



REMAKING THE CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS FROM A CROSS-COUNTRY PUBLIC OPINION PROJECT

DECEMBER 2025

 PUBLIC FIRST

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This independent report was produced by Public First, authored by Carly Munnely and Sunita Pfitzner.

Public First is an independent research consultancy headquartered in London and operating internationally. We specialise in combining public opinion research, economic modelling and policy expertise to help our clients navigate rapidly changing policy environments.

We are grateful to the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) for commissioning this work, and to the many colleagues who contributed their expertise to help shape the research. Established in 2002, CIFF is an independent philanthropic organisation, with offices in Addis Ababa, Beijing, London, Nairobi and New Delhi. CIFF's work seeks to transform the lives of children and adolescents around the world.

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BACKGROUND

A growing number of donor governments have slashed their Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets in recent years. Despite polling showing consistently high public support for development, these cuts have been met with little to no public resistance. In this context, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) commissioned Public First to deliver an in-depth research project exploring what really drives public opinion on development across a set of countries.

Ultimately, this project aims to build an understanding of the forces driving the public and political discourse in a set of countries - and what this means for building durable support for development. Public First started this work with a few assumptions:

1. That the political consensus on development has collapsed in part due to the failure of advocates and officials to connect and communicate its value to ordinary people.
2. That the existing public opinion research landscape is insufficient and has left the sector's advocates and officials unprepared to deal with rising nationalist and populist movements across the US and Europe.
3. That political headwinds will continue to exist as domestic economic and demographic challenges persist.
4. That public support for development does not exist in a vacuum and is shaped by 'upstream' forces, including trust in government, struggles with the cost of living, and concerns over immigration.

To test these assumptions and help build the evidence base to support effective advocacy on development, we launched a three-phased project.



PHASE 1

Phase 1 was a literature review exploring the political economy trends (i.e. on economics, inequality, demographics, and politics) and public opinion research over the past 25 years across 10 key countries: Germany, France, Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, Japan, Italy, Qatar, Brazil and China. These countries were chosen to represent a spread of traditional donors where ODA budgets appeared under immediate threat (Germany, France, Netherlands) and where they appear relatively stable (Norway, Ireland, Italy, Japan), as well as non-traditional donors that are increasingly becoming an important part of the donor landscape or may reshape the landscape over the next decade (Qatar, Brazil, China). We chose to exclude certain countries, such as the US and UK, where we assumed a higher quantity of publicly available research may already exist.

The purpose of the review was to better understand the forces that have driven major policy decisions, including on development and multilateralism. We found that all of the countries reviewed are facing a similar set of domestic challenges, including ageing populations putting pressure on public resources, a sense of growing inequality particularly between older and younger generations, widespread concerns around the cost of living, and low trust in government and politicians. The review also revealed a number of limitations of the existing public opinion data on development specifically, including:

- 1. Support for development tends to be assessed in a vacuum.** The majority of research reviewed explored absolute rather than relative support for development and failed to explore support in the context of the country's wider political realities. The real challenges to the sector¹ come from large and politically significant groups who hold the view that tackling global poverty is important, yet also believe the government should "prioritise domestic issues", "keep aid spending level or cut it", or "prioritise other areas for government spending". These trade-offs are not sufficiently interrogated in the research. Indeed, the majority of the research reviewed seemed to start from a place of trying to 'prove' support for development rather than building an in-depth and nuanced understanding of public attitudes.
- 2. There are significant research gaps in both traditional donor markets and non-traditional donor markets, though they take slightly different forms.** In traditional donor markets, the core gaps in the literature are in relative support measurement, in longitudinal data, in message testing, and in how to communicate with groups that represent the contemporary challenge on development (typically, the populist right political parties). In non-traditional donor countries, the gaps are more fundamental. Non-existent or unreliable research, and (as a result of limited research being conducted) where relevant attitudes tend to be just a small part of the research objectives.



PHASE 2

Phase 2 of this project was a series of stakeholder interviews to test the findings of our literature review and to explore whether there are plans to fill some of the identified research gaps. We interviewed 11 stakeholders from foundations and other international institutions that have previously engaged on this topic. The stakeholder interviews confirmed our diagnosis of the research landscape as not fit-for-purpose for effective advocacy, but shared very few plans to fill the gaps. Where research plans did exist they tended to focus on a small subset of European countries, including the UK, Germany and France.

PHASE 3

Phase 3 of this project was to conduct primary research to help address some of the weaknesses in the existing research landscape. We conducted polling in 5 countries (France, Italy, Ireland, Japan, and Brazil) to better understand the 'upstream' forces driving public opinion as well as rigorously test public support for development and multilateralism. We complemented this quantitative research with focus groups in 2 countries (France and Italy) to explore some of the findings in more depth with key voter groups - right-wing voters and centrist voters. The research deliberately tested upstream attitudes alongside development-specific views so we could explore how economic, social and political attitudes impact support for international development spending.

This project has two primary audiences:

- 1. Advocates.** The research provides important insights for advocates looking to build support for development and multilateralism by highlighting the challenges and opportunities across different segments of the public. The findings illuminate the major forces driving public opinion, consider how these forces relate to public support for development, and explore different ways of building support.
- 2. Funders.** This research provides an overview of the public opinion research landscape (more broadly, and on development and multilateralism specifically). We identify the key gaps in the research needed to enable targeted advocacy and ultimately build sustained public and political support for development and multilateralism.

This report summarises the key findings from the primary public opinion research carried out in phase 3. The cross-country key findings and overarching takeaways are laid out in 'The Big Picture' chapter, followed by individual country chapters that dive into country-specific findings.



TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this report we use the term 'aid' to refer to the concept of wealthier countries providing support, financial or otherwise, to lower income countries. We have chosen to use the term 'aid' despite its flaws because this research project covers a number of countries with significant cultural and linguistic differences. Further, this research engages with 'ordinary' people, the vast majority of whom have little to no exposure to the international development sector. We have therefore used the term aid for simplicity - to ensure respondents understand the concept being discussed - and in an attempt to stay methodologically consistent across countries.

Further, the concept of 'aid' - as it is referred to throughout this research - intentionally goes beyond a country's spending on Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending - as specifically defined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - and instead refers to broader international cooperation efforts to reduce global poverty, provide humanitarian relief, support economic growth and mitigate the impact of climate change in lower income countries around the world. This is a particularly important clarification for the Brazil research, given Brazil is both an aid recipient and donor whose contributions are not classified as ODA.

We acknowledge that the term 'aid' has also been contested in recent years as legitimate questions have been raised around the power dynamics, value propositions, and history that has shaped and arguably continues to shape development. This paper does not seek to resolve those questions, but to explore where alternative framings might increase support for development cooperation in many forms.



METHODOLOGY

We ran nationally representative online surveys of 1,000 adults in France², Italy, Ireland, Japan and a 1,000-person representative survey of the online population in Brazil. These countries were chosen to represent a spread of traditional donors where ODA budgets are under immediate threat/pressure (France), traditional donors where ODA budgets seem relatively stable (Ireland, Japan and Italy) and non-traditional donors that may change the donor landscape in coming years (Brazil). An additional reason for choosing these countries is because they are democracies where public attitudes drive policy decisions more directly than in countries such as China or Qatar.

We leaned towards conducting this research in more countries where ODA budgets seem relatively stable rather than those where ODA budgets seem under immediate threat for two reasons: 1. It can support the sector to engage in more proactive advocacy in the markets where cuts have not yet been made, and 2. Most of the existing research and upcoming research plans skewed towards the countries where ODA budgets are under immediate threat, leaving a more significant gap in other countries.

We recognise the limitations that may come with online sampling, particularly in Brazil where there is limited access to the internet in some parts of the country.³ Ultimately this method was chosen to maximise the insights from this project according to our resourcing and time constraints. Further, this approach aligns with how research is often conducted in markets like Brazil and therefore the data/findings better align with the sorts of analysis stakeholders are used to seeing. All results are weighted using Iterative Proportional Fitting, or 'Raking', to available nationally representative data.

We identified three significant external events that occurred during or immediately before our fieldwork, which may have influenced some of the results. It is impossible to entirely anticipate or avoid research coinciding with news/current events that may influence the results - this underscores why longitudinal research is so important, as it can smooth out any anomalies from individual moments. The three relevant external events we identified were:

1. **The 2025 NATO Summit** in The Hague was held in the Netherlands on the 24-25 June, a few days before our fieldwork in Italy & France (30th June - 6th July). This high-level summit may have influenced responses, particularly on defence, national security and multilateralism for both Italian and French respondents.

2. **Rallies around Bolsonaro's coup trial verdict.** Huge public rallies were held both in support of and against Brazil's former president in the run up to the conclusion of his trial on charges of plotting a coup in Brazil (he was found guilty on the 11th of September). Our fieldwork ran from the 29th August - 12th September, which may have impacted responses, particularly on trust in government/institutions, disillusionment with politicians and politics, and social cohesion.

3. **JICA Africa Hometown initiative.** On the 21st August the Japanese International Cooperation Association (JICA) announced an initiative that would pair four African countries - Mozambique, Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania - with Japanese cities to promote exchange and foster collaboration. This sparked significant backlash, particularly from the public within the proposed 'hometown' cities and may have influenced responses around development, multilateralism, and views towards the government given our fieldwork ran just after this announcement, from the 29th August - 12th September.

We also conducted 2 focus groups (one with centrist voters and one with right-leaning voters) in both France and Italy. These structured conversations allowed us to dive deeper into why these groups held certain attitudes towards development and multilateralism, how deeply they hold these views, and to test whether any reform options were effective at building support. Each group included 6-8 participants, aged 25-60, who all work or are married to someone who works, including an even mix of gender and class/income (excluding top 10% and bottom 10% of the income distribution).

We acknowledge that relying only on polling in Ireland, Japan and Brazil is a limitation of the research. Qualitative research in these countries would have added a rich dimension to the insights but we were ultimately constrained by limited time and resources.

² We ran a 2,000 person sample in France to enable the use of a Multilevel Regression and Post-stratification (MRP) model. This statistical modelling technique allowed us to combine external data with our polling data to deliver more accurate results down to the commune level.

³ https://www.noamlupu.com/online_samples.pdf



THE BIG PICTURE

THE BIG PICTURE

The intention behind this project was to understand the forces that are driving the political and public discourse across France, Italy, Ireland, Japan and Brazil. Across every country we examined, the same upstream forces are doing most of the work in shaping public attitudes to development and multilateralism: people are anxious about their domestic economies, sceptical that politicians will deliver for them, and feel increasingly detached from one another.

Set against that backdrop, support for development in principle remains surprisingly robust, but it collapses quickly when people are asked to prioritise between competing domestic and international claims on limited public resources. Reforming messages or shifting development spending priorities helps only at the margins. The binding constraints are low trust and domestic pressure on living standards - ultimately, our research suggests that advocacy strategies to build public support for development will only be effective if they take this wider context into account.

The key findings from this research broadly seek to answer three questions:

- 1. WHAT DO THE PUBLIC CARE ABOUT?**
- 2. HOW CAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATES BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC?**
- 3. WHAT ARE THE MAIN DRIVERS OF SUPPORT/ OPPOSITION TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?**

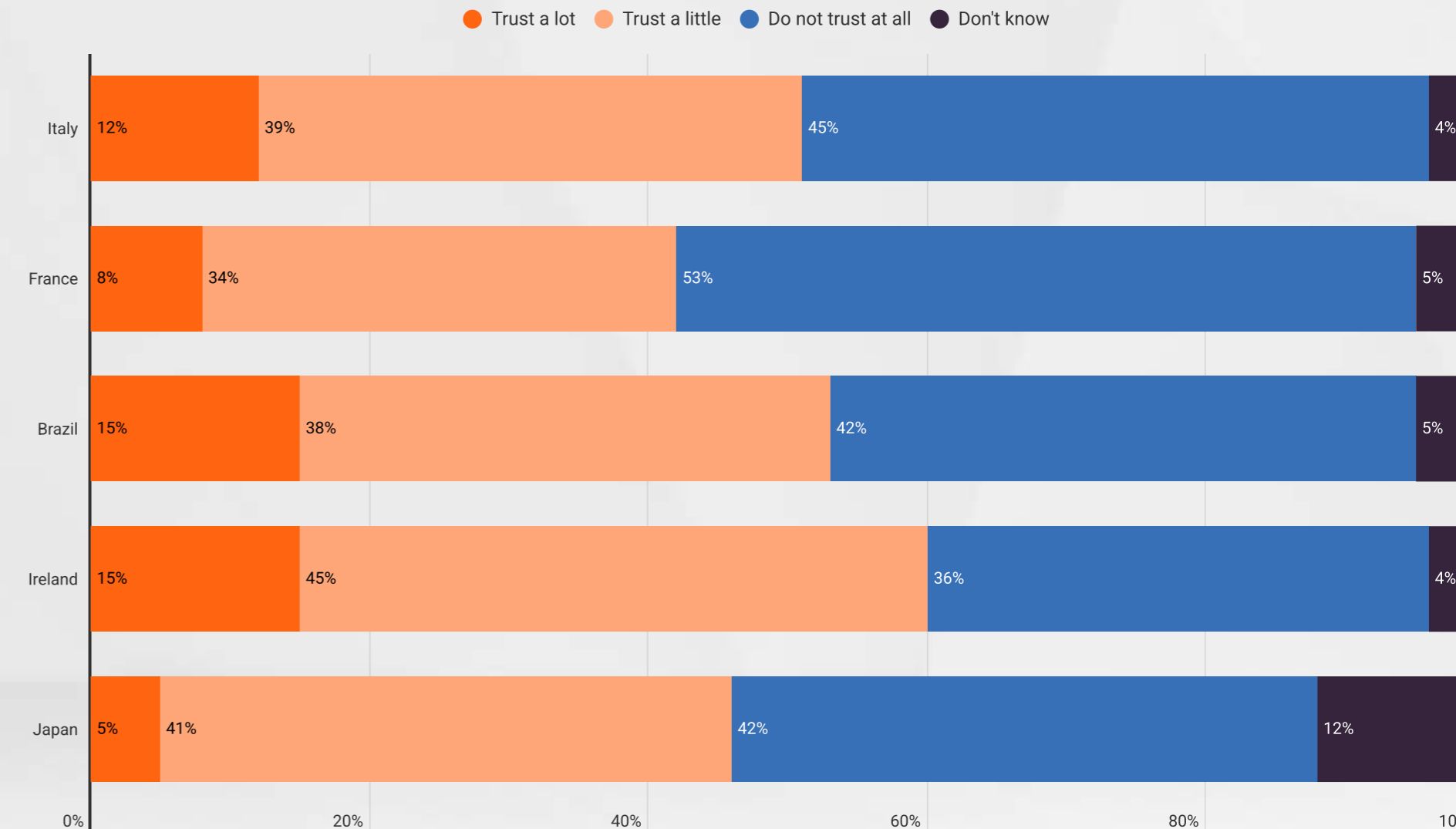
1. WHAT DO THE PUBLIC CARE ABOUT?

THE MAJOR FORCES AT PLAY ACROSS ALL FIVE COUNTRIES ARE CONSISTENT: ECONOMIC CONCERNS, A GROWING SENSE OF INEQUALITY, AND LOW TRUST IN GOVERNMENT TO EFFECTIVELY DELIVER FOR THE PEOPLE.

Cost of living and the state of the economy were prominent public concerns across all five countries we polled. There were several other domestic issues that the public were concerned about which were unique to each individual country, such as healthcare in Italy, housing in Ireland, and crime in Brazil. Concerns around migration were especially prominent in France and in Ireland to a lesser extent. Further, there was a widespread sense across all countries that inequality is on the rise and that ordinary people are not getting their fair share of the country's wealth.

Layered onto this is a profound trust problem. In all five countries, large shares of the public say they do not trust the national government and feel disillusioned with politicians - with a majority agreeing that "it doesn't matter what the public thinks because politicians will do what they want anyway". Although there is some split in trust across party lines, disillusionment with politicians tends to span the political spectrum.

Trust in National Government, by Country



THERE IS HIGH IN-PRINCIPLE SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MULTILATERALISM - THIS IS TRUE ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

The appetite for international cooperation is real. In France, 77% say countries should work together on solving global problems; in Italy it is 86%. Similar majorities can be found in Ireland, Japan and Brazil. These attitudes coexist with pride in national reputation: majorities in all countries think it matters that other countries hold a positive view of their nation.

There is also high in-principle support for development spending. 67% of people in Italy support their country spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries, along with 63% in Ireland, 51% in France, 59% in Japan, and 62% in Brazil. Net support tends to hold true across the political spectrum, though is highest amongst left-leaning voters.

HOWEVER, DOMESTIC PRESSURES MEAN THAT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SPENDING IS THE FIRST THING PEOPLE WANT TO SEE CUT WHEN FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN PRIORITIES - THIS IS ALSO TRUE ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

When the public are forced to trade off international development against domestic priorities, domestic priorities win every time across every voter group. In an experiment that forced choices over a new pot of public money, increasing spending on international aid ranked among the least-favoured options in all five countries. This is true across the political spectrum, including for left-leaning voters who are otherwise the most sympathetic to development and multilateralism.

However, support did vary based on different framings. We tested three different framings for development, including 'disaster relief', 'joint projects with other countries to solve global challenges' and 'international aid'. The 'joint projects' framing was the most well received, particularly in Brazil and Japan - in Japan, it even topped the list for how CDP (Japan) voters would like to see the hypothetical pot of money spent.

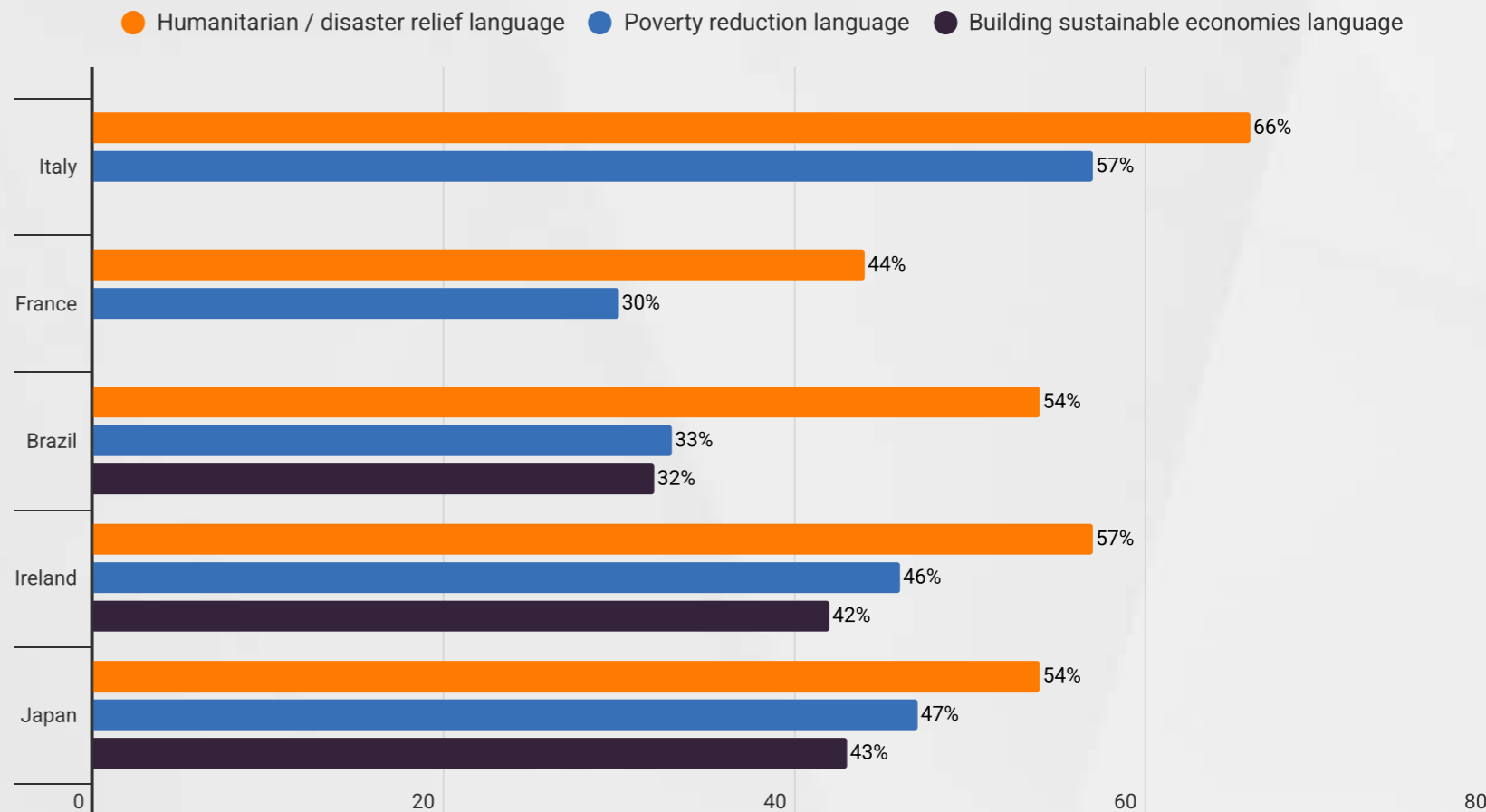


2. HOW CAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATES COMMUNICATE BETTER WITH THE PUBLIC?

THE LIMITED PATHWAYS TO BUILDING SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT TEND TO BE AROUND HUMANITARIANISM/DISASTER RELIEF, PRESENTING A TENSION BETWEEN THE SECTOR'S EFFORTS TO MOVE TOWARDS A 'MODERN' APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND THE MESSAGING THAT ACTUALLY RESONATES WITH THE PUBLIC.

Whether it is the way you talk about development or the way you spend it, humanitarianism and disaster relief tends to be more effective at building support than framing around poverty reduction or building sustainable economies - particularly with right wing groups. This is as true in traditional donor countries like France as it is in Brazil. This reality presents a tension between the sector's efforts to move towards a more modern approach to development - one that is centered on locally led development and building sustainable economies - and the framing/approach that best resonates with the groups that the sector needs to persuade - one that is centered on shorter-term humanitarian relief.

Support for Aid Spending, Net Support by Country



In the first round of surveys (France and Italy) we only tested humanitarian vs. poverty reduction language. In the second round of surveys (Brazil, Ireland and Japan) we added a third option using 'building sustainable economies' language.

MUTUAL BENEFIT ARGUMENTS CAN BE POWERFUL, BUT THE PUBLIC ARE NOT CONVINCED THESE RELATIONSHIPS EXIST.

The idea that spending abroad can have tangible benefits at home is attractive to many - particularly right-leaning voters and older populations. However, these groups also tend to doubt whether these relationships exist. To take 'reducing migration pressures' as an example - this was a top 3 benefit of international spending for National Rally voters in France, however the majority of these voters actually believe that international aid spending either has no impact or a negative impact on reducing migration levels to France. Further, the idea that international aid spending could have economic benefits for people at home was also attractive to right-leaning voters across most countries, however when we explored this in the Italian and French focus groups, it was clear that people did not believe that these benefits would ever flow to "us little people".

CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF THE PUBLIC ARE SUPPORTIVE OF CERTAIN TYPES OF NEW TAXES TO INCREASE AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT, HOWEVER HYPOTHECATING THE REVENUE FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL BE A HUGE CHALLENGE.

There is support amongst left-leaning voters across all five countries for introducing taxes that avoid hitting 'ordinary' people (i.e. wealth taxes or polluter levies) to fund increases in international development spending. Support for these taxes is consistently low amongst right-leaning voters, and support for any taxes that could increase the burden on 'ordinary' people (e.g. income tax or VAT) was met with widespread disapproval across the political spectrum.

Crucially, when asked how they would want to see the government spend a hypothetical new pot of money, international aid is amongst the least preferred policy areas across all five countries - including for left-leaning voters. This suggests that even for the groups for whom certain new taxes are tolerable, hypothecating the revenues for development would be a significant political challenge in reality.



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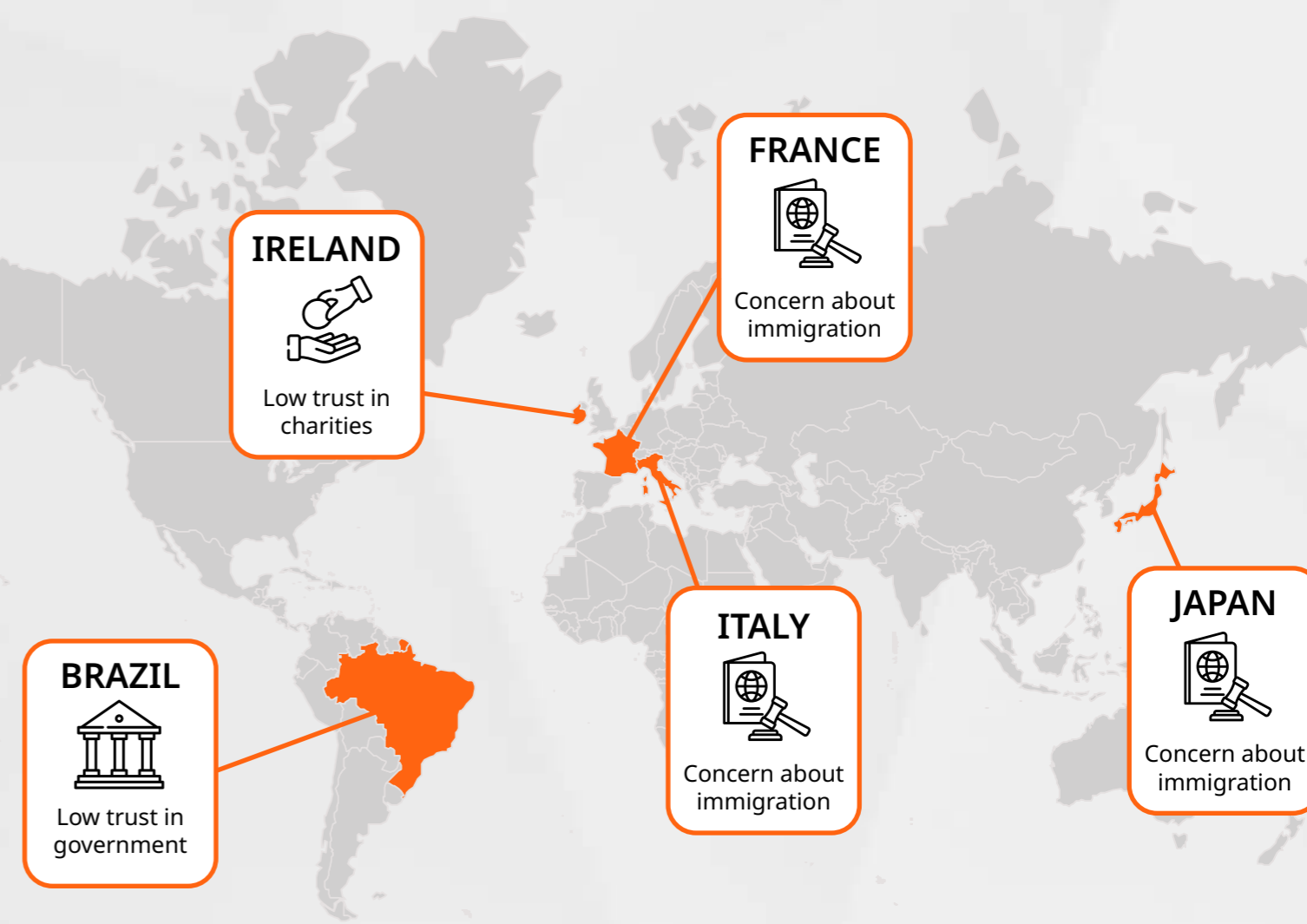
WHAT ARE THE MAIN DRIVERS OF SUPPORT/ OPPOSITION TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

ULTIMATELY, THE BARRIERS TO BUILDING SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ARE UPSTREAM, NOT DEVELOPMENT-SPECIFIC.

Our research ultimately shows that the challenges are upstream, not specific to development or multilateralism. When the public is sceptical that their government can spend any money well, it doesn't matter how much you change the way you talk about international development or reform how you spend the budget. Further, persistent economic issues, particularly the rising cost of living, mean that governments are increasingly faced with hard choices between funding different policy priorities - and, ultimately, increasing (or even maintaining) development spending does not win them favor with the voters they are accountable to.

If the sector wants durable public permission for development, it must do more than refine narratives about what development is or who it benefits. It has to grapple with the upstream environment: low trust; heightened economic insecurity; and a politics that rewards visible focus on domestic priorities. Messaging and spending tweaks will not compensate for these fundamentals.

MOST SIGNIFICANT DRIVER OF OPPOSITION TO AID



NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The core finding of this project is that the challenge for building public support for development is upstream. People do not reject help for others because they are hostile to internationalism; they deprioritise it because they doubt the state's competence and feel pressed by domestic costs. This pattern was true across the five very different countries included in this research.

Our findings suggest that the sector will not win back durable public support by cycling through new slogans or tweaking the way development is spent - advocates must instead grapple with these upstream forces: economics/inequality, trust, and demographic changes. Right now, development is widely seen as unrelated or, worse, actively contradictory to solving the domestic problems dominating public concern. The key question for the sector therefore is: how to demonstrate that a country's international development spending actively helps to address domestic challenges around cost of living, migration, inequality and trust?

WE RECOMMEND:

Building winning arguments in the short-term by:

- **Demonstrating domestic co-benefits with proof rather than rhetoric.** The idea that spending abroad can have tangible benefits to life at home is attractive to many segments of the public, particularly right-leaning voters and older people. However, pushing these messages will not be enough because most people are simply not convinced that this relationship exists. International development advocates should focus on building the evidence base to prove this relationship and then incorporating it more centrally into the sector's messaging.
- **Tying international development messaging to national reputation and values.** The public across all five countries included in this project care deeply about their international reputation, however there are significant variations - both within countries and across them - about what builds international respect. For countries like Ireland and Italy, where the public see global poverty reduction and climate action as the main drivers of international respect, it is easy to see how development advocates can tweak public messaging to reinforce these values. For other countries, such as France, where the drivers of international respect come from standing up for national interests and values, the shift to the development sector's messaging will need to be more fundamental and lean into narratives around national security and interests. This may well be an uncomfortable shift for many in the sector.
- **Leaning into humanitarian leadership.** In the near term, tilt communications and storytelling toward disaster response and providing basic services, where support is broadest and least politically contested. This can be done at the same time as continuing to fund long-term development activities.

Investing in the evidence base in the longer-term by:

- **Tracking longitudinal data.** The sector needs regular tracking of public attitudes across both the upstream challenges (e.g. what are the main issues dominating public concern; how are people feeling about the economy; to what extent is trust in government rising or declining) as well as attitudes towards international development specifically. Gathering and sharing this data will allow advocates to build proactive advocacy strategies that can build and maintain support for development before spending cuts become a political reality.
- **Segmenting the public based on the drivers of support/opposition to international development.** The sector would benefit from a country-specific exercise to segment the public based on their attitudes across a number of indicators of support for international development (this could include, for example, their level of concern over immigration, level of trust in the government, and concerns around the economy) alongside their declared direct support/opposition to development spending. This would give advocates insight into which groups are politically important, how their views are changing over time, and how they can be swayed.
- **Testing new messages, messengers and mediums with target audiences.** It is crucial that the sector identifies new messages, messengers and mediums to effectively deliver its advocacy to target audiences. This effort should focus on crowding in new voices and reaching new people on new platforms - effectively seeking to break out of the 'bubble' of communications focussed on existing left-leaning supportive segments of the public.
- **Sharing insights widely.** This research is only useful if it can be used by the advocacy partners who need it. This means ensuring that new research does not happen in silos, that the insights are widely shared, and that partners are armed with a toolkit explaining how to use the findings to create change. A shared public platform, building on existing efforts, that consolidates research efforts led by different organizations and in different markets, and helps partners translate these insights into advocacy would accelerate the sector's efforts to build and maintain support for international development.



