

# **Economic Risk Perceptions and Willingness to Learn about Globalization: A Field Experiment with Migrants and Other Underprivileged Groups in Vietnam**

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## **Abstract**

Existing research maintains that socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals are reluctant to seek information that might help mitigate risk. We challenge this convention by proposing that perceptions of risks associated with global economic shocks can incentivize some disadvantaged individuals to acquire knowledge about their distributional effects. Internal migrants, in particular, have strong incentives to respond to such risks by seeking information. We test our hypotheses using a randomized experiment in Vietnam exposing half of the participants to risks associated with a new trade agreement with the European Union. We track willingness to learn by observing whether respondents accessed an online video describing the economic impacts of the agreement. We find that treated migrants were 187% more likely to seek knowledge than the control group, but find null effects for residents from sending and receiving locations. Our findings help uncover the key role migrants can play in supporting globalization and shared prosperity.

## **Replication**

The data and materials required to verify the computational reproducibility of the results, procedures, and analyses in this article are available on the American Journal of Political Science Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/361LGD>

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Do underprivileged individuals in developing countries seek information on the repercussions of major economic transformations in their localities? Greater knowledge can empower individuals to both mitigate pending hazards and seize emerging opportunities. Such efforts are especially vital for the disadvantaged, because lower socioeconomic status influences their susceptibility, vulnerability, and potential recovery. Extensive research on information-seeking behavior reveals that disadvantaged individuals rarely pursue information when confronted with risks. However, this body of work mainly concentrates on risks related to disease and healthcare. Scholars have yet to explore whether underprivileged individuals demonstrate a willingness to learn about the distributional risks associated with major economic transformations, such as exposure to global markets.<sup>1</sup> The omission is critical, given that the underprivileged in less developed countries (LDCs) prioritize economic anxieties, including wages, income, and unemployment, over health-related concerns in multiple global surveys.<sup>2</sup> To fill this lacuna, we apply Dunwoody, Griffin, and Neuwirth's (1999) *Risk, Information, and Processing (RISP)* model to ask whether and under what circumstances disadvantaged individuals are willing to educate themselves about the implications of a transformative international economic agreement.

We predict that internal migrants in LDCs are the disadvantaged demographic group most likely to undertake information-seeking behavior when facing economic risk. Building on Knight (1921), we define risks as events that may lead to significant income loss *or* gain. We specifically treat trade liberalization as a proxy for individual economic risk in LDCs, because trade reforms pose a substantial shock to these economies and affect the daily lives and incomes of large segments of the workforce. Combining the information-seeking literature with research in political

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text we treat “information-seeking” and “willingness to learn” interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> See **Appendix A** (p.3) for comparative data from global household surveys across LDCs.

economy, we anticipate that internal migrants will be more likely to pursue information in response to risks associated with trade integration for two reasons: First, they are better equipped than other vulnerable groups in their originating locations to exploit new opportunities and relocate in response to these changes. Second, they face increased vulnerability to economic shocks due to discrimination in the destinations where they settle. In essence, the unique combination of relative strength and vulnerability positions migrants to be highly responsive to economic risk perceptions, thus motivating their active pursuit of information regarding the effects of globalization on their well-being.

Our expectations are particularly applicable to a specific subgroup of migrants, who voluntarily moved to work in the manufacturing sector, and who we refer to as "manufacturing migrants." Applying the RISP model, these individuals possess the necessary prerequisites for seeking information, namely, the capacity and motivation to gather it. Manufacturing migrants typically begin their migration journey with relatively higher financial resources, knowledge, and middle-school education, which enhances their capacity to enter sectors that can directly benefit or lose from globalization. This, in turn, influences their motivation to comprehend the implications of global economic shocks. We further emphasize that it is essential to differentiate manufacturing migrants from those who have been forced - or 'pushed' - to relocate into the low-skilled service sector due to factors such as economic crises, violence, humanitarian disasters, or environmental degradation. The latter group, which we label "subsistence migrants," faces limitations in information-gathering capacity, leaving them less capable of mitigating risks or seizing new economic opportunities (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013).

To test our hypotheses, we field a randomized experiment with a nationally representative sample of respondents in Vietnam. We propose an original approach to proxy for

economic risk by prompting respondents to think about the economic effects of the recent European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), the largest trade agreement in the country's history (World Bank 2020). Specifically, we test respondents' knowledge about this agreement's micro and macro distributional effects. We intentionally prime “economic risk perceptions” about the opportunities and threats of globalization on respondents' economic futures.

Since most respondents are likely to have difficulty answering the EVFTA module, we expect that this risk exposure should increase their willingness to learn about the true effects of the agreement. We then estimate the extent to which the “risk perceptions treatment” incentivizes respondents to visit a website we created with a video explaining the distributional impacts of EVFTA. This allows us to assess actual post-treatment behavioral responses, rather than merely gauge the stated intentions of respondents, as would be the case in standard survey experimental settings. Our research design is also unique in that it undertakes a multi-staged sampling approach to capture unregistered migrants in receiving locations, allowing us to account for the migration experience far more accurately than previous research on developing countries.

The analysis reveals several interesting patterns. First, economic risk does not incentivize all respondents to seek information about the impacts of EVFTA – the national average treatment effect (ATE) is not significantly different from zero. Nevertheless, as predicted in our pre-analysis plan (PAP), internal migrants are the most eager to pursue information about EVFTA. When primed with economic risk, migrants are 180% more likely to visit the trade website relative to untreated migrants, a conditional average treatment effect (CATE) that is significantly larger than the treatment effect in the full population and other

vulnerable groups. We also find that the effects are largest for manufacturing migrants, who work for firms in this comparatively advantaged sector, often for foreign-invested enterprises in industrial zones.

Our findings contribute to research on information-seeking, political economy, development, and public policy in emerging markets. To our knowledge, we are the first to test and confirm that individuals with low socioeconomic status pursue information in response to significant economic risk. Our findings also suggest that political economy scholars, who fixate on the link between college education and support for globalization, should exercise caution. This focus discounts the ability and incentives of disadvantaged groups to seek knowledge about the distributional impacts of globalization and become key actors in the politics of globalization. Although we do not directly test this, our findings imply that a much greater percentage of the population could become informed about and endorse globalization policies, especially when presented with information regarding its distributional effects. This is a behavior that contrasts starkly with previous work on trade literacy. Our analysis calls for a shift in focus toward a "willingness to learn" about global economic shocks rather than examining mere trade or economic literacy.

In addition, our research provides new insights into development and 'poverty traps.' We find that respondents constrained by scarcity (e.g., subsistence migrants) are unresponsive to risk and less likely to seek information about job opportunities created by globalization. At the same time, our analysis indicates migrants who are not burdened by extreme poverty, demonstrate a strong desire to gain knowledge about globalization's effects. At the individual level, such knowledge provides them with the resources to avoid losses and improve their

economic fortunes. At the aggregate level, it has the potential to enhance growth and allow more underprivileged groups to share in the benefits of economic integration.

### **Disadvantaged Groups and Willingness to Learn about Globalization**

A large body of scholarly work examines whether and how individuals confront risk and seek information to aid their decision-making processes (Yang et al 2014, McComas 2006, Griffin et al 1999). Research on information-seeking behavior maintains that individuals place a high value on information when they perceive threats and/or opportunities, yet remain uncertain about the best course of action to take. In this context, scholars have explored the extent to which individuals pursue information in response to risks, such as health and disease (Huang et al 2023, Pop-Eleches, Robertson, and Rosenfeld 2023, Kahlor et al. 2003, Kahlor 2010, Nagelhout et al. 2016, McComas 2006, Wang et al 2021, McMullan et al 2019), perceived negative political outcomes (Marcus, and Mackuen 1993, Valentino, Hutchings, and Davis 2008, Johnston, Lavine and Woodson 2015), environmental disasters (Kim and Madison 2020, Ryan 2018, Kellens et al. 2011, Kahlor et al. 2019), and flawed or dangerous consumer purchases (Gemünden 1985, Mitchell 1992, Locander and Hermann 1979, Cheong and Monmmed-Baksh 2021).

A common finding in this literature is that psychological triggers, such as fear and anxiety, are the main determinants of willingness to learn. The specific impact of demographic factors, including socioeconomic status has either been disregarded or deemed of marginal importance (e.g., Yang et al 2014, Wang et al 2021). A few scholars have recently taken the role of lower socioeconomic status more seriously, finding that such individuals have a low propensity to seek information even when they perceive risks to be associated with their physical well-being, such as health-related issues or environmental disasters (Teo et al 2018, Lwoga,

Ngulube and Stilwell 2010, Wang, Shi and Kong 2021, Pandey, Hart and Tiwary 2003, Jiang, Basnyat and Liu 2021). However, this literature has primarily concentrated on risks that many individuals are likely to perceive as less pertinent to them, less dire, or easily dismissed. Scholars have yet to investigate whether the disadvantaged might actively pursue information in response to economic shocks that they view as more urgent and severe due to their daily needs and concerns regarding job prospects, employment status, and income, thus triggering greater anxiety.

