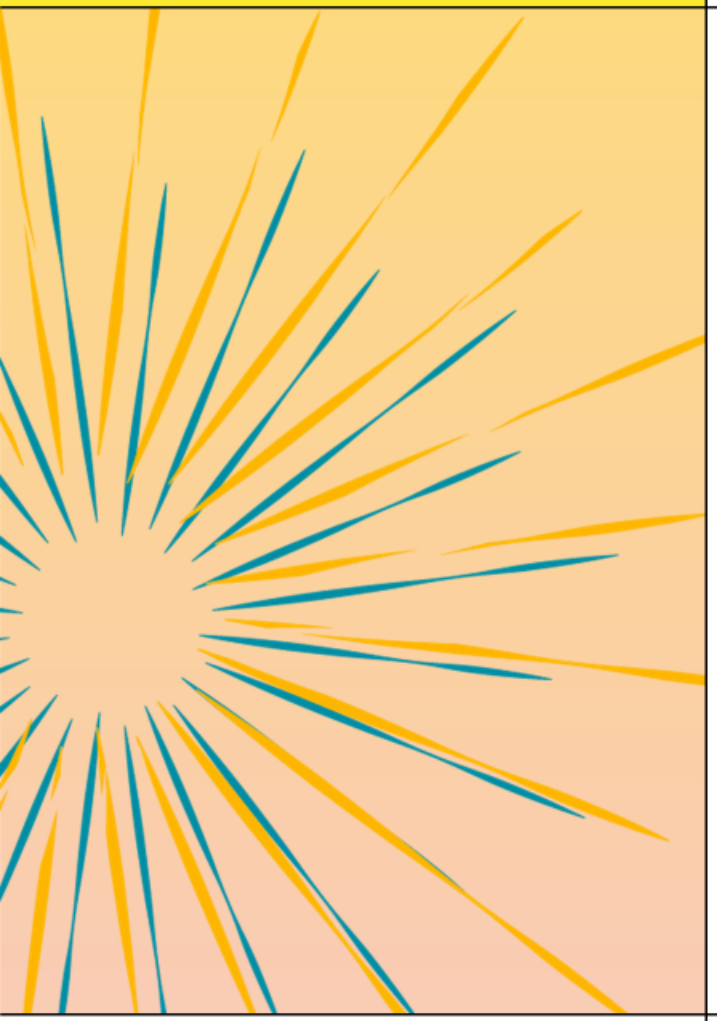
Eastside People

The Festival of Trusteeship 2026



Trusteeship today:
Turning research into better boards

12.30pm Wednesday 11th November

Thought leadership strand

Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland

Trustees' Week

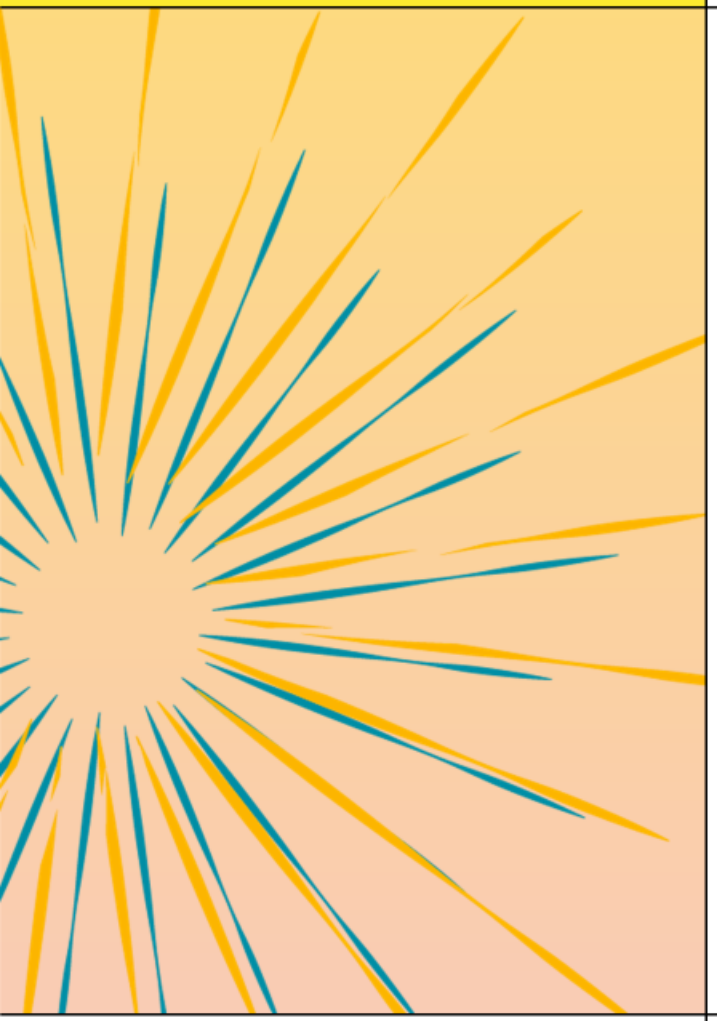
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Welcome! We're so pleased you're joining us for this session.

This session will be recorded. Please stay muted unless we ask you to unmute. It helps to make sure everyone can clearly hear who is talking.

Closed captions are available; you need to enable these.

Please use the chat to ask questions and share experiences. We'd love to hear from you. Please keep your comments respectful, useful and accurate.

Please also feel free to ignore the chat and focus on the discussion if you'd prefer. We always read out questions fully.

If you don't already have one, you can still purchase a weekly pass. Please visit the Eastside People website for details.

