

## CHARITIES, VOTERS & TRUST

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*'When you drill down... you discover that the few bob that you gave [to charities] outside Charing Cross station isn't actually how they are funded. They are run by a secretariat of extremely well paid people and they are funded by government.'* **Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP<sup>i</sup>**

*'With large organisations you cannot be sure the profit is going to those who are needy nor the ordinary people employed to help run the charity, but instead to the bosses. What percentage of donations do they take? Do they make this information available to people?'*

**Respondent to NPC and Ipsos MORI survey, mid-October 2014**

### Introduction

Civil society in the UK today commands an income of more than £60bn a year, spans some 160,000 registered charities<sup>ii</sup> and employs over 732,000<sup>iii</sup> people. The sector's involvement in delivering public service has grown rapidly in recent years<sup>iv</sup> and this trend seems set to continue as the state shrinks further and public sector cost-cutting deepens. This growth in role and size is, at least in part, a reason charities are under sustained pressure<sup>v</sup> and questions about the levels of trust and confidence experienced by charities remain as relevant as ever.

While the voluntary sector currently continues to enjoy relatively high levels of public trust, a complacent approach would be unwise, as research by NPC and others<sup>vi</sup> have shown. Our *Matter of trust*<sup>vii</sup> paper reported that one in three people mistrust charities, giving them a score of five or less out of ten. The study explored some of the underlying drivers of trust, including the work and size of charities and how much contact the public says they have with them. For example, those who think of national or local organisations when they think of charities, as opposed to international ones, are more likely to have high levels of trust (27% vs 21%).

The public's top five concerns about charities, as outlined in our *Mind the gap*<sup>viii</sup> paper, are that charities spend too much on executive salaries (42%), are not transparent enough about how they are spending their money (36%), spend too much abroad (29%), put pressure on people to donate (29%) and spend too much on running costs (26%).

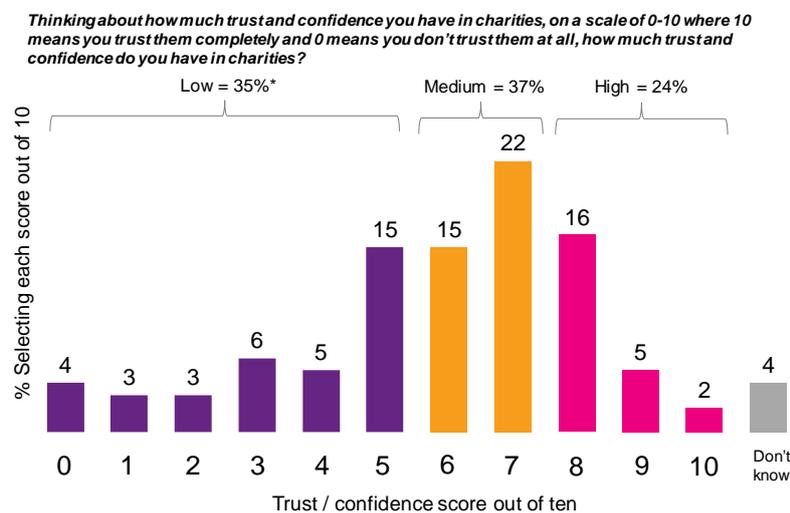
It has not been clear up until now how these issues of trust in charities, and perceptions or concerns about their work, are related to the public's voting intentions. This is of particular interest as we head towards the General Election 2015 and seek to understand how the fluctuating fortunes of the Coalition Government and political parties—and the accompanying shift in public mood—might impact on the charity sector.

In this paper, we dig into the findings of our recent online survey carried out by Ipsos MORI to find out how the voting intentions of respondents are linked to their level of trust in charities. And we explore whether public perceptions of charities can be segmented along party political lines. The survey was carried out by Ipsos MORI with a representative sample of more than 1,000 adults aged 16-75 across Great Britain in mid-October<sup>ix</sup>.

