

Third Sector Research Centre

Working Paper 73

The idea of a ‘civic core’: what are the overlaps between charitable giving, volunteering, and civic participation in England and Wales?

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February 2012

Abstract

This paper explores the relative shares of the total amounts of charitable giving, volunteering, and participation in civic associations accounted for by different sections of the population in England and Wales. It draws upon and seeks to replicate sections of a Canadian study (Reed and Selbee 2001) of the 'civic core' - those groups in the population that account for the largest share of three dimensions of civic engagement. The paper uses three waves of the Citizenship Survey, for 2007-8, 2008-9 and 2009-10, with a combined total of over 27,000 respondents. Respondents' relative contribution to the sum total of effort on each of these dimensions is identified and individuals are characterised as members of the 'civic core' if their contribution exceeds a threshold above which they collectively provide two thirds of the national total. Findings indicate that a group constituting less than 10% of the population contribute between 24% and 51% of the total civic engagement, depending on which dimension is examined. The idea of a 'core' also implies a periphery, which in this case consists of individuals who do not participate in any of the three forms of civic engagement. However, these disengaged only constitute around 15% of the population. The social characteristics of members of these 'core' groups are analysed and it is shown that members of the 'civic core' are drawn predominantly from the most prosperous, middle-aged and highly educated sections of the population, and that they are most likely to live in the least deprived parts of the country. The members of the 'civic core' provide a contribution which is clearly disproportionate to their share of the population as a whole. Consideration is given to the normative meaning of this disproportionality, and to the implications of the analysis for policies which aim to increase the level of pro-social behaviour in the population.

Keywords

Civic core, volunteering, charitable giving, civic participation, engagement, Big Society.

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Introduction

In the UK survey data on volunteering, charitable giving and participation in civic associations shows some well-established social and geographical variations in the proportion of the population who engage in these activities. However, less is known about variations in the actual effort or contribution made, in terms of money donated, hours of volunteering undertaken, or number of civic associations in which people participate. Nor do we know very much about the extent to which individuals engage in more than one of these activities, although the 'Helping Out' survey (Low et al., 2007) has explored some of this terrain. In this paper we use the Citizenship Survey to analyse not just whether people are engaged in these activities, but also the extent of their engagement across these three dimensions.

Building on existing international scholarship, the paper seeks to replicate, for England and Wales, a study conducted in Canada by Reed and Selbee (2001). They were interested in the idea of a 'civic core', a term which they coined to convey the notion that certain groups in the population provided an apparently disproportionate share of volunteering, charitable giving, and participation in civic associations. Using a national household survey of Canadians, they found that 6% of Canadian adults accounted for between 35% and 42% of all civic engagement. At the time of writing, there are few studies that seek to replicate sections of Reed and Selbee's work. Bekkers' (2011) work on trends in the association between civic engagement and religiosity over time in the Netherlands builds on Reed and Selbee's concept of the civic core. However, Bekkers defines the core slightly differently. He divides the distribution of volunteering and charitable giving into quintiles, rather than dividing it on the basis of proportion of engagement contributed, as done by Reed and Selbee and in this paper.

Increasing our understanding of the ways in which individuals in the UK contribute to civic engagement is currently particularly relevant. Since New Labour's drive to promote 'community', there has been an increasing focus on service provision through civil society rather than through the state. Under the current coalition government, policy to promote the 'Big Society' relies on the idea of increasing the level of civic engagement at the local level across the UK. An emerging academic literature raises questions about whether the call for greater involvement is likely to meet with a positive response. Firstly, levels of volunteering and charitable giving display long-term stability and so there are questions about whether – and if so, how quickly – the level of involvement in these behaviours might change (Cowley et al., 2011; Staetsky, 2011). Secondly, scholars are asking whether it is indeed possible to increase volunteering as much as the government would like, on the grounds that cross-sectional surveys underestimate the level of engagement. Kamerade (forthcoming), for example, points out that much of our understanding about volunteering rates in the UK is based on cross-sectional data which suggests that around 40% of the population participates in voluntary organisations. Kamerade finds that over a longer time period, volunteering is an activity that people transition in and out of frequently. Only about 13%, according to Kamerade, are never engaged in such activities. Kamerade's paper is based on participation in a range of types of associations but we can also analyse volunteering using the same source. Geyne Rajme and Smith (2012, forthcoming) show that in any individual wave of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) around

20% report that they are engaged in unpaid voluntary work, but nearly 40% of the population report that they have volunteered at least once in the seven waves of the survey for which the question has been asked. As a result, it may be the case that rather than increasing the number of people who volunteer, policy may best be directed at improving retention rates within volunteering environments.

The current paper further informs the policy debate by identifying and exploring the primary contributors to those behaviours that are seen to be so beneficial to civic society as a whole. By examining the distribution of volunteering, charitable giving and participation in civic associations in England and Wales, the paper touches on what increasing the levels of civic engagement might mean for particular groups in society, and highlights questions about the wider division of formal and informal civic labour in UK society.

The paper provides background information on the British data sources used, builds on Reed and Selbee's measures of the civic core and sets out how these are operationalised. It then provides an overview of the size of the three key civic engagement cores in England and Wales: the volunteering core, the charitable giving core and the participation in civic associations core; and, examining the overlap between these, groups them into the primary and secondary cores. The socio-economic composition of the cores is further explored and future research is outlined.

Data, definitions and measurement

The analysis is based on the core samples from the 2007-8, 2008-9 and 2009-10 waves of the Citizenship Survey. In combination, these provide a sample of 27,976 respondents across England and Wales. For some work involving a geographical breakdown, the analysis is restricted to respondents in England, totalling 26,423 cases. Where appropriate, values for incomplete responses were imputed.¹

The pooled data for the three waves were weighted to adjust for unequal sampling probabilities and non-response by subgroup, with the weights based on census data. The core sample sizes across the three waves were almost identical, meaning that the weights did not need to be adjusted. The advantage to pooling the data across these years is the ability to work with a larger sample, allowing for an exploration of the characteristics of the relatively small group of individuals who are in the core on all three dimensions of civic engagement. Pooling the data from the three waves, however, assumes that there were no significant differences in the composition of the three dimensions of the civic core over those three years. For sake of clarity, this initial paper works on the basis of the assumption that this is the case. Later work will examine the extent of any over-time change.