Trustees' Week

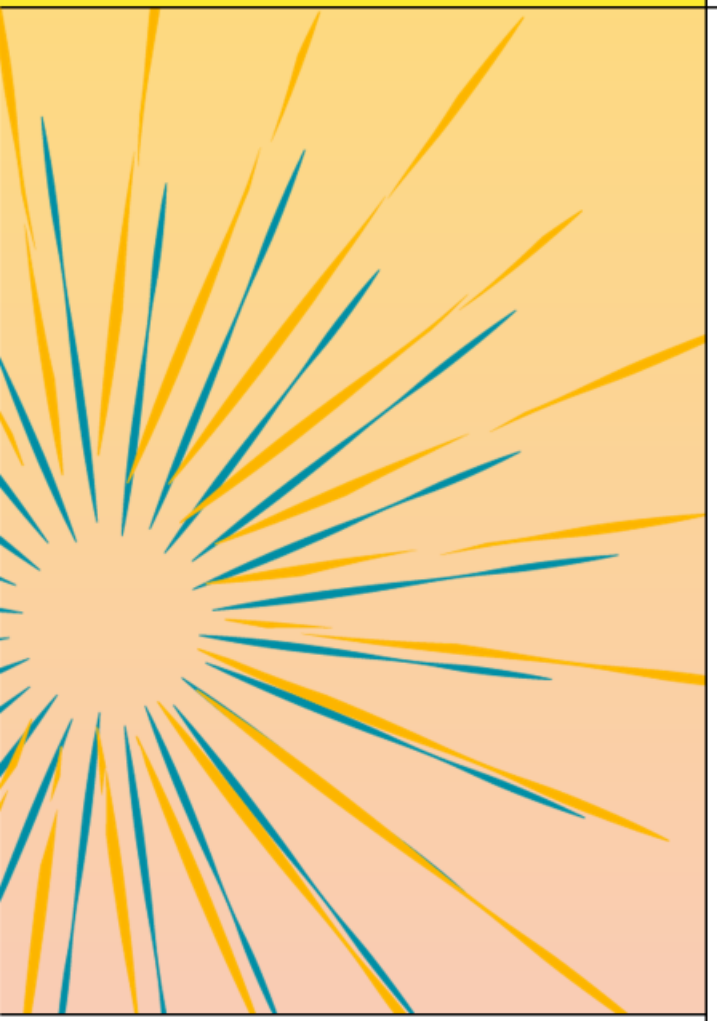
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Thank you to our wonderful partners

CFG Leading the way for charity finance

Association of Chairs

Young Trustees Movement

fair collective

Bayes Business School, City St George's University of London

acevo imagine, inspire, improve

Board Racial Diversity UK

ICAEW

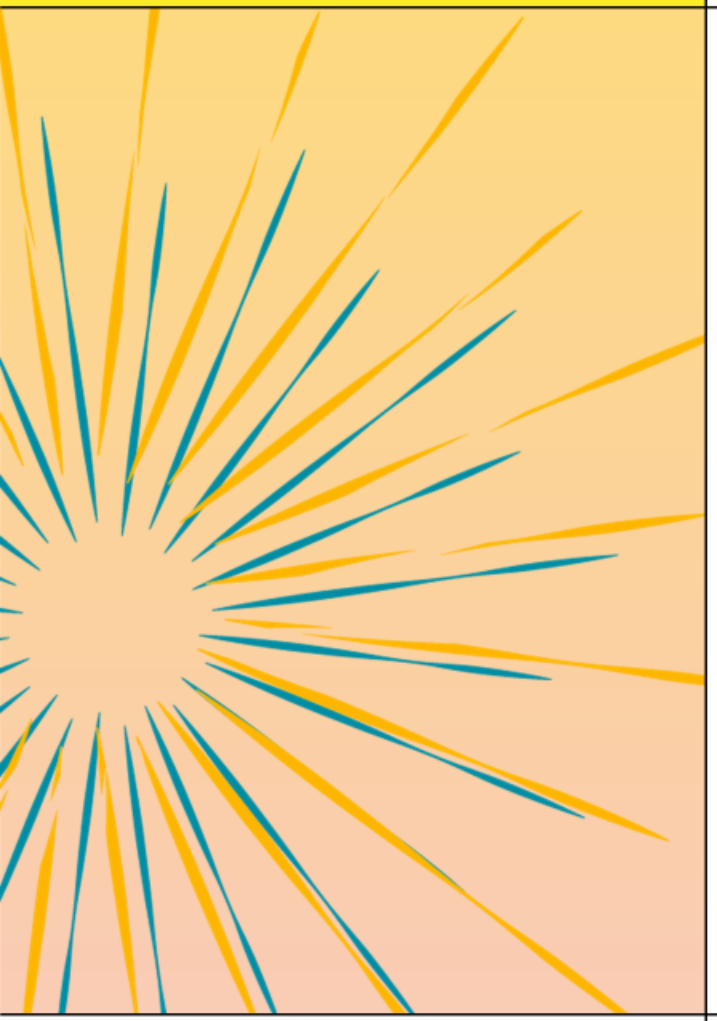
Charity Excellence Framework

Queer Trustees

Trustees' Week

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Chair	**Alex Evans**, Consultant in charity and philanthropy; Founder, Barely Civil Society
Presenters	**Shirley Otto**, Charity Governance Specialist and Social Historian, University of Glasgow
	Neal Green, Strategic Policy Advisor, Charity Commission for England and Wales; Chair, Cheam Baptist Church
	Valentina Dotto, Senior Policy Advisor, The Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland; Trustee, the Working Well Trust
	Vidya Panicker, Associate Professor of International Business, Loughborough Business School; Trustee, Citizens Advice Charnwood
	Tim Harrison-Byrne, Co-Managing Director, nfpResearch

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Trusteeship Today: lessons from history

Shirley Otto PhD, Affiliate, University of Glasgow

Social history research



Charity Trusteeship from1601 to 2025

Trustee's lens, looking through the Board and AGM minutes of four welfare charities from1980 to 2010.

How has governance practice changed over time and with what significance for the role of Trustees?

To what extent has external control, by the State (e.g. policies, accreditation + regulation) changed internal charity governance?

The changing ‘place’ of Trustees 1980 to 2010



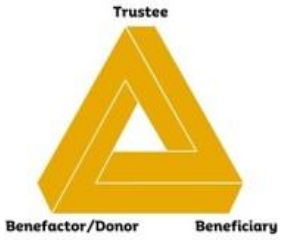
- ✓ Since 1601 Trustee’s duty remains to act as stewards to get the best for the beneficiaries.
- ✓ Trustees have provided resilience in hard times and stability through change.
- ✓ Trustee’s motivation remains rooted in individual, spiritual and social impulses.

BUT

- ❖ With increased State engagement and resourcing came considerable control and regulation. On occasions challenging and determining core values and purposes of a charity
- ❖ The prohibitive cost of implementing State policies and funding requirements (e.g. 1990 Community Care Act)
- ❖ Power and control shifted, internally, to CEO and senior teams. Trustees became greatly dependent on reporting by the CEO + senior staff to fulfil their stewardship role.
- ❖ Trustees let go of their recruitment, induction and training.
- ❖ Trustees had less in contact with staff, service users, volunteers and Members.
- ❖ Trustees became much less active in planning and taking part in AGMs.

