



International Development Strategy

Debate on 16 December 2021

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On 16 December 2021, the House of Lords is due to debate a motion moved by Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Labour) that “this House takes note of the plans by Her Majesty’s Government to announce a new international development strategy for the United Kingdom in 2022”.

A new international development strategy was announced as part of the Government’s Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (IR), published in March 2021. The Government explained that the strategy will build upon the strategic objectives and themes set out in the IR and would detail its approach to international development for the next 10 years. The Government is consulting on the strategy, and it is expected to be published in spring 2022.

The IR emphasised that the UK was committed to tackling global poverty, achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030, aligning aid spending with commitments in the Paris Agreement on climate change and maintaining the highest standards of evidence for investments. It also said that the Government intends to focus aid work on areas “which are important to a globally-focused UK and where we can have the greatest life-changing impact in the long-term”. It said the UK will maintain its commitment to Africa, while increasing development efforts in the Indo-Pacific.

Some criticised the Government’s IR for its lack of detail on international development priorities. For example, the chair of the House of Commons International Development Committee, Sarah Champion (Labour MP for Rotherham), stated it had “done little to alleviate fears that this is the beginning of the end for the UK’s development superpower status”.

The IR’s publication was preceded by government announcements to merge the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Department for International Development and to temporarily reduce overseas development assistance (ODA) from its 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) legislative target to 0.5% of GNI, with effect from 2021. The latter announcement was met with particular criticism, with Bond (the UK network for organisations working in international development) publishing a letter from almost 200 charities calling for the decision to be reversed. Opposition parties and some Conservative MPs also opposed the move. However, the Government argued that it was a temporary but necessary measure due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the UK’s finances. It said it would return to the 0.7% target once certain fiscal tests were met.

In 2021, the UK is expected to spend around £11bn on overseas development assistance. It spent £14.5bn in 2020.

This briefing provides information on the international development strategy and the IR. It also contains information and statistics on ODA spending, including coverage of the announced reduction.

I. International development policy

I.1 International development strategy: What has been announced?

A new international development strategy is expected to be published in spring 2022.¹ It was first announced in the Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (IR), which was published in March 2021.² Further information on the IR, and some of the background to it, can be found in section 1.2 of this briefing.

The Government has explained that the strategy will set out its approach to international development for the next decade.³ It says it will ensure close alignment with objectives set out in the IR from 2022 to 2030 and will maintain the UK's commitment to international development:

The strategy will uphold our commitment to be a world leader in international development and demonstrate how this work has a life changing impact in areas of the world that are important to a globally-focussed UK while supporting our long-term national security and prosperity.⁴

What are the Government's current development priorities?

The Government stated that the strategy would "restate our commitment to poverty eradication" and would build on the seven priorities for the UK's official development assistance (ODA) spending for 2021 to 2022.⁵ It also said it would "consider the competitiveness of our trade and development offer to developing countries".⁶

Full details on the seven priorities for ODA for 2021 to 2022, including practical examples of spending in these areas, were provided by the then Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (FCDO), Dominic Raab, on 21 April 2021, as follows:

- **Climate and biodiversity.** FCDO will maintain a strong climate and biodiversity portfolio of £534m as we host COP26 [the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference]. In total, the FCDO will deliver more than £941m of activities this year, across all themes, that count towards the UK's flagship £11.6bn international climate finance target.
- **Global health security.** FCDO will spend £1,305m on global health. We will focus on the UK's position at the forefront of the international response to Covid-19, through our commitments to COVAX, GAVI and the World Health Organisation, and through bilateral spend where the need is greatest in Africa.
- **Girls' education.** FCDO will spend £400m on girls' education. We will invest directly in over 25 countries, helping to achieve the global target to get 40 million girls into education and demonstrating our commitment at this year's Global Partnership for Education summit.
- **Humanitarian preparedness and response.** FCDO will spend £906m to maintain the

¹ [HL Hansard, 25 November 2021, col 1007.](#)

² HM Government, [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#), March 2021, CP 403.

³ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, ['International development strategy: call for evidence'](#), 27 July 2021.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ The requirement to focus development assistance on poverty reduction is set out in the International Development Act 2002.

⁶ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, ['International development strategy: call for evidence'](#), 27 July 2021.

UK's role as a force for good at times of crisis, focusing our work on those countries most affected by risk of famine, including Yemen, Syria, Somalia, and South Sudan. A £30m crisis reserve will enable us to respond rapidly to new crises.

- **Science and technology.** FCDO will make £251m of research and development investments across all seven themes of this strategy, with £38m targeted directly at science and technology including new innovations to tackle development challenges, including innovations in satellite imagery and AI [artificial intelligence] to support humanitarian responses.
- **Open societies and conflict resolution.** FCDO will spend £419m to harness the UK's unique strengths in conflict management and resolution, and to project our support for democratic values and institutions, human rights, and freedom of religious belief. We will further drive impact and support democratic values and institutions through our diplomacy, including our new sanctions policy, which will shortly be extended to cover corruption. We have also protected civil society programmes, particularly Comic Relief, Commonwealth Veterans, Jo Cox Memorial grants within UK Aid Direct, UK Aid Match and Voluntary Service Overseas.
- **Economic development and trade.** FCDO will spend £491m to support new trade relationships with developing country partners, complementing our wider multilateral and capital investments to build the trade and investment partners of the future. We will use CDC [the UK's development finance institution] and multilateral partners to drive mutually beneficial growth with strategic partners in circumstances where private sector investment is not practicable.⁷

What is the status of the strategy?

The Government is consulting on the strategy. Speaking about this in evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in July 2021, Dominic Raab said:

We will be tapping the expertise and experience of all of our stakeholders. We get a huge amount of input in the ordinary course of things from all the NGO groups and from our international partners, the key partners that we work very closely with, and the UN. All of those will be able to feed into that process.⁸

The Government published a call for evidence on 27 July 2021, which closed on 6 September 2021.⁹ It featured six questions about the UK's role in international development and how it should address some of the trends and objectives identified in the IR.

These trends and objectives are set out below:

Four key trends that will shape the international environment to 2030:

- Geopolitical and geo-economic shifts: such as China's increasing power and assertiveness internationally and the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific.
- Systemic competition: the intensification of competition between states and with non-

⁷ House of Commons, ['Written Statement: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Update'](#), 21 April 2021, HCWS935.

⁸ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: Work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HC 518](#), 6 July 2021, Q521.

⁹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, ['International development strategy: call for evidence'](#), 27 July 2021.

state actors, manifested in the formation of competing geopolitical and economic blocs of influence and values.

- Rapid technological change: technological developments and digitisation will reshape our societies, economies and change relationships—both between states, and between the citizen, the private sector and the state.
- Transnational challenges: such as climate change, global health risks, illicit finance, serious organised crime, and terrorism.

Four UK strategic objectives to 2025:

- Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology.
- Shaping the open international order of the future.
- Strengthening security and defence at home and overseas.
- Building resilience at home and overseas.

1.2 What did the Integrated Review say about international development?

The IR was published in March 2021.¹⁰ It was preceded by several other government announcements relating to international development, including the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) and the current reduction in the UK's ODA from 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to 0.5%. Further information on the ODA reduction can be found in section 2.1 of this briefing.

The IR emphasised the need for an integrated approach to international work across government departments. It cited the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in September 2020 as a key example of this, saying it was “integrating diplomacy and development to achieve greater impact and address the links between climate change and extreme poverty”.¹¹ The IR also stated that the UK will “remain a world leader in international development and we will return to our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on development when the fiscal situation allows”.

The report introduced the four key themes and the four strategic objectives referred to above. The strategic objectives formed the Government's overall strategic framework.

Commenting on the new strategic framework, the Government noted that it involved some “significant continuities” as well as some “significant shifts” in its international policy; for example:

Continuities:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): we will remain a world-leading international development donor, committed to the global fight against poverty and to achieving the UN SDGs by 2030 [...]
- Girls' education: we will continue our efforts to ensure all girls have at least 12 years of quality education and to get 40 million more girls in developing countries into school by 2025 [...]¹²

¹⁰ HM Government, [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#), March 2021, CP 403.

