Appendix A Supplementary Materials

A.1 Cost-benefit exercise

The numbers provided in the cost-benefit exercise question come from this simple hypothetical exercise on the short run effects of introducing a minimum price, also called a price support, which is a specific type of price control¹. There are different types of price supports: the easiest case is the one in which no surplus exists, illustrated in figure A1; in the second case, shown in figure A2, the surplus exists and has no buyer; finally in the third case the government purchases this extra surplus, illustrated in figure A3. The latter case is the case analyzed in this paper. Overall, price supports are intended to help producers, but at a cost to the rest of society. Regardless of which type of price support is implemented, these measures result in losses to society, although the distribution of benefits varies across these (Barkley, 2016). In the case where no surplus exists, the loss to society after the introduction of the price support is equal to the purple triangle in figure A1, representing the deadweight loss (DWL): while producers are slightly better off, consumers are unambiguously worse off, so that the total change in society's welfare is negative. In the second case, where a surplus does exist, illustrated by figure A2, the effect on consumers is the same as in case one: they are significantly worse off than before the price support. Producers, however, are much worse off than before. The surplus is costly to produce and it does not have a buyer, this is represented by the gold rectangle in figure A2. Ultimately, the total change in society's welfare is once again negative. I now turn to the third case, the exercise used in this study and illustrated by figure A3.

¹For more details on this and different forms of price support see Chapter 2.2 in Barkley (2016).



Figure A1: Consumer and producer surplus before and after the introduction of price support with no surplus



Figure A2: Consumer and producer surplus before and after the introduction of price support without government buying the surplus

Imagine an hypothetical market for olive oil, where supply and demand are such that equilibrium price and quantity are \in 4 and 400 units². The government then decides to institute a minimum price for oil at \in 6 per unit.



Figure A3: Consumer and producer surplus before and after the introduction of price support with government buying the surplus

As shown in figure A3, before the minimum price is introduced, $P^* = 4$ and $Q^* = 400$. The initial values of surplus are:

- Consumer surplus $(CS_0) = \in 800$
- Producer surplus $(PS_0) = \in 800$
- Government spending $(G_0) = \in 0$, and

²In order to keep this exercise as simple and as generalizable as possible, demand and supply are represented as being unit elastic. However, how much a price support costs the government does not only depend upon how high the price support is, but also on how much surplus output it generates, which is a function of the elasticities of supply and demand. Price supports are more costly and inefficient when consumers and producers are more price sensitive, and viceversa when they are less price sensitive.

• Social Welfare $(SW_0) = \in 1600$.

After the government sets the new price to $\in 6$ and buys the surplus of 400 units (for a total of $\notin 2,400$):

- Consumer surplus $(CS_1) = \in 200$
- Producer surplus $(PS_1) = \in 1800$
- Government spending $(G_1) = \in 2400$, and
- Social Welfare $(SW_1) = \notin 400$.

The changes in surplus are equal to:

- $\Delta CS = \textcircled{=} 600$
- $\Delta PS = \in 1000$
- $\Delta G = \textcircled{2400}$, and
- $\Delta SW = \textcircled{=} 2000$
- $DWL = -\Delta SW = \textcircled{2000}$

The benefit to producers is equal to the gain in producer surplus: 1,800 - 800 = €1,000. The cost to consumers is equal to the loss in consumer surplus: 200 - 800 = -€600. The cost to the government is equal to the cost of buying the surplus in the market 6 * 400 = -€2,400. Maintaining this price floor involves losses for society and is a cost to taxpayers, since government spending is financed out of taxes with opportunity costs. Hence, the total cost to society (in the short run) is the sum of the loss in consumer surplus and the cost of the government purchasing the surplus off

