



More in
Common

Green and Global Britain

Navigating public opinion on climate foreign policy

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Foreword

The next five years will determine Britain's trajectory towards meeting or missing our 2030 climate targets and in subsequent years. While much of the political debate on climate has rightly focused on the domestic transition here in Britain, this research - the largest of its kind on climate and foreign policy - lifts the lid on what the public think about how we should work with other countries to tackle the global challenge of climate change.

Drawing on polling of more than 12,000 Britons and focus group conversations with more than 120 people, we are able to identify what the public expect from the government and how they would like the government to tackle climate change on the world stage.

The polling and focus group research highlights both the opportunity for - and the expectation of - leadership on tackling climate change on a global scale. Climate is a top five public priority on climate foreign policy and the public want greater focus on delivering tangible benefits from climate foreign policy, greater security - from national security to energy security - and a reset in our relationship with countries around the world. There is no public mandate for backtracking on our international obligations on tackling climate change.

Designing and delivering a climate foreign policy that is not in tune with the views of the public risks undermining public support for climate action and public support for financial aid to tackle climate action at home and abroad.

This report charts out a course for how to avoid that from happening, and to ensure the public's values, viewpoints and expectations are met as the new government sets out its approach to tackling climate change on the world stage.

Public's starting points on climate foreign policy

Expectation of strong British leadership and frustration with current weakness

The British public expects the UK to be a leader on the global stage, including on climate change.

They view climate foreign policy as an opportunity for Britain to restore national pride and deliver tangible benefits at home and abroad.

However, the public also recognises the limits of what the UK can do compared to major powers. It expects Britain to be one of the leaders on issues such as climate change but does not expect or want Britain to be the only leader.

Tackling climate change is a priority and important for Britain's security

Britons see tackling climate change as a top five foreign policy priority and also see tackling climate change as important for national security - their concerns span different security issues including national security, energy, water, and food security.

The public views tackling climate change as embedded in and affecting other top foreign policy priorities.

Backtracking on climate commitments would be seen negatively by most. Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Change Agreement is viewed almost as negatively as withdrawing from NATO.

Support for a multilateral approach to tackling emissions

The public favours a multilateral approach to climate change, believing global problems require global solutions.

The public think that working with other countries will be most effective at encouraging those currently not doing enough to do their bit to tackle emissions.

The public tend to support UK-China cooperation on climate. However, they prioritise protecting national security over increasing trade with China.

Meeting public's expectation on climate foreign policy

More in Common's polling and focus group research has identified nine key expectations that the public have for how the new government approaches climate foreign policy. This slide summarises these expectations and they are further explored in the subsequent section.

Help make Britain feel safer: rising global instability heavily shapes public views on foreign policy. A key test for any climate foreign policy approach is how does it help make Britain safer in a more uncertain world.

Deliver tangible benefits: the more that climate foreign policy can be framed in a way that delivers tangible benefits for Britons, the more likely it will be to command public support - one of the most compelling ways of doing this is tying climate foreign policy to savings on energy bills at home.

A fair approach: the public want an approach to climate change where polluters pay for the damage they have done and those with the broadest shoulders bear the costs for transition appropriately.

Deliver for both nature and people: a climate foreign policy approach which prioritises protecting animals and nature is one that can command broad public support. Most reject a binary choice between nature and people, expecting the Government's approach to address both.

Technology is key : the public is supportive of investment in technological innovation to tackle climate issues and think it is something the UK should be doing more of both domestically and around the world.

Work in partnership with business: the public wants government and business to collaboratively tackle climate change, favouring supporting British green businesses to become "climate problem solvers" over holding business accountable for damage caused in the past.

Connect the national to the global: while the public are more concerned about the national challenges posed by climate change, linking international challenges to salient domestic challenges (such as flooding) boosts support for international climate action and for climate foreign policy.

Forward-looking on accountability: the public largely rejects assigning blame for past actions on climate to the UK, favouring a forward-looking approach to accountability and supporting governments and large corporations to tackle climate change in the future rather than a backward-looking blame game.

Prioritise climate adaptation: the public leans towards favouring adaptation measures that improve resilience to specific risks like flooding and drought rather than mitigation approaches - partly because adaptation approaches seem both more urgent and more tangible.

Climate and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)

The challenge and opportunity-making the case for ODA

Most Britons support the principle of providing aid to poorer countries. While the aid budget has been cut in recent years, more think it has increased than been cut. Almost half also think the UK should spend less on foreign aid.

To command public support for increasing or reprofiling overseas development aid, a broader story has to be told - one which deals with both why Britain should give aid, and crucially the ways in which we give overseas aid that can pass the public's tests on reciprocity, self-sufficiency and effectiveness.

Climate initiatives can boost overall support for overseas development aid.

Three tests - the opportunity on climate ODA

Public support for climate-related ODA is contingent on passing three tests:

Reciprocity - ODA should benefit both Britain and the recipient country

Self-sufficiency - ODA should help recipients become more self-reliant

Effectiveness - aid investments should demonstrably make a difference

Climate-related ODA, such as promoting green businesses globally or investing in climate technology, has the potential to meet these public expectations more easily than traditional forms of ODA.

The importance of framing

Framing is important to build public support. For example, investing in climate technology is viewed favourably as it is something which is tangible, mutually beneficial to both giver and receiver of ODA and something which supports self-sufficiency.

Emphasising the effectiveness and value-for-money benefits of empowering local communities is more convincing than moral arguments about redressing historic power imbalances or injustices. The public take a practical rather than a moralistic approach to ODA investments.

Methodology

More in Common was commissioned to carry out this mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) research by Global Optimism.

These public opinion insights form part of a larger piece of policy and narrative development work that will be launched in Autumn 2024.

More in Common is grateful for the help of the Global Optimism team and narrative researchers Jamie Clarke and Susie Wang for their guidance and advice on many parts of this work.

More in Common's researchers have retained editorial control throughout this project and the insights from this report are the authors' alone.

Quantitative Research Design

More in Common polled a nationally representative sample of 12,000 across two polls - one poll of 2,000 people in January 2024 to provide a baseline assessment of the public's views and a 10,000 person nationally representative sample in April-May 2024.

As part of our quantitative research, More in Common has conducted randomised control trials message testing experiments and conjoint and MaxDiff analysis.

Further analysis of this quantitative research will be released in Autumn 2024.

Qualitative Research design

More in Common conducted 14 focus groups as part of this project convening voters in Essex, Blyth, Stevenage, Swindon, Selby, Camden, Stoke, Surrey, Aldershot, Bristol and Hyndburn.

We also convened groups of Muslim voters, Black British voters, British Indian and British Chinese voters and SME business leaders from across the country in May 2024.

Seven of these groups took place in February 2024 and the additional seven groups took place in May 2024 following the decision to call the 2024 General Election.

A key lens for understanding climate foreign policy

Throughout this report, More in Common has used the lens of the British Seven segments to describe how different groups of the public - shaped by their values and core beliefs - converge and diverge on different issues. A further analysis of the segments' views on foreign policy will be released in Autumn 2024.

Progressive Activists



...a group for whom politics is an important part of their identity and who seek to correct long-standing injustices.

Civic Pragmatists



...a group that cares about others, at home or abroad. They wish for less conflict and more compromise.

Disengaged Battlers



... a group that are just getting by. They blame the system for its unfairness, but not other people.

Established Liberals



...a group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo.

Loyal Nationals



...a patriotic group who worry that our way of life is threatened and also feel our society has become more unfair.

Disengaged Traditionalists



... a group that values a well-ordered society and takes pride in hard work. They want strong leadership that keeps people in line.

Backbone Conservatives



... a group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future, and who keenly follow the news.

Section 1

**Public's starting points on
climate foreign policy**

Public's expectation for British leadership on the world stage

Britons' views on climate and foreign policy are informed by an expectation that Britain should lead on the world stage. Three in five (61 per cent) say the UK should do more to lead the way on global issues, more than twice as many as those who say the UK should not be taking a leading role on global issues.

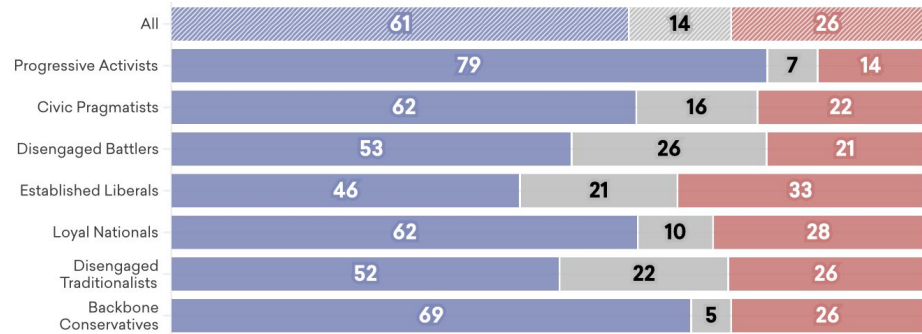
The public are proud of Britain's potential for international leadership - and are particularly proud of the role that Britain has played in supporting Ukraine. Most Britons see this leadership on the world stage through the frame of 'one of the leading countries' on any particular issue rather than a sole 'lead country'. This is the starting point from which to think about climate and foreign policy.

