“No Hatred or Malice, Fear or Affection”: Media and Sentencing

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Abstract: We explore how television broadcasting of unrelated criminal justice events affects sentencing. Exploiting as-good-as-random variation in news content before a verdict, we find that sentences are 3 months longer when the verdict is reached after coverage of crime. Sentence increase with media exposure to crime, not crime itself, and the effect tapers off quickly. Our results suggest that professional experience and expertise mitigates the effect of irrelevant external information. This paper highlights the influence of noise in the news cycle: media can temporarily influence decisions by changing what is top-of-the-mind, rather than signaling deeper changes in offending or societal concerns.

Keywords: courts, media, sentencing, crime, judicial decision, cognitive bias
JEL codes: D83, K4, K14, L82

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"You swear and promise not listen to hatred or malice or fear or affection […] *and to decide according to your conscience and intimate conviction, with the impartiality and firmness that befits an honest and free person."*

– French juror pledge

1. Introduction

The right to a fair trial, one of the cornerstones of the criminal justice system, implies that defendants should be tried based only on the facts at hand and not on extraneous factors. However, a growing literature shows that decisions of both citizens (mock juries) and judges are vulnerable to extraneous influences such as physiological fatigue.[2] We show that in an important field setting – criminal courts – actual jurors respond to irrelevant information. Specifically, we show that sentence length varies with media coverage of unrelated crimes.

Our study exploits as-good-as-random variation in television news content at time of trial to estimate the causal effects of media on sentencing decisions made within the French criminal justice system. We combine original administrative data on all criminal records for jury trials in France between 2004 and 2010 (a total of 16,342 criminal cases), and data on the content of the main 8PM national TV newscast, which is followed by 20% of households in France.[3] Because trial start and end dates are set months in advance, cases examined are plausibly independent from what is on the news at the time of a particular trial. Empirically, cases examined are similar regardless of what kind of news stories run immediately before verdicts are handed down. We compare outcomes of trials whose verdicts happen to be rendered just after relatively more coverage of crimes unrelated to the case at hand, versus those preceded by relatively less coverage. We examine jury decisions for both convictions and sentences. We rule out reverse causality – the possibility that TV could reflect ongoing trials – by focusing on stories that do not mention trials or legislation, and by demonstrating that coverage of crimes is not influenced by ongoing trials.

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[2] Danziger et al (2011). Other papers have looked at the degree to which common psychological biases like the gambler's fallacy apply to judges (Chen et al, 2014). Compared to research on judges, there is a much larger literature using mock juries (see Devine et al, 2001 for a review).

[3] Authors' calculations using data from Mediamétrie, a French audience measurement company. Daily audiences are included in the main media dataset that we obtained from the French National Audiovisual Institute.

We find that news stories do not affect convictions. In France, an investigating judge decides which cases to bring to criminal court, so jurors examine only relatively strong cases that have cleared that hurdle. Only 7% of cases in criminal court end in an acquittal.

Jurors in France also vote on the sentence, and we find that news content on the day before the verdict impacts sentence length in jury trials. In criminal courts with lay jurors, each additional news story about felonies increases sentences the following day by an average of 26 days. Being tried after media coverage of crime (which happens for 45% of cases) versus no stories on crime increases sentences by 86 days, or close to 3 months.

In criminal courts in France, sentences for crimes are full years of prison, so in terms of magnitude, the average effect of media coverage of crimes can be interpreted as an increased likelihood that a person will receive a sentence of at least one extra year in prison. The average increase of prison sentences by 3 months after coverage of crime translates into one in four defendants receiving one additional year in prison.

We apply the same methodology to look at the effect of judicial errors on sentencing. Coverage of judicial errors is less frequent, and is concentrated around the coverage of one particular incident of miscarriage of justice, raising questions of external validity. With these caveats in mind, we find that sentences are 40 days *shorter* after coverage of judicial errors, suggesting that jurors adjust sentences both upward and downward depending on media coverage of criminal justice issues. These first-order results on judicial errors are robust to changing the specification, but results on mechanisms are not as robust.

We hypothesize that news on crime temporarily makes crime more salient in jurors' minds. Several facts are consistent with this interpretation. We find that sentences do not respond to local variations in the number of crimes, but only to differences in media coverage of crime. We then show that while news on the day before a verdict is released has a significant effect on sentencing, news further back in time does not, even when the trial lasted several days. Looking at a national survey about public safety concerns and exploiting variations in the exact timing of the survey date, we find that the people are more likely to report "feeling unsafe" on the day after more

media coverage of crime; but in that case also, the effect tapers off quickly. Furthermore, our effects are driven by the presence of crime news rather than the amount of it. Finally, we find that sentence lengths vary only with news about criminal justice, not with news on other upsetting topics such as natural catastrophes or unemployment.

We explore whether experience and expertise can help mitigate media biases, by asking whether judges are less prone to respond to media content. We show in different settings that news stories do not affect decisions made by judges. There is no effect of media on decisions in corrections courts, where professional judges examine misdemeanors. Our analyses focus on the most serious misdemeanors, but we cannot reject that this is due to the difference in types of cases being tried. We then exploit a discontinuity at age 16, leading felonies to be judged by laypeople, instead of only by judges. We find that news stories have no effect on decisions for defendants younger than 16 (judged only by professional judges), while they affect sentences in cases with defendants older than 16. This suggests that professionalism mitigates the effect of domain-pertinent but irrelevant external information, though we note that the difference in effect sizes between the two age groups is not statistically significant. Lastly, we also find no effect of media in appellate courts, where judges and attorneys are more experienced. These results in different contexts suggest that professional experience and expertise reduce the effect of domain-pertinent but irrelevant external information.

Our paper provides some of the first quasi-experimental field evidence of the effects of irrelevant information on criminal justice outcomes. While several studies look at the effect of media on sentencing, they use surveys of jurors (Dowler, 2003; Surette, 2014), or mock juries (see Greene, 1990, for a review). Some recent papers have used data on real convictions, but focus on sentencing variations due to intrinsic characteristics of jurors and defendants, including age (Anwar et al, 2014); race (Anwar et al, 2012; Gazal-Ayal and Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2010; Shayo and Zussman, 2011); or political opinions (Anwar et al, 2015). Other work looks at how consistent media coverage of courts can influence judges' decisions by increasing accountability (Lim et al 2015; Lim, 2015).

Our paper also contributes to a growing literature showing how news provision and its

biases influence policy-relevant behaviors (reviewed in DellaVigna and La Ferrara, 2015), including voter turnout (Gentzkow, 2006; Cagé, 2013); corruption (Ferraz and Finan, 2008); political accountability (Snyder and Strömberg, 2010); election results (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; Gerber et al, 2009; Enikolopov et al, 2011); or conflicts (Yanagizawa-Drott 2014). More broadly, audiovisual content can also affect offending (Dahl and DellaVigna, 2009), adolescent attitudes (Kearney and Levine, 2015), and fertility (La Ferrara et al, 2012). We show that there can be large impacts from small variations in what media coverage puts top-of-the-mind before a decision. This factor is somewhat accounted for by modern democracies: for example, in France, the media may not interview candidates or publish polls the day before an election; in the United States, juries may be isolated during a trial so that they will not be influenced by media coverage of the case they are considering.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we describe French institutions and the data we use. Section 3 discusses our identification strategy. Section 4 presents the effect of media on juror decisions, and section 5 explores mechanisms. Section 6 turns to the effects of media content on judges' decisions, and section 7 concludes.

2. Institutions and Data

2.1. French Courts

There are three types of criminal courts in France: corrections courts (*tribunal correctionnel*), criminal courts (*cour d'assises*), and juvenile courts (*tribunal pour enfants*). If the maximum sentence for an offense is less than 10 years, it is tried in corrections court; if the maximum sentence is more than 10 years, the offense is tried in criminal court. For simplicity, we refer to cases judged in criminal court as "felonies," even though they represent only a small subset of all felonies – the most severe ones.[4] Defendants younger than 18 at the time of misdemeanors, or 16 at the time of felonies, are judged in juvenile court. While offenders may admit guilt in

[4] Using the criminal record data described below, we find that only about 0.5% of criminal cases are tried in criminal court, and that these are mainly cases of murder, forcible rape, armed robbery, and aggravated assaults leading to permanent disability. The vast majority of cases, including many felonies, are tried in corrections court.

court, there is no plea-bargaining procedure for felonies: all felony defendants have to go to trial. Importantly for our purposes, this means that the selection of felony cases that go to trial cannot depend on what is in the news.

Guilt and sentencing are both determined on the day of the verdict in criminal court. Criminal courts examine about 3,000 cases per year. Judicial decisions are made by a jury of nine (first instance) or twelve (appeals) civilian jurors and three judges.[5] Defendants are tried in the county (*département*) where the offense occurred in first instance trials, and in a different county within the same judicial region for appellate trials.

Jurors are randomly drawn from among French citizens older than 23 who are registered to vote. A pool of forty potential jurors is selected for a court session, which typically lasts about two weeks, during which one to ten cases are heard, with each trial generally lasting two or three days. All forty jurors show up to court at the beginning of each case, and members of the jury are selected at random. Attendance is mandatory, with a compensation of roughly 100 USD per day in court. The defense attorneys and prosecutor are allowed to exclude 5 and 4 jurors, respectively. However, unlike in the U.S., there is no questioning of potential jurors and selection relies on very little information: name, age, gender, occupation, and a person's demeanor as they walk to the jury box. Importantly for our work, this means that jurors cannot be excluded based on their consumption of media or their perception of current events.

The jury first votes on culpability. There is a single vote on guilt, and a conviction needs a two-thirds majority. Only 6% to 7% of defendants are acquitted in criminal court.[6] This low number is likely due to the fact that investigating judges have to decide that there is enough evidence against the defendant for the case to be pursued in criminal court. Though these numbers are not directly comparable, in the U.S.,

[5] In this paper, we examine pre-2012 institutions. Since 2012, these numbers went down to 6 and 9 jurors, respectively. One of the three judges, known as the president, leads the trial. Very high-profile cases, in particular linked to terrorism, are judged solely by judges.

[6] Calculated by the authors using official statistics on overall outcomes of trials from the Ministry of Justice (Ministère de la Justice (2012), p. 127). Chaussebourg and Lumbroso (2008) look at appellate cases, and find a rate of acquittal of 7% for this subset of cases – which is low, given the selection. For the counties for which we have data on acquittals, we find that 7.5% of cases ended in an acquittal.

acquittals represent only 1% of felony case outcomes (Reaves, 2013).[7] In England and Wales, 11.9% of offenders judged by Crown courts were found not guilty.[8]

If the defendant is found guilty, the jurors vote on sentence length immediately after. Each juror writes down a sentence length. There are as many iterations of this vote as needed for one sentence length to obtain a strict majority (according to articles 355 to 365 of the French penal code). There are no strict sentencing guidelines in France: the minimum possible sentence in criminal court is generally one year, or two years if the maximum penalty is life imprisonment. Sentences in criminal courts are typically given in increments of full years.

For criminal cases, investigations typically take a long time: the median length of investigation is 3.5 years.[9] Court dates are determined months in advance and the jury pool receives a notification at least one month before the trial, reinforcing the idea that the precise date of a trial is not correlated with events that take place at that time.

Felonies committed by 16- and 17-year-olds are judged in criminal court, but juvenile laws still apply. While possible penalties are less severe than for adults, the structure of this criminal court is similar in many ways to adult criminal court, and in particular also includes civilian jurors. By contrast, juvenile courts have one judge and two assessors, who are appointed for 4 years. About 350 felonies committed by offenders under the age of 16 are tried each year, and about 300 juveniles aged 16 to 17 years old are tried for felonies in criminal court.[10]

2.2. Court Data

Our main data source on sentencing is criminal records (*casier judiciaire*), kept by the

[7] The acquittal rate is much higher for offenders who go to jury trial. For example, Anwar et al. (2012) find that about 27% of jury trials in Florida lead to no guilty conviction, but less than 10% of defendants actually have a jury trial. The remaining 90% plead guilty, leading to the very low overall acquittal rates. Since there are no plea bargains in France, the relevant comparison acquittal rate would be acquittals of all felony defendants, and not only those decided in a jury trial.
[8] Ministry of Justice (2013), p.31.
[9] See table 1. Investigation length is defined as the time between crime and trial, so it is the sum of the time between crime and arrest, and time between arrest and trial. While we cannot parse these out in our data, on average nationally, there are 24 – 26 months between crime and arrest, and 34 – 36 months between arrest and trial (Ministère de la Justice (2012), p. 127).
[10] Authors' calculations, using court data, presented in table 7.

French Ministry of Justice. Criminal records have one observation per criminal court conviction. No criminal record is kept if the trial ended in an acquittal. Criminal records are collected for administrative purposes: judges check them at trial, they are (very selectively) used for background checks, and the French Ministry of Justice uses them for statistical purposes. They contain information on the date and county of conviction, offenses (type of offense, date of offense) and sentences, as well as basic socio-demographic information such as age, gender, and nationality. We analyze outcomes for convictions from between 2004 and 2010.

The upper part of table 1 presents descriptive statistics on adult convictions in criminal court between 2004 and 2010. Felony defendants are mostly male (94%) and French (88%); they are 38.6 years old on average, and 36% have had some past conviction. Forcible rape is the most frequent crime tried in criminal courts (47%). The average sentence is around 10 years, with up to 15 years for murder.[11]

In order to fully understand how media might influence criminal court outcomes, we sought to obtain data on acquittals and trial length (criminal records report only the date of the verdict). Some court clerks keep this information on annotated court schedules, so we contacted all 95 counties, and 44 were willing to share their court schedules. Of these, 25 counties had annotated schedules, which included information on trial outcomes, and allow us to determine whether a defendant was convicted, acquitted, or appealed the decision.[12] For this subsample, there are 514 acquittals for 6,769 trials (7.6%). The remaining 19 counties did not have information on acquittals, but their schedules include trial start dates. In online appendix A, we provide more details on these subsamples. The cases in these subsamples are very similar to our main sample in terms of defendant characteristics, crimes, and sentences. The main results in this paper use the criminal records dataset, and we specify when we use the criminal court schedule datasets.

[11] Only 3.5% of sentences are fully suspended and 84% of sentences are only prison time (no part of which is suspended). We code life imprisonment sentences as being equal to 32 years, which is the highest sentence other than life imprisonment. Only 0.64% of sentences are life sentences; and we show that our results are robust to dropping life sentences (online appendix table D4, column 2).

[12] What exactly appears on the court schedule is left to the court's discretion. Some courts update their schedules after the trial and include information on the outcome of the trial, while others do not. We noted no particular pattern according to which courts update their schedules to include information on trial outcomes.

2.3. French Television: Viewership and Data

Television is a popular source of information in France, with two channels splitting most of the audience shares: TF1, a privately owned, non-cable channel, draws between 31.8% (2004) and 24.5% (2010) of viewers; France 2, a public channel, draws between 20.5% (2004) and 16.1% (2010) of viewers. In particular, the 8PM news programs are very popular and influential, so much so that they are often dubbed the "8PM mass." The 8PM TF1 and France 2 news programs have average audiences of 8 million and 5 million viewers per day, respectively (from a population of 65 million in France).[13] Both programs last roughly 40 minutes. Programming on free audiovisual media (including TF1 and France 2) is mandated to be non-partisan. This neutrality is enforced by the Superior Counsel of Audiovisual Media (CSA).

The National Audiovisual Institute archives all 8PM news broadcasts. We collected data on TF1 and France 2 news broadcasts from between 2004 and 2010. For each news story, we have information on the title, date, place, and length of the story, and a list of keywords describing its content. Archive staff assign those keywords using a precise standardized list. There is an average of 24 stories per day, per channel. Since we are most interested in the effect of jurors' environment on sentencing, we limit our sample to national news, which represents an average of 15 stories per day.[14] We also obtained from the National Audiovisual Institute information on viewership for each news broadcast, as calculated by Médiamétrie.

We use the keywords describing the content of each story to construct indicators of coverage of crime and criminal justice. We kept keywords that appear more than 20 times between 2004 and 2010 (2,636 words – more than 80% of all keywords). We grouped them into categories relevant to measuring coverage of crime and criminal justice: felonies, criminal law, trials, and judicial errors. Using this keyword classification, we then calculate the number of news stories per day that include keywords on felonies and judicial errors, and the number of minutes devoted to these subjects.

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[13] The figures on viewership in this paragraph are based on the authors' calculations using data from Mediamétrie, a French audience measurement company. This data was included in the main media dataset.

[14] Authors' calculations, using the main media dataset.

We also create a measure for stories about crimes committed (henceforth labeled "perpetrated felonies"), which are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. We identify these as news stories including "felony" keywords, but no "criminal justice" keywords, such as "trial," "verdict," "court," "hearing," or "appeal." Appendix A presents the full list of words used to construct these measures.

For each day and each topic, we construct three measures: number of stories, number of minutes, and dummies for whether these topics were covered at all. Stories from both TV channels, TF1 and France 2, are grouped together in our measures. Figure 1 illustrates variations over time in stories on crime: there is substantial variation in coverage of crime. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the coverage of stories between 2004 and 2010. While there are many stories about crime, with a lot of daily variation, news on miscarriage of justice is rarer, and at least 75% of these stories relate to the infamous "Outreau trial,"[15] in which a dozen people had been wrongly convicted for sexual abuse on children, based on false witness testimony. Since stories about judicial error most often relate to this single event, our main results focus on coverage of crimes.

