



# Pictures are Worth Many Words: Effectiveness of Visual Communication in Dispelling the Rent–Control Misconception

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# Pictures are worth many words: Effectiveness of visual communication in dispelling the rent–control misconception

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## Abstract

The popular belief that rent–control leads to an increase in the amount of affordable housing is in contradiction with ample empirical evidence and congruent theoretical explanations. It can therefore be qualified as a misconception. We present the results of a preregistered on–line experiment in which we study how to dispel this misconception using a refutational approach both in a video and in a text format. Communication in a video format comes closer to how citizens are typically exposed to information. We find that the refutational video has a significantly higher positive impact on revising the misconception than a refutational text, an effect that is driven by the departure from the misconception by individuals who initially agreed with it. The refutational text, in turn, does not have a significant impact relative to a non–refutational baseline text. Higher cognitive reflective ability positively affects the impact on beliefs of all interventions. Our research shows that visual communication effectively reduces the gap between scientific economic knowledge and the views of citizens.

Keywords: misconceptions; written and visual communication; refutation; persuasion; online experiment

JEL codes: A12, A2, D9, I2

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*They [economists] are accused of all thinking the same thing. But what use would economists be if they could not reach a consensus about anything?*

Jean Tirole, “Economics for the public good”, p. 65, Princeton University Press, 2017

## 1 Introduction

Research on how to communicate economic research findings to the general public effectively is still limited. However, policymakers and researchers increasingly acknowledge the need to improve the communication of economic research results (Stankova, 2019). Recently, some studies have started to approach this issue. For instance, Haldane and McMahon (2018) and Coibion et al. (2019, 2020) analyze how communication of fiscal and monetary policies affects agents’ expectations, communication being a policy tool in itself. Other studies focus on the spread of socio-economic misinformation in the media (“alt-facts”) and on the effect of fact-checking to neutralize it (Barrera et al., 2020; Ecker et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2021). Finally, some other studies analyze how people perceive and form their attitudes towards tax policy (Stantcheva, 2021) and racial gaps (Alesina et al., 2021).

Little is known, however, on how to communicate economic knowledge when large segments of the public have entrenched misconceptions—that is, beliefs that contradict well-established scientific knowledge about the functioning of the economy. The problem is that the divide between economic research and widespread unfounded beliefs may result in the public endorsing damaging economic policies, or rejecting the implementation of evidence-based, welfare-enhancing reforms (Nyhan, 2020). Hence, it is of general interest to explore how to communicate convincingly economic research findings that contradict misconceptions.

We focus on the popular belief that rent control allows more families to find affordable housing. The support for this policy is very large and widespread among the public in many countries.<sup>1</sup> This belief, however, is at odds with scientific consensus arising from economic research. In a poll to economists from the IGM Economic Experts Panel, 95% strongly disagree that rent capping will increase the quantity of affordable housing.<sup>2</sup>

This high consensus stems from the abundant empirical evidence on this subject (see, for instance, Diamond et al. (2019a) and Kholodilin and Kohl (2020)). Although rent control may have positive effects for a subset of tenants because their rents will be low, or grow less, relative to market rents (Sims, 2007), both total quantity of rental housing available and quality of controlled housing falls (Sims, 2007; Mora-Sanguinetti, 2011; Asquith, 2019; Diamond et al., 2019a; Hahn

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, in the UK the support for rent controls reached 71% in a poll conducted in December 2019 by Ipsos MORI, with only 9% of people opposing them. This is the most supported policy among other housing policies indicated in the same survey. Building new public homes is supported by 56%, while opposed by 15%. In a poll conducted by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) of UC Berkeley in 2017, 60% of the state’s registered voters favored rent control, while 26% opposed them.

<sup>2</sup>Percentage weighted by the degree of confidence of the response. See <https://www.igmchicago.org/surveys/rent-control/>

et al., 2021). Some owners decide not to rent their property but sell it instead, either to owner-occupants or to developers (Diamond et al., 2019a). Supply reduction is more pronounced among corporate landlords than among individual landlords (Diamond et al., 2019b). The quantity of tenants willing to pay the controlled rent is higher than the supply of dwellings, so queues and a black market for rental contracts appear (Malpezzi, 1998; Andersson and Söderberg, 2012).<sup>3</sup> In the end, low-income tenants—young people and newcomers—are most likely to be harmed by this policy (Hahn et al., 2021; Kattenberg and Hassink, 2017). Alternative policies, however, such as tax subsidies for low-income households, are welfare increasing (Diamond et al., 2019b).

Research in communication and in social, educational and political psychology shows that a refutational correction has a positive effect on reducing the prevalence of people’s misconceptions about climate change (Nussbaum et al., 2017; Lewandowsky, 2021), education (Aguilar et al., 2019), psychology (Kowalski and Taylor, 2009, 2017) and vaccine resistance (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). The surge of misinformation associated with the recent Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences has prompted further research on debunking, finding that refutational corrections are effective at it (MacFarlane et al., 2021). The main features that characterize a refutational correction are that the misconception addressed is explicitly activated and stated as incorrect, that the existing scientific arguments and evidence are explained as simply as possible, and that the relevance of the issue for the individual and her values is acknowledged (Tippett, 2010; Druckman, 2015; Weil et al., 2020).

The refutational correction is an interesting approach because it aims at inducing careful, reflective thinking about the evidence and arguments provided by scientific research. However, this approach has barely been studied in relation to popular misconceptions about economic questions. In previous work (Brandts et al., 2022), we find that a written refutational message reduces the misconception about rent controls but when testing the refutational text (RT) against a non-refutational text (NRT) in the laboratory, both texts lead to a similar decline in the prevalence of the misconception. Thus, in this case, a refutational correction does not induce an additional reduction of the misconception. In a field environment of a college-level principles of economics course, however, the RT slightly improves on the NRT, subject to some caveats. Nonetheless, in both settings more than half of participants still stick to the misconception.

In this paper we analyze the effectiveness of a communication strategy that combines the refutational approach with a visual format in countering the rent-control misconception. Refutational corrections do not have to be restricted to a text format. We build here on research that suggests that using visual explanations, such as videos and infographics, to correct misconceptions or misinformation may be more effective than text-only information (Mayer and Moreno, 2003; Goldberg et al., 2019; Young et al., 2018; Reynolds et al., 2018). We design three interventions: a refutational video (RV) and two short written messages, a refutational text (RT) and a non-refutational

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<sup>3</sup>See also Stockholm’s housing agency, <https://bostad.stockholm.se/english/>.

text (NRT). In an on–line experiment we compare the effectiveness of the RV relative to the RT and the NRT to reduce the prevalence of the rent–control misconception. We also compare the effectiveness of the two written messages to each other. The refutational text adds the refutational elements referred to above to the non–refutational text. The video adds images and symbols to some textual sentences from the RT. In addition to evaluating the impact of the interventions, we also analyze the role of some personality traits, such as attentiveness and the propensity to be reflective relative to intuitive thinking, on the disposition to revise the misconception.<sup>4</sup>

Our work contributes to the sparse literature on communicating economics to lay people, to the literature on misconceptions in political and economic psychology, and, more broadly, to the literature on science communication. First, we investigate, for the first time in economics, the effectiveness of using a visual format combined with a refutational approach to dispel a widespread and highly persistent misconception. Previous research has not investigated the effect of visual formats on dispelling misconceptions about economics. Some work studies the impact of visual formats on financial literacy (Lusardi et al., 2017) and on attitudes towards taxation (Stantcheva, 2021). Second, we provide evidence on the effectiveness of a short RT compared to a short NRT that adds to the evidence in Brandts et al. (2022), where texts are twice as long. Third, we show evidence on whether the role of personality traits on revising the misconception varies across visual and written formats. Our study, thus, adds to an emerging body of research on the effectiveness of different modes of communicating economic research findings that confront popular beliefs.

The on–line experiment was preregistered at Wharton Credibility Lab (University of Pennsylvania). We recruit 1,050 participants of all ages and conditions, who participate through their own laptops, tablets and smartphones from wherever they are. Participants are randomly allocated to one of the three conditions: RV, RT and NRT, with 350 participants per condition. An on–line experiment is less intrusive than delivering the message in a physical laboratory environment, and it also allows us to access a broader and more diverse audience than in Brandts et al. (2022), where all subjects are college students. Given that ultimately we are interested in engaging with ordinary citizens in their natural setting, our current subject pool brings us closer to this aim.

The rationale behind our design choices is the following. A factor underlying the limited success of the texts used in Brandts et al. (2022) may be their length. Reading them may require a significant level of cognitive effort, particularly because the information provided is counter–intuitive and contradicts a widely shared opinion. Length may also be in the way of the refutational elements of the RT not having a differential effect with respect to the NRT. Given the attention needed to comprehend a long text, the refutational elements may remain rather unnoticed. The RT and NRT that we use here, are based on Brandts et al. (2022), but about half

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<sup>4</sup>There is no consensus on the terminology that refers to attributes other than cognitive ability. Here we adopt the term personality traits. Other authors refer to them as non–cognitive abilities, character skills, temperament or personal qualities. All this terminology has flaws as discussed in Duckworth and Yeager (2015).

their length. With the shorter texts we aim at achieving a balance between providing an accurate explanation and minimizing the time and cognitive effort required to read the text. We rely here on previous research that finds that short textual information is effective to reduce the prevalence of misconceptions (Ecker et al., 2020). The RV is a dynamic slideshow composed of twenty-one frames that contain images, symbols and some text extracted from the RT. We are motivated by previous work that finds that visual messages are effective in communicating information of different kinds. More broadly, we consider that a visual presentation matches more closely how citizens nowadays encounter information of different kinds.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 explains the hypotheses, conditions and procedure of our experimental framework. Section 3 describes the specifications used to test the hypotheses. Section 4 reports the estimated treatment effects. Section 5 concludes.

## 2 Experimental framework

### 2.1 Research hypotheses

A first pre-analysis plan (PAP) was preregistered at AsPredicted Registry, Wharton Credibility Lab (University of Pennsylvania) on July 4, 2020. This PAP included two conditions, the RT and the NRT. The PAP corresponding to the RV condition was preregistered at AsPredicted Registry on July 3, 2021. All three conditions were preregistered before running the corresponding experiments. Budgetary constraints prevented us from conducting the three conditions simultaneously. To avoid potential seasonal effects we conducted both experiments on the same day and month. Pandemic, socio-economic and political conditions were very similar over this period.<sup>5</sup>

Our first hypothesis is about the effect of the video format on the change in beliefs:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): Communicating scientific evidence about rent control policy through a refutational video is more effective to dispel the misconception about this policy than a refutational or a non-refutational text.*

H1 relies on literature from social and political psychology and from communication that has investigated the effects of different communication formats on recipients' beliefs or attitudes regarding climate change, political or health issues. Goldberg et al. (2019) report that a video is significantly more effective than its transcript in increasing people's perception of scientific agreement on climate change. Bolsen et al. (2019) show that climate science politicization undermines credible textual frames, but that adding compelling imagery to the textual frames counteracts science politicization and restores the impact of a scientific consensus message. In a similar vein, Young et al. (2018) show that providing audiovisual information is more effective than text-based messages in correcting misperceptions in the context of political fact-checking. Reynolds et al.

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<sup>5</sup>An anonymized copy, without author names, of the first preregistered plan is available at <https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=uv2t69>. The PAP corresponding to the video condition is available at <https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=4n78sy>.

(2018) find that using infographics enhanced with images to communicate evidence on the effectiveness of a hypothetical tax to tackle childhood obesity increases perceived effectiveness and support for this policy. In the educational literature, Mayer and Moreno (2003) document that meaningful learning involves cognitive processing that includes building connections between pictorial and verbal representations. Mason et al. (2017) find that accompanying a refutational text with a graph is more effective to reduce a misconception about the earth’s seasonal changes than the text alone. All this work suggests that explanations that include visual components may also be more effective than text-only messages in communicating the effects of economic policies, such as rent-control.

