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## Doing Good When Times Are Bad: Volunteering Behaviour in Economic Hard Times<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper examines how the 2008 – 9 recession has affected volunteering behaviours in the UK. Using a large survey dataset, we assess the recession effects on both formal volunteering and informal helping behaviours. Whilst both formal volunteering and informal helping have been in decline in the UK since 2008, the size of the decline is significantly larger for informal helping than for formal volunteering. The decline is more salient in regions that experienced a higher level of unemployment during the recession and also in socially and economically disadvantaged communities. However, we find that a growing number of people who personally experienced financial insecurity and hardship do not explain the decline. We argue that the decline has more to do with community-level factors such as civic organizational infrastructure and cultural norms of trust and engagement than personal experiences of economic hardship.

**Keywords:** Volunteer; recession; altruism; informal helping; social capital; community; civil society

## Introduction

Remembering the ‘age of austerity’ in which he grew up in London, the historian Tony Judt wrote ‘that bare-bones age...aspired to a public ethic’ because ‘we were all in it together’ (Judt 2010: 29 – 30). Echoing Judt’s recollection of postwar Britain, recent news articles have reported that volunteering seems to be flourishing in these ‘economic dark times’ caused by the global financial crisis of 2008 (BBC News 2009). Citing the increasing number of applicants to large national voluntary organisations, the *Observer* reported ‘the voluntary sector may be the one industry benefiting from the economic downturn’ (The *Observer* 2008). According to the *Telegraph*, “thanks to the recession...we're rediscovering the joys of old-fashioned neighbourliness” (The *Telegraph* 2009). Similar sentiments have been proclaimed in the US media, where the recession seemed to be leading to a ‘burst of neighboring’ by making people think more about their communities (The *Washington Post* 2009).

However, studies of the Great Depression era offer a less optimistic prognosis on the impacts of hard times on community spirit and civic life. The classic sociography of Marienthal (an industrial village in Austria) during the Great Depression observed that the pervasive joblessness depressed the civic life in this once vibrant community (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel 2002). The researchers found that the residents of Marienthal decreased their attendance of clubs, voluntary organizations, and even use of the free library, and also found evidence that social relations deteriorated. Bakke’s (1933) study of Depression era London similarly found that unemployed men decreased their social activities. Whilst in the USA, Putnam (2000) tracked the membership in thirty-two national chapter-based civic associations throughout the twentieth century and found that membership declined sharply during the Great Depression.

This study attempts to assess these opposing views on the impacts of economic hard times on civic life. In particular, we focus on whether people are more or less likely to volunteer their time and energy to help others in economic hard times. Helping others in need is certainly admirable, yet more importantly, volunteering is often considered ‘an important diagnostic sign’ of social capital and civic health of a community (Putnam 2000: 117).

We will focus predominantly on patterns of volunteering in the UK. We utilize the Citizenship Survey that has interviewed a large representative sample of residents in England and Wales since 2001, and compare the level of volunteering over time, both before and after the 2008 – 9 recession. By doing so, we aim to shed light on how and why economic hard times influence the social fabric of the community. Such an analysis is particularly prescient for the UK in light of the Government’s ‘Big Society’ reforms which aim at ‘fostering a culture of voluntarism’ to ‘help people to come together in their neighbourhoods to do good’ (The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 2011; Big Society Network 2010). The proposed moves to replace certain government services with co-ops, charities and social enterprises will likely rely on a pool of active, willing and engaged volunteers. Exploring how the recession has affected the stock of volunteers in the UK is crucial to gauge the potential impact of such state withdrawal.

To be sure, it may be too early to assess the true impact of the 2008 – 9 recession on civic life as the UK is only slowly recovering from the recession and its civic toll may take longer to materialize. Still, we now have some high quality data to assess at least the short-term effects of the recession. Using the Citizenship Survey, we examine how the recession has affected both formal volunteering coordinated by organizations and informal helping amongst friends and neighbours. By doing so, this study updates our knowledge on the civic consequences of economic hard times, which is still largely based on the studies from the Great Depression era.

This study also draws attention to informal helping behaviour, an important dimension of volunteering behaviour that has been understudied. In addition, our findings on Britons' volunteering behaviour during the 2008 – 9 recession and its aftermath will provide useful backgrounds for the national debate on the role of civil society in an age of economic insecurity.

The layout of the paper is as follows. First, we briefly review what previous studies on civic consequences of economic hard times have found and discuss various theories of volunteering behaviour to draw predictions on how a recession may affect different types of volunteering behaviour. Next we describe the dataset we use to test our predictions. In the third section we examine the link between the 2008 – 9 recession and volunteering by looking at the trends in the level of volunteering over time and across major census regions in the UK. This is followed by the analysis to shed light on the mechanisms that link the recession to volunteering behaviours. In the final section, we try to contextualize our findings in a cross-national comparative perspective and conclude with implications for theories of volunteering and civic engagement as well as for the debate on the role of civil society in the UK.

### **Economic hard times and volunteering**

While social scientists have long studied various forms of volunteering behaviour, few have directly examined how economic hard times affect volunteering activities or civic participation in general. While the studies of the Great Depression era offer helpful insights, it is unclear how much of their findings are applicable to contemporary recessions. To begin with, the economic impacts of the Great Depression were much larger than any other recession. Moreover, the standard of living in the Great Depression era was much lower and welfare policies more limited. The level of economic hardship in the Depression era might therefore not be directly comparable to those in contemporary recessions.

Zizumbo-Colunga, Zechmester, and Seligson (2010) analysed data from the 2006 – 2010 AmericasBarometer survey and found a significant decline in trust and a few measures of civic engagement over the period. However, this decline happened mostly between 2006 and 2008, not between 2008 and 2010. Still, they found that respondents' negative evaluations of personal and national economic situations are associated with a lower level of trust. Similarly, Hall (1999) suggested the substantial decline in 'generalized trust' in the UK during the early 1980s was likely a consequence of economic insecurity, personal experiences of unemployment, and pessimism about the economy, stemming from the 1980 – 1982 recession.<sup>2</sup> While illuminating, these studies rely on relatively small samples and too few data points around the recessions. Thus, it is hard to assess whether or not the observed changes are a significant deviation from long-term trends in trust and civic engagement. Also a recent study in the USA examined the General Social Survey panel data and found little evidence that the recession had any impact on interpersonal trust, even though they did find an association between local economic hardship and confidence in government (Owens and Cook 2013). To the best of our knowledge, there has been no study that systematically examines the impacts of the 2008 – 9 recession on volunteering or other forms of civic engagement.

Still, these studies, combined with studies from the Great Depression era, suggest that the effects of economic hard times on volunteering might be largely negative, especially for those directly experiencing economic hardship due to recession. An expansive literature on 'non-pecuniary' effects of unemployment suggests that the unemployed might be less likely to volunteer as they become discouraged and decrease social activities in general (Feather 1989; Strauß 2008). The literature on volunteerism has also found that even though people who are not employed have more time and thus a lower opportunity cost for volunteering, they tend to

volunteer less than the employed (Erlinghagen 2000; Smith 1998). Since a recession is typically accompanied by high unemployment and widespread financial insecurity, we may expect declines in volunteering in general to be the result of a reduced supply of potential volunteers.

It is less clear how an economic recession would affect volunteering among those not directly experiencing a recession's pain. Theories of volunteering emphasize several factors to explain who volunteers and why, including the cost and benefit of volunteering, motives or values, human capital and social resources (Wilson 2000; Musick and Wilson 2008; Smith, Rochester and Hedley 1995; Bales 1996). With respect to the cost and benefit of volunteering, people may be less likely to volunteer in hard times because they feel less secure financially and thus work harder to protect their jobs and weather the recession. In other words, the opportunity cost of volunteering might increase in a recessionary period even for people who are fortunate enough to avoid the worst pain of recession.

Values and norms, especially altruistic and pro-social values, are another important factor that might encourage volunteering activities (Musick and Wilson 2008). Such values that encourage volunteering may develop gradually through socialization and thus might be relatively stable over time. However, an historical event such as the 9/11 attacks in the USA, or 7/7 attacks in the UK, might invoke, at least temporarily, a stronger sense of community and thus motivate more people to volunteer. A deep, nation-wide economic recession may similarly invoke a strong sense of community and increased empathy, thus motivating people to give more help to others.

Such norms and cultures of volunteering may also operate at the local-level (i.e. in communities or neighbourhoods) rather than individual or national levels. Sampson et al. (2005) show that the neighbourhoods in Chicago that have a strong sense of collective efficacy – i.e. the shared expectations for social action and collective engagement to solve problems – are more

likely to organize ‘collective action events’, a wide range of public events such as community festivals, fundraising events, citizen lobbies, and protest. More importantly, they argue that collective efficacy is a property of a community, not ‘perceptions, memberships, and behaviors of individuals’ (2005: 675) and that its importance increases under conditions of challenge, such as a severe economic recession. From this perspective, residents of communities with a stronger sense of collective efficacy may respond to economic crises by actively getting involved in communities to protect their neighbourhoods, whereas those in disadvantaged communities, without strong cultural norms of engagement, may further withdraw from civic life and focus on weathering hard times individually. As a result, the effects of a recession on volunteering activities may vary substantially across local communities, possibly more negative in disadvantaged communities that are posited to lack strong norms of community engagement to begin with.