2.4. Crime

We compute the number of crimes per county using two data sources. First, we use official police statistics, which report the monthly number of offenses per county. This data is publicly available on the open data platform of the French government (www.data.gouv.fr). We calculate the number of felonies per county and per month. There are on average 18 felonies per county and per month recorded by the police, amounting to about 1,736 felonies per month in France. In figure 2, we present the monthly variation in number of felonies and number of media stories on crime between 2004 and 2010. The variation in number of media stories on crime in a given

[15] We calculate this percentage by looking at the number of stories on judicial errors that include one of two words: "Outreau" or "Burgaud" (the judge in charge of that case). This gives us a lower bound for the percent of stories on judicial errors that are about the Outreau case, since some other coverage on Outreau may not have included direct mentions of either.

month does not directly match the variation in number of offenses.[16]

Our second measure of crime comes from the criminal records data presented in section 2.2. Criminal records include the date that the crime was committed. Using data for 2004-2015, we can determine the number of crimes that led to a conviction in the following years, at the day and county level.[17]

The two datasets have different strengths and weaknesses. The police data records all crimes, but is available only at the month level. Criminal records capture offending at the day level, but only keep track of crimes for which a person was convicted. Note also that court data is at the offender level, while police data is at the crime level; therefore, court statistics yield slightly higher overall numbers than police statistics, since one crime could have multiple perpetrators.

2.5. Perceptions of Crime

Lastly, we use a national victimization survey to get a measure of people's perception of safety and insecurity. This survey has been administered each year since 2007 by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), and we used data collected from 2008 to 2010.[18] Roughly 17,000 people are surveyed each year, so there are 50,817 respondents over the period from 2008 to 2010. We obtained from INSEE a specific dataset containing the exact date that each survey was administered. In order to measure people's perception of safety, we use the answer to the following question: "Do you sometimes feel insecure in your neighborhood?" The possible responses are: never (77.6%), rarely (9.5%), sometimes (9.5%), and frequently (3.2%).

[16] At the yearly level, the number of news stories on crimes is correlated with the number of actual felonies, as shown appendix figure B1. It is only in the short run that variations in crimes differ from media coverage thereof.

[17] We exclude offenses that take place on the first day of the month, since these capture all offenses whose date is uncertain. 58% of the cases are tried within 5 years of the offense date, and 80% with 7 years. Our "criminal records" measure of offending captures more offenses at the beginning of the 2004-2010 period than at the end of that period.

[18] A complete description of the survey (in French) can be found at: http://www.insee.fr/fr/methodes/default.asp?page=sources/ope-enq-victimation.htm

3. Empirical Strategy

Our main identification strategy exploits variations in the exact timing of news stories and trials. We compare verdicts handed down just after more coverage of crime to verdicts handed down following less media coverage of crime. We investigate the effect of media on two main outcomes: conviction and sentence length. Since trial dates in France are set months in advance, the exact day of a trial is plausibly unrelated to the content of news on the day before the verdict (more discussion of this below). We estimate equations of the form:

$$\mathrm{Y_{i,t,j}} = \alpha \mathrm{Media_{t-k}} + \beta \mathrm{X_t} + \gamma W_j + \delta \mathrm{Z_i} + \varepsilon_{i,t,j} \quad (1)$$

With the assumption that the conditional mean of the errors is zero:

$$E(\varepsilon_{i,t,j} \mid \mathrm{Media_{t-k}}, \mathrm{X_t}, W_j, \mathrm{Z_i}) = 0 \quad (2)$$

$\mathrm{Y_{i,t,j}}$ is the trial outcome (conviction or sentence length) for person i whose verdict happened at date t in county j; $\mathrm{Media_{t-k}}$ captures measures of media coverage on relevant topics k days before the verdict; $\mathrm{X_t}$ controls for time (day of the week, calendar month and year fixed effects); W_j controls for county of trial; $\mathrm{Z_i}$ controls for defendant characteristics (offense, type of court (appellate court, normal court), age, gender, a dummy for French citizenship, pre-trial custody (number of days), investigation length (number of days), and number of prior convictions in the past five years). Standard errors are clustered at the county level, unless otherwise specified.

In our main specifications, we define "Media" as the number of news stories on a given topic, and we present results for k = 1: in this case, we measure the effect of news stories on the day before the verdict. Using the same basic structure, we can conduct a "placebo experiment" by looking at the effect of media after the verdict on a trial's outcome, since posterior events cannot influence that trial's outcomes. We also run specifications that include measures of news stories on the day before and the day after the verdict. In our main analyses, we do not include media content on the day of the verdict, since its effect is a priori ambiguous. While the 8PM news broadcast that takes place on the day after the verdict could not influence a trial's outcome, some of the events covered on the 8PM news on the day of the verdict

might also have appeared in morning papers and radio shows. Therefore, this news on the day of the verdict cannot be seen unequivocally as news "before" or "after" a verdict.

Identification rests on the assumption that the exact timing of trials is not related to TV coverage of crime and criminal justice. One might worry about reverse causality – more serious trials are more likely to be covered on TV. Note first that most felonies and most trials do not make national news. Furthermore, several years typically go by between offenses and trials, so on any given date, crimes that are being covered are not those that are being tried. Another concern is selection bias: attorneys could factor in public sentiment when choosing the trial dates, trying to avoid periods of higher crime coverage. However, trial dates are set several months in advance, as a function of availabilities of judges, attorneys and courtrooms. Trial length is determined before the schedule is set, based on the number of experts and witnesses. Jurors are summoned at least 30 days before the trial starts. So while season or month (which we control for) could potentially be manipulated, last-minute planning to avoid a trial in an unfavorable media climate seems very unlikely.

Table 2 presents the correlation between characteristics of cases being tried and coverage of felonies and judicial errors at t-1. Each panel represents independent regressions – we examine the effect on sentence length of three different types of news: news about perpetrated felonies (which we define as stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation); about all felonies (including stories on trials and legislation); and about judicial errors. For most covariates, differences across media contexts are not statistically significant, and when significant, the point estimates are small. In particular, observables are balanced across media coverage of perpetrated offenses, which is our main measure of crime coverage. For our secondary measure of media coverage of crime – which includes trials and laws – investigations are longer after coverage of crime. This could be because trials after long investigations have a higher probability of being covered in the media. However, importantly for our identification strategy, the last column of table 2 shows that trial length is not correlated with media content on the day before the verdict, confirming that it is not strategically manipulated based on news content. These analyses validate our identification strategy: the exact timing of cases is orthogonal to news coverage of

offenses.

To further address the potential concern that media could cover information on upcoming judicial decisions, our preferred estimates look at the effect of news stories about current crimes and violent offenses, excluding stories about trials ("perpetrated felonies"). As part of our robustness checks, we also exclude stories about crimes that took place in the same county as the trial, to make sure that there could not be overlap between the case tried and news story examined. Appendix table E6 shows that only 2% of stories on crimes took place in the same county as the trial and only 7% took place in an adjacent county.

Another concern could be that there would be more coverage of (unrelated) crime stories when there are more high-profile court cases, because the public's interest in crime would increase.[19] Appendix B shows that there is little empirical relationship between the amount of news on crime and the amount of news on trials.

We investigate the effect of media on two main outcomes: conviction and sentence length. Sentence length is only observed in case of conviction. If media has an effect on acquittals, then our estimates of the effect of news on sentencing would likely be biased by selection (Lee 2009).

4. Media Coverage and Jurors' Decisions in Criminal Court

4.1. Media Coverage and Jury Conviction

We first measure the effect of news coverage of crime on acquittals. This information is available only for the subsample of 25 counties that provided data on acquittals, since criminal records in France report only convictions (see online appendix A for more details). Results are presented in the first four columns of table 3. Each panel of the table represents independent regressions: the effect of news about felonies perpetrated, about all felonies, and about judicial errors is examined separately.

News stories about perpetrated felonies (panel A) have no impact on convictions.

[19] Conversely, time constraints could make news about trials limit coverage of perpetrated felonies.

News stories about felonies in general (panel B, including news on upcoming trials) at t-1 are marginally associated with more acquittals, but the effect is both small and not robust.[20]

We now move to the effect of media on sentence length. Since media does not affect acquittals, the sample of defendants for whom we observe sentences is similar regardless of coverage of crime and judicial errors on the day preceding the verdict.[21]

4.2. Media Coverage and Sentence Length: Jury Decisions

We now turn to the effect of media content on sentence length. We use the full sample of criminal records, since jurors determine sentences for all convictions. Our main results are presented in columns 5 to 8 of table 3. As for acquittals, each panel presents results for independent regressions. Column 5 presents regression results with no controls, and columns 6 to 8 include controls for case characteristics.

Panels A and B respectively present the effect of news about perpetrated felonies (excluding stories on trials and legislation) and all news about felonies. We find significant impacts on sentence length of news about crimes. For each additional story on felonies, sentences handed down the day after the stories run are 24 days longer on average. Results are similar for perpetrated felonies. The difference between these two measures is that one includes trials; the other does not. This indicates that coverage of crimes, not coverage of trials, affects sentences. These results hold with and without controls.

Reassuringly, we find no difference in sentences depending on the content of news stories on the day after the verdict (columns 7 and 8): none of the coefficients are significant. Point estimates are small, with large standard errors. In addition, point estimates for news at t-1 and t+1 are marginally statistically different for perpetrated felonies (p-value = 0.0651). This indicates that civilian jurors respond to the context in which they are making judicial decisions: cases that are otherwise similar tend to

[20] Robustness tests are presented in online appendix tables D1and D2.
[21] We discuss this point further in online appendix D (table D3 and discussion).

get longer sentences when tried after more media reports.[22]

Why are sentences, but not convictions, affected by media? One candidate explanation stems from the difference in how juries vote on convictions and sentences. Since a single vote determines conviction, the marginal voter would have to be affected by media for there to be an effect on conviction. Conversely, sentences are reached through a convergence process; and so *any* juror may be able to influence the ultimate decision through this iterative voting. Another interpretation could be that news stories are more likely to change the perception of crimes' severity, and not the strength of the evidence in the case at hand.

4.3. Robustness Checks

The first concern that we address is that the effect of media on sentences could be counterbalanced by more appeals after coverage of crimes (from the defense) or criminal justice (from the prosecutors). Overall, 14.4% of first instance cases are appealed. This could be driving the null result on convictions, and lead to an understatement of the effects of media on sentencing, if we observe only cases that were not appealed. We investigate this using the date of the first instance proceeding, which is recorded in the court data: when cases were appealed, we only keep the first instance proceeding.[23] All verdict dates are thus now first appearance dates, and we create a dummy equal to one if a case was appealed, our outcome of interest here. Results are presented in column 1 of table 4. All coefficients are non-significant and point estimates are extremely small. News stories do not impact appeals. This also confirms the idea that media does not impact conviction.

In column 2, we present the effect of news on log sentences, this measure being more robust to outliers. News at t-1 remains significant while news at t+1 is not. In column 3, we replicate our results excluding trials that took place in the same county as stories about crime covered the day before or after, as an additional step to make sure

[22] Results are similar when we use the subsample for which we have additional information and, in particular, the subsample used in section 4.1 for results on acquittals (see online appendix table D4).
[23] Since appeals generally take time, we look at appeals judged up to 2012, for cases whose first instance was prior to 2010. This allows us to capture virtually all appeals cases between 2004 and 2010.

that there could be no possible overlap between the case tried and news story examined. Results are extremely close to those presented in table 3.

Another concern might be around differential selection of jurors, based on exposure to coverage of crime. As was outlined in section 2, in the French context, potential jurors can be excluded based only on minimal information. In particular, people are not questioned before being included in a jury, and so attorneys have no information on their relation to media or current events. One might still worry that a different set of jurors could be selected the day after news stories about crime than would have been selected the day before. While unlikely, we control for this scenario by running our main regressions for a subsample of trials that last more than one day, among the sample of cases for which we know trial length. For those trials, jury selection took place before the 8PM news broadcasts of the day before sentencing, and could not be influenced by news. Results are presented in column 4 of table 4. They are similar to those obtained for all cases.

The remainder of table 4 shows that our results are robust to variations in the exact kind of media coverage, and time controls. In column 5, standard errors are clustered by day. In column 6, we control for session fixed effects, for the subsample for which we have information on session (see online appendix A for the description of the subsample). This is a very stringent specification, since each session contains four trials on average. In column 7, we add county-month specific time trends. Results are close to those obtained in section 4.3.

In column 8, we vary our measure of media coverage and exposure. In our main results, we used number of news stories covering felonies. Here, we use the length of media coverage in minutes. Our results tell the same story with this measure of news. Results are similar if we look at the effect of each TV channel – TF1 or FR2 – alone (see online appendix table E5).

4.4. Magnitude of Effects

Our main results imply that each additional news story on crime increases sentence length by 26 days on average, for a 0.7% increase in sentence length per additional

story on crime. The first column of table 5 presents a regression of sentence length on a dummy equal to one if there is at least one news story on crime on the day before the verdict. We find that being tried after a news story on crime, versus no story on crime increases sentences by three months (86 days), which is an average of a 2.4% increase in sentence length. In this subsection, we first contrast these magnitudes to those found in the experimental literature and in field evaluations of the effect of extraneous factors on sentencing, and then unpack these average effects in terms of sentence distribution.

Our average effects are small relative to those in lab experiments testing the effect of biases on sentencing. To take a few examples, Englich et al. (2001) and Englich et al. (2006) find sentences to be 20% to 33% higher, both for professionals and for lay people, after being presented a high versus low sentence anchor. Ogloff and Vidmar (1994) find that mock jurors exposed to TV excerpts of testimonies of sexual abuse victims chose hypothetical sentences 30% higher than mock jurors exposed to less emotional narratives. The fact that our results are qualitatively similar to those obtained in lab experiments, but quantitatively smaller, is in line with the lab study of many other mechanisms (Dahl and Della Vigna 2009, see also Kessler and Vesterlund 2015).

The effects that we find are closer in magnitude to those found in field evaluations of the effect of extraneous factors on sentencing.[24] Eren and Mocan (2016) find that juvenile sentences increase by 35 days, or 6%, after "surprise losses" of the football team from the judge's alma mater. Abrams and Yoon (2007) find that an attorney with 11 years of experience will, on average, obtain sentences that are 1.2 months shorter than someone with only one year of experience, representing a 17% decrease in sentence length. Lim et al. (2015) find that a one standard-deviation increase in coverage of court activities increases the average sentence length of nonpartisan elected judges for homicides, sexual assaults, and robberies by about 5.7 months (3.4%).

[24] Many recent empirical papers look at convictions rather than sentence length (Anwar et al., 2012, 2014; Chen et al., 2016), and so we cannot directly compare magnitudes of effects. The same applies to a lot of the mock jury work, which focuses on convictions (for reviews: see Greene, 1990, or Devine et al., 2001).

Average effects do not fully capture how media affects sentencing, and in particular may not be the best way to interpret magnitudes. Figure 3 plots the sentence distribution, depending on whether there was some coverage of crime on TV on the day before the verdict or not. This graph indicates that, in France, sentences for crimes are full years of prison. So another way to interpret the average effects is that media content increases the likelihood that a person will be sentenced to a higher sentencing bracket of at least one year.[25]

Figure 3 also suggests that the difference in sentences after news about crime appears for longer sentences. This graphical intuition is confirmed using quantile regressions, using controls for offender characteristics, offense and day of the week fixed effects (online appendix C). These results suggest that media coverage of crime affects sentences in the distribution. We estimate, for example, that an additional news story increases the 90th percentile sentence by more than 150 days. Note that except for the top deciles of the treatment effect of news stories on crime, most of the quantile regression coefficients are not significantly different from one another when we include controls.

4.5. Judicial Errors

In panel C of tables 3 and 4, we look at the effect of media coverage of judicial errors on sentencing. As with crimes, we find that news stories on judicial errors have no impact on convictions (table 3, panel C, columns 1–4). Moving to sentence length, one additional story on judicial errors (table 3, panel C, columns 5–8) decreases sentences by 40 days. Those results are robust to many different specifications (table 4, panel C). This suggests that news can sway jurors in both directions – toward more severity after coverage of crimes, and less severity after coverage of judicial errors. In column 9 of table 4, we jointly test the effect of news stories about perpetrated felonies, felonies other than perpetrated felonies (coverage of legal discussions and trials), and judicial errors. The effect of coverage of perpetrated felonies and judicial errors remains similar to what was observed before. The effect of news stories about

[25] The average increase of prison sentences by 3 months after coverage of crime in fact means that one quarter of defendants received one additional year in prison, if we assume that news on TV doesn't cause rank reversals in sentences.

"felonies other than perpetrated" is not significant.

However, as mentioned earlier, stories on judicial errors almost exclusively relate to the Outreau case, in which false testimonies resulted in several innocent suspects spending years in jail, and one defendant who even died while incarcerated. The Outreau miscarriage of justice was covered at various points in time (see online appendix figure F1), and our identification exploits various moments when Outreau came up. However, this context does not allow us to say whether our results would hold for less extreme cases of miscarriage of justice. By contrast, news about felonies are frequent and refer to many different events.

We now turn to mechanism. While the first-order results on judicial errors are robust, our analysis of mechanisms for judicial errors is not as robust. In the remainder of the paper, we focus on the effects of coverage of crime. Similar analyses for judicial error are presented in online appendix F.

5. Mechanisms of Media Influence: Social Trends, Mood, or "Top of the Mind"?

The effect on sentencing decisions of exposure to news about crime and criminal justice could be explained by several mechanisms. Jurors might be responding to changes in the prevalence of crime; media coverage might alter perceptions of crime or criminal justice; media coverage could affect people's overall mood; or media coverage could increase what is "top of the mind" at a given moment.

In this section, we show that news coverage of crime, beyond increases or decreases in the prevalence of crime, affects judicial decisions. We further show that media content has a very short-lived effect: only news on the day before a verdict affects sentencing, but news further back in time does not. Using a nationally representative survey on perceptions of safety and security, we show that the same holds true for people's perception of insecurity. Lastly, we show that this effect is not driven by mood changes: we find that coverage of other "bad news" does not affect sentencing.

