



# COMMUNICATING DEVELOPMENT TO THE IRISH PUBLIC: WHAT WORKS, FOR WHO?

/ 25 January 2022  
// Dochas Stakeholder Meeting  
/// [@DevEngageLab](#)

[www.developmentcompass.org](http://www.developmentcompass.org)

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# MOTIVATION

- As part of Dochas's study of Irish attitudes and engagement with overseas aid and development, we included a variety of messages or statements as part of the Wave 2 panel to better understand which messages best resonate with the Irish public.
- Against the backdrop of Covid moving from pandemic to endemic, growing concern over climate change, and a host of other domestic and international challenges, this work aims to provide insight into communicating development in the current context.

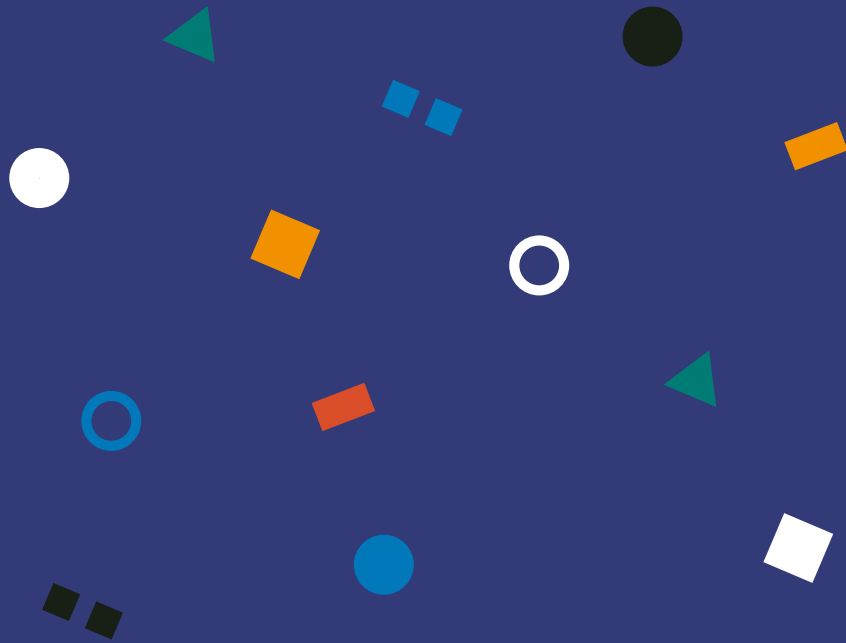


# APPROACH

- Drawing on the insights from Wave 1 (e.g. human rights, shared humanity, Ireland's role in the world), we tested 38 messages from submissions by the research team and Dochas' partner organizations.
- Messages were edited for length, clarity, and to remove identifying information.
- Respondents were shown two randomly selected statements from a total pool of 38; repeated 5x
- Respondents were presented with a short preface and then asked:
  - *“Please tell us whether you agree more with the first statement or the second statement – even if neither is exactly right.”*



