

Official development assistance for gender equality and women's empowerment in 2020-21: A snapshot

Findings

- Members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) committed **USD 57.4 billion** to gender equality in 2020-21 (average per year).
- After a decade rising, the share of official development assistance (ODA) for gender equality **stopped growing**, plateauing at 44%.
- 40% of total bilateral ODA had gender equality and women's empowerment as a *significant* objective, and 4% as a *principal* objective.
- Canada, the Netherlands, Ireland and Iceland rank first in terms of shares of ODA for gender equality.
- USD 458 million of bilateral ODA was dedicated to **ending violence** against women and girls, and USD 574 million to **women's rights organisations** and movements.

This snapshot provides the latest information on bilateral, allocable [official development assistance \(ODA\) for gender equality and women's empowerment](#), based on OECD data up to 2021, in 2020 constant prices, using the [DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#) of the [Creditor Reporting System](#) (CRS). This qualitative statistical tool enables the examination of development finance and the identification of gender equality as either a *principal* policy objective (dedicated funding, "score 2"), a *significant* objective (funding that integrates/mainstreams gender equality, "score 1"), or not an objective ("score 0"). Analyses use commitments, rather than disbursements, in order to capture intentions for the activity at the design stage and the political vision for the finance provided. Averages of two years are used to reduce volatility since commitments are recorded in full in the year they are made, even if multi-year, and irrespective of when they are disbursed. The gender marker with the 0-1-2 scoring system has existed since 1997. Data for Portugal was not available at the time of writing.

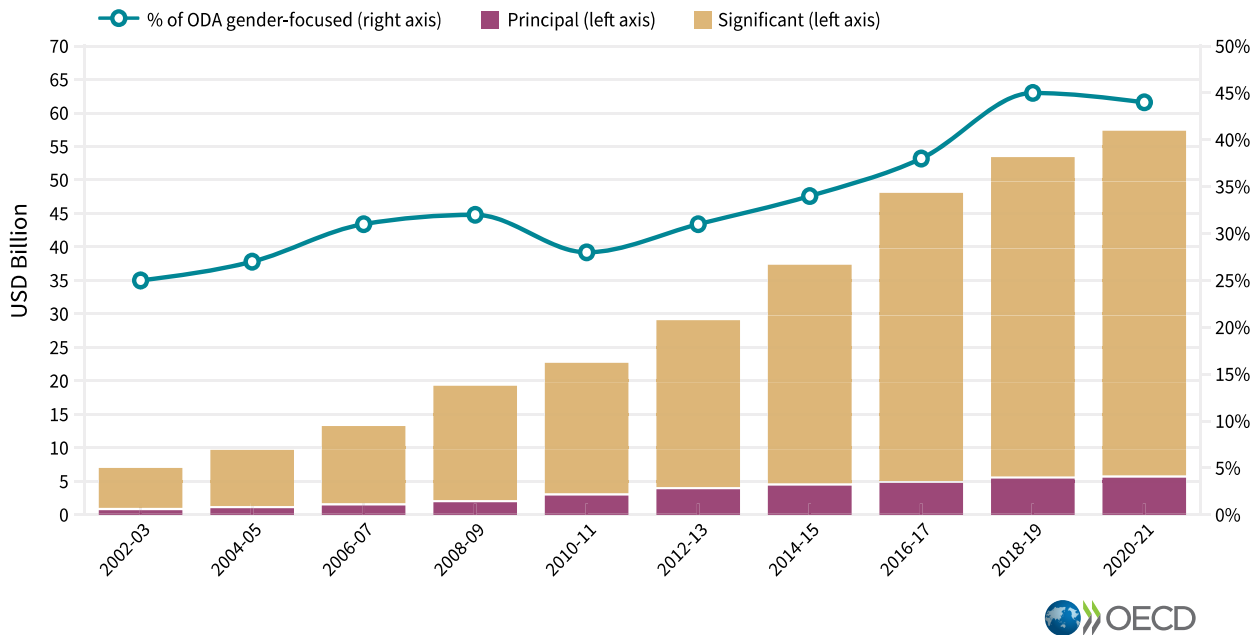
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Bilateral ODA for gender equality over time and by DAC member



The share of DAC members' ODA for gender equality **stopped growing in 2020-21, after a decade on the rise**

Volume and share of ODA with gender equality and women's empowerment as principal and significant policy objectives (2002-2021)



Notes: Gender-focused includes both principal and significant.

