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The Usual Suspects. Offenders' Origin, Media Reporting and Natives' Attitudes Towards Immigration

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RÉSUMÉ

Immigration and crime are two first-order issues that are often considered jointly in people's minds. This paper analyzes how media reporting policies on crime impact natives' attitudes towards immigration. We depart from most studies by investigating the content of crime-related articles instead of their coverage. Specifically, we use a radical change in local media reporting on crime in Germany as a natural experiment. This unique framework allows us to estimate whether systematically disclosing the places of origin of criminals affects natives' attitudes towards immigration. We combine individual survey data collected

between January 2014 and December 2018 from the German Socio-Economic Panel with data from more than 545,000 crime-related articles in German newspapers and data on their diffusion across the country. Our results indicate that systematically mentioning the origins of criminals, especially when offenders are natives, significantly reduces natives' concerns about immigration.

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