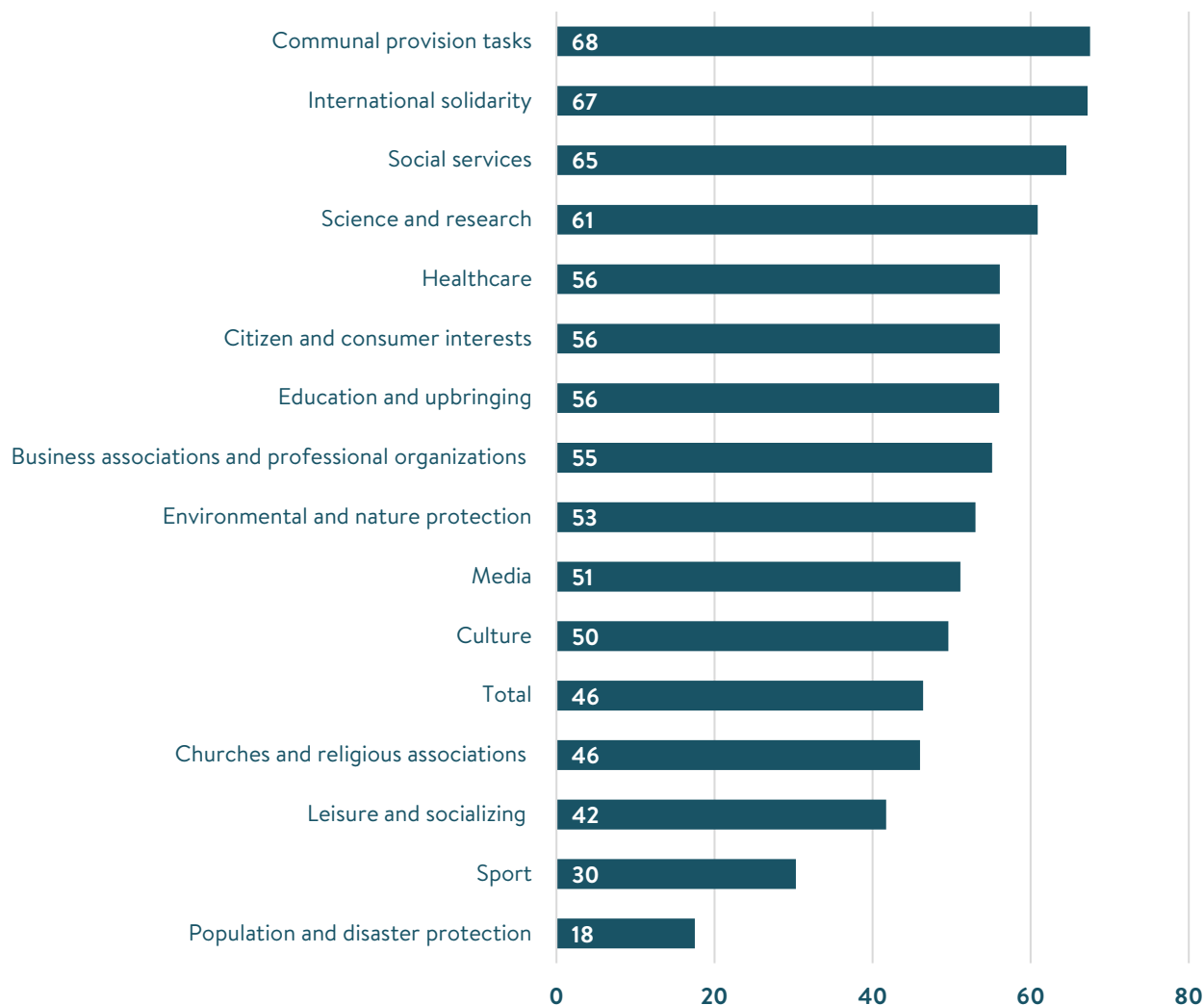


Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=10,655, weighted. Due to rounding differences, the values do not always add up to 100.

Figure 26

Organizations without volunteers under 30 in leadership roles by field of activity

Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,357, weighted.

Social and cultural diversity with potentials for improvement

The ZiviZ-Survey also delivers insights into the diversity within organizations beyond age structure, including aspects such as gender, social or cultural backgrounds. Overall, 66 percent of organizations report that the cultural backgrounds of their volunteers are (rather) similar. Only 11 percent of organizations have (rather) diverse cultural backgrounds. The diversity in terms of social background (e.g., educational level, income) is somewhat more pronounced: 47 percent reported being (rather) similar, and 21 percent (rather) different. Table 10 presents findings on various dimensions of diversity, differentiated by fields of activity. These dimensions were surveyed on a scale from -2 (left pole) to +2 (right pole). Values greater than 0 under the gender variable indicate that in an average organization in the fields of population/disaster protection, science, media, sports, and economics, more men are engaged, while in the fields of education, health, social services, and international solidarity, more women are involved.

