



helping non-profits thrive

Charity Parliamentary Monitor
Survey of MPs February-March 2008

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Methodology

Fieldwork dates

18th February – 7th March 2008

Sample

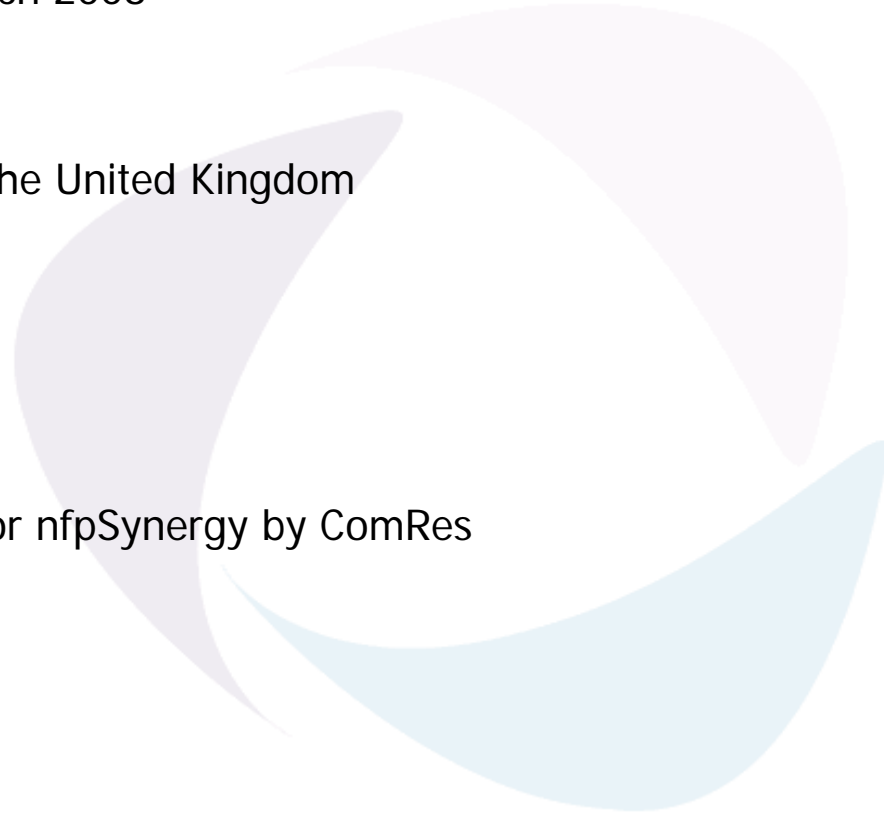
Sample of 159 MPs in the United Kingdom

Methodology

Paper questionnaire

Fieldwork

Fieldwork carried out for nfpSynergy by ComRes



Respondents by political affiliation

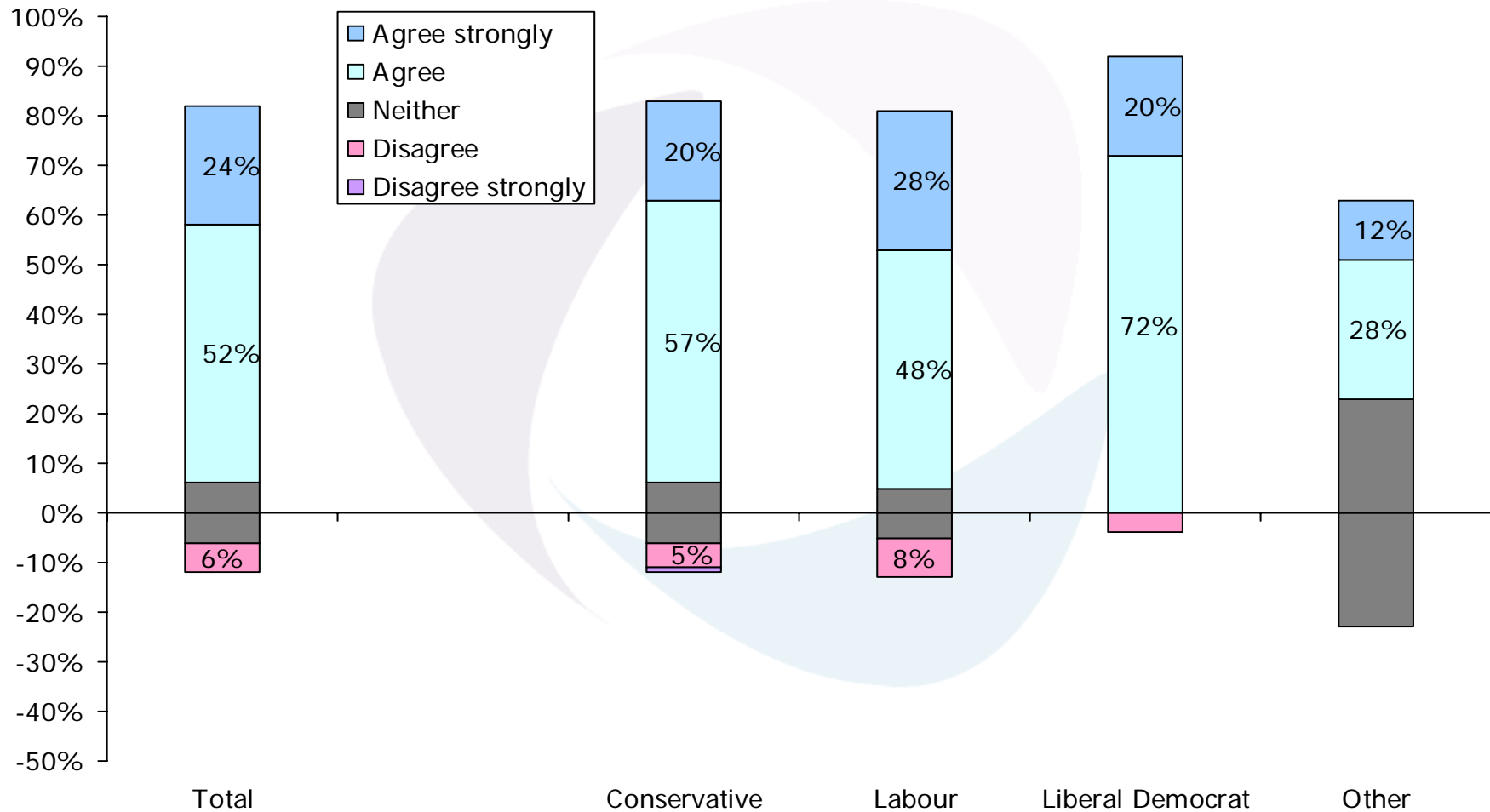


Campaigning Questions

*Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“In general I think that charities are more effective at campaigning amongst MPs than companies*

Strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know

In general I think that charities are more effective at campaigning amongst MPs than companies



Base: 159 MPs, Feb/Mar 08
Source: CPM, nfpSynergy

Campaigning Questions

Please provide your comments about the campaigning work by charities at Westminster compares with the lobbying done by companies; including any relevant examples of good or bad practice.

You start from a good position, MPs are sympathetic to your cause

Comments from MPs show that they are more open to meeting you, hearing about your campaigns and supporting your work. So you are beginning from a better position than companies

- Charities - on the whole good. Companies - on the whole poor.
- Lobbying by charities compares v. favourably with company lobbying. It is tolerated more by members.
- Campaigning by charities is generally more effective - but this is because I am more willing to trust them
- I am more likely to attend a charity event than a company event as there is a basic assumption that it is a "good thing" Also helps provide local press profile. Companies tend to be too pushy. Often try to dictate rather than persuade.