This research project was conducted across 5 countries: France, Italy, Ireland, Japan and Brazil. We conducted polling across all 5 countries and additional focus groups with centrist and right-leaning voters for deeper insights in France and Italy. The key findings for each country are detailed in the following country chapters.

Each country chapter includes:

- 1. A SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FORCES DRIVING PUBLIC OPINION.**
- 2. THE KNOCK ON IMPACT THESE FORCES ARE HAVING ON PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES AND FEELINGS OF SOCIAL COHESION.**
- 3. AN OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MULTILATERALISM SPECIFICALLY.**
- 4. PATHWAYS FOR BUILDING SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY:**
 - 1. CHANGING THE WAY IT IS FRAMED,**
 - 2. CHANGING THE WAY IT IS SPENT, OR**
 - 3. RAISING NEW TAX RESOURCES TO FUND IT.**

COUNTRY DEEP DIVES



FRANCE

MAJOR FORCES



CONCERNS ABOUT THE ECONOMY AND IMMIGRATION



LOW TRUST IN GOVERNMENT



WIDESPREAD FEELINGS OF DISEMPOWERMENT

WHICH ARE CONTRIBUTING TO:



A BREAKDOWN IN SOCIAL COHESION



A BREAKDOWN IN THE SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT



A TENDENCY TO PRIORITISE DOMESTIC ISSUES OVER INTERNATIONAL ONES



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Despite high levels of support for development in principle, support crumbles once presented as a trade off with domestic priorities.



PATHWAYS TO BUILDING SUPPORT:

There are limited pathways to building support for development by tweaking messaging though focusing on humanitarianism and national benefits are more effective.

SUMMARY

Concerns about the economy and immigration, low trust in government, and widespread feelings of disempowerment are driving the public and political discourse in France. These forces are contributing to a breakdown in social cohesion across the country, a breakdown in the social contract between the public and the government, and a tendency to prioritise domestic issues over international ones.

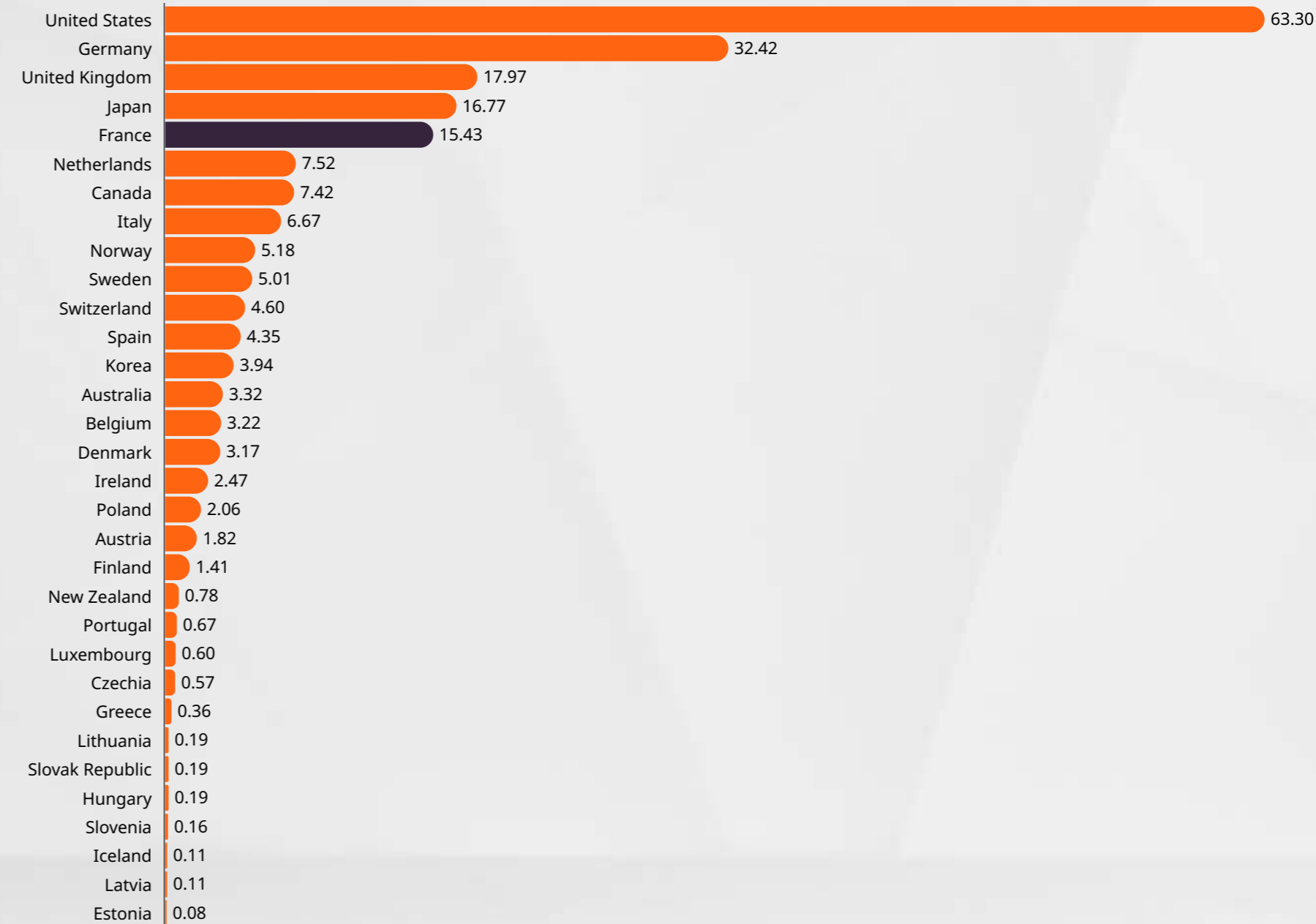
As a result - despite relatively high levels of support for multilateralism and international development in-principle - support crumbles once it is presented as a trade-off with domestic priorities. This is true for all groups, including those who are more supportive of development in general, including younger people and left-leaning voters.

There are some promising routes to shifting attitudes for some segments of the public by changing the way you speak about international development, the way that you spend it, or finding new tax resources to fund it. However, the reforms we tested only led to marginal changes in support, mostly with centrist or left-leaning groups who were already more sympathetic to international development - none sufficiently shifted the dial with sceptical groups.

Ultimately, our research suggests that advocacy aimed at building public support for international development in France will fail unless it fundamentally grapples with: 1. Low trust and feelings of disempowerment that the government can make positive change and 2. Domestic economic and migration challenges that are dominating the public discourse.



ODA as percent of GNI (grant equivalent) in 2024



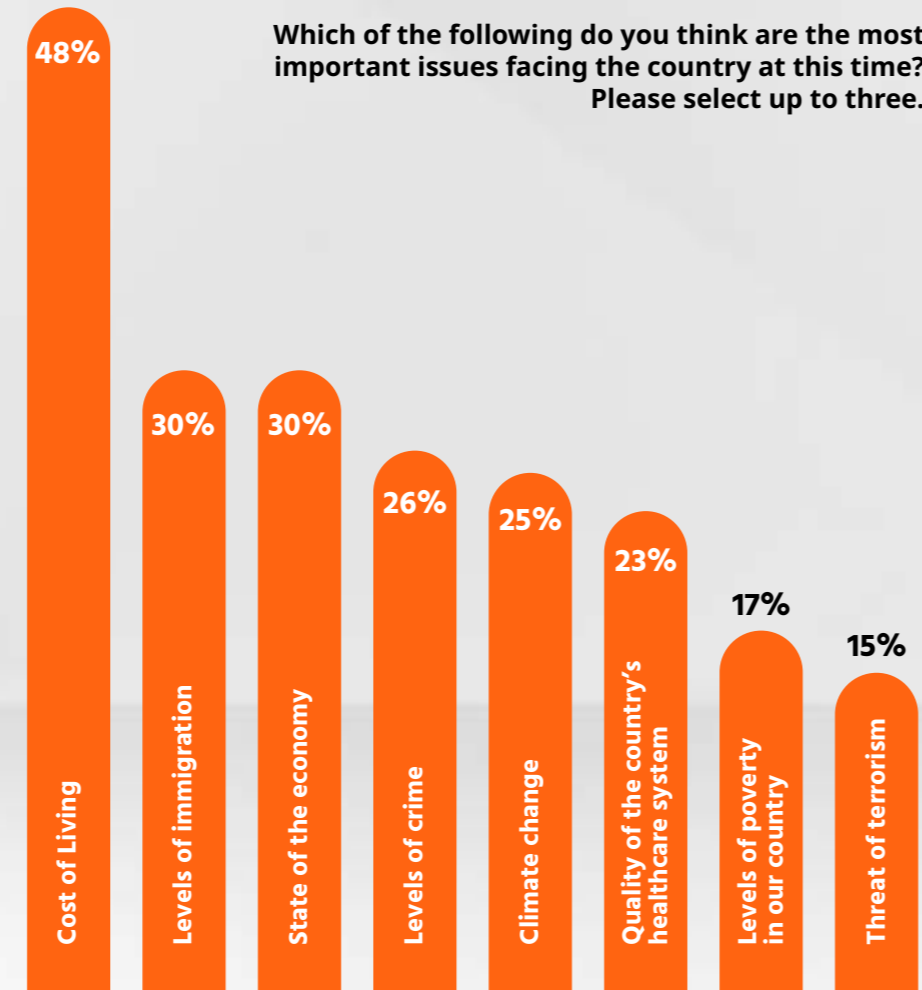
ODA - grant equivalent in 2024, USD billions

THE MAJOR FORCES DRIVING THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

We identified three major forces that are shaping the political and public debate in France:

Widespread concerns about the economy and immigration.

The cost of living (48%), levels of immigration (30%), and the state of the economy (30%) are the top three most important issues facing the country according to the French public. This was reflected in our focus groups with right-leaning and centrist voters, where cost of living and immigration dominated much of the conversation. In the right-leaning group, participants unanimously agreed that these domestic concerns meant France should take care of its own before sending money abroad.

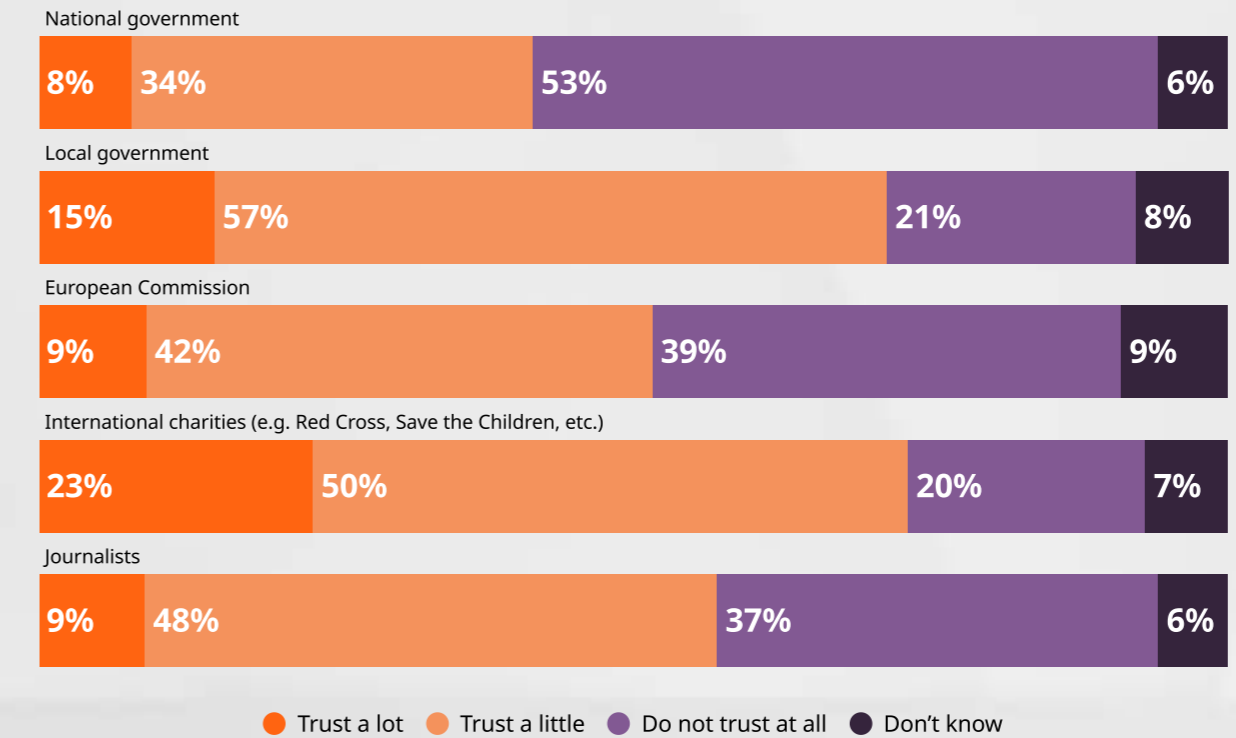


Low trust in the government.⁴

53% of the French public do not trust the national government at all - trust is lowest amongst older people and those who voted for the National Rally or didn't vote at all in the last election. Further, only around 1 in 5 French people trust the government to spend the national budget in a way that is in their best interest. This sentiment was borne out in both focus groups, where both centrist and right-leaning voters routinely expressed scepticism and general mistrust in the government. For example, when presented with national spending figures one male participant in his 50s replied:

"Where does this number come from? What does it mean? You can make numbers mean anything."

ODA as percent of GNI (grant equivalent) in 2024



⁴ This research took place after the December 4th 2024 no confidence vote that toppled Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government, but before the September 8th 2025 no confidence vote that toppled Prime Minister Francois Bayrou's government.

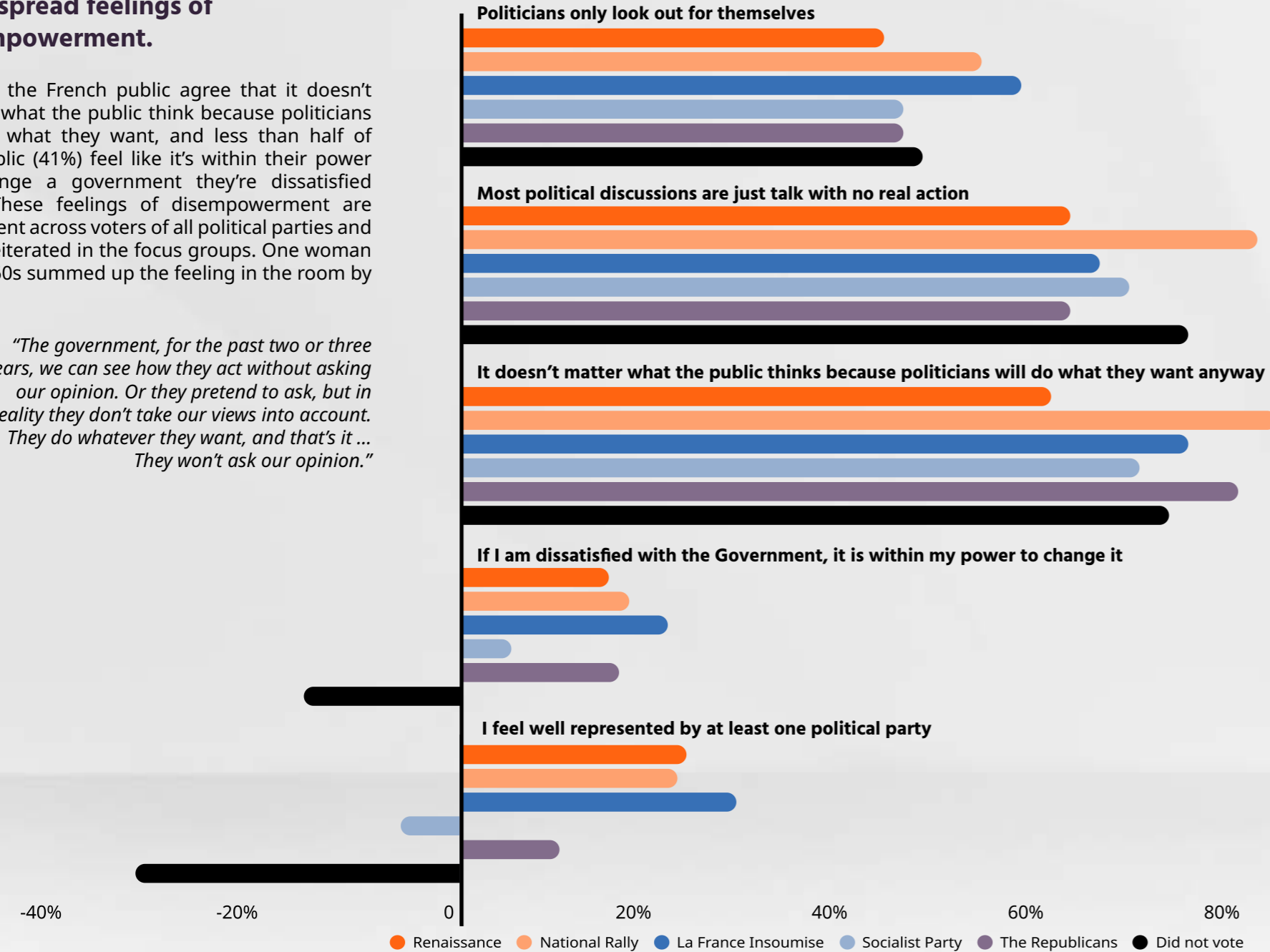


Widespread feelings of disempowerment.

81% of the French public agree that it doesn't matter what the public think because politicians will do what they want, and less than half of the public (41%) feel like it's within their power to change a government they're dissatisfied with. These feelings of disempowerment are consistent across voters of all political parties and were reiterated in the focus groups. One woman in her 60s summed up the feeling in the room by saying:

"The government, for the past two or three years, we can see how they act without asking our opinion. Or they pretend to ask, but in reality they don't take our views into account. They do whatever they want, and that's it ... They won't ask our opinion."

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



Combined, we find these forces are contributing to:

- 1. A breakdown of social cohesion.** Only a third of the French public agree that they are feeling increasingly more connected to the people around them. Feeling less connected to the people around them was a consistent finding for voters across the political spectrum and across age groups.
- 2. A breakdown in the social contract between the public and the government.** Both the poll and focus groups found widespread mistrust of the government and scepticism that they can deliver for the public. This suggests that the social contract - i.e. that the public pay taxes to the government who spend it efficiently to provide a social safety net and enable people to thrive - is breaking down. This was at the very core of people's opposition to international development (i.e. the government could not be trusted to spend it efficiently or effectively) but went far beyond international development to all elements of government spending - only 19% of the public trust the government to spend the national budget in a way that is in their best interest vs. 61% disagree.
- 3. A focus on domestic over international priorities.** There are high levels of support for tackling international issues, like climate change or global poverty, when viewed in isolation (77% of the public agree countries should work together to solve global problems like climate change or global poverty - this is consistently high across all voter groups). However, when presented in the context of other domestic priorities, support for international policies crumbles. When asked how they would like the government to spend a new hypothetical pot of €10 billion, international aid is the last (or one of the last) choices for voters across right-wing, centrist and left-wing parties alike.



LOOKING OUTWARD: FEELINGS TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY & MULTILATERALISM

Despite widespread domestic concerns, the French do not want to turn their back to the world.

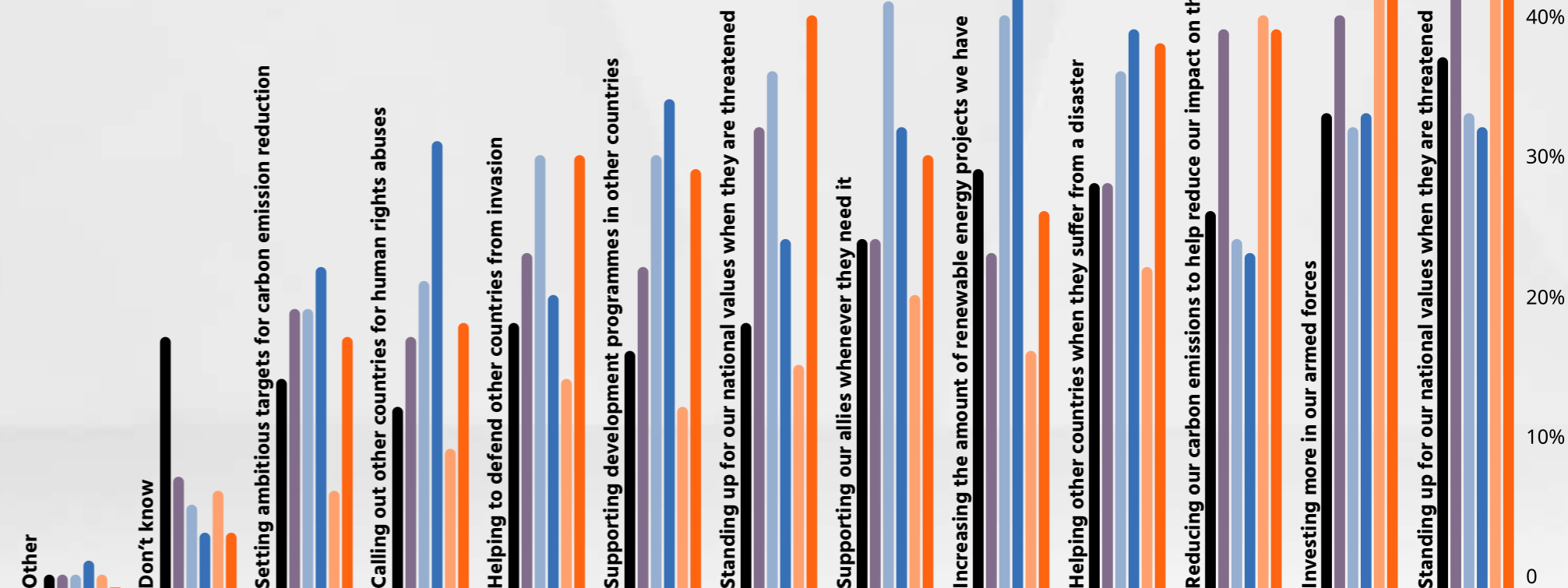
The French public agree that countries should be working together to solve global problems, such as climate change or global poverty (77% agree vs. only 7% disagree) and a plurality agree that France has a responsibility to help people in other countries when they are in need (45% agree vs. 23% disagree). Support for multilateralism is higher for voters of left-leaning parties like La France Insoumise (88% agree countries should work together) and the Socialist Party (86% agree) but there is also strong agreement across voters for right-wing parties like the National Rally (71% agree). However, National Rally voters differ from others in that they generally disagree that France has a responsibility to help people in other countries when they are in need (46% disagree vs. 26% agree); voters across all other parties believe France does have this responsibility. Further, the public have higher trust in multilateral institutions like the European Commission (51% trust) and United Nations (58% trust) than they do in their own national government (41% trust) - this is true for all voter groups.

The French think it's important that other countries have a positive view of their country but have different opinions on what builds international respect.

76% of the French public - including a majority across voters of all political parties - agree that it is important that other countries have a positive view of France. However, there is a significant difference in what builds those positive views across different voter groups. Voters across more centrist and right-leaning parties believe respect is earned by 'standing up for our national values when they are threatened' and 'standing up for our economic interests more loudly'. These activities were also popular amongst voters of left leaning parties, like La France Insoumise and the Socialist Party, however they came secondary to activities related to climate and development, including "reducing our carbon emissions to help reduce our impact on the climate" and "helping other countries when they suffer from a disaster".

This dimension of public attitudes will be particularly important for the upcoming French Presidency of the G7 in 2026 when issues of global cooperation and development will be part of the agenda.

In your view, which, if any, of the following would increase the respect other countries have for France on the world stage? Select any which apply

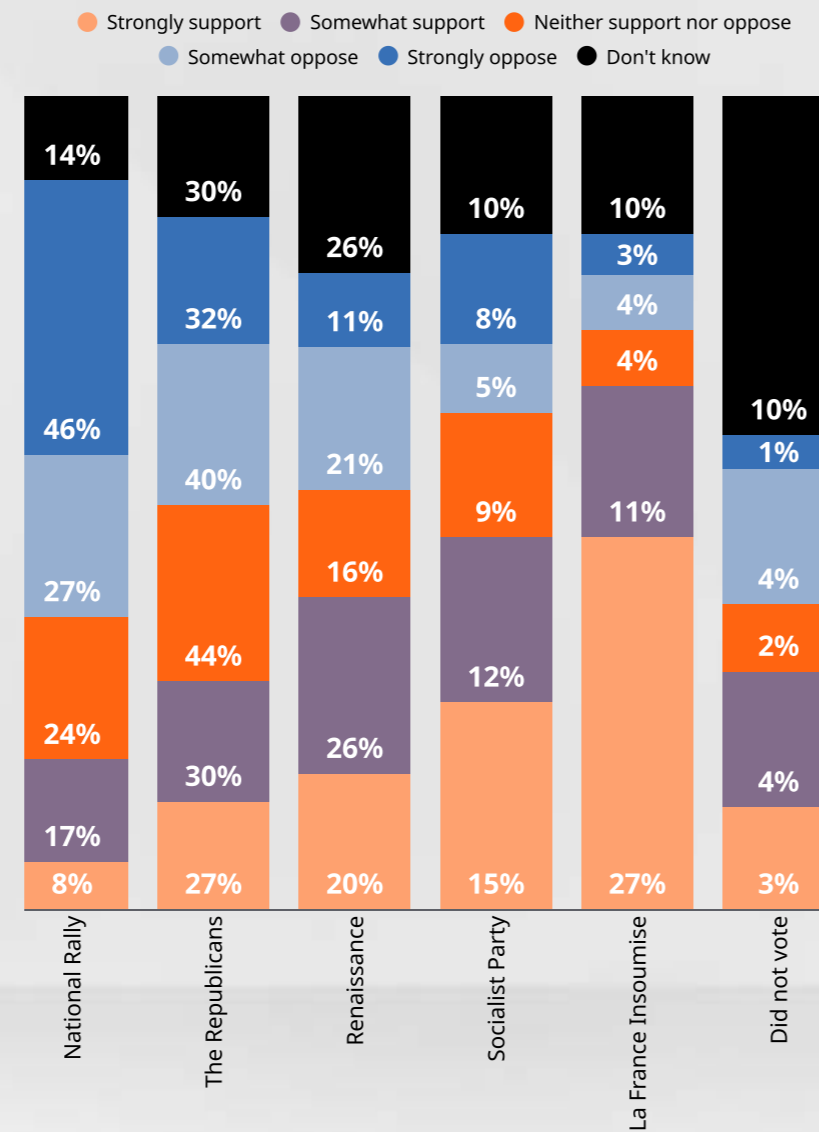


CURRENT ATTITUDES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When it comes to international development more specifically, support in principle is high.

51% of the public support their government spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries vs. just 21% who oppose. Further, 52% agree it is important for the French government to reduce poverty in other countries vs. 38% who disagree. Support for international development in-principle is relatively high across the political spectrum.

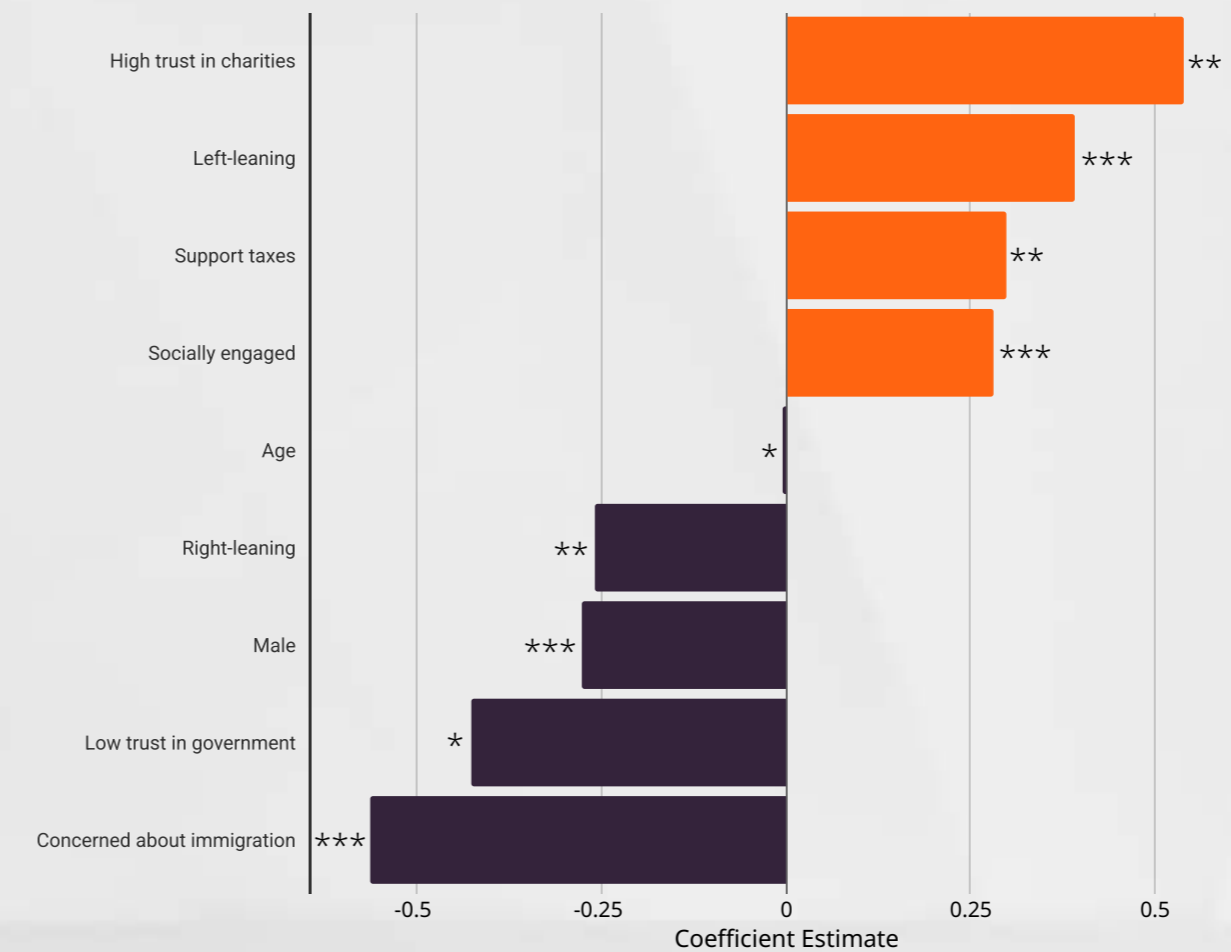
To what extent do you support or oppose France spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries, such as by providing food assistance, or helping to construct vital infrastructure like schools or wells?



The most significant predictors of support for international development are being politically left-wing and having high trust in charities, whereas opposition to international development is driven by low trust in government and concerns about immigration.

Significant Predictors of Support for International Aid in France⁵

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



⁵ 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. Supports taxes represents those who would support increasing taxes in order to improve public services. 'Concerned about Immigration: 1' represent those who selected immigration as one of the top three issues facing France today.



However, the French do generally think they are spending too much on international development

46% agree France spends too much vs. 37% believe the country spends either the right amount or too little. There is a left/right political divide to these attitudes, with voters of right-leaning parties more likely to think France is paying too much. This may be related to the fact the French think other countries are not pulling their weight - 46% believe France is spending more on international development than other wealthy countries, 24% think France spends about the same as others and only 9% think France spends less than others.

Further, the public are very sceptical about how the international development budget is spent, with significant concerns around transparency, waste and corruption found in both the poll and focus groups.

