



**HOUSEHOLD SATELLITE ACCOUNT
(EXPERIMENTAL)
METHODOLOGY
Chapter 8 Voluntary Activity**

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8. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY

Output

The output of this function is goods and services for other institutions – the activities which relate to this function are undertaken by household members in the main outside the home.

Concepts

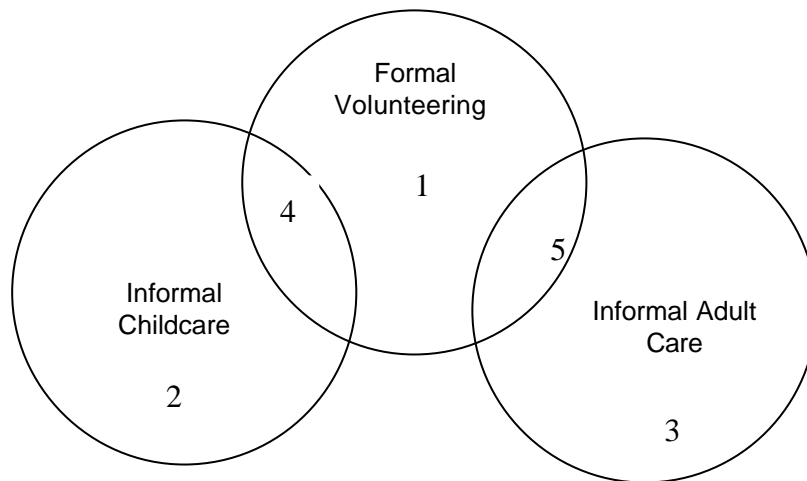
The other elements of household production – providing accommodation, nutrition, clothing and care – have identifiable market equivalents, and the complementary valuation of both the outputs and the inputs is possible. As with all Household Satellite Account projects, the original goal of the voluntary activity project was to measure output independently of inputs; e.g. the number of children in uniformed organisations rather than the time spent supervising those children. The outputs could then be valued at the market equivalent prices; i.e. running a brownie pack (which is voluntary work) could be equated with running an after-schools club (paid employment). However, although there may be market equivalents for some activities, for many the paid service is often also offered on the basis of time spent. For example, the value of fundraising is the cost of the time of the fundraiser – you cannot buy some ‘fundraising’ on any other basis. It may, in future, be possible to measure the output of voluntary organisations independently of the input but, at this stage, quantifying the physical output of volunteers' efforts has not been possible. Therefore we have valued the time spent in voluntary activity (the input method). This is a departure in methodology from the rest of the account.

The measurement of voluntary activity is notoriously difficult, as there is no consensus on a definition. The very word 'voluntary' has different connotations for different people and different cultures. 'Voluntary work' is thought to conjure up images of formal employment, but this may not always be appropriate. The term 'volunteering' may also mean little to somebody from a minority ethnic group or different culture. Despite this difficulty, a number of attempts have been made to measure voluntary activity. The Institute for Volunteering Research has tried to avoid directly using the term and attempts to measure:

"Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment."
(National Survey of Volunteering 1997)

For this project, we have refined the above definition to measure only 'formal' voluntary activity, which is undertaken through a group or organisation. We did not seek to create a new definition, since it is dependent on existing sources. In the HHSA, any 'informal volunteering', such as helping friends or family members, is included either in the childcare or adult care projects. The Venn diagram below helps to illustrate how these three projects are linked.

The voluntary activity project (1) records all the time spent formally volunteering. This can include time spent assisting adults through a voluntary organisation (5), e.g. a hospital visitor, and time spent supervising children (4), e.g. helping in an after-school club.



Informal care of children (2) is defined as ‘care from household members or their networks i.e. help from family members or neighbours’. In the childcare project we have been able to identify informal care by household members. We have avoided double counting area (4) by measuring volunteer time spent supervising children *only* in the voluntary activity project. The same applies to adult care.

We recognise that informal care in its entirety includes all caring, whether by a voluntary organisation or household member, i.e. childcare (2) and (4), and adult care (3) and (5). In the same way voluntary work could include all caring tasks carried out by households and their members as well as formal voluntary activity, i.e. a proportion of (2) and (3), as well as formal volunteering (1). Although we are aware that public and policy interest often lies in being able to measure each activity as a "whole", because of data availability, it is not possible to identify and measure these areas separately. What is important for the HHS is that informal care is not double counted.

