

CUES, ATTENTION, AND CHARITABLE GIVING

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Abstract

We identify cue-based beliefs as a source of context dependence in charitable giving. Adapting associative memory models to donations, we predict that cues shift giving by changing which beneficiaries and needs come to mind, even when the cues are uninformative about the donation decision. In online experiments, cues that draw attention to global needs increase giving to an international cause, whereas cues that draw attention to local needs reduce it. Open-ended text responses confirm the attentional mechanism. Applying the framework to fundraising design, we predict that neighborhood-based group appeals—which can raise giving when the charity’s mission is local—may backfire when the charity’s mission is global. In a natural field experiment with 105,000 donors to a charity with a global mission, such an appeal reduces pledge take-up by 33%. A complementary online experiment replicates this effect and shows that the appeal shifts attention toward local recipients and away from global ones. Heterogeneity reinforces this interpretation because, in both settings, the group appeal backfires most where baseline behavior suggests that global needs would otherwise have been more likely to come to mind. The results help organize evidence on media-driven shifts in giving, boomerang effects of norm nudges, failures of priming interventions to replicate, and the sensitivity of redistribution preferences to salient recipients.

Keywords: Memory, Nudging, Salience, Fundraising Campaigns

JEL Classification: D64, D90, L31

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1 Introduction

Decisions to help others are informed by judgments about their impact. When deciding whether to support a local food bank, contribute to disaster relief abroad, or redistribute income to those with less, individuals weigh how much their giving will help, whom it will reach, and what alternatives they forgo. The literature on charitable giving shows that donors respond to the expected consequences of giving, including effectiveness and efficiency information (Andreoni, 2006; List, 2011; Gneezy et al., 2014; Karlan and Wood, 2017).¹ A parallel literature on redistribution shows that support depends on beliefs about who benefits and why—including perceptions of effort, mobility, and recipient characteristics (Alesina et al., 2018, 2023). But weighing these consequences is inherently difficult: people rarely consider all relevant beneficiaries, needs, and trade-offs from scratch, and some come to mind more readily than others. Prosocial behavior may therefore depend not only on preferences and information, but also on cues in the immediate choice environment that influence which beneficiaries, needs, and trade-offs come to mind.

A growing literature shows that beliefs form through cue-based attention and associative memory rather than exhaustive deliberation, and even uninformative cues can change judgments (Gennaioli and Shleifer, 2010; Bordalo et al., 2023; Enke et al., 2024; Graeber et al., 2024; Conlon and Kwon, 2025; Bordalo et al., 2026). Applied to prosocial behavior, this implies that uninformative cues shift generosity by changing which beneficiaries and needs come to mind. A donor whose morning news happened to feature a flood overseas may, when later asked to give to a local charity, more readily envision international suffering. Receiving a fundraising letter that mentions her neighborhood may bring local needs to mind even when the charity itself operates globally, and a voter whose media diet has dwelled on rare cases of welfare fraud may picture people gaming the system more readily than the working poor when asked about redistribution.

The implications are far-reaching. At the micro level, fundraising appeals can inadvertently redirect donations—not only because of what they tell donors, but also because of what they bring to mind. At the macro level, world events, media coverage, and policy discourse can shift giving and redistribution by changing which needs and recipients are salient (see, e.g., Gilens, 1999; Jaimovich et al., 2026). Understanding this mechanism matters for fundraising campaigns, information provision, and cooperation in organizations and society more broadly.

In this paper, we identify cue-based beliefs as a source of context dependence in prosocial behavior. We study this in the context of charitable giving. First, we

¹Giving can also be shaped by impure motives (Andreoni, 1989; Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2017), including warm glow (Andreoni, 1990), conditional cooperation (Frey and Meier, 2004), reciprocity (Falk, 2007), social image (DellaVigna et al., 2012), and conformity (Goette and Tripodi, 2021).

develop a framework in which donors care about the consequences of their giving and form beliefs through cue-driven attention to charity and recipient attributes. We then test the framework’s prediction that uninformative cues influence giving in pre-registered online experiments. The results support both the behavioral prediction and the mechanism of cue-driven attention. We then document the relevance of giving from cues in a natural field experiment and discuss implications for the design of fundraising appeals, behavioral interventions, and the broader question of why prosocial behavior is often so context-dependent.

Framework. We adapt models of associative memory and belief formation (Bordalo et al., 2023; Conlon and Kwon, 2025) to a setting in which a donor chooses between charities characterized by attributes—features of the charity and its recipients—that influence the consequences of a donation. Donors care about consequences but cannot attend to all relevant attributes at once. Instead, they form beliefs through a sampling process in which contextual cues determine which attributes come to mind. A cue increases the weight on states of the world that are similar to it, tilting the donor’s simulated belief distribution away from the rational benchmark. Critically, cues need not carry any information about the charity or its recipients: a cue that merely draws attention to a feature—say, local need—shifts the set of attributes the donor considers, and thereby shifts beliefs about the relative merits of competing causes. The framework predicts a joint shift: uninformative cues that draw attention to attributes favoring one cause over another shift giving toward that cause, accompanied by a measurable change in what donors attend to.

Attention and Cue experiments. We then test our framework in two preregistered online experiments on Prolific with UK-based participants. In both, participants allocate money between the British Red Cross (local charity) and the International Red Cross (global charity). In the *Attention experiment*, we exogenously vary which recipient participants attend to before the donation decision. In *Local Attention*, participants first learn that one charity operates locally in Britain, then describe in an open-ended question whom they would most like to help and where these recipients are located. Participants predominantly mention local recipients, for example “homeless ex-veterans and homeless UK people” or “MIND or similar mental health organisations” located in the UK.² In *Global Attention*, participants instead learn that one charity operates in regions affected by war. They predominantly mention global recipients, for example “the displaced people of Ukraine and Gaza” or recipients located “anywhere.” Quantitatively, 87% of participants in *Local Attention* mention local recipients, while only 14% mention global recipients. In *Global Attention*, 65%

²For more details on these texts, see also Figure 1 and Appendix Table B.1. All open-ended text results were classified by both human and AI-assisted coding using GABRIEL (Asirvatham et al., 2026).

mention global recipients, while 34% mention local recipients. This attentional shift translates into giving: participants allocate 16% more to the global charity in *Global Attention* than in *Local Attention*.

In the *Cue experiment*, we test whether a cue unrelated to the donation decision can produce similar shifts. Participants are told they will complete a brief follow-up survey on either homelessness (*Local Cue*) or victims of war (*Global Cue*). Unlike in the *Attention experiment*, the cue is not part of the donation decision and attention is measured only after the donation decision. Even this unrelated cue shifts giving: participants allocate 12% more to the global charity in *Global Cue* than in *Local Cue*. Consistent with the attentional mechanism, participants also mention more global and fewer local recipients: global mentions increase from 39% to 48%, while local mentions decrease from 67% to 58%. For example, local mentions refer to food-bank users or veterans struggling for housing, while global mentions refer to recipients in Africa, Ukraine, or Gaza. See Appendix Figure A.4 and Appendix Table B.1.

Fundraising application: Charity and Group experiments. The framework yields a sharp prediction for the design of fundraising campaigns. A widely used strategy is the group appeal—asking donors to give as part of a team, neighborhood, or community. Major charities such as Movember, the Red Cross, Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand, and the UN World Food Programme build entire campaigns around team-based giving, and leading peer-to-peer fundraising platforms (e.g., Give Lively, Givebutter) offer team structures as a default feature.³ Recent work shows that such appeals raise giving when the charity operates locally (Kessler and Milkman, 2018). Our framework implies that the effect of the same appeal should depend on whether the appeal is congruent with the charity’s mission. A neighborhood-based group appeal not only invokes fellow donors or a giving norm but also cues the donor’s local community, raising the accessibility of local recipients and needs. When the charity operates locally, this cue and the donation target are aligned. When the charity operates globally, the same cue can redirect attention away from the global recipients the charity is asking donors to support, causing giving to fall.

We examine this prediction in a natural field experiment, the *Charity experiment*, with 105,000 existing donors of a major charity in Europe. The charity operates internationally, helping children affected by war, and embedded a neighborhood-based group appeal in one of its regular fundraising letters. In the *Local Group Appeal* condition, donors were asked to “help us now as a team together with other donors from [ZIP code] and [Region].” In the *Standard Appeal* condition, they were simply asked to “help us now.” The local group appeal reduces the probability of signing an

³For example, Blackbaud’s Peer-to-Peer Benchmark Report (Blackbaud, 2023) covers nearly 6,400 fundraisers that mobilized more than 4.4 million participants and raised over \$1.1 billion in 2020-2022. See also Appendix D.

additional pledge by 33%. The effect is economically meaningful: extrapolating to the full sample, the local group appeal implied approximately 30,000€ in forgone annual donations. The field setting does not permit direct measurement of donor attention. Its role in the paper is therefore to test the framework's behavioral prediction in a natural setting.

We test the attentional mechanism directly in our complementary online *Group experiment*. We replicate the local group appeal, embed it in a choice between a global and a local charity, and use the open-ended attention measure introduced in the earlier experiments. The local group appeal again reduces donations to the global cause. Importantly, the local group appeal shifts what participants report bringing to mind: mentions of local recipients rise (from 67% to 90%) relative to a *No Cue* condition and mentions of global recipients fall (from 24% to 6%). Examples of local recipient mentions from the *Local Group Cue* refer to low-income families in South East London or disadvantaged people in Birmingham, while global mentions from *No Cue* refer to domestic violence victims in the Global South or cobalt miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo. See Appendix Figure A.5 and Appendix Table B.1.

Heterogeneity. Our framework predicts that cue effects should depend on what donors would have brought to mind absent the cue. A local cue should backfire most among donors for whom global-favoring states are highly accessible in the absence of the cue, because these donors have the most global content to displace. Consistent with this prediction, the group appeal backfires more strongly among individuals whose baseline behavior suggests greater accessibility of global recipients and needs: donors with higher prior annual giving in the *Charity experiment* and non-UK-born participants in the *Group experiment*. By contrast, in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, where global and local conditions are directly compared, UK-born and non-UK-born participants respond similarly to the cue contrast. These patterns are consistent with our framework and support the interpretation that the group appeal backfires by displacing otherwise accessible global states.

Alternative explanations. We discuss several alternative interpretations of our results, including payoff-relevant information conveyed by cues, social norms (Kessler and Milkman, 2018), experimenter demand (De Quidt et al., 2018), diffusion of responsibility (Falk et al., 2020), and substitution effects (Varian, 1994). We argue, based also on additional analyses, that they do not provide compelling explanations for our findings.

Discussion. Our framework helps to organize other empirical patterns in the literature. First, we argue that the growing body of evidence on how charitable giving responds to media attention, online search, and public discourse is consistent with our

framework (Eisensee and Strömberg, 2007; Brown and Minty, 2008; Perroni et al., 2022; Scharf et al., 2022; Jayaraman et al., 2023; Yildirim et al., 2024; Jaimovich et al., 2026). Second, we show that the same logic extends to redistribution: evidence on welfare attitudes, immigration, tax policy, and perceived deservingness is consistent with the idea that policy support depends on which recipients, causal stories, and trade-offs are made salient (Gilens, 1999; Fong, 2001; Alesina and Angeletos, 2005; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Stantcheva, 2021; Alesina et al., 2023). Finally, we discuss behavioral interventions and nudging. Evidence from meta-analyses shows that many nudges produce heterogeneous effects, and that some even backfire (Hummel and Maedche, 2019; DellaVigna and Linos, 2022); related findings have emerged for priming, where prominent results have not replicated (Doyen et al., 2012; Open Science Collaboration, 2015; Camerer et al., 2018). We argue that our framework offers an explanation for well-known backfiring findings of norm-nudging (Cialdini, 2003; Schultz et al., 2007; Richter et al., 2018) and the failures of priming results to replicate (Cohn et al., 2014, 2019; Rahwan et al., 2019).

Relation to literature. Our paper contributes to an emerging literature that brings economic models of attention, associative memory, and mental representations to field and naturally occurring data (Bordalo et al., 2018, 2021; Afrouzi et al., 2024; Bordalo et al., 2024; Gennaioli et al., 2024; Bordalo et al., 2025; Graeber et al., 2025; Taubinsky et al., 2025), as well as related work developing empirical measures of attention, information acquisition, and what is top of mind (Andre et al., 2022; Haaland et al., 2025; Andre et al., 2026a,b; Gennaioli et al., 2026). We add to this literature by showing that cue-driven attention shapes prosocial choice and fundraising design. This also speaks to the longstanding question of why prosocial behavior is so context-dependent (Levitt and List, 2007; List, 2007). Existing explanations emphasize context-dependent preferences—such as social image and pressure (Bursztyn and Jensen, 2017), self-image (Bénabou and Henkel, 2025), or warm glow (Andreoni, 1990). We provide evidence for a complementary channel: context-dependent beliefs formed through cue-driven attention. This channel helps organize the sensitivity of giving to framing (Eckel and Grossman, 2003), to deliberative versus affective processing (Small et al., 2007), and to the gap between prosocial behavior in the laboratory and the field. The evidence also complements work on generosity across group boundaries by showing that brief cues can redirect attention and giving without sustained contact or rich narrative exposure (Bursztyn et al., 2024; Andries et al., 2025). Finally, our results inform the economics of charitable giving and fundraising design (List, 2011). Conceptually, our findings imply a cue-target congruence principle: cues can increase giving when they make the solicited beneficiaries salient, but reduce giving when they make competing beneficiaries salient.

2 Conceptual Framework

We adapt the model of Bordalo et al. (2023) and Conlon and Kwon (2025) to the charitable giving context. An agent chooses between donating to charity A and charity B. Charities are defined by characteristics. Characteristics capture features of the charity and of the recipients whom it helps. For simplicity, we assume that charity i is characterized by a vector $\Theta_i = (\theta_{i1}, \theta_{i2}, \dots, \theta_{in})$. For instance, characteristics of the charity include its level of overhead costs or operational efficiency, while characteristics of the recipients include the severity of their need or the number of people in need.

Preferences. Agents receive utility from giving to a charity. We assume they care about the impact that their donation has on others. That is, their choice between charities is at least partially influenced by consequentialist concerns. The existence of such concerns is supported by a large empirical literature, which has documented that altering the consequences of donations strongly influences donation behavior. For instance, donation behavior changes based on the effectiveness of seed money (Vesterlund, 2006), or the presence of matched donations (Eckel and Grossman, 2003, 2004; Eckel et al., 2005; Meier, 2007; Karlan and Wood, 2017). This, in turn, implies that certain features of the charity and its recipients matter for people’s propensity to donate. Indeed, past research has shown that giving is significantly influenced by features such as charity performance metrics (Exley, 2020), the degree of flexibility in how donations may be used (Batista et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015), and more generally by various effectiveness and efficiency measures such as overhead costs (Gneezy et al., 2014).⁴ Given this evidence, agents in our framework care about the characteristics of a charity that influence the consequences of the agent’s giving. That is, their utility is influenced by Θ_i . For simplicity, we assume that characteristics are numerical, with higher values indicating more favorable outcomes from the donor’s perspective (e.g., higher efficiency).

Beliefs. We further assume that agents are not perfectly certain about the realizations of the characteristics for each charity. Instead, they hold (subjective) beliefs about them. Importantly, they are unable to attend to all decision-relevant characteristics at once. Quite naturally, charities and recipients differ on many relevant dimensions, so some might not come to mind easily. When faced with this large set of characteristics, we follow Bordalo et al. (2023) and Conlon and Kwon (2025) and assume that agents form beliefs using an associative sampling process. Formally, there is a set of possible states of the world Ω , with the likelihood of $\omega \in \Omega$ being

⁴See for instance Gordon et al. (2009), Meer (2014), Yörük (2016), Brown et al. (2017), Coffman (2017), Karlan and Wood (2017), and Metzger and Günther (2019).

$\pi(\omega)$. A state $\omega \in \Omega$ specifies the realizations of the characteristics of both charities, that is, $\omega = (\Theta_A, \Theta_B)$. As agents care about the realizations, their utility from giving is state-dependent. Formally, they receive a payoff $\psi(\omega)$ in state ω . The agent has a “mental database” of states and likelihoods, but these are not readily available. Instead, they need to be retrieved through a sampling process.

Importantly, this sampling process is (i) similarity-based through an exogenous similarity function S and (ii) influenced by cues C . We explain S and C in more detail below. The influence of cues then enters by assuming that the probability that state ω is sampled is proportional to the context similarity $S(\omega, C)$. Assuming that the agent is naive about the influence of context, the agent’s simulated distribution is then in the limit (large number of independent draws) proportional to

$$\pi_s(\omega | C) \propto \pi(\omega) \cdot S(\omega, C). \quad (1)$$

In the absence of context distortions ($S(\omega, C) = 1$), the agent’s simulated expectation of the state-dependent payoff $\psi(\omega)$ reduces to the rational benchmark:

$$E[\psi(\omega)] \equiv \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \pi(\omega) \psi(\omega) \quad (2)$$

Cues. An important dimension of how context matters in this environment is cues: pieces of text, images, or other contextual features that draw attention to a specific feature of the decision environment. Throughout the paper, we call a cue *uninformative* if it adds no new payoff-relevant information about the relative merits of the available giving options or about the consequences of giving to one option rather than another. Given that not all states are at the top of an agent’s mind, a cue that simply describes a state of the world, or makes the donor think about it, can influence beliefs. Formally, let $\tilde{\Omega}$ be the set of all possible cues, where $C \subset \tilde{\Omega}$. Importantly, $\Omega \subset \tilde{\Omega}$, i.e., states can be cues, meaning that an agent’s belief can be influenced by the mere mentioning of a state.

We assume an exogenous similarity function $S : \Omega \times \tilde{\Omega} \rightarrow [0, 1]$, where $S(\omega, \omega) = 1$ for all ω . $S(\omega_1, \omega_2)$ captures the degree to which ω_2 is similar to (or “associated with”) the cue ω_1 . We can then generalize S to apply to subsets of $\tilde{\Omega}$ and Ω by averaging pairwise similarity. Formally, let A be a subset of $\tilde{\Omega}$ and B be a subset of Ω . Then, the similarity between A and B is given by

$$S(A, B) = \frac{1}{|A| \cdot |B|} \sum_{\tilde{\omega} \in A, \omega \in B} S(\tilde{\omega}, \omega). \quad (3)$$

Cue-based beliefs. Since context enters beliefs only through the recall weights in (1), the effect of cues on beliefs can be characterized directly. Define the agent’s

simulated expectation in context C for payoff $\psi(\omega)$ as

$$E_s[\psi(\omega) | C] \equiv \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \pi_s(\omega | C) \psi(\omega).$$

Using (1) and (2), simulated expectations can be written as

$$E_s[\psi(\omega) | C] = \frac{E[\psi(\omega) S(\omega, C)]}{E[S(\omega, C)]} = E[\psi(\omega)] + \frac{\text{Cov}(S(\omega, C), \psi(\omega))}{E[S(\omega, C)]}.$$

Thus, cues distort beliefs whenever they are disproportionately associated with states in which $\psi(\omega)$ is high or low. In particular, a cue raises the expected value of ψ when it makes high- ψ states more likely to come to mind, and lowers it when it makes low- ψ states more salient. When C contains several cue elements $c \in C$ and similarity is aggregated as in (3), Conlon and Kwon (2025) show that the agent's beliefs are

$$E_s[\psi(\omega) | C] - E[\psi(\omega)] = \frac{\sum_{c \in C} W(c) D^\psi(c)}{\sum_{c \in C} W(c)}, \quad (4)$$

where $W(c) \equiv E[S(\omega, c)]$ is the baseline accessibility of cue c , and

$$D^\psi(c) \equiv \frac{\text{Cov}(S(\omega, c), \psi(\omega))}{E[S(\omega, c)]}$$

measures how representative cue c is of states with high values of ψ .

