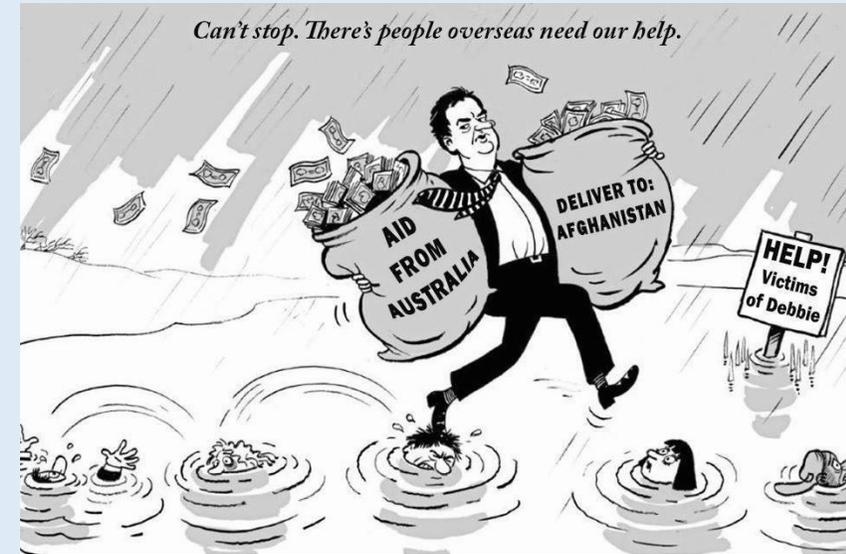


Aid and the Australian Public: what we've learned



terence.wood@anu.edu.au

Aid and the public in Australia: key findings from Development Policy Centre research

Terence Wood

Abstract

For close to a decade, Development Policy Centre researchers have studied Australian public opinion about aid extensively. In this paper I summarise what we have learnt. When we started our work, other than headline figures about public support from intermittent surveys, little was known about how much aid Australians wanted given, and what they wanted it given for. We have now systematically surveyed how many Australians think their country gives too much or too little aid and we have tracked this over time. We have also studied whether Australians want their aid given to advance the national interest or help developing countries. And we have studied whether information can change people's views on aid. Our key findings are that, although Australians started the 2010s hostile to aid, views have softened significantly in recent years, probably due to COVID-19. Views about the purpose of aid are also changing, becoming more pro-development. Finally, it has often been easy to change Australians' views about aid by giving them more information. Yet not all information works – telling Australians how little aid their country gives does not change views, for example.

The Development Policy Centre is part of Crawford School of Public Policy at The Australian National University. We undertake research and promote discussion on Australian aid, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific and global development policy.



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<https://tinyurl.com/devpolpa>

Problem: at time of big changes in Australian aid 2013 didn't fully understand what the public thought.

