

# Planting volunteerism and reaping citizenship: comparing citizenship practices between volunteers and workers in other sectors

## *Plantar voluntariado e colher cidadania: comparação das práticas cidadãs entre voluntários e trabalhadores dos demais setores*

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### Abstract

Although everyone is responsible for solving collective problems, volunteers in the Third Sector are believed to perform better as citizens than non-volunteers, even if they are public servants (First Sector), who are equally close to social issues. It is also expected that non-volunteers associated with the private sector (Second Sector) demonstrate a lower performance in citizenship practices, due to their tendency towards individualistic values. Thus, the objective is to investigate the differences in performance in citizenship practices among workers in the three sectors. A quantitative survey was chosen, using descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. The results showed that volunteers perform better in citizenship practices than non-volunteers. Workers in the private sector performed the worst on average. Volunteering and public service are recognised as activities that promote citizenship, subject to investment and promotion when the focus is on citizenship formation.

**Keywords:** citizenship practices; volunteering; public sector; private sector; third sector.

### Resumo

Embora todos sejam responsáveis por resolver problemáticas coletivas, acredita-se que os voluntários atrelados ao Terceiro Setor tenham maior desempenho cidadão que os não voluntários, mesmo que estes sejam servidores públicos (do Primeiro Setor), que são igualmente próximos às questões sociais. Espera-se ainda, que os não voluntários associados ao setor privado (Segundo Setor) demonstrem um menor desempenho em práticas de cidadania, pela tendência para valores individualistas. Assim, objetiva-se investigar as diferenças de desempenho nas práticas de cidadania entre trabalhadores dos três setores. Optou-se por uma pesquisa quantitativa via *survey*, empregando a estatística descritiva e inferencial para análise dos dados. Os resultados demonstraram que os voluntários têm maior desempenho nas práticas cidadãs do que os não voluntários. Os trabalhadores do setor privado tiveram os piores desempenhos em média. Reconhece-se o voluntariado e o serviço público como atividades de fomento a cidadania, passíveis de investimento quando o foco for a formação de cidadania.

**Palavras-chave:** Práticas de cidadania; voluntariado; setor público; setor privado; terceiro setor.

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## 1 Introduction

Volunteer work is a productive activity, not financially remunerated, undertaken out of free will and rich in meaning and motivation. It has a significant impact on civil society, especially related to organisations with social purposes, public interest, and non-profit status, or, as they are called in Brazil, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (Nacacche, Carmo & Souza, 2021).

In Brazil and worldwide, volunteering is evolving and innovating in how it acts and helps solve social problems, bringing together efforts and dedication while occupying different spaces in society. Linked to the growing number of CSOs (IPEA, 2018), across diverse segments of activity and being regulated to better guide their operations (Brasil, 2014; Caldas, 2020), volunteers address not only deficiencies in public services but also engage in solving complex issues, including sensitive conflicts of interest, and support the functioning of the Third Sector in many countries, such as Brazil. They create opportunities for individuals to play an active and civic role, helping groups of people in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability to have a voice and overcome everyday challenges.

It is not difficult to visualise the role of volunteering in everyday life, especially in situations such as the recent tragedy involving the cities of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, in May 2024 (Portal G1, 2024; Rio Grande do Sul, 2024). After heavy rainfall, floods, landslides, and severe damage to local infrastructure, hundreds of volunteers and CSOs mobilized to provide assistance to the affected communities. Volunteering not only offers immediate practical support but also demonstrates solidarity and the exercise of citizenship, promoting social cohesion and the reconstruction of the affected areas.

Considering the above, the Third Sector, CSOs, and volunteer work are seen as fertile ground for fostering citizenship. Citizenship is understood as the involvement of individuals in the creation and maintenance of their communities, encompassing a set of rights and duties derived from their place of origin, which allow them to collaborate with the collective (Caldas and Cavalcante, 2023). Every individual is expected to be concerned with issues in their surroundings, beyond the political rights and duties that arise from voter status. Therefore, the objective is for individuals to build their collectives based on a citizenship that not only recognizes inequalities but also enables them to actively transform their realities toward a society that can be fair and equitable (Pires, 2025).

From this perspective, citizen action can be developed and encouraged by institutions as well as at an individual level. According to Caldas and Cavalcante (2023), citizenship is a complex, multidimensional, and volatile construct in time and space, influenced by various instances and types of participation. However, at an individual level, it can be exercised based on practices classified into four areas: 1) civil, enabling life in society; 2) political, ensuring participation in the government of society; 3) social, guaranteeing social justice; and 4) environmental, supporting contemporary struggles and environmental sustainability.

Any individual can exercise citizenship in their daily lives. However, due to the expansion of voluntary activities and the growing role of volunteering in society, this study is based on the premise that volunteers in the Third Sector demonstrate a higher level of citizenship performance, at an individual level, than non-volunteers. Even public servants (in the First Sector), who also address social and collective issues, may have lower performance in this regard.

Considering the above, this research aims to investigate the differences in performance in citizenship practices developed by volunteers and non-volunteers. A quantitative and descriptive survey was chosen to achieve this, involving volunteers connected to the Third



Sector and non-volunteers working in the First and Second Sectors. Descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney test were employed to analyze the data.

