

## ActionAid Opinion Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary

### ***About the poll***

ActionAid commissioned this poll as a contribution to an ongoing discussion about how best to make sure the public are engaged and informed about aid. In particular, we wanted to know more about how the public views aid quality issues, which ActionAid believes are central to making aid an effective contribution to the fight against poverty.

In designing the poll, we examined and built on existing polling data, in particular the Office of National Statistics' yearly 'Public attitudes to development' survey. ICM<sup>1</sup> interviewed a random sample of 1009 adults aged 18+ by telephone across the UK between 19th – 20th December 2006.

### ***Main findings***

#### **1. Public support for aid is high and more robust than might be assumed**

Our findings show that the public has an astonishingly high estimation of how much public money is being spent on overseas aid. **The mean average estimate for the proportion of government spending accounted for by aid was 18.55%.** The actual figure is only 1.3%. Even accounting for the fact that respondents weren't given a yardstick against which to estimate, only 19% guessed between 1 and 2%. Almost a quarter guessed between 3 and 10% and 24% and another quarter guessed more than 10%. As we might expect, there were substantial differences across class, gender and age, but all categories over-estimated by a considerable amount.

Despite this, **our poll shows – as previous polls have – a very high level of support for current aid expenditure, and for the government's intention to increase aid.** When told that 1.3% or £4.4billion was the correct figure, almost three quarters – 72% - judged this 'about right' or too little. A substantial majority were in favour when told that the government plans to increase aid in order to help meet the Millennium Development Goals. There

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<sup>1</sup> ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at [www.icmresearch.co.uk](http://www.icmresearch.co.uk).

were differences across age and class, but all categories had a majority in support of aid, and of the government's intention to increase it.

Interestingly, **almost three quarters – 74% - think aid should increase even if every penny can't be accounted for**, suggesting that this support is quite robust.

## **2. The public are concerned about aid quality**

The poll showed a high level of scepticism about the UK government's efforts to use its aid effectively. **A majority – 54% - 'tended to' or 'strongly disagreed' that the UK government pays enough attention to ensuring that its aid is used effectively.** This throws the early findings into interesting relief – the public strongly supports government aid, even though they are highly sceptical about how much importance the government attaches to aid effectiveness: more evidence that support for aid is robust.

## **3. Aid sceptics could be won over by improvements to quality**

The 'aid sceptics' – those who opposed the government's plans to increase aid – were asked why they did so. **The majority -52% - said that 'we should spend the money in this country, not overseas.'** Other popular answers were: 'the aid won't get through to the poor– it is lost to corruption' (22%) and 'the aid will be wasted on bureaucracy & expensive consultants' (12%).

Of course, as each respondent could only select one answer, this does not suggest that these were the only reasons they opposed aid increases, but it does indicate that corruption may not dominate the public's list of concerns in the way that some have suggested.

Furthermore, **a majority (57%) of these aid sceptics said they would support the increases 'if the aid provided by the UK could be fully accounted for and guaranteed to help the poorest.'**

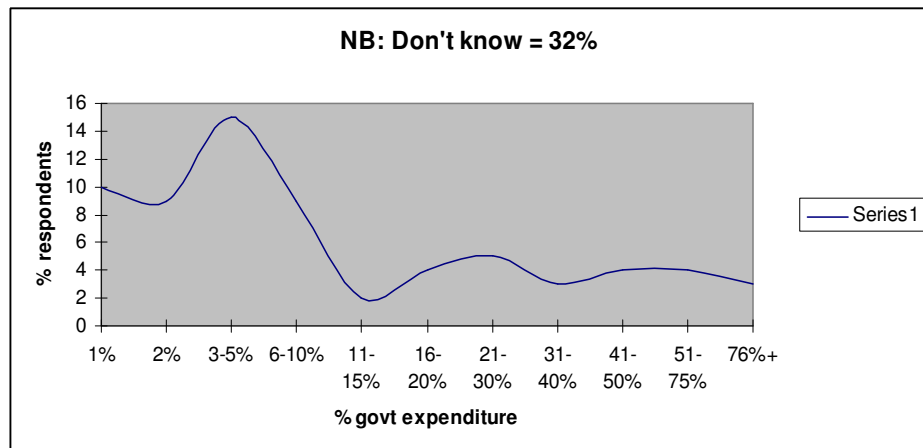
## **4. More public discussion of aid would be welcomed**