- Campaigns are focussed - giving MPs a simple task to support them

Your constituency work and local focus are a real bonus

Other CPM surveys have shown the importance of the constituency for MPs - a campaign with a constituency angle is more likely to win their ear and support. And the verbatim responses to this question show that parliamentarians rank you above companies in this area. MPs would like to see more such local focus, over circulars and large receptions

- Charities are more likely to ask for specific action. Also more likely to approach through constituents.
- Charities are usually better at engaging constituents and providing worthwhile media opportunities.
- Circular letters in brown envelopes are hopeless and are termed by me as junk mail. Local meetings or events in the constituency always get my involvement.
- Charities are far more effective at getting support - and letters from - constituents.
- Charities are better at building a relationship with MP's and their staff recognise the importance of the constituency angle - with locally based campaigns and visits to local representatives.
- Charities tend to go for stunts/high profile campaigns and involve constituent supporters. Companies send letters assuming interest!
- Charities do best if they involve local constituency links - visit a centre or something like that. The Westminster 'reception' only works if specific to a campaign.
- Charities more imaginative in their campaigning and have supporters whom they can call on to lobby MPs in their constituency. Companies, particularly small & medium enterprises are very reluctant to lobby their MPs.
- Charities are effective because of the way they mobilise their supporters in the constituency.