Reed and Selbee (2001) defined the civic core in terms of the smallest grouping of the population who, collectively, accounted for two thirds of all efforts in a particular sphere of activity. Thus, for volunteering, this was based on the sum of hours of unpaid help given; for participation in civic

¹ Some 845 individuals report that they have volunteered (in response to a question about the frequency or otherwise of voluntary action), but not how much time they have given. In these cases the median number of hours for each group was imputed. This came to 4 hours, and 10 hours, for those reporting having volunteered between once a week and once a month, and those reporting having volunteered at least once a week, respectively.

associations, it was based on the total number of types of organisations in which individuals participated, and for charitable giving it was based on the total funds given to charity. Reed and Selbee acknowledged that there was no theoretical justification for the cut-off point of two-thirds – a threshold of 80% or 50% or any other threshold could have been used. Other possibilities for defining the threshold for inclusion in the ‘core’ might be to look at those who commit certain number of hours or a certain amount of money. For example Mohan et al. (2006) defined ‘core volunteers’ in terms of people who volunteered on a minimum number of days during the year, as measured using the General Household Survey.

Appropriate questions are available in the Citizenship Survey that allow us to replicate Reed and Selbee’s study for England and Wales. Please see Appendix A for the question wording. Respondents are asked how many hours they spent giving unpaid help in the context of particular types of civic associations and they are also asked how much money they have given to charity. For both of these dimensions the reference period is the past four weeks at the point of interview.² In relation to participation in civic associations, individuals are asked how many groups, clubs or organisations they had taken part in over the past 12 months. In Reed and Selbee’s work, respondents were asked whether they belonged to or participated in any of seven organisational types: service clubs, union/professional, political, cultural/educational/hobby, sports/recreation, religious affiliated, and school/neighbourhood/community. These correspond to the 16 types of group offered to respondents in the Citizenship Survey, but (as was the case in the Canadian survey) there is no figure for the time they committed to each of these groups. Instead a count is generated for the number of types of organisations in which they participated.

There are two potential sources of measurement error here. On the one hand, there is a possibility of double counting, or *over-estimating*, when we look at the overlap between core groups, because it is likely that the hours of volunteering undertaken overlap with the associations in which individuals take part. However, the two measures still allow us to distinguish between those individuals who contributed all of their volunteering to one type of association, and those who distributed their volunteering hours across numerous types of organisations. On the other hand, it is likely that the measurement of associational participation also *under-estimates* the number of organisations an individual participates in, given that its prime focus is counting the number of *different types of organisations* in which an individual participates, rather than counting the *number of organisations* participated in, per se. Neither of these potential sources of measurement error can be further disentangled in these data, unfortunately, and the reader is asked to bear this in mind.

The scales used for measurement of the three forms of participation differ, due in part to question wording. The score for civic participation ranges from 0 to 15 associations over the past 12 months; for volunteering the upper limit of hours given is 324 hours over the past four weeks (i.e. over ten hours per day,); while for charitable giving the maximum threshold imposed by the Citizenship Survey is £9,999 given in the last four weeks. The distributions on these variables are highly skewed, yet

² We recognise that the relatively short reference period used by these two questions (previous 4 weeks) makes the data vulnerable to one-off behaviours that are otherwise uncharacteristic of the individual. The reader is asked to bear this in mind.

broadly comparable between the Citizenship Survey and the data examined by Reed and Selbee (2001).³ Note that for charitable giving the figures were adjusted for inflation using the quarterly RPI figures (the quarter of the year in which the respondent was selected is reported in the survey data). Please see Appendix B for a summary of the distributions of these three variables.

There are some reports of very large amounts of volunteering. One respondent claimed 324 hours of unpaid help, or approximately 80 hours per week. Consideration was therefore given to trimming such values on the grounds that they would be likely to exert a disproportionate influence on the findings. However, when this was done - e.g. by removing figures greater than two standard deviations above the mean, or by removing the top 1% of observations - it had very little effect on the relative shares of effort accounted for by different groups of the population, nor on the analysis of social characteristics of members of the core groups.

Overall, these three survey measures capture formal aspects of civic engagement. It is recognised that informal types of volunteering, such as helping neighbours, are not captured here. It is anticipated that further work on the civic core will expand to examine this additional dynamic in due course. The current absence of informal contributions to civic engagement in the analysis is worth bearing in mind since those who are not engaged in the more formal mechanisms may well be carrying out substantial proportions of informal volunteering, again calling into question the assumption that civic engagement rates can be increased as much as policy makers state.

Deriving the core variables

As per Reed and Selbee's analysis, ordering respondents from highest to lowest contributions on the three dimensions of civic engagement allows for the identification of those individuals who have contributed most to these formal types of engagement. A respondent is in the core on a dimension of behaviour if they form part of the smallest grouping in the population to collectively provide two-thirds of total effort.

As an illustration of the data preparation, let us examine the volunteering core. Across the 8,734 (31%) people of the sample who reported volunteering in the past four weeks, (including the cases for which data were imputed), the total number of reported hours of volunteering is 98,890. The 60 most active volunteers account for around 10% of the total time given although they represent only 0.69% of those volunteering and about 0.2% of the surveyed population. 1,894 people (under 7% of

³ Given that the analysis of the civic core relies on examining the top of the distribution on each dimension of civic association, it is relevant to examine whether any caps imposed by the questionnaires are roughly comparable between the Canadian and UK data sources. The Canadian National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating imposes a cap on the charitable giving variable, as does the Citizenship Survey. The Canadian cap is at \$60,000 Canadian dollars, but this is for the last year, rather than for the last 4 weeks, as is the case in the Citizenship survey. To examine whether the cap results in a roughly comparable level to that found in the Citizenship Survey (£9,999 in the last 4 weeks), and whether the top of the distributions resemble each other, we can divide this \$60,000 Canadian dollars by 12 to get the cap per month, at \$5,000 for 4 weeks. About 5% of the Canadian sample gave over £1,088 per year (or \$90.60 a month). The Citizenship Survey shows that 5% of the sample gave £50 or more over the past 4 weeks. Whilst it is difficult to compare Canadian dollars in 2000 with pounds between 2007 and 2010, it looks like there is no massive discrepancy between the top of the Canadian and the UK distributions, which is encouraging. It is acknowledged, however, that the Citizenship Survey's restriction to donations given in the last 4 weeks may well cut out large one-off donations which are more likely to show up in the Canadian data, given that this records donations given in the past 12 months.

respondents to this question) accounted for two thirds of the total hours volunteered. The threshold value for membership of this core group would be 14 or more hours volunteering in the previous four weeks. Calculated in a similar way, one would have to have given £30 or more to charity in this time period in order to be in the charitable giving core, and one would have had to have participated in three or more types of organisations in the past 12 months in order to be part of the civic engagement core. Following the methods used by Reed and Selbee (2001: 765-6), we define a 'primary core', consisting of those whose contribution exceeds the threshold value for inclusion in the core on at least two out of the three dimensions, and a 'secondary core', consisting of those who are in the core on one dimension.

