

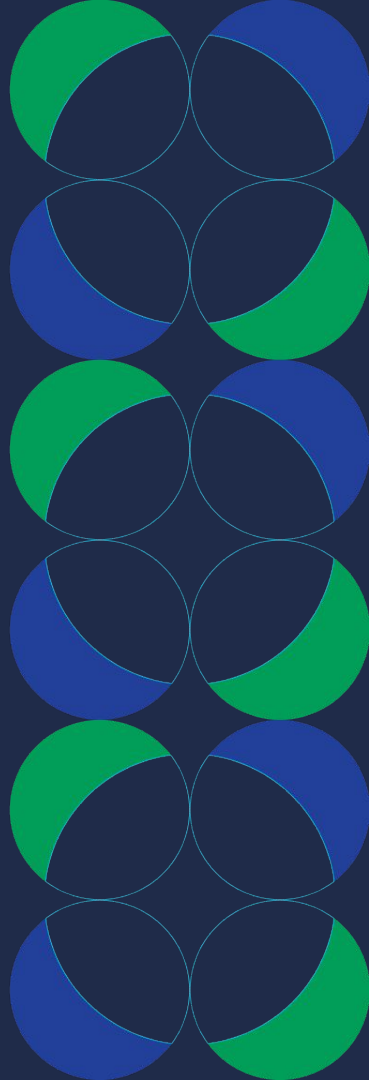


More in
Common

Ireland in the World

Attitudes to development, global health, defence and neutrality

September 2026



Executive Summary

Irish people credit themselves, not the government, for Ireland's good name on the world stage, but few think Ireland is really heard by the EU or UN.

Two thirds (65%) say Irish people have had a positive impact on the world; only 41% say the same of the government. The public splits 46–45 on whether a small country can influence the world by example. Only 17% think other countries take Ireland seriously at the EU or UN, while almost half (47%) say they listen but it changes little.

On the EU presidency, 47% want Ireland's interests defended first against 37% who would prioritise a deal all EU-27 can accept. Awareness has risen sharply of the EU Presidency: those who had heard nothing fell from 38% to 22% since May.

Support for development aid is broad but soft.

56% want the 0.7% promise kept, but only 22% want a date attached to the commitment. Half (51%) back aid as the right thing to do regardless of return, against 32% who are comfortable with Ireland getting something back for our aid.

79% think Ireland already does its fair share or more, ahead of the EU (66%) and UK (52%). The public splits 42–44 on whether Ireland should hold its aid spending if others cut, and 47–44 on need versus national interest.

A majority (53%) want aid decisions based on today's circumstances rather than Ireland's own history of poverty (37%).

Consequences move people more than charity. War (78%) and forced migration (71%) top the list of global concerns, but concern is broad about climate change, poverty, famine and global health as well.

Asked what aid cuts elsewhere will mean, Irish people predict more deaths from disease and hunger (32%), more conflict (28%) and more forced migration (28%).

56% want Ireland to fund aid that reduces forced migration, and 49% think this sort of aid works to reduce this type of migration.

Goodwill and influence (39%), a safer world (37%) and fewer people forced from their homes (32%) are what people think Ireland gets back from aid.

Executive Summary

Two thirds think that disease anywhere is seen as a threat to Ireland and protecting health in poor countries protects Ireland too. Only a quarter (24%) think that Ireland is too far away to be affected by poor health systems elsewhere.

Concern about another pandemic (63%), antibiotic resistance (63%) and infectious diseases like HIV, TB and malaria (59%) is widespread and runs across party lines.

The public splits 49–44 on whether the world is prepared for another pandemic. Preparation for another pandemic is seen as requiring action at home and abroad.

Irish medical missionaries are remembered warmly (50% mostly good); while religious missionaries divide opinion more.

Neutrality is cherished, but its meaning is contested. 55% view neutrality favourably and 59% lean towards keeping it whatever happens in the world.

The public view neutrality as peacekeeping, self-reliance and not sending weapons or troops abroad, though many think prohibiting refuelling at Shannon and keeping a more domestic focus should be part of neutrality. US refuelling at Shannon (57%) and weapons for Ukraine (59%) are seen as breaches of neutrality, while body armour (45–41) and intelligence-sharing (44–37) split opinion more.

On the triple lock, framing matters: support for keeping the triple lock drops 8 points when framed as a US / China / Russia veto than international authorisation.

Ireland's defence perception gaps: Three in four (75%) think the Defence Forces would not be well prepared for an attack, and 69% say Ireland relies on Britain and America for protection.

63% lean towards Ireland being able to defend itself, even at much higher cost – yet when the trade-off is housing and health, more would keep defence spending as it is (44%) than raise it significantly (39%).

Three in five (58%) expect EU countries to come to Ireland's aid if attacked, while only 33% would send military help the other way.

Irish people are also warmer to NATO than they think their neighbours are (43% v 31% positive), a gap that holds across voter groups.



Section 1

Ireland's place in the world

Irish people credit themselves rather than the government for a positive impact in the world

Overall, do you think Irish people / the Irish government have had a positive or negative impact on the world? All adults in Ireland (%)

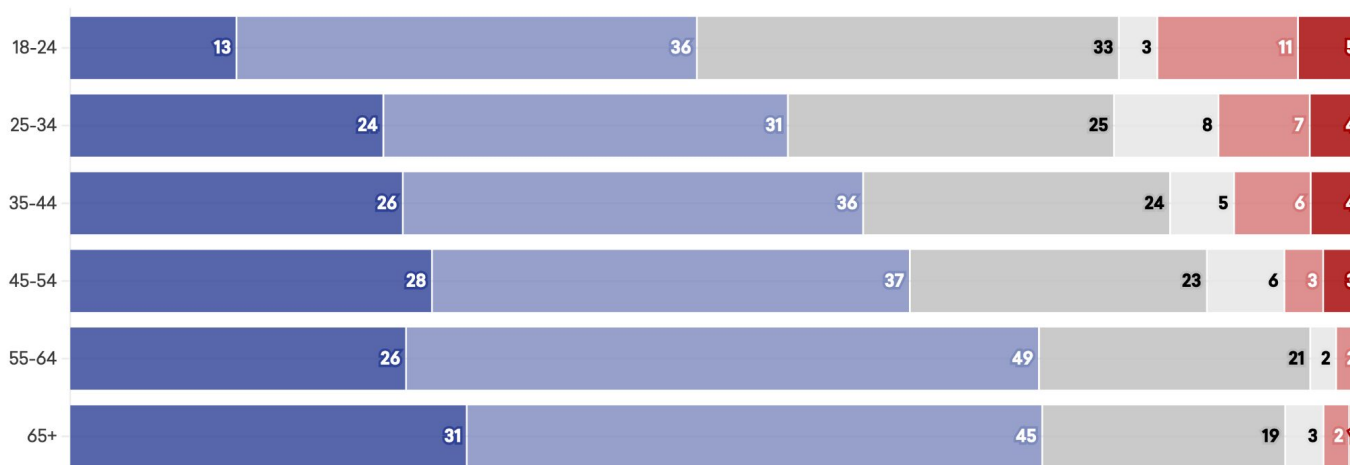
● Very positive ● Somewhat positive ● Neither positive nor negative ● Don't know ● Somewhat negative ● Very negative



Older people are more confident of the positive role the Irish people have had in the world

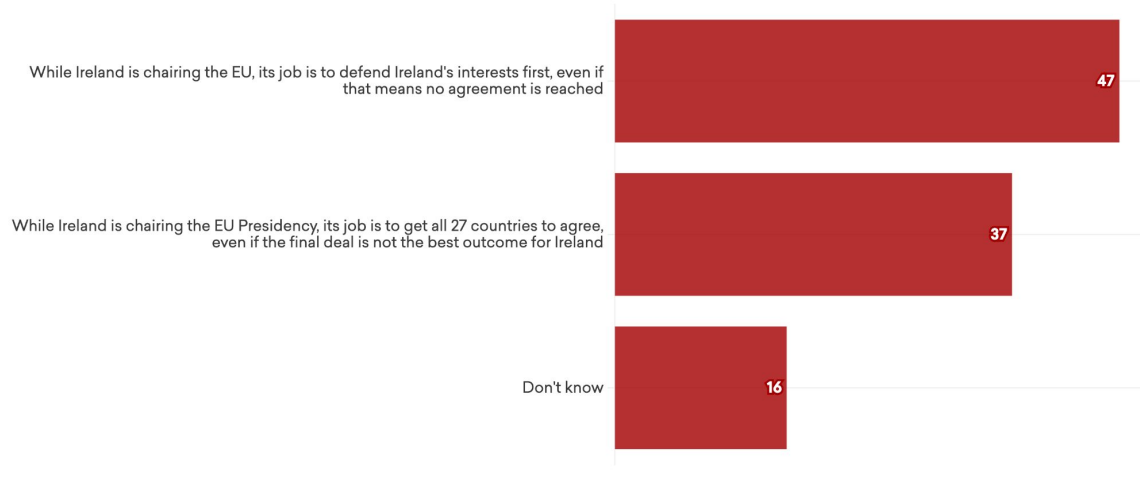
Overall, do you think Irish people have had a positive or negative impact on the world? By age (%)

● Very positive ● Somewhat positive ● Neither positive nor negative ● Don't know ● Somewhat negative ● Very negative