In focus groups, participants cautioned that Britain should be realistic about the much greater reach of other nations such as the US and China - including on issues such as climate change. This is shaped by the broad sense that Britain has - with the exception of Ukraine - 'lost its way' on international affairs in recent years. This contributes to the view that Britain should be 'a leader' on the world stage, rather than the only leader.

We were one of the countries that helped Ukraine out. When it comes to making deals in five years for how much we're going to pay for grain or wheat or whatever, we should get a favourable price. Not that they have to give it us for free or anything, but I think it would be quite fair that we've helped them, so they help us - Simon, Tadcaster

Thinking about the UK taking a stance on global issues, which statement comes closer to your view?

- The UK should do more to lead the way on global issues
- Don't know
- The UK should not try to lead the way on global issues



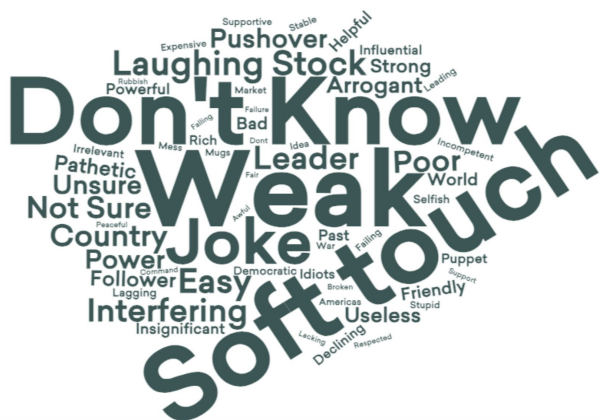
What do you think the UK's role in the world should be?



Public's frustration with British weakness in foreign affairs

Britons' views on climate and foreign policy are shaped both by an expectation that we should lead on the world stage, and a frustration that Britain is taken advantage of and seen as both weak and a soft touch by others. Any new approaches to climate foreign policy which can respond to these views will help better command public support.

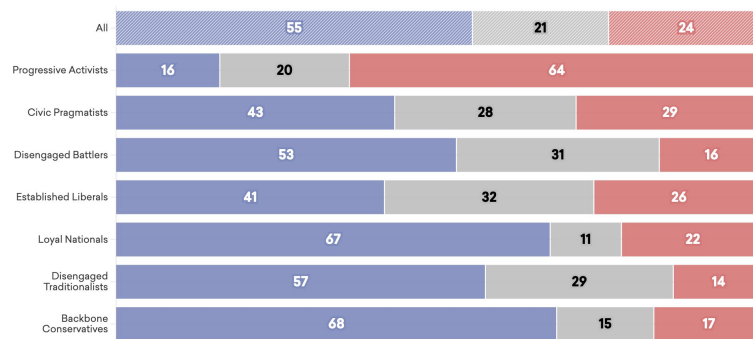
How do you think the UK is seen by the rest of the world?



"I think there's been a shift of late. I don't think we've got much clout" - Graham, Probation Officer, Blyth

Thinking about the UK taking a stance on global issues, which statement comes closer to your view?

Other countries take advantage of the UK (blue) Don't know (grey) The UK takes advantage of other countries (red)



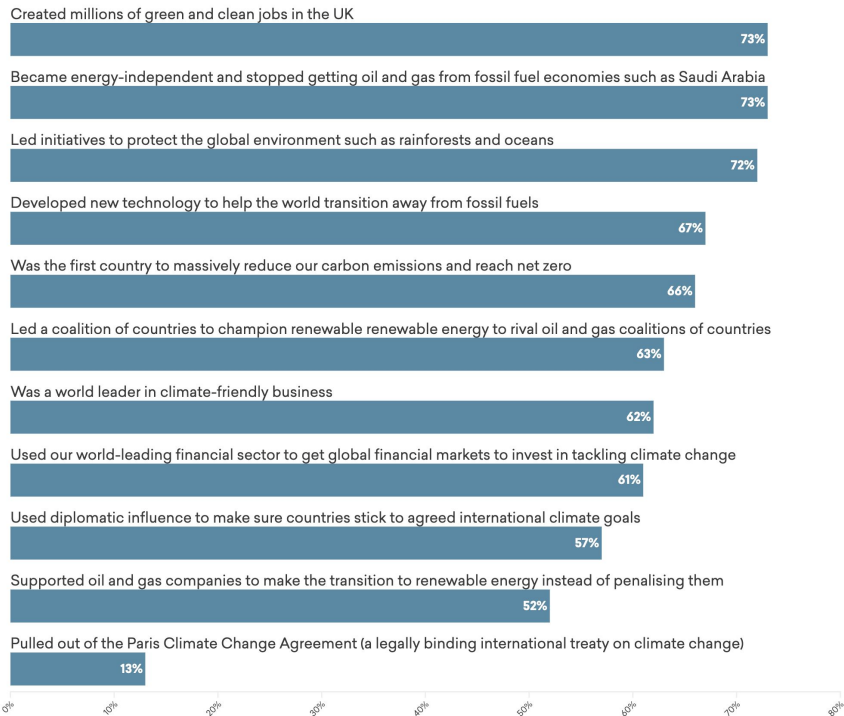
Source: More in Common, February 2024

"I believe that we've been lost for quite a while. I think for maybe certainly over a decade, maybe even two decades that we lack a strong leader. I feel like the country's lost its weight" - Lisa, Veteran, Blyth

Climate foreign policy is an opportunity to lead and restore pride in British leadership on the world stage

How proud or ashamed would you be if Britain...

% proud



Source: More in Common, April 2024 • Some non-climate options removed for data visualisation

A clear opportunity emerges from across the polling and focus group research that climate foreign policy can be used both as an instrument to respond to the public frustration about British weakness on the world stage and to meet their expectations for British leadership.

The parts of climate foreign policy that will most effectively restore the public's pride are those which deliver tangible benefits at home and abroad - from job creation in clean industries, to energy self sufficiency, to leading the way on efforts to protect oceans and rainforests around the world.

Selling the national benefits of Britain's climate foreign policy will be key to building and maintaining public support for the work and giving Britons confidence that our standing on the world stage has been restored.

Backtracking on Britain's international climate commitments is something only a tiny minority of the public think should be done. 46 per cent of Britons say they would be ashamed if Britain pulled out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, comparable to the 50 per cent of Britons who would be ashamed if the country was to pull out of NATO.

We need to come together as a planet to look at real sensible solutions instead of keep having these meetings and then saying, oh well we can't agree again. If you want to do something, you need strong leadership - Tracy, Blyth

I think I may be a bit selfish, but I think we've got to think of the UK people first and then think about the rest of the world - Ronald, Selby

Our government's priority should be what is right for our country, not what is best for everybody else - Lucy, Hyndburn

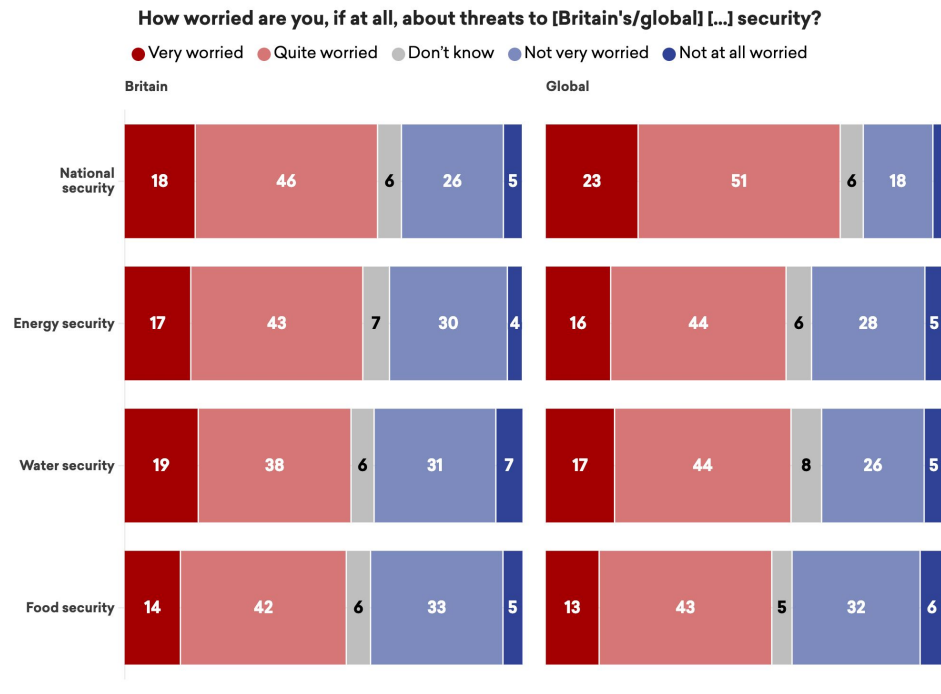
Tackling climate change and Britain's national security

Britons increasingly think about climate change - and its component impacts - as something which affects the safety and security of the country. The public take a broad view of what 'security' means in the national and global context - from the more traditional understanding of 'national security' to other security issues including energy, water, and food.

It is not surprising debates about security dominated the political debate in the lead up to and after the general election, given around two thirds of the public are worried about national security at home and almost three quarters worried about global security.

