

Characteristics of the participants in mass sporting events in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the characteristics of athletes and spectators at mass sports competitions, focusing on aspects such as quantity, age, gender, educational level, occupation, and income to provide a comprehensive demographic overview. The study employed a sociological survey method, sampling 10 localities out of 63 provinces and cities across Vietnam. The survey included 520 spectators (Group 1) and 220 athletes (Group 2), resulting in a total sample size of 740 participants. The results are illustrated using graphical representations. The majority of spectators at mass sport events are aged 23 to under 60, whereas athletes show a more even age distribution, indicating lower student participation in spectating. Men significantly outnumber women. Most participants hold high school or university degrees, with the largest group being unskilled workers. Students, freelancers, and retirees are more evenly distributed. Professional field participants make up 35.5% of the total. Income-wise, most participants are middle to high-income earners, with nearly half earning between 5 and 10 million VND per month, and 42.3% earning over 10 million VND. Low-income and very high-income individuals are mostly spectators, while medium to high-income individuals are more likely to be athletes.

KEYWORDS

Mass Sports Event; Vietnam; Spectators; Athletes

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on participants in sports events is of great interest worldwide because, besides the athletes, the spectators are the soul of the events, acting as an emotional catalyst in motivating the athletes in competition (McCartney et al., 2010; Weed et al., 2015). The social interaction and

communication among these attendees can help solve social problems, build networks, and empower social organizations and associations (Potwarka & Wicker, 2020).

Weed et al. (2015) raised the issue that organizing sporting events such as the Olympic Games could affect the frequency and re-engagement of sports events by spectators. Researching event participants is beneficial to organizers, managers, and strategic policymakers (Chalip et al., 2017), helping to avoid situations where sports organizations achieve great revenue while the cities may lose money (Preuss, 2019).

There have been several authors studying different categories of participants. For example, Annear et al. (2019) conducted a study on adults. Furthermore, Dubnewick et al. (2018) examined the impact of local, small-scale traditional sports on the participation of young people, contributing to the enhancement of sporting involvement and the development of physical health (Grix et al., 2017).

Potwarka & Wicker (2020) addressed issues such as identifying six conditions causing viral effects, including event initiatives, the capacity of mass sports to serve new participants, the live viewing experience, the possibility of television or other media consumption, and the community where the event is located. These findings have implications for the sustainability of public finance and sport policy decisions. Furthermore, Thomson et al. (2020) found, from 77 articles published from 2000 to 2016, that the focus on legacy sports events and their audiences confirmed that mass sport activities have aroused people's pride, community integration, and active participation. Teare & Taks (2021) also evaluated the participation of spectators in sporting events of different sizes, from complex sport to single sport. The types of events (participants/spectators) and the number of each type of participant (e.g., youth/adult) are considered additional variables in the relationship between sporting events and their spectators.

However, in Vietnam, while there are statistics on mass exercise participation, there is a lack of research detailing the specific characteristics of event participants. The study of the characteristics of participants in mass sport events in Vietnam aims to fill the research gap in this field and form a basis for relevant studies in Vietnam and worldwide.

2. METHODS

This study aimed to examine the characteristics of athletes and spectators participating in mass sports competitions. It focused on various aspects, including quantity, age, gender, educational level, occupation, and income, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the demographics

involved in these events. The study employed a sociological survey method, sampling 10 localities out of 63 provinces and cities across Vietnam. The survey included 520 spectators (Group 1) and 220 athletes (Group 2), resulting in a total sample size of 740 participants. Respondents were asked to complete questionnaires that addressed various demographic factors, including age, gender, educational level, occupation, and income. The results are presented as percentages and illustrated using graphical representations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Age Distribution

The survey included participants from four distinct age groups. The results reveal that 72.3% of the respondents are aged between 23 and 60 years, 16.5% are under 22 years, and 11.2% are over 60 years. Notably, the age distribution among athletes is relatively even, covering a broad range. In contrast, the majority of spectators fall within the 23 to 60-year age range, highlighting a more concentrated age demographic among the audience (Chart 1).

