



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Trustee Survey

JUNE 2020

Populus

The approach

2,200 online interviews with charity trustees

- The research was conducted in two waves, with two impact measures added to the second wave
- Where questions were asked in both waves, data has been combined
- Respondents were sampled from the register of charities
- This included a range of different charity types and sizes
- All were trustees of a charity

Executive summary

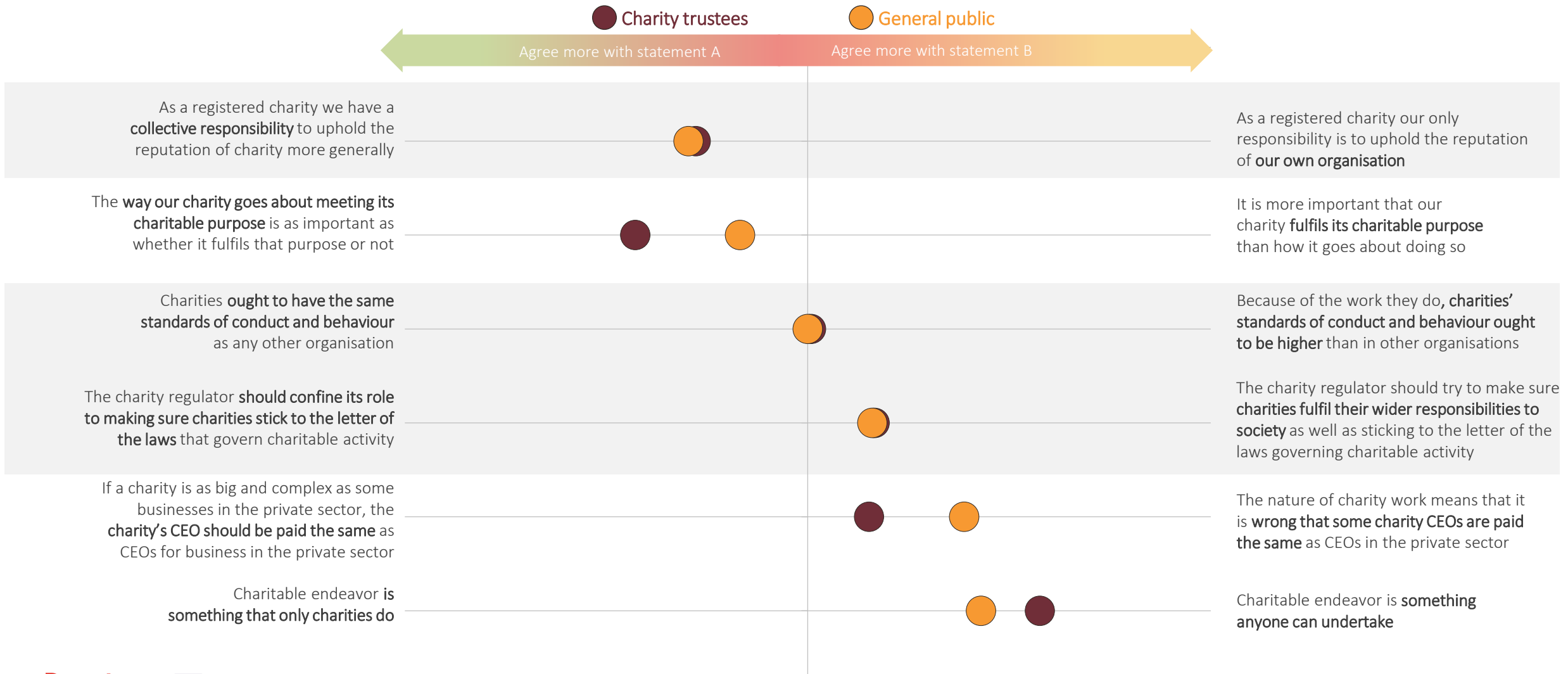
Executive summary

- Charity trustees share similar perceptions to the public about what charities' responsibilities are. They are more likely than the public to say how charities behave matters as much as what they do and as likely to believe in collective responsibility.
- Charity trustees are also very confident in fulfilling their responsibilities. They are confident in their own ability to deal with wrongdoing and harm, although they are less confident in the Charity Commission's ability to uncover it in other charities.
- Trustees though are more likely than the public to find high Charity CEO pay acceptable in some circumstances and are divided as to whether the public or charities are at fault when popular expectations are not met.
- This may be explained in part by the fact that many charities are focussed on short-term pressures of fundraising and survival. Reiterating the link between the funding landscape and public opinion could therefore prove important.
- There is more scope for the Charity Commission to be seen as a source of help and guidance for charity trustees. Many do not currently engage with it, but those who do find it helpful.

Overall, trustees and the public align when it comes to charities' responsibilities

Both, for instance, believe that charities have a collective responsibility to uphold the reputation of the sector and that the regulator should do more than just ensure charities stick to the letter of the law.

Charity trustees' views are largely in line with the public's when it comes to what is expected of charities

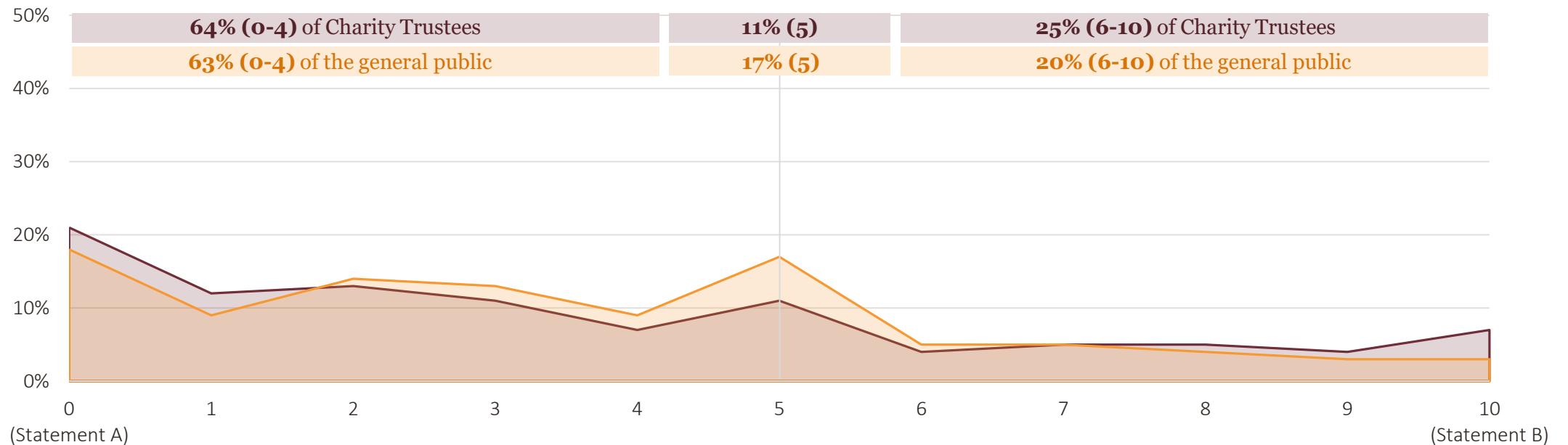


E.g. on the question of collective responsibility, Charity Trustee views track closely with the public's views

As a registered charity we have a **collective responsibility** to uphold the reputation of charity more generally

■ % of Charity Trustees
 ■ % of the general public

As a registered charity our only responsibility is to uphold the reputation of **our own organisation**

