

The Politics of International Aid Special Report

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PoliticsHome worked with the think tank YouGov@Cambridge, which combines the leading opinion research of YouGov with Cambridge academics, to produce the first in-depth study into public attitudes towards the Coalition government's international aid policy.

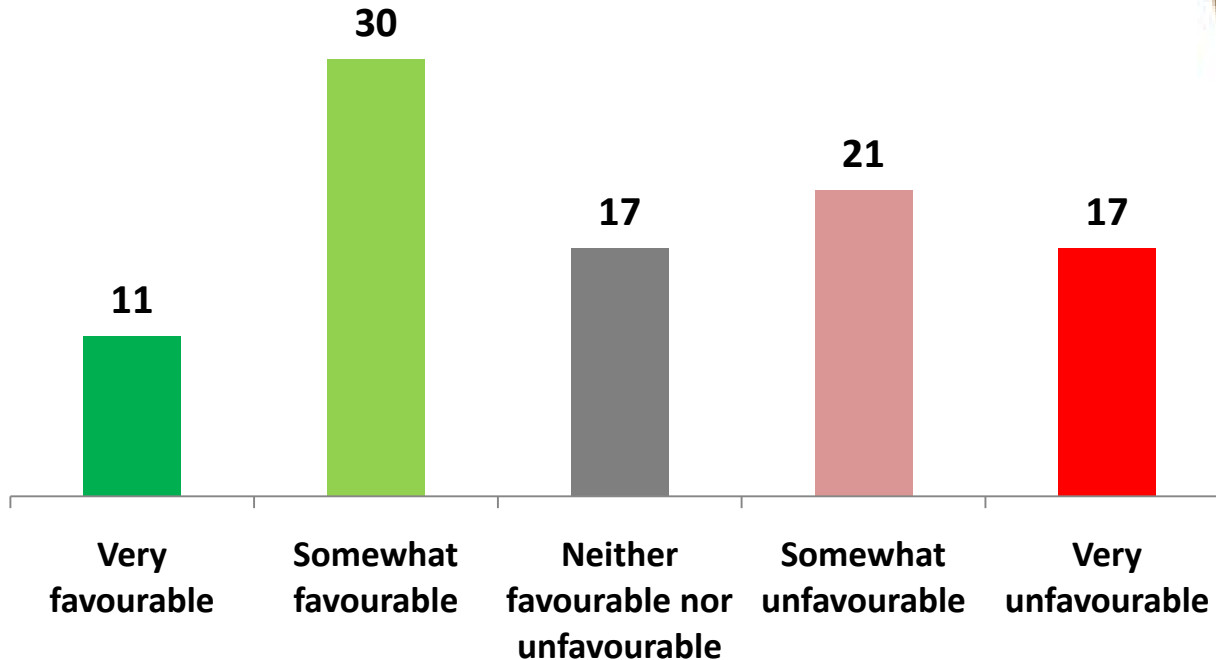
All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov@Cambridge. Total sample size was 2,206 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th-15th June 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

A polarised debate

3 in 10 voters have strong views on aid in principle, with slightly more strong opponents than strong supporters.

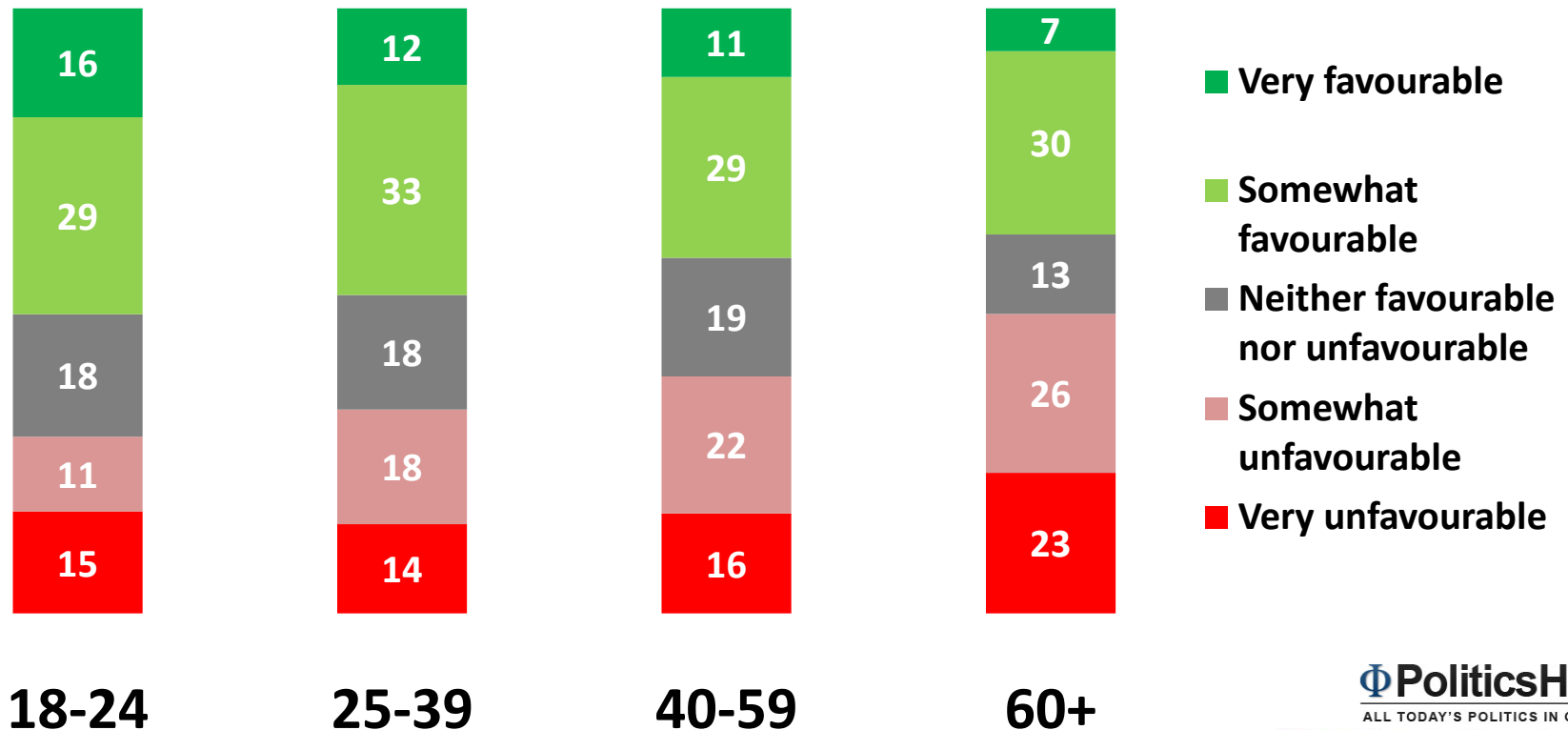
The most significant group of soft 'swing voters' are those 'somewhat favourable' (30%).