Trustees became ‘accounted to’ as opposed to being ‘accountable’.

Future of Trusteeship



Is Trusteeship to become vestigial?

Will we see a significant shift to professional Trustees?

Will we see Chair of Board accepted as the formal leader?

Will we come to have CEOs on the Board as a Trustee?

Charity law 2000. How do Trustees, benefactors + beneficiaries fit together in the 21st century?

Investing in Trusteeship



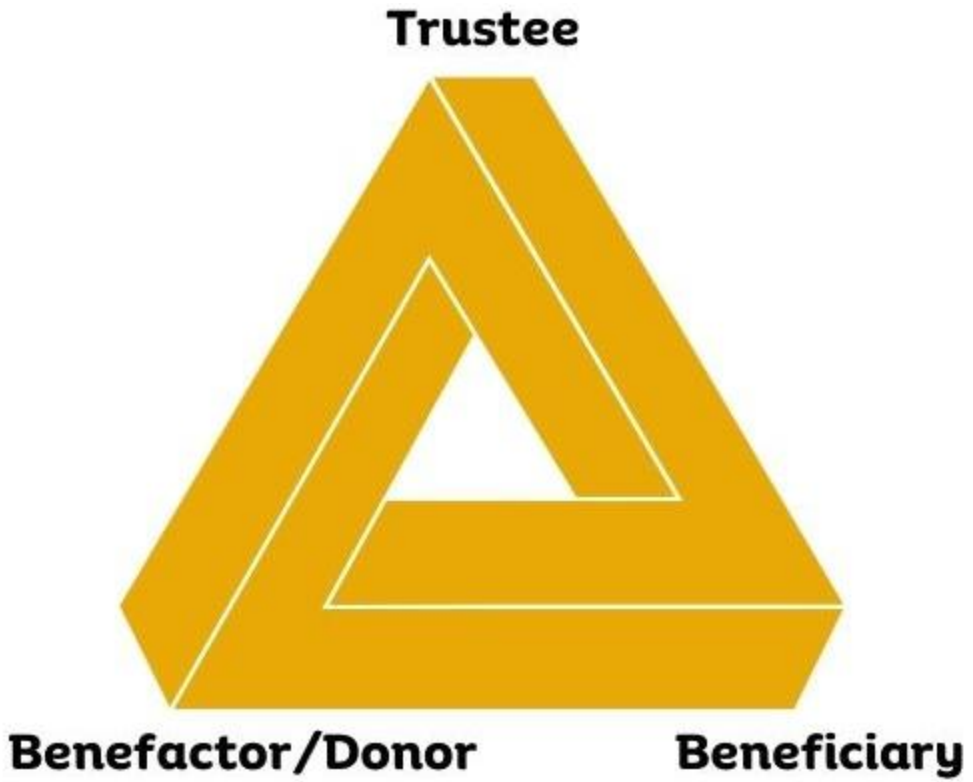
Board accountability- debate and identify quality reporting + best practice(s).

Make Trusteeship visible – in mainstream media and have the same status as jury service.

Rationalise legal categories – mutual aid, CICs + social enterprises become separate entities and not charities.

Balance of EDI and acquiring skilled and specialist Trustees in difficult times

The Golden Triangle of Trusteeship



The trustee research programme

- What issues, challenges and risks are affecting the charity sector?
- How well do trustees understand their role? Where are the gaps?
- Are we helping trustees to get it right and do better?

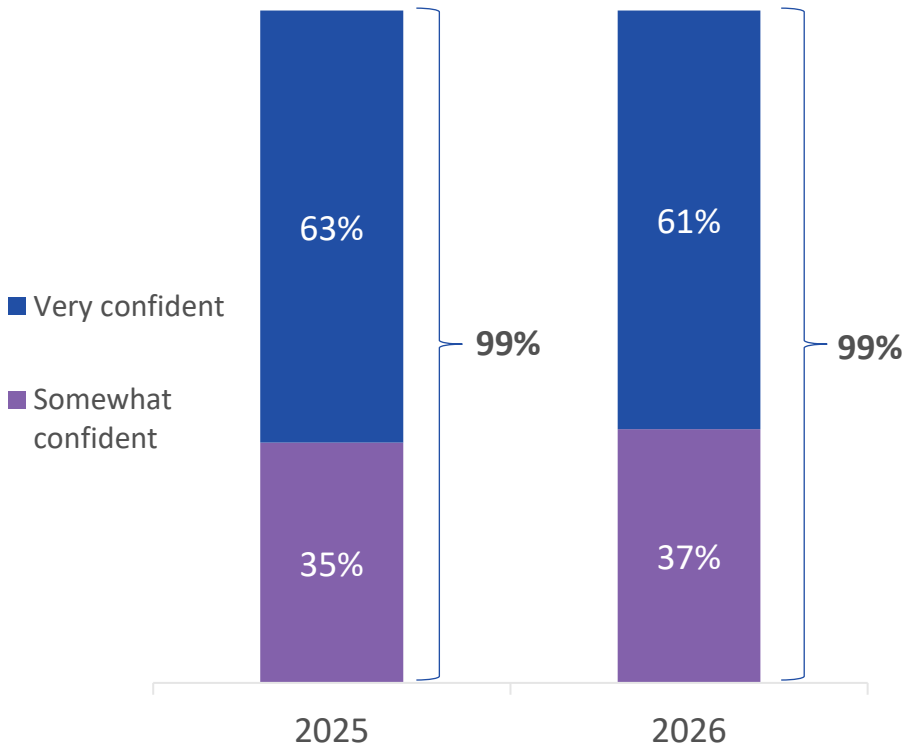
Informs:

- Our guidance design
- Our communications
- Our impact measurement

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99% of trustees are confident in their role.

