

# The public view: trust, confidence and support of charities in Scotland

## SCVO briefing

February 2016

### About this briefing

This briefing presents and analyses the findings from a poll of the general public in Scotland on trust, confidence and support of charities.

These findings are based on a telephone survey of 1,028 respondents (adults aged 16+) commissioned by SCVO and conducted by Ipsos MORI during 9-16 November 2015.

### Findings

- **82% of respondents to SCVO's survey agree that charities are trustworthy and act in the public interest.** This is significantly higher than the 57% reported in the 2015 Charities Aid Foundation survey and shows that trust in charities remains high in Scotland.
- **9 out of 10 (89%) respondents have personally supported a charity in some way in the last year,** donating money or goods, or giving their time as volunteers and supporters. This compares to 81% for the wider UK overall - see Scottish/UK comparison on page 6.
- **77% of respondents donated money in the last year.** Donating money remains the most popular way the Scottish public supports charities, highlighting the importance of fundraising to Scottish charities.
- **However, over a quarter of those surveyed said they had lost trust in charities in the last year.** More than 1 in 4 people surveyed reported losing trust in charities over the last year, and 41% said that negative media stories had affected their trust.

### Headline figures

- 89% of people have contributed to a charity in the last year
- 82% of people agree that charities are trustworthy and act in the public interest

- 78% of people who have personally used a charity are more likely to trust them.
- 77% of people donated to a charity last year
- 67% of the public gave charities a high rating for trust, giving scores of 6/10 or above for trust and confidence.
- Public trust and confidence in charities has remained stable in the last year - 67% in 2015 compared to 68% in 2014 and 60% in 2011 (OSCR).
- 73% of people agree that they feel confident donating to charity
- 41% agree that recent stories in the media have made them lose confidence in charities
- Around half (49%) of people would like to find out more about how charities are performing
- Almost half (47%) of people have used a community centre or village hall in last year.

## Conclusions

- Trust and confidence in charities is notably high in Scotland and, overall, Scotland has not seen the steep drop in trust and confidence reported in UK-wide surveys.
- People in Scotland are more likely to give their time and money to charities.
- Despite a number of negative stories in the past 18 months concerning fundraising, confidence in fundraising is also high, with 73% of respondents feeling confident donating to charity.
- Where people have a personal connection to charities, trust and confidence rises, from 67% to 78%.
- 2 in every 5 respondents (41%) said that recent stories in the media have made them lose confidence in charities, so although the public are generally very supportive, charities cannot be complacent.
- When support for charities in Scotland is compared with results from UK-wide surveys, we can see that the Scottish public is consistently more supportive and engaged across all forms of giving and support.

## The public view: trust, confidence and support of charities in Scotland

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## Context: Is public trust in charities under threat?

A number of surveys regularly take the British public's pulse on issues relating to charities. While the public's trust and confidence can fluctuate, this tends to be by only a few percentage points, and trust generally remains fairly stable.

However, at the end of 2015, a number of UK-wide surveys of public trust in charities were suggesting a significant drop in trust of charities.

nfpSynergy's Spring 2015 Charity Monitor found that *"trust has fallen to its lowest level in eight years"*, tumbling from 66% in 2013 to 53%, and dropping a further 5% in Autumn 2015.

In September 2015, a UK Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) survey also found that *"public trust in charities is under threat"* with only 57% of respondents agreeing that charities are trustworthy and act in the public interest, far lower than the 72% recorded by the Charity Commission for England and Wales in 2014.

Both the nfp Synergy and CAF surveys were UK-wide, with a relatively small Scottish component.

To what extent are these patterns primarily driven by media and opinion? And are people in Scotland losing trust in charities to the same extent as the UK polls suggest?

### 1. Trust and confidence in charities remains high in Scotland

Trust and confidence in charities is notably high in Scotland. The overwhelming majority of respondents to SCVO's survey agreed that 'most charities are trustworthy and act in the public interest' (82%). This is higher than the figures found in recent UK-wide surveys, and 25% more than the proportion of people who agreed charities are trustworthy in the 2015 Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) survey - figure 2.