Prediction: Uninformative cues can shift charitable giving. Let $\psi_i(\omega)$ denote the utility from donating to charity $i \in \{A, B\}$ in state ω . Define the relative attractiveness of charity B as

$$\Delta(\omega) \equiv \psi_B(\omega) - \psi_A(\omega). \quad (5)$$

Agents choose charities by maximizing $E[\Delta(\omega) | C]$. In the benchmark case without context distortions, the agent chooses B if $E[\Delta(\omega)] > 0$ and A if $E[\Delta(\omega)] < 0$. In context C , choice is instead governed by

$$E_s[\Delta(\omega) | C] = E[\Delta(\omega)] + \frac{\text{Cov}(S(\omega, C), \Delta(\omega))}{E[S(\omega, C)]}.$$

Hence, an agent who would choose charity A under the benchmark distribution, $E[\Delta(\omega)] < 0$, chooses charity B in context C whenever

$$\frac{\text{Cov}(S(\omega, C), \Delta(\omega))}{E[S(\omega, C)]} > -E[\Delta(\omega)].$$

The framework therefore predicts that uninformative cues can change charitable choice if they increase the accessibility of states in which one charity is relatively

Table 1: Overview of experiments and treatment conditions

Experiment Conditions	Type	Donation	Attention	Section
<i>Attention experiment</i>				
<i>Global Attention, Local Attention</i>	Online	Measured	Measured	3.1.1
<i>Cue experiment</i>				
<i>Global Cue, Local Cue</i>	Online	Measured	Measured	3.1.2
<i>Global Cue g, Local Cue g</i>	Online	Measured	Measured	5.2.1
<i>Charity experiment</i>				
<i>Local Group Appeal, Standard Appeal</i>	Natural Field	Measured	No	3.2.1
<i>Group experiment</i>				
<i>Local Group Cue, No Cue</i>	Online	Measured	No	3.2.2
<i>Local Group Cue ff, No Cue ff</i>	Online	Measured	Measured	3.2.2

Notes: Summary of the experimental conditions used in the paper. “Donation” indicates whether donation behavior is measured. “Attention” indicates whether an open-ended elicitation of recipient mentions is included. “ff” denotes conditions with the free-form open-ended attention elicitation added before the donation decision. The conditions *Global Cue g* and *Local Cue g* add a generic group frame to the corresponding cue conditions.

more attractive than the other. What is brought to mind is governed by the similarity of the cue with the corresponding state of the world.

3 Experiments and main results

The framework has two key predictions: first, the features to which individuals attend during decision-making influence donations; second, cues can shift attention, and therefore donations, even when they provide no informational value. We test these predictions in a series of four preregistered experiments. See Table 1 for an overview and Appendix Section E for the mapping between preregistration and experiment.

3.1 Attention and Cue experiments

We first test our framework in two preregistered online experiments on Prolific with participants living in the UK. In the *Attention experiment*, we directly shift participants’ attention to different features of the donation decision to test whether attention itself affects giving. In the *Cue experiment*, we vary the content of a cue that is unrelated to the donation decision to test whether such cues shift attention and donations.

3.1.1 Attention experiment

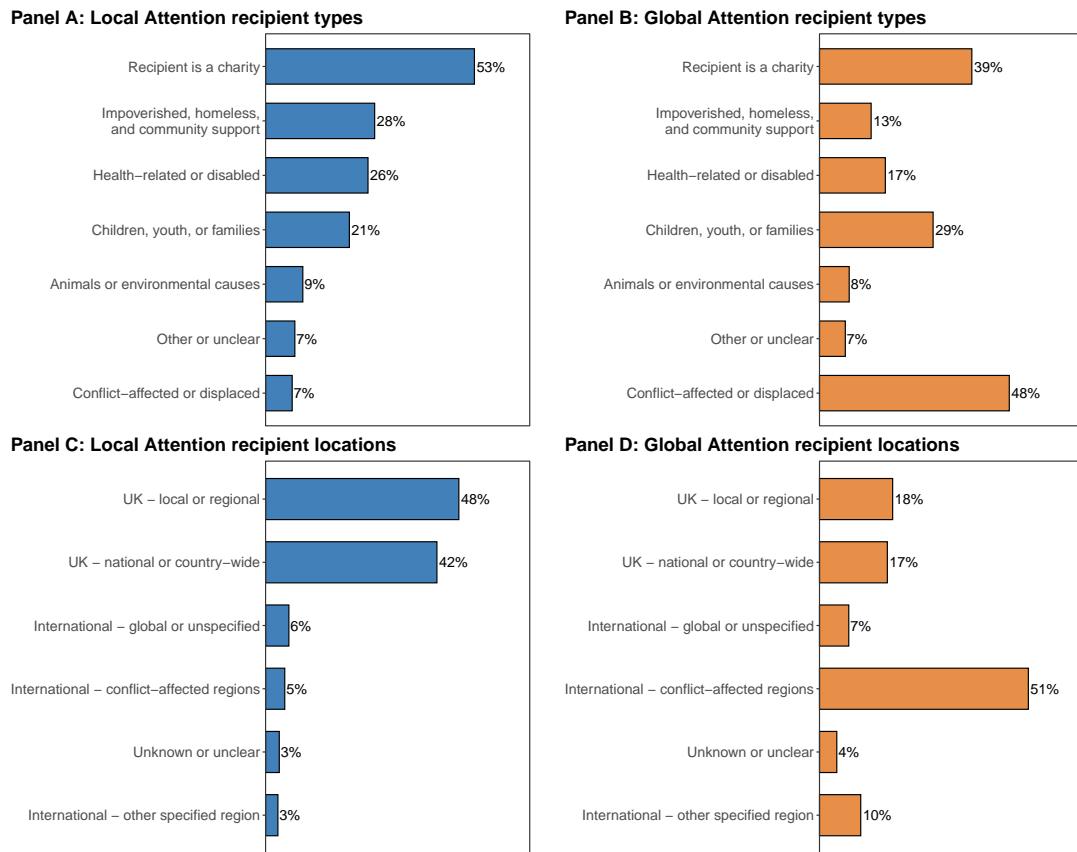
Design. The *Attention experiment* is based on a deliberately simple design. In the donation decision, participants were given £10 to divide between the British Red

Cross and the International Red Cross in increments of £2. The British Red Cross provides health care and disaster relief to people living in Britain, and the International Red Cross does the same around the world. We chose the Red Cross because it is well known and allows us to vary the location of potential recipients while keeping the type of help reasonably similar. The choice thus involves a direct trade-off between donating to a local cause and donating to a global cause. In the following, we code higher values as the amount donated to the International Red Cross.

We exogenously vary which side of this local-global trade-off participants attend to before they are introduced to the full donation decision. We implement this in a two-part procedure. First, participants learn that they will face a donation decision and that one of the two recipients has been randomly selected to be mentioned first. In *Local Attention*, this recipient is a charity that operates in Britain. In *Global Attention*, this recipient is a charity that operates in regions affected by war. Second, immediately after this initial mention, we ask participants an open-ended text question: *“From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.”* Specifically, in two input fields participants indicate the types of recipients they would like to help and where these recipients are located.

This two-part procedure creates exogenous variation in attention to local versus global needs rather than variation in objective information about the donation options. The first step randomly determines the initial anchor: participants first encounter either the local or the global side of the subsequent donation trade-off. The content of this anchor does not convey information about the relative effectiveness of the charities, the donation technology, or the impact of a donation. Instead, it highlights recipient states that are naturally associated with the two options and already implicit in the subsequent choice: a local charity in Britain can be associated with domestic hardship, while an international humanitarian charity can be associated with recipients in regions affected by war and disaster. The second step asks participants to actively elaborate on whom they would like to help before seeing the full donation screen. The open-ended question is therefore part of the attention manipulation instead of merely being a measurement device: it induces participants to retrieve and articulate recipient states, with the randomly revealed recipient serving as the natural anchor for this retrieval. Since the initial mention is randomly assigned, the later decision screen provides information about both charities, and the manipulation does not vary payoff-relevant information about the charities, systematic differences in subsequent giving are naturally interpreted as the effect of the induced shift in attention rather than differences in objective information.

Figure 1: Categorized open-ended responses in *Local Attention* and *Global Attention*



Notes: The figure displays categorizations of participants’ responses to the open-ended question of who they would like to help when given a choice. **Panel A** reports the distribution of different recipient-type categories in the *Local Attention* condition. **Panel B** reports the corresponding shares for the *Global Attention* condition. **Panel C** reports the distribution of different recipient-location categories in the *Local Attention* condition. **Panel D** reports the corresponding shares for the *Global Attention* condition. A response can fall into multiple recipient-type or recipient-location categories, hence fractions do not add to 100%.

Sample. In total, 601 participants took part in the *Attention experiment*: 305 in *Global Attention* and 296 in *Local Attention*. Participants were adults living in the United Kingdom recruited via Prolific. This and all following online experiments used oTree (Chen et al., 2016) for the graphical user interface (see Appendix F for the instructions) and were preregistered (see Appendix E for details). Participants spent a median time of 3 minutes in the experiment and received £0.50 as compensation, approximately £10 per hour. We implemented the donation choice of one in 25 participants using a between-subject random incentive system.

Results. We first examine whether the attention manipulation shifted what participants brought to mind. We analyze participants’ responses to the open-ended question about whom they would like to help. For examples of text responses, see Appendix Table B.1. In Figure 1, we classify participants’ responses based on the type of recipients and their location, split by treatment. See Appendix Tables B.2

and B.3 for category definitions and Appendix C for details on the coding procedure, which was AI-based using GABRIEL (Asirvatham et al., 2026). Starting with recipient types in Panels A and B, two things stand out: First, participants mention a wide variety of recipients, such as homeless people, conflict-affected people, disabled people, or children and youth. Second, the treatment shifts which recipients are mentioned. The starkest differences are between the recipient categories “impoverished, homeless, and community support” and “conflict-affected or displaced”. The fraction of responses falling in the former category more than halves from *Local Attention* to *Global Attention*, while the latter category’s fraction increases more than sixfold. Note that categories are not mutually exclusive (e.g., children affected by war), so fractions do not add to 100%. In Panels C and D, we then categorize the location mentioned by the participants. We see a clear shift in locations between the conditions. Mentions in *Local Attention* are primarily about locations in the UK—either local regions such as their own city or the UK as a whole. In contrast, in *Global Attention* the majority of mentions refer to locations outside of the UK, in particular conflict-affected regions.

To quantify and statistically test whether the manipulation changed participants’ attention from local to global recipients, we classify whether each response mentions recipients located in the UK (*Local recipient*) and whether it mentions recipients located outside of the UK (*Global recipient*).⁵ We code the responses using both GABRIEL and human coding, see Appendix C for details.

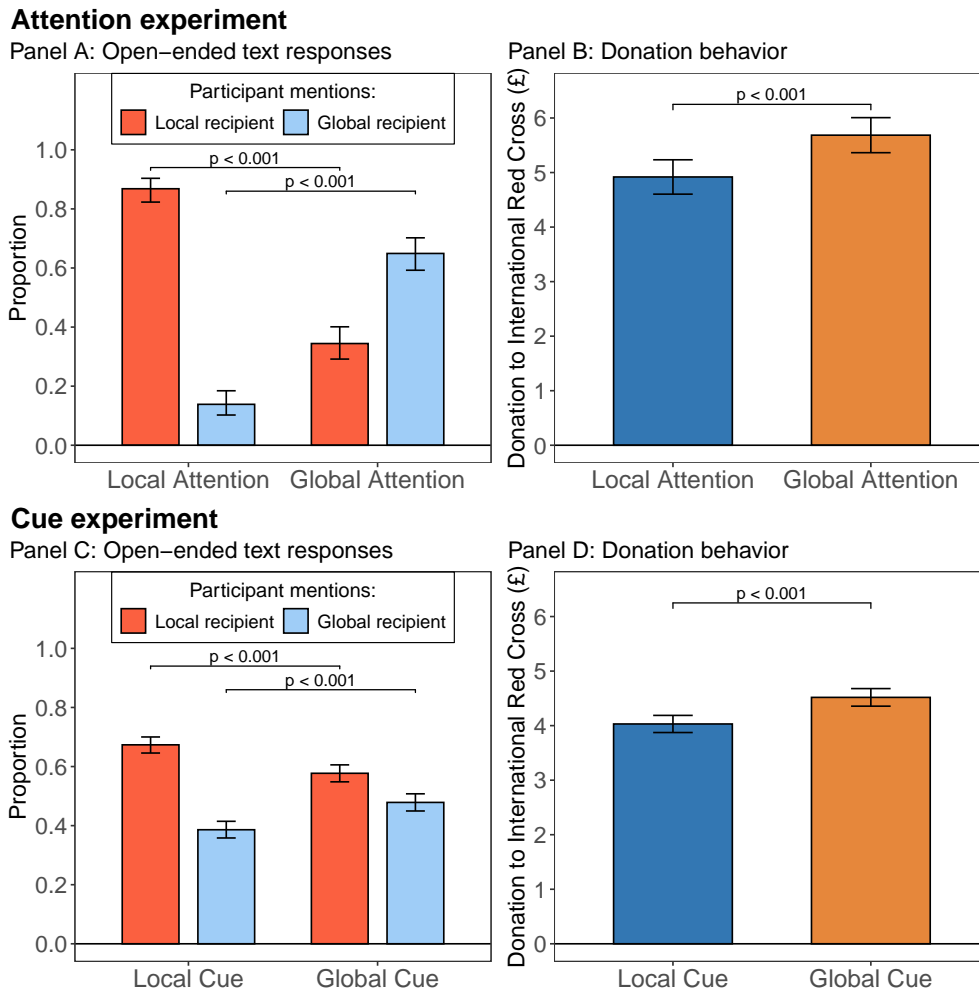
Panel A of Figure 2 shows that the attention manipulation shifted the location of recipients mentioned. In *Local Attention*, 87% of participants mention a local recipient, while 14% mention a global recipient. In contrast, in *Global Attention*, 34% of participants mention a local recipient and 65% mention a global recipient. These differences are substantial and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, two-sample tests of proportions).

We next turn to donation decisions. Panel B of Figure 2 shows average donations to the International Red Cross by treatment condition. In *Local Attention*, participants donate on average £4.92 to the International Red Cross. In *Global Attention*, they donate on average £5.69. Shifting attention from local toward global needs therefore increases donations to the global cause by 16%, a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.001$, t-test). Appendix Figure A.1 shows the distribution of decisions.

Finally, recipient mentions are strongly related to donation behavior. Participants who mention a local recipient donate £2.02 less to the International Red Cross than those who do not ($p < 0.001$, t-test). Participants who mention a global recipient

⁵These categories are not mutually exclusive: a response can mention local recipients, global recipients, both, or neither. In total, 95% of responses mention at least one type of recipient: 94% mention exactly one (local or global) and 1% mention both. The remaining 5% mention neither.

Figure 2: The effect of attention and cues on donation behavior and recipient mentions



Notes: **Panel A** displays the effect of the attention manipulation on open-ended text responses. “Global recipient” and “Local recipient” are indicator variables equal to one if a participant mentions a globally located recipient and a locally located recipient, respectively. **Panel B** displays the treatment effect of varying attention between the *Local Attention* and *Global Attention* conditions on donation behavior. The outcome variable denotes the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross. **Panel C** and **Panel D** show the effect of the *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* conditions on open-ended text responses and donation behavior, respectively, with variables defined as in Panels A and B. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. P-values are obtained from tests of proportions (Panels A and C) or two-sample t-tests (Panels B and D).

donate £2.22 more than those who do not ($p < 0.001$, t-test). Consistent with the attentional mechanism, controlling for either local or global mentions in an OLS regression attenuates the treatment coefficient to near zero; see Appendix Table B.6.

The *Attention experiment* shows that directly shifting attention shifts giving. The next experiment asks whether a cue that is unrelated to the donation decision can produce similar shifts in both attention and giving.

3.1.2 Cue experiment

Design. The *Cue experiment* uses the same donation decision as the *Attention experiment*, but changes how attention is shifted. Instead of directly asking participants

to elaborate on a randomly mentioned recipient before the donation decision, we introduce a cue that is unrelated to the donation decision. After giving their consent, participants were told that the study consisted of two independent parts. The first part was a decision in which they could decide how much to help others. The second part was a short survey about a randomly selected topic. We varied this topic across conditions. In *Local Cue*, participants were told that they would complete a survey about homelessness. In *Global Cue*, participants were told that they would complete a survey about victims of war.

This manipulation differs from the *Attention experiment* in two ways. First, the cue is not part of the donation decision. It refers only to the topic of a later survey, is randomly assigned, and provides no new payoff-relevant information about the relative merits of the two charities, their effectiveness, the donation technology, or the impact of a donation. The topics are instead associated with recipient states that participants could already connect to the available options: local hardship such as homelessness and international humanitarian need such as victims of war. Second, participants do not answer an open-ended attention question before making their donation decision. Thus, any effect on giving cannot be driven by the act of elaborating on recipients before the choice. The cue is informative about the topic of the later survey, but uninformative about the donation decision itself.

Participants then made the same incentivized allocation between the British Red Cross and the International Red Cross as in the *Attention experiment*. After the donation decision, we elicited attention using a second-order version of the open-ended question. Participants were asked what other Prolific participants had brought to mind when facing the same choice.⁶ This elicitation differs from the one used in the *Attention experiment*: it is measured after rather than before the donation decision, and it asks about others rather than the self. Asking about others reduces concerns that participants report socially desirable motives for their own choice (Prelec, 2004). At the same time, if participants project their own thoughts onto others (Ross et al., 1977), their answers remain informative about what the cue made accessible to them.

Sample. In total, 2,342 participants took part in the two conditions: 1,176 in *Local Cue* and 1,166 in *Global Cue*. All other implementation details are as in the *Attention experiment*.

