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**Exploring the economic and
social value of present patterns of
volunteering in Australia**

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Executive summary

This report begins by exploring grey areas at the edges of the definition of volunteering. The term ‘volunteer’ generally designates a person who provides services or benefits to others for motivations other than financial or material reward. Volunteering has also been seen as an activity taking place within the confines of formal organisations promoting a range of good causes. This report sets out the case for expanding the definition of volunteering to include not only formal activity within charitable organisations but also volunteering for emergency services, informal charitable acts undertaken outside the bounds of organisations, and unpaid care of adults with disabilities and the frail elderly. Through the remainder of this summary, the term volunteering should be taken to encompass all these forms of voluntary activity. Nevertheless, the majority of analysis in this report explicitly separates volunteering within organisations (formal volunteering) from other forms of volunteering (unpaid care, unpaid work in the emergency services, and informally helping other people from outside one’s household or the wider community).

This report contains the first systematic comparative results from the two major sources of information on volunteering, the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ (ABS) *Voluntary work survey 2000* and its *1997 Time use survey*. This report demonstrates the value of using these two sources of data in conjunction with each other in the analysis of voluntary activity. This report also makes use of multivariate analysis, that is, analysis which considers the combined effects of several different influences on people’s decisions about whether and how long to volunteer.

This report analyses three policy relevant aspects of volunteering—its effects on direct government expenditure on services, the contribution of volunteering to the stock of social capital, and the possibility of volunteering providing a pathway to economic, social and civic participation. The major findings of this project are outlined below.

- Even conservative estimation procedures (which are more likely to underestimate the monetary value of volunteering) reveal that voluntary welfare services are worth more than double the value of services provided by all levels of government in Australia.
- Informal volunteering outside organisations accounts for more than half of all voluntary activity.
- People who provide care to disabled adults and the frail elderly are more likely than other Australians to undertake formal voluntary work on behalf of the wider community, including helping strangers.
- More than half of formal voluntary activity promotes community-wide interests, including recreation, though a significant portion of voluntary work aims to assist disadvantaged groups.

- ▶ Sixteen per cent of Australians undertake informal voluntary work, with 1.8 million Australians helping people who live in other households and around 400,000 Australians providing unpaid adult care to someone living in the same household. More severely disabled adults are likely to live with the people who provide their care, while adults needing less intensive care are more likely to receive help from someone who lives in another household. People who provide the main source of care to another adult are more likely to be an immediate family member of the person for whom they care, while people who informally help others but do not provide the main source of help to another individual are most likely to be distant relatives or unrelated to the people they help.
- ▶ Professional and union agencies, as well as sports-focused organisations, attract a higher proportion of male than female volunteers. Men feel more motivated to work for voluntary organisations that aim to help the community at large or young people. Education, health, religious and community welfare agencies attract more female than male volunteers. Women are more likely to aid organisations targeting young children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- ▶ The proportion of Australians who volunteer has increased since 1987. Even so, on any given day, Australians spend about half the amount of time doing voluntary activities as people in Canada, Finland, France and the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, certain categories of Australians, most notably lone mothers, people aged 25 to 45 who live with their parents, as well as retired Australians who do not live with a spouse or partner, tend to volunteer for a longer time than their counterparts in the other countries when they do make the choice to volunteer.
- ▶ People working in the range of major employment sectors in Australia perform a significant number of hours of voluntary work each year, though people working in wholesale and retail trades tend to perform more hours of voluntary work than people working in other sectors.
- ▶ When all other factors are held constant, people working in professional or managerial jobs and people who have achieved educational qualifications at university level or higher are more likely to formally volunteer through organisations, to informally help others, and to provide care to adults. People who do not speak English at home, work for pay full-time, and are aged less than 30 are less likely to undertake any form of voluntary activity. These findings emerge consistently in both the *Voluntary work survey 2000*, which measures whether people performed any work for a voluntary organisation, even if the level of volunteering is only once a year, and in the *1997 Time use survey*, which measures who is most likely to volunteer in any capacity on an average day.
- ▶ Other findings about formal volunteering through organisations are less clearly consistent between the two sets of data. In many cases, the inconsistency is

merely a matter of degree—that is, the finding is stronger for one data set than for the other. In other cases, the two studies produce different results. This may mean that people who do only a small amount of volunteering over a whole year (who are more likely to be counted as volunteers in a voluntary work survey than in a time use survey) differ in systematic ways from people who volunteer on a regular basis.

- D The *1997 Time use survey* and the *Voluntary work survey 2000* complement each other. A rounded picture of voluntary activity requires data from both types of surveys. Even so, the two studies could be made more complementary if conducted again in the future.
- D People who have young children living at home and people aged 60 to 74 are more likely to formally volunteer through organisations, but less likely to provide adult care or to informally help others. People aged 75 and above are more likely to provide unpaid adult care but less likely to engage in other forms of volunteering.
- D People living outside a capital city in Australia and who are in the middle of the income distribution are more likely to formally volunteer through organisations than other Australians.
- D Men, people in the highest 20 per cent of the income range, people born in Australia, people working part-time, and the unemployed are more likely to provide informal help but less likely to provide adult care. People living in a capital city, women, married people or cohabiting couples, and people aged 45 to 74 are more likely to provide adult care but less likely to offer informal help to others.
- D Formal volunteering and informally helping others can enable volunteers to build social capital resources. Nevertheless, a simple comparison of the average minutes spent in social activity by people who reported any form of voluntary activity in their diaries with people who reported no voluntary activity in their diaries indicates that each group enjoyed the same average minutes of socialising time. Thus, the social capital benefits from volunteering accrue over the longer term rather than on a daily activity basis.
- D People in the lowest 20 per cent of the income range are more likely to provide both informal help to others and to undertake adult care, however, this group was less likely to work with a formal voluntary organisation.
- D Not all volunteers enjoy the same degree of socialising time. People who informally help others and adult carers experience an average of eight hours socialising time each week. In general, people caring for adults living in another household enjoy more socialising time per week than either other groups of volunteers or people who do not volunteer. Nevertheless, some people who care for adults become socially isolated. Adult carers looking after a person living in the same household enjoy barely one hour of socialising time per week—less

than half the socialising time experienced by parents of young children. Public policy could usefully facilitate increased social opportunities for isolated carers by expanding the availability of affordable respite care and promoting the formation of more self-help groups for carers.

We believe that FaCSIA could use findings from this report to tailor information packs on volunteering options for its different client groups. We also argue that voluntary activity should remain voluntary, and not be confused with compulsory public service to receive benefits. Voluntary agencies can experience negative consequences from forced 'volunteering'.

1 Public interest in voluntary activity

The term ‘volunteer’ generally designates a person who provides services or benefits to others for motivations other than financial or material reward (ABS 2001; Cordingley 2000; Dingle & Heath 2001). The exact parameters of the term volunteering, however, vary by national policy context and philosophical views of many researchers and non-profit organisations. Some see volunteering as an activity taking place within the confines of formal organisations promoting a range of good causes. This report sets out the case for expanding the definition of volunteering to include not only formal activity within charitable organisations but also volunteering for emergency services, informal charitable acts undertaken outside the bounds of organisations, and unpaid care of adults with disabilities and the frail elderly. Through the remainder of this report, the term volunteering on its own should be taken to encompass all these forms of voluntary activity. Nevertheless, the majority of analysis in this report explicitly separates volunteering within organisations (formal volunteering) from other forms of volunteering (unpaid care, unpaid work in the emergency services, and informally helping other people from outside one’s household or the wider community).

Wherever one draws the boundaries of volunteering, policy makers and social researchers view such activity as an essential cornerstone of the operation of societies. In consequence, the literature on volunteering is enormous. The 2001 and 2002 issues of just three of the over 100 volunteering-specific journals—*Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, *Nonprofit management and leadership*, and *Nonprofit world*—contain over 300 articles. Academic articles constitute a small proportion of popular media articles and materials available on Internet sites of thousands of voluntary organisations.¹

United States President, George W. Bush, called for Americans to commit at least two years, or 4,000 hours, to the service of neighbours and nation in his 2001 State of the Union Address (Bush 2002a), as well as issuing a Proclamation for National Volunteer Week (Bush 2002b). In the United Kingdom, there has been a parliamentary study of volunteering and its role in national life (Dingle & Heath 2001). In New Zealand, the Department of Internal Affairs (in conjunction with local governments) has set up a National Conversation on Volunteering, and the Ministry of Social Policy has set up a project on volunteers and volunteering (Wilson et al. 2001). Here in Australia, interest in volunteering has been revitalised, not only by the 2000 Sydney Olympics (Fairbairn 2001; Walker & Gleeson 2001), but also by the part played by volunteers in fighting bushfires around the country. The non-government organisation Volunteering Australia, has worked to coordinate the principles and working practices of formal voluntary organisations in this country (Cordingley 2000). So great is international interest in the voluntary sector that the year 2001 was designated as the International Year of the Volunteer.

Australia actively participated in the International Year of the Volunteer (Costigan & Woolias 2001). In August 2001, Senator Amanda Vanstone announced an extra

\$5 million funding (over and above the \$14.68 million previously allocated for the International Year of the Volunteer) to help voluntary organisations buy equipment (Vanstone 2001). In May 2002, Senator Vanstone announced \$1.6 million funding over four years for Volunteering Australia to expand voluntary placements for the Australians Working Together programs (Vanstone 2002). FaCS provides funding to voluntary organisations working in fields that fall within the remit of the Stronger Families and Community Strategy (Paul 2001).

State and territory governments in Australia likewise have shown recent interest in promoting and expanding voluntary activities. The New South Wales Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care initiated the 'Experienced Hands' voluntary project, initially trialed in Bathurst and on the Central Coast, to provide a link between older and younger generations that would also address the needs of local communities (New South Wales Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care 2002). The Western Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet, in partnership with the Office of Seniors Interests, commissioned a research project investigating the voluntary activities of the 'baby boomer' generation (Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet 2002).

In the context of this general interest in the value and outputs of volunteering, this report begins by examining the specific policy and economic significance of volunteering for FaCS. The report next considers the question of what constitutes volunteering. We then discuss who benefits from volunteering in Australia, who volunteers, and how voluntary patterns in Australia compare with other countries. Some key questions that this report seeks to answer are listed below.

- What is the composition of the voluntary (third) sector?
- How does the voluntary sector compare in size to the market economy or government?
- What is the economic value of volunteering?

2 Policy significance of voluntary activity

Key Australian policy initiatives, including FaCS' Stronger Families and Community Strategy and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEWR) Increasing Workforce Participation envisage roles for volunteers. Volunteers directly provide a variety of services to groups including the frail elderly, people with impairments, new mothers, and vulnerable children. They also play a significant part in maintaining and restoring the natural environment. Indirectly, volunteering strengthens social connectedness and increases the stock of social capital, helping to build community capacity. Volunteering also can provide a pathway to social engagement and employment. There is significant potential for voluntary activities to improve the lives of disadvantaged and isolated community members, young people and older Australians. In light of this potential, this report analyses existing data sources to provide policy relevant information on volunteering.

2.1 Three policy relevant aspects of volunteering

It is possible to analytically separate the aspects of volunteering which are of immediate interest to policy makers. These are:

- ▶ volunteering as a substitute for direct government expenditure on services
- ▶ volunteering as an activity which contributes to the stock of social capital
- ▶ volunteering as a pathway to economic, social, and civic participation.

In what follows, evidence bearing on each of these aspects is examined in turn.

2.2 The economic significance and value of all forms of volunteering to government

For more than 20 years writers have been talking about a 'third sector', a sector composed of organisations that are neither part of the private market economy nor part of government. The label 'third sector' is typically intended to capture all the activities of the thousands of not-for-profit and non-government organisations, together with the activities of volunteering and giving which sustain them. Recently there has been a renewed appreciation of the potential of this sector. There is a widespread impression that not only are voluntary activities undervalued, but they also are under-researched.

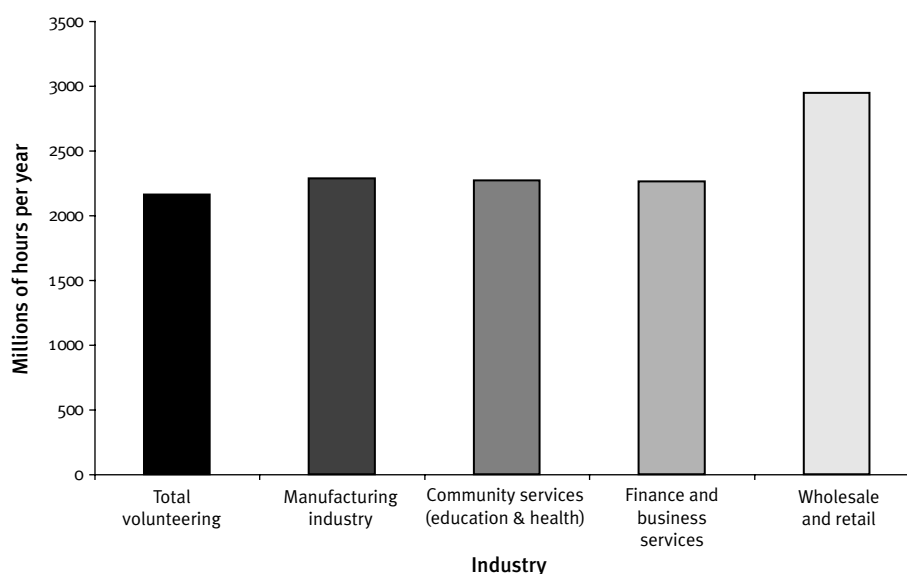
The most difficult obstacle to comparing market activity and voluntary (or third) sector activity is that we lack comparable standards for assessing the value of outputs. While we have fairly comprehensive information about the monetary value of market activities, most voluntary activity is performed for no monetary reward, and thus not formally valued in market terms. However, one characteristic is common to both sectors—time spent doing productive work. By comparing labour inputs—the time spent working—it is possible to make an elementary measure of the relative scale of these sectors. Fortunately, the ABS *Time use survey* offers us

a statistically reliable way of capturing the time Australians devote to third sector activities.

Comparative labour inputs

Using data about the time Australians devote to third sector activities² from the time use survey and information about the inputs in various branches of market activity, Ironmonger (2000) has estimated size of the volunteering ‘industry’. As we can see in Figure 1, measured over the whole year of 1997, the total volume of voluntary work (2,161 million hours per year) was the rough equivalent of the labour inputs in the manufacturing industry (2,285 million hours per year), community services (education and health—2,269 million hours per year), finance and business services (2,262 million hours per year), and equivalent to three-quarters of labour input in wholesale and retail trade (2,946 million hours per year) (Ironmonger 2000). Comparing the yearly hours in volunteering with those of selected market industries shows that volunteering is significant ‘industry’.

Figure 1: Labour inputs to various industries



Source: Ironmonger 2000

Dollar values compared

To gain a better grasp of the value of the economic outputs of volunteering, it is useful to consider recent estimates calculated by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). In 2001, the AIHW published estimates of the volume and value of voluntary effort by household contributions to ‘welfare services for family, friends and neighbours and for the wider community through community service organisations’ (AIHW 2001, p. 15).

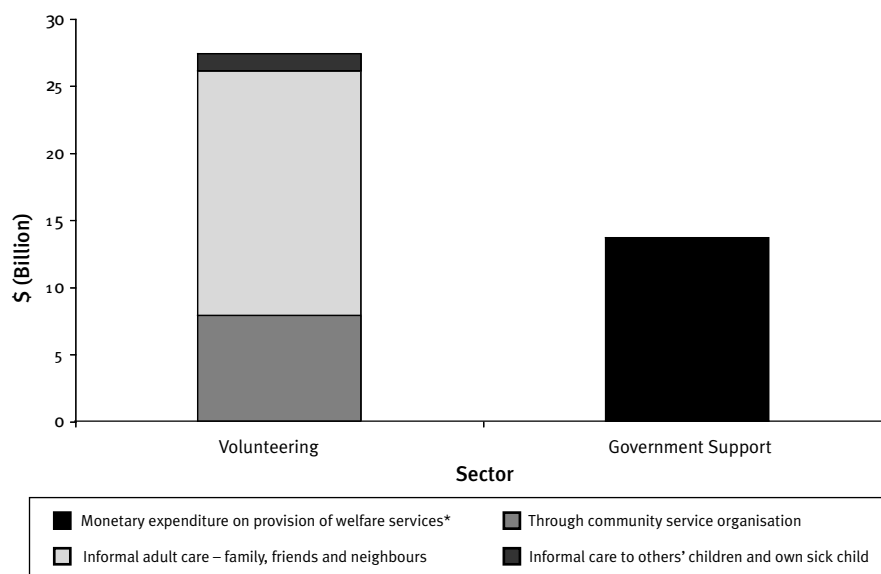
These estimates are subtly different from the published conventional categories of both expenditure and volunteering. For this comparison, the AIHW included expenditure by all levels of government (Australian Government, state/territory and

local), and excluded expenditure on income support, long-term housing assistance, and on nursing home and domiciliary nursing care from its calculations (AIHW 2001, p. 12). For these reasons, the resulting AIHW estimates of 'welfare services expenditure' do not resemble the 'welfare expenditure' figures conventionally quoted from the Australian Government's Budget papers.

