

RECOGNIZING SKILL DEVELOPMENT  
THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AS A ROUTE TO  
EMPLOYMENT: REFLECTIONS FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF VOLUNTEERING

Prof. dr. Lesley Hustinx – EUROVIP conference – Brussels, April 26, 2018

# REPOSITIONING VOLUNTEERING

- Policies and practices that promote and facilitate volunteering as a lever for social and professional inclusion of youth, such as a tool for building a portfolio for volunteering experiences, could be considered a form of **‘third party volunteering’** (Haski-Leventhal, Meijs & Hustinx, 2010)

*= increasing involvement of governments, businesses and educational institutes to enhance and utilize volunteering*

# DEFINITION: 4 DIMENSIONS

**Table 9.3** *Dimensions of volunteering*

Dimension	Characteristics
Free choice	1 Free will
	2 Relatively un-coerced
	3 Obligation to volunteer
Remuneration	1 None at all
	2 None expected
	3 Expenses reimbursed
	4 Stipend/low pay
Structure	1 Formal
	2 Informal
Intended beneficiaries	1 Strangers
	2 Friends, relatives
	3 Oneself

(Anheier, 2005, p.222 based on Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth, 1996)

# PUBLIC PERCEPTION: NET COST

- The most foundational unit of the construction of the volunteer concept is a **cost-benefit analysis**:

*“The individual incurring **higher net cost** is likely to be perceived as ‘**more**’ of a **volunteer** than someone with a lower net cost”* (Handy et al. 2000, pp. 47–48)

# INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS AS A 'BY-PRODUCT'

- ‘Positive externalities’ of participation (Dekker, 2002)
  - Civic skills (→ democracy)
  - Social capital (→ social cohesion)
- Self-development young people (Hustinx, 2001)
- Economic ‘spillover effects’ (Benenson, 2017)
- **Wat if this becomes a primary function?**

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND VOLUNTEERING

- Specific interests as part of life-course perspective
- Volunteering as experimental space for DIY-biography (Hustinx, 2001)
- “Serious leisure” (Stebbins) versus episodic volunteering (Macduff)
- “Flexivol”-scheme for young people (Gaskin)  
(flexibility, legitimacy, ease of access, ‘xperience, incentives, variety, organization, laughs)

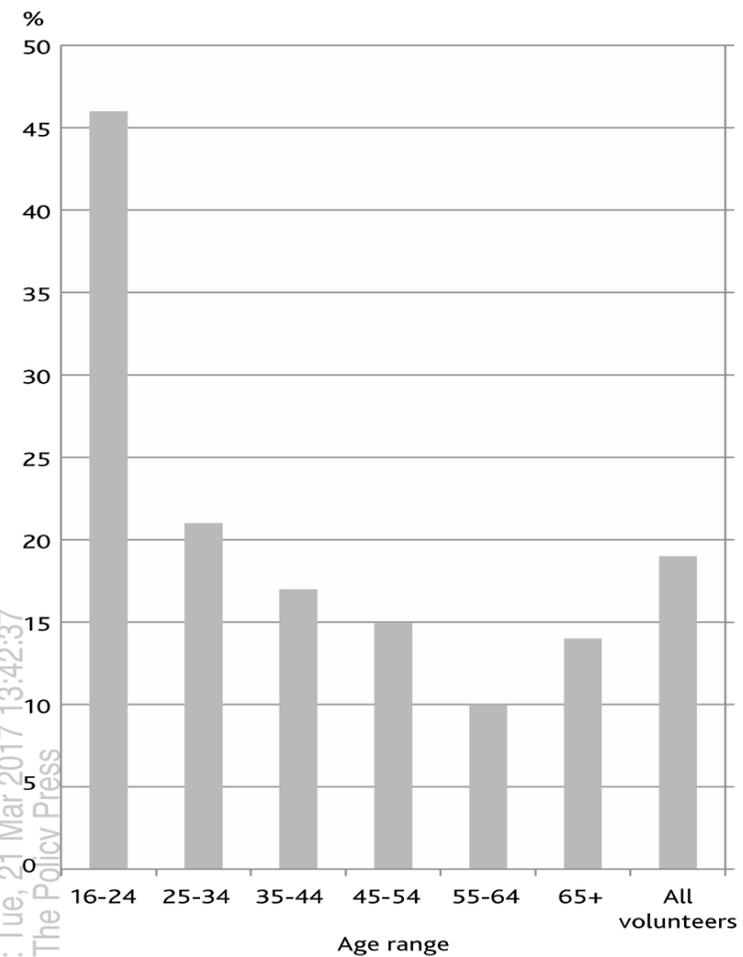
# DIVERSITY IN CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES

5 repertoires of participation among Belgian and Dutch university students

- Passive citizens (.19)
- Classical volunteers (.13)
- Humanitarian citizens (.12)
- Monitorial citizens (.39)
- Civic omnivores (.17)

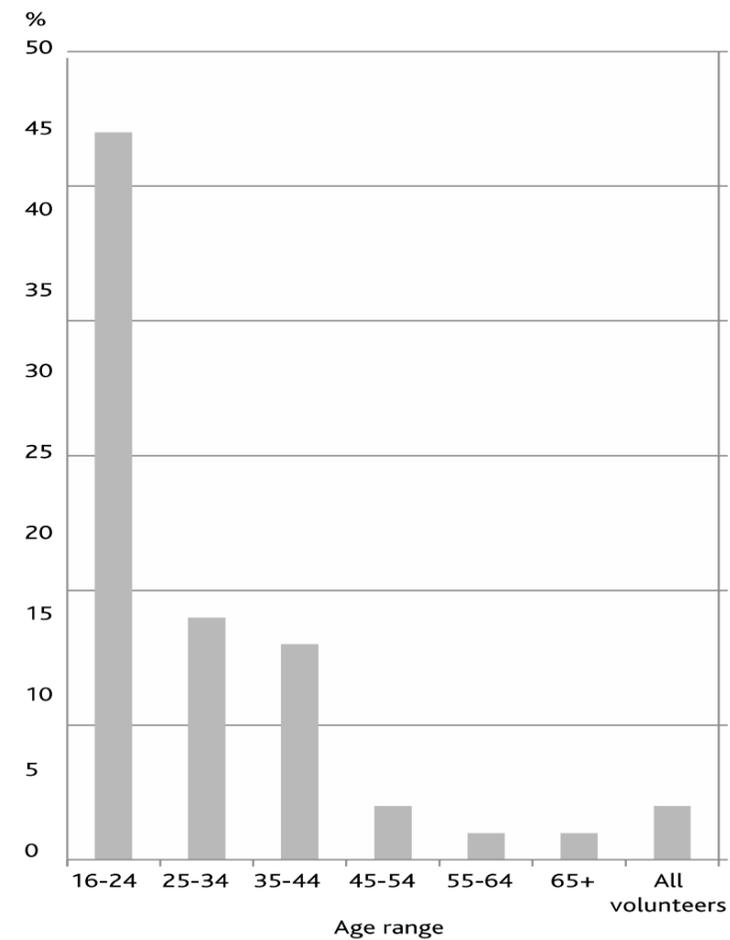
# THE RISE OF INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATIONS?

**Figure 1: Percentage motivated to volunteer 'to learn new skills', by age range**



Source: Adapted from Low et al (2007: 35)

**Figure 2: Percentage motivated to volunteer 'to help me get on in my career', by age range**



Source: Adapted from Low et al (2007: 35)

(Dean, 2014, p.235)

Résumé building MTV has a statistically significant negative impact on volunteer participation

Students who are more strongly motivated by résumé building MTV reported volunteering less frequently and investing fewer hours in volunteering

However, in countries, such as in North America where résumé building is a normative expectation, large number of students respond with high rates of volunteering and with a higher intensity. The findings would suggest—contrary to our theoretical assumptions—that regular volunteering is a more credible signal of volunteering than is episodic volunteering, which is a less costly engagement.