⁶Participants were told that other Prolific participants previously faced the same donation decision and, before seeing the recipients, were asked the following question: “From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.” Participants then stated their best guess about the types of recipients those other participants mentioned and where they were located.

Results. We first turn to donation decisions. Panel D of Figure 2 shows average donations to the International Red Cross by treatment condition. Participants in *Local Cue* donated on average £4.03 to the International Red Cross, while participants in *Global Cue* donated £4.52. Thus, even though the cue was unrelated to the donation decision, mentioning victims of war rather than homelessness increased giving to the global charity by 12% ($p < 0.001$, t-test). Appendix Figure A.2 shows the distribution of decisions.

We next examine whether the cue also shifted what came to mind. Panel C of Figure 2 shows that it did. In *Local Cue*, 67% of participants mentioned a local recipient, while 39% mentioned a global recipient. In *Global Cue*, local mentions fell to 58%, while global mentions increased to 48%. Both differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, two-sample tests of proportions).⁷ Thus, the unrelated survey topic shifted recipient mentions in the same direction as it shifted donations.

Finally, mentions are again strongly related to donation behavior. Participants who mention a local recipient donate less to the International Red Cross, while participants who mention a global recipient donate more. In percentage terms, local mentions are associated with 37% lower donations to the International Red Cross, and global mentions are associated with 59% higher donations (both $p < 0.001$, two-sample t-tests). For regression results replicating these associations, see Appendix Table B.7. Taken together, the *Cue experiment* shows that even cues that provide no information about the donation decision can shift both which recipients come to mind and how participants give.

3.2 Application: fundraising appeals

The experiments in Section 3 establish the framework’s central prediction in a controlled environment: shifting attention toward local or global recipients shifts giving in the corresponding direction. We now apply the framework to fundraising appeals. The application focuses on group appeals—soliciting donors as part of a team, neighborhood, or community—which are widely used in fundraising practice and have been shown to increase giving when the charity operates locally (Kessler and Milkman, 2018; Charness and Holder, 2019). Proposed mechanisms in this literature emphasize identity activation, group norms, and the desire not to “let one’s team down.”

Our framework suggests a complementary prediction. A neighborhood-based group appeal is not only a group or norm appeal; it is also a local cue. It mentions the donor’s area, neighborhood, or fellow local donors, and may thereby raise the accessibility of local recipients and needs. When the charity operates locally, this cue is

⁷For the distribution of recipient type and location categories, see Appendix Figure A.4.

aligned with the charity’s mission. When the charity operates globally, the same cue is misaligned: it may redirect attention away from the global recipients the charity asks donors to support. The group appeal can therefore backfire.

We examine this prediction in two steps. First, we use a large-scale natural field experiment, which we call the *Charity experiment*, to test the behavioral prediction in a setting where stakes are real and the appeal is embedded in the charity’s normal operations. Second, because the field setting does not allow us to measure donor attention without changing the fundraising environment, we conduct a complementary online *Group experiment*. The online experiment replicates the group appeal in a controlled setting and measures which recipients participants bring to mind.

3.2.1 Charity experiment

Setting. The *Charity experiment* is a natural field experiment with a charity whose mission is globally focused. We partnered with a well-known nonprofit organization operating in Europe that focuses on humanitarian and development aid worldwide. The organization regularly uses fundraising letters to solicit donations from private donors for its global cause. For the experiment, we randomized the content of the letters as part of a regular fundraising round for the charity. The purpose of the letter was to motivate individuals who actively and regularly donate to the charity to sign an additional pledge, an Emergency Response Sponsorship, which enables the organization’s staff to quickly and effectively help children in emergency situations around the world. The one-page solicitation letters were sent in three waves at different times between June and August 2021.

Sample. Our sample consists of 105,318 individuals in a European country. Each individual had donated to the charity in the past and had made an ongoing commitment to donate a certain amount of money to the organization on a regular basis. On average, individuals in our sample donate 172€ per year to the organization as part of their regular commitment (median 120€) and have been donors for an average of 16 years. We thus study regular donors who are familiar with the charity. Overall, 51% are male and 19% were originally acquired through face-to-face fundraising, with the remainder acquired through other acquisition channels. In addition, the average population of their ZIP-code area is 18,540, with 13% living in a city of more than one million inhabitants. All individuals had agreed to be contacted by the organization for future fundraising rounds and are part of the charity’s pledge file. As such, they receive letters from the charity on a regular basis.

Treatments. As part of the experiment, donors were randomly assigned to receive letters that differed slightly in wording. Donors assigned to the treatment group

received a neighborhood-based group appeal (*Local Group Appeal*), while donors assigned to the control group received a standard appeal (*Standard Appeal*). The wording was varied in two places: (a) the headline at the top of the letter, and (b) the last paragraph of the letter, which repeated the headline in slightly different words. In all other respects, the letters were identical. Thus, the treatment changed the local group frame but not the information about the charity’s mission, recipients, or donation technology.

In *Standard Appeal*, the headline was “Emergency Helpers needed.” In *Local Group Appeal*, the headline read “Emergency Helpers from <ZIP Code + Region> needed! We are looking for generous neighborhoods.”⁸ The last paragraph of the letter repeated the appeal with different wording. Most importantly, the wording in *Local Group Appeal* emphasized that donations would be made “as a team together with other donors from <ZIP Code + Region>.” In contrast, the *Standard Appeal* condition made no reference to the donor’s region or other donors.

From the perspective of existing evidence and fundraising practice, this was a plausible appeal intended to increase giving (Kessler and Milkman, 2018; Charness and Holder, 2019). From the perspective of our framework, however, the appeal also contains a local cue: it mentions the donor’s ZIP code, region, neighborhood, and fellow local donors. Since the charity’s mission in this campaign was global—helping children in emergency situations around the world—the cue and the donation target are potentially misaligned. The *Local Group Appeal* condition had a further variation in which a subset of the letters contained an explicit notion of group competition that was added to the wording of the group appeal. For our main analysis, we pool both variations of the treatment and return to the analysis of differences within the treatment in Section 5.2.2. This wording introduced a local group cue that was absent from the control letter and from the charity’s usual appeals.

The rest of the letter, written and designed by the organization, followed its typical fundraising practices, as in earlier campaigns. See Appendix F for the exact wording of the letters. The letters also included a link and QR codes that directed donors to the organization’s general home page. The 28% of individuals who had previously provided their email address received an additional email two weeks after the solicitation letters were sent. The email was a digitized version of the solicitation letter, with the subject line being the treatment-specific appeal.

Treatment assignment. In total, 38,414 donors (36% of the sample) were part of the *Standard Appeal* condition, while 66,904 donors (64%) were part of the *Local*

⁸Because potential donors agreed to be contacted by direct mail fundraising campaigns, the organization had address information readily available. Since the donor’s address is also printed in the address field at the top of the letter, forming teams based on regional affiliation should not seem strange to donors.

Group Appeal condition. When assigning treatment status, we balanced potentially relevant donor baseline characteristics following Athey and Imbens (2017). For balancing, we first divided the population into small strata according to six baseline variables: annual donation amount, whether the donor provided an email address, whether the donor was recruited face-to-face, gender, the population of the ZIP code, and years as a donor. These variables have been previously found to be associated with donation behavior in our sample, and we randomized within strata for each of the three waves. Appendix Table B.9 shows that both conditions are balanced on baseline variables.

Results. We focus on two outcome variables. First, we examine donation incidence, an indicator equal to one if a donor signs the additional pledge solicited in the letter and zero otherwise. Second, we examine the average donation size, i.e., the average amount pledged per donor, which captures the aggregate effect of the letter on giving behavior.⁹ Since the pledge request is for a regular giving commitment, donation size refers to the annual amount pledged.

Table 2 presents the results. In response to the letter, 0.28% of donors in the *Standard Appeal* condition signed the additional annual pledge. This rate dropped to 0.19% in the *Local Group Appeal* condition, an effect that is robust to the inclusion of controls. Thus, the group appeal decreased the probability of signing the pledge by 33% ($p = 0.003$, two-sample test of proportions).

The group appeal also decreased the amount raised. Donors in *Standard Appeal* pledged an average of 0.66€ annually, while donors in *Local Group Appeal* pledged 0.38€, a decrease of 43%. Extrapolating these averages to the full sample, the result implies that using the group appeal for all donors would have reduced annual pledges by approximately 30,000€ relative to the standard letter. Thus, a small change in the wording of the fundraising letter had a large effect on the amount raised.

Robustness. For robustness, we first rerun the regression on donation incidence using a probit specification (Appendix Table B.11). Second, we rerun the regression on total donations excluding outliers identified by a Cook’s distance of $4/N$, and using log donations (Appendix Table B.12). We obtain a significant negative treatment effect in both cases.

Follow-up behavior. The *Charity experiment* tests the behavioral prediction in a natural fundraising environment, but it does not directly measure donor attention. Adding attention measures, manipulation checks, or memory questions to the fundraising letter would have changed the decision environment. We thus use the *Charity experiment* for a more limited purpose: to test whether a neighborhood-based group

⁹The intensive-margin effect is not separately identified because treatment may affect selection into giving.

Table 2: The effect of the group appeal on donation behavior in the Charity experiment

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	−0.093*** (0.032)	−0.086*** (0.032)	−0.285*** (0.110)	−0.267** (0.107)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	0.281*** (0.027)		0.665*** (0.101)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a donor signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in euros that is pledged. “*Local Group Appeal*” is equal to 1 when the donor is part of the *Local Group Appeal* condition and zero if the donor is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are the donor’s annual donation amount, whether the donor provided an email address, whether the donor was recruited face-to-face, gender, the population of the ZIP code, years as a donor, and wave fixed effects. See Appendix Table B.10 for all coefficients. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

appeal can backfire in the setting where the framework predicts that it may, namely when the appeal contains a local cue but the charity asks for support for a global cause.

We can nevertheless examine whether the effect is persistent. If the appeal caused a negative update about the charity, damaged the donor-charity relationship, or changed preferences, one would expect spillovers to subsequent fundraising rounds or to existing pledges. By contrast, if the appeal temporarily shifted attention at the moment of choice, the effect should be specific to the solicited pledge. We analyze donation behavior for the next six fundraising rounds and do not detect persistent effects of the group appeal; see Appendix Table B.13. Neither the probability of giving nor the total amount given differed between treatment and control in response to the next fundraising letter. We also find no treatment effect on whether donors gave in response to any of the next six fundraising appeals, on the total amount donated over these rounds, or on termination rates for existing pledges. These patterns are consistent with a short-lived cue effect directed at the specific decision.

3.2.2 Group experiment

The *Charity experiment* documents that a neighborhood-based group appeal can reduce giving to a global cause in a natural fundraising campaign. The framework implies a specific mechanism: the group appeal acts as a local cue, raising the acces-

sibility of local recipients and needs and redirecting attention away from the global cause. Since the field experiment does not measure attention directly, we test this mechanism in a complementary online *Group experiment*.

The online experiment has two goals. First, it tests whether the negative effect of the group appeal replicates in a controlled environment with the same local-global donation trade-off used in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments. Second, it measures whether the group appeal shifts which recipients participants bring to mind.

Design. Participants faced the same donation decision as in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments: they allocated £10 between the British Red Cross and the International Red Cross. We varied whether the decision was introduced with a neutral individual framing or with a local group appeal modeled on the *Charity experiment*. In the *Local Group Cue* and *Local Group Cue ff* conditions, participants were told that they form a group with other Prolific participants who live in the same UK postcode area:

This survey is fielded to people who live in [UK postcode area]¹⁰ and are active on Prolific. You and the other people from [UK postcode area] who participate in this Prolific survey form a group. Your group faces a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

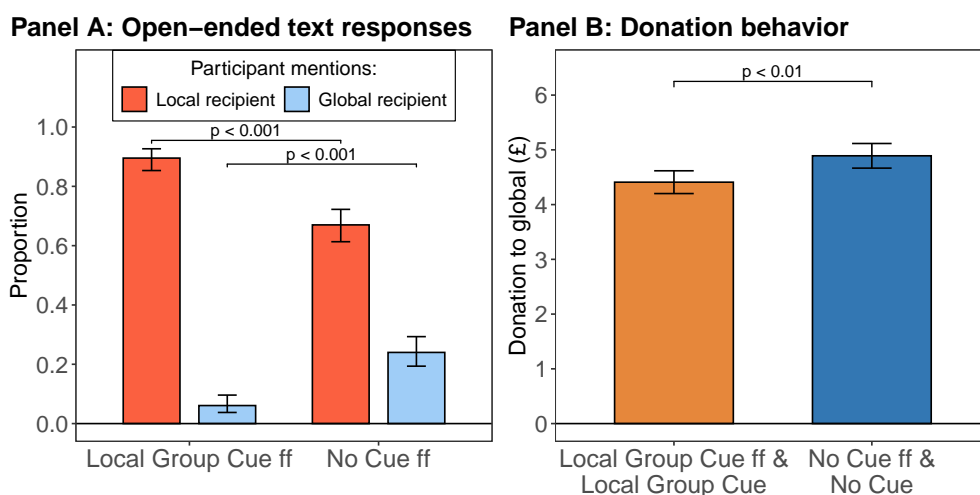
In doing so, we keep the group appeal as close as possible to the appeal in the *Charity experiment*. The appeal frames the decision as a group decision with similar others from the same region (other regular donors in the *Charity experiment* and other Prolific participants in the *Group experiment*). In the *No Cue* and *No Cue ff* conditions, participants were simply told that they faced a decision. Thus, as in the field experiment, the treatment introduced a local group cue without changing information about the two charities or the consequences of the donation.

The experiment includes two pairs of conditions. In *No Cue* and *Local Group Cue*, participants proceeded directly to the donation decision. These conditions test whether the group appeal reduces giving to the global charity when no attention question is asked before the choice. In *No Cue ff* and *Local Group Cue ff*, participants answered the same open-ended question as in the *Attention experiment* before making the donation decision. These conditions allow us to measure whether the group appeal changes which recipients participants bring to mind.

Decision. After the framing and, in the free-form conditions, the open-ended question, participants received information about the endowment and incentives and made the donation decision. We maintained the group versus individual framing throughout. Thus, as in the *Charity experiment*, participants were asked to donate either under an individual framing or in the presence of a group appeal.

¹⁰On average, around 500,000 people live in a UK postcode area, which is the first one or two letters of a postcode.

Figure 3: The effect of the group appeal on donation behavior and recipient mentions



Notes: **Panel A** displays the effect of the group appeal on open-ended text responses. “Global recipient” and “Local recipient” are indicator variables equal to one if a participant mentions a globally located recipient and a locally located recipient, respectively. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. **Panel B** displays the treatment effect of the group appeal on donation behavior. The outcome variable denotes the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross. P-values are obtained from tests of proportions (Panel A) or two-sample t-tests (Panel B).

Sample. In total, 1,193 participants took part in the experiment: 297 in *No Cue*, 300 in *Local Group Cue*, 296 in *No Cue ff*, and 300 in *Local Group Cue ff*. All other implementation details are as in the *Attention experiment* described in Section 3.1.1.

Results. We first examine whether the group appeal reduces giving to the global charity. Panel B of Figure 3 shows that donations to the International Red Cross are significantly lower in the two group appeal conditions (*Local Group Cue* and *Local Group Cue ff*) relative to the conditions without the appeal (*No Cue* and *No Cue ff*). Specifically, in the conditions without a pre-decision attention question, participants in *No Cue* donated on average £4.96 to the International Red Cross. Participants in *Local Group Cue* donated £4.52. The group appeal therefore decreased donations to the global charity by 9% ($p = 0.039$, t-test). We find the same pattern in the free-form conditions (*No Cue ff* and *Local Group Cue ff*), where attention is measured before the donation decision. Here, donations to the International Red Cross fall from £4.82 in *No Cue ff* to £4.30 in *Local Group Cue ff*, again by 11% ($p = 0.021$, t-test). Appendix Figure A.3 shows the distribution of decisions. Thus, the *Group experiment* replicates the negative effect of the local group appeal found in the *Charity experiment*. The fact that the effect is also present in the conditions without a pre-decision attention question shows that it is not driven by asking participants to articulate recipients before making their choice. This is consistent with the results in the *Cue experiment*, which implemented the attention measurement after the donation decision.

We next test whether the local group cue shifts what participants bring to mind.

Appendix Table B.1 shows examples of participants' local and global mentions. Panel A of Figure 3 shows the share of global versus local recipient mentions by condition. In the absence of the local group cue (*No Cue ff*), 67% of participants mention a local recipient and 24% mention a global recipient. When the local group cue is introduced before the open-ended question (*Local Group Cue ff*), local recipient mentions increase to 90%, while global recipient mentions fall to 6%. Both differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, two-sample tests of proportions).¹¹ Thus, the local group cue shifts attention toward local recipients and away from global recipients.

Finally, recipient mentions are strongly related to choices. Participants who mention a local recipient donate £2.17 less to the International Red Cross than those who do not ($p < 0.001$, t-test). Participants who mention a global recipient donate £2.56 more than those who do not ($p < 0.001$, t-test). The *Group experiment* therefore provides direct support for the mechanism suggested by the *Charity experiment*: the group appeal reduces giving to the global charity by shifting attention toward local recipients and needs.

Taken together, the *Charity experiment* and the *Group experiment* play complementary roles. The *Charity experiment* shows that a neighborhood-based group appeal can backfire in a natural fundraising campaign for a globally operating charity. The *Group experiment* replicates the effect in a controlled setting and shows that the appeal shifts attention toward local recipients and away from global recipients.

4 Heterogeneity

The framework has implications for heterogeneity. The key distinction is between the cue contrasts estimated in the different experiments. In the *Charity experiment* and in the *Group experiment*, the treatment adds a local group cue (*Local Group Appeal* and *Local Group Cue*) to a baseline context (*Standard Appeal* and *No Cue*). In the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, by contrast, the experimental manipulation is between a global condition (*Global Attention* and *Global Cue*) and a local condition (*Local Attention* and *Local Cue*). The framework therefore has different implications for heterogeneity across the two types of comparisons: baseline accessibility should moderate the effect of adding a local group cue to a baseline context, while it need not moderate a contrast between a global cue and a local cue when the two cues are similarly strong.

¹¹For the distribution of recipient type and location categories, see Appendix Figure A.5.

4.1 Heterogeneity prediction

We extend the framework to explore its implications for heterogeneity. Specifically, we allow donors to differ in their baseline contexts, which are shaped by their experiences. Formally, let b_t denote the baseline context of donor type t , and assume that there are two charities, one global and one local, with $\Delta(\omega) = \psi_G(\omega) - \psi_L(\omega)$ as their relative attractiveness as defined in equation (5). We then define

$$D_t \equiv D^{\Delta(\omega)}(b_t),$$

where higher D_t means that the donor's baseline context is more strongly associated with states in which global giving is attractive.

