

Cross-National Differences in Charitable Giving in Europe and the World  
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Why does charitable giving by individuals vary so widely among European countries? There are two reasons to answer this question. First, scholars of the nonprofit sector want to gain scientific and historical knowledge of why these differences exist. Second, practitioners and policy makers in other countries can learn from the European example when they shape the laws and policies of their own countries.

Theories and hypotheses:

While there is not room in this abstract to explain the theoretical reasoning behind the hypotheses tested, the paper tests how four ways in which nations can differ may affect aggregate participation in charitable giving: the economy, the political system, religion, culture, and history. Economic variables include GDP per capita and welfare state spending, and political variables include political freedom and past experience of communist government. Religious variables include religiosity and religious diversity, and cultural variables include ethnolinguistic diversity. Historical theories comprise Salamon and Anheier's (1998) social origin theory and its modifications and challenges by other scholars (Einolf, 2015; Ragin 1998; Siveskind & Selle, 2009).

Methods:

This paper uses OLS regression to test hypotheses of variation in the percentage of citizens who engage in any charitable giving, with countries being the units of analysis. It first tests these theories using data from Europe and then tests the same models using data from developing countries. It uses country-level data on charitable giving taken from the European Social Survey and the Gallup World Poll; both data sets report the percentage of people who reported giving money to charity, not the amounts given. The independent variables are taken from various sources, particularly from United Nations reports.

Preliminary results:

In both Europe and the rest of the world, GDP per capita correlates strongly and positively with participation in charitable giving; welfare spending also correlates positively, but with less strength. Political freedom correlates strongly with charitable giving in both Europe and the rest of the world, and formerly communist countries have significantly lower rates of giving. Religious diversity correlates with charitable giving in Europe but not in non-European countries, and linguistic diversity correlates positively with giving in Europe but negatively outside of Europe. The final paper will present the results of tests of all hypotheses, including the historical theories, and will examine mediating and interaction effects among the independent variables.

References:

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