

Optional or obligatory? An analysis of social information provision for climate protection donations

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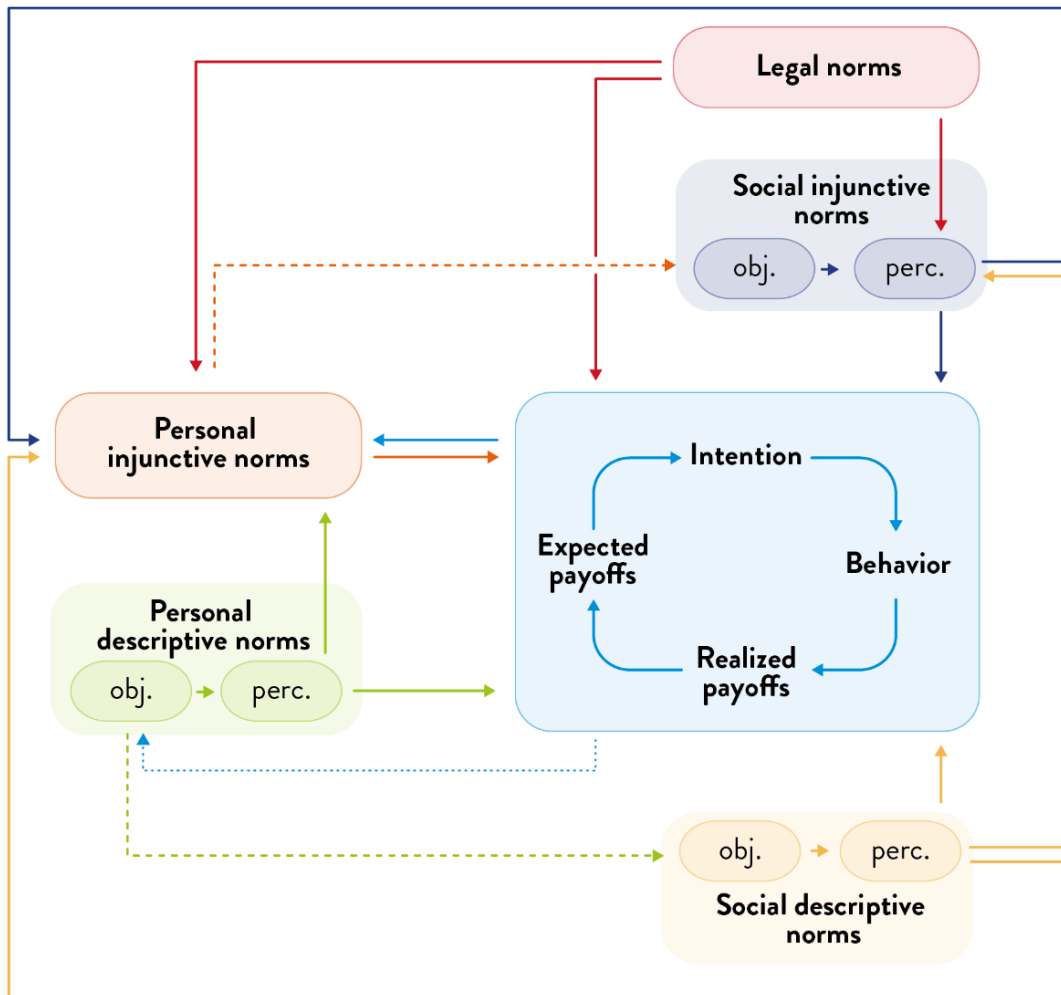
39th meeting of the European Economic Association

Rotterdam, August 26, 2024

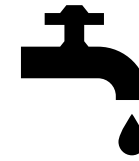
Motivation & research question

- information provision can induce pro-environmental behavior (e.g., Bernard et al., 2022; see Haaland et al., 2023 for an overview)
- Provision of social information as one form of information provision

Norms impact behavior



Source: Dannenberg et al. (2024)



e.g., Ferraro and Price (2013)



