



## **An Overview of Time in Volunteering and Adult Care in the United Kingdom**

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### **Executive Summary**

#### **Substantive findings about volunteering and other adult care**

- Volunteering covers three main domains of activity – donated work for an organisation; informal work for other individuals or the community in general; and adult care.
- British men and women volunteered in roughly equal proportions in the 1970s, but women volunteer at a higher rate than men (though men tend to commit equal and possibly slightly higher time to volunteering than women when they do decide to volunteer).
- The British are less likely to volunteer at younger ages, and more likely to volunteer and to spend more time volunteering as they approach and in the years immediately after retirement.
- Voluntary activity in the United Kingdom falls in the middle range of volunteering in industrialised countries. People in many countries do less, but in some countries, including the USA and Turkey, people undertake considerably more voluntary activity.
- Voluntary behaviour in the UK has become more fragmented over the day with time.
- Over 40% of voluntary activity takes place at the same time as other activities. Diaries best collect these simultaneous activities that include volunteering.

#### **Methodological observations**

- The Harmonised European Time Use Surveys design of diary, which enables people to complete activities in their own words, better collects data on the range of voluntary activities, particularly informal volunteering.
- Surveys need to collect large samples to collect diaries on sufficient numbers of days when people volunteer to assess the total volume and patterns of voluntary activity.
- Diaries show how people schedule voluntary activity into their other daily routines. Estimating the capacity of a society to take up more voluntary activity requires knowledge of people's capacity to multi-task and the shift schedules. Diaries reveal what people do on days when they volunteer, but do not indicate the total number of people who might volunteer over the longer term. Additional survey questions or a one month volunteering schedule attached to a time diary survey could reveal this additional detail.
- While a wealth of time-use surveys permit tracking of behaviour trends in the UK from 1961 through 2005, the best historical survey informing voluntary activity was collected in 2000-01.
- Time diaries offer particular value for money. Diaries have higher administration costs than questionnaire surveys, but daily activity schedules inform a wide range of policy areas, including transport, physical activity, energy and resource use, total economic activity (paid and unpaid), work-life balance, parenting, eating and drinking behaviours, and quality of life. One time-use survey can address more areas than comparable funding on a series of questionnaire surveys.



## Introduction

This short report uses four of the time use surveys conducted in the United Kingdom which are included in the Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS), a database of harmonised activity diary data which facilitates cross-time and cross-national analysis. The Centre for Time Use Research (CTUR), based at the University of Oxford, maintains the MTUS. CTUR staff have worked with diary and longitudinal data collection, harmonisation and analysis since the 1970s. The CTUR Director, Professor Jonathan Gershuny, previously worked as the Director of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex (which maintains the British Household Panel Survey) and is a past president of the International Association for Time Use Research (IATUR). Dr. Kimberly Fisher, author of this report, is the present Secretary-Treasurer of IATUR.

Time diaries collect details of people's activities over 24-hour periods. As the time diary records activities in time, other time-relevant information, such as the level of pollution or sunlight at the time of activities, can be matched to the diary to compliment the analysis. Diary surveys also ask for additional information, which can include what else participants are doing when they do more than one activity at the same time, where they were, how they travelled during each trip, who else was present, how they felt as they did the activity, whether they did the activity for someone else, whether they were paid to do the activity, and whether they used ICTs (such as computers or the internet) during the activities. Time-diary surveys sample random days throughout a year. Diary data thus reveals what patterns of activity people in a society do on an average day, how people balance work, household necessities, personal care and leisure time, and how many hours on average people in a society spend over a year undertaking various activities (Gershuny 2000, Michelson 2005).

## Measuring Volunteering

When considering the topic of voluntary activity, there are three broad categories of behaviours which may be of policy interest: formal volunteering, informal volunteering, and unpaid adult care (Bittman and Fisher 2006). Formal volunteering takes place within a structured setting, and covers a range of activities from parents giving time to coach or transport children in sporting leagues, to activists in political parties, to voluntary workers in charitable shops, to people engaged in organised wildlife preservation efforts for agencies such as WWF or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Informal volunteering entails two broad sets of activities: assisting another person on an informal basis (such as collecting shopping for a neighbour who is unwell); and activities which benefit the wider community which a person does without consultation with others, such as people who decide to pick up rubbish discarded on the streets and pavements near their houses to tidy the area around their homes. Many academic analyses of volunteering also include unpaid adult care. In contrast with child care, adult care tends to become more intensive over time, and social supports for adult care is less comprehensive than those available for care of children. Additionally, a significant proportion of the informal volunteering in which women engage is adult care. Nonetheless, formal volunteering is the form of civic engagement which enables the participant to derive the most social capital that may enhance their prospects of employment (Patulny 2005). All three types of volunteering contribute to the public good, and save public agencies significant sums. The three types of voluntary activity together also may contribute to a policy outcome. For instance, some older people may be able to continue living in their own homes for



longer on account of a combination of formal services, formal and informal voluntary arrangements, and adult care provided by family members.

