

# What Do Canadians Think We Spend on Foreign Aid?

The gap between perception and reality and why it changes everything.



# The Survey: April 2026

In April 2026, **1,004 Canadian adults** were asked a simple question: what share of the national budget goes to foreign aid?

**19.7%**

**Average Guess**

What Canadians estimated foreign aid costs

**41%**

**Guessed Over 20%**

Nearly half thought the number was even higher

**1,004**

**Adults Surveyed**

A representative sample of Canadian adults



# The Reality Check



## What Canada Actually Spends

Canada's official development assistance in 2025 came in at **\$7.2 billion USD** — a number that sounds large until you see it in context.

### 0.32% of GNI

Canada's actual foreign aid as a share of gross national income

### ~60× overestimated

Canadians guessed 19.7% — roughly sixty times the real figure

# Why the Huge Gap is so Important

Perception is a real problem because it shapes real political decisions.

1

## Public believes 19.7%

People assume foreign aid is a massive budget item eating up nearly a fifth of spending

2

## Support for cuts grows

When voters think aid spending is enormous, they naturally demand reductions

3

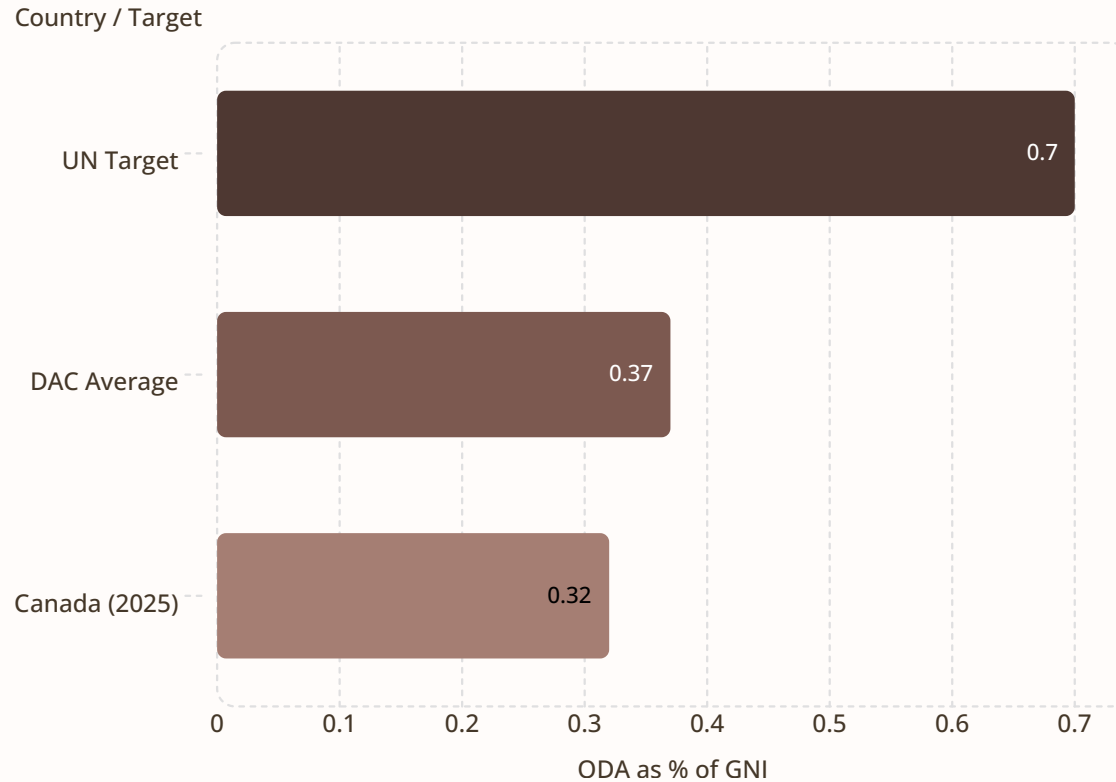
## Policy shifts

Politicians respond to public pressure — even when that pressure rests on a myth



If Canadians knew the real number was **0.32%**, the entire conversation would look different.

