

# Report on public trust and confidence in charities

Prepared by Cognisense on behalf of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

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# 1 Executive summary

## 1.1 Background

### 1.1.1 The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (the 'Commission') is a non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Communities (DfC). The Commission was established under the Charities Act (NI) 2008 (the Charities Act) and came into effect from 27 March 2009 under Commencement Order No.1. The body became operational from 1 June 2009 with the appointment of six part-time Charity Commissioners.

The Commission has a key role in regulation of the charitable sector in Northern Ireland. One of its statutory requirements under the Charities Act is to regulate charities, encourage transparency and, by doing so, to raise public trust and confidence in charities.

### 1.1.2 Research objectives

In November 2020, Cognisense was contracted by the Commission to conduct a survey of public trust and confidence in charities, the specific objectives of which were as follows:

- to measure current levels of public trust and confidence in the local charity sector and the Commission as regulator;
- to identify the factors and key drivers of public trust and confidence;
- to assess the impact, if any, of the Covid-19 emergency, the Court of Appeal ruling of 19 February 2020 (McKee & Others vs Charity Commission for Northern Ireland) and the approach of charities to safeguarding trust and confidence;
- to identify the priorities of stakeholders with regard to the charity sector; and
- to compare, where possible, results from this survey with benchmarking research conducted on behalf of the Commission in 2016 as well as with the following similar research conducted by other charity regulators:
  - Charity Commission for England & Wales, *Trust in Charities 2018*;
  - Scottish Charity Regulator, *Scottish Charity Survey 2018*; and
  - Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission (ACNC), *Public Trust and Confidence in Australian Charities 2017*.

### 1.1.3 Methodology

In order to meet the research objectives identified above in an efficient and safe manner, Cognisense administered an online survey with 1500 members of the Northern Ireland (NI) public. Quota controls based on the most recent NISRA population estimates were employed during fieldwork and corrective rim weighting

was applied during data analysis to ensure that the final sample was representative of the NI population in terms of age, sex, social class and area.

The questionnaire used for the online survey was developed in consultation with the Commission. To enable comparison with the 2016 benchmarking survey the same or similar wording was used for questions from which meaningful comparable analysis would be possible. Some open text questions were also included in order to gather verbatim responses for use in this report.

## 1.2 Trust and confidence in charities

### 1.2.1 Overall trust and confidence

Overall trust and confidence in charities was rated using a scale between zero and 10, where zero meant do not trust charities at all and 10 meant trust charities completely. As with the benchmarking research of 2016, ratings were grouped as follows:

- scores 8-10 indicate high levels of trust;
- scores 5-7 indicate medium levels of trust; and
- scores 0-4 indicate low levels of trust.

Around two in five (43%) members of the public had a high level of trust, a similar number (41%) had a medium level of trust and about one in seven (15%) had a low level of trust.

The mean score for overall trust and confidence in charities was 6.59, which in addition to being slightly higher than that recorded in 2016 (6.2), was also higher than the corresponding scores from recent research conducted on behalf of the charity regulators in England & Wales (5.5), Scotland (6.14) and Australia (6.2).

### 1.2.2 Supporting charities

More than four in five (84%) members of the public had supported a charity in the last six months, which is a decrease on the number (90%) who claimed to have done so in 2016. The main methods of supporting a charity were donating items to a charity shop or charity appeal (44%), donating online (30%) and making a one-off donation to a charity for a specific campaign.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the means by which charities were supported can perhaps be seen in the notable decreases in the number who donated money to a street collector (down to 24% from 51%), the number who signed up to a direct debit (down to 10% from 21%) and the number who had taken part in a charity event (down to 10% from 16%).

### 1.2.3 Factors influencing support of a charity

As in 2016, the cause that the charity represents was the main factor influencing the public's decision to support a charity, though the number who cited this reason decreased (down to 64% from 74%) when compared to the benchmarking survey.

There were very significant increases in the number who were influenced by awareness of the impact a charity has on the cause it represents (up to 49% from 24%), by personal trust of the charity (up to 45% from 11%) and by the fact that they may need to use the charity in future (up to 20% from 8%).

Almost two in five (39%) claimed that their decision to support a charity is influenced if they or someone they know has benefitted from the charity – although the inclusion of the words '*someone I know*' in the 2021 survey prevents a direct comparison with the statement used in the 2016 questionnaire (*I have benefitted from the use of a charity*), the difference between the figures (2021: 39%; 2016: 6%) is nonetheless striking.

### 1.2.4 How trust in charities compares to other organisations and professions

The public was asked to rate their level of trust and confidence in a number of organisations and professions via the same scale, detailed at 1.2.1, used to determine the level of trust and confidence in charities.

Doctors were by far the most trusted of the professions and organisations measured, with a high rating offered by nearly seven in ten (69%) members of the public. Positively, charities had the second largest number (43%) of high ratings, just ahead of the police service (42%) and small companies (37%).

If assessed by mean score, charities (6.59) were third on the list in terms of trust and confidence, with doctors (7.88) in first place and small companies (6.68) in second.

## 1.3 Drivers of overall trust in charities

### 1.3.1 Trust in specific aspects of charities' work

Using the same scale detailed at 1.2.1, the public was asked to rate their level of trust in specific aspects of charities' work. Approaching three in five (57%) had a high level of trust in charities to have a positive impact on the causes that they represent – a slight increase on the number who did so in 2016 (53%). More than half stated a high level of trust in charities with regards to raising funds/collecting donations, which is a significant increase (up to 53% from 44%) when compared to the benchmarking study.

In 2021, the public was also asked to rate the extent to which they trust charities to have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults, with half (50%) having offered a high rating in this regard.

### 1.3.2 Quality most likely to increase trust and confidence in a charity

As part of the 2021 survey, the public was asked to rank the following factors in the order in which they would influence trust and confidence in a charity:

- makes a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries;
- operates ethically and honestly in keeping with its stated values;
- is transparent and accountable in its reporting;
- spends its donations in line with its fundraising campaigns; and
- can demonstrate good governance and financial management.

Each option was ranked from 1-5, with 1 being the most likely to increase trust and confidence and 5 being the least likely to do so.

The quality most likely to increase trust and confidence in a charity was 'makes a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries', with approaching three in five (56%) members of the public having ranked this either first or second.

### 1.3.3 What is important to the public in terms of trust

Like in 2016, nearly nine in ten (87%) members of the public indicated that it is important to them that charities do what they say they will do, whilst a similar number (86%) rated it highly important that donations/funds raised by charities are used properly. The number who felt that it was very important that charities have a positive impact on the causes they represent decreased slightly (down to 81% from 85%) when compared to the benchmarking survey.

There were significant decreases when compared to the 2016 research in the number of respondents who gave a high rating of importance to the following:

- how charities raise their funds/donations - down to 55% from 70%;
- how open and transparent charities are about their activities - down to 72% from 83%;
- how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds - down to 74% from 84%; and
- that charities are well managed - down to 78% from 84%.

The importance assigned to these areas in the 2016 survey may have been inflated due to a number of fundraising scandals that had been highlighted in the media, in the months before that survey was conducted.

Almost three quarters (72%) suggested that it was highly important that charities have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults, which was a factor that was not assessed during the benchmarking research.

### 1.3.4 Most important factor when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland

In 2021, the public was asked to state which of the following factors is most important to them when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland:

- how open and transparent charities are about their activities;
- how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds;
- how charities raise their funds/collect donations;
- that they have a positive impact on the causes they represent;
- that they are well managed;
- that they have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults;
- that donations/funds raised by the charity are used properly; and
- that charities do what they say they will do.

By a considerable margin, the factor most likely to have been chosen as most important was 'that donations/funds raised by charities are used properly' (32%). The next most likely was that charities 'have a positive impact on the causes they represent' (18%), followed by 'how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds' (16%) and that 'charities do what they say they will do' (16%).

The factor least likely to have been chosen as most important when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland was 'how charities raise their funds/collect donations', with only a tiny proportion (2%) selecting this option.

### 1.3.5 Importance of transparency and reporting

As in 2016, the vast majority (89%) of the public agreed that charities should be transparent about how public donations are spent, though the number who strongly agreed increased significantly (up to 69% from 61%).

Overall, when compared to the benchmarking research, there was a slight decrease (down to 86% from 92%) in the number who felt that it is important that charities demonstrate how they benefit the public, whilst the number (34%) who agreed that they know where they can find out information about how charities are spending their money remained steady, as did the number (42%) who agreed that they know where they can find out more information about how charities are run.

### 1.3.6 Trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland over the past two years

One in ten (10%) members of the public stated that their trust and confidence in charities over the past two years had increased, with personal experience of using a charity (43%), the experiencing of someone they know using a charity (32%) and

witnessing the impact of a charity's work in their local area (39%) key in driving this increase.

Around one in twelve (13%) stated that their trust and confidence had decreased over the past two years, with media coverage about how charities spend donations (on salaries, bonuses, etc.) the main (52%) reason for this decline.

Three-quarters (75%) of the public reported that their level of trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland over the past two years had stayed the same.

## 1.4 Impact of familiarity, size and local service

### 1.4.1 Familiarity

Four in five (80%) members of the public agreed that they are more likely to trust a charity if they believe in what it is trying to do – a decrease on the number (86%) who agreed in 2016. There were also decreases in the number that agreed that they are more likely to trust a charity if they have personal experience of it (down to 70% from 85%) and the number who agreed that if they have heard of a charity they are more likely to trust it (down to 62% from 72%).

### 1.4.2 Size

About a third (35%) of the public agreed that they trust smaller charities more than big charities, which is a decrease on the number (47%) who felt this way during the 2016 research.

### 1.4.3 Local service

Locality was less influential in 2021, with the number who agreed that they trust charities more if they are based in Northern Ireland and the number who agreed that they trust charities more if they are providing services within their local community both decreasing (down to 41% from 48% and 60% from 70% respectively) when compared to the benchmarking survey.

## 1.5 Overall perceptions of charities

### 1.5.1 Conduct

Almost nine in ten (88%) members of the public agreed that it is important to them that charities are properly regulated; a very high level of agreement, but a decrease compared to the number (94%) who felt this way in 2016. Positively, there was a decrease in the number who agreed that they know very little about how charities are run (down to 49% from 59%).



Nearly three in five (59%) agreed that most charities are trustworthy, whilst the same number agreed that they trust charities to spend their funds appropriately, which was consistent with the results from the benchmarking survey.

### 1.5.2 Administrative expenditure and fundraising

When compared to 2016, the number who agreed that charities spend too much of their funds on salaries and administration decreased (down to 58% from 72%) as did the number who agreed that some of the fundraising methods used by charities make them uncomfortable (down to 45% from 66%) – though the latter decrease may be influenced by changes in the means of donation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, detailed at 1.2.2.

### 1.5.3 Use of a charity

Nearly two in five (43%) members of the public had themselves benefitted from a charity or knew someone else who had. In 2016, the public was asked if they themselves had benefitted from the use of a charity to which a fifth (20%) responded that they had. Although a direct comparison between the two surveys is not possible here, the difference between the figures is interesting.

Over a fifth (22%) of the public reported having used the services of a charity during the Covid-19 crisis.

## 1.6 Public understanding of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

### 1.6.1 Effective regulation of charities

Over three-fifths (61%) of the public felt that charities are regulated effectively in Northern Ireland, which is a notable increase when compared to the number (52%) who felt that way in 2016. This is also higher than the corresponding figure (55%) from the research conducted on behalf of the charity regulator for England & Wales that was mentioned earlier in the report. Positively, the number who believed that charities are regulated very effectively increased (up to 13% from 8%) from the benchmarking research.

### 1.6.2 Awareness and trust of the Commission

Half (50%) of the public had heard of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, which is a significant increase from the third (33%) who were aware of the organisation in 2016.

More than half (55%) of the public had a high level of trust and confidence in the Commission (rated using the same scale detailed at 1.2.1), which is a notable

increase on the number (36%) who felt that way during the benchmarking study. The mean score for 2021 reflects this increase, rising to 7.24 from 6.9 in 2016.

Awareness levels were similar to those recorded in the recent survey conducted for the regulator for England and Wales (52%) and significantly higher than the figure recorded in the recent survey for the Scottish Charity Regulator (33%) that were mentioned earlier in the report.

