



ICLS/20/2018/Room document 12

20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians
Geneva, 10-19 October 2018

Room Document* **12**

National practices in measuring volunteer work: A critical review

* This room document has not been formally edited

National practices in measuring volunteer work: a critical review
ILO Department of Statistics¹

ILO-UNV project to facilitate and to promote regular measurement of volunteer work
in official statistics

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List of acronyms

EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
GHS	General Household Survey
GSS	General Social Survey
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
ILO	International Labour Office
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TUS	Time Use Survey
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Department
UNV	United Nations Volunteers programme

1. Introduction

1. This report presents the results of a global review of national practices in measuring volunteer work, between 2007 and 2017, undertaken by the Statistics Department of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The review was conducted under the framework of the ILO-UN Volunteers (UNV) partnership established to promote and facilitate the regular measurement of volunteer work by the National Statistical Offices (NSOs).
2. As acknowledged by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, volunteers are key stakeholders in the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They contribute to development efforts by providing their time and skills to help others, whether through organizations or directly. Although recognized as very important, in many countries volunteers' efforts have, so far, not been fully measured and as a result, this valuable resource has not been efficiently tapped or managed. In 2017, ILO and UNV joined efforts to promote the production of official statistics on volunteer work and their use in policy development and reporting, including on SDGs.
3. For many people around the world, the help offered by volunteers (individually or through organizations) is essential for their wellbeing, sometimes even for their physical survival. Volunteers tend to help people where and when governments are limited in doing it, due to the lack of resources or reduced flexibility to act in a timely manner.
4. Volunteers' engagement in actions to save and improve lives of other humans or to protect the environment, without expecting to be remunerated, often in difficult or even dangerous conditions, is probably one of the main reasons why humanity still can "envisage a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive"².
5. Quantifying volunteers' contribution to the sustainable development of their countries can only be done by regularly estimating the number of people involved in volunteer work, time spent doing this work, type of tasks performed, etc. To do this, efficient statistical tools, able to provide reliable estimates have to be developed and applied regularly.
6. The **ILO Manual on the measurement of the volunteer work** (ILO, 2011), approved in 2008 by the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) and published in 2011, offers a model questionnaire to be attached to Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) and implementation guidelines. However, it needs to be updated, in light of the new standards on statistics of work, set by the 19th ICLS, in 2013 and accumulated country experience. The information consolidated in this review is the first step in this process.
7. This report aims to:
 - offer an overview of the global evolution of the measurement of volunteer work from 2007 through 2017;
 - review the approaches used by countries to measure volunteer work, identify possible good practices and issues that need to be further tested;
 - identify good practices and ways of improving the efficiency of the measurement tools, based on current accumulated knowledge;
 - outline the next practical steps by ILO to promote progress towards the regular measurement of volunteer work as part of official statistics, in line with the international standards.

² Paragraph 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2. Summary of Main findings

8. Based on data collected from NSOs, through website review and a specially designed questionnaire sent to countries, the ILO Department of Statistics identified 169 data sources used to collect data on volunteer work in 103 countries between 2007 and 2017. Africa and Asia are the regions in which fewer data sources could be identified.
9. Most of the data sources (155) measured volunteer work through household surveys: 85 surveys using retrospective recall methods (Labour Force Survey, General Household Survey, General Social Survey, dedicated surveys, etc.) and 70 Time Use Surveys using activity diaries or stylized retrospective questions. Only four standalone, dedicated surveys designed to measure volunteer work could be identified.
10. The 19th ICLS in 2013 appeared to have had a major impact on countries' measurement practices. Starting in 2014, the share of Time Use Surveys (TUSs) in the total number of data sources used to measure volunteer work decreased significantly. Dedicated modules attached to large-scale household surveys became the main measurement tools.
11. Instead, the number of LFSs used to measure volunteer work increased greatly and rapidly. Based on the measurement plans declared by countries, in 2018, at least half of the measurements will be made using LFSs.
12. Although the operational definitions of volunteer work developed by countries tend to be similar, their practical implementations differ significantly. The number of survey questions, used to identify volunteers ranges from only one to more than 20.
13. Measurement approaches applied by countries vary depending on factors like previous measurement experience, available statistical infrastructure and resources, and policy concerns. This variety has a significant impact on national and international data comparability.
14. Most of all, comparability of estimates is affected by the choice of the reference period used to identify respondents doing volunteer work. Since 2011, in its **Manual on the measurement of the volunteer work** (ILO Manual), ILO recommends using the "4 weeks" reference period. In 2013, the 19th ICLS set it as the reference period in the new standards on statistics of work.
15. However, given the many specific conditions and practical limitations faced by countries, the implementation of the "4 weeks" reference period appears to be problematic, some countries choosing to use the "one week" or "12 months" reference periods.
16. Few (only 18 identified) data sources can be used to estimate the five core variables recommended by the ILO Manual:
 - number of volunteers
 - number of hours volunteered
 - type of work performed (i.e., occupation)
 - institutional setting of the work performed, if any
 - field (industry) in which the volunteer work is performed
17. The number of the dedicated modules used to measure volunteer work each year or at least once in five years is increasing. Still, more than one third are irregular, with countries not being able to provide a date for the planned repeated measurement.
18. In 2017, about 30 measurements of volunteer work were made. In 2018, at least 30 countries expect to measure volunteer work: 24 repeated measurements using existing data sources and

10 measurements using newly developed data sources. It will be the second year, after 2015, with the highest number of measurements.

19. Based on the accumulated national practice identified in the review, in the context of relevant findings of cognitive research and specific tests conducted by countries and ILO, it is possible to formulate a few general recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of the existing measurement tools. This report offers such recommendations in a dedicated section.

3. Definition of volunteer work

20. Volunteer work is defined in paragraphs 37 and 38 of the **Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization**, adopted by the 19th ICLS (ILO, 2013):

37. Persons in volunteer work are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, performed any unpaid, non-compulsory activity to produce goods or provide services for others, where:

(a) “any activity” refers to work for at least one hour;

(b) “unpaid” is interpreted as the absence of remuneration in cash or in kind for work done or hours worked; nevertheless, volunteer workers may receive some small form of support or stipend in cash, when below one third of local market wages (e.g. for out-of-pocket expenses or to cover living expenses incurred for the activity), or in kind (e.g. meals, transportation, symbolic gifts);

(c) “non-compulsory” is interpreted as work carried out without civil, legal or administrative requirement, that are different from the fulfilment of social responsibilities of a communal, cultural or religious nature;

(d) production “for others” refers to work performed:

(i) through, or for organizations comprising market and non-market units (i.e. organization-based volunteering) including through or for self-help, mutual aid or community-based groups of which the volunteer is a member;

(ii) for households other than the household of the volunteer worker or of related family members (i.e. direct volunteering).

38. Excluded from volunteer work:

(a) community service and work by prisoners ordered by a court or similar authority, compulsory military or alternative civilian service;

(b) unpaid work required as part of education or training programmes (i.e. unpaid trainees);

(c) work for others performed during the working time associated with employment, or during paid time off from an employee job granted by the employer.

21. In addition, paragraph 19 (b) of the Resolution sets the “short reference period” for the measurement of volunteer work: **“four weeks or one calendar month, for own-use production of goods, unpaid trainee work and volunteer work”**.

22. It is important to mention that there is one essential difference between this definition and the one recommended by the ILO Manual. In 2008, when the draft of the ILO Manual was approved by the 18th ICLS, all unpaid productive activities conducted for persons living in households *other* than that of the respondent was considered volunteer work. The 19th ICLS narrowed the definition, by excluding from volunteer work unpaid help offered to family members living in other households.

23. Limiting volunteer work only to unpaid help offered to people, who are not members of the volunteer’s household or family was needed in order to avoid the overlap with another form of unpaid work: own-use production work.

4. Sources and methodology

24. Data for the review of national practices in measuring volunteer work was collected by the ILO between November 2017 and April 2018 using three sources. First, NSOs' web-sites were identified and available information on measuring volunteer work collected. Then, a metadata questionnaire was developed by ILO and sent to NSOs to collect more detailed information on the measurement experience. Finally, the UN Statistics Department (UNSD) data on measurement of volunteer work through Time Use Surveys (TUSs), published on the Gender Statistics web-portal³, was used to complement the information on national practices identified by the ILO.
25. The collected information (metadata) was used to identify different measurement approaches, best practices, and main issues with a view to inform the development of updated survey modules on volunteer work for further testing.
26. The information collected through the review of national web-sites, ILO metadata survey of national practices, and UNSD data portal on TUSs was crosschecked and used complementarily to build a list of national data sources used to measure volunteer work between 2007 and 2017.

4.1. Review of national web-sites

27. During November 2017 - January 2018 efforts to review web-sites of NSOs in 249 countries and territories⁴ were made. A total number of 130 official NSO web-sites could be identified and accessed.
28. These web-sites were searched for any references to volunteer work in the relevant language. Content of the returned pages and/or documents was reviewed to establish whether it made references to any data collection to produce official estimates of volunteer work. On 74 accessed web-sites, references to at least one official data sources were found.
29. For each identified data source on volunteer work, four characteristics were collected: **name** of the data source; **type** of data source; **year** when data was collected last time and **web links** to relevant metadata and published results. Additionally, available methodological documents were compiled.

4.2. ILO Metadata survey of national practices

30. Information collected during the web-site review was used to design a short meta-data questionnaire⁵ (in English, French, Spanish and Russian languages), to collect information from NSOs. The questionnaire was used to identify countries which measured volunteer work from 2007 to 2017, collect information about data sources used (if data has been collected), reasons for not measuring (if data had not been collected) and future plans to measure volunteer work (in all cases).
31. During March-April 2018, a total of 105 countries replied to the survey. Of them, 59 countries reported measuring volunteer work at least once during 2007-2017 and offered details on 89 data sources used.

³ Data available on <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/timeuse/>, as of 23/04/2018

⁴ Further, in this report, the term "country" will be used to refer to both, countries and territories.