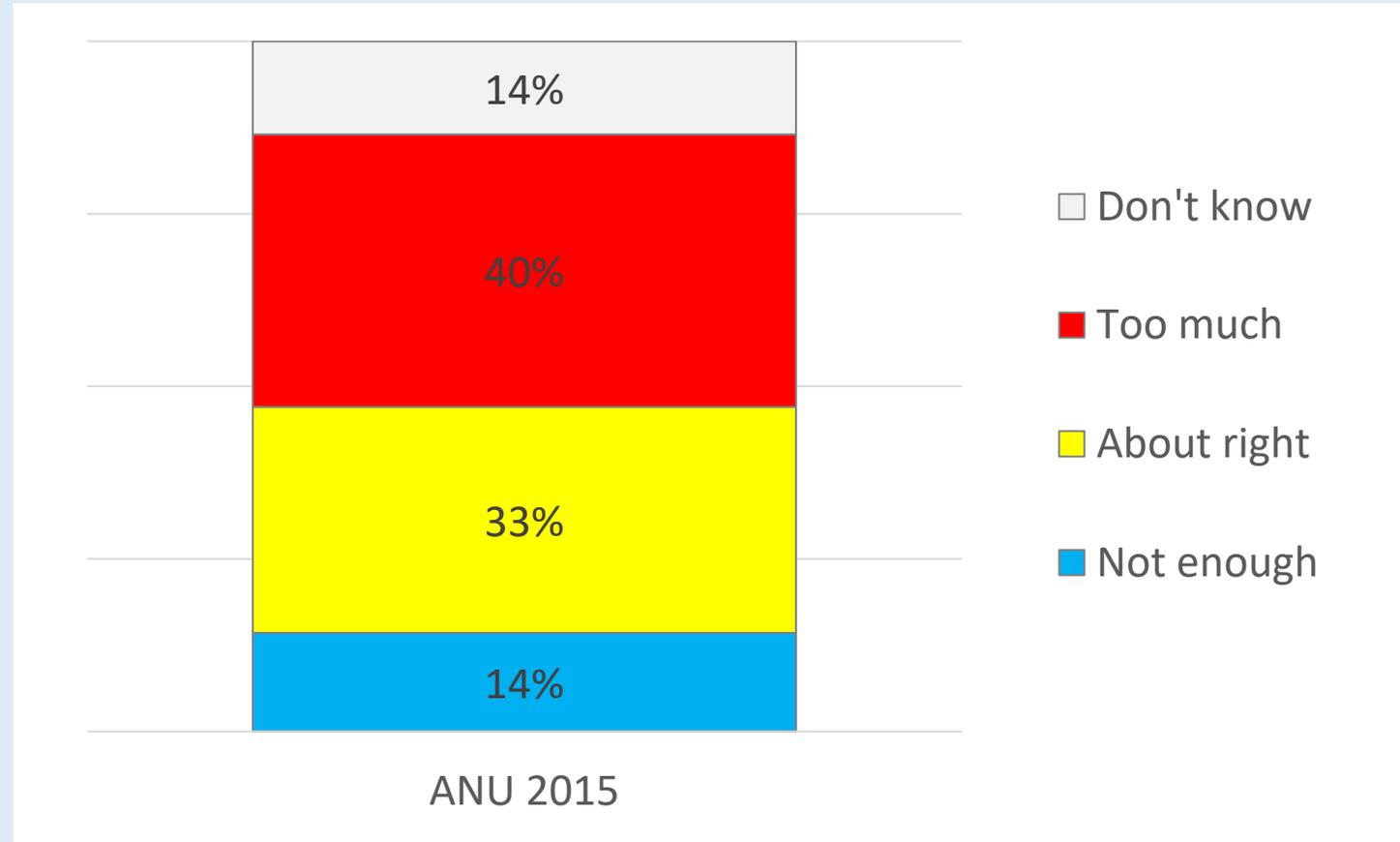
Solution: We started systematically studying attitudes to aid.

Large N; random samples; carefully constructed consistent question wording.

How much, what for, who, can attitudes be changed, are they changing?

