

Data, Innovation, and Performance in Scottish Charities:

Headline Findings from a Survey of Scottish Third Sector Organisations

December 2014

Summary Findings

What was the research about?

The aim of the research was to gather information about:

- the extent to which Scottish charities are using data
- key data sources used by Scottish charities
- what enables data utilisation in Scottish charities
- what impedes data utilisation in Scottish charities.

Why did we do the research?

Developments in information and communication technologies from the mid 20th century onwards have led some to argue that we are living in the 'Information Age'. Whether or not that is the case, it has never been easier to capture, manage, and interrogate data and information than it is in the first decades of the 21st century. Data can be accessed in real time. 'Open Data' and 'Big Data' afford opportunities to analyse data on an unprecedented scale and depth. Personal data and information is more readily available than ever before. While these developments bring considerable opportunities for organisations and citizens, they also generate important issues. Yet, despite the significance of data, the opportunities that it brings, and the issues that it generates, there is a dearth of research on its utilisation by charities in Scotland or elsewhere. This prompted us to take a first step towards understanding and benchmarking how Scottish charities are engaging with data.

How did we do the research?

- The research took the form of a postal questionnaire survey.
- Questionnaires were mailed to 704 Scottish charities.
- Responses were received from 161 Scottish charities [23%].
- The survey was completed between November 2013 and January 2014.

The findings in more detail

Are charities engaging effectively with data?

Archetypes

- We asked respondents to indicate which of four archetypes – Pushing the Boundaries, Managing, Just about Managing, and Struggling – best reflected their charity's use of data.
- 5% regarded their charities as Pushing the Boundaries, almost 25% as Managing, nearly 51% as Just about Managing, and 11% described themselves as Struggling.

How many charities have a formal data management strategy?

- Almost 65% of participants stated that their charity has a formal data management strategy.

Who participated in the research?

- The participating charities had annual incomes of £1 million or over.
- 62% of the participating charities were established in the 'Internet era' [1976 onwards]. Of these, almost 17% were established in the current highly mobile, 'computing-on-the-go' era [2000 – onwards].
- The participating charities operated mainly in health and social welfare [26%], housing [17%], culture and recreation [13%], and education [13%].

Headline findings from the research

- A small number of the charities that we looked at can be described as Struggling with data, while the majority are Managing or Just about Managing and a few are Pushing the Boundaries.
- Charities that are Pushing the Boundaries led the way in reporting seven of the ten data sources that we looked at, including three of the newer types (social networking forums, smart cards, and data analytics) as being extremely useful.
- 75% of the Pushing the Boundaries group reported that leadership was extremely important in driving data utilisation, by contrast with 42.5% of the Managing group, and fewer than 40% in each of the Just about Managing and Struggling groups.

