



British Foreign Policy Group

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# Swing Voters and the Electoral Significance of Foreign Aid: A Study in Conservative- Lib Dem Marginals

British Foreign Policy Group &  
the Coalition for Global Prosperity

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## The British Foreign Policy Group

The British Foreign Policy Group (BFPG) is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to advancing the UK's global influence, at a crucial time in the nation's modern history. Our core objective is to bridge the link between the domestic and international spheres – recognising that Britain's foreign policy choices are shaped by our social landscape at home, and the social, economic and political constraints of both our allies and strategic rivals. BFPG works as the connective tissue between the UK's policy-makers, businesses, institutions, and ordinary citizens, to promote the connectivity and understanding needed to underpin Britain's national resilience and global leadership in the 21st Century.

The BFPG produces pioneering social research, which provides a nuanced, holistic picture of the social trends shaping public attitudes on foreign policy in the UK, our allies and competitors. This research provides a unique degree of strategic foresight, at a time in which domestic conditions are bearing down on political decision-making on the world stage. The BFPG believes that a strong and united nation at home is the essential foundation of a confident and effective British foreign policy.



[www.bfpg.co.uk](http://www.bfpg.co.uk)

## Coalition for Global Prosperity (CGP)

The Coalition for Global Prosperity brings together political, military, business and faith leaders who believe that an effective development budget, alongside an active diplomatic and defence strategy, keeps Britain at the forefront of saving lives, alleviating poverty and bringing freedom, security and prosperity to those who need it most. We believe that Britain is at its best when it acts as a global leader in development as well as in defence and diplomacy. Since our launch in 2018, the Coalition for Global Prosperity has hosted the past four Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Rt Hon David Cameron and Rt Hon Gordon Brown as well as figures including former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Rowan Williams, former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Sir David Attenborough.



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# This Project

The UK is an established global donor for aid, and its international development programmes are some of the most effective and widely respected in the world. These investments contribute significantly to the UK's global reputation, as well as our capacity to influence and project our soft power. They are also a foundational underpinning of our efforts to share prosperity and to promote peace and security across the globe.

The UK's international development activities have been under scrutiny during recent years, as the UK Government has undertaken an historic project to merge the Department for International Development into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, creating a super-department – the FCDO – which supports the holistic integration of our foreign policy activities. The pandemic has also focused attention on the costs of our development investments, and the pressures on Government finances have led to the decision to temporarily reduce the UK's Overseas Development Assistance budget from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5% of GNI until the fiscal situation stabilises and improves.

Although the British public largely supports the decision to temporarily reduce international development spending, it is also the case that they recognise the moral and strategic value of the UK's aid investments. The enduring political commitment over the past decade to remain one of the world's leading aid donors has formalised and embedded this issue within the public consciousness. And while international development may not always be considered as fundamental as other foreign policy and security investments, it remains a point of pride and identity for many Britons.

This project sought to explore the salience and electoral significance of international development and foreign aid amongst voters in Conservative-Liberal Democrat marginal seats. To do this, the BFPG first conducted a rapid evidence review of UK public opinion on foreign aid, and then worked with the Coalition for Global Prosperity to design a survey to gauge citizens' instincts, the salience of various attitudes, and to test a range of different narrative framings around international development.

The survey was conducted online by the pollsters Opinium Research between 1 April – 13 April 2021, capturing a sample of 50 respondents for each of the 30 seats. The sample was then weighted to be socially and politically representative within those seats. Please note that the survey itself is not nationally representative, as it only focuses on a select number of seats. The total sample size was 1,500 respondents.

This report presents a snapshot of the findings of the rapid evidence review, and then the comprehensive findings of the original survey research – both the top-line findings, presented as an executive summary, and the demographic, geographic and socio-economic breakdowns of the results. Overall, the research contributes new evidence to the understanding of public attitudes towards foreign aid, including areas open to both policy and political influence, and highlights the potential electoral significance of international development in marginal seats of current and future importance in the UK's political landscape.

## Research Resources

Many of the BFPG research findings presented in this document draw on the organisation's 2021 Annual Survey of Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Britain, which is available to access at [www.bfpg.co.uk](http://www.bfpg.co.uk), alongside other relevant pieces of original qualitative and quantitative public opinion research conducted internally and externally, and harnessed as part of this project.

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# Original Research: Executive Summary of Research Findings

## The UK's Global Reputation

- The two most commonly cited words to describe how Britain should be seen in the world by citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are 'responsible' and 'dependable', followed by 'industrious and hard-working', 'plays by the rules' and 'open'.
- These choices indicate that, for Britons in these seats, the conception of the UK's international role is formed with a degree of self-consciousness towards other nations in the global community, and the role we play within the liberal world order. In effect, the sense of the nation is constituted by our steadfast and authentic relationships with other nations.
- For these citizens, our openness and connectivity are seen as strengths, as is our entrepreneurial spirit and intellectual capital.
- Messages that evoke the UK's enduring values and the projection of these on the world stage are received positively amongst citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, with 57% agreeing that the UK should lead by example as a 'force for good' in the world, and just 9% actively disagreeing with this statement.

## Issues and Policy Salience

- When forming views about their political choices and affiliations, policies on climate change (39%), defence and security (39%) and international trade (38%) are the highest-priority foreign policy issues for citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats. Diplomacy and international cooperation (32%) are slightly less likely to be viewed as important, and UK international aid and development (23%) is the least important foreign policy issue to respondents when determining how they will vote.
- These findings suggest that there is a strategic advantage to educating and communicating the relationship between international development and other areas of the UK's foreign policy, such as climate action, security and trade.
- One-quarter of constituents in the marginal seats surveyed for this project identify with feeling pride in the UK's commitment to being a world leader in international aid, closely followed by just over one-fifth not having an opinion (21%). This is followed by feeling pleased (16%), frustrated (10%), ambivalent (9%), safe (7%), angry (5%) and anxious (5%).
- The out-performance of 'pride' in word association emphasises the significance of the UK's aid and development investments for citizens' sense of national identity. However, the substantial proportion of respondents who feel no emotional response also highlights the overall lack of salience of this policy area compared to some other aspects of the UK's international policy.
- This should not necessarily be seen as a negative finding, as it speaks to both the capacity for persuasion, the potential resonance of more 'hard-minded' motivations to supporting international aid, and also the capacity for citizens to accept its importance without an emotional stake in the issue. In time, this can imbue this policy area with a greater degree of resilience.

## Foreign Aid Spending

- The largest plurality of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats support spending 'about the same' as our allies on the UK's aid and development investments (46%), with a quarter believing the UK should spend less than its allies, and a fifth wishing the UK to spend more.
- These findings somewhat mirror the choices respondents made around the UK's international reputation, suggesting a desire for us to fall around the middle of the pack and emphasise burden-sharing, cooperation and shared values.

- Importantly, citizens living in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are more likely to say that they feel uninformed (41%) than informed (27%) about where the UK's aid and development projects are directed, and the outcome of these investments. There is clearly significant room to advance understanding and awareness of the UK's aid and development projects.
- Britons surveyed for this project overwhelmingly (78%) support the concept of enhancing the scrutiny of the UK's aid and development investments, indicating a strong preference for accountability around tax-payer spending.
- Although a greater emphasis on highlighting the checks and balances that underpin foreign aid programmes may not in and of itself counter citizens' instinctive concerns about these issues, if combined with greater visibility of the transformational nature of the UK's investments themselves, it is certainly feasible that this transparency could help contribute to a stronger and more sustainable degree of support for aid spending overall.
- It is important to note that, in the two questions where respondents were given the opportunity to say that they do not support the UK's aid and development investments at all, the proportion who chose these responses was very small. And significantly, the proportion who chose this option was higher (11% vs. 7%) on the question where citizens were asked about aid and development spending as a concept, rather than the priority issues that the UK Government should direct their aid and development spending towards.
- This chimes with broader BFPG research indicating that programmatic and outcome-focused frames are more compelling to Britons than questions about how spending is directed.

### Foreign Aid Priorities

- Among citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, the outcome that citizens most want to see achieved from the UK's investments in aid and development is ensuring that all people have their basic human needs of health and shelter met (39%). This is followed by reducing poverty and tackling global inequality (25%), empowering communities to create their own prosperity (23%) and advancing the UK's economic and trading relationships (19%).
- Preventing environmental degradation and endangered animals (17%), reducing conflict to improve global security (16%) and improving women's safety and education (13%) are less likely to be seen as priority outcomes by citizens in these seats.
- These findings make clear that citizens in the surveyed seats make distinctions between foreign aid investments that are seen to be fundamentally supporting baseline standards of human need, and those which are more strategically oriented or addressing what they perceive to be 'second order' issues.
- Moreover, it highlights that the issues we know that citizens do care about to a significant degree, such as climate change, are not necessarily linked in their minds to aid and development investments. Again, this emphasises the urgent need and opportunity to 'tell the story' of the UK's aid spending beyond simply supporting basic human survival.
- The majority (59%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals believe that the UK's aid and development programmes should be time-limited and focused on allowing local people to take control of their own futures. A further 34% neither agree nor disagree with this statement, and only 7% disagree. These findings suggest that messages of empowerment and 'levelling the playing field' to help aid recipients 'stand on their own feet' are likely to find positive reception amongst these voters.
- One of the most interesting findings in the narrative testing is that the language of values, which has been prominent in the UK Government's messaging about the UK's international relationships, does not trump citizens' recognition of the supremacy of need in prioritising aid and development spending. Despite scrutiny of UK Government spending towards some of the UK's strategic rivals and/or questionable regimes, more than three times as many citizens in marginal seats (36%) believe aid should be directed to people most in need rather than those who share our values (10%). However, a further 32% believe that the spending should encompass a balance between the two.
- Strikingly, an even larger number of respondents (64%) agree with statements that infer proximity between Britons and the recipients of aid and development investments. 64% of those living in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats agree that 'human rights and values

are universal, and those living in the poorest parts of the world ultimately share the same hopes and dreams as I do', including a quarter of respondents who strongly agree. Just 7% of respondents disagree.

- Messages of universalism, community and human rights clearly triumph over other concerns citizens may hold regarding aid expenditure, or their scepticism about perceived lack of direct benefits that aid investments might deliver for the UK.