⁵ See Annex 1

4.3. Review of UNSD data portal on Time Use Surveys

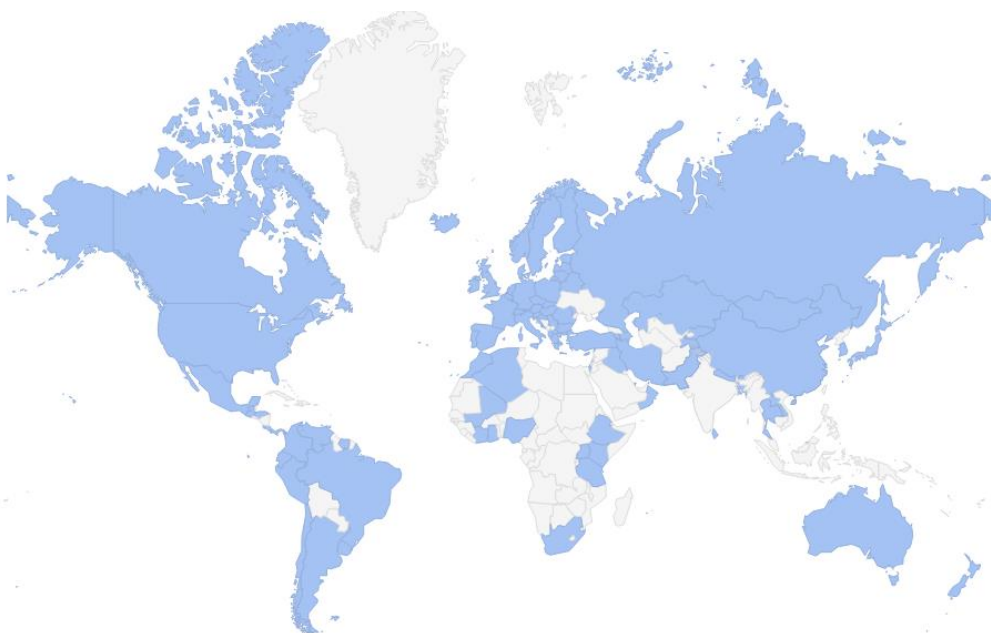
32. Information on availability of data on volunteering, collected in TUSs, compiled by UNSD was used to complement the web-site review and ILO country metadata survey. It helped identify TUSs conducted in 52 countries.

Table1. Number of countries and data sources identified, by sources of information

Source of information	Countries identified	Data sources	Characteristics of data sources
Web-sites review	74	120	country, name, type, year
ILO survey of national practices	59	89	country, name, type, year and other characteristics (see the questionnaire in the Annex)
UNSD data on TUSs	52	52	country, name, type, year

33. By combining all the metadata collected independently through the web-site review, ILO survey of the national practices and review of UNSD data portal on TUSs, details on 142 individual countries were aggregated. Of them, 103 countries were identified to have collected data on volunteer work, using a total number of 169 data sources.
34. The geographical distribution of the 103 countries, which measured volunteer work at least once, is presented in the map below.

Figure1. Geographical distribution of countries for which data collection on volunteer work, between 2007 and 2017, was identified



35. For all 169 identified data sources, three characteristics are known: country, survey type and year (when last conducted). For 90 of them (data sources reported by countries in the survey) additional information is available. Therefore, in this report, when analyzing the type of data sources applied during 2007-2017, information on all 169 data sources, in 103 countries is used.

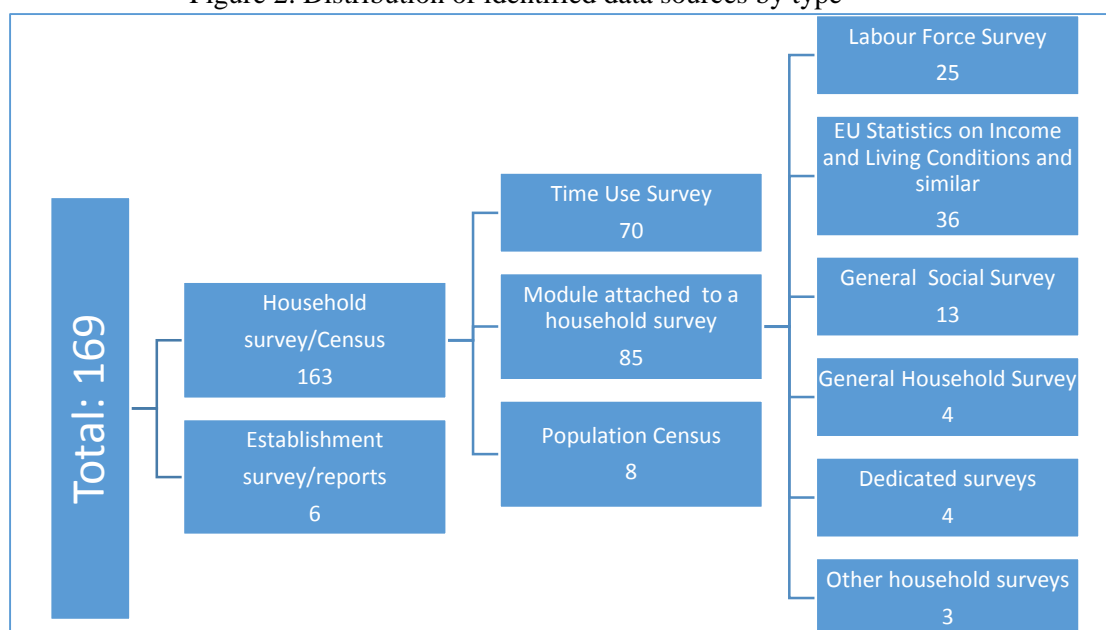
36. When analyzing more detailed characteristics of the data sources (e.g. geographical coverage, definition used, variables measured, etc.) only information on data sources reported in the ILO country metadata survey is used (90 data sources).

5. Results

5.1. Data sources

37. The review of national practices identified 169 official data sources used to measure volunteer work in 103 countries (in which lives 62% of the global population), between 2007 and 2017. Figure 2 offers an overview of the types of data sources identified.

Figure 2. Distribution of identified data sources by type



38. As the ILO recommends measuring volunteer work through household surveys, in order to cover both organization-based and direct volunteering⁶, this report focuses on the 163 data sources identified covering Population Censuses (8), Time Use Surveys (70) and other household surveys (85).

39. Based on data collection strategy, data sources could be classified in two main categories:

- Dedicated modules (only one question or a set of questions), designed specifically to collect data on volunteer work, using a reference period of at least one week, conducted as dedicated surveys or attached to other household surveys (Labour Force Survey (LFS), General House Survey (GHS), General Social Survey (GSS), etc.) and Censuses;
- Time Use Surveys (TUS), using the diary-based approach or stylized questions, in which participation in different activities is recorded, over a very short reference periods (usually one day). Yet, dedicated modules, using a longer reference period, may be attached to TUS individual questionnaires.

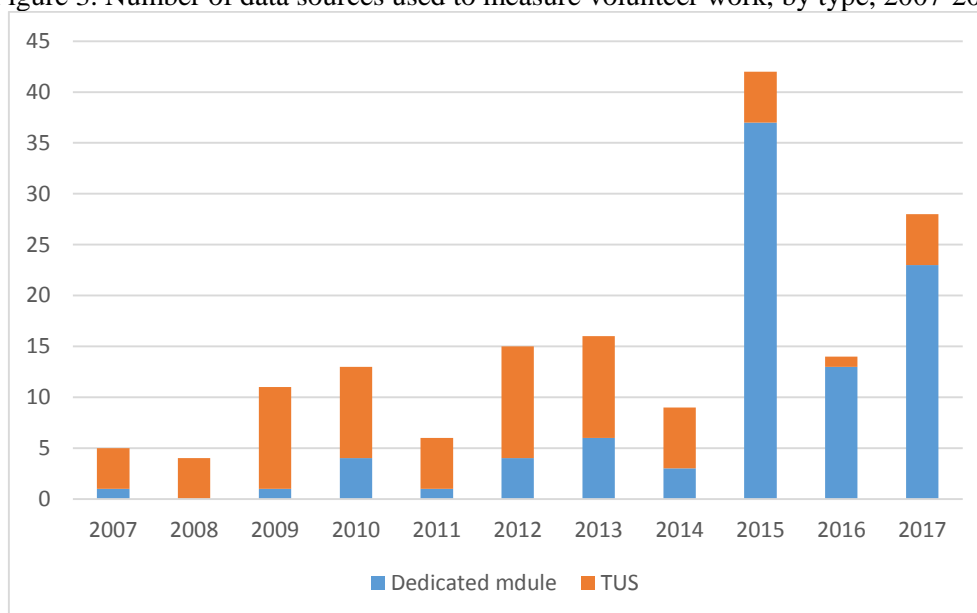
40. Adoption by the 19th ICLS of the new framework of statistics on different forms of work, with volunteer work defined as one, seems to have increased countries' interest in measuring it and to have caused a significant shift in the measurement approach. This is reflected by the number

⁶ See the definition of the volunteer work in paragraph 22 of this report

and type of surveys conducted: from 2007 to 2013, in 62 countries, 73 data sources were identified, 53 data sources being TUSs; from 2014 to 2017, in only four years, in 73 countries, 93 data sources were implemented, 76 data sources being dedicated modules.