¹¹ *ibid*, p 5.

¹² *ibid*, p 21.

Shifts:

- Shaping the international order of the future: we will move from defending the status quo within the post-cold war international system to dynamically shaping the post-Covid order, extending it in the future frontiers of cyberspace and space, and protecting democratic values [...]
- Climate and biodiversity: we will lead sustained international action to accelerate progress towards net zero emissions by 2050 and build global climate resilience [...]¹³

The IR expanded on the Government's plans for international development in its chapter on the "shaping the open international order" objective. It emphasised plans to use ODA as a way of "increasing our impact as a force for good".¹⁴ It said that the "UK is one of the world's leading development actors", and was committed to tackling global poverty, achieving the SDGs by 2030 and maintaining the highest standards of evidence and transparency for investments.

The IR said that the Government intends to focus aid work on areas "which are important to a globally-focused UK and where we can have the greatest life-changing impact in the long-term". It said the UK will maintain its commitment to Africa, while increasing development efforts in the Indo-Pacific.

The "Indo-Pacific tilt" was a key theme of the IR. It set out an ambition for the UK to become "the European partner with the broadest, most integrated presence in support of mutually-beneficial trade, shared security and values" in that region by 2030.¹⁵ ODA spending is identified as having a role in this. The Government said it remained committed to development in a region that is home to a third of the world's poorest people. It intends to work closely with "like-minded" bilateral and multi-lateral partners, including on global priorities such as girls' education and tackling climate change.¹⁶ It also described using ODA "more strategically" in the region in support of its wider objectives and moving gradually from offering grants to providing UK expertise and returnable capital, including support for infrastructure, where countries can finance their own development.

The IR said the UK would "maintain a liberal approach to economic development, creating greater opportunities for all and modelled on open societies" and will "more effectively combine our diplomacy and aid with trade".¹⁷ The UK would "continue to provide principled humanitarian assistance at moments of crisis", including responding to unanticipated events, funding bilateral and multilateral programmes and leading a global campaign to protect 20 million people from catastrophic famine. To support this, the Government intends to promote the use of digital technology to provide faster and cheaper support to those affected by crises.

The IR also said that the Government will ensure that all UK ODA is aligned to the Paris Agreement, reflecting a commitment to tackling climate change and its effects as a driver of future instability and poverty. Further information on the Paris Agreement and on supporting developing countries to meet climate change objectives can be found in the Library's briefing on the November 2021 climate change conference: [COP26: Aims, Goals and Progress](#), 15 November 2021.

¹³ HM Government, [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#), March 2021, CP 403, p 22.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p 46

¹⁵ *ibid*, p 6.

¹⁶ *ibid*, pp 66–7.

¹⁷ *ibid*, pp 46–7.

1.3 What has been the reaction to the Government's international development policy?

The chair of the House of Commons International Development Committee, Sarah Champion, criticised the Government's IR for its limited focus on international development, stating it had "done little to alleviate fears that this is the beginning of the end for the UK's development superpower status".¹⁸ She believed there were contradictions in the approaches set out in the report, and also criticised the handling of the DFID and FCO merger and the reduction in ODA spending:

The Government explains that Africa will increasingly be left behind, that with a growing population Africa will be hit hardest with the impacts of climate change, poverty and conflict. Yet the UK's international priorities are gearing towards the Indo-Pacific with presumably less development spend going to Africa. Setting a commitment to meet the 17 SDGs by 2030 is admirable, but excluding extreme poverty as a strategic objective for aid is bizarre [...]