### Positive Impacts of Aid and Development Spending

- Half of Britons (48%) living in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals agree that the UK's aid and development investments have been impactful and transformative, and just 11% disagree with this statement. A further 41% neither agree nor disagree, which aligns closely with the self-reported knowledge gap that citizens identify in terms of their understanding of the issues at stake and outcomes from spending investments.
- When asked whether the UK's aid and development investments encourage the UK to be viewed as a reliable and generous partner, 88% of Britons in the surveyed seats believe they foster a positive influence on our reputation, of whom 13% believe the UK's leadership on aid influences 'a great deal', and 36% believe it influences 'a fair amount'. A further 39% of citizens identify a small but favourable influence, and just 12% believe it makes no difference.
- These findings make clear that Britons in these seats recognise that the UK's aid and development investments do contribute in a positive manner to our global reputation, although there is clearly scope to more strongly emphasise this relationship via respected international voices – especially given this survey has been taken after a long period of publicity around the 0.7% commitment reduction.
- A clear majority (69%) of surveyed Britons believe the UK's development spending does contribute to the nation's security in a positive manner, although this recognition is not necessarily felt with significant conviction. Just 11% believe it contributes 'a great deal' to UK national security and 29% believe it contributes 'a fair amount'. Meanwhile, 29% believe it contributes just 'a small amount' and a substantial 31% do not believe it makes a difference at all.
- When asked to consider the positive impact of aid and development on global security more generally, however, Britons surveyed in marginal seats are somewhat more likely to recognise the benefits – although this movement is largely between those who deny any link at all (down to 21%) and those who recognise only a 'small amount' of positive influence (up to 37%).
- These findings suggest that respondents are less knowledgeable about the links between aid and the UK's national security, suggesting that increasing public awareness and knowledge of these specific links between global stability and safety at home, could increase support for resources being directed towards development.
- Britons in the marginal seats surveyed for this project are most likely to recognise that the UK's aid and development investments support the project of the 'enduring strength of the UK's values' or 'sets us apart from other nations in a positive way' than to believe they contribute to achieving other strategic objectives. However, we can see the emergence of some meaningful foundations on which to build public understanding of the benefits of development spending to the UK's foreign policy objectives and trade opportunities.
- A fifth of Britons surveyed recognised that the UK's development programmes contribute 'a great deal' to the UK's international reputation and our moral mission in the world. Overall, 88% of Britons in the Conservative-Lib Dem marginals acknowledged, to some extent, the positive contribution aid spending makes to our values projection, and 84% recognised the positive contribution to our international standing, even if only to a small degree.
- While there is clearly room to improve the assessment of the value of international development to the UK's foreign policy goals – recognised as contributing 'a great deal' by just 10% of Britons surveyed – and trade opportunities – recognised as contributing 'a great deal' by 13% of Britons surveyed – an evident majority of Britons in these seats acknowledge the positive influence of international development in these areas, even if only marginally. Overall, just 14% of those in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals said that our aid and development investments contribute nothing towards achieving these objectives.

### **Aid Spending Reductions, the Coronavirus Pandemic and Zero-Sum Frames**

- 38% of Britons living in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe that the UK Government's decision to reduce the nation's aid and development spending from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5% will have a negative impact on the UK's global reputation, 31% believe it won't have any impact, and 15% believe it will have a positive impact. A further 16% of Britons living in these seats are unsure of their position.
- There is no clear consensus from respondents on how the UK's global reputation will be impacted by these choices. However, there does appear to be some degree of awareness about the impact of these spending reductions in particular that extends beyond the core group of Britons in these seats who are strongly supportive of aid and development spending more generally.
- Almost half (45%) of citizens living in the marginal constituencies surveyed agree to some extent that Britain has a moral obligation to continue to help the world's poorest people even when the UK's economy is going through a difficult time. This compares to around a quarter who disagree, and 31% who are neutral.
- The widespread support for stopping or reducing the UK's aid and development spending during the coronavirus pandemic identified in the BFPG's research suggests that voters in these marginal seats are somewhat more favourable towards maintaining development investments than the British electorate as a whole. The large group of 'neutral' citizens is also likely reflective of a lack of understanding of both the rationale and implications of the spending reductions.
- One of the most positive messages tested within the survey was around the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted global connectivity and how the health and well-being of the world's citizens affects us all, with 70% of respondents agreeing with this statement and just 7% disagreeing. Around a quarter (23%) of the surveyed citizens strongly agreed, and the same proportion felt neutral – considerably fewer than in many of the other narratives tested within the survey.
- Hence, although the pandemic has undoubtedly prompted a zero-sum frame in citizens' thinking about aid and development spending, it also has the potential to better reinforce the direct links between the developing and developed world in a manner that bridges both self-interest and moral impulses.
- When presented with both zero-sum and community framings simultaneously in the same question, citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals become sharply divided in their instincts. The same proportion of respondents (30%) identified most strongly with the moral argument, agreeing that 'the UK has an obligation to help the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world and that in doing so, we uphold our values', as believes that 'many individuals and communities in the UK continue to live in poverty, and overseas development assistance takes away funds that should be spent at home'.
- However, two smaller groups of citizens swerved the moral argument for aid and development spending and rather recognised its strategic (12%) or economic (11%) benefits. This means that, despite the zero-sum frame being presented to respondents, a majority (53%) of citizens chose to declare their support for aid and development investments and rejected the notion that this was coming at the cost of measures to reduce poverty at home.
- When briefed about the competition that has been fostered around access to vaccines and the vacuum that has opened up for the UK's strategic rivals such as Russia and China to provide these scarce resources to the developing world, the majority of citizens in these marginal constituencies recognise that this poses a risk to the UK's own interests (63%) – although only 15% believe that it poses a critical risk. A further 15% believe it is not an important risk and only 5% do not believe it is a risk at all. However, a notable minority (18%) are unsure on whether this poses a risk to the UK's own interests.
- The largest plurality of respondents in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats believe the UK should encourage our allies to help provide vaccines for the developing world alongside us, so we can solve the problem together (47%), which demonstrates again the tendency for these citizens to want to see the UK as part of a pack of friends and allies working collaboratively and sharing burdens.



- However, the next largest proportion of respondents believe that the UK should focus on its pandemic response at home and ensure all Britons are vaccinated before we consider providing support to the developing world (29%), which aligns with the percentage of respondents who did not recognise that reducing the UK's aid budget would negatively impact the UK's reputation.
- There is significantly less support amongst those surveyed for the UK investing in providing vaccines to the developing world, even if that means some less vulnerable Britons are vaccinated later (11%). This issue may well have the potential to capture interest in a way that other issues pertaining to the developing world cannot: just 3% of respondents thought the issue did not concern the UK and that it should not respond, and 9% were unsure of their position – strikingly low compared to many other questions within the survey.

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# Original Research: Full Demographic and Geographical Findings

Beneath the top-level findings outlined above, lie important nuances in public opinion across demographic groups and regions. In this section, we set out the notable distinctions across age, gender, socio-economic status, region, political affiliation and Leave-Remain voting behaviour in the 2016 EU Referendum.

Overall, we find that younger citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are the most supportive of the UK's aid and development programmes. This support is primarily values-driven, with younger Britons in the constituencies surveyed preferring to prioritise spending towards those with the greatest need over the UK's immediate interests. However, younger citizens in the constituencies surveyed are also the most likely to perceive benefits to the UK from aid and development investments, including to both national and international security. Collectively, this creates a strong and resilient foundation of support for the UK's aid and development investments among the younger generations, who will hold an increasingly important voice in these constituencies in the coming years.

Levels of support for aid and development spending in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are also strongly contingent on levels of personal economic security, with full-time workers, higher-income earners and those from higher socio-economic backgrounds consistently more supportive of aid and development investments, less concerned about the financial costs, and more persuaded by a sense of moral obligation than many of their counterparts with higher insecurity profiles. The notable exception to this is the unemployed, who have some of the strongest senses of moral obligation to support those in developing countries and are among the least supportive of greater scrutiny of aid and development, perhaps driven by their own experiences and reliance on state support. Broadly however, citizens in these constituencies who are more economically secure tend to be more supportive of aid and development investments, and as such, efforts to address regional inequalities through programmes such as those associated with the Levelling Up agenda, may also offer a potential dividend in terms of conjuring a greater degree of support for aid and development investments.

While women are more supportive than men of the values that underpin the UK's aid programmes, they are also more sceptical about the financial implications of aid and development investments. However, women are significantly less confident in their views, and less likely to view themselves as informed about the UK's aid and development investments, which impacts the strength of their positions in both directions. Geographically, significant regional variations are evident, with residents in constituencies surveyed in London the most supportive of UK aid and development across the board. In contrast, residents in constituencies surveyed in areas such as Yorkshire and Humberside are significantly more opposed to aid spending, in part because they are often among the least convinced about the positive impacts of aid.

Finally, political views play a significant role in shaping the views of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies, particularly along the Remain-Leave axis. Remain voters are consistently more supportive of aid and development investments, and more likely to perceive a range of benefits than Leave voters, who often show a high degree of uncertainty and ambivalence in their views around aid and development. Overall, Labour and Lib Dem voters tend to be driven by a stronger sense of moral obligation to support the UK's aid and development investments and have lower degrees of scepticism or cynicism towards their efficacy. However, there is also a consistent minority of Conservative voters – around 15% –

who are strident in their positive feelings towards international development, and their high levels of engagement with foreign policy, and their commitment to the Party itself, may render these a powerful influencing voice within their social circles and communities.

### Britain's International Reputation

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Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are most likely to believe the UK is seen as 'responsible' (18%), followed by 'dependable' (16%) and 'industrious and hard-working' (14%). These are followed by the perception that Britain is seen as a nation which 'plays by the rules' (14%), as 'open' (14%), 'generous' (12%), as a nation which 'cooperates with others' (11%) and as 'innovative' (11%). At 6%, citizens in the constituencies surveyed are least likely to believe the UK is viewed as 'sophisticated'. Furthermore, 33% of those in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies do not believe any of the statements provided capture how the UK is viewed in the world.

