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‘A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep’?
Understanding Support for Aid
in the UK

Spencer Henson and Johanna Lindstrom
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‘A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep’?

Understanding Public Support for Aid in the UK

Spencer Henson and Johanna Lindstrom

Summary

Despite considerable interest in the level and nature of public support for aid to developing countries, there has been relatively little academic research in this area. This paper reports analysis of survey data for the UK that explores the factors driving support for cuts in aid spending. Dominant factors are found to be beliefs in the moral imperative to help reduce poverty in developing countries versus the prioritisation of efforts to tackle poverty in the UK. Most demographic characteristics of respondents are insignificant. The results highlight the need to examine support for aid in the context of government spending more generally at particular points in time.

Keywords: public; aid; development assistance; attitudes; development; United Kingdom; policy; support.

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Introduction

Given international commitments to increase aid to developing countries, there is much interest in the motivations for donors to provide development assistance (Czaplińska 2007; van Heerde and Hudson 2010). The majority of previous research on this subject has focused on state motivations for aid (see for example Lumsdaine 1993; McKinley and Little 1979; Burnell 1991; Alesina and Dollar 2000; Macrae and Leader 2001; Thérien 2002; Dollar and Levi 2006; Headey 2008), with the dominant discourse over the role of self-interest versus humanitarian and egalitarian factors. A parallel but less extensive literature explores the role of public support as a driver of aid (see for example Olsen 2001; Bøås 2002; Otter 2003; Olsen *et al.* 2003; Busby 2007; Stern 2008), with debates over the degree to which governments are driven by the will of their citizens to assist developing countries, versus the need for governments to garner public support in order to pursue predefined aid strategies. It is this latter strand that we pursue here, in particular by examining the extent to which there is UK public support for increases in aid spending, notably in the context of the current economic austerity.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has long espoused the need to maintain and enhance public support for international development, as set out in each of its four White Papers (DFID 1997, 2000, 2006, 2009). Indeed, DFID has pursued an active process of engagement with the public, as set out in its *Building Support for Development* (DFID 1999: 3) strategy paper:

Our aim, in line with the White Paper, should be to promote public understanding of our interdependence, of the need for international development and of the progress that has been made and that is possible. This should help raise awareness, and probably change behaviour and attitudes.

Evidently, DFID's strategy has been motivated by a belief that the ability to achieve increases in aid spending in line with its international commitments is dependent, at least in part, on the underlying public support for development assistance (van Heerde and Hudson 2010). While there is some evidence that this is a rather simplistic assumption (see for example Noël and Thérien 2002; OECD 2003), it implies the need to monitor public attitudes towards development, both as a means to assess the impact of DFID's engagement strategy and, more importantly, to provide indicators of public support for aid that can be used to direct political decision-making processes.

Accompanying its strategy of engagement with the public on development issues, DFID has funded a regular public opinion tracking survey on attitudes towards development since 1999 (see for example TNS 2010). As we will see below, these surveys suggest that there is considerable and consistent public support for aid, although that this has been eroded recently. Questions have been asked, however, about the way in which support for aid is measured, including in the International Development Committee (House of Commons 2009). More profoundly, commentators on public attitudes towards aid suggest that support is remarkably shallow, famously being characterised as 'a mile wide and an inch deep' by Ian Smillie (1999: 72), and on a false belief that most aid is in the form of humanitarian assistance (Riddell 2007).

The series of public opinion tracking surveys undertaken for DFID provide a potentially rich body of data through which public support for aid to developing countries can be better understood. Indeed, the UK arguably enjoys the most comprehensive data on public attitudes amongst major donor nations; whilst a number of donors do undertake public opinion surveys, these tend to be undertaken irregularly. Analysis of these data, however, has tended to be restricted to the examination of simple summary statistics, with little or no effort to try and quantify the influence of attitudes on the support for aid. The one known

exception is van Heerde and Hudson's (2010) analysis of DFID tracking survey data for 2005. Thus, we know little about the manner in which members of the UK public trade-off, for example, the moral imperative to help the poor in developing countries against beliefs that corruption compromises aid effectiveness, which may be taken to mean that it is a waste of time trying to help. It is only through an understanding of such intricacies of public attitudes that we can begin to engage effectively with the public, as part of efforts to garner public support for aid.

Here we present new analysis of the drivers of public support for aid in the UK, using an original data set derived from a longitudinal panel of members of the UK public; the so-called UK Public Opinion Monitor. Our analysis focuses on the influence of a range of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables on support for aid spending. A criticism of previous survey data is that public support for aid is largely framed in terms of hypothetical scenarios, while aid spending is considered in isolation of other areas of public expenditure (House of Commons 2009). To overcome this problem, we focus on the specific context of the current budget deficit in the UK and changes across a range of government services as part of efforts to curb spending. Indeed, the current UK context provides a rather interesting case study for the examination of public support for aid to developing countries. Whilst broad-based cuts in government spending are being pursued, there is support across the major political parties for the 'ring fencing' of aid, and even increases in expenditure to reach 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2013. Critically, our focus is on whether there *exists* public support for aid spending, specifically in the context of current efforts to reduce government spending. It is beyond the scope of our analysis as to whether any such public support actually *drives* UK government policy on aid.

In the next section we provide a brief review of current knowledge on public perceptions of development, outlining the key drivers of support for aid. The approach used to model public support for aid spending is then described, followed by a description of the survey data. The results of the analysis are reported, highlighting the variables found to be the predominant drivers of public support for aid spending, followed by the conclusions. This paper is currently under review.

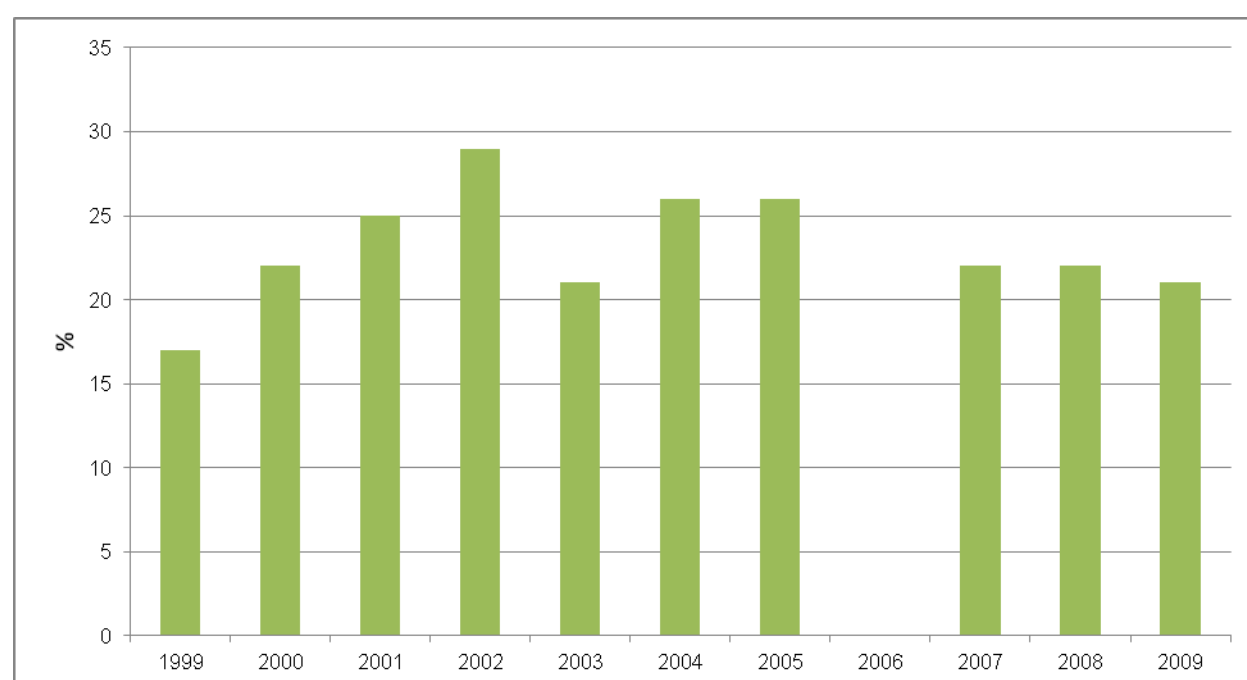
1 What do we know about public attitudes towards aid in the UK?