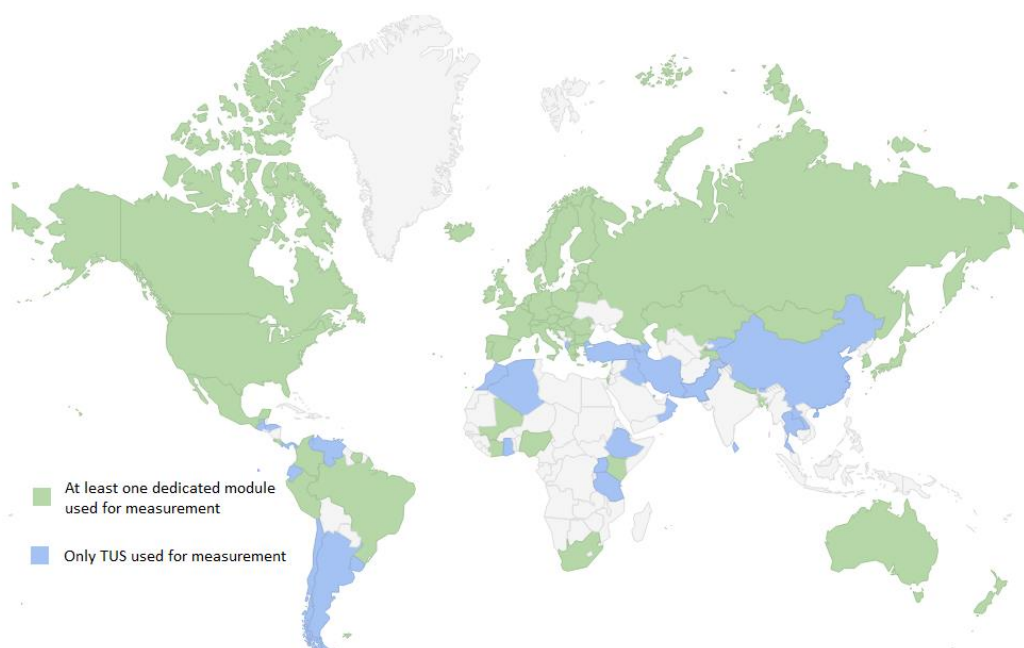
41. Although few data sources were used to collect data in 2014, many countries worked on developing dedicated measurement tools during that year.
42. The year 2015, was the one with the highest number of household surveys used to measure volunteer work (42), significantly higher than the yearly average of 10 surveys, during 2007-2014. Most of these 42 data sources were dedicated modules. Although the number of data sources applied in 2016 and 2017 was lower, the share of dedicated modules remained high.
43. Eurostat's decision to attach a dedicated module to the EU-SILC survey in 2015 had a major impact in that year. The modules applied by EU countries offered the opportunity to produce estimates of organization-based and direct volunteer work for all EU countries, using harmonized definitions. For many EU countries, the module attached to the EU-SILC has been the only data source specifically designed to measure volunteer work.

Figure 3. Number of data sources used to measure volunteer work, by type, 2007-2017



44. In the next two years, 2016 and 2017, another important change in the measurement approach happened: LFSs became the most frequently used surveys used to collect data on volunteer work. In 2015, only two LFSs were used to measure volunteer work. In 2017, out of 28 data sources, 14 were LFSs (50%).
45. About one half of countries measured volunteer work using only one data source, one third used two data sources, the rest of the countries used three or more. The share of countries which performed measurements using more than one data source increased significantly after 2013, as countries started developing dedicated modules, in addition to TUSs or already existing dedicated modules.

Figure 4. Geographical distribution of countries by type of data sources used to measure volunteer work, 2007-2017



46. ILO recommends measuring volunteer work using dedicated modules attached to large-sample surveys, randomly selected from frames with high degree of coverage, in terms of persons and areas, which are essential requirements for producing reliable and unbiased national estimates.
47. For 80 data sources (household surveys or Censuses), of the 84 reported by countries in the ILO survey of national practices, covering the whole territory was not an issue, regardless of the type of the data source. Only 6 data sources, in 6 countries could not be applied to the whole country, for various reasons.

5.2. Frequency of data collection

48. In the survey of national practices, for each data source, countries were asked to specify in how many previous rounds data has been collected and the year in which data will be collected next time. Based on countries answers and assuming that measurements will continue with the same frequency in the future, the 84 household data sources identified by the survey can be grouped in 6 broad categories:
 - Measurement repeated each year
 - Measurement repeated once in 2 to 4 years
 - Measurement repeated once in 5 years
 - Measurement repeated once in 6 to 9 years
 - Measurement repeated once in 10 years
 - Irregular measurement (year of repeated measurement unknown)

The next table summarizes the distribution of household data sources, reported by countries in the survey, by these categories:

Table 2. Distribution of data sources by planned measurement frequency and type

Planned measurement frequency	Dedicated module	TUS	Total
each year	17	1 ⁷	18
once in 2 to 4 years	8	1	9
once in 5 years	7	4	11
once in 6 to 9 years	5	0	5
once in 10 years	2	9	11
Irregular	23	7	30
Total	62	22	84

49. Almost one third of data sources fall in the category of irregular data sources, countries not being able to provide a specific year in which data collection on volunteer work is planned to be repeated, in the same survey. Most of the data sources in this category are dedicated modules, mainly those attached to LFSs and 2015 EU-SILC.
50. Most of irregular data sources are concentrated in EU because of the 2015 EU-SILC and in small or developing countries, which implemented dedicated modules or TUSs once, without having plans or resources to do it regularly.
51. Two thirds of the TUSs will be conducted periodically, mainly each five or ten years. Half of the dedicated modules, are planned to be applied at least once in five years. This share increased from 20% before 2013 to 62% after 2013, which may indicate an increasing interest in establishing statistical tools to regularly measure volunteer work in official statistics.

Table 3. Distribution of dedicated modules by planned measurement frequency, 2007-2017

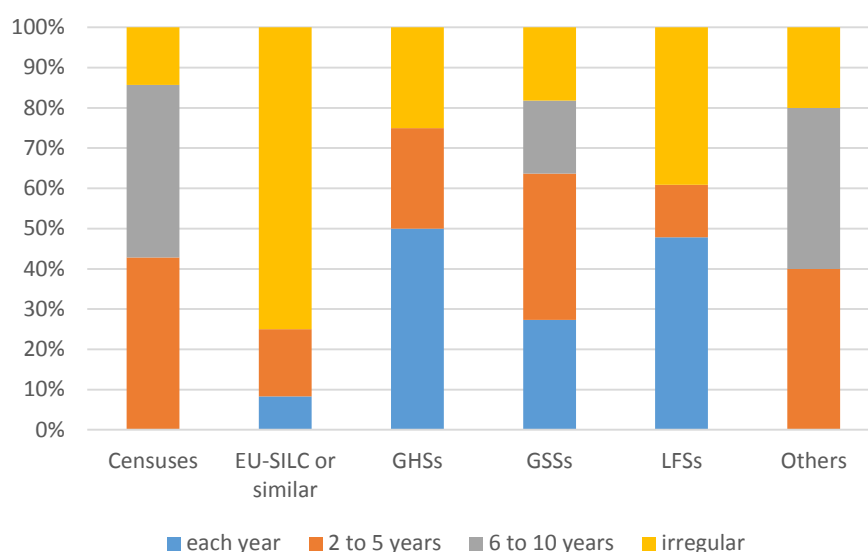
Planned measurement frequency	2007-2013	2013-2017	Total
each year	0	17	17
once in 2 to 4 years	0	8	8
once in 5 years	3	4	7
once in 6 to 9 years	4	1	5
once in 10 years	2	0	2
Irregular	6	17	23
Total	15	47	62

52. The EU-SILC and similar surveys are the least expected to host modules on volunteer work. GHSs and LFSs are those expected to do it most frequently, at least once in five years, half of

⁷ American Time Use Survey, conducted by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/tus/>

them every year. Still, in case of one third of LFSs and one fourth of GHSs, countries are not sure when repeated measurements could be made.

Figure 5. Distribution of dedicated modules by survey type and expected frequency of data collection



5.3. Age limits

53. The age of respondents from whom data on volunteer work was collected varies by data source type. In TUSs reported in the ILO country metadata survey, data on volunteer work was collected using a lower limit, in most case set to 10 years. In dedicated modules, the most frequent lower age limits were 15 years and 16 years.

Table 4. Distribution of data sources reported in country survey, by type and lower age limits

	No limits	5 yrs	10 yrs	11 yrs	12 yrs	13 yrs	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	18 yrs	20 yrs	Total
Dedicated modules	2	2	2	-	2	1	3	37	11	1	1	62
TUSs	-	-	13	1	3	-	1	3	1	-	-	22
Total	2	2	15	1	5	1	4	40	11	1	1	84

54. The range of lower age limits applied in dedicated modules increased after 2013, when the use of dedicated modules attached to different household surveys increased significantly. This may suggest that age limits are rather “inherited” from the parent survey to which the module is attached, than set specifically to measure volunteer work. This diversity of lower age limits is observed in modules attached to all types of surveys.

Table 5. Distribution of dedicated modules reported in country survey, by lower age limits, before and after 2013

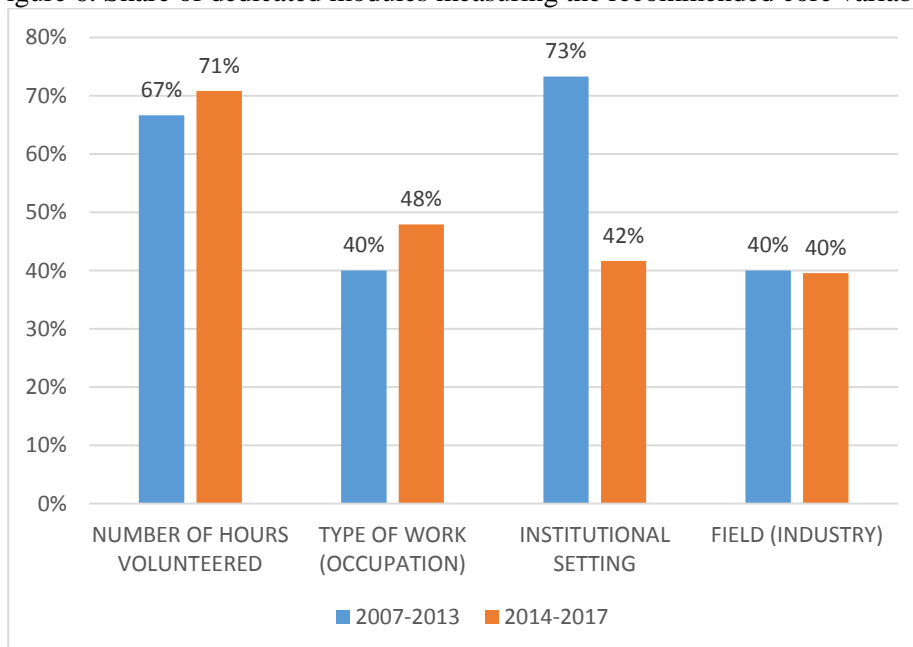
	No limits	5 yrs	10 yrs	11 yrs	12 yrs	13 yrs	14 yrs	15 yrs	16 yrs	18 yrs	20 yrs	Total
2007-2013	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	12	1	-	-	15
2014-2017	1	1	2	-	2	1	3	25	10	1	1	47
Total	2	2	2	-	2	1	3	37	11	1	1	62

55. Higher age limits were reported for only 5 data sources, all of them dedicated modules: two attached to LFSs (74 and 75 years), two attached to GSSs (64 years) and one attached to a PIAAC⁸ survey (65 years).