In its efforts to capture the dollar value of welfare services provided without any payment, the AIHW has amended ABS categories to include not only support for adults but also support for children in the form of 'child care-related activities for other people's children' and care for one's 'own sick children' (AIHW 2001, p. 16). However, the AIHW has also included only health and welfare organisations as 'welfare support through formal organisations'. Thus they excluded much of what is traditionally counted as volunteer effort through sport, art, education, youth, religious and emergency services organisations. In our opinion, the likely net effect of the various AIHW assumptions about the scope of 'informal volunteering' at least partially cancel each other out,³ and any inaccuracy is more likely to underestimate rather than to overestimate the value of volunteering. Therefore, the AIHW estimates provide a useful basis for thinking about the size and significance of the third sector, especially in gauging to what extent volunteering substitutes for government expenditure.

The AIHW has used 'the alternative provider cost method' to calculate the dollar value of the payment that would be incurred by governments if 'they were to employ workers to provide these services'. The annual hours donated by volunteers was valued using hourly wage rates of (non-managerial) adult employees undertaking similar work in May 2000 (AIHW 2001, p. 16).⁴ While the choice of wage rate significantly affects the size of the dollar estimate, the AIHW acknowledge that using this method understates the dollar value of volunteering because it ignores the overhead costs.

As we can see in Figure 2, the total imputed dollar value of the time donated to welfare service by volunteers (\$27.4 billion) is almost double the total cash amount spent by all governments and non-government sources (\$13.7 billion) in Australia. Informal help to family, friends and neighbours generates over two-thirds of the imputed value of the services. This suggests that if the analysis is restricted to measures of formal volunteering only—the strategy employed in the ABS *Voluntary work surveys*—a significant part of the overall picture is missed.

Figure 2: Relative values of welfare services 1999–2000

Source: AIHW, *Australia's Welfare 2001*

Note: Monetary expenditure on the provision of welfare services excludes income support payments, long-term housing assistance and nursing home expenditure.

It should also be remembered that private households, community sector organisations and not-for-profit organisations are in the peculiar position of simultaneously providing, purchasing and funding services (AIHW 2001, p. 27). Private households and other non-government organisations spent about \$5 billion on welfare services in the financial year 1999–2000, **contributing more than one third of all the funding** for welfare services in Australia. The client fees paid by private households alone funded about 23 per cent of all the expenditure on welfare services in Australia. In the same year, the AIHW estimates that all levels of government (Australian Government, state/territory and local) spent about \$8.6 billion on welfare services. The majority (55 per cent) of government expenditure on welfare services is provided through state/territory and local governments (AIHW 2001, p. 29). If the funding supplied by non-government sources were moved to the other side of the ledger, so that only government expenditure on welfare services was compared with the combined value of funds provided and the dollar value of non-monetary contributions of households and non-government organisations, then the ratio of private versus public contributions would be close to 4:1 in favour of the private organisations. When one considers that the process of estimating the economic value of volunteering is likely to have underestimated rather than overestimated the value of voluntary work, it is clear that voluntary welfare services play an indispensable role in maintaining the quality of life for a significant proportion of the Australian population.

2.3 Volunteering and social capital

Expanding social capital and the capacity of members of local communities to resolve some problems themselves are explicit goals of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The value of social capital for governments is based on a quality that economists and lawyers call ‘fungibility’.

Fungibility refers to the way goods can be treated as interchangeable. This implies that an asset is redeemable in a number of different forms. One of the peculiar characteristics of paper money is that it is fungible and can be exchanged for other currencies, stocks, shares, goods and services. Social capital is deemed to be fungible to the extent that the networks, norms and trust built on the basis of one common purpose can be used for another. For example, a movement created to stage the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras can also be used to spread information about HIV/AIDS and safe sex. As this example shows, social capital represents a stock of fungible social connections. This is the property of social capital which justifies the use of the word ‘capital’ in the term ‘social capital’ (Wilkinson & Bittman 2002a, p. 34).

Economists also make an important distinction between private and public goods. A private good is the exclusive possession of a person or a corporation, meaning that they could exclude others from consuming this good. The goods found in most shops are like this; you can only acquire them if you pay the appropriate price—anything else is regarded as theft. Public goods, on the other hand, have two peculiar properties.

- ▶ They are non-competitive (so that one person’s use of public goods does not deprive others from also enjoying the same goods).
- ▶ It is more difficult to exclude others from consuming them.

Flowering plants adorning the verges of public highways are examples of public goods. Each motorist who enjoys the view while driving past does not impede motorists driving past later from enjoying the same view. Economists call the properties of public goods that do not have to be factored into the costs of production ‘positive externalities’. They are supplied for free by the producer. Putnam (2000) notes that this is also a characteristic of social capital. The stock of social connectedness stored in social capital ‘can have externalities that affect the wider community, so that not all the costs and benefits accrue to the person making the contact’ (Putnam 2000, p. 20).

These two elements of social capital—its fungibility and its positive externality—make the prospect of increasing social capital an attractive idea to policy makers because, as private individuals accept greater responsibility for providing services, the role played by government may diminish. This reduces the unit cost of government service provision while potentially freeing resources to improve the quality of services.

All forms of volunteering entail at least a nominal level of civic engagement, and any civic engagement can foster more civic engagement. Putnam (2000, p. 93), argues that ‘like pennies dropped in a cookie jar’ each of the acts of volunteering ‘is a tiny investment in social capital’. Research in the United Kingdom has found that

unemployed people who develop or maintain a close friendship with someone who is employed are more likely to find work than people who do not have an employed close friend (Hannan 1999). Other researchers have postulated that volunteering provides an avenue for people to develop such useful social contacts, which may in turn help them out of crises such as the loss of a job (Aldridge et al. 2002).

Participation in formally organised recreational or hobby activities for youth and for the elderly has other palpable public benefits. Organised activities for youth can reduce the threats of toxic social environments, boost resilience, and divert teenagers from gangs, drugs, and juvenile crime (Holman 2000). Among the elderly, decreasing social isolation by participation in formally organised activities has many of the same benefits as preventative occupational therapy for improving physical and mental health (Clark et al. 2001). Thus, even volunteering in sport or religious organisations can have flow-on benefits for public expenditure.

The concept of social capital spans a wide range of outcomes in addition to volunteering—from participation in government, to the degree to which people trust their governments, neighbours and people in general. Recent research comparing levels of volunteering with levels of trust in Australia, the United States and selected European countries, however, has found that the links between these dimensions of social capital are tenuous and complex (Patulny et al. 2003). This report does not set out to explore the range of concepts of social capital, but merely notes that volunteering does constitute an important element of this social resource. Further, as recent social capital research has made use of time diary data (Putnam 2000; Ruston 2003; Patulny et al. 2003), this report offers insight into how volunteering data collected by time use surveys might be combined with other forms of volunteering data to examine other dimensions of the development of social contacts.

2.4 The availability of new volunteering data

The availability of confidentialised unit record data from two ABS surveys, the *Voluntary work survey 2000* and the *1997 Time use survey*, provide a number of vital opportunities for researchers and policy makers—particularly as the volunteering information in the time use survey has received little attention to date. First, these data open the way for a more thorough examination of participation in formal volunteering because they contain more detail than any other data source about the organisations to which people donate their time and money and the contexts into which people fit volunteering activities into their days. Second, the two sets of data provide an opportunity to crosscheck the information provided by either source.

Though this final objective may have less obvious policy relevance than the other objective, it is nevertheless a crucial activity that has potential to add significantly to the information available to policy makers. Both data sources collect information about formal volunteering but use different methods of data collection and different reporting periods—with the *Voluntary work survey 2000* revealing who is likely to undertake any voluntary work during a whole year, while the *1997 Time use*

survey data reveal how long people volunteer on days when they engage in such activity and which groups of people are likely to be engaged in volunteering on any given day. Knowing how the information from the two surveys compares is an indispensable aid to interpreting the information. The interpretation depends heavily on the answer to a number of key questions.

- Is the information reconcilable? (the answer is partially yes).
- Do the two methods provide a compatible description of volunteering? (the answer is largely yes, but there are discrepancies).
- Are the surveys complementary and can data from one be used to provide an informative context for the other? (the answer is a qualified yes).

We return to more detailed comparison of the two data sets in the conclusions (Section 7).

Until mid-2002, the public could only access information from the 1995 and 2000 ABS *Voluntary work surveys* without significant charge from tables in ABS publications. The problem with interpreting published cross-tabulations is making inferences based on spurious statistical relationships. For example, volunteering may be affected by the availability of spare time, so that people are more likely to volunteer later in life when their children have left home or when they have retired from paid employment, and conversely, less likely to volunteer in those stages of their lives when they are building their careers and raising a young family. Some academics speculate that people from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds demonstrate differing degrees of enthusiasm for volunteering. Views among public servants about levels of volunteering in the rural areas of Australia have differed, from those who perceive that people living in non-metropolitan areas volunteer at higher rates than other metropolitan-dwelling Australians (Paul 2001, p. 30), to those who have suggested that ‘the bush’ might be disadvantaged by lower rates of volunteering (for instance see comments on the Australian Institute of Family Studies web site <www.aifs.gov.au/sf/volunteering.html>). This range of views, however, raises the question of how much of the different levels of volunteering between rural and urban areas might be due to the spatial characteristics of remoteness and social isolation, and how much is simply the result of differences in the age profile, occupational background and ethnicity between the populations living in rural areas and the rest of Australia? Under these circumstances it is useful to move beyond cross-tabulation and to employ multivariate statistical procedures that allow one to analyse the effect of each variable independently, that is, while all the other possible explanatory variables are held constant.

The term volunteering is usually restricted to acts of donating time (see, for example, ABS 2001, p. 44), however the *Voluntary work survey 2000* also allows us to examine who donates money to voluntary organisations. The ABS chiefly employs two main indicators as summary measures of formal volunteering in Australia—the ‘volunteer rate’ and the ‘annual hours of voluntary work’.

The volunteer rate is intended to capture participation over the course of a year. It is calculated by expressing the number of people who undertook any voluntary work over the course of a year in a demographic group as a percentage of the total number of people in that group. The volunteering rate conceptualises participation in a binary form, that is, either a respondent volunteered in the last twelve months or he/she did not. This binary conceptualisation does not attempt to measure the intensity of volunteering—that is, how often and for how long people donated time to voluntary work. A person who worked a single hour in the last year and the secretary of a large voluntary association who worked more than 60 hours per week (over 2,880 hours in the last year) are both treated equally as ‘participants’.

The other main measure—‘annual hours of voluntary work’—is the summary measure used to capture the intensity of volunteer commitment. This measure is based on questions asking people to recall the number of hours they spent undertaking voluntary work in the last year. There are doubts about the accuracy of such estimates, as it is not easy to recall how many hours you spent doing any particular activity over a year (unless you did a very limited amount of the activity or did not participate at all) (Gershuny 2000). Time diaries offer a more reliable estimate of hours people spent performing any given activity on a randomly selected day (Gershuny 2000). For this reason, we use the annual volunteering rate calculated from the *Voluntary work survey 2000* data and the daily rate (the average number of minutes people who did volunteer tended to spend volunteering on any given day) calculated from the *1997 Time use survey*.

3 What constitutes volunteering?

The United Nations has defined volunteering as activity which broadly covers four main domains: ‘mutual aid or self-help, philanthropy or service to others, participation, and advocacy or campaigning’ (Valot 2001). Volunteering generally entails the presumption of activity driven by civic responsibility and concern for people, especially those suffering, those who have experienced a crisis, or those whose circumstances leave them vulnerable, as well as other living creatures and the environment. The adjective ‘voluntary’ also generally implies that the work is free—both that the person who performs the work does so for little or no financial reward, and the people or other agencies that benefit from the voluntary work do not pay to receive the assistance (Cuskelly & Brosnan 2001, p. 101). Nevertheless, the United Nations has recognised that the precise meaning of volunteering varies by cultural context (Valot 2001). We now address three ambiguous questions about the definition of volunteering.

- ▶ Is all volunteering ‘voluntary’?
- ▶ Can volunteers be paid?
- ▶ Are there forms of donated work that are not volunteering?

3.1 Is all volunteering ‘voluntary’?

Not all parties accept that the choice to undertake voluntary work need completely result from free will. Since the 1980s, many states in the United States have endorsed the provision of ‘workfare’ rather than welfare to people experiencing difficulty making ends meet. Workfare programs begin with the assumption that receiving aid from public finances creates an obligation to give back to the community whose taxes paid for the assistance, and also assume that recipients are likely to shirk this responsibility unless compelled to do so. Thus, Workfare programs operate on the principle that people only receive aid if they perform services for the community. The Canadian government likewise has instituted similar obligations for welfare recipients to volunteer to continue to receive their benefits (Bowen 2002, p. 18), and the Australian Government also has adopted similar principles with initiatives like Work for the Dole. People receiving benefits in Australia provide aid to recognised voluntary organisations. Though some income support recipients may have participated in such organisations regardless of whether they had received welfare payments, some people volunteer under such schemes because they have no choice.

Programs like Workfare or Work for the Dole follow a similar assumption about community responsibility to those assumptions underpinning the concept of mandatory military or community service—that people have civic obligations they cannot legitimately refuse. People performing voluntary work required as a condition of receiving welfare, or performing compulsory military or community service, may feel the same sense of pride in their achievement as people who

choose to volunteer without compulsion from sanctions for refusal to participate. Nevertheless, people **forced** to undertake civic work may assume a very different attitude as well.

Freely chosen civic engagement differs from enforced civic engagement in a number of respects. First, in most cases, people who have the choice to leave can demand better working conditions and more directly influence the policy of the organisations or people they assist, as they can withdraw their labour if they are unhappy (though, as we shall see in Section 3.3, some voluntary workers have less of this power than others). Second, some people who undertake work because they have to do so will not share the cooperative and well-meaning spirit central to most voluntary activity. Indeed, in some cases, voluntary organisations can waste scarce resources motivating and supervising people forced to participate in the organisation's efforts (Cordingley 2000, p.79). Third, even freely chosen voluntary activity can be perceived as providing a cheap and unprofessional service (Parsons 2001), and compulsory volunteering can become stigmatised as unprofessional work performed by people whose work ethic might be questioned (because the policy requirement promotes the perception that such people would not fulfil their civic obligations unless compelled to do so). In other words, 'involuntary' volunteers can become second-class volunteers (Reitsma-Street & Neysmith 2000).

On account of these differences, compulsory voluntary work is not coded as volunteering in the data sets analysed in this report. Also for similar reasons, Volunteering Australia has called on the Government to avoid confusing the concept of enforceable civic obligations with volunteering, and also urged caution with the placement of people whose participation has been officially mandated alongside volunteers (Cordingley 2000, pp. 78–9). This report undertakes no further analysis of 'compulsory volunteering', though the authors take the view that enforced activity does not fall under the rubric of volunteering.

3.2 Can volunteers be paid?

One way that voluntary work differs from paid work is that people do not earn their living from voluntary activity. We would not expect that volunteers would earn a sizeable wage. The point of debate, however, revolves around the question of whether people can receive some minimal remuneration and still be defined as volunteers.

There are some examples of programs under which people can receive payment for work with charities. Systems of 'therapeutic earnings' in the United Kingdom provide an example. In the United Kingdom, people of working age who rely on state support or a private pension for their primary income and who have a medical condition which renders them incapable of working sufficient hours to support themselves can undertake therapeutic earnings—that is, they can work for a limited number of hours and receive a very modest sum per week, generally capped below £70 (Department for Work and Pensions 2003). The idea behind therapeutic

earnings is to allow people unable to work for a living to still have a chance to feel that they are making a contribution to society and also to draw the satisfaction of having some income they have earned from their labour. Thus, therapeutic earnings schemes in the United Kingdom aim to provide self-esteem and psychological benefits to people with disabilities. Nevertheless, people working under therapeutic earnings schemes generally do not earn the market value for the labour they undertake, as they often apply skills learned through years of experience or extended training for wages near the minimum unskilled labour wage. Such arrangements might be defined as voluntary in part because the person performing the work does so of free will and in part because the recipient(s) of the work receive the work for a bargain rate.

