



Public Trust in Charities 2026

Prepared for the Charity Commission for England and Wales by BMG Research

Contents

1. Executive summary
2. Overall trust in charities
3. Drivers of trust in charities
4. Supporting charities
5. Charities in the news
6. Awareness and knowledge of the Charity Commission
7. The impact the Charity Commission has on trust
8. Register of charities
9. Trustees
10. Background and methodology



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

- **Trust in charities remains resilient:** Overall trust has held steady at a high level since 2020, with 57% having high trust, and charities continue to outperform almost all other institutions. However, there has been a small rise in those with low trust in charities since 2024 (9% in 2024, 11% in 2026). Those with less contact with charities and lower awareness of the Commission are more likely to have low trust. This reinforces the link between visibility, understanding and trust.
- **Trust, engagement and giving form a virtuous (and vicious) cycle:** High trust is associated with donating, volunteering and other forms of contact, while lower trust tends to be linked to disengagement or informal support (e.g. helping individuals directly). Those with high trust of charities, but who are not donating are still often supportive in other ways, whereas medium-trust groups are more likely to disengage due to affordability pressures. High trust is also correlated with higher frequencies of financial donation.
- **Money reaching the end cause remains the most important driver of trust:** But perceptions that charities ‘make a real difference’ and act as a voice have grown in importance. This reflects a shift from a narrow focus on financial efficiency towards a broader expectation that charities demonstrate purpose, relevance and outcomes.
- **Tolerance for overheads exists, but only when impact and restraint are visible.** While focus group participants accepted that charities must invest in staff, fundraising and infrastructure, this acceptance was highly conditional. High CEO pay appears to be a focal symbol of mistrust, not just as a cost issue, but as a perceived misalignment with charitable values. Where overheads appear excessive or poorly justified, they can undermine confidence. Strong opposition to paying trustees also underscores a broader public expectation that charity roles should be values-based.

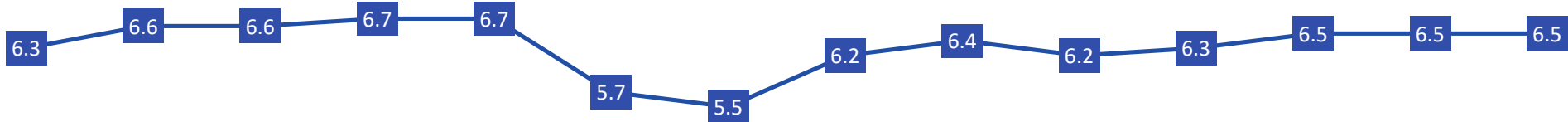
Executive Summary

- **Financial pressures are suppressing giving, but concerns about value also have a role to play:** The proportion using charity shops or taking part in charity campaigns has fallen this year. The cost-of-living crisis is the primary reason given for reduced donations, affecting both individual behaviour and perceptions of national giving trends. However, donations to local charities and causes with personal relevance are more likely to be protected as donors seek greater visibility of impact.
- **The proportion using charity services has fallen:** For the first time since the pandemic, the proportion attending charity-run community facilities, using other charity services and receiving food, financial, medical or similar help has declined. This suggests an easing of pressure for some households. However, longer-term declines in the public assisting with campaigning, volunteering and some forms of giving indicate a narrowing base of 'active' supporters, increasing reliance on those with high trust and capacity to engage.
- **The Charity Commission's presence reassures in principle, but there continues to be limited understanding of its role:** Around half of the public are more likely to support charities after learning about the Commission's role yet focus group findings reveal uncertainty about how charities are regulated in practice. This gap highlights a distinction between knowing the Commission exists and understanding what the Commission actually does and what its remit is.

Overall Trust in Charities

Overall trust remains in line with previous years

Overall Trust in Charities over time (mean score)



From 2018 onwards, the survey was conducted online rather than via telephone. This question, however, was also asked on a concurrent telephone survey as a comparison in 2018, giving a mean score of 5.7/10 (a difference of +0.2)

2005 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

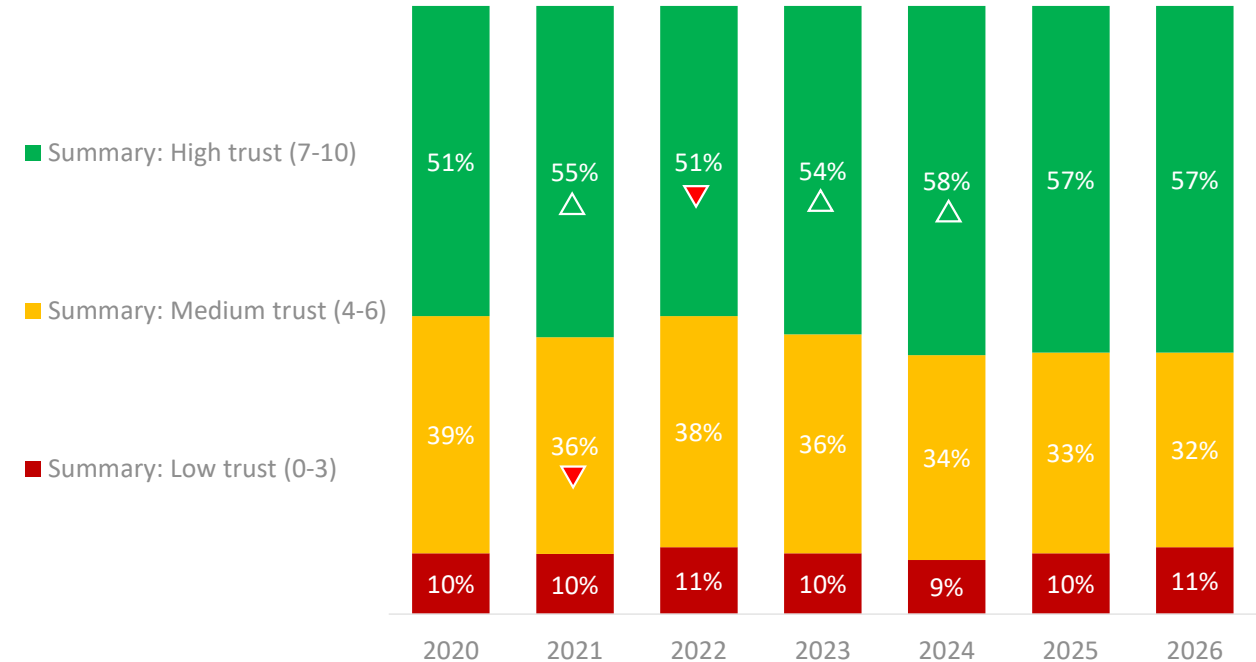


A1. Firstly, thinking about how much trust and confidence you have in charities overall, on a scale of 0-10 where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, how much trust and confidence do you have in charities? Base: All respondents (4681)



Over half (57%) say they have high trust in charities while 1 in 10 have low trust, in line with 2025. Those with higher education and contact with charities continue to be more likely to trust charities

Trust in Charities



Analysis

High trust in charities is higher among:

- Those with a degree or higher (69%)
- Socio-economic grade AB (69%)
- Least deprived (63%)
- Doing well financially (71%)

Having knowledge of the charity sector also increases high trust:

- Heard of the Charity Commission (63%)
- High knowledge of the Charity Commission (80%)
- Donated money to charity in the last 12 months (66%)



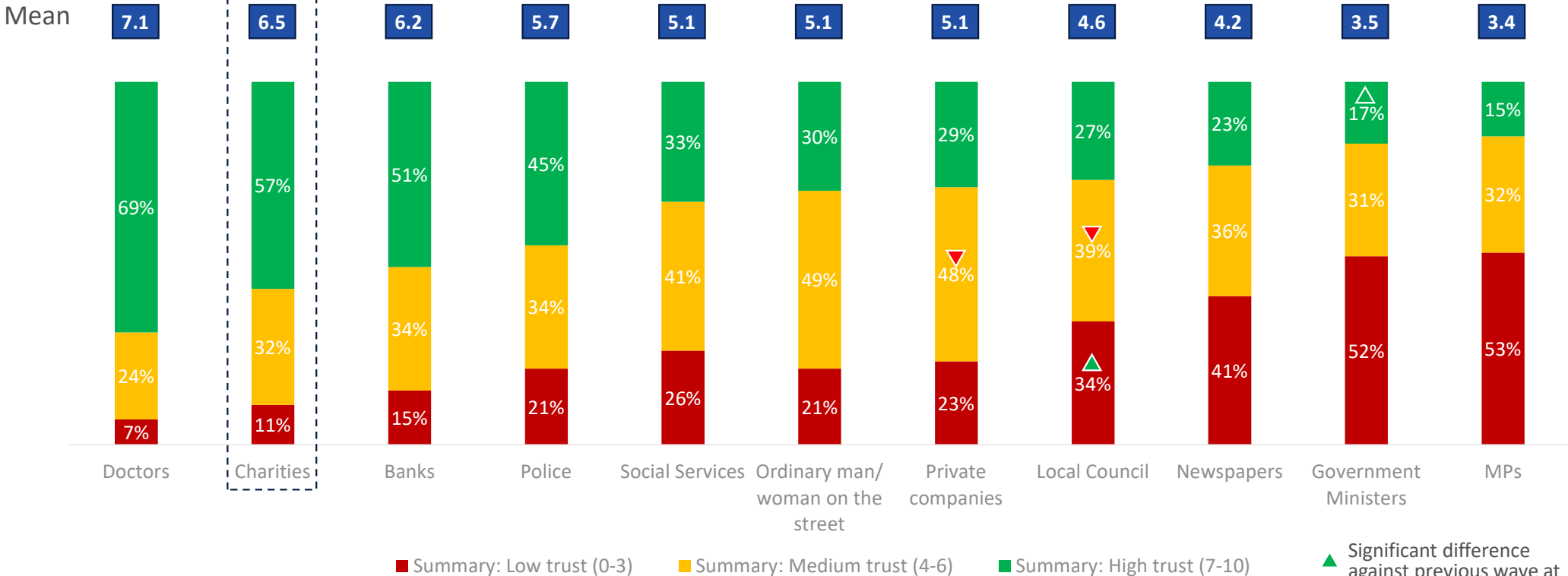
A1. Firstly, thinking about how much trust and confidence you have in charities overall, on a scale of 0-10 where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, how much trust and confidence do you have in charities? Base: All respondents: 2020 (4042), 2021 (4037), 2022 (4348), 2023 (4316), 2024 (4599), 2025 (4092), 2026 (4681)

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
▼



Trust in charities still ranks very highly compared to other organisations, with only doctors continuing to rank higher

Trust in other organisations



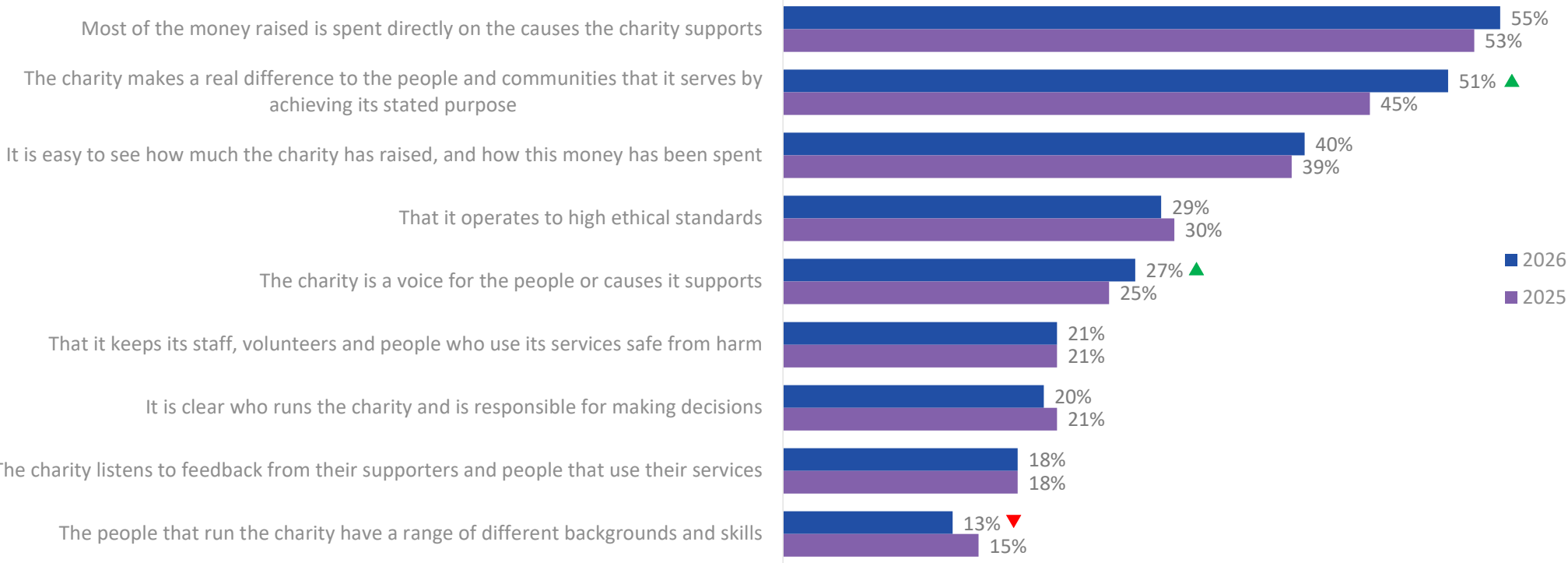
Summary: A2. On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means you trust them completely and 0 means you don't trust them at all, please tell me how much trust and confidence you have in each? Base: All respondents (4681)