Generally speaking, how favourable or unfavourable are you towards the principal of international aid?



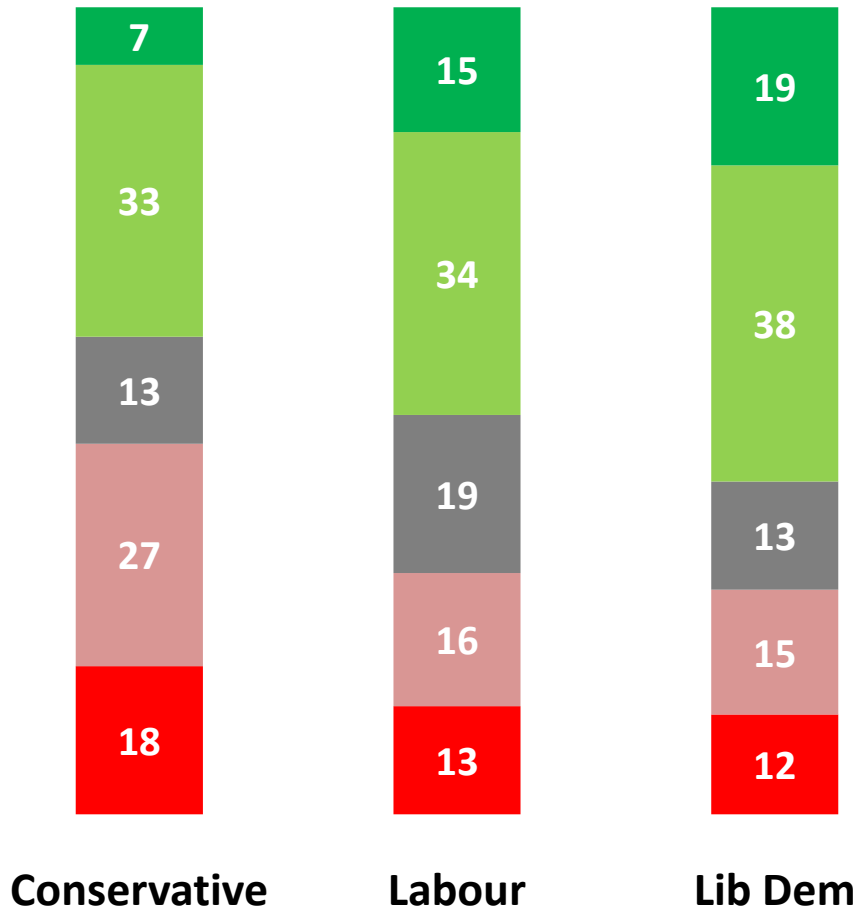
It's an age thing

Older voters are far more likely to be opposed to the principle of international aid than young people. This perhaps points to a shift of a post-1980 generation who have grown up with intense media focus around development issues, through *Blue Peter*, *Children In Need* and others.



a political thing

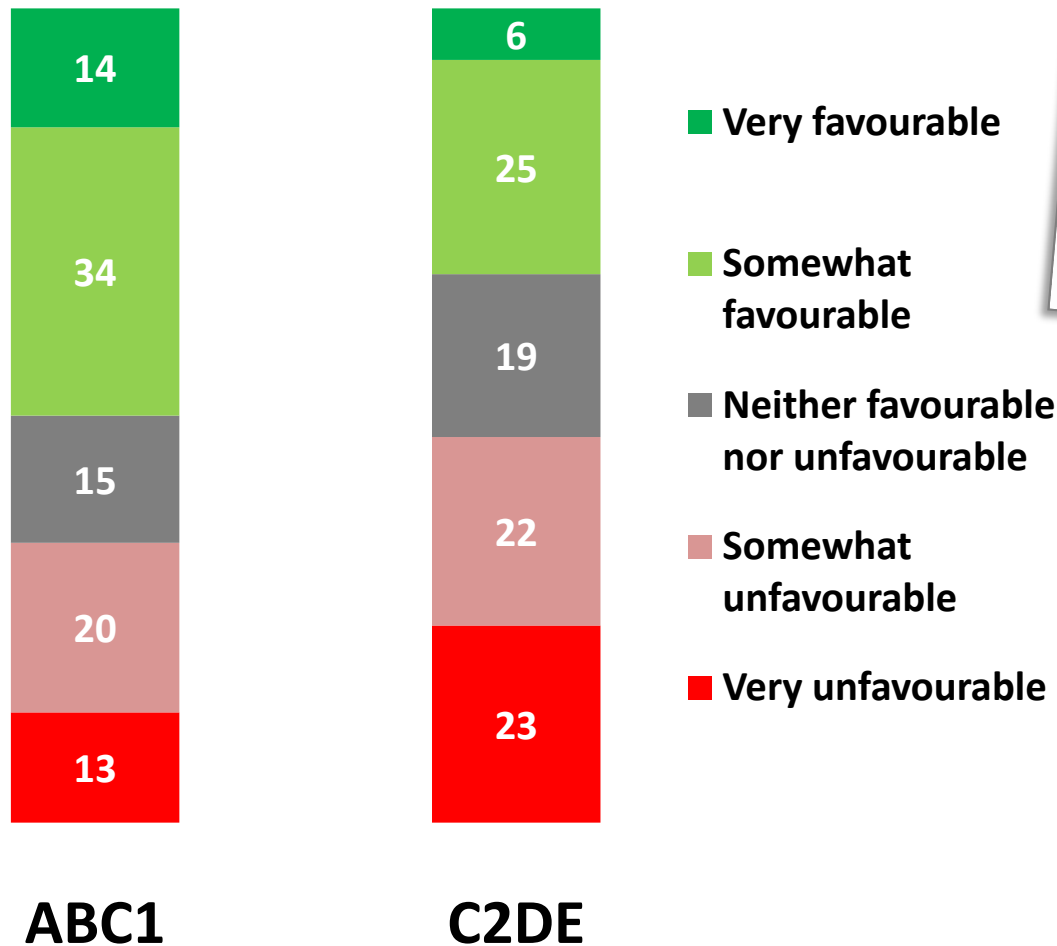
Conservative voters are far more sceptical towards aid than Liberal Democrat or Labour supporters.