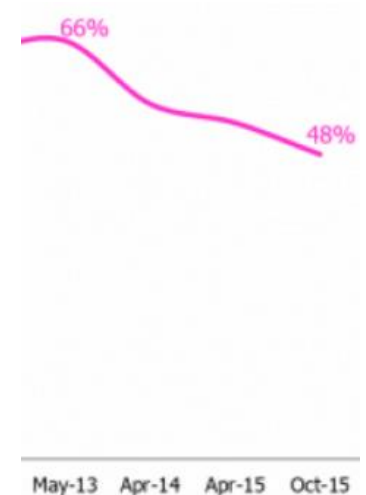


Fig 1 nfp Synergy 2015

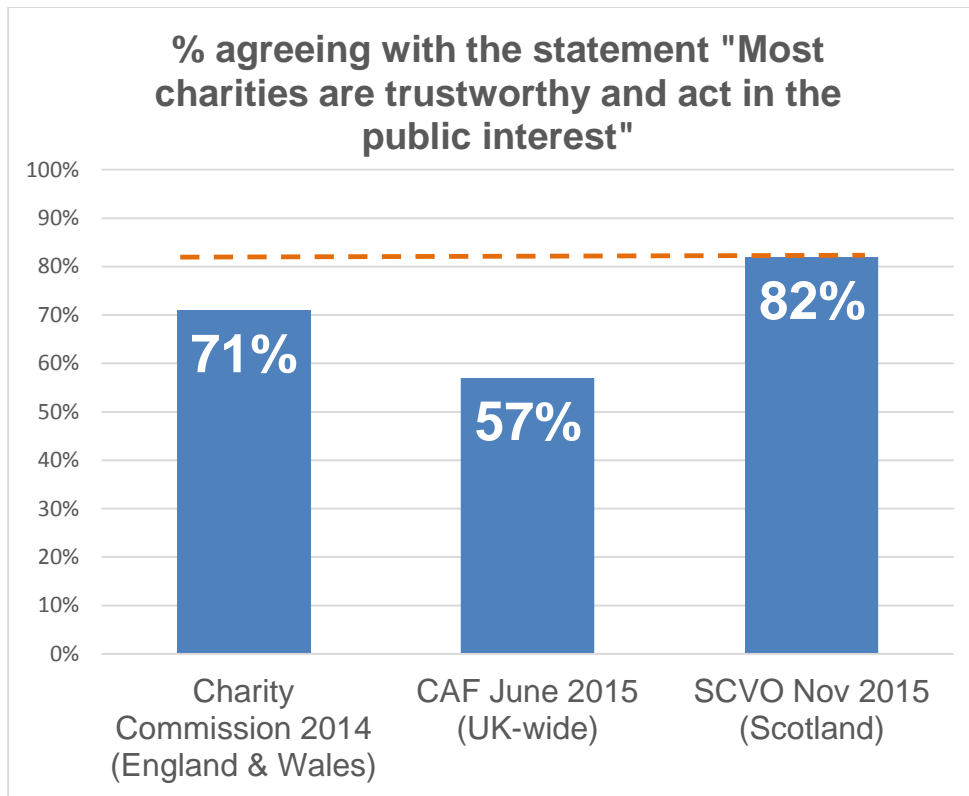


Figure 2 Comparison of SCVO responses against Charity Commission (England & Wales) and CAF (UK-wide)

SCVO's survey found that 67% of respondents scored their trust in charities as 6/10 or higher. This compares closely with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator's (OSCR) results of 68% in 2014 and 60% in 2011. It is also close to the patterns seen in Charity Commission surveys of people in England and Wales over the last decade.

Despite a number of negative fundraising stories, levels of confidence in fundraising are also high, with **73% of respondents feeling confident donating to charity.**

Overall, **Scotland has not seen the steep drop in trust and confidence reported in the UK-wide surveys.**

## 2. Personal connection to charity increases trust

Where people have a personal connection to charities, the proportion giving scores of 6/10 and above for trust rises from 67% to 78%. The number of people giving top scores of 9 and 10 also more than trebles, jumping from 11% to 37% - see figure 3.