Describing the civic core

Summarising the population's contribution to civic engagement, we find that just over a third of the population provides nearly 90% of volunteer hours, just over four-fifths of the amount given to charity, and 77% of participation in different civic associations. These findings are broadly comparable with those of Reed and Selbee (29% of the population providing 85%, 78% and 71 % respectively). Reed and Selbee depict the contribution of the respective parts of the core using a Venn diagram, at the centre of which is the 1% or so of the population who are contributing to the separate cores for volunteering, charitable giving and participation in civic associations respectively. The Venn diagram is replicated here for England and Wales (Figure 1).

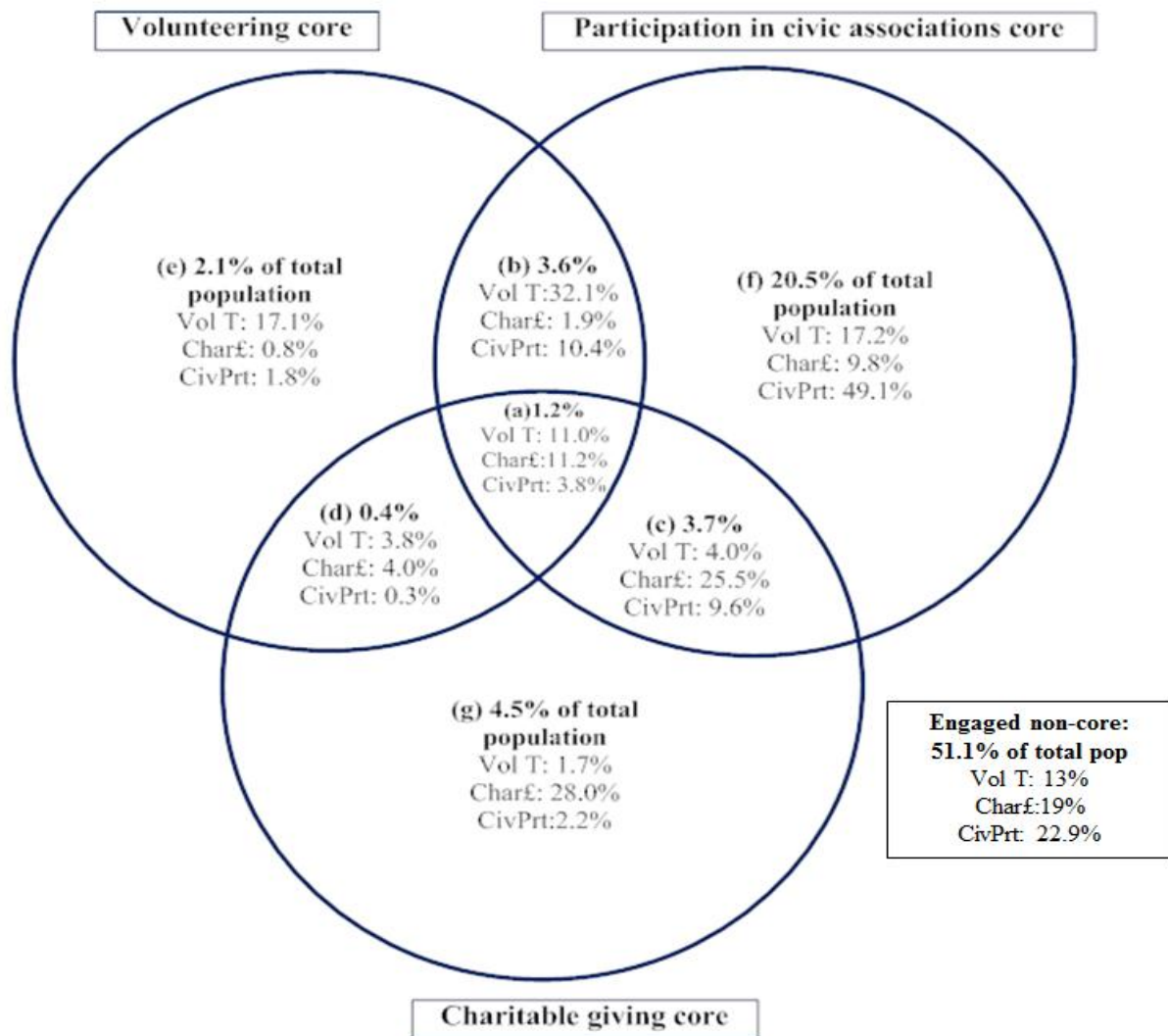
Examining valid responses across all cores, the volunteer core (segments a, b, d and e) equate to 7.3% of the population; the charitable giving core (segments a, c, d and g) is 9.8% of the population; and the civic participation core (segments a, b, c and f) is larger, at 29%.

Breaking this grouping down further, and examining the overlap between cores, segment (a) indicates those individuals who are highly and widely engaged, being in the core on all three dimensions of civic engagement. These people are comparatively rare - they represent 1.2% of the population. As indicated in the definition of the cores, these individuals all contributed more than 14 hours of volunteering and over £30 to charity in the four weeks preceding the survey. They also participated in three or more types of civic associations in the previous 12 months. As a group, these individuals were responsible for just over a tenth of the total volunteering and charitable giving that took place across the population, and almost 4% of participation in civic associations. It is interesting to note that these individuals are generous givers of both time and money. This is a combination which is not seen in other sections of the core, where those two dimensions are not often seen together.

Sections (b), (c), (d) of Figure 1 represent individuals who are part of the core on two out of the three dimensions of civic engagement. Typically, a larger proportion of the population are categorised into these segments than into segment (a), with the notable exception of those who are on the core in both the dimension of volunteering and charitable giving, but not in the core on participation in civic associations. Segment (d) represents only 0.4% of the total population. As mentioned before, the combination of high levels of giving in terms of both time and money is the most unusual one.

