

# Research

## Report



**Yours** for good.

The House of Good:  
**The value of music  
and community groups**

**December 2024**

[nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood](https://nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood)



The House of Good:  
The value of music and community groups

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# Summary and key findings

**In The House of Good, first published in 2020,<sup>1</sup> we examined a range of social support that church buildings provide by hosting food banks, drug and alcohol support, youth groups and mental health groups.**

For the very first time, the report quantified the economic and social value of all church buildings to the UK. Not just the bricks and mortar but the welfare and wellbeing they create in our communities.

It showed that the total economic and social value that church buildings generate in the UK is at least £12.4 billion per year, which averages around £300,000 per church. That is over three-quarters of the total NHS spending on mental health in England in 2022-23.

The report was updated in 2021 based on new HM Treasury Green Book supplementary guidance on the value of their preferred measure of the value of wellbeing, the WELLBY<sup>2</sup>. This showed that the annual social and economic value of church buildings to the UK is worth around £55 billion and includes the contribution churches make to wellbeing and to local economies.

The House of Good pointed out that in the UK there are more food banks than McDonalds; many of these are hosted, set up or run by churches. Church buildings provide twice the social care budget of UK councils in economic value.

Together, the UK's 38,500 churches form a ready-made network of community care - **they are a National Help Service.**

Due to the pioneering nature of the work, we were only able to attach an economic/monetary value to four main activities: foodbanks, drug and alcohol support, youth groups and mental health groups

From the survey of churches we carried out in 2020 for The House of Good<sup>3</sup>, we became aware of many other community activities and groups hosted by churches and that these would add additional layers of wellbeing value generated by church buildings.

For this study, we wanted to look further into how church buildings improve people's wellbeing. We therefore undertook advanced regression analysis (OLS supported by fixed effect regressions, where possible) on UK open data sets.

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1. View The House of Good 2020 technical report [here](#)

2. View The House of Good 2021 updated report [here](#)

3. View The House of Good 2020 technical report [here](#)



The House of Good:  
**The value of music and community groups**

This is what we found:

- As well as food banks, church buildings host a wide range of community groups; many of these groups are run by volunteers from the church.
- These include meetings for people who may be isolated (e.g. coffee mornings, over 60s clubs) childcare (eg parent/toddler groups), arts and music groups and 'warm places' to meet in winter.
- Being part of a local community group is good for us.
- Large, nationally representative surveys show there is a positive increase in wellbeing from attending a community/neighbourhood group.
- Taking part in a community group is worth around £1,200 per year, per person, in wellbeing benefits using the most recent HM Treasury recommended WELLBY measure of economic value.
- Churches also host choirs and music groups. Participation in a choir or music group has a slightly higher impact on wellbeing and therefore a higher WELLBY value of £1,250 per person.
- The values per person identified above for music and community groups have been included as additional components in the House of Good - Local, a church social value calculator being developed by The National Churches Trust and State of Life.

# Data and Methodology

**Our analysis focused on the Community Life Survey<sup>4</sup> and DCMS's Taking Part Survey<sup>5</sup>. We also looked at the major Understanding Society<sup>6</sup> dataset, which enables us to refine and check the findings in Community Life and Taking Part due to this data set allowing a more advanced type of analysis.**

In our work there are two types of analysis that examine the relationships between wellbeing and participation in music and community groups:

1. **OLS regression (OLS):** the basic, first step when looking at the data is to use 'regression analysis' or an OLS Regression. This is where we estimate the correlation between an outcome like wellbeing (life satisfaction) or loneliness alongside a 'treatment variable' such as being a member of a church, attending church, joining a group. With this type of analysis we can factor in, as far as possible, all the other things that may affect the outcome such as age, gender, socio economic status and, ethnicity. But we cannot determine anything around the underlying character of the people.
2. **Fixed effects regression (FE):** The next step is to carry out a 'Fixed Effects regression' analysis, where we can factor in those things in a person that are 'fixed' - so their underlying character. For this, we need a more advanced, larger data set which asks the same people the same questions over a longer period of time (also known as a 'longitudinal panel'). Understanding Society meets this criteria.

Once we have determined the effect of participation in music and community groups on wellbeing, we can then calculate the equivalent economic value using the HM Treasury endorsed WELLBY.

One WELLBY is equal to one person moving one point on the 0-10 life satisfaction scale for one year as a result of an intervention or participation in an activity, and is valued in the Treasury's Green Book guidance at £13,000. Given that the regression coefficients estimate the per-person, per-year effect of participation on wellbeing, we can simply multiply them by the value of a WELLBY, £13,000, to calculate the economic value. As the life satisfaction scale in Understanding Society is from 1 to 7, we rescale the coefficient onto 0-10 by multiplying by a factor of 1.667.

