

# BRITAIN'S CIVIC CORE

*Who are the people powering Britain's charities?*

September 2013



## *About Charities Aid Foundation*

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) is an international charity registered in the UK. Its mission is to motivate society to give ever more effectively and help transform lives and communities around the world. CAF advises on and distributes charitable funds around the world and has offices in nine countries: Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, India, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, the UK and the United States of America.

Data provided by



Copyright © The Trustees of the Charities Aid Foundation 2013  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Charities Aid Foundation, the copyright owner.

# Contents

Introduction	4
Britain's Civic Core	5
Civic Core, Civic Duty	7
Civic Participation	9
Core Causes	11
The Core on Charities	12
Core Connections	13
Who are the Civic Core?	14
Zero Givers	15
From Zero to Hero – getting more people powering Britain's charities	18
Methodology	19

# Introduction

Charities are powered by people.

Every day thousands of people in the UK give their time and money to support good causes. They are the lifeblood of our thriving civil society.

Charities large and small depend on the goodwill of their supporters to enable them to pursue their charitable missions. As a result they are able to help some of the most vulnerable people in society and address some of the biggest challenges of our time.

Millions of Britons give their hard-earned money to causes that they care about, and millions more volunteer their time and skills to ensure that the beneficiaries of charities are able to access the support that they so desperately need. CAF's UK Giving 2012<sup>1</sup> report found that 55 per cent of adults give to charity in a typical month, whilst NCVO's UK Civil Society Almanac 2013<sup>2</sup> reports that 44 per cent of adults in England said that they had formally volunteered at least once in the previous 12 months.

To most people in this country, it will be no surprise that Britain has repeatedly featured highly in CAF's annual World Giving Index, which ranks nations across the world based on the strength of their charitable activity. We should remain proud of our charitable sector and champion the difference that charities make to people's lives every day.

We know that without the generosity of people across Britain, charities would not be able to continue to operate in every community across the country, supporting the people that need help the most.

It is important that we celebrate the contribution that so many people make towards creating a stronger society, and that we acknowledge the vital role that people power plays in making the work of charities possible.

However, we also know that there is a small segment of the population that does the lion's share when it comes to powering charities.

Our report focuses on this 'Civic Core' – the minority of people in Britain who are responsible for the majority of the social action.<sup>3</sup> The key factor that elevates someone to the Civic Core is that they are significantly more likely to volunteer than those in other groups in society. This makes them a crucial source of people power for charities, and differentiates them from those who are unlikely to participate in community activities.

It is largely the generosity of this Civic Core, in providing charitable donations and volunteering their time, that powers charities. We will examine indicators that point to a person's propensity to give, as well as looking at the factors explaining why members of the Civic Core are so keen to support charities.

We will also take a look at the uneven spread of charitable giving. Why do some people do far more to support charities than others? We will look at the people who do not feel the desire to support good causes – the 'Zero Givers.'

Finally, the report will consider how to harness people power – how can we get millions more people backing Britain's charities? As the charity sector suffers from a squeeze in income whilst at the same time there is a rise in demand for the help that charities provide, we will be looking at ways to encourage more people to use their goodwill to support charities.

1 <https://www.cafonline.org/publications/2012-publications/uk-giving-2012.aspx>

2 <http://data.ncvo-vol.org.uk/category/almanac/>

3 The concept of a Civic Core was discussed by Professor John Mohan and Dr Sarah L. Bulloch in a February 2012 paper, and their research was conducted on the basis of defining a Civic Core based upon the group responsible for two thirds of the national total of charitable activity. We have followed this approach by also using two thirds of civic engagement as the relevant dividing line when assessing the people who make up the Civic Core.

