Do Donors to Charity Really Not Care About Effectiveness?

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Abstract

Experimental evidence shows that when donors in developed countries choose between an international development charity and a less effective domestic charity, they usually favour the domestic charity. We argue that past studies did not make the greater effectiveness of overseas charities sufficiently salient. To test this, we conducted an incentivised experiment where US participants allocated $50 between two charities providing school lunches: one domestic and one overseas. In a within-subjects design, participants made three allocation decisions, varying how many lunches the overseas charity (2, 5, or 25) could be provided for the same cost as one in the US. Donations to the overseas charity rose as its relative effectiveness increased, with the strongest effect when participants viewed a visual cue highlighting how many more children could be fed overseas. The results are statistically significant, but the effect sizes are modest.

JEL classification: D64, C91 and O1

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1 Introduction

The effective altruism movement argues that donors to charity should target donations to the charities that do the most good per dollar. These charities will typically be international development charities helping people in need in the developing world (MacAskill, 2015; Singer, 2015; Schubert and Caviola, 2024). However, most people living in the developed world prefer to donate to charities helping those in need in their own country. For example, in the US only four percent of personal donations go to international development charities (Giving USA Foundation, 2009) with Casale and Baumann (2015) finding that only 7.2% of US households donated to international development in the previous 12 months.

For people in the developed world to be effective altruists requires first that they realise the most cost-effective interventions will be to projects in developing countries. The second step is to seek out the most cost-effective projects in developing countries. Our research focuses on the first of these decisions. We analyse how responsive people in the US are to information on relative cost effectiveness when choosing between a domestic charity and an international development charity. The specific example we use is donations for the provision of school lunches. It is much cheaper to provide school lunches in a developing country than in a developed country, with the cost of providing school lunches varying across countries due to variation in food costs and the labour costs of preparing the meals.

Evidence from experimental economics suggests that most people donating to charity are not particularly interested in how effective their donations are, consistent with a preference for donating to domestic charities (Knowles and Sullivan, 2017; Metzger and Günther, 2019; Karlan and Wood, 2017).[1] There is one lab experiment, Brañas-Garza

[1] Karlan and Wood (2017) did find that providing the information on effectiveness increased donations for donors with a history of giving large donations, but reduced donations for those with a history of making small donations.

(2006), where it is possible that providing information on effectiveness increased donations, but it is unclear whether the difference in donations stems from information on effectiveness or from providing information on who and what the money will be used for.[2] In a non-incentivised Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE), Genc et al. (2020) obtain results consistent with the experimental literature. They analyse how much weight people place on (i) the effectiveness of a donation, (ii) the need of the recipient or (iii) whether the donation will be spent domestically or overseas. For over half the participants, where the money will be spent is the most important attribute, with the effectiveness of the donation being most important for only 23 percent of participants.

We argue that in these existing studies it is often not particularly salient *how much* more effective a donation is in one scenario compared to another. For example, Genc et al. (2020) describe the effectiveness of a donation as being either "high", "medium" or "low". In Metzger and Günther (2019) participants are randomly matched with an international development charity described as having either "high" or "low" impact. Clark et al. (2017) include a treatment where participants are told that any donation will be spent on immunising children in Mali and that scientific research has shown immunisation is "highly effective" at improving child health. In a similar vein, Karlan and Wood (2017) conduct a field experiment with fundraising mailers for a charity. In the treatment group subjects are told that "rigorous scientific methodologies" demonstrate the positive impact of the charity's work. None of these studies provide quantitative data on the cost-effectiveness of the charities.

We add to the existing literature by conducting two experiments where it is very salient how much more effective the charity in the developing country is. For both experiments,

[2] Brañas-Garza (2006) conducts a Dictator Game with three treatments: (i) no information is provided about the recipients, (ii) the recipients are poor people in developing countries and money donated will be very useful in these countries, and (iii) money donated will be used for medicine and that these medicines can be of great help. Donations were higher in (iii) than (ii) and higher in (ii) than (i). None of these treatment comparisons introduce information on effectiveness alone; (ii) also adds information on who the recipient is and (iii) also adds information on what the money will be spent on.

in a within-subjects design, US participants make three decisions dividing $50 between a charity providing school lunches in the US and a charity providing school lunches in a developing country. Varied across these choices is how many school lunches can be provided in the developing country for the cost of one meal in the US, with the ratios being 2:1, 5:1 and 25:1. Our design makes it very salient how much further a donation can go in a developing country than in a developed country.

In the second experiment we add a visual cue to make even more salient how many more children can be fed in the overseas country. For example, when the relative cost ratio is 25:1, the visual image shows 25 stick figures for the overseas country and one stick figure for the US. This is shown in Figure A.1. Our hypothesis is that adding the visual cue makes the relative effectiveness of the overseas charity more salient and that this makes people more responsive to differences in the price ratio.[3] The two experiments are exactly identical in all other aspects.

One study which does provide quantitative data on effectiveness is Caviola et al. (2020b). In this study participants divide a hypothetical sum of money between two hypothetical charities (A and B) that use different malaria medication in a developing country. In the control group no data are presented on how much more effective Charity A is, but Charity A is described as being more effective. In Treatment One participants are told Charity A is 1.5 times more effective than Charity B and in Treatment Two participants are told Charity A is 100 times more effective. Participants are presented with a binary choice: they can either donate $100 to Charity A and $0 to Charity B

[3]There is a substantial and growing literature studying how visual cues affect participant behaviour. The results in these studies are mixed. For example, Fong and Luttmer (2011) conduct an experiment on charitable giving and find that showing participants photos of black recipients rather than white recipients affects the perceived worthiness of recipients among non-black participants but has no significant effect on charitable giving. Kuziemko et al. (2015) provide participants with information on the share of households who pay estate tax to analyse if beliefs and policy preferences change in response to this information. One of the treatment groups received the information along with a picture of a mansion (priming people to think about the lifestyle of the rich). They find the visual cue does not affect views on inequality. On the other hand, Israel et al. (2014) find having a visual cue affects time preference and discount rates whereas the textual information does not.

or \$60 to Charity A and \$40 to Charity B. The percentage of participants donating the full \$100 to Charity A is 37.3% in the control, 38.0% in Treatment One and 55.6% in Treatment Two. Our research question is very different to Caviola et al's. In Caviola et al. (2020b) the only thing that varies between the two charities is effectiveness; there is no trade-off between effectiveness and which country the recipients are in. In that sense we might expect everyone to donate everything to the most effective charity. In our study there is a trade-off between effectiveness and whether the money is spent in the participant's own country or overseas. We would not expect people to allocate all money to the overseas charity, even though this will mean more lunches are provided, if they have some preference for supporting local causes. We are interested in whether providing very salient information on effectiveness can override people's preferences for supporting the less domestic charity.