Much of the evidence on public attitudes towards aid, in the UK and internationally, comes from public opinion tracking surveys for donors and/or development NGOs (see for example OECD 2003; McDonnell *et al.* 2003; Darnton 2007, 2009). There is a remarkable paucity of academic research on what drives public support for aid (key exceptions include Noël and Thérien 2002; van Heerde and Hudson 2010; Stern 1998). Thus, much of the ongoing commentary about public support for aid hinges on fairly simple metrics, such as levels of concern about poverty in developing countries and perceptions of corruption and/or aid wastage, which we summarise below. Indeed, as van Heerde and Hudson (2010: 393) lament, 'many studies of the role of public opinion and development aid proceed descriptively or a-theoretically.'

The main metric of public sentiment towards development employed by DFID is the level of concern about levels of poverty in developing countries, and specifically the proportion of respondents to the annual public opinion tracking survey that are 'very concerned' (Darnton 2010). This question has been included using standard wording since the DFID tracking survey commenced in 1999. While there has been significant year-on-year variation in the

proportion of respondents that are 'very concerned', the long-term trend is around 25 per cent, with over 70 per cent typically expressing some degree of concern (Figure 1.1) (Darnton 2007). It is important to recognise that the level of concern about poverty in developing countries is sensitive to short-term communications efforts (for example anti-poverty campaigns such as 'Make Poverty History'), but with no evident long-term shifts in public attitudes.

Figure 1.1 Proportion of respondents to public opinion tracking surveys every concerned about levels of poverty in developing countries, 1999–2010¹



Source: Darnton (2010)

There is some scepticism about the degree to which the measured level of concern about levels of poverty in developing countries truly reflects support for aid (House of Commons 2009). Indeed, Darnton (2009, 2010) suggests this question should more appropriately be considered an indicator of broader engagement with poverty. Taking this perspective, the results of the DFID's annual tracking surveys suggest that poverty in developing countries is of limited salience to the UK population, with no more than a quarter of the population demonstrating appreciable and concrete commitment to poverty alleviation.

Arguably, a better indicator of public support for aid is provided by questions on relative spending priorities that place aid in the context of broader government expenditure. DFID introduced such a question into its tracking survey, on the recommendation of the International Development Committee (House of Commons 2009), in September 2009. When asked to prioritise 'help for poor countries' against five other areas of government spending, 16 per cent of respondents gave a top ranking, behind the NHS and education and schools (Figure 1.2). In February 2010, the proportion of respondents considering aid to be the top priority was only 11 per cent. In both September 2009 and February 2010, aid was ranked lowest on the basis of the proportion of respondents placing it amongst their top three priorities for government spending. When asked whether they supported the UK

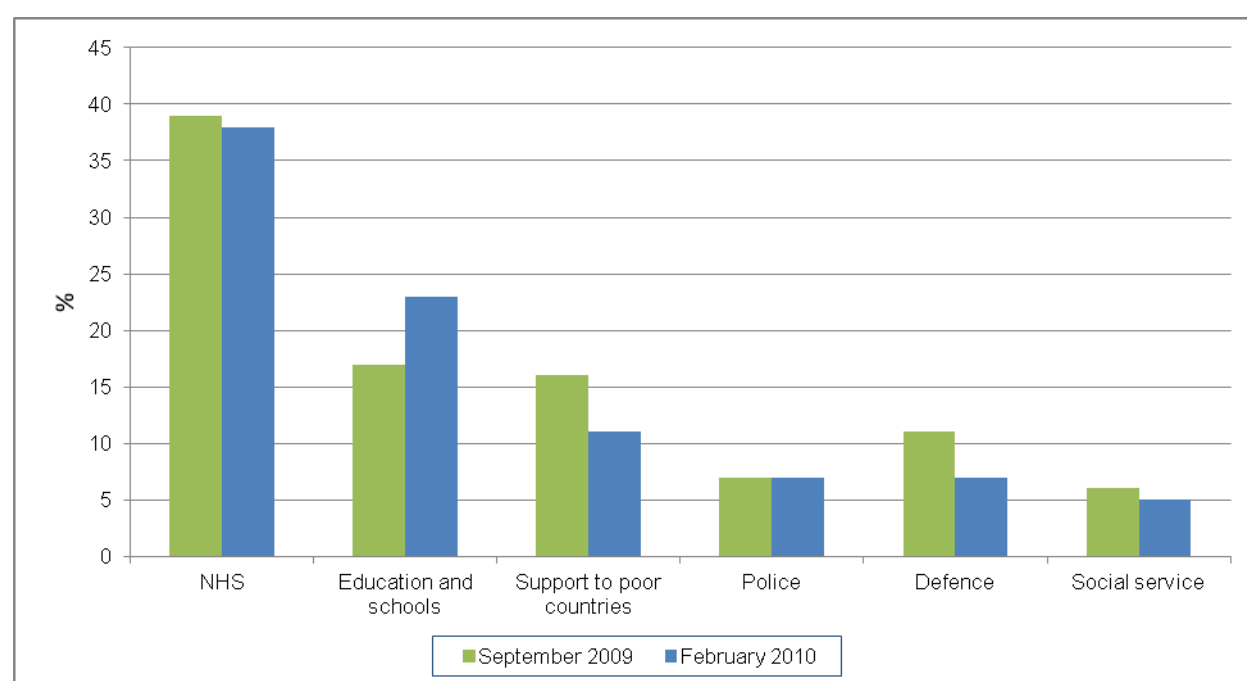
¹ Note that tracking survey in 2006 employed a four-point Likert scale, making it incompatible with all other years that used a five-point Likert scale.

government doing more to reduce poverty in poor countries, 42 per cent agreed in September 2009 (TNS 2009), but only 35 per cent in February 2010 (TNS 2010).

It is generally recognised that the UK public know relatively little about development and/or aid, with Darnton (2009: 9) claiming ‘the public as a whole remains uninterested in and ill-informed about global poverty.’ Indeed, data from the DFID public opinion tracking surveys suggests relatively low levels of awareness of development institutions (including DFID itself) and even more so what they do, and also development initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Knowledge of the level and nature of aid likewise tends to be lacking. For example, there is evidence that the members of the public tend to grossly over-estimate the amount spent by the UK government on aid to developing countries (see for example Action Aid 2006), whilst at the same time closely associating aid with humanitarian assistance (Riddell 2007; Darnton 2009; Henson *et al.* 2010).