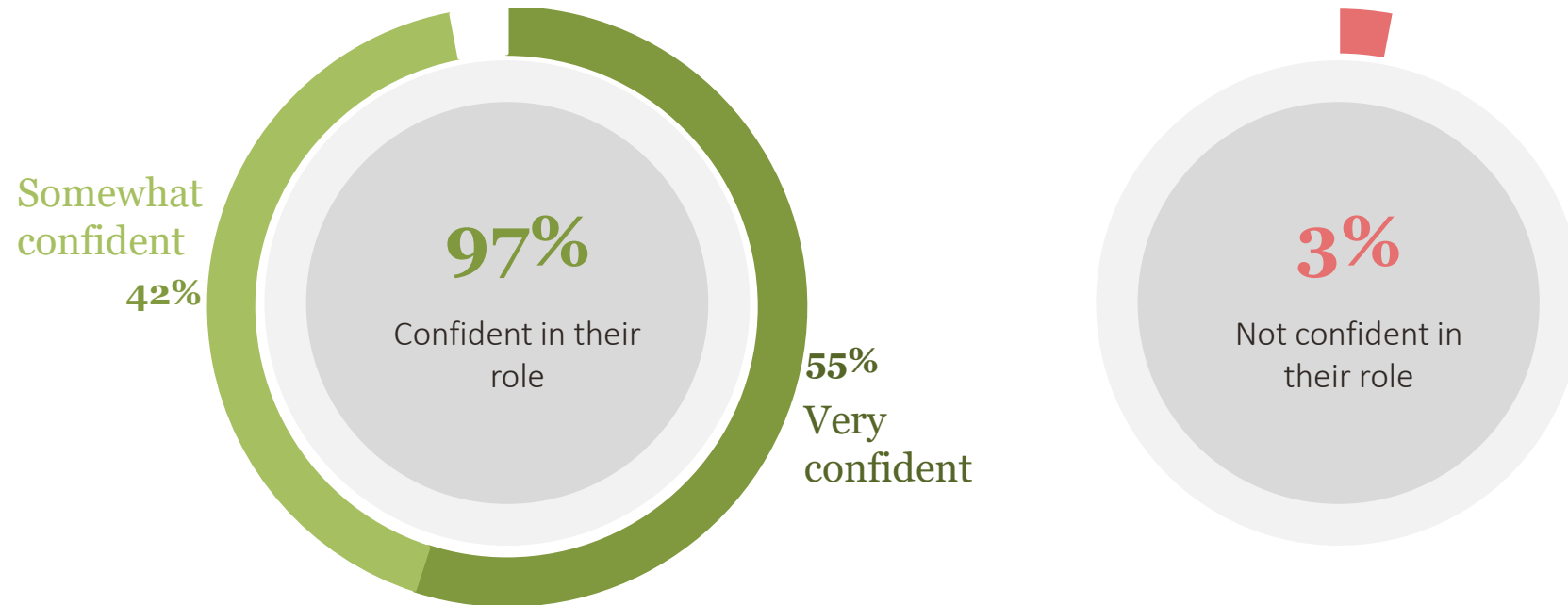


And charity trustees feel confident in fulfilling those responsibilities

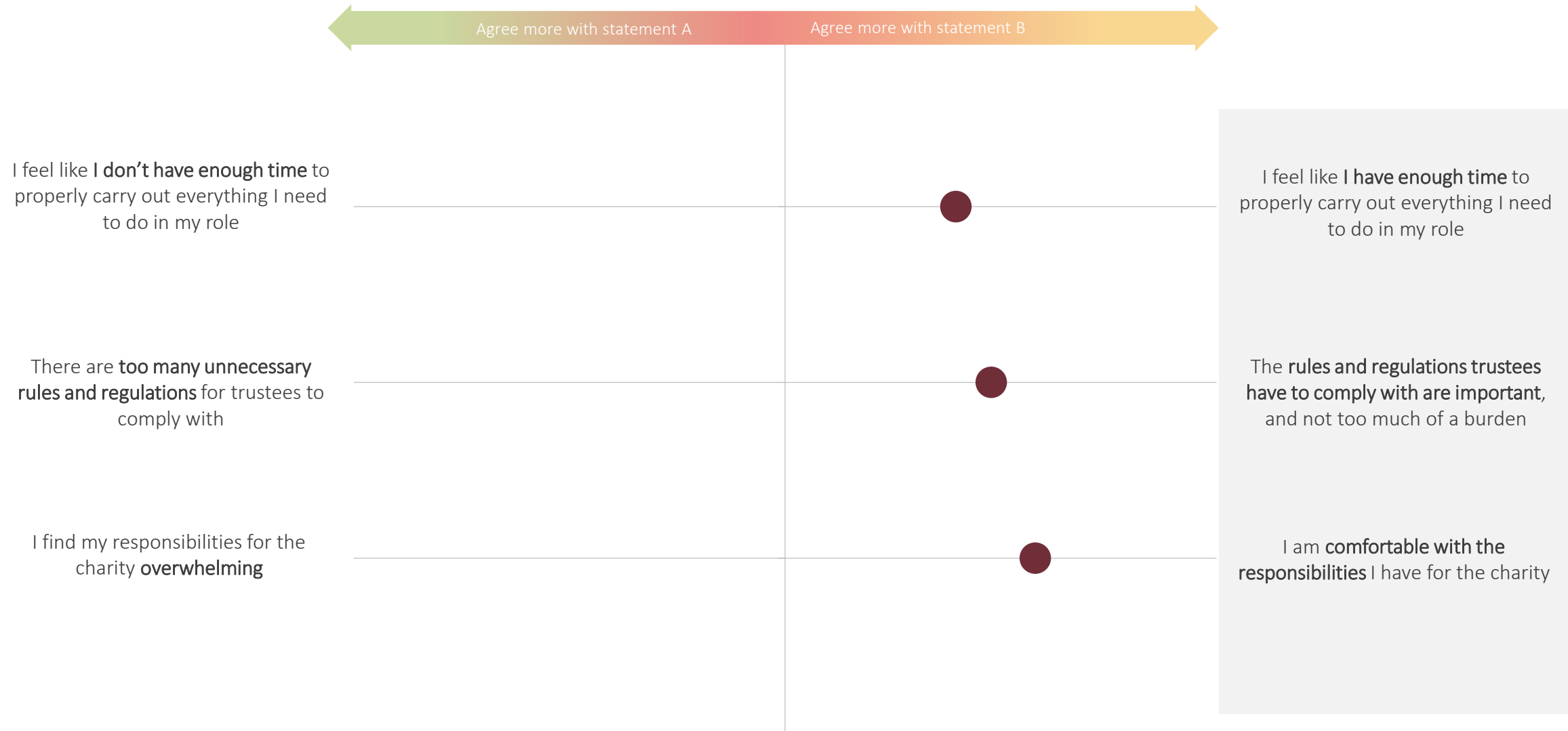
They express high levels of self-confidence and, encouragingly for the Commission, do not consider either their responsibilities or the rules and regulations with which they must comply burdensome.

