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Active Communities: Initial Findings from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey

Duncan Prime, Meta Zimmeck and Andrew Zurawan

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Introduction

This short report sets out some initial findings about active communities from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey. Other reports to be published in due course will deal in greater detail with this and other related subjects (citizenship; identity, religion and language; racial prejudice and discrimination; and family networks and parenting).

The Citizenship Survey was carried out for the first time in 2001 and in future will be carried out every two years. First it will provide an evidence base for the Home Office's community policies, which address issues of social cohesion and civil renewal. Secondly, it will provide a means for assessing the Home Office's performance against targets – in the case of the Active Communities Agenda, the target of making substantial progress by 2004 towards actively involving one million more people in their communities. Thirdly, it will provide a major contribution to the continuing debate about social capital, defined as social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust which arise from them.

The Citizenship Survey had a sample of 15,475 people aged sixteen and over in England and

Wales, a nationally representative sample of 10,015 and a minority ethnic booster sample of 5,460. Due to the large size of the sample and the use of well-established methodologies (for details see p.8), these data are robust for detailed analysis.

People and neighbourhoods

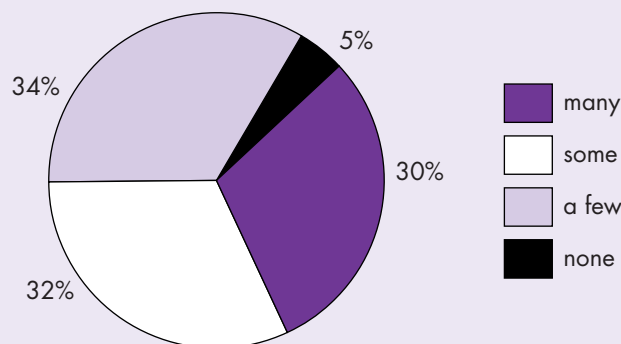
People's views about where they live and their understanding of how they relate to other people in their neighbourhoods are key components of social capital and have an impact on social cohesion.

How do people feel about their neighbourhoods? How many other people do they know in their neighbourhoods? How often do they socialise with friends and neighbours? How much do they trust their neighbours? And how many are prepared to intervene for the common good?

How do people feel about their neighbourhoods?

Overall, 67% of people said that they definitely enjoyed living in their neighbourhoods, but people in the most deprived areas were much less likely than those in the least deprived areas to say this (46% versus 79%).

Figure 1: How many people do you know in your neighbourhood



9,949 respondents in England and Wales (excluding don't know/not stated)
Data do not total 100% due to rounding

How many others in their neighbourhoods do people know?

Knowing and spending time with other people can help to build local social networks, which increase trust between neighbours and provide a stepping stone to greater involvement in community activities.

Sixty-two per cent of people said that they knew some/many of the people in their neighbourhoods (Figure 1).

Unsurprisingly, the longer people lived in their neighbourhoods, the more contacts they had with others. Of those who had lived in their neighbourhoods for less than a year, only 5% knew many people. Forty-six per cent of those who had lived there for more than thirty years said that they knew many people. People who lived in the most deprived areas knew as many people as those who lived elsewhere.

How often do people socialise with friends and neighbours?

Fifty per cent of people said that they had friends or neighbours round to their houses; 46%, that they visited friends or neighbours at least once a week; and 37%, that they went out socially with friends or neighbours at least once a week.

People aged under 35 were more likely than those aged 35 and over to have friends or neighbours round to their houses (66% versus 42%), go round to their friends' or neighbours' houses (67% versus 35%), or go out with friends (56% versus 31%) at least once a week.

How much do people trust their neighbours?

The extent to which people trust their neighbours and feel safe in their neighbourhoods contributes to their physical and mental well-being and to other social objectives such as the reduction of crime.