(Handy, Cnaan, Hustinx et al., 2010)

# 'TRANSACTIONAL VOLUNTEERING' (DEAN)

- Dean (2014) points to structural factors (policies, programs) that stimulate instrumental MTV
  - Emergence of a 'short-terminism' in volunteering: short-term instrumentality prevails over long-term and more 'holistic' involvement, both among volunteers and professionals running the programs
- Eliasoph (2009, 2011): volunteering as bookkeeping, counting hours to earn study credits

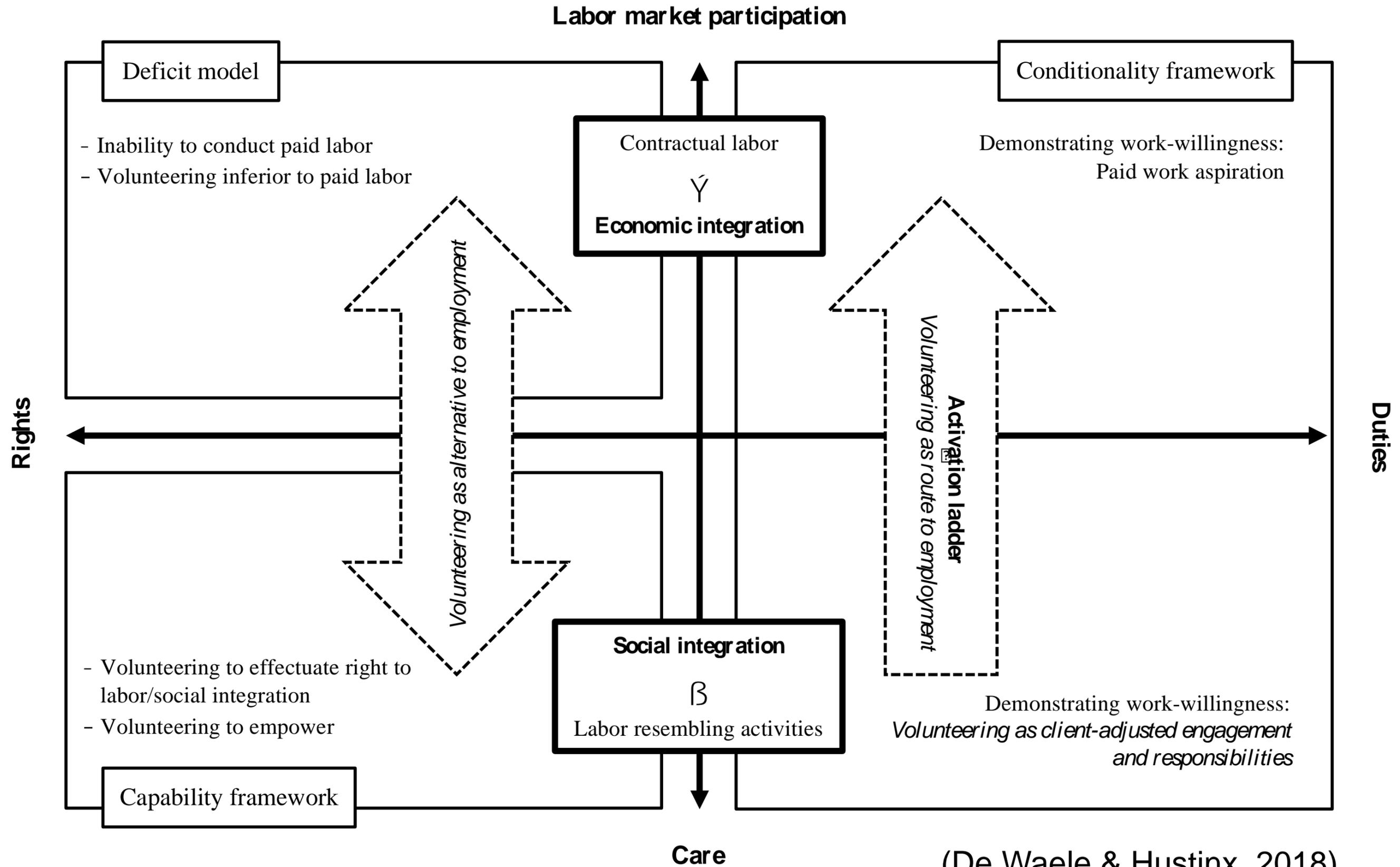
“Young people came forward to plant trees and clear canals, not because they wanted to plant trees and clear canals, but because they wanted to *say* they had planted trees and cleared canals. The *work* had been supplanted by the *experience*.” (Dean, 2014, p.243)