Charity trustees feel overwhelmingly confident in their role

Confidence in helping to manage or govern the charity

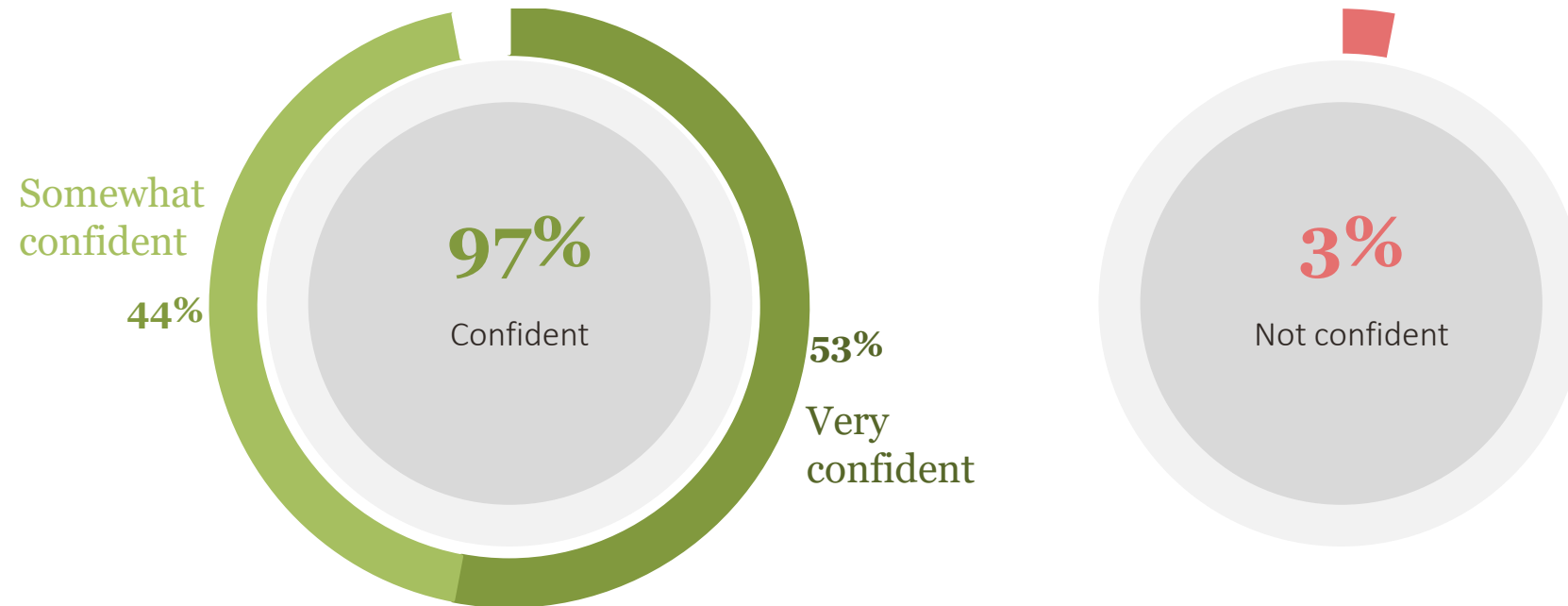


In fact, charity trustees are comfortable with their responsibilities and the rules and regulations with which they must comply



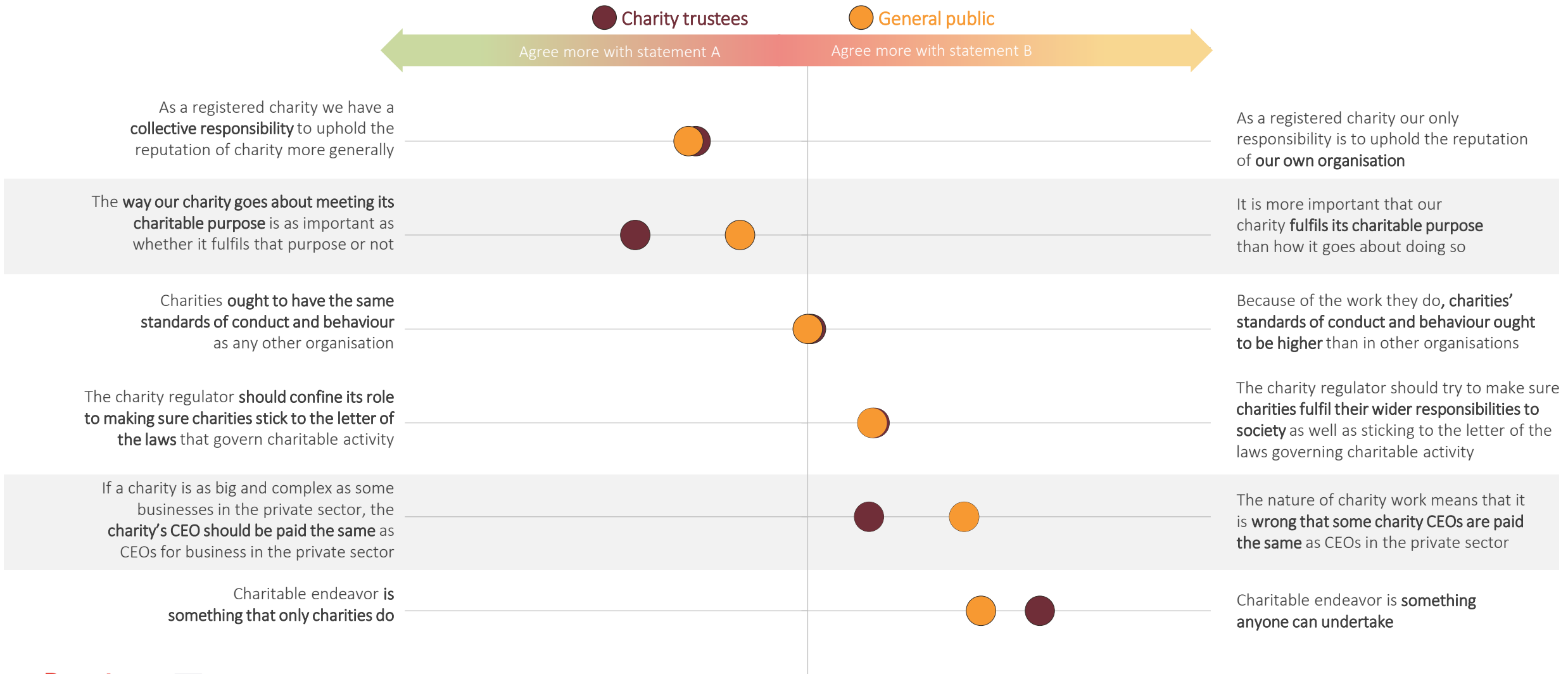
Charity trustees believe in their own ability to stop instances of wrongdoing and harm

Confidence in “my ability to protect my own charity and its beneficiaries from wrongdoing and harm”



But there is some disagreement
between trustees and the public

Key differences between the views of charity trustees and the general public

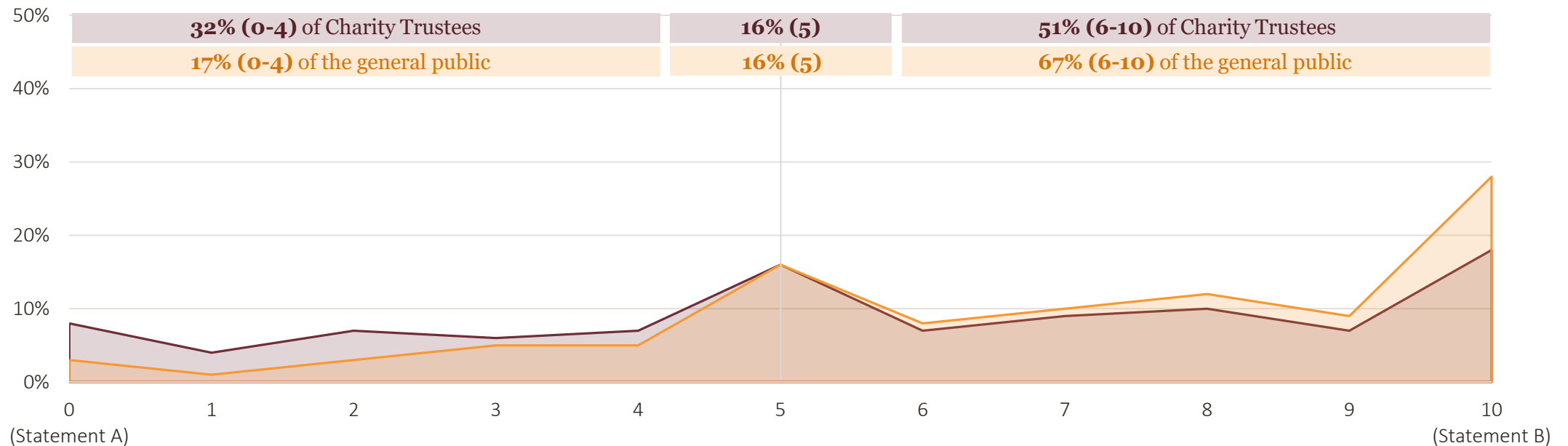


Trustees are nearly twice as likely as the public to think that high salaries for charity CEOs can be justified