Our second hypothesis is about the effect of the refutational correction communicated in a written form:

*Hypothesis 2 (H2): Communicating scientific evidence about rent control policy through a refutational text is more effective to dispel the misconception about this policy than a non-refutational text.*

Evidence from psychological, political and educational research shows that a refutational correction is often more effective than a simple retraction to correct misinformation (Kowalski and Taylor, 2009; Tippett, 2010; Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Lewandowsky, 2021; Chan et al., 2017; Aguilar et al., 2019; Ecker et al., 2020; Weil et al., 2020). In economics, and in the case of the particular misconception about the effects of rent controls, Brandts et al. (2022) report mixed findings. In the laboratory experiment with college students, both their RT and NRT reduce the misconception on rent controls by a similar magnitude. Hence, the RT does not significantly improve on the NRT. However, in the field environment of a college course, the RT is more effective than standard, non-refutational instruction, and it also slightly improves on the NRT. Here we test the effectiveness of the written refutational approach using shorter texts based on Brandts et al. (2022). Given the length of the texts in our previous paper, participants may not have been able to pay attention to the refutational elements of the RT. In a shorter RT the refutational elements may be more salient. Some previous studies show that short messages are effective. For instance, Ecker et al. (2020) find that refutational fact-checks (like Tweets) reduce misinformation regarding factual claims. Ferrero et al. (2020) show that 200-word-long texts reduce the number of misconceptions about education among teacher education students. Hypothesis 2 is aimed at assessing the sensitivity of our previous results to the shorter, less attention-demanding version of the texts.

Our third hypothesis is about the role of cognitive reflection in changing beliefs:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Higher cognitive reflection values—higher propensity to analytical thinking—will induce a higher positive change in the misconception.*

We test the role of a particular personality trait, the inclination to reflective relative to intuitive thinking, on the change of beliefs after being exposed to each treatment. Understanding scientific

reasoning and evidence requires cognitive effort, especially when people have misconceptions on an issue. The individual inclination to analytical thinking may thus affect the extent to which people revise their beliefs. Measuring this trait through modified versions of the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT), Pennycook and Rand (2019), Pennycook et al. (2020) and Tappin et al. (2020) find that an individual’s ability to discern fake news from real news, and to update beliefs about political issues, are positively correlated with higher propensity to use analytical thinking (higher CRT scores). Furthermore, McPhetres et al. (2020) find that cognitive sophistication is often positively correlated with pro–science beliefs, although political affiliation may affect this correlation for some divisive issues. Brandts et al. (2022) report that higher CRT scores are positively related to revising the rent–control misconception, but only for the case where the text is discussed in teams rather than read individually. Given the length of the texts used in our previous paper, cognitive reflection perhaps could not make more of a difference there. H3 is aimed at testing whether this personality trait plays a role when participants are exposed to shorter or visual messages.

## 2.2 Conditions

The experiment has three conditions: the RV condition, the RT condition and the NRT condition. Conditions only differ in the format the message is delivered to participants. In the RV condition, participants watch a 2:42 minute long refutational video about the effects of the rent control policy. In the RT and NRT conditions, participants read a text about the same issue that uses, respectively, a refutational and a non–refutational approach. The estimated reading time of the NRT and the RT is about 2 and 3 minutes, respectively (see Table B.2 in Appendix B). Thus, all formats are designed to take the reader/viewer a similar amount of time.

We follow the guidelines from research in psychology in incorporating the refutational elements into the design of the RV and the RT (Tippett, 2010; Druckman, 2015; Lewandowsky, 2021). The features that characterize the refutational approach are the following. First, the text must activate the misconception. Second, it must explicitly state that the misconception is incorrect. Third, it must explain, as simply and clearly as possible, the scientific evidence on the topic to show why the misconception is incorrect and what the negative consequences of the belief are. Fourth, it must aim at capturing the recipient’s attention making clear the personal relevance of the problem and the connection with the person’s values.<sup>6</sup> As in Brandts et al. (2022) we add another feature, which is detailing alternative effective policies. Our intention is to show participants that there are effective policies aligned with their fairness concerns but without the negative consequences of a rent control policy.

The RT, in Spanish, is 671 words long, and is based on the longer RT in Brandts et al. (2022).

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<sup>6</sup>A fifth element refers to facilitating interactions among individuals by asking them to explain their opinions to other participants. We do not introduce this element here because of the technical complexity involved in an online setting.

Appendix B.1 shows the English translation of the text that participants read in the RT condition. As explained in the introduction, we design a shorter RT to achieve a balance between providing a detailed explanation and reducing time and cognitive load involved in reading the text. The resulting RT includes all the refutational elements listed above to correct the misconception, but is around half the length of the RT in our previous experiments. The first three paragraphs contain a brief introduction to how markets work and to price controls. We incorporate the first refutational element—activating the misconception—in the fourth sentence of paragraph four (see Appendix B.1). In the last sentence of paragraph four and in paragraph five we state that the belief is incorrect (second element). In paragraphs six to eight and in the first sentence of paragraph nine, we explain the negative effects of rent controls as shown by the scientific evidence (third element). In our case, we explain the negative, unintended consequences of rent controls—waiting lists, black market, poor maintenance, supply reduction—as shown in many empirical studies (Malpezzi, 1998; Sims, 2007; Mora-Sanguinetti, 2011; Andersson and Söderberg, 2012; Kattenberg and Hassink, 2017; Asquith, 2019; Diamond et al., 2019*a,b*; Kholodilin and Kohl, 2020; Hahn et al., 2021). Regarding the fourth refutational element (connecting with person’s values), we (i) refer to the participant’s potential fairness concern (see the first three sentences in paragraph four and the last sentence in paragraph nine), (ii) give the example of Stockholm in Sweden, a society with strong fairness concerns, and (iii) cite the study of Swedish researchers Andersson and Söderberg (2012) about the negative effects of rent control there. Finally, we explain alternative effective policies in paragraphs ten and eleven to show that there are better alternatives to reach the desired goal.

We include two links in the RT in paragraph six (“*you can find it **HERE***”): the first leads to Andersson and Söderberg (2012) and the second to the Stockholm Housing Agency<sup>7</sup>. Our purpose is to show readers that the claims about the negative effects of rent controls are not ideological but based on empirical evidence. Finally, we use non-technical language and include some sentences to induce critical thinking about own beliefs, such as “[...] *contrary to what it seems [...]*”, “*How can this be?*”, “*Let’s think slowly and ask [...]*”.

We design the RV as a dynamic slideshow composed of twenty-one frames that combine text extracted from the RT and images. We intentionally exclude a voice in the video to avoid confounding effects that may arise from the voice’s gender, intonation and other features of voice. For a rigorous comparison with the other conditions, the sentences included in the video are taken from the RT, with minor changes in some case to adapt the sentence to the narrative. Therefore, the format of our RV is a slideshow that includes text and images. We design this RV to closely reflect the RT because our purpose is to rigorously test whether just adding images and presenting the information in a dynamic format is a more effective debunking strategy than plain written text.

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<sup>7</sup>First link: <https://aresjournals.org/doi/abs/10.5555/jhor.21.2.xv120w45816v3344>. Second link: <https://bostad.stockholm.se/Como-funciona/>

Appendix B.2 includes the frames of the video and indicates the reference to the RT paragraphs where the corresponding exact—or the closest—sentence can be found. As shown in Appendix B.2, six out of twenty-one frames are animated with the purpose of increasing the dynamism of the video.

The structure of the RV, thus, reproduces the content and the structure of the RT. Most importantly, both the RV and the RT include the refutational elements that characterize the refutational approach. Frames one to three correspond to the brief introduction to markets and price controls contained in the first three paragraphs of the RT. The video activates the misconception (first refutational element) in frame seven and states it is incorrect (second element) in frames eight and nine. Frames ten to fifteen explain the negative effects of rent controls as shown by the scientific evidence (third element). As in the RT, the fourth element is included by mentioning Stockholm and the study by Andersson and Söderberg (2012) in frame eleven and by contemplating fairness issues in frames four to six and in frame sixteen. Finally, frames seventeen to twenty-one explain the policies alternative to rent controls.<sup>8</sup> The video includes images, objects, or symbols that intend to capture the viewer's attention and to emphasize the message of the written words.<sup>9</sup> Appendix B.2 shows the frames of the RV.

To write the NRT we exclude the refutational elements from the RT. The original NRT is in Spanish and is 392 words long (Table B.2). Appendix B.3 shows the English translation of the NRT. The first three paragraphs are the same as in the RT. Paragraph four is partly new—except for one sentence equal to the first sentence in paragraph six of the RT—because the NRT does not activate explicitly the misconception, does not state that the belief is incorrect and does not consider the person's values. Regarding the latter, paragraph eight of the NRT is equal to paragraph nine of the RT except for the last sentence, because it appeals to fairness values. Paragraphs ten and eleven of the RT—about alternative policies—are excluded from the NRT. The only element that we maintain is the explanation of the scientific evidence about the negative effects of rent controls because this is usually the case in standard, expository, textbooks (see, for instance, Krugman and Wells (2020)). Therefore, paragraphs five to seven of the NRT are equal to paragraphs six to eight of the RT, including the two links (except for the first sentence in paragraph six of the RT, which is included in paragraph four of the NRT as explained above). The NRT provides thus a research-based explanation of the negative effects of rent controls using a neutral—expository—tone.<sup>10</sup>

Tables B.1 and B.2 in Appendix B.4 show readability measures and text statistics of the RT and NRT in Spanish. The NRT is somewhat easier to read than the RT. However the differences

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<sup>8</sup>Due to technical reasons, it was not possible to include in the RV the two links inserted in the RT.

<sup>9</sup>We thank a professional in the visual industry for his advice about the suitability of the sequences of images and signs.

<sup>10</sup>When the misconception on rent controls is not explicitly addressed, undergraduate students are found to stick to it after receiving standard teaching on price controls during a course in principles of economics, even if they perform well in a question on this topic included in graded tests (Busom et al., 2017).

in the readability statistics are small. Overall, both texts have a fairly standard readability, corresponding to a reading level of seventh graders, around 13–14 years old.

### 2.3 Experimental procedure

The experiments were run on–line by the LINEEX Laboratory for Research in Behavioural Experimental Economics of the University of Valencia (Spain). The experiment with the RT and NRT conditions was run on July 7, 2020, and the experiment with the video condition on July 6, 2021. LINEEX recruited 1,050 participants such that the resulting pool was gender balanced and with at least 20% of participants older than thirty years. Sample size is determined by the goal to reach a statistical power close to 80% in case of an effect size equal to 0.29, which is the estimated effect of the RT relative to the NRT in the laboratory, as shown in Table 3 of Brandts et al. (2022). It is close to the comparable estimated effect of the RT relative to the same benchmark in the field (see Table 8 in Brandts et al. (2022)).

The procedure and questionnaires to elicit beliefs are the same across conditions. Before starting the experiment, participants’ profiles were checked to make sure they fulfilled the required characteristics. In addition, filters for previous participation were applied so the final pool was composed solely of inexperienced participants. Security measures such as IP geolocation were applied before and after the start of the experiment in order to avoid fraud and profile duplication. Subjects could participate from their own laptops, tablets and smartphones.

The 1,050 participants are randomly allocated to the three conditions, so each condition has 350 participants. Composition of the final pool is as follows: 50% women; around 35–45% older than thirty, with average age between 30 and 33 years; about 45–50% with college education, and about 20% tenants. Table C.1 in Appendix C shows the distribution of socio–demographic characteristics across conditions and the results from a test of differences in means from pairwise comparisons between the NRT, RT and RV. Participants’ characteristics are rather balanced across conditions, with some small significant differences.