Our research design enables us to test (i) how sensitive participants are to the variations in the relative cost of providing school lunches when choosing between helping people at home or abroad, (ii) whether people are more sensitive to variation in relative cost when we add the visual cue and (iii) how many people allocate all the money to the country with the lowest cost of providing school lunches for all three decisions (i.e. they are effective altruists). Our main focus is on these first two questions. If people are sensitive to quantitative information on cost effectiveness, this would have important implications for international development charities. For both experiments we collect a wide range of demographic data along with data on whether people think in a utilitarian manner, whether they consider themselves liberal or conservative with respect to economic policy, and their moral views. We analyse whether any of these variables are correlated with how sensitive participants are to variations in the cost of providing school lunches.

We are unaware of any existing studies analysing how sensitive people are to quantitative variation in relative cost-effectiveness when choosing between a domestic charity and international development charity. We aim to fill this gap in the literature, as well as

contribute to the literature on cost effective charitable donation behaviour more generally, by being the first incentivised experiment to provide quantitative data (rather than qualitative information) on relative cost-effectiveness in any charitable donation context. We also contribute to the literature by testing whether responsiveness to information on effectiveness increases with the inclusion of a visual cue.

We find evidence of a statistically significant downward sloping demand curve. That is, on average participants allocate less to the US charity as the relative price of school lunches in the US increases and this effect is amplified when the stick figures are included as a visual cue. We find an elasticity of 0.25 between a price of 2 and 25. However, the relative-price effect size is not particularly large, being similar to the effect of including the stick figures.

2 Experimental Methods

We conducted the online experiments in Qualtrics, with participants drawn from Prolific. Participants had to be living in the US, aged 18 or over and be fluent in English. Requiring participants to be living in the US is crucial to our research design, as we want participants to identify with the US being their home country.

Participants took part in a task where they had to divide 50 USD between two charities, under three different scenarios.[4] They were informed that both charities provide school lunches for children.[5] For each scenario, one charity provides school lunches for children in

[4]Our within-subjects design is more likely than a between-subjects design to lead to higher donations to the more effective charity as participants can compare the effectiveness of the two charities. In a between-subjects design there is no point of comparison. Caviola et al. (2014) show more money is allocated to the more effective charity in a within-subject design (which they term "joint evaluation") than in a between-subject design (which they term "separate evaluation"). We choose a within-groups design, so we have data on what percentage of participants have a downward sloping demand curve, allocating less money to the US charity as the relative price of school lunches increases in the US.

[5]We chose school lunches because we were able to identify a charity in the US and a charity in a developing country that provided school lunches that we could make online payments to at the end of the experiment.

the US, and the other charity provides school lunches for children in a low-income country overseas. We did not name the overseas countries, but referred to them as Country A, Country B and Country C in the experiment instructions. This was because we did not want other information participants had about the three countries to affect their decision. For example, if they knew how far the country was from the US, this might influence their decision. Instead, we wanted them to focus solely on the information we provided about how many children could be fed in the overseas country for the same cost as feeding one child in the US.

It was explained that the cost of providing school lunches varies across countries due to variation in food costs and the labour costs of preparing the meals.[6] Participants had to decide how much of the $50 to allocate to the charity feeding children in the US and how much to allocate to the charity feeding children in the overseas country for three different scenarios. The information on the relative costs of providing school lunches in different countries was taken from Gelli and Daryanani (2013). The price ratios were 2:1, 5:1 and 25:1. Based on the data from Gelli and Daryanani (2013) it costs approximately twice as much to provide school lunches in the US than in Trinidad and Tobago (Country A), five times as much in the US than in the Dominican Republic (Country B) and 25 times as much in the US than in India (Country C).

As noted in the introduction there were two versions of the experiment. The only difference between the two experiments is that in Experiment 2 participants were shown stick-figure images of the number of children the donations can help in each country, in addition to textual information on relative prices described above. Experiment 1 did not include the stick figures. Given that we present the same information with and without the visuals, we can disentangle the effect of the visual cue from that of providing only textual information on the effectiveness of their donation. We use stick figures and not

[6]Participants could not proceed to the next screen without spending at least a minute reading the description of the task.

images of real children because showing real images could prompt the participants to focus on the visible attributes of the children in the image such as race and gender.

Participants' decisions were incentivised by informing them that for one-in-ten randomly chosen participants we would make real payments, from a research grant, to the two charities based on that participant's decision for one of the three scenarios. It was stated that we had decided in advance which of the three scenarios (countries) this would be , and at the end of the experiment they would learn the names of Country A, Country B and Country C, as well as which of the three scenarios, payments were based on.[7] Participants were also told at the end of the experiment whether they were one of the one-in-ten participants for whom actual payments would be made. All three decisions were included on the same screen, so participants could see all three scenarios before making their first decision. A screen shot of this information for Experiment 1 can be seen in Appendix Figure A.1 and the full set of survey questions for both experiments is included as Appendix B.

Participants' decisions in the experiment generate data enabling us to answer three questions. First, do participants allocate more money to the overseas charity as the cost of providing school lunches falls relative to that in the US (in other words, does their demand curve for US lunches slope downwards). Second, whether having the visual cue makes the demand curve for US lunches steeper than the demand curve without the stick figures. Third, what proportion of participants are effective altruists, choosing to allocate all money to the overseas charity for all three scenarios. We also analyse whether participant behaviour is correlated with a range of control variables.

It is worth considering why we would expect participants to allocate any money to the US charity, given that doing so means providing fewer school lunches in total. If the only information participants had was the price ratios, we would expect all the money

[7] We decided in advance that the country would be India. This was because we identified ahead of time a charity providing school lunches in India that we could make an online donation to.

to go to the most efficient charity. However, participants also have information on who (children in the US or overseas) receives the lunches. An effective altruist would attach no weight to who receives the lunches, but if people have any preference for helping those in their own country this would be consistent with allocating some money for lunches for US children. Another possibility is that when people are not sure what the right thing is to do, or perhaps think that splitting is the fair thing to do, they might split the money.

