"No hatred or malice, fear or affection":

Media and sentencing

Arnaud Philippe, Aurélie Ouss[1]

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Abstract: How does the media affect behaviors of laypeople versus experts? We look at the effect of television broadcasting of crime and criminal justice stories on sentencing decisions, by juries of civilians and professional judges. We find that news on the day before a trial affects sentencing of juries of civilians: sentences are longer after more coverage of crimes, and shorter after stories on judicial errors. However, we find no effect of media coverage on professional judges' decisions. The effect on sentences is not due to actual crimes, but to exposure to crime on TV: crimes per se have no effect. Digging into mechanisms, it seems that media affects jurors' decisions very circumstantially, by making crime more salient, rather than by capturing deeper social currents or reflecting changes in levels of crime: the effects do not last over time. This paper contributes to the analysis of how context affects judicial choices; and distinguishes how different types of extraneous factors affect lay people versus experts.

Keywords: media, judicial decision, cognitive bias

[1] Philippe: University of Paris 1, CREST, arnaud.philippe@ensae.fr ; Ouss: University of Chicago, Crime Lab. aouss@uchicago.edu. We gratefully thank the French Ministry of justice (Sous direction de la Statistique et des Etudes) and the National Institute for Audiovisual media (INA) who helped with data access and analysis. We also thank Bruno Crepon, Roberto Galbiati, Randi Hjalmarsson, Christian Traxler, Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, Ruben Durante, Julia Cage, Thomas Piketty, CREST, PSE and DIW seminar participant, 6th transatlantic workshop on economics of crime participant for their useful comments.

1. Introduction

How does television coverage of crime and justice affect sentencing decisions across different institutional settings? The content, quality and biases of media have been shown to affect an array of very important behaviors, including voting behaviors, political accountability, or corruption. In the legal sphere and turning to judges' behaviors, recent empirical evidence has supported theories of legal realism, which posit that psychological or contextual factors might affect sentences, beyond just the facts. At the intersection of those two literatures, we investigate the effect of television coverage of crime and justice on sentencing decisions, by looking at the outcomes of trials in France as a function of the number of stories on crime and judicial error on the night before.

Beyond this initial question, French institutional setting allows us to measure the effect of media on both professional judges and juries of lay people, thus contributing to understanding how expertise might mitigate biases in some contexts. Jurors play an important role in the criminal justice, representing civil society and capturing its views, thus adding legitimacy to criminal justice. They are expected to deliver impartial judgment, and are explicitly asked to act and reflect void of all passions, taking only relevant factors into account. However, this is a striking case where people are asked to make important decisions in a role that is new to them and with no feedback on their decisions, potentially making their choices susceptible to context. Conversely, professional judges make these decisions on a daily basis and might be less swayed by media on their area of expertise. Understanding how news coverage affects sentencing is important in the judicial context to capture the potential tradeoffs between legitimacy from civilian representation versus sensitivity to local context; and, beyond the judicial context, to unpack how the content of media affects behaviors.

We investigate this in the French context, which offers several interesting features. First, all felonies are judged by a jury of civilians. There is no plea bargain, which

could affect the sample of eventual juror decisions, in particular if prosecutors or defendants incorporate media content in their plea decisions. Second, French jurors are not only asked to examine innocence or guilt, but also the existence of aggravating or mitigating factors; and if they decided the defendant was guilty, they also vote on a sentence length. This allows us to look at effects of media both on conviction and on sentencing. Lastly, professional judges are not elected in France: they are civil servants, and therefore do not have direct incentives to appeal to voters via media coverage of their decisions. We can therefore single out the "media to trial" channel, without the "trial to media" feedback loop.

We combine two sources of data: administrative data for all criminal records in France between 2004 and 2010, and data on the content of 8PM TV news, which is followed by about 20% of French households each day. Our main identification rests on the randomness in the exact timing of trials and offenses covered by the media: we compare outcomes of trials that happened to take place just after more coverage of crime and judicial errors, versus less. Since the exact timing of trials is determined months ahead of time, timing of trials and perpetrated offenses are plausibly independent We rule out the reverse causality problem - the fact that TV could mention upcoming verdict - by focusing on news on crime perpetrated excluding news stories about trial, court, verdict...

We find that news stories on the day before a trial affects sentences in jury trials, but not convictions. For criminal courts including jurors, news stories about felonies increase sentences the following day by 24 days, while judicial errors decrease sentences by 37 days. By contrast, news stories do not affect decisions made by professional judges. Even if types of crimes diverge between the two courts, this suggests that experience increases independence from exogenous shocks.

Turning to mechanisms, we find that sentences are not affected by actual crimes, but through coverage: effects are stronger after high audience, and local variations in crimes do not affect sentences. Furthermore, we find that having stories on crime and criminal justice "on the top of the mind" seems to matter more than longer-term exposure to crime stories; news stories on the day before a judgment affects sentencing but not further back in time. Along those lines, news stories about crimes that occurred closer to the court have more effect than news stories about crimes

further away. Lastly, we find that media only affect sentences when they covered crimes more severe than cases on stage; news about misdemeanors have no effect and news about felonies do not affect the most severe crimes judged.

Our paper extends the existing literature on the effect of media on important behaviors, by demonstrating its effect on sentencing decisions. Several papers already investigate the effect of media on voter turnout (Gentzkow, 2006; Cagé, 2013), corruption (Ferraz, and Finan, 2008), political accountability (Snyder and Strömberg, 2008), election results (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; Enikolopov et al, 2011), conflicts (Yanagizawa-Drott 2010), or offending (Dahl and DellaVigna, 2009). This paper also contributes to the literature on biases affecting judicial decisions. Judges might be changing their sentencing patterns close to elections (Berdejo and Yuchtman, 2013; Lim et al, 2012) to gain popular support, be subject to mental fatigue (Danziger, Levav, and Avnaim-Pesso, 2011), or mood swings due to sports outcomes (Chen and Spamann, 2014). Furthermore, in other domains such as finance expertise has famously been found not to lessen biases (De Bondt, and Thaler, 1990). Beyond professional judges, many studies look at on biases affecting lay people, most of which rely on either surveys or mock juries, in particular because of legal limitation in gathering data on juries' decisions (see a review by Devine et al, 2001). Some recent papers have used data on real convictions. They largely focus on intrinsic characteristics of jurors and defendant: age (Answar et al, 2012), race (Answar, 2012 et al, Gazal-Ayal & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2010), or political opinions (Answar 2014).

This paper innovates in several ways. First, while prior work has discussed the effect of media on judicial preferences using survey (Dowler, 2003; Surette, 2014) or the effect of media pressure on judges (Lin et al 2012), this is the first paper, to our knowledge, to show the effect of media content on judicial decisions. Second, our paper presents robust evidence that media could affect jurors in two opposite directions, depending on the content of the news: jurors are sensitive not only to coverage of crime, but also of judicial errors. Third, while most papers look at access to media, we use content at a daily level, using simple and replicable methodology. Lastly, while most papers study either judges or laypeople, we use the same methodology to contrast the effects of media on professionals and jurors.

Our results are also important from a policy perspective. Understanding bias in judicial decision is crucial for democracy where the right to a fair trial is an essential feature of any justice system. Furthermore, biases observed in criminal justice could affect public policy efficiency. Rizolli and Stanca (2012) show that both type one and type two errors in convictions decrease deterrence. Over or under sentencing could be viewed as two attenuated version of classical judicial errors, thus they could have an effect on crime. Third, understanding differences between professional judges and lay people is important as systems with juror are costly and their presence or absence is frequently debated[2]

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we describe French institution and the data we use. Section 3 discusses our identification strategy. Sections 4 and 5 present the effect of media on juror and professional judges. Section 6 explores mechanisms, and section 7 concludes.

2. **Institutions and Data Description**

2.1. French courts

There are two types of courts in France: correction courts (*tribunal correctionnel*), and criminal courts (*cour d'assises*). The former is for offenses where the maximum possible prison sentence is 10 years, so mainly misdemeanors, while the latter are for more serious cases, including crimes such as homicides, forcible rape, aggravated assaults, or armed robberies. Correction courts process about 600,000 cases every year, and professional judges determine both guilt and sentences. By contrast, in criminal court, a jury made of 9 (first instance proceedings) or 12 (appeal proceedings) civilian jurors [3] and three professional judges make these judicial decisions. Around 3,000 crimes are judged each year in France. Defendants are typically judged in the county (*département*) where the offense took place. There is

[2] In France, jurors were introduced in some criminal courts in 2012, removed from those courts in 2013 and their presence in labor court is a matter of some debate.
[3]These are the pre-2012 numbers, for which we do our analyses. There. Since 2012, these numbers went down to 6 and 9 jurors, respectively.

one court per county in smaller counties; and several in larger ones, in particular in the areas of Paris, Lille, Lyon and Marseille.

Jurors are randomly drawn amongst French citizens registered to vote who are above 23 years old. 40 potential jurors are selected for a court session, which lasts about 3 weeks, and during which one to ten cases are heard, each trial lasting about 2-3 days. All 40 jurors show up to court at the beginning of each case, and 9 or 12 the members of the jury are randomly drawn, along with two substitute jurors. Presence is compulsory and the compensation is around 100 USD per day in court. The defense attorneys and prosecutor are allowed exclude some jurors (5 and 4 respectively) but there is no questioning of potential jurors and selection can only rely on available information: name, age, sex and occupation, and what the person looks like as they walk to the bar.

The jury decides both culpability and sentence lengths, and both decisions are made on the same day: if the defendant is found guilty, the jury immediately votes on sentence length[4]. Conviction is decided with a majority rule of two thirds while sentences require a majority plus one vote[5]. There are no strict sentencing guidelines in France: the minimum possible sentence in criminal court is generally 1 year, or 2 years if the maximum penalty is life imprisonment.

For criminal cases, investigations typically take a very long time: the median length of investigation is 3.5 years. Court dates are determined long in advance and the jury pool receives notification at least one month before the trial, reinforcing the idea that the precise date of a trial is not correlated with events taking place at that time. There are almost no court cases examined in the summer for felony and two times less misdemeanor: judges are on vacation in July and August (case per month in appendix C).

2.2. Court data

[4] Very high-profile cases, in particular linked to terrorism, are judged solely by professional judges.
[5] This is covered in articles 355 – 365 of the French penal code, which can be found online at http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?idSectionTA=LEGISCTA000006167469&cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071154

Our main source of judicial data is criminal records (*casier judiciaire*), informed and kept by the French Ministry of Justice, from 2004 to 2010. These criminal records have one observation per criminal court conviction, and no information for acquittals: for people found "not guilty", no criminal record is kept and no record of the case remains. Criminal records are collected for administrative purposes: judges have access to them as part of a case, they are used in some very particular instances for background checks, and the French Ministry of Justice uses them to do statistics. They contain information on date and county of trial, detailed information on offenses (type of offense, date of offense) and sentences, as well as socio-demographic information on age, gender, and nationality[6].

