

## Budget 2018 & foreign aid: Two-thirds see moral obligation to help abroad and half that many say Canada should raise spending

*Comprehensive study looks at perspectives on international aid at governmental and individual levels*

**March 6, 2018** – The 2018 federal budget includes a defibrillator for Canada's foreign aid spending: \$2 billion in new contributions to international development over the next five years that has drawn plaudits from the likes of [Bono, among others](#).

The Canadian public is likely to have mixed feelings about this increase, however. An Angus Reid Institute study finds that, while Canadians say they would like to do more for global development, just over one-quarter of them (28%) believe their country should spend more than it currently does.

This lack of appetite for increased payments persists even when respondents are told Canada's foreign aid spending has lagged behind that of other OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries and fallen short of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. Even with the cash-infusion in the 2018 budget, Canada's spending remains below the UN goal.

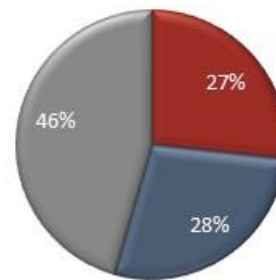
The budget increase, which has been praised by many non-governmental organizations working in overseas aid, squares with another seemingly competing Canadian opinion, however. Two-thirds say that Canada has a moral obligation to help those in developing countries.

This study explores both views of Canada and its place in the foreign aid community, as well as individual mindsets on development work, engagement and contribution among Canadians, themselves.

### More Key Findings:

- Canadians hold four broad dispositions when they consider the value and successes of aid work done by their country's development NGO's. They are the True Believers, the Optimists, the Doubtful and the Hopeless. Each group represents at least one-fifth of the population and views these issues in a distinct way

Should Canada spend more on international development assistance, spend less, or is the current spending level about right?



■ Should spend less      ■ Should spend more  
■ Current is about right

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from September 26 – October 2, 2017, among a representative, randomized sample of 1802 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was conducted in partnership with World Vision Canada and paid for jointly by ARI and World Vision Canada. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

- Close to one-in-five Canadians (17%) believe that Canada spends more than the UN target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income on overseas development assistance. Three-in-ten (31%) say the country is at or close to that figure, while just one-in-four (26%) correctly identify Canada's foreign aid spending as below the target
- Most Canadians (64%) say that countries like Canada have a moral responsibility to assist less wealthy nations in development, but one-in-five (21%) say they personally donate money to overseas aid or charity projects.
- Asked how they donate to their cause or causes, more than half (56%) say it is usually a spontaneous call to action or a crisis, rather than planned giving (44%). Those who plan their donations in advance are much more likely to give larger sums of money

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### Canadian Giving Groups

To gain an understanding of the varying mindsets of Canadians when it comes to Canada's obligations in international aid and the work of non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and to better inform the discussion of these issues in this country, the Angus Reid Institute created an index and grouped Canadians into four broad categories. These segments are based on a person's disposition toward overseas development programs and whether or not they believe aid can have a meaningful impact in addressing the core problems explored throughout this study, the so-called efficacy of aid.

Individuals were grouped based on their responses to these questions:

- Do they believe that assistance from other countries and international aid organizations can have a meaningful impact in addressing major issues?
- Do they see a record of success when they consider the work of Canadian NGO's involved in overseas development?

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Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

- Do they see a clear impact of the work done by these Canadian NGO's?
- Do they agree or disagree with the statements "some problems just can't be helped" and "no matter how much help we give, it just never seems to get better in poor countries" when it comes to development?

Each question chosen represents an opportunity to offer a positive, negative, or neutral outlook when it comes to problems in the global community, and the ability of aid organizations to help solve them. Based on this collection of answers, respondents were assigned values ranging from a minimum of -1 for those with the most pessimistic outlook to a +20 for those with the most positive one. The Hopeless are those with a total under 10, The Doubtful 10-12, the Optimists 13-15 and the True Believers 16 or higher.

### **The True Believers (21%)**

This group looks at the organizations working in development overseas with great admiration. More than half of them (58%) say that most or all Canadian NGO's in this field have a proven record of success and that the impact of that work is clear (55%). Roughly nine-in-ten True Believers look at seven different areas of development work, from human rights issues, to natural disaster relief, to children's well-being, and say that aid from countries and international organizations can have a meaningful impact in improving them.

This group is the most likely of all four to be female (58%) and has equal numbers of Millennials (32%), 35 to 54-year-old's (34%), and those age 55 or older (33%). Close to four-in-ten (38%) of the True Believers have a university education, 13 points higher than any other group.

### **The Optimistic (26%)**

The second most positive group, the Optimistic, are encouraged by aid work and still supportive of organizations, but less bullish than the True Believers. For example, roughly half (55%) among this group say that development work can have a meaningful impact, 33 points lower than responses from the True Believers. However, almost none (4%) say that aid efforts are in vain. One-in-three (34%) say that most Canadian NGO's have a clear record of success and four-in-ten (41%) say they do a good job of delivering aid to people in poor countries. More than half of this group (57%) say that Canada should join countries like the UK and Sweden in meeting the UN target for aid spending.