5.4. Indicators produced

56. Modules applied by countries differ in relation to the amount of information collected. In some cases only one question is asked to identify volunteers. In many cases, detailed information about each reported activity is collected. Additionally, questions on motivation, ways to engage in volunteering and intention to volunteer in the future are also sometimes asked.
57. The ILO Manual recommends a minimum set of five core variables on which data should be collected:
- number of volunteers
 - number of hours volunteered
 - type of work performed (i.e., occupation)
 - institutional setting of the work performed, if any
 - field (industry) in which the volunteer work is performed
58. While all data sources using dedicated modules identified in the survey of national practices can offer estimates of people doing volunteer work, fewer collected data on all the core variables. It appears that after the number of volunteers, time worked is of the highest interest for countries and is measured in about 70% of cases. Interest in the rest of the variables is almost equal, however lower and some changes had happened after 2013: a slight increase in data collection on occupations and a significant decrease in collecting details on the organizations through or for which volunteer work was done.

Figure 6. Share of dedicated modules measuring the recommended core variables



59. As shown in the graph, collecting data on the recommended variables is an issue in many cases. Likely, the capacity to do it depends on the data source to which modules are attached. The highest rates of data collection on “hours worked” and “occupation” are observed for modules attached to LFSs, followed by those attached to GHSs.

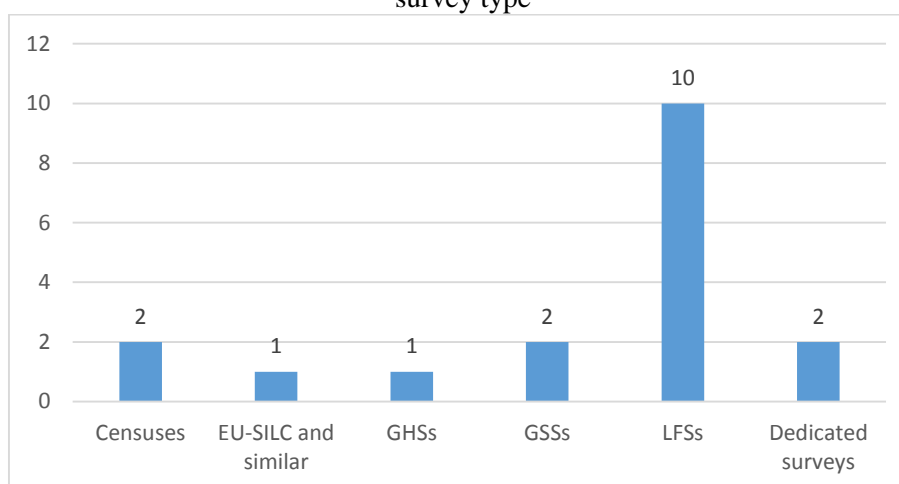
⁸ Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies

Table 6. Share of the dedicated modules used to measure the core variables, by type of data source, percent

	number of hours volunteered	type of work (occupation)	institutional setting	field (industry)
Censuses	71	43	57	43
EU-SILC and similar	25	17	25	17
GHSs	75	50	25	25
GSSs	64	27	55	46
LFSs	96	70	57	48

60. For the other two core variables (institutional setting and industry), there are no significant differences between modules attached to LFSs, Censuses, and GSSs. Modules attached to surveys dedicated to measure income, living conditions and to GHSs seem to be the least used to collect data on institutional setting and field (industry) of volunteer work.
61. Only 18 modules reported in the survey collected data on all five core variables, most of them attached to LFSs. These surveys continuously or periodically collect data on the recommended core variable in relation to employment. Skills and experience of staff involved in these surveys, the existing infrastructure facilitate the collection of similar data on volunteer work.

Figure 7. Distribution of the 18 modules identified to measure all five core variables, by survey type



62. LFSs are the preferred choice to host dedicated modules to measure volunteer work because these surveys are focused on measuring work-related issues, unlike GHSs, GSSs, TUSs and Censuses. Focus on a specific topic offers flexibility in applying more complex measurement approaches and capacity to collect data on more variables. One specific advantage of the LFSs is that they are usually designed to measure employment in both organizational and non-organizational settings. Measurement of volunteer work can benefit a lot from this, especially in countries in which the number of people engaging in direct volunteer work is significant.
63. About 90% of the modules attached to LFSs, collected data on direct volunteering as opposed to 86% for Censuses, 82% for GSSs and 75% for GHSs. The EU-SILC and similar surveys, on average, measured direct volunteer in over 90% of cases too, yet, compared to LFSs these surveys are limited in the capacity to host more elaborate modules and collect data on the core

variables recommended by the ILO. Moreover, when it comes to modules attached to this type of surveys, countries are less sure about when repeated measurement could be made.

64. As for TUSs, compared to dedicated modules, they have one big advantage: they always collect data on “time spent” doing volunteer work and almost always on the “type of work done” (occupation). Data on “institutional setting” and “industry” was collected less frequently, in 48% and 27% of cases, respectively. Most TUSs (87%) collected data on direct volunteer work. However, because TUSs usually use a very short reference period (unless stylized questions are included), resulting estimates of the participation in volunteer work tend to be significantly underestimated.

5.5. Data availability

65. Data on volunteer work collected through 61 of the 84 sources, identified in the ILO survey of national practices is available on-line. Some countries published only press releases, some published dedicated reports, and others published the survey micro-data.
66. UNSD has the TUS data to produce estimates of engagement in volunteer work for over 85 countries (surveys conducted between 1966 and 2015). As of the writing of this report, on the dedicated UNSD web portal⁹, time spent doing volunteer work is combined with time spent doing own-use production work, to produce estimates of time dedicated to unpaid forms of work.
67. It would be useful to investigate the opportunity of producing estimates of volunteer work separately and making them also available on the UNSD web portal.
68. As for the official data collected using dedicated modules, mostly after 2013, the only source offering access to estimates produced for a large number of countries (35) is the Eurostat’s web portal¹⁰.

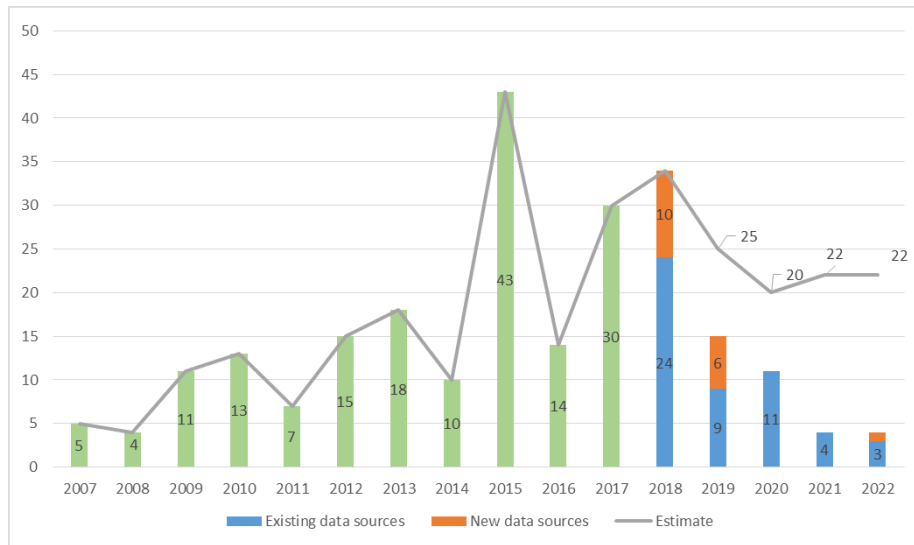
5.6. Planned measurements

69. Based on the countries’ plans identified by the survey, in 2018, it is expected that 24 existing household surveys will be used to repeat another measurement of volunteer work. Other 10 new data sources will be developed and implemented. A total number of at least 30 countries will collect data on volunteer work, most of them located in the Northern Hemisphere.

⁹ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/timeuse/>

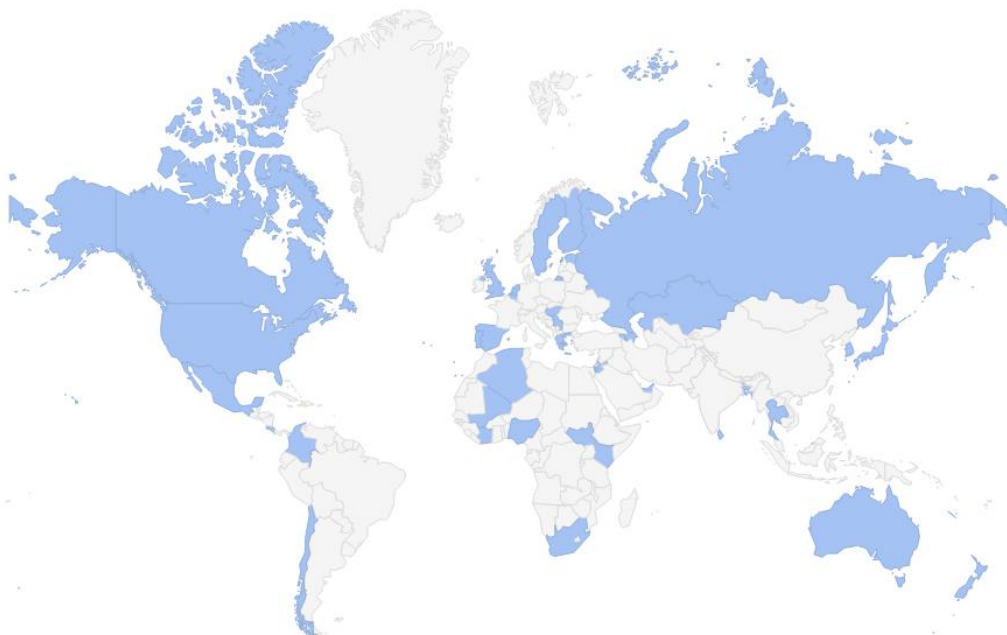
¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

Figure 8. Number of data sources used and planned to be used to measure volunteer work, 2007-2022



70. 2018 will be the year with the second highest number of measurements of volunteer work, after 2015. Based on countries' declared plans, starting with 2019 the number of new data sources may decline significantly. However, if the existing sources continue to be implemented at least with the same frequency as planned, then yearly at least 20 measurements will be made. This number may increase if countries start collecting data more frequently, with existing sources or by designing new ones.