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on conviction for different types of courts between 2004 and 2010. "Most severe misdemeanors" are defined as misdemeanors with a 10 years maximum sentence. We further restrict the sample to trials that took place at maximum of 7 days after the facts, since sentencing need not always take place on the day of the trial in correction courts. We can thus make sure that decisions had not been postponed.

Offenders who commit a felony are 37 years old on average and mostly male (93%), adults (92%) and French (88%). Forcible rape is the most frequent crime (45%)[7]. Sentences for murder are the highest (14 years on average).

People convicted for most severe misdemeanor and juvenile are also a vast majority of male. They are mainly convicted for property crimes and their sentences are much lower than those for felonies (around 11 months for the most severe misdemeanor, less than 3 months for juveniles).

For 39 counties[8], we additionally collected the courts' schedules for felonies. Those documents give the precise dates of the beginning and the end of each session, and the order of trials within sessions. For 20 counties the documents also contains precise

[6] We only have information on the final judgment decision. In particular, we do not have information on what happened in first instances proceedings when there was an appeal proceeding.
[7] Armed robberies are supposed to be felonies and therefore tried in criminal court. However, in practice only the most severe one are judged as felonies, the rest are re-qualified as misdemeanor and bench tried. This explains why only 20% of offenses tried in criminal court, and therefore in our sample, are property crimes.
[8] We contacted all 95 courts in France. 39 courts answered and accepted our request to provide schedules. For the list of courts, see annex 1.

dates of acquittals and first instance proceeding when there was an appeal. In this subsample there are 260 acquittals (4.77%) and 756 appeal (13.86%) over 5194 trials.

2.3. French television: viewership and data

Television is a very popular source of information in France. Two television channels are most watched in France: TF1, a privately owned, non-cable channel has between 32.3% (2004) and 24.5% (2010) of viewers; and France 2, a public channel has between 20.5% (2004) 16.1% (2010) of viewers[9]. The 8PM news bulletins are very popular and influent, so much so that they have been dubbed the "8PM mass". The 8PM news bulletins have average respective audiences of 8 million (TF1) and 5 million (France 2) viewers per day (for 60 millions inhabitant in France). The two programs last for roughly 40 minutes.

France is very centralized, and although there are local channels, regional news bulletins have fewer viewers than national bulletins. This also has a practical implication when we look at the effects of news on judicial decisions: most of the news that people watch on television takes places in counties far from where they live, and in particular, news stories which might affect jurors' perception of crime and law enforcement will rarely be local.

The National Institute for Audiovisual media (INA) archives all 8PM news bulletins. We collected data on news bulletins of TF1 and France 2 presented between 2004 and 2010. For each news story, we have data on date, rank in the bulletin, length (in seconds), title of the story, a list of keywords describing the content of the story, and the place where it took place. We have one observation per news story, for an average of 24 observations per day, per channel. Since we are most interested in the effect of jurors' environment on sentencing, we limit our sample to reports taking place in France, which represents an average of 15 stories per day.

We construct indicators of coverage of crime and criminal justice in the news by using keywords that appear more than 20 times between 2004 and 2010 (2,636 words,

[9] Source: "Médiamat Annuel" published by Mediamétrie

or 80% of keywords used overall). We then group them into several categories relevant to measuring coverage of crime and criminal justice: judicial errors; felonies; misdemeanors; criminal law; and trials. All words used are presented in appendix A. We also have indicators for stories about actual crimes committed (labeled "perpetrated offenses" moving forward), i.e. crime stories which do not also mention trials or laws. In order to isolate these, we look for news stories on offenses, which do not contain keywords such as: trial, verdict, court, audience, appeal... (see appendix B, point 5 and 6 for the list of the keywords). For each day and each topic, we can thus construct indicators, for the number of stories and number of minutes on the topic; as well as a dummy if a topic was covered at all.

Figures 1a and 1b illustrate variations over time in stories on crime and judicial errors: there is quite substantial variation in number of stories covering crime. While there are many stories about crime, with a lot of daily variation, news on miscarriage of justice is more rare, and concentrated mainly around the infamous "Outreau trial", during which it was revealed that a dozen innocent suspects had been convicted for sexual abuse on children, based on false witnesses. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the coverage of these stories between 2004 and 2010. There are very frequently stories on crime, but a lot of variation in the number of reports.

3. **Identification strategy**

Our main identification strategy uses very fine variation in the timing of news stories and trials to do a precise event study: we use the exact (daily) timing of both news reports and trials. In other words, we compare outcomes of cases examined just after more coverage of crime or judicial errors to that of cases following lesser media coverage of crime and justice stories. As we discuss more in details later, since trial dates are chosen months in advance, we can assume that the exact (daily) timing of a trial is unrelated to the content of news on the day before the trial. We estimate equations of the form:

$$Y_{i,t,j} = \alpha Media_{t-k} + \beta X_{t,j} + \gamma Z_i + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where $Y_{i,t,j}$ is the trial outcome for person i judged at time t in county j; $Media_{t-k}$ captures measures[10] of media coverage on relevant topics at time $t-k$; $X_{t,j}$ controls for time and place dependent variables[11]; Z_i controls for individual characteristics[12]. Both media and trials present systematic differences across months and days of the week: lower audiences during the week-end and over the summer; fewer trials in August, and more serious cases at the end of sessions (i.e. on Friday). We thus include controls for day of the week and month. We present the correlation between sentence length and individual characteristics in Appendix table D1.

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 a trial. Using the same basic structure, we can define placebo exposure by looking at the effect of media *after* trial on trial's outcome, since posterior events cannot influence the trial's outcomes.

Finally, we also run specification with both news stories at $t-1$ and $t+1$, which have two advantages. First, they summarize the main effect and the main Placebo. Second, they help 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 $media_{t+1}$. In fact, empirically, coverage of felony, misdemeanor or judicial errors on a given day increases the number of report on that subject the following day by 0.32, 0.33 to 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 is suggestive that on average, events are covered for a couple of days at a time.[13]

Our main identification rests on the assumption that the exact timing of trials is not related to TV coverage of crime and criminal justice. This assumption is plausible for several reasons. First, most felonies – and even more so, most trials – do not make

[10] Number of stories; dummy for the existence of a story on crime or judicial errors; number of minutes
[11] County fixed effects, number of felonies during the month in the county, number of misdemeanor during the month in the county, and controls for days of the week, month, and year.
[12] Offense, type of court (appellate court, minor court, normal court), age, gender, French citizenship, pre trial custody (number of days), investigation length (number of days), number of past convictions in the last 4 years.
[13] Since our main outcomes of interests, conviction and sentence length, are determined at the individual level, we need not worry about correlations in error terms, even while including covariates that might be temporally correlated.

national news. Second, several years typically go by between date of facts and trials, so on any given date, crimes that are being covered are not those that are being tried. Table 1 shows that the average length of time that goes by between crimes and court dates is of 5.27 years, and the median is 3.5 years. One might also worry that some lawyers factor in public sentiment when choosing trials date: they could try to game trial dates to avoid periods of higher crime coverage. However, trial dates are set several months in advance, as a function of judges', lawyers' and courts' calendars. Jurors are summoned at least 30 days before the beginning of the trial, so daily timing is not plausible.

To address the potential concern that media could cover information on upcoming judicial decision, we use two different strategies. First, we look at the effect of news stories on crimes and violent offenses *excluding* stories on trials and legislation, keeping only stories on crimes that took place around the trial date[14]. Second, we check our results removing stories on crimes that took place in the same county as the trial, to make sure that there could not be overlap between case tried and story covered. As we mentioned previously, France being a very centralized country, people all over France tuning into national news will typically get information on crimes and other events taking place in counties where they do not live.

We investigate the effect of media on two main outcomes: conviction and sentence length. The second outcome is only observed if defendant is found guilty. We then have a system of two equations:

$$Acquittal_{i,t,j} = \alpha_1 Media_{t-k} + \beta_1 X_{t,j} + \gamma_1 Z_{i,t} + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

$$Prison_{i,t,j} = \alpha_2 Media_{t-k} + \beta_2 X_{t,j} + \gamma_2 Z_{i,t} + +\vartheta \quad (3)$$

The main coefficients of interest are α_1 and α_2, which capture the effects of media on jurors' decisions.

[14] This strategy is valid if the number of news stories on trials is not correlated with news about "perpetrated felonies". This need not be the case: journalists might report more on crime overall when major trials are being covered; or conversely, time constraints could make news about trials limit the amount of news on perpetrated felonies. We check for those possibilities. One additional report on trials increase the number of news stories on felony perpetrated by 0.07. This coefficient is very small and not significant when we control for day in the week and year fixed effects, which are included in our regressions.

Sentence length is only observed in case of conviction. If media has no effect on acquittals, then $\alpha_1 = 0$ in equation (2). If this is the case, the sample of cases for which we observed sentences will not be different depending on the content of the news, and α_2 is identified in equation (3). This equation captures the relation between media and sentence for all trials.

If media were to have some effect on acquittal, then we would have $\alpha_1 \neq 0$. In this situation we would observe sentences for a selected subsample of trials. For example if news on felonies increases the probability of being found guilty, we observed *more* sentences after news coverage of felonies. Using simple OLS would lead to biased estimates of α_2. In the previous example, the marginal conviction would plausibly have shorter average sentences, if least severe cases were more likely to be swayed by media. Selection would thus induce a downwards bias to our results.

4. **Media coverage and jurors' decisions**

4.1. Timing of news and trials

First, we check that media content is not correlated with the type of cases being tried. Table 2 presents the correlation between some characteristics of cases being tried and coverage of felonies or judicial error at t-1[15]. As we had institutional reasons to believe, we observe no detectable difference in the type of offenses being tried.

Investigation length has a significant difference. However there is no significant difference when we look at stories on crime committed, netting out news stories on trials. This indicates that trials after long investigations have a higher probability of being covered by journalists. In our main analyses, we control for time between offense and trial, and focus on media coverage of perpetrated offenses to limit risks of coverage of offenses being tried. This validates our identification strategy: exact timing of cases is orthogonal to news coverage of offenses.

[15] Additional specifications are available in the appendix C, table 2.

4.2. Media coverage and jurors' conviction

We first measure the effect of media coverage of crime on acquittals. Since this information is not recorded in our main data set, criminal records in France reflecting only convictions, we use several indirect measures of acquittals. First, we look at the number of criminal records. Number of criminal records can be used as a proxy for acquittals since they are negatively correlated, acquittals resulting in the *absence* of a criminal record. Second, we look at re-qualification as misdemeanor. All cases judged in criminal court were considered felonies at the end of the investigation period. Any person judged in a criminal court eventually convicted for a misdemeanor had part of their charges dropped or re-qualified. We use this "partial acquittal" as a proxy for "full acquittal". We also use information from the subsample of twenty counties for which we have data on acquittal.[16]

In table 3, panel A presents the effect of news stories at t-1, and panel B presents the effect of news stories in t-1 and t+1. Media has no impact on conviction rates using t-1 and non-robust, marginally significant effects using both t-1 and t+1. Results are similar if we restrict our sample to forcible rape, which is the type of offense for which acquittal are the most frequent.