# How Canada Ranks Globally



## Where Canada Stands

Among the 30+ DAC (**Development Assistance Committee** — the OECD committee made up of many of the world's major donor countries), Canada ranks:

- **9th** by total ODA volume in dollars
- **16th** by ODA as a share of Gross National Income (GNI)

The UN target is **0.7% of GNI**. Canada currently gives **0.32%** — less than half the goal.



# What 0.32% Actually Looks Like

## **32¢ per \$100**

For every \$100 of Canada's gross national income, just 32 cents goes to foreign aid

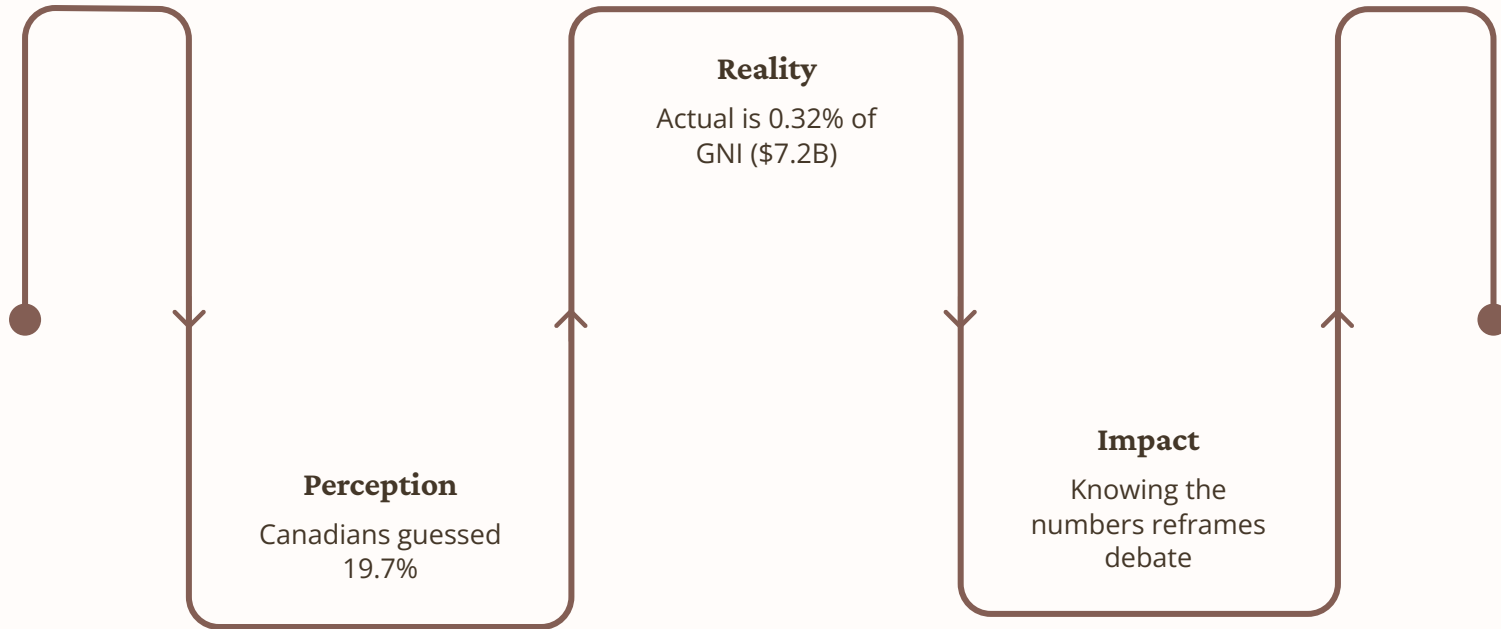
## **Less than 1/3 of the UN target**

Canada would need to more than double its commitment to reach the 0.7% goal

## **Room to grow**

Closing the gap to 0.7% is a large step, but it would not "break the budget"

# Key Takeaway



## Perception vs. Reality

Canadians guessed **19.7%**. The actual figure is **0.32% of GNI** — a 60× overestimate driven by unfamiliarity and measurement confusion.

## Why It Matters for You

Policy debates about cutting or increasing aid are only meaningful when based on the real numbers. Now you know them.