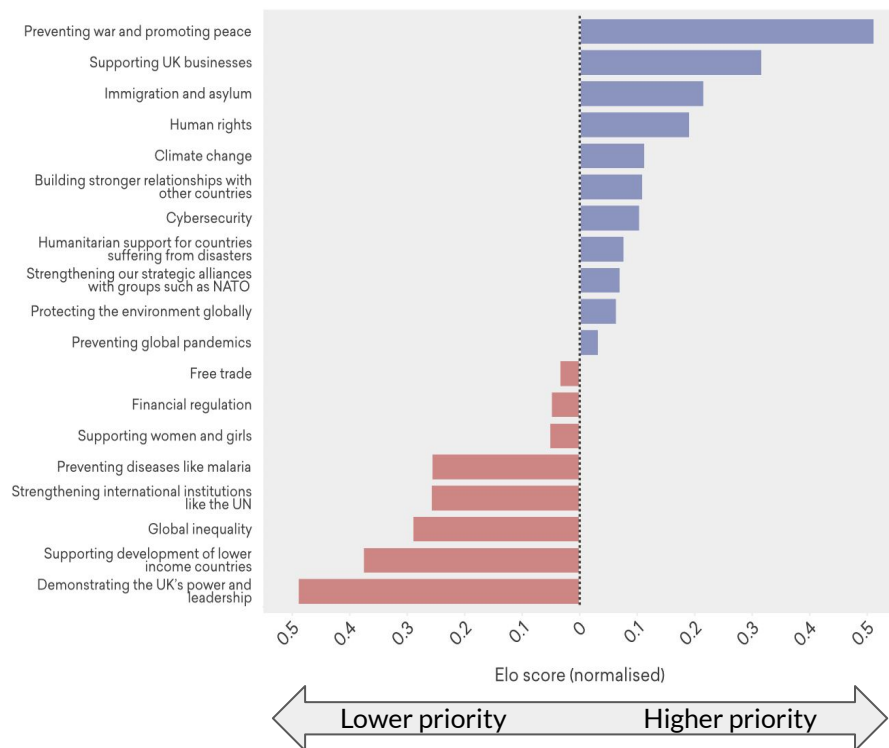
However, not far behind this level of concern over national security is the fact that significantly more than half of the public consider energy, water and food security as something about which they worry too. It is reasonable to conclude that the public increasingly see tackling climate change as something which is important to Britons' security at home and abroad.

I know our shoreline is going to be reduced because of climate change, so that means our land is going to be less, but there's going to be I think heavy pressure people still coming to this country due to the effects of climate change in other countries, and I think it could lead to climate wars in terms of water and food scarcity - Mohamed, Potters Bar



Public see climate change embedded into other foreign policy priorities

Max diff analysis based on the question 'Of the foreign policy issues listed, which do you think should be the highest and lowest priority for the UK government?'



The public see climate as an important top priority in its own right - the fifth highest priority in a MaxDiff analysis which, by some margin, places war/peace as the top foreign policy duty of the government followed behind by supporting UK business.

Polling and focus groups reveal the public clearly see tackling climate change as an issue that is embedded within other foreign policy issues, and that the impacts of climate change and the work done to tackle climate change do materially affect Britain's security and economy.

Climate change is not the number one foreign policy concern for the public. However, in focus group conversations, many shared how it was a top two or three issue, and backtracking on British leadership on tackling climate change would soon start to have negative implications for both our national security and our economy.

I think climate change is a ticking time bomb. I think it's something that the government should be focused. It is not just focus on one thing and take a backseat at the other - Jade, Bristol

There's definitely higher priorities than climate change, but I don't think it should be ignored totally either - James, Selby

The public support a multilateral approach on climate

The public believe that a multilateral approach will succeed in persuading more countries to do their bit on climate change - particularly those who are not currently 'pulling their weight' to get emissions under control.

Most Britons see climate change as a global problem requiring a global response. In fact, the apparent absence of a global response leads some to question the point of exclusively British measures if others are not acting as well. For this reason that the public are more likely to believe that working together with other countries on a multilateral level will make our approach to tackling climate change more effective.

In focus groups, participants were persuaded by the logic of pursuing multilateral agreement and felt that international treaties were more likely to deliver stability and better decision making that would benefit both Britain and other countries, even if they took more time to reach.

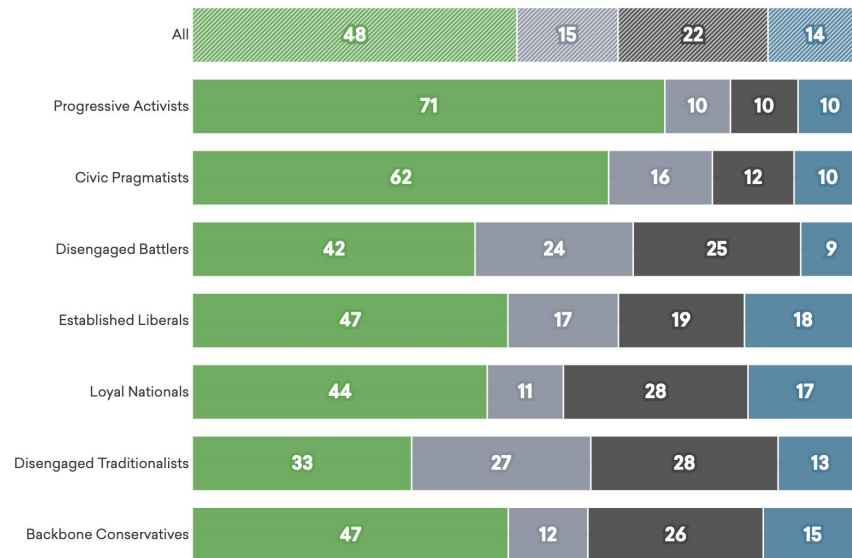
It's a global problem so we can do as much as we can, but everyone needs to be on board - Chris, Godalming and Ash

I think good relations with everybody is in everybody's interest. We can tap into the German's brains to improve our quality. We can go to the Japanese to improve our productivity. You can go to the Scandinavian countries to call it improve our renewables and dealing with the cold and that you can't limit it just to a few countries. I think every country can benefit everybody else - Patrick, Ramsgate

I think the 1:1 level just wouldn't work because I think there's so much history between different countries, which is why obviously you'd have other countries there to mediate. That's why it is good to have the United Nations because you've got other countries that are kind of mediating and supporting with that - Jade, Bristol

When it comes to the UK influencing international action on climate change, which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

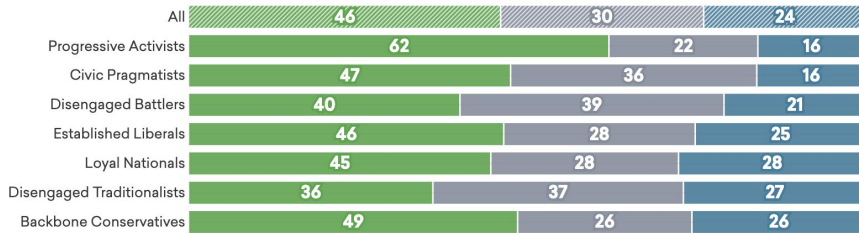
- The UK will be more effective at getting countries around the world to act on climate change if we club together with other like-minded countries who are committed to tackling climate change.
- Don't know
- There will be no difference to how effective the UK will be at getting countries to act on climate change, whether we work with other countries or individually
- The UK will be more effective at getting countries around the world to act on climate change if we act as an individual country influencing other countries one-to-one.



How would the public engage with China on climate change

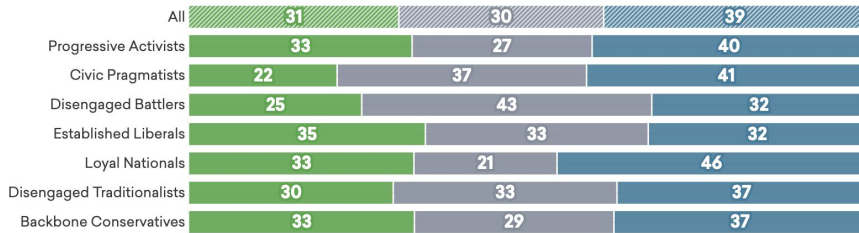
When it comes to tackling climate change, which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

- It is in the UK's best interest to work together with China
- Don't know
- It is in the UK's best interest to avoid working with China



When it comes to tackling climate change, which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

- The benefits of close trade with China outweigh any national security threats
- Don't know
- It is not worth pursuing close trade with China - the security risks are too large



China features in how the public think about climate foreign policy. The public perceive that China is not pulling its weight or taking enough action on tackling climate change, which in turn contributes to a sense of fatalism that there is little point in Britain acting on climate change if China does not do so as well.

It's within this context that the public think Britain should work with China on tackling climate change. The British public are twice as likely to think it is in the UK's best interest to work with China (46 per cent) than avoid working with China (24 per cent) on issues such as climate change - a view held fairly consistently across the British Seven segments.

The public do not think that it's in Britain's best interest to engage with China on every issue - for example, when presented with a straight trade-security trade off is presented, the public are more likely to favour Britain's national security over increasing trade with China (38 per cent v 30 per cent). However on climate, the public take a different view and think it is the government's job to try and influence China to reduce their own emissions, because given the global nature of the problem, Britain ought to work with all countries.