Note that overall, only about 5% of defendants are found "not guilty" in criminal court[17]. This might be the case since investigating judges have to decide that there is enough evidence against the defendant for the case to be pursued in criminal court: it is only beyond a certain threshold that jurors examine cases. Though these numbers are not directly comparable, for felony cases in US (See Reaves, 2009) only 1% of adjudication outcomes are an acquittal. Overall, these results indicate that acquittal might be too rare an event to have enough variation to be detected with our design. As we mentioned in the identification strategy section, since media have no impact on conviction, then the effect of media on sentences is identified by directly looking at differences in sentences, by media content.

[16] Unlike most procedures in France, what exactly appears on the court's schedules is left to their discretion. Some courts update their schedules after the facts and include information on the outcome of the trial; while others do not. There is no particular pattern in which courts update their schedules to include information on the outcomes of trials.

[17] Exact numbers are not publicly available and difficult to compute, since as we mentioned earlier, there is no criminal record for people found "not guilty". These numbers were circulated to the press by the Ministry of Justice. 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.

4.3. Media coverage and sentence length: jurors' decisions

We now turn to our main results: looking at the effect of content of media coverage on the sentence length. Before turning to regressions, we present graphic evidence of the relation between media coverage of crimes, judicial errors, and sentence length. We look at the three most covered felonies over the period, and the most covered judicial error. We compute average sentences in the 15 days following the first mention of the story[18] and compare it to the average sentences in the 15 days before the first report. Results are presented in figure 2. "Fourniret" and "Trieber" are the name of two murder suspects, and "Gang des barbares" was an anti-Semitic kidnapping and murder case. "Outreau" was the most important miscarriage of justice in France over this period, which led to the acquittal of seven people who had spent years in pre-trial detention, one even committing suicide. Averages sentences are longer just after felonies made the news, compared to the period just before; and conversely around news on judicial errors.

First regression results are presented in table 4. The odd columns present the regression with no controls, and the even columns include controls for case characteristics. We find significant responses of sentence length to content of news, for both crimes reported and judicial errors. For each extra story on felonies, sentences are 24 days longer the day after (columns 2). This is not due to the fact that media announce upcoming decision for the most severe case. Results for felonies perpetrated (columns 3 and 4) yield similar results. Conversely, one additional story on judicial error decreases sentences by 37 days. Stories on misdemeanors are not correlated with sentence length: these are less relevant - and less severe - to cases being tried. All those results hold with or without control variables.

Reassuringly, we find no differences in sentences if the news story was the day after: with or without variables on media the day before, none of the coefficients on content

[18] These stories all happen to be murders. They contain a victim and / or a killer's name, so we can track the first day that these names appear.

of media the day after are correlated with sentences (table 5), with small point estimates and large standard errors. This indicates that jurors of civilians respond to the context in which they are making judicial decisions: cases that are otherwise similar tend to get longer sentences when tried after more media reports on crimes and shorter after media reports on judicial errors.

Professional judges and lawyers are supposed to limit these kinds of biases that jurors might have, by reminding them that they should only consider relevant factors. It is then reassuring that the effect, although very significant, is not very large. The one-month variation that we observe due to reports in crimes or judicial mistakes represents roughly 1% of the average prison sentence.

4.4. Appellate procedures

We now turn to the number and distribution of appellate cases, which could reflect dissatisfaction on either prosecution or defense side with trial outcomes. This allows us to investigate the extent to which sentences seem to align with prosecutors' or defense attorneys' expectations. Defense attorneys could have incentives to request an appeal after news about felonies, while prosecutor could have incentives to appeal after news about judicial errors if jurors reacted to those. In both cases, news stories could lead to higher appeal rate. We investigate this using two different strategies. First, if news stories increase the number of appeals the day after, we should have observed fewer first instance proceedings at t+1. We should therefore observe fewer first instance proceedings after news stories about felonies or judicial errors and a thus a higher proportion of appellate judgments. Second, we use information from the subsample of twenty counties for which we have data on acquittal and appeal. For those counties we know which proceedings lead to an appellate trial.

Results are presented in table 6. Both strategies yield the same result: we detect no effect of media on appeals. The proportion of trials in appellate court is not affected by media (columns (1)-(3)). Results on the subsample (columns (4)-(6)) yield similar conclusion: trials after media coverage of felonies or judicial error do not have more chances to end with an appeal.

News stories do not seems to impact appeal. This could be because media does not

impact conviction, and only has a limited impact on sentencing, perhaps not detectable at the incident level. The effect could be hard to identify with limited information: effects on sentences are robust, but small.

4.5. Robustness checks

We now show that our results are robust to variations in the definition of what offenses to consider, and how to define media content. Table 7 summarizes the point estimates obtained across our robustness check. Regressions with news stories on felonies, felony perpetrated or judicial error are run separately, and all regressions include control variables.

The first three columns vary sample and model. While our main specification focused on felonies, which represent the bulk of offenses judged in criminal court, column (1) look at the effect of media on sentences for *all crimes* judged by criminal court with juror, including misdemeanors judged at the same time as felonies [19] and re-qualification. Even if sentences for the non-felony crimes are far smaller, results go in the same direction. Column (2) present results when life sentences are dropped. In the third columns, standard errors are clustered by day. In all those specifications results are extremely closed to those obtain in section 4.3.

In columns (4) to (6) we vary our measure of media coverage and exposure. In our main results, we used number of news stories covering felonies or judicial errors. Here, we use alternative measures of media coverage: 8PM news audience (millions); length of media coverage (minutes); dummies measuring any exposure. Results remain largely unchanged, except for judicial error, which is no longer significant using dummies, even though the point estimates are still high[20].

In the last three columns we vary time controls. In column (7) we add *county specific time trend*. In columns (8) we add *year*month* fixed effects and in columns (9) we add session fixed effects. In this last situation the database is restricted to the 30 counties for which we have the information. Session fixed effects control for time but

[19] For example people who did not report a rape committed in their house.
[20] Results are also similar if use only TF1 or only France 2 or if we restrict the sample to adults (not shown).

it also control for some court characteristics, such as professional judges are constant through court sessions. Standard errors increase because part of the variability is captured by the additional controls. However, coefficients keep the same signs and order of magnitude, and they are often still significant.

4.6. Placebo tests

Finally, we investigate the specificity of the effect of news coverage of crime and criminal justice, relative to other potentially upsetting or rejoicing news. This is particularly relevant given the existing literature on the effect of weather or sports, which affect general mood, on many behaviors, including convictions. For each day and each keyword used more than 200 times in the database we built a database containing the number of stories described by this keyword. 32 words are related to crime, 2 are related to judicial errors and 327 are related to other topics. We then run regressions of sentences on the number of news stories using each keyword at t-1 and t+1, with and without control variables.

Results are consistent with an effect of media on sentences if coefficients at t-1 are significant and have the same sign with and without control variables while coefficients at t+1 are not significant. 14 words fill this criteria. Four are related to crime (among 32, 12.5%) and all have positive coefficient at t-1; one is related to judicial error (among 2, 50%), and 9 are not related to justice (among 327, 2.75%). Among those 9 placebos, one keyword, "racism" is strongly correlated with keywords concerning crime. The other 8 words ("building", "closure", "labor conditions", "travelers", "back-to-school", "air transport", "road transport", "second world war"), do not belong to similar semantic fields (except the two on transport which have coefficients in the opposite directions). Even if not significant, point estimates at t+1 are high for these placebo words, while they are not for words related to crime or judicial errors. Results are presented in appendix E.

More than 97% of placebos do not present results consistent with an effect on sentences. Those who fill the basic requirement do not form a coherent group and usually have high point estimates at t+1. Average point estimates at t-1 are equal to 0.07 among placebo while it is 7.78 among keywords related to crime and -43 among the two keywords related to judicial errors.

5. **Media and professional judges' decisions**

Jurors' sentencing decisions are affected by the content of media, but how does this same type of information affect professional judges? In order to look at this, we turn to decisions taken by professional judges only. Two other courts are used here: courts sentencing misdemeanor and courts sentencing juvenile.[21]

5.1. Media coverage and professional judges' conviction

Similarly to section 4, we first measure the effect of crime coverage in the media on acquittals. As this information is not recorded in the data set, we use an indirect measure of acquittals: the number of criminal records. This measure would increase if there were less acquittals, and conversely with more acquittals, since each acquittal results in there *not being any* criminal record for this case.

Results are presented in panel A of table 8. Columns (1) to (3) present the results for all misdemeanors tried within one week of the date of offenses[22]. Columns (4) to (6) present the results for "most serious" misdemeanors, which are likely to be more similar to cases tried in courts of sessions. The last three columns present results for juvenile courts.[23] Media have no significant impact on conviction rates.

5.2. Media coverage and sentence length: judges' decisions

We now turn to the effect of content of media coverage on the sentence length.

[21] Juveniles could be judged as adults if they are older than 16 and if they are repeated offenders or judged for felony. We observe here people who are judged by specialized juvenile courts.
[22] In general, sentences for misdemeanors are not pronounced on the same day as the trial, except for immediate trials (*comparution immédiate*). To capture those, we look at trials that took place within one week of offense date, and we can say with fair certainty that trial and sentencing date coincide.
[23] As there is, by construction, only a very short time between facts and trials we only present results using news on felonies. The effect of news about misdemeanor is affected by reverse causality problem and results would be biased

Results are presented in panel B of table 8 for misdemeanor, "most serious" misdemeanors and juveniles. Coefficients are non significant and very small. Whereas sentences are on a scale from 1 to 10 between felonies and most serious misdemeanors, the point estimates are on a scale of 1 to 100. Given our sample size, we have a well-estimated zero effect. We find no criminal decisions that are both taken by professional and affected by media, which indicates that professional judges are less swayed by media stories than civilian jurors lacking experience.

As we mentioned earlier on, judges in France are not elected. When thinking about judicial independence, we mainly think of the way in which judges might respond to coverage of *their own decisions*. The French context allows us to investigate another mechanism: how coverage of crime overall might affect particular sentences, when these decisions in return cannot affect their careers. Our results with professional judges are interesting to contrast to the findings of Lim et. al. (2012), who find that appointed judges are not affected by media coverage of their cases.

This builds on to our understanding of how media can affect decision-making: in cases when people make decisions often, or have more experience, they are less swayed by media coverage of crimes irrelevant to the case at hand. Conversely, in situations of rare decision-making, people might extract more cues from the external world – and in particular, from media information.

However, experience is a longer-term process. If we distinguish the effect of news stories at the beginning or at the end of a session results are similar (see appendix table D3). This indicates that sessions are too short - and jury to rarely selected - to allow for learning.

6. **Interpretations and Mechanisms**

6.1. Crime vs. crime exposure

The results we present in section 4 could be driven by two very different mechanisms. Coverage of felonies and judicial errors is plausibly correlated with frequency of

events, and media would be a proxy for real event affecting people. On the other hand, jurors might simply be responding to differences in media exposure, conditional on given levels of crime or judicial mistakes.

