

# **The Effect of Alternative Outcomes on Perceived Counterfactual Closeness**

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## **Abstract**

Assessing the likelihood that a counterfactual event would have happened involves contrasting a factual outcome with the counterfactual alternative. In many situations, the number of alternatives will influence the perceived closeness of a particular alternative. For example, losers of a game in which participants guess which door conceals a prize will likely believe they were closer to winning when there were three doors compared to six. This reflects accurate probabilistic reasoning because more doors will be associated with a lower probability of winning. However, we test whether the number of alternatives has a unique influence on beliefs about counterfactual closeness. Experiments 1 and 2 show that, even when probability is held fixed, people believe counterfactual closeness decreases when there are more alternatives.