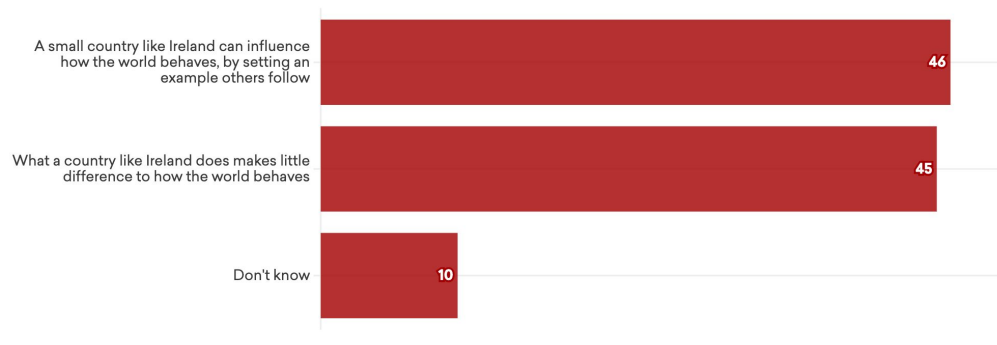
Public are more likely to think the government should take an Ireland first approach to the presidency over an EU-first one

Which comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)

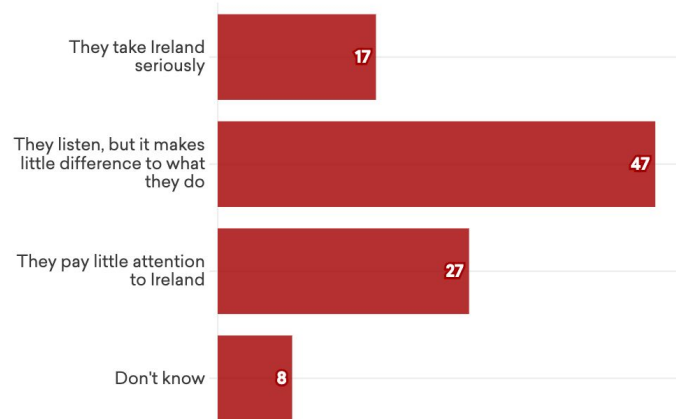


The country splits on whether Ireland can lead by example; few think it is taken seriously

Which of the following comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? All adults in Ireland (%)



When Ireland speaks at the European Union or at the United Nations about issues like aid, human rights or peace, which best describes how you think other countries react? All adults in Ireland (%)



Most want Ireland to speak up when it disagrees – as much as with Brussels as with Washington

Which comes closer to your view?

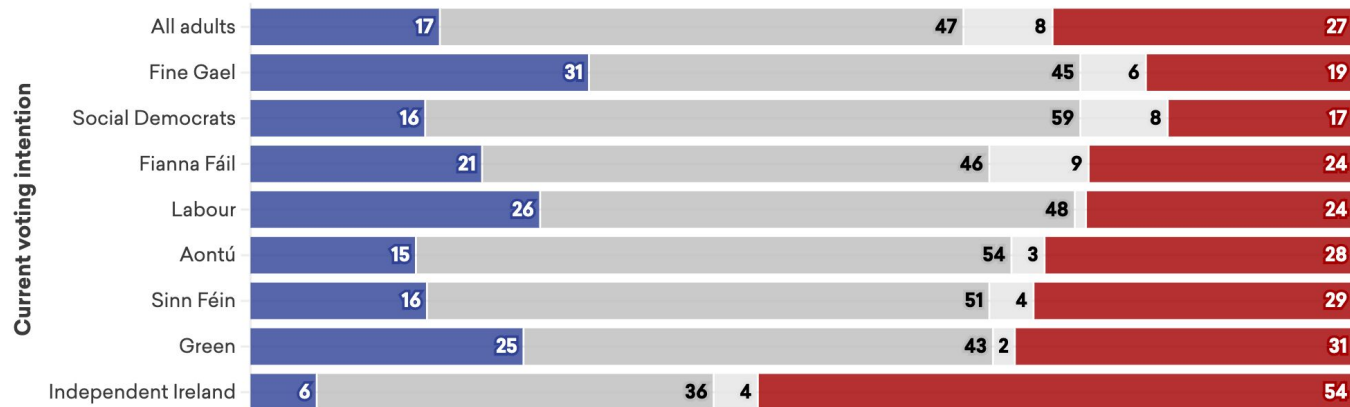
- Ireland should speak up when it disagrees, even at a cost ● Don't know
● Ireland should keep its head down and protect the relationship



Independent Ireland voters stand out by their view that UN and EU leaders pay little attention to Ireland

When Ireland speaks at the European Union or at the United Nations about issues like aid, human rights or peace, which best describes how you think other countries react?

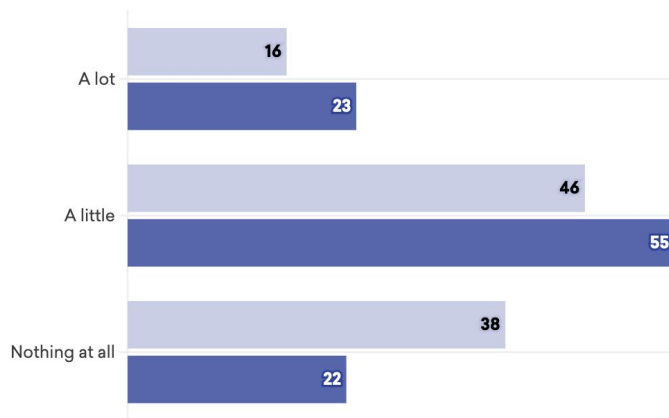
● They take Ireland seriously ● They listen, but it makes little difference to what they do ● Don't know ● They pay little attention to Ireland



Presidency awareness is up since May, while views of Ireland's influence have moved slightly

How much, if anything, have you heard about Ireland's presidency of the EU Council? All adults in Ireland, May vs September 2026 (%)

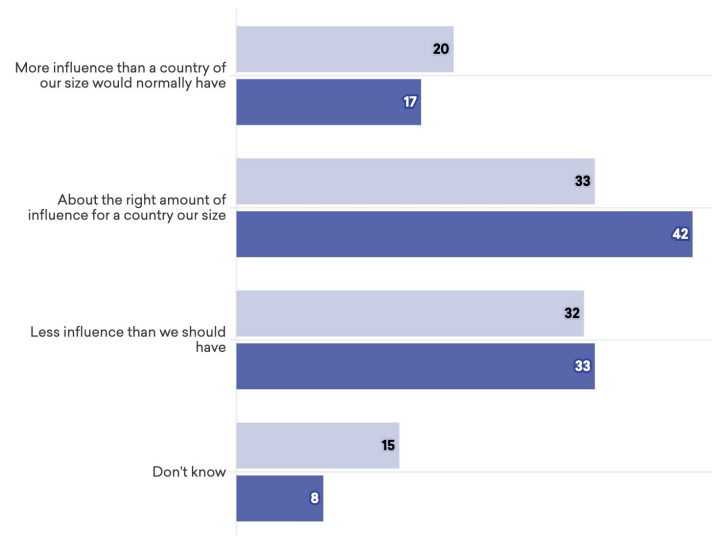
● May 2026 ● September 2026



Source: More in Common, May 2026 (n=2,277) and September 2026 (n=1,908). May wording referred to Ireland's 'upcoming' presidency

How much influence do you think Ireland has in the European Union? All adults in Ireland, May vs September 2026 (%)

● May 2026 ● September 2026

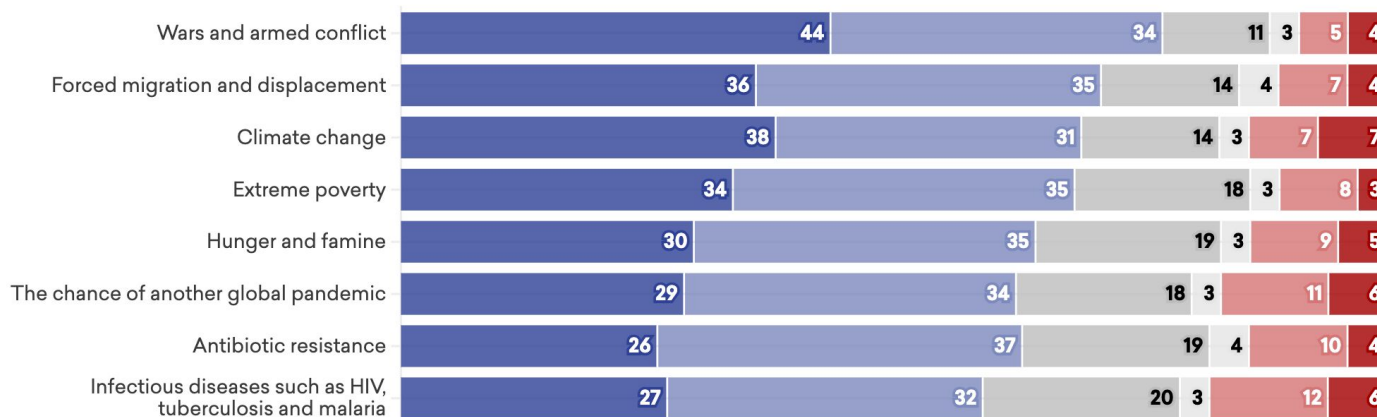


Source: More in Common, May 2026 (n=2,277) and September 2026 (n=1,908)