- Very favourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Neither favourable nor unfavourable
- Somewhat unfavourable
- Very unfavourable

and a class thing

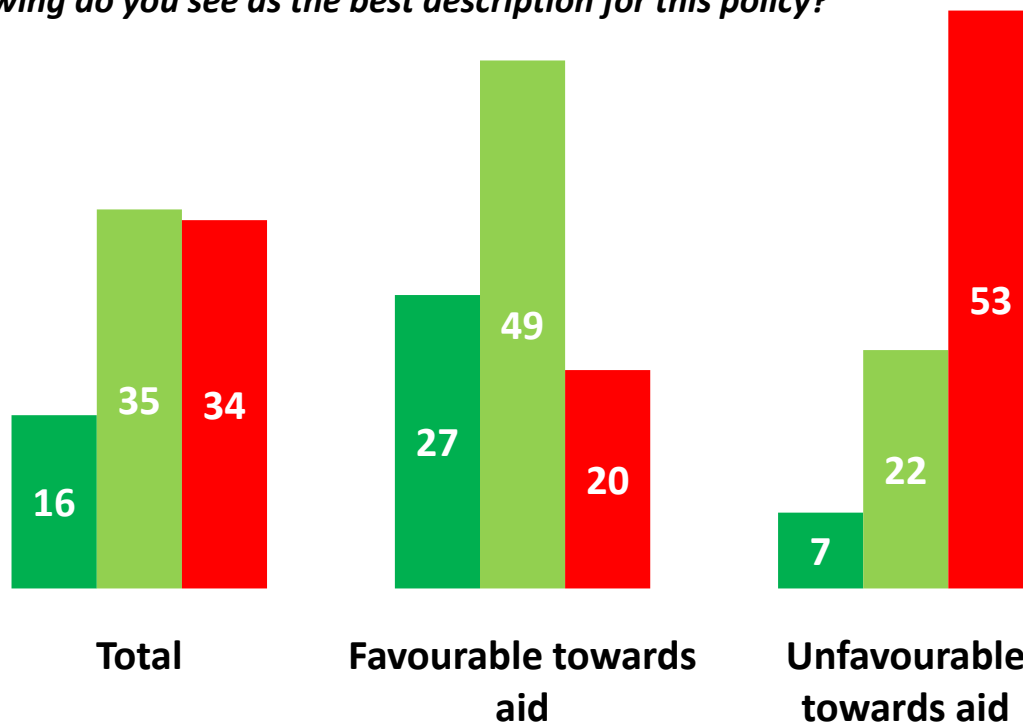
Defined by work status and type as well as income levels and source, ABC1s support the principle of aid 48% to 33%. C2DEs are opposed 45% to 31%.



If you don't like it, it's 'foreign'

Those who support it call it 'international aid', or 'international development', while the majority of those opposed call it 'foreign aid'.

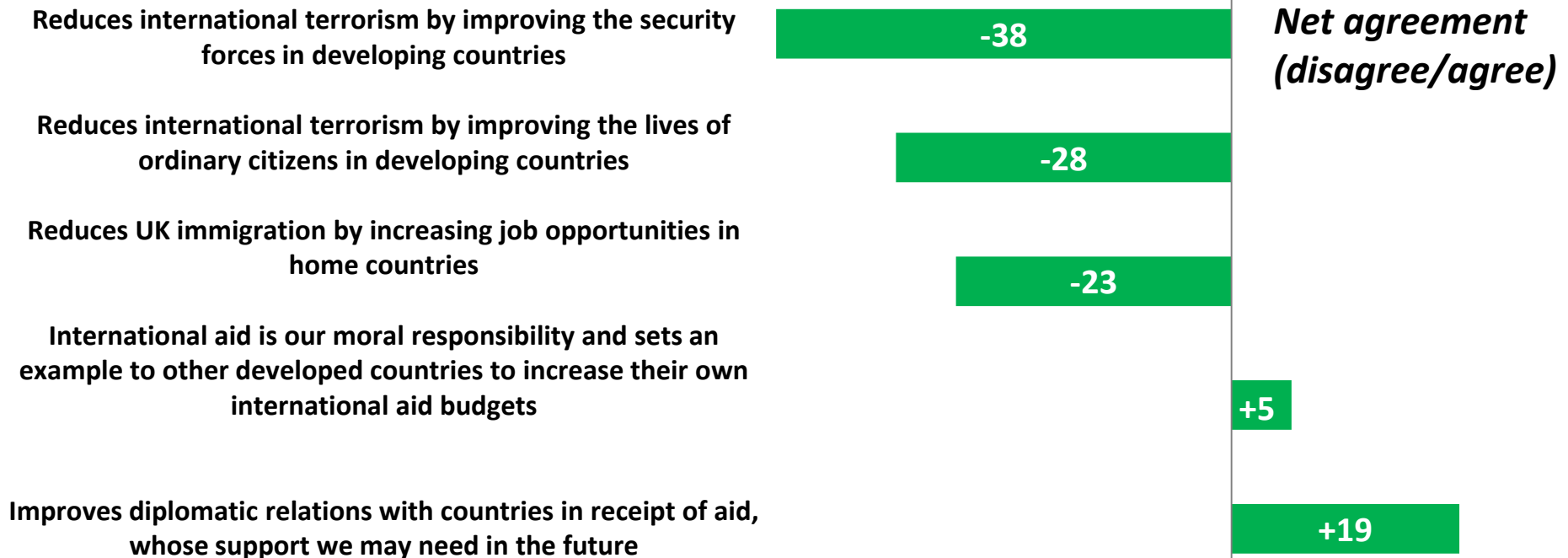
Every year, the UK government sends resources to other countries with the aim of benefitting the country who receives these resources. Which of the following do you see as the best description for this policy?



