



MAJOR FORCES



RISING COST OF LIVING PRESSURES, CONCERNS ABOUT HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE



A FEELING THAT INEQUALITY IS INCREASING, PARTICULARLY FOR YOUNGER GENERATIONS



CONCERNS ABOUT NATIONAL SECURITY

WHICH ARE CONTRIBUTING TO:



A BREAKDOWN IN SOCIAL COHESION



A BREAKDOWN IN TRUST IN GOVERNMENT - PARTICULARLY AMONGST YOUNGER GENERATIONS



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Despite high levels of support for development and agreement that Ireland has a moral responsibility to contribute to global poverty reduction, support falls apart once presented as a trade off with domestic priorities.



PATHWAYS TO BUILDING SUPPORT:

Messaging that speaks to Ireland's moral responsibility to help people in need around the world and focuses on disaster relief/humanitarianism tends to get more widespread support from the public.

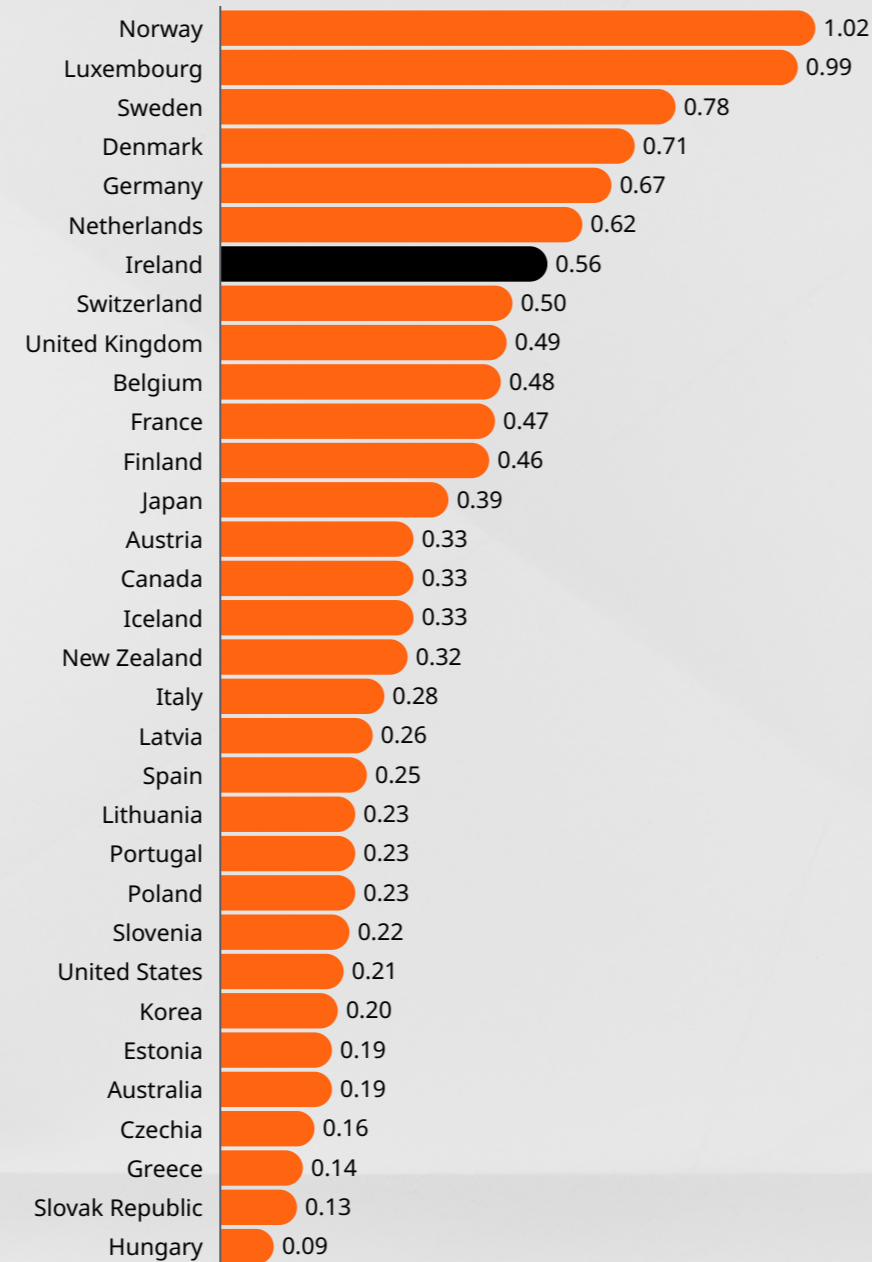
This chapter is based on polling only

SUMMARY

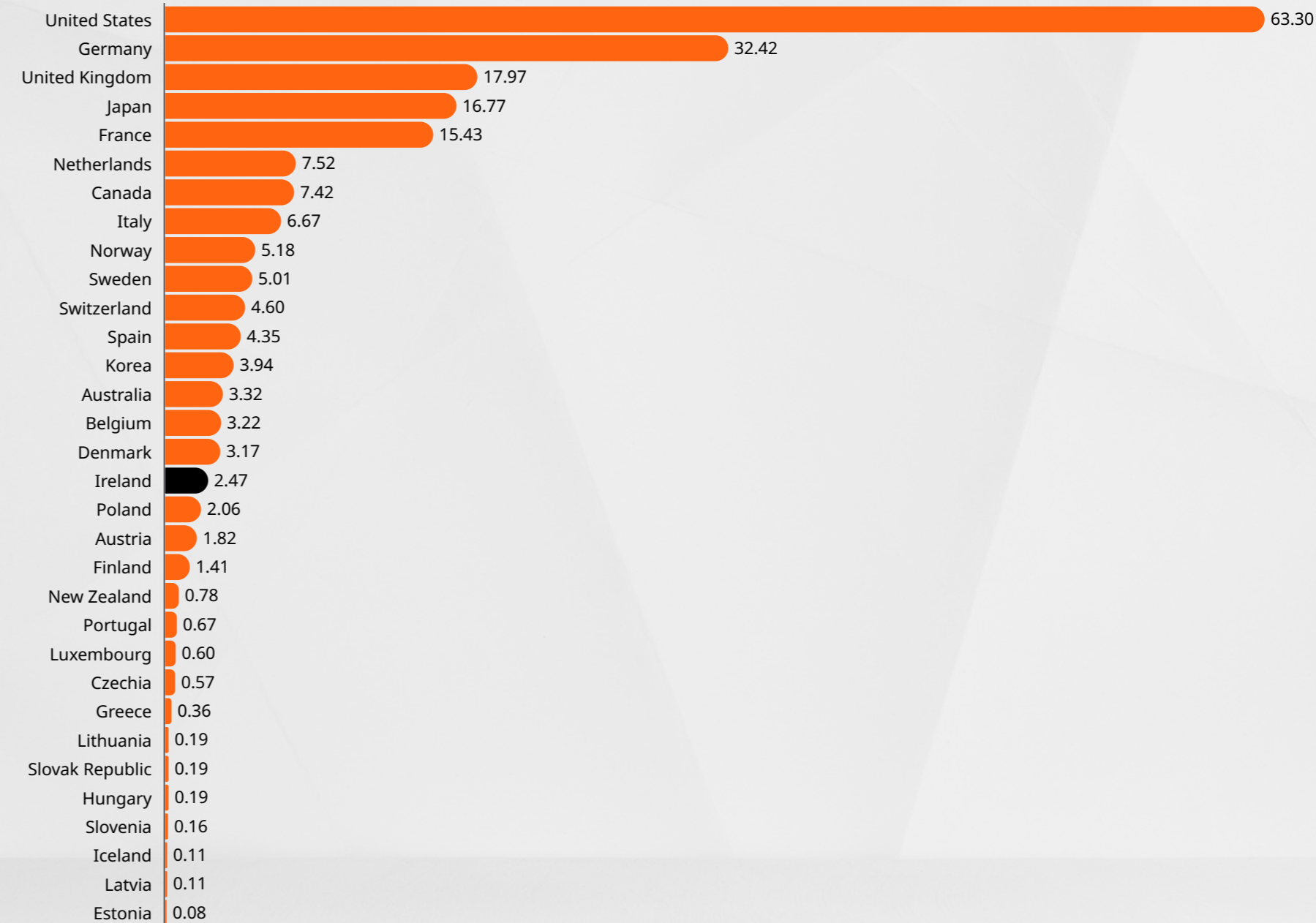
The public's top concerns in Ireland are the cost of living, housing, and healthcare. These domestic concerns, coupled with rising worries about the threat of international conflict, are beginning to lead the Irish down a path towards diverting international development spending to other issues. There is a widespread sense that inequality is growing, and young people in particular are feeling less enamored by the government and less connected to the people around them. As a result, social cohesion is starting to degrade in Ireland.

Currently, public support for international development spending remains strong, though overall support is greater amongst left-leaning voters. The Irish public sees value in maintaining development spending for the sake of doing what is right, with support highest for spending that is delivered during times of crisis. The public currently does not connect international development spending with relieving domestic issues, and largely views development as a moral responsibility for the Irish government.

Although support for international development was high across the board, it fell apart when traded off against domestic priorities. Ireland is at the crossroads between maintaining its commitment to international development and prioritising domestic concerns. While other countries are in the midst of reducing development spending and expanding their defence budgets, Ireland has not yet pivoted away from its ODA spend. Future advocacy, however, must focus on addressing the underlying challenges and preempting public attitudes from worsening in order to maintain support.