## Who trusts and does not trust charities?

The headline finding of our *Matter of trust*<sup>x</sup> paper was that about one in four people in our sample (24%) rated their trust and confidence in charities at a high level of 8-10 out of ten, 37% rated it as medium (6-7) and 35% rated it as low (0-5) as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1, Trust and confidence in charities



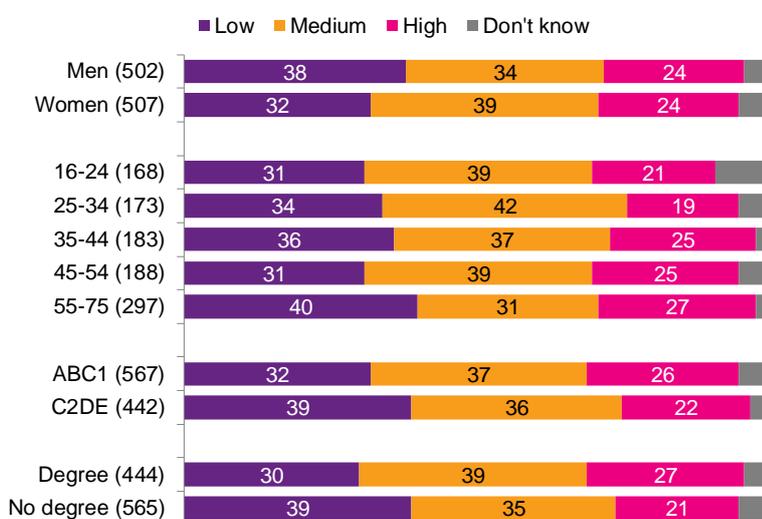
Base: All (1,009) \* Net scores are slightly different to the sum of individual scores because of rounding

In thinking about these findings, it should be noted that the Charity Commission have been asking the question since 2005 and not seen any decline in trust over this period, while other polls comparing peoples' view of charities to other institutions generally put charities above average.<sup>xi</sup> This context is important but it should not lead the sector to complacency. The fact remains that over a third of people rate their trust in charities at a low score of five or less.

## Trust, age, gender and social class

Our data allows us to explore how feelings of trust in charities varies across the population. Overall, attitudes do not vary that much by gender, age or social class but there were some small differences, as Figure 2 shows.

Figure 2. Trust and confidence in charities by demographics



Men are slightly more likely to be critical than women (who are more likely to give a medium trust score of 6 or 7). Older people (aged 55-75) are slightly more likely to give a low trust score than other age groups (40%) and are also the least likely to give a medium score. Finally, people in classes C2DE and those without degrees are more likely than other groups to say they have low trust in charities (39%).

*Men and older people are slightly more critical about charities than other groups*

Base: All (1,009)

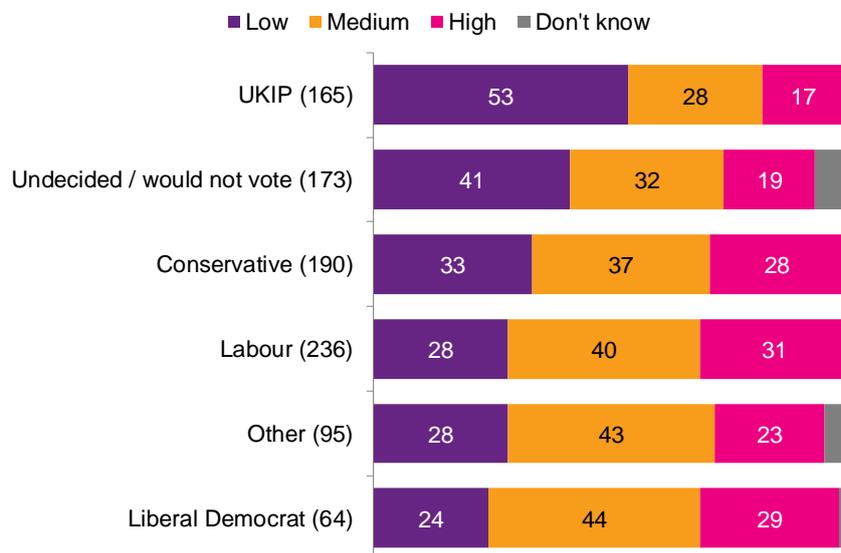
## Trust and voting intention

We also asked respondents which political party they would support in a general election, and we then compared this variable against trust in charities.