For both experiments, once participants had made the three allocation decisions, they were asked a variety of demographic questions (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, country of birth, which country their parents were born in, educational attainment, income). Participants were also asked if they had donated to a charity in the last year and whether on economic policy matters they considered themselves very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, very conservative, or other. To determine whether participants think in a utilitarian manner, we also asked a question based on the popular 'trolley problem'. Participants were also asked a battery of questions on their moral views, giving a score between -1 and 7 on a Likert scale as to how important the following are to them: pragmatism, purity, justice, social recognition, pleasure, compassion, spirituality, equality, freedom, respect for tradition, and giving. These questions were based on Graham et al. (2011). Details for all of these questions can be found in the experiment instructions in Appendix B.

3 Results

The first of the two experiments was conducted on June 24, 2023 and completed by 603 participants and the second experiment was conducted on June 20, 2024, and completed by 600 participants. Summary statistics for both samples are presented in Table 1. In Experiment 1, the average age of participants was 38 years, with 53 percent of the sample being male. The sample in Experiment 2 is slightly younger with average age being 35

years and is less likely to be male. Over half the sample in both experiments (55 percent) had at least a college degree. Sixty-six percent in the first experiment and 58 percent in the second experiment had donated to charity in the last year, with 25 percent having volunteered their time for a charity in the last year in both experiments. In the first experiment 50 percent of the sample described themselves as liberal, 26 percent as moderate and 23 percent as conservative. In the second experiment the ratios were 50 percent liberal, 30 percent moderate and 18 percent conservative.[8] Having some statistically significant differences in the sample characteristics between the two experiments means it is important we include a full set of control variables in our regression equations.

Although not our primary research focus, our experiment provides data on how many people donated the full amount to the overseas charity in all three scenarios (i.e., for all three price ratios); in other words, how many people could be termed "effective altruists"? Only 43 (7.1%) in the first experiment and 51 (8.2%) in the second experiment allocated the full $50 to the overseas charity for all three scenarios. In the online Appendix Table A.1, we analyse if any demographic variables are correlated with whether people are effective altruists. Effective altruism is measured using two dependent variables: (i) a dummy variable for people who donate the full $50 to the overseas charity in all three scenarios and (ii) the total amount donated to the overseas charity in the three allocation decisions. We find very few variables to be significantly correlated. Of note is that the utilitarian measure is not correlated with being an effective altruist.

Our primary research question is how sensitive people are to the variation in relative cost (or price) and if their responsiveness varies based on whether participants see the visuals or not. Figure 1 shows our key results. In Experiment 1, donations to US charity are $2.23 less at P=5 and $5.49 less when P=25, as compared to P=2. In Experiment 2, which presents the same quantitative information but with the visual cue added, we see

[8] We combined "very liberal" and "liberal" into one group ("liberal") and "very conservative" and "conservative" into one group ("conservative").

a sharper drop in donations to the US charity as relative price increases. In particular, allocations to the US charity are \$5.7 less at P=5 and almost \$9 less at P=25, as compared to P=2. Thus, it shows that the donations to the US charity decline as the relative price increases. Additionally, this responsiveness to information on relative prices is significantly greater when participants see the visual cue.

In Table 2 we probe this finding further to see if adjusting for covariates changes this relationship. Table 2 pools the data from both experiments.[9] The dependent variable in the regression is the amount donated to the US charity. Column 1 replicates the estimates from Figure 1 – for Experiment 1, when P=5, donations to the US charity are \$2.23 less than when P=2 (the omitted category). At P=25, donations are \$5.49 lower than at P=2. The coefficients on the two interaction terms (interacting relative price with Experiment 2 dummy) are significantly negative, indicating that the relative price effects are larger in Experiment 2 (that is, the demand curve is steeper when participants see the visual cue).

Although we find a statistically significant effect of relative price (i.e. the demand curve is downward sloping), the effect sizes are not particularly large. For example, comparing P=2 with P=25 for Experiment 2 gives an elasticity of only 0.25. Another way to put the effect size for relative price in context is to note that the effect sizes for relative price are not too dissimilar to those for whether the stick figures are included or not. In other words, participants are about as responsive to the visual cue as they are to differences in the effectiveness of the charities (between P=2 and P=25).

Adding control variables to the regression does not notably change any of the coefficients discussed above. Column (2) adds controls for age and gender. Older people donate

[9]People who allocate all \$50 to the overseas charity at P=2 cannot allocate more to the overseas charity at P=5 or P=25 as they have already allocated the maximum amount to the overseas charity. Likewise, those who allocate nearly all of the \$50 to the overseas charity at P=2, can only allocate a few dollars more to the overseas charity at P=5 and P=25. In the online appendix Table A.2 we present a version of Table 2 for the subsample of participants who donated \$30 or less to the overseas charity at P=2, meaning they have at least \$20 more they could allocate to the overseas charity at P=5 and P=25. The results from this regression are qualitatively very similar to those in Table 2, which includes all participants.

more to the US charity with males donating less to the US charity. In Column (3) we control for other background characteristics of participants. Those with lower incomes, those who are born in the US, those for whom both parents were born in the US and those that value pragmatism, purity and freedom donate more to the US charity. Liberals and moderates donate less to the US charity (relative to the omitted category of Conservatives), as do those who value social recognition, compassion and equality.

The key reason we used a within-subjects design, was so we could analyse how many people donated less to the US charity as relative price increased (i.e. they have a downward sloping demand curve). In Experiment 1, 278 participants (46%) have a downward sloping curve (when measured between P=2 and P=25), 132 (22%) have an upward sloping curve and 193 (32%) have a flat demand curve (i.e. they are insensitive to variation in relative price). Having an upward sloping curve (allocating more money to the US charity as the relative price of a lunch in the US increases) may sound irrational at first, but this would be consistent with people realising that allocating the same amount to the US charity as relative price increases means fewer lunches in the US. They therefore respond by allocating more money to the US charity as the relative price increases. Of the 193 participants with a flat demand curve 51 (26% of those with a flat demand curve) donate the full amount to the US charity irrespective of relative price and 45 (23% of those with a flat demand curve) donate the full $50 to the overseas charity irrespective of relative price.

The results are somewhat different in Experiment 2, with 365 (61%) having a downward sloping curve, 78 (13%) having an upward sloping curve and 157 (26%) having a flat curve. Only 23 people (less than half the number in Experiment 1) always donate the full amount to the US charity, with 49 always donating the full amount to the overseas charity. This is consistent with our earlier findings that participants are more responsive to differences in relative price in Experiment 2.

In Figure 2 we plot the distribution of donations at P=2, P=5 and P=25 for the

two experiments, with the amount donated to the overseas charity on the horizontal axis. The figure shows that the majority of participants prefer splitting their allocations, rather than allocating the full $50 to one of the two charities. At P=2, there are a large number who split their donations approximately equally, especially in Experiment 2. Consistent with the results presented in Table 2, the figure shows a greater tendency to allocate more to the overseas charity as the relative price of donating to the US increases, and this is especially marked for Experiment 2 which includes the visual cue.