Drivers of Trust in Charities

Donations reaching the end cause remains the top selected driver of trust, but the charity making a difference and being a voice for those it supports have increased in importance

Importance in whether to trust a charity or not





Participants in focus groups stressed the importance of money going the end cause, and agreed the “end cause” is what directly benefits those the charity supports

What “donations being spent on the end cause” means

Participants understood “end cause” spending as anything directly benefiting those in need/the cause, not administration or overheads. For animal charities, this meant things like food, veterinary care, litter, heating, shelter facilities, or rehoming support. For health charities, it meant medical care, research, equipment, or hospice services.



“I would say the end cause is the actual help... the actual help reaching people or communities in need. Things like providing food to the hungry, paying for medical treatments, funding education, building shelters, or delivering clean water... basically the direct impact that improves someone’s life.”

Importance of money going to the end cause

Money reaching the end cause was extremely important to most people. Many said it was “paramount” that donations go to the end cause rather than administrative costs. Participants explained that when they give money, they expect it to make a difference to the cause, not be spent on salaries and admin costs.

Some said they want to know how much of their pound reaches the cause, similar to a “GoFundMe” style breakdown. Others noted that previous media stories about low proportions reaching the cause had made them far more cautious of charity donations.



“I don’t want it to go to anything else... I don’t want it to go on admin costs and salaries. I want it to go to the actual nitty-gritty of trying to find something that helps.”

“I like to know the breakdown... like you get on GoFundMe where it shows exactly where the money is going.”



Participants understood overheads were necessary, but felt they should be limited where possible

Overheads

Participants generally accepted some overhead spending is necessary. They acknowledged the need for costs that directly support service delivery and operational costs:

- Spend on staff that deliver the charity services
- Fundraising and advertising to raise awareness and future income
- Investment in technology that keeps donor data secure
- Basic administration (e.g. finance)

Participants also noted that acceptable overhead levels vary by charity size and complexity, as larger organisations often require more infrastructure.

Overall, there was a preference for keeping overheads as low as possible without undermining impact, with many favouring around 10% or less, though some accepted 20–25% as realistic for larger or more complex charities.



“Fundraising raises awareness for next year... you have to put a certain portion into fundraising... If you stop spending money on fundraising, outreach, and administration costs, then you wouldn’t have anything to run the next year.”

“Ideally most of the donation, around 70 to 80%, should go directly to helping people or funding projects. The remaining 20 to 30% can be used for necessary overheads like staff and administration, as long as it’s reasonable and transparent.”

Concerns about duplication in overheads

A strong theme across the groups was the belief that many charities are duplicative, leading to unnecessary overheads and wasted donor money. Participants felt that there are multiple charities working on the same issue but each have their own overhead costs that take away from the end cause. Some argued that charities tackling similar causes could merge or combine infrastructure, so donors’ money could be used more efficiently on overheads and more reaches the end cause.



“There seems to be quite a proliferation of charities... how much of that... is just duplicated and lost that could actually be going to those end causes.”

“There are so many charities all doing the same thing... all that is being multiplied by admin costs.”

“Why couldn’t you have animal charities where you’ve got shared infrastructure costs?”



High CEO pay was seen to detract from money going to the end cause, and could deter the public from donating money

Some see CEO pay as excessive and inappropriate for a charity

Several participants perceived high CEO salaries in large national charities as “appalling” and “ridiculous”, arguing that charity CEOs should not be earning figures comparable to the private-sector. They felt this level of pay contradicts the values of a charitable organisation.

“The average CEO for a [large] charity gets the best part of £200,000 a year, which is appalling in my eyes, nobody should be working for a charity getting paid that level of money.”

Participants said that if a CEO earns a high salary it would reduce their willingness to donate, and some would stop donating entirely.

“It would affect my willingness to donate, as does the knowledge that CEOs get paid that fat-cat salary because you do feel like you’re funding their BMW or whatever.”

Participants also felt some charity leaders could behave irresponsibly and still earn a high salary which increased their scepticism in charity salaries and reduced their trust in how charities were using donations.

Salaries were seen as diverting money away from the end cause

Participants believed that large CEO salaries take funds away from frontline services and the beneficiaries of the charity.

While they acknowledged that charities have overheads and need to be efficient, they were not happy with the idea of charities paying similar salaries to businesses.

Private sector rates are seen to be unacceptable

Participants expected charities to hire leaders who are motivated by the charity cause, not the salary.

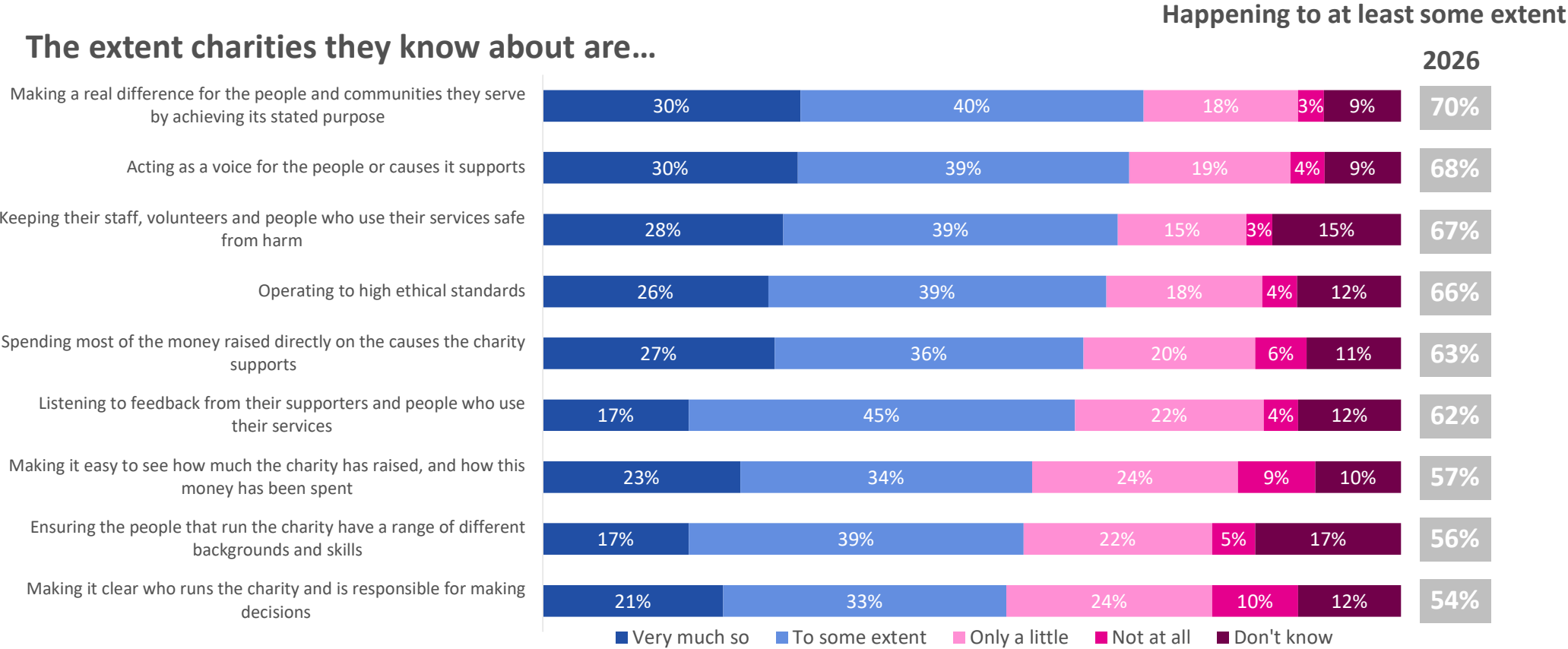
“The best people for the job wouldn’t accept that salary they’d care about the charity and do it for less.”

A few participants suggested CEOs could be paid a lower salary with bonuses tied to performance (e.g. hitting fundraising goals). Others felt CEOs should earn much less than private sector equivalents as a matter of principle.

A small minority recognised that leadership roles are demanding and require skill but still believed salaries should be **reasonable** and reflect charitable values. They felt senior leaders should accept lower pay if they are genuinely committed to the cause.

“I think they should be committed to the cause and therefore know they’re only going to earn 75% of what they would in the private sector.”

Most think charities they know about are making a real difference, as well as acting as a voice for the people or causes they support.



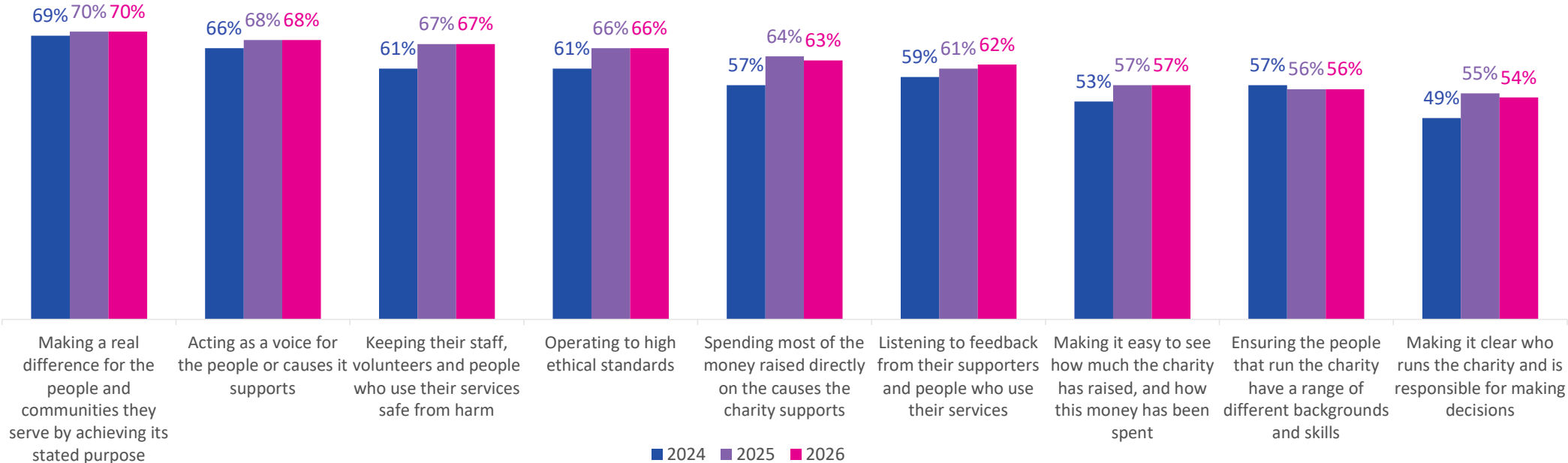
C1. To what extent do you think that charities that you know about are...? Base: All respondents: 2024 (4599), 2025, (4092), 2026 (4681)

▲ Significant difference against 2024 at 95% confidence interval
▼



Generally, positive perceptions of charities increased in 2025, and have held stable in 2026.

Happening to at least some extent in the charities they know about...