Why might disadvantaged individuals react differently to economic shocks, leading to a willingness to learn about perceived risks? First, multiple research strands in economics, psychology, and migration studies find that living in poverty motivates large numbers of individuals around the world to alter their circumstances and make household decisions based on economic “pull factors,” such as better employment opportunities, improved shelter, and higher standards of living (Ortega and Peri 2013; Grogger and Hanson 2011, Jakimow, 2016; Arellanes et al. 2017).<sup>3</sup> These studies suggest, but have yet to directly test, that such individuals must necessarily seek economic information to facilitate their move. The fact that global surveys reveal that disadvantaged individuals in LDCs consistently prioritize economic issues, such as job opportunities, over all other concerns underscores the potential role of socioeconomic status on their economic risk information-gathering behavior.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Holland and Peters (2020) are a notable exception. They find that violence and poverty motivate individuals to invest in learning about migration opportunities.

<sup>4</sup> In Vietnam, for example, respondents of low socioeconomic status were more likely to identify wages, jobs, and poverty as their number one concern over above health issues such as health care and health insurance, access to clean water, and food hygiene and safety (see **Appendix Figure A1**, p.3). Disadvantaged groups in regional surveys, such as the Afrobarometer and Asiabarometer, demonstrated very similar rank-ordering. See **Appendix Figures A2** (p.4) and **A3** (p.5).



Second, individuals facing economic disadvantages require a greater volume of information to navigate economic risk exposure compared to those in more favorable circumstances. The heightened load need stems primarily from their lower economic literacy. International Political Economy (IPE) scholars find that their knowledge is especially low regarding their understanding of the effects of globalization.<sup>5</sup> Since insufficient prior knowledge is a key motivator in information seeking (Griffin, Dunwoody, and Neuwirth, 1999), disadvantaged individuals have incentives to seek information in response to major economic transformations. Such knowledge can empower them to make reasoned economic decisions to respond to the risk, including informed calculations about where to live, and work, and the benefits of investing in education or not, in a rapidly liberalizing economy.

Combining these two discrete strands of literature from information-seeking and political economy reveals new insights into the conditions under which LDC individuals, particularly those with low socioeconomic status, may seek information in response to risks associated with globalization. To sum up, political economy research unveils how and why disadvantaged groups, at once, have less information and, in turn, lower motivation to seek more information when exposed to economic risks, such as rapidly expanding trade liberalization. At the same time, the information-seeking literature unveils that factors such as anxiety and fear drive individuals to pursue new knowledge. By linking these two bodies of work below, we offer more precise theoretical predictions about the mechanisms and motivations behind why individuals in LDCs

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<sup>5</sup> The prevailing consensus in political economy is that educated individuals are economically literate and make more reasoned political and economic decisions (Walstad and Rebeck 2002, Jappelli 2010, Burke and Manz 2014). IPE scholars frequently use college education as a proxy for trade literacy, reasoning that college-educated individuals are more exposed to economic concepts and therefore support globalization (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006; Mansfield and Mutz 2009; Walstad 1997; Magistro 2020). Rho and Tomz (2017) is an exception.

might gather information in response to economic risk; and why specific disadvantaged groups are more likely than others to seek information regarding the effects of trade and foreign investment in their localities.

## Theoretical Hypotheses

Applying the RISP model, we propose a theoretical framework to explain why individuals in developing economies are motivated to seek information about the local impacts of a major trade reform, considering the economic risks involved.<sup>6</sup> Knight (1921) defined risk as the likelihood of significant gains or losses resulting from internal or external factors. This dual-sided conception of risk is exquisitely captured by the etymology of the translation of the term *nguy cơ* in our research setting of Vietnam, which is a combination of two words – *nguy hiểm* (danger) and *cơ hội* (opportunity). Risk, in contrast to uncertainty, can be estimated, and the potential outcomes (gains or losses) can be determined, albeit with varying probability distributions.<sup>7</sup> We apply RISP to analyze globalization as an economic risk that motivates information-seeking. Trade and capital liberalization introduce economic risks in developing nations due to their pronounced and predictable distributional consequences on individual job opportunities, existing income, prices, and poverty (Goldberg and Pavcnik, 2007; Bresser Pereira, Maravall, and Przeworski, 1993). When a developing country engages in a new bilateral trade agreement with a nation possessing different factor endowments (e.g., North-South trade agreements), risks of significant gains and

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<sup>6</sup> While the RISP model explores the full theory of change leading from risk exposure (R) to information seeking (IS) to the processing (P) of that information, our focus in this paper is on the first pathway from R to IS, saving processing of newly acquired information for future work.

<sup>7</sup> By contrast, uncertainty is not quantifiable, and is characterized by both an unknown outcome and unknown probability distributions (Langlois and Cosgel 1993). Under conditions of uncertainty, it is impossible to devise strategies for achieving objectives or mitigating losses (Bylund 2021).

losses are heightened, especially in the short run. This is why political economists find that policymakers often encounter stiff political resistance when proposing trade and investment agreements (Fernandez and Rodrik, 1991; Schiff and Wang, 2008; Falvey et al., 2002).

In response to such trade-induced risks, individuals may be inclined to seek information due to two key components of the RISP model: motivation and capacity to acquire information. In general, an individual's motivation to learn is heightened when a sudden change in the environment generates a sense of personal risk, influencing the perceived need for information to cope with the risk. Capacity is an individual's perception of their ability to gather information (Gregory and Mendelsohn, 1993). Since systematic seeking and processing of information are challenging tasks, Griffin, Dunwoody, and Neuwirth (1999) maintain that individuals only seek new information when they are sufficiently motivated and have the capacity to gather it.

Applying the RISP model to the context of trade shocks, we anticipate that individuals in developing countries who perceive significant economic changes resulting from North-South trade agreements, which could have either highly detrimental or substantial beneficial impacts on their personal outcomes, are more inclined to actively seek information to mitigate their risk perceptions. LDC citizens have such motivation because North-South trade agreements bring about extensive changes in jobs and wages across the economy, especially because these states start from a lower level of economic liberalization compared to wealthier ones (Goldberg and Pavcnik, 2016; Baker, 2009). Furthermore, most developing countries lack comprehensive safety nets to safeguard potential "losers" from the adverse effects of globalization shocks (Rudra, 2008). As a result, the need to address their risk perceptions and seek information becomes even more critical for individuals in these countries.

To summarize, when applying the RISP model to trade shocks, individuals in developing countries who perceive significant economic changes resulting from North-South trade agreements are more likely to seek information to address their risk perceptions about the agreement's distributive effects. This heightened motivation arises from the considerable impact these agreements have on workers in developing countries, combined with the lack of robust safety nets to protect those adversely affected by globalization shocks. By engaging in information-seeking behavior (i.e. demonstrating a willingness to learn), they aim to mitigate their risks so that they can benefit- and/or avoid loss- from the outcomes associated with such shocks. Hence, we propose our first hypothesis:

*H1: Individuals exposed to the risk of a globalization shock will demonstrate a greater willingness to learn about its distributive effects compared to individuals who are not exposed to such risk.*

The RISP model informs our expectation that risk perceptions related to the impact of sudden economic changes may be more pronounced among internal migrants. Information is a valuable resource for migrants throughout their migratory journey, from the initial decision to migrate to their settlement in new locations, regardless of whether they were "pulled" by economic opportunities and a better quality of life or "pushed" out of their homes due to natural disasters, conflicts, or economic crises (Lee, 1966; Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 2018).

Migrants uniquely possess both high motivation *and* capacity to seek information about the potential benefits and costs associated with global economic shocks. Most internal migrants are more socioeconomically vulnerable compared to residents in the receiving provinces where they settle. However, they also have more assets and a greater capacity to gather information compared to individuals who remain in the sending provinces and other disadvantaged groups.

