

How to find and keep volunteers collaborating with you

Citizen Science Summer School 2023

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Participants in volunteering programmes are not free labour, but individuals who will keep coming if their needs are fulfilled.



Robert L. Ryan , Rachel Kaplan & Robert E. Grese

Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programmes,
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09640560120079948>



Big potential for citizen scientists

*...in Switzerland,
at least..*

- **48%** of respondents can imagine participating in a participatory research project, only **5%** have already done so
- Of the ones interested, **83%** would invest at least a couple of hours per month for it
- Particularly interested: Younger people, people with higher education, people with an openness to scientific topics.

**1394
respondents**

Swiss population,
18 and older,
city and
countryside,
all levels of
education

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Why do people participate in CS projects?

have fun

do „something good“
(for other people, for nature,
for science)

meet people with
similar interests

learn something new

share knowledge

improve my own life

pimp my CV

Motivations can
differ widely
within a project!

Stages of participation

1. Decision to participate

- People need to be aware the opportunity exists
- Opportunity needs to be appropriate
- Motivation

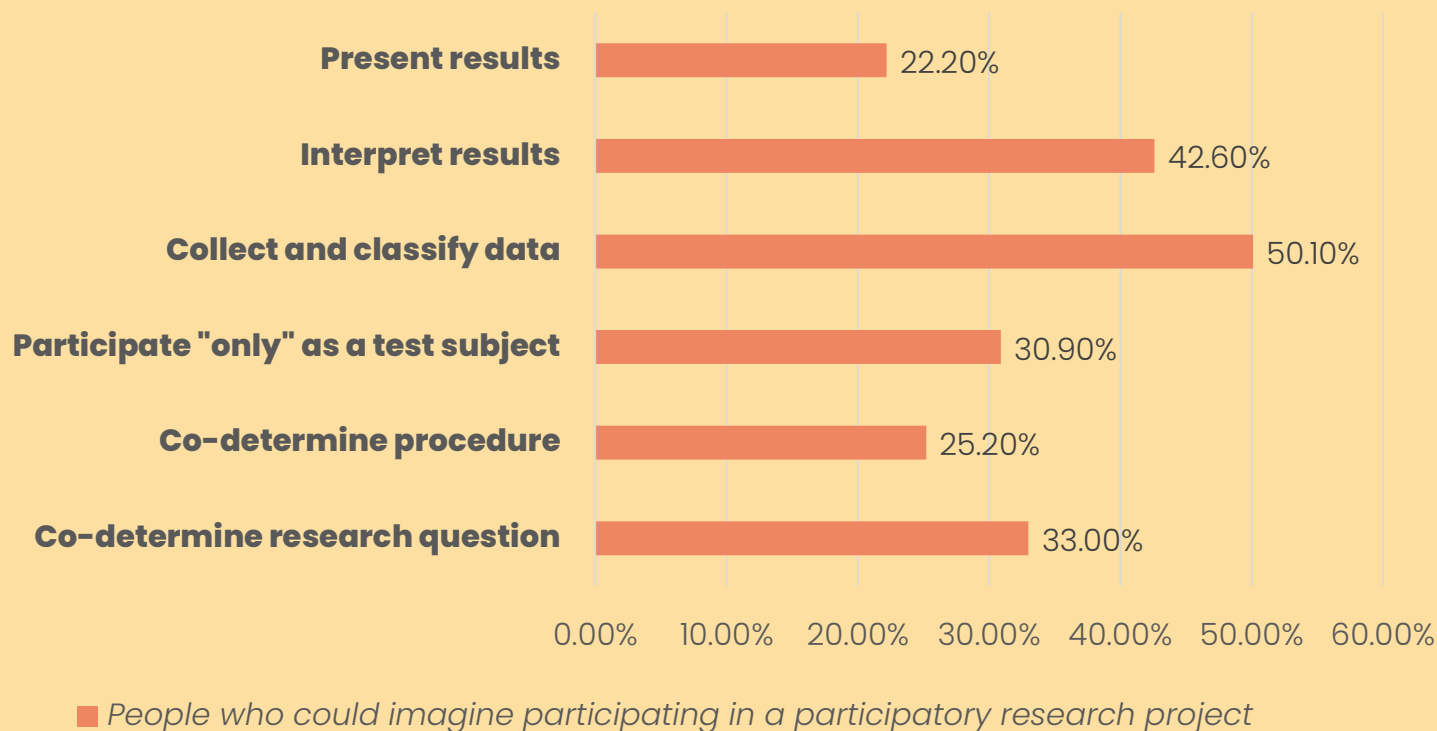
2. Initial participation

- Interests of potential participants
- Personal circumstances and demographics
- Awareness of the project
- Sign-up process understandable, uncomplicated and working