Some people who engage in voluntary work do so most days. More volunteers undertake this work on a weekly, monthly, or less regular schedule. Time diary surveys collect between 1 and 7 diaries from individuals. This means that diaries do not indicate what proportion of the population volunteers over a year. Additional survey questions about voluntary behaviour are needed to model the total number of people in a society who volunteer. Nonetheless, research comparing the profiles of volunteers in Australia identified in time-use surveys and special surveys of voluntary activity, found similar profiles of who volunteers (Fisher, Patulny and Bittman 2004). In contrast to questionnaire surveys, diary data reveal how much time people spend volunteering on an average week day and an average weekend day across a society. Diary data is more accurate than stylised estimates (Gershuny 2000, Michelson 2005). If you ask people a question like “how many hours did you spend in a car last week?”, most people who spent any time in a car would struggle to make an accurate estimate, as people do not walk around with mental stop watches recording time committed to various domains of behaviour. As diaries collect activities in the context of the full routine of the day, people are able to give more accurate accounts of the time in each activity. Further, only the diary format adequately captures time in volunteering that overlaps with time doing another activity at the same time. Consequently, diary data reveals the total time commitment to volunteering over a year. Diary data also permit approximate valuations to be placed on this voluntary time (giving an indication of how much funding governments and private agencies would have to raise to pay for substitute labour to take place were volunteers not willing or able to continue with their activities – or conversely how much money volunteers save public and private coffers). Conventional surveys that ask people questions about volunteering over the longer term do not reveal this information. The two forms of information are needed together to get a full picture of voluntary activity.

## Data

The United Kingdom has a long history of irregular collection of time use data which extends back to the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pember-Reeves 1913). The UK boasts some of the most influential literary diaries (Samuel Pepys of particular note), and long-period diary data collection projects (Mass Observation and Project SIGMA are examples). Access to older data is limited, though surveys collected by the BBC Audience Research Unit are accessible for 1961 and 1974-75. The BBC continues to collect time-use surveys. Research teams led by Jonathan Gershuny collected Great-Britain time use surveys in the 1980s. The Office for National Statistics collected two diary supplements attached to the Omnibus Surveys in May 1995 and four seasons in 2005. The ONS also participated in the first round of Harmonised European Time Use Studies (HETUS), co-ordinated by Eurostat. Sadly, the UK is one of a handful of European countries not participating in the current HETUS round (details of countries presently collecting time-use surveys can be found on the CTUR table of time use studies: <http://www.timeuse.org/information/studies/>). Some BBC, the Gershuny-led and the ONS surveys are available from the UK Data Archive, and MTUS versions of these surveys are distributed by CTUR.

Time diaries collect structured stories of people’s days (Michelson 2005). The narrative element of diary data means that information collected in different formats can be compared meaningfully



(Fisher et. al. 2010, Gershuny 2000). The process of transforming data into the Multinational Time Use Study involves a series of data cleaning and processing procedures which permit the maximum use of the information which diarists record. The MTUS translates original activity, location and who else is present codes into a harmonised set of codes which appear in a large number of surveys. The MTUS also includes harmonised demographic information. In general, CTUR has included large national sample surveys that collect data for all seasons, and preferably over whole years. There are some exceptions where the team obtained the best possible survey to include as many countries as possible, and to include as many decades for as many of these countries as possible (Gershuny 2000). At present, the MTUS covers 22 countries.

This report uses four surveys in the MTUS collected in the United Kingdom. Table 1 shows basic details of each survey. The 2005 survey has a small number of cases, and the 1995 survey is even smaller. The 1995 survey also did not collect secondary activities, and only collected diaries in one season. This matters, as diarists reported less time in volunteering in July and August than in other months year. Results from the 1995 survey are more blunt as a result, and cannot be included in some tables. Readers also should treat the 1974-75 results with some caution. The number of diarists in this survey is comparable to the number of diarists in the 2005 survey. The 1974-75 participants completed seven diaries, which means that there will be a heightened influence of their individual behaviour compared with the other surveys. Also, the 1974-75 survey only asked people to report activities in half hour intervals (in contrast with 15 minute slots for 1995 and 10 minute periods in the more recent surveys). As a result, short-duration activities are under-reported in the 1974-75 data.

**Table 1: Details of Surveys Use in This Report**

| Details of the survey             | 1974-75                             | 1995                                   | 2000-01                              | 2005  |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Collector                         | BBC                                 | ONS                                    | ONS                                  | ONS   |
| Period sampled                    | Aug-Sept 1974<br>Feb-March 1975     | May-June 1995                          | June 2000 –<br>August 2001           | March-April, June-<br>July, Sept-Oct,<br>Nov-Dec 2005 |
| Eligible persons                  | All household<br>members aged 5+    | 1 person aged 16+<br>per household     | All household<br>members aged 8+     | 1 person aged 16+<br>per household                    |
| Response rate                     | 60% 74, 62% 75                      | 93%                                    | 45%                                  | 59%   |
| Number of diaries<br>per diarist  | 7 (1 week)                          | 1                                      | 2 (one week day,<br>one weekend day) | 1   |
| When diaries<br>completed         | During the<br>observation day       | The following day                      | During the<br>observation day        | The following day                                     |
| Time intervals                    | 30 minutes                          | 15 minutes                             | 10 minutes                           | 10 minutes  |
| Activity information              | Own words, main<br>+ secondary acts | Chose from list,<br>main activity only | Own words, main<br>+ secondary acts  | Chose from list,<br>main +second acts                 |
| Number of good<br>quality diaries | 20,076 diaries                      | 1,883 diaries                          | 19,911 diaries                       | 4,834 diaries   |

All surveys cover Great Britain. The 2000-01 also covers Northern Ireland (526 diaries). While nation-specific information, like region, cannot be harmonised across countries, the MTUS includes supplementary files for the UK which, among other things, permit separate analysis for England, Wales,



Scotland and Northern Ireland. The lowest age range varies among these surveys. This report only covers diaries completed by people aged 16 and older.