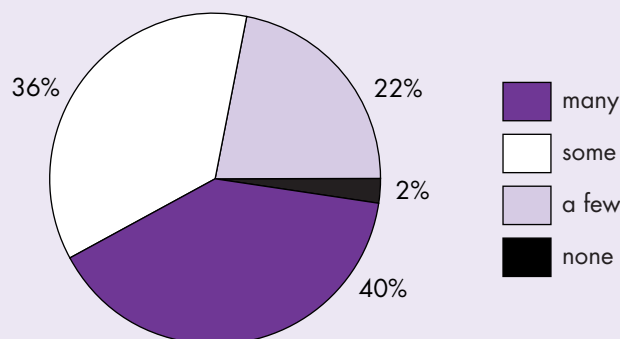
Overall, 76% of people said that they could trust some or many people in their neighbourhoods (Figure 2). Only 2% said that they could trust no one in their neighbourhoods.

People in the most deprived areas were much less likely than people in the least deprived areas to say that they could trust many people in their neighbourhoods (26% versus 51%).

Thirty-four per cent of people said they felt very safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark. People living in the least deprived areas were twice as likely as those living in the most deprived areas to say so (43% versus 21%). Women were five times as likely as men to say that they never went out after dark (15% versus 3%) and more than three times as likely to say that they felt very unsafe if they did so (10% versus 3%). People's feelings of being safe after dark declined with age. Only 26% of those aged 50 and over said that they felt very safe, compared with 40% of those under 50.

Forty-three per cent said that their neighbourhoods were definitely places where people looked out for each other; and 40%, that they were places where to some extent people looked out for each other.

Figure 2: How many people in your neighbourhood can you trust



9,441 respondents in England and Wales (excluding don't know/not stated)

When asked about the likelihood of getting a purse or wallet back with nothing missing if they lost it in their neighbourhoods, 42% of people said that it was quite or very likely that this would happen. Only 18% of those living in the most deprived areas said this.

How many people are prepared to intervene for the common good?

In order to explore how prepared people were to intervene for the common good, they were asked, for example, what they did the last time they saw someone drop litter in the street:

- 39% ignored the litter
- 25% picked up the litter themselves
- 22% thought about asking that person to pick up the litter but decided not to
- 15% of people asked that person to pick up the litter.

More women than men took action, either by picking up the litter themselves or asking the offenders to do so (42% versus 36%), and more older people than younger people did so (46% of those aged 75 and over versus 21% of those aged 16 to 24).

Active participation in communities

People participate in communities in different ways, from the relatively low key, such as writing to a local

councillor or belonging to an angling club, to the very active, such as running after-school activities or a Neighbourhood Watch group. High levels of participation in these activities are considered to be good indicators of healthy and well-functioning communities.

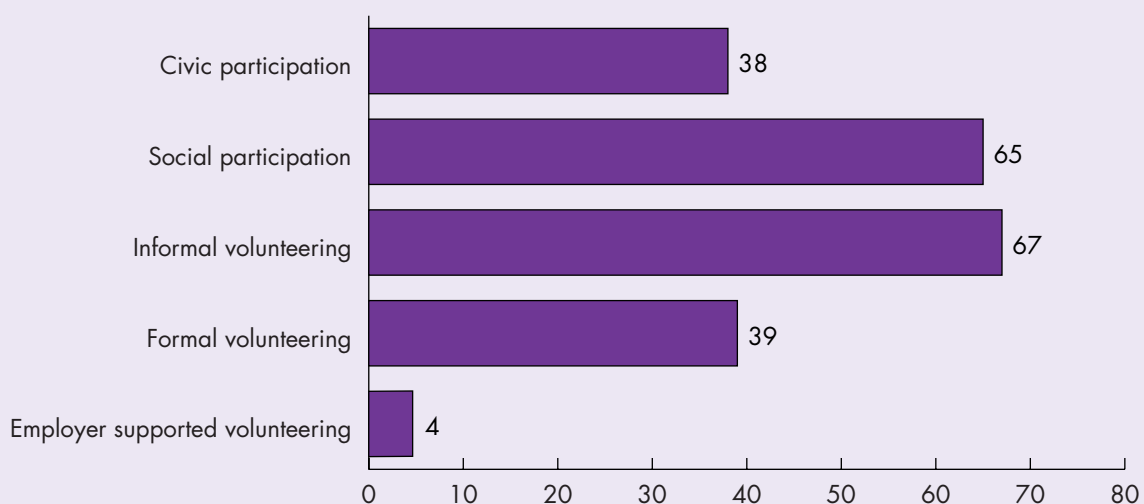
How many people engage in civic affairs and what do they do? How many participate socially in groups and what do they do? How many volunteer informally and what do they do? How many volunteer formally and what do they do? How many volunteer through employer-supported schemes? And how does their participation vary according to the relative deprivation of the areas in which they live?