Some distinctions are evident in how different genders imagine the UK is seen in the world. The sharpest gender difference in phrases associated with Britain among the constituencies surveyed is 'innovative', with men (16%) more likely than women (6%) to believe that Britain is seen as an innovative nation. However, women (14%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals are more likely than men (9%) to believe that the UK is seen as a nation that 'cooperates with others', although women (35%) are more likely than men (30%) in the constituencies surveyed to not believe any of the descriptions sum up how Britain is viewed in the world. BAME Britons (16%) in the constituencies surveyed are also significantly more likely to believe the UK is viewed as 'sophisticated' than White Britons (5%), and White Britons (12%) are more likely than BAME Britons (6%) to believe the UK is defined by 'cooperat(ing) with others'.

Citizens under 35 in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are also more likely to view the UK as 'innovative', relative to other age groups, and significantly more likely to believe that Britain is seen as 'sophisticated' (15%) than those aged between 35-54 (3%) and over-55s (2%). However, over-55s (20%) are more likely than under-35s (9%) to believe that the UK is viewed as a nation that 'plays by the rules' (9%), or to believe it 'cooperates with others' (15% to 10%), suggesting that older Britons surveyed are more likely to believe that the UK's international identity is constructed based on its behaviour within the international sphere, relative to younger Britons, who view the UK's own domestic success as more important to conceptions of the UK.

This trend in which some demographics disproportionately prioritise domestic success as defining perceptions of the UK, can also be seen at the regional level. Residents in London in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are the most likely to believe London is viewed as 'innovative' (18%), compared to just 5% of residents in Yorkshire and Humberside, and are the most likely to believe the UK is viewed as 'sophisticated' (12%). In turn, residents in the East of England (46%) and the North West (41%) in the constituencies surveyed are almost twice as likely as residents in London (25%) to believe none of the proposed descriptions accurately depict how the UK is viewed in the world.

On a socio-economic level, in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, citizens earning over £40,000 a year (23%) are the most likely to believe the UK is viewed as 'responsible', particularly relative to those earning £20,001 to £40,000 a year (16%), who are the most likely to believe the UK is viewed as 'generous' (14%). Britons working part-time (20%), full-time (19%) and retirees (19%) in these constituencies are also particularly likely to believe the UK is viewed as responsible, compared to just 11% of those who are unemployed. 40% of those who are unemployed do not believe any of the suggested terms accurately reflect how the UK is viewed in the world. The proportion not associating with any of the terms is also higher among those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (36%) than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (31%).

EU Referendum voting is a particularly salient factor in influencing how constituents believe Britain is perceived. For example, one-fifth of Leave voters (20%) in these marginal constituencies believe that others see Britain as 'playing by the rules' compared to 10% of Remain voters. Remain voters in the constituencies surveyed are also more likely to believe none of the above descriptions accurately portray Britain, with almost half believing as such (46%), compared to just 22% of Leave voters. Similarly, Lib Dem voters (49%), and Labour voters (45%) are twice as likely as Conservative voters (18%) to believe none of the above descriptions accurately depict Britain. As such, Conservative voters in the surveyed areas identify the most strongly with all the suggested descriptions of the UK, and the large extent to which they believe Britain is perceived as responsible (27%) and dependable (24%), or that Britain plays by the rules (22%), relative to both Labour voters and Lib Dem voters, is particularly notable.

### Most Salient Foreign Policy Issues in Electoral Decisions

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Policies on climate change (39%), defence and security (39%) and international trade (38%) are considered the highest-priority foreign policy issues for citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies when forming views about political parties. At 32%, diplomacy and international cooperation are slightly less likely to be viewed as important, while UK international aid and development (23%) is the least important foreign policy issue in determining the views of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies on political parties.

Gender and ethnicity appear to influence citizens' priorities in terms of the formation of their electoral choices. The largest plurality of men (42%) in the Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies surveyed believe international trade is the most important foreign policy issue and are more likely to believe this than women (34%), the largest plurality of whom view climate change (42%) as the most important foreign policy issue when forming views about political parties. BAME Britons in these constituencies also have particularly distinct foreign policy priorities, with 52% viewing international trade as most important, compared to 37% of White Britons. BAME Britons (31%) in these constituencies also show a high prioritisation of international aid and development relative to White Britons (23%) when forming views of political parties, suggesting that international aid and development is a particularly fertile ground for political parties to build support in BAME communities in marginal constituencies.

Climate change (43%) is the foreign policy issue most important to those under 35 years of age in these constituencies when forming views about political parties, while international trade is the biggest concern of those aged 35-54 (39%), and defence and security is the biggest concern among those over 55 years (44%). Under-35s (36%) are also twice as likely as those aged 35-54 (19%) and those over-55 (18%) in the constituencies surveyed to believe that international aid and development is one of the most important foreign policy issues when forming views about political parties. If this passion and support for international development is resilient within these generational cohorts, it is likely that it will become an increasingly salient issue on an electoral level, over the coming years.

The largest disparity in preferences based on personal income in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats emerges in relation to international trade, with 46% of constituents earning over £40,000 believing this to be the most important foreign policy issue, compared to 31% of those earning up to £20,000. In turn, Britons in higher socio-economic grades (43%) in these constituencies are more likely to prioritise climate change than those in lower socio-economic grades (33%), as are those working part-time (46%) and retirees (41%), compared to those working full-time (35%) and those who are unemployed (26%). Those in the most secure economic position, including those earning over £40,000 (29%), full-time workers (28%) and those in the ABC1 social category (26%), are all more likely to view international aid as most important when forming views about political parties – likely, in part, because aid and development spending is often viewed in a zero-sum manner relative to domestic spending.

The starkest regional disparities in importance given to different foreign policy issues in these constituencies are in relation to climate change, with 51% of residents in the East of England in the constituencies surveyed viewing climate change as the most important foreign policy issue in determining their perception of political parties, compared to 28% of those in the North West.

Residents in constituencies surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (29%) and the East of England (27%) are the most likely to believe UK international aid and development is one of the most important foreign policy issues when forming views about political parties, while residents in the South West (16%) are the least.

Defence and security (54%) and international trade (48%) are seen as the most important foreign policy areas among Conservative voters in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats in forming views about political parties, while climate change is the biggest priority among Labour (56%) and Lib Dem voters (53%). International development is a particularly salient concern among Labour voters in these constituencies (40%), relative to Lib Dem (27%) and Conservative (18%) voters. It is also more salient among Remain (29%) than Leave (17%) voters.

### Aid Spending Compared to Allies

Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are most likely to support spending 'about the same' (46%) as our allies on the UK's aid and development investments. These citizens are marginally more likely to believe the UK should spend less than our allies (24%) rather than more (21%), with 11% believing the UK should spend much less, compared to 4% who believe the UK should spend much more than its allies.

Younger Britons in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are significantly more supportive than older Britons of spending more than our allies on aid and development, with 33% of under-35s supporting this, compared to 20% of 35-54-year-olds and 14% of over-55s. The gender and ethnicity disparities in desire for the UK to spend more than our allies on aid are negligible, but men (26%) are more likely than women (22%) and BAME Britons (30%) are more likely than White Britons (24%) in these constituencies to support spending less than our allies.

Britons with higher levels of economic security in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are more likely to believe the UK should spend more than our allies on aid and development than those in more precarious financial positions. As such, Britons earning over £40,000 a year (31%), those in the ABC1 social category (24%) and workers (24%) are more supportive of spending more than our allies on aid and development than Britons earning less than £20,000 a year (17%), non-workers (17%) and those in the C2DE social category (16%) in these constituencies.

Residents in the constituencies surveyed in London (34%) are twice as likely to believe the UK should spend more than our allies compared to residents in constituencies surveyed in the South West (17%) and Wales (13%) and three times as likely as those in the North West (11%). In turn, residents in the constituencies surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (32%) and Wales (28%) are the most likely to believe the UK should spend less than its allies on aid and development.

The largest plurality of both Remain (54%) and Leave voters (40%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats believe the UK should spend about the same on aid and development as its allies, however, Remain voters are more likely to believe the UK should spend more (27%) rather than less (13%) than its allies, while Leave voters are more likely to believe the UK should spend less (38%) rather than more (14%) than its allies. Labour (29%) and Lib Dem (29%) voters in these constituencies are notably more likely than Conservative voters (15%) to believe the UK should spend more than its allies on aid, 36% of whom believe the UK should spend less.

## Knowledge and Understanding of the UK's Aid Investments

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Citizens living in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are more likely to feel uninformed (41%) than informed (27%) about where the UK's aid and development projects are directed, and the outcome of these investments. 32% feel neither informed nor uninformed.

In line with findings from the BFPG's Annual Public Opinion Survey about gender disparities in knowledge about foreign policy more generally, men (36%) are more likely than women (19%) in the constituencies surveyed for this project to say that they feel informed about the UK's aid and development projects. Although BAME Britons often self-report as being less informed about foreign policy more generally, they are considerably more likely (41%) than White Britons (26%) to feel informed about how and where these investments are directed. Similarly, in contrast to their understanding of broader foreign policy as a whole, under-35s (35%) are also more likely than 35-54-year-olds (26%) and over-55s (22%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats to say that they feel informed about the UK's aid and development projects.

Citizens in the constituencies surveyed who are more economically secure are more likely to feel informed than those who are less economically secure. For example, 39% of those earning over £40,000 and 29% of workers feel informed about the UK's aid and development investments compared to 24% of non-workers and 18% of those earning less than £20,000 a year. Regionally, citizens surveyed in constituencies in London (39%) are the most likely to say they feel informed about the UK's aid and development projects, compared to just 17% of those surveyed in marginal constituencies in Wales and the East of England. Indeed, the majority (52%) of respondents in the East of England feel uninformed about these projects.

Politically, Conservative voters (32%) in the constituencies surveyed for this project are more likely to feel informed than Labour voters (28%) or Lib Dem voters (24%), perhaps reflective of the fact Conservative voters are more attuned to and supportive of the policies of the current Conservative Government, regardless of their focus. Interestingly, Remain voters (48%) are more likely to feel uninformed than Leave voters (37%) in these constituencies.

## Priority Outcomes from Development Investments

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Ensuring that all people have their basic human needs of health and shelter met (39%) is the most important outcome that citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the UK Government should seek to achieve with UK aid and development programmes. Reducing poverty and tackling global inequality (25%), empowering communities to create their own prosperity (23%) and advancing the UK's economic and trading relationships (19%) are seen as the next most important priorities in these constituencies. Preventing environmental degradation and endangered animals (17%) and reducing conflict to improve global security (16%) are seen as relatively less important priorities. At 13%, improving women's safety and education is the lowest priority outcome for citizens in these marginal constituencies.