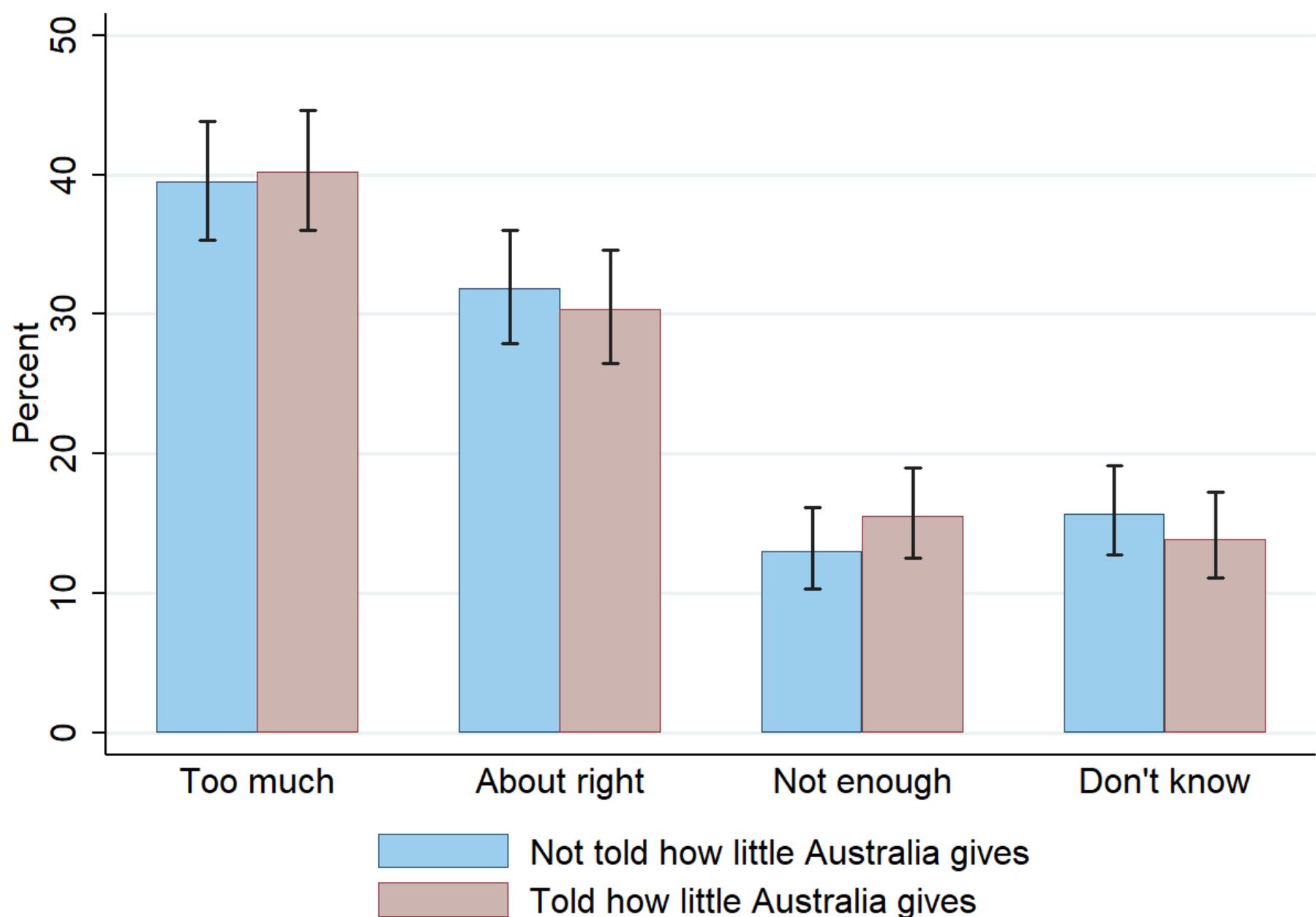
Today I am going to focus on questions that we asked about how much aid Australia gives, and whether attitudes to aid can be changed.

Bad news from 2015



2015: “Every year the Australian government provides aid money to poorer countries. Currently just under 1 dollar out of every 100 dollars of federal spending is given as aid. Which of the following options...”

Can opinion be changed?