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4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-life-survey-2>

5. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>

6. <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/>

# Findings

**Below we present the main findings from our analysis of three large, nationally representative UK surveys. Tables 1 and 2 show the most important OLS and FE coefficients, where possible, from the regression analysis of the effects of participation in community groups and in choirs/music groups - that is, what difference in life satisfaction is associated with the treatment variable in the row header (on the left).**

Table 2 presents the regression coefficients, rounded to two decimal places, for the analysis of participation in choirs and music groups. The full tables can be found in the appendix.

**Table 1.**  
Regression analysis of the effects of participation in community groups on life satisfaction

Treatment variable	Life Satisfaction (0-10) coefficient		Life Satisfaction (1-7) coefficient	
	Community Life (OLS)	Taking Part (OLS)	USoc (OLS)	USoc (FE)
Participation in local community or neighbourhood group	0.09	0.19	N/A - question not asked	
Participates in a religious or church organisation/group	0.07	0.12	0.09	0.03

**Table 2.**  
Regression analysis of the effects of participation in choirs and music groups on life satisfaction

Treatment variable	Life Satisfaction (0-10) coefficient		Life Satisfaction (1-7) coefficient	
	Community Life (OLS)	Taking Part (OLS)	USoc (OLS)	USoc (FE)
Sang to an audience or rehearsed for a performance	N/A - question not asked	0.06	0.05	0.06
Sang as part of a group or taken singing lessons	N/A - question not asked	0.10	N/A - question not asked	
Played a musical instrument to an audience	N/A - question not asked	0.10	N/A - question not asked	

## Being involved in a local community group is clearly good for our wellbeing

Our more basic analysis using OLS regressions on Community Life Survey shows that being part of a group is good for us. The coefficient in Table 1 shows that participating in a local community or neighbourhood group contributes approximately 0.09 points to our Life Satisfaction, on a 0-10 scale, and this has a WELLBY value of £1,200 per annum.

Regression analysis on the Taking Part and Understanding Society datasets are a way to double-check the findings above from Community Life and to extend the analysis to 'fixed effects' (FE). Findings from both datasets reveal that participation in a group is significantly and positively associated with our wellbeing, supporting the findings from Community Life.

Understanding Society does not ask about general participation in a community group, but rather in specific types of groups. For the most relevant variable available - that is, participation in a religious or church group, we find that being part of this type of group is good for our wellbeing.

In settling on one coefficient which expresses the effect of community group participation on wellbeing, we opt for the OLS coefficient from Community Life for 'participation in local community or neighbourhood group'.

The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the Community Life survey is specifically designed to capture community group participation, unlike the other two surveys. Secondly, the variable for participation in a religious or church organisation may inadvertently capture the benefits of faith and worship on life satisfaction (which we know exist from the original The House of Good study), potentially inflating the coefficient. Thus, the local community or neighbourhood group variable is more appropriate for looking into the wellbeing benefits of participating in secular groups hosted by churches (e.g. coffee mornings, over 60s clubs, etc.).



## **Singing in a choir or playing a musical instrument is also good for us**

To estimate the effect of singing in a choir and playing musical instruments, we analyse the Taking Part survey dataset. This dataset from the DCMS covers the population's participation in civic life in the form of arts (music, drama, theatre, cinema), culture, sport, heritage etc.

The OLS regression coefficients in column 2 of table 2 show that singing and playing musical instruments, whether to an audience or as part of a group, is significantly positive for our wellbeing. Specifically, the coefficients show that singing and playing music contributes approximately 0.1 points to our Life Satisfaction, on a 0-10 scale, and this has a WELLBY value of £1,250 per annum.

We opt to use the coefficient for "sang as part of a group or taken singing lessons" as the best proxy for the effect of singing in a choir or playing music, as it avoids any performative element and instead focuses on the group participation aspect. Whilst the coefficient for "played a musical instrument to an audience" includes a performative element, it reports the same magnitude of effect as singing in a group. Therefore, we take this coefficient of 0.1 as a proxy for the effect of playing music in a group as well.

The findings from the analysis on Understanding Society support those from Taking Part, however, it does not include the same variables as reported above, and so the analysis is limited to performative singing.



# Conclusion

**This research work has allowed us to increase the range of wellbeing values that occur thanks to the community activities and groups that take place in the UK's church buildings.**

**They reinforce the fact that churches, chapels and meeting houses bring people together and help them thrive.**

**As a result, we can now put a monetary figure on more of the social good that churches provide to the UK and the health and wellbeing they provide to hundreds of thousands of people.**

# Appendix 1 – Full regression tables

**Table A1.**  
CL - Life satisfaction (0 to 10) as the outcome variable

Treatment variable	OLS coefficient
Groups/clubs/organisations taken part in: Youth/children's activities (outside school)	0.10611***
Groups/clubs/organisations taken part in: Religion	0.07064***
Groups/clubs/organisations taken part in: Older people	0.09561***
Groups/clubs/organisations taken part in: Local community or neighbourhood group	0.09068***
Formal or informal volunteering in the last 12 months	0.10122***
Formal or informal volunteering at least once a month	0.11280***
Formal volunteering in last 12 months	0.12711***
Formal volunteering at least once a month	0.17164***
Informal help in last 12 months	0.08080***
Informal help at least once a month	0.09156***

