

# UK Public Attitudes towards Development

## Understanding our Audiences

### Key insights:

- Different but complementary research approaches help us **understand public attitudes and behaviour** around international development so we can persuade more people to **think, feel and act positively** about development.
- Audience personas such as Supporters and Fully Engaged have similar characteristics and can act as a **barometer** for measuring other groups as well as **play the role of influencers** in shifting perceptions of the lower engaged audiences.
- Less active than Fully Engaged, both Behaviourally and Informationally Engaged audience groups demonstrate a willingness to become involved in relevant development issues, and have the **potential to be mobilised**.

### What are current UK public attitudes towards development?

Current research has told us that the UK public is more concerned about poverty in the UK rather than globally, has a low tolerance for corruption and has little awareness of the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Why are audience segments useful?

This briefing will help you to understand the latest research on UK public attitudes towards development and the different audience types. Dividing our UK audience into segments shows the varying levels of support for development. This can help you:

- Understand the different ways people choose to engage with development, especially different attitudes and behaviours
- Understand what drives different segments to new attitudes and actions
- Test how each segment responds to different messages and messengers
- Target resources at specific audiences to increase support for development.

# Two research projects: related issues, different approaches

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## Aid Attitudes Tracker

The Aid Attitudes Tracker is a five-year project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to understand what the public thinks about aid and development, how those views change and what leads to that change.

The Aid Attitudes Tracker (AAT) looks at people's **behavioural** engagement with international development in order to better understand features of those already engaged and how to communicate with them more effectively. The research was designed to understand the key factors that can be used to encourage people to move from less to more engaged groups, and segmented the general public into five different categories: Fully Engaged, Behaviourally Engaged, Informationally Engaged, Marginally Engaged and Totally Disengaged.

## Narrative Project

The primary objective is to learn something new about how to *change* public attitudes – rather than a greater understanding of existing attitudes. This research is also funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Narrative Project looks at developing new messaging and communications to persuade the public to support international development. It examined the **attitudes** of three groups within the Engaged Public: Supporters, Swings and Sceptics, and found that if we expand our base of support with messages that will persuade Swings to think and feel more positively about development, there is the potential to double our supporter base. The same narrative can also empower Supporters and appease Sceptics.

## How do they differ?

Both projects carried out research in the UK, France, Germany and the US, and broke down their audiences into different 'persona' groups based on those that are more or less engaged with international development and global poverty. However, their objectives and approaches are different.

The AAT looked at the **behavioural** patterns of people (what people actually do), whereas the Narrative Project looked at the **attitudes** of people (what people say they do). Both approaches are important in trying to build a better picture of different audience types. Further work is being developed to understand how both projects relate to one another.