In figures 3a and 3b we present the yearly variations in number of crimes and number of media stories on crime, between 2004 and 2010. There appears to be little correlation between the number of stories on misdemeanors and the number of misdemeanors in France (figure 3a), and more correlation between number of felonies and news stories thereof (figure 3b). Turning to monthly variations[24], figure 4 shows that this correlation is less obvious at a finer temporal level: there is a lot of idiosyncratic variation in number of media stories on crime that does not directly match the variation in number of offenses.

The correlation between crime and crime exposure is already addressed in the previous sections. The numbers of misdemeanor and felonies within a month and a country, as measured by police forces, are included in the control variables. Models including those variables do not differ from estimates without control variables. However, the timing of "real crime" variables and media variables are not the same. Because of this difference, media variables could capture smaller variations in the number of crimes at the county and day level. We further investigate this question by measuring the effect of crimes committed the day before and the day after the trial.

This information comes from the crime data itself: criminal records include offending dates. Using information from future trials, we can construct the number of offenses per day. In order to have a constant definition for this measure of crimes per day, we keep felonies judged in the following 5 years[25] and, as we have data for conviction until 2012, we build a database which contains the number of felonies per day between 2004 and 2007[26].

Table 9 presents the main estimates. Crimes committed the day before and the day after the trial in France (column (1)) or in the same county (column (2)) are not correlated with sentences. Using those variables as control (columns (3)-(5) for felonies in France, columns (6)-(8) for felonies in the same county) do not change the

[24] Month is the finest level of variation we can look at using publicly available police data.
[25] This represent 71% of all felonies.
[26] We drop the 1st of each month because dates of facts are corrected to the first when the precise day is ignored by the police.

magnitude of the effect of media. Standard error are bigger and some coefficients are no longer significant, but point estimates are still of the same order of magnitude, and the sample size here is roughly divided by 2.

This result highlights the importance of media coverage as a whole; we can reject the hypothesis that the effects are driven by crime committed per se. Felonies have an effect only if they are covered.

Our explanatory variable could still be interpreted in two different ways. It could be a proxy for general media exposure: radio, newspaper... or it could reflect the effect of media exposure *on TV*. We document this question by running our main regressions on two subsamples: trials occurred the day after high audience rate and trials occurred after low audience rate. High audience days are defined as those for which both TV shows have audience above average[27]. If our measure is a proxy for media exposure the estimates should be the same across audience rates. On the contrary if the effect is driven by TV in particular it should be bigger when more people watch. Results are presented in table 10. The effect is always bigger when audiences are high. Those results suggest that our results are mainly driven by TV news.

6.2. Saliency vs. rational expectation

Media could affect sentencing decisions through two main causal chains. Media might help people update their beliefs on the risk that a felony or a judicial error might occur. In this case, news should have a lasting impact on judicial decisions, and sentences should be higher when there is more crime, regardless of the intensity of media coverage.

The second hypothesis is that media affects sentencing by making one type of event more salient. In that hypothesis, felonies or judicial errors are not viewed as more frequent, they are just more "top of the mind". Media should then only affect decisions in a brief time window, and the effect should be different depending on how it is presented. News on facts close from people's home should be more salient. On

[27] The two audiences are very much correlated, they are both above or both below average in more than 80% of the cases.

the contrary, if people are used to see information on felonies, each additional media story could be less salient.

Figure 5a and 5b present coefficient of the regression of sentences on media at t-k for different value of k. Interestingly, results diverge depending on the type of news. For news stories about felonies, it is only what happened on television on the day before the trial that affects sentencing: more news coverage of crimes at t-2 or in the previous week does not change sentencing. On the contrary, the effect of news stories about judicial errors last for some time and only vanished after a week.

This allows us to enter a little bit more into the mechanisms through which sentencing is affected by media: this immediacy in the relation between news and sentencing is informative of the span in which media affects decisions. It also allows us to lean towards people seeing news stories about felonies as bringing events to the top of the mind, rather than informing deep social trends: if this were to be the case, then news stories would have stronger effects over longer periods of time.

Finally, we look at the effects of media depending on whether news stories about crime are close or far from the county. We use two definition of "close": felony occurred in the same administrative region, but not in the same county[28]; and felonies occurred in an adjacent county. For each trial we measure the effect of news close or further from the county. Results are presented in table 11. Whatever the definition is, the effect of close news stories is bigger. This confirms the idea that people react most to news stories nearer to home, possibly because they identify more to these stories.

6.3. Heterogeneity among crimes: the importance of reference points

In section 4 we present results showing that news stories about felonies impact sentencing while news stories about misdemeanor do not. This difference could come from the proximity between facts and trials and rely on an identification process or, on the contrary, it could be explained by a change in juror's reference point. In this second case, media would impact decision when they present graver felonies that the

[28] There is 22 region divided in 95 counties in France. We remove stories that took place in the same county to make sure these results are not subject to the reverse causality discussed earlier.

ones on stage. If this is the case, worse offenses should be less affected by media, since news stories could not present more traumatic cases.

We test this idea by comparing the effect of media on different types of felonies: violence (mainly murder), sexual crimes (mainly rape), property crimes (mainly armed robbery). Average sentences for those three groups are respectively: 12.4 years, 9 years and 8 years. Results are presented in table 12. The effect of news stories about felonies is bigger for property crime than for violence. On the contrary, the effect of judicial error is more important for the most severe crimes. This is coherent with the idea that news impact sentences when they present facts that are more severe than the case being tried.

7. Conclusion

As with other important behaviors, the content of media affects jurors' decisions: sentences in jury trials are longer following more coverage of crime, and shorter after coverage of judicial mistakes. This effect is very localized: only media coverage on the day before affects sentencing decisions; but affects jurors equally across regions and socio-demographics. By contrast, we find no effect of media on professional judges' decisions: in this domain, it seems that professional experience cancels out the way in which media might influence decisions.

Whereas several recent papers pointed out several biases that professional judges might be subject to, including mental fatigue, reacting to extraneous good or bad news, or responding to electoral cycles, we show one bias which they are not subject to: news coverage of crime and justice. This highlights 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 jurors of laypeople); and more generally, training or experience could help overcome some biases. The diffusion of this result during juror's mandatory training would be a good way to reduce the problem, while being mindful that there might be tradeoffs with "boomerang effects" of increasing

sensitivity to coverage of crime and justice by drawing jurors' attention to potential biases.

Finally, by investigating the effect of media on sentencing in a jury trial, we are able to look at a particularly localized, contextual outcome. Whereas for behaviors like voting, citizens might actively be looking for information in the media; or conversely, elected judges might be looking to influence the media through their decisions, jurors are plausibly neither seeking feedback, nor trying to influence other outcomes beyond the trial. Yet even in this setting, media affects jurors' decisions, in a very localized manner, highlighting the contextual influences of media.

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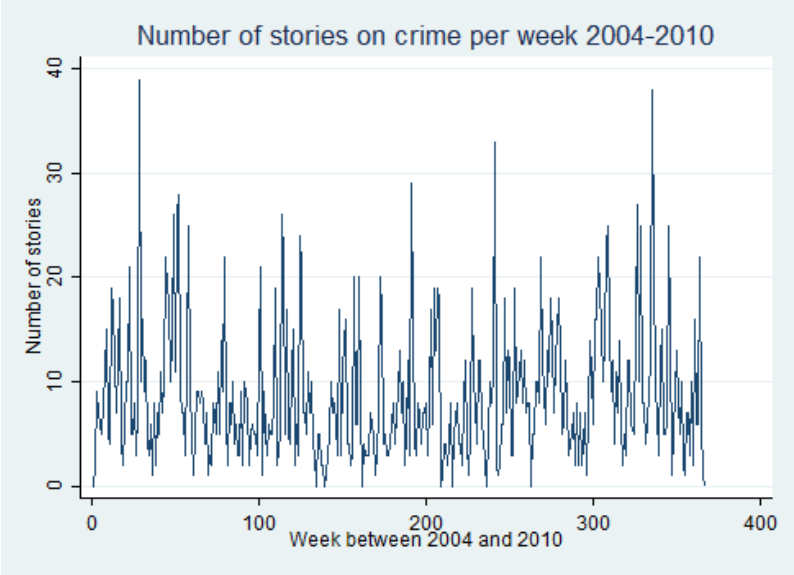

Figure 1a: Number of news stories on crime per week: 2004 – 2010

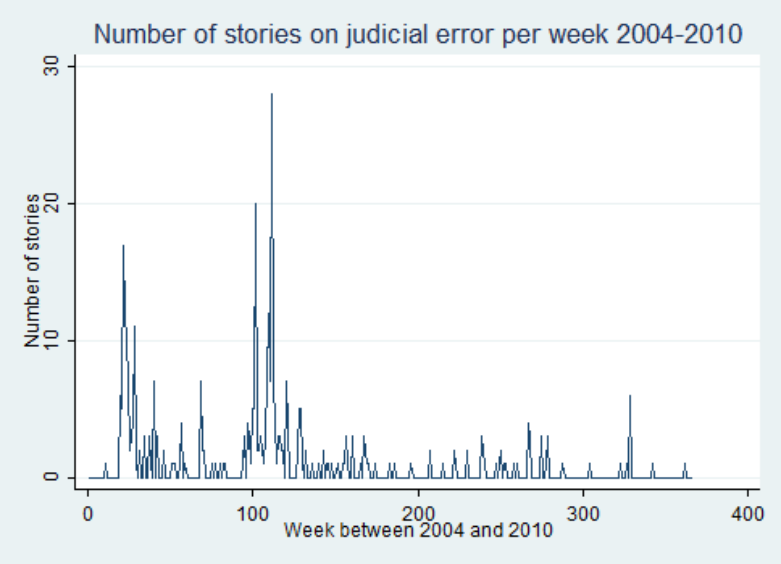

Figure 1b: Number of news stories on judicial errors per week: 2004 – 2010

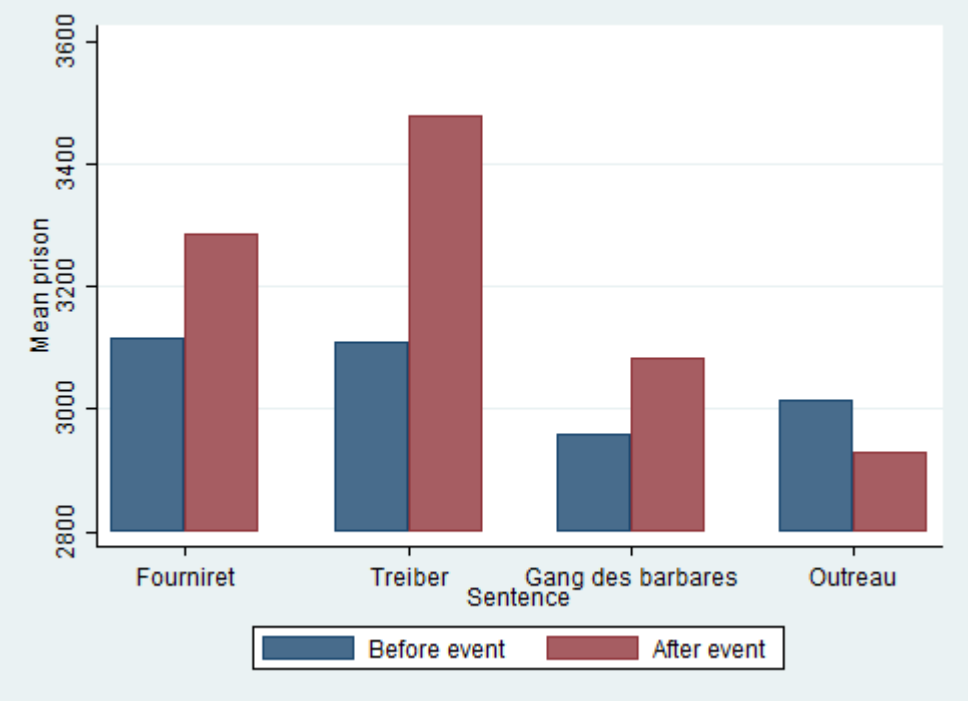

Figure 2: average sentences 15 days before and after the begining of one of the three most covered felonies ("Fourniret", "Treiber", "Gang des Barbares") or the most covered judicial error ("Outreau").