The changes to the development sector last year—the merging of DFID and the FCO, the drastic aid cuts—should have been properly explored within the scope of the Integrated Review rather than rushed through. We cannot forget that these severe cuts are against a backdrop of increasing levels of violence, hospitals at breaking point, inequality and gender-based violence rising in some of the world's poorest countries.¹⁹

Similar points about the IR were raised by the chair of the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee, Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Conservative).²⁰ She said there was little detail on the Government's vision for international development and was concerned about the impact of the announced reduction in ODA, which she believed could damage Britain's reputation and soft power. She stated:

The document asserts that Britain will 'remain a world-leading international development donor', with no acknowledgement of the impact of a precipitous drop in the aid budget, and no strategy for mitigating the impact of this decision. It commits to use official development assistance 'more strategically', an implicit criticism of past policy which sheds little light on a new approach.

Looking ahead to the publication of the international development strategy, Bond (the UK network for organisations working in international development) published a report in July 2021 setting out its vision for international development over the next decade and its recommendations for the Government.²¹

Bond said that the UK's role in the world was "evolving", and that development policy needed to change to adapt to that. It called for the international development strategy to be:

[...] a forward-looking approach to international development that is focused on alleviating poverty, shaping the international order to address structural inequalities and humanitarian needs, delivering sustainable development, and promoting gender equality and racial justice in ways that put the people who have been the most marginalised first.²²

¹⁸ House of Commons International Development Committee, '[Integrated Review laden with contradictions: chair makes statement on the publication of the Government's Integrated Review](#)', 16 March 2021.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Baroness Anelay of St Johns, '[The UK's Integrated Review overpromises and under-delivers](#)', Chatham House, 2 April 2021.

²¹ Bond, '[Setting a New Course: Principles and Recommendations for the UK's International Development Strategy](#)', July 2021.

²² *ibid.*, p 3.

It then set out a number of visions and principles for the UK's aid interventions. For example, it outlined the importance of the SDGs and “leaving no-one behind”, as well as maintaining commitments to conflict prevention and the Paris Agreement.²³ It also said that development interventions should be evidence based and measurable, transparent and accountable, and rights based.

Bond concluded its report with 31 recommendations for the upcoming strategy. These included:

- Prioritise the realisation of the ‘leave no one behind’ commitments by ensuring that all policies are (a) properly assessed to ensure they will have a positive impact on the people who have been made the most vulnerable and marginalised and will do no harm, and (b) monitored through effective data collection to determine impact and strengthen accountability.
- Decision-making on investment and ownership of resources should happen as close as possible to the communities being affected, and there should be an end to all policies and programmes that remove local ownership and accountability over the economy.
- The UK should use existing bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels to support negotiations for continued humanitarian access that is compatible with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, and to put pressure on states that restrict civil society and encourage governments to protect rights.
- Recommit the UK to spending 50% of all ODA in fragile and conflict-affected states, and embed conflict and gender-sensitivity principles across the whole UK aid portfolio in conflict-affected and potential conflict contexts.
- Clearly outline how there will be consistency and coherence across all policies that guide the UK's relationships with other countries to ensure the UK does not continue to invest in that which is doing harm on the one hand, and actions to address that harm on the other.
- All UK ODA spending departments should achieve a ‘good’ or ‘very good’ UK Aid Transparency Index rating, and all ODA spending should be open to scrutiny by the International Development Committee and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact.²⁴

2. Aid spending

2.1 Why was a reduction in aid spending announced?

The Government has announced that it has allocated around £10bn for ODA in 2021, although it has been estimated that actual spending may increase to around £11bn.²⁵ This represents 0.5% of expected GNI. It is a reduction in aid spending from the target of 0.7% of GNI set out in the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 and recommended by the UN.²⁶ ODA allocation was £14.5bn in 2020, which met the 0.7% target.²⁷

²³ Bond, [Setting a New Course: Principles and Recommendations for the UK's International Development Strategy](#), July 2021, pp 4–5.

²⁴ *ibid*, pp 26–8.

²⁵ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2020, col 830](#). See House of Commons Library, [Reducing the UK's Aid Spend in 2021](#), 5 November 2021 for information on aid spending being forecast at £11bn.

²⁶ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, [‘The 0.7% ODA/GNI target—a history’](#), accessed 7 December 2021.

²⁷ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 29 September 2021.