If China doesn't buy in and Russia doesn't buy in and America don't buy in, then us buying into it just doesn't make any sense - Ryan, Swindon

China is going to still carry on doing whatever it is they want. They're going to push as much rubbish in the air as they feel like and a lot of other countries will as well. And all the good we do with our tiny little nation is negligible - Patrick, Ramsgate

Section 2

**Meeting the public's
expectations on climate
foreign policy**

Meeting public's expectation on climate foreign policy

More in Common's polling and focus group research has identified nine key expectations that the public have for how the new government approaches climate foreign policy. This slide summarises these expectations and they are further explored in the subsequent section.

Help make Britain feel safer: rising global instability heavily shapes public views on foreign policy. A key test for any climate foreign policy approach is how does it help make Britain safer in a more uncertain world.

Deliver tangible benefits: the more that climate foreign policy can be framed in a way that delivers tangible benefits for Britons, the more likely it will be to command public support - one of the most compelling ways of doing this is tying climate foreign policy to savings on energy bills at home.

A fair approach: the public want an approach to climate change where polluters pay for the damage they have done and those with the broadest shoulders bear the costs for transition appropriately.

Deliver for both nature and people: a climate foreign policy approach which prioritises protecting animals and nature is one that can command broad public support. Most reject a binary choice between nature and people, expecting the Government's approach to address both.

Technology is key : the public is supportive of investment in technological innovation to tackle climate issues and think it is something the UK should be doing more of both domestically and around the world.

Work in partnership with business: the public wants government and business to collaboratively tackle climate change, favouring supporting British green businesses to become "climate problem solvers" rather than holding business accountable for damage caused in the past.

Connect the national to the global: while the public are more concerned about the national challenges posed by climate change, linking international challenges to salient domestic challenges (such as flooding) boosts support for international climate action and for climate foreign policy.

Forward-looking on accountability: the public largely rejects assigning blame for past actions on climate to the UK, favouring a forward-looking approach to accountability and supporting governments and large corporations to tackle climate change in the future rather than a backward-looking blame game.

Helping people adapt to climate impacts: the public leans towards favouring adaptation measures that improve resilience to specific risks like flooding and drought rather than mitigation approaches - partly because adaptation approaches seem both more urgent and more tangible.

Expectation 1: Does climate foreign policy help make Britain feel safer?

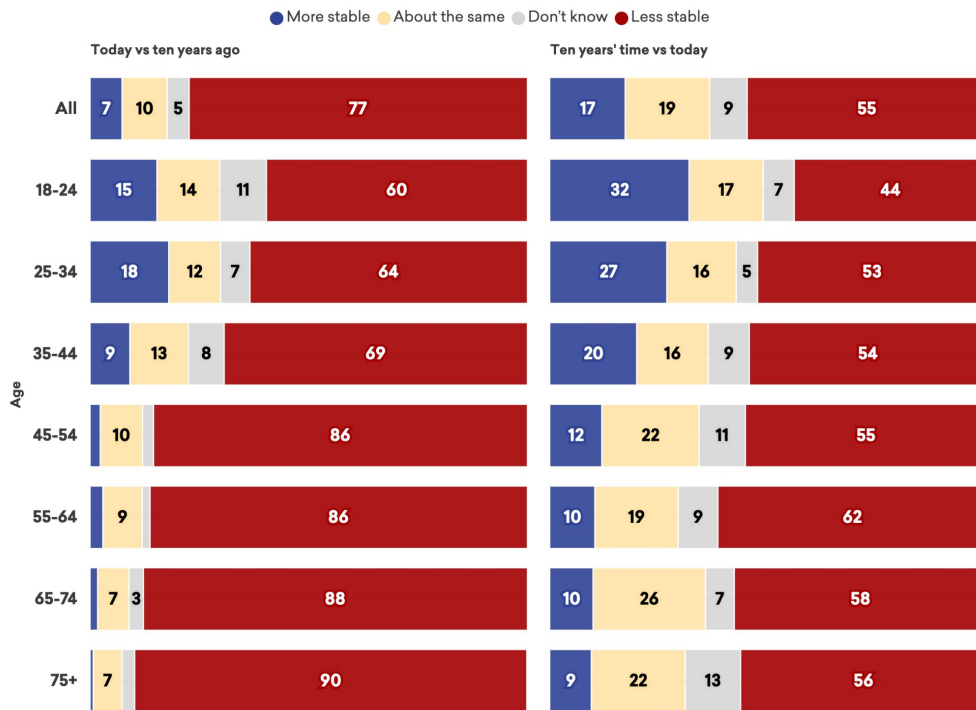
The first expectation that the public have on climate foreign policy is that it must contribute to making Britain safer.

More than three in four Britons (77 per cent) say the world today is less stable than it was ten years ago, and more than half (55 per cent) expect it to be less stable in the coming decade - a view held more strongly by older generations than younger generations.

The public take a broad view about what drives instability at home and abroad from wars in Ukraine and the Middle East to global challenges such as climate change. Any government's approach to climate foreign policy must respond to those broad concerns about instability, and design and explain an approach to climate change which - at the very least - manages instability more effectively, and helps contribute to reducing that instability.

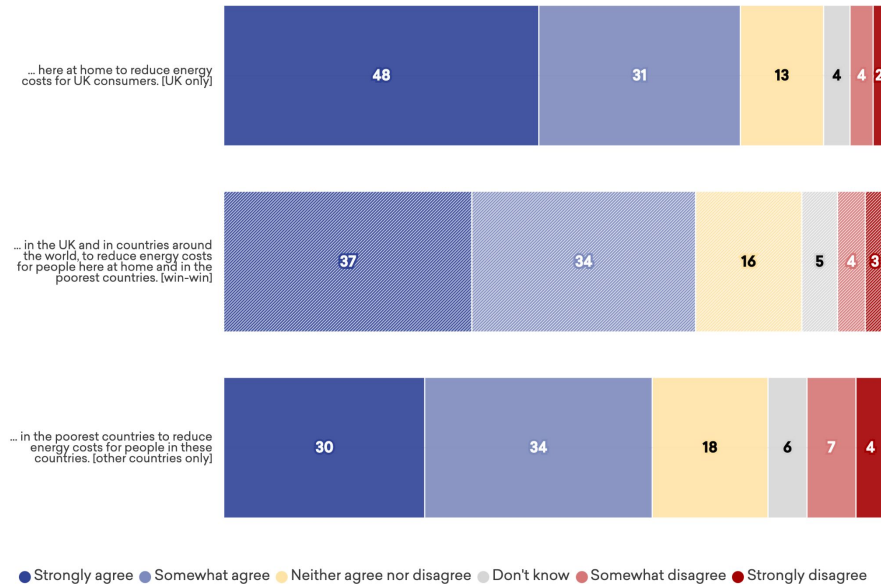
I'm personally more worried about what happens in this country, but unfortunately when it happens in other countries as well, it can affect the uk. So you've really got to be worried generally about the worldwide climate change and it is dangerous and like somebody said before, I'd be worried for my grandchildren. What is it going to be like in, I dunno, 10, 15, 20 years the way things are going at the moment - Ronald, Selby

Thinking about the world [today/ in ten years' time] compared to [ten years ago/ today], [would you say it is/ do you expect it will be]...



Expectation 2: Does climate foreign policy deliver tangible benefits at home and abroad?

Renewable energy is now the cheapest source of energy in the world. We should be producing more renewable energy...



To command the support of the public for any increased overseas development assistance, the tangible benefits of such an investment - both at home and abroad need to be clear. If this can be done, any increase in ODA or the reprofiling of ODA to include more climate investment is more likely to command broader public support.

An example of how this can be done is delivering tangible benefits on energy. More than three in five of the public are worried about Britain's energy security. A climate foreign policy which can contribute to delivering permanent and sustainable reductions to energy bills will be one that is more supported by the public.

Tying investment in renewable technologies abroad to reducing bills at home was something that resonated with most voters (79 per cent). However, talking about the benefits for both consumers in the UK and in poor countries around the world also commanded public support (71 per cent). Other research has also found these 'win-win' arguments command public support. While delivering tangible benefits for Britons is a larger public priority for climate foreign policy, delivering those same benefits for those in poor countries also meets with strong approval.

Expectation 3: Does climate foreign policy help tackle climate change in a fair way?