ODA as percent of GNI (grant equivalent) in 2024

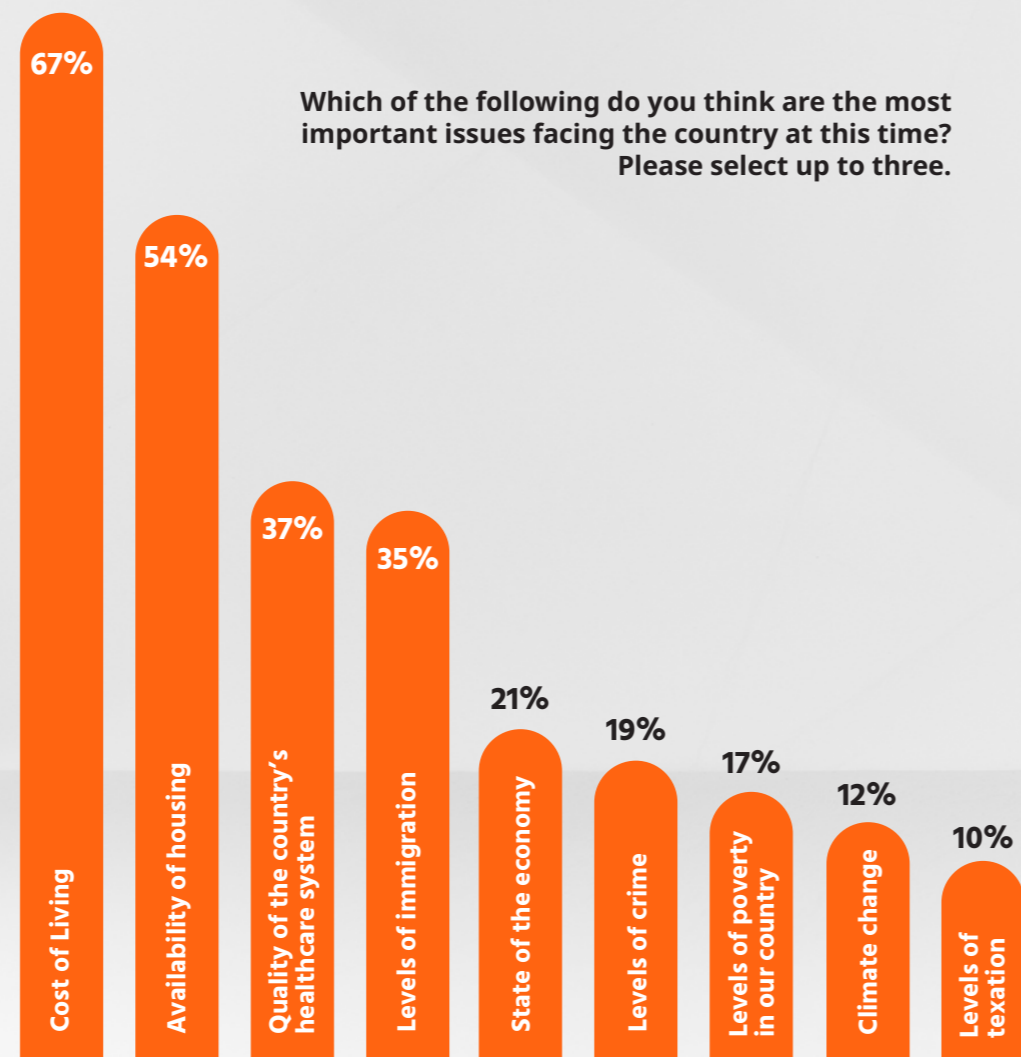


ODA - grant equivalent in 2024, USD billions

THE MAJOR FORCES DRIVING THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The Irish public is concerned about the national economy, and are becoming increasingly concerned about protecting national interests.

The current cost of living dominated people's domestic concerns, with two-thirds saying it's one of the top issues facing the country today. This, coupled with an overwhelming perception that the world is getting more dangerous (84%), has lended itself to a public that thinks it should prioritise protecting its own economic interests even if it has negative impacts on other countries (70%).



Inequality is perceived to be growing, both domestically and internationally.

74% of the public think the gap between the rich and poor in Ireland is growing, with

78% saying the same is true globally.

51% Half the public don't think that people in Ireland have enough to get by.

Feelings of disempowerment, rising inequalities, and growing national security concerns are driving a breakdown in social cohesion.

54% of the public feel they're becoming detached from the people around them, a feeling that is driven by young people. Although trust in institutions is relatively strong, there is a link being formed between those with low trust in government, a frustration that domestic concerns are worsening, and a perception that the country needs to put its people first.

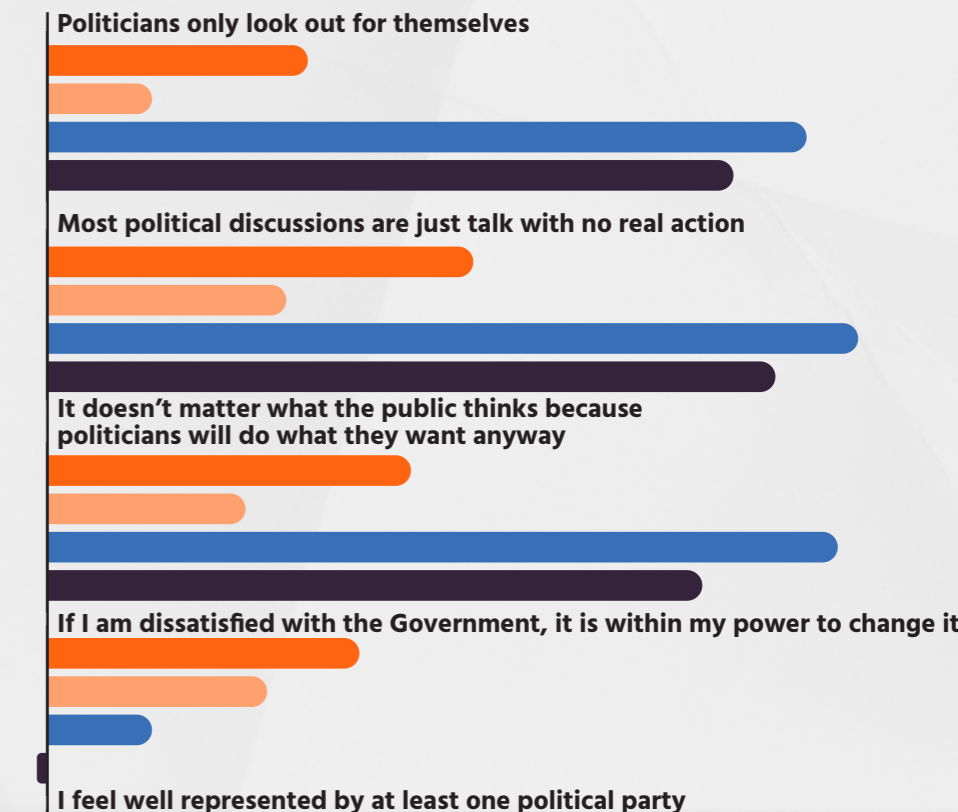
Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements. Net support

● Fianna Fail ● Fine Gael ● Sinn Fein ● Did not vote

-40% -20% 0 20% 40% 60% 80%

Disempowerment in politics trended amongst younger voters, but the public overall demonstrated high levels of pride in their country and trust in the government.

Anti-political sentiment was split down party lines, with Sinn Fein voters most likely to be critical of the government and feel disempowered to change it. Despite this, the public on the whole - including Sinn Fein voters - felt proud of Ireland (63%), though pride increased with age. Trust in the government was higher than the other countries reviewed - with 60% of the Irish public reporting trusting the national government at least a little.



