

**Horizon Research**  
**Public Trust and Confidence**  
**in Charities**

**Conducted for Charities Services**  
**Department of Internal Affairs**  
**December 2016**



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# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey continues the series of Trust and Confidence surveys conducted biennially for Charities Services (and the former Charities Commission). The previous studies were in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014.

The survey looks at:

- the current state of public trust and confidence in the charitable sector;
- the critical factors driving public trust and confidence; and
- New Zealanders' knowledge of Charities Services, the Charities Register and the importance of regulation of charities.

2,118 New Zealanders responded to the online survey between 7 and 16 December 2016.

### Overall Trust and Confidence

New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities remains moderate, with an average rating of 5.9 out of 10; effectively no change from 2014 and 2012.

Comparison with other New Zealand sectors shows trust in charities is in the upper group of sectors measured - marginally ahead of the education sector and slightly lower than law enforcement, small businesses and the health sector.

5% of respondents said their trust and confidence in charities had increased in the past two years, attributing that to knowing more about charities, knowing they were doing a good job and doing what they said they would do, and being involved with charities.

21% of respondents said their trust and confidence in charities had decreased in the past two years, pointing to media coverage of charities, lack of information on how charities spent donations and a general perception that

too much money was spent on administration.

70% felt their trust and confidence had remained the same, while 4% were unsure.

### Drivers of Trust and Confidence

Analysis showed that trust and confidence in charities does not come from just one factor, but is driven by 10 primary factors. Each of these contributes to building the overall trust and confidence in charities – some more than others. The contribution each makes is shown in figure 2.1 on page 10.

Three main groups of drivers for trust and confidence in charities include 9 of 10 drivers:

- **Use of funds and transparency:** This was the primary group of drivers as demonstrated in figure 2.1, contributing nearly half of respondents' trust and confidence. It includes charities applying the majority of their funds to make sure they made a positive difference in the areas where the funds were most needed – and letting the public know what they were doing.
- **Personal factors:** These factors include a connection with a charity or the charity supporting a cause that was personally important to the respondent. Just over a third of trust and confidence in charities is driven by these factors.
- **Registration and regulation:** Knowledge that charities are registered and regulated drives 12% of trust and confidence. However, knowing that there was an organisation that had oversight of charities did not, in itself, increase confidence.

An additional supporting driver was public support of charities by well-known people.

## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

In general, respondents trusted charities to make a positive difference. They were less trusting that charities would tell the public how they used donations and resources.

Confidence came from charities being open about how they used their resources and where the money was going. A majority felt that charities spend too much on administration but they also agreed that they knew very little about how charities are run.

### Contact with Charities

68% of respondents, equivalent to around 2.17 million New Zealand adults, had some form of contact with a charity in the past year, either as a volunteer or employee, through donating goods or money, providing professional services to a charity or receiving money, support or help from a charity.

Respondents who donated money to charities gave an average of \$222 per annum, although nearly two-thirds of donors gave \$250 or less.

### Knowledge of Charities Services

More than half of the respondents were unsure whether or not there was an organisation responsible for regulating charities in New Zealand. Approximately one in ten knew there was such an organisation and while the majority of those correctly knew that organisation was Charities Services (including those who referred to it as the Charities Commission), overall awareness of Charities Services and what it does is low.

Almost two thirds of the respondents felt that it was "essential" or "very important" to have a regulator that performs the functions performed by Charities Services. However these people were only slightly more likely than average to know that one did, in fact, exist.

### The Charities Register

As in previous surveys, the majority of respondents appeared to be unaware that there was information available about charities registered in the Charities Register.

However, of those who were aware of the register, 43% said they had used it, a significant increase on the results of previous surveys (32% 2014, 30% in 2012 and 2010).

Close to half of respondents said they intended to use the Charities Register in future.

### Trust and Confidence in Charities Services

Overall, the trust and confidence in Charities Services to regulate charities in New Zealand averaged 6.3 out of 10. This was higher than any other sector included in the survey.

### Charitable sector - strengths and areas to be addressed

Half of the respondents felt that the strengths of the charitable sector were in the work done by charities – the assistance, help and support they provided, their ability to make a difference, give and do good.

Other groups of fewer than 10% of respondents saw strengths in charities' honesty and transparency; the provision of support which respondents felt the government was not currently providing; meeting many aspects of needs that are not met in other ways in New Zealand; charities giving back to the community; and the involvement of volunteers.

The fact that charities were registered and regulated was also mentioned as a strength of the sector.

## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Only 1% of respondents felt that there were no key strengths of the charitable sector.

Nearly half of the respondents were unsure if any areas in the sector needed to be addressed.

Areas to be addressed tended to reflect the concerns that had led to a reduction in trust and confidence in charities and the concerns reflected in the drivers of trust and confidence. Key themes were administration costs; assessing the charitable status of organisations; accountability; transparency, particularly about where charities spend their money and who benefits; and ensuring – and knowing – that donations get to the end cause.

Fewer than 10% of respondents contributed to each of these key themes.

One in twenty felt there were too many charities in New Zealand.

Fewer than 2% mentioned fundraising as an area to be addressed.

# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

## BACKGROUND

This survey continues the series of Trust and Confidence surveys conducted biennially for Charities Services (and the former Charities Commission). The previous studies were completed in 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014.

The survey looks at:

- the current state of public trust and confidence in the charitable sector;
- the critical factors driving public trust and confidence; and
- New Zealanders' knowledge of Charities Services, the Charities Register and the importance of regulation of charities.

2,118 New Zealanders responded to the online survey between 7 and 16 December 2016.

Results in the report are rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (for example, 16.5% and 17.4% are both rounded to 17%).

## REPORT

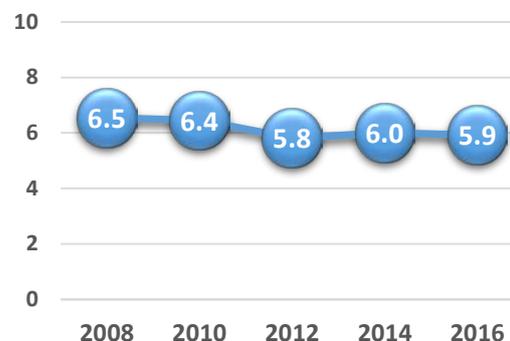
### 1. Trust and confidence in charities

#### Overall Trust and Confidence

New Zealanders' trust in charities remains moderate, with an average rating of 5.9 out of 10; effectively no change from 2014 and 2012.

