Crime Perception and Voting Behavior: Evidence from Individual Data*

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of local crime on individual voting behavior, using geolocated crime-related news as a proxy for public concern about crime. Drawing on a retrospective survey of 5000 individuals across several election rounds, our analysis exploits the occurrence of a criminal event in the vicinity of a voter in the lead-up to elections. The results for general elections are mixed overall, showing no effects on voting behavior when crimes are committed by Italians. Conversely, crimes attributed to immigrants result in lower support for the populist right-wing parties, sometimes having an ambiguous stance on immigration, and instead higher support for the more traditional right-wing parties, which emphasizes law and order. In administrative elections, the effect of crime diverges. Crimes committed by Italians result in the punishment of incumbents, while immigrant-related crimes lead to increased voter abstention, possibly reflecting the social stigma associated with party-switching among left-leaning voters, the incumbent party. These findings provide novel insights into the relationship between crime salience, particularly regarding immigration, and individual voting behavior.

Keywords: crime; elections; political parties; newspapers; individual voting behavior; dictionary-based classification.
JEL: D72; K42; J15; D83; L82.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, democracies across the globe have witnessed a notable surge in populism. This phenomenon has been fueled by multiple factors, including the lingering effects of the Great Recession and the Sovereign Debt Crisis, as well as the political salience of immigration in the aftermath of the European "migration crisis". As emphasized by Keita et al. (2023), crime and immigration are often intertwined in public perception, and populist politicians frequently exploit this association by presenting immigrants as an external threat on which to pin social grievances, often explicitly associating immigration to crime. Rhetoric revolving around public safety and the behavior of "others" has thus become a potentially powerful driver of political preferences. A tension emerges when right-wing parties strategically conflate immigration *and* crime within the political arena. Voters may penalize policies that are simultaneously perceived as permitting excessive immigration and as exhibiting leniency toward crime. Distinguishing between these two channels is essential for understanding how voter reactions shape party support and the policy platforms advanced.

This paper investigates whether direct exposure to immigrant-related crime, compared to native-related crime, influences individual voting behavior. Our empirical setting allows us to examine whether individuals adjust their voting behavior as a consequence of crimes committed by immigrants or natives in their immediate surroundings. Specifically, we measure such exposure as the occurrence of a criminal event within 200 meters of an individual's home address during the month preceding an electoral round. Exploiting crimes committed by Italian nationals provides a benchmark to separate the effect of crime itself from the crime-immigration channel, which has been central to the rise of populist parties in Italy and beyond.

A central feature of our approach is the reliance on media-reported crime as the empirical measure of localized criminal activity. Unlike much of the literature, which emphasizes how media outlets distort or selectively amplify crime in ways that shape public opinion, we interpret local news coverage as a close proxy for the flow of information in a highly granular urban context. In many settings, official crime records are not available at the same spatial and temporal resolution as local media reports. As a result, media coverage functions less as a biased intermediary and more as the first observable channel through which information about neighborhood crime becomes salient.[1] Our interpretation thus shifts attention away from national-level media bias

[1] In line with the Latin root of *media* as "in between," we emphasize the informational role of local outlets as conduits between events and residents, downplaying potential distortions due to political leanings or editorial bias. The latter is also true in our empirical application, as will be clear in the section describing the data construction.

toward the diffusion of information about highly localized crime.

Our empirical design compares declared voting choices across multiple elections for individuals differentially exposed to immigrant-related crimes and nationals-related crimes. By exploiting spatial and temporal variation in reported incidents, we are able to isolate the effect of immigrant crime exposure on political preferences at the individual level. This design represents a departure from much of the existing literature, which typically analyzes crime and voting using data aggregated at the ballot-box, municipal, or regional level.

To implement this design, we combine two novel data sources. The first is a representative survey of 5,000 residents of Bologna, a major city in Northern Italy, conducted in 2021, which records retrospective voting behavior across nine elections between 2004 and 2021, including both national parliamentary and local municipal contests. The second is a corpus of approximately 11,000 crime-related articles published between 2011 and 2022 by the local online outlet *BolognaToday*. Using a dictionary-based classification algorithm, we distinguish crimes committed by Italians from those committed by immigrants and geocode each article at the street level. The underlying assumption is that learning about a crime in one's immediate vicinity—such as on one's own street or a neighboring one—generates greater concern than learning about a crime occurring farther away. These data allow us to construct individual-specific measures of exposure to crime news within the relevant space-time window around each election. Conceptually, our empirical strategy follows a differences-in-differences framework: we compare the voting behavior of individuals who do or do not experience a nearby crime within the month preceding an election, distinguishing whether the crime was committed by immigrants or nationals to assess their potentially different effects.

Our analysis builds on a large body of research linking media exposure to political behavior. Seminal contributions demonstrate the persuasive effects of mass media on electoral outcomes (Barone et al., 2015; Dellavigna and Kaplan, 2007; Enikolopov et al., 2011; Gerber et al., 2009), while other work has shown how crime coverage in particular shapes perceptions of safety and attitudes toward immigrants (Ajzenman et al., 2021; Mastrorocco and Minale, 2018; Sacco, 1982). As DellaVigna and Gentzkow (2010) argue, the accuracy of individual beliefs plays a crucial role in the functioning of democratic systems, and distortions in the information environment can shift both policy preferences and electoral outcomes. Consistent with this perspective, Mastrorocco and Minale (2018) show that reduced exposure to crime-heavy channels leads to lower concerns about crime, highlighting the centrality of media in shaping individual beliefs. Our study builds on these insights, while introducing a novel focus on micro-level exposure to immigrant versus national crime.

The findings reveal asymmetric effects of exposure to crime. Individuals residing near incidents of immigrant-related crime are significantly more likely to shift their support toward right-wing and anti-immigration parties, both in national and local elections. By contrast, exposure to crimes committed by Italian nationals does not produce comparable electoral shifts. In national elections, exposure to immigrant-related crime reduces the likelihood of switching to the Center-Left or to the Lega. The latter is a right-wing populist party that has traditionally centered its rhetoric on blaming immigrants for social and economic problems, yet without a consistent policy platform aimed at addressing crime through concrete interventions. Instead, immigrant-crime exposure increases the probability of switching to the Center-Right, a coalition more firmly associated with "law and order" positions, which emphasizes tougher enforcement and security-oriented policies.