Caviola et al. (2020a) find participants tend to split donations between a more effective and less effective charity, rather than allocating everything to the most effective charity, suggesting this could be due to fairness considerations and/or the belief that diversifying donations is more effective than concentrating donations on only one charity. This notion of diversifying donations is akin to diversifying an investment portfolio. We also find that the vast majority of our participants split their donations. Even when the relative price is 25, 69.7% choose to split, with 23.4% allocating everything to the overseas charity and 9.8% allocating everything to the US charity, across the two experiments. If splitting is motivated by fairness considerations, this may mean allocating half the money to each charity and we find a large proportion of participants do this, particularly at P=2. Caviola et al. (2020b) suggest, but do not test, that another motivation for splitting could be that people falsely assume the most efficient allocation is to give X times more to the charity that is X times as effective. For a relative price of 2, this would mean giving twice as much ($33.33) to the overseas charity as the US charity, for a relative price of 5, 5 times as much ($41.67) to the overseas charity and for a relative price of 25, 25 times as much ($48.07) to the overseas charity. Figure 2 does not appear to show clustering at these donation levels.

We now analyse what type of people are more sensitive to information on relative price. These results are presented in Table 3. The dependent variable in the three columns is

the absolute change in donation to overseas charity between different prices.[10] In Column (1) the dependent variable is donations to the overseas charity at P=5 minus donations to the overseas charity at P=2. In Column (2) the dependent variable is donations to the overseas charity at P=25 minus donations to the overseas charity at P=5. In Column (3) the dependent variable is donations to the overseas charity at P=25 minus donations to the overseas charity at P=2. In all columns older people are less sensitive to variation in relative price than younger people and in two of the three columns males are more sensitive to variation in relative price than females. Consistent with the Table 2 results, people in Experiment 2 are more sensitive to information on relative price than are people in Experiment 1. No other variables are significant in more than one column, with most being insignificant in all three columns.

4 Conclusion

Effective altruists argue that those wanting to do the most good they can, should direct their charitable donations to the most cost-effective charities, noting that the most cost-effective charities are typically those helping people in need in the developing world. However, existing studies find that most people prefer to donate to those helping people in their own country and that providing people with information on the cost effectiveness of different charities does not increase donations to the more cost-effective charity. We argue that in these existing studies it is not very salient how much more effective the most effective charity is.

We add to the existing literature by providing quantitative information on how many more children a school lunch can be provided for in a developing country, compared to the cost of providing a school lunch for one child in the US. US Participants were asked

[10]We define our dependent variable as the change in donations to overseas charity, as opposed to changes in donation to the US charity, so that a greater positive value indicates a larger change which makes the interpretation of the coefficients more straight forward.

to divide $50 between a charity providing school lunches for children in the US and a charity providing school lunches for children in a poor country overseas. Each participant made three allocation decisions, with the relative cost of providing a school lunch in the US varying across these three decisions.

We find a statistically significant downward sloping demand curve, on average across participants, with this effect being stronger when we include the visual cue. However, the effect size is not particularly high, even though it is statistically significant. In fact, the relative-price effects are not that much larger than the effect of the visual cue. Our experimental design provides every opportunity for a large effect size: we provide salient quantitative information on the varying effectiveness of the two charities, provide visual cues to make these differences even more obvious, and do so within a within-subjects design. Despite this, the average effect sizes are modest. Existing experiments providing less salient information on effectiveness find the provision of information on effectiveness tends to have no effect on donations; we find the provision of more salient quantitative information leads to only a small (but significant) effect.

From a policy perspective, perhaps our most important result is that the visual cue matters. Including the stick figures increases donations to the overseas charity and makes people more responsive to variations in relative price. International development charities may find including such visual cues increases donations. Whereas existing studies find most people are not sensitive to information on relative cost when making charitable donations, we find that over 60 percent have a downward sloping demand curve when the information on cost effectiveness is sufficiently salient, including having the visual cue of the stick figures. Our results suggest that international development charities, when soliciting donations, should continue to provide information on how much can be achieved for a donation helping those in poor countries overseas.

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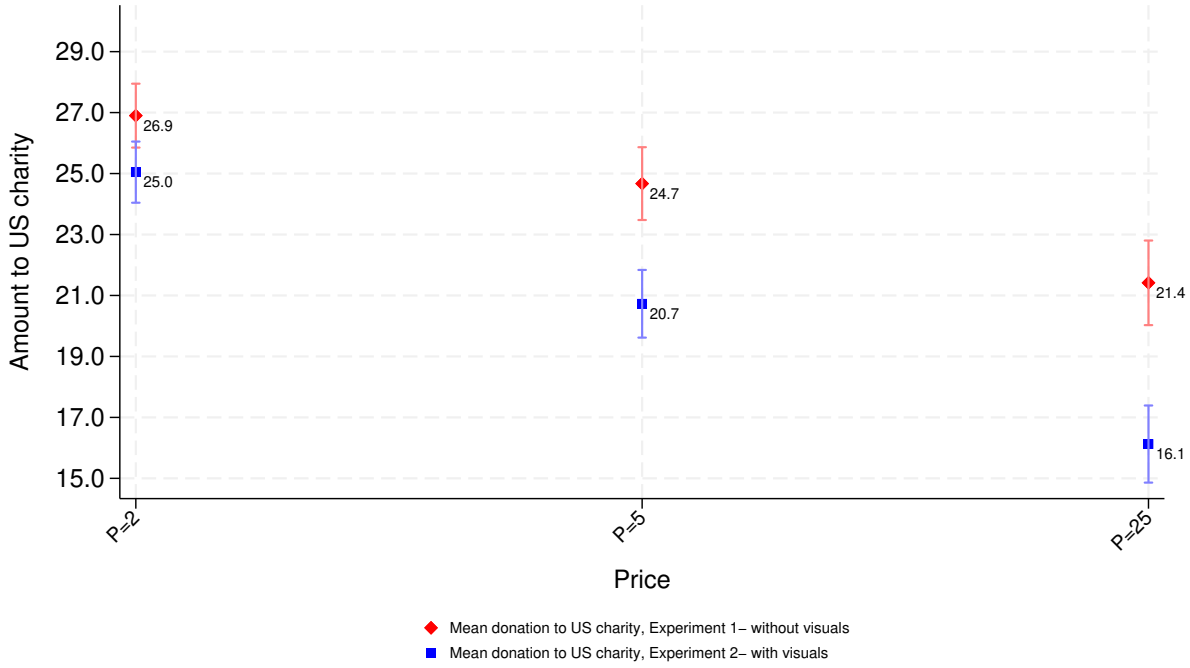
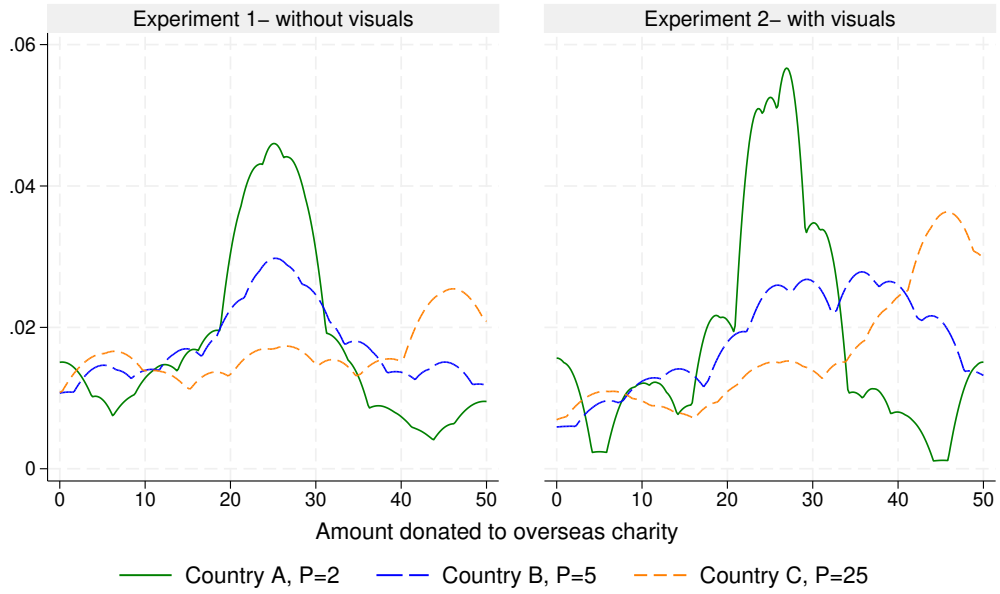
Figures

