

Breaking News: How Media Coverage Shapes Judicial Responses to Violence Against Women

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Abstract

Violence against women (VAW) is highly prevalent worldwide, yet criminal justice systems often struggle to address it effectively. This paper examines whether media visibility of VAW affects the criminal justice response to sexual and intimate partner violence. It combines novel administrative microdata on criminal cases with high-frequency data on daily TV news broadcasts in France. Leveraging the quasi-random timing of TV news stories about VAW relative to case processing, I find that TV news coverage of VAW leads to a 2.3% increase in the prosecution rate but no increase in the conviction rate in the week following coverage. Suggestive evidence indicates that this shift in prosecutions is likely driven by both priming effects, reflecting short-term cognitive or emotional reactions, and strategic responses to increased public scrutiny and accountability. This occurs in a context where prosecutors largely determine case outcomes: they dismiss nearly 80% of cases, while most prosecuted cases ultimately result in conviction. In line with this pattern, I find that cases prosecuted following TV news coverage of VAW are just as likely to result in conviction as those prosecuted on other days. Consequently, increased media visibility enables more viable cases to reach trial without influencing judges' rulings, thereby strengthening the overall judicial response to VAW.

Keywords – Gender-based violence, Media, Judicial decision, Crime

JEL Classification – D91, I18, J12, J16, K4, K14, L82

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1 Introduction

Violence against women (VAW) is a pervasive social and public health issue, with one in three women worldwide reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime (WHO, 2021). Beyond the immediate physical and mental harm, such violence can have long-lasting economic consequences for victims' educational and employment trajectories (Adams-Prassl et al., 2024, 2025; Batut et al., 2021; Borker et al., 2021; Folke & Rickne, 2022). Despite these substantial costs to women and society, criminal justice systems worldwide continue to face challenges in responding effectively, with available evidence documenting widespread underreporting and low prosecution rates across many countries (Daly & Bouhours, 2010).¹ These patterns contribute to high levels of case attrition, whereby cases are dropped or fail to progress through the criminal justice process. In addition to limiting the justice system's ability to hold perpetrators accountable and deter such crimes (Chalfin & McCrary, 2017), this attrition may further discourage victims from coming forward and reinforce a cycle of impunity (Wieberneit et al., 2024).

These crimes typically occur in private settings, with few witnesses and little material evidence, making them especially difficult to investigate and prosecute. At the same time, such constraints often leave considerable room for discretion in how cases are processed, potentially opening the door to harmful social norms, beliefs, and attitudes that tend to downplay or justify this violence² and can influence how police, prosecutors, and judges handle these crimes (Bielen et al., 2022; Sleath & Bull, 2017). Yet norms and institutional behavior are not fixed. For example, the #MeToo movement has shown that increased visibility of sexual violence can shift beliefs and attitudes toward such violence (Acquaviva et al., 2021; Levy & Mattsson, 2023; Szekeres et al., 2020). But does greater public salience of VAW translate into consistent changes in judicial responses?

This paper analyzes how the criminal justice system responds to the growing visibility of VAW by examining the impact of media coverage of such violence on judicial decision-making. The media, by reflecting and shaping public awareness and expectations regarding how such violence should be handled, offers a valuable tool to examine this question.

¹For example, in France, victimization surveys estimate that only 10–20% of victims of sexual or intimate partner violence report their assault to the authorities (SSMSI, 2019). Administrative judicial data further indicate that, among these reported cases, 70–80% are dismissed by prosecutors in correctional and juvenile courts, and 15–30% result in conviction in those courts (Stricot, 2024).

²For instance, research in social psychology has long highlighted the existence of rape myths, formally defined by Burt (1980) as “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists” (p. 217), such as the belief that women lie about rape or were responsible for it (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). A corollary to these myths is the “classic rape” stereotype, involving a sudden violent attack by a stranger in a deserted public space, with physical resistance from the victim (Estrich, 1987).

Assessing whether this impact is causal is empirically challenging without granular data and an exogenous setting to address reverse causality. Moreover, it is not clear whether media influence should be viewed as desirable: while prevailing social norms may lead to the minimization of VAW in the justice system, heightened public expectations could also risk pushing decision-makers toward over-punishment. I address this question by leveraging a unique setting that enables causal identification of the effect of news coverage of VAW on prosecutors and judges' decisions. It combines high-frequency data on the daily content of France's main 8pm national TV newscasts, which reach over 10 million viewers each day, with rich, novel administrative microdata on nearly all cases processed by the French criminal justice system between 2012 and 2019. These individual case-level data contain detailed information on 792,802 cases of sexual or intimate partner violence handled in correctional and juvenile courts (excluding rape felonies tried in criminal courts), tracking each case from the initial incident through every stage of the process, including reporting, prosecution, and sentencing decisions.

I begin by examining the internal dynamics of the French criminal justice system to better understand where media exposure is most likely to affect judicial decision-making. I document the extent of prosecutors' power and discretion in the judicial handling of sexual and intimate partner violence cases, showing that they dismiss more than three-quarters of cases at the outset, primarily on the grounds of insufficient evidence or indeterminate facts. These legal grounds reflect evidentiary challenges and typically involve a high degree of prosecutorial discretion. Strikingly, however, once prosecuted, the vast majority of cases (94%) result in conviction, suggesting less room for adjustment at the trial stage than at the prosecutorial stage. This pattern is consistent with a model of decision-making under constraints: in judicial systems with limited resources, pursuing cases with weak evidence is costly when conviction is unlikely (Easterbrook, 1983; Landes, 1971). As a result, prosecutors may adopt implicit evidentiary thresholds to decide which cases proceed to trial, which could be affected by extraneous factors such as the media.

To explore how media coverage of VAW may relate to judicial responses, I first investigate their respective trends over time. Using keyword analysis, I identify news stories covering this violence in the French 8pm national TV newscasts. Between 2000 and 2021, such stories accounted for less than 1% of all topics, compared to 5% for crime-related news more broadly, remaining fairly stable until 2017 and increasing notably thereafter, in the wake of the #MeToo movement. This rise has also been accompanied by a shift in media framing, reflected in the growing use of the term "femicide". In parallel, I

document a steady increase in the number of cases handled by the criminal justice system since 2012, with a marked acceleration beginning in 2017 and a declining dismissal rate for intimate partner violence since 2016. These global trends suggest an alignment between growing media attention to VAW and its judicial handling, especially after #MeToo.

To assess whether this increased visibility of VAW shapes judicial responses, I then estimate the causal effects of TV news coverage of VAW on each stage of the criminal justice process. The strategy leverages the quasi-random timing of TV news stories about VAW relative to case processing in the short run, comparing prosecution, conviction, and sentencing decisions made shortly after isolated days of news coverage, versus during periods without such coverage, using a similar design to that employed by Philippe and Ouss (2018). Identification relies on the assumption that, absent news coverage, outcomes in the days following relatively more TV news stories about VAW would have evolved similarly to those in the days following relatively less or no stories, after controlling for case characteristics and seasonality. Empirically, I show that cases are similar regardless of whether decisions are handed down just after news stories. I rule out reverse causality by focusing on news stories about crimes against women that do not mention trials or legislation and are unlikely to relate to the cases under examination. To ensure that results are not driven by changes in the composition of cases entering the system, I also examine impacts on reporting.

I find that TV news coverage of VAW significantly influences prosecutorial decisions in the short run. On average, each additional news story on crimes against women decreases the propensity to dismiss a case in the following seven days by 0.54 percentage points. Cumulative analyses show that prosecutors are not merely postponing dismissal decisions over time, and the timing of case processing remains unaffected. Relative to a baseline prosecution rate of 23%, this corresponds to a 2.3% increase in the likelihood of prosecuting sexual or intimate partner violence, translating to approximately 260 additional cases prosecuted per year on average. The effect is concentrated in marginal cases with greater prosecutorial discretion, such as those involving multiple offenses, shorter investigations, or dismissals for lack of evidence. However, news stories do not significantly affect reporting, showing only a marginal increase in the number of new registered cases and no change in reporting time. For prosecuted cases, I find no direct impact of media exposure on judges' decisions regarding conviction or sentence length at trial. Overall, the results suggest that media attention primarily affects the judicial process at the prosecution stage – a critical stage where most cases are filtered out – by bringing more cases to trial.

A key concern is whether this increased likelihood of prosecution leads to weaker cases entering the system. If prosecutors were lowering their standards in response to increased public attention, conviction rates would be expected to drop. However, examining long-term outcomes, I find that cases prosecuted following news coverage of crimes against women are just as likely to result in conviction as other cases. The absence of any direct effect on judges' decisions, combined with the long interval between prosecution and sentencing, makes it unlikely that judges are lowering their standards for conviction. This suggests that prosecutors are not compromising case quality; instead, cases that might have been dismissed without media attention were legally viable and met the evidentiary threshold for conviction.

I conduct several falsification exercises and robustness checks to ensure that the results are not driven by other underlying trends. In particular, I test whether news coverage of crimes against women affects the propensity to dismiss unrelated offenses, and whether news unrelated to VAW affects the propensity to dismiss VAW cases. Reassuringly, I find no effect in either placebo test. A falsification test using 500 randomly assigned fake treatment dates similarly yields no significant effect. Moreover, controlling for periods of heightened visibility of women (e.g., International Women's Day) or VAW-related legislative changes does not alter the results, helping to rule out potential confounding factors. Finally, the findings remain robust to alternative measures of news coverage and to variations in sample restrictions and model specifications, including limiting the sample to cases registered before the news coverage, controlling for holidays, removing weekends, and excluding each news day, month, or county in leave-one-out analyses.

Heterogeneity analyses indicate that the effect of TV news coverage on prosecutorial decisions is more pronounced when TV audiences are larger and in courts with higher baseline dismissal rates or greater exposure to VAW cases. Content-based analyses show that it occurs following both emotionally resonant stories (e.g., victim testimonies) and those questioning police or judicial accountability. Interestingly, the effect arises only in the post-#MeToo period, suggesting that a broader normative shift heightening sensitivity to VAW is necessary for media coverage to alter prosecutorial behavior. Taken together, these findings provide suggestive evidence consistent with two potential mechanisms: short-term cognitive or emotional reactions triggered by news coverage (*priming*), and strategic responses to increased public scrutiny and accountability in case handling (*signaling*).

Overall, these findings underscore the pivotal role of prosecutors in the judicial response to VAW. Prosecutors dismiss nearly 80% of cases at the outset, while most

prosecuted cases ultimately result in conviction at trial. Yet this initial decision proves malleable: media coverage increases the likelihood that VAW cases are prosecuted in the short run, which in turn allows more viable cases to reach trial without biasing judges' rulings. This raises important questions about the role of prosecutorial discretion and its implications for both the equity and efficiency of the criminal justice system. Judicial outcomes are not solely determined by the evidentiary strength of a case but can also respond to broader contextual factors, such as the salience of VAW in public discourse. From a policy perspective, these results suggest that increasing the salience of such violence more broadly could help improve how criminal justice systems handle these crimes.

Related literature and contributions This paper contributes to three strands of the literature. First, I build on the literature examining how extraneous factors influence judicial decisions. Prior research has mostly focused on judges and jury decision-making, using highly selected samples of tried cases to examine sentencing variations driven by contextual factors (Chen & Philippe, 2023; Danziger et al., 2011; Eren & Mocan, 2018; Heyes & Saberian, 2019; McConnell & Rasul, 2021; Philippe & Ouss, 2018; Shumway & Wilson, 2022), or by intrinsic characteristics of judges, jurors and defendants (Abrams et al., 2012; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2014; Anwar et al., 2012, 2014, 2019; Ash & Marangon, 2024; Shayo & Zussman, 2011). In contrast, despite the central role of prosecutors in case attrition globally (Daly & Bouhours, 2010; Hohl & Stanko, 2015), prosecutorial decision-making remains comparatively underexplored in the economics literature (Garoupa, 2012; Tonry, 2012; Voigt & Wulf, 2019). This is especially true outside the United States (U.S.), where prosecutors are typically appointed rather than elected, although a few recent studies have examined the effect of salience shocks on prosecutorial decisions in the Netherlands (Bielen & Grajzl, 2021; Hanemaaijer et al., 2024). I contribute to this literature by shifting the focus from sentencing alone to earlier stages of the judicial process, including prosecution, in a modern European setting where judicial actors are appointed civil servants. My results highlight the role of prosecutorial discretion in the handling of VAW cases and the factors that influence it.

Second, I add to a growing literature on the effect of media on policy-relevant behaviors, particularly crime and judicial decisions. Prior work has shown that media exposure is a powerful driver of attitudes and behavior and can challenge entrenched gender norms, for instance by reducing the acceptability of intimate partner violence and increasing the willingness to report it (Banerjee et al., 2019; Colagrossi et al., 2023; DellaVigna &

La Ferrara, 2015; Green et al., 2020; Jensen & Oster, 2009). It can also affect judicial behavior by increasing accountability, especially in settings where judges are elected (Ash & Poyker, 2023; Lim, 2015; Lim et al., 2015). Yet, despite the growing visibility of VAW and the challenges of investigating such crimes, little is known about how media coverage shapes judicial responses. Existing evidence is scarce and limited to a few settings. Notably, Vasishth (2022) finds that local news coverage of sexual violence increases conviction rates in India, and Philippe and Ouss (2018) show that general crime coverage affects sentencing decisions made by civilian jurors for severe crimes in France, although their focus is not specifically on VAW. Using new data from France that allow me to examine earlier stages of the judicial process, I contribute to this literature by providing the first causal evidence that media coverage of crimes against women shifts prosecutorial behavior in the handling of sexual and intimate partner violence cases.

Third, this paper complements the literature on the impact of gender norms and policy interventions on gender-based violence. Prior research has examined how institutional reforms (Aizer & Dal Bo, 2009; Amaral et al., 2023, 2025; Arteaga et al., 2025; Chin & Cunningham, 2019; Costa et al., 2024; Ferraz & Schiavon, 2022; García-Hombrados et al., 2024; Iyengar, 2009; Sviatschi & Trako, 2024) and increased female representation (Amaral et al., 2021; Iyer et al., 2012; Miller & Segal, 2019) can reduce prevalence or increase reporting, and how gender norms shape behavior and institutions in the context of VAW (Alesina et al., 2021; González & Rodríguez-Planas, 2020; Guarnieri & Tur-Prats, 2023; Tur-Prats, 2019). Much less is known about how changes in public attention, such as through media coverage, affect institutional responses to this violence. I contribute to this literature by showing that even temporary increases in the visibility of VAW can enhance criminal justice responses. While previous studies have linked social movements like #MeToo to increased reporting of gender-based violence (Battisti et al., 2024; Gauthier, 2022; Levy & Mattsson, 2023), I show that it also marked a turning point in how routine media coverage influences judicial actors, complementing Cai et al. (2024)'s findings on how #MeToo affected female judges' decisions in domestic violence cases. More broadly, I demonstrate that shifts in public awareness and visibility can help reshape institutional responses, with concrete implications for how such violence is addressed in practice.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the institutional background. Section 3 presents the data and discusses some descriptive statistics. Section 4 outlines the theoretical basis and empirical strategy. Sections 5 and 6 present and discuss the main results. Finally, Section 7 concludes.

2 Institutional Background

The French criminal justice system The French criminal justice system consists of three main stages shown in Figure 1, during which police officers, prosecutors, and judges each make key decisions. All of these actors are civil servants affiliated with the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Justice, with specific provisions for judges, such as guarantees of independence and security of tenure. Unlike in the U.S., where these officials are elected, prosecutors and judges in France are appointed by presidential decree on the recommendation of the Ministry of Justice, after passing competitive entrance exams and completing a formal training program.

Criminal proceedings typically begin when an offense is reported to the police, either through a complaint filed by the victim or a report submitted by a third party, such as a witness. Before launching an investigation, the police must immediately forward information about the reported offense to the public prosecutor. The law stipulates that this transmission must occur as quickly as possible, within a matter of hours or days.³ The public prosecutor may also become aware of an offense through the direct receipt of complaints or denunciations, or through any civil servant who are legally obligated to report if they learn of an offense.