5.1. Crime Versus Media Coverage of Crime

Are jurors responding to real changes in crime that are reflected in the news, or are they affected by crime showing up on the news? If coverage of felonies is correlated with frequency of crime, our results could be explained by two causal chains. When there is more crime (and greater TV coverage of crime), jurors might be more likely to have been victims or to know victims of crime, or be more generally concerned about longer-term trends in crime, and to reflect that in their sentencing choices. Alternatively, media coverage may increase the saliency or visibility of crime, or trigger emotional responses. In that case, the effect would be driven by news coverage and not by the prevalence of crime.

A first way to explore whether people are reacting to crime first-hand or coverage of crime is to contrast the effect of stories on crimes within one's county or outside. As a reminder, column 3 of table 4 shows that point estimates do not change much when looking at crime stories that took place outside one's county. When further breaking out news "outside one's county" to news about crimes in adjacent counties or further away, the latter remains significant and similar to our main estimates.[26]

A second way to distinguish the effect of news from the effect of crime is to include controls for crime. As discussed in section 2.4, figure 2 shows that news on crime and crimes registered by the police were not correlated in the short run, giving us leverage to tease out the effect of crime versus coverage of crime. In columns 2 and 3 of table 5, we include measures of numbers of felonies. Column 2 controls for month by county number of felonies using police data, and column 3 controls for day by county numbers of crimes that led to a conviction, using court data (see section 2.4 for more details on these measures). Controlling for crimes does not affect our media point estimates. The effect of local crime on sentences is open to more than one interpretation. Daily crime measured using court data has no effect on sentences, but monthly felonies measured using police data has a negative, marginally significant, effect on sentences.

[26] This result, consistent with the idea that media coverage, not crime, is affecting sentences, is presented in the online appendix table E7. While estimates for coverage of crime within one's county or a neighboring county are imprecise (potentially due to the rarity of such events, shown in table E6), this indicates that our main results are not driven by coverage of crime to which a juror may directly or indirectly have been exposed.

5.2. Effects of Media Exposure

We next explore whether news stories covered when TV audiences are higher have a greater effect on sentences. We split TV audiences around the median, and look at the effect of media on sentences after audiences below median (column 4) or above the median (column 5). Effects are bigger and point estimates are always significant when audiences are above the median, while they are not when audiences are below the median. Although this difference in point estimates is not significant (the p-value is equal to 0.67 for the effect of news about perpetrated crime and 0.57 for all news about crime), this suggests that more exposure to news on crimes increases the likelihood of sentences responding to crime.[27] Note that audience rates could be correlated to what is covered on TV – more people watch the news if it covers horrible crimes – and so we cannot exclude that crimes covered on high audience days differ from those covered on low audience days.

Taken together, these results go against the hypothesis that the effect of media on sentences reflects changes in crime. Instead, this suggests that there is a direct effect on sentencing of the prevalence of crime in the news.

5.3. Saliency Versus Information Gathering: Short and Long-Term Effects

In the previous subsections, we showed that news coverage of crime matters independent of possible effects of trends in crime. Turning to an analysis of the duration of the effects, we show that our results are most consistent with short-lived changes in perceptions of crime.

Figure 4 presents coefficients for a regression which includes both leads and lags in news coverage of crime, relative to the date of the verdict. We find that only TV news on the day before a verdict affects sentencing: more news coverage of crimes at t-2 or

[27] There are on average 15.1 million viewers when the audience is above the median, and 12.6 million viewers when the audiences is below the median. In the "above median" sample, the probability that at least one juror watched the 8PM news the day before is 91% versus 86% for the "below median" sample. The average number of viewers among 9 jury members is 2.1 in the "above median" sample and 1.9 in the "below median." Furthermore, audiences could be correlated with the severity of crime, and so these results could also be driven by unobservable differences in what kinds of crimes coverage draws larger audiences. This similarity could explain why the effects are not significantly different.

further back does not affect sentencing. One could argue that this pattern comes from the fact that judges and jury members pay attention to information only when it is relevant to their decision-making – i.e., when they have to make a judgment. We explore this in two ways.

First, if seeking to collect information before making a judicial decision, people would likely pay attention to news during the whole length of the trial and not just on the day before the verdict. Using the subsample of cases for which we have trial start date, and for which the trials lasts more than two days, we test this hypothesis by measuring the effect of news at t-1 and t-2 on the verdict. Results are presented in column 6 of table 5. We find that while news on the day before the verdict affects sentences, news stories during the trial but prior to the day before the verdict have no effect. The sample is smaller than our main sample, and difference between news at t-2 and news at t-1 is not significant for news about perpetrated crimes (P-value equal to 0.3) but significant at the 5% level for news on crime in general.

In order to further test the role of information gathering, we look at the effect of media on the intensive versus extensive margin. We regress sentences on a dummy equal to one if there was media coverage of crime on the day before the verdict and on the number of news stories (table 5, column 7). All the effect comes from the extensive margin: while having been exposed to stories on crime before the verdict affects sentences, there is no additional contribution of each additional story. Assuming that each additional story would provide more information on crimes, this result is less consistent with learning and seems to us more consistent with news putting crime on top of people's mind.

5.4. Effects of Crime News on Salience of Crime

To further uncover what mechanisms may be explaining our results, we use responses to a nationally representative survey on perceptions of public safety and insecurity from between 2008 and 2010. This allows us to explore whether media coverage of crime directly influences perceptions of crime. The survey takes 3-4 months to administer, and some people will be surveyed after more coverage of crime, and others after less. We exploit this variation to see if media content affects responses.

Results are presented in column 8 of table 5, and in figure 5. First, survey respondents declare more frequently that they feel insecure in their neighborhood on the day after news stories about perpetrated felonies. Moreover, this effect is limited in time; only news on the day before the survey affects responses. The fact that we replicate our main findings in this survey sheds light on mechanisms. First, a random sample of the population is affected by media content. This indicates that the effect of media on sentences cannot be fully explained by jurors paying more attention to news stories on crime because they are making judicial decisions, since people did not know ahead of time that they would be administered this survey and had no reason to factor in media content in their responses. Second, this makes it unlikely that the influence is fully mediated by judges or attorneys leveraging these news stories in their recommendations to the jury. This analysis of timing and the survey evidence suggest that the effect of media coverage of crime is mediated by crime news making crime more salient to jurors.

5.5. Bad News Versus Crime-Specific Information

Several papers have documented the effect of irrelevant but upsetting information on people's behavior (Card and Dahl, 2011; Chen, 2014). News about crime could be just another type of upsetting news, and any bad news might increase sentence length because of the bad mood of an individual playing a role in determining the sentence.

In order to investigate the general effect of bad news on sentence length, we construct a database of keywords appearing more than 200 times between 2004 and 2010.[28] We report the number of stories that contain each keyword per day. Online appendix table E1 presents the effect of several types of bad news at t-1 and t+1 on sentences. Columns 1–4 document the effect of news stories on strikes, natural disasters, social conflict and unemployment,[29] while columns 5 and 6 present the effect of news about judicial error and murder – the two most common keywords in the judicial error and

[28] Those keywords represent less than 2% of the keywords used in the database but around 60% of the occurrences (the vast majority of the keywords are used only once).
[29] These keywords have been chosen because they are used more than 1,000 times and capture bad news.

felony aggregates. For this subset of frequent keywords, only bad news related to criminal justice – crimes or judicial errors – has an effect on sentencing.[30]

5.6. Heterogeneous Effects by Type of Offense Tried and on TV

In table 6, we present the effect of news by type of crime covered and by type of offense tried.[31] Panel A presents the effect of news on all perpetrated felonies, by type of offense being tried; panel B distinguishes between news on sexual crimes (0.15 news story per day), news on murders (0.5 news story per day) and news on other kinds of crimes (0.26 news story per day). Column 1 presents results for all offenses being tried; and columns 2–5 present the effect of different news on sentences for different types crimes: murder, aggravated assaults (including involuntary manslaughter and torture), sexual crimes, and property felonies (mainly armed robbery). Panel A shows that sexual crimes and property crimes are more influenced by news than violent crimes. Moving to the first column of panel B, it appears that only news on sexual felonies perpetrated at t-1 appear to be significant. Even if coefficients are not significantly different from that for coverage of murders, sexual crimes seem to have a greater effect on sentencing.

Results by crime type (columns 2 to 5) suggest that verdicts are not affected by news about crimes of the same type as the one judged. Stories on sexual crimes have significantly more effect on trials for violent crime than stories on murders. The opposite is true for trials for sexual crimes, though the difference is not significant.

News stories about murders have no effect on sentences for trials for murder (column 2) but have a *negative* effect on aggravated assaults (column 3). This could come from a contrast effect. Indeed, crimes aggregated in column 3 are similar but less severe than the murders covered by the news.

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[30] The coefficients for the regression of sentences on news at t-k for different values of k are presented in online appendix H.

[31] Further explorations of heterogeneous treatment effects, in particular according to position of the news stories in the 8PM news lineup and defendant and juror sociodemographic characteristics, are presented in online appendix E. We find no significant differences relative to those factors.

6. Professional Judges and Media

Thus far, our analyses reflect decisions made by a jury that includes civilian jurors who have no particular legal or criminal justice experience. Now we ask, how does media affect decisions made by professional judges alone? On the one hand, media might sway civilian jurors particularly, because they have little experience from which to draw other reference points. On the other hand, a lengthy literature has shown that professional judges' decisions are affected by extraneous factors. Ideally, we would like to compare how sentences vary by news coverage for similar cases, depending on whether a case is judged by only judges, or also by a jury that includes civilians. Unfortunately, such a setup does not exist, so we present different strategies to get at this question.

Our first strategy is to look at misdemeanors, which professional judges examine alone. We focus on the most severe misdemeanors, but acknowledge that differential effects might be driven by the difference in cases examined. We then turn to juvenile procedures: before 16, youth are tried in juvenile court (with no lay jurors), and after age 16, they are tried in criminal court for felonies. We can exploit this discontinuity to contrast the effects of media on professionals versus laypeople. Lastly, we compare first instance proceedings to appeals, the latter having more experienced teams of judges and attorneys.

The two first columns of table 7 present characteristics of cases tried in corrections courts, for all severe violent misdemeanors (defined as crimes for which the maximum sentence in the French Criminal Code is at least seven years, column 1) and for the most severe sexual misdemeanors (sexual aggressions for which the maximum sentence in the French Criminal Code is at least seven years, column 2).[32] Defendants are similar to criminal court defendants in terms of gender and nationality (see table 1 for comparison), but they tend to be younger (35.4 years old versus 38.6 years old). Investigation length is shorter (3 years versus 5 years), and sentences are much

[32] In appendix table G1, we provide statistics on all cases judged in corrections courts. Many rapes are re-qualified as "sexual aggressions" due to lack of evidence or in order to avoid long investigations and trials. In recent years, several bills were introduced to reduce this practice and ensure that all rapes are tried in criminal courts (see Senate bill 249, on January 11, 2012 or Senate bill 368, on February 13, 2014). These cases are therefore cases that legislators are moving to see tried more consistently in criminal court.

shorter (1 year versus 10 years), especially when focusing on prison sentences, excluding suspended sentences.[33]

The first two columns of table 8 present the effect of media on correctional case outcomes. As sentences and imprisonment are usually different in correctional courts, we present the effect of media on the two different outcomes: the effect of media on overall sentence length is presented in panel A; the effect of media on imprisonment is presented in panel B. We find that there is no effect of media coverage on either the most severe misdemeanors (column 1) or on severe sexual misdemeanors (column 2). Not only are the coefficients non-significant; they are also very small, even in terms relative to the average sentence (less than 0.4%). Given our sample size, we have a well-estimated zero effect. Once again, we cannot rule out the fact that this difference is due to differences in the kind of offenses being tried, but this does suggest that decisions by professionals are not affected by media.

Trials for juveniles in France offer a potentially cleaner research design. For felony offenses, age at offense determines whether a case is judged in juvenile court or in criminal court: before 16, youth are judged in juvenile court, and between 16 and 18 years old they are judged in juvenile criminal court, which includes 9 civilian jurors.[34] The data confirms that this rule holds empirically: 98.5% of felony offenders less than 16 years old are tried in juvenile court, and 95% of youth more than 16 years old are tried in criminal court, though not as adults. This setup allows us to compare similar cases, which based on the age of the defendant will be judged by a jury including laypeople. To be charged as felonies, offenses committed by juveniles have to be very severe. Columns 3–8 of table 7 compare characteristics of juveniles tried in criminal court versus juvenile court. While offending profiles are different (columns 3 and 4) for the overall sample, when we limit ourselves to 15- and 16-year-olds (columns 6 and 7), the crime structure is similar (around 70% of sexual crimes), investigations are always very long and socio-demographic status are similar (column 8 presents the P-

[33] In corrections courts, sentences are often a mix of a prison sentence and suspended sentence (for example 6 months of imprisonment and 18 months of suspended sentence). Using our sample on corrections courts, we calculate that on average, 33% of one's sentence is a suspended sentence. Only 20% of defendants have a sentence that is only imprisonment, with no suspended sentence. By contrast, in criminal court, on average, 90% of the sentence length is imprisonment, and 84% of sentences contain only imprisonment with no suspended prison time.

[34] Criminal courts for juvenile include 9 jury members and three professional judges (like criminal courts for adults). In contrast to adult criminal courts, two magistrate assistants have to be specialized in juvenile crimes, and the trial is not public. The criminal court for juveniles also judges adults who committed crimes with juveniles. In our main specifications, we include only young adults (under 21). This threshold corresponds to the age after which prison time must be served in adult facilities. We provide more information on juvenile courts in online appendix G.

value of the difference). The downside of this strategy, however, is that the sample is much smaller, with 2,212 youth tried in juvenile court and 1,842 youth tried in juvenile criminal courts between 2004 and 2010.[35]

In general, a juvenile's maximum sentence is half that of an adult, but if a juvenile offended between ages 16 and 18, a court can decide not to apply this rule. Another major difference is in the fraction of the sentence that is suspended: table 7 shows that in juvenile court, 22% of one's sentence length is imprisonment (the remainder being a suspended sentence), versus 74% in juvenile criminal court. Sentences are about 1.8 times longer in juvenile criminal court, compared to juvenile court. Because of deterrence, this change in expected sentences could induce differences in unobserved characteristics. While we cannot directly speak to this, the deterrence effect of the increase in sentence time among juveniles seems to be quite low (Lee and McCrary, 2005). Note also that at least for adults, we don't find the effect of media on sentences to change a lot with observable offender characteristics (see online appendix tables E3) so even if youth are unobservably different across courts, this exploration of heterogeneity for adults suggests that it would not affect our estimates.

Results are presented in columns 3–6 of table 8. Panel A presents results for sentences including suspended sentences, and panel B presents results for imprisonment sentences only. Columns 3 and 4 show the effect of media on sentences in juvenile criminal court (with civilian jurors), using the number of news stories on crime or a dummy for crime being covered. As with adults, sentences are longer after more coverage of crimes. Even if the sample is small, the effect of media on the sentences for juveniles judged by jurors is significant and similar in magnitude to that presented in section 3. However, the results are different in juvenile court, where there are only professional judges, as shown in columns 4: estimates are small in magnitude and not significant.[36] The difference between the effect in criminal court and the effect in juvenile court is significant when we use dummies (1% level for news about perpetrated crime, 10% level when using all news about crime).

[35] We exclude from the analysis offenders who were below the age of 13 (no prison sentence possible), or above 21 (necessarily incarcerated in adult facilities, even if judged and convicted together with other juveniles). We also exclude judicial decisions that are not made the day of the trial (only 57 cases), since we cannot precisely date the verdict.

[36] Some coefficients for t+1 are significant. However, they are marginally significant (10%), not robust, and go in the opposite direction as those found throughout the paper.

The last two columns compare more specifically the effect among offenders at the 16-year-old age cutoff. The effects of media are less clean, as the samples get very small. However, they remain sizable and significant (for news about perpetrated felonies) for 16-year-old offenders, while they are not for 15-year-olds. These results are more imprecise, and the differences between the effects on prison sentences at 16 and 15 years old is not significant. Because cases are similar, and the main difference is the presence or absence of juries of laypeople, this suggests that professional knowledge of and experience with the legal or criminal justice system protects against media biases.

The full distribution of the effect broken out by age at infraction is presented in figure 6. While the estimates are noisy because of the small sample sizes, the general picture is similar to the one presented in columns 3–6 of table 8. Media coverage of crime does not affect sentences for offenders who were younger than 16 when offending, and so tried only by professional judges. Point estimates for prison sentences (excluding suspended sentences) are especially small. Conversely, the effect of media is significant or close to significant for offenders aged 16 or more.

Lastly, we compare outcomes for first instance proceeding and appellate court separately. Procedural rules are slightly different in the two contexts. There are more jury members (9 in first instance proceedings, 12 in appellate court at that time of this study). Appellate courts judge crimes that were not committed in the county. Judges and attorneys working in appellate courts are usually more experienced than those in first instance courts. Lastly, appellate court cases have already been judged and so juries already have a reference point regarding sentences.

Results presented in table E2 indicate that news stories on crimes have no effect on sentence decisions in appeal courts. This could be due to more careful deliberations for appellate decisions; to the existence of a reference point provided by the preceding decision; or to the presence of more experienced professionals, who can guide jurors more effectively to ignore the news.

Overall, these three sets of results suggest that the effects of media on sentences are not present when there are professional judges, or when these are more experienced. While we cannot rule out fully that these differences in media effects are due to differences in case contents, or in the probability that one member of the court has

seen the news,[37] these results over different contexts suggest that this null effect being driven by experience in the legal profession.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we show that news content affects criminal justice decisions: sentences in jury trials are longer following more coverage of crime, and shorter after coverage of judicial errors. We find that only media coverage of crime and criminal justice (not of other upsetting topics) affects sentences, and that only coverage of crimes on the day before a sentence is handed down (not on other days) affects sentencing decisions. By contrast, we find no effect of media on professional judges' sentencing decisions.