Figure 1: Average Donations to US charity by experiment



Notes: The whiskers are 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 2: Distribution of amount donated to overseas charity at three prices



Notes: The figures plot k-density of the amount donated to the overseas charity for the three prices, seperately for the two experiments.

Tables

Table 1: Summary statistics by experiment

	Experiment 1- without visuals (1) mean/sd	Experiment 2- with visuals (2) mean/sd	Difference (2)-(1) (3) b/t
Amount to US, P=2	26.90	25.05	1.854*
	(13.13)	(12.54)	(2.50)
Amount to US, P=5	24.67	20.73	3.942***
	(14.96)	(13.87)	(4.74)
Amount to US, P=25	21.41	16.12	5.289***
	(17.38)	(15.81)	(5.52)
Age	38.30	34.83	3.472***
	(12.87)	(11.96)	(4.85)
Male	0.53	0.40	0.132***
	(0.50)	(0.49)	(4.64)
College education or more	0.55	0.55	-0.006
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(-0.21)
Income less than USD50,000	0.37	0.35	0.020
	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.72)
Donated in last year	0.66	0.58	0.083**
	(0.47)	(0.49)	(2.99)
Volunteered in last year	0.25	0.27	-0.023
	(0.43)	(0.44)	(-0.91)
Conservative	0.23	0.18	0.046*
	(0.42)	(0.38)	(1.97)
Liberal	0.50	0.50	0.002
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.09)
Moderate	0.26	0.30	-0.045
	(0.44)	(0.46)	(-1.72)
Other	0.01	0.02	-0.003
	(0.11)	(0.13)	(-0.49)
Utilatarian measure	0.17	0.14	0.029
	(0.38)	(0.35)	(1.39)
Pragmatism	3.80	3.89	-0.087
	(1.73)	(1.77)	(-0.87)
Purity	2.66	2.87	-0.203
	(2.47)	(2.34)	(-1.47)
Justice	5.34	5.41	-0.068
	(1.58)	(1.44)	(-0.78)
Social Recoginition	2.52	2.80	-0.283*
	(1.96)	(1.98)	(-2.48)
Pleasure	3.74	3.67	0.071
	(1.72)	(1.72)	(0.72)
Compassion	5.57	5.54	0.029
	(1.47)	(1.48)	(0.34)
Spirituality	2.83	3.03	-0.201
	(2.59)	(2.47)	(-1.38)
Equality	5.46	5.34	0.124
	(1.68)	(1.70)	(1.28)
Freedom	5.58	5.51	0.072
	(1.44)	(1.44)	(0.87)
Respect for tradition	2.56	2.75	-0.193
	(2.20)	(2.11)	(-1.55)
Giving	4.55	4.58	-0.036
	(1.73)	(1.65)	(-0.37)
Observations	603	600	1203

Notes: * denotes significance at 10 percent; ** at 5 percent and *** significance at 1 percent. Utilitarian measure is a dummy variable that takes a value 1 when participants choose "Yes" to the survey question, and 0 if they choose "No" or "Cannot Decide". For the moral values in the last 11 rows (Pragmatism- Giving), participants selected a value from -1 (opposed to my values) to 7 (of supreme importance). See survey instrument in Appendix B for more details.

Table 2: Differences in donation behaviour by Price and experiment

	Dep. var.= Donations to US charity		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
price=5	-2.230***	-2.230***	-2.230***
	(0.810)	(0.808)	(0.794)
price=25	-5.485***	-5.485***	-5.485***
	(0.887)	(0.882)	(0.875)
Experiment 2- with visuals	-1.854**	-1.495**	-1.333*
	(0.740)	(0.747)	(0.733)
price=5 × Experiment 2- with visuals	-2.088*	-2.088*	-2.088*
	(1.113)	(1.105)	(1.077)
price=25 × Experiment 2- with visuals	-3.435***	-3.435***	-3.435***
	(1.211)	(1.199)	(1.179)
Age		0.154***	0.119***
		(0.019)	(0.020)
Male		-1.323***	-2.090***
		(0.495)	(0.507)
College education or more			0.160
			(0.524)
Income less than USD 50,000			1.511***
			(0.537)
Donated in last year			0.316
			(0.533)
Volunteered in last year			0.656
			(0.591)
Liberal			-3.121***
			(0.812)
Moderate			-1.872**
			(0.759)
Other			-3.366
			(2.495)
US born			1.889**
			(0.859)
Both parents US born			2.098***
			(0.694)
Utilatarian measure			-0.686
			(0.681)
Pragmatism			0.290**
			(0.147)
Purity			0.335**
			(0.140)
Justice			-0.037
			(0.197)
Social Recoginition			-0.363***
			(0.139)
Pleasure			0.277*
			(0.160)
Compassion			-0.708***
			(0.242)
Spirituality			-0.209
			(0.131)
Equality			-0.510***
			(0.194)
Freedom			0.808***
			(0.208)
Respect for tradition			-0.105
			(0.163)
Giving			0.034
			(0.213)
Constant	26.900***	21.709***	21.627***
	(0.535)	(0.952)	(1.929)
Obs.	3609	3609	3609
No. of participants	1203	1203	1203
R-sq	0.055	0.074	0.116
Outcome mean	22.485	22.485	22.485