Research in various countries suggests that perceptions of the causes of global poverty are a key driver of support for aid (see for example Harper *et al.* 1990; Carr and MacLachlan 1998; Hine and Montiel 1999). In general, support for aid is greater when poverty is considered to be imposed from outside, whether meaning developing countries or poor people therein. DFID’s tracking surveys and a number of previous qualitative studies (Darnton 2009, 2010; Henson *et al.* 2010) provide strong evidence that the UK public see the causes of poverty in poor countries as being internal to developing countries themselves. By far, corruption is considered the main cause, with over 50 per cent of respondents to DFID’s tracking survey in both September 2009 and February 2010 providing this as a spontaneous response (Figure 1.3).² The only causal factor that might be considered at all external to the developing world, namely international debt, was only mentioned by nine or 10 per cent of respondents.

Figure 1.2 Proportion of respondents ranking specific areas of government spending as of top priority, September 2009 and February 2010



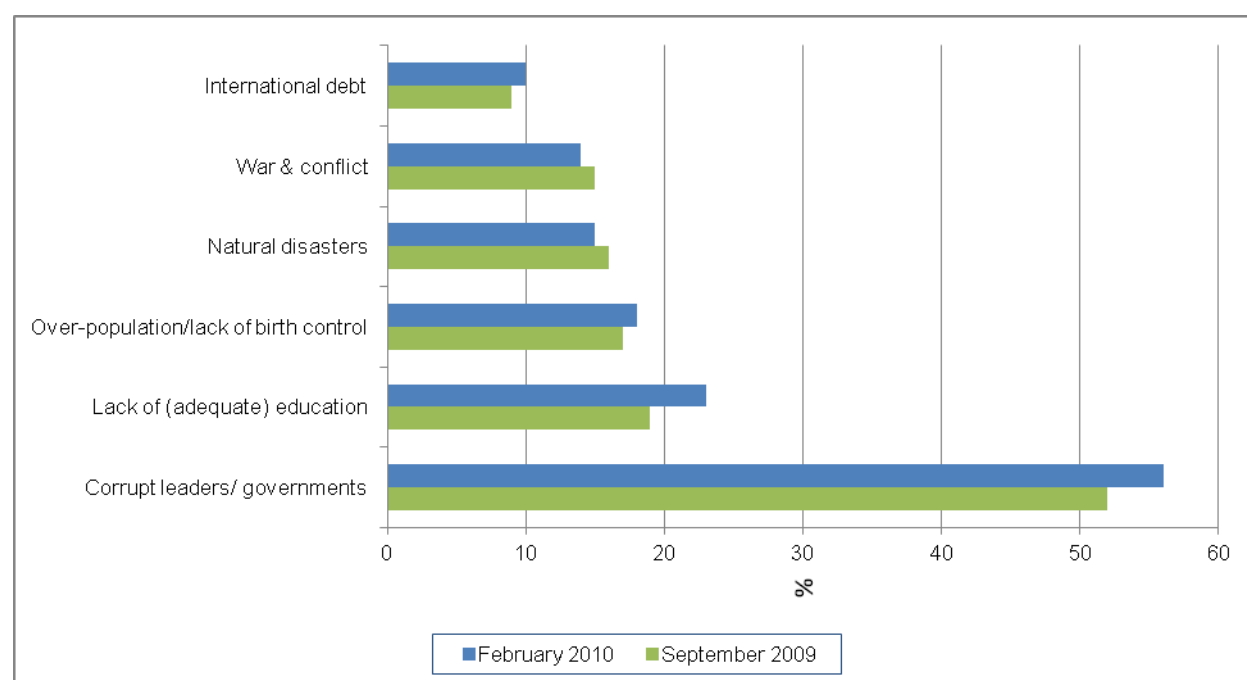
Source: TNS (2009, 2010).

² Note that there is strong evidence to suggest that the UK public strongly associate developing countries with Africa (Darnton 2007), with Africa’s problems widely being seen to be self-generated (Philo 2002).

At the current time, there is a great deal of interest in the influence of values on public attitudes towards development and, in turn, support for aid (Darnton 2010; Crompton 2010). While there is a body of research on the links between values and various aspects of consumer behaviour, for example purchase of fair trade products (Doran 2008), there is a paucity of work on links to support for aid to developing countries. Some studies explore the concept of a 'just world' and other social ideologies, and relations to support for aid (see for example Harper *et al.* 1990; Carr and MacLachlan 1998; Hine and Montiel 1999). Guidance can also be taken from the broader literature on public support for foreign policy, which suggests an interplay between self-interest and moral suasion. For example, van Heerde and Hudson (2010) show that moral issues are positively associated with concern about poverty in developing countries, while conversely self-interest is negatively associated with such concerns. However, when self-interest is disaggregated into the personal effects of poverty in developing countries versus effects on their country as a whole, the former is found to be positively associated with concern about poverty in developing countries.

A dominant discourse in the literature on public support for aid is the dominance of perceptions of corruption and aid wastage. For example, 57 per cent of respondents to DFID's public opinion tracking survey in February 2010 agreed that 'corruption in poor country governments makes it pointless donating' (TNS 2010). Further, 53 per cent agreed that 'most financial aid to developing countries is wasted'. Corruption and wastage are also dominant themes in qualitative research on public attitudes to development (Henson *et al.* 2010; Darnton 2009, 2010). It is not clear, however, that we have a good understanding of the ways in which perceptions of corruption and wastage influence support for aid. On the one hand, there is some evidence that corruption is used as an 'excuse' to disengage from stories about poverty (Darnton 2010). On the other, such perceptions may fuel a belief that aid is ineffective and, while aid may be supported in principle, in practice it is not believed to work (Henson *et al.* 2010).

Figure 1.3 Spontaneous responses on causes of poverty in poor countries, September 2009 and February 2010



Source: TNS (2009, 2010).

2 Modelling public attitudes to aid

The foregoing discussion highlights the dominant themes in the existing literature on public attitudes towards development and support for aid. While highlighting the factors that are likely to be key drivers of public support for aid, the literature is weak on providing understanding of the relative importance of these factors and the manner in which they interplay. For example, which is dominant, perceptions of wastage or a belief that there is a moral imperative to provide aid to developing countries? Similarly, to what extent do members of the public support aid even though they believe much of it is wasted? If we are to understand better what drives support for aid and to be able to engage constructively with the public on development issues, these are questions that need answering.

The aim of the analysis presented below is to begin to unveil the ways in which a range of socio-demographic and attitudinal factors influence UK public support for aid to developing countries. The analysis is not perfect; a number of desirable explanatory variables are not currently available and there is a need to explore different and perhaps more sophisticated modelling approaches. However, it does provide one of the most detailed analyses to date of the key drivers of public support for aid in the UK.

As outlined above, the reliability of efforts to gauge public attitudes towards aid to developing countries is often compromised by the hypothetical and/or unspecific nature of the questions posed. Thus, survey respondents are typically asked whether they consider that government should do more or less to reduce poverty in poor countries and/or whether they support increases in aid spending, as in the public opinion tracking surveys for DFID (see for example TNS 2010). Only 35 per cent of respondents to the tracking survey for DFID in February 2010 supported increased (but unspecified) government action to reduce poverty in poor countries, compared to 50 per cent in September 2007 (TNS 2010). Whilst 55 per cent of respondents were of the view that the government should spend more on aid to developing countries in the tracking survey of September 2007, this support had declined to 40 per cent by February 2010. Do such trends reflect a genuine decline in public support for aid, or a more vague 'protest' that has little or no real consequence in terms of how much the public thinks should actually be spent on aid?