Prosecutors and judges In France, the public prosecutor is the magistrate who advocates for the enforcement of the law and leads criminal proceedings on behalf of society's interest.⁴ Their authority primarily applies to criminal matters, from the initiation of the police investigation to the trial of the defendant. Prosecutors are responsible for qualifying the facts and are the sole authority in deciding the direction of a case. For example, they supervise police investigations and custody measures, and decide whether to prosecute within a judicial court. Each court has its own public prosecutor's office, composed of a Chief Prosecutor and several deputies or substitutes, who function as a single, unified body. Members of the public prosecutor's office are considered indivisible and interchangeable, meaning that any of them may represent the public prosecutor's office at any stage of the proceedings.⁵ Prosecutors are subject to a hierarchical structure

³Article 40 of the French Code of Criminal Procedure.

⁴Articles 53 to 80 of the French Code of Criminal Procedure.

⁵In 2023, there were approximately 2,200 full-time equivalent prosecutors across all French jurisdictions (3.2 per 100,000 inhabitants). By contrast, there were about 7,900 professional judges in judicial and administrative jurisdictions (11.5 per 100,000 inhabitants) (SDSE, 2024).

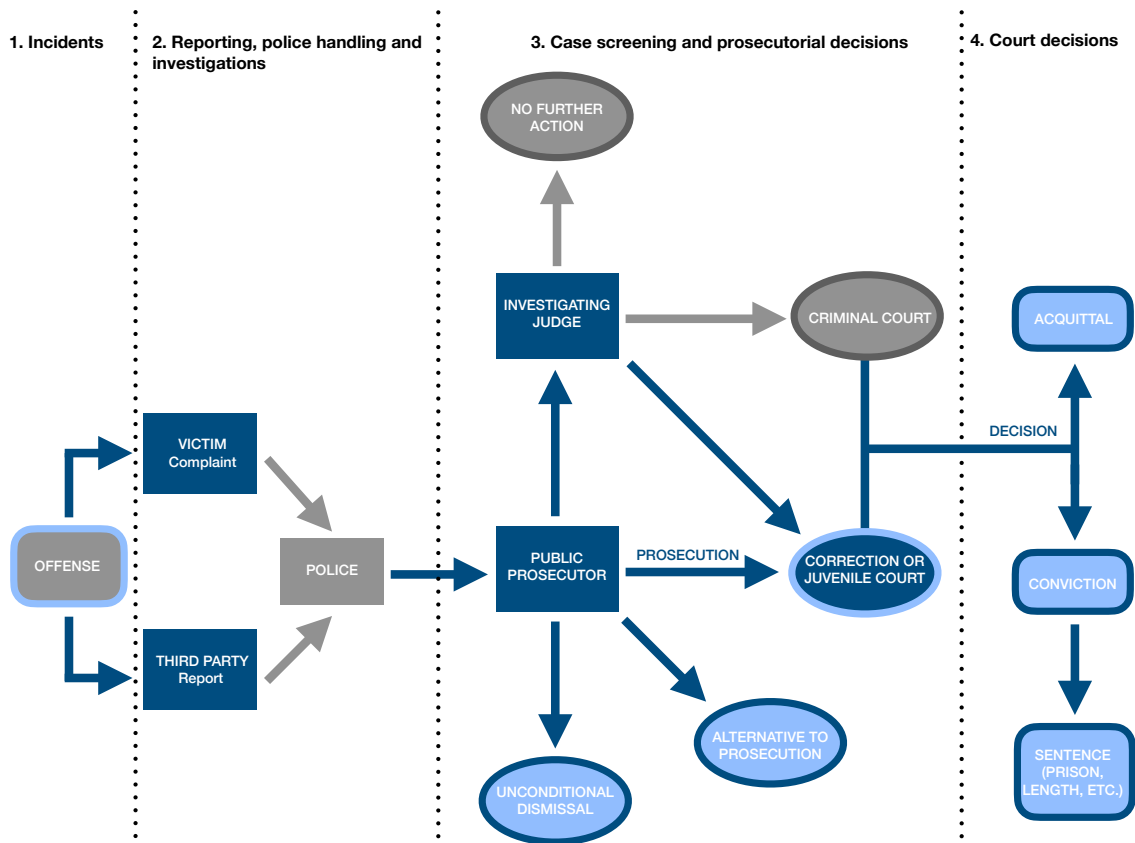


Figure 1: Chronology of the French criminal procedure

Notes: Main steps of the criminal justice system procedure in France, from offense reporting to the perpetrator’s final trial. The data contain information only about cases registered by the authorities, without details on the police handling of cases. Among those registered cases, it provides information on the universe of completed cases handled by the criminal justice system, excluding those dropped by the investigating judge or sent to the criminal court (steps shown in gray). In 2019, 84% of cases prosecuted by the public prosecutor’s office were brought before correction courts, 8% before juvenile courts, 5% before police courts and 3% were referred to investigating judges (SDSE, 2019).

and are subordinate to the Ministry of Justice.⁶ They receive directives and circulars aimed at implementing a comprehensive and uniform criminal policy across the country, such as guidelines for handling cases and prioritizing certain offenses. In addition, Chief Prosecutors may establish local guidelines within their own judicial court.

By contrast, judges are responsible for applying the law and delivering decisions with full independence and impartiality. In criminal matters, they determine guilt and impose sentences on convicted offenders. Their role is to examine case files, conduct hearings, and render judgments in the name of the people. Their status guarantees independence and security of tenure, meaning that they cannot be reassigned without their consent. This independence is further protected by the fact that the government cannot interfere in their career advancement.

⁶Prosecutors have no fixed term of office; they are appointed to specific posts for a set period (often 3 to 7 years), but may be transferred or promoted over the course of their careers and reassigned without their consent. Unlike in some countries, French public prosecutors and judges do not systematically change with each new government.

Prosecutors' handling of a case After learning of an offense, prosecutors are responsible for overseeing the police investigation and have several options for directing the case based on the information received (see Figure 1). If they decide not to prosecute, they can either pronounce a pure dismissal, for instance, if the perpetrator is unknown or if prosecution seems inappropriate. There is no further investigation, no trial, and the case is closed.⁷ The decision to dismiss a case is subject to a notice from the public prosecutor's office sent to the complainant, indicating the reason for dismissal. Prosecutors can also order alternatives to prosecution (e.g., reparation of damage, compensation for the victim, therapeutic injunction, reminder of the law, etc.), which also legally result in a dismissal and do not appear on the defendant's criminal record.⁸

Alternatively, if prosecutors deem that there are sufficient grounds, they can decide to prosecute the defendant. Prosecuted cases are referred to a trial court or investigating judge, depending on the seriousness and complexity of the facts. If further investigation is needed, prosecutors can refer the case to an investigating judge, which is mandatory for felonies. The investigating judge can then decide to drop the case or send it to court for trial. Prosecutors can choose among several procedural routes to bring a case before a court for trial (e.g., immediate appearance, direct summons, plea bargaining procedure, etc.). Each has distinct implications, for instance regarding the time to judgment, the possibility of pretrial detention, or the severity of the sentence.

Criminal judgment and types of courts A judgment is then handed down by the court, where judges determine whether the offender is guilty or innocent, resulting in either a conviction or an acquittal. There are three main types of trial courts regarding criminal matters in France: (i) correctional courts (*tribunal correctionnel*), (ii) criminal courts (*cour d'assises*) and (iii) juvenile courts (*tribunal pour enfants*).⁹ The most serious offenses (felonies, e.g., murder), which carry a maximum prison sentence of more than 10 years,

⁷Dismissing a case is not a final decision. Prosecutors can revisit their decision at any time and choose to initiate legal proceedings, unless the statute of limitations has expired or the perpetrator has died. The complainant can also contest the dismissal and has legal means to ensure that action is taken, either by filing a complaint with an investigating judge (complaint with civil-party application) or by directly referring the case to court through a direct summons (although this is rare in practice), or by filing a civil claim for damages in compensation for the harm suffered – all at their own expense.

⁸Except for the penal composition (*composition pénale*), which is a reinforced alternative to prosecution that is recorded on the criminal record.

⁹Minor offenses (fines, e.g. traffic offenses), which are punishable by a fine, are tried in police courts. The data used for the analysis covers only a fraction of these minor offenses (5th-class fines). France also introduced departmental criminal courts in January 2023. They specialize in the trial of the most serious crimes but are composed exclusively of professional judges. My data do not cover these courts.

are tried in criminal courts composed of civilian jurors.¹⁰ Other offenses (misdemeanors, e.g., sexual assault) which carry a maximum sentence of less than 10 years, are tried in correctional courts composed solely of professional judges. Offenses involving defendants younger than 18 (resp. 16) at the time of the misdemeanors (resp. felonies) are tried in juvenile courts. This paper focuses on cases tried in correctional and juvenile courts, as the data do not cover criminal courts.¹¹ Guilt and sentencing are both determined on the day of the verdict in these courts,¹² and the decision can be appealed by the defendant or the prosecutor. Further details on the organization and functioning of the French criminal justice system are provided in Appendix A.

3 Data and Descriptive Statistics

3.1 Judicial data

Data source The main data source on judicial decisions comes from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice. This software is used by court clerks within French judicial courts to process all offenses related to minor offenses, misdemeanors, and felonies, committed by individuals (adults and minors) or legal entities. It enables court clerks and magistrates to keep track of all ongoing cases for administrative purposes.¹³ The French Ministry of Justice also exploits these data for statistical purposes.

The micro-data extracted from this software provide unique and rich information on all completed cases received by prosecutors and judges, classified as dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2023.¹⁴ The software was gradually rolled out to all public prosecutors' offices between 2008 and 2013, with data completeness ensured from 2012 onwards. However, since data are available only for completed cases and not for those still being processed, the Ministry of Justice's statistics department

¹⁰Felonies may be judged in correctional courts in the case of decriminalization (*correctionnalisation*), which consists of reducing a felony to a misdemeanor, tried in correctional courts. This procedure is common with rape cases (Cromer et al., 2017). The law n°2004-204 of March 9, 2004, made the judicial decriminalization process legal to relieve congestion in criminal courts.

¹¹At first instance, correctional courts are made up of three professional judges or a single judge for less serious offenses. Juvenile courts are made up of professional and civilian jurors in the case of felonies and only professional judges when it comes to misdemeanors.

¹²The Juvenile Criminal Justice Code enacted on September 30, 2021 later introduced a two-stage procedure in juvenile courts, with an initial judgment on guilt and a second judgment on punishment following a period of educational probation.

¹³For example, court clerks use this software to create the date of the summons for the defendant once the hearing date has been set, or to record the date of the decision that will prevail in a contested case.

¹⁴The data are anonymous and only accessible through a highly secured platform that maintains data confidentiality, the Secure Data Access Center (CASD).

considers them reliable only up to two years before the latest release. For these reasons, and because judicial activity was substantially disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I limit the analysis to the 2012–2019 period. With one observation per case, the initial dataset contains over 22 million charge-level observations for this period.

This source collects information on the crime/offense (e.g., nature of the offense, number of offenses, number of victims), the perpetrator (e.g., gender, age, nationality, recidivism), the jurisdiction that handled the case (type and location), the decision to dismiss or prosecute the case made by the prosecutor and the associated motives, the decision to convict or acquit the defendant made by the judge and the associated sentence, as well as the dates of each stage in the process. Information pertains only to the judicial process, with no data on police handling, preventing me from accessing direct information on police practices related to the recording, forwarding, or investigation of cases. Because I do not observe the exact date of the complaint, I approximate the reporting date using the date on which the case is first registered within the criminal justice system, as transmission from the police to prosecutors is legally required to occur almost immediately (see Section 2). In addition, the data include no personal identifiers for prosecutors or judges, including gender and age, as their collection and analysis are prohibited under French law.¹⁵

Case identification The nature of cases is identified by an official nomenclature, which assigns a main case type (NATAFF code) upon arrival at the public prosecutor’s office, enabling an initial classification of the case.¹⁶ Present in all affairs, it is used to classify cases into broad categories throughout the referral process.¹⁷ Using the NATAFF code, I restrict the sample to judicial cases of sexual violence (defined as rape, sexual assault, or sexual harassment) or intimate partner violence (defined as violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner), which amounts to 792,802 charge-level observations involving 703,695 identified authors and corresponding to 732,644 affairs (3.6% of all cases handled by the criminal justice system). Marital rapes will generally enter the category of intimate partner violence. When there is more than one incident of sexual violence, the classification refers to the most serious. It is important to note that the NATAFF classification may not

¹⁵Article 33 of Law No. 2019-222 of 23 March 2019 on the Programming and Justice Reform.

¹⁶The nature of the case (NATAFF) is described using a 350-item nomenclature (which is subject to minor variations over time).

¹⁷Beyond this NATAFF classification that marks the beginning of the case, as soon as a prosecution decision is taken, at least one type of offense (NATINF code) is systematically assigned to the case. This code describes the nature of the offense in great detail (with over 18,000 different items), but does not exist for all cases. While magistrates systematically assign a precise legal classification to prosecuted individuals, and therefore a NATINF code, this is done less consistently for dismissed cases.

capture all cases of intimate partner violence, as some may fall under other categories of physical violence (e.g., assault resulting in a temporary inability to work). These cases can be retrospectively identified as intimate partner violence using their NATINF code, which is assigned at the prosecution stage. However, this correction can only be applied to prosecuted cases for which a NATINF code exists, which may introduce selection bias. That said, this classification issue appears to affect only a very small proportion of cases. Additional details on the legal qualification and selection process of cases are provided in Appendix A and B.

3.2 Descriptive statistics on judicial data

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on sexual and intimate partner violence cases received by the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. On average, 305 new cases reach the justice system each day, 64% of which are cases of intimate partner violence, 23% sexual assault, 12% rape, and 1% sexual harassment.¹⁸ The vast majority of cases were referred to the justice system by the police (87%), while 7% originated from reports made by other administrations and 5% from individuals (e.g., victims, witnesses) who approached the prosecutor directly. Defendants are predominantly male (90%) and born in France (76%), with an average age of 36.2 years. Fourteen percent of prosecuted defendants were repeat offenders (5% in sexual violence cases and 16% in intimate partner violence cases).

The prosecution rate is low, with only 24% of cases prosecuted on average (17% for sexual violence and 29% for intimate partner violence), making this initial stage of decision-making a key driver of case attrition. Figure 2 shows that one fifth (21%) of all cases were dismissed with an alternative to prosecution (mostly a simple reminder of the law or mediation), 7% were dismissed following a failure to prosecute (notably because the victim does not comply with requests for information or due to failure to find the perpetrator), and half were dismissed because they were deemed non-prosecutable. Within this last category, the main reason for dismissal is that the offense is insufficiently characterized (36% of all cases). This does not imply that the offense did not occur, but rather that there is not enough evidence or that the facts are not clearly established.

¹⁸In principle, rape is considered a felony by the law and should therefore be tried in criminal court. However, a relatively large proportion of rapes are being decriminalized either upon their arrival at the public prosecutor's office or following the investigation. Several studies based on the examination of court files estimate that almost half of all sexual assaults prosecuted in correctional courts are decriminalized rapes (Cromer et al., 2017). In 2018, 80% of rape convictions were pronounced by criminal courts, and 20% by another jurisdiction (SDSE, 2019). My results are robust to excluding rapes from the analysis.