Indeed, among underprivileged groups who face discrimination and barriers to equal opportunities, internal migrants are likely to be more motivated to seek information. This is because migrants frequently encounter worse economic, political, and social conditions in their destination cities compared to pre-existing residents. Such disparities can contribute to heightened risk perceptions and a strong drive to gather information. For instance, internal migrants face notable challenges in accessing essential public services, such as education and healthcare, particularly in the specific context of Vietnam, our research setting, as they do not possess household registration certificates for their new residences (Niimi, Pham, and Reilly, 2009). Furthermore, migrants tend to have lower average incomes compared to residents in destination cities and are more likely to be employed under temporary arrangements without formal labor contracts or social protections (Nguyen, Raabe, and Grote, 2015; Do et al., 2021).

Internal migrants also experience greater discrimination within receiving communities, which further amplifies their sensitivity to economic shocks in comparison to other underprivileged groups and the general population. As economic liberalization occurs, perceived job competition intensifies, leading to increased resentment toward migrants (Helms, 2023). Migrants' challenges are then exacerbated as globalization triggers greater socioeconomic conflict with residents. In this environment, migrants encounter even more limited avenues for recourse, often becoming subject to heightened discrimination while experiencing reduced police protection, heightened harassment, harsher working conditions, higher rates of violent crimes, and lower access to critical public goods and services in their communities (Gaikwad and Nellis, 2021). Simply put, the discriminatory treatment they endure adds to their vulnerability and shapes their risk perceptions in response to major economic transformations.

However, motivation alone is insufficient; migrants must also possess the capacity to seek and process information, as emphasized by RISP. Notably, internal migrants are better equipped to seek and comprehend information compared to other disadvantaged groups due to their *relatively* higher incomes and financial resources derived from wage labor (Carling and Schewel 2018). Although internal migrants are rarely college or even high-school graduates, and therefore cannot be expected to be economic and trade literate in line with standard political economy and IPE assumptions, they tend to have higher levels of elementary and middle school education than those left behind. This is an important distinction, as it means that internal migrants have comparatively greater skills to find and understand new trade information. Additionally, internal migrants' capacity to seek information is augmented by their more extensive family and social networks than the residents left behind in sending provinces (Schewel and Fransen, 2022; Grogger and Hanson, 2011).

Considering these arguments collectively, we posit that internal migrants will demonstrate greater responsiveness to economic risk in a liberalizing environment, leading to a higher propensity to seek information regarding the impacts of globalization.

*H2: The effect of exposure to the risks of a globalization shock on willingness to learn will be greater for migrants than for sending and receiving residents.*

Migrants are not a homogeneous category, however, and their motivation and means to access and process information to achieve desired outcomes may differ. While all migrants have some motivation to seek information in response to an imminent trade shock, we anticipate low-skilled migrants situated in the manufacturing sector will display both greater motivation and greater capacity to seek information compared to other migrant groups. This hypothesis was not

anticipated in our PAP and was developed post-experiment after considering research in both IPE and migration.

“Manufacturing migrants” may anticipate greater personal risk from a globalization shock and therefore may be more motivated to seek information on its distributional effects for two reasons. First, as workers in the manufacturing sectors, they are poised to be winners or (short-run) losers from globalization. Manufacturing migrants were likely ‘pulled’ into manufacturing because they have relatively more education, social networks in the destination city, and savings to pay for relocation costs, risk-taking, and relocation to high-growth manufacturing sectors, in comparison to poorer migrants working in the low-skill service sector (Kraay and McKenzie 2014, Sanders, Nee and Sernau 2002).

The specific factors of Ricardo-Viner model posits that the winners of globalization, and trade in particular, will be workers in the export-oriented manufacturing sector. Tariff cuts in the low-skilled manufacturing sector have increased the manufacturing growth rate in most developing countries (Papageorgiou, Choksi, and Michaely 1990). Economic analysis in our research setting of Vietnam has shown that migration to the country’s manufacturing center has been an important stimulus for poverty and inequality reduction (McCaig 2011, Phan and Coxhead 2010). At the same time, however, manufacturing migrants could confront significant short-term losses if they are working in an import-competing manufacturing firm.

Recall that the key aspect of risk is that while outcome probabilities can be estimated, they cannot be guaranteed. In essence, individuals facing risk cannot be absolutely certain of either success or failure. Anxiety thus rises because of the fear of potential loss, coupled with uncertainty that hopes for potential gains may not materialize. In our analysis, manufacturing migrants may experience this emotion because while they may have been winners from previous periods of

globalization, the impact of trade liberalization – such as a new north-south trade agreement- on their particular firm is still unknown.

Second, manufacturing migrants have a higher capacity for information-seeking compared to other migrant groups. Although subsistence, or low-skilled service migrants, may also feel compelled to seek information in response to trade-related risks they face substantial obstacles in doing so. These constraints stem from their struggles with scarcity, which prioritize focusing on and addressing immediate challenges over long-term preparations such as gathering information and preparing for new job opportunities (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013). In Vietnam, Phan and Coxhead (2010) highlight such poverty-related immobility as a critical barrier to inequality reduction in the country.

In contrast, manufacturing migrants experience fewer hindrances in their information-gathering capacity. They are less burdened by the constraints of scarcity and therefore have more resources and cognitive bandwidth available to pursue poverty-escaping behaviors, including actively seeking information to mitigate the risks associated with globalization. Their relatively better information-gathering capacity empowers them to learn about the potential effects of globalization, enabling them to make more informed decisions.

In sum, while manufacturing migrants still face many difficulties associated with being underprivileged, such as limited resources and discrimination, they possess both the incentive and the capacity to seek, process, and act upon information. These insights motivate our third hypothesis:

*H3: The effect of exposure to the risks associated with a globalization shock on willingness to learn will be greater for migrants working in manufacturing than migrants employed in other low-skilled sectors.*



## Research Design

To test these three hypotheses, we ran a randomized field experiment. We selected Vietnam due to the country's sizeable exposure to a forthcoming globalization shock and the availability of high-quality, citizen-level data. Below we describe several unique features of our design that are critical for testing our theory. First, we target internal migrants (H2), who have been overlooked in previous survey efforts (Pincus and Sender 2008). Second, we randomize risk perceptions related to a globalization shock by designing a trade literacy test on the effects of EVFTA, the largest FTA in Vietnam's history. The deal is estimated to raise Vietnam's GDP 2.3% by 2030 by cutting 85% of the EU's import tariffs with the rest slated for removal within seven years (World Bank 2020). Randomization allows us to isolate the impact of risk from underlying structural factors and avoid the potential reverse causality of information-seeking generating risk perceptions. Third, we introduce a behavioral measure of "willingness to learn" by providing all respondents the opportunity to seek information about the impact of EVFTA. This approach provides us with a direct behavioral measure of exactly who was motivated to access greater trade information.

To be clear, the theory of change that motivates our research design is that when individuals are exposed to risk through the trade literacy test, they will be more willing to engage in costly and time-consuming behavior of going online to seek information about the potential threats and opportunities of the new trade agreement. At this stage in the research agenda, we are only focusing on information seeking and not the processing of the information or knowledge acquisition.

## *Data*

We use data from Vietnam's Provincial Governance and Public Administration Index (PAPI) survey, a joint annual study with the United Nations Development Program and the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies. PAPI is Vietnam's largest, annual, citizen-centric, policy monitoring tool. It measures citizens' experiences to (1) benchmark the quality of policy implementation and service delivery in all of Vietnam's 63 provincial/city governments: and (2) advocate for effective governance. To achieve national representativeness, PAPI relies on a multi-stage clustering strategy that selects districts within provinces, communes and ultimately villages by probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling with the capital of each locality selected as a certainty unit. Within each village, 20 individuals are selected to complete the survey using simple random sampling (CECODES, VVF, and UNDP 2022).

The 2022 wave, conducted between October 2021 and February 2022, included an upgraded sampling strategy to directly capture non-permanent respondents in the twelve provinces that are net recipients of migrants (i.e., receiving provinces). For these units, the same multi-stage clustering, PPS, and simple random sampling were maintained. Simple randomization was then conducted on these new lists handed over by village heads, leading to a sample of 744 migrants in the receiving provinces. We included an additional 68 respondents who self-identified as migrants in traditionally non-receiving provinces. Our final sample yields a total of 812 migrants and 15,021 permanent residents in all of Vietnam's provinces.

### *Experimental Design: Randomized Exposure to Economic Risk*

Our treatment variable of economic risk is derived from the social psychology, behavioral economics, and marketing literatures, which demonstrate that perceived personal risk about gains and losses can be generated by challenging tasks (Locander and Herman 1979, Hartley and Phelps 2012, Eisenbach and Schmalz 2016, Buckert et al. 2014). Following this research, our design operationalized risk by exposing all respondents to a question about familiarity with EVFTA, “*Have you heard about the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement signed on June 30, 2019?*” We did this for two reasons. First, we wanted our treatment to prime risk and not just awareness of EVFTA. Second, we ensured that baseline awareness did not influence our experimental results. We find no statistical difference between treatment and control groups ( $p=.63$ ): approximately 37% of both groups self-report awareness about EVFTA.