Figure 1: Components of the UK's civic core

Components of the UK's Civic Core (source: Citizenship Survey, 2007-2010)



Percentages are calculated on the basis of a sample of 25,982 respondents who answered questions on all three dimensions of civic engagement

The combination of segments (a), (b), (c) and (d) constitutes the primary core. In total, this group represent the 8.9% of the population that are responsible for just over half of all volunteering hours contributed by the population, 42.5% of all charitable giving, and 24.2% of all participation in different civic associations.

In Figure 1 the secondary core is represented by segments (e), (f) and (g) and it comprises a further 27.1% of the population, all of who are high-level contributors to one of the three dimensions of civic engagement. Again we see that volunteering and charitable giving are behaviours that are less likely to be demonstrated by the same individuals. The 2.1% of the population who are in the secondary core on volunteering provide 17.1% of the total volunteering hours given by the population,

but they are only responsible for 0.8% of all charitable giving. Similarly, the 4.5% who are in the secondary core on charitable giving provide 28% of funds donated, but only contribute 1.7% of hours of volunteering. In other words, in the secondary core, people are giving relatively high amounts of money, or devoting relatively large amounts of time to volunteering, but not both.

In summary, the British primary core comprises 8.9% of the population (as compared to 6% in Canada) and the secondary core about 27.1% (as compared to 23% in Canada). Proportionally, effort is concentrated in the primary core – half of volunteer hours, two-fifths of charitable giving, and just under one-quarter of civic participation. The secondary core provides around 40%, 40% and 50% of effort respectively. Just under two thirds of the population do not appear in the core on any of the three dimensions of involvement. This does not, however, mean that they have no engagement whatsoever: they account for 13.1%, 19.0% and 22.9% of volunteering, charitable giving and participation in different civic associations. Only 15.4% of the population record no volunteering, associational participation or charitable giving at all. This latter proportion is higher than figures quoted in presentations based on initial findings from this work, but there are reasons for this.⁴

Distribution of civic engagement, normative expectations and the concept of proportionality

The distribution of civic engagement within the population varies across the three dimensions of volunteering, charitable giving and participation in civic associations. Participation in different civic associations is the dimension that is most equally distributed in the population, as indicated by the fact that the core is large, relative to the cores on the other two dimensions. Reed and Selbee (2001) examined this issue in more depth, adopting an approach to distribution of civic engagement that focused on the *proportionality* of contribution.

Reed and Selbee explored the concept of proportionality by determining the extent to which it could be shown that social groups contributed an amount of civic engagement effort that was equivalent to, below, or above their share of the population. Underlying this notion was the expectation that the contribution made by a group of the population should be broadly in line with its share of total population. It can easily be seen from the relative sizes of the various sections of the overall civic core that the contribution of some groups is disproportionate: the 1.2% who are in the core on all three areas of participation provide 11% of volunteering so if we express this as a ratio, this group are doing 9.2 times their share of the population's volunteering. When compared with the Canadian results, the evidence of disproportionality in the UK is less strong, at least for volunteering. In the Reed and Selbee analysis, four groups in the primary and secondary core accounted for at least 12 times their notional share of hours given. In the British analysis, the highest degree of disproportionality was for those groups providing unpaid help – typically close to ten times greater than their share of the population. For charitable giving, and for civic participation, the patterns revealed in Britain were broadly comparable with those in Canada.

How useful is the concept of proportionality? It would seem helpful to compare how concentrated or otherwise a distribution is since this might assist in efforts to expand particular forms of participation.

⁴ This arises because of features of the questionnaire design which result in an underestimation of the proportion of the population who do not volunteer. Further details are available from the authors.

On the other hand, there are no normative guidelines as to how much volunteering, charitable giving or participation in civic associations we ought to expect from any one social group. Should we expect more from the wealthy, since they have the financial resources to contribute, or from the retired, since they have time on their hands? Alternatively, these groups may be regarded as having paid their dues either through higher rates of income tax or through a lifetime of working and raising children. The idea of some groups contributing less than their share is potentially very problematic. Relatively low shares of participation for some groups might be explicable in terms of levels of illness, lengthy or inconvenient working hours and/or a lengthy journey to work, a heavy burden of caring responsibilities, low income, or the lack of opportunities to participate.

Recalling that this study focuses on formal types of civic engagement, it is perhaps prudent to examine individuals' contributions to more informal types of engagement, too; those who are heavily engaged in informal activities may be less heavily involved in the more formal activities considered in this analysis. This will be addressed in future work.

Who is in the civic core?

What can we say about the characteristics of individuals in the civic core? Analysis is presented for three groups: the core engagers (primary + secondary cores); those groups not in the core but with at least some level of engagement on one or more of the three dimensions (referred to here as the engaged non-core); and those who are completely disengaged. Table 1 examines how membership of these three groups is patterned by sex, age, qualifications, religiosity, length of residence in the neighbourhood and occupational class. Whilst there are established relationships between these personal characteristics and volunteering and charitable giving behaviours, this is the first examination that focuses on actual degrees of engagement in the UK.

Table 1 shows the pattern for a range of individual characteristics. Within each of the six main socioeconomic or demographic variables the percentages sum to 100 and comparisons are most appropriately made within rows of the table. Thus, looking at length of residence, 38% of the core have lived in the same area for between 10-29 years, compared to 37% for the 'non-core but engaged' and 32% for the disengaged. Alternatively, considering socioeconomic status, 41% of the disengaged are in semi-routine occupations, compared to 17% for the core. Note that for ease of reference we have not included confidence intervals in this table. Compared to the non-core and disengaged groups, the civic core is composed of people who are more likely than their counterparts in other groups to be middle-aged, have higher education qualifications, actively practice their religion, have lived in the same neighbourhood for at least 10 years, and be in managerial and professional occupations. There are some countervailing trends for the over 65s, who are less likely, possibly for reasons of illness or declining mobility, to be part of the core. This may also account for the apparent decline for those who have lived in the same area for over 30 years. There are, of course, likely to be interactions between these variables which need to be taken into account in a more sophisticated analysis.