**Reporting of volunteering and adult care**

Time use surveys around the world collect information on volunteering in a variety of ways. Some, including the 1974-75 UK survey, simply lump all volunteering and adult care into a single activity code. Most time use surveys, including the 2005 UK survey, separately collect adult care and all other volunteering. Some surveys collect a range of detail about volunteering. Older surveys in the USA asked about volunteering for different kinds of organisations (sports-related, child-oriented, political, union, religious, etc.). The 1995 UK survey has three codes, adult care, voluntary activity meetings, and other voluntary activity. The Harmonised European Time Use Studies model (which the UK 2000-01 survey followed) distinguishes meetings from other formal volunteering, as well as identifying kinds of informal help undertaken (gardening as help, shopping as help, etc.). The 2000-01 survey includes 8 adult care and 17 volunteering codes. The MTUS dataset includes two codes, adult care and all other voluntary activity. Nonetheless, the MTUS documentation records what original codes are translated into the harmonised codes, which allows a user to identify which surveys are suited to compare cross-time or cross-country voluntary behaviour at a more detailed level.

**Table 2: How People Reported Volunteering and Adult Care in 1974-75, 2000-01, and 2005**

|   | Number of episodes | % of episodes |
|---|--------------------|---------------|
| Simultaneous volunteering and adult care                    | 20                 | 0.2%          |
| Adult care as a main activity and as a secondary activity   | 1                  | 0.0%          |
| Volunteering as a main activity and as a secondary activity | 33                 | 0.4%          |
| Adult care as a main activity, other secondary activity     | 449                | 5.4%          |
| Volunteering as a main activity, other secondary activity   | 1951               | 23.4%         |
| Adult care as a main activity only                          | 1155               | 13.8%         |
| Adult care as a secondary activity only                     | 469                | 5.6%          |
| Volunteering as a main activity only                        | 3455               | 41.4%         |
| Volunteering as a secondary activity only                   | 818                | 9.8%          |
| Total episodes of voluntary and adult care                  | 8351               | 100.0%        |

Three of the four UK surveys used here asked people to record both their main activities as well as simultaneous activities. Table 2 shows how people record volunteering. This table concentrates on episodes, that is each spell when someone engages in adult care or volunteering during the 24-hour diary day (some people recorded more than one spell in their diary). In 55.2% of these episodes, people reported that they were only engaged in volunteering or adult care. This means that in just under half of episodes, people are doing other things at the same time as volunteering. As the 1974-75 survey lumped adult care and all voluntary activity into a single category, the lines which relate to adult care only appear in the later surveys. Simultaneous voluntary and other activity occurs in all the surveys.

Multi-tasked volunteering can take many forms. People may fill time with another activity during a dull period – for instance, working on a document for a charity while commuting on the train to work, collecting rubbish on the street in front of their house while waiting for a taxi, or reading a book



while working in a charity shop when no customers are in the shop. People also may extend or add complexity to an activity done for another purpose to also perform adult care or engage in voluntary work. Someone might be cooking a meal for the family, and at the same time preparing a special dish for a disabled neighbour who has specific dietary needs or cooking extra pasties for sale to raise money for the cook's children's football team. People may engage in a multi-purpose activity. A student on limited financial means might benefit from participating in a conference that the student cannot afford to attend. A person looking after a family member with Multiple Sclerosis may want to hear about research into treatments for this disease, but feel unqualified to attend a conference as a delegate. Both may volunteer for the conference, which has the side benefit that they also can hear the presentations.

Understanding how people fit volunteering into the day has a number of policy implications. Estimating the capacity of a society to take up more voluntary activity requires knowledge of people's capacity to multi-task and the shift schedules. To measure the level of need for a certain activity across a society or the proportion of that need provided by state, private, and voluntary sectors, one needs to know the total scale of the activities performed as well as the full scale of consumption of services. To understand the value of voluntary activity to the economy, one needs to know how many hours of activity occur and to be able to attach an approximate value to those hours. Valuation of voluntary activity has other potential uses. The government might consider permitting a higher pension entitlement to people unable to work for pay and thus contribute to their pension entitlements on account of their time commitment to providing adult care or a voluntary service. Time diary data could reveal the approximate value of such work to permit an assessment of what range of adjustment might be appropriate for such people.