The missing volunteers

Whilst using this definition of voluntary activity, we recognise that some types of volunteering may be under recorded in the surveys used. It is commonly acknowledged that present survey techniques fail to measure adequately some new types of voluntary activity. For instance, employer-supported activity (e.g. employees undertaking a community project out of work hours) meets all the characteristics of voluntary activity - it is unpaid, has benefit and is organised. The National Survey of Volunteering (NSV) does attempt to measure employer-supported volunteering. However, no data are collected on the type of employer-supported activity undertaken. Voluntary work undertaken via the Internet (known as 'virtual volunteering'), such as on-line counselling or training, is another area we are unsure about. Much of this may be picked up unknowingly. Since the medium in which the voluntary activity takes place is rarely recorded, we cannot be certain. Therefore the HHS estimates give an “at least value” of voluntary activity.

Inputs

Intermediate consumption

As this is most likely to be provided by the organisation for which the voluntary activity is being undertaken, the intermediate consumption we wish to include in this account is only transport related, if households use their own transport in order to undertake the voluntary activity. This should only be included where volunteers do not receive a mileage allowance.

However, as the data source for transport does not separately identify travel for voluntary activity, we have not been able to make any adjustment for intermediate consumption.

Household capital consumption

Even if the voluntary work is done outside the home, it may well involve planning and organisation at home, often these days by using a home computer. In this case the appropriate proportion of the cost of the computer should be included. However, as we have no data on the use of computers by volunteers, we have not included any capital consumption in this project.

Related services

This should include shopping etc. related to voluntary work, if it can be identified. The Time Use Survey does not separately identify shopping related to voluntary work, and data on volunteering from the Omnibus Survey does not separately identify this task. Therefore we have no related services for this project.

Labour

Information on time spent in voluntary work from Time Use Diaries is likely to lead to a different valuation if the hours are multiplied by average wages, than if the hours spent in specific activities can be identified and valued using the wage of the appropriate market activity.

Methodology

Data sources

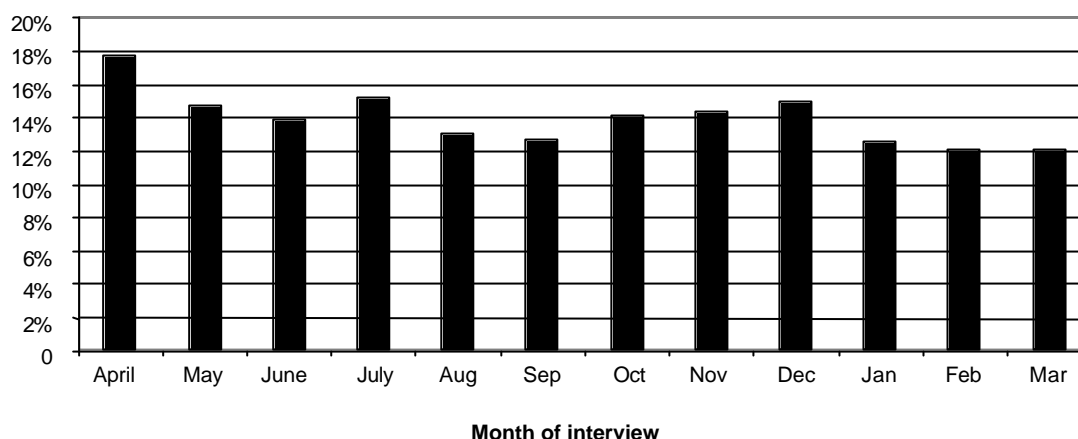
The estimated number of volunteers varies considerably, depending on the survey used, with different surveys asking different questions at different times of the year. The primary source of information for the estimates in the HHSA is a module which was placed on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey. Other sources of information were examined and the National Survey of Volunteers (NSV) and the General Household Survey (GHS) and Continuous Household Survey (CHS) are used in our sensitivity analysis.

Both the National Statistics Omnibus Survey (2001) and the National Survey of Volunteering (1997) are ad hoc surveys. The 1992 General Household Survey (GHS) is the only year long, continuous survey of voluntary activity in Great Britain. The voluntary work module relates to individuals in all surveyed households. The month of each household interview is contained in another part of the dataset. We used the GHS to test the hypothesis that the proportion of people volunteering does not alter significantly throughout the year. Since all individuals in a household were interviewed at the same point in time, it is possible to match all individual cases with the relevant month of interview of the household. There was a maximum of 4 interviews per household. The responses to the question '*did you participate in voluntary work in the last 4 weeks?*' were compared with the month of interview. The results are presented below.