- International development
- International aid
- Foreign aid

Doubt about positives

The only positive reasons for giving aid are seen as the direct consequences: improving diplomatic relations with countries whose help we might need – and the moral responsibility and setting an example. Arguments around fighting terrorism or lowering immigration are rejected.



But not about negatives

The traditional arguments of international aid making matters in the third world worse by going to corrupt governments, who don't care about their own people, seems much stronger than arguments that have emerged this year around the wrong projects being funded.



Is spent on projects that don't deserve funding

+13

*Net agreement
(agree/disagree)*

Takes money away from the poor in developed countries and gives it to the rich in developing countries

+21

Enhances the power of bad governments in developing countries

+33

Discourages governments in developing countries from spending money on their own people

+42

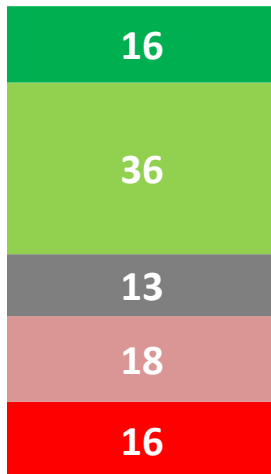
Fails to reach ordinary people in the developed world, and is wasted by corrupt governments

+62

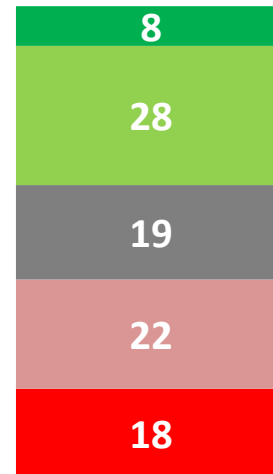
Projects make you more supportive

Those who have heard of projects supported by international aid are far more likely to view aid favourably, 52% to 34%, against 36% to 40% among those who haven't heard of any, suggesting the positive examples of aid are more convincing than negative ones.

Have you heard of any particular projects that have been supported by international aid?