The move from a 0.7% of GNI to 0.5% of GNI target was announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in the November 2020 spending review.²⁸ He explained that it was a temporary reduction due to the difficult economic circumstances brought about by the coronavirus pandemic and that the Government needed to prioritise resources on jobs and public services. Mr Sunak said the Government intended to return to the 0.7% of GNI target when the fiscal situation allowed.

The Government faced criticism for this decision. For instance, the chair of the House of Commons International Development Committee, Sarah Champion, argued that “supporting the world’s poorest is the right thing to do” and that the Government should be “defining Global Britain as a force for good”.²⁹ She also highlighted the negative impact of coronavirus on other countries:

As has been made abundantly clear in our inquiries on coronavirus in the global south, the secondary impacts of the pandemic are severe. From children out of school, more cases of gender-based violence, and economies and healthcare systems nearing collapse, now is not the time to turn our backs on the world’s poorest.³⁰

Bond raised similar points, stating that the UK should be increasing overseas support during the coronavirus pandemic, not reducing it.³¹ Bond also published a letter signed by almost 200 charities, including the National Federation of Women’s Institutes, Greenpeace and UNICEF UK, calling on the Government to reconsider the reduction.³²

What are the Government’s conditions for returning to the 0.7% of GNI target?

On 12 July 2021, Mr Sunak made a written statement in which he reaffirmed the Government was “committed to the 2015 act and to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA once the fiscal situation allows”. He argued that the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 “clearly envisages situations in which a departure from spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA may be necessary; for example in response to ‘fiscal circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of meeting the target on taxation, public spending and public borrowing’”.

In the statement, Mr Sunak set out the two tests of the fiscal circumstances that would need to apply for the 0.7% of GNI target to be resumed.³³ These are that:

- the Government is not borrowing to finance day-to-day spending (excluding spending on investment—also known as a current budget surplus); and
- underlying government debt (public sector net debt, excluding the Bank of England, as a percentage of GDP), is falling.

The Chancellor stated that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) would assess whether the tests had been met, and that they must be met “sustainably”. In the autumn 2021 spending review, the Government forecast that these tests would be met in 2024/25.³⁴ It stated that it had allocated departments £11.4bn of ODA for 2022/23, £11.8bn for 2023/24 and £12.3bn for 2024/25.

²⁸ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2020, cols 827–71.](#)

²⁹ House of Commons International Development Committee, ‘[World’s poorest to be hit with up to £30bn less development support due to political decision to slash aid budget](#)’, 15 December 2020.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Bond, ‘[Statement in response to the aid budget being cut to 0.5%](#)’, 25 November 2020.

³² Bond, ‘[Nearly 200 charities call on PM not to do a U-turn by reducing UK spend on aid](#)’, 20 November 2020.

³³ House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Treasury Update](#)’, 12 July 2021, HCWS172.

³⁴ HM Treasury, [Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021](#), 27 October 2021, p 105.

The Chancellor's statement also said that the House of Commons would have the opportunity to vote on the policy the next day, and that it would reverse the aid reduction if the House voted against it:

If the House were to negative the motion, rejecting the Government's assessment of the fiscal circumstances, then the Government would consequently return to spending 0.7% of GNI on international aid in the next calendar year, and with likely consequences for the fiscal situation, including for taxation and current public spending plans.³⁵

House of Commons debate and vote

The House of Commons held a vote on the aid reduction policy on 13 July 2021, where it was agreed by 333 votes to 298 votes.³⁶ However, a number of Conservative MPs voted against the policy.

In the debate, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the reduction in aid spending to 0.5% of GNI was "temporary" and necessary because of the increased spending and debt arising from the coronavirus pandemic.³⁷ He stated:

We all believe in the principle that aid can transform lives, and by voting for this motion, hon. Members will provide certainty for our aid budget and an affordable path back to 0.7%, while also allowing for investment in other priorities, including the NHS, schools and the police. As soon as circumstances allow and the tests are met, we will return to the target that unites us.³⁸

The Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer, said the Labour Party opposed the change.³⁹ He argued that international aid "reduces conflict, disease and people fleeing from their homes" and that cutting it was, therefore, a "false economy". He also criticised the Government for not allowing a vote on the policy sooner, noting that meeting the 0.7% target was a Conservative manifesto commitment. He believed the reduction was a "political choice" and called for an immediate return to meeting the 0.7% target. In addition, he raised concerns that the fiscal tests set out by the Government to return to the 0.7% target would not be met in this Parliament and that the reduction may become indefinite.