### 1.6.3 New awareness of the Commission

After being informed about the Commission, almost seven in ten (68%) members of the public felt that its existence has a positive impact on their level of trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland, which was a significant increase on the number (58%) who felt the same way during the benchmarking study.

## 1.7 Court of Appeal judgment

### 1.7.1 Awareness of the Court of Appeal judgment

The Commission was keen to assess awareness and public perception of the 19 February 2020 judgment of the Court of Appeal. Ruling in the case of *McKee & Others v Charity Commission for Northern Ireland*, the court upheld a legal challenge to the delegation of decision-making powers by the Commission to members of staff. The case addressed a technical point of law, namely that all Commission orders and decisions must be made by the Board of Commissioners or a committee to include Commissioners with delegated authority, rather than Commission staff following manuals approved by Commissioners. It is important to be aware that the judgment does not prevent any organisation, which is a charity in law, from operating as a charity.

A permanent solution is being sought from the Department for Communities. Meanwhile a temporary solution has been implemented and the Commission's work and oversight of the charity sector is continuing.

The Commission has published a legal update on its website that sets out the impact of this judgment.

Fewer than one in ten (9%) members of the public knew about the Court of Appeal judgment.

### 1.7.2 Impact of the Court of Appeal judgment

Those who were aware of the Court of Appeal judgment were informed of the following: *the Commission recognises that the impact of the judgment may create some confusion for charities. A temporary solution has been put in place and the Commission is working with partners, including the Department for Communities, to resolve the issues raised by the judgment and seek a preferred way forward. While a*

*permanent solution is being sought, the Commission's work and oversight of the charity sector is continuing. For example, while some Commission decisions may be delayed and the volume of decisions made has been temporarily reduced, work on registration applications, requests and queries is ongoing. Further information on this is available on the Commission's website.*

For seven in ten (70%) members of the public this information affected their trust and confidence in the Commission, with the majority (54%) feeling that it had a positive impact.

## 2 Background and methodology

### 2.1 The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (the 'Commission') is a non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Communities (DfC). The Commission was established under the Charities Act (NI) 2008 (the Charities Act) and came into effect from 27 March 2009 under Commencement Order No.1. The body became operational from 1 June 2009 with the appointment of six part-time Charity Commissioners.

The Charities Act, which was based on the Charities Acts 2006 and 1993 for England and Wales, introduced a new regulatory framework for the charitable sector in Northern Ireland. The previous framework did not provide for any form of local registration or annual reporting and only made limited provisions for enforcement generally. The main objective of the Charities Act is to introduce an integrated system of registration and regulation of registered charities. The aim of these changes will be to provide a structure and process through which charities can demonstrate their contribution to society, the public can be assured regarding how charities are spending any donations, and government can assist in the better governance of the charity sector.

The Commission has a key role in regulation of the charitable sector in Northern Ireland. One of its statutory requirements under the Charities Act is to regulate charities, encourage transparency and, by doing so, to raise public trust and confidence in charities.

The Commission's objectives are set out in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, the Corporate & Business Plan for 2020-2022 and the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) with DfC; details of the main objectives are as follows:

- **Public confidence objective:** to increase public trust and confidence in charities
- **Public benefit objective:** to promote awareness and understanding of the operation of the public benefit requirement;
- **Compliance objective:** to promote compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations in exercising control and management of the administration of their charities;
- **Charitable resources objective:** to promote the effective use of charitable resources;
- **Accountability objective:** to enhance the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries and the public; and
- **Delivery objective:** to manage the Commission as an effective and efficient non departmental public body.

## 2.2 Research background

To fulfil its remit the Commission must be able to understand what trust and confidence in charities looks like, identify factors that impact on trust and confidence, and chart changes in levels and drivers of trust and confidence over time. The findings of this research will be used to inform the effective delivery of the Commission's regulatory activities and engagement priorities and to benchmark against the findings of other charity regulators in the UK and internationally.

In 2016, an extensive piece of independent, external research was conducted which focussed on the public's attitude to charities, including what they knew about charity regulation and what influenced levels of trust and confidence in charities. (A copy of this research is available on the Research page of the Commission's website.)

Since the Commission's 2016 research a number of significant developments have occurred which may impact current perceptions of the charity sector. These include public concern regarding the handling of safeguarding issues by charities, introduction of the Fundraising Regulator, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Covid-19 emergency.

A significant development which may impact public perception of the Commission as charity regulator is the 19 February 2020 judgment of the Court of Appeal. Ruling in the case of *McKee & Others v Charity Commission for Northern Ireland*, the court upheld a legal challenge to the delegation of decision-making powers by the Commission to members of staff. The case addressed a technical point of law, namely that all Commission orders and decisions must be made by the Board of Commissioners or a committee to include Commissioners with delegated authority, rather than Commission staff following manuals approved by Commissioners. It is important to be aware that the judgment does not prevent any organisation, which is a charity in law, from operating as a charity.

A permanent solution is being sought from the Department for Communities. Meanwhile a temporary solution has been implemented and the Commission's work and oversight of the charity sector is continuing.

The Commission has published a legal update on its website that sets out the impact of this judgment.

## 2.3 Research objectives

In November 2020, Cognisense was contracted by the Commission to conduct a survey of public trust and confidence in charities, the specific objectives of which were as follows:

- to measure current levels of public trust and confidence in the local charity sector and the Commission as regulator;

- to identify the factors and key drivers of public trust and confidence;
- to assess the impact, if any, of the Covid-19 emergency, the Court of Appeal ruling of 19 February 2020 (McKee & Others vs Charity Commission for Northern Ireland) and the approach of charities to safeguarding trust and confidence;
- to identify the priorities of stakeholders with regard to the charity sector; and
- to compare, where possible, results from this survey with benchmarking research conducted on behalf of the Commission in 2016 as well as with the following similar research conducted by other charity regulators:
  - Charity Commission for England & Wales, *Trust in Charities 2018*;
  - Scottish Charity Regulator, *Scottish Charity Survey 2018, General Public, March Reporting*; and
  - Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission (ACNC), *Public Trust and Confidence in Australian Charities 2017*.

## 2.4 Methodology

In order to meet the research objectives identified above in an efficient and safe manner, Cognisense administered an online survey with 1500 members of the Northern Ireland (NI) public. Quota controls based on the most recent NISRA population estimates were employed during fieldwork and corrective rim weighting was applied during data analysis to ensure that the final sample was representative of the NI population in terms of age, sex, social class and area.

The questionnaire (detailed at Appendix) used for the online survey was developed in consultation with the Commission. To enable comparison with the 2016 benchmarking survey the same or similar wording was used for questions from which meaningful comparable analysis would be possible. Some open text questions were also included in order to gather verbatim responses for use in this report. Where quotations from such questions appear in this report the sex, age and social class of the person who made the comment has been cited.

All fieldwork was conducted between 18th January and 14th February 2021 and was carried out in accordance with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct.

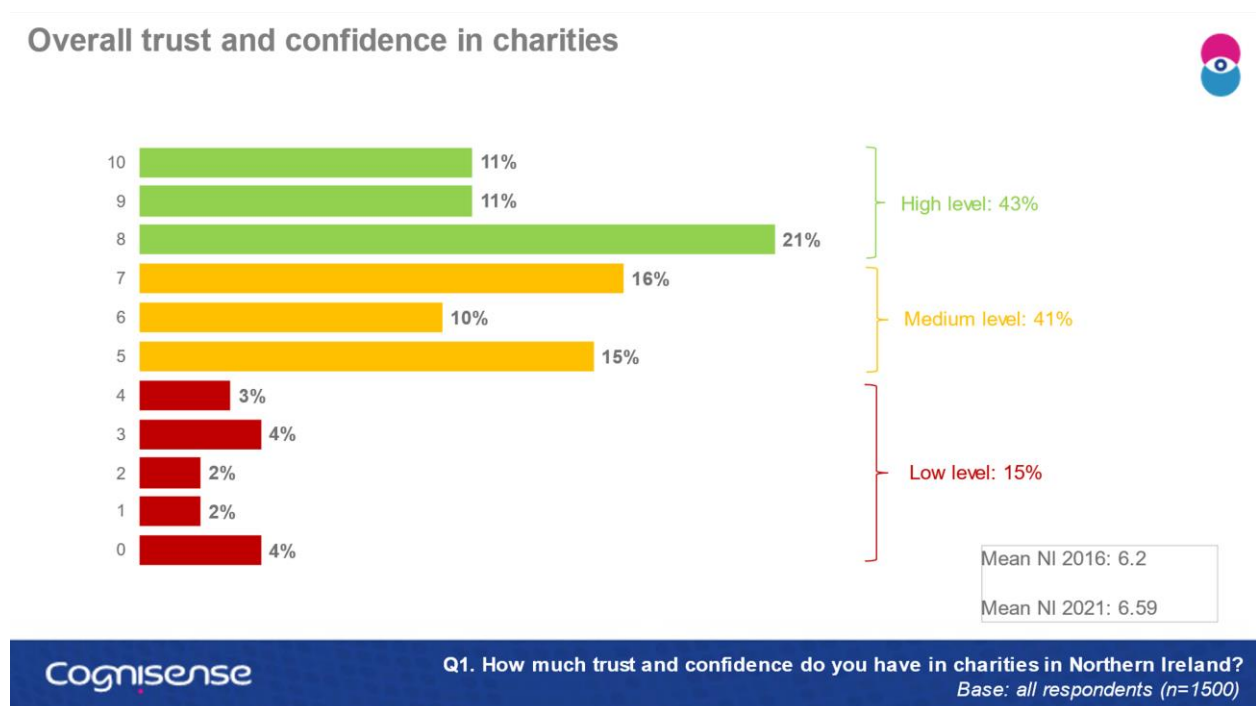
### 3 Trust and confidence in charities and other organisations

This section of the report provides detailed analysis of the following:

- the public’s overall trust and confidence in charities;
- how the public supports charities;
- factors influencing this support; and
- how the public’s trust and confidence in charities compares to other professions and organisations.

#### 3.1 Overall trust and confidence in charities

Overall trust and confidence in charities was rated using a scale between zero and 10, where zero means do not trust charities at all and 10 means trust charities completely. As with the benchmarking research of 2016, ratings were grouped as follows: scores 8-10 indicate high levels of trust, scores 5-7 medium levels of trust and 0-4 low levels of trust.



Around two in five (43%) members of the public had a high level of trust, a similar number (41%) had a medium level of trust and about one in seven (15%) had a low level of trust in charities.

Positively, the number who offered a score of eight, nine or ten (43%) was considerably higher than the number (30%) who did so in 2016.

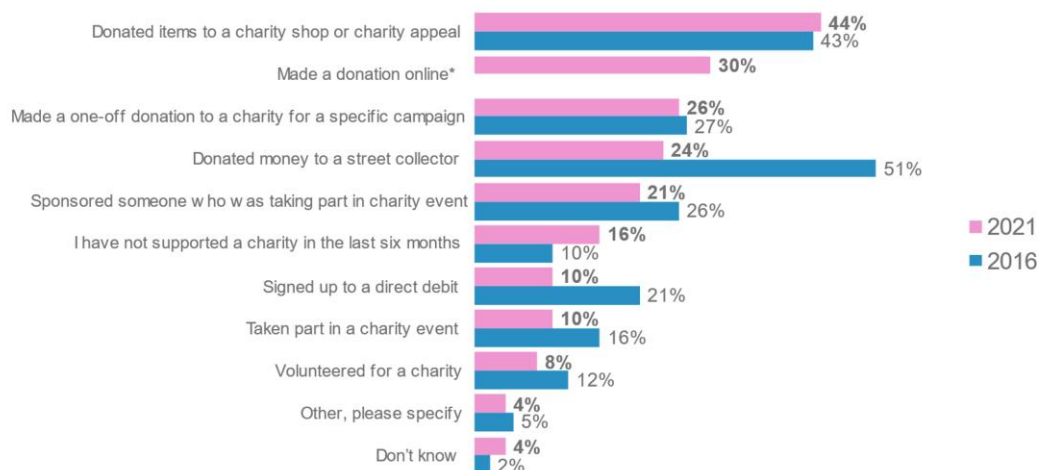
Those who had used the services of a charity or knew of someone else who had were much more likely to have rated their level of trust as high (53%) than those for whom this was not the case (35%).