**Table A2.**  
**USoc - Life satisfaction (1 to 7) as the outcome variable**

<b>Treatment variable</b>	<b>OLS coefficient</b>	<b>FE coefficient</b>
<b><i>Membership of organisations</i></b>		
Member of Parents'/School Association	0.04908**	-0.00678
Member of Religious/church organisation	0.09401***	0.02652
Member of Voluntary services group	0.04499***	0.02383
Member of Pensioners group/organisation	0.00366	0.0361
<b><i>Participating in arts activities</i></b>		
Dance, including ballet	0.07728***	0.06766**
Sang to an audience or rehearsed for a performance (not karaoke)	0.05026**	0.06212
Played a musical instrument	0.0093	0.04424
Written music	-0.04184	-0.10943
Rehearsed or performed in a play/drama, opera or musical theatre	0.04496	0.04208
<b><i>Attending arts events</i></b>		
Film at a cinema or other venue	0.04709***	0.06271***
Exhibition or collection of art, photography or sculpture or a craft	0.02600**	0.01709
Event connected with books or writing	-0.00449	-0.07367**
Play/drama, pantomime or a musical	0.08462***	0.04845**
Opera/opera	0.05039**	0.06502
Classical music performance	0.08280***	0.05566*
Rock, pop or jazz performance	0.04950***	-0.00753
Ballet	0.05460**	0.04222
<b><i>Frequency of participating in arts activities (ref. = never)</i></b>		
At least once a week	0.06533***	0.06758**
Less than weekly but at least monthly	0.02973*	0.0437
At least 3/4 times/year	-0.0103	0.02635
Twice in past year	-0.01468	0.06314
Once in past year	0.06467	0.12528*
<b><i>Frequency of attending arts events (ref. = never)</i></b>		
At least once a week	0.12902***	0.10114*
Less than weekly but at least monthly	0.14478***	0.13325***
At least 3/4 times/year	0.10830***	0.10750***
Twice in past year	0.07921***	0.08544***
Once in past year	0.05081**	0.09853***

**Table A3.**  
Taking part - Life satisfaction (0 to 10) as the outcome variable

Treatment variable	OLS coefficient		
	Participated last 12 mths.	At least once a week	Participated in a group
<b><i>Participation in arts activities</i></b>			
Ballet	0.19710**	0.16936	0.12895
Sang to an audience or rehearsed	0.05899**	0.00842	0.07596**
Sang as part of a group or taken singing lessons	0.09531**	0.17197***	0.11260**
Played a musical instrument to an audience	0.10409***	0.02929	0.07660*
Rehearsed or performed in a play/drama	0.12547***	0.25373***	0.09892*
Rehearsed or performed in an opera	0.09186	0.08582	0.11412
<b><i>Attending arts events</i></b>			
Film at a cinema or other venue	0.08044***	0.12216*	–
Exhibition or collection of art	0.06740***	0.15989	–
Craft exhibition (not craft market)	0.11703***	0.49843**	–
Event which included video or electric art	-0.00666	0.18834	–
Event connected with books or writing	0.04550	0.29302	–
Play/drama	0.10892***	0.38812**	–
Pantomime	0.13556***	-0.17254	–
Musical	0.14347***	-0.09592	–
Opera/opera	0.12315***	0.06600	–
Classical music performance	0.13547***	0.42468**	–
Ballet	0.13732***	0.44141	–
<b><i>Membership of social groups</i></b>			
Hobbies/social clubs	-0.00528	–	–
Local community or neighbourhood groups	0.19132***	–	–
Groups for children or young people	0.05380	–	–
Groups for older people	-0.07583	–	–
Religious groups, including going to a place of worship	0.12439*	–	–

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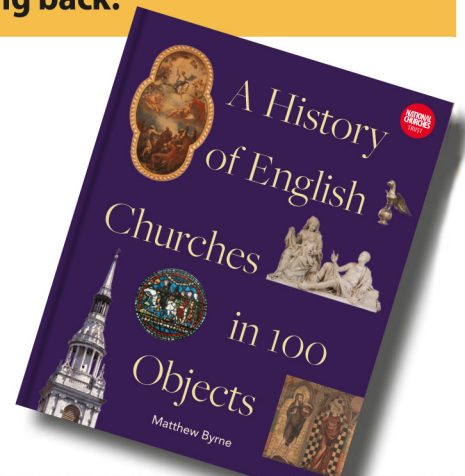
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## About the National Churches Trust

The National Churches Trust is the charity for people who love church buildings. Our work supports churches, chapels and meeting houses open for worship and of architectural, community and historic value, of all denominations, throughout the United Kingdom.

Find out more at [nationalchurchestrust.org](https://nationalchurchestrust.org)



## About State of Life

State of Life use open data, economic analysis and digital technology to evidence social impact and value. This helps organisations show the difference they make to society and the people they help.

Find out more at [stateoflife.org](https://stateoflife.org)

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