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FUNDRAISING

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FACE OFF

Is face-to-face
fundraising as
controversial as we think?

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taking it to

Face-to-face is in your face. But is it the controversial issue that many believe it is, and does the sector stand up for it enough?

CELINA RIBEIRO looks at exclusive research about public perception and how the sector responds

They stand there. Grinning. Youthful. Bouncing from foot to foot. Bedecked in oversized, brightly-coloured tabards. Waving at passersby.

They are face-to-face fundraisers. A survey of just under 1,000 people by fast.MAP for *Fundraising* found that these smiling, branded individuals every month approach about 8 per cent of the population at their homes, and a further 18 per cent of the public on the street.

The only aspect of fundraising

to have a derogatory term invented for it, 'chugging' is typically regarded as the most controversial form of fundraising. Half of the general public believe there are too many street fundraisers. Nearly a third say street fundraising should be banned and just a smidgeon under 50 per cent say that street fundraisers are annoying.

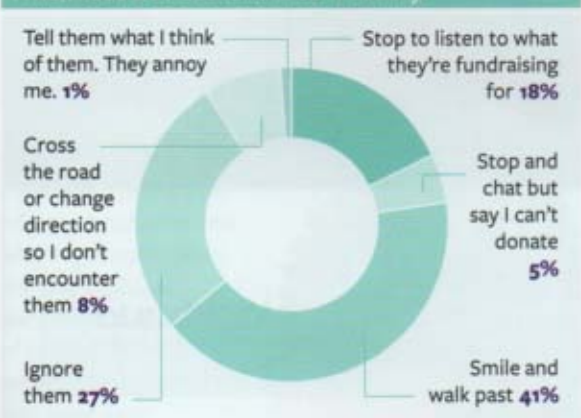
However, compared to another prolific form of direct marketing, direct mail, face-to-face fares well; 54 per cent say there is too

much direct mail and 35 per cent want direct mail banned.

Nearly one in four (23 per cent) of the public say they will stop and chat to either a street or door-to-door fundraiser and 12 per cent told fast.MAP that they have signed up via one of these individuals.

The Public Fundraising Regulatory Association estimates that around £10m is brought into the sector every month by donors recruited face-to-face and that donors who sign up this way account for up to 18 per cent of all regular donors. At some charities, like WWF, around a quarter of new regular donors sign up via face-to-face, while the British Red Cross says it speaks to "millions of people every year" on the street and doorstep.

When I see a street fundraiser I usually:



Charities spend too much money on...



the street

So what's the problem?

"The problem with face-to-face isn't that donors don't like it," says Tobin Aldrich, WWF director of fundraising. "Just that the people who really don't like it tend to be quite vocal."

Aldrich says that the different target markets has a bearing on the loudness of objections; it is more likely that a young City worker stopped on her way to work will comment on an online newspaper story about 'chugging' than a 78-year-old Dorothy Donor who receives three direct mailings a week will call up talkback radio.

Face-to-face "undoubtedly" has an image problem, says Aldrich. He's just not convinced it's a bigger issue than for any other form of fundraising.

Richard Verden, head of individual giving at the British Red Cross, one of the sector's largest users of face-to-face, agrees that while there can be an issue about public perception, it relates to the whole of fundraising.

"For me face-to-face is much like a lot of things in fundraising and a lot of things in life: there's people that like it, there's people that are ambivalent, there's people that are indifferent - which is probably the majority - and there's people that don't like it," he says.

"Within direct marketing and individual giving there's always sensitivities, there are always challenges. You're in the public eye. You're dealing with millions of people. There's a high profile and

you need to manage it sensitively and effectively and do all the things right and represent your charity, your cause and indeed the sector with due diligence and care."

The sector and face-to-face

As the most visible and arguably personal form of fundraising, face-to-face occupies an interesting position within the charity sector; some charities are willing to publicly criticise the form and others are quick to criticise charities for not standing up for it.

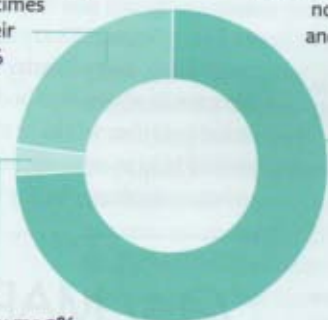
For Cathy Bauso, group managing director of Fundraising Initiatives, individuals and charities all have a responsibility to stand up for face-to-face fundraising - but at

When I open my door to a fundraiser I usually:

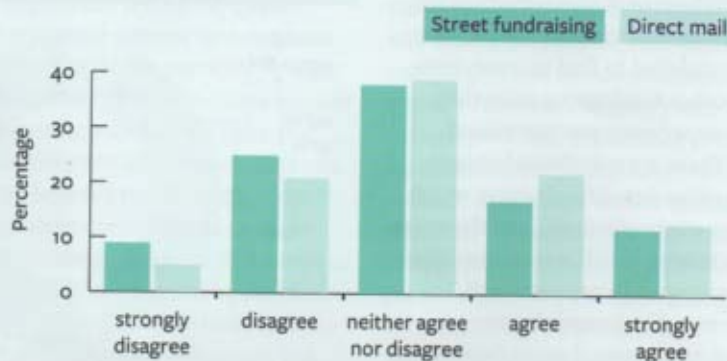
Listen to their story and sometimes give to their cause **23%**

Politely tell them I'm not interested and send them on their way **74%**

Shut the door in their face. They annoy me **3%**



This form of fundraising should be banned



the same time, she says, they should be savvy as to the situation.