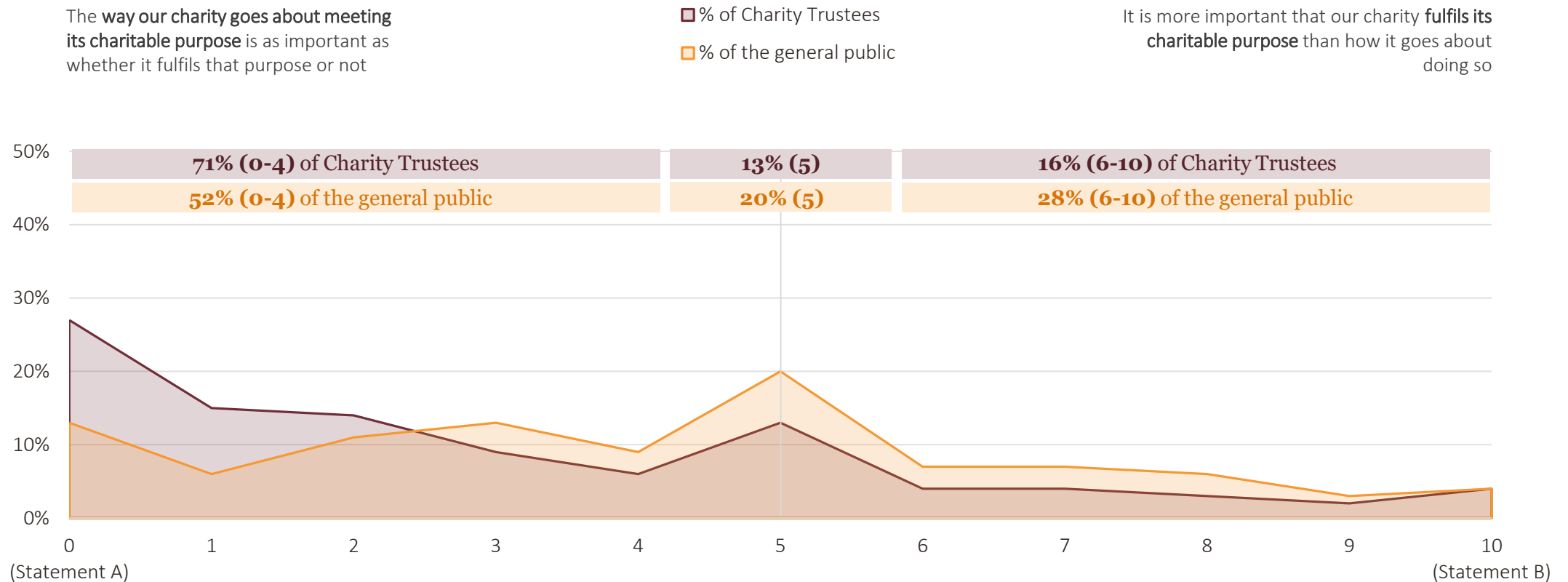
If a charity is as big and complex as some businesses in the private sector, the charity's CEO should be paid the same as CEOs for business in the private sector

■ % of Charity Trustees
 ■ % of the general public

The nature of charity work means that it is wrong that some charity CEOs are paid the same as CEOs in the private sector

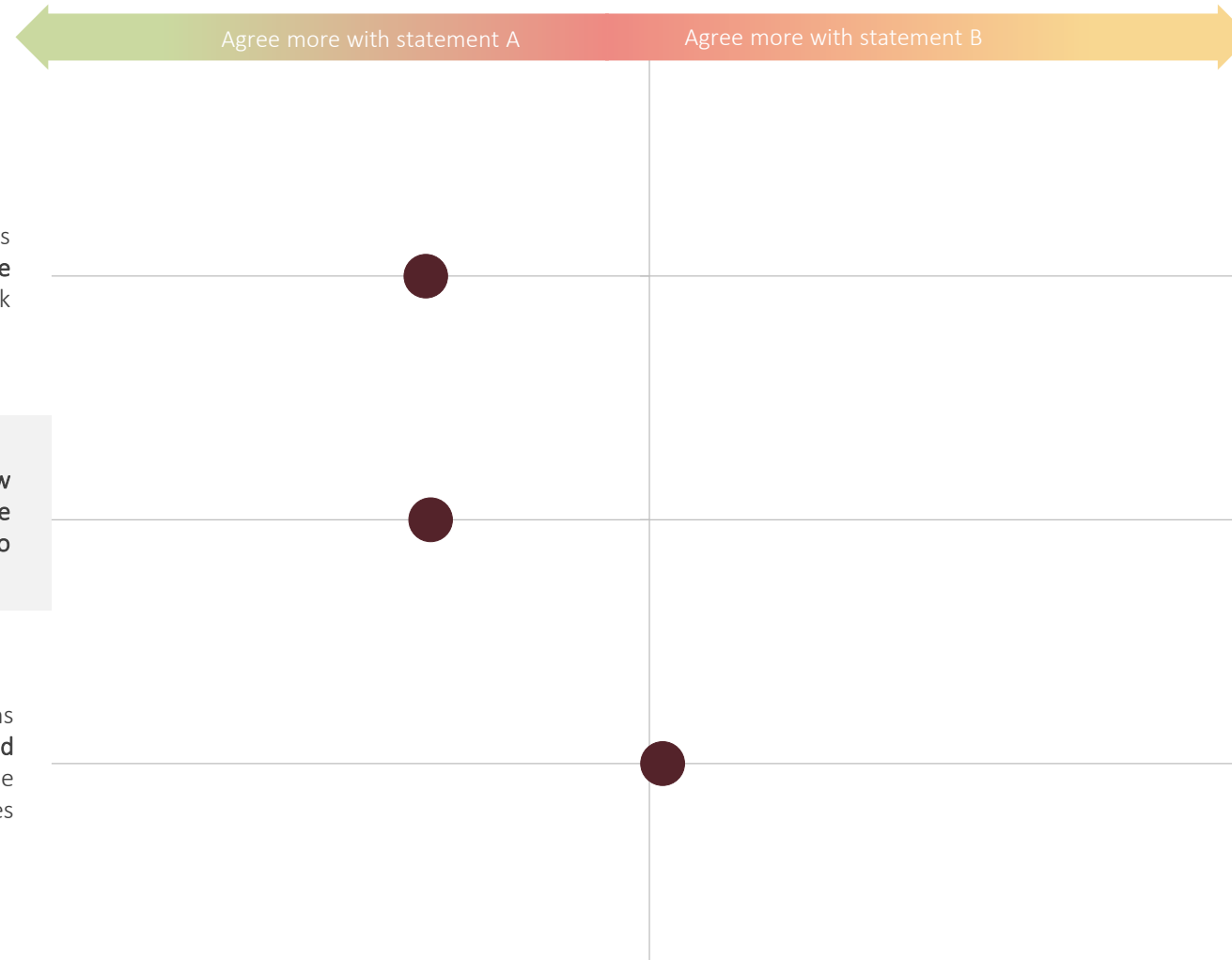


And they feel more strongly that the way a charity goes about meeting its purpose is as important as whether it fulfils that purpose or not

