

# WHEN CRIMINALITY BEGETS CRIME: THE ROLE OF ELECTED POLITICIANS IN INDIA

Nishith Prakash<sup>\*</sup>

Soham Sahoo<sup>†</sup>

Deepak Saraswat<sup>‡</sup>

Reetika Sindhi<sup>§</sup>

May 29, 2024

## Abstract

This paper examines the effect of electing criminally accused politicians on crime in India, considering the severity of their alleged offenses. Employing an instrumental variable approach that exploits the quasi-random variation in outcomes of close elections between candidates with and without criminal accusations, we find that a standard deviation increase in the share of criminally accused leaders in institutionally weaker states leads to a 0.05 standard deviation rise in yearly reported crimes. Leaders accused of serious crimes have a more pronounced effect on crime outcomes, including crimes against women. Crucially, leaders accused of serious crimes also exert a negative influence on female labor force participation, underlining their detrimental impact on socioeconomic welfare. Our findings highlight the significance of considering the nature and severity of criminal accusations when evaluating the impact of criminally accused politicians on crime and society.

---

<sup>\*</sup>**Corresponding Author.** Northeastern University, CESifo, IZA, GLO, HiCN, & CReAM.  
Email: [n.prakash@northeastern.edu](mailto:n.prakash@northeastern.edu).

<sup>†</sup>Indian Institute of Management Bangalore. Email: [soham.sahoo@iimb.ac.in](mailto:soham.sahoo@iimb.ac.in).

<sup>‡</sup>Independent Researcher<sup>\*\*</sup>. Email: [saraswat.d@gmail.com](mailto:saraswat.d@gmail.com).

<sup>§</sup>University of California, Santa Barbara. Email: [reetika@ucsb.edu](mailto:reetika@ucsb.edu).

**Keywords:** Crime, Female Labor Force Participation, Criminal Accusations, Elected  
Leaders, Close Elections, India

**JEL Codes:** D72, D73, K42, O17

**Acknowledgements:** We thank the editor, Randi Hjalmarsson, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments. The paper also benefitted from discussions with Rahul Lahoti, Marion Mercier, Ashoka Mody, Ruben Poblete-Cazenave, Kunal Sen, and participants of 3rd International Conference on Globalization and Development (University of Goettingen), 16th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development (ISI Delhi), German Development Economics Conference (University of Hohenheim), Australasian Development Economics Workshop (University of Sydney), Nordic Conference in Development Economics (Helsinki), International Conference on Development Economics (Clermont-Ferrand), PEGNet Conference (Kampala), and seminar at University of Manchester. Cathrine Varghese provided excellent research assistance. We acknowledge research support from IIM Bangalore through a Research Seed Grant and the Economic and Social Research Council through a Global Challenges Research Fund (ref. no. ES/T010606/1).

**\*\*** Deepak Saraswat is an independent researcher and currently a Research Scientist in Demography and Survey Science at Meta. Deepak's work on this research was done as a graduate student at the University of Connecticut prior to joining Meta Platforms, Inc.

*“Parliament should frame a law that makes it obligatory for political parties to remove leaders charged with ‘heinous and grievous’ crimes, such as rape, murder, and kidnapping, to name only a few, and refuse ticket to offenders in both Parliamentary and Assembly polls.”*

Supreme Court of India, 2018

## 1 Introduction

In many parts of the world, the criminalization of politics – linkages between criminals and politicians – has become a threat to society ([Kochanek, 2010](#); [Brown, 2017](#); [Godson, 2017](#)). However, significant concerns arise when criminally accused individuals themselves become elected representatives. This situation is further exacerbated when these representatives turn out to be charged with serious crimes such as murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and rape.<sup>1</sup> While criminality in politics is prevalent in many countries, India is experiencing it on a larger scale ([Vaishnav, 2017](#)). Despite the Supreme Court of India’s suggestion to the Indian Parliament to frame a law against seriously accused candidates, these candidates continue to participate and win both the Parliamentary and State Assembly elections.<sup>2,3</sup> Addressing this requires strong interventions, e.g., eliminating voter frictions, as it is not self-corrective ([George et al., 2018](#)). Furthermore, a high share of seriously accused leaders weakens law enforcement ([Kim and Lee, 2022](#)) and, therefore, is likely to result in various socioeconomic costs to society ([Rothe, 2009](#)).

In this paper, we examine how criminally accused state legislative representatives impact the crime environment of their legislative regions. The impact of criminally accused leaders on the crime environment of the district is *a priori*

ambiguous. Leaders with criminal backgrounds can impact crime in opposing directions, making this an open empirical question. One stream of research recognizes the direct or indirect support received by *mafias* from elected criminally accused politicians, leading to more criminal cases in the area (Paoli, 2014). The *nexus* between mafias and politicians is a common phenomenon in regions with a weak state and judicial capacity (Williams, 2009; Acemoglu et al., 2020). In addition, areas with weaker state capacity are characterized by bottlenecks that render plans and efforts for improvements ineffective (Blattman et al., 2022).

Another stream of research argues that voters do not expect any support from the weak institutions of the state and, therefore, intentionally elect criminally accused politicians as they consider these leaders their *Godfathers* who can support the local community during socioeconomic distress (Vaishnav, 2017). Rejecting the “ignorant voter hypothesis”, this literature highlights that when influential politicians with extra-judicial violence (the so-called “godfathers”) are in power, some criminals in the area exercise restraint, resulting in fewer criminal cases. In regions with weaker state capacity, this becomes further complicated when taking into account the co-existence and an *implied competition* between mafias and state governing bodies (Blattman et al., 2022; Melnikov et al., 2020).

We explore this question by analyzing the impact of electing a criminally accused politician on crime in their jurisdictions. In 2003, the Supreme Court of India mandated that every candidate participating in an election must file an affidavit disclosing relevant background details, including criminal cases. Using affidavit data compiled by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and data from the Election Commission of India (ECI), we construct a candidate-election year panel of candidate characteristics including criminal cases, charges leveled, and the nature of those charges. Combining this data with district-level

crime reports from India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), we generate a district-year panel covering all state legislative assembly elections from 2005 to 2017.

The main identification challenge here is that unobserved heterogeneity in voter behavior and candidate characteristics may correlate with crime environment (George et al., 2018). Therefore, we use a fixed-effects instrumental variables strategy that exploits quasi-random variation in the outcome of close elections between candidates with and without criminal accusations. Specifically, we instrument the share of constituencies in the district won by criminally accused candidates with the share of constituencies in the district having criminally accused leaders who won in close elections against non-criminally accused candidates. This strategy has been used extensively in the political economy literature to study the impact of political leaders' characteristics on various outcomes (Clots-Figueras, 2012; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014; Bhalotra et al., 2014; Nellis and Siddiqui, 2018; Lahoti and Sahoo, 2020). The validity of this identification strategy relies on the assumption of quasi-randomness of the outcome of close elections (Lee, 2008; Eggers et al., 2015). We conduct several tests to check the internal validity of our estimation strategy, showing that close election outcomes are not manipulated, and they are uncorrelated with pre-determined constituency-level characteristics. Further, as the existence of close elections in a district may not be random, the empirical specification controls for the district-level fraction of constituencies having close elections between a criminally accused and a non-criminally accused candidate and the vote margin between these candidates.

We find that leaders accused of *any* crime have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on the total number of reported crimes. However, in the group of states with historically weak socioeconomic outcomes and institutions (re-

ferred to as BIMAROU states)<sup>4</sup>, the winning of a criminally accused politician leads to a significant increase in reported crimes. In these states, a standard deviation (SD) increase in the share of constituencies having a criminally accused leader results in a 0.05 SD (or 4.3 percent over the mean) rise in the number of crimes reported yearly in the district. The impact in other states is statistically not significant. Thus, the harmful impact of criminally accused leaders on crime is concentrated in areas where the institutions and the rule of law are weaker.

While criminal charges may be imposed on politicians following the legal course, not all charges are similar. Charges related to murder, kidnapping, sexual assault, rape, etc., are grievous, whereas political candidates often have other *minor* criminal charges, such as protests, public tranquility violations, etc. We find no statistically discernible impact of leaders accused of *serious* crimes (or, *seriously* accused leaders) on crime outcomes in the overall sample. However, considering only the BIMAROU states, a standard deviation increase in the share of *seriously* accused politicians leads to a 0.07 SD (or 5.8 percent over the mean) increase in the annual reported crimes in the district. We show that these impacts are indeed due to the seriousness of the crimes rather than the number of cases that the leaders are accused of. These findings are consistent with the literature emphasizing the nexus between criminally accused politicians, especially those accused of serious crimes, and mafias in the institutionally weak environment (Berenschot, 2011; Vaishnav, 2017).<sup>5</sup>

We further divide the crime outcomes into various categories, such as violent crimes, property crimes, crimes against women, gender-neutral crimes, and other crimes.<sup>6</sup> Although we cannot completely rule out the effects on crime *reporting*, our findings suggest that seriously accused politicians indeed lead to higher crime *incidence* in institutionally weaker states where we find a significant increase in homicides – a type of crime with negligible reporting bias (Iyer

et al., 2012; Bindler and Hjalmarsson, 2021). Moreover, crimes against women increase with a higher share of seriously accused leaders in the district; the effect is significant in the overall sample and magnified in the BIMAROU states. Extending our analysis further, we show that seriously accused leaders also have a negative impact on female labor force participation; one SD increase in the fraction of seriously accused leaders reduces women's labor force participation by 10.8 percent on average. This finding indicates the overall loss in socioeconomic welfare these leaders may entail.

The robustness of these results holds up to a range of specification tests, varying definitions of a close election, alternate measures of the outcome variable, different definitions for classifying institutionally weak states, and falsification tests. For a subset of districts with a single close election, we also use a sharp regression discontinuity design (RDD) to show results consistent with our main findings based on instrumental variable analysis.

Our work contributes to several bodies of literature. Most narrowly, our result contributes to the literature exploring the impact of criminally accused politicians on various socioeconomic outcomes in India (Chemin, 2012; Nanda and Pareek, 2016; Cheng and Urpelainen, 2019; Prakash et al., 2019). Using data from 2004 to 2008 and employing a close-election RDD, Prakash et al. (2019) show a negative impact of criminally accused leaders on aggregate economic growth measured by night-time luminosity, but they do not consider the first-order effects on outcomes such as law and order or crime. A few studies have looked at the potential impact on crime, but the evidence has been either mixed or inconclusive (Chemin, 2012; Cheng and Urpelainen, 2019; Kim and Lee, 2022). Chemin (2012) uses data for 2002-2006 and employs a state and year fixed effects regression to find a positive association of criminal leaders with crime outcomes. In addition to having data for a much shorter period, the analysis does not con-



trol for district-level unobserved heterogeneity or other state-specific confounding factors that vary over time. [Cheng and Urpelainen \(2019\)](#) uses an instrumental variable analysis to find no effect of criminal politicians on incidence of murder and perceived crime. [Kim and Lee \(2022\)](#) find a negative impact of criminal leaders on crimes such as rape and kidnapping, which they argue are under-reported due to the influence of criminal leaders, while they do not find any impact on crimes such as murder and auto theft. Compared to the existing literature, our analysis is built on a comprehensive framework taking into account the interplay between *the nature of criminality* of the politician and the *quality of institutions* of the state in this context. We use district-level panel data spanning almost a decade to conduct a more thorough and updated analysis. Furthermore, to evaluate the causal effect, we rely on the state-of-the-art identification strategy in the literature and employ a regression discontinuity design and instrumental variable analysis. Our instrumental variable strategy is akin to a fuzzy regression discontinuity design that is well established in the literature to identify the causal effect in such a setting ([Clots-Figueras, 2012](#); [Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014](#); [Nellis and Siddiqui, 2018](#)). Besides, we also show that the results are unchanged when the analysis is based on a sharp RDD, bolstering the credibility of our estimates as the causal effects of criminally accused leaders. A novel aspect of our analysis is that we carefully look into each section of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to identify the nature of the offense committed by the political candidates. The IPC is the official criminal code of India covering all aspects of criminal law, and it acts as the primary guiding document for law enforcement. A detailed understanding of the IPC helps us identify seriously accused leaders from the pool of criminally accused leaders.

Our study also contributes to the recent literature on low and stagnant female labor force participation in India ([Klasen and Pieters, 2015](#); [Lahoti and](#)

Swaminathan, 2016; Afridi et al., 2018; Sarkar et al., 2019). Some studies have highlighted the negative effect of local crime on women’s economic participation outside their home (Chakraborty et al., 2018; Borker, 2021; Mishra et al., 2021; Siddique, 2022). Our findings show that political leaders accused of serious crimes have a detrimental impact on female labor force participation, plausibly through a rise in crimes against women in their constituencies.

More broadly, we contribute to the literature exploring the causes of the increasing crime in society (Entorf and Spengler, 2002), studies finding heterogeneity in the impact of political leaders’ characteristics across Indian states (Lahoti and Sahoo, 2020; Prakash et al., 2019), literature concerned with politicians’ quality based on their different characteristics (De Paola et al., 2010; Martinez-Bravo, 2017), and to the discussion on the criminalization of politics that focuses on crime in the political economy context (Paoli, 2014).

## 2 Background and Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Political Structure in India

India is a federal republic with a bicameral parliamentary system at national and state levels. While the Parliament of India is the national legislative body, each state has a similar structure comprising an Upper House (Legislative Council) and a Lower House (Legislative Assembly). Each state is divided into several assembly constituencies. The voting population of each constituency elects a representative who becomes a Member of the State Legislative Assembly (MLA) with a term usually fixed at five years.<sup>7</sup> The responsibility of crime control and law enforcement lies primarily with the state government; hence, political leaders in the state legislative assembly (i.e., MLAs) are the focus of our

study. MLAs hold considerable legislative, financial, and executive powers during their term. They also have various electoral powers; for instance, they elect one-third of the State Legislative Council members. Besides these constitutional roles, they significantly influence their constituencies' bureaucratic and social environment.

## 2.2 Criminality in Indian Politics

The *nexus* between crime and politics in India has been a long-standing phenomenon ([Berenschot, 2011](#)). While politicians have depended on criminals to mobilize votes, redistribute funds, and fix the police, criminals have sought direct or indirect support from the political leaders to keep committing crimes but remain outside the law ([Kim and Lee, 2022](#)). However, why criminals choose to become politicians, why political parties give them tickets, and why voters elect them have been debated in the literature.<sup>8</sup> While One strand of the literature supports the ignorant voter hypothesis ([Banerjee et al., 2014](#)), another strand explains the existence of criminals in politics due to the rational behavior of informed voters ([Vaishnav, 2017](#)). Criminals, who are essentially lawbreakers, seek an opportunity to portray themselves as lawmakers to gain direct protection by holding office. Moreover, entry of criminals into the electoral domain relies on voters' demand, well-mediated by political parties ([Aidt et al., 2011](#); [Tiwari, 2014](#)). Criminal candidates' ability to self-finance electoral campaigns also helps them get affiliated with political parties in the competitive electoral market ([Kapur and Vaishnav, 2013](#); [Dutta and Gupta, 2014](#)).

The existing literature also points out several reasons why criminal candidates win elections. First, a candidate's criminality may signal their willingness and ability to bend the rules to protect their community's interests, especially by redistributing public sector benefits in a patronage democracy ([Kitschelt et al.,](#)

2007; Wade, 1985). Second, the inability or unwillingness of the state to address social matters or disputes may encourage voters to choose a local arbiter as their leader (Skaperdas, 2001). Such a choice may be based on ethnic ties to candidates and parties rather than their qualities (Horowitz, 2000; Chauchard, 2014). Third, voters may turn to criminal leaders as their last resort when they experience negative shocks (Gutiérrez-Romero and LeBas, 2020). A notorious criminal might be an antisocial element to the police, but to his society, he could be a local “Robinhood” helping them stand against the odds and, thus, become the voters’ choice.

### 2.3 Nature of Criminality

The nature of criminality reflected through the type of charges plays a vital role in defining the identity of a criminally accused politician (Asher and Novosad, 2018). Frequently, politicians and activists engaging in protests against the state for its actions and policies face minor criminal charges against them. These public tranquility violations, a regular expression of Indian politics, are qualitatively different from serious charges like murder, rape, and physical assault. Thus, a politician accused of minor charges cannot be compared to a politician charged with serious amounts of rape and murder. This study distinguishes politicians accused of serious crimes from politicians accused of any crime.

### 2.4 Weak Rule of Law Environment

A weak rule of law environment is likely to amplify the impact of criminally accused leaders. In states with weak institutions, seriously accused leaders are either well-networked mafias or connected to the mafias, directly or indirectly taking advantage of the weak law and order, and thereby creating an environment

where more crimes can be committed easily.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, these politicians may burnish their accusations to create voters' support in weak states where citizens, not trusting the state's weak institutions, may consider the seriously accused leaders as "Robinhood" or "Godfather" who would help them during socio-economic distress.<sup>10</sup> Evidence suggests that these scenarios are prevalent in India's institutionally weak states, such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, known as the BIMAROU states ([Prakash et al., 2019](#)). These states also have higher levels of corruption, enabling politicians to engage in unlawful activities for private gains ([Fisman et al., 2014](#)). We incorporate this aspect in our analysis by exploring heterogeneity based on the institutionally weak "BIMAROU" states versus other states.

## 2.5 Elected Politicians and Crime Outcomes

The main focus of our study is on crime outcomes that can be driven by the extent of crime occurrence and crime reporting – both of which can be influenced by politicians. Maintaining law and order within the state comes under the scope of the respective state governments in India. This system enables the MLAs to influence the crime environment and public administration responsible for crime control, including the police force and bureaucrats. The administrative machinery for maintaining law and order is primarily composed of non-politically recruited civil servants.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, politicians affiliated with the state government significantly influence the assignment of officers for specific positions, transfers across posts, and promotion prospects ([Iyer and Mani, 2012](#)). [Kim and Lee \(2022\)](#) show that senior police officers have shorter tenure in districts where criminally accused politicians are elected. Knowing the influence of the politicians, the top-level bureaucrats may avoid actions that clash with the interest of the local MLAs ([Nellis et al., 2016](#)). This is even more

applicable for subordinate police officers who are mostly recruited within the state ([Aneja and Ritadhi, 2021](#)).

In this context, the potential impact of MLAs on *crime occurrence* may differ from their impact on *crime reporting*, as the two processes are different ([Iyer et al., 2012](#)). Under the MLA's influence, the existing law-and-order environment of a constituency may determine whether a potential criminal commits a crime; it may also affect the victim's decision about reporting the crime to the police and whether the police indeed record the crime.

A criminally accused MLA may weaken the ability and effort of the police force to maintain law and order in the constituency, leading to a higher rate of crime occurrence. The incidence of crime may also vary depending on whether there is a nexus between the perpetrator and the MLA. Even if crime occurrence increases, the MLA may influence the law enforcement priorities of the police, reducing their responsiveness in recording and investigating the crime. Such behavior from the police may also discourage victims from reporting crimes. Thus, the overall effect of criminally accused leaders on the number of documented crimes is ambiguous. We may observe an overall negative effect if crime reporting is reduced or if potential criminals unconnected with the MLA exercise restraint. In contrast, an overall positive effect on documented crime, despite the possibility of under-reporting, is likely to imply that actual crime occurrence is increasing. We further reflect on this issue by analyzing different types of crime outcomes in [Section 6.2](#).