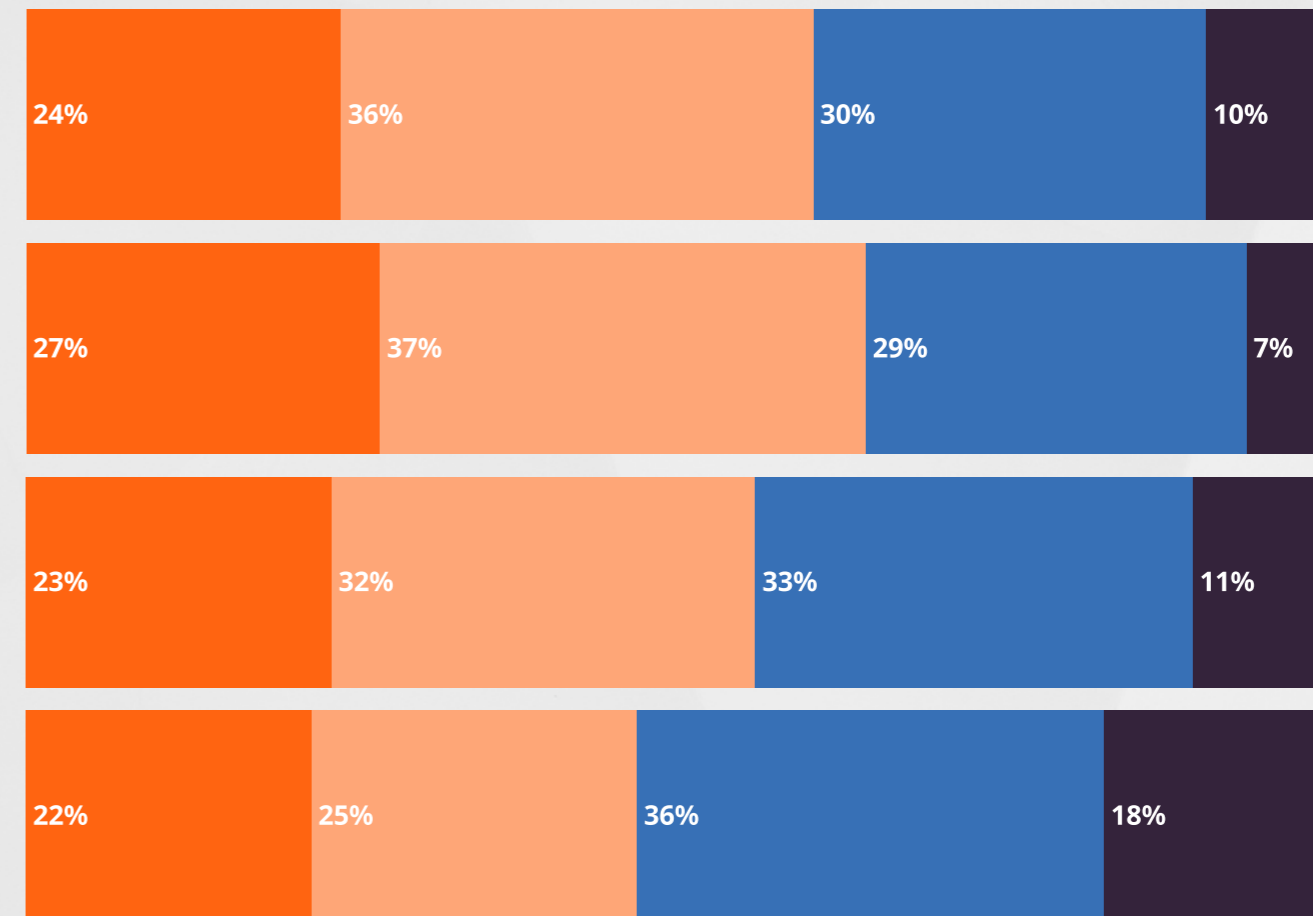
LOOKING OUTWARD: FEELINGS TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY & MULTILATERALISM

At its core, the Irish public supports international cooperation and wants to see their government working with other countries to solve global issues, even if it is against Ireland's national interest.

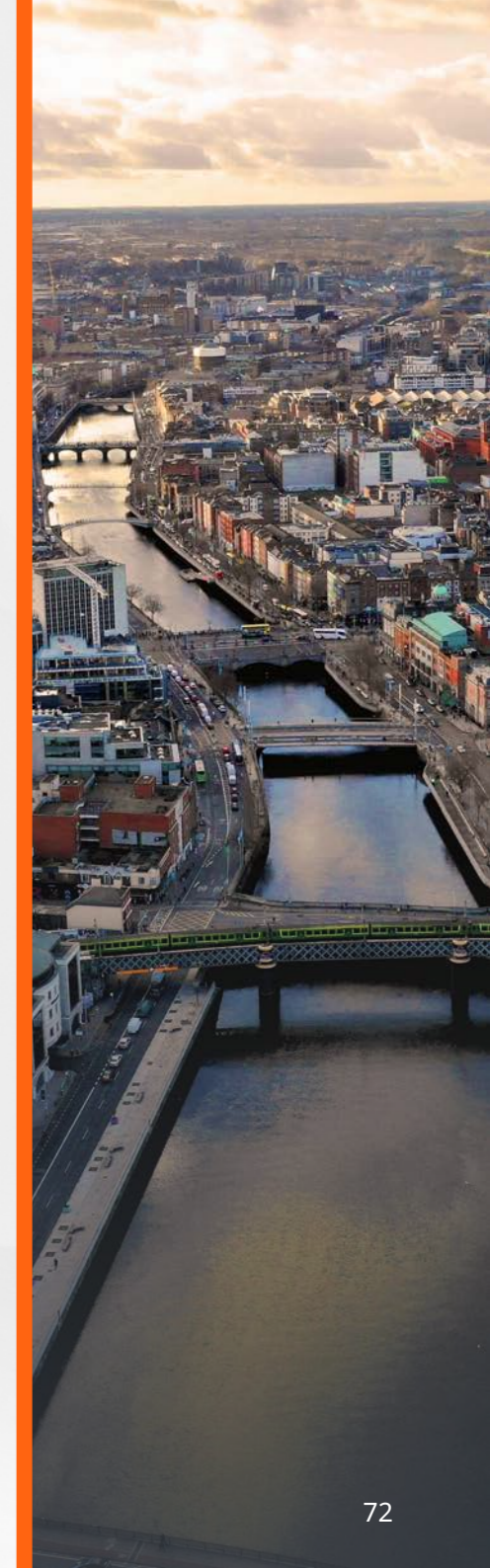
57% of the public think Ireland should cooperate with other countries to solve global issues, even if it means acting against national interests. Voters across the political spectrum agreed with this, though support notably dropped off amongst non-voters. Further, two-thirds of the public agree that it is important for Ireland to work to reduce poverty in other countries, with 76% seeing it as a significant issue in the rest of the world.

A large part of the support for international cooperation is driven by image: 80% of the Irish public think it is important for other countries to have a positive image of Ireland. The public think this positive image is largely driven by morality on the global stage - the primary driver of international respect for the Irish public comes from calling out other countries for human rights abuses. Indeed, 51% of the public think Ireland has a responsibility to help other countries in need, compared to just 31% who feel they do not have a responsibility.

