

Tracking ODA for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities

Highlights of the 2025 Canadian Aid Trends Report

In a context of growing poverty and inequality, escalating humanitarian crises, climate disruption, geopolitical tension and increasing pressure to use official development assistance (ODA) for broader objectives, this document introduces the Core Poverty Accountability Standard (Referred to as Core or Standard).¹ It uncovers key trends and examines Canada's performance in addressing the foundational poverty and inequality issues captured by the metric.

What is the Core Poverty Accountability Standard?

ODA is declining globally, and the way it is counted and allocated is changing. Expanded ODA accounting rules for loans, private sector instruments and climate mitigation, alongside growing donor emphasis on economic and security interests, risk diluting ODA's central purpose: reducing poverty and inequality.

The Standard is designed to track the share of Canadian ODA most clearly directed toward that purpose, particularly for the poorest countries and people. It provides a clearer way to assess whether Canada's ODA is reaching the countries, communities and sectors most directly linked to poverty reduction.

- 1 It offers a way to track poverty-focused ODA.** It includes:
 - a. All ODA to least developed and other low-income countries
 - b. All ODA to extreme fragile contexts (not included in a, b or c)

- c. All ODA to ODA-eligible small island developing states (SIDS) (not included in a)
- d. All ODA dedicated to humanitarian assistance (not included in a, b or c)
- e. Core poverty-oriented ODA only, defined by select sector and purpose Creditor Reporting System (CRS) codes in lower middle-income countries (not included in b or c)
- f. Core poverty-oriented ODA only (defined by select sector and purpose CRS codes) in regional allocations for Africa and South Asia.

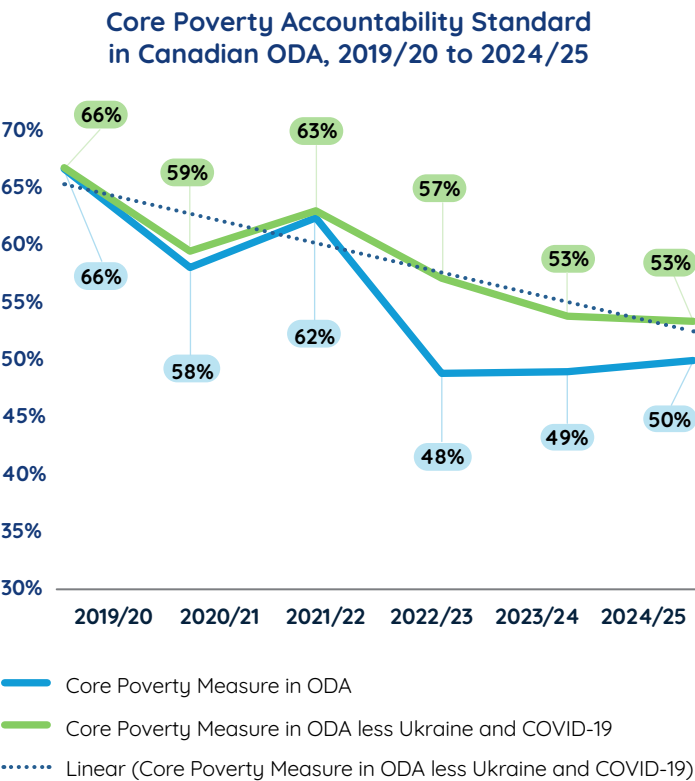
- 2 The Standard does not replace ODA.** It is an accountability metric within ODA. It tracks resource flows, but poverty accountability must also include questions of power, ownership, community agency and whether programming addresses the structural conditions that sustain poverty and inequality.

Protecting a minimum level of poverty-focused ODA would help safeguard the original purpose of Canada's ODA and prevent further erosion. Ringfencing at least \$5.5 billion for Core ODA would help ensure that planned cuts to Canada's international assistance through 2029/30 do not fall disproportionately on the poorest countries, fragile contexts and communities most affected by poverty and inequality. Other ODA activities would remain additional to this protected minimum.

¹ This document is part of a Canadian Aid Trends series produced by Cooperation Canada and AidWatch Canada. These highlights provide a snapshot of the analysis; for more detail, consult the [full briefing note](#) and related [Canadian Aid Trends resources](#).