<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=rpeV6LU4XI%3D&tabid=500>

## Britain's Civic Core

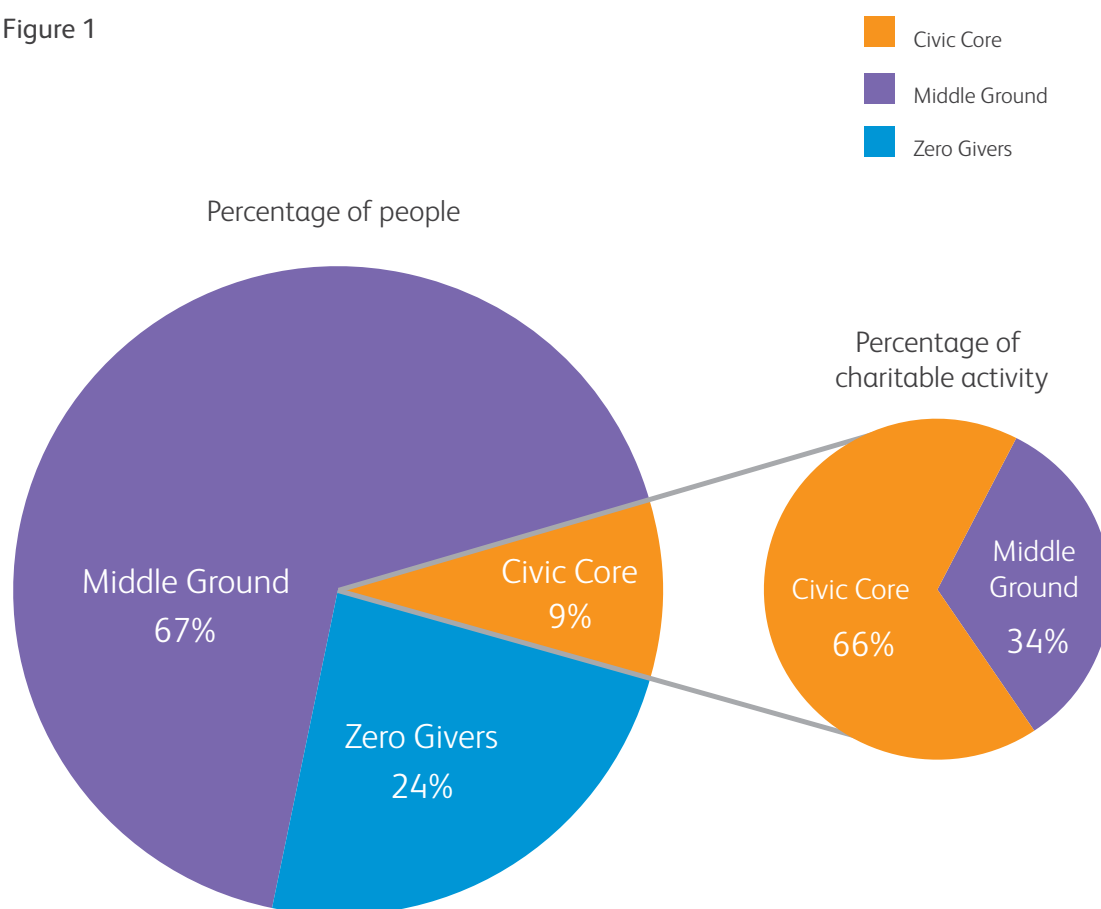
To explore the concept of people power and what it means for Britain's charities, we undertook an extensive piece of research investigating people's attitudes towards their involvement with charities and social causes.

We estimated the scale of people's different charitable activity by asking them how much they donate to charity and how much time they volunteer in a year. We used the value of people's financial donations and the value of the time they gave to estimate their total charitable activity; this allowed us to look at those who gave different levels of support to charitable causes in the past year.<sup>4</sup>

Our research found that:

- Nine per cent of people account for 66 per cent of charitable activity – the Civic Core
- 67 per cent of people account for the remaining 34 per cent of charitable activity – the Middle Ground
- The remaining 24 per cent of people do little or no charitable activity – the Zero Givers

Figure 1



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

<sup>4</sup> Time was valued at the National Minimum wage, the rate as of 31st October 2013

These three distinct groups provide an interesting overview of the way that people across Britain support charities and it is clear that there is a small segment of the population that is responsible for a great amount of this support.

Members of the Civic Core are undoubtedly significant contributors to society, and their dedication and commitment to supporting good causes is to be applauded. We want to find out why these people are so much more likely than other people to give, and we asked a series of questions to allow us to gain a better understanding of the reasons why they are so generously supporting charities.

**9%**

*of people do 66 per cent  
of the charitable activity*



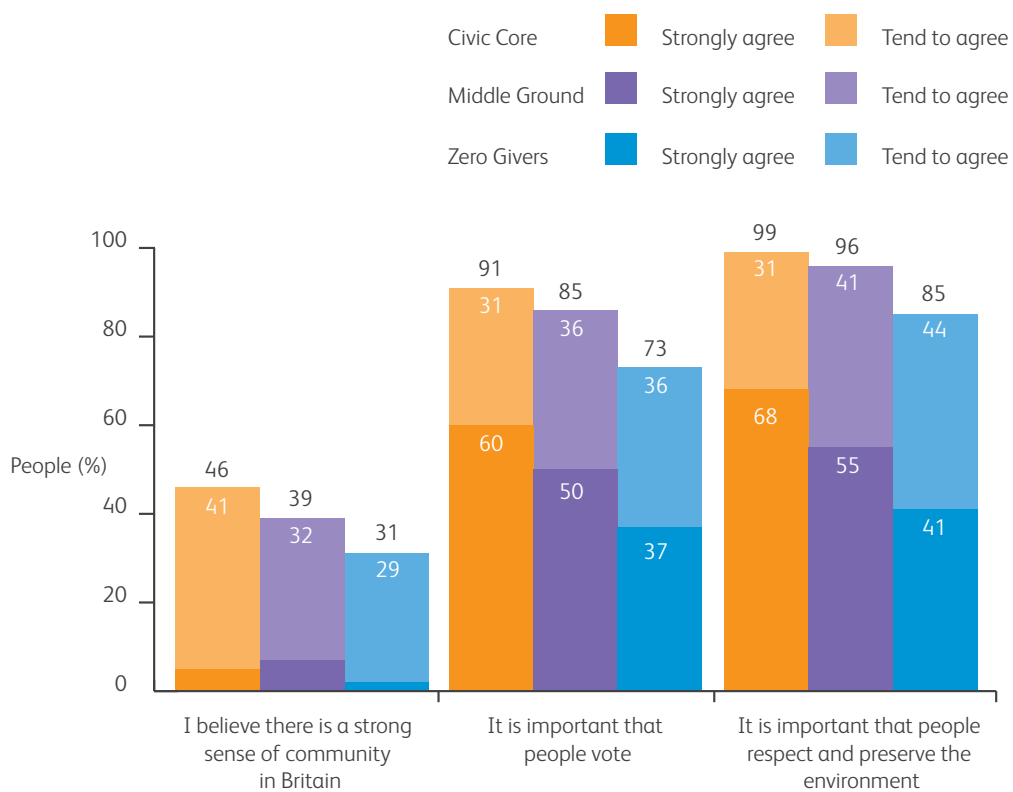
## Civic Core, Civic Duty

Using questions about attitudes and demographics, we have uncovered a number of interesting findings that give an insight into what drives the members of the Civic Core to give.