We design two questionnaires to elicit participants’ beliefs about the effect of rent capping. One is to be completed before the intervention, and the other after it. Both questionnaires include six statements: three related to housing (including the key statement about the misconception), two on attitudes towards science, and one about fairness. Appendix A shows all the statements included in the questionnaires. Questionnaires are identical across the three conditions, but vary somewhat before and after the treatment in order to blur the focus on the statement on rent controls and to avoid memorization of answers. As shown in Table A.1 in Appendix A, three out of six statements are the same before and after the treatment.

The statement that refers to the misconception reads as follows: “Establishing rent controls, such that rents do not exceed a certain amount of money, would increase the number of people who have access to housing facilities.” Participants are asked to indicate their agreement with this

and remaining statements on a five-point scale. We obtain a measure of opinion change about rent controls by subtracting pre-exposure beliefs from post-exposure beliefs.

Figure 1 depicts the steps of the experiment. First, participants see on their screens a consent form, where they are informed that the experiment is part of a research project in social sciences, that their personal data will be confidential, that their decisions will be anonymous, and that they will be paid if they agree to participate. If they do so, they are asked to sign the consent form. The next screen explains that they will be asked to complete several tasks, that if they complete all of them, they will receive a six euro payment, and that one of the tasks will allow them to obtain two more euros if they perform it correctly. They are also informed that the tasks will take about 20 minutes but they can use more time if they wish. Instructions emphasize that in the opinion questionnaires there are no correct or incorrect answers, and remind participants that payment does not depend on these answers, but on task completion (see the initial instructions in Appendix E.1).

After a set of socio-demographic questions, participants fill out the questionnaire eliciting initial beliefs. On the next screen, participants see either the RT, the NRT, or the RV according to the condition they have been assigned to. They can take their time to read and re-read the texts, as they are not given a time limit. Participants in the video condition can also take their time and view the video several times if they wish, and they can also pause it.

After participants have read the texts or watched the video, we assess their attention and understanding of the content by showing a screen with two comprehension questions. These questions are shown in Appendix B.5 and are the same across the three conditions. If participants answer both questions correctly, their payment increases by 2 euros. They cannot go back to previous screens with the text or the video to answer the questions. They are informed about this before being presented with the text or the video.

On the next screen participants answer an 8-item Cognitive Reflection Test. We adapt the original questions in Frederick (2005); Toplak et al. (2014); Thomson and Oppenheimer (2016) to have economic content, so that they do not appear too disconnected from all other statements that have a socio-economic character. The eight items are shown in Appendix D. Following the CRT questions, participants answer the final opinion questionnaire. In the closing screen participants are informed about the total payment and thanked for their collaboration. Appendix E.2 shows all the instructions given to participants on each screen, which are the same across conditions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>A potential concern in experimental work is the presence of an experimenter demand effect. Note that all three interventions would be equally subject to this effect, and what we do is to compare across conditions.

### 3 Analysis

To test the hypotheses, we specify the following general regression:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

where  $y_i$  is the change in beliefs, computed as the difference between a participant’s response to the statement on rent controls after the intervention and her response before the intervention. We transform the original responses in the five-point scale into numerical values as follows: 5 (fully disagree), 4 (disagree), 3 (do not know), 2 (agree), and 1 (fully agree). Hence  $y_i$  takes values between  $-4$  (a change from fully disagree pre-intervention to fully agree post-intervention) and  $4$  (a change from fully agree pre-intervention to fully disagree post-intervention). That is, a positive value obtains when the response varies from agreement towards disagreement with the misconception. If the participant provides the same response in both questionnaires, the change is zero.  $D_i$  is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant is exposed to a given treatment and zero otherwise.

To test for the first hypothesis we estimate equation (1) by comparing the change in beliefs of participants exposed to the RV relative to the change in beliefs of participants exposed to the RT, both unconditional and conditional to the initial belief. Hence  $D_i$  is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant is exposed to the video and zero if she/he is exposed to the RT. Testing for H1 also involves estimating equation (1) by comparing the change in beliefs of participants exposed to the RV relative to the change in beliefs of participants exposed to the NRT, both unconditional and conditional to the initial belief. Hence  $D_i$  in this case is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant is exposed to the video and zero if she/he is exposed to the NRT.

To test for the second hypothesis we estimate equation (1) by comparing the change in beliefs of participants exposed to the RT relative to the change in beliefs of participants exposed to the NRT, both unconditional and conditional to the initial belief. In this specification,  $D_i$  is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant is exposed to the RT and zero if she/he is exposed to the NRT.

To test for the third hypothesis we build on the models above adding participants’ CRT scores to the regressions. To additionally assess whether the effect of the treatment varies with the propensity to think analytically, we add an interaction term between CRT score and the corresponding dummy variable.

Furthermore, we explore whether the change in beliefs is correlated with other personality traits, such as attentiveness, as captured by the time spent reading the texts or watching the video. We build on the models specified above with the CRT scores and add this attentiveness measure. We also study whether the effect of the interventions varies across gender, education level or housing ownership status by separately estimating the treatment effects in these subsamples.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptives

Table 1 reports the distribution of the degree of agreement with the statement about rent controls before and after each intervention. The distribution of initial beliefs is very similar in the three conditions: about 77 to 79% of participants agree or totally agree with the statement—that is, hold the misconception—while only 12 to 15% disagree (see Panel A). These numbers are in line with findings from Brandts et al. (2022), where the misconception is initially shared by 75% to 84% of participants in the laboratory experiment, and by 70 to 78% in the field, depending on the condition. Note that these percentages are also similar to those found in polls conducted in the UK or the USA (see footnote 1).

After the treatment, the share of participants who disagree or totally disagree with the statement increases substantially in all three conditions, up to 42 to 53% depending on the treatment (see Panel B). Note that the percentage in the case of the RV is over 10 percentage points (pp) higher than in the case of the NRT and over 8 pp higher than in the case of the RT. These percentages are substantially higher than those found in Brandts et al. (2022), where the share of the participants who disagree or totally disagree after the treatment ranges from 25% to 32% in the laboratory and from 10% to 29% in the field, depending on the condition.

Panel C shows the change in beliefs and the significance level from a test of difference in means. In both text conditions the percentage agreeing falls substantially, by about 37 pp, a drop of almost 50%. In the RV condition, the drop in the percentage of those who agree is more dramatic, being equal to 45 pp, almost 60%. These are the participants who abandon the misconception. Some of them move towards “don’t know” but most move towards disagreeing. In the NRT condition the share of those disagreeing increases by 29 pp, which is more than twofold the initial share. In the RT condition, the share disagreeing increases slightly more, by 32 pp. The percentage of those disagreeing in the RV condition increases by 38 pp, even more. All these changes are statistically significant.

According to these findings, the on-line intervention with shorter texts appears to be more successful in reducing the prevalence of the misconception than the interventions with the longer texts in Brandts et al. (2022), although one needs to take into account the change of subject pool and the fact that the current experiment was conducted online. More importantly, a visual presentation of the refutation arguments is, on a descriptive level, more effective than a text-only correction, be it the NRT or the RT.

Table 2 shows a number of performance indicators, mainly CRT scores and average time spent in each screen of the experiment. We do not observe significant differences for most of them across the three conditions. The CRT score is measured as the percentage of correct answers to the eight items included in the test. The mean score is around 0.45, in line with the average

CRT score in Brandts et al. (2022) and in Mosleh et al. (2021). On average, participants spend around 13 minutes to complete all screens. This is lower than the expected duration of about 20 minutes, calculated on the basis of the length of the questionnaires, the video duration and the texts’ estimated read time (Table B.2).

Time spent on the treatment screen exhibits significant differences across conditions, as expected, since the estimated duration of the treatments is somewhat different. Participants spend more time on the RT than on the NRT. Average time spent on the RT screen is 2.8 minutes, slightly below the estimated read time (3.4 minutes). Average time on the NRT screen is about equal to the estimated time of 2 minutes. Looking at time per word, however, we find that the RT is read faster than the NRT. Participants spend more time on the video than on the two texts, as average time on the RV screen is 3.26 minutes, which is higher than the video duration (2.42 minutes). We also observe that the percentage of participants who spend less than the estimated time on the treatment screen is substantially lower in the RV than in the text conditions. All this suggests that the RV increases the attention paid to the message, while texts are read more lightly.

Time spent on the comprehension question screen is significantly lower in the RV than in the two text conditions, with no significant difference between the last two. A possible interpretation is that participants focus more on the visual presentation, which allows them to respond faster to the comprehension questions. However, we do not observe large differences across conditions in the percentage of participants who answer both questions correctly. Finally, very few participants (about 5%) show an interest in checking the links to the Andersson-Söderberg paper or to the Stockholm housing agency website in the text-only corrections. Table C.2 in Appendix C shows more statistics on the total time spent in the experiment and on each screen in the three conditions.

## 4.2 Estimation results

The results shown in Tables 3 and 4 address the three research hypotheses formulated in section 2.1.

Table 3 presents the estimation results of the differential impact of the treatments on participants’ beliefs, comparing pairwise and pooling all three treatments. We first estimate equation (1) with and without the set of socio-demographic variables in each case to assess the sensitivity of the results to the observed sample unbalances across conditions discussed above. Since there are no large differences in the estimated treatment effects once we have accounted for socio demographics, we focus on commenting on the results with controls.<sup>12</sup>

Column (2) shows that the RV significantly reduces the misconception relative to the RT, as the positive coefficient indicates a change away from the misconception. The effect size, as measured by the ratio of the estimated coefficient to the standard deviation of the dependent variable indicates

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<sup>12</sup>Table C.3 in Appendix C shows the estimated coefficients for all control variables.

that the video induces a revision in beliefs towards disagreeing with the statement by 0.13 standard deviations. Column (5) shows that the RT has a positive but not significant impact on reducing the prevalence of the misconception relative to the NRT. Since both RT and NRT decrease the prevalence of the misconception by a similar magnitude (Table 1), the additional effect of the RT is of small size and not precisely identified. Column (8) shows that the effect of the RV is larger and highly significant with respect to the NRT. The effect size is of 0.20 standard deviations, larger than the effect with respect to the RT. When pooling all three conditions in column (11), the estimated effects of the RV and the NRT with respect to the RT—the base category—are very close to those in columns (2) and (5). Since results are robust to conducting the pooled and pairwise estimations, we use the latter in the rest of the paper, as sample sizes are sufficiently large. This approach is more flexible than pooling because it allows the coefficients of control variables to vary across pairwise comparisons. Pooling all conditions constrains the coefficients of control variables to be equal and, therefore, any difference in participants’ distribution of characteristics across conditions would be captured by the treatment coefficients.

Columns (3), (6), (9) and (12) show that adding the CRT score to each specification with controls barely changes the treatment estimates. In all pairwise comparisons a higher CRT score is significant and associated with a stronger change away from the misconception, with very little variation across conditions. The estimates range between 0.45 in the RV vs NRT comparison and 0.51 in the RT vs NRT comparison, implying an effect size of 0.34 to 0.40 standard deviations. Note that the CRT score is not significantly correlated with the initial belief in any of the conditions as shown in Table C.4 in Appendix C. Therefore, being more analytical does not predict the initial belief but it predicts the ability to revise it.

Results in Table 3 capture the overall effects of treatments on changing beliefs. These overall effects, however, may conceal differences across the distribution of initial beliefs. We thus estimate equation (1) separately for the groups of participants who initially agree, don’t know and disagree with the statement.<sup>13</sup> Table 4 contains the results for the specifications with all the controls. This table also shows the results from the specifications that add the CRT score and its interaction with the treatment.