**A majority – 56% - thought there was 'too little' public discussion of aid, with only 9% saying there was 'too much.'**

## Questions asked (linked to main summary points)

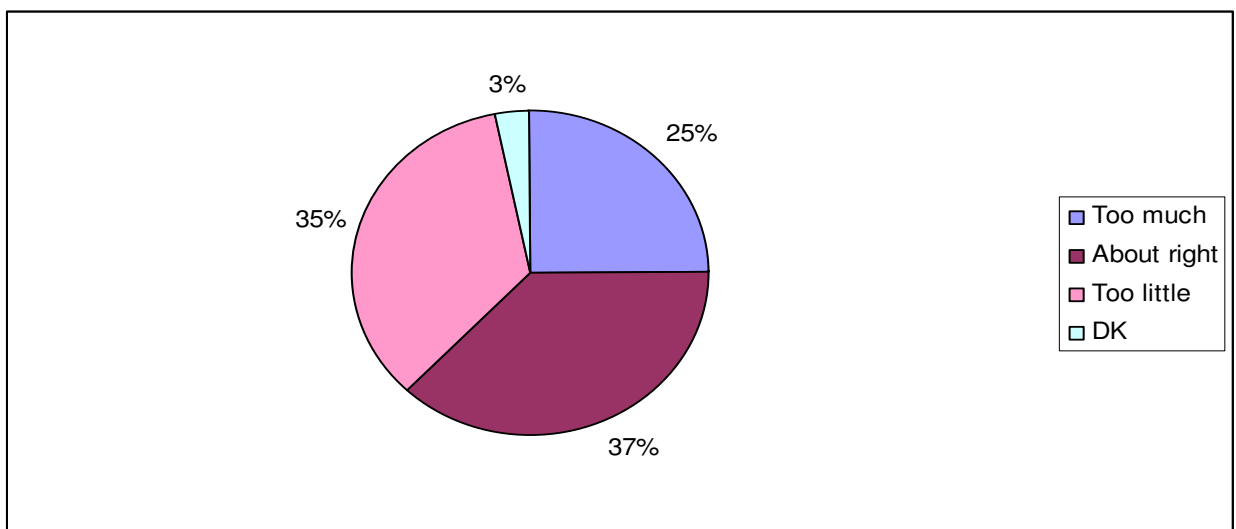
### 1. Public support for aid is high and more robust than might be assumed

**QUESTION:** As a percentage of all government spend how much do you think the UK government spent on aid in 2005-2006?



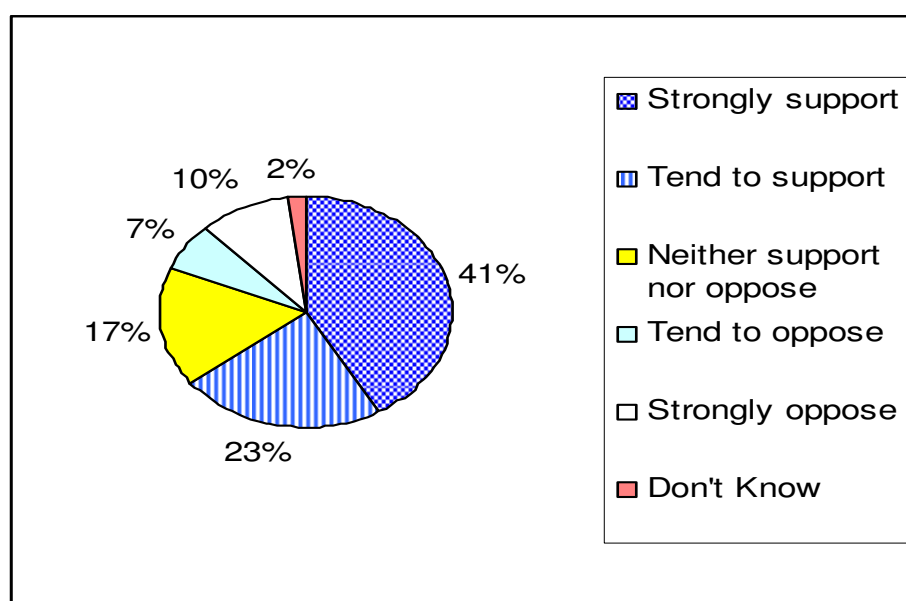
	Gender		Age							Social Class			
	All	M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	D E
Mean avg estimate (%)	19	15	23	22	21	17	15	20	18	11	17	25	24