C1. To what extent do you think that charities that you know about are...? Base: All respondents: 2024 (4599), 2025, (4092), 2026 (4681)

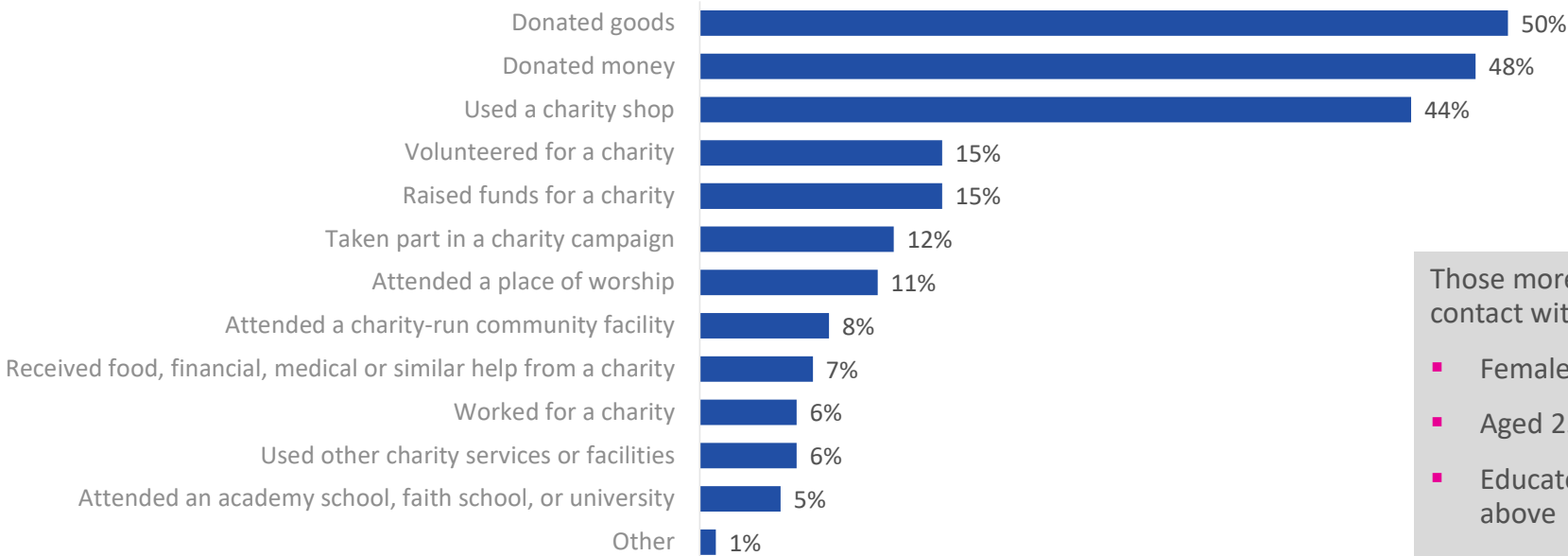
▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
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Supporting Charities

Donating goods, money and using a charity shop are the most common forms of contact with a charity, while far fewer volunteer, raise funds or take part in a charity campaign

Charity contact



Those more likely to have had contact with charities tend to be:

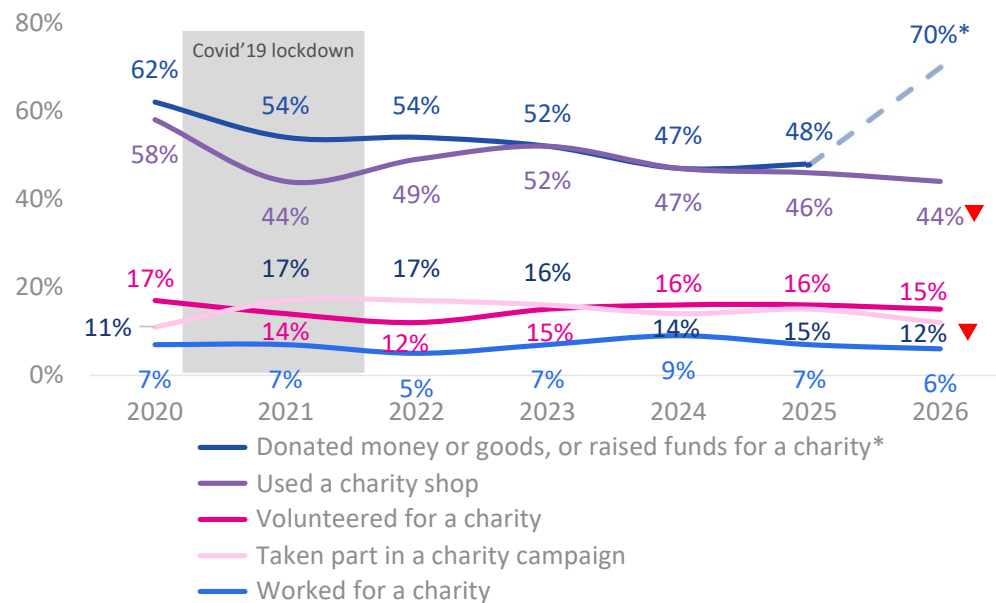
- Female
- Aged 25-34
- Educated to degree level or above
- High trust in charities
- Have heard of the Charity Commission

This aligns with data in the latest UK Giving Report from Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) where 50% of UK adults say they donated money in 2024 and 2025 [UK Giving Report 2026 | CAF](#)

E1. Have you or any of your close family had contact with a charity in the last year? Base: All respondents: (4681)

For the first time since Covid we have seen a fall in the proportion using charity services, although some forms of charitable giving continue to decline

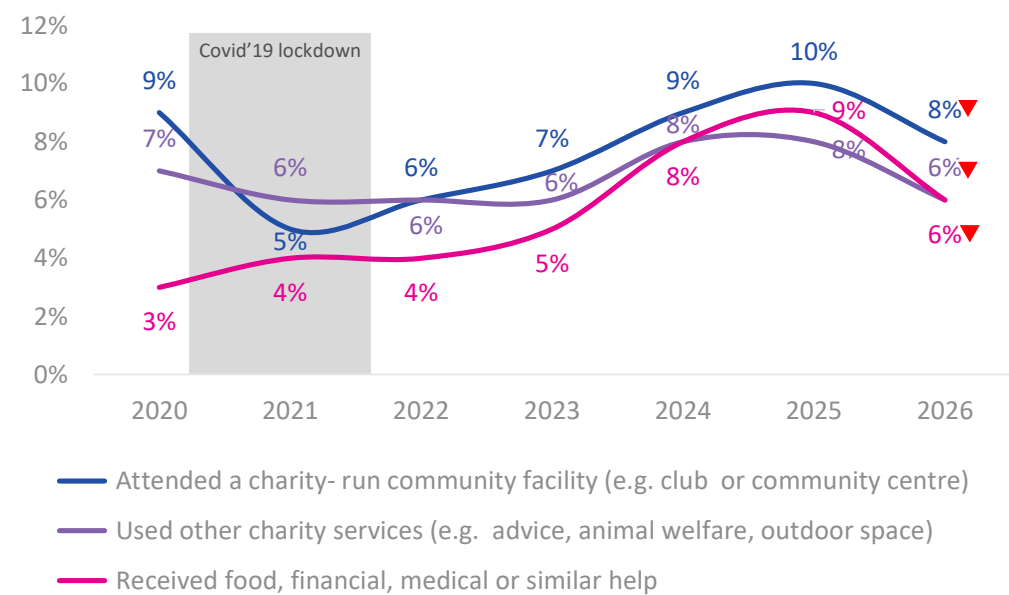
Charitable giving over time



*In 2026 'donated money', 'donated goods' and 'raised funds' were asked as separate codes. Results are not directly comparable to previous years. 2026 results:

Donated money	48%
Donated goods	50%
Raised funds	15%

Receiving from charities over time

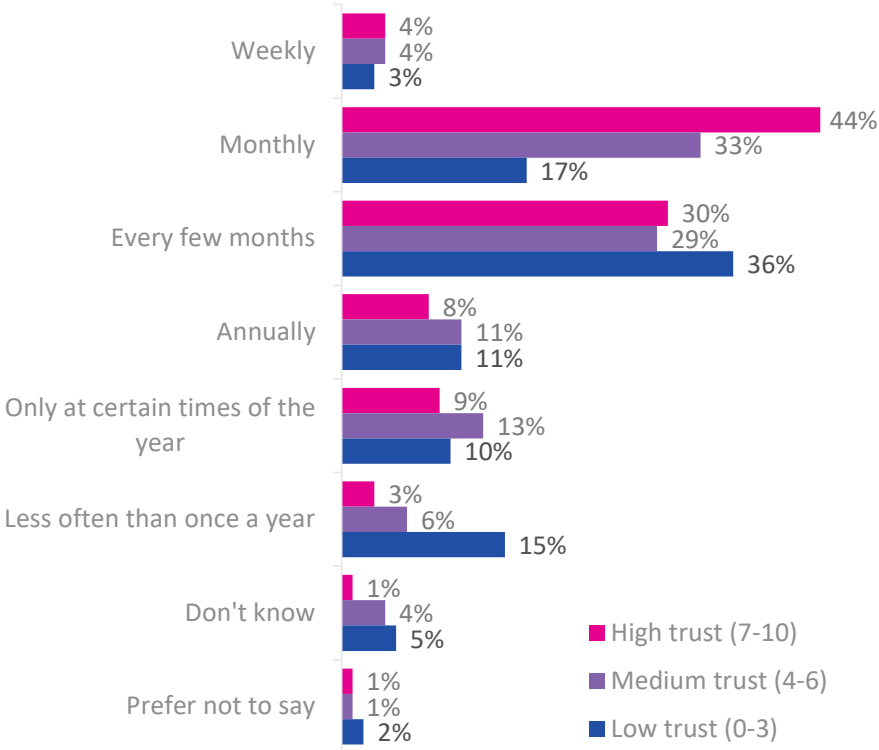
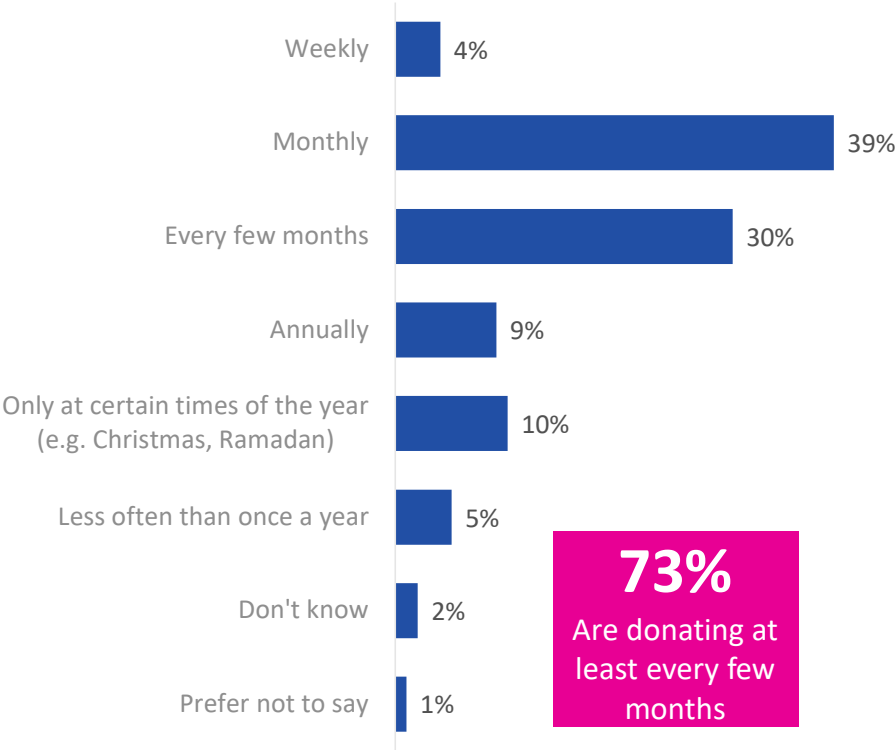


E1. Have you or any of your close family had contact with a charity in the last year? Base: All respondents: 2024 (4599), 2025 (4092), 2026 (4681).