When dealing with an activity which is partially voluntary, it is important to be able to identify the portion that is voluntary. With an activity like baking bread, partially for the cook's own household and partially for a voluntary agency (to feed people in need or to sell to raise funds), diary data provides the best available evidence. People have difficulty answering a direct question that asks them to distinguish which proportion of the time is time they would have spent on the household element of the activity alone and which portion of the time was only for the charity. People can readily identify how long they spent cooking and whether the activity had multiple purposes. With diary data, researchers can compare the diaries of people who engage in joint household and voluntary cooking with the diaries of people who cook but do not do joint voluntary and other purpose cooking who are from comparable demographic backgrounds, and work out how much more cooking the people engaged in the joint voluntary activity do (Bittman and Fisher 2006; Bittman et. al. 2005, Hill et. al. 2007).

### **Proportion of People Who Volunteer**

One measure of interest when examining volunteering is the proportion of people engaged in the activity. Diary data reveal the proportion of people who volunteer on any given day, as opposed to the proportion of people who volunteer over a month or year. In this section, the percentage of participants reflects the percentage of people who report any voluntary or adult care activity in their diary as a main activity (1995) or as a main or simultaneous activity (1974-75, 2000-01, 2005).



British women volunteer in slightly higher proportions than British men. Among both men and women, voluntary activity is lower among younger people, increases as people near retirement, peak in the post-retirement years, and decline slightly in older age. Table 3 shows that these patterns are consistent across the surveys.

**Table 3: Percentage and Number of Diaries Including Voluntary Activity by Survey, Age and Sex**

| Age and sex group   | 1974-75    | 1995*^      | 2000-01¤                          | 2005*     |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| men aged 16 to 24   | 2.0% (31)  | 5.1% (6)    | <b>1.2% (15)</b><br>7.3% (90)     | 1.7% (6)  |
| men aged 25 to 39   | 2.0% (42)  | 4.8% (13)   | <b>1.2% (30)</b><br>11.3% (289)   | 1.0% (6)  |
| men aged 40 to 54   | 3.2% (69)  | 6.0% (15)   | <b>2.9% (69)</b><br>15.8% (375)   | 1.5% (9)  |
| men aged 55 to 64   | 2.9% (24)  | 7.9% (11)   | <b>5.1% (60)</b><br>18.8% (222)   | 3.1% (12) |
| men aged 65 to 74   | 3.4% (21)  | 13.4% (16)  | <b>7.5% (73)</b><br>23.8% (231)   | 4.5% (11) |
| men aged 75+        | 7.4% (11)  | 8.1% (5)    | <b>4.1% (23)</b><br>20.2% (114)   | 2.7% (5)  |
| women aged 16 to 24 | 1.4% (23)  | 1.8% (2)    | <b>0.9% (12)</b><br>10.9% (142)   | 1.8% (6)  |
| women aged 25 to 39 | 2.1% (52)  | 7.5% (23)   | <b>2.7% (71)</b><br>15.9% (425)   | 3.7% (25) |
| women aged 40 to 54 | 3.8% (89)  | 12.4% (33)  | <b>3.9% (96)</b><br>21.2% (522)   | 1.1% (7)  |
| women aged 55 to 64 | 3.3% (35)  | 11.5% (14)  | <b>4.8% (58)</b><br>25.3% (305)   | 4.2% (16) |
| women aged 65 to 74 | 3.7% (23)  | 12.9% (19)  | <b>4.4% (49)</b><br>25.2% (283)   | 3.7% (10) |
| women aged 75+      | 3.6% (7)   | 13.5% (12)  | <b>4.1% (35)</b><br>14.5% (124)   | 2.7% (7)  |
| all men aged 16+    | 2.7% (198) | 6.9% (66)   | <b>3.0% (271)</b><br>14.8% (1321) | 2.1% (49) |
| all women aged 16+  | 2.8% (228) | 10.0% (104) | <b>3.3% (322)</b><br>18.7% (1801) | 2.8% (71) |

\*Small numbers of cases      ^ One month sample only

¤ **Figures in bold brown font show percentages and number of cases using main activity time in formal volunteering only.** The figures in smaller black font below represent the percentage and number of cases using main and secondary formal and informal volunteering.

Nonetheless, Table 3 also shows two significant methodological issues. The first issue is that sample size matters to examine volunteering. Smaller sample sizes produce quality estimates of time and episodes in activities which people undertake nearly every day (such as sleep, eating, travel), or which people tend to perform multiple times a week on average if they engage in the activity (such as paid work and routine domestic work) (Michelson 2005, Gershuny 2000). The less often people who typically do an activity undertake that activity, the bigger the sample that is required to ensure sufficient



numbers of people are sampled on days when they undertake the activity. Table 3 shows many small cell sizes. Were additional background variables added to the analysis, there would be many cells with no observations for 1995 and 2005.

The second issue is that the means of collecting voluntary activity significantly influence the estimates. The 1995 and 2005 surveys did have instructions allowing interviewers to explain that volunteering can include informal help, however, the activity showcard the interviewer handed to participants before the interviewer filled in the diary only included the term volunteering. As the 24-hour activity diary component of the interviews took between 10 and 20 minutes to complete, participants and interviewers would have had little time to discuss the categories included in each activity. While this would not have mattered for more self-evident categories (food preparation, paid work, sleep, and the like), the lack of explanation appears to matter greatly compared with the 2000-01 survey, where diarists were allowed to use their own words to explain their activities. The 2000-01 survey also gave participants explicit instructions to include informal volunteering.