Figure 3 and Tables 1, 2, 3 (below) and 4 (on p. 7) show how participation rates vary by the type of activity; people's age, ethnic group and sex; and the level of deprivation in the areas in which they live.

How many people participate in civic affairs and what do they do?

Participation in civic affairs is engaging in at least one of a range of nine representative activities.¹ Thirty-eight per cent of people participated in civic affairs in the last twelve months. This is equivalent to approximately 16.2 million people in England and Wales.

Figure 3: Participation in voluntary and community activities within the last 12 months, by type of activity (%)



Respondents in England and Wales (excluding don't know/not stated)

Table 1: Participation in voluntary and community activities within the last 12 months, by age (%)

| | Civic participation | Social participation | Informal volunteering | Formal volunteering | Employer-supported volunteering |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 16-24 | 28 | 70 | 73 | 40 | 3 |
| 25-34 | 37 | 66 | 72 | 37 | 6 |
| 35-49 | 44 | 68 | 72 | 44 | 6 |
| 50-64 | 43 | 65 | 64 | 40 | 3 |
| 65+ | 34 | 56 | 54 | 32 | 0 |
| Respondents in England and Wales | 10,005 | 9,991 | 10,000 | 10,002 | 10,005 |

(excluding don't know/not stated)

Table 2: Participation in voluntary and community activities within the last 12 months, by ethnic group (%)

| | Civic participation | Social participation | Informal volunteering | Formal volunteering | Employer-supported volunteering |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| White | 39 | 65 | 68 | 39 | 4 |
| Mixed | 37 | 67 | 63 | 41 | 6 |
| Asian | 28 | 61 | 58 | 35 | 3 |
| Black | 31 | 66 | 68 | 42 | 4 |
| Chinese/Other | 26 | 58 | 58 | 35 | 4 |
| Respondents in England and Wales | 15,459 | 15,430 | 15,434 | 15,447 | 15,470 |

(excluding don't know/not stated)

Table 3: Participation in voluntary and community activities within the last 12 months, by ethnic group/sex (%)

| | Civic participation | Social participation | Informal volunteering | Formal volunteering | Employer-supported volunteering |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| White men | 41 | 67 | 68 | 40 | 4 |
| White women | 38 | 64 | 68 | 39 | 3 |
| Asian men | 31 | 66 | 59 | 37 | 3 |
| Asian women | 24 | 56 | 56 | 32 | 3 |
| Black men | 29 | 63 | 69 | 38 | 4 |
| Black women | 32 | 67 | 66 | 45 | 4 |
| Respondents in England and Wales | 14,465 | 14,437 | 14,442 | 14,453 | 15,324 |

(excluding don't know/not stated)

People were most likely to be involved in:

- signing a petition – 22%
- contacting a public official working for the local council – 15%
- contacting a local councillor – 9%
- attending a public meeting or rally – 7%.

People aged 35 to 49 were the most likely to participate in civic affairs (44%) and those aged 16 to 24 were the least likely (28%).

White people were the most likely to participate in civic affairs (39%) and people from the Chinese/Other ethnic group were the least likely (26%).

White men were the most likely to participate in civic affairs (41%) and Asian women were the least likely (24%).

How many people participate socially in groups and what do they do?

Social participation is involvement in groups, clubs or organisations. In the last twelve months 65% of people were involved socially at least once in groups, clubs or organisations. This is equivalent to approximately 27.4 million people in England and Wales. In the last twelve months 52% of people were involved socially in groups, clubs or organisations at least once a month. This is equivalent to approximately 21.9 million people in England and Wales.

People were most likely to have been involved socially in groups, clubs or organisations in the following fields:

1. These are: signing a petition; contacting a public official working for a local authority/Greater London Assembly or National Assembly for Wales (if appropriate)/central government; contacting a local councillor/member of the Greater London Assembly or National Assembly for Wales (if appropriate)/Member of Parliament; attending a public meeting or rally; and taking part in a public demonstration or protest. It was not possible to ask questions about people's voting behaviour since the fieldwork for the Citizenship Survey took place at the time of the general election in May 2001.