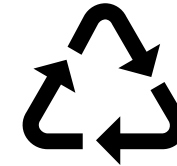
e.g., Allcott (2011), Carrico and Riemer (2011)



e.g., Demarque et al. (2015)



e.g., Gravert and Olsson Collentine (2021)



e.g., Schultz (1999), Bohner and Schlueter (2014)

Provide norm information to increase pro-environmental behavior and climate change mitigation activities (e.g., Byerly et al., 2018; Farrow et al., 2017; Schubert, 2017; Osbaldiston and Schott, 2012)

→ Norm provision is not always effective (e.g., Carattini and Blasch, 2024)

→ “Forced” provision of information as default option

- Active choice can increase pro-environmental behavior (e.g., Kesternich et al., 2019)
- Individuals who avoid to see information behave less environmentally friendly (e.g., Epperson & Gerster, 2024) and less altruistic (e.g., Vu et al., 2023)
- Consider information seeking preferences: Who is seeking information? (e.g., Andersson et al., 2022)

1. Do donations for climate protection differ depending on whether individuals are obliged to or have the choice to see additional information?
2. In case of optional information: Does behavior of individuals that seek information differ from individuals that avoid additional information?

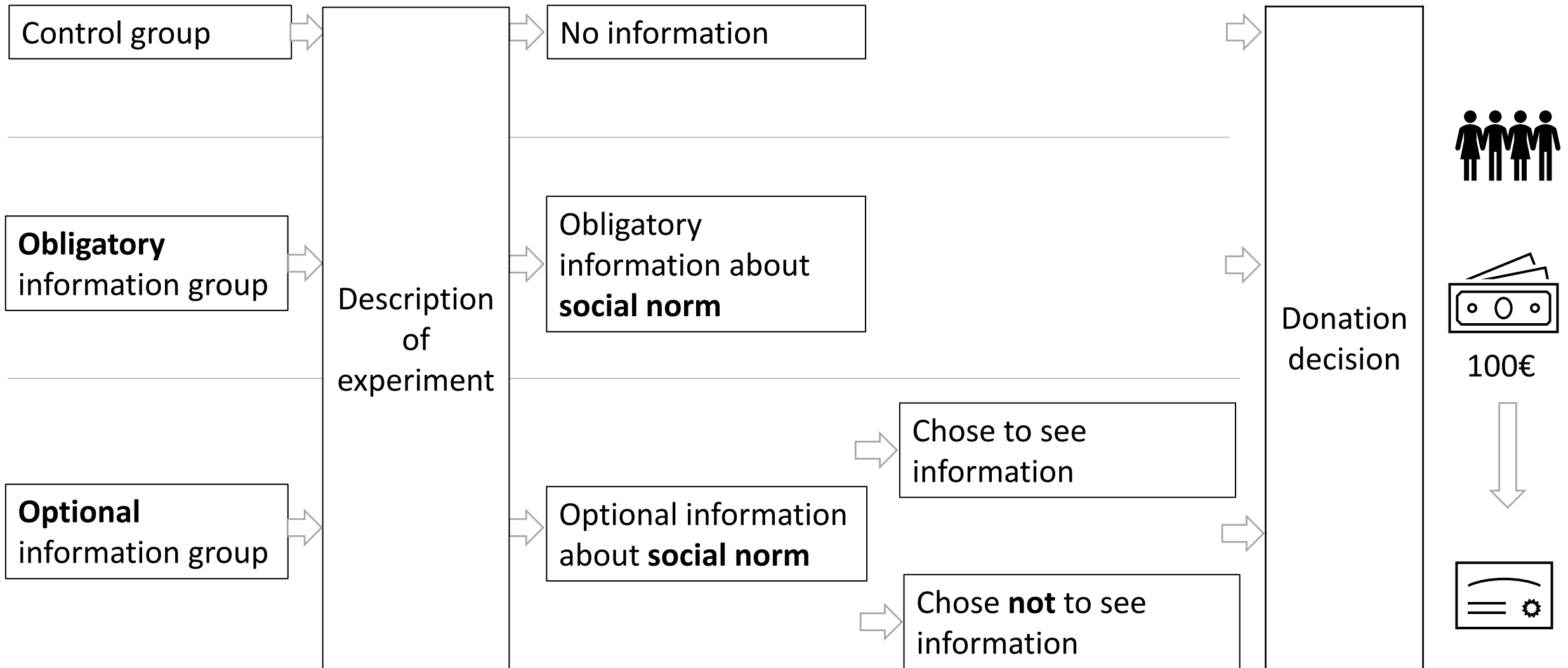
Data



- Conducted in 2020
- 1,751 respondents
- Individuals in Germany above the age of 18
- Representative with regard to age, gender, and place of residence in Germany