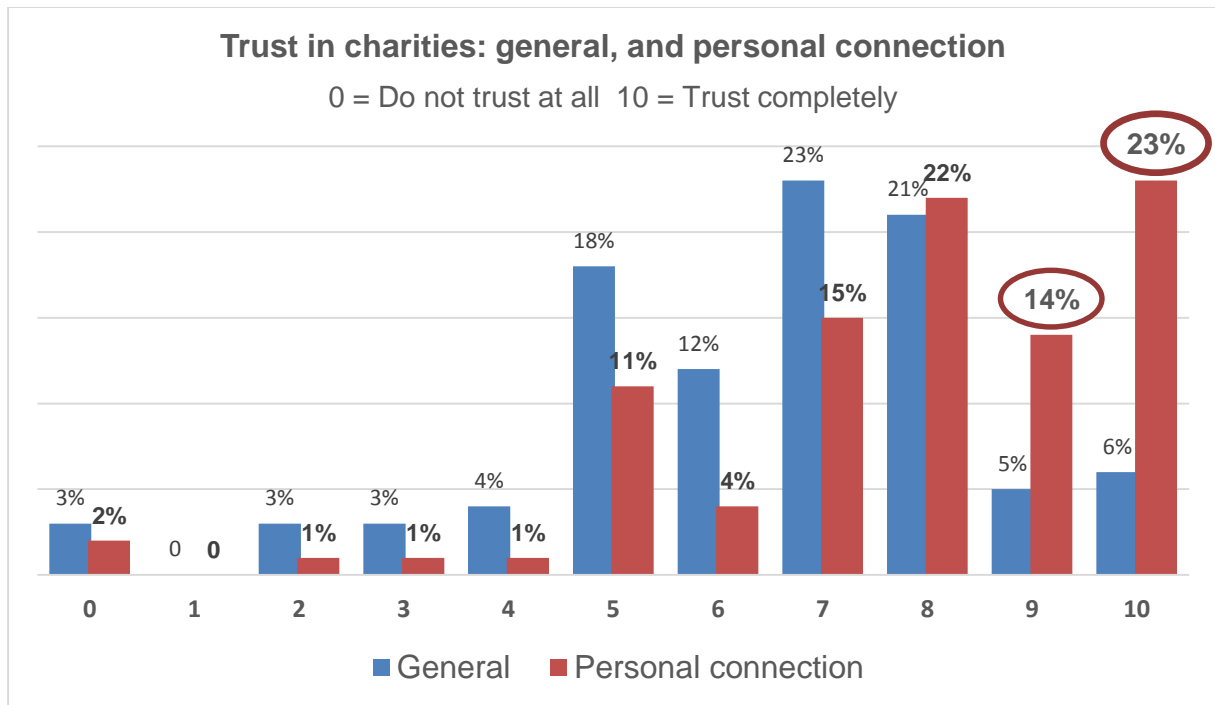


Figure 3 Comparison of general trust in charities against trust in charities that respondent has used/supported

### 3. Majority of people in Scotland supported charities last year

9 out of 10 respondents supported a charity in some way in the last year, with 89% giving either financial support or their time to charity. Only 1 in every 10 respondents had not supported a charity in the preceding year.

- 77% of respondents donated money, 62% bought goods and 58% donated goods
- Nearly half of all respondents (48%) had sponsored someone
- 36% took part in a campaign or signed a petition
- 30% had volunteered in the last 12 months.

When support for charities in Scotland is compared with results from UK-wide surveys, we can see that the Scottish public is consistently more supportive and engaged across all forms of giving and supporting – see figure 4:

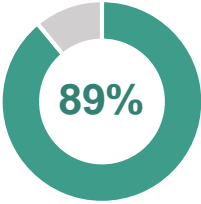
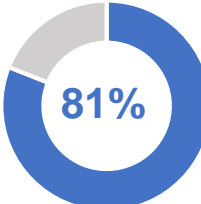
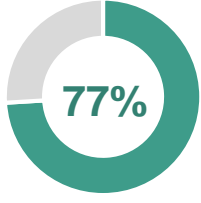
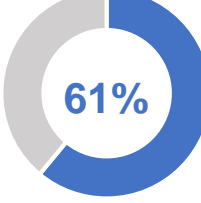
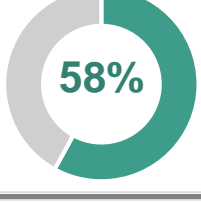
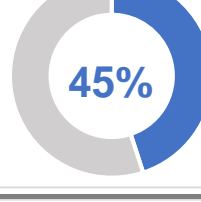
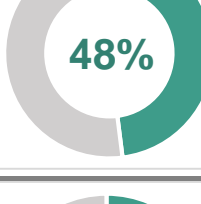
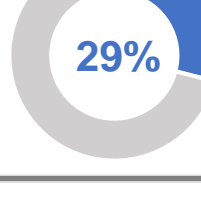
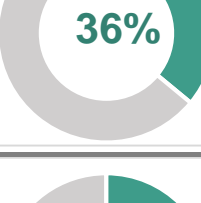
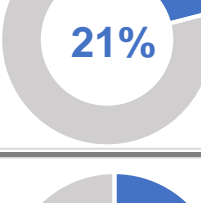
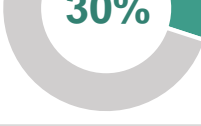
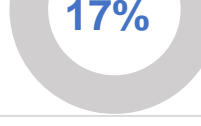
Scotland	In the last year I have...	UK
	Supported a charity	
	Donated money	
	Donated goods	
	Sponsored someone	
	Taken part in a campaign or signed a petition	
	Volunteered	

