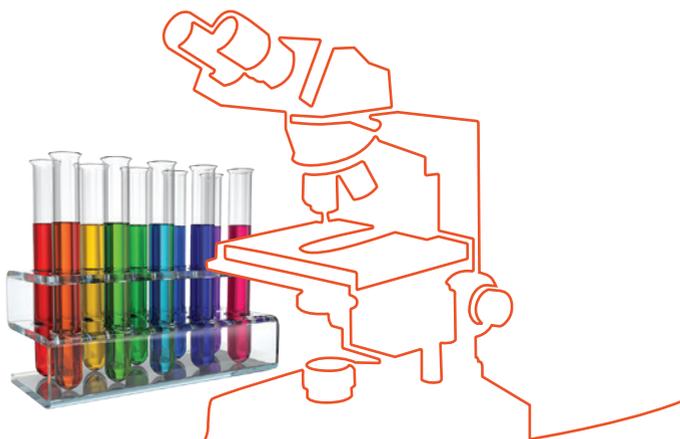


# UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Charities in Scotland



**CAF** Charities Aid  
Foundation

 **SCVO**

## *Foreword*

Charities and voluntary sector organisations are at the very core of what is great about Scotland, showcasing the determination of so many people and organisations to make a difference.

However we cannot rest on our laurels, and it is important that charities remain at the forefront of the political debate. This pamphlet explores the contribution that Scottish charities make to society, whilst also examining the attitudes of Scottish voters towards the role of the voluntary sector.

Whilst the Scottish voluntary sector is in a healthy position, there are challenges on the horizon. Continuing to build public trust in the work of charities is essential, as is securing funding for work in the years ahead.

It is also vitally important that charities develop strong ties with government, enabling the development of partnership working. After all, both charities and politicians share the aim of building a stronger society, and collaboration can often be the most effective route to drive positive change.

We hope that you find the information contained within helpful, and we look forward to continuing to make the case for Scottish charities in the years ahead.

**Dr John Low**  
Chief Executive, CAF

**Martin Sime**  
Chief Executive, SCVO

## *Charities in Scotland*

The Scottish charitable sector encompasses an estimated 45,000 voluntary organisations, carrying out an enormous range of activities to improve people's lives, often complementary to and in partnership with the public sector:

### **Supporting people**

social care, health and mental health services, employability

### **Empowering people**

campaigning, representing minorities, strengthening voices

### **Bringing people together**

social activities, community events, hobby groups

### **Health and wellbeing**

community centres, sports facilities, self-help groups

### **Improving our environment**

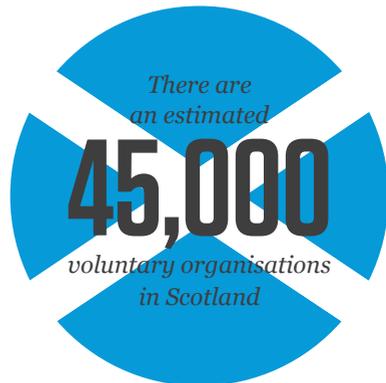
heritage, conservation, regeneration

Two-thirds of charitable organisations in Scotland operate locally, while 7% operate nationally across Scotland and 2% have an international focus. There are more charities per head of population in Scotland than any other UK nation, and levels of voluntary sector activity are particularly high in rural areas.

The top 100 largest charities in Scotland account for almost half of the sector's income, and around a third of the sector's workforce. 700 charities in Scotland have a turnover of more than £1 million, with the largest charities including housing associations, social care and health service providers, and cultural organisations.

*“Many charities provide essential safety net services for vulnerable people and also do excellent research work.”*

SNP MP



The sector's turnover has doubled over the last 10 years to nearly £5 billion. However, growth has been concentrated in a small number of very large organisations, and the average growth in turnover was 0.8% in 2013. Worryingly, and as a result of the wider financial climate, 43% of charities were spending more than they were able to bring in during 2013.



The bulk of the voluntary sector in Scotland is made up of around 40,000 small community groups that play an active role in the wellbeing of communities all over Scotland, often making a huge impact on their communities on very small budgets and with no paid staff.

Donors in Scotland give the second highest average amount (£16 per month on average) after London, and have the second highest proportion of the population giving to charity (61%).

The charitable sector in Scotland employs an estimated 138,000 people, comparable to that of the NHS (Scotland's largest single employer) which employs 153,000 staff. The sector is supported by an estimated 250,000 trustees, with an average of 7 trustees per organisation.

Around 1.3 million volunteers formally volunteer with organisations, equal to the population of Estonia and providing 126 million hours of support.<sup>1</sup>

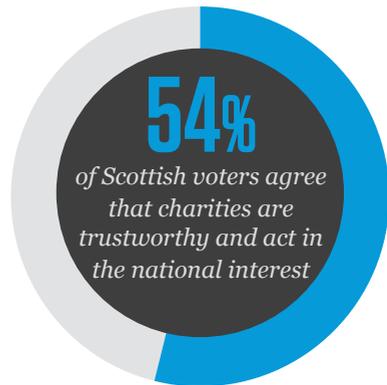
---

<sup>1</sup> Statistics from the Scottish Household Survey 2013

## *Attitudes of Scottish voters*

The ability to develop a stronger charity sector depends upon our understanding of attitudes towards charities. Voluntary organisations must act in a way that encourages public support, and helps to develop trust in organisations. To understand more about the different ways that people in Scotland perceive charities, CAF undertook a piece of research in partnership with ComRes.