Experimental design

Experimental design



Obligatory social descriptive norm information

In an earlier study, an average of 31% of the financial means available were used to purchase emission certificates.

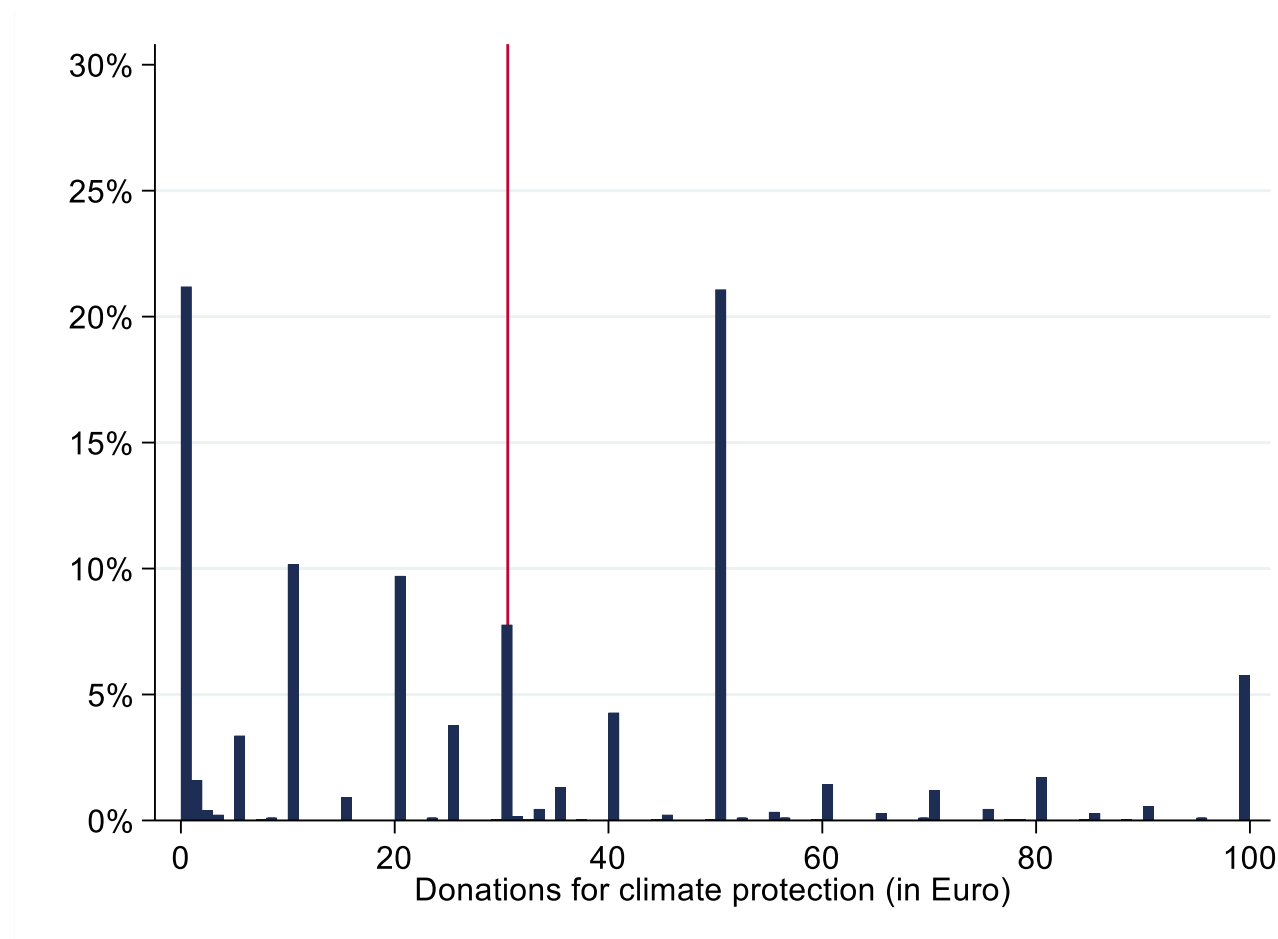
Optional social descriptive norm information

If you would like to see how much of the available financial means participants used to purchase emission certificates in an earlier study, click [here](#).