This study is justified because, although the relationship between volunteering and citizenship has already been addressed in some studies such as those by De Bie and Roose (2016), Ferraz et al (2021), and Caldas (2020), it is still observed that this relationship is not always linear and that, depending on how volunteering is practiced, it may not promote active citizenship, limiting itself to more passive participation (Dagnino, 2006; Bezjak and Klemenčič, 2014). Ferraz, Cavalcante, Mendonça, and Caldas (2024) and Caldas (2020) did not find many studies that quantitatively prove the relationship between volunteering and citizenship, highlighting the gap investigated by this study. It is important to understand the citizenship dimension linked to volunteering so that it can be recognized and promoted.

## 2 Theoretical Basis

### 2.1 Citizenship

The concept of citizenship has evolved over time, and for each democratic model or society, there exists an ideal citizen conceived—specifically, a subject who adopts a set of values and practices deemed positive for that societal model (Rosa, Lima and Cavalcanti, 2023). According to Guarinello (2016), the essence of citizenship possesses a public, impersonal character and serves as a privileged space for collective action aimed at building future projects.

Marshall (1967), a classic reference on the subject, establishes the concept of citizenship based on legal equality, stating that an individual's involvement in community issues relies on equal rights and duties associated with citizenship, which are linked to three areas: civil, political, and social. The civil sphere concerns the rights and obligations inherent to individual freedom, including freedom of expression, the right to move freely, and the right to think. The political aspect encompasses the rights and duties involved in democratic participation in political life, such as voting, being a voter, utilising e-citizenship, and other forms of engagement. Finally, the social sphere refers to dignity, social and economic well-being, and security, encompassing rights and duties related to education, health, leisure, and work, among others.

To analyse citizenship, Caldas and Cavalcante (2023) developed a scale to measure citizenship practices based on advances in Marshallian Theory, focusing on individuals' actions in their daily lives. Considering national and foreign literature alongside experts' perceptions, they defined four dimensions: the classic spheres (civil, political, social) and a fourth sphere, called 'environmental' (see definitions in Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Dimensions of citizenship practices*

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
<b>Civil Practices (PC)</b>	They represent the involvement of individuals in favor of civilized relations and individual freedom, necessary for life in society.
<b>Political Practices (PP)</b>	They demonstrate the participation of individuals in the exercise of political power or in the government of society.
<b>Social Practices (SP)</b>	They focus on social justice and the rights and duties that provide minimum conditions of security and well-being, especially for the unfortunate and oppressed.

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
<b>Environmental Practices (EP)</b>	They demonstrate the participation of individuals in favor of sustainable development and concern for the environment.

Source: Caldas and Cavalcante (2023)

Although fostering citizenship in their territories is a challenge for governments, given the low level of active participation and the difficulty in accessing basic rights and collective well-being, especially in countries with heterogeneous social demands such as Brazil (Fialho Botelho and Costa, 2025), volunteering has been recognized for its potential to develop citizenship by promoting opportunities for active community involvement and supporting public and private actions aimed at collective well-being (Caldas and Cavalcante, 2025). The next topic further explains how the three sectors foster citizenship.

## 2.2 The practice of citizenship across the three sectors: outlining the research hypotheses

The analysis of citizenship practices by individuals in a location is complex and difficult to operationalize, given the complexity and multidimensionality involved (Caldas and Cavalcante, 2023). Although volunteering in the Third Sector fosters citizenship, it is noted that even those who do not engage in it have similar obligations and opportunities for citizen participation.

In fact, volunteering in the Third Sector is closely tied to social issues, developing civil, political, social, and environmental skills while assisting individuals and communities in social vulnerability. However, Koolen-Maas et al. (2023) state that there is a growing concern about the sustainability of volunteering for future needs, influenced by profound changes the activity has been undergoing regarding its nature and motivations, in addition to the increase in competition, professionalization, and a shortage of volunteers to meet current social demands. Depending on how it is perceived and used, volunteering can also foster a more passive citizenship (Dominelli, 2016) and involve more selfish and private motivations (Cavalcante, 2016). In the latter case, it would diverge from the construct of citizenship, which has universal and collectivist characteristics.

On the other hand, environmental crises, the Social and Environmental Responsibility movement, and the appreciation of practices such as ESG (Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance) and corporate volunteering foster closer relationships between the Third Sector and other sectors. This shift compels the First and Second Sectors to adopt social roles beyond their formal obligations. Social and environmental responsibility encourages public and private organisations to look beyond mere organisational, market, or profit-making objectives and has already introduced empirical practices that embed philanthropic and civic values into organizational environments. According to Silva Filho et al. (2025), social responsibility is strategic for organizations and can contribute to the sustainability of their businesses. According to their study, among the 30 largest companies in Brazil, twenty have their own foundations or institutes. In nominal terms, mitigating, mandatory, and voluntary investments by companies and their foundations exceeded R\$1 billion in 2020, disregarding the resources allocated to combating COVID-19. However, data masking is a concern, as companies may use "greenwashing" inappropriately, disclosing only the data they consider most relevant, masking their overall poor ESG performance. There is no single standard for disclosing this information, nor is it mandatory.

To investigate the differences in performance regarding citizenship practices developed by volunteers and non-volunteers, several hypotheses are proposed. Firstly:



H1: Performance in citizenship practices is different between volunteers and non-volunteers.

H1 considers that greater citizenship performance by volunteers arises because the activity provides them with opportunities to collaborate in developing collective solutions that promote social well-being. Ferraz et al. (2021; 2024) found an overlap in the citizenship attitudes of volunteers compared to non-volunteers, as well as a positive relationship between altruistic motivation (of a more universal and collective nature) and attitudes supportive of social, political, and civil rights. Caldas and Cavalcante (2025) also finds common ground in the citizenship performance of volunteers relative to non-volunteers across all dimensions of citizenship. For Parejo et al. (2021), voluntary organizations are increasingly perceived as venues where citizenship can thrive.