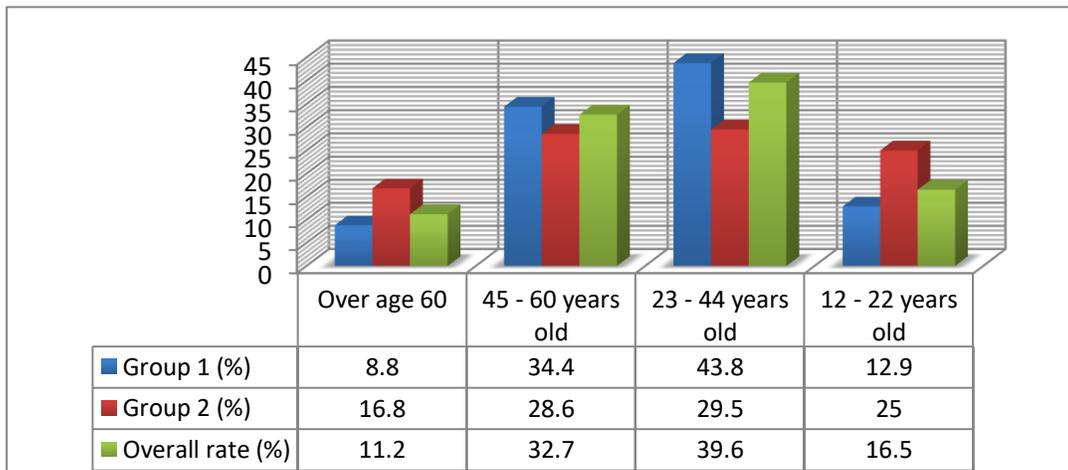


Chart 1. Age distribution of participants in mass sport events

3.2. Gender Distribution

General statistics reveal that men constitute approximately 62.7% of the total sample, while women make up 37.3%, showing a nearly two-to-one ratio. However, when examining the different types of participants—athletes and spectators—the gender ratio becomes more balanced. Both groups display a relatively even distribution of men and women, indicating that gender disparities are less pronounced within the specific categories of participants.

3.3. Education Level

The results from Chart 2 reveal the following distribution of educational qualifications among respondents: 0.27% have no formal educational degrees; 1.35% have completed primary school; 57.16% have reached high school level; 36.9% hold a university degree; and 4.46% have obtained postgraduate degrees. The 1% difference in educational levels between the two participant groups—athletes and spectators—indicates that both groups have similar qualifications. Overall, the majority of participants in mass sport events are high school and university graduates, with very few having only primary school education or postgraduate degrees.

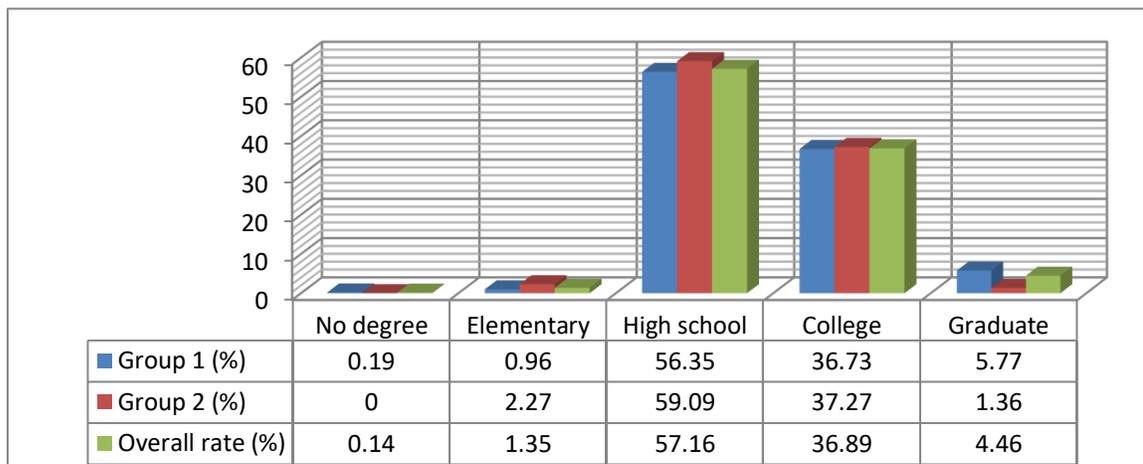


Chart 2. Educational level of participants in mass sport events

3.4. Occupation

Given the large number and diverse nature of occupations, participants were classified into six groups based on job characteristics and duties:

1. **Students:** Individuals currently engaged in academic studies.
2. **Freelancers:** Individuals who operate as self-employed professionals or business owners conducting activities not restricted by law.
3. **Retired Residents:** Individuals who are retired or primarily engaged in home care.
4. **Officers:** Individuals who work in roles related to the enforcement of state power, including legislative, executive, and judicial functions.
5. **Unskilled Workers:** Individuals performing manual labor or unskilled tasks.