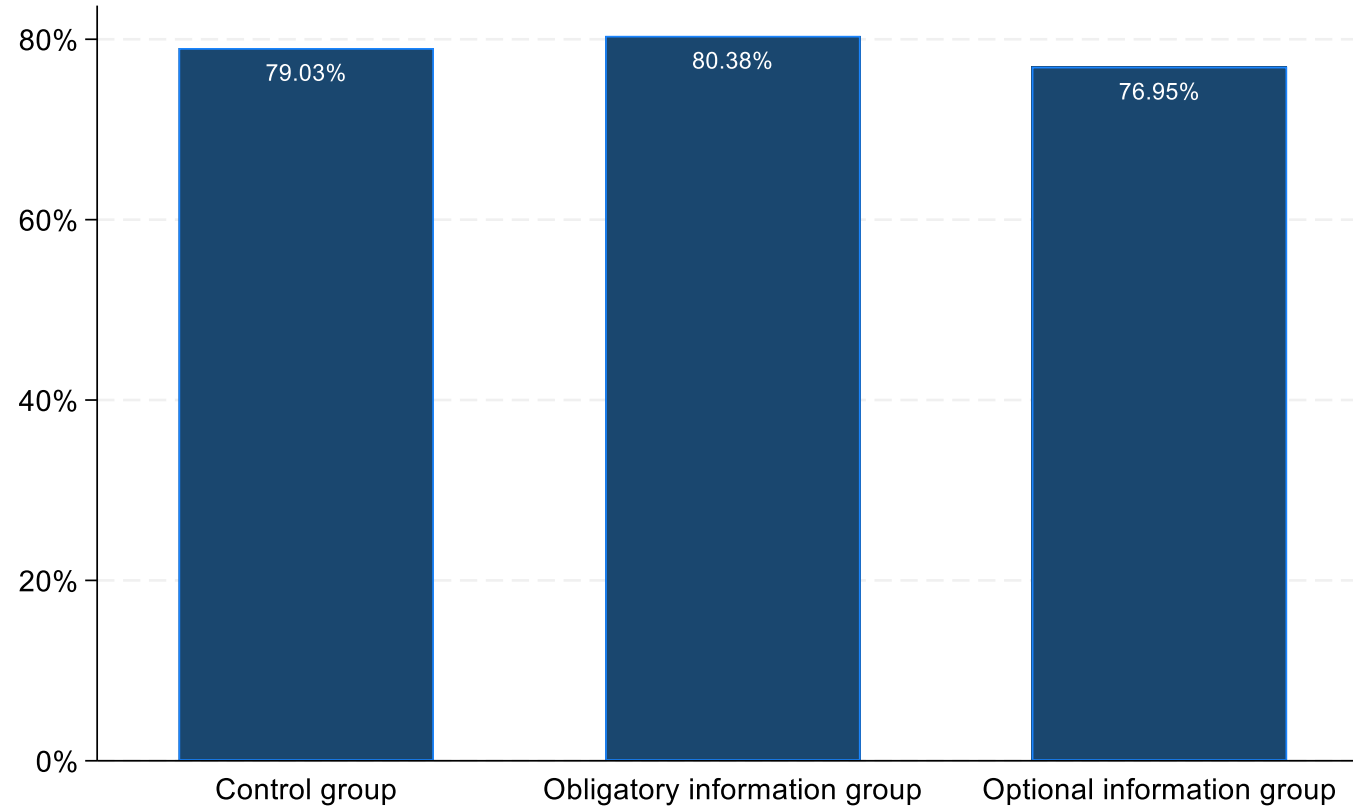
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Empirical results