## 3 Data and Variables Description

### 3.1 Elections Data and Treatment Variables

The data on politicians comes from the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). In particular, we use the state assembly elections from 2005 to 2017 to construct candidate-level data.<sup>12</sup> ECI provides information about the election, including total candidates, name and position of all the candidates, total voters, total electorate size, total votes received by each candidate, and party affiliation details. On the other hand, ADR provides additional information available after the 2003 Supreme Court verdict, compiled from affidavits filed by candidates of the elections. This additional information includes education level, number of criminal cases, type of criminal charges, assets, liabilities, and other vital details of the candidates. Using the Indian Penal Code (IPC), we further identify the candidates with *serious* criminal accusations against them.<sup>13</sup> According to the IPC, serious offenses are defined as intention, preparation, attempt, and accomplishment of offenses against the human body.<sup>14</sup>

Our main treatment variables are based on whether a politician is criminally accused when they declare to stand in an election. There are two potential concerns with this variable. First, since the measure is based on self-reported information, criminal accusations may be under-reported. Second, some of the accused candidates will eventually not be convicted. However, note that both these possibilities will likely bias our estimates towards zero since they dilute the comparison between criminal and non-criminal politicians. Thus, our estimates are likely to be a lower bound of the true effect of criminal politicians on crime outcomes.

### 3.2 Crime Data and Outcome Variables

Data on crime comes from the *Crime in India* publication of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India from 2005 to 2018. This data consists of the number of crime cases reported by district, year, and crime categories by aggregating information from all the police stations. The flow of information starts when a cognizable offense gets recorded in a First Information Report (FIR) at a particular police station. FIR, recorded under one of the crime categories, refers to the written document prepared by police to register a complaint under various sections of the IPC. The cases recorded under all the crime categories at all police stations are compiled by the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB), where the first round of data validation is conducted. The second round of validation is conducted by the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB) after compiling data from all DCRBs before being handed over to NCRB.

Our main outcome variable, Total IPC Crime, is the sum of total crime cases reported by NCRB under all the crime categories and, therefore, reported under all the sections of IPC. We then categorize total crimes into different types of crimes using two approaches. In the first case, total crimes are categorized into violent crimes, property-related crimes, and other crimes.<sup>15</sup> In the second case, we consider crime against women (comprising violent crime against women and other crime against women), gender-neutral violent crimes, and other crimes.<sup>16</sup> Table 1 presents the summary statistics of the crime data showing the averages of the different categories of crime across all samples.



### 3.3 Combined Data

State assembly elections are conducted at the constituency level, whereas the crime data provided by NCRB in its annual publication is available at the district level, which is higher than the constituency level (i.e., constituencies are nested within districts). Therefore, we aggregate our constituency-level treatment variables at the district level; for example, the main treatment variable becomes the district-level fraction of criminally accused leaders.

Once a leader is elected, the electoral term lasts for five years. Hence, we identify leaders in power in a given year and create district-level annual panel data on politicians. We merge this data with NCRB data at the district level. Moreover, states follow asynchronous electoral cycles, i.e., they conduct assembly elections once every five years but at different times. Therefore, we restrict our sample from 2009 onward as this is the first year after the Supreme Court verdict when data on all the variables are available for all states. Before 2009, we had data on selected states, which cannot be referred to as fully representative data at the all-India level.<sup>17</sup> This yields a district-year panel of 5,134 observations. We present the summary statistics for the main variables using the district-year level data in Tables 1 and 2. We find that the average fraction of leaders accused of any crime is 0.3, while the average fraction of leaders accused of serious crimes is 0.17 in the sample.

## 4 Empirical Strategy

Our objective is to evaluate the effect of criminally accused leaders, as compared to leaders who are not criminally accused, on crime outcomes in the district. We also distinguish between leaders accused of *any* crime and leaders accused of

*serious* crimes. Hence, we present two sets of estimates, each capturing either the effect of leaders accused of any crime or those accused of serious crimes. As explained in the previous section, for each district in a given year, we aggregate the constituency-level information on political leaders and merge it with the data on the outcome variables. Thus, our main treatment variable is the fraction of leaders accused (or seriously accused) in a district for a given year.

In the baseline specification given by Equation (1), we postulate that leaders in period  $t$  would affect the crime environment such that the impact would show up in period  $(t + 1)$ .<sup>18</sup>

$$C_{ds(t+1)} = \alpha_{ds} + \delta_{st} + \beta A_{dst} + \epsilon_{ds(t+1)} \quad (1)$$

$C_{ds(t+1)}$  refers to the total crime count in-district  $d$  in state  $s$  at time  $(t + 1)$  and  $A_{dst}$  refers to the fraction of seats held by an accused politician in district  $d$  in state  $s$  at time  $t$ . The time-invariant unobserved factors are captured by district fixed effects,  $\alpha_{ds}$ , which also subsumes state-level heterogeneity. We control for time-varying unobserved factors at the state level by including state-specific year fixed effects,  $\delta_{st}$ , which also absorbs the overall year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the district level to allow for any possible correlation between observations from the same district.

Despite the inclusion of fixed effects to control for unobservables at various levels, our model cannot rule out the possibility of unobserved time-varying district-specific factors that are correlated with both  $A_{dt}$  and  $C_{d(t+1)}$ . For instance, a sudden surge in heinous crime incidents in some districts may have propelled the voters to look carefully at the criminal record of the candidates and decide who to vote for. Such unobservable district-level factors changing over time can make our treatment variable endogenous.

We utilize an instrumental variable approach to address the problem of endogeneity. The fraction of assembly constituency seats won by the accused politicians in a district is instrumented by the fraction of seats won by the accused politicians in close elections.<sup>19</sup> Following existing studies (Nellis and Siddiqui, 2018; Lahoti and Sahoo, 2020; Bhalotra et al., 2021), we define close elections as those where the margin of victory is less than 3 percent of total votes and consider alternative thresholds to define close elections as a robustness exercise. The instrument is constructed on the premise that there is no clear voters' preference in the constituency where an accused politician wins against a non-accused politician by a small margin or vice-versa. Thus, the constituency where an accused won in a close election is ex-ante comparable to the constituency where a non-accused won in a close election as the margin of victory is arbitrarily small, implying winning has happened by chance. As the outcome of the close election is random for each constituency, the average of the same at the district level can be considered random too. This quasi-experimental method of identification is extensively used in the literature to identify the impact of political leaders' identity on various economic and social outcomes (Clots-Figueras, 2011, 2012; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014; Bhalotra et al., 2014; Nellis and Siddiqui, 2018; Lahoti and Sahoo, 2020; Bhalotra et al., 2021). We further examine the assumptions of this empirical strategy in a later section.

The model for the two-stage least squares (2SLS) method employing this instrumental variable strategy is given below:

$$C_{ds(t+1)} = \alpha_{ds} + \delta_{st} + \beta A_{dst} + \gamma TC_{dst} + \sum_{j=1}^J \mu_j I_{jdst} + \sum_{j=1}^J \pi_j I_{jdst} \times F(M_{jdst}) + \epsilon_{ds(t+1)} \quad (2)$$

$$A_{dst} = \omega_{ds} + \zeta_{st} + \lambda AC_{dst} + \tau TC_{dst} + \sum_{j=1}^J \nu_j I_{jdst} + \sum_{j=1}^J \sigma_j I_{jdst} \times F(M_{jdst}) + \eta_{dst} \quad (3)$$

$A_{dst}$  referring to the fraction of constituencies in the district where an accused

politician has won the election against a non-accused politician is the main variable of interest and potentially endogenous. In the first stage presented by Equation (3),  $A_{dst}$  is predicted by the instrument  $AC_{dst}$ , i.e., the fraction of constituencies in the district where an accused politician has won against a non-accused politician in a close election.

While we argue that the outcome of a close election is random, we acknowledge that the presence of a close election itself may not be random. For instance, a close election between the top two candidates who differ in their criminality status can depend on the number of accused and non-accused candidates in the district. Further, the incidence of close elections may also reflect the competitiveness in the political environment, which may affect the outcome variable. To address this, we include the fraction of close elections between accused and non-accused candidates in the district,  $TC_{dst}$ , as an additional control variable.<sup>20</sup> We also control for  $I_{jdst}$ , which is a dummy variable indicating the existence of an election between an accused politician versus a non-accused politician in the  $j$ -th constituency of a district.  $F(M_{jdst})$  refers to a polynomial function of the vote-margin ( $M_{jdst}$ ) between an accused and a non-accused candidate. Similar to a regression discontinuity design, we include the polynomial function of the vote margin whenever there is an election between an accused and a non-accused politician, as given by the interaction between  $I_{jdst}$  and  $F(M_{jdst})$ . We consider a linear function in the main regression and later show robustness considering the quadratic and cubic functions of the vote margin.

This empirical strategy takes advantage of the “first-past-the-post” voting system, where the probability of winning is a function of the vote margin. If we consider the top two candidates, the probability that a given candidate wins is a function of the difference in vote share between the candidate and their competitor. This probability changes discontinuously at the point where the

difference in vote share (or vote margin) is zero, i.e., one needs to have a higher vote share than their competitor to become a winner. Considering elections where the top two candidates are an accused and a non-accused, in an arbitrarily small neighborhood around the discontinuity, the winner is determined by chance. Therefore, the discontinuous change in winning probability in a close election is similar to the random assignment of treatment. In the spirit of a fuzzy regression discontinuity design, our instrumental variable strategy aggregates these constituency-specific discontinuities to exploit quasi-random variation in the treatment at the district level.

## **5 Validity of the Identification Strategy**

We conduct various tests to check for the instrument's validity and close-election-related assumptions. For brevity and considering the main results of our study presented in the subsequent sections, we show the results of these tests mostly for elections involving seriously accused candidates in this section. However, the same tests show similar patterns for elections involving leaders accused of any crime.

### **5.1 Validity of the Instrument**

To validate that our instrument is a good predictor of the endogenous variable, we show the first stage regression results in Table 3. Panel A presents the effect of leaders accused of any crime; thus, the endogenous variable – a fraction of seats won by accused candidates – is instrumented by the fraction of seats won by accused candidates in close elections between accused and non-accused candidates. Similarly, Panel B shows the effect of leaders accused of serious

crimes; hence, the fraction of seats won by seriously accused candidates is instrumented by the fraction of seats won by seriously accused candidates in close elections between seriously accused and non-seriously accused or non-accused candidates. In both the panels, the coefficient of the instrumental variable is statistically significant at a 1 percent level in full and sub-samples.<sup>21</sup> A high first-stage F-statistics, reported along with 2SLS result in Table 3, further validates the relevance of our instrument.

In addition, we show a graphical illustration of the first stage result by plotting district-level proportions of seriously accused leaders against the victory margin between the accused and their opponent in each constituency. Figure 1, Figure A.1, and Figure A.2 show the first stage illustration for all states, BIMAROU states, and Non-BIMAROU states, respectively. We see a significant and discontinuous rise in the proportion of seriously accused leaders in the district when a seriously accused candidate wins a close election.

## 5.2 Validity of Close Election Related Assumption

We use the McCrary test (McCrary, 2008) to verify the continuity of the density of the vote margin around the threshold, i.e., when the vote margin is zero, to ensure no manipulation of outcomes of close elections. Figure 2, Figure A.3 and Figure A.4 plot the density of vote margin for the different samples; we find no significant difference in the density on either side of the threshold.

We also show continuity checks for various observable constituency and leader-specific characteristics. For the underlying regression discontinuity design to be valid, pre-determined constituency-level characteristics should not change at the threshold. Besides, to isolate the effect of a leader's criminality from other characteristics, we should not find any discontinuous change in other

characteristics of leaders at the cutoff. Figure 3 considers a range of observable constituency and leader-specific characteristics such as constituency type, total turnout in the election, total voters in the election, electorate size, leader's gender, age, assets, incumbency status, education, party affiliation, and ruling party affiliation. The same tests for the two sub-samples are shown in Figures A.5 and A.6. The graphical evidence suggests no significant jump in these variables at the threshold.

To further examine this point, we conduct a balance test comparing the average constituency and candidate level characteristics between constituencies where seriously accused candidates won and constituencies where they lost in close elections. Panel A of Table A.1 shows that all the pre-determined constituency level characteristics are balanced, except that in BIMAROU states, whether the constituency was reserved for disadvantaged caste candidates shows a difference significant at the 10 percent level. To investigate this issue further, we check the constituencies' reservation status for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) separately. We find that the difference is emanating from ST constituencies – the proportion of constituencies reserved for ST is 0.01 when a seriously accused candidate has won, while it is 0.06 when they have lost, and this difference is significant at the 10 percent level. Note that among the 212 constituencies with close elections in BIMAROU states, only 3.3 percent, i.e., 7 constituencies, are reserved for ST. Since this is such a low number, we believe that the imbalance in the distribution of these constituencies is not a concern for the validity of the RDD. Nevertheless, to ensure that the effect of leaders' criminality is not confounded by the reservation status of the constituency, we control for the reservation status and show that our results are robust.

Panel B of Table A.1 shows the balance test for the leaders' individual characteristics such as gender, age, education level, wealth, affiliation to the state

ruling party, incumbency status, and the number of votes received. Unlike pre-determined constituency characteristics, the winners' characteristics are determined along with the outcome of the election; hence, an imbalance in these ex-post measures does not necessarily refute the validity of the RDD. However, an imbalance in winners' characteristics other than criminality may imply that the effects of criminality and these other characteristics are bundled. Indeed, the balance table shows that some individual characteristics differ significantly in constituencies where a seriously accused candidate won versus lost in close elections. Hence, to separate out the effect of criminality, we control for all the characteristics that are not balanced in any of the sub-samples. The impact of a leader's criminality remains unchanged after controlling for these variables, as discussed in detail in Section 7.2.

To provide additional evidence supporting the quasi-randomness of the outcome of close elections, we regress a dummy variable indicating whether a seriously accused candidate won in a close election on various election and district-specific characteristics. Table A.2 shows that the probability of a seriously accused candidate winning in a close election is not significantly predicted by most of these variables, ruling out the strategic influence or advantage of specific political parties in the election. A test for the joint significance of these predictors also suggests no significant association. We also compare various district-level characteristics between districts with more and less numbers of seriously accused winners in close elections and find that they are comparable (Table A.3).



## 6 Main Results

### 6.1 Effect on Total Crimes

We present the main results of our study in Table 3, after estimating the 2SLS model given by Equations (2) and (3). Panel A shows the results where the leader is accused of *any crime*. For the sample with all states (column 1), the effect of a criminally accused leader on crime is positive but statistically insignificant. Column 2 shows the result for BIMAROU states, where the estimate is statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Considering the magnitude, if the fraction of constituencies with criminally accused leaders in the district increases from 0 to 1, the number of crime cases rises by approximately 636 per year, around 15 percent of the mean outcome for BIMAROU states. It also implies that a rise in the fraction of criminally accused leaders by one SD (0.28) leads to a 0.05 SD increase in total crimes, equivalent to a 4.3 percent rise over the mean of total crimes reported yearly.

Similarly, panel B shows the results considering leaders accused of serious crimes. Again, there is no statistically significant impact in the overall sample (column 1). However, in BIMAROU states, the impact is 1055 (25 percent of the mean outcome) and is statistically significant at a 5 percent level. This estimate indicates that a ten percentage point increase in the fraction of seriously accused leaders in a district results in 106 additional crime cases per year. The equivalent effect due to leaders accused of any crime is around 64; thus, our findings suggest that electing a seriously accused leader compared to a leader accused of any crime poses a bigger threat to society in terms of the crime environment, specifically in states with weaker institutions. The estimate also implies that one SD (0.23) increase in the proportion of seriously accused leaders results in a 0.07 SD increase in total crimes, equivalent to a 5.8 percent rise over the yearly av-

erage crime in the BIMAROU states. In non-BIMAROU states, the estimate is negative but statistically not distinguishable from zero at the conventional significance levels.

The findings suggest that the nature of criminal accusations and the strength of state-level institutions matter.<sup>22</sup> We elaborate on these angles in the following discussion. First, we consider the finding that the effects are significant only in BIMAROU states, i.e., states with weaker institutions, indicating potential heterogeneity in the effect of criminal politicians on crime outcomes. While interpreting this result, a concern is whether the lack of significant effect in non-BIMAROU states is driven by fewer criminally accused politicians being in power in these states; this might change the interpretation of the results to heterogeneity in treatment intensity rather than the heterogeneous effect of the treatment. This angle is important because, although criminally accused leaders exist in both types of states, the proportion of such leaders is higher in BIMAROU states, as shown by the summary statistics in Table 2. For example, the fraction of seats won by politicians accused of any (serious) crime is 36 (24) percent in BIMAROU states, while it is 27 (14) percent in non-BIMAROU states. One possibility is that fewer accused leaders might result in lower variation in the treatment variable, posing a challenge to identifying the impact. However, we argue this is not the case because the first-stage regressions show the instrument to be adequately strong in both the sub-samples.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the results show the same state-wise patterns in a battery of robustness tests, including a sharp RDD, presented in a later section. As elaborated in Section 7.1, the sharp RDD restricts the sample to districts with a single close election involving seriously accused candidates and their opponents in both BIMAROU and non-BIMAROU states and finds significant impact only in BIMAROU states consistent with the main results. These analyses support an alternative possibility

that the existence of a larger number of criminally accused leaders in BIMAROU states is itself one of the factors that characterize the quality of institutions, creating an environment with weak rule of law that catalyzes the impact of these politicians.

Turning to the nature of criminality, in the main specification, seriously accused politicians have been compared with their counterparts, including non-seriously accused and non-accused politicians. The findings may be different if we compared seriously accused with non-accused politicians. To check this, we include two treatment variables, i.e., the fraction of seriously accused leaders and the fraction of non-seriously accused leaders, in the same specification and use two instruments based on the corresponding close election outcomes. Results presented in Table A.5 show a significant impact of seriously accused leaders but no significant impact of the non-seriously accused leaders in comparison with non-accused leaders. Another potential concern is that if seriously accused candidates also have more criminal cases registered against them, the effect of the nature of criminality may be confounded with the number of cases. To address this concern, we utilize the same empirical framework to estimate the effect of an alternative type of leaders who are accused of a high number (above median) of crimes irrespective of the nature of the crime.<sup>24</sup> Results from Table A.6 show that such leaders do not have any effect on crime outcomes in the district. This finding helps us establish that the nature of criminality rather than the number of cases matters in this context. Therefore, for the remaining results, we focus on leaders accused of serious crimes.<sup>25</sup>

## 6.2 Effect on Different Categories of Crime

Next, we explore the effect of seriously accused leaders on different types of crimes. As discussed in Section 3.2, we follow two approaches to categorize

crimes. First, we consider the broad categories of violent crimes, property-related crimes, and the remaining crimes (Bindler and Hjalmarsson, 2021). The second categorization is based on whether a crime is against women or gender-neutral (Iyer et al., 2012).<sup>26</sup>

Apart from understanding what kind of crimes are affected by the political leaders' criminality, this analysis helps us partially address the concern of reporting bias in crime outcomes. A common problem encountered by studies using administrative data on crime is that they may capture both crime *incidence* and *reporting* (Soares, 2004; Iyer et al., 2012; Prasad, 2012; Bindler and Hjalmarsson, 2021).<sup>27</sup> We discussed in Section 2.5 that a criminally accused MLA might suppress crime reporting; therefore, our estimates may be a lower bound of the true effect on crime occurrence. The existing literature has attempted to measure the impact on crime incidence by focusing on specific types of crimes where the reporting bias is likely to be small. Especially, the most serious violent offenses such as homicides are considered to have negligible reporting bias (Iyer et al., 2012; Prasad, 2012; Aneja and Ritadhi, 2021; Bindler and Hjalmarsson, 2021). Following the literature, we separately analyze homicides (including murders and culpable homicides) and other violent crimes. Table 4 shows no significant impact of seriously accused leaders on overall violent crimes, although the effect on homicides is significant and positive in BIMAROU states. The magnitude of the coefficient implies that one SD increase in the fraction of seriously accused leaders results in a 0.08 SD increase in homicides per year; this effect is equivalent to a 6.25 percent increase over the yearly average number of reported homicides. We do not find a statistically significant effect on other violent crimes or property crimes, while the effect on other crimes is significant and positive in BIMAROU states. The finding on homicides is consistent with the hypothesis that seriously accused leaders deteriorate law and order, resulting in higher crime

*incidence* in institutionally weaker states. However, we cannot completely rule out the impact on crime *reporting*, as the null effect on property crimes might be due to reporting being suppressed while crime occurrence rises.