Overall, the mean score for trust and confidence in charities was 6.59, which in addition to being slightly higher than that recorded in 2016, was also higher than the corresponding scores from the recent research mentioned earlier in this report that was conducted on behalf of the charity regulators in England & Wales (5.5), Scotland (6.14) and Australia (6.2).

### 3.2 Supporting charities

More than four in five (84%) members of the public had supported a charity in the last six months, which is a decrease on the number (90%) who claimed to have done so in 2016. The main methods of supporting a charity were donating items to a charity shop or charity appeal (44%), donating online (30%) and making a one-off donation to a charity for a specific campaign (26%), donating online (30%) and making a one-off donation to a charity for a specific campaign.

#### Support for charities over the last six months



**Cognisense** Q2d. In which, if any, of these ways have you supported a charity in the last six months?  
 Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016:n=1016)  
 \*Option was not included in the 2016 research questionnaire

Those who had benefitted from a charity or knew of someone else who had (93%) were significantly more likely to have supported a charity in the last six months than those for whom this was not the case (76%).

Females (51%) were considerably more likely than males (38%) to have donated items to a charity shop or charity appeal, whilst those aged 65+ (54%) were more



likely than those from other age groups to have done the same. Online donations were more common amongst ABC1s (35%) than those from a C2 (24%) or DE (26%) background, whilst females (33%) were more likely than males (26%) to have supported a charity in this way. Those aged 16-24 were significantly more likely than those from other age categories to have sponsored someone who was taking part in a charity event (28%), to have taken part in a charity event themselves (22%) and to have volunteered for a charity (21%) in the last six months.

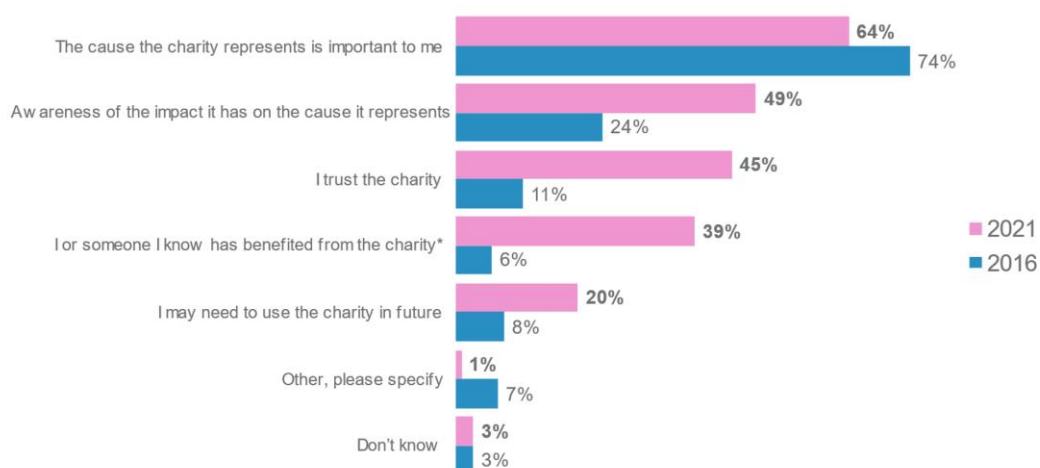
The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the means by which charities were supported can perhaps be seen in the notable decreases in the number who donated money to a street collector (down to 24% from 51%), the number who signed up to a direct debit (down to 10% from 21%) and the number who had taken part in a charity event (down to 10% from 16%).

### 3.3 Factors influencing support for charities

The cause that the charity represents is the most prominent factor influencing members of the public when deciding to support a charity, though the number who cited this reason decreased (down to 64% from 74%) when compared to the results from 2016.

There were very significant increases in the number who were influenced by awareness of the impact a charity has on the cause it represents (up to 49% from 24%) and by personal trust (up to 45% from 11%) of the charity.

#### Factors which influence decision to support a charity



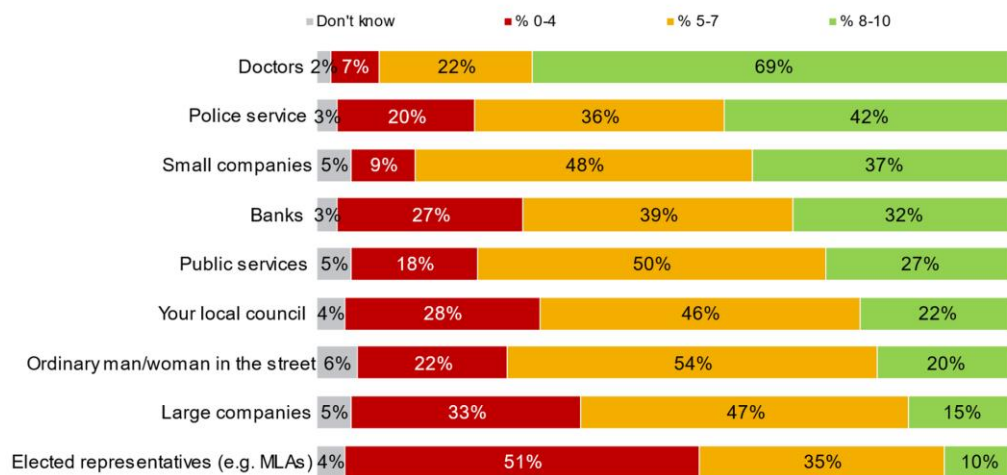
Almost two in five (39%) claimed that their decision to support a charity is influenced if they or someone they know has benefitted from the charity – although a direct comparison with the benchmarking research is not possible as the statement wording in 2016 was ‘*I have benefitted from the use of a charity*’, the difference between the figures recorded (2021: 39%; 2016: 6%) is striking, nonetheless.

There was a marked increase (up to 20% from 8%) in the number who stated that the fact that they may need to use the charity in future influenced their decision to support it.

### 3.4 How trust in charities compares to other organisations and professions

Overall trust and confidence in other organisations and professions was rated using the same scale, detailed at 3.1, that was used to assess overall trust and confidence in charities, with a mean score out of ten calculated for comparative purposes.

#### Extent of trust in other organisations and professions



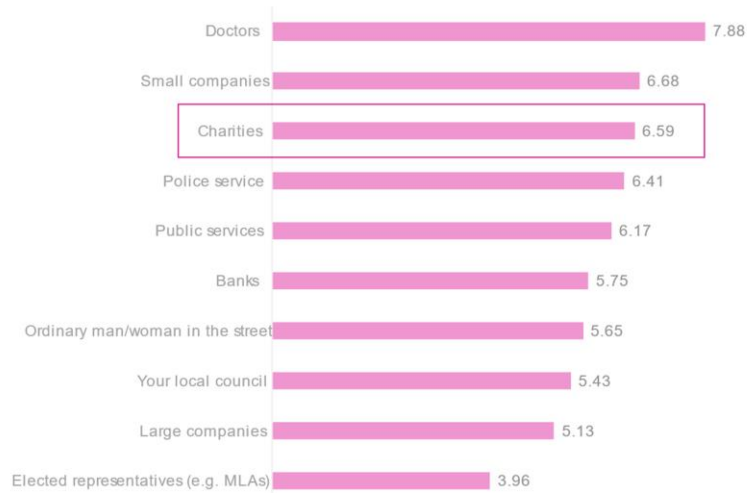
Cognisense

Q4. On a scale of 0-10, where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, please tell me how much trust and confidence you have in ...  
 Base: all respondents (n=1500)

Doctors were by far the most trusted of the professions and organisations measured, with a high rating offered by nearly seven in ten (69%) members of the public. Those aged 65+ (86%) were considerably more likely to have offered a score of 8, 9 or 10 for doctors than any other age group.

As referenced earlier in the report, charities had the second largest number (43%) of high ratings, placing them just ahead of the police service (42%) and small companies (37%).

### Extent of trust in other organisations and professions: mean comparisons



Cognisense

Q4. On a scale of 0-10, where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, please tell me how much trust and confidence you have in ...  
Base: all respondents (n=1500)

If assessed by mean score, charities (6.59) were third on the list in terms of trust and confidence, with doctors (7.88) in first place and small companies (6.68) in second.

Elected representatives had a mean score (3.96) that was significantly lower than that of every other organisation or profession measured.

## 4 Drivers of overall trust in charities

This section of the report provides detailed analysis of the following:

- trust in specific aspects of charities' work;
- quality most likely to increase trust in a charity;
- factors important when deciding to trust charities in Northern Ireland;
- most important factor when deciding to trust charities in Northern Ireland;
- importance of transparency and reporting; and
- changes to trust and confidence in charities over the past two years.

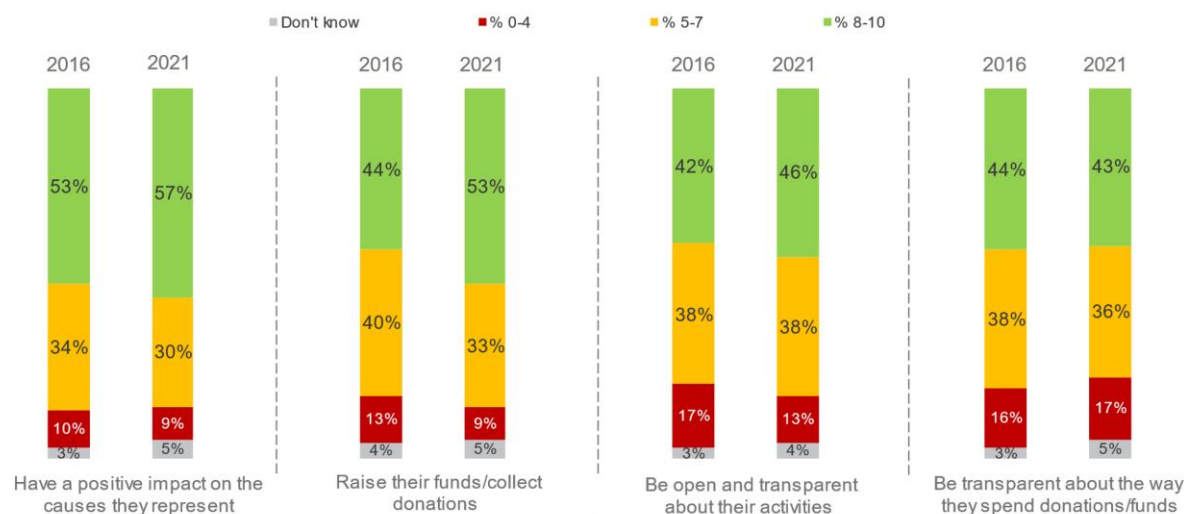
### 4.1 Trust in specific aspects of charities' work

As in the 2016 benchmarking research, the public was asked to use the zero to 10 scale detailed previously at 3.1, to rate their trust and confidence in charities to do the following:

- have a positive impact on the causes they represent;
- raise their funds/collect donations;
- be open and transparent about their activities;
- be transparent about the way they spend donations/funds;
- be well managed;
- use donations/funds raised by the charity properly; and
- do what they say they will do.

In 2021, the public was also asked the extent to which they trust charities to *have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults*.

## Extent of trust that charities fulfil certain roles



Cognisense

Q3d. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is do not trust them at all and 10 is trust them completely, to what extent would you trust charities in Northern Ireland to ...?

Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

Approaching six in ten (57%) had a high level of trust in charities to have a positive impact on the causes that they represent – a slight increase on the number who did so in 2016 (53%).

“Because I can see in my own community what Northern Ireland charities are doing to help.” Female, 45-64, E

More than half (53%) stated a high level of trust in charities with regards to raising funds/collecting donations, which is a significant increase (up to 53% from 44%) when compared to the benchmarking study.