Here we found a strong pattern as Figure 3 shows. Respondents who said they intended to vote for UKIP were significantly more likely to say they had a low level of trust of charities (53% vs an average of 36%). In contrast, those respondents who said they would vote for any of the three mainstream parties were all more trusting and their pattern of response was fairly similar. Among these, Liberal Democrat supporters appear to be the least mistrusting (although it is important to be aware that this is based on a very low sample size of 64). Meanwhile, those whose outlook on the sector was closest to UKIP supporters were those who said they were undecided about who to vote for or that they would not vote in 2015.

This pattern—where supporters of mainstream parties share a similar outlook on charities, while UKIP supporters have more in common with the undecided/would not vote group—is evident across a few issues in our polling.

Figure 3. Trust and confidence in charities by voting intention



Base: All (1,009)

A potential interpretation of UKIP and undecided voters' mistrust of charities is that their mutual disillusionment with politics and society in general has leaked into their attitudes about charities.

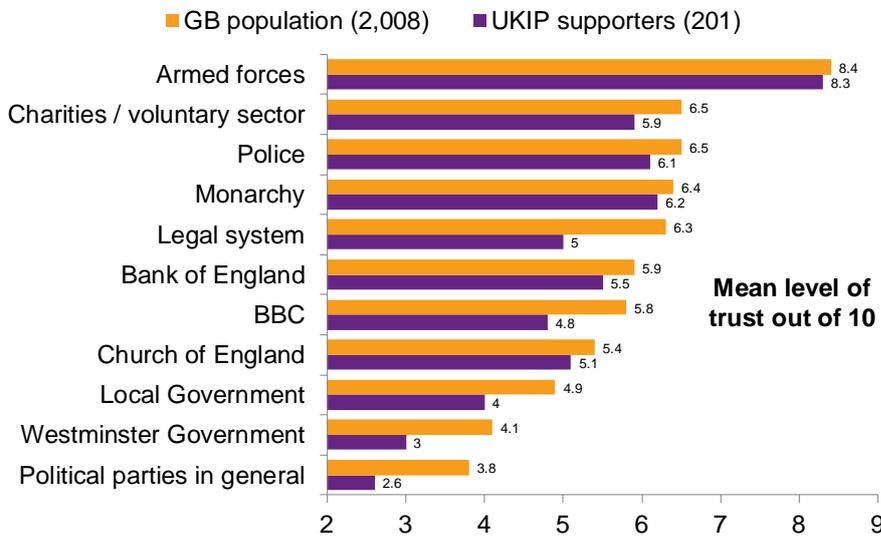
Other Ipsos MORI research suggests that UKIP supporters are less optimistic about the economy and their own personal financial circumstances<sup>12</sup> and the least satisfied with how the Government is running the country.<sup>13</sup> They are often mistrusting of British institutions generally, including charities, as Figure 4 shows (taken from Ipsos MORI research for the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust).<sup>14</sup>

*Supporters of mainstream political parties share a similar outlook on charities*

*The level of mistrust in charities among those who intend to vote for UKIP is almost 20 percentage points higher than other groups*

Figure 4. Trust in a range of institutions

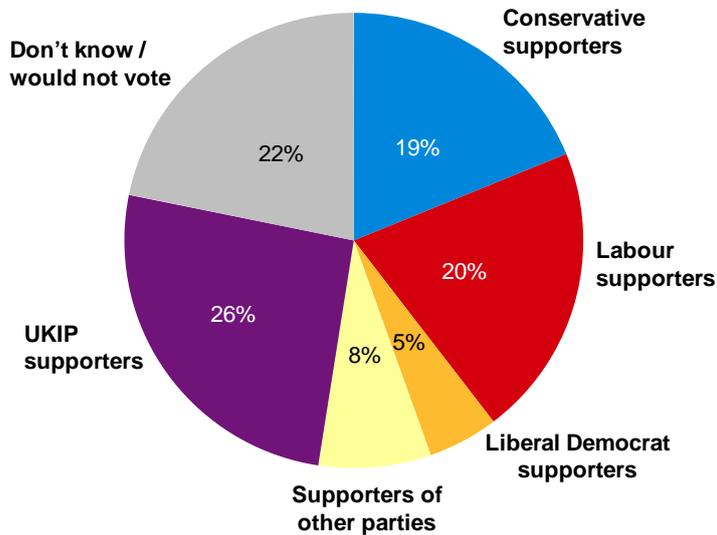
Please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions below. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.