Although men and women are broadly aligned in their priorities for aid spending in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, two notable distinctions emerge: firstly, women (47%) are significantly more concerned than men (29%) with ensuring all people have their basic human needs of health and shelter met, and secondly, women (16%) show a higher level of concern than men (9%) with improving women's safety and education.

More significant disparities emerge in relation to age, with over-55s (32%) significantly more likely than 35-54-year-olds (17%) and under-35s (16%) in these marginal seats to believe empowering communities to create their own prosperity should be a priority. In turn, under-35s (32%) are more likely than 35-54-year-olds (22%) and over-55s (22%) in these areas to prioritise reducing poverty and tackling global inequality. Empowering communities to create their own prosperity is also a particular priority of White Britons (24%) relative to BAME Britons (12%), likely due to the positive influence of the narrative of aid being 'time-limited' amongst these citizens.

Economic factors also impact respondents' preferences for aid and development outcomes in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats. While the largest plurality across all incomes and working statuses in these constituencies believe that ensuring all people have their basic human needs of health and shelter met should be one of the most important outcomes of aid and development programmes, those with incomes over £40,000 (28%) are more likely than those with incomes less than £20,000 (20%) to believe reducing poverty and tackling global inequality should be prioritised. Similarly, those in the ABC1 social category (27%) in these constituencies are more likely to prioritise tackling poverty and inequality than those in the C2DE social grade. Empowering communities to create their own prosperity is distinctly more popular among those not working (27%) than those working (20%), specifically those with an income over £40,000 (20%).

On a regional level, residents in constituencies surveyed in Wales are the most distinct in their preferences. In all other regions, the largest plurality believes that 'ensuring all people have their basic human needs of health and shelter met' is the most important outcome the UK Government should seek to achieve, while in Wales the largest plurality (36%) favour 'advancing the UK's economic and trading relationships'. In contrast, just 11% of those in the East of England believe this is the most important outcome. At 13%, residents in the constituencies surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside are the most likely to oppose the UK's aid and development spending, in contrast to just 3% of those in London.

Lib Dem and Labour voters in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are distinctly more supportive than Conservative voters of aid spending that has clear and direct benefits to recipients, while Conservative voters are more supportive of those with tangible benefits to the UK. One-quarter of Conservative voters (25%) in these constituencies believe that advancing the UK's economic and trading outcomes should be one of the most important outcomes of UK aid and development programmes, significantly more than the proportion of Labour voters (14%) and more than double than that of Lib Dem voters (12%) who believe this. Similarly, Leave voters (24%) in these areas are notably more likely to prioritise advancing the UK's economic and trading outcomes than Remain voters (15%).

## Emotional Responses to the UK's Leading Aid Donor Status

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Constituents in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are most likely to feel 'proud' (25%) about the UK's leadership in aid and development. Among those that cited an opinion, 'pleased' (16%), 'frustrated' (10%) and 'ambivalent' (9%) are the next most common emotions among citizens in these constituencies. Constituents in these marginal seats are less likely to feel 'safe' (7%), 'angry' (5%) or 'anxious' (5%) in regards to the UK's leadership on aid.

Gender has a relatively limited impact on how respondents' feel about the UK being a world leader in international aid in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats. However, women (24%) are more likely than men (18%) to not have an opinion, reflecting a broader disengagement of women from foreign policy, reflected in the BFPG's 2021 Annual Public Opinion Survey. White Britons (17%) are more likely than BAME Britons (8%) in these marginal constituencies to feel 'pleased' about the UK being a world leader in international aid, and while White Britons are also more likely than BAME Britons to feel more 'frustrated' about the UK's leadership in international aid, BAME Britons are more likely to feel 'angry'.

Younger citizens generally have more positive associations with the UK's aid leadership than older citizens in the constituencies surveyed. For example, under-35s (29%) are more likely to feel 'pride' in the UK's aid leadership than over-55s (20%) and are less likely to feel 'frustrated' (7% to 13%). Similarly, those earning over £40,000 a year (30%) are more likely to feel 'pride' in the UK's aid and development programmes than those earning £20,001- £40,000 a year (25%) and those earning under £20,000 a year (23%). This trend also emerges among socio-economic groups in these constituencies, with those in the ABC1 social category (29%) more likely to feel 'pride' than those in the C2DE social category (20%). The disparities in word associations

between workers and non-workers are relatively small, although the unemployed consistently associate strongly with positive words around the UK's aid and development investments with 34% feeling 'pride' in these investments.

Residents in the constituencies surveyed in London and the East of England have some of the most positive feelings towards the UK's aid leadership. At 32% and 31% respectively, residents in the constituencies surveyed in these regions are the most likely to feel 'pride' in the UK's aid leadership and, alongside constituencies surveyed in Wales, they are the most likely to feel 'pleased' about the UK's aid leadership (20%). Residents surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (11%) are the most likely to feel 'angry', while those surveyed in Wales (19%) are the most likely to feel 'frustrated'.

Across the three main political parties in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, Conservative voters are the only group in which the largest plurality primarily feel 'pride' in the UK's commitment to being a world leader in international aid, while the largest plurality of Lib Dem voters feel pleased (27%). Feelings of frustration are more prominent among Conservative and Labour voters (both 14%) in these constituencies than among Lib Dem voters (7%). The fact that the largest plurality of Labour voters does not have an opinion (24%) is particularly notable, and highlights that while a large proportion of Labour voters are 'pleased' (23%) and feel 'pride' (18%) in the UK's aid leadership, aid and development is a less salient issue among Labour voters than among Lib Dem or Conservative voters in these seats. Finally, 26% of Remain voters surveyed feel 'pleased' about the UK's aid and development investments, compared to 9% of Leave voters, while 15% of Leave voters feel 'frustrated' compared to 6% of Remain voters, illustrating that there are higher levels of emotionally driven goodwill towards the UK's aid and development programmes among Remain voters than Leave voters.

## The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on our International Reputation

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The vast majority (88%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the UK's aid and development investments encourage the UK to be viewed as a reliable and generous partner. This includes 13% who believe the UK's leadership on aid has 'a great deal' of impact on perceptions of the UK as a reliable and generous partner, 36% who believe it influences 'a fair amount' and 39% who believe it makes 'a small amount' of difference.

Under-35s (91%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are the most likely to believe the UK's aid commitments encourage other nations to see the UK as a reliable and generous partner, compared to 86% of 35-54-year-olds and 86% of over-55s. The differences based on ethnicity and gender are more marginal. Although there is relatively little regional variation in overall levels of belief that this commitment encourages other nations to see the UK as a reliable and generous partner, residents in constituencies surveyed in London (20%) are the most likely to believe it affects this 'a great deal', and residents in Yorkshire and Humberside (3%) are the least likely to.

Citizens in the constituencies surveyed who earn £20,001 - £40,000 a year (91%) and those earning over £40,000 a year (90%) are more likely than those earning less than £20,000 (84%) to believe international aid encourages other nations to see the UK as a reliable partner, as are those in the ABC1 social grade (89%) relative to those in the C2DE social grade (85%). Those who work full-time (90%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals are also more likely to believe this than those who are unemployed (85%), retired (85%) or working part-time (84%).

Among the political parties in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, Lib Dem voters (92%) are more likely than Conservative (86%) and Labour (86%) voters to believe the UK's aid leadership impacts perceptions of the UK as a reliable and generous partner, although Conservative voters (15%) are the most likely to believe it affects perceptions 'a great deal', compared to 11% of Labour voters and 9% of Lib Dem voters. Remain voters (91%) in the constituencies surveyed are also more likely to believe it has a positive impact than Leave voters (86%).



## The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on UK National Security

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A clear majority (69%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the UK's aid and development investments makes the UK safer, compared to 31% who believe it does not make a difference at all. However, just 11% believe of citizens in the constituencies surveyed believe it contributes 'a great deal' to the UK's security, while 29% believe it contributes 'a fair amount' and 29% believe it contributes 'a small amount'.

Under-35s (82%) in the constituencies surveyed are significantly more likely than 35-54-year-olds (69%) and over-55s (60%) to believe the UK's aid leadership makes the UK a safer place to live, and are the most likely to believe that it makes it 'a great deal' safer (16%). BAME Britons (75%) in these constituencies are also more likely to believe it makes the UK safer than White Britons (68%). The overall gender disparities in perceptions in these constituencies are negligible, although men (15%) are more likely than women (8%) to believe aid spending makes the UK 'a great deal' safer to live.

Constituents surveyed earning over £40,000 (74%) and those earning £20,001- £40,000 a year (72%) are more likely than those earning less than £20,000 a year (64%) to believe international aid makes the UK a safer place to live to some degree, as are workers (72%) relative to non-workers (64%). Regionally, 76% of those in constituencies surveyed in London believe that the UK's aid leadership makes the UK a safer place to live, compared to 62% in the South East. There are no significant variations based on socio-economic status.

Lib Dem (71%) and Labour (70%) voters in the constituencies surveyed are more likely than Conservative voters (63%) to believe that the UK's aid leadership makes the UK a safer place to live to some degree, although Conservative voters (13%) are more likely to believe it makes the UK 'a great deal' safer than Labour (11%) or Lib Dem (6%) voters. Remain voters (71%) surveyed are more likely than Leave voters (61%) to believe it makes the UK a safer place to live.

## The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on Global Safety

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A clear majority (79%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies also believe the UK's aid and development investments make the world a safer place to live. This includes 11% of citizens who believe it makes 'a great deal' of difference to global safety, 31% who believe it makes 'a fair amount' of difference and 37% who believe it makes 'a small amount' of difference.

Similarly compared to perceptions of the impact of the UK's aid leadership on levels of safety in the UK, in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies under-35s (86%) are more likely than 35-54-year-olds (83%) and over-55s (70%) to believe the UK's aid leadership helps make the world safer, highlighting the importance of emphasising the interconnection between aid and conflict, particularly to older citizens.

While ethnicity is not a salient factor in overall levels of agreement in these constituencies, it is a significant factor in the extent to which citizens agree that the UK's aid leadership makes the world a safer place to live, with 23% of BAME Britons believing that it makes the world 'a great deal' safer, compared to 10% of White Britons. Interestingly, given women in the constituencies surveyed are no more likely than men to believe aid makes the UK safer, women (81%) are more likely than men (76%) in the marginal constituencies surveyed to believe the UK's leadership on aid makes the world a safer place to live.