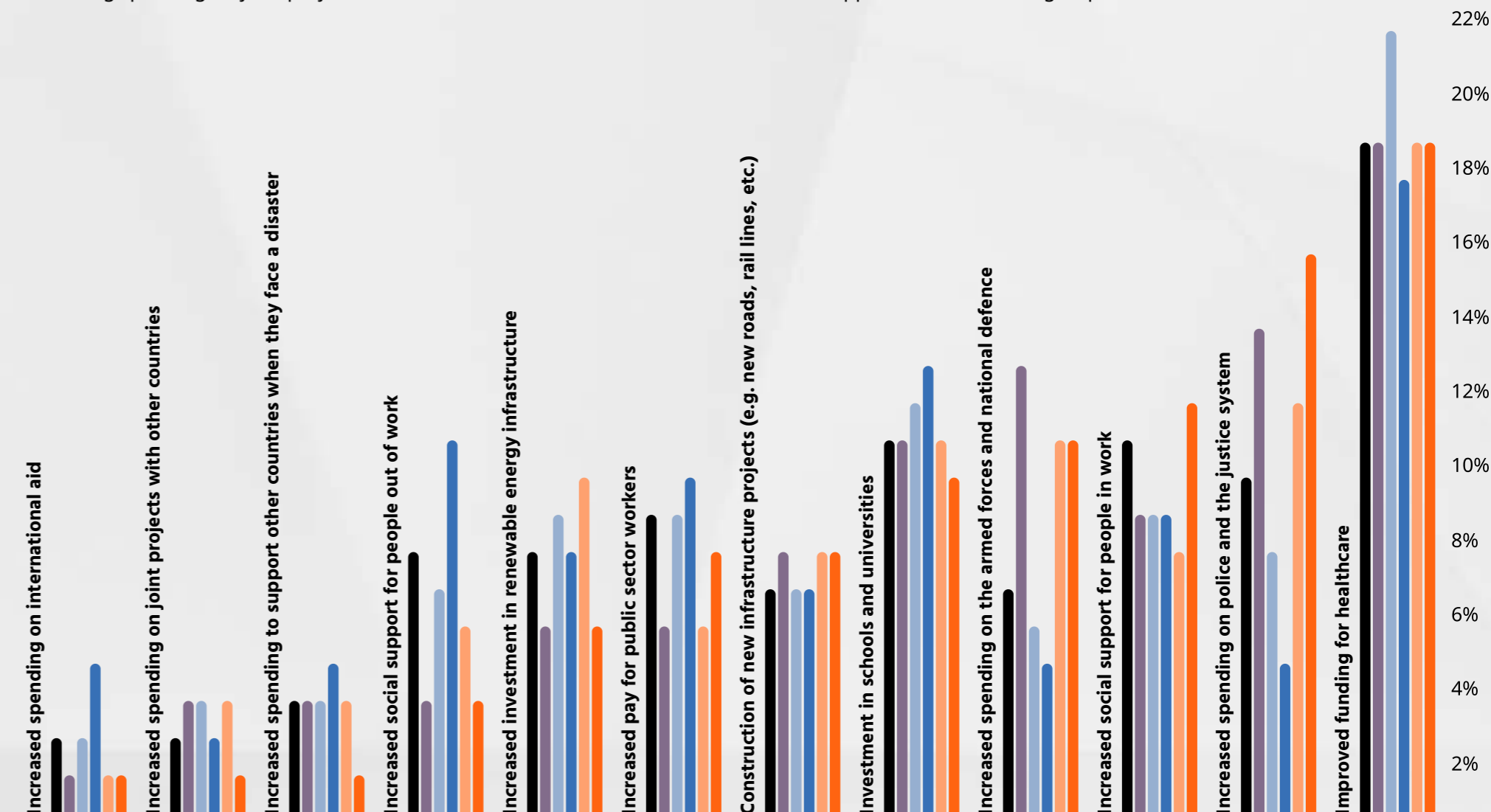
In a focus group with right-leaning voters, for example, the most powerful driver of opposition to international development spending was corruption and participants were highly sceptical that money ever reached the people it was intended for. This was due to obstacles like corrupt intermediaries, but also a general lack of trust in their government to make good use of the funds.

“AND ALSO, WITH THIS AID, WE NEVER SEE THE DETAILS, AND I GET THE IMPRESSION THERE IS LITTLE OR NO CONTROL. IF I TAKE THE EXAMPLE OF AID TO UKRAINE, YOU SOMETIMES HEAR ABOUT CORRUPTION, MONEY DISAPPEARING. INSTEAD OF ACTUALLY BEING AID, THAT MONEY ENDS UP IN THE POCKETS OF THOSE AT THE TOP. I MENTION UKRAINE, BUT IT COULD BE IN AFRICA OR ANYWHERE ELSE - CORRUPTION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE. I FEEL THERE IS LITTLE OR NO OVERSIGHT. IF IT WERE REALLY CONTROLLED, DOWN TO THE EURO, THEN IT WOULD BE DIFFERENT.”

Male, 40s

While there does appear to be a left/right political divide in high-level support for international development, support crumbles when compared to domestic priorities for voters across the political spectrum.

When we asked the public how they would like to see the government spend a new hypothetical pot of €10 billion, increasing spending on international aid, increased spending to support other countries when they face a disaster, and increasing spending on joint projects with other countries received the lowest levels of support across all voter groups.



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

We found that each reform pathway offered limited routes to building support with specific groups (who tended to be more supportive or sympathetic of international development to begin with), but none of them were sufficient for building widespread public support for international development.

Changing the way it's framed.

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

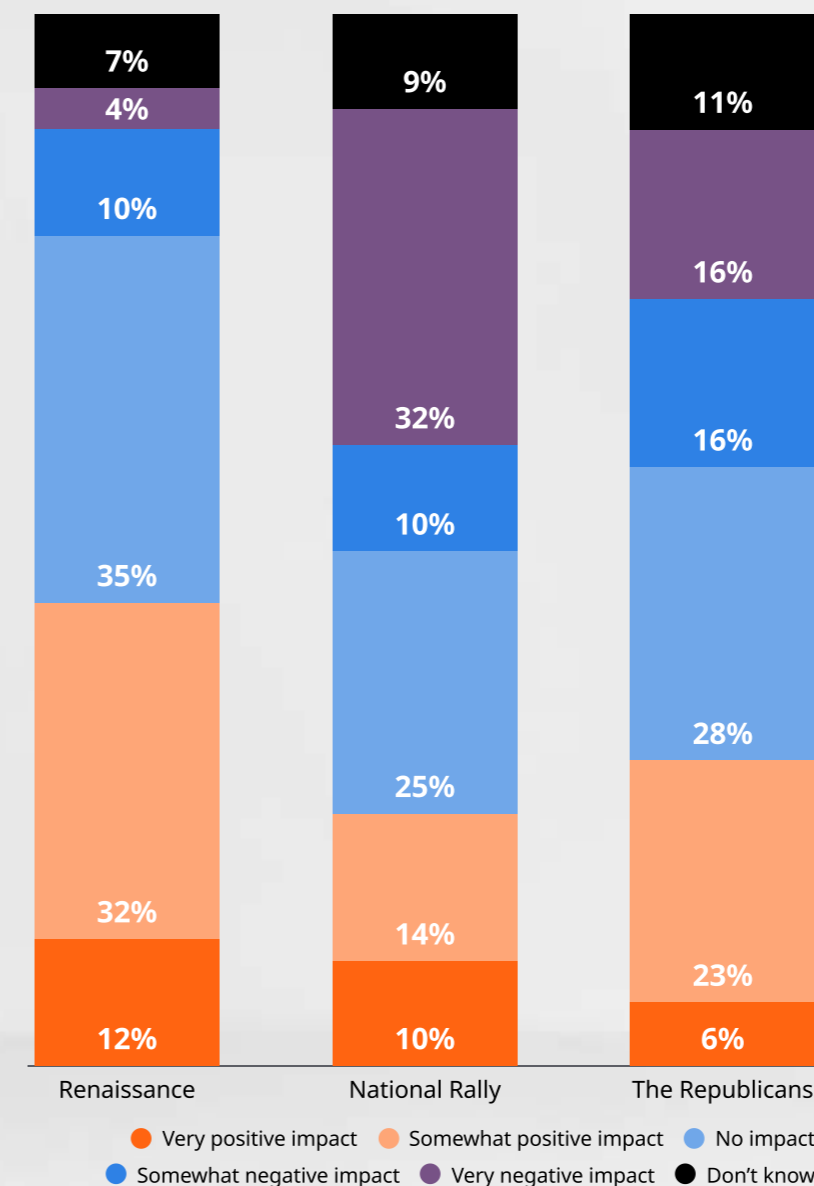
1. As a tool for poverty reduction (e.g. focused on 'traditional' development programmes in education, health and nutrition)
2. As a tool for disaster relief (e.g. focused on humanitarian relief)
3. As a tool for sustainable economic growth (e.g. focused on job creation)

We found no meaningful difference between the 'traditional' framing of international development around poverty reduction and investment in social sectors vs. the more 'modern' framing of international development around building sustainable economies - there was a relatively even split in attitudes across left-leaning, centrist and right-leaning voters.

However, framing international development as 'helping other countries respond to a disaster, such as an earthquake, a flood, or the outbreak of a disease' did receive more support with voters across the political spectrum than the 'traditional' poverty reduction framing. This framing was particularly impactful with National Rally voters - who reported net support for international development when framed as disaster relief (46% support vs. 27% oppose) compared to net opposition to the traditional framing (34% support vs. 42% oppose).

We also tested various 'mutual benefit' arguments to see if these framings could drive support - i.e. that investment in developing countries has tangible benefits to the donor country, including by supporting the growth of new trading partners, reducing the flow of migration, or reducing the price of food or energy in the donor country. Whilst these framings do speak to concerns that different groups have - e.g. reducing migration pressures to France would be a top 3 benefit of international spending for voters across Renaissance, the National Rally and the Republicans - this framing didn't resonate with voters because they are not sold that these relationships exist.

To what extent do you believe that your country providing financial support to developing countries has a positive or negative impact on the following?: Reducing levels of international migration



This finding was reiterated in the focus groups, where most participants - in both the centrist and right-wing groups - were either sceptical or outright rejected the idea that international development spending could deliver mutual benefits for France. Both groups acknowledged that this made sense in principle and that France probably does not give money purely "out of the goodness of its heart", and that international development is likely tied to diplomatic relationships or strategic interests. However, many of them felt these interests were hidden from the general public and that the benefits were removed from most ordinary people's lives.

"There might be a benefit, but it's not us little people that will ever see it."

Female, Right-leaning Voter, 60s

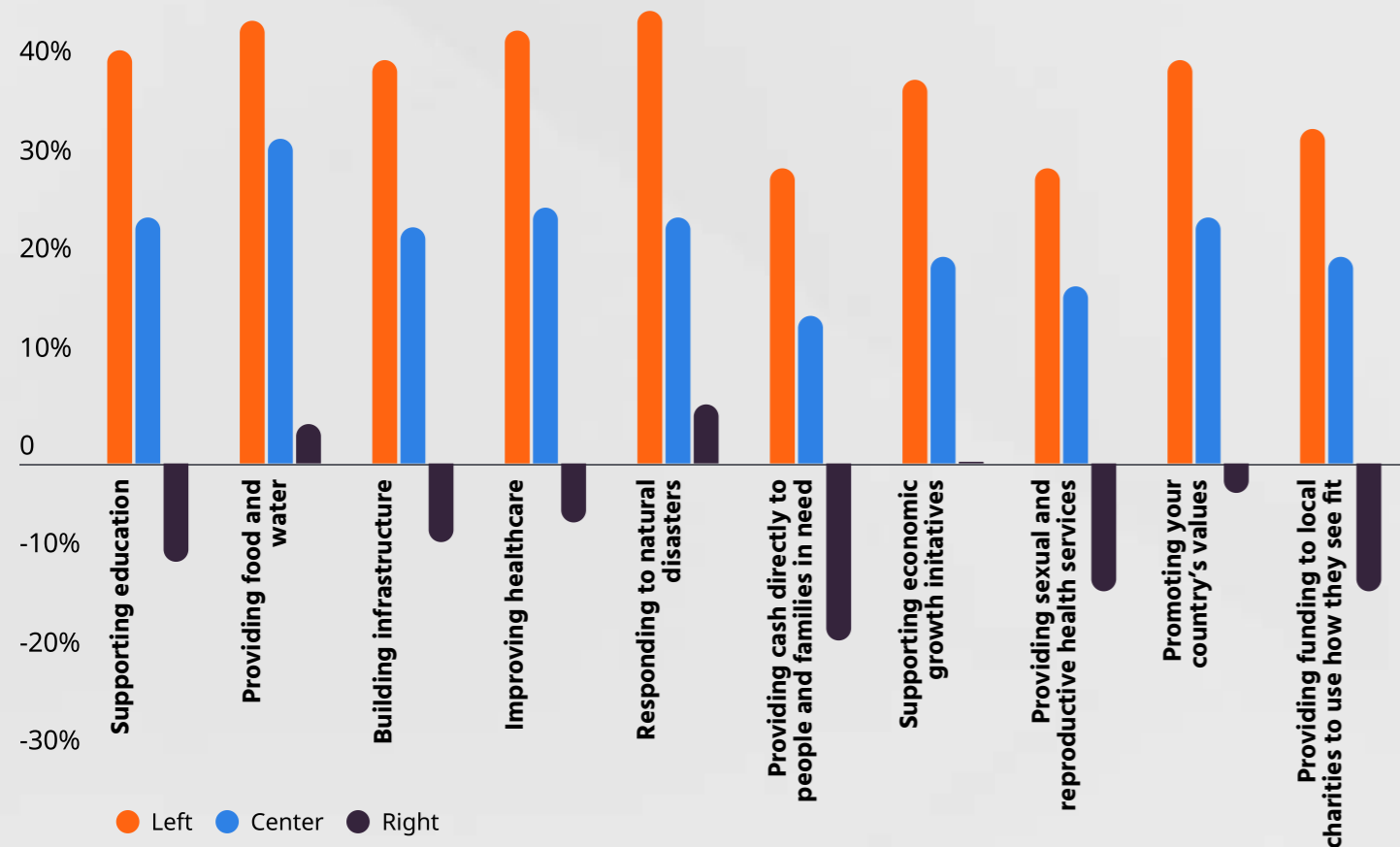
Participants in the centrist group also questioned whether international development spending may actually hurt France people and businesses rather than leading to mutual benefit after one participant shared an example of aid to Ukrainian poultry farmers ultimately undercutting French farmers.

"I'm a poultry farmer. Twenty years ago, we went to teach Ukrainians how to raise chickens. Now, there's MHP (a large poultry producer and exporter in Ukraine), which accounts for 79% of the European volume, and 77% of the poultry arriving in France. There's no mutual benefit... I mean, everyone has certainly advanced, but that aid has created other issues."

- Male, 30s

Changing how it's spent.

We tested various reform options for international development spending to understand whether how you spend the development budget can fundamentally shift support. We found slight variations in support, but that reform to spending priorities did not fundamentally shift any voter groups. For left-wing groups with the highest support for international development already, all options were similarly well received. For centrist groups, all options received similar lukewarm support. For right wing groups with the lowest support for international development already, humanitarian relief was the only option that received net support. For National Rally voters specifically, none of the options meaningfully shifted support levels.



In the focus groups, participants across both groups said they might support international development spending more if the money were clearly directed towards issues they felt were urgent - which included climate and conflict reduction. However, across both groups, a lack of transparency around how the development budget is spent fuelled mistrust that these changes could be made.

"We don't have any information; we know that we don't know. As citizens, maybe we need to go out and seek the information ourselves. But from everything I read and hear about international aid, I'd say we still don't have more information, we lack visibility."

- Female, 50s

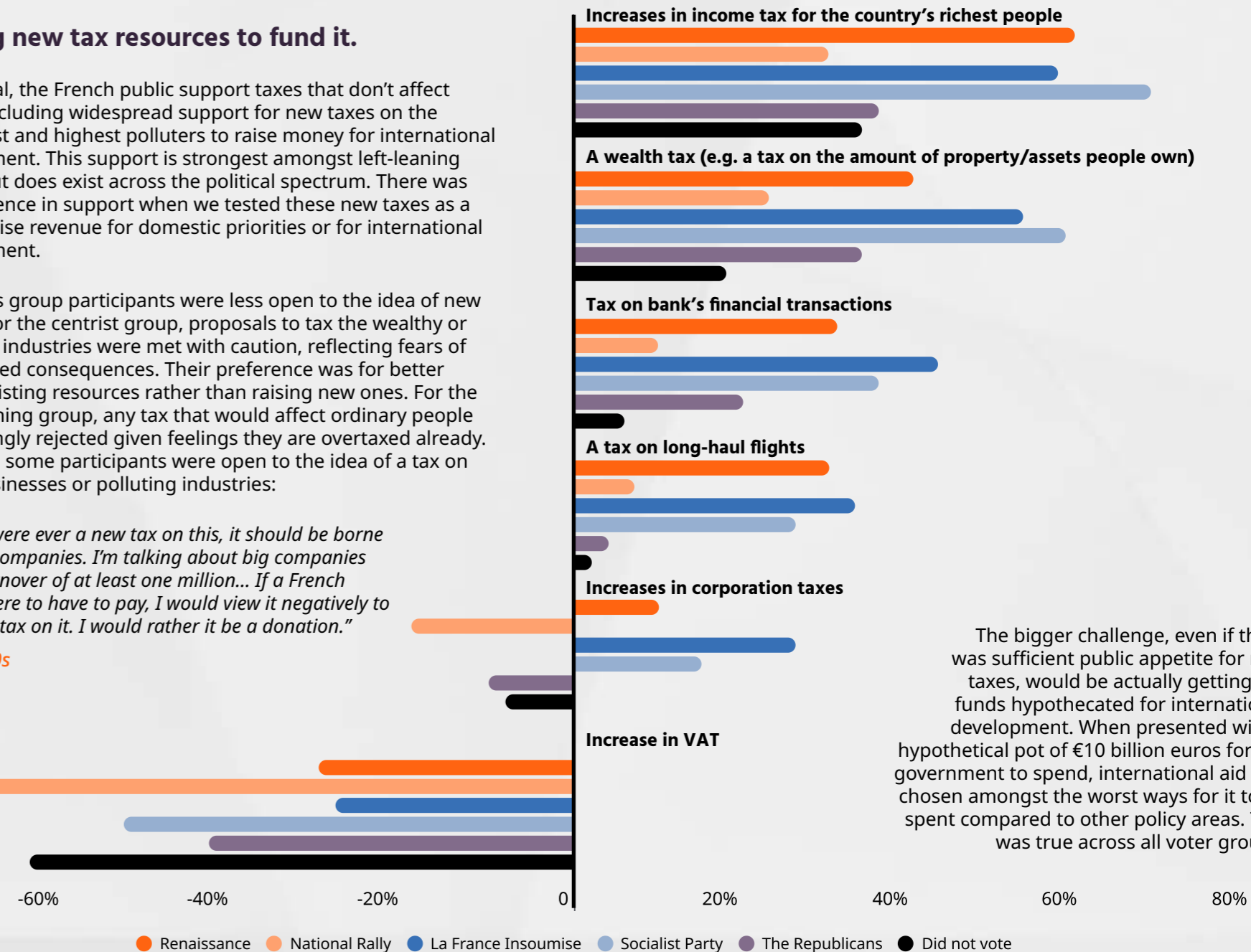
Raising new tax resources to fund it.

In general, the French public support taxes that don't affect them - including widespread support for new taxes on the wealthiest and highest polluters to raise money for international development. This support is strongest amongst left-leaning voters but does exist across the political spectrum. There was no difference in support when we tested these new taxes as a way to raise revenue for domestic priorities or for international development.

The focus group participants were less open to the idea of new taxes - for the centrist group, proposals to tax the wealthy or polluting industries were met with caution, reflecting fears of unintended consequences. Their preference was for better use of existing resources rather than raising new ones. For the right-leaning group, any tax that would affect ordinary people was strongly rejected given feelings they are overtaxed already. However, some participants were open to the idea of a tax on large businesses or polluting industries:

"If there were ever a new tax on this, it should be borne by large companies. I'm talking about big companies with a turnover of at least one million... If a French person were to have to pay, I would view it negatively to impose a tax on it. I would rather it be a donation."

- Male, 40s



The bigger challenge, even if there was sufficient public appetite for new taxes, would be actually getting the funds hypothecated for international development. When presented with a hypothetical pot of €10 billion euros for the government to spend, international aid was chosen amongst the worst ways for it to be spent compared to other policy areas. This was true across all voter groups.



ITALY

MAJOR FORCES



RISING COST OF LIVING PRESSURES AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



FEELING THAT INEQUALITY IS INCREASING AND ORDINARY PEOPLE ARE NOT GETTING THEIR FAIR SHARE



HIGH SCEPTICISM OF POLITICIANS

WHICH ARE CONTRIBUTING TO:



A BREAKDOWN IN SOCIAL COHESION



A BREAKDOWN IN THE SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Despite high levels of support for development and widespread recognition of the domestic benefits to this spending, support falls apart once presented as a trade off with domestic priorities. This is true even for groups who are more sympathetic to development.



PATHWAYS TO BUILDING SUPPORT:

Evidencing messaging that demonstrates the impact development can have on relieving migration pressures and leaning into development as a tool for disaster relief.

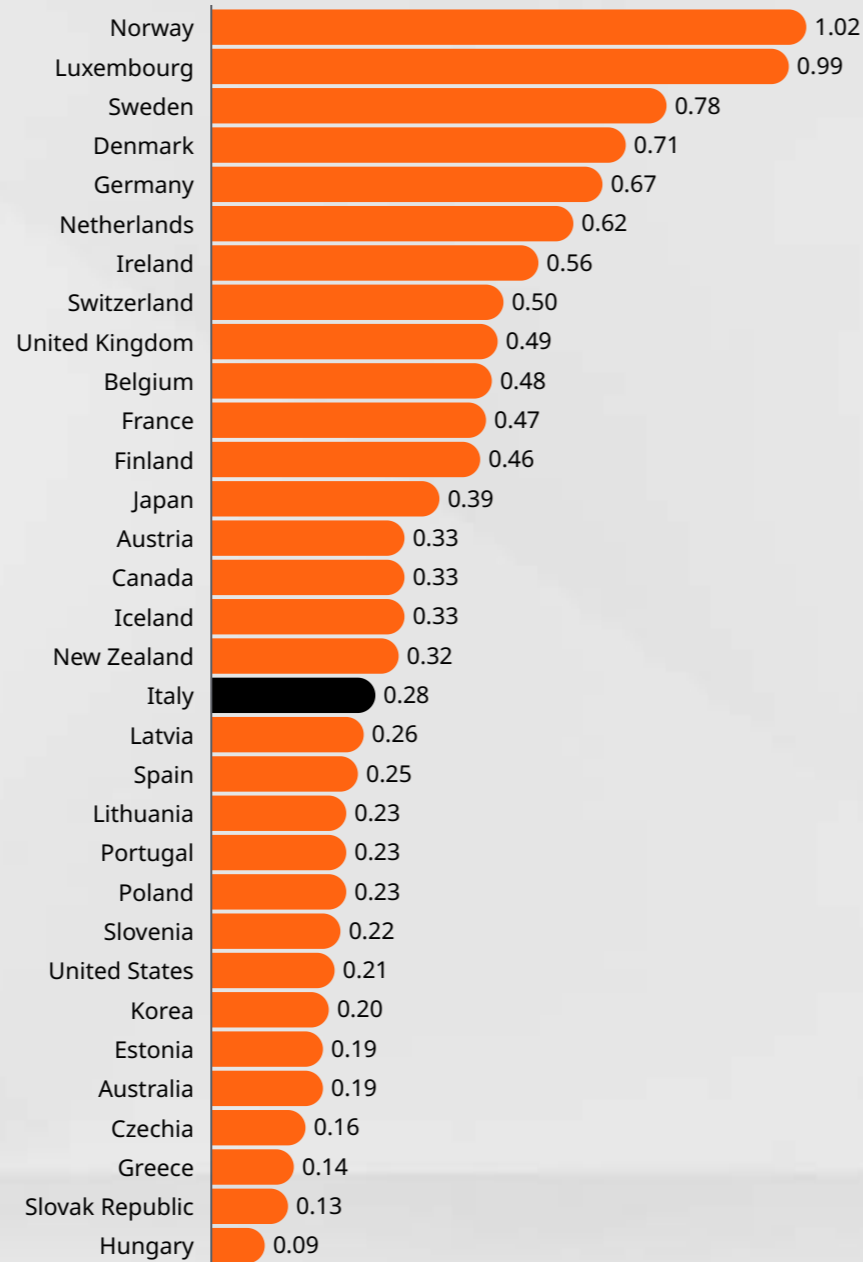
SUMMARY

Rising cost of living pressures and concerns around the quality of the healthcare system are dominating public concern in Italy. There is a widespread feeling that inequality (both within Italy and globally) is increasing and that ordinary people are not getting their share of the country's wealth. Italians are feeling increasingly less connected to the people around them and are highly sceptical of politicians.

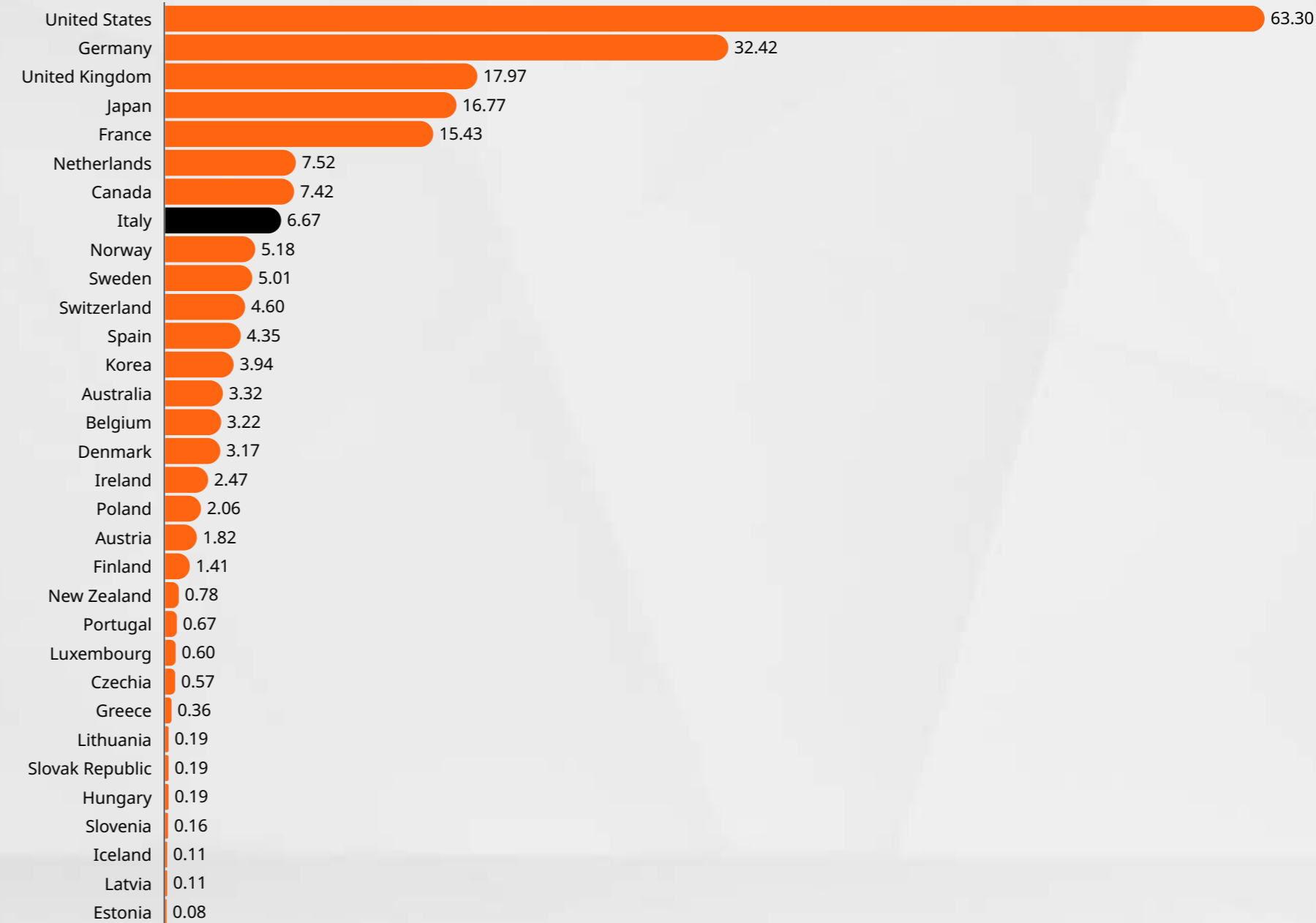
However, despite these domestic concerns, there are high levels of support for the government to work on solving international issues, such as climate change or global poverty. Indeed, it is this type of work - investing in renewable energy, supporting development programmes in other countries, and helping other countries when they suffer from disaster - that the public believe builds respect for Italy on the international stage.

Support for international development is high across the political spectrum and the benefits - both to the recipient country and to Italy - are widely understood, particularly amongst older populations. The relationship between international development and reducing levels of migration to Italy was a particularly clear and convincing message both in the poll and focus groups with right-leaning and centrist voters.

However, while the public consensus on international development is relatively strong in Italy when viewed in a vacuum, this support falls apart in the context of domestic priorities - even for more sympathetic groups (e.g. left-wing voters). Development budgets in Italy are not immediately under threat, but growing domestic pressures combined with low trust in the government could create an environment where support crumbles across the political spectrum. Future advocacy in Italy to build public support for international development must, therefore, address these underlying challenges rather than tweaking messaging or spending priorities.



ODA as percent of GNI (grant equivalent) in 2024

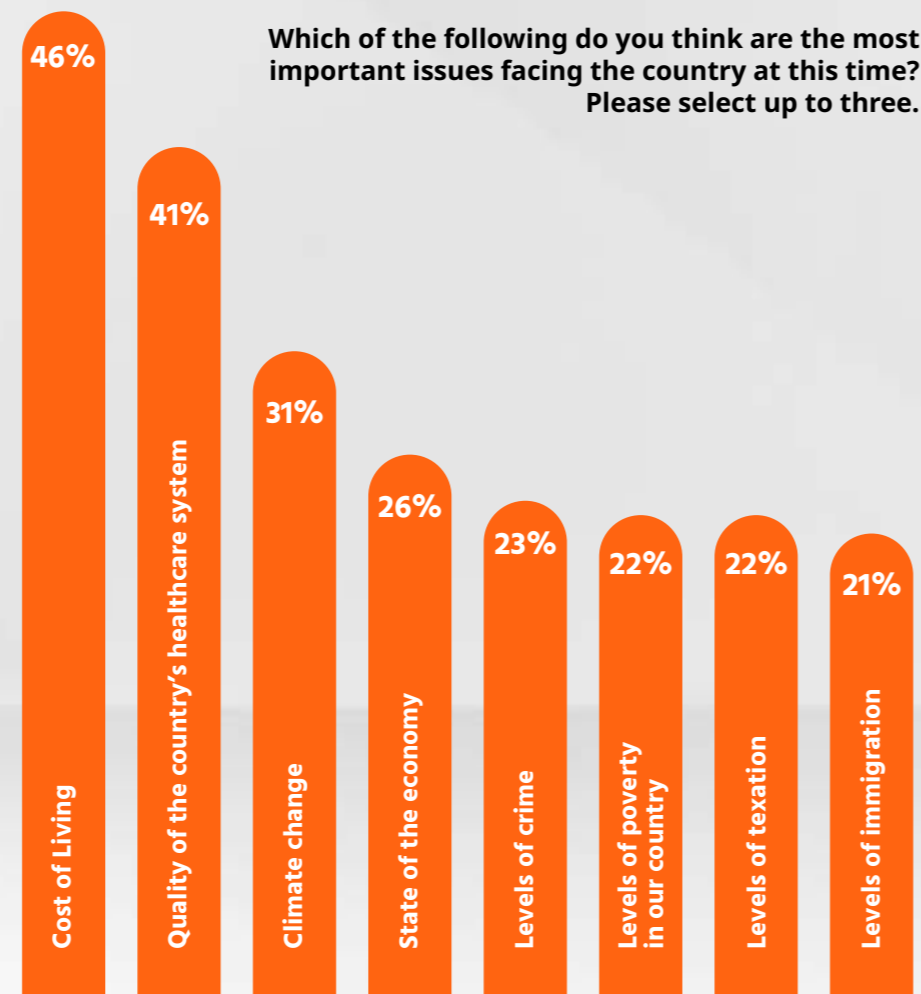


ODA - grant equivalent in 2024, USD billions

THE MAJOR FORCES DRIVING THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Concerns about cost of living, the quality of healthcare and growing inequality dominate the public discourse.