6. **Other Occupations:** Individuals working in various fields not covered by the previous categories, such as office work, military, science and technology, health, education, business and management, information and communication technology, law, and culture and society.

Chart 3 reveals that participants in mass sport events are relatively evenly distributed among students, freelancers, and retired residents, with each group representing between 10.4% and 14.1% of the total. In contrast, unskilled workers are notably more active in mass sport events, comprising 21.9% of participants, highlighting the significance of these events to this group.

The remaining participants come from various professional fields—such as office work, military, science and technology, health, education, business and management, information and communication technology, law, and culture and society—constituting 35.5% of the total.

Regarding the types of participants, there are notable differences in participation rates. Students and freelancers tend to prefer spectating rather than competing, while retired residents and officers are more likely to participate in competitions. Unskilled workers display an equal ratio of participation between competing and spectating. Additionally, the chart indicates that there are more spectators than athletes in most professional fields.

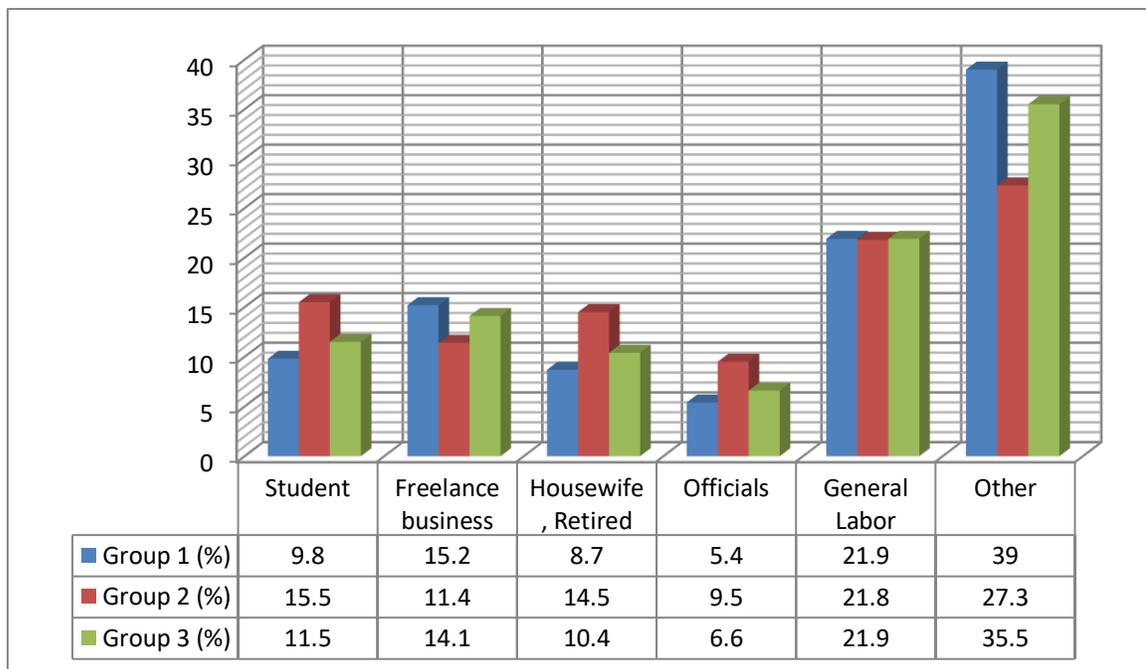


Chart 3. Occupations of participants in mass sport events

3.5. Incomes

In order to find out whether the incomes of the spectators and athletes affects their participation, awareness and behaviors or not, we conducted a statistical survey on the respondents' income according to 5 levels:

- Level 1: Under 5 million VND/month
- Level 2: From 5 million VND to 10 million VND/month
- Level 3: From 10 million VND to 15 million VND/month
- Level 4: From 15 million VND - 20 million VND/month
- Level 5: Over 20 million VND.