Next, we executed a simple automatic random assignment, exposing 50% of respondents to an initial treatment prompt (**Table 1**). We did not block or stratify on any covariates, hence we did not control for blocking variables in our analysis. **Appendices D and E** (p.8) provide balance tests indicating that respondents in the control and treatment groups are statistically equivalent on almost all observable characteristics. We induced perceived economic risk by telling respondents that EVFTA is likely to create both local winners and losers but refrain from anticipating whether the respondents themselves will benefit or face economic loss. Following our theory, we expect the prompt will activate respondents’ risk perceptions and be followed by a willingness to learn about the shock.

**Table 1: Treatment Prompt**

In 2019, the EU and Vietnam signed a trade agreement that will bring about considerable economic change. This trade policy is expected to create a large group of winners (i.e., people who will economically benefit from the agreement) and losers (i.e., people who will face economic losses from the agreement) due to the sector in which they work or the province in which they live. We now would like to ask you about your opinion about the effects of the EU-Vietnam trade agreement. It is okay if you are not sure, just give your best answer.
Note: PAPI 2021 survey. Question D611d1.

We presented respondents with a range of questions about both the micro and macro effects of the EVFTA to assess their trade literacy *and* trigger economic risk perceptions (to potentially benefit or avoid loss), regardless of whether respondents correctly answered the question (**Table 2**). These included questions about the impact of the agreement on *choice, specialization, prices, employment, competition, and investment*. Although theory predicts that globalization will create winners and losers, we know less about whether individuals understand such impacts. To that end, we include a broad set of questions based on Heckscher-Ohlin, Ricardo-Viner, and Melitz (2003). The goal of the design was to prime risk exposure in respondents by first noting that there could be winners and losers, and second, inviting respondents to speculate on who those winners and losers would be across a range of different EVFTA-induced changes.

To our knowledge, this was also the first effort to assess the public's trade literacy in developing economies. In general, trade literacy is low; the average score on the six-point scale is 1.8 with a standard deviation of 1.4.

**Table 2: Trade Literacy Questions**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>Choice</b>	Do you think the recent trade agreement with Europe will increase or decrease the types of goods available in your local area? <i>(Increase/Decrease/Stay the same/DK)</i>	Increase
<b>Specialization</b>	Do you think Vietnam will produce more goods in the following areas after signing the EU-VN trade agreement? <i>a) coffee; b) electronic devices; c) garments; d) chemicals.</i>	a, b, and c
<b>Prices</b>	How might the trade agreement change the price of EU products sold in Vietnam compared to their current price? <i>(Increase/Decrease/Stay the same/DK)</i>	Decrease
<b>Employment</b>	How will the EU-VN trade agreement affect the number of jobs available in Vietnam’s state-owned enterprises (SOEs)? <i>(Increase/Decrease/Stay the same/DK)</i>	Decrease
<b>Competition</b>	Do you think the Vietnamese economy will grow in the long run because of the trade agreement with the EU? <i>(Increase/Decrease/Stay the same/DK)</i>	Increase
<b>Investment</b>	How will the amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Vietnam change? Will FDI increase, stay the same, or decrease? <i>(Increase/Decrease/Stay the same/DK)</i>	Increase
Note: PAPI 2021 survey. Question D611d1.		

To validate that the test induced economic risk, we assess a series of post-treatment questions, including enumerator-reported levels of respondent anxiety, survey duration times, and comprehension scores among respondents (**Appendix L**, p.17). Risk exposure elicits responses such as anxiety, operationalized by higher levels of cortisol in hair and saliva tests (Buckert et al. 2014) and comprehension challenges (Rommel et al. 2017). Anxiety in turn influences an individual’s sense of information insufficiency about the personal gains and losses associated with risk and ultimately, their efforts to seek information (Huurne and Gutteling 2008, Marcus, and Mackuen 1993, Valentino, Huchtings, and Davis 2008). Respondents answering three or fewer questions correctly (87.9%) had higher anxiety, lower comprehension, and took longer to complete the survey than the control group. Respondents who answered four or above correctly (12.1%),

and therefore had pre-existing knowledge about forthcoming changes, had less anxiety, greater comprehension, and survey durations on par with the control group.<sup>8</sup> These figures justify the assumption that the treatment stimulated risk perceptions among respondents who did not already know the answers about EVFTA.

*Outcome Variable: Willingness to Learn about the Distributional Effects of Shocks*

To measure respondents' willingness to learn, we invited all respondents to visit a dedicated website to estimate the difference in actual behavior between treatment and control groups, rather than merely gauge the post-treatment intentions of respondents, as would be the case in standard survey experimental settings.<sup>9</sup> To keep the experiment authentic, we featured an explanatory video about the projected economic effects of EVFTA (**Figure 1A**).

At survey completion, all respondents were handed a card that included a website address and QR code, which directed respondents to a landing page (**Figure 1B**).<sup>10</sup> We included two "placebo" websites on the card, which directed respondents to greater information about procedures for land use rights certificates and information on the governance indicators derived from PAPI. The placebos were important to ensure that our treatment was driving risk perceptions associated with EVFTA, and not just general curiosity, and/or the novelty of receiving a card and QR code at the end of the survey. The placebos can be interpreted as the impact of receiving a card in the absence of a survey prime.

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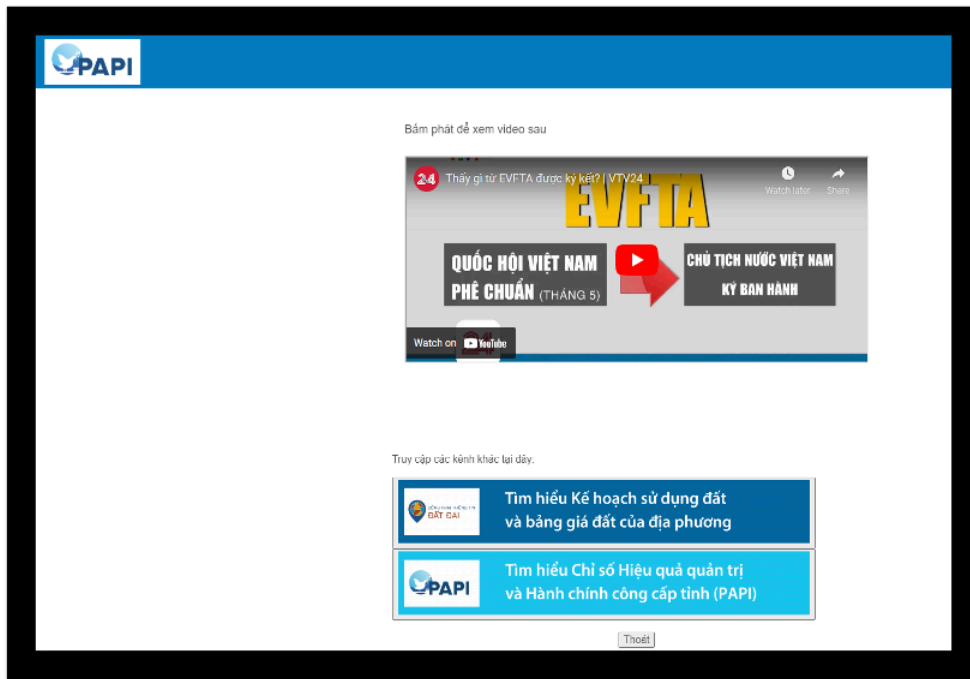
<sup>8</sup> We also studied responses to questions about COVID blame attribution that followed the trade literacy test in the survey, finding that treated respondents who performed well on the test were far more likely than those who did poorly to express support for local government's COVID policy. We attribute this difference to exposed (treated and poor performers) feeling greater anxiety about future well-being caused by COVID-19 (**Appendix L**, p.17).

<sup>9</sup> No monetary incentives were provided to respondents.

<sup>10</sup> The unique code matches respondents with the main survey.

## Figure 1: Survey Experiment Setup

(A) Website with Video to Learn about the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA)



(B) Card Requiring Code to Visit Websites



Note: Panel A shows a website landing page created for the PAPI project. Panel B shows the card handed to PAPI recipients at the end of the PAPI 2021 survey with a QR code to take them to the website.