Two-thirds of Italians think that the standard of living for the average person in their country is decreasing and 75% believe the gap between the rich and the poor is growing. Only 17% of the population think that ordinary people get their fair share of the country's wealth (compared to 56% who disagree) - this is broadly true across the political spectrum but is most pronounced for Democratic Party voters (11% agree vs. 67% disagree) and people who did not vote in the last election (9% agree vs. 68% disagree).

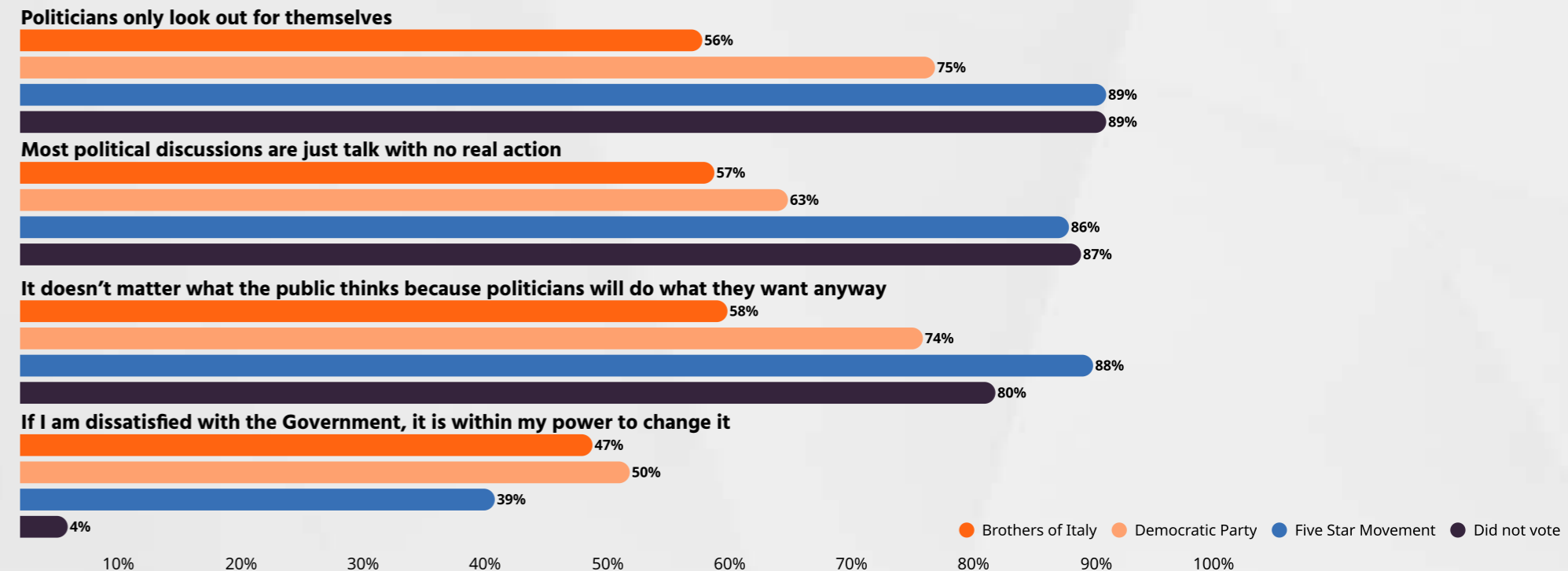


Low trust in the government and widespread feelings of political disempowerment.

Nearly half of the country (45%) does not trust the national government at all and the country is split on whether the government can be trusted to spend the national budget in a way that is 'in my best interest' (39% agree vs. 41% disagree). Trust in the national government is lowest for Five Star Movement voters - 67% of these voters do not trust the government at all compared to 62% of Democratic party voters, 58% of people who did not vote, and

just 15% of Brothers of Italy voters. Further, the public think that politicians only look out for themselves (81% agree) and that it doesn't matter what the public think because politicians will do what they want (80% agree). These sentiments are consistent across political voter groups, with the strongest sense of dissatisfaction and disempowerment held by Five star Movement voters and those who did not vote in the last election.

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



Combined, these forces are driving a breakdown in social cohesion, with 53% of Italians feeling increasingly less connected to the people around them. This is relatively consistent across age groups and political orientation. **These sentiments are also driving a breakdown in the social contract between the public and the government**, with 41% of Italians saying they do not trust

the government to spend the budget in a way that is in their best interest. For participants in the focus groups, the government's inability to transparently and effectively manage the state budget was a core reason they rejected the idea of any new taxes.

LOOKING OUTWARD: FEELINGS TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY & MULTILATERALISM

Italians across the political spectrum want their government to work on solving global issues like climate change and global poverty (86% agree), and indeed a majority of the public believe Italy has a responsibility to help people in other countries when they are in need.

84% of Italians think that poverty is one of the biggest issues in the rest of the world and 65% of the public believe it's important for their government to reduce poverty in other countries (this is highest amongst Democratic party voters, with 71% agreement but is broadly consistent across voter groups). Further, 62% believe their country has a responsibility to help other countries in need - this is consistent across voter groups, with 57% of Brothers of Italy voters agreeing, 72% of the Democratic party voters, 73% of Five Star Movement and 53% of people who did not vote in the last election.

The public care about Italy's international reputation, with 86% of the public thinking it is important that other countries have a positive view of their country. Further, the public are proud of their leadership on climate and development and believe these activities build international respect.

This is true across the Democratic Party, Five Star Movement and people who did not vote. However, Brothers of Italy voters disagree - these voters see 'standing up for our national values' and 'standing up for our economic interests more loudly' as the key ways of garnering international respect.

“IN ANY CASE, WHEN IT COMES TO HUMANITARIAN AID ITALY IS ACTUALLY VERY GOOD, ESPECIALLY IN PROVIDING LOGISTICAL SUPPORT. IT'S ONE OF OUR STRONG POINTS, AND THE GENEROSITY OF ITALIANS IN THIS AREA HAS NEVER BEEN LACKING.”

*Female,
Right-leaning Voter, 40s*

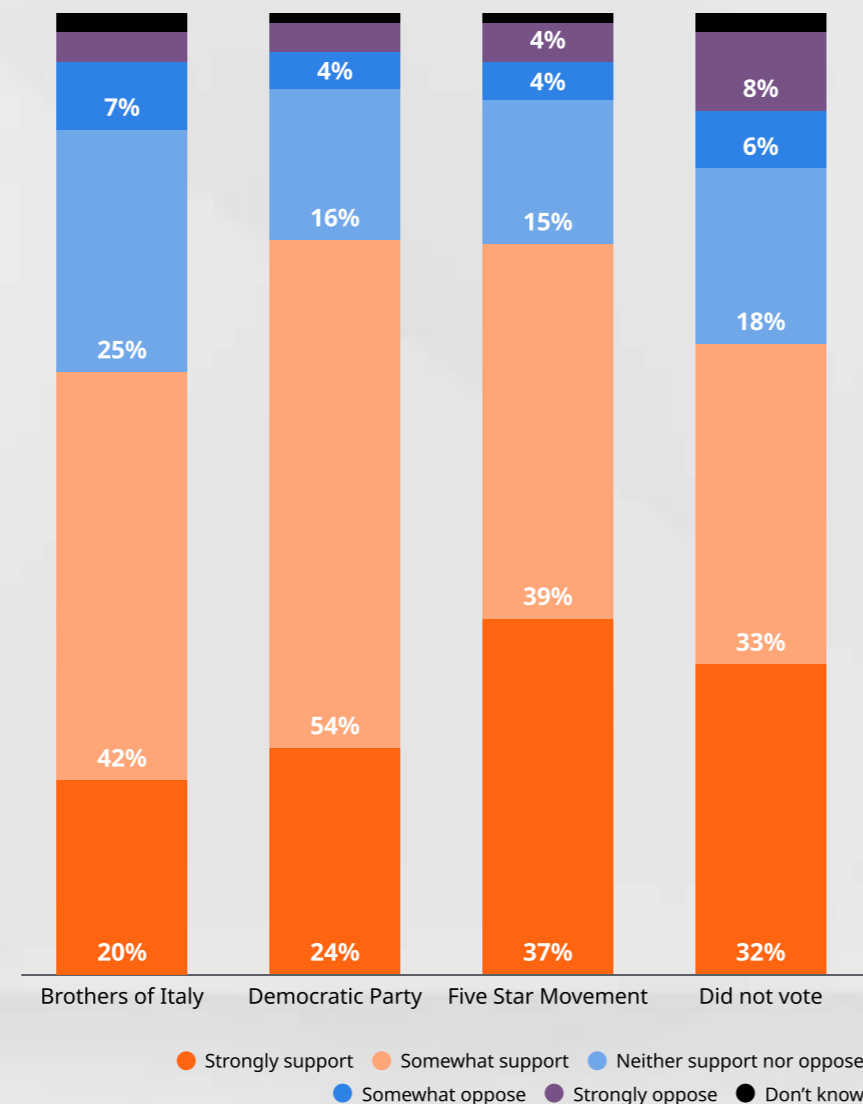


CURRENT ATTITUDES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Support for international development is high across the political spectrum in Italy.

This was found both in the poll and focus group results. 53% of Italians think the country spends the right amount or too little on international development vs. only 24% who think Italy spends too much. This was broadly consistent across voter groups - with 54% of Brothers of Italy voters thinking Italy spends the right amount or too little on international development, 58% of the Democratic Party voters, and 59% of Five Star Movement voters. The main reasons for wanting to reduce the budget were consistent across both the poll and focus groups - that people 'at home' need help first, Italy cannot afford it, and there is no transparency around how the money is spent.

To what extent do you support or oppose Italy spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries, such as by providing food assistance, or helping to construct vital infrastructure like schools or wells?



“1% IS FINE WHERE IT IS. IT’S DEFINITELY NOT 1% THAT SHIFTS THE BALANCE IN OTHER SECTORS. IT’S IMPORTANT, BECAUSE WITHOUT THAT 1%, MAYBE WE’D STILL HAVE INFECTIOUS DISEASES LIKE MEASLES AND POLIO IN THE WORLD. THESE INFECTIOUS DISEASES COULD REACH ITALY. WE’VE ALREADY SEEN HOW QUICKLY DISEASES CIRCULATE, SO OUR CHILDREN COULD BE AT RISK. FOR ME, 1% IS NOT A FIGURE THAT IMPACTS OUR NATIONAL BUDGET.”

Female, Centrist Voter, 40s



“BETTER TO SPEND MORE IN ITALY THAN ABROAD. AFTER WHAT YOU JUST TOLD ME, I DON’T DISLIKE THE AID GIVEN ABROAD, AND I REALLY LIKED IT, BUT IT’S TRUE THAT WE HAVE SO MANY INTERNAL PROBLEMS TO FIX.”

Male, Centrist Voter, 30s



“COMPARED WITH OTHER NATIONAL EXPENDITURES, IT’S ACTUALLY QUITE SMALL. SO I THINK THIS PERCENTAGE CAN DEFINITELY BE MAINTAINED. IF SUCH RESULTS ARE ACHIEVED WITH SO LITTLE, DESPITE CORRUPTION, IT ENCOURAGES KEEPING AT LEAST 1%.”

Female, Right-leaning Voter, 20s



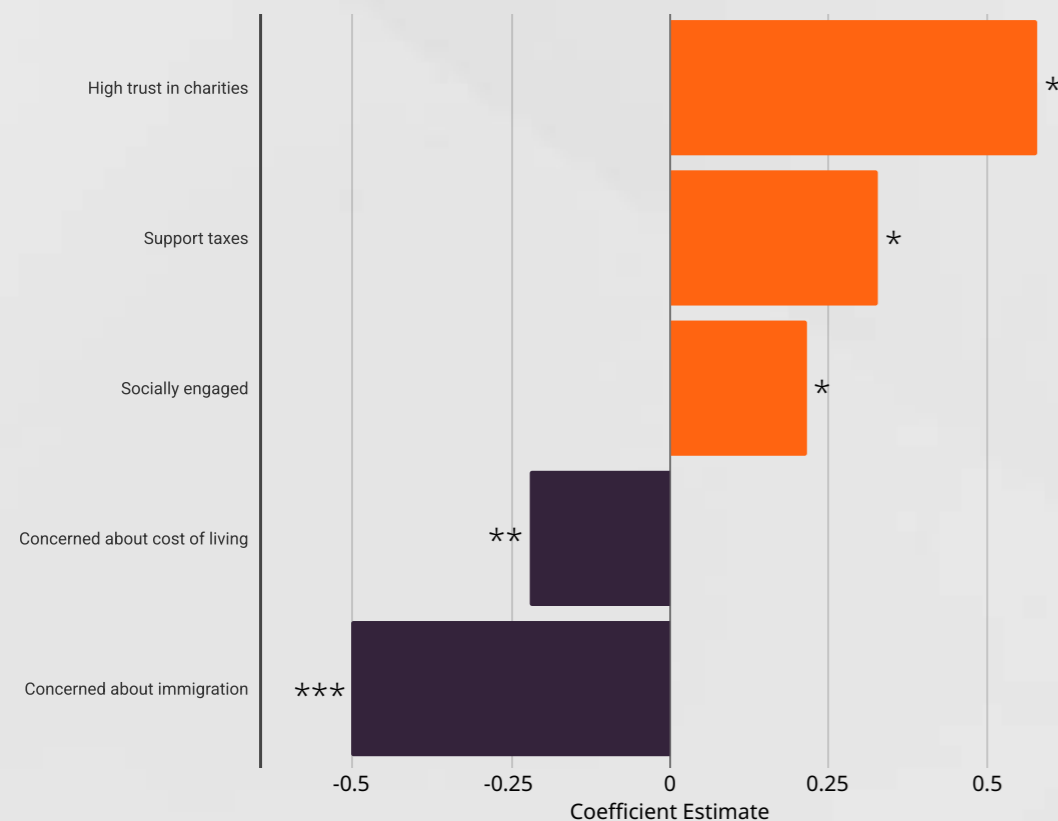
“I WOULD ALSO INCREASE DOMESTIC SPENDING, BECAUSE ITALY REALLY HAS MANY PROBLEMS. IDEALLY, PRIORITIZE OUR COUNTRY WHILE KEEPING THE CURRENT FOREIGN AID PERCENTAGE, AND THEN SEE IF THERE’S ANYTHING EXTRA TO INCREASE.”

Female, Right-leaning Voter, 30s

The main predictors of support for international development were having high trust in charities, supporting higher domestic taxes in exchange for better public services, and being socially engaged⁶. Drivers of opposition to development in Italy were being highly concerned about the cost of living or immigration.

Significant Predictors of Support for International Aid in Italy

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



⁶ 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. Supports taxes represents those who would support increasing taxes in order to improve public services. 'Concerned about Immigration: 1' represent those who selected immigration as one of the top three issues facing Italy today.

Some of the main reasons for opposition cited in the poll and focus groups included concerns around affordability, the need to help people at home first, a lack of transparency, and concerns over corruption and waste. In the right-leaning focus group, many participants believed corruption was unavoidable both in Italy and abroad, seeing it as “part of human nature” and “part of our country, of all countries in the world”, which left them sceptical that money could ever be channelled efficiently. In the centrist group, perceptions of waste, corruption, and mismanagement were common, fuelled by a lack of transparency over how funds were allocated, which projects were chosen, and what outcomes were achieved. This scepticism was compounded by wider distrust in Italian media and political leaders.

“I don't see the professional skills in Italy—neither in the current government nor in the recent ones—that would be able to effectively manage public money for humanitarian aid wisely.”

- Female, Centrist Voter, 40s

Despite relatively high levels of in-principle support for international development both in the poll and focus groups, when the public are forced to trade off between policy priorities, support falls apart - this is true for voters across the political spectrum. When asked how they would like to see the government spend a new hypothetical pot of €10 billion, international aid was the policy area with the lowest level of support. Spending on the armed forces and national defence also received low support, particularly from Democratic Party and Five Star Movement voters. This is perhaps related to the timing of the fieldwork, which took place 30th June - 6th July, only a week after the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague.

Improved funding for healthcare

Construction of new infrastructure projects (e.g. new roads, rail lines, etc.)

Increased social support for people out of work

Increased investment in renewable energy infrastructure

Investment in schools and universities

Increased spending on police and the justice system

Increased spending on the armed forces and national defence

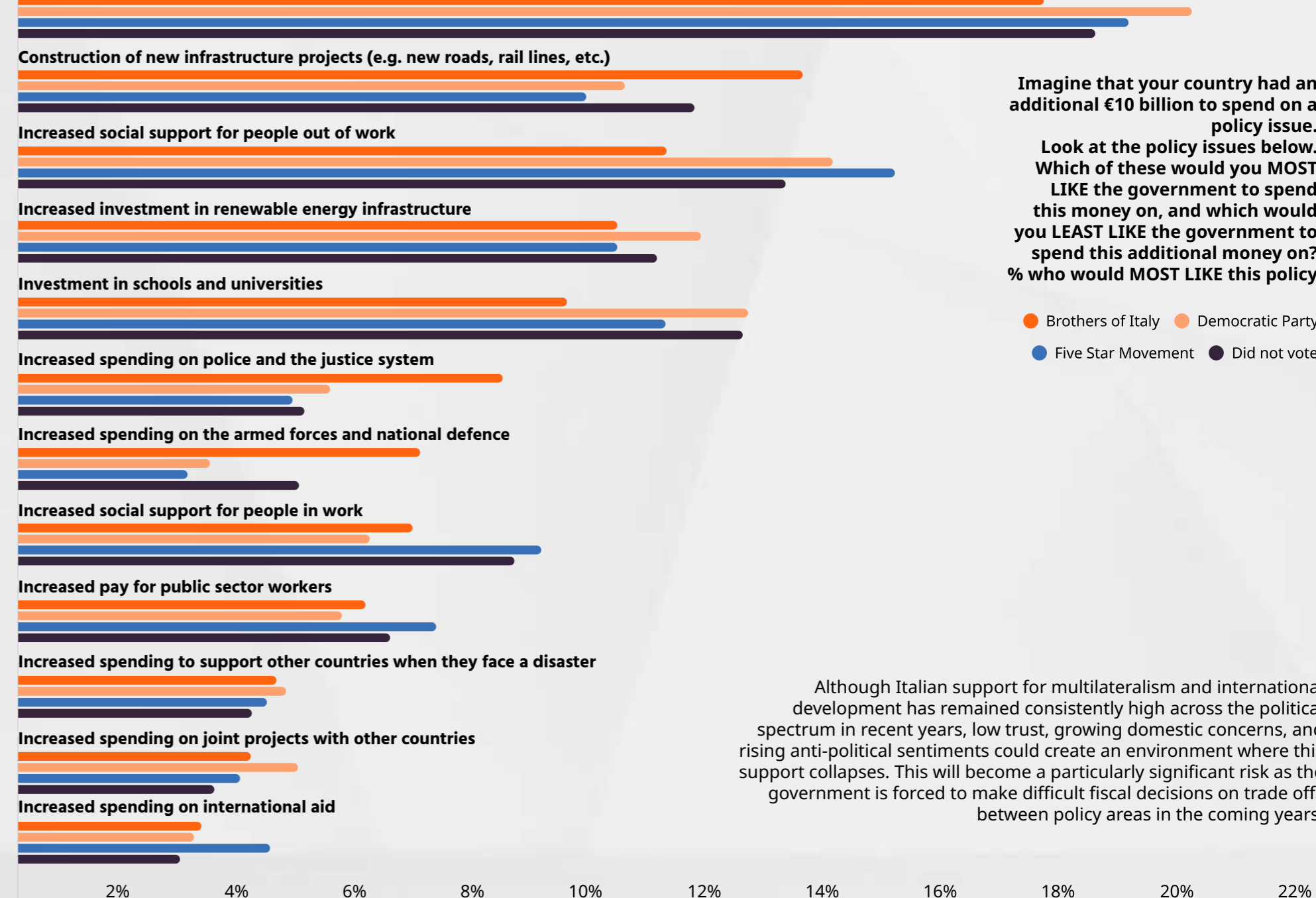
Increased social support for people in work

Increased pay for public sector workers

Increased spending to support other countries when they face a disaster

Increased spending on joint projects with other countries

Increased spending on international aid



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

Brothers of Italy (orange), Democratic Party (light orange), Five Star Movement (blue), Did not vote (dark blue)

Although Italian support for multilateralism and international development has remained consistently high across the political spectrum in recent years, low trust, growing domestic concerns, and rising anti-political sentiments could create an environment where this support collapses. This will become a particularly significant risk as the government is forced to make difficult fiscal decisions on trade offs between policy areas in the coming years.

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

We found limited routes to building support for development from these pathways - most reform options received lukewarm support and led to marginal shifts for certain groups. The mutual benefits to international development - particularly around reducing migration flows to Italy was particularly convincing for centrist and right-leaning voters. However, the lack of trust in the government is a fundamental threat to building further support for development - none of these reforms to messaging or spending priorities will matter if the public continue to think the government fundamentally cannot be trusted to properly manage the budget.

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)

There was a relatively even split in support for the more 'modern' framing of development around building sustainable economies compared to the 'traditional' framing around poverty alleviation. This was true across the political spectrum (e.g. 40% of Brother of Italy voters prefer the traditional framing vs. 46% prefer the modern framing; 42% of the Democratic party voters prefer the traditional framing vs. 45% prefer the modern framing).

Framing development as disaster relief was also more popular across the political spectrum - particularly for right-leaning Brothers of Italy voters - compared to framing as poverty reduction. For Brothers of Italy voters, net support for international development spending jumped from 61% to 69% when presented as disaster relief rather than poverty reduction.

We also tested 'mutual benefit' arguments, to understand the degree to which the Italian public believe that development spending can have positive benefits on the recipient country and the donor country (in terms of supporting the growth of new trading partners, decreasing the price of food or energy, and decreasing migration pressures). In both the poll and focus groups, we found these arguments to be well understood and convincing to the Italian public - particularly around migration. Indeed, 'reducing migration pressures to our country' was identified as a top benefit of investment in other countries, second only to 'helping reduce poverty in other countries'.

The idea that spending abroad leads to benefits at home was more obvious to older Italians - 48% of 65+'s said reducing migration pressure to our country was a main benefit of investment abroad vs. 27% of 18-24 year olds. Further, 35% of 65+'s also saw 'creating new markets for businesses from our country' as a main benefit of this spending, compared to just 22% of 18-24s.



"I THINK THERE IS AN INFLUENCE, MAYBE WE DON'T PERCEIVE IT IMMEDIATELY, BUT OVER THE YEARS, YES, I THINK THERE IS—ON MIGRATION FLOWS, THE ECONOMY, HEALTHCARE."

Female, Centrist Voter, 40s



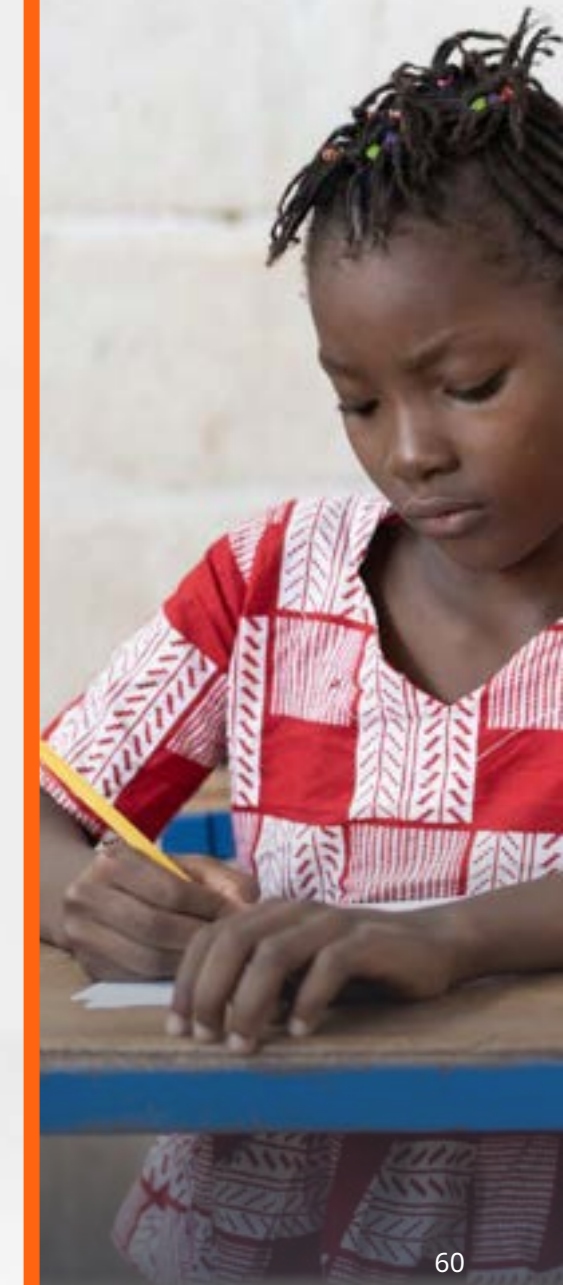
"INVESTING WITH LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS—LIKE LONG-TERM HEALTH PROJECTS—MAKES SENSE IN MY OPINION. WE GET SOMETHING IN RETURN, LIKE MORE SECURE BORDERS, BETTER CONTROL OF MIGRATION, BETTER ENERGY AGREEMENTS."

Female, Centrist Voter, 40s



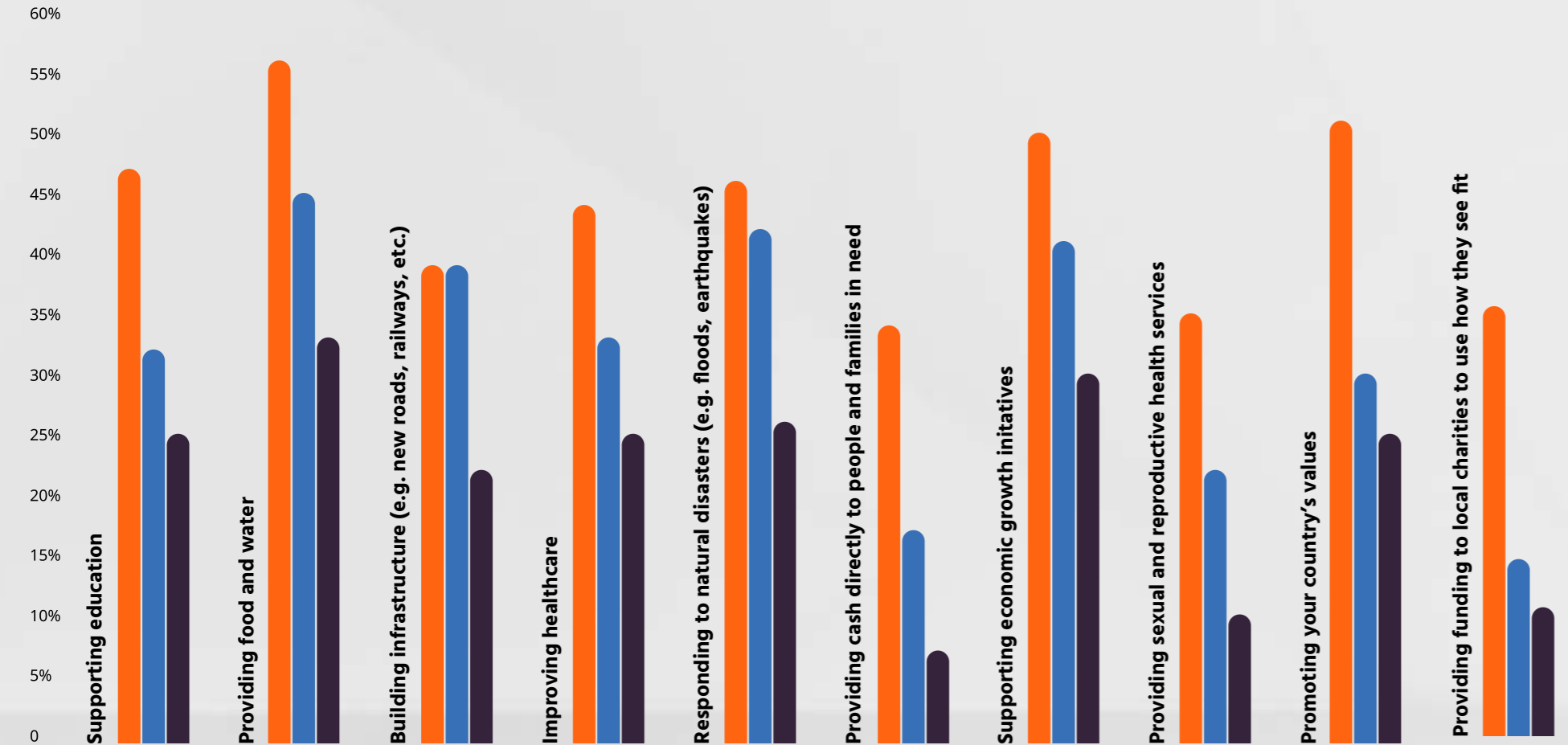
"I THINK ITALY IS STILL ONE OF THE G7/G8 COUNTRIES, SO WE HAVE A LOT AND EAT EVERY DAY. INVESTING IN HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS, IN MY VIEW, THE RETURN SHOULD BE THAT OTHERS LIVE DECENTLY. THAT'S THE ONLY RETURN, AND MAYBE IT PREVENTS DESPERATE PEOPLE FROM RISKING THEIR LIVES CROSSING TO ITALY BY BOAT."

Male, Right-leaning Voter, 50s



Changing how it's spent.

In Italy, all spending options were met with net support across the political spectrum - with left-leaning voters reporting the highest levels of support across the board, followed by lukewarm support from centrist voters and the lowest levels of support for right-leaning voters. The highest levels of support across voter groups was related to providing basic humanitarian relief (food and water, and responding to natural disasters) and support for economic growth initiatives. By contrast, the lowest levels of support was for providing cash directly for families or local charities as well as sexual and reproductive health services.



Raising new tax resources to fund it.

New taxes received limited support in Italy, whether they were framed as raising funds for international development or for domestic purposes. The only option that did receive significant support was an increase in income tax for the country's highest earners. This reflects the growing concerns about inequality throughout Italy and that ordinary people are not getting their share of the nation's wealth.



When we explored this in the focus groups, most participants in both the centrist and right-leaning groups rejected the idea outright, citing Italy's already high tax burden and the risk of misuse. A tax targeted only at the wealthiest individuals or highly polluting industries generated little enthusiasm and was often met with sarcasm. Opposition to new taxes often boiled down to scepticism that these taxes could lead to any meaningful outcomes and addressing tax evasion was seen as a more urgent priority than creating new levies.

[REFERRING TO THE TAX] "I THINK THIS IS A PROVOCATIVE QUESTION, ONE THAT ALREADY HAS A "PRE-WRITTEN" ANSWER. NO ONE WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER IT, AND NO PARTY OR MOVEMENT WOULD RISK PROPOSING IT, SO NO. I'M AGAINST IT."

Male, Centrist Voter, 50s

"BEFORE ADDING TAXES, THERE'S A LOT TO BE DONE IN FIGHTING TAX EVASION. WE COULD COLLECT A LOT MORE AND IT WOULD BE VERY EFFECTIVE FOR INTERNATIONAL AID TO TRACK DOWN THE 100 MILLION TAX EVADERS IN ITALY RIGHT BESIDE US."

Female, Centrist Voter, 40s

"YOU'RE ADDING YET ANOTHER TAX! AS I SAID BEFORE, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT AVERAGE ITALIANS WOULDN'T AGREE."