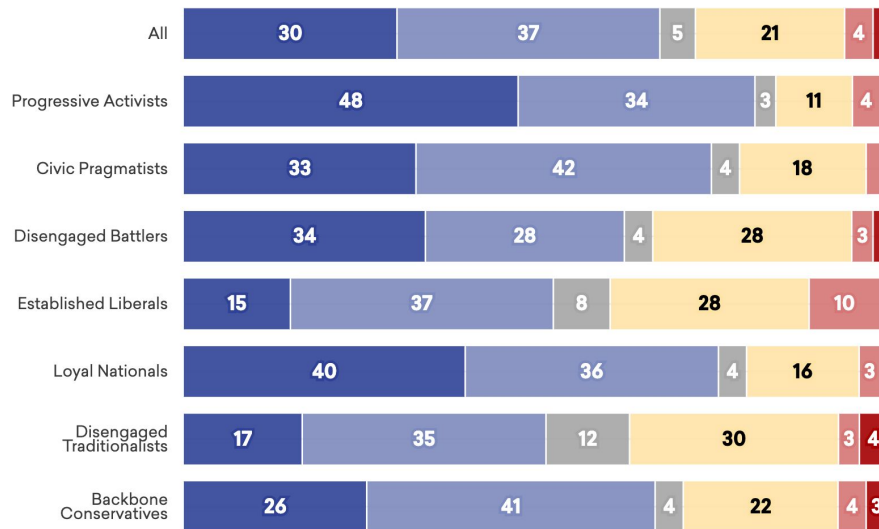
The public want an approach to climate foreign policy that helps us deal with the impacts of climate change in a fairer way. There is broad public support for the 'polluter pays' idea. Two thirds of the public (67 per cent) think that those who've contributed most to climate change globally should foot the bills and lead the efforts to deal with its impacts.

In focus group conversations, it's clear that the public view this 'polluter pays' principle through a large corporation rather than country lens. They want large corporations to be held to account, but the idea that Britain should be responsible for its historic emissions and recompense former colonies does not command public support. The public don't see historic emissions as a factor in a fair climate policy and they don't think about fairness through the lens of industrialised countries or industrialising countries having benefited or not benefits from economic growth based on fossil fuels.

To make the case for Britain to do more to help Commonwealth countries deal with the impacts of climate change, a frame which focuses on responsibility rather than historical culpability better commands public support.

Some argue that those who are most responsible for causing the climate crisis globally should provide the most money and effort to deal with its impacts. Do you think this is a good or a bad idea?

● Very good idea
 ● Somewhat good idea
 ● Don't know
 ● Neither a good idea nor a bad idea
 ● Somewhat bad idea
 ● Very bad idea



Expectation 4: Does climate foreign policy deliver for nature and people?

We should protect [animals/nature/children/people] around the world from harmful climate impacts because the climate has no borders.

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree



The public prioritise a climate foreign policy approach which delivers first and foremost for animals and nature. Saving rainforests and protecting biodiversity resonates more with the British public than measures to benefit humans when it comes to tackling climate change.

However, while the public are more likely to prioritise a nature-centric approach to climate foreign policy, they reject the binary that climate foreign policy should be focused exclusively on either nature or people. Most think that the government's climate foreign policy should do both and deliver both for nature and people.

Even so, framing climate foreign policy through a nature lens can help build public support for doing more internationally on tackling climate change - including action that goes beyond protecting nature and animals.

I think nature and humans are interlinked. I think you can't see one without the other because if we're talking about climate change on nature and we're talking about you know deforestation and the climate warming up, that has a direct impact on us too. So I don't think you can separate the two really - Jade, Bristol

Expectation 5: Does climate foreign policy put technology at the centre?

The public want technological innovation to be front and centre of Britain's approach to tackling climate change both at home and abroad - an approach to climate foreign policy which can do this is more likely to command the support of the public. This is clearly the public want climate foreign policy to demonstrate clearly and tangible how taxpayers' money will be used towards global climate action.

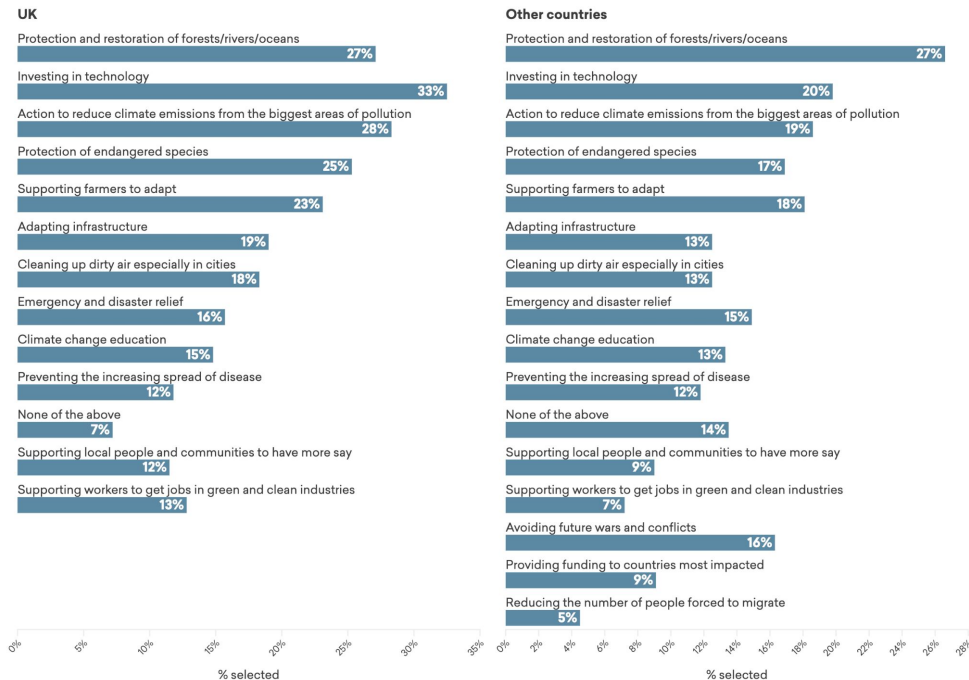
Focus group conversations reveal that the public don't view the use of technology in climate foreign policy from a traditional 'techno-optimist' perspective - a belief that technology alone will solve all our climate related problems - but from the perspective that investment in technology is a sound use of taxpayers money and will be necessary if Britain and the world is to transition to a more sustainable economy.

These conversations also reveal that public support for government investment in climate-tackling technology domestically stems from the public's concern that if the government fails to invest in technology, they - the public - are more likely to have to bear the direct costs of technological uptake themselves.

I like that not to go as money, but in terms of technology and building places around the world that people can help themselves - Vishwar, Swindon

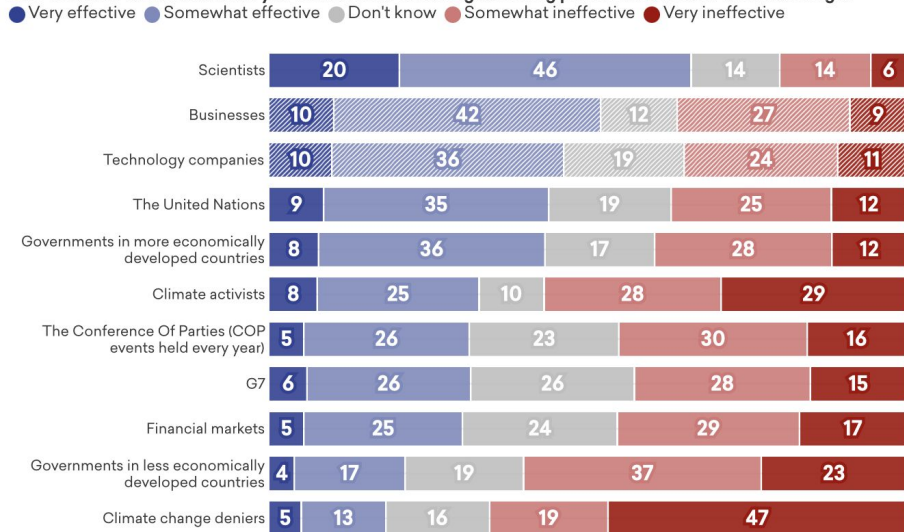
What should be the priorities for UK spending on climate change [within/outside] the UK ?

Select up to three.



Expectation 6: Does climate foreign policy see government work in partnership with business?

How effective or ineffective do you consider the following at solving problems related to climate change?



Source: More in Common, April 2024

Which of the following comes closer to your view? The government's role is to...



● support UK businesses and companies who are tackling climate change ● Don't know ● hold UK businesses and companies to account over their climate footprint

The public want to see government and businesses working together in partnership to tackle climate change. This partnership with business provides a key opportunity to build public support for climate foreign policy.

As with many issues related to tackling climate change, the public prioritise a more forward-looking approach for British businesses who are tackling climate change over a backward looking approach which holds businesses to account for their historical climate footprint. However, there are some exceptions, such as oil and gas companies which the public hold more responsible for causing climate change and put less faith in their ability to tackle it without Government direction.

The public see businesses and tech companies as 'climate problem solvers'. Our research with SME business leaders in the North East also showed that many were ready to work in partnership with the government on climate issues.

Throughout the industry they're then adding in more sustainable things. Like all businesses now look to try and put solar panels on the buildings and use ground source heat pumps and water recycle systems as well. So all these sort of things I don't think people really pick on up on as much. It's not really brought up in the news, but if you're in the industry over the last five, six years, you've seen a massive change. People are spending millions on trying to be more sustainable - Ryan, Swindon

Expectation 7: Does climate foreign policy connect the national to the global?

