

Two-thirds of people feel more negatively about charities after media coverage of malpractice cases, survey shows

23 September 2015 by Susannah Birkwood, Be the First to Comment

Research also shows 44% are now less likely to share personal information, with charities and donors requiring more honesty and transparency from such organisations



Many national newspapers have run negative stories about fundraising practices

Almost two-thirds of people who have seen negative media stories about charities in recent months feel more negatively towards them, according to new research.

Speaking at the launch of *Third Sector's Charity Brand Index 2015* in London today, Martin Bradley, associate director of media and entertainment at Harris Interactive, which carries out the research for the publication, presented additional data from a survey of 2,000 people conducted by the market research company this month.

Sixty-six per cent of respondents said they had seen negative stories about charities in the media in recent months and, of these, 63 per cent said they now had a more negative opinion of charities in general as a result.

Older people were influenced more by the negative coverage, the data shows – 68 per cent of those aged 55 and over said they now had a more negative opinion, compared with 48 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds.

Bradley said that this more negative attitude towards charities appeared to have had an effect on willingness to engage in certain activities. When respondents were asked if they were more or less likely to share personal information such as bank details or addresses with charities, 44 per cent said they were now less willing, while 6 per cent said they were more willing, leaving a balance of 38 per cent less likely.

Ten per cent of respondents said they would now be less willing to campaign on behalf of a charity, 7 per cent were less likely to take part in a sporting challenge to raise funds and 4 per cent were less likely to volunteer or donate money.

Bradley told the launch that the top three factors people said would reduce their trust in a charity were if they were pressured to sign up or donate (43 per cent selected this option), if the charity's fundraisers knocked at their door (36 per cent) or if a charity received bad media coverage about how it spent its money (34 per cent).

While more than half (52 per cent) of respondents indicated that their trust in charities had not changed in recent months, those who had lost trust in charities said the top three things charities could do to regain their confidence were: to be more open about how they spent their money, to be more honest and transparent, and to stop "pestering or begging" people for money.

Bradley said 84 per cent of respondents disapproved of "cold call" telephone fundraising, 77 per cent disapproved of door-to-door fundraising and 64 per cent disapproved of receiving addressed mail from charities with which they had no prior connection.

Referring to the *Charity Brand Index*, Bradley said that despite the recent media stories the average trust score for charities this year was 58 per cent, exactly the same as in 2014. "But this does not highlight any changes in trust within the sector as a whole, just the small number of charities that we focus on," he said.

The *Charity Brand Index*, which gauges public opinion of charity brands, is based on an online survey of more than 4,000 UK adults. While it was topped by the same charity – Cancer Research UK – in 2014 and 2015, this year's report shows that Save the Children dropped out of the top 20 for the first time since 2011.

Bradley's presentation will be available to view online for free to all those who attended today's launch event, as well as to those who download the webinar or purchase a copy of the *Charity Brand Index*.

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