We found that members of the Civic Core have a greater sense of community spirit and civic duty than other groups. We discovered that:

- 46 per cent of the Civic Core agree that there is a strong sense of community in Britain, compared with 39 per cent of the Middle Ground and 31 per cent of Zero Givers
- 91 per cent of the Civic Core agree that voting is important, whilst 85 per cent of Middle Ground and only 73 per cent of Zero Givers agree with this
- 68 per cent of the Civic Core *strongly* agree that it is important that people respect and preserve the environment, with 55 per cent of Middle Ground and only 41 per cent of Zero Givers sharing this sentiment

Figure 2



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

# 51%

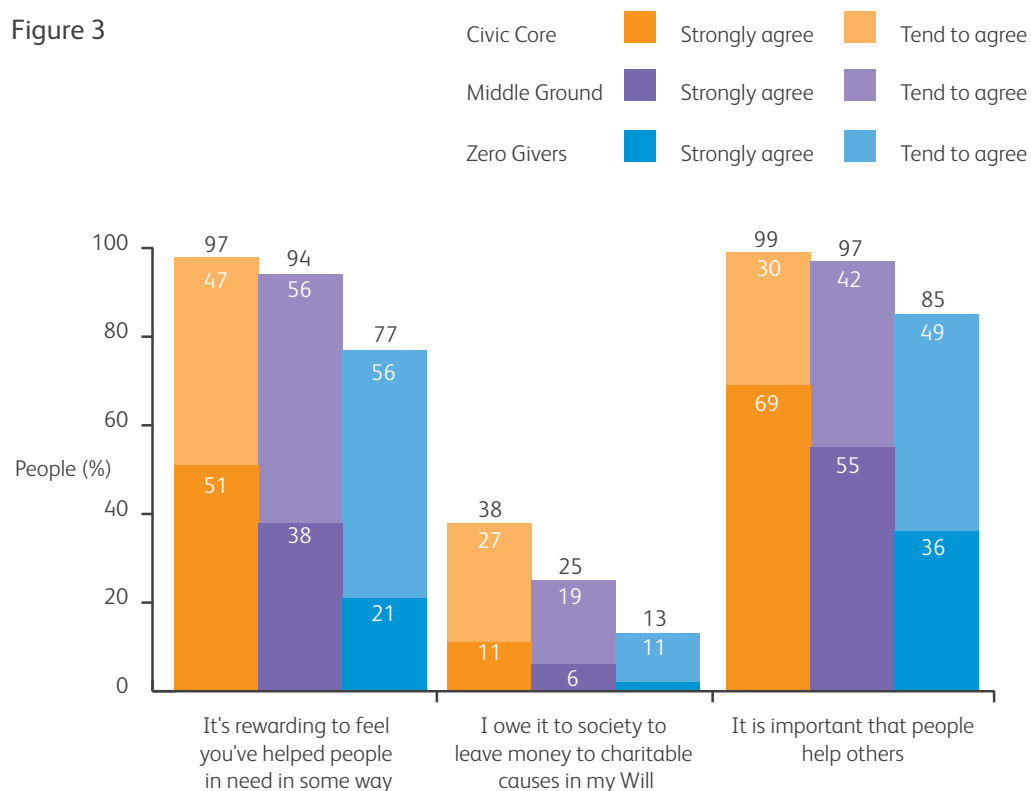
*of the Civic Core strongly agree that it is rewarding to feel you've helped people in some way*

We found that members of the Civic Core feel a sense of duty to help others, which is less profound amongst the other groups. We found that:

- 51 per cent of the Civic Core *strongly* agree that it is rewarding to feel you have helped people in need in some way, compared with 38 per cent of Middle Ground and only 21 per cent of Zero Givers
- Significantly, 38 per cent of the Civic Core believe that they owe it to society to leave money to charitable causes in their Will, compared with 25 per cent of Middle Ground and just 13 per cent of Zero Givers
- Crucially, 69 per cent of the Civic Core *strongly* agree that it is important that people help others, with 55 per cent of Middle Ground and 36 per cent of Zero Givers feeling strongly about this issue

It appears that a strong sense of civic duty is an indicator that can be used to determine whether someone will give significantly to charity and become a member of the Civic Core.

Figure 3



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487



## Civic Participation

Knowing that members of the Civic Core are more likely to be involved with community activities, we took a closer look at the kind of activities that they are involved with. We found that:

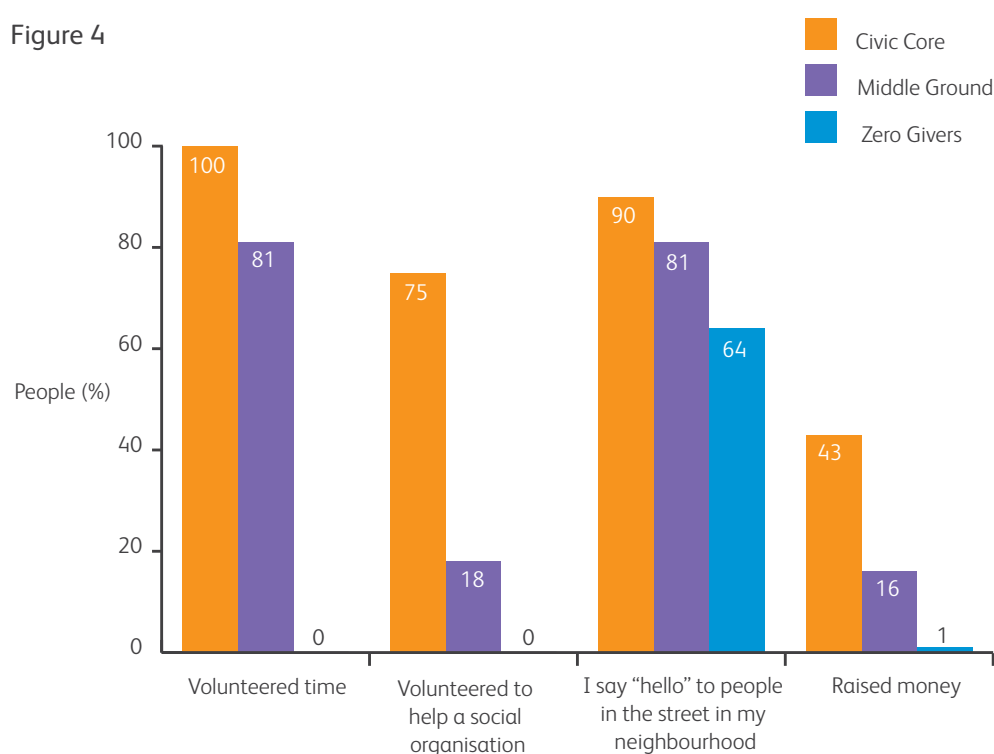
- All people in the Civic Core have spent at least one hour volunteering in the past year, compared with 81 per cent of the Middle Ground and none from the Zero Givers group
- Of the Civic Core, 75 per cent volunteer to help social causes, with only 18 per cent of the Middle Ground giving their time in this manner. No people from the Zero Givers do so
- Of the Civic Core, 90 per cent say “hello” to people in the street in their neighbourhood, compared with 81 per cent of the Middle Ground and 64 per cent of the Zero Givers
- Members of the Civic Core are also keen to ensure that charities are supported financially, with 43 per cent helping to raise money compared with 16 per cent of the Middle Ground and only one per cent of Zero Givers

In the past year, have you done any of the following to help social causes?

Activity to support social causes	Total	Zero Givers	Middle Ground	Civic Core
Donating money	63%	2%	83%	82%
Donated items or gifts-in-kind	48%	8%	58%	76%
Volunteered in an organisation	19%	0%	18%	75%
Raised money	15%	1%	16%	43%
Organised or helped to run an activity or event	10%	0%	10%	36%
Visited, befriended or mentored people	9%	1%	9%	35%
Lead a group/member of a committee	5%	0%	4%	30%
Campaigned	4%	0%	4%	17%
Other practical help (i.e. helping out at school, shopping)	10%	3%	11%	28%
No, I haven't been involved in social causes	21%	88%	0%	0%

Base (all): 2027 Zero Givers 487 Middle Ground 1356 Civic Core 184

Figure 4



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

Members of the Civic Core are significantly more likely than other groups to support charities in a range of ways, such as donating items or gifts, mentoring or visiting others, campaigning, and helping to organise an event. By comparison, 88 per cent of Zero Givers said that they have not been involved with social causes.

This commitment to helping out social organisations is the primary difference between the two most engaged groups (the Civic Core and the Middle Ground). We will now take a look at the charities that members of the Civic Core are most likely to support.

# 100%

*of people in the Civic Core have spent at least one hour volunteering in the past year, compared with 81 per cent of Middle Ground and none from the Zero Givers group*



## Core Causes

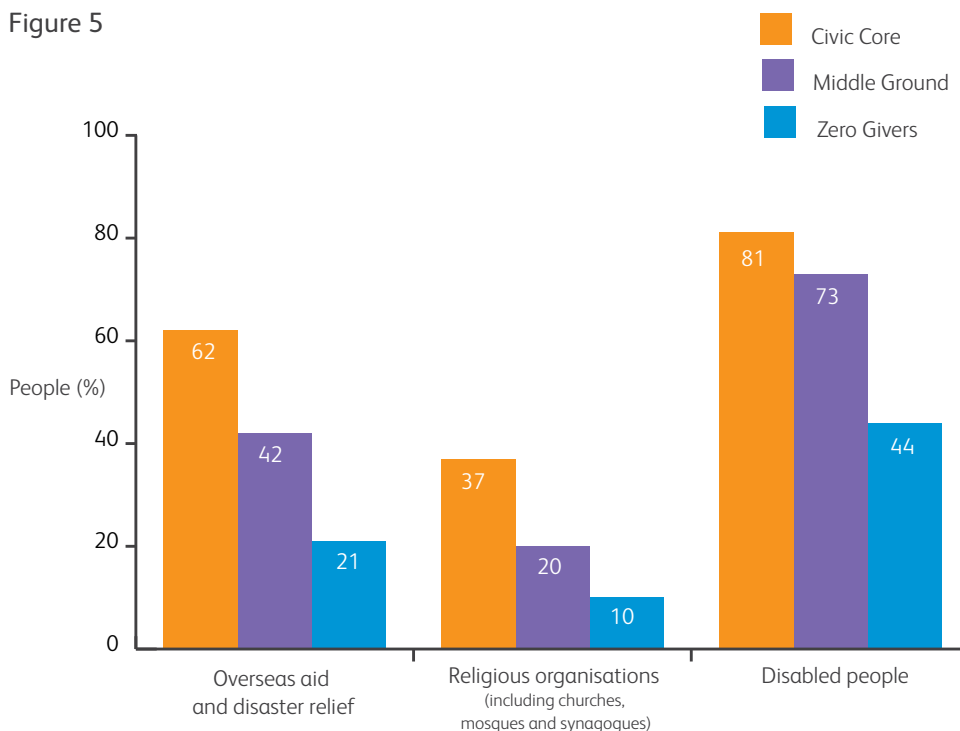
Members of the Civic Core give more than the other two groups to charity as a whole; most significantly there are also differences in the types of causes that they are likely to support. We found that, overall, the Civic Core is much more interested in a greater variety of social causes than the other two groups. For instance:

- 62 per cent of the Civic Core are interested in charities focusing on overseas aid and disaster relief, compared to 42 per cent of Middle Ground and just 21 per cent of Zero Givers
- Whilst only 10 per cent of Zero Givers are interested in religious charities, and 20 per cent of the Middle Ground, 37 per cent of the Civic Core are interested in organisations active in this area
- Members of the Civic Core were almost twice as likely to be interested in charities working to support disabled people (81 per cent) than Zero Givers (44 per cent); 73 per cent of the Middle Ground are interested in charities supporting this cause

# 62%

*of the Civic Core are interested in charities focusing on overseas aid and disaster relief, compared with just 21 per cent of Zero Givers*

Figure 5



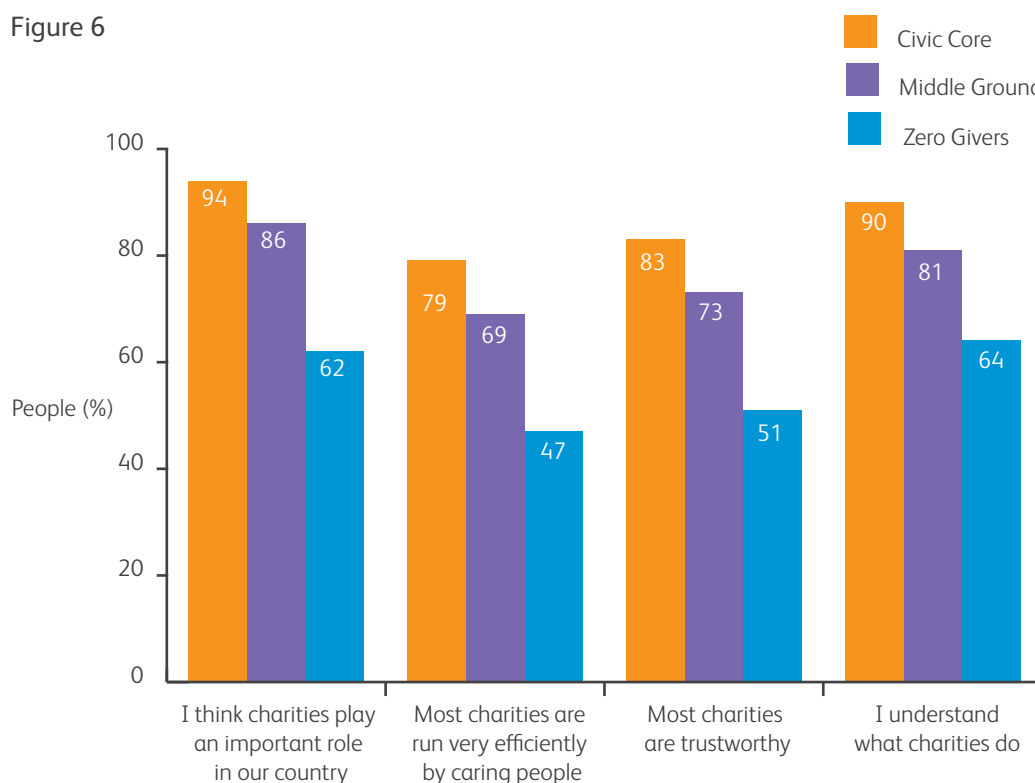
Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

## The Core on Charities

As well as differences in the types of causes that members of different groups choose to support, we also asked the groups about their views on charities. We found that the more optimistic outlook of members of the Civic Core is also reflected in their attitude towards charitable organisations. We found that:

- 94 per cent of the Civic Core agree that charities play an important role in our country, compared with 86 per cent of the Middle Ground and 62 per cent of Zero Givers
- 79 per cent of the Civic Core agree that most charities are run very efficiently by caring people, compared with 69 per cent of the Middle Ground and 47 per cent of Zero Givers
- 83 per cent of the Civic Core think that most charities are trustworthy, compared with 73 per cent of the Middle Ground and 51 per cent of Zero Givers
- 90 per cent of the Civic Core say they understand the work that charities do, compared with 81 per cent of the Middle Ground and 64 per cent of the Zero Givers