Base: 2,008 GB adults interviewed by Ipsos MORil for the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, July 2014 (including 201 UKIP supporters)

However it is important to remember that UKIP supporters and potential non-voters only represent a proportion of the overall mistrust in charities that exists and that our poll only provides a snapshot picture of this in what is a fluid political context. Figure 5 shows the political profile of all those who have a low level of trust in charities and shows that only around half of them are in this UKIP/non-committed camp, while the rest intend to vote for the other political parties.

Figure 5. Breakdown of mistrusting population by voting intention



Base: 328 people with a low level of trust in charities and responded to the question on voting intention

*Among those who mistrust charities, around half intend to vote UKIP or are undecided/would not vote*

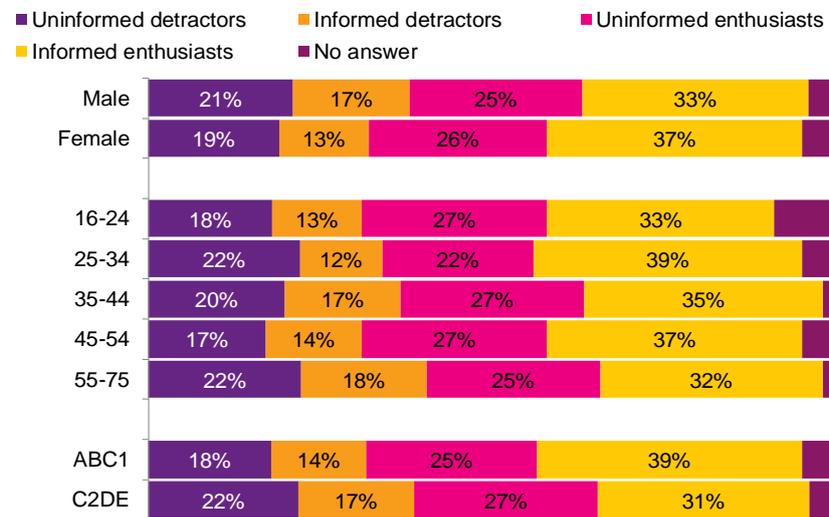
## Segmenting trust and knowledge

In *Matter of trust*<sup>15</sup>, we looked at how knowledge of charities interacted with feelings of trust and we outlined four population segments as follows:

<p><b>Informed enthusiasts</b> This is the largest group (35%). They are at least mildly positive about charities (scoring 6 out of ten or higher) and feel they know a lot about them.</p>	<p><b>Uninformed enthusiasts</b> One in four of the population (26%). They are also positive but with a lower level of familiarity.</p>
<p><b>Uninformed detractors</b> The 20% who feel they do not know much about charities and are negative about them.</p>	<p><b>Informed detractors</b> The 15% of the population who feel negative despite knowing a great deal or fair amount about the sector.</p>

The subgroup analysis in Figure 6 reveals that these proportions are relatively consistent by demographic group.

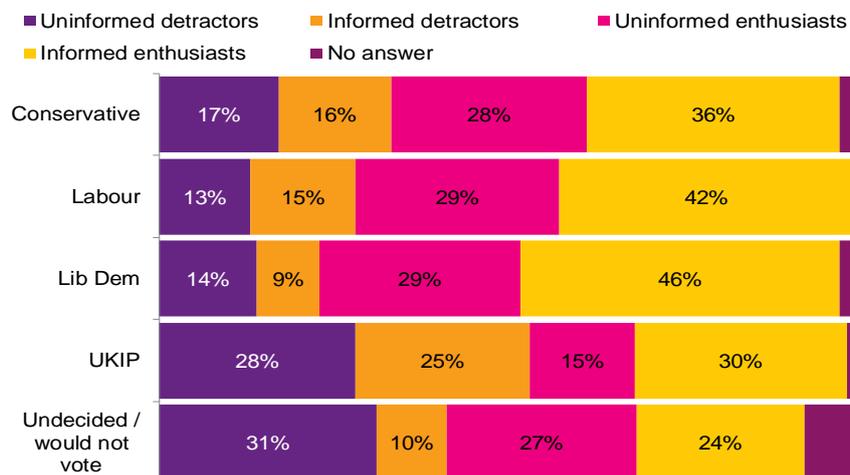
Figure 6. How the population divides by demographics



Base: All (1,009)

How the public divides between the four segments appears to be strongly related to voting intentions, as Figure 7 shows. UKIP supporters were more likely to be in both the ‘uninformed’ and ‘informed detractors’ groups, and those undecided and not intending to vote most likely to be ‘uninformed detractors’. Again, this suggests that those who do not support one of the three established parties share some similar views about charities.