In Panel A we compare the RV to the RT. The RV has a positive and significant effect on abandoning the misconception of those participants who initially agree with it, with a coefficient of 0.26 and an effect size of 0.21 standard deviations. The effect is positive although not significant for the other two initial belief categories. Adding the CRT does not alter these patterns. The CRT score has a positive effect on reducing the misconception (equivalent to 0.34 standard deviations) but it is only significant for those who initially agree. Adding an interaction term between the RV and the CRT score does not change previous results, as shown by the estimated average marginal effect (AME), which is 0.26 in both regressions. That is, the effect of the RV does not vary with

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<sup>13</sup>We add up *agree* and *totally agree*; and *disagree* and *totally disagree*.

CRT scores.

In sum, the RV improves on the RT basically through the effect on those who initially agree with the misconception. Note that participants who initially disagree or those who are uncertain do not significantly react to the RV. Therefore, the RV induces a reduction of the misconception by shifting the whole distribution of beliefs towards disagreeing.

In Panel B we compare the RT to the NRT. We do not find significant differential effects of the RT along the distribution of initial beliefs. As in Panel A, higher CRT scores induce a higher abandonment of the misconception, with the effect being slightly stronger (0.40 standard deviations). The interaction term between the RT and the CRT score is not significant, as above. In sum, higher CRT scores tend to reduce the misconception but, in contrast to Panel A, treatment effects are not significant. These results are qualitatively in line with those obtained in the laboratory in Brandts et al. (2022).

Panel C in Table 4 shows the comparison between the RV and the NRT. Here, as in Panel A, the RV has a positive effect on revising the misconception of those who initially hold it. The effect size is however stronger and equal to 0.28 standard deviations. The CRT score also has a positive impact. The interaction term between the CRT score and the treatment is not significant.

Hence, our results indicate that the ranking in terms of effectiveness in dispelling the misconception is the RV, followed by the RT and, last, the NRT.<sup>14</sup> They also show that the importance of the disposition to reflective thinking in revising the belief slightly decreases when information is presented in video instead of in text.

Our empirical findings provide the following evidence regarding the three research hypotheses as follows:

Result 1. *“The RV has a significantly higher impact on abandoning the misconception than the RT, and even higher impact relative to the NRT. In both cases the effect of the RV is driven by the impact on participants who initially hold the misconception.”*

Our results support H1. Visual communication is more effective in dispelling the misconception than refuting it through a written text, even if the text is refutational.

Result 2. *“The RT is not significantly more effective than the NRT in dispelling the misconception.”*

Our estimates do not support H2. Although the effect of a written RT is positive, it is small, and its differential impact with respect to the NRT is not precisely estimated. The refutational elements of the RT do not seem to stand out among the other sentences. This result concurs with Brandts et al. (2022). Note, however, that in that study the proportion of participants who hold the misconception after the intervention is of about 54 to 63%; while here this percentage is

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<sup>14</sup>The pooled estimation conditional on initial beliefs yields the same results.

smaller, 41%. The drop is now of 37 pp, almost double than in the former study. This suggests that short texts are more effective than long texts.

Result 3. *“A higher propensity to reflective thinking significantly induces a change away from the misconception in all treatments for participants who initially hold it.”*

Our findings support H3, especially for the key group of interest, i.e., participants who initially have the misconception. We do not find evidence that the treatment effect varies with the CRT score.

We explore whether the mechanism that makes the RV more effective than written information is related to a higher ability of the RV to capture and keep the viewer’s attention. As described above, in the case of the NRT condition 53% of participants spend less time than expected on the text screen; in the RT condition, 62% are below expected time. In the RV condition, in contrast, only 24% spend less time than the whole video duration. This suggests that the video attracts and keeps the attention of more participants than the text interventions. To analyze the role of attention, we define two alternative measures. One is the ratio between the time spent on the treatment screen by an individual and the expected time to be spent on that screen. This is 2:42 minutes in the case of the RV, and 3:40 minutes in the RT, and 2:00 minutes in the NRT (see section 2.2). The second measure is a dummy variable equal to one if time spent on the treatment screen is below the expected time and zero otherwise.

We separately add these two measures to the specification with the CRT and the controls both for the full sample and conditional on initial beliefs. Table 5 shows that the estimated CRT and treatment effects are robust to the attention measure used. Relative time has always a positive effect on revising beliefs, and the indicator for time below the expected time shows a congruent negative sign. Estimated treatment effects fall somewhat compared to those in Tables 3 and 4, as does the effect of the CRT. This suggests that part of the positive effect of the video found above can be attributed to the video per se prompting higher attention compared to plain text. In other words, if participants paid as much attention to the text as they do to the video, the impact of the two formats would likely be similar. When comparing the RV with the NRT, the impact of attention is significant and positive, and so does the treatment effect. Overall, these results suggest that integrating visual elements increases attention and thus comprehension of the arguments and evidence presented in the correction, boosting the refutational elements.

### 4.3 Additional results

We explore whether treatment effects vary across several socio–demographic characteristics. We focus on the subsample of participants who initially hold the misconception (agree with the statement) because this is where the relevant changes take place as discussed above.

We first split the sample of participants according to whether they are tenants or owners. Tenants and owners might differ in their reaction to a treatment, since they would be potentially affected in opposite directions by rent regulation. Perhaps current tenants, whose interest is to pay low rents, stick to their initial belief more than owners, who may be more receptive to the intervention, given that they may wish to rent out at some point. Panel A in Table 6 shows, however, that the treatments do not significantly differ for tenants and owners. Note that sample size is small in the case of tenants, which reduces the precision of the estimates. The only exception is for the RV vs NRT comparison, where the positive impact of the RV on owners' revision is significant. This is in line with owners being more receptive to the intervention than tenants, who are not significantly affected by it.

Men and women often differ in their attitudes or behavior. Indeed, in our data gender is significantly correlated with the initial opinion (see Table C.4 in Appendix C): women are more likely to agree with the statement. Results in Panel B, Table 6 show some differences in the effect of treatment on beliefs across gender but there is not clear pattern. For the RV vs RT comparison, RV is significant for men but not for women and for the RT vs NRT comparison, RT is significant for women but not for men. For the RV vs NRT comparison, both men and women significantly revise their beliefs but the video has a stronger effect on women. Remarkably, the CRT scores have a significantly positive effect only for men.

Education is not significantly correlated with the initial belief (see Table C.4 in Appendix C) but more educated individuals may react differently to the treatments than less educated ones. To study this we split the sample into low and highly educated participants. Highly educated includes those who report tertiary education as their maximum schooling level as well as participants who report being currently enrolled in tertiary education. Results in Panel C of Table 6 show that the video is more effective for the highly than for the low educated participants, relative to both the RT and NRT. When comparing the two text conditions the effects are not significant for any education level. Therefore, results suggest that participants with high education are more likely to abandon the misconception after watching the video than participants with low education.

## 5 Conclusions

The accumulation of research about the causes and effects of socio-economic phenomena has contributed to building a strong consensus among researchers on some issues. A case in point are the effects of rent controls on rental housing availability. Yet, this consensus has not reached a majority of citizens, who endorse and demand this policy in the hope that it will have positive effects on access to housing. There may be several barriers to effective communication between researchers and the public in all fields of knowledge, and some may be stronger in the case of social sciences. Some stem from the inherent difficulty involved in explaining concepts, methods

and results in a simple way without losing accuracy; others may arise from different biases and values that arise when people process information.

The concern about the serious consequences that ignoring solid knowledge may have, has led to the emergence of a body of research on how to communicate science to policymakers and the public in several fields. This concern is further justified by the rise of mis-information in the media and social networks.

In this paper we have investigated the effectiveness of specific communication formats in confronting the widespread belief that rent control increases affordable housing. The main takeaway from this study is that communicating to the general public evidence about the effects of rent control in a visual refutational format goes a long way in dispelling this misconception. A refutational video is more effective than communicating the same refutational message in text-only format, and even more effective than a message without the refutational correction. Participants who initially hold the misconception, and participants with higher CRT scores, revise their misconception the most.

The short video we design contributes to closing the gap between scientific consensus and public opinion substantially. Indeed, while 77% of participants initially hold the misconception, after the refutational video intervention this percentage drops to 32%, that is, by 45 pp. This is an additional 12 pp compared to the effect of texts that convey the same information but in words only. Part of the positive treatment effect derives from the higher attention that the video attracts. We interpret that visual communication, by reducing cognitive effort, makes economic arguments easier to grasp. Our results are in line with previous literature that finds that visual tools are more effective than text to dispel misconceptions about other topics (Mayer and Moreno, 2003; Goldberg et al., 2019; Young et al., 2018; Reynolds et al., 2018).

Citizens are currently highly exposed to visual communication in the media; there is also a lot of competition for their attention. We therefore believe that it is important that the format that uses images is the most successful in our case. The main conclusion is that researchers should rely more on visual refutational elements to communicate research findings to the public. A practical implication is, for instance, that academic associations design and disseminate refutational videos addressing common misconceptions about socio-economic issues.

Yet, in our experiment 32% of participants still hold the misconception after the refutational video intervention. Although obviously one cannot expect to persuade everybody, we think that this is still a high percentage, given the high consensus among researchers. The question is, thus, why so many participants stick to the misconception. We see several possibilities that remain to be explored in future research. The first pertains to the characteristics of our refutational video. In designing it we have been quite restricted, since we needed to make it very parallel to the refutational text to properly identify the effect of the pure visual element. A richer, less restricted video could be more effective, closing the gap further.

Second, our communication strategy may be improved by adding some other important aspects. The standard refutation correction is based on attempting to make people approach the issue at hand analytically. However, one possible reason that may be behind the resistance to move away from the misconception is lack of trust of lay people in economic experts or in social science more broadly (Müller and Gsottbauer, 2021). Trust in science has been found to play a role in complying with Covid-19 public health recommendations (Bicchieri et al., 2021). A refutational correction could take this into account. A second possibility is that corrections involving topics sensitive to political views or worldviews are perceived as a threat to individuals' social identity. This kind of misconceptions may be harder to debunk, and may require the refutation approach to account for this explicitly. Other issues that warrant further research are for how long changes in beliefs persist, whether peer-to-peer communication would affect them (Hüning et al., 2021), and whether changes in beliefs translate into behavior such as voting decisions.

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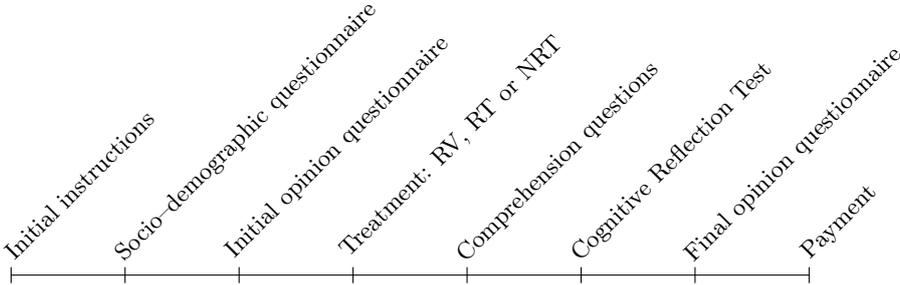
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# Figures

Figure 1: Experiment procedure



Note: RV: Refutational video. RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. RV condition was conducted on July 3, 2021. RT and NRT conditions were conducted on July 4, 2020. Each condition has 350 participants.