Figure 4 UK figures based on combined averages from New Philanthropy Capital's 2015 survey and the Charity Aid Foundations 2014 UK Giving Report – see Annex. Scottish data based on SCVO 2015 survey results.

#### 4. Trust levels are generally stable, but showing some downward trends

In Scotland public trust in charities does not appear to be as volatile as some UK surveys have suggested. More than half the respondents to the SCVO survey said there had been no change in their trust in charities over the previous year, and 16% of respondents said that their trust had increased.

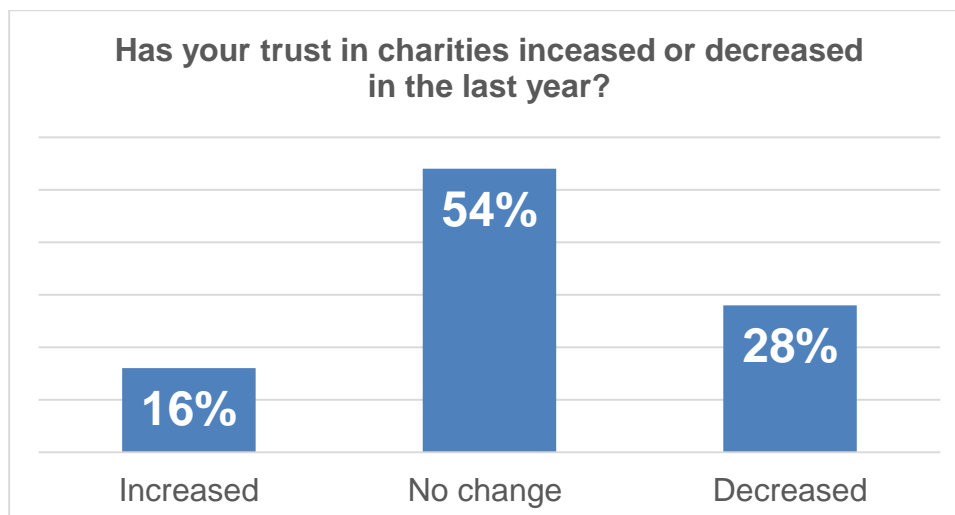


Figure 5 Increasing / decreasing trust in charities

However, there are some indicators that suggest future areas of concern:

- 28% of respondents said that they had lost trust in charities in the last year and the number of people reporting a drop in trust is growing, up from 11% in the Charity Commission's 2010 survey of people in England and Wales (figure 6 below).
- While the overall number of people giving charities a high score for trust (6 out of 10 or higher) has remained stable, there has been a continuing drop in the number giving top marks of 9/10 or 10/10 when compared with previous surveys of the Scottish public by OSCR.