Distribution of the total amount donated to buy emission allowances over all treatment groups (mean = 30.57€)

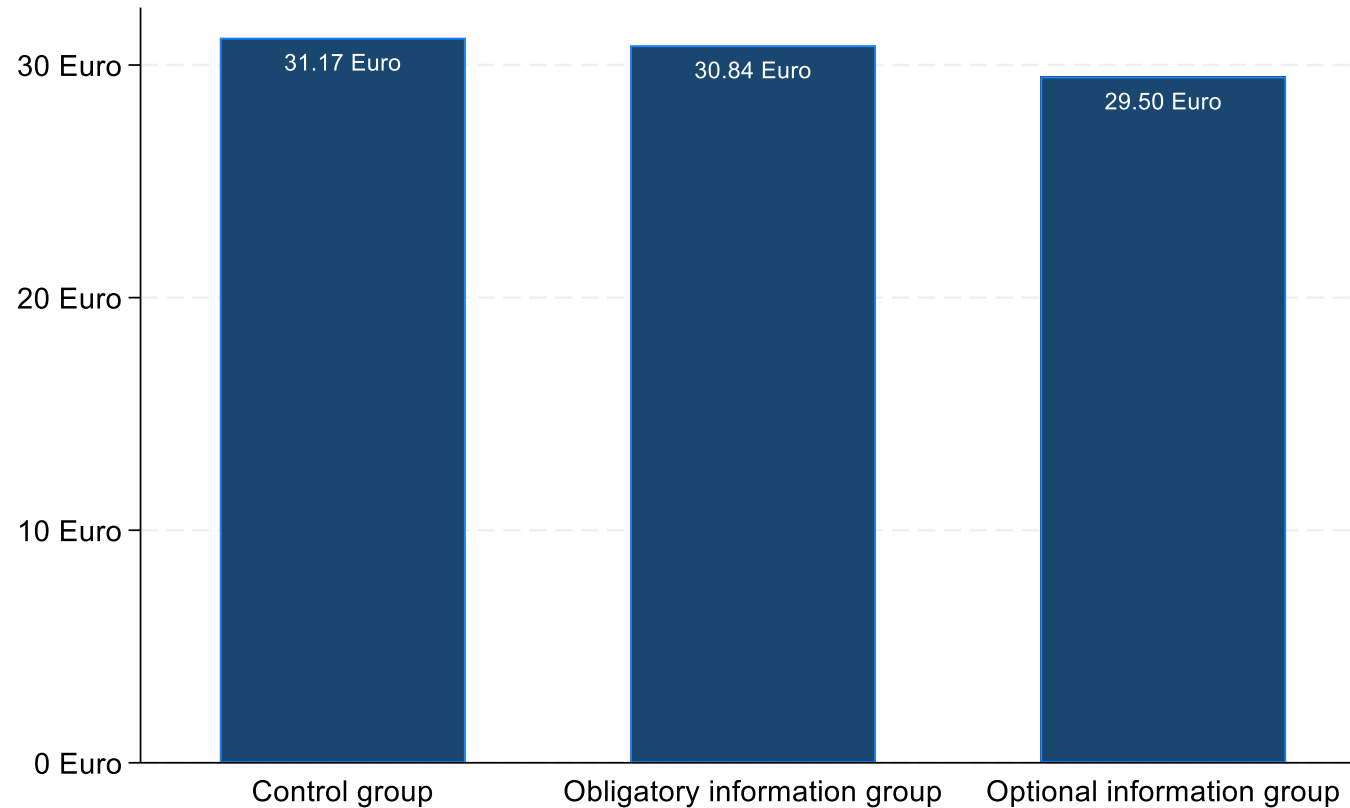


Shares of respondents who donate for climate protection in the optional social information group