Table 10
Diversity characteristics by field of activity

What applies to your volunteers?
Average on a scale from -2 to +2

	Gender	Cultural Background	Social Background	Places of Residence	Volunteers with physical and/or mental disabilities
	-2 = Mostly women +2 = Mostly men	-2 = Similar +2 = Diverse	-2 = Similar +2 = Diverse	-2 = Close to each other +2 = Widely distributed	-2 = None +2 = Many
Culture	0.0	-1.1	-0.5	-0.8	-1.3
Sport	0.6	-0.9	-0.2	-0.8	-1.3
Leisure	0.3	-1.0	-0.2	-1.1	-1.2
Research	0.7	-0.9	-1.0	0.6	-1.5
Education	-0.5	-0.9	-0.6	-0.8	-1.3
Healthcare	-0.4	-0.9	-0.6	-0.1	-0.7
Social services	-0.4	-0.9	-0.4	-0.7	-1.0
Population protection	0.9	-1.1	-0.1	-1.2	-1.3
Environment	0.1	-0.9	-0.2	-0.4	-1.1
International solidarity	-0.4	-0.6	-0.3	-0.5	-1.4
Citizen interests	0.3	-0.9	-0.4	-0.9	-1.2
Business associations	0.6	-1.2	-0.9	0.3	-1.5
Communal provision tasks	0.5	-0.9	-0.4	-0.6	-1.4
Religion	-0.1	-1.1	-0.4	-0.5	-1.1
Media	0.7	-0.8	-0.4	-0.3	-1.4
Other	0,3	-1,0	-0,4	-0,8	-1,1
Total	0,1	-1,0	-0,4	-0,7	-1,2

 Lowest value  Highest value

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,249–11,467, weighted.

In the areas of sports, leisure, environment, and population/disaster protection, the social composition of volunteers is somewhat more heterogeneous than in other areas. The fields of economy and science exhibit the greatest homogeneity in social backgrounds. Cultural diversity, on the other hand, tends to be more similar than different across all fields of activity. Only a few organizations have people with disabilities as volunteers.

Self-organizing of migrant communities with development potentials

The ZiviZ-Survey data also reveals that although refugees and people with migration backgrounds are specific target groups for many organizations, individuals from migrant communities are much less likely to provide self-organized offerings. 8 percent of organizations identify refugees and people with migration backgrounds as explicit target groups for their offerings and activities. However, only 3 percent of all civil society organizations report having a majority of members with a migration background, and only 1 percent have a majority of refugee members. Migrant communities tend to organize more frequently in informal structures. The German Volunteer Survey shows that the engagement of people with migration or refugee backgrounds more often occurs in the informal sector (Simonson et al. 2022). Possible reasons for the rarer self-organization in formal organizations might be access barriers: Lack of information, bureaucratic obstacles, or the perception that formal organizations are not capable of addressing the specific needs and challenges of people with migration backgrounds can limit the participation of individuals with migration and refugee backgrounds in these organizations, thereby also complicating their access to funding.

9.2 Resilience and Digitalization in Times of Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on civil society organizations over the past years. Social distancing forced many organizations to rapidly digitalize their work and adapt their workflows. It was also challenging for many organizations to engage their members and volunteers during times of limited activities and to rekindle their active participation post-pandemic. Particularly, organizations with high fixed costs due to paid staff and their own infrastructure faced massive financial difficulties (Hoff/Tahmaz 2022).

Simultaneously, the societal importance and creativity within civil society have become more evident than ever during the crisis. Civil society organizations played a crucial role in societal cohesion and provided vital services to people in need. Some organizations reacted creatively, finding new ways to continue their work and achieve their goals. For instance, they utilized digital technologies to carry on their work online, expand their reach, and engage new target groups. Although the crisis was challenging for many organizations, the advancements in digitalization especially offer a chance to better prepare organizations for the future.

Only a portion of organizations feel prepared for future crises

Participants of the ZiviZ-Survey were asked how resilient they perceive their organization in light of the pandemic experience. The results present a mixed sentiment. While a majority of the organizations (57 percent) successfully adapted their internal workflows during the pandemic, only about one-third (34 percent) responded to the crisis with new activities and offers. Only 7 percent of organizations have completely realigned themselves, for example, by developing entirely new digital business models. Similarly mixed views are seen in assessing whether the organization feels better prepared for future crises (41 percent). Although theoretical since each crisis comes with different challenges, this result conveys a sentiment among organization representatives about how flexibly they can handle extraordinary situations.

Figure 27 shows that organizations in the field of social services have made particularly significant strides. 48 percent of these organizations created new offers,

73 percent successfully adapted workflows, and 55 percent feel better prepared for future crises. Social welfare institutions often have paid employees, thus having more resources for digitalization and adjusting organizational strategies. The pressure to adapt in this field was likely higher to meet the needs of vulnerable people under new circumstances.