# 1. LEAGUE TABLE



Ranking of all 38 messages

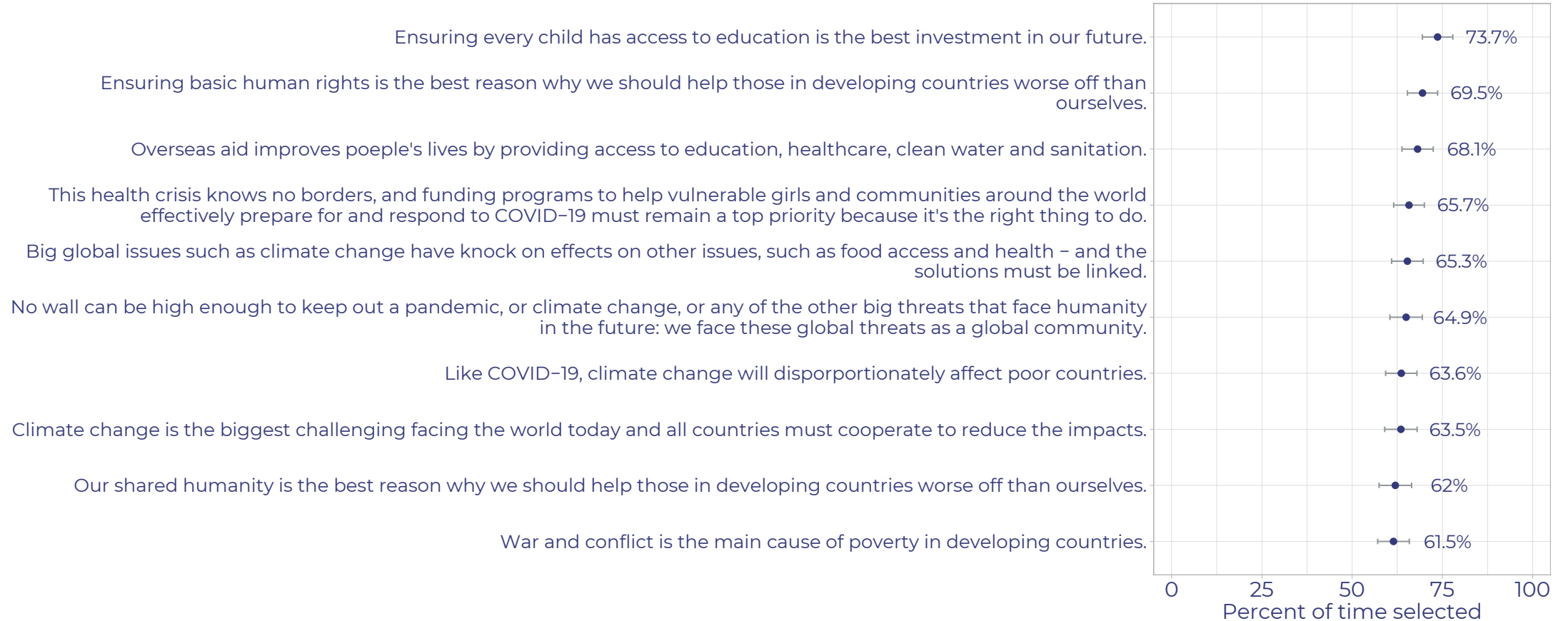
# LEAGUE TABLE OF MESSAGES



Sample size n=2,026 | Base: Irish adults | Data are weighted to be nationally representative | Fieldwork by B&A, 20 Oct – 3 Dec 2021 | Analysis by Development Engagement Lab  
 Question: Respondents were shown 5 random pairs of statements and each time were asked: 'Which statement do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?'




# TOP 10 MESSAGES




Sample size n=2,026 | Base: Irish adults | Data are weighted to be nationally representative | Fieldwork by B&A, 20 Oct – 3 Dec 2021 | Analysis by Development Engagement Lab  
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*Messages emphasizing access to the basics – education, health, clean water, and sanitation – perform well with the Irish public.*