No significant differences between groups regarding who decides to donate

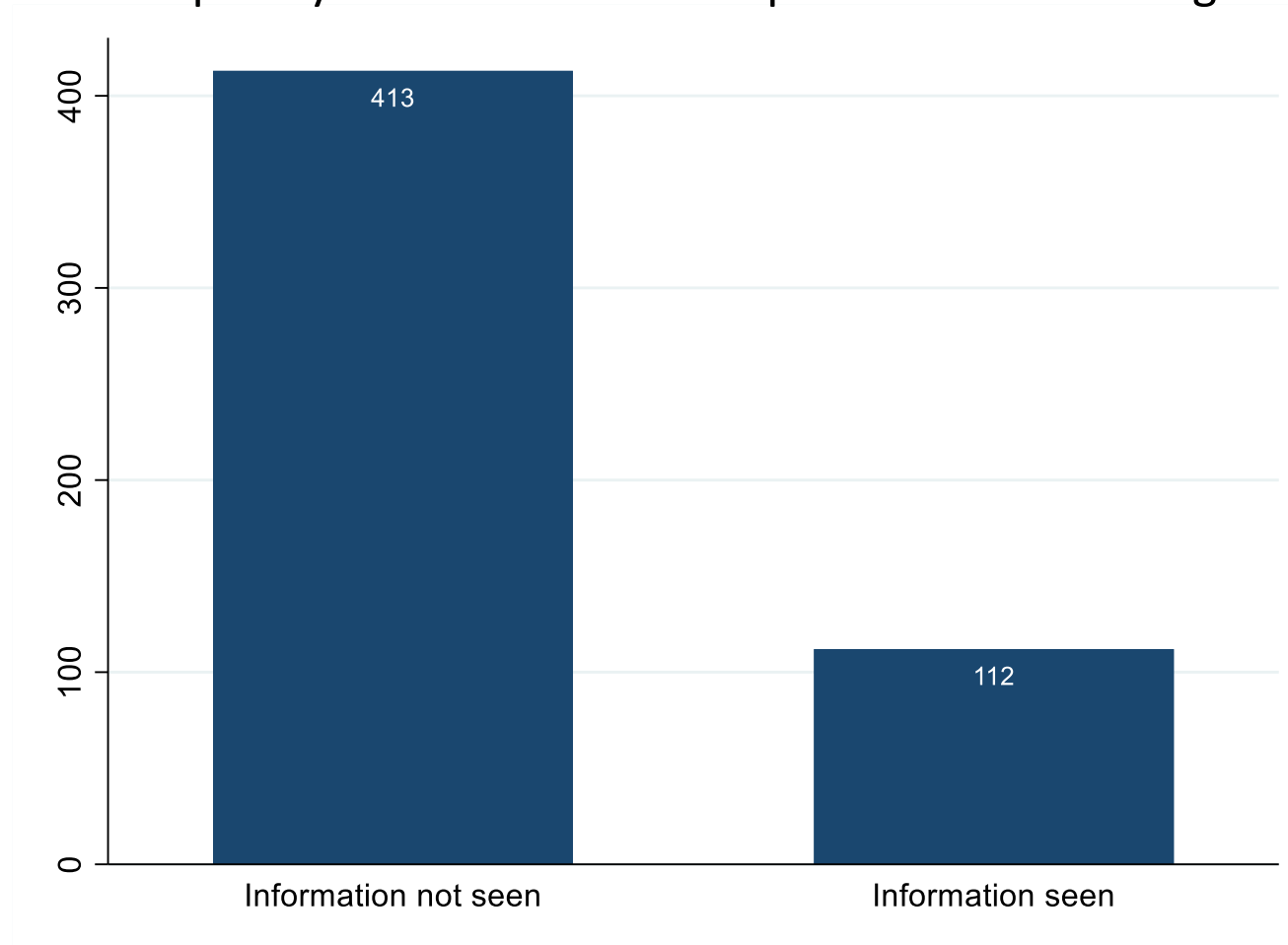
Average donations for climate protection