Heard of projects supported by aid



Not heard of projects supported by aid

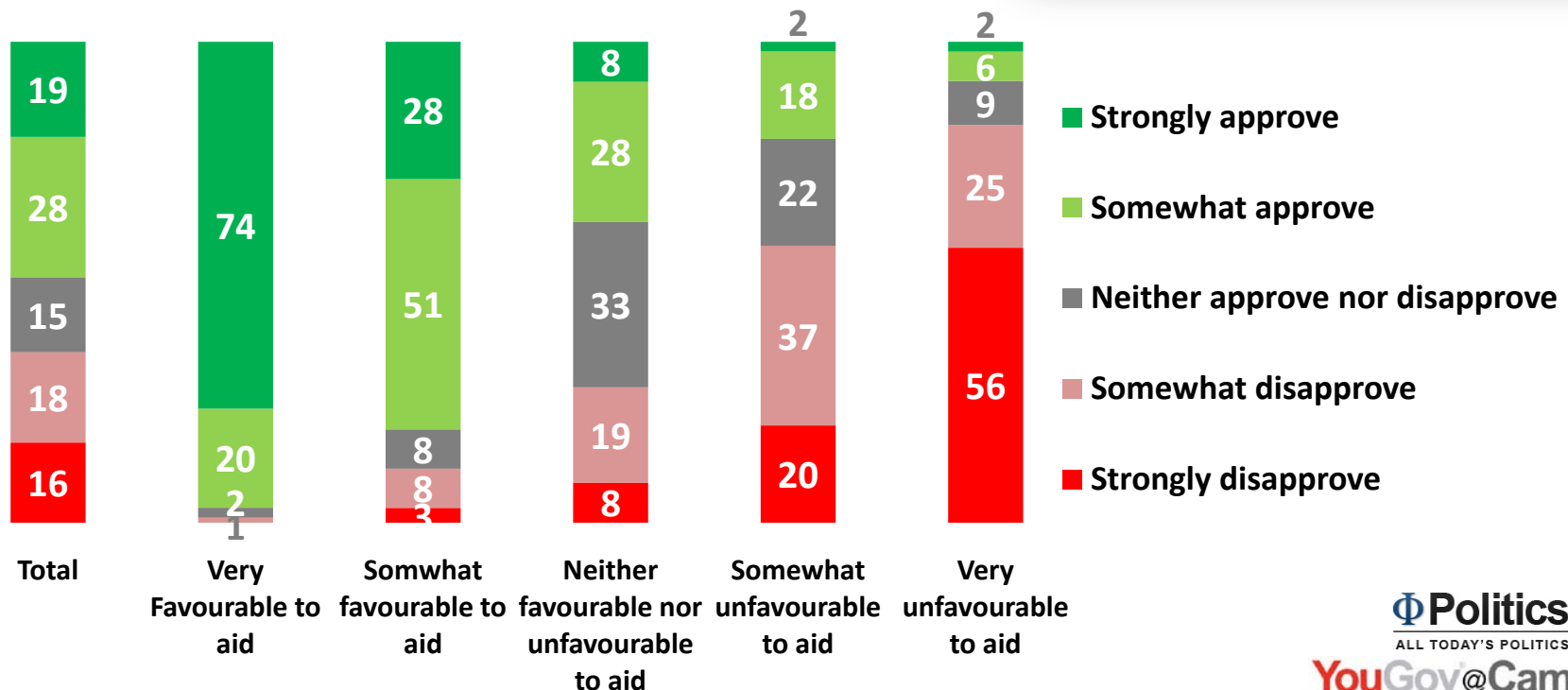


- Very favourable to aid
- Somewhat favourable to aid
- Neither favourable nor unfavourable to aid
- Somewhat unfavourable to aid

Support for vaccines decision

The announcement of new funding for vaccines for over 80m children is supported 47% to 34%, and is even approved of by those indifferent to aid by 36% to 27%.

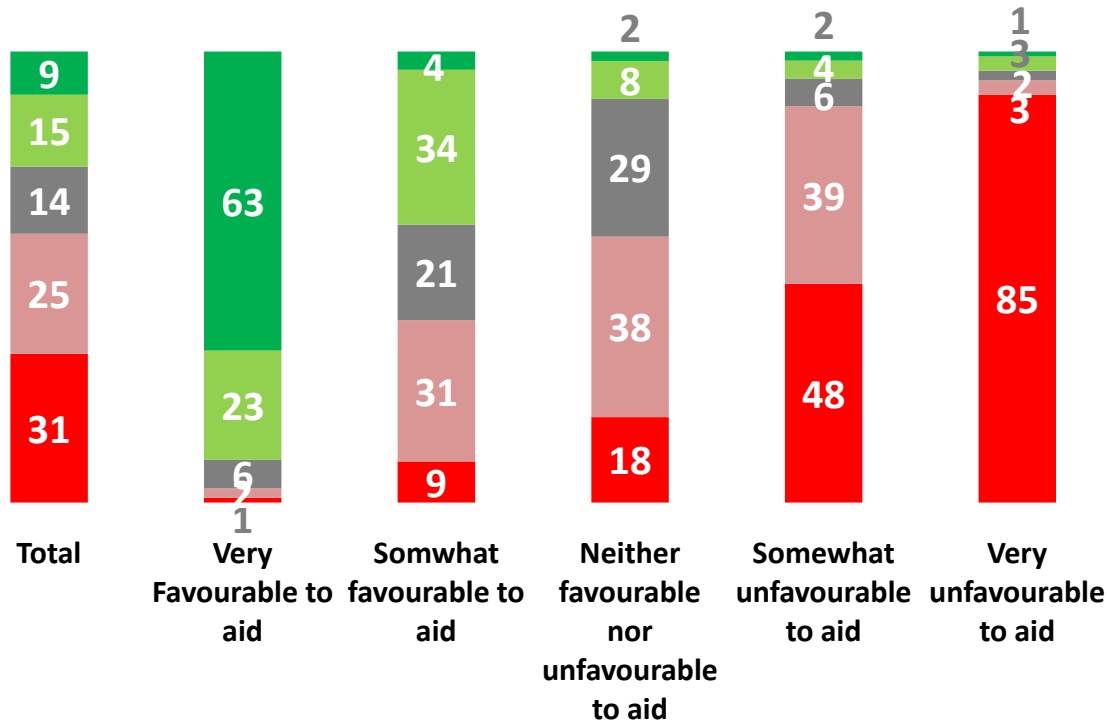
The Prime Minister announced on Monday that the UK is contributing £814m of new funding for vaccines for over 80m children in developing countries in a bid to save 1.4m lives by 2015. To what extent do you approve or disapprove of this decision?



But wider aid policy unpopular

Ring-fencing and increasing aid is opposed 56% to 24%. Even those 'somewhat favourable' to the principle of aid oppose the policy 40% to 38%. Those indifferent to aid oppose it 56% to 10%.

Along with spending on the NHS, the international aid budget is the only area of government spending that is not facing cuts. The government has promised to increase this budget by one third to 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI), in line with international agreements signed previously. Generally speaking, how favourable or unfavourable are you towards this policy?