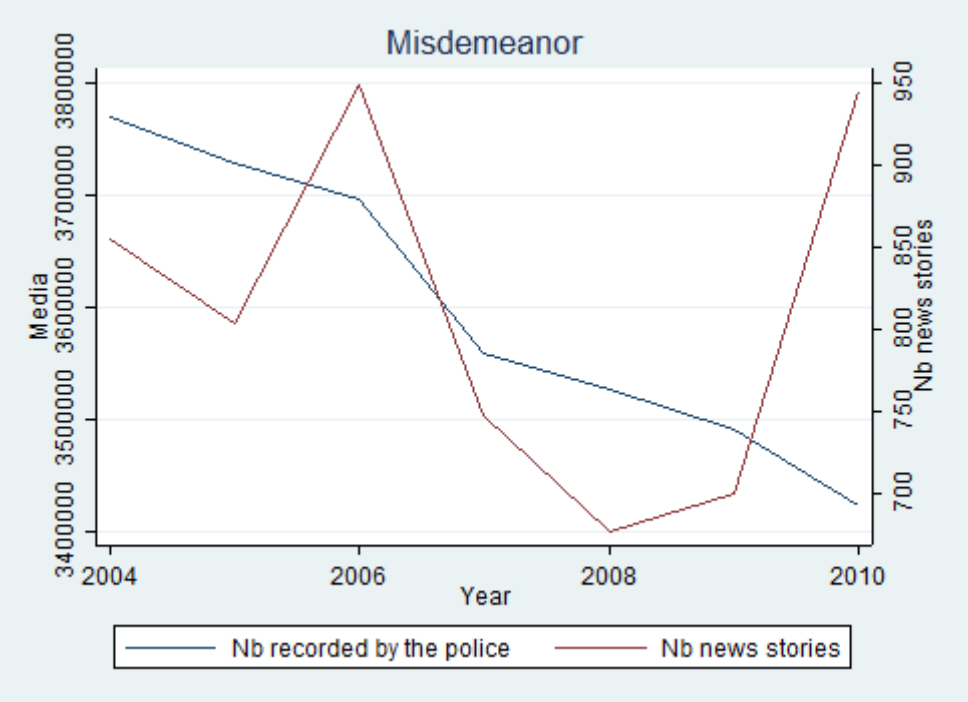

Figure 3a: Number of misdemeanor recorded by the Police or covered by the news per year: 2004 – 2010

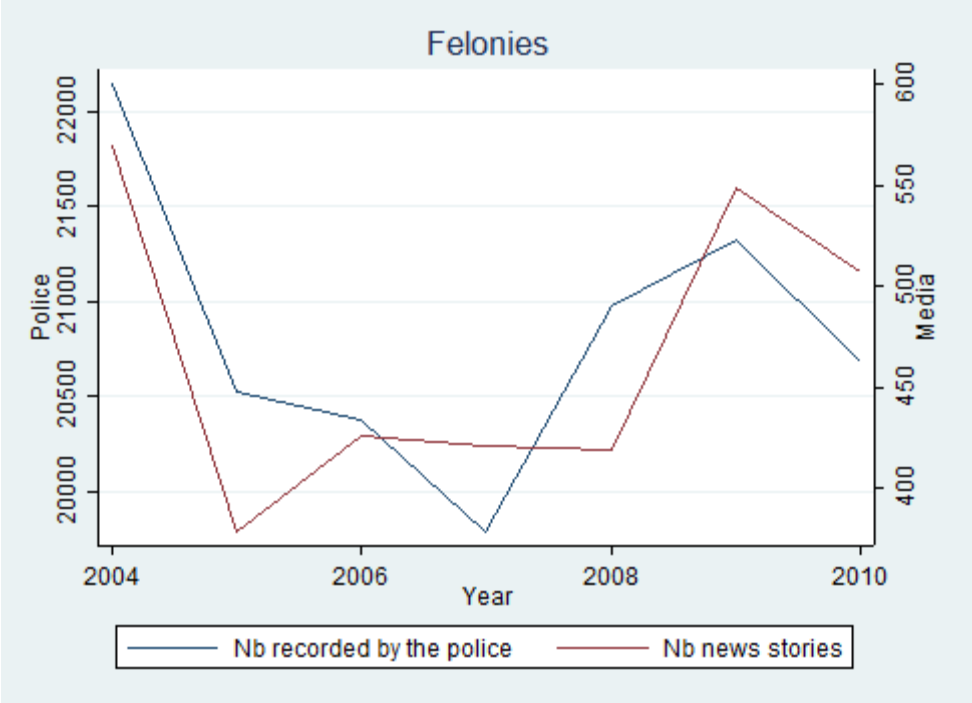

Figure 3b: Number of felonies recorded by the Police or covered by the news per year: 2004 – 2010

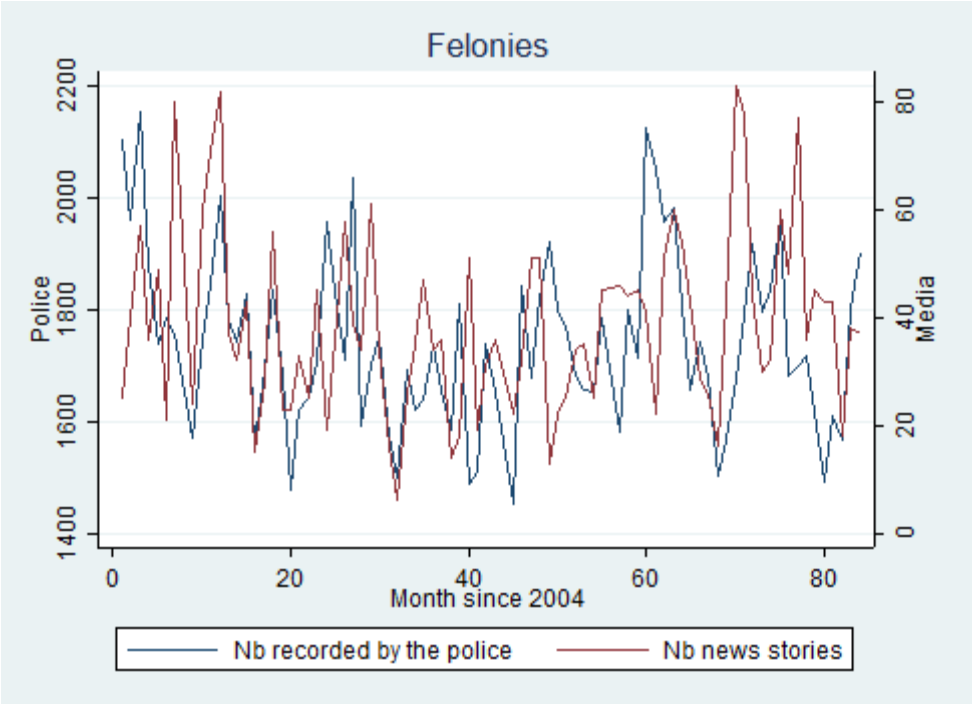

Figure 4: Number of felonies recorded by the Police or covered by the news per month since

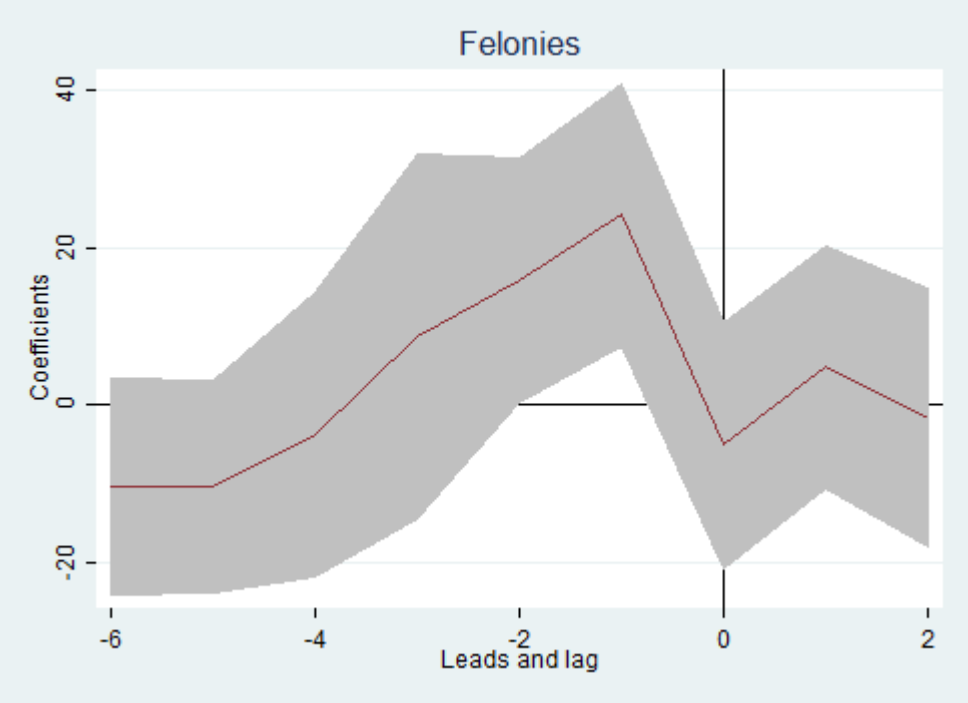

Figure 5a: effects of the number of report on felonies at t+k on sentences at t for different value of k. *Note: regressions include all control variables*. *Confident interval at 10% in grey*.