Reserved sentiment about the benefits of digitalization

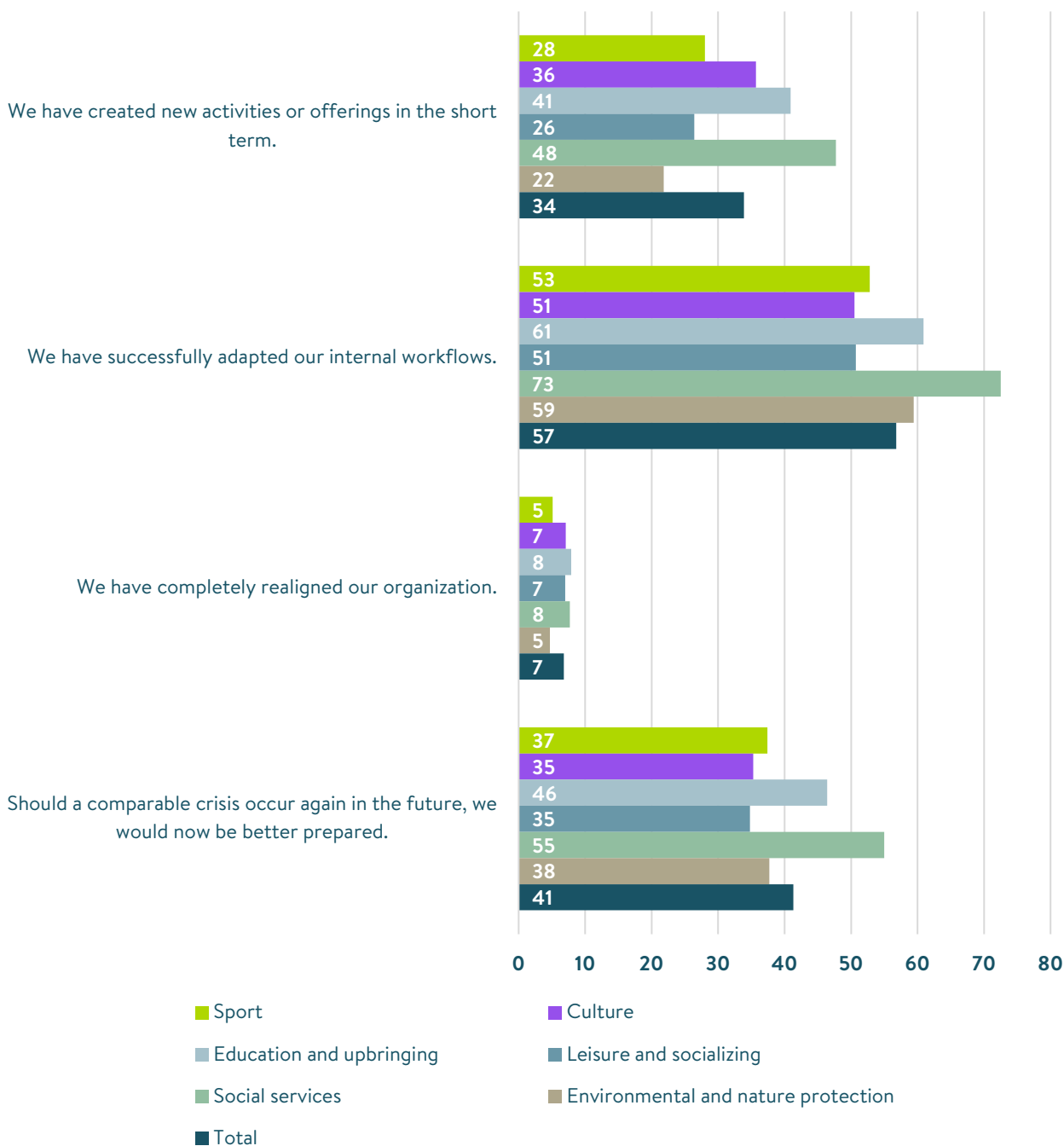
Organizations have made progress in digitalization in recent years. Nearly two-thirds agree that their organization is well-positioned in the areas of public relations and coordination of members/volunteers. There is a particular need for improvement in digital offerings for target groups and communication with donors and funding institutions. Differentiating by field of activity also shows that environmental organizations are particularly well-positioned.

Although many organizations have made digitalization progress, the consequences of increasingly digital work for the organizations have not been extensively studied. There are few empirical insights into the positive and negative effects of digital work. Therefore, in the ZiviZ-Survey, participants were also asked about various potential impacts of digitalization (see Figure 28). 21 percent of organizations report gaining more participants in their offers and activities due to digitalization. Other positive digital effects are less common, for example, more people engaging who are not local (10 percent) or more individuals participating in decision-making processes within the organization (14 percent). Notably, digitalization leads to increased engagement of young people under 30 years old in only 9 percent of organizations. For many, social interaction is an important motivation for membership and active engagement in an organization. 18 percent of organizations agreed that the sense of community has diminished due to increasingly digital work. Therefore, a future task will be to productively combine analog and digital means of exchange and engagement.

Figure 28 presents the results of digitalization consequences, segmented by the six fields of activity with the largest number of organizations. It shows that environmental organizations, in particular, seem to be more capable of reaching more participants with offers and activities and inspiring more people to engage who are not on-site due to digitalization. This is surprising at first glance, as environmental organizations rarely created new activities and offers during the pandemic (see Figure 27). However, this might indicate that environmental organizations were already better digitally positioned before the pandemic compared to organizations from other fields of activity. This is supported by environmental organizations rating their digitalization status as above average.