Table 1: Summary statistics on judicial cases of sexual and intimate partner violence (2012-2019)

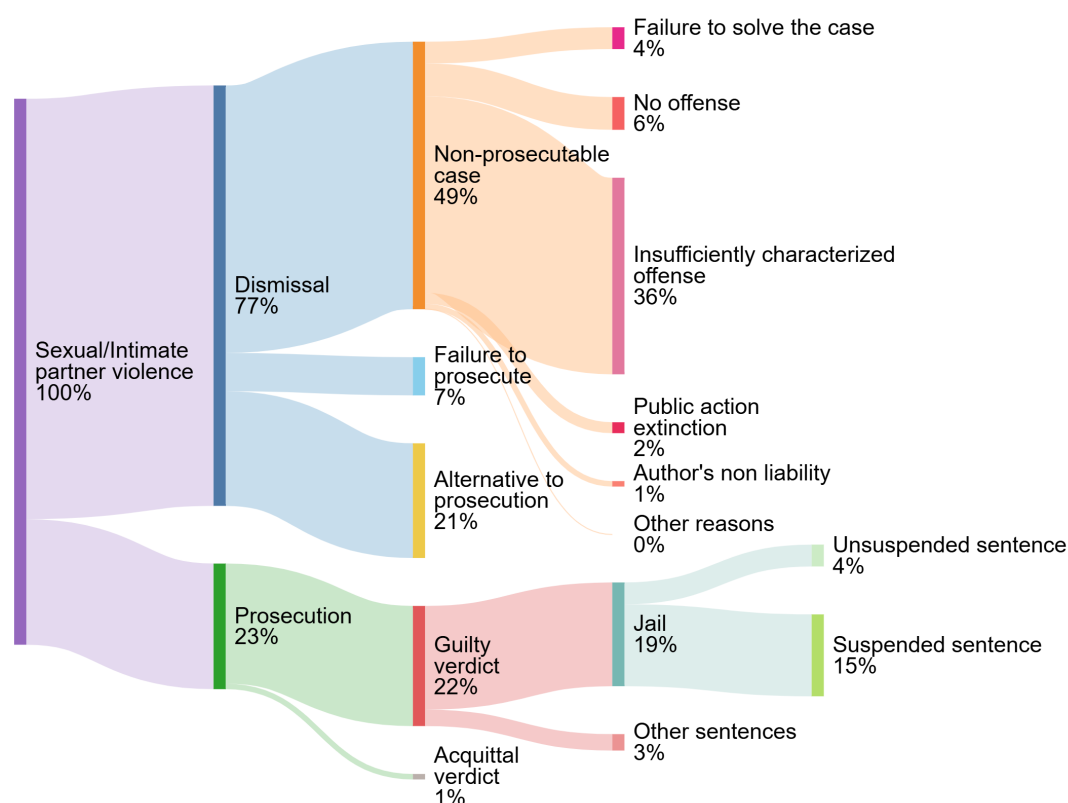
	Mean	Sd	Median	Min	Max
A. Sexual and intimate partner violence cases ($N = 792, 802$)					
No. of new cases per day	305.20	118.75	333.00	77.00	2044.00
<i>Offense:</i>					
Rape	0.12	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.00
Sexual assault	0.23	0.42	0.00	0.00	1.00
Sexual harassment	0.01	0.11	0.00	0.00	1.00
Intimate partner violence	0.64	0.48	1.00	0.00	1.00
<i>Origin:</i>					
Police	0.87	0.34	1.00	0.00	1.00
Persons	0.05	0.22	0.00	0.00	1.00
Justice	0.01	0.11	0.00	0.00	1.00
Other administrations	0.07	0.25	0.00	0.00	1.00
Prosecution rate	0.24	0.43	0.00	0.00	1.00
Conviction rate (if prosecuted)	0.94	0.24	1.00	0.00	1.00
Prison sentence (days) (if convicted)	274.80	330.25	180.00	6.00	6480.00
Investigation length (days) until decision	204.71	215.25	127.00	0.00	1076.00
Investigation length (days) until dismissal	224.80	281.08	120.00	0.00	1814.00
<i>Author:</i>					
Fraction male	0.90	0.30	1.00	0.00	1.00
Age	36.22	13.54	35.00	10.00	96.00
Fraction French-born	0.76	0.43	1.00	0.00	1.00
Fraction recidivist (if prosecuted)	0.14	0.34	0.00	0.00	1.00
B. Sexual violence cases ($N = 279, 511$)					
No. of new cases per day	111.33	54.90	124.00	9.00	663.00
<i>Origin:</i>					
Police	0.71	0.46	1.00	0.00	1.00
Persons	0.10	0.29	0.00	0.00	1.00
Justice	0.03	0.16	0.00	0.00	1.00
Other administrations	0.17	0.37	0.00	0.00	1.00
Prosecution rate	0.17	0.37	0.00	0.00	1.00
Conviction rate (if prosecuted)	0.90	0.30	1.00	0.00	1.00
Prison sentence (days) (if convicted)	557.94	533.32	360.00	8.00	5400.00
Investigation length (days) until decision	383.41	278.49	357.00	0.00	1075.00
Investigation length (days) until dismissal	274.13	324.41	149.00	0.00	1789.00
<i>Author:</i>					
Fraction male	0.94	0.23	1.00	0.00	1.00
Age	32.08	16.76	30.00	10.00	96.00
Fraction French-born	0.81	0.39	1.00	0.00	1.00
Fraction recidivist (if prosecuted)	0.05	0.22	0.00	0.00	1.00
C. Intimate partner violence cases ($N = 519, 183$)					
No. of new cases per day	196.37	68.75	208.00	52.00	1407.00
<i>Origin:</i>					
Police	0.96	0.19	1.00	0.00	1.00
Persons	0.02	0.15	0.00	0.00	1.00
Justice	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	1.00
Other administrations	0.01	0.10	0.00	0.00	1.00
Prosecution rate	0.29	0.45	0.00	0.00	1.00
Conviction rate (if prosecuted)	0.95	0.21	1.00	0.00	1.00
Prison sentence (days) (if convicted)	204.62	201.37	150.00	6.00	6480.00
Investigation length (days) until decision	159.56	168.27	108.00	0.00	1076.00
Investigation length (days) until dismissal	196.43	248.61	105.00	0.00	1814.00
<i>Author:</i>					
Fraction male	0.88	0.32	1.00	0.00	1.00
Age	37.83	11.64	36.00	10.00	96.00
Fraction French-born	0.73	0.44	1.00	0.00	1.00
Fraction recidivist (if prosecuted)	0.16	0.37	0.00	0.00	1.00

Notes: Summary statistics on all cases of sexual and intimate partner violence received across all French jurisdictions and either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019.

Reading: Between 2012 and 2019, there was an average of 305 new sexual and intimate partner violence cases registered daily within the French criminal justice system, with 64% of these cases pertaining to intimate partner violence. Among these cases, 24% were prosecuted, and 94% of the prosecuted perpetrators were convicted.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Figure 2: Judicial handling of sexual and intimate partner violence cases (2012-2019)



Notes: Share of cases at each stage of the criminal justice system process, among all cases of sexual and intimate partner violence received across all French jurisdictions and either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019.

Reading: 77% of sexual and intimate partner violence cases completed between 2012 and 2019 were dismissed, with 49% of all cases dismissed because they were deemed not prosecutable. The perpetrator was prosecuted in 23% of cases and found guilty in 21%, with a prison sentence imposed in 19% of all sexual and intimate partner violence cases.

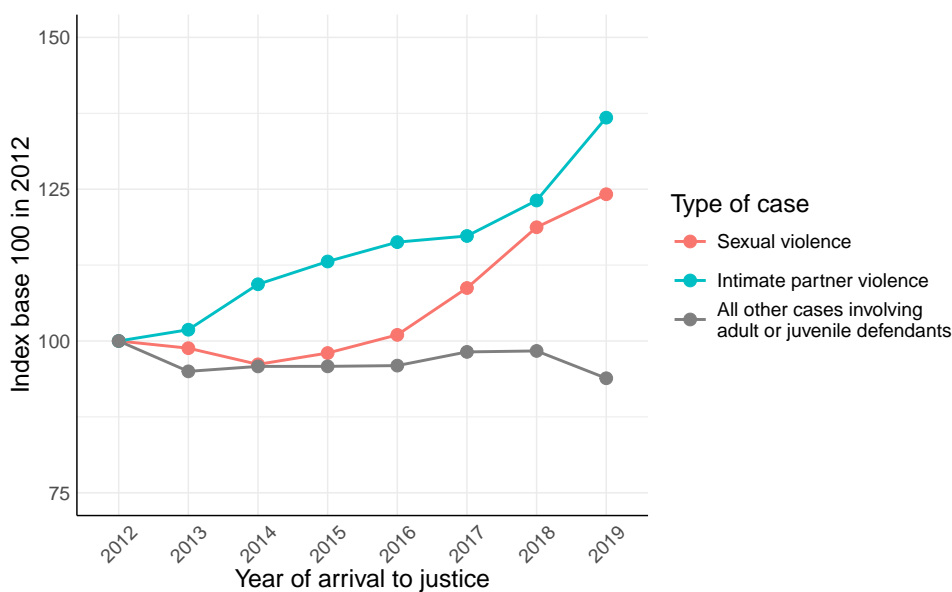
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

This legal basis for dismissal, which relies on assessments of the available evidence and inherently involves a high degree of prosecutorial discretion due to evidentiary challenges, is highly specific to sexual and intimate partner violence. Indeed, Figure B1 shows that the dismissal rate for any other type of crime – which are mainly thefts or burglaries (28.62%), driving violations such as driving under alcohol or drugs (8.76%), physical violence (8.40%) or destruction (8.34%) – is also very high (80%). However, these affairs are mainly dismissed due to failure to solve the case, notably because the perpetrator is only identified in three out of five cases. In contrast, perpetrators of sexual and intimate partner violence are identified in 90% of the cases.

Strikingly, once prosecuted, the vast majority of defendants (94%) are found guilty at trial (90% for sexual violence and 95% for intimate partner violence). Combining the prosecution and trial decisions, Figure 2 shows that one fifth of all cases ultimately led to a conviction and 19% to a jail sentence, but only 4% to an unsuspended sentence, in

which the offender is actually incarcerated. These stylized facts highlight the considerable power and discretion exercised by prosecutors in France, who determine the outcome (most often, the dismissal) of most cases. By contrast, there appears to be little room to influence judicial decision-making at the conviction stage since most prosecuted cases result in a conviction.

Figure 3: Evolution of number of cases reported to justice, by type of case



Notes: Time evolution of the number of cases of sexual violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and other crimes reported to the French criminal justice system (criminal justice system) between 2012 and 2019 (and later dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts), compared to their levels in 2012.

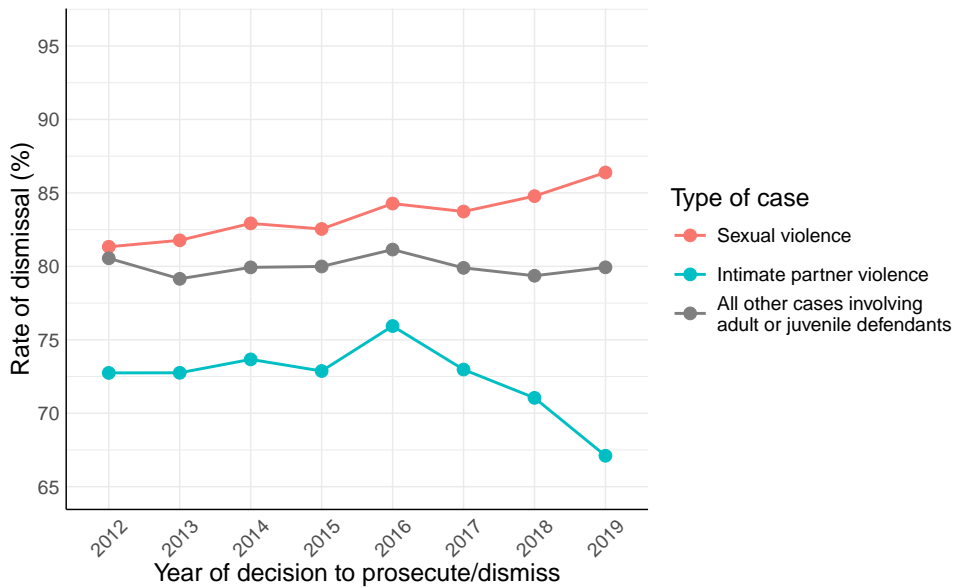
Reading: Compared to 2012, the number of new sexual violence cases registered within the criminal justice system increased by 25% in 2019, while intimate partner violence cases increased by 36%.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Regarding global trends, Figure 3 shows that the number of sexual and intimate partner violence cases registered within the criminal justice system has been steadily increasing since 2012, while it has remained stable (or even slightly decreased) for other types of offense. The evolution in absolute numbers is shown in Figure B2. The rise accelerated in 2017, the year when the #MeToo movement¹⁹ emerged and the French government announced a series of new measures to combat domestic violence, which began to be implemented in 2018. This increase is more likely to be explained by a change in the victims' behavior, who report more, than by a change in the police behavior, taking more complaints. Indeed, Figure B3 shows that the average number of days between the start of the incident and its arrival to justice has also increased over time, suggesting that

¹⁹In October 2017, a series of public disclosures of sexual harassment and assault in work-related contexts by film producer Harvey Weinstein gave rise to the global #MeToo movement, sparking a flood of statements about experiences of sexual violence. Although the case originated in the United States, it also had a significant media impact in France, leading to the creation of the #BalanceTonPorc movement.

Figure 4: Evolution of dismissal rate, by type of case



Notes: Time evolution of the share of cases of sexual violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and other crimes dismissed by public prosecutors across all French jurisdictions between 2012 and 2019.

Reading: The dismissal rate for intimate partner violence cases decreased from an average of 73% in 2012 to 67% in 2019. *Source:* Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

victims tend to report older incidents.

Finally, Figure 4 shows a drop in the share of intimate partner violence cases dismissed from 2016 onward, contrasting with a slight increase in the dismissal rate for sexual violence. The rise in dismissals was especially pronounced for rape and sexual assault, while the share of sexual harassment cases dismissed fell slightly (Figure B4). Many reasons could explain these global trends. For instance, the lower dismissal rate for intimate partner violence could be partly explained by changes in the criminal justice system policy following the various measures implemented by the French government to fight this violence. Besides, the increase in sexual violence complaints recorded by the police since #MeToo came along with a rise in reporting of old incidents, which are more difficult to prove and therefore to prosecute (Baux et al., 2020). The aim of this paper is to examine whether the media can explain some part of these global trends, focusing on the effect of news coverage of VAW in the short run.

3.3 TV news data

Data source To measure media coverage of VAW, I use archives of all 8pm news broadcasts of the main French national TV channels²⁰ collected by the National

²⁰TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte.

Audiovisual Institute (INA) from 2000 to 2021. An example of the data structure appears in Table C1. For each news story, these data provide information on the channel, date and time of broadcast, the duration of the story and program type, a title (about 7 words), a short summary (about 48 words), and a list of keywords describing its content (about 12 words). The INA staff manually document information for each show broadcast on TV and assign keywords using a precise standardized list (Philippe & Ouss, 2018). I also have access to the audience ratings for each news broadcast, as calculated by Médiamétrie, the official organization responsible for measuring TV and media audiences in France. I focus on TV news as television remains one of the main sources of information in France.²¹

Identification of stories Using these data, I identify stories on VAW through a keyword search in all text-based variables. I code a news broadcast as featuring a news story about VAW if the title, summary, or keywords variables include words pertaining to sexual violence (rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment) or intimate partner violence and femicides.²² I make some restrictions to exclude news stories related to violence against children and pedophilia in the church to focus on women and adolescents only. I also exclude cases taking place abroad (except those involving French nationals and #MeToo) to focus on the domestic context of victims, prosecutors, and judges. Figure C2 displays the most common keywords that appear in the selected news stories.

I then group these stories on VAW into three exclusive categories based on their content: (i) current crimes (e.g., rape, murder, or disappearance cases, excluding trials), (ii) trials, and (iii) law and society (e.g., awareness campaigns, legislation/policies to fight VAW, societal issues, etc.). Appendix 6 presents the full list of keywords used to perform this classification. I manually reviewed all news stories of the final sample to discard errors. This methodology gives me 100% precision (zero false positives or type I errors) but does not prevent missing news stories (some false negatives or type II errors).