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



- We should co-operate with as many countries as possible to solve global challenges, even if this means acting against our national interests
- We should co-operate with our closest allies to solve global challenges, even if this means acting against our national interests
- We should NOT co-operate with other countries to solve global challenges when this means acting against our national interests
- Don't know



CURRENT ATTITUDES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

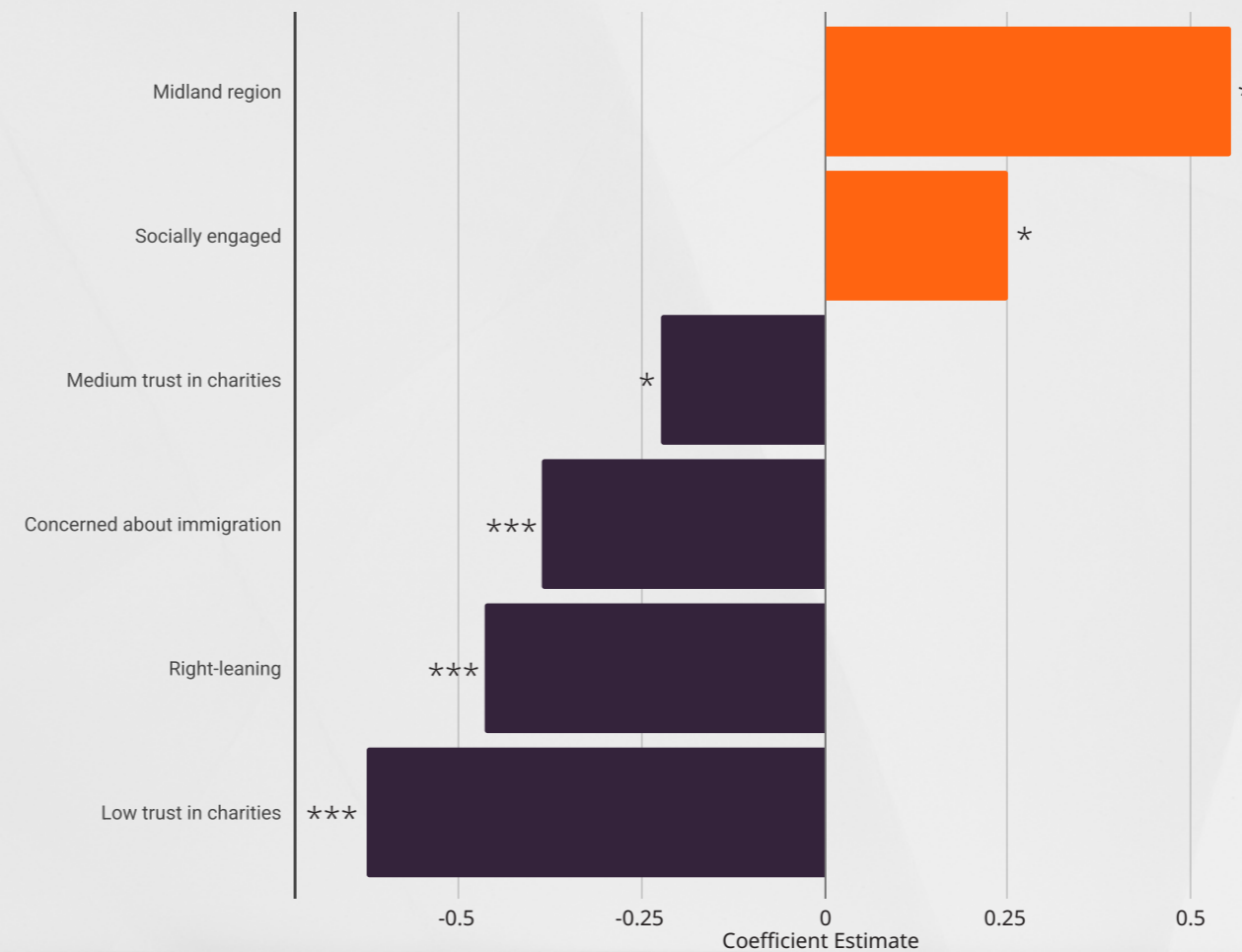
Support for international development in Ireland is high.

With only 16% saying they actively oppose spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries compared to 63% who support it. This support is consistent across parties, rising to 75% of Fianna Fail voters, 67% of Fine Gael voters, and 60% of Sinn Fein voters, though it dropped off across those who didn't vote, at 52%.