Results presented in Table 5 show that the impact of seriously accused leaders on crime against women is significant in the overall sample and BIMAROU states. Consistent with the finding on total crimes, the effect is more pronounced in BIMAROU states. A standard deviation increase in the fraction of seriously accused leaders results in around 47 additional crimes against women, implying an effect size of almost 0.14 SD or 12.6 percent of the mean number of crimes against women recorded per year. Further disaggregating the outcome variables, we find that both violent and other crimes against women significantly increase when a seriously accused politician is in power. The magnitude of the impact on violent crimes against women is 13 SD (11 percent over mean), and on other crimes against women is 0.11 SD (15 percent over mean) in BIMAROU states. We do not find any significant effect on gender-neutral violent crimes. Considering the remaining crimes categorized as other crimes, we find a significant and positive impact of seriously accused leaders only in BIMAROU states.

How do our estimated effects compare with the effect size found by other related studies? Iyer et al. (2012) show that the Indian policy of women's political reservation, by encouraging higher reporting of gender-related crimes, increases the reported crimes against women by 46 percent, with violent crimes against women going up by 13-23 percent. Chemin (2012) finds a 20-30 percent increase in various types of violent crimes and crimes against women when a criminally accused politician is elected. Aneja and Ritadhi (2021) find that one SD increase in the representation of low-caste political parties in the state leads to around 3.7 percent decrease in low-caste murder rates. Our analysis differs from these studies in terms of context, methodology, and data. Nevertheless,

with these studies, our estimated effects due to seriously accused leaders are largely comparable, though somewhat smaller in magnitude for similar crime outcomes.

## 7 Robustness Analysis

We test the sensitivity of our results by adopting a sharp RDD and considering various alternative specifications of the empirical model.

### 7.1 Analysis Using Sharp Regression Discontinuity Design

In this section, we follow [Clots-Figueras \(2012\)](#) and employ a sharp regression discontinuity design (RDD) considering districts with a single close election between a seriously accused and a non-seriously accused or non-accused candidate. The details of this method is described in Online Appendix [B](#). The result of the sharp RDD analysis is reported in Table [6](#). Columns 1, 3, and 5 present results from specifications without controls, while columns 2, 4, and 6 present results after controlling for state and year fixed effects. Similar to our main analysis, sharp RD results suggest no significant impact of electing a seriously accused politician on crime outcome for the full sample; however, the impact is positive and significant for BIMAROU states across all regressions. The effect is negative but statistically not significant for non-BIMAROU states.<sup>28</sup>

To compare the magnitude of the estimate from the sharp RDD with our main result, we consider that, on average, each district has around ten constituencies. Thus, an additional constituency with a seriously accused leader would imply around a ten percentage point increase in the district-level proportion of seriously accused leaders. The first row of Table [6](#) shows that having an

additional seriously accused leader in a district, i.e., a ten percentage point increase in the fraction of seriously accused leaders in a district results in around 176 more crime cases per year in the BIMAROU states. Hence, this impact is slightly higher than the 2SLS result, where the equivalent effect size was 106. Nevertheless, the results are broadly comparable, given that the sharp RDD is applied only to a subset of districts with a single close election involving the seriously accused candidates.

## 7.2 Controlling for Correlated Characteristics

The analysis presented in Section 5.2 revealed that some of the individual characteristics of the leader and the reservation status of the constituency significantly change when a seriously accused leader wins versus loses in close elections. We presented additional analysis and argued that this is not a concern with respect to the validity of the RDD, although this raises the possibility that our estimates are capturing the effect of criminality bundled with these other covariates. Therefore, to ensure that we separate out the effect of criminality, we control for all the following covariates that showed a significant difference in the balance test: proportion of female leaders, average age of leaders, average education level of leaders, proportion of leaders affiliated with the ruling party, average wealth of leaders, proportion of leaders who are incumbents, and the proportion of reserved constituencies in the district. Table 7 presents both 2SLS (Panel A) and reduced form (Panel B) estimates from this augmented model.<sup>29</sup> Similar to our main results, the estimates are significant only for BIMAROU sample. Also, they remain statistically significant at 5 percent level and comparable in magnitude with our main results. The slight decline in the point estimates is potentially negligible, as the 2SLS estimate from this revised model indicates an effect size of 24.52 percent over the mean outcome, as opposed to 25.41 percent

found in the main results presented in Table 3.<sup>30</sup> In other words, a one standard deviation increase in the proportion of seriously accused leaders results in 5.64 percent increase in total crimes according to this model, as opposed to 5.84 percent found in our main model.

### 7.3 Additional Robustness Analysis

**Varying Degrees of Polynomials in Vote Margins:** While our main results are based on a specification that controls for a linear function of vote-margin, and as a robustness exercise, we consider the quadratic and cubic polynomial functions of margin. Similar to our main results, the effect remains significant in the BIMAROU states (Table A.12).

**Alternative Definitions of Close Election:** Our main specification is based on close elections where the margin of victory is less than 3 percent. Alternatively, we consider bandwidths of 1, 5, 7, 9, and 11 percent vote margin and find that the results remain significant for BIMAROU states in all the cases (Table A.13).

**Extreme Values and Alternate Dependent Variable:** Removing the top and bottom one percentile data on the outcome variable for each sub-sample does not perturb our main results (Table A.14). The logarithm of total crimes as an alternative dependent variable also yields the main result qualitatively unchanged and marginally significant, with a p-value of 0.16 (Table A.14).

**Placebo Test Considering Lagged Outcomes:** We consider the lagged values of total crime as dependent variables while estimating the effect of leaders. This is a falsification test because a seriously accused leader in office in the current period cannot affect the past crime environment. Indeed, there is no significant effect of seriously accused leaders in a district in time  $t$  on crime outcomes



in  $(t - 1)$ ,  $(t - 2)$ ,  $(t - 3)$ , and  $(t - 4)$  (Table A.15).

## 8 Welfare Implications

Our analysis establishes the detrimental impact of criminally accused politicians on crime outcomes. An increase in crime in response to electing a criminally accused politician may translate into a reduction in economic activities; one measure of economic activities is individuals' labor force participation. Therefore, we estimate the effect of criminally accused leaders on working-age individuals' labor force participation using household survey data collected by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).<sup>31</sup> Existing studies have shown that an increase in crime in the locality has a significant negative impact on female labor force participation (Mishra et al., 2021), as the possibility of sexual assaults discourages women from seeking employment outside their home (Chakraborty et al., 2018; Borker, 2021; Siddique, 2022). Given our previous findings on crime against women, we postulate that electing politicians accused of serious crimes is likely to have a negative and larger impact on females compared to males.

Results presented in Table 8 support our hypothesis – there is a negative and significant effect of seriously accused leaders on individuals' labor force participation in the overall sample, but this impact is statistically significant only for females with a larger magnitude (-0.144) compared to males (-0.015). The magnitude of the estimate implies that a standard deviation increase in the fraction of seriously accused leaders causes female labor force participation to decline by 3.3 percentage points, or 10.8 percent over the mean.<sup>32</sup>

The extant literature has highlighted the instrumental role of women's labor market participation in promoting economic growth and development (Bandiera and Natraj, 2013; Klasen, 2018). The aggregate income loss attributable to the

gender gap in labor force participation has been estimated to be substantial, by studies such as [Esteve-Volart \(2009\)](#) using state-level panel data and [Cuberes and Teignier \(2016\)](#) calibrating a general equilibrium model of occupational choice to specific country contexts. Therefore, the negative impact on female labor force participation can plausibly lead to a significant welfare loss.<sup>33</sup>

A related study by [Prakash et al. \(2019\)](#) finds that narrowly electing a criminally accused politician negatively affects the GDP growth rate by 2.4 percentage points. Our analysis highlights additional evidence on the channels through which such politicians can affect economic outcomes. Our main results show that seriously accused leaders increase crimes in their constituencies; a rise in crimes can have negative consequences for economic performance, as found in the literature ([Pinotti, 2015](#)). Moreover, our finding on female labor force participation suggests another mechanism through which electing criminally accused leaders can reduce socioeconomic welfare.

## 9 Discussion

The existing literature exploring the influence of politicians on development outcomes has grappled with identifying the precise mechanisms through which the impacts may play out. In the context of our analysis, it is hard to establish whether the negative impact on economic welfare leads to increased crime or the worsening of the crime environment results in an economic loss. Since these outcomes are correlated and can be simultaneously influenced by the political leader, we cannot disentangle the exact direction of the mechanisms.

On the one hand, existing evidence suggests that criminally accused leaders exert lower efforts, measured by their attendance in the parliament, participation in parliamentary debates, and utilization of their discretionary funds

(Gehring et al., 2019). A lack of effort by the leader may result in lower prosperity of the region they represent, reflected by a fall in average consumption of the citizens, especially the marginalized groups (Chemin, 2012), and lower GDP growth rate (Prakash et al., 2019). A rise in poverty and inequality due to these negative economic impacts may translate into a higher incidence of crime (Becker, 1968; Kelly, 2000).

On the other hand, criminally accused leaders can directly affect crime outcomes by deteriorating law and order due to their influence on the police officers (Kim and Lee, 2022) and judiciary (Poblete-Cazenave, 2023). In section 2.5, we have discussed how MLAs can influence the functioning of the bureaucracy and the police force, as documented by existing studies (Iyer and Mani, 2012; Kim and Lee, 2022). Moreover, Poblete-Cazenave (2023) finds that criminal politicians from the ruling party receive favorable outcomes in the court when they hold office, highlighting their power to manipulate prosecutors and police officers. Another direct channel through which criminally accused leaders can affect crimes is their nexus with the criminal gangs (Paoli, 2014; Vaishnav, 2017). These mechanisms are likely at play in explaining our findings that seriously accused leaders increase crime outcomes.

## 10 Conclusion

Different strands of literature have recognized the types of costs imposed by criminally accused leaders in society. In this paper, we estimate the impact of criminally accused leaders on the crime environment of the district. In particular, we explore the impact of seriously accused leaders in weak states where the impact is ex-ante ambiguous due to two contrasting views of the crime literature. The first view suggests that criminally accused leaders are expected to

increase criminal cases in the weak states due to their *nexus* with other criminals in the area. However, the second view suggests that seriously accused leaders support the local voting population who consider them their *godfathers*, helping them in the absence of strong institutions. We find that criminally accused leaders, including those accused of serious crimes, lead to more criminal cases in the district. The effect is larger when we consider seriously accused leaders. These leaders also increase crimes against women and hamper female labor force participation in their constituencies. These results indicate that politicians accused of serious crimes impose a significant loss in socioeconomic welfare when elected. Future research should attempt to deeply understand why such leaders get elected despite these large costs to society.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Pakistani leaders are accused of rape, and Brazilian leaders are accused of ordering murders, for example, see [BBC News \(2020\)](#); [Motta et al. \(2017\)](#).

<sup>2</sup>See [Rajagopal \(2018\)](#).

<sup>3</sup>For example, in the 2020 Bihar State Assembly elections in India, 68 percent of elected candidates possessed a criminal history, with surprisingly 75 percent of them accused of serious crimes ([Kumar, 2018](#)).

<sup>4</sup>BIMAROU is a term for grouping the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. These states have demonstrated weaker social and economic outcomes, a weak rule of law, and higher corruption ([Fisman et al., 2014](#); [Prakash et al., 2019](#)).

<sup>5</sup>Relatedly, the Supreme Court of India made suggestions to the Parliament about making a law or policy to deal with seriously accused leaders ([Rajagopal, 2018](#)); our findings affirm that this suggestion is more relevant for states with weaker institutions.

<sup>6</sup>For details see Table 1.

<sup>7</sup>These elections follow the "first past the post" voting system where the candidate who receives the majority votes wins.

<sup>8</sup>Criminal candidates refer to politicians who are charged in any criminal case, and the legal system has taken cognizance against them. They have not yet been conclusively proven guilty by a court of law.

<sup>9</sup>This phenomenon is popularly known as "Mafia Raj" or "Jungle Raj", characterized by the representation and influence of gangster politicians ([Subramanian, 2016](#); [Rashid, 2020](#); [The Print, 2020](#)).

<sup>10</sup>Approximately 25% of the elections in BIMAROU states are won by seriously accused politicians with the analogous figure of 16% in non-BIMAROU states.

<sup>11</sup>At the district level, the police force is headed by the Commissioner of Police (CP) or by the Superintendent of Police (SP) working with the District Magistrate (DM). These positions are part of the prestigious Indian Police Service (IPS) or Indian Administrative Service (IAS), where recruitment is done through a competitive examination.

<sup>12</sup>Additionally, to identify the incumbents, we utilize candidate-level data from the previous elections. We sourced these data from the replication files of [Jensenius \(2016\)](#).

<sup>13</sup>Serious crimes refer to all the crimes reported under chapter 16 and chapter 22 of the Indian Penal Code. Chapter 16, consisting of sections 299 to 377 of IPC, refers to all the offenses against the human body, and chapter 22, consisting of sections 503 to 510 of IPC, refers to all the offenses reported under criminal intimidation, insult, and annoyance.

<sup>14</sup>For instance, life threat given by anonymous communication, which comes under section 507, is part of chapter 22 and homicide committed, which comes under section 299, is part of chapter 16.

<sup>15</sup>Violent crimes include murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, rape, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, dowry death, molestation, and causing death due to negligence. Property crimes include robbery, dacoity, preparing for dacoity, burglary, theft, breach of trust regarding property, cheating, counterfeiting, and arson. Other crimes include eve-teasing, cruelty by husband/relatives, human trafficking, and other IPC crimes.

<sup>16</sup>Crimes against women include violent crime against women (rape, molestation, and dowry death) and other crimes against women (cruelty by husband/relatives and eve-teasing). Gender-neutral violent crimes include murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, and causing death due to negligence. We include all the remaining crimes in a separate group (other crimes).

<sup>17</sup>This is because data on criminality and related candidate characteristics are available from the first election that took place after the Supreme Court verdict implemented from 2004. Since election cycles are five years and asynchronous across the states, the first election post-2004 for a given state can be between 2004 and 2009. However, we get qualitatively similar results even if we include the pre-2009 data.

<sup>18</sup>We capture the immediate impact of an accused leader by considering crime outcomes in the next period ( $t + 1$ ). This specification is similar to other studies such as [Prakash et al. \(2019\)](#) investigating the effect of criminally accused leaders on economic growth. We find qualitatively similar results if we consider crime outcomes at ( $t + 2$ ).

<sup>19</sup>Close elections are defined as elections where the vote margin between the top two candidates, i.e., the winner and the runner-up, in a constituency is arbitrarily small.

<sup>20</sup>This also ensures that the exclusion criterion is met, as after controlling for a fraction of close elections in the district, the instrument ( $AC_{dst}$ ) can affect the outcome only through the overall fraction of accused leaders in the district ( $A_{dst}$ ).

<sup>21</sup>The coefficient of the instrument is statistically indistinguishable from 1, which is expected because an additional criminally accused leader winning a close election also implies an additional criminally accused leader in the district. However, the coefficient is not exactly one because the fraction of criminally accused leaders is also determined by some criminally accused leaders winning a non-close election in the district.

<sup>22</sup>Instead of classifying the BIMAROU states as institutionally weaker states, we also adopt an alternative definition by segregating states based on Human Development Index (HDI). We find that the impact of seriously accused leaders on crime is driven by states in the lowest tercile of HDI, which is consistent with the BIMAROU classification (Table A.4).

<sup>23</sup>Another related hypothesis is that if the dose-response function is non-linear (convex, for example), the effects may show up only at higher levels of treatment. However, we investigate nonlinearity by including a quadratic function of the share of criminally accused politicians and do not find any evidence supporting non-linear effects (results not presented).

<sup>24</sup>Specifically, the fraction of “highly accused” leaders is instrumented by the fraction of highly accused leaders who won in close elections against non-highly accused/non-accused leaders.

<sup>25</sup>We also estimate the reduced form regression for the effect of seriously accused leaders on crimes. As expected, the impact is significant only in BIMAROU states. Table A.8 shows this result along with the OLS estimates (Table A.7).

<sup>26</sup>For further details on which crimes are included in each category, refer to footnotes 15 and 16 in Section 3.2. For each type of categorization, we aggregate all the remaining crimes in the “other” category, which is slightly different from the category of “Other IPC crimes” reported by NCRB in its annual publication “Crime in India”. Other IPC crimes reported by NCRB are a subset of Other Crimes reported by us. Our panel data must have consistent crime categories over the years; therefore, we deviate from the NCRB categories that are not always consistently reported.

<sup>27</sup>In contrast, Amaral et al. (2023) use a novel technique to measure actual sexual harassment in public space (this is observed by enumerators, hence is not biased by reporting concerns) and compare that to reported sexual harassment. However, such measures are usually not available

in any secondary dataset.

<sup>28</sup>The graphical representation of the sharp RD result is provided in Figure A.7. It plots the average crime count in a district against the vote margin, aggregated over bins with width of 0.5 percentage points. The curves are local linear regression fitted separately on the left and right side of the cutoff using triangular kernel and optimal bandwidth suggested by (Imbens and Kalyanaraman, 2012). A clear jump in the average crime cases at the cutoff zero can be seen only in the BIMAROU sub-sample.

<sup>29</sup>Note that here we follow the same identification strategy as the main analysis, i.e., the proportion of seriously accused leaders is instrumented by the proportion of seriously accused leaders who won in close elections.

<sup>30</sup>The reduced form estimate from this augmented specification implies an effect size of 22.62 percent over the mean of total crime, which is marginally lower than 24.35 percent found in the main model without the additional controls.