Overall confidence as a trustee



Confident…

- About decision-making
- About delivering the purpose
- About disagreeing with co-trustees
- About calling out bad behaviour

Less confident…

- Newer trustees (under 5 years)
- About finance
- About safeguarding
- About conflicts of interest

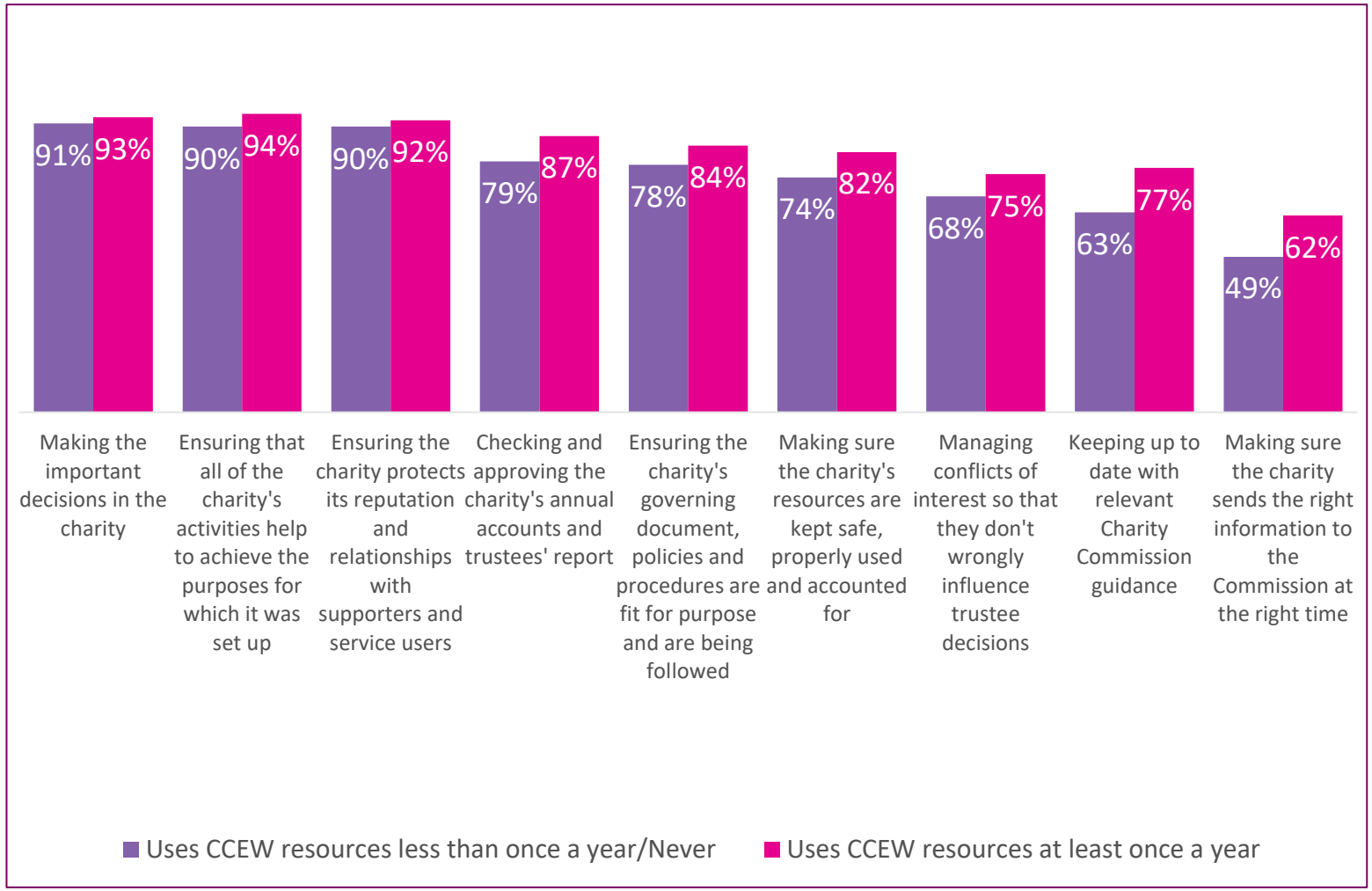
B05. And overall, how confident are you in your role as a trustee? Base: All trustees 2025 (2511), 2026 (2947),

92% of trustees know they share responsibility for decision making, and for ensuring the charity's activities further its purpose; only 55% think they share responsibility for filing accounts

Answered 'the board of trustees are jointly responsible'



A02. In your charity, who do you think is ultimately responsible for each of the following? Base: All trustees: 2026 (2947)



Those that read our guidance are more likely to know their duties

Those that don't either didn't know where to look (new trustees) or don't think they need it!

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Trustee segments - in a nutshell:









	High proportion of:	Years' experience	Have high confidence	Knowledge score /19	Regularly use our guidance?	Those who don't…
1. Skilled and sure **43%**	Chairs (24%)	10+ (46%)	99%	16.2	48%	Didn't need it! (74%)
2. On the right track **29%**	Working f/t (22%) Under 50 (14%)	1-5 years (42%)	43%	15.8	46%	Didn't know (16%)
3. Experienced and overconfident **9%**	Treasurers (33%) Over 75 (42%)	10+ (61%)	88%	14.5	43%	Didn't need it! (84%)
4. Low confidence but learning **20%**	Under 50s (14%)	<1 year (11%) 1-5 years (37%)	5%	14.7	41%	Didn't know (16%)

Research into trusteeship and the trustee population (PBE)

We wanted to understand....

- Trustees' experience of trusteeship
- How boards function, the diversity of perspectives shaping decisions, notable gaps?

We found....

- Trustees are resoundingly positive about their experience
- They feel confident and well equipped to exercise their duties
- Over half of trustees are older (**average 65**); from **professional** backgrounds; **retired**
- Some improvement in gender balance since 2017 (**36% -> 42%** female in 2024)
- Only **8%** of trustees are from ethnic minority backgrounds, but reflective of the age demographic
- Most trustees rely on existing networks to recruit new trustees

(….Which of those things sound like a problem, and why?)

Outputs and impact....