The volume of ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment increased from USD 53.4 per year on average over 2018-19 to **USD 57.4 billion in 2020-21** (out of a total of USD 129.5 billion screened against the gender marker). This is in line with the increase of total ODA during the same period, as DAC members stepped up their co-operation with partner countries grappling with the COVID-19 crisis. However, the *share* of total ODA¹ with gender equality as a policy objective dropped slightly **from 44.5% to 44%**.

As in previous periods, the bulk of ODA was committed to programmes with gender equality as a *significant* policy objective: USD 51.6 billion (40% of total bilateral ODA). Support to programmes dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment as the *principal* objective amounted to **USD 5.7 billion** in average per year (4% of total bilateral ODA).

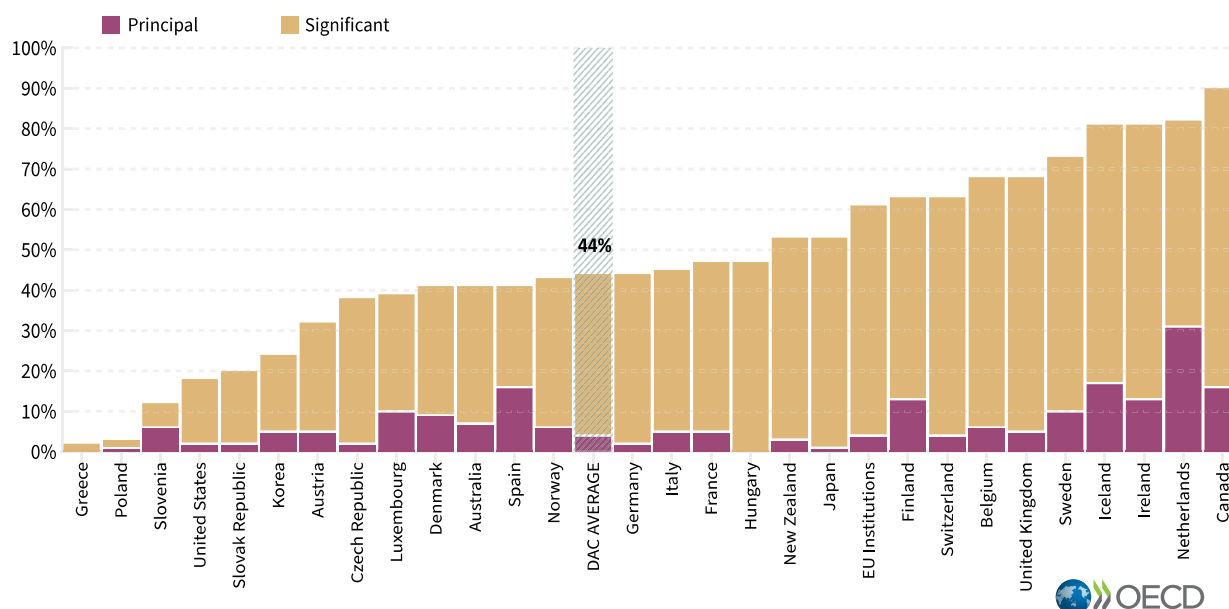
Having a *principal* objective is not by definition better than a *significant* objective: a **twin-track approach** in the development co-operation portfolio allows dedicating some interventions for gender equality while [mainstreaming it across all policy, strategy and programming](#).

¹ Refers to bilateral allocable ODA that has been examined against the gender marker. DAC members examined over 93% of their bilateral allocable ODA against the marker in 2021.



A majority of DAC members target gender equality in **at least 40%** of their ODA

Share of ODA with gender equality and women's empowerment as principal and significant policy objectives, per DAC member (average 2020-2021)



Notes: Shares are based on ODA examined against the gender marker. Lithuania joined the DAC in 2022 and does not appear.

