

Immigration Shocks and (Mis)Concerns about Crime: Evidence from Chile¹

Fernando Severino²

Giancarlo Visconti³

Revise and Resubmit, *American Political Science Review*

Abstract

The world has experienced unprecedented migration movements since 2010. In this context, unsubstantiated claims about a causal connection between immigration and crime have become common in politics. In this paper, we examine whether people's concerns about crime are affected by rapid and large demographic changes (i.e., immigration shock). To answer this question, we take advantage of rich administrative data in Chile, a country that has experienced a historic influx of migrants in the past few years. Using survey data, we estimate the effect of an immigration shock at the municipality level on concerns about crime. Our analysis shows that a rapid shift in Haitian migration at the local level leads to greater concerns about crime. However, we do not find evidence that immigration shocks are affecting crime rates. People's misperceptions about immigration and crime can have relevant consequences such as contributing to the negative stereotyping of migrant communities.

Keywords: Immigration, crime, concerns, crime rates.

¹ We thank Caitlin Andrews-Lee, Sarah Goldberg, Michael Touchton, Amy Erica Smith, Lindsay Mayka, Mason Moseley, SPSA 2020 and APSA 2020 seminar participants for useful comments and suggestion. Soledad Araya provided excellent research assistance.

² Assistant professor, California State University, Dominguez Hills, email: fseverino@csudh.edu.

³ Assistant professor, Purdue University, email: gviscont@purdue.edu.