## Tables

Table 1: Prevalence of the misconception and change of beliefs

| A. Initial beliefs (%)                                |               |       |          |                  |             |           |              |     |
|---|---------------|-------|----------|------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-----|
|   | Totally agree | Agree | Disagree | Totally disagree | Do not know | Sum agree | Sum disagree | N   |
| NRT condition   | 30.5          | 47.3  | 10.0     | 3.1              | 9.1         | 77.8      | 13.1         | 351 |
| RT condition  | 33.6          | 45.3  | 8.6      | 4.0              | 8.6         | 78.9      | 12.5         | 351 |
| RV condition  | 29.01         | 48.34 | 10.22    | 4.7              | 7.73        | 77.4      | 14.9         | 362 |
| B. Final beliefs (%)                                  |               |       |          |                  |             |           |              |     |
|   | Totally agree | Agree | Disagree | Totally disagree | Do not know | Sum agree | Sum disagree | N   |
| NRT condition   | 8.0           | 32.8  | 34.2     | 8.3              | 16.8        | 40.7      | 42.5         | 351 |
| RT condition  | 8.3           | 32.8  | 35.6     | 8.8              | 14.5        | 41.0      | 44.4         | 351 |
| RV condition  | 8.01          | 24.31 | 35.64    | 17.4             | 14.64       | 32.3      | 53.0         | 362 |
| C. Change in beliefs (percentage points) <sup>†</sup> |               |       |          |                  |             |           |              |     |
|   |               |       |          |                  | Do not know | Sum agree | Sum disagree | N   |
| NRT condition   |               |       |          |                  | 7.7***      | -37.0***  | 29.4***      | 351 |
| RT condition  |               |       |          |                  | 6.0**       | -37.9***  | 31.9***      | 351 |
| RV condition  |               |       |          |                  | 6.9***      | -45.0***  | 38.1***      | 362 |

NRT: Non-refutational text. RT: Refutational text. RV: Refutational video. <sup>†</sup>Difference between percentage of participants answering a given level of agreement in the corresponding final and initial questionnaires. Significance levels of t-tests of the difference in means between final and initial questionnaires: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 2: Participants' performance indicators

|   | NRT            | RT             | RV             | Difference<br>(NRT – RT) | Difference<br>(RT – RV) | Difference<br>(NRT – RV) |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Average CRT score<br>(standard deviation) | 0.45<br>(0.26) | 0.43<br>(0.26) | 0.45<br>(0.29) | 0.02                     | -0.02                   | -0.00                    |
| <i>Average time (minutes) spent in:</i>   |                |                |                |                          |                         |                          |
| All screens                               | 13.51          | 12.76          | 13.40          | 0.76                     | -0.64                   | 0.12                     |
| Instructions screen                       | 0.72           | 0.61           | 0.69           | 0.10                     | -0.08                   | 0.03                     |
| Sociodemographic quest. screen            | 1.67           | 1.47           | 1.50           | 0.19*                    | -0.03                   | 0.16                     |
| Initial opinion quest. screen             | 1.67           | 1.45           | 1.33           | 0.22*                    | 0.12                    | 0.35***                  |
| Treatment screen                          | 2.12           | 2.80           | 3.26           | -0.69***                 | -0.45**                 | -1.14***                 |
| Text screen (per word)                    | 0.33           | 0.25           | –              | 0.08***                  | –                       | –                        |
| Comprehension questions screen            | 1.01           | 0.93           | 0.72           | 0.07                     | 0.21**                  | 0.28***                  |
| CRT screen                                | 5.20           | 4.40           | 4.82           | 0.80**                   | -0.42                   | 0.38                     |
| Final opinion quest. screen               | 1.14           | 1.09           | 1.08           | 0.05                     | 0.01                    | 0.06                     |
| Closing screen                            | 0.14           | 0.17           | 0.17           | -0.03                    | -0.00                   | 0.06                     |
| <i>Below estimated treatment time:</i>    |                |                |                |                          |                         |                          |
| % participants <sup>†</sup>               | 52.71          | 62.11          | 24.31          |                          |                         |                          |
| <i>Comprehension questions:</i>           |                |                |                |                          |                         |                          |
| Question 1 correct                        | 0.91           | 0.87           | 0.88           | 0.03                     | -0.00                   | 0.03                     |
| Question 2 correct                        | 0.89           | 0.85           | 0.86           | 0.04                     | -0.00                   | 0.04                     |
| Both questions correct                    | 0.86           | 0.81           | 0.83           | 0.05*                    | -0.02                   | 0.03                     |
| <i>Clicking on link to:</i>               |                |                |                |                          |                         |                          |
| Andersson-Söderberg paper                 | 0.06           | 0.04           | –              | 0.02                     | –                       | –                        |
| Stockholm housing agency                  | 0.05           | 0.03           | –              | 0.02                     | –                       | –                        |
| N   | 351            | 351            | 362            |                          |                         |                          |

NRT: Non-refutational text. RT: Refutational text. RV: Refutational video. CRT: Cognitive Reflection Test. CRT takes values between 0 and 1; it is computed as the percentage of correct answers to the eight questions included in the test. Significance levels of t-tests of the difference in means: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . <sup>†</sup>% of participants spending less than the estimated time in the treatment screen: less than 2 minutes in the NRT and 3.4 minutes in the RT (as shown in Table B.2); less than 2.42 minutes in the RV.

Table 3: Estimated treatment effects on revising the misconception

|           | RV vs. RT      |                 |                  | RT vs. NRT     |                |                   | RV vs. NRT       |                   |                   | Pooled <sup>†</sup> |                 |                   |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|           | (1)            | (2)             | (3)              | (4)            | (5)            | (6)               | (7)              | (8)               | (9)               | (10)                | (11)            | (12)              |
| RV        | 0.17<br>(0.10) | 0.18*<br>(0.11) | 0.17<br>(0.11)   | –              | –              | –                 | 0.23**<br>(0.10) | 0.26***<br>(0.10) | 0.26***<br>(0.10) | 0.17<br>(0.10)      | 0.19*<br>(0.10) | 0.18*<br>(0.10)   |
| RT        | –              | –               | –                | 0.06<br>(0.10) | 0.07<br>(0.10) | 0.08<br>(0.10)    | –                | –                 | –                 | –                   | –               | –                 |
| NRT       | –              | –               | –                | –              | –              | –                 | –                | –                 | –                 | -0.06<br>(0.10)     | -0.07<br>(0.10) | -0.08<br>(0.10)   |
| CRT score | –              | –               | 0.48**<br>(0.20) | –              | –              | 0.51***<br>(0.20) | –                | –                 | 0.45**<br>(0.19)  | –                   | –               | 0.51***<br>(0.16) |
| Controls  | No             | Yes             | Yes              | No             | Yes            | Yes               | No               | Yes               | Yes               | No                  | Yes             | Yes               |
| N         | 713            | 713             | 713              | 702            | 702            | 702               | 713              | 713               | 713               | 1064                | 1064            | 1064              |
| $R^2$     | 0.00           | 0.07            | 0.08             | 0.00           | 0.06           | 0.07              | 0.01             | 0.05              | 0.06              | 0.01                | 0.05            | 0.06              |

Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). NRT: Non-refutational text. RT: Refutational text. RV: Refutational video. Pooled<sup>†</sup>: pooled sample with all three conditions. Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . See the list of control variables in Table C.3 in Appendix C.

Table 4: Estimated treatment effects on revising the misconception, conditional on initial belief

| Panel A. RV vs. RT  |         |         |         |             |        |        |          |        |         |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|---------|
|                     | Agree   |         |         | Do not know |        |        | Disagree |        |         |
| RV                  | 0.26**  | 0.26**  | 0.41*   | 0.35        | 0.34   | 0.91*  | 0.01     | 0.05   | -0.18   |
|                     | (0.11)  | (0.11)  | (0.21)  | (0.28)      | (0.28) | (0.45) | (0.28)   | (0.28) | (0.52)  |
| CRT                 |         | 0.42**  | 0.60*   |             | 0.25   | 1.42   |          | 0.65   | 0.37    |
|                     |         | (0.21)  | (0.31)  |             | (0.56) | (0.86) |          | (0.50) | (0.74)  |
| RV × CRT            |         |         | -0.34   |             |        | -1.65* |          |        | 0.48    |
|                     |         |         | (0.41)  |             |        | (0.94) |          |        | (1.01)  |
| <i>AME</i>          |         |         | 0.26**  |             |        | 0.32   |          |        | 0.05    |
|                     |         |         | (0.11)  |             |        | (0.27) |          |        | (0.28)  |
| N                   | 557     | 557     | 557     | 58          | 58     | 58     | 98       | 98     | 98      |
| $R^2$               | 0.09    | 0.09    | 0.10    | 0.59        | 0.59   | 0.62   | 0.17     | 0.19   | 0.19    |
| Panel B. RT vs. NRT |         |         |         |             |        |        |          |        |         |
|                     | Agree   |         |         | Do not know |        |        | Disagree |        |         |
| RT                  | 0.11    | 0.11    | 0.11    | -0.05       | -0.08  | -0.95* | -0.19    | -0.20  | 0.10    |
|                     | (0.10)  | (0.10)  | (0.20)  | (0.28)      | (0.27) | (0.55) | (0.22)   | (0.23) | (0.52)  |
| CRT                 |         | 0.46**  | 0.46*   |             | 0.95   | 0.05   |          | 0.41   | 0.73    |
|                     |         | (0.21)  | (0.28)  |             | (0.78) | (1.04) |          | (0.44) | (0.51)  |
| RT × CRT            |         |         | -0.00   |             |        | 2.59   |          |        | -0.65   |
|                     |         |         | (0.41)  |             |        | (1.54) |          |        | (1.08)  |
| <i>AME</i>          |         |         | 0.11    |             |        | -0.04  |          |        | -0.20   |
|                     |         |         | (0.10)  |             |        | (0.26) |          |        | (0.22)  |
| N                   | 550     | 550     | 550     | 62          | 62     | 62     | 90       | 90     | 90      |
| $R^2$               | 0.03    | 0.04    | 0.04    | 0.45        | 0.47   | 0.52   | 0.26     | 0.27   | 0.27    |
| Panel C. RV vs. NRT |         |         |         |             |        |        |          |        |         |
|                     | Agree   |         |         | Do not know |        |        | Disagree |        |         |
| RV                  | 0.34*** | 0.33*** | 0.43**  | 0.44        | 0.45   | 0.92   | -0.35*   | -0.33  | 0.15    |
|                     | (0.10)  | (0.10)  | (0.20)  | (0.33)      | (0.34) | (0.57) | (0.21)   | (0.20) | (0.42)  |
| CRT                 |         | 0.33*   | 0.44    |             | 0.54   | 1.30   |          | 0.77** | 1.31*** |
|                     |         | (0.20)  | (0.28)  |             | (0.63) | (1.02) |          | (0.37) | (0.48)  |
| RV × CRT            |         |         | -0.20   |             |        | -1.15  |          |        | -1.01   |
|                     |         |         | (0.38)  |             |        | (1.26) |          |        | (0.80)  |
| <i>AME</i>          |         |         | 0.33*** |             |        | 0.48   |          |        | -0.32   |
|                     |         |         | (0.10)  |             |        | (0.32) |          |        | (0.20)  |
| N                   | 553     | 553     | 553     | 60          | 60     | 60     | 100      | 100    | 100     |
| $R^2$               | 0.09    | 0.10    | 0.10    | 0.43        | 0.44   | 0.46   | 0.23     | 0.26   | 0.27    |

Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. RV: Refutational video. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All regressions include the same control variables as in Table 3. AME: Average marginal effect of the treatment.