The highest *shares* of ODA committed for gender equality (significant + principal) over 2020-21 were reported by **Canada (90%)**, the **Netherlands (82%)**, **Ireland (81%)** and **Iceland (81%)**. In terms of *volumes*, the top development partners in 2020-21 were Germany (USD 10.5 billion on average per year), the EU Institutions (USD 9.3 billion), Japan (USD 8.1 billion), the United States (USD 5.7 billion) and France (USD 5.5 billion).

Several DAC members have set quantitative targets for a share of their ODA to have gender equality objectives, and other are considering it. Setting such financial targets helps to ensure that more resources are directed towards gender equality. This also creates internal awareness on the matter and enables constructive discussions across teams and development actors involved in development co-operation.

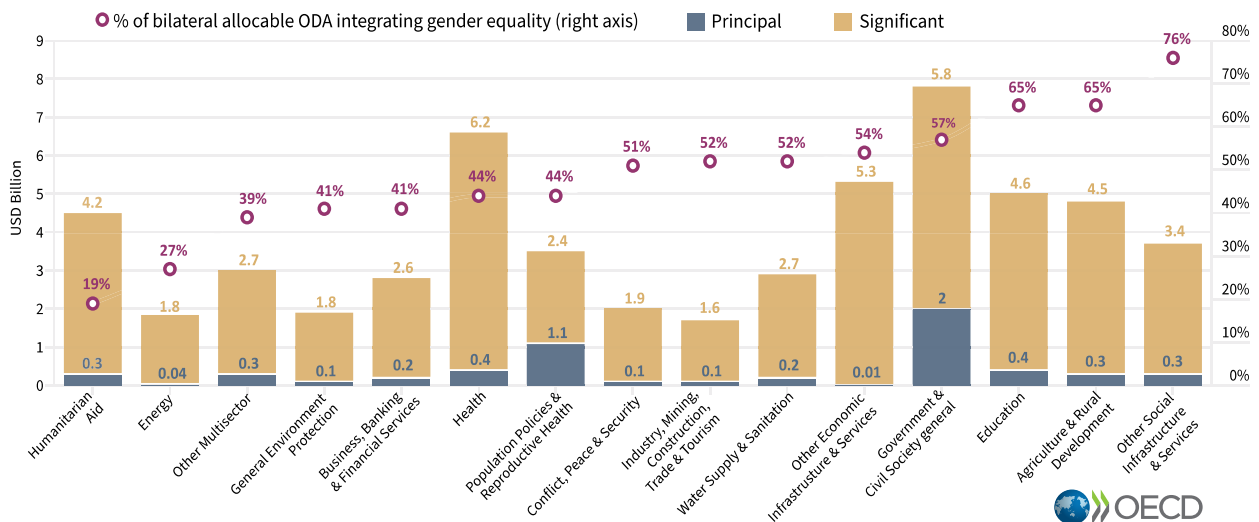
Africa and Asia are the main regions receiving ODA with gender equality objectives (significant + principal). Close to one third goes to Africa and another third to Asia. In Africa, support to programmes *dedicated* to gender equality and women's empowerment as the principal objective amounted to USD 2.3 billion on average per year in the period 2020-21, more than any other region and representing 13% of total ODA for gender equality in the region – exceeding the global average of 4%.

Bilateral ODA for gender equality by sector



Gender equality is poorly integrated in the humanitarian and energy sectors

Volume and share of ODA with gender equality and women's empowerment as a policy objective by sector (average, 2020-2021)



Note: Social sectors include Education, Health, Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health, Water Supply & Sanitation, Government & Civil Society, Conflict, Peace & Security and Other Social Infrastructure Services. Economic sectors include Transport & Storage, Communications, Energy, Banking & Financial Services, Business & Other Services. Production sectors include Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Industry, Mining, Construction, Trade Policies & Regulations and Tourism. More details available [here](#) under "purpose code".

DAC members also report on the main sector(s) of destination of their ODA. The sectors with the highest *shares* of ODA with gender equality objectives (dots in the figure) are **Other Social Infrastructure and Services** – including employment policies, housing, social protection – followed by **Agriculture and Rural Development and Education**.