If a cue c is added to this baseline context, let $D_c \equiv D^{\Delta(\omega)}(c)$ and let $\lambda_{t,c}$ denote the relative weight placed on the cue.¹² The simulated attractiveness of global giving can then be written as

$$M_t(c) = E[\Delta(\omega)] + (1 - \lambda_{t,c})D_t + \lambda_{t,c}D_c.$$

In the absence of the cue,

$$M_t(0) = E[\Delta(\omega)] + D_t.$$

Case 1: Local cue versus baseline. Consider first a local cue c_L added to the baseline context. The treatment effect is

$$M_t(c_L) - M_t(0) = \lambda_{t,L}(D_L - D_t),$$

where $D_L \equiv D^{\Delta(\omega)}(c_L)$. Accordingly, holding $\lambda_{t,L}$ constant, the treatment effect becomes more negative as baseline accessibility of global-favoring states increases:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial D_t} [M_t(c_L) - M_t(0)] = -\lambda_{t,L} < 0.$$

Thus, a local cue should reduce global giving most among donors for whom global recipients and needs are highly accessible in the control condition. These donors have the most global content to displace.

Case 2: Local versus global cue. The prediction is different when we instead compare the relative effect of a global cue and a local cue. In that case,

$$M_t(c_G) - M_t(c_L) = (\lambda_{t,L} - \lambda_{t,G})D_t + \lambda_{t,G}D_G - \lambda_{t,L}D_L.$$

¹²The weight relates to the baseline accessibility. Suppose the baseline context has accessibility of W_t , and the added cue accessibility $W_{t,c}$, then $\lambda_{t,c} = \frac{W_{t,c}}{W_t + W_{t,c}}$.

If the two cues are similarly strong, so that $\lambda_{t,G} \approx \lambda_{t,L}$, this simplifies to

$$M_t(c_G) - M_t(c_L) \approx \lambda_t(D_G - D_L).$$

The treatment effect then depends primarily on the difference between the global and local cues, and less on baseline accessibility D_t . Baseline differences in levels of giving may remain, but the cue itself has more similar effects across donor types.

4.2 Heterogeneity in the Charity experiment

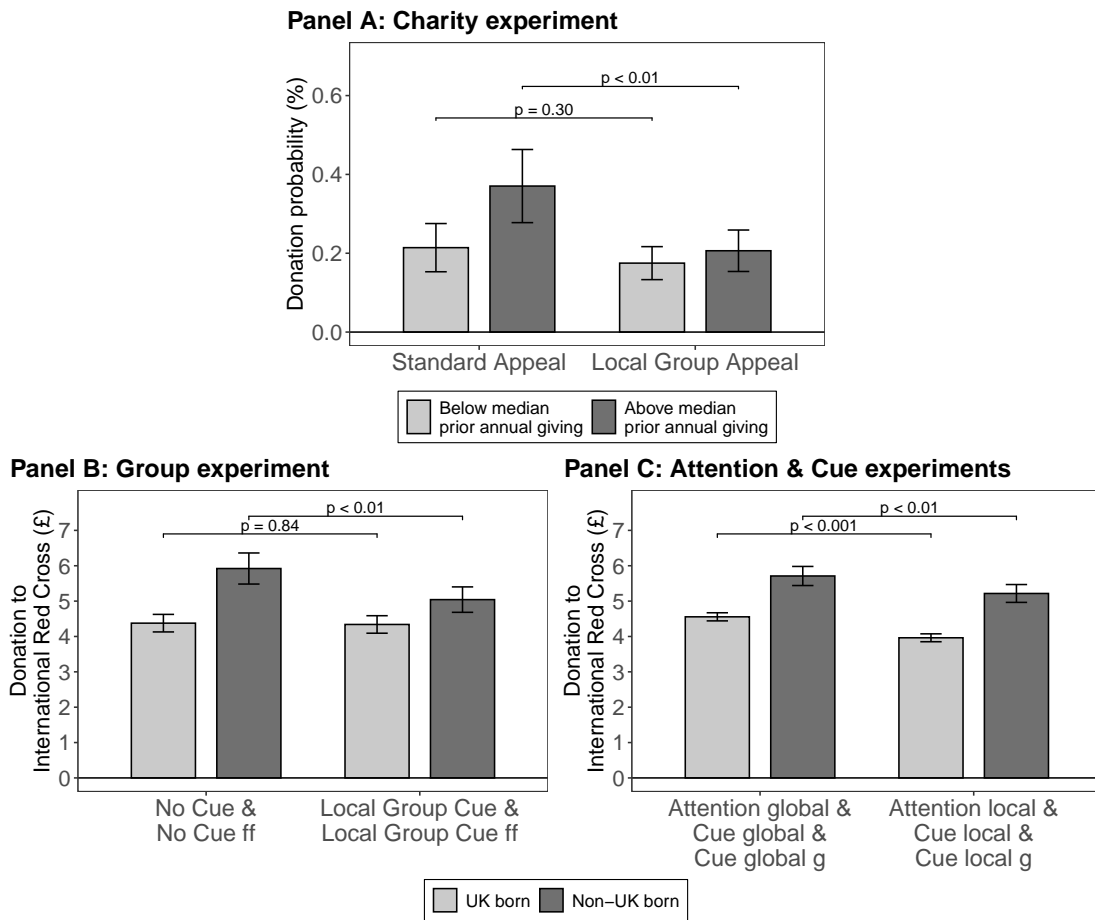
Heterogeneity variable. In the *Charity experiment*, the most natural proxy for baseline accessibility of global-favoring states is the size of the donor’s existing regular pledge to the charity. Donors who already give larger amounts to a charity with a global mission have revealed a stronger attachment to the charity’s global mission. In the language of the framework, their baseline context is more likely to bring to mind states in which giving to the global charity is valuable.

Results. Panel A of Figure 4 shows the share of donors signing the additional pledge by treatment condition and by whether their prior annual giving is below or above the median. In the *Standard Appeal* condition, above-median donors are more likely to sign the additional pledge than below-median donors, consistent with the idea that above-median donors have higher baseline accessibility of global-favoring states.¹³

The framework predicts that the local group appeal should backfire most among these high-baseline-accessibility donors. Our data support this prediction. Panel A shows that the group appeal has little effect among below-median donors: the probability of signing the annual pledge solicited in the letter decreases only slightly, and the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.30$). Among above-median donors, by contrast, the group appeal leads to a pronounced and statistically significant decline ($p < 0.01$). The group appeal therefore largely eliminates the higher baseline response of above-median donors. This pattern is consistent with the displacement prediction: donors whose prior giving suggests greater accessibility of the charity’s global mission have more global content to lose when the local group cue is introduced. Appendix Table B.4 confirms the same pattern using log prior annual giving continuously: the interaction between *Local Group Appeal* and log prior annual amount is negative and (at least marginally) statistically significant for both the probability of signing the additional pledge and the amount raised.

¹³Similarly, Appendix Table B.4 shows that log prior annual giving positively predicts response to the standard fundraising letter. With controls, a one-log-point increase in prior annual giving is associated with a 0.173 percentage point increase in the probability of signing the additional pledge and a 1.362€ increase in the amount raised. Thus, the proxy is strongly related to giving in the baseline condition.

Figure 4: Heterogeneity in the field and online experiments



Notes: **Panel A** shows the share of donors signing the additional pledge in the *Charity experiment*, separately by prior annual giving below versus above the median, comparing the *Standard Appeal* and *Local Group Appeal* conditions. **Panel B** shows average donations to the International Red Cross in the *Group experiment*, separately by country of birth, comparing the pooled *No Cue* and *No Cue ff* conditions to the pooled *Local Group Cue* and *Local Group Cue ff* conditions. **Panel C** shows average donations to the International Red Cross in the pooled *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, separately by participants' country of birth, comparing the global conditions to the local conditions. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. P-values report tests of the treatment contrast within subgroup.

4.3 Heterogeneity in the Group experiment

Heterogeneity variable. The *Group experiment* provides a parallel test. We use whether participants were born outside the UK as a proxy for baseline accessibility of non-UK recipients and needs. Non-UK-born participants plausibly have more accessible associations with recipients outside the UK, for example through personal experience, family networks, or media consumption. Pooling the *No Cue* and *No Cue ff* conditions supports this interpretation. In the absence of the local group cue, non-UK-born participants donate substantially more to the International Red Cross than UK-born participants, consistent with the idea that they have high baseline accessibility of global needs. In Appendix Table B.5, this difference in the pooled *No Cue* and *No Cue ff* conditions is £1.545.

Results. The framework predicts that the local group cue should reduce global giving especially for non-UK-born participants, because they have more global content to displace. Panel B of Figure 4 shows this pattern. Introducing the local group cue in *Local Group Cue* and *Local Group Cue ff* leaves giving among UK-born participants essentially unchanged ($p = 0.84$), but significantly reduces giving among non-UK-born participants ($p < 0.01$). As a result, the local group cue compresses the baseline difference between the two groups. Column (1) of Appendix Table B.5 makes the same point in regression form. In the *Group experiment*, *Global cond.* equals one for the *No Cue* and *No Cue ff* conditions and zero for the *Local Group Cue* and *Local Group Cue ff* conditions. Thus, the coefficient on *Global cond.* is the difference between the baseline context and the local group cue, or equivalently the negative of the local-group-cue effect. For UK-born participants, this difference is only £0.037 and statistically insignificant. For non-UK-born participants, the corresponding difference is £0.879. Importantly, the interaction term is statistically significant, indicating that the treatment effect for non-UK-born participants is larger than for UK-born participants. Thus, the local group cue reduces giving to the International Red Cross mainly among participants whose baseline behavior suggests greater accessibility of non-UK recipients.

The heterogeneity patterns in the *Charity experiment* and the *Group experiment* are therefore closely parallel. In both experiments, the treatment adds a local group cue to a baseline context; in both experiments, the proxy for baseline global accessibility predicts higher giving in the baseline condition; and in both experiments, the local group cue reduces giving primarily among the high-accessibility group. In the field, this is above-median prior donors; online, it is non-UK-born participants. The two settings differ in sample, stakes, and outcome, but the heterogeneity follows the same structure: the group cue compresses baseline differences by reducing global giving where global recipients were most likely to come to mind absent the cue.

4.4 Heterogeneity in the Attention and Cue experiments

The *Attention* and *Cue* experiments estimate a different contrast. They do not compare a local cue to a baseline context. Instead, they compare global cues to local cues. The framework therefore does not predict the same heterogeneity pattern. Even if UK-born participants have lower baseline accessibility of non-UK recipients, the global cue actively supplies global content. Hence, the global-versus-local treatment effect can be present for both UK-born and non-UK-born participants.

This is what we find. Panel C of Figure 4 shows that moving from the local conditions to the global conditions increases giving to the International Red Cross for both groups. Column (2) of Appendix Table B.5 confirms this. The global condition

increases donations by £0.593 among UK-born participants. Among non-UK-born participants, the corresponding effect is £0.495. The interaction is small and statistically insignificant.

At the same time, baseline differences in levels remain. Non-UK-born participants give more to the International Red Cross than UK-born participants in both local and global conditions. Thus, the global cue does not make the two groups identical. Rather, it moves both groups in parallel. This is exactly what the cue-contrast logic predicts: when the experiment compares a global cue to a local cue, the treatment effect depends less on baseline accessibility and more on the difference between the two cues.

Column (3) of Appendix Table B.5 directly compares these heterogeneity patterns across experiments. We test a triple interaction between experiment family, cue condition, and country of birth: (*Group experiment* versus *Attention* and *Cue experiments*) \times (baseline/global condition versus local condition) \times (non-UK-born versus UK-born). We find that the origin-based heterogeneity in the treatment effect is £0.941 larger in the *Group experiment* than in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, a significant triple interaction. This is consistent with heterogeneity being pronounced when the experiment adds a local group cue to a baseline context, but muted when the experiment compares an explicit global cue to an explicit local cue.

Summary. Taken together, the heterogeneity results support the framework’s interpretation of the main findings. In the *Charity experiment*, the group appeal backfires more strongly among donors with higher prior giving to the global charity. In the online *Group experiment*, the group cue reduces global giving mainly among non-UK-born participants, whose control behavior suggests greater baseline accessibility of non-UK recipients. In the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, where global and local cues are directly compared, both UK-born and non-UK-born participants respond similarly to the cue contrast. The results therefore line up with the model’s prediction that local cues have the most scope to backfire when they displace global states that would otherwise have been accessible.

5 Alternative interpretations

The results so far show that cues shift giving in the predicted direction, and that a neighborhood-based group appeal backfires when applied to a charity with a global mission. Heterogeneity patterns further support the interpretation that these effects operate through cue-driven attention to recipient states. We now assess alternative interpretations of our findings. To this end, we examine whether the cues conveyed payoff-relevant information, the interpretation of the local group cue, experimenter

demand, and diffusion of responsibility.

5.1 Payoff-relevant information

A natural concern is that our treatments may have changed giving by providing information rather than by shifting attention. For example, mentioning homelessness may remind participants of domestic hardship, while mentioning victims of war may remind them of international humanitarian need. In this broad semantic sense, the cues are of course meaningful. Our use of the term *uninformative* is narrower: the cues add no new payoff-relevant information about the relative merits of the available giving options, the effectiveness of the charities, the donation technology, or the consequences of giving to one option rather than another. The mechanism we emphasize is that cues change which already plausible recipient states are retrieved, not that they reveal new facts about how donations are used.

Our experiments are designed to focus on this mechanism. In the *Attention experiment*, the initial anchor highlights recipient states naturally associated with either the locally or the globally operating charity. The subsequent donation screen provides information about both charities, and the randomly assigned anchor does not vary information about effectiveness, donation technology, or impact. In the *Cue experiment*, the cue is even more clearly separated from the donation decision: it refers only to the topic of a later survey and is randomly assigned before participants allocate money between the same two charities. In the *Charity* and *Group* experiments, the local group appeal changes the social and local frame of the ask, while holding fixed the mission and donation information. Thus, the treatments vary which associations are made salient while leaving payoff-relevant information about the giving options unchanged.

5.2 Interpretation of the local group cue

The treatment in both the *Charity experiment* and the *Group experiment* combines two elements: it is local and it is a group appeal. Our interpretation emphasizes the local component. A neighborhood-based group appeal mentions the donor's ZIP code, region, neighborhood, or local peers, and should therefore bring local recipients and needs to mind. An alternative interpretation is that the local component is not important. On this view, the treatment works because it is a group appeal per se: it may cue social norms, conformity, group identity, or a desire not to let the group down. While such mechanisms are often expected to increase giving (Kessler and Milkman, 2018; Charness and Holder, 2019), they could in principle also generate backfiring in our setting.

We use two additional analyses to distinguish these interpretations. First, in the *Cue experiment*, we test whether adding a mere group mention to the local and global cue treatments changes giving or attention. Second, in the *Charity experiment*, we test whether strengthening the group component through explicit group competition changes the effect of the appeal.

5.2.1 Combining cues

The *Cue experiment* included two additional conditions designed to isolate the role of a generic group mention. These conditions, which we label *Local Cue g* and *Global Cue g*, add a group frame to the corresponding *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* conditions. Importantly, the group frame in these conditions was not tied to participants' post-code, neighborhood, or region. It therefore allows us to ask whether a mere group cue changes giving and attention, holding fixed the content of the cue.

The four conditions—*Local Cue*, *Global Cue*, *Local Cue g*, and *Global Cue g*—were run at the same time, on the same platform, and with the same donation decision and attention elicitation. This makes the comparison between conditions with and without the group frame a direct test of whether the group component affects decision-making beyond the local or global cue content.

Design. In *Local Cue g*, participants were told that they formed a group with other Prolific participants and then learned that, after the donation decision, they would complete a survey about homelessness. In *Global Cue g*, participants received the same group frame and then learned that the later survey would be about victims of war. The local and global cue text was otherwise identical to the *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* conditions described in Section 3.1.2. In total, 1,159 participants took part in *Local Cue g* and 1,157 in *Global Cue g*.

Results. Adding the generic group frame does not produce the pattern expected if the group component by itself drove the backfiring effect. Participants in *Local Cue g* donate on average £4.10 to the International Red Cross, compared to £4.03 in *Local Cue* ($p = 0.55$, t-test). Participants in *Global Cue g* donate on average £4.71, compared to £4.52 in *Global Cue* ($p = 0.10$, t-test). Thus, adding a generic group frame does not reduce giving to the global charity. If anything, the difference in the global cue condition is positive. Interacting the group frame with the local-versus-global cue contrast also yields a small and statistically insignificant interaction effect; see Appendix Table B.8.

The attention data show the same pattern. Adding the generic group frame does

not meaningfully change which recipients participants mention.¹⁴ These results suggest that the group component alone does not explain the backfiring effect. The evidence therefore points to the local content of the group appeal, rather than group framing per se.

5.2.2 Group competition

The *Charity experiment* provides a second test of whether the group component drives the backfiring effect. Here, a subset of donors in the *Local Group Appeal* condition received an additional group-competition element.

Design. In total, 28,328 of the 66,904 donors assigned to the group-appeal condition were assigned to the *Group Competition* condition. In addition to the neighborhood-based group appeal, the letter announced a neighborhood tournament: the “most generous neighborhoods” would be recognized on the organization’s website and social media. According to laboratory evidence (Charness and Holder, 2019), this manipulation strengthens the group component of the appeal. If the backfiring effect were driven by group identity, conformity, or the desire not to let one’s group down, then making intergroup competition explicit should change the effect of the appeal.

Results. In contrast, Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between the group appeal without competition and the group appeal with competition.¹⁵ This result is difficult to reconcile with the view that the group component alone drives the backfiring effect. Strengthening the group aspect of the appeal neither reverses nor amplifies the negative effect.

Together with the cue-combination evidence from the online experiment, the field evidence supports our interpretation that the crucial feature of the treatment is the local group cue: the appeal backfires because it directs attention toward local recipients and needs while the charity is asking for support for a global cause.

5.3 Experimenter demand effects

A further concern is that the online results may be driven by experimenter demand (De Quidt et al., 2018). However, several features of the evidence make experimenter demand an unlikely explanation for our results.

¹⁴Among participants who received *Local Cue*, 67% mentioned a local recipient; among those who received *Local Cue g*, 69% did so ($p = 0.55$, two-sample test of proportions). The shares mentioning global recipients were also similar, at 39% and 40%, respectively ($p = 0.59$). Likewise, 58% of participants in both *Global Cue* and *Global Cue g* mentioned a local recipient ($p = 0.86$), while 48% and 51% mentioned a global recipient, respectively ($p = 0.14$).

¹⁵The *Local Group Appeal* condition without competition retains a significant negative effect when tested against the *Standard Appeal* condition; see Appendix Table E.4.