This group is also slightly more likely to be female (54%) than the two more pessimistic segments and is the least wealthy of the four (38% have a household income below \$50K). This group has the largest percentage of BC (28%) and Ontario (27%) residents.

### **The Doubtful (26%)**

The third group is where Canadians begin to voice more skepticism about the efficacy of aid. Six-in-ten (62%) Canadians in the Doubtful group say that international aid efforts "might help" in addressing the major development issues. This is their primary departure from other cohorts. They do not rule out the possibility of improvements, like the Hopeless, but they are less willing to say that aid can have a meaningful effect outright. Fewer than one-in-five (17%) say that Canadian NGO's have a record of proven success.

The Doubtful comprise the largest number of Atlantic Canadians (35%) of any group, and are tied with the Hopeful, which also hosts 29 per cent of Albertans. This group leans slightly more male than the two more positive dispositions, but less so than the most negative (51% female, 49% male).

### **The Hopeless (27%)**

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The Hopeless view aid as just that - hopeless. This segment of the population is significantly more likely than the others to say that foreign aid work will make no positive impact. Roughly one-in-three (34%) say this, compared to just 9 per cent for the next highest group. Only one-in-ten (11%) say a meaningful impact can be made. Further, half of the Hopeless (49%) say that none or very few Canadian NGO's have a proven record of success, or that the impact of their work is clear (51%)

The largest number of Saskatchewan (37%) and Quebec (31%) residents are among the Hopeless. The Hopeless are also the oldest (41% over 55, 40% 35-54), the most male (57%), and most likely to have voted Conservative in 2015 (44%).

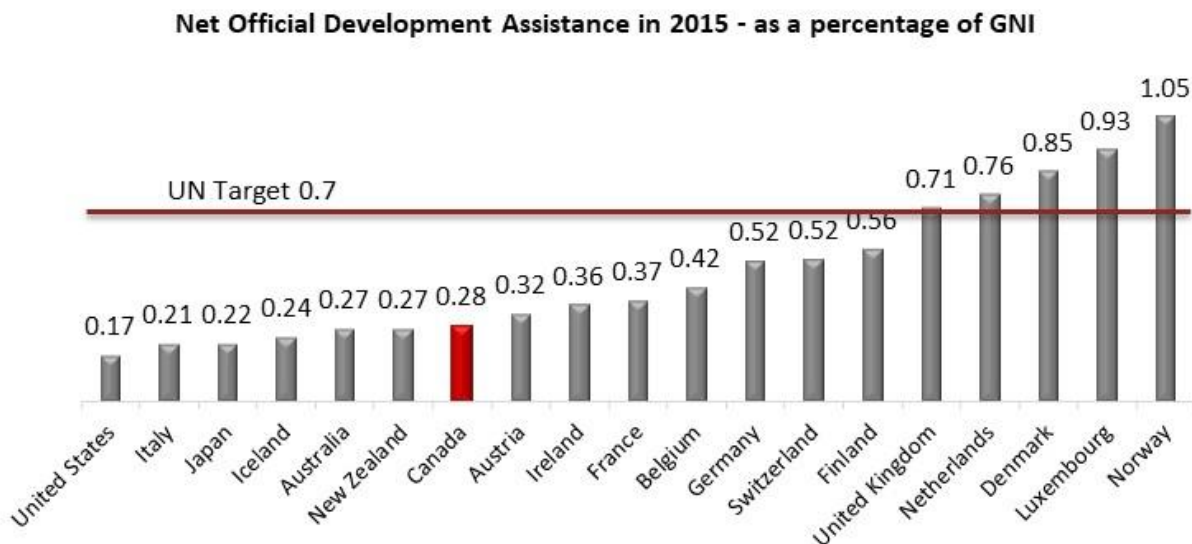
This report will further explore the relationship of these groups and their efficacy beliefs to development work throughout the forthcoming sections.

## **Official Development Aid**

### **Is Canada giving enough?**

Aid to poor countries is a massive global undertaking. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that aid volume grew 8.9% in 2016 to more than \$142B USD. However, the variation between countries in terms of funding for aid can vary substantially.

In October 1970, the United Nations passed a resolution that donor countries should contribute 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) to official development aid (ODA). Though many countries have committed to this target, just six reached it in 2015. The United States has not committed to the target, and the European Union averages under 0.5 per cent.



Canadians were asked where they believe Canada ranks in terms of giving. Are we on, above, or below the UN target? Just one-in-four (26%) correctly say that this country contributes below the target level. In fact, Canada offered 0.28% in 2015, less than half of the UN target.