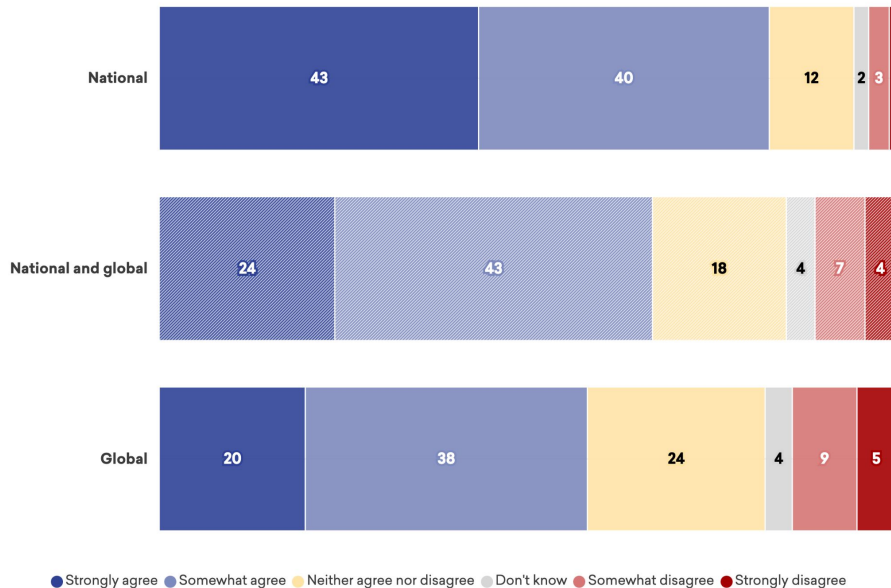
While the public are most concerned about the impacts of climate change in Britain, there is an opportunity for climate foreign policy to resonate more with the public if it links the national and the global, rather than simply approaching climate foreign policy as a global-only challenge.

In a message testing experiment the salience of national-only, international-only and national and international messaging was measured on a range of climate foreign policy issues from extreme flooding to extreme heat.

The findings - corroborated by focus group research - show that linking foreign policy and climate policy can increase public support for tackling the issue in an international context. However, this can only work effectively when there is the same salient national problem.

For example, linking the national to the international messaging on flooding increases overall support, but the same pattern doesn't appear when trying to link the extreme heat problem which is a challenge internationally, but much less salient in Britain.

In recent years parts of the UK, along with many countries around the world, have suffered flooding, and this is expected to get worse due to climate change. We should [protect ourselves/ help poor countries facing severe flooding to protect themselves] by investing in flood defences.



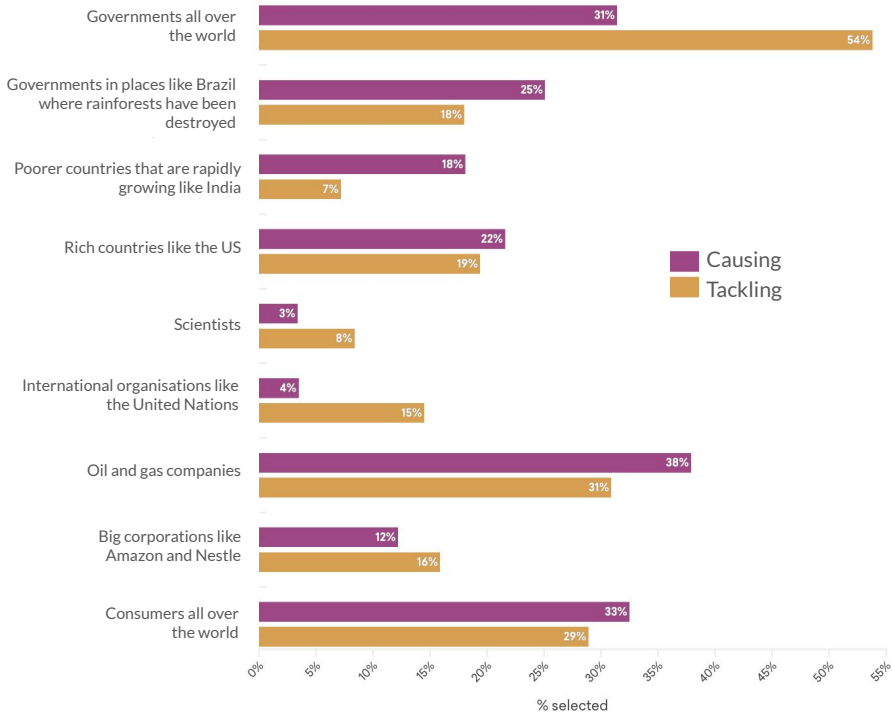
Source: More in Common, April 2024

What ticks me off at the moment, because I live quite close to the beach in Blyth, I've seen the erosion of the beach massive at the moment. There are no political parties at the minute what are talking about the erosion factor. The beaches are massively eroding and it's like, again, there's nothing from the political parties to say what they are doing to help combat flood and beach erosion - Tracy, Blyth

Expectation 8: Does climate foreign policy adopt a forward looking approach to accountability?

Who, if any of the following, is most responsible for [causing/tackling] climate change?

Select up to three.



Selected options displayed
Source: More in Common, April 2024

One of the emerging climate foreign policy debate faultlines centres on how to hold countries and corporations accountable for causing climate change, and how to ensure they take responsibility for tackling it.

The public's approach to questions of accountability and responsibility for climate is one which puts more emphasis on supporting businesses and countries to do more to tackle climate change rather than holding them responsible for causing it in the first place. As previously mentioned, there are some nuances to the public's approach here. The public is more likely to hold oil and gas companies responsible for causing climate change and most likely to hold governments across the world responsible for tackling it.

The public is broadly unconvinced by the 'right to development' - the argument that it is only fair that developing economies should have right to prioritise industrialisation over environmental transition because developed economies consumed fossil fuels to acquire their wealth. Participants in focus groups rejected this argument, pointing out that given what we now know about the harm caused by economic growth reliant on increasing carbon emissions it would be unwise to promote this model of development. Participants also talked about the importance of more sustainable economic development for developing and emerging economies as a way to ensure their future self-sufficiency and long and medium term security.

"The world evolves, doesn't it?... You can't just say, well if you've done it, I want to do it now" - Helen, New Hartley

"Not saying countries shouldn't have the chance to expand... but it is as simple as we now know that it's harmful... I don't think they should be allowed to just crack on - Simon, Tadcaster

Expectation 9: Does climate foreign policy help people adapt to climate change impacts?

The public lean towards prioritising climate adaptation measures (which help countries become more resilient to the impacts of climate change) over climate mitigation measures (which aim to take a more preventative approach to reduce countries' carbon emissions), though many don't take a firm view either way. One of the public's tangible expectations on climate foreign policy is that helps people adapt to the impacts of climate change.

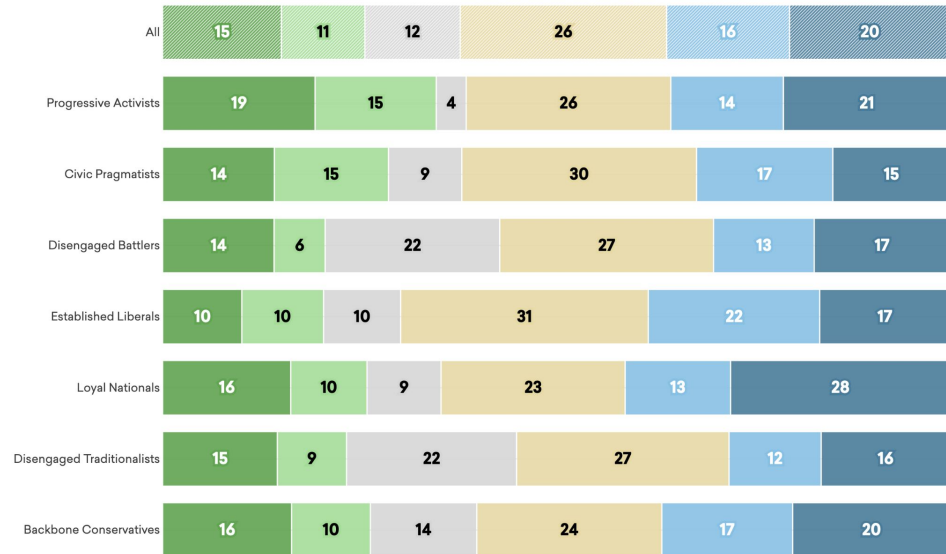
Interesting, the typical Red Wall voters from the Loyal National segment are most likely to favour actions which improve resilience to specific risks such as flooding, drought or wildfires. Due to their high threat perception, they feel adaptation work is both more immediate and a more pressing threat. If climate foreign policy can respond to these concerns on adaptation, it's more likely to command this segment's support which is significant given it is an important group for swinging public opinion.

When adaptation actions (such as improved flood defences) are approached from both a local, national and global perspective - rather than purely global perspective - support for investment in global flood defences increase. In focus group conversations, when the work on adaptation was presented in a more tangible way (e.g. protection for small island nations), it was more likely to be supported, particularly by more sceptical groups.

I think it's relevant to not necessarily to pay towards subsidising China and India, but the likes of the small nations like Fiji, all these small islands who could be wiped out to help them, the Caribbean, et cetera. So I would do it for the fund to help these smaller nations but not this large developing nations - Mohamed, Potters Bar

Which of the following do you think should be more of a priority for the government's budget for overseas spending on climate change?