Our results are important from a policy perspective. Understanding biases in judicial decisions is crucial, since the right to a fair trial is an essential feature of democratic justice systems. Our main result that sentences, but not convictions, are affected by media is in line with the finding in Kahneman, Schkade, and Sunstein (1998) of "shared outrage but erratic awards" in punitive damages. Understanding differences between decision-making by judges and by lay people is important, as jury trials are costly and there are debates as to what jurisdictions they should be present in.

Recent papers have identified several biases that judges might be subject to, such as mental depletion (Danziger et al, 2011), gambler's fallacy (Chen et al, 2014), or mood of the day (Chen, 2014). Our paper suggests that professional expertise can limit the effect of media biases, which otherwise have been shown to matter for many behaviors (and in our case, for juries that include laypeople). This could be a reason for the French judicial system to include laypeople only in conviction decisions, and not in sentencing decisions, if these are more susceptible to external factors.

The diffusion of this result during juror training could be a good way to reduce the problem; however, we should be mindful of the potential tradeoff of a "boomerang effect": drawing jurors' attention to potential biases may increase sensitivity to coverage of crime and justice. Overall, these results indicate that juries of lay people

[37] In criminal courts, the court is composed of 12 people; but only of three people in juvenile and in correctional courts. It may also be the case that judges are less likely to watch the 8PM news.

might lead to greater noise in outcomes of trials, if, beyond behavioral biases, the current-events context also impacts sentencing.

By investigating the effect of media on sentencing in a jury trial, we are able to look at a particularly localized, contextual outcome. For behaviors like voting, citizens might be actively looking for information in the media. Conversely, elected judges might be looking to influence the media through their decisions. Jurors, on the other hand, are plausibly neither seeking feedback, nor trying to influence other outcomes beyond the trial in which they are serving. Yet even in this setting, we find that media affects jurors' decisions, underscoring the contextual influences of media.

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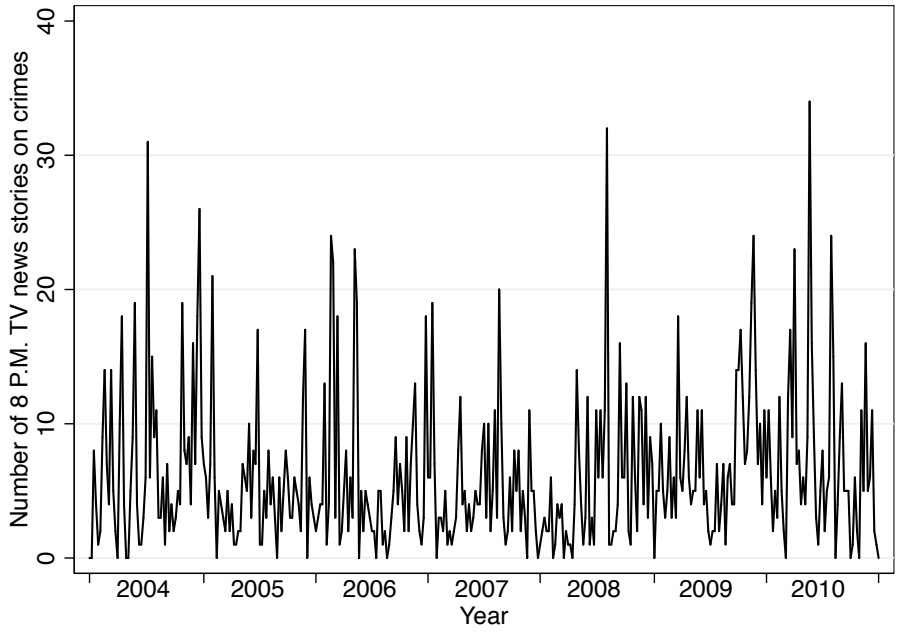


Figure 1: Number of stories about perpetrated felonies on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2) per week, from 2004 to 2010. Stories about perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: authors' calculations based on data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

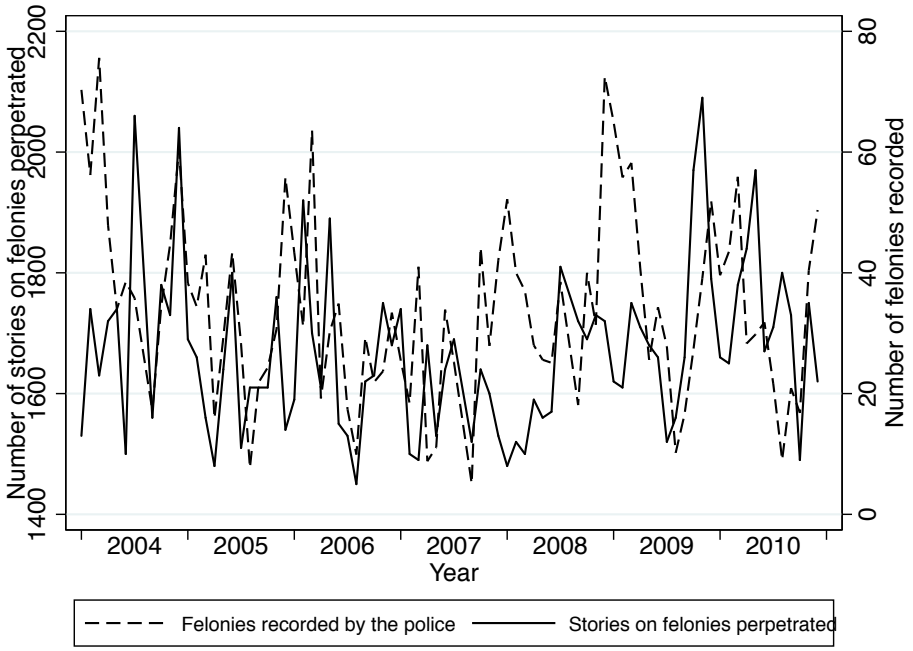


Figure 2: Crimes on TV and reported by the police. The full line (left axis) presents the number of stories on perpetrated felonies on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2), per month, from 2004 to 2010. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. The dashed line (right axis) presents the number of felonies recorded by the police, per month, from 2004 to 2010. Source:

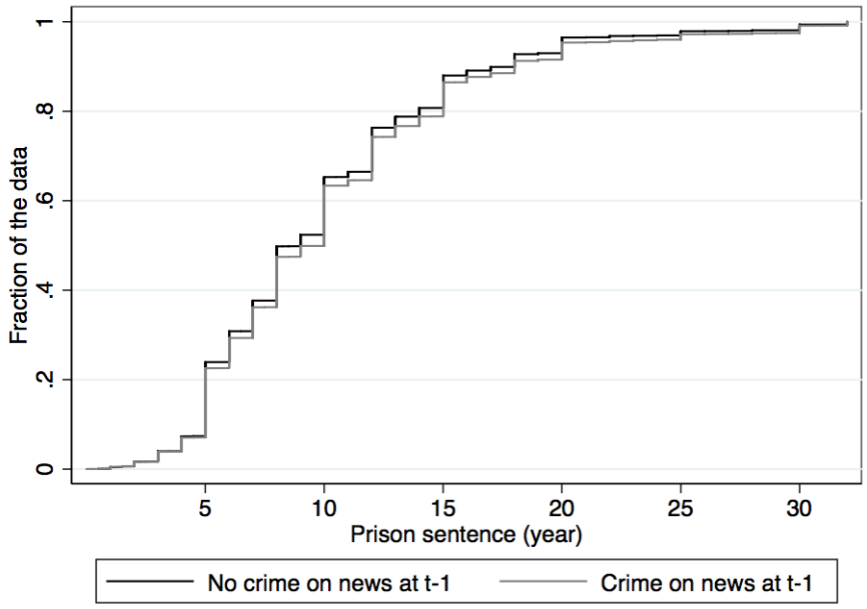


Figure 3 : Distribution of sentence length by coverage of crime on TV. The dark line (light line) presents the cumulative fraction of defendants with a sentence shorter than any sentence length, if there were any stories (no stories) on perpetrated felonies on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2) on the day before the verdict. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: authors' calculations based on criminal records provided by the French Ministry of Justice and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

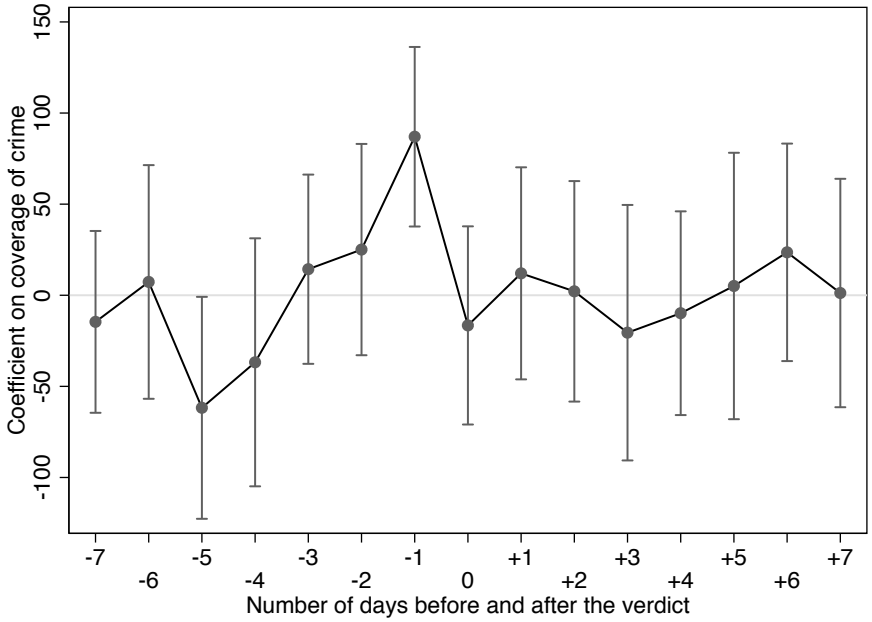


Figure 4: Duration of the effect of media coverage of crime on sentences: regression coefficients for perpetrated felonies, 7 days pre and post sentencing. The measure for perpetrated felonies is a dummy equal to one if there were any news stories about crimes on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2). Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Note: the reported coefficients are for a single regression, which also includes controls for age, gender,

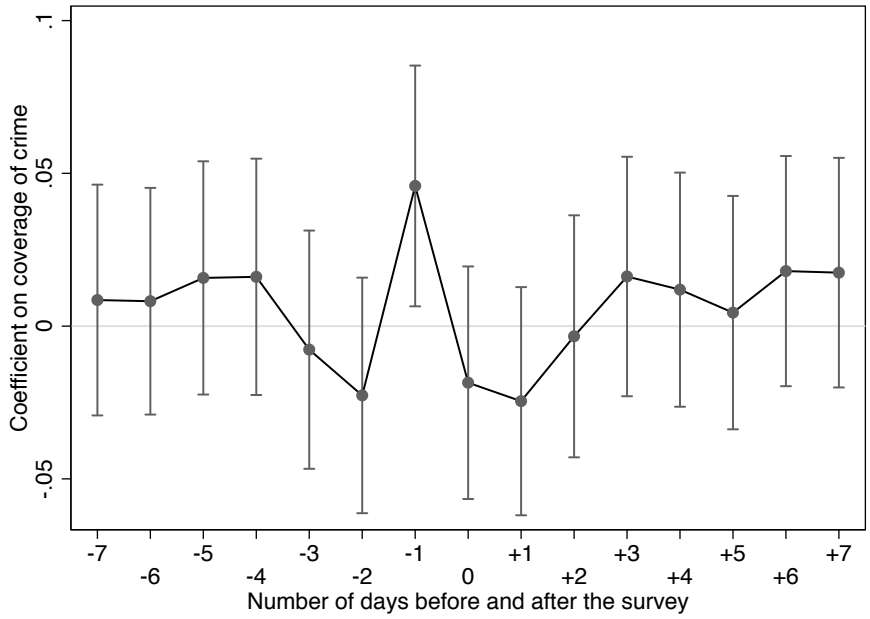


Figure 5: Duration of the effect of media coverage of crime on "feeling unsafe": regression coefficients for perpetrated felonies, 7 days before to 7 days after a survey of perceived insecurity. The measure for perpetrated felonies is a dummy equal to one if there were any news stories about crimes on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2). Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. The outcome is the answer to the question "do you feel insecure in your neighborhood," on a scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Coefficients are for a single ordered logit regression, which includes controls for day of the week and region. Bars represent the 90% confidence interval. Source: Authors' calculations using data from a survey on victimization conducted by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

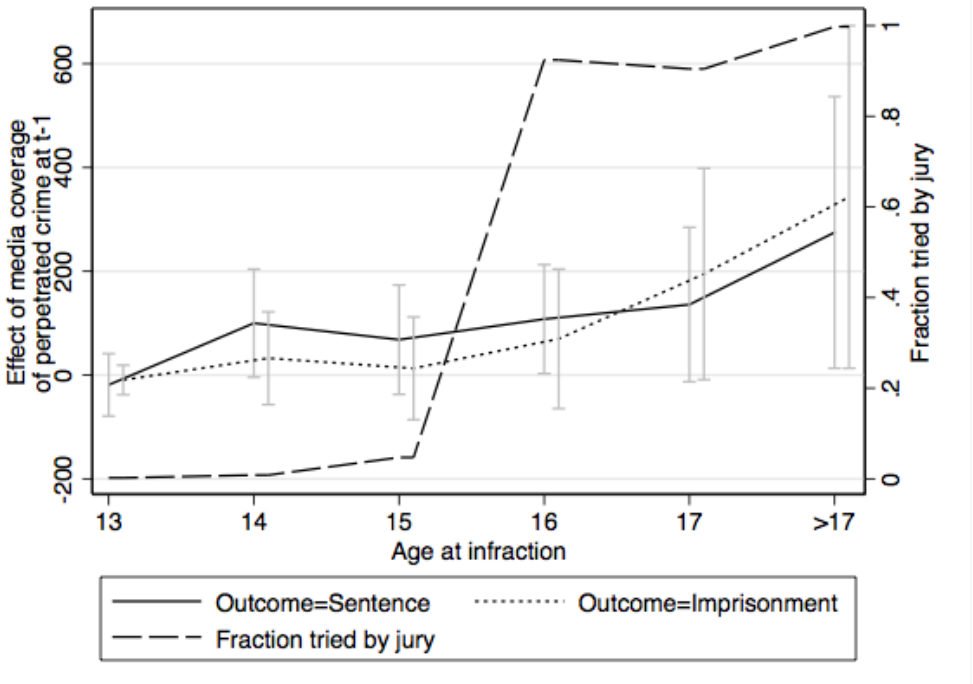


Figure 6: Effect of the coverage of perpetrated felonies on sentencing, by age of the defendant and presence of lay jurors. This figure presents the coefficient of news on

the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

		Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Maximum
Felonies (N=16,342)	Number of cases per year	2335	246	2471	2633
	Fraction male	.94	.23	1	1
	Age	38.62	13.07	37	91
	Fraction French	.87	.34	1	1
	Had a past conviction	.36	.48	0	1
	Appellate case	.13	.34	0	1
	Investigation length (year)	5.29	4.73	3.49	37.29
	Length pre-trial custody (days)	675.58	491.4	700	7439
	Offense				
	Murder	.18	.38	0	1
	Aggravated assault	.12	.33	0	1
	Forcible rape	.47	.5	0	1
	Property crime	.22	.41	0	1
	Prison sentence, in years				
	Overall	10.16	5.68	9	life
	Murder	15.15	7.06	15	life
	Aggravated assault	8.91	5.46	8	life
	Forcible rape	9.49	4.38	9	life
	Property crime	8.25	4.66	7	life
Sub-sample with acquittal data (N=6,769)	Felony acquital	.076	.27	0	1
8PM TV national news (TF1 and France 2) (N=2,557)	**Number of stories per day on...**				
	Felonies	1.28	1.65	1	12
	Felony perpetrated	0.89	1.37	0	10
	Judicial errors	0.14	0.76	0	22
	At least one story per day on…				
	Felonies	0.57	0.50	1	1
	Felony perpetrated	0.45	0.50	0	1
	Judicial errors	0.07	0.26	0	1
	Time per day (in minutes) on…				
	Felonies	1.72	2.34	.95	16.87
	Felony perpetrated	1.21	1.96	0	13.08
	Judicial errors	0.22	1.36	0	44.7
	Audience (million)	13	2,13	13	19

Table 1: Summary statistics on convictions and 8PM news content, 2004-2010. Statistics on the news content reflect stories covered on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2). Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. The summary statistics on convictions use all criminal records. The acquittal rate is calculated for the sub-sample of cases for which we have acquittal information. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Number of news stories on…		Type of offense being tried			Trial characteristics					Socio-demographics		
		Homicide	Sexual assault	Property	Investigation length	Pre-trial custody	Appeal court	Trial length	Past conviction	Age	Male	French
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies											
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	-0.000790	-0.000365	0.00388	-0.151	2.309	0.00296	0.0442	-0.000228	-0.169*	0.000185	0.00321
		(0.00335)	(0.00413)	(0.00394)	(10.67)	(3.093)	(0.00208)	(0.0297)	(0.00309)	(0.0922)	(0.00144)	(0.00213)
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies											
	Felonies t-1	-0.00170	-0.000225	0.00255	16.94*	2.518	0.00150	0.0138	0.000891	-0.0428	-0.000216	0.00227
		(0.00310)	(0.00324)	(0.00330)	(9.910)	(2.777)	(0.00190)	(0.0208)	(0.00227)	(0.0713)	(0.00111)	(0.00188)
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors											
	Judicial errors t-1	-0.00745	-0.000837	0.00720	-4.851	-4.416	-0.00745*	-0.0492	0.00184	-0.0981	0.00478***	0.00538
		(0.00454)	(0.00547)	(0.00532)	(17.36)	(5.663)	(0.00417)	(0.0460)	(0.00460)	(0.138)	(0.00149)	(0.00365)
	Observations	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	7,324
	Mean	0.300	0.469	0.216	1930	38.62	0.943	0.870	0.358	675.6	0.135	3.556