# THE EROSION OF FREE CHOICE?

# VOLUNTEERING AS A REQUIREMENT

- When the potential of volunteering for employment is increasingly promoted and recognized, to have/show volunteering experience can become a “non-negotiable necessity in young people’s lives” (Dean, 2014, p.233)
- So rather than a free choice, it can become a requirement; rather than ‘extra-curricular’, it becomes ‘co-curricular’ (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2013)
- Youth that were enforced to volunteer, were less likely to volunteer again (Warburton & Smith, 2003)

Figure 2: Discursive field of workfare volunteering



(De Waele & Hustinx, 2018)

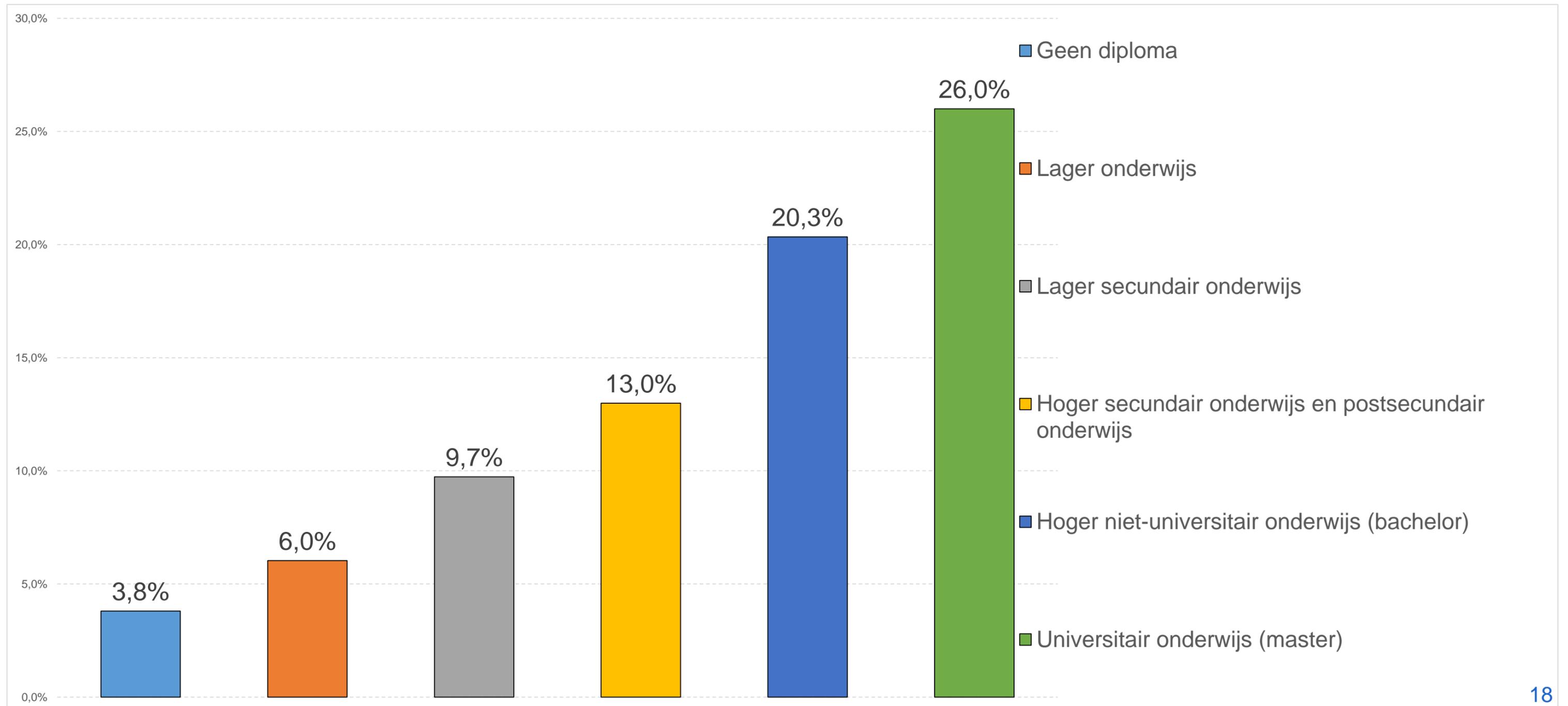
COMPETENCE  
BUILDING AT TWO  
DIFFERENT SPEEDS?