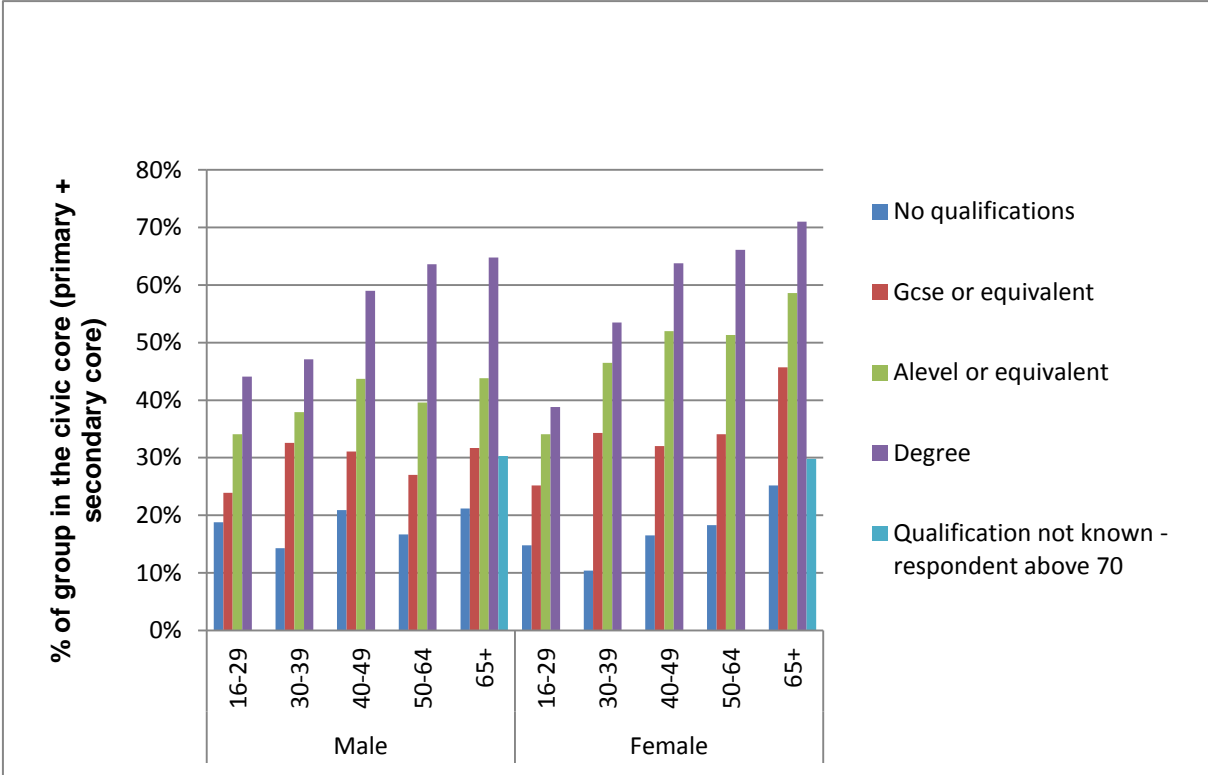
Table 1: Characteristics of the disengaged, non-core engaged and core engaged groups

		Disengaged (%)	Non-core engaged (%)	Core (%)
Sex	Men	50.4	48.4	47.1
	Women	49.6	51.6	52.9
Age	16-29	24.7	24.0	18.8
	30-39	14.7	17.0	18.9
	40-49	15.8	17.3	21.6
	50-64	21.3	21.8	23.4
	65+	23.5	19.9	17.4
Qualifications	no qualifications	31.0	17.5	7.8
	GCSE or equivalent	23.6	26.6	19.3
	A-level or equivalent	15.4	23.4	27.3
	degree level and above	11.1	17.1	33.6
	qualification not known - respondent above 70	18.9	15.3	12.0
Religiosity	not actively practising a religion	75.3	73.5	57.6
	actively practising a religion	24.7	26.5	42.4
Time in Neighbourhood	less than a year	7.7	6.3	5.2
	1-4 years	22.2	20.3	19.7
	5-9 years	13.4	15.0	18.0
	10-29 years	32.1	36.5	38.0
	more than 30 years	24.6	22.0	19.2
Occupational Class	higher and lower salariat (managers and professionals)	18.4	31.5	51.3
	intermediate occupations (routine non-manual)	9.1	11.6	11.0
	small employers and self-employed	9.1	8.9	9.1
	manual supervisors, forepersons and lower technicians	10.9	11.8	8.5
	semi-routine occupations	41.4	31.3	17.0
	routine occupations	11.1	4.8	3.1

Source: Citizenship Survey 2007-10

In terms of the core itself, there is a contrast between a small minority which provide the bulk of help, and a large majority which are less engaged, if at all. For particular groups of the population over 60% are already engaged in voluntary activities of some kind at a level which means they are part of the core. Figure 2 shows that that is particularly the case for middle-aged females with higher education qualifications. However, this group only account for a small proportion of the population, so increasing its level of engagement would not have a substantial effect on the overall inputs of volunteer labour, charitable giving, or participation in associations.

Figure 2: Civic core membership rate by qualifications age and sex



Source: Citizenship Survey 2007-10

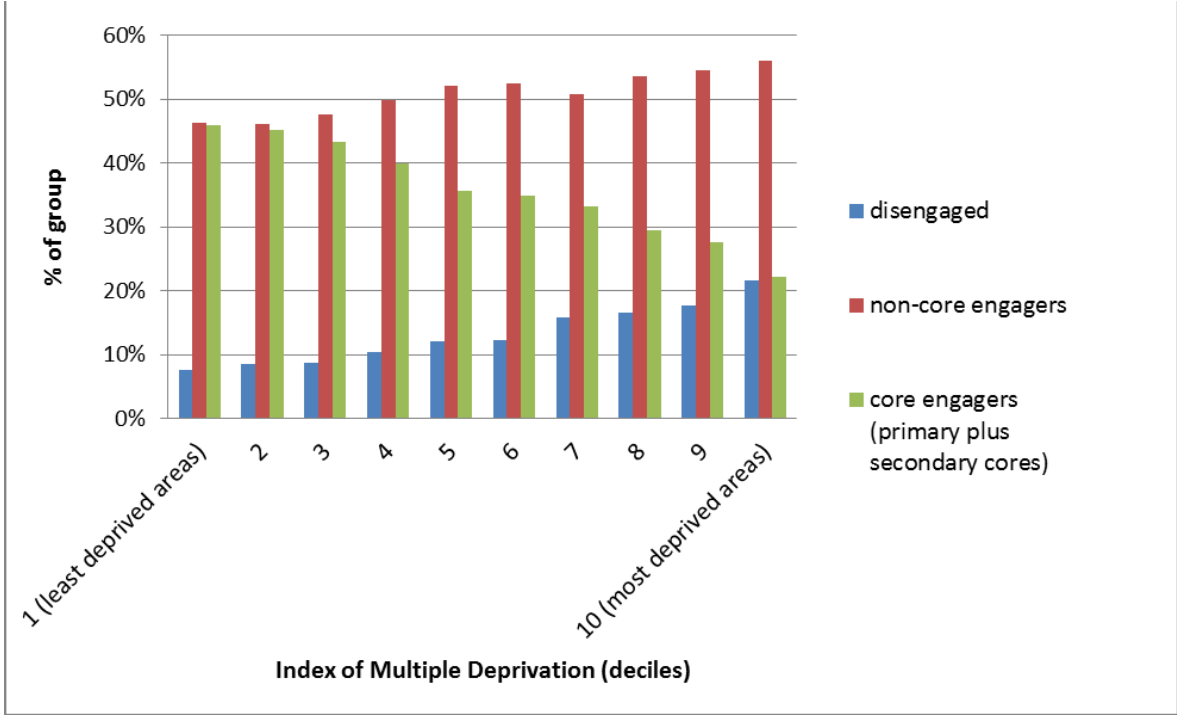
If the civic core are highly educated, in professional and managerial occupations and middle-aged, there is likely to be an imbalance in their geographical distribution as well. The original Canadian analysis concentrated on 3 out of 10 provinces, selecting those that best represented variation in the sizes of the core across the country. In this paper we choose to shift the focus slightly from the size of the core in different parts of the country to the level of engagement shown as a function of the levels of deprivation in different regions.