Broad public concern about a whole series of international issues – conflict and migration chief among them

How concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following? All adults in Ireland (%)

● Very concerned
 ● Somewhat concerned
 ● Neither concerned nor unconcerned
 ● Don't know
 ● Not very concerned
 ● Not at all concerned



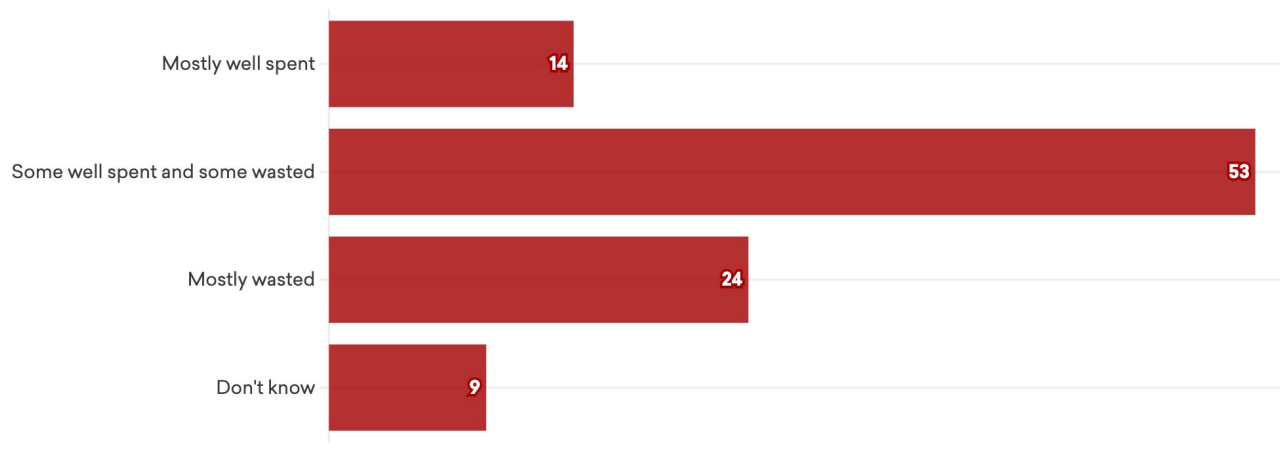


Section 2

Irish attitudes to aid

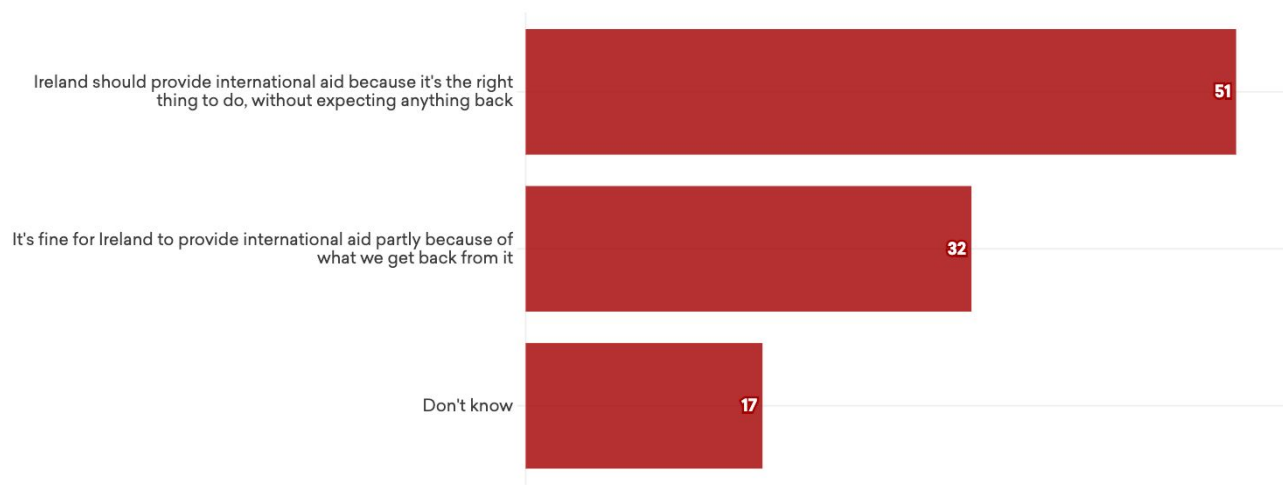
Most see aid spending record as mixed

Over the past 25 years, many countries have spent money on aid for poorer countries. Looking back, do you think that money was... All adults in Ireland (%)



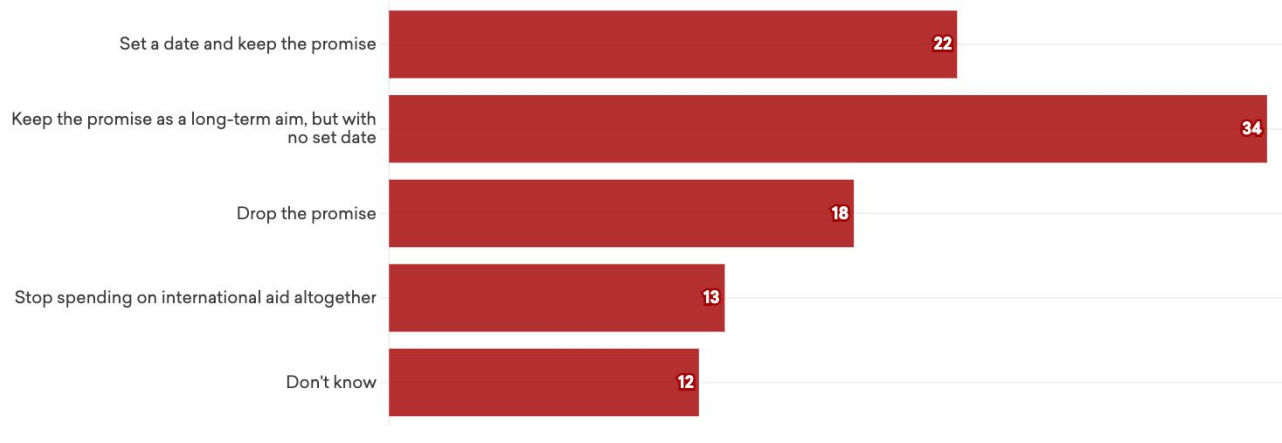
Most back a values-based approach to aid, but a third of the public are more interested in what we get back

Which comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)



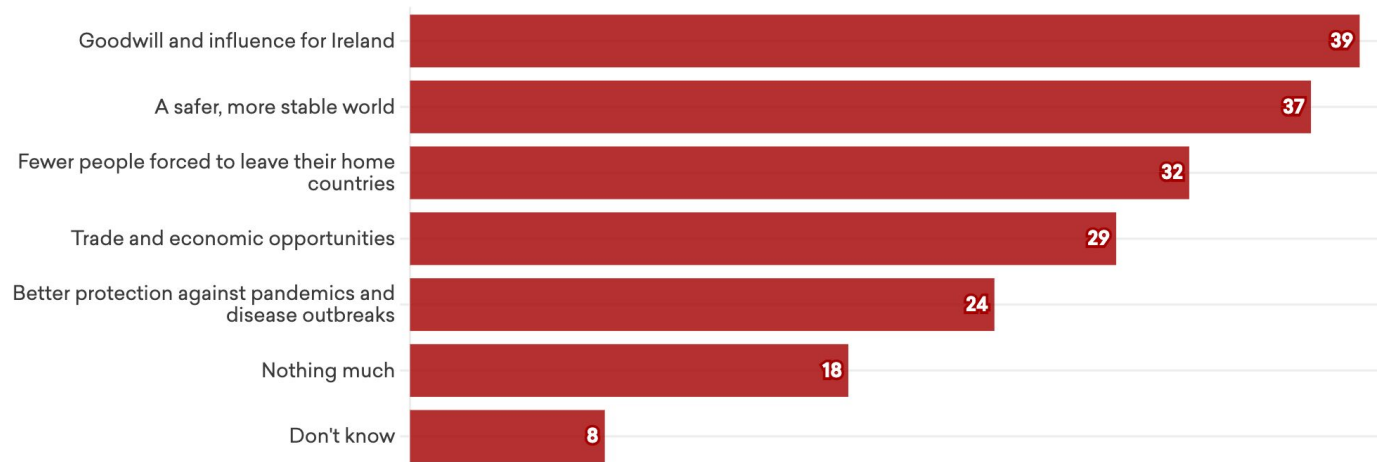
Support for the 0.7% promise is broad but soft – most want it kept, few want a date

The Irish government has promised to spend a share of national income – 0.7%, or 70 cents in every €100 – on international aid, but has never yet reached that level. What do you think Ireland should do? All adults in Ireland (%)