“I have confidence that most charities in NI are raising donations lawfully and in a respectful and respected manner.” Female, 25-44, C2

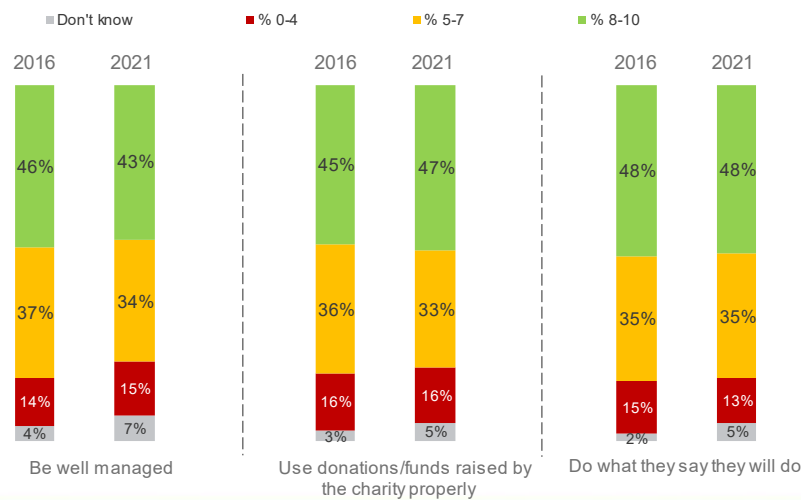
There was a slight increase in the number (up to 46% from 42%) who had a high level of trust in charities to be open and transparent about their activities.

“I think nowadays there is pressure on charities to be open and transparent about their funding and their activities. I think there’s more accountability, especially given the current stresses charities are facing.” Female, 25-44, C1

The number (43%) who trusted charities to be transparent about the way they spend donations and funds remained steady with the results from 2016.

“ I feel as if charities in Northern Ireland tend to be showing the community how they are working to help others and using their funds. ” Male, 18-24, B

### Extent of trust that charities fulfil certain roles



**Cognisense** Q3d. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is do not trust them at all and 10 is trust them completely, to what extent would you trust charities in Northern Ireland to ...? Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

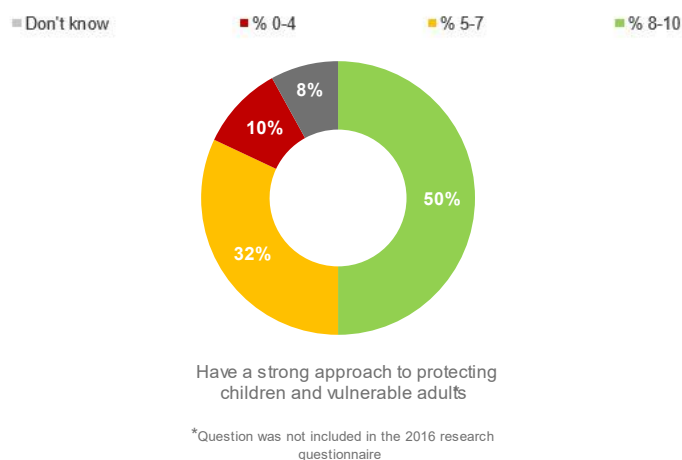
The numbers who had a high level of trust in charities to be well managed (43%), to use donations/funds properly (47%) and do what they say they will do (48%) remained consistent with the benchmarking survey.

“ They have to be well managed to ensure the best quality service as there are so many elements involved in running a charity. ” Female, 25-44, C1

“ I think most charities publish reports showing what they spend their funds on, so it is easy to check proper usage. ” Male, 45-64, C1

“ I trust that NI charities will do what they claim to do, otherwise they would not be permitted to operate. ” Male, 45-64, B

## Extent of trust that charities fulfil certain roles



Cognisense

Q3d. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is do not trust them at all and 10 is trust them completely, to what extent would you trust charities in Northern Ireland to ...?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500)

Half (50%) of the public had a high level of trust in charities to have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults.

*“There are so many policies now days on the protection of vulnerable people, children and personal data, so I expect this sort of protection.”* Female, 25-44, E

*“Scandals have rocked the charity sector over the years, from child abuse to bullying to misogyny. I believe charities know we expect better and would strive to live by a set of values that includes a culture of zero-tolerance for the aforementioned behaviour.”* Female, 25-44, C1

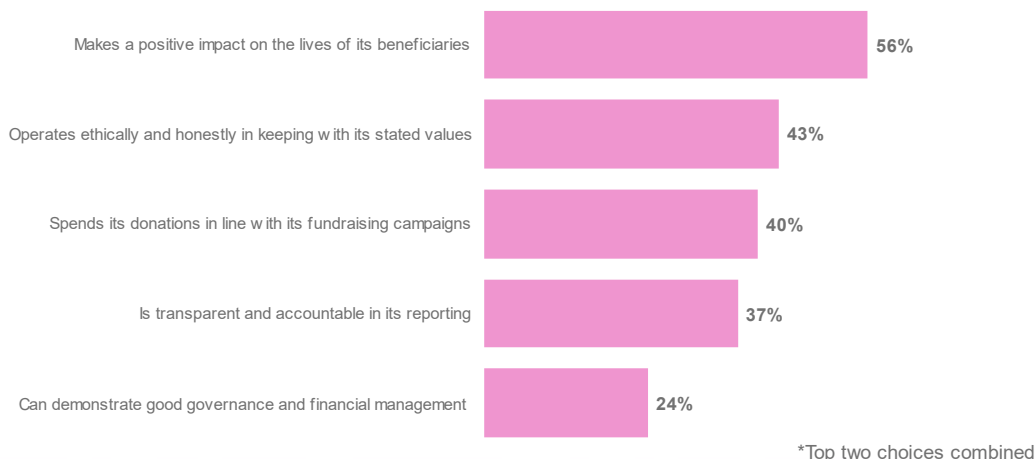
## 4.2 Quality most likely to increase trust and confidence in a charity

In 2021, the public was asked to rank the following factors in the order in which they would influence trust and confidence in a charity:

- makes a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries;
- operates ethically and honestly in keeping with its stated values;
- is transparent and accountable in its reporting;
- spends its donations in line with its fundraising campaigns; and
- can demonstrate good governance and financial management.

Each option was ranked from 1-5, with 1 being the most likely to increase trust and confidence and 5 being the least likely to do so.

### Quality most likely to increase trust and confidence in a charity\*



**Cognisense** Q3g. From the following list, please rank each of the following qualities, in order of which is most likely to increase your trust and confidence in a given charity to which is least likely to do so. Base: all respondents (n=1500)

The quality most likely to increase trust and confidence in a charity was ‘makes a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries’, with approaching three in five (56%) members of the public having ranked this either first or second.

“If people see that the charities are being honest and making a difference to peoples’ lives then it inspires people to donate.” Male, 25-44, C1

“If you can actually see good being done from the donations you have given you know you can put your trust in them to do the right thing.” Female, 18-24, C2

The next most likely quality to increase trust was ‘operating ethically and honestly in keeping with its stated values’ (43%), followed by ‘spends its donations in line with its fundraising campaigns’ (40%).

“Because if they operate in an ethical and honest manner in keeping with stated values, then everything else will be done correctly.” Male, 65+, B



*“This is the reason that the charities exist, people do not want to give to charities if the donations are used differently to what they say they’re for.”* Male, 65+, C2

‘Transparent and accountable in its reporting’ (37%) was ranked next before, finally, ‘can demonstrate good governance and financial management’ (24%).

*“This will ensure that the public can see where the money is going and the charity can be held to account if it is misappropriating the funds.”* Male, 45-64, D

*“To me this means all the proper controls are in place for each stage of the Charity’s activities. They can be properly monitored and audited. All channels of distribution of money, time, decision making, etc. are clearly defined and are robust in being scrutinized.”* Female, 65+, C1

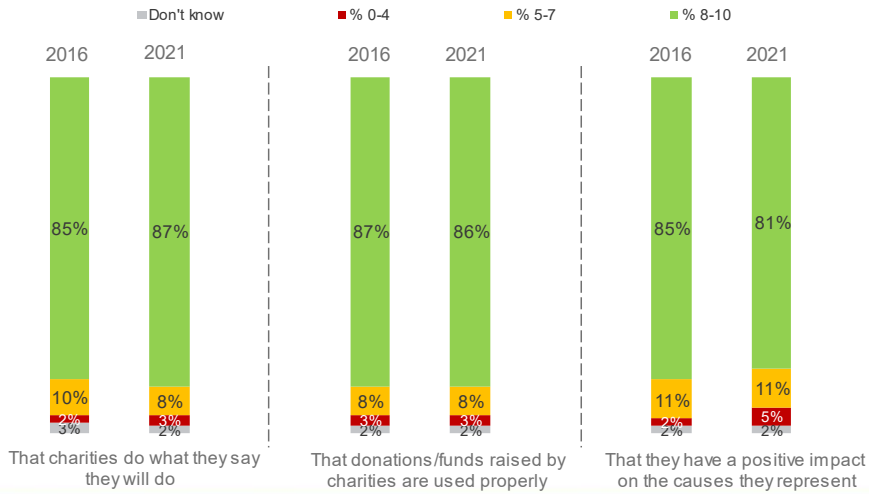
### 4.3 Factors important when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland

Consistent with the benchmarking research, the public was asked to use the zero to 10 scale detailed previously at 3.1, to rate how important each of the following factors are when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland:

- that charities do what they say they will do;
- that donations/funds raised by charities are used properly;
- that they have a positive impact on the causes they represent;
- how charities raise their funds/collect donations;
- how open and transparent charities are about their activities;
- how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds; and
- that charities are well managed.

In 2021, the public was also asked the extent to which they trust charities to *have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults.*

## Factors important when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland

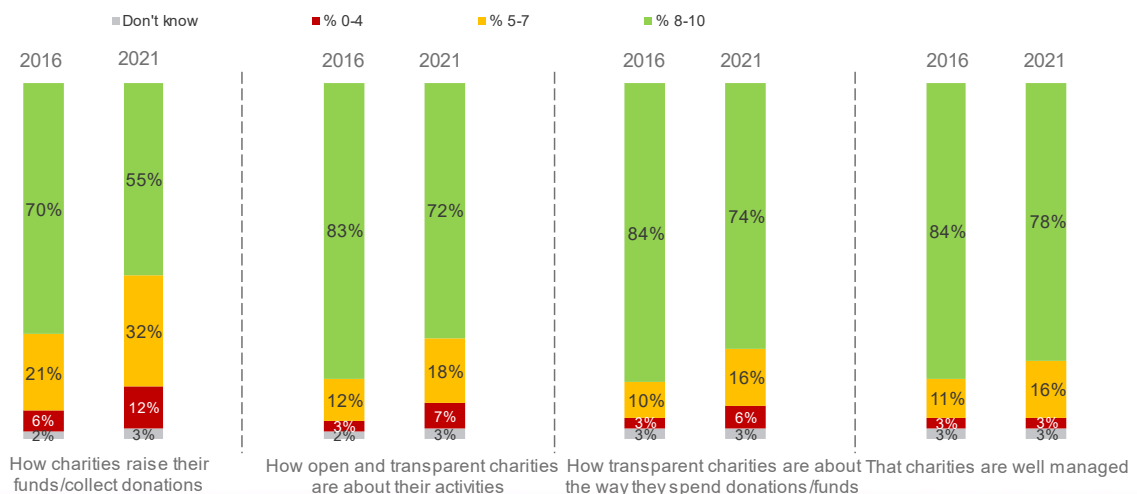


Cognisense

Q3. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is very important, how important or unimportant are each of these factors to you when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

As in 2016, nearly nine in ten (87%) members of the public indicated that it is important to them that charities do what they say they will do, whilst a similar number (86%) rated as highly important that donations/funds raised by charities are used properly. The number who felt that it was very important that charities have a positive impact on the causes they represent decreased slightly (down to 81% from 85%) when compared to the benchmarking research.

## Factors important when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland



Cognisense

Q3. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is very important, how important or unimportant are each of these factors to you when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

There were significant decreases when compared to the 2016 research in the number of respondents who gave a high rating of importance to the following:

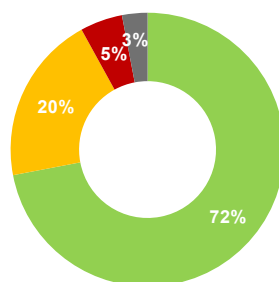
- how charities raise their funds/donations - down to 55% from 70%;
- how open and transparent charities are about their activities - down to 72% from 83%;
- how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds - down to 74% from 84%; and
- that charities are well managed - down to 78% from 84%.

The importance assigned to these areas in the 2016 survey may have been inflated due to a number of fundraising scandals that had been highlighted in the media, in the months before that survey was conducted.