H1 reflects other concerns about the relationship between citizenship and volunteering. If the justification is rooted in the nature of work in the Third Sector, which focuses on social services or products that promote the well-being of society, one might also consider that both volunteers and public servants (non-volunteers), connected to the First Sector, could exhibit similar citizenship performance, as both serve society and are responsible for social activities aimed at collective well-being. Thus, we have a second hypothesis:

H2: Performance in citizenship practices is different between volunteers and non-volunteer public servants.

According to Ariete (2022), there is a similarity in the profiles of individuals working in the First and Third Sectors, as there is convergence in the direction of the social objectives focused on by these sectors. Both propose actions aimed at the development of collective interests and have non-profit purposes.

As differences, it is observed that the Third Sector has a private legal nature, and its actions must be conceived with its own resources through the free and voluntary participation of individuals (Salamon; Solokolowski, 2016). In contrast, the First Sector differs in that the State is framed within a legal framework that limits and regulates its actions, with obligations to meet public demands (broader, of an entire society). In the case of the Third Sector, it aims to meet collective (group) needs that, in many cases, can be public (Coelho, 2009). Markioni et al (2022) warn that the Third Sector must be seen as a specific and distinct sphere from the public sector since the community sphere must have autonomy in relation to state agencies and private companies and represent the strength of associations.

Although they differ, partnerships and relationships between the First and Third Sectors are common. One can observe, for example, the practice of volunteering in public service, sharing social objectives, and recognising the interdependence between sectors (Ariete, 2022). In Brazil, there is a regulation implemented by the Federal Government regarding partnerships between public administration and CSOs (BRASIL, 1998; 1999 and 2014), along with the adoption of measures such as the National Volunteer Incentive Program - PNIV, which aims to strengthen CSOs to promote activities related to volunteering and encourage the practice among public servants (BRASIL, 2019).

Other studies in the public sector, such as that by Ariza-Montes et al. (2015), state that public sector employees are nearly twice as likely to dedicate time to social and volunteer activities compared to private sector workers. Lee and Jeong (2015), in turn, found that this public may choose to volunteer due to a strong desire to influence the process and outcomes of

public policies. The more favorable context gives meaning to actions that aim to foster this initiative [of volunteering] in public agencies (Rotolo; Wilson, 2016).

Finally, a third hypothesis is raised, involving the Second Sector (Private Market):

H3: The performance in citizenship practices among volunteers and non-volunteers working in the public sector differs from that of non-volunteers working in the private sector.

It is observed that although the growing emphasis on socio-environmental responsibility and volunteering within the corporate context reflects the continuous pressure exerted by the business environment for a more socially responsible stance (Rodell et al., 2017), other contemporary movements, such as competition, fragmentation, and flexibilisation of work, along with the consequent distancing from human and face-to-face relationships at work, lead classic authors like Sennet (2009) to express concern about the corrosion of character in the new capitalism. In this context, modern organisations can distort the meaning of “organisation,” which should imply more of a community than a turn toward individualism (going against citizenship).

Balman (2011), another classical thinker, reflects on relationships in the capitalist world and observes human behavior oriented towards economic bias, involved in superficial, selfish, self-interested, and individual social relationships that, instead of uniting, divide. Such behaviors are common in private corporate environments, especially in Western cultures, where a lack of time, an exaggerated search for competition, independence, results, and personal success, along with the distortion of values, act as forces of negative influence on practices aimed at the collective.

For Rotolo and Wilson (2016), in the private sector, certain factors can act as obstacles to socially-oriented practices, such as time constraints, individual performance goals, and an organizational culture that does not value or encourage volunteering. Ianni, Costa, Travagin, and Serra (2022) complement this, reflecting that uberized, home-based, self-sustained, and self-produced work leads to a new modality of productive activity, which is more individualized and individualizing. Lee (2012) adds that there is empirical evidence suggesting that public employees and employees of non-profit organizations are more likely to donate their time to charity compared to employees working in the private sector, as they are more motivated by intrinsic rewards.

### 3 Methodological Procedures

Methodologically, we chose to conduct exploratory-descriptive and quantitative research because it allows us to explore a problem and, thus, provide information for a more precise investigation. Among the techniques used, a survey was carried out with 164 research subjects, distributed as shown in Table 2:

**Table 2**

*Classification and distribution of subjects*

Classification	Volunteers	Non-Volunteers
Belonging to the 1st Sector	07	31
Belonging to the 2nd Sector	17	47



Classification	Volunteers	Non-Volunteers
Self-employed	6	23
From home	1	4
Retired	2	1
Students	5	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>126</b>

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The subjects of this research are over 18 years old, deemed fit to work, and capable of consciously developing citizenship practices. The data collection period spanned from February to April 2024 using Google Forms. The data collection instrument was based on the Citizenship Practices scale (Caldas and Cavalcante, 2023), which comprises 17 assertions classified into four dimensions: civil, political, social, and environmental. An 11-point Likert scale was also utilised, ranging from 0 (I never perform this practice) to 10 (I always perform this practice).