Figure 6



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

# 94%

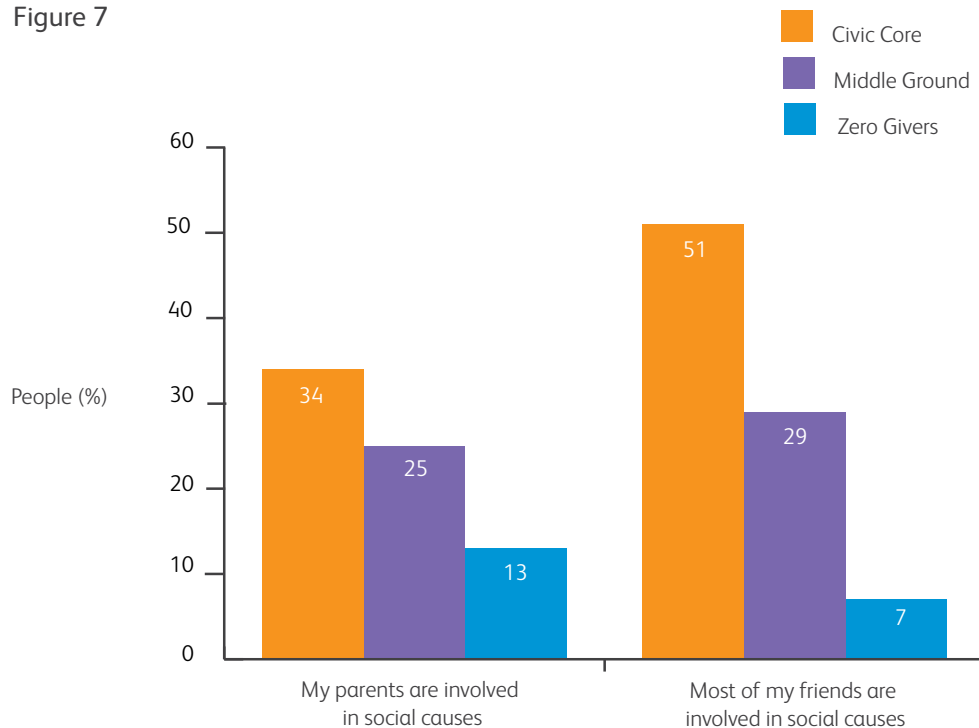
*of the Civic Core agree that charities play an important role in our country, but only 62 per cent of Zero Givers agree with this*

## Core Connections

As well as being the group most likely to support charities, we also found that the Civic Core are most likely to have friends and families who are also involved in social causes. This suggests that the most generous people are encouraged by their family and friends to develop a culture of social action. We discovered that:

- 34 per cent of the Civic Core say that their parents are involved in social causes, compared with 25 per cent of the Middle Ground and 13 per cent of Zero Givers
- 51 per cent of the Civic Core say that most of their friends are involved in social causes, with the corresponding figure for the Middle Ground and Zero Givers being 29 per cent and seven per cent respectively

Figure 7



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

# 51%

*of the Civic Core's friends are involved in social causes, with the corresponding figure for Zero Givers being just seven per cent*

## Who are the Civic Core?

Those who give their time and money to good causes provide the people power that allows charities to continue to operate. We have already examined some of the reasons that these people give, but what else do we know about the people that power charities?

- The most common occupations of members of the Civic Core are skilled professional (22 per cent) and manager or senior officer (17 per cent)
- However, members of the Civic Core are the least likely to be working of all three groups (48 per cent working in either part or full time, compared with 57 per cent from the other two groups), and much more likely to be pensioners (29 per cent) than the Middle Ground (17 per cent) and Zero Givers (14 per cent)

We also discovered that members of the Civic Core are more likely to be female (60 per cent compared with 40 per cent males), living in their own home (71 per cent) in London or close by (27 per cent). One third of the Civic Core is over 65 (33 per cent), and this is more than in the other two groups (with 15 per cent of people aged 65+ amongst the Zero Givers and 23 per cent in the Middle Ground).

They are typically engaged in a broad range of social actions, more than the other two groups. These activities range from helping out at schools (22 per cent from the Civic Core compared with nine per cent of Middle Ground and four per cent of Zero Givers) and as we have seen it is this volunteering activity that is the main difference between members of the Civic Core and those in the Middle Ground group.

These findings suggest that members of the Civic Core are more likely to be 'time-rich' than other groups. As they are less likely to be in work than members of the other groups, it is probable that they have more time available to volunteer, which means that they are able to use their skills and experience to support good causes.