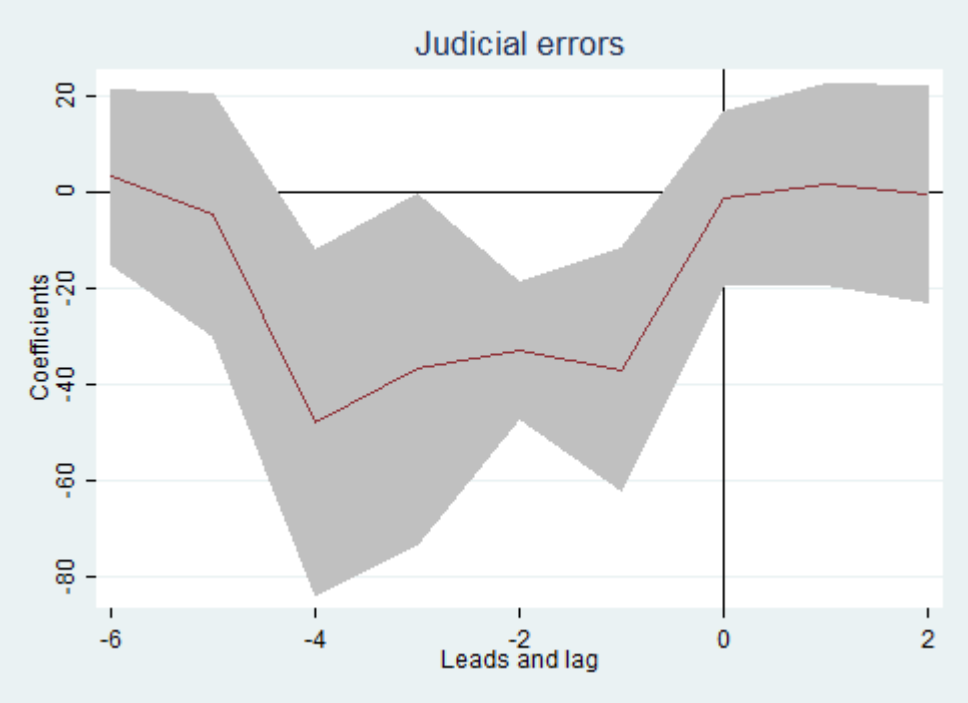

Figure 5b: effects of the number of report on judicial errors at t+k on sentences at t for different value of k. *Note: regressions include all control variables*. *Confident interval at 10% in grey*.

		Mean	sd	median	max
Felonies (N=17 755)	Male	.94	.23	1	1
	Age	37.28	13.41	35	91
	French	.08	.27	0	1
	Juvenile court	.88	.33	1	1
	Appeal court	5.28	4.7	3.5	1
	Investigation length (year)	.13	.34	0	37.3
	Murder	.17	.38	0	1
	Violence	.12	.32	0	1
	Rape	.48	.5	0	1
	Property crime	.22	.41	0	1
	Sentence length (in years) for…				
	… murder	14.98	7.06	15	life
	… violence	8.73	5.41	8	life
	… sexual assualt	9.05	4.41	8	life
	… property crime	7.97	4.6	7	life
Worse misdemeanors (N=19 638)	Male	.95	.22	1	1
	Age	27.18	8.69	24	74
	French	.75	.43	1	1
	Assault	.02	.12	0	1
	Theft	.25	.43	0	1
	Drug	.7	.46	1	1
	Prison (year)	.92	.92	.67	7
All misdemeanors (N=204 615)	Male	.96	.2	1	1
	Age	30.03	10.06	28	87
	French	.73	.45	1	1
	Assault	.18	.39	0	1
	Theft	.36	.48	0	1
	Drug	.08	.28	0	1
	Prison (year)	.57	.6	.42	7
Juveniles (N=152 788)	Male	.93	.26	1	1
	Age	17.18	1.57	17	39
	French	.94	.23	1	1
	Assault	.22	.41	0	1
	Theft	.61	.49	1	1
	Drug	.07	.26	0	1
	Prison (year)	.2	.34	.08	5.08
Media (N=2 557)	Number of stories per day on...				
	Felonies	1.28	1.65	1	12
	Felony perpetrated	0.89	1.37	0	10
	Misdemeanors	2.22	2.23	2	20
	Misdemeanor perpetrated	1.85	1.97	1	19
	Judicial errors	0.14	0.76	0	22
	Time per day (in minutes) on…				
	Felonies	1.72	2.34	.95	16.87
	Felony perpetrated	1.21	1.96	0	13.08
	Misdemeanors	3.15	3.33	2.3	32.57
	Misdemeanor perpetrated	1.85	1.97	1	19
	Judicial erros	0.22	1.36	0	44.7
	Audience (million)	13	2,15	13	19

Table 1: Summary statistics for conviction and media aggregate, 2004-2010

	Type of offense being tried											
	homicide			rape			Property			Investigation length		
Felony t-1	-0.00152			0.00140			0.00105			16.23*		
	(0.00307)			(0.00311)			(0.00316)			(8.924)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		-1.96e-05			0.00137			0.00336			2.031	
		(0.00316)			(0.00396)			(0.00370)			(11.38)	
Judicial error t-1			-0.00207			-0.00489			0.00165			-10.54
			(0.00443)			(0.00496)			(0.00550)			(14.87)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128
Mean	0.267	0.267	0.267	0.445	0.445	0.445	0.202	0.202	0.202	1865	1865	1865
Sd	0.443	0.443	0.443	0.497	0.497	0.497	0.402	0.402	0.402	1670	1670	1670

Table 2: Content of cases, by media coverage of felonies, felonies perpetrated, and judicial errors on the day before the trial.

Note: Regressions include controls for: age, gender, nationality (French or other), length of pre-trial detention, type of offense, county, length of time between offense and trial, dummies for month, day of week and year; as well as monthly number of offenses reported by police at the county level, temperature in Paris on that day, and stock market value in Paris. Standard errors are clustered by county. Unless specified otherwise, this is the case in all regressions presented.

	Number of cases			Re-qualified			Acquital (sub-sample)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Pannel A : media in (t-1)									
Felony t-1	0.0790			0.000754			0.00163		
	(0.0522)			(0.000849)			(0.00109)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		0.0303			0.000202			-0.00175	
		(0.0625)			(0.000851)			(0.00123)	
Judicial error t-1			0.144			0.00134			0.00158
			(0.114)			(0.00216)			(0.00419)
Pannel B : media in (t-1) and (t+1)									
Felony t-1	0.0645			0.000699			0.00205*		
	(0.0534)			(0.000914)			(0.00119)		
Felony t+1	0.0682			-7.73e-05			-0.00213		
	(0.0534)			(0.000770)			(0.00133)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		0.0205			0.000198			0.00174	
		(0.0640)			(0.000887)			(0.00204)	
Felony perpetrated t+1		0.0455			-0.000478			-0.00317*	
		(0.0641)			(0.000929)			(0.00158)	
Judicial error t-1			0.123			0.00135			0.00174
			(0.114)			(0.00218)			(0.00412)
Judicial error t+1			0.199*			-0.000735			-0.00114
			(0.114)			(0.000780)			(0.00307)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,555	2,555	2,555	13,780	13,780	13,780	5,453	5,453	5,453
Mean	5.393	5.393	5.393	0.0237	0.0237	0.0237	0.0475	0.0475	0.0475
Sd	6.609	6.609	6.609	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.213	0.213	0.213

Table 3: Effect of the number of new stories at t-1 (Panel A) or t-1 and t+1 (panel B) on number of conviction, probability to be convicted for misdemeanor and probability of an acquittal.

Note: coefficients in panel A and panel B correspond to different regressions. Number of observations, mean or sd are identical among columns

	Sentence length									
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Felony t-1	33.97***	23.58***								
	(11.82)	(7.834)								
Felony perpetrated t-1			35.15**	23.95**						
			(13.67)	(10.02)						
Misdemeanor t-1					-4.076	10.61*				
					(7.960)	(6.125)				
Misdemeanor perpetrated t-1							-3.776	8.469		
							(9.622)	(6.679)		
Judicial error t-1									-48.25**	-37.02**
									(20.77)	(15.40)
Control	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755
Mean	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522
Sd	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035

Table 4: Effect of the number of new stories on felonies, felonies perpetrated, misdemeanors and judicial errors at t-1 on sentences.

	Sentence length									
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Felony t-1						22.57***				
						(7.752)				
Felony t+1	9.203					5.211				
	(7.655)					(7.608)				
Felony perpetrated t-1							23.76**			
							(9.901)			
Felony perpetrated t+1		4.607					1.082			
		(9.335)					(9.240)			
Misdemeanor t-1								10.83		
								(6.839)		
Misdemeanor t+1			2.555					-0.884		
			(6.061)					(6.980)		
Misdemeanor perpetrated t-1									8.733	
									(7.580)	
Misdemeanor perpetrated t+1				1.944					-0.973	
				(6.653)					(7.731)	
Judicial error t-1										-37.69**
										(15.27)
Judicial error t+1					1.662					5.221
					(12.65)					(12.37)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755
Mean	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522	3522
Sd	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035	2035

Table 5: Effect of the number of new stories at both t-1 and t+1 on sentences.

	Appellate proceeding (dummy)			Trial ends with an appeal		
Felony t-1	2.70e-06			-0.00379		
	(0.00176)			(0.00229)		
Felony t+1	0.000550			0.000185		
	(0.00158)			(0.00293)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		0.000332			-0.00457	
		(0.00203)			(0.00400)	
Felony perpetrated t+1		0.00158			0.00129	
		(0.00174)			(0.00301)	
Judicial error t-1			0.00216			0.00769
			(0.00351)			(0.00526)
Judicial error t+1			-0.00207			-0.00173
			(0.00204)			(0.00309)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,755	17,755	17,755	5,454	5,454	5,454
Mean	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.138	0.138	0.138
Sd	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.345	0.345	0.345

Table 6: Effect of the number of new stories at both t-1 and t+1 on appellate proceedings

	With misdemeanor	Without life imprisonnment	With error clustered per day	With audience (in million)	With Media in minute	With dummies	With county specific time trend	With year*month fixed effect	With session fixed effect
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Felony t-1	20.31***	19.87**	22.57***	6.681***	15.07***	91.88***	23.68***	23.39***	45.61***
	(7.316)	(7.595)	(8.748)	(2.078)	(5.485)	(24.69)	(8.216)	(8.075)	(13.95)
Felony t+1	4.732	7.823	5.211	1.991	2.479	27.93	4.836	14.07*	15.38
	(7.269)	(7.280)	(7.105)	(2.470)	(4.882)	(24.73)	(8.226)	(7.499)	(13.40)
Felony perpetrated t-1	22.08**	21.19**	23.76**	6.554***	17.85**	82.68***	26.35**	24.72**	57.94***
	(9.088)	(9.339)	(11.57)	(2.305)	(8.388)	(24.39)	(10.32)	(10.68)	(17.51)
Felony perpetrated t+1	0.857	3.884	1.082	-0.776	-0.135	11.46	-1.182	11.12	19.89
	(8.871)	(9.050)	(8.695)	(2.630)	(6.163)	(26.45)	(9.942)	(9.642)	(17.66)
Judicial error t-1	-31.98**	-39.95***	-37.69***	-7.095**	-19.23**	-80.07*	-27.03*	-20.45	-15.58
	(14.88)	(15.18)	(10.76)	(3.398)	(8.610)	(40.48)	(15.59)	(16.53)	(37.13)
Judicial error t+1	2.712	8.405	5.221	-2.569	1.879	35.71	9.823	20.56	18.67
	(11.87)	(11.80)	(6.923)	(21.97)	(6.284)	(51.27)	(12.24)	(13.51)	(32.85)
Control	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	19,128	17,636	17,755	17,303	17,755	17,755	17,171	17,755	7,392
Mean	3334	3468	3522	3334	3522	3522	3522	3522	3511
Sd	2083	1933	2035	2083	2035	2035	2035	2035	2010