Figure 9. Geographical distribution of countries which will measure volunteer work during 2018-2020, based on declared plans



Based on the available data, it is expected that in the next two years only 6 new countries will appear on the list of those measuring volunteer work.

5.7. Operational definitions of volunteer work: main characteristics

71. In the ILO survey of national practices, countries were asked to provide the definitions of volunteer work used for measurement. Definitions used in 72 data sources (out of the 89 identified) were provided. Although, this information was not detailed enough to make a comprehensive analysis, some general conclusions can be made.
72. The 19th ICLS resolution sets three conditions which have to be met, in order to classify a productive activity as volunteer work: *unpaid, non-compulsory, for others*.¹¹
73. “*Unpaid*” nature of work seems to be the main, universal characteristic used by countries to define volunteer work. Fewer definitions mention working without expecting to be paid; or work for a symbolic fee. In two data sources, volunteer work was defined as work done by contributing family workers.
74. “*Non-compulsory*” nature of volunteer work is cited less frequently in definitions, especially in those developed by countries before 2013. This is explained by the use of words “voluntary”, “to give help” or “own/free will” in definitions.
75. “*Others*” as the beneficiaries of the volunteers’ work are mentioned frequently, but not in all definitions. Most often, “*others*” are organizations/groups; other households; the community; other families. Few definitions mention also help to the environment, wild animals or a cause.

6. Review of measurement approaches in dedicated modules

76. In this section of the report, measurement approaches used by countries to develop dedicated modules will be described.
77. Within this review, it was not possible to collect and analyze questions in all identified dedicated modules as many of them are not made public. Only 36 available modules were reviewed.
78. Modules are designed to suit specific countries’ needs, within specific conditions and limitations. Despite this, modules can be grouped in a couple of homogenous categories based on the approach used to identify volunteers.
79. First, modules can be split in two groups based on how the two types of volunteer work (organization-based and direct) are targeted:
 - In the **broad approach**, one question is used to identify participation in volunteer work, its type being assessed later, as a characteristic of the activity;
 - In the **targeted approach**, participation in volunteer work is assessed for each type separately, the type of volunteer work being used to identify the activities.
80. Additionally, modules can be grouped in three categories, based on the prompting type:
 - In the **brief** approach, respondents are asked one general question about whether they have engaged in volunteer work or not during the reference period;
 - The **detailed** approach entails asking a series of “Yes/No” questions about specific volunteer work which respondents may have done or about help given to specific beneficiaries (schools, NGOs, clubs, community, neighbors, etc.);

¹¹ See paragraph 4 of this report

- In the **mixed** approach, also recommended by the ILO Manual, the first question is used to identify volunteers based on self-identification, and then a few follow-up or recovery questions on engagement in broad types of relevant activities are used to recover volunteers from respondents who answered “No” to the initial question. In some cases, the recovery questions are about offering help to different types of beneficiaries.

Figure 10. Types of dedicated modules

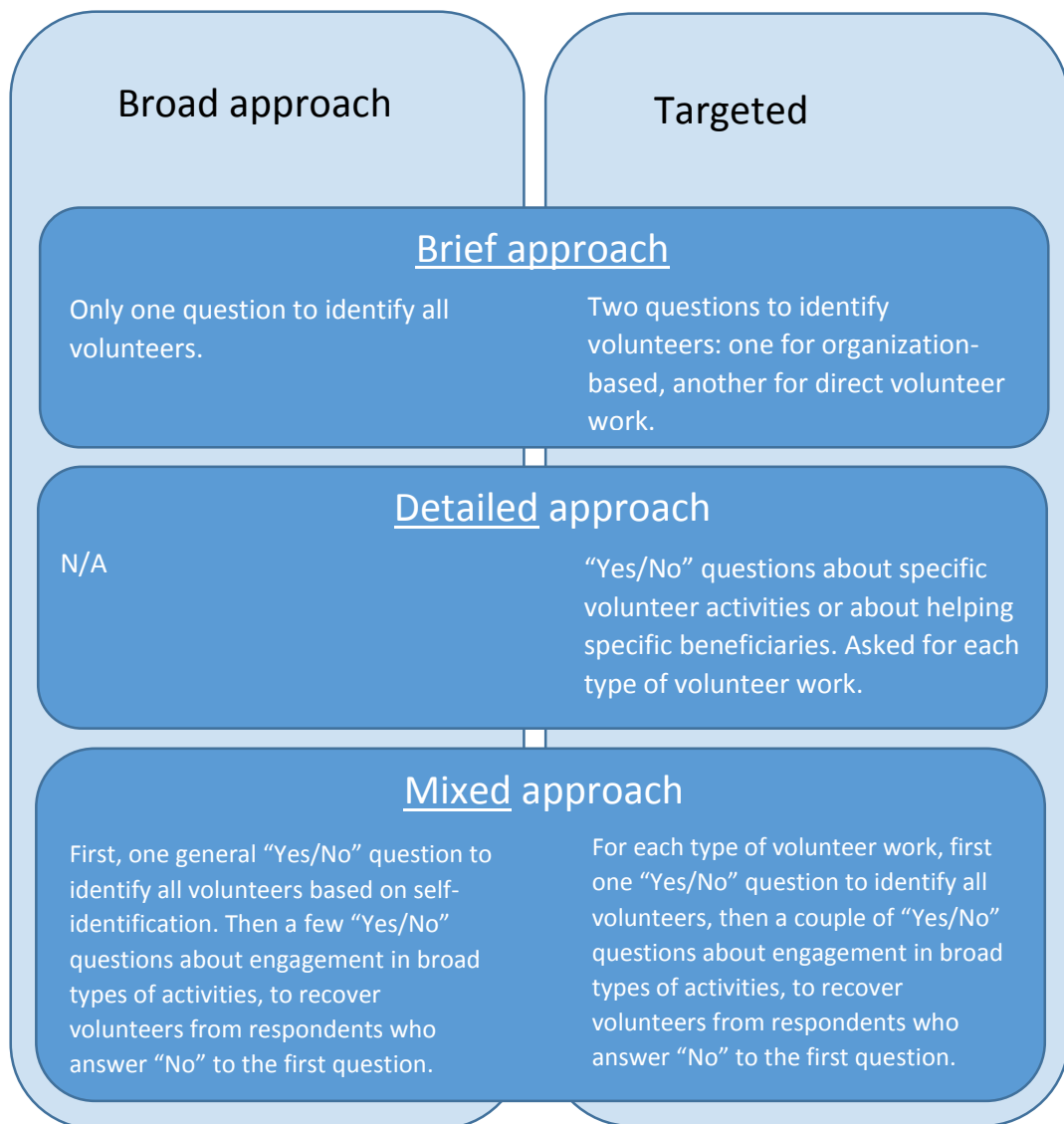


Table 7. Distribution of reviewed dedicated modules, by measurement approaches used

Approach to target types of volunteer work	Prompting type			Total
	Brief	Detailed	Mixed	
Broad	7	N/A	6	13
Targeted	9	12	2	23
Total	16	12	8	36

81. For example, the modules designed by the most EU countries, for the 2015 EU-SILC, the first one implemented in a large number of countries, covering more than half billion people, were

of a targeted, brief type. They used two questions: one to measure participation in organization-based volunteer work, another one to measure participation in direct volunteer work.

82. The types of modules do not depend on the amount of data collected about activities in which volunteers engage, they depend only on the number and type of questions asked to identify volunteers. Below, the module types are described in more detail. Advantages and disadvantages are analyzed.

6.1. Broad, brief modules

83. This type of module was identified in a couple of continuous LFSs, in a survey similar to EU-SILC, and a Census. One “Yes/No” question is used to identify volunteers, making possible to estimate the number of people doing volunteer work.

Example:

Last month, did you do unpaid, non-compulsory work through an organization, for your community or to help people who are not members of your family?

84. Both, developed and developing countries apply these modules. The ILO Manual offers an example of such a module and recommends applying it in years, in which the main recommended module is not administered.
85. Fewer resources are required to implement this type of module. However, an important work has to be done to find the right wording of the question through which volunteers are identified.
86. Country experience and results of some tests (CIS STAT, 2017; Glejberman, 2018) suggest that this approach has two main disadvantages:
- One question cannot comprise the whole complexity of the concept of the volunteer work;
 - Direct volunteering, unpaid help given individually to other families tends to be underreported.
87. Broad, brief modules may be very useful if attached to a continuous survey, in the initial stage of the development of tools to measure volunteer work, when no data on volunteer work is available. Data collected using such a module can offer useful information to estimate the scale of the volunteer work, the seasonal pattern, regional distribution, to identify the main population groups engaged in it. This information may be very helpful when designing more comprehensive modules, applied less frequently.

6.2. Broad, mixed modules

88. This is the approach recommended by the ILO Manual and is gaining more popularity. Many countries, which had designed or redesigned modules to measure volunteer work after the 19th ICLS, had followed this approach.
89. First, a “Yes/No” question on participation in unpaid, non-compulsory activities is asked. Respondents answering “Yes” are asked details about the activity. Respondents answering “No” are asked several “Yes/No” recovery questions about participation in broad clusters of unpaid activities (mainly about direct volunteering) or about doing unpaid work for different types of beneficiaries. Some countries also used questions to exclude respondents wrongly

identified as volunteers in the first question. Both developed and developing countries apply this type of modules.