Figure 27
Resilience by selected fields of activity

Regarding the Corona pandemic in the past two years: To what extent do you agree with the following statements from the perspective of your organization? Percentage "agree (fully)"*

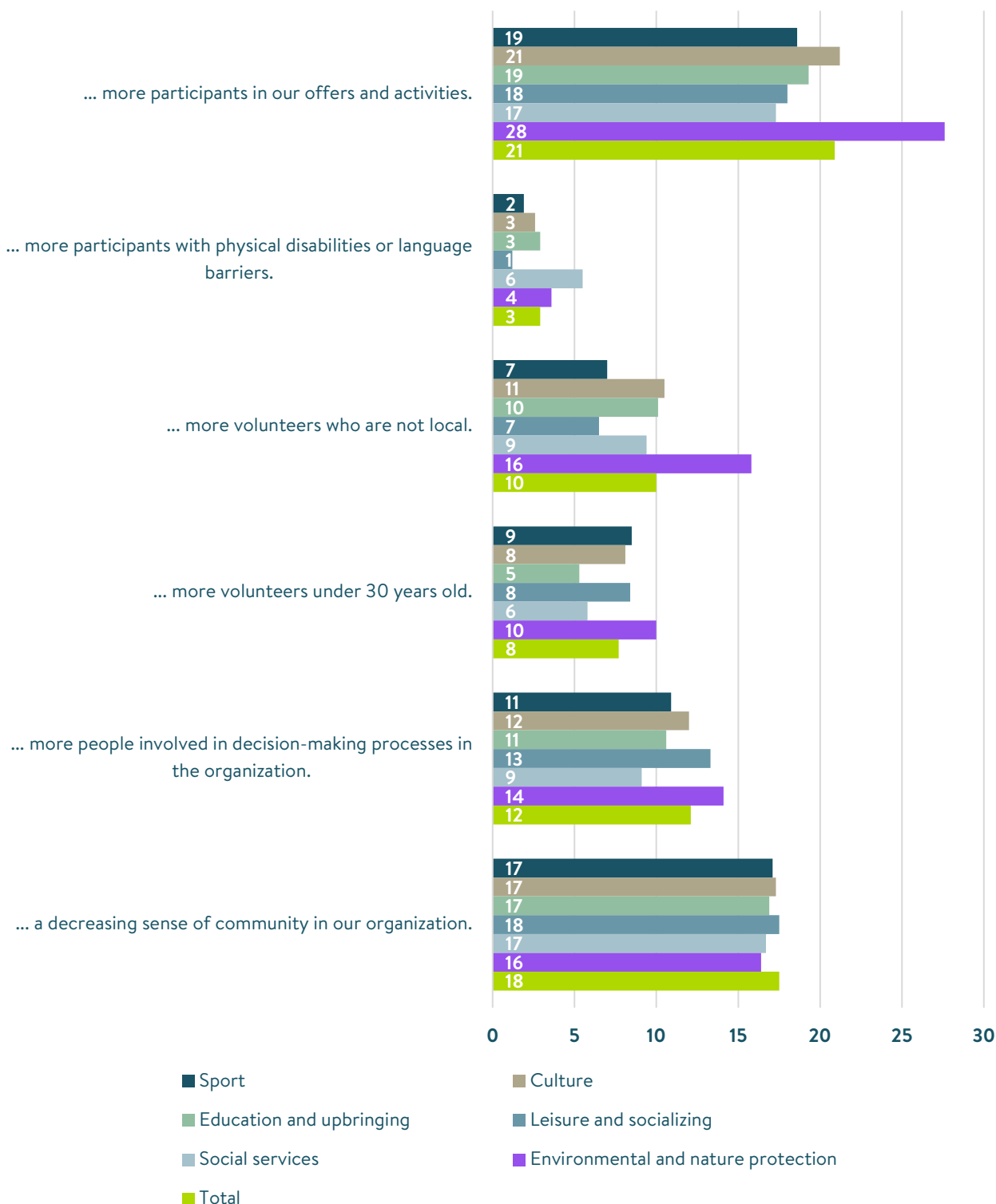


* Each aspect was queried on a scale from 1 "do not agree at all" to 5 "fully agree". Presented here are the proportions of organizations that indicated 4 "agree" and 5 "fully agree".

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12,092–12,337, weighted.

Figure 28
Consequences of digitalization

How does increasing digitalization affect your organization? * Percentages
 Due to increasing digitalization, we have...



* Each aspect was queried on a scale from 1 "do not agree at all" to 5 "fully agree". Presented here are the proportions of organizations that indicated 4 "agree" and 5 "fully agree".

Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,034–12,172, weighted.

9.3 Collaboration and Support Structures

Due to the increasing complexity of social, ecological, and economic challenges, individual organizations rarely have the necessary resources to develop and implement effective solutions. The importance of collaboration across sector boundaries – as well as within civil society itself – is steadily increasing. From an organizational development perspective, collaboration with other institutions and organizations can bring various added values, such as additional financial resources, strengthening of one's visibility, or the acquisition of new committed individuals.