the market, totaling \in 3,000. The benefit to producers is \in 1,000. The net welfare loss to society is equal to \in 2,000³. Since respondents are not expected to be familiar with concepts such as consumer surplus or producer surplus, I have simplified the question for the cost-benefit exercise. Hence, respondents are not asked to quantify Δ CS, Δ PS or Δ SW, but rather they are given those numbers and are just asked how much society gains or loses if producers gain \in 1000, consumers lose \in 600 and the government buys excess surplus for \in 2400 as a result of the measure. The exercise is aimed at testing whether FEL individuals are more likely to understand what constitutes a cost and what constitutes a benefit in this example. The CB exercise is not only shown to the policy information treatment group, but also to the control group and the party cue group *after* seeing their respective treatments and *after* being asked whether they favor price controls or not, so not to bias the treatment but to increase the sample on which to calculate whether respondents can solve the exercise.

A.2 Original treatment questions

Respondents in the survey were randomly assigned to one of the three groups (control, political statement treatment, and cost-benefit treatment). These are the original questions. The control group saw this statement:

"Immagini il seguente scenario: Il prezzo attuale dell'olio di oliva è intorno ai 4 euro al litro. I produttori chiedono che venga stabilito un prezzo minimo per l'olio, intorno ai 6 euro al litro, per coprire almeno i costi di produzione. Lei è favorevole a fissare un prezzo minimo per l'olio di oliva?"

³In the cost-benefit exercise for respondents I divided all numbers by 10 for simplicity so the correct answer is -200.

The political statement treatment group saw this statement:

"Immagini il seguente scenario: Il prezzo attuale dell'olio di oliva è intorno ai 4 euro al litro. I produttori chiedono che venga stabilito un prezzo minimo per l'olio, intorno ai 6 euro al litro, per coprire almeno i costi di produzione. Il leader del partito che più La rappresenta sostiene che i produttori nazionali necessitino di uno scudo protettivo contro la concorrenza estera, che altrimenti porrebbe un rischio enorme al futuro della produzione nazionale. Lei è favorevole a fissare un prezzo minimo per l'olio di oliva?" The cost-benefit treatment group saw this statement:

"Immagini il seguente scenario: Il prezzo attuale dell'olio di oliva è intorno ai 4 euro al litro. I produttori chiedono che venga stabilito un prezzo minimo per l'olio, intorno ai 6 euro al litro, per coprire almeno i costi di produzione. Il governo accetta di imporre un prezzo minimo sull'olio. Questo crea un eccesso di olio sul mercato: viene prodotto più olio di quanto ne sia richiesto dai consumatori. Il governo decide di comprare l'eccesso di olio. Dopo che questa misura viene introdotta, i produttori guadagnano 100 milioni di euro. Il governo paga 240 milioni di euro per comprare l'eccesso di olio. I consumatori perdono 60 milioni di euro. Quanto guadagna (+) o perde (-) la società nel suo complesso?" "Lei è favorevole a fissare un prezzo minimo per l'olio di oliva?"

A.3 Financial and economic literacy and other covariates

Based on a survey conducted in July 2018 of 1,100 Italian individuals I determined that individuals with low literacy would be those answering zero or one correct questions out of six (anyone below mean minus one standard deviation) and individuals with high literacy would be those answering

five or six correct questions out of six (anyone above mean plus one standard deviation) (Magistro, 2019). The financial literacy questions reflect knowledge about interest compounding, inflation, interest rates, and risk diversification⁴. The economic literacy questions reflect knowledge of the effects of certain public policies in the country. The first financial literacy question is: 'Suppose you have ≤ 100 in a savings account with an interest rate of 2% per year. If you never withdrew any money from this account, how much do you think there would be after five years?' The answers are:

- 1) More than $\in 102$,
- 2) Exactly $\in 102$,
- 3) Less than $\in 102$,
- 4) Don't know.

The second question is: 'Suppose inflation is 2% per year and you have put money into a savings account with an interest rate of 1% per year. Assuming that you buy the same things today and in one year's time, do you think you would be able to buy more with the money in this account in one year than today, less in one year than today, or do you think you would be able to buy exactly the same things in one year as today?' The answers are:

- 1) More than today,
- 2) Exactly the same as today,
- 3) Less than today,

⁴Studies on financial literacy have been measuring the concept in a consistent manner, using this set of questions. See Lusardi and Mitchell (2007) and Lusardi and Mitchell (2014).