Male, Centrist Voter, 30s

"IF WE WERE CERTAIN OF THE RESULTS, WE'D PAY THE TAX. THE PROBLEM IS, NO ONE CAN GUARANTEE OUTCOMES, AND WE KNOW HOW MUCH PROMISES ARE WORTH IN ITALY."

Female, Right-leaning Voter, 30s

"IF THERE ARE CONCRETE RESULTS, I'LL PAY THIS TAX—AND EVEN TWICE. IF IT CUTS THE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS COMING TO ITALY, I'LL PAY TWICE."

Male, Right-leaning Voter, 50s





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.

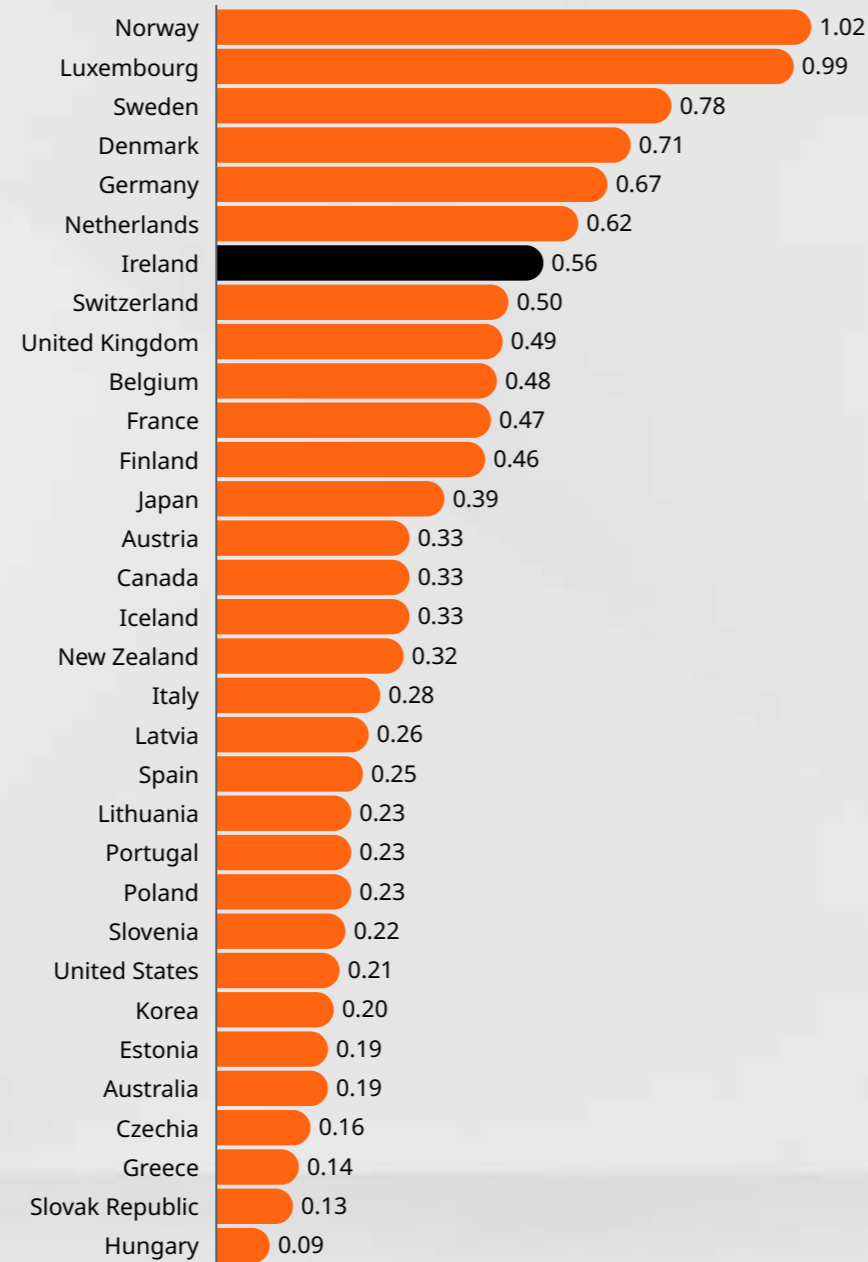
This chapter is based on polling only

SUMMARY

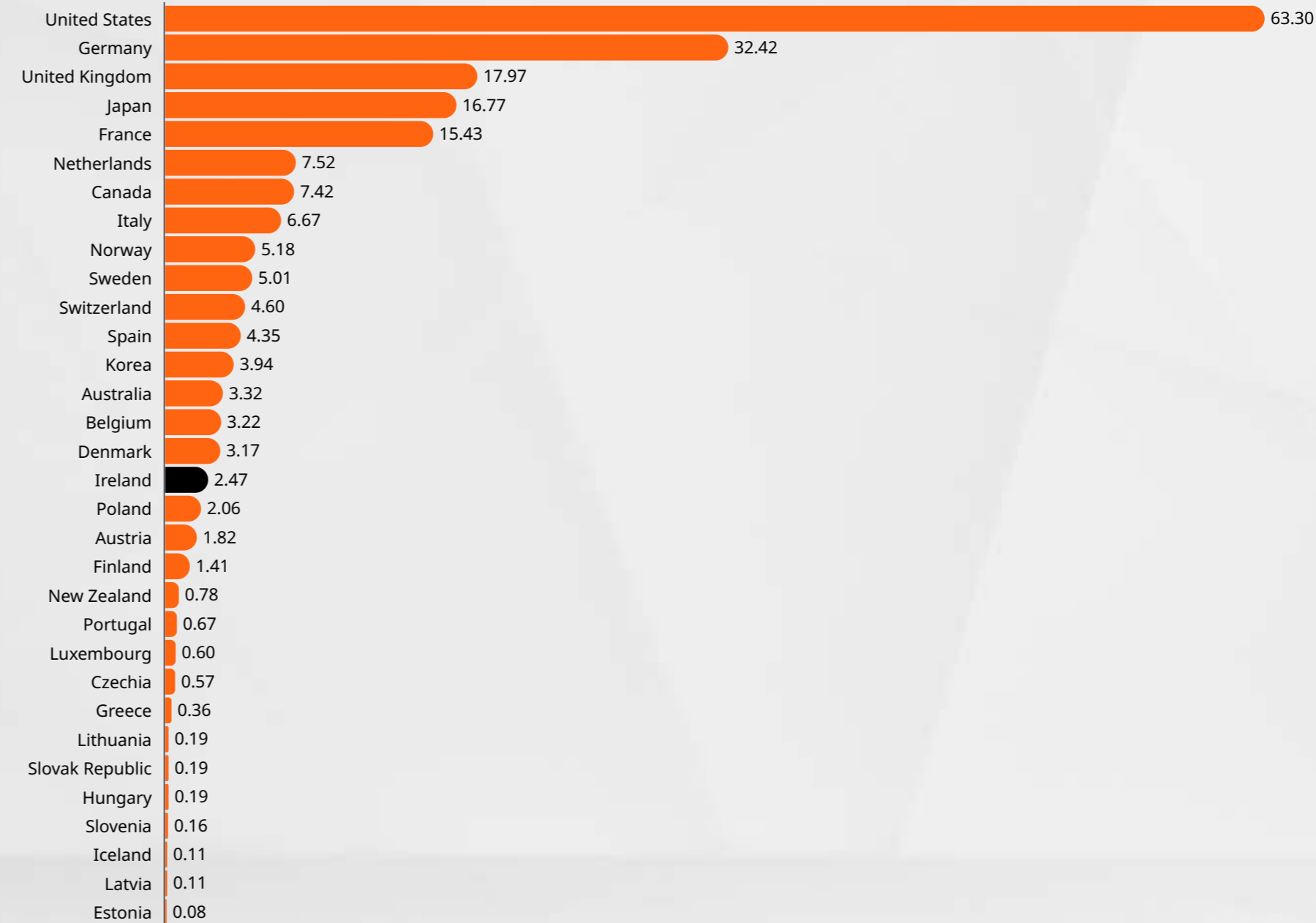
The public's top concerns in Ireland are the cost of living, housing, and healthcare. These domestic concerns, coupled with rising worries about the threat of international conflict, are beginning to lead the Irish down a path towards diverting international development spending to other issues. There 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

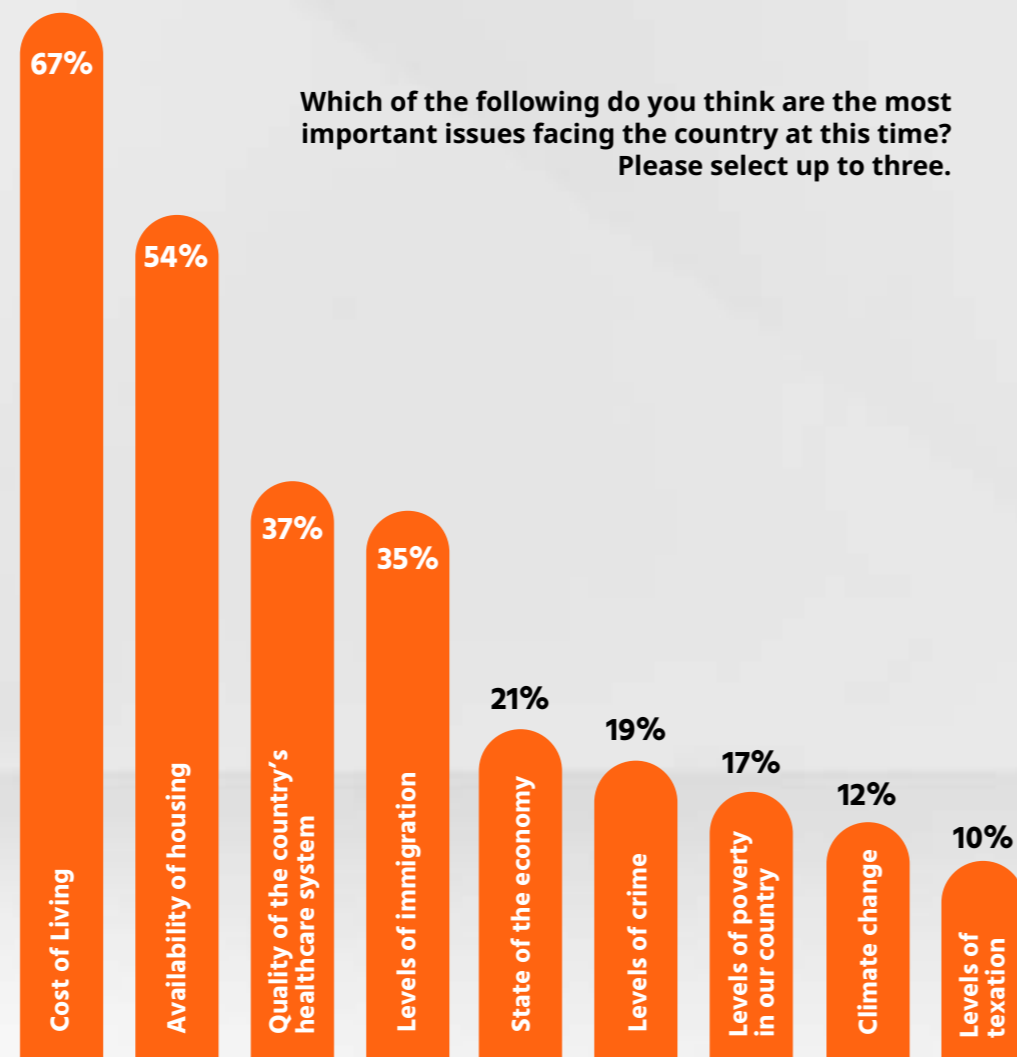


ODA - grant equivalent in 2024, USD billions

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.

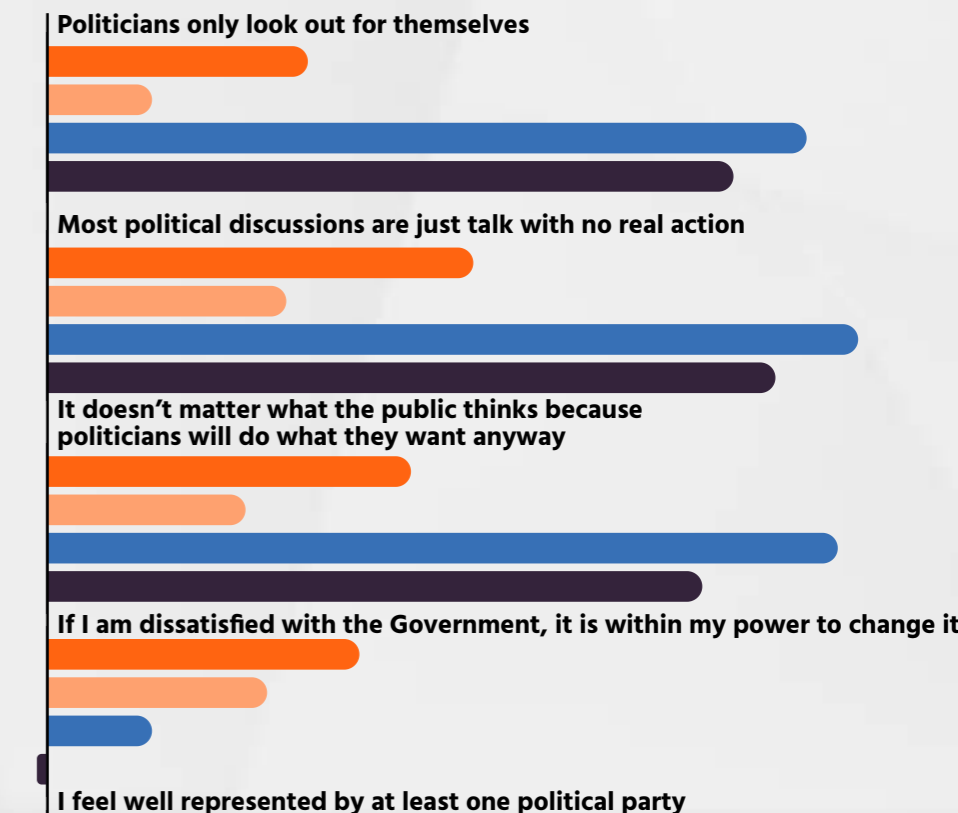
Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements. Net support

● 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.



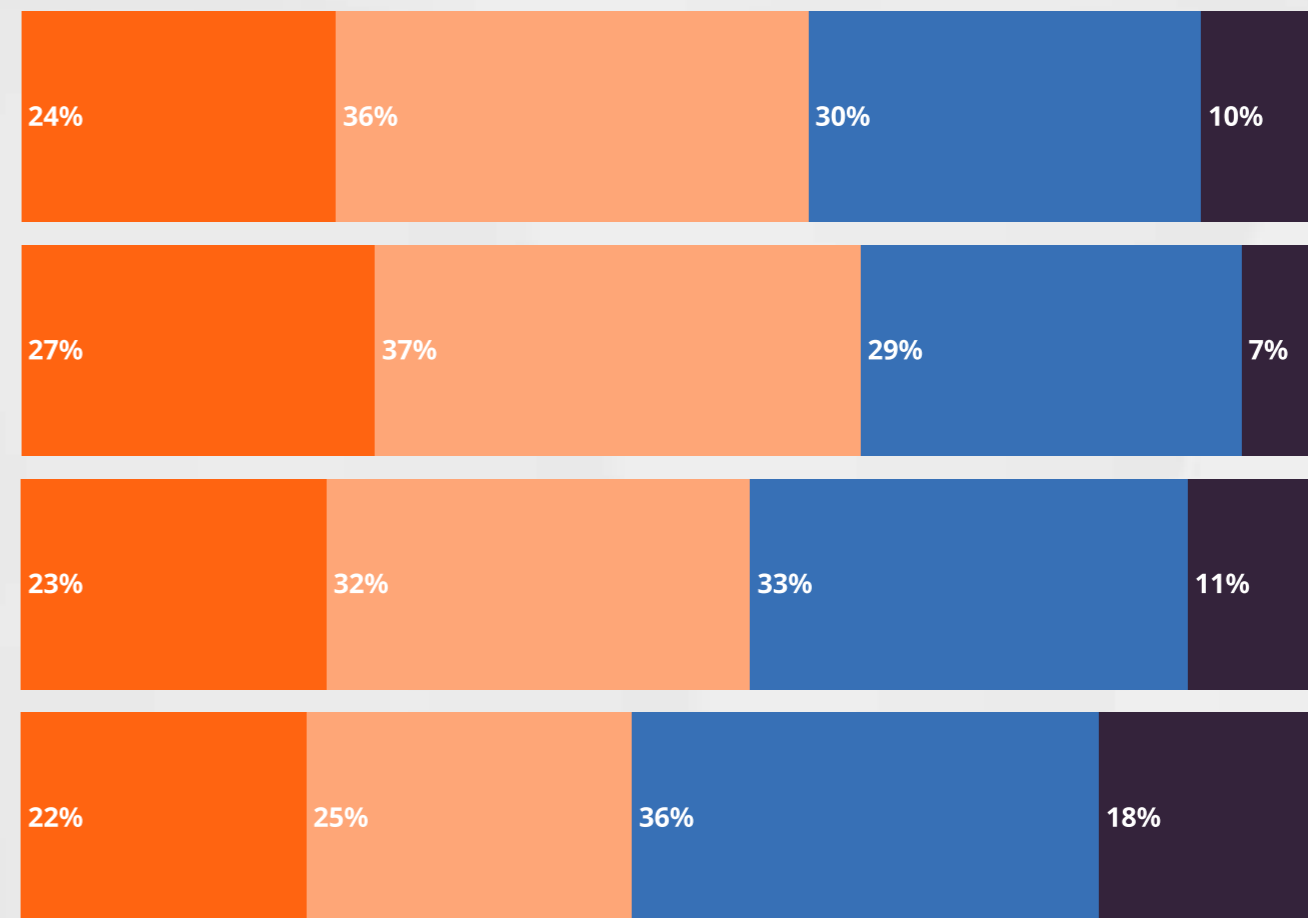
LOOKING OUTWARD: FEELINGS TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY & MULTILATERALISM

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.

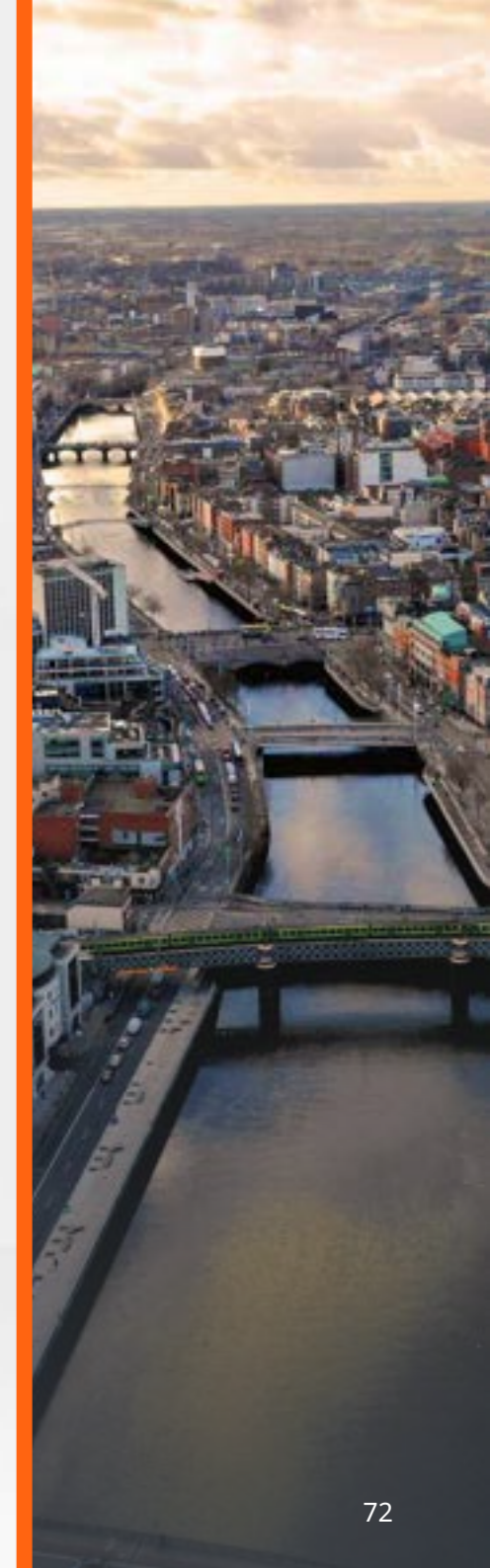
57% of the public think Ireland should cooperate with other countries to solve global issues, even if it means acting against national interests. Voters across the political spectrum agreed with this, though support notably dropped off amongst non-voters. Further, two-thirds of the public agree that 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

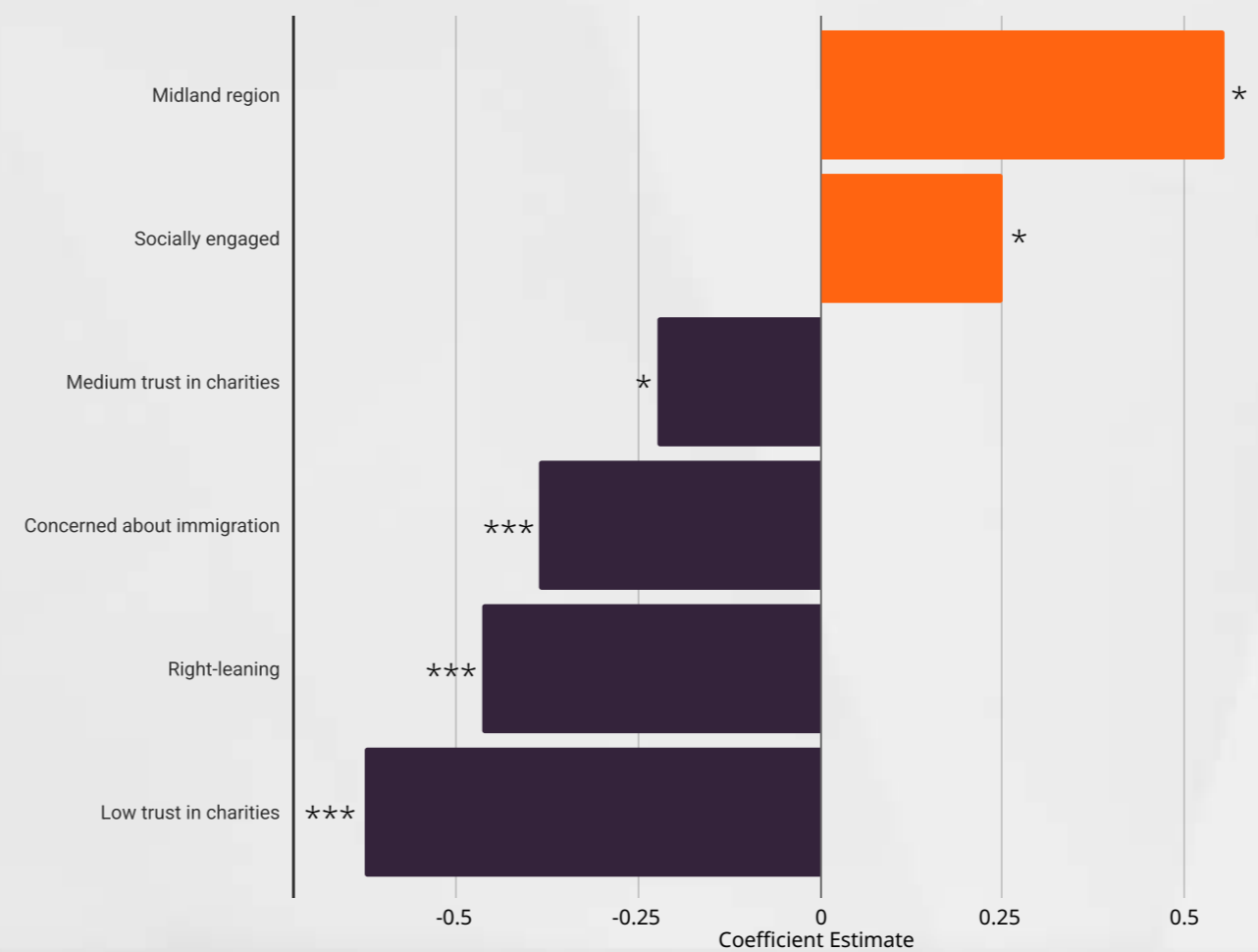
Support for international development in Ireland is high.

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%.

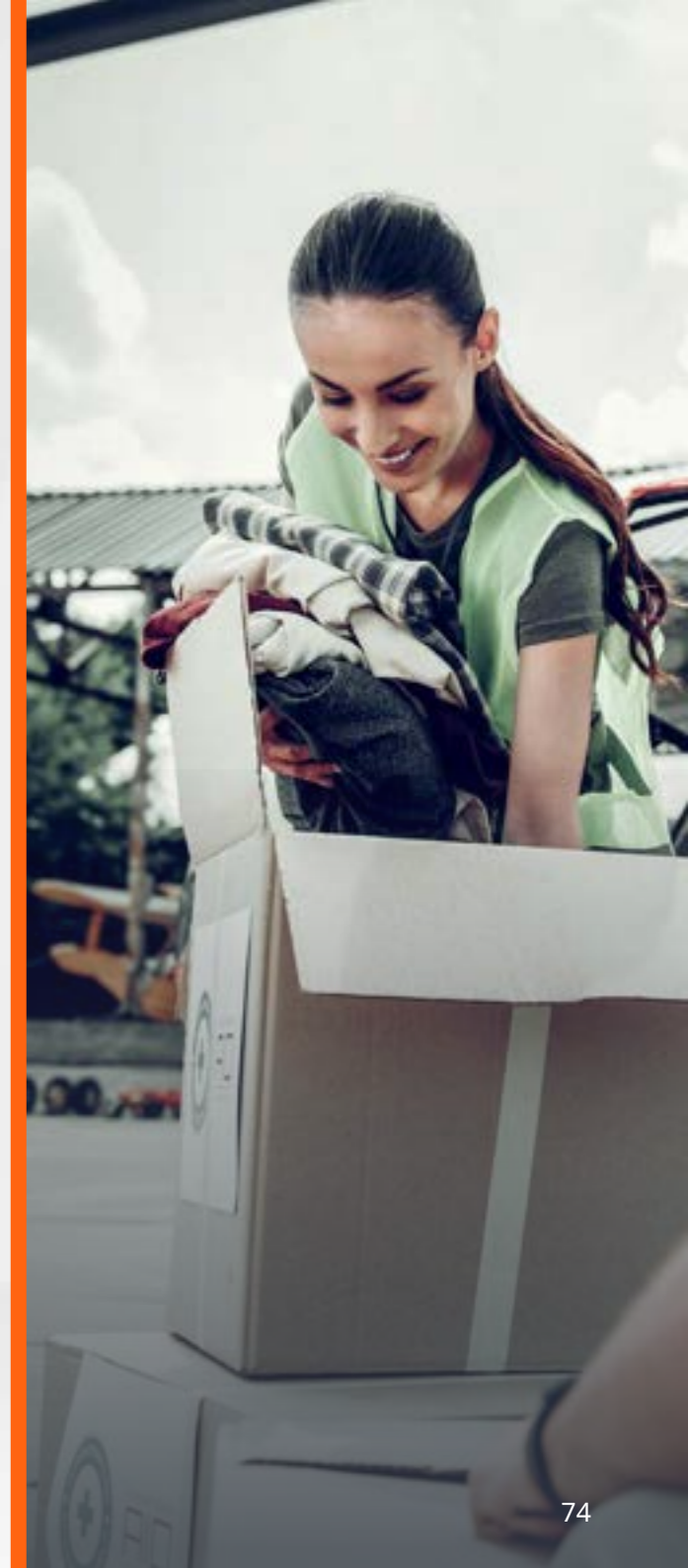
The main predictors of support for international development were living in the midland region and being more socially engaged, while opposition was largely driven by low trust in charities, right-leaning voters, and those who said that immigration was one of the top three issues facing Ireland at this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



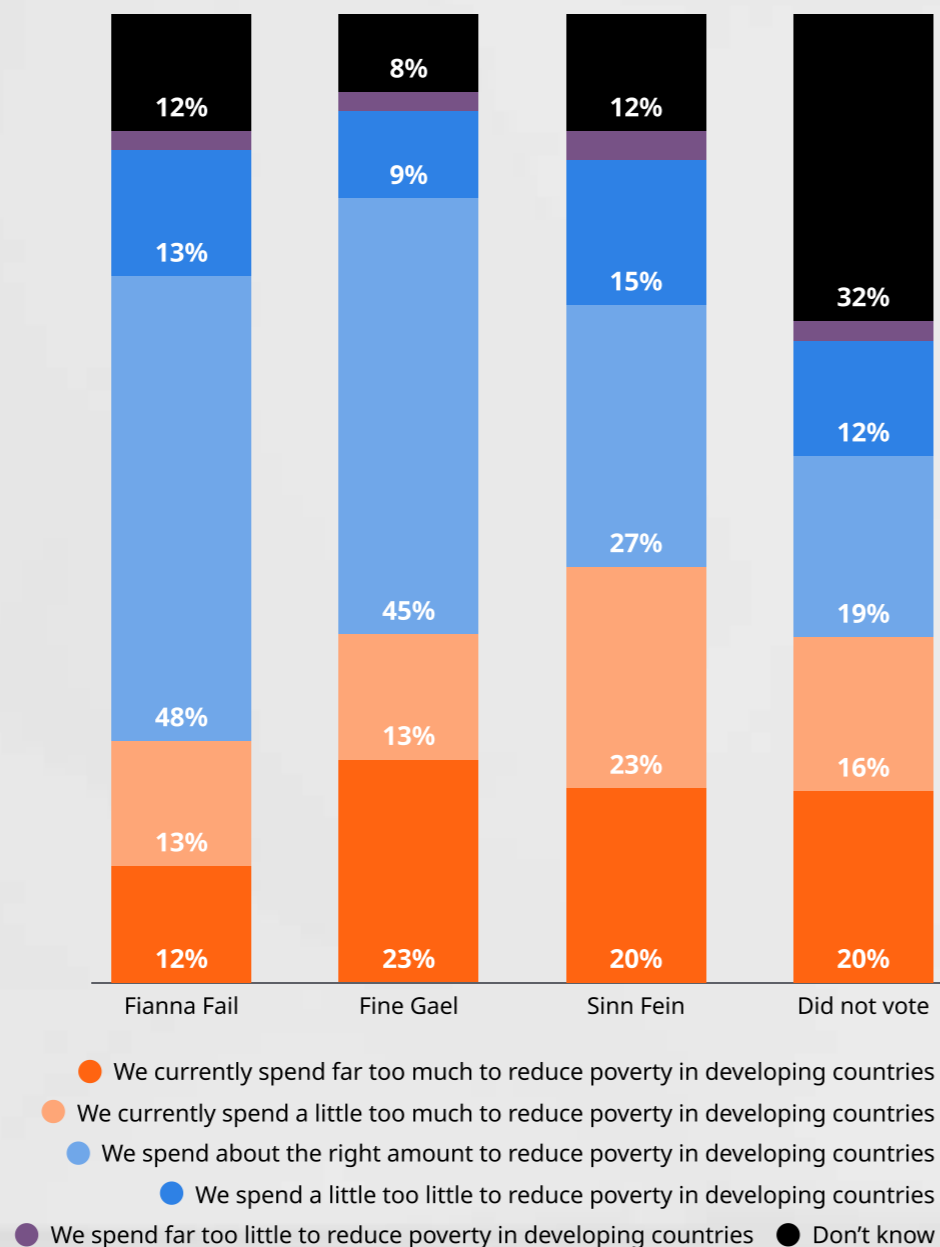
Opposition was largely driven by domestic concerns, while support was driven by moral responsibility.

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?