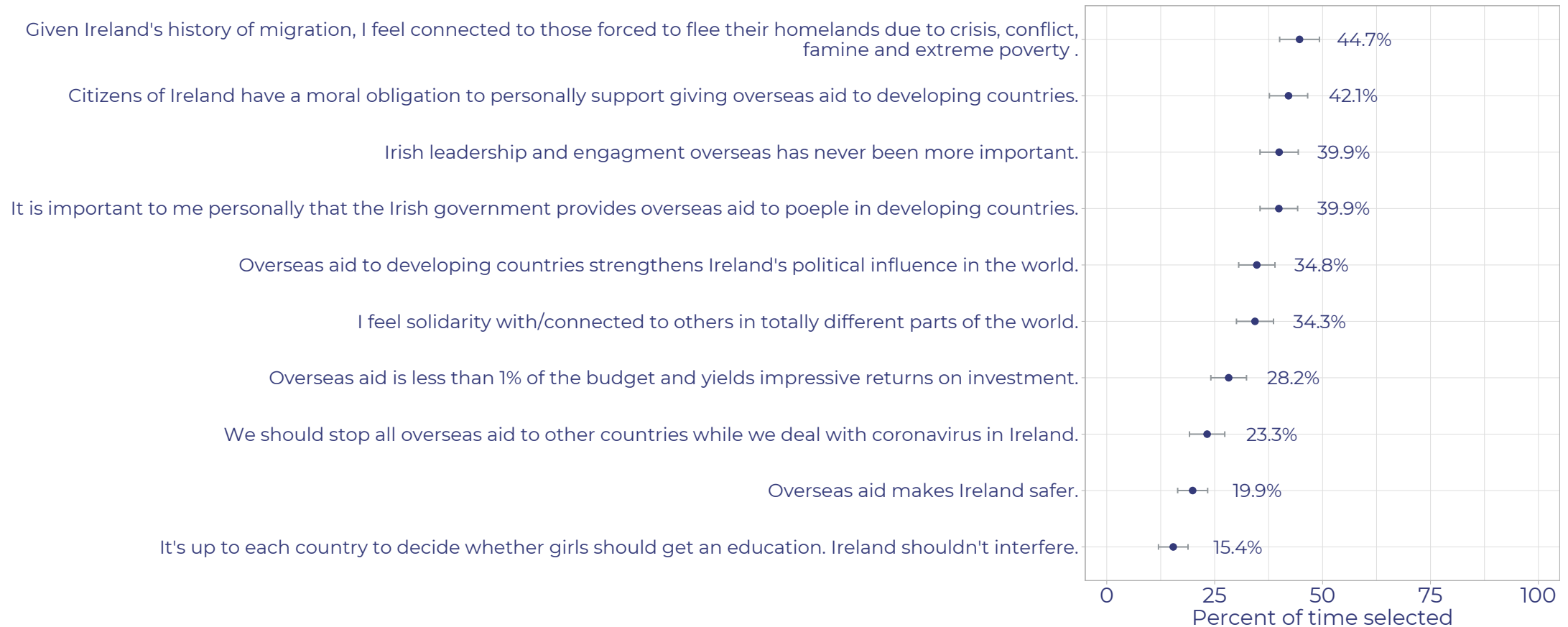
*Two values underpin support for  
**helping** people in developing countries  
– basic human rights and our shared  
humanity.*






*5 of the 10 top performing statements mention major global challenges (i.e. Covid, climate change) with emphasis on the need for global cooperation and linked solutions.*

# BOTTOM 10 MESSAGES



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 Question: Respondents were shown 5 random pairs of statements and each time were asked: 'Which statement do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?'



*Messages focusing on identity and solidarity perform less well and present a challenge to key hypotheses about support for aid.*



*Messages on moral obligation and personal imperative to support aid perform poorly. Avoid individual attribution and speak as a collective emphasizing shared humanity and human rights.*



*Little evidence that instrumental arguments for aid  
– e.g. Irish influence, security, and leadership –  
resonate with the Irish public.*

# SPECIAL MENTION

- “We should stop all overseas aid to other countries while we deal with coronavirus in Ireland.”
- When you take into account the reverse valence of this statement, it actually becomes the strongest message: only 23% of respondents selected it, meaning 77% rejected it which is more than the highest scoring pro-aid message.
  - 74% agreed with this statement: “Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.”
- This is important because it means that when you hear others making this claim, the majority of the Irish public reject it. Only one in four people agree with it when placed against any of the alternative messages above it




# HOW YOU CAN DIG IN...

- We will be circulating the full table of the 38 messages and their scores after the workshop
- The spreadsheet not only has the aggregate score for each message (as just presented), but allows you to reorder the more or less successful statements for different groups in the population
- The spreadsheet contains cuts by age (generation), segment, gender, education, household income, vote intention, religion, region, social grade, urban/rural, marital status, and family size.
- There are number of significant differences among the different groups.