**CONTACT:**

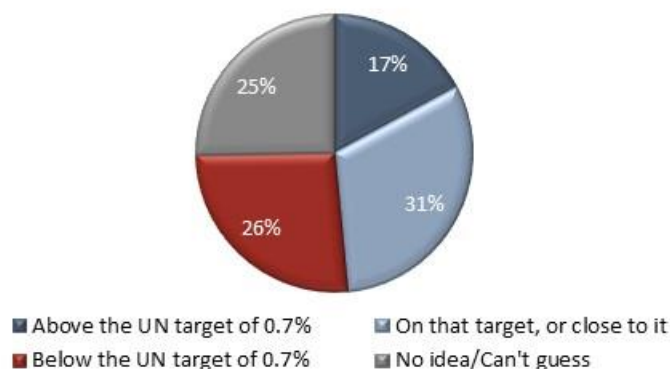
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*UN Target for Official Development Aid - 0.7% of Gross National Income.*

*Canada's total amount contributed in 2015 – 0.28% of Gross National Income.*

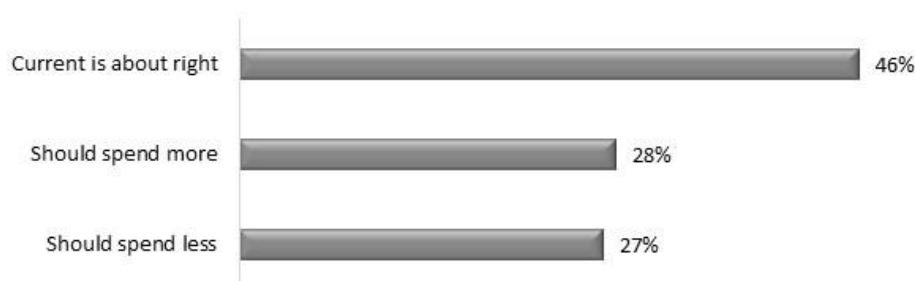
The largest group (31%) assumes that Canada gives the encouraged amount, while close to one-in-five (17%) think that Canada gives more than asked.

**If you had to estimate or guess, how do you think Canada's current spending on international aid compares to this UN target - 0.7%?**



Leaving aside how much they *thought* Canada was giving, Canadians were then asked how much this country *should* give, knowing now that the international target is 0.7% of GNI. Close to half of Canadians (46%) are inclined to say that current contribution levels are fine, while the other half are split between spending more (28%) or less (27%).

**In your opinion, should Canada spend more on international development assistance, spend less, or is the current spending level about right?**

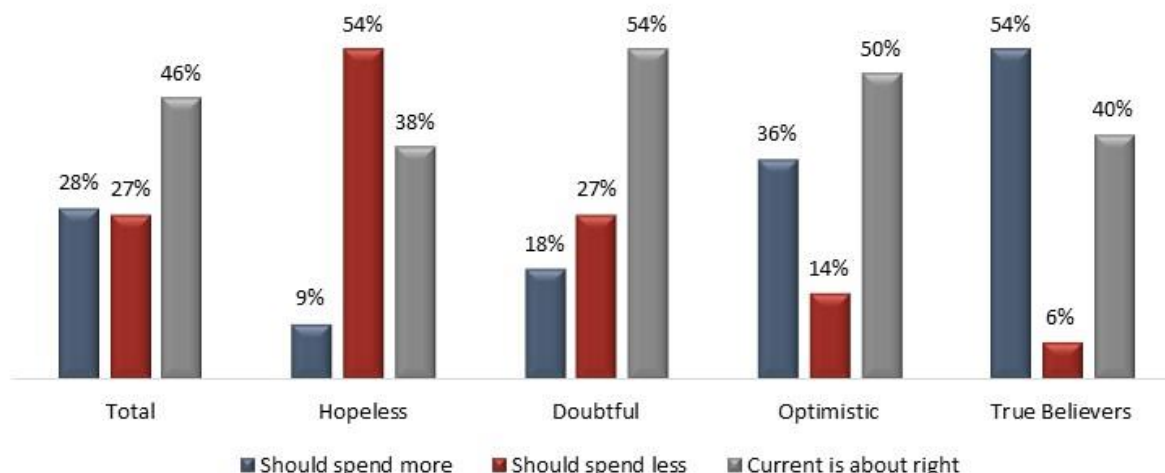


Men and women are close to equally as likely to say Canada should be giving more and the most likely groups to say this country should be more generous are Millennials (35% say spend more) and those with university educations (41%) ([see comprehensive tables](#)). Looking at these issues through the four Canadian mindsets, the delineation in belief of aid efficacy is evident. Those who are most inclined to value development work and organizations voice majority support for spending more, while the opposite end of the spectrum, the Hopeless, voice majority support for spending less.

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**In your opinion, should Canada spend more on international development assistance, spend less, or is the current spending level about right?**