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
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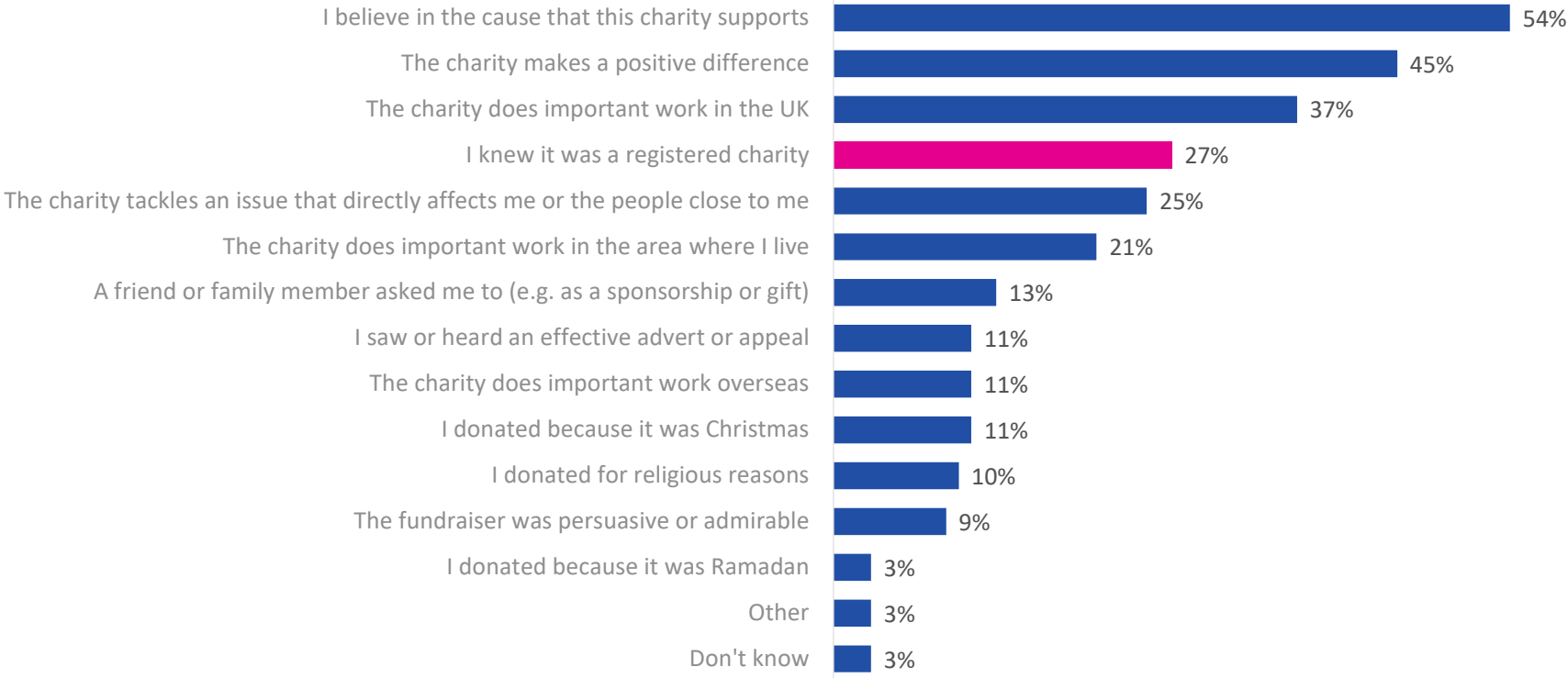
Of those that donated money, the majority donated monthly or every few months. Higher trust in charities is correlated with more frequent donation

Frequency of donating money



The main reasons for donating money were believing in the cause and the impact the charity makes, but knowing a charity was registered plays a part

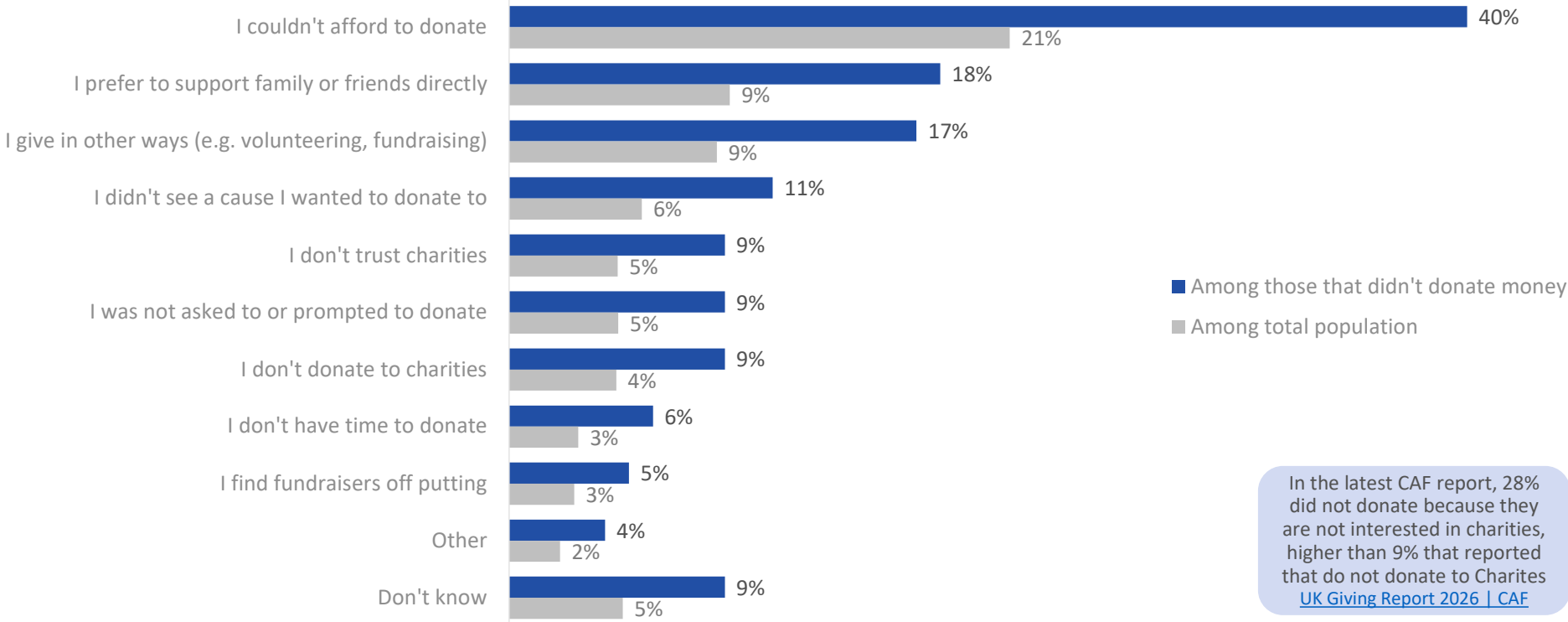
Reasons for donating money



E9. Why did you/your family choose to give to the specific charity that you did – rather than a different cause? Base: donated money to charity (2313)

The main reason for not donating money in the past year was not being able to afford to, although a sizeable minority prefer to support in other ways

Reasons for not donating money



In the latest CAF report, 28% did not donate because they are not interested in charities, higher than 9% that reported that do not donate to Charities [UK Giving Report 2026 | CAF](#)

E10. You mentioned you haven't donated to charity in the last 12 months. Which of the following reasons best describe why? Base: Not donated money to charity (2368)



Having a personal connection was the main motivation for donating to charity, but adverts and certain times of the year also motivated people to give

Motivations for donating

1

Personal connection

Participants were most likely to donate when a cause touches participants or their families directly, particularly around illnesses or experiences with local hospitals and hospices. Others were moved by experiences with animal charities, especially when they had adopted a pet or volunteered locally and “*saw the situation physically*”, which cemented long-term loyalty.

2

Advertising and appeals

Participants were motivated by advertising, social media posts and emotional campaigns. Examples included adverts showing neglected animals or end-of-life care, or social media content about mental health or suicide. Adverts prompted donations even when the cause wasn't personally connected.

3

Time of the year

Those with Christian beliefs described giving more at Easter and Christmas because these times symbolise showing love and generosity. Those with Islamic beliefs said donating is encouraged and expected during Ramadan so their giving increases at this time. Others without religious beliefs were also motivated by the Christmas season as it is a period of joy and they were prompted to think of people who had less than them.

4

Heightened emotion

Participants were motivated to donate in response to emergencies and crises (wars, floods, international appeals), although some were cautious and checked charities carefully first. Participants were also motivated to make donations related to personal life events, such as grief-related dates.

Donating money vs time

Personal connection was also the main motivator for donating time to a charity, but secondary motivations differed from giving money.

Personal interest was a secondary driver for donating time. Some participants took on sponsored challenges because they enjoyed the activity and they were able to put their skills to good use. Others volunteered so they could see the impact the charity was making and provide more practical help (e.g. volunteering at an animal shelter).

However, not all participants could donate time. Many felt they didn't have the time to volunteer or fundraise, and some felt uncomfortable asking for sponsorship from others and would rather donate their own money. Instead, participants would find other ways to support charities like reposting appeals online.



Financial pressures was the main reason participants had reduced their donations

How participants giving habits have changed

Most participants had reduced their charitable giving in recent years for the following reasons:

- Most mentioned
- 1. Cost of living pressures:** less disposable income and needing to cut back on non-essential spend. Some choose to shop in charity shops instead of donating money.
 - 2. Change in personal circumstances:** retiring or having children so having less money available to spend on charity.
 - 3. Feeling disillusioned with large charities:** concerns over high CEO pay, admin costs and not seeing a visible impact from their donation.
 - 4. Perceived increased pressure to donate:** Charities phoning asking for an increase in their donations leading to participants cancelling altogether.

Only those who had seen a large increase in their salary have increased their giving.

Where participants donated more irregularly they hadn't noticed a change in their charitable giving as their donations tend to be more reactive.

How participants choose which charities to keep supporting

Participants mainly prioritise causes with personal significance. This included:

- Charities linked to family/friend/personal health issues
- Animal charities they have personally interacted with (e.g., adopting a pet)
- Local organisations where they can “see the impact”

Participants also favour charities they perceive to be transparent and trustworthy:

- Are transparent with finances
- Provide regular updates or newsletters showing clear impact
- Have a good reputation

Participants were most likely to cut donations to large national charities. This was due to low visibility of impact and perceptions they get lots of donations from others.

A smaller group said they'd rather give smaller amounts to all their current charities than stop supporting any of them outright.

“I would possibly donate small amounts to a range of charities I already do, rather than cut anyone out.”

Participants also hypothesised on why donations have fallen nationally. Their suggested reasons closely aligned with their own reasons for reducing donations; cost-of-living pressures, possible erosion of trust and confidence in charities, public fatigue from constant appeals, feeling overwhelmed by the number of charities, and competing priorities and wider pressures.



Non-regular donors felt they couldn't donate regularly due to financial pressures, but did find other ways to support charities

Barriers to regular donating

Most who didn't donate regularly did infrequent one-off donations. Reasons for not donating regularly echoed earlier concerns about charities and reasons for reducing donations:

- **Financial pressures and competing priorities:** Several participants said that the current cost of living makes it difficult to commit to even small regular donations.
- **Not feeling donations have much impact:** Many worried that their money would not reach the end cause and therefore not make a difference. Participants spoke about charities being inefficient, wasting resources, or paying high executive salaries.
- **Too many charities and 'charity fatigue':** Participants felt overwhelmed by the number of charities, TV adverts, doorstep fundraisers and street collectors, describing the experience as being "bombarded" and "off putting". Some questioned why there are so many charities working on the same issues, and whether this leads to duplication and wasted admin costs.
- **Not wanting to be tied in:** Some simply didn't want to be signed up to a monthly direct debit, preferring to give when something personal comes up rather than committing long-term.