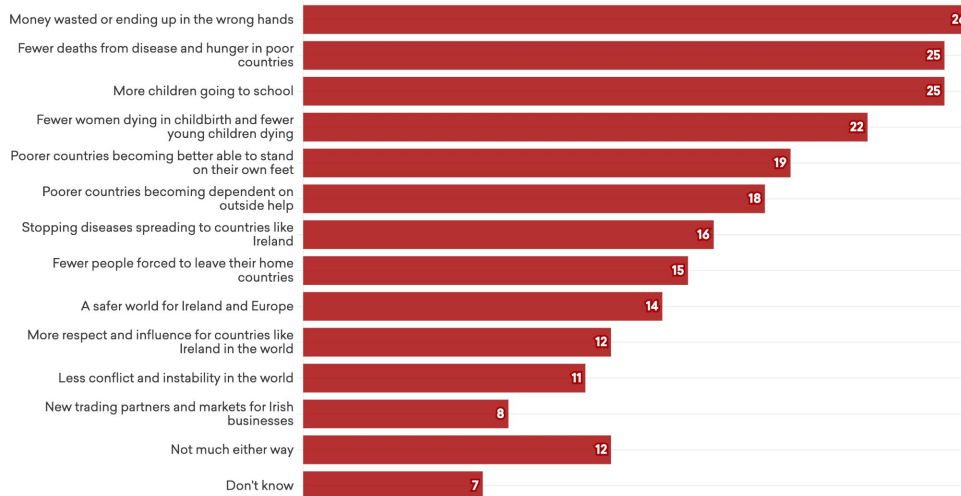
Goodwill and a safer world are what people think Ireland gets from aid

Which of the following, if any, do you think Ireland gets back from providing international aid? Select all that apply. All adults in Ireland (%)



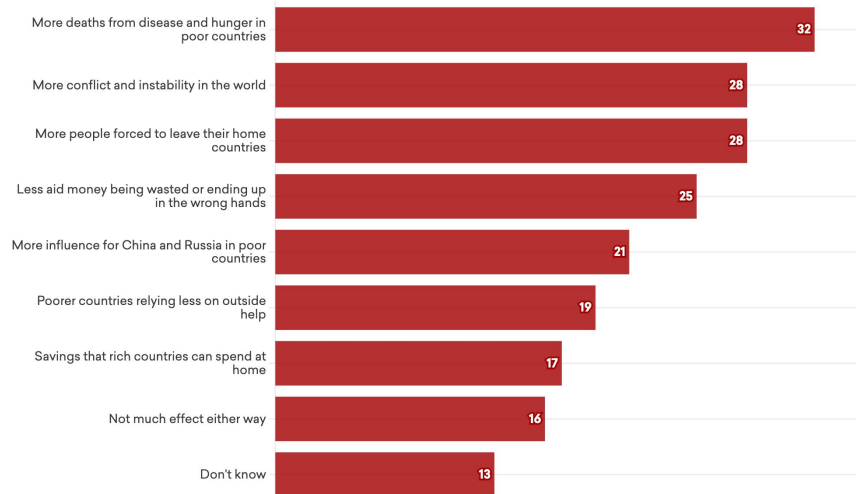
Fewer deaths and more education are seen as biggest aid achievements, but concern about wasted money too

Thinking about aid given by countries like Ireland over the past few decades, which of the following, if any, do you think it has achieved? Select up to three. All adults in Ireland (%)



Irish people expect aid cuts to mean more deaths, conflict and migration

Which of the following effects, if any, do you think these aid cuts are most likely to have over the next few years? Select up to three. All adults in Ireland (%)

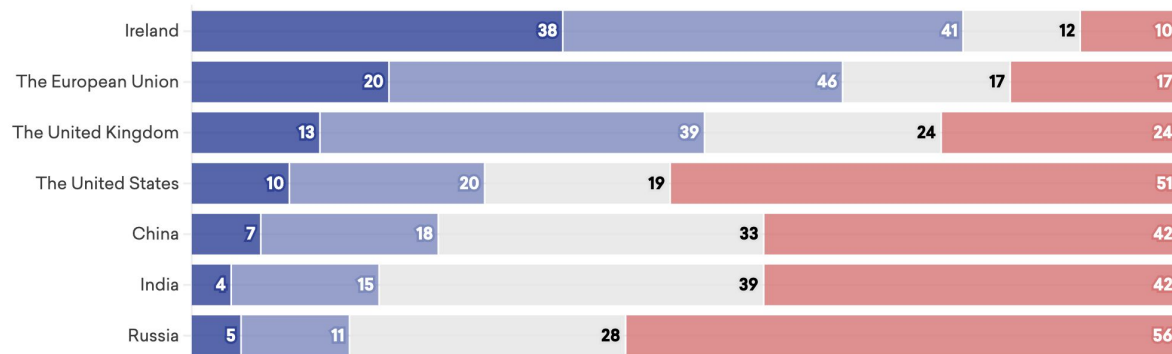


**Ireland tops the
fair-share table on
aid in its own eyes.**

**Many think the US,
Russia, China and
India are not pulling
their weight**

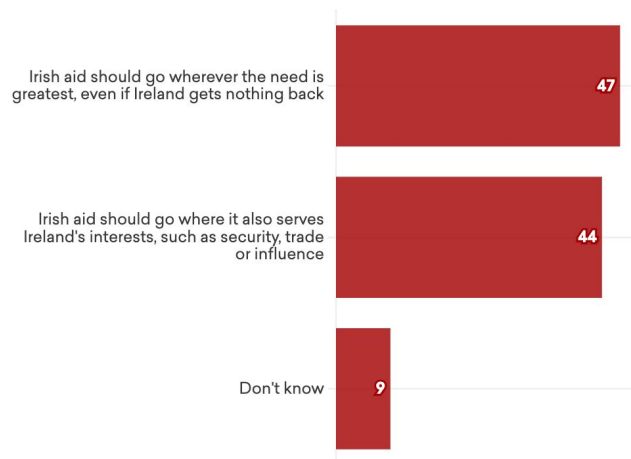
For each of the following, please say whether you think they provide their fair share of international aid. All adults in Ireland (%)

● Doing more than their fair share ● Doing their fair share ● Don't know ● Doing less than their fair share

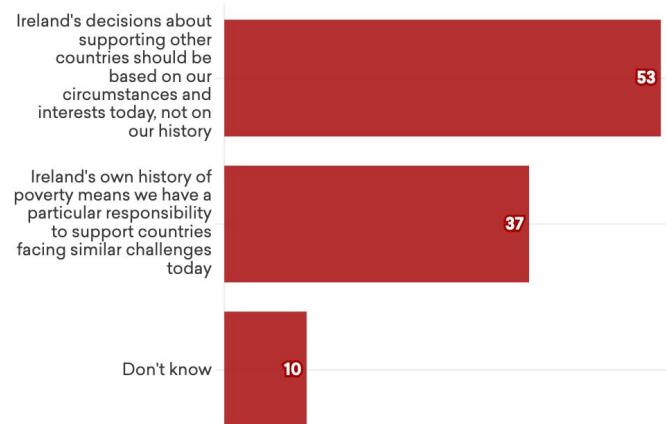


Irish people are split down the middle on needs vs national interest, but want aid shaped on today's reality not historic experiences

Which of the following comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)

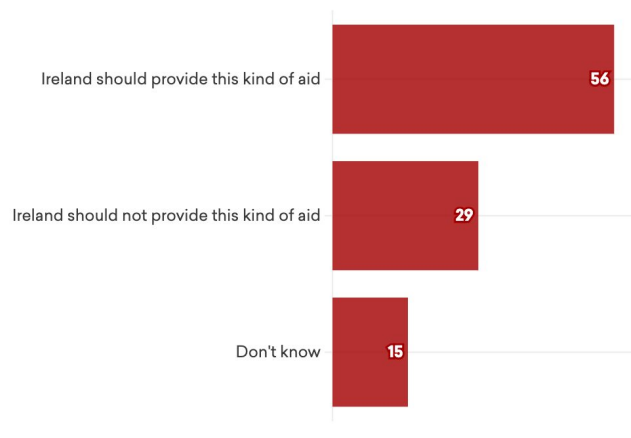


Which of the following comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)

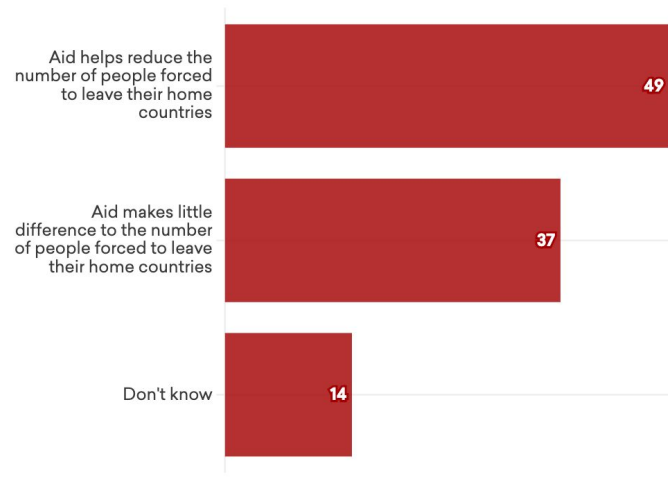


Most want Ireland to provide aid that reduces forced migration, and half think it works

Do you think Ireland should or should not provide aid to help reduce the number of people forced to leave their home countries because of conflict, poverty or instability?
All adults in Ireland (%)