4) Don't know.

The third question asks: 'The following statement:'An individual share in a company is usually a less risky asset to invest in than a portfolio of different company shares' is':.

1) True,

2) False,

3) Don't know.

The first economic literacy question asks: 'According to you, for which purpose are pension contributions paid for?'⁵

- 1) Only to pay for future pensions,
- 2) Only to pay for current pensions,
- 3) To pay for both current and future pensions,
- 4) Don't know.

⁵Italy has a nonfinancial defined contribution (NDC) pension scheme, which features the lifelong contributionbenefit link of defined contribution systems, but is based on a pay-as-you-go format, where contributions paid by current workers finance current pensions, with additional funds possibly coming from the overall government budget (Fornero, Oggero, and Puglisi, 2020; Fornero, 2015). As is the case in most other EU countries, the social security system (INPS in the Italian case) is still by far the most important pension provider; indeed, the standard of living of the elderly still depends largely or exclusively on it (Fornero, Lusardi, and Monticone, 2010). Furthermore, this question has been validated and used in other papers analyzing the Italian context by Boeri et al (2002) and Boeri and Tabellini (2012). Their findings similarly reveal large unawareness of how the Italian pension system works with about half the respondents not understanding the function of the pay-as-you-go system. The second question asks: 'If Italy adopts public policies that restrict imports from another nation that is a major trading partner, then in Italy'⁶:

- 1) The cost of producing products will decrease,
- 2) Job opportunities in export industries will increase,
- 3) Consumers will pay higher prices for products,
- 4) Don't know.

The third question asks: 'Economic research agrees on the effects of immigration on advanced economies. More specifically'⁷:

⁶This question is one of the questions asked in the Test of Economic Literacy by Walstad, Rebeck, and Butters (2013), which has been revised and used throughout the US to assess knowledge of basic economic concepts to high school students for over 40 years. The economic content of the Test of Economic Literacy is based on the Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics by the Council of Economic Education, which focuses on the more fundamental economic ideas and concepts that are widely shared by professional economists.

⁷What does current research find about the impacts of immigration on wages and employment? Many people commonly believe that immigration increases unemployment and reduces wages among native workers, falling prey to "the lump of labor fallacy", the idea that there is a fixed number of jobs to go around. Most models assume that workers are perfectly substitutable for one another. In this context, immigration would increase the supply of labor, which would in turn lead to a decline in the wages of native workers. However, using these models is problematic for at least two reasons (Leeson and Gochenour, 2015; Portes, 2019). One is the assumption of perfect immigrant-native substitutability. Immigrant labor may be in many cases complementary to some subpopulations of native labor. In this latter case, immigration would actually raise native wages. The second problem of using this model to predict immigration's economic effects is that it is a partial-equilibrium model, and it ignores important general-equilibrium effects of immigration. For instance, an influx of immigrants does not only increase the supply of labor, it also increases the demand for labor, since immigrants are also consumers and become employers themselves, putting upward pressure

- 1) In the short run there may be a decline in wages and employment of unskilled natives, but these would be offset by rising wages and employment in the long run,
- 2) In the short run there may be an increase in wages and employment of unskilled natives, but these would be offset by declining wages and employment in the long run,
- 3) Native workers lose, in terms of wages and employment, in both the short run and the long run in all sectors,
- 4) Don't know.

The financial and economic literacy index variable combines these six questions and measures the number of correct answers to the questions: 0) 0 correct answers, 1) 1 correct answer, 2) 2 correct answers, 3) 3 correct answers, 4) 4 correct answers, 5) 5 correct answer, and 6) 6 correct answers.

Table A1 shows descriptive statistics on the retained individuals with respect to the financial and economic literacy index, specifically on the exact questions that FEI and FEL individuals got correctly, respectively.