Analysis of engagement across areas in each decile of the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation shows that there are strong contrasts between areas in terms of the residential location of the core, non-core engaged and disengaged groups. Figure 3 shows the distribution of these three groups arranged by the index of deprivation (IMD) for the Census output area in which they live.⁵ There is a strong gradient, with 46% of those living in the most prosperous 10% of localities being part of the core, about the same proportion being engaged although not to the extent necessary to be considered core engagers, and only 7% being recorded as disengaged. Conversely, less than a quarter of individuals living in the most disadvantaged areas are part of the core, and the disengaged constitute

⁵ The IMD deciles for the 2007-8 data in the survey are based on the 2004 IMD figures; those for 2008-9 and 2009-10 are based on the 2007 IMD. The scores, and the class boundaries of the deciles are likely to vary slightly between the 2004 and 2007 IMD and the reader is asked to bear this in mind. Future analyses examining over-time trends in the core will examine this issue more fully. As the Welsh data on deprivation have a different distribution, the decile thresholds do not match neatly onto the English ones. It is for this reason that we have chosen to omit the Welsh data in this particular analysis.

a fifth of the population in these areas. In between these extremes the trends are consistent: with rising deprivation we see falling rates of engagement and rising rates of disengagement. It is interesting to see, however, that the proportion of engaged but non-core individuals is less dependent on deprivation, ranging between 46% in the least deprived areas and 56% in the most deprived areas.

Figure 3: Distribution of core engaged, non-core engaged and non-engages groups by Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles



Source: Citizenship Survey 2007-10, English data

Causal interpretation of these patterns should be approached with caution. Firstly, note that neither the indices of deprivation, nor the measures of volunteering, charitable giving or participation in civic associations link the acts of engagement with a geographical location. Instead, deprivation is measured at the residential locations of respondents and so it is impossible to state whether those who are volunteering, participating in civic associations, or giving money to charity, are doing so in their own neighbourhood. Individuals may, for example, be volunteering in a scheme organised by their employers, or giving money to a charity working overseas or across the whole of the UK. It is also possible that the reason why individuals in some areas do not report an activity could be that they were less likely than their counterparts elsewhere to be asked to participate in it – solicitation of charitable donations might be a case in point. More importantly, even if volunteering rates are relatively low in deprived areas, we cannot infer that living in a disadvantaged area means that one is less likely to help other people. The geographical variations are much more likely to reflect compositional factors – the mix of individuals in a place, and the resources those individuals do or do not have that enable participation – rather than contextual factors (e.g. the characteristics of a place).

Conclusions and implications

Policy statements from the Coalition government, such as the Giving White Paper (Cabinet Office, 2011) indicate a desire to increase the proportions of the population who are engaged in volunteering and charitable giving. But this neglects the overlap between different forms of pro-social behaviours, and one contribution of this analysis is to demonstrate the relative contributions made by different subsets of the population. In addition to the proportions of people engaged, we need to consider the size of the contribution they make. Increases in the proportions of the population engaged in giving and volunteering may not have a substantial effect if those who become engaged are donating small amounts of money or time. The emphasis in the White Paper on marginal increments as a result of 'nudging' techniques is relevant here. If one is prompted regularly for small amounts of money or encouraged to give 'slivers of time' these might result in an increase in the headline figures of those who are engaged, but may not lead to much additional input.

This analysis also shows that there is not a substantial problem of non-engagement – only a small minority of the population (some 15%) seem to be completely disengaged from the various forms of activity analysed here. It is possible, as suggested earlier, that there are good reasons for this. The idea of the 'total social organisation of labour' (Glucksmann, 2005) draws attention to the multiple combinations of paid and unpaid work, formal and informal voluntary activity, and unpaid caring that go on. There are many ways in which individuals contribute to the functioning of communities, and in this paper we have only analysed combinations of volunteering, charitable giving and civic engagement. We have not looked at combinations which include informal volunteering and our source does not permit analysis of the amounts of unpaid care given by respondents. However, we know that although estimates of volunteering rates for local authorities (such as those from the Place Surveys)⁶ are to be treated with caution, there are strong negative associations between volunteering and the proportions of the population who spend substantial amounts of time giving unpaid care to family members (as measured by the Census). This is cited as a barrier to volunteering by substantial numbers of people. Looking more closely at combinations of different forms of participation – e.g. who does some or all of volunteering, giving to charity, civic participation, informal help, and unpaid care - we find that there are some social gradients but that they do not all run in the same direction depending on combinations of activity. Further work on this will be reported in extensions of this analysis. The general lesson for policy is that undifferentiated appeals for people to do more need to be tempered by an acknowledgement of individual circumstances.