Table 3 includes two sets of figures for 2000-01. The top figure covers entries of formal volunteering as a main activity only, and these numbers are relatively consistent with the other years (when one considers that the small sample sizes can distort apparent trends). The lower figure covers all volunteering (main and secondary), including formal and informal, as well as time filling in the diary for fastidious participants who took a long time completing their survey instrument (completion of the diary does not figure in 1995 and 2005, as in these surveys, and interviewer talked the participants through their activities during the previous 24 hours). The 1974-75 survey also allowed people to fill in their activities in their own words; however, this survey also gave participants small boxes that accommodate only a few words for half hour time slots, which did not give participants space to explain informal assistance to the community or to other people. If one includes the full range of voluntary activity, as shown in the smaller font lower figures in the 2000-01 column of Table 3, one gets significantly higher estimates of participation in volunteering. Put another way, brief activity lists with a singular category for volunteering do not capture the informal element of this form of community engagement.

Reports of adult care are more consistent across the surveys where this category was separately recorded, as shown in Table 4, in part as this category was conceptually clearer for participants. The levels of reporting in the 2000-01 survey may be slightly higher as more short duration and secondary only care episodes were recorded. The gender gap in care is more substantial than for other volunteering. This result is consistent with other research, which finds that women provide more adult care than men (Hill et. al. 2007). Other research finds that men and women in couples are equally likely to look after their spouse, but women are more likely than men to provide care to other persons in need of care (Bittman et. al. 2005). This may explain why men's participation in adult care increases with age, while women's participation peaks between 40 and 74, then declines. These bivariate tables suggest that there may have been a slight increase in the percentage of people providing adult care from the 1990s to the 2000s, which would not be surprising given the aging population. Nonetheless, this apparent finding needs further examination before it can be confirmed.



**Table 4: Percentage and Number of Diaries Including Adult Care Activity by Survey, Age and Sex**

| Age and sex group   | 1974-75 | 1995      | 2000-01    | 2005       |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|------------|------------|
| men aged 16 to 24   | NA      | 0.0% (0)  | 1.5% (18)  | 2.5% (9)   |
| men aged 25 to 39   | NA      | 2.6% (7)  | 2.1% (55)  | 2.1% (13)  |
| men aged 40 to 54   | NA      | 3.6% (9)  | 3.5% (83)  | 2.0% (12)  |
| men aged 55 to 64   | NA      | 3.5% (5)  | 6.1% (72)  | 4.5% (17)  |
| men aged 65 to 74   | NA      | 0.8% (1)  | 7.2% (70)  | 4.8% (12)  |
| men aged 75+        | NA      | 1.6% (1)  | 6.7% (38)  | 6.0% (11)  |
| women aged 16 to 24 | NA      | 2.6% (3)  | 2.2% (28)  | 2.2% (7)   |
| women aged 25 to 39 | NA      | 2.3% (7)  | 3.4% (92)  | 2.9% (20)  |
| women aged 40 to 54 | NA      | 4.9% (13) | 7.4% (182) | 6.0% (38)  |
| women aged 55 to 64 | NA      | 4.1% (5)  | 5.8% (70)  | 7.0% (27)  |
| women aged 65 to 74 | NA      | 4.1% (6)  | 7.8% (88)  | 10.9% (29) |
| women aged 75+      | NA      | 2.3% (2)  | 3.1% (27)  | 1.1% (3)   |
| all men aged 16+    | NA      | 2.3% (22) | 3.8% (335) | 3.0% (72)  |
| all women aged 16+  | NA      | 3.4% (36) | 5.1% (487) | 4.9% (124) |

**Time in Voluntary Activity**

On two-thirds of days when people volunteer, they report only one episode of voluntary work. On fewer than 10% of days, people reported doing 4 or more episodes of voluntary work (the highest number is 19 episodes). Single voluntary episode reporting is higher in the earlier years (89.7% in 1974-85 and 81.3% in 1995) than in the later years (59.2% in 2000-01 and 58.3% in 2005). In the earlier surveys, less than 5% of diaries contain three or more volunteering episodes. In the later surveys, 20% contain two episodes, 10% three episodes, and 5% four episodes, with fewer people reporting more volunteering spells. As the different methodologies of the 2000-01 and 2005 surveys produce the same result, this is likely to be a real change in volunteering activity, with volunteering becoming more fragmented in recent years.

On nearly one-third of days where people perform adult care, diarists report only one episode. A higher proportion of people report more episodes of adult care, and the proportion of days where diarists reported only one or two episodes has declined, while the proportion reporting three or more episodes has increased with time, as Table 5 shows. Further analysis would be needed to determine if adult care activities likewise have become more fragmented, if this change reflects an increase in more complex care needs, or if both factors are in play.