## How objectives and approach differ

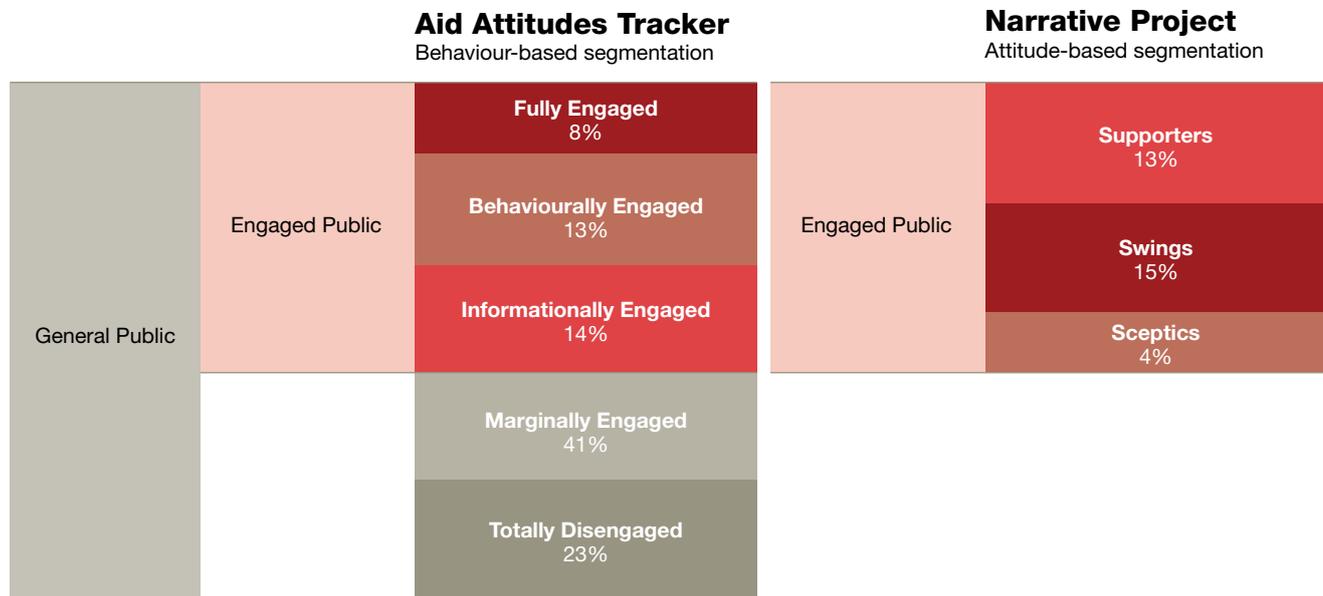


Insights on what drives change in public perceptions about global development.



Looking for new ways of talking about global development.

# Audience segments

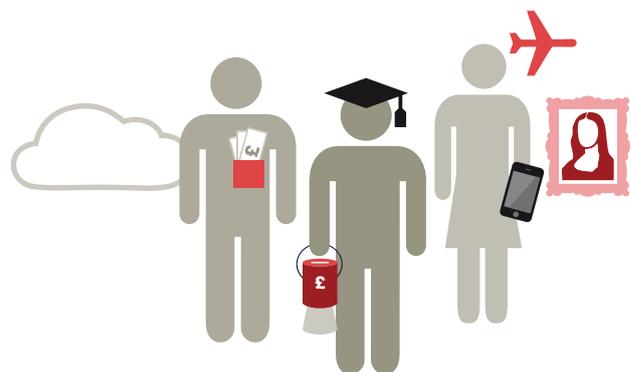


Behavioural data focuses on what people actually do. Because of this, behavioural data is always objective and free of bias.

Attitudinal data only captures information about what people say they do, which is subjective, as people's views can change or be swayed by personal or external issues.

## Who is the Engaged Public?

Both projects concentrate on the more persuadable Engaged Public – those who follow global issues, have an awareness of global events and discuss these issues with others. This group is younger, politically moderate and better educated, with an interest in the arts, travel and community.



# Aid Attitudes Tracker

## audience profiles

**Fully Engaged** International development is an important part of this person's lifestyle, and they are likely to have volunteered overseas or organised development-related campaigns. Young, well educated and male, they are most likely to influence the behaviour and perceptions of other people.



**Fully Engaged (8%)**  
**Young, male**  
**Well educated**  
**Widely travelled**  
**Likely to attend religious ceremonies**  
**Higher income**



**Behaviourally Engaged (13%)**  
**Older, average age 47, 86% white**  
**Over half with degree**  
**Politically left of centre**  
**Highest household income**  
**Least likely to have a disability**  
**High life satisfaction**

**Behaviourally Engaged** This group is more likely to engage in some development-related activity such as donating money, voting and to a lesser extent, fundraising. Older, well educated with left of centre political views, they are socially active and more likely to vote.

**Informationally Engaged** This audience type is more likely to share information about international development via social media, but does not actively donate money, fundraise or volunteer. Older and male, this group is less supportive of government spending on overseas aid.



**Informationally Engaged (14%)**  
**55% male, average age 43**  
**Politically centrist**  
**Strong social networker**  
**Low life satisfaction**  
**Most likely to have disability**  
**Likely to read the Daily Mail**



**Marginally Engaged (41%)**  
**Most likely to be white**  
**54% female**  
**Average age 51**  
**Educated, degree and above**  
**Higher income**

**Marginally Engaged** This group is typically uninterested in issues of international development, and in social issues and politics more generally. To the right of the political spectrum, they may have paid attention to media coverage on development issues at some point, but remain sceptical and unsupportive of aid.

**Totally Disengaged** This group tend to be less well educated and have lower incomes. They are unlikely to have taken part in any development-related activity, and believe that their action will make no difference to global issues.



**Totally Disengaged (23%)**  
**Most likely to be white, male**  
**Not caring for children**  
**Not religious**  
**Least trusting of society**  
**Politically most right wing**

# The Narrative Project audience profiles

## Supporters (13%)

Supporters have a positive attitude towards development and form a powerful base of support. They volunteer, donate, raise their voices and take an active interest in global development. They believe they can make a difference. We can get them to do more, but they're already on our side.