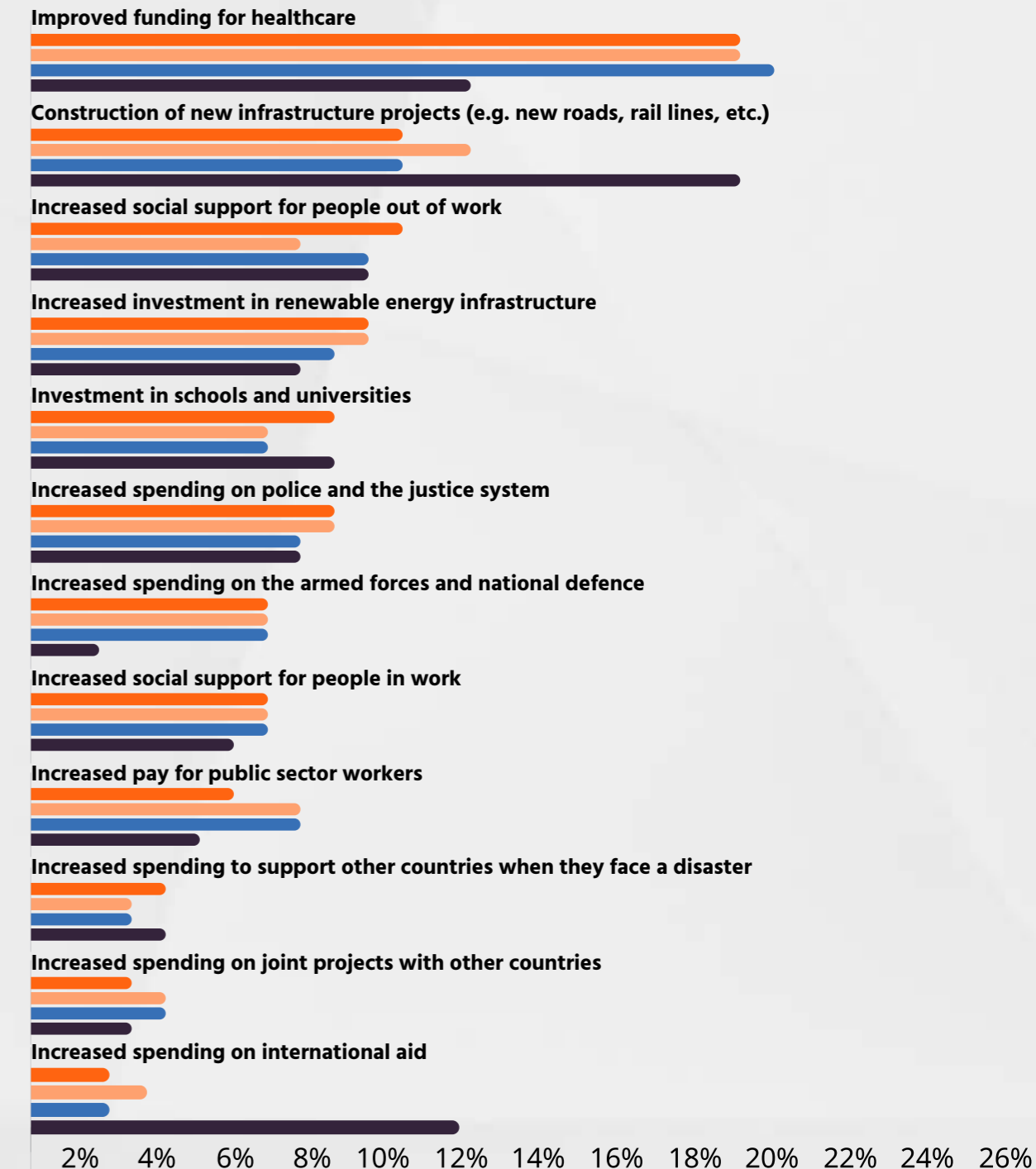
Despite high levels of stated support for international development, this support dropped significantly when framed as trade-offs with domestic policies.

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.

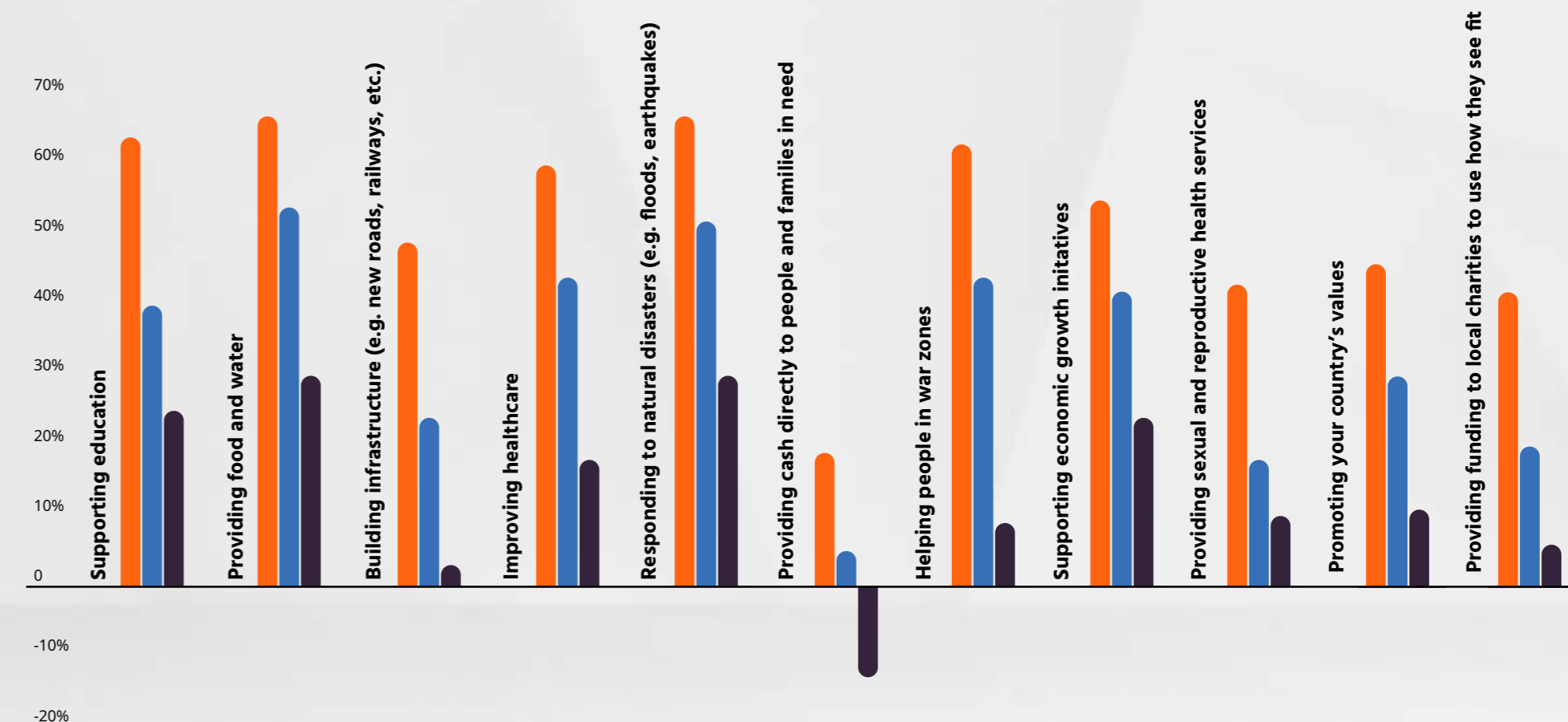
Indeed, when framed as a trade-off, people across the political spectrum felt that Ireland's approach to international development should focus on giving help to people in humanitarian crises and extreme poverty instead of creating sustainable economies that wouldn't need aid in the long-term, though 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

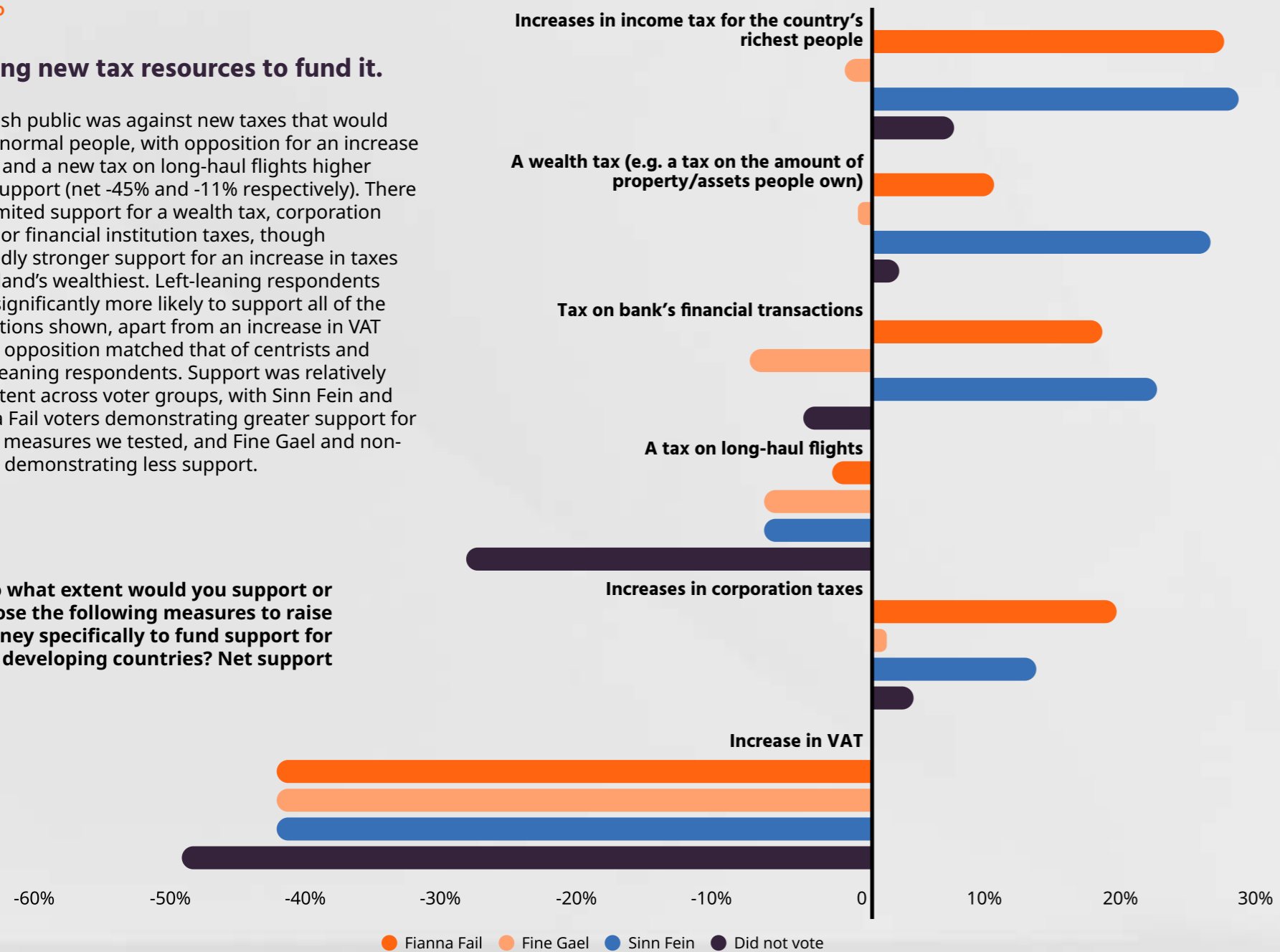
● Left ● Center ● Right



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





JAPAN

MAJOR FORCES



CONCERNS ABOUT THE ECONOMY, COST OF LIVING AND LEVELS OF TAXATION



DISILLUSIONMENT AND LOW TRUST IN GOVERNMENT



GROWING CONCERNS AROUND INEQUALITY

WHICH ARE CONTRIBUTING TO:



A BREAKDOWN IN SOCIAL COHESION



A TENDENCY TO PRIORITISE DOMESTIC ISSUES OVER INTERNATIONAL ONES



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Despite high levels of support for development and widespread recognition of the domestic benefits to this spending, support falls apart once presented as a trade off with domestic priorities. This is true even for more sympathetic groups.



PATHWAYS TO BUILDING SUPPORT:

Framing international development as a tool for poverty reduction or disaster relief were more effective than framing as building sustainable economic growth. Emphasising the role of multilateralism and working together with other countries was also effective.

This chapter is based on polling only

SUMMARY

Worries about the state of the economy dominate public concerns in Japan, with cost of living and levels of taxation following. A majority of people across the political spectrum feel disillusioned by the government, though there is some optimism about the role that individuals can play in enacting change in government. Even so, concerns about the economy and low trust in government, coupled with a rising sense of inequality, are contributing to a breakdown in social cohesion.

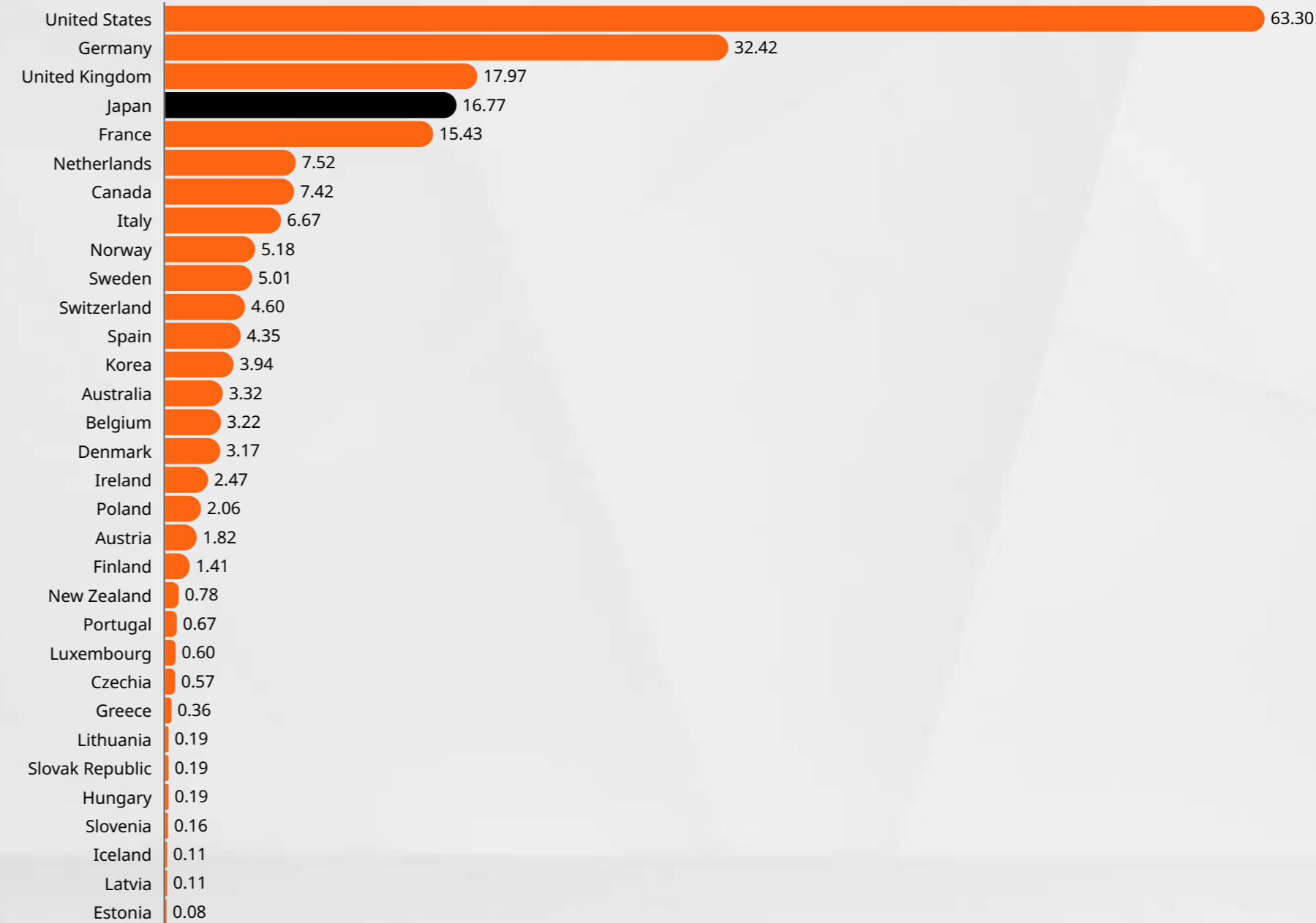
Across all age groups, the Japanese public feel strongly about their international reputation and support multilateralism on the whole. CDP voters in particular placed investment into global cooperation above other domestic priorities, suggesting there is still widespread support for international development amongst this voter group, even when traded-off against competing national issues. This is driven in part by the perception that international development could result in a stronger global economy and could create new markets for Japanese goods.

Despite blanket support for international development across voter groups, there was little support for hypothetical funding models, with the public highly sceptical about increased taxes unless they're targeting Japan's wealthiest. The most resistant to development spending in all of the framings tested were non-voters, a group that also felt disempowered from politics and isolated from society.

International development framing around the disaster relief/humanitarian approach resonated best with the Japanese public. However, messaging related to global cooperation was more successful than disaster relief and international aid when traded against domestic policies, suggesting a combination of disaster relief whilst emphasising a multilateral approach to international development delivery may resonate in Japan.



ODA as percent of GNI (grant equivalent) in 2024

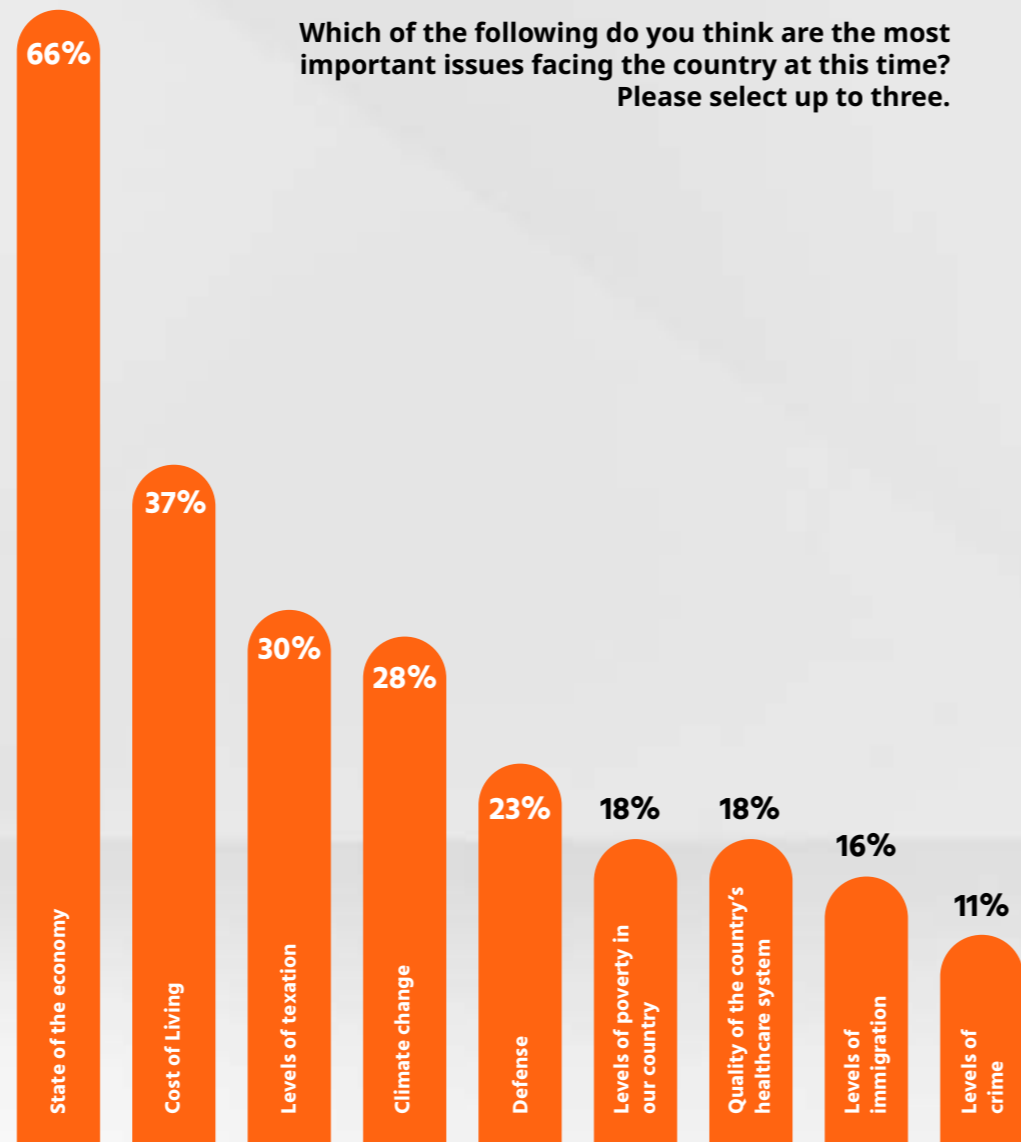


ODA - grant equivalent in 2024, USD billions

THE MAJOR FORCES DRIVING THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Japan's economy is dominating public concern.

The state of the economy is by far the biggest issue for Japanese voters, followed by cost of living and levels of taxation.



Relatedly, the Japanese public is concerned about rising levels of inequality in the country.

Most people (59%) disagree that ordinary people get their fair share of the country's wealth, compared with just 10% who agree. A majority of Japanese people also think that the gap between the rich and the poor in their country is growing (75% agree vs. just 8% who think the gap is shrinking). Further, a majority agree that the standard of living of the average person in Japan is decreasing (69% vs. 10% who think it is increasing). These concerns are shared widely across age groups and across the political spectrum.

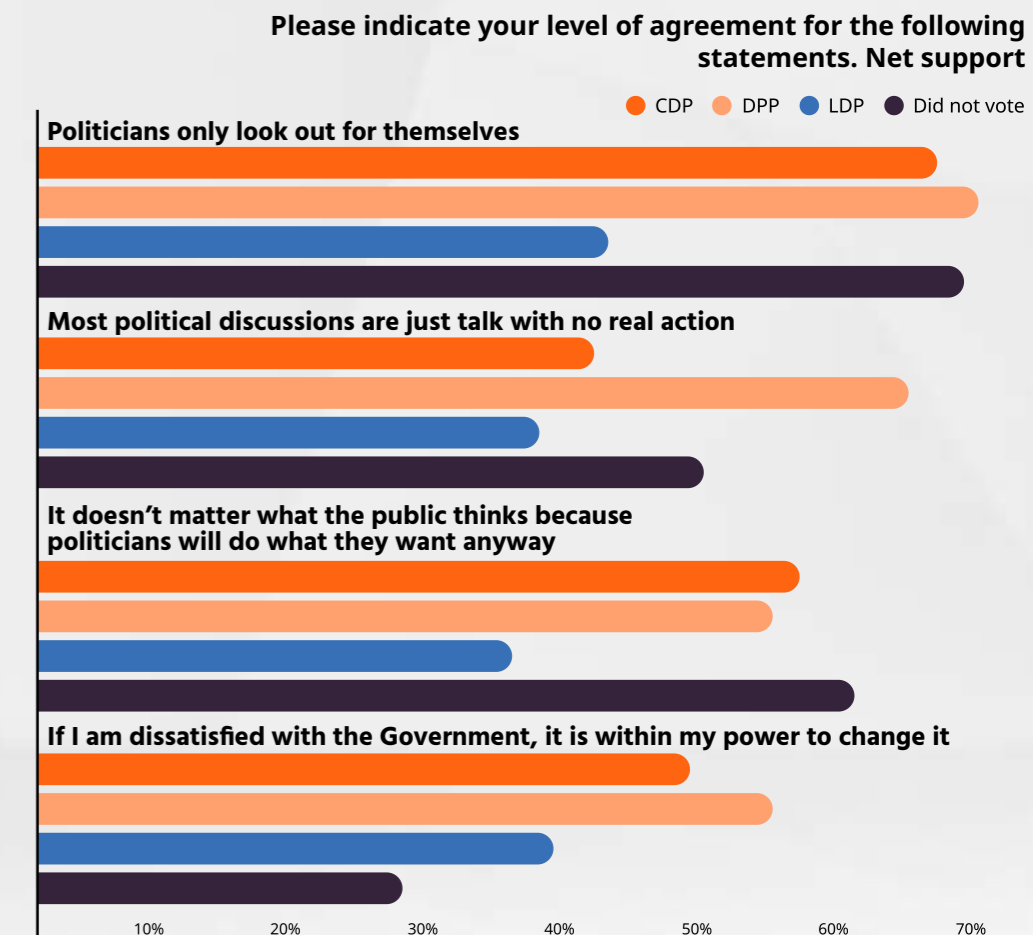
Less than half (46%) of the public in Japan say they trust the national government with significant splits across party lines.

Trust is highest amongst LDP voters (69%), followed by CDP (53%), DPP (42%), then those who did not vote in the most recent election (26%). The public also tend to not trust that the government will spend the national budget in a way that is in their best interest (16% agree vs. 55% disagree) or the best interest of the country (17% agree vs. 53% disagree).

Combined, these forces are contributing to a breakdown in social cohesion - with 70% of Japanese people saying they are feeling increasingly less connected to the people around them compared to just 9% who say they are feeling increasingly more connected.

Though there are high levels of disillusionment in politics in Japan, most voters still feel empowered to make change.

This is particularly true for DPP voters - this group are the most likely to think that most political discussions are just talk with no action and that politicians only look out for themselves. However, they are also the most likely to think that it is within their power to change a government they are dissatisfied with. This suggests that this disillusionment with politics and politicians has not yet translated into political apathy.



LOOKING OUTWARD: FEELINGS TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY & MULTILATERALISM

The Japanese public care about their international reputation.

80% of the public think it is important that other countries have a positive view of Japan. This is highest amongst older populations:

88%

of over 65s agreeing it is important vs. just 8% who think it is not important. They see humanitarian aid, development programmes and climate action as the main ways to build respect from other countries.

Helping other countries when they suffer from a disaster was by far the most popular choice for ways to drive international respect for Japan.

LDP voters were notably more likely to think that respect was driven by a strong military approach - including supporting Japan's allies and helping to defend other countries from invasion.

The Japanese public also think it is important for countries to work together to solve global problems, but these cannot get in the way of fixing problems at home.

Indeed, a plurality of Japanese agree "we should take care of our own people before we take care of people from other countries" (46% agree), rather than "at the same time" (31% agree). There is an age divide - with over 65s much more likely to think Japan can help its own people and fix its own issues at the same time as helping people from other countries and fixing global issues compared to 25-34-year-olds. However, this doesn't mean the Japanese are apathetic to providing help to others internationally:

49%

of the public think their country has a responsibility to help people in other countries when they are in need, compared to just 20% who disagree.



CURRENT ATTITUDES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

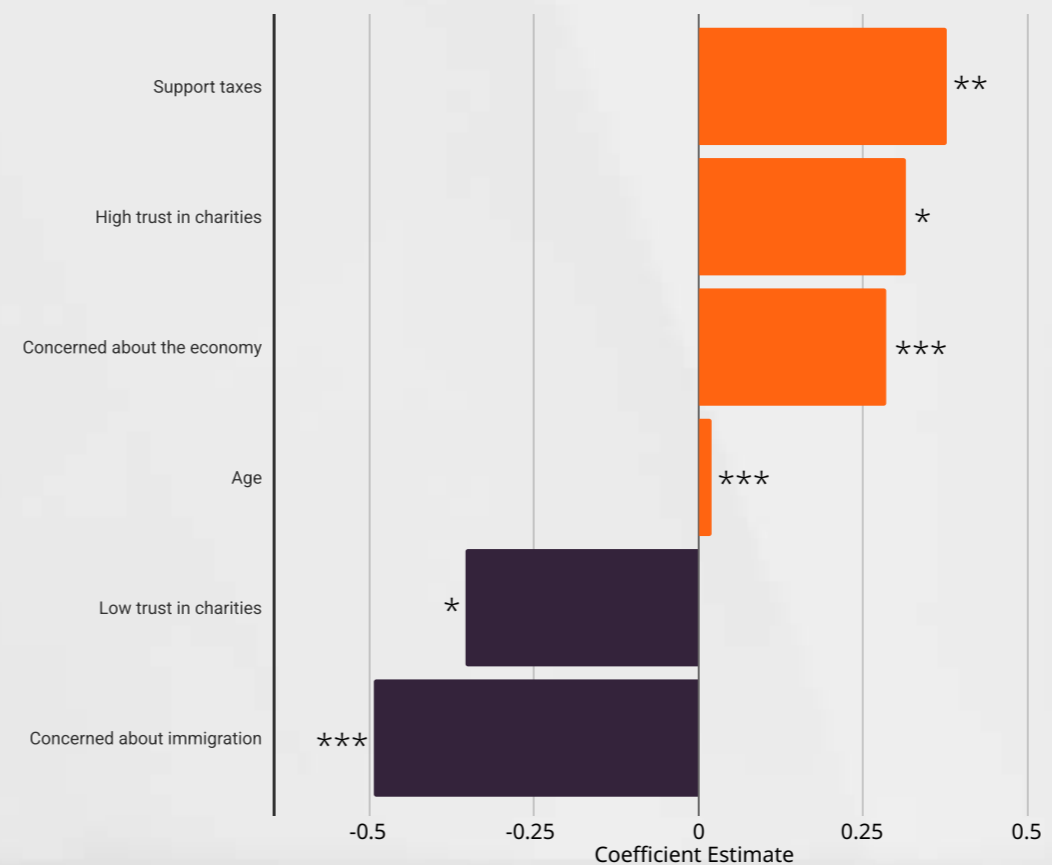
A majority of the public support international development spending.

With 59% saying they supported Japan spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries compared to just 13% who said they opposed it. Support varied across political parties, with CDP and LDP voters demonstrating higher levels of support, and DPP voters showing much lower levels of support. Non-voters were the most critical of development spending overall, with just 38% saying they supported the government spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries.

Support for international development was largely driven by those who were willing to pay higher taxes to address domestic issues, those with higher trust in international charities, and those who were concerned about the state of the Japanese economy.

Significant Predictors of Support for International Aid in Japan⁸

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



⁸ 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 the top three issues facing Japan today.