Government subsidies and other financial assistance provided to family members who care for frail elderly relatives (unless the care recipient is the spouse of the care provider) offer another example. In 1985, the Illinois Association of Family Service Agencies (in the United States) funded a study of such payments to inform state level policy (Linsk et al. 1992, p. 40). The study found that by 1990, 96 countries offered some form of local or national level financial support (generally through tax credits for care providers who are also employed, cash grants, or provision of services for free) for people who volunteered to provide care to frail elderly people (Linsk et al. 1992, p. 40). In the United States which, like Australia, administers most health policies on the state rather than the national level, three-quarters of states provided some form of such assistance (Linsk et al. 1992, p. 92).⁵ The main motivation for such payments to volunteer care providers is that it allows more people to care for the frail elderly in the community, thereby giving the government short-term legitimacy among the population for performing its duty to care for citizens and also providing long-term cost savings by reducing the degree of elder care which the state must provide (Linsk et al. 1992). Another motivation is improving the quality of care by establishing links between government agencies and care providers, which also allows the agencies to disseminate information about more and less effective (and also dangerous) actions to meet the needs of the care recipient (Linsk et al. 1992, p. 145).⁶

Linsk et al. (1992) undertook an extended study of one of the most publicised and generous programs for paying family carers of the elderly in the state of Michigan. They found that both the caregivers and the care receivers benefited from the payments. The near minimum wage level payments to family carers (as long as the carer is not the spouse of the care recipient) enabled many carers to keep their jobs by enabling them to hire help while the carers were at work. Caregivers also reported that the payments demonstrated 'that the state was recognising their efforts and rewarding them for a job well-done' (Linsk et al. 1992, p. 192). The care recipients also welcomed the system. A small payment to family members eased many care recipients' worry that they were burdens on their families. Care recipients also felt that they could call on family ties to justify certain types of care, such as needing to call for help in the early hours of the morning, which they could not exercise with low-paid care staff who were not related, but care recipients felt less

guilty about calling on family ties when the care provider received a financial reward (Linsk et al. 1992, pp. 186–87).

Consequently, some systems allow for minimal payment or other financial compensation of people who choose to perform voluntary work. Including partially paid work in the definition of voluntary work nonetheless remains controversial. Agencies like Volunteering Australia firmly reject the idea that work receiving any pay can be called volunteering (Cordingley 2000, p. 74). The data available in Australia do not cover paid voluntary work, and do not record if the voluntary work entailed financial reimbursement. Thus, this report will not dwell further on this point.

3.3 Are there forms of donated work that are not volunteering?

The third general set of questions we address is whether some forms of unpaid or minimally recompensed work (which is not part of routine domestic work) fall outside the remit of voluntary work. Some Australian academics and public servants have raised questions about unpaid work undertaken for two specific beneficiaries:

- neighbours and local communities (especially during times of emergency) of the volunteer
- friends and family of the volunteer.

We now consider the implications of including or excluding three categories of activities which help one or both of these beneficiaries—labour donated to emergency services; informal help doing favours for people living in other households; and care of friends or relatives who are frail elderly or adults with disabilities.

Volunteering for emergency services

Some Australian academics and public servants have excluded unpaid contributions to emergency services from the definition of volunteering on the grounds that Australian culture includes a sense of helping others in times of emergency. Thus, the argument goes, the sense of duty Australians feel toward each other to help in time of emergency makes voluntary emergency work different from volunteering for other organisations. As a result of this view, few official statistics cover this form of volunteering.

We question the validity of excluding volunteering through emergency services from the definition of volunteering. The list of main motivations for volunteering included in the ABS *Voluntary work surveys* are:

- to help others in the community
- to do something worthwhile
- personal satisfaction from doing something good
- a way to be active

- to learn new skills
- to gain work experience
- to use existing skills or experience.

These motivations are surely as relevant to voluntary fire fighters or ambulance drivers as they are to people who volunteer through other organisations. Prospective volunteers need not choose the emergency services to deal with people in distress. Refugees fleeing torture in their home countries, battered children, or people newly diagnosed with a degenerative illness can feel as much distress as a family whose house is in danger from a bushfire. Volunteers in the emergency services are not necessarily only helping people in the local communities in which they live. In 2002, voluntary fire fighters travelled from state to state to help bring bushfires under control. Indeed, some emergency services volunteers, particularly those that assist with rescues at sea in bad weather or those who fight bushfires, risk serious injury and their lives, which is surely as high or higher a form of sacrifice for the community as that made by other volunteers. Voluntary emergency service workers save substantial money for taxpayers. In Victoria alone, the contribution made by volunteers in the County Fire Authority in 2001 was estimated to have a value of a half-billion dollars (Conboy & Turner 2001, p. 44).

Indeed, the absence of voluntary emergency service statistics has impeded improvements in public protection for these volunteers. Surveys in 1998 and 2001 found that emergency services in Australia were not able to produce simple statistics, including turnover rates of staff, number of volunteers over the last 10 years, or male–female ratios of volunteers (Fahey & Walker 2001). The exclusion of volunteer emergency workers from the statistics has facilitated legal oversights, which has resulted in voluntary workers, particularly emergency service voluntary workers, finding themselves without the basic protections enjoyed by paid employees and ambiguous liability if any activity they undertook as a volunteer did not go to plan (Oppenheimer 2001; Woodward & Kallman 2001). Indeed, lack of access to sufficient equipment and training for voluntary workers, excessive demands from the fire services that created a work–life imbalance for volunteers, lack of recognition, and time wasting have contributed to many volunteer fire fighters leaving the system, which may potentially leave some areas vulnerable (Miekle 2001; Woodward & Kallman 2001).

Voluntary time with emergency services is incorporated with other formal volunteering for organisations in the *1997 Time use survey*, and not separately identified. We therefore will not be making specific analysis about this form of volunteering, though we do argue that volunteering with the emergency services rightly belongs with other voluntary activity.

Informal volunteering

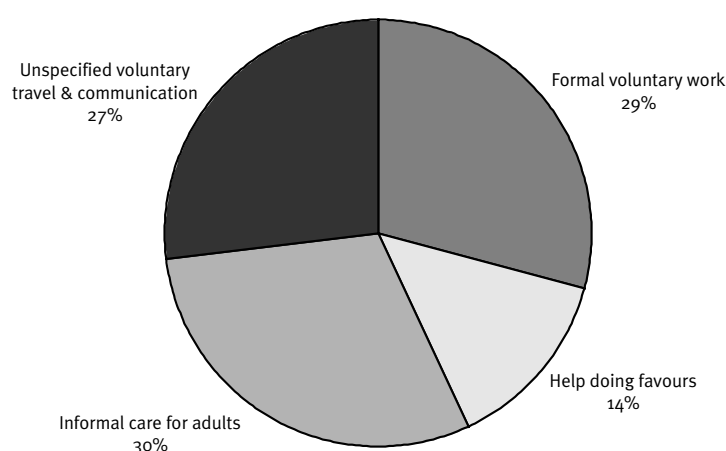
A second view holds that activities provided outside the auspices of formal voluntary organisations do not constitute voluntary work. The main justification

for this view is the argument that voluntary work requires a formal organisation to achieve a public as opposed to a strictly private effect. As a result of this view, the 1995 and 2000 ABS *Voluntary work surveys* only collected information about formal volunteering within organisations.

The above argument has serious flaws. There is no compelling reason why people could only experience the motivations for volunteering identified by the ABS inside the formal bounds of an organisation. In some cases, there may be no difference between the work performed, the satisfaction derived from performing the work, or the benefit to the community from a formally organised activity and an individual initiative. A person who picks up litter on the local beach out of respect for the environment and disgust with inappropriate waste disposal for example, may feel the same pride—and the local community gain the same value from the beach cleaning—whether the person chooses individually to pick up litter or does so after agreeing to perform this task for a formal organisation. Indeed, some formal voluntary organisations arise because one person or a small group of people spotted a community need or came up with a creative idea to address a social problem, took individual action (as there was no formal organisation available or willing to address the problem in that way), and this success attracted growing ranks of followers that led to the founding of an organisation.

True, in some contexts, the formal organisation may provide a context for better training or more efficient channelling of activity, and may improve the effectiveness of voluntary activity. Nevertheless, in other contexts, informal arrangements may generate more rapid solutions to problems (as volunteers act when a need arises, rather than developing and refining procedures before acting or seeking rota assignments or committee approval before acting), and may prove a more efficient use of people's free-time resources. To omit informal volunteering from the statistics consequently merely misses part of the volunteering picture.

Figure 3: Relative shares of time devoted to volunteering



Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

The 1997 *Time use survey* (in which respondents were selected throughout the year to complete diaries of every activity they undertook on two designated days, thus capturing both formal and informal voluntary activities) shows that the scale of informal volunteering is considerable. Figure 3, drawn from the time use survey data, displays the relative size of the time donated to each of the four components of the third sector—formal volunteering; informal help doing favours for individuals or for the community at large; informal care for adults; and unspecified voluntary travel and communication time.⁷ Formal volunteering accounts for 29 per cent of all volunteered time. Informal help doing favours represents an additional 14 per cent of voluntary time. The time in transit and communication time (time making phone calls, sending email, writing letters, and so forth on behalf of voluntary causes) accounts for a further 27 per cent of all voluntary time. The largest slice covers care of frail elderly people and working age adults with significant disabilities. In the time use data, routine housework, care of children, and time looking after a household member who has a temporary illness or injury are coded separately. The category of informal adult care only covers assistance with medical care related to long-term needs and assistance that enables the person receiving care to perform core daily living activities (like getting out of bed, bathing, and getting from place to place). Informal care and help doing favours, along with their associated travel and communication time, account for more than half of all time Australians donate for the good of others.

Care for adults with impairments

The third dimension of unpaid work performed for others, which has not been universally accepted as volunteering, covers the provision of aid to people with impairments—especially when the person needing aid is a friend, neighbour, or family member. The main argument against including this activity holds that people feel bound to help out people in need around them—particularly when these people are family, and thus there is no choice to undertake the work. Adult care, this argument suggests, is merely an extension of unpaid domestic work, just like child care, that has always been carried out by families and communities.

There are five main flaws with this argument. First, demographic and geographic trends have changed the landscape of providing care to adults in a manner that has increased the burden on many people who provide care. Family sizes are shrinking, and households in many industrialised countries, including Australia, primarily include members of one generation or parents and their dependent children (Jackson 1998; OECD 1994). At the same time, improvements in health care mean that people live to more advanced ages and survive illnesses and injuries that would have killed them in the past. More adults needing care are living longer, but people are having fewer children, fewer extended family members live together in the same household, and members of extended families are moving to households located in increasingly wider geographic regions (Jackson 1998; OECD 1994; Linsk et al. 1992, p. 11). Thus, fewer people are immediately available to share the responsibility for the increasing need for adult care. Furthermore, the development

of contemporary cities often means that people now travel further than before to get to shops and jobs, adding further strain on the time schedules of people who add adult care responsibilities to their daily routines (OECD 1994).

This is not to say that families do not continue to provide care. In the United States, families provide between 80 and 90 per cent of elderly care (Merrill 1997, p. 2). Australian families have a long tradition of rejecting nursing homes unless they have no other choice (OECD 1994; Braithwaite 1990, pp. 2–3), and few families in other countries willingly place relatives in a nursing home until they have exhausted other options (Linsk et al. 1992; OECD 1994; Neysmith 2000). As one or two people increasingly assume the majority of primary caring responsibilities, the hours they undertake are long, often between one and four hours daily (and longer in some cases), and for a vast majority of carers, the job lasts for seven days a week (Merrill 1997, pp. 2, 21). The role of caring encroaches upon the sleeping and leisure time of carers, reducing their quality of life; straining their relations with other family members (particularly with children when the carer also looks after dependent children); and causing stress (Merrill 1997, pp. 89–98; Linsk et al. 1992, p. 9; Braithwaite 1990). A study of carers in the United States found that 8 per cent of carers admitted to acting abusively out of frustration, and many more admitted to being near the point of committing abuse (Merrill 1997, p. 92). In the longer term, caring for the elderly and for adults with impairments can result in carers accumulating inadequate pension cover for their own retirement (Neysmith 2000, p. 17).

Families and friends did not initially assume the full impact of demographic changes that have increased the proportion of frail elderly people needing care. Generally, from the 1950s through to the early 1970s, state health care systems covered much of the care needed by older people (Neysmith 2000). Nevertheless, economic restructuring in recent decades resulted in most industrialised countries relying on cost-saving strategies to reduce government expenditure, which has shifted the duty of care for the frail elderly from public health care systems to families (Neysmith 2000, p. 11; Mosher 2000; Swift & Birmingham 2000).⁸ The Australian Government and state and territory governments in particular used the shifting care of older people from formal health care facilities to families and neighbours as a key part of cost containment strategies from the 1970s through the 1980s (Braithwaite 1990, p. 2). In this respect, Australian Government agencies have relied on shifting some adult care to the voluntary sector to substitute for government services (one of the key points mentioned in Section 2.1). Thus the second flaw with the argument that adult care is an extension of standard unpaid domestic work is that families are assuming new roles as a result of government policies.

Third, as Braithwaite (1990) has noted, considerable differences distinguish the care of the elderly and adults with disabilities from the care of children. Australian society celebrates independent living and the process by which children become independent. Parents have milestones to which they can look forward to as their children grow up. Passing these milestones (toilet training, learning language skills,

learning to manage the affairs of the household, learning to earn and manage money) marks a decrease in the care time (though not emotional caring) parents invest in their children. Further, governments, businesses and communities recognise (at least to a limited extent) that they have a role in raising children. Governments provide schooling for children, and parents generally have time to engage in other activities while their children are in school. Local governments often maintain children's play areas in residential areas, and a range of businesses, from family restaurants to doctor's surgeries to airport lounges, provide play areas for children. Airlines, ferries, and family-friendly restaurants often have activity packs to entertain children. Restaurants routinely offer special menu options for babies, and high chairs, cutlery and dishes designed for the very young. Community organisations and churches often provide networks of babysitters to help parents organise an occasional night out with other adults. Most public toilets offer baby changing facilities.

In contrast, Braithwaite (1990) notes, losing or never gaining independence is stigmatised, and in some cases distressing both for the person who is losing their capacities and the person providing the care. There is no clear guidance for people helping an adult whose condition deteriorates, and there are no milestones that gradually decrease care—in contrast, the care commitment often increases with time. Government agencies provide no universal functional equivalent of school to return time to carers to undertake other activities. Such government services as are available are often means-tested, limited in capacity, and short-term. Local facilities seldom specifically cater for the needs of the frail elderly or people with severe disabilities. Few transport or restaurant services offer special entertainment packs for people with learning difficulties or suffering the effects of dementia. Restaurants generally do not offer seating or catering to suit the special needs of adults (unless people come in their own wheelchairs), and tend not to offer special meals for adults who have trouble swallowing or cutting food, or to offer cutlery and glasses suited to people with a shaky hand. Formal adult day care facilities are less numerous than formal child care facilities, and most local areas have no informal networks to help carers of elderly people to enjoy a night out. Outside of specialised nursing homes, one would be hard pressed to find any public toilet that offered adult changing facilities.

Fourth, excluding provision of adult care from official voluntary statistics leads to an undervaluing of the work performed by women. Most official statistics collect information on paid work and consumption—unpaid work of any kind seldom figures in official accounts (Gershuny 2000, pp. 3–4). As men perform a larger share of paid work and women perform a larger share of unpaid work in most countries, the official statistics have generally devalued the contribution women make to their societies by ignoring a major segment of women's contributions. Recognising this imbalance in official statistics, the United Nations sponsored the 1995 Peking Declaration of the World Congress of Women, which called for national governments to keep satellite national accounts recording both the volume and value of unpaid work as well as paid work (Gershuny 2000, p. 4). As of the end of 2002, however,

only the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics had produced a complete set of national satellite accounts (Holloway 2002). Even if satellite national accounts were available now for Australia, such accounts would need to be used with some caution, since, as has already been explained, caring for the frail elderly is not a sub-component of the normal daily unpaid domestic work undertaken by households. Largely for this reason, the Harmonised European Time Use Surveys (HETUS) project coordinated by Eurostat collects information on care of adults as one of three main components of voluntary work (along with informal volunteering and formal volunteering through organisations) (Österberg 1998).

Australia does have an admirable history of collecting official data on voluntary work, but apart from the information collected through the national time use studies, similar information on hours of unpaid work provided by outside organisations are not available for Australia. Indeed, the absence of official information on caring and the dominance of stereotypes and inaccurate perceptions of the resources available to carers has led to some significant injustices in official policies in the past.⁹ For example, through the end of the 1980s, male carers of elderly people in Australia were able to draw on assistance from such services as Meals on Wheels, on the grounds that men are not so adept at housework and cooking and thus need all the help they can get, while female carers of elderly people were denied such assistance, on the grounds that women have a natural affinity for cooking and housework and therefore do not need any help (Braithwaite 1990, p. 106). While discrimination was not always this blatant, contemporary Australian elder care policies have emerged from a climate in which policies of 'community care' and 'family care' developed as unacknowledged euphemisms for female care (Braithwaite 1990, p. 3).