Table 5: Estimated treatment effects adding attention measures

| A. RV vs RT         |               |          |         |          |            |        |          |         |
|---------------------|---------------|----------|---------|----------|------------|--------|----------|---------|
|                     | Unconditional |          | Agree   |          | Don't know |        | Disagree |         |
| RV                  | 0.01          | -0.06    | 0.13    | 0.03     | 0.24       | 0.22   | -0.10    | -0.21   |
|                     | (0.11)        | (0.11)   | (0.11)  | (0.11)   | (0.27)     | (0.27) | (0.30)   | (0.37)  |
| CRT                 | 0.31          | 0.37*    | 0.29    | 0.30     | 0.26       | 0.24   | 0.73     | 0.80    |
|                     | (0.20)        | (0.20)   | (0.21)  | (0.21)   | (0.56)     | (0.59) | (0.48)   | (0.49)  |
| Relative time       | 0.30***       | –        | 0.22*** | –        | 0.51**     | –      | 0.32     | –       |
|                     | (0.06)        |          | (0.06)  |          | (0.22)     |        | (0.22)   |         |
| Below expected time | –             | -0.59*** | –       | -0.54*** | –          | -0.55  | –        | -0.53   |
|                     |               | (0.12)   |         | (0.12)   |            | (0.35) |          | (0.41)  |
| N                   | 713           | 713      | 557     | 557      | 58         | 58     | 98       | 98      |
| $R^2$               | 0.11          | 0.11     | 0.12    | 0.13     | 0.65       | 0.63   | 0.22     | 0.22    |
| B. RT vs NRT        |               |          |         |          |            |        |          |         |
|                     | Unconditional |          | Agree   |          | Don't know |        | Disagree |         |
| RT                  | 0.13          | 0.11     | 0.15    | 0.14     | -0.03      | -0.06  | -0.10    | -0.14   |
|                     | (0.09)        | (0.09)   | (0.10)  | (0.10)   | (0.26)     | (0.27) | (0.21)   | (0.22)  |
| CRT                 | 0.35*         | 0.41**   | 0.34*   | 0.36*    | 0.66       | 0.88   | 0.23     | 0.34    |
|                     | (0.20)        | (0.20)   | (0.21)  | (0.21)   | (0.80)     | (0.77) | (0.44)   | (0.43)  |
| Relative time       | 0.28***       | –        | 0.21*** | –        | 0.35       | –      | 0.37**   | –       |
|                     | (0.06)        |          | (0.06)  |          | (0.22)     |        | (0.16)   |         |
| Below expected time | –             | -0.46*** | –       | -0.42*** | –          | -0.31  | –        | -0.42** |
|                     |               | (0.10)   |         | (0.11)   |            | (0.30) |          | (0.20)  |
| N                   | 702           | 702      | 550     | 550      | 62         | 62     | 90       | 90      |
| $R^2$               | 0.10          | 0.10     | 0.07    | 0.07     | 0.51       | 0.49   | 0.32     | 0.30    |
| C. RV vs NRT        |               |          |         |          |            |        |          |         |
|                     | Unconditional |          | Agree   |          | Don't know |        | Disagree |         |
| RV                  | 0.19*         | 0.12     | 0.29*** | 0.21**   | 0.40       | 0.41   | -0.36*   | -0.45*  |
|                     | (0.10)        | (0.10)   | (0.10)  | (0.11)   | (0.34)     | (0.36) | (0.20)   | (0.24)  |
| CRT                 | 0.34*         | 0.36*    | 0.26    | 0.24     | 0.58       | 0.54   | 0.71*    | 0.72*   |
|                     | (0.19)        | (0.19)   | (0.20)  | (0.20)   | (0.62)     | (0.64) | (0.37)   | (0.38)  |
| Relative time       | 0.20***       | –        | 0.13*** | –        | 0.27       | –      | 0.21     | –       |
|                     | (0.05)        |          | (0.05)  |          | (0.27)     |        | (0.16)   |         |
| Below expected time | –             | -0.44*** | –       | -0.39*** | –          | -0.11  | –        | -0.38   |
|                     |               | (0.11)   |         | (0.11)   |            | (0.34) |          | (0.32)  |
| N                   | 713           | 713      | 553     | 553      | 60         | 60     | 100      | 100     |
| $R^2$               | 0.08          | 0.08     | 0.11    | 0.12     | 0.46       | 0.44   | 0.28     | 0.28    |

Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. RV: Refutational video. Relative time: ratio between the time spent on the treatment screen and the expected time to be spent on that screen. Below expected time: dummy variable equal to 1 if time spent on the treatment screen is below the expected time and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All regressions include the same control variables as in Table 3.

Table 6: Heterogeneous effects conditional on initially agreeing with rent controls

| A. Housing ownership status |                |                  |                  |                   |                   |                   |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                             | RV vs. RT      |                  | RT vs. NRT       |                   | RV vs. NRT        |                   |
|                             | Tenant         | Owner            | Tenant           | Owner             | Tenant            | Owner             |
| RV                          | 0.36<br>(0.29) | 0.20<br>(0.13)   | –                | –                 | 0.31<br>(0.29)    | 0.35***<br>(0.12) |
| RT                          | –              | –                | 0.07<br>(0.28)   | 0.15<br>(0.12)    | –                 | –                 |
| CRT                         | 0.07<br>(0.51) | 0.56**<br>(0.26) | 0.48<br>(0.52)   | 0.28<br>(0.24)    | 0.64<br>(0.54)    | 0.27<br>(0.25)    |
| N                           | 103            | 384              | 103              | 393               | 106               | 373               |
| $R^2$                       | 0.32           | 0.11             | 0.25             | 0.05              | 0.27              | 0.11              |
| B. Gender                   |                |                  |                  |                   |                   |                   |
|                             | RV vs. RT      |                  | RT vs. NRT       |                   | RV vs. NRT        |                   |
|                             | Women          | Men              | Women            | Men               | Women             | Men               |
| RV                          | 0.24<br>(0.15) | 0.30*<br>(0.15)  | –                | –                 | 0.42***<br>(0.15) | 0.30**<br>(0.15)  |
| RT                          | –              | –                | 0.25*<br>(0.14)  | 0.01<br>(0.15)    | –                 | –                 |
| CRT                         | 0.07<br>(0.31) | 0.72**<br>(0.30) | -0.02<br>(0.32)  | 0.78***<br>(0.27) | -0.18<br>(0.30)   | 0.62**<br>(0.28)  |
| N                           | 293            | 264              | 288              | 262               | 289               | 264               |
| $R^2$                       | 0.11           | 0.15             | 0.06             | 0.10              | 0.12              | 0.15              |
| C. Education                |                |                  |                  |                   |                   |                   |
|                             | RV vs. RT      |                  | RT vs. NRT       |                   | RV vs. NRT        |                   |
|                             | Low            | High             | Low              | High              | Low               | High              |
| RV                          | 0.14<br>(0.24) | 0.30**<br>(0.12) | –                | –                 | 0.10<br>(0.22)    | 0.47***<br>(0.12) |
| RT                          | –              | –                | 0.03<br>(0.18)   | 0.16<br>(0.12)    | –                 | –                 |
| CRT                         | 0.78<br>(0.48) | 0.33<br>(0.23)   | 0.86**<br>(0.41) | 0.36<br>(0.24)    | 0.82<br>(0.54)    | 0.18<br>(0.22)    |
| N                           | 161            | 396              | 143              | 407               | 128               | 425               |
| $R^2$                       | 0.11           | 0.14             | 0.28             | 0.07              | 0.20              | 0.09              |

Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. RV: Refutational video. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . All regressions include the same control variables as in Table 3.

# Appendices

## A The statements

- *Rent control:*

Establishing rent controls, such that rents did not exceed a certain amount of money, would increase the number of people who have access to housing facilities.

- *Online platforms for vacation rentals:*

Online platforms for renting vacation apartments, like Airbnb or Wimdu, are one of the main cause of the rising rents.

- *Housing investment funds:*

Housing investment funds own most of the housing for rent.

- *Affordable housing:*

Government should guarantee that everybody can buy a house.

- *Mistrust statistics:*

Economic statistics do not reflect, in general, the true economic situation.

- *Trustworthy information source:*

Of the following options, indicate your most trustworthy source for social and economic information: a) participants in radio and tv debate shows; b) politicians; c) civil servants; d) social scientists who work at universities; e) journalists.

- *Disagreement among scientists:*

Disagreement among scientists on some topics shows that science reflects more scientists' opinion than objective facts.

- *Social sciences knowledge:*

Scientific knowledge from social sciences is the best starting point for the elaboration of rules and social regulations.

- *Equal opportunities:*

National and regional governments in Spain should guarantee equal opportunities for children from low-income families and children from high-income families

Table A.1: Statements included in the opinion questionnaires

|                                       | Before intervention | After intervention |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Housing:</i>                       |                     |                    |
| Rent control                          | Yes                 | Yes                |
| Online platforms for vacation rentals | Yes                 | Yes                |
| Housing investment funds              | Yes                 | No                 |
| Affordable housing                    | No                  | Yes                |
| <i>Attitudes towards science:</i>     |                     |                    |
| Mistrust statistics                   | Yes                 | No                 |
| Trustworthy information source        | Yes                 | No                 |
| Disagreement among scientists         | No                  | Yes                |
| Social sciences knowledge             | No                  | Yes                |
| <i>Fairness</i>                       |                     |                    |
| Equal opportunities                   | Yes                 | Yes                |

## B The video and the texts

### B.1 The refutational text

Text available from the authors upon request

### B.2 The refutational video

Video available from the authors upon request

### B.3 The non-refutational (expository) text

Text available from the authors upon request

### B.4 Text readability and statistics

Table B.1: Readability statistics (for the texts in Spanish)

| Readability indexes                     | Non-refutational text |                      | Refutational text |                      |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
|   | Value                 | Easiness             | Value             | Easiness             |
| Fernández Huerta                        | 60.4                  | Standard (7th grade) | 62.67             | Standard (7th grade) |
| Gutiérrez de Polini (understandability) | 38.78                 | Standard             | 39.57             | Standard             |
| Szigriszt-Pazos                         | 55.72                 | Standard             | 58.21             | Standard             |
| INFLESZ-Barrio                          | 55.72                 | Standard             | 58.21             | Standard             |
| Readability $\mu$                       | 52.5                  | Fairly difficult     | 50.57             | Difficult            |

Fernandez Huerta index for Spanish is equivalent to the Flesch readability formula for English. Szigriszt-Pazos index is an adaptation to the Spanish of the Flesch formula for English. INFLESZ Barrio index adapts the Szigriszt-Pazos index to the current average Spanish reader.

Table B.2: Text statistics (for the texts in Spanish)

|                            | Non-refutational text | Refutational text |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Estimated read time        | 2 minutes             | 3.4 minutes       |
| No. of characters          | 2420                  | 4268              |
| No. of letters             | 1971                  | 3484              |
| No. of syllables           | 821                   | 1447              |
| No. of words               | 392                   | 671               |
| No. of sentences           | 18                    | 46                |
| No. of paragraphs          | 8                     | 11                |
| Average letters per word   | 5.03                  | 5.19              |
| Average syllables per word | 2.09                  | 2.16              |
| Average words per sentence | 20.63                 | 14.28             |

## B.5 Comprehension questions

- Question 1 (correct answer is C):

The text/video exposes that:

- A. Rents in Spain have increased up to the price ceiling.
  - B. If the Government or the City council establishes a rent capping, many people will have easier access to housing.
  - C. Establishing a rent capping may create problems and not achieve its objective of facilitating access to housing.
- Question 2 (correct answer is B):

The text/video suggests that:

- A. Rental vacation apartments have mostly contributed to the increase in rents in certain areas.
- B. Regulating rents through a price ceiling may lead to different forms of corruption.
- C. Setting a rent capping will guarantee that all low-income people may access to housing.