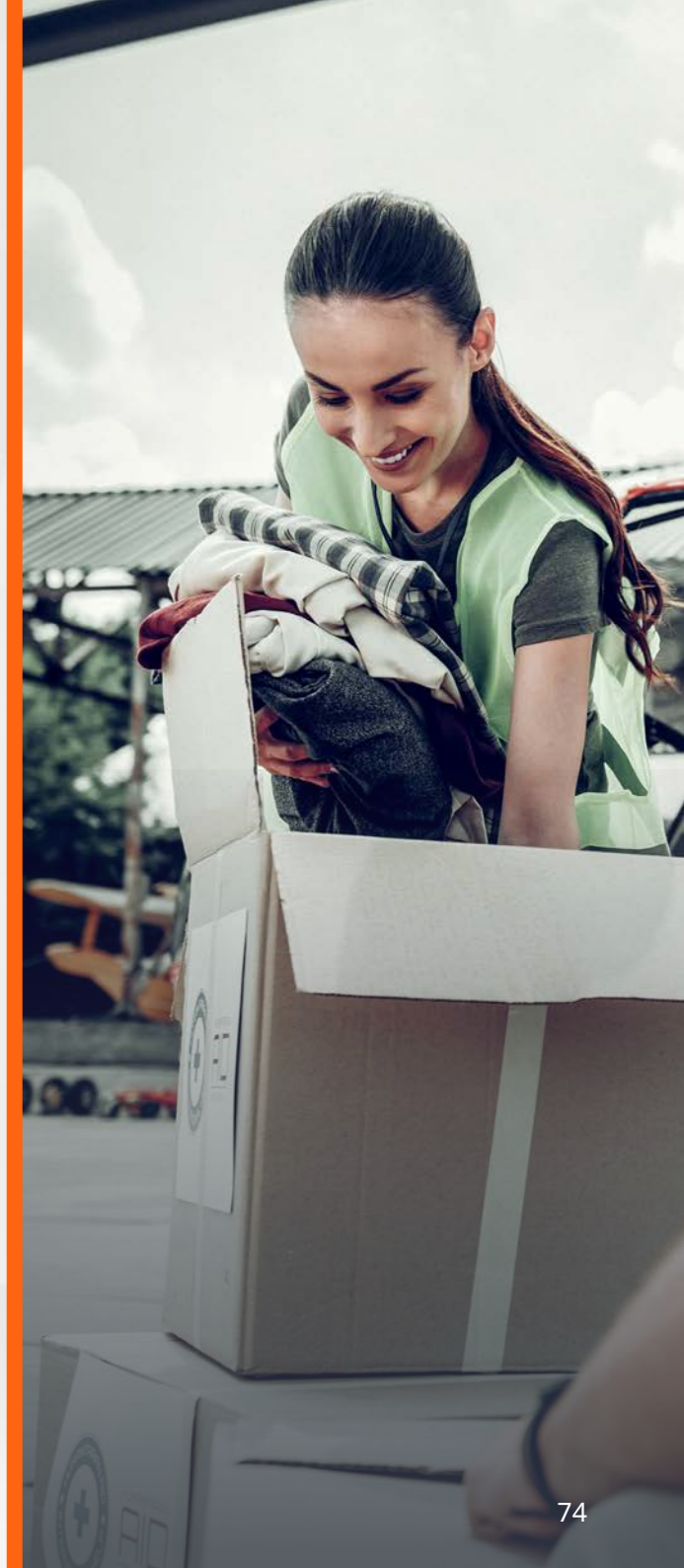
The main predictors of support for international development were living in the midland region and being more socially engaged, while opposition was largely driven by low trust in charities, right-leaning voters, and those who said that immigration was one of the top three issues facing Ireland at this time.

Significant Predictors of Support for International Aid in Ireland⁷

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001



⁷ Social engagement is defined as those who have taken part in signing a petition, donating or volunteering, sharing political content on social media, or attending a protest. 'Concerned about Immigration: 1' represents respondents who selected immigration as one of the top three issues facing Ireland today.



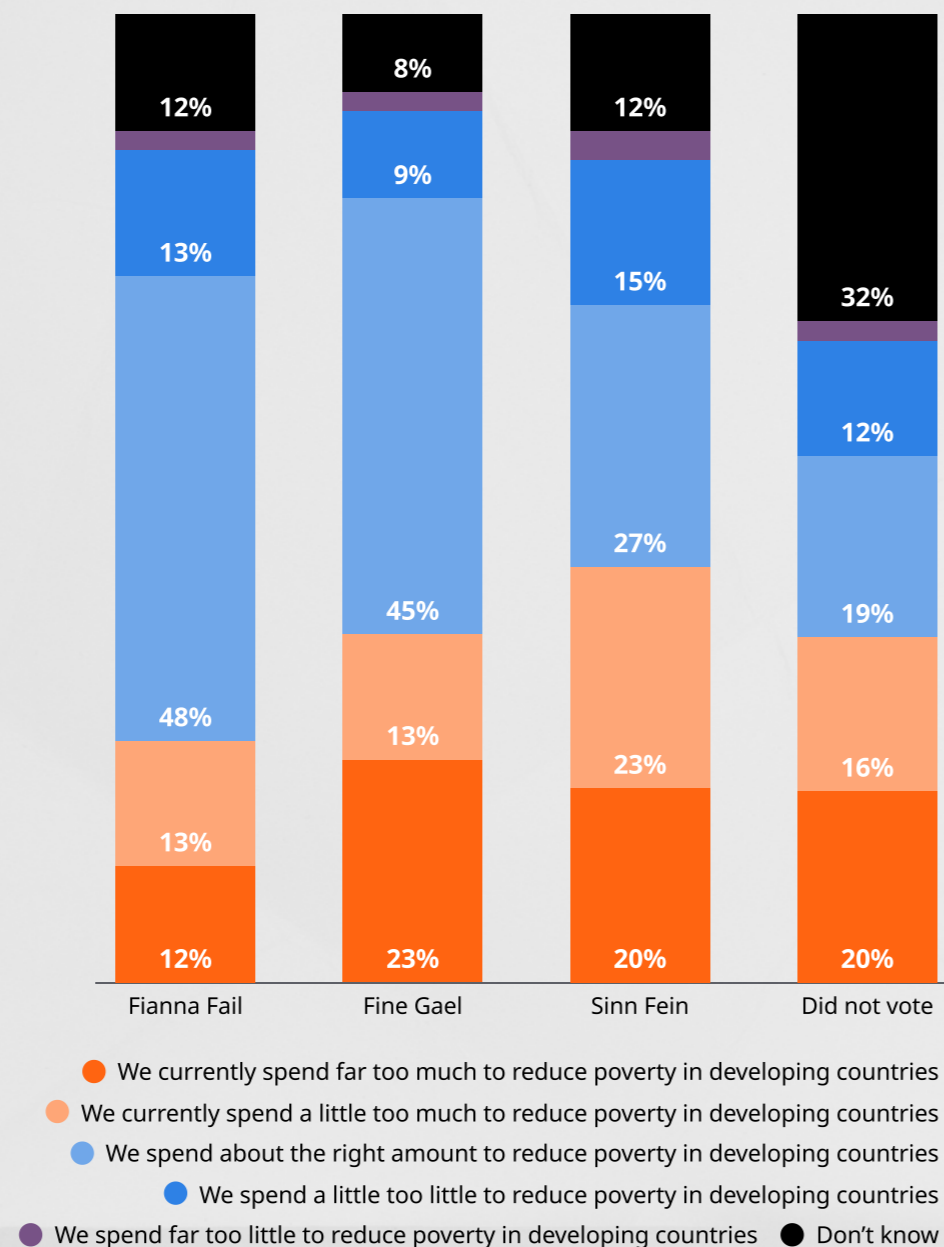
Opposition was largely driven by domestic concerns, while support was driven by moral responsibility.