**QUESTION:** Do you think the UK Government spends too much, too little or about the right amount on international aid?



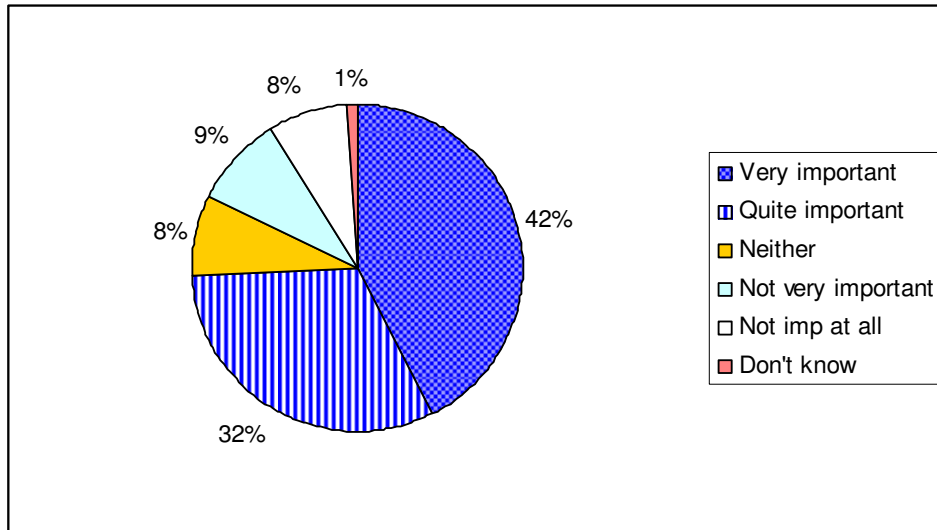
	Gender		Age							Social Class			
	All	M	F	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 +	AB	C 1	C 2	D E
<b>Too little</b>	<b>35</b>	32	37	46	40	42	36	29	20	42	40	26	28
<b>About right</b>	<b>37</b>	39	36	39	42	34	38	36	36	35	37	41	38
<b>Too much</b>	<b>25</b>	26	23	13	16	22	22	30	40	18	21	30	32
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>3</b>	2	4	2	2	2	4	5	4	5	3	2	3

**QUESTION: To what extent do you support or oppose the planned government increase in international aid?**



	Gender		Age							Social Class			
	All	M	F	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 +	AB	C 1	C 2	D E
<b>Strongly support</b>	<b>42</b>	40	44	33	44	43	47	43	40	50	40	41	37
<b>Tend to support</b>	<b>23</b>	20	25	31	26	23	22	16	22	22	27	16	25
<b>Neither support nor oppose</b>	<b>17</b>	17	16	27	16	18	13	13	15	13	18	19	16
<b>Tend to oppose</b>	<b>7</b>	8	6	5	7	8	7	8	6	8	5	8	7
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	<b>10</b>	12	7	5	4	6	10	17	14	6	8	13	12