A critical feature of this experiment is that all respondents must be able to use the internet to seek information about EVFTA. Fortunately, most Vietnamese use smartphones regularly: Vietnam’s internet and cellphone penetration rates are 77.4% and 69%, respectively (Statista 2022). According to the 2021 PAPI survey, residents (51.8%) use the internet less than migrants (59.4%) as primary information sources. While EVFTA video viewings appear small, they are higher than visits to the placebo websites and consistent with global average click-through rates and clicks to national services portals in Vietnam (**Table 3**).<sup>11</sup>

**Table 3: Click-through Rates, by Module**

<u>Module</u>	<u>Click-through rates (%)</u>
European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (Main Outcome)	2.99 (1.70)
Land use (Placebo 1)	2.72 (1.62)
Provincial Administrative Performance Index Governance (Placebo 2)	1.84 (1.34)
Global Average (Chaffey 2022)	0.60
Google Ads (Chaffey 2022)	3.17
Vietnam National E-Service (CECODES 2022)	3.53

Note: Table 3 shows click through rates on the websites for our main outcome and two placebo treatments, compared to global and Vietnamese click through rates from other sources. Standard deviations are in parentheses. For the Vietnam National E-Service module, less than 1% clicked through to complete procedures.

<sup>11</sup> **Appendix P** (p.41) provides a more comprehensive breakdown of click-through rates by treatment status and subgroups. Treated migrants’ click-through rates on the EVFTA module are significantly higher (4.2%) than the averages reported in Table 3.



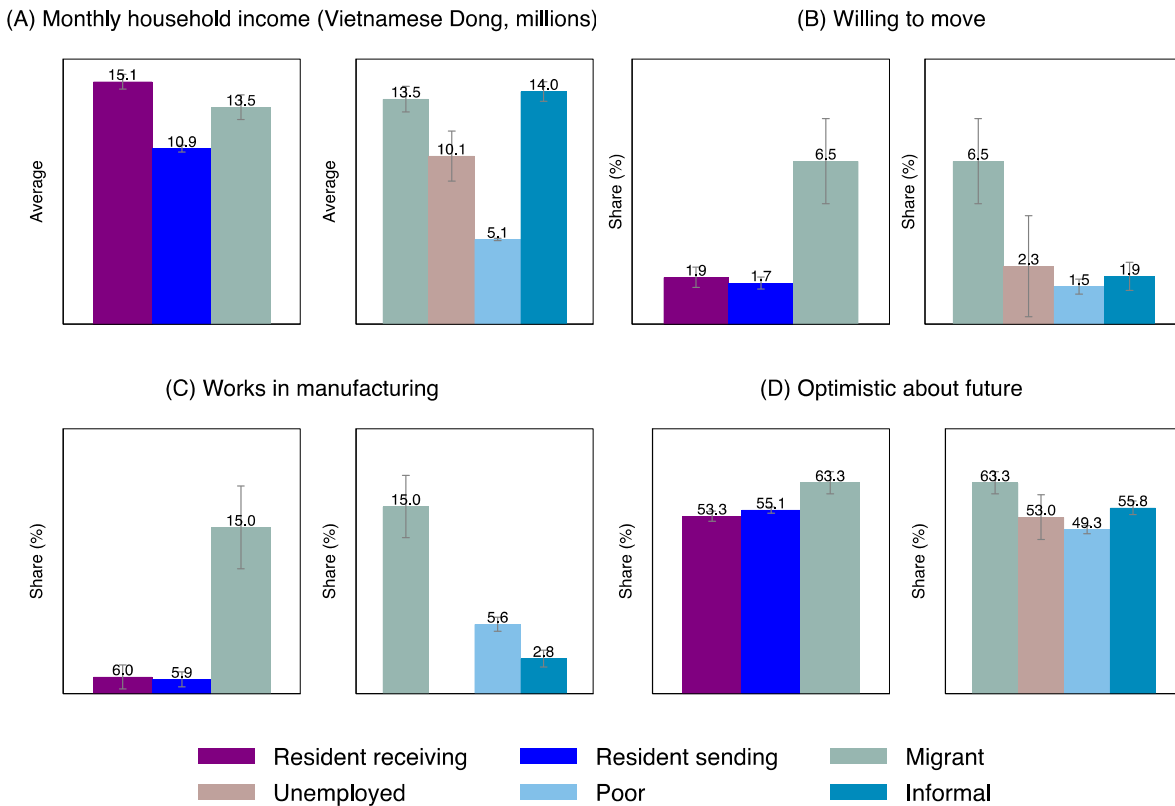
## *Empirical Validation of Differences between Migrants and Residents*

Before testing our hypotheses, we also validate our theoretical assumptions for H2 that internal migrants are: 1) better poised to seek information to capitalize on opportunities than those left behind (capacity); and 2) more exposed to economic risk than other vulnerable groups (motivation), because of their greater exposure to discrimination and economic uncertainty than locals. In **Figures 2 and 3**, the left panel compares migrants (green) to residents in receiving (purple) and sending provinces (blue). The right panel compares migrants to other vulnerable groups, including the non-migrant poor (light blue), unemployed (pink), and workers in the unregulated, informal sector (royal blue).<sup>12</sup> **Figure 2** illustrates that migrants appear to possess several advantages relative to other economically insecure groups. Migrants have an average monthly income of \$587 USD, higher than residents they left behind (\$474), but poorer than residents in receiving provinces (\$656). They have greater human capital relative to poorer populations and the unemployed; their average highest education level is eighth grade (middle school). Middle school education is far below the level that IPE scholars would deem to be trade literate by virtue of exposure to economic theory in school (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006, 2007); however, it does provide migrants with advantages in numeracy and literacy that aid job seeking and resettlement. It is telling that higher shares of migrants (15.0%) are employed in Vietnam's growing manufacturing sector, compared to only 6.0% and 5.9% of receiving and sending residents, respectively, and less than 6.0% of other vulnerable respondents. **Appendices B (p.6) and C (p.7)** provide further statistics on migrants' relative assets.

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<sup>12</sup> As the categories overlap, we code this variable to ensure that the migrant category is not exclusive, but includes poor, unemployed, and informal migrants. By contrast, the poor, unemployed, and informal categories are applied only to receiving and sending residents.

**Figure 2: Comparison of Migrants and Other Groups on Relative Advantages**



Note: Figure 2 illustrates that migrants appear to possess several advantages relative to other economically insecure groups on four measures: A) household income; B) willingness to move to new location; C) employment in manufacturing; and D) optimism about future income. Within each group, the left panel compares migrants (green) to residents in receiving (purple) and sending provinces (blue). The right panel compares migrants to other vulnerable groups, including the non-migrant poor (light blue), unemployed (pink), and workers in the unregulated, informal sector (royal blue). Range bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Migrants are also more insecure, both relative to sending and receiving residents and, by some measures, other vulnerable groups (**Figure 3**). We find migrants are more likely to report difficulties when accessing basic public services and are less likely to be politically engaged. On average, migrants rank governance – an index comprising participation, transparency, accountability, corruption, public administration, public services, environmental degradation, and e-governance - where they live at 44.4 points, which is significantly lower than both receiving (45.9), sending residents (47.3), and other vulnerable groups. Disaggregated analysis

by sub-dimensions reveals that migrants face discrimination in opportunities for public participation, exposure to corruption, and access to public information compared to residents (**Appendix K**, p.16). Unsurprisingly, migrants are far less likely to have state social protections such as health insurance (72.4%) than other residents (89.0% and 91.0% for receiving and sending residents) and vulnerable groups. As we would expect, COVID-19 proved far more disruptive to their livelihoods with 52.0% losing jobs.<sup>13</sup> Migrants also lack *formal* connections; less than a quarter are members of associations that might provide them with access to information and resources, compared to 43.2% of receiving and 57.0% of sending residents. Other vulnerable groups have comparatively greater access to formal networks.

The findings are consistent with the scholarship and confirm critical assumptions underlying H2. Compared to residents, migrants are low-skilled, yet still benefit from relatively greater human capital than other vulnerable groups, employment in high-growth sectors, greater risk acceptance, and mobility. At the same time, migrants are economically insecure; they have fewer formal social connections and face greater discrimination in access to public services and governance than other underprivileged groups. This distinctive combination of features, encompassing greater strength and vulnerability, implies that migrants should have both high capacity *and* motivation to seek information in response to exogenous exposure to risk. They do so to pursue new economic opportunities and/or buffer against the shock.