In local elections, exposure to immigrant-related crime reduces switching toward the Center-Left while increasing both abstention and support for smaller parties, with some additional evidence of mobilization toward the Center-Right. Taken together, these results suggest that the salience of immigrant crime erodes support for mainstream parties and strengthens the appeal of "law and order", right-leaning parties.

This paper contributes to several strands of literature. First, it extends research on the economics of crime, which has explored the broader consequences of criminal activity for economic and political outcomes. Prior studies document how crime affects housing prices (Buonanno et al., 2013), mental health (Dustmann and Fasani, 2016), and voting behavior through crime-related policies (Drago et al., 2020). We contribute by showing that exposure to immigrant crime—captured at a highly granular level—has direct political effects, altering individual party preferences. Second, we add to the literature on media and political persuasion, which has emphasized the power of news content to shape beliefs and votes (Couttenier et al., 2021; Dellavigna and Kaplan, 2007; Enikolopov et al., 2011). Our results highlight that the framing of crime along identity lines matters at least as much as overall crime salience.

In addition, our work also relates to studies on social dynamics and violence, such as Blanes i Vidal and Mastrobuoni (2018), Kirchmaier et al. (2020), and Vargas et al. (2022), which document the effects of crime and disorder on community cohesion and political participation.

Finally, our study is closely connected to the literature on media bias and electoral outcomes. Research has shown that partisan media can influence both perceptions and votes, from the introduction of Fox News in the United States (Dellavigna and Kaplan, 2007), to the presence of independent TV channels in Russia (Enikolopov et al., 2011), to distortions of immigrant-crime coverage in Switzerland (Couttenier

et al., 2021). In the Italian context, Durante and Knight (2012) show that Berlusconi's coalition benefitted from systematic bias in television news, while Barone et al. (2015) demonstrate how the expansion of digital channels eroded this advantage. We build on this line of work by showing that even absent national-level partisanship, localized crime reporting can have measurable electoral consequences.

In sum, our contribution is threefold. First, we provide novel evidence that exposure to immigrant-related crimes in one's immediate environment has a significant causal impact on voting behavior. Second, we introduce a new setting that links individual-level survey data on electoral behavior to geocoded media reports of crime, offering a unique micro-level perspective that directly incorporates the spatial distribution of criminal events, rather than relying on cross-sectional shifters such as aggregate media exposure. Third, we highlight the importance of framing: it is crimes committed by immigrants, rather than by Italian nationals, that drive electoral shifts. These shifts consistently affect parties on the right of the political spectrum, though with an important asymmetry: populist parties that primarily engage in blame attribution (such as the Lega) tend to lose support, while right-wing parties with a stronger "law and order" stance gain it. To maintain clarity, throughout the paper we refer to these groups jointly as "right-wing parties", while distinguishing between their populist and law-and-order components when relevant.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the data and how we construct our exposure measures. Section 3 outlines the empirical strategy. Section 4 presents the main results and heterogeneity analyses, while Section 5 reports robustness checks. Section 6 concludes the paper. Additional information on the data, as well as robustness checks and supplementary figures, is provided in the Appendix.

2. Data

2.1. Survey Data

Our analysis relies on the survey data originally designed and collected for the work Berti Ceroni et al. (2025), so most of the technical details can be found therein. We will stress here the fundamental features that are key to this empirical analysis.

The survey was administered in December 2021 by a professional firm[2] and covers 5,000 Italian citizens residing in Bologna, a 400-thousands-inhabitants city in Northern Italy, who were eligible to vote and had lived in the city since at least 2013. Respondents were stratified across the city's 18 neighborhoods, with interviews conducted via

[2]Tecne Italia s.r.l., under the approval of the University of Bologna's ethical committee. The full questionnaire is available upon request.

telephone (70%) and online (30%). The questionnaire collected detailed demographic and socio-economic characteristics—such as birth year and province, education, employment status, occupation, and family structure and, key to our purposes, retrospective voting choices in all national (2006, 2008, 2013, 2018) and municipal elections (2004, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2021).[3] To enhance recall accuracy regarding retrospective voting, a brief neutral summary of the political environment during each specific time period was provided to the participants before asking about their voting behaviors. Moreover, to mitigate potential consistency bias, voting questions were asked in chronological order, starting from the earliest election.

A distinctive feature of the dataset obtained from the survey is the provision of respondents' street of residence (without house numbers for privacy). This information enables precise geo-localization and makes it possible to link individual voters to spatially disaggregated measures of media coverage of crime in their neighborhood. To minimize recall bias, voting questions were asked in chronological order and preceded by a neutral description of the political context of each election (main parties and candidates, relevant scandals, and whether the government completed its term).

Validation against official electoral outcomes shows close alignment, with minor discrepancies only in the 2011 and 2016 municipal elections, when the Center-Right and Lega presented joint candidates. Internal mobility within Bologna is limited: more than 96% of respondents in 2021 lived in the same area as in 2013, reducing concerns about selective migration. Additional descriptive evidence and validation exercises are presented in Appendix A.

2.2. Crime Measures from Newspapers

Our primary source of crime data is *BolognaToday*, a freely accessible local online newspaper.[4] Its digital archive spans from 2011—the year of the newspaper's establishment—through 2022, and contains approximately 55,000 articles, of which about 18.5% report on crime. Roughly three-quarters of these articles are geolocated at the street level, which we aggregate into both the 18 historical *zones* and the 6 current *districts*.[5]

We identify crime-related content using a dictionary-based approach (Gentzkow et al., 2019; Muço, 2022). Specifically, we consider articles that include keywords related to different categories of criminal activity (e.g., theft, assault, fraud, rape, murder,

[3]The empirical analysis will exploit five electoral events: the national elections of 2013 and 2018, and the municipal elections of 2011, 2016, and 2021.

[4]At the time of data collection, the website was freely accessible. Subscription plans for premium content were introduced only in 2025, after the period considered in our analysis.

[5]The municipality of Bologna reorganized local boundaries in 2016, replacing the 18 "*zones*" with 6 larger "*districts*".

kidnapping, drugs), as well as terms signaling the nationality of the offenders (Italians vs. non-Italians). It is important to note that serious offenses such as murders or kidnappings represent only a very small fraction of the total coverage, while more common categories such as thefts or assaults dominate the dataset.