Education is a variable with 6 categories: no education, elementary school diploma, middle school diploma, high school diploma, undergraduate degree, and postgraduate degree. The variable is recoded so that it takes two values indicating the respondent's qualification; low education on native wages and employment (Leeson and Gochenour, 2015; Peri, 2012; Portes, 2019). Several studies show that increased immigration leads to net gains in GDP, it has no direct impact on unemployment in the host country, it increases innovation, and it actually increases total factor productivity (Coppel, Dumont, and Visco, 2001; Foged and Peri, 2016; Hamilton and Whalley, 1984; G. I. P. Ottaviano and Peri, 2012; G. I. Ottaviano, Peri, and Wright, 2013; Peri, 2012; Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian, 2020). The negative impacts of migration for native workers in developed countries are, if they exist at all, relatively small, short-lived and affect unskilled native labor (Portes, 2019).

Financial and economic literacy index		EL	FE	EI
Correct Answers	6/6	5/6	1/6	0/6
Ν	252	1058	1040	536
Total	13	310	1576	
Financial literacy questions		Correct	t N (%)	
Interest rate Inflation		(98%)	350 (2	22%)
		(99%)	177 (1	11%)
Risk diversification		(94%)	153 (1	10%)
Economic literacy questions		Correct	t N (%)	
Pay as you go pensions	891	(68%)	106 (7%)
Effects of protectionist measure	1120	(93%)	138 (9%)
Effects of immigration		(67%)	116 (7%)

Table A1: Descriptive statistics for the Financial and Economic Literacy index (n=2,881).

includes anyone who has a secondary education or less and high education anyone who has a university degree (undergraduate or postgraduate): 1) low education, 2) high education. *Income* is an ordinal variable that indicates in which bracket the individual's gross income is. The variable has 10 categories, going from less than 3,000 \in to more than 75,000 \in . The variable was recoded so that, based on values below the 25th percentile, between the 25th and 75th percentile, and above the 75th percentile, it takes three values: 0) low-income (below 10,000 \in , reference category), 1) middle-income (between 10,000 and 29,999 \in), and 2) high-income (above 30,000 \in). *Age* is also recoded so that, based on values below the 25th percentile, between the 25th and 75th percentile, and 75th percentile, and above the 75th percentile, it takes three values: 0) 18-31, 1) 32-51, and 2) over 51. The political ideology variable is a self-placement question where respondents self-identify from 0 - extreme right. *Female* takes values: 0) male, 1) female. And *region* takes values: 0) North, 1) Center, and 2) South.

All of the models are run also with the original variables for income, education, and age, and the results do not change substantively. However, when using the CEM method on the original non-transformed variables, the effects are larger and more uncertain as a result of the fact that very few individuals are matched (respectively 162 and 156).

Appendix B Matching and Balance

Tables B1 and B2 show relative frequencies for the main covariates across treatment groups and across literacy levels. It emerges that although the respondents' characteristics are quite balanced across information treatment groups, since people were randomly assigned into each group, they are not balanced across literacy levels. Hence, in addition to controlling for these covariates in the main analyses, I also conduct different matching procedures in order to create pruned samples, aimed at achieving better balance on my covariates. To create matched samples, I use both propensity score matching (PSM) methods, including nearest-neighbor matching and full matching, and Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM), which are all available in the R function 'MatchIt'⁸.

In tables B3, B4, and B5 I provide summaries, such as the means of each covariate before and after matching and a % improvement statistics, that allow to assess the balance of covariates after matching for each method employed. The summaries I provide are for one imputed dataset for each method. The results suggest that the CEM method outperforms the PSM methods (especially the nearest neighbor), and achieves almost perfect balance on all variables.

⁸Unfortunately, there is not an automated procedure for using 'MatchIt' with multiply imputed datasets through 'Amelia'. I hence multiply imputed the data, did matching on each imputed data set, and then combined them in 'Zelig' using the 'mi' function.

