

Altruism Around the World. What Can We Learn from International Surveys?

Artero, Jesús M. ¹, Caraballo, M. Ángeles²

University of Seville, Spain

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of altruism around the world based on the information available in the five most widely-used international surveys in the economic literature on this topic. First, a precise definition of altruism is given. The questions in these surveys that are linked to the proposed definition are then selected. Two types of questions are distinguished: one type refers to environment and the other refers to charitable activities. Moreover, by focusing on the respondents' answers, different degrees of intensity can also be distinguished in the altruism revealed by individuals. The joint exploitation of the surveys allows us to point out that altruism is associated with being female, having a university degree, being employed, and is positively related to age. However, certain differences appear when the degree of intensity and the two dimensions of altruism are taken into account. Likewise, the relevance of the socio-economic variables in explaining altruism differs across geographical regions. These issues should be considered in further studies into the social and economic implications of altruism.

Keywords: Social preferences, altruism, international surveys