Table 2: Characteristics of cases being tried, by media coverage on the day before the verdict. The dependent variable of each regression is specified in the column header. Panel A presents results by coverage of perpetrated felonies; panel B of felonies; panel C of judicial errors. We regress case characteristics on the number of news stories on each topic. Regressions include day of the week fixed effects. Each cell presents regression coefficients for a different regression. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records. *Note*: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Outcome:		Acquittal (sub-sample)				Sentence length			
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Number of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**								
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	0.00358	0.00281		0.00245	28.28**	25.96**		25.82**
		(0.00324)	(0.00287)		(0.00280)	(14.06)	(10.28)		(9.992)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1			0.00228	0.00187			4.615	0.770
				(0.00346)	(0.00344)			(10.08)	(9.885)
	pval diff t-1/t+1				0.900				0.0651
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies								
	Felony t-1	0.00471**	0.00382*		0.00363*	33.25***	25.25***		23.94***
		(0.00213)	(0.00187)		(0.00188)	(12.53)	(7.947)		(7.760)
	Felony t+1			0.00161	0.000953			11.03	6.833
				(0.00277)	(0.00282)			(8.315)	(8.199)
	Pval diff t-1/t+1				0.473				0.128
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors								
	Judicial errors t-1	0.000224	-0.00181		-0.00274	-63.77***	-39.27**		-39.70**
		(0.00470)	(0.00540)		(0.00603)	(21.96)	(15.87)		(15.77)
	Judicial errors t+1			0.00578	0.00601			-0.436	3.346
				(0.00747)	(0.00777)			(13.60)	(13.34)
	Pval diff t-1/t+1				0.488				0.0395
	Controls	Day of week	All	All	All	Day of week	All	All	All
	Observations	6,769	6,719	6,719	6,719	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342
	Mean	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	3656	3656	3656	3656

Table 3: News content, acquittals and sentence length: jury trials. Panel A presents the effect of coverage of perpetrated felonies; panel B of felonies; and panel C of judicial errors. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. The outcome in columns 1–4 is a dummy for acquittal. These regressions are estimated for the subsample of cases for which we have information on acquittals (defined in appendix A). Controls in columns 2–4 are for: gender, aggregate type of offense, county, dummies for month, day of week and year, which are the variables available for this sample. The outcome in columns 5–8 is sentence length in days. Regressions are estimated for all criminal records. Controls in 6–8 are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. All standard errors are clustered at the county level. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records. *Note*: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Outcome:		Appeal	log (sentence)	Sentence length						
		(1)	(2)	Without trial in county of the news (3)	Trial length longer than 1 day (4)	With error clustered per day (5)	With session fixed effects (6)	With county specific time trend (7)	With media in minutes (8)	Same regression (9)
Number of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**									
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	-0.00153	0.00711***	22.15**	34.61***	25.82**	60.11***	25.45**	18.45**	26.61***
		(0.00221)	(0.00262)	(10.43)	(12.20)	(12.53)	(19.97)	(11.98)	(8.410)	(10.06)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1	-0.000649	-0.000490	7.792	21.50	0.770	23.47	-1.305	0.109	0.105
		(0.00208)	(0.00278)	(10.38)	(14.03)	(9.249)	(17.06)	(9.417)	(6.597)	(9.815)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.752	0.0502	0.320	0.472	0.113	0.110	0.0870	0.0969	0.0525
	Felony other than perpetrated t-1									20.12
										(13.28)
	Felony other than perpetrated t+1									20.76
										(14.57)
	pval diff t-1/t+1									0.977
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies									
	Felony t-1	-0.00189	0.00577**	22.92***	38.27***	23.94**	45.89***	23.42**	15.54***	
		(0.00187)	(0.00227)	(8.355)	(9.738)	(9.413)	(15.72)	(9.114)	(5.540)	
	Felony t+1	0.00098	0.000739	9.702	7.195	6.833	24.68*	6.131	3.614	
		(0.00193)	(0.00219)	(8.528)	(12.89)	(7.562)	(13.76)	(7.563)	(5.337)	
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.292	0.132	0.289	0.0854	0.174	0.249	0.170	0.105	
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors									
	Judicial errors t-1	-0.00440	-0.0130**	-40.09**	-27.57	-39.70***	-24.18	-35.65***	-20.28**	-41.87***
		(0.00403)	(0.00530)	(15.74)	(25.01)	(11.85)	(41.26)	(11.08)	(8.947)	(15.61)
	Judicial errors t+1	-0.00167	0.00322	2.985	9.884	3.346	16.49	4.394	0.852	3.605
		(0.00230)	(0.00383)	(13.31)	(22.26)	(7.748)	(36.18)	(8.104)	(6.850)	(12.67)
	Pval diff t-1/t+1	0.592	0.0127	0.0389	0.357	0.00407	0.402	0.00566	0.0643	0.0296
	Observations	16,636	16,340	(see note)	7,041	16,342	7,903	16,342	16,342	16,342
	Mean	0.149	8.058	(see note)	3666	3656	3619	3656	3656	3656

Table 4: News content and sentence length: robustness checks. Panel A presents the effect of coverage of perpetrated felonies; panel B of coverage of felonies; and panel C of coverage of judicial errors. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. These estimates include controls for age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. In all columns except for column 1, we also control for type of court (appellate court, court of first instance). In all but column 5, standard errors are clustered at the county level. In column 1, the sample includes all first instance trials between 2004 and 2010, and no appellate trials. In column 1, we look at the effect of media on the day before the first instance verdict, and not on the final conviction. In column 3, we exclude stories that took place within the same county as the trial, and so the sample size and outcome mean varies across panels. Panel A has 15,956 observations (mean sentence: 3,658 days); panel B has 15,856 observations (mean sentence: 3,655 days); and panel C has16,331 observations (mean sentence: 3,655 days). In column 4 and 5, we only include data for which we have information on session length (subsample 1, as defined in online appendix A). In column 4, we exclude from that sample cases where the trial lasted one day. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records. *Note*: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.10$.

Outcome:	**Sentence length**							**Survey: felt unsafe in your neighborhood**
	(1)	Controlling crimes (police) (2)	Controlling crimes (courts) (3)	Audience below median (4)	Audience above median (5)	Trial length ≥2 days (6)	Intensive & extensive margin (7)	(8)
Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies								
Perpetrated felony t-1 (dummy)	86.10*** (24.33)						76.76** (35.29)	
Perpetrated felony t+1 (dummy)	10.81 (28.28)						15.97 (35.34)	
Perpetrated felonies t-2						-1.374 (16.56)		
Perpetrated felonies t-1		25.60** (10.09)	24.90** (10.08)	19.09 (16.27)	27.86* (14.75)	32.21** (13.99)	5.177 (14.58)	0.0210** (0.0103)
Perpetrated felonies t+1		0.955 (9.762)	2.111 (9.814)	-1.836 (13.36)	1.317 (13.71)	18.72 (14.56)	-3.048 (12.59)	-0.00366 (0.00833)
Crimes – Police measure		-3.137* (1.599)						
Crimes – Court measure			0.321 (38.15)					
Pval t-1/t+1 (dummy)	0.0584						0.254	
Pval t-1/t+1 (continuous)		0.0694	0.0757	0.339	0.158	0.461	0.656	0.0845
Pval t-1 audience				0.681				
Panel B: effect of all news about felonies								
Felony t-1 (dummy)	91.86*** (25.76)						67.55* (37.87)	
Felony t+1 (dummy)	28.82 (25.52)						17.19 (36.12)	
Felony t-2						-18.60 (12.40)		
Felonies t-1		23.89*** (7.737)	24.28*** (7.575)	17.21 (12.02)	26.26** (11.12)	38.92*** (10.69)	11.01 (11.57)	0.00186 (0.00747)
Felonies t+1		6.954 (8.131)	7.766 (7.895)	0.306 (12.97)	15.29 (11.08)	13.76 (12.36)	3.985 (11.45)	-0.00363 (0.00711)
Crimes – Police measure		-3.169* (1.614)						
Crimes – Court measure			-0.156 (37.94)					
Pval t-1/t+1 (dummy)	0.0791						0.336	
Pval t-1/t+1 (continuous)		0.129	0.110	0.373	0.485	0.162	0.669	0.637
Pval t-1 audience				0.579				
Observations	16,342	16,342	15,926	7,378	8,041	6,462	16,342	50,749
Mean	3656	3656	3656	3585	3587	3654	3656	1.383

Table 5: Evidence on mechanisms and heterogeneity of effects. Panel A presents the effect of coverage of perpetrated felonies; and panel B of felonies. Stories on perpetrated felonies are

stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. In column 1, we include a dummy for the presence of news stories on crimes. In column 2, we include controls for the number of felonies per county and per month, measured using publicly available police data. In column 3, we include controls for the number crimes per county and per day that led to a conviction by 2015, as reflected in criminal records. We calculate this using the date of conviction that appears on criminal records. We exclude cases tried on the first day of each month, since in criminal records, crimes are dated on the first day of the month if the exact date is unknown. In column 4 (5), we limit our sample to cases tried on a day where the audience for the 8PM news was below (above) the median in audiences for that period. In column 6, we only include data for which we have information on session length (subsample 1, as defined in online appendix A), and for which the trial lasted 2 days or more. In column 7, we include a dummy for the presence of news stories on crimes; and the number of news stories on crimes. Estimates in columns 1–7 include controls for age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors in columns 1-7 are clustered at the county level. Estimates in column 8 are calculated for responses to a survey on perceived safety. The outcome is the answer to the question "do you feel insecure in your neighborhood?" on a scale from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Estimates in column 8 include controls for day of the week and region. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records, from publically available police statistics, and from a survey on victimization, conducted by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE). *Note*: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.10$.

Outcome:		**Sentence length**				
		All trials (1)	Murder (2)	Aggravated assault (3)	Sexual crimes (4)	Property crimes (5)
Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies						
Perpetrated felonies t-1		25.82**	30.37	-32.52	27.99**	57.64**
		(9.992)	(37.72)	(37.84)	(13.41)	(24.22)
Perpetrated felonies t+1		0.770	6.638	9.781	-7.337	10.19
		(9.885)	(33.72)	(26.57)	(12.65)	(24.07)
Pval diff t-1/t+1		0.0651	0.559	0.369	0.0649	0.258
Panel B: effect of news about perpetrated felonies, by type of crime covered						
Number of news stories on perpetrated felonies at t-1 on…	Murder	14.71	-39.70	-89.97**	41.07**	72.63*
		(13.63)	(40.72)	(41.99)	(19.43)	(43.65)
	Sexual crimes	56.24*	129.2	166.5**	10.70	27.62
		(32.64)	(107.2)	(82.30)	(34.27)	(54.88)
	Other	21.90	97.44	-74.92	15.71	42.56
		(16.85)	(63.17)	(64.10)	(22.22)	(29.75)
Number of news stories on perpetrated felonies at t+1 on…	Murder	-16.93	-20.33	-5.223	-23.68*	-10.65
		(14.03)	(42.30)	(32.73)	(13.26)	(39.45)
	Sexual crimes	21.53	116.3	-20.54	15.93	12.53
		(23.24)	(85.96)	(74.86)	(29.95)	(52.45)
	Other	18.62	-0.639	71.87	0.130	36.77
		(20.47)	(82.21)	(59.37)	(23.02)	(31.48)
Observations		16,342	2,913	1,983	7,661	3,529
Mean		3656	5455	3209	3416	2968

Table 6: Heterogeneity of the effect of media on sentences, by type of crime covered on TV and by type of offense being tried. The outcome in all regressions is sentence length in days. Panel A presents the effect of coverage of perpetrated felonies; and panel B of felonies. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. These estimates are calculated using all criminal records, and include controls for age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *Note:* *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Sample	Corrections courts (professional judges only)		Juveniles					
	All severe misdemeanors	Severe sexual misdemeanors	Felonies in juvenile court (no jurors)	Juveniles in criminal court (jurors)	Diff col. (3) and col. (4): P-value	15 years old (no jurors)	16 years old (jurors)	Diff col. (6) and col. (7): P-value
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Number of cases per year	5,051	2,977	316	263		85	121	
Male	.92	.95	.97	.97	.09	.96	.97	.17
French	.84	.85	.97	.94	0	.96	.95	.38
Age (at crime)	35.48	39.6	13.98	17.01	0	15	16	0
Investigation length (days)	1129	1645	1851	1752	.04	1426	2005	0
Sentence (including suspended)	596	679	800	2068	0	978	1809	0
Sentence in prison	290	317	170	1478	0	331	1141	0
Murder & violence	.41	0	.05	.17	0	.09	.13	.013
Sexual assaults	.59	1	.82	.53	0	.7	.69	.72
Armed robbery	0	0	.12	.3	0	.21	.18	.11
N	35,358	20,842	2,212	1,842		594	845	

Table 7: Jurors vs. professional judges: descriptive statistics on corrections courts and on felonies judged in juvenile court or in juvenile criminal court. We define “severe misdemeanors” as crimes for which the maximum sentence in the French Criminal Code is at least seven years. We define “severe sexual misdemeanors” as sexual offenses for which the maximum sentence in the French Criminal Code is at least seven years.

Outcome:	**Sentence length**					
Sample	Corrections courts (professional judges only)		Juveniles			
	All severe misdemeanor	Severe sexual misdemeanor	Felonies in juvenile court (no jurors)	Juveniles in criminal court (jurors)	15 years old (no jurors)	16 years old (jurors)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies on sentences (including suspended)					
Perpetrated felony t-1	1.534	-2.532	34.75	146.9**	68.18	107.9*
(dummy)	(4.814)	(6.085)	(28.69)	(69.40)	(64.04)	(63.80)
Perpetrated felony t+1	2.643	2.162	-20.57	-24.76	-94.51*	-120.4
(dummy)	(4.509)	(6.243)	(26.14)	(94.41)	(53.60)	(76.22)
Pval t-1/t+1	0.880	0.588	0.167	0.172	0.0878	0.0397
Pval comparison t-1			0.061		0.596	
Mean Sentence (including suspended)	595.8	679	800	2068	979.7	1799
	Panel B: effect of news about perpetrated felonies on sentence in prison					
Felony t-1	0.883	-0.810	10.58	165.8*	12.90	69.73
(dummy)	(3.657)	(5.000)	(18.23)	(94.45)	(60.23)	(81.74)
Felony t+1	-2.592	-7.597	20.33	-22.12	-78.73	-47.16
(dummy)	(3.445)	(4.669)	(20.79)	(125.4)	(56.30)	(97.18)
Pval t-1/t+1	0.511	0.331	0.342	0.269	0.361	0.395
Pval comparison t-1			0.0802		0.603	
Observations	35,358	20,842	2,212	1,842	594	845
Mean sentence in prison	290.3	316.8	170.4	1478	331.3	1141

Table 8: Effects of media, depending on the presence of juries of laypeople: corrections courts and juveniles. The outcome in all regressions is sentence length in days. In panel A, the outcome is sentence length (including suspended sentences). In panel B, the outcome is the imprisonment sentence. We include controls for day of week. We define "severe misdemeanors" as crimes for which the maximum sentence in the French Criminal Code is at least seven years. We define "severe sexual misdemeanors" as sexual aggressions for which the maximum sentence in the French Criminal Code is at least seven years. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *Note*: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Appendix: Keywords Used in Our Definitions of Crimes and Criminal Justice Stories

Table A1 shows an example of what the raw media data looks like. For each story on the 8PM news, the National Audiovisual Institute provides its title, length, time of broadcast, and a list of keywords associated with that story. We use this these keywords to determine what stories cover crime and judicial errors.

Title	Channel	Length	Keywords	Day	Time
[Barack Obama elected president of the United States]	TF1	00:02:19	Presidential election; United States; Obama Barack; Democratic Party - United States; domestic policy; election results	05/11/08	08:01:15
[A family murder in Hendaye]	TF1	00:01:25	confessions; child; family; wife; resident (neighbor); Hendaye; murder; Father; Pyrenees Atlantiques; testimony	16/02/04	08:12:22
[Meeting between Dominique Perben and the Outreau acquitted]	TF1	00:01:22	acquittal; judicial error; compensation; Outreau; pedophilia; judicial rehabilitation; meeting	27/09/04	08:00:54

Table A1: example of the structure of raw media data, for three different news stories.

Below is the list of words that we used to define the aggregate measures of media coverage of crime and criminal justice, with number of days that these words appear in parentheses.

1. **Crime**: enfant (Mathias) (20); Mouzin Estelle (26); Evrard Francis (26); crime (sexuel) (26); enfant (Valentin) (28); enfant (Jonathan) (31); enfant (Antoine) (36); bandit (39); inceste (40); Bodein Pierre (41); Fourniret Michel (44); cadavre (48); Louis Emile (50); gang (Gang des barbares) (57); crime (68); infanticide (76); bagarre (89) (if used with " décès "); prise d'otage (93); Treiber Jean Pierre (96); séquestration (98); Giraud Géraldine (99); banditisme (113); Erignac Claude (113); Colonna Yvan (117); meurtrier (127); assassinat politique (134); fusillade (162); hold-up (200); viol (321); moeurs (334); enlèvement (335); pédophilie (522); meurtre (1435); violence (1620) (if used with the word death).

2. **Judicial errors**: erreur judiciaire (235); Outreau (262); réhabilitation judiciaire (36); Burgaud Fabrice (58).