The resulting daily panel dataset consists of approximately 7,800 geolocated crime articles, of which 46% involve immigrant offenders. Because the same crime can be reported in multiple articles across different days, we do not use raw article counts as a measure of crime intensity. Instead, we construct indicator variables (dummies) for the occurrence of crime reports, thereby minimizing distortions due to repeated coverage of the same incident. These geocoded reports form the basis for constructing individual-level measures of exposure to crime news, which we then merge with electoral records for the empirical analysis. Further details on the classification algorithm, the scraping protocol, and descriptive reporting patterns are provided in Appendix B.

3. Empirical Strategy

The aim of the empirical analysis is to assess whether exposure to a criminal event in the immediate vicinity of an individual, during the period preceding the elections, alters their voting behavior. The innovative contribution of the research question lies in distinguishing between crimes committed by immigrants and those perpetrated by nationals.

The empirical approach employed in this study utilizes ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation with fixed effects to address various factors. Individual-level fixed effects account for time-invariant characteristics of each voter, while year fixed effects control for time-specific factors that may influence voting behavior. Additionally, district-level fixed effects, interacted with year, are included to capture district-specific dynamics. To account for potential errors correlation, we cluster standard errors at the district level.

The aim is to achieve identification by including district-year fixed effects and exploiting the plausible random variation in the timing (and location) of crimes within the same district per year. This approach enables an examination of changes in voting behavior associated with variations in the presence of reported crimes while holding other factors constant.

We recognize two potential concerns regarding the identification of the main effect. However, we ultimately conclude that these concerns do not threaten its validity. First, newspapers may exhibit systematic biases in crime reporting that correlate with the political orientation of local constituencies, and the frequency of reported criminal events themselves may display differential increases in the period preceding elections.

For instance, right-leaning neighborhoods may appear to experience higher levels of crime, not necessarily due to greater underlying incidence, but because residents adopt a more activist posture toward law enforcement—for example, by contacting the police in response to suspicious behavior. If such reporting patterns intensify in the weeks before an election, estimates of the electoral impact of crime news are likely to be upwardly biased. Importantly, however, in a difference-in-discontinuity exercise we find no evidence of systematic differential reporting of crimes in the pre-election period across districts of different historical political leaning (see subsection 5.2). This provides reassurance that the crime exposure measures we construct are not mechanically driven by partisan reporting patterns. Second, serial correlation of crimes beyond the dimension of the controls could still result in local persistence, so we run placebo regressions using criminal events occurring right after election dates and we find no statistically significant effects, see subsection 5.1.

Therefore, to quantitatively assess the causal impact of crime rates attributed to foreigners and nationals on voting behavior, we set up the following specifications, i.e. with time or time-by-district fixed effects, respectively:

$$Vote_{it}^{P} = \alpha CI_{it} + \beta CNI_{it} + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

$$Vote_{it}^{P} = \alpha CI_{it} + \beta CNI_{it} + \gamma_i + \delta_t \times \theta_d + \epsilon_{it} \tag{2}$$

The dependent variable, $Vote_{it}^{P}$, is a dummy for vote to party P for individual i at the election in year t (elections will grouped by type: national and administrative). The variable takes the value of 1 if the individual votes for parties such as M5S, Lega, Center Left, Center Right, or abstains from voting.

The main independent variables of interest are CI_{it} and CNI_{it}, which equal one if at least one crime involving nationals or immigrants, respectively, was reported within 200 meters of individual i's residence in the 30 days preceding election t. We rely on indicator variables—rather than article counts—because, as discussed in subsection 2.2, a single crime may generate multiple news reports across different days, and using dummies mitigates distortions arising from repeated coverage of the same incident.

Moreover, γ_i are the individual-level fixed effects, δ_t the year fixed effects, while $\delta_t \times \theta_d$ are the district per year fixed effects. The error term is denoted as ϵ_{it}.

4. Main Results

Our primary analysis focuses on national elections, considering both the intensive and extensive margins, as this approach mitigates the influence of local issues and accounts for the fact that Lega and the broader center-right coalition run separately. This

enhances the external validity of our findings. Additionally, we conduct a heterogeneity analysis to examine variations in responses based on parental status (having or not having a child), gender differences, education levels, and skill profiles.

Before presenting the details of our main findings, Tab. 1 shows the results at the extensive margin of the effects of overall crime perception, which accounts for both Italians and foreigners together.

Table 1: Effects of Crime Perception on Voting at National Elections

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Total Crimes	-0.012**	-0.011*	-0.005	-0.005	0.010	0.010	0.007**	0.004**	0.007**	0.007**
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts fixed effects × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: This table reports OLS estimates of the effect of local crime on voting behavior at national elections. The unit of observation is the individual i at time t. The dependent variable is a dummy that takes the value 1 if the individual votes for parties such as M5S, Lega, Center Left, Center Right, or abstains from voting. The independent variable is a dummy that takes value 1 if there is at least one crime around 200m from the residence street, 30 days before the election day. Robust standard errors are clustered at district level.

Our results indicate a mixed overall pattern, with small yet statistically significant effects on voting behavior for the Five Star Movement (M5S), the center-left coalition, and abstention. While these effects are not large in magnitude, their significance suggests that crime perception plays a role in shaping electoral choices. In the following paragraph, we extend this analysis by distinguishing the differential effects associated with the nationality of the perceived offenders, allowing us to assess whether voters respond differently depending on whether crime is attributed to Italians or foreigners. This distinction provides further insight into the underlying mechanisms driving the observed electoral shifts.

4.1. National Elections

We now turn to the findings of our analysis on the impact of crime perception on individual voting behavior, distinguishing between crimes attributed to Italians and those attributed to foreigners. Tab. 2A presents the results for national elections at the intensive margin, capturing the probability of switching political preferences between elections, while Tab. 2B reports the corresponding results at the extensive margin. The coefficients associated with crime-related news measure the change in the likelihood of shifting party support compared to the previous election. In particular, Tab. 2B further refines this analysis by estimating how this probability evolves with each additional news article on crime, allowing us to assess the cumulative impact of media exposure

on electoral behavior.