Table 3: Effect of explicit group competition within the *Local Group Appeal* condition

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Group Competition</i>	-0.021 (0.034)	-0.011 (0.036)	-0.054 (0.088)	-0.030 (0.091)
Constant (<i>Local Group Appeal No Competition</i>)	0.197*** (0.023)		0.403*** (0.060)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	66,904	66,904	66,904	66,904

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a donor signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged. “*Group Competition*” is equal to 1 when the donor is part of the *Group Competition* treatment and zero if the donor is part of the *Local Group Appeal* condition without the additional competition element. Additional independent variables (“*Controls*”) added in columns (2) and (4) are annual donation amount, whether the donor provided an email address, whether the donor was recruited face-to-face, gender, the population of the ZIP code, years as a donor, and wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

First, the backfiring result comes from the *Charity experiment*, which was embedded in the normal operations of the charity. Donors received a regular fundraising letter, there was no reference to a scientific study, and donors were unaware that the wording of the letter was experimentally varied. Experimenter demand therefore cannot explain the 33% reduction in pledge take-up in the field. The online *Group experiment* then reproduces the same behavioral pattern in a controlled setting.

Second, the online experiments were designed to reduce the scope for demand in several ways. In the *Attention experiment*, participants were explicitly told that the first-mentioned recipient was randomly selected. In the *Cue experiment*, the cue was embedded in the study structure: participants were told that they would later complete a survey about a randomly selected topic. The cue was informative about the later survey, but not about the relative merits, effectiveness, donation technology, or impact of giving to the two charities in the donation decision. Moreover, the attention measure in the *Cue experiment* was elicited after the donation decision and asked participants what other participants brought to mind, rather than asking them to justify their own choice. In the *Group experiment*, the negative effect of the group appeal appears both when no open-ended attention question is asked before the donation decision and when attention is measured before the decision. Thus, the effect is not driven by asking participants to articulate recipients before choosing.

Third, the pattern of heterogeneity (Section 4) is difficult to reconcile with experimenter demand. The framework predicts that a local group cue should backfire most among donors for whom global-favoring states are most accessible absent the cue. This is exactly what we find: in the *Charity experiment*, the backfiring is

stronger among donors with higher prior annual giving, and in the *Group experiment*, the negative effect is concentrated among non-UK-born participants. By contrast, in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, where the contrast is between global and local conditions rather than between a local group cue and a baseline context, UK-born and non-UK-born participants respond similarly to the cue contrast. Explaining this design-specific heterogeneity pattern through demand would therefore require ad hoc assumptions about which participants infer which experimental objective in which design.

Finally, the treatment effects are closely tied to what participants report bringing to mind. Across experiments, cues that shift giving toward the global charity also increase global recipient mentions and reduce local recipient mentions, while the local group cue shifts mentions in the opposite direction. These attention shifts are measured using open-ended responses and are strongly related to choices. This pattern is consistent with the cue-based attention mechanism and less consistent with participants merely trying to comply with an inferred experimental objective. More broadly, recent evidence suggests that experimenter demand has limited effects on response behavior even when demand is explicitly prompted (De Quidt et al., 2018; Mumolo and Peterson, 2019; Winichakul et al., 2024). Taken together, experimenter demand is unlikely to account for the full set of field results, online replications, attention measures, and heterogeneity patterns.

5.4 Diffusion of responsibility and substitution

A final alternative explanation is diffusion of responsibility. Approaching donors as part of a group may make the involvement of other donors salient, leading individuals to feel less personally responsible for contributing. If individuals perceive others' contributions as substitutes for their own, this may reduce giving (Varian, 1994; Bartling and Fischbacher, 2012; Falk et al., 2020). Similarly, increasing the salience of others' involvement may trigger a "bystander effect" that reduces the likelihood of helping (Darley and Latané, 1968; Cryder and Loewenstein, 2012).

Several pieces of evidence speak against diffusion of responsibility as the main explanation in our setting. First, our online experiments use a fixed-budget allocation between the British Red Cross and the International Red Cross. Diffusion of responsibility concerns the level of helping, but the level is fixed at £10 in the experiments. Because the choice is which charity to support, not whether to give, diffusion of responsibility cannot explain the reduction in giving to the International Red Cross induced by the group appeal.

Second, the evidence in Section 5.2 shows that the mere presence of a group frame is not enough to reduce global giving. In the additional online conditions,

adding a generic group mention to the *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* conditions does not reduce donations to the International Red Cross and does not meaningfully change recipient mentions. If the main effect were driven by the involvement of other group members reducing personal responsibility, one would expect the generic group frame to reduce giving as well. It does not. This suggests that the relevant feature of the treatment is not group membership per se, but the local content of the group appeal.

Third, evidence from the same donor population also weighs against a diffusion-of-responsibility interpretation of the field result. Oslislo and Schwerter (2026) provide direct evidence that information about the giving behavior of other donors increases giving using the same sample of regular donors as in our *Charity experiment*. In their experiment, donors receive information about the progress of a campaign toward a specific fundraising goal, with progress varied across conditions. Importantly, this information is provided without the neighborhood cue or other local mentions. They find that all goal interventions increase giving relative to a control in which no information was provided. If diffusion of responsibility were the dominant force, information that the campaign is close to its goal should have reduced further giving in particular. Instead, information about others' giving increases donations.

Finally, diffusion of responsibility also does not naturally explain the heterogeneity patterns: the group appeal backfires most among donors and participants whose baseline behavior suggests greater accessibility of global recipients, while similar origin-based heterogeneity is absent when the online experiments compare explicit global and local cues.

Overall, diffusion of responsibility may matter in many helping environments, but it is unlikely to explain the results here. The evidence points instead to the local group cue redirecting attention.

6 Discussion

We discuss how our framework helps organize empirical patterns in charitable giving and prosocial behavior more broadly. In naturally occurring settings, cues and information often arrive together: cue-based recall may therefore complement, amplify, or offset ordinary information effects. We focus on media-driven shifts in giving, redistribution, norm nudging, and priming.

6.1 Media salience and transient shifts in giving

Our framework speaks directly to a body of empirical evidence on how media attention, online search, and public discourse shape charitable giving. The relevant prediction follows from the recall mechanism: a cue raises the weight on states sim-

ilar to it, so cues should redirect giving toward causes whose features are similar to the cue and away from causes whose features are dissimilar.

The crowd-in prediction is supported by several findings. Brown and Minty (2008) document that media coverage of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami substantially raised online donations to relief organizations. Eisensee and Strömberg (2007) show, in the context of U.S. disaster relief, that responses to disasters depend on whether they compete with other newsworthy events: disasters that arrive during news droughts attract more aid. Jayaraman et al. (2023) document that giving to natural disasters is concentrated on the subset of disasters that attract organized fundraising and media coverage, rather than tracking severity per se. Scharf et al. (2022) show, using UK fundraising telethons, that on-air appeals substantially raise giving to featured charities, with the effect concentrated immediately after the appeal and decaying quickly thereafter. Across these settings, exogenous increases in the salience of a particular cause raise giving to charities whose missions are similar to it.

The crowd-out prediction is also supported. Perroni et al. (2022) use Google Trends to show that increases in online attention to a given issue over time are associated with more donations to charities with missions related to the issue and with fewer donations to charities with unrelated missions. Yildirim et al. (2024) document a sharper pattern: foreign natural disasters that draw media attention toward humanitarian causes raise donations to disaster relief while simultaneously reducing donations to political campaigns, and political advertising shocks generate a mirror-image crowding out of charitable giving. Jaimovich et al. (2026) show that rising local pandemic salience during COVID-19 redirected charitable donations from global to local causes, generating short-term substitution effects along the dimension that the prevailing cue made salient.

These patterns are the field-level analog of our experimental results. The same cognitive process that shifts experimental allocations in a Prolific experiment when a survey topic is mentioned may drive sizable cross-cause swings in giving when news cycles change. Anticipating which cause attributes a given cue retrieves, and which alternatives are accessible in donors' choice sets, is a prerequisite for predicting the sign and magnitude of any communication strategy.

6.2 Redistribution and the politics of who deserves help

Many of the same mechanisms apply to redistribution. A large literature documents that support for redistribution depends not only on self-interest but also on perceived recipient deservingness, beliefs about social mobility, and views about the composition of welfare recipients (Fong, 2001; Alesina and Angeletos, 2005; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Alesina et al., 2018; Stantcheva, 2021; Alesina et al., 2023). Redistribution

preferences also respond to perceived group boundaries: support for redistribution is shaped by social distance, racial and ethnic divisions, and whether beneficiaries are seen as members of one's own group (Luttmer, 2001; Bonomi et al., 2021).

Our framework helps organize these patterns. A respondent asked about welfare or redistribution is, in effect, evaluating a trade-off between different categories of potential recipients: the deserving versus the undeserving poor, the working family versus the welfare recipient, the native-born citizen versus the immigrant. Which recipients come to mind at the moment of evaluation depends on the cues in the environment. Gilens (1999) documents how shifts in the racial composition of media coverage of poverty in the United States tracked shifts in public opposition to welfare. Alesina et al. (2023) show that respondents who exaggerate the share of immigrants among welfare recipients are less supportive of redistribution, and that providing accurate information shifts both beliefs and policy preferences. Andries et al. (2025) document that narrative accounts that foster perspective-taking change attitudes toward immigrants and refugees, plausibly by raising the accessibility of states in which redistribution is valuable.

The implication for the communication of redistributive policy parallels our results on fundraising. The same policy proposal can attract markedly different levels of support depending on which beneficiaries and trade-offs the framing makes salient. As in the fundraising case, open-ended measures of what comes to mind in response to a policy frame—rather than stated agreement with the frame alone—may help distinguish persuasion through information from persuasion through cue-driven attention.

6.3 Norm nudging

Our framework also helps organize a broader set of backfiring results in the literature on norm interventions. Information about norms may not only be processed as a signal of how others behave or what behavior they approve of. It may also bring to mind examples, categories, and comparison standards. An intervention may thus backfire if the cue in the norm message is more strongly associated with states that favor the unintended action than with states that favor the action the designer intends to promote.

This perspective sheds light on classic boomerang effects in environmental behavior. Cialdini (2003) argues that messages emphasizing the prevalence of an undesirable behavior can be self-undermining because the psychologically powerful descriptive implication may simply be that many people are doing it. Schultz et al. (2007) show this effect empirically in a field experiment on household energy use. Informing households about average neighborhood consumption reduced usage among

above-average consumers but increased it among below-average consumers; adding an injunctive message of approval or disapproval eliminated this boomerang effect. In our terms, descriptive feedback made average or high energy use salient for already low-use households, whereas the injunctive message restored attention to the evaluative dimension the intervention was meant to activate.

Richter et al. (2018) provide closely related evidence for the mechanism we emphasize. In supermarket field interventions, signs intended to increase purchases of sustainably labeled seafood failed to raise the sustainable share and in one case even reduced it. At the same time, the interventions increased seafood purchases overall. Their follow-up evidence suggests that the signs primarily cued the product category seafood rather than the attribute sustainable. This is precisely the kind of cueing failure highlighted by our framework: the intervention brought the wrong object to mind. The result is not that social information has no effect, but that it can shift accessibility toward a broader or different category than the one the intervention designer intends to promote.

Our contribution to this literature is to isolate this cue-based channel experimentally and show the attentional mechanism behind it. Our evidence suggests that some failures of norm communication may arise because the message draws attention to unintended features. For intervention design, this implies that successful pretesting should ask not only whether people understand a message, but also which features it makes salient. A carefully designed message that draws attention to the intended features while avoiding unintended ones may both avoid backfiring and increase effectiveness. Indeed, as Allcott and Rogers (2014) argue, what makes home energy reports effective in changing energy consumption may not only be the information conveyed by personalized reports and social comparisons but also the fact that they draw attention to energy use itself. The open-ended responses used in our online experiments may be particularly useful for capturing what comes to mind when people receive communications involving norms and social comparisons. They could thus serve as a tool to support the design of norm messages.

6.4 Priming and the activation of cognitive content

Priming has been a useful tool for identifying cognitive channels in economic behavior. Studies in this tradition show that priming social identity shifts intertemporal and risk choices in line with category norms (Benjamin et al., 2010), that priming criminal identity raises rule violation among inmates (Cohn et al., 2015b), that priming professional identity changes honesty among bank employees (Cohn et al., 2014), and that priming financial states induces countercyclical risk aversion among financial professionals (Cohn et al., 2015a); Cohn and Maréchal (2016) provide an

overview. At the same time, several high-profile priming results have failed to replicate in preregistered tests, raising concerns about the robustness of this approach (Doyen et al., 2012; Open Science Collaboration, 2015; Camerer et al., 2018; Rahwan et al., 2019).

The exchange around Cohn et al. (2014) on dishonesty in the banking industry is instructive for our framework. Rahwan et al. (2019) reported a failed replication across five populations. In their reply, Cohn et al. (2019) note that the manipulation check in the non-replicating sample showed no significant increase in the accessibility of bank-related thoughts between the treatment and control conditions. Thus, the prime did not appear to make participants' occupational role more salient. Whatever one's view of the substantive question about business culture, this observation points to a structural feature of cue-based interventions: a cue can only shift behavior to the extent that it activates relevant content in the participant's mental database. If the targeted associations are not represented in the database, or if the cue fails to make them accessible, the prime cannot move beliefs or choices in the predicted direction—regardless of whether the underlying hypothesis is correct.

This logic is built into our framework. Cues operate by raising the recall weight on similar states; absent states cannot be retrieved, and weakly activated states have weak effects. It also motivates our methodological approach. The open-ended elicitations we use in our online experiments serve precisely as a check on which content the cue actually activates, allowing us to verify rather than assume the cognitive shift associated with the treatment effect on behavior (Haaland et al., 2025). More broadly, the experience with priming research suggests that combining cue manipulations with direct measures of activated cognitive content is valuable not only for identifying mechanisms but also for diagnosing why a given intervention does or does not produce its expected effect.

7 Conclusion

This paper studies how uninformative cues influence charitable giving. We develop a framework in which donors care about the consequences of their giving but, because the state space of consequences is large, form beliefs through an associative sampling process that is shaped by contextual cues. Cues affect giving even when they carry no payoff-relevant information because they influence which attributes of charities and recipients come to mind at the moment of choice.

We provide evidence for this mechanism in a series of online experiments and a large-scale natural field experiment. In the online *Attention* and *Cue* experiments, local and global cues shift both recipient mentions and donation behavior in the predicted directions. In the *Charity experiment*, a neighborhood-based group appeal

applied to a charity with a global mission reduces pledge take-up by 33%. The complementary online *Group experiment* replicates this negative effect and shows that the appeal shifts attention toward local recipients and away from global recipients. Heterogeneity patterns further support this interpretation: the appeal backfires most among donors and participants whose baseline behavior suggests that global needs would otherwise have been more likely to come to mind.

These findings have several implications. For fundraising practice and charitable giving, they imply that effective communication requires considering not only the informational content of a campaign, but also which associations it activates. Group appeals, identity frames, and other contextual elements may redirect donors' attention in ways that are difficult to anticipate without understanding the processes that govern what comes to mind. Our framework highlights a key feature of how associations come to mind: associative recall based on the similarity between cues and states. The *Charity experiment* illustrates the practical importance of these processes. A group appeal was a plausible fundraising intervention, motivated by existing evidence and common fundraising practice. In this global-giving context, however, implementing the appeal across the donor base would have implied approximately 30,000€ in foregone annual pledges. The complementary online evidence suggests why: rather than only invoking a norm of giving by mentioning fellow donors, the appeal shifted attention toward local needs, making the global cause less compelling at the moment of choice.

Beyond fundraising, our results carry lessons for behavioral interventions and for the study of prosocial behavior more broadly. Interventions are typically designed around what they communicate. Our findings suggest that what they cause decision makers to retrieve also matters. Anticipating which beneficiaries, comparisons, and categories a cue activates in a given population can thus help amplify the intended message, while neglecting such effects may even reverse the intended effect. The same perspective helps us understand longstanding puzzles about the context-dependence of giving: variation across settings need not only reflect variation in underlying preferences, but also variation in what the decision environment makes accessible at the moment of choice. In summary, prosocial behavior is shaped not only by the preferences people hold and the information they receive, but also by the cognitive material the decision environment brings to mind.