Probably the most established finding in the literature is the importance of social resources, especially the importance of being encouraged to volunteer through personal and organizational ties (Freeman 1977; Musick and Wilson 2008). This ‘supply-side’ theory of volunteering emphasizes that much of the volunteering activities are organized by civic groups and social service organizations, and people are often recruited to volunteer by those groups through social ties. Because the demand for the services provided by these organizations would increase during hard times, they might more actively mobilize volunteers to support their activities. As a result, we may actually see an increase in volunteering activities through organizations. On the other hand, resources for those organizations may dry up in hard times, making it difficult for them to sustain mobilizing efforts. In particular, economically deprived neighbourhoods, where organizational resources are often scarce, may have more difficulties in



supplying volunteering opportunities during a recession. Due to the diminishing organizational resources and weaker collective norms of engagement, we may expect residents of deprived communities to withdraw from volunteering activities more than those in affluent communities, regardless of their personal experiences of financial hardship during the recession.

In short, whilst it is plausible that a recession influences the level of volunteering even among the people who do not directly experience hardship, the direction of such effects remains unclear. The demands for social services would go up in recession and thus may increase organizations' efforts to mobilize volunteers and resources to meet the rising demands. However, such resources might be in short supply during a recession, which can strain personal resources and increase the opportunity cost of volunteering. The effects may also vary across communities, depending on their organizational infrastructures and cultural norms of engagement.

These theories of volunteering, however, have mostly developed to explain formal volunteering through organizations rather than informal helping behaviour; that is 'unpaid service people provide on a more casual basis, outside of any organizational context, to someone in need' (Musick and Wilson 2008: 23). In fact, informal helping has been generally understudied (c.f. Gallagher 1994; Wilson and Musick 1997; Hank and Stuck 2008). Formal volunteering certainly accounts for a large portion of altruistic behaviour in society, but focusing exclusively on formal volunteering leaves out much of the informal or unorganized 'Good Samaritan' behaviours taking place in daily life without the mediation of formal groups. Babysitting for a single working-mother next door or doing a grocery run for an ailing neighbor may seem trivial compared to activities organized by large civic associations, but a frequent exchange of such small favours could signal a strong norm of reciprocity and spirit of community, the hallmarks of social capital. In fact, one may even argue that informal exchanges

of small favours without the mediation of formal organizations better capture the essence of community social capital and the spirit of the Big Society initiative than formal volunteering activities do.

It seems particularly important to consider how a recession might affect informal helping differently from formal volunteering. Unlike formal volunteering, informal helping behaviours are more spontaneous and by definition, unorganized. As a result, such volunteering is more dependent on ‘ability’ and ‘opportunity’ (Wilson and Musick 1997). In recessions, there would be more opportunities to help others. At the same time, however, more people would be going through hardship themselves and thus might be less able to help others. Alternatively, a sense of collective hardship may mean people are less willing to impose on others by asking for help and thus the demand for informal aid may decline.

In addition, even though studies have found that people who provide informal help also tend to formally volunteer more, informal helping is more common than formal volunteering (Wilson and Musick 1997). This means that the people who formally volunteer are a subset of *general volunteers*, probably with more organizational skills, resources and a strong sense of commitment. Formal volunteers are also likely to be embedded in organizational and personal networks that encourage their participation, compared to those who only provide informal help to their friends and neighbours. As a result, their commitment to providing help to the needy, either formally or informally, might be more robust against changes in demands for help and their abilities to provide them. On the other hand, people who only engage in informal helping activities might possess fewer resources and weaker commitment and thus their volunteering activities may fluctuate more in hard times.

In summary, despite the optimistic outlook by journalists and the pessimistic lessons from the Great Depression era, the impact of recessions on volunteering and civic engagement in general are largely unknown. Theories of volunteering behaviour suggest that the relationship between recessions and volunteering could be complex, as economic hard times could affect the supply and demand of volunteering activities in both positive and negative ways. High unemployment during a recession could lead to depressed levels of volunteering, as unemployed individuals tend to volunteer less than the employed. However, the impacts on those who feel a recession's impacts only indirectly or mildly are less clear. Widespread financial insecurity during a recession might increase the opportunity cost of volunteering for workers, suppressing the supply of volunteers. A nation-wide recession, however, may motivate people to volunteer more by evoking empathy with people in need and strengthening a sense of community. Furthermore, the demands for services provided by social service agencies and voluntary association may also increase in hard times, leading such organizations to make additional efforts to recruit and retain volunteers. Across communities, however, the impact of a recession on volunteering may be more salient in economically disadvantaged communities, where the economic pain of recession is felt more strongly and norms of civic engagement might be weaker and less resilient to begin with. It may also matter which type of volunteering we focus on. Formal volunteering, mostly provided by formal organizations and carried out by more committed volunteers, might remain more stable than informal helping in the face of economic hard times. How all of these different factors net out is an empirical question, which we turn to now.

### **Data and measurement**

The main dataset we use in this study is the *Citizenship Survey* (CS henceforth), covering England and Wales. We use all seven waves of the CS from 2001 to 2011, which are publicly available. The CS is a survey of a large representative sample of adults who are 16 years and over, with a boosted sample of minority adults. The survey originally interviewed about 15,000 respondents (including the boosted minority sample<sup>3</sup>) biannually, but beginning in 2007, it changed to quarterly interviews while maintaining a similar annual sample size. The response rate ranges from 56 per cent to 67.5 per cent.<sup>4</sup> The CS is an ideal dataset for our purpose because it is high quality national survey data with a large representative sample that includes numerous measures of volunteering activities over a decade. It includes several data points before the 2008 – 9 recession so that we can examine whether any change *since* the recession is a systematic deviation from a long-term trend rather than random sampling variability.

We start by looking at trends in formal volunteering and informal helping. For formal volunteering, the CS asks respondents to identify groups or organizations they have been involved with in the last twelve months and then asks whether they have ‘given unpaid help to the organizations, excluding financial donations and anything that was a requirement of their job.’ Based on these questions, we construct a dichotomous measure of formal volunteering, assigning one for respondents who gave unpaid help to any organization and zero otherwise. The CS also provides detailed information on unpaid help respondents provided to their friends, neighbours, or someone else (*but who is not a relative*) outside of organizations. More specifically, the CS asks about respondent’s involvement in a wide range of activities, such as babysitting, helping with housework, and giving a ride (see Appendix for the complete list). We again summarize respondent’s involvement in these various activities with a dichotomous measure of informally volunteered or not.<sup>5</sup>

## Trends in volunteering behaviour in England and Wales

<Figure I>

We start by examining the trends in volunteering behaviour in the UK. Figure I shows the trends of formal volunteering and informal helping in England and Wales since 2001. The level of formal volunteering increased between 2001 and 2005 by about five percentage points, but began to decline afterwards. The decline appears to have accelerated since 2008 and as a result, about 37 per cent of the respondents in 2010 said they had volunteered for organizations in the past 12 months, compared to 42 per cent in the first quarter of 2008. However, the decline since 2008 is not monotonic with rates of volunteering fluctuating from quarter to quarter. This undulation since 2007 is partly due to the fact that the CS was conducted quarterly with a smaller sample size and may also reflect seasonal variations. Considering these issues, we show the trend based on annually merged data in Figure I. The annualized data shows a more monotonic decline in the likelihood of formally volunteering. We also observe a similar decline in the amount of time spent formally volunteering per month, suggesting that the intensity of volunteering among those who volunteer has also been sagging in recent years.<sup>6</sup> The decline in formal volunteering, however, is relatively small. Moreover, it seems to have stopped and may even have been reversed since mid-2010, although we need to wait for more data points to confirm it.

Figure I also shows the trend in the percentage of residents in England and Wales who engaged in any informal helping activity. There has been an unmistakable decline in the level of informal helping since 2008. Barring some sampling variability, there is no clear trend in informal helping until 2008. Beginning in the middle of 2008, however, the rate of informal helping has dropped more or less monotonically up to the last quarter of 2010, when about 53 per cent of the respondents said they engaged in informal helping activities, a decline of more than

10 percentage points from just two years ago. This is substantially larger than the decline in formal volunteering. The rate of informal helping in the first quarter of 2011 (the latest data available) is back up to 58 per cent, suggesting that informal helping may also have begun to reverse its course or at least its decline has slowed down. Again, we need to be cautious not to draw any firm conclusion before more data points are available.

In summary, the rates of formal volunteering and informal helping amongst non-relatives declined in England and Wales after the 2008 – 9 recession. The decline was more monotonic and substantial for informal helping than for formal volunteering. The level of informal helping in 2009 and 2010 was at its lowest point since 2001 when the CS began to measure it. In comparison, the post-recession level of formal volunteering was on par with the rate of volunteering in 2001 even at its lowest point. In the next section, we further probe the link between the recession and volunteering.