<sup>31</sup>We consider individual-level data on labor supply (for working-age individuals in the age group of 25-55 years) using multiple rounds of household survey data collected by NSSO. Specifically, we use the Employment and Unemployment Surveys from 2007-08, 2009-10, 2011-12, and comparable Periodic Labour Force Survey data from 2017-18 and 2018-19. We follow the standard NSSO approach and define a binary indicator of whether an individual participated in the labor force, based on the activities conducted in the week preceding the date of survey. This data on labor force participation is matched with information on politicians (lagged by one year) at the district-year level, and the same instrumental variable strategy discussed in Section 4 is applied.

<sup>32</sup>Note that male labor force participation rate is almost universal at 96.5 percent as they are considered the primary earners in the Indian society; hence their labor supply may be inflexible and not respond to the prevailing crime environment in the locality. On the other hand, female labor force participation rate is much lower at 30.6 percent, and safety concerns are likely to impact their labor supply decisions. Table A.16 shows that the effects are slightly more prominent for females in BIMAROU states rather than non-BIMAROU states, which is consistent with our main results on crime outcomes. There is some loss in precision of the estimates when we split the sample.

<sup>33</sup>Cuberes and Teignier (2016) find that the prevailing gender gap in labor force participation



in India can potentially lead to a total income loss of around 30 percent. Therefore, a 10.8 percent fall with respect to the current average level of women's labor force participation (the impact of criminally accused leaders estimated in our analysis) is likely to have a significant impact on aggregate income.

## References

- Acemoglu, D., G. De Feo, and G. D. De Luca (2020). Weak states: Causes and consequences of the sicilian mafia. *The Review of Economic Studies* 87(2), 537–581.
- Afridi, F., T. Dinkelman, and K. Mahajan (2018). Why are fewer married women joining the work force in rural india? a decomposition analysis over two decades. *Journal of Population Economics* 31, 783–818.
- Aidt, T. S., M. A. Golden, and D. Tiwari (2011). Incumbents and criminals in the indian national legislature.
- Amaral, S., G. Borker, N. Fiala, A. Kumar, N. Prakash, and M. M. Sviatschi (2023). Sexual harassment in public spaces and police patrols: Experimental evidence from urban india. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Aneja, A. and S. Ritadhi (2021). How representation reduces minority criminal victimization: Evidence from scheduled castes in india. *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*.
- Asher, S. and P. Novosad (2018). Rent-seeking and criminal politicians: Evidence from mining booms. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 1–44.
- Bandiera, O. and A. Natraj (2013). Does gender inequality hinder development and economic growth? evidence and policy implications. *The World Bank Research Observer* 28(1), 2–21.
- Banerjee, A., D. P. Green, J. McManus, and R. Pande (2014). Are poor voters indifferent to whether elected leaders are criminal or corrupt? a vignette experiment in rural india. *Political Communication* 31(3), 391–407.

- BBC News (August 24, 2020). Flordelis de souza: Brazilian mp accused of ordering husband's murder. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-53895457>.
- Becker, G. S. (1968). Crime and punishment: An economic approach. *Journal of political economy* 76(2), 169–217.
- Berenschot, W. (2011). On the usefulness of goonda s in indian politics: 'moneypower' and 'musclepower' in a gujarati locality. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 34(2), 255–275.
- Bhalotra, S. and I. Clots-Figueras (2014). Health and the political agency of women. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 6(2), 164–97.
- Bhalotra, S., I. Clots-Figueras, G. Cassan, and L. Iyer (2014). Religion, politician identity and development outcomes: Evidence from india. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 104, 4–17.
- Bhalotra, S., I. Clots-Figueras, and L. Iyer (2021). Religion and abortion: The role of politician identity. *Journal of Development Economics* 153, 102746.
- Bindler, A. and R. Hjalmarsson (2021). The impact of the first professional police forces on crime. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 19(6), 3063–3103.
- Blattman, C., G. Duncan, B. Lessing, and S. Tobon (2022). State-building on the margin: An urban experiment in medellín. *SocArXiv Version - 18 Jan 2022*.
- Blattman, C., B. Lessing, S. Tobon, and G. Duncan (2022). Gang rule: Understanding and countering criminal governance. *SocArXiv Version - 5 Feb 2022*.
- Borker, G. (2021). *Safety first: Perceived risk of street harassment and educational choices of women*. World Bank Washington, DC, USA.

- Brown, G. D. (2017). McDonnell and the criminalization of politics. *Va. J. Crim. L.* 5, 1.
- Calonico, S., M. D. Cattaneo, and R. Titiunik (2014). Robust nonparametric confidence intervals for regression-discontinuity designs. *Econometrica* 82(6), 2295–2326.
- Chakraborty, T., A. Mukherjee, S. R. Rachapalli, and S. Saha (2018). Stigma of sexual violence and women's decision to work. *World Development* 103, 226–238.
- Chauchard, S. (2014). Is 'ethnic politics' responsible for 'criminal politics'? a vignette-experiment in north india. *Unpublished paper*.
- Chemin, M. (2012). Welfare effects of criminal politicians: a discontinuity-based approach. *The Journal of Law and Economics* 55(3), 667–690.
- Cheng, C.-Y. and J. Urpelainen (2019). Criminal politicians and socioeconomic development: Evidence from rural india. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 54(4), 501–527.
- Clots-Figueras, I. (2011). Women in politics: Evidence from the indian states. *Journal of Public Economics* 95(7-8), 664–690.
- Clots-Figueras, I. (2012). Are female leaders good for education? evidence from india. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 4(1), 212–44.
- Cuberes, D. and M. Teignier (2016). Aggregate effects of gender gaps in the labor market: A quantitative estimate. *Journal of human capital* 10(1), 1–32.
- De Paola, M., V. Scoppa, and R. Lombardo (2010). Can gender quotas break down negative stereotypes? evidence from changes in electoral rules. *Journal of Public Economics* 94(5-6), 344–353.

- Dutta, B. and P. Gupta (2014). How indian voters respond to candidates with criminal charges: Evidence from the 2009 lok sabha elections. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43–51.
- Eggers, A. C., A. Fowler, J. Hainmueller, A. B. Hall, and J. M. Snyder Jr (2015). On the validity of the regression discontinuity design for estimating electoral effects: New evidence from over 40,000 close races. *American Journal of Political Science* 59(1), 259–274.
- Entorf, H. and H. Spengler (2002). *Crime in Europe: causes and consequences*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Esteve-Volart, B. (2009). Gender discrimination and growth: Theory and evidence from india. *Working Paper, University of York, Toronto*.
- Fisman, R., F. Schulz, and V. Vig (2014). The private returns to public office. *Journal of Political Economy* 122(4), 806–862.
- Gehring, K., T. F. Kauffeldt, and K. C. Vadlamannati (2019). Crime, incentives and political effort: Evidence from india. *European Journal of Political Economy* 59, 1–20.
- George, S., S. Gupta, M. Kumar, and Y. Neggers (2018). Coordinating voters against criminal politicians: Evidence from a mobile experiment in india. *Working Paper*.
- Godson, R. (2017). *Menace to society: political-criminal collaboration around the world*. Routledge.
- Gutiérrez-Romero, R. and A. LeBas (2020). Does electoral violence affect vote choice and willingness to vote? conjoint analysis of a vignette experiment. *Journal of Peace Research* 57(1), 77–92.

- Horowitz, D. L. (2000). *Ethnic groups in conflict*. Univ of California Press.
- Imbens, G. and K. Kalyanaraman (2012). Optimal bandwidth choice for the regression discontinuity estimator. *The Review of Economic Studies* 79(3), 933–959.
- Iyer, L. and A. Mani (2012). Traveling agents: political change and bureaucratic turnover in india. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 94(3), 723–739.
- Iyer, L., A. Mani, P. Mishra, and P. Topalova (2012). The power of political voice: women’s political representation and crime in india. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 4(4), 165–93.
- Jensenius, F. R. (2016). Competing inequalities? on the intersection of gender and ethnicity in candidate nominations in indian elections. *Government and Opposition* 51(3), 440–463.
- Kapur, D. and M. Vaishnav (2013). Quid pro quo: Builders, politicians, and election finance in india. *Center for Global Development Working Paper* (276).
- Kelly, M. (2000). Inequality and crime. *Review of economics and Statistics* 82(4), 530–539.
- Kim, J. E. and A. Lee (2022). Crime, politics and policing: Evidence from india. *Working Paper*.
- Kitschelt, H., S. I. Wilkinson, et al. (2007). *Patrons, clients and policies: Patterns of democratic accountability and political competition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Klasen, S. (2018). The impact of gender inequality on economic performance in developing countries. *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 10, 279–298.
- Klasen, S. and J. Pieters (2015). What explains the stagnation of female labor

- force participation in urban india? *The World Bank Economic Review* 29(3), 449–478.
- Kochanek, S. A. (2010). Corruption and the criminalization of politics in south asia. In *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics*, pp. 380–397. Routledge.
- Kumar, A. (November 12, 2018). Bihar election 2020 results: More mlas with criminal records make it to assembly. *Hindustan Times*.  
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/bihar-election/bihar-assembly-election-2020-results-more-mlas-with-criminal-records-make-it-to-assembly/story-LLh1ylQG2Xv1EMRv5vHnfP.html>.
- Lahoti, R. and S. Sahoo (2020). Are educated leaders good for education? evidence from india. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 176, 42–62.
- Lahoti, R. and H. Swaminathan (2016). Economic development and women’s labor force participation in india. *Feminist Economics* 22(2), 168–195.
- Lee, D. S. (2008). Randomized experiments from non-random selection in us house elections. *Journal of Econometrics* 142(2), 675–697.
- Martinez-Bravo, M. (2017). The local political economy effects of school construction in indonesia. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 9(2), 256–89.
- McCrary, J. (2008). Manipulation of the running variable in the regression discontinuity design: A density test. *Journal of Econometrics* 142(2), 698–714.
- Melnikov, N., C. Schmidt-Padilla, and M. M. Sviatschi (2020). Gangs, labor mobility and development. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

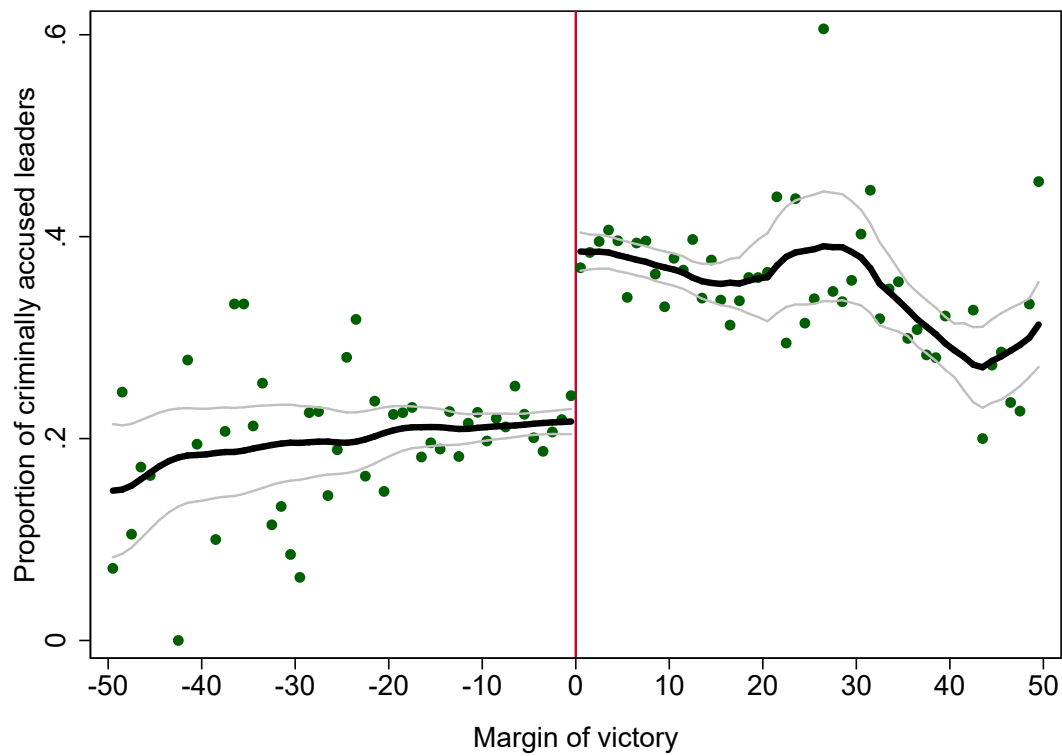
- Mishra, A., V. Mishra, and J. Parasnis (2021). The asymmetric role of crime in women's and men's labour force participation: Evidence from india. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 188, 933–961.
- Motta, S., F. Coutinho, A. Aragao, and T. Farah (April 12, 2017). Almost every major politician in brazil is under criminal investigation now. *BuzzFeed News*. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/severinomotta/almost-every-major-politician-in-brazil-is-under-criminal>.
- Nanda, V. K. and A. Pareek (2016). Do criminal politicians affect firm investment and value? evidence from a regression discontinuity approach. *Evidence from a Regression Discontinuity Approach* (May 11, 2016).
- Nellis, G. and N. Siddiqui (2018). Secular party rule and religious violence in pakistan. *The American Political Science Review* 112(1), 49.
- Nellis, G., M. Weaver, and S. Rosenzweig (2016). Do parties matter for ethnic violence? evidence from india. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 11(3), 249–277.
- Paoli, L. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of organized crime*. Oxford Handbooks.
- Pinotti, P. (2015). The causes and consequences of organised crime: Preliminary evidence across countries. *The Economic Journal* 125(586), F158–F174.
- Poblete-Cazenave, R. (2023). Do politicians in power receive special treatment in courts? evidence from india. *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Prakash, N., M. Rockmore, and Y. Uppal (2019). Do criminally accused politicians affect economic outcomes? evidence from india. *Journal of Development Economics* 141, 102370.
- Prasad, K. (2012). Economic liberalization and violent crime. *The Journal of Law and Economics* 55(4), 925–948.



- Rajagopal, K. (September 25, 2018). Supreme court asks parliament to frame laws to bar those accused of crimes from fighting elections. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cant-bar-politicians-with-criminal-charges-from-contesting-elections-parliament-should-frame-laws-sc/article25035435.ece>.
- Rashid, O. (October 11, 2020). 'jungle raj' exists in congress-ruled rajasthan too, says mayawati. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/jungle-raj-exists-in-congress-ruled-rajasthan-also-says-mayawati/article32826233.ece>.
- Rothe, D. L. (2009). *State criminality: The crime of all crimes*. Lexington Books.
- Sarkar, S., S. Sahoo, and S. Klasen (2019). Employment transitions of women in india: A panel analysis. *World Development* 115, 291–309.
- Siddique, Z. (2022). Media-reported violence and female labor supply. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 70(4), 1337–1365.
- Skaperdas, S. (2001). The political economy of organized crime: providing protection when the state does not. *Economics of governance* 2(3), 173–202.
- Soares, R. R. (2004). Development, crime and punishment: accounting for the international differences in crime rates. *Journal of development Economics* 73(1), 155–184.
- Subramanian, K. (November 4, 2016). Jungle raj in up: What do crime data tell us about the record of successive state governments? *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/jungle-raj-in-up-what-do-crime-data-tell-us-about-the-record-of-successive-state-governments/>.
- The Print (July 8, 2020). Jungle raj in state, govt should be sacked: Up congress chief slams yogi adityanath. *The Print*. <https://theprint.in/politics/jungle-raj-in-state-govt-should-be-sacked-up-congress-chief-slams-yogi-adityanath/457086/>.

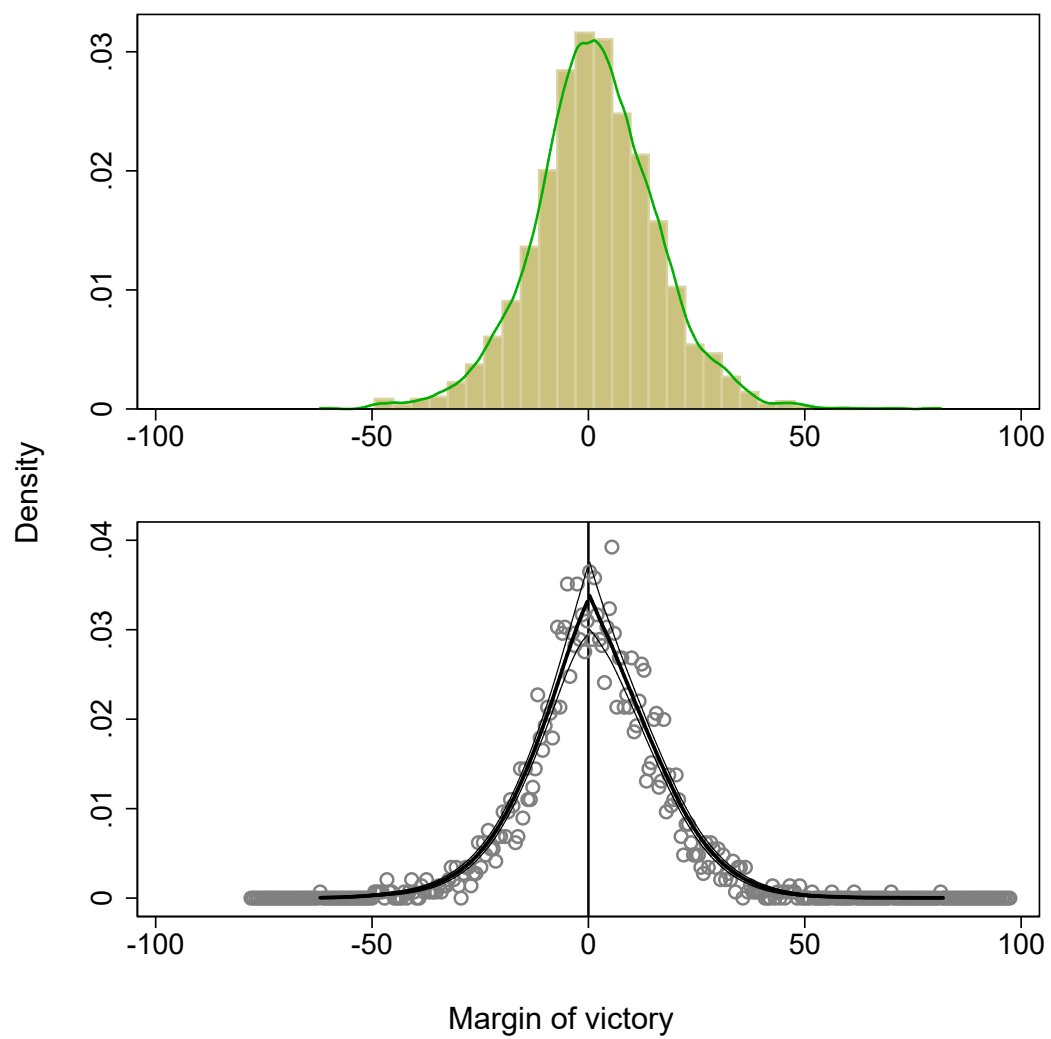
- Tiwari, D. K. (2014). *Party politics and criminality in India*. University of California, San Diego.
- Vaishnav, M. (2017). *When crime pays: Money and muscle in Indian politics*. Yale University Press.
- Wade, R. (1985). The market for public office: Why the indian state is not better at development. *World Development* 13(4), 467–497.
- Williams, P. (2009). Illicit markets, weak states and violence: Iraq and mexico. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52(3), 323–336.