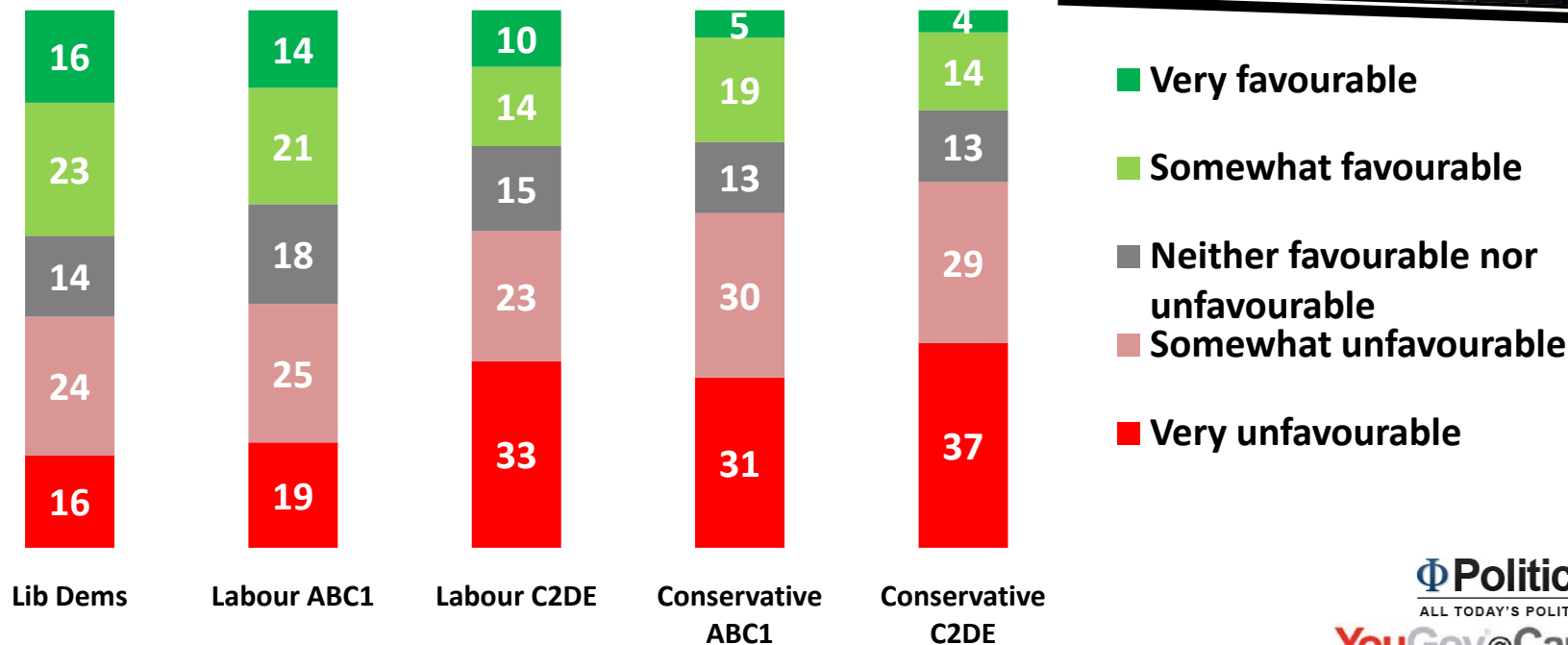


- Very favourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Neither favourable nor unfavourable
- Somewhat unfavourable
- Very unfavourable

Lib Dems and richer Labour split

Lib Dems and richer Labour voters are more evenly split on Cameron's aid policy, 39% to 40% opposed and 35% to 44% opposed respectively.

Poorer Labour voters, richer Conservatives and, in particular, poorer Conservatives, are overwhelmingly opposed.

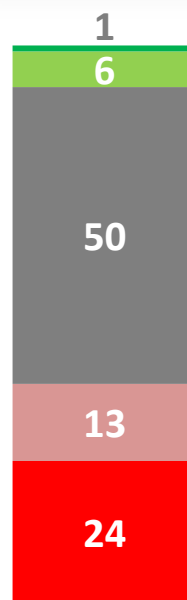
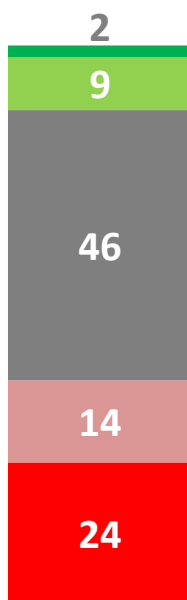
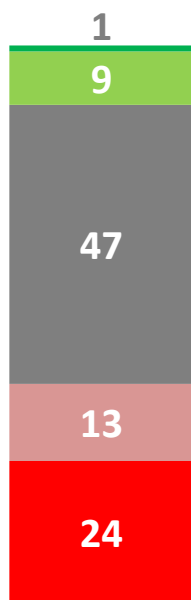


But the electoral maths are poor

David Cameron's international aid policy makes nearly 4 in 10 voters less favourable towards him, including 1 in 4 'much less' so – and fewer than 1 in 10 more favourable.



Effect of aid policy on Coalition, Cameron and Conservative favourability



- Much more favourable
- A little more favourable
- No change
- A little less favourable
- Much less favourable