For the analyses, we used descriptive statistics and a nonparametric inferential test for independent samples—the Mann-Whitney U test—indicated after the normality test. The SPSS software assisted in the calculations and analyses. To enhance the visualization of the average results of the Citizenship Practices, we applied the parameters developed by Caldas (2020): measurements up to 3.9 indicate low intensity of the practice (colored in red), from 4.0 to 6.9 indicate low-moderate intensity (colored in yellow), from 7.0 to 9.9 indicate moderate-high intensity (colored in green), and above 10 represent very high intensity (colored in blue). This classification was based on the Brazilian educational assessment paradigm, which adopts a grading scale ranging from 0 to 10, a structure familiar to the research participants. This scale was then adapted to a scale of 1 to 11 for statistical analysis.

## 4 Results and discussion

The first hypothesis to be tested examines whether performance in citizenship practices differs between volunteers and non-volunteers. Table 3 presents the statistics for the group of 38 volunteers. Their performance in citizenship practices shows an overall average of  $\bar{x} = 5.324$ , which indicates low to moderate intensity. By dimension, environmental practices emerge with the highest average ( $\bar{x} = 6.781$ ), demonstrating that volunteers tend to be more concerned with collective issues related to environmental preservation. In contrast, political citizenship practices suggest that volunteers tend to exhibit low engagement in participatory actions within the government of society.

Among the variables, PC4 shows the highest citizen performance ( $\bar{x} = 8.00$ ), indicating that the volunteers in the sample tend to organize and associate to resolve issues beyond the individual level. This behavior is ideal for addressing more complex social problems. In contrast, the practice with the lowest average is PP1 ( $\bar{x} = 3.000$ ), which focuses on participatory actions that can influence politicians or representatives, such as protests, manifestos, public hearings, councils, etc. This citizenship practice requires a greater collective effort and is not very inviting for the sample.

Caldas (2020) also identified this low-to-moderate citizenship behaviour in the political dimension, which aligns with discussions about Brazilians' historical passivity (Avritzer, 2010; Carvalho, 2016), a legacy of a colonising process and the cultivation of uninspiring and passive



citizenship. It is also noted that the sample of volunteers is quite heterogeneous, showing variability around the mean (reaching 14) and similar behaviour regarding the standard deviation (between 2.2 and 3.8), indicating a variety of responses.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive statistics – Volunteers*

Dimensions	Variables	Average	Standard Deviation	Variance	Asymmetry	Median	Coef. Variation
<b>Volunteers (N=38); Citizenship Practices <math>\bar{x}=5,324</math></b>							
Civil Practices (CP) $\bar{x} = 5,695$	CP2	3,789	3,542	12,549	0,472	3,000	93,48%
	CP3	5,868	3,289	10,820	-0,392	6,000	56,05%
	CP4	8,000	2,371	5,622	-1,528	8,500	29,64%
	PD2C	5,632	3,605	12,996	-0,268	6,000	64,01%
	PD9C	5,184	3,593	12,911	-0,070	5,000	69,31%
Political Practices (PP) $\bar{x} = 3,553$	PP1	3,000	3,587	12,865	0,798	1,500	119,56%
	PP2	3,474	3,570	12,743	0,597	3,000	102,76%
	PP4	3,421	3,576	12,791	0,537	2,000	104,54%
	PP5	4,316	3,814	14,546	0,240	4,000	88,37%
Social Practices (SP) $\bar{x} = 5,495$	SP1	7,368	2,936	8,617	-0,945	8,000	39,84%
	SP2	4,447	3,539	12,524	0,211	4,500	79,57%
	SP3	6,237	3,467	12,023	-0,494	6,500	55,60%
	SP5	4,711	3,594	12,914	0,186	4,500	76,29%
	SP7	4,711	3,196	10,211	-0,100	5,000	67,84%
Environmental Practices (EP) $\bar{x} = 6,781$	PD5A	7,289	2,205	4,860	-0,261	7,500	30,24%
	PD6A	7,237	2,307	5,321	-1,045	8,000	31,87%
	PD7A	5,816	3,178	10,100	-0,377	5,500	54,65%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

For the group of 126 non-volunteers (see Table 4), it is observed that there is lower citizenship performance (predominance of low-intensity practices) compared to the averages of the volunteers. The overall average for citizenship practices of the non-volunteers showed a low performance of  $\bar{x} = 3.624$ . Lower citizenship performance behavior is also noted in relation to the averages by dimension.

In the hierarchical ordering of the averages by dimension, environmental practices again stand out as the highest ( $\bar{x} = 5.556$ ), while political practices reflect the lowest average performance ( $\bar{x} = 2.276$ ). Among the variables, PD6A emerges positively, with the highest average ( $\bar{x} = 6.119$ ), indicating the development of conscious consumption practices, such as buying only what is necessary and preferring recyclable products or those that do not involve slave labour, for example. The variable with the lowest average in the sample of non-volunteers was, once again, PP1, which also demonstrated the lowest performance among volunteers. According to Carvalho (2016) and Andrade et al. (2012), Brazilians have a certain deficiency in the formation of political skills, influenced by the historical process of passivity and a lack of knowledge regarding forms of political participation, as well as periods of oppression and dictatorship that suppressed political rights. The non-volunteer group also exhibited a high



degree of variability and dispersion, as evidenced by the standard deviation, variance, and coefficient of variation values in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics – Non-Volunteers*

