WILL YOU TRUST ME?: HOW INDIVIDUAL AMERICAN DONORS RESPOND TO INFORMATIONAL SIGNALS REGARDING LOCAL AND GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN CHARITIES


When making charitable donations, individuals would like to have some assurance that their resources will be used appropriately, but they do not necessarily have the time to research charities thoroughly. Charities have thus joined voluntary regulatory programs to signal trustworthiness and good governance. We conduct a survey experiment to explore if individual donors in the United States are more willing to give to a charity participating in a voluntary regulatory program. Because voluntary programs vary in their institutional design, we further test whether the provision of third-party auditing (to ensure that charities abide by program rules and obligations) enhances donor confidence in the voluntary program. Finally, we explore whether individuals seek to circumvent information problems by donating to local charities as opposed to overseas charities. We find that charity membership in a voluntary program does not influence people's willingness to donate significantly, but that location of operations is significant.

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