Can opinion be changed? Part 2

Australian aid to join the fight against devastating epidemics in poor countries

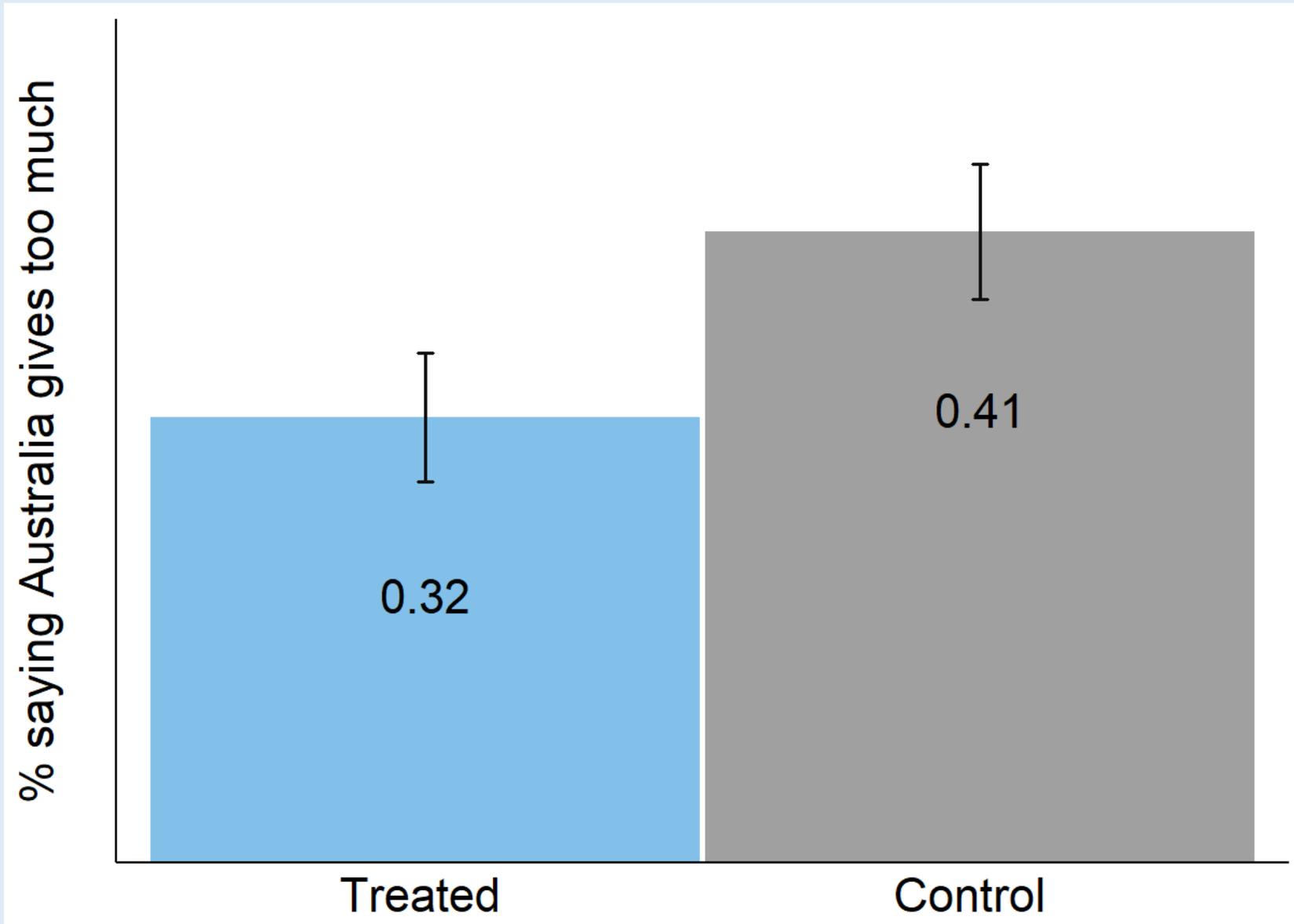
8 October 2017

CANBERRA – A new Australian government aid initiative to fight epidemics has drawn praise from aid experts as an excellent way of preventing suffering in poorer countries.

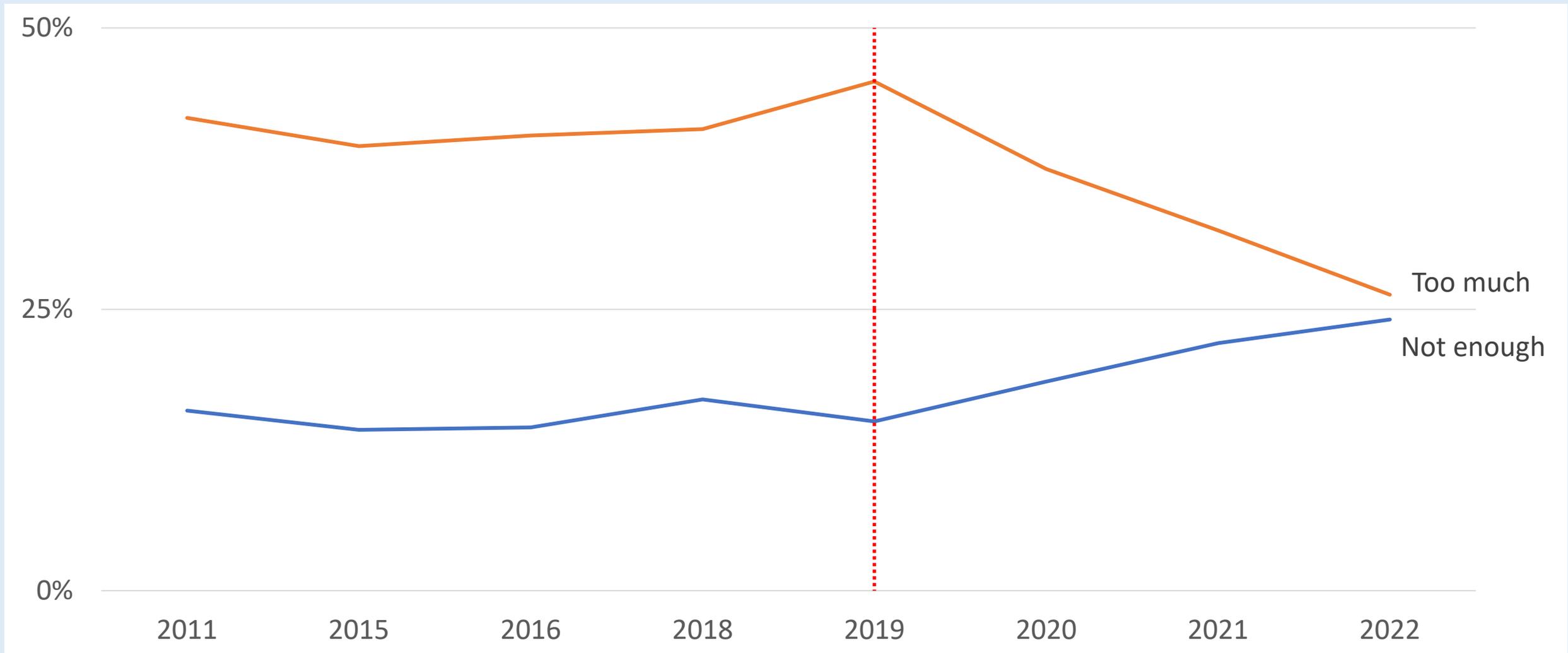
The aid funded work is intended to stop epidemics such as Ebola and Zika from spreading in the Asia-Pacific region. Aid money will be used for medicines, health workers and international emergency responses.