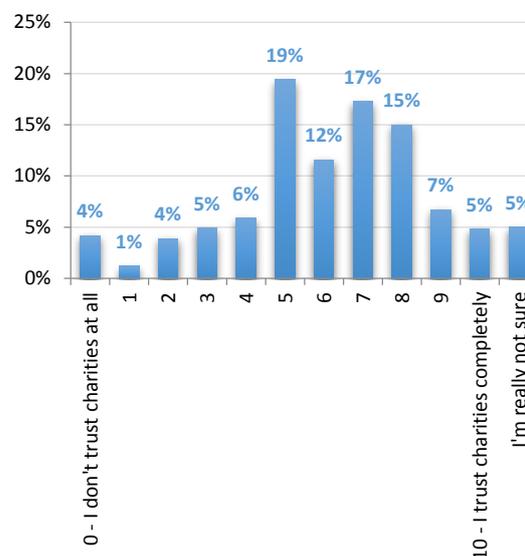
Figure 1.1: On a scale from 0 to 10, generally how much trust and confidence do you have in charities? (n=2,095)

- Average score out of 10



55% of respondents rated their trust in charities at 6 out of 10 or higher, with most choosing scores between 5 and 8 out of 10. 12% gave trust scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 and 19% chose 5 - the midpoint of the scale.

Figure 1.2: On a scale from 0 to 10, generally how much trust and confidence do you have in charities? (n=2,095)



There has been a small degree of polarisation with the percentage of respondents ranking their trust and confidence in charities at 9 or 10 (10 = "I trust charities completely") growing to 11% from 9% in 2014 and the percentage selecting scores of 0 or 1 growing from just under 4% to just over 5%.

## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Women (average score of 6.1) had more trust and confidence in charities than men (5.8).

Trust generally declined with increasing age, **even though the incidence of donations to a charity increased with increasing age.** 45-54 year olds had the least trust and confidence in charities - an average rating of 5.4.

In general, respondents in lower income and education level groups had lower trust and confidence in charities.

Where respondents had contact with charities, their level of trust and confidence was significantly higher than for those who had no contact. The average score for those who had any type of contact was 6.3; those who had no contact with charities had an average trust score of 4.8, as shown in figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3: On a scale from 0 to 10, generally how much trust and confidence do you have in charities? (n = 2,095) - Average by contact with charities**

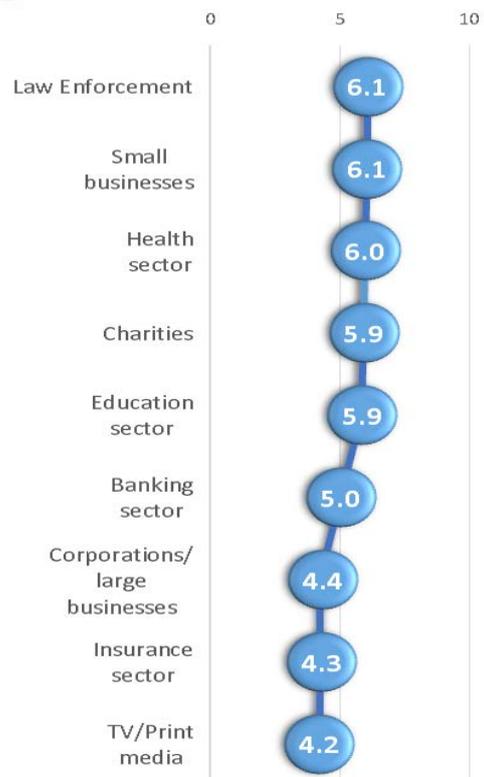


## Comparison with other sectors

Comparison with other New Zealand sectors shows trust in charities is in the upper group of sectors measured - similar to the education sector and slightly lower than law enforcement, small businesses, and the health sector. All of these higher ranking sectors had very similar trust rating patterns, with between 54% and 59% of respondents scoring 6 to 10; 15% to 20% scoring 5; and 17% to 22% scoring 4 or below.

Despite the relative importance of the media in increased or decreased trust in charities (as discussed in the next section of the report), the TV/Print sector was the least trusted, with 47% of respondents scoring their trust in the sector at 4 out of 10 or below.

**Figure 1.4: How much trust and confidence do you have in these sectors? (n=1965) - Average score out of 10**

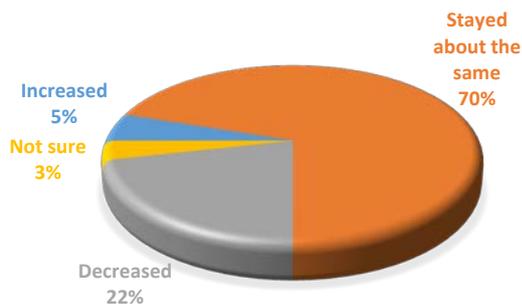


# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

## Change in levels of Trust and Confidence

21% of respondents said their trust and confidence in charities had decreased in the past two years. However, note that this was not reflected in the overall average level of trust and confidence, which at 5.9 was similar to the average of 6.0 reported in the 2014 survey. Those whose trust and confidence had decreased had an average trust and confidence score of 4.4. By comparison, those whose trust hadn't changed scored an average of 6.3 and the 5% whose trust had increased scored an average of 6.8.

**Figure 1.5: Over the past two years, has your trust and confidence in charities increased, decreased or stayed about the same? (n=2,088)**



### Increased trust

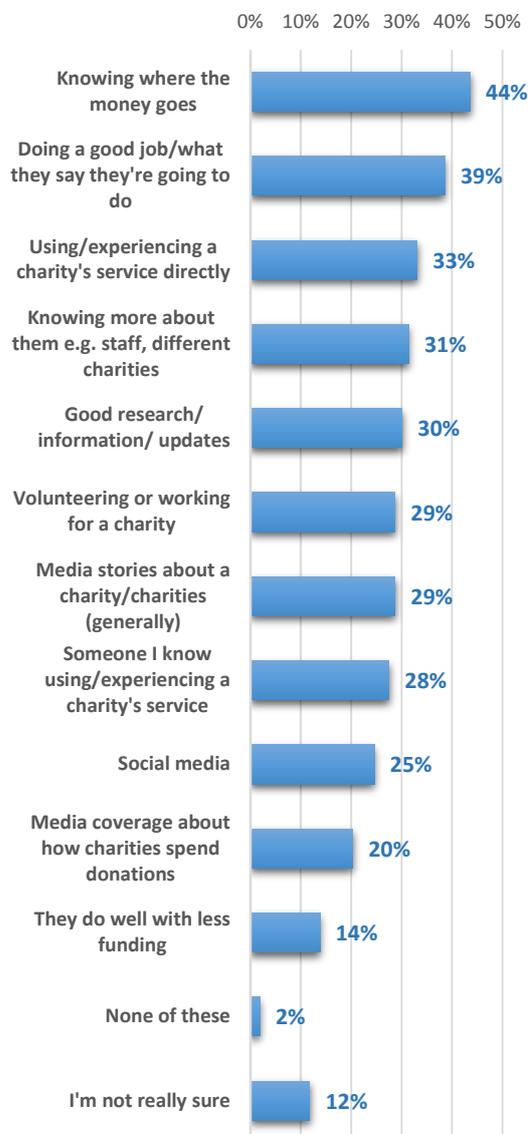
Asked what had made their trust and confidence increase, respondents talked spontaneously about a wide range of factors. 21% talked about knowing where and how the charities spent money, while 30% commented on being more involved with a charity. 27% mentioned the good charities do and the results of their work.