Chris Law, the Scottish National Party's spokesperson for international development, also believed it was a political choice. He said he feared the aid reduction would jeopardise efforts to minimise the impact of the coronavirus pandemic around the world and would cost lives.⁴⁰ He called for the policy to be reversed, stressing the need to deliver on the commitment to help the "most marginalised and vulnerable people on earth". Wendy Chamberlain, Liberal Democrat chief whip, shared Mr Starmer's concerns that the fiscal tests might not be met.

³⁵ House of Commons, '[Written Statement: Treasury Update](#)', 12 July 2021, HCWS172.

³⁶ [HC Hansard, 13 July 2021, cols 173–230](#).

³⁷ *ibid*, cols 173–6.

³⁸ *ibid*, col 176.

³⁹ *ibid*, cols 176–80.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, cols 181–5.

2.2 Aid spending statistics

Allocations for 2021/22

In April 2021, the then Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary, Dominic Raab, set out initial details of how the FCDO would spend its allocation of the overall ODA budget for ~ 2021–22.⁴¹ This amounted to £8.1bn, approximately 80% of the UK's total allocated ODA spending. The breakdown by thematic area is shown in the table below:

Table: ODA allocations by thematic area

Thematic area	FCDO ODA allocation 2021/22, £m
Climate change and biodiversity	534
Covid-19 and global health	1,305
Girls' education	400
Humanitarian preparedness and response	906
Open societies and conflict	419
Science, research and technology	38 (plus thematic research and development)
Trade and economic development	491
Financial transactions	863
Programmes with cross cutting themes	1,940
Arm's length bodies, international subscriptions and other fixed costs	1,219
Total	8,115

Mr Raab did not set out a country-by-country breakdown of planned aid spending. He said the FCDO would spend around half its bilateral aid budget in Africa, and one third in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia to promote open societies, reinforce trade links and promote climate change collaboration. The FCDO's ODA to China would be reduced by 95% to £0.9m to fund programmes on open societies and human rights, although there would be some additional ODA to China this year only to meet the contractual costs of exiting former programmes.

Further details on the Government's plans for ODA spending in 2021/22, including some country-level spending allocations, can be found in Annex A of the recent FCDO annual report:

- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21](#), 22 September 2021

However, as stated in the report, this does not represent the full range of UK aid spent in these countries.

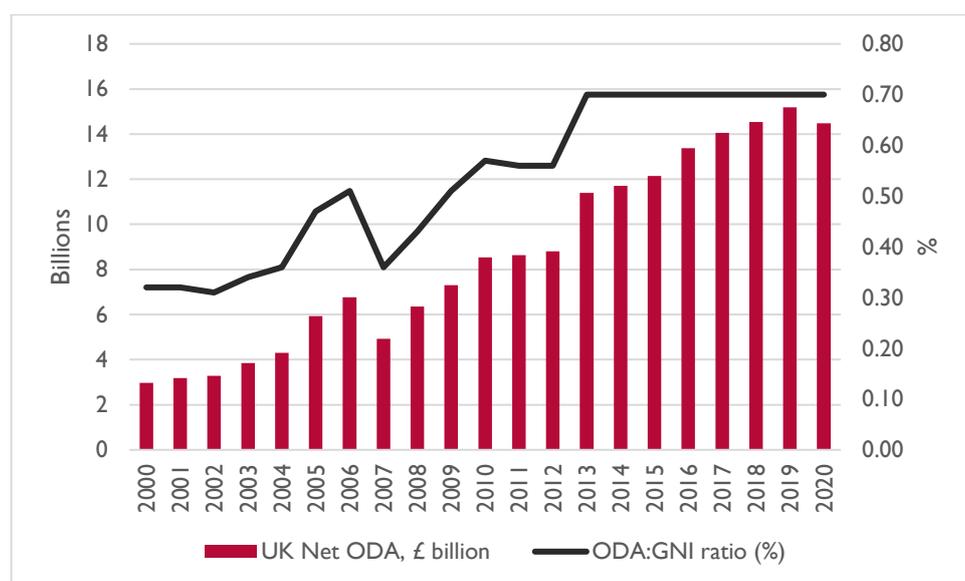
⁴¹ House of Commons, '[Written Statement: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Update](#)', 21 April 2021, HCWS935.