Table 2: Differential Effects of Crime Perception on Voting at National Elections

Panel A: Intensive Margin

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	-0.004	-0.004	0.000	-0.002	0.002	0.004	0.004	0.002	0.005	0.007
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Crimes by immigrants	-0.023**	-0.021**	-0.015**	-0.010	0.021**	0.021**	0.007	0.008	0.005	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts fixed effects × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Panel B: Extensive Margin

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	-0.001	0.000	0.002	-0.001	-0.003	-0.001	-0.002	0.006**	0.005*	-0.000
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Crimes by immigrants	-0.012**	-0.011**	-0.013**	-0.011	0.013	0.014	0.002	0.003	0.006**	-0.001
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: This table reports OLS estimates of the effect of local crime on voting behavior at national elections. The unit of observation is the individual i at time t. The dependent variable is an indicator equal to one if the respondent votes for M5S, Lega, Center Left, Center Right, or abstains from voting. The key explanatory variables are indicators for whether at least one crime is committed by Italians or immigrants within 200 meters of the respondent's street in the 30 days following election day. Robust standard errors, clustered at the district level, are reported in parentheses.

As shown in Tab. 2A, our analysis reveals no statistically significant effects of crime perception when offenses are attributed to Italians during national elections. However, when considering crimes perceived to be committed by immigrants, we observe notable shifts in voting behavior. Specifically, the probability of leaving the Five Star Movement (M5S) ranges between 2.3% and 2.1%, while the likelihood of abandoning Lega is 1.5%. In contrast, support for the Center-Right coalition increases by 2.1%, indicating a reallocation of votes toward parties with a stronger emphasis on law and order. These findings suggest that voters tend to desert the populist party (M5S, which maintains an ambiguous stance on immigration, and Lega), while they reward the Center-Right, which explicitly prioritizes security and stricter immigration policies.

When examining the effects at the extensive margin, our results further confirm that voters tend to abandon the populist party, reinforcing the idea that an increased perception of crime committed by foreigners does not translate into electoral gains for these parties. Instead, heightened concerns over crime appear to weaken their appeal at the ballot box, suggesting that their ambiguous stance on immigration may fail to

mobilize or retain their electorate in the face of rising security concerns.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, we examine heterogeneous effects across key demographic and socioeconomic dimensions, including parental status (having or not having a child), gender, education, and skill levels. In the next section, we focus on the latter two, while the results for parental status and gender differences are reported in the Appendix. We include this analysis to account for potential variation in how different segments of the population respond to crime perception, as factors such as educational attainment and skill profiles may shape both individuals' exposure to crime-related information and their electoral reactions to it.

4.1.1. Heterogeneity Effects on National Elections

We therefore extend our analysis to examine the heterogeneous effects of crime perception, considering potential variations in how different population segments respond to crime. Factors such as educational attainment and skill profiles may influence both individuals' exposure to crime-related information and their subsequent electoral reactions. By accounting for these dimensions, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of how socio-economic characteristics mediate the relationship between crime perception and voting behavior.

Beginning with the analysis of education level, we incorporate interactions between crime perception and dummy variables for high and low levels of education. The results, presented in Tab. 3A, indicate that it is primarily highly educated voters who abandon the Five Star Movement (M5S), while lower-educated voters tend to leave Lega. At the same time, it is predominantly the latter group—those with lower educational attainment—who shift their support toward the Center-Right coalition. These findings suggest that education plays a crucial role in shaping voters' responses to crime perception, potentially reflecting differences in information processing, policy preferences, or ideological alignment with party platforms.

When we extend our analysis to examine the effects of skill levels, we incorporate interactions between crime perception and dummy variables for high and low skill levels. Skill levels are constructed based on respondents' job types, reflecting the basic qualifications required for their respective occupations. The results, presented in Tab. 3B, further corroborate our previous findings. Specifically, highly skilled voters are more likely to abandon the Five Star Movement (M5S), while lower-skilled voters tend to shift their support toward the Center-Right coalition.

To conclude, these patterns suggest that both education and occupational skill levels play a crucial role in shaping electoral responses to crime perception, potentially reflecting differences in economic vulnerability, policy priorities, and ideological alignment

Table 3: Differential Effects of Crime Perception on Voting at National Elections

Panel A: By Education Level

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crime by Italians × low education	-0.015	-0.014	0.024	0.021	0.002	0.004	0.008	0.006	-0.005	-0.003
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Crime by Italians × high education	0.002	0.002	-0.013	-0.016	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.000	0.011	0.012
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Crime by immigrants × low education	-0.013	-0.012	-0.039***	-0.034**	0.029*	0.030*	-0.005	-0.003	0.016	0.012
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Crime by immigrants × high education	-0.027**	-0.026**	-0.003	0.002	0.016	0.016	0.013	0.015	-0.001	-0.005
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Panel B: By Skills Level

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crime by Italians × low skills	-0.012**	-0.011*	0.009	0.006	-0.011	-0.009	0.017	0.015	0.001	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Crime by Italians× high skills	0.013	0.014	-0.019	-0.021	0.030	0.032	-0.026	-0.027	0.014*	0.015**
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.027)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Crime by immigrants × low skills	-0.007	-0.006	-0.011	-0.006	0.028**	0.028*	0.002	0.003	0.011	0.007
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.014)
Crime by immigrants × high skills	-0.048***	-0.046***	-0.022	-0.017	0.008	0.008	0.016	0.019	-0.006	-0.010
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: This table reports OLS estimates of the effect of local crime on voting behavior at national elections. The unit of observation is the individual i at time t. The dependent variable is an indicator equal to one if the respondent votes for M5S, Lega, Center Left, Center Right, or abstains from voting. The key explanatory variables are indicators for whether at least one crime is committed by Italians or immigrants within 200 meters of the respondent's street in the 30 days following election day. These variables are interacted with individual characteristics capturing heterogeneity by education (Panel A) and by skill level (Panel B). Robust standard errors, clustered at the district level, are reported in parentheses.

with party positions on law and order.

4.2. Administrative Elections

Finally, we present the results for the differential effect of crime perception in administrative elections, while the remaining findings are available in Appendix C. This analysis allows us to assess whether the electoral impact of crime perception varies between national and local contexts, shedding light on the extent to which voters' reactions are influenced by the level of government at which elections take place.