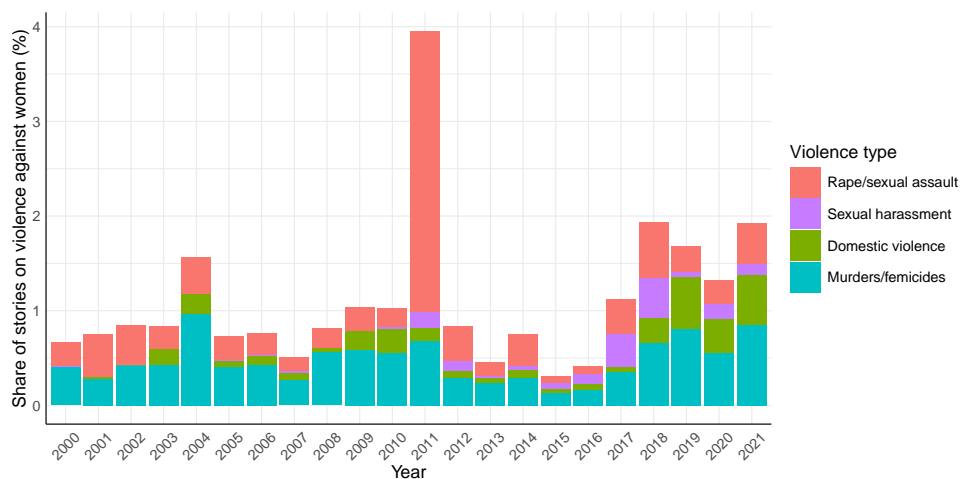
²¹As highlighted by Kennedy and Prat (2019), the main French media groups are centered around television, which remains citizens' main source of information. This pattern is confirmed by the 2021 Reuters Institute Digital News Report, indicating that television was still the primary source of news in France from 2013 to 2021, though it slightly declined in favor of online media.

²²The precise list of keywords is the following: rape, sexual violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, street harassment, sexual abuse, molestation, rapist, sexist violence, sexual crime, forced sexual intercourse, intimate partner violence, conjugal violence, femicide, marital drama, crime of passion, gender violence, woman+murder, woman+assault, woman+violence, girl+murder, girl+assault, girl+violence, spouse+murder, spouse+violence, murder+NAME.

3.4 Descriptive statistics on TV news data and sample restriction

Figure 5 shows the evolution of the share of news stories on VAW among all stories covered in the 8pm news broadcasts on the seven national channels listed above. On average, VAW stories represent 0.9% of all news stories broadcast on this program during the 2000-2021 period, and a similar share of airtime (see Figure C4). The surge in the share of stories on rape and sexual assault in 2011 corresponds to the criminal case involving Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a French political figure, which is excluded from my main analysis.²³ In comparison, this figure stands at 4.7% if we focus on news stories pertaining to crime in general (see Figure C5). The share of VAW stories has risen over time, particularly since 2017 concerning rape and sexual harassment. This evolution aligns with the series of public disclosures of sexual harassment and assault in work-related contexts by the film producer Harvey Weinstein, which sparked the #MeToo movement in October 2017. Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in coverage of intimate partner violence and femicides since 2018, following the high-profile case of Alexia Daval’s murder by her husband and the French government’s announcement of various measures to combat domestic violence.

Figure 5: Share of stories on VAW in national 8pm TV news, by type of VAW

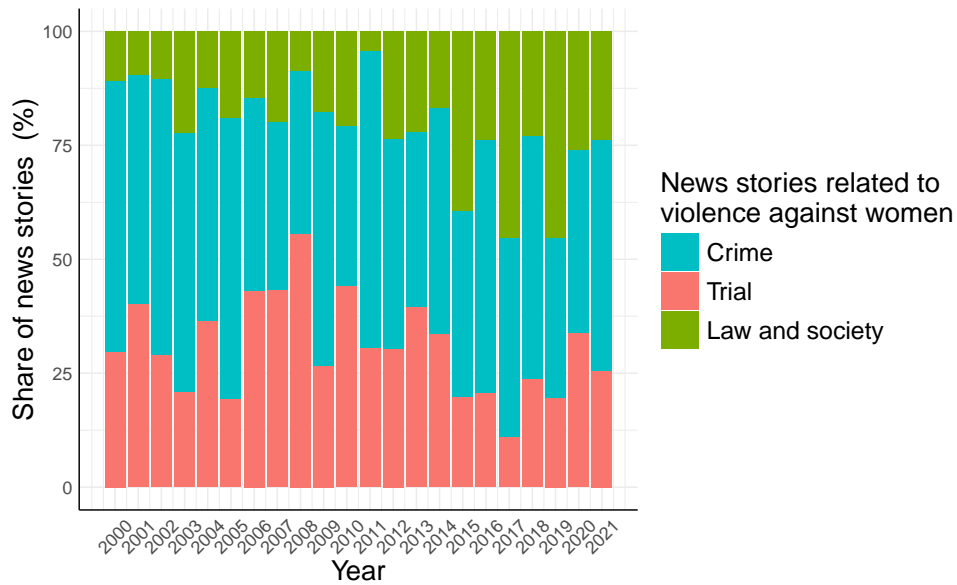


Notes: Time evolution of the share of TV news stories (in number) about violence against women (VAW) in the 8pm news broadcast of the main French national TV channels (TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte), by type of violence.

Source: Author’s calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

²³In May 2011, the economist and politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn was accused of sexual assault and attempted rape by Nafissatou Diallo, a hotel maid at the Sofitel in New York. At the time, DSK led voting intentions for the French 2012 presidential election, explaining why this affair has received a lot of media attention in France. However, this case was more an exception than a turning point in news coverage of sexual violence. It is not included in my main analysis sample, starting in 2012.

Figure 6: Content of VAW stories in national 8pm TV news, by news category



Notes: Time evolution of the share of stories on violence against women (VAW) in national 8pm TV news broadcast of the main French national TV channels (TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte) within each exclusive content category: (i) crime, (ii) trial or (iii) law and societal issues related to VAW.

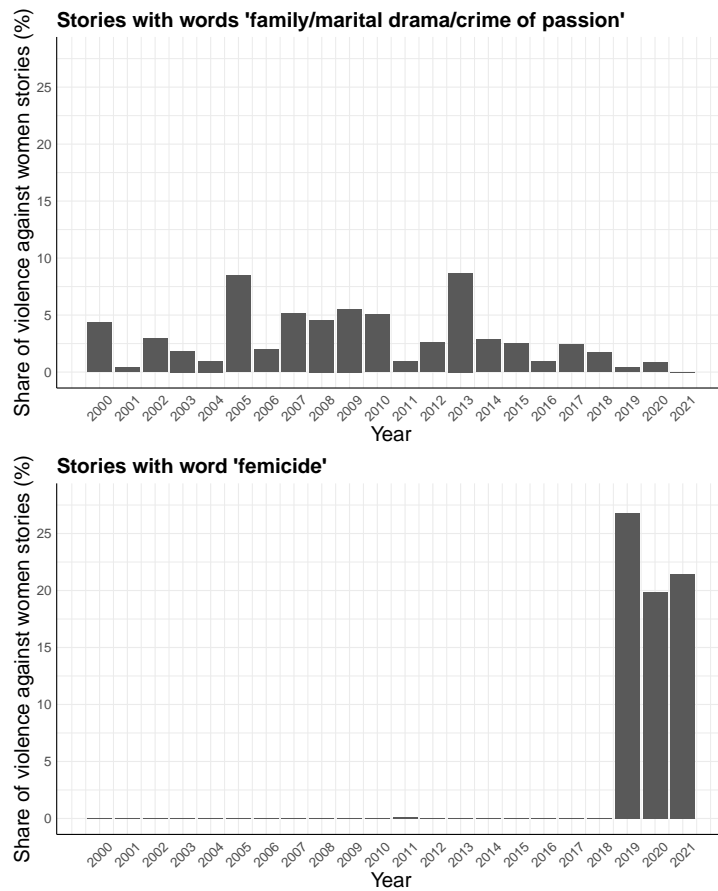
Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Besides the amount of VAW cases covered, the way in which these stories are covered on TV newscasts also seems to have evolved. According to Figure 6, most VAW stories relate to crime news (48%), while 31% cover trials and 21% address legal and societal aspects related to VAW. The share of stories on trials has decreased over time, while there was an increase in coverage of stories related to legal and societal aspects of VAW. In contrast, coverage of stories on crimes against women remained broadly unchanged over the period. Moreover, the increase in news coverage of VAW has been accompanied by a reframing of how such violence is portrayed in the media. Figure 7 shows that, among news stories dealing with VAW, the word “femicide” began to be used more frequently starting in 2019, while the share of stories employing terms that tend to minimize the violence – such as “family drama” or “crime of passion” (Bazin, 2022; Houel et al., 2014; Sapio, 2019) – has declined. This shift, which notably began in 2019, suggests a changing narrative around the nature and seriousness of such violence in the media.

Sample and time restriction For the empirical analysis, I restrict the sample to France’s two main free national TV channels (TF1 and France 2), which are the best documented by INA staff and attract the largest audiences, over the same analysis period (2012–2019) as the judicial data.²⁴ These two channels had average audiences of 10.4

²⁴Although I focus on TF1 and France 2 for the main estimation sample to ensure better data quality,

Figure 7: Coverage of intimate partner violence in national 8pm TV news



Notes: Time evolution of the share of TV news stories on violence against women (VAW) using specific narratives in the 8pm news broadcast of the main French national TV channels (TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte).
Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

million viewers per day for the 8pm news program on this period (5.8 million for TF1 and 4.6 million for France 2, from a French population of 66 million inhabitants), drawing about 47% of French television viewers.²⁵ Daily prime time starts at 8pm, lasts about 35 minutes, and covers an average of 26 stories on each of these channels.

Figures C6 and C7 show the evolution of news coverage of VAW over time on TF1 and France 2 only. Such TV news coverage serves as a reliable proxy for broader media attention to VAW, as Figure C8 demonstrates a strong correlation between coverage of VAW topics on these two channels and in other media outlets. Following the design of Philippe and Ouss (2018), I construct three main measures of TV news coverage of VAW, for each news category, grouping stories from TF1 and France 2 together: number of stories, number of minutes, and dummies for whether these topics were covered at all.

Table 2 shows that between 2012 and 2019, there was at least one news story on VAW

I present descriptive statistics over a longer period and across all available channels to fully exploit the richness of this unique dataset and provide a broader overview of media coverage of VAW in France.

²⁵Author's calculations using the INA dataset.

Table 2: Summary statistics on 8pm TV news content (TF1 & France 2, 2012-2019)

	Mean	Sd	Median	Max
<i>No. of stories per day on:</i>				
Violence against women	0.20	0.72	0.00	8.00
Crime	0.09	0.44	0.00	8.00
Trial	0.05	0.31	0.00	8.00
Law & society	0.06	0.38	0.00	7.00
<i>At least one story per day on:</i>				
Violence against women	0.11	0.31	0.00	1.00
Crime	0.05	0.23	0.00	1.00
Trial	0.03	0.17	0.00	1.00
Law & society	0.04	0.19	0.00	1.00
<i>Time per day (minutes) on:</i>				
Violence against women	0.30	1.15	0.00	13.77
Crime	0.11	0.64	0.00	12.23
Trial	0.06	0.41	0.00	8.30
Law & society	0.12	0.75	0.00	12.07

Notes: Summary statistics on the coverage of violence against women (VAW) in the 8pm TV news broadcast of TF1 and France 2, between 2012 and 2019.

Reading: On average between 2012 and 2019, there was at least one news story on VAW broadcast on TF1 and France 2 prime time news on 11% of the days, and a news story on crimes against women on 5% of the days.

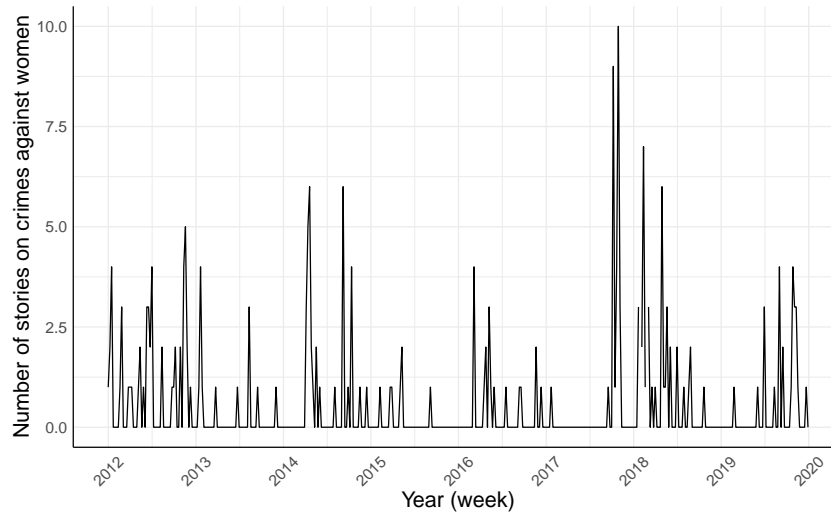
Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

in 11% of the days, mostly covering current crimes against women. The main analysis focuses on these crime-related news stories, as other types of coverage (such as trials or legislation) are more likely to raise endogeneity concerns (see Section 4). Examples of such news stories are provided in Table C3. Finally, Figure 8 displays the weekly variation in news coverage of crimes against women in the 8pm prime-time TV news used for the analysis. The data reveal significant fluctuations in coverage, with extended periods (95% of days) containing no news on this topic at all.

4 Empirical Framework

The previous descriptive results suggest an alignment between growing media attention to VAW and judicial responses to such violence over time, particularly in the aftermath of #MeToo. Whether this apparent alignment reflects a causal relationship is the key question I address next. Before turning to how I address this question empirically, I briefly outline the theoretical basis for understanding whether and how media coverage of VAW could affect judicial responses.

Figure 8: Weekly evolution of news coverage of crimes against women in TF1 & France 2 8pm TV news



Notes: Time evolution of the number of stories on crimes against women in the 8pm TV news broadcast on TF1 and France 2, per week, from 2012 to 2019.

Reading: The weekly number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast on TF1 and France 2 prime time news ranged from zero to ten between 2012 and 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

4.1 Theoretical basis

In most country settings, judicial decision-makers – such as prosecutors and judges – can be modeled as agents seeking to minimize expected social harm, subject to informational and resource constraints (Landes, 1971). In this context, social harm includes both the direct harm caused by the crime and the expected harm from future offenses, conditional on the current decision. Future harm is minimized by obtaining maximum deterrence given available resources (Easterbrook, 1983). In deciding whether to prosecute or pursue a conviction, agents face a fundamental trade-off between Type I errors (wrongfully prosecuting or convicting an innocent person) and Type II errors (failing to prosecute or convict a guilty person) (Kaplow, 1994). The perceived social cost of each type of error may vary depending on the nature of the crime. For example, this trade-off is particularly salient in VAW cases, where the cost of under-prosecution may be particularly high due to repeat victimization and the risk of escalation (Jelveh & Motta, 2024).

Prosecutors also face resource constraints: pursuing cases with weak evidence is costly, especially if they are unlikely to result in conviction, given the limited resources of the criminal justice system (Baker & Mezzetti, 2001; Bandyopadhyay & McCannon, 2015; Garoupa, 2009; Reinganum, 1988). As a result, prosecutors may adopt implicit evidentiary thresholds below which cases are dismissed or resolved through alternative measures. Previous research in criminology has shown that when it comes to VAW cases,

prosecutors tend to prioritize minimizing the risk of pursuing cases unlikely to lead to conviction rather than avoiding the dismissal of cases that are likely to result in conviction (Frohmann, 1991). A similar pattern of behavior may also characterize judges' decisions.

In this context, news coverage of VAW could affect judicial decision-making through several channels. First, it may increase the perceived harm associated with these crimes or heighten the salience of recidivism risk, effectively raising the perceived social cost of a Type II error. Second, it may alter the evidentiary threshold at which prosecutors and judges decide to prosecute or convict, by shifting expectations around public scrutiny, reputational risk, or perceived fairness. Finally, it may prompt a reallocation or substitution of resources or institutional effort toward these cases, for instance by leading to more thorough investigations or faster judgments.