**"We have so much and some people have so little. Everyone deserves to have enough food, somewhere safe to live and health and education" – UK survey participant**

 **41%** aged 18 to 34

 **51%** female (49% male)

 **52%** degree and above

 **39%** moderate ideology  
(29% left of centre; 14% right of centre; 18% don't know)

 **47%** aged 45 to 69

 **51%** male (49% female)

 **40%** degree and above

 **35%** moderate ideology  
(26% left of centre; 18% right of centre; 21% don't know)

## Swings (15%)

This group believe they have a strong obligation to help people in the world's poorest places but they can also be led to believe that development programmes are wasteful. They are older than the Supporters, educated and swing from a neutral to positive attitude towards development.

**Swings represent our biggest opportunity and could potentially double our base of support. If we can convince them that they can make a difference, that belief will help drive them to take action.**

## Sceptics (4%)

This group feels strongly that development is not effective and their attitudes are unlikely to change. They help to drive the negative narrative about development.

**Sceptics can pull Swings away from a positive perception of development towards a negative one.**

 **65%** aged 45 to 69

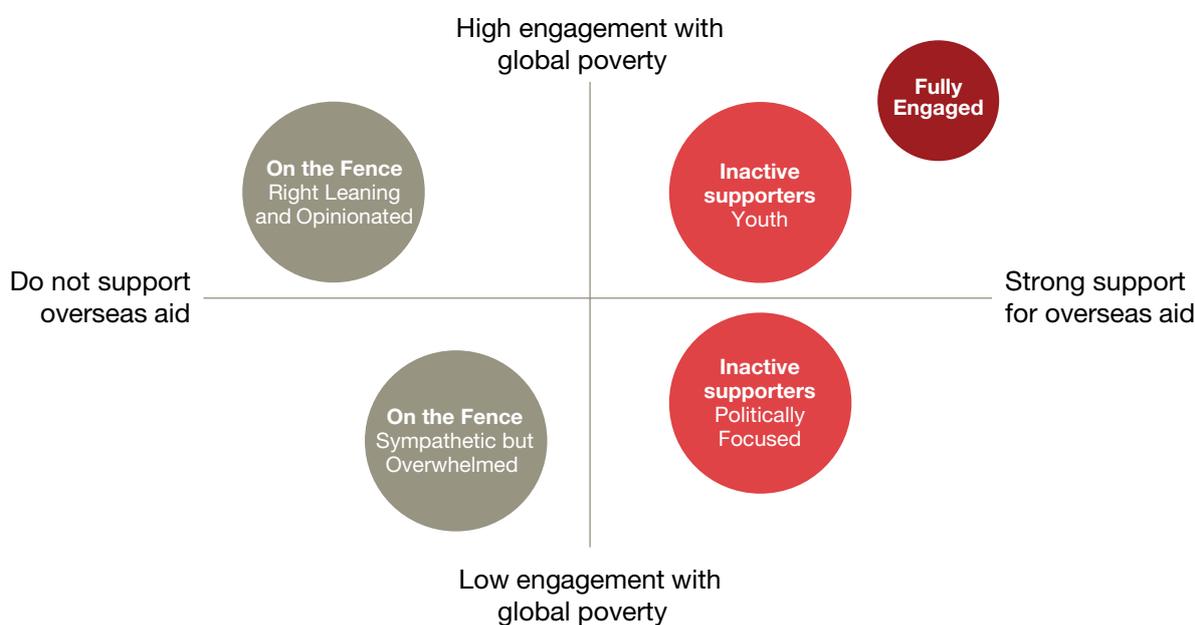
 **54%** male (46% female)

 **38%** degree and above

 **23%** right of centre ideology  
(18% left of centre; 36% moderate ideology; 23% don't know)

## Dissecting the audiences even further

A further research project within the AAT explored in more detail the Fully, Behaviourally, Marginally and Informationally Engaged, asking the following target audiences how they felt about different aspects of overseas aid.<sup>1</sup>



### Fully and Behaviourally Engaged

This group is more optimistic about the future – believing that we have the tools to eradicate global poverty. They are supportive of overseas aid and take an active interest in global development. They may have studied development at university, be involved with overseas charities, or have strong ties through friends and family working overseas.

**Fully and Behaviourally Engaged have a global outlook, believing that poverty overseas is more extreme than in the UK.**

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## Inactive Supporters

Typically part of the Informationally Engaged audience segmentation, this group is supportive of development issues but is currently inactive. They tend to work in social services where they experience social issues in the UK first hand.

Inactive supporters are split even further into Politically Focused and Youth:

### Politically Focused

This group is broadly supportive of aid spending and sympathetic of issues around global poverty, but tend to question what aid is actually achieving and whether it is making a difference. Often left leaning they are passionate about a UK cause where they feel they can make a difference and see tangible results.