Table 4: Differential Effects of Crime Perception on Voting at Administrative Elections

Dep.	M5S		Center Right & Lega		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	0.003	0.002	0.005	0.007	-0.015*	-0.015**	0.005	0.003
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Crimes by immigrants	-0.003	-0.002	0.004	-0.000	-0.011	-0.007	0.012**	0.014**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.27	0.27	0.14	0.14	0.00	0.00
Observations	14436	14436	14436	14436	14436	14436	14436	14436

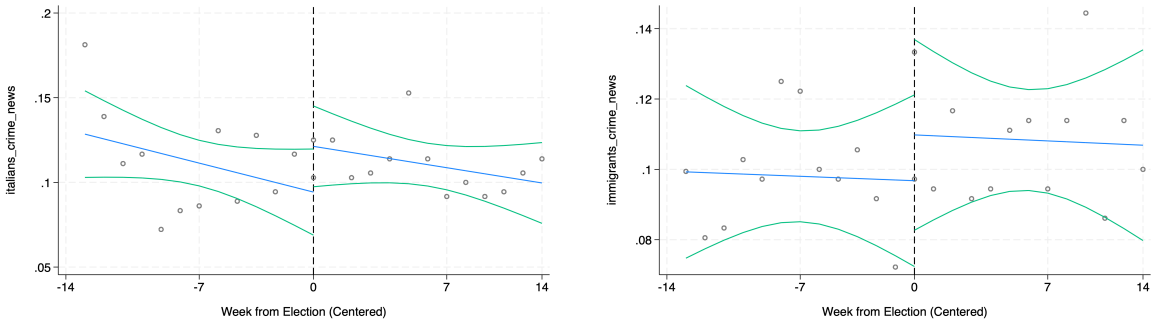
Notes: This table reports OLS estimates of the effect of local crime on voting behavior at administrative elections. The unit of observation is the individual i at time t. The dependent variable is a dummy that takes the value 1 if the individual votes for parties such as M5S, Lega, Center Left, Center Right, or abstains from voting. The independent variables are dummies that takes value 1 if there is at least one crime committed by Italians and by immigrants, respectively, around 200m from the residence street, 30 days before the election day. Robust standard errors are clustered at district level.

The results presented in Tab. 4 illustrate how voters respond differently in local and national elections. In administrative elections, the perception of crime committed by Italians appears to drive voters away from the Center-Left, suggesting a form of electoral punishment for the incumbent. Conversely, when crime is perceived to be committed by immigrants, we observe an increase in abstention rather than a direct shift in party support. This pattern may indicate that for left-leaning voters, switching parties in response to crime concerns carries a social or ideological cost, leading them to disengage from the electoral process rather than realign with a different political faction.

5. Robustness

In this section, we provide further evidence of the plausibility of our identifying assumptions as well as of the robustness our main estimates.

5.1. Testing Crime News Coverage and Political Orientation Around Elections



(a) News Coverage of Italian Citizens' Crime.

(b) News Coverage of Immigrants' Crime.

Fig. 1: Crime News Coverage around the 2013 and 2018 Elections.

Notes: Time window includes 14 weeks before and after both elections. District political leaning is assigned using the 2008 general election. Each dot represents the district-level weekly average of crime mentions; blue lines are fitted trends with 95% confidence intervals.

To investigate whether political alignment influences the salience of crime news, we compare right- and left-leaning districts using a difference-in-discontinuities design around the 2013 and 2018 elections. Districts are classified based on their 2008 general election results.

Fig. 1a shows a modest decline in the reporting of Italian-involved crime in right-leaning districts prior to elections. Though not statistically robust, the trend aligns with theories suggesting a strategic de-emphasis of "domestic" crime in conservative-leaning contexts. In contrast, Fig. 1b reveals a remarkably stable pattern for immigrant-involved crime, with no significant discontinuities.

Together, the evidence offers limited support for short-term political conditioning of crime coverage. While some selective emphasis is plausible, especially for Italian-related crime, immigrant narratives appear consistently salient—possibly reflecting deeper editorial structures or longer-term agenda-setting dynamics.

5.2. Testing identifying assumptions: placebo effect of crime news after the elections

In our primary analysis, we assume that crime perception due to news articles influence voting behavior primarily due to their publication during the political campaign period. To validate this assumption, we estimate the effects of crime perception within the 30-day window preceding the elections, while excluding the first two weeks to mitigate potential persistence effects of news coverage both before and after the electoral event. This approach allows us to isolate the immediate impact of crime-related media exposure on voter decisions, ensuring that our results are not driven by longer-term trends or post-election reporting.

Table 5: Differential Effects of Crime Perception on Voting after National Elections

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	-0.010	-0.009	-0.012	-0.011	0.008	0.009	-0.010	-0.008	0.015	0.013
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Crimes by immigrants	-0.001	0.003	0.000	-0.001	-0.004	-0.001	0.005	0.006	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts fixed effects × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: This table reports OLS estimates of the effect of local crime on voting behavior **after** national elections. The unit of observation is the individual i at time t. The dependent variable is a dummy that takes the value 1 if the individual votes for parties such as M5S, Lega, Center Left, Center Right, or abstains from voting. The independent variables are dummies that takes value 1 if there is at least one crime committed by Italians and by immigrants, respectively, around 200m from the residence street, 30 days **after** the election day. Robust standard errors are clustered at district level.

Upon analyzing the results presented in Tab. 5, we find no statistically significant effects on the coefficients associated with our main findings. This suggests that our estimated effects are not driven by spurious correlations or pre-existing trends, reinforcing the validity of our identification strategy. The absence of significant results in this placebo test strengthens our confidence that the observed impact of crime perception on voting behavior is genuinely attributable to news exposure during the campaign period rather than to broader underlying factors.

6. Conclusion

In contemporary electoral contexts, political campaigns frequently emphasize issues related to immigration and public safety. This raises a pertinent question: to what extent does crime influence political preferences? This study examines the relationship between crime perception, media coverage, and voting behavior within the framework of Italian elections. Employing a dataset comprising 4,812 non-relocating individuals observed across five electoral cycles (two national and three administrative elections), we use crime-related news articles as a proxy for crime salience in the period preceding elections. Our findings highlight distinct patterns based on whether the crimes reported in the media were perpetrated by Italians or immigrants.