Coalition government

David Cameron

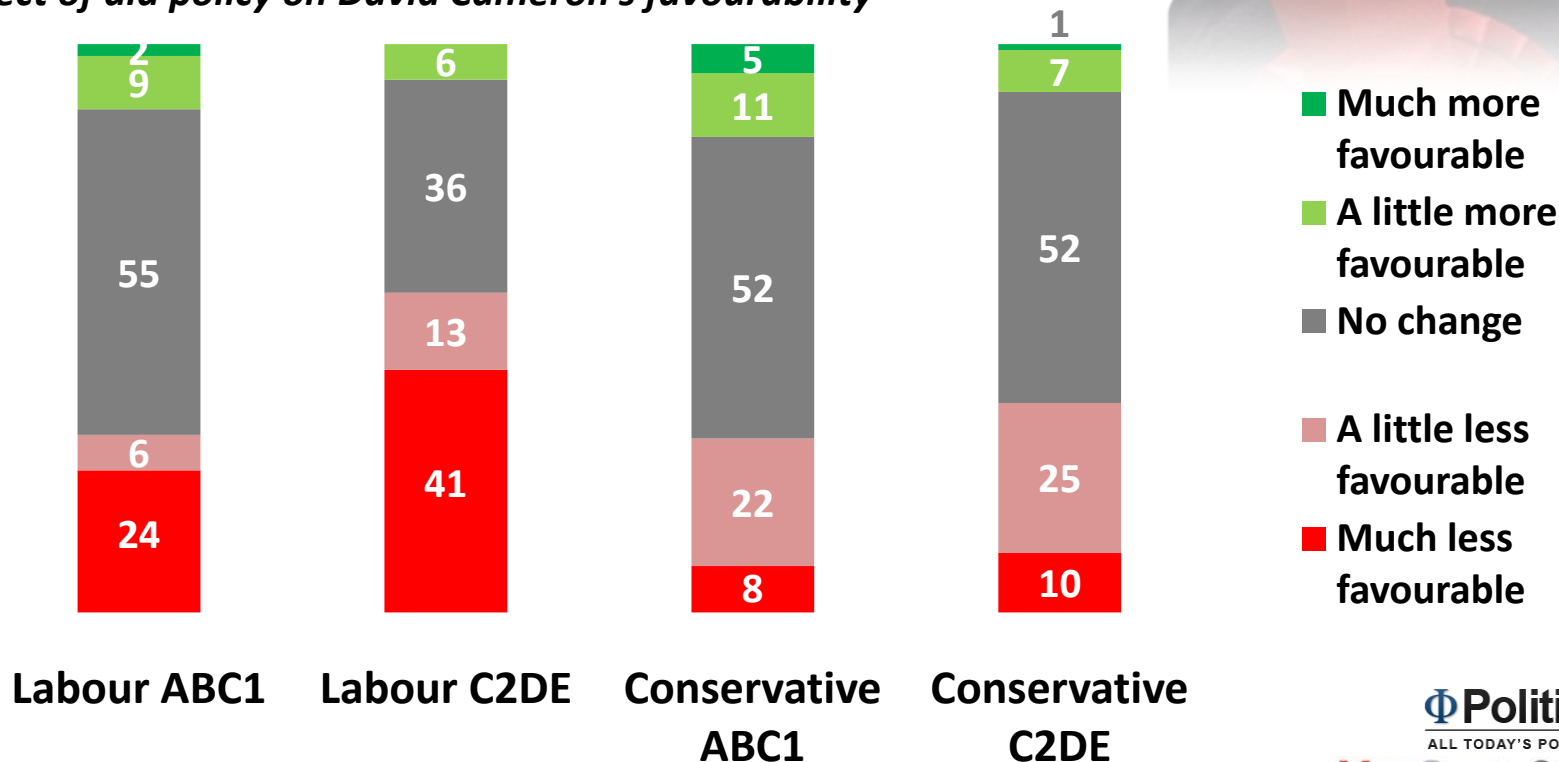
Conservative Party

It won't make Labour voters like him

Labour and Conservative voters both view David Cameron less favourably because of the policy. Labour C2DE voters are the most likely to view Cameron less favourably because of the aid increase, but it's even damaging among ABC1s.



Effect of aid policy on David Cameron's favourability

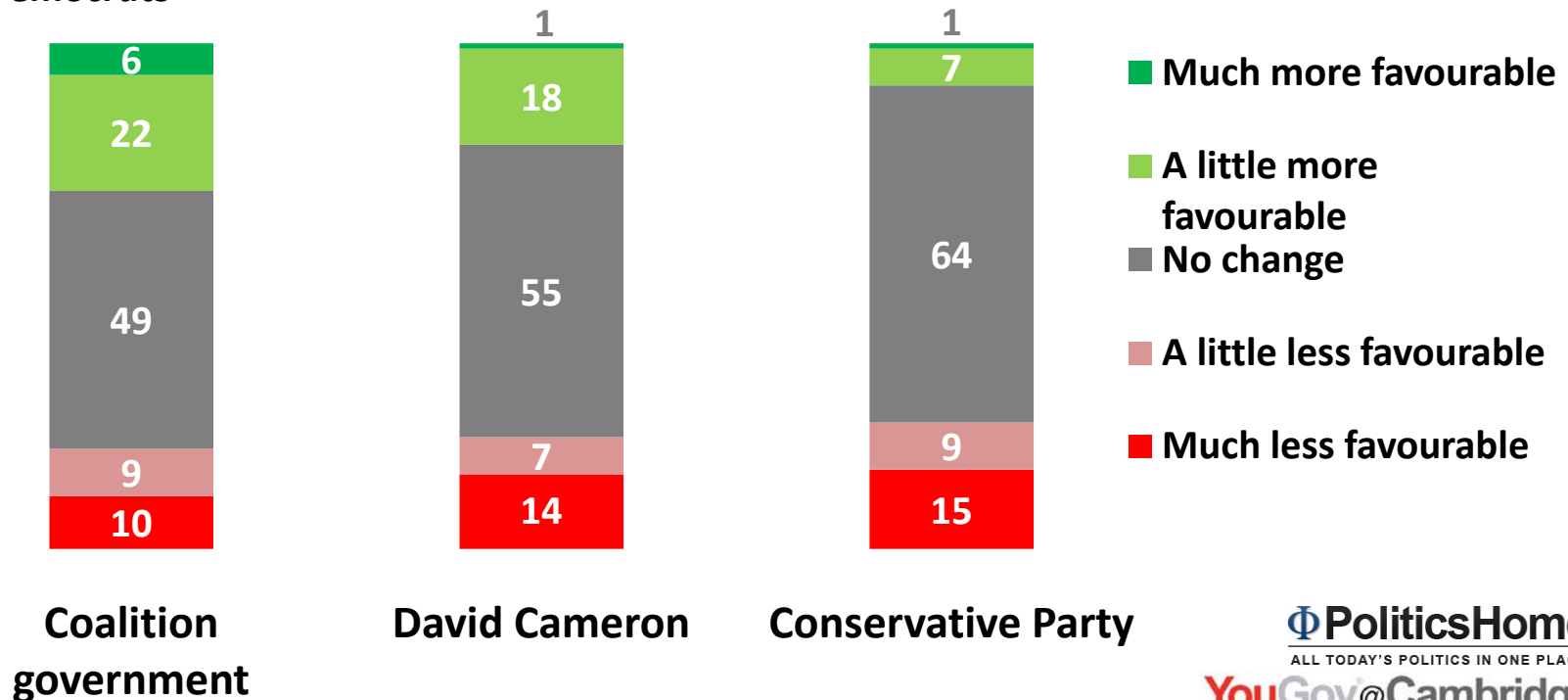


Lib Dems slightly more responsive

The increased aid budget does make Liberal Democrat voters slightly more favourable towards the Coalition – but not towards Cameron, or less, the Conservative Party.