Table 7: News and sentence length: robustness check. *Note: regressions are independent by pair. We regress sentence length on Felony at t-1 and t+1, then sentence length on felony perpetrated at t-1 and t+1…*

	All misdemeanor			Most severe misdemeanor			All crime juvenile court		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: conviction									
Felony t-1	-0.0607			-0.0164			0.300		
	(0.305)			(0.0550)			(0.451)		
Felony t+1	-0.0591			-0.0376			0.765*		
	(0.305)			(0.0549)			(0.450)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		0.0302			0.0490			0.0687	
		(0.365)			(0.0659)			(0.540)	
Felony perpetrated t+1		0.105			-0.0329			0.317	
		(0.366)			(0.0659)			(0.541)	
Judicial error t-1			-0.284			0.125			0.0520
			(0.652)			(0.117)			(0.963)
Judicial error t+1			-0.0672			-0.162			1.659*
			(0.651)			(0.117)			(0.963)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,555	2,555	2,555	2,555	2,555	2,555	2,555	2,555	2,555
Mean	80.02	80.02	80.02	7.679	7.679	7.679	60.35	60.35	60.35
Sd	55.47	55.47	55.47	6.482	6.482	6.482	62.93	62.93	62.93
Panel B: Sentences	All misdemeanor			Most severe misdemeanor			All crime juvenile court		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Felony t-1	0.176			-1.715			-0.0568		
	(0.257)			(1.295)			(0.214)		
Felony t+1	0.171			2.941*			0.274		
	(0.335)			(1.515)			(0.190)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		-0.00806			-1.597			0.0318	
		(0.270)			(1.406)			(0.284)	
Felony perpetrated t+1		-0.787**			-0.543			0.405*	
		(0.376)			(1.906)			(0.220)	
Judicial error t-1			-0.352			2.297			0.0546
			(0.588)			(2.175)			(0.439)
Judicial error t+1			0.418			-0.903			0.325
			(0.518)			(2.516)			(0.330)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	204,455	204,455	204,455	19,657	19,657	19,657	152,787	152,787	152,787
Mean	205.3	205.3	205.3	332.4	332.4	332.4	78.14	78.14	78.14
Sd	217.1	217.1	217.1	332.3	332.3	332.3	147.5	147.5	147.5

Table 8: Professional judges; effect of the number of new stories at both t-1 and t+1 on number of conviction (panel A) and sentences (panel B).

	Sentence length							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Felony t-1			19.16*			20.61*		
			(10.13)			(11.32)		
Felony t+1			8.591			5.335		
			(10.84)			(10.95)		
Felony perpetrated t-1				20.70			19.55	
				(13.19)			(15.07)	
Felony perpetrated t+1				1.864			-4.993	
				(12.79)			(14.28)	
Judicial error t-1					-41.20**			-38.85**
					(15.78)			(16.04)
Judicial error t+1					6.774			8.439
					(12.21)			(12.73)
Number felonies t-1	8.301		6.875	7.444	8.890			
	(6.666)		(6.857)	(6.776)	(6.708)			
Number felonies t+1	5.887		5.697	6.094	6.550			
	(6.330)		(6.390)	(6.357)	(6.342)			
Number felonies same county t-1		-36.07				-36.33	-35.82	-37.24
		(40.91)				(40.84)	(40.96)	(40.69)
Number felonies same county t+1		51.29				50.98	52.60	52.78
		(41.11)				(41.42)	(41.78)	(41.22)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,249	10,368	10,249	10,249	10,249	10,368	10,368	10,368
Mean	3486	3480	3486	3486	3486	3480	3480	3480
Sd	2010	2014	2010	2010	2010	2014	2014	2014

Table 9: Media reports vs. actual crime. *Note: "Number of felonies" captures the number of offenses that took place on the day before the trial, as meadured by criminal reports, overall in France or in the county where the trial takes place.*

	Audience at t-1, relative to average TV audience							
	above	below	above	below	above	below	above	below
Felony t-1	12.11	31.76***	9.793	30.66***				
	(10.66)	(10.86)	(10.83)	(10.91)				
Felony t+1			10.09	7.190				
			(11.86)	(10.18)				
Felony perpetrated t-1					20.22	26.07**	18.60	26.56**
					(15.98)	(13.04)	(16.02)	(12.83)
Felony perpetrated t+1							9.288	-3.624
							(13.80)	(11.81)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,799	9,956	7,799	9,956	7,799	9,956	7,799	9,956
Mean	3606	3457	3606	3457	3606	3457	3606	3457
Sd	2081	1996	2081	1996	2081	1996	2081	1996

Table 10: effect of media on sentences, by audience at t-1.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Felony region t-1	49.34**			
	(19.83)			
Felony outside region t-1	16.17*			
	(8.572)			
Felony region t+1	9.630			
	(17.79)			
Felony outside region t+1	7.778			
	(7.700)			
Felony perpetrated		29.83		
region t-1		(18.75)		
Felony perpetrated		20.53*		
outside region t-1		(11.64)		
Felony perpetrated		1.938		
region t+1		(15.46)		
Felony perpetrated		8.113		
outside region t+1		(10.30)		
Felony adjacent county t-1			40.40*	
			(20.62)	
Felont outside adjacent t-1			18.68*	
			(9.624)	
Felony adjacent county t+1			16.29	
			(19.98)	
Felont outside adjacent t+1			6.355	
			(8.215)	
Felony perpetrated				42.17*
adjacent county t-1				(22.93)
Felony perpetrated				18.50
outside adjacent t-1				(12.07)
Felony perpetrated				15.25
adjacent county t+1				(17.91)
Felony perpetrated				5.539
outside adjacent t+1				(10.27)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,230	17,442	17,230	17,442
Mean	3522	3522	3522	3522
Sd	2035	2035	2035	2035

Table 11: Effect of news, by distance between place of offense and place of trial

	Sexual assault			Violence			Property crimes		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Felony t-1	18.32*			23.35			37.12**		
	(9.827)			(20.70)			(16.49)		
Felony t+1	4.107			5.376			14.58		
	(9.195)			(20.61)			(18.29)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		22.15*			5.259			52.02**	
		(12.71)			(24.72)			(22.23)	
Felony perpetrated t+1		-8.416			5.291			16.73	
		(12.23)			(22.60)			(22.73)	
Judicial error t-1			-22.44			-71.67**			-27.10
			(16.56)			(33.72)			(32.86)
Judicial error t+1			11.41			18.77			-36.90
			(13.59)			(39.03)			(25.70)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,518	8,518	8,518	5,116	5,116	5,116	4,121	4,121	4,121
Mean	3259	3259	3259	4464	4464	4464	2897	2897	2897
Sd	1589	1589	1589	2567	2567	2567	1676	1676	1676

Table 12: Effect of content of news on sentence length, by type of crime judged.

Appendix A

List of courts for which we got court schedules and information on acquittals:

Ain (1), Alpes Maritimes (6), Hautes-Garonne (31), Gironde (33), Indre (36), Loire (42), Loiret (45), Maine et loire (49), Haute Marne (52), Meurthe-et-Moselle (54), Pas de Calais (62), Pyrénées-Orientales (66), Haute Savoie (74), Paris (75), Somme (80), Tarn (81), Vendée (85), Vienne (86), Haute Vienne (87), Essonne (91), Seine-Saint Denis (93)

List of courts for which we got court schedules, but no information on acquittals:

Allier (3), Cantal (15), Doubs (25), Eure (27), Gard (30), Hérault (34), Isère (38), Haute-Loire (43), Lot-et-Garonne (47), Moselle (57), Nord (59), Puy-de-Dôme (63), Bas-Rhin (67), Savoie (73), Seine-et-Marne (77), Yvelines (78), Val-de-Marne (94), Val-d'Oise (95)

Appendix B

List of words used to define main aggregate measures of media coverage of crime and criminal justice. Number of appearances in the news 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 "décès").

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

3. Misdemeanor: trafic d'armes (20); disparition (cavale) (22); clandestin (Sans papier) (24); travail au noir (26); contrebande (27); escroquerie (caisse noire) (27); harcèlement moral (27); trafiquant (29); manifestant (casseur) (31); drogue (cannabis) (31); abus de biens sociaux (31); Musulin Toni (32); racket (33); état d'urgence (37); délit d'initie (39); travail clandestin (40); couvre feu (41); délit (53); homicide involontaire (53); proxénétisme (54); arme a feu (64); campement (illégal) (65); cocaïne (72); bavure policière (76); clandestin (Sans papiers) (76); piraterie (83); cambriolage (87); bagarre (89) (if used without "décès"); banque (Clearstream) (91); clandestin (sans papier) (91); contrefaçon (98); infraction (105); bande de jeunes (107); corruption (120); profanation (136); délinquant (141); dégâts (dégradation) (144); maltraitance (165); trafic de drogue (180); drogue (186); insécurité (210); vandalisme (261); escroquerie (283); fraude (339); délinquance (362); vol-infraction (369); délinquance juvénile (385); agression (705); violence (1620) (if used without "décès").

5. 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).

6. 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).