The municipality as a central place for action and networking

Two-thirds of all civil society organizations in Germany are active locally in their community. Significantly fewer organizations are active at the state, federal, or even international level. This is also reflected in governmental cooperation relationships. Figure 29 shows that, in addition to widespread collaboration with public institutions (schools, universities, museums, etc.), collaboration with administrations and political actors is particularly common at the municipal level. 29 percent of organizations report collaborating often or very often with municipal administration/politics. A broad understanding of possible forms of collaboration was applied here, including contract relationships, funding relationships, partnerships, or networks.

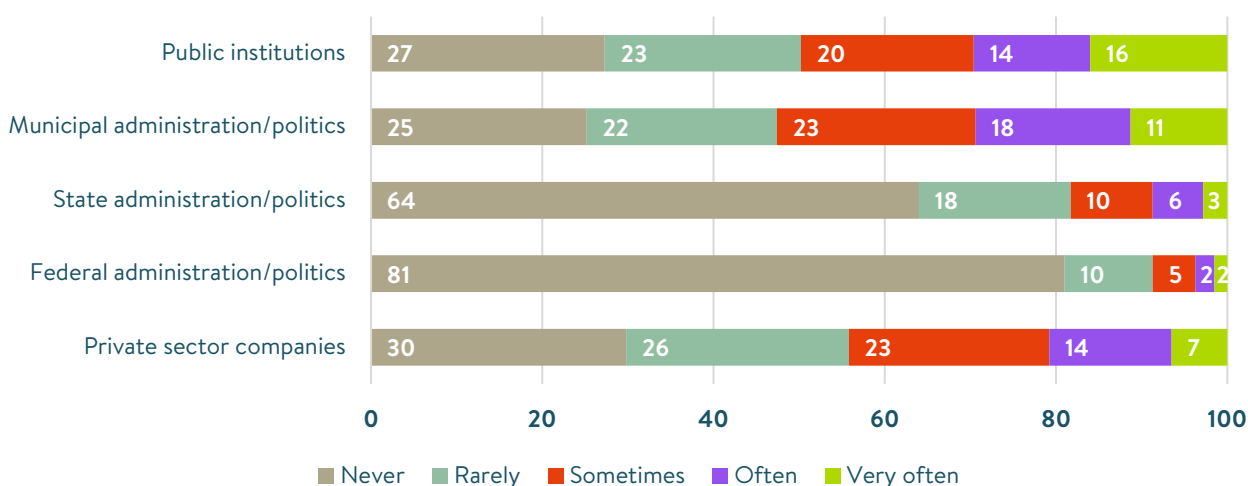
Collaboration with private sector companies appears to still have potential for expansion: more than half (56 percent) of the organizations rarely or never collaborate with companies.

One in four organizations collaborates with at least one organization promoting civic engagement

The ZiviZ-Survey also examined the structures of civic engagement promotion in more detail.

Figure 29
Collaboration with other institutions and actors

How often does your organization collaborate with the following organizations and institutions? Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=11,886–12,396, weighted. Due to rounding differences, the values do not always add up to the aggregated sum of 100.

A broad network of institutions has developed that specifically focus on promoting civic engagement and are assigned high importance within the framework of governmental engagement strategies as hubs and centers of competence. These include contact points for engagement in municipalities and districts, as well as volunteer agencies, community foundations, self-help contact points, centers for senior citizens, or multi-generational houses. Currently, the most common collaboration is with municipal contact points (14 percent), followed by volunteer agencies (9 percent), community foundations (6 percent), self-help contact points (3 percent), multi-generational houses (3 percent), centers for senior citizens and/or mother centers (3 percent).⁰⁹ Multiple responses were possible in the survey. Nearly one in four organizations collaborates with at least one of these institutions.

The fact that three-quarters of the organizations do not maintain a collaboration with any of these institutions can be interpreted in various ways. This could indicate a lack of perceived need for collaboration or a lack of knowledge about the existence and offerings of such engagement-supporting structures. However, it should also be considered that these institutions are not always present in the local area of the organizations, especially in rural areas. For example, there are just over 400 volunteer agencies nationwide – a relatively small number compared to more than 600,000 civil society organizations, most of which are located in larger cities (Speck et al. 2022).

Table 11 shows the proportion of organizations in each field of activity that collaborate with the mentioned institutions. In the field of social services, collaboration with volunteer agencies and municipal contact points is particularly strong, in the health care sector with self-help contact points. Organizations in the fields of international solidarity, citizen interests, and supply tasks also work relatively frequently with municipal contact points for civic engagement.

Goals of collaboration vary by field of activity

In their collaboration with organizations promoting civic engagement, the organizations pursue different goals. For many organizations, networking in the local or regional environment is important (61 percent), followed by the desire to implement joint projects (56 percent) and to gain committed individuals (53 percent). But also increasing one's own visibility (46 percent) or raising financial funds (45 percent) are relevant goals for many organizations. Here, too, differences are evident in the various fields of activity. For organizations in social services and the health sector, networking in the local/regional environment is most relevant, in the area of civil protection the acquisition of committed individuals, and in international solidarity the implementation of joint projects.