Focusing on national elections, where the absence of local confounders enhances external validity, we find heterogeneous effects. Specifically, media reports on crimes committed by Italians do not appear to significantly impact voting behavior. By contrast, media coverage of crimes committed by immigrants generates notable electoral shifts. Voters tend to withdraw support from the populist party with an ambivalent stance on immigration (M5S) while increasing support for the law-and-order-oriented

Center Right party. Furthermore, we observe heterogeneity in these responses: highly skilled and educated voters disproportionately defect from M5S, whereas low-skilled and less-educated voters shift away from Lega.

In the context of administrative elections, the electoral consequences of crime differ. Reports of crimes committed by Italians tend to result in electoral punishment for the incumbent government. Conversely, media coverage of crimes committed by immigrants leads to increased abstention, suggesting that left-leaning voters may perceive switching parties as socially costly.

These findings contribute to the broader literature on the political economy of crime perception, media influence, and voting behavior, emphasizing the role of media salience in shaping electoral dynamics. Further research incorporating additional media sources, refining measures of crime exposure, and exploring heterogeneous treatment effects across voter demographics will enhance our understanding of these complex relationships.

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Appendix

A. Survey Data and Electoral Validation

This Appendix provides background on the political context of Bologna, a more detailed description of the survey design, and validation exercises comparing survey-based voting reports with official electoral outcomes.

A.1. The City of Bologna

Bologna, the seventh most populous Italian city, hosts nearly 400,000 residents and has experienced substantial population growth (+15% over the last two decades). Civic engagement is traditionally high, with voter turnout rates consistently above the national average. Historically a stronghold of the center-left, Bologna has nonetheless witnessed increasing support for populist parties such as the Five Star Movement and the Lega, the latter being the only major party with an explicitly anti-immigration platform (Fetzer, 2019; Guiso et al., 2024).

At the same time, crime and security have been salient issues in the local political debate and frequently covered in Bologna's press. This combination of strong civic participation, political competition, and high media attention to crime makes Bologna an ideal setting to study the electoral consequences of crime news.

A.2. Survey Design

The survey was administered in December 2021 to 5,000 Italian citizens who had resided in Bologna since at least 2013. Respondents were stratified across the 18 neighborhoods, with 70% interviewed by telephone (C.A.T.I.) and 30% online (C.A.W.I.). The questionnaire collected demographic and socio-economic information (birth year, birthplace, education, occupation, family composition) and retrospective voting behavior in national and municipal elections between 2004 and 2021.

A distinctive feature of the survey is the provision of respondents' street of residence (excluding house numbers), which allows geo-localization at a fine spatial scale. This enables us to match individuals to neighborhood-level indicators of crime news exposure and to exploit within-city variation in media coverage. To minimize recall bias, voting questions were asked in chronological order and preceded by neutral reminders of the political context of each election.

A.3. Electoral Validation

To evaluate external validity, we compare self-reported voting behavior with official election results. Fig. A.1 shows a close correspondence between survey-based and official outcomes across major parties, with only minor deviations in the 2011 and 2016 municipal elections, when the Center-Right and Lega fielded joint candidates.

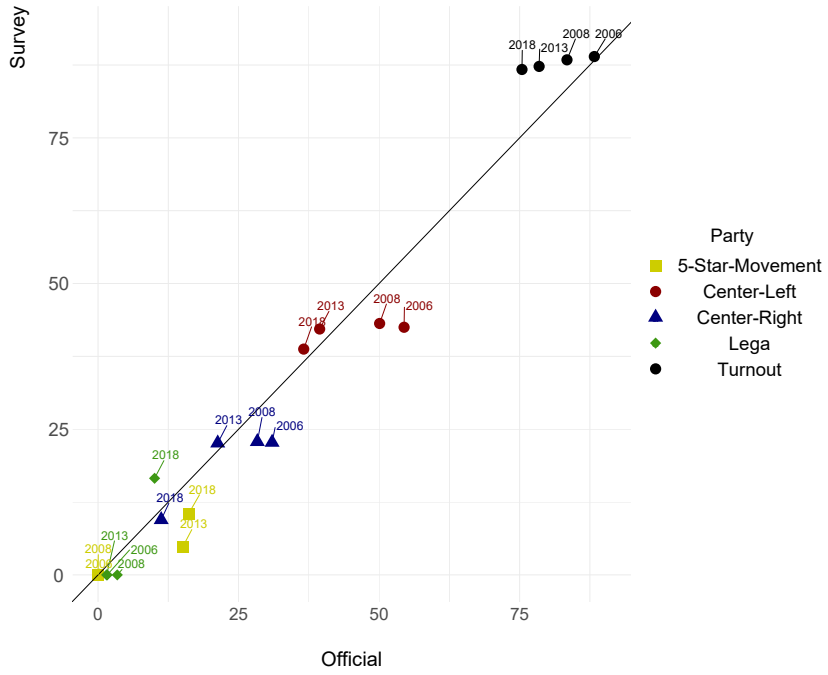

Fig. A.1: Comparison between survey and official data

Notes: The figure compares survey-based and official vote shares in the five elections used in the empirical analysis.

Summary statistics are reported in Tab. A.1. Respondents were on average born in 1970, lived in households of three members, and attained secondary or post-secondary education. Females accounted for 54% of the sample, and about half were employed at the time of the survey.

Taken together, the descriptive evidence and validation figures confirm that the survey constitutes a reliable source for analyzing political behavior in Bologna.

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics of the Survey Sample

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Individual Characteristics					
Birth Year	4812	1970.145	18.41787	1927	2003
Female	4812	.5367	.4986509	0	1
Household Members	4812	2.954	.922489	1	6
Education (1=PhD,7=Primary School)	4812	5.145	1.109011	1	7
Working	4812	.5054	.4999766	0	1
Student	4812	.1140	.3179048	0	1
Retired	4812	.2640	.4408551	0	1
Homemaker	4812	.0723	.2590022	0	1

Notes: The descriptive statistics refers to the final sample of 4812 individuals (the non-movers) over 9 elections

B. Local News Corpus on Crime and Geographic Exposure

B.1. Data Source and Collection

Our measures of local crime exposure are based on *BolognaToday*,[6] a leading online outlet independent of political parties. Its archive includes about 55,000 articles. Of these, 18.5% (≈11,000) report on crime, and 41% of crime-related news mention immigrants as perpetrators. Approximately 75.7% of crime articles are geolocated, yielding around 7,800 usable observations, of which 46% concern immigrants.