Appendix C: Number of Trial per calendar Month

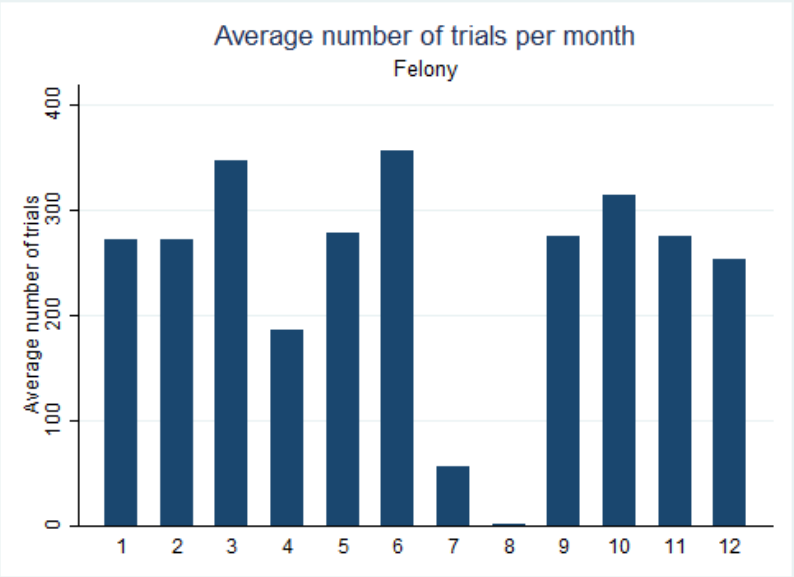

Figure a: number of trials for felony per calendar month over 2004-2010

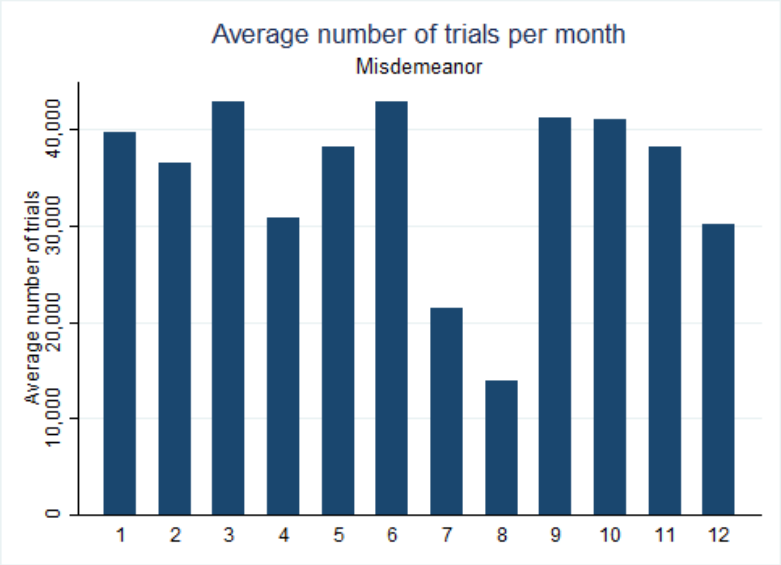

Figure b: number of trials for misdemeanor per calendar month over 2004-2010

Appendix D: Additional Regression tables

	Sentence length
Past convictions (dummy)	72.01**
	(31.64)
Number of past convictions	19.38**
	(9.575)
Nb misdemeanors in the county in the month	-0.0282
	(0.0214)
Nb felonies in the county in the month	-3.381**
	(1.387)
Age	14.31***
	(1.282)
Sex	682.6***
	(61.79)
French (dummy)	-66.07
	(74.15)
Investigation length	0.0395**
	(0.0191)
Pre-trial custody (number of days)	1.427***
	(0.0894)
Thuesday (dummy)	-111.7*
	(60.65)
Wednesday (dummy)	49.67
	(67.03)
Thursday (dummy)	110.5*
	(62.50)
Friday (dummy)	175.9***
	(62.28)
Saturday (dummy)	111.6
	(114.9)
Sunday (dummy)	-144.8
	(711.7)
Minor	-664.9***
	(42.55)
Appeal	487.4***
	(71.04)
Appeal for minor	-247.6
	(203.9)
Violence (dummy)	-1,775***
	(76.94)
Rape (dummy)	-1,703***
	(69.58)
Armed robbery (dummy)	-2,182***
	(63.50)
Year fixed effects	Yes
Month fixed effects	Yes
County fixed effects	Yes
Observations	17,499
Sentence mean	3525
Sentence sd	2037

Table D1: Correlation between sentence time and control variables

	Age			Male			Past conviction			Pre trial custody		
Felony t-1	-0.0358			-0.00154			0.000783			1.253		
	(0.0770)			(0.00116)			(0.00239)			(2.437)		
Felony perpetrated t-1		-0.148			-0.00051			-0.000500			2.307	
		(0.103)			(0.00154)			(0.00335)			(2.816)	
Judicial error t-1			-0.107			0.00525***			0.00753*			-8.955*
			(0.129)			(0.00163)			(0.00440)			(5.103)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128	19,128
Mean	37.02	37.02	37.02	0.930	0.930	0.930	0.405	0.405	0.405	619.1	619.1	619.1
Sd	13.35	13.35	13.35	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.491	0.491	0.491	496.1	496.1	496.1

Table D2: Socio-demographic characteristics of defendants, by media coverage of felonies, felonies perpetrated, and judicial errors.

	Begining session	End session	Begining session	End session	Begining session	End session
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Felony t-1	32.20***	48.27***				
	(8.904)	(15.73)				
Felony t+1	15.42	2.624				
	(15.10)	(16.62)				
Felony perpetrated t-1			34.71**	42.14**		
			(13.78)	(18.01)		
Felony perpetrated t+1			28.91	8.848		
			(21.19)	(17.49)		
Judicial error t-1					-9.207	-38.76
					(32.14)	(33.21)
Judicial error t+1					12.31	16.24
					(23.91)	(23.78)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,816	3,992	3,816	3,992	3,816	3,992
Mean	3483	3483	3483	3483	3483	3483
Sd	1983	1983	1983	1983	1983	1983

Table D3: Jurors' experience

Appendix E: placebo test

Significant at t-1, non significant at t+1(with control)	Significant at t-1 with and without control with same sign, non significant at t+1	Coefficient at t-1 (with control)	Coefficient at t+1 (with control)	Occurence of the keyword in the database
Bourse		-33.51	18.54	506
Charente Maritime		-44.63	30.64	229
FillonFrancois		-28	27.88	579
Nantes		55.61	-22.06	341
Outreau	Outreau	-50.07	2.982	278
Seconde Guerre mondiale	Seconde Guerre mondiale	-65.19	21.07	694
aide humanitaire		68.61	10.44	1164
cinema		41.63	-2.274	2334
condition de travail	condition de travail	53.92	-24.61	566
contamination		31.69	-33.13	908
enquete police	enquete police	28.91	-10.14	3540
erreur judiciaire		-37.17	.735	258
escroquerie	escroquerie	65.09	-22.94	361
faitdivers		12.75	-3.407	5506
fermeture	fermeture	-49.95	27.44	810
film		34.13	-16.08	565
financement		36.64	12.54	692
hommage		-19.21	-23.39	1385
immeuble	immeuble	-42.35	7.335	344
incendie		28.22	-5.95	2182
jeune fille		47.36	29.98	388
litterature		-63.14	6.955	267
mauvais temps		-32.43	16.22	684
meurtre	meurtre	26.74	-3.858	2144
polemique		-15.5	-3.051	5250
police	police	19.57	-10.98	1196
pompier		55.24	-4.282	654
racisme	racisme	49.03	11.82	379
recherche scientifique		56.83	10.96	801
referendum		28.96	-23.46	606
rentree des classes	rentree des classes	-70.4	51.48	271
securite		16.95	-8.441	1346
securite routiere		54.6	4.144	1099
surveillance		54.98	-33.34	303
transport aerien	transport aerien	-22.96	48.27	1258
transport routier	transport routier	109.9	28.5	252
verdict		50.64	19.21	442
voyageur	voyageur	-83.43	74.68	339

Table E1: keywords consistent with an effect of media on sentences depending on requirement.

Appendix F: heterogeneity of the effect

	French	Foreigner	French	Foreigner	<35 years old	<35 years old	<35 years old	<35 years old	No past conviction	Re-offender	No past conviction	Re-offender
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Felony perpetrated t-1	20.21*	49.74			26.14**	25.99			16.75	30.94**		
	(11.02)	(32.15)			(12.83)	(16.42)			(13.53)	(14.51)		
Felony perpetrated t+1	0.496	6.274			1.877	6.070			0.166	2.957		
	(8.682)	(23.92)			(12.70)	(12.28)			(11.33)	(12.18)		
Judicial error t-1			-30.52**	-62.82**			-32.26**	-38.56			-46.34**	-20.64
			(14.96)	(29.15)			(15.59)	(25.12)			(18.96)	(21.10)
Judicial error t+1			-0.653	32.58			14.81	-1.050			11.74	-8.722
			(12.97)	(37.30)			(16.19)	(13.91)			(14.89)	(17.80)
Observations	15,547	2,208	15,547	2,208	9,045	8,710	9,045	8,710	11,240	6,515	11,240	6,515
Mean	3491	3746	3491	3746	3135	3925	3135	3925	3574	3433	3574	3433
Sd	2020	2128	2020	2128	1921	2072	1921	2072	2059	1990	2059	1990

Table F1: Effect of content of news on sentence length, by socio-demographic characteristics.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Blood crime t-1	21.18**			19.53**
	(9.412)			(9.343)
Blood crime t+1	-8.032			-8.471
	(9.407)			(9.215)
Sexual crime t-1		70.57**		66.57**
		(27.55)		(27.77)
Sexual crime t+1		38.76**		39.23**
		(17.85)		(17.49)
Property felony t-1			28.01	26.62
			(29.38)	(29.36)
Property felony t+1			28.46	26.67
			(35.67)	(35.32)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,755	17,755	17,755	17,755
Mean	3522	3522	3522	3522
Sd	2035	2035	2035	2035

Table F2: Effect of content of news on sentence length, by type of crime in the news.

	Sentence length		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Felony t-1 report	10.28		
	(9.530)		
Felony t+1 report	1.869		
	(8.614)		
Felony t-1 news flash	59.64***		
	(21.85)		
Felony t+1 news flash	32.43		
	(28.48)		
Felony perpetrated t-1 report		14.85	
		(12.72)	
Felony perpetrated t+1 report		2.440	
		(10.67)	
Felony perpetrated t-1 news flash		44.31*	
		(26.29)	
Felony perpetrated t+1 news flash		12.15	
		(29.26)	
Judicial error t-1 report			-39.82**
			(19.64)
Judicial error t+1 report			4.277
			(15.32)
Judicial error t-1 news flash			-48.31
			(63.16)
Judicial error t+1 news flash			52.67
			(73.46)
Observations	17,755	17,755	17,755
Mean	3522	3522	3522
Sd	2035	2035	2035

Table F3: Effect of the news by type of news stories. *Note: news flash are defined as news stories shorter than 30s*.

	Share vote conservative				Share older than 65				Share Unemployment			
	< mean	> mean	< mean	> mean	< mean	> mean	< mean	> mean	< mean	> mean	< mean	> mean
Felony perpetrated t-1	17.07	28.57**			19.63	37.25*			20.46	25.99*		
	(13.94)	(13.81)			(12.17)	(18.98)			(16.27)	(13.74)		
Felony perpetrated t+1	-0.615	6.518			-2.854	13.52			3.250	4.373		
	(13.83)	(12.59)			(11.19)	(17.74)			(14.86)	(11.79)		
Judicial error t-1			-34.41	-32.64			-32.02*	-45.85*			-44.74**	-34.03
			(22.08)	(19.59)			(18.41)	(23.04)			(20.50)	(21.34)
Judicial error t+1			13.20	-6.691			5.342	7.452			-3.891	13.72
			(17.41)	(16.44)			(14.89)	(21.33)			(14.32)	(17.48)
Observations	8,879	8,876	8,879	8,876	13,061	4,694	13,061	4,694	6,679	11,076	6,679	11,076
Mean	3493	3551	3493	3551	3474	3657	3474	3657	3576	3490	3576	3490
Sd	2010	2060	2010	2060	2032	2037	2032	2037	2070	2013	2070	2013

Table F4: Effect of content of news on sentence length, by average characteristics of the population in the county. *Note: juror are randomly drawn from the county's population (via electoral roles). However both prosecutor and defendant attorney could exclude some juror*.