Other ways participants support charities

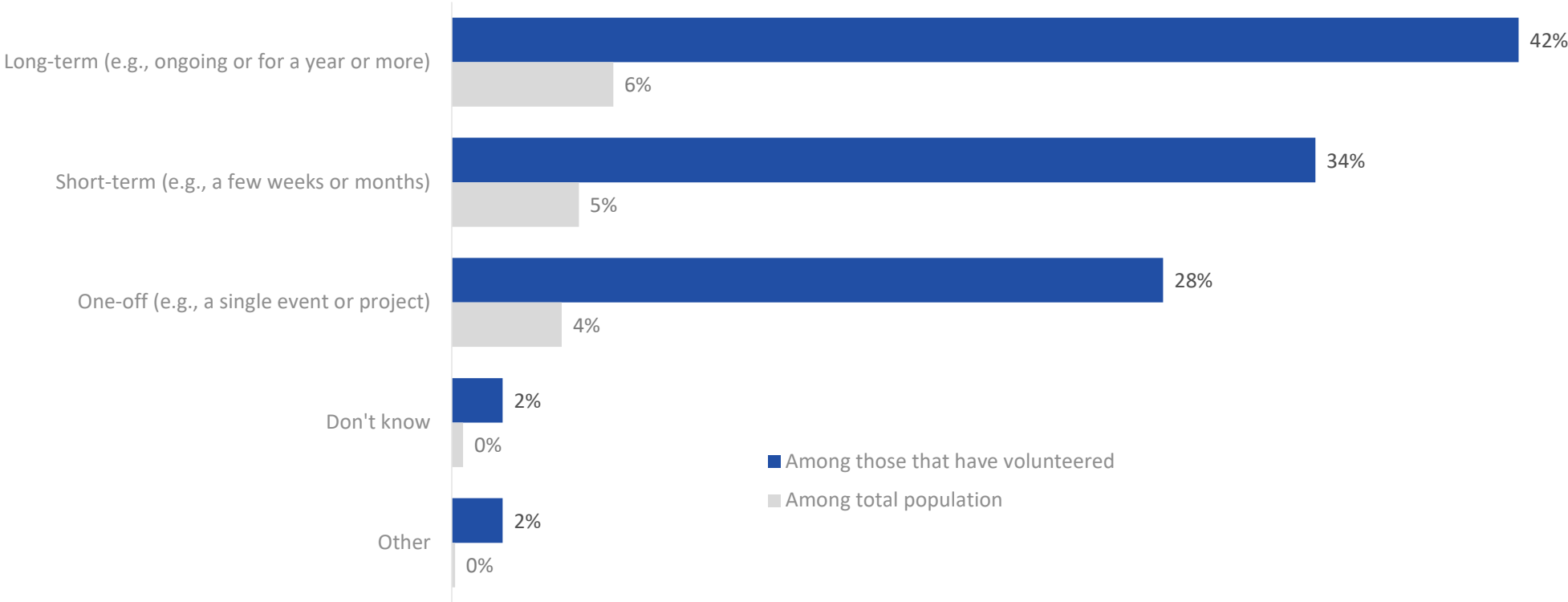
Most who didn't donate regularly tried to support charities in other ways:

- **Donating items** such as books, food, clothes, or toys to charity shops or local families
- **Shopping in charity shops**
- **Volunteering time** at local charities, libraries, athletics clubs or community organisations
- **Fundraising participation** such as taking part in fundraising nights like pub quizzes. *"it makes it more fun donating when everyone enjoys themselves."*
- **Helping neighbours or local people informally**

Participants said these forms of support felt more accessible than donating, and also benefited them as well, for example buying an item, decluttering their home or going to a social event with friends. They didn't have to worry about a financial commitment.

Of those that volunteered/family volunteered, 4 in 10 had long term involvement with the charity. Long term volunteer involvement has remained stable with 2025 (41%)

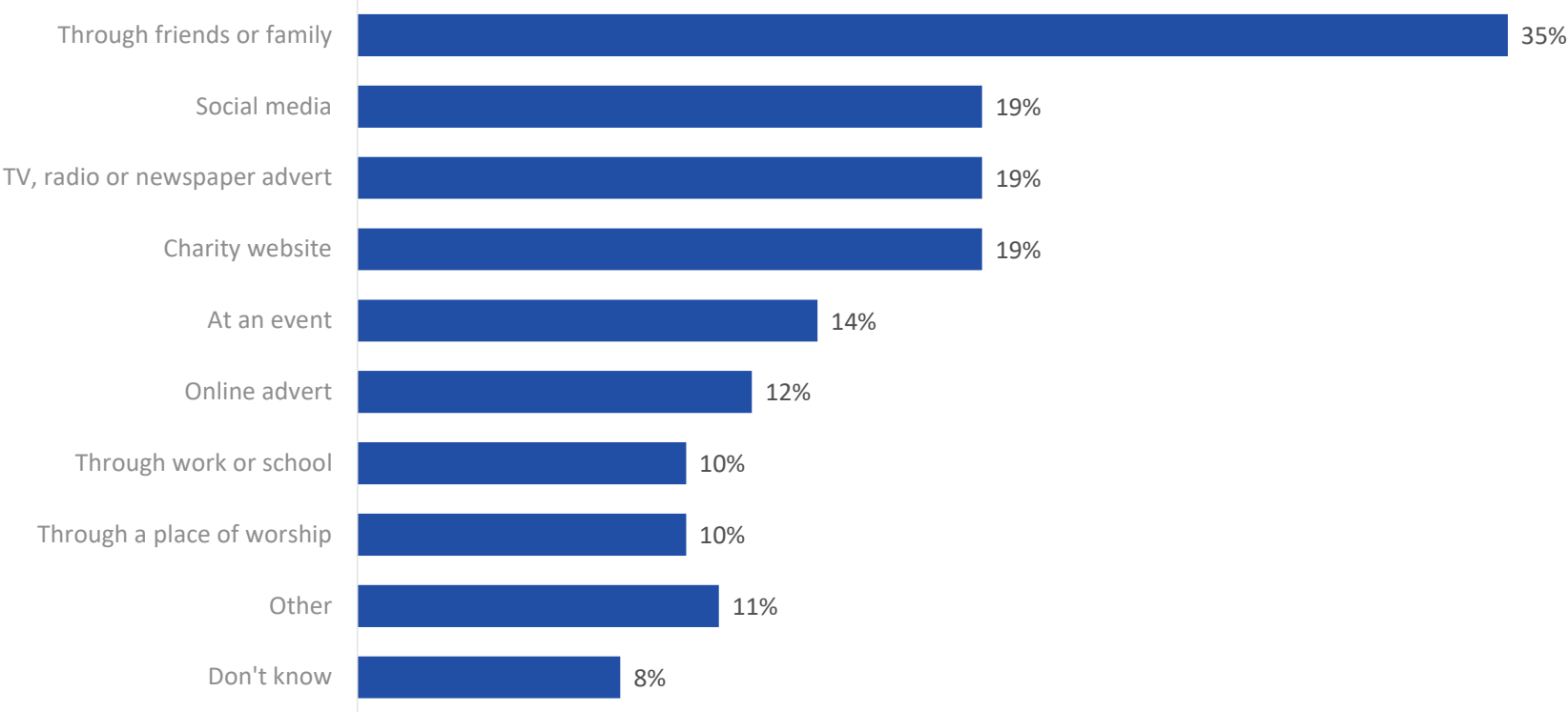
Volunteer involvement



E4. How would you describe your/your family members volunteer involvement with the charity? Base: where volunteered for a charity (775)

Over a third heard about the chosen charity through friends or family, with one in five hearing about them from each social media, TV, radio or newspaper adverts and the charities website.

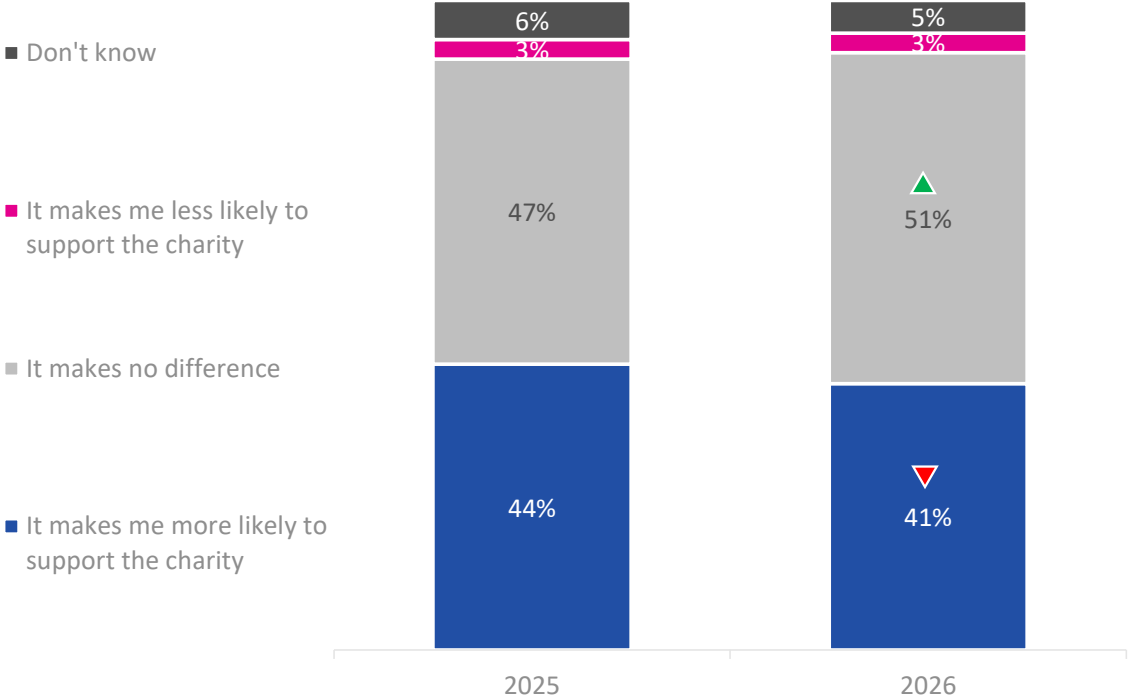
Where they heard about the charity



E8. How did you first hear about the charity/cause you/your family donated to most recently? Base: donated money to charity (2313)

Charities campaigning either makes participants more likely to support the charity or makes no difference, though more say it makes no difference compared to 2025

Impact of campaigning on support



Analysis

The impact of charities campaigning on support differed by the following:

- **Age:** 16 – 34-year-olds more likely to support (56%), 65+ are more likely to say it makes no difference (70%)
- **Country:** Respondents in England more likely to support (42%) compared to those in Wales (36%)
- **Education:** those degree educated are more likely to support (54%), those with no qualifications more likely to say it makes no difference (58%)
- **Donated money:** those that have donated are more likely to support (46%), those who have not donated are more likely to say it makes no difference (53%)

For those that are less likely to support a charity after it campaigns, they are more likely to be in Wales (5%) and have no contact with charities (6%).

C7. And if a charity is involved in campaigning, does that affect whether you would support them? Base: All respondents: 2025 (4092), 2026 (4681)