### **The recession and volunteering in England and Wales**

To examine whether the decline in volunteering activities can be attributed to the 2008 – 9 recession itself, we test the statistical significance of the declining trends: that is, whether or not the decline can be explained by random sampling variability or changes in demographic composition of the sample over time. One option would be including a set of dummy variables for the time of each survey in a regression model that predicts volunteering behaviour. Instead, we use the spline logistic regression to model the sharp decline in volunteering activities since 2008 that we observed above. This approach provides a single number (i.e. a spline coefficient) that summarizes the downward trend since the onset of the recession, offering analytic flexibility compared to the dummy variable approach for tracking how effectively various factors explain the decline in volunteering activities (Hout and Fisher 2002). Given that the recession officially

started in the second quarter of 2008, we fit a spline logistic regression that allows the regression line to ‘bend’ at the second quarter of 2008. Because Figure 1 suggests that the downward trend stopped and even began to reverse its course around mid-2010, we let the line to bend again at the second quarter of 2010. As a result, this model estimates three separate slopes: one for the period up to the second quarter of 2008 (‘Period 1’ in Table 1), another for the period between the second quarter of 2008 and the second quarter of 2010 (‘Period 2’), and the other for the rest of the period (‘Period 3’).<sup>7</sup> Our key interest is the coefficient of the second period (‘Period 2’), which captures the trend of volunteering activities immediately after the official start of the recession. To ensure that the trends in volunteering activities are not driven by the demographic changes in the sample, we control for the following factors: age, sex, race, marital status, education, employment status, and social class. We also include a set of dummy variables to capture regional variations in the level of volunteering activities: using Government Office Regions (GOR) boundaries to capture such regional differences. Because the 2001 CS does not include GOR identifiers variable, our analyses use the data since 2003.

<Table I>

Model 1 and 2 in Table I show the spline logistic regression results for formal volunteering and informal helping respectively. In Model 1, the coefficient of ‘Period 1’ (pre-recession) is weakly negative, but that of ‘Period 2’ shows that the post-recession decline is much sharper and statistically significant, indicating that the decline in formal volunteering cannot be attributed to sampling variability alone.<sup>8</sup> Model 1 also controls for demographic factors (e.g. employment status, education, etc.) and therefore the decline cannot be accounted for by the changes in demographic compositions of the sample. For informal volunteering, there was again a weak negative trend up to the first quarter of 2008, but the coefficient for ‘Period 2’

suggests that the decline significantly accelerated after the recession (Model 2). The size of the coefficient of 'Period 2' is substantially larger for informal helping than it is for formal volunteering, confirming the larger decline in informal helping in Figure I. The coefficient of 'Period 3' reflects the slow-down of the decline (formal volunteering) or reversal of the trend (informal helping). The positive coefficient of 'Period 3' for informal helping is sizable and statistically significant, but it is driven mostly by the last quarterly data point (the first quarter of 2011). Without it, the coefficient of 'period 3' is close to zero and statistically insignificant.

In addition, Models 1 and 2 suggest that white married women in middle or upper-middle class with a higher level of education are more likely to volunteer both formally and informally. Both types of volunteering activities, in other words, are less common amongst people who are most vulnerable economically. These findings are largely consistent with what previous studies have found about volunteering (e.g., Musick and Wilson 2008).<sup>9</sup> The coefficient for 'unemployed' is positive and significant, suggesting that the unemployed volunteer more than the employed.<sup>10</sup> However, this positive coefficient appears only when we include the social class variable in the model. Without it, the unemployed do significantly less volunteering (both formally and informally) than the employed, which is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Strauß, 2008).<sup>11</sup> There are also significant regional variations in volunteering. Southern regions of England have the highest levels of formal and informal volunteering, whereas Northern regions and London have the lowest.

Whilst Model 1 and 2 suggest that the decline in volunteering since 2008 represents a significant deviation from the pre-recession trends, the causal link between the recession and the decline is largely based on the timing. Another way to examine the link would be to look at the variation across regions (i.e. GORs). Economic recessions hit certain regions harder than others.



If the recession is to blame for the decline, controlling for regional economic indicators may account for some of the downward trends in volunteering activities. We may also observe that the decline since 2008 is concentrated in regions that were more severely affected by the 2008 – 9 recession.

To assess these possibilities, we add annual unemployment rate in each region (Model 3 and 4) and the interaction term between annual unemployment rate in the region and the ‘Period 2’ variable (Model 5 and 6). Model 3 suggests that when adding annual regional unemployment rate the coefficient of ‘Period 2’ for formal volunteering changes little. However, it does reduce the size of ‘Period 2’ coefficient for informal helping by about 40 per cent (Model 4), indicating that the downward trend in informal helping may be partly explained by increases in annual unemployment in the region during the recession, even after controlling for individual unemployment status and the regional dummies. Moreover, the negative coefficients for the interaction terms in Model 5 and 6 suggest that the declines in both types of volunteering are steeper in regions that experienced a higher level of unemployment. It is also notable that controlling for annual unemployment rate appears to explain most of the regional variations in informal helping, as indicated by mostly insignificant coefficients of the regional dummy variables in Model 6 (although there continue to be significant regional differences in levels of formal volunteering).

Combined with the timing of the decline, these regional patterns offer additional evidence that the declines in volunteering activities between 2008 and 2010 are likely to be a result of the recession. The evidence appears stronger for informal helping than formal volunteering, both in terms of the size of the decline during the period and its connection to the recession i.e. the timing of the decline and its relationship with regional unemployment.

### **Why volunteering declined in the recession?**

We next want to explore why volunteer activities, especially informal helping, decline in an economic recession. One possibility is that in recessions more people experience financial hardship and economic insecurity and thus have fewer resources (e.g. time, money, energy) to help other people and engage in the community. In other words, the decline may be largely attributable to compositional changes; especially a growing number of the unemployed, who are less likely to volunteer. The models in Table I, however, do control for personal employment status and social class. We find a very similar decline in formal and informal volunteering activities, whether or not we control for these personal characteristics. While not shown, we also estimated the models that include respondent's household income. The results were almost identical to those in Table I. As well as compositional, another way in which experiences of financial hardship may be driving the decline is that during a recession volunteering behaviour declines most amongst economically vulnerable groups. We therefore examined whether the decline was concentrated amongst the unemployed, or people with low income, or in low social classes by including a series of interaction terms between 'Period 2' and various social and economic indicators. We find no evidence that the decline is larger or smaller amongst certain socio-economic groups.<sup>12</sup>

<Table II>

Still, it is possible that employment status or income do not fully capture the effects of the recession on individual's financial security. Beginning in the second quarter of 2009, the CS has asked whether or not respondents experienced various forms of economic hardship (e.g. losing job, drop in income, arrears with bills or mortgage). The survey also asked whether respondents blame the recession for the hardships they experience. Using these measures,

Models 1 to 4 in Table II examine whether or not these perceptions on recession-related financial hardships mediate or moderate the post-recession declines in volunteering activities. Again, we find no evidence that the continuing declines since 2009 are attributable to personal financial hardship experienced during the recession. In sum, we find little evidence that compositional changes in terms of employment status or financial situations are responsible for the decline in volunteering activities in Figure I. Nor that the declines in volunteering are concentrated amongst the economically vulnerable or those directly affected by the recession. The level of volunteering therefore did not drop after the recession simply because a larger number of people personally experienced financial hardships and reduced their volunteering activities.

We therefore find little evidence that increasing hardship amongst the population, or greater vulnerability amongst disadvantaged individuals, can account for the declines in volunteering observed. However, despite the importance of individual-level disadvantage for volunteering outlined in the literature review, studies have demonstrated that, above and beyond this, levels of disadvantage within communities can play a key role in civic participation. In these studies, economically deprived communities have lower rates of volunteering, not simply because of their demographic composition, but because they often lack institutional infrastructure to sustain an active civic life, such as voluntary associations and the ‘critical mass’ of active volunteers (Musick and Wilson 2008; Coulthard, Walker and Morgan 2002). Deprived communities also tend to have lower levels of ‘collective efficacy’ which has been shown to be associated with various community-level outcomes (Sampson 2012). On average, therefore, individuals in such deprived communities may volunteer less than people in affluent neighbourhoods, regardless of their personal social and economic status, because of both the lack of opportunities and the weaker norms of engagement. Sampson (2012) also finds Chicago

neighbourhoods with dense associational life and strong collective efficacy weathered the recession better than other communities. As a result, deprived neighbourhoods might find it particularly difficult to sustain their volunteering activities in the face of a severe economic recession, not only because of their fragile civic infrastructure and the low level of collective efficacy, but also because the communities themselves may be hit harder economically by the recession.