Of the 16% who opposed international development spending, most pointed towards concerns that Ireland couldn't afford to help other countries and should prioritise helping Irish people first. Support, on the other hand, was largely driven by moral arguments, that development spending is 'the right thing to do' and would reduce global poverty and save lives.

When asked about the amount that Ireland should be spending, however, attitudes leaned more conservative:

15% thought Ireland does not spend enough on international development; 31% felt that they're spending the right amount; and 36% felt that Ireland is spending too much. This is partly explained by the fact that Irish people overestimate how much the country spends on ODA and the perception that Ireland spends more to support developing countries than other wealthy countries. Views on international development spending levels varied significantly between parties, with 43% of Sinn Fein voters saying Ireland spends too much. There is also a rising worry that Ireland cannot continue providing the amount of help it gives to people in other countries. This feeling was higher among lower earners than higher earners (47% compared to 39%), reflecting wider concerns about the cost of living.

Do you think that your country currently spends too much, too little, or the right amount to reduce poverty in developing countries?



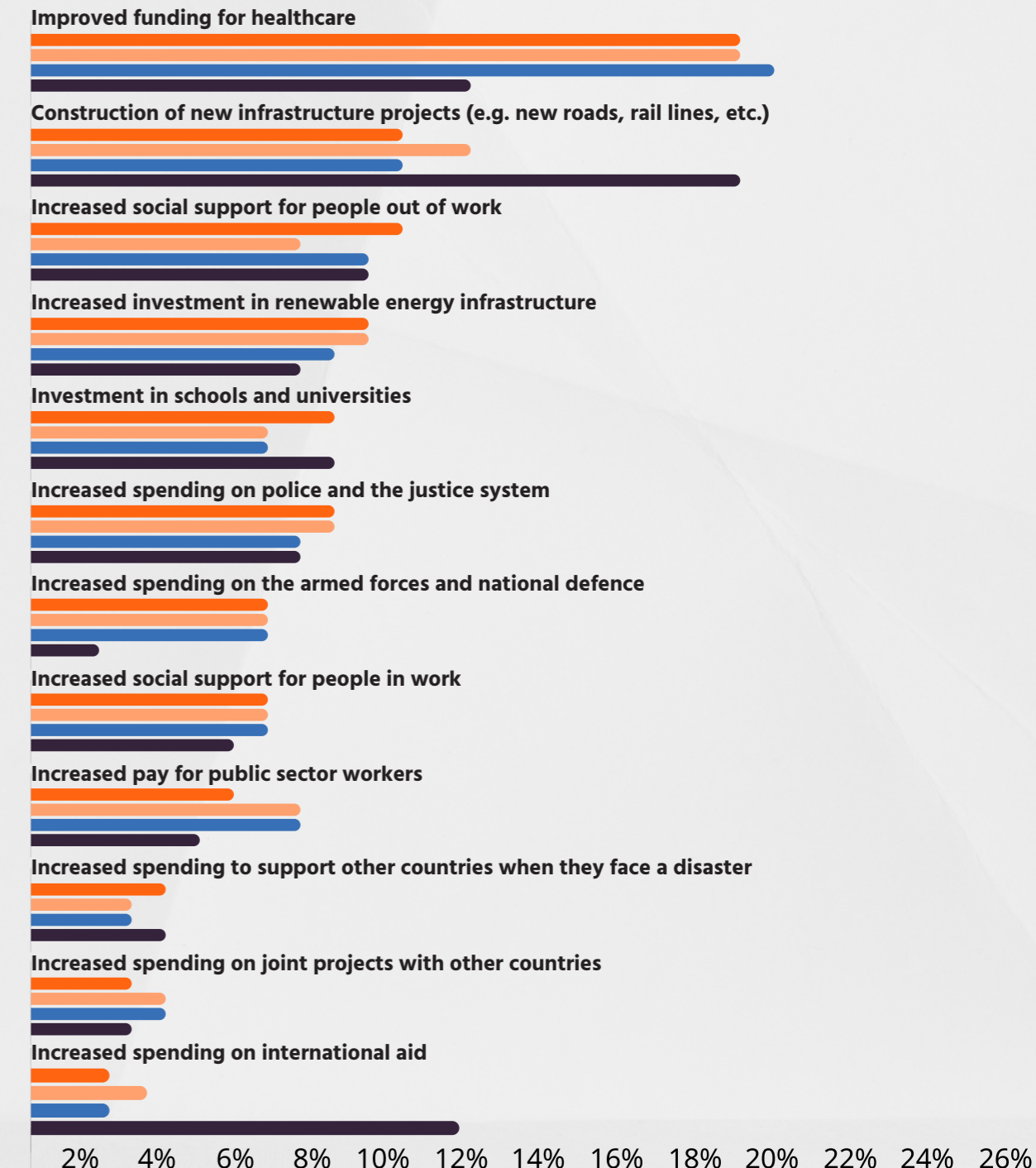
Despite high levels of stated support for international development, this support dropped significantly when framed as trade-offs with domestic policies.

The country's top priority was improved funding for healthcare - which was chosen 63% of the time. On the contrary, increased spending on international aid was chosen as the least popular policy 40% of the time - with all spending models of international development (framed as international aid, joint projects with other countries on solving global problems, and disaster relief) coming within the bottom four.

Imagine that your country had an additional €10 billion to spend on a policy issue. Look at the policy issues below. Which of these would you MOST LIKE the government to spend this money on, and which would you LEAST LIKE the government to spend this additional money on? % who would MOST LIKE this policy

● Fianna Fail ● Fine Gael ● Sinn Fein ● Did not vote

Support for international development has been consistently high in Ireland, though scepticism on whether the government is spending too much on other countries is growing. With domestic concerns rising, particularly over the economy and cost of living, Ireland is reaching a tipping point where public support may bottom out.



PATHWAYS FOR BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We tested three pathways for building support for international development:

1. Changing the way it's framed
2. Changing how it's spent
3. Raising new tax resources to fund it

Changing the way it's framed.