## C Additional results

Table C.1: Characteristics of participants in each condition

|                               | NRT              | RT               | RV               | Difference<br>(NRT – RT) | Difference<br>(RT – RV) | Difference<br>(NRT – RV) |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Female                        | 0.50             | 0.50             | 0.48             | 0.00                     | 0.02                    | 0.02                     |
| Non-Spanish                   | 0.06             | 0.05             | 0.08             | 0.01                     | -0.03                   | -0.01                    |
| Age<br>(st. dev.)             | 30.19<br>(12.76) | 33.22<br>(14.28) | 30.99<br>(11.51) | -3.03***                 | 2.22**                  | -0.80                    |
| <i>Education level:</i>       |                  |                  |                  |                          |                         |                          |
| Primary or less               | 0.03             | 0.07             | 0.01             | -0.04**                  | 0.05***                 | 0.02*                    |
| Compulsory                    | 0.09             | 0.11             | 0.12             | -0.01                    | -0.01                   | -0.02                    |
| Upper secondary               | 0.44             | 0.38             | 0.37             | 0.06*                    | 0.01                    | 0.07*                    |
| Tertiary                      | 0.44             | 0.45             | 0.50             | -0.01                    | -0.05                   | -0.06                    |
| Currently enrolled in TEd.    | 0.51             | 0.39             | 0.41             | 0.12***                  | -0.02                   | 0.10***                  |
| <i>Labor status:</i>          |                  |                  |                  |                          |                         |                          |
| Employed                      | 0.38             | 0.46             | 0.50             | -0.08**                  | -0.04                   | -0.12***                 |
| Unemployed                    | 0.13             | 0.13             | 0.12             | 0.01                     | 0.00                    | 0.01                     |
| Not in labor force            | 0.46             | 0.37             | 0.35             | 0.09**                   | 0.02                    | 0.11***                  |
| Furlough                      | 0.03             | 0.04             | 0.01             | -0.02                    | 0.04***                 | 0.02**                   |
| <i>Province:</i>              |                  |                  |                  |                          |                         |                          |
| Alicante                      | 0.07             | 0.05             | 0.06             | 0.02                     | -0.01                   | 0.01                     |
| Barcelona                     | 0.03             | 0.05             | 0.06             | -0.02                    | -0.01                   | -0.02                    |
| Madrid                        | 0.08             | 0.09             | 0.16             | -0.01                    | -0.06**                 | -0.08***                 |
| Valencia                      | 0.59             | 0.50             | 0.42             | 0.09**                   | 0.08**                  | 0.17***                  |
| Other                         | 0.23             | 0.30             | 0.31             | -0.07**                  | -0.00                   | -0.08**                  |
| <i>Home ownership:</i>        |                  |                  |                  |                          |                         |                          |
| Owner                         | 0.38             | 0.40             | 0.38             | -0.02                    | 0.01                    | -0.00                    |
| Mortgage                      | 0.30             | 0.33             | 0.26             | -0.02                    | 0.07**                  | 0.05                     |
| Tenant                        | 0.20             | 0.19             | 0.18             | 0.01                     | 0.01                    | 0.02                     |
| Other                         | 0.12             | 0.09             | 0.18             | 0.03                     | -0.09***                | -0.06**                  |
| <i>Household composition:</i> |                  |                  |                  |                          |                         |                          |
| Single                        | 0.11             | 0.13             | 0.14             | -0.01                    | -0.01                   | -0.02                    |
| Single parent                 | 0.21             | 0.22             | 0.17             | -0.01                    | 0.05                    | 0.04                     |
| Childless couple              | 0.10             | 0.09             | 0.13             | 0.01                     | -0.04*                  | -0.03                    |
| Couple with children          | 0.45             | 0.48             | 0.37             | -0.03                    | 0.11***                 | 0.08**                   |
| Other                         | 0.13             | 0.09             | 0.19             | 0.04                     | -0.10***                | -0.07**                  |
| <i>Town size:</i>             |                  |                  |                  |                          |                         |                          |
| Small                         | 0.13             | 0.13             | 0.14             | 0.00                     | -0.01                   | -0.00                    |
| Medium                        | 0.42             | 0.47             | 0.40             | -0.05                    | 0.07*                   | 0.02                     |
| Large                         | 0.45             | 0.40             | 0.47             | 0.04                     | -0.06*                  | -0.02                    |
| Observations                  | 351              | 351              | 362              |                          |                         |                          |

RV: Refutational video. RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. TEd.: Tertiary education.

Significance levels of t-tests of the difference in means: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Table C.2: Statistics of time spent in each screen in minutes

| A. Non-refutation text condition (N=351) |       |           |      |       |
|--|-------|-----------|------|-------|
|  | Mean  | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max.  |
| All screens                              | 13.51 | 8.17      | 1.13 | 44.78 |
| Instructions screen                      | 0.72  | 1.55      | 0.02 | 23.83 |
| Sociodemographic quest. screen           | 1.67  | 1.54      | 0.27 | 17.47 |
| Initial opinion quest. screen            | 1.67  | 1.61      | 0.15 | 16.57 |
| Text screen                              | 2.12  | 1.96      | 0.03 | 20.93 |
| Comprehension questions screen           | 1.01  | 1.62      | 0.05 | 22.32 |
| CRT screen                               | 5.20  | 4.50      | 0.28 | 34.77 |
| Final opinion quest. screen              | 1.14  | 1.49      | 0.10 | 25.33 |
| Closing screen                           | 0.14  | 0.17      | 0.02 | 1.97  |
| B. Refutation text condition (N=351)     |       |           |      |       |
|  | Mean  | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max.  |
| All screens                              | 12.76 | 9.16      | 1.05 | 60.03 |
| Instructions screen                      | 0.61  | 1.25      | 0.02 | 14.90 |
| Sociodemographic quest. screen           | 1.47  | 1.16      | 0.25 | 8.70  |
| Initial opinion quest. screen            | 1.45  | 1.54      | 0.10 | 14.10 |
| Text screen                              | 2.80  | 2.74      | 0.02 | 18.08 |
| Comprehension questions screen           | 0.93  | 1.38      | 0.05 | 14.80 |
| CRT screen                               | 4.40  | 4.17      | 0.18 | 27.83 |
| Final opinion quest. screen              | 1.09  | 1.26      | 0.08 | 16.25 |
| Closing screen                           | 0.17  | 0.37      | 0.00 | 5.30  |
| C. Refutation video condition (N=362)    |       |           |      |       |
|  | Mean  | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max.  |
| All screens                              | 13.40 | 8.08      | 1.12 | 55.87 |
| Instructions screen                      | 0.69  | 1.45      | 0.02 | 21.73 |
| Sociodemographic quest. screen           | 1.50  | 1.51      | 0.25 | 18.72 |
| Initial opinion quest. screen            | 1.33  | 0.94      | 0.12 | 5.50  |
| Video screen                             | 3.26  | 2.44      | 0.02 | 14.95 |
| Comprehension questions screen           | 0.72  | 0.84      | 0.05 | 8.93  |
| CRT screen                               | 4.82  | 4.02      | 0.20 | 23.72 |
| Final opinion quest. screen              | 1.08  | 1.19      | 0.12 | 15.75 |
| Closing screen                           | 0.17  | 0.28      | 0.02 | 3.35  |

CRT: Cognitive Reflection Test.

Table C.3: Estimated treatment effects on revising the misconception

|                         | RV vs. RT      |                    | RT vs. NRT     |                    | RV vs. NRT       |                    | Pooled <sup>†</sup> |                    |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                         | (1)            | (2)                | (3)            | (4)                | (5)              | (6)                | (7)                 | (8)                |
| RV                      | 0.17<br>(0.10) | 0.18*<br>(0.11)    | –              | –                  | 0.23**<br>(0.10) | 0.26***<br>(0.10)  | 0.17<br>(0.10)      | 0.19*<br>(0.10)    |
| RT                      | –              | –                  | 0.06<br>(0.10) | 0.07<br>(0.10)     | –                | –                  | –                   | –                  |
| NRT                     | –              | –                  | –              | –                  | –                | –                  | -0.06<br>(0.10)     | -0.07<br>(0.10)    |
| Female                  |                | 0.26**<br>(0.11)   |                | 0.12<br>(0.10)     |                  | 0.08<br>(0.10)     |                     | 0.16*<br>(0.08)    |
| Non-Spanish             |                | 0.27<br>(0.22)     |                | 0.13<br>(0.22)     |                  | 0.21<br>(0.19)     |                     | 0.22<br>(0.17)     |
| Age                     |                | -0.01***<br>(0.01) |                | -0.01**<br>(0.01)  |                  | -0.02***<br>(0.01) |                     | -0.01***<br>(0.00) |
| <i>Education level:</i> |                |                    |                |                    |                  |                    |                     |                    |
| Compulsory              |                | -1.02***<br>(0.31) |                | -0.29<br>(0.26)    |                  | -0.40<br>(0.39)    |                     | -0.63**<br>(0.25)  |
| Upper secondary         |                | -0.82***<br>(0.29) |                | -0.45*<br>(0.25)   |                  | -0.55<br>(0.38)    |                     | -0.66***<br>(0.24) |
| Tertiary                |                | -0.77***<br>(0.28) |                | -0.35<br>(0.24)    |                  | -0.40<br>(0.38)    |                     | -0.57**<br>(0.23)  |
| Enrolled in TED.        |                | 0.08<br>(0.16)     |                | -0.18<br>(0.14)    |                  | 0.22<br>(0.15)     |                     | 0.05<br>(0.12)     |
| <i>Labor status:</i>    |                |                    |                |                    |                  |                    |                     |                    |
| Unemployed              |                | 0.03<br>(0.17)     |                | 0.03<br>(0.16)     |                  | -0.13<br>(0.16)    |                     | -0.04<br>(0.13)    |
| Not in labor force      |                | -0.09<br>(0.14)    |                | -0.15<br>(0.13)    |                  | -0.19<br>(0.14)    |                     | -0.15<br>(0.11)    |
| Furlough                |                | -0.51<br>(0.35)    |                | -0.12<br>(0.27)    |                  | 0.35<br>(0.31)     |                     | -0.15<br>(0.27)    |
| <i>Province:</i>        |                |                    |                |                    |                  |                    |                     |                    |
| Barcelona               |                | 0.86***<br>(0.30)  |                | 0.08<br>(0.30)     |                  | 0.82***<br>(0.28)  |                     | 0.56**<br>(0.24)   |
| Madrid                  |                | 0.11<br>(0.27)     |                | -0.73***<br>(0.27) |                  | 0.08<br>(0.25)     |                     | -0.18<br>(0.22)    |
| Valencia                |                | 0.44**<br>(0.22)   |                | -0.23<br>(0.22)    |                  | 0.24<br>(0.20)     |                     | 0.13<br>(0.17)     |
| Other                   |                | 0.35<br>(0.22)     |                | -0.45**<br>(0.22)  |                  | 0.18<br>(0.21)     |                     | 0.01<br>(0.18)     |
| <i>Home ownership:</i>  |                |                    |                |                    |                  |                    |                     |                    |
| Mortgage                |                | -0.05<br>(0.13)    |                | -0.13<br>(0.12)    |                  | 0.07<br>(0.12)     |                     | -0.03<br>(0.10)    |

Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. RV: Refutational video. Pooled<sup>†</sup>: pooled sample with all three conditions. TED.: Tertiary education. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Reference categories: primary education, employed, Alicante, owner, single, small size. Significance levels: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

(Continued on next page)