Dr Terence Wood, an aid researcher from the Australian National University, said: **“This is a great idea. A major epidemic somewhere like Papua New Guinea or Indonesia would cause so much suffering and loss of life. Families and communities would be devastated, and take years to recover. It’s the right thing to do. Preventing epidemics is exactly what we should be using aid for.”**

Can opinion be changed? Part 2



Is opinion changing? Why? Will it keep changing?



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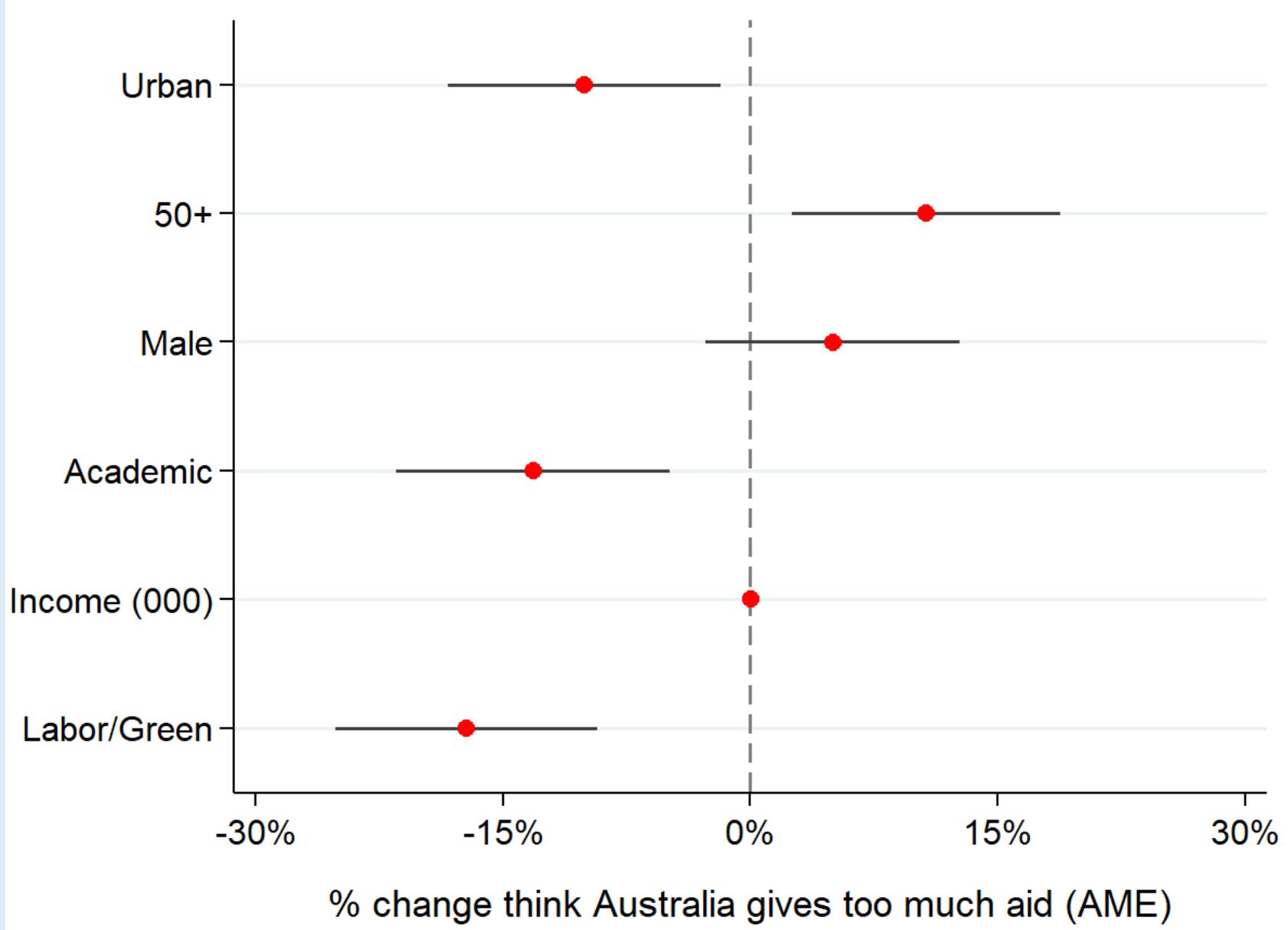