Figure 7. How the population divides by voting intention



Base: All (1,009)

## Voting intentions and perceptions of charities

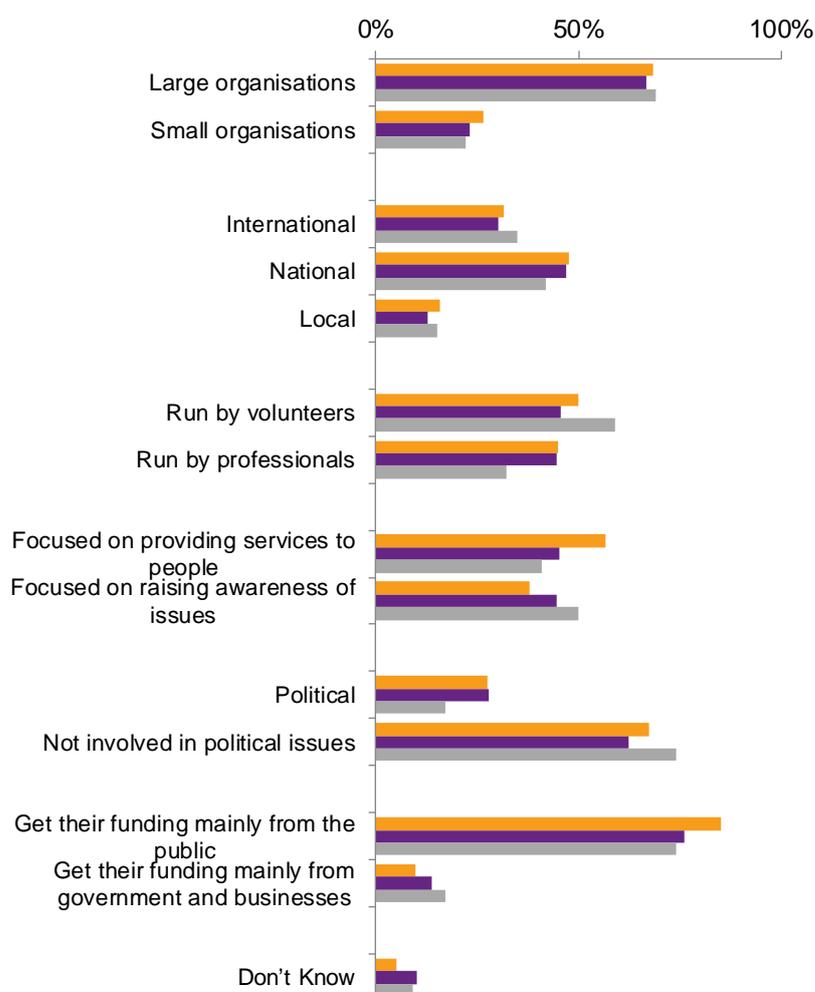
As we discussed in *Matter of trust*<sup>16</sup> the public's perceptions of charities affect their trust in the sector and of individual charities. In our poll, we asked people to choose which words or phrases most come to mind when they think of charities in the UK.

The chart below shows how preconceptions of charities vary according to whether people support UKIP, the other political parties or are 'undecided/would not vote'. The three different groups have roughly the same perception of charities' size but there is a greater tendency among the 'would not vote/undecided' group to imagine charities being run by volunteers rather than professionals. Those who support parties other than UKIP are more likely to think of charities that provide services to people and receive donations from the public rather than government/company support.

Figure 8. Perceptions of charities by voting intention

When you think about charities, which of the following words or phrases **most comes to mind**?