**Figure 1:** First stage illustration for seriously accused: All states



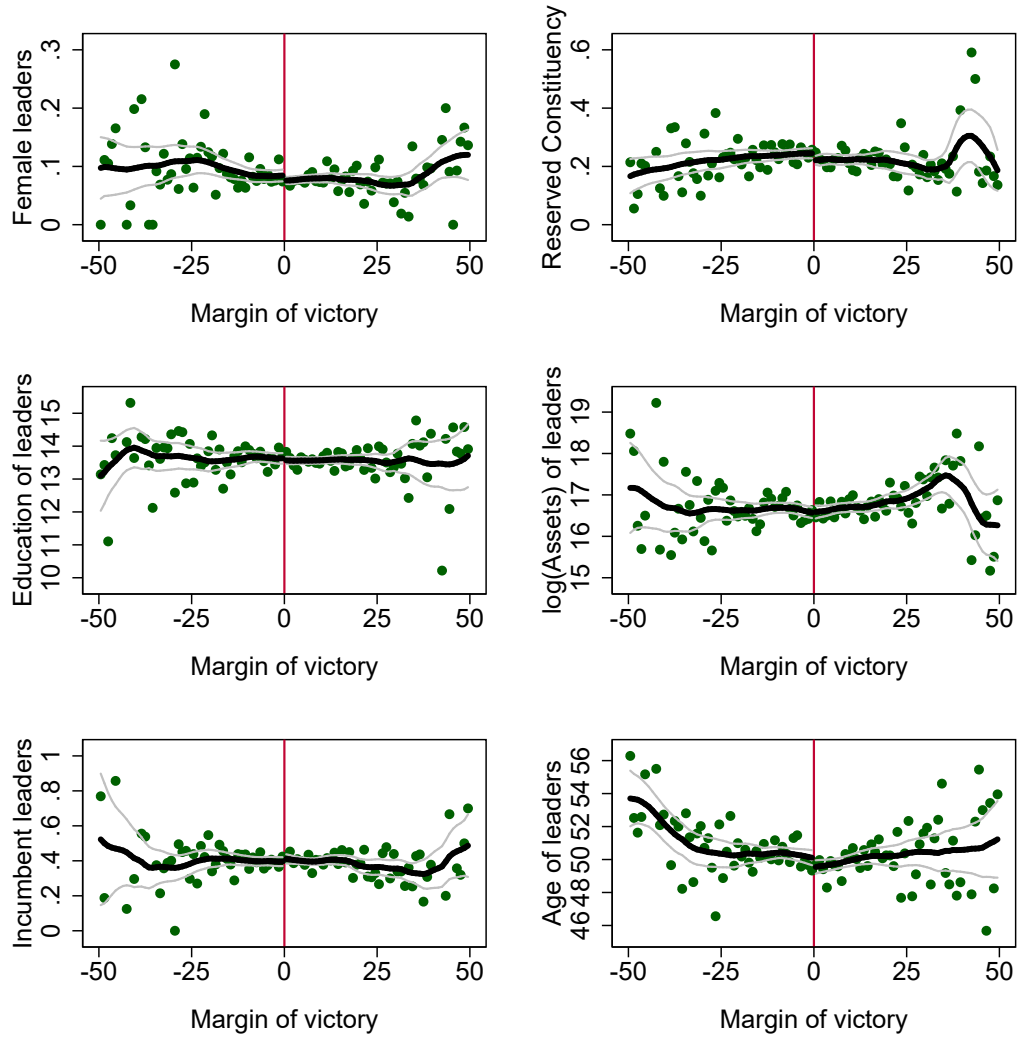
Notes: District-level fraction of seriously accused MLAs is plotted against the vote margin between politician accused of serious crime and not accused of serious crime in each constituency of the district. Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

**Figure 2:** Continuity of vote margin for seriously accused: All states



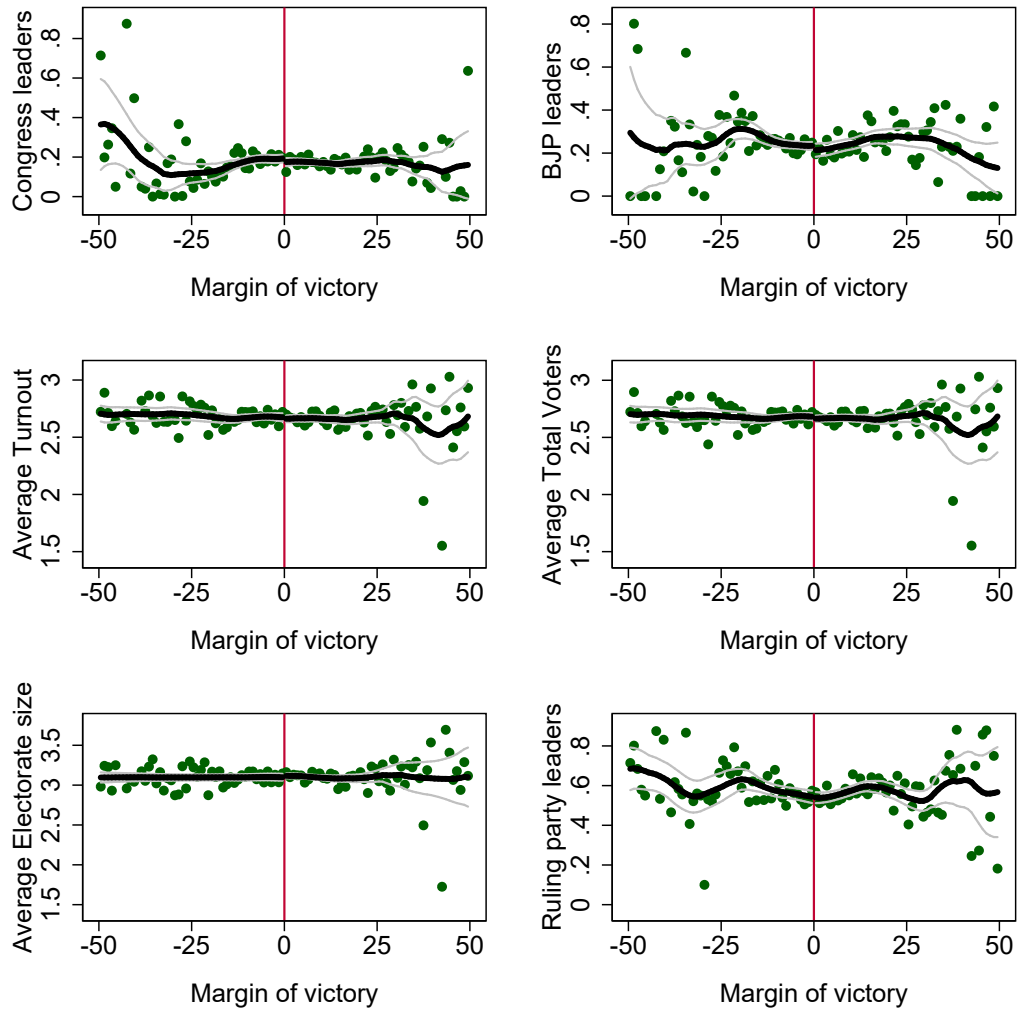
Notes: The upper panel shows the kernel density of vote margin between seriously accused and non-accused candidates. The lower panel shows McCrary's density test.

**Figure 3:** Continuity checks for seriously accused: All states



Notes: The horizontal axis plots the difference in vote share between politicians accused of serious crime and politicians not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal). The vertical axis plots the district level average age of the constituency leaders, the fraction of seats won by female politicians, fraction of constituencies reserved for backward sections (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes), log of average asset of winner, Average Education Level of Winners, fraction of seats won by incumbents and Average Age of Winners. Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

### Continuity checks for seriously accused: All states (continued)



Notes: The horizontal axis plots the difference in vote share between politicians accused of serious crime and politicians not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal). The vertical axis plots Proportion of Congress Leaders, Porportion of BJP Leaders, Average Turnout, Average Total Voters, Average Electorate Size and Porportion of Leaders from state ruling party . Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

**Table 1:** Summary statistics of outcome variables on crimes

	All states		BIMAROU		Non-BIMAROU	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total crimes	4661	8402	4152	3654	4963	10217
<i>First categorization of total crimes:</i>						
Violent crimes	1236	1509	1291	1161	1204	1681
Homicide	68	85	75	57	64	98
Other violent crimes	1169	1448	1216	1133	1141	1605
Property crimes	1184	5101	977	1390	1308	6348
Other crimes	2240	3467	1885	1822	2451	4133
<i>Second categorization of total crimes:</i>						
Crime against women	391	653	372	347	403	780
Violent crimes against women	188	293	207	172	177	345
Other crimes against women	203	420	165	213	226	502
Gender neutral violent crimes	1048	1308	1084	1093	1028	1420
Other crimes	3221	7061	2697	2836	3533	8629
Observations	5134		1914		3220	

Notes: This table presents summary statistics of variables obtained from NCRB data. Total crime includes crimes reported under all the sections of IPC. Violent crimes are murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, rape, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, dowry death, molestation, and causing death due to negligence. The sub-category 'homicide' includes murder and culpable homicide. Property crimes include robbery, dacoity, preparing for dacoity, burglary, theft, breach of trust regarding property, cheating, counterfeiting, and arson. Other crimes, apart from violent and property crimes, include eve-teasing, cruelty by husband/relatives, human trafficking, and other IPC crimes. Crimes against women include violent crime against women (rape, molestation, and dowry death) and other crimes against women (cruelty by husband/relatives and eve-teasing). Gender-neutral violent crimes are murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, and causing death due to negligence. All remaining crimes are grouped into 'other crimes'.

**Table 2:** Summary statistics of district level electoral data

	All states		BIMAROU		Non-BIMAROU	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>For accused:</b>						
Fraction of seats-						
-won by accused	0.30	0.28	0.36	0.28	0.27	0.27
-won by accused in close election	0.04	0.10	0.04	0.11	0.03	0.09
-with accused and non-accused election	0.35	0.25	0.41	0.25	0.31	0.24
-with accused and non-accused close election	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.15	0.06	0.12
District with at least one-						
-accused leader	0.71	0.45	0.78	0.41	0.66	0.47
-accused leader in close election	0.20	0.40	0.20	0.40	0.19	0.39
-election between accused and non-accused	0.80	0.40	0.86	0.34	0.76	0.43
-close election between accused and non-accused	0.33	0.47	0.35	0.48	0.31	0.46
<b>For seriously accused:</b>						
Fraction of seats-						
-won by seriously accused	0.17	0.22	0.24	0.23	0.14	0.20
-won by seriously accused in close election	0.03	0.08	0.03	0.09	0.02	0.08
-with seriously and non-seriously/non accused election	0.24	0.24	0.33	0.24	0.19	0.23
-with seriously and non-seriously/non accused close election	0.05	0.11	0.07	0.12	0.04	0.10
District with at least one-						
-seriously accused leader	0.53	0.50	0.65	0.48	0.45	0.50
-seriously accused leader in close election	0.14	0.35	0.18	0.38	0.12	0.33
-election between seriously and non-seriously/non accused	0.65	0.48	0.80	0.40	0.56	0.50
-close election between seriously and non-seriously/non accused	0.25	0.43	0.32	0.47	0.21	0.41
Observations	5134		1914		3220	

Notes: This table shows summary statistics based on data from the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). Close election for accused is defined as an election between a politician accused of any crime and a politician not accused of any crime, where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. For the seriously accused, a close election is defined as an election between politician accused of serious crime and politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-accused politicians) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent.



**Table 3:** 2SLS estimates of the effect of criminally accused leaders on crimes

	Total crime		
	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<i>Panel A: Effect of leaders accused of any crime</i>			
<i>Second stage estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by accused	257.4 (528.0)	635.8* (376.4)	-218.7 (1142.1)
<i>First stage estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by accused in close election	0.996*** (0.0972)	1.066*** (0.134)	0.871*** (0.138)
First stage R-squared	0.506	0.496	0.542
First stage F stat (on instrument)	105.1	63.14	39.61
<i>Panel B: Effect of leaders accused of serious crimes</i>			
<i>Second stage estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-141.7 (617.1)	1055.3** (502.6)	-1684.8 (1283.5)
<i>First stage estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	0.923*** (0.103)	0.958*** (0.114)	0.877*** (0.186)
First stage R-squared	0.588	0.585	0.607
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	70.61	22.26
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	4152.1	4963.3
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election for accused is defined as an election between a politician accused of any crime and a politician not accused of any crime, where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. For the seriously accused, a close election is defined as an election between politician accused of serious crime and politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-accused politicians) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, district fixed effects, state specific year fixed effects, and linear function of vote margin. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table 4:** 2SLS estimates of the effect of leaders accused of serious crime on different categories of crime

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b>A. Violent crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-2.424 (215.7)	230.0 (276.8)	-273.2 (288.8)
Mean of Violent crimes	1236	1291	1204
<b>A(i). Homicide</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	11.22 (9.596)	20.33* (11.72)	-11.78 (17.16)
Mean of Homicide	67.81	74.78	63.66
<b>A(ii). Other violent crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-13.64 (214.9)	209.7 (276.2)	-261.4 (288.6)
Mean of Other violent crimes	1169	1216	1141
<b>B. Property crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	37.01 (137.2)	149.4 (183.1)	-160.4 (177.9)
Mean of Property crimes	1184	976.7	1308
<b>C. Other crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-176.3 (551.3)	675.9*** (260.0)	-1251 (1306)
Mean of Other crimes	2240	1885	2451
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	70.61	22.26
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Violent crimes include homicide (murder and culpable homicide) and other violent crimes (attempt to murder, rape, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, dowry death, molestation, and causing death due to negligence). Property crimes include robbery, dacoity, preparing for dacoity, burglary, theft, breach of trust regarding property, cheating, counterfeiting, and arson. Other crimes include evetearing, cruelty by husband/relatives, human trafficking, and other IPC crimes. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin (linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects.\*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table 5:** 2SLS estimates of the effect of leaders accused of serious crime on gender-related and gender neutral crimes

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b>A. Crime against women</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	106.7* (62.71)	204.1** (80.96)	29.40 (78.57)
Mean of Crime against women	391.3	371.9	402.8
<b>A(i). Violent crime against women</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	26.01 (37.92)	97.82** (46.13)	-44.49 (48.54)
Mean of Violent crime against women	188	207.3	176.5
<b>A(ii). Other crime against women</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	80.73** (40.48)	106.3** (51.47)	73.89 (64.83)
Mean of Other crime against women	203.3	164.6	226.2
<b>B. Gender-neutral violent crime</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-28.44 (206.1)	132.2 (259.7)	-228.7 (285.1)
Mean of Gender-neutral violent crime	1048	1084	1028
<b>C. Other crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-220.0 (576.1)	719.0** (341.2)	-1486 (1321)
Mean of Other crimes	3221	2697	3533
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	70.61	22.26
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Crimes against women include violent crime against women (rape, molestation, and dowry death) and other crimes against women (cruelty by husband/relatives and eve-teasing). Gender-neutral violent crimes include murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, and causing death due to negligence. All remaining crimes are considered in Panel C. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin(linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects.\*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table 6:** Sharp RD results: Effect of seriously accused leaders on total crime

	Total crime					
	All states		BIMAROU		Non-BIMAROU	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b><i>Bandwidth: IK</i></b>						
Seriously accused	288.7 (602.3)	650.6 (516.6)	1758.1*** (382.2)	1738.2*** (349.7)	-1016.9 (931.9)	-119.0 (905.5)
Bandwidth size	7.511	7.511	6.828	6.828	10.96	10.96
<b><i>Bandwidth: IK/2</i></b>						
Seriously accused	458.0 (722.1)	1050.1* (631.6)	1010.6*** (372.7)	1147.3*** (408.9)	-632.9 (1216.3)	-1236.1 (1361.5)
Bandwidth size	3.755	7.511	3.414	6.828	5.480	10.96
<b><i>Bandwidth: 2(IK)</i></b>						
Seriously accused	-82.97 (411.3)	326.5 (338.7)	739.9** (321.0)	868.4*** (281.4)	-796.5 (625.0)	-505.3 (558.5)
Bandwidth size	15.02	15.02	13.66	13.66	21.92	21.92
<b><i>Bandwidth: CCT</i></b>						
Seriously accused	295.2 (658.5)	324.8 (577.0)	827.2* (466.1)	1152.5*** (318.9)	-1099.3 (1125.4)	-701.2 (1123.9)
Bandwidth size	6.127	6.081	2.699	5.414	7.030	7.522
Observations	1245	1245	612	612	633	633
State FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. We use local linear regression and a triangular kernel to arrive at sharp RD estimates. The bandwidths are chosen by the optimal bandwidth algorithms suggested by [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#) (IK) and [Calonico et al. \(2014\)](#) (CCT). The table also includes additional bandwidth choices (half of IK and twice of IK) to show the robustness of the estimates.