- Informed guidance redesigns
- Shaped comms and campaigns
- Catalyst for sector action

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Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland

Beyond Capacity - Closing the Governance Adaptation Gap

Strengthening Voluntary Charity Governance for the Decade Ahead

Dr. Valentina Dotto
Senior Policy Adviser
The Chartered Governance Institute UK and Ireland

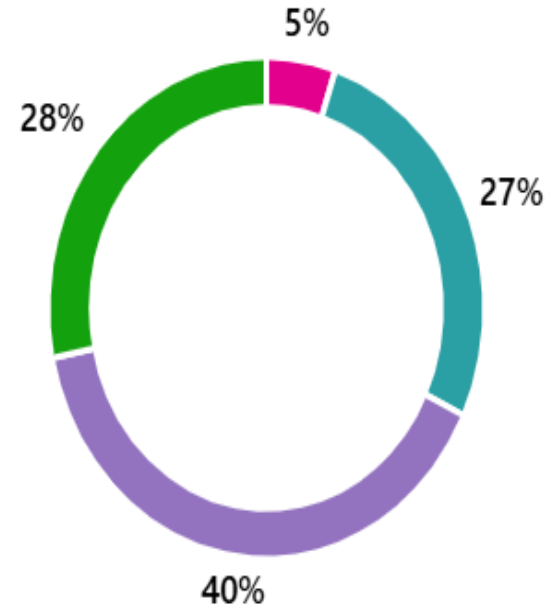
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Trusteeship has changed.

The model supporting trusteeship has not.

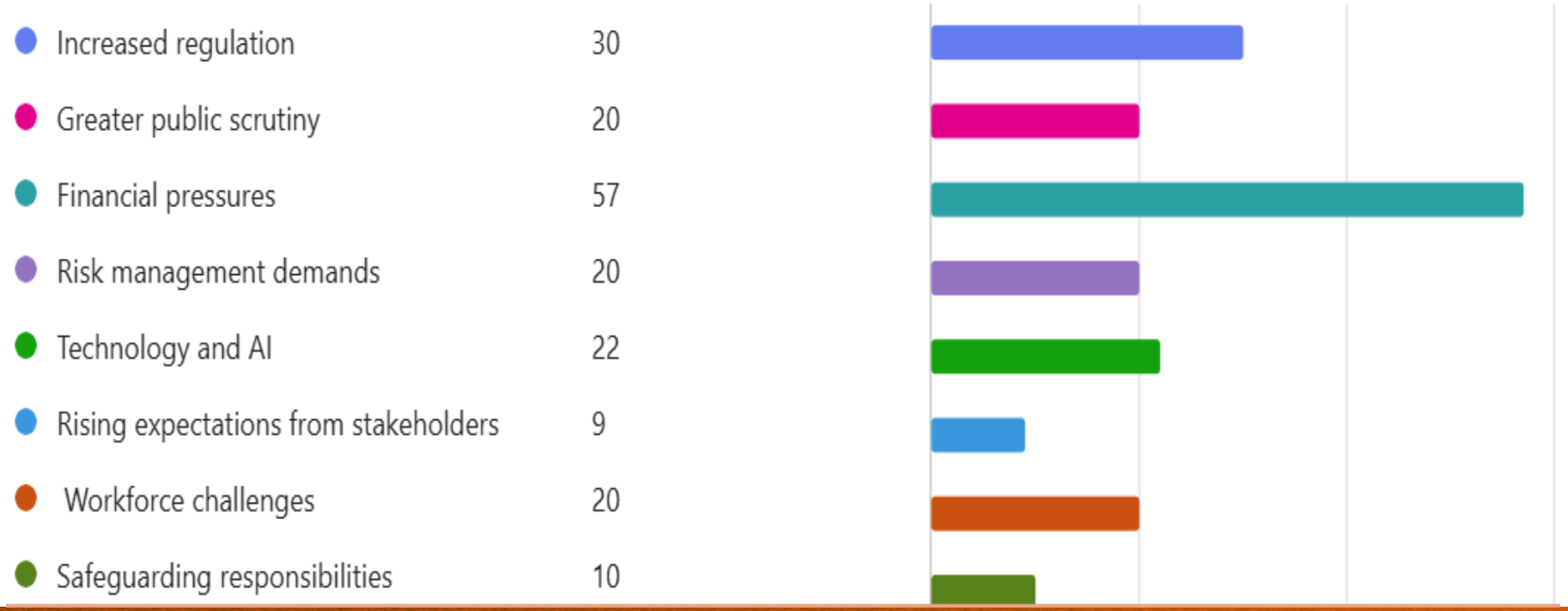
68% say trusteeship is harder than five years ago.

Much easier	0
Slightly easier	4
About the same	21
Slightly harder	31
Much harder	22



Governance got bigger

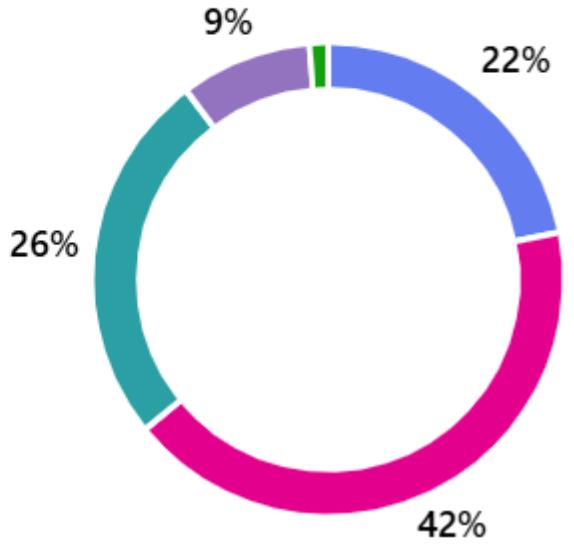
Trusteeship is changing because the scope of governance keeps expanding.



Boards are effective. But stretched.

Which statement best describes your board?