Spending in 2020

The UK ODA spend in 2020 was £14,479m, a decrease of £698m (4.6%) on 2019.⁴² This represented 0.7% of GNI. Of this total, £9,533m was bilateral funding (65.8% of total UK ODA), and £4,945m (34.2% of total UK ODA) was multilateral funding.⁴³ The FCDO was responsible for 73.7% of the ODA spending in 2020.

The following chart shows UK ODA spending, alongside the percentage of GNI it represented, since 2000:

Figure 1: ODA spend since 2000



Source: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020: Excel Tables](#), 29 September 2021.

Africa received the highest proportion of UK bilateral aid that was allocated to a country or region (51.8%) in 2020, followed by Asia (39.2%).⁴⁴ The top five countries for country-specific bilateral aid from the UK were: Ethiopia (£254m), Nigeria (£241m), Somalia (£232m), Afghanistan (£226m) and Yemen (£221m). These countries accounted for 17.2% of total country-specific UK bilateral ODA.⁴⁵

The top five recipients of core multilateral funding in 2020 were:

- European Commission (development share of budget): £1,149m, 23.2% of total

⁴² Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 29 September 2021.

⁴³ The FCDO defines bilateral ODA as “earmarked spend, ie the donor has specified where and/or what the ODA is spent on—this is usually ODA going to specific countries, regions or programmes”. It defines multilateral ODA as “un-earmarked funding from national governments to multilateral organisations, which is pooled with other donors’ funding and disbursed as part of the core budget of the multilateral organisation. For example, the UK’s contribution to the World Bank International Development Association” (ibid).

⁴⁴ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 29 September 2021.

⁴⁵ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020: Excel Tables](#), 29 September 2021.

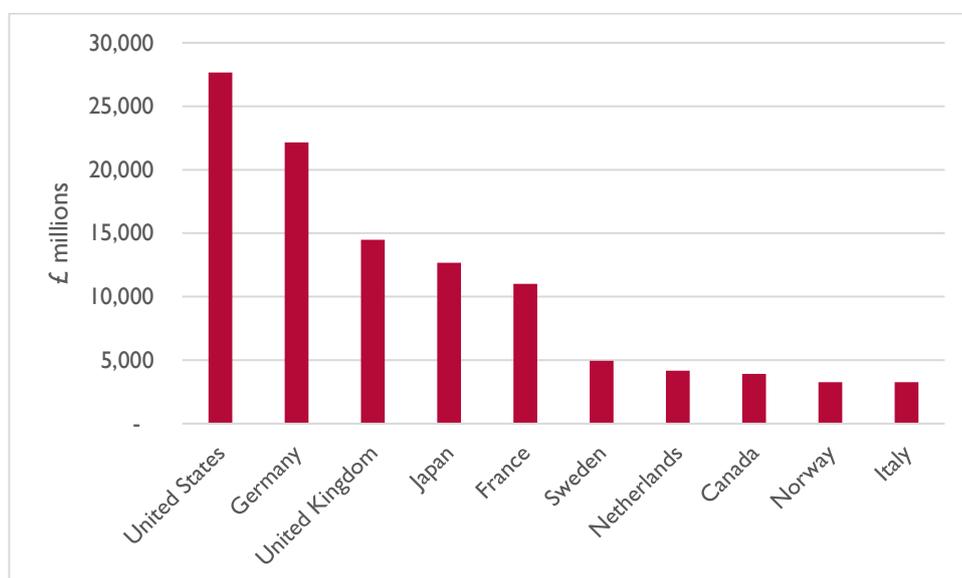
multilateral ODA.