We tested a few different framings for international development, including:

1. As a tool for poverty reduction (e.g. focused on 'traditional' development programmes in education, health and nutrition)
2. As a tool for disaster relief (e.g. focused on humanitarian relief)
3. As a tool for sustainable economic growth (e.g. focused on job creation)

In Ireland, framing international development as a tool for disaster relief garnered more support than the 'traditional' poverty reduction or 'modern' sustainable economic development framings. It was also the only framing which saw a majority of right-leaning respondents and people with low trust in charities respond positively (55% and 51% respectively). Views were consistent across the political spectrum, with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael voters demonstrating high levels of support regardless of framing, and Sinn Fein and non-voters demonstrating markedly lower support for job creation. Those with low trust in government maintained high support for disaster relief (61%) but much lower support for building sustainable economies (46%), suggesting a wariness with long-standing government involvement in foreign countries outside of crisis response.

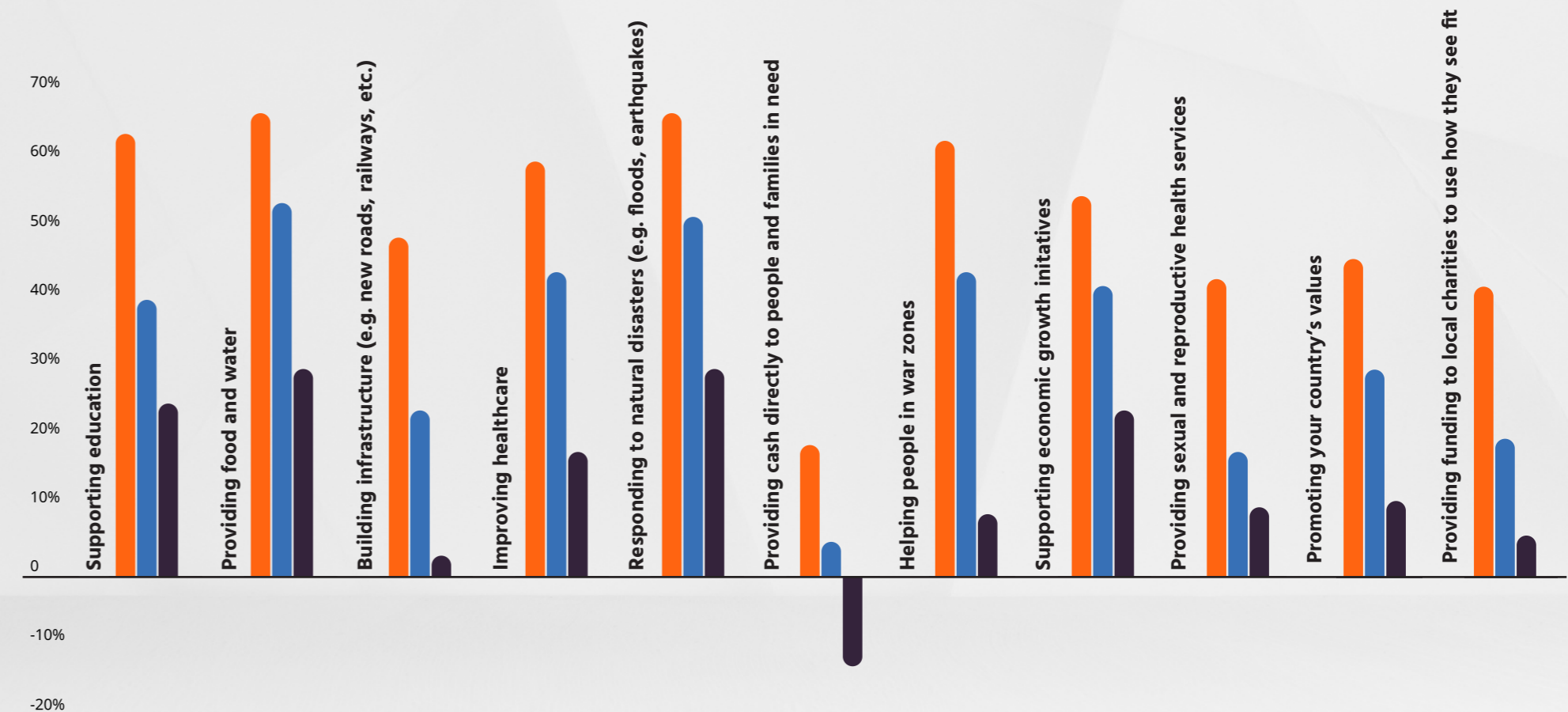
Indeed, when framed as a trade-off, people across the political spectrum felt that Ireland's approach to international development should focus on giving help to people in humanitarian crises and extreme poverty instead of creating sustainable economies that wouldn't need aid in the long-term, though views were nearly split (42% compared to 39%). This partly reflects the way people think about international development: as a short-term response to a morally unacceptable problem. The Irish public were much more likely to see value in spending on international development in order to reduce global poverty and support humanitarian values and were less likely to emphasise 'mutual benefits' like reducing migration pressures and bringing down cost of living.

Changing the way it's spent.

Support for the potential development spending options we tested was generally high across the board and followed trends across the political spectrum, with left-leaning respondents demonstrating the highest levels of support and right-leaning respondents demonstrating the lowest levels of support. On the whole, support was highest across all three groups for supporting education, providing food and water to those in need, and responding to natural disasters, all of which are largely in line with the perception that Ireland has a responsibility to deliver international development to deal with short-term issues.

Imagine that aid spending in your country was focused on X. To what extent would you support or oppose your country spending more money to reduce poverty in developing countries in this scenario? Net support

● Left ● Center ● Right



Raising new tax resources to fund it.

The Irish public was against new taxes that would affect normal people, with opposition for an increase in VAT and a new tax on long-haul flights higher than support (net -45% and -11% respectively). There was limited support for a wealth tax, corporation taxes, or financial institution taxes, though markedly stronger support for an increase in taxes on Ireland's wealthiest. Left-leaning respondents were significantly more likely to support all of the tax options shown, apart from an increase in VAT where opposition matched that of centrists and right-leaning respondents. Support was relatively consistent across voter groups, with Sinn Fein and Fianna Fail voters demonstrating greater support for all the measures we tested, and Fine Gael and non-voters demonstrating less support.

To what extent would you support or oppose the following measures to raise money specifically to fund support for developing countries? Net support