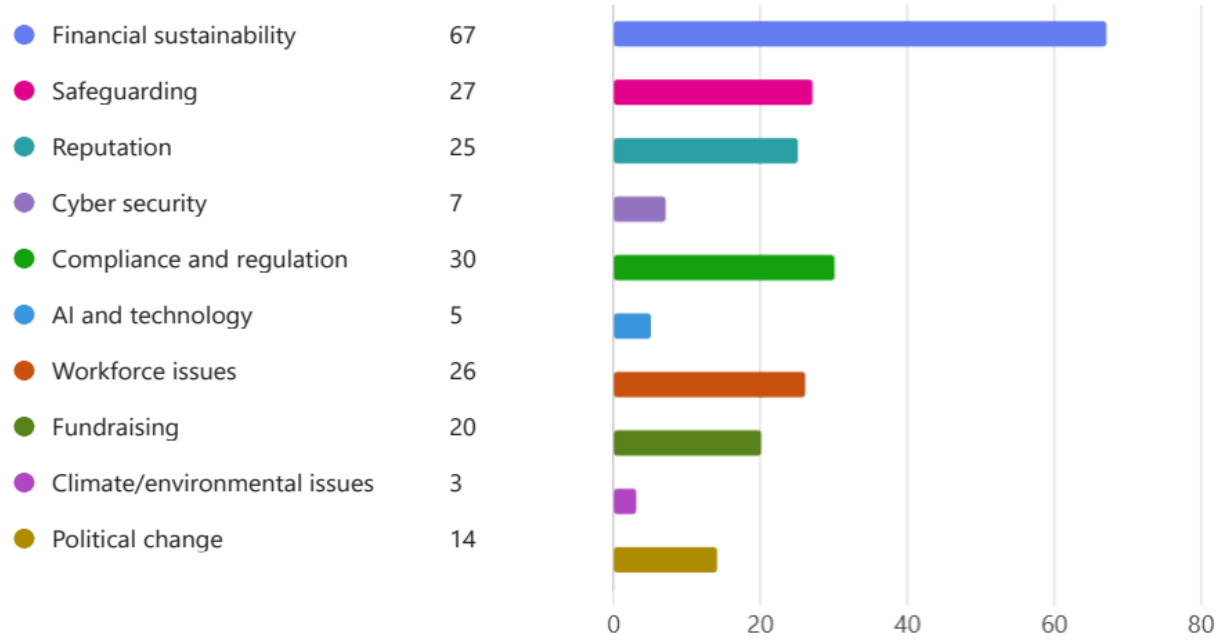
High-performing and future-focused	17
Effective but stretched	33
Adequate but mostly reactive	20
Frequently challenged by governance issues	7
Unsure	1



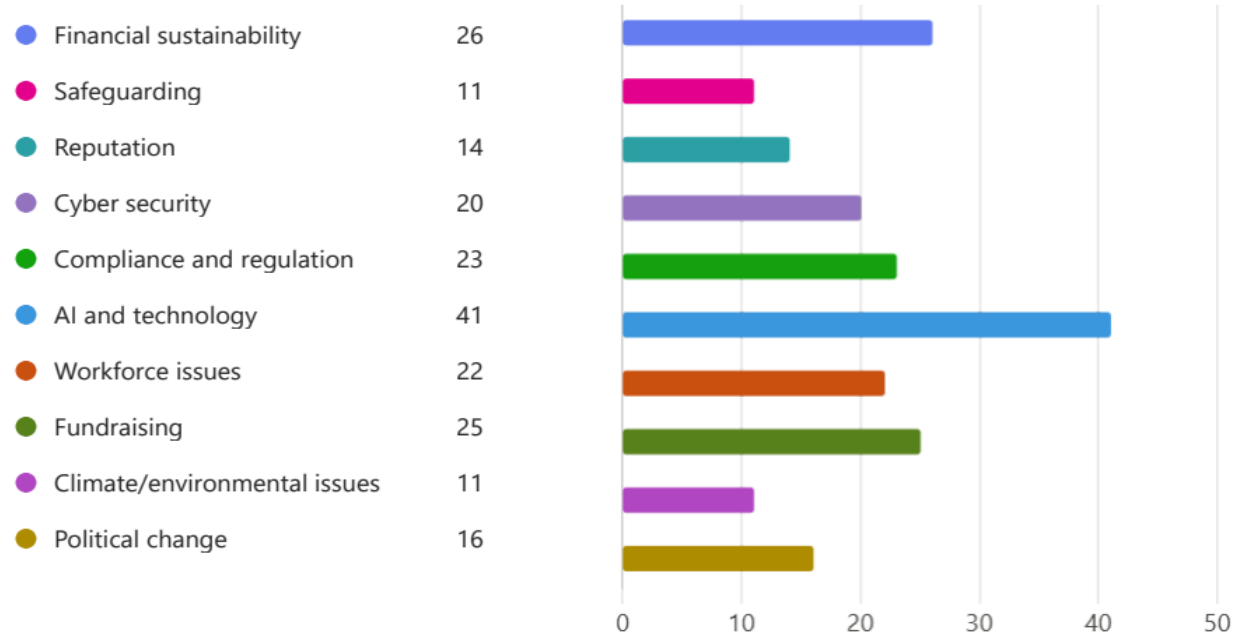
The issue is strain, not failure.

Boards know what matters.
They just struggle to find time for it.

Which risks receive the greatest attention from your board?