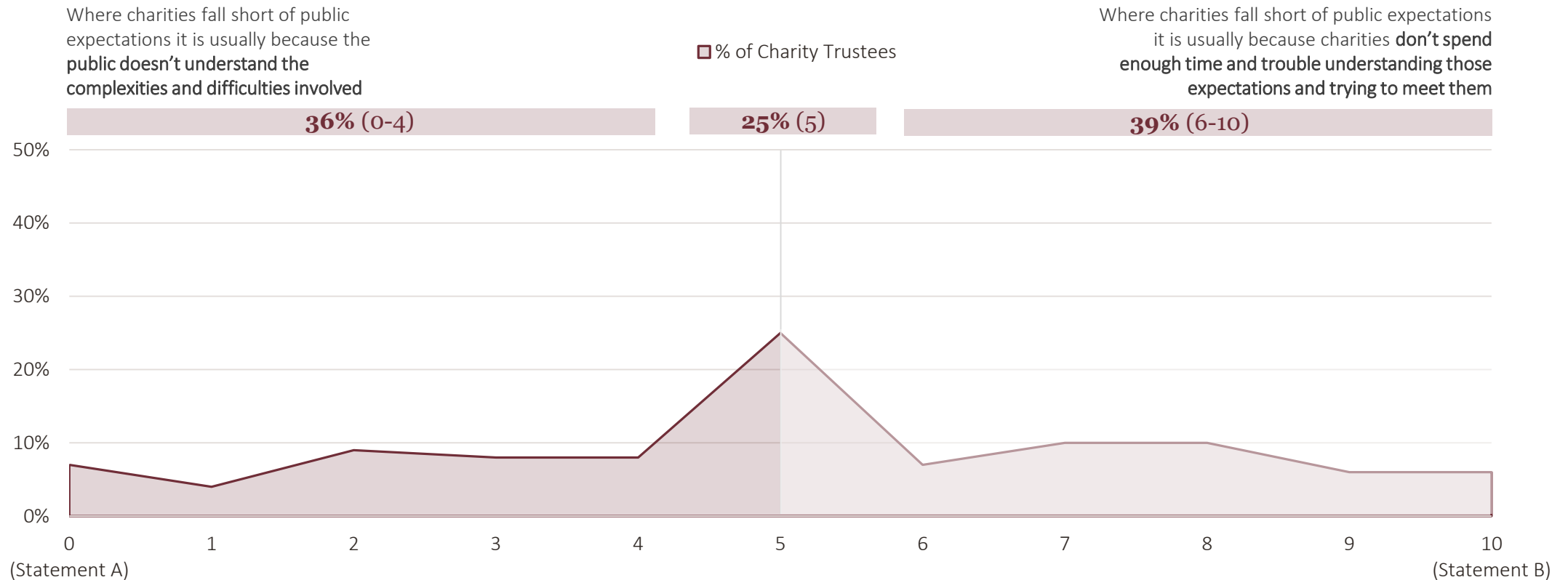


Even while most trustees say they have a clear understanding of how public opinion ought to shape the way charities go about doing what they do, it is clear that some are sceptical of the value of paying attention to public opinion.

Charity trustees tend to say they have a clear understanding about how public expectations shape the way charities go about doing what they do...



... But are divided on whether failing to meet popular expectations is the fault of the public or of charities

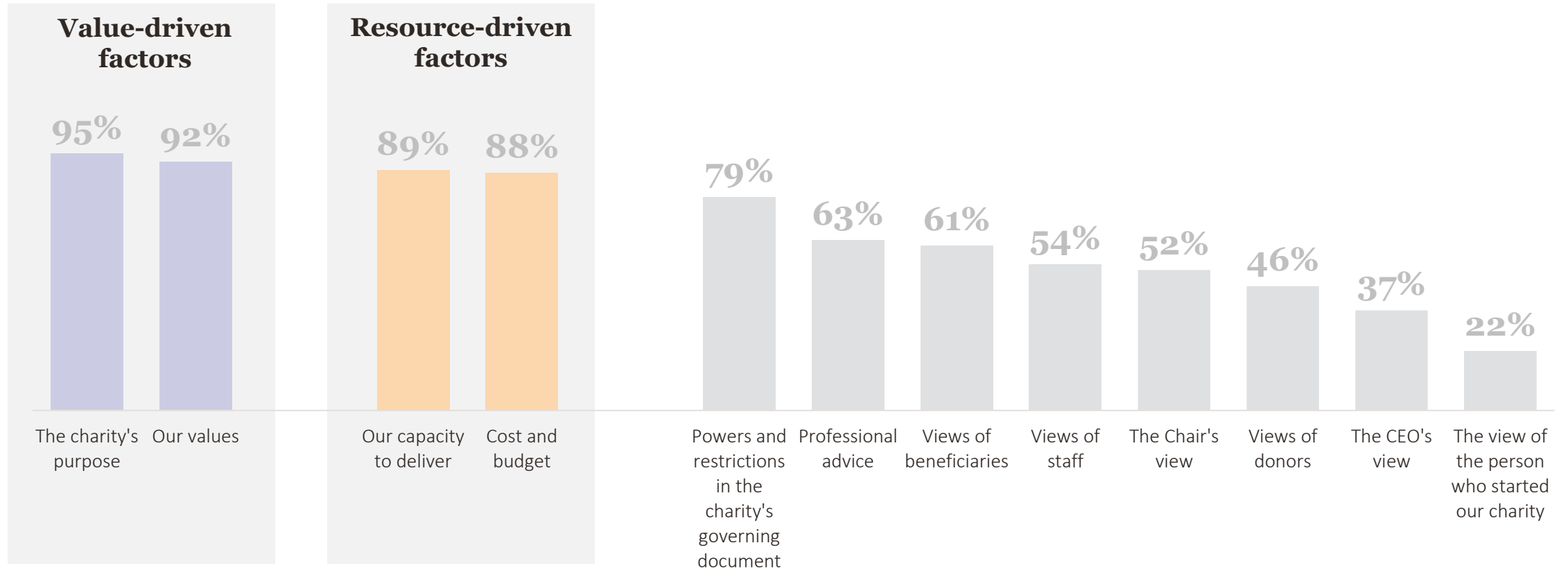


Trustees feel a pressure on fundraising and so many are focussed on short-term survival

While charity trustees place a high priority on fulfilling their charity's purpose and values, they are equally driven by the pressures of ensuring that their charity has sufficient resources.

Charity trustees' most important factors in decision-making

% SUM Important



The pressure of raising sufficient funds arose in previous qualitative research conducted by Populus amongst charity trustees

“The **overriding issue that we have is raising money.**

Obviously we're raising considerable amounts of money and have been successful in doing it so far, but **the cliff is never much further away than a year.**”

“**It's always about short-term,** and this is for both my charities. Where is the next year's money coming from?”

“**You need to be paranoid about finance**

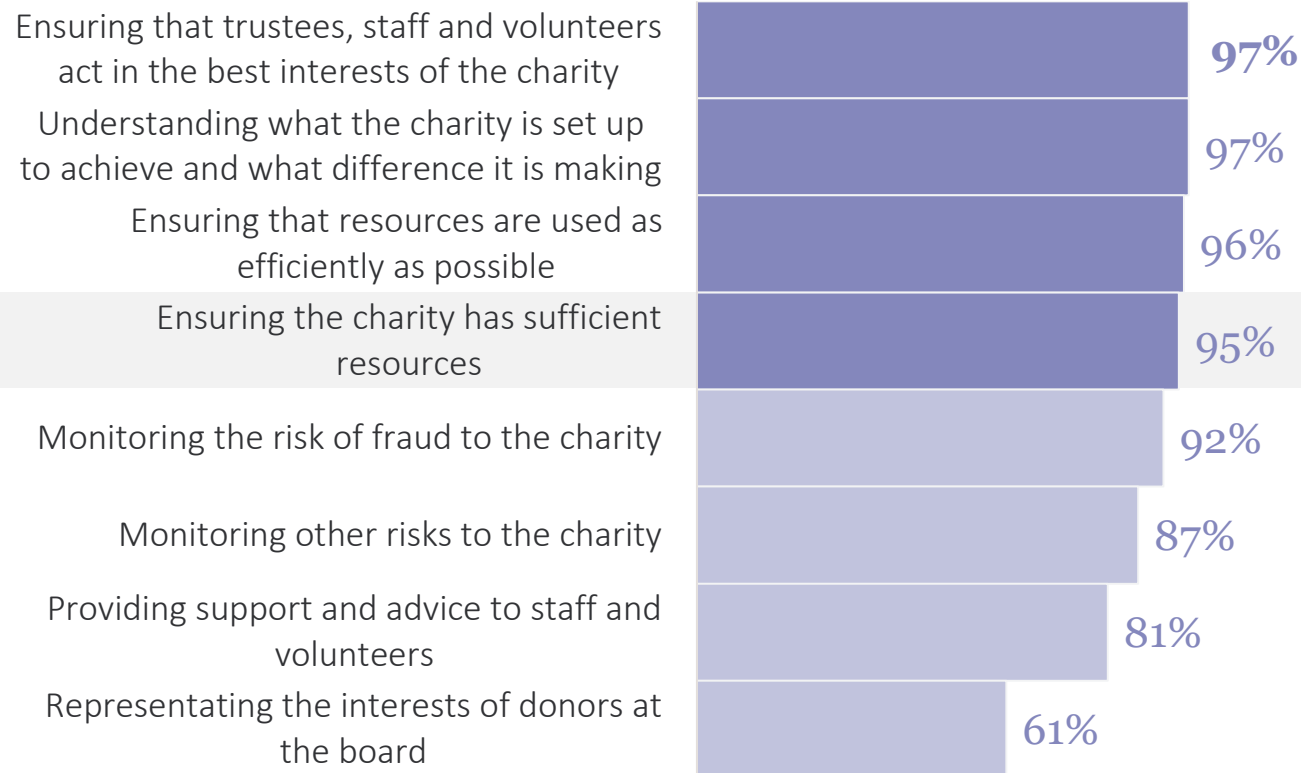
because if you haven't got the money, you just fall apart, as everybody knows.”

