

Public Attitudes to Overseas Aid

MRBI Polling: Public support for overseas aid remains high – but trust is a problem

June 2017

Dóchas has conducted research into the attitudes of the Irish public to government spending on overseas aid. This research has been conducted annually by Dóchas since 2010 (excluding 2016).

Overall, support for overseas aid remains high but as evidenced by a new question on whether the public trust international aid agencies to spend their money well; there is a clear issue with regard to public trust.

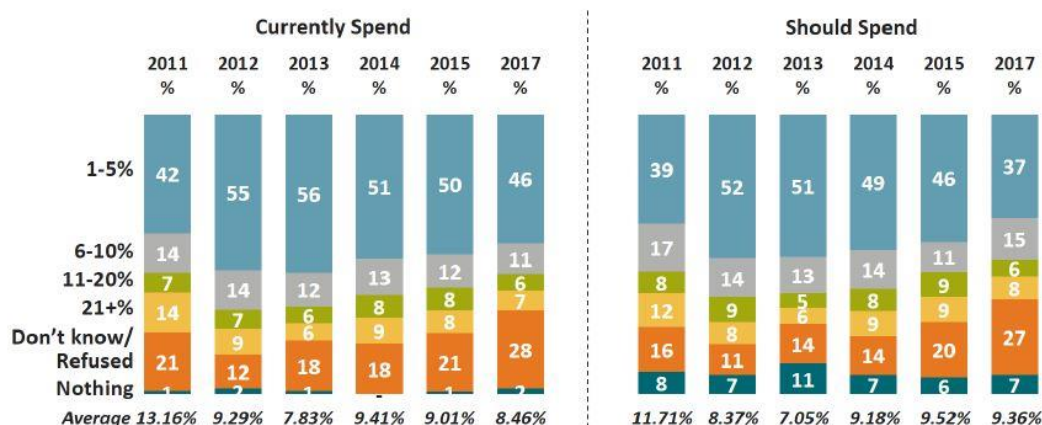
The research was conducted from 18th – 30th April 2017 among a nationally representative sample of 1000 adults aged 15+.

Question 1:

Every year the Irish government spends a proportion of the country's income on overseas aid in some of the poorest countries in the world. What proportion of Ireland's income, in percentage terms, do you think the government spends on overseas aid?

Question 2:

What proportion of Ireland's income, in percentage terms, do you think the government should spend on overseas aid?

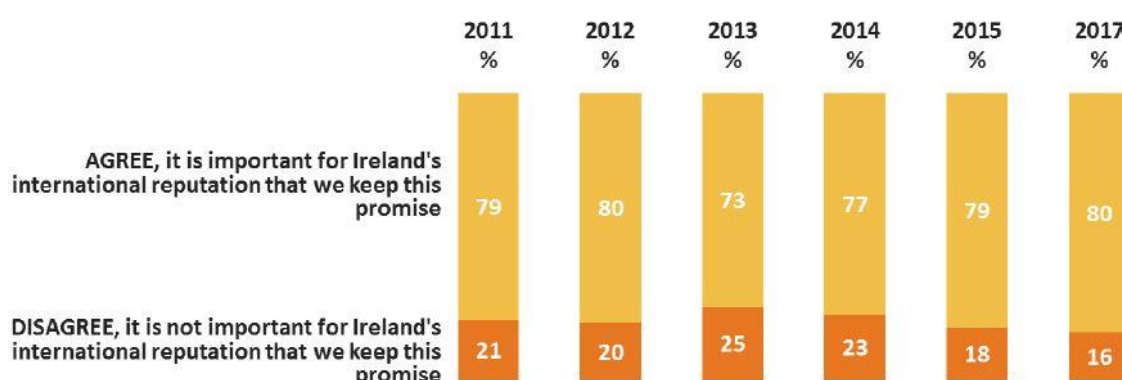


Findings:

- On average, Irish people over-estimate the amount that the government spends on overseas aid with respondents believing we spend an average of 8.46%.
- Irish people believe that we should spend much more than we currently do on overseas aid – 2016 spending on ODA was 0.33%, whereas on average Irish people believe we should be spending 9.36%.
- These results are generally in line with previous surveys – though the percentage of people answering ‘don’t know’ has notably risen since 2015 – up to 28% from 21%.
- The number of people who believe we should spend nothing on overseas aid remains low and at comparable levels to previous surveys.

Question 3:

The Government has promised to spend 0.7% of our national income (that is 70 cent out of every 100 euro) on overseas aid. Do you agree or disagree that it is important for Ireland’s international reputation that we keep this promise?

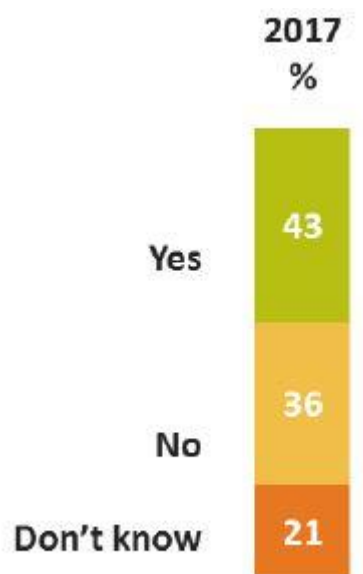


Findings:

- 80% of respondents agreed that it is important for Ireland’s international reputation that we keep our promise to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA.
- This is a slight increase, but generally in line with results from previous surveys.
- There has been long-term, large-scale agreement with this question across the years of these surveys.

Question 4:

Do you think international aid agencies use your money well?



Findings:

- This was a new question added for 2017 to assess the levels of public trust in the work of international aid agencies.
- Only 43% of respondents said that they trust international aid agencies to spend their money well.
- This is concerning – and indicates that while the Irish public continue to be supportive of spending government funds on overseas aid, they are not necessarily as supportive of NGOs.