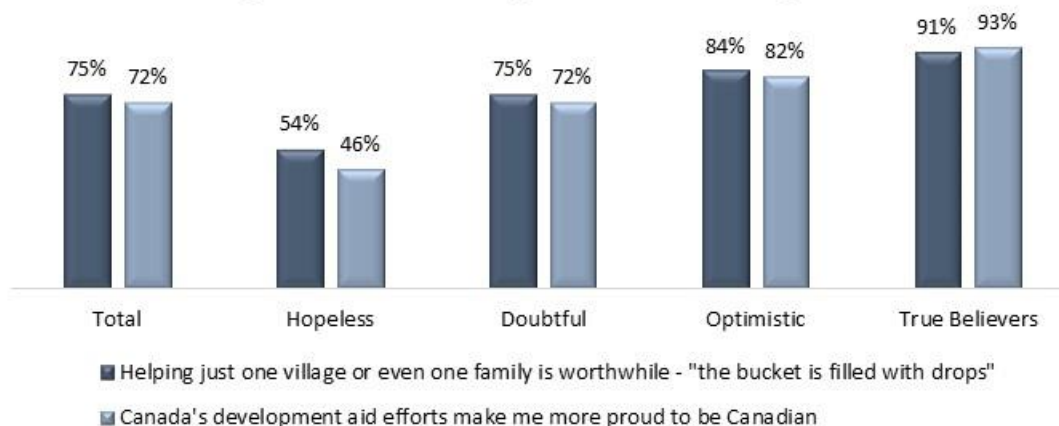


**Benefits of aid**

The sheer amount of demand for aid can be staggering. The aforementioned more than \$140B USD per year has been distributed between nearly 150 different countries since 2014. Programs range from housing projects, to medical and dental operations, to disaster relief. With such a vast number of ongoing projects, Canadians see many benefits to this country's involvement in development activities.

Seven-in-ten Canadians (72%), including even almost half of the Hopeless (46%), say that Canada's development aid efforts make them proud to be Canadian. And three-quarters of Canadians (75%) say that no mission is too small when it comes to helping those who suffer:

**Percentage of Canadians who agree with the following statements:**



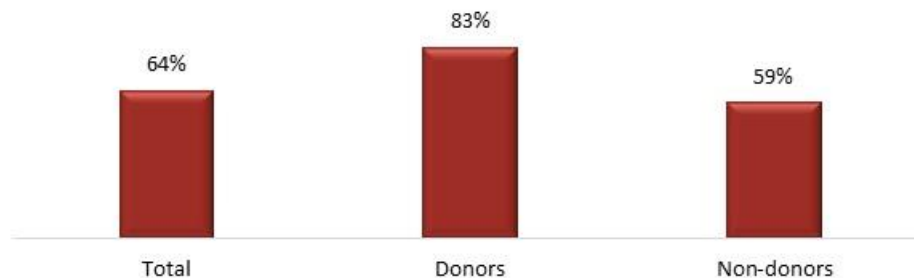
Much of this sentiment appears to be rooted in a belief that those in a position of relative wealth have an obligation to assist people in more precarious positions. Two-thirds of Canadians (64%) hold the opinion

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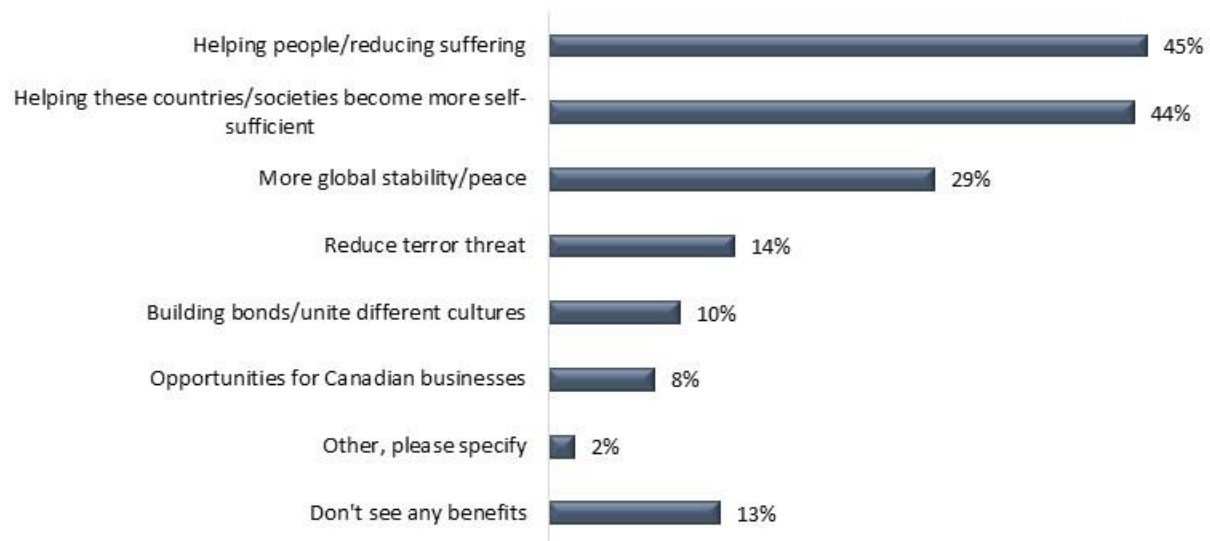
that rich countries like Canada have moral responsibility to help. Notably, even among those who have not personally donated, six-in-ten (59%) say that the country has a responsibility:

**Percentage of Canadians who agree that 'Rich countries like Canada have a moral responsibility to assist poor countries'**



Asked to choose the top two or three perceived benefits of such work, helping people and reducing suffering (45%), as well as assisting communities and countries as they strive to become more self-sufficient (44%), are seen as the top benefits. More than four-in-ten Canadians choose each. Another three-in-ten say that more global stability can come from aid work, and that this is an important benefit.