- sports and exercise – taking part or going to watch – 33%
- hobbies/recreation/arts/social clubs – 24%
- religion – 18%
- children's education/schools – 16%
- education for adults – 12%
- local community or neighbourhood groups – 11%
- youth/children's activities outside school – 10%.

People aged 16 to 24 were the most likely to be involved socially in groups, clubs or organisations (70%), and those aged 65 and over were the least likely (56%).

People from the Mixed ethnic group were the most likely to be involved socially in groups, clubs or organisations (67%), and those from the Chinese/Other ethnic group were the least likely (58%).

Black women and White men were the most likely to be involved socially in groups, clubs or organisations (67%), and Asian women were the least likely (56%).

How many people volunteer informally and what do they do?

Informal volunteering is giving unpaid help to an individual who is not a member of the respondent's family. In the last twelve months 67% of people volunteered informally at least once. This is equivalent to approximately 28.3 million people in England and Wales. In the last twelve months 34% of people volunteered informally at least once a month. This is equivalent to approximately 14.2 million people in England and Wales.

The mean number of hours of informal volunteering undertaken by people who volunteered informally in the last twelve months was 66.4 hours.

People were most likely to have volunteered informally by carrying out the following tasks:

- giving advice to someone – 31%
- looking after property or a pet for someone who was away – 28%
- transporting or escorting someone – 21%
- baby sitting or caring for children – 19%
- keeping in touch with someone – 19%
- doing shopping, collecting pension or paying bills – 17%.

Black and White people were the most likely to volunteer informally (68%); Asian and Chinese/Other people were the least likely (58%). Black men were the most likely to volunteer informally (69%), and Asian women were the least likely (56%).

People identified the main barriers to informal volunteering as:

- lack of time and being too busy – 30%
- not being asked to volunteer – 18%
- work commitments – 12%
- no local need for help – 10%
- parenting, caring or family responsibilities – 9%.

People said that the incentives most likely to get them involved in informal volunteering in the future were knowing someone who needed help (54%) or being asked to help by someone (44%).

How many people volunteer formally and what do they do?

Formal volunteering is giving unpaid help to groups, clubs or organisations. It has roots in social participation but involves a greater commitment. In the last twelve months 39% of people volunteered formally at least once. This is equivalent to approximately 16.5 million people in England and Wales. In the last twelve months 26% of people volunteered formally at least once a month. This is equivalent to 11.2 million people in England and Wales.

The mean number of hours of formal volunteering undertaken by people who volunteered formally in the last twelve months was 110.5 hours.

People were most likely to have volunteered formally by carrying out the following tasks:

- raising and handling money – 22%
- organising or helping to run an activity or event – 21%
- giving other practical help – 14%
- being a leader or a member of a committee – 13%
- giving advice, information or counselling – 11%
- providing transport or driving – 10%.

People were most likely to have been involved in formal volunteering in the following fields:

- sports and exercise – 13%
- children's education/schools – 12%
- hobbies/recreation/arts/social clubs – 10%
- religion – 9%
- youth/children's activities outside school – 7%.

Men were most likely to be involved in the field of sports/exercise (17%); and women, in the field of children's education/schools (15%).

People aged 35 to 49 were the most likely to be formal volunteers (44%); and those aged 65 and over were the least likely (32%).

Black people were most likely to be formal volunteers (42%), and Asian and Chinese/Other people were the least likely (35%). Black women were the most likely to be formal volunteers (45%), and Asian women were the least likely (32%).

People identified the main barriers to formal volunteering as:

- lack of time and being too busy (33%)
- work commitments (20%)
- parenting, caring or family responsibilities (15%).

People said that the incentive most likely to get them involved in formal volunteering in the future was a direct appeal for help (38%).

How many people volunteer through employer-supported volunteering schemes?

Some employers support schemes to enable their employees to help with community projects, assist voluntary and community organisations, or donate money. In the last twelve months 4% of people volunteered through employer-supported schemes. This is equivalent to approximately 1.5 million people in England and Wales.

Of people in employment 7% volunteered through employer-supported schemes. Of those whose employers had schemes for volunteering 21% participated. Of those whose employers supported schemes for donating money 39% participated.