3. **Trial:** reconstitution judiciaire (20); audience-procès (21); réquisition (29); conseil d'Etat (29); procédure d'appel (31); justice (recours) (35); Cour de cassation (37); palais de justice (38); accuse (39); non lieu (39); tribunal de grande instance (49); relaxe (58); acquittement (100); cour d'appel (112); tribunal correctionnel (123); tribunal (128); verdict (300); cour d'assises (372); prison (402); procès (2173)

4. **Law:** projet de loi (anticipation et prévention des conflits) (22); parlementaire (24); gouvernement (Fillon, 4eme) (24); gouvernement (Fillon, 2eme) (26); parlement (28); gouvernement (Fillon, 3eme) (28); projet de loi (cohésion sociale) (33); loi (relatif aux libertés des universités) (44); amendement (63); débat parlementaire (66); gouvernement (Fillon) (66); droit pénal (91); député (93); sénat (114); Assemblée nationale (401); loi (599); projet de loi (1032).

Online Appendix

Appendix A: Court Data

We use three different datasets to capture criminal justice outcomes. Table A1 summarizes the content in each dataset, and table A2 presents descriptive statistics for each sample.

Our main dataset, referred to here as "full sample," is an administrative dataset containing all convictions that occurred in France between 2004 and 2010. The French Ministry of Justice compiles this database to check defendants' criminal records. There is one observation per conviction, which includes offenses, sentence, verdict date, procedural characteristics (first instance or appellate trial), and socio-demographic information. However, this dataset only contains information on final convictions: criminal records contain no mention of acquittals, or of first instance decisions when decisions are appealed. Another limitation is that this dataset only contains information on conviction date, and not on trial length.

In order to measure the effect of media on acquittals, and to exploit variations in trial length, we contacted all 95 French courts (there is one court per county) to ask for their trial schedules and all trial outcomes. 42 courts responded, some of which had information available for only certain years. Out of these, 17 provided only their schedules, and 25 sent us both their schedules and trial outcomes. We can thus construct 2 subsamples:

- Subsample 1 contains the start and finish dates for each trial, and covers 42 counties. This is the sample that we use to look at the effect of media when a trial lasts more than a day (table 4, columns 4 and 6; table 5, column 6).
- Subsample 2 contains information on trial start and finish time; as well as information on all trial outcomes – conviction or acquittal – for both final decisions and appealed decisions. We refer to trials that led to an appeal as "first instance proceedings." We use this subsample to look at conviction outcomes (table 3, columns 1 through 4). Note that for cases that led to an acquittal, we do not have a person's full criminal record, and in particular we do not have information on a person's age, nationality, past offenses, or length of pre-trial detention. We have information only on a person's gender and current offense.

Table A1 summarizes the characteristics of each of the datasets.

	Full sample	Subsample 1	Subsample 2
Number of counties	95	42	25
Number of cases	16,342	7,903	4,330
Cases for which this data is available	Only for final convictions	Only for final convictions	All trials, including first instances and acquittals
Variables	• Offense and past convictions • Pre-trial detention • Sociodemographic • Conviction date	All in sample A + Trial start and finish date	*For convictions*: all in sample B + appeal *For acquittals:* acquittal date and place, offense, gender

Table A1: Characteristics of the different criminal outcome datasets

Table A2 presents the characteristics of defendants in these two subsamples, compared to the full sample. Overall, defendants are similar in terms of socio-demographic characteristics. One difference is in offenses – there are slightly more forcible rapes in subsample 2 than in the full sample (49% vs. 47%); and slightly fewer property crimes (19% vs. 22%).

	Full sample	Subsample 1		Subsample 2	
	Mean	Mean	Pval difference with full sample	Mean	Pval difference with full sample
Male	.94	.94	.74	.94	.7
Age	38.62	38.2	.02	38.46	.47
French	.87	.84	0	.85	0
Investigation length (year)	5.29	5.32	.56	5.29	.97
Had a past conviction	.36	.36	.95	.35	.69
Length pre-trial custody (days)	675.58	697.7	0	697.19	.01
Offense					
Murder	.18	.17	.25	.18	.86
Violence	.12	.13	.05	.12	.98
Forcible rape	.47	.46	.17	.49	.05
Property crime	.22	.22	.71	.19	0
Prison sentence, in years					
Overall	10.16	10.05	.19	10.31	.12
Murder	15.15	15.02	.57	15.57	.15
Violence	8.91	8.96	.82	8.72	.46
Forcible rape	9.49	9.49	.98	9.56	.52
Property crime	8.25	8.05	.16	8.6	.06
N	16,342	7,903		4,33	

Table A2: Characteristics of defendants in the subsamples, compared to the main dataset

List of counties in subsample 2:

- Data available for all years: 1, 6, 31, 33, 36, 42, 44, 45, 49, 52, 54, 78, 80, 81, 82, 86, 87, 91, 93
- Data available for certain years: 85 (for 2005-2010), 66 (for 2004-2007), 73 and 74 (for 2009-2010), 62 (for 2004-2005), 76 (for 2004)

List of counties in subsample 1, on top of those in subsample 2:

- Data available for all years: 3, 15, 27, 30, 34, 38, 43, 47, 57, 63, 94
- Data available for certain years: 75 (for 2004-2006 and 2008-2010), 62 (for 2006-2010), 77 (for 2005-2010), 25 (for 2007-2010), 67 for (2004-2006), 73 and 95 (for 2009-2010), 59 (for 2010)

Appendix B: Additional Information on Identification Strategy

Our identification strategy relies on the assumption that news content is orthogonal to the timing of trials. While we show that the timing of trials cannot be gamed around the media context, another threat to identification would be if media reflected upcoming trials. To limit this risk that media covered these trials, we mainly focus on stories about perpetrated felonies, to avoid capturing information on the case being tried itself.

However, as we mentioned in section 3.1., our identification assumption could still be violated if the number of news stories on felonies perpetrated were correlated with the number of news stories on trial for felony. This could be the case if media was more prone to cover crimes during high-profile trials, or if news stories about trials were to crowd out news stories about crimes committed.

To further test our identification assumption, we regress the number of news stories on perpetrated crimes on the number of news stories on trials. Results are presented in table B1. We look at the number of news stories (column 1), the presence of news stories on crime (column 2) or more specifically on violent crime (column 3) or sexual crime (column 4). All coefficients are small and non-significant. Moreover, R2 are extremely low, confirming that coverage of perpetrated crimes is not correlated with coverage on trials for crime the same day.

We replicate this exercise for news about trials at t and news about perpetrated felonies at t-1. This allows us to test whether media anticipates important trials by presenting more stories on perpetrated felonies the day before. Results are presented in table B2. Once again, coefficients are small and non-significant, and the R2 are all very low. This all converges to suggest that news stories about perpetrated crimes are not correlated to news about trials.

In several specifications, we include coverage of media at t-1 and at t+1, which has several advantages. First, this summarizes the main effect and the placebo. Second, this helps address the fact that news stories might be correlated over time: an event might be covered several days in a row, and media_{t+1} could be correlated with Y_{it} through the correlation between media_{t-1} and media_{t+1}. Empirically, coverage of felonies and judicial errors on a given day increases the number of reports on that subject the following day by 0.32, and 0.43 respectively. However, the correlation is much weaker two days later, around 0.07; and there is no longer any correlation after this. This suggests that on average, events are covered for a couple of days.

		Stories on **perpetrated crimes**			
		Number of stories, any crime	Dummy for story on any crime	Dummy for story on violence	Dummy for story on sexual crime
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Stories on **felony trials**	Number of stories, any crime	0.0493			
		(0.0325)			
	Dummy for story on any crime		-0.000705		
			(0.0279)		
	Dummy for story on violence			-0.0290	
				(0.0244)	
	Dummy for any story on sexual crimes				0.00124
					(0.0227)
Observations		2,557	2,557	2,557	2,557
R2		0.000942	2.50e-07	0.000461	1.23e-06

Table B1: correlation between news about perpetrated crimes and news about judicial decisions. Source: Authors' calculations based on data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

		Stories on **perpetrated crimes at t-1**			
		Number of stories, any crime	Dummy for story on any crime	Dummy for story on murder	Dummy for story on sexual crime
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Stories on **felony trials at t**	Number of stories, any crime	0.0448			
		(0.0341)			
	Dummy for story on any crime		0.0264		
			(0.0239)		
	Dummy for story on murder			0.00123	
				(0.0227)	
	Dummy for any story on sexual crimes				0.0320
					(0.0288)
Observations		2,556	2,556	2,556	2,556
R2		0.000778	0.000479	1.22e-06	0.000562

Table B2: correlation between news about perpetrated crimes at t-1 and news about judicial decisions at t. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

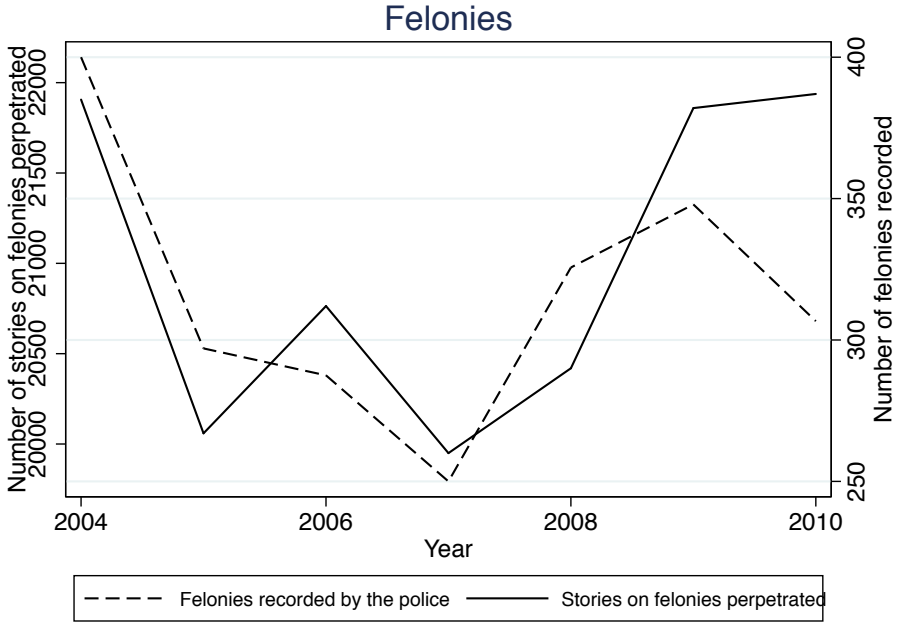


Figure B1: Crimes on TV and reported by the police. The full line (left axis) presents the number of stories on perpetrated felonies on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2), per year, from 2004 to 2010. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. The dashed line (right axis) presents the number of felonies recorded by the police, per year, from 2004 to 2010. Source: authors' calculations based on data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute, and from police statistics, publicly available on the open data platform of the French government.

Appendix C: Quantile Regression Results

We use quantile regressions to explore the distribution of the treatment effect. The goal is to see whether media coverage of crime and judicial errors affects certain sentences more than others. Table C1 presents quantile regression estimates of the effect of media coverage of crime (columns 1 and 2) and judicial errors (columns 3 and 4) on sentences, for each ventile of the sentence distribution. Odd columns are without controls, and even columns include controls for gender, offense, nationality, investigation length, time in pre-trial detention, and dummies for day of week.

This table suggests that media coverage of crime affects sentences in the top two third of the distribution, while coverage of judicial errors affects sentences in the bottom half of the distribution. However, except for the top deciles of the treatment effect of news stories on crime, most of the quantile regression coefficients are not significantly different from one another when we include controls. Note also that all coefficients are of the same sign, for either type of news story.

Note that in the quantile regressions without controls, many coefficients are exactly equal to zero (columns 1 and 3). This is due to the fact that sentences in criminal court are whole years, and they do not take many values (see figure 3 for an illustration of this). While there may be a difference across media contexts in the percent of people who are sentenced to a given number of years, the gap may open and close outside of a ventile; and in that case, it won't be captured in these quantile regressions.

	Perpetrated felonies (dummy)		Judicial errors (dummy)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Quantile	No control	Controls	No controls	controls
	(0)	(23.99)	(12.43)	(42.93)
10	0	27.6	0	-102.21***
	(0)	(22.28)	(0)	(36.26)
15	0	17.83	0	-100.47***
	(0)	(22.04)	(0)	(36.05)
20	0	23.99	0	-80.37**
	(0)	(21.76)	(0)	(36.49)
25	0	31.01	-360***	-79.9**
	(0)	(22.03)	(75.65)	(35.68)
30	360***	36.34*	-360***	-92.09***
	(42.9)	(21.95)	(70.33)	(35.51)
35	0	45.24*	0	-81.17*
	(0)	(25.5)	(0)	(42.91)
40	0	49.42*	0	-86.79**
	(0)	(26.4)	(0)	(43.05)
45	0	60.28**	0	-68.15
	(0)	(27.52)	(0)	(45.95)
50	360***	61.24**	-360***	-72.11
	(73.81)	(27.43)	(121)	(46.39)
55	0	54.91*	0	-58.48
	(0)	(28.48)	(0)	(46.36)
60	0	55.54*	0	-57.31
	(0)	(30.35)	(0)	(49.32)
65	720***	56.53*	-360***	-22.39
	(80.68)	(31.01)	(132.27)	(50.04)
70	0	96.18***	0	-12.99
	(0)	(36.61)	(0)	(59.03)
75	360***	110.2***	0	-55.24
	(67.31)	(38.04)	(0)	(60.58)
80	360***	132.63***	-360**	-21.55
	(77.34)	(44.23)	(164.5)	(73.54)
85	0	153.95***	0	-43.12
	(0)	(54.25)	(0)	(88.76)
90	0	156.93**	0	-43.44
	(0)	(70.7)	(0)	(113.68)
95	0	246.21***	0	-153.17
	(0)	(88.51)	(0)	(138.21)

Table C1: Quantile regression estimates for each ventile. Note: The outcome variable is sentence, in days. The number of observations is the same for each regression (16,342). Controls are for: gender, age, type of offense, nationality, investigation length, time in pre-trial detention, dummies for day of week. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Appendix D: Additional Robustness Checks

In the first four columns of table 3, we showed that news about perpetrated felonies and judicial errors had no effect on acquittal, while news about felonies in general was correlated with lower acquittal rates. We test the robustness of those results by using different models (logit, probit, different clustering, county time trend, month*year fixed effects) and different measure of the news (dummies or time of the news). Results are presented in table D1. The null effect of news about perpetrated felonies and judicial errors on conviction is robust. The correlation between news stories on felonies in general and convictions is not robust across specifications.

In table D2, we measure the effect of media on the number of convictions per day. This is another way to capture the potential effect of media on acquittals. Indeed, since the criminal records data only includes information conditional on conviction, if there are more (resp. fewer) acquittals, we should observe fewer (resp. more) convictions. We find this not to be the case.

If coverage of crime were to affect acquittals, we would not be observing sentences for the same subsample of trials after coverage of crime or not. For example, if news on felonies increases the probability of being found guilty, we would observe *more* sentences after news coverage of felonies. Using simple OLS would lead to biased estimates. In the previous example, the marginal conviction would plausibly have shorter average sentences, if less severe cases are more likely to be swayed by media. Selection would thus induce a downward bias to our results. If media has no effect on acquittals, then the effect of media on sentences will not be biased. Results presented in tables 3, D1 and D2 do not support the hypothesis of an effect of media on acquittal.

In table D3, we further explore how the acquittal and sentencing margins may interact, using data from subsample 2, for which information on acquittal is available. In column 1, we run our main regression with acquittals considered as sentence lengths of zero. In columns 2 and 3, we present the results when using a two stages Heckman selection model. The second stage (effect of media on sentences corrected for selection) is presented in column 2 and the first stage (probit estimates of the selection equation) in column 3. Results are similar to those presented in table 3: we find an effect of media on sentences (column 1 and 2) but not on acquittals (column 3).

In table D4, we replicate our main result – the effect of news on sentences (column 8 of table 3) – removing life sentences and for the different subsamples presented in online appendix A. Column 1 reproduces column 8 of table 3. Column 2 removes life sentences instead of coding them as 32 years. Columns 3 and 4 present results for the two subsamples for which we gathered additional information. The sample sizes are smaller and our estimates tend to be less precise in these subsamples, but they are similar across specifications and not statistically different from one another.

In table D5, we replicate our main result – the effect of news on sentences (column 8 of table 3) – outside of electoral campaigns. These periods are usually characterized by high antagonism and special news coverage. In particular, crime and crime control

were major topics in the 2007 campaign. We use two definitions of the election period: the month before any election (column 1), which is the official "campaign period" in France, and January-June 2007, during which the presidential and legislative campaign de facto took place (column 2). Excluding these periods does not affect our main results.