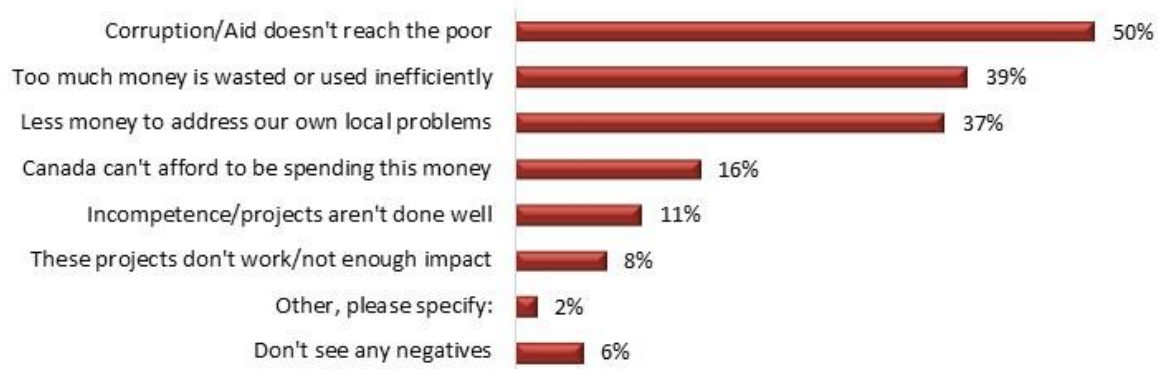
**What do you think are the most important benefits of Canada's international development activities?**



**Costs of aid**

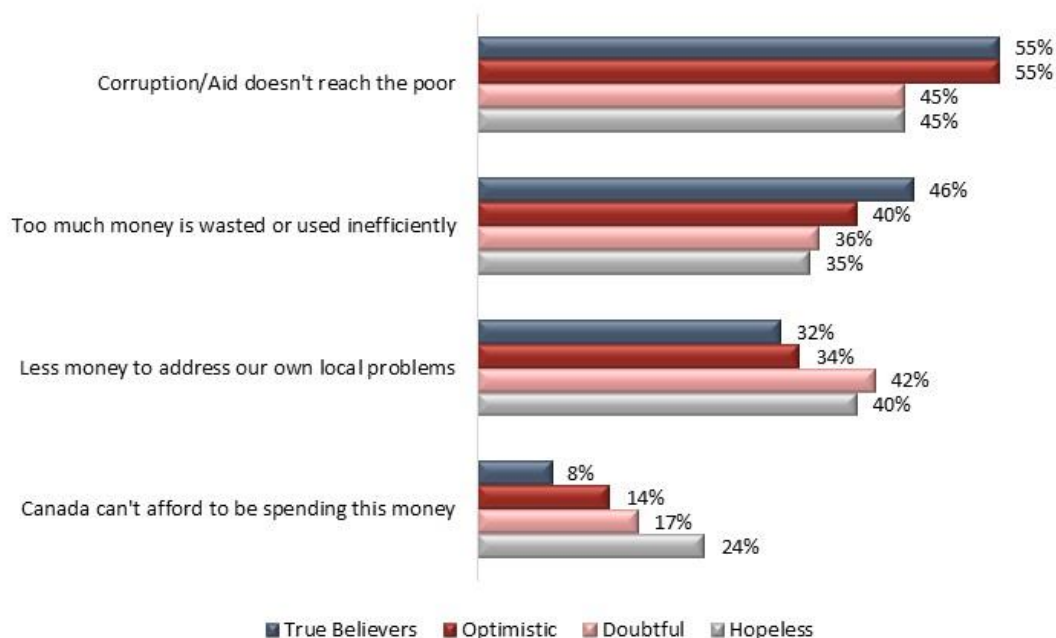
There are, of course, costs associated with funding and administering aid work. Concerns among Canadians are largely over the potential that donations may not reach the target population, or that corruption or inefficiency will lead to money being squandered:

**And what do you think are the negatives or drawbacks of Canada's international development involvement and activities?**



Older Canadians, those over 55 years of age, are more likely to hold each of these top two concerns. Interestingly, True Believers and the Optimistic are more inclined to say that problems with aid are related to efficiency and corruption abroad, while the Hopeless and Doubtful are more likely to point to domestic financial concerns. These two latter segments maintain a “Canada First” perspective:

**And what do you think are the negatives or drawbacks of Canada's international development involvement and activities?**