Current Trends

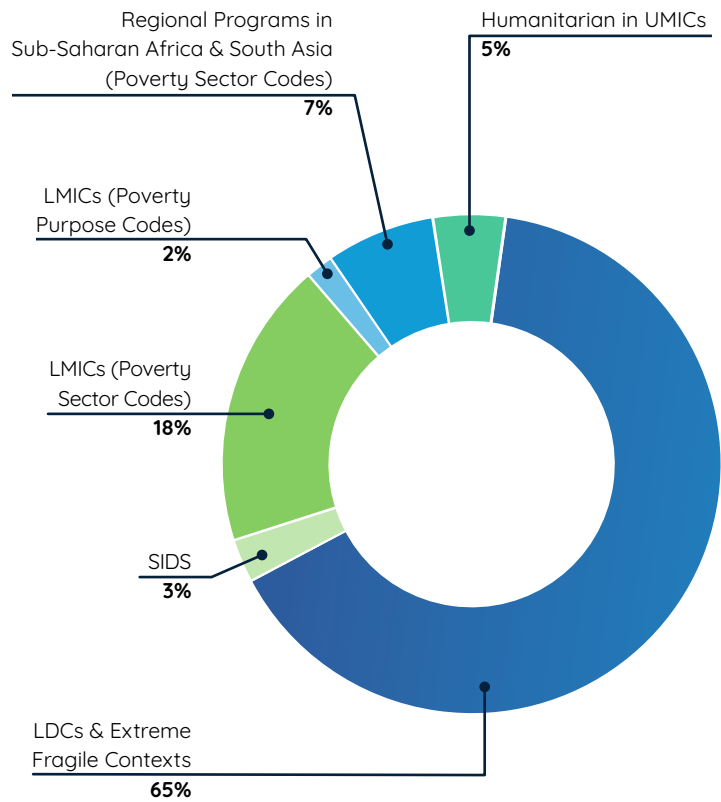
3 The poverty-focused share of Canadian ODA is eroding. While the average dollar value of Core ODA has remained relatively stable since 2020/21, at about \$4.175 billion, it has declined as a share of Canadian ODA. It represented 66% of Canadian ODA in 2019/20, but only 53% in 2024/25, excluding in-donor refugee costs.



Disaggregated Trends

4 Least developed countries (LDCs) and extreme fragile contexts remain the core of poverty-focused Canadian ODA. These countries make up roughly two-thirds of the Core, a share that has remained consistent since 2019/20. Poverty-oriented sectors in lower-middle-income countries account for another 18%, with regional programming in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia adding 7%.

Core Poverty Accountability Standard in Canadian ODA: Main Components Share of Total Core, 2022/23 to 2024/25 Average



- 5 Humanitarian assistance is a major part of the Standard.** Because humanitarian assistance is fully included, it represents about 25% of Core ODA allocations on average, compared to 13% of total ODA in 2024/25.
- 6 Gender equality is strongly embedded in the Standard.** In 2024/25, 80% of Core allocations had significant gender equality objectives, while 19% focused on gender equality as their principal objective. Any weakening of Canada’s feminist policy framework would therefore put at risk a core feature of poverty-focused ODA.
- 7 The Standard is concentrated in emergency response and health.** Reproductive, basic and general health accounted for 27% of Core sector allocations in 2024/25. Together with emergency response, these sectors made up about half of the Standard that year.

8 Some poverty-relevant sectors need closer attention. Basic and general education within Core ODA declined from 6% in 2019/20 to 3% in 2024/25, with only 64% of activities implemented within the Standard. Also, adaptation finance within it accounted for only 44% of total adaptation finance in 2024/25, raising important questions about whether Canada's climate finance is sufficiently reaching countries and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Channels of Delivery

- 9 Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a central and growing role in delivering poverty-focused ODA.** In 2024/25, CSOs delivered 34% of all Core ODA (48% of bilateral Core, excluding Ukraine), up from 28% in 2019/20. CSOs also implemented 74% of Core activities exclusively focused on women's rights, up 50% since 2019/20. Furthermore, 70% of Canadian international assistance delivered through CSOs was directed to activities within the Standard.
- 10 Multilateral organization play a dominant role in the Standard, similar to overall delivery channels for Canadian ODA.** In 2024/25, they accounted for 62% of Core ODA, including bilateral aid delivered through multilateral channels (multi-bi) at 30%.

**Core Poverty Accountability Standard in Canadian ODA:
Sector Allocation, 2024/25**