“We need to **focus on raising the funds to run the church.** That includes paying all the electricity and all the rest and financially — we have to manage our own finance within that.”

The time charity trustees dedicate to tasks is broadly in line with the importance they assign to them. Ensuring their charity has sufficient resources takes up much of their time

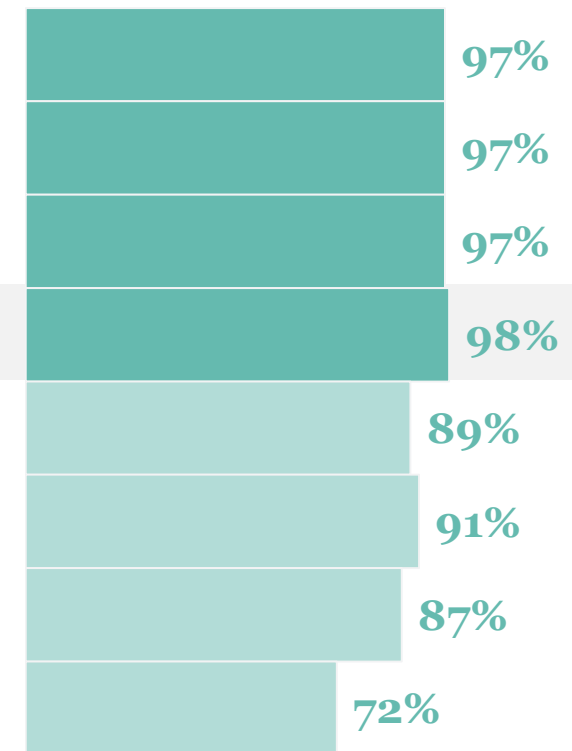
Importance

% Think the following are *vital or very important*



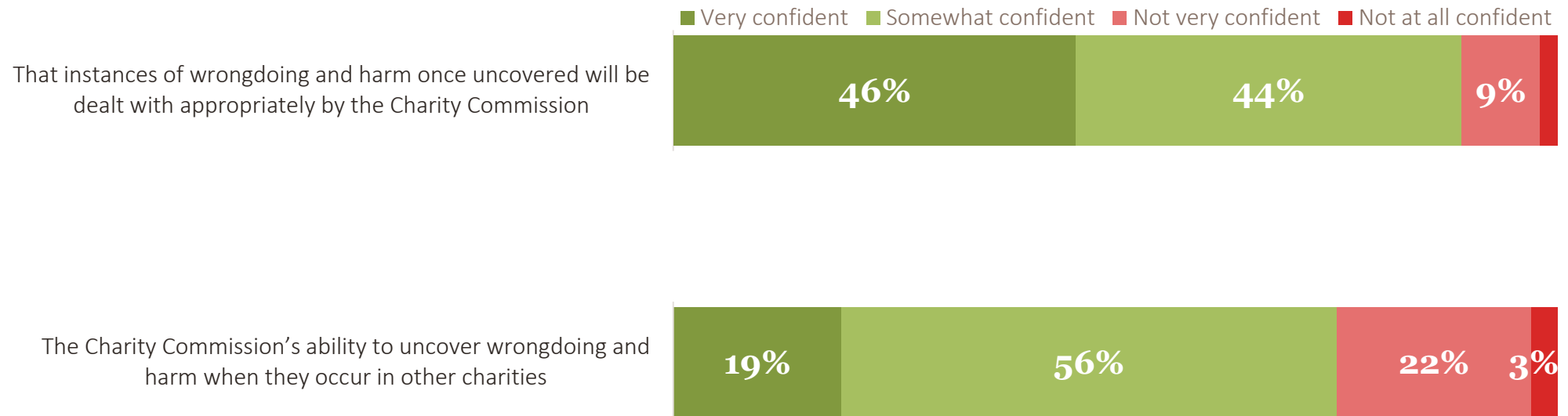
Time given

% who say the following are *given regular attention [very much so + to some extent]*



The Charity Commission is generally regarded highly, although some doubt its ability to uncover wrongdoing

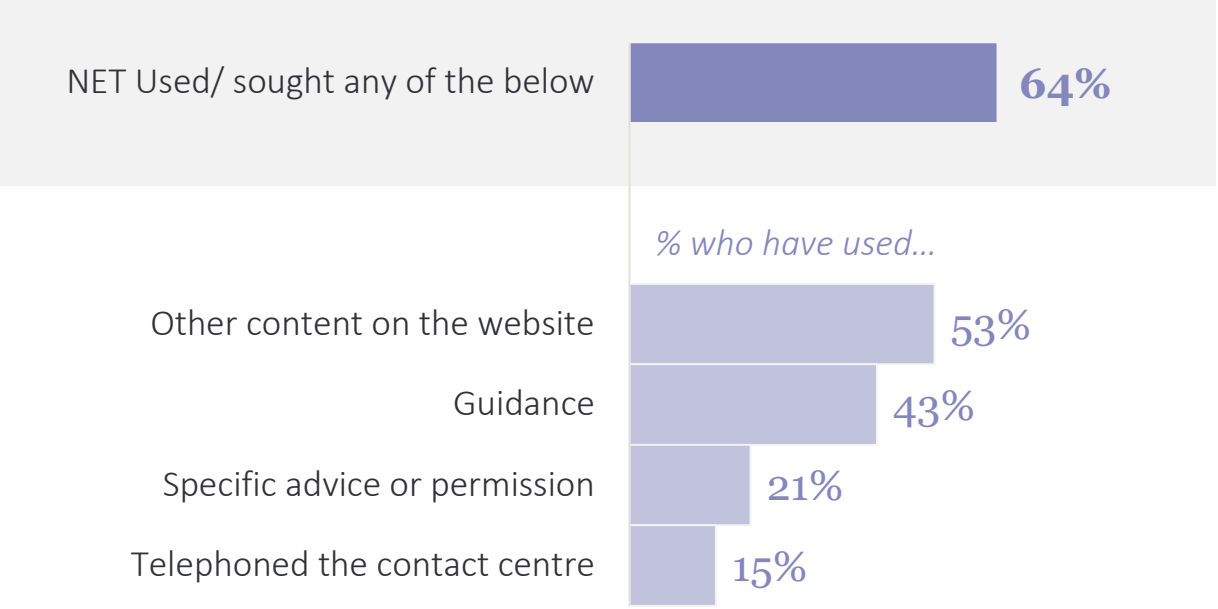
Charity trustees view the Commission highly in regards to dealing with instances of wrongdoing and harm, but are less confident in its ability to uncover them