The focus on gender equality is particularly low in **Humanitarian Aid** and in **Energy**, despite evidence that integrating gender equality objectives in programming across every sector can strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, and ensure they are not harmful.

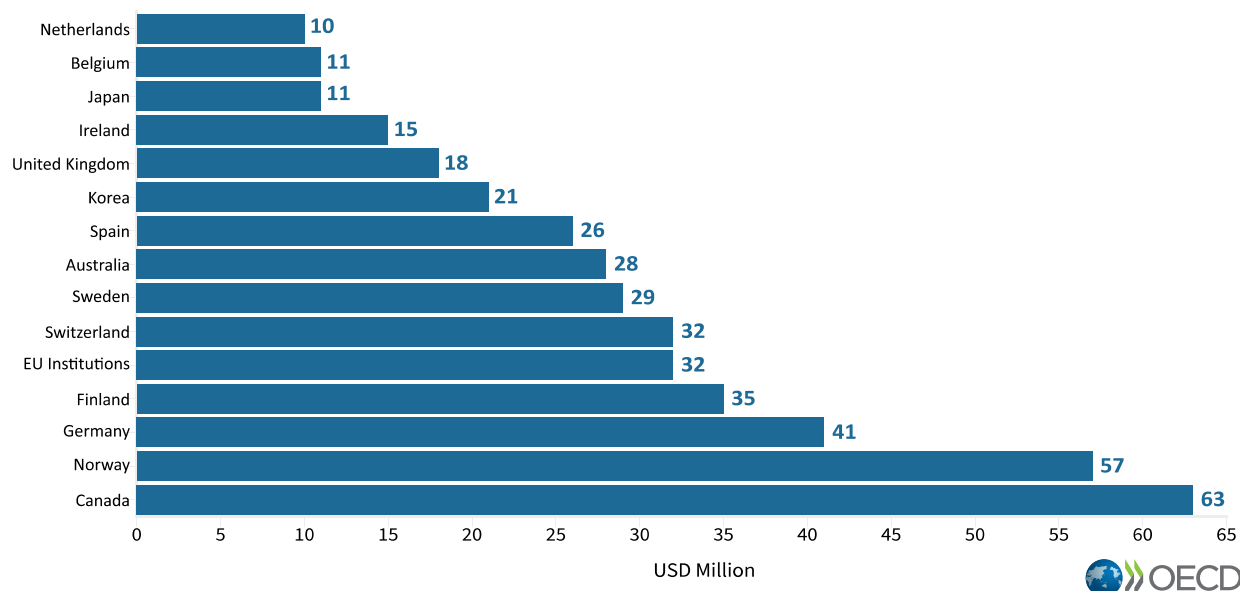
Government and Civil Society General² – including democratic participation, elections, media and free flow of information, human rights – and **Health** had the highest *volume* of ODA committed for gender equality and women's empowerment (bars in the figure).

² Although the CRS code is called "Government and Civil Society General" it does not refer to who is receiving ODA but to its purpose.



Ending violence against women and girls: a priority for certain DAC members

Volume of ODA with gender equality and women's empowerment as principal policy objectives destined to end violence against women and girls, top 15 DAC members (average, 2020-2021)



DAC members committed **USD 458 million** per year on average over 2020-21 in support of **ending violence against women and girls**, a mere **0,3%** of their total ODA. Despite the increase of ODA overall in the period, ODA for ending violence against women and girls decreased compared to 2018-19 (USD 531 million).