On the necessity of a holistic view of structures promoting engagement

However, organizations promoting civic engagement are only one instrument for strengthening civil society support. Figure 30 illustrates that in the field of sports, few organizations collaborate with these institutions. However, a specific characteristic of organized sports is the particularly high degree of organization in associations. 84 percent of organizations in this field reported being a member of an association. In most other fields of activity, it is only 30 to 50 percent of the organizations. Overall, Figure 30 shows that organizations in fields of activity with lower degrees of collaboration with organizations promoting civic engagement tend to have higher degrees of self-organization in associations.

09

It should be noted that some of the volunteer agencies are municipally owned.

Table 11
Collaboration with organizations promoting civic engagement by field of activity

Does your organization collaborate with one or more of the following institutions for the mediation and promotion of voluntary engagement?

Proportions in percent

	Volunteer/ Community Service Agency	Multi- generational House	Self-Help Contact Point	Community Foundation	Municipal contact office	Senior Citi- zens' Office and/or Moth- ers' Center
Culture	6	2	1	6	14	2
Sport	6	1	1	4	12	1
Leisure	5	2	2	3	13	2
Research	2	0	2	2	3	0
Education	11	4	3	8	12	4
Healthcare	16	5	26	8	15	8
Social services	26	9	19	15	28	11
Population protection	11	0	0	3	17	1
Environment	9	0	0	4	13	1
International solidarity	11	2	2	6	19	2
Citizen interests	13	7	5	6	21	7
Business associations	4	2	0	2	5	0
Communal provision tasks	6	3	2	7	17	4
Religion	5	3	2	3	8	1
Media	11	7	4	9	9	11
Other	6	2	3	5	10	5
Total	9	3	3	6	14	3

 Lowest value
  Highest value

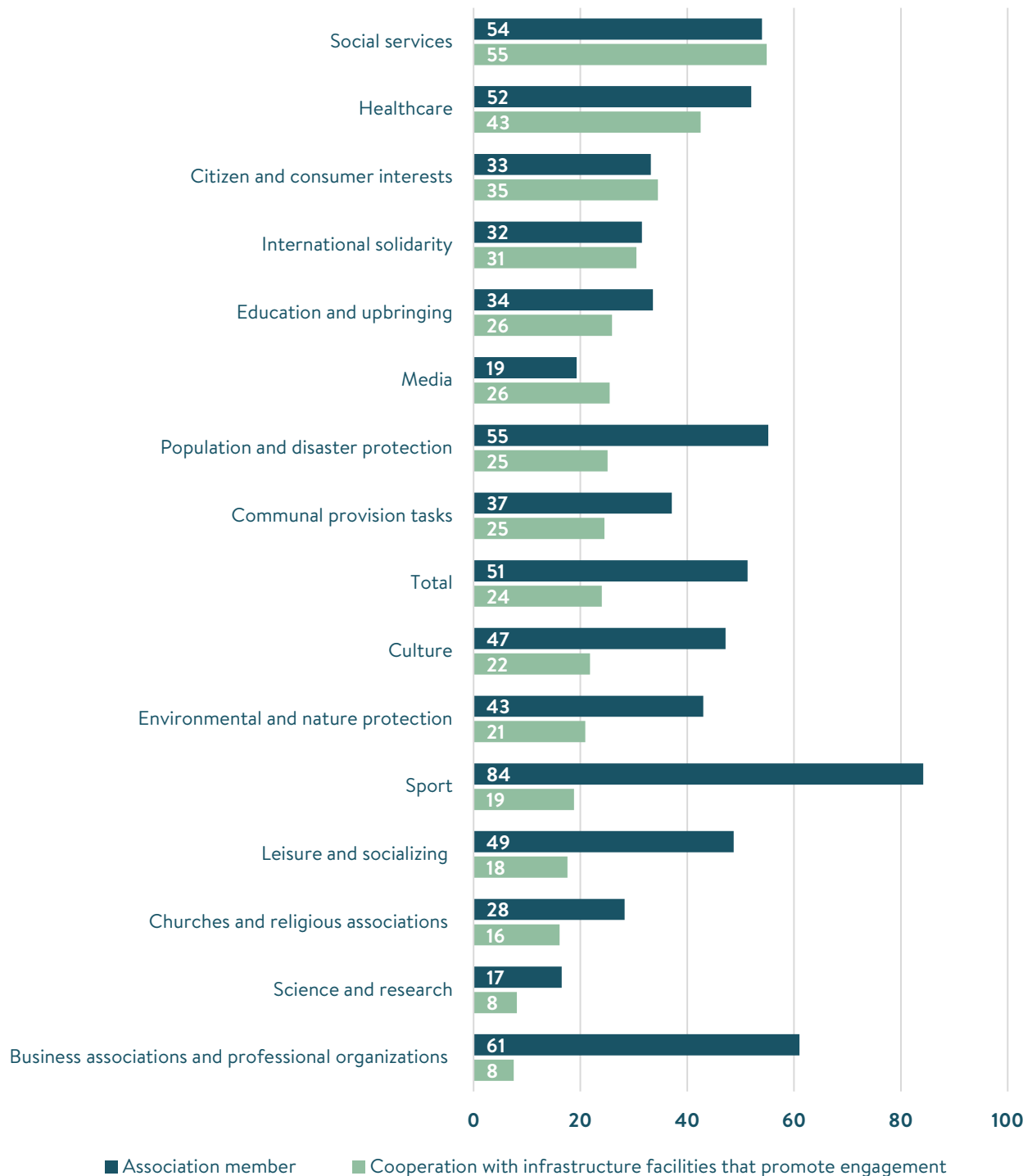
Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12,495, weighted.