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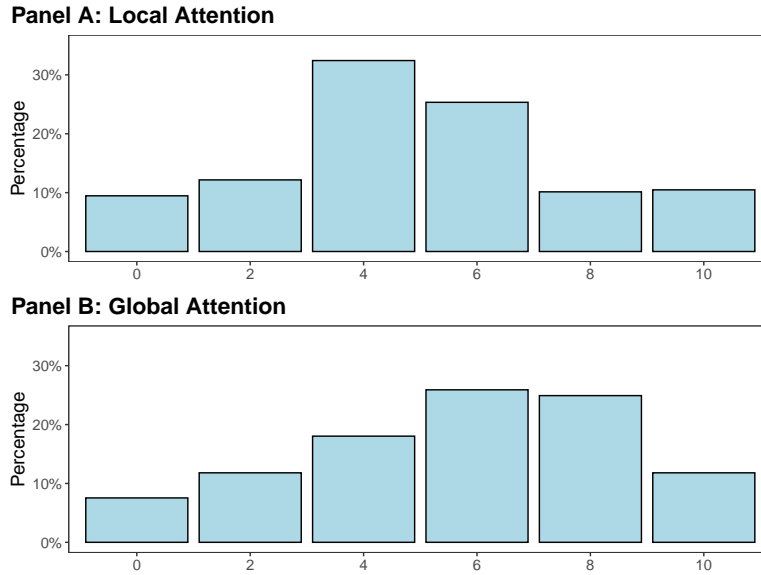
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Appendix

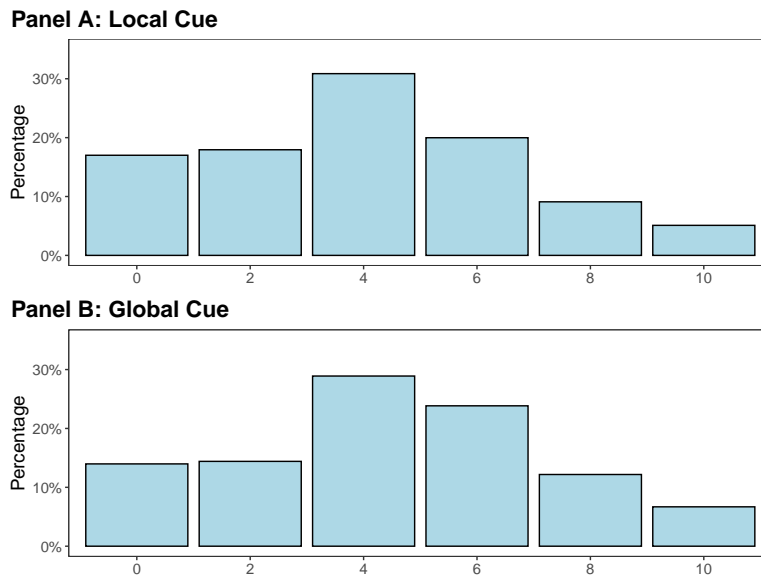
A Additional figures

Figure A.1: Distribution of donation decisions for the *Local Attention* and *Global Attention* conditions



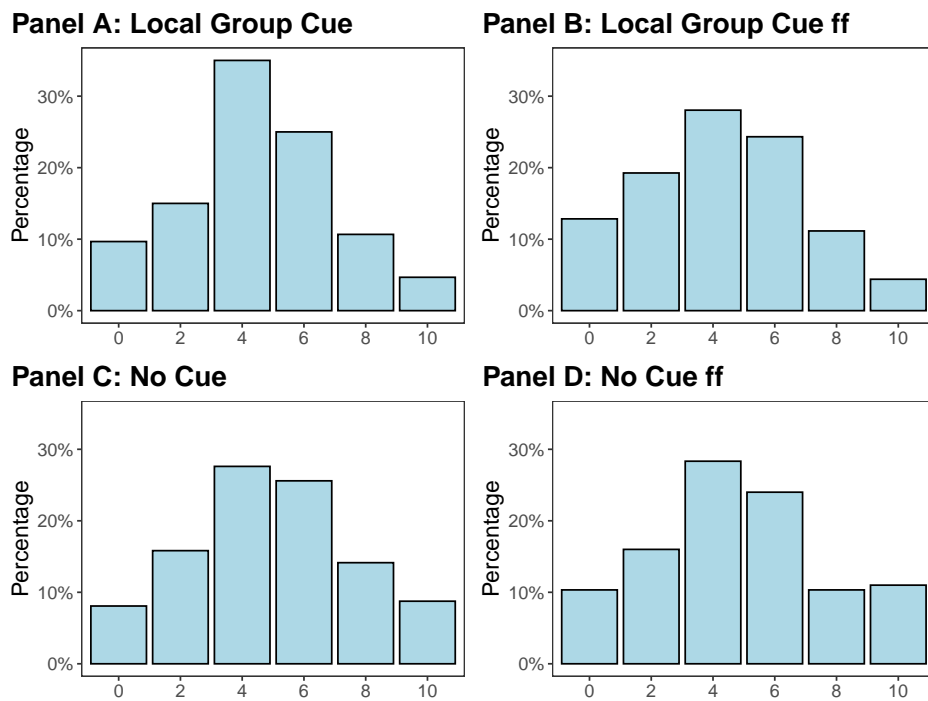
Notes: The figures display histograms of the donation behavior for the *Local Attention* and *Global Attention* conditions. The x-axis denotes the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross.

Figure A.2: Distribution of donation decisions for the *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* conditions



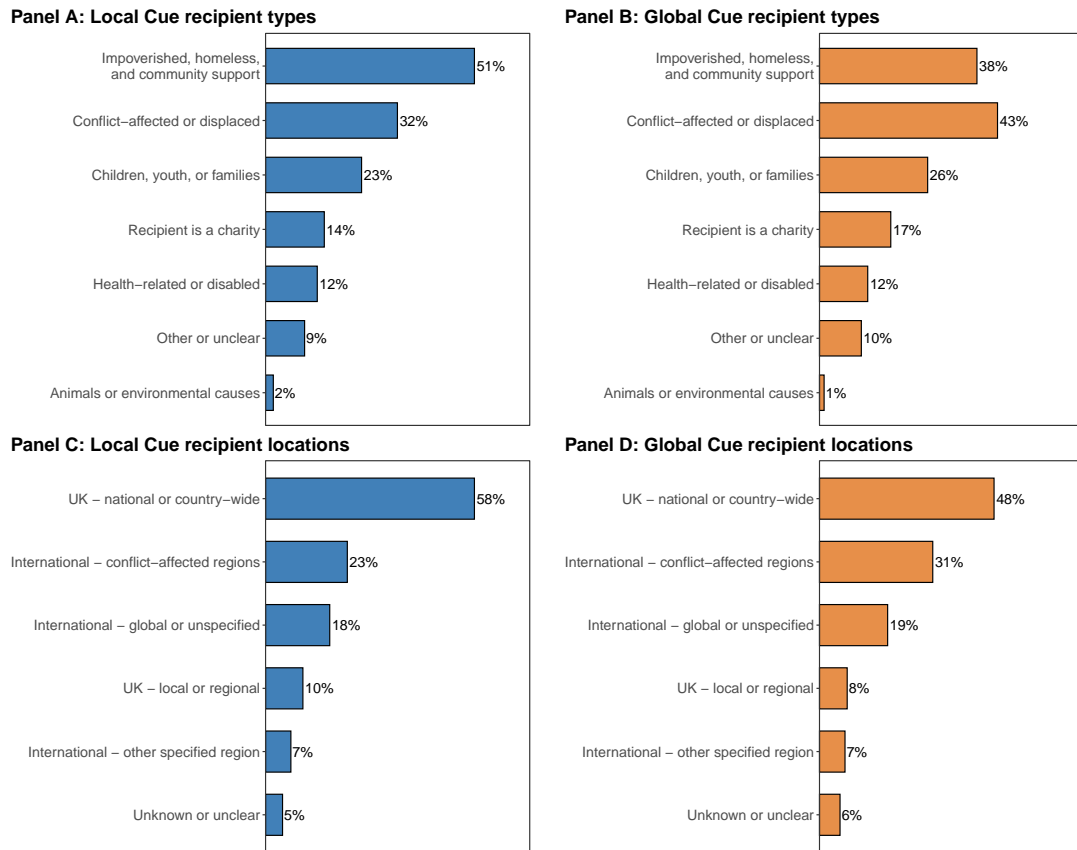
Notes: The figures display histograms of the donation behavior for the *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* conditions. The x-axis denotes the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross.

Figure A.3: Distribution of donation decisions for the *Local Group Cue* and *No Cue* conditions



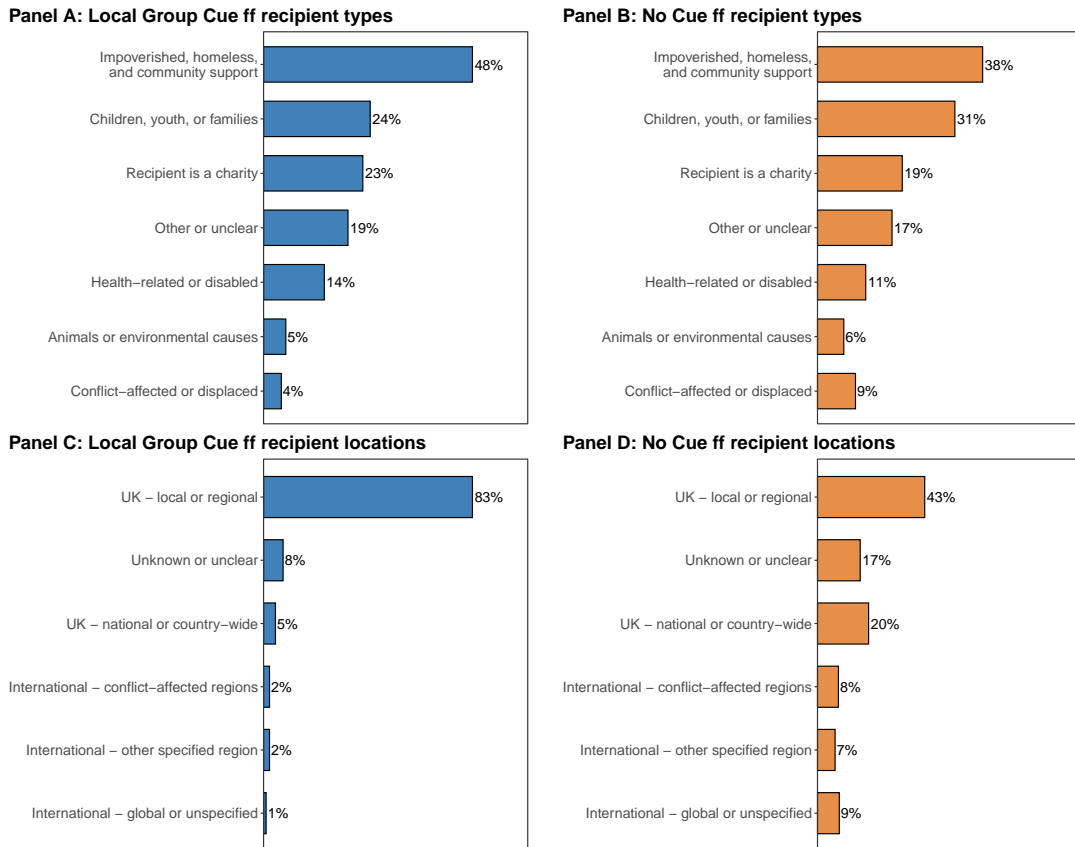
Notes: The figures display histograms of the donation behavior for the *Local Group Cue*, *No Cue*, *Local Group Cue ff* and *No Cue ff* conditions. The x-axis denotes the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross.

Figure A.4: Categorized open-ended responses in *Local Cue* and *Global Cue*



Notes: The figure displays categorizations of participants' responses to the open-ended question of who they would like to help when given a choice. **Panel A** reports the distribution of different recipient-type categories in the *Local Cue* condition. **Panel B** reports the corresponding shares for the *Global Cue* condition. **Panel C** reports the distribution of different recipient-location categories in the *Local Cue* condition. **Panel D** reports the corresponding shares for the *Global Cue* condition. A response can fall into multiple recipient-type or recipient-location categories, hence fractions do not add to 100%.

Figure A.5: Categorized open-ended responses in *Local Group Cue ff* and *No Cue ff*



Notes: The figure displays categorizations of participants' responses to the open-ended question of who they would like to help when given a choice. **Panel A** reports the distribution of different recipient-type categories in the *Local Group Cue ff* condition. **Panel B** reports the corresponding shares for the *No Cue ff* condition. **Panel C** reports the distribution of different recipient-location categories in the *Local Group Cue ff* condition. **Panel D** reports the corresponding shares for the *No Cue ff* condition. A response can fall into multiple recipient-type or recipient-location categories, hence fractions do not add to 100%.

B Additional tables

Table B.1: Examples of participants mentioning local and global recipients

Panel A: Examples of participants mentioning local recipients	
Recipient	Recipient location
<u>Attention experiment</u>	
(i) Homeless ex-veterans and homeless UK people.	In my local area, Manchester, UK.
(ii) MIND or similar mental health organizations.	In the UK, given the current crisis with waiting lists.
(iii) A children's/women's/domestic violence charity	Locally to my area or at least in the U.K.
(iv) The charity teenage cancer trust	Based in the UK
<u>Cue experiment</u>	
(i) People who are in food poverty and are having to use food banks to survive and feed themselves and their children.	Within the UK.
(ii) Old veterans struggling for housing and food.	UK.
(iii) Homeless people	UK wide. I don't think the area matters. We should try and help every homeless person.
(iv) Local people suffering from unaffordable inflation. Salary benefits no longer allow parents to feed and clothe their children	In the UK, local area
<u>Group experiment</u>	
(i) I would like to help local low income families in South East London who are struggling to make ends meet.	These families could be located in areas such as Lewisham, Greenwich, or South-wark.
(ii) The disabled and less advantaged as there people need the most help in our society.	Birmingham UK area.
(iii) I would like to help the local schools	In Tooting
(iv) I would like to help with the homeless people in Sheffield.	Sheffield City Centre.
Panel B: Examples of participants mentioning global recipients	
Recipient	Recipient location
<u>Attention experiment</u>	
(i) I would like to help the displaced people of Ukraine and Gaza.	Ukraine and Gaza.
(ii) Women's refugees.	Anywhere.
(iii) education of underprivileged, smart kids	anywhere in the world
(iv) Homeless	Anywhere as everyone should have a roof over there head
<u>Cue experiment</u>	
(i) Sight impaired people.	Africa.
(ii) Those struggling to find food and shelter due to war or fighting.	Ukraine and Gaza.
(iii) I think they would mention donating to the Homeless people	This would be in the UK
(iv) The people of Palestine and other war torn countries such as Syria and Congo	Palestine, Syria, Congo
<u>Group experiment</u>	
(i) Domestic violence victims.	In the global south.
(ii) Cobalt miners.	Democratic Republic of Congo.
(iii) Charities helping people in poverty	Countries in Africa and Latin America
(iv) I would help the Palestinian people.	Gaza Strip

Notes: The table provides illustrative examples of open-ended text responses mentioning locally and globally located recipients in the *Attention experiment*, *Cue experiment*, and *Group experiment*. In these experiments, participants were asked to describe recipients and to state the location of recipients.

Table B.2: Recipient Categories in Open-Ended Responses

Category	Description
Impoverished, homeless, and community support	Recipients described as poor, homeless, financially vulnerable, or otherwise in need of basic material support. It also includes local community recipients, food banks, shelters, elderly people, veterans, and people affected by domestic hardship or abuse.
Recipient is a charity	Responses that identify a charity, foundation, trust, nonprofit organization, or similar institution as the recipient. It captures cases in which participants refer to an organization, either by referring to a specific or a generic mention.
Health-related or disabled	Recipients connected to illness, disability, healthcare, hospitals, hospices, medical research, or mental health. It covers both specific health conditions and organizations associated with health-related support.
Children, youth, or families	Recipients that are children, young people, students, babies, parents, families, and organizations primarily serving these groups. It also includes references to schools, education, orphanages, youth clubs, and family-oriented support.
Animals or environmental causes	This category includes animals, animal shelters, wildlife, conservation, environmental causes, and related organizations. Includes both direct support for animals and broader ecological or conservation-oriented recipients.
Conflict-affected or displaced	This category includes recipients affected by war, conflict, displacement, humanitarian crises, natural disasters, or international emergencies. It covers refugees, victims of war, people in specific crisis regions, and organizations associated with humanitarian relief.
Other or unclear	This category includes responses that are too vague, ambiguous, or incomplete to classify into the substantive categories above. It also includes personal names or idiosyncratic references when the recipient type cannot be inferred from the response.

Notes: Categories are not mutually exclusive. A response is assigned to all categories that match its content.

Table B.3: Recipient Location Categories in Open-Ended Responses

Category	Description
UK – national or country-wide	Responses that locate the recipient in the United Kingdom, Britain, England, Scotland, Wales, or the country as a whole. It includes national or country-wide references such as “UK”, “Britain”, “United Kingdom”, or “nationwide”.
UK – local or regional	Responses that mention a specific UK city, town, region, neighborhood, or local area. It includes named places such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and other local references of the UK-based participants such as “my area”, “at home”, or “near where I live”.
International – global or unspecified	Responses that locate the recipient outside the UK in broad or unspecified terms. It includes global references such as “worldwide”, “abroad”, “internationally”, “anywhere in the world”, or other non-specific foreign locations.
International – conflict-affected regions	Responses that refer to Ukraine, Gaza, Palestine, or other conflict-affected and crisis-affected locations. It includes both specific regions and broader references to places affected by war, displacement, conflict, disasters, or humanitarian crises.
International – other specified region	Responses that name an international location outside the UK that is not primarily coded as conflict-affected. It includes specified countries, continents, or regions in Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas.
Unknown or unclear	Responses that do not provide enough information to classify the recipient’s location. It includes vague or ambiguous answers from which no geographic location can be inferred.

Notes: Categories are not mutually exclusive. A response is assigned to all location categories that match its content.

Table B.4: Heterogeneity in the effect of the group appeal on donation behavior in the field experiment

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	0.628*	0.640*	5.305*	5.325*
	(0.349)	(0.350)	(2.900)	(2.907)
log(Prior annual amount)	0.155**	0.173***	1.371**	1.362**
	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.591)	(0.581)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i> × log(Prior annual amount)	−0.146**	−0.147**	−1.131*	−1.131*
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.605)	(0.605)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	−0.484		−6.114**	
	(0.316)		(2.836)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a donor signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged. “*Local Group Appeal*” is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. “log(Annual donation amount)” is the logarithm of the amount participants donate annually as their existing pledge. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are whether the donor provided their email, whether the donor were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: *p<0.1, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Table B.5: Country-of-birth heterogeneity in cue effects across the online experiments

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Donation to the International Red Cross		
	<i>Group exp. = 1</i>	<i>Group exp. = 0</i>	All
	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Group exp.</i>			0.377*** (0.138)
<i>Global cond.</i>	0.037 (0.178)	0.593*** (0.082)	0.593*** (0.082)
Non-UK born	0.703*** (0.222)	1.253*** (0.141)	1.253*** (0.141)
<i>Group exp.</i> × <i>Global cond.</i>			−0.556*** (0.196)
<i>Group exp.</i> × Non-UK born			−0.550** (0.263)
<i>Global cond.</i> × Non-UK born	0.842** (0.339)	−0.098 (0.205)	−0.098 (0.205)
<i>Group exp.</i> × <i>Global cond.</i> × Non-UK born			0.941** (0.396)
Constant	4.340*** (0.126)	3.963*** (0.057)	3.963*** (0.057)
Observations	1,150	5,208	6,358

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable is the amount, in pounds, donated to the International Red Cross. Column (1) restricts the sample to the *Group experiment*; column (2) pools the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments; column (3) pools all online experiments. *Group exp.* equals one for observations from the *Group experiment* and zero for observations from the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments. *Global cond.* equals one for the control conditions in the *Group experiment* and for the global conditions in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments; it equals zero for the local group cue conditions in the *Group experiment* and for the local conditions in the *Attention* and *Cue* experiments. Thus, in column (1), *Global cond.* compares the control conditions to the local group cue conditions; in column (2), it compares the global cue/attention conditions to the local cue/attention conditions. *Non-UK born* is an indicator for participants born outside the UK. The interaction *Global cond.* × *Non-UK born* captures country-of-birth heterogeneity within each experiment family. The triple interaction in column (3) compares this heterogeneity between the *Group experiment* and the pooled *Attention* and *Cue* experiments. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.6: Open-ended responses as mediator of the treatment effect on donation behavior

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Donation to the International Red Cross		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Constant (<i>Global Attention</i>)	5.685*** (0.164)	6.379*** (0.178)	4.244*** (0.239)
Treatment <i>Local Attention</i>	-0.766*** (0.229)	0.290 (0.266)	0.367 (0.260)
Local mention		-2.016*** (0.271)	
Global mention			2.220*** (0.264)
Observations	601	601	601
R ²	0.018	0.105	0.126

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable is the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross. “Treatment *Local Attention*” is an indicator equal to one if participants are part of the *Local Attention* condition, and zero if they are part of the *Global Attention* condition. “Global mention” and “Local mention” are indicator variables equal to one if the open-ended text responses contain globally located recipients and locally located recipients, respectively. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * p<0.1, ** p<0.05 and *** p<0.01.