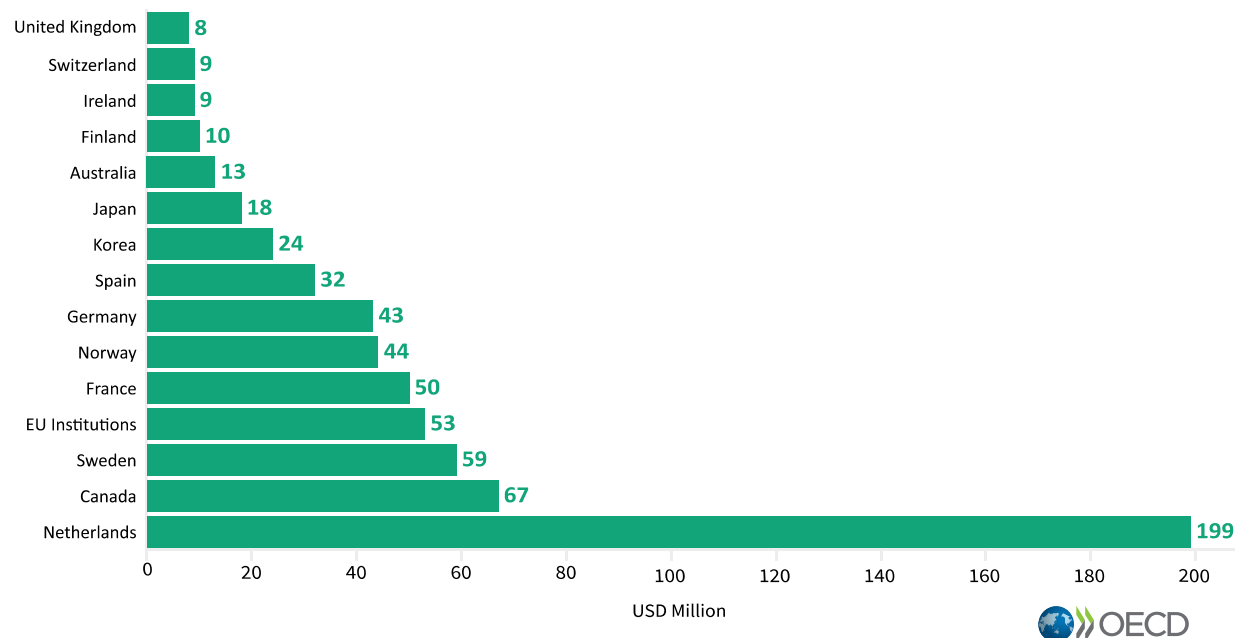
The main development partners for this specific sub-sector in 2020-21 were **Canada** (USD 63 million on average per year in the period) and **Norway** (USD 57 million). The top recipients were Tanzania (USD 23 million in average per year), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (USD 22 million) and Somalia (USD 15 million).

More funding should be channelled into services to support victims, create stronger systems that prevent violence and promote the well-being, healing, and recovery of survivors. The [Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment](#), adopted by DAC members in 2019, provides a framework for action on creating safer environments for all.



Supporting women's organisations and institutions: a clear policy objective for certain DAC members

Volume of ODA with gender equality and women's empowerment as principal policy objectives destined to women's rights organisations and institutions, top 15 DAC members (average, 2020-2021)



DAC members also committed some of their ODA for “Government and Civil Society General” to support **women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions**, which are essential development actors for gender equality. At **USD 665 million** on average per year over 2020-21, it was a slight drop from USD 682 million in 2018-19. Excluding the volumes committed to government institutions (e.g. women's ministries) the amount was **USD 574 million** in 2020-21, down from USD 581 million in 2018-19.

The largest volumes were reported by the **Netherlands**, **Canada**, **Sweden**, the **EU Institutions** and **France** who committed more than USD 50 million on average each. The main receiving partners for ODA to support women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions were Morocco (USD 32 million on average per year), Ethiopia (USD 26 million) and Rwanda (USD 16 million).

DAC members also channelled³ **USD 10.4 billion to and through civil society organisations (CSOs)⁴ for projects or programmes with gender equality as an objective**, i.e. about half of the total ODA channelled to and through CSOs. Out of that, 11% was channelled through CSOs based in partner countries, 22% through international CSOs, and 66% through CSOs based in donor countries⁵.

³ Channel of delivery is the first implementing partner. It is the entity that has implementing responsibility over the funds and is normally linked to the extending agency by a contract or other binding agreement, and is directly accountable to it. See [2021 statistical reporting directives for CRS](#).

⁴ Aid to CSOs refers to core contributions and funds programmed by the CSOs themselves. Aid through CSOs are those funds channelled through CSOs to implement projects initiated by development partners. See [Aid for Civil Society Organisations](#)

⁵ Refers to an organisation organised at the national level, based and operated either in the development partner country or another developed (non-ODA eligible) country. See [Reporting Directives for the CRS](#).