Chart 4 illustrates that the average monthly income of employees in the first half of 2022 was 6.5 million VND. In comparison, approximately 47.8% of participants in mass sport events fall within the income range of 5 to 10 million VND per month, which aligns with the average income of Vietnamese employees. The remaining 50% of participants are unevenly distributed across other income groups. Specifically, 21.1% belong to the low-income group earning less than 5 million VND per month. The high-income group, earning between 10 and 15 million VND per month, constitutes 23.9%, while the very high-income group, earning over 15 million VND per month, makes up about 7.2%. Participants with an income exceeding 20 million VND are very few.

Among spectators, those with low or high to very high incomes represent 24% to 26.4%. The low-income group is primarily composed of young athletes and retired elderly individuals, accounting for approximately 14.1%. Conversely, high and very high-income participants are mostly athletes, making up 42.3% of this group.

In other words, except for the small number of students and low-income retirees, the middle-income to high-income groups make up the majority of participants in mass sport events. Nearly a half of the participants belong to the average income group of 5 million - 10 million/month.

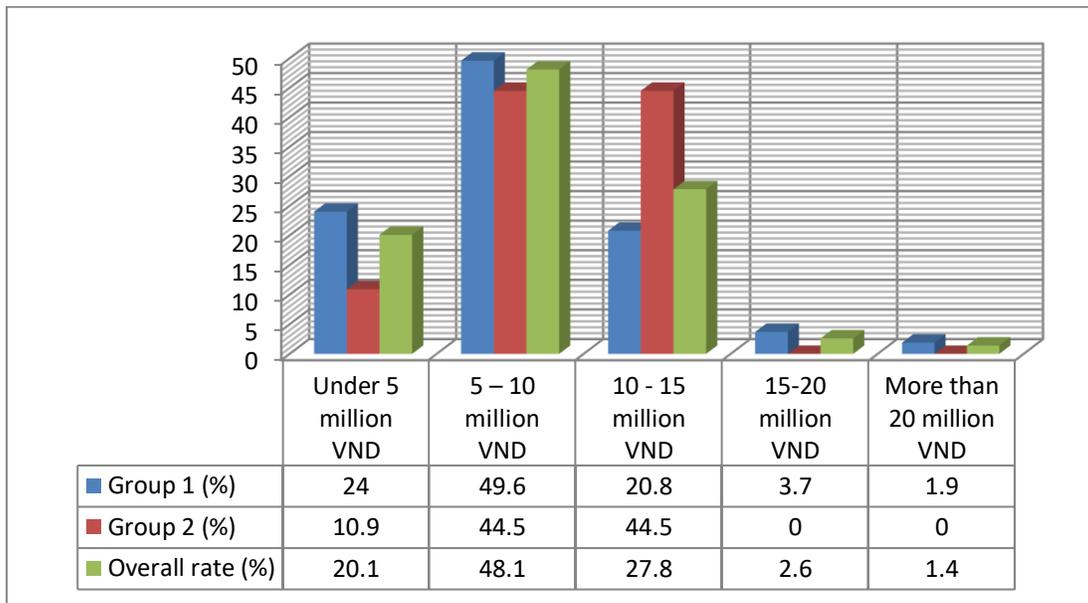


Chart 4. Income of participants in mass sport events

4. CONCLUSIONS

The largest group of spectators at mass sport events is comprised of individuals aged 23 to under 60 years old, while athletes display a more even age distribution. This suggests that students are less likely to engage in spectating at these events. Additionally, the proportion of men participating is nearly double that of women.

Most participants in mass sport events hold high school or university degrees. The highest percentage of participants come from the unskilled worker group, while students, freelancers, and retired residents are more evenly distributed. Participants from professional fields such as office work, the military, science and technology, health, education, business and management, information and communication technology, law, culture, and society constitute 35.5% of the total.

Income levels among participants vary, with those from middle to high-income brackets being the majority. Nearly half of the participants fall into the average income group of 5 million to 10 million VND per month. Participants with high to very high incomes (over 10 million VND per month) account for 42.3%. Low-income and very high-income individuals are predominantly spectators rather than athletes, while those with high incomes are more likely to be athletes than spectators.

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All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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