Whilst the regional variations we observe in Table I are certainly consistent with these neighbourhood effects, census regions are too coarse a geographical unit to capture such effects properly. Unfortunately the public version of the CS does not include finer geographic identifiers. However, the data does include the Index of Multiple Disadvantage (IMD) at the Census Area Statistical (CAS) ward level, which typically contains about 5,500 individuals. This index was created by the government to measure disadvantage in seven domains, including employment, income, and crime. Because the IMD is not updated yearly, the latest available measure of IMD included within the CS is from 2007, before the recession began. We are therefore unable to test the possibility that changes in the IMD account for the declines in volunteering outlined above. However, we can examine whether the decline is concentrated within disadvantaged communities.

<Table III>

To test for this possibility, we add the quintile-IMD measure to the spline logistic regression models in Table I, alongside the same individual-level covariates and regional dummy variables.<sup>13</sup> To test whether volunteering has declined more sharply in more disadvantaged communities we include an interaction term between the IMD and the ‘Period 2’ variable (Model 1 and 4 in Table III). To facilitate the interpretation, we use Model 1 and 4 and compute the

predicted probabilities of volunteering between 2008 and 2010 for the most disadvantaged communities (5<sup>th</sup> quintile) and the least disadvantaged ones (1<sup>st</sup> quintile) respectively. The predicted probabilities and their 95 per cent confidence intervals are shown in Figure II (formal volunteering) and III (informal helping). For formal volunteering, there was almost no decline in this period among the least disadvantaged communities, but there was a significant decline (about six percentage points) among the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. As a result, the gap between these communities that was already large before the recession grew even larger. The gap also grew bigger for informal helping as well, although a significant decline is observed in both the most and the least disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Even in the least disadvantaged communities, the rate of informal helping declined by almost 10 percentage points. In the most disadvantaged communities, the decline was close to 16 percentage points. In short, the civic costs of economic hard times are not borne evenly across communities. The most disadvantaged communities have paid higher prices in terms of formal and informal volunteering activities and as a result, the inequality in volunteering activities between affluent and disadvantaged communities grew substantially after the recession.

<Figure II and III>

As we discussed above, disadvantaged communities may be particularly vulnerable to economic hard times because they lack strong organizational civic infrastructure and sense of collective efficacy amongst residents. Unfortunately we do not have proper measures of either organizational infrastructure or collective efficacy at the community-level to directly test these possibilities. The CS, however, does have some individual-level measures that may allow us to tap into the strength of the social fabric of community. In particular, the CS asks how much respondents trust their neighbours. We add this variable and its interaction with the 'Period 2'

variable to examine whether trust in neighbours either mediates or moderates the post-recession decline in volunteer activities.

Trust in neighbours significantly predicts both formal volunteering (Model 2) and informal helping (Model 5), although the size of the coefficient for formal volunteering is substantially larger. Adding this variable attenuates the main effects of the IMD dummy variables, especially for formal volunteering, suggesting that trust in neighbours can partly account for the gaps in volunteering between affluent and disadvantaged communities. Models 3 and 6 show the decline in volunteering is also larger among people who distrust their neighbours. In fact, formal volunteering did not decline at all among respondents who say many of their neighbours can be trusted. Adding the interaction term also somewhat mutes the interaction effects between the IMD variables and ‘Period 2.’ We interpret these results as evidence that the larger decline in formal volunteering observed in disadvantaged communities is partly attributable to the weaker norms of trust in such neighbourhoods. The interaction effect for informal helping is also statistically significant, but it is weaker than for formal volunteering: we also observe a significant decline in informal helping even among people with a high level of trust in their neighbours.<sup>14</sup> However, even after taking trust in neighbours into account, we still observe both types of volunteering decline more in disadvantaged communities than in affluent communities. This suggests that other community-level factors not captured through the individual-level measure of trust in neighbours (e.g. organizational infrastructure and cultural norms of engagement), may also contribute to the vulnerability of disadvantaged communities.

Overall, we find strong evidence that the rates of formal volunteering and informal helping in England and Wales declined significantly in recent years. All evidence – the timing, the regional variation, and the concentration of the decline among deprived communities –

suggest that the recession is responsible for the downward trends. We find little evidence that individual experience of economic hardship drives this downward trend in volunteering after the recession. Instead, we argue that the decline appears to have more to do with community-level factors, such as cultural norms of trust and civic engagement and organizational infrastructure.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This paper aimed to explore whether the 2008 – 9 recession has had any short-term effects on formal volunteering and informal helping. In England and Wales we observe a decline in both formal volunteering and informal helping immediately after the recession began. However, the size of the decline is substantially larger for informal helping, dropping by about 10 percentage points over a two-year period; the magnitude of such a decline is more commonly witnessed over decades, and between generations, rather than over a few years *within* a population (Putnam 2000). The decline appears to have slowed down in late 2010 and early 2011, despite the weak economic recovery, although whether rates of volunteering will fully regain the ground lost remains to be seen.

Our analyses reveal important variations in how the recession shapes volunteering behaviour. We find that informal helping appears more responsive to national economic climates than formal volunteering. The relative stability of formal volunteering compared to informal helping may not be surprising considering one of the defining features of organized forms of volunteering is its ability to produce collective goods repeatedly over time, despite changes in the organization's environments. Whilst civic associations may have more difficulties in securing necessary resources during recessions, the demands for their services are also likely to be rising. In response, organizations might make additional efforts to retain existing resources (including volunteers) and mobilize more. Newspaper stories we mentioned earlier about increasing

demand for certain voluntary organizations provide anecdotal evidence for such effects. On the other hand, the demand for informal help may decline in hard times, as people may be reluctant to ask friends and neighbours for favors, understanding that everybody is experiencing a rough time. Under a greater pressure to prioritize how to spend their limited resources, therefore, people may be more likely to maintain their commitment to formal volunteering while decreasing their involvement in informal helping activities.<sup>15</sup> People only participating in informal helping activities might also be less committed and have fewer resources and organizational skills compared to formal volunteers, and thus more likely to withdraw from volunteering activities (or introvert their time within their households) when challenged by hard times.

This relative stability of formal volunteering highlights the importance of organizations as a pillar of stable community. Spontaneous and casual ‘Good Samaritan’ behaviours can strengthen social fabric and enrich civic life in the community, but they may be in short supply when and where they are most needed. Instead, it is ‘institutionalized altruism’ coordinated by civic associations that can provide more reliable services and supports to the community, especially in the face of economic hard times. This is certainly not a new insight as sociologists have long emphasized the role of voluntary associations as a source of collective capacity of local communities (e.g., Putnam 1993). In his recent study of Chicago neighbourhoods, Sampson (2012) points out that a community’s organizational resources are likely to become more important as American communities face this unprecedented economic and housing crisis. Our finding on the greater stability of formal volunteering and the instability of informal helping supports this conclusion, illuminating why the importance of organizational resources might increase during a period of recession.



This perspective that emphasizes the role of community-level factors sheds light on why volunteering activities may decline in a recession, especially in disadvantaged communities. Our analyses suggest that the declines in formal and informal volunteering activities cannot be explained by compositional changes of the population. Similar declines are observed whether or not we control for various individual characteristics, including employment status, income, and social class. Nor is the decline concentrated among people who were personally affected by the recession or economically more vulnerable. Instead, we find that the declines tend to be larger within communities that are more socially and economically disadvantaged. The larger decline in disadvantaged communities also appears to be partly explained by weaker norms of social trust in those neighbourhoods. These findings suggest that the decline in volunteering activities might have more to do with community-level factors that affect all residents within a community, rather than personal experiences of financial hardship. Volunteering activities are fundamentally social actions, which involve collaborations of multiple individuals. As discussed above, volunteering tends to be more common and stable in communities where a strong cultural norm of trust and civic engagement makes it a natural part of community life and a dense web of civic associations and leaders supply rich opportunities of involvement. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods would have more difficulties sustaining their (already lower) levels of volunteering activities in economic hard times, when outside resources are scarce and people are likely to focus on weathering hard times individually rather than reaching out to offer and seek help. Helping other people requires more than kind hearts. People are more likely to help others when there is a strong culture of trust and reciprocity, and also when they receive personal requests. When people feel that they cannot rely on others for help, they themselves may be reluctant to ask for help. As a result, informal helping is likely to decline in hard times, even

though people may be still willing to help. Again, this decline is more likely in disadvantaged communities where norms of trust and mutual help may be already weaker.

Are the trends in volunteering activities we find in this study specific to the UK's experience of the recession in particular, or indicative of recessions generally? Answering this question would require a systematic cross-national comparative research, well beyond the scope of this article. However, our initial analyses of the US data offer some useful insights (see Appendix C). Our analysis of the Current Population Survey-Volunteer Supplement (CPS), which has tracked volunteering and other civic activities in the US since 2002, suggest that the trend is mostly flat between 2002 and 2011. We find no evidence of change in the number of hours volunteering among the volunteers, either. Since 2008, the CPS also began to ask how often people exchange favours with their neighbours such as watching each other's children, house sitting, and lending tools, the question that might tap into informal helping behaviours among non-family members. There is a slight decline in this measure between 2008 and 2010 (about 2.5 percentage points). In sum, whilst there is rather sketchy evidence that informal helping behaviour may have declined slightly in the USA, volunteering behaviour appears to have remained more stable in the USA than in the UK. The higher level of volatility in volunteering behaviour in the UK compared to the USA suggests that the recession's effect on volunteerism may also be partly shaped by national institutions and culture. Researchers of volunteerism often group the two countries together as the same model that combines liberal welfare-state regime with a vibrant voluntary sector, but they also point out that the volunteer sector in the UK is not as well institutionalized as it is in the USA (Salamon and Anheier 1996). However, the demand for services by voluntary associations during the recession could also be stronger in the USA, as a result of its weaker social safety net. Thus, the relative stability of

volunteering in the USA may reflect a greater demand for its services. These differences between the two countries emphasize the importance of national institutions and cultural factors to understand volunteering behaviour.

