

[Which is the most generous country in the world?](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Thursday 29 December 2011

Which is the most generous, the most charitable, country in the world is rather a difficult question really. We know what the official answer is, a neck and neck tie between Norway and Sweden for those are the countries that give the highest portion of their economy as official overseas aid each year. You know, well over that 0.7% of GDP that is supposed to be given away as Official Development Aid (ODA) and the number which the current Coalition has insisted that we will maintain even as everything else is up for grabs in budget negotiations.

You can see a country listing [here](#) [3]. The figures are a little old which is why the UK is so far down the list. But look, for example at the US: the meanies!

However, that's not really measuring which country is the most charitable. It's in fact measuring which governments are most charitable with the citizenry's money. Which politicians are most willing to use the power of taxation at gunpoint to feed money to foreign potentates.

There's another way entirely of measuring who is most charitable and that's to actually go out and count those who are charitable. Who gives money voluntarily, who helps strangers, who volunteers at charities and projects. Which is what the Charities Aid Foundation [has done](#) [4]. The results are really very different: The US is the world's most charitable country, Ireland second, Australia, New Zealand then the UK fifth. Norway's down at 32 and Sweden languishes 40 th.

There's a number of ways you can look at this information: that what governments do purportedly on our behalf is not the same as what we do ourselves. Or even that government's priorities are not the same as ours. That the most charitable nations seem to be the relatively low tax Anglo-Saxon ones will come as a surprise to many: but then again, perhaps it's the low tax which leads to the charity. We find our desire to do good not being crowded out by government: or even we find we've a small enough tax bill that we can afford to do good directly. Possibly, even, that in certain countries they know that government is handling it so why bother to do anything oneself?

I think the biggest point that I would pluck from this though is that it's easy enough for politicians to take our money and spend it they way they wish: but charity requires rather more than that and it does seem to be those countries where the exactions of the revenue are lower that have room for that rather more.

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[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Official_development_assistance

[4] https://www.cafonline.org/pdf/World_Giving_Index_2011_191211.pdf

[5] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

[6] <http://disqus.com>