Example:

Q1. In the last four weeks did you spend any time on any unpaid, non-compulsory activities, done for others living outside your household, non-relatives, the community or the environment, performed through groups/organizations or directly?

If answer to question Q1 is No, then ask Q2

Q2. In the last four weeks, did you provide any of the following unpaid help to non-related people?

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Childcare, adult care, prepare food, transport persons or goods.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Clean or improve your community.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Organize an event to make others aware of an issue.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

90. Accumulated country experience suggests that respondents may face difficulties understanding and answering the first question as the expression “unpaid and non-compulsory activity“, used to replace “voluntary work” is unusual for many of them. Interviewers are often asked to offer more explanations and examples.
91. In all languages there are specific words used to name the work done for others, without expectations to be paid for it. Some words are strongly linked to organization-based volunteer work, others to direct volunteering. This fact may be used to increase the efficiency of the questions. Countries with experience in measuring volunteer work tend to use this, targeted, approach.

6.3. Targeted, brief modules

92. As mentioned earlier, the module attached to the 2015 EU-SILC is of this kind. Other countries use it too, mainly in continuous surveys or periodically, in surveys, in which data on multiple topics is collected.
93. In this type of modules, different, general questions are used to assess participation in organization-based and direct volunteer work. Some countries measure only organization-based volunteer work.

Example:

Q1. During the past 12 months, have you done any voluntary work through an organization, formal group or a club?

Q2. During the past 12 months, have you undertaken any voluntary activities that were not arranged by an organization? For example, helping someone with cooking or shopping.

94. The targeted approach, as opposed to the broad one, has the advantage of asking questions about clusters of more homogenous activities.

6.4. Targeted, detailed modules

95. This kind of module usually starts with either one question with many “Yes/No” options or by a series of “Yes/No” questions on participation in specific organization-based or direct volunteer work.
96. Some developed countries ask only about the organization-based volunteering. Countries which do not limit measurement to organization-based volunteer work, ask also questions on unpaid help given individually by respondents to other people and to the environment.

Example:

Q1. Last month, did you offer unpaid help to schools, religious organizations, sports community associations or other organizations with:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
• <i>Fundraising</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Organizing, supervising events</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Teaching, training</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Cooking</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Cleaning</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Other activities</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2. Last month, did you give unpaid help to neighbors, friends, other people not related to you, individually, with:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
• <i>Cooking</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Cleaning</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Babysitting</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Shopping, paying bills</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Gardening</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Other activities</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

97. This type of module was identified to be used mainly by countries having previous experience in measuring volunteer work. Designing questions for the detailed approach ideally requires availability of data from previous measurements or other sources. This way, a detailed list of specific volunteering activities, in which most (ideally all) volunteers are engaged in could be established.
98. One important advantage of the detailed approach is that it reduces the probability to classify as volunteers respondents who did not do volunteer work, by asking questions about participation in specific activities. However, this advantage comes at the cost of higher burden. Finding the balance between the number of questions on detailed activities and the degree of burden is an important task when designing this type of module.

6.5. Targeted, mixed modules

99. Modules of this type are obtained by applying the mixed approach, recommended by the ILO Manual, separately to different types of volunteer work.

Example:

Q1. Last month, did you give unpaid help individually, to neighbors, friends, or other people not members of your household or family?

If answer to Q1 is No, then ask Q2

	Yes	No
<i>Q2. Maybe last month you gave unpaid help to neighbors, friends, other people not related to you, individually, with:</i>		
<i>work at their home such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, maintenance, shopping, paying bills?.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>taking care of children, elderly or sick people from another family?.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>other types of services like transporting people/goods, tutoring, or taking care of pets?.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q3. Last month, did you do any voluntary work through an organization, formal group, a club or community?

If answer to Q3 is No, then ask Q4

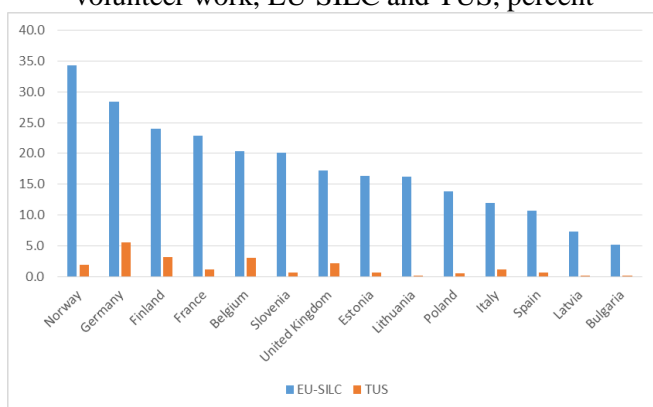
	Yes	No
<i>Q2. Maybe last month you did voluntary work for an organization or your community, helping with:</i>		
<i>fundraising, organizing events, teaching, training, participating in information campaigns.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>preparing and distributing food and beverages?.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>collecting, sorting, cleaning, packing and distributing clothes, footwear, toys and other products ?.....</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Review of reference periods used to define volunteer work

100. The 19th ICLS set the reference period for volunteer work to be the “4 weeks or calendar month”. In data collection, in many cases the “12 months” or “one week” were used in dedicated modules, and “one day” in TUSs.
101. More countries had started using as reference week the “4 weeks” or “calendar month” after the 19th ICLS. Before, the most common reference periods had been “one day” (TUSs) and “12 months” (dedicated modules).
102. Of the 36 dedicated modules reviewed, 18 applied the “12 months/one year” reference period, 12 applied the “4 weeks/one month” reference period and 6 applied the “one week/7 days” reference period.
103. The ILO Manual recommends using three reference periods for measurements:
 - “4 weeks” by default, as the base reference period;
 - “12 months”, in addition to “4 weeks” if the survey is conducted once a year;

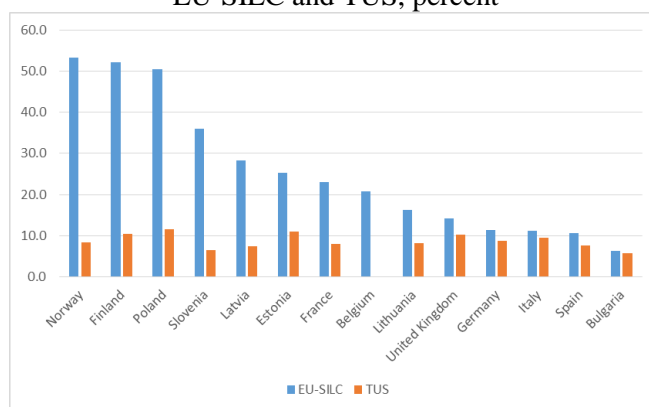
- shorter than “4 weeks” if the measurement is made using modules attached to continuous LFSs (or other surveys), with data collected at least monthly.
104. In the next paragraphs, advantages and disadvantages of using different reference periods are analyzed. Data offered in the OECD publication “How’s life? 2015. Measuring well-being” (OECD, 2015) is used to support the analysis.
105. Using data from the above-mentioned publication, it can be estimated that during a 12 months period, about 25% of the working-age volunteers do volunteer work (organization-based and direct) at least once a week, other 25% do it at least once a month and 50% do it less frequently than once a month. This important finding helps understand how much the length of the reference period may affect survey estimates.
106. The differences between the participation rates in volunteer work estimated through TUSs (2010, “one day”) conducted during 12 months and EU-SILC (2015, “12 months”) for selected EU countries show how big the impact can be¹².

Figure 11. Participation rates in organization-based volunteer work, EU-SILC and TUS, percent



Source: Eurostat database

Figure 12. Participation rates in direct volunteer work, EU-SILC and TUS, percent



Source: Eurostat database

107. Theoretically, differences between TUS estimates and estimates obtained from dedicated modules using the “4 weeks” reference period should be smaller, but still important. In practice, it depends much on when data in surveys to which dedicated modules are attached is collected.

7.1 The “12 months/one year” reference period

108. As mentioned earlier, the “12 months” reference period was and is used particularly by countries having experience measuring volunteer work before the 19th ICLS. Measurement objectives, statistical infrastructure, tools available and policy concerns at the time when modules were developed likely, had an important influence on their choice.
109. This reference period is convenient when data is collected once a year. Compared to data collection concentrated over a short period, it can help to limit underestimation of volunteer work due to seasonality, capture irregular and occasional engagement in this form of work.
110. Indicators based on data collected using the “12 months” reference period estimate the total number of people doing volunteer work and the total (cumulated) number of hours worked during twelve months. This facilitates the production of estimates for national accounts (e.g. satellite accounts) and the assessment of the relationship with other economic and social

¹² EUROSTAT database <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

statistics that use a long observation period. However, assessing the relationship with indicators expressed as annual averages is difficult as data collected over the “12 months” recall period is used to estimate maximum values¹³. In addition, concerns exist with the quality of data reported over long reference periods such as 12 months, due to the long-documented effects of memory recall bias, telescoping, etc.

111. Indeed, while participation in volunteering activities on a regular basis is not very difficult to recall, volunteer work done occasionally or irregularly/on request is harder to remember, especially when speaking about direct volunteering. In addition, recalling the number of hours worked during 12 months is a more challenging task for respondents, even when volunteering on a regular basis.
112. The ILO Manual recommends using the “12 months” reference period, in addition to the “4 weeks” if data is collected once a year and the survey sample is not spread over the full calendar year. This recommendation, however, is difficult to be implemented in practice as it requires spending more resources and time to collect the data twice, using two reference periods. More so, it can also add importantly to respondent burden. The review could identify only one surveys applying this approach, using stylized questions in a TUS conducted in 2009.
113. Currently, the demand for sub-annual (quarterly, monthly) data to inform design and evaluation of short-term policies is increasing. In some countries, seasonal variation of participation in volunteer work and of time worked could be significant. This type of work can have an important impact on the well-being of many people during specific months, for example, persons living in regions affected seasonally by storms and hurricanes who receive unpaid help to repair or rebuild houses, for example, from the community, organizations, and other individuals. Similarly, elderly persons living alone and persons living in poverty may receive assistance from others particularly around important holidays. Official statistics should be able to capture this.