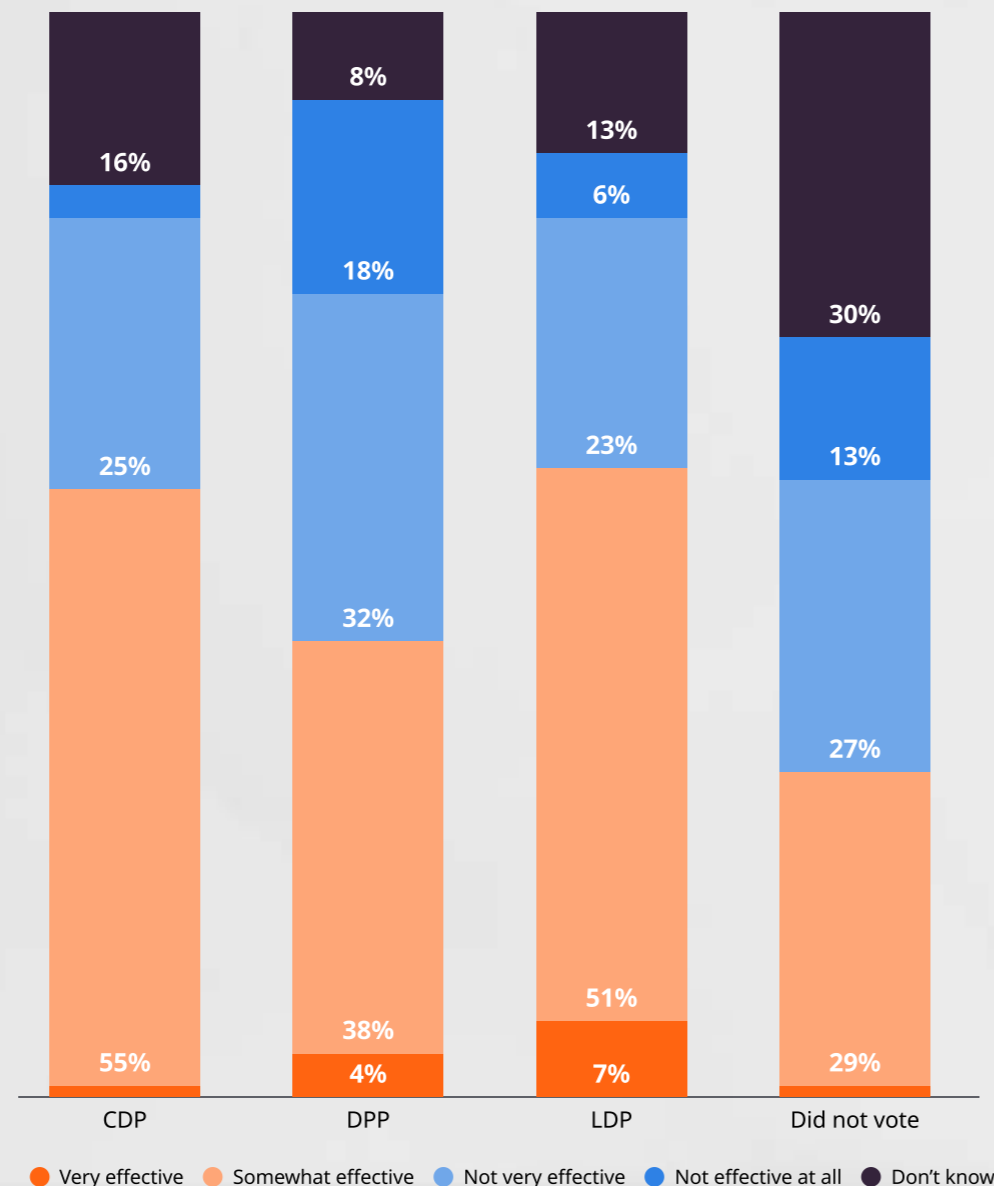
Part of this support can be explained by the sense that development reduces global poverty.

Which was viewed as a big problem in other countries (61%) and an important issue for the Japanese government to try to reduce globally (54%). The public sees the mutual benefits of development in creating new markets and supporting Japan's economic growth.

Despite support for international development spending, a large portion of the public think Japan is currently spending too much to reduce poverty in other countries.

38% hold this view, and the sentiment was higher among the right (54%). Public perception is that Japan spends more on international development than similar wealthy countries, but again this was driven by those on the right (37% compared to 57%). The public is relatively mixed on whether this spending is effective or not, with views splitting down party lines: CDP and LDP voters are more likely to think it's effective while DPP and non-voters are more likely to think it's ineffective.

Do you think the money your country sends to developing countries is effective or ineffective in its goals of reducing poverty around the world?



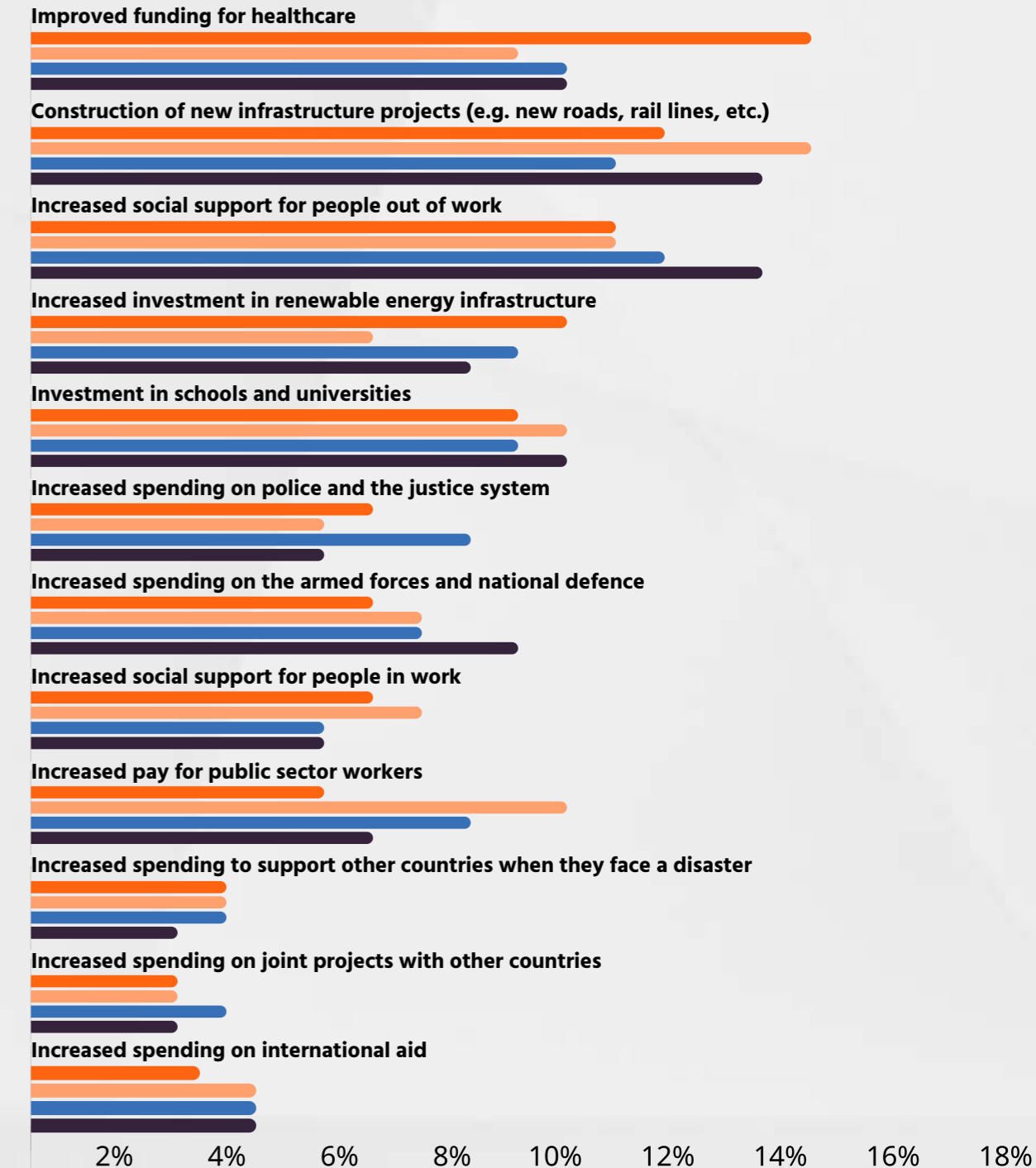
In addition to concerns about how effective international development is among parties on the right, support falls apart when traded off against domestic priorities.

Across all parties, voters were least likely to prioritise greater spending on police and international aid, though changes to how international development is framed dramatically shifted responses. When framed through the lens of multilateralism - i.e. 'joint projects with other countries to tackle global challenges' - this policy was the most supported option amongst CDP voters - above all of the domestic policies that were tested. The framing of 'disaster relief' was more effective than 'international aid' but less effective than the multilateral framing.

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

● CDP ● DPP
● LDP ● Did not vote



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.

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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)

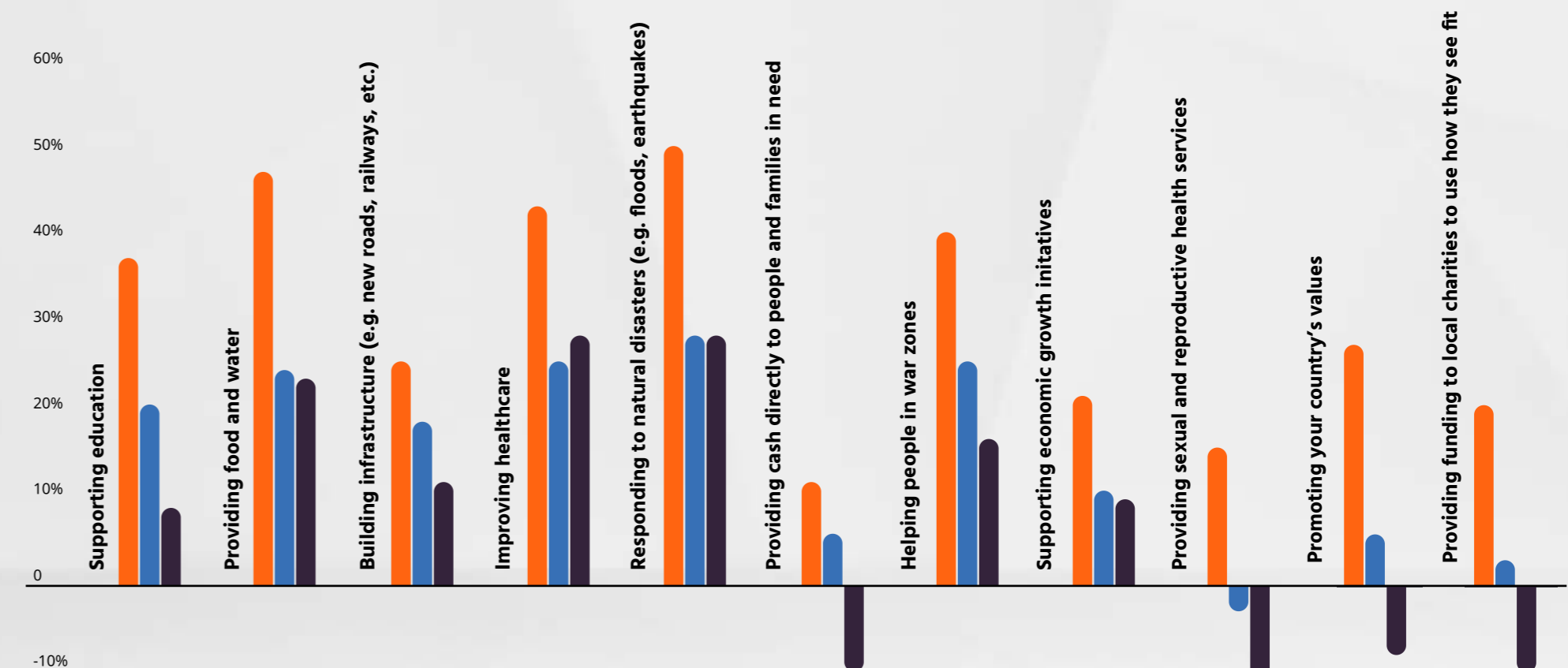
Support for the 'traditional' model of international development as a tool for poverty reduction was highest among the left and CDP and LDP voters, but received the lowest levels of support from the right. Support was consistently high across all parties for development when framed as a tool for disaster relief, earning much higher support from the right but still demonstrating lower support amongst non-voters. The 'modern' model of international development as a tool for sustainable economic growth resonated the least with the Japanese public, though notably, left-leaning members of the public were still highly in support of this model.

Changing the way it's spent.

Support for development spending was varied depending on political leaning, with right-wing voters in opposition to funding for sexual health services, promoting democracy, providing funding to charities, and providing cash directly to families in need. On the left, support was highest for disaster relief and providing necessities.

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

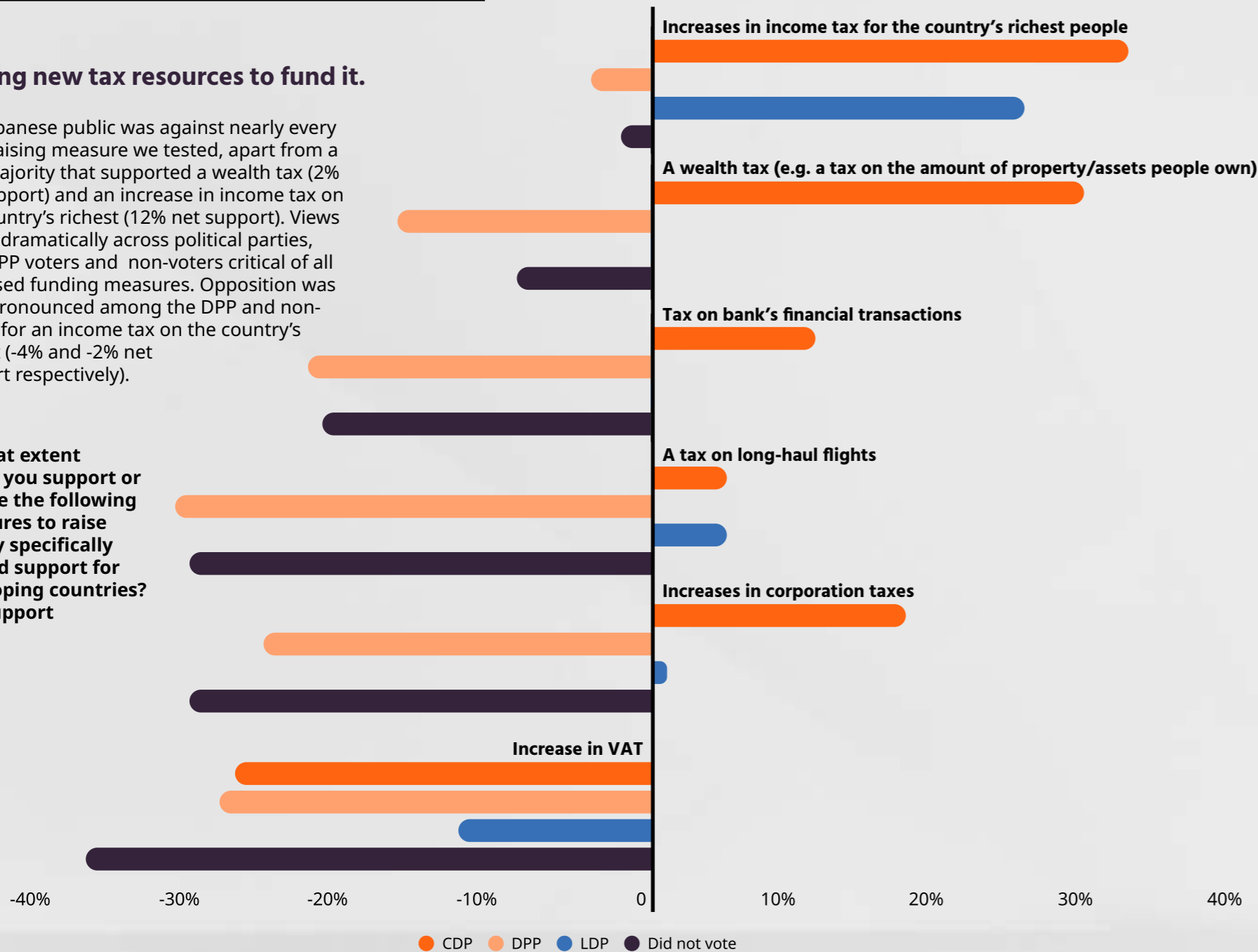
● Left ● Center ● Right



Raising new tax resources to fund it.

The Japanese public was against nearly every fund raising measure we tested, apart from a slim majority that supported a wealth tax (2% net support) and an increase in income tax on the country's richest (12% net support). Views varied dramatically across political parties, with DPP voters and non-voters critical of all proposed funding measures. Opposition was least pronounced among the DPP and non-voters for an income tax on the country's richest (-4% and -2% net support respectively).

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





BRAZIL

MAJOR FORCES



**CONCERNS ABOUT
CRIME, THE ECONOMY
AND HEALTH CARE**



**HIGH LEVELS OF
DISILLUSIONMENT
WITH POLITICIANS
AND LOW TRUST IN
GOVERNMENT**



**GROWING CONCERNS
AROUND INEQUALITY**

WHICH ARE CONTRIBUTING TO:



**A BREAKDOWN IN
SOCIAL COHESION**



**A TENDENCY
TO PRIORITISE
DOMESTIC
ISSUES OVER
INTERNATIONAL
ONES**



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Despite high levels of support for development, high domestic concerns cause support for this spending to collapse when presented as a trade off against domestic priorities - except when it is framed as spending on joint projects with other countries to solve global challenges.



PATHWAYS TO BUILDING SUPPORT:

Framing international development as a tool for poverty reduction or disaster relief was more effective than framing as building sustainable economic growth. Emphasising the role of multilateralism and working together with other countries was also effective.

This chapter is based on polling only


SUMMARY

The top issues of concern for Brazilians are crime, the economy and healthcare. Across age and voter groups, people are concerned about growing levels of inequality and they are highly disillusioned with politics and politicians themselves. These forces are contributing to decline in social cohesion, with most Brazilians - particularly young people - feeling less connected to the people around them.

As both a recipient and donor of international development, Brazilians have a unique perspective on multilateralism and development. Brazilians support global cooperation on climate action and poverty reduction, and they care about their country's international reputation. They think a combination of standing up for national interests and contributing to progress on global development and climate goals builds respect on the world stage. These are broadly consistent across demographics, though Bolsonaro voters are notably less convinced that climate action builds international respect.

However, high domestic concerns around the cost of living and inequality mean that Brazilians do not want a focus on solving global problems like climate change or global poverty to get in the way of fixing problems at home. When compared to domestic priorities, support for international development declines. However, when framed through the lens of multilateralism - i.e. joint projects with other countries to solve global problems like poverty and climate change - support for development stays strong compared to domestic priorities.

Humanitarian & disaster relief framing resonates the most with Brazilians across the political spectrum (compared to poverty alleviation or building sustainable economies) though none of the framings shift support in a significant way.

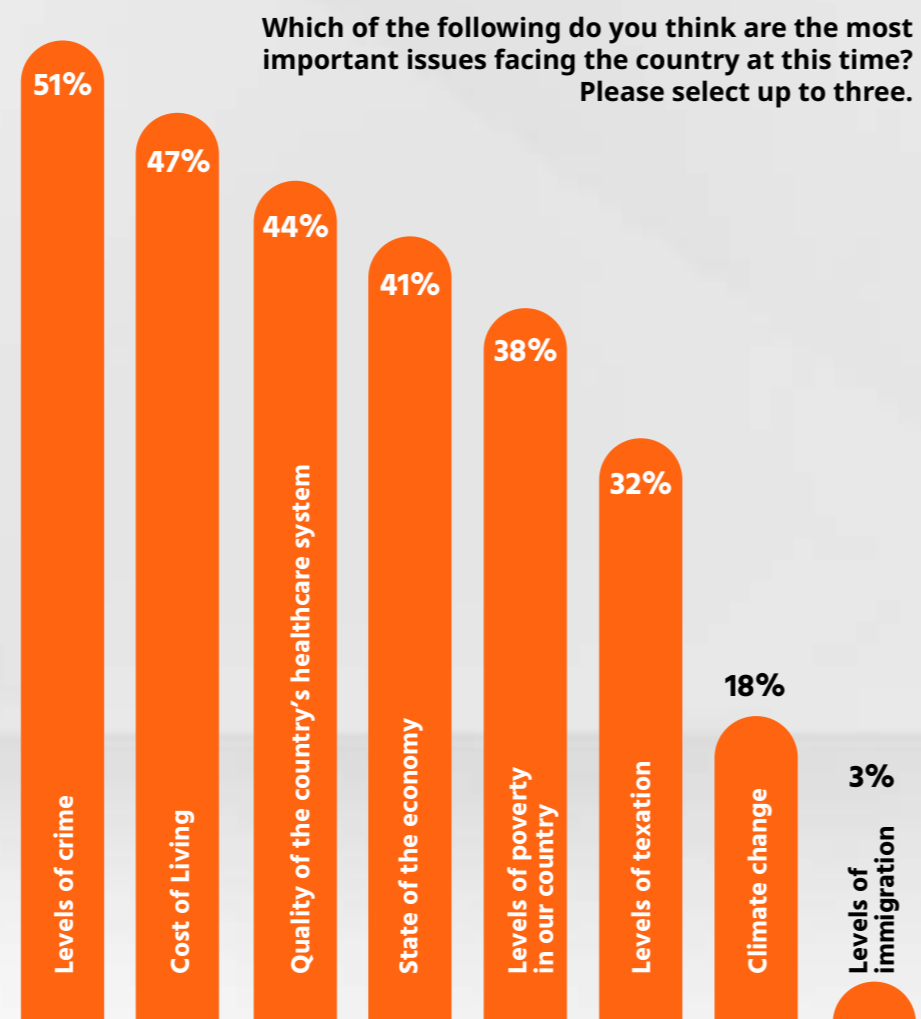


Brazil does not report ODA spending to the OECD as it is not an official DAC or non-DAC donor country. However, it is playing a growing role as a donor country alongside being a traditional recipient country. Brazil is a member of the International Forum on Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), where it reported USD 2.6 billion in support of sustainable development in 2023, of which USD 49.1 million was cross-border resources to TOSSD recipients.

THE MAJOR FORCES DRIVING THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Top issues of concern for Brazilians are levels of crime, cost of living and the quality of the healthcare system.

These are relatively consistent across age groups and across those who voted for Lula, Bolsonaro or who did not vote in the most recent election. The state of the economy and levels of poverty are also major concerns - only 19% of the public agree that people in Brazil generally have more than they need to get by.



Growing inequality is also a major concern in Brazil.

With 70% of the public agreeing that the gap between the rich and poor in their country is growing. This is true across ages and voter groups (67% of Lula voters and 70% of Bolsonaro voters agree the gap between the rich and the poor is growing). Further, 70% of the public disagree that ordinary people get their fair share of the country's wealth - again this is consistent across age and voter groups.

The public feel disillusioned with politicians and trust in government is split across party lines.

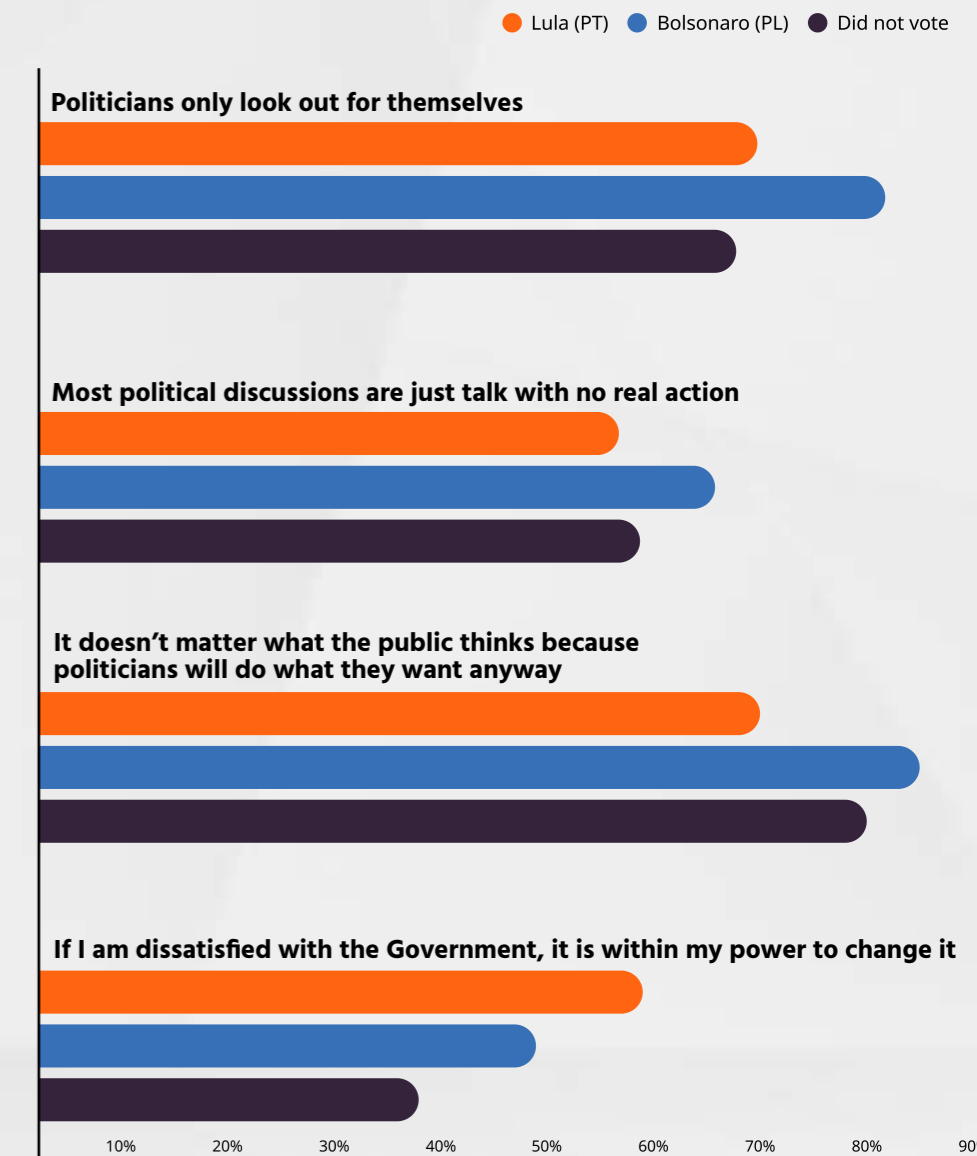
A majority of Brazilians agree that politicians only look out for themselves, that most political discussions are just talk with no action, and that it doesn't matter what the public thinks because politicians will do what they want anyway - this is true across age and voter groups. Trust in the government is clearly split along party lines - with 78% Lula voters saying they trust the national government vs. just 31% of Bolsonaro voters and 42% of people who did not vote in the most recent election. There was no meaningful difference in levels of trust between people who were following the Bolsonaro news⁹ vs. those who weren't.

These forces are driving a breakdown in social cohesion, particularly amongst younger people. Only a third of the population say they are feeling increasingly more connected to the people around them vs. 54% who say they are feeling increasingly less connected. This is most pronounced for 18-24 year olds - in fact, 61% of this group feel less connected to the people around them, compared to 45% of over-65s.

However, it is a promising signal that Brazilians feel empowered to make change. Indeed, the public tend to agree that it is within their power to change the government if they are dissatisfied with it (48% agree vs. 39% disagree), though there are differences across voter groups - with disempowerment highest amongst those who did not vote in the most recent election.

⁹ As described in the 'Methodology' section, our fieldwork in Brazil took place in the run-up to the verdict in Bolsonaro's coup trial which garnered significant media attention and attracted large-scale public rallies both in support and opposition.

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



LOOKING OUTWARD: FEELINGS TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY & MULTILATERALISM

There is widespread agreement across the public that it is important that other countries have a positive view of Brazil (88% agree).

This is consistently true across age, income and voter groups. The public see a combination of action on global issues - like climate and development - as well as standing up for national interests as the way to build respect on the global stage. Lula voters were more likely to believe climate-related action builds respect compared to Bolsonaro voters.

Brazilians tend to agree that countries should work together on global problems at the same time as national problems

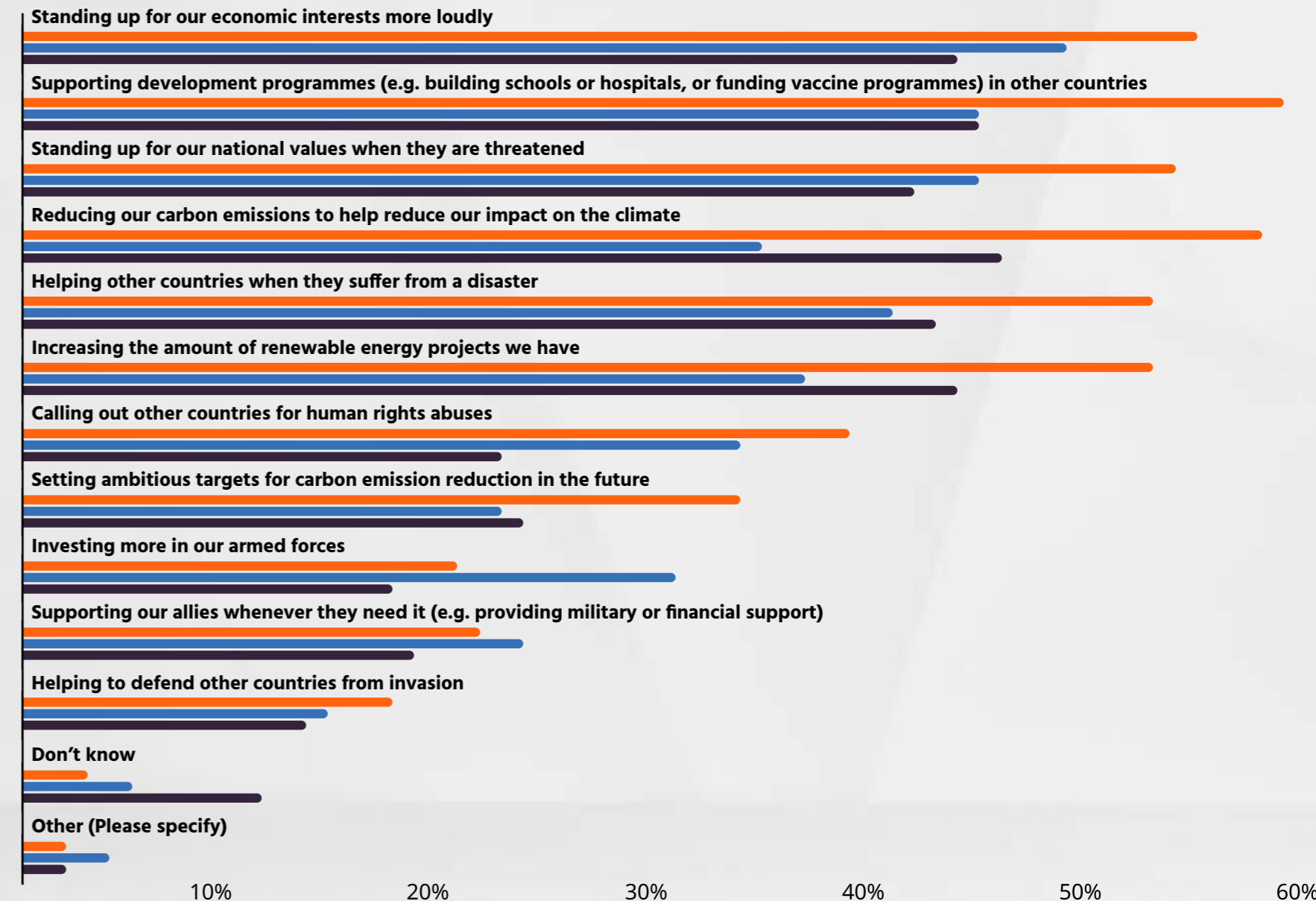
(63% agree vs. 27% who think Brazil should focus on solving national problems before working with others on global problems). Further, a majority of Brazilians (68%) think it is important for their government to reduce poverty in other countries - support is highest amongst Lula voters but there is net support across the political spectrum.

However, Brazilians don't want a focus on global problems to get in the way of fixing problems at home

54% of the public agree Brazil should take care of its own people before taking care of people from other countries (vs. 39% who think Brazil should do both at the same time). Bolsonaro voters in particular want the government to prioritise Brazilians first (62% agree). Further, the public are split on whether Brazil has a responsibility to help people in other countries when they are in need - young people 18-24 particularly disagree with this statement (36% agree vs. 45% disagree, compared to 45% of over-65s who agree and 35% who disagree).