# ATTENTION FOR INEQUALITY IN VOLUNTEERING

- Young people from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds experience civic service very differently (Simonet, 2009)
- Not all volunteers are equal: job segregation in volunteering (Musick & Wilson, 2008)
  - Not all young people will have equal opportunities for skill development
- Volunteering reproduces inequalities present in the labor market → “Re-exclusion” through volunteering (Hustinx et al., 2015)
- Too much focus on individual skills development (supply side), neglect of the demand side of employability (Ellis-Paine et al., 20013)

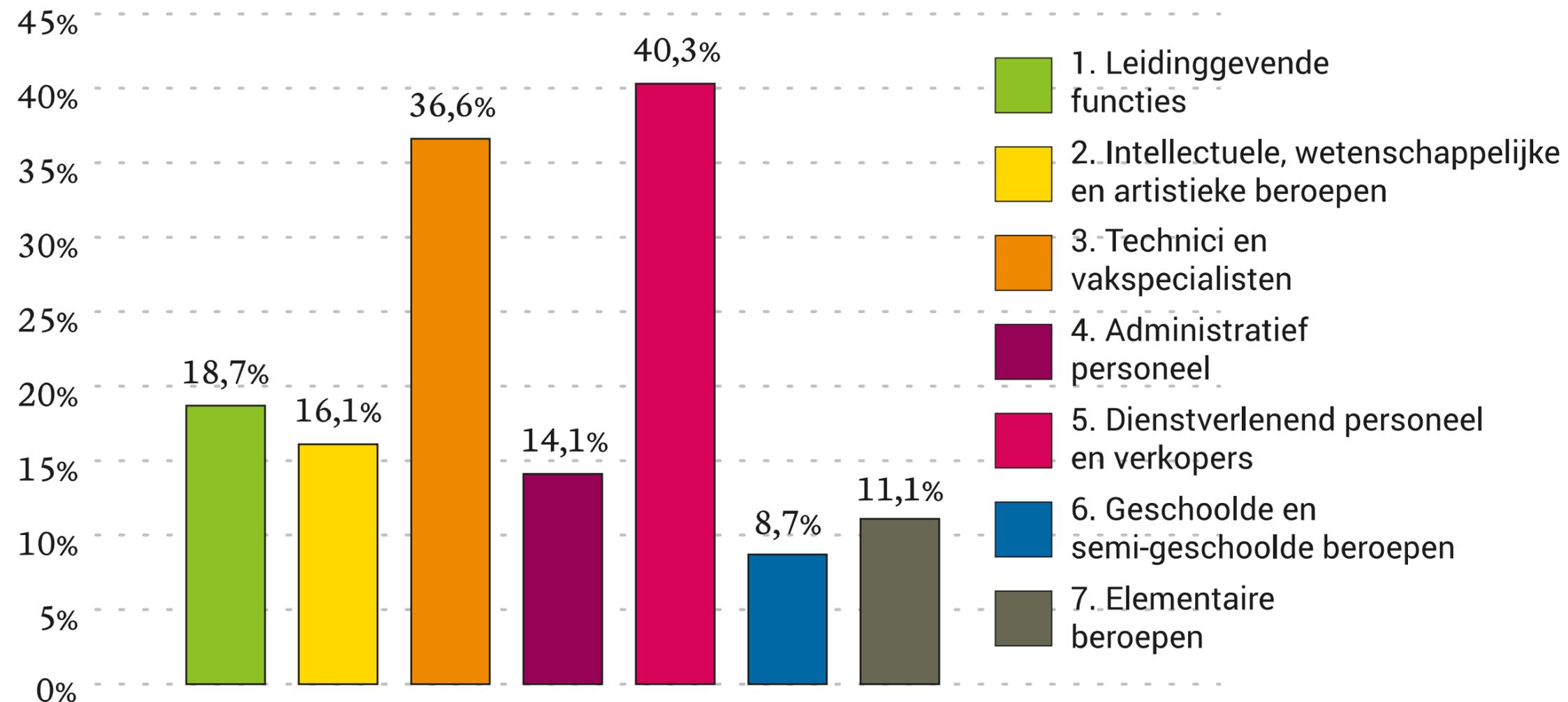
# UNEQUAL ACCESS TO VOLUNTEERING

Percentage of volunteering in Flanders according to level of education (Hustinx et al., 2015)