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

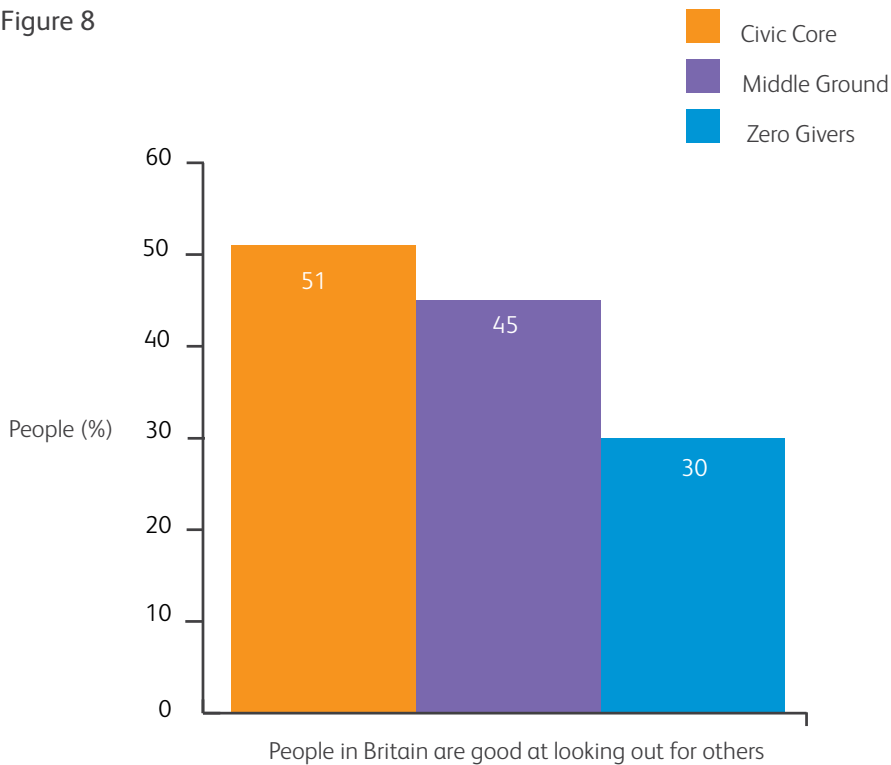
# Zero Givers

At the other end of the scale, there is a significant segment of the population (24 per cent) that do very little or nothing to support good causes. There may be a number of reasons for this – some may be unwilling to give to charity, others may be unable to give – but only by understanding more about this group can we start to work out how we can get them to engage with social action.

A closer look at the Zero Givers shows that they lack the sense of engagement and civic duty that underpins the Civic Core:

- Only 30 per cent of Zero Givers agree that people in Britain are good at looking out for others, compared with 45 per cent of Middle Ground and 51 per cent of the Civic Core
- When asked whether it is important that people obey and respect the law, six per cent of Zero Givers disagreed (compared to three per cent of the Middle Ground and one per cent of the Civic Core). A further nine per cent say that they did not know whether they agreed or disagreed

Figure 8

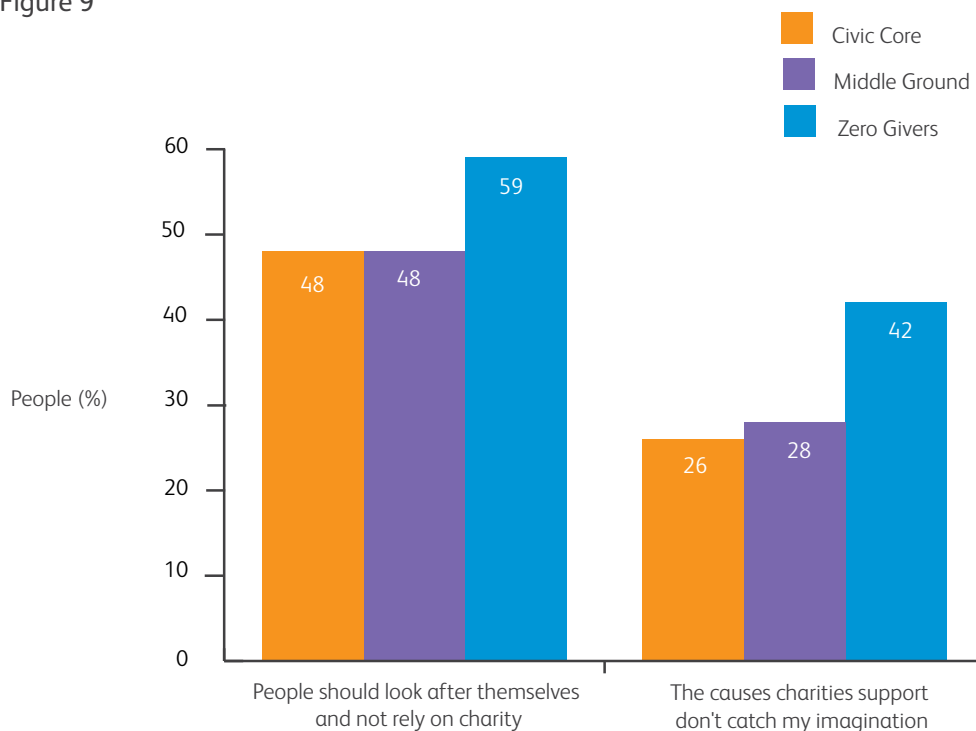


Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

We then asked Zero Givers about their lack of engagement with good causes, and discovered that:

- 59 per cent of Zero Givers say that people should look after themselves and not rely on charity (compared with 48 per cent from the other two groups)
- 42 per cent of Zero Givers say that the causes charities support “don’t catch my imagination”, significantly more than the other two groups (28 per cent of Middle Ground and 26 per cent of the Civic Core)

Figure 9



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

**59%**

*of Zero Givers say that people should look after themselves and not rely on charity*