Dimensions	Variables	Average	Standard Deviation	Variance	Asymmetry	Median	Coef. Variation
<b>Non-Volunteers (N=126); Citizenship Practices</b>					<b><math>\bar{x}=3,624</math></b>		
Civil Practices (CP) $\bar{x} = 3,784$	PC2	2,119	2,767	7,658	1,101	1,000	130,59%
	PC3	4,659	3,385	11,459	0,072	5,000	72,66%
	PC4	5,103	3,147	9,901	-0,189	5,000	61,66%
	PD2C	3,175	3,049	9,297	0,642	3,000	96,05%
	PD9C	3,865	3,323	11,046	0,325	4,000	85,99%
Political Practices (PP) $\bar{x} = 2,276$	PP1	1,635	2,455	6,026	1,506	0,000	150,14%
	PP2	2,571	2,930	8,583	0,973	1,000	113,93%
	PP4	2,008	2,697	7,272	1,148	5,000	134,30%
	PP5	2,889	3,255	10,596	0,795	2,000	112,68%
Social Practices (SP) $\bar{x} = 3,384$	PS1	3,460	3,053	9,322	0,547	3,000	88,24%
	PS2	3,159	3,186	10,151	0,616	2,000	100,86%
	PS3	3,897	3,237	10,477	0,350	4,000	83,06%
	PS5	3,357	3,128	9,783	0,517	2,000	93,17%
	PS7	3,048	3,062	9,374	0,612	2,000	100,46%
Environmental Practices (EP) $\bar{x} = 5,556$	PD5A	5,889	2,781	7,732	-0,360	6,000	47,22%
	PD6A	6,119	2,610	6,810	-0,311	6,500	42,65%
	PD7A	4,659	3,109	9,667	0,105	5,000	66,74%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Comparing the measures in Tables 4 and 5, the citizen engagement of volunteers is higher ( $\bar{x} = 5.32$ ), on average, than that of non-volunteers ( $\bar{x} = 3.62$ ). This superior behaviour on average remains when analysing all dimensions of citizenship practices, with volunteers having moderate to high intensity engagement.

To verify the difference between the groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed (see Figure 1). The results indicated a p-value of less than 0.001, signifying a significant difference in citizenship practice performance between the analysed groups, with volunteers showing a higher average performance.

**Table 5**

*Hypothesis Testing Summary (H1)*

Null Hypothesis	Test	p-value	Decision
The distribution of Citizenship is the same between volunteers and non-volunteers	Independent-sample Mann-Whitney U test	0,000*	Reject the null hypothesis

\* Significance level of 0.05

Source: Survey Data (2024)



These findings confirm hypothesis H1 and align with studies such as those by Caldas (2020) and Amorim (2018), which also identified a greater practice of citizenship among volunteers and non-volunteers. Carballal (2009) corroborated these findings by emphasizing the influence of volunteering in promoting active citizenship.

However, it is important to note that the relationship between volunteering and citizenship is not always linear. According to De Bie and Roose (2016) and Ferraz et al. (2021), the impact on citizenship may vary depending on the context and nature of volunteering. Dagnino (2006) and Bezjak and Klemenčič (2014) highlight that passive forms of volunteering may limit the effects on active citizenship. Nonetheless, Flanagan et al. (2020) emphasize that participation in volunteer activities is associated with differences in civic practices, especially among adolescents.

We now move on to investigate H2, comparing the data from volunteers (N=38) with those from non-volunteer public servants (N=31). The analysis of the volunteers' data in Table 2 revealed an average of  $\bar{x} = 5.324$  in citizenship practices, indicating a predominance of low to moderate intensity actions. In the case of non-volunteer public servants (see Table 6), it can be observed that the average of citizenship practices was  $\bar{x} = 4.023$ , also classified as moderate intensity, but slightly lower than that found in the group of volunteers.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics – Non-Volunteer Public Servants*

Dimensions	Variables	Average	Standard deviation	Variance	Asymmetry	Median	Coef. Variation
<b>Não Voluntários Servidores Públicos (N=31); Práticas de Cidadania</b>							<b><math>\bar{x}=4,023</math></b>
Civil Practices (CP) $\bar{x}= 3,845$	PC2	2,065	2,874	8,262	1,317	1,000	139,23%
	PC3	5,129	2,825	7,983	-0,425	5,000	55,09%
	PC4	4,548	2,631	6,923	-0,598	5,000	57,85%
	PD2C	3,226	2,642	6,981	-0,076	4,000	81,90%
	PD9C	4,258	3,255	10,598	0,144	5,000	76,45%
Political Practices (PP) $\bar{x}= 2,919$	PP1	2,161	2,162	4,673	0,667	2,000	100,02%
	PP2	3,710	3,068	9,413	0,367	4,000	82,70%
	PP4	2,355	2,739	7,503	0,766	1,000	116,32%
	PP5	3,452	3,375	11,389	0,505	3,000	97,77%
Social Practices (SP) $\bar{x}= 3,961$	PS1	3,161	2,758	7,606	0,554	3,000	87,24%
	PS2	4,258	3,376	11,398	0,101	4,000	79,29%
	PS3	4,387	2,985	8,912	0,176	5,000	68,05%
	PS5	4,452	2,873	8,256	-0,154	5,000	64,55%
	PS7	3,548	2,942	8,656	0,284	3,000	82,91%
Environmental Practices (EP) $\bar{x}= 5,892$	PD5A	6,290	2,148	4,613	-0,102	6,000	34,14%
	PD6A	6,258	2,476	6,131	-0,472	7,000	39,57%
	PD7A	5,129	3,253	10,583	-0,073	5,000	63,43%

Source: Survey Data (2024)



In the analysis of citizenship practices by dimension, it is observed that all averages are lower than those of volunteers, balancing those of low intensity and low-moderate intensity. Even the political dimension, where it was expected that public servants would be closer than other workers, also shows lower citizenship performance in relation to other spheres of citizenship, with  $\bar{x} = 2.919$ , indicating low performance intensity. Again, the dimension of environmental citizenship practices has the highest average ( $\bar{x} = 5.892$ ).