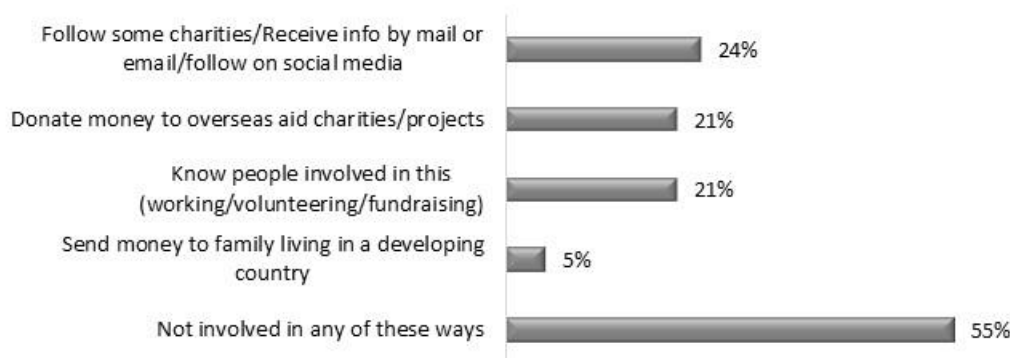


**Canadians as Donors**

**Who gives? Canadian donor habits**

Canada is home to hundreds of NGO’s participating in overseas development programs. From World Vision Canada, to Oxfam, to Doctor’s Without Borders, there is no shortage of options for Canadians looking to donate to a program – and many do. Just under half of Canadians (45%) are engaged with NGO’s in some fashion. One-in-five (21%) say they actively donate to overseas aid or charity projects:

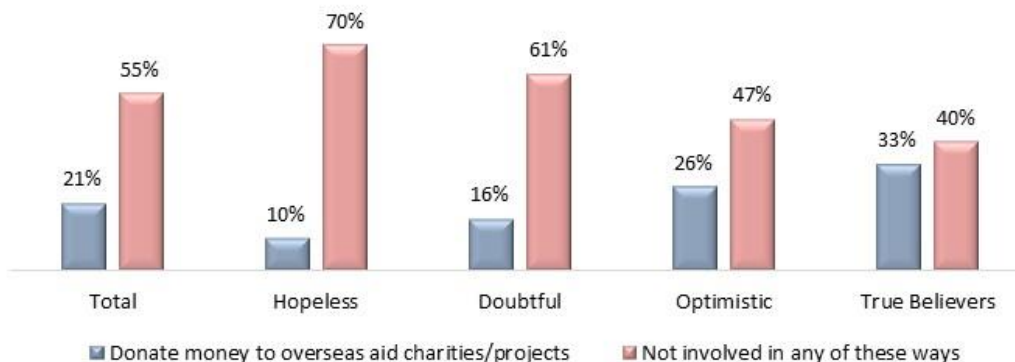
**Are you personally involved in any way with these international development issues we’ve been talking about in this survey?**



Men and women are equally as likely to donate. Of the 372 Canadians who responded that they have donated an overseas aid organization, 48 per cent are men and 52 per cent are women.

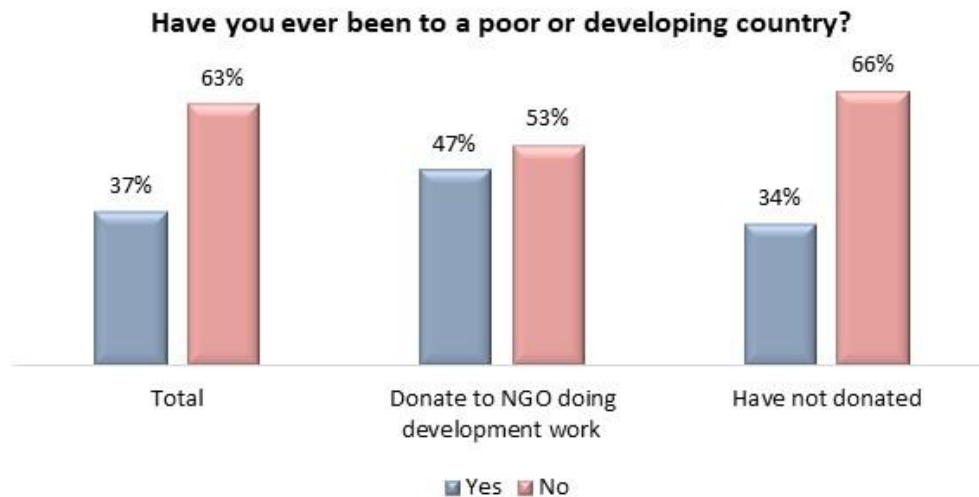
The True Believers are predictably the most likely Canadians to have donated to development work: one-in-three (33%) have. Notably however, four-in-ten (40%) from this most enthusiastic group have not participated in any of the ways listed above. While this group shows a higher level of participation than others, this displays that even among the most charitably inclined, there are still a great deal of people on the sidelines.

**Are you personally involved in any way with these international development issues we’ve been talking about in this survey?**



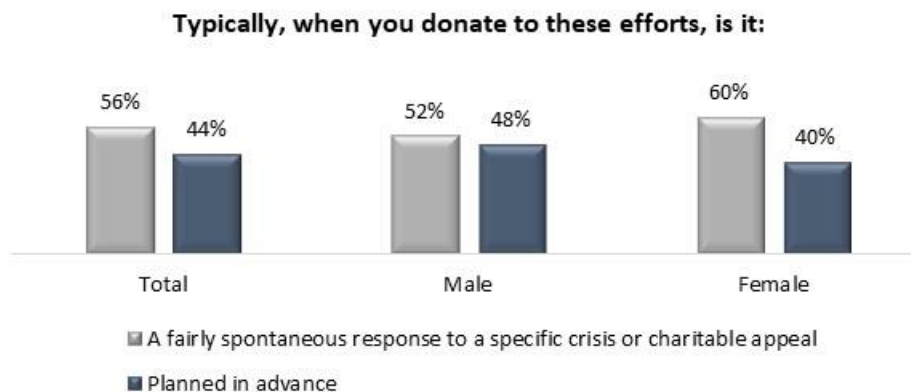
In terms of up close exposure to development work, the Canadian experience is considerably more limited. Slightly under four-in-ten (37%) Canadians say they have visited a poor or developing country, and among this group, under one-in-five (18%) say they have visited a development project in that country. As a percentage of the total population, this comes out to under one-in-ten (7%).