The invisibility of caring in the official statistics has particular significance for women. While men and women in Australia have been equally willing to take up the caring role for an elderly spouse (Braithwaite 1990, p. 46), in all countries, the majority of care for older people and adults with disabilities—particularly when the relationship between the provider and the recipient of care is not a spousal relationship—is performed by women (Neysmith 2000; Merrill 1997, p. 4; Linsk et al. 1992, pp. 8–9, 42). Even when men and women share the task of caring for the elderly, men are likely to look to women as being in charge of caring tasks (Merrill 1997, p. 7). Women are more likely to provide personal and daily care, while men (except for spouses) are more likely to provide occasional help, such as doing repairs (Merrill 1997, p. 6). Further, women are more likely to cut back hours or make other adjustments to their paid work, like changing jobs to a more convenient location or to switching to less demanding (and often lower paid) tasks, to facilitate caring, while men make fewer adjustments to their working arrangements (Merrill 1997, p. 74).¹⁰

Excluding adult care from official statistics of voluntary labour has two consequences for women. First, the exclusion of this work helps to maintain the illusion that women have a natural duty to provide adult care and will, in most

cases, supply this care. Thus the daily needs of severely disabled adults and frail elderly people slip down the agenda both of government agencies and voluntary agencies. After all, why should taxpayers' money or limited resources of a voluntary organisation pay for a need that people generally assume is already covered by the routine work of households? Second, while the inclusion of activities in official statistics of volunteering emphasises that members of society share the responsibility for the included activities, exclusions of unpaid activities create the impression that the people who perform these activities should not expect assistance from others for the majority of the work required to perform these tasks. Canadian academic, Shelia Neysmith, explains that such a state of affairs limits women's ability as citizens to negotiate the distribution of roles and responsibilities in their society.

The importance of distinguishing between making moral choices and having a responsibility [for elder care] imposed on one. It is the difference between an agent herself recognising a responsibility and deciding to act upon it and the arbitrary assignment of the responsibility of the care for others ... [W]omen are increasingly being given assignments rather than operationalising social justice through a process wherein such responsibilities are negotiated and shared among different groups of citizens (Neysmith 2000, p. 8).

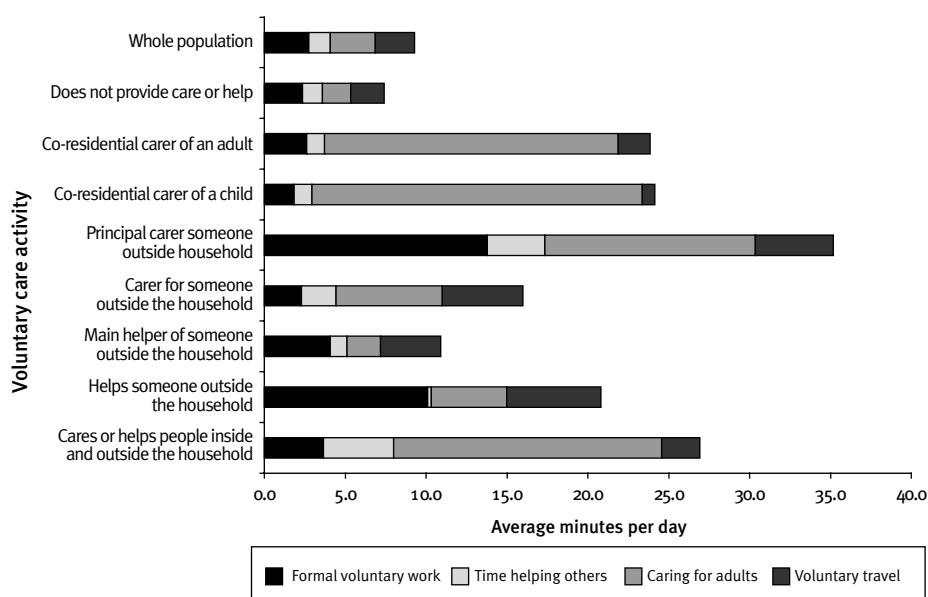
Australian academic, Valerie Braithwaite, further observes that casting women with the 'super-identity' of carers places a burden of responsibility on women's shoulders that neither benefits the providers of care nor the people who need care.

Furthermore, the super-carer image may be particularly damaging to women because it offers them a super-identity. Women not only do caring, they are caring. The role of caregiver is one which allows them to express values central to their identity, yet this role brings with it frustration, pain and despair. Not only must women be counselled against enmeshing themselves in the caring role, families, community agencies and governments must resist and guard against the practice of any one person feeling solely responsible for care. Effective long-term community care objectives cannot be achieved through women adopting the super-carer role. The costs to women, to their families and to society are too high in the long-term (Braithwaite 1990, p. 133).

Fifth, excluding adult care from voluntary figures can lead to a misunderstanding of who volunteers and why. Figure 4 displays the average minutes per day Australians spent volunteering through formal organisations, informally helping others, caring for adults, and undertaking voluntary work-related travel by whether they identify as a carer of a person who lives in their household, in another household, or both, as recorded in the national *1997 Time use survey*. People who are the main carer of an elderly person or a disabled adult who lives in another household undertake more voluntary work within formal organisations than other groups of Australians—five times as long as people who do not provide care. Indeed, principal carers of an adult that live in another home provide more voluntary work of all kinds than other Australians. People who provide help to an adult living in another household spend the second longest time on a daily basis volunteering through formal organisations—four times as long as people who do not identify as a carer or

helper. People who provide care to adults with whom they live as well as to adults from other households undertake the second longest total time in voluntary activity of all kinds. People who do not identify as carers or helpers perform less total voluntary work than all other Australians. Consequently, the decision to help others informally or to act as a carer is connected with undertaking any form of voluntary work for many people.

Figure 4: Nature of voluntary caring and help in minutes per day



Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

Volunteering Australia advances a very different argument against including care for adults in the definition of volunteering. Cordingley documents that some for-profit nursing homes have shamefully appealed to people's humanitarian instincts to attract volunteers to replace paid staff and thus boost profits (Cordingley 2000, p. 76). Volunteering Australia has argued that, in general principle, volunteering cannot and should not replace paid workers (Cordingley 2000). We share Cordingley's concerns with agencies that seek to save money and undermine the working conditions of paid staff through operating volunteer schemes alongside their employment programs. Nevertheless, not all organisations providing care to the elderly operate for profit, and, as we have already noted, private people provide a substantial proportion of adult care in Australia. The same arguments relating to the undervaluing of the work undertaken by women, and the misleading picture of who volunteers, apply equally well to the Volunteering Australia argument as they apply to the 'adult care is an extension of routine domestic work' argument.

3.4 Categories of voluntary work distinguished in this report

Nevertheless, the views the authors express in this report are not universally accepted. In consequence, with the exception of Section 6 comparing volunteering in Australia with volunteering in European countries, the available data do not allow

for the inclusion of voluntary adult care or informal voluntary work. All subsequent analysis either presents time in voluntary adult care and informal volunteering as separate categories in the figures or excludes these forms of volunteering. Thus, readers who wish to consider findings that do not include adult care or informal volunteering have the ability to do so for all but the comparative section of this report.

4 Beneficiaries of volunteering in Australia

The report now examines who benefits from volunteering in Australia.

Unfortunately, data limitations prevent us from commenting on beneficiaries of informal volunteering. Nevertheless, the *1997 Time use survey* did collect detail of the relationship between providers and receivers of adult care, and we begin with analysis of these data. The *Voluntary work survey 2000* asked respondents which types of organisations they aided and what motivated them to help such organisations. Sadly, the level of item non-response on the motivation questions is high. Thus, we then examine beneficiaries of formal volunteering in detail, before making some limited observations about why volunteers donate their time to charitable organisations.

4.1 Providers and receivers of informal care

Since informal care is such an important constituent element of volunteering in Australia, a little more detail about who provides care and to whom may assist in formulating policy.¹¹ Table 1, derived from the *1997 Time use survey*,¹² shows the estimated number of Australians providing various types of informal care and assistance.¹³ These estimates are based on respondents' answers to standardised questions about providing care and assistance that are used to determine who is a 'carer' for official purposes¹⁴, and not the information collected in the diary. Of the 14 million Australians living in private dwellings and aged 15 years and over, more than 2 million (16 per cent) gave some recognised form of regular care or assistance to somebody.

Slightly fewer than half a million people classified themselves as 'helpers', and over 1.5 million people described themselves as 'carers'. Officially, a carer is:

...a person in the household specified as the provider of assistance to a person with a disability; or a person who identifies him/herself as the provider of assistance to a person who has a long-term illness or disability who lives in another household (ABS 1999).

Helpers, in contrast, provide varying forms of assistance to people who are in need for any reason. Helpers generally do not provide the intimate assistance (such as attending to bodily needs) that carers often provide, and the relationship between helpers and the people they assist can be less clearly defined than the relationship between carers and recipients of care. Among the carers, only a third (571,977) are classified as principal carers—that is, as the person providing the most assistance (ABS 1999).

Table 1: Population estimates of the number of carers and helpers (aged 15 and above) in Australia, 1997

	Sample frequency	Population estimate	%
Does not provide assistance	6,097	11,855,775	84.0
Co-residential principal carer of an adult	149	267,882	2.1
Co-residential principal carer of a child	43	80,061	0.6
Principal carer for someone outside household	85	161,170	1.2
Carer for someone outside household	512	969,645	7.1
Main helper to someone outside household	112	219,218	1.5
Helper to someone outside household	227	436,742	3.1
Combined care and assistance inside or outside household	35	62,864	0.5
Total	7,260	14,053,357	100.0

Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

The ABS believes that since caring for someone living in the household who relies on assistance to overcome functional limitations is a not-for-profit activity and undertaken out of a devotion to serving the needs of others, not simply from self-interest, it has more in common with voluntary activity than routine household chores (ABS 1999). Nearly 1.8 million people provided care or assistance to a person with whom they did not share a dwelling, while just over 400,000 Australians lived with the person to whom they provided care.

The 1997 *Time use survey* also identified the recipients of care and assistance. Co-residential care is provided chiefly to immediate kin—spouses, children and parents. In the case where the carer and the person with the disability, injury or illness live in the same house, care recipients are predominantly spouses (70 per cent), with grown children (1 per cent), and parents (10 per cent) accounting for almost all the other cases. In the case of co-residential carers of children, by definition children are the care recipients.

Table 2 analyses inter-household assistance, by cross-tabulating the official ‘care and assistance’ categories with the kinship relationship between carer and care recipient. Inter-household care and assistance is offered to a variety of kin from different generations and to non-family members. There appears to be a relationship between the intensity of the assistance and the kinds of people to whom it is extended. The greater the dependency on assistance and the greater the responsibility for assistance accepted, the more likely it is that the care recipient will be a close relative. Conversely, those assisting people with less fundamental limitations are more likely to offer assistance to neighbours and friends. This suggests that people with high needs and high dependence are more likely to receive care from close relatives. In contrast, public generosity is more likely to be directed to needy but more independent friends and strangers.

Table 2: Who receives care from which type of carer

	Principal carer for someone outside household %	Carer for someone outside household %	Combined care inside and outside household %	Main helper to someone outside household %	Helper to someone outside household %
	(n=85)	(n=512)	(n=35)	(n=112)	(n=227)
Spouse	1.2	1.0	0.0	0.9	0.0
Parent	38.8	24.2	5.7	36.6	13.7
Child	40.0	22.1	40.0	34.8	14.5
Grandparent	0.0	4.5	0.0	1.8	4.0
Grandchild	2.4	4.7	5.7	1.8	3.5
Sibling	1.2	2.5	2.9	0.9	2.6
Other kin	7.1	12.7	14.3	4.5	7.0
Non-family member	9.3	28.3	31.4	18.7	54.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

The first column of Table 2 shows that in four-fifths of cases (79 per cent), principal carers offer assistance to the previous generation (their parents), or to the next generation (their adult children). Fewer than one in 10 principal carers look after someone who is not a family member. The next column shows that contributing carers (carers who are not principal carers) are three times more likely than principal carers to be assisting a friend or neighbour. Indeed among contributing carers, assisting someone outside their residential family with long-term care needs is the modal category, larger than any other category of care recipient taken singly (although nearly three-quarters of care recipients are relatives of some sort—mostly parents or children). The small group of people who qualify both as co-residential carers, and as carers to people outside their household, is the group of carers most likely to assist friends and neighbours.

Helpers, in contrast to carers, assist people without long-term functional restrictions. At first glance the pattern of assistance provided by those classified as the 'main helper to someone outside household' seems similar to that of principal carers, in that parents and children are the recipients of help in the majority of cases. However, main helpers are twice as likely as principal carers to assist friends and neighbours. Among those who are contributing helpers (helpers who are not the main helper), the majority (54.7 per cent) of the recipients of this assistance are friends and neighbours, with parents and children combined accounting for fewer than one in three cases of this form of assistance. We will examine who participates in informal volunteering in more detail in Section 5.4.

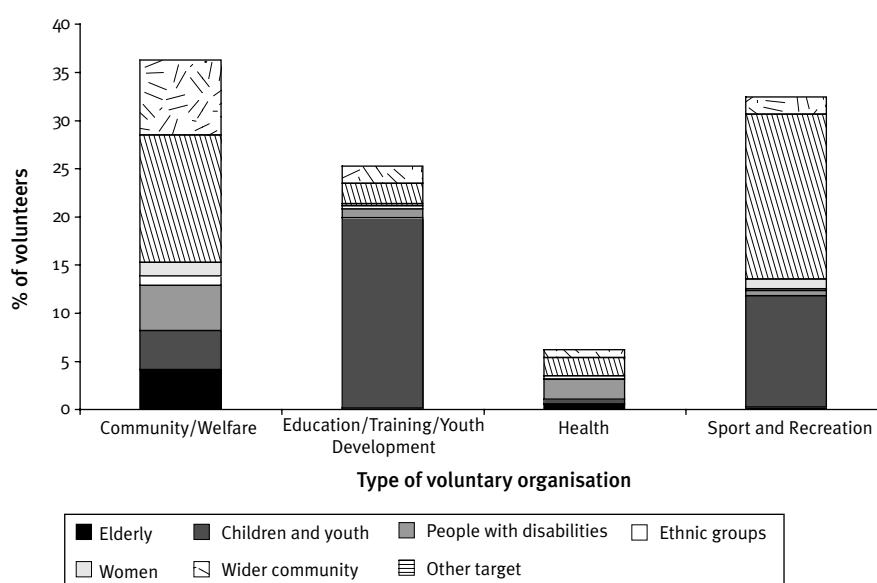
4.2 Beneficiaries of formal volunteering in Australia

In addition to counting Australians who participated in formal volunteering through organisations, the ABS *Voluntary work survey 2000* collected information about the organisations' target groups. Using this survey, it is possible to form an idea of the proportion of formal volunteering directly associated with community welfare and how much is devoted to other pursuits.¹⁵ Thus, the analysis of these data mirrors the procedure used in considering who provides care and assistance, as well as who receives it.

Figure 5 shows participation in the various types of voluntary organisations along the horizontal axis. The total height of the stacked bars in Figure 5 shows the distribution of volunteers across each of the types of voluntary organisation. The largest proportion (36 per cent) participated in community or welfare organisations, which is slightly larger than the proportion of volunteers involved in sporting and recreational organisations (32 per cent). One-quarter of Australian adult volunteers donated time to organisations concerned with education, training and youth development, and a small proportion (6 per cent) participated in health-related organisations.

In Figure 5, volunteering for each type of organisation is analysed by the target group of this activity—represented by the height of the shaded components of each bar. Only a minority (42 per cent) of the voluntary activity through community/welfare organisations is targeted at a specific group (such as the elderly, children and youth, people with disabilities, ethnic groups, or women). Most voluntary work serves broad community groups.