**Table 7:** Robustness: Effect of seriously accused leaders after controlling for other correlated characteristics

	Total crime		
	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<i>Panel A: 2SLS estimates</i>			
<i>Second stage</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-156.2 (616.8)	1018** (485.7)	-1583 (1236)
<i>First stage</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	0.914*** (0.101)	0.923*** (0.117)	0.902*** (0.173)
First stage R-squared	0.620	0.625	0.643
First stage F stat (on instrument)	81.74	62.19	27.04
<i>Panel B: Reduced form estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	-142.8 (578.0)	938.9** (458.3)	-1427 (1119)
Mean of Total crime	4661	4152	4963
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. A close election is defined as an election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-accused politicians) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, district fixed effects, state specific year fixed effects, and linear function of vote margin. These regressions additionally control for the proportion of female leaders, average age of leaders, average education level of leaders, proportion of leaders affiliated with the ruling party, average wealth of leaders, proportion of leaders who are incumbents, and the proportion of reserved constituencies in the district. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table 8:** 2SLS estimates on the effect of seriously accused leaders on working-age individuals' labor force participation

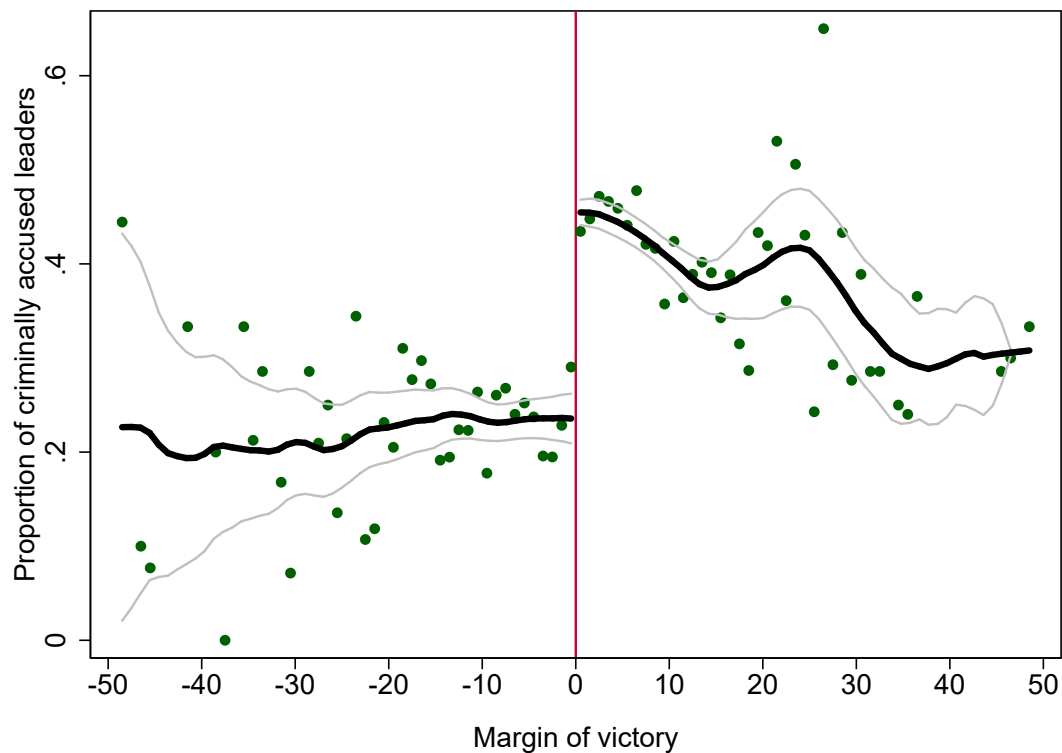
	Labor force participation		
	All (1)	Female (2)	Male (3)
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-0.080* (0.042)	-0.144* (0.079)	-0.015 (0.025)
Mean of Labor force participation	0.633	0.306	0.965
First stage F stat (on instrument)	66.52	62.25	70.73
Observations	820,544	412,823	407,721

This analysis considers multiple rounds of National Sample Survey (Employment and Unemployment) and Periodic Labour Force Survey data. Labor force participation is a binary indicator of whether an individual participated in the labor force, based on their activity status in the last seven days prior to the date of survey. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. A close election is defined as an election between politician accused of serious crime and politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-accused politicians) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, district fixed effects, state specific year fixed effects, and linear function of vote margin. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

## Online Supplementary Appendix

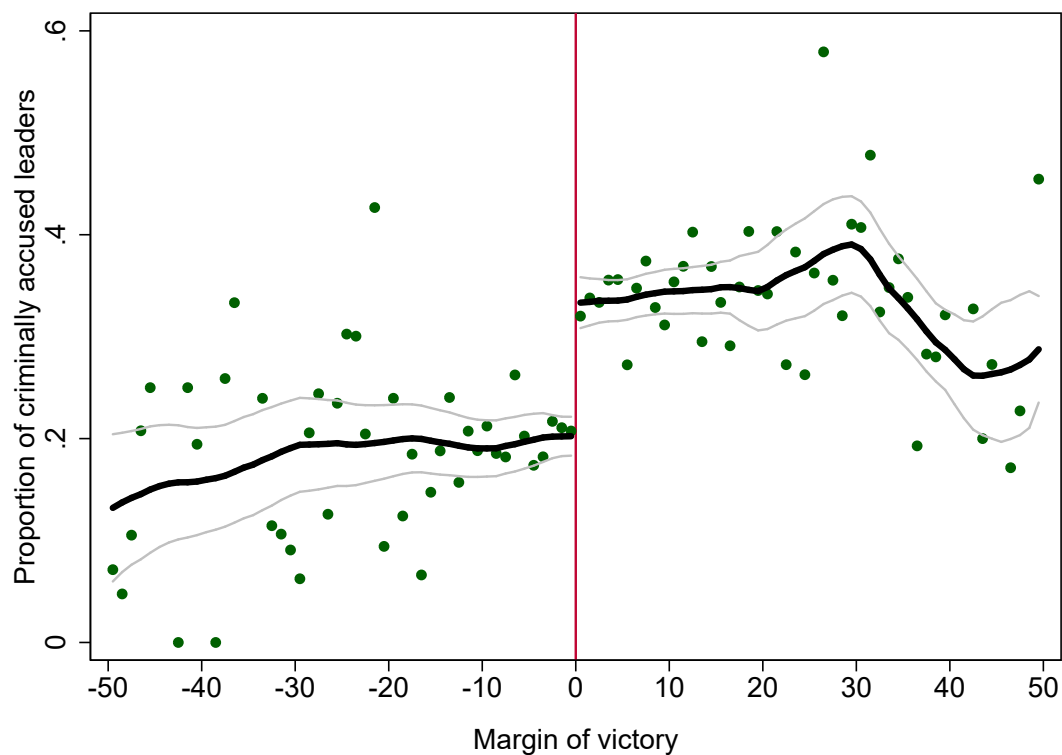
### A Additional Figures and Tables

**Figure A.1:** First stage illustration for seriously accused: BIMAROU states



Notes: District-level fraction of seriously accused MLAs is plotted against the vote margin between politician accused of serious crime and not accused of serious crime in each constituency of the districts in BIMAROU states. Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

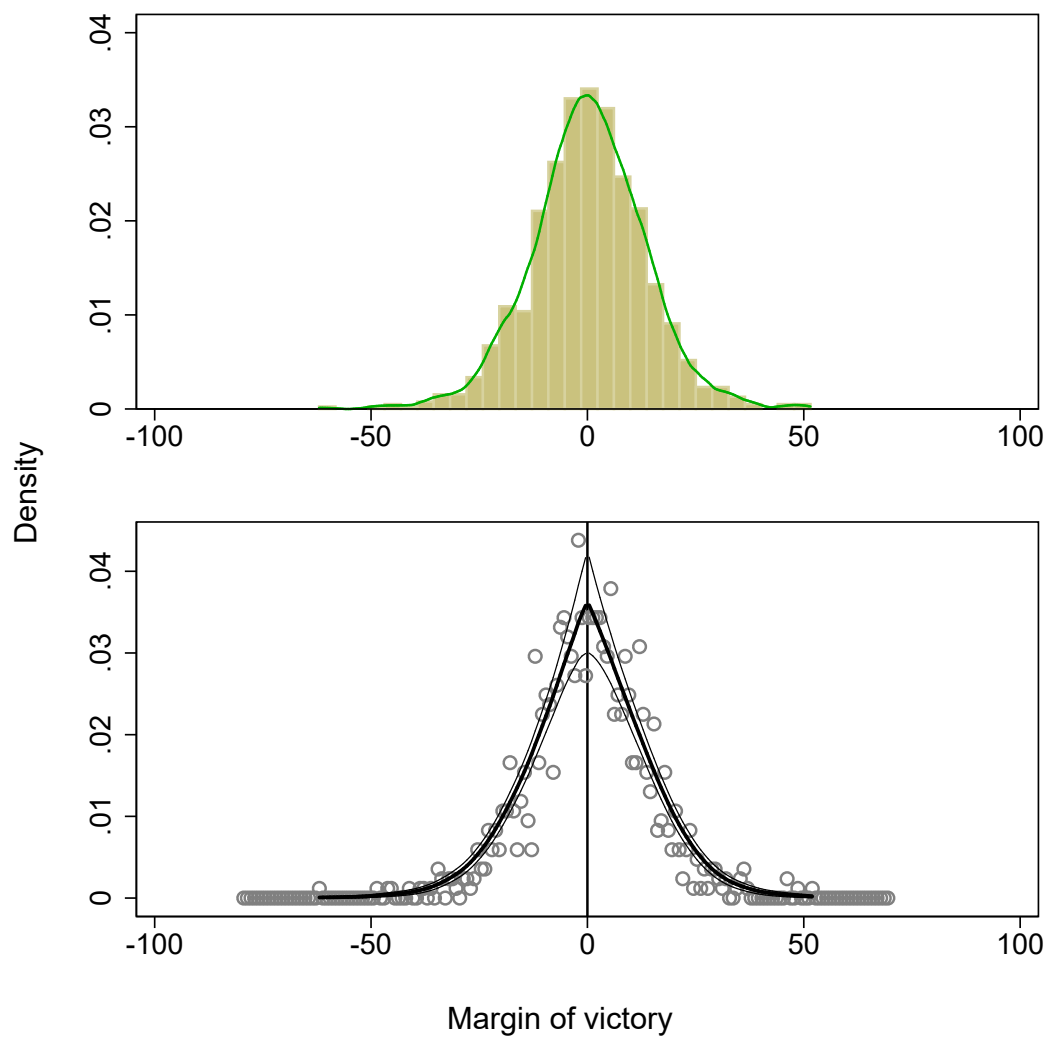
**Figure A.2:** First stage illustration for seriously accused: Non-BIMAROU states



Notes: District-level fraction of seriously accused MLAs is plotted against the vote margin between politician accused of serious crime and not accused of serious crime in each constituency of the districts in Non-BIMAROU states. Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

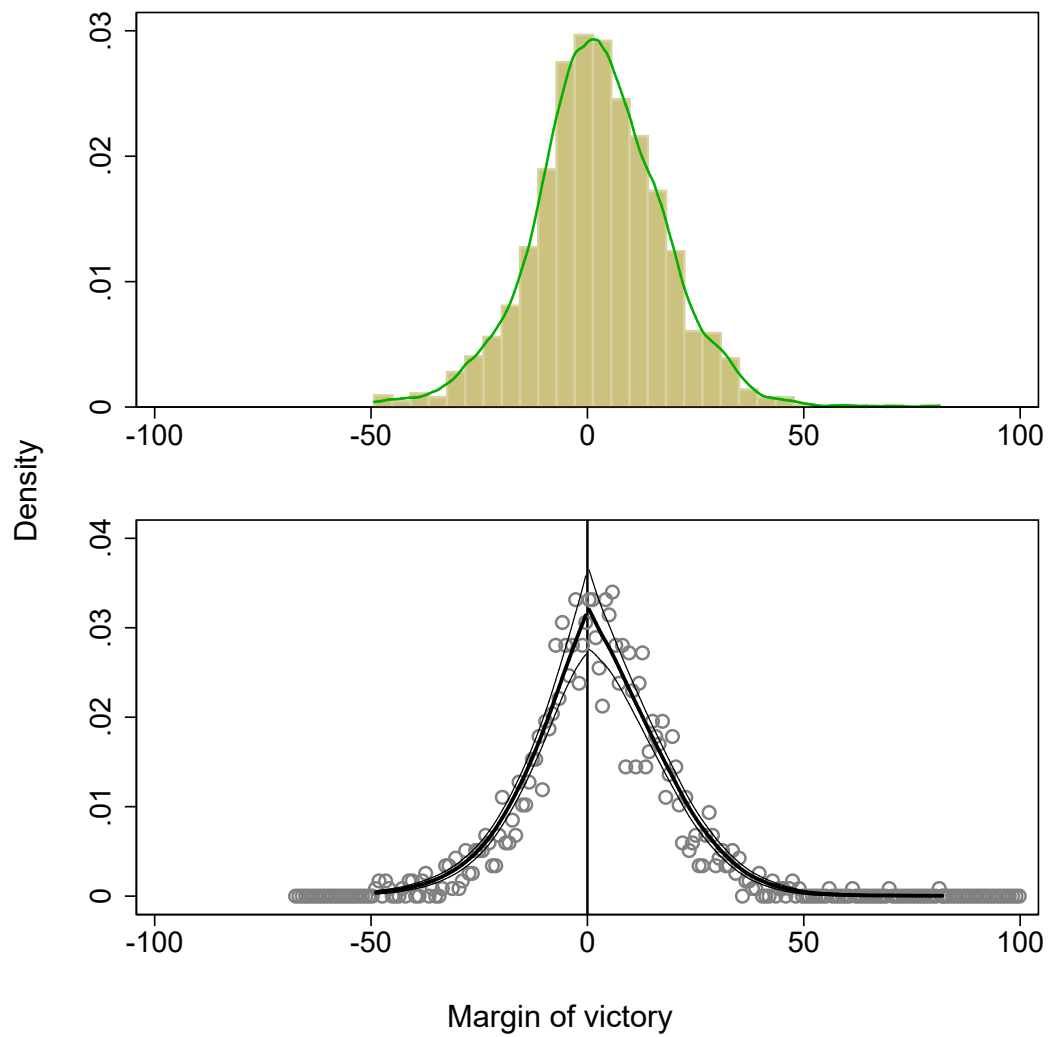


**Figure A.3:** Continuity of vote margin for seriously accused: BIMAROU states



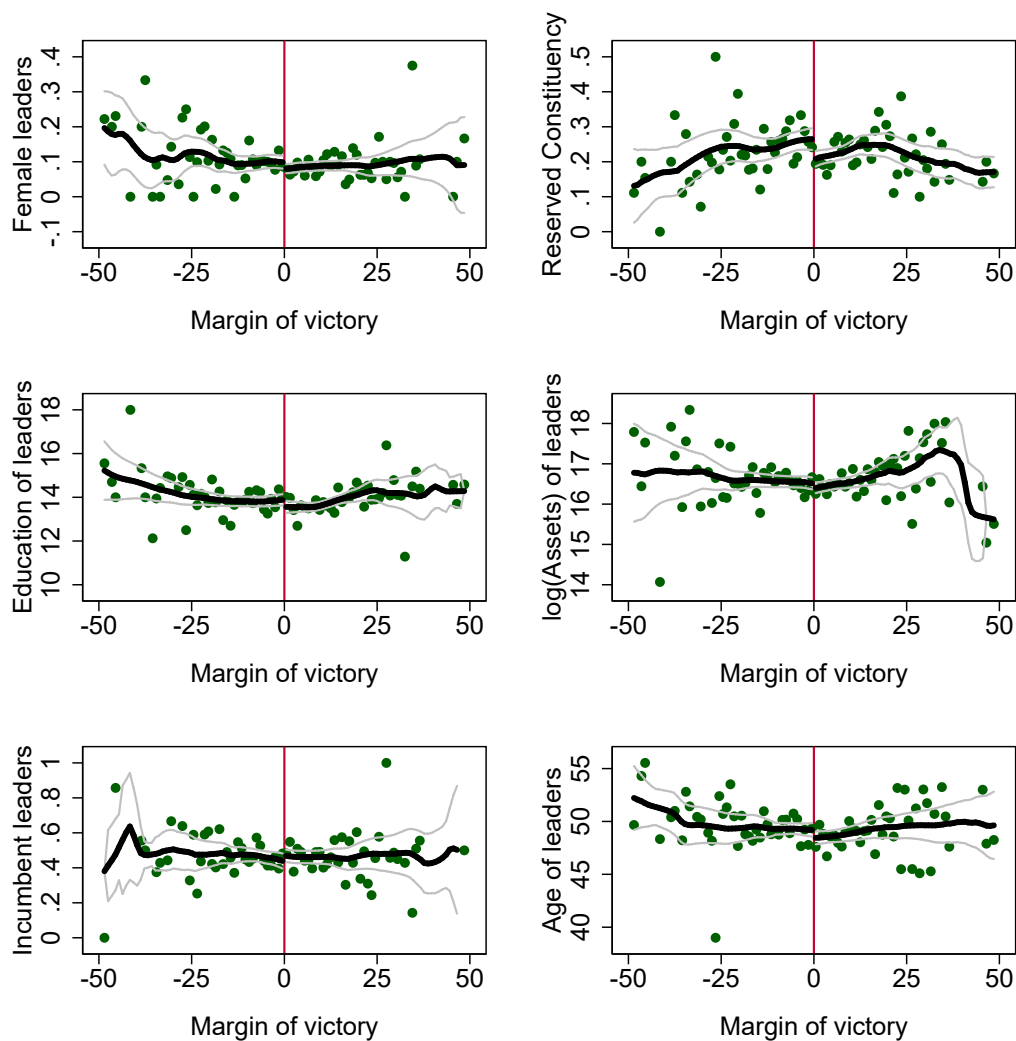
Notes: The upper panel shows the kernel density of vote margin between seriously accused and non-accused candidates in BIMAROU states. The lower panel shows McCrary's density test.

**Figure A.4:** Continuity of vote margin for seriously accused: Non-BIMAROU states



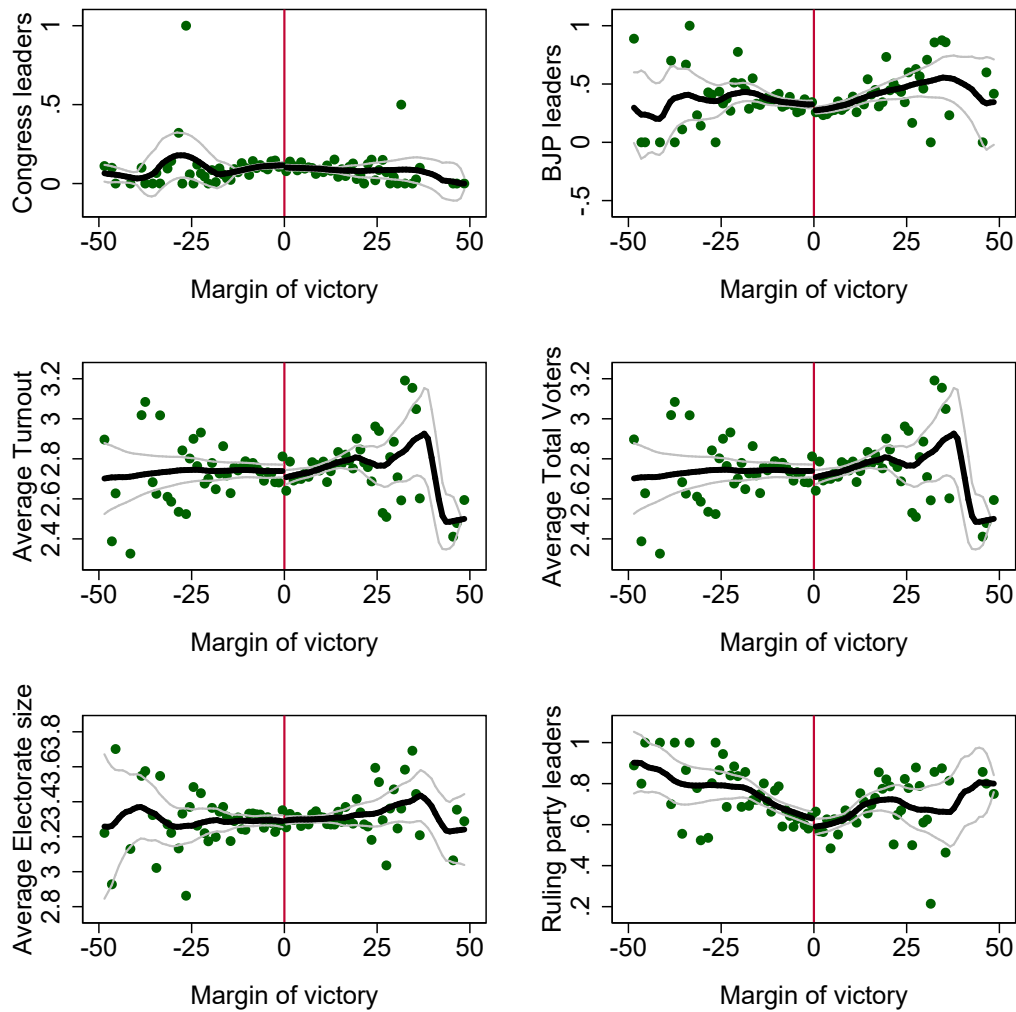
Notes: The upper panel shows the kernel density of vote margin between seriously accused and non-accused candidates in Non-BIMAROU states. The lower panel shows McCrary's density test.