7.2 The “4 weeks/one calendar month” reference period

114. Recommended by the ILO Manual since 2011 and adopted by the 19th ICLS, this reference period is considered the most appropriate to capture volunteer work: it is longer than one day or one week as to capture volunteer work occurring less frequently, however not very long as to generate important memory recall issues.
115. This reference period is intended to be used in surveys with data collected continuously or at least monthly. In this approach, monthly sub-annual samples could be aggregated to obtain reliable quarterly and yearly average indicators.
116. Such indicators facilitate the analysis of the relationship with other indicators expressed as average values. However, they may not be directly compared with indicators obtained using longer reference periods (e.g. “12 months”), which are estimates of the maximum number of people doing volunteer work and of the total cumulated number of hours worked during those periods. Theoretically, for a given population in a specific period (e.g. quarter, year) the average indicators will be lower than the ones based on longer reference periods. Consequently, the use of the “4 weeks/one calendar month” reference period, with monthly data collection could make more difficult the production of reliable indicators for national accounts.

¹³ For example, the number of people engaging in volunteer work estimated using the “12 months” reference period is the cumulated number of people who did volunteer work at least once during that period.

117. With data collected less frequently than monthly, the use of the “4 weeks/one calendar month” reference period can limit the capacity to produce reliable estimates of the annual averages. Especially, countries which collect data on volunteer work only once or a couple times a year, using this reference period, have to find a way to avoid significant overestimation or underestimation due to seasonality.
118. As suggested by the paragraph 57(c) of the 19th ICLS Resolution I, when not feasible to spread data collection over the year, annual estimates based on one-time surveys, could be obtained by retrospective recall related to short, individual time periods. While memory recall bias may still impact reporting, this approach could serve to account for some of the seasonality patterns present in volunteer work. For example, in addition to being asked about participation in volunteer work during the last month/4 weeks, respondents may be also asked about doing volunteer work in each of the previous 12 months. This approach offers the option of estimating both annual average numbers and the total (cumulated) number of people doing volunteer work.
119. If such data is not collected and estimates are reported as annual averages (or typical values for the country) on the assumption that a specific month or quarter is representative for the whole year then the dates for the fieldwork should be chosen carefully. For many countries this may be a very challenging or even impossible task for two reasons:
 - In order to decide on the best dates for data collection, prior, reliable information is needed. Countries trying to measure volunteer work for the first time usually don't have this type of information;
 - Even if information is available, countries may not have the flexibility/resources to collect the data during the most appropriate time period(s).
120. If, however, estimates are planned to be reported as total values for a specific month(s) and not as annual averages (typical values) then choosing the data collection period is less critical. Yet, the comparability of measurements made in different years may be seriously affected if data is collected in different months, making difficult to track the progress. Even if data is collected in the same month(s) of different years, comparability of estimates may still be seriously affected by events with changing dates around which the intensity of volunteering activities increases significantly (e.g religious holidays, agricultural season).
121. It may also be very difficult to make reliable conclusions when comparing national estimates at the regional or global level. Finally, observing volunteer work only in a specific period of the year, across time, may prevent countries from detecting important, structural changes in this form of work.

7.3 The “one week/7 days” reference period

122. This reference period was found to be used in continuous surveys. It may be a solution to a more reliable measurement in LFSs and GHSs with continuous data collection.
123. In this approach data on volunteer work is collected for the same reference week, used to measure employment, making possible simultaneous measurement of time worked in different forms of work. The shorter reference period also reduces recalling errors.
124. The use of the “one week” reference period in continuous surveys, to identify volunteers, is based on the assumption that any volunteer does volunteer work each week. This is also the assumption on which measurement of employment relies on: people, who have jobs/businesses, work for pay/profit each week.

125. For most employed, most of the time, this assumption is true. For volunteers, however, it may not be. According to the OECD data, this assumption is true only for 25% of volunteers. It is very likely that using only the "last week" reference period to identify volunteers may lead to significant underestimation of the number of volunteers.
126. Indicators calculated by accumulating survey data over longer periods (quarter, year) are averages and as mentioned in the previous section, offer both advantages and disadvantages.

7.4 The "one day" reference period

127. "One day" reference period used in TUSs (diaries or stylized questions), the shortest one, leads to significant underestimation of the number/share of volunteers, even if data collection covers all days of a year.
128. TUSs could still be used to estimate the number/share of volunteers, according to the 19th ICLS definition, if stylized questions would be used to ask respondents whether they spent at least one hour doing volunteer work, in the previous 4 weeks/one calendar month.

8. Issues identified by the review

129. Review of national practices helped identify some issues, related to the operational definitions of volunteer work, which should be addressed by countries when designing and implementing survey tools, as they may have an important impact on estimates of participation in volunteer work and of the total volume of time dedicated to it.
130. Section 5.7. of this report offers a brief review of the operational definitions applied by countries, in relation to the three criteria that should be met, in order for an activity to be considered volunteer work: *unpaid, non-compulsory, for others*.
131. As indicated earlier, detailed information on how volunteer work was measured in household surveys is only available for the 36 dedicated modules described in section 6 of this report. These were analyzed to find more details on how countries operationalize the 19th ICLS definition of volunteer work.
132. In relation to the *unpaid* nature of work, the 19th ICLS definition¹⁴ states that volunteers' work is considered non-remunerated (i.e. with no expectation of payment for time worked or work done) although volunteers may receive some small form of support in cash or in kind. Examples of in-kind support are provided without a specified equivalent value amount, nevertheless for support in cash, an upper threshold set at less than one third of local market wages.
133. Few of the reviewed dedicated modules had questions to confirm the "non-remunerated" nature of the activity. Only one reviewed module collected data on the amount of cash received as support, making possible to check whether it is less or more than one third of the local wages, as established by the definition.
134. Introducing questions to directly assess this criterion may help refining estimates of volunteer work, especially in countries where terms associated with volunteer work, such as "community volunteering", "community development jobs", "international volunteer jobs" etc. may be used to refer to paid jobs or particular employment schemes. However, as these questions may be

¹⁴ Paragraph 37 (b) of the 19th ICLS Resolution I

very sensitive, they should be included only if there is strong evidence that a significant number of respondents are classified as volunteers while receiving important compensation in cash.

135. This issue also raises the question about whether volunteers identified to receive amounts of money higher than one third of the local wages should be considered employed or not.
136. The second criterion relating to the *non-compulsory* nature of volunteers' work was assessed in few modules by asking whether the unpaid work was done as part of an educational programme, was requested by law or by a decision of a court.
137. During tests in some countries, the issue of engagement in volunteer work under "social pressure" (a real or perceived menace of being marginalized by the community) was raised. The current definition of volunteer work does not elaborate on the distinction between social pressure and coercion. However, a member of a community might accept to do something for the community only to avoid being stigmatized (e.g. because she or he saw it happening to someone else). Or, one person could force members of own family to do unpaid work for another family. Identifying such cases in household surveys may be very difficult due to the high sensitivity of the issue. Therefore, if there is evidence that questions to test the voluntariness of engagement in activity are needed then questions and interview procedures should be carefully tested.
138. Modules, trying to assess the voluntariness of engagement in activities, beyond civil, legal or administrative obligation could not be identified during the review. However, in many modules initial questions ask about work done "voluntarily", "willingly" or "out of free will", which probably makes testing the voluntariness of engagement less relevant.
139. The three criteria set by the definition (*unpaid, non-compulsory work, for others*) help identify volunteer work as opposed to other three forms of work: employment, own-use production and other (compulsory) forms of work. Yet, there is another form of work, unpaid trainee work, which is defined similarly to volunteer work, the main difference being the motivation to engage in a specific unpaid activity: to acquire skills and/or work experience.
140. Some modules included questions on reasons for engaging in volunteer work. Answer options like "to gain work experience", "to learn new skills" were offered. Using such questions (and possibly additional questions), unpaid trainees could be identified and estimates of people doing volunteer work could be refined. This would be particularly relevant for countries in which opportunities to acquire workplace experience or skills in a trade or profession, in a formal, structured way are very limited.
141. The ILO Manual encourages the addition of additional filter questions to modules, in order to ensure that the three criteria of the definition of the volunteer work are properly understood. Filter questions addressing the issues of compulsory service, family relationship, and compensation are suggested. These questions could be used during the interview, to filter-out non-relevant cases or to collect additional data that could be used for further refinement during analysis.

9. Positive practices identified by the review

142. In this review, different methodological and practical solutions used by countries to measure volunteer work were described. Of course, all solutions are tailored to meet specific country objectives, within available resources. However, some of them may be useful for any country, given their expected positive impact on the measurements.

143. Below, identified good practices, at different stages of the survey planning and measurement are listed.

144. Developing the operational definition of volunteer work:

- Using the definition set by the 19th ICLS as basis to develop national definitions;
- Mentioning explicitly activities to preserve, protect or improve the environment and activities to contribute to a cause as possible volunteer work done for community/society. Doing this reduces the risks of limiting measurement to help offered directly to humans (households) ;
- Defining the “unpaid” nature of work primarily as lack of expectation to receive a remuneration rather than as actual receipt of some compensation, in order to focus on the person’s intention to do the work (gainful vs. non-gainful).
- Adopting a short reference period for measurement, in order to reduce memory recall errors and burden.

145. Developing survey questions:

- Targeting organized and direct volunteer work in separate questions;
- Identifying and using words which are commonly used to refer to different types of volunteer work;
- Including into questions examples of volunteer work and names of relevant organizations well known in the national context;
- If considered necessary, including confirmatory questions to assess during analysis whether the criteria of the definition of the volunteer work are properly understood;
- In modules attached to household surveys adding a short introductory text to highlight the scope of the module questions. This is especially important for modules attached to LFSs, to highlight the difference between different forms of work;
- Including questions to collect data at least on the type of volunteer work (organization-based or direct), tasks performed (occupation) and time worked. Ideally, on all five core variables recommended by the ILO;
- If producing indicators for the national accounts is an objective, then additional questions to assess participation in volunteer work over several short reference periods (e.g. 3, 6 or 12 months) should be included.