Beyond memberships in associations, there are various support structures in civil society. For example, over a quarter of organizations are committed to networking different organizations (28 percent). Another 22 percent support organizations in public relations, 20 percent provide premises, and 15 percent offer training and consulting for the committed individuals of other organizations.

Figure 30

Collaboration with organizations promoting civic engagement and association memberships by field of activity

Proportions in percent



Source: ZiviZ-Survey 2023, N=12,495–12,595, weighted.

Professionalism in organizations increases support capability

A difference exists between organizations with and without paid staff. In organizations with paid staff, the proportion of supportive networking activities is 44 percent, compared to 23 percent in purely volunteer organizations. Similarly, in professionally structured organizations, 27 percent offer consulting and training for other organizations, compared to 10 percent in purely volunteer organizations. The data thus suggest that a professional structure within the organizations increases the ability to support other organizations in their work.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The crises in recent years have been challenging for many civil society organizations. Social distancing during the pandemic made it difficult to carry out activities and to recruit members and volunteers. Digitalization has required many organizations to acquire new competencies and adapt their work processes. Moreover, long-term societal changes, such as demographic change or a decreasing willingness in the population for committed engagement, are already significant challenges for many organizations today. These and other societal changes not only influence the thematic focuses of the organizations but also the resources available to them (Benning et al. 2022).

Most of the organizations studied in this report would not exist without the voluntary commitment of citizens. Less than one-third of the organizations have paid employees to support their work. The strong reliance on self-financing through membership fees means that most organizations have to operate with very limited financial resources. To maintain a strong civil society, it is therefore necessary to continuously improve the conditions for civil engagement. The federal government, states, and municipalities play a particularly important role in designing support measures and legal frameworks. But civil society organizations themselves, such as associations, foundations, or engagement-supporting infrastructure facilities, also play a role in promoting engagement. Likewise, private companies have a responsibility in shaping their local environment and in promoting civil society engagement.

This report described the diverse landscape of civil society organizations. In the debate about the increase in informal engagement, it is important not to lose sight of the added value of sustainable organizational structures. While informal initiatives are particularly agile due to their flexibility and lower bureaucratic hurdles, reliable and sustainable structures are also needed in civil society to permanently address societal problems. The following section discusses selected findings of the report with a view to recommendations for action.

Increasing informalization of engagement requires creative solutions and a willingness to change from organizations

The increasing popularity of informal engagement, as clearly shown in the German Volunteer Survey, increasingly poses problems for organizations. Many organizations no longer find enough volunteers, especially for leadership positions. Also, more organizations now report a decline in volunteer numbers than in earlier survey waves of the ZiviZ-Survey. There is also a growing decoupling of engagement from the institution of membership in formal organizations.

The changing engagement behavior within the population demands a willingness to change from organizations. It is necessary to test new models of task distribution among volunteers in charge, as well as new forms of recognition for taking on offices and setting shorter terms of office. Furthermore, new structures need to be created, for example, to attract those interested in event- or project-related engagements. This includes creating open engagement structures beyond formal memberships, tailoring task profiles with clear time limitations, and, where possible, professionalizing volunteer management. Long-term engagement should be complemented by forms of project-based, task-related, or virtual engagement. Cooperation with informal groups and initiatives must also be systematically tested and strengthened.

The results of the ZiviZ-Survey show that the number of volunteers has developed positively in recent years, when organizations have opened up to non-members. Therefore, targeted approaches to non-members should be increasingly tested. The traditional path of a voluntary career, where taking on a leadership role is preceded by a longer, multi-year membership and proven competence in subordinate positions, no longer seems contemporary in light of the findings. Therefore, there is a need to develop more low-threshold concepts to bind people to organizations beyond formal membership and create new participation opportunities. However, an increasing decoupling of engagement from the institution of membership raises the question for organizations of how to finance their activities in the future if fewer people pay membership fees.

Systematically involve civil society organizations in political processes

Organizations are increasingly striving to provide impetus for social change and to participate in political processes. There is a shift in civil society from primarily inward-oriented membership organizations to organizations that have a greater impact on societal problems locally and want to shape society beyond the boundaries of the organization. This is also evident in the fact that more and more organizations see themselves as gap fillers for missing state provision of basic services.