- 1 - Reducing all countries' carbon emissions that cause climate change to stop the problem getting worse
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Dealing with the impacts of climate change better in all countries to make sure things like food and water supplies are resilient to flooding, drought or wildfires



Section 3

**Climate Change and
Overseas Development
Assistance**

Climate Change and Overseas Development Assistance

A major component of any policy or political debate on climate foreign policy will be the role that Overseas Development Assistance (also known as foreign or development aid) will play. Most Britons (61 per cent) support the principle of overseas development assistance (ODA) to poorer countries - both because they think it is the right thing to do and they think it is a proud British value to help countries in need. However, the public are twice as likely to think that Britain's aid budget has increased than decreased, and almost half of the public think that Britain should spend less on foreign aid.

A series of tests emerge from the polling and focus group research on how advocates for ODA can better bring the public with them on arguments calling for maintaining current levels of ODA spending, or for increasing them, or for making the case that climate-related investments (such as climate adaptation measures) should form a larger part of ODA spending.

Advocates of more (or more climate) ODA spending must persuade the public of a two-part argument- answering the 'why' and the 'how'.

- **The Why** - Broadly speaking, the public agree that Britain has a responsibility to help countries in need around the world. They also believe that helping those in need is a British value. In focus group conversations, people connect the UK's spending on overseas aid to their own personal experiences of charitable giving and most argue that it is important that Britain does its bit and individuals do their bit too on charitable giving.
- **The How** - The public are more sceptical about how overseas development assistance works in practice. Increasing support for ODA, or making the case for climate to become a larger part of ODA, is contingent on meeting three tests of the public's expectations: a reciprocity test (how does this deliver benefits for Britain and the recipient country), a self-sufficiency test (how does this help the recipient country become more self-sufficient), an effectiveness test (how does this investment make a difference). Taken together, these tests form part of the public's broad 'value for money' sniff test on ODA where support or opposition is shaped in part by how advocates of ODA talk about the investment.

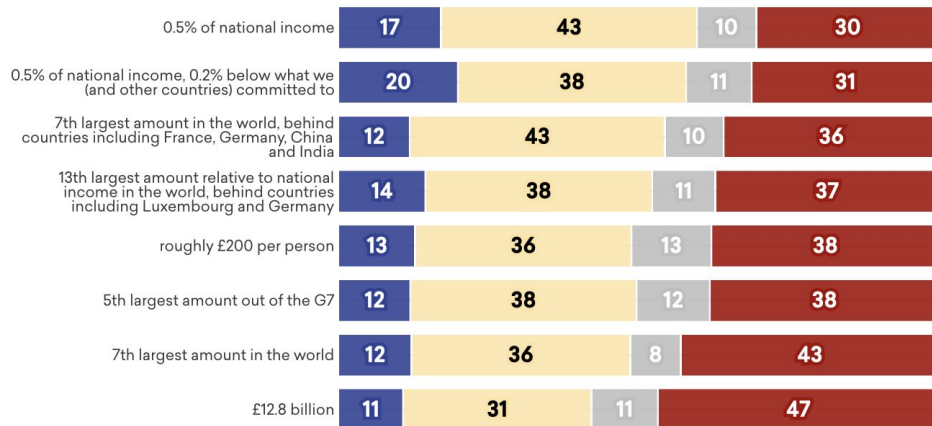
This research finds that climate-related overseas development assistance - whether that's in the form of supporting green businesses or technology - should be able to meet the public's expectations and tests, and potentially meet it more easily than more traditional forms of aid or overseas development assistance.

The public opinion challenge on increasing Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)

Do you think the UK should spend more, less or the same on overseas development aid?

- UK should spend more on foreign aid than we do now
- UK should spend the same amount on foreign aid as we do now
- Don't know
- UK should spend less on foreign aid than we do now

Current annual spending described as...



The challenge facing advocates of increasing overseas development assistance is clear. While aid spending has been cut over the course of the last Parliament, the public are almost twice as likely to think that aid spending has increased (44 per cent) than decreased (23 per cent). A similar pattern emerges when asking whether the government should spend more on ODA (18 per cent support) or less on ODA (46 per cent support).

A message testing experiment identified differences between the levels of support on ODA depending on how the funding envelope is described. When current annual spending on aid is described as 0.5 per cent of national income 30 percent of the public think we should spend less on it, when it is described as £12.8 billion, 47 per cent of the public say we should spend less on foreign aid.

This highlights the limitations of a conversation or debate on aid that is only focused on the size of the funding envelope. To command public support for increasing or reprofiling overseas development aid, a broader story has to be told - one which deals with both why Britain should give aid, and crucially the ways in which we give overseas aid that can pass the public's tests on reciprocity, self-sufficiency and effectiveness.

Why should Britain invest in overseas development assistance?

The first question that advocates of increased or reprofiled overseas development assistance need to answer is the why: why should Britain spend money on ODA.

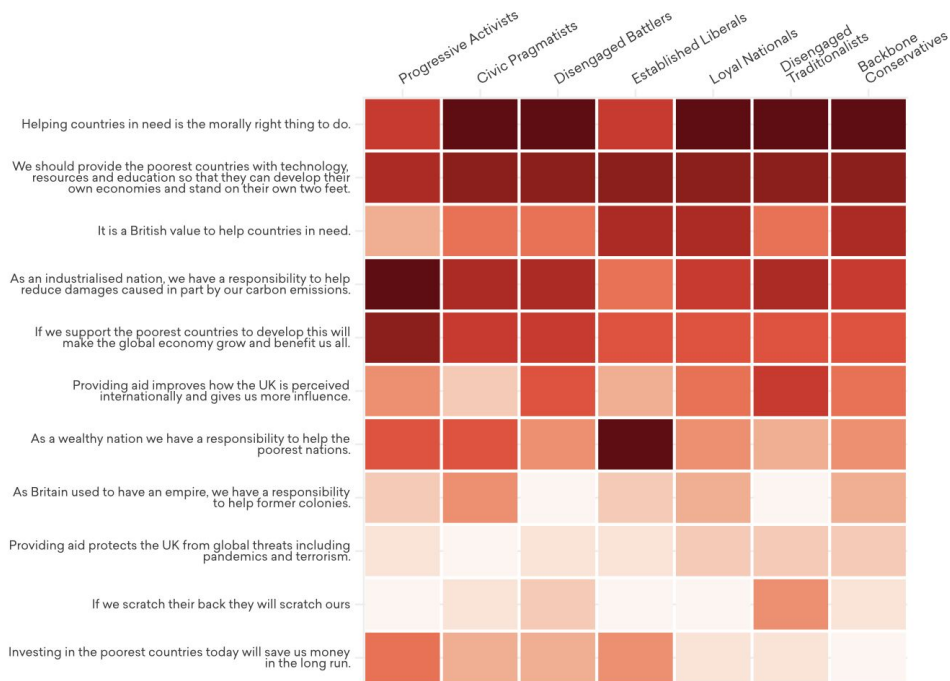
The public broadly agree with the notion that Britain should spend money on overseas development assistance - because they think it is the right thing to do morally, because they think we have a responsibility to help countries be more self-sufficient, and because they feel that it is a British value to help countries in need.

These are three arguments that command support across the British Seven segments - though the intensity of support is stronger among segments such as Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists than others such as the Disengaged Traditionalists.

Our research finds however that it is framing and arguments around the 'how' of ODA rather than the 'why' that is more likely to shape the overall level of public support for the ODA budget.

Below are some arguments in favour of the UK spending public money on foreign aid. How convincing do you find the following arguments?

Colour indicates rank of net support (% convincing minus % unconvincing)



Three tests to better command public support for overseas development assistance

Support for increased overseas development aid or spending more overseas development aid on climate adaptation is contingent upon passing three tests for public support that have emerged from across the polling and focus group research.

Test 1: Reciprocity

What's in it both for Britain and the recipient?

Greater support for ODA can be commanded, particularly for those who are more sceptical, with an approach that focuses on what both the giver and receiver get out of the relationship. ODA needs to pass the reciprocity test: a more equal relationship where both parties have something to offer and something to gain.

If the shoe was on the other foot, we would expect some support from somewhere and if we're in the position to offer that support to those who may need it, I feel that we should - Sabrina, Bristol

I think that every country and every nation, everyone has strengths and everyone has weaknesses and I think it's important to be able to use those to help each other - Hiena, Stevenage

Test 2: Self-sufficiency

Will this commitment help the recipient to be self-sufficient?

The public is weary of long-standing and open-ended spending commitments. It's for this reason that the public favours approaches to international aid which prioritise recipients increasing their self-sufficiency.

You give a person what is it money for him to say buy food or do you give him the tools like a fisherman, a fishing rod so he can catch fish and so he can be in a sustainable himself - Mohammed, Potters Bar

Handing out food parcels and other stuff that will just help keep the country stable in the short term. But with the technology that's more of long-term situation - Faz, Hyndburn

Test 3: Effectiveness

How is our overseas development assistance making a difference?

The public want something to show for their investment in overseas development assistance. The more tangible the ODA proposition is (particularly around investment in technology), the more likely the public will think it can be effective and make a difference, and the more likely it will be to command public support.