Finally our findings also have implications for the current debates surrounding the UK government's 'Big Society' initiatives. With economic forecasts predicting sluggish growth and high unemployment our findings suggest that any attempt to shift responsibility from the state on to individuals and communities, will undoubtedly prove more difficult. This will be especially problematic in disadvantaged communities that lack organizational infrastructure, leadership, and the cultural norms of civic engagement. Our findings on the relative stability of formal volunteering also suggest that the key to a vibrant and enduring civil society may lie in nurturing dense networks of civic organizations, a task that may turn out more challenging for government to achieve, especially in a short period.

**Appendix A****Table A-I:** *Sample sizes and response rates of the Citizenship Survey*

| Year      | Sample size | Response rate |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| 2001      | 15,485      | 67.5%         |
| 2003      | 14,057      | 64.0%         |
| 2005      | 14,081      | 63.0%         |
| 2007 – 08 | 14,095      | 57.0%         |
| 2008 – 09 | 14,917      | 56.0%         |
| 2009 – 10 | 16,140      | 56.0%         |
| 2010 – 11 | 16,966      | 58.0%         |

**Table A-II:** *The cumulative sample size of the Citizenship Survey in each region*

| Region               | Cumulative sample size (2001 – 11) |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| North East           | 3,454                              |
| North West           | 10,060                             |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 8,229                              |
| East Midlands        | 7,078                              |
| West Midlands        | 9,562                              |
| Eastern              | 7,206                              |
| London               | 24,737                             |
| South East           | 10,341                             |
| South West           | 5,976                              |
| Wales                | 3,623                              |

**Appendix B:** *The 'informal helping' questions in the Citizenship Survey*

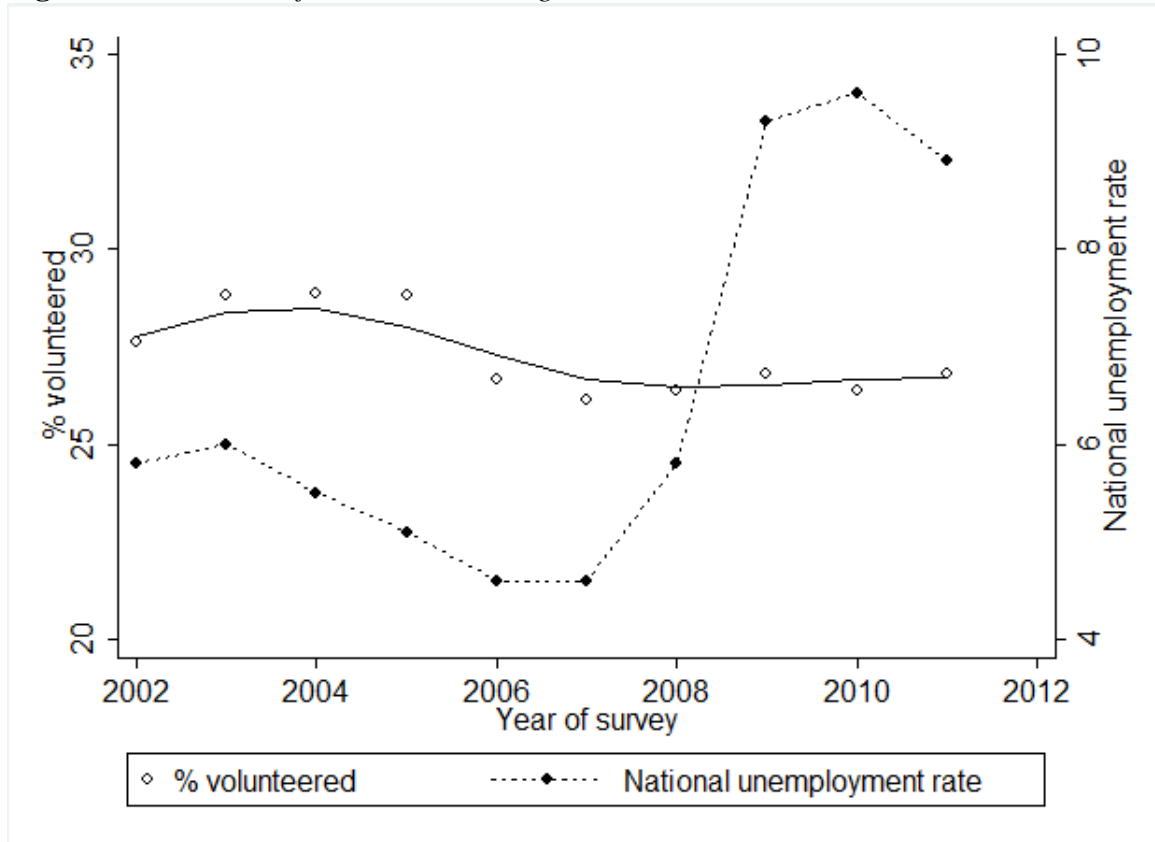
In the **last 12 months** have you done any of the following things, unpaid, for someone who was not a relative?

*This is any unpaid help you, as an individual, may have given to other people, that is apart from any help given through a group, club or organization. This could be help for a friend, neighbour or someone else but not a relative.*

- (1) Keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about (visiting in person, telephoning or e-mailing)
- (2) Doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills
- (3) Cooking, cleaning, laundry, gardening or other routine household jobs
- (4) Decorating, or doing any kind of home or car repairs
- (5) Baby sitting or caring for children
- (6) Sitting with or providing personal care (e.g. washing, dressing) for someone who is sick or frail
- (7) Looking after a property or a pet for someone who is away
- (8) Giving advice
- (9) Writing letters or filling in forms
- (10) Representing someone (for example talking to a council department, or to a doctor)
- (11) Transporting or escorting someone (for example to a hospital, or on an outing)
- (12) Anything else

**Appendix C**

**Figure A-I: Trends in formal volunteering in the US**



Source: The Current Population Survey

**Table A-III: Exchanging favours with neighbours in the US (%)**

| How often did you and your neighbours do favours for one another? | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| Basically every day   | 4.03  | 3.79  | 3.78  |
| A few times a week  | 12.84 | 11.65 | 11.37 |
| A few times a month   | 20.85 | 20.13 | 19.17 |
| Once a month  | 20.39 | 20.68 | 21.31 |
| Not at all  | 41.89 | 43.76 | 44.37 |
| Total   | 100   | 100   | 100   |

Source: The Current Population Survey

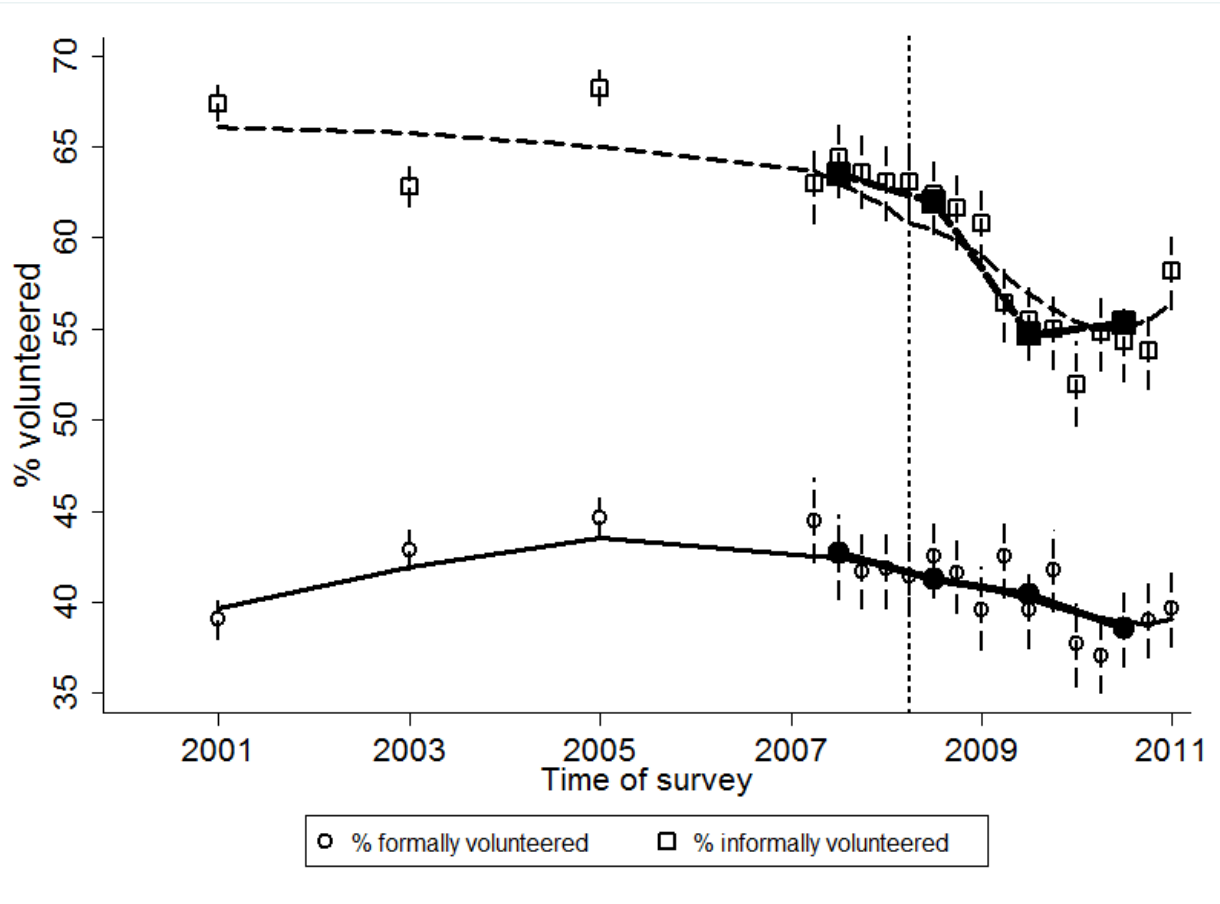
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**Figure I:** Trends in formal volunteering and informal helping in England and Wales