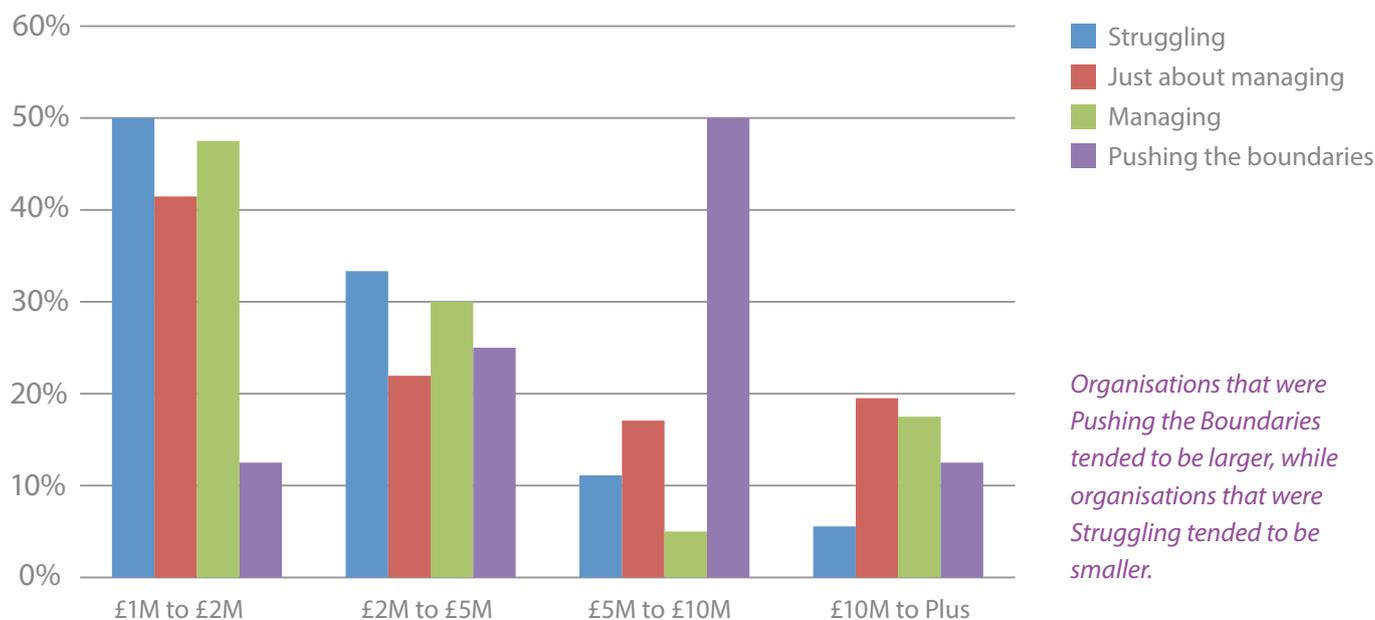
Thanks to participants

We would like to thank everyone who completed our questionnaire. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

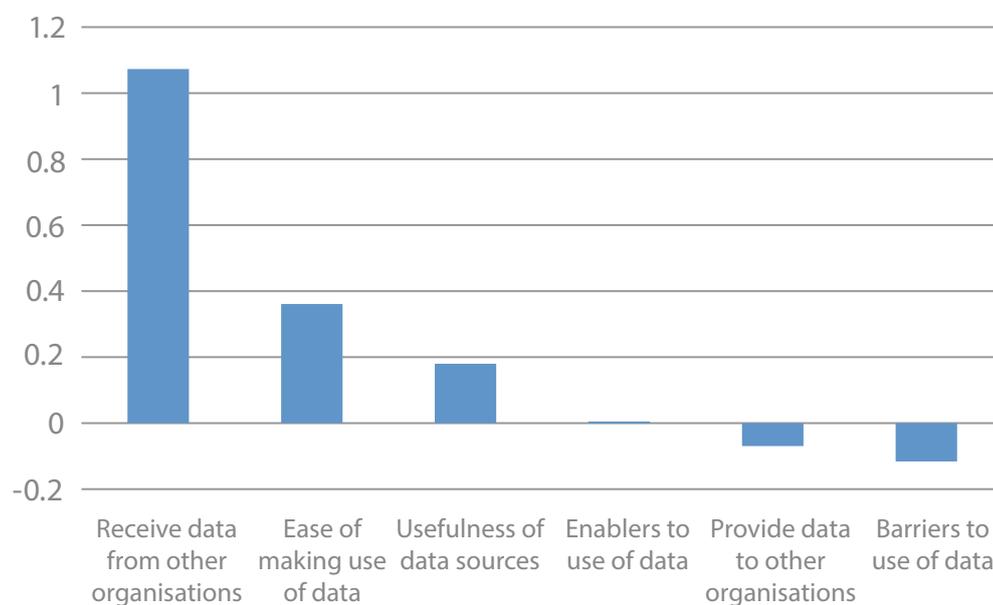
What data sources do charities find most useful?

- Almost 47% of participants stated that data from their charity's website is extremely useful.
- Almost 74% of participants stated that their charity's user/member database is an extremely useful source of data.
- 36% of participants indicated that their charity's fundraising database is an extremely useful source of data.
- 32% of participants stated that their charity's volunteering database is an extremely useful source of data.
- Almost 30% of participants stated that their charity's social networking forums are an extremely useful source of data.
- Fewer than 7% of participants stated that smart cards are an extremely useful source of data. [We anticipated that only a small number of charities would be using smart cards.]
- Fewer than 19% of participants stated that trends data is extremely useful.

Which charities tend to be Pushing the Boundaries?



Organisations that were Pushing the Boundaries tended to be larger, while organisations that were Struggling tended to be smaller.



Charities in the Pushing the Boundaries archetype were more likely than charities in the other archetype groups to receive data regularly from other organisations, to find it easy to make use of data, and to find a wide range of data sources useful.

How regularly do charities provide data to other organisations?

- 9% of charities provide data on a daily basis to organisations on whose behalf they deliver a service.
- 7% of charities provide data on a daily basis to organisations with which they collaborate.