A particular challenge for policy arising from this analysis is that there are very strong geographical gradients. For reasons to do with residential segregation, the 'core' groups tend to be concentrated in the most prosperous locations, which poses a substantial challenge to policy. Breaking this down further, there seems to be evidence to suggest that there is a tendency for people to either provide high levels of volunteering or charitable giving. This potentially has further implications for the 'supply'

⁶ Information on the Place Survey is available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/placesurvey2008>;

the survey gathered information on people's involvement in and perceptions of their local community.

of civic engagement if these two behaviours are not distributed in the same way even within the most prosperous locations across England and Wales. Do charitable giving and volunteering need to take place in the geographical areas of highest need or can these resources be redistributed? Can charitable giving, as a resource, be more easily distributed to areas of need than the resource that volunteering represents? As an extension of this, does it matter where the highest providers of these resources live? A defining feature of Big Society discussions have been the emphasis on localism – for example encouraging people to get involved in ‘Your Square Mile’, or the Prime Minister’s statement that he would like to see everyone involved in a neighbourhood group of some kind. Our figures suggest that (to the extent that we assume that engagement is a local matter) the most prosperous communities are those best placed to respond to the transfer of responsibilities to voluntary organisations and volunteers. This will require creative thought about how best to steer voluntary resources to areas where they are most needed.

What, then, are the prospects for an expansion of the civic core? Is it, in fact, something for which we should be aiming? The think tank ResPublica has suggested that we need to double the size of the core, but while this is superficially an attractive slogan, there are some difficulties. It is arithmetically impossible for some subsets of the population, as Figure 2 makes clear; for that objective to be attained, the proportion in the core will therefore have to be more than doubled in other social groups. More fundamentally, the idea of a core is something of a moving target; the numbers and proportions of people in it depend on an arbitrary threshold value. Increasing the size of the core could actually be attained if a relatively small number of highly-committed individuals were to scale back their involvement dramatically!⁷ A less frivolous suggestion is simply to focus on getting people to engage more and give more, but this will be challenging, given the current economic circumstances confronting individuals and households. Policy will certainly have to be aligned appropriately – for example, length of residence seems strongly associated with membership of the core, but if predictions of the consequences of changes to housing benefit policies were to be borne out, many people would be likely to move.

Extensions of this work intend to expand the analysis to include informal as well as formal forms of engagement. We will examine whether the formal core differs from, or overlaps with, the informal core. We will also seek to develop understanding of the kinds of skills individuals are bringing to their formal volunteering activities, as well as of particular patterns in types of civic associational participation. The Citizenship Survey will also allow us to examine the extent to which the core has been changing or remaining stable over time. These further pieces of analysis will provide insights into the scope and limitations of policies aimed at increasing levels of engagement in voluntary activities.

⁷ For instance, if we were to remove the top 60 volunteers, contributing some 9900 hours to the total amount of time recorded in the survey, it would require at least 700 individuals contributing the current threshold value of 14 hours which is required for inclusion in the volunteering core. Thus the volunteering core would increase in size by nearly 40%.

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Appendix A: Citizenship Survey measures used

Measure of participation in civic associations in past 12 months (derived by counting the number of associations the respondent reported participating in)

Please pick out the ones which best describe any groups, clubs or organisations you've taken part in, supported or helped over the last 12 months. On each card are some examples, although what you do may not be on the cards:

- (A) Children's education/schools
 - (B) Youth/children's activities (outside school)
 - (C) Education for adults
 - (D) Sport/exercise (taking part, coaching or going to watch)
 - (E) Religion
 - (F) Politics
 - (G) The elderly
 - (H) Health, Disability and Social welfare
 - (I) Safety, First Aid
 - (J) The environment, animals
 - (K) Justice and Human Rights
 - (L) Local community or neighbourhood groups
 - (M) Citizens' Groups
 - (N) Hobbies, Recreation/Arts/Social clubs
 - (O) Trade union activity
- Other _____
- None of these _____

Measure of hours volunteered in past 4 weeks

Now just thinking about the past **4 weeks**. Approximately how many **hours** have you spent helping [in the above groups] in the past 4 weeks?

Answer must be in the range from 0 up to 999: _____

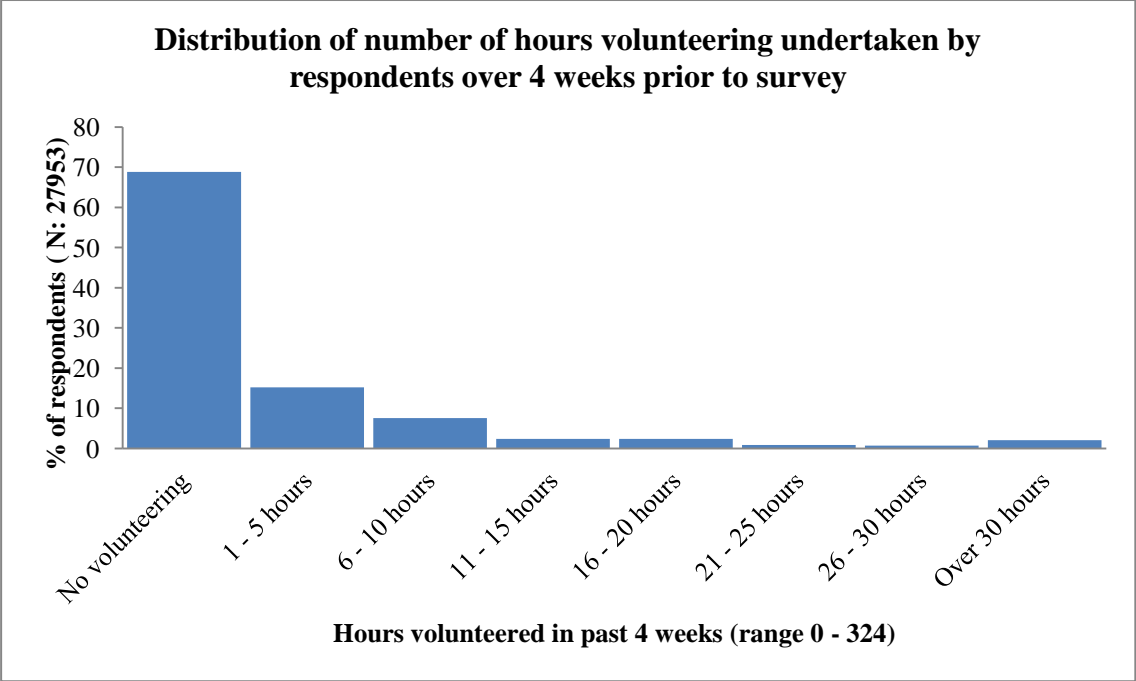
Measure of amount given to charity in past 4 weeks

About how much in total have you given to charity **in the last 4 weeks?** (Please exclude buying goods).