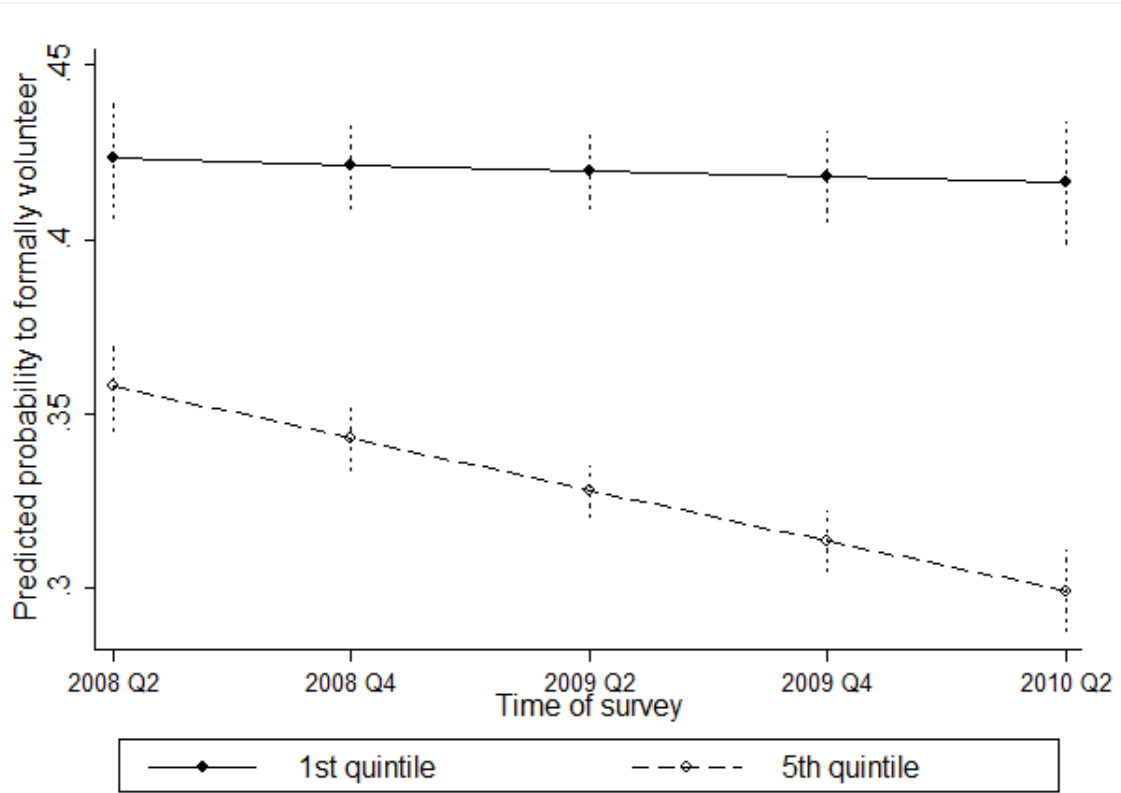


Note:

The thicker line represents the annually aggregated trend. The vertical dotted line marks the second quarter of 2008, where the recession officially began in the UK.