146. Choosing data collection tools:

- Attaching dedicated modules to LFSs in order to use the advantages offered by the existing infrastructure, regular data collection, knowledge/experience accumulated by staff in measuring other forms of work ;
- If attaching dedicated modules to LFS is not an option, then attaching to other nationally representative household surveys with large sample size, to ensure largest coverage of the population and higher probability to capture enough respondents engaging in volunteer work.

147. Disseminating data and meta-data:

- Publishing estimates of participation in volunteer work and of time worked in dedicated press releases, publications, databank tables on NSOs’ official web sites;
- Publishing the questionnaires/modules used to collect data and the survey methodology on NSOs’ official web sites.

10. Recommendations

10.1. Recommendations on choosing the measurement approach

148. It is very difficult to offer a simple solution. Modules are designed with many objectives in mind and with many constraints. Still, producing reliable, unbiased estimates is one universal principle for official statistics. Keeping unchanged all other characteristics of a survey (sample design and size; data collection mode; etc.), some types of modules may perform better than others in producing more reliable data.
149. In household surveys, interviewers have to make respondents go through several mental processes, in order to collect the desired information. One of these processes, probably the most important one, is to make respondents understand what the questions are about.
150. Explaining complex concepts in a simple way that can be understood by the general population is a challenging task, especially during interviews, in household surveys. Interviewers usually have no more than a couple of minutes to do it, by reading predefined questions. Thus, questionnaires should be very well designed, in order to ensure survey efficiency.
151. Psychological research of the mental processes people go through, while trying to learn complex concepts, shows that understanding increases if:
 - components of the complex concepts are introduced gradually, one-by-one or in combinations (stepwise approach);
 - complex definitions are decomposed into less complex ones, respondents are familiar with;
 - common words are used and examples are provided;
152. Cognitive testing, conducted within the ILO LFS pilot studies generated similar findings¹⁵.
153. These principles are used by many countries measuring employment in LFSs by using the stepwise approach; targeting specific activities at the national level to be excluded or included; using specific, common words to refer to “employment”, “job” in national languages.
154. Thus, referring to the approaches reviewed in the previous section of this report, modules using the targeted approach, measuring separately participation in different forms of volunteer work, may be less confusing for respondents, due to focus on more homogeneous clusters of activities, similar to the way employment is identified in many LFSs, by targeting employees and self-employed (especially in agricultural activities).
155. Combining the targeted approach with the detailed or mixed approach (as opposed to the brief one) may increase further the chances of producing more precise estimates of volunteer work, by recovering or filtering-out relevant/irrelevant cases.
156. Therefore, if resources allow it, countries may consider as a first option applying:
 - targeted, mixed modules if volunteer work is measured for the first time or if it’s a repeated measurement;
 - targeted, detailed modules if it’s a repeated measurement and there is detailed, recent data which can be used to establish the list of specific volunteering activities, in which most (ideally all) volunteers are engaged in. This approach has the advantage of collecting data on voluntary activities, while identifying volunteers.

¹⁵ See: https://www.ilo.org/stat/Areasofwork/Standards/lfs/WCMS_627815/lang--en/index.htm

157. If resources are limited and the above mentioned solutions can't be implemented, then countries may wish to apply the targeted, brief approach. In this scenario, two questions to identify volunteers are needed.
158. If, for some reasons, the targeted, brief approach can't be applied, then the next preferred choice would be the broad, mixed approach. This is the module currently recommended by the ILO.
159. The broad, brief module (only one question to capture all types of volunteer work) might be useful for explorative purposes, to collect data which may help designing a module for production. The ILO Manual recommends using such a module in years, when the main, more elaborated, module is not administered. However, before following this recommendation, countries should test if the quality of the data collected using both modules is similar.
160. This hierarchy of modules is based on the expected quality of the collected data as suggested by cognitive research in general and some tests conducted by the ILO in particular. Other factors, like the available resources and the frequency of data collection may influence the amount of data collected, hence the modules applied.
161. However, limitations should not lead to application of approaches known to be less efficient in identifying volunteers. It is preferable to collect less data on characteristics of the volunteer work (occupation, industry, etc.) than reducing the quality and comparability over time of the main estimates: number of volunteers and time worked by them. When choosing the type of modules to apply, countries should use available options to test different approaches.

10.2. Recommendations on choosing the reference period

162. Countries' choices of the reference periods used to capture volunteer work and their practical application depend mainly on the measurement objectives, data sources used, on how relaxed (related to the frequency of engagement) the definition of volunteer work is and wish to ensure comparability between measurements made in different rounds or sources.
163. After the 19th ICLS, more countries started designing or redesigning tools to measure volunteer work using the "4 weeks" reference period. As seen from the previous paragraphs, implementing this reference period may raise issues related to the quality of the estimates and/or to their analysis.
164. Different implementation models, in relation to the reference period, exist. Others can be developed. Each of these models has advantages and disadvantages. Countries may be limited in their capacity to experiment with different implementation options, in fact some countries, due to the lack of resources, may have no alternatives to the current practice. However, efforts should be made to conduct tests and implement the model which offers the capacity to produce reliable, unbiased estimates of the number/share of volunteers and time worked in different volunteer work activities.
165. The choice of the reference period can have a significant impact on the estimates. Longer the period, higher the probability to capture more people doing volunteer work. In the same time, the quality of the data recalled over a longer period tends to be less accurate.
166. For this reason, the 19th ICLS set the "4 weeks/one calendar month" as the reference period. It is longer than one day or one week as to capture volunteer work occurring less frequently, however not very long as to generate important recalling issues and capture sporadic volunteering activities. In addition, it offers the capacity to observe the seasonal pattern, if data

is collected monthly. For these reasons, countries should aim to use it in data collection, to identify volunteers.

167. Another important reason to apply the reference period agreed by the international community of labour statisticians is the fact that this is probably the most efficient way to increase the international comparability of national indicators. As mentioned earlier in the report, in general, definitions used by countries are not very different. Reference periods, however, are and may affect significantly indicators.
168. Yet, data on volunteer work collected monthly or less frequently using the “4 weeks/one calendar month” reference period may be less suitable for producing indicators for national accounts. To overcome this disadvantage, solutions have to be identified and tested.
169. When different implementation options are available, priority to those offering the capacity to produce reliable, unbiased estimates as opposed to those facilitating the analysis and/or data collection should be given.

11. Next steps

170. The adoption by the 19th ICLS of new international standards on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, seems to have generated an increased interest in measuring volunteer work using the recommendations contained in the ILO Manual.
171. Since 2011, when it was published, the ILO Manual has been a great source of inspiration for many statisticians developing survey tools to measure volunteer work. Countries have accumulated an important amount of valuable experience in implementing the ILO recommendations. As identified by the review, this experience and recent updates in related international standards warrant an update of the existing recommendations on measuring volunteer work.
172. Besides adjusting the content, to make it in line with the text of Resolution I of the 19th ICLS, more detailed guidelines on development and implementation of survey tools in specific conditions, to reach specific measurement objectives have to be incorporated into the ILO manual.
173. These additional guidelines are particularly related, but not limited to:
 - Refinement of survey tools by designing and including into modules questions to test the criteria used to define volunteer work;
 - Choice of the reference period for measuring engagement in volunteer work and time worked, considering the measurement objectives and available data collection tools;
 - Adjustment of recommended survey tools to national circumstances through testing;
 - Development of appropriate sampling plans for different data collection options;
 - Dissemination of data and meta-data;
 - Use of data on volunteer work with relation to other statistics (e.g. other forms of work, national accounts)
174. To update the ILO Manual, ILO in close cooperation with courtiers has to develop and test alternative measurement tools.
175. Two experimental modules are being designed by the ILO, based on the analysis of national practices. One module, builds on the current practice, is an improved version of the module

recommended by the ILO Manual, and uses the targeted, mixed approach. The other uses the broad, stepwise approach, uncommon for measuring volunteer work, but frequently used in LFSs to identify employed.

176. It is expected that these two modules may be more efficient than the one currently recommended by the ILO because they were developed taking in account the current best practices, countries' experience and results of tests, including those conducted by the ILO. Initially, these modules will be tested in small-scale studies, in two countries, using qualitative and quantitative methods. It is expected that by mid-2019 the ILO will be able to develop survey tools, ready to be applied in nationally representative surveys.
177. ILO and UNV are in the process of establishing a multi-year programme to test and support the implementation of volunteer work modules, in collaboration with interested countries from different regions of the world. The results of the pilots will be used to develop training materials and to revise and update the ILO Manual on Measuring Volunteer Work. Ultimately, the main objective is to improve the global availability of statistics on volunteer work to support policy-making and monitoring.
178. Finally, during the review of national practices a few potential conceptual issues related to the current definition of volunteer work were identified. As part of the testing process, ILO will address these issues in order to establish whether the definition needs to be adjusted accordingly.

12. Annex

Questionnaire used in the survey of national practices

Country	
Organisation	
Person completing the questionnaire:	
Name	
Title	
Department	
e-mail	

1. In the last 10 years (between January 2007 and December 2017), did your institution collect any data on volunteer work through a survey?

Please consider any type of survey: a household or establishment survey; a dedicated survey or a module attached to another survey; whether to produce estimates or to test the methodology/tools.

See the answer options below and enter the value into the yellow cell

Choose answer: If Yes , go to question 2
If No , go to question 13

Yes=1 No=2

2. In how many different surveys was data on volunteer work collected?

Different rounds of the same surveys must be considered as one survey. For example, Labour Force Survey and Time Use Survey are different surveys.

See the answer options below and enter the value into the yellow cell

Insert number (1 or 2 or 3): → go to question 3

List the survey(s) that your country has used to collect data on volunteer work between January 2007 and December 2017, starting with the most recent

Please, answer questions 3 to 12 for each survey

	Survey1	Survey 2	Survey 3
3. What is the title of the survey?			
4. When was the last time that data on volunteer work was collected through this survey? Insert year			
4.1. Was it a household survey or an establishment survey? Household=1; Establishment=2			
4.2. In how many rounds of the survey data on volunteer work was collected between January 2007 and December 2017? Insert number			

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