Figure 5: Percentage of volunteers participating in each type of formal organisation and the target population groups of this voluntary work



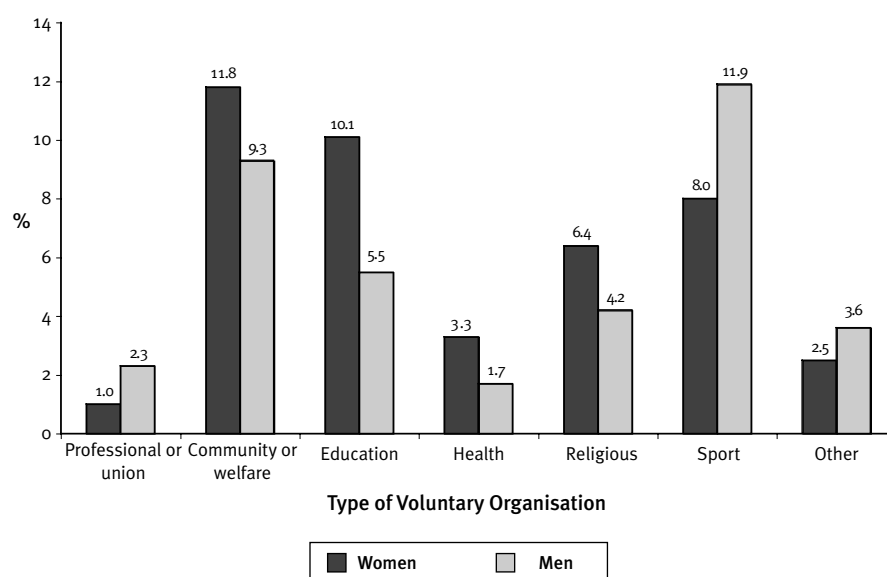
Source: ABS, *Voluntary work survey 2000*

Not unexpectedly, the predominant target groups of education/training/youth development voluntary organisations are children and youth, though some target the wider community or people with disabilities. Over one-third of volunteering through sports and recreation organisations aims to assist children and young people. People with disabilities constitute the single largest target group of voluntary activity in health-related organisations.

Summing the differently shaded components across all the bars in Figure 5 reveals that more Australians (36 per cent) engage in volunteering aimed at children and youth than any other target group. One-third (34 per cent) of volunteers are involved in activities intended to benefit the wider community, and the remaining 30 per cent volunteer on behalf of people with disabilities, the elderly, women, ethnic groups, and a variety of other groups.

There are differences in the volunteering preferences of women and men in Australia. Figure 6 shows the percentage of women and men who volunteer for different types of organisations. Women and men are equally likely to volunteer for art or cultural organisations and also for environmental or animal organisations, so these types of organisations are excluded from Figure 6.

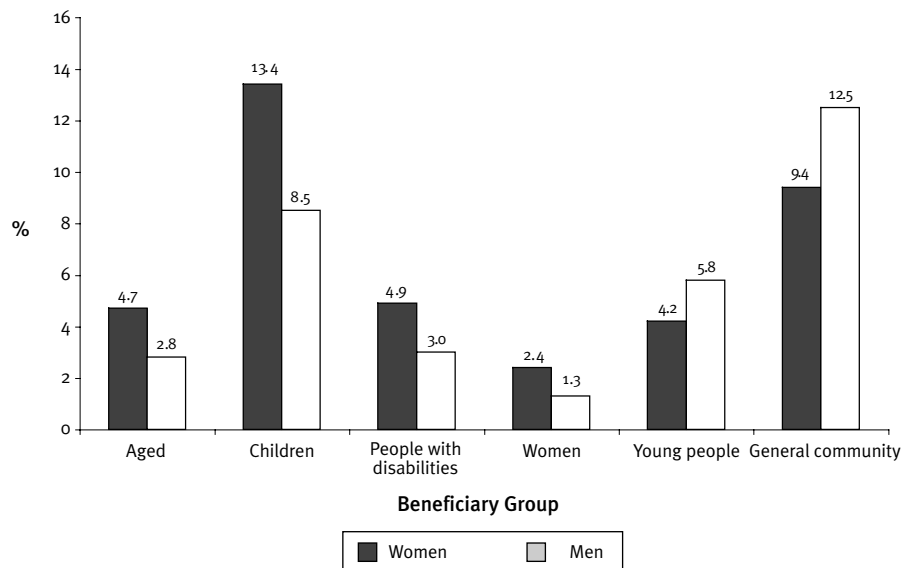
Figure 6: Percentage of women and men who volunteer for different types of organisations



Source: ABS, *Voluntary work survey 2000*

Figure 7 displays the different percentages of women and men who volunteer for organisations which help different beneficiaries. Men and women are equally likely to volunteer for agencies which help ethnic groups or other groups, so these categories are excluded from Figure 7. The level of statistical significance for each difference between men and women (as measured by Fisher's exact test) in Figures 6 and 7 is 0.000, which means that the odds of the figures resulting by chance are less than 1 in 1,000. Another way of stating this is that the differences in Figures 6 and 7 are likely to represent real sex differences.

Figure 7: Percentage of women and men who volunteer for organisations helping different groups of beneficiaries



Source: ABS, *Voluntary work survey 2000*

When type of agency is examined, men are more likely to participate in professional or union organisations, sports-related organisations, and other organisation types. Twice as many men as women participate in unions and professional organisations, though the total level of volunteering for this type of organisation is low. Among the two organisation types with the highest level of participation, men are one-third more likely to participate in sports-related organisations than women, while women are one-third more likely than men to volunteer for community or welfare-related agencies. Women are also more likely than men to participate in education, health-related, or religious voluntary groups. Similar findings have emerged in Canada, where women are more likely than men to volunteer for health, education, and child care organisations (Prentice & Ferguson 2000, p. 122).

Smaller but still consequential differences between women and men emerge when one examines the groups assisted by voluntary agencies. Women are more likely to volunteer for organisations which aim to help women, people with disabilities, the aged, and children. Men are more likely to work for agencies which help young people or the community as a whole.

4.3 Reflections on motivations for formal volunteering

Formal voluntary work research suggests that the motivations for voluntary work in Australia have changed over the last decade from primarily altruistic motivations to a more complex range of motivations (Zappalà et al. 2001). Other research has found that people who principally volunteer for altruistic reasons tend to give both more time and money to voluntary organisations than those who primarily volunteer for personal development or other reasons (Farmer & Fedor 2001).¹⁶ Our assessment of the *Voluntary work survey 2000* reveals that for both

men and women across Australia, two altruistic reasons—helping others and the community, followed by personal satisfaction—are the main motivations for performing voluntary activities. Nearly 55 per cent of respondents who answered the *Voluntary work survey 2000* questions on volunteering motives nominated only one motivation, which in most cases was an altruistic reason. The smaller numbers of people who reported multiple reasons for volunteering most often nominated clusters of work-related (learn new skills, gain work experience, use existing skills or experience), duty (religious belief, felt obliged), and incidental (a way to be active, just happened to get involved) reasons. Altruistic reasons are rarely nominated with other reasons for volunteering. Nevertheless, nearly two-thirds of the *Voluntary work survey 2000* sample (59.9 per cent) did not answer the questions about their motivations for volunteering, thus it is hard to draw any firm conclusions about volunteers' motivations from these data. Apart from including a column where people indicated for whom they performed activities, the *1997 Time use survey* did not ask people why they undertook voluntary activity, so we do not delve into this subject at length.

5 Profiles of volunteers in Australia

We now consider who volunteers¹⁷ in Australia. In Section 5 we present the results of a multivariate analysis based on a wide range of factors that influence people's participation in volunteering. First, we examine the annual participation in volunteering using binary logistic regression and the *Voluntary work survey 2000*, showing the independent influence of the factors affecting volunteering. Second, we analyse participation in formal volunteering on any one day, drawing on the *1997 Time use survey*, using the same multivariate technique. Third, the picture of participation is completed by analysing the intensity of volunteering—that is, the time people spend volunteering on days when they volunteer—using a multivariate analysis (based on ordinary least squares regression¹⁸) of average minutes per day devoted to formal volunteering. Finally, we examine who is likely to undertake informal volunteering and to perform adult care, though these latter questions can only be answered using the *1997 Time use survey* data.

This section also allows comparison of these two sources of data. As we use the same methods to analyse each data set, we expect that some results should be consistent from both sources. Nevertheless, the reader should keep in mind that each study measured different concepts, and each study has separate strengths and weaknesses. In consequence, the picture suggested by each data source can vary to a degree.

The *Voluntary work survey 2000* asked people to recall all voluntary work they did over the last year for up to five formal organisations. For people who were active members of voluntary agencies and who did regular voluntary activity, answering these questions was relatively straightforward. The data fall short in cases where (a) people did not identify as members of organisations but nevertheless became involved with voluntary organisations for short periods, and (b) people performed activities which were not clearly formal or informal. As an example, a person might fill in for a sick friend who donates voluntary secretarial work to the Salvation Army to help the friend, while feeling no particular attachment to the organisation. A mother may respond to an appeal from her child's scout group to help with fundraising by baking cakes for a sale, but otherwise have minimal contact with the scouts. Many months after such irregular activities, a person may forget to mention such activities when interviewed.

The *1997 Time use survey* captured all activities people performed over two randomly selected consecutive 24-hour periods. Thus, time diaries are useful tools for measuring the level of voluntary activity on any given day. This also means, however, that the less often a person does an activity, the less likely they are to be doing the activity on their diary day. As much voluntary activity occurs on a weekly, monthly, or less frequent basis, the diary alone is not a good predictor of the overall participation rate (total percentage of people who do any voluntary work) over the year, but the diary does predict who volunteers on any given day, the total time people spend volunteering, and how volunteers schedule their voluntary work around other activities.

For both forms of multivariate analysis, the researcher must choose a comparison group—that is, a group of people against whom you can compare the likelihood of participation in volunteering and against whom to compare intensity. The group chosen for this analysis are women aged 30 to 44 years who:

- are not currently not married (de jure or de facto)
- are Australian residents but born in another country
- speak English at home
- do not live in a capital city
- live in households with household income in the middle 60 per cent of the income range
- are not managers or professionals
- have at least a secondary school education but who do not have a university or other advanced degree or professional qualification
- are not currently employed and not seeking a job.

In this section, we present results of the analysis of each of the factors affecting volunteering separately, while holding all others constant. In this way it is possible to examine the influence of life course stage, sex, ethnicity, region, employment and socioeconomic status on volunteering. The first of the two methods we use, binary logistic regression, allows us to explain a simple yes/no dependent variable—did people formally volunteer for an organisation or not? With the second method, ordinary least squares regression, we seek to explain the total time (in minutes) people spent volunteering on their diary day (including people who have a zero score—that is, who did not volunteer on that day).

Where the relationship between the study group and the comparison group is positive, the study group is more likely to have volunteered or spent more time volunteering than the comparison group. Where the relationship is negative, the study group is less likely to have volunteered or spent less time on average volunteering than the comparison group. An asterisk (*) is used to indicate the degree of confidence that we have in whether these results are likely to reflect real social differences or simply to have resulted from an anomaly in the study. We use no asterisks when we are not confident that the results represent real differences.

5.1 Participation in formal volunteering—who is likely to be involved and what groups might be excluded

Table 3 shows which groups of people volunteer through formal organisations by age, marital status, and the presence of pre-school age children in the household. We selected these age groups after comparing both the mean and median minutes spent volunteering and the percentage who recorded doing any volunteering in a time diary, as well as the mean and median number of organisations for which people reported working and the percentage who reported doing any volunteering

in the *Voluntary work survey 2000*. We chose boundaries between the age categories at points where volunteering patterns changed in both data sets. While we had to make a few minor adjustments (covering spans of up to five years of age) to make the age bands fit both data sets, there were remarkably consistent patterns of changes in volunteering by age among the two data sets. Important life course milestones, such as marriage, child rearing and retirement are captured as separate variables.

Table 3: Likelihood and intensity of volunteering by life course stage

	Participation		Intensity (time)	Comments
	Yearly	Daily		
Aged less than 30	less likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer ***	Younger people are both less likely to volunteer and spend less time in voluntary activity
Aged 45–59	less likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	more time as a volunteer ***	People in the older working age range and who have recently retired are more likely to volunteer on any given day and spend longer periods volunteering, but they are less likely to report doing any voluntary work in the last year
Aged 60–74	less likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	more time as a volunteer ***	
Aged 75 or over	less likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer ***	Living beyond the age of 75 lowers the likelihood of both annual and daily participation and is also associated with lower intensity of volunteering than the comparison group
In couple	more likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer **	Having a spouse or a live-in partner increases the likelihood of volunteering, but people in couples spend fewer minutes volunteering
With child aged less than five years	less likely to volunteer *	more likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer ***	Parents of pre-school age children are more likely to engage in some form of voluntary work, but they spend less time volunteering and are less likely to report volunteering in the last year

Source(s): Yearly—ABS, *Voluntary work survey 2000*; Daily and Intensity—ABS, *1997 Time use survey*

Asterisks (*) mark the degree to which we can be confident that the results are real and not the result of chance or coincidence.

*** the odds that results may be in error are less than 1 in 1,000

** the odds that results may be in error are less than 1 in 100

* the odds that results may be in error are less than 5 in 100

Everything else being equal, participation in voluntary organisations plateaus in middle age groups.¹⁹ Though a comparison of the *Voluntary work survey 1995* and the *Voluntary work survey 2000* suggests that the rate of volunteering among young people aged 18 to 24 increased from 17 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent in 2000 (Paul 2001, p. 31), this report illustrates that young people are less likely to volunteer than people in the middle age range.²⁰ People nearing retirement or recently retired are more likely to volunteer and also spend the most time in voluntary activities, but they are less likely to report working for voluntary

organisations over the last year than people aged 30 to 44 years. Both the participation rate and time spent volunteering declines from the age of 75.

The effect of living in a couple, independent of other variables in the model, increases the likelihood of doing some volunteering, but lowers the time committed to voluntary work. Parents of pre-school age children are less likely to report volunteering over the last year, but more likely to volunteer on any given day. Nevertheless, parents of young children spend less time volunteering on average than other volunteers. Neither marriage nor presence of a pre-school age child in the household has a significant effect on the intensity of volunteering.

As Table 4 shows, when other factors are held constant, men spend less time formally volunteering than women. The sex effect is otherwise unclear. Men are more likely than women to report volunteering in the time diaries (that is, men are more likely to be volunteering on any given day), but women are more likely than men to state that they had done some voluntary work over the last year. Language and country of birth are used as proxy measures of ethnicity. Speaking a language other than English at home consistently reduces the both the likelihood and intensity of volunteering. Being born outside Australia negatively affects attachment to voluntary organisations but increases the likelihood of volunteering on a given day and the average number of hours spent volunteering compared to those born in Australia.

Owing to the measures that the ABS takes to protect the identity of individuals in the unit record data, the best available measure of regional effects is a contrast between the metropolitan capital cities in Australia and the balance of the population. However, this measure consistently shows that those living in a state/territory capital city are less involved in volunteering than Australians living elsewhere. Table 4 also reveals that the independent effect of being in the labour force is weak. However, most effects go in the direction of reducing the likelihood of any participation in volunteering and increasing the likelihood of spending less time doing volunteering when an employed person chooses to volunteer.

Table 4: Likelihood and intensity of volunteering by sex, ethnicity, region, and employment status

	Participation		Intensity	Comments
	Yearly	Daily	(time)	
Sex				
Male	less likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer **	less time as a volunteer ***	Men are more likely to volunteer on a daily basis than women, but women are more likely to report volunteering in the last year and spend more time volunteering than men
Ethnicity				
Does not speak English at home	less likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer ***	Speaking a language other than English at home decreases both the likelihood and the intensity of volunteering
Born in Australia	less likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	more time as a volunteer ***	People born in Australia are more likely to report daily volunteering than yearly volunteering, and are also more likely to spend more time volunteering
Region				
Capital city	less likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer ***	Being a resident of a capital city lessens the likelihood of volunteering on a yearly or daily basis and also reduces the time donated to volunteering
Employment status				
Employed full-time	not different from other groups	less likely to volunteer ***	less time as a volunteer **	Compared to those not in the labour force, full-time employed people are less likely to volunteer on a given day and donate less time to voluntary work
Employed part-time	more likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer **	not different from other groups	Those in part-time employment are less likely to report volunteering on a daily basis but more likely to say that they volunteered in the last year
Unemployed	not different from other groups	not different from other groups	less time as a volunteer ***	The only characteristic that distinguishes those actively looking for work (the unemployed) from those not in the labour force is that the unemployed devote less time to volunteering

Source(s): Yearly—ABS, *Voluntary work survey 2000*; Daily and Intensity—ABS, *1997 Time use survey*
 Asterisks (*) mark the degree to which we can be confident that the results are real and not the result of chance or coincidence.

*** the odds that results may be in error are less than 1 in 1,000

** the odds that results may be in error are less than 1 in 100

* the odds that results may be in error are less than 5 in 100

Table 5 shows that those in the middle-income range (the second to fifth quintiles) are more likely to volunteer on an average day and to allocate more time to volunteering. People working in either very high or very low status occupations are more likely to volunteer and more freely give their time than those in low status occupations. Independent of income and occupational status, people holding advanced educational qualifications have a higher propensity to volunteer and to commit more time to volunteering.