Regarding the variables, PD5A and PD6A stand out, with the highest averages ( $\bar{x} = 6.290$  and  $\bar{x} = 6.258$ ). These variables pertain to the environmental sphere, with PD5A relating to reuse, repurposing, and recycling, and PD6A associated with actions related to conscious consumption, both critical for the preservation of natural resources. The variable with the lowest average ( $\bar{x} = 2.065$ ) was PC2, which represents actions aimed at changing laws deemed unfair within the civil sphere of citizenship. In this case, it is possible that a lack of knowledge, discredit, distance, or insufficient access to legal means or appropriate spaces for implementing this practice influences the low score observed.

It is important to emphasise that the results obtained for non-volunteer public servants also demonstrated high variability and dispersion (see dispersion measures in Table 5). It was observed that the means of the variables Civil Practices (PC3), Political Practices (PP1), Social Practices (PS1 and PS2), and Environmental Practices (PD5A and PD7A) were close to the median results. Since the mean and median are measures of central tendency, this indicates that the distribution of the results is effectively centred on the mean. The hypothesis test is now performed to verify whether this difference is significant (see Table 7).

**Table 7**

*Hypothesis Testing Summary (H2)*

Null Hypothesis	Test	p-value	Decision
The distribution of Peitizenship is the same between volunteers and non-volunteer public servants.	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis test.	0,000*	Reject the null hypothesis

\* Significance level of 0.05

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The hypothesis test for H2 reveals that the p-value is lower than the significance level of 0.05 for the Citizenship Practices construct (Pcidadania). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected and hypothesis H2 is accepted: there is a difference in performance in citizenship practices between volunteers and non-volunteer public servants, with the former presenting higher averages.

According to Ribeiro (2018), although previous studies suggest that public servants have a broader view of their social role and greater awareness of community needs compared to non-volunteers, it is important to consider that they face challenges, such as conflicts of interest and additional demands on their time and effort. For Neto and Fernandes (2010), these differences are reflected in the flexibility of volunteers to choose their activities and schedules, in contrast to the regulated responsibilities and obligations of public servants, whose functions are defined by government regulations.

While both groups contribute to the well-being of society, volunteers often enhance the efforts of government and public agencies by providing additional services and support, whereas public servants perform defined roles within the state structure, implementing public policies, delivering government services, and ensuring compliance with laws and regulations.



Continuing the analysis, the data from a new group (N=69; Table 8), composed of volunteers (N=38) and non-volunteer public servants (N=31), are compared with the data from non-volunteers in the private sector (N=70; Table 9) to investigate H3.

Regarding the newly formed group of volunteers and non-volunteer public servants (N=69), the average performance in citizenship practices is  $\bar{x} = 4.673$ . Since both groups have already been analysed individually, it can be summarised as follows: the dimension with the highest average performance remains the environmental dimension ( $\bar{x} = 6.337$ ), while the one with the lowest performance is politics ( $\bar{x} = 3.236$ ). The item with the highest average was PD5A ( $\bar{x} = 6.790$ ), which pertains to recycling and resource use practices, whereas the lowest average was PP1 ( $\bar{x} = 2.581$ ), concerning participation in political mobilisation actions. These results may indicate that, although participants in this group show engagement with environmental practices, there is still significant room to promote greater participation in broader political and social actions, particularly considering their importance in strengthening active citizenship.

**Table 8**

*Descriptive statistics – Volunteers, Non-Volunteers, Public Servants*

Dimensions	Variables	Average	Standard deviation	Variance	Asymetry	Median	Coef. Variation
<b>Volunteer and Non-Volunteer Public Servants (N=69); Citizenship Practices</b>						<b><math>\bar{x}=4,673</math></b>	
Civil Practices (CP) $\bar{x}= 4,770$	PC2	2,927	3,208	10,406	0,895	2,000	109,62%
	PC3	5,499	3,057	9,401	-0,408	5,500	55,60%
	PC4	6,274	2,501	6,272	-1,063	6,750	39,86%
	PD2C	4,429	3,124	9,988	-0,172	5,000	70,53%
	PD9C	4,721	3,424	11,754	0,037	5,000	72,53%
Political Practices (PP) $\bar{x}= 3,236$	PP1	2,581	2,874	8,769	0,732	1,750	111,38%
	PP2	3,592	3,319	11,078	0,482	3,500	92,40%
	PP4	2,888	3,158	10,147	0,652	1,500	109,35%
	PP5	3,884	3,594	12,968	0,372	3,500	92,55%
Social Practices (SP) $\bar{x}= 4,728$	PS1	5,265	2,847	8,112	-0,195	5,500	54,07%
	PS2	4,353	3,458	11,961	0,156	4,250	79,43%
	PS3	5,312	3,226	10,468	-0,159	5,750	60,74%
	PS5	4,581	3,233	10,585	0,016	4,750	70,58%
	PS7	4,130	3,069	9,434	0,092	4,000	74,31%
Environmental Practices (EP) $\bar{x}= 6,337$	PD5A	6,790	2,176	4,736	-0,181	6,750	32,05%
	PD6A	6,748	2,391	5,726	-0,758	7,500	35,44%
	PD7A	5,472	3,216	10,342	-0,225	5,250	58,76%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

When compared to non-voluntary workers associated solely with the private sector (Second Sector; Table 8), it is evident that they have the lowest average among all worker types ( $\bar{x} = 3.474$ ), even when contrasted with the data in Tables 3 (Third Sector Volunteers) and 6 (Non-Volunteer Public Servants). Low-intensity practices are predominant (below  $\bar{x} = 3.9$ ).