Citizens with greater economic security in the constituencies surveyed are more likely to believe the UK's aid leadership makes it a safer place to live, with 86% of those earning over £40,000 a year believing this, compared to 79% of those earning £20,001 to £40,000 a year and 76% of those earning less than £20,000 a year. Similarly, among those surveyed, 81% of those in the

ABC1 social grade and 81% of workers believe it helps make the world safer, compared to 75% of those who don't work and 74% of those in the C2DE social grade. Residents in constituencies surveyed in London (82%) and the East of England (82%) are the most likely to believe the UK's aid leadership makes the world safer, while those in Yorkshire and Humberside (75%) are the least likely to.

Remain voters (87%) are significantly more convinced than Leave voters (69%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats that the UK's aid leadership makes the world a safer place to live. Lib Dem voters (85%) are also more likely to believe this than Labour (79%) or Conservative voters (72%), although again Conservative voters (12%) are more likely than Labour (10%) or Lib Dem voters (7%) to believe it makes the world 'a great deal' safer. This consistent minority of Conservative voters that are particularly emphatic about the positive impacts of aid and development suggests that while Conservative voters more broadly may be more sceptical than those in other parties of some of the impacts of aid, there is a notable minority of Conservative voters who are very acutely aware of the impacts and particularly supportive of aid and development, who could form an important constituency.

### **The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on the Nation's Foreign Policy Objectives**

The vast majority (86%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the UK's aid and development investments help the UK to achieve its foreign policy objectives, compared to just 14% who believe it does not have any impact. However, just 10% believe it makes 'a great deal' of difference to achieving the UK's Foreign Policy objectives, compared to 36% who believe it makes 'a fair amount' of difference and 40% who believe it makes 'a small amount' of difference.

Under-35s (89%) and 35-54-year-olds (88%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats are more likely than over-55s (83%) to believe being a leader in aid helps the UK achieve its foreign policy objectives. White Britons (87%) are also more likely to believe it helps the UK achieve its foreign policy objectives than BAME Britons (80%) in these constituencies, however BAME Britons who do see the benefit do so more emphatically, with 18% of BAME Britons believing it helps the UK 'a great deal' in achieving its foreign policy objectives, compared to 10% of White Britons. There are no significant variations in support based on gender.

Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats with more secure economic positions are more likely to believe the UK's leadership in international aid helps the UK to achieve its foreign policy objectives. 91% of constituents surveyed earning over £40,000 a year believe that being a world leader in international aid helps the UK to achieve its foreign policy objectives, compared to 85% of those earning under £20,000. Similarly, among those surveyed, Britons working full-time (88%) are more likely to identify these benefits than retirees (83%), as are those in the ABC1 social grade (88%) relative to those in the C2DE social grade (83%).

Regionally, citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals residing in London (91%) are the most likely to believe aid leadership helps the UK achieve its foreign policy objectives, and the most likely to believe it does so 'a great deal' (18%). Those surveyed living in the North West (80%) are the least likely to agree. Remain voters (89%) are more likely than Leave voters (83%) to believe the UK's aid leadership helps it achieve its foreign policy objectives. There is limited variation in overall levels of agreement with this across parties, however Conservative (13%) and Labour (10%) voters are more likely to believe it helps 'a great deal' than Lib Dem voters (5%).

## The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on Trade and Investment

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The vast majority (86%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the UK's aid and development programmes strengthen our trade and investment opportunities. The largest proportion of citizens believe aid and development investment strengthens our trade and investment opportunities 'a fair amount' (36%) or 'a small amount' (36%), while 13% believe it strengthens our trade and investment opportunities 'a great deal'.

Although overall levels of support are similar across age groups in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies, under-35s (18%) are more likely than 35-54-year-olds (13%) and over-55s (11%) to believe the UK's leadership in international aid strengthens its trade and investment opportunities. Similarly, while overall disparities based on gender and ethnicity are minimal, BAME Britons (24%) are more likely than White Britons (13%) to believe it strengthens our trade and investment opportunities 'a great deal', as are men (16%) relative to women (11%).

Regionally, citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals residing in London (91%) and the South West (90%) are the most likely to believe leadership in aid strengthens the UK's trade and investment opportunities, while those in the North West (79%) are the least supportive. Socio-economic status, personal income and employment status have a less notable impact on perceptions.

The variations in perceptions in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies based on political affiliations are also relatively small on this issue, highlighting how there is a broad consensus around the positive impact of leadership on international aid on the UK's trade and investment opportunities. However, Conservative voters (16%) are more likely than Labour (11%) or Lib Dem (7%) voters to believe that the UK's aid leadership has 'a great deal' of impact on the UK's trade and investment opportunities.

## The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on Demonstrating the Strength of UK Values

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The notion that the UK's aid and development investments show the enduring strength of our values is supported by 88% of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem constituencies, including 20% who believe it shows the enduring strength of our values 'a great deal'. 37% of citizens in the constituencies surveyed believe it shows the enduring strength of our values 'a fair amount' and 31% believe it does so 'a small amount'. Only 12% believe it has no impact.

Under-35s (90%) are slightly more likely than over-55s (86%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe that the UK being a world leader in international aid shows the enduring strength of our values, as are full-time workers (89%) relative to part-time workers (84%). White Britons (88%) are also more likely than BAME Britons (82%) in these constituencies to believe that the UK's aid leadership shows the enduring strength of our values. However, BAME Britons that do believe it shows the enduring strength of our values do so more emphatically, with 27% of BAME Britons believing it shows the enduring strength of our values 'a great deal', compared to 19% of White Britons.

Regionally, residents in constituencies surveyed in London (91%) and the South West (91%) are the most likely to believe that UK leadership in aid shows the enduring strength of our values, while those surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (79%) are the least likely to. The significance of gender, personal income, and social grade in shaping views about whether aid leadership shows the strength of our values is limited.

Conservative (90%) and Lib-Dem (88%) voters in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals are more likely than Labour voters (83%) to believe that UK leadership in aid shows the enduring strength of our values, including 25% of Conservative voters, compared to 15% of Lib Dem voters and 14% of Labour voters, who believe it does so 'a great deal'. There are no significant variations along the Remain/Leave axis.

## The Impact of the UK's Aid Programmes on Setting the UK Apart in a Positive Way

A decisive majority (84%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies also believe the UK's aid and development investments helps set the UK apart from other nations in a positive way. This includes 19% of citizens who believe it sets the UK apart 'a great deal', while 34% believe it does so 'a fair amount' and 31% believe it does so 'a small amount'.

Citizens living in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals under the age of 35 (88%) are more likely than those over-55 (83%) and those aged between 35-54 (82%) to believe that leadership in aid sets us apart from other nations in a positive way. Women (87%) surveyed are also more likely than men (82%) to believe this is the case, as are White Britons (85%) relative to BAME Britons (79%). However, BAME Britons (30%) who do believe this believe it more emphatically, with 30% believing it does so 'a great deal', compared to 19% of White Britons.

Overall levels of agreement vary relatively little across different economic groups, however the strength of support does vary. Citizens in the constituencies surveyed earning over £40,000 (24%) are more likely than those earning less than £20,000 a year (19%) or £20,001 - £40,000 a year (18%) to believe the UK's aid leadership sets us apart 'a great deal' from other nations. Similarly, full-time workers (21%) are more likely to believe this than part-time workers (15%) and the unemployed (15%).

Furthermore, while overall levels of agreement vary relatively little across regions, residents in the constituencies surveyed in London agree more emphatically than those in other regions, with 30% of Londoners surveyed believing that aid sets us apart 'a great deal', compared to 14% of residents surveyed in the East of England. This trend is also seen across political parties, with overall agreement varying relatively little, although interestingly – Conservative voters (23%) are more likely than Lib Dem (15%) or Labour (12%) voters to believe it sets us apart 'a great deal', as are Leave voters (21%) compared to Remain voters (15%). This suggests that, although Conservative and Leave voters are generally less enthused by foreign aid, the reputational arguments in its favour may be more strongly felt by the cohort of their voters who do recognise some benefits from these investments.

## The Impact of the 0.7% GNI Commitment Reduction on the UK's Reputation

The largest plurality of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believes that the reduction of the UK's aid spending commitment from 0.7% GNI to 0.5% GNI will have a negative impact (38%) on the UK's reputation, compared to 15% who believe it will have a positive impact. However, almost a third (31%) of those surveyed believe it will have no impact at all on the UK's reputation, while another 31% believe it will have 'a somewhat negative impact', compared to just 7% who believe it will have 'a large negative impact'.

Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats aged under-35 are simultaneously the age group most likely to believe reducing the UK's aid and development spending will have a negative impact on the UK's global reputation (41%) and to believe that it will have a positive impact (22%). This is driven by the fact the largest plurality of over-55s (40%) and 35-54-year-olds (31%) believe this will not have an impact at all, while only 19% of under-35s believe this, highlighting the disproportionate concern about this issue among younger Britons, which means it is likely to become increasingly salient over the coming years.

While similar proportions of men and women in the constituencies surveyed believe that the cut to aid spending will have a negative or no impact on the UK's global reputation, men (18%) are more likely to believe it will have a positive impact than women (12%). Women (21%) are also more likely than men (11%) to be unsure of their position, emphasising, once again, the importance of targeted information provision to address gendered gaps in understanding of and confidence in foreign policy.

BAME Britons (31%) in the constituencies surveyed are more likely than White Britons (14%) to believe the cut to aid spending will have a positive impact on the UK's global reputation, as are those earning over £40,000 (21%) compared to those earning £20,001-£40,000 a year (16%) and those earning up to £20,000 (11%). However, those earning under £20,000 (34%) in these constituencies are also the least likely to believe it will have a negative impact, driven by the sizeable proportion of those earning under £20,000 annually (21%) who are unsure of their position.

Full-time workers (40%) and the unemployed (39%) in the constituencies surveyed are the most likely to believe cuts to aid spending will have a negative impact on the UK's global reputation, while retirees (35%) and part-time workers (34%) are the least likely to. Similarly, those surveyed in the ABC1 social grade (41%) are more likely than those in the C2DE social grade (32%) to believe these spending cuts will have a negative impact.