From these results, summarised in Chart 8.1 below, we concluded that overall rates of participation do not differ significantly during the course of a year. By examining the confidence intervals around each estimate we see that the difference between the proportion of volunteers recorded per interview month and the average annual proportion of volunteers is not statistically different for the majority of months, with the exception of three months. Results for February and March are marginally significantly different. The April result is the

most clearly significantly higher result. This may be because certain voluntary activities tend to occur more often in school holiday periods and the GHS survey year overlapped to cover both April 1991 and April 1992, thereby including two sets of Easter school holidays in the sample. Overall, therefore, it is reasonable to use the NS Omnibus result (where the questions were asked only in two months) as an estimate of overall levels of participation for the year.

Chart 8.1 Population volunteering in past 4 weeks, by month of interview



Source: General Household Survey (1992-93) unpublished data

How many volunteers in the United Kingdom (UK)?

The Household Satellite Account is attempting to measure and value unpaid productive work in the United Kingdom (UK). The NS Omnibus survey estimates were grossed to the GB population using data derived from the Labour Force Survey, which exclude people living in institutions. A further adjustment has to be made to obtain UK estimates. The hypothesis, that it is reasonable to assume that the percentage of the total population volunteering in Great Britain is the same as in Northern Ireland, was tested by merging the GHS (1992-93 Great Britain) and the Continuous Household Survey (1991-92 Northern Ireland).

The two survey estimates were combined, taking the respective population estimates into account. The results are presented in Table 8.1 below. The new proportion of formal volunteers is 24.1 per cent (in the 4 weeks prior to interview). This gives a total of 11.1 million volunteers in the United Kingdom in 1991-92. The overall effect of combining the CHS and GHS is negligible, because the Northern Ireland population is relatively small, when compared with the Great Britain population.

Results from the CHS indicate that 22 per cent of Northern Ireland respondents volunteered in the previous year. This result is significantly different (at the 95 per cent confidence level) from the 24 per cent reported in the GHS, and shows that it is not reasonable to assume the same distribution of volunteering in Northern Ireland as Great Britain.

Because of these results, we decided that it is important for the NS Omnibus figures to be grossed up from the Great Britain (GB) level to the United Kingdom level. The difference between the General Household Survey estimate (GB) and merged estimate (UK) were used as a ratio to multiply the NS Omnibus estimate. Unrounded proportions were used for this

procedure. It is not possible to gross the average number of hours obtained from the NS Omnibus, because we have no comparable mean values from the GHS and CHS.

Table 8.1 Estimated number of volunteers in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and UK

Survey	Population	Volunteered in past year	Volunteered in past 4 weeks	Mean (1)	Median	Base
GHS	Great Britain	24.2%	13.8%	15.6	8	2,504
CHS	Northern Ireland	22.4%	14.6%	13.5	8	849
GHS and CHS combined	United Kingdom	24.1%	14.0%	14.6	8	3,353

(1) The Continuous Household Survey revised all responses of 100 hours and above down to 99. This affected 13 cases.

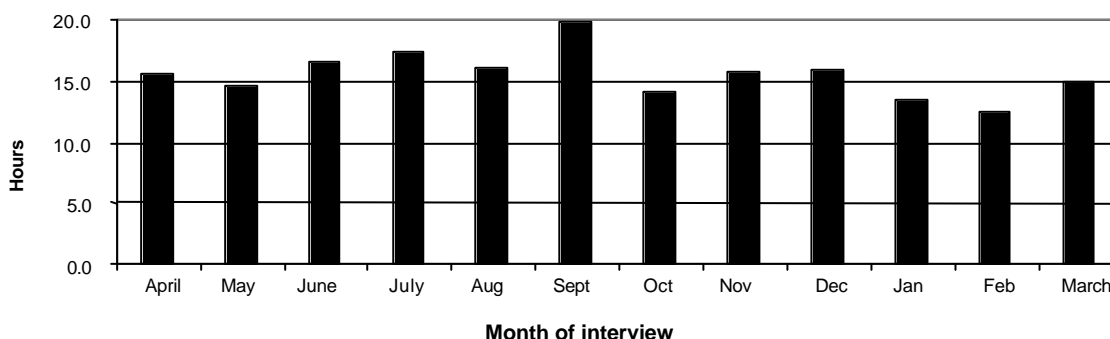
Source: General Household Survey (1992-93) & Continuous Household Survey (1991-92)

How many hours do people volunteer?