# EXAMPLE: GENERATION Z

Statement Overall Rank	Statement Text	Percentage times chosen	Generation Z (after 1996)	Millennial (born 1981 - 1996)	Gen (bc
5	Big global issues such as climate change have knock on effects on other issues, such as food acc	65.3	76.9	65.2	
11	Actions we take in our part of the world can have significant consequences, whether positive or n	59.3	74.6	63.5	
2	Ensuring basic human rights is the best reason why we should help those in developing countri	69.5	70.5	72.3	
14	Overseas aid can help bring about positive change for those living in developing countries.	55.2	65.6	50.9	
22	Immigrants and refugees contribute to develop the economy and enrich the culture of the countri	49	65.6	48.7	
6	No wall can be high enough to keep out a pandemic, or climate change, or any of the other big th	64.9	64	62	
23	Ireland is much more advanced than other countries in its treatment of women. Ireland should n	48.8	64	50.2	
1	Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.	73.7	63.9	77.8	
19	It is important to highlight the connection between local and global sustainability.	50.7	63.5	47.3	
20	We are all inextricably interconnected in this interdependent world.	50.2	61.6	44.5	
4	This health crisis knows no borders, and funding programs to help vulnerable girls and commun	65.7	60.4	65.7	
7	Like COVID-19, climate change will disproportionately affect poor countries.	63.6	60.3	61.4	
9	Our shared humanity is the best reason why we should help those in developing countries worse	62	57.8	57.3	
30	Citizens of Ireland have a moral obligation to personally support giving overseas aid to developin	42.1	57.5	42	
8	Climate change is the biggest challenging facing the world today and all countries must cooperate	63.5	56.1	63.3	
16	COVID-19 has made it clear that charity may well begin at home, but doesn't end there.	53.2	55.3	49.2	
27	Overseas aid from the Irish government is effective in reducing poverty in developing countries.	45.2	54.4	42.8	
3	Overseas aid improves poeple's lives by providing access to education, healthcare, clean water and	68.1	53.9	64.1	
12	This health crisis knows no borders, and funding programs to help vulnerable girls and commun	58.3	53.6	64.1	
32	It is important to me personally that the Irish government provides overseas aid to poeple in deve	39.9	52.6	37.5	
24	Ireland has a duty to encourage other countries to adopt similar progressive values through its ow	48	52.5	42.7	
15	Global cooperation has never been more important.	53.5	51.9	52	
21	Assuring access to safe water and sanitation around the world helps protect Ireland from global h	49.5	46.9	52.6	
13	Government and private sector corruption is the main cause of poverty in developing countries.	57.5	46.4	54.6	
25	Solidarity begins at home, but it doesn't end there.	46.5	44.8	49	
10	War and conflict is the main cause of poverty in developing countries.	61.5	43.5	55.3	
33	Overseas aid to developing countries strengthens Ireland's political influence in the world.	34.8	40.9	34.4	
29	Given Ireland's history of migration, I feel connected to those forced to flee their homelands due	44.7	40.1	44.3	
28	Climate change is a significant underlying factor contributing to the global migration crisis.	44.7	39.6	48.2	
31	Irish leadership and engagment overseas has never been more important.	39.9	39.3	39.3	
17	Ireland is best placed to secure a prosperous and safe country in cooperation with other countrie	51.3	38.3	56	
25	Overseas aid is less than 1% of the budget and yields impressive returns on investment	22.2	27.5	22.4	



## 66%

of Gen Z agree with the contribution of immigrants to Ireland compared to the whole sample (49%)

Just to pick an example, looking at Generation Z (those born after 1996) they are much more positive (overindex) on the notion that immigrants and refugees contribute to the economy and society than the general population. Similarly about the idea that our actions have consequences for others (75% agreement versus 59% for population overall).

But they are much less likely to agree that poverty is the consequence of war and conflict (44% versus 62% for the population overall).

**These insights are useful for microtargeting of messages, but equally to see which messages cut through across groups and are suitable for broadcasting** (e.g. basic human rights are why we should help).



# TOP MESSAGES BY AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION



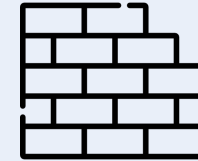
## EUROPEAN MULTILATERALISTS

Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.



## COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

Ensuring basic human rights is the best reason why we should help those in developing countries worse off than ourselves.



## DISENGAGED NATIONALISTS

War and conflict is the main cause of poverty in developing countries.



## EMPATHETIC REACTIONARIES

Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.



## GLOBAL CITIZENS

This health crisis knows no borders, and funding programs to help vulnerable girls and communities around the world effectively prepare for and respond to COVID-19 must remain a top priority because it's the right thing to do.