**Figure A.5:** Continuity Checks for seriously accused: BIMAROU states



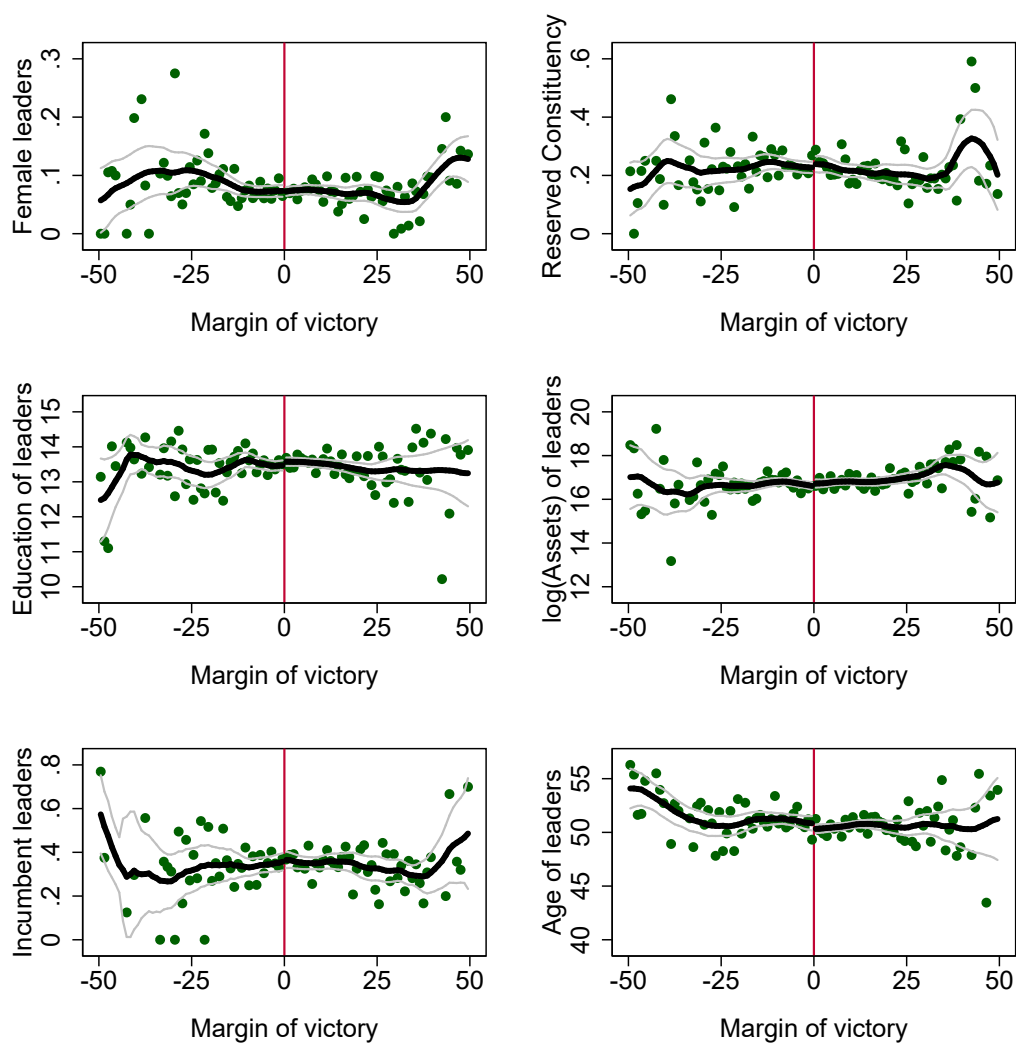
Notes: The horizontal axis plots the difference in vote share between politicians accused of serious crime and politicians not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) in BIMAROU states. The vertical axis plots the district level average age of the constituency leaders, the fraction of seats won by female politicians, fraction of constituencies reserved for backward sections (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes), log of average asset of winner, Average Education Level of Winners, fraction of seats won by incumbents and Average Age of Winners. Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

### Continuity checks for seriously accused: BIMAROU states (continued)



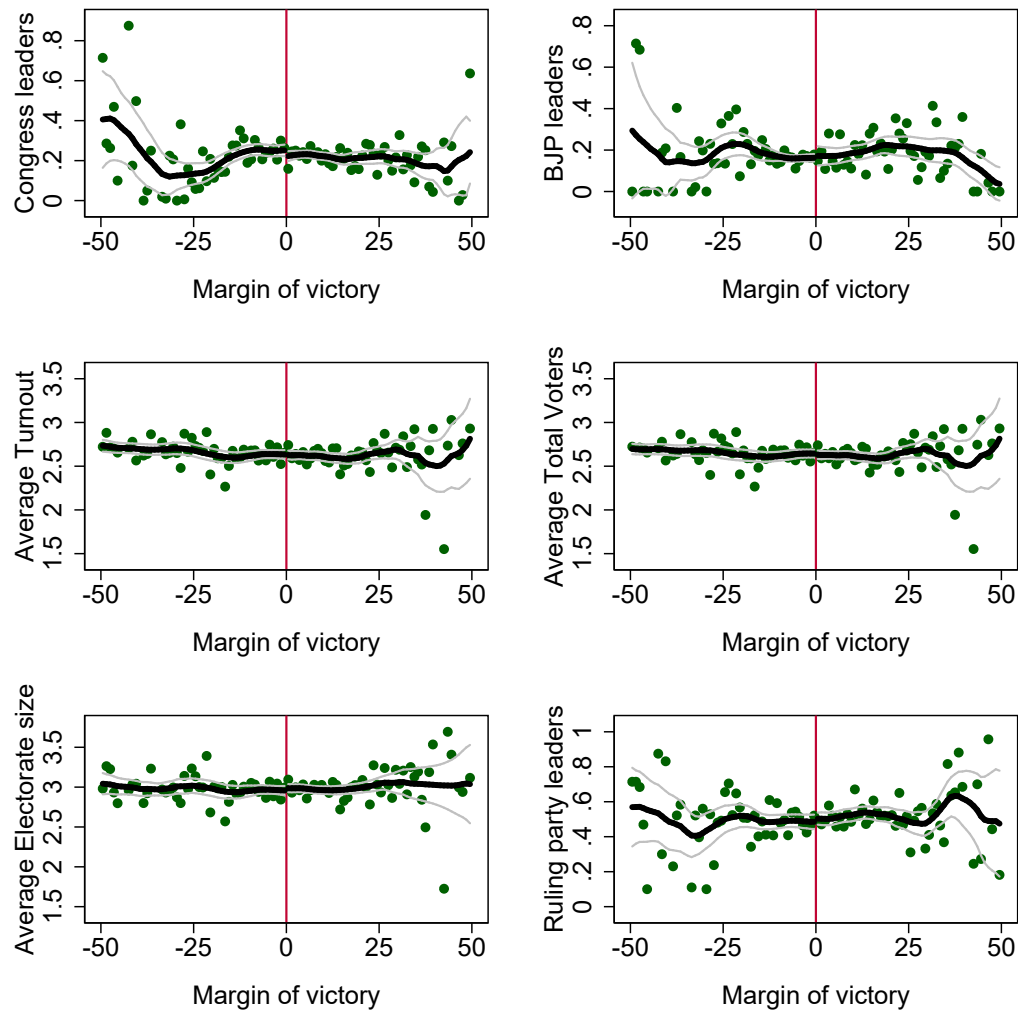
Notes: The horizontal axis plots the difference in vote share between politicians accused of serious crime and politicians not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) in BIMAROU states. The vertical axis plots Proportion of Congress Leaders, Proportion of BJP Leaders, Average Turnout, Average Total Voters, Average Electorate Size and Proportion of Leaders from state ruling party . Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

**Figure A.6:** Continuity checks for seriously accused : Non-BIMAROU states



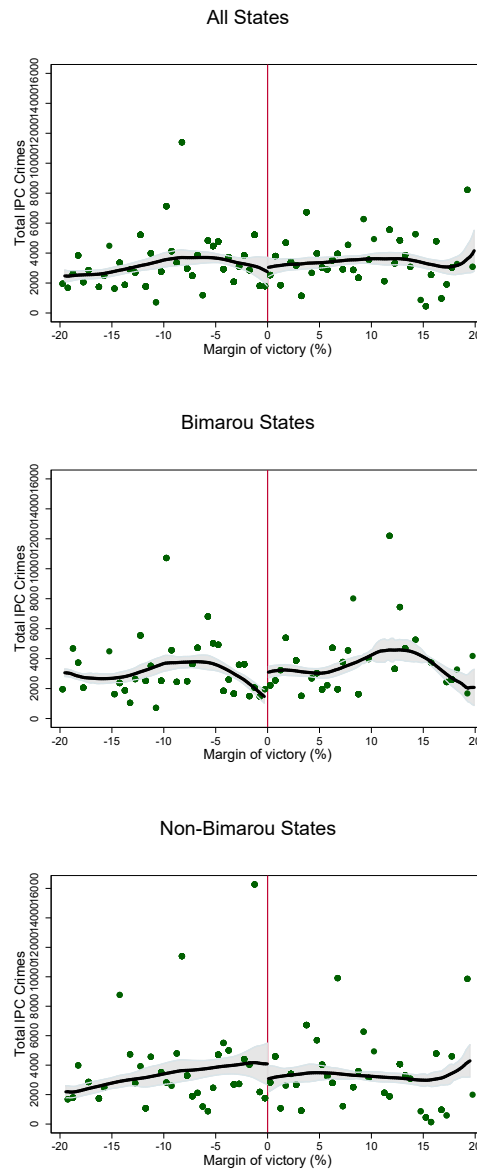
Notes: The horizontal axis plots the difference in vote share between politicians accused of serious crime and politicians not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) in Non-BIMAROU states. The vertical axis plots the district level average age of the constituency leaders, the fraction of seats won by female politicians, fraction of constituencies reserved for backward sections (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes), log of average asset of winner, Average Education Level of Winners, fraction of seats won by incumbents and Average Age of Winners. Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

# Continuity checks for seriously accused : Non-BIMAROU states(continued)



Notes: The horizontal axis plots the difference in vote share between politicians accused of serious crime and politicians not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) in Non-BIMAROU states. The vertical axis plots Proportion of Congress Leaders, Proportion of BJP Leaders, Average Turnout, Average Total Voters, Average Electorate Size and Proportion of Leaders from state ruling party . Data is aggregated into 1 percentage point bins. The curves are local polynomial regressions (with 95 percent confidence intervals on each side) fitted separately for positive and negative parts of the margin of victory variable.

**Figure A.7:** Sharp RD illustration for seriously accused



Notes: The running variable is the margin of victory between a seriously accused candidate and a non-seriously accused/non-accused candidate. This analysis considers districts with a single close election between such candidates.

**Table A.1:** Balance table comparing constituency and candidate characteristics across close elections

Variable	All states			BIMAROU			Non-BIMAROU		
	Non SA	SA	Diff	Non SA	SA	Diff	Non SA	SA	Diff
<b>Panel A: Constituency characteristics</b>									
Total voters in constituency (log)	11.81 (0.40)	11.82 (0.38)	0.01 (0.04)	11.87 (0.28)	11.86 (0.28)	-0.01 (0.04)	11.76 (0.46)	11.79 (0.44)	0.03 (0.06)
Total electors in constituency (log)	12.25 (0.46)	12.30 (0.45)	0.05 (0.04)	12.43 (0.32)	12.47 (0.27)	0.04 (0.04)	12.10 (0.51)	12.17 (0.51)	0.07 (0.06)
Reserved constituency	0.21 (0.41)	0.15 (0.36)	-0.06 (0.03)	0.17 (0.38)	0.08 (0.28)	-0.09* (0.05)	0.23 (0.43)	0.20 (0.40)	-0.04 (0.05)
Reserved constituency for SC	0.13 (0.34)	0.10 (0.30)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.11 (0.32)	0.07 (0.26)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.15 (0.36)	0.11 (0.32)	-0.03 (0.04)
Reserved constituency for ST	0.07 (0.26)	0.05 (0.22)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.06 (0.23)	0.01 (0.10)	-0.05* (0.02)	0.09 (0.28)	0.09 (0.28)	-0.00 (0.03)
Proportion of female candidates	0.06 (0.10)	0.06 (0.09)	0.00 (0.01)	0.07 (0.08)	0.07 (0.08)	0.00 (0.01)	0.05 (0.11)	0.06 (0.09)	0.00 (0.01)
Average age of candidates	46.04 (5.47)	45.48 (4.79)	-0.56 (0.47)	44.49 (3.84)	44.05 (4.24)	-0.43 (0.56)	47.32 (6.25)	46.56 (4.92)	-0.76 (0.68)
Average years of education of candidates	12.19 (1.94)	12.25 (1.79)	0.05 (0.17)	11.95 (1.78)	12.34 (1.84)	0.39 (0.25)	12.39 (2.05)	12.17 (1.75)	-0.22 (0.23)
Average log of wealth of candidates	13.94 (1.26)	13.90 (1.31)	-0.04 (0.12)	13.91 (1.08)	13.93 (1.13)	0.02 (0.15)	13.96 (1.39)	13.88 (1.44)	-0.08 (0.17)
Proportion of seriously accused candidates	0.24 (0.14)	0.24 (0.15)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.20 (0.11)	0.22 (0.14)	0.02 (0.02)	0.28 (0.16)	0.25 (0.16)	-0.03 (0.02)
Proportion of criminally accused candidates	0.30 (0.16)	0.30 (0.17)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.27 (0.13)	0.28 (0.15)	0.01 (0.02)	0.34 (0.17)	0.31 (0.18)	-0.03 (0.02)
<b>Panel B: Candidate characteristics</b>									
Female winner	0.08 (0.27)	0.01 (0.09)	-0.07*** (0.02)	0.05 (0.21)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.05** (0.02)	0.10 (0.30)	0.01 (0.12)	-0.09*** (0.03)
Winner's age	49.96 (9.78)	48.38 (10.14)	-1.57* (0.91)	49.39 (10.33)	45.94 (10.61)	-3.45** (1.44)	50.42 (9.32)	50.23 (9.40)	-0.19 (1.14)
Winner's years of education	13.70 (3.89)	13.16 (3.44)	-0.54 (0.34)	14.32 (3.80)	13.33 (3.70)	-0.99* (0.52)	13.18 (3.90)	13.02 (3.22)	-0.16 (0.44)
Winners net wealth (log)	15.41 (2.44)	15.67 (2.24)	0.26 (0.21)	15.63 (2.25)	15.40 (2.67)	-0.23 (0.34)	15.22 (2.58)	15.87 (1.82)	0.64** (0.27)
Winner from ruling party	0.54 (0.50)	0.43 (0.50)	-0.11** (0.05)	0.53 (0.50)	0.46 (0.50)	-0.08 (0.07)	0.55 (0.50)	0.41 (0.49)	-0.14** (0.06)
Winner is incumbent	0.28 (0.45)	0.25 (0.44)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.29 (0.45)	0.23 (0.43)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.28 (0.45)	0.27 (0.45)	-0.01 (0.05)
Votes received by winner (log)	10.84 (0.43)	10.81 (0.41)	-0.02 (0.04)	10.81 (0.32)	10.75 (0.31)	-0.06 (0.04)	10.86 (0.49)	10.86 (0.47)	0.00 (0.06)
Votes received by runner-up (log)	10.80 (0.43)	10.77 (0.41)	-0.02 (0.04)	10.76 (0.33)	10.70 (0.31)	-0.06 (0.04)	10.82 (0.50)	10.82 (0.47)	-0.00 (0.06)
Observations	233	248		105	107		128	141	

Notes: SA refers close elections that were won by seriously accused politicians. Non SA refers to the close elections where the winners were not seriously accused (this also includes non-criminals). Mean and standard deviation (in parenthesis) are given under SA and Non SA columns, along with the difference in means and their standard errors (in parenthesis) under the Diff columns. The number of close elections (margin of victory being less than 3 percent) between seriously accused and their counterparts considered in this analysis is 481, 212, and 269, respectively, for all states, BIMAROU states and non-BIMAROU states. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.