Note that 17% were unsure why their trust and confidence in charities had increased.

Only 3% mentioned positive media coverage, although prompted recall of that was much higher.

The unprompted results were reinforced by prompted responses, which indicated that trust had increased where respondents knew about a charity – in particular, where the money was going, but also knowing more about them in general. Knowing that charities were doing a good job and doing what they said they were going to do was also important for those with increased trust levels, as was involvement with a charity.

**Figure 1.6: Have any of the following influenced your increased trust and confidence in charities? (n=103)**



## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

### Decreased trust

Respondents with decreased trust and confidence also talked spontaneously about money and where it had gone. Variations on that theme included comments about administration costs, management/CEO salaries, spending on non-charity functions and other overhead costs inside charities. These themes were commented on by 57% of respondents with decreased trust and confidence.

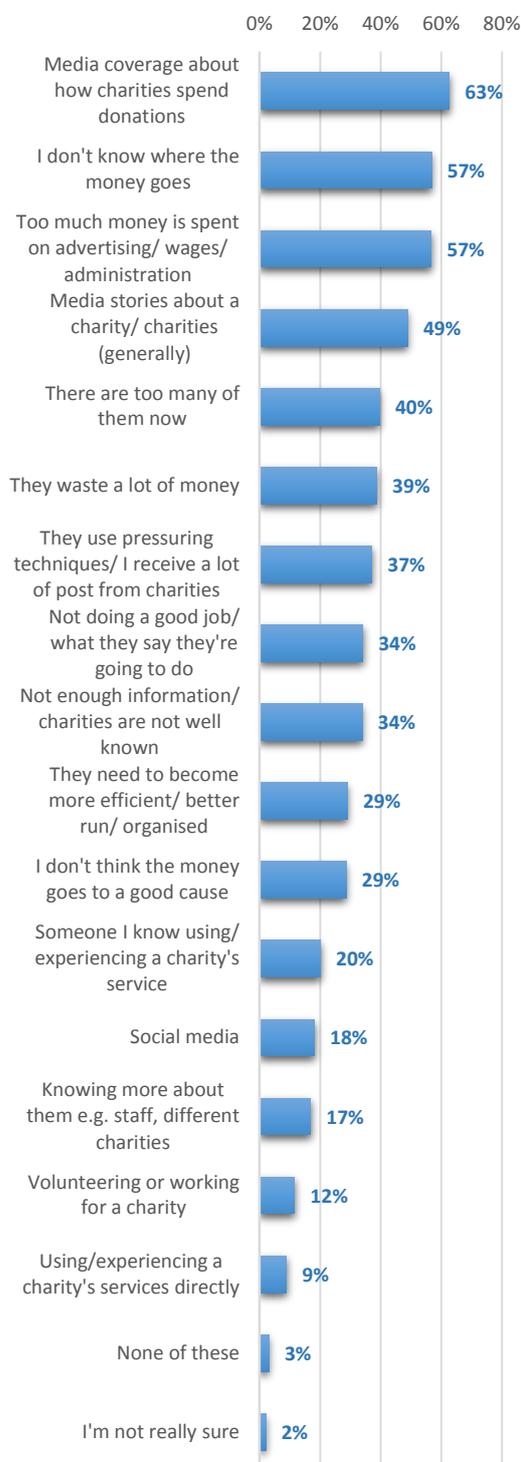
13% spontaneously mentioned negative media/news coverage. Note that prompted recall of that was significantly higher (see figure 1.7).

8% commented on organisations that they felt should not have charitable status, while 8% commented on concerns over fraud or scams. 7% talked about there being too many charities in New Zealand, while 6% mentioned fundraising techniques.

7% commented about their trust decreasing after working or volunteering for a charity. It appears that working or volunteering for a charity can be double-edged – more volunteers had decreased trust in the past two years than increased trust. 23% of those working for a charity are more trusting than two years ago, but 14% are less trusting.

Reinforcing the spontaneous comments, prompted responses showed that reasons for decreased trust were strongly money/donation related: media coverage on how charities spend donations (or about charities generally), not knowing where the money was going to, or a belief that too much money was going on expenses to run the charity.

**Figure 1.7: Have any of the following influenced your decreased trust and confidence in charities? (Please select all that apply) (n=431)**



# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Almost as many recipients of help, support, or money from a charity had decreased trust as had increased trust.

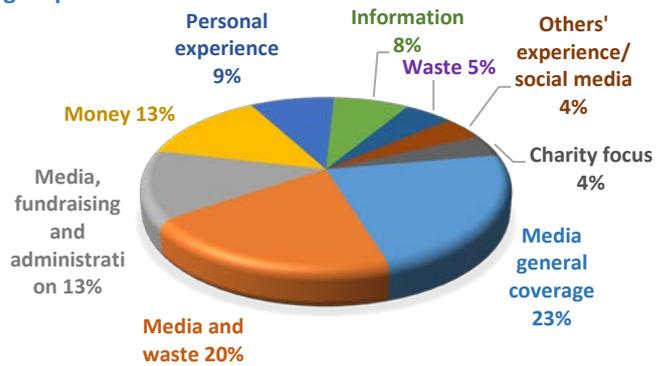
Being more or less distrustful was not related to the amount of money donated.

**Figure 1.8: Increase and decrease in trust and confidence in charities in past two years - by involvement in charity (n=2,089)**



Respondents who had decreased trust and confidence in charities were grouped based on similarities in their reasons for the decrease. As illustrated in figure 1.9, there were three groups whose trust and confidence in charities had been affected by media comment; for two of these, media comment was combined with other factors, but the effect was that for just over half of those with decreased trust and confidence in charities, media comment was a primary factor in the decrease.

**Figure 1.9: Decreased trust and confidence in charities - groups**



9 out of 10 of those in the “Money” group felt that charities waste a lot of money and said they didn’t know where the money goes. There was a near universal belief in this group (97%) that too much money was spent by charities on advertising/wages/administration and 8 out of 10 felt that charities needed to be more efficient.

Decreased trust and confidence for those with personal experience with charities resulted primarily from being a volunteer, but this group also included people who worked in a charity, were involved at executive/governance/management committee level or received support from charities.

Those who felt there was a lack of information about charities in general had particular interest in “where the money went” and concern about a general lack of information, but also cited decreased trust and confidence that had been generated as a result of knowing more about charities.

The “Waste” group’s concern was primarily about perceived waste of money and, like the members of the “Money” group, members of this group had an almost universal belief (98%) that too much was spent by charities on advertising/wages/administration. However, members of this group were less likely than

## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

the “Money” group members to say that they did not know where the money goes to and more likely to feel that there was not enough information about charities. Members of this group did not feel that charities needed to become more efficient/better run/organised.