		Logit	Probit	Dummy	Time (second)	cluster day	year*month fe	dep time trend	Same regression
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Nb of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**								
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	0.0283	0.0144	0.00284	3.36e-05	0.00245	0.00291	0.00240	0.00334
		(0.0360)	(0.0181)	(0.00869)	(2.51e-05)	(0.00312)	(0.00289)	(0.00263)	(0.00284)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1	0.0156	0.00439	-0.00459	5.75e-06	0.00187	-0.00142	0.00201	-0.00141
		(0.0395)	(0.0210)	(0.00774)	(3.26e-05)	(0.00299)	(0.00305)	(0.00403)	(0.00311)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.827	0.742	0.546	0.507	0.901	0.384	0.937	0.342
	Felonies other than perpetrated t-1								0.00787*
									(0.00420)
	Felonies other than perpetrated t+1								-0.00527
									(0.00346)
	pval diff t-1/t+1								0.0490
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies								
	Felony t-1	0.0470**	0.0239**	0.00713	2.94e-05	0.00363	0.00465*	0.00370*	
		(0.0231)	(0.0119)	(0.00810)	(3.54e-05)	(0.00252)	(0.00234)	(0.00184)	
	Felony t+1	0.00395	-0.000673	-0.00594	1.79e-05	0.000953	-0.00256	0.00113	
		(0.0324)	(0.0170)	(0.00691)	(3.70e-05)	(0.00245)	(0.00222)	(0.00341)	
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.345	0.298	0.247	0.821	0.498	0.0557	0.546	
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors								
	Judicial error t-1	-0.0388	-0.0203	-0.000506	-4.95e-06	-0.00274	-0.00531	-0.00192	-0.00573
		(0.0798)	(0.0397)	(0.0125)	(5.22e-05)	(0.00517)	(0.00468)	(0.00590)	(0.00435)
	Judicial error t+1	0.0649	0.0344	0.0159	5.52e-05	0.00601	0.00532	0.00600	0.00538
		(0.0612)	(0.0355)	(0.0143)	(6.87e-05)	(0.00725)	(0.00766)	(0.00767)	(0.00770)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.405	0.412	0.453	0.578	0.378	0.361	0.523	0.326
	Observations	6,539	6,539	6,719	6,719	6,719	6,719	6,719	6,719
	Mean	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759	0.0759

Table D1: Robustness checks of the effect of media on acquittal. The outcome is a dummy for acquittal. These regressions are estimated for the subsample of cases for which we have information on acquittals (defined in appendix A). Controls are for: gender, type of offense, county, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Felonies "other than perpetrated" are stories that jointly cover felonies and trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

	Outcome:	Number of cases		
		(1)	(2)	(3)
Nb of news stories on…		**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**		
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	0.00574		-0.00161
		(0.0846)		(0.0859)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1		0.0335	0.0339
			(0.0799)	(0.0811)
	pval diff t-1/t+1			0.782
		Panel B: effect of all news about felonies		
	Felonies t-1	0.0995		0.0859
		(0.0727)		(0.0738)
	Felonies t+1		0.0821	0.0639
			(0.0674)	(0.0684)
	pval diff t-1/t+1			0.840
		Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors		
	Judicial errors t-1	0.228		0.205
		(0.199)		(0.193)
	Judicial errors t+1		0.241*	0.220
			(0.138)	(0.135)
	pval diff t-1/t+1			0.952
	Observations	2,555	2,555	2,555
	Mean	6.909	6.909	6.909

Table D2: Effect of media on the number of convictions per day. Regressions include controls for month, day of the week, and year. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

		Acquittal as a sentence of 0 years	Heckman stage 2	Heckman stage 1
		(1)	(2)	(3)
Nb of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**			
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	35.30**	41.65*	-0.00964
		(14.99)	(22.17)	(0.0186)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1	1.315	19.82	-0.0198
		(29.90)	(20.52)	(0.0165)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.252	0.507	0.507
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies			
	Felony t-1	29.92***	37.95**	-0.0209
		(10.39)	(17.89)	(0.0147)
	Felony t+1	0.442	5.984	-0.0116
		(21.21)	(16.77)	(0.0135)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.201	0.235	0.235
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors			
	Judicial error t-1	-40.60	-81.19**	-0.00737
		(43.64)	(35.89)	(0.0287)
	Judicial error t+1	-37.13	6.930	-0.0337*
		(32.66)	(27.63)	(0.0191)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.958	0.0713	0.0713
	Observations	6,333	6,333	6,333
	Mean	3472	3736	3736

Table D3: Robustness check: effect of media on sentences in subsamples 2 with acquittals considered as sentence length of zero (column 1) and Heckman selection model (columns 2 and 3). The outcome variable is the sentence in days. Coefficients in each panel correspond to different estimates. The number of observations and sample means are the same within each column. In column 1, controls are for: gender, type of offense, county, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. For convergence reasons, controls are restricted to dummies for day of the week in column 2 and dummies for counties and day of the week in column 3. This analysis is run for the subsample of data for which we have information on acquittals (subsample 2, defined in online appendix A).
Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

		Full sample	Full sample, minus life imprisonment	Subsample 1 (information on court dates)	Subsample 2 (information on acquittals)
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nb of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**				
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	25.82**	23.04**	36.83***	48.04**
		(9.992)	(9.324)	(12.15)	(18.18)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1	0.770	3.719	23.55*	28.01
		(9.885)	(9.711)	(13.68)	(17.43)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0651	0.140	0.445	0.268
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies				
	Felony t-1	23.94***	20.94***	36.97***	36.65***
		(7.760)	(7.619)	(9.001)	(11.79)
	Felony t+1	6.833	9.630	10.70	23.39
		(8.199)	(7.860)	(12.76)	(13.86)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.128	0.311	0.102	0.496
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors				
	Judicial error t-1	-39.70**	-41.99***	-24.15	-36.43
		(15.77)	(15.52)	(24.69)	(36.84)
	Judicial error t+1	3.346	7.043	13.92	11.03
		(13.34)	(12.64)	(18.19)	(21.89)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0395		0.268	0.366
	Observations	16,342	16,223	7,903	4,33
	Mean	3656	3598	3619	3710

Table D4: Robustness check: effect of media on sentences for different subsamples. The outcome variable is the sentence in days. Controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, county, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Subsamples in columns 3 and 4 are defined in online appendix A. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Outcome:		Sentence length	
		Without the month before election	Without January-June 2007
		(1)	(2)
Nb of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**		
	Perpetrated felonies t-1	26.85***	22.68**
		(9.800)	(9.845)
	Perpetrated felonies t+1	-1.533	3.569
		(10.27)	(9.528)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0465	0.152
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies		
	Felony t-1	25.27***	20.42**
		(7.924)	(7.987)
	Felony t+1	6.507	7.694
		(8.935)	(7.991)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.132	0.258
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors		
	Judicial error t-1	-37.36**	-44.61***
		(16.38)	(16.13)
	Judicial error t+1	-0.493	5.445
		(14.57)	(13.46)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0785	0.0178
	Observations	14,802	15,051
	Mean	3656	3656

Table D5: Effect of news on sentences, excluding electoral periods. The outcome is the sentence length in days. Controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Appendix E: Heterogeneity of Treatment Effects

In this appendix, we explore heterogeneities. First, we present the effect of different news stories on sentences. In table E1, the first four columns present the effect for "bad news" unrelated to criminal justice: strikes, natural disaster, social conflict, and unemployment. None of these news stories has an effect on sentences. The last two columns present the effect of the two most common keywords used in our main aggregates: "murder" in the felony aggregate and "judicial error" in the judicial error aggregate. Results are similar to the main regressions.

Table E2 presents our main analyses for first instance proceeding and appellate court separately, which are discussed in section 6 of the paper. These results indicate that news stories on crimes have no effect on sentence decisions in appeal courts. This could be due to more careful deliberations for appellate decisions; to the existence of a reference point provided by the preceding decision; or to the presence of more experienced professionals, who can guide jurors more effectively to ignore the news.

We then look for differential effects across defendant and county characteristics (tables E3 and E4). In table E3, we look at heterogeneous effects based on citizenship, age and past convictions of the defendant, interacting the variable of interest and controls with the characteristic of interest. In table E4, we look at heterogeneity across counties. We do not have information on jurors, but since they are randomly selected from their county's electoral role, we can look at differences in counties. We measure the effect of news in counties where the share of conservative votes is higher than the national average, or the share of citizens older than 65 is larger than the national average. We find no significant differences.

Turning to heterogeneity across news characteristics, we separately measure the effect of the content of the news on TF1 or France 2, the two channels for which we have data. As we mention in section 2.3., TF1 is a private channel and has an audience roughly 1.5 times larger than France 2, a public channel. Their coverage of crime and judicial errors is quantitatively very similar: 0.64 news stories on felony per day for TF1, the same for France 2; 0.068 news stories on judicial error per day for TF1, 0.072 for France 2. In practice, there is a strong correlation in the content of news on either channel (0.5 for the number of news about crime; 0.7 for the number of news about judicial error). Results are presented in table E5. Coefficients are of the same order of magnitude and they are not significantly different.

We then ask whether proximity of the news story matters. We divide the events into three groups: those that occurred in the same county as trial, in adjacent counties, or in other counties. Table E6 presents the percent of stories that take place in one's county; in adjacent counties; or further out. Note that more than 90% of the news relate to events in other counties. Table E7 presents the effect of those news stories by proximity. The point estimates for news "outside county and adjacent counties" are significant and of the same order of magnitude as the effect of all news presented in table 3. The results observed in the paper do not come from events that occurred in the same county, or in close counties. Point estimates for events that took place in the same county, or in neighboring counties, are not significant; standard errors are very

large. Note that point estimates for the effect of news on perpetrated crimes are bigger when the event is closer.

Lastly, in table E7, we present the effect of news placed in the beginning or in the end of the 8PM news lineup. The beginning is defined as the first 10 news stories (over 24 on average). The effect of news stories about crimes broadcasted early on is always significant. This is not the case for news broadcasted towards the end. However, the differences between the two point estimates are not significant and the latter are sometimes bigger than the former (see columns 1 and 2).

Outcome	Sentence length					
Number of news stories on...	Strikes	Natural disasters	Social conflict	Unemployment	Judicial errors	Murder
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
… at t-1	4.951	-3.063	6.721	-17.73	-42.22**	28.70*
	(5.743)	(7.010)	(7.406)	(11.96)	(18.03)	(16.08)
… at t+1	-1.714	8.370	-1.327	2.152	-0.918	-5.765
	(6.302)	(13.02)	(7.185)	(13.60)	(14.67)	(12.70)
Controls	yes	yes	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes
Obs	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342
Sample mean	3656	3656	3656	3656	3656	3656

Table E1: Sentence length and news: criminal justice versus other bad news. The outcome in all regressions is sentence length in days. These estimates are calculated using all criminal records, and include controls for age, gender, nationality (French or other), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Outcome	Sentence length	
	1st instance	Appellate court
	(1)	(2)
Perpetrated felonies t-1	30.22***	6.975
	(9.510)	(36.64)
Perpetrated felonies t+1	5.601	-28.01
	(10.52)	(30.21)
pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0551	0.532
pval diff 1st/appeal t-1	0.506	
Felony t-1	27.72***	0.361
	(7.989)	(23.95)
Felony t+1	4.188	31.90
	(8.342)	(26.08)
pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0409	0.446
pval diff 1st/appeal t-1	0.265	
Observations	14,139	2,203
Mean	3476	4813

Table E2: Effect of news stories on sentences in first instance court and appeals court. The outcome in all regressions is sentence length in days. These estimates are calculated using all

criminal records, and include controls for age, gender, nationality (French or other), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, county, number of prior convictions in the past five years, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Outcome	Sentence length		
	Interaction with non-French nationality	Interaction with age	Interaction with prior conviction
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Felony perpetrated t-1	21.93*	31.49**	17.54
	(11.30)	(13.35)	(14.09)
Felony perpetrated t+1	-0.0847	-2.215	0.443
	(9.230)	(13.37)	(11.85)
Felony perpetrated t-1 * not French	29.44		
	(33.74)		
Felony perpetrated t+1 * not French	5.834		
	(25.52)		
Felony perpetrated t-1 * age>median		-9.180	
		(19.51)	
Felony perpetrated t+1 * age>median		8.176	
		(18.63)	
Felony perpetrated t-1 * (prior conviction)			16.74
			(20.56)
Felony perpetrated t+1 * (prior conviction)			0.270
			(17.63)
Observations	16,342	16,342	16,342
Mean	3656	3656	3656
Sd	2046	2046	2046

Table E3: Effect of content of news on sentence length, by socio-demographic characteristics of the defendant. The outcome variable is the sentence in days. The median age of defendants is 37 years old. We include, on top of the main effects, the interaction of media coverage (and covariates) with nationality (column 1), a dummy for being over the median age (column 2), and a dummy for having a prior conviction (column 3). The controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Outcome	Sentence length	
	(1)	(2)
Felony perpetrated t-1	26.49*	23.02*
	(14.94)	(13.85)
Felony perpetrated t+1	-3.480	-1.117
	(15.86)	(14.78)
Felony perpetrated t-1 * (population above 65 > national average)	-1.449	
	(20.62)	
Felony perpetrated t+1 * (population above 65> national average)	9.024	
	(19.60)	
Felony perpetrated t-1 * (conservative vote > national average)		1.657
		(19.81)
Felony perpetrated t+1 * (conservative vote > national average)		6.483
		(19.65)
Observations	16,342	16,342
Mean	3656	3656
Sd	2046	2046

Table E4: Effect of content of news on sentence length, by average characteristics of the population in the county. The outcome variable is the sentence in days. Jurors are randomly drawn from the county's population (via electoral rolls). Past convictions are defined as having a prior conviction in one's criminal record. Controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Additional controls for all the variables interacted with the relevant socio-demographic variable are also included. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

	Outcome:	Sentence length	
		Using only the TF1 news stories (1)	Using only the France 2 news stories (2)
Nb of news stories on…	**Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies**		
	Felony perpetrated t-1	39.59**	37.09**
		(19.73)	(15.41)
	Felony perpetrated t+1	0.495	5.448
		(16.24)	(18.28)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.125	0.160
	Panel B: effect of all news about felonies		
	Felony t-1	41.58**	32.64**
		(16.30)	(13.06)
	Felony t+1	9.569	14.74
		(14.86)	(14.61)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.154	0.367
	Panel C: effect of news about judicial errors		
	Judicial error t-1	-63.82**	-72.53**
		(26.68)	(32.24)
	Judicial error t+1	9.176	2.586
		(26.48)	(25.54)
	pval diff t-1/t+1	0.0564	0.0700
	Control	Yes	Yes
	Observations	16,342	16,342
	Mean	3656	3656
	Sd	2046	2046

Table E5: Effect of news stories on sentences, by TV channel. Outcome is sentence length (in days). Controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

News that is…	Proportion of news stories about perpetrated crimes	Proportion of all news stories about crimes
… in the same county	2%	1%
… in adjacent county	7%	4%
… in other counties	91%	94%

Table E6: Breakdown of news stories on crime, by distance to the court. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Outcome:		Sentence length	
		News about perpetrated crimes (1)	All news about crime (2)
Nb of news stories at t-1 in…	The same county	44.28	24.46
		(42.02)	(34.04)
	An adjacent county	35.27	38.21*
		(32.99)	(22.64)
	Neither county nor adjacent	22.89*	21.82**
		(12.60)	(9.886)
	Observations	16,342	16,342
	Mean	3656	3656
	Sd	2046	2046

Table E7: Effect of news stories on sentences, by distance between trial and place of the event. Outcome is sentence length (in days). Controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

News stories on...	Outcome: sentence length in days			
	Perpetrated felonies	All felonies	Perpetrated felonies (dummy)	All felonies (dummy)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Beginning t-1	21.23**	19.03**	76.73**	70.87**
	(10.39)	(9.003)	(30.03)	(28.79)
End t-1	44.13	39.60*	58.78	38.57
	(27.97)	(20.10)	(37.98)	(27.51)
Beginning t+1	-4.734	4.483	-20.62	-4.565
	(11.08)	(8.607)	(31.66)	(28.69)
End t+1	27.60	21.84	23.94	22.75
	(26.78)	(21.40)	(36.19)	(33.39)
Observations	16,342	16,342	16,342	16,342
Mean	3656	3656	3656	3656
P value for testing the null hypothesis of equality of the "beginning t-1" and "end t-1" coefficients	0.450	0.381	0.736	0.423

Table E8: Effect of news stories about crime on sentences, by rank in the news lineup. Stories are defined as "at the beginning" (end) of the news lineup if they are in the first (second) half. Controls are for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), past convictions, length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France

2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: Authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Appendix F: Additional Results on Judicial Error

In this appendix, we present additional results on the effect of judicial errors on sentencing. Figure F1 shows that news on judicial errors are clustered in time, around events relating to the Outreau trial. In particular, there are spikes in news stories during first trial (May and June 2004), the appeal trial (November and December 2005) and the review of the case by a parliamentary commission (January–April 2006).

Table F1 is analogous to table 5 in the paper, and looks at mechanisms. Results are overall similar to those in table 5: the effect of coverage of judicial error does not change when we control for crimes; point estimates are larger and more significant when there were above-median TV audiences. The main difference is that when we include both the presence and the number of stories on judicial errors, the number of judicial error stories matters more (column 7).

Figure F2 is analogous to figure 3 in the paper. It plots the distribution of sentence length, by coverage of judicial errors on the 8PM national TV news on the day before a trial's verdict. It seems that the difference in sentences after news about judicial errors appears for shorter sentences, while the difference in sentences after news about crime appears for longer sentences. This is confirmed in the quantile regressions, presented in appendix table C1 (columns 3 and 4).

Lastly, figure F3 presents the coefficients for leads and lags for judicial errors (analogous to figure 4 in the paper). For judicial errors, the effect over time of news can be identified less cleanly, since coverage of judicial errors is more correlated over time. Indeed, news about judicial error mainly comes from the Outreau case, which in each iteration is covered multiple days in a row. It's harder to identify clearly the dynamic of the effect when we add several leads and lag in the same regression.