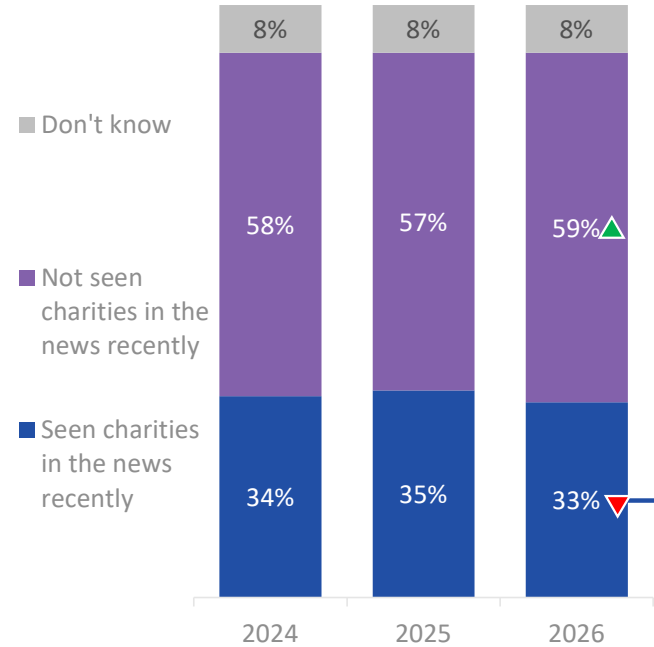
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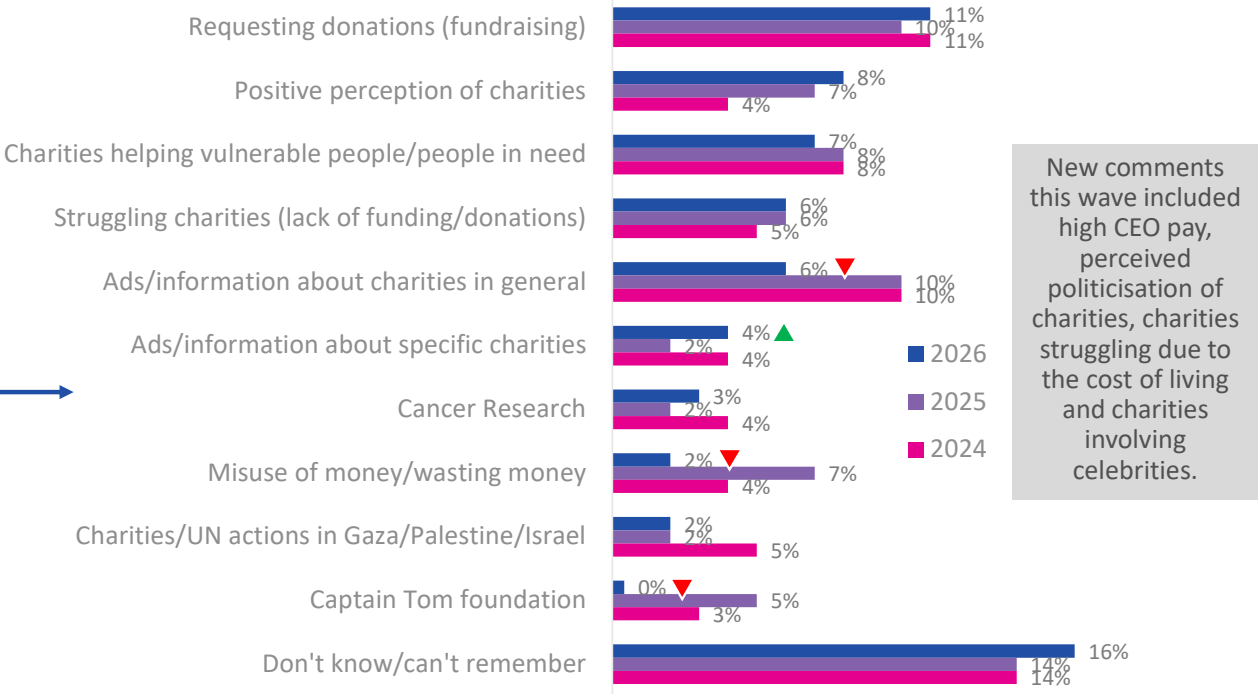
Charities in the news

A third have seen something in the news about charities recently, a decline since 2025. Most coverage remains around fundraising, but fewer mention charity scandals.

Heard/read/see charities in the news recently



What has been heard/seen about charities in the news (coded responses)



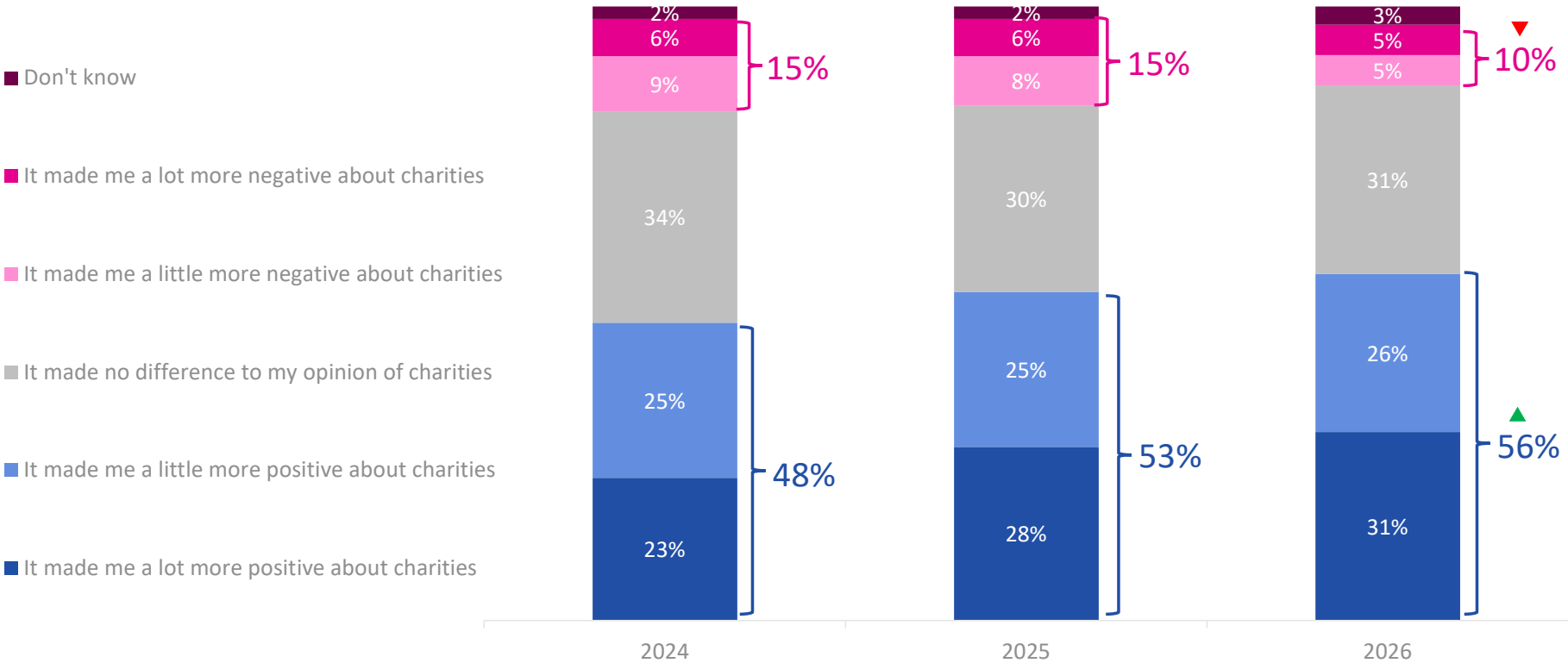
B1. Have you heard, read or seen anything recently about charities in the news? Base: All respondents: 2024 (4599), 2025 (4092), 2026 (4681) B2. What did you hear, read or see about charities in the news? Base: Where heard, read or seen something about charities (1625). Codes below 3% not shown.

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
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Despite fewer seeing charities in the news, where it has been seen it has left the public feeling more positive about charities

How what they have seen has changed opinions of charities



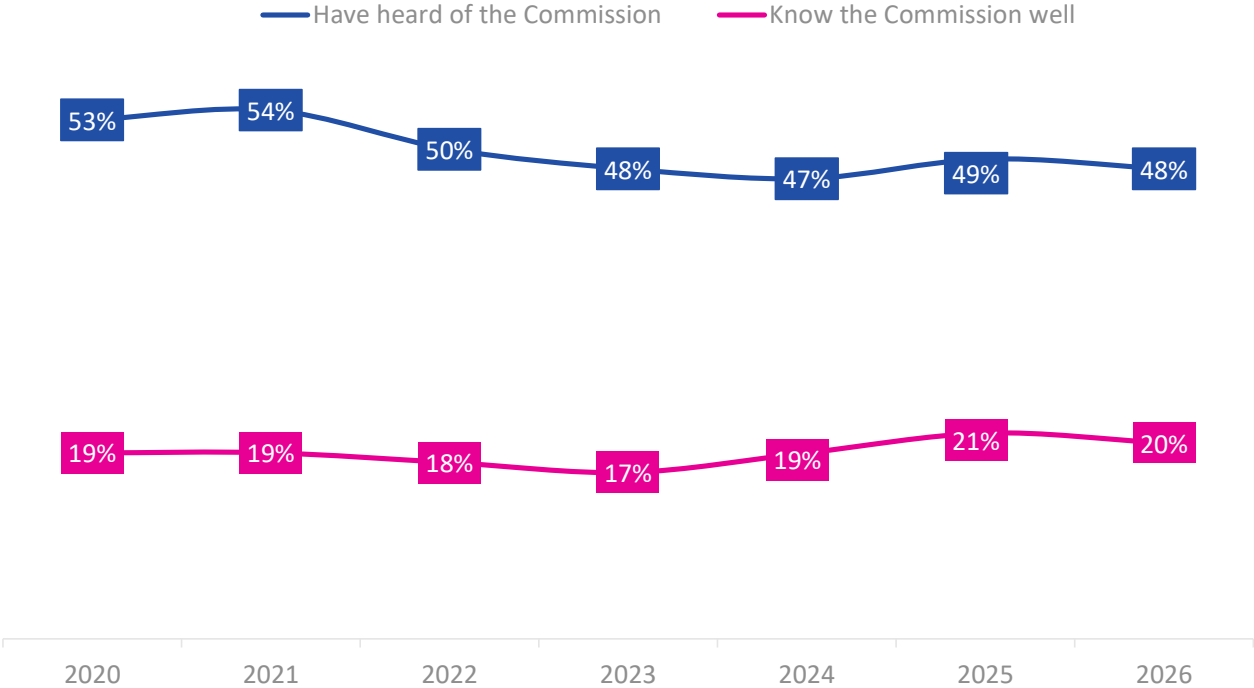
B3. How, if at all, did this change your opinion of charities? Base: Where heard, read or seen something about charities: 2024 (1643), 2025 (1525), 2026 (1625)

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
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Awareness and knowledge of the Charity Commission

Around half continue to have heard of the Commission and a fifth claim to know the Commission well

Awareness of the Charity Commission



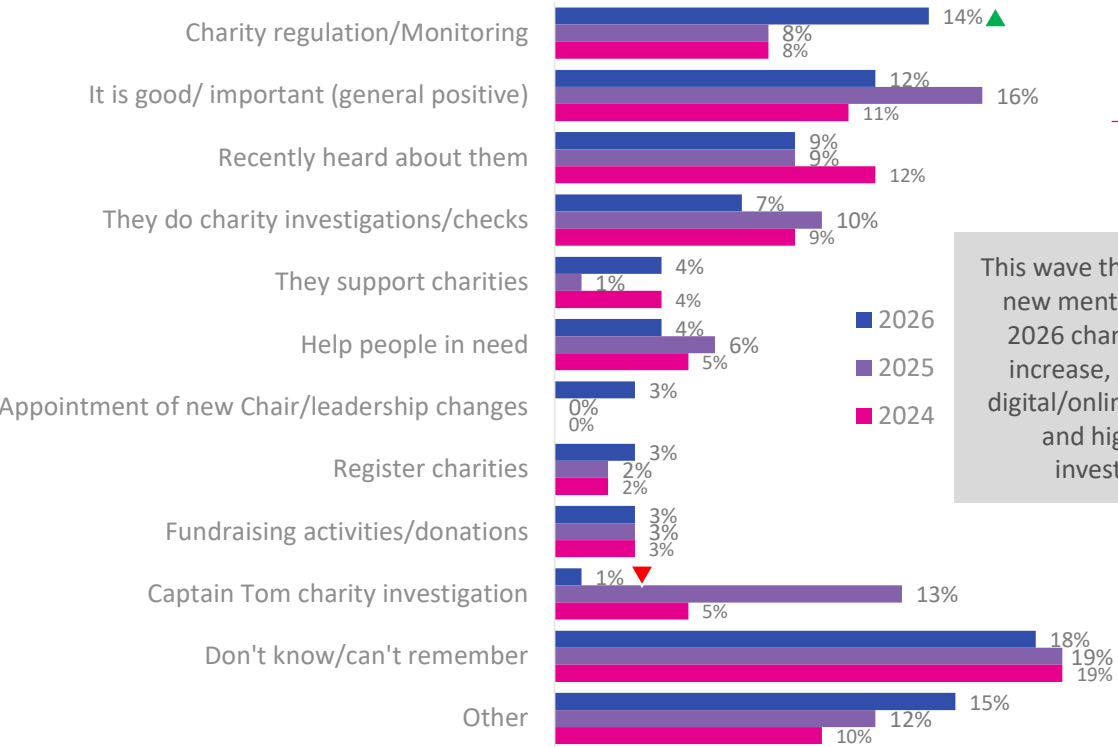
Qualitative Analysis

Participants’ awareness of the Charity Commission varied. Some had heard of it in name only and were unsure what it did, while others were moderately aware, describing it as a regulator similar to Ofsted, Ofgem or Companies House. A few participants were already familiar with its role, especially those who had checked whether charities were registered before donating. For those who donated less frequently, they were less aware of the Charity Commission.