Notes: Robust standard errors shown in brackets. * denotes significance at 10 percent; ** at 5 percent and *** significance at 1 percent. The omitted category for political leaning on economic matters is conservative. Column 3 also controls for the order in which participants see the three price scenarios.

Table 3: Correlates of absolute change in donation to overseas charity between prices

	(1) Overseas donation at P=5 - P=2	(2) Overseas donation at P=25 - P=5	(3) Overseas donation at P=25 - P=2
Age	-0.042*	-0.073***	-0.117***
	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.033)
Male	1.419***	0.316	1.720**
	(0.547)	(0.597)	(0.822)
College education or more	-0.348	-0.084	-0.406
	(0.559)	(0.609)	(0.840)
Income less than USD 50,000	-0.705	-0.501	-1.221
	(0.578)	(0.631)	(0.869)
Donated in last year	0.178	0.732	0.856
	(0.576)	(0.627)	(0.865)
Volunteered in last year	-0.440	-1.288*	-1.699*
	(0.620)	(0.676)	(0.932)
Liberal	-0.396	0.356	0.189
	(0.822)	(0.894)	(1.235)
Moderate	0.028	0.349	0.485
	(0.776)	(0.846)	(1.166)
US born	-0.225	-0.278	-0.594
	(0.910)	(0.991)	(1.367)
Both parents US born	0.367	1.079	1.254
	(0.721)	(0.784)	(1.083)
Utilatarian measure	0.506	0.816	1.299
	(0.712)	(0.777)	(1.070)
Pragmatism	-0.020	-0.237	-0.269
	(0.154)	(0.168)	(0.232)
Purity	-0.256*	-0.013	-0.264
	(0.146)	(0.160)	(0.220)
Justice	0.262	-0.276	-0.033
	(0.205)	(0.223)	(0.308)
Social Recoginition	0.214	-0.195	0.025
	(0.151)	(0.164)	(0.226)
Pleasure	-0.059	0.054	-0.018
	(0.165)	(0.180)	(0.248)
Compassion	0.274	0.049	0.339
	(0.235)	(0.256)	(0.352)
Spirituality	-0.117	-0.103	-0.193
	(0.135)	(0.147)	(0.203)
Equality	0.346*	0.029	0.372
	(0.191)	(0.209)	(0.288)
Freedom	0.061	0.012	0.015
	(0.206)	(0.224)	(0.310)
Respect for tradition	0.052	0.357**	0.403
	(0.167)	(0.182)	(0.250)
Giving	-0.226	-0.063	-0.268
	(0.214)	(0.233)	(0.321)
Experiment 2- with visuals	2.509***	1.615***	4.041***
	(0.528)	(0.579)	(0.794)
Overseas Donation, P=2	-0.125***		-0.233***
	(0.020)		(0.031)
Overseas Donation, P=5		-0.059***	
		(0.020)	
Constant	4.229**	7.839***	13.440***
	(2.096)	(2.270)	(3.150)
Obs.	1203	1203	1203
R-sq	0.079	0.044	0.093
Outcome mean	3.272	3.927	7.199

Notes: Notes: Robust standard errors shown in brackets. * denotes significance at 10 percent; ** at 5 percent and *** significance at 1 percent. The omitted category for political leaning on economic matters is conservative. The regressions also control for the order in which participants see the three price scenarios.

Online appendix for "Do Donors to Charity Really Not Care About Effectiveness?"

Authors: Neha Agarwal and Stephen Knowles

FOR ONLINE PUBLICATION ONLY

Appendix A

Figure A.1: Allocation task for two Experiments

Experiment 1

Scenario One

The cost of feeding a child in the US is **TWO** times as high as in Country A. That is, **TWO** children can be fed in Country A for the same cost as one child in the US.

- How much of a 50 USD donation should go to the charity feeding children in the US?

[Enter dollar amount]

Scenario Two

The cost of feeding a child in the US is **FIVE** times as high as in Country B. That is, **FIVE** children can be fed in Country B for the same cost as one child in the US.

- How much of a 50 USD donation should go to the charity feeding children in the US?

[Enter dollar amount]

Scenario Three

The cost of feeding a child in the US is **TWENTY-FIVE** times as high as in Country C. That is, **TWENTY-FIVE** children can be fed in Country C for the same cost as one child in the US.

- How much of a 50 USD donation should go to the charity feeding children in the US?

[Enter dollar amount]

Experiment 2

Scenario One

TWO children can be fed in Country A for the same cost as one child in the US.

- Please indicate how much of the US$50 you would like to donate to the US charity or to the Country A charity.

[Enter dollar amount]

Scenario Two

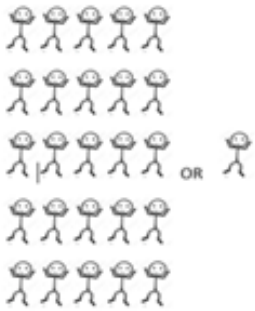
FIVE children can be fed in Country B for the same cost as one child in the US.

- Please indicate how much of the US$50 you would like to donate to the US charity or to the Country B charity.

[Enter dollar amount]

Scenario Three

TWENTY-FIVE children can be fed in Country C for the same cost as one child in the US.



- Please indicate how much of the US$50 you would like to donate to the US charity or to the Country C charity.