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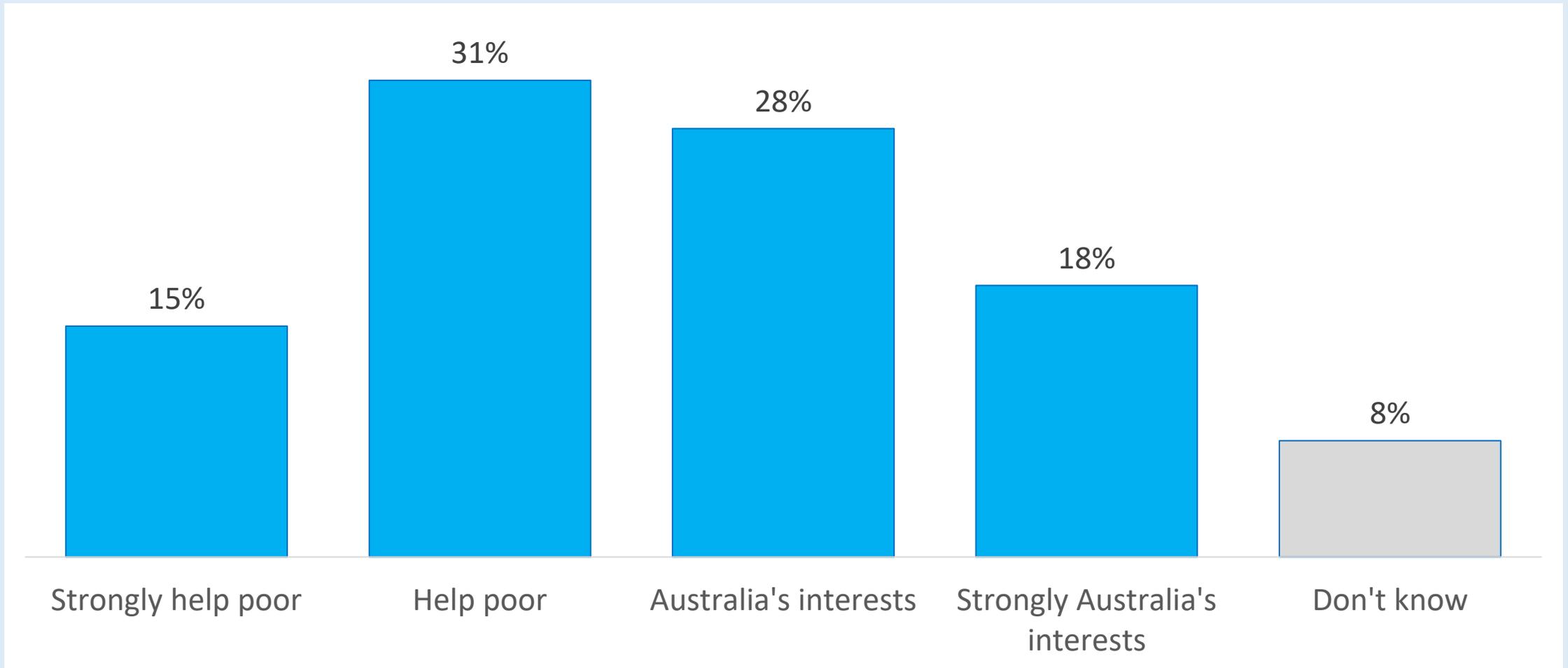
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Appendices