### Extent of trust that charities fulfil certain roles



■ Don't know   ■ % 0-4   ■ % 5-7   ■ % 8-10



Have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults

\*Question was not included in the 2016 research questionnaire

Cognisense

Q3d. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is do not trust them at all and 10 is trust them completely, to what extent would you trust charities in Northern Ireland to ...?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n= 1500)

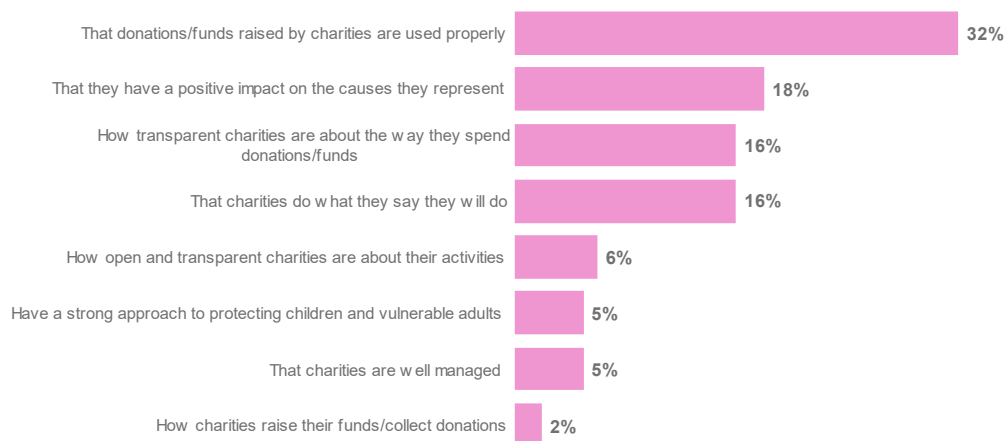
Almost three-quarters (72%) suggested that it was highly important that charities have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults, which was a factor that was not assessed during the 2016 research.

## 4.4 Most important factor when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland

In 2021, the public was asked to state which of the following factors is most important to them when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland:

- how open and transparent charities are about their activities;
- how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds;
- how charities raise their funds/collect donations;
- that they have a positive impact on the causes they represent;
- that they are well managed;
- that donations/funds raised by the charity are used properly; and
- that charities do what they say they will do.

## Most important factor when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland



Cognisense

Q3b. Of the following, which factor is most important to you when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland?  
Base: all respondents (n=1500)

By a considerable margin, the factor most likely to have been chosen as most important was ‘that donations/funds raised by charities are used properly’ (32%).

“If people are prepared to donate their hard-earned cash, then the minimum I expect the charity to do is spend it wisely and to the best benefit of the recipients. This is even more important in the current pandemic.” Female, 65+, C1

“If they do not use the funds properly then it’s like fraud and affects my trust in them as an organisation.” Female, 45-64, C1

“The charities have a promise with the public whom they ask for support - they must be able to fulfil the public trust ... and do what they have promised their donators.” Male, 25-44, C1

The next factor most likely to have been chosen was that charities 'have a positive impact on the causes they represent' (18%), followed by 'how transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds' (16%) and that 'charities do what they say they will do' (16%).

*“You are more likely to donate to a charity if you can see that the money you are donating is actually helping the charity do good work. You wouldn't be as quick to donate to a charity that doesn't seem to be having a positive impact from your donations.”* Female, 18-24, C2

*“In order to donate to a charity, I need to be able to trust that charity. The more open and transparent that charity is, the more I'm able to trust them.”* Female, 45-64, C1

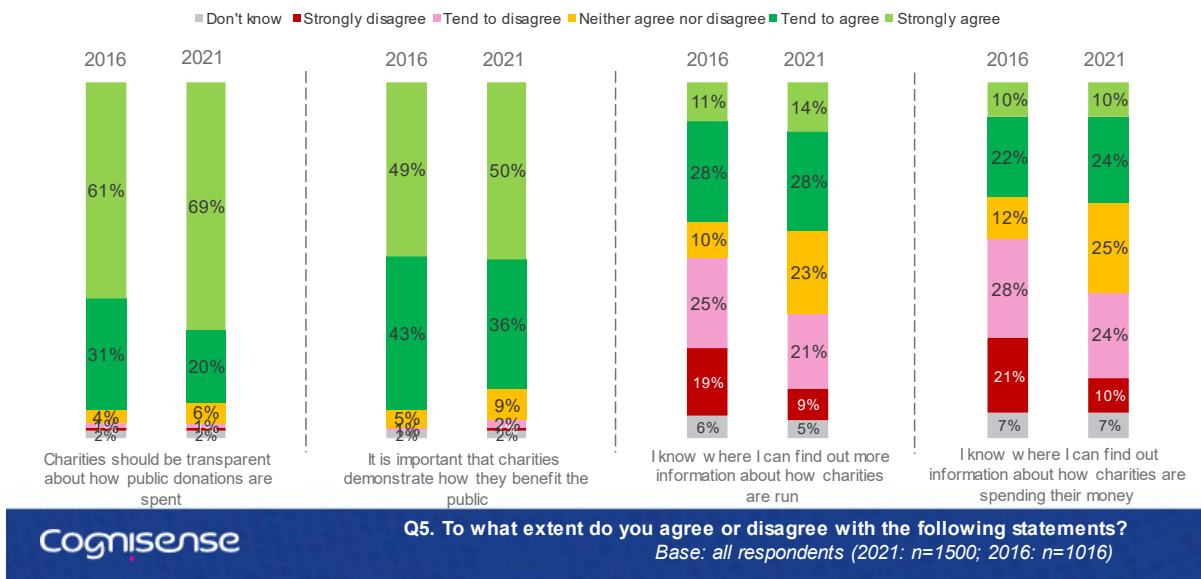
*“If you are donating to/supporting a charity it is usually because you care about the cause, you trust what you donate will reach and help the people you want it to/are being told it will help. It is important that this happens or it defeats the purpose of supporting the charity in the first place, the money that you donated could have been used elsewhere for the correct purposes.”* Female, 18-24, C1

The factor least likely to have been chosen as most important when deciding whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland was 'how charities raise their funds/collect donations', with only a tiny proportion (2%) selecting this option.

## 4.5 Importance of transparency and reporting

As in 2016, the vast majority of the public (89%) agreed that charities should be transparent about how public donations are spent, though the number who agreed strongly increased significantly (up to 69% from 61%).

## General attitudes towards charities regarding transparency

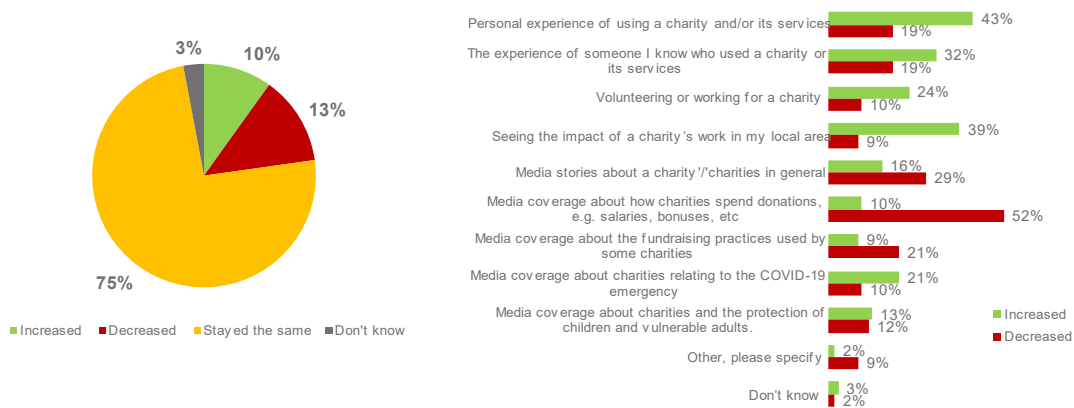


Overall, when compared to the benchmarking research, there was a slight decrease (down to 86% from 92%) in the number who felt that it is important that charities demonstrate how they benefit the public, whilst the number (34%) who agreed that they know where they can find out information about how charities are spending their money remained steady, as did the number (42%) who agreed that they know where they can find out more information about how charities are run.

### 4.6 Trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland over the past two years

One in ten (10%) members of the public stated that their trust and confidence in charities over the past two years had increased, with personal experience of using a charity (43%), the experiencing of someone they know using a charity (32%) and witnessing the impact of a charity's work in their local area (39%) key in driving this increase.

## Change in trust and confidence in charities over the past two years



**Cognisense** Q2. Over the past two years, has your trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland increased, decreased or stayed the same? Base: all respondents (n=1500)  
 Q2b. Why do you think your trust and confidence in charities has increased/decreased/stayed the same? Base: all increased (n=161); all decreased (n=177)

Around one in twelve (13%) stated that their trust and confidence had decreased over the past two years, with media coverage about how charities spend donations (on salaries, bonuses, etc.) the main (52%) reason for this decline.

*“Recently in N.I. there have been high profile cases of senior executives having their hand in the till. Also, vast swathes of donations never do the work they are intended to do but are paid out in sky high salaries to staff and CEOs.”*  
 Male, 65+, B

*“Too often funds/donations are used to pay staff members high salaries rather than benefitting those most in need.”* Male, 45-64, C1

*“Because a lot of charities will award staff high salaries and spend money on offices etc. before they will help people for which money was donated in the first place.”*  
 Female, 25-44, B

Three-quarters (75%) of the public reported that their level of trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland over the past two years had stayed the same.

## 5 Impact of familiarity, size and local service

This section of the report provides detailed analysis of the impact of familiarity, size and local service on likelihood to trust a charity.

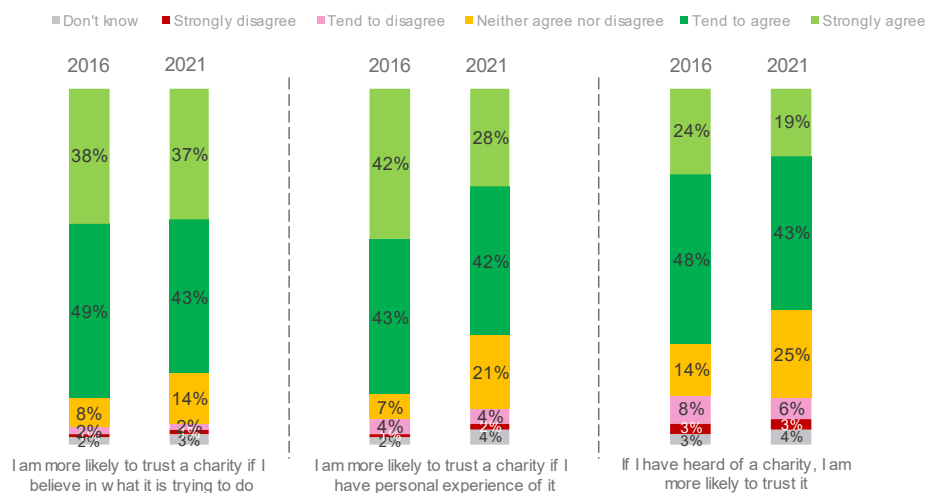
### 5.1 Impact of familiarity, size and local service

Four in five (80%) members of the public agreed that they are more likely to trust a charity if they believe in what it is trying to do – a decrease on the number (87%) who agreed in 2016.

“If the charity supports a cause that I am passionate about I tend to agree with their values and I am more likely to trust in them.” Male, 45-64, D

“If my values align with them, then I’d be less concerned about my donations going to things I wouldn’t want them going towards.” Male, 25-44, C2

#### General attitudes towards charities regarding familiarity



Cognisense

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

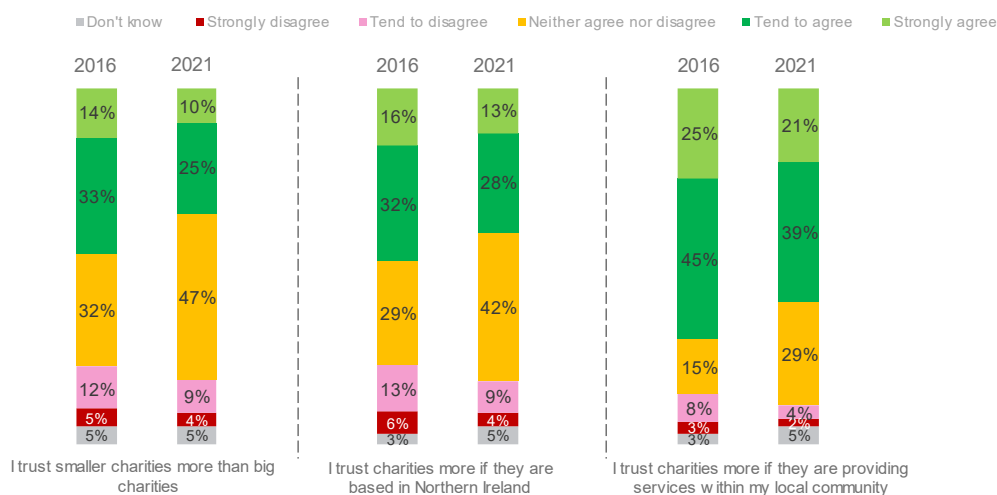
There were also decreases in the number that agreed that they are more likely to trust a charity if they have personal experience of it (down to 70% from 85%) and the number who agreed that if they have heard of a charity, they are more likely to trust it (down to 62% from 72%).