Scottish voters are generally positive about the role that charities play in society. When asked to rank the importance of charities on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being essential), 53 per cent of voters in Scotland give charities a score of 8-10, and the average rating given is 7.61. Many people rely on the services that charities provide, and research elsewhere has shown that those who interact regularly with charities are more likely to rate their importance highly.



There are reasons for optimism elsewhere for Scottish charities, too, although there are clear areas where charities need to improve if they are to retain the support and confidence of the public. 54 per cent of Scottish voters agree that charities are trustworthy and act in the public interest. This compares favourably to levels of trust in other professions, and comes in the aftermath of a challenging climate for charities, with stories such as the recent collapse of Kids Company, and concerns about fundraising practices linked to the death of Olive Cooke having dominated the news agenda in recent weeks.

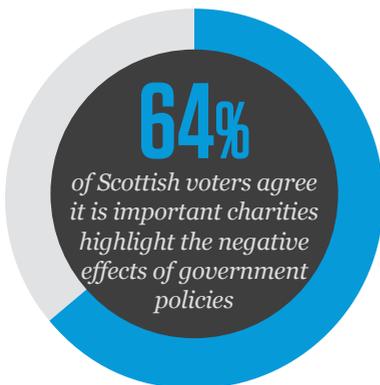
*“[Charities] have a positive impact on society and political debate.”*

SNP MP

Scottish voters give a clear mandate to charities to continue their advocacy. 64 per cent of voters in Scotland agree that it is important for charities to highlight if they believe government policies will negatively affect people, with only 6 per cent disagreeing. In addition, 61 per cent of Scottish voters believe that money given to charities by government to run public services should not be a focus for spending cuts.

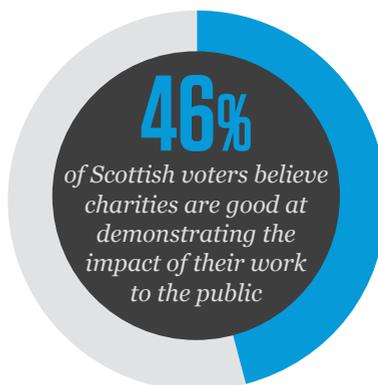
Although there is an expectation from voters that politicians should stand up to protect the role of charities, it is worrying that half of Scottish voters (50 per cent) believe that most politicians do not understand how important charities are in Britain today. Of course, it is possible that these numbers would change if voters were asked about the importance of charities in Scotland, or the attitudes of Scottish politicians.

There is caution about the impact that the financial climate is having on charities. When asked about the most pressing challenges facing voluntary groups, Scottish voters were most likely to cite insufficient resources, whether time, skilled people or money (29 per cent), reductions in government funding (28 per cent) and the increasing costs of running a charity (26 per cent).



*“[Charities] play a very  
positive role, but some are  
too large and cumbersome.”*  
SNP MP

Scottish voters feel strongly about the policies that they would like to see introduced which would impact upon the charity sector. Using the proposals put forward at the 2015 election by a range of different political parties, voters in Scotland would like to see a focus on changing the rules so that a private school can no longer be a registered charity (42 per cent), and removing local authority fees for foodbanks and charities disposing of unwanted goods (39 per cent).



There is also significant support for action to get more young people engaged in volunteering and social action, which is a policy that retains the support of both MPs and voters across the political spectrum in all parts of the UK. Interestingly, there is comparatively little public support for policies such as repealing the Lobbying Act, and the expansion of the role of charities in public services.

For charities, perhaps the most worrying finding is that only 46 per cent of Scottish voters believe that charities are good at demonstrating their impact of their work to the public. Encouraging charities to focus on increasing awareness of their activities and the positive impact that they have would be a step towards increasing trust and support from Scottish voters further.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Statistics from ComRes's Perceptions of Charities Polling, accessible at: <http://comres.co.uk/polls/charities-aid-foundation-party-conference-polling/>

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) is a registered charity that promotes charitable giving and provides expert advice, financial services and social finance to companies, individuals and not-for-profit organisations.

CAF manages £3bn on behalf of charities and donors, and we work with 280,000 donors, 7,000 companies, supporting 50,000 charities. Our mission is to motivate society to give ever more effectively, helping to transform lives and communities around the world.

For more information contact:

Charities Aid Foundation

**0300 012 3208**  
**[campaigns@cafonline.org](mailto:campaigns@cafonline.org)**  
**[@cafonline](https://twitter.com/cafonline)**

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the membership organisation for Scotland's charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises.

SCVO has over 1,500 members who range from individuals and grassroot groups, to Scotland-wide organisations and intermediary bodies.

Through lobbying and campaign SCVO works to advance the interests of our members and the people and communities they support.

For more information contact:

Scottish Council for  
Voluntary Organisations

**0131 474 8000**  
**[enquiries@scvo.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@scvo.org.uk)**  
**[@scvotweet](https://twitter.com/scvotweet)**

1680A/1015

**CAF** Charities Aid  
Foundation

 **SCVO**