People are asked how many hours they volunteered during a defined reference period. For the National Survey of Volunteering, this was one week, and for the General Household Survey, Continuous Household Survey and National Statistics Omnibus, the reporting period was four weeks. To estimate the annual number of hours volunteered, we assumed that the reference period is typical of the whole year and grossed up the hours to an annual total. There are some difficulties with this assumption.

Using the GHS, the question ‘how much work did you undertake in the last 4 weeks?’ was compared to the month of interview. The estimate for each month will, therefore, contain voluntary work undertaken in the previous calendar month. Chart 8.2 below shows how much voluntary activity was undertaken in the last 4 weeks compared with the month of interview. Firstly, the amount of time that ‘active volunteers’ volunteer does fluctuate during the course of the year. Analysis of the GHS shows that the mean number of hours spent volunteering each month was higher in the summer months and lower in the winter months. Therefore the NS Omnibus survey, conducted in January and March, may be an underestimation of hours volunteered.

Chart 8.2 Average time spent volunteering by month of interview



Source: General Household Survey (1992-93) - unpublished data

Secondly, analysis of the number of hours volunteered shows that the reference period of the survey affects the number of hours recorded. The GHS and the NS Omnibus modules asked

for information about the 'amount of time spent volunteering over the past 4 weeks'. The distribution of these values has some evidence of bunching around values divisible by 4. This is particularly the case for larger numbers of hours, for example 20, 40, 60 and 80. This affects the value of the mean more than the median. The problem of clustering around values divisible by 4 is not uncommon in surveys that ask questions along the lines of 'over the past 4 weeks'.

The average number of hours reported by volunteers in each survey varies, depending on the type of average used: the mean, median (the value in the middle) or mode (occurs most often). We believe that the mean is the most appropriate measure to use, with the median hours used for comparisons. Revised means were calculated by adjusting the particularly high number of hours that were reported by a minority of volunteers. Revision of outlying numbers is necessary only if we assume that the respondents gave inaccurate information. We have no way of testing this assumption. What we can investigate, however, is the extent to which these people said that their time was typical/untypical. As the table below shows, 67 per cent of people reported that the time spent volunteering was the same as usual, with approximately the same proportion volunteering "more than usual" as "less than usual".

Table 8.2 Typicality of number of hours volunteered

	More than usual	Less than usual	Same as usual	Total
Number of volunteers	92	98	396	587

Source: National Statistics Omnibus Survey (2001)

In order to calculate revised means, we reclassified an outlier as a respondent who had reported undertaking more than 100 hours of voluntary work in the past 4 weeks. Since the NSV asked people how much time they had volunteered in the past week, outliers were classed as those completing a total of 25 hours or more. This analysis is not possible on the GHS because a typicality question was not asked.

The results are inconclusive. We may have expected more respondents with 'outlying' hours, proportionally, to report that their time was *more than usual*. Only 1 person on the Omnibus and 5 people on the NSV reported this. The majority of the outlying cases said that the time undertaken on voluntary work was *about the same amount of time as usual*. Since we have no reason to doubt the plausibility of people reporting long hours volunteering, the use of revised means was rejected.

What type of voluntary activity takes place?

The range of voluntary activities includes fund-raising, organising groups, clerical work and professional help or coaching. These activities are undertaken at different rates and levels of intensity. For the purposes of valuation, it seems reasonable to allocate appropriate wage rates to different activities, which reflect this intensity and/or difficulty and/or skills used. Previous research on the nature of volunteering, broken down by activity, has been conducted by Katharine Gaskin¹, on a case study basis. We would have liked to replicate this work for the whole of the UK. This approach requires the average number of hours spent on formal voluntary activity, broken down by the type of activity that is being undertaken.

¹ Katharine Gaskin and Barbara Dobson(1996) *The Economic Equation of Volunteering - A Pilot Study* Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University

Due to the structure of the GHS questionnaire, it was not possible to obtain information by type of activity from this source. The number of eligible cases on the NSV (n=134) is very small. A larger sample is obtainable from the NS Omnibus Survey. The original data set has eight categories:

1. Personally raising or collecting money

For example, selling flags on flag day; helping out at jumble sales or collecting jumble; sponsored activities; selling raffle tickets; making things to sell at fetes; carol singing.