**Inactive Supporters who are Politically Focused may work in an area where they see poverty first hand in the UK (NHS, social work, teaching etc) and believe that social issues in the UK need urgent attention as a result of government spending cuts.**

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## On the Fence

Typically from the Marginally Engaged audience, this group often feels 'sanitised' to the issues of global poverty and overseas aid and tends to focus on negative media stories around corruption and waste. Though likely to be in the centre politically, they can have different outlooks where some are more cynical and others are overwhelmed, and are therefore split as follows:

### Right Leaning and Opinionated

This group is sceptical but not critical of overseas aid, with a tendency to be 'anti big charities', preferring to focus on smaller projects with tangible outcomes. Interested in current affairs, they are more economically driven than emotionally, favouring a reduced spending at home and abroad. People in this category believe

### Youth

This group has become disillusioned with international development and global issues – mainly due to the increasing conflict, the failure of the 'humanitarian' war in Iraq and scepticism over 'gap year' efforts – but still feel a moral obligation to give overseas. From a mix of political backgrounds, they are more focused on poverty in the UK but don't trust government and politicians to do the right thing.

**The Inactive–Youth group are supportive of overseas aid in principle, but feel that corruption and waste are huge challenges to aid in practise.**

that poverty is caused by failings both at home and abroad and focus on media stories of corruption as a reason why aid spend is not working.

### Sympathetic but Overwhelmed

This group is broadly supportive of international development, but is very UK focused – charity begins at home. People within this category are contradictory and feel confused about the issues facing people in poorer countries – and question how they can help and what their support actually means.

**On the Fence–Sympathetic but Overwhelmed people feel a moral obligation to support poorer people but are less able to support charities due the financial crisis.**

# What is our approach to the different audiences?

<b>Totally Disengaged</b>	Negative ideas Doing nothing	→	Are not to be targeted
<b>Marginally Engaged</b>	Indifferent Doing nothing	→	Could be targeted for attitudinal change, although unlikely they can be mobilised
<b>Informationally Engaged</b>	Positive attitudes Doing nothing (yet)	→	Could be targeted for mobilisation
<b>Behaviourally Engaged</b>	Positive attitudes and minimally engaged Doing some things	→	Could be targeted for mobilisation
<b>Fully Engaged</b>	Positive attitudes and actively engaged Doing lots	→	Could be targeted for re-enforcement of existing attitudes and behaviours
<b>Supporters</b>	Positive attitudes	→	Use Narrative Project language and messaging to empower and motivate Supporters <a href="https://my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-project-summary">my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-project-summary</a>
<b>Swings</b>	Swing from negative to positive	→	Mobilise and 'swing the Swings' to embrace development by using Narrative Project language and messaging <a href="https://my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-project-summary">my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-project-summary</a>
<b>Sceptics</b>	Negative attitudes	→	Use new and positive language and messaging to appease and neutralise Sceptics

## Further evidence

### Public Support Hub

[my.bond.org.uk/workspace/building-public-support-hub](http://my.bond.org.uk/workspace/building-public-support-hub)

### AAT and Narrative Project Audiences

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-and-narrative-project-audiences](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-and-narrative-project-audiences)

### Narrative Project User Guide

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-project-user-guide-1](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-project-user-guide-1)

### Narrative Project Overview Slide Deck

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-projectoverview-slide-deckjuly-2014](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/narrative-projectoverview-slide-deckjuly-2014)

### Aid Attitudes Tracker Segment Profiles

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-audience-segment-profiles](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-audience-segment-profiles)

### Aid Attitudes Tracker Wave 1 Engaged Segments

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-wave-1-2013engaged-public-segmentation](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-wave-1-2013engaged-public-segmentation)

### Aid Attitudes Tracker Qualitative Report

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-qualitative-reportjuly-2014](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/aat-qualitative-reportjuly-2014)

### Aid Attitudes Tracker Newsletter 8

Key Target Audiences Insight

[my.bond.org.uk/resource/aid-attitude-tracker-newsletter-8](http://my.bond.org.uk/resource/aid-attitude-tracker-newsletter-8)

## Support

Would you like to present these findings to others in your organisation?

We can support you to:

- Access to the Bond Public Support Hub where you can find the latest research [my.bond.org.uk/workspace/building-public-support-hub](http://my.bond.org.uk/workspace/building-public-support-hub)
- Deliver presentations on the research and the implications for your organisation
- Facilitate a discussion within your organisation about how you might use this evidence
- Test new narrative messages in your communications

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