In the analysis by dimension, consistent with the profile observed in other samples, the highest averages are in environmental practices ( $\bar{x} = 5.614$ ) and the lowest in political practices ( $\bar{x} = 1.964$ ). The values for all dimension averages (civil  $\bar{x} = 3.760$ ; political  $\bar{x} = 1.964$ ; social  $\bar{x} = 3.111$ ; environmental  $\bar{x} = 5.614$ ) are below those found in the group of volunteers (Table 3: civil  $\bar{x} = 5.695$ ; political  $\bar{x} = 3.553$ ; social  $\bar{x} = 5.495$ ; environmental  $\bar{x} = 6.781$ ) and non-volunteer public servants (Table 6: civil  $\bar{x} = 3.845$ ; political  $\bar{x} = 2.919$ ; social  $\bar{x} = 3.961$ ; environmental  $\bar{x} = 5.892$ ). Notably, PD6A ( $\bar{x} = 6.257$ ) excels in conscious consumption, marking it as the item with the highest average citizen performance among private sector workers. In contrast, PP1 ( $\bar{x} = 1.586$ ), which refers to participation in political mobilisations, records the lowest average.

The presented results highlight the need for strategies to enhance awareness and engagement in political practices, emphasising the significance of these actions in strengthening active citizenship, particularly in a context where environmental issues are increasingly recognised and integrated into the daily lives of private sector workers.

**Table 9**

*Descriptive statistics – non-volunteers working in the private sector (Second Sector)*

Dimension	Variables	Average	Standard Deviation	Variance	Asymmetry	Median	Coef. Variation
<b>Não Voluntários Trabalhadores Privados (N=70); Práticas de Cidadania</b>							<b><math>\bar{x}=3,474</math></b>
Civil Practices (CP) $\bar{x}= 3,760$	PC2	2,086	2,883	8,311	1,133	0,000	138,22%
	PC3	4,486	3,698	13,674	0,186	4,000	82,43%
	PC4	5,271	3,318	11,012	-0,177	5,000	62,95%
	PD2C	3,314	3,412	11,639	0,665	2,500	102,94%
	PD9C	3,643	3,275	10,726	0,394	3,000	89,90%
Political Practices (PP) $\bar{x}= 1,964$	PP1	1,586	2,721	7,406	1,647	0,000	171,61%
	PP2	1,957	2,710	7,346	1,314	5,000	138,48%
	PP4	1,786	2,802	7,852	1,414	0,000	156,92%
	PP5	2,529	3,179	10,108	1,000	5,000	125,73%
Social Practices (SP) $\bar{x}= 3,111$	PS1	3,586	3,109	9,666	0,495	3,000	86,71%
	PS2	2,686	3,000	9,001	0,820	2,000	111,71%
	PS3	3,586	3,386	11,464	0,576	3,000	94,42%
	PS5	2,871	3,189	10,172	0,766	2,000	111,07%
	PS7	2,829	2,973	8,840	0,652	2,000	105,11%
Environmental Practices (EP) $\bar{x}= 5,614$	PD5A	5,886	3,048	9,291	-0,426	6,500	51,79%
	PD6A	6,257	2,603	6,773	-0,321	7,000	41,59%
	PD7A	4,700	3,028	9,170	0,096	5,000	64,43%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As in the previous results, a high degree of variability and dispersion was observed, showing that all the analysed groups exhibited volatile behaviour. The nature of the citizenship construct is multidimensional and varied, influencing this behaviour.



Continuing the analyses, H3 is tested (see Table 10) to verify whether the performance in citizenship practices among volunteer and non-volunteer public servants differs from that of non-volunteers working in the private sector (Second Sector).

**Table 10**

*Hypothesis Test Summary (H3)*

Null Hypothesis	Test	p-value	Decision
The distribution of Pcitizenship is the same between volunteers and non-volunteers public servants as it is among non-volunteers working in the private sector.	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis test.	0,000*	Reject the null hypothesis

\* Significance level of 0.05

Source: Survey Data (2024)

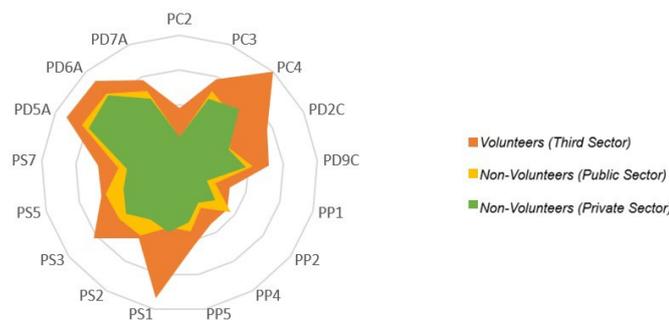
According to Table 10, the results of the hypothesis test for H3 indicate that the p-value shows statistical significance below 0.05; consequently, hypothesis H3 is accepted, revealing differences in the performance of citizenship practices among the groups analyzed. Lee (2012) found that employees of non-profit organizations, as well as public servants, when compared to employees of for-profit companies, are more motivated by intrinsic and collectivist rewards. In the private sector, some factors can inhibit social and volunteer practices, as well as differences in the motivational aspects of employees engaging in such actions (Rotolo; Wilson, 2016).