The current UK situation arguably provides an opportunity to obtain a more reliable assessment of public attitudes towards aid to developing countries, although clearly within the specific context of wide-scale cuts in public spending. Thus, the UK government is not only planning reductions in spending on many public services, but has requested public input in guiding where these cuts should be made.³ While the UK government has committed itself to 'ring fence' and even increase aid spending this has, perhaps ironically, served to heighten rather than lessen public debate about the utility of aid to developing countries and raise questions about the scale of current aid spending.

A number of recent opinion polls suggest that many members of the UK public not only reject the notion of 'ring fencing' aid to developing countries, but support cuts in aid spending. For example, 60 per cent of respondents in a July 2010 survey for PricewaterhouseCoopers were of the view that aid to developing countries should not be exempt from government spending cuts (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2010). In a June 2010 survey by Harris Interactive, 64 per cent of respondents considered that aid to developing countries should bear the biggest part of cuts in government spending (Financial Times/Harris 2010). More broadly, in a June 2010 survey by Chatham House and YouGov,

³ For example, members of the public have been invited to submit suggestions for areas where cuts in spending could and/or should be made through a 'Spending Challenge' website. See: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spend_spendingchallenge.htm

54 per cent of respondents were of the view that much development assistance is wasted and does little to promote British interests, and should be radically reduced (Chatham House/YouGov 2010). As a whole, and alongside the results of the February 2010 public opinion tracking survey for DFID (see above), these survey results suggest that public support for cuts in aid spending at a time of broad economic austerity is hardening.

The focus of our analysis here is on what drives public attitudes to aid rather than on the proportion of the population supporting particular levels of spending *per se*. Thus, our main research question is who supports reducing rather than maintaining or even increasing aid spending in the context of broad cuts in government expenditure and what underlying attitudes towards aid and the wider world drive such views? Specifically, we estimate a binary probit model that relates support for cuts in UK aid spending to a range of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. While the results are clearly highly time and context specific, they present one of the most in-depth and rigorous insights into UK public attitudes towards aid to date. The data employed in this analysis and the nature of the dependent and explanatory variables are explained below.

2.1 Data

Data for the empirical analysis were derived using the UK Public Opinion Monitor (UKPOM), a longitudinal panel of 6,010 members of the UK public aged from 18 to 65 years, based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).⁴ Members of the UKPOM were initially recruited by telephone by a professional market research organisation. The panel is broadly representative of the UK population on the basis of gender, age, level of education and region, although sample weights are applied to the survey responses in order to correct for some relatively minor discrepancies. Members of the UKPOM receive an email invitation to complete an online questionnaire every six to eight weeks and are entered into a prize draw for 10 prizes of £100 in return.

The data employed in the analysis presented here are predominantly from a questionnaire elicited in July 2010 that focused on government spending in broad terms and aid to developing countries.⁵ The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents employed in the analysis were collected during the initial process of respondent recruitment and through three online questionnaires over the period February to September 2010. Of the 6010 members of the panel, 1,342 provided useable responses to the questionnaire elicited in July 2010 and are included in the analysis.

2.2 Variables

Public support for aid has been shown to be related to a range of socio-demographic, attitudinal and values-based factors (see for example Harper *et al.* 1996; Harper 1996; Stern 1998; Carr and MacLachlan 1998; Hine and Montiel 1999; Noël and Thérien 2002; van Heerde and Hudson 2010), a number of which are discussed above. Thus, previous studies provided useful guidance on the variables to include in our analysis. Existing studies, however, broadly fail to present coherent evidence on the direction of causal relations, with significant inter-study variation in the sign and/or magnitude of measured relations. As a result, we make extensive use of our own prior qualitative research on attitudes to development and aid in the UK (Henson *et al.* 2010) to guide the model specification.

Table 2.1 itemises the dependent and explanatory variables in the binary probit model. The characteristics of each variable are provided along with summary statistics. Below we

⁴ The panel is restricted to individuals aged 65 years or less because of concerns about representativeness in older age groups. The UKPOM is internet based, whilst internet use is limited within older age groups in the UK population.

⁵ A copy of the questionnaire is available from the authors on request.

Table 2.1 Characteristics of model variables

Dependent Variable	Description	Mean	Standard Deviation
Dependent variable			
red_aid	Support reduced spending on aid as part of measures to address UK budget deficit (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.6261	0.4832
Socio-Demographic Variables			
gender	Gender (1 = male; 0 otherwise)		
age1	Aged 18 to 24 years (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.13	0.33
age2	Aged 25 to 34 years (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.19	0.39
age3	Aged 35 to 44 years (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.20	0.40
age4	Aged 45 to 54 years (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.21	0.41
age5	Aged 55 years or more (1 = yes; 0 otherwise) a	0.23	0.42
education1	No formal qualifications/Other (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.33	0.47
education2	1 to 4 O Levels/GCSEs/CSEs/NVQ Level 1/Foundation GNVQ or equivalent (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.14	0.30
education3	5 or more O Levels/GCSEs/CSEs/1 A Level/NVQ Level 2/Intermediate GNVQ or equivalent (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.14	0.35
education4	2 or more A Levels/ 4 or more AS Levels/NVQ Level 3/Advanced GNVQ or equivalent (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.12	0.33
education5	First degree/Higher degree/NVQ Levels 4 and 5/HNC/HND or the equivalent (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)a	0.22	0.37
children	Children aged 18 years or less (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.34	0.47
prac_religion	Practicing religious faith (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.64	0.48
ethnicity	White (1 = yes; 0 otherwise)	0.97	0.18
Perceived Knowledge about Poverty and Aid			
poverty_know	'I know very little about the causes of poverty in the world' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	2.50	1.08
aid_know	'I know very little about the aid given by the UK to developing countries' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.23	1.02
World Views			
global_citizen	'I see myself as more a citizen of the world than a citizen of the UK' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	2.78	1.18
Attitudes towards Development and Aid			
moral_duty	'The UK has a moral duty to help reduce poverty in developing countries' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.30	1.24
UK_benefit	'Ultimately the UK stands to benefit from reductions in poverty in developing countries' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.40	1.20
own_impact	'Poverty in developing countries has a great impact on my own life' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	2.53	1.11
feel_good	'It makes me feel good knowing the UK is helping the poor in developing countries' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.22	1.12
UK_lead	'The UK should be a global leader in reducing poverty in the world' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.00	1.18
corruption	'Corruption in developing countries makes it pointless trying to help' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.25	1.24
aid_waste	'Most aid given by the UK to developing countries is wasted' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.80	1.20
UK_priority	'Ultimately, it is more important for the UK government to tackle poverty at home than in other parts of the world' (1 = 'disagree strongly'; 5 = 'agree strongly')	3.88	1.11

Note: a = reference/excluded category

examine each of these variables in turn and outline our *a priori* hypothesised relation with support for cuts in aid spending, on the basis of previously published studies, including our own qualitative research. Thus, while we do not have a formal model on which to base our analysis, we hope to not fall foul of the accusation by van Heerde and Hudson (2010), that much analysis of public support for aid is a-theoretical.