**Table 5: Number of Episodes of Adult Care Activity by Survey**

| Number of Episodes | 1974-75 | 1995  | 2000-01 | 2005  |
|--------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 1 episode          | NA      | 64.9% | 61.8%   | 57.4% |
| 2 episodes         | NA      | 24.6% | 18.0%   | 20.5% |
| 3 episodes         | NA      | 3.5%  | 7.3%    | 6.2%  |
| 4 episodes         | NA      | 1.8%  | 4.6%    | 4.1%  |
| 5 or more episodes | NA      | 5.3%  | 8.3%    | 11.8% |



This report now considers time spent volunteering. As this is a brief overview, time is calculated simply. Table 6 uses the total minutes in episodes where diarists reported volunteering or adult care as either the main or the secondary activity. In subsequent tables, if the diarist reported volunteering or adult care as a main activity, the total minutes in the episode are counted. If the diarist reported some other activity as her or his main activity, and volunteering or adult care as a secondary activity, Tables 7 and higher include half of the minutes in the episode.

**Table 6: Average Number of Minutes Spent in Voluntary Activity by the Number of Episodes in the Day (all years pooled, 1995 data and both formal and informal volunteering in 2000-01 included)**

| Order of episode                       | Voluntary Activity | Adult Care |
|--|--------------------|------------|
| First episode                          | 44 minutes         | 7 minutes  |
| Second episode                         | 29 minutes         | 7 minutes  |
| Third episode                          | 27 minutes         | 7 minutes  |
| Fourth episode                         | 23 minutes         | 8 minutes  |
| Fifth through 19 <sup>th</sup> episode | 17 minutes         | 11 minutes |

Table 6 shows the average time spent in volunteering and adult care by the episode number in the diary day for a pooled sample of all years used in this report. A similar pattern emerges considering each year separately. People who engage in one to three episodes of adult care tend to put in a similar amount of time each time they perform care. If people engage in four or more episodes of adult care in one day, the total time per episode is higher, likely as these people are providing more intensive care for care recipients with higher levels of need. In the case of voluntary activity, people tend to spend more time in the first episode, less in the second and third episodes, then reduce time in later episodes. Perhaps many of the later episodes finish off outstanding elements of the first episode.

**Table 7: Average Minutes of Volunteering Per Day – Whole Population**

| Age and sex group   | 1974-75    | 1995*^     | 2000-01    | 2005*     |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| men aged 16 to 24   | 4 minutes  | 9 minutes  | 6 minutes  | 2 minutes |
| men aged 25 to 39   | 3 minutes  | 11 minutes | 7 minutes  | 3 minutes |
| men aged 40 to 54   | 5 minutes  | 5 minutes  | 11 minutes | 2 minutes |
| men aged 55 to 64   | 3 minutes  | 13 minutes | 15 minutes | 6 minutes |
| men aged 65 to 74   | 6 minutes  | 17 minutes | 21 minutes | 8 minutes |
| men aged 75+        | 10 minutes | 9 minutes  | 12 minutes | 7 minutes |
| women aged 16 to 24 | 2 minutes  | 5 minutes  | 6 minutes  | 2 minutes |
| women aged 25 to 39 | 3 minutes  | 11 minutes | 8 minutes  | 4 minutes |
| women aged 40 to 54 | 5 minutes  | 26 minutes | 12 minutes | 3 minutes |
| women aged 55 to 64 | 4 minutes  | 18 minutes | 19 minutes | 6 minutes |
| women aged 65 to 74 | 5 minutes  | 11 minutes | 17 minutes | 4 minutes |
| women aged 75+      | 4 minutes  | 16 minutes | 10 minutes | 6 minutes |
| all men aged 16+    | 4 minutes  | 10 minutes | 10 minutes | 4 minutes |
| all women aged 16+  | 4 minutes  | 15 minutes | 11 minutes | 4 minutes |

\*Small numbers of cases

^ One month sample only



Table 7 shows the total minutes of volunteering performed per person per day across the UK. Not everyone who volunteers does so every day. Table 8 shows the amount of time people volunteer on average on days when they volunteer. These tables show basic distributions. While the data are weighted to balance the distribution of days of the week and to adjust for survey non-response and to balance the sample in relation to census distributions, these figures do not control for person, household or regional characteristics. Viewed as preliminary figures, these table suggest a mixed picture, but that over-all time commitments to voluntary activity may be roughly level in the UK. Both men and women spend more time volunteering as they approach retirement and in the years immediately after retirement.