Table 5: Likelihood and intensity of volunteering by socioeconomic status

	Participation		Intensity	Comments
	Yearly	Daily	(time)	
Lowest 20% of the income range	not different from other groups	less likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer **	Compared to those in the middle of the income distribution, being at the bottom one-fifth of the income distribution decreases both the daily propensity to volunteer and the time donated to voluntary work
Highest 20% of the income range	not different from other groups	less likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer ***	People with incomes in the top one-fifth of the income distribution behave similarly to those at the bottom, and are less likely than middle-income earners to volunteer on a designated day and donate less time to volunteering
Manager or professional	more likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	less likely to volunteer ***	This high-prestige occupational group are more likely to volunteer, but commit less time to volunteering than middle ranking employees
Elementary clerical or labourer	less likely to volunteer *	more likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	Although people from low-prestige occupations are less likely to report volunteering over the last year, they are more likely to be involved on any single day and they commit more time to voluntary activities
Bachelor degree or higher	more likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	more likely to volunteer ***	Being among the highly educated increases both the likelihood and the intensity of volunteering

Source(s): Yearly—ABS, *Voluntary work survey 2000*; Daily and Intensity—ABS, *1997 Time use survey*

Asterisks (*) mark the degree to which we can be confident that the results are real and not the result of chance or coincidence.

*** the odds that results may be in error are less than 1 in 1,000

** the odds that results may be in error are less than 1 in 100

* the odds that results may be in error are less than 5 in 100

Throughout the presentation of these results it has been evident that each of the three measures of volunteering used—yearly participation rates, daily participation rates, and the average amount of time committed to volunteering—vary independently. That measures of intensity should differ from binary measures of participation comes as no surprise. However, the degree of difference between the two binary measures of participation, which are more frequently disparate than they are congruent, was unexpected. The greatest certainty of interpretation is in those cases where all three measures predict consistent results, such as the

universally positive influence of high education and living in regional Australia or the universally negative effects of non-English speaking backgrounds. Those cases where two measures agree on the direction (either positive or negative) of the effect of an influential variable and when the third measure is not statistically significant are relatively easy to interpret. However, mixed cases where the yearly and the daily measures have different signs are more challenging. Being aware of these peculiarities is a useful precaution against hasty interpretation and a good basis for further investigation. Hopefully, greater scrutiny might lead to more refined measures.

5.2 Participation in informal volunteering and adult care—who is likely to be involved and what groups might be excluded

The *Voluntary work survey 2000* excluded informal volunteering and adult care. Some studies, summarised in ‘Care for adults with impairments’ in Section 3.3, have profiled people providing adult care. Very little information has been gathered about who provides informal assistance to others. Time use studies offer a distinct advantage for the analysis of voluntary work, as they are one of the few sources of data that collect reliable detail on all three types of volunteering.

The *1997 Time use survey* data include two features that could be used to identify informal help for others. Activities done as voluntary help in outside organisations have a separate code in the activity data. In addition, the diary instrument asked people to note for whom they performed each activity. Scope remains for future analysis of this ‘for whom’ column, as some informal volunteering which responding diarists did not recognise to be informal volunteering might be identified in this column. Nevertheless, using the ‘for whom’ column is not straightforward, as this column also marks activities which do not fall into the rubric of volunteering. People regularly undertake routine domestic work for other household members (such as ironing a spouse’s clothes or packing lunch for a school child). People may borrow money from a friend or neighbour and pay back the loan by doing odd jobs at the friend’s or neighbour’s home. People may also exchange labour for mutual convenience—such as one mother watching both her children and her neighbour’s children on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and the neighbour assuming child minding duties for both households on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The task of unravelling uncoded informal volunteering from the ‘for whom’ column lies outside the scope of this project. Thus we now turn to examining those informal helping and adult care activities that are coded in these categories in the time use data. Tables 8 and 9 present the results of logistic regression analysis showing which groups of people provide informal help to others (Table 6) and which perform adult care (Table 7).

Table 6: Likelihood of informal helping

Variable	Exponential β	Standard error		Significance
(Constant)	0.02	0.003	0.000	(highly meaningful)
More likely to provide informal help				
Lowest 20% of the income range	1.24	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Highest 20% of the income range	1.13	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Manager or professional	1.39	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Bachelor degree or higher	1.36	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Male	1.43	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Born in Australia	1.01	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Employed part-time	1.08	0.003	0.003	(highly meaningful)
Unemployed	1.08	0.003	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Less likely to provide informal help				
Capital city	0.74	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Married	0.79	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Elementary clerical or labourer	0.74	0.003	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Does not speak English at home	0.52	0.004	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Employed full-time	0.72	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Youngest child aged 0–4	0.45	0.003	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged <30	0.65	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 45–59	0.94	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 60–74	0.84	0.003	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 75 and over	0.57	0.004	0.000	(highly meaningful)

Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

There are some similarities between the findings in both tables as well as in Section 5.1. Australians working in managerial or professional jobs and Australians with a university equivalent level of education are more likely to volunteer formally through organisations, to provide informal help to others, and to provide adult care. People in the lowest 20 per cent of the income range are also more likely to provide both informal help to others and to undertake adult care. However, as Section 5.1 indicated, this group was less likely to aid a formal voluntary organisation. People who do not speak English at home, are employed full-time, are aged less than 30, or are aged 75 or more are less likely to participate in any form of volunteering—with the one exception that people aged 75 and over are more likely to perform adult care. People who work in elementary clerical or labouring jobs, or have a child at home aged under five, were less likely to provide informal assistance or adult care, though Section 5.1 showed that people with a toddler or infant and people aged 60 to 74 are more likely to engage in formal voluntary work (the formal voluntary work picture for people employed in elementary trades is mixed).

Table 7: Likelihood and intensity of providing adult care

Variable	Exponential β	Standard error		Significance
(Constant)	0.05	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
More likely to provide adult care				
Capital city	1.12	0.001	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Married	1.15	0.001	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Lowest 20% of the income range	1.16	0.001	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Manager or professional	1.61	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Bachelor degree or higher	1.25	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 45–59	1.75	0.001	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 60–74	1.13	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 75 and over	1.08	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Less likely to provide adult care				
Highest 20% of the income range	0.59	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Elementary clerical or labourer	0.91	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Male	0.67	0.001	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Does not speak English at home	0.69	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Born in Australia	0.94	0.001	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Employed full-time	0.35	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Employed part-time	0.74	0.002	0.003	(highly meaningful)
Unemployed	0.75	0.003	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Youngest child aged 0–4	0.57	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged <30	0.50	0.002	0.000	(highly meaningful)

Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

The voluntary profile of other groups is more mixed. Men, people in the highest 20 per cent of the income range, people born in Australia, people working part-time, and the unemployed are more likely to provide informal help but less likely to provide adult care. In contrast, people living in a capital city, women, people living in married or cohabiting couples, and people aged 45 to 74 are more likely to provide adult care but less likely to offer informal help to others. The results in Table 7 are consistent with the findings of the research summarised in ‘Care for adults with impairments’ in Section 3.3²¹, which attests to the reliability of time use data for identifying carers. Though we do not have a comparative data set against which we can assess the reliability of the profile of informal helpers, given the degree of overlap between the two very different types of formal voluntary work information collected in the *Voluntary work survey 2000* and the 1997 *Time use survey*, and the compatibility of the time use results with other surveys of adult carers, suggests that any inaccuracies in the profile of helpers are likely to be modest.

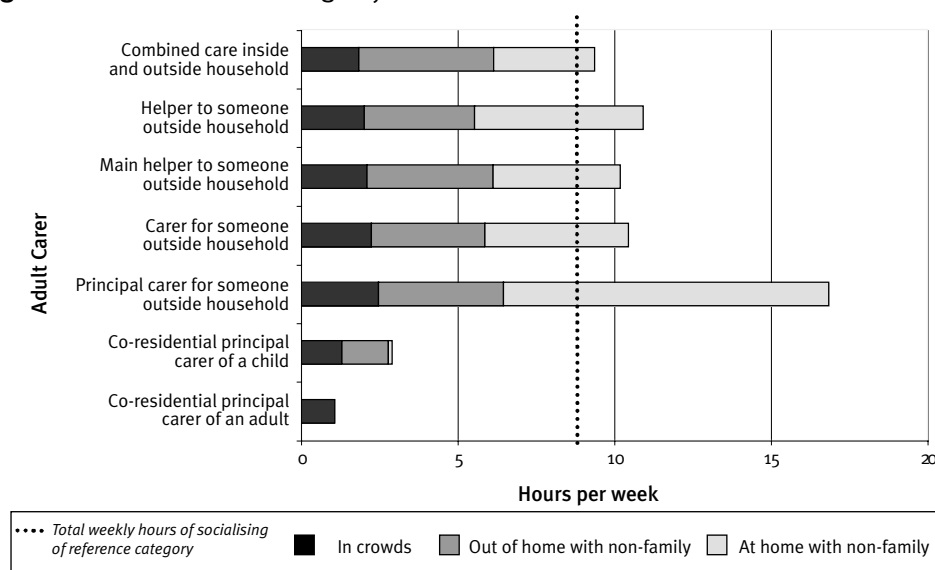
5.3 Pathways to participation—volunteering and social connectedness

Present welfare policy in Australia aims to foster increased workforce participation among welfare recipients. The present policy focus holds that increasing the social

capital of people at the lower end of the economic spectrum might facilitate stable and successful employment, as well as improve the health and quality of life of people living in low-income households. This section examines the propensity for all forms of volunteering to serve as pathways to participation.

We start by examining the socialising habits of adult carers (these categories are based on questions in the individual questionnaire of the *1997 Time use survey*, which apply to the activities people generally perform, and are not drawn from activities recorded in the diaries). Figure 8 shows the socialising time spent by different groups of people providing occasional help to an adult with impairments and regular adult carers. We constructed the measure of ‘time spent in socialising’ from the raw information contained in the time use data. Total socialising time, represented by the total length of the bars in Figure 8, consists of three components—time spent participating in events with crowds; time spent socialising with friends and associates at venues outside the respondent’s own home (for example, in public places and in other people’s homes); and time spent entertaining friends and associates in respondents’ own homes.

Figure 8: Predicted socialising beyond the circle of kin



Source: ABS, *1997 Time use survey*

Adult carers experience an average of around eight hours of socialising time each week. Co-residential carers are far less likely to engage in the more public forms of socialising. Not only was the total time spent socialising markedly lower, it was also lower in each component of socialising. Co-residential carers spent 30 to 57 per cent less time in crowds than carers living in other households—two to four hours per week less socialising out of home with people beyond the circle of their kin, and six to 16 hours per week less in entertaining friends and associates at home. Adult carers have almost no socialising time—barely an hour a week on average—which severely limits the ability of these carers to maintain or build social capital. Even parents caring for a young infant have more than double the socialising time of adult carers.

In contrast, people who provide adult care to someone who lives in another household enjoy more socialising time than people who only perform occasional help for adults with impairments. From the perspective of policy makers, adult carers generally have a reasonable base of social contact from which to build other forms of social capital, and encouraging greater participation in informal volunteering and adult care for people living in other households may help more isolated people build social capital.

Table 8: Factors explaining time (in minutes per day) spent in formal volunteering

Variable	Exponential β	Standard error	Significance	
(Constant)	4.985	0.882	0.000	(highly meaningful)
More time spent in formal volunteering				
Manager or professional	0.210	0.707	not different from other groups	
Elementary clerical or labourer	1.727	0.704	0.014	(marginal difference)
Bachelor degree or higher	3.333	0.646	0.004	(meaningful)
Born in Australia	0.904	0.528	not different from other groups	
Unemployed	0.397	1.031	not different from other groups	
Aged 45–59	1.382	0.589	0.019	(marginal difference)
Aged 60–74	2.003	0.760	0.008	(meaningful)
Total socialising time	0.002	0.004	not different from other groups	
Less time spent in formal volunteering				
Capital city	-1.966	0.440	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Married	-0.381	0.489	not different from other groups	
Lowest 20% of the income range	-1.459	0.581	0.012	(marginal difference)
Highest 20% of the income range	-0.426	0.560	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Male	-0.155	0.442	not different from other groups	
Does not speak English at home	-1.706	0.865	0.049	(marginal difference)
Employed full-time	-3.744	0.621	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Employed part-time	-2.593	0.720	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Youngest child aged 0–4	-0.738	0.707	not different from other groups	
Aged <30	-1.729	0.601	0.004	(highly meaningful)
Aged 75 and over	-0.817	1.109	not different from other groups	

Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

The time use study did not classify volunteers into subcategories, so we examine whether there is a relationship between socialising time and time spent volunteering in the diaries. This is not an elegant solution, as people who volunteer might engage in more social activities on days when they do not volunteer. Nevertheless, no independent question asked diarists responding to the time use survey if they ever volunteered on either a formal or informal basis, so the preferable analysis comparable to that presented in Figure 8 could not be repeated.

Tables 8 and 9 employ regression analysis to examine two questions.

- Who is more likely to formally volunteer in an organisation (Table 8)?
- Who is likely to undertake any form of voluntary work (Table 9)?

Table 9: Factors explaining time (in minutes per day) spent in any form of volunteering

Variable	Exponential β	Standard error		Significance
(Constant)	17.661	1.830	0.000	(highly meaningful)
More time spent in any form of volunteering				
Manager or professional	3.416	1.468	0.020	(marginal difference)
Elementary clerical or labourer	3.630	1.461	0.013	(marginal difference)
Bachelor degree or higher	3.902	1.341	0.004	(meaningful)
Male	0.568	0.917		not different from other groups
Born in Australia	1.103	1.095		not different from other groups
Aged 45–59	3.320	1.223	0.007	(meaningful)
Aged 60–74	1.805	1.576		not different from other groups
Total socialising time	0.008	0.008		not different from other groups
Less time spent in any form of volunteering				
Capital city	-3.938	0.912	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Married	-0.215	1.015		not different from other groups
Lowest 20% of the income range	-0.729	1.206		not different from other groups
Highest 20% of the income range	-2.816	1.162	0.015	(meaningful)
Does not speak English at home	-2.717	1.795		not different from other groups
Employed full-time	-9.331	1.288	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Employed part-time	-4.241	1.494	0.005	(meaningful)
Unemployed	-2.710	2.141		not different from other groups
Youngest child aged 0–4	-4.291	1.468	0.003	(meaningful)
Aged <30	-5.491	1.247	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 75 and over	-5.190	2.301	0.024	(marginal difference)

Source: ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*

Note: Any form of volunteering comprises formal, informal, adult care, as well as travel and communication activities related to voluntary activities.

Both tables include the total minutes of socialising time that people recorded in their diaries. In both tables, socialising time is statistically insignificant—which means that on days when volunteers actually perform voluntary work, there is no difference in the average time volunteers and non-volunteers spend socialising.²² Indeed, the only major difference between the tables is that women are more likely to record doing formal voluntary work in their time diaries when socialising time is added to the model, but men are more likely to record formal voluntary activity in their diaries than women. This means that when socialising time is added to the model, women are more likely to engage in formal volunteering, while men are more likely to report doing either informal help or care work (mostly informal help). This difference between the sexes aside, Tables 8 and 9 indicate that the social capital benefits from volunteering accrue over the longer term rather than on a daily activity basis.

5.4 Adult care and social connection

Formal volunteering helps people establish social ties with other people who share similar interests. Informal helping can build community ties and friendships. Nevertheless, adult care can have the opposite effect of leaving carers socially isolated, in part because they live in areas that lack facilities to enable them to take the person for whom they care out in public, and in part because the intensity of the care needs of the person whom they aid can prevent them from leaving the house for regular or long periods (Neysmith 2000; Merrill 1997). Indeed, Figure 8 confirms this finding—adult carers living in the same household as the person for whom they care have substantially less time for social activities than other volunteers.

Policies to help carers maintain or improve their social capital must entail flexibility to address the individual circumstances of each carer. Nevertheless, certain categories of people who provide care may need a bit more attention. While individual carers employed in professional or managerial jobs and carers with a high level of education may experience extreme personal hardship, people in these groups are more likely to engage in all forms of volunteering, and thus more likely to at least be aware of the possibilities by which they might increase social capital through voluntary activity. People who assume the role of caring for an adult who come from the categories of people not as engaged with volunteering—those who do not speak English at home, the youngest and oldest members of society, and people working full-time—may be more likely to need assistance to build or re-establish social links. Likewise, people on low incomes and women—particularly women on low-incomes caring for someone living in the same household—are less likely to be socially engaged through volunteering and may also need more attention from programs seeking to boost social interaction. In particular, the findings in this report about isolated carers highlight the specific need for expanding access to affordable respite care and expanding the degree of community self-help facilities for adult carers that might enable these people to regain time in which they can expand their social capital resources.

6 Australian volunteering in a comparative perspective

We next examine total voluntary activity (formal volunteering, helping other people in informal contexts, and caring for adults with impairments) in Australia with the total voluntary activity in four other developed countries. In this section, we compare results from the *1997 Time use survey* with tables produced from national sample time use studies conducted in Canada in 1998, Finland in 1999–2000, France in 1998–99, and the United Kingdom in 2000–01. All of these studies were conducted over a whole year. The three European and the Australian studies asked all adult members of sample households to complete diaries. The Canadian study was conducted over the telephone, and people completed one diary covering their activities on the previous day. The three European surveys asked participating diarists to complete two diaries, one on a weekday and one on a weekend day. The Australian study asked people to complete diaries on two randomly selected consecutive days.