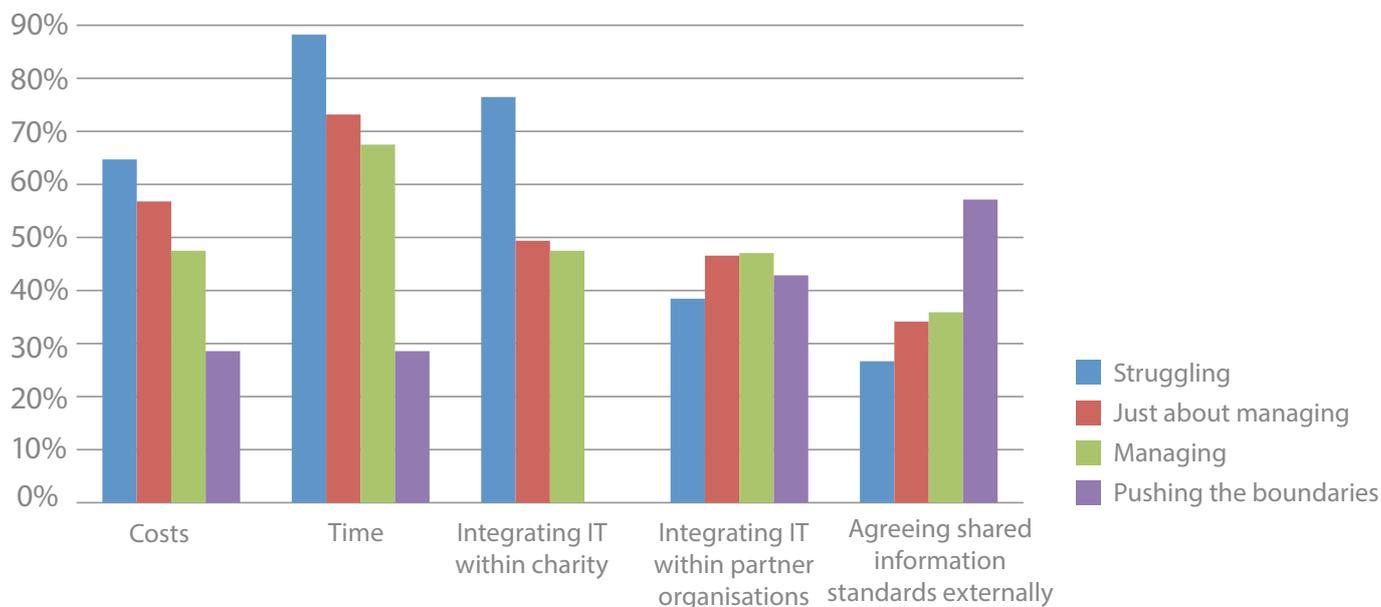
How regularly do charities receive data from other organisations?

- Almost 12% of charities receive data on a daily basis from organisations on whose behalf they deliver a service.
- 13% of charities receive data on a daily basis from organisations with which they collaborate.

How easy/difficult for charities are the following?

- Almost 37% of charities find knowing the questions to ask of data easy.
- 41% of charities find knowing where to look for data easy.
- Almost 38% just about manage when it comes to accessing data, while 33% find this easy.
- 3% of charities find integrating their own internal data extremely difficult and almost 19% find this difficult.
- 3% of charities find analysing and understanding data extremely difficult and almost 15% report that this is difficult.

What were the top barriers for charities wanting to engage with data?



The top five barriers to engagement with data were Costs, Time, Integrating IT (both internally and externally), and agreeing shared information standards. Costs and Time were most significant for charities in the Struggling archetype, whereas external factors (IT and information standards) were most significant for those that were Pushing the Boundaries.

- 58% said that appreciating how data can inform strategic and operational decisions is extremely important.
- Almost 52% stated that improving resource utilisation was an extremely important driver.
- Just 40% of participants perceived leadership to be extremely important in driving data utilisation, while almost 50% said that this was important.

What are the main drivers of data usage by charities?

- 65% of participants said that reporting and accountability requirements are extremely important in driving data utilisation.

Who are we?



Dr Eleanor Burt is a Senior Lecturer at the University of St Andrews, where she delivers specialist modules in charity management at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She has been doing research and consultancy on and for charities and other nonprofit organisations for more than two decades. During this time she has been invited to give evidence to bodies such as the

Cabinet Office, the Better Regulation Task Force, and the Kemp Commission. She has also delivered commissioned reports to the Baring Foundation, NCVO, and CVS Fife amongst others.



Dr Alasdair Rutherford is a Lecturer in Quantitative Methods at the University of Stirling. His research focus is the analysis of administrative and survey data in the fields of health, social care and the Third Sector. He has also been involved in a number of initiatives to build data analysis skills amongst Third Sector practitioners. Prior to becoming an academic, Alasdair worked for seven years in marketing and fundraising for a large social care charity.

Scottish Network for Third Sector Data information

Increasingly, as well as using externally generated datasets such as the Scottish Household Survey and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, many Third Sector Organisations are also generating their own administrative datasets related to service provision, volunteering, and fundraising, for example. On their own or in combination the different data sources provide both opportunities and challenges for Third Sector Organisations and everyone with an interest in the Third Sector. The Scottish Network for Third Sector Data has been established to bring together academics, Third Sector practitioners, and public policy-makers to share relevant ideas, experiences, and insights. If you would like to find out more, or to join the network, visit us at www.thinkdata.org.uk

Send any questions or comments to: info@thinkdata.org.uk

Find out more at: www.thinkdata.org.uk