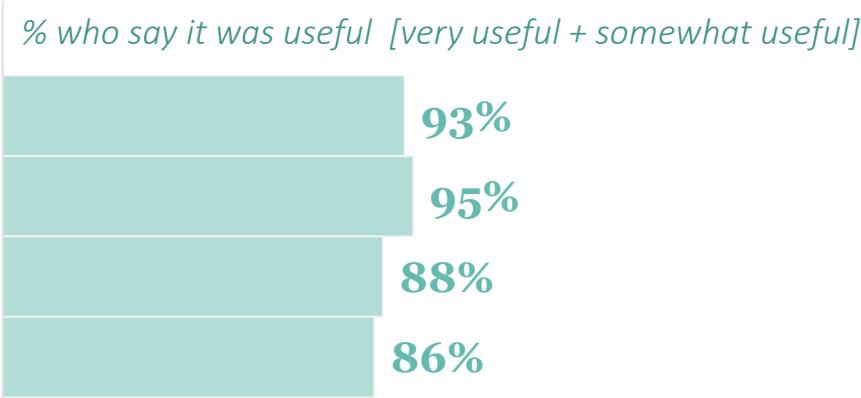
Many charity trustees report having used the Charity Commission's services before, most commonly guidance or content on the website. They rate them highly.

Two-thirds (64%) of charity trustees have used a Charity Commission service before, and most found them useful...

Have you ever used or sought any of the following services?



How useful was it?



58% found it easy to find that information on the website

...But only a third (32%) use them regularly

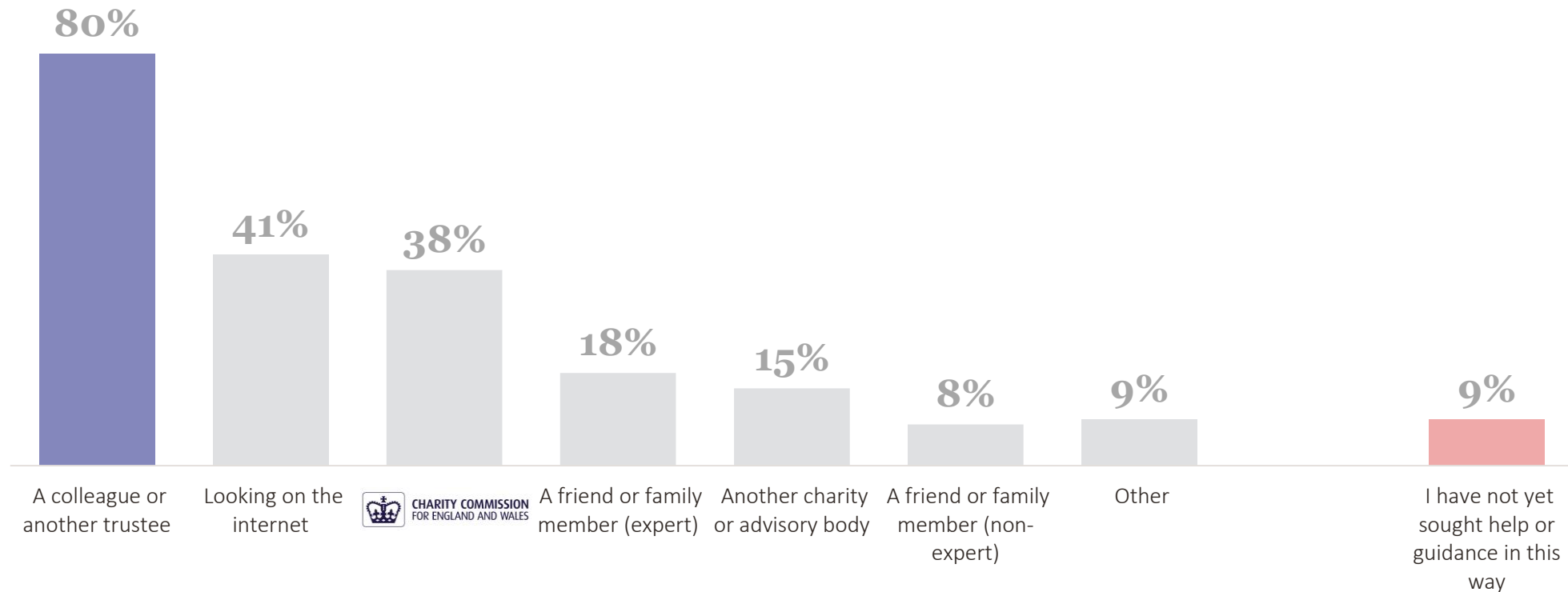


Why trustees do not use the website for help and guidance

- 1.** I don't think I need help and guidance that regularly (62%)
- 2.** I didn't know that the Charity Commission's website provided help and guidance (11%)
- 3.** I don't think the help and guidance provided by the Charity Commission is clear enough (6%)
- 4.** There is too much help and guidance – I don't know how to find what I need (4%)
- 5.** I don't use the internet very much (3%)
- 6.** I don't think there is enough help and guidance provided by the Charity Commission (3%)

Fewer charity trustees say they look to the Charity Commission when they are unsure of something in their role. Instead, they rely on fellow trustees.

Charity trustees look to other colleagues or trustees for guidance when they are unsure about something in their role



Charity trustees want the Commission to provide further guidance on raising funds, securing grants and managing their charities' accounts

Most commonly, trustees want the Commission to provide guidance on the following:

Guidance on raising funds and securing grants

“**Help from a funding officer** to present our needs for funding successfully to organisations where so many charities are competing for ever-diminishing pots of funding.”

“Funding outlets are an important key to success for any charity, so **we need more information on this.**”

Guidance on trustees' key responsibilities

“It should be **easier to access and read the responsibilities of trustees.**”

“A **guide to being a trustee** with all the points covered.”

Guidance on managing and filing accounts

“**Filing responses to the Charity Commission** – simplified forms and clearer instructions would help.”

“A **free online course** on how to read and understand accounts.”

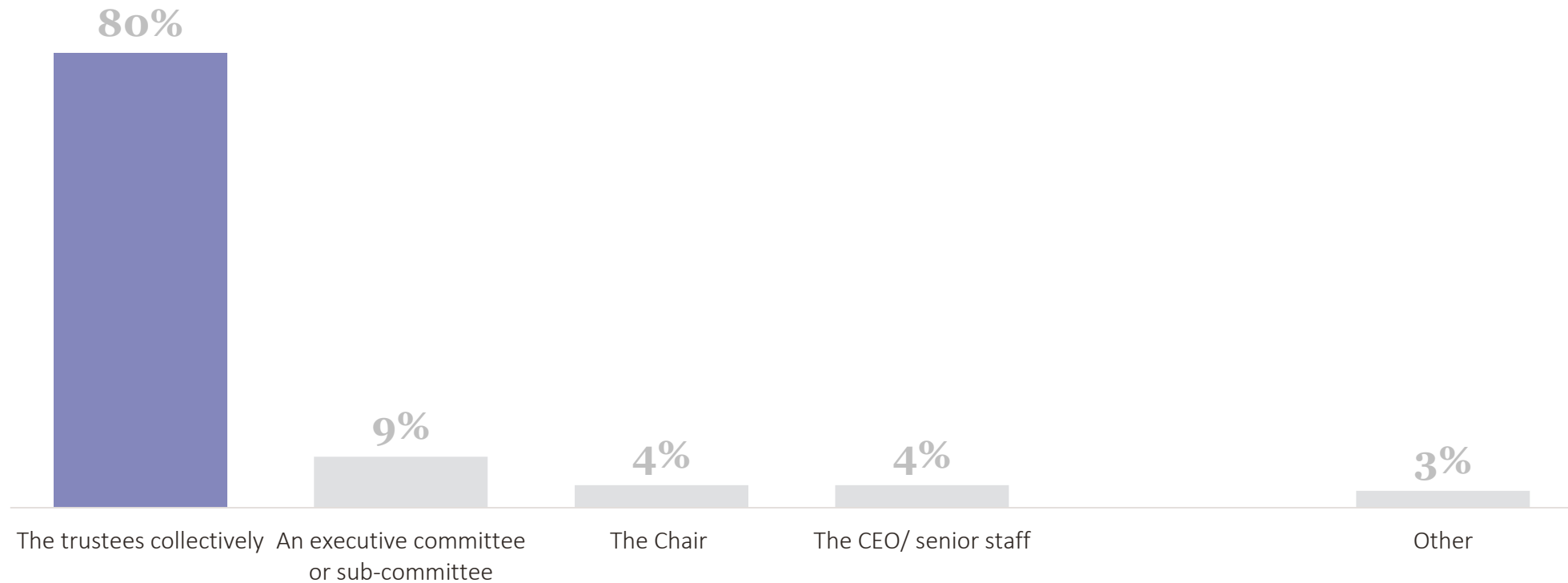
They would like guidance to be free from jargon and presented as clearly as possible