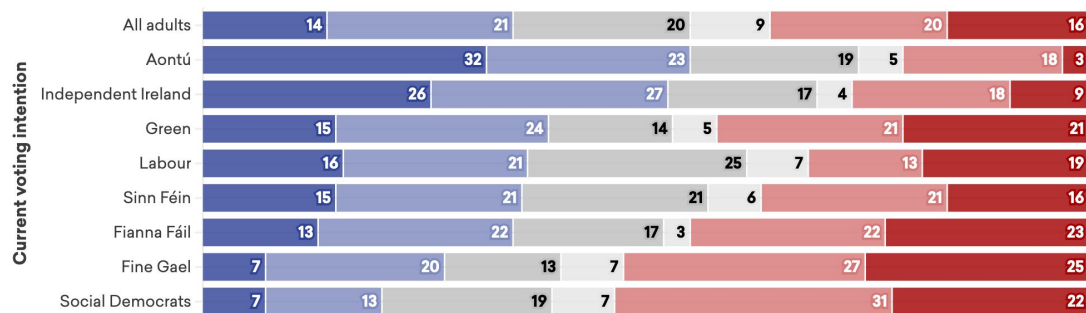
Which of these comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)



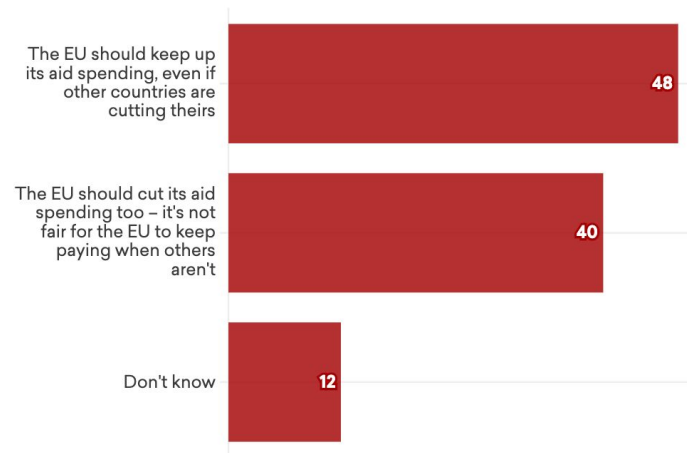
Public split on whether aid cuts elsewhere were right or wrong decision, but more likely to think EU aid spending should stay

Some of the world's richest countries, including the US and the UK, have made big cuts to their aid budgets. Do you think these cuts were the right or wrong decision?

● Definitely the right decision
 ● Probably the right decision
 ● Neither the right nor the wrong decision
 ● Don't know
 ● Probably the wrong decision
 ● Definitely the wrong decision



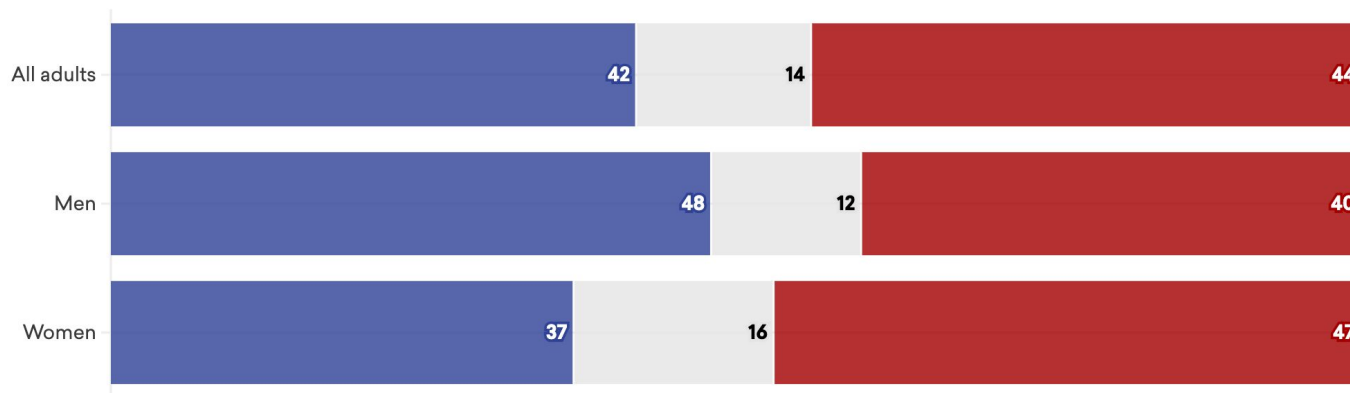
Some countries are cutting their aid budgets. Which comes closer to your view of what the EU should do? All adults in Ireland (%)



Public are split on what Ireland should do in response to the cuts – men are more supportive than women of maintaining Ireland's aid spending

Some countries are cutting their aid budgets. Which comes closer to your view of what Ireland should do? All adults in Ireland and by gender (%)

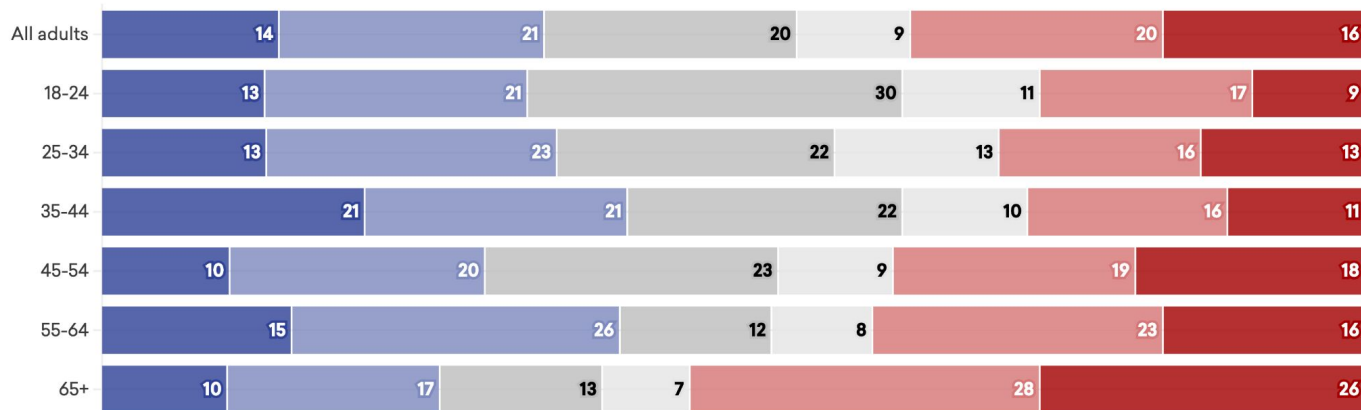
- Ireland should keep up its aid spending, even if other countries are cutting theirs ● Don't know
● Ireland should cut its aid spending too if others are cutting theirs



Older people are more likely to say the US and UK cuts were wrong

Some of the world's richest countries, including the US and the UK, have made big cuts to their aid budgets. Do you think these cuts were the right or wrong decision? By age (%)

● Definitely the right decision ● Probably the right decision ● Neither the right nor the wrong decision ● Don't know ● Probably the wrong decision ● Definitely the wrong decision