The categories in Tables 10 to 13 were chosen by Eurostat for the first phase of HETUS data release. Eurostat, in conjunction with leading European time use researchers, has developed guidelines for harmonised data collection, official reporting of results, and user data files for the European Union countries and candidate countries. To date, 19 European countries have completed or are in the process of completing time use studies which follow at least a part of the Eurostat HETUS guidelines, and Eurostat recently funded a post-data collection pilot phase for the data release. In the first phase of release, Eurostat has posted basic tables for all women, all men, employed women, and employed men, that cover time spent in 12 broad categories of activities across 11 demographic categories on its Internet site (Eurostat 2003). At a future date, Eurostat may make harmonised time use data files available to selected scientific and academic researchers, and also post a program on the Internet that allows all users to produce some customised time use tables. As the program producing customised tables and harmonised data files is not yet available, this section makes use of the basic table information only. The basic tables were specifically designed to facilitate comparison with similar time use studies from non-European countries, and the Canadian data have been harmonised for inclusion at this level (further detail supplied in the documentation of the Multinational Time Use Study). As the available comparative data do not separate adult care, informal volunteering, and formal volunteering, these three types of voluntary activity are grouped for this section of this report.

Tables 10 and 11 show the average time men and women spent performing any activity which falls into the broad range of voluntary work at different life stages on an average day of the year. Tables 10 and 11 also show the average daily participation rate for women and men in each category—that is, the proportion of people doing volunteering on the average day, not whether any particular individual did any voluntary work over the year. If people happened to undertake voluntary

activity on the randomly selected days when they were asked to keep their diaries, then they are recorded as participants in voluntary activities in these tables.

The reader should exercise some caution comparing participation rates across countries. Studies in Canada have found that the number of people who volunteered on a yearly basis (that is, who did some voluntary work at least once a year) declined from 31 per cent in 1997 to 26 per cent in 2000, but at the same time, the average time people who volunteered spent doing voluntary activities on each volunteering day increased between 1997 and 2000 (Bowen 2002, p. 17). Paddy Bowen, the President of Volunteer Canada, concludes that compared to 1997, a smaller number of Canadian volunteers worked longer hours on more days of the year in 2000 (Bowen 2002, p. 17).

Table 10: Average time (in minutes per day) women spent in formal and informal voluntary work^a and the percentage of people who volunteered on any given day

		Australia 1997	Canada 1998	Finland 1999–2000	France 1998–99	United Kingdom 2000–01
Whole population	minutes	6	10	14	13	10
Women <25, no children <18, living with parents	minutes	2	6	7	7	5
	% volunteering	3.2	8.3	7.1	7.2	5.8
Women 25–44, no children <18, living with parents	minutes	7	3	11	11	14
	% volunteering	5.3	8.1	21.8	9.7	9.4
Women <45, living in couple, no children <18	minutes	2	6	7	8	5
	% volunteering	3.3	6.5	9.8	6.7	7.5
Women <45, no children <18, living in other arrangement	minutes	3	9	18	13	8
	% volunteering	4.4	8.6	13.0	10.3	10.9
Single female parent (all ages) youngest child <18	minutes	8	13	19	11	7
	% volunteering	3.9	10.9	14.4	9.9	8.8
Women (all ages) living in couple, youngest child 0–6	minutes	3	4	7	5	6
	% volunteering	5.4	7.3	9.2	6.6	9.4
Women (all ages) living in couple, youngest child 7–17	minutes	9	8	10	9	10
	% volunteering	8.1	10.3	10.0	9.9	10.7
Women 45–64, living in couple, no children <18	minutes	9	17	22	16	24
	% volunteering	10.1	11.1	18.6	14.2	22.1
Women 45–64, no children <18, living in other arrangement	minutes	14	20	26	22	24
	% volunteering	12.3	12.6	21.0	7.5	21.9
Women 65 and above, living in couple, no children <18	minutes	10	17	15	13	13
	% volunteering	10.4	11.9	12.5	12.1	14.3
Women 65+, no children <18, living in other arrangement	minutes	6	10	12	17	13
	% volunteering	5.9	7.4	14.5	13.0	15.5
	minutes	6	10	14	12	12
All women	% volunteering	6.7	9.3	12.8	10.9	12.5

Source(s): Eurostat 2003, HETUS.

(a) This excludes travel related to voluntary work.

Based on the 1995 and 2000 *Voluntary work surveys*, the ABS reports that the proportion of Australians who did some voluntary work on at least one day during

the year increased from 23.6 per cent in 1995 to 31.8 per cent in 2000 (ABS 2001). The average time Australians spent volunteering on days when they did voluntary work (measured by time use diary studies) also increased from 1987 to 1997, but the nature of this increase depends on the population cohort examined (Wilkinson & Bittman 2002b, pp. 15–7). For people aged in their 40s, the average time spent volunteering remained virtually unchanged for both men and women (around 20 minutes for men, and just under 30 minutes for women). The time people in their 20s, 30s, and 50s spent volunteering increased by around 10 minutes between 1987 and 1997 — though this increase reflects a rise in women’s participation only. The time Australian men aged in their 20s to 30s and in their 50s spent volunteering was around three minutes higher in 1992 than it was in 1997 (Wilkinson & Bittman 2002b, p. 16). Australians aged 60 or more increased the average time they spent volunteering by over 20 minutes for men and nearly 30 minutes for women (Wilkinson & Bittman 2002b, p. 16).

Table 11: Average time (in minutes per day) men spent in formal and informal voluntary work^a and the percentage of people who volunteered on any given day

		Australia 1997	Canada 1998	Finland 1999–2000	France 1998–99	United Kingdom 2000–01
Whole population	minutes	6	10	14	13	10
Men<25, no children<18, living with parents	minutes	2	6	5	7	4
	% volunteering	2.4	6.4	4.1	5.5	3.9
Men 25–44, no children<18, living with parents	minutes	8	19	15	15	7
	% volunteering	4.5	14.7	11.5	8.0	9.4
Men<45, living in couple, no children<18	minutes	3	7	13	12	4
	% volunteering	4.4	5.4	9.8	9.0	6.1
Men<45, no children<18, living in other arrangement	minutes	4	6	11	12	6
	% volunteering	4.0	6.2	9.8	9.5	6.8
Single male parent (all ages) youngest child<18	minutes	44 ^b	3	3	10	0
	% volunteering	14.9	6.5	4.4	5.0	1.1
Men (all ages) living in couple, youngest child 0–6	minutes	3	5	11	11	6
	% volunteering	3.4	4.6	10.7	7.6	6.5
Men (all ages) living in couple, youngest child 7–17	minutes	4	8	21	13	9
	% volunteering	4.3	7.9	13.7	9.1	7.3
Men 45–64, living in couple, no children<18	minutes	6	11	22	23	16
	% volunteering	7.2	8.6	14.7	13.8	13.5
Men 45–64, no children<18, living in other arrangement	minutes	4	12	13	21	9
	% volunteering	6.8	8.0	10.8	11.7	11.1
Men 65 and above, living in couple, no children<18	minutes	8	17	21	23	16
	% volunteering	7.7	12.6	13.3	15.2	16.7
Men 65+, no children<18, living in other arrangement	minutes	10	7	18	17	12
	% volunteering	7.3	5.7	15.6	14.3	12.7
	minutes	5	9	15	15	9
All men	% volunteering	5.0	7.5	11.0	10.4	8.6

Source(s): Eurostat 2003, HETUS

(a) This excludes travel related to voluntary work.

(b) Based on 21 diaries, and skewed by one very active volunteer.

Thus, to understand the full picture of voluntary participation rates in each country, one needs information on changes in the demographic composition of each country, as well as cross-time information on the annual and average daily voluntary participation rates.²³ Cross-time annual and average daily information is not available for all countries discussed in this section. Thus, we are left with making the best we can of what information is available, and Tables 10 and 11 should be viewed as a rough rather than a definitive guide to cross-national differences.

Most volunteers do not undertake voluntary work every day, so these participation rates are generally lower than those recorded in other studies which asked people if they had undertaken any voluntary work in the last year. Nevertheless, the time use tables do reflect the average time that people of each category spend volunteering on any given day when they do engage in voluntary activity.

As the majority of people in the population did not volunteer on their diary days (and thus contributed zero minutes to the average daily voluntary activity time shown in the tables), the average volunteering time looks low. To work out the average time people in each category spent volunteering on days when they did some voluntary work, divide the average time by the participation rate (divided by 100). For example, single mothers in Australia spent an average of eight minutes each day volunteering. Single Australian mothers had a participation rate of 3.9 per cent. If you divide eight minutes by 0.039, you find that the average Australian single mother who does volunteer tends to spend about 205 minutes—that is three hours and 25 minutes—helping others on days that she volunteers.

There are two anomalies in these tables. Few women in Finland continue to work past the age of 65, and the few older women who are working and kept diaries reported no voluntary activity. This handful of women is not representative of the small category of older working women in Finland. Comparatively few men in Australia are single parents. One Australian single male parent performed marathon voluntary activities on his diary days, which distorted the average voluntary time for men who are single parents in Australia.

The Eurostat basic time use tables distinguish patterns for the whole population from patterns for people who are working. By using the difference in the number of diaries completed by all people in each category for each country and the number of diaries completed by those who are employed, we were able to construct an employment rate for men and women in each demographic group. We computed ordinary least squares regression models of the voluntary participation rate (Table 12) and of the average time spent volunteering in minutes (Table 13) for each life stage group, where country, the employment rate calculated from the time diary studies, the sex of the group of diarists, and the life stage of the group of diarists are independent variables. We used Australians, men, and people living in couples aged 45 to 64 who do not live with dependent children as the comparison group.

Table 12: Factors explaining participation in any form of voluntary activity on an average day in five countries

Variable	Exponential β	Standard error	Significance	
(Constant)	12.70	2.291	0.000	(highly meaningful)
More likely to volunteer on any given day				
Women	1.24	0.619	0.048	(marginal difference)
People from Canada	2.15	0.869	0.015	(marginal difference)
People from Finland	5.71	0.878	0.000	(highly meaningful)
People from France	3.24	0.877	0.000	(highly meaningful)
People from the United Kingdom	4.08	0.867	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Less likely to volunteer on any given day				
Aged <25, no child, lives with parents	-9.64	1.615	0.000	(highly meaningful)
In couple, aged <45, no dependent child	-5.60	1.402	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged <45, no dependent child or partner	-4.65	1.304	0.001	(meaningful)
Single parent	-5.33	1.284	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Parent in couple, child aged <7	-5.80	1.320	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Parent in couple, child aged 7–17	-3.32	1.401	0.020	(meaningful)
Aged 65 and over, no dependent child or partner	-5.00	2.113	0.020	(meaningful)
Neither more nor less likely to volunteer on any given day				
Aged 25–44, no child, lives with parents	-2.55	1.332	not different from other groups	
Aged 45–64, no child, no partner	-1.23	1.289	not different from other groups	
Aged 65 and over, in couple	-3.41	2.061	not different from other groups	
Employment rate (from diary studies)	-0.05	0.029	not different from other groups	
Adjusted R ² =0.553		Model significance p<0.000		

Source(s): ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*; Eurostat 2003; HETUS basic tables.

Note: Any form of volunteering comprises formal, informal, adult care, as well as travel and communication activities related to voluntary activities.

Tables 10 and 11 reveal that on average, Australians spent six minutes per day in voluntary activity. This means that if voluntary responsibility was shared equally across the national population, every person in Australia would need to volunteer for an average of six minutes each day to produce the volume of voluntary work presently performed by a proportion of the population. A lower percentage of Australians undertook voluntary activity than people in the other four countries, spending about half the amount of average time doing voluntary activities, and being somewhat less likely to do any voluntary work on an average day. Table 12 confirms this finding, as voluntary participation rates remain higher in the other countries in the multivariate model. Tables 10 to 13 indicate that people in Finland, followed by people in the United Kingdom, were most likely to volunteer, and volunteers in Finland, followed by volunteers in France, spent the longest time when they volunteered.

Even so, there are some cases where Australians stand proud. Lone mothers in Australia are less likely to volunteer than single mothers in the other countries; however, those Australian lone mothers who do volunteer spend longer hours volunteering—three hours 25 minutes for Australians, compared to two hours

12 minutes in Finland, just under two hours in Canada and France, and one hour 20 minutes in the United Kingdom. Among people who volunteer, Australian women aged 25 to 44 who live with their parents and have no partner or children also spend more time volunteering than their counterparts in Canada, Finland and France (but not the United Kingdom), while Australian men in the same circumstances spend 50 minutes longer than their Canadian and Finnish counterparts and one hour and 20 minutes longer than their British counterparts volunteering.

Table 13: Factors explaining average time (in minutes) spent volunteering in five countries

Variable	Exponential β	Standard error		Significance
(Constant)	12.70	2.291	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Spend more time volunteering				
People from Finland	23.14	4.194	0.000	(highly meaningful)
People from France	5.55	1.607	0.001	(meaningful)
Spend less time volunteering				
Aged <25, no child, lives with parents	-16.27	2.957	0.000	(highly meaningful)
In couple, aged <45, no dependent child	-7.16	2.566	0.006	(meaningful)
Aged <45, no dependent child or partner	-6.46	2.388	0.008	(meaningful)
Single parent	-4.57	2.351	0.055	(marginal difference)
Parent in couple, child aged <7	-9.00	2.416	0.000	(highly meaningful)
Aged 65 and over, in couple	-9.14	3.774	0.017	(meaningful)
Aged 65 and over, no dependent child or partner	-12.56	3.869	0.002	(meaningful)
Employment rate (from diary studies)	-0.14	0.053	0.009	(meaningful)
Neither more nor less time volunteering				
Women	-1.44	1.133	not different from other groups	
People from Canada	1.63	1.592	not different from other groups	
People from the United Kingdom	1.91	1.588	not different from other groups	
Aged 25–44, no child, lives with parents	-3.86	2.439	not different from other groups	
Parent in couple, child aged 7–17	-0.72	2.361	not different from other groups	
Aged 45–64, no child, no partner	-3.76	2.566	not different from other groups	
Adjusted R ² = 0.402			Model significance p<0.000	

Source(s): ABS, 1997 *Time use survey*; Eurostat 2003, HETUS basic tables.

Australian mothers with older dependent children who volunteer spend over 20 minutes longer on average volunteering than their counterparts in Canada, France and the United Kingdom. Retired Australian women who do not live with a spouse or partner and who volunteer, spend over 20 minutes longer on average volunteering than their counterparts in Finland and the United Kingdom, and retired men who do not live with a wife spend around 15 minutes longer volunteering than similar men in Canada and France, 20 minutes longer than similar men in Finland, and 42 minutes longer than similar men in the United Kingdom. From a policy perspective, there is scope to encourage a wider range of Australians to undertake voluntary activities, though it is worth noting that Australian single mothers spend more time volunteering than their counterparts in the other countries.

In other respects, the patterns of volunteering in Australia are similar to patterns in the other countries. Between 5 per cent and 15 per cent of the national population of each country does something to help out other people on the average day. Volunteers typically work for over an hour, though when averaged over the whole population, the average time drops to around 10 minutes. Women and men have similar overall patterns of volunteering. Though women are more likely to volunteer than men, when they do volunteer, men and women are equally generous with their time.

Overall, employed people are less likely to undertake voluntary activity, and when they do volunteer, they are likely to donate less time than people who are not employed. There is an exception for men in the United Kingdom, where employed men are more likely than men who are not working to volunteer and to spend a longer amount of time in voluntary activities. Nevertheless, the employment rate within each sex and demographic group is not significantly related with the likelihood of engaging in voluntary activity, though the time spent volunteering decreases as the employment rate increases.

The youngest people, particularly single women aged less than 25 in Australia living with their parents, are least likely to volunteer and spent the fewest minutes volunteering. Single parents and parents of young children also generally have less time to volunteer. Parents spend more time volunteering as their children get older in all five countries. People approaching retirement age and who have recently retired are most likely to volunteer, though people past retirement age spend fewer minutes volunteering than working-age people. Middle-aged men who are not working and living with their parents also perform relatively high levels of voluntary activity across the countries, though the total time spent volunteering by this group does not differ significantly from the rest of the population in the multivariate model. Even so, some basic volunteering trends emerging in Australia are similar to the general patterns of volunteering in other countries.