Participants generally believed the Charity Commission’s role was to oversee charities, make sure they are properly run, and ensure they file accounts and comply with rules.

Fewer have heard, read or seen something about the Commission recently, driven by fewer high-profile charity scandals

What they have seen recently about the Charity Commission (coded responses)



This wave there have been new mentions of SORP 2026 changes, budget increase, guidance on digital/online governance and high-profile investigations

21% ▼

of those aware of the Charity Commission heard/read/saw something about them recently, a decline from 2025 (25%).

Qualitative Analysis

Some saw the Commission as responsible for investigating wrongdoing but were unsure how it did this. For some, the Commission's role felt vague or distant, with participants saying they only hear about it when a scandal hits the news.



B5. What did you hear, read or see about the Charity Commission? Base: Heard, read or seen something about the Charity Commission 2024 (455), 2025 (538), 2026 (553)

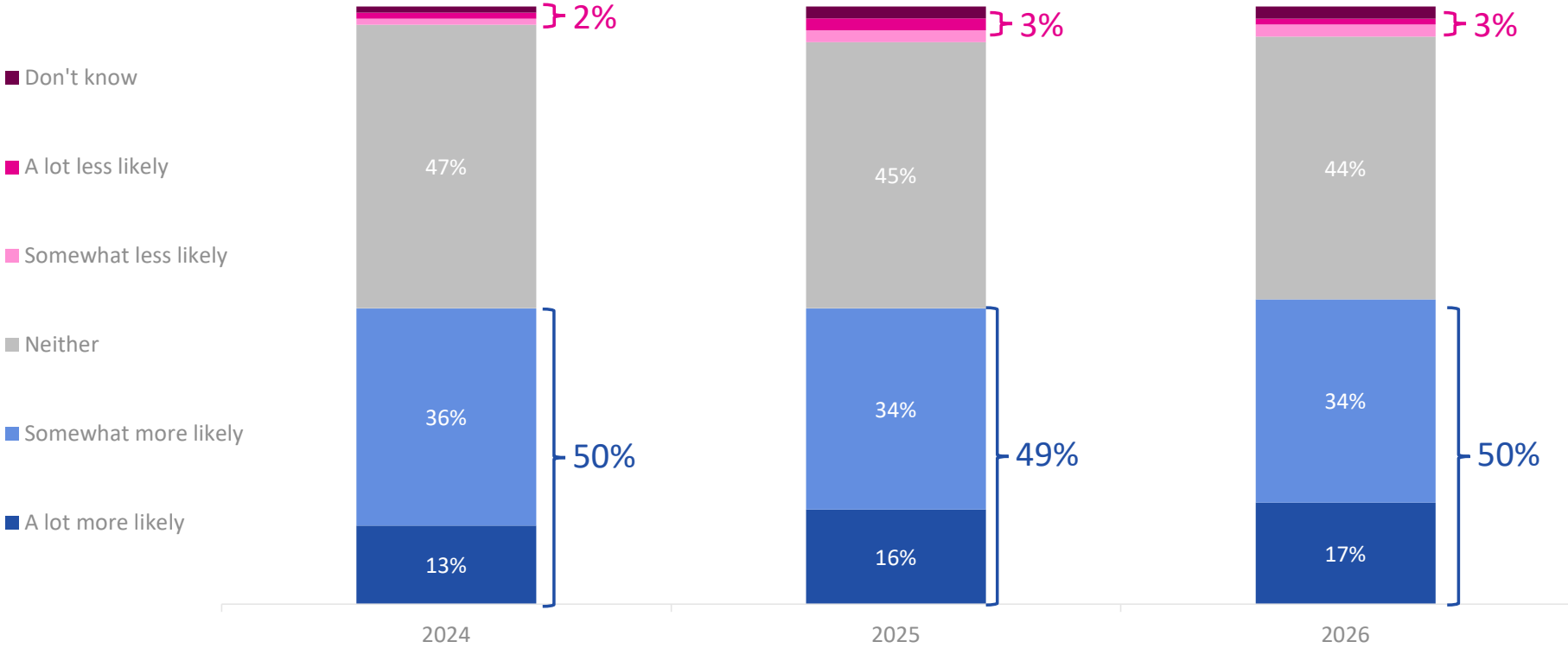
▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
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The impact the Charity Commission has on trust

Half are more likely to support charities after learning about the role of the Charity Commission, in line with previous waves

Likelihood to support charities after learning about the Charity Commission



B9. After reading the above, are you more or less likely to support charities? Base: All respondents: 2024 (4599), 2025 (4092), 2026 (4681)

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
▼





However, participants from the focus groups needed to understand more about the Commission before they felt it would increase their trust in the charity sector

Does the Charity Commission increase trust in charities?

Participants generally felt that the Charity Commission existing does not automatically increase trust. Although most had heard of it, they lacked clarity about how it monitors charities, what criteria it uses, how often checks happen, and whether all charities are reviewed or only those reported for wrongdoing.

“We know of the Charity Commission, but we don’t know what they do, how they do it, or the basis upon which they do it... we don’t know how often they look at these people, whether it’s yearly, five-yearly, ten-yearly, or if they send random checkers.”

This uncertainty left many unsure how effective the Commission really is as they weren’t sure if all charities were being monitored and how closely.

“People don’t know how they look at these charities or how often... so you don’t know what standards they’re being held to.”

Some also compared the Commission to other regulators that they felt were ineffective. Due to the lack of clarity around the role, they questioned whether it prevents waste, duplication, or inefficiency across the sector.

As a result, participants said that the regulator alone does not boost trust. Instead, they wanted clearer evidence of what the Commission checks, how investigations work, what actions are taken when issues are found and how often charities must demonstrate compliance.

They felt without monitoring being more transparent and visible, it is difficult to rely on the Charity Commission as a meaningful assurance that a charity is well-run or that donations are used properly.

What could the Charity Commission do to increase trust in charities?

Participants wanted to see more of **how** the Commission monitor charities:

- Publish how charities are monitored, what criteria is assessed, what wrongdoing has been found, and what penalties have been issued
- More visible enforcement, including shutting down or penalising charities that misuse funds or fail to meet reporting requirements

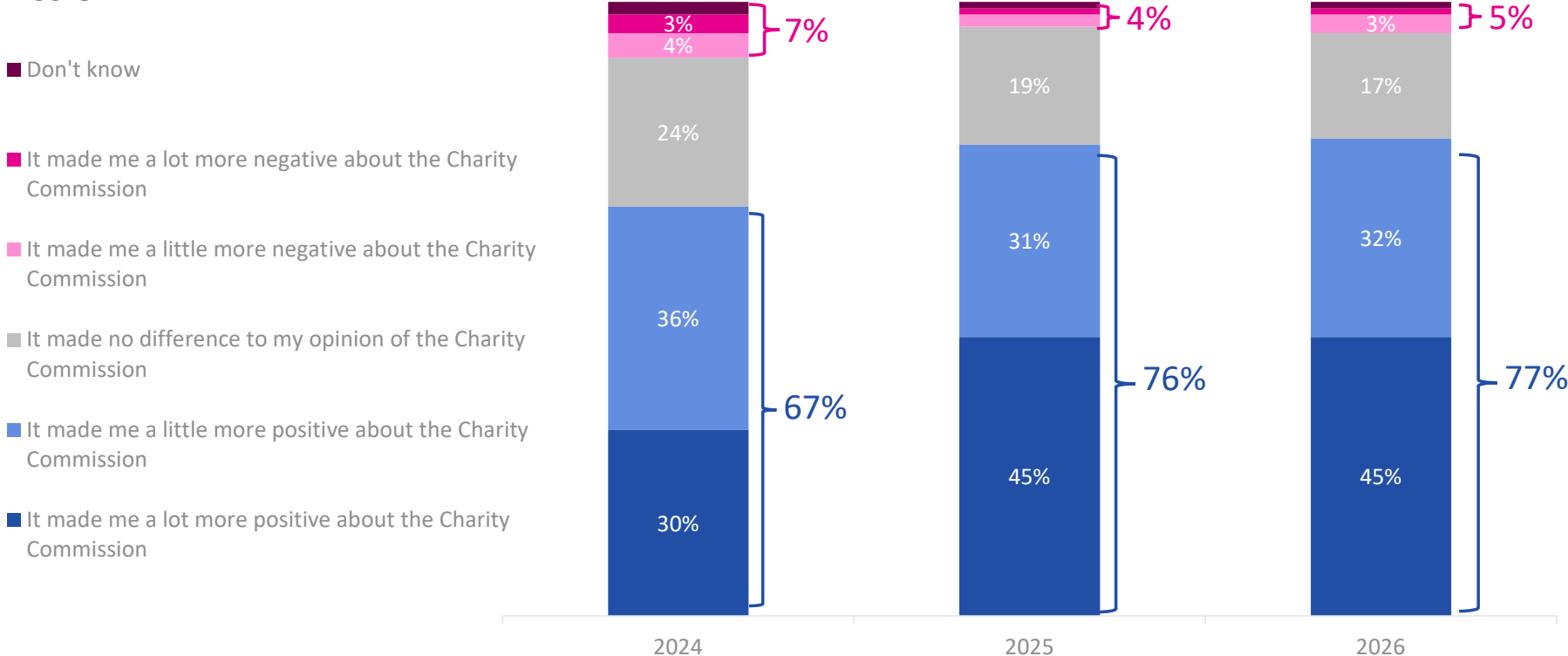
However, participants did say they were unlikely to go seek this information themselves. They didn’t want to view long reports the Commission published, instead they wanted something more easily accessible. Participants discussed public-facing information, such as a simple, recognisable hygiene-rating-style score that quickly shows whether a charity is well-run, transparent, and efficient.

Across all groups, participants talked about how much money is wasted in the charity sector. They were frustrated by the amount of duplication, with many charities doing the same thing and competing for the same donations. Several felt the Commission could take a role in reducing this inefficiency, for example by discouraging the creation of multiple charities with the same purpose or even encouraging mergers to cut duplication and admin costs. They generally didn’t recognise that this was beyond the Commission’s remit.

“Surely they should be saying we already have four charities doing this, don’t make another one.”

The recent increase in positive sentiment towards the Commission based on news coverage has been sustained in 2026

How what they have seen has changed opinions of the Charity Commission



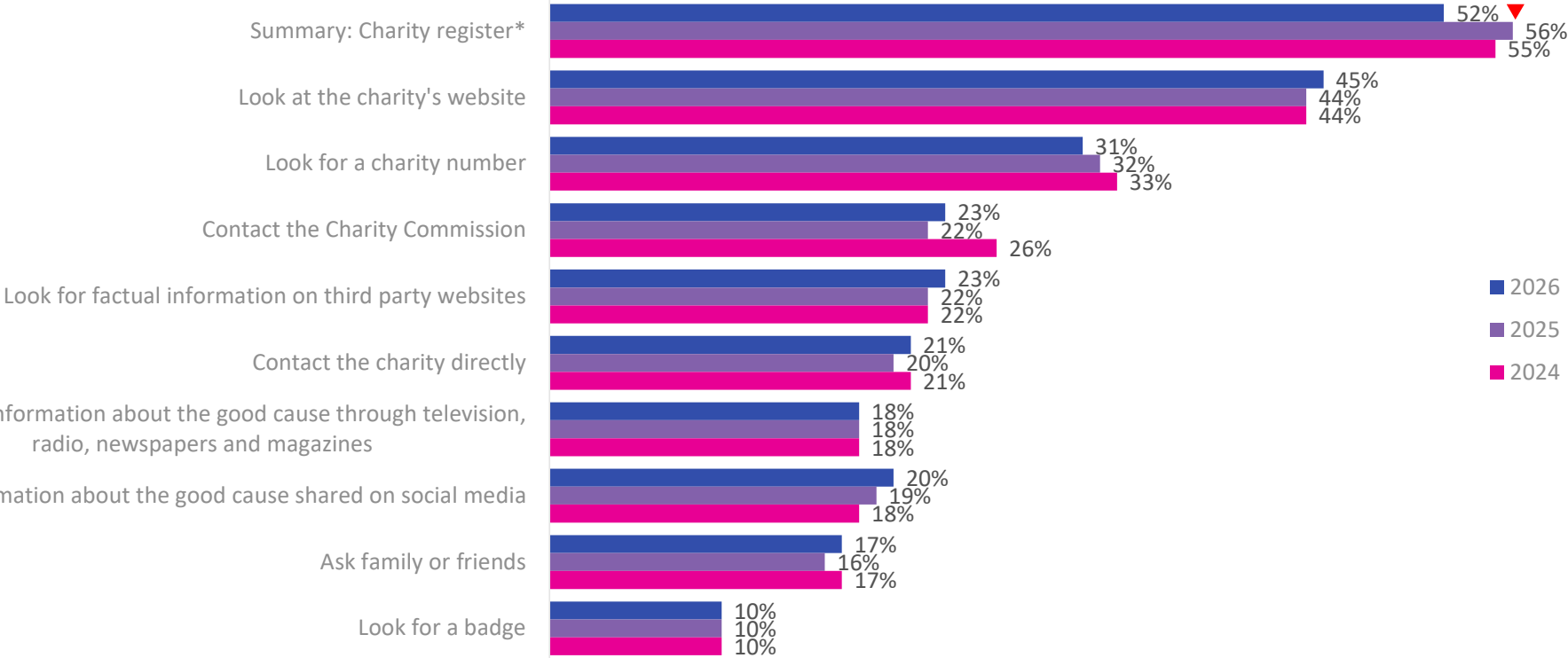
B6. How, if at all, did this change your opinion of the Charity Commission? Base: Heard, read or seen something about the Charity Commission: 2024 (455), 2025 (538), 2026 (553). Labels under 3% not shown.