## NATIONAL PRAGMATISTS

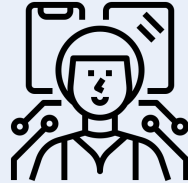
Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.

# TOP MESSAGES BY KEY SUBGROUPS



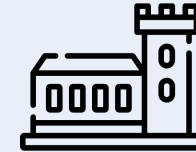
## WOMEN & MEN

Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.



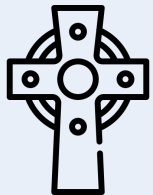
## GEN Z

Big global issues such as climate change have knock on effects on other issues, such as food access and health - and the solutions must be linked.



## DUBLIN

Like COVID-19, climate change will disproportionately affect poor countries.



## CATHOLIC

Ensuring every child has access to education is the best investment in our future.



## H.S. EDUCATION

No wall can be high enough to keep out a pandemic, or climate change, or any of the other big threats that face humanity in the future: we face these global threats as a global community.

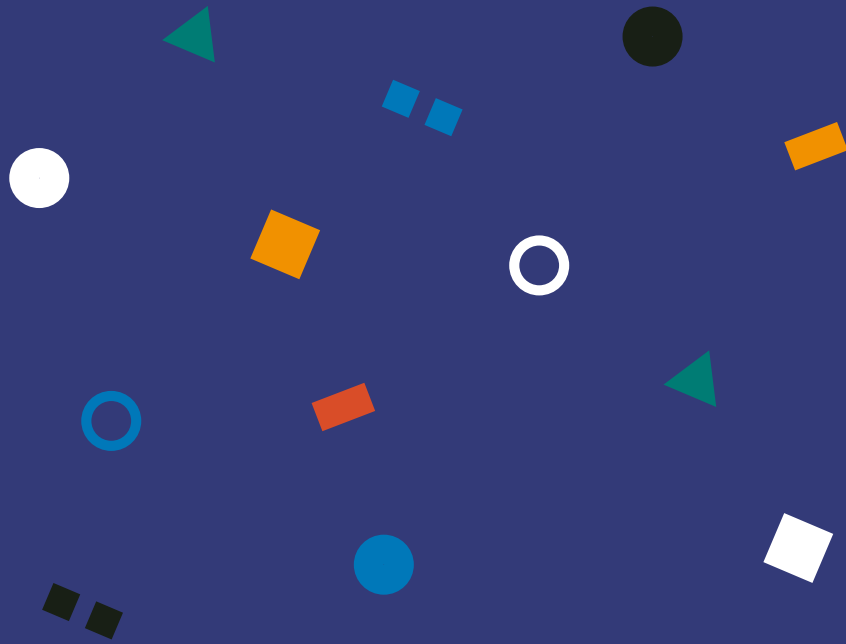


## FIANNA FAIL

Overseas aid improves people's lives by providing access to education, healthcare, clean water and sanitation.