7 Conclusions

Voluntary activity, which encompasses formal work within voluntary organisations, informal assistance to people living outside of one's household or the community at large, providing unpaid care to adults with impairments, and unpaid assistance to emergency services, constitutes an important element of economic activity in Australia. Volunteering affects public policy in three main ways. Voluntary work can complement and, in some cases, replace government-funded services. If volunteers stopped providing the public services that they presently provide, the Australian Government and state/territory governments would face higher outlays on services that the Australian public has come to expect. Volunteering can serve as a pathway to social and civic participation and also help people to build and refine skills needed for employment.

The voluntary sector—or third sector—plays a considerable role in the Australian economy. People working in the range of major employment sectors in Australia perform a significant number of hours of voluntary work each year, though people working in wholesale and retail trades tend to perform more hours of voluntary work than people working in other sectors. Even conservative estimation procedures (which are more likely to underestimate the value of volunteering) reveal that the monetary value of welfare services provided by voluntary agencies exceeds the total welfare spending of the various levels of Australian government.

Public servants should bear an important qualification in mind when they turn to the voluntary sector. It would be unwise to rely on the voluntary sector to replace services that government agencies have customarily provided. Mechanisms for accountability operate differently in the voluntary sector than in the public sector. The voluntary sector is primarily driven by the objectives of people willing to donate their time and not by the electorate. Overregulation of the voluntary sector may act as a deterrent and discourage people from volunteering. Government agencies cannot guarantee that voluntary organisations will provide a service over the long term to the degree that will meet the need, and a drop in volunteering in a particular field could leave unmet needs if government agencies do not maintain their role in social services. Voluntary work fits more properly as a complement to and not as a replacement of government services.

This report explored grey areas at the edges of the definition of volunteering. The term 'volunteer' generally designates a person who provides services or benefits to others for motivations not related to financial or material reward. In some contexts, the term volunteering has been loosely extended to cover legal obligations placed on individuals (such as the Work for the Dole schemes). This report takes the view that involuntary civic work is different from volunteering. Indeed, we argue that voluntary activity should remain voluntary, and not be confused with compulsory public service to receive income support.

Some commentators on volunteering have proposed that the term 'volunteering' apply only to unpaid activity within the confines of charitable organisations.

This report makes a case for expanding the definition of a volunteer to also cover unpaid work for emergency service providers, informal charitable acts undertaken outside the bounds of formal organisations, and unpaid care of adults with disabilities and the frail elderly. Similar motivations inspire people to take up all four forms of activity we include within the rubric of volunteering. Australians spend more time working without pay for emergency services, informally helping others and providing unpaid adult care than they spend working in non-emergency service organisations in Australia, and these forms of volunteering—particularly volunteering for the emergency services and providing unpaid adult care—save government agencies considerable amounts of money each year. Unpaid work for emergency services, informal helping of people from other households and the community at large, and unpaid adult care more closely resemble formal volunteering than routine domestic work, and people who provide unpaid adult care for a person living in another household are significantly more involved in other forms of volunteering than other Australians. Leaving such work out of official statistics distorts the picture of voluntary activity.

While Australians perform a considerable proportion of adult care for immediate family members living in other households, most informal care assists people who are distant relatives or not related to the volunteers. While 1.8 million people (nearly 16 per cent of Australians) help people who live in other households, 400,000 Australians provide adult care to someone living in the same household. The degree of difficulty a person has with daily life influences the type of person to whom they are likely to turn for help and whether they are likely to live with the person on whom they rely for assistance. More severely disabled adults are more likely to live with the people who provide their care. Likewise, people who are main carers (that is, people who help someone else perform daily living activities, like getting dressed and personal hygiene) are more likely to live with the person for whom they care. Adults needing less frequent or intensive help are more likely to receive help from someone who lives in another household. People who informally help others but do not provide the main source of help to another individual are most likely to be distant relatives or unrelated to the people they help.

Men and women choose different paths when they volunteer. Professional associations, union, and sport-focused organisations attract a higher proportion of male than female volunteers, and men feel more motivated to work for voluntary organisations that aim to help the community at large or young people. Education, health, religious, and community welfare agencies attract more female than male volunteers, and women are more drawn to organisations aiming to help young children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

International comparisons can be tricky at the best of times, as it is difficult to design and implement studies in a similar way to produce comparable results. Time use diary estimates have proven more robust for international comparison across countries than many alternative forms of comparative data (Gershuny 2000), as time use studies capture detail about one dimension of life which is shared across cultures—everyone has 24 hours in the day. The HETUS has generated

particularly comparable data within European countries, and the HETUS basic time use activity tables, which include volunteering among the 12 categories of activities listed, provide a good base to reflect on voluntary work in Australia. Canada has also contributed data to the HETUS basic tables, allowing comparison with another industrialised country. On any given day, Australians spend about half the amount of time doing voluntary activities as people in Canada, Finland, France and the United Kingdom. This finding is less revealing than it seems at face value, as demographic distributions affect national averages. Since 1987, the proportion of Australians who volunteer has increased, as has the total time Australians spend in voluntary activities, but there are significant age differences. Volunteering among people aged in their 40s has remained largely unchanged. Younger people have marginally increased the time they spend volunteering, while people aged in their 60s have more than doubled the time they spend volunteering. Certain categories of Australians, most notably lone mothers, but also people aged 25 to 45 who live with their parents, and retired Australians who do not live with a spouse or partner, tend to volunteer for a longer time than their counterparts in the other countries when they do make the choice to volunteer. Other categories of Australians do not compare as favourably with their counterparts in the other assessed countries.

This report reveals that two ABS surveys, the *1997 Time use survey* and the *Voluntary work survey 2000*, both provide an important element for constructing the picture of volunteering in Australia. The two study formats are complementary, and each study contributes some information that is not available from the other. Nevertheless, the level of complementarity between the studies could be enhanced if the studies are again conducted in the future. For instance, the voluntary work surveys could usefully include more detail about the total household income and income sources on which households rely. The time use survey does include information on income sources, though to compare the two data sets, we had to analyse the time use data based on *Voluntary work survey 2000* estimation techniques.

The voluntary work surveys also collect only a limited portion of the range of voluntary activity. The 2000 study excluded volunteering for the Sydney Olympics (as the Olympics were not held in 1995). This exclusion is unfortunate, as it is impossible to tell the degree to which people who might otherwise not have volunteered chose to volunteer for the Olympics, and whether people who usually volunteer simply did less voluntary work for other agencies to concentrate on the Olympics or whether they did more volunteering. Also, the voluntary work survey format excludes activities such as voluntary travel, informal volunteering, and adult care. The time use data, in contrast, collects information on all activities people undertook on any given day, giving researchers the ability to select which activities to include or to exclude from the analysis. Thus the two sets of data would provide more complementary results if future voluntary work surveys covered the full range of voluntary work rather than only that activity directly performed for (most) formal organisations.

The time use survey data usefully estimate which groups of Australians engage in voluntary work on any given day, but do not reveal the full picture of which Australians do any voluntary work during the course of a year. The time use diary study collected information on two randomly selected days. Some people perform voluntary activities on a regular—even a daily basis—and these people will be identified as volunteers in the time use survey. The voluntary work surveys (both the 1995 study and the 2000 follow-up study) ask people about their voluntary activities over the last year. People who volunteer occasionally and who self-identify as volunteers will note their participation in voluntary activities on the voluntary work survey format, whereas they may or may not have performed voluntary work on the two selected diary days. Nevertheless, the time use diaries may capture voluntary activities performed by people who do not self-identify as volunteers. People who only occasionally undertake voluntary roles and who do not conceptualise their efforts as volunteering may not report voluntary activity on the voluntary work survey format, but a percentage of these people who are volunteering on their diary day will be captured in the time diary data. Thus, the time diary study format could benefit from a small number of additional questions asking people if they perform voluntary activity during the year (in addition to the questions asking whether respondents provide care or informal assistance to someone else).

The voluntary work survey format offers a more efficient way of collecting information on the motives for volunteering, both as the questionnaire format concentrates the minds of respondents on voluntary activity and as it would not be practical in the diary study to ask people to provide detailed motivation information for every activity recorded in their diaries. The time diary, however, provides a more accurate estimate of the time spent in voluntary activities. As people do not operate the equivalent of a stop-watch in their brains which keeps track of how much time they spend performing every activity, survey respondents tend to make very inaccurate estimates of how much time they spend doing activities on standardised survey questions (Gershuny 2000). The time diary not only captures a more accurate representation of the time that people actually spend volunteering (as people record activities as they perform them), the diary also captures details of how people schedule voluntary work into their daily routines.

Consequently, the voluntary work survey and the time use survey information complement each other. In an ideal world with additional information collected in both types of surveys, one would expect that the two types of data would generate more closely connected findings. Each form of data collection, however, provides a piece of the picture that the other survey method cannot provide, and thus both formats are essential for a detailed assessment of voluntary activity.

When all other factors are held constant, people working in professional and managerial jobs and people who have achieved university level educational qualifications or higher are more likely to undertake all forms of voluntary activity. People who do not speak English at home, work for pay full-time, and are aged

less than 30 are less likely than other Australians to engage with any form of volunteering. People who have young children living at home are more likely to formally volunteer through organisations, but less likely to provide adult care or to informally help others. People living outside a capital city in Australia and who are in the middle of the income distribution are more likely to formally volunteer through organisations. People in the lowest 20 per cent of the income range are more likely to provide both informal help to others and to undertake adult care, however, this group was less likely to aid a formal voluntary organisation. Men, people in the highest 20 per cent of the income range, people born in Australia, people working part-time, and the unemployed are more likely to provide informal help but less likely to provide adult care. People living in a capital city, women, people living in married or cohabiting couples, and people aged 45 to 74 are more likely to provide adult care but less likely to offer informal help to others. People aged 75 or more are more likely to provide adult care but less likely to engage in other forms of volunteering.

Formal volunteering and informally helping others can enable volunteers to build up social interaction. Informal volunteers enjoy an average of eight hours socialising time each week. In contrast, some people who care for adults, particularly women on low incomes, become socially isolated (though social isolation is not an inevitable outcome and does not arise in all cases). Indeed, caring for an adult living in the same house reduces average socialising time to just one hour per week. For this reason, government programs aiming to help boost people's social resources need to give special attention to isolated adult carers. Even so, there is no significant difference between the average socialising time enjoyed by people who do not volunteer and volunteers on the average day. Thus the social benefits from volunteering accrue over the longer term rather than on a daily activity basis.

Endnotes

- 1 Nevertheless, a study sponsored by the New South Wales Rural and Regional Volunteering Support Strategy found that only around 5 per cent of voluntary organisations make use of the Internet as a major method for finding volunteers, raising money, or providing assistance (New South Wales Premier's Department 2002, p. 12).
- 2 Ironmonger (2000) defines the time spent volunteering as the sum of the time devoted to volunteering through formal organisations, informal care for adults (support for co-residential adults with significant limitations on their autonomy or support for friends and neighbours), caring for other people's children and the travel and communication time associated with any of these activities.
- 3 The ABS last published estimates of the time spent caring for one's own sick children and for other people's children, based on the *Time use pilot survey* (ABS 1988). Average time spent in these 'welfare-related child care' activities was about four minutes per day. On the basis of the ABS *Voluntary work survey 2000* (ABS 2001, p. 27), 44 per cent of time donated to formal volunteering is to 'non-welfare' organisations, and would be excluded from the AIHW calculations. This reduces the average time spent in formal volunteering by five minutes per day.
- 4 The economic estimations are based on the nearest market equivalent for each type of work performed. The calculations do not force one wage to fit all circumstances. Nevertheless, in the wage economy, people who are particularly high performers are often rewarded with higher wages. Conservative estimates are based on average wages, which is likely to further underestimate the value of voluntary labour.
- 5 The study also found that the degree of provision and the level of publicity for the programs varied widely between countries and between regions within countries.
- 6 In some cases, government agencies want payments to establish a tie to monitor the care provided, in order to reduce possibilities of abuse of elderly people by carers (Linsk et al. 1992, pp. 134–35).
- 7 The 1997 *Time use survey* asked respondents to indicate the purpose of travel and communication (phone calls, email, letter writing, and so on), but the travel and communication purpose codes distinguish travel or communication related to paid work, voluntary work, leisure time, socialising time, care of children, care of adults, sport, household shopping, and receiving household or personal services. The problem with these distinctions is that it is not always possible to distinguish travel or communication related to a formal organisation and informal help and doing favours. In some cases, people did both informal and formal voluntary work travel or communication at the same time. When travel and communication could be distinguished as relevant to formal volunteering,

informal adult care, or informal volunteering, it is coded into that category. When the travel or communication simultaneously served both formal and informal volunteering purposes, or where the purpose of the travel or communication was not clearly linked to either formal or informal volunteering, the time is coded into the separate voluntary travel and communication category.

- 8 This shift includes strategies such as reducing the number of visits by health officials to people's houses, reducing the time people are allowed to remain in hospitals to recover from particular problems, or reducing the rate at which older people are admitted to hospital for more minor complaints.
- 9 A survey of state agencies that pay family carers for providing care to the frail elderly in the United States found that no public servants in these agencies mentioned gender justice as a rationale for providing these programs (Linsk et al. 1992, p. 145).
- 10 Many providers of care to the frail elderly also undertake paid employment. For some carers, paid work functions as a 'godsend' that enables the carer to maintain contact with the world outside the household (Merrill 1997, p. 82).
- 11 The following analysis of informal care draws heavily on work by Wilkinson and Bittman (2003).
- 12 The original data collected in 1997 are used for the analysis in this report; estimates published by the ABS using this data in 1998 are not employed as the basis for this report.
- 13 Raw sample numbers are provided to help interpret the reliability of these population estimates.
- 14 The term 'carer' covers Carer Payment and Carer Allowance recipients.
- 15 In these calculations, if individuals do voluntary work for two or more kinds of organisation, they are counted once for each kind of organisation.
- 16 It is not possible for us to confirm this finding with the data used in this report. The *Voluntary work survey 2000* reveals who the volunteers are and collects details about the time spent volunteering for up to three organisations, though these data do not collect total volunteering time for organisations. Also, the voluntary work surveys do not collect information on volunteering in some types of organisation (the Sydney Olympics and some emergency services were excluded) and did not collect information on volunteering outside formal organisations. The *1997 Time use survey* collected time spent in all volunteering, but did not ask respondents why they undertook voluntary work.
- 17 Table 9 in Section 5.3 offers further information about volunteers, as it shows results of an ordinary least square regression model of who performs any voluntary activity, including formal volunteering, informal helping, and adult care, as well as travel and communication related to volunteering. This table shows that compared with the general population, managers and professionals, people in elementary clerical and manual jobs, people who have achieved a

university degree or equivalent, and people aged 45 to 59 are more likely to undertake at least one form of volunteering. People living in a capital city, who have income in the highest 20 per cent of income, who are employed (either full-time or part-time), people living in households where a child aged less than five is resident, people aged under 30, and people aged 75 or more, are less likely to undertake any form of volunteering than other Australians. This table is not included in this section so that the information on adult carers remains separate from the other analysis of voluntary work based on the ABS *Voluntary work survey 2000* and the ABS *1997 Time use survey*.

- 18 We used binary logistic regression to determine which groups of people are more likely to participate in volunteering and ordinary least squares regression to measure the average intensity of such volunteering. Binary logistic regression does not assume that volunteering behaviour is normally distributed. This technique is particularly suited to analyses where dependent variables have only yes/no categories. The second method, ordinary least square regression, assumes that level of voluntary participation is normally distributed across various groups in the Australian population.
- 19 A similar finding emerged from cross-time research using three time use studies from 1987, 1992, and 1997 (Wilkinson & Bittman 2002b).
- 20 Some research suggests that young Indigenous people volunteer at even higher rates than other young Australians (Kerr et al. 2001, p. 121), but we did not have data to test this finding.
- 21 Braithwaite (1990) noted that many Australian carers lived in urban environments as more facilities and sources of assistance are available, particularly in the capital cities. Neysmith (2000) and Merrill (1997) report that carers often live in couples, and regularly have dependent children as well. Neysmith (2000) expressed concern that government policies overlook carers, as a large proportion of care is provided by women in the older working age range, which means that these women have less opportunity to build pension contributions. Merrill (1997) found that low-income families were more likely to provide care to relatives than better off families, though families with high-income were also more likely to take friends and relatives needing care into their homes and to hire professionals to assist in the provision of adult care.
- 22 Socialising time remains insignificant when other forms of volunteering are held as the dependent variable. The unstandardised β , standard error, and significance figures for socialising time in the otherwise identical models are—for adult care $\beta = -0.003$, standard error = 0.003, significance = 0.362; for informal helping $\beta = 0.004$, standard error = 0.003, significance = 0.170; for voluntary travel and communication $\beta = 0.004$, standard error = 0.003, significance = 0.247.
- 23 Cross-time figures also need to be comparable—collected with similar sampling procedures, similar questionnaire designs and attracting similar response rates.

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