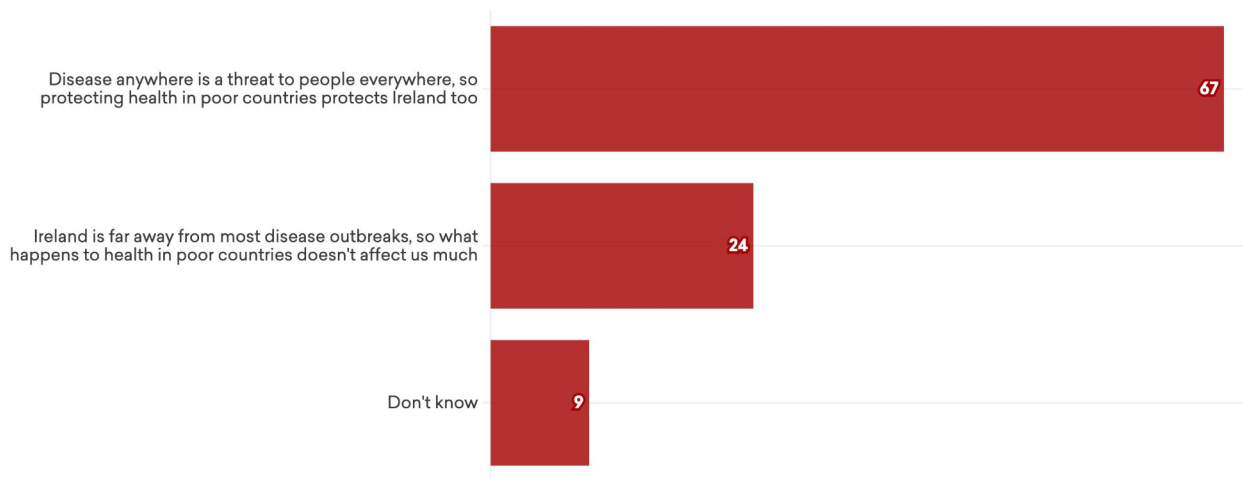
Section 3

Global health and legacy



Two thirds think that disease anywhere is a threat to Ireland

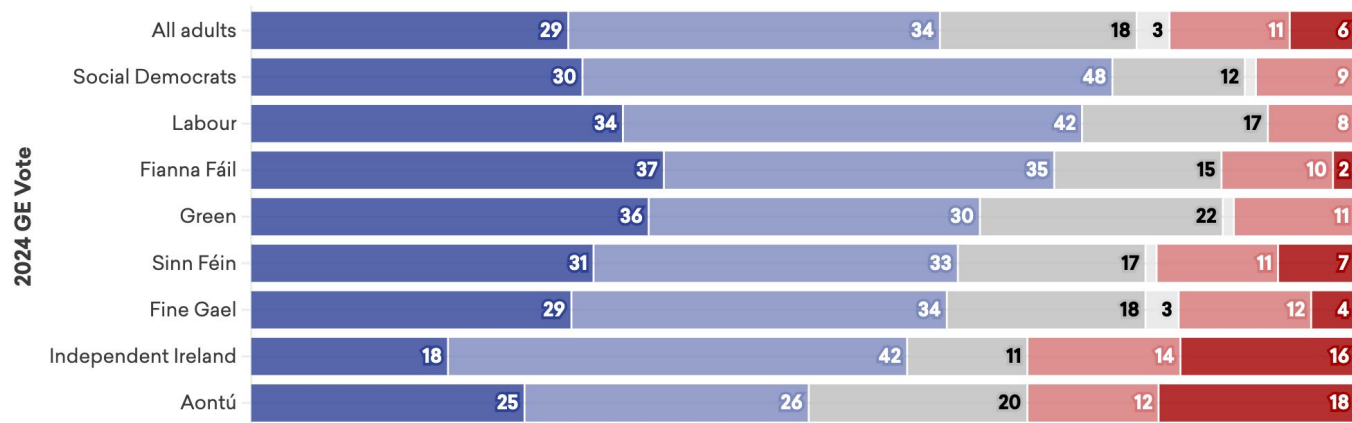
Which comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)



Concern about another pandemic runs across the political spectrum

How concerned are you, if at all, about the chance of another global pandemic?

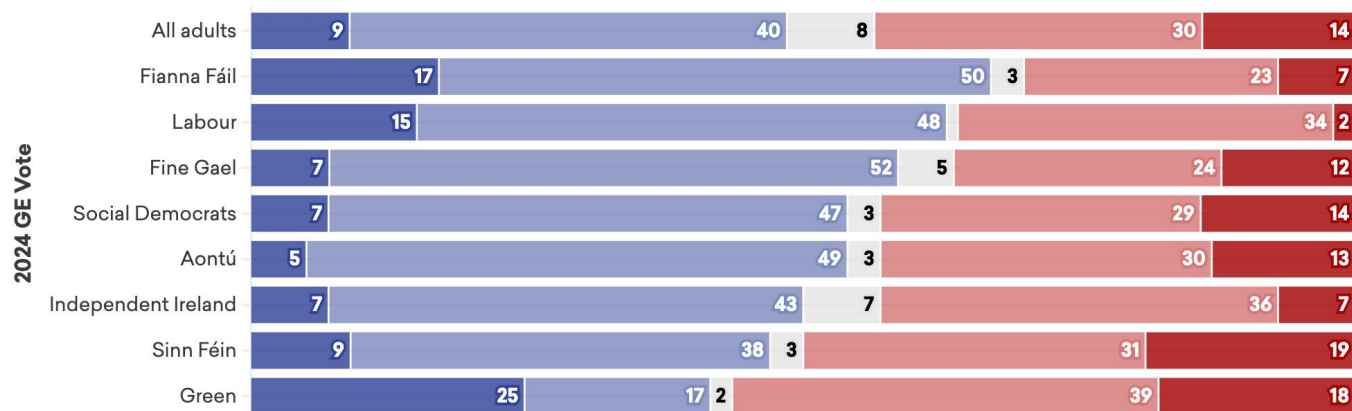
Very concerned Somewhat concerned Neither concerned nor unconcerned Don't know Not very concerned Not at all concerned



Public are split over whether the world is prepared for another pandemic

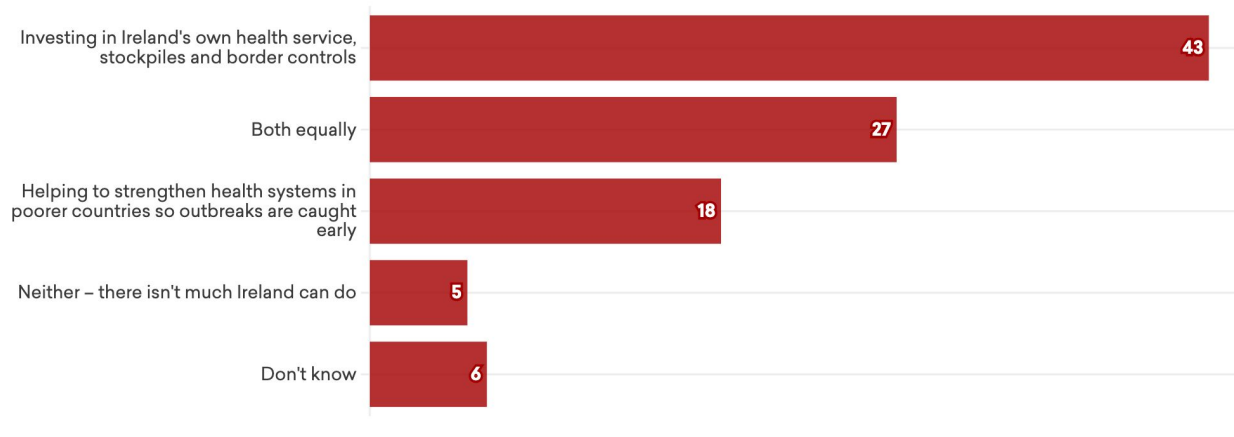
If a new pandemic like Covid emerged somewhere in the world, how prepared do you think the world is to stop it spreading?

● Very prepared ● Somewhat prepared ● Don't know ● Not very prepared ● Not at all prepared



On preparing for future pandemics, the instinct is to invest at home, but a quarter want both and a fifth would prioritise overseas spending

If Ireland wanted to reduce the risk from future pandemics, which of the following should it focus on?
All adults in Ireland (%)



Irish medical missionaries are seen as a force for good, while Irish religious missionaries divide opinion more

Thinking about Irish medical / religious missionaries' work overseas over the decades, which comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)

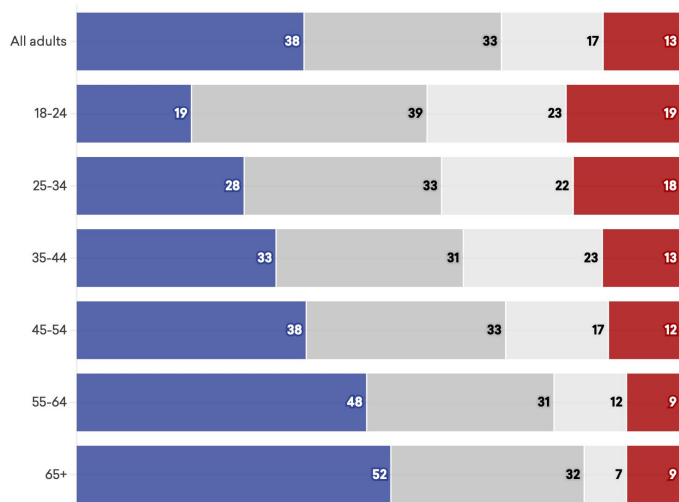
● They mostly did good ● They did a mix of good and harm ● Don't know ● They mostly did harm



Older people and weekly mass attenders are more proud of Irish religious missionary heritage

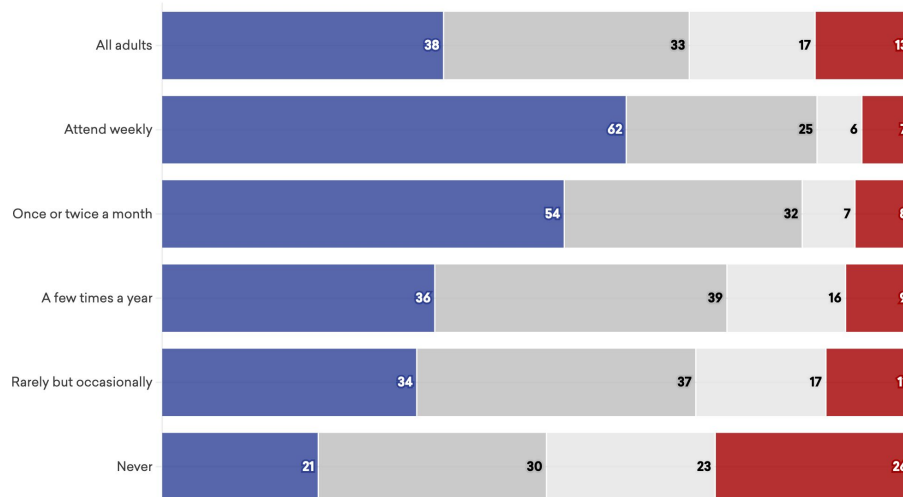
Thinking about Irish religious missionaries' work overseas over the decades, which comes closer to your view? By age (%)

● They mostly did good ● They did a mix of good and harm ● Don't know ● They mostly did harm



Thinking about Irish religious missionaries' work overseas over the decades, which comes closer to your view? By how often respondents attend religious services (%)

● They mostly did good ● They did a mix of good and harm ● Don't know ● They mostly did harm



Section 4

Neutrality and defence



More than half have a favourable view of neutrality and three in five want to stick with it whatever happens

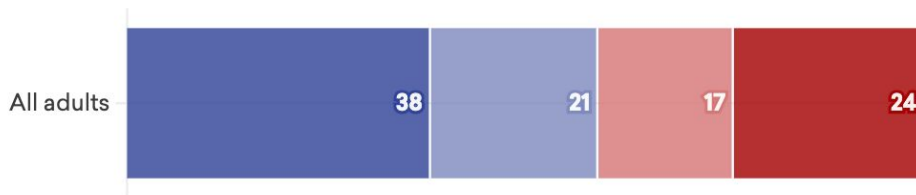
How favourable or unfavourable do you feel towards Ireland's policy of military neutrality?