The dependent variable in the model was support for reduced spending on aid in the context of efforts to address the UK budget deficit. As outlined above, survey respondents are generally questioned about their views on aid spending in rather general and hypothetical terms, and equipped with little or no knowledge of how much is actually spent on aid to developing countries, whether in absolute terms or relative to overall government expenditure. For example, there is evidence that people tend to grossly over-estimate the amount spent by the government on aid to developing countries, perhaps conditioning responses towards lower levels of support.⁶ In an attempt to overcome these problems, respondents were presented with 15 UK government services and the amount spent on each per person in 2009 (broadly following Kemp 1998; Kemp and Burt 2001). They were then asked how expenditure on each of these services should be changed given current efforts to address the budget deficit on a five-point scale from 'reduce a lot' (-2) to 'increase a lot' (+2).

On the basis of the mean scale scores, respondents as a whole only considered that spending on pensions, health care and education should be increased (Figure 2.1). Government services that respondents considered should be reduced the most included broadcasting and publication services, aid to developing countries and cultural services. In the case of aid to developing countries, 62.9 per cent of respondents considered that spending should be reduced (Figure 2.3), while only 7.9 per cent were of the view that spending should be increased. For the purposes of the probit model, these responses were converted into a dichotomous variable taking a value of one if a respondent considered that aid spending should be reduced, and zero otherwise.

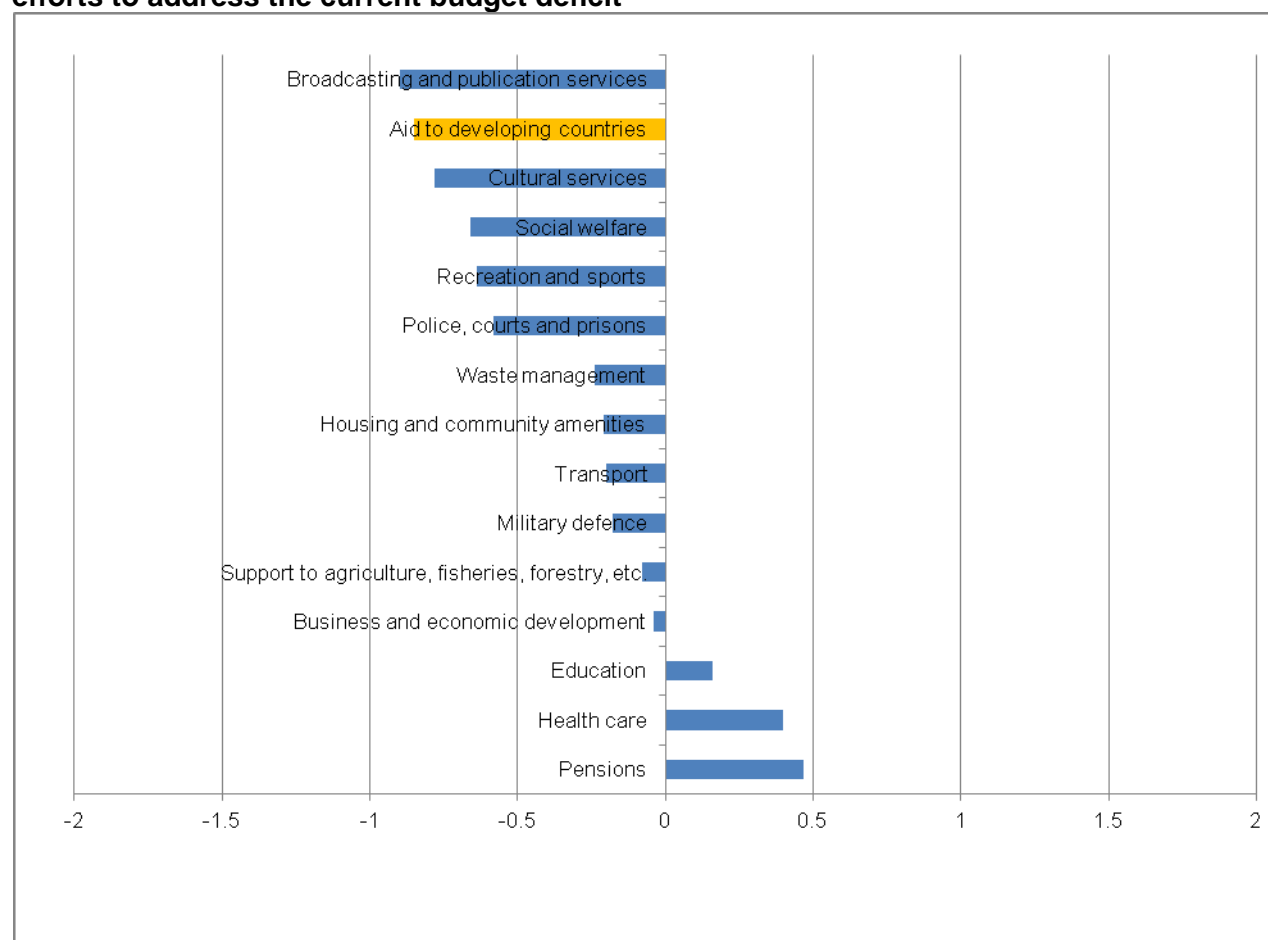
A range of socio-demographic variables were included in the model. The gender of the respondent was represented by a categorical variable (*gender*) taking a value of one for males, and zero otherwise. A series of dummy variables (*age1* to *age 5*) captured the age of respondents, with *age5* as the reference category. Likewise, the highest level of educational attainment of respondents was included through a series of dummy variables (*education1* to *education5*), with *education5* as the reference category. Finally, having children was captured with a categorical variable (*children*) taking a value of one if a respondent had at least one child aged 17 years or younger, and zero otherwise. On the basis of previous surveys of public attitudes to development, for example the public opinion tracking surveys for DFID (see for example COI 2009; TNS 2009, 2010), we expected females, younger age groups and more highly educated respondents to be more supportive of aid to developing countries and, consequently, to be less likely to support cuts in aid spending. We had no concrete *a priori* hypothesis regarding the impact of having children on support for reducing aid spending. Although there was some expectation that the associated coefficient would be negative; it is plausible that having children enhances recognition and/or concerns about global interdependencies, while children may be a source of information for parents on poverty in developing countries through development-related education.

Respondents to UKPOM surveys have been asked whether they associate themselves with a religious faith and, if so, whether they consider themselves to be actively practicing this faith. Having a practicing religious faith was captured through a categorical variable (*prac_religion*), taking a value of one if a respondent was practicing a religion, and zero

⁶ For example, in a 2006 survey for Action Aid, estimates of spending on aid by respondents averaged 18.5 per cent of total government spending (Action Aid 2006). At the time, aid accounted for no more one per cent of public expenditure.

otherwise. *A priori*, we expected respondents that had a practicing religious faith to be less likely to support cuts in aid spending. Although there is very limited empirical evidence to support this hypothesis, beyond simple anecdotes, the fact that a number of major development NGOs in the UK are faith-based, suggests that faith is a motivator of support for aid amongst some members of the public (Clarke 2007).