Crimes are classified using a dictionary-based method (Gentzkow et al., 2019; Muço, 2022) that identifies major categories (e.g., theft, assault, fraud, rape, murder, kidnapping, drug-related) based on co-occurrence of relevant keywords with terms such as "*arrest*" or "*reported*". Nationality markers allow us to distinguish between Italians and non-Italians.

To retrieve these articles systematically, we implemented an automated web scraping protocol targeting the digital archive. The scraper extracted headlines, publication timestamps, summaries, full texts, and geographic identifiers such as street or district names. Metadata tracking and session continuity ensured completeness, and delays between requests maintained ethical standards. Articles were collected in reverse chronological order.

[6]Based on data from *similarweb*, *BolognaToday* averages 2.968 million monthly visits, with 1.086 million unique visitors. The average session lasts 2 minutes and 5 seconds, during which readers view an average of 7.35 pages. About 41.7% of the visitors identify as female, and 44.8% are under 35 years old.

B.2. Preprocessing, Standardization, and Integration

Following collection, the dataset underwent several steps of textual and geographic preprocessing. Articles were filtered for geographic relevance to Bologna and for reporting specificity, excluding generic news. A dictionary-based tagging system identified references to crime types and demographics, complementing the outlet's automated classification.

Street names and other geographic markers were standardized against municipal records, correcting for spelling inconsistencies. Articles reporting multiple incidents were split into separate entries, while those lacking geographic information were excluded. For longitudinal analysis, each incident was associated with its year of publication and geocoded with latitude–longitude coordinates. This enabled spatial econometric analysis and integration with electoral records.

B.3. Descriptive Patterns and Visualization

The dataset reveals strong spatial heterogeneity in crime reporting. One peripheral zone, *Colli*, consistently shows no reported crimes, while central zones such as *Bolognina*, *Marconi*, and *Irnerio* display persistent concentrations (see Fig. B.1).

Fig. B.1: Spatial distribution of crime news in the five election years.

Notes: Red dots (•) indicate crimes attributed to immigrants; green dots (•) indicate crimes attributed to Italians.

The linguistic content of crime reporting is illustrated in Fig. B.2, which highlights frequent terms such as *police*, *carabinieri*, *arrest*, and *drug dealing*. Frequent mentions of demographic markers (*citizen*, *woman*, or nationality labels) suggest framing within identity-based narratives.

Figures B.3a and B.3b display the spatial distribution of reports in 2013 and 2018, respectively. Both show clustering in central districts, with immigrant-related incidents

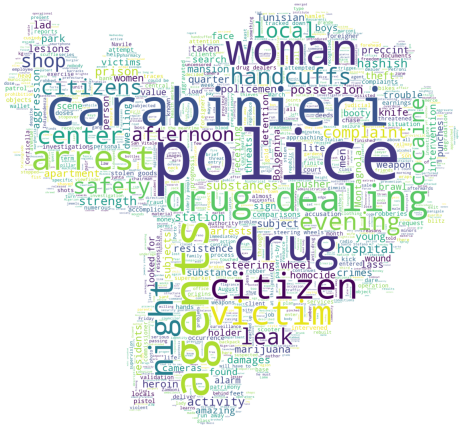

Fig. B.2: Most frequent terms in the crime-related news corpus.

Notes: The figure is a visual representation of text data where words are displayed in varying sizes, with the most frequent words appearing largest and most prominent

more spatially concentrated. While clustering may reflect behavioral patterns, it may also capture editorial selectivity.

(a) 2013. **(b)** 2018.

Fig. B.3: Spatial distribution of crime-related news reports by nationality.

Notes: Red dots (●) indicate crimes attributed to immigrants; green dots (●) indicate crimes attributed to Italians

Finally, we examine exposure heterogeneity. Figure B.4 shows the number of crime-related articles geocoded to individuals' residential locations in 2013 and 2018. The distribution is highly right-skewed: most individuals are linked to zero or one article, while a minority receive disproportionately high coverage. This skew is more pronounced for immigrant-related crime, raising concerns about amplification effects in localized areas.

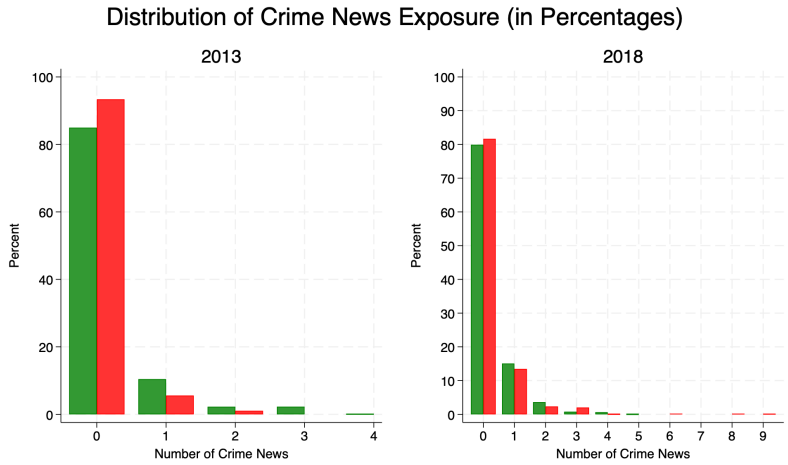

Fig. B.4: Distribution of individual exposure to crime news in 2013 and 2018.

Notes: Exposure is highly right-skewed. Most individuals are linked to zero or one article, while a minority are associated with disproportionately high coverage.

C. Robustness and Additional Results

This Appendix presents further robustness checks and heterogeneity analyses. All tables use the same specification as in the baseline results, unless otherwise noted. Overall, findings are consistent across alternative distance thresholds, time windows, and outcome definitions, confirming that the main results are not driven by modeling choices.