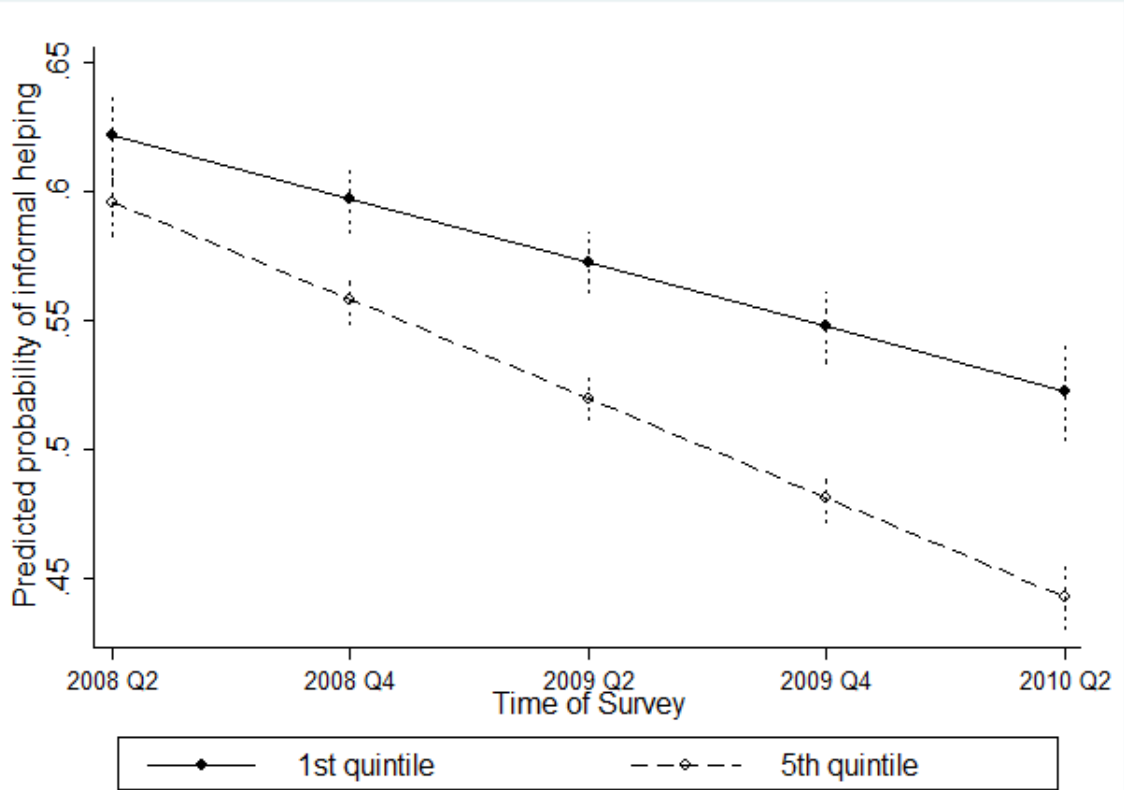
Source: The Citizenship Survey

**Figure II:** Trends in formal volunteering: the least and the most disadvantaged communities



Source: The Citizenship Survey

**Figure III:** Trends in informal helping: the least and the most disadvantaged communities



Source: The Citizenship Survey

**Table I:** *Spline logistic regressions of formal volunteering and informal helping*

| VARIABLES  | Model 1<br>(Formal)  | Model 2<br>(Informal) | Model 3<br>(Formal)  | Model 4<br>(Informal) | Model 5<br>(Formal)  | Model 6<br>(Informal) |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Respondent's age (ref. = 16 – 29)                                  |                      |                       |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| 30 – 39  | 0.048<br>(0.038)     | -0.069+<br>(0.039)    | 0.048<br>(0.038)     | -0.068+<br>(0.039)    | 0.048<br>(0.038)     | -0.069+<br>(0.039)    |
| 40 – 49  | 0.243***<br>(0.040)  | -0.028<br>(0.040)     | 0.243***<br>(0.040)  | -0.026<br>(0.040)     | 0.242***<br>(0.040)  | -0.027<br>(0.040)     |
| 50 – 64  | 0.131**<br>(0.041)   | -0.191***<br>(0.041)  | 0.131**<br>(0.041)   | -0.188***<br>(0.041)  | 0.131**<br>(0.041)   | -0.188***<br>(0.041)  |
| 65 or older  | 0.244***<br>(0.058)  | -0.251***<br>(0.057)  | 0.244***<br>(0.058)  | -0.249***<br>(0.057)  | 0.243***<br>(0.058)  | -0.250***<br>(0.057)  |
| Female (ref. = male)   | 0.218***<br>(0.021)  | 0.202***<br>(0.021)   | 0.218***<br>(0.021)  | 0.202***<br>(0.021)   | 0.218***<br>(0.021)  | 0.202***<br>(0.021)   |
| Ethnicity (ref. = British white)                                   |                      |                       |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| Indian, Pakistani, Bangladesh                                      | -0.405***<br>(0.035) | -0.378***<br>(0.032)  | -0.405***<br>(0.035) | -0.378***<br>(0.032)  | -0.405***<br>(0.035) | -0.378***<br>(0.032)  |
| Black  | -0.045<br>(0.041)    | -0.142***<br>(0.039)  | -0.045<br>(0.041)    | -0.141***<br>(0.039)  | -0.046<br>(0.041)    | -0.141***<br>(0.039)  |
| Others   | -0.433***<br>(0.044) | -0.185***<br>(0.042)  | -0.433***<br>(0.044) | -0.186***<br>(0.042)  | -0.433***<br>(0.044) | -0.186***<br>(0.042)  |
| Marital status (ref. = married)                                    |                      |                       |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| Single (never married)   | -0.325***<br>(0.029) | -0.108***<br>(0.029)  | -0.325***<br>(0.029) | -0.108***<br>(0.029)  | -0.324***<br>(0.029) | -0.107***<br>(0.029)  |
| Divorced/separated/widowed   | -0.284***<br>(0.026) | -0.058*<br>(0.025)    | -0.284***<br>(0.026) | -0.057*<br>(0.025)    | -0.284***<br>(0.026) | -0.057*<br>(0.025)    |
| Education (ref. = no qualification)                                |                      |                       |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| Foreign or others  | 0.207***<br>(0.045)  | 0.037<br>(0.041)      | 0.207***<br>(0.045)  | 0.036<br>(0.041)      | 0.209***<br>(0.045)  | 0.038<br>(0.041)      |
| GCSE (a to e)  | 0.624***<br>(0.035)  | 0.440***<br>(0.032)   | 0.624***<br>(0.035)  | 0.440***<br>(0.032)   | 0.625***<br>(0.035)  | 0.441***<br>(0.032)   |
| A level  | 0.984***<br>(0.041)  | 0.678***<br>(0.040)   | 0.984***<br>(0.041)  | 0.679***<br>(0.040)   | 0.985***<br>(0.041)  | 0.679***<br>(0.040)   |
| Higher education (no degree)                                       | 1.088***<br>(0.045)  | 0.634***<br>(0.046)   | 1.087***<br>(0.045)  | 0.632***<br>(0.046)   | 1.089***<br>(0.045)  | 0.633***<br>(0.046)   |
| Higher education (degree)  | 1.236***<br>(0.039)  | 0.708***<br>(0.038)   | 1.236***<br>(0.039)  | 0.707***<br>(0.038)   | 1.237***<br>(0.039)  | 0.708***<br>(0.038)   |
| Social class (ref. = never worked/<br>long-term unemp./unemployed) |                      |                       |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| Semi-routine/routine   | -0.016<br>(0.056)    | 0.250***<br>(0.049)   | -0.016<br>(0.056)    | 0.250***<br>(0.049)   | -0.016<br>(0.056)    | 0.251***<br>(0.049)   |
| Intermediate/small employers/<br>lower supervisory                 | 0.293***<br>(0.056)  | 0.476***<br>(0.050)   | 0.293***<br>(0.056)  | 0.478***<br>(0.050)   | 0.294***<br>(0.056)  | 0.478***<br>(0.050)   |
| Higher and lower management  | 0.596***<br>(0.057)  | 0.688***<br>(0.052)   | 0.596***<br>(0.057)  | 0.690***<br>(0.052)   | 0.596***<br>(0.057)  | 0.690***<br>(0.052)   |

|  |                       |                       |                       |                      |                       |                      |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Others                                 | 0.895***<br>(0.075)   | 0.459***<br>(0.069)   | 0.896***<br>(0.075)   | 0.464***<br>(0.069)  | 0.896***<br>(0.075)   | 0.464***<br>(0.069)  |
| Employment status<br>(ref. = employed) |                       |                       |                       |                      |                       |                      |
| Unemployed                             | 0.281***<br>(0.069)   | 0.182**<br>(0.067)    | 0.282***<br>(0.069)   | 0.187**<br>(0.067)   | 0.281***<br>(0.069)   | 0.186**<br>(0.067)   |
| Retired                                | -0.020<br>(0.040)     | 0.011<br>(0.039)      | -0.021<br>(0.040)     | 0.010<br>(0.039)     | -0.020<br>(0.040)     | 0.010<br>(0.039)     |
| Not in labor force                     | -0.059+<br>(0.033)    | -0.116***<br>(0.031)  | -0.059+<br>(0.033)    | -0.117***<br>(0.031) | -0.059+<br>(0.033)    | -0.117***<br>(0.031) |
| Region (ref. = North East)             |                       |                       |                       |                      |                       |                      |
| North West                             | 0.186***<br>(0.054)   | 0.046<br>(0.051)      | 0.173**<br>(0.058)    | -0.043<br>(0.055)    | 0.173**<br>(0.058)    | -0.045<br>(0.055)    |
| Yorkshire and Humber                   | 0.211***<br>(0.056)   | 0.049<br>(0.053)      | 0.201***<br>(0.059)   | -0.021<br>(0.056)    | 0.211***<br>(0.060)   | -0.014<br>(0.056)    |
| East Midlands                          | 0.338***<br>(0.057)   | 0.082<br>(0.054)      | 0.319***<br>(0.066)   | -0.054<br>(0.063)    | 0.320***<br>(0.066)   | -0.055<br>(0.063)    |
| West Midlands                          | 0.285***<br>(0.056)   | 0.151**<br>(0.053)    | 0.279***<br>(0.057)   | 0.110*<br>(0.054)    | 0.284***<br>(0.057)   | 0.114*<br>(0.054)    |
| Eastern                                | 0.407***<br>(0.055)   | 0.223***<br>(0.053)   | 0.379***<br>(0.074)   | 0.024<br>(0.071)     | 0.376***<br>(0.074)   | 0.019<br>(0.071)     |
| London                                 | 0.129*<br>(0.057)     | -0.024<br>(0.054)     | 0.128*<br>(0.057)     | -0.028<br>(0.054)    | 0.118*<br>(0.057)     | -0.037<br>(0.054)    |
| South East                             | 0.493***<br>(0.053)   | 0.316***<br>(0.051)   | 0.462***<br>(0.076)   | 0.094<br>(0.073)     | 0.459***<br>(0.076)   | 0.088<br>(0.073)     |
| South West                             | 0.529***<br>(0.056)   | 0.327***<br>(0.055)   | 0.497***<br>(0.080)   | 0.094<br>(0.078)     | 0.498***<br>(0.080)   | 0.090<br>(0.078)     |
| Wales                                  | 0.319***<br>(0.063)   | 0.069<br>(0.060)      | 0.305***<br>(0.067)   | -0.031<br>(0.065)    | 0.313***<br>(0.067)   | -0.026<br>(0.065)    |
| Period 1 (2003 – 2008 Q2)              | -0.031***<br>(0.007)  | -0.029***<br>(0.007)  | -0.029***<br>(0.007)  | -0.015*<br>(0.008)   | -0.034***<br>(0.008)  | -0.019*<br>(0.008)   |
| Period 2 (2008 Q2-2010 Q2)             | -0.118***<br>(0.019)  | -0.255***<br>(0.018)  | -0.103**<br>(0.032)   | -0.151***<br>(0.031) | 0.072<br>(0.075)      | -0.002<br>(0.075)    |
| Period 3 (2010 Q2-2011 Q1)             | 0.052<br>(0.068)      | 0.265***<br>(0.066)   | 0.039<br>(0.071)      | 0.180**<br>(0.069)   | 0.055<br>(0.072)      | 0.193**<br>(0.069)   |
| Regional unemployment                  |                       |                       | -0.011<br>(0.019)     | -0.075***<br>(0.018) | 0.009<br>(0.020)      | -0.058**<br>(0.020)  |
| Period 2 X Regional unemployment       |                       |                       |                       |                      | -0.026*<br>(0.010)    | -0.021*<br>(0.010)   |
| Constant                               | 60.379***<br>(13.185) | 57.245***<br>(13.513) | 56.661***<br>(14.723) | 30.132*<br>(15.136)  | 65.896***<br>(15.180) | 37.848*<br>(15.604)  |
| Number of observations                 | 85,201                | 85,201                | 85,201                | 85,201               | 85,201                | 85,201               |