[Enter dollar amount]

Table A.1: Correlates of being an Effective Altruist & total amount donated to overseas country

	(1) =1 if donated everything to overseas cty for every price	(2) Total amount donated to overseas cty across three prices
Age	-0.000	-0.408***
	(0.001)	(0.097)
Male	0.021	4.734**
	(0.016)	(2.399)
College education or more	0.011	-0.432
	(0.017)	(2.485)
Income less than USD 50,000	-0.008	-4.837*
	(0.017)	(2.568)
Donated in last year	0.009	-1.646
	(0.017)	(2.553)
Volunteered in last year	0.020	-1.849
	(0.019)	(2.756)
Liberal	0.012	10.393***
	(0.024)	(3.629)
Moderate	0.000	6.688*
	(0.023)	(3.436)
Other	0.175***	11.645
	(0.066)	(9.812)
US born	0.011	-4.527
	(0.027)	(4.031)
Both parents US born	-0.046**	-7.678**
	(0.021)	(3.175)
Utilatarian measure	0.023	1.845
	(0.021)	(3.166)
Pragmatism	-0.001	-0.755
	(0.005)	(0.684)
Purity	-0.014***	-0.937
	(0.004)	(0.650)
Justice	0.006	0.291
	(0.006)	(0.909)
Social Recoginition	-0.004	1.185*
	(0.005)	(0.669)
Pleasure	-0.004	-0.988
	(0.005)	(0.732)
Compassion	0.006	2.060**
	(0.007)	(1.041)
Spirituality	0.005	0.687
	(0.004)	(0.600)
Equality	-0.004	1.326
	(0.006)	(0.849)
Freedom	-0.011*	-2.466***
	(0.006)	(0.913)
Respect for tradition	0.000	0.373
	(0.005)	(0.741)
Giving	-0.010	-0.074
	(0.006)	(0.950)
Constant	0.187***	99.955***
	(0.059)	(8.777)
Obs.	1203	1203
R-sq	0.045	0.084
Outcome mean	0.076	82.545

Notes: There are 43 out of 603 respondents in experiment 1 and 49 out of 620 respondents in experiment 2 who donated everything to overseas charity in every scenario. The omitted category for political leaning on economic matters is conservative. The regressions also control for the order in which participants see the three price scenarios.

Table A.2: Differences in donation behaviour by Price and experiment; Subsample: who donate less than $30 to overseas charity at P=2

	Dep. var.= Donations to US charity		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
price=5	-2.780***	-2.780***	-2.780***
	(0.736)	(0.739)	(0.729)
price=25	-6.259***	-6.259***	-6.259***
	(0.870)	(0.870)	(0.865)
Experiment 2- with visuals	-1.730***	-1.307**	-1.330**
	(0.615)	(0.627)	(0.615)
price=5 × Experiment 2- with visuals	-2.252**	-2.252**	-2.252**
	(1.025)	(1.021)	(0.994)
price=25 × Experiment 2- with visuals	-4.058***	-4.058***	-4.058***
	(1.205)	(1.197)	(1.178)
Age		0.121***	0.093***
		(0.018)	(0.020)
Male		-0.221	-1.275**
		(0.496)	(0.505)
College education or more			0.622
			(0.531)
Income less than USD 50,000			0.583
			(0.538)
Donated in last year			0.380
			(0.537)
Volunteered in last year			0.924
			(0.581)
Liberal			-3.029***
			(0.809)
Moderate			-2.272***
			(0.752)
Other			1.570
			(2.384)
US born			1.277
			(0.878)
Both parents US born			-0.000
			(0.696)
Utilatarian measure			0.387
			(0.691)
Pragmatism			0.138
			(0.148)
Purity			0.089
			(0.141)
Justice			0.236
			(0.197)
Social Recoginition			-0.424***
			(0.141)
Pleasure			0.157
			(0.162)
Compassion			-0.484**
			(0.246)
Spirituality			-0.048
			(0.134)
Equality			-0.760***
			(0.197)
Freedom			0.637***
			(0.209)
Respect for tradition			-0.306*
			(0.160)
Giving			-0.229
			(0.215)
Constant	31.122***	26.508***	30.601***
	(0.441)	(0.885)	(1.922)
Obs.	2940	2940	2940
No. of participants	980	980	980
R-sq	0.083	0.096	0.137
Outcome mean V	26.224	26.224	26.224

Notes: Robust standard errors shown in brackets. * denotes significance at 10 percent; ** at 5 percent and *** significance at 1 percent. The omitted category for political leaning on economic matters is conservative. Column 3 also control for the order in which participants see the three price scenarios.

Appendix B

Survey Instrument for Experiment 1

Consent Form

The aim of the survey is to better understand decisions about charitable giving.

You have been selected to participate because you signed up on Prolific and have a US IP address. Please note that you need to be living in the US to take part, be more than 18 years of age and be fluent in English.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in a short decision-making task, and to answer some survey questions. We estimate this will take a total of 10 minutes.

You will earn GBP 2 for taking part. After successful completion of all survey questions, GBP 2 will be paid to your Prolific account. Payment is conditional on diligently completing the task, answering all questions and entering the code that you will receive at the end.

Your decisions in the task, and your answers to the survey questions, will remain anonymous. Your Prolific ID will be used for payment purposes only. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. However, if you withdraw before completion you will not be paid the GBP 2. In this case your decisions will be recorded up to the point you withdraw, but we will not use these results in our research.

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (reference D23/077). All information in the instructions is true, including that all payments will actually take place.

If you have any questions about this project please email the researchers: Neha Agarwal (neha.agarwal@otago.ac.nz) or Stephen Knowles (stephen.knowles@otago.ac.nz).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee Administrator (gary.witte@otago.ac.nz).

Informed consent is required for any person participating in a University research study. By clicking "I agree" below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, live in the US, are fluent in English, have understood this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this research. You may want to print a copy of this page for your records.

Thank you for participating in our survey. We hope that you will pay close attention to the questions.

New page:

It is very important for the success of our research project that you answer honestly and read the questions very carefully before answering. Please be sure to spend enough time reading and understanding the task and the survey questions. Note that on the next screen you need to spend at least one minute reading the instructions before you are able to proceed (the arrow you click to advance to the next screen won’t appear for one minute).

[General Qualtrics instructions: Respondents can't move forward without completing all the questions on a page.]

School lunch task

In this task you will be asked to divide US$ 50 between two different charities. Both charities fund school lunches for children. One charity funds school lunches for children in the US and the other charity funds school lunches for children in a low-income country overseas. The cost of providing school lunches varies across countries due to variation in food costs and the labour costs of preparing the meals.

Your task is to decide how much of the US$ 50 goes to the charity feeding children in the US and how much goes to the charity feeding children in the overseas country. We will ask you to perform this task for three different scenarios, involving three different overseas countries. We will refer to these overseas countries as Country A, Country B and Country C.

For every ten people who complete our survey, we will make real payments to the two charities based on the decisions of one randomly chosen participant. For each of these 'one-in-ten' participants, we will split the money between the two charities based on that person's decision for **one** of the three scenarios.