Although these channels could plausibly affect both prosecutors and judges, their effect is likely to be more limited for judges. Indeed, as discussed above, professional judges in France operate with full independence and are not subject to direct accountability mechanisms such as performance evaluations or public approval. This structural independence makes them less likely to respond to external signals such as media coverage. Consistent with this view, Philippe and Ouss (2018) find that media coverage of crime in general has no effect on sentencing decisions made by professional judges in France. Likewise, Ash and Poyker (2023) show that conservative news exposure in the U.S. does not influence the sentencing harshness of appointed judges. By contrast, prosecutors remain under hierarchical supervision and may be reassigned without their consent, making them more sensitive to public scrutiny and institutional expectations. Moreover, given that 94% of prosecuted cases result in a conviction (Table 1), there is limited scope for media coverage to affect outcomes at the conviction stage, whereas the decision to prosecute offers a much wider margin for adjustment given the high dismissal rate. This theoretical reasoning, combined with stylized facts on variation across stages, suggests that prosecutorial behavior represents the most plausible channel through which media coverage of VAW may influence judicial responses.

4.2 Estimation strategy

To analyze whether increased public attention to VAW shifts the judicial decision-making process regarding such crimes, I exploit variations in the exact timing of news coverage and judicial decisions. I compare judicial decisions made *shortly after* more TV news coverage of VAW with those made following relatively less or no coverage. Since my

treatment consists of several news stories on VAW that occur repeatedly over a short period of time and at varying intervals, I focus on the short-term (daily) effect of TV news coverage of VAW. This strategy follows the approach introduced by Philippe and Ouss (2018) and has since been adopted in several other studies using high-frequency media news data in different contexts (Durante & Zhuravskaya, 2018; Emeriau, 2024; Skandalis, 2019). Specifically, I estimate regressions of the form:

$$Y_{i,t,j} = \alpha + \sum_{k=-6}^7 \beta_k TV_{t-k} + \sigma X_t + \gamma W_j + \eta Z_i + \epsilon_{i,t,j} \quad (1)$$

where $Y_{i,t,j}$ represents the different judicial decisions observed at the case level: (i) a dummy variable for whether the case was dismissed, (ii) (if prosecuted) a dummy variable for whether the defendant was convicted and (iii) (if convicted) the associated sentence length (in log days),²⁶ for a case i whose decision happened on date t in county j . For each decision, the analysis is conducted on a distinct sample of cases that reached this stage, with different event times t based on the decision date. TV_{t-k} captures daily measures of TV news coverage of VAW, with a set of leads and lags to capture coverage k days before and after the decision date t . X_t controls for seasonality (day of the week, calendar month, and year fixed effects) and W_j for the county of jurisdiction that handled the case. Depending on the outcome of interest, Z_i controls for certain offender and case characteristics (age, born in France, number of offenses, number of victims, nature of the offense, repeat offender status, attempted crime, co-offending, mode of prosecution, and mode of judgment). I exclude cases involving female offenders, which represent a very small share of all cases. The main specification is a linear probability model using ordinary least-squares (OLS) regressions, with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.²⁷

The coefficient of interest is $\hat{\beta}_k$, which captures the difference in the probability of prosecution, conviction, or average sentence length between (1) cases decided in the days following TV news coverage of VAW and (2) those on other days (i.e., when there is relatively less or no coverage), controlling for observable case characteristics and seasonality. Intuitively, I compare otherwise similar cases that differ only in whether they were processed shortly after relatively more coverage of VAW. Including lead coefficients allows me to test for pre-trends by assessing whether cases decided shortly before news coverage resemble those decided when there is no coverage. In

²⁶I also examine the time taken to reach each of these decisions as additional outcomes.

²⁷The results are robust to clustering standard errors at the county level or day level, among others, which partly addresses potential dependence across cases exposed to the same news coverage.

my main specification, TV news coverage of VAW is measured by using the number of news stories on crimes against women, but the results are robust to alternative measures.

Validity of the empirical design This strategy relies on certain parametric assumptions regarding the treatment, notably the independence of news events and the additivity of their effects, which apply to the continuous specifications using the number or duration of news stories. While including both leads and lags of news coverage in the regression helps account for potential serial correlation in news stories over time, these assumptions may still be violated when a major high-profile case receives coverage over several consecutive days, which also complicates the interpretation of the results. To address this concern, I restrict the main analysis sample to periods with either a single day of TV news coverage of crimes against women or no coverage at all in the seven days preceding the decision. Although this restriction yields a slightly smaller sample than the one used for the descriptive statistics, it allows for a clearer interpretation of the results.²⁸

Moreover, judicial outcomes are conditional on a decision being made. Consequently, the estimated effect may capture both the likelihood that a decision is made (e.g., whether the case is examined by prosecutors or brought before a judge) and the nature of that decision (e.g., whether the defendant is prosecuted or convicted). While this is less of a concern for judges' decisions, as trial dates are usually set months in advance, the timing of prosecutorial decisions may be more easily manipulated. To address this concern, I also examine the cumulative number of dismissal and prosecution decisions over a two-week period to assess whether prosecutors are simply postponing their decisions.

Finally, the composition of cases brought before judicial decision-makers may change following news coverage – for instance, if the news prompts more victims to report or leads police to register additional complaints. To test this possibility, I examine the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the number of cases reported, using as a supplementary outcome the natural logarithm of the number of VAW cases registered with the justice system on date t in county j .²⁹

²⁸The results are robust to including periods with multiple days of news coverage.

²⁹The logarithm is used to capture relative effects, given the time trend in the number of reports over the analysis period. There are no days without newly registered sexual and intimate partner violence cases during this period.

4.3 Identification strategy

Identifying assumption The coefficient $\hat{\beta}_k$ has a causal interpretation under the assumption that, on average, outcomes on days following relatively more TV news coverage of VAW would have been similar to those on days following relatively less or no coverage, had the coverage not occurred, after controlling for case characteristics and seasonality. This assumption holds if the timing of TV news coverage is as good as random in the short run. Although media coverage of VAW is unlikely to be exogenous to long-term trends in judicial decisions regarding VAW cases, all that is required is that TV news coverage is exogenous to changes in judicial decision-making in the short window around a news story on VAW.

This assumption is likely to hold given that the timing and intensity of daily news stories on VAW fluctuate at high frequency in ways that are difficult to anticipate or manipulate by the judicial system, at least in the short run. For this reason, I restrict the analysis to short-term effects, capturing the impact of news coverage over a one-week horizon. Besides, conditional on the controls, the timing of TV news coverage of VAW should not be correlated with unobserved factors that also affect the patterns of judicial decision-making in the short run.

Threats to identification There are three main threats to this identification strategy. First, one may worry about reverse causality. Yet it is unlikely that TV channels adjust their coverage of VAW immediately after changes in judicial decisions, which are generally not publicly available in the short run. In addition, most crimes and judicial decisions do not make national news (Philippe & Ouss, 2018), with an average of only 0.20 news stories per day over the analysis period (Table 2), compared to 305 new cases registered per day (Table 1). The bulk of coverage concerns severe cases such as murders or rapes (Table C3). To nevertheless alleviate concerns that the news could anticipate or directly cover upcoming judicial decisions, the main analysis focuses on TV news stories about current crimes against women, excluding those on VAW-related trials or legislation. Estimates including trial coverage are reported as robustness checks. Furthermore, given the time elapsed between offenses and judicial decisions (on average, 567 days between the initial incident and the final decision),³⁰ the crimes covered in the news are not the same as those being processed by the criminal justice system at that time. Finally, to rule out

³⁰On average, 930 days for sexual violence and 358 days for intimate partner violence; 492 days until conviction and 588 days until dismissal.

any possible overlap between the judicial cases under examination and the news stories, I present as a robustness check a specification that excludes cases coinciding with coverage of crimes occurring in the same county as the jurisdiction handling them. Table C1 indicates that only 2.3% of crime stories took place in the same county and 6.7% in an adjacent county.

Second, there may be measurement errors. For instance, news covered in the 8pm TV news broadcast may have already appeared on the same day (or the day before) on radio morning shows or press articles. The effect of news that occurs on the same day as the judicial outcome is thus ambiguous. Moreover, while I manually reviewed all news stories to ensure no false positives, some stories may still be missing. Overall, the bias that these measurement issues may introduce would likely reduce the estimated effect and hence make the results a lower bound.

Third, there could be omitted variables affecting both judicial decision-making and the likelihood of covering VAW in TV news broadcasts (such as the #MeToo movement). These factors are likely to be mostly absorbed by the time fixed effects. I also perform several falsification exercises and robustness checks to ensure that the results are not driven by other time-varying unobservables. Finally, I show that the findings are unlikely to be driven by selection, as TV news coverage of crimes against women is not systematically correlated with most observable characteristics of the judicial cases under examination (see Tables E1 and F1). The main notable imbalance concerns the type of violence committed (notably for intimate partner violence cases), but the point estimates are small and marginally significant, and this variable is explicitly controlled for in the regression models. Crucially for the identification strategy, the last column of Table E1 shows that the time elapsed between the registration of a case at the prosecutor's office and the final prosecutorial decision is not associated with media content in the days preceding the decision. This rules out the possibility of strategic manipulation based on news coverage and supports the validity of the design: the exact timing of prosecutorial decisions is orthogonal to media coverage of crimes against women, and cases examined before and after coverage are similar with respect to observable characteristics.³¹

³¹I do not observe the exact dates of trial scheduling, which prevents me from running an analogous test for judicial decisions. However, concerns about manipulation are less relevant in this case, as trial dates (and their duration) are typically set months in advance according to court calendars and are therefore much harder to adjust strategically in response to media coverage.

5 Results and Discussion

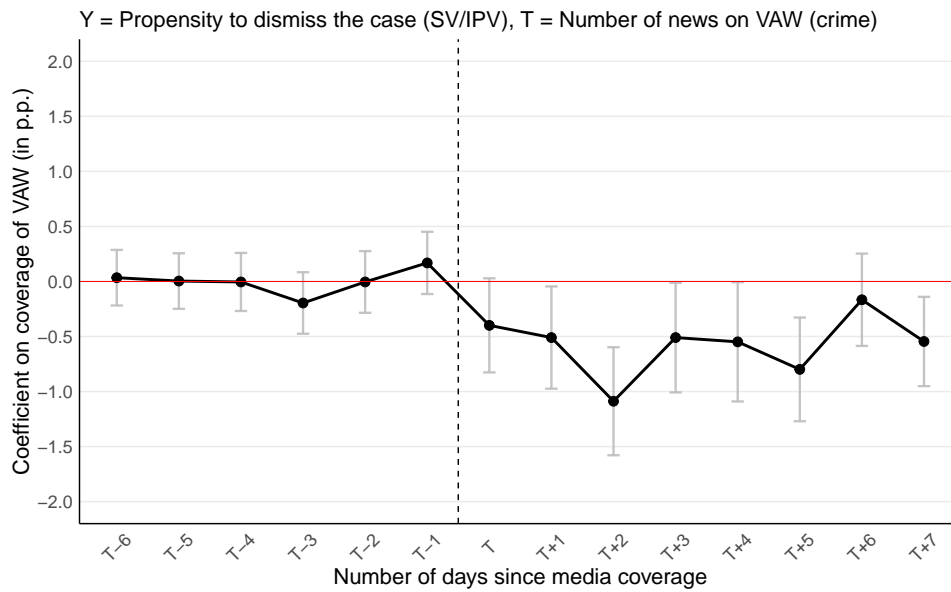
5.1 Main results

Prosecutorial decision-making I start by analyzing the effect of news coverage on prosecutors' decisions. The estimation results from Equation 1 are displayed in Figure 9, which displays the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss cases of sexual violence or intimate partner violence, for each lead and lag around the news coverage, which occurred at time T .³² I find no evidence of pre-trends, consistent with cases decided just around news coverage being comparable to those decided on days without coverage. The figure highlights a significant drop in the propensity to dismiss a case following the news coverage, starting on the day the coverage airs up to six days afterward. On average, each additional news story on crimes against women decreases the propensity to dismiss a case in the following seven days by 0.54 percentage point (Table 3). Given the baseline prosecution rate of 23% for such violence, this effect corresponds to a 2.3% increase in the likelihood of prosecution. According to Figure E1, the effect is short-lived: while the dismissal rate decreases in the week after the coverage, it returns to its prior level thereafter. This indicates that prosecutors respond to the context in which they make decisions in the short run: otherwise similar cases are less likely to be dismissed when examined shortly after news stories on crimes against women.

To assess whether prosecutors are not merely postponing their dismissal decisions, I examine the effect of news coverage on the number of prosecutorial decisions. Column (3) of Table 3 shows no significant change in the total number of decisions made in the seven days following news coverage. Figure E2 displays the dynamic effects on the number of decisions for sexual and intimate partner violence cases separately. It shows that the short-term decline in dismissal rates is driven mainly by fewer dismissal decisions rather than by an immediate rise in prosecution decisions. Figure E3 presents cumulative results over the two weeks following news coverage. Coefficients are normalized by the average value of the lead coefficients, and standard errors are corrected to account for the cumulation. The figure shows a general increase in prosecutions over the two weeks following coverage, alongside a decrease or no change in dismissals. This suggests that the reduction in dismissal rates is associated with a rise in prosecutions, rather than with a postponement of dismissals over time.

³²For interpretability, the event time is redefined relative to the date of news coverage (T), such that negative values correspond to days before coverage and positive values to days after.

Figure 9: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual and intimate partner violence cases



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Reading: Two days after the TV news coverage, the propensity to dismiss sexual and intimate partner violence cases decreases by 1 percentage point (significant at the 5% level).

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Placebos To verify that the results are not due to an artifact, I perform several placebo tests. First, I estimate the same regression but using the propensity to dismiss other offenses against the person as the new outcome variable, being mostly physical violence (32%), threats or blackmail (13%), injuries following traffic accidents (6%) and privacy invasion (5%). Reassuringly, Figure E4 shows no effect on the the dismissal propensity for these cases in the days following news coverage of crimes against women on average. Likewise, I observe no decrease in the dismissal rate when restricting the sample to murders or other intentional bodily harm, which are likely the most comparable group in terms of the nature of the violence and the penalties incurred. If anything, there is a small, statistically insignificant increase in the propensity to dismiss such cases, consistent with the hypothesis that prosecutors may reallocate limited resources away from these cases when attention to VAW intensifies.

Second, I estimate the impact of unrelated news stories on the propensity to dismiss

Table 3: OLS results for the effect of news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss sexual and intimate partner violence cases

<i>Dependent Variables:</i>	Reporting	Prosecution		Sentencing	
	Log. Number of new cases reported	Dismissal (0/1)	Number of decisions made by prosecutors	Conviction (0/1)	Log. Sentence length (days)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Number of news on VAW crimes in the 7 days before the decision	0.0171** (0.0080)	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	0.0081 (0.0189)	-0.0014 (0.0012)	0.0010 (0.0037)
Number of news on VAW crimes in the 6 days after the decision	-0.0002 (0.0021)	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0003)	0.0015 (0.0032)	0.0003 (0.0004)	-0.0023* (0.0013)
Year, month, day-of-the-week fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Case-level controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>					
Observations	2,647	687,198	2,647	150,703	123,686
R ²	0.80745	0.18649	0.86295	0.03079	0.48931
Within R ²	0.00206	0.12849	0.00016	0.02544	0.47545

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on reporting, prosecution and sentencing decisions, pooling the leads and lags together into two event-time dummies. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. In Column (1), the dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases registered within the criminal justice system. In Column (2), the dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. In Column (3), the dependent variable is the total number of decisions made by prosecutors regarding such cases. In Column (4), the dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case led to a conviction. In Column (5), it is the natural logarithm of the sentence length (in days) for convicted cases. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. Case-level controls include: French-born author, author’s age, number of victims, type of assault (Columns 2 to 5), dummies for attempt, complicity, recidivism, mode of prosecution, nature of the judgment, prosecution time (Columns 2 to 5).

Source: Author’s calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

VAW cases.³³ Figure E5 shows that news coverage related to gardening, crafts, leisure, or travel has a precisely estimated null effect on prosecutorial decisions. Interestingly, coverage of other crimes – excluding VAW – also does not affect the propensity to dismiss VAW cases.