Table B.7: Open-ended responses as mediator of the treatment effect on donation behavior in the conceptual replication experiment

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Donation to the International Red Cross		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Constant (<i>Global Cue</i>)	4.518*** (0.082)	5.690*** (0.104)	3.565*** (0.093)
Treatment <i>Local Cue</i>	-0.487*** (0.115)	-0.292*** (0.108)	-0.303*** (0.108)
Local mention		-2.030*** (0.113)	
Global mention			1.992*** (0.109)
Observations	2,342	2,342	2,342
R ²	0.008	0.131	0.132

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable is the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross. “Treatment *Local Cue*” is an indicator equal to one if participants are part of the *Local Cue* condition and zero if they are part of the *Global Cue* condition. “Global mention” and “Local mention” are indicator variables equal to one if the open-ended text responses mention globally located recipients and locally located recipients, respectively. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: *p<0.1, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Table B.8: The interaction of local and global cues with the group cue

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Donation to the International Red Cross
<i>Local Cue</i>	−0.487*** (0.115)
<i>Local Cue g</i>	0.191* (0.114)
<i>Local Cue</i> × <i>Local Cue g</i>	−0.125 (0.159)
Constant (<i>Global Cue</i>)	4.518*** (0.082)
Observations	4,658
R ²	0.011

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable is the amount of money (out of £10) that participants allocate to the International Red Cross instead of the British Red Cross. “Local Cue” and “Local Cue g” are indicators equal to one if participants are part of the conditions in which they receive the local cue and the group cue, respectively, in contrast to receiving the global cue and no group cue. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: *p<0.1, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Table B.9: Balance test across the three waves of the field experiment

	Wave 1			Wave 2			Wave 3		
	<i>Local Group Appeal</i> (1)	<i>Standard Appeal</i> (2)	$H_0 :$ (1) = (2)	<i>Local Group Appeal</i> (3)	<i>Standard Appeal</i> (4)	$H_0 :$ (3) = (4)	<i>Local Group Appeal</i> (5)	<i>Standard Appeal</i> (6)	$H_0 :$ (5) = (6)
Annual donation amount	176	175	0.68	172	173	0.65	168	167	0.51
Provided Email	0.31	0.30	0.83	0.25	0.25	0.87	0.40	0.40	0.86
Recruited face-to-face	0.25	0.25	0.94	0.14	0.14	0.77	0.38	0.38	0.57
Men	0.51	0.52	0.16	0.51	0.51	0.98	0.48	0.48	0.84
Years donor	14.44	14.66	0.12	17.47	17.45	0.77	13.59	13.48	0.49
Local ZIP code population	18,879	18,984	0.47	18,417	18,445	0.73	18,579	18,477	0.58
Observations	10,331	10,269		47,598	23,733		8,975	4,412	

Table B.10: Field experiment treatment effect on donation behavior displaying all coefficients

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	-0.093*** (0.032)	-0.086*** (0.032)	-0.285*** (0.110)	-0.267** (0.107)
log(Population)		0.034* (0.020)		0.141** (0.062)
Men		-0.064** (0.029)		-0.188* (0.102)
Received by Email		-0.078** (0.031)		-0.350*** (0.097)
log(Prior annual amount)		0.080** (0.034)		0.642*** (0.219)
log(Years donor)		-0.007 (0.026)		-0.124 (0.091)
Recruited face-to-face		-0.085* (0.043)		-0.284 (0.180)
Wave1		0.062 (0.042)		0.125 (0.153)
Wave3		-0.012 (0.042)		-0.169** (0.083)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	0.281*** (0.027)		0.665*** (0.101)	
Observations	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a participant signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged. “*Local Group Appeal*” is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. “log(Population)” is the logarithm of the number of individuals living in participants’ ZIP code region. “Men” is an indicator equal to one if the participant is a man and zero if the participant is female. “Received by Email” is an indicator equal to one if the participant also received the fundraising appeal via email after the letter. “log(Annual donation amount)” is the logarithm of the amount participants donate annually as their existing pledge. “log(Years donor)” is the logarithm of the years that participants have been donating to the organisation. “Recruited face-to-face” is an indicator equal to one if participants were initially recruited via a face-to-face approach. “Wave 1” and “Wave 3” are indicator variables equal to one if participants were part of the first and third wave, respectively, of sending the letters, relative to the second wave. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.11: Field experiment treatment effect on donation behavior robustness

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Has donated (Probit)		Has donated (Probit marginal effects)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	-0.128** (0.042)	-0.120** (0.043)	-0.00093** (0.00032)	-0.00082** (0.00031)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	-2.769*** (0.031)	-3.714*** (0.420)		
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318

Notes: The table shows Probit estimates in columns (1) and (2) and Probit marginal effects in columns (3) and (4). The dependent variable is a variable equal to 1 if a participant signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise. “*Local Group Appeal*” is equal to 1 if the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are participants’ annual donation amount, whether they provided their email, whether they were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.12: Field experiment treatment effect on total donation size robustness to outliers

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Donation Size		log(Donation Size + 1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	-0.155** (0.065)	-0.149** (0.065)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.002)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	0.482*** (0.055)	-1.171** (0.583)	0.015*** (0.001)	-0.026* (0.015)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	105,308	105,308	105,318	105,318

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is the amount in Euro that participants pledge annually to donate to the charity. In columns (3) and (4), this variable is logarithmized. To deal with zeros, a constant of 1 is added beforehand. “*Local Group Appeal*” is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are participants’ annual donation amount, whether they provided their email, whether they were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. In columns (1) and (2), we excluded 10 observations from the main sample that were identified using a Cook’s distance of $1/4N$. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.13: Field experiment treatment effect on follow-up donation behavior

	Dependent variable:									
	Next call: Donation Probability		Next call: Donation Size		Next 6 calls: Donated in any		Next 6 calls: Donation Size		Has terminated contract	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	0.015 (0.095)	-0.021 (0.096)	0.117 (0.171)	0.080 (0.172)	0.003 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.142 (0.916)	-0.021 (0.906)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	2.257*** (0.076)		2.321*** (0.123)		0.114*** (0.002)		21.755*** (0.784)		0.068*** (0.001)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318	105,318

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a participant signs an additional pledge in the next fundraising campaign after the field experiment and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged in the next campaign. The dependent variable in columns (5) and (6) is an indicator equal to 1 if a participant signs an additional pledge in any of the next six fundraising campaigns after the field experiment and zero otherwise; in columns (7) and (8), it is the total amount in Euro that is pledged in the next six fundraising campaigns after the field experiment. Lastly, the dependent variable in columns (9) and (10) is an indicator equal to one if a participant terminates his existing giving pledge. "*Local Group Appeal*" is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. Additional independent variables ("Controls") added in columns (2) and (4) are participants' annual donation amount, whether they provided their email, whether they were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: *p<0.1, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

C Open-ended responses coding procedure

This section describes the two coding procedures of the open-ended responses used in the paper. First, the coding that classifies responses into distinct recipient type and location categories. Second, the coding procedure that generates the global and local mention variables.

C.1 Categorization coding

Procedure. We first devised the recipient type and location categories, see Tables B.2 and B.3. To classify each participants' open-ended response, we used the Generalized Attribute Based Ratings Information Extraction Library – GABRIEL with gpt-5.4-mini (Asirvatham and Mokski, 2026; Asirvatham et al., 2026). For each participant, GABRIEL received the two open-ended response fields: the stated recipient of help and the stated location of the recipient. It then classified the response into each of the pre-specified categories using binary indicators. Categories are not mutually exclusive. A response can therefore be assigned to multiple recipient-type categories and multiple recipient-location categories when the content of the response supports more than one classification. The residual categories “other or unclear” and “unknown or unclear” was used only when no substantive recipient-type or recipient-location category could be inferred from the response.

C.2 Mentions coding

Procedure. We use two research assistants to code the responses, and validate their classifications using AI. See Section C.3 for the full script provided to the coders. Coders were blind to hypotheses and treatment status of the participants. They only received participants' open-ended responses containing (i) who they would like to help and (ii) where the recipient of the help is located. They were then instructed to code the variable local mentioning as one if the response indicates that the recipient was located in the UK, and zero otherwise. Likewise, they were instructed to code the variable global mentioning as one if the recipient was located outside of the UK, and zero otherwise. In cases the two research assistants disagreed, a third research assistant resolved the disagreement. We use the resolved scores as our variables.

Attention experiment. For the attention experiment, i.e., the *Local Attention*, *Global Attention*, *No Cue ff*, and *Local Group Cue ff* conditions, Table C.1 shows the results of both coders for the 1,197 open-ended responses. Comparing the classifications between the two coders shows very high degrees of agreement. Indeed, we calculate a Cohen's Kappa of 0.94 for both local and global mentions, which commonly indicates

near-perfect agreement.

Cue experiment. For this experiment, i.e., the *Local Cue*, *Global Cue*, *Local Cue g* and *Global Cue g* conditions, Table C.2 shows the results of both coders for the 4, 658 open-ended responses. We again find high degrees of agreement (Cohen’s Kappa = 0.87 for global mentions, Cohen’s Kappa = 0.92 for local mentions).

Table C.1: Comparing human coder classifications for the attention experiment

	Coder 1	Coder 2	Final
Local mention = 1 & Global mention = 0	68.09%	68.42%	68.00%
Local mention = 0 & Global mention = 1	26.40%	26.82%	26.32%
Local mention = 0 & Global mention = 0	4.34%	4.09%	4.51%
Local mention = 1 & Global mention = 1	1.17%	0.67%	1.17%

Notes: The table shows the results of coding 1, 197 open-ended text responses of the *Local Attention*, *Global Attention*, *No Cue ff*, and *Local Group Cue ff* conditions. “Global mention” and “Local mention” are indicator variables equal to one if the open-ended text responses contain a globally located recipient and a locally located recipient, respectively.

Table C.2: Comparing human coder classifications for the cue experiment

	Coder 1	Coder 2	Final
Local mention = 1 & Global mention = 0	53.2%	53.05%	53.31%
Local mention = 0 & Global mention = 1	32.8%	34.84%	34.63%
Local mention = 0 & Global mention = 0	4.51%	2.02%	2.4%
Local mention = 1 & Global mention = 1	9.49%	10.09%	9.66%

Notes: The table shows the results of coding 4, 658 open-ended text responses of the *Local Cue*, *Global Cue*, *Local Cue g*, and *Global Cue g* conditions. “Global mention” and “Local mention” are indicator variables equal to one if the open-ended text responses contain a globally located recipient and a locally located recipient, respectively.

Validation using AI. As an additional validation exercise, we compare the resolved human-coded classifications with classifications produced by GABRIEL. Table C.3 compares the distribution of local and global mention classifications across human and AI. The agreement between the resolved human scores and AI is high. Across both online experiments, AI agrees with the human-coded local mention indicator in 96.78% of cases and with the global mention indicator in 95.84% of cases. Jointly considering both indicators, AI exactly matches the resolved human classification in 93.04% of responses. Cohen’s Kappa is 0.93 for local mentions and 0.91 for global mentions, indicating very strong agreement between the human coding procedure

and the automated AI classifications. Accordingly, none of our results change if we use AI instead of human coders for the analysis.

Table C.3: Comparing human and AI classifications for open-ended responses

	Attention experiment		Cue experiment	
	Human coder	AI	Human	AI
Local mention = 1 & Global mention = 0	67.98%	65.13%	53.34%	51.77%
Local mention = 0 & Global mention = 1	26.47%	22.02%	34.63%	32.76%
Local mention = 0 & Global mention = 0	4.37%	12.02%	2.36%	4.83%
Local mention = 1 & Global mention = 1	1.18%	0.84%	9.67%	10.63%

Notes: The table compares the final human-coded classifications with AI classifications. The Attention experiment columns use 1,190 responses from the *Local Attention*, *Global Attention*, *No Cue ff*, and *Local Group Cue ff* conditions. The Cue experiment columns use 4,655 responses from the conceptual replication experiment. “Global mention” and “Local mention” are indicator variables equal to one if the open-ended text responses contain a globally located recipient and a locally located recipient, respectively.

C.3 Instructions for mentions coding

Your goal is to classify open-ended responses of participants of an experiment. Participants were given a choice. Prior to the choice, they were given the following instructions:

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

Before we inform you about the other potential recipients of your help and ask you how you want to help, please respond to the following question.

From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.

Their responses are in the [name file] file. Each observation contains:

- [name column]: description of the people or group the participant wants to help
- [name column]: where the recipients are located

For each observation, classify whether it contains the following:

Local Mentioning (local_mentioning). Code as 1 if the response refers to recipients located in the United Kingdom, including:

- explicit mentions of the UK;
- UK cities or regions;
- local community references, e.g., “people in my area” or “local homeless people”.

Code as 0 otherwise.

Global Mentioning (global_mentioning). Code as 1 if the response refers to recipients outside the UK or globally, including:

- specific foreign countries;
- regions outside the UK;
- global populations, e.g., “people around the world”, “developing countries”, or “anywhere”.

Code as 0 otherwise.

Note: Some responses refer to both UK/local recipients and global/non-UK recipients in the same answer, such as “people in the UK and around the world.” In such cases, both variables should be coded as 1.

D Examples of group appeals

The Australian Red Cross invites people to volunteer as a team with the slogan “nothing beats the feeling of saving lives together.” On their website, potential donors can register a personal account, create a new Lifeblood Team or join an existing one, and even become a Lifeblood Champion. Contributions are tracked at the group level, as each blood donation counts toward the team’s total.¹⁶ The Australian charity MS Plus aims at improving the lives of people affected by multiple sclerosis and regularly organizes charity cycling events in which the top teams’ fundraising totals are posted on its website.¹⁷ Similarly, the charity Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand encourages donors to give in teams with features such as team profile pictures, introductory texts, and team fundraising goals.¹⁸ Movember, a foundation dedicated to men’s health projects around the world, motivates potential donors to create a “Movember Team” and join a field or industry-specific team challenge to compete against other teams representing, for example, schools, universities, companies, or sports clubs.¹⁹ Monthly donors to the United Nations World Food Programme can join “Challenges” as a feature within the charity’s ShareTheMeal app—which provides a way to donate together with other donors in a group.²⁰ Not only charities, but also large fundraising platforms that serve as tools for smaller nonprofits to securely collect and process donations offer ways to create a sense of community by allowing donors to form teams (e.g. [givelively.org](https://www.givelively.org) or [givebutter.com](https://www.givebutter.com)). In addition, a common feature of most of the above fundraising campaigns is that they feature leaderboards, i.e., a public ranking of team contributions.

¹⁶<https://www.lifeblood.com.au/blood/donate-as-a-group> (05/16/2026)

¹⁷<https://www.msgongride.org.au/fundraising/leaderboard> (05/16/2026)

¹⁸<https://www.shaveforacure.co.nz/teamsleaderboard> (05/16/2026)

¹⁹<https://ie.movember.com/leaderboards/network/> (05/16/2026)

²⁰ShareTheMeal App (05/16/2026)

E Research transparency

Table E.1 provides an overview of the treatments of the online experiments and the field experiment. The online experiments as well as the field experiment were pre-registered at aspredicted.org and the AEA RCT registry, respectively. The preregistrations include details on the experimental design, the sampling process and planned sample size, exclusion criteria, hypotheses, and the main analyses. This section documents the mapping between the preregistration and the paper.

Table E.1: Overview of treatments

Label	Treatments	<i>N</i>	Covered in	Date	Link to preregistration
Attention experiment	<i>Local Attention & Global Attention</i>	601	Section 3.1.1	July 2024	https://aspredicted.org/wg4s-9s58.pdf
Group experiment I	<i>No Cue, Local Group Cue, No Cue ff & Local Group Cue ff</i>	1,193	Section 3.2.2		
Cue experiment	<i>Local Cue & Global Cue</i>	2,342	Section 3.1.2	September 2025	https://aspredicted.org/s2et6e.pdf
Group experiment II	<i>Local Cue g & Global Cue g</i>	2,316	Section 5.2.1		
Charity experiment	<i>Standard Appeal & Local Group Appeal & Group Competition</i>	105,318	Sections 3.2.1, 5.2.2	June–August 2021	https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.7724-1.0 ; https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.7962-1.1

E.1 Online experiments

We conducted the online experiments in two waves. The first wave was conducted in July 2024. In this wave, we ran the treatment conditions *Local Attention* and *Global Attention* (labeled *Attention experiment* and covered in Section 3.1.1) as well as *Local Group Cue*, *No Cue*, *Local Group Cue ff*, and *No Cue ff* (labeled *Group experiment* and covered in Section 3.2.2). The second wave was conducted in September 2025. In this wave, we ran the treatment conditions *Local Cue* and *Global Cue* (labeled *Cue experiment* and covered in Section 3.1.2) as well as *Local Cue g* and *Global Cue g* (covered in Section 5.2.1). Both waves were preregistered at aspredicted.org. The document for wave 1 can be accessed here <https://aspredicted.org/wg4s-9s58.pdf>, and the document for wave 2 can be accessed here <https://aspredicted.org/s2et6e.pdf>.

Our experimental implementation followed closely the pre-registration. In particular, we implemented the experimental design and sample size exactly as specified in the pre-registration. Similarly, we employed the exclusion criteria as pre-registered: we specified to exclude any participant who did not complete the experiment, which was about 1-6% in each condition. Specifically, in the first wave, excluded were 7 participants in *Local Attention*, 15 in *Global Attention*, 2 in *Local Group Cue*, 1 in *No Cue*, 21 in *Local Group Cue ff* and 13 in *No Cue ff*. In the second wave, excluded were 64 participants in *Global Cue*, 57 in *Local Cue*, 76 in *Global Cue g* and 78 in *Local Cue g*. The sample sizes reported in the paper are the final sample sizes used in all analyses of the paper after excluding the previously mentioned numbers of participants.

In the following, we map our pre-registered hypotheses to the results reported in the paper.

E.1.1 Online experiment wave 1

We start with the first wave of the online experiments.²¹

Local Attention versus Global Attention. As pre-registered, we test whether donations to the International Red Cross are lower in the *Local Attention* condition compared to the *Global Attention* condition. Furthermore, we test whether there are more local mentions and fewer global mentions in the open-ended question in the *Local Attention* condition compared to the *Global Attention* condition. We find support for both hypotheses, with results reported in Section 3.1.1.

Local Group Cue versus No Cue. As pre-registered, we test whether donations to the International Red Cross are lower in the *Local Group Cue* condition compared to the *No Cue* condition (or equivalently, that donations to the British Red Cross are higher). This hypothesis is supported by the data, see Section 3.2.2.