Once you have completed the survey you will find out:

(i) The names of the three countries;
(ii) Whether you were one of the 'one-in-ten' participants for whom we will make payments to the charities based on one of your decisions;
(iii) If you are one of the people whose decisions are paid out to the charities, which of the three scenarios payments will be based on (we have determined ahead of time which of the three scenarios this will be).

In the three scenarios below, please indicate how much of the US$ 50 you want us to donate to the US charity. The remainder will go to the charity in the low-income country overseas. **Remember you might be one of the participants for whom we will donate the money to the two charities, splitting the money between the charities based on one of your decisions.**

[Qualtrics instructions: The three scenarios are presented on the same page and the order of three scenarios is randomized. They cannot skip a question and move to the next page. Condition on answer: In the answer space the value entered must be between 0-50.]

Scenario One
The cost of feeding a child in the US is **TWO** times as high as in Country A. That is, **TWO** children can be fed in Country A for the same cost as one child in the US.
•
Please indicate how much of the US$50 you would like to donate to the US charity or to the Country A charity.
[Enter dollar amount]

Scenario Two
The cost of feeding a child in the US is **FIVE** times as high as in Country B. That is, **FIVE** children can be fed in Country B for the same cost as one child in the US.
• Please indicate how much of the US$50 you would like to donate to the US charity or to the Country B charity.
[Enter dollar amount]

Scenario Three
The cost of feeding a child in the US is **TWENTY-FIVE** times as high as in Country C. That is, **TWENTY-FIVE** children can be fed in Country C for the same cost as one child in the US.
• Please indicate how much of the US$50 you would like to donate to the US charity or to the Country c charity.
[Enter dollar amount]

Demographic block

1. What is your age in years?
   [Enter number]

2. What is your gender?
   Male, Female, Non-binary/ non-confirming, Transgender, Prefer not to say

3. With which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?
   [European American/White; African American/Black; Hispanic/Latino; Asian/Asian American; Indian, Other, Prefer not to say]

4. What country were you born in?
   [Enter name]

5. What country were your parents born in?
   [Enter name]

6. What is your highest level of education?
   [Primary education or less; Some High School; High School degree/GED; Some College; 2-year College Degree; 4-year College Degree; Master's Degree; Doctoral Degree; Professional Degree (JD, MD, MBA), other please specify]

7. What was your **household** income in 2022, before taxes? (Include **both** your income **and** that of other household members.)
   [$0-$9999;$10000-$14999;$15000-$19999;$20000-$29999;$30000-39999;$40000-$49999;$50000-$69999;$70000-$89999;$90000-$109999;$110000-$149999;$150000-$199999;$200000+, Don't know]

8. In which state do you currently reside?
   [Select from Drop-down menu]

9. Have you donated to a charity **in the last year**?
   [Yes, No, Don't know]

10. Have you volunteered for a charity **in the last year**?
    [Yes, No, Don't know]

11. On economic policy matters, do you consider yourself to be:
    [Very liberal, Liberal, Moderate, Conservative, Very Conservative, other (please specify).]

On the Next page:

Imagine the federal government is considering a project that will lead to 5000 people in one state losing their jobs, but which will create 8000 new jobs in a different state. Do you think the federal government should enact this policy?

[Yes/ No/ Cannot decide]

Please give a brief reason for your response above.

[Enter text]

Moral Views block

The purpose of the next section is to identify your **dominant values**.

In this questionnaire you are to ask yourself: "What values are important to ME as guiding principles in MY life, and what values are less important to me?" In the parentheses following each value is an explanation that may help you to understand its meaning.

Please use the rating scale below:

- 0 means the value is not at all important, it is not relevant as a guiding principle for you
- 3 means the value is important
- 6 means the value is very important
- -1 is for rating any values opposed to the principles that guide you
- 7 is for rating a value of supreme importance as a guiding principle in your life; *ordinarily there are no more than two such values*

For each value, select the number (-1,0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7) that indicates the importance of that value for you, personally.

[Qualtrics instruction: The order of the values is randomised.]

1. **Pragmatism** (acting to achieve practical results, as opposed to adhering to abstract principles)

   -1 opposed to my values

   0 not important

   1

   2

   3 important

   4

   5

   6 very important

   7 of supreme importance

2. **Purity** (avoiding doing things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed)

- -1 opposed to my values
- 0 not important
- 1
- 2
- 3 important
- 4
- 5
- 6 very important
- 7 of supreme importance

3. **Justice** (conforming to principles of impartiality and fairness)
   - -1 opposed to my values
   - 0 not important
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3 important
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6 very important
   - 7 of supreme importance

4. **Social Recognition** (respect, approval by others)

-1 opposed to my values

0 not important

1

2

3 important

4

5

6 very important

7 of supreme importance

5. **Pleasure** (gratification of desires)

-1 opposed to my values

0 not important

1

2

3 important

4

5

6 very important

7 of supreme importance

6. **Compassion** (concern for those who are suffering)

- -1 opposed to my values
- 0 not important
- 1
- 2
- 3 important
- 4
- 5
- 6 very important
- 7 of supreme importance

7. **Spirituality** (emphasis on spiritual, not material matters)
   - -1 opposed to my values
   - 0 not important
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3 important
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6 very important
   - 7 of supreme importance

8. **Equality** (equal opportunity for all)

- -1 opposed to my values
- 0 not important
- 1
- 2
- 3 important
- 4
- 5
- 6 very important
- 7 of supreme importance

9. **Freedom** (freedom of action and thought)
   - -1 opposed to my values
   - 0 not important
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3 important
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6 very important
   - 7 of supreme importance

10. **Respect for tradition** (preservation of time-honored customs)

-1 opposed to my values

0 not important

1

2

3 important

4

5

6 very important

7 of supreme importance

11. **Giving** (being charitable, selfless; helping the needy)

-1 opposed to my values

0 not important

1

2

3 important

4

5

6 very important

7 of supreme importance

End message:
Everyone: The country where two children can be fed for the same cost as one US child is Trinidad and Tobago. The country where five children can be fed for the same cost as one US child is Dominican Republic. The country where twenty-five children can be fed for the same cost as one US child is India.
Added message for the 'one-in-ten' participants: You are one of the "one-in-ten" participants and we will use your allocation decision to donate money to the charity. Donations will be based on how you divided the money between the US charity and the Indian charity.

Added message for the 'nine-in-ten' participants: You are not one of the "one-in-ten" participants and we will not use your allocation decision. We would however like to thank you for your participation. Your input is valuable in this field of study.