Notably, close to half of those who have donated to charities in this field (47%) say they have visited a poor or developing nation, while this number drops to one-in-three (34%) among non-donors.



### How they give: Spontaneous call or part of a plan?

Calls to action have never been easier to issue for governments and aid organizations. A quick text message to a number on the screen or a tweet referring to a GoFundMe page can quickly route funds to where they're needed. Perhaps because of these diffusion contribution mechanisms, Canadians are leaning to more spontaneous charitable donations in 2017. Asked whether they donate on the fly or plan which causes they are going to support in advance, a majority (56%) say they respond to specific calls to action:



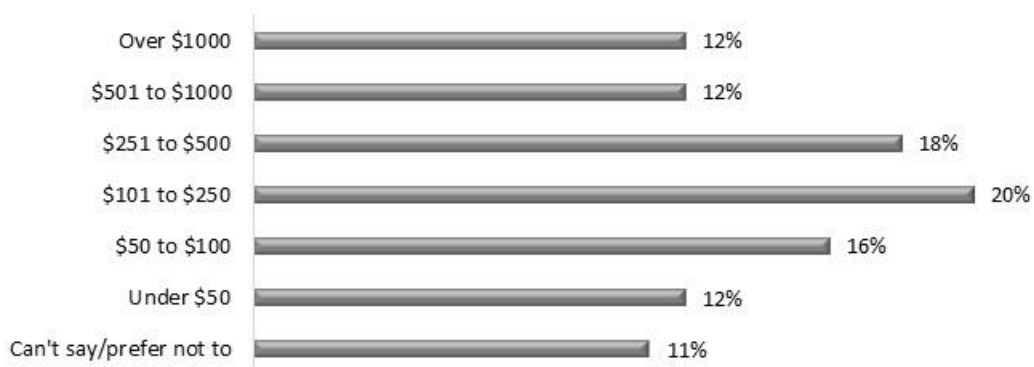
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**How much they give: Planned donation amounts vastly exceed spontaneous ones**

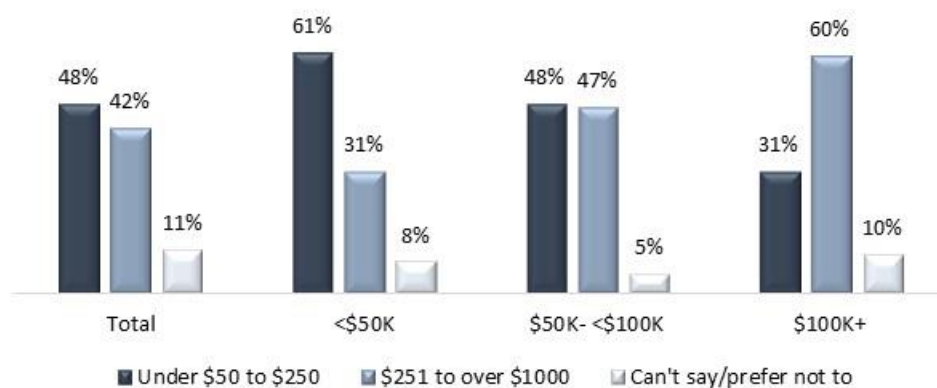
Giving habits vary substantially among Canadians. Asked how much money they have donated in the past couple of years to overseas development charities, an equal number say under \$50 (12%) or over \$1000 (12%). The most common amount, donated by one-in-five (20%), is between \$101 and \$250. Note these figures are from the 21 per cent of Canadians who do donate, and do not include the 79 per cent who do not:

**Approximately how much money have you donated to overseas development charities or projects over the past couple of years?  
(Among those who donate to development NGO's: n=372)**



Donations are correlated with household income. For example, 61 per cent of the donations from those whose household income is less than \$50,000 per year are \$250 or less, while this amount accounts for just 31 per cent of the donations for those who have a household income of over \$100,000.