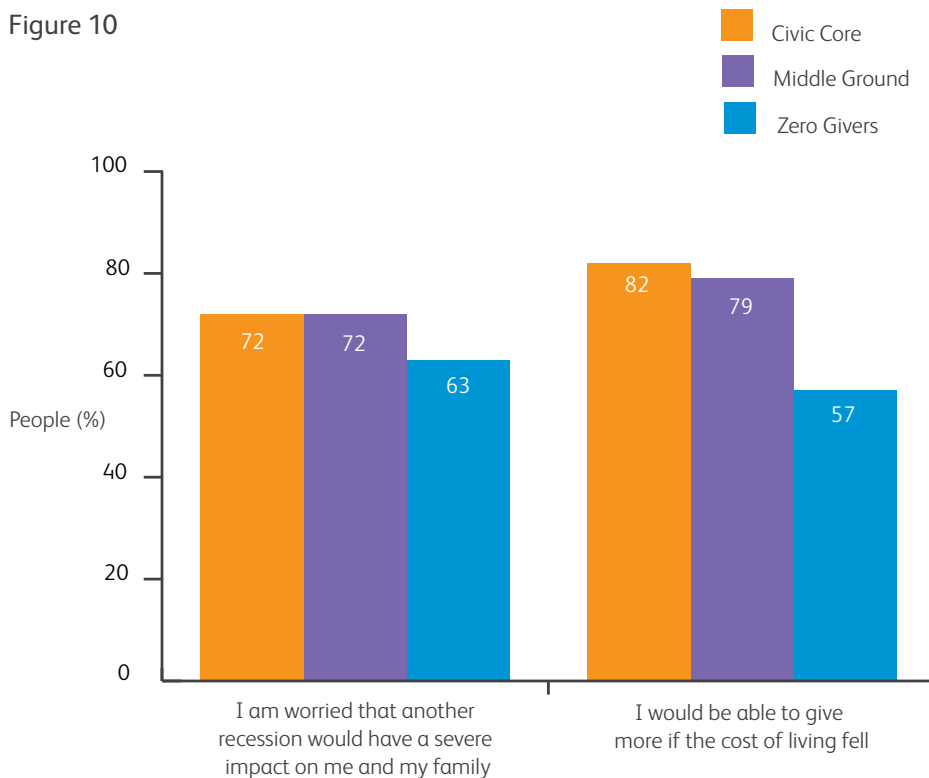
It is interesting to note that concerns about current or future personal finances do not appear to be a key factor preventing Zero Givers from giving:

- Zero Givers are the least likely group to believe that another recession would have a severe impact on them and their family (only 63 per cent compared to 72 per cent of the other two groups)
- Only 57 per cent of Zero Givers say that they would be able to give more if the cost of living fell, compared with 79 per cent of Middle Ground and 82 per cent of the Civic Core

Given their lack of engagement with social causes, it is perhaps not surprising that Zero Givers are the least likely group to believe that most people in their local community are involved in social causes (nine per cent), compared to 22 per cent of Middle Ground and 25 per cent of the Civic Core.

Zero Givers tend to be the youngest of the three groups, with people who make up the group having an average age of 44.4 compared to 47.8 for the Middle Ground and 50.2 for the Civic Core. This tallies with CAF's Mind the Gap report<sup>5</sup> which found that charities are increasingly dependent on the support of older people, and highlights that more action needs to be taken to engage people with charity from a young age.

Figure 10



Base: Civic Core 184 Middle Ground 1,356 Zero Givers 487

5 [https://www.cafonline.org/PDF/1190H\\_PartyConf\\_MindTheGap.pdf](https://www.cafonline.org/PDF/1190H_PartyConf_MindTheGap.pdf)

## *From Zero to Hero – getting more people powering Britain’s charities*

This research shows the need for a national debate about how we can get people more involved in their communities, and with the causes they care about.

It is fascinating to gain a deeper insight into Britain’s Civic Core – the people whose kindness means that the most vulnerable people in society have somewhere to turn when they are in need of a helping hand.

The real challenge for charities is engaging with the group at the other end of the spectrum – the Zero Givers – and encouraging them to begin to engage with good causes. As we have seen, people in this group are less likely to have a sense of community than other groups, and more likely to hold a sceptical view about the role of charities in society.

Our research found the Civic Core is involved with a great variety of charity activities, this suggests that even small things – donating unwanted items to a charity shop or making cakes for the school fête – can help bring people into the culture of giving. The huge success of initiatives such as the Race for Life, Movember and Olympic volunteering shows how giving can be social and bring families and friends together.

Our study has shown that Zero Givers have a broadly confident outlook about their personal financial situation, but if the cost of living fell, Zero Givers would be less likely to use this additional income to give more to charities. This suggests that their decision not to give may be more about their engagement with the community than it is to do with their feelings of economic well being.

It also shows that it’s good to talk. Those doing most for charity are most likely to have friends doing the same. People should be encouraged to make others aware of their charitable nature and try to ensure that their altruism is passed onto others.

Over the past year the Back Britain’s Charities campaign has been working to raise awareness of the challenges facing Britain’s voluntary sector, and has been urging charities to improve their engagement with the general public to make sure that they are aware of the important work carried out by charitable organisations across Britain.

We will continue to urge people to give time and money as regularly as they can to support good causes. We should be proud of the strength and scope of the charitable sector in Britain, but remain aware that charities need help if they are to be able to continue their work.

It is testament to the goodwill of Britons that there is such a strong Civic Core, but we are eager to ensure that more people get involved with supporting charities, and to that end we are looking to increase the people power generated for good causes. This report is an important step in helping us understand how we can get millions more backing Britain’s charities.

## *Methodology*

To investigate the attitudes and characteristics of the Civic Core, a survey collected the responses of 2,027 people, aged 18 or over. The interviews were conducted in Great Britain by online survey between 31 July and 1 August 2013. The data were weighted to be representative of all UK adults aged 18+ in Great Britain. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

**Charities Aid Foundation**

25 Kings Hill Avenue  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent ME19 4TA UK

T: +44 (0)3000 123 000  
E: [campaigns@cafonline.org](mailto:campaigns@cafonline.org)  
W: [www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org)