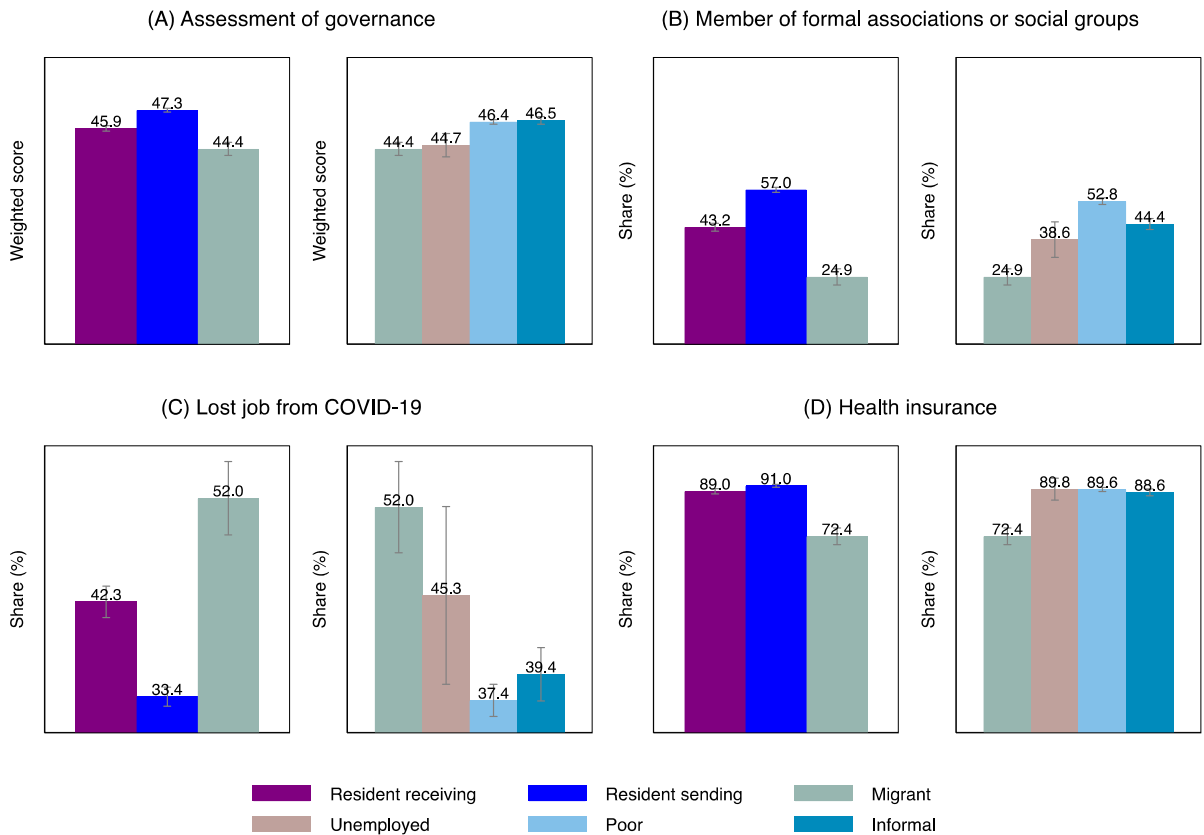
Finally, no statistical difference between trade literacy between migrants and residents in receiving and sending provinces exists (see **Figure 4** and regression analysis in **Appendix Table F1**, p.9). The only difference is the lower-than-average score of poor citizens. The fact that

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<sup>13</sup> 88.7% of migrants lost income due to COVID-19.

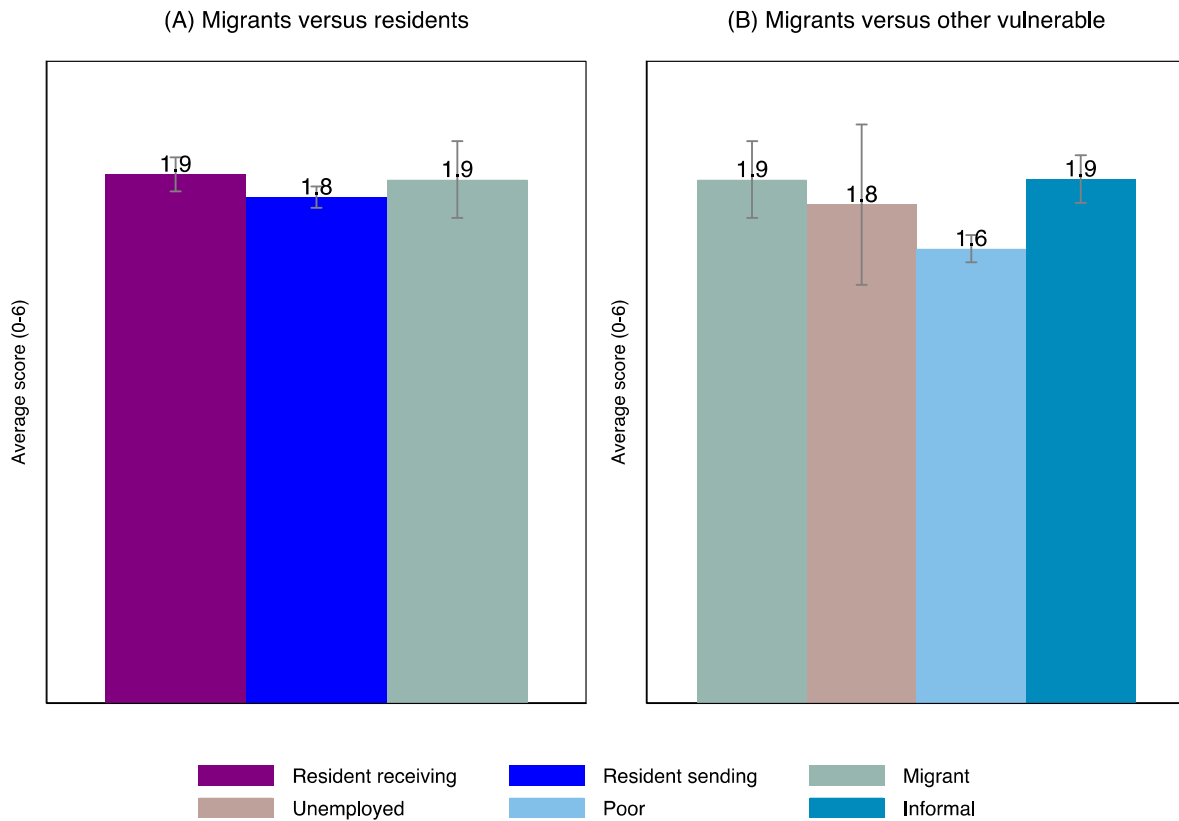
migrants rank among the most literate of disadvantaged groups is critical because it indicates that before our observation period at least some migrants did not have a scarcity mindset and could acquire information about globalization, which may have contributed to their ability to select into higher growth sectors before our survey.

**Figure 3: Comparison of Migrants and Other Groups on Relative Disadvantages**



Note: Figure 3 illustrates that migrants are more insecure, both relative to sending and receiving residents and, by some measures, other vulnerable groups on four measures: A) experience with governance according to the UNDP Provincial Administrative Performance Index (PAPI); B) connections in formal associations or organizations; C) employment shocks due to COVID-19; and D) possession of health insurance. Within each category, the left panel compares migrants (green) to residents in receiving (purple) and sending provinces (blue). The right panel compares migrants to other vulnerable groups, including the non-migrant poor (light blue), unemployed (pink), and workers in the unregulated, informal sector (royal blue). Range bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 4: No Difference in Trade Literacy Between Migrants and Residents**



Note: Figure 4 shows no statistical difference between trade literacy between migrants and residents in receiving and sending provinces exists and that migrants are more literate than other insecure groups. Panel A compares migrants (green) to residents in receiving (purple) and sending provinces (blue). Panel B compares migrants to other vulnerable groups, including the non-migrant poor (light blue), unemployed (pink), and workers in the unregulated, informal sector (royal blue). Range bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

### *Model Specifications*

Does economic risk incentivize Vietnamese respondents to learn about the impacts of global economic shocks? For H1, we predicted that citizens of developing economies exposed to risk are more willing to learn about the distributive effects of globalization. H2 focuses on migrants as the key marginalized subgroup that will be most responsive to economic risk. Finally, H3 examines the effect of our treatment by migrant subgroups: low-skilled manufacturing and subsistence service. Our hypotheses are expressed formally by the following linear equations:

$$(1) \text{ Willingness to learn}_{ip} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{risk}_{ip} + \epsilon_{ip}$$

$$(2) \text{ Willingness to learn}_{ip} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{migrant}_{ip} + \beta_2 \text{risk}_{ip} + \beta_3 \text{risk}_{ip} \times \text{migrant}_{ip} + \epsilon_{ip}$$

$$(3) \text{ Willingness to learn}_{ip} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{risk}_{ip} + \beta_2 \text{manufacturing}_{ip} + \beta_3 \text{risk}_{ip} \times \text{manufacturing}_{ip} + \epsilon_{ip}$$

| migrant=1

*Willingness to learn<sub>ip</sub>* is dichotomous and refers to whether a respondent (*i*) in province (*p*) is willing to learn about EVFTA. In a follow-up analysis in **Appendix H** (p.14), we study the intensive margin,<sup>14</sup> measuring willingness to learn as the duration (in logged seconds) spent on the website.  $\beta_1$  in eq. 1 captures H1, the ATE.  $\beta_2 + \beta_3$  in eq. 2 and 3, instead, captures H2 and H3, the CATE. If H1 is correct, we expect  $\beta_1$  will be positive and significant in eq. 1. However, if migrants are the key group that is sensitive to risk, we expect  $\beta_3$  in eq. 2 will be positive and significant, and the treatment effect will be greater for migrants than sending and receiving residents. Finally, if migrants employed in manufacturing are significantly more willing to learn, then  $\beta_3$  in eq. 3 will be positive and statistically significant.