- International Development Association: £920m, 18.6%.
- Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: £476m, 9.6%.
- Green Climate Fund: £450m, 9.1%.
- European Commission (European Development Fund): £368m, 7.4%.⁴⁶

Among the members of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's development assistance committee (DAC), the UK was the third largest ODA donor country in 2020.⁴⁷ The US was the largest donor country with an ODA spend of £27.7bn, and Germany was the second largest donor, with spend of £22.1bn.⁴⁸

The following graph shows the top ten DAC donor countries, alongside their total ODA in £ millions:

Figure 2: Top ten DAC ODA donor countries in 2020 (in £ millions)



Source: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020: Additional Tables](#), 29 September 2021.

However, at 0.17% of GNI the US had a significantly lower ODA:GNI ratio than the UK in 2020. Germany's ODA:GNI ratio was 0.73%.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020: Excel Tables](#), 29 September 2021.

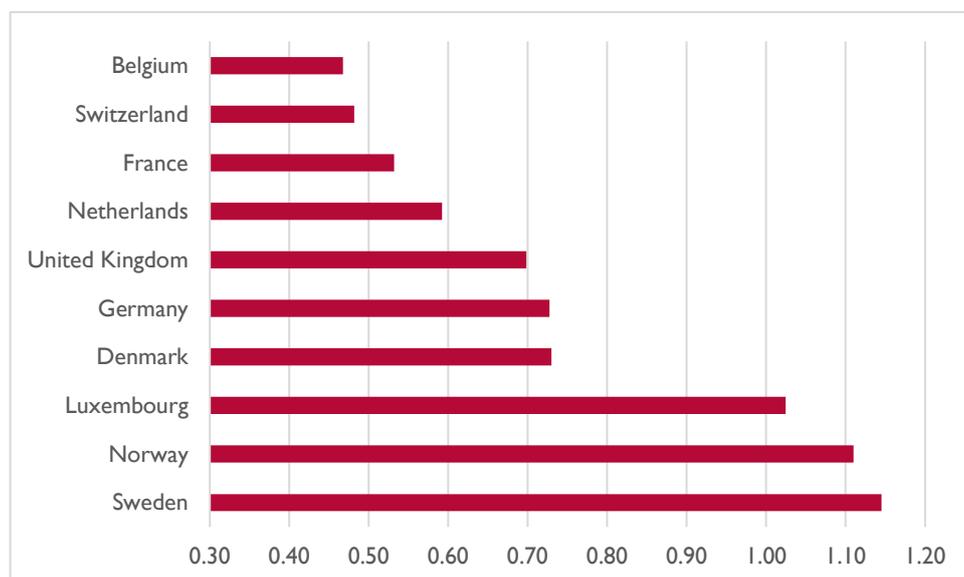
⁴⁷ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 29 September 2021. DAC also provides the definition of ODA spending, which the UK and other countries follow.

⁴⁸ Note: the 2020 ODA figures for the UK are final figures, whereas the figures for the other countries are provisional.

⁴⁹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020: Additional Tables](#), 29 September 2021.

The following graph shows the ten countries with the highest ODA:GNI ratio in 2020:

Figure 3: Top ten countries in terms of ODA:GNI ratio (%) in 2020



Source: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020: Additional Tables](#), 29 September 2021.

The graph shows that five countries exceeded the 0.7% UN ODA:GNI target, and eight exceeded a ratio of 0.5%. Sweden had the highest ODA:GNI ratio (at 1.14%), and the UK had the sixth highest. However, each of the top four countries in terms of the ODA:GNI ratio spent less than £5bn overall on aid.⁵⁰

More detailed statistics can be found in the FCDO publication: [Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 29 September 2021.

3. Read more

- House of Lords Library, '[Importance of foreign aid programme](#)', 24 June 2021
- House of Commons Library, '[Reducing the UK's Aid Spending in 2021](#)', 5 November 2021
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