No significant differences between groups regarding the average donations

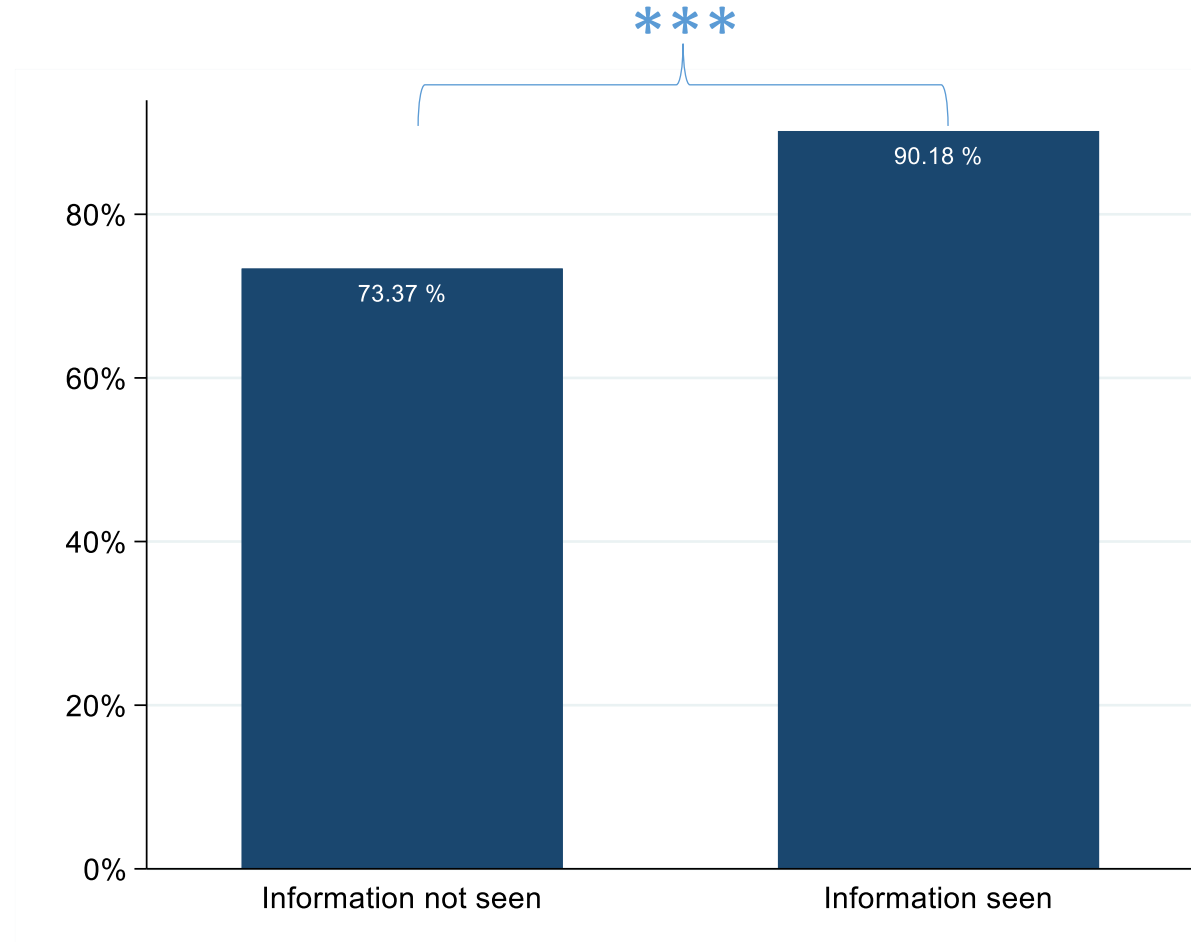
Optional information group

Frequency distribution in the optional information group



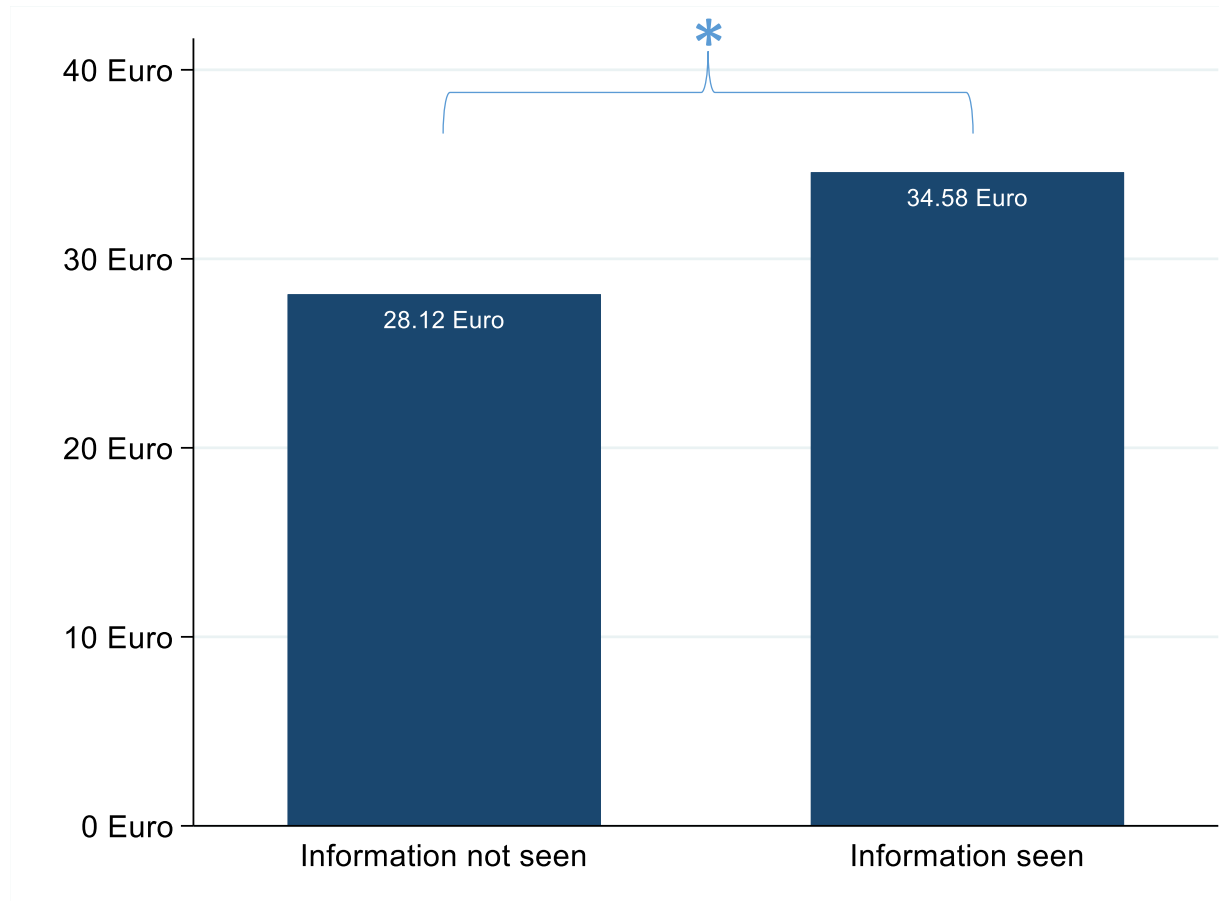
Around 80% of individuals avoid to see social norm information

Shares of respondents who donate for climate protection in the optional social information group



Individuals that chose to see additional information are significantly more likely to donate

Average donations for climate protection in the optional social information group



Individuals that chose to see additional information on average donate significantly more

Who is seeking information?

ML estimates of average marginal and discrete effects (robust z-statistics) in probit models, dependent variable: Chose to see additional information, 525 respondents

Explanatory variables	Chose to see additional information
High perceived personal norm in environmental context	0.077* (1.91)
Altruism	n.s.
Patience	n.s.
High trust	0.064* (1.79)
Environmental awareness	n.s.
Age	0.005*** (4.09)
Other explanatory variables	included

Note: *** (**, *) indicates that the estimated parameters are significantly different from zero at the 1% (5%, 10%) significance level.

Conclusion

- No hint that social norm information provision can neither impact the decisions to donate nor increase donations for climate protection
- Altruism, trust, belief in climate change, high climate knowledge, green policy orientation, and age affect donations for climate protection
- Individuals that actively decide to see additional information
 - Are more likely to donate
 - Have higher average donations for climate protection

Thank you so much for
your attention!