Finally, I conduct a placebo falsification test using 500 randomly assigned fake treatment dates. Figure E6 displays the distribution of the estimated pooled lag coefficients for the seven days following these placebo treatments, which is reassuringly centered around zero. In contrast, the actual estimated coefficient lies at the extreme end of this distribution. These various tests suggest that the previously estimated effect is unlikely to be driven by seasonal patterns or random fluctuations in the data. The results are also robust to a battery of checks described in Section 5.3.

Judicial decision-making Next, I examine the effect of TV news coverage of

³³Since such news stories are far more frequent than those about crimes against women, I cannot restrict the analysis to single-day coverage without ending up with too few observations. Hence, periods with multiple days of news coverage are also included in the analysis for these placebo tests.

crimes against women on conviction and sentencing decisions in cases prosecuted before professional judges in correctional or juvenile courts. The main estimation results are presented in Table 3. Figure 10 shows that news coverage of crimes against women has no impact on conviction. This result holds for both sexual and intimate partner violence cases, as shown in Figures F1 and F2. For offenders sentenced to jail, there is no significant effect on the sentence length decided by the judge either (whether measured in log days or in levels; see Figure F3).

As I found that the decision to prosecute a case is affected by the news coverage, the results on conviction and sentencing could be driven by selection if the sample used to estimate the effect of news on conviction decisions includes cases that were tried on the same day they were prosecuted. However, given the average interval between prosecution and final judgment (199 days on average; 420 days for sexual violence and 130 days for intimate partner violence), selection bias is likely to be minimal. Moreover, the results remain unchanged when restricting the sample to cases in which prosecution occurred before the coverage episode that anchors the sentencing event window (Figure F4), or when broadening the exposure measure to include trial-related news reports (Figure F5).

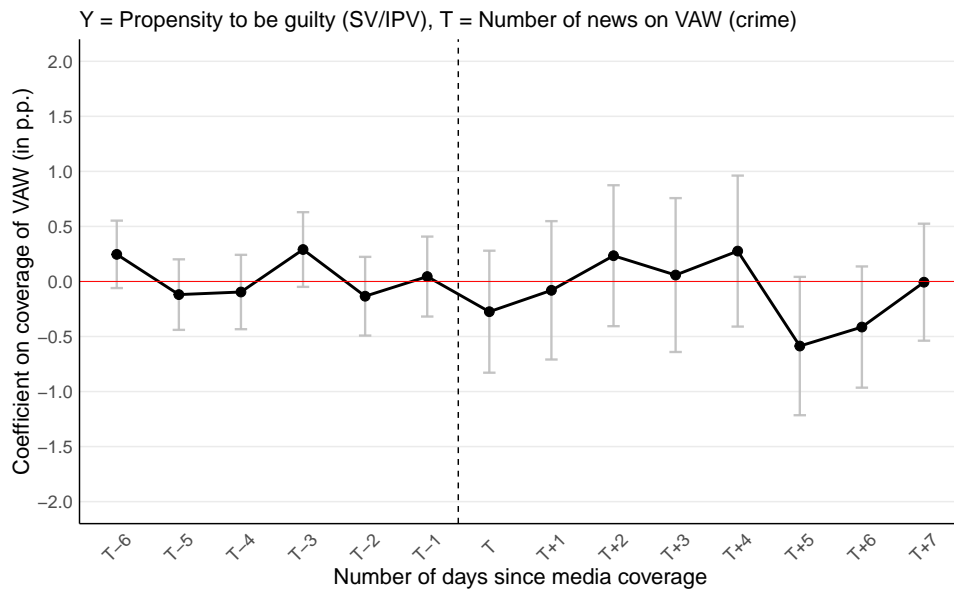
This finding is consistent with the results of Philippe and Ouss (2018), who find no effect of TV coverage of unrelated criminal justice events on sentencing decisions made by professional judges in correctional courts. Furthermore, Figure F6 indicates that news coverage of crimes against women has no significant impact on the time elapsed between prosecution and the final judgment decision, suggesting that it does not lead to faster judgments either.

5.2 Assessing changes in victim or police behavior

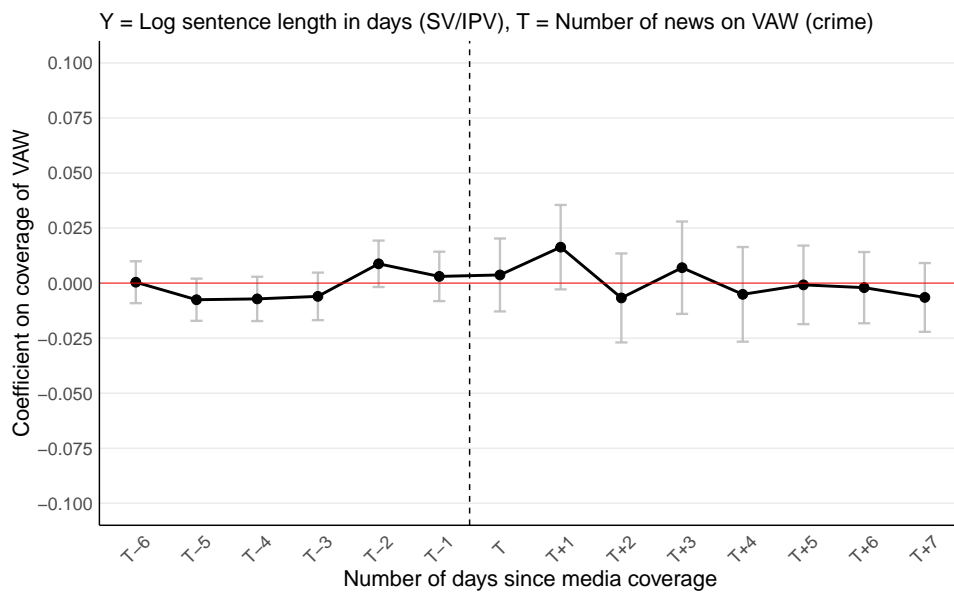
A possible concern is that the composition of cases reaching the criminal justice system could have changed following media coverage of VAW, potentially influencing the observed effects on prosecutorial decisions. This could occur through behavioral responses at the reporting stage, either from victims becoming more likely to report incidents or from police being more likely to record and transmit complaints. To examine this possibility, I analyze the impact of news coverage on the (log) number of cases registered with the justice system, which serves as a proxy for reporting behavior.

Figure 11 shows no clear pattern: while there is a slight increase in the amount of cases reported at time T , this is followed by an almost symmetrical (though statistically insignificant) decrease at $T + 2$, before increasing again. On average, each additional news

Figure 10: Effect of news coverage on conviction and sentence length for sexual and intimate partner violence cases



(a) Conviction



(b) Sentence length

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to convict such violence and the sentence length, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. In the upper panel, the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the perpetrator was convicted at trial, with the estimated coefficient expressed in percentage points. In the lower panel, the dependent variable is the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Reading: Up to seven days after the TV news coverage, the propensity to convict sexual and intimate partner violence cases remains unaffected. In contrast, the sentence length decreases slightly two days after the TV news coverage, with the effect being marginally significant.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

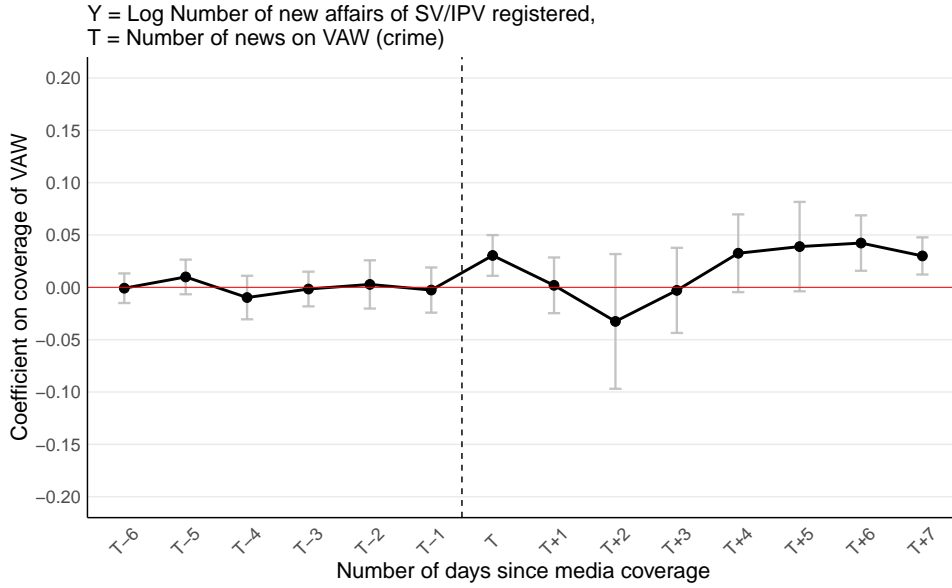
story on crimes against women is associated with a 1.7% increase in reported cases over the following seven days (Table 3), statistically significant at the 5% level. Additional analyses presented in Appendix D show that this effect is more likely due to greater willingness to report violence or record complaints than to an actual rise in incidence, and remains similar across heterogeneity analyses and alternative samples. However, placebo tests in Figure D9 reveal a similar pattern in the reporting of other types of violence following news coverage of crimes against women, with point estimates of comparable magnitude and statistical significance. Therefore, these findings suggest that the increase in the number of reported cases is both small and not robust.

This small effect is likely explained by several factors. Unlike judicial actors, whose daily work involves making such decisions, victims of sexual or intimate partner violence face a fundamentally different process when deciding whether to report their assault to the police. Because reporting is likely a high-stakes and costly decision, media coverage may exert less influence on it compared with other factors, such as economic and material conditions or the direct consequences of the assault (Stricot, 2025). Moreover, it is not clear that media exposure would always encourage victims to report. Hearing about crimes against women could increase fear and discourage victims from coming forward, or they might see examples of a dysfunctional justice system, which could offset any potential incentive to report. Finally, even though the transmission of complaints from the police to the justice system is expected to occur almost immediately, there could still be some noise around the event time associated with the reporting decision.

Moreover, the average time elapsed between the start of the incident and its arrival at the public prosecutor's office is 365 days (678 days for sexual violence and 194 days for intimate partner violence). Figure D10 shows that TV news coverage of crimes against women has no impact on this reporting delay. These results imply that the characteristics of cases reported to the justice system did not change significantly following news coverage of crimes against women.³⁴ While I cannot entirely rule out some increase in victims' reporting or police recording, I conduct robustness checks in the next section to ensure that the prosecutorial estimates are unaffected. These tests suggest that changes in victims' reporting or police behavior are unlikely to drive the main results.

³⁴Even if TV news coverage of crimes against women leads to a slight increase in reporting on the day the coverage airs, my results on judicial decisions are unlikely to be biased by selection given the relatively long delay between reporting and prosecutors' and judges' decisions. On average, the time elapsed between the arrival of a sexual violence or intimate partner violence case at the public prosecutor's office and the prosecution or dismissal decision is 210 days (242 days for dismissal and 98 days for prosecution), and the average duration until the final sentencing decision for prosecuted cases is 255 days.

Figure 11: Effect of news coverage on number of sexual and intimate partner violence cases reported to justice



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the reporting of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system (criminal justice system) and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Reading: On the day of the TV news coverage, the number of new sexual and intimate partner violence cases registered within the criminal justice system increases by approximately 2% (significant at the 5% level).

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

5.3 Robustness and sensitivity checks

The results I find on prosecutorial decision-making are robust across a wide range of other alternative specifications, samples, and definitions of media coverage, reported in Table E3 (while Figure E14 visually summarizes them).

Alternative modeling strategies and fixed effects. Column (1) of Table E3 displays the main result from the estimation of Equation 1. Column (2) replicates the analysis using a Probit model. In Column (3), I modify my base regression to a two-step procedure: first, I residualize the data to eliminate the overall time trend and the day-of-the-week pattern, using the following specification:

$$Y_t = dow_t + month_t + year_t + \epsilon_t \quad (2)$$

where dow_t , $month_t$, and $year_t$ are day of the week, calendar month, and year fixed effects. I then compute the residuals from this regression \bar{Y}_t and use the residualized outcome in Equation 1. In all cases, the estimated effect of news coverage remains negative and

significant.

Columns (4) to (7) sequentially introduce increasingly flexible time fixed effects by interacting year with month, quarter, weekday, and day. Column (8) adds court fixed effects, and Column (9) includes a linear time trend. In all cases, the effect of news coverage on the propensity to dismiss remains robust and comparable in magnitude.

Controlling for time-varying confounders. To address potential seasonality or symbolic calendar effects, Columns (10) and (11) control for school vacations and official holidays. Column (12) accounts for periods of heightened female visibility (e.g., International Women’s Day, #MeToo), and Column (13) for the adoption of new VAW-related legislation enacted during the study period (e.g., measures to facilitate the filing of complaints, changes to the statute of limitations, Istanbul Convention, etc.). Column (14) excludes weekend decisions, and Column (15) aggregates news on weekends to test whether unusual patterns on weekends might bias the results. The results consistently hold across these variations.

Inference and clustering. Columns (16) to (20) examine the robustness of inference to different clustering levels: by day, county, year–month, individual case (affair), and court. The effect remains significant under all clustering strategies.

Alternative samples and outcomes. Columns (21) to (24) test the sensitivity of results to sample restrictions: limiting to known authors (21), removing duplicated authors involved in multiple charge-level cases (22), excluding alternatives to prosecution from the definition of dismissal (23), and excluding rape cases (24). The results remain robust in all situations. Figure E7 displays the dynamic effects when restricting the sample to cases registered before the coverage episode surrounding the prosecutorial decision, to ensure that no case is affected twice by the same news coverage (corresponding to Column (25)).

Alternative measures of media exposure. Columns (26) and (27) replace the main measure of media coverage with (i) a dummy indicating the occurrence of any news, and (ii) the total duration of news stories in minutes. These specifications yield qualitatively similar effects, as visualized in Figure E8. Column (28) includes news on VAW-related trials. Although Figure E9 shows that a similar downward trend in dismissal is observed when news stories about trials are included in the specification, the effect is somewhat weaker. Column (29) excludes stories related to the high-profile Dominique Strauss–Kahn case that might disproportionately affect results. Columns (30) and (31) examine each TV channel separately (TF1 and France 2, respectively), with similar

coefficients across channels that are not significantly different from each other. To ensure that there is no possible overlap between the judicial cases and the news stories, Columns (32) to (34) present the effects of news on crimes against women that occurred in the same county as the jurisdiction, in adjacent counties, or in other counties (the latter accounting for 91% of the news). The results are significant and of similar magnitude across the three estimates, indicating that the effect is not driven solely by events occurring in the same or neighboring counties.

Addressing exposure overlap and news absence. Finally, Column (35) expands the sample to include periods with multiple days of news coverage during the seven days preceding a decision, while Column (36) excludes periods without any news coverage. Figure E10 confirms that the main dynamic pattern also appears under the broader exposure criterion.