# 2. FRAMES



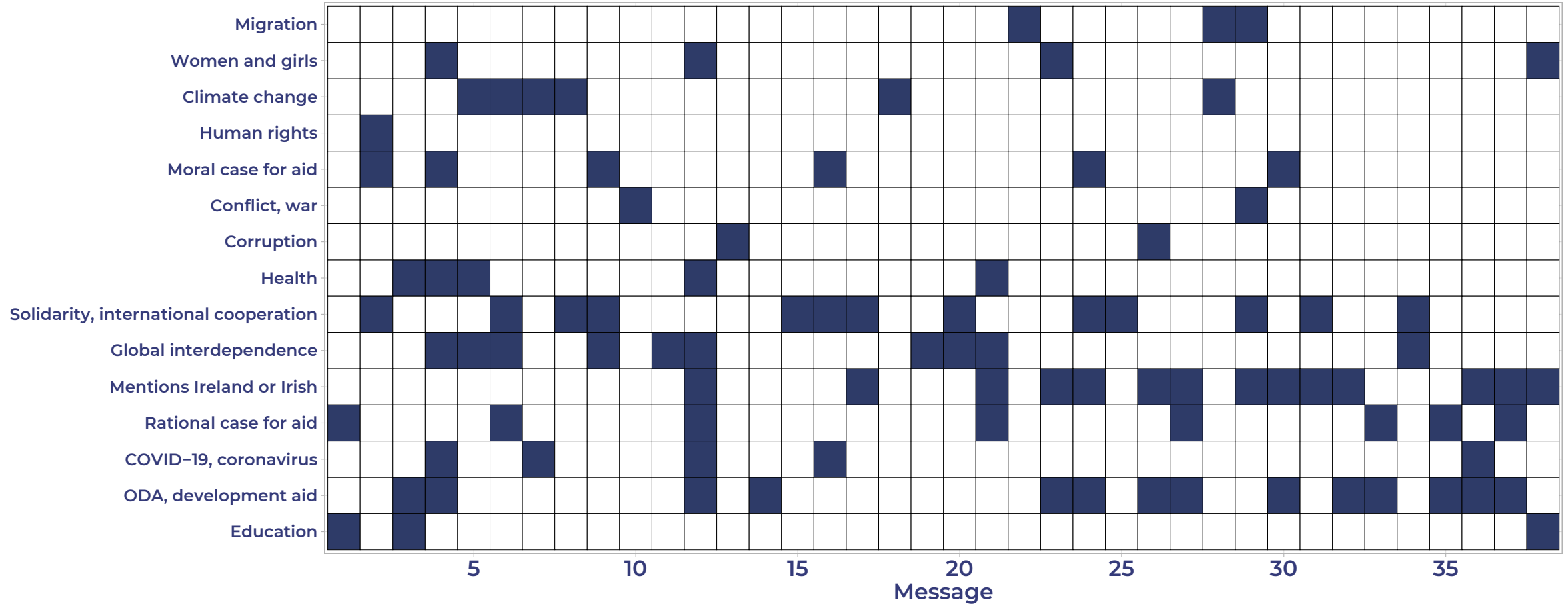
Which frames or issues are systematically more frequently associated with winning messages/ statements?

# FRAMING MATTERS

- We looked across all the messages and identified a number of common or significant frames
- For example, did the message reference Ireland or Irish identity in some way? Were they about health, or education, or migration? Did they appeal to a sense of solidarity or cooperation?
- Then, controlling for the fact that most messages had multiple frames, which frames were more commonly agreed with or rejected?
- This allows to to draw some more general inferences about patterns across all messages, not just how individual messages performed
- Note: there is an unknown confounding between whether some messages were worded in a more appealing way and the content or frame

# WHICH FRAMES APPEAR WHERE?

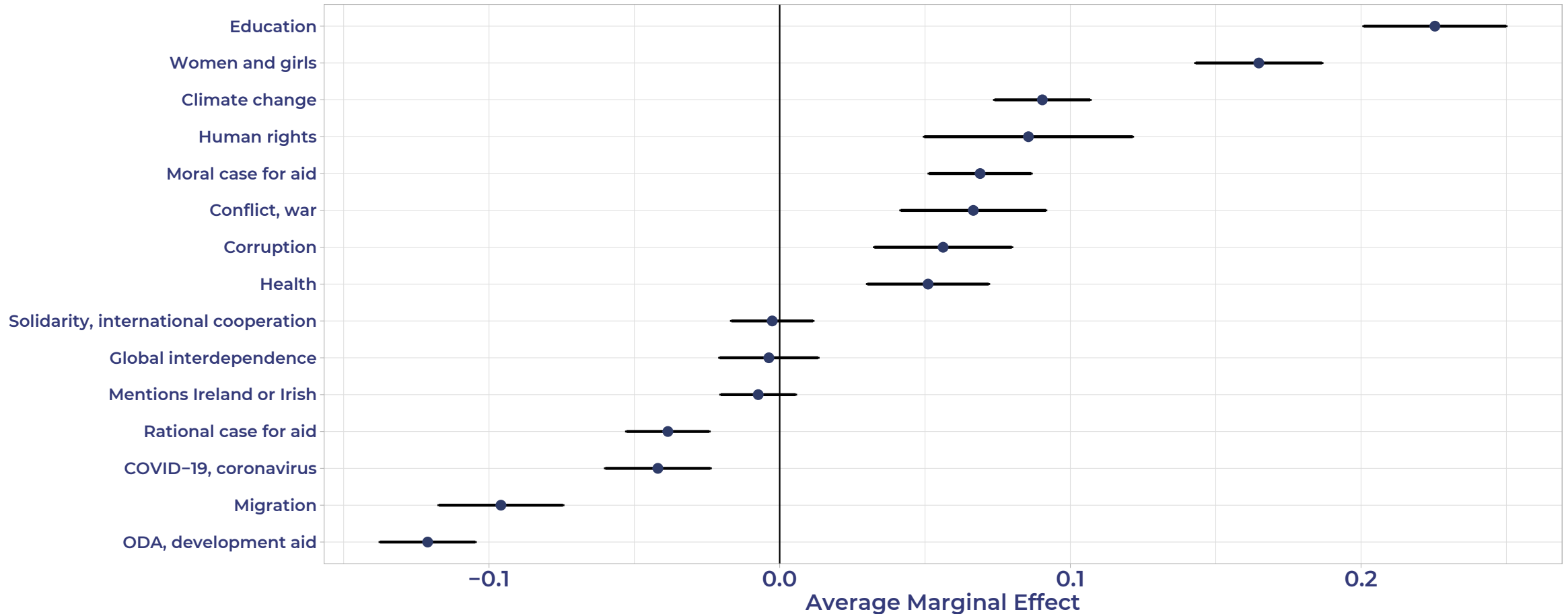
Each column is a message, ranked by the strongest performing message on the far left and worst on the far right. Each row is one of the codes, with a filled cell indicating the message contained that frame. More blue to the left of a row indicates a positive association of a frame and being chosen and more blue to the right indicates a negative association.