"No individual or organisation wants to put themselves in the firing line when, frankly, it's a set-up," she says, referring to last year's *Newsnight* 'investigation'. "On the other hand, we all have to protect what we do. There is a balance to be struck."

"It depends on context," says Verden. "Sometimes we handle it well, sometimes less well and sometimes I think it's an impossible agenda."

Aldrich, however, is more critical of the sector's public defence of face-to-face. "There has been a problem in that charities as a whole haven't stood full square behind face-to-face. We get quite a lot of criticism about the medium within the sector," he says.

"Even charities which are doing face-to-face sometimes get criticism of it within the charity."

Former 'chugger' and current executive lead on the Philanthropy Review, Rowena Lewis, says that the dedication and hard work of face-to-face fundraisers on the ground can be undermined by others within charities, and other fundraisers, not defending their work more vociferously.

"The charity sector as a whole simply isn't standing up and challenging the negative stereotypes in the media," she says. "If anything what we're trying to do is shirk that responsibility; maximise the income that we can reap from the streets while almost disassociating ourselves from those teams."

"You can't leave that to the PFRA. The PFRA is about self-regulation. They're doing a good job trying to challenge the stereotypes but that's not what they were set up for."

Lewis adds that after years working as a street fundraiser, equipping her with what she felt was a good sense of donor motivation and how to formulate an ask, she was shocked to find in interviews for other fundraising roles that her experience was not valued.

"There is a real divide between the office-based fundraising, which is seen as professional, and the street fundraising which is seen as mildly annoying and a necessary evil," she says. The former director of fundraising says of street fundraising; "I will never have a harder job."

There is too much:

	Street fundraising	Door-to-door fundraising	Direct mail
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	1%
Disagree	10%	11%	7%
Neither agree nor disagree	38%	49%	28%
Agree	30%	23%	39%
Strongly agree	20%	13%	25%

This type of fundraising gives charities a bad name:

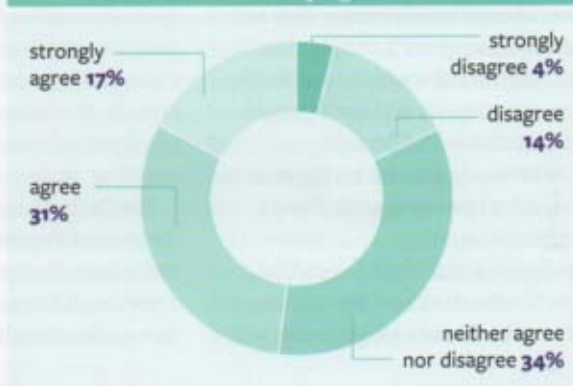
	Street fundraising	Door-to-door fundraising
Strongly disagree	6%	2%
Disagree	25%	17%
Neither agree nor disagree	41%	44%
Agree	18%	25%
Strongly agree	10%	11%

Ms Average

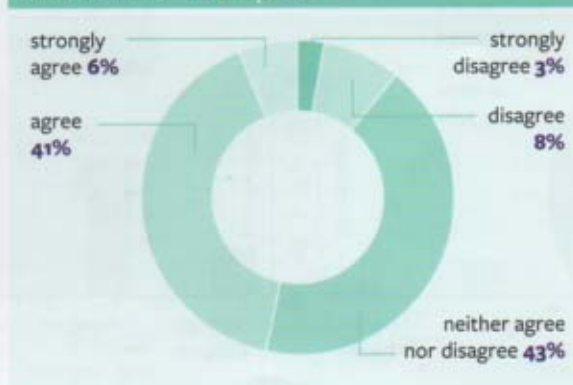
Those who say they have signed up to a donation via a face-to-face donor are most likely to be:

- A woman
- Between the ages of 25 and 34
- Living with a partner, but unmarried
- In a house with an annual household income of over £50,000

Street fundraisers are annoying



Street fundraisers are polite



All for one, one for all

One of the most common objections to face-to-face fundraising is that the fundraisers are paid. While a third of the public (34 per cent) agreed that street fundraisers do a good job of raising money for charity, more believed that charities spend too much money on paying street fundraisers (39 per cent).

However, yet more – nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) – believe charities spend too much on direct mail; a form of fundraising which many argue is less onerously regulated than face-to-face fundraising.

Aldrich says that the lack of public education about fundraising costs with regard to face-to-face fundraising – possibly the fundraising's most visible 'cost' – could set the sector up for difficulty in the future in explaining other fundraising investments.

"Certainly we're not doing anything like enough to explain how fundraising works. We're leaving ourselves wide open for so-called exposés that illustrate the reality of fundraising," he says.

"When defending face-to-face we need to be clearly explaining to people that all fundraising costs money. It would be brilliant if it didn't and people just gave money voluntarily, but that doesn't happen."

For Aldrich that defence and explanation should come not just from fundraisers, but from charity chairs and chief executives. Verden, meanwhile, says there should not be a "prescriptive approach" to face-to-face media strategy, but that "each media event needs to be assessed on what the story is and who needs to respond".

Both Bauso and Lewis, however, see a role for the entire sector to get involved.

"We all have a role. I don't think it's something that one organisation can do," says Bauso. "Every fundraiser, every CEO, every charity finance director, institutional body, every individual that works in the territory should help to educate people as to how a modern charity works." ■