Figure 2.1 Mean scores for changes in major areas of government spending given efforts to address the current budget deficit



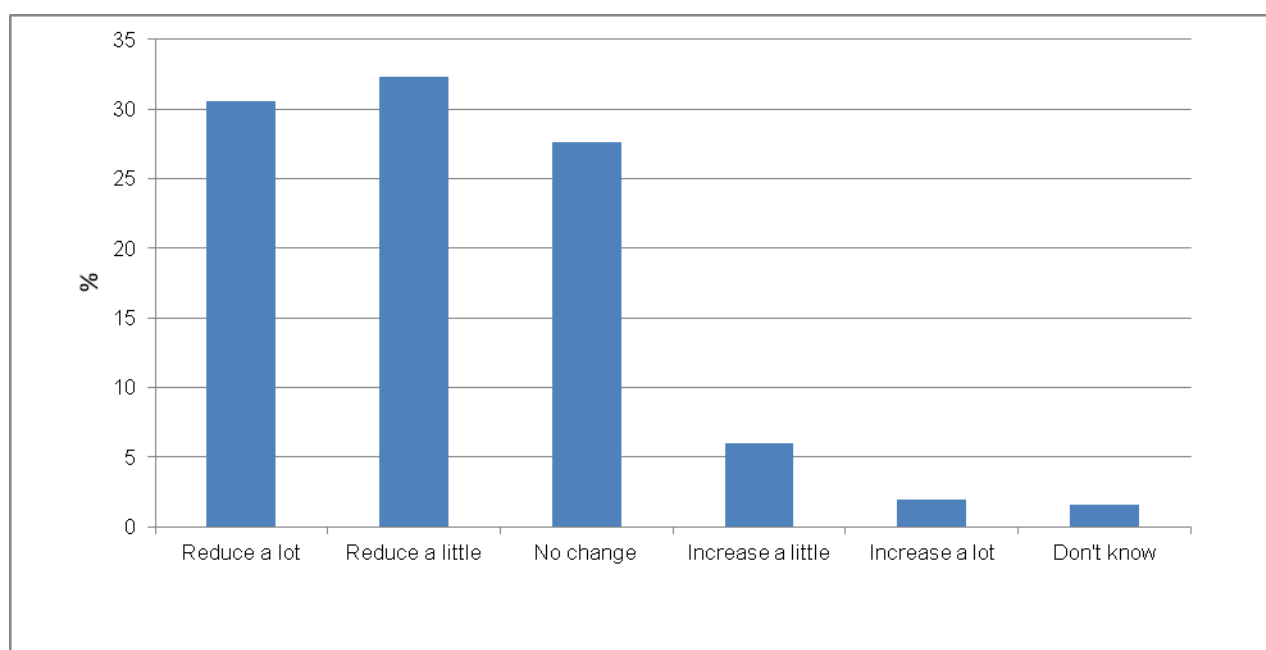
Note: 1 = 'reduce a lot'; 3 = 'No change'; 5 = 'increase a lot'

The final socio-demographic variable in the probit model captured the ethnic origin of respondents. This was a categorical variable taking a value of one if the respondent was white, and zero otherwise. Although we did not have any concrete predictions of the causal relationship between ethnicity and support for cuts in aid spending, it is plausible that ethnic minorities might have greater links, whether real or emotional, with developing countries such that they would be less likely to support cuts in aid spending.

As noted above, the existing literature suggests that the general public are relatively uninformed about development and the nature and role of aid. Indeed, in surveys many people profess to knowing little about how much and what types of aid are given by the UK to developing countries (see for example TNS 2009, 2010). At the same time, greater levels of knowledge appear to be related to support for aid to developing countries (Henson *et al.* 2010). To capture the influence of knowledge on support for cuts in aid spending, two variables were included. The first variable (*poverty_know*) captured perceived knowledge of

the causes of poverty in developing countries. Specifically, respondents were asked to record the degree to which they agreed with the statement 'I know very little about the causes of poverty in the world' on a five-point Likert scale from 'disagree strongly' (1) to 'agree strongly' (5). The second variable (*aid_know*) captured perceived knowledge of UK aid to developing countries. In this case, respondents recorded their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement 'I know very little about the aid given by the UK to developing countries'. Given higher values of these two variables indicate lower levels of perceived knowledge, both were expected to be positively associated with support for cuts in aid spending.

Figure 2.2 Support for changes in expenditure on aid to developing countries in order to address the budget deficit



While there is a paucity of research on the links between broader values and 'world views' and support for aid to developing countries (Crompton 2010), the limited research that does exist suggests that seeing oneself as a global citizen and perceptions of the world as 'just' are associated with support for aid (see for example Harper *et al.* 1990; Noël and Thérien 2002). To date, very little data has been captured on the values of members of the UKPOM. However, information is available on the degree to which respondents see themselves as global citizens. This was included in the model through the *global_citizen* variable that recorded the level of agreement with the statement 'I see myself as more a citizen of the world than a citizen of the UK' on a five-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). *A priori*, we expected this variable to be negatively associated with support for cuts in aid spending.

The foregoing discussion highlights the dual role of moral imperatives versus self-interest as motivating factors in support for aid to developing countries. Here, the moral case for aid is captured through the *moral_duty* variable which was measured through the level of agreement with the statement 'The UK has a moral duty to help reduce poverty in developing countries' on a five-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). *A priori*, we expected *moral_duty* to be negatively associated with support for cuts in aid spending. As with van Heerde and Hudson (2010), we sub-divided self-interest motives for supporting aid to developing countries into impacts on respondents themselves

(*own_impact*) and impacts on the UK more generally (*UK_benefit*). These were measured through the level of agreement with the statements 'Poverty in developing countries has a great impact on my own life' and 'Ultimately the UK stands to benefit from reductions in poverty in developing countries', respectively. The results of prior qualitative research (Henson *et al.* 2010), however, suggested that there is an additional and less tangible dimension to self-interest as a motive for supporting aid to developing countries in the form of the 'warm glow' or 'good feeling' from knowing the UK is helping the global poor. In part, this reflects the concept of the 'powerful giver' (us) versus 'grateful receiver' (the poor in developing countries) that has been associated with the so-called 'Live Aid Legacy' (VSO 2002). This was captured through the *feel_good* variable that was measured through the level of agreement with the statement 'It makes me feel good knowing the UK is helping the poor in developing countries'. All three of the self-interests were expected, *a priori*, to be negatively associated with support for cuts in aid spending.

While not specifically related to self-interest *per se*, our previous qualitative research (Henson *et al.* 2010) highlighted how some supporters of aid to developing countries are motivated by the belief that the UK should be a global leader in the fight against poverty in developing countries. In part this seems to reflect the view that the UK has 'something to give' and can steer aid in positive directions, and in part the view that the UK can benefit from being proactive in providing aid to developing countries. In our model this was captured through the *UK_lead* variable that was measured through the level of agreement with the statement 'The UK should be a global leader in reducing poverty in the world' on a five-point Likert scale from 'disagree strongly' (1) to 'agree strongly' (5). We expected *a priori* the *UK_lead* variable to be negatively associated with support or cuts in spending on aid.

The existing literature, as we discuss above, is replete with evidence that the UK public considers much aid to be wasted and, even more damning, that it never reaches the intended beneficiaries due to corruption (Darnton 2007, 2009; Henson *et al.* 2010). Thus, even though members of the public might support aid to developing countries in principle, this support can be undermined by beliefs that aid 'simply does not work'. Our previous qualitative research suggests that perceptions of aid wastage and of corruption are distinct in terms of their impact on support for aid, and indeed are not necessarily highly correlated with one another (Henson *et al.* 2010) and so these were incorporated separately into the probit model.⁷ The variable *corruption* was measured through the level of agreement with the statement 'Corruption in developing countries makes it pointless trying to help' on a five-point Likert scale from 'disagree strongly' (1) to 'agree strongly' (5). Perceptions of aid wastage were measured by the level of agreement with the statement 'Most aid given by the UK to developing countries is wasted', captured through the variable *aid_waste*. Both the *corruption* and *aid_waste* variables were expected to be negatively related to support for cuts in aid spending *a priori*.