Regionally, over half of residents surveyed in constituencies in the East of England (52%) believe that cuts in aid spending will have a negative impact on the UK's global reputation, compared to 28% of those surveyed in the North West and 26% of those surveyed in Wales. Residents surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (29%) are the most likely to believe reducing aid spending will have a positive impact on the UK's global reputation.

Remain voters (55%) are significantly more likely than Leave voters (21%) in these marginal constituencies to believe cuts to aid spending have a negative impact on the UK's international reputation, as are Lib Dem (54%) and Labour (50%) voters relative to Conservative voters (24%). The largest plurality of Conservative voters (49%) in these constituencies believe that the cut to aid spending will have no impact on the UK's global reputation, compared to 21% of Lib Dem and 18% of Labour voters.

## Aligning UK Aid Investments with Need or Values

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Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are most likely to believe the UK Government should direct our aid and development spending towards the countries with the greatest need (36%), compared to just 10% who believe it should prioritise countries that share our values. A third of those surveyed (32%) support an equal balance between the two. 11% of those surveyed responded that they do not support the UK's aid and development spending.

Over-55s (42%) are more likely than under-35s (36%) and 35-54-year-olds (30%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe UK aid and development spending should prioritise those with the greatest need, while under-35s (35%) are the age group most likely to support an equal balance between need and values and 35-54-year-olds (13%) are the age group most likely to prioritise aid spending to countries that share our values.

Within Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies, women (39%) are more likely than men (34%) to prioritise countries with the greatest need, as are White Britons (37%) relative to BAME Britons (31%). This is driven by the fact BAME Britons are more likely than White Britons in these constituencies to oppose aid spending (17% vs 10%) and to be unsure of their position (18% vs 9%).

Britons who are working (13%) are more likely than those who are not (6%) to believe the UK should prioritise countries whose values align with the UK's, and those who earn over £40,000 (16%) are more likely than those earning £20,001 to £40,000 (10%) or up to £20,000 a year (8%) to believe we should prioritise countries most closely aligned with our values. Socio-economically, in the constituencies surveyed, there is no substantial difference in the proportion who believe aid spending should be driven by values alignment between those in the ABC1 social category and those in the C2DE category. However, those in the ABC1 category (41%) in these constituencies are significantly more likely than those in the C2DE category (28%) to believe it should be based on need, while those in the C2DE category (16%) are more likely than

those in the ABC1 category (8%) to oppose all aid spending. Those in the C2DE social category (16%) are also more likely to be unsure of their position than those in the ABC1 category (7%).

Regionally, residents in the constituencies surveyed in Wales are the most likely to believe aid spending should prioritise countries with the greatest need (42%), and the least likely to support an equal balance between needs and values (24%). Residents in the constituencies surveyed in London (14%) are the most likely to believe it should prioritise countries whose values align with our own, while residents surveyed in the North West (5%) are the least likely to. At 13%, residents surveyed in the South West and Yorkshire and Humberside are the most likely to oppose aid and development spending.

Remain voters (49%) are significantly more likely than Leave voters (28%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to prioritise sending aid to those in greatest need, driven in large part by the fact Leave voters (18%) are more likely than Remain voters (5%) to oppose all aid and development spending. Similarly, Lib Dem voters (47%) in the constituencies surveyed are the most likely to prioritise aid spending on those in greatest need, followed by Labour (40%) and then Conservative voters (31%). In turn, Conservative voters (15%) are more likely than Labour (9%) or Lib Dem (6%) voters to wish to prioritise those who share our values. Conservative voters (17%) in these constituencies are also more likely to oppose all aid spending than Labour (6%) or Lib Dem voters (4%).

### Financial versus Moral Considerations in Aid Spending

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Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are divided in their relative prioritisation of financial versus moral considerations in aid spending, with 30% believing that 'we have a moral obligation to help the poorest communities in the world and in doing so we uphold our values', while a further 30% believe that 'many individuals and communities in the UK continue to live in poverty, and overseas development assistance takes away funds that should be spent at home'. Citizens in these constituencies are less likely to believe the 'UK's aid investments are a win-win for the British people, helping to tackle the root causes of global challenges, such as future pandemics and terrorism' (12%) or that 'the UK's aid and development investments support global economic growth and creates new markets for UK businesses, which delivers direct benefits to the UK's prosperity' (11%).

Men and women in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are equally like to believe aid spending takes away funds that should be spent at home, although women (34%) are more likely than men (26%) to primarily agree that we have a moral obligation to help, while men (14%) are more likely than women (8%) to primarily agree that aid investment helps UK and global economic growth.

Under-35s (20%) in the constituencies surveyed for this project are the age group most likely to focus on the economic benefits to the UK of aid and investment, while over-55s are the most likely to focus on our moral obligation (34%). At 37%, over-55s in these constituencies are significantly more likely than 35-54-year-olds (28%) and under-35s (23%) to believe aid spending takes away from domestic spending.

White Britons (31%) are more likely than BAME Britons (16%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to focus on the UK's moral obligation to help the world's poorest, while BAME Britons (25%) are more likely than White Britons (10%) to focus on the positive economic impacts for the UK. Similarly, those who are not working (33%) are more likely than those who are (28%) to focus on a moral obligation for aid spending, while those who work (13%) are more likely than those who do not (8%) to focus on the economic benefits to the UK.

Constituents in the areas surveyed who earn less than £20,000 a year are the most likely to believe aid spending takes away from domestic spending (35%), followed by those who earn £20,001 to £40,000 a year (31%) and then those who earn over £40,000 (24%). Similarly,

those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (37%) are more likely than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (27%) to believe aid takes away from domestic spending. In turn, those from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to identify a moral obligation to support and to view aid investments as win-win than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Regionally, residents in constituencies surveyed in Wales (37%) are the most likely to believe we have a moral obligation to help the world's poorest, while residents surveyed in the East of England (18%) are the most likely to view aid investments as win-win for the British people. At 38% and 37% respectively, residents in the constituencies surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside and the South East are significantly more likely than those surveyed in London (19%) to primarily believe aid spending takes money away from those in need in the UK.

Politically, Lib Dem (40%) and Labour (38%) voters are more likely to primarily believe we have a moral obligation to help the world's poorest. Lib Dem (20%) and Labour (17%) voters are also more likely than Conservative voters (9%) to primarily believe aid investments are a win-win for the British people. This is driven by the fact Conservative voters (41%) are more likely than Labour (25%) or Lib Dem voters (21%) to believe aid spending takes money away from domestic spending.

## The Risks Posed by Vaccine Nationalism and our Strategic Rivals

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The majority (63%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe that the vacuum created by the competition for vaccines which could lead to Russia and China providing these scarce resources to the developing world poses a risk to the UK's interests, including 15% who believe this is a critical risk. A further 48% believe it is an important but not critical risk, while 15% believe it is not an important risk. Just 5% don't believe it affects the UK at all and 18% are unsure of their position.

Under-35s (71%) in Conservative-Lib Dem constituencies are more likely to view the vacuum that the global vaccine race has created as a risk than over-55s (64%) or 35-54-year-olds (56%), and are particularly likely to view this as a critical risk (20%). BAME Britons (66%) in the constituencies surveyed are also slightly more likely to view this as a risk than White Britons (62%) and while men and women are broadly equally likely to view it as a risk, men (24%) are more likely than women (16%) to not view this as an important risk.

Retirees (65%) and full-time workers (64%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are more likely to view this as a risk than those working part-time (58%) or those who are unemployed (57%), as are those in higher socio-economic categories (66%) relative to those in lower socio-economic categories (57%). However, larger disparities in risk perception emerge in relation to personal income, with those earning over £40,000 (71%) and between £20,001 and £40,000 a year (67%) more likely to view this as a risk than those earning up to £20,000 a year (59%).

Regionally, residents in constituencies surveyed in London (68%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (67%) are the most likely to view this vacuum as a risk, while those in Wales (58%) are the least likely to. Remain voters (68%) are also more likely to view this as a risk than Leave voters (61%), as are Labour voters (71%) relative to Lib Dem (65%) and Conservative voters (65%).

## Responses to the Vaccine Nationalism Situation

The largest plurality (47%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe 'the UK should encourage our allies to help provide vaccines for the developing world alongside us, so we solve the problem together'. A further 11% believe 'the UK should invest in providing vaccines to the developing world, even if that means some less vulnerable Britons are vaccinated later'. However, 29% believe 'the UK should focus on its pandemic response at home and ensure all Britons are vaccinated before we consider providing support to the developing world' and 3% believe 'this doesn't concern us and the UK should not respond'.

Women (52%) are more likely than men (42%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe the UK should work with allies to provide vaccines to the developing world, as are over-55s (51%) relative to 35-54-year-olds (45%) and under-35s (44%). However, over-55s (31%) are also the most likely to believe the UK's pandemic response should focus at home, while lower levels of support for collective solutions among under-35s is driven by high levels of support for investing in vaccine provision, even at the cost of the UK's own vaccine programme, which is supported by 17% of under-35s compared to 9% of over-55s.

BAME Britons (43%) in the constituencies surveyed are more likely to primarily believe that the UK's aid and development investments should focus at home than White Britons (28%), who are more likely to support working with allies to distribute vaccines globally (48% to 33%). Support for working with allies is also particularly high among retirees (53%), followed by those working full-time (47%) and the unemployed (46%), with those working part-time (42%) the least supportive. Unemployed people are the most supportive of investing in vaccines in the developing world, even if that means some of the UK receiving vaccines later (18%), but are also the most likely to be unsure of their position (20%).

Citizens earning £20,001- £40,000 (52%) in the constituencies surveyed are the most supportive of working with our allies on this issue, followed by those earning over £40,000 (50%). It is least popular among those earning less than £20,000 a year (43%), who in turn are the most likely to believe the UK should focus on its domestic vaccination programme (32%). However, they are closely followed by citizens earning £20,001- £40,000 (31%), in contrast to those earning over £40,000 (22%) who are notably less likely to believe the UK should focus its pandemic efforts at home. This trend is also seen among those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (33%) in the constituencies surveyed who are more likely to believe the UK should focus its efforts at home than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (27%), highlighting how those who are more economically insecure often place a higher prioritisation on the domestic.