“It is personal experience which gives a better insight into the performance of a charitable organisation.” Male, 65+, B

“If it is a long running charity it is likely to be well run & respected.” Female, 25-44, C1

### General attitudes towards charities regarding size and local service



**Cognisense** Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

About a third (35%) of the public agreed that they trust smaller charities more than big charities, which is a decrease on the number (47%) who felt this way during the 2016 study.

“Because the bigger the charity the more likely the money gets a chance to disappear i.e., admin, wages, more chiefs at the top more wages to be paid out.” Female, 45-64, E

Locality was less influential in 2021, with the number who agreed that they trust charities more if they are based in Northern Ireland and the number who agreed that they trust charities more if they are providing services within their local community both decreasing (down to 41% from 48% and 60% from 70% respectively) when compared to the benchmarking research.

“Just because they are based in Northern Ireland does not mean that they are any more trustworthy than any other charity.”

Female, 65+, C1

*“ I don't mind where the charity is based so long as it does some good. ”*

Female, 18-24, B

*“ I think there are many charities all over the world that do good work, not just here in Northern Ireland. I trust charities all over if they prove that can do good work. ”* Male, 25-44, C2

*“ It does not make them any more trustworthy simply because they operate in my community. ”* Male, 45-64, C2

## 6 Overall perceptions of charities

This section of the report provides detailed analysis of the following:

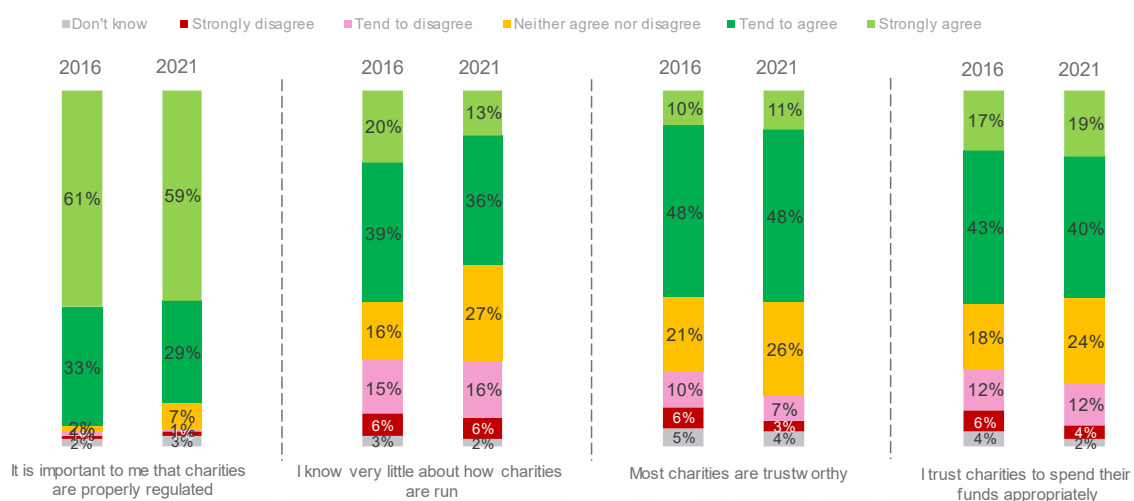
- general attitudes toward charities' conduct;
- general attitudes towards charities' administrative expenditure and fundraising;
- extent to which the public have benefitted from charities; and
- extent to which the public used charities during the Covid-19 crisis;

### 6.1 Conduct

Almost nine in ten (88%) members of the public agreed that it is important to them that charities are properly regulated. While this is a very high level of agreement, it is a marginal decrease compared to the number (94%) who agreed in 2016. Regarding strength of agreement, males (62%) were more likely to strongly agree than females (55%), as were those over 65+ (70%) compared to younger age groups, and ABC1s (62%) compared to those from other socio-economic backgrounds.

*“Charities generally handle large amounts of donors’ money and it is important that those donors can trust the charity to do good with that money. Regulators can help ensure that this is the case.”* Female, 45-64, A

#### General attitudes towards charities regarding conduct



Cognisense

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

Positively, there was a decrease in the number who agreed that they know very little about how charities are run (down to 49% from 59%).

*“Because I make it a point of finding out as much about the charity as I possibly can, before making a donation.”* Male, 65+, B

*“Because anyone can research a charity and obtain information.”*  
Female, 45-64, C1

Nearly three in five (59%) agreed that most charities are trustworthy, with agreement higher amongst those who had used a charity during the Covid-19 (67%) crisis than those who had not done so (57%). Likewise amongst those who had used a charity (68%) or knew of someone else who had, compared to those for whom this is not the case (54%).

*“Most have secure websites which show the impact the charity creates.”*  
Male, 18-24, C1

Almost three-fifths (59%) agreed that they trust charities to spend their funds appropriately, which was consistent with the results from the benchmarking survey. Females (63%) were more likely to agree than males (54%), as were those who had used a charity during the Covid-19 pandemic (70%) compared to those who had not done so (55%). Agreement was higher amongst those who had used a charity (67%) or knew of someone else who had compared to those for whom this was not the case (52%)

*“They are strictly regulated so I feel inappropriately spending funds would be the exception.”* Female, 25-44, A

## 6.2 Administrative expenditure and fundraising

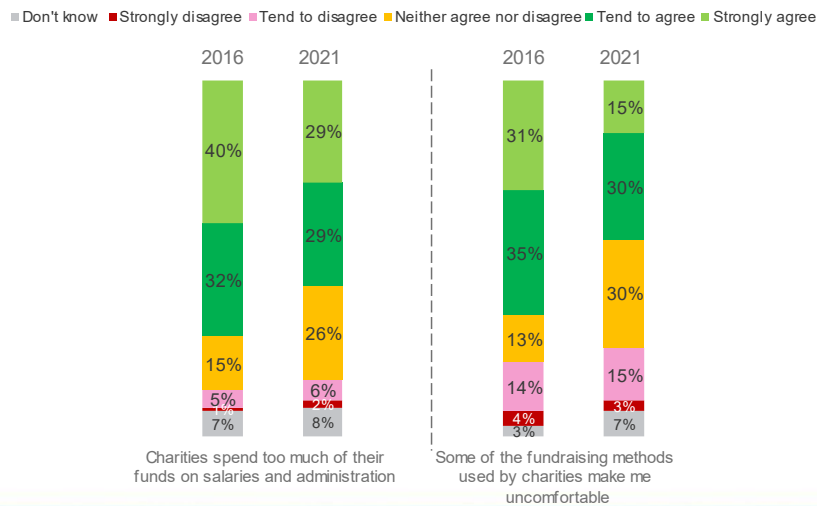
When compared to 2016, the proportion of the public who agreed that charities spend too much of their funds on salaries and administration decreased (down to 58% from 72%). However, this remains a very emotive issue.

*“The stories in the news of CEOs of charities earning way more than they should.”*  
Female. 25-44, C1

*“The salaries of some charity senior operatives are well above what seems a*

reasonable income and put beside the language of the fundraising campaign they sometimes seem obscene.” Male, 65+, C1

### General attitudes towards charities regarding administration and expenditure



**Cognisense** Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
 Base: all respondents (2021: n=1500; 2016: n=1016)

There was also a decrease in the number who agreed that some of the fundraising methods used by charities make them uncomfortable (down to 45% from 66%) – although the latter decrease may be influenced by changes in the means of donation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (see 3.2). In spite of this decrease there remains strong feelings on this issue:

“I hate being doorstepped. Generally, if you are not prepared to sign up there and then a guilt trip ensues. Older people can feel pressure to sign up”

Female, 45-64, C1

“I don't like being badgered by phone or email to increase donations. I don't like cold calling on my doorstep.” Male, 45-64, A

“Hate with a passion being stopped in the street and feeling forced to sign a direct debit there and then. I avoid those people and do not knowingly donate to charities

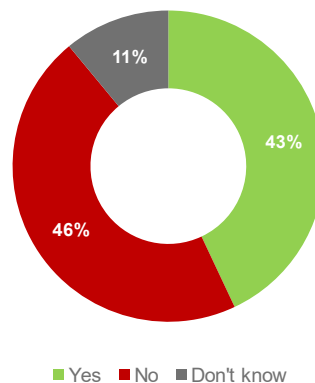
*that use that strategy. I also strongly dislike non-stop written communications asking for money using tactics that make the recipient feel guilty if they don't donate. There is also a big question mark about the integrity of a charity that allows the sale of its donors details to other charities or agencies that charities use to raise funds.*”

Female, 45-64, C2

### 6.3 Extent of benefitting from charities

Nearly two in five (43%) members of the public had benefitted from a charity or knew of someone else who had done so. In 2016, the public was asked if they themselves had benefitted from the use of a charity to which a fifth (20%) responded that they had. Although a direct comparison between the two surveys is not possible here, the difference between the figures is nonetheless interesting.

Extent of benefitting from charities



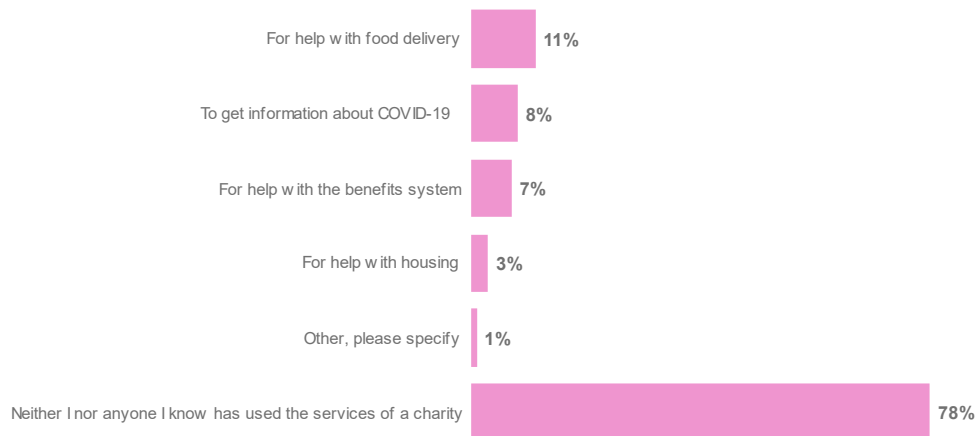
**Cognisense** Q6. Have you or anyone you know ever benefitted from or used the services of a charity?  
Base: all respondents (n=1500)

Females (47%) were more likely than males (39%) to have stated that they have benefitted from a charity or knew of someone who had, whilst those aged 65+ (33%) were significantly less likely than those from the other age groups to have done the same.

## 6.4 Use of a charity during the Covid-19 crisis

Over a fifth (22%) of the public had used the services of a charity during the Covid-19 crisis, with those from the 16-24 (35%) and 25-34 (39%) age groups significantly more likely than older members of the public to have done so.

### Use of a charity during the Covid-19 crisis



Cognisense

Q16. During the COVID-19 crisis, have you, or anyone you know, used the following services of a charity in any of the following ways?  
Base: all respondents (n=1500)

Males (10%) were slightly more likely than females (6%) to have used a charity to get information about Covid-19, whilst those from the DE category (11%) were more likely than those from other socio-economic backgrounds to have used a charity for help with the benefits system.