Finally, our previous qualitative research (Henson *et al.* 2010) highlighted how, while members of the public might support the principle of aid to developing countries, actions to alleviate poverty 'at home' are considered of greater priority. We might reasonably expect such views to be a particular important driver of support for cuts in aid spending in times of economic austerity when the government is looking to make significant cuts in spending. In our model this perspective was captured through the *UK_priority* variable measured through the level of agreement with the statement 'Ultimately, it is more important for the UK government to tackle poverty at home than in other parts of the world' on a five-point scale

⁷ This was confirmed by examining the correlation ($r=0.267$) between the levels of agreement with the statements 'Corruption in developing countries makes it pointless trying to help' and 'Most aid given by the UK to developing countries is wasted'.

from 'disagree strongly' (1) to 'agree strongly' (5). It was expected that *UK_priority* would be positively associated with support for cuts in aid spending.

3 Results

The estimated regression coefficients and calculated marginal probabilities for the binary probit model are reported in Table 3.1. The model was estimated with White's heteroskedastic robust standard errors. The pseudo R^2 was relatively high for a cross-section model at 0.389. A joint Wald test of the significance of the regression coefficients indicates that the model overall has significant explanatory power.

A potential concern with the probit model is the presence of multicollinearity due to correlation between the explanatory variables, and especially the attitudinal variables. However, no appreciable correlations between the estimated regression coefficients on the attitudinal variables were observed. Further, the mean Variation Inflation Factor (VIF) for the model was only 1.44, while the highest VIF for the individual explanatory variables was 2.68. These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a problem.

Contrary to prior expectations, most of the socio-demographic variables in the model are insignificant. Thus, gender, level of education, having children, practicing a religion and ethnicity all have no appreciable impact on the propensity to support cuts in aid spending. The one socio-demographic factor that is found to influence support for cuts in aid spending is age. The *age1*, *age2* and *age4* variables are all significant ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.1$, respectively) and negative, suggesting that the propensity to support cuts in aid spending broadly increases with age. Indeed, respondents aged 18 to 24 years and 25 to 34 years are 20.6 per cent and 23.4 per cent less likely to support cuts in expenditure on aid than those aged 55 years and older (the reference category), respectively.

Perceived knowledge of the causes of poverty in developing countries and of UK aid to developing countries is insignificant. It is important to recognise that these variables capture the perceptions of respondents regarding their knowledge rather than the actual state of their knowledge. This result accords with our previous qualitative research (Henson *et al.* 2010). Thus, even when people profess to knowing little about development and/or aid, they are often able and willing to present quite elaborate explanations of why aid does or does not work.

The one variable included in the model to capture 'world views' is insignificant. Evidently, seeing one-self as a global rather than a national citizen fails to capture the broader values of respondents. It is recognised above that one weakness of our analysis is the lack of more detailed data on the values of respondents; these data are to be gathered in a future survey and further analysis will subsequently be undertaken.

Of the eight variables in the model that capture attitudes towards development and aid, six are significant. Taken as a whole, these results suggest that the propensity to support cuts in aid is predominantly driven by people's attitudes rather than their socio-demographic characteristics, while attitudes are only weakly correlated with factors such as level of education, age, gender, etc.

Table 3.1 Determinants of propensity to support cuts in aid spending as part of measures to address UK budget deficit

Dependent Variable	Coefficient Estimate	Marginal Probability
Socio-Demographic Variables		
gender	0.077 (0.69)	0.025 (0.69)
age1	-0.560 (-2.13)**	-0.206 (-1.99)**
age2	-0.640 (-3.38)***	-0.234 (-3.18)***
age3	-0.167 (-0.89)	-0.056 (-0.86)
age4	-0.258 (-1.73)*	-0.87 (-1.67)*
education1	0.087 (0.65)	0.028 (0.66)
education2	0.100 (0.32)	0.032 (0.33)
education3	-0.280 (-1.58)	-0.097 (-1.50)
education4	0.284 (1.40)	0.086 (1.54)
children	0.026 (0.18)	0.008 (0.18)
prac_religion	0.100 (0.75)	0.032 (0.76)
ethnicity	0.132 (0.38)	0.045 (0.37)
Perceived Knowledge about Poverty and Aid		
Poverty_know	-0.007 (-0.13)	-0.002 (-0.13)
Aid_know	-0.055 (-0.89)	-0.018 (-0.89)
World Views		
Global_citizen	-0.050 (-0.95)	-0.016 (-0.95)
Attitudes towards Development and Aid		
Moral_duty	-0.3405 (-5.31)***	-0.133 (-5.55)***
UK_benefit	-0.121 (-2.16)**	-0.040 (-2.18)**
Own_impact	0.040 (0.72)	0.013 (0.72)
Feel_good	-0.130 (-1.78)*	-0.043 (-1.78)*
UK_lead	-0.177 (-3.08)***	-0.058 (-3.08)***
Corruption	-0.004 (-0.08)	-0.001 (0.08)
Aid_waste	0.153 (2.97)***	0.050 (2.99)***
UK_priority	0.371 (6.39)***	0.122 (6.38)***
Wald (23df) = 244.39*** Per cent correctly predicted = 80.74% Pseudo R ² = 0.389 Log pseudo-likelihood = -344.15 N = 1,342		

Moral duty is revealed to be a strong determinant of the propensity to support cuts in aid spending. The coefficient on the *moral_duty* variable is negative and significant ($p < 0.01$), while the associated marginal effect is -13.3 per cent. Self-interest also appears to drive support for cuts in aid spending, although the associated marginal effects are much lower than for moral duty. The coefficients on both the *UK_benefit* and *feel_good* variables are significant ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.1$, respectively) and negative, with marginal effects of -4.0 per cent and -4.3 per cent, respectively. The *own_impact* variable, however, is insignificant. This suggests that it is the intangible 'feel good' effects of aid to developing countries rather than any material or tangible benefits for the individual that drive support for aid. At the same time, respondents that considered the UK as a whole, rather than themselves individually, stood to benefit from reduced poverty in developing countries were less likely to support cuts

in aid spending. This is somewhat at odds with van Heerde and Hudson (2010), which find perceived benefits to the UK as a whole to be negatively associated with concern about poverty in developing countries, but in line with our *a priori* expectations.

The *UK_lead* variable is significant ($p < 0.01$) and negative, suggesting that respondents considering the UK should play a leadership role in efforts to reduce poverty in developing countries are less likely to support reduced aid spending. The associated marginal effect is 5.8 per cent. This is in accordance with the results of our previous qualitative research (Henson *et al.* 2010).

Perhaps the most surprising result of our analysis is the insignificance of the coefficient on the *corruption* variable. The existing literature makes much of the fact that a large proportion of the general public considers corruption to be a major impediment to aid effectiveness (McDonnell *et al.* 2003; Riddell 2007; Darnton 2007, 2009). Indeed, as discussed above, in the public opinion tracking surveys for DFID the majority of respondents agree that 'corruption in poor country governments makes it pointless donating money to help reduce Poverty' (TNS 2010). In our own survey, 47.3 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement 'corruption in developing countries makes it pointless trying to help', although this is relatively poorly correlated ($r = 0.187$) with support for cuts in aid spending. This appears to suggest that an appreciable number of respondents that did not support cuts in aid spending nevertheless considered corruption to be a problem.