	Control	Political	Cost-benefit	
	Control	Treatment	Treatment	
Education				
Low education	69 %	66 %	61 %	
High education	31 %	34 %	39 %	
Income				
Low income	32 %	30 %	31 %	
Middle income	42 %	44 %	41 %	
High income	26 %	26 %	28 %	
Region				
North	46 %	44 %	42 %	
Center	19 %	20 %	20 %	
South	35 %	36 %	38 %	
Age Group				
18-31	26 %	28 %	24 %	
32-51	43 %	44 %	63 %	
51+	31 %	28 %	13 %	
Gender				
Female	52 %	52 %	49 %	
Male	48 %	48%	51 %	
Political ideology (0 - 10)	6.1 (2.6)	6 (2.7)	6.1 (2.7)	

Table B1: Demographics/balance across treatment groups for one imputed dataset: relative frequencies and mean and standard deviation for political ideology (n=2,881).

	FEI	FEL
Education		
Low education	72%	58 %
High education	28 %	42 %
Income		
Low income	41 %	19 %
Middle income	40 %	45 %
High income	19 %	36 %
Region		
North	38 %	52 %
Center	20 %	19 %
South	42 %	29 %
Age Group		
18-31	34 %	17 %
32-51	49 %	49 %
51+	17 %	34 %
Gender		
Female	62 %	37 %
Male	38 %	63 %
Political ideology (0 - 10)	6.4 (2.7)	5.7 (2.5)

Table B2: Demographics/balance across literacy groups for one imputed dataset: relative frequencies and mean and standard deviation for political ideology (n=2,881).

Table B3: Summary of balance for the non-matched dataset and the matched one using nearestneighbor matching. The treated individuals refer to FEL individuals, while the control ones are FEI.

	No Matching		Matching		
	Treated	Control	Treated	Control	% Improvement
High Education	0.42	0.28	0.42	0.32	26
Middle Income	0.45	0.40	0.45	0.45	98
High Income	0.36	0.19	0.36	0.22	18
Center Region	0.19	0.20	0.19	0.21	-100
South Region	0.29	0.42	0.29	0.37	37
Age (32-51)	0.49	0.50	0.49	0.52	-194
Age (51+)	0.34	0.17	0.34	0.20	17
Female	0.38	0.62	0.38	0.56	25
Political Ideology	5.7	6.4	5.7	6.2	28
Sample Size	1310	1571	1310	1310	

Table B4: Summary of balance for the non-matched dataset and the matched one using full matching. The treated individuals refer to FEL individuals, while the control ones are FEI.

	No Matching		Matching		
	Treated	Control	Treated	Control	% Improvement
High Education	0.42	0.28	0.42	0.44	85
Middle Income	0.45	0.40	0.45	0.43	55
High Income	0.36	0.19	0.36	0.37	92
Center Region	0.19	0.20	0.19	0.20	30
South Region	0.29	0.42	0.29	0.28	90
Age (32-51)	0.49	0.50	0.49	0.48	95
Age (51+)	0.34	0.17	0.34	0.34	97
Female	0.38	0.62	0.38	0.38	100
Political Ideology	5.7	6.4	5.7	5.8	87
Sample Size	1310	1570	1310	1570	

	No Matching		Matching		
	Treated	Control	Treated	Control	% Improvement
High Education	0.42	0.28	0.25	0.25	100
Middle Income	0.45	0.40	0.44	0.44	100
High Income	0.36	0.19	0.17	0.17	100
Center Region	0.19	0.20	0.14	0.14	100
South Region	0.29	0.42	0.42	0.42	100
Age (32-51)	0.49	0.50	0.55	0.55	100
Age (51+)	0.34	0.17	0.18	0.18	100
Female	0.38	0.62	0.58	0.58	100
Political Ideology	5.7	6.4	6.2	6.2	100
Sample Size	1310	1571	891	1101	

Table B5: Summary of balance for the non-matched dataset and the matched one using CEM. The treated individuals refer to FEL individuals, while the control ones are FEI.