Most trustees come to decisions collectively

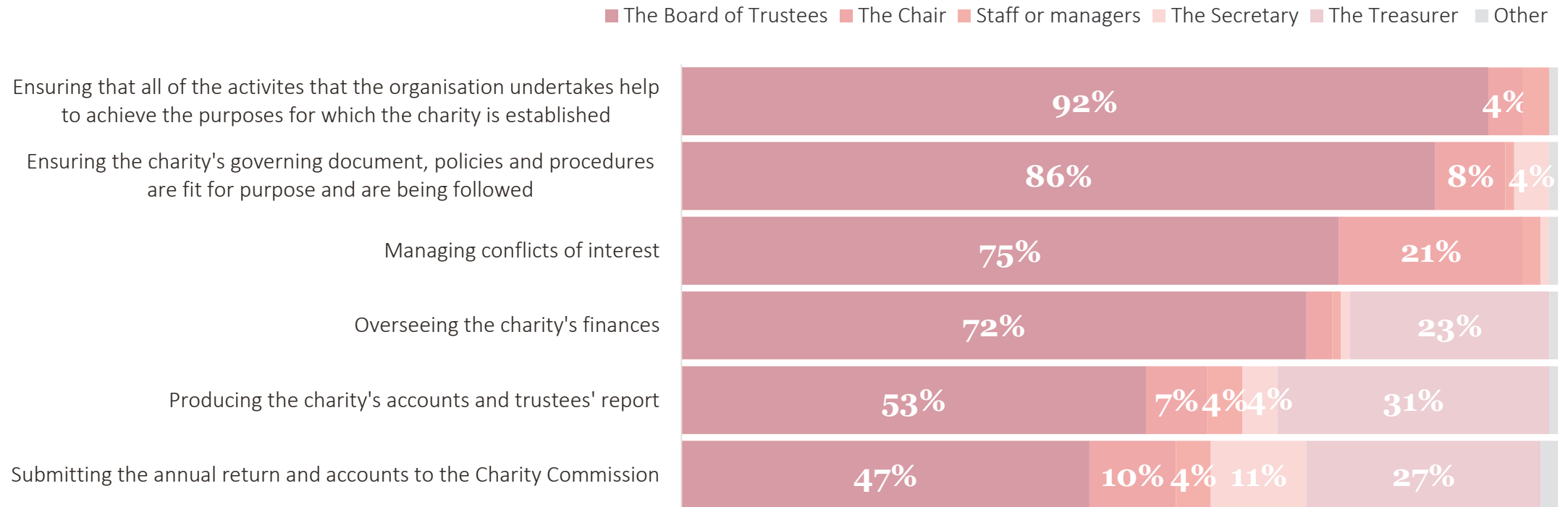
Charity trustees primarily rely on other trustees when coming to decisions and think the board of trustees are responsible for most of the decisions in their charities.

This is in keeping with their reliance on their professional networks for help and guidance.

Trustees collectively make the most important decisions in their charities...



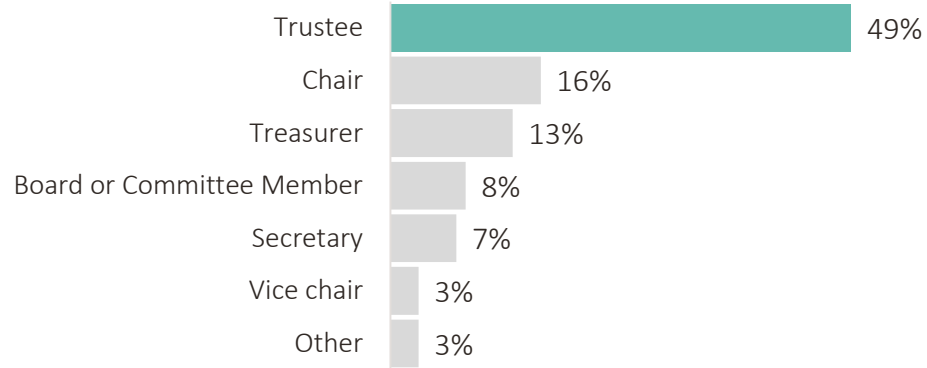
... and most think the board of trustees is responsible for their charity's activities (or the treasurer for matters relating to finances and accounts)



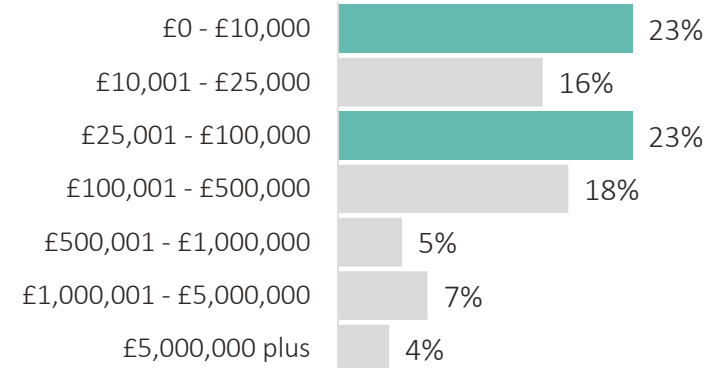
Appendix

The respondents

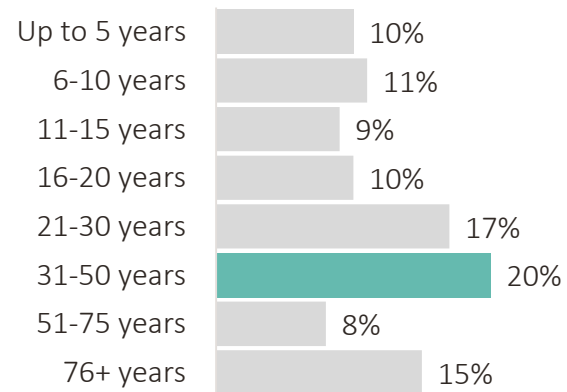
Role



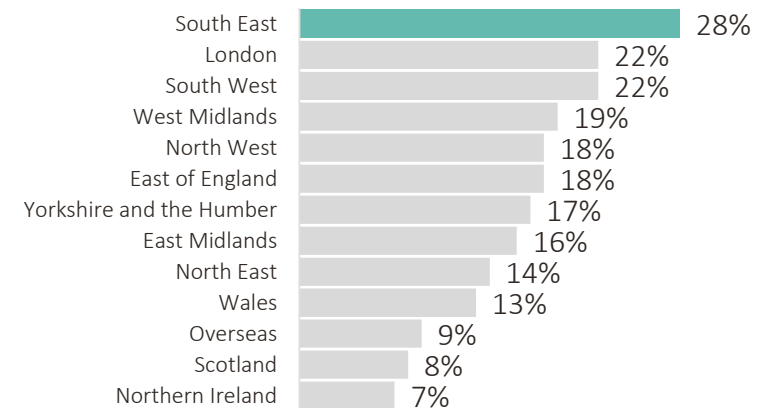
Income



Years operating



Geography



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