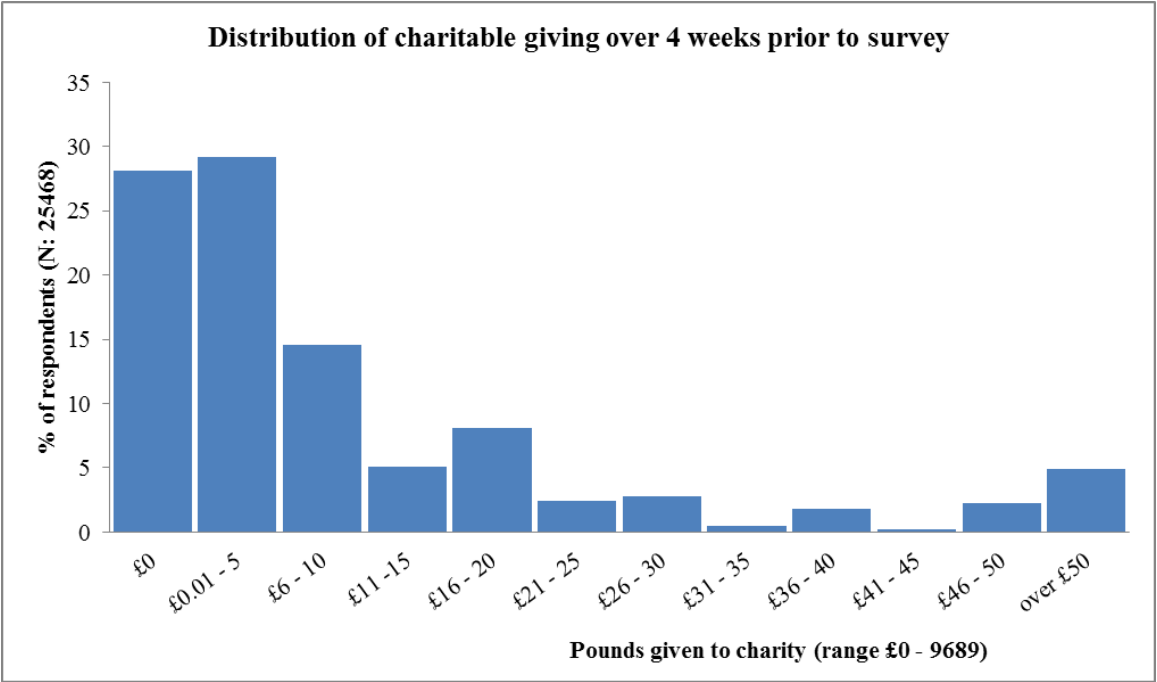
Answer must be in the range from 0 up to 9999: _____

Appendix B: Population distributions of volunteering, charitable giving and civic associational participation

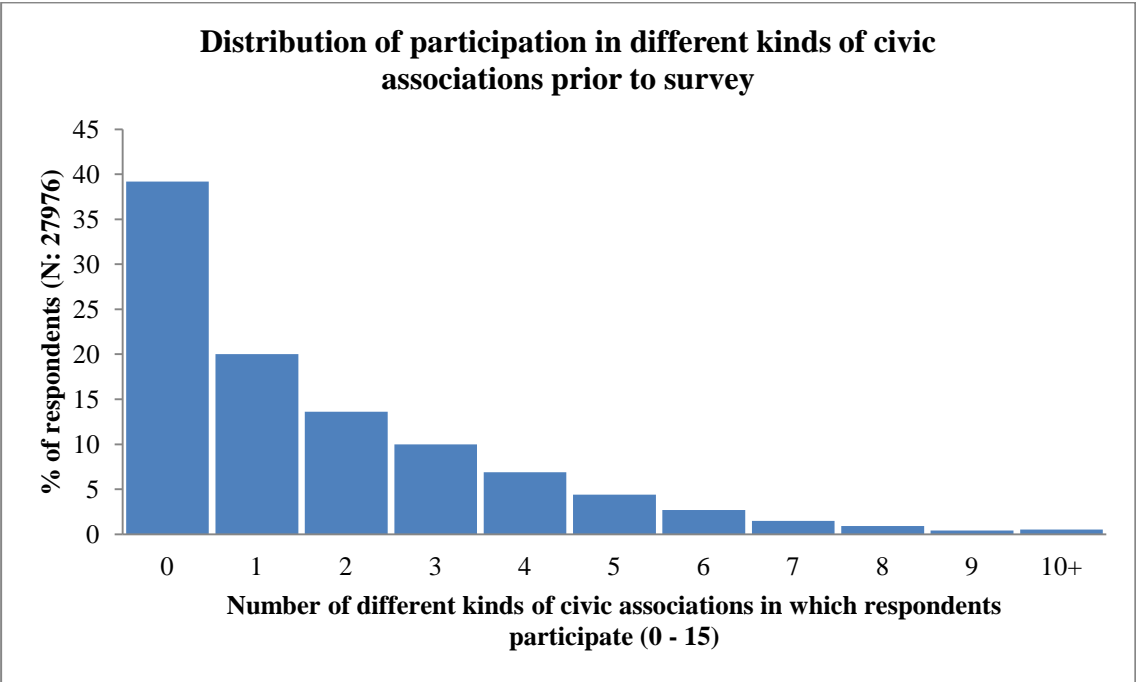
Distribution 1: Volunteering variable as found in Citizenship Survey 2007-10



Distribution 2: Charitable giving as found in Citizenship Survey 2007-10



Distribution 3: Civic associational participation as found in the Citizenship Survey 2007-10



About the Centre

The third sector provides support and services to millions of people. Whether providing front-line services, making policy or campaigning for change, good quality research is vital for organisations to achieve the best possible impact. The Third Sector Research Centre exists to develop the evidence base on, for and with the third sector in the UK. Working closely with practitioners, policy-makers and other academics, TSRC is undertaking and reviewing research, and making this research widely available. The Centre works in collaboration with the third sector, ensuring its research reflects the realities of those working within it, and helping to build the sector's capacity to use and conduct research.

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Quantitative Analysis

This research stream is designed to improve our understanding of the third sector through a large-scale programme of quantitative work. It is designed to help us better explain the distribution of third sector organisations, analyse their contribution to society and the economy and understand their dynamics. We are interested in data not just on third sector organisations and their resources, but also on both financial inputs to the sector (funding flows from various sources) and human inputs (e.g. the paid workforce and volunteers).

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The support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Office for Civil Society (OCS) and the Barrow Cadbury UK Trust is gratefully acknowledged. The work was part of the programme of the joint ESRC, OCS Barrow Cadbury Third Sector Research Centre.