● Very favourable ● Somewhat favourable
● Neither favourable nor unfavourable ● Don't know ● Somewhat unfavourable
● Very unfavourable



Which comes closer to your view?

● 1 – Irish neutrality is a core principle the country should keep, whatever happens in the world
● 2 ● 3
● 4 – Irish neutrality is a policy that should be reviewed as the world changes



Attachment to neutrality is strongest among Aontú, Independent Ireland and Sinn Féin voters

Which comes closer to your view?

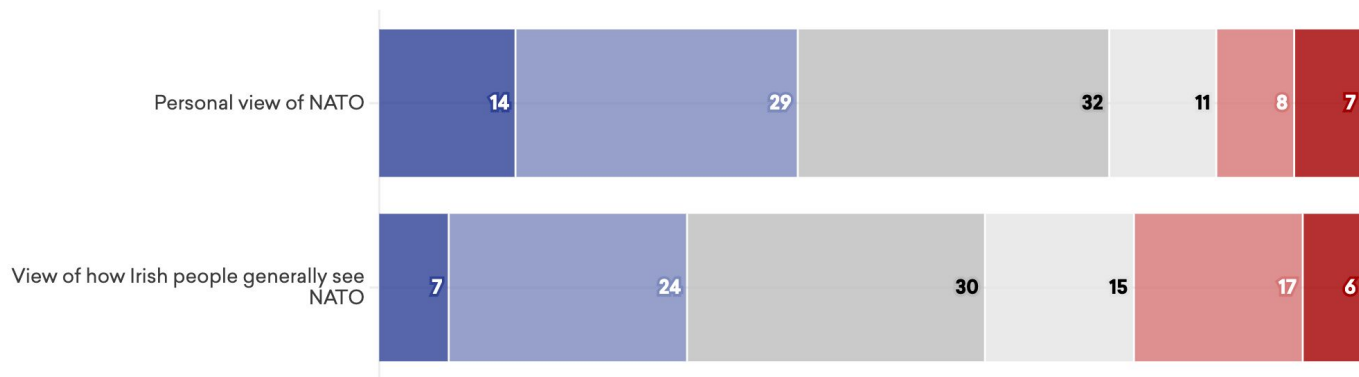
- 1 – Irish neutrality is a core principle the country should keep, whatever happens in the world ● 2 ● 3
● 4 – Irish neutrality is a policy that should be reviewed as the world changes



Irish people themselves are warmer to NATO than they think their neighbours are

NATO is a defensive alliance of 32 countries from Europe and North America. Ireland is not a member of NATO but is a Partner for Peace. Do you personally / Irish people generally have a positive or negative view of NATO? All adults in Ireland (%)

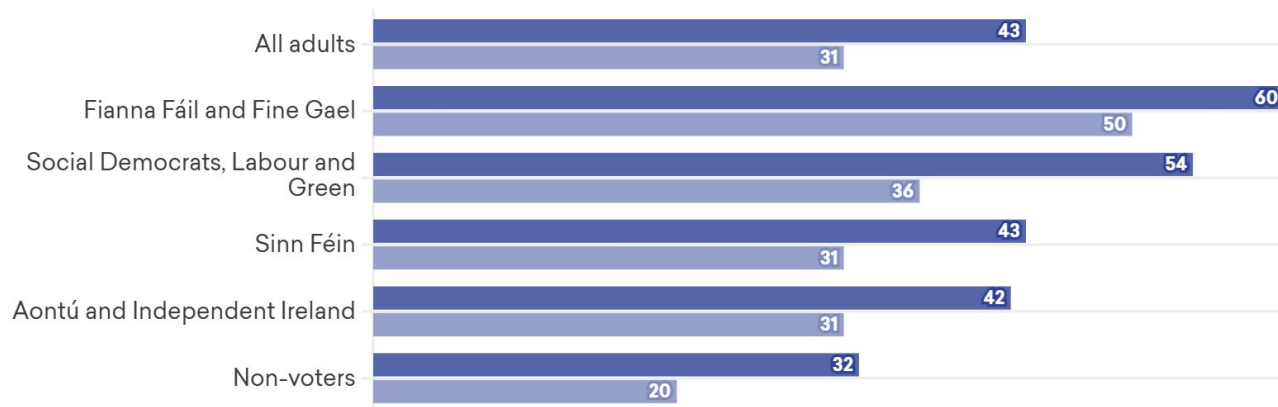
● Very positive ● Somewhat positive ● Neither positive nor negative ● Don't know ● Somewhat negative ● Very negative



The NATO perception gap is across all voters, but it is narrowest among government voters

Share with a positive view of NATO, and share who think Irish people generally have a positive view of NATO. By 2024 general election vote (%)

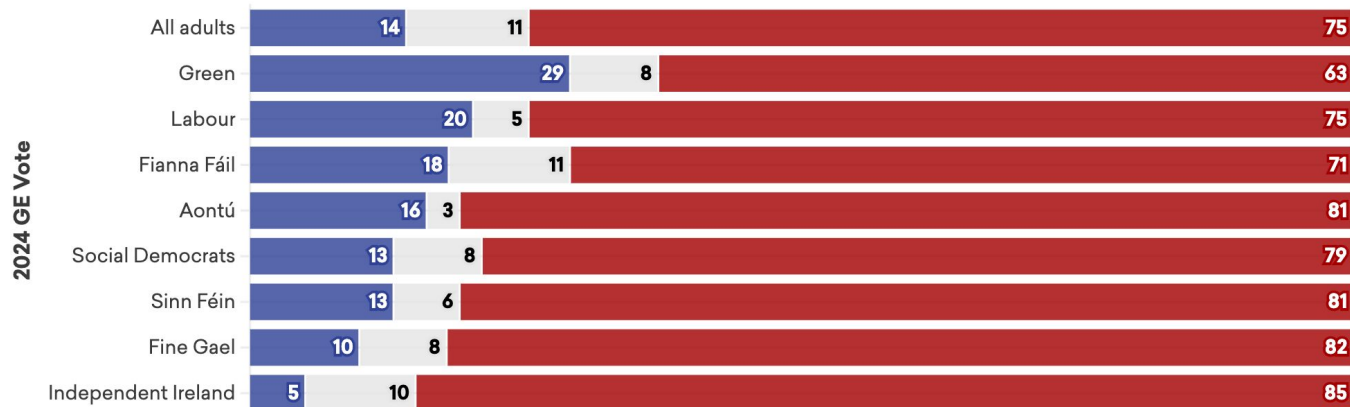
● Own view of NATO: positive ● Think Irish people generally view NATO positively



Three in four think the Defence Forces would not be well prepared if Ireland were attacked

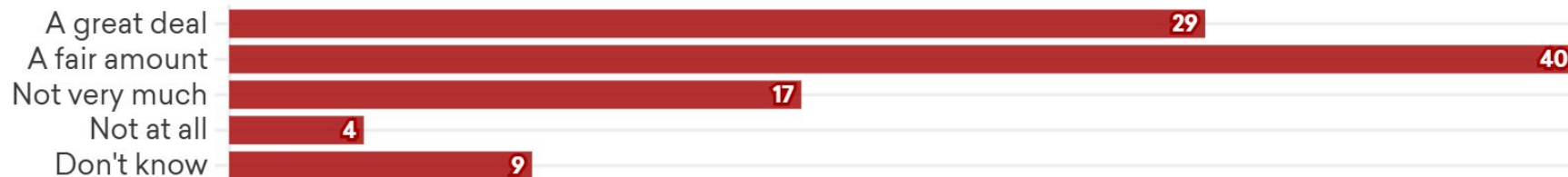
If Ireland were attacked tomorrow, how well prepared do you think the Irish Defence Forces would be to defend the country?

● Well prepared ● Don't know ● Not well prepared



Seven in ten say Ireland relies on Britain and America for protection

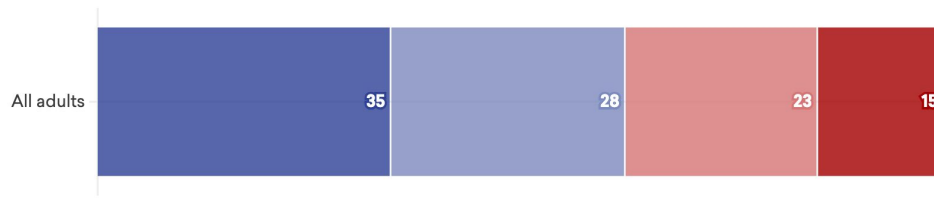
How much, if at all, do you think Ireland currently relies on Britain and America to protect it?