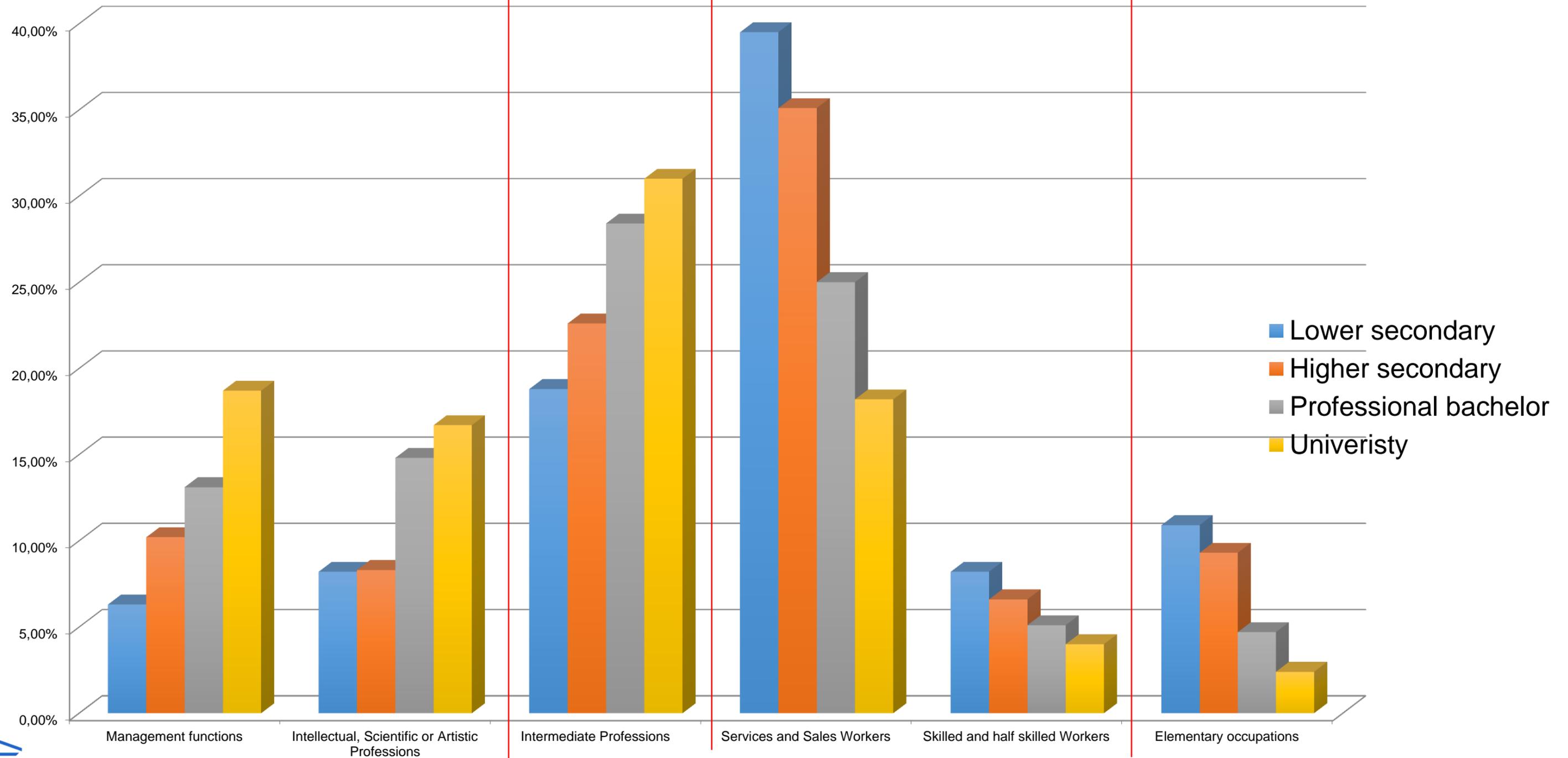


# % OF VOLUNTEERS ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF OCCUPATION

**Grafiek 6:** Verdeling van de vrijwilligers volgens het type van activiteit

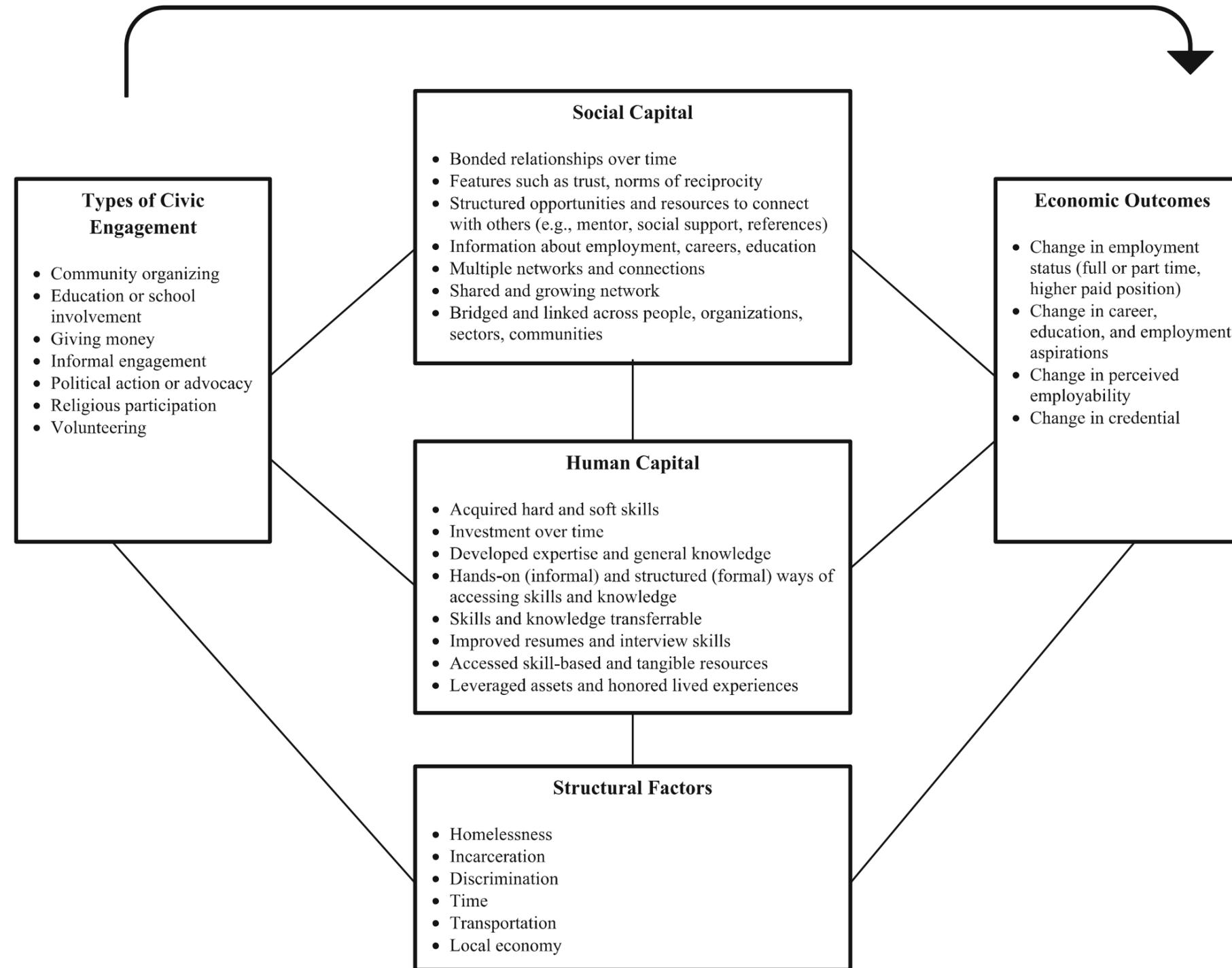


# EDUCATION



(Hustinx et al., 2015)

# Civic Engagement and Economic Opportunity Among Low-Income Individuals: An Asset-Based Approach



**Fig. 2** Conceptual framework with study findings

(Benenson, 2017)

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