Who thinks Australia gives too much aid (2018)

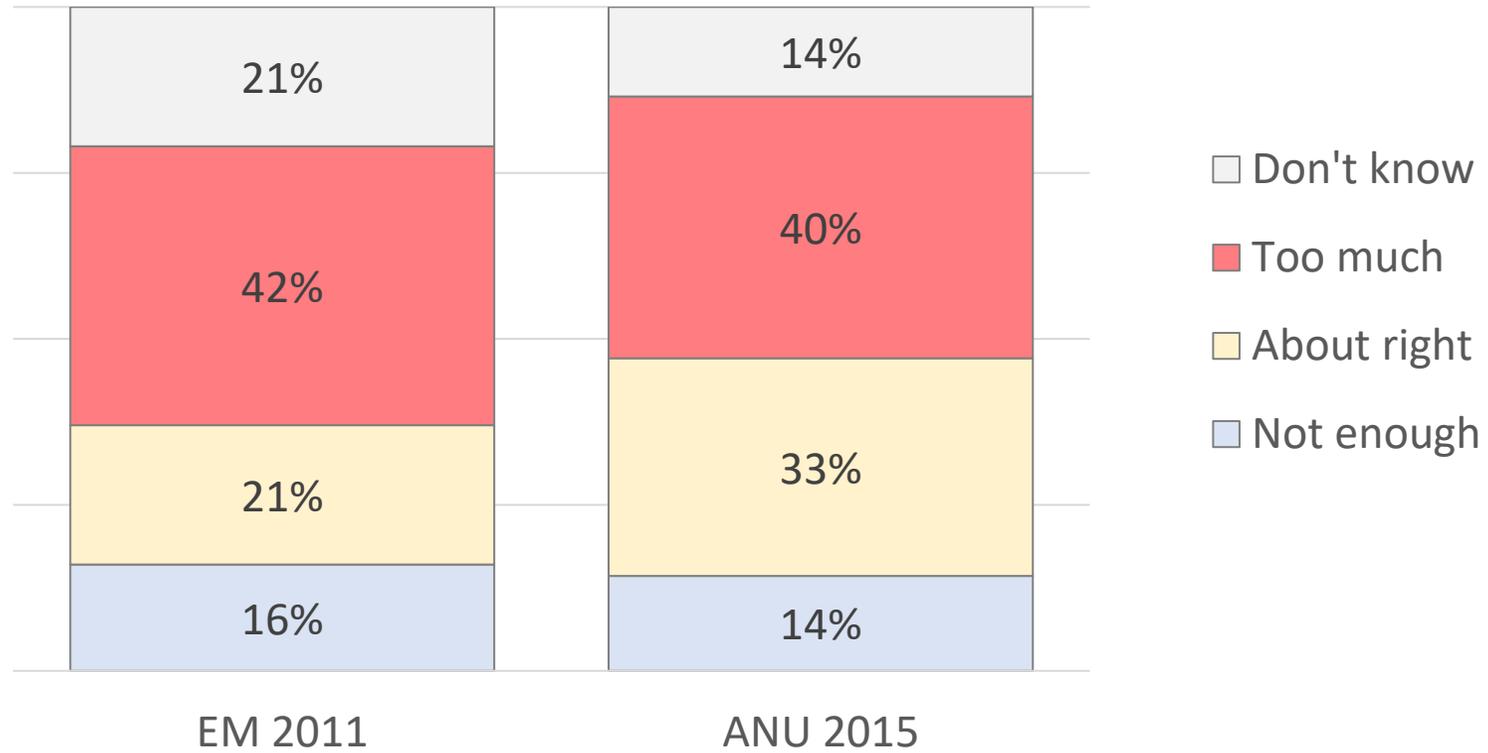


What do Australians think aid's purpose should be (2022)



Do you think Australian government aid to poor countries should be given primarily for the purpose of helping people in poor countries, or do you think Australian aid should be given primarily to help advance Australian interests and help Australians?

Bad news from 2015



Could this be changed?

MPs from electorates where aid was more popular among the public were more likely to meet with aid advocates.