3. Sustained participation

- Good project organisation is key: good leadership, clear expectations, good communication of project progress and meaningful tasks

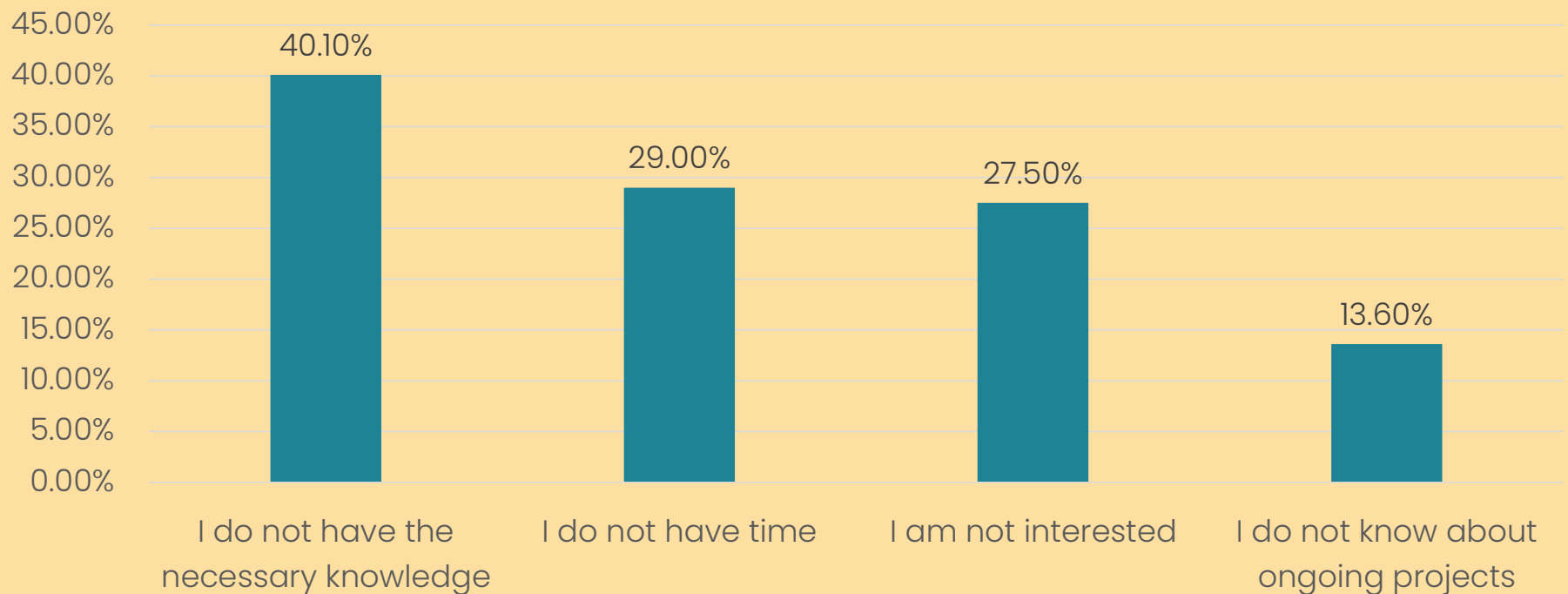
Offer different level of participation



Alexander Seifert, fhnw, 2021: <https://uzhalumni.ch/news/444635>



What are reasons for people, NOT to participate?



Alexander Seifert, fhnw, 2021: <https://uzhalumni.ch/news/444635>



Risks for people to stop contributing

Citizen scientists do not feel valued enough

Tasks are too complicated

Tasks are too time consuming

Bad project organisation

Not considering potential participants' motivations: personal attributes, circumstances and demographics

Technology does not work

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Who is important to your project?

**Researchers
from other
fields**

**Citizen
Scientists**

**Financial
partners**

Competitors

Multipliers

Administration

Consultants



Proof by underpants

Funders

Farmers
(organic and
traditional)

Private
gardeners

Federal Office for
Environment

Media

Researchers
(scientists and
communication)

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Exercise in groups



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In which project would you rather take part?

Proof by underpants

or

A nationwide assessment of soil health using citizen science

A citizen observatory for air quality with the help of strawberry plants

or

AirBerries

You need to find some kind of "twist" to make your project accessible for your target audience



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How to make people participate?

**Make people
curious
about your
project.**

**Choose a
title/topic/twist
to aim at your
target group's
interests.**

**Make people
feel like you
are one of
them.**

**Make your
project sound
like fun.**

**Make your
project
accessible
(locally, time-
wise, minorities)**

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Link to Volunteer Checklist mentioned by Pia:

<https://www.catta.ch/post/citizen-science-checklist-how-to-find-and-keep-volunteers-collaborating-with-you>

Exercise “Falling leaves”



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