

Increasing effective charitable giving with personalized LLM conversations

Joshua White

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States

Carter Allen

University of California, Berkeley, California, United States

Lucius Caviola

University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

Thomas Costello

American University, Washington, District of Columbia, United States

David Rand

MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States

Abstract

Despite substantial charitable giving, donations often fail to maximize impact. While a variety of persuasive strategies can increase donations to effective charities, their success depends on individual differences. Large Language Models (LLMs) offer a powerful solution to this problem by dynamically personalizing persuasive strategies. In a pre-registered experiment (N=1952), we tested whether personalized LLM conversations could increase donations to the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF), rated one of the world's most effective charities. Participants allocated \$1 between their favorite charity and AMF after being assigned to either: (1) a personalized persuasive LLM conversation, (2) a static LLM-generated persuasive message, and (3) a control conversation. Personalized LLM conversations significantly increased donations to AMF by 46.6%, outperforming the static message (28.7% increase). Personalized LLMs also shifted moral attitudes about charitable giving. Our findings highlight the potential of AI-driven personalization to enhance effective giving and provide new insights into the psychology of charitable persuasion.