If we're talking along the lines of government sending money abroad, I guess, well you'd like to think that they are sure about where it's going and who they're sending it to and how it's being spent - Angela, Bristol

They say put 20 pound or whatever a month in there, but does that all get there? Mike, Bristol

The reciprocity test and support for green business

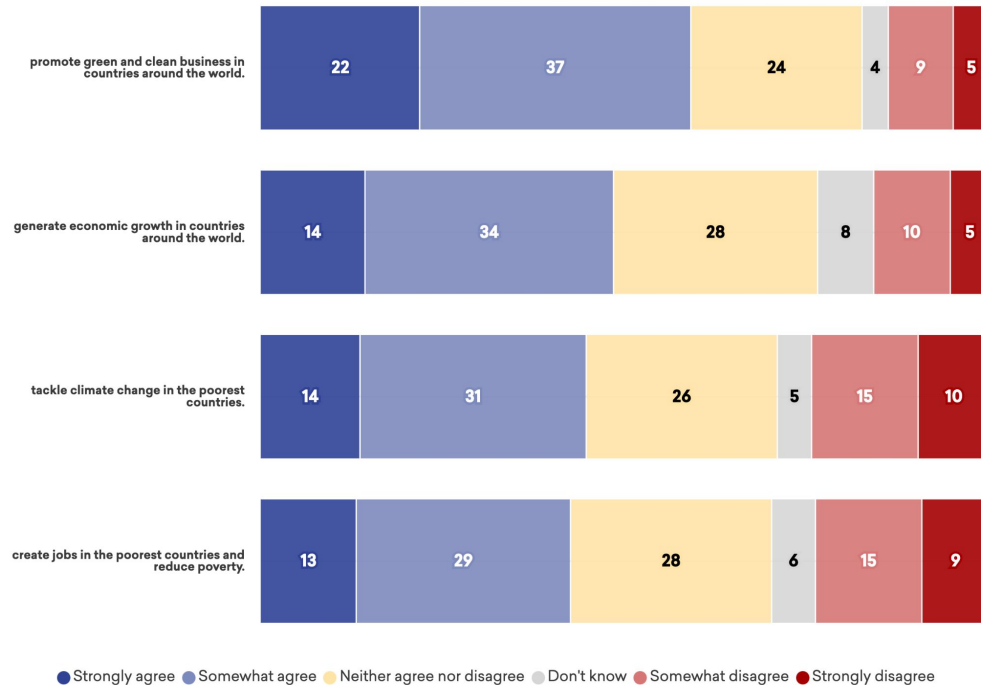
Climate-related overseas development investment based on business and technology transfer presents an opportunity to meet the public's expectations on reciprocity. For example, using taxpayers' money to promote green businesses around the world garners more support than generally tackling climate change or reducing poverty.

Focus group research with small and medium sized businesses in the North East of England also found a clear appetite among business leaders to play an active part in a green-business centric approach to climate foreign policy.

For the public, promoting business is a tangible proposition for the recipient country's long term future development, as well as something which can benefit British businesses.

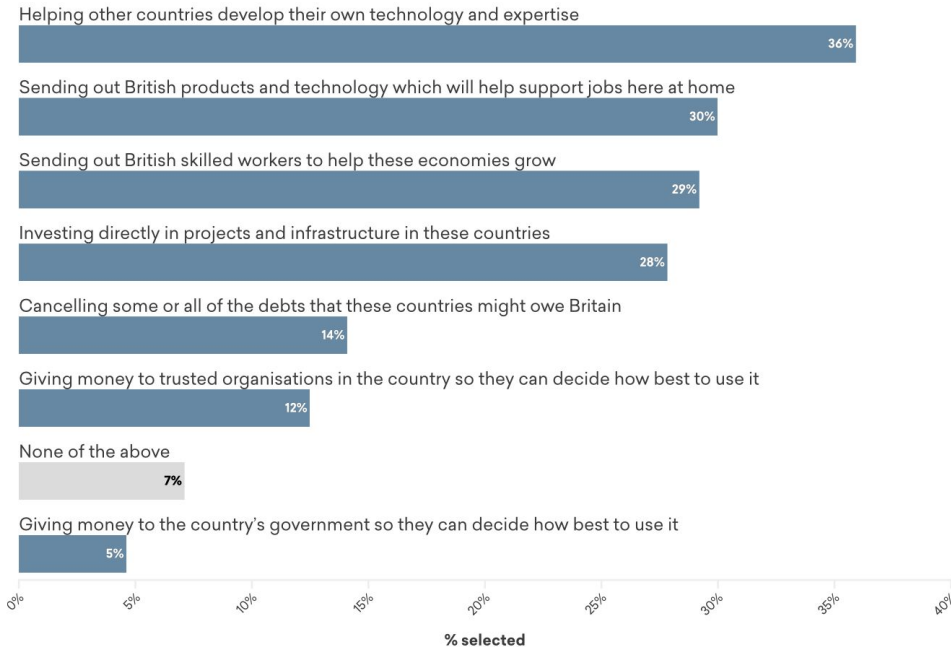
So give them money, not just the money, but give the money by way of green technology. We are market leaders in what we do. Give the technology to countries that we colonised and other countries because a lot of the countries we colonised are struggling. And that's wrong. So for me, I think we have a duty to give the technology to them - Vishwar, Swindon

Britain should its financial power to...



The self-sufficiency test and support for technological investment

Which of the following, if any, do you think are good ways of Britain sending development aid to developing economies around the world?



Across polling and focus group research, technology which focuses on tackling climate change is something which first and foremost passes the public's test for self-sufficiency. The public can clearly see how technology can help recipients of overseas development assistance to become more self-reliant and independent.

Technological investment also helps pass the 'effectiveness' test - the public can see how investment in technology can contribute to tackling climate change and more plainly it gives Britain something to show for its investment. It also passes a reciprocity test as the public can see the opportunity for British technology to be exported around the world.

This support for investment in climate technology shouldn't be misunderstood as a techno-optimist lens for thinking about tackling climate change. Instead most of the the public think investment in technology is something highly practical, where there is something in it for Britain, and which helps countries who receive Britain's aid to be more self-sufficient.

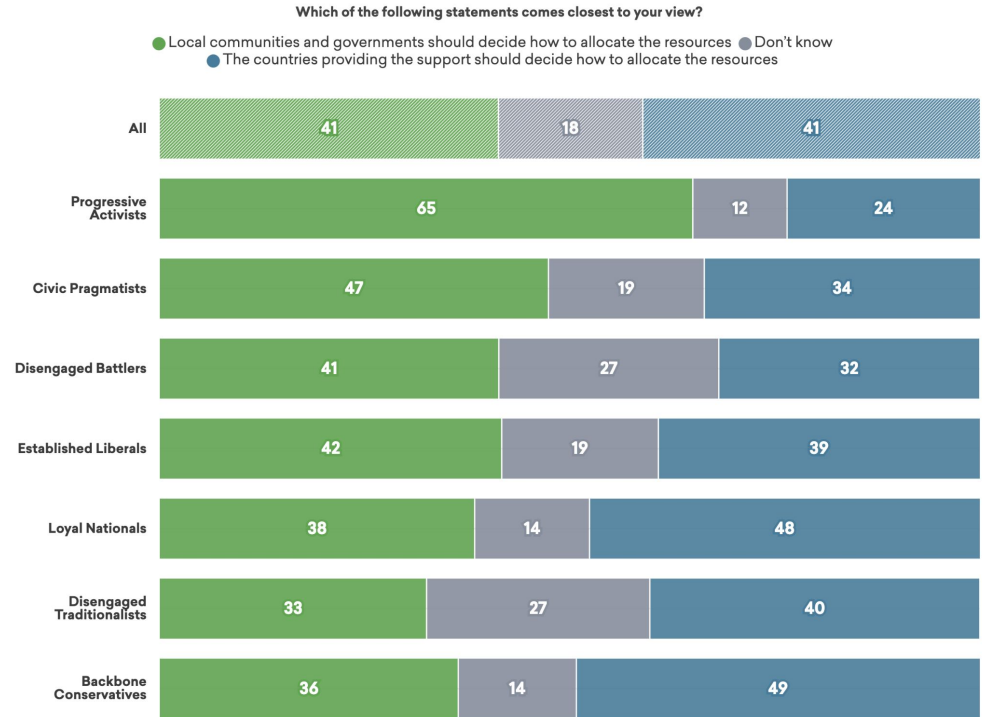
If you are talking about technology and then you are talking about the critical supply chain of how the country operates, we need to invest in that. We don't just need to be sending blank checks abroad and not worried about where that's going to. We need to be investing in the future of the money that we're investing- Keith, Aldershot

The effectiveness test and local agency

The public's third test on aid focuses on the question of effectiveness and the question of whether Britain's investment in overseas development assistance is making a difference on the ground in local communities. This test should also help advocates of particular approaches to overseas development aid to reframe how they talk about their approach to ODA.

For example, many climate justice activists talk about an approach to ODA which empowers local governments and local communities to make decisions for themselves and see this focus as a means to address historic power imbalances between nations. In our research, this local agency argument divides opinion among the public and only really convinces the Progressive Activist segment.

However, when the local agency argument is made through the lens of effectiveness or value for money - and very importantly avoiding unnecessary waste - the argument can garner much broader appeal. This shows how considering the explanation used to justify aid can help advocates of increased ODA to make more compelling arguments to better command public support.



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