

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

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## Abstract

This paper analyses how media reporting policies on crime impact natives' attitudes towards immigration. We depart from most of the existing literature by investigating the content of crime-related articles instead of their coverage. Specifically, we use a radical change in local media reporting on crime in Germany, following hundreds of sexual assaults in Cologne on the 2015-2016 New Year's Eve, as a natural experiment. This unique framework allows us to estimate whether systematically disclosing the origin of criminals affects natives' attitudes towards immigration. Using individual survey data collected between January 2014 and December 2018 from the German Socio-Economic Panel and analysing more than 545,000 crime-related articles in German newspapers, and data on their diffusion across the country, we find that systematically mentioning the origin of criminals, especially when offenders are natives, significantly reduces natives' worries about immigration.

**Keywords:** Immigration, Crime, Media Bias

**JEL codes:** F22, K42, L82

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