## Findings

**Table 4** provides the main experimental results for the full population, internal migrants, receiving and sending residents. We run two models: 1) an unadjusted linear model where standard errors are clustered at the provincial level; and 2) a model including provincial fixed effects to hold constant unique socio-cultural, economic, and historical features of each primary sampling unit. Coefficients can be interpreted as marginal probabilities. On the full population of 15,833,

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<sup>14</sup> The length of time spent on the site (see **Appendix H**, p.14) is very interesting, but a more problematic test, because it includes both information about willingness to learn, and reflects the quality of information we provided. Highly motivated learners may have dropped off the site because they felt the information given was inadequate.

2.8% of respondents visited the trade website. However, the coefficients in models 1 and 2 are small (0.4 and 0.3 percentage points, respectively) and not significantly different from zero, indicating that individuals exposed to risk are not more likely to visit the EVFTA website than the control group. The null finding falsifies H1, indicating that risk does not have a significant effect on the full population. Models 5-8 confirm the null results for residents of sending and receiving provinces.

However, we find strong support for H2. In the fully specified model, migrants exposed to economic risk were 2.8 percentage points more likely to visit the trade website relative to migrants in the control group, who had a 1.5% probability of visiting. Risk increased the probability of migrants visiting the EVFTA website by 2.8 percentage points to 4.3%, a 187% marginal effect ( $.028/.015=1.87$ ).<sup>15</sup> Together these findings support our prediction that migrants confronted with economic risk are more motivated to seek new information that might help them improve their welfare.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 4: Relationship between Treatment by and Site Visits for Full Sample and Subgroups**

	Full sample		Migrants		Receiving residents		Sending residents	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treatment	0.004 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.027* (0.012)	0.028* (0.012)	0.005 (0.006)	0.005 (0.005)	0.002 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)
Constant	0.028** (0.003)	0.028** (0.001)	0.015* (0.006)	0.015* (0.006)	0.026** (0.004)	0.026** (0.003)	0.030** (0.003)	0.030** (0.002)
Province FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	15,833	15,833	812	812	4,304	4,304	10,707	10,707
R-squared	0.000	0.012	0.007	0.022	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.014

<sup>15</sup> **Appendix Table G1** (p.10) uses the interaction model in eq. 2 to demonstrate that the treatment effect for migrants is indeed statistically different from the treatment effect for residents. These results are robust to adding multiple confounders and e-balancing based on salient features of migrants.

<sup>16</sup> **Appendix H** (p.14) provides a graphical representation of the distribution of time respondents spent seeking information.

RMSE	0.170	0.170	0.166	0.167	0.165	0.165	0.172	0.172
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Note: Table 4 shows that migrants were the only group to respond to the treatment by visiting the dedicated EVFTA website. The dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent accessed website and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors, clustered at the provincial level, in parentheses († p<0.1, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01)

*Ruling-Out Small Sample Biases*

As the absolute number of treated migrants and the share of treated migrant website visitors is small, a concern is that our results may be dependent on one or two outliers. We address this in two ways. First, we perform a k-fold cross-validation test, where we divide our sample into five test sets, performing the analysis separately on each group and comparing the root mean squared errors (RMSE) of the analysis. The RMSE from each of the test sets is very similar to that of the original model, indicating that our results are not an artifact of idiosyncrasies in our sample (**Appendix I**, p.16). Second, we perform randomization inference (Ding et al. 2016, Hess 2017), where we randomly shuffle our treatment assignment 1,000 times, comparing the ATE for migrants from the re-shuffled treatment assignments to the actual ATE from Table 4 (**Appendix J**, p.16). This allows us to calculate a test statistic, the RI p-value, of  $c/1000$ , where  $c$  equals the number of ATEs that are greater than the ATE in Table 4. We calculate a p-value of 0.027, indicating that less than 3.0% of the permutations are greater than our actual ATE, lending greater credence to the notion that our findings for migrants are valid.

*Placebo Tests to Rule Out Novelty and Curiosity Effects*

**Table 5** re-runs Table 4 for the placebo websites. While a very similar share of control delegates visited these alternative websites (2.9% for all and 2.2% for migrants) compared to the EVFTA website, we find that treatment had no impact on information-seeking on other issues (i.e., land policy and governance). The null effects rule out the potential that our migrant findings result from the simple novelty of receiving a card. Relatedly, they also help rule out the fact that trade questions generated general curiosity about other issues. We can be confident that the trade literacy



questions compelled migrant respondents to want to learn especially about the probabilities of different distributional effects of EVFTA.

**Table 5: Effect of Treatment on Placebo Site Visits**

	Land use				PAPI governance			
	Full sample		Migrants		Full sample		Migrants	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treatment	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	0.008 (0.014)	0.007 (0.014)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.005 (0.013)	0.008 (0.013)
Constant	0.029** (0.002)	0.029** (0.001)	0.022** (0.006)	0.022** (0.007)	0.017** (0.002)	0.017** (0.001)	0.015* (0.006)	0.013* (0.006)
Province FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	15,833	15,833	812	812	15,833	15,833	812	812
R-squared	0.000	0.012	0.001	0.061	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.145
RMSE	0.163	0.162	0.159	0.157	0.135	0.134	0.130	0.123

Note: Table 5 shows that the treatment had no effect on visits to the land use (Panel 1) or UNDP Provincial Administrative Performance Index (PAPI) governance websites (Panel 2). The dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent accessed website and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors, clustered at the provincial level, in parentheses ( $\dagger$   $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ).

### *Other Underprivileged Groups*

**Table 6** repeats Table 4 for other vulnerable groups to ensure that our results are attributable to the unique exposure of migrants hypothesized above and not simply conflating the migrant experience with generalizable features of vulnerability. We look at six groups of non-migrant underprivileged populations: 1) respondents with below-median incomes (the poor); 2) workers in the unregulated informal sector; 3) unemployed workers; 4) rural residents; 5) ethnic minorities; and 6) those who did not complete middle school. As expected, treatment effects for these groups are never statistically different from zero. This finding is also important, because it

indicates that it is the specific features of migrants and not general curiosity about the impact of the trade agreement that drove the information-seeking behavior.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 6: Effect of Treatment on Other Vulnerable Populations**

	Poor	Informal workers	Unemployed	Rural	Ethnic minorities	Only elementary education
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.007)	-0.020 (0.032)	0.001 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.008)	0.000 (0.005)
Constant	0.026** (0.002)	0.030** (0.003)	0.038* (0.016)	0.028** (0.002)	0.033** (0.004)	0.018** (0.003)
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,365	2,290	215	5,665	2,312	4,110
R-squared	0.014	0.036	0.213	0.019	0.031	0.020
RMSE	0.161	0.170	0.172	0.167	0.172	0.135

Note: Table 6 shows that the treatment had no impact on other vulnerable groups visiting the dedicated EVFTA website. The dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent accessed the website and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors, clustered at the provincial level, in parentheses († p<0.1, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01).