Sample size n=2,026 | Base: Irish adults | Data are weighted to be nationally representative | Fieldwork by B&A, 28th May – 1st June 2020 | Analysis by Development Engagement Lab Question: Respondents were shown 10 pairs of statements in total and each time were asked: 'Which statement do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?'

# HOW FRAMES AFFECT SUCCESS OF STATEMENTS

Everything clear to the right of the zero line is positively and significantly associated with a statement being chosen, and everything clear to the left of the zero line is negatively and significantly associated with a statement being chosen.




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# THE EFFECT SIZES OF DIFFERENT FRAMES

- The previous slide showed that – controlling for all other frames at the same time – messages
  - specifically referencing aid were 12% **less** likely to be chosen
  - Migration -10%
  - COVID-19 -4%
  - The rational case for aid -4%
- And on the other hand, messages
  - referring to education were 23% **more** likely to be chosen
  - Women and girls +17%
  - Climate change +9%
  - Human rights +9%
  - The moral case for aid +7%



*There are significant differences in the ranking of different messages for different sub-groups of the population. We have created a simple tool to allow organisations to examine these. Useful for both microtargeting but also for understanding when messages can be broadcast across all groups.*





*Messages that were framed using education, women and girls, climate change, human rights, and the moral case for aid were more likely to be chosen. Specifically referencing aid depressed agreement, as do those that are about migration, COVID, and using a rational (investment, self-interested) case for aid.*



UNIVERSITY OF  
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The **Development Engagement Lab** (DEL) is a five-year study of public attitudes and engagement with global development in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States (2018-2023). DEL is a partner focussed research programme, convening and co-producing research and insights with over 30 international development NGOs and government agencies to understand the drivers of engagement and inform development communications.

Fieldwork is carried out by YouGov and surveys are weighted to be a nationally representative of the adult population. DEL is a grantee of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and led by Professor Jennifer Hudson (University College London) and Professor David Hudson (University of Birmingham).

The **Development Engagement Lab** (Aid Attitudes Tracker Phase 2) has three goals:

1. Co-production of an evidence base for development campaigning
2. Enabling collaboration across the sector
3. Increasing advocacy capacity through the sharing of research and strategic insights

You can find out more information about DEL research at [www.developmentcompass.org](http://www.developmentcompass.org), follow us on Twitter [@DevEngageLab](https://twitter.com/DevEngageLab) or by contacting [del@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:del@ucl.ac.uk).

*Citation:* Hudson, David & Hudson, Jennifer. 2022. Communicating development to the Irish public: What works, for who? London: Development Engagement Lab.