Local Group Cue ff versus No Cue ff. As pre-registered, we test whether donations to the International Red Cross are lower in the *Local Group Cue ff* condition compared to the *No Cue ff* condition. Furthermore, we test whether there are more local mentions and fewer global mentions in the open-ended question in the *Local Group Cue ff* condition compared to the *No Cue ff* condition. We find support for both hypotheses, with results reported in Section 3.2.2.

E.1.2 Online experiment wave 2

We now turn to the second wave of the online experiments.²²

Local Cue versus Global Cue. While not explicitly preregistered as a hypothesis, we compare the conditions in Section 3.1.2.

Interaction of the local and global cue with the group cue. As pre-registered, we test for the interaction between the different types of cues in Section 5.2.1 and find no effect. Moreover, in the same section, we test the *Local Cue* and *Local Cue*

²¹Treatment names were updated in the paper relative to the pre-registration. Specifically, the pre-registered baseline condition is now *No Cue*, *Group prime* is now *Local Group Cue*, the pre-registered free-form baseline condition is now *No Cue ff*, *Free form group prime* is now *Local Group Cue ff*, *Free form local prime* is now *Local Attention*, and *Free form global prime* is now *Global Attention*.

²²Treatment names were updated in the paper relative to the pre-registration. Specifically, *Local Cue* corresponds to *Non-social framing Local priming*, and *Global Cue* corresponds to *Non-social framing Global priming*. Furthermore, *Global Cue g* corresponds to *Social framing Global priming*, and *Local Cue g* corresponds to *Social framing Local priming*.

g against each other as well as the *Global Cue* and *Global Cue g*. Both comparisons were not explicitly preregistered as hypotheses.

The heterogeneity analysis of Section 4 and the category classification described in Appendix Section C.1 were not preregistered.

E.2 Field experiment

The charity we collaborated with implemented the field experiment in three waves. Each wave was pre-registered in a different document. The letters of the first wave were sent in June 2021, the second in July 2021, and the third in August 2021. The pre-registration for the first wave can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.7724-1.0>. Due to uncertainty about the implementation by the charity, the pre-registration did not specify a sample size. The implemented sample size was 20,600.

The pre-registration for the second wave can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.7962-1.1>. The initially uploaded document corresponds to wave 2 and specified a sample size of 71,000; the implemented sample size was 71,331. The charity then decided to implement a third wave, which is preregistered as an amendment to the previous preregistration of wave 2. The amendment specified an additional sample size of 13,400; the implemented sample size was 13,387.

The intended main data collection was wave 2. Since the other two waves are almost identical in their features, we decided to pool all waves together in this paper for transparency and to maximize sample size. Importantly, our results fully replicate when we focus only on wave 2. In Table E.2, we replicate the negative effect of the group appeal on donation probability and donation size from Table 2 in the main document. In Table E.3, we replicate the lack of a difference between *Group Competition* and *Local Group Appeal No Competition* reported in Table 3. The coefficients and effect sizes are very similar, showing that our results do not depend on adding or removing the two additional waves of data collection.

The pre-registration for wave 2 specified three conditions corresponding to *Standard Appeal*, *Local Group Appeal*, and *Group Competition*.²³ In the paper, we pool the *Local Group Appeal* and *Group Competition* conditions together and report the analysis as otherwise pre-registered in Section 3.2.1. Table E.4 shows that the findings of Table 2 remain statistically significant if we focus only on the comparison between *Local Group Appeal* and *Standard Appeal*.

²³Treatment names were updated in the paper relative to the pre-registration. Specifically, *Standard Appeal* corresponds to the pre-registered individual condition, and *Local Group Appeal* corresponds to the pre-registered group condition.

Table E.2: The effect of the group appeal on donation behavior using only wave 2

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal</i>	−0.085** (0.039)	−0.085** (0.039)	−0.266** (0.127)	−0.265** (0.127)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)	0.270*** (0.034)		0.651*** (0.116)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	71,331	71,331	71,331	71,331

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates for the wave 2 sample of the field experiment. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a participant signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged. “*Local Group Appeal*” is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are participants’ annual donation amount, whether they provided their email, whether they were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

Table E.3: Field experiment treatment effect of explicit group competition on donation behavior within the *Local Group Appeal* condition using only wave 2

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Group Competition</i>	−0.025 (0.039)	−0.025 (0.039)	−0.055 (0.105)	−0.055 (0.105)
Constant (<i>Local Group Appeal No Competition</i>)	0.198*** (0.029)		0.412*** (0.073)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	47,598	47,598	47,598	47,598

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates for the wave 2 sample of the field experiment. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a participant signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged. “*Group Competition*” is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Group Competition* treatment and zero if the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* condition without the additional competition element. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are participants’ annual donation amount, whether they provided their email, whether they were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

Table E.4: The effect of the group appeal on donation behavior excluding the group competition condition

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<u>Donation Probability</u>		<u>Donation Size</u>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Local Group Appeal No Competition</i>	-0.084** (0.035)	-0.084** (0.035)	-0.262** (0.118)	-0.263** (0.118)
Constant (<i>Standard Appeal</i>)			0.665*** (0.101)	
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	76,990	76,990	76,990	76,990

Notes: The table shows OLS estimates excluding the group competition condition. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is a variable equal to 100 if a participant signs the annual pledge solicited in the fundraising letter and zero otherwise; in columns (3) and (4), it is the amount in Euro that is pledged. “*Local Group Appeal No Competition*” is equal to 1 when the participant is part of the *Local Group Appeal* treatment without the additional group competition part and zero if the participant is part of the *Standard Appeal* condition. Additional independent variables (“Controls”) added in columns (2) and (4) are participants’ annual donation amount, whether they provided their email, whether they were recruited face-to-face, their gender, the population of their ZIP code, the years they have been a donor as well as wave fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

F Experimental material and instructions

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F.1 Attention experiment instructions

This section provides screenshots of the instructions of the online experiment. Note that in order to avoid anchoring effects, the slider-thumbs of the donation decision are initially hidden and only appear once subjects click on the slider-scale.

F.1.1 Local Attention

Figure F.1: *Local Attention* screen 1

Information

In this survey, you face a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

Next

Figure F.2: *Local Attention* screen 2

Information

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

You receive a budget of £10. You then decide how much of the budget to contribute to help others. There are two different recipients.

One of the recipients is a charity that is operating locally in Britain.

The computer randomly selected which recipient you learn about on this screen. Each recipient had an equal chance of being chosen.

Before we inform you about the other potential recipient of your help and ask you how you want to help, please respond to the following question.

From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help.

Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

Next

Figure F.3: Local Attention screen 3

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your donation

You decide how much you want to donate from your budget of £10 to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you donate to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you donate to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations. Help the charities: make high-impact aid possible with your donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your donation to the *British Red Cross* Your donation to the *International Red Cross*

Confirm decision

F.1.2 Global Attention

Figure F.4: *Global Attention* screen 1

Information

In this survey, you face a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

Next

Figure F.5: *Global Attention* screen 2

Information

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

You receive a budget of £10. You then decide how much of the budget to contribute to help others. There are two different recipients.

One of the recipients is a charity that is operating in regions affected by war.

The computer randomly selected which recipient you learn about on this screen. Each recipient had an equal chance of being chosen.

Before we inform you about the other potential recipient of your help and ask you how you want to help, please respond to the following question.

From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help.

Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

Next

Figure F.6: *Global Attention* screen 3

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your donation

You decide how much you want to donate from your budget of £10 to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you donate to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you donate to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations. Help the charities: make high-impact aid possible with your donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your donation to the *British Red Cross* Your donation to the *International Red Cross*

Confirm decision

F.2 Cue experiment instructions

F.2.1 Local Cue

Figure F.7: *Local Cue* screen 1

Information

We distribute this study to you because you are active on Prolific and indicated on Prolific that you currently live in the UK. In this Prolific study, you face a decision which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

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Next

Figure F.8: *Local Cue* screen 2

Information

The study consists of two parts that are independent of each other.

Part 1: Decision

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

You receive a budget of £10. You then decide how much of the budget to contribute to help others.

Part 2: Survey

You complete a survey about homelessness.

The computer randomly selected the topic of the survey out of two alternatives.

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Next

Figure F.9: Local Cue screen 3

Part 1: Decision

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your donation

You decide how much you want to donate from your budget of £10 to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you donate to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you donate to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations from the UK. Help the charities: make high-impact aid possible with your donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your donation to the
British Red Cross

Your donation to the
International Red Cross

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Confirm decision

Figure F.10: *Local Cue* screen 4

Question

Please consider the following situation:

Just like you, other Prolific participants were presented with the choice on the previous page. Before informing them about the decision and the recipients, we asked them the following question:

Question asked: *From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.*

Now, what do you think other Prolific participants responded? Please provide your best guess about the types of recipients they mentioned and where those recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

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Next

F.2.2 Global Cue

Figure F.11: *Global Cue* screen 1

Information

We distribute this study to you because you are active on Prolific and indicated on Prolific that you currently live in the UK. In this Prolific study, you face a decision which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

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Next

Figure F.12: *Global Cue* screen 2

Information

The study consists of two parts that are independent of each other.

Part 1: Decision

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

You receive a budget of £10. You then decide how much of the budget to contribute to help others.

Part 2: Survey

You complete a survey about victims of war.

The computer randomly selected the topic of the survey out of two alternatives.

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Next

Figure F.13: *Global Cue* screen 3

Part 1: Decision

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your donation

You decide how much you want to donate from your budget of £10 to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you donate to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you donate to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations from the UK. Help the charities: make high-impact aid possible with your donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your donation to the
British Red Cross

Your donation to the
International Red Cross

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Confirm decision

Figure F.14: *Global Cue* screen 4

Question

Please consider the following situation:

Just like you, other Prolific participants were presented with the choice on the previous page. Before informing them about the decision and the recipients, we asked them the following question:

Question asked: *From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.*

Now, what do you think other Prolific participants responded? Please provide your best guess about the types of recipients they mentioned and where those recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

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Next

F.2.3 Local Cue g

Figure F.15: *Local Cue g* screen 1

Information

You indicated on Prolific that you currently live in the UK. This study is distributed to people who live in the UK and are active on Prolific. You and the other people from the UK who participate in this Prolific study form a group. Your group faces a decision which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

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Figure F.16: *Local Cue g* screen 2

Information

The study consists of two parts that are independent of each other.

Part 1: Decision

You and people in your group decide on how much to help others.

Every group member receives a budget of £10. Every group member then decides individually how much of the budget to contribute to your group's financial help to others.

Part 2: Survey

You and the people in your group complete a survey about homelessness.

The computer randomly selected the topic of the survey out of two alternatives.

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Next

Figure F.17: Local Cue g screen 3

Part 1: Decision

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your group's donation

You decide how much you want to contribute from your budget of £10 to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations from the UK. Help the charities together with other Prolific donors from the UK: make high-impact aid possible with your contribution to your group's donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross*

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Confirm decision

Figure F.18: *Local Cue g* screen 4

Question

Please consider the following situation:

Just like you, other Prolific participants were presented with the choice on the previous page. Before informing them about the decision and the recipients, we asked them the following question:

Question asked: *From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.*

Now, what do you think other Prolific participants responded? Please provide your best guess about the types of recipients they mentioned and where those recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

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Next

F.2.4 Global Cue g

Figure F.19: *Global Cue g* screen 1

Information

You indicated on Prolific that you currently live in the UK. This study is distributed to people who live in the UK and are active on Prolific. You and the other people from the UK who participate in this Prolific study form a group. Your group faces a decision which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

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Figure F.20: *Global Cue g* screen 2

Information

The study consists of two parts that are independent of each other.

Part 1: Decision

You and people in your group decide on how much to help others.

Every group member receives a budget of £10. Every group member then decides individually how much of the budget to contribute to your group's financial help to others.

Part 2: Survey

You and the people in your group complete a survey about victims of war.

The computer randomly selected the topic of the survey out of two alternatives.

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Next

Figure F.21: *Global Cue g* screen 3

Part 1: Decision

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your group's donation

You decide how much you want to contribute from your budget of £10 to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations from the UK. Help the charities together with other Prolific donors from the UK: make high-impact aid possible with your contribution to your group's donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross*

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Confirm decision

Figure F.22: *Global Cue g* screen 4

Question

Please consider the following situation:

Just like you, other Prolific participants were presented with the choice on the previous page. Before informing them about the decision and the recipients, we asked them the following question:

Question asked: *From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help. Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.*

Now, what do you think other Prolific participants responded? Please provide your best guess about the types of recipients they mentioned and where those recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

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Next

F.3 Charity experiment material

The following displays the text of the letters that were distributed in the field experiment.

[Standard letter head]

[Standard Appeal]

[Emergency Helpers needed!](#)

[Local Group Appeal]

[Emergency Helpers from <ZIP CODE> <REGION> needed! We are looking for generous neighborhoods](#)

[Group Competition]

[Emergency Helpers from <ZIP CODE> <REGION> needed! We will award the most generous neighborhoods](#)

Dear [Name of donor],

many children are currently having a harder time than ever. Poverty and hunger are continuing to affect girls and boys all over the world. Wars, natural disasters and the corona crisis are increasing the plight of children. It is our job to help them quickly. As [charity name] sponsors, you are making an important contribution to this.

Our helpers are currently in constant operation in many places, for example in [country]. The country is on the verge of collapse due to a long, terrible civil war. Millions of children are starving.

[charity name] is providing emergency aid in [country of operation]. This means that, for example, we are providing malnourished children with special food. For girls and boys, we are organizing medical aid that cannot be delayed. It is about ensuring that children can survive.

Every year, [charity name] teams carry out around 300 emergency aid missions in 100 countries. Whether currently in [country] or [event in other country] – wherever children urgently need help, our helpers are on site.

[Standard Appeal]

[Help us now: Become a \[charity name\] Emergency Helper and make life-saving emer-](#)

gency aid possible with your contribution!

[Local Group Appeal]

Help us now as a team together with other donors from <ZIP CODE> and <REGION>: Become a [charity name] Emergency Helper and make life-saving emergency aid possible with your contribution!

[Group Competition]

Help us now as a team together with other donors from <ZIP CODE> and <REGION>: Become a [charity name] Emergency Helper and make life-saving emergency aid possible with your contribution!

We will crown the neighborhoods with the highest numbers of Emergency Helpers in our next newsletter as well as on our homepage and on social media.

Further information about the campaign can be found at: [link]

I would like to thank you very much for your generous support.

With warm thanks and kind regards [Picture, name and signature of the charity's director]

F.4 Group experiment instructions

F.4.1 No Cue

Figure F.23: *No Cue* screen 1

Information

In this survey, you face a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

Next

Figure F.24: *No Cue* screen 2

Information

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

You receive a budget of £10. You then decide how much of the budget to help others.

On the next page, we inform you about the potential recipients of your help and ask you how you want to help.

Next

Figure F.25: *No Cue* screen 3

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your donation

You decide how much you want to donate from your budget of £10 to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you donate to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you donate to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations. Help the charities: make high-impact aid possible with your donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your donation to the *British Red Cross* Your donation to the *International Red Cross*

Confirm decision

F.4.2 Local Group Cue

Figure F.26: *Local Group Cue* screen 1

Information

You indicated on Prolific that you currently live in East London. This survey is fielded to people who live in East London and are active on Prolific. You and the other people from East London who participate in this Prolific survey form a group. Your group faces a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

Next

Figure F.27: *Local Group Cue* screen 2

Information

You and people in your group – **people from East London who are active on Prolific** – decide on how much to help others.

Every group member receives a budget of £10. Every group member then decides individually how much of the budget to contribute to your group's financial help to others.

On the next page, we inform you about the potential recipients of your group's help and ask you how you want to contribute to your group's help.

Next

Figure F.28: Local Group Cue screen 3

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your group's donation

You decide how much you want to contribute from your budget of £10 to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations from **East London**. Help the charities together with other Prolific donors from **East London**: make high-impact aid possible with your contribution to your group's donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*

£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross*

Confirm decision

F.4.3 No Cue ff

Figure F.29: *No Cue ff* screen 1

Information

In this survey, you face a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

Next

Figure F.30: *No Cue ff* screen 2

Information

In the decision, you decide on how much to help others.

You receive a budget of £10. You then decide how much of the budget to contribute to help others. There are two different recipients.

Before we inform you about the other potential recipient of your help and ask you how you want to help, please respond to the following question.

From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your help.

Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

Next

Figure F.31: *No Cue ff* screen 3

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your donation

You decide how much you want to donate from your budget of £10 to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you donate to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you donate to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations. Help the charities: make high-impact aid possible with your donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*
£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your donation to the *British Red Cross* Your donation to the *International Red Cross*

Confirm decision

F.4.4 Local Group Cue ff

Figure F.32: *Local Group Cue ff* screen 1

Information

You indicated on Prolific that you currently live in East London. This survey is fielded to people who live in East London and are active on Prolific. You and the other people from East London who participate in this Prolific survey form a group. Your group faces a decision, which will be explained on the next pages.

After the study is completed, a computer will randomly choose one out of every 25 participants. For the selected participants, their decision is implemented with real monetary consequences. That is, each selected participant's choice in the decision is carried out exactly as described in the description of the decision.

Since your choice can have actual consequences, you should make the choice as conscientiously as possible.

Next

Figure F.33: *Local Group Cue ff* screen 2

Information

You and people in your group – **people from East London who are active on Prolific** – decide on how much to help others.

Every group member receives a budget of £10. Every group member then decides individually how much of the budget to contribute to your group's financial help to others.

Before we inform you about the potential recipients of your group's help and ask you how you want to contribute to your group's help, please respond to the following question.

From the top of your mind: whom would you like to help with your group? Assume it is up to you and you could choose any person or group of people to be the recipient(s) of your groups' help.

Please be specific about who is the recipient and where the recipients are located.

Who?

Where?

Next

Figure F.34: *Local Group Cue ff* screen 3

The Red Cross

The *Red Cross* is a humanitarian organization that is dedicated to preventing and alleviating human suffering in the face of emergencies. It plays a crucial role in responding to disasters and provides support to individuals and communities. It is also at the forefront of disaster response, providing shelter, food, and medical care to individuals affected by events such as rail crashes, floods, and fires. In addition to its disaster response efforts, it is also deeply involved in providing health services.

British Red Cross

The *British Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **in Britain**.

International Red Cross

The *International Red Cross* provides the services described above to individuals and communities **all around the world**.

Your group's donation

You decide how much you want to contribute from your budget of £10 to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* and how much to the *International Red Cross*. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross* will help communities in Britain. The part of the budget you contribute to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross* will help communities all around the world.

The charities are looking for donations from **East London**. Help the charities together with other Prolific donors from **East London**: make high-impact aid possible with your contribution to your group's donation.

How would you like to divide the money?
Please use the slider below to make your decision.

£-Click the scale- for the *British Red Cross*

£-Click the scale- for the *International Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *British Red Cross*

Your contribution to your group's donation to the *International Red Cross*

Confirm decision