### *The Impact of Economic Risk on Manufacturing Migrants*

H3 posits that migrants are not a uniform group and that the migrant effect in Table 4 may be moderated by the perceived motivation and information-seeking capacity that is associated with “manufacturing migrants.” Recall that we theorized all migrants have the motivation to pursue information in response to economic risks; however, manufacturing migrants have *both* greater motivation and capacity to do so. Subsistence migrants, who are concentrated in the low-skilled service sector, are both less impacted by trade exposure and also

<sup>17</sup> **Appendix O** (p.34) also helps rule-out the alternative general curiosity mechanism by studying the relationship between specific answers on the survey, finding that migrants were most likely to look for information on the site when they selected electronics and garments as the industries most likely to be impacted by EVFTA. Since most migrants are employed in these sectors, the relationship indicates that interest in the personal economic effects rather than general curiosity or disagreement are associated with willingness to learn.

have less capacity to seek economic information because of their scarcity mindset.<sup>18</sup> Our current research design does not (and cannot) distinguish the relative contribution of manufacturing migrants' motivation versus capacity, which we anticipate are at higher levels and highly correlated among manufacturing migrants.<sup>19</sup> **Table 7** reports findings for H3, examining whether treated migrants employed in globalization's winning sectors, such as manufacturing, are more willing to learn about an economic shock than other migrants.<sup>20</sup>

We find that manufacturing migrants and those employed in foreign firms, which account for 70% of Vietnam's manufacturing exports (World Bank 2020), are 8 and 16 percentage points more likely to visit the EVFTA website than migrants employed in other sectors or domestic, Vietnamese firms. Critical to our analysis, we find the effect of manufacturing and foreign firms holds only for migrants and not for the general population. Our results appear to indicate that migrants who possessed the capacity to make pro-growth choices before exposure to our treatment were the ones most likely to respond to the risks associated with EVFTA.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> **Appendix N** (p.31) uses an open-ended question to validate the assumption that manufacturing migrants are less impacted by a scarcity mindset. Manufacturing migrants overwhelmingly select economic growth as the greatest concerns facing the country, while service-sector migrants state that poverty, jobs, and hunger are Vietnam's biggest concerns.

<sup>19</sup> As we show in the Latent Class Analysis in **Appendix M** (p.22), there is a bundle of characteristics that are associated with manufacturing migrants, including education levels and income (capacity) and higher vulnerability, discrimination, and willingness to play the lottery (motivation).

<sup>20</sup> Respondents self-report their occupation in Vietnamese. We create a new manufacturing dummy variable by coding respondents' occupations according to the [Census' Manufacturing Codes](#) and the [Census' Definitions and Instructions for the Annual Survey of Manufactures](#).

<sup>21</sup> **Appendix Table G4** (p.13) uses a triple interaction between treatment, migrant, and manufacturing status to show that the effect of manufacturing applies only to the migrant subgroup and not to the general population of manufacturing workers.

There are two possible concerns with focusing on manufacturing migrants. First, it was not theorized in our PAP, so it is reasonable to ask why we highlighted this subgroup compared to the dozens of others that were possible. Second, the decision of migrants to seek out manufacturing jobs is not exogenous; demographic, personality, or structural factors may lead certain migrants to pursue manufacturing opportunities which, in turn, may be associated with information-seeking about EVFTA. To confirm that migrants do indeed cluster into ideal types which include manufacturing, we rely on an objective and systematic method to ascertain which migrant type has features conducive to information take-up. We do this in **Appendix M** (p.22) via Latent Class Analysis (LCA), a method for identifying unmeasured class membership among respondents using categorical information about the 812 migrants (Lanza et al. 2018).

**Table 7: Heterogenous Effects of Treatment on Migrants Working in Manufacturing**

	Migrants		Receiving and sending residents	
	Manufacturing (1)	Foreign firms (2)	Manufacturing (3)	Foreign firms (4)
Treatment	0.017 (0.014)	0.019 (0.013)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)
Subgroup	-0.019† (0.009)	-0.015† (0.008)	-0.001 (0.009)	0.008 (0.018)
Treatment*Subgroup	0.079* (0.038)	0.156** (0.042)	0.014 (0.012)	0.022 (0.023)
Constant	0.018* (0.007)	0.015* (0.006)	0.029** (0.002)	0.029** (0.002)
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	794	812	14,884	15,011
R-squared	0.030	0.039	0.012	0.013
RMSE	0.169	0.166	0.170	0.170

Note: Table 7 shows that the treatment was most effective at inducing behavior by migrants in manufacturing and working for foreign firms. The first two columns depict heterogenous effects for migrants and the second two columns show results for formal residents of sending and receiving provinces. The dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent accessed the website and 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors, clustered at the provincial level, in parentheses († p<0.1, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01)

Our LCA uncovers three subtypes of migrants: “LCA-Manufacturing” migrants are associated with 12.4% of the 812 migrants, “Urban Professional” (49.6%), and “Subsistence” (37.9%). “LCA-Manufacturing” migrants are more likely than others to be employed in manufacturing ( $\gamma = 69.8\%$ ), often for foreign firms (39.1%), and relocate to industrial zones (92.1%) instead of urban centers (61.8%). Confirming their greater capacity to seek and process information, they also tend to watch the news (87.1%) and have better formal social networks (41.9%). This subgroup is also more risk-taking, measured by willingness to play the lottery (84.4%), and relatively less likely to experience discrimination than other migrants (53.3%), and more optimistic (73.0%) than service subsistence migrants, but not more so than urban professionals. They are more educated (graduated from middle school (74.2%) or college (31.4%)) than services subsistence migrants, but less educated than urban professionals.

**Appendix Tables M1** (p.25) and **M2** (p.28) subject these predictions to a formal test, finding that treated “LCA-Manufacturing” migrants were more likely to visit the EVFTA website than both subsistence migrants in the low-skilled sector. In sum, this data-mining analysis shows that while the overall effects of risk on willingness to learn were higher for migrants, there was a great deal of variation in which migrants were most motivated by exposure to our literacy test. Ultimately, three factors stand out. Willingness to learn is greatest among migrants who are less constrained by scarcity have enough education to be able to take advantage of economic shocks, are employed in sectors most likely to benefit from increased openness, and are the most likely ‘winners’ of globalization.<sup>22</sup> Critically, the college-educated urban professionals are not as

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<sup>22</sup> These are confirmed by a more traditional approach in **Appendix Table M3** (p.29) that regresses website visits on the interaction of treatment and several salient characteristics of manufacturing migrants’ motivation, capacity, and work locations.

motivated to learn as the LCA-manufacturing migrants, showing that the educational advantage is really about literacy, rather than motivation to seek knowledge.

## **Discussion**

The information-seeking research has yet to find evidence that the disadvantaged are willing to learn when primed about economic risk exposure. At the same time, political economy research contends that only the college-educated understand the distributional effects of globalization and thereby make reasoned economic decisions, leaving no hope for the underprivileged. Thus, two discrete literatures concur that individuals of low- socioeconomic status are economically illiterate and hesitant to seek out information, even in the face of risk, lending support to the popular view that the poor are a source of political support for bad economic policies and misinformed household decisions. We challenge this conclusion and propose a new way forward to better understand the underlying conditions that drive the underprivileged to learn about the impacts of economic shocks. We demonstrate how economic risk serves to prompt select disadvantaged groups – internal migrants – to be more willing to learn about the distributional effects of globalization. Faced with economic risk, migrants respond to any official information that may help them prepare to address changes brought by transformative economic change. Digging deeper, we find that “manufacturing migrants” are far more capable than subsistence migrants, who were pushed rather than pulled to their current locations, of accessing and taking advantage of new trade information.

Future research should test whether our findings hold for democratic developing countries, as our study was conducted in a single-party regime. Treatment effects may be lower in more democratic settings where economic information is more transparently provided by the state and

easier to obtain, reducing the impact of a one-time intervention such as ours. In addition, Vietnam is one of the greatest beneficiaries of globalization, allowing it to rise to middle-income country status, and lifting millions out of poverty (World Bank 2016). Critical to this growth has been Vietnam's exposure to trade and capital. Manufacturing migrants in our study may have benefited more than similarly situated individuals in less successful contexts, where negativity about global integration may be more pronounced. The generalizability of our findings is thus a logical question for future research

Our findings provide insights for future work on information-seeking, development, and individual preferences on trade, particularly in developing countries (Menéndez Gonzales, Owen, and Walter 2023; Rudra, Nooruddin, and Bonifai 2021). Information-seeking scholars should further explore if and how different types of economic risk trigger anxiety and information-seeking, particularly amongst disadvantaged groups who are most vulnerable in these circumstances. Development scholars might consider how improved access to economic information might help – at least some- vulnerable individuals make more reasoned decisions in a liberalizing economy, thereby enhancing the prospects for both their households and the wider economy. Finally, recent evidence has shown that elite framing on the distributional impacts of trade can impact protectionist attitudes in rich nations (Ballard Rosa et al 2022). Results from our analysis suggest that the link between elite framing and trade support may be 'broken' in LDCs conditional upon the respondent's willingness to learn. If so, populists may not be as easily able to manipulate opinions on nationalism and globalization as current research contends.

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