Time constraints, a lack of awareness about volunteering opportunities, financial difficulties, and concerns about conflicts of interest may contribute to the low participation of private sector employees in social and collective activities. However, Ribeiro (2018) points out that simply working in the public service also does not encourage the practice of social activities.

Comparing the averages of all variables among the three groups of workers, Graph 1 illustrates the superior performance of citizenship practices by volunteers linked to the Third Sector compared to the others. This pattern was observed across all dimensions and various variables, with an emphasis on Civil Practices (PC4 and PC3), Social Practices (PS1 and PS3), and Environmental Practices (PD5A and PD6A).

**Graphic 1**

*Overlapping results of citizenship practices among workers in the three sectors*



Source: Survey Data (2024)



Non-volunteers in the public sector performed worse than volunteers in all dimensions except Political Practices (PP2 – Monitoring of political actions and actors). However, they outperformed Second Sector workers in the dimensions of Social Practices (PS2 – Citizen actions for improvements in labor rights, PS3 – Protection of human rights, and PS5 – Reporting violations of quality public services) and Political Practices (PP2). This result suggests that, despite their overall lower performance, non-volunteers in the First Sector demonstrate some level of engagement in crucial areas of defending social rights and political monitoring.

On the other hand, non-volunteers in the private sector had lower results in all dimensions compared to volunteers but stood out when compared to non-volunteer public servants in the Civil (PC4 – Association of civilians for the resolution of collective problems) and Social (PS1 – Participation in social actions of social vulnerability) dimensions. This indicates a greater concern among workers in the Second Sector for the resolution of collective problems and support for vulnerable populations, reflecting a profile more focused on direct and community-based social actions.

When comparing the behavior of the three groups, a hierarchical pattern emerged: environmental practices exhibited the highest averages, followed by civil, social, and political practices. It is interesting to see how environmental citizenship practices, which reflect the new demands of today, are already established in the respondents' routines.

Only among public servants did social practices, on average, outperform civil practices. In all groups, political practices performed the worst, indicating significant challenges concerning engagement, a lack of motivation, or structure for involvement in more organized political actions. This result appears to align with a national trend. According to the TSE (2022), despite being compulsory, civil participation in Brazilian voting in 2022 experienced a high level of absenteeism – 20.93%. This data highlights a potential lack of concern among Brazilians regarding the governance of society. Perhaps factors such as corruption, the often misguided perception of an ‘inefficient’ justice system, distrust in institutions, and the ineffectiveness of political participation methods contribute to this low interest in political citizenship practices. For Hoskins and Mascherini (2009) and Bole and Gordon (2009), it is crucial for individuals to engage in political actions that can influence community governance, thus preventing managers and public representatives from formulating public policies based solely on individual interests.

## 5 Final Considerations

This research found differences in performance in citizenship practices among workers associated with three sectors: volunteers linked to the Third Sector, non-volunteer public servants linked to the First Sector, and non-volunteer workers in the private sector (Second Sector). It was discovered that volunteers demonstrate higher averages and significant differences compared to the citizenship practices of other workers, excelling in all dimensions of citizenship (civil, political, social, and environmental). Even workers in similar contexts—Third Sector volunteers and non-volunteer public servants—exhibit significant differences in citizenship performance. Consistent with theoretical expectations, it was also confirmed that Second Sector workers are the most distant from citizenship practices.

In summary, the results demonstrated the positive influence of volunteering in strengthening citizenship at the individual level, highlighting its relevance in promoting the active participation of individuals in civil, social, political, and environmental issues. The superior performance in citizenship practices among public servants, compared to non-



volunteers in the private sector, suggests an association between involvement in volunteer activities and a greater commitment to public service. This finding supports the implementation of incentive programs aimed at this group through flexible working hours, training opportunities, partnerships with external organizations, and awareness campaigns, which aim to improve the contribution of public servants to society.

Furthermore, the disparity in engagement in citizenship practices between the public and private sectors underscores the importance of intersectoral collaboration for promoting citizenship, reinforcing the idea that society is everyone's responsibility and that volunteering is ultimately a strategic alternative worth investing in.

The research has some limitations. Initially, the sample size stands out, consisting of 164 participants from eight states. Although diverse, it is predominantly concentrated in Paraíba and exhibits a high volatility of responses. It is suggested that the sample be geographically decentralised to enhance the generalizability of the results. Therefore, future studies may benefit from more comprehensive and geographically varied samples, in addition to exploring alternative methodologies to mitigate the limitations observed in this study. However, the results support and contribute to the management of volunteering, whether in civil society organisations or in public and private entities that utilise this type of work to foster citizenship in their localities. Given the confirmed link between volunteering and citizenship, the promotion of incentive policies for this activity is justified, recognising its role in building more socially just communities.

Moreover, the results may inspire additional studies that explore the mechanisms leading to improved citizenship performance among volunteers and public servants.

In conclusion, it is essential to emphasise that this research does not intend to position volunteering as the sole and exclusive space for fostering citizenship but aims to demonstrate that this activity has significantly impacted the formation of citizenship in local communities.

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