■ Other parties (585) ■ UKIP (165) ■ Would not vote / undecided (173)



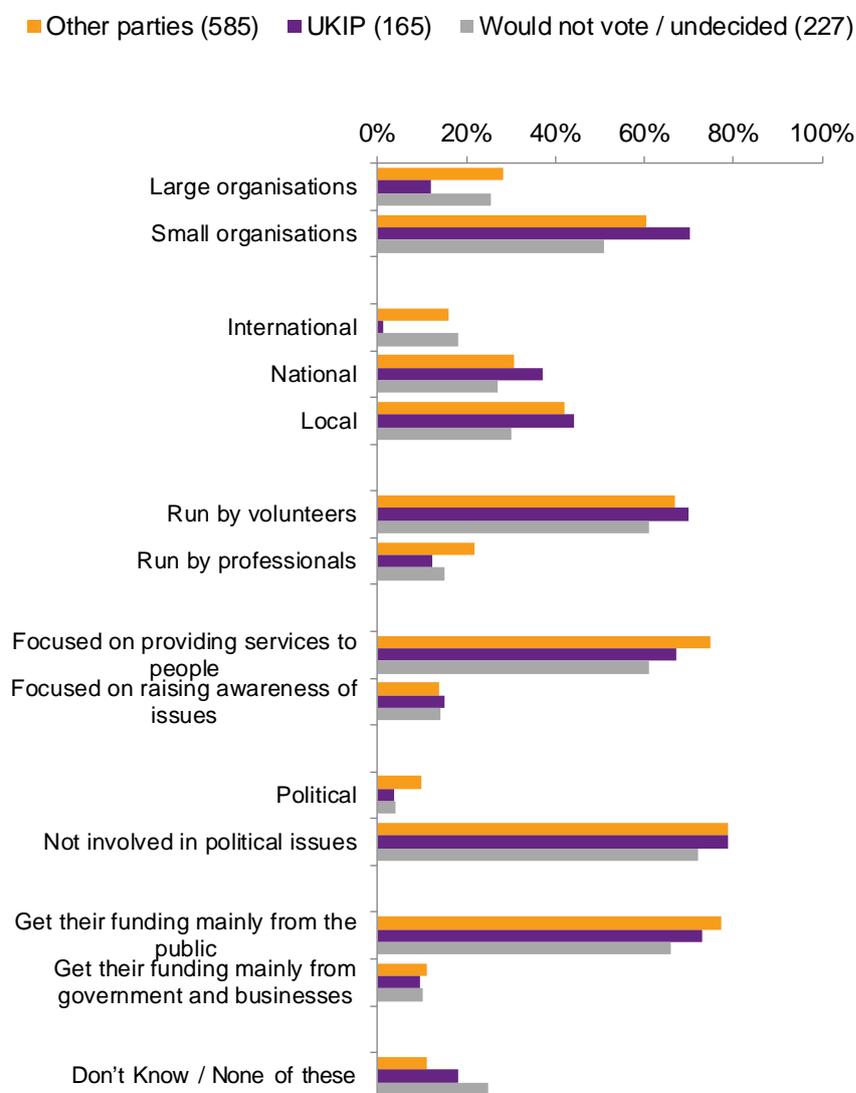
## Voting intentions and donations to charities

We also asked respondents which kinds of charities they would prefer to donate to and we can look at how this divides depending on political persuasion. Firstly, it's important to note that the 'Would not vote/undecided' group (and to some extent UKIP supporters) are less likely to express any preference. Both groups are less likely to be willing to donate and there are particularly high proportion of 'don't knows' amongst the 'would not vote/undecided' group. As shown in Figure 9, all groups say they would prefer to donate to smaller organisations but this is particularly the case for UKIP supporters. Most notably, virtually no UKIP supporters say they prefer international charities compared to under a fifth of people in the other two groups. This is perhaps not surprising given UKIP's stated policy on overseas aid<sup>17,18</sup>. Otherwise preferences are fairly similar across different groups.

### *Almost no UKIP supporters say they prefer to donate to international charities*

Figure 9. Donation preferences by voting intention

Which of each of the following types of charity would you be more likely to donate money to?



## Conclusion

Our findings have implications for both charities and politicians. For charities, this polling raises questions about public support, particularly given our finding that a chunk of the public are mistrustful of charities and our interpretation that they seem to be lumping charities in with other British institutions with which they feel disillusioned.