However, the role of civil society in political and administrative practice is often reduced to purely operational functions such as service provision or crisis management. The potential of these organizations for creative solutions and as initiators of social change often remains untapped. There is a need for a deeper integration of civil society into political decision-making processes, where they participate as equal partners in the conception of solutions. It should also be considered that the increasing role of civil society as gap fillers can lead to an overload of volunteers. While a provision of basic services carried by civil society self-organization offers diverse opportunities, it also has limits in terms of resilience, sustainability, and ensuring and maintaining high qualitative standards of service provision.

Reduce bureaucracy in volunteering and create support structures

The increasing burden of bureaucratic and administrative tasks in volunteer work, such as the necessary maintenance of registers, complex grant application procedures, or recognition of charitable status, proves to be an entry barrier and motivation brake for taking on leadership roles. This is compounded by legal uncertainties regarding questions of personal liability in volunteering and the protection of personal data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Almost three-quarters of organizations rate the administrative effort in voluntary leadership positions as particularly time-consuming.

Especially small organizations regularly complain about the oftentimes bureaucratic grant application procedures of government institutions or foundations. In the future, more attention should be paid to creating low-threshold offers in the portfolio of funding programs that require less bureaucratic effort and allow small organizations to focus on their actual work. Training and consulting services are also important to better cope with the increasingly complex tasks and demands in volunteering. The German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering (DSEE) has established an extensive range of training and consulting opportunities and operates a telephone hotline for volunteers. But associations and state networks also play an important role in supporting volunteers in member organizations and providing advisory assistance. Since most organizations offer their services only in a relatively small local area, support services from the municipal side, such as fixed contact persons for questions around the topic of engagement and volunteering, are also of great importance.

Strengthen diversity in organizations

The internal structures of civil society organizations still too rarely reflect societal diversity. Notably, nearly half of the organizations have no young volunteers under 30 years in leadership positions. Only 11 percent have volunteers with different cultural backgrounds, 21 percent with different social backgrounds. Promoting diversity is essential for civil society organizations to be able to make effective contributions to integration and social cohesion – as well as to solving internal succession problems by opening up the organization to new population groups more broadly.

Strengthening diversity often requires a whole package of measures over a longer period of time to change not only structures but also organizational culture. Possible measures to strengthen diversity in civil society organizations include training and workshops to first create a deeper understanding and awareness of social and cultural heterogeneity. In addition, attention should be paid to diversity aspects in the recruitment phase of volunteers and employees. Often, partnerships with other organizations are necessary to implement this and to mutually strengthen each other in promoting diversity.

A continuous monitoring through surveys and feedback systems can be useful in evaluating progress in the area of diversity and inclusion and identifying needs for adjustment. Finally, the communication and public relations work of organizations should also be examined for diversity relevance. By using various communication channels and formats, different target groups can be reached. Only by combining measures will it be possible to overcome the deficits in social and cultural diversity that still exist in many organizations and to make effective contributions to societal integration and cohesion. However, it is also important to be aware of the limits of diversity in civil society organizations. As voluntary associations of individuals whose constitutive principle is the same or at least similar goals, interests, and values, a certain socio-structural and socio-cultural bias in the membership will probably be inevitable.

Considering support structures for civic engagement holistically and establishing a solid foundation

The landscape of infrastructure facilities promoting civic engagement - such as municipal contact points for civic engagement, volunteer agencies, or community foundations - has been systematically expanded in recent years and is playing an increasingly important role in state engagement strategies. Nearly one in four organizations now collaborates with at least one such facility. However, these facilities are often not yet based on solid structural financing. It should also be

considered that the landscape of structures promoting engagement also includes associations that support member organizations in various ways. There are also numerous local networks of mutual support between civil society organizations. It is important to make these locally quite different support networks visible. To ensure effective promotion of engagement, continuous exchange of various engagement-promoting institutions about strategies, measures, and experiences is required. This exchange and the interlinking of measures are of great relevance, especially in view of the current process of the federal government to conceive a federal engagement strategy. Through close cooperation, synergies can be created, information exchanged, and resources used efficiently.

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Since 2008, ZiviZ has systematically worked to improve the data available on organized civil society in Germany. In 2012, a representative survey of associations, non-profit corporations, cooperatives, and foundations was conducted for Germany for the first time. The so-called ZiviZ-Survey has now been carried out three times.

With the Corporate Engagement Monitor, starting in 2018, ZiviZ also conducted a representative survey on the societal engagement of companies for the first time. For the Corporate Engagement Monitor, small, medium, and large companies in Germany are surveyed on a variety of topics related to corporate engagement and adjacent issues. The Corporate Engagement Monitor has now been conducted four times.

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The ZiviZ-Survey 2023 was made possible by



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Bibliographic Information of the German National Library. The German National Library records this publication in the German National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data is available on the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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Essen, 2024

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DESIGN

SeitenPlan GmbH, Dortmund

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Schubert, P., Kuhn, D., & Tahmaz, B. (2023). ZiviZ-Survey 2023: Civil Society Organizations in Transition – Recognizing Potential for Shaping Change. Strengthening Resilience and Diversity. Berlin: ZiviZ im Stifterverband.

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