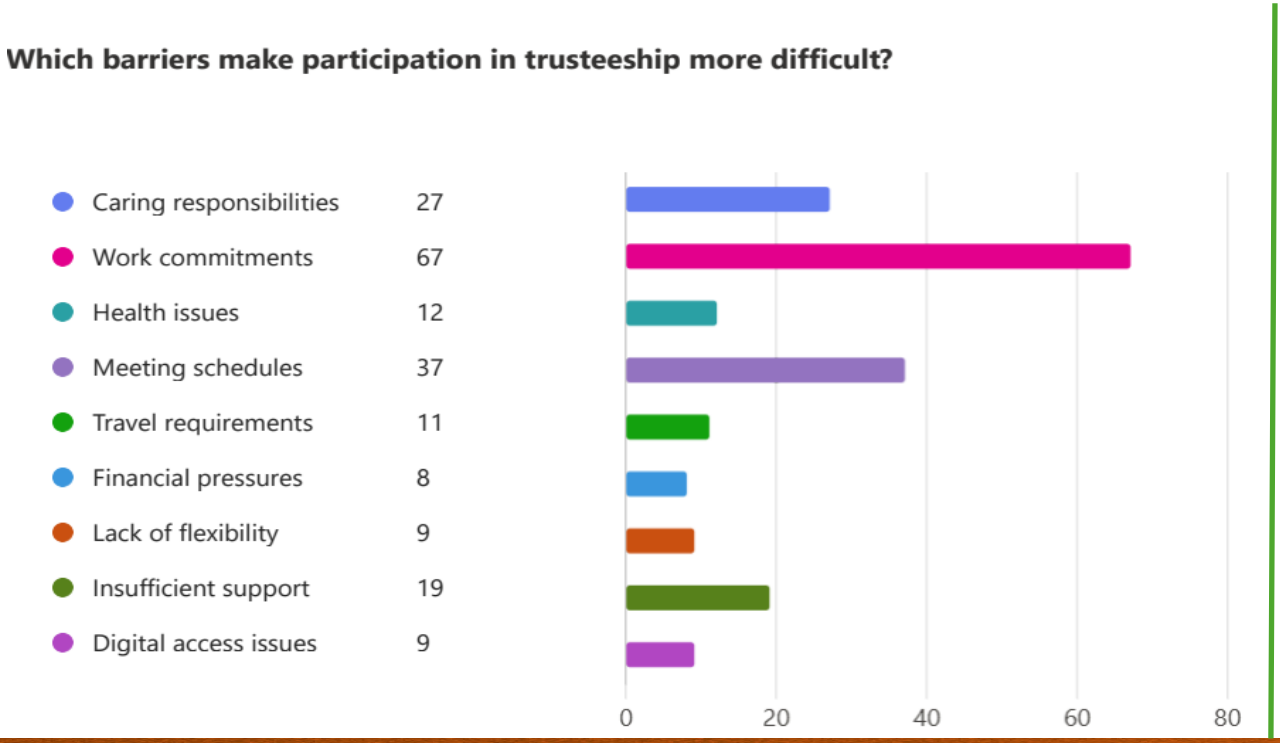


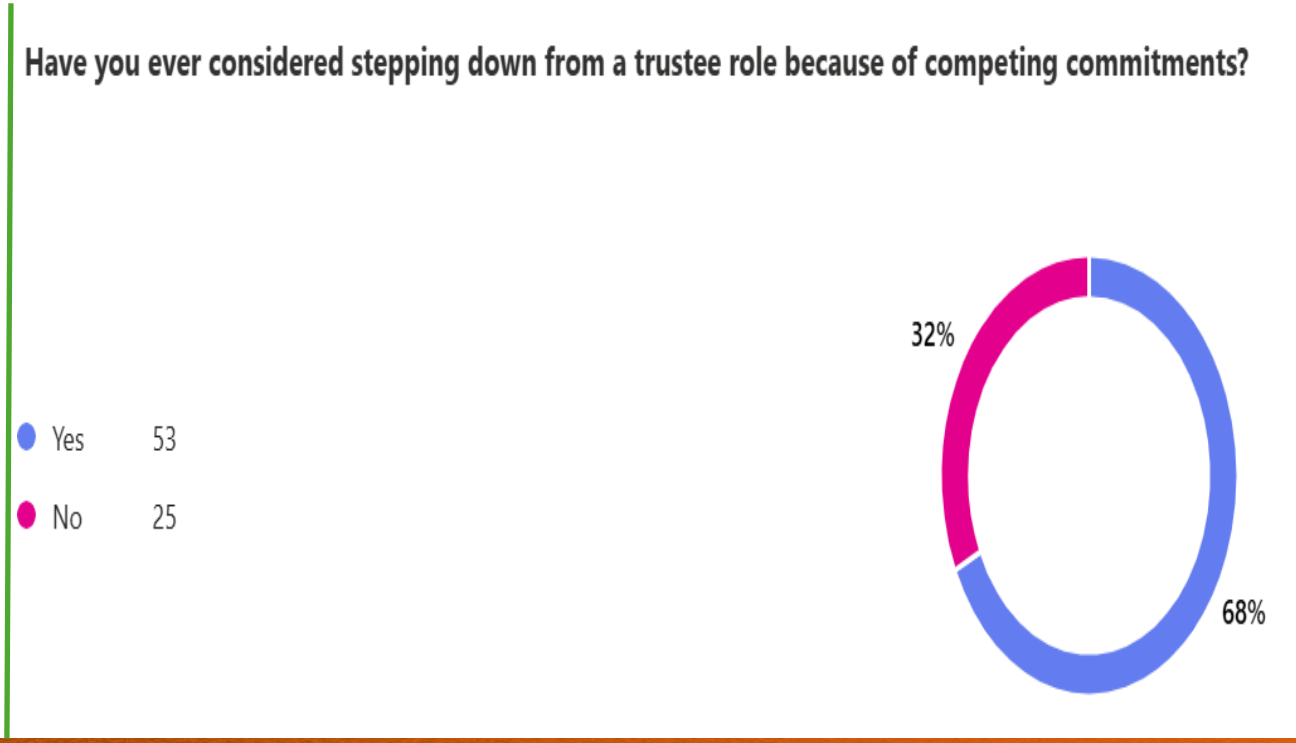
Which risks deserve more board attention?



Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland

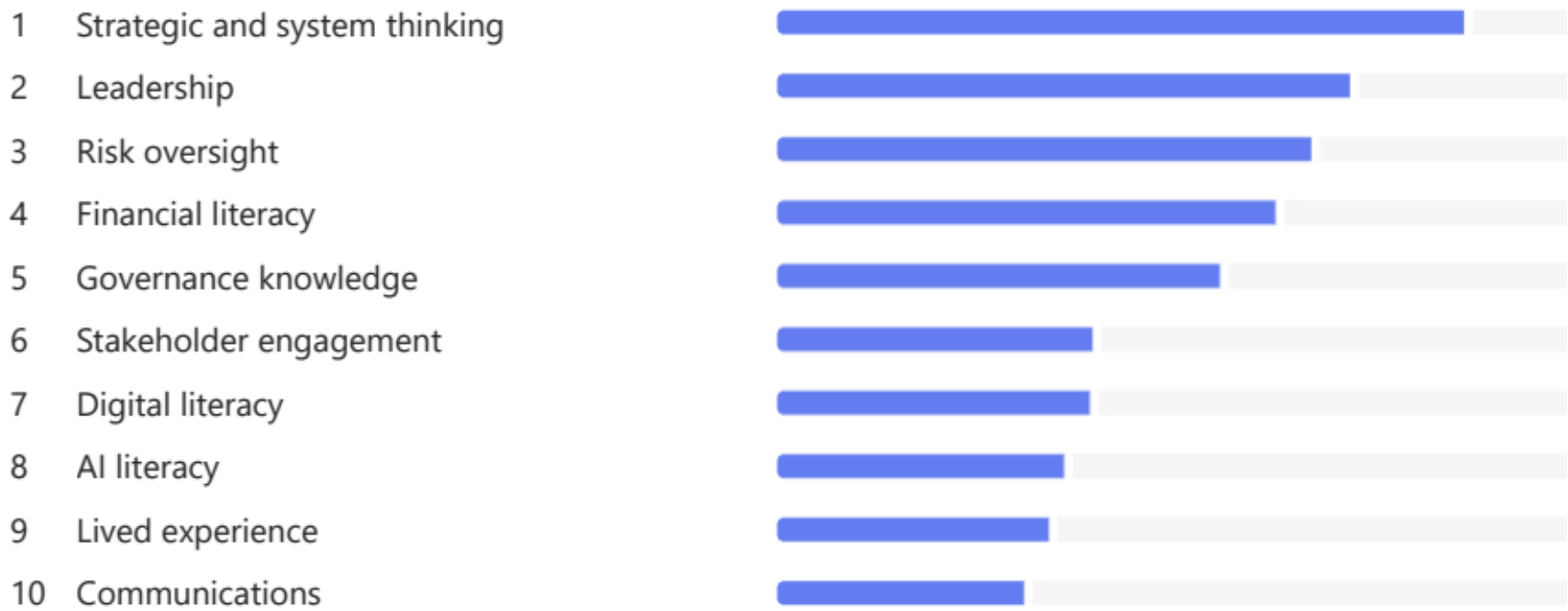
Trustees are not running out of commitment. They are running out of capacity.





Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland

Looking towards 2030, what skills will trustee need?





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UK & Ireland



BRITISH ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT



Is the trustee skills gap just a recruitment problem?

Insights from 44 qualitative interviews across the UK

Dr Vidya Panicker

Trustee, Citizens Advice Charnwood

Senior Lecturer and Researcher, Loughborough Business School

v.s.panicker@lboro.ac.uk

The central insight: From recruitment to activation

Recruitment	Activation
• Who is around the table?	• How do we enable them to contribute?

Having capability ≠ using capability

Questions for us to ask



Are we using the expertise we already have?



Does our board culture encourage contribution and challenge?



Are we recruiting for our actual governance needs?

Thank you!

You can reach me and connect with me on my email ID
v.s.panicker@lboro.ac.uk

Scan the QR Code for my LinkedIn



What the public thinks of trustees, and how boards behave

Trusteeship Today, Festival of Trusteeship

Wednesday 11 November 2026 | Tim Harrison-Byrne, nfpResearch

Little understanding, but goodwill

•13%

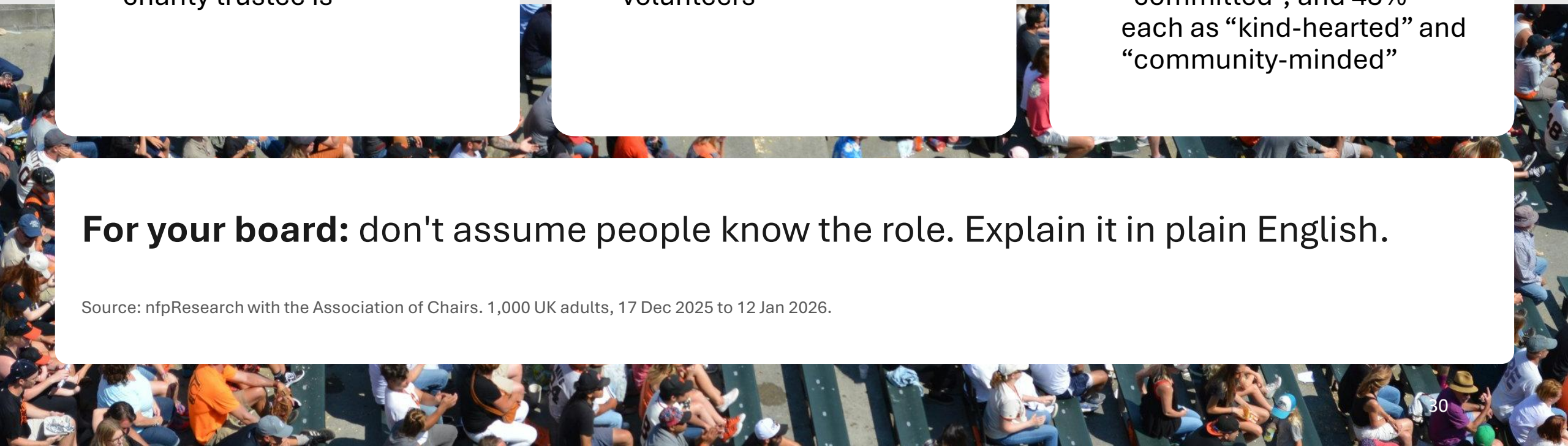
- definitely know what a charity trustee is

•35%

- know trustees are unpaid volunteers

•47%

- picture trustees as “committed”, and 45% each as “kind-hearted” and “community-minded”



For your board: don't assume people know the role. Explain it in plain English.

Source: nfpResearch with the Association of Chairs. 1,000 UK adults, 17 Dec 2025 to 12 Jan 2026.

A quarter would consider it, but real barriers get in the way

- **What would make you less likely to become or remain a trustee?**

For your board: advertise openly, state the time involved, offer training and pay expenses.



Source: nfpResearch with the Association of Chairs. 1,000 UK adults, 17 Dec 2025 to 12 Jan 2026.

Chairs see a healthier board than CEOs do

For your board: check the chair and CEO see the board the same way, and appraise the chair.



- **77%** CEOs
- **91%** chairs

- say they can discuss difficult issues safely with each other

- **66%** CEOs
- **52%** chairs

- have faced challenging behaviour on the board at least occasionally

- **18%** CEOs
- **36%** chairs

- say their organisation has a chair appraisal process

Source: ACEVO, Association of Chairs and nfpResearch, Board behaviours, April 2026 (pp13, 33, 46). CEOs and chairs of trustees (ACEVO and Association of Chairs members), 24 Nov to 19 Dec 2025.

Help fill the data gap – what do you think about how the sector is doing?

Chairs and trustees are the group most surveys miss.
10 to 12 minutes, anonymous, closes 30 November.

Read both reports
nfpresearch.com/blog
acevo.org.uk/reports
tim.harrison-byrne@nfpresearch.com



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The Festival of Trusteeship 2026

Thanks for joining us

Charity Trustee Hub: The one-stop shop for resources, events, and top tips for charity trustees.

https://bit.ly/4yY9Rtv

Free ESG survey:
Benchmark your organisation and find ways to develop your ESG practice.

https://bit.ly/4yTtzqu

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