**Table 8: Average Minutes of Volunteering Per Day – People Who Volunteered on Their Diary Day**

| Age and sex group   | 1974-75        | 1995*^         | 2000-01¤                               | 2005*          |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|--|----------------|
| men aged 16 to 24   | 3 hours 3 min  | 3 hours 14 min | <b>3 hours 1 min</b><br>1 hour 21 min  | 1 hour 52 min  |
| men aged 25 to 39   | 2 hours 30 min | 3 hours 34 min | <b>1 hour 32 min</b><br>1 hour         | 4 hours 6 min  |
| men aged 40 to 54   | 2 hours 35 min | 1 hour 24 min  | <b>2 hours 2 min</b><br>1 hour 7 min   | 1 hour 12 min  |
| men aged 55 to 64   | 1 hour 56 min  | 2 hours 46 min | <b>2 hours 11 min</b><br>1 hour 18 min | 3 hours 16 min |
| men aged 65 to 74   | 3 hours 2 min  | 2 hours 7 min  | <b>2 hours 15 min</b><br>1 hour 28 min | 3 hours 10 min |
| men aged 75+        | 2 hours 7 min  | 1 hour 55 min  | <b>1 hour 21 min</b><br>1 hour 1 min   | 4 hours 27 min |
| women aged 16 to 24 | 2 hours 15 min | 3 hours 41 min | <b>2 hours 43 min</b><br>53 minutes    | 1 hour 29 min  |
| women aged 25 to 39 | 2 hours 1 min  | 2 hours 25 min | <b>2 hours 12 min</b><br>52 minutes    | 2 hours 2 min  |
| women aged 40 to 54 | 2 hours 22 min | 3 hours 28 min | <b>1 hour 47 min</b><br>55 minutes     | 4 hours 40 min |
| women aged 55 to 64 | 2 hours 13 min | 2 hours 37 min | <b>2 hours 37 min</b><br>1 hour 15 min | 2 hours 20 min |
| women aged 65 to 74 | 2 hours 24 min | 1 hour 22 min  | <b>2 hours 10 min</b><br>1 hour 6 min  | 1 hour 41 min  |
| women aged 75+      | 2 hours 2 min  | 2 hours 3 min  | <b>1 hour 54 min</b><br>1 hour 10 min  | 3 hours 47 min |
| all men aged 16+    | 2 hours 35 min | 2 hours 26 min | <b>2 hours 4 min</b><br>1 hour 11 min  | 2 hour 45 min  |
| all women aged 16+  | 2 hours 15 min | 2 hours 35 min | <b>2 hours 8 min</b><br>1 hour 0 min   | 2 hours 26 min |

\*Small numbers of cases      ^ One month sample only

¤ **Figures in bold brown font show hours and minutes using main activity time in formal volunteering only.** The figures in smaller black font below represent the hours and minutes using main and secondary formal and informal volunteering.



The 2000-01 survey collected more short-spells, and hence picked up some additional people as volunteers. As with the participation rate, the time figures show a significant difference if one uses only the formal volunteering for 2000-01, or all volunteering from this survey. Table 8 again demonstrates that the HETUS design of the 2000-01 survey is picking up more information on volunteering than the Omnibus supplement surveys.

Table 9 shows the total minutes of adult care performed per person per day across the UK. Table 10 shows the hours and minutes of adult care reported by people who performed some adult care on their diary day. There are some general patterns. Both men and women perform more care later than earlier in their lives. Women’s peak care hours tend to arise between the ages of 40 and 74. Men’s peak care ages are 55 to 74. This reflects the participation results already reported. People in these age ranges are more likely to engage in adult care, and do more such care on days when they perform it.

**Table 9: Average Minutes Adult Care Per Day – Whole Population**

| Age and sex group   | 1974-75 | 1995*^     | 2000-01   | 2005*      |
|---------------------|---------|------------|-----------|------------|
| men aged 16 to 24   | NA      | 0 minutes  | 1 minute  | 3 minutes  |
| men aged 25 to 39   | NA      | 1 minute   | 2 minutes | 1 minute   |
| men aged 40 to 54   | NA      | 5 minutes  | 1 minute  | 2 minutes  |
| men aged 55 to 64   | NA      | 5 minutes  | 3 minutes | 8 minutes  |
| men aged 65 to 74   | NA      | .5 minutes | 4 minutes | 7 minutes  |
| men aged 75+        | NA      | .5 minutes | 2 minutes | 10 minutes |
| women aged 16 to 24 | NA      | 2 minutes  | 1 minute  | 3 minutes  |
| women aged 25 to 39 | NA      | 1 minutes  | 1 minute  | 3 minutes  |
| women aged 40 to 54 | NA      | 3 minutes  | 3 minutes | 7 minutes  |
| women aged 55 to 64 | NA      | 4 minutes  | 4 minutes | 9 minutes  |
| women aged 65 to 74 | NA      | 3 minutes  | 5 minutes | 13 minutes |
| women aged 75+      | NA      | 5 minutes  | 1 minute  | 1 minutes  |
| all men aged 16+    | NA      | 2 minutes  | 2 minutes | 4 minutes  |
| all women aged 16+  | NA      | 2 minutes  | 3 minutes | 6 minutes  |

\*Small numbers of cases

^ One month sample only

Recording of adult care in diaries is problematic, which likely explains the apparent jumping in the time reported in this activity between the years. The reason that adult care is problematic to record is that, in contrast with child care, very little adult care is clearly care (such as helping a person get dressed or take medication) (Bittman et. al. 2005). More adult care involves domestic activities that happen to be done for someone who has difficulty undertaking them. People with difficulty standing or with motor control problems find food preparation, laundry and shopping particularly challenging, and not surprisingly, studies of adult care time in other countries finds that people who perform adult care also spend significantly more time doing laundry and preparing food than people with similar background and household characteristics (Hill et. al. 2007, Bittman and Thomson 2004, Michelson 2005). Interviewers complete the diaries in 2005, and prompted the identification of adult care time. In 2000-01, people completed the diaries alone. In practice, even when an interviewer assists the process, carers find the process of separating out the amount of food preparation and laundry time that they



might have done anyway had they not been helping another adult from the time that is additional on account of their role as a carer. These figures can be adjusted by comparing the total shopping, laundry and food preparation time of carers with similarly situated persons who do not perform adult care, and identifying the extra time in these activities which carers undertake (Bittman et. al. 2005; Michelson 2005). This process takes time, a luxury not available in the production of this report.