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
▼

Register of Charities

The charity register is still where the majority would go to verify if a charity is real, but there has been a decline since 2025

How would you check a charity was real?



D1. If you were thinking about donating time or money to a good cause and you wanted to check a charity was real, how would you do it? Base: All respondents: 2024 (4599), 2025 (4092), 2026 (4681). *net of "Look up a charity in the charity register" and "Use the information in the charity register to see if the charity is using their funds properly"

▲ Significant difference against previous wave at 95% confidence interval
▼





Participants in focus groups had lots of ways they checked charities before deciding to donate to them

Most mentioned

- 1 Check if the charity is real**
Participants would check a charity is real by looking it up online, checking the register, or checking it has a charity number
- 2 Reputation and brand familiarity**
Participants would consider how well-known charities are, how well they personally knew the charity and if it had a good reputation
- 3 Look for proof of impact**
Participants would look to see that the charity was making a difference by looking at newsletters or social media posts
- 4 Charity size and spend**
Some participants would stay away from charities where they feel their donation would be swallowed up by admin, or that running costs are high

“It’s easy nowadays to look online and find out if it’s [a charity] regulated and where money is going.”

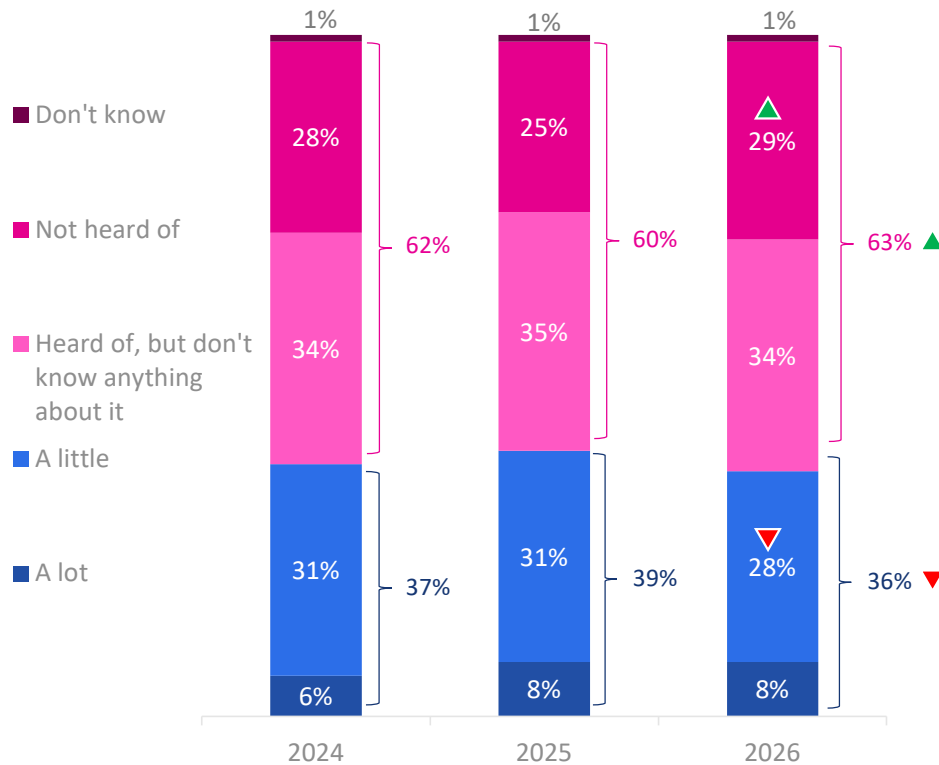
“With the big names, you just tend to trust them anyway...just going by the name.”

“I always want to know the breakdown of the activities done on a monthly basis...if truly the organisation is actually doing what they portray themselves to do.”

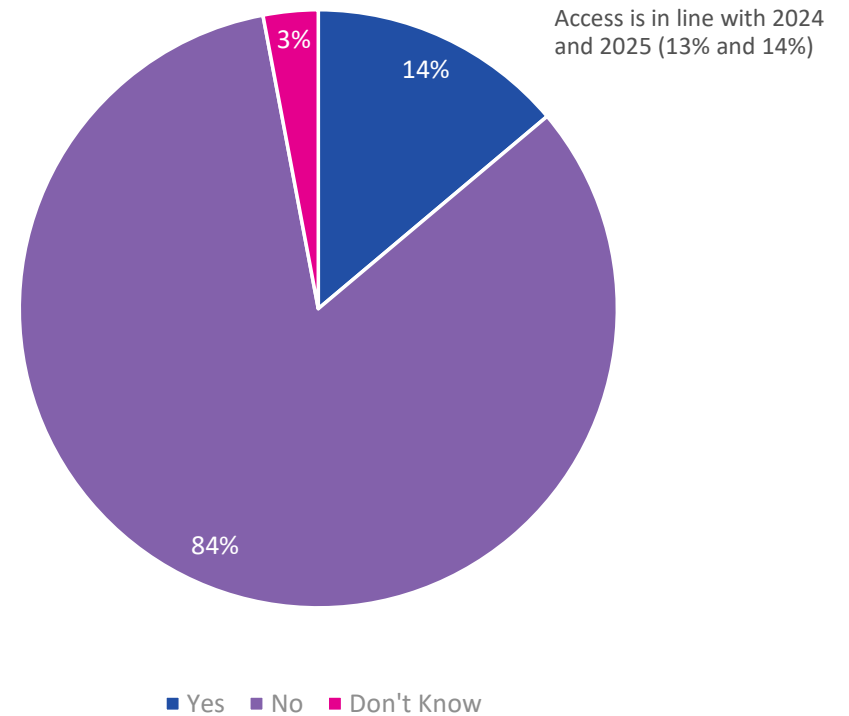
“I check the salaries and...negative reports about the charity...you really want to make sure that your resources are genuinely going to help the cause that you want to help.”

Knowledge of the register has declined after an increase in 2025, however the proportion accessing the register of charities has remained stable

Knowledge of the register of charities



Accessed the register of charities



Trustees



Participants were largely against trustees being paid, but some did see some value in a small payment

Participants mostly knew what trustees were and their role. They believed trustees oversaw the activities of a charity, such as finances, decisions, and setting priorities. They also believed they act as a layer of governance ensuring money is spent correctly and there is no mismanagement of funds.

Most participants were against the idea of trustees being paid for the following reasons:

- As much money as possible should be going to the end cause
- Trustees should be motivated by the charity's cause without getting pay
- Charities should not be run like a corporation where everyone is paid for their time
- Paying trustees may deter people from donating
- The public volunteer their time to charities without pay so trustees should be treated the same way

While most did not want trustees to be paid a salary, participants did think it was fair that trustees were paid expenses so they were not out of pocket.



"If they want the public to volunteer and not be paid, they should be in the same position themselves."

"It needs to be voluntary otherwise it's just another job with charity money paying for it."

Some participants were more open to trustees being paid, although they thought pay should be capped around £5,000 - £10,000. Reasons in favour included:

- Trustees do valuable work as they ensure the charity sector is run properly
- A small salary or bonus could improve motivation for trustees and therefore improve the performance of the charity
- Payment could help attract more skilled trustees
- Payment could attract a wider range of people as currently only those who can afford to give their time for free are trustees



"Give them a little stipend, a bonus... it encourages them and keeps the whole organisation running smoothly."

"If they're bringing real expertise and giving lots of time, maybe a small payment is fair."



Participants said paying trustees may impact their willingness to donate to charities

For the most part, if trustees started receiving a salary it would reduce participants' willingness to donate to charity:

- There was a feeling that donations would be funding salaries instead of causes
- There was concern that the charity becomes "too corporate" and loses the values that makes it a charity
- Trustee pay could indicate charities have poor priorities and are no longer prioritising the right things



"That's the sort of thing that makes me stop donating it feels like my money is being swallowed up."

"I wouldn't want to give if I thought the trustees were getting paid."

"If donations are going into wages, that puts me off."

"If the money's going to the trustees, I'd rather give directly to the people who need it."

There were some participants who said it would not affect their willingness to donate, but only IF the following conditions were met:

- The payment was small
- The charity was transparent about the payment and the amount
- Trustees raised more money than they cost, or ran the charity very efficiently so more money went to the end cause

There were a few participants where the charity meant so much to them due to a personal connection that nothing could stop them donating



"If he raised four times his salary and made the charity better, maybe then he's worth it."

"If the charity is run well and money gets where it needs to go, I don't mind as much."

Background and Methodology

Background and Methodology

- **Background:** The Charity Commission has been collecting data on public trust in charities since 2005. BMG Research were commissioned by the Charity Commission to run 3 waves of their public tracker, from 2024 to 2026. Impact measures were updated in 2025.
- **Research objectives:** To understand public trust in charities, what affects public trust in charities, and awareness and knowledge of the Charity Commission.
- **Methodology:** Research was split into two phases, a quantitative and qualitative phase. In the quantitative phase, an online panel was used to achieve a nationally representative split of participants from England and Wales. Weighting has been applied to give a representative view of England and Wales. The qualitative phase was then conducted to explore the themes from the data. 3 focus groups were conducted with 17 participants overall. Each group had a mix of genders, ages, ethnicities and regions. The focus groups were split into those who had donated money to charity and not donated money to charity.
- **Fieldwork dates:** Quantitative fieldwork took place between the 6th and 9th of January and the focus groups took place between the 12th and 19th of March.
- **Number of completes:** 4681 completes were achieved.
- **Weighting:** The data was weighted by age by gender, region, education and ethnicity. Checks were also carried out to ensure the data collected was broadly representative by IMD and urban/rural. Targets were set to be nationally representative. Additionally completes were collected in Wales to give larger base sizes for analysis, but down weighted to be in line with regional targets.

Comparability Over Time

It is important to note that the survey contents, and its administration have undergone a number of changes in 2024. These changes were necessary to improve the relevance and robustness of the data collected, and to facilitate a new research partner.

Throughout this report comparisons are made to previous waves where there have been no substantial changes to the question wording or routing. However, these comparisons should be treated as indicative only as there is likely to be some impact on the data from the changes detailed below. A such, statistical significance testing across waves has not been carried out.

The changes include:

- **A number of new questions:** These have been added to reflect the current needs of the Charity Commission. As new questions have been added at various points throughout the survey there is a risk that responses to existing questions could have been impacted by the presence of the new questions. Some questions from previous waves have also been removed from the survey.
- **Some small changes to existing questions:** These changes have been made to improve the quality of the data collected, and include changes such as adding in 'don't know' options to allow respondents to answer more accurately. Direct comparisons to previous years data for questions have not been made.
- **A change in research partner:** BMG were commissioned as a new research partner in 2023. Due to this change in research partner, there has also been a change in the panel providers that have been used. Although quotas have been used to ensure the sample is as representative of the population as possible, and a mix of panels have been used, each panel introduces their own inherent bias.
- **Likely change in weighting criteria:** Although the survey results have been weighted to population statistics in previous years it was not clear what weighting criteria were used. Therefore, it was not possible to replicate the weighting scheme used previously.