

New poll on aid, charity and Australian voters

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For those trying to stay abreast of what the Australian public thinks about international development, and the sacrifices people are willing to make to help others, the latest [Roy Morgan poll](#) (based on a very large sample gathered over a year) makes for an interesting read.

They report that their findings show that:

1. The vast majority of self-identified Green supporters, and a slender majority of Labor supporters think ODA should be increased in the name of reducing poverty. Only 27% of Coalition supporters feel this way.
2. Similarly more Green supporters and Labor supporters think they personally have a responsibility to help the world's poor than do Coalition supporters.
3. However, roughly equal portions of the three parties' supporters reported making actual financial donations to charities over the last 12 months.
4. And, perhaps most strikingly, the average (reported) amount donated over the last 12 months by Coalition supporters was considerably greater than the average amount donated by Labor supporters (though the Greens still led the pack on donation amounts).

This is all interesting. However, before anyone reads too much into the findings and starts speculating about the hypocrisy or reluctant virtue of particular parts of the political spectrum, there are a few points that bear noting.

First, it's not clear from the report whether these are all reported donations (including donations to the arts, pony clubs and the like), all reported poverty-related donations (including domestic donations), or only reported donations to aid NGOs.

Second, social desirability bias (that is, wanting to make one's self look nicer than one actually is), is a well recognised issue in survey research and may well have led to the over-reporting of donations.

Third, the relationships reported on are simple bivariate relationships, which don't control for other factors (such as, for example, the average Coalition voter being wealthier than the average Labor voter). Unless these sorts of relationships are controlled for, reported findings may actually be a product of some additional third factor.

For what it's worth, [in our own research last year](#) we found (using data on actual international development NGO donations) that the proportion of the public donating to international development NGOs tended to be highest in the same parts of the country where support for government aid was highest. And that the proportion of the public donating to NGOs tended to be highest in better educated parts of the country. Greens party support was (when other variables were controlled for) also associated with more donors, but there was no clear relationship between either Labor or Coalition support and donations to NGOs.