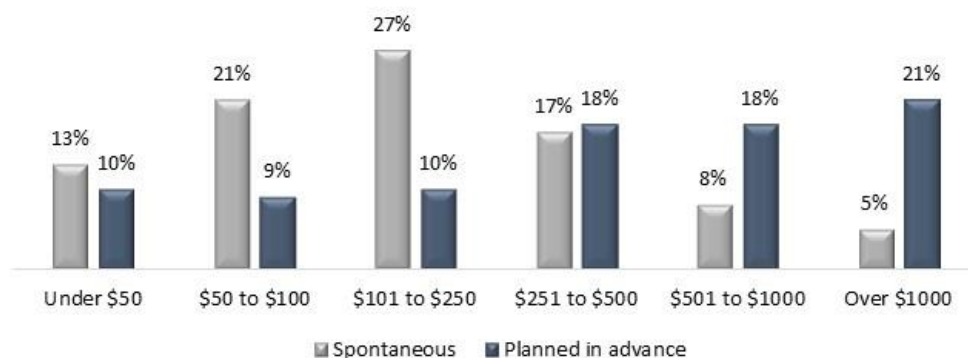
**How much Canadians donated in the last year to development related charities by household income level  
(Among those who donate to development NGOs: n=372)**



Aid organizations often stress the importance of regular giving. Most offer a monthly donation option to donors, which allows the organization the ability to better plan programs with a stable source of funding.

Looking at the data, one can see why NGO's would prefer this model. Planned donations vastly exceed spontaneous giving in terms of the amount donated over the past two years. Six-in-ten (61%) who say they donate mainly in a spontaneous fashion have given under \$250, while 57 per cent of planned donors have given more than that amount:

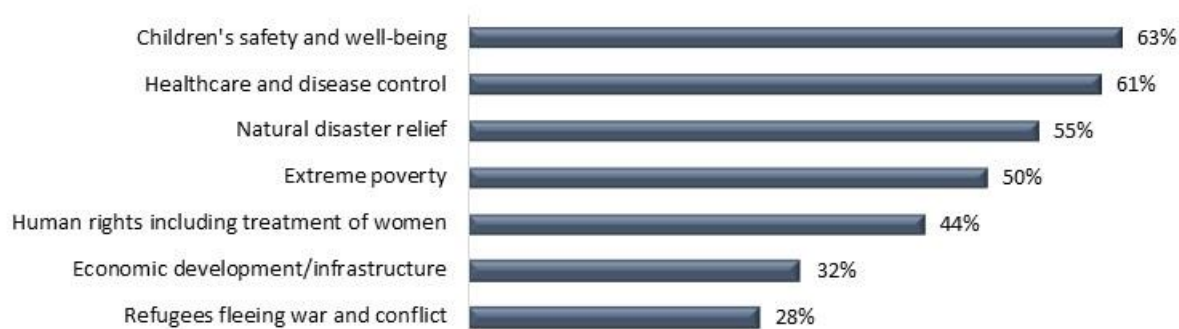
**Approximately how much money have you donated to overseas development charities or projects over the past couple of years?  
(Among those who donate to development NGOs: n=372)**



### What type of aid work do Canadians support?

For those who do give, again, about one-in-five Canadians (21%), there are no shortage of opportunities and issues to focus on. Two issues receive primary focus among donors – children’s issues (63%) and healthcare programs (61%). Lowest on the list of development efforts are economic development programs (32%) as well as refugee aid and assistance (28%):

**Which type(s) of development efforts are you most interested in supporting?  
(Among those who donate to development NGOs: n=372)**

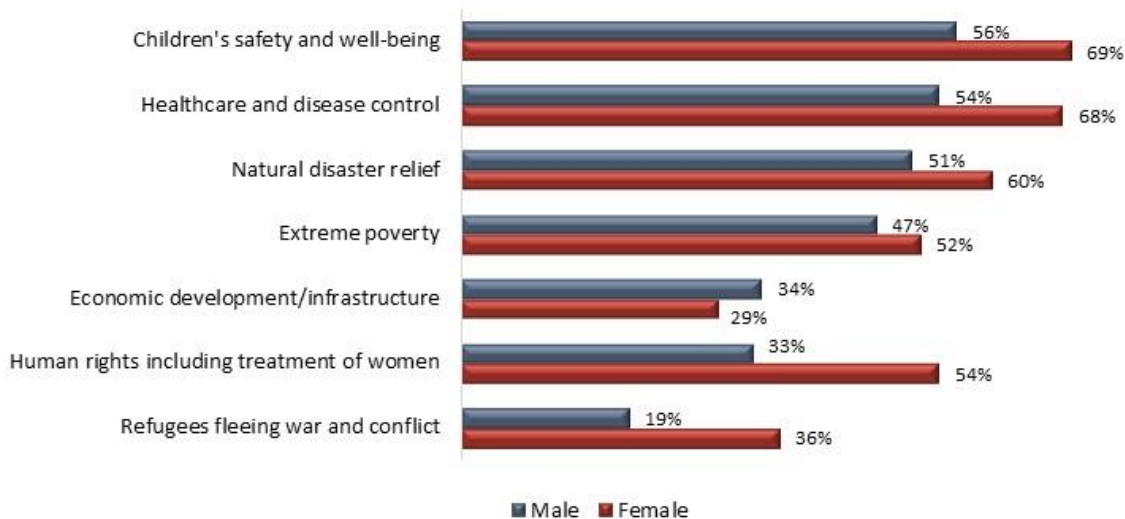


There is significant diversion in which issues are most important to men and women, particularly among the least popular issues. Women are twice as likely to donate to refugee programs and substantially more likely to donate to human rights-based programs.

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The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by each of the four giving groups, [click here](#).