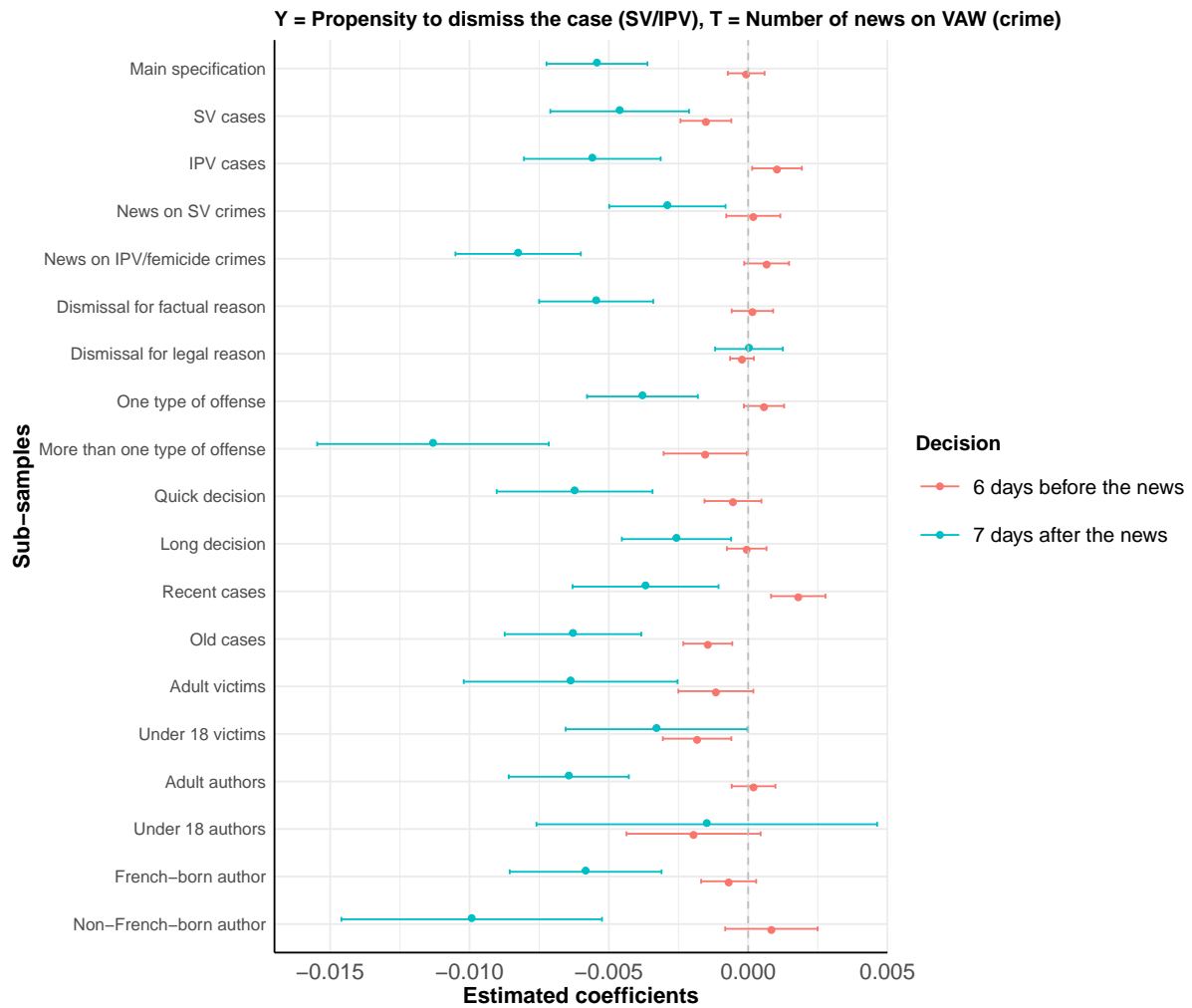
Additional tests. Figure E11 further shows no abrupt break in the time trends of news coverage or dismissal rates that could artificially generate the main result. To further verify that no specific time period or location drives the findings, I perform leave-one-out exercises by removing each day, month, or county individually from the dataset. The main effect persists even after excluding each of the 76 isolated days with news coverage, each of the 96 months of the 2012–2019 analysis period, and each of the 96 French metropolitan counties (see Figure E12). Moreover, correcting for multiple hypothesis testing using several approaches still yields a statistically significant effect (see Figure E13).

Taken together, these robustness checks strongly support the conclusion that exposure to TV news coverage of crimes against women decreases the likelihood that a prosecutor will dismiss a case of sexual violence or intimate partner violence.

5.4 Heterogeneous effects by case characteristics

To better understand which types of cases drive the main result, I examine heterogeneity across characteristics of cases, offenders and victims. Figure 12 shows that the effect is slightly more pronounced for intimate partner violence than for sexual violence cases, although the difference is not statistically significant (see Figure E15 for the dynamic effects and Table E2 for the precise estimates). Consistent with this pattern, I also find that the reduction in dismissal propensity is stronger after news stories about intimate partner violence or femicides than after stories about sexual violence (Figure 12). Regarding offenders, the effect is about twice as large for those born abroad (19% of cases) as for those born in France (58% of cases), although the difference is not statistically significant.

Figure 12: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual and intimate partner violence cases: heterogeneity by case characteristics



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence by audience, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision.

Reading: In the baseline specification, each additional news story on crimes against women decreases the propensity to dismiss a case in the following seven days by 0.54 percentage point on average.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Moreover, the decrease in the propensity to dismiss is concentrated in cases where prosecutors exercise greater discretion. First, Figure 12 shows that the effect arises only for dismissals based on factual grounds (which account for 69% of case dismissals) – for instance, when the offense is deemed insufficiently characterized or when the case remains unsolved; but not for legal grounds (8% of case dismissals) – such as statute of limitations, procedural irregularities, or mental incapacity of the perpetrator (see Table E4 for the precise estimates). These factual dismissals are precisely those where prosecutorial discretion is greatest, making them more susceptible to external influences.

Second, the effect is stronger for cases involving multiple offense categories (23% of cases), as identified by the NATAFF codes, than for those with a single offense recorded. Such cases are typically more serious and provide more tangible elements on which to build a prosecution, making them easier to pursue. Likewise, the reduction in dismissal propensity is more pronounced for faster decisions, where the time between the case's arrival in court and the prosecutor's decision is shorter than the median (96 days \approx 3 months), which applies to half of the sample. This suggests that the effect pertains mainly to relatively straightforward cases. By contrast, the decrease is observed both for recent incidents, where the time between the incident and its arrival to court is shorter than the median value (25 days), and for older incidents, although the estimates are noisier and exhibit signs of pre-trends.

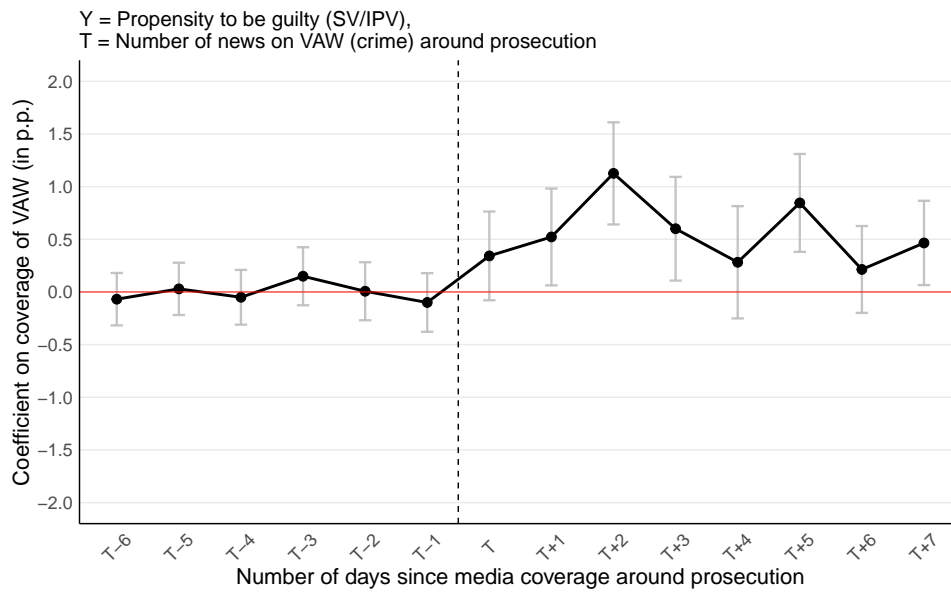
Finally, the effect is more significant and robust in cases involving adults rather than under 18 individuals, whether as victims (42% of cases) or perpetrators (81% of cases). Taken together, these findings support the plausibility of the main results, as the lower propensity to dismiss is concentrated in less complex cases subject to greater prosecutorial discretion, which are the types of cases most likely to be influenced at the margin by external factors such as media coverage.

5.5 Long-term effect of news coverage on conviction

I showed that the propensity to prosecute VAW cases increases following TV news coverage of crimes against women, particularly for cases where prosecutors have greater discretionary power, thereby enabling more cases to reach trial. In contrast, judges' decisions are not directly affected by the coverage. But this raises a key question: what happens to the cases that are prosecuted following media attention? A central concern is whether this increase in prosecution rates leads to weaker cases entering the system. If prosecutors were simply lowering their standards in response to increased public attention, we would expect to see a decline in conviction rates. To assess this potential long-term effect, I leverage the detailed judicial data to examine whether cases prosecuted after TV news coverage of crimes against women are less likely to result in conviction. The analysis includes all cases, assigning a conviction outcome of zero to those dismissed by prosecutors. This approach allows me to account for composition effects, since news coverage influences whether a case is dismissed or prosecuted.

Figure 13 displays the results of this analysis. It shows that the propensity to convict a defendant increases significantly for cases prosecuted following TV news coverage of

Figure 13: Long-term effect of news coverage on conviction for sexual and intimate partner violence cases



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women around the time of prosecution on the long-term propensity to convict such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of all cases of sexual violence (sexual violence) or intimate partner violence (intimate partner violence) that were completed between 2012 and 2019, either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts. The dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the perpetrator was convicted at trial, with the estimated coefficient expressed in percentage points. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 around the prosecutor’s decision, with coverage occurring at time T .

Reading: sexual and intimate partner violence cases prosecuted two days after the TV news coverage see a 0.5 percentage point increase in the propensity to result in a conviction in the long run (significant at the 5% level).

Source: Author’s calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

crimes against women. The estimated effect on the propensity to convict in Table F2 (0.53 p.p.) is nearly identical to the previously observed effect of news coverage on the propensity to prosecute (0.54 p.p.). As shown in Figure 2, when defendants are prosecuted, they are almost systematically convicted. This implies that cases prosecuted following news stories about crimes against women are just as likely to result in convictions as other cases. Moreover, these cases lead to slightly longer jail sentences, although the effect is marginal in terms of both magnitude and statistical significance (see Figure F7 and Table F2). Therefore, the pool of cases prosecuted following news coverage is unlikely to differ significantly from other cases that would have been prosecuted without the news coverage.

The usual long delay between prosecution and sentencing (130 days for intimate partner violence and 420 days for sexual violence, on average), combined with the absence of any direct effect of media exposure on judges’ decisions, makes it unlikely that this result is driven by judges adjusting their standards for conviction in response to media attention. To nevertheless investigate this possibility, I also conduct a similar analysis

focusing on the long-term effect on convictions among prosecuted cases only. Figure F8 shows no significant decrease in the propensity to convict for cases prosecuted following TV news stories on crimes against women. This finding suggests that judges are not, in turn, lowering their standards for conviction in response to media attention, supporting the idea that cases prosecuted following news coverage of crimes against women are relatively similar to the remaining prosecuted cases.

Overall, these results suggest that prosecutors are not compromising case quality. Instead, cases that might have been dismissed without media attention were legally viable and met the evidentiary threshold for conviction, suggesting that prosecutors may be behaving sub-optimally. These findings have important policy implications for the role of prosecutorial discretion in case attrition and underscore its potential to affect both the equity and efficiency of the criminal justice system.

5.6 Magnitudes

What do these findings imply in terms of magnitude? Using a dummy indicator for the occurrence of any news coverage of crimes against women, I find that cases decided after such coverage (which occurs for 20% of cases in the sample) are, on average, 0.64 percentage points less likely to be dismissed than those decided when no stories are aired (Table E3). However, media coverage does not affect conviction or sentence length decisions made by judges, nor does it significantly impact the number of cases reported to the justice system, with only a slight increase observed on the day of coverage.

In the sample, prosecutors examine on average 2,080 cases of sexual violence or intimate partner violence over a seven-day period (around 1,590 dismissed and 490 prosecuted). I find that news coverage does not affect the overall number of decisions made within a seven-day period (Table 3). Hence, the effect I estimate amounts to about 13 additional cases ($2,080 \times 0.0064$) being prosecuted over a seven-day period. I then extrapolate this estimate by considering the number of days with news on crimes against women over the sample period. With 163 unique days with news coverage of crimes against women between 2012 and 2019, either on TF1 or France 2, this corresponds to roughly 20 unique news days per year on average ($162 \div 8$). Therefore, this implies around 260 additional cases (13×20) prosecuted per year on average.³⁵ The analysis of long-term effects suggests

³⁵Using the more conservative measure of unique news days, which excludes stretches of multiple consecutive days, there are 76 isolated days of coverage across the sample period (either on TF1 or France 2). This corresponds to roughly 9.5 unique news days per year on average ($76 \div 8$) and implies around 105 additional cases (11×9.5) prosecuted per year on average.

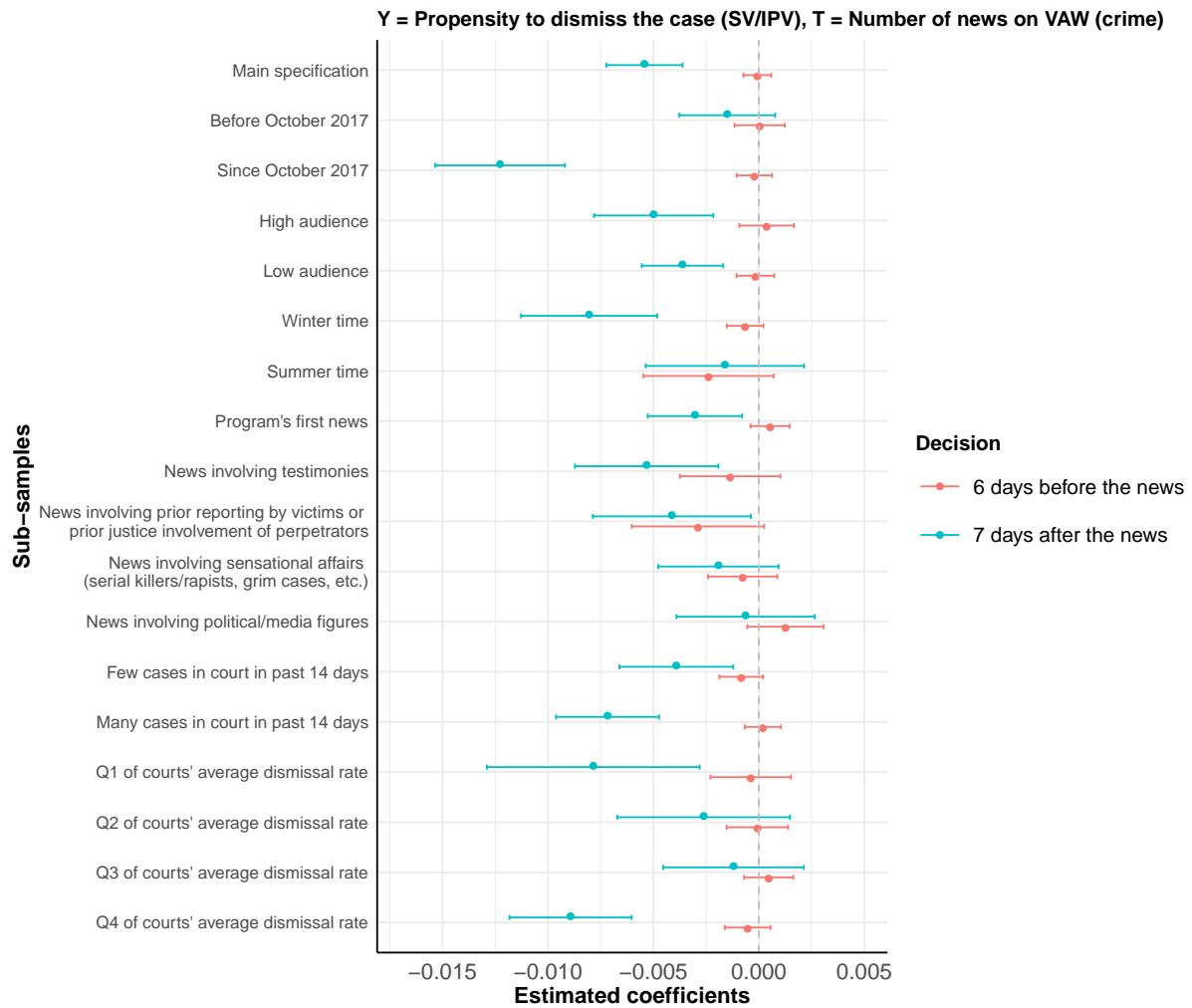
that most of these additional prosecuted cases are then likely to result in conviction.