The decrease in trust and confidence of members of the “Others’ experience/social media” group came primarily from someone they knew using/experiencing a charity’s service or from comment in social media. They had lower than average concern with all other reasons measured and significantly higher trust and confidence in charities than members of any of the other groups.

Concern with the focus of charities on doing a good job, doing what they said they would do and concern about the money going to a good cause was the cause of a decrease in trust and confidence for members of the “Charity focus” group. Members of this group had the lowest overall trust and confidence in charities of all the groups.

## 2. Drivers of public trust and confidence in charities

Analysis shows that trust and confidence in charities does not come from just one factor, but is driven by 10 primary factors. Each of these contributes to building the overall trust and confidence in charities – some more than others. The contribution each makes is shown in figure 2.1 on page 11.

Three main groups of drivers for trust and confidence in charities include 9 of 10 drivers:

- **Use of funds and transparency:** This was the primary group of drivers as demonstrated in figure 2.1, contributing nearly half of respondents’ trust and confidence. It includes charities applying the majority of their funds to make sure they made a positive difference in the areas where the funds were most needed

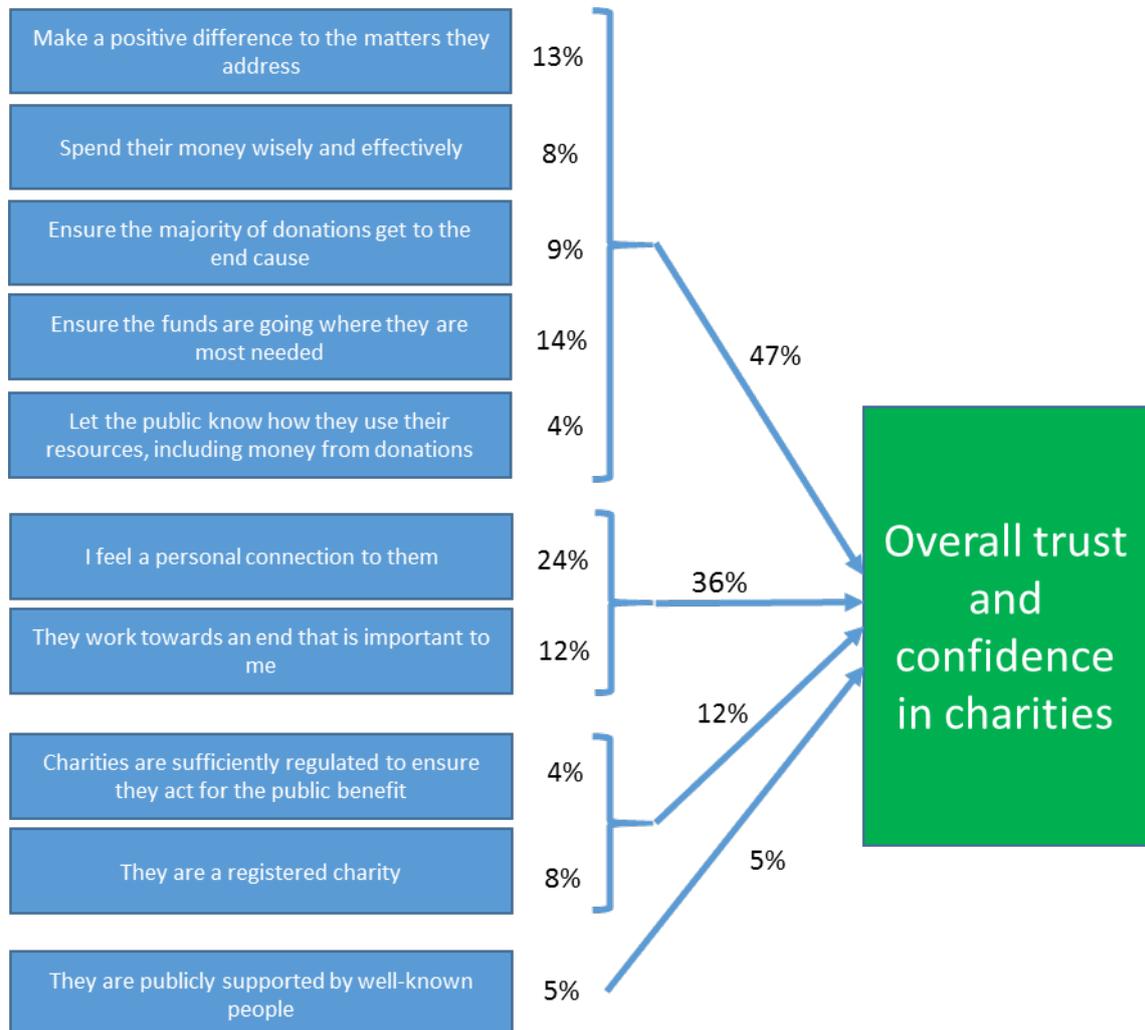
– and letting the public know what they were doing.

- **Personal factors:** These factors include a connection with a charity or the charity supporting a cause that was personally important to the respondent. Just over a third of trust and confidence in charities is driven by these factors.
- **Registration and regulation:** Knowledge that charities are registered and regulated drives 12% of trust and confidence. However, knowing that there was an organisation that had oversight of charities did not, in itself, increase confidence.

An additional supporting driver was public support of charities by well-known people.

# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

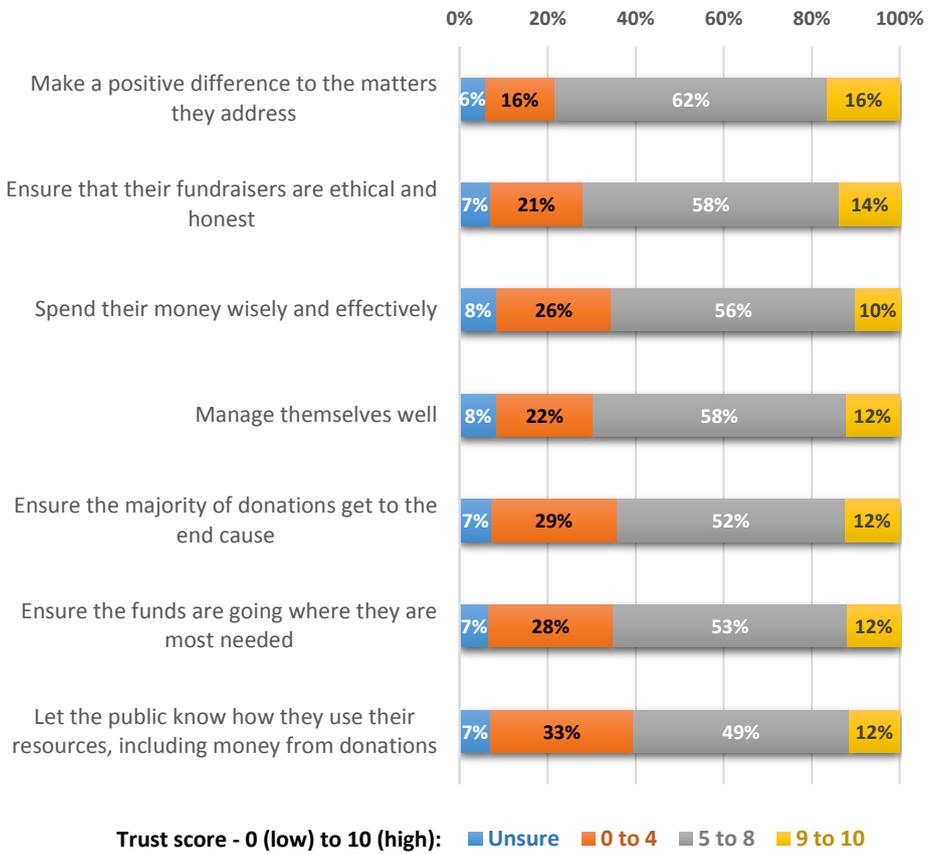
Figure 2.1: Drivers of trust and confidence in charities



## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

In general, respondents trusted charities to make a positive difference. They were less trusting that charities would tell the public how they used donations and resources.

**Figure 2.2: How much do you trust charities to...**  
(n=2,008)

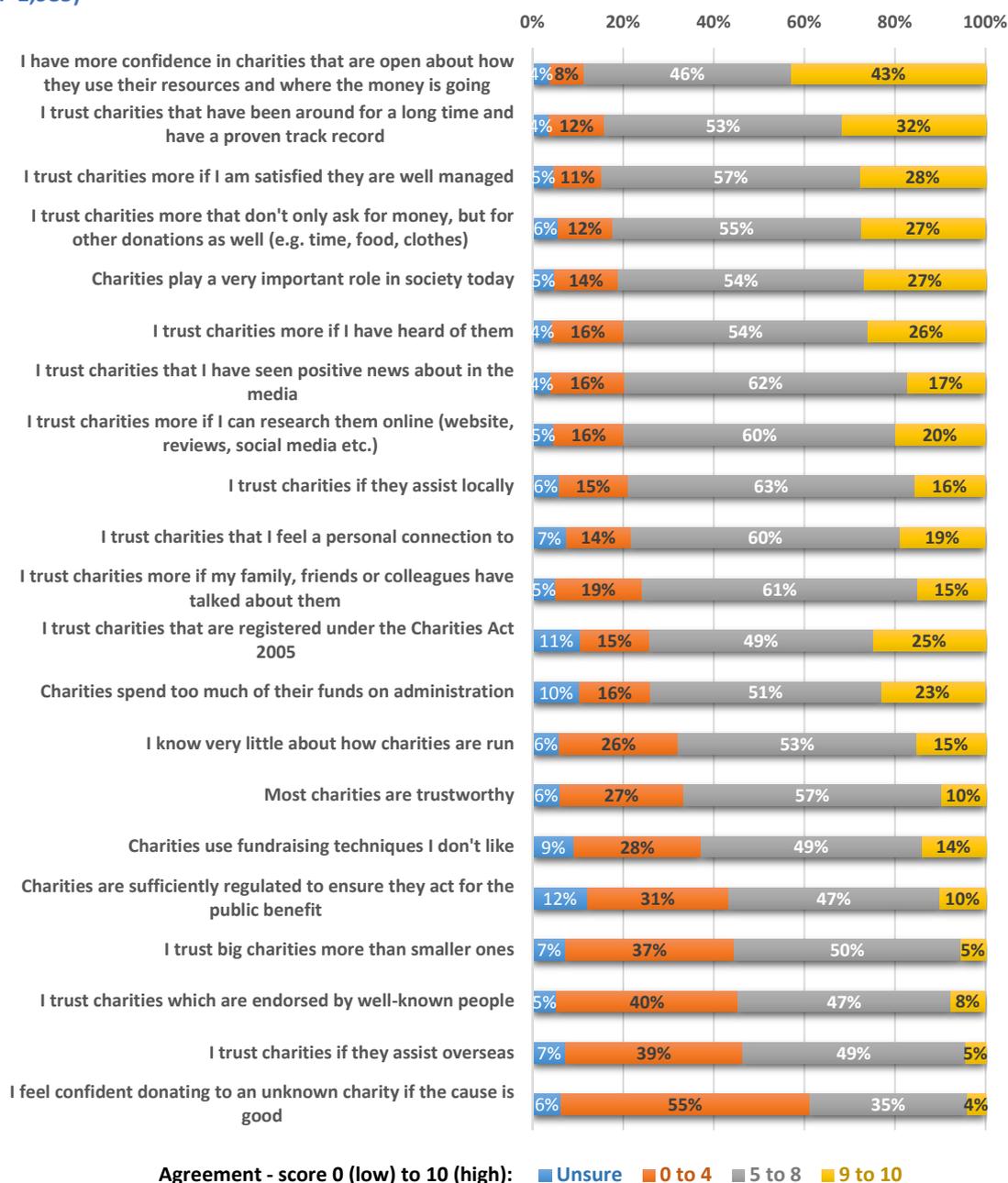


## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Confidence came from charities being open about how they used their resources and where the money was going. A majority felt that charities spend too much on administration but they also agreed that they knew very little about how charities are run.

Charities that had been around for a long time and were well known for their track record were more likely to have trust and confidence than charities that were not well known. Positive news in the media about charities added to confidence as did the ability to research them online, and personal connection or talking about charities were also were important in generating trust.