**Table 10: Average Minutes Adult Care Per Day – People Who Performed Care on Their Diary Day**

| Age and sex group   | 1974-75 | 1995*^           | 2000-01          | 2005*            |
|---------------------|---------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| men aged 16 to 24   | NA      | 0 minutes        | 1 hour 8 minutes | 2 hours 22 min   |
| men aged 25 to 39   | NA      | 43 minutes       | 1 hour 1 minute  | 1 hour 5 minutes |
| men aged 40 to 54   | NA      | 2 hours 14 min   | 31 minutes       | 1 hour 57 min    |
| men aged 55 to 64   | NA      | 2 hours 8 min    | 55 minutes       | 2 hours 50 min   |
| men aged 65 to 74   | NA      | 30 minutes       | 50 minutes       | 2 hours 20 min   |
| men aged 75+        | NA      | 15 minutes       | 30 minutes       | 2 hours 57 min   |
| women aged 16 to 24 | NA      | 1 hour 5 minutes | 41 minutes       | 2 hours 15 min   |
| women aged 25 to 39 | NA      | 33 minutes       | 40 minutes       | 1 hour 37 min    |
| women aged 40 to 54 | NA      | 54 minutes       | 41 minutes       | 1 hour 49 min    |
| women aged 55 to 64 | NA      | 1 hour 48 min    | 1 hour 13 min    | 2 hours 10 min   |
| women aged 65 to 74 | NA      | 1 hour 5 minutes | 1 hour 3 minutes | 2 hours 2 min    |
| women aged 75+      | NA      | 3 hours 4 min    | 39 minutes       | 1 hour 47 min    |
| all men aged 16+    | NA      | 1 hour 37 min    | 47 minutes       | 2 hours 16 min   |
| all women aged 16+  | NA      | 1 hour 9 min     | 49 minutes       | 1 hour 56 min    |

\*Small numbers of cases

^ One month sample only

### Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The level of volunteering in the UK appears relatively steady across time. In comparative perspective, the United Kingdom falls into the middle range of industrialised countries for the level of volunteering (Fisher and Robinson 2010). People in the United States are significantly more likely to volunteer than those in the United Kingdom (Fisher and Robinson 2010), though this is largely a cultural difference and the result of incentives, such as the likelihood of universities, employers, and others viewing a person’s CV more favourably if the CV includes evidence of voluntary behaviour. People in Turkey likewise are more likely to volunteer than people in the UK (Fisher and Robinson 2010), though in this case the voluntary activity is both culturally encouraged and replaces the significantly less generous system of public support for deprived persons and communities. While there are clear prospects for boosting welfare in the UK from boosting voluntary behaviour, increasing volunteering would be an enhancement of opportunities rather than the rebuilding of a lost cultural feature.

This short report highlights a number of methodological issues. Diaries best capture the degree of total volunteering as they collect details of informal as well as formal activity and as they best represent the degree of volunteering occurring simultaneously with other activities. Nevertheless, the design of the diary survey matters significantly. To compare trends across time, researchers need large



sample datasets. This is because the less frequently people undertake an activity, the more observation days are required to adequately capture voluntary behaviour.

Some countries, such as the Netherlands, have tried to get around this problem of measuring the total participation level in volunteering by collecting diaries over one week rather than one day. In consequence, the Netherlands do indeed capture a level of volunteering in diary data closer to the level reported in questionnaire surveys (Bittman and Fisher 2006, Patulny 2005), however, this comes as a cost of very low response rates (less than 30%). There is another potential solution to this problem. The HETUS surveys have successfully collected two 24-hour time diaries (one week day and one weekend day) as well as paid work information for a full week at relatively high response rates in most participating countries (the UK had exceptionally low response in 2000-01). The full work-week was collected on a supplementary schedule with 10-minute time slots for a full week where participants merely ticked a box to indicate when they had performed paid work. Travel and sexual activity surveys have collected one to three month diaries with similar formats of schedules. Schedules supplements to diaries work if limited to only one domain of activity. While schedules have not been used for volunteering yet, there is great potential for such an application.

An equally significant issue is that own-words reporting collects significantly more episodes and time in volunteering, particularly informal voluntary behaviours. The HETUS design produces the best results, and the best available data for the UK to examine voluntary behaviours is the 2000-01 survey, which sadly now is out of date. There is need for more recent data collection.

If one compares the administration costs of a HETUS-style survey with a simplified module, as has been added to the 1995 and 2005 Omnibus surveys or a questionnaire study, the more complete diary study appears expensive. When viewed from the potential policy uses of the data, however, this comparison produces a false economy. Large sample, whole year, own-words time use surveys produce data relevant to a wide range of policy applications, including transport, physical activity, energy and resource use, total economic activity (paid and unpaid), work-life balance, parenting, eating and drinking behaviours, and quality of life. When considered from the perspective of the range of policy uses for effort and expenditure, the HETUS-style time use survey produces the best value for money for research over a 10 year time frame.

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