These average effects are small but consistent with the literature on the impact of news coverage of violence on reporting or judicial decisions. For instance, Philippe and Ouss (2018) find a 2.4% increase in sentence length for convictions for any type of crime delivered by civilian juries in criminal courts in France the day after a news story on an unrelated crime, and no effect for sentences handed down by professional judges. This is very close to the magnitudes I estimate. Colagrossi et al. (2023) find that calls to the Italian helpline against gender-based violence increase by 11% a week after a femicide news and in the province where the femicide has occurred. As deciding to prosecute a case can be seen as a more high-stake decision than calling the helpline, it is not surprising that my results are quantitatively smaller. As for reporting, Levy and Mattsson (2023) find a 10% increase in sex crimes reporting during the first six months of the #MeToo movement. In contrast, my findings suggest that news coverage of crimes against women is not as effective as large-scale social movements such as #MeToo in improving reporting. Consistently, in Appendix G, I show that the #MeToo movement itself was associated with a larger increase in reporting and a stronger reduction in dismissal rates, highlighting the difference in magnitude between high-frequency media coverage and broader salience shocks in gender norms.

6 Analysis of Mechanisms

What could explain the lower propensity to dismiss a case following news coverage of crimes against women? I investigate two potential mechanisms through which the theoretical effects outlined in Section 4 may influence prosecutorial behavior. First, news coverage of VAW may temporarily increase the salience of such crimes in prosecutors' minds, thereby raising awareness or triggering emotional reactions through unconscious psychological processes in the short run (*priming mechanism*). Second, prosecutors may strategically adjust their behavior in response to increased public scrutiny and accountability, given the socially sensitive nature of the issue highlighted in the news and potential external pressure from society or hierarchical superiors (*signaling mechanism*). In this section, I present suggestive evidence consistent with both interpretations, though more strongly supporting the signaling one, while acknowledging that the data and setting do not allow for a definitive distinction between them and that other mechanisms may also be at play.

Figure 14: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual and intimate partner violence cases: heterogeneity by media exposure, news content and courts' characteristics



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence by audience, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision.

Reading: In the baseline specification, each additional news story on crimes against women decreases the propensity to dismiss a case in the following seven days by 0.54 percentage point on average.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

6.1 Heterogeneous effects by media exposure

To examine the underlying mechanisms, I first explore whether the propensity to dismiss VAW cases decreases more following news stories aired when TV audiences are higher. I split the audiences of TF1 and France 2 around the median for each channel and examine the effect of TV news coverage on prosecution decisions for audience levels below and above the median. Figure 14 shows that the estimated coefficient is larger when audiences are above the median (see Table E5 for the precise estimates). In a similar vein, I examine

heterogeneity across different times of the year when TV viewership varies, by splitting the sample between summer and winter periods, based on the idea that people are more likely to watch TV during the winter. Again, Figure 14 shows that the effect is larger and statistically significant only during the winter period, when people are arguably more likely to watch TV.

This finding is consistent with both priming and signaling mechanisms, as broader viewership may amplify the salience of VAW and also increase the perceived risk of public scrutiny. Nevertheless, it should be noted that audience size may also correlate with the type of stories covered on TV, as higher viewership is typically associated with more sensational news, which itself may prime judicial decision-makers more strongly. Therefore, I cannot rule out the possibility that the nature of crimes against women featured in the news differs between high- and low-audience days, or between summer and winter periods.

6.2 News intensity: salience versus learning

I next examine whether the effect of news coverage on prosecution decisions increases with the accumulation of news stories about crimes against women. I find that the estimated effect remains similar whether TV coverage is measured by the number of news stories or by a dummy variable for whether there was any coverage (Figure E8). This suggests that the effect arises from the extensive rather than the intensive margin, or in other words, the presence of news matters more than its quantity. Therefore, additional stories do not appear to enhance learning or further shift behavior.

Another way to assess the intensity of news exposure is to focus on stories that lead the 8pm news broadcast, as these are likely to be most salient. Using the exact broadcast times from the TV news dataset, I identify stories about crimes against women that aired first in the program (59% of the news stories used in the estimation). Figure 14 shows that the estimated effect for these headline stories is similar to the main result, and even slightly smaller, suggesting that the most prominent news events do not generate stronger behavioral responses.

This indicates that while prosecutors are more responsive when television viewership is higher, they do not react more when the issue is prominently featured or repeatedly covered in the news, which does not fully align with a priming interpretation. That said, headline stories may differ substantially in tone or content from other reports, and their distinctive features could still elicit different reactions from prosecutors.

6.3 Prosecution decisions, speed and severity

I then assess whether media coverage of VAW affects not only the likelihood but also the nature of prosecution decisions, in terms of their speed and severity. To do this, I test whether TV news coverage of crimes against women increases the likelihood of prosecution via immediate trial compared to other modes. An immediate trial is a fast-track procedure that allows prosecutors to bring a person to court immediately after custody. It is used for relatively straightforward but serious offenses requiring an immediate penal response and accounts for only about 3% of prosecution modes in VAW cases. Figure E18 shows that the likelihood of prosecution through an immediate trial increases significantly in the days following news coverage. Given the small baseline for this mode of prosecution, this represents a sizable 10% increase in the likelihood of prosecution via immediate trial compared to other modes on average.

I also examine whether TV news coverage of crimes against women affects the time between a case's registration and the prosecutor's decision (with a mean of 210 days; 242 days for dismissals and 98 days for prosecutions). Although effects are not statistically significant (as previously outlined in Table E1), the time-based coefficients presented in Figure E19 show that dismissals decisions tend to take slightly longer and prosecutions somewhat less time following media coverage, suggesting that prosecutors may deliberate more before dismissing and act more swiftly when deciding to prosecute.

Therefore, while prosecutors become more reluctant to dismiss cases after news coverage – since such decisions are more likely to attract public attention – they also tend to adopt harsher or more expedited prosecution practices, which could result either from cognitive or emotional reactions driven by priming effects, or from strategic adjustments motivated by signaling effects.

6.4 Heterogeneous effects by courts

I next examine heterogeneity across courts, focusing first on differences based on the number of sexual and intimate partner violence cases handled by each court in the two weeks preceding a decision (with an average of 47.5 cases and a median of 32 across all courts). The hypothesis is that prosecutors more accustomed to handling such cases pay closer attention to their treatment when the issue becomes more prominent in the news, consistent with a signaling mechanism, whereas those less accustomed may not significantly adjust their behavior. Figure 14 supports this prediction: the decrease in the propensity to dismiss following news coverage is concentrated in courts processing above-median

numbers of cases in the prior two weeks. This pattern suggests that experience with such cases conditions prosecutors' responsiveness to media coverage, with more experienced prosecutors particularly attentive to public scrutiny when VAW is salient in the news.

I then analyze court-level heterogeneity based on average baseline dismissal rates, which vary substantially across courts, as shown in Figures E16 and E17. Figure 14 shows that the reduction in dismissal propensity after news coverage follows a U-shaped pattern. The effect is primarily driven by courts in the first and fourth quartiles – that is, those with the lowest and highest baseline dismissal rates. Courts with higher dismissal rates (Q4) appear especially sensitive to media attention, possibly because they have more room to adjust or face greater reputational exposure to criticism, consistent with both priming and signaling mechanisms. Conversely, courts with the lowest dismissal rates (Q1) may already comprise prosecutors more committed to addressing VAW seriously and who respond to coverage by reinforcing their cautious approach through signaling effects. By contrast, courts in the middle quartiles (Q2–Q3) appear less responsive, perhaps because they follow more routinized practices or hold weaker normative priors, making them less influenced by short-term fluctuations in public visibility of VAW.

6.5 Increased awareness of VAW

The #MeToo movement had a profound impact on the perception of VAW, both in France and worldwide, as evidenced by studies documenting increased reporting in its aftermath (Gauthier, 2022; Levy & Mattsson, 2023; SSMSI, 2024). To examine whether such broader societal shifts condition the effect of media coverage, I explore how prosecutorial responsiveness varies before and after the #MeToo movement. Figure 14 shows that the reduction in dismissal rates occurs only after the #MeToo movement (October 2017), with no effect observed before that date. Robustness checks presented in Section 5.3 indicate that this pattern is unlikely to be driven by new VAW legislation or judicial reforms enacted from October 2017 onward. This suggests that changes in prosecutorial behavior may have been influenced by the heightened public awareness generated by the movement, which reframed VAW as a broader social issue rather than as isolated incidents. Such an effect could be consistent with both priming and signaling mechanisms becoming more salient in the post-#MeToo period. Interestingly, this indicates that prosecutorial behavior became responsive to news coverage conditional on a prior shift in gender norms that has already heightened public sensitivity to VAW.

To better understand the link between media content and prosecutorial decisions, I

finally apply a basic text analysis to a subsample of TV news transcripts, using keyword classification to categorize the content of news stories on crimes against women. Although the small sample size for this content-based analysis calls for interpreting the results as suggestive, Figure 14 shows that the reduction in dismissal rates follows news featuring victims' testimonies ($N = 24$ isolated news days) or mentioning that victims had previously reported the violence to authorities, or that perpetrators had prior interactions with the justice system ($N = 16$). By contrast, there is no significant effect for crime news involving sensational cases ($N = 25$) or political or media figures ($N = 19$), suggesting that prosecutors respond primarily to coverage emphasizing institutional responsibility rather than sensationalized news. Thus, the effect appears to be driven both by news reports likely to evoke emotional responses – consistent with a priming mechanism – and by those questioning police or judicial actions and accountability – consistent with more cautious behavior through signaling.

7 Conclusion

Criminal justice systems worldwide are frequently criticized for their handling of VAW. Yet recent trends reveal significant changes in the judicial treatment of such violence in France over the past decade. This paper asks whether increased visibility of VAW in public discourse can shift judicial responses in the short run. To answer this question, I combine novel administrative data on nearly all court cases of sexual and intimate partner violence processed by the French criminal justice system with high-frequency data from France's 8pm TV news broadcasts. Exploiting as-good-as-random variation in the timing of unrelated TV news stories on crimes against women, I estimate the causal effects of media coverage of VAW on each stage of the judicial process.

I find that news coverage of VAW increases prosecution rates in the short run but does not significantly affect reporting or sentencing decisions. Suggestive evidence indicates that this shift in prosecutorial behavior is likely driven by strategic adjustments in response to increased public scrutiny and accountability to case handling, and, to a lesser extent, by heightened awareness or emotional reactions through priming. The results underscore the central role of prosecutors, who dismiss nearly 80% of cases while most prosecuted cases result in conviction, thereby making prosecution the key decision stage of the criminal justice process. Media coverage influences precisely this margin: by lowering dismissal rates, it allows more cases to proceed to trial. Importantly, once cases reach trial, judges' behavior remains unchanged, addressing concerns that media visibility might bias judicial

rulings or lead to over-punishment. Moreover, the additional cases brought forward are just as likely to result in conviction as those prosecuted otherwise, suggesting that many viable cases would have been prematurely dismissed without this salience shock.

From a policy perspective, these findings indicate that judicial decisions are malleable, and that increasing the salience of VAW could enhance the overall criminal justice response by strengthening accountability without influencing judges' decisions. At the same time, the normative implications of these results remain unclear without further evidence on whether this increased accountability helps deter or prevent future violence, or whether it may divert resources away from other crimes, which are issues that lie beyond the scope of this paper.

These results come with limitations. First, because identification targets short-run, local responses to isolated news coverage, generalizing to longer horizons requires caution. Second, the media measure focuses on national evening TV news, whereas effects may differ for regional TV, print, radio, or social media. Third, the lack of direct information on police behavior may introduce bias if changes in police practices also affect which cases are recorded and forwarded to the justice system or how they are investigated. Finally, external validity is bounded by institutional context: France's civil-law system with appointed prosecutors and professional judges may respond differently than systems with elected officials or jury trials.

The framework and results established in this paper can be extended in several fruitful directions. First, I plan to implement additional empirical strategies to reinforce the robustness of the findings. One approach would involve exploiting spatial variation in exposure to news events across regions, comparing regions treated at different times using a difference-in-differences design with regional news data. Second, I aim to further elucidate the mechanisms underlying the observed effects on prosecution decisions by collecting additional information on the prosecutors and courts handling the cases. Third, a promising extension of the paper would involve conducting heterogeneity analyses based on the narratives used to portray victims or offenders in the TV news stories, using transcription data. Finally, comparing the estimated effects with those obtained from other types of TV programs, such as talk shows, dramas, or awareness campaigns would provide further insight into how different media formats shape judicial responses.

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A Appendix A: Additional elements on the French criminal justice system and legal definitions

A.1 Judicial actors

There are two main categories of magistrates tasked with applying and upholding the law in France: judicial magistrates (*magistrats du siège*), also known as judges, who apply the law by ruling on criminal cases and issuing impartial decisions in accordance with legal standards; and prosecutorial magistrates (*magistrats du parquet*), or prosecutors, who advocate for the enforcement of the law and lead criminal proceedings on behalf of society's interest.

Judicial magistrates enjoy guarantees of independence and security of tenure, meaning they cannot be reassigned without their consent. Their independence is further protected by the fact that the government cannot intervene in their career paths. **Prosecutorial magistrates**, on the other hand, do not issue rulings. They are appointed by the President of the Republic, based on proposals from the Ministry of Justice and following the opinion of the *High Council for the Judiciary* (*Conseil supérieur de la magistrature*).

Prosecutors operate under the authority of the Minister of Justice and are subject to a principle of hierarchical subordination. While they may receive general policy instructions from the Minister of Justice, they cannot be directed in specific cases. Their freedom to speak during court hearings is fully protected. **Unlike judges, prosecutors do not benefit from security of tenure** and may be reassigned without their consent.

Each judicial court (*tribunal judiciaire*) has a **public prosecutor's office** led by a **prosecutor of the Republic**, supported by deputy prosecutors, vice-prosecutors, and substitutes. They represent the state before the correctional court, juvenile court, investigating judges, and civil chambers. All members of the same prosecutor's office form an **indivisible and interchangeable body**, meaning any member can represent the prosecution at any stage of the legal proceedings.

A.2 Jurisdictions

In France, different types of courts handle criminal cases, judging both individuals and legal entities suspected of having committed an offense. The appropriate court depends on the severity of the alleged crime.

The **correctional court** (*tribunal correctionnel*) is the lower criminal court responsible for trying adults accused of misdemeanors (*délits*) such as theft or serious assault. It may impose prison sentences of up to 10 years—or up to 20 years in the case of repeat offenders—as well as fines and alternative or complementary sanctions. Proceedings are handled either by a single judge or a panel

of three professional judges.

The **criminal court** (*cour d'assises*) is the higher criminal court responsible for trying felonies (*crimes*) punishable by more than 15 years of imprisonment (e.g., murder, rape, armed robbery, etc.), committed by adults or minors over the age of 16 at the time of the offense. It is composed of three professional judges and a jury of six randomly selected citizens. Cases are referred to this court following a judicial investigation.

The **county criminal court** (*cour criminelle départementale*), generalized across France in 2023, tries adults accused of felonies punishable by between 15 and 20 years of imprisonment, such as rape or armed robbery, excluding repeat offenders. It is composed solely of five professional judges and handles cases referred by an investigating judge.

Juvenile criminal courts (*tribunal pour enfants*) (including the juvenile judge, the juvenile court, and the juvenile correctional court) rule on the guilt of minors charged with criminal offenses and, if applicable, impose appropriate educational or punitive measures.

The present study includes only first-instance rulings delivered by the correctional courts or juvenile criminal courts. Judgments rendered by the *cour d'assises* or *cour criminelle* are not included in the dataset and are therefore excluded from the analysis. However, such cases represent a small share of criminal proceedings overall. For example, in