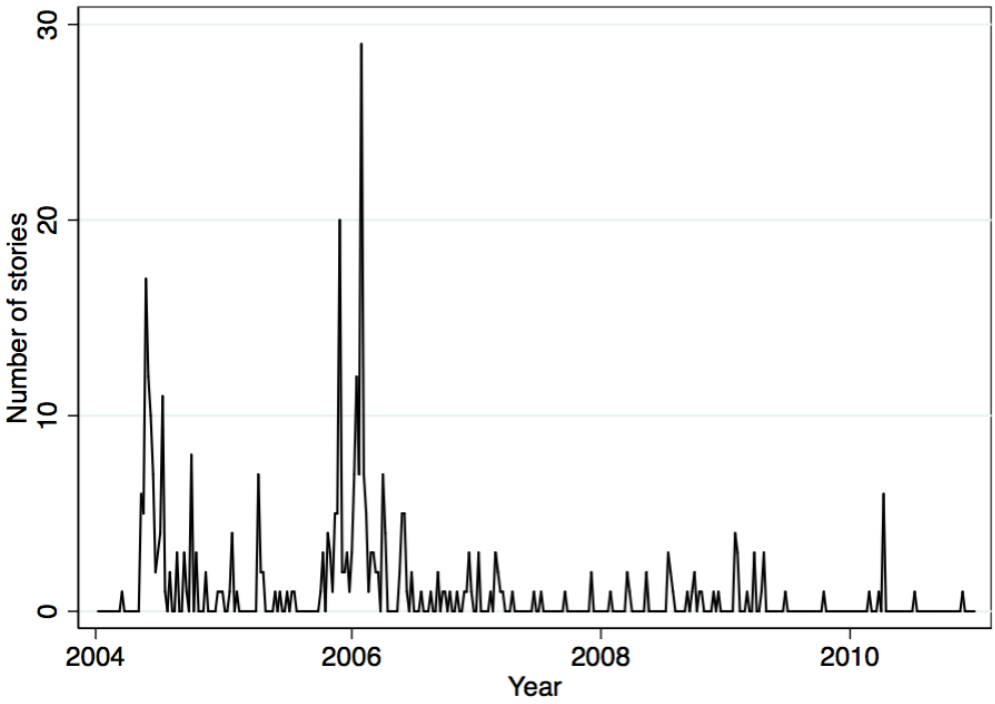


Figure 1: Number of stories judicial errors on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2) per week from 2004 to 2010. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Source: authors' calculations based on data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

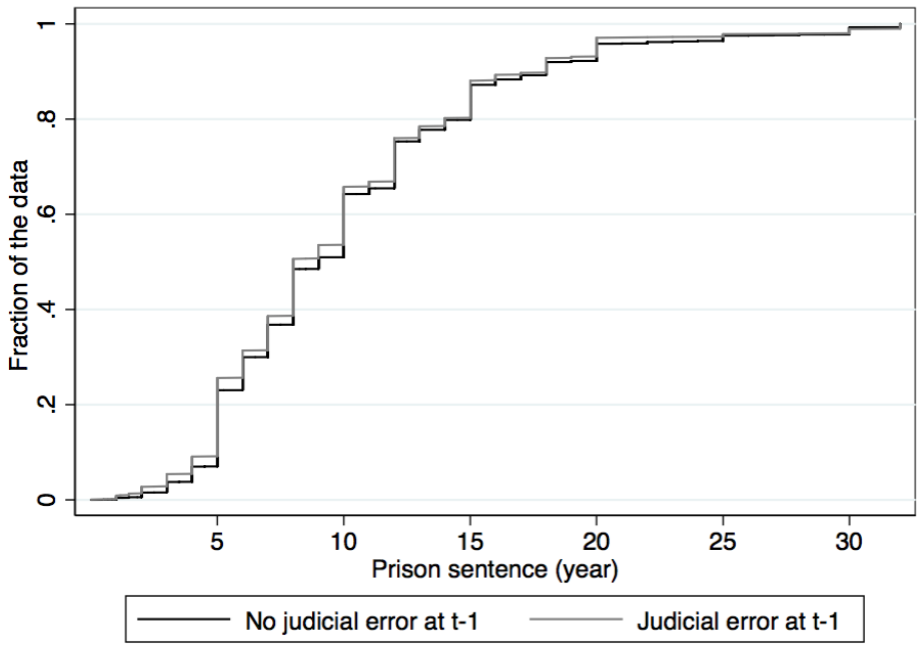


Figure F2: Distribution of sentence length, by coverage of judicial errors on TV. The dark line (light line) presents the cumulative fraction of defendants with a sentence shorter than any sentence length, if there were any stories (no stories) on judicial errors on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2) on the day before the verdict. Source: authors'

calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

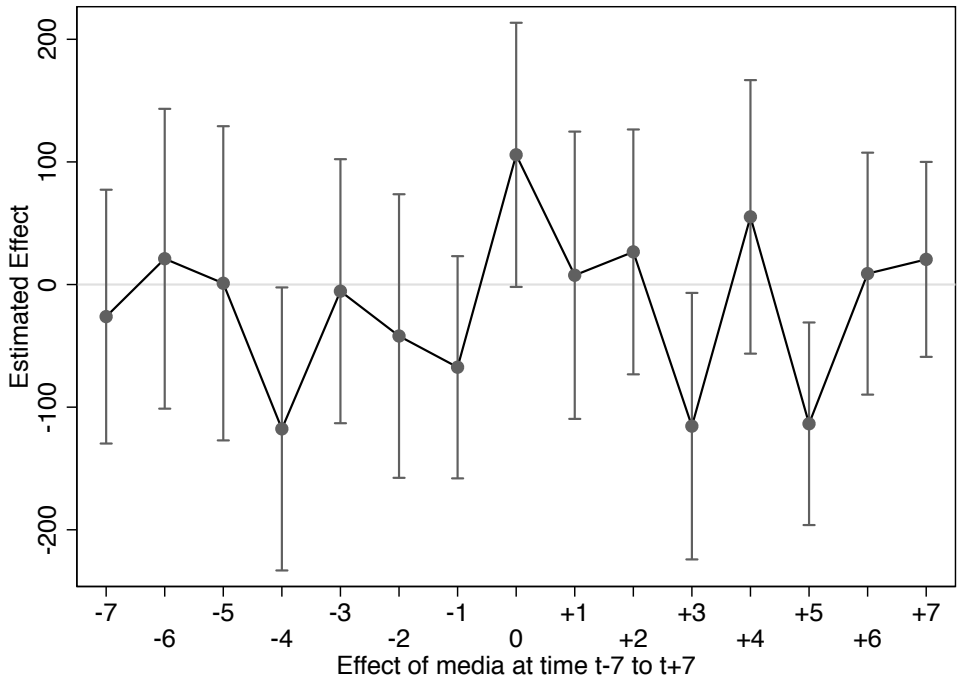


Figure F3: Duration of the effect of media coverage of judicial errors: regression coefficients for perpetrated felonies, 7 days pre and post sentencing. The measure for judicial errors is a dummy equal to one if there were any news stories about judicial errors on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2). Note: the reported coefficients are for a single regression, which also includes controls for age, gender, nationality (dummy for being French), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, and dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Source: authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.

Outcome	Sentence length						
	(1)	Controlling crimes (police) (2)	Controlling crimes (courts) (3)	Audience below median (4)	Audience above median (5)	Trial length ≥ 2days (6)	Intensive & extensive margin (7)
Dummy: Judicial	-72.06*						11.50
error t-1	(41.36)						(53.52)
Dummy: Judicial	23.52						23.56
error t-1	(54.26)						(60.45)
Judicial error t-2						1.126	
						(20.79)	
Judicial error t-1		-40.73**	-37.24**	15.42	-45.20**	-24.54	-42.55**
		(15.82)	(15.87)	(44.55)	(17.98)	(31.95)	(20.66)
Judicial error t+1		3.203	2.865	17.57	5.052	6.251	-0.677
		(13.28)	(13.33)	(28.98)	(14.87)	(22.11)	(14.19)
Crimes-Police		-3.265**					
measure		(1.598)					
Crimes-Court			-0.844				
measure			(37.93)				
Pval t-1/t+1 (dummy)	0.137						0.882
Pval t-1/t+1 (continuous)		0.0353	0.0516	0.972	0.0296	0.513	0.123
pval t-1 audience				0.203			
Observations	16,342	16,342	15,926	7,378	8,041	6,462	16,342
Mean	3656	3656	3656	3585	3587	3654	3656

Table F1: Mechanisms: judicial errors. In column 1, we include controls for the number of felonies per county and per month, measured using publicly available police data. In column 2, we include controls for the number crimes per county and per day that led to a conviction by 2015, as reflected on criminal records. We calculate this using the date of conviction that appears on criminal records. In column 4 (5), we limit our sample to cases tried on a day where the audience for the 8PM news was below (above) the median in audience size for that period. In column 6, we include only data for which we have information on session length (subsample 1, as defined in online appendix A), and for which the trial lasted 2 days or more. In column 7, we include a dummy for the presence of news stories on crimes; and the number of news stories on crimes. Estimates in columns 1–7 include controls for age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year. All standard errors are clustered at the county level. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Source: authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records, from publicly available police statistics. *Note*: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Appendix G: Additional Information on Corrections Courts and Juveniles

In section 6, we present the effect of media on two kinds of courts that include only professional judges: corrections courts, and juvenile courts. We provide more details for each in turn. The statistics that we present are based on our calculations, using the same criminal records data as used for our main results (described in section 2.2).

Corrections courts examine all criminal offenses that are not examined in criminal court – so offenses that entail a maximum prison sentence under 10 years. We present descriptive statistics in table G1. The most frequent offenses are driving offenses (41%, close to two thirds of which are for "driving under influence," with the remainder for driving without a license or without insurance), followed by property crimes (17.6%), battery (9.5%) and drug-related offenses (7.9%). Between 2004 and 2010, there were 485,000 (in 2004) to 637,000 (in 2010) cases tried each year.

As in criminal court, there is no plea bargaining possible in corrections courts. There are no lay jurors in corrections courts; a panel of three professional judges decides on both conviction and sentences. Investigation length is generally shorter than in criminal court (one year on average). Cases can be judged within a week of the offense (*comparution immediate,* 5% of cases). A decision is not necessarily made at the end of the trial: decisions are delayed for 22% of cases. We restrict our sample to decisions that are not delayed, because for these cases we know the precise verdict date.

Overall, sentences are much shorter in corrections court than in criminal court. In order to make cases more comparable, in tables 7 and 8, we focus on violent crime that could lead to at least 7 years in prison. These represent the most severe cases: virtually all such cases are for violence or sexual offenses (see column 4 of table G1).

Juvenile courts examine two kinds of cases that involve youth: when a child is in danger (for example, extreme cases of child abuse);[38] or when the offender was less than 18 years old at the time of crime for misdemeanors; 16 for felonies. The age threshold is determined by age at the time of the offense, not at the time of the trial. In juvenile court, three professionals make conviction and sentencing decisions: one juvenile judge, and two volunteers (*assesseur du tribunal pour enfant*), appointed for four years (renewable). Sentences can include incarceration, suspended sentences, or educational sanctions.

Descriptive statistics are presented in table 7. There are about 300 cases per year, amounting to 2,508 between 2004 and 2010, or 2,212 when we exclude defendants below the age of 13, whose sentences cannot include prison time. Sentences in juvenile court cannot be more than half of the adult maximum. Sentences are generally handed down on the day of the verdict. In 57 cases, the decisions were postponed. We exclude these cases from the analysis, since we cannot precisely date when the sentence was handed down.

Juvenile criminal courts examine felony cases when the offender was 16 or 17 years old, as well as that of co-offenders when at least one offender was less than 18. In

[38] This does not appear in criminal records, so is not part of these analyses.

section 6, we only consider offenders who are under the age of 21. Defendants younger than 21 represent 80% of people represented in juvenile criminal court. If an offender is over 21 years old, he or she cannot serve a sentence in juvenile prison.

Here again, the relevant age threshold is age upon offending. As in criminal courts, conviction and sentencing are decided by a jury including lay people, but one of the presiding magistrates must be a juvenile judge. As opposed to adult trials, trials are behind closed doors, and juveniles cannot be named in the media. As in juvenile court, sentences cannot be more than half of the adult maximum, unless the court explicitly excludes the attenuating circumstance of being a minor. There are around 250 cases per year, representing 2,024 cases between 2004 and 2010, and 1,842 when adults older than 21 are excluded.

	Corrections courts (professional judges)			
	All	No delay	No delay, maximum prison term equal to or greater than 7 years	No delay, maximum prison term equal to or greater than 7 years, violent or sexual crime
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Male	.9	.9	.92	.92
French	.78	.78	.83	.84
Age (at crime)	32.6	32.8	27.4	35.48
Investigation length (days)	346	357	569	1129
Sentence (including suspended)	94	121	394	596
Sentence in prison	44	53	225	290
Crime types				
Violence	.09	.11	.05	.41
Sexual crimes	.01	.02	.07	.59
Property crimes	.15	.16	.37	0
Drug	.08	.09	.37	0
Road-related crimes	.45	.36	0	0
Maximum prison term				
≤ 1 year	.26	.2	0	0
2 years	.31	.27	0	0
3 years	.18	.21	0	0
4-5 years	.16	.2	0	0
≥ 7 years	.1	.13	1	1
N	3,409,698	2,212,694	287,104	35,358

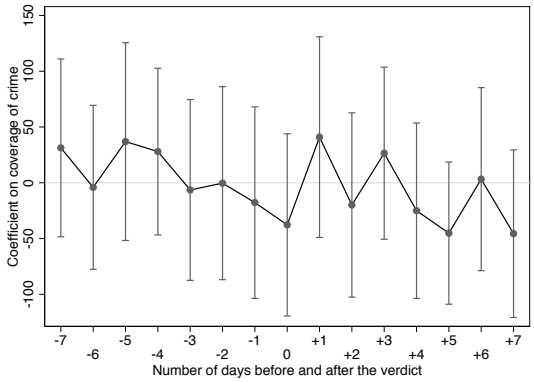
Table G1: Summary statistics on crimes judged in corrections courts.

Sample	Felonies in juvenile court (without juror)	Juveniles criminal court (with juror) age ≤ 21	Juveniles criminal court (with juror) all ages
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Panel A: effect of news about perpetrated felonies on sentences (including suspended)		
Felony perp t-1 (dummy)	30.81	146.9**	191.8***
	(27.70)	(69.40)	(70.96)
Felony perp t+1 (dummy)	-16.15	-24.76	-0.755
	(25.97)	(94.41)	(92.86)
Pval t-1/t+1	0.239	0.172	0.111
Pval comparison t-1 with juvenile court		0.0521	0.00987
Mean Sentence (including suspended)	800	2068	2169
	Panel B: effect of news about perpetrated felonies on sentence in prison		
Felony perp t-1 (dummy)	-1.008	165.8*	219.3**
	(17.68)	(94.45)	(93.82)
Felony perp t+1 (dummy)	24.56	-22.12	6.530
	(20.12)	(125.4)	(123.6)
Pval t-1/t+1	0.342	0.269	0.191
Pval comparison t-1 with juvenile court		0.0713	0.0139
Observations	2,269	1,842	2,022
Mean sentence in prison	178.2	1478	1610

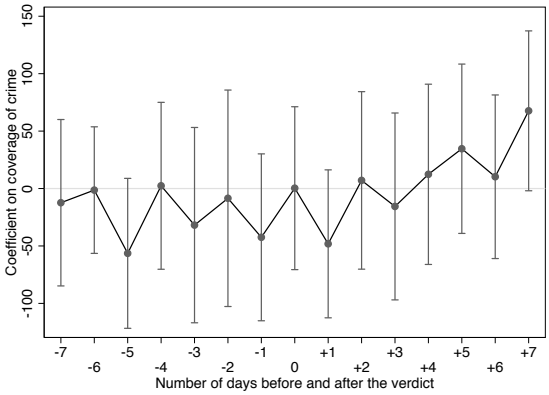
Table G2: Effects of media on decisions in juvenile courts and juvenile criminal courts: robustness checks. The outcome in all regressions is sentence length in days. In panel A, the outcome is sentence length (including suspended sentences). In panel B, the outcome is the imprisonment sentence. The first column includes all cases tried in juvenile court, including for youth less than 13 years old at the time of crime (and so ineligible for prison sentences). The second column shows the effect of media on sentencing only for juveniles less than 21 at the time of offense. The third column shows the effect of media on sentencing for all defendants tried in juvenile criminal court – including people older than 21 who committed offenses with juveniles. We include controls for day of week. News stories are those covered on the 8PM national television news on TF1 and France 2. Stories on perpetrated felonies are stories about crimes that do not mention trials or legislation. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *Note*: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Appendix H: Effect of Different Kinds of News between t-7 and t+7

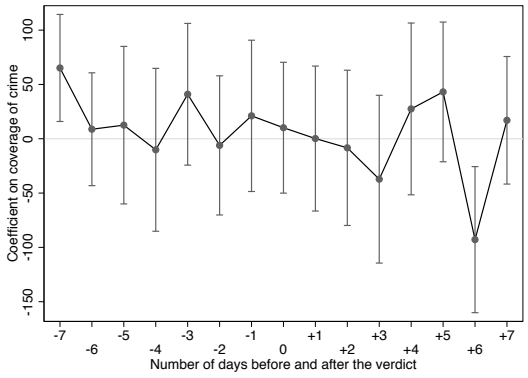
In the appendix, we present coefficients for a regression of sentence length on leads and lags of media content. Leads and lags are included simultaneously.



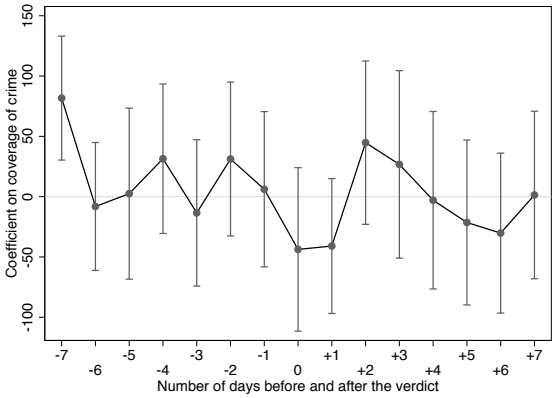
(a) natural disasters



(b) unemployment



(c) social conflict



(d) strikes

Figure H1: Duration of the effect of media coverage of non-crime news stories on sentences: regression coefficients for perpetrated felonies, 7 days pre and post sentencing. Sub-figures (a) to (d) present the effect of coverage of natural disasters, unemployment, social conflict, and strikes (respectively). In each case, the measure is a dummy equal to one if there were any news stories on that topic on the 8PM national television news (TF1 and France 2). Note: the reported coefficients are for a single regression, which also includes controls for age, gender, nationality (dummy for being French), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, number of prior convictions in the past five years, type of court (appellate court, court of first instance), county, length of time between offense and trial, and dummies for month, day of week and year. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Source: authors' calculations based on criminal records, provided by the French Ministry of Justice, and data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute and from French criminal records.