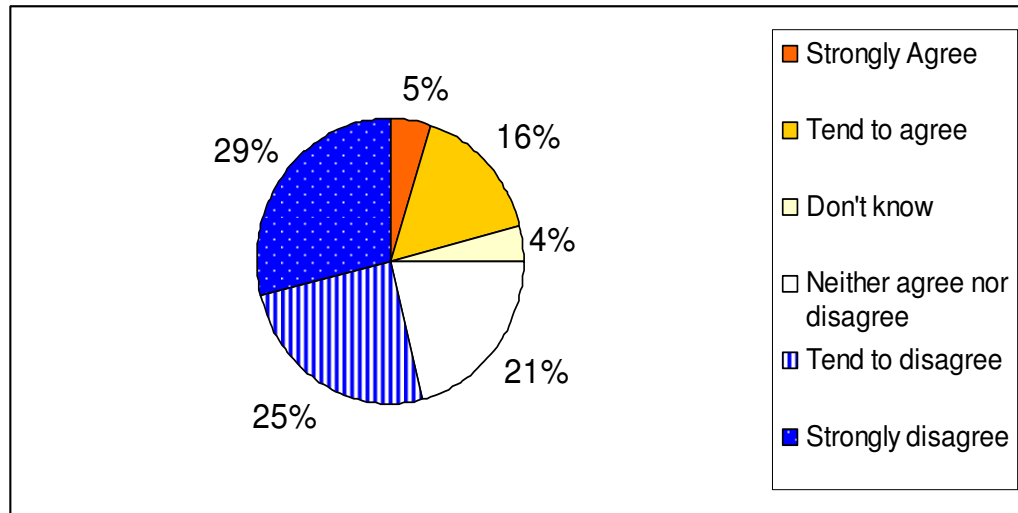
**QUESTION: How important do you think it is for the UK government to increase aid, even if it can not guarantee that every single penny will be accounted for?**



	Gender		Age							Social Class			
	All	M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	D E
<b>Very important</b>	<b>43</b>	43	43	45	41	37	41	39	51	44	42	40	43
<b>Quite important</b>	<b>32</b>	29	35	31	31	38	33	32	26	34	33	27	33
<b>Neither</b>	<b>8</b>	8	7	7	14	7	7	5	5	6	10	11	4
<b>Not very important</b>	<b>9</b>	10	9	11	8	7	9	12	10	9	7	12	11
<b>Not imp at all</b>	<b>8</b>	9	6	6	5	8	11	8	7	5	8	8	9
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>1</b>	1	1	0	0	2	0	4	0	2	0	1	1

## 2. The public are concerned about aid quality

**QUESTION:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the UK government pays enough attention to ensuring that its aid is used effectively?



	Gender		Age							Social Class			
	All	M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C 1	C 2	D E
Strongly Agree	5	7	4	6	6	4	5	6	4	4	4	7	6
Tend to agree	16	14	18	24	16	17	13	15	15	15	15	19	16
Neither agree nor disagree	21	18	24	23	24	25	25	19	12	20	26	19	19
Tend to disagree	25	27	23	27	26	21	22	26	28	26	23	23	27
Strongly disagree	29	30	27	20	24	29	33	29	33	30	28	28	28
Don't know	4	4	4	1	4	4	2	5	8	5	4	4	4

## 3. Aid sceptics could be won over by improvements to quality

**Question:** Which of the following reasons best explains why you oppose the planned increase in aid? (to opponents of aid increases only)

A- 52% = We should spend the money in this country, not overseas

B- 22% = The aid won't get through to the poor– it is lost to corruption

C- 12% = The aid will be wasted on bureaucracy & expensive consultants

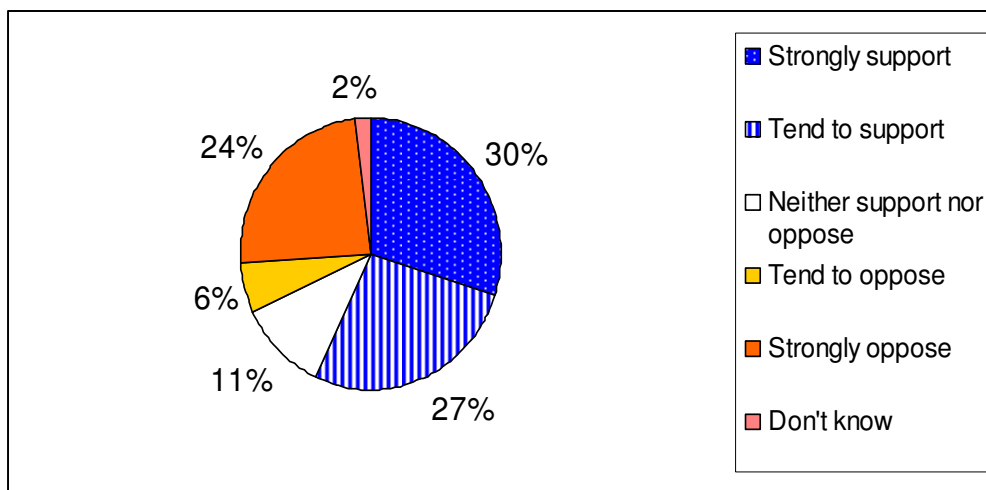
D- 6% = The government should focus on more important issues, like making trade fair