Working with our allies to distribute vaccines is most popular among residents in constituencies surveyed in the East of England (53%), and least popular among those in the North West (35%). In turn, those surveyed in the North West (35%) are the most likely to believe the UK should focus its pandemic response at home, and those surveyed in the East of England (17%) are the least likely to support this. At 18%, residents in constituencies surveyed in London are the most likely to believe the UK should invest in providing vaccines to the developing world, even if that means delays to the UK's own vaccine programme.

Remain voters (56%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are more supportive than Leave voters (44%) of working with allies in vaccine provision, and of providing vaccines even at the cost of the UK's vaccine programme (16% to 5%). Meanwhile, Leave voters (38%) are significantly more likely than Remain voters (18%) to believe the UK should focus its pandemic response at home. This is also a prominent opinion among both Conservative (36%) and Labour (31%) voters in the constituencies surveyed, although it is distinctly less popular among Lib Dem voters (19%). In turn, Lib Dem voters (17%) in these constituencies are more likely to believe the UK should support global vaccine distribution even at the cost of its own vaccination programme than Conservative (7%) or Labour voters (6%).



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# Original Research: Narrative Testing Statements

## **1. Britain has a moral obligation to continue to help the world's poorest people, even when our own economy is going through a difficult time.**

Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are more likely to agree (45%) than disagree (24%) that Britain has a moral obligation to help the world's poorest, even during domestic economic difficulties. A further 31% are neutral on this issue. Citizens in these constituencies are also more likely to strongly agree (15%) that the UK has a moral obligation regardless of domestic economic circumstances than to strongly disagree (7%).

Women (47%) are more likely than men (43%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe the UK has a moral obligation to the world's poorest people, even when our own economy is going through a difficult time, as are under-35s (49%) relative to over-55s (43%). Support is also particularly strong among those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (52%), relative to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (32%), and among those earning over £40,000 (57%) compared to those who earn less than £20,000 a year (39%). Interestingly, full-time workers (47%) and those who are unemployed (46%) show higher levels of support than those who work part-time (43%) or who are retired (41%). The differences which emerge on the basis of ethnicity are negligible.

Among the constituencies surveyed, residents in London (60%) are the most likely to believe the UK has a moral obligation to continue helping the world's poorest people, while those in the South West (38%) are the least likely to. Politically, Remain voters (63%) in the constituencies surveyed are twice as likely as Leave voters (32%) to believe we have a moral obligation, and Lib Dem (62%) and Labour (57%) voters are significantly more likely to believe this than Conservative voters (36%).

## **2. The UK's aid and development programmes should be time-limited and focused on allowing local people to take control of their own futures.**

In Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies, citizens are significantly more likely to agree (59%) than disagree (7%) that the UK's aid and development programmes should be time-limited and focus on allowing local people to take control of their own futures. A further 34% are neutral in their position. Furthermore, only 2% of citizens strongly disagree with this statement, compared to 15% who strongly agree.

Over-55s (71%) are significantly more likely than under-35s (50%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe the UK's aid and development programmes should be time-limited and should prioritise enabling people to take control of their lives. White Britons (60%) are also more likely to believe this than BAME Britons (52%).

In terms of employment, retirees (75%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginals are the most likely to support time-limited programmes that allow local people to take control of their own futures, followed by those working full-time (57%) or part-time (53%), while those who are unemployed are the least supportive (43%). The low level of support, in relative terms, among those who are unemployed, is particularly interesting, and given their relatively high levels of support for aid evidenced elsewhere in this paper, suggests some scepticism of the effectiveness of time-limited programmes and their ability to empower local people, perhaps reflective of their own experiences with state support, or that the idea of time-limited programmes is seen as a refutation of existing aid programmes. This trend can also be seen regionally, with residents in London (55%) in the constituencies surveyed, who are typically among the most supportive of aid and development, the region least likely to support time-limited programmes designed to

empower local people to take control of their lives. Support is highest among residents surveyed in constituencies in the South East (64%).

Those earning £20,001-£40,000 a year (65%) in the constituencies surveyed are also more likely to support prioritising enabling people to take control of their futures than those who earn less than £20,000 a year (58%) and those who earn over £40,000 a year (56%). Notably, however, these distinctions do not carry through to socio-economic background, with those from both higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds broadly aligned in levels of support. There are also no notable distinctions in views based on gender.

Political persuasion is once again a particularly salient demographic indicator. Conservative voters (75%) in the constituencies surveyed are by far the most likely to believe programmes should be time-limited and enable local people to take control of their own futures, followed by Lib Dem voters (54%) and then Labour voters (45%). Leave voters (72%) in these constituencies are also significantly more supportive of this than Remain voters (55%).

### **3. Britain has a unique and enduring set of values and it is important we lead by example as a force for good in the world.**

The majority (57%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the UK has a unique and enduring set of values and that it is important we lead by example as a force for good in the world. Only 9% of those surveyed disagree, while 34% are neutral on this statement. Furthermore, citizens in the constituencies surveyed are more likely to strongly agree (14%) than strongly disagree (3%) that Britain has a unique set of values and should lead by example.

A majority of both men and women in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats believe that the UK has an enduring set of values and it is important that we lead by example as a force for good in the world, although women (61%) are more supportive of this than men (52%). Over-55s (62%) are also more inclined to believe this than 35-54-year-olds (55%) and under-35s (53%), although a majority across all age groups recognise the UK's distinct values and the need to lead as a force for good in the world.

White Britons (57%) in the constituencies surveyed are also more likely than BAME Britons (50%) to believe the UK has unique values and it is important that we lead by example, as are those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (62%) relative to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (48%). In terms of personal income, support is highest in the constituencies surveyed among those earning over £40,000 annually (61%), followed by those earning £20,001-£40,000 (58%) and lowest among those earning less than £20,000 a year (54%). Within the constituencies surveyed, support is also particularly high among retirees (63%), and lower among full-time workers (56%), the unemployed (51%) and part-time workers (49%).

Regionally, two thirds of constituents surveyed in London (66%) believe the UK has enduring values and that it should lead by example, with 20% strongly agreeing. This is contrasted with constituents surveyed residing in the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside where just 49% believe this is the case, and Wales in which 22% of respondents actively disagree with this idea. On a political level, this statement brings out some interesting coalitions, with Lib Dem (64%) and Conservative (61%) voters more supportive than Labour voters (48%). Remain voters (64%) are also more supportive than Leave voters (56%).

### **4. Human rights and values are universal, and those living in the poorest parts of the world ultimately share the same hopes and dreams as I do.**

The majority (64%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe human rights and values are universal and those living in the poorest parts of the world ultimately share the same hopes and dreams as they do, including 25% who strongly agree with this. In contrast, just 7% of those surveyed disagree that human rights and values are universal, while 29% are neutral.

An overwhelming majority across all statistically significant demographic groups in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies agree that human rights and values are universal and that those living in the poorest parts of the world ultimately share the same hopes and dreams as we do. Across genders and ethnic groups, there are no significant demographic distinctions in levels of support.

However, agreement is particularly high in the constituencies surveyed among respondents under-35-years (71%), compared to those over-55 (63%) and those aged 35-54 (60%). It is also particularly high among those earning over £40,000 a year (72%), compared to those earning £20,001- £40,000 (63%) or under £20,000 a year (60%). Similarly, those in the ABC1 social category (70%) in the constituencies surveyed are significantly more likely than those in the C2DE social category (53%) to believe human rights and values are universal and that our aspirations are shared. These distinctions are less profound based on working status, although respondents who are unemployed (67%) or working full-time (66%) are the most supportive of the idea that human rights and values are universal and retirees (63%) and part-time workers (61%) are the least.

Regionally, agreement on the universality of human rights and values is strongest among residents in constituencies surveyed in London (75%) and weakest among those surveyed in Wales (57%). Politically, Remain voters (75%) in the constituencies surveyed for this project are significantly more supportive than Leave voters (58%) and support is also higher among Lib Dem voters (73%) than among Conservative (64%) or Labour voters (63%).

### **5. The UK has achieved a lot from its aid and development investments and has been able to change people's lives in a transformative way.**

Citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are more likely to agree (48%) than disagree (11%) that the UK has achieved a lot from its aid and development investments and has been able to change people's lives in a transformative way. However, a significant proportion of citizens surveyed (41%) are neutral on this issue and just 7% of citizens strongly agree and 5% strongly disagree that this is the case.

Women (51%) are more likely than men (44%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe that the UK has achieved a lot from its aid and development investments and has been able to change people's lives in a transformative way, as are under-35s (54%) relative to over-55s (46%) and 35-54-year-olds (45%). Support is also particularly high among White Britons (48%) relative to BAME Britons (40%) in these constituencies.

At 63%, respondents who are unemployed in the constituencies surveyed are the most likely to believe the UK's aid investments have been transformative and effective, followed by full-time workers (49%), retirees (45%) and part-time workers (40%). However, those with higher personal incomes are more supportive than those with lower incomes in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies, with 52% of those earning over £40,000 and 50% of those earning between £20,001 and £40,000 a year believing it has transformed people's lives, compared to 44% of those earning less than £20,000 a year. Similarly, those in higher socio-economic categories (51%) in these constituencies are more supportive than those in lower socio-economic categories (41%).

Regionally, support is, once again, highest among residents surveyed in constituencies in London (55%). It is lowest among respondents in Yorkshire and Humberside (38%). Agreement that UK aid and development investments have transformed people's lives is also particularly high among Remain voters (52%) than Leave voters (44%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies. However, the distinctions based on political affiliation are notably less distinct, with Lib Dem voters (52%) the most supportive, followed by Labour (49%) and Conservative voters (47%), although the distinctions are relatively small.

## **6. The pandemic has shown how connected the world is today, and underscored how the health and well-being of the world's people affects us all.**

A clear majority (70%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe the pandemic has shown how connected the world is today, and underscored how the health and well-being of the world's people affects us all, including 23% who strongly agree that this is the case. In contrast, just 7% disagree that the pandemic has shown how connected the world is today, while 23% are neutral.

Within Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies, the idea that the pandemic has highlighted the interconnectedness of the world's health is felt most strongly by over-55s, 77% of whom agree, compared to 66% of under-35s and 65% of 35-54-year-olds, likely reflective of older respondents' acute awareness of their higher level of vulnerability to the worst effects of the virus. As such, retirees (79%) in these constituencies are particularly attuned to this interconnectedness, compared to those working part-time (70%), full-time (66%) and the unemployed (65%), all of whom are predominantly younger. Women (72%) are also somewhat more likely than men (67%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies to believe the pandemic has highlighted global interconnectedness, particularly around health, as are White Britons (70%) relative to BAME Britons (62%).