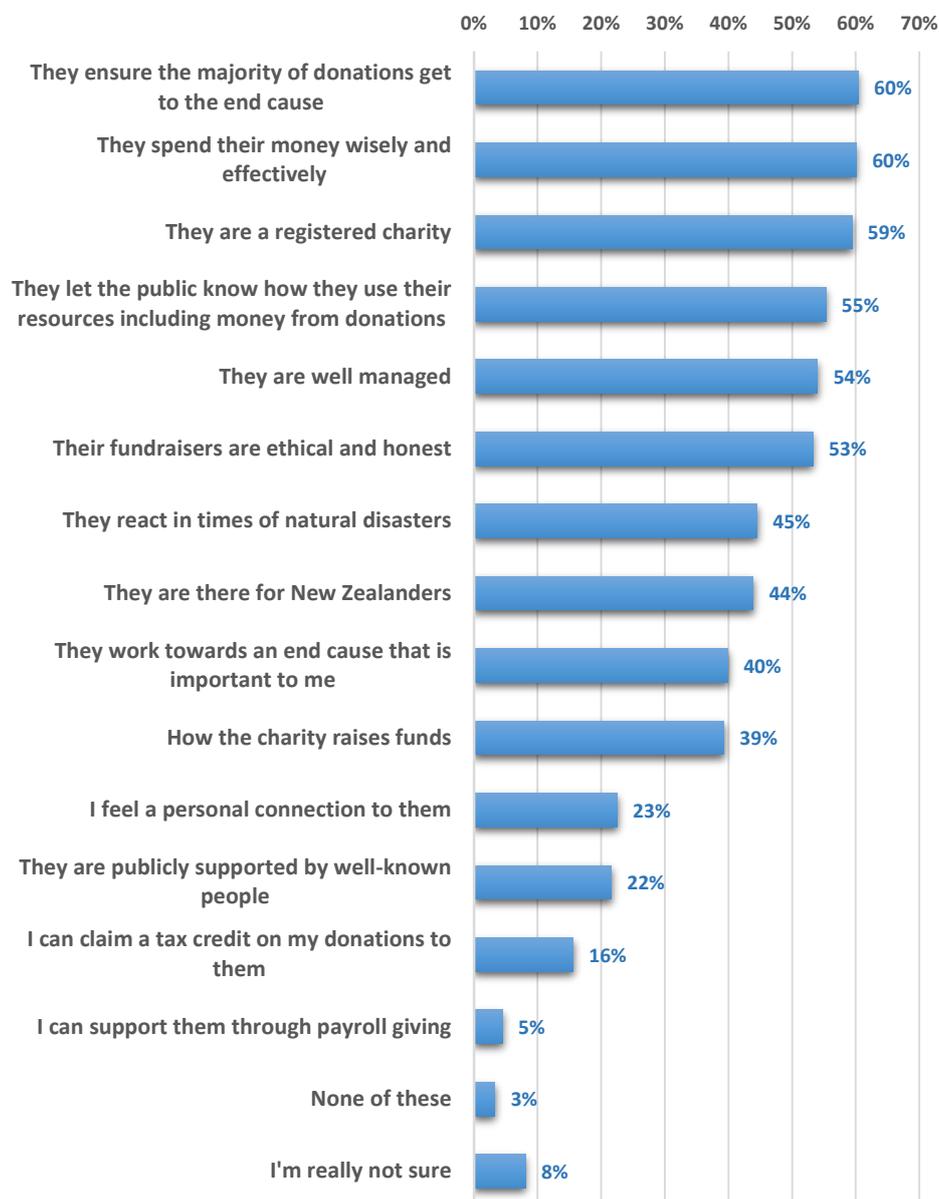
**Figure 2.3: How much do you agree or disagree that...**  
(n=1,985)



## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Responses to a question on other key factors reinforced that where charities spend money and the public knowing how they use their resources were key factors in generating trust. Achieving understanding that charities are well managed, fundraise ethically and honestly and spend their money effectively were all important in trust and confidence, as was charities registration.

**Figure 2.4: Which of the following characteristics make you have trust and confidence in an individual charity? (n=1,973)**



# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

## 3. Contact with charities

68% of respondents, equivalent to around 2.17 million New Zealand adults, had some form of contact with a charity in the past year, either as a volunteer or employee, through donating goods or money, providing professional services to a charity or receiving money, support or help from a charity.

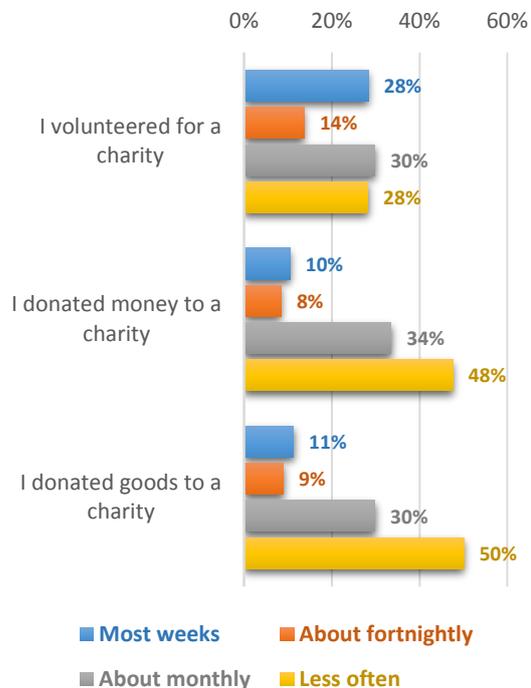
**Figure 3.1: Have you had any of the following types of contact with any charity over the past year? (Please select all that apply) (n=2,118)**



The percentage of respondents donating money to charities increased with increasing age and education level. Donating goods was not affected by income or education level but did increase with increasing age.

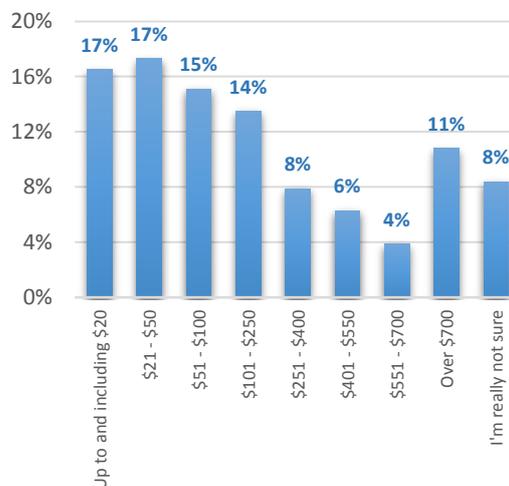
Around 50% of those who donated goods or money to a charity did so monthly or more frequently. Volunteers were involved with charities more frequently than donors, with over 70% volunteering monthly or more often.

**Figure 3.2: About how often would you say you donated goods, volunteered for a charity, and/or donated money to one or more charities over the past year? (n=1,486)**



Respondents who donated money to charities gave an average of \$222 per annum. Figure 3.3 shows that nearly two-thirds of donors gave \$250 or less per annum.

**Figure 3.3: Approximately how much money in total did you donate to charities over the past year? (n=1,256)**



## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Although, as shown in figure 3.4, average donations showed a general increase as household income increased, up to household income of \$150,000 per annum the change was relatively minor. The average donation as a proportion of household income actually decreased with increasing household income.

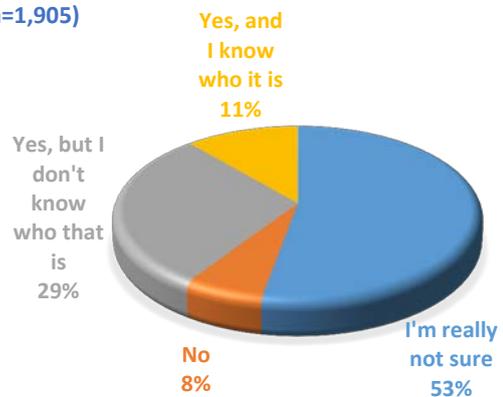
**Figure 3.4: Average donations to charities over the past year based on household income levels (n=1,256)**



### 4. Public awareness and knowledge of Charities Services

Over half of the respondents were unsure whether or not there was an organisation responsible for regulating charities in New Zealand. Approximately one in ten knew that there was such an organisation, and the majority of those who knew also knew that the organisation was Charities Services (including those who referred to it as the Charities Commission).