In your view, which, if any, of the following would increase the respect other countries have for Brazil on the world stage? Select any which apply

● Lula (PT) ● Bolsonaro (PL) ● Did not vote

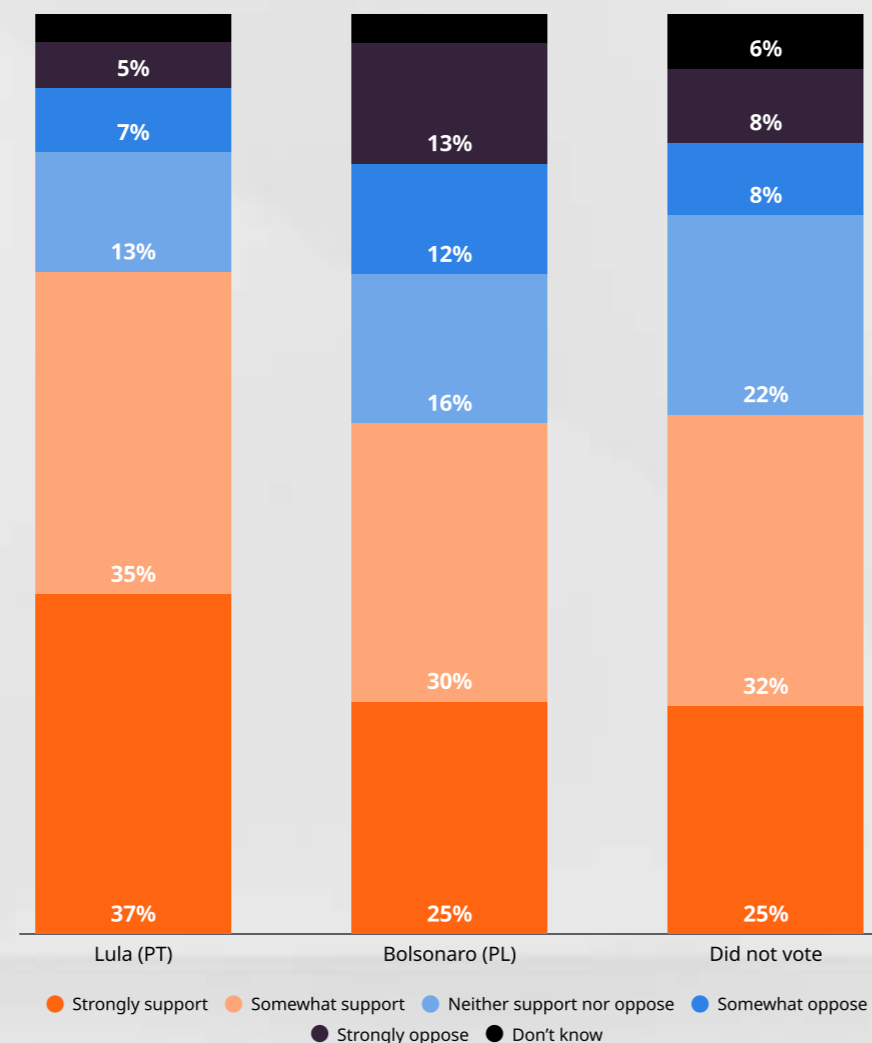


CURRENT ATTITUDES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As both an international development donor and recipient, Brazilians have an interesting perspective on the country's development spending - there are high levels of in-principle support (62% support vs. just 18% oppose) across the political spectrum, but high concerns about cost of living and inequality mean the public don't want to see international development getting in the way of helping people at home. Indeed, the main reasons for opposition to development spending were 1. our country should focus on helping people at home first and 2. our country cannot afford to spend money helping other countries.

Brazilians are split on whether or not the country's development spending is effective - 42% think it is effective in its goal of reducing poverty around the world vs. 43% think it is ineffective. Lula voters are more likely to think it is effective compared to Bolsonaro voters and those who did not vote.

To what extent do you support or oppose Brazil spending money to reduce poverty in developing countries, such as by providing food assistance, or helping to construct vital infrastructure like schools or wells?

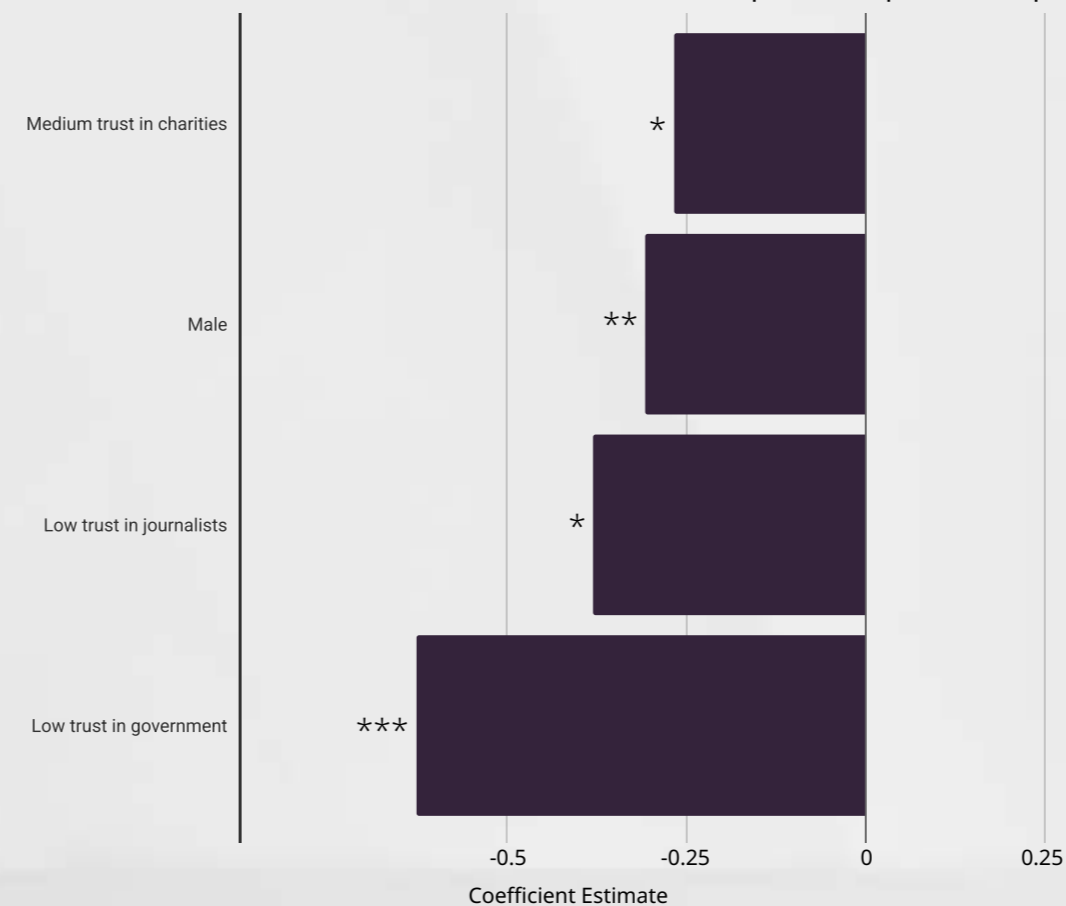


Opposition to aid was largely driven by those with low trust in institutions.

Low trust in government was the most significant predictor of opposition to international aid in Brazil, with low trust in journalists also significant.

Significant Predictors of Support for International Aid in Brazil¹⁰

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



¹⁰ 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 Brazil today.

The public tend to think the government spends too much on international development.

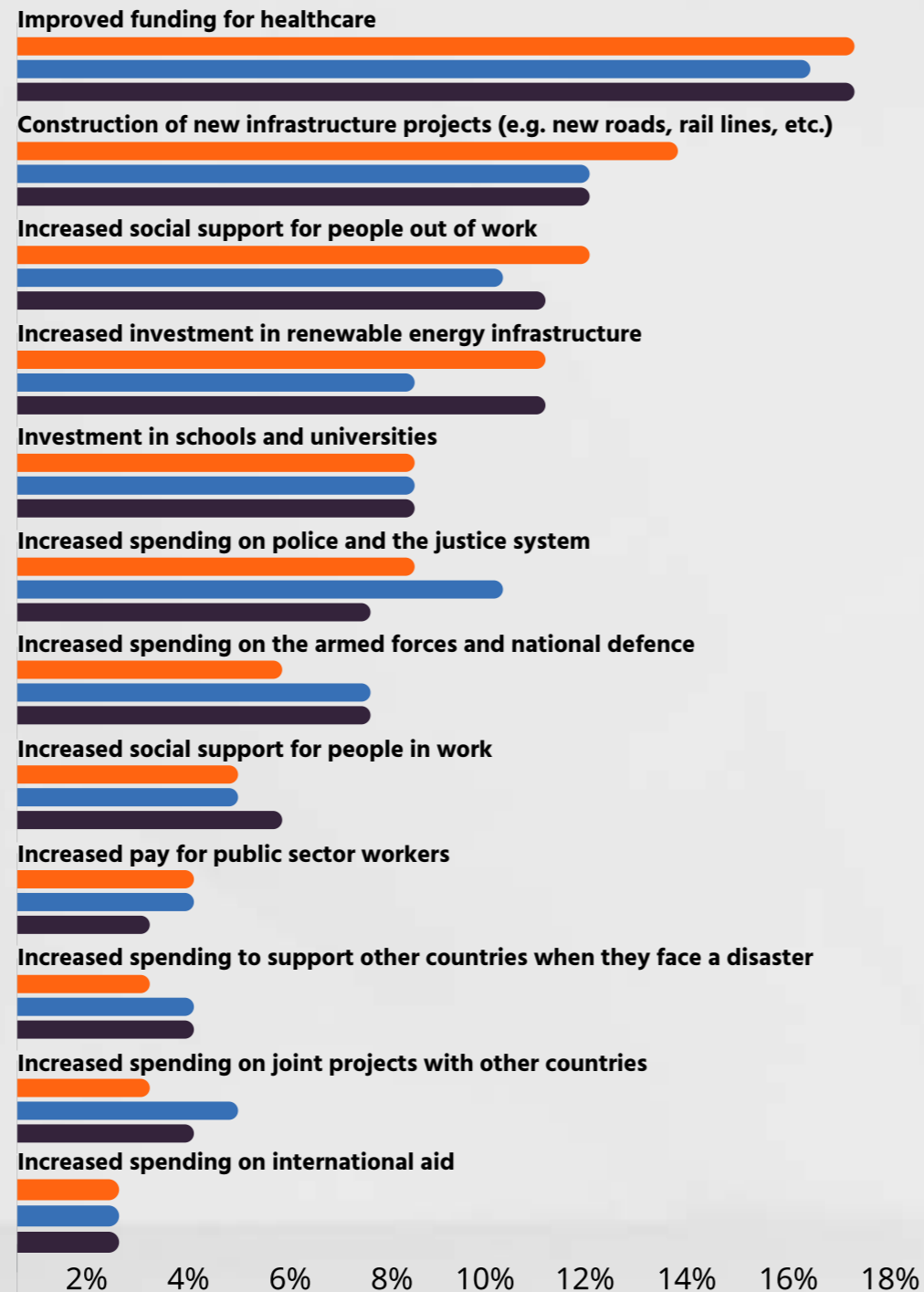
(34% say too much, 19% say the right amount, 24% say too little). Part of this likely comes from the fact that Brazilians overestimate the amount their government spends on development - in fact, 1 in 5 Brazilians think they spend more than 10% of the national budget on reducing poverty in developing countries and nearly half of the public (42%) think Brazil spends the same amount or more than other wealthy countries.

When forced to trade off between competing policy priorities, support for international development collapses - except when it is framed as joint projects with other countries to solve global challenges.

When asked how they would like to see the government spend a hypothetical pot of €10 billion, increased spending on international aid was the least likely policy area to be chosen by Brazilians. Support was slightly higher when framed as disaster support for other countries, and significantly higher when framed as increased spending on joint projects with other countries to solve global challenges, such as climate change or poverty reduction.

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

● Lula (PT) ● Bolsonaro (PL) ● Did not vote



PATHWAYS FOR BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We tested three pathways for building support for international development:

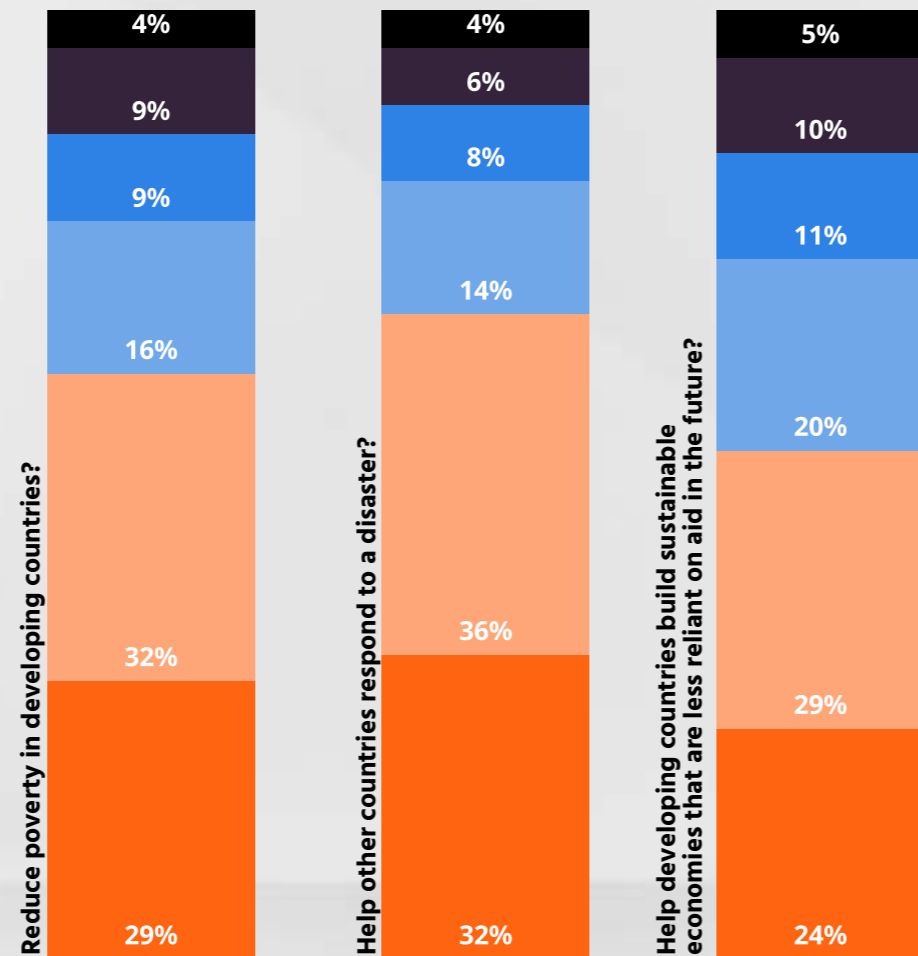
1. Changing the way it's framed
2. Changing how it's spent
3. Raising new tax resources to fund it

We found that none of these options fundamentally altered the way the public views international development in Brazil. The most impactful and convincing framings for Brazilians are disaster relief and humanitarian aid rather than sustainable economic development. The public were also particularly supportive of this spending when framed as part of multilateral efforts to solve global challenges.

Changing the way it's framed.

Support is highest for development when it is framed as disaster relief (68%), then poverty alleviation (62%) then building sustainable economies (53%).

To what extent do you support or oppose Brazil spending money to...

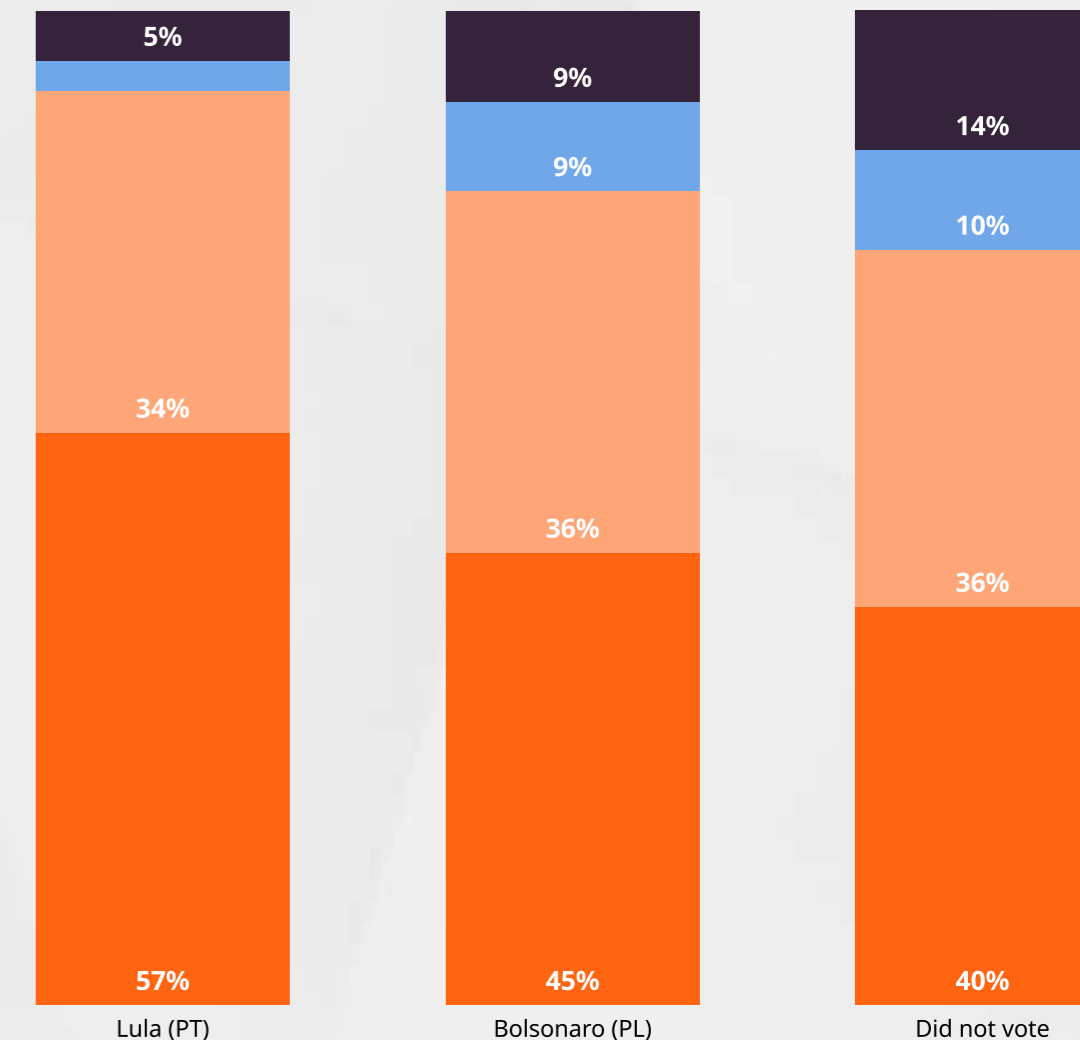


● Strongly support
 ● Somewhat support
 ● Neither support nor oppose
 ● Somewhat oppose
 ● Strongly oppose
 ● Don't know

When forced to choose between a humanitarian approach vs. economic growth approach to Brazil's international development spending, the humanitarian approach was more popular across all ages (except 18-24 year-olds, who were evenly split between the two approaches) and voter groups.

We also tested whether the public were convinced by any mutual benefit arguments - i.e. that international development provides tangible benefits to both the donor and recipient country. Brazilians tend to agree that international development can boost the Brazilian economy by providing new markets for their own goods (58% agree), and can reduce migration flows by fixing problems abroad (57% agree). They are less convinced, however, that it can reduce the price of food (45% agree) or energy (39% agree). Younger Brazilians were more likely to believe that it could have economic benefits and reduce food prices compared to older populations and Lula voters were more likely to recognise all of the mutual benefits compared to Bolsonaro voters.

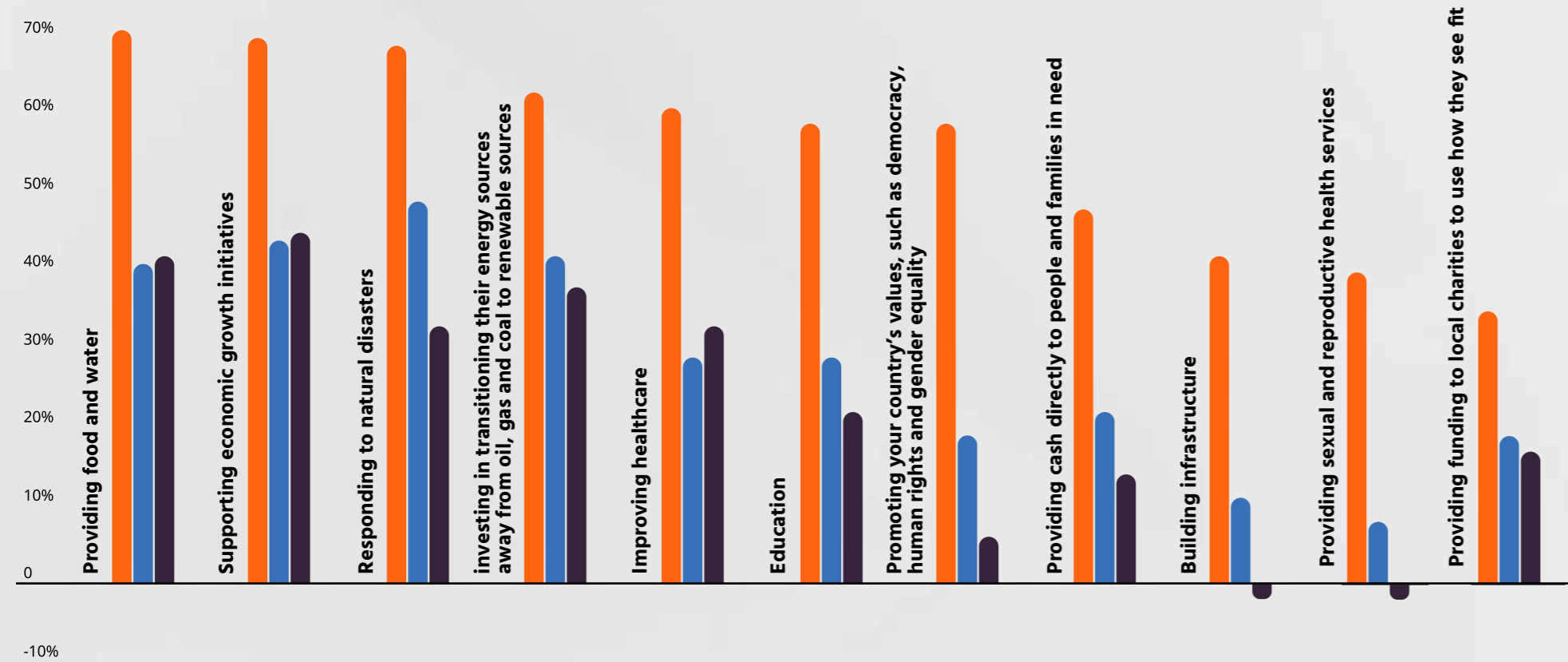
Which of the following comes closest to your view...



● My country's approach to international aid should focus on giving help to people in humanitarian crises and extreme poverty
 ● My country's approach to international aid should focus on creating sustainable and growing economies that are not reliant on aid in the long term
 ● My country should not deliver any international aid.
 ● Don't Know

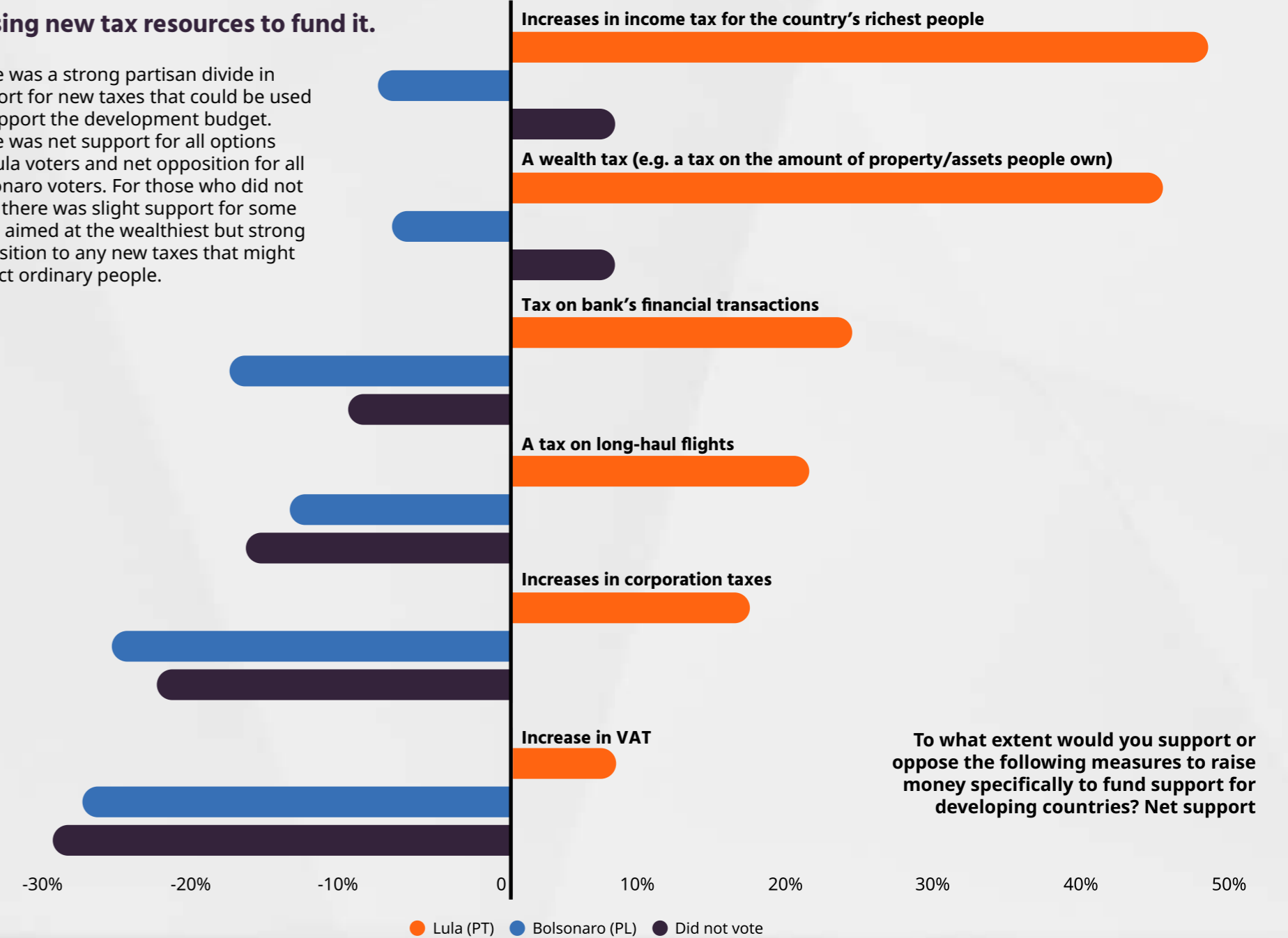
Changing the way it's spent.

Most of the spending priorities that we tested were met with widespread support from Lula voters. For all voter groups, the priorities with the highest levels of support were a mixture of humanitarian relief (providing food and water, and responding to natural disasters), economic growth initiatives, and investing in renewable energy.



Raising new tax resources to fund it.

There was a strong partisan divide in support for new taxes that could be used to support the development budget. There was net support for all options for Lula voters and net opposition for all Bolsonaro voters. For those who did not vote, there was slight support for some taxes aimed at the wealthiest but strong opposition to any new taxes that might impact ordinary people.



A large-scale construction site is shown under a hazy, orange-tinted sky. Several tall tower cranes are visible, with their jibs extending across the frame. In the foreground and midground, multiple high-rise buildings are under construction, with visible concrete structures and scaffolding. The overall scene conveys a sense of active development and infrastructure building.

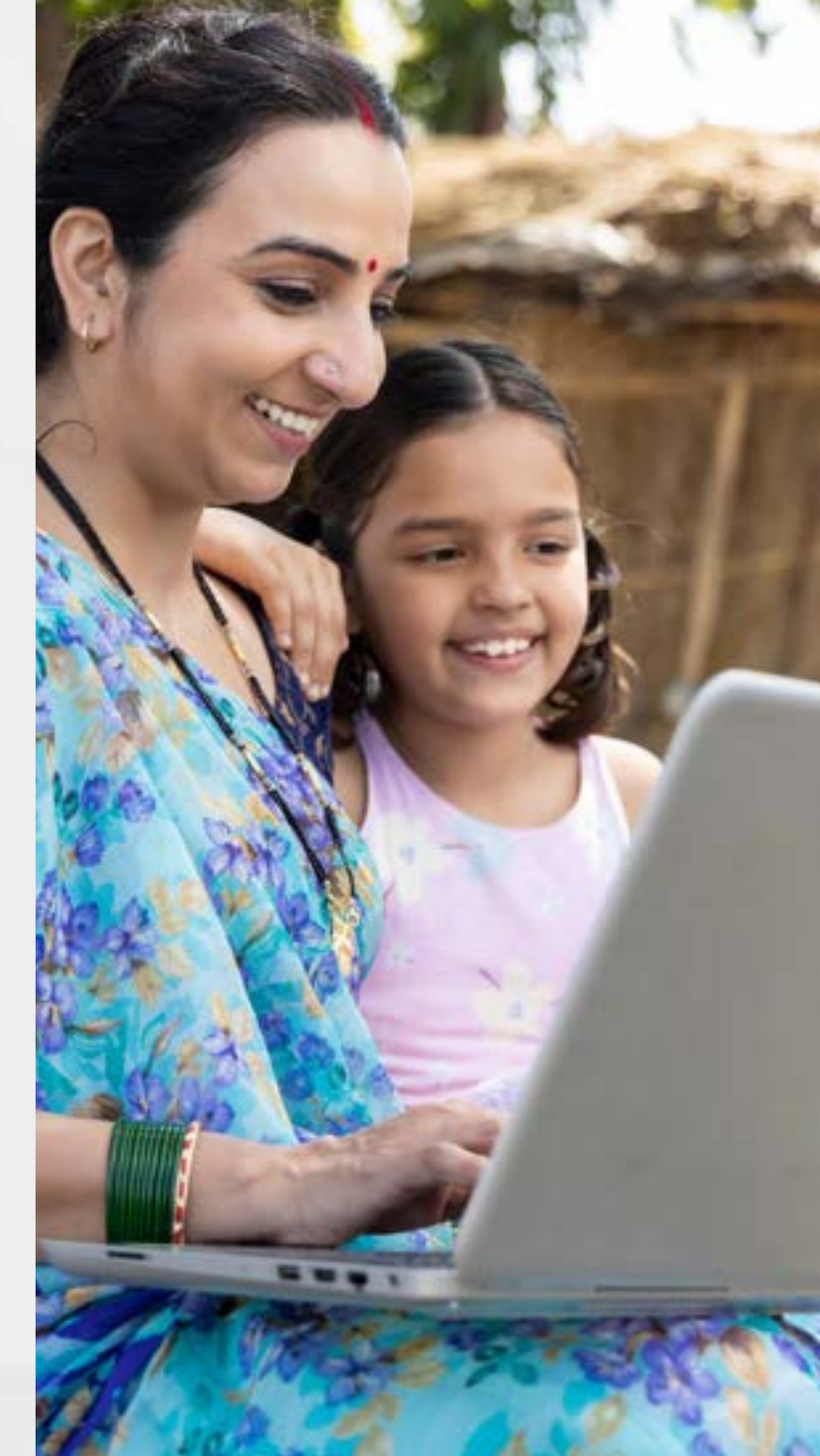
CONCLUSION

Across all five countries included in this study, the same upstream forces are shaping the public and political discourse on development. People remain broadly positive about international cooperation and are supportive of helping others in principle, but they become markedly less supportive when asked to make explicit trade-offs with domestic policies. In fiscally tight environments and amid low trust in politics, it is easy for the public, and therefore governments, to deprioritise development.

Three clear patterns emerged across these countries. First, economic pressure and perceived growing inequality dominate everyday concerns for the public; this makes any non-domestic public spending feel discretionary unless urgency is obvious. Second, low trust in government and to deliver domestically translates to low trust in government to deliver internationally. Third, there are some pathways to building support within this context, with humanitarian and disaster relief framing performing consistently best across the public, particularly with international development-sceptics.

Ultimately, this research suggests that the real challenge for development advocates is upstream: the binding constraints to building public support are trust and domestic economic pressures. Effective advocacy will have to grapple with these forces to shift the dial.

For more information on this research project, please visit [Public First](#) where you can download the desk review and full poll results for each country.





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