This interconnectedness is also felt particularly strongly in the constituencies surveyed by those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (74%) relative to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (61%), and those with personal incomes over £40,000 (74%) compared to those earning £20,001-£40,000 a year (69%) or those earning less than £20,000 a year (67%). Regionally, residents in the constituencies surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (76%) are the most likely to feel the pandemic has highlighted our interconnectedness, while those surveyed in the East of England (65%) and Wales (65%) are the least likely to.

Of the political parties, Lib Dem voters (83%) in the constituencies surveyed are the most likely to believe the pandemic has highlighted the global interconnectedness of our health and well-being, followed by Conservative (71%) and Labour voters (64%) – interesting because Labour voters often tend to be more attuned to the concept of universalism. However, agreement with this statement is also higher among Remain voters (82%) than among Leave voters (67%), which again suggests that the particular dynamics within the seats surveyed in this project reveal a particular cluster of Conservative voters more receptive to moral and humanitarian arguments than the norm amongst their counterparts.

## **7. We need greater scrutiny on aid spending to ensure every penny is effectively spent.**

The vast majority (78%) of citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies believe we need greater scrutiny of aid spending to ensure every penny is effectively spent, including 38% who 'strongly agree' that we need this. In contrast, just 3% of citizens surveyed disagree that more scrutiny is needed, while 19% are neutral.

Over-55s (89%) in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal constituencies are the most supportive of increasing scrutiny of aid spending to ensure every penny is effectively spent, significantly more so than 35-54-year-olds (72%) and those under-35 (70%), although large majorities of all age groups are supportive of greater scrutiny. Support for greater scrutiny is also stronger among women (81%) than among men (74%) although differences across ethnic groups are relatively small.

Britons earning less than £20,000 a year (81%) or between £20,001 and £40,000 a year (78%) in the constituencies surveyed are notably more supportive than those with a personal income over £40,000 a year (72%). Retirees (91%) in the constituencies surveyed are by far the most supportive of greater scrutiny, which is perhaps unsurprising given they are at the intersection of both financial precarity and older age, both of which are associated with a desire for greater scrutiny of aid spending. Part-time workers (82%) and full-time workers (71%) in these

constituencies are the next most likely to support greater scrutiny, and unemployed people (65%) are the least likely to, perhaps reflective of concerns that greater aid scrutiny would lead to greater scrutiny of government spending domestically, on which they are heavily reliant.

Regionally, residents in constituencies surveyed in Yorkshire and Humberside (82%) are the most likely to believe that we need greater scrutiny of aid spending, and those surveyed in the East of England are the least likely to (68%). Politically, within Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats, Conservative voters (88%) are the most supportive of greater scrutiny of aid spending, followed by Lib Dem voters (76%) and finally Labour voters (63%). Leave voters (86%) in these constituencies are also more supportive of greater scrutiny than Remain voters (77%).

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## Research Conclusions

Overall, this survey has yielded positive findings about the resilience and depth of support for the UK's aid and development investments in these marginal seats, which are largely seen as an irrefutable moral obligation and actively contributing to the UK's international reputation. Although the overall salience of aid and development as a policy area remains lower than other areas of the UK's international activities, the commitment to maintaining an ongoing programme of development investments is robust and enduring. Britons remain morally bound to the universal application of human rights and ensuring all people live with basic standards of human health, sanitation and well-being. They recognise common values shared across the human experience.

Moreover, although the coronavirus pandemic has evidentially sharpened minds about the scarcity of state resources, this has not fundamentally challenged the sense of responsibility that Britons in these seats hold towards the world's most vulnerable people. Indeed, the pandemic itself has drawn attention to the connectivity we share as part of the global community, and the fact that poor health outcomes can compromise the security of all people. However, although Britons surveyed for this project are supportive of the UK's investments in aid and development, and recognise the risks that vacuums in global leadership in the developing world can create, if they are able to be filled by the UK's strategic rivals, there is a very clear sentiment expressed throughout this data-set that they wish for Britain to stand in the 'middle of the pack' amongst our allies. Although the nation's unique and enduring values are keenly felt, the emphasis is on burden-sharing and working collaboratively as a team with our allies to achieve common objectives. In short, the concept of a competitive 'race to the top' on international development does not resonate as strongly as the idea of 'keeping up with' and 'working alongside' our global partners.

There are clearly significant gaps in both knowledge, interest and support for many aspects of the UK's foreign aid and development programmes. In particular, the case for development spending's strategic importance to the UK's broader foreign policy and economic objectives has not sufficiently resonated with these voters. Nonetheless, as respondents' self-reported knowledge is quite low, and they have indicated their willingness to learn more, there is a significant opportunity presented by this research to champion an educational campaign that better reflects the transformative, empowering nature of the UK's international development investments, and their tangible contribution to our collective global security, prosperity and well-being.

Furthermore, when broken down into demographic groups and regions, many of the distinctions that emerge highlight further opportunities to engage with groups which may prove decisive in shifting public opinion on international development. In particular, the strength of support for the UK's aid and development programmes among younger Britons, who are driven both by values and by their strong belief in the benefits of aid programmes, is a positive foundation on which to build a more sustainable degree of public support in the future. Targeted engagement with the younger generations is likely to provide the best opportunity to render these opinions resilient and enduring, as young Britons begin to become an increasingly powerful electoral force.

Similarly, findings that citizens in Conservative-Lib Dem constituencies who have higher levels of economic security are more supportive of aid and development investments can also indicate a pathway through which the success of Government initiatives such as the Levelling Up agenda could lead to greater economic security in these constituencies in the longer term, which in turn encourages a wider proportion of citizens to feel sufficiently comfortable to endorse international aid spending. Furthermore, the fact women are broadly supportive of the values that underpin the UK's aid programmes, even if they hold these views less emphatically due to

## Research Conclusions

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a lack of confidence in their views, highlights that public awareness raising campaigns could help to build support among a large constituency, which could have a significant impact on public and electoral discourse.

Finally, while there are marked differences between many Conservative and Lib Dem voters in their opinions on aid and development, it is also true that there is a sizeable minority of Conservative voters who are emphatic in their support for the UK's aid and development investments and particularly attuned to its benefits, and who may work to shape and influence perceptions of aid and development within the Party, and within their constituencies. In short, we discern an encouraging foundation of support for aid and development within these constituencies, which could be elevated and made more enduring, through the deepening of ties between the international development sector and the Levelling Up agenda, and the provision of targeted awareness-raising and education campaigns – to bring to live the transformative impacts of UK aid and development.

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# Appendix: Rapid Evidence Review

In order to develop the survey to conduct the original research for this project, the BFPG undertook a rapid evidence review of existing literature regarding UK public opinion on foreign aid. The review brought together evidence from both the BFPG's existing data-sets and a wide range of external sources, both in the UK and internationally, covering both quantitative and qualitative research. Below we present a short summary of the findings.

Firstly, the evidence review makes clear that the British public is strongly supportive of the UK's aid and development initiatives, with, according to the BFPG's data, only 17% of Britons fundamentally opposed to foreign aid. Britons are particularly supportive of aid spending to implement basic health programmes (76%), provide emergency support in a crisis (74%) or to provide infrastructure to enable the provision of public services (72%). Support is also particularly high among Remain voters, residents of London, graduates and those in higher social grades. The deep roots and strength of the support for the underlying values behind the UK's aid and development programmes are therefore clear.

Framing is especially important in conducting research about international development. Support for aid and development investments is most robust when there is a focus on the programmes or issues which are being addressed, rather than abstract questions about support for aid in principle. It is also clear from our research that aid and development remains a relatively low-salience, second-order issue for the electorate as a whole, but that this is particularly acutely felt when foreign aid is held up against other areas of foreign policy. Finally, that ambivalence can shift to active antipathy, scepticism and concern when foreign aid spending in particular is juxtaposed against domestic spending priorities. As such, particularly in times such as these when there is such a pronounced focus on the pressures on Government spending inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic, it is certainly the case that the public's willingness to endorse the financial commitments required to achieve the objectives they support does not always match the strength of their underlying values.

In the areas and demographics of particular interest to this project, some important distinctions were observed. In particular, the strength of support among Lib Dem voters for the UK's aid and development programmes, which is motivated by a sense of moral duty, stands in contrast to weaker levels of support among Conservative voters, whose support is strongest when there are clear and direct benefits to the UK. However, where efforts are made to render those links explicit, and to steer framing away from a zero-sum conception of aid spending, instead highlighting how aid and development investments are integral to achieving other foreign policy objectives, support will often rise among Conservative voters. As such, if visibility of the full spectrum of positive impacts offered by UK aid investments improves, it is plausible to expect that international development will become an increasingly salient issue among swing voters in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats.

The rapid evidence review highlighted several research gaps that were ultimately addressed in the quantitative survey conducted for this project. In particular, we identified the need to understand the thought processes taking place amongst citizens around the coronavirus pandemic, and how trade-offs between domestic and international security were being assessed. Moreover, the lack of clarity around the public's own conception of their knowledge and education on foreign aid, and how this contributed to their understanding of the benefits international development can bring to advancing the UK's interests. Finally, the value in testing a wide range of different frames within the same survey, and within the same question grids – spanning financial, programmatic and out-put oriented messages.



# COALITION FOR GLOBAL PROSPERITY

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The Coalition for Global Prosperity brings together political, military, business and faith leaders who believe that an effective development budget, alongside an active diplomatic and defence strategy, keeps Britain at the forefront of saving lives, alleviating poverty and bringing freedom, security and prosperity to those who need it most. We believe that Britain is at its best when it acts as a global leader in development as well as in defence and diplomacy.

The British Foreign Policy Group is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to advancing the UK's global influence, at a crucial time in the nation's modern history. To achieve this, we produce dynamic events and high-quality research, and facilitate networks amongst stakeholders with a vested interest in Britain's international engagement.

Our core objective is to bridge the link between the domestic and international spheres – recognising that Britain's foreign policy choices and obstacles are shaped by our social landscape at home. Through pioneering research into the UK's social fabric, we seek to build understanding of the nuances of public opinion, and how our foreign policy can become more inclusive, responsive and relevant to citizens' lives.

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