**Figure 4.1: To the best of your knowledge, is there an organisation or agency that is responsible for regulating/having oversight of charities in New Zealand? (n=1,905)**



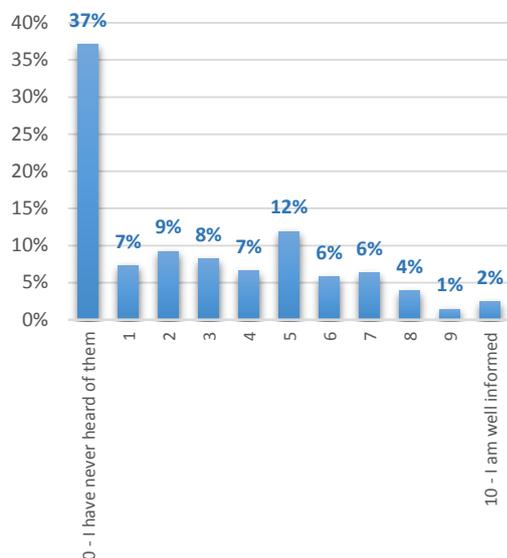
Awareness that there was an organisation or agency that was responsible for regulation/oversight of charities in New Zealand was highest among 45+ year olds while more than 60% of those under 35 years were not sure. Māori and New Zealand European/Pakeha ethnic group members were the most likely to be aware that there was such an organisation. Awareness increased with increasing personal and household income as well as education level.

Respondents were asked how much they knew about Charities Services. More than a third said they had never heard of them while 43% rated their knowledge of Charities Services at 5 out of 10 or lower. 20% rated their knowledge of Charities Services at 6 out of 10 or above with only 2% feeling they were well informed.

55% of those who were not sure whether there was an organisation regulating charities had never heard of Charities Services. Only 11% of those who knew that a regulating/oversight organisation existed, and knew who it was, felt well informed.

## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Figure 4.2: On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you have never heard of them, and 10 means you are well informed, how much do you know about Charities Services (formally the Charities Commission)? (n=1,901)



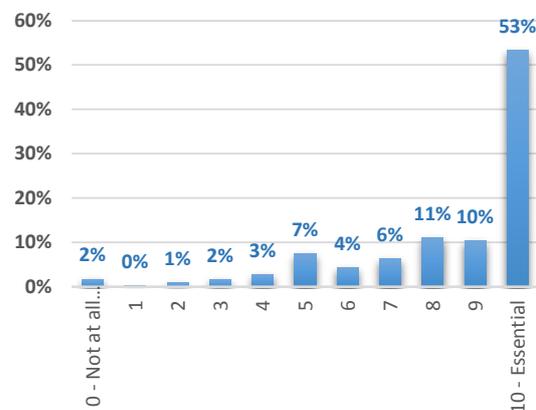
Self-rated knowledge about Charities Services increased as age and education level increased.

### 5. Importance of a charities regulator

Respondents were provided with a brief high level statement about Charities Services and asked how important they thought its role and functions were.

Just over half (53%) of respondents felt that it was 'essential' to have a regulator that performs the functions performed by Charities Services.

Figure 5.1: On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all important, and 10 means essential, how important do you think it is to have a regulator that performs these functions? (n=1,895)



Those who thought it was essential or very important (a score of 8 or more out of 10) to have a regulator were only slightly more likely than average to know that a regulator did, in fact, exist.

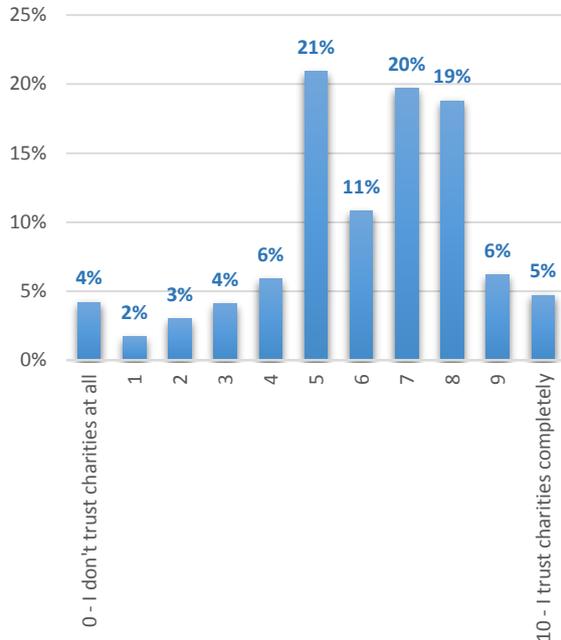
### 6. Overall Trust and Confidence (awareness of a regulator)

Overall, being told that there was an organisation that has regulatory and oversight functions related to charities did not affect the average trust and confidence in charities. The initial measurement of trust and confidence in charities was an average of 5.9 out of 10; after respondents were informed that New Zealand charities were regulated by Charities Services, the average was 6.0 – not a significant change.

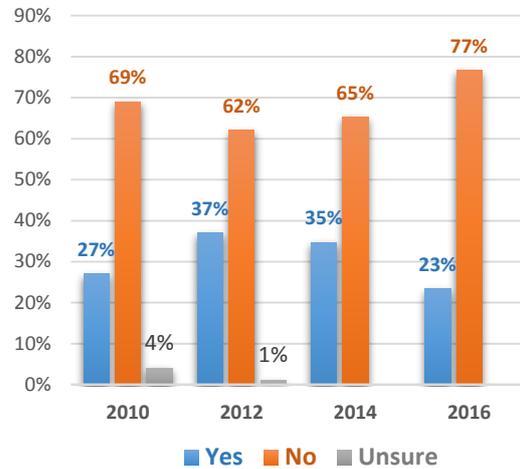
There were slight increases in trust from those who originally scored their trust below 6; however there was little change from those who originally scored their trust above 6; if anything, their trust levels declined marginally.

# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

**Figure 6.1: Taking into consideration that New Zealand charities are regulated by Charities Services, how much trust and confidence do you have in charities? (n=1,893)**



**Figure 7.1: Information about charities registered under the Charities Act 2005 (including what they do and how they spend their money) is publicly available on the Charities Register. Were you aware of this? (n=1,893)**



## 7. Awareness and usage of Charities Register

As in previous surveys, the majority of respondents seemed to remain unaware that there was information available about charities registered on the Charities Register, including what charities do and how they spend their money.

Awareness increased with increasing age to a peak in the 65-74 year age group. Awareness of the Charities Register also increased as education level increased.

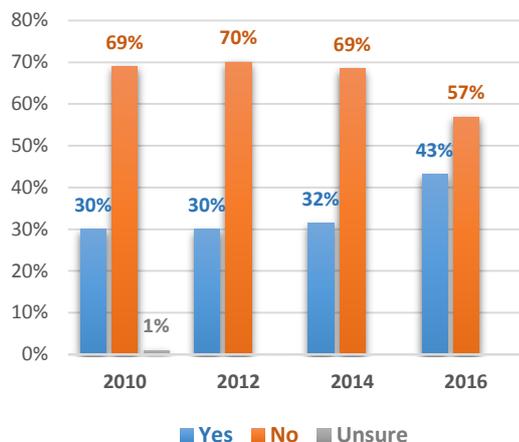
Pacific Peoples and Māori were more aware of the Charities Register than members of other ethnic groups.