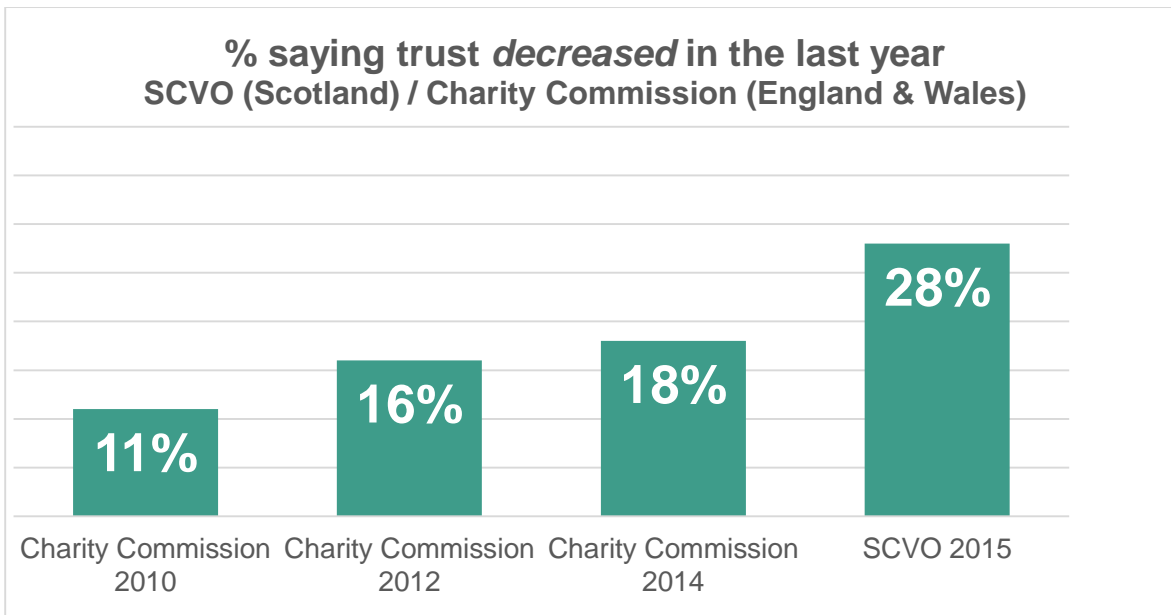


Figure 6 Percentage saying trust has decreased 2010-2015

## 5. Why are trust levels changing?

Only 15% of respondents reported having personal experiences which made them lose confidence in charities. However, 2 in every 5 respondents (41%) said that recent stories in the media have made them lose confidence in charities. This is almost double the figure (22%) found by the Charity Commission in 2014, and highlights the important role of the media in shaping public attitudes.

The age of respondents also appears to play a role, with younger people having more trust than older respondents. Respondents aged 55 and over were more likely to have had recent personal experiences that made them lose confidence (20% against an average 15%). They were also more likely to report losing confidence due to recent media stories (49% against an average of 41%).

## 6. Analysis

The charity sector in Scotland appears to have better weathered the storm of negative press and falling public trust than our counterparts south of the border. This resilience appears to be due to a complex range of factors. The two main factors appear to be people's strong personal connections to charity in Scotland and more positive media coverage.

- Strong personal connections to charities in Scotland

The survey results show that people in Scotland are more likely to give their time and money to charities (figure 8). Data from the charity regulator OSCR also shows that Scotland has more charities per head of population than the other UK regions, with a particularly active charity sector in rural areas. Scots are therefore more likely to have high personal connections with charities, which in turn has a direct positive impact on people's trust levels (see [section 2. Personal connection to charity increases trust](#)).

- More positive media coverage in Scotland

While a significant proportion of survey respondents (41%) have said that recent stories in the media made them lose confidence in charities, the degree to which those surveyed have lost confidence seems to have been relatively small (1% lower than figures reported by OSCR's in 2014). Therefore, there has been only a minor impact on trust in Scotland. To date, most of the negative press coverage has concerned charities perceived as being UK-wide, English or London-based, and so charities in Scotland may have been somewhat insulated. Some commentators have also suggested that the press and media in Scotland have been more supportive of charities than their UK counterparts.

## Looking forward

Whatever the reasons for trust in Scotland remaining high, both the Scottish charity regulator OSCR and the Charity Commission for England and Wales will be running their 2016 public trust surveys later this year, and we look forward to seeing how their findings compare.

## 7. Appendix - Data tables

<b>Q1 Thinking about how much trust and confidence you have in charities overall, on a scale of 0 to 10 where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, how much trust and confidence do you have in charities?</b>	
<i>Base: 1,028</i>	(%)
<b>10 (Trust them completely)</b>	6
<b>9</b>	5
<b>8</b>	21
<b>7</b>	23
<b>6</b>	12
<b>5</b>	18
<b>4</b>	4
<b>3</b>	3
<b>2</b>	3
<b>1</b>	*
<b>0 (Don't trust them at all)</b>	3
<b>Don't know</b>	2
<b>Refused</b>	*

<b>Q2 In the last year, have you had any involvement with any charity, either donating, fundraising or volunteering?</b>	
<i>Base: 1,028</i>	(%)
<b>Yes – I have donated money</b>	77
<b>Yes – I have bought goods/ cakes/ raffle tickets</b>	62
<b>Yes – I have donated goods</b>	58