In contrast to corruption, perceptions that most aid to developing countries is wasted (*aid_waste*) is significant ($p < 0.01$) and negative. The associated marginal effect (5.0 per cent), however, is relatively low, suggesting that perceptions of aid wastage are not a dominant driver of support for cuts in aid spending. There appear to be two processes at work here. On the one hand, there are respondents that support aid despite the fact that they consider much of it is wasted. Thus, 28 per cent of respondents agreeing with the statement 'Most aid given by the UK to developing countries is wasted' did not propose cuts in aid spending (Figure 4.1). For Riddell (2007: 117) this is not 'an anomaly, a contradiction or a paradox', but rather reflects the fact that a sub-group of the population supports aid to developing countries (and often more of it) so strongly that any belief that much of it is badly spent is overlooked (also see Darnton 2009). On the other hand, a much greater proportion (37.6 per cent compared to 14.0 per cent) of respondents that oppose cuts in aid spending are of the view that most aid is wasted than respondents that propose cuts in aid.

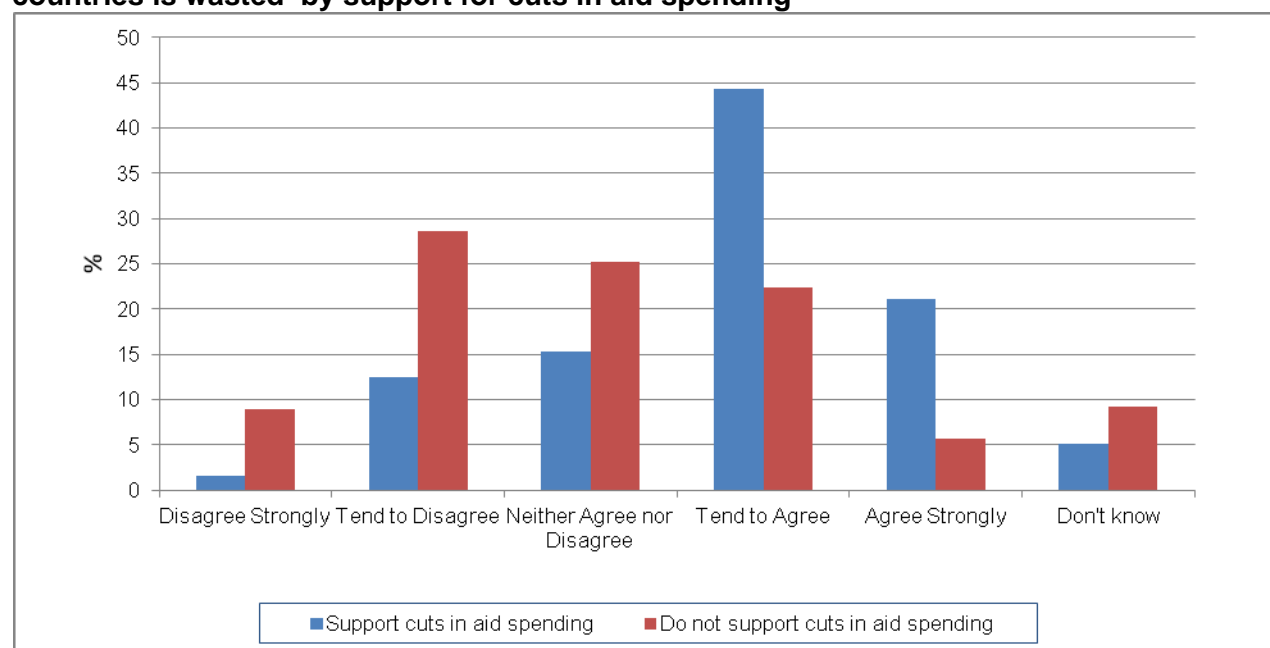
Finally, the view that priority should be given to poverty alleviation at home rather than in other parts of the world (*UK_priority*) is significant ($p < 0.01$) and positive. The associated marginal effect is 12.2 per cent, suggesting a strong influence on the propensity to support cuts in aid spending, as expected. Although we do not have comparator data for the period before the budgetary crisis, it is perhaps 'reasonable' to expect a greater emphasis on domestic needs during a time of economic austerity and that the influence of such attitudes on support for aid spending will be lower in times of relative prosperity.

4 Conclusions

The analysis presented in this paper represents one of the few attempts to quantify the drivers of public support for aid spending in the UK. Public support for expenditure on aid evidently reflects the complex interplay of a range of attitudinal factors. Conversely, socio-demographic characteristics appear to play a limited role, with the one important exception of age. Clearly, the results are context specific; they apply to the UK at a time of economic austerity and when the government is looking to achieve significant cuts in spending. Arguably, however, such specific contexts are necessary in order to provide a concrete

frame in which to ask respondents for their views on aid spending. As we have noted, one of the major criticisms of past surveys of public attitudes to development is the hypothetical nature of the questions they ask. At the same time, public attitudes evidently do change over time, as is apparent from DFID's public opinion tracking surveys, suggesting that analyses such as ours should rightly focus on 'snap shots' of public support over time with given prevailing economic, political and social conditions.

Figure 4.1 Level of agreement with statement 'Most aid given by the UK to developing countries is wasted' by support for cuts in aid spending



The results suggest that the dominant driver of public support for aid spending is the interplay between the moral obligations to help the poor in developing countries and prioritisation of the poor 'at home'. The marginal probabilities of both of these variables are appreciably greater than any other of the explanatory variables. These results suggest that, even in times of economic austerity and wide-ranging cuts in government spending, the majority of the population appreciate the moral imperative to provide aid to developing countries. At the same time, there is poverty in the UK and the literature on policy feedback tells us that people will tend to support policies where impacts are more visible and more proximate (Soss and Schram 2007). Presumably the argument that needs to be made here is that, while we need to address poverty in the UK, we must not forget the plight of the poor in other parts of the world.

Perceptions of corruption and aid wastage dominate the current discourse on public support for aid in the UK, with a vibrant debate about the extent to which such concerns (and especially those relating to corruption) can be tackled 'head-on' through the presentation of contrary evidence, or whether the underlying frames make such a strategy counterproductive (Darnton 2010). The results of the current study suggest that perceptions of corruption have no significant influence on support for aid spending; presumably, such perceptions are so widespread that they provide the backdrop for attitudes towards aid across the population. However, perceptions of aid wastage are significant, although with a marginal probability that is low relative to factors such as moral obligation. Perceptions of wastage are perhaps more amenable to communication efforts that present positive images of aid working.

The results of our analysis illustrate the utility of longitudinal panels for understanding attitudes towards aid, as well as public policy more generally. Thus, we collected data on support for changes in government spending across a range of services, attitudes to development, and a range of socio-demographic characteristics across multiple surveys. Such a rich collection of data can rarely be collected through one-off questionnaires, while data collection at multiple instances acts to minimise bias. Looking to the future, the UKPOM will enable changes in support for aid and in attitudes to development to be monitored, and for additional data (for example on values) to be collected. In this way, an ever richer picture of public support for aid will be revealed.

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