It would be a mistake for the charity sector to disregard the views of any would-be supporters. Indeed, it is worth bearing in mind that the public's concerns about charities—ranging from putting pressure on people to donate to spending money abroad—span all political hues. That said, an effective response from the charity sector would likely require targeted engagement, for example with UKIP voters and those who are undecided or not planning to vote and possibly a joint effort by the international charities which appear to be singled out for criticism.

For politicians, there are questions about the state's relationship with charities and its role in supporting a vibrant civil society. At NPC we have argued that transparency and accountability are crucial to trust in the longer term and policy makers need to think through what this might mean for regulation and the like.

We hope that the insights in this paper will inform charities in their work to retain the trust of those who feel positively about charities while winning round some of the more entrenched sceptics.

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> Weakley, K. '[Charities that lobby shouldn't get government grants, says UKIP leader](#)' in *Civil Society* online, 26 June 2014.
- <sup>ii</sup> Charity Commission (2014), [Charity Register Statistics](#).
- <sup>iii</sup> Skills Third Sector, TSRC and NCVO (2013), [UK Voluntary Sector Workforce Almanac 2013](#).
- <sup>iv</sup> NCVO (2012) [Civil Society Almanac 2012](#).
- <sup>v</sup> Birrell, I. '[Hideous hypocrisy of the charity fat cats](#)', in the *Daily Mail*, 7 August 2013.
- <sup>vi</sup> Among others: Ipsos MORI (2014) [Public trust and confidence in Charities](#). Charity Commission; and Saxton, J., White, R. and Egan, R. (2013) [What do the public think about charity costs and CEO salaries](#). nfpSynergy.
- <sup>vii</sup> Noble J., and Wixley, S. (2014) [Matter of trust: What the public thinks of charities and how it affects trust](#). New Philanthropy Capital.
- <sup>viii</sup> Noble J., and Wixley, S. (2014) [Mind the gap: What the public thinks about charities](#). New Philanthropy Capital.
- <sup>ix</sup> Interviews conducted online on 10-14 October 2014 of 1,0009 adults aged 16-75.
- <sup>x</sup> New Philanthropy Capital, op cit.
- <sup>xi</sup> Among others: YouGov (2010), [Who do you trust](#); and Ipsos MORI: [Trust in public institutions](#).
- <sup>12</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014) [Ipsos MORI Political Monitor: November 2014](#).
- <sup>13</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014) [Ipsos MORI Political Monitor: September 2014](#).
- <sup>14</sup> Ipsos MORI (2014) [State of the Nation](#). Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust.
- <sup>15</sup> New Philanthropy Capital, op cit.
- <sup>16</sup> New Philanthropy Capital, op cit.
- <sup>17</sup> Matt Chorley '[Charity begins at home': UKIP's Nigel Farage calls for foreign aid budget to be used to help flood-hit communities](#)' in *Mail online* (6 February 2014).
- <sup>18</sup> UKIP are not the only group criticising international NGOs and the aid industry. See this recent paper: Magee, H. (2014). *The Aid Industry: What Journalists Really think About Aid*. [The International Broadcasting Trust](#).

## TRANSFORMING THE CHARITY SECTOR

NPC is a charity think tank and consultancy which occupies a unique position at the nexus between charities and funders, helping them achieve the greatest impact. We are driven by the values and mission of the charity sector, to which we bring the rigour, clarity and analysis needed to better achieve the outcomes we all seek. We also share the motivations and passion of funders, to which we bring our expertise, experience and track record of success.

**Increasing the impact of charities:** NPC exists to make charities and social enterprises more successful in achieving their missions. Through rigorous analysis, practical advice and innovative thinking, we make charities' money and energy go further, and help them to achieve the greatest impact.

**Increasing the impact of funders:** NPC's role is to make funders more successful too. We share the passion funders have for helping charities and changing people's lives. We understand their motivations and their objectives, and we know that giving is more rewarding if it achieves the greatest impact it can.

**Strengthening the partnership between charities and funders:** NPC's mission is also to bring the two sides of the funding equation together, improving understanding and enhancing their combined impact. We can help funders and those they fund to connect and transform the way they work together to achieve their vision.

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