## 7 Public understanding of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

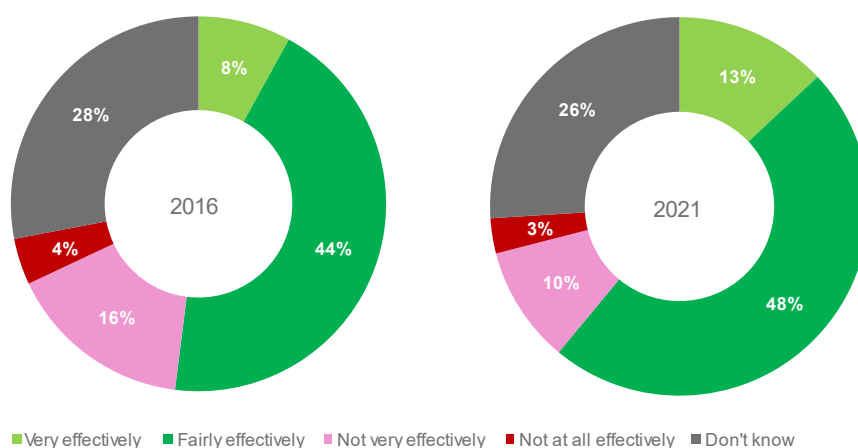
This section of the report provides detailed analysis of the following:

- perceived effectiveness of charity regulation in Northern Ireland;
- knowledge of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland;
- the level of trust and confidence in the Commission;
- the impact of awareness of the Commission on trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland;
- importance of transparency and reporting; and
- trust and confidence in charities over the past two years.

### 7.1 Effectiveness of charity regulation in Northern Ireland

Over three-fifths (61%) of the public felt that charities are regulated effectively in Northern Ireland, which is a notable increase when compared to the number (52%) who felt this way in 2016 and is higher than the corresponding figure (55%) from the research mentioned previously that was conducted on behalf of the charity regulator for England & Wales. Positively, the number who believed that charities are regulated very effectively also increased (up to 13% from 8%) from the benchmarking research.

Effectiveness of charity regulation in Northern Ireland





Females (63%) were more likely than males (58%) to rate regulation as effective, whilst those aged 16-24 (70%) were more likely to have done so than any other age cohort.

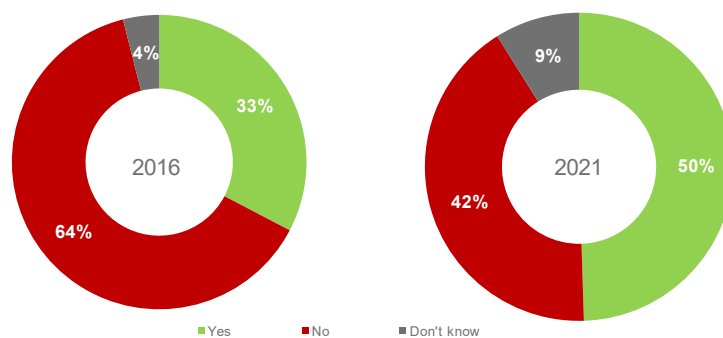
Interestingly, around a quarter (26%) of the public did not know how effectively charities are regulated in Northern Ireland, with those aged 50+ more likely to have offered this response.

Interaction with a charity had a significant impact on perceptions, with those who had used a charity during the Covid-19 crisis (77%) more likely to have felt that charities are regulated effectively than those who had not (57%), whilst those who had used a charity or knew of someone else who had (74%) were more likely to have felt this way than those for whom this was not the case (52%).

## 7.2 Knowledge of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

Half (50%) of the public had heard of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, which is a significant increase from the third (33%) who were aware of the organisation in 2016. Awareness levels are similar to those recorded in the recent survey conducted for the regulator for England and Wales (52%) and significantly higher than the figure recorded in the recent survey for the Scottish Charity Regulator (33%) that were mentioned earlier in this report.

Knowledge of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland



Males (55%) were more likely than females (45%) to be familiar with the Commission, whilst awareness was considerably higher amongst ABC1s (60%) than

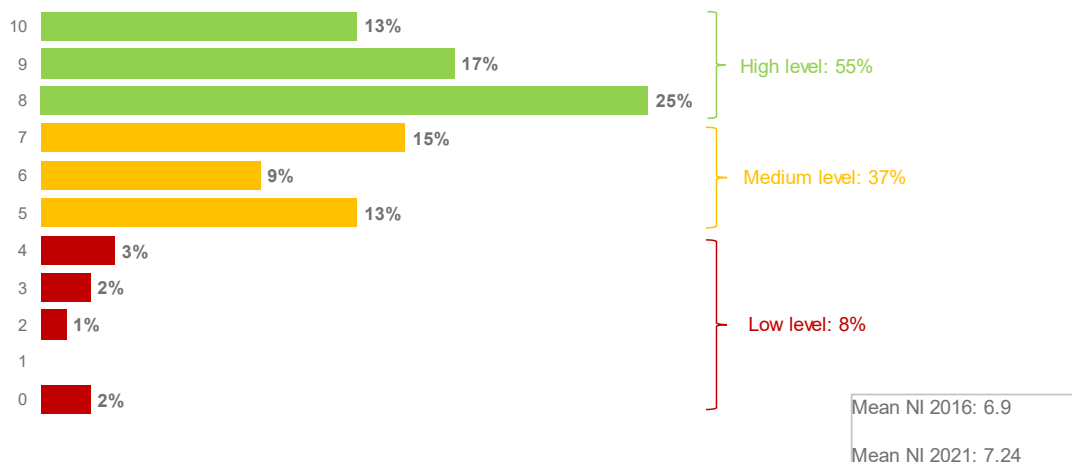
those from a C2 (48%) or DE (36%) background. Those aged over 50 were more likely to have heard of the Commission than younger members of the public.

Those who had used a charity previously or knew of someone else who had were significantly more likely (61%) to have been aware of the Commission than those for whom this was not the case.

### 7.3 Trust and confidence in The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

More than half (55%) of the public had a high level of trust and confidence in the Commission, which is a notable increase on the number (36%) who felt this way during the benchmarking study. The mean score for 2021 reflects this increase, rising to 7.24 from 6.9 in 2016.

Overall trust and confidence in the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland



**Cognisense** Q9a. On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means you trust it completely and 0 means you don't trust it at all, how much trust and confidence do you have in the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?  
 Base: all respondents who have heard of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (2021: n=764; 2016: n=333)

Interestingly, for a number of respondents, their perception regarding the Commission’s role influenced their trust and confidence in the organisation.

“ I don t know much about them but assume a regulatory body has to meet the stringent requirements set for charities. ” Female, 25-44, C1

“ Because they have a role to oversee the activities of all charities. This is their key responsibility, and they are in place to heighten public trust in charities. ”

Female, 45-64, B

*“ I don’t have enough knowledge of their work, but I would say that they would be a fairly reputable organisation. ”* Female, 25-44, B

*“ They can check up and make sure everything is above board and things are being done the way they should be. ”* Male, 45-64, C2

*“ They are a competent authority with powers to regulate charities and investigate allegations of misappropriation or mismanagement of funds or materials. ”*  
Male, 65+, B

*“ That is the job they have to do. I’m sure everyone involved has been vetted and appointed because of their honesty. ”* Female, 65+, B

*“ It will have governance and accountability procedures in place to regulate its operations. ”* Female, 45-64, B

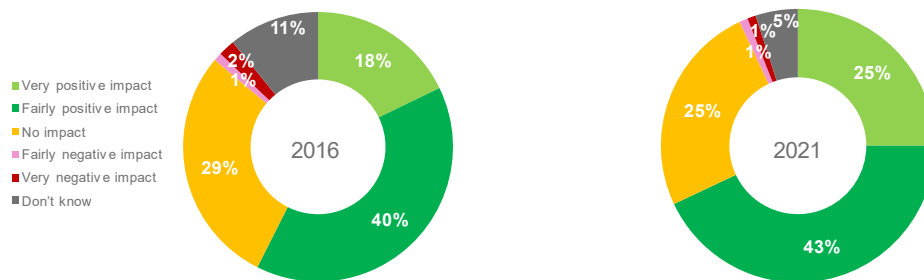
## 7.4 Impact of awareness of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The members of the public who had not heard of the Commission were informed as follows:

*The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent body responsible for registering and regulating charities in Northern Ireland. They register charities after examining their purposes against the requirements of charity law. Registered charities are required to submit their accounts and reports on an annual basis to the Commission. They also regulate charities by ensuring they stay within the law and are run for the public benefit, and by investigating any serious allegations of wrongdoing. Information about charities is publically available on the Commission’s website.*

After being informed about the Commission, almost seven in ten (68%) members of the public felt that its existence had a positive impact on their level of trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland, which was a significant increase on the number (58%) who felt the same way in the 2016 research.

### Impact of awareness of the Charity Commission



**Cognisense** Q10. Now that you know there is a Charity Commission for Northern Ireland that regulates the charity sector here, what impact, if any, does this have on your level of trust and confidence in charities in NI? *Base: 2021, all respondents (n=150) 2016, all respondents who had not heard of the Commission (n=683)*

Knowledge of the Commission was more likely to have had a positive impact on ABC1s (72%) and C2s (71%) than those from a DE background (61%), and on females (73%) when compared to males (64%).

Exposure to a charity seems to have had an influence with those who had used a charity (78%) during the Covid-19 pandemic more likely to have felt that their new knowledge of the Commission had a positive impact than those who had not done so (66%). The same was true regarding those who had used a charity or knew of someone who had (78%) when compared to those for whom this was not the case (62%).

## 8 Court of Appeal judgment

This section of the report provides detailed analysis of the following:

- awareness of the Court of Appeal judgment; and
- the impact of this judgment.

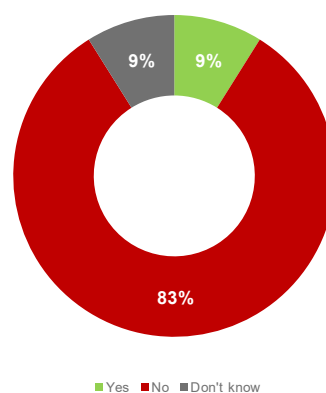
### 8.1 Awareness of Court of Appeal judgment

The Commission was keen to assess awareness and public perception of the 19 February 2020 judgment of the Court of Appeal. Ruling in the case of *McKee & Others v Charity Commission for Northern Ireland*, the court upheld a legal challenge to the delegation of decision-making powers by the Commission to members of staff. The case addressed a technical point of law, namely that all Commission orders and decisions must be made by the Board of Commissioners or a committee to include Commissioners with delegated authority, rather than Commission staff following manuals approved by Commissioners. It is important to be aware that the judgment does not prevent any organisation, which is a charity in law, from operating as a charity.

A permanent solution is being sought from the Department for Communities. Meanwhile a temporary solution has been implemented and the Commission's work and oversight of the charity sector is continuing.

The Commission has published a legal update on its website that sets out the impact of this judgment.

#### Awareness of Court of Appeal judgment



Fewer than one in ten (9%) members of the public knew about the Court of Appeal judgment, though awareness was considerably higher (25%) amongst those who had used a charity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

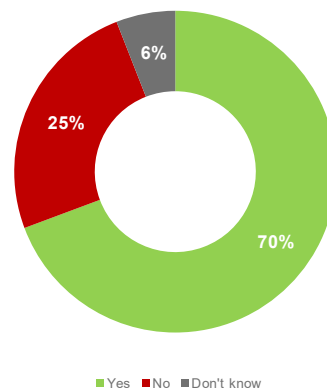
Awareness of the ruling was higher amongst males (11%) than females (6%), those aged 25-34 (16%) than any other age group and amongst those who had used a charity or knew of someone who had (12%) than those for whom this did not apply.

## 8.2 Impact of Court of Appeal judgment

Those members of the public who were aware of the Court of Appeal judgment were informed of the following: *the Commission recognises that the impact of the judgment may create some confusion for charities. A temporary solution has been put in place and the Commission is working with partners, including the Department for Communities, to resolve the issues raised by the judgment and seek a preferred way forward. While a permanent solution is being sought, the Commission's work and oversight of the charity sector is continuing. For example, while some Commission decisions may be delayed and the volume of decisions made has been temporarily reduced, work on registration applications, requests and queries is ongoing. Further information on this is available on the Commission's website.*

For seven in ten (70%) this information affected their trust and confidence in the Commission.