Appendix C Supplementary Regression Results

	Correct CB	Correct Direction CB	Information
Intercept	-1.35***	0.42*	0.29
	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.18)
Female	-0.10	0.16	0.17*
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
FEL	1.25***	0.94***	-0.11
	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.14)
Middle Income	0.10	-0.03	0.11
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)
High Income	0.27*	0.05	0.21
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Region Center	-0.13	-0.21	0.10
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Region South	-0.18	-0.20^{*}	0.06
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Age 32-51	-0.14	0.34***	0.14
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Age over 51	-0.22	0.49***	0.18
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Political Ideology	-0.01	-0.04^{*}	0.03*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party Cue			0.28*
			(0.13)
Cost-benefit exercise			-0.20
			(0.14)
Party Cue: FEL			-0.39*
			(0.20)
Cost-benefit exercise: FEL			-0.66***
			(0.20)
Num. obs.	57620	57620	57620
Num. imp.	20	20	20

Table C1: Logistic models using financial and economic literacy as main covariate without controlling for education: log odds and standard errors in parentheses. The results are for the combined imputations and they are calculated by Rubin's Rules.

 $^{***}p < 0.001, \, ^{**}p < 0.01, \, ^{*}p < 0.05$

	Correct CB	Correct Direction CB	Information
Intercept	-1.45***	0.40^{*}	0.25
	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.18)
FEL	1.31***	0.92***	-0.07
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.17)
High Education	0.40**	0.05	0.27
	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.23)
Female	-0.12	0.15	0.16
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Middle Income	0.07	-0.04	0.08
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)
High Income	0.18	0.03	0.16
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Region Center	-0.14	-0.21	0.09
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Region South	-0.19	-0.21^{*}	0.07
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Age 32-51	-0.11	0.34***	0.16
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Age over 51	-0.15	0.51***	0.21
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Political Ideology	-0.01	-0.04^{*}	0.03*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
FEL: High ed.	-0.24	0.04	-0.19
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.31)
Party Cue			0.20
			(0.15)
Cost-benefit exercise			-0.17
			(0.16)
Party Cue: FEL			-0.18
			(0.24)
Cost-benefit exercise: FEL			-0.63*
			(0.25)
Party Cue: High ed.			0.29
			(0.33)
Cost-benefit exercise: High ed.			-0.14
			(0.32)
Party Cue: FEL: High ed.			-0.61
			(0.44)
Cost-benefit exercise: FEL: High ed.			0.02
			(0.43)
Num. obs.	57620	57620	57620
Num. imp.	20	20	20

Table C2: Logistic models with interaction between financial and economic literacy and education: log odds and standard errors in parentheses. The results are for the combined imputations and they are calculated by Rubin's Rules.

 $^{***}p < 0.001, ^{**}p < 0.01, ^{*}p < 0.05$

	Correct CB	Correct Direction CB	Information
Intercept	-0.76***	0.83***	0.17
	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Female	-0.34***	-0.03	0.25**
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)
High Education	0.40***	0.20*	0.17
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.16)
Middle Income	0.25*	0.08	0.02
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)
High Income	0.41**	0.19	0.06
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Region Center	-0.27*	-0.31**	0.14
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Region South	-0.33***	-0.31**	0.12
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Age 31-51	0.03	0.43***	0.10
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Age over 51	0.20	0.75***	0.10
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Political Ideology	-0.04**	-0.06***	0.05**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party Cue			0.13
			(0.12)
Cost-benefit exercise			-0.46***
			(0.12)
Party Cue: High ed.			-0.12
			(0.21)
Cost-benefit exercise: High ed.			-0.26
			(0.21)
Num. obs.	57620	57620	57620
Num. imp.	20	20	20

Table C3: Logistic models using education as main covariate: log odds and standard errors in parentheses. The results are for the combined imputations and they are calculated by Rubin's Rules.

 $^{***}p < 0.001, \, ^{**}p < 0.01, \, ^{*}p < 0.05$

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