Respondents with household and personal incomes over \$150,000 were most aware of the Charities Register.

Of those aware of the Charities Register, 43% had used it before to look for information about a charity. Use of the register had increased compared with previous surveys.

## New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

Figure 7.2: Have you ever gone to this register to look for information about a charity? (n=562)



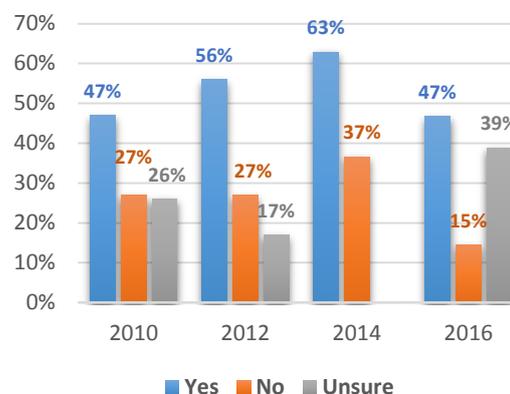
- Significantly more males than females had gone to the Charities Register to look for information about a charity
- Respondents between the ages of 45 to 54 and 65+ had used the Charities Register more compared with other age groups.
- Indian, Pacific Peoples, and New Zealand European/Pakeha ethnic group members were around 25% more likely to have used the register than members of other ethnic groups.
- Use generally increased with increasing income and increasing education level.

The main reasons for using the Charities Register was to find information on the following:

- Registration status/registration number;
- Financial reports/audits;
- Charity members (Directors, Trustees, Board members);
- Information about a particular charity (including general information, aims, and the charity's rules);and
- Length of registration.

Almost half of respondents intended to use the Charities Register in the future. This level is down on 2014, but note that the 2014 question did not allow an "unsure" answer.

Figure 7.3: Do you think you will refer to the Charities Register (at [www.charities.govt.nz](http://www.charities.govt.nz)) in the future? (n=1,873)



As trust and confidence in charities increased, the likelihood to use the register generally increased. However, those who said their trust and confidence in charities had decreased in the past two years were more likely than others to say they would use the Charities Register in the future.

Others more likely than average to use the Charities Register in future included:

- Respondents who had donated \$551 or more per annum. However, 63% of those who had not donated anything in the past year were also likely to use it.
- Those who donated goods, volunteered and/or donated money most weeks.

Significantly more females than males were unsure whether they would refer the Charities Register in the future.

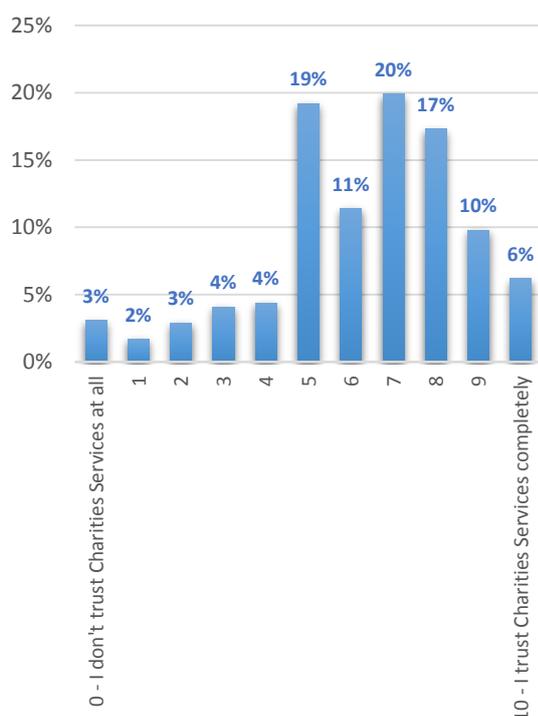
# New Zealanders' trust and confidence in charities

## 8. Trust and confidence in Charities Services

Overall, the trust and confidence the public had in Charities Services to regulate charities in New Zealand averaged 6.3 out of 10. Scores were primarily grouped in the 5 to 9 out of 10 range.

35-54 year olds seemed to be less trusting of Charities Services compared with other age groups and trust declined slightly as personal income increased.

**Figure 8.1: How much trust and confidence do you have in Charities Services to regulate charities in New Zealand? (n=1,886)**



## 9. Charitable sector strengths and areas to be addressed

### Strengths

36% of respondents were unsure what, if anything, were key strengths of the charitable sector.

The main themes around the key strengths of the charitable sector in New Zealand were:

- The work that charities do (assist/support/help/make a difference/give/do good) – this was mentioned by 50% of respondents;
- Charities are honest and transparent, mentioned by 8%.
- Providing support (or filling in support gaps) which respondents felt central or local Government should either be providing or were not currently responsible for, or meeting needs that were not being met in other ways, mentioned by 7%;
- Giving back to the community/involving the community, mentioned by 5%;
- The volunteers/amount of volunteers, mentioned by 3% of respondents; and
- 2% mentioned the fact that charities were registered/regulated; and
- 1% of respondents felt that there were no key strengths of the charitable sector.

### Areas that need to be addressed

48% of respondents were unsure what, if anything, needed to be addressed. However, only 4% felt that nothing needed to be addressed.

Key areas that respondents felt needed to be addressed within the charitable sector were:

- Administration costs: 9% commented spontaneously on either administration costs or the proportion of charities' funds that were allocated to administration;
- Assessing the charitable status of organisations and removing it where appropriate. This was mentioned by 8% of respondents, with specific references to religious organisations and organisations with charitable status that have commercial interests;
- More transparency, particularly about where charities spend their money, and who benefits. This was mentioned by 8%;
- Ensuring and knowing donations get to the end cause, mentioned by 7%;

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- Too many charities in New Zealand (with some suggestions for better coordination or collaboration in the sector), mentioned by 5%; and
- Ensuring accountability, mentioned by 4%.

Other comments mentioned by 2% or fewer respondents included:

- Fundraising techniques;
- Auditing of charities;
- More government support for, or involvement in, areas currently addressed by charities;
- Corruption/dishonesty/credibility;
- Better management of charities; more advertising to create awareness of charities; and
- Concern about how charities use donated goods – mentioned by 1% of respondents.

### **SAMPLE**

A total of 2,118 respondents - 1,618 members of Horizon Research's national online research panels, which represent the New Zealand population 18 years of age and over, plus 500 respondents provided by an online sampling and data collection company, responded to the survey between 7 and 16 December 2016.

The sample was weighted to match national demographics for age, gender, personal income, education level, employment status and region and has an overall margin of error of  $\pm 2.1\%$ .