Source: The Citizenship Survey

**Table II:** *Spline logistic regressions of formal volunteering and informal helping on personal experiences of financial hardship*

| VARIABLES   | Model 1<br>(Formal)  | Model 2<br>(Informal) | Model 3<br>(Formal)  | Model 4<br>(Informal) |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| (Results for other variables omitted)                   |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| Financial hardship<br>(ref. = not experienced hardship) |                      |                       |                      |                       |
| Hardship unrelated to the recession (R2)                | 0.186***<br>(0.054)  | 0.461***<br>(0.052)   | -0.238<br>(0.250)    | 0.326<br>(0.243)      |
| Hardship related to the recession (R3)                  | 0.219***<br>(0.039)  | 0.458***<br>(0.037)   | 0.022<br>(0.178)     | 0.455**<br>(0.172)    |
| Period 2 (2008 Q2 – 2010 Q2)                            | -0.231***<br>(0.058) | -0.130*<br>(0.056)    | -0.321***<br>(0.082) | -0.143+<br>(0.078)    |
| Period 3 (2010 Q2 – 2011 Q1)                            | 0.108<br>(0.077)     | 0.190*<br>(0.075)     | 0.109<br>(0.077)     | 0.190*<br>(0.075)     |
| Period 2 X R2   |                      |                       | 0.249+<br>(0.143)    | 0.080<br>(0.139)      |
| Period2 X R3  |                      |                       | 0.116<br>(0.102)     | 0.001<br>(0.098)      |
| Constant  | -1.226*<br>(0.591)   | -0.213<br>(0.568)     | -1.064+<br>(0.599)   | -0.189<br>(0.577)     |
| Number of observations                                  | 31,963               | 31,963                | 31,963               | 31,963                |

Note:

The models include the same individual and regional level covariates as the models in Table I. The results for these covariates are omitted to save space and available from the authors up on request.

Source: The Citizenship Survey

**Table III:** Spline logistic regressions of formal volunteering and informal helping on Index of Multiple Disadvantages and trust in neighbours

| VARIABLES  | Formal volunteering    |                        |                        | Informal helping     |                      |                      |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|  | Model 1                | Model 2                | Model 3                | Model 4              | Model 5              | Model 6              |
| Period 1 (2003 – 2008 Q2)  | -0.132***<br>(0.039)   | -0.139***<br>(0.039)   | -0.136***<br>(0.039)   | -0.024<br>(0.038)    | -0.027<br>(0.038)    | -0.026<br>(0.038)    |
| Period 2 (2008 Q2 – 2010 Q2)   | 0.022<br>(0.031)       | 0.016<br>(0.031)       | -0.136**<br>(0.048)    | -0.186***<br>(0.031) | -0.189***<br>(0.031) | -0.270***<br>(0.046) |
| Period 3 (2010 Q2 – 2011 Q1)   | -0.037<br>(0.051)      | -0.025<br>(0.051)      | -0.025<br>(0.051)      | 0.212***<br>(0.048)  | 0.219***<br>(0.048)  | 0.220***<br>(0.048)  |
| Index of Multiple Disadvantages<br>(ref. = 1 <sup>st</sup> quintile) |                        |                        |                        |                      |                      |                      |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> quintile   | -0.050<br>(0.050)      | -0.038<br>(0.050)      | -0.043<br>(0.050)      | -0.039<br>(0.052)    | -0.033<br>(0.052)    | -0.036<br>(0.052)    |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> quintile   | -0.106*<br>(0.049)     | -0.074<br>(0.049)      | -0.088+<br>(0.049)     | -0.049<br>(0.051)    | -0.032<br>(0.051)    | -0.041<br>(0.051)    |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> quintile   | -0.177***<br>(0.048)   | -0.110*<br>(0.048)     | -0.139**<br>(0.049)    | -0.076<br>(0.049)    | -0.041<br>(0.049)    | -0.059<br>(0.050)    |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> quintile   | -0.267***<br>(0.048)   | -0.168***<br>(0.048)   | -0.209***<br>(0.049)   | -0.086+<br>(0.048)   | -0.036<br>(0.048)    | -0.060<br>(0.049)    |
| Interactions: Period 2 and IMD                                       |                        |                        |                        |                      |                      |                      |
| Period 2 X 2nd quintile  | -0.070+<br>(0.039)     | -0.066+<br>(0.039)     | -0.059<br>(0.039)      | -0.055<br>(0.040)    | -0.052<br>(0.040)    | -0.048<br>(0.040)    |
| Period 2 X 3rd quintile  | -0.099*<br>(0.039)     | -0.093*<br>(0.039)     | -0.077*<br>(0.039)     | -0.046<br>(0.039)    | -0.042<br>(0.039)    | -0.032<br>(0.039)    |
| Period 2 X 4th quintile  | -0.168***<br>(0.037)   | -0.165***<br>(0.037)   | -0.136***<br>(0.038)   | -0.092*<br>(0.037)   | -0.090*<br>(0.037)   | -0.072+<br>(0.038)   |
| Period 2 X 5th quintile  | -0.151***<br>(0.035)   | -0.152***<br>(0.035)   | -0.111**<br>(0.037)    | -0.135***<br>(0.035) | -0.135***<br>(0.035) | -0.111**<br>(0.036)  |
| Trust in neighbours  |                        | 0.149***<br>(0.009)    | 0.107***<br>(0.013)    |                      | 0.073***<br>(0.008)  | 0.050***<br>(0.013)  |
| Period 2 X Trust in neighbours                                       |                        |                        | 0.043***<br>(0.011)    |                      |                      | 0.023*<br>(0.010)    |
| Constant   | 263.297***<br>(78.469) | 277.282***<br>(78.685) | 271.707***<br>(78.593) | 47.472<br>(77.097)   | 54.030<br>(77.153)   | 51.322<br>(77.128)   |
| Observations   | 57,176                 | 57,176                 | 57,176                 | 57,176               | 57,176               | 57,176               |

Source: The Citizenship Survey

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<sup>1</sup> Each author contributed equally to this collaboration; the authors' names are listed in reverse alphabetical order. The authors thank Robert D. Putnam, Anthony Heath, Tom Sander, Ed Fieldhouse, Tom Clark, and the anonymous reviewers of BJS for their helpful comments. The research received generous financial supports from the Saguaro Seminar at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Institute for Social Change at the University of Manchester. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2012 meeting of the American Sociological Association.

<sup>2</sup> Whilst the causal direction is still not clear, studies have found a strong association between social trust and volunteering (e.g. Uslaner 2002).

<sup>3</sup> We use the sampling weight available in the public version of the dataset to make the sample representative of the adult population in England and Wales.

<sup>4</sup> Annual response rate and sample size can be found in the Appendix. For more information on the Citizenship Survey, please visit the following website:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/communities/research/citizenshipsurvey/> (last accessed on July 29, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> The wording of these questions remained unchanged throughout this period. The questions were also asked approximately in the same context in the survey.

<sup>6</sup> The results are available from the authors.

<sup>7</sup> Technically we did this by creating three 'spline terms'. For the first term, all respondents interviewed up to March 2008 were assigned the time of their survey and those interviewed since April 2008 were assigned 2008. The second spline term is coded zero for all respondents interviewed up to the first quarter of 2008 and then increases by 0.25 for each quarter up to the second quarter of 2010. Similarly, the third spline term is coded zero for all respondents interviewed up to the second quarter of 2010 and increases by 0.25. We experimented with knots at different time points (i.e., the first or the third quarter of 2008 for the first knot) and the results were consistent with what we present here.

<sup>8</sup> The difference between the first two spline coefficients is also statistically significant with p-values smaller than 0.001.

<sup>9</sup> We repeated Models 1 and 2 for each type of formal volunteering and informal helping activities to examine whether the post-recession decline only applies to some types of activities but not others. The results suggest that almost all types of volunteering activities declined significantly.

<sup>10</sup> The CS uses the International Labour Organization's definition of unemployment, which defines the unemployed as individuals who are without a job, want a job, have actively sought work in the last 4 weeks and are available to start work in the next 2 weeks, or out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next 2 weeks.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, we find that the positive association between unemployment and volunteering (after adjusting for social class) applies only to female respondents. In fact, unemployed women are more likely to volunteer than employed women even without adjusting for social class (c.f. Taniguchi 2006; Strauß 2008).

<sup>12</sup> The results are available from the authors.

<sup>13</sup> We exclude Wales from this analysis because the IMD in Wales is not directly comparable to that in England.

<sup>14</sup> However, our analysis finds no significant interaction between generalized social trust and 'Period 2,' either for formal or informal volunteering.

<sup>15</sup> Our additional analyses of the CS show that whilst the numbers of respondents who only informally volunteer and those who do both formal and informal volunteering declined after the recession, the number of people who only formally volunteer slightly increased. These suggest that people who do both formal and informal volunteering are more likely to disengage from informal helping activities than from formal volunteering in a recession.