Volunteering in employer-supported schemes was most common among people aged 25 to 49 (6%).

Does people's participation in community activities vary according to the relative deprivation of the areas in which they live?

In the least deprived areas, during the last twelve months, people were the most likely to participate in all of the community activities described above. In the most deprived areas they were the least likely to participate (Table 4)².

2. Table 4 excludes participation in employer-supported volunteering, as the number of respondents in each of the six types of areas was not statistically significant.

As between the least and the most deprived areas the proportion of people involved in formal volunteering differed by the largest margin: 47% volunteered formally in the least deprived areas compared with 29% in the most deprived areas. The proportion involved in civic participation differed by 10% (43% versus 33%); social participation, by 16% (73% versus 57%); and informal volunteering, by 12% (71% versus 59%).

The reasons for these disparities are not yet clear, but the lower levels of participation in the most deprived areas may be due to socio-demographic factors (for example, the greater prevalence of people with lower educational attainments and lower income levels in the most deprived areas).

Conclusion

Overall, the Citizenship Survey has shown that people engage with and participate in their communities in a substantial way. It has also shown that what they do and how much they do it varies according to their sex, age and ethnic group and the relative deprivation of the areas in which they live.

The Active Communities Agenda focuses on increasing the number and diversity of people who participate in their communities and the range of opportunities open to them. The Citizenship Survey will inform the Home Office about important differences in people's participation and enable it to develop targeted programmes to encourage people, particularly those from groups which are least engaged, to join in more fully.

Table 4: Participation in voluntary and community activities within the last 12 months, by level of deprivation in area (%)

| | Civic participation | Social participation | Informal volunteering | Formal volunteering |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Least deprived | 43 | 73 | 71 | 47 |
| 2 | 39 | 67 | 69 | 41 |
| 3 | 37 | 64 | 68 | 39 |
| 4 | 36 | 60 | 65 | 35 |
| 5 | 37 | 59 | 64 | 33 |
| 6 Most deprived | 33 | 57 | 59 | 29 |
| Mean | 38 | 63 | 66 | 37 |
| Respondents in England | 9,434 | 9,420 | 9,429 | 9,431 |

(excluding don't know/not stated)

Methodology

The Home Office Citizenship Survey had a nationally representative sample of 10,015 people aged sixteen and over living in private households in England and Wales³. The response rate was 68%.

It had a minority ethnic booster sample of 5,460 people. This was drawn by using a combination of two approaches:

- over-sampling in areas where, according to the 1991 Census, greater than 18% of households contained people from minority ethnic groups
- focused enumeration – sampling at households three doors either side of each household drawn in the main sample, where households contained people from minority ethnic groups.

In all, the Citizenship Survey gathered information from 6,109 people from minority ethnic groups. It is the largest survey of its kind of people from minority ethnic groups undertaken in England and Wales and will examine differences between individual minority ethnic groups and between minority and majority ethnic groups.

The Citizenship Survey was carried out for the first time in 2001 and in future will be carried out every two years. The survey for 2001 will provide a baseline and later surveys will provide trend data.

A consortium of BMRB and IPSOS/RSL conducted the interviews between March and September 2001. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI).

Due to methodological and contextual differences data from the Citizenship Survey are not strictly comparable with those from other surveys.

Data set out in the text are from a combination of the nationally representative and minority ethnic booster samples. Analyses by ethnic group use the full sample of 15,475 people. Analyses which do not require an ethnic break use the nationally representative sample of 10,015 people.

Data set out in the text exclude 'don't know' and not stated responses.

People have been divided into eight socio-economic classes in accordance with the 2001 National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC).

People have been described in accordance with the Office for National Statistics' harmonised classification of ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds.

Deprived areas have been divided into six groups (from the least to the most deprived) in accordance with the Department of the Environment Transport and the Region's Index of Multiple Deprivation. Data on deprived areas are for England only.

The Home Office Citizenship Survey Technical Report, due to be published later this year, will contain a detailed discussion of methodological issues.

3. Selected by random probability without replacement, stratified by minority ethnic density, population density, non-manual head of household and unemployment.

Further copies of this report are available from:
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