E- 6% = The aid will be used to promote our own foreign policy interests, not help the poor

F- 1% = None of these

	All	Gender		Age						Social Class			
		M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	DE
A	52	53	53	39	58	49	47	48	60	48	46	45	65
B	22	22	22	16	17	41	21	17	18	38	26	16	13
C	12	13	13	0	17	2	14	23	6	3	22	15	7
D	6	4	4	14	3	0	15	7	4	11	1	11	3
E	6	8	8	31	4	3	0	3	11	0	1	11	10
F	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	3	0	2

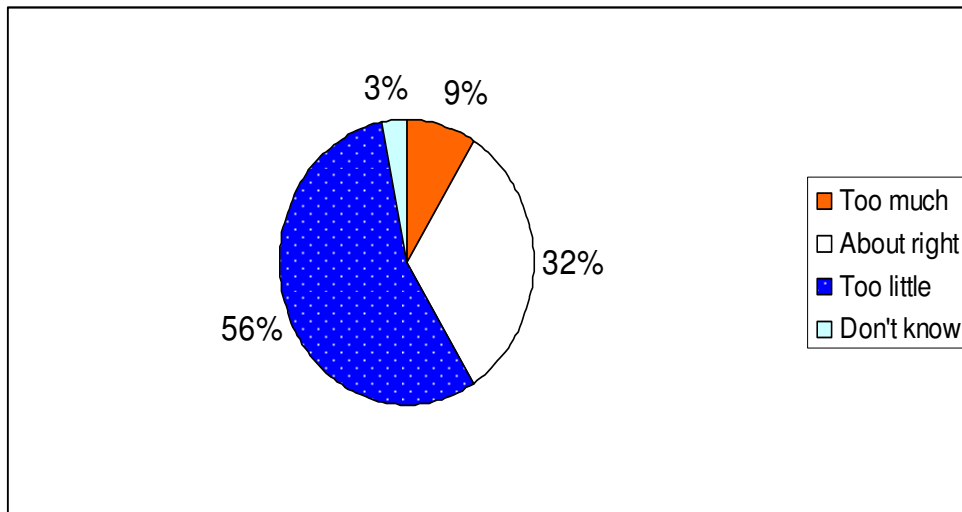
**Question: If the aid provided by the UK could be fully accounted for and guaranteed to help the poorest, to what extent would you support or oppose the planned increase in aid? (To opponents of increase only)**



	All	Gender		Age						Social Class			
		M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	D E
Strongly support	30	32	26	27	51	27	27	25	28	23	33	39	23
Tend to support	27	25	29	45	20	27	4	37	31	38	23	20	28
Neither support nor oppose	11	8	16	28	11	19	14	10	2	12	9	14	11
Tend to oppose	6	6	7	0	5	5	20	2	3	6	8	4	6
Strongly oppose	24	26	22	0	13	19	34	22	34	19	24	20	33

#### 4. More public discussion of aid would be welcomed

Do you believe there is too much, too little, or about the right amount of public discussion regarding aid given by the UK?



	All	Gender		Age						Social Class			
		M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	D E
Too much	9	10	8	6	7	12	5	11	12	5	7	13	11
About right	32	35	30	37	32	30	30	26	39	27	30	36	37
Too little	56	52	59	56	59	56	63	58	45	64	61	50	47