Yes – I have sponsored someone	48
Yes – I have helped to fundraise	38
Yes – I have taken part in a campaign/signed petition	36
Yes – I have volunteered	30
No- none of these	11
Don't know/ remember	*
Refused	

<b>Q3 And in the last year have you or anyone in your household or close family accessed any of the following services provided by a charity?</b>			
	Yes	No	Don't know
<i>Base: 1,028</i>	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>Visited a charity-run museum, theatre or festival?</b>	30	68	2
<b>Visited a charity-run tourist attraction such as a zoo or nature reserve?</b>	36	62	2
<b>Attended a charity-run leisure facility or sports club?</b>	19	80	1
<b>Used a local community centre or village hall?</b>	47	52	*
<b>Accessed information or advice (in person or online) from a charity?</b>	31	68	1
<b>Received social care or health services from a charitable organisation?</b>	11	89	1
<b>Received financial or material support from a charity?</b>	7	93	*
<b>Attended or taken part in a charity-run social event, walk, concert, dance, comedy night, quiz or similar?</b>	52	48	*
<b>Attended a church or religious building or church-based event?</b>	43	57	*
<b>Any other service from a charity that is not mentioned?</b>	9	90	1

<b>Q4 And thinking about the charities whose services you have used - on a scale of 0 to 10, how much trust and confidence do you have in them, where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 that you don't trust them at all?</b>	
<i>Base: 1,028</i>	(%)
<b>10 (Trust them completely)</b>	23
<b>9</b>	14
<b>8</b>	22
<b>7</b>	15
<b>6</b>	4
<b>5</b>	11
<b>4</b>	1
<b>3</b>	1
<b>2</b>	1
<b>1</b>	*
<b>0 (Don't trust them at all)</b>	2
<b>Don't know</b>	5
<b>Refused</b>	*

<b>Q5 Has your trust in charities increased or decreased over the last year? Would you say it has...?</b>	
<i>Base: 1,028</i>	(%)
<b>Increased a lot</b>	6

Increased a little	10
Not changed	54
Decreased a little	19
Decreased a lot	9
Don't know/ remember	1
Refused	

<b>Q6 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</b>						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<i>Base: 1,028</i>	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>I feel confident donating to charity</b>	31	42	11	10	5	1
<b>Recent stories in the media have made me lose confidence in charities</b>	16	25	10	27	19	2
<b>Recent personal experiences have made me lose confidence in charities</b>	6	9	8	32	43	2
<b>Most charities are trustworthy and act in the public interest</b>	34	48	6	8	3	2
<b>I would like to be able to find out more about how charities are performing</b>	20	29	15	23	10	2
<b>There should be a way for members of the public to review charities they know about</b>	45	43	4	5	2	1

### Other survey data referred to in briefing

Commissioner	Year	Region	Method	Respondents	Link
OSCR	2014	Scotland	Online	1,001	<a href="http://www.oscr.org.uk/media/1871/2014-04-22_scottish_charity_surveys_2014_-_general_public-1.pdf">http://www.oscr.org.uk/media/1871/2014-04-22_scottish_charity_surveys_2014_-_general_public-1.pdf</a>
Charity Commission	2014	England & Wales	Telephone	1,163	<a href="https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/publications/1679/Public-Trust-and-Confidence-in-Charities-2014.aspx">https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/publications/1679/Public-Trust-and-Confidence-in-Charities-2014.aspx</a>
nfpSynergy	2015	UK-wide	Online	1,000	<a href="http://nfpsynergy.net/slidezone/trust-oct-15">http://nfpsynergy.net/slidezone/trust-oct-15</a>
NPC Jan 2014	2014	UK-wide	Telephone	1,000	<a href="http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/mind-the-gap/">http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/mind-the-gap/</a>
NPC Oct 2014	2014	UK-wide	Online	1,000	<a href="http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/matter-of-trust/">http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/matter-of-trust/</a>
CAF UK Giving	2014	UK-wide	Face to face	5,068	<a href="https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf-ukgiving2014">https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf-ukgiving2014</a>

CAF Under the Microscope	2015	UK-wide	Online	2,071	<a href="https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2015-publications/future-of-charities-in-britain">https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2015-publications/future-of-charities-in-britain</a>
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