MPs see strong relationships as key

Face to face meetings, regular briefings on important issues and follow-up are flagged by MPs as effective ways of gaining their attention and support.

Charities are considered better at this than companies, which means that a stronger relationship develops.

- Charities are better at organising one to one meetings which is the best way of lobbying myself.
- Much better. House meetings can be effective.
- Much more direct, informative and willing to meet; follow-up much better.
- Generally it is been 'in your face' and more acceptable although there are exceptions. The real key is where the charity has a parliamentary officer who builds a relationship with interested MP's. [But] when such an officer leaves the successor does not continue the relationship.
- Better & more detailed info provided. More ethical approach. Use better methods. Better networking.
- More subtle. More personal. More constant/long term. Better at getting individual constituents to contact MP.
- Usually have parliamentary officer who is actively contacting MP's and briefing on current issues in their field. E.g. Every Disabled Child Matters campaign.
- Charities have the advantage of usually 'pushing an open door' when contacting MPs. Also, they tend to build up regular contact and engage in relationships which last between their individual campaigns.
- There is more personal contact by charities and they are trusted more.

The right kind of information, and the right kind of forum

MPs value the focused research briefings charities provide. And they appreciate that you organise meetings with media opportunities. But they do single out generic postcard mailings for criticism.

- On balance less aggressive. Generally speaking they run good campaigns with receptions and attractive photo opportunities.
- Charities offer active involvement by MP's in campaigns (photo ops/ letters etc). This is a great strength. Companies can not generally do this.
- Charities provide better briefings and advice in legislation. Many companies lack expertise in engaging Westminster
- Providing media opportunities (charities do this more)
- Good practice - "one to one" briefings followed up by paperwork. Bad practice - receptions only without "in depth" briefings.

The boredom factor

While comments and results to the previous question show that MPs rank your parliamentary work above the Westminster work of companies, they also had a number of criticisms. Generic campaigning, mass postcard mailings and a lack of understanding of MPs and their work were major gripes.

- Charities are effective because they campaign for "sexy" issues. Companies have a harder job. On the whole charities are considered a pain. Too many EDMs, All party groups campaign cards - MPs are getting bored. (As are their staff).
- The worst practice is the mass postcard campaigns - it is old fashioned and does not impress these days
- After 11 years as an MP I am bored rigid with the approach from charities - they need to be much smarter in how they campaign and communicate with us.
- There is a spectrum ranging from good, focussed, brief and to the point to over burdensome, detailed and not comprehending either what we can do or how many priorities compete for our attention.

Concern over wasted resources

Reinforcing their criticism of mass mailings and large receptions, some MPs stated their concern that charities' campaigning tactics are a waste of donors' money. The use of lobbying firms was singled out for particular criticism.

- Some charities are very amateurish in their strategies and waste a lot of money on pointless receptions & generic materials of no interest to 90% of MP's. They need to focus on constituency interests.
- I could write a book on this! I am concerned at the amount of money that they spend on Public Affairs Companies. They sometimes are aware just how much lobbying of MP's goes on - it can get a bit irritating. I hate EDMS but will usually write to the Minister. They should invite MP's to their local charity shops.
- Charities are normally good (by definition) though increasingly the charity bosses are there to drum up support and make themselves more prominent and indeed well paid. I particularly dislike Barnardo's advertising which sets out, like Benetton, to shock.
- Charities now employ 'Lobbyists' and media consultants - and are good at 'product placement' in the media. They particularly understand to appeal to MP's local constituency concerns & media coverage. Far too many and too much lobbying while employing people to nig up MP's get them to go events. Too insistent, overwhelming & drowning us.
- Fed up with charities using PR lobbyists to act as front men for them
- Some charities appear to be very sophisticated & well funded lobbyists irrespective of quality of cause.

What can be learnt from companies?

MPs also identified areas where companies are more effective than charities. So what can you take away and use in your own work?

Be more selective. Companies are often better at targeting specific MPs.

- They are chalk and cheese. Charities tend to locate most MP's. Lobbying by companies tends to be selective. Lobbying by business costs money charities are more sparing. Lobbyists tend to get the ear of MP's by concentrating on individual names or small groups.
- Charities sometimes not good at targeting. Companies a bit better at targeting based on interest/relevance to constituency or media...even basic ones of offering an interesting picture & press which are very useful.



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