### Impact of Court of Appeal judgment



Cognisense

Q13. Now that you know that a temporary solution has been put in place and a permanent one is being sought, does the Court of Appeal judgment affect your trust and confidence in The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?  
Base: all respondents aware of Court of Appeal judgment (n=135)

Just over half (54%) felt that the Court of Appeal judgment had a positive effect on their trust and confidence in The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

*“It means that The Charity Commission itself will be scrutinised which is very important.”* Female, 45-64, E

*“Confidence in the process ... and some understanding of the case and its ramifications.”* Male, 45-64, A

For a small number (4%), the impact of the judgment had a negative impact on their trust and confidence in the Commission.

*“This will slow everything down. Decisions will be longer in coming as it is only the board now and not staff who can make these decisions. It makes life harder for the Charity Commission and those who they are investigating will get doing wrong for much longer to the detriment of the charity.”* Female, 65+, C1

# Appendix

## Survey questionnaire

### Overall Trust

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

#### **Q1. How much trust and confidence do you have in charities in Northern Ireland?**

Please rate on the following scale, where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all.

0 - Do not trust them at all
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 - Trust them completely

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

#### **Q2. Over the past two years, has your trust and confidence in charities in Northern Ireland increased, decreased or stayed the same?**

1 – Increased
2 – Decreased
3 – Stayed the same
99 – Don't know



ASK ALL WHO SAID INCREASED (CODE 1) AT Q2

MULTICODE POSSIBLE

**Q2b. Why do you think your trust and confidence in charities has increased?**

1 – Personal experience of using a charity and/or its services
2 – The experience of someone I know who used a charity or its services
3 – Volunteering or working for a charity
4 – Seeing the impact of a charity's work in my local area
5 – Media stories about a charity/charities in general
6 – Media coverage about how charities spend donations, e.g., salaries, bonuses, etc
7 – Media coverage about the fundraising practices used by some charities
8 – Media coverage about charities relating to the Covid-19 emergency
9 – Media coverage about charities and the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
10 – Other, please specify
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL WHO SAID DECREASED (CODE 2) AT Q2

MULTICODE POSSIBLE

**Q2c. Why do you think your trust and confidence in charities has decreased?**

1 – Personal experience of using a charity and/or its services
2 – The experience of someone I know who used a charity or its services
3 – Volunteering or working for a charity
4 – Seeing the impact of a charity's work in my local area
5 – Media stories about a charity/charities in general
6 – Media coverage about how charities spend donations, e.g., salaries, bonuses, etc
7 – Media coverage about the fundraising practices used by some charities
8 – Media coverage about charities relating to the Covid-19 emergency
9 – Media coverage about charities and the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
10– Other, please specify
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL

MULTICODE POSSIBLE

**Q2d. In which, if any, of these ways have you supported a charity in the last six months?**

1 – Donated money to a street collector
2 – Made a one-off donation to a charity for a specific campaign
3 – Signed up to a direct debit
4 – Taken part in a charity event
5 – Sponsored someone who was taking part in charity event
6 – Volunteered for a charity
7 – Donated items to a charity shop or charity appeal
8 – I have not supported a charity in the last six months
9 – Made a donation online
10 – Other, please specify
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL WHO HAVE SUPPORTED A CHARITY IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS (CODES 1-7, 9) AT Q2D

MULTICODE POSSIBLE

**Q2e. Which of the following factors, if any, influence your decision to support a charity?**

Please select all that apply.

1 – The cause the charity represents is important to me
2 – Awareness of the impact it has on the cause it represents
3 – I or someone I know has benefited from the charity
4 – I may need to use the charity in future
5 – I trust the charity
6 – Other, please specify
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL

ROTATE STATEMENTS

SINGLE CODE PER STATEMENT

**Q3. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is very important, how important or unimportant are each of these factors to you when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland?**

How open and transparent charities are about their activities	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
How transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/funds	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
How charities raise their funds/collect donations	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
That they have a positive impact on the causes they represent	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
Have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
That charities are well managed	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
That donations/funds raised by charities are used properly	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know
That charities do what they say they will do	0 -Not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very important	Don't know

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

**Q3b. Of the following, which factor is most important to you when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland?**

1 – How open and transparent charities are about their activities
2 – How transparent charities are about the way they spend donations/'funds
3 – How charities raise their funds/'collect donations
4 – That they have a positive impact on the causes they represent
5 – Have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults
6 – That charities are well managed
7 – That donations/'funds raised by charities are used properly
8 – That charities do what they say they will do
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE

**Q3c. You selected [STATEMENT CHOSEN AT PREVIOUS QUESTION]. Why is this factor most important to you when making a decision on whether to trust charities in Northern Ireland?**

--

ASK ALL

ROTATE STATEMENTS

SINGLE CODE PER STATEMENT

**Q3d. On balance, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is do not trust them at all and 10 is trust them completely, to what extent would you trust charities in Northern Ireland to ...?**

Be open and transparent about their activities	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Be transparent about the way they spend donations/funds	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Raise their funds/collect donations	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Have a positive impact on the causes they represent	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Have a strong approach to protecting children and vulnerable adults.	0-Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Be well managed	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Use donations/funds raised by the charity properly	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Do what they say they will do	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know

ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE

**Q3e. For what reason did you give [RANDOMLY SELECTED STATEMENT FROM Q3D. THAT RECEIVED A LOW (0-1) RATING] a low score in terms of trusting charities in Northern Ireland?**

ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE

**Q3f. For what reason did you give [RANDOMLY SELECTED STATEMENT FROM Q3D. THAT RECEIVED A HIGH (9-10) RATING] a high score in terms of trusting charities in Northern Ireland?**

ASK ALL

RANKING QUESTION FROM 1 (HIGHEST) TO 5 (LOWEST)

**Q3g. From the following list, please indicate which qualities are most likely to increase your trust and confidence in a given charity. Please rank each option from 1-5, with 1 being the most likely to increase your trust and confidence and 5 being the least likely to do so.**

	Ranking
Makes a positive impact on the lives of its beneficiaries	
Operates ethically and honestly in keeping with its stated values	
Is transparent and accountable in its reporting	
Spends its donations in line with its fundraising campaigns	
Can demonstrate good governance and financial management	

ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE QUESTION

**Q3h. Why did you rank [OPTION RANKED FIRST AT Q3G.] as the quality most likely to increase your trust and confidence in a given charity?**

--

ASK ALL

ROTATE ORDER OF OPTIONS

SINGLE CODE PER OPTION

**Q4. On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, please tell me how much trust and confidence you have in ... ?**

Large companies	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Small companies	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Public services	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Elected representatives (e.g., MLAs)	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Your local council	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know

Banks	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Doctors	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Police service	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know
Ordinary man/woman in the street	0 -Don't trust them at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – Trust them completely	Don't know

### General Attitudes Towards Charities

ASK ALL

ROTATE ORDER OF STATEMENTS

SINGLE CODE PER STATEMENT

**Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	Strongly agree 1	Tend to agree 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	Tend to disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5	Don't know/No opinion 99
I trust smaller charities more than big charities						
If I have heard of a charity, I am more likely to trust it	1	2	3	4	5	99
I trust charities more if they are based in Northern Ireland	1	2	3	4	5	99
I trust charities more if they are providing services within my local community	1	2	3	4	5	99



Charities should be transparent about how public donations are spent	1	2	3	4	5	99
It is important to me that charities are properly regulated	1	2	3	4	5	99
I know where I can find out information about how charities are run	1	2	3	4	5	99
I know very little about how charities are run	1	2	3	4	5	99
It is important that charities demonstrate how they benefit the public	1	2	3	4	5	99
Charities spend too much of their funds on salaries and administration	1	2	3	4	5	99
Most charities are trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	99
I am more likely to trust a charity if I have personal experience of it	1	2	3	4	5	99
Some of the fundraising methods used by charities make me uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	99
I know where I can find out information about how charities are spending their money	1	2	3	4	5	99
I trust charities to spend their funds appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	99
I am more likely to trust a charity if I believe in what it is trying to do	1	2	3	4	5	99

It is important to me that charities protect children and vulnerable adults.	1	2	3	4	5	99
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ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE QUESTION

**Q5b. Why did you strongly agree with the statement [RANDOMLY SELECTED STATEMENT FROM Q5. WITH WHICH RESPONDENT STRONGLY AGREED]?**

ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE QUESTION

**Q5c. Why did you strongly disagree with the statement [RANDOMLY SELECTED STATEMENT FROM Q5. WITH WHICH RESPONDENT STRONGLY DISAGREED]?**

**Benefitting from Charities**

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

**Q6. Have you or anyone you know ever benefited from or used the services of a charity?**

1 – Yes
2 – No
99 – Don't know

**Knowledge of Charity Regulation and The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland**

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

**Q7. Overall, how effectively do you think charities are regulated in Northern Ireland?**

1 – Very effectively
2 – Fairly effectively
3 – Not very effectively
4 – Not at all effectively
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

**Q8. Have you heard of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?**

1 – Yes
2 – No
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL WHO HAVE HEARD OF THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (CODE 1 AT Q8.)

SINGLE CODE

**Q9. On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means you trust it completely and 0 means you don't trust it at all, how much trust and confidence do you have in The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?**

0 - Do not trust them at all
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 - Trust them completely

ASK ALL

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE QUESTION

**Q9b. Why do you say that?**

--

ASK ALL WHO HAVE NOT HEARD OF THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (CODE 2 AT Q8)

SINGLE CODE

*The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent body responsible for registering and regulating charities in Northern Ireland. They register charities after examining their purposes against the requirements of charity law. Registered charities are required to submit their accounts and reports on an annual basis to the Commission. They also regulate charities by ensuring they stay within the law and are run for the public benefit, and by investigating any serious allegations of wrong-doing. Information about charities is publically available on the Commission's website.*

**Q10. Now that you know there is a Charity Commission for Northern Ireland that regulates the charity sector here, what impact, if any, does this have on your level of trust and confidence in charities in NI?**

1 – Very positive impact
2 – Fairly positive impact
3 – No impact
4 – Fairly negative impact
5 – Very negative impact
99 – Don't know

## Court of Appeal Judgment

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

**Q11. Are you aware of any court cases in 2020 that involved The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?**

1 – Yes
2 – No
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL

SINGLE CODE

**Q12. Are you aware of the Court of Appeal ruling from 19 February 2020 in the case of McKee & Others v Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?** (The case addressed a technical point of law, namely that all decisions set out in the Charities Act (NI) 2008, including registering charities and the making of orders or schemes must be made by the Board of Commissioners or a committee to include Commissioners with delegated authority, rather than Commission staff following manuals approved by Commissioners.

1 – Yes
2 – No
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL AWARE OF COURT OF APPEAL RULING (CODE 1 AT Q12)

SINGLE CODE

*The Commission recognises that the impact of the judgment may create some confusion for charities. A temporary solution has been put in place and the Commission is working with partners, including the Department for Communities, to resolve the issues raised by the judgment and seek a preferred way forward. While a permanent solution is being sought, the Commission's work and oversight of the charity sector is continuing. For example, while some Commission decisions may be delayed and the volume of decisions made has been temporarily reduced, work on registration applications, requests and queries is ongoing. Further information on this is available on the Commission's website.*

**Q13. Now that you know that a temporary solution has been put in place and a permanent one is being sought, does the Court of Appeal ruling affect your trust and confidence in The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland?**

1 – Yes
2 – No
99 – Don't know

ASK ALL WHO SAY YES (CODE 1) AT Q13

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE QUESTION

**Q14. Why do you say that?**

--

ASK ALL

MULTICODE POSSIBLE

**Q15. Do you or any of your close family or friends work for a charity, either as a paid employee, a trustee, a volunteer or member of a charity's executive or management committee?**

1 – Yes - paid employee
2 – Yes – Trustee, e.g., member of charity's executive management committee
3 – Yes - Volunteer other than as a trustee
4 – Yes – other, please specify
5 – No
99 – Don't know

### Covid-19

ASK ALL

MULTICODE POSSIBLE

**Q16. During the Covid-19 crisis, have you, or anyone you know, used the services of a charity in any of the following ways?**

To get information about Covid-19	1
For help with food delivery	2
For help with the benefits system	3
For help with housing	4
Other	5
I have not used the services of a charity	99