C.1. Alternative Distance Definitions

Tab. C.1 shows that results remain significant when using a 300m exposure window, with magnitudes close to the 200m baseline. When expanding the radius to 500m (Tab. C.2), effects become weaker and less precise, consistent with lower salience of more distant events.

Table C.1: Effect of Crime News on Voting — 300m radius

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	-0.013	-0.012	-0.007	-0.010	0.011	0.014	0.010	0.008	0.001	0.003
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Crimes by immigrants	-0.023***	-0.022***	-0.005	0.000	0.012	0.013	0.004	0.005	0.005	0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts fixed effects × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: Estimates analogous to baseline but using a 300m exposure window. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table C.2: Effect of Crime News on Voting — 500m radius

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	-0.010	-0.009	-0.005	-0.008	0.007	0.010	0.002	0.000	0.004	0.007
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Crimes by immigrants	-0.016*	-0.014	-0.009	-0.003	0.004	0.007	-0.000	0.001	-0.004	-0.011***
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts fixed effects × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: Same specification as baseline, with a 500m exposure definition. Standard errors clustered at the individual level.

C.2. Alternative Time Windows

As reported in Tab. C.3, extending the exposure window from 30 to 90 days produces smaller coefficients, as expected, since older news is less salient. Nevertheless, results remain statistically significant, showing that both recent and cumulative exposure to crime news affect voting behavior.

Table C.3: Effect of Crime News on Voting — 200m, 90-day window

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crimes by Italians	-0.006	-0.003	-0.009	-0.006	0.012	0.013	0.002	0.001	0.007	0.005
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Crimes by immigrants	0.000	-0.002	-0.013**	-0.013*	0.020	0.019	-0.001	-0.004	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts fixed effects × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: Specification as in baseline, but exposure measured over a 90-day window. Standard errors clustered at the individual level.

C.3. Alternative Measures of Exposure

Tab. C.4 shows results using minimum distance to crime news instead of a within-radius dummy. The coefficients remain consistent with the baseline, confirming robustness to different exposure metrics.

C.4. Additional Heterogeneity Analyses

Splitting the sample by socio-demographic characteristics confirms the robustness of the findings. Tab. C.5A shows stronger effects for parents with children and respondents, while gender differences are modest (Tab. C.5B).

Table C.4: Effect of Crime News on Voting — closest crime, 30-day window

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Closest crime by Italians	-0.000	0.001	0.012	0.015	-0.015	-0.016	-0.007	-0.004	0.005	0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Closest crime by immigrants	0.007**	0.004	0.011**	0.016	-0.000	-0.005	0.009*	0.025**	-0.003	-0.001
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9620	9620	9620	9620	9620	9620	9620	9620	9620	9620

Notes: Dependent variable and specification as baseline, with exposure measured as minimum distance. Standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Table C.5: Differential Effects of Crime Perception on Voting at National Elections

Panel A: By Having Children

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crime by Italians × w/ children	-0.009*	-0.008	0.005	0.002	0.002	0.004	-0.001	-0.003	0.005	0.007
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Crime by Italians × w/o children	0.010	0.010	-0.010	-0.012	0.002	0.003	0.018	0.017	0.005	0.006
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Crime by immigrants × w/ children	-0.022**	-0.020*	-0.031**	-0.025	0.019	0.019	-0.007	-0.005	0.000	-0.004
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Crime by immigrants × w/o children	-0.024	-0.023	0.031	0.033	0.024	0.025	0.049*	0.048*	0.017	0.014
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.010)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Panel B: By Gender

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crime by Italians × female	-0.002	-0.001	-0.008	-0.010	0.006	0.008	0.017	0.015	0.001	0.003
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Crime by Italians × male	-0.006	-0.006	0.008	0.006	-0.002	-0.000	-0.009	-0.011	0.009	0.011*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Crime by immigrants × female	-0.028*	-0.026	-0.015	-0.010	0.020**	0.020*	-0.002	-0.000	0.012	0.008
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Crime by immigrants × male	-0.016*	-0.015*	-0.016	-0.011	0.021	0.021	0.017	0.019	-0.004	-0.008
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: Baseline specification estimated by children and gender. Standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Similar patterns hold when extending the exposure window to 90 days (Tab. C.6), although estimates become less precise.

Table C.6: Differential Effects of Crime Perception on Voting at National Elections — 90-day window

Panel A: By Having Children

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crime by Italians × w/ children	-0.000	0.002	-0.011	-0.009	0.011	0.012	-0.001	-0.002	0.001	0.000
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Crime by Italians × w/o children	-0.021**	-0.019**	-0.001	0.002	0.013	0.013	0.023	0.012	0.011	0.022
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.015)
Crime by immigrants × w/ children	-0.000	-0.002	-0.024**	-0.023**	0.019	0.018	-0.008	-0.011**	-0.006	-0.006
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Crime by immigrants × w/o children	0.001	-0.003	0.021	0.017	0.024	0.023	0.021	0.016	0.008	0.010
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Panel B: By Gender

Dep.	M5S		Lega		Center Right		Center Left		Abstention	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Crime by Italians × female	-0.006	-0.004	-0.006	-0.003	0.004	0.004	0.013	0.012	0.002	0.001
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Crime by Italians × female	-0.005	-0.003	-0.013	-0.010	0.020**	0.021**	-0.010	-0.011	0.011	0.010
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Crime by immigrants × female	0.006	0.004	-0.016	-0.016	0.028*	0.027*	0.002	-0.002	-0.006	-0.005
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Crime by immigrants × female	-0.007	-0.009	-0.009	-0.010	0.011	0.010	-0.004	-0.008	0.001	0.002
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Individual fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Districts × Year fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.05	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Observations	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624	9624

Notes: Baseline specification estimated by children and gender. Standard errors clustered at the individual level.

Across all robustness checks, the estimated effects of crime news exposure on voting remain stable in sign and significance. Effects attenuate when the exposure radius or time window is broadened, which is consistent with weaker salience of more distant or older news. Heterogeneity analyses suggest that respondents with children and lower education are particularly responsive to crime reporting. Overall, the evidence demonstrates that the main results are not sensitive to modeling choices and reflect a robust relationship between local crime coverage and electoral behavior.