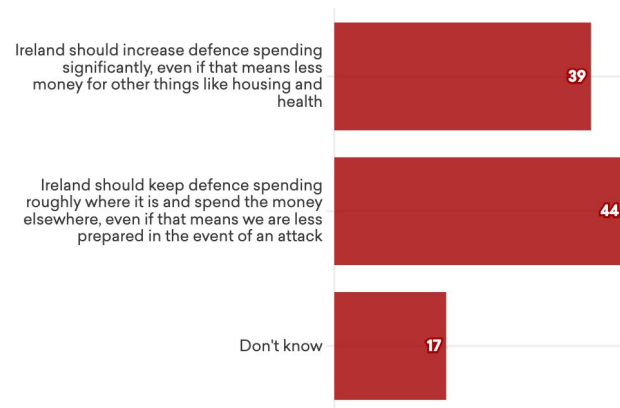
Despite a strong belief that Ireland should be able to defend itself, the public are torn over whether to increase defence spending

Which comes closer to your view?

- 1 – Ireland should be able to defend itself without relying on Britain and America, even if that means spending much more on defence
- 2 3
- 4 – Ireland should continue to rely on Britain and America for protection, even if that limits what neutrality means in practice



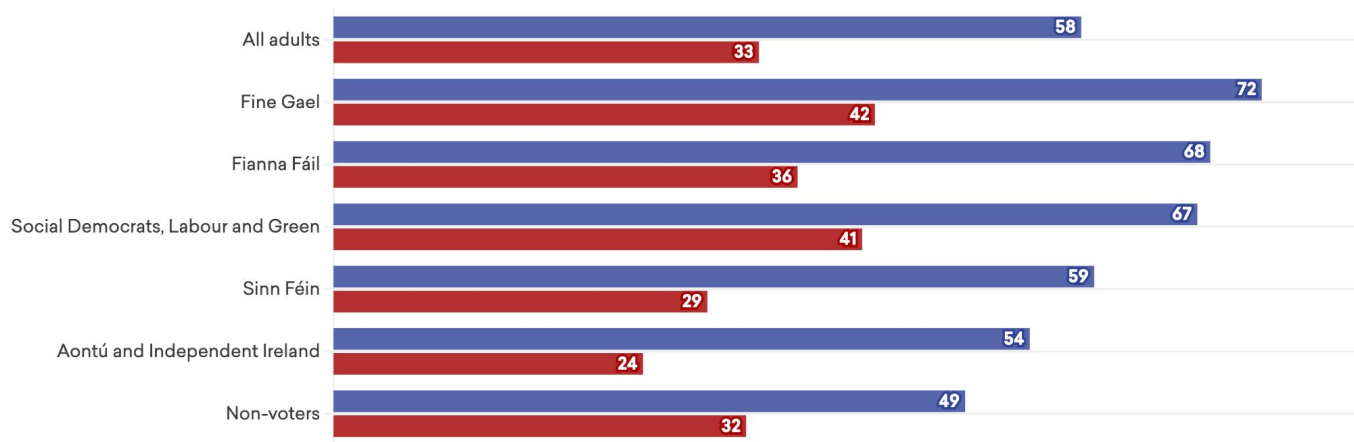
Ireland currently spends less on defence as a share of national income than any other EU country. Which comes closer to your view? All adults in Ireland (%)



Most expect the EU to defend Ireland; only a third would send military help the other way

Share who think other EU countries would come to Ireland's aid if it were attacked, and share who say Ireland should be prepared to give military support to an EU country that is attacked. By 2024 general election vote (%)

● Think other EU countries would come to Ireland's aid if it were attacked ● Would have Ireland give military support to an EU country that is attacked



Framing shifts views on the triple lock by 8 points

Under the “triple lock”, Ireland cannot send more than twelve members of the Defence Forces overseas without approval from the Government, the Dáil and the UN Security Council. [Framing A or B shown.] The Government is proposing to remove the UN requirement. Which comes closer to your view? Split sample, all adults in Ireland (%)

- Keep the triple lock as it is ● Remove the United Nations requirement, as the Government proposes ● Don't know
● Remove the triple lock altogether

A: Because Russia, China and the United States hold vetoes at the Security Council, any of them can block an Irish deployment



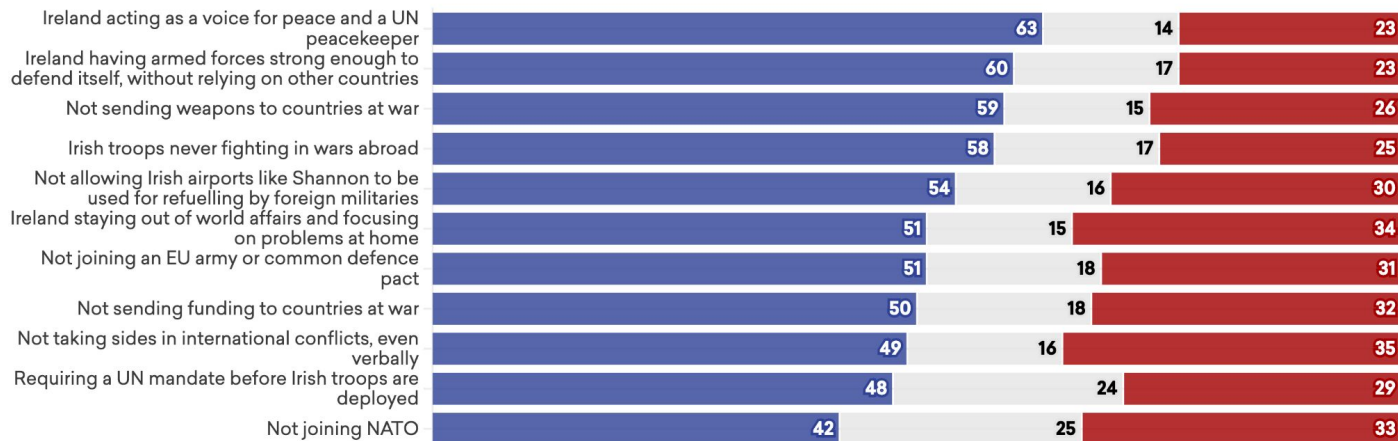
B: This means Irish troops are only deployed with international authorisation



Neutrality means peacekeeping and self-reliance, though most think blocking Shannon refuelling should be part of neutrality

People mean different things by Irish neutrality. For each of the following, do you think it should be considered a part of Irish neutrality, or not? All adults in Ireland (%)

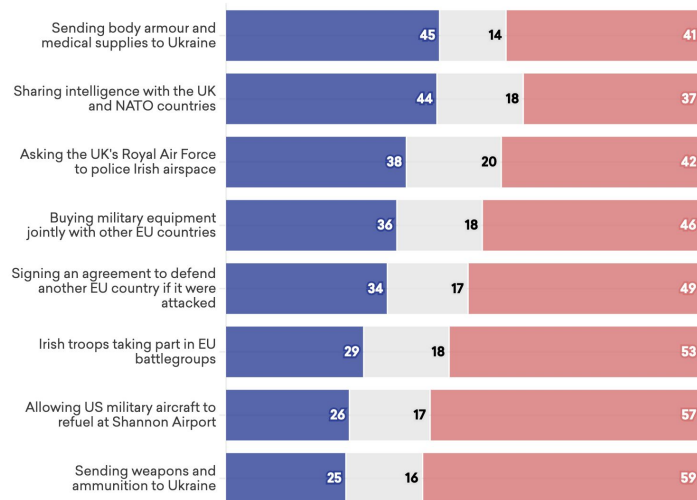
● Should be a part of Irish neutrality ● Don't know ● Should not be a part of Irish neutrality



Public think Shannon refuelling and sending weapons to Ukraine are clear breaches of neutrality, but more split on intelligence sharing with NATO

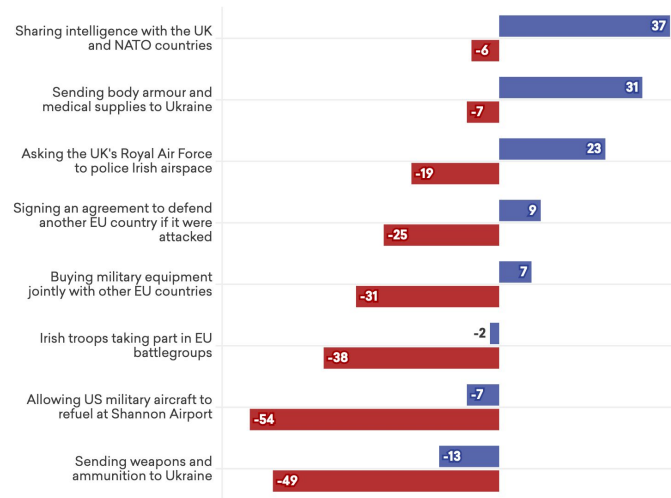
For each of the following, please say whether you think it is compatible with Irish neutrality or not. All adults in Ireland (%)

● Compatible with Irish neutrality ● Don't know ● Not compatible with Irish neutrality



Net "compatible with Irish neutrality" (compatible minus not compatible), by 2024 general election vote (percentage points)

● Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael voters ● Sinn Féin voters



Methodological note

Fieldwork dates: 2nd - 14th September 2026

Sample size: 1,908

Population effectively represented: Adults in the Republic of Ireland aged 18 and over using computer-assisted web interviewing

Sample detail: Respondents have been weighted according to age/sex interlocked, 2024 General Election vote, province, tenure, ethnicity, and education level.

Commissioned by: This polling was commissioned by the Strategic Communications and Advocacy Lab, run by Future Advocacy.

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