Table C.3: Estimation results: Change in misconception (continued)

|                               | RV vs. RT         |                   | RT vs. NRT        |                   | RV vs. NRT        |                   | Pooled <sup>†</sup> |                   |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
|                               | (1)               | (2)               | (3)               | (4)               | (5)               | (6)               | (7)                 | (8)               |
| Tenant                        |                   | -0.18<br>(0.17)   |                   | -0.21<br>(0.15)   |                   | -0.08<br>(0.17)   |                     | -0.16<br>(0.13)   |
| Other                         |                   | -0.12<br>(0.20)   |                   | -0.21<br>(0.19)   |                   | 0.03<br>(0.20)    |                     | -0.07<br>(0.16)   |
| <i>Household composition:</i> |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                     |                   |
| Single parent                 |                   | 0.23<br>(0.18)    |                   | 0.04<br>(0.17)    |                   | 0.09<br>(0.19)    |                     | 0.11<br>(0.15)    |
| Childless couple              |                   | 0.54**<br>(0.21)  |                   | 0.25<br>(0.20)    |                   | 0.17<br>(0.21)    |                     | 0.32*<br>(0.17)   |
| Couple with children          |                   | 0.36**<br>(0.16)  |                   | 0.42***<br>(0.15) |                   | 0.25<br>(0.16)    |                     | 0.34***<br>(0.13) |
| Other                         |                   | 0.21<br>(0.21)    |                   | 0.42**<br>(0.20)  |                   | 0.05<br>(0.21)    |                     | 0.20<br>(0.17)    |
| <i>Town size:</i>             |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                     |                   |
| Medium                        |                   | -0.08<br>(0.16)   |                   | -0.09<br>(0.16)   |                   | 0.07<br>(0.16)    |                     | -0.02<br>(0.13)   |
| Large                         |                   | 0.03<br>(0.17)    |                   | -0.02<br>(0.16)   |                   | -0.02<br>(0.16)   |                     | 0.00<br>(0.13)    |
| Constant                      | 1.00***<br>(0.07) | 1.53***<br>(0.47) | 0.94***<br>(0.06) | 1.93***<br>(0.45) | 0.94***<br>(0.06) | 1.38***<br>(0.51) | 1.00***<br>(0.07)   | 1.71***<br>(0.38) |
| Observations                  | 713               | 713               | 702               | 702               | 713               | 713               | 1064                | 1064              |
| $R^2$                         | 0.00              | 0.07              | 0.00              | 0.06              | 0.01              | 0.05              | 0.01                | 0.05              |

Dependent variable: belief change after intervention; it takes values between  $-4$  and  $4$  (positive values indicate a change away from the misconception). RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. RV: Refutational video. Pooled<sup>†</sup>: pooled sample with all three conditions. TEd.: Tertiary education. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Reference categories: primary education, employed, Alicante, owner, single, small size. Significance levels: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table C.4: OLS regression of initial belief on CRT and socio-demographic variables

|                               | RV                 | RT                | NRT               |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| CRT                           | 0.08<br>(0.23)     | -0.06<br>(0.24)   | -0.04<br>(0.24)   |
| Female                        | -0.34***<br>(0.11) | -0.27**<br>(0.11) | -0.10<br>(0.11)   |
| Non-Spanish                   | 0.38<br>(0.24)     | -0.02<br>(0.26)   | 0.03<br>(0.23)    |
| Age                           | 0.02**<br>(0.01)   | 0.00<br>(0.01)    | 0.02***<br>(0.01) |
| <i>Education level:</i>       |                    |                   |                   |
| Compulsory                    | 0.62<br>(0.73)     | 0.20<br>(0.25)    | -0.16<br>(0.42)   |
| Upper secondary               | 0.59<br>(0.73)     | 0.42*<br>(0.22)   | 0.11<br>(0.41)    |
| Tertiary                      | 0.58<br>(0.73)     | 0.28<br>(0.23)    | 0.14<br>(0.42)    |
| Enrolled in TEd.              | 0.04<br>(0.18)     | 0.02<br>(0.19)    | 0.28*<br>(0.16)   |
| <i>Labor status:</i>          |                    |                   |                   |
| Unemployed                    | -0.00<br>(0.19)    | -0.20<br>(0.18)   | -0.22<br>(0.21)   |
| Not in labor force            | 0.14<br>(0.17)     | 0.08<br>(0.18)    | -0.04<br>(0.15)   |
| Furlough                      | -0.14<br>(1.01)    | 0.67**<br>(0.27)  | 0.06<br>(0.33)    |
| <i>Province:</i>              |                    |                   |                   |
| Barcelona                     | -0.46<br>(0.30)    | -0.81**<br>(0.33) | -0.79**<br>(0.34) |
| Madrid                        | -0.06<br>(0.27)    | -0.38<br>(0.37)   | 0.37<br>(0.33)    |
| Valencia                      | -0.08<br>(0.24)    | -0.28<br>(0.30)   | 0.02<br>(0.25)    |
| Other                         | -0.12<br>(0.25)    | -0.42<br>(0.31)   | 0.21<br>(0.28)    |
| <i>Home ownership:</i>        |                    |                   |                   |
| Mortgage                      | 0.08<br>(0.15)     | 0.20<br>(0.14)    | 0.18<br>(0.14)    |
| Tenant                        | -0.21<br>(0.17)    | 0.30<br>(0.18)    | 0.09<br>(0.17)    |
| Other                         | 0.26<br>(0.23)     | 0.33<br>(0.23)    | 0.35<br>(0.21)    |
| <i>Household composition:</i> |                    |                   |                   |
| Single parent                 | -0.06<br>(0.21)    | -0.14<br>(0.22)   | 0.17<br>(0.21)    |
| Childless couple              | -0.16<br>(0.21)    | -0.43*<br>(0.25)  | -0.22<br>(0.24)   |
| Couple with children          | 0.09<br>(0.18)     | -0.25<br>(0.19)   | -0.12<br>(0.19)   |
| Other                         | 0.00<br>(0.22)     | -0.31<br>(0.28)   | -0.17<br>(0.24)   |
| <i>Town size:</i>             |                    |                   |                   |
| Medium                        | 0.20<br>(0.18)     | -0.03<br>(0.21)   | 0.20<br>(0.19)    |
| Large                         | 0.19<br>(0.19)     | -0.17<br>(0.21)   | -0.02<br>(0.18)   |
| Constant                      | 1.01<br>(0.91)     | 2.30***<br>(0.51) | 1.02<br>(0.67)    |
| N                             | 362                | 351               | 351               |
| R <sup>2</sup>                | 0.08               | 0.10              | 0.13              |

Dependent variable takes values from 5 (fully disagree) to 1 (fully agree). RV: Refutational video. RT: Refutational text. NRT: Non-refutational text. TEd.: Tertiary education. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## D Cognitive Reflection Test

The test contains adapted versions of the three initial Frederick (2005) (F) statements, of four statements taken from Thomson and Oppenheimer (2016) (TO), and of one from Toplak et al. (2014) (T).

1. A bat and a ball cost £1.10 in total. The bat costs a dollar more than the ball. How much does the ball cost? (F)

Adapted version: A bat and a ball cost €1.10 in total. The bat costs one more euro than the ball. How much does the ball cost?

2. If it takes 5 machines 5 minutes to make 5 widgets, how long would it take 100 machines to make 100 widgets? (F)

Adapted version: If it takes 5 machines 5 minutes to make 5 pieces (NOTA: products?), how long would it take 100 machines to make 100 pieces?

3. In a lake, there is a patch of lily pads. Every day, the patch doubles in size. If it takes 48 days for the patch to cover the entire lake, how long would it take for the patch to cover half the lake? (F)

Adapted version: In Europe the demand for electric kick scooters is expanding. Every month, demand doubles. If it takes 48 months to satisfy all the demand, how many months will it take one half of the demand?

4. If you're running a race and you pass the person in second place, what place are you in? (TO)

Adapted version: Your business appears in a sales ranking chart. If next year your business surpasses the business in second place, what place will you be in?

5. A farmer had 15 sheep and all but 8 died. How many are left? (TO)

Adapted version: A fruit store has bought 15 tomato boxes, and all but 8 have been damaged. How many are left?

6. Emily's father had three daughters. The first two are named April and May. What is the third daughter's name? (TO)

Adapted version: A family, who owns the firm FOC, which produces firecrackers and pyrotechnic products, owns a total of three firms. The first two are named PIM and PAM. How is the third named?

Note: PIM, PAM, PUM is a popular onomatopoeic expression in Spanish that represents shots or explosions. It also refers to a game in which you try to knock down balls in a row.

7. How many cubic feet of dirt are there in a hole that 3' deep x 3' wide x 3' long? (TO)

Adapted version: A developer buys a plot to build a public sport center. In the plot there is a hole measuring 3 meters deep x 3 meters wide x 3 meters long. How many cubic meters of dirt are there in the hole?

8. A man buys a pig for €60, sells it for €70, buys it back for €80, and sells it finally for €90. How much has he made? (T)

Adapted version: Someone buys a videogame for €60, sells it for €70, buys it back for €80, and sells it finally for €90. How much has this person made?

## E Instructions to participants

Instructions are the same across conditions.

### E.1 Initial instructions

You are about to participate in an activity to gather opinions about economic and social issues.

To complete the different tasks that you will face you will receive an **economic compensation of 6 EUROS**. This amount **will be paid to you through PayPal**. The tasks should take you about 20 minutes, but you can take more time if you wish. You have a total of one hour to complete everything.

One of the activities we will ask you to do will allow you to **EARN 2 EXTRA EUROS** in case you do it correctly. Hence, if you do this task activity correctly you will receive an economic compensation of in **TOTAL  $6 + 2 = 8$  EUROS**. We will inform you about whether you have obtained the 2 extra euros after you will have completed all the tasks that we will ask you to do.

In this activity that you are about to begin we will ask you, first, to provide us with some socio-demographic information.

Subsequently, we will ask you opinion about some economic and social issues. There is no correct or incorrect answer for these questions. We just ask you about your sincere opinion, and your answers will not influence your final payment.

Then we will present to a short text (video). We will appreciate that you read it (watch it) carefully and then answer two questions directed a checking the comprehension of the text (the video). If you respond correctly to the two questions you will receive 2 euros extra in your final payment.

Subsequently, we will present some economic situations to you. Your responses to these situations will not influence your final payment.

Finally, we will ask you opinion about some economic and social issues. There is no correct or incorrect answer for these questions. We just ask you about your sincere opinion, and your answers will not influence your final payment.

All your responses will be anonymized.

This activity is part of social research project carried out by professors from several universities. Your effort and attention in answering all questions will be very valuable for the success of this study, contributing to a better understanding of our society.

We thank you in advance for your collaboration!

## **E.2 Other instructions**

- Before opinion questionnaires:

We next will show you several statements about economic and social issues. Please read them carefully and choose the option that best matches your current opinion. There is no correct or incorrect answer for these questions. We just wish to know your sincere opinion, and your answers will NOT AFFECT your final payment.

- Before the video:

We next will show you a video. Please watch it carefully. You may pause it and replay it if you wish. You will next be presented with two questions. These questions refer to the video, but to answer them you will not be able to view the video again. If your answers to both questions are correct, you will additionally win 2 euros at the end. You therefore will have the chance to win a total of 8 euros.

Press PLAY to start the video.

- Before the texts:

Next we will show you a text. We ask you to read it carefully and then answer 2 questions that will appear in the next screen. These questions relate to the text you will just have read, but you will not be able to read the text again to answer them. If your answers to both questions are correct, you will additionally win 2 euros at the end. You therefore will have the chance to win a total of 8 euros.

- Before CRT:

We next will show you some economic situations. Please read them carefully and answer the questions. Your answers DO NOT AFFECT your final payment.

- Before the final opinion questionnaire:

You will see next some statements about economic and social issues. Please read them carefully and choose the option closer to your personal opinion at this moment. There are no correct or incorrect answers. We only wish to know your sincere opinion, and your answers WILL NOT AFFECT the final payment.