Effect of policy on favourability among Liberal Democrats

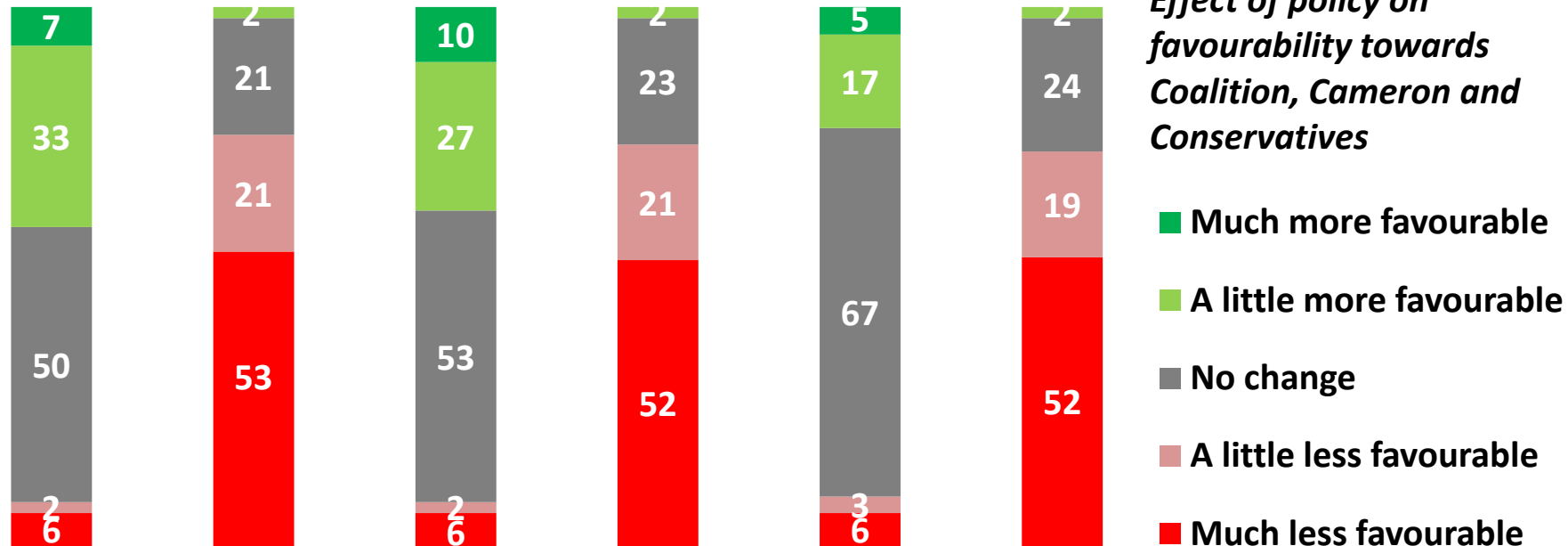


Opponents care far more

Increasing the aid budget is so electorally challenging because opponents are far more likely to shift their favourability due to the policy. For the Conservatives, just 22% of very strong policy supporters view them more favourably, 71% of strong opponents view them less favourably.



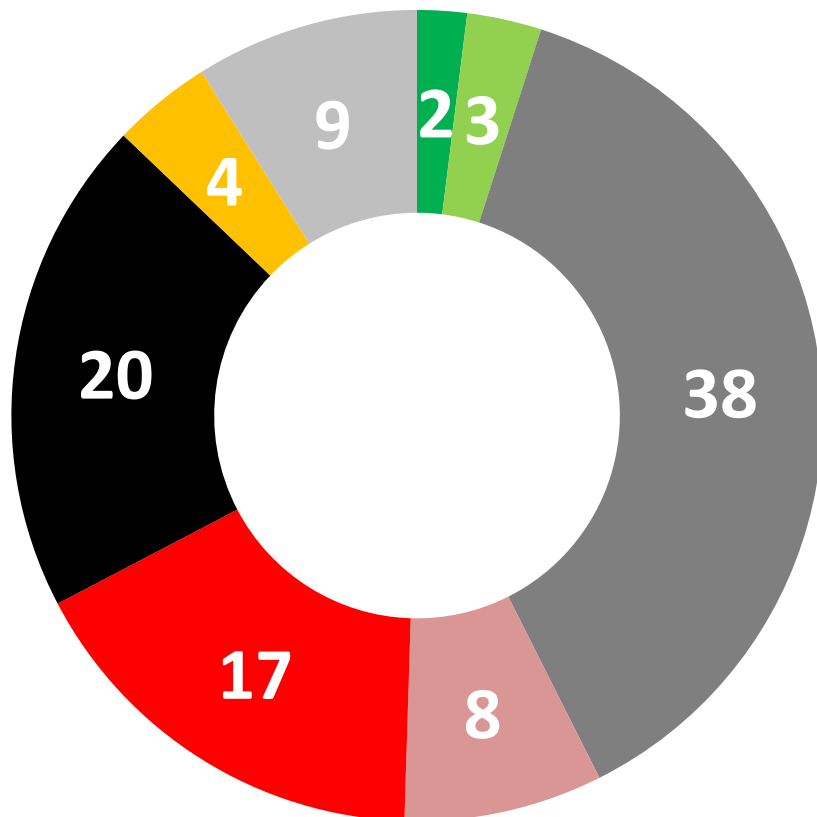
Effect of policy on favourability towards Coalition, Cameron and Conservatives



Coalition: Very favourable to policy Coalition: Very unfavourable to policy Cameron: Very favourable to policy Cameron: Very unfavourable to policy Conservatives: Very favourable to policy Conservatives: Very unfavourable to policy

1 in 4 less likely to give to charity

Increasing the aid budget would make 25% less likely to 'give to an overseas like Oxfam and Save The Children', including 17% 'much less likely'. A further 20% of people vote never give to such a charity.



- Much more likely
- A little more likely
- Neither more nor less likely
- A little less likely
- Much less likely
- Would never donate to an overseas aid charity
- Would always donate to an overseas aid charity
- Don't know