**Table A.2:** Probability that a seriously accused candidate wins in close election as a function of constituency and district level characteristics

	Seriously accused candidate won		
	All states	BIMAROU	Non-BIMAROU
Total voters in constituency (log)	-0.157 (0.127)	-0.303 (0.205)	-0.125 (0.198)
Total electors in constituency (log)	0.198* (0.117)	0.183 (0.207)	0.213 (0.177)
Reserved constituency for SC	-0.123 (0.075)	-0.114 (0.120)	-0.112 (0.099)
Reserved constituency for ST	-0.157 (0.148)	-0.165 (0.328)	-0.199 (0.175)
Proportion of female candidates	-0.047 (0.273)	0.224 (0.493)	-0.047 (0.346)
Average age of candidates	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.006 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.007)
Average years of education of candidates	0.002 (0.014)	0.027 (0.024)	-0.016 (0.018)
Average log of wealth of candidates	-0.006 (0.021)	-0.011 (0.038)	0.001 (0.027)
Proportion of seriously accused candidates	0.031 (0.324)	0.474 (0.521)	-0.432 (0.450)
Proportion of criminally accused candidates	-0.025 (0.277)	-0.235 (0.473)	0.019 (0.350)
Congress party contested	-0.037 (0.061)	0.017 (0.094)	-0.076 (0.091)
BJP contested	-0.036 (0.059)	0.006 (0.108)	-0.086 (0.084)
Regional party contested	-0.071 (0.092)	-0.041 (0.235)	-0.109 (0.109)
Left party contested	-0.048 (0.054)	-0.047 (0.084)	-0.072 (0.074)
Independent candidate contested	0.047 (0.067)	0.105 (0.114)	0.040 (0.089)
Proportion of urban population in district (2004-05)	-0.039 (0.183)	0.639* (0.329)	-0.326 (0.235)
Proportion of female population in district (2004-05)	0.976 (1.148)	1.877 (1.587)	0.916 (1.826)
Proportion of ST population in district (2004-05)	0.307 (0.332)	0.116 (0.706)	0.529 (0.401)
Proportion of SC population in district (2004-05)	0.220 (0.317)	1.105** (0.559)	0.081 (0.410)
Proportion of OBC population in district (2004-05)	-0.174 (0.144)	0.413 (0.418)	-0.232 (0.167)
Male primary education completion rate in district (2004-05)	0.597 (0.525)	-0.251 (0.754)	1.512* (0.782)
Female primary education completion rate in district (2004-05)	-0.604 (0.423)	-0.529 (0.680)	-1.152* (0.594)
Constant	-0.221 (1.014)	0.704 (1.980)	-0.657 (1.527)
Observations	461	209	252
R-squared	0.035	0.082	0.088
F statistic	0.798	1.009	1.241
p-value	0.730	0.455	0.215

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.3:** Balance table comparing district specific characteristics across districts with more and less number of seriously accused winners in close elections

Variable	All states			BIMAROU			Non-BIMAROU		
	Less	More	Diff	Less	More	Diff	Less	More	Diff
Proportion of urban population in district (2004-05)	0.21 (0.18)	0.20 (0.16)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.15 (0.15)	0.17 (0.15)	0.02 (0.02)	0.27 (0.19)	0.23 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.03)
Proportion of female population in district (2004-05)	0.49 (0.03)	0.49 (0.02)	0.00 (0.00)	0.48 (0.03)	0.48 (0.02)	0.00 (0.00)	0.49 (0.02)	0.49 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.00)
Proportion of ST population in district (2004-05)	0.07 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)	0.01 (0.01)	0.05 (0.12)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.08 (0.14)	0.11 (0.16)	0.03 (0.02)
Proportion of SC population in district (2004-05)	0.20 (0.09)	0.21 (0.09)	0.01 (0.01)	0.21 (0.08)	0.23 (0.07)	0.02 (0.01)	0.19 (0.10)	0.19 (0.09)	0.01 (0.01)
Proportion of OBC population in district (2004-05)	0.45 (0.21)	0.42 (0.20)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.50 (0.15)	0.52 (0.12)	0.01 (0.02)	0.40 (0.25)	0.35 (0.23)	-0.05 (0.04)
Male primary education completion rate in district (2004-05)	0.66 (0.12)	0.65 (0.12)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.59 (0.10)	0.58 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.72 (0.10)	0.70 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.02)
Female primary education completion rate in district (2004-05)	0.49 (0.16)	0.47 (0.15)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.39 (0.11)	0.38 (0.12)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.59 (0.14)	0.54 (0.14)	-0.05** (0.02)
Proportion of constituencies reserved for SC	0.17 (0.12)	0.17 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.20 (0.12)	0.19 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.14 (0.12)	0.15 (0.11)	0.01 (0.02)
Proportion of constituencies reserved for ST	0.09 (0.24)	0.08 (0.20)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.08 (0.22)	0.02 (0.10)	-0.06** (0.03)	0.09 (0.25)	0.12 (0.25)	0.03 (0.04)
Proportion of seriously accused winners in non-close elections	0.18 (0.18)	0.20 (0.18)	0.01 (0.02)	0.19 (0.17)	0.24 (0.18)	0.04 (0.03)	0.18 (0.19)	0.16 (0.17)	-0.01 (0.03)
Proportion of non-seriously/non accused winners in non-close election	0.63 (0.20)	0.61 (0.21)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.59 (0.17)	0.55 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.66 (0.22)	0.66 (0.20)	-0.00 (0.03)
Total constituencies in the district	8.81 (8.66)	9.53 (8.41)	0.72 (0.92)	6.22 (2.59)	6.71 (2.62)	0.49 (0.42)	11.04 (11.13)	11.69 (10.46)	0.64 (1.58)
Observations	166	175		77	76		89	99	

Notes: District-election years with close elections (i.e., districts and election years containing at least one close election (margin of victory less than 3 percent) between seriously accused and their counterparts) are considered as the sample. "Less" refers to districts where the number of seriously accused winners is less than the number of non-seriously accused/non-accused winners considering close elections between them. "More" refers to districts where the number of seriously accused winners is less than the number of non-seriously accused/non-accused winners considering close elections between them. Out of 372 (170 in BIMAROU and 202 in non-BIMAROU) district-election year observations with close elections, 31 (17 in BIMAROU and 14 in non-BIMAROU) observations had the number of seriously accused winners being equal to the number of non-seriously accused/non-accused winners; these 31 observations are not included in the comparison presented in this table. Mean and standard deviation (in parenthesis) are given under *Less* and *More* columns, along with the difference in means and their standard errors (in parenthesis) under the *Diff* columns. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.4:** First stage and 2SLS estimates of seriously accused leader on total crime based on HDI classification

	<b>Total crime</b>			
	All states (1)	Low HDI (2)	Medium HDI (3)	High HDI (4)
<b><i>Second stage estimates</i></b>				
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-141.7 (617.1)	883.6* (462.8)	329.5 (1027.1)	-2296.2 (2719.7)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	53.96	53.29	9.451
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	3646.1	4965.2	5992.6
Observations	5134	1977	1696	1380
<b><i>First stage estimates</i></b>				
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	0.923*** (0.103)	0.901*** (0.123)	1.099*** (0.151)	0.894*** (0.291)
R-squared	0.588	0.546	0.689	0.708
Observations	5134	1977	1696	1380

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. States in Col 1 to 3 are divided by the terciles of HDI ranking (lowest to highest). All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin (linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects.\*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.5:** Comparing the effect of seriously accused leader and non-seriously accused leader on total crime

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b>Second stage estimates</b>			
<i>Outcome: Total crime</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-179.1 (720.7)	1075.1** (512.5)	-2363.3 (1674.4)
Fraction of seats won by non-seriously accused	142.4 (644.7)	292.4 (561.9)	458.0 (1132.1)
Kleibergen-Paap Wald rk F stat	40.96	27.94	8.924
<b>First stage estimates</b>			
<i>Outcome: Fraction of seats won by seriously accused</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	0.910*** (0.101)	0.889*** (0.114)	0.918*** (0.177)
Fraction of seats won by non-seriously accused in close election	-0.107 (0.0993)	-0.388*** (0.133)	0.0532 (0.135)
F stat of excluded instruments	41.80	42.43	13.71
Sanderson-Windmeijer F stat of weak identification test	92.29	59.48	32.93
R-squared	0.607	0.606	0.636
<i>Outcome: Fraction of seats won by non-seriously accused</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	0.126 (0.100)	0.126 (0.0796)	0.0872 (0.222)
Fraction of seats won by non-seriously accused in close election	1.075*** (0.100)	1.152*** (0.106)	1.003*** (0.151)
F stat on excluded instruments	57.53	59.54	22.26
Sanderson-Windmeijer F stat of weak identification test	119.63	103	46.74
R-squared	0.659	0.739	0.633
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious/non-serious crime and a politician not accused of any crime where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close elections in the district, vote margin(linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects.\*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.6:** 2SLS estimates of the effect of leaders with high number of accusations

	Total crime		
	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<i>Second stage estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by highly accused	-181.7 (696.3)	-288.8 (374.3)	-612.8 (1,417)
<i>First stage estimates</i>			
Fraction of seats won by highly accused in close election	1.009*** (0.113)	1.087*** (0.153)	0.918*** (0.154)
First stage R-squared	0.544	0.565	0.568
First stage F stat (on instrument)	79.43	50.25	35.34
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	4152.1	4963.3
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: The main explanatory variable is the fraction of leaders with high (i.e., more than median) number of accusations, irrespective of the seriousness of the crime. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as an election between a highly accused candidate and a non-highly accused candidate (including those not accused of any crime) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, district fixed effects, state specific year fixed effects, and linear function of vote margin. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.7:** OLS estimates of the effect of criminally accused leaders on total crime

	Total crime		
	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<i>Panel A: Leaders accused of any crime</i>			
Fraction of seats won by accused	2.861 (152.2)	57.71 (142.2)	-47.88 (263.4)
<i>Panel B: Leaders accused of serious crime</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	152.9 (203.7)	280.7 (171.2)	26.23 (372.2)
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	4152.1	4963.3
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. OLS regression controls for district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.8:** Reduced form estimates of the effect of criminally accused leaders on total crime

	Total Crime		
	All States (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<i>Panel A: Leaders accused of any crime</i>			
Fraction of seats won by accused in close election	256.3 (540.0)	677.9* (404.1)	-190.4 (1034.2)
<i>Panel B: Leaders accused of serious crime</i>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	-130.8 (583.7)	1011.4** (488.4)	-1477.0 (1123.8)
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	4152.1	4963.3
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election where the top two candidates differ in their criminality status, and the vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. Reduced form regression controls for the proportion of seats that had close elections in the district, vote margin(linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.9:** Reduced form estimates of the effect of leaders accused of serious crime on different categories of crime

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b>A. Violent crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	-2.237 (204.7)	220.4 (270.7)	-239.5 (251.7)
Mean of Violent crimes	1236	1291	1204
<b>A(i). Homicide</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	10.35 (9.129)	19.48* (11.70)	-10.33 (15.49)
Mean of Homicide	67.81	74.78	63.66
<b>A(ii). Other violent crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-12.59 (203.7)	201.0 (269.9)	-229.2 (252.2)
Mean of Other violent crimes	1169	1216	1141
<b>B. Property crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	34.15 (130.3)	143.1 (178.3)	-140.6 (163.5)
Mean of Property crimes	1184	976.7	1308
<b>C. Other crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	-162.7 (521.6)	647.8** (250.2)	-1097 (1167)
Mean of Other crimes	2240	1885	2451
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Violent crimes include homicide (murder and culpable homicide) and other violent crimes (attempt to murder, rape, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, dowry death, molestation, and causing death due to negligence). Property crimes include robbery, dacoity, preparing for dacoity, burglary, theft, breach of trust regarding property, cheating, counterfeiting, and arson. Other crimes include eve-teasing, cruelty by husband/relatives, human trafficking, and other IPC crimes. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin (linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.



**Table A.10:** Reduced form estimates of the effect of leaders accused of serious crime on gender-related and gender-neutral crimes

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b>A. Crime against women</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	98.51* (59.32)	195.6** (77.16)	25.77 (71.09)
Mean of Crime against women	391.3	371.9	402.8
<b>A(i). Violent crime against women</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	24.01 (36.16)	93.75** (43.50)	-39.00 (42.67)
Mean of Violent crime against women	188	207.3	176.5
<b>A(ii). Other crime against women</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	74.51** (37.69)	101.9** (50.18)	64.77 (55.58)
Mean of Other crime against women	203.3	164.6	226.2
<b>B. Gender-neutral violent crime</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	-26.25 (195.2)	126.7 (254.2)	-200.5 (251.5)
Mean of Gender-neutral violent crime	1048	1084	1028
<b>C. Other crimes</b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused in close election	-203.1 (544.6)	689.1** (329.3)	-1302 (1175)
Mean of Other crimes	3221	2697	3533
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Crimes against women include violent crime against women (rape, molestation, and dowry death) and other crimes against women (cruelty by husband/relatives and eve-teasing). Gender-neutral violent crimes include murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping, riots, hurt/grievous hurt, and causing death due to negligence. All remaining crimes are considered in Panel C. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin(linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects.\*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.11:** Reduced form estimates of the effect of seriously accused leaders on individuals' labor force participation

	Labor force participation		
	All (1)	Female (2)	Male (3)
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-0.077** (0.037)	-0.138* (0.071)	-0.015 (0.024)
Mean of Labor force participation	0.633	0.306	0.965
Observations	820,544	412,823	407,721

This analysis considers multiple rounds of National Sample Survey (Employment and Unemployment) and Periodic Labour Force Survey data. Labor force participation is a binary indicator of whether an individual participated in the labor force, based on their activity status in the last seven days prior to the date of survey. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. A close election is defined as an election between politician accused of serious crime and politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-accused politicians) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, district fixed effects, state specific year fixed effects, and linear function of vote margin. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.12:** Robustness: Effect of seriously accused leader on total crime after controlling for different polynomials of vote margins

	Total crime		
	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b><i>Controls: Linear</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-141.7 (617.1)	1055.3** (502.6)	-1684.8 (1283.5)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	70.61	22.26
<b><i>Controls: Quadratic</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	29.20 (588.2)	1047.3** (501.7)	-1073.7 (1232.5)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	81.72	67.70	21.88
<b><i>Controls: Cubic</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	513.6 (606.8)	1086.6** (516.4)	156.3 (1300.0)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	75.68	61.44	18.70
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	4152.1	4963.3
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin (linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects. Quadratic regression in addition controls for square margin. Cubic regression in addition controls for square and cubic margin. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.13:** Robustness: Effect of seriously accused leader on total crime by considering different definitions of close election

	Total crime		
	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b><i>Vote margin: 1 percent</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-1285.9 (1749.9)	4195.1* (2406.9)	-5295.8 (4692.4)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	13.17	6.798	2.945
<b><i>Vote margin: 5 percent</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	52.90 (449.6)	855.1** (427.3)	-731.6 (795.9)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	192.7	85.68	108.4
<b><i>Vote margin: 7 percent</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	196.7 (413.3)	746.2** (342.7)	-465.1 (752.9)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	197.3	109.4	79.86
<b><i>Vote margin: 9 percent</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-124.1 (456.8)	737.7** (358.0)	-1193.3 (848.5)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	197.9	97.17	96.87
<b><i>Vote margin: 11 percent</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-141.7 (617.1)	1055.3** (502.6)	-1684.8 (1283.5)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	70.61	22.26
Mean of Total crime	4660.9	4152.1	4963.3
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than the percent mentioned. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin (linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.14:** Robustness: Effect of seriously accused leader on total crime after removing extreme values and considering alternate dependent variable

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b><i>Outcome: Trimmed total crime</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	131.3 (548.0)	1168.4** (455.4)	-1740.4+ (1228.0)
Mean of Trimmed total crime	4173.2	3984.3	4357.1
First stage F stat (on instrument)	82.22	72.16	22.53
Observations	5033	1875	3155
<b><i>Outcome: Log total crime</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	0.0536 (0.0794)	0.132+ (0.0955)	-0.0988 (0.153)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	80.65	70.61	22.26
Observations	5134	1914	3220

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin(linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects. The dependent variable is trimmed at 1 percent from both ends for each sample in the first panel. The second panel considers the log of total crimes (after adding 1 to total crimes). \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level. + Significant at the 16 percent level.

**Table A.15:** Robustness: Effect of seriously accused leader on lagged outcomes of total crime (from previous years)

	All states (1)	BIMAROU (2)	Non-BIMAROU (3)
<b><i>Outcome: Lag1 (<math>t - 1</math>)</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	205.6 (547.4)	430.6 (413.9)	-63.80 (1246.0)
Mean of Lag1	4513.5	4005.2	4815.5
First stage F stat (on instrument)	57.65	56.10	15.25
Observations	3984	1484	2500
<b><i>Outcome: Lag2 (<math>t - 2</math>)</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	55.46 (882.1)	114.1 (550.0)	410.6 (1560.6)
Mean of Lag2	4420.7	3935.9	4708.6
First stage F stat (on instrument)	35.69	29.56	13.83
Observations	3406	1270	2136
<b><i>Outcome: Lag3 (<math>t - 3</math>)</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-261.7 (957.0)	-756.3 (773.0)	407.5 (1559.4)
Mean of Lag3	4296.7	3842.3	4567.1
First stage F stat (on instrument)	31.16	15.49	18.18
Observations	2839	1059	1780
<b><i>Outcome: Lag4 (<math>t - 4</math>)</i></b>			
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-997.7 (1220.6)	-655.2 (676.5)	-2092.9 (3088.2)
Mean of Lag4	4139.2	3682.1	4411.2
First stage F stat (on instrument)	30.03	11.79	34.62
Observations	2271	847	1424

Notes: Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. Close election is defined as election between a politician accused of serious crime and a politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-criminal) where vote share margin between the winner and the runner up is less than 3 percent. Lag1, Lag2, Lag3 and Lag4 refer to Total Crime one year, two years, three years and four years before the leader is in office. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, vote margin(linear), district fixed effects, year fixed effects, and state specific year fixed effects.\*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level.\*\* Significant at the 5 percent level.\* Significant at the 10 percent level.

**Table A.16:** Effect of seriously accused leaders on working-age individuals' labor force participation in BIMAROU and non-BIMAROU states

	Labor force participation					
	BIMAROU			Non- BIMAROU		
	All (1)	Female (2)	Male (3)	All (4)	Female (5)	Male (6)
<i>Panel A: 2SLS estimates</i>						
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-0.083 <sup>+</sup> (0.055)	-0.144 (0.104)	-0.024 (0.034)	-0.057 (0.069)	-0.128 (0.126)	0.022 (0.035)
First stage F stat (on instrument)	40.45	37.80	43.13	34.68	34.64	34.67
<i>Panel B: Reduced form estimates</i>						
Fraction of seats won by seriously accused	-0.083 <sup>+</sup> (0.050)	-0.143 <sup>+</sup> (0.095)	-0.024 (0.034)	-0.049 (0.059)	-0.109 (0.107)	0.019 (0.031)
Mean of Labor force participation	0.587	0.210	0.965	0.650	0.339	0.965
Observations	210,164	105,349	104,815	610,380	307,474	302,906

Notes: This analysis considers multiple rounds of National Sample Survey (Employment and Unemployment) and Periodic Labour Force Survey data. Labor force participation is a binary indicator of whether an individual participated in the labor force, based on their activity status in the last seven days prior to the date of survey. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level are in parentheses. A close election is defined as an election between politician accused of serious crime and politician not accused of serious crime (this also includes non-accused politicians) where the vote share margin between the winner and the runner-up is less than 3 percent. All regressions control for the proportion of seats that had close election in the district, district fixed effects, state specific year fixed effects, and linear function of vote margin. \*\*\* Significant at the 1 percent level. \*\* Significant at the 5 percent level. \* Significant at the 10 percent level. + Significant at the 15 percent level.

## B Sharp Regression Discontinuity Design

In this section, we explain the sharp RDD used for robustness analysis. Our main empirical strategy revolves around a fuzzy regression discontinuity design, where we aggregate the constituency-level discontinuities in the treatment variable at the district level to construct an appropriate instrumental variable. However, restricting the sample to the districts with a single close election in an election term, we can conduct a sharp regression discontinuity analysis to identify the causal impact of electing a seriously accused leader on the crime environment of the district.

In this setting, the running variable is vote margin ( $M_{dst}$ ), defined as the vote share difference between the seriously accused and the opponent candidate. The probability of a seriously accused candidate winning an election changes discontinuously when the vote margin becomes zero. Specifically, the probability of a seriously accused candidate winning an election is 1 when the vote margin is positive and 0 when the vote margin is negative. We estimate the following specification in a close neighborhood (bandwidth) around the threshold of discontinuity, i.e., for all  $M_{dst} \in (-h, h)$ :

$$C_{ds(t+1)} = \alpha + \beta D_{dst} + F(M_{dst}) + \eta_{ds(t+1)} \quad (4)$$

where  $C_{ds(t+1)}$  refers to the total crime count in district  $d$  in state  $s$  at time  $(t + 1)$ ;  $M_{dst}$  is the running variable;  $D_{dst}$  is the treatment dummy indicating whether a seriously accused politician is elected. By construction,  $D_{dst} = 1$  if  $M_{dst} > 0$ , and  $D_{dst} = 0$  otherwise.  $F(M_{dst})$  is a continuous function of the running variable on each side of the cutoff which is zero in our setting. We estimate a local linear regression with a triangular kernel and choose the optimal band-



width ( $h$ ) following algorithms proposed by [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#) and [Calonico et al. \(2014\)](#). We show results using the optimal bandwidth estimated using the method of [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#), referred to as IK in Table 6. As a robustness check, we show results for alternate bandwidths  $IK/2$  and  $2(IK)$ , which are respectively half and double of the optimal IK bandwidth. We also show results for optimal bandwidth suggested by the method of [Calonico et al. \(2014\)](#), referred to as CCT.