2. Serving on committees or attending committee meetings

Such as local councillors; magistrates; school governors, charity trustees, those who attend committee meetings at PTA or Tenants Associations.

3. Organising or helping a club or group

For example girl guides; scouts; playgroup; youth club; local social club; canvassing; leafleting; performing/organising entertainment e.g. children's concert.

4. Giving professional advice, talks, coaching or training

For example local advice associations i.e. legal advice, financial advice; counselling; teaching; a qualified referee.

5. Giving non-professional advice, talks, coaching or training

For example unqualified coaching or training at sports club; classroom assistant; self-help groups; groups of enthusiasts.

6. Providing administrative, clerical or secretarial help

For example word processing; book-keeping; filling envelopes.

7. Giving other kinds of practical help not already mentioned

For example Meals on Wheels, Hospital Visitor, Prison Visitor, Hospital Patient Transport Scheme, first aider, special constable, healing, making costumes for play/pantomime.

8. Any other type of voluntary activity

Due to the small samples at this level of detail, these have been collapsed into three categories: professional occupations, personal & protective occupations, and clerical & secretarial occupations. This is based on categories used in the Standard Occupational Classification.

Volunteers who said they had given 'professional advice' or served on committees' were recoded as *professional occupations*. The justification for this is self-explanatory. Respondents who said that they had spent time 'giving non-professional advice' or 'other practical help' were regarded as being in *personal & protective service occupations*. This major category includes care assistants, caretakers, childcare and travel attendants. This is considered to be similar to the kind of voluntary work we expected to be conducted under 'non-professional advice' and 'other practical help'. Finally, 'personally raising money', 'organising or helping a group/club' and 'administration/clerical' voluntary activities were recoded into *clerical and secretarial occupations*. This major category includes numerical clerks and cashiers, secretaries, receptionists, personal assistants and telephonists. It was felt that the tasks of money handling, organisation skills and clerical tasks would be adequately covered under *clerical and secretarial occupations*. It is recognised that by recoding 'organising a group/club' into *clerical and secretarial occupations* we may be undervaluing the responsible nature of club/group organisation. However, there is no way of separating this work from the helping, leafleting, and canvassing that were also in this Omnibus

category and clearly are more akin to clerical and secretarial occupations. The recoding is summarised in Table 8.4 below.

Table 8.4 Re-categorising the Omnibus activities

NS Omnibus category	Standard Occupational Classification
Personally raising or collecting money	Clerical and secretarial occupations
Serving on committees	Professional occupations
Organising / helping a group or club	Clerical and secretarial occupations
Giving professional advice/training	Professional occupations
Giving non-professional advice/ training	Personal and protective service occupations
Administration/clerical	Clerical and secretarial occupations
Other practical help	Personal and protective service occupations

Source: HHSA

When voluntary activity is split into the professional, personal and protective, and clerical and secretarial occupations categories, a volunteer may do just one of the activities, three combinations of two activities or all three activities. The annual total number of hours volunteered was estimated as before. The annual number of hours volunteered in *only* professional activities, *only* personal and protective activities, and *only* clerical and secretarial activities can be calculated from the dataset. Total annual hours volunteered minus the annual hours volunteered in only *one* activity, gives the volume of hours given by respondents who participate in more than one voluntary activity ("multi-tasking volunteers"). The proportion of hours volunteered by "multi-tasking" respondents relating to each activity type (professional, personal and protective, and clerical and secretarial) is known. These proportions were applied to the total hours given by this group of volunteers, to complete the estimated annual number of hours volunteered by activity.

Value

The wage rates used are taken from the New Earnings Survey and relate to the occupations described above. This survey samples 1 per cent of UK employees (1998 onwards) who are members of the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Income Tax Scheme. Prior to 1998, only employees in Great Britain were sampled. The wages are simply aggregated, and no grossing or weighting is attempted. No imputations for non-response or sample frame deficiencies are made. The average hourly earnings calculated take into account only those earnings not affected by sick absence and are basic wages excluding overtime. We used median wages, to avoid the effect of very high and very low levels of income in the distribution.

Sensitivity analysis

We tested the sensitivity of our estimates to the wage rate, looking at mean wages and the national minimum wage as alternatives. We looked at the impact of using median rather than mean hours of volunteering, and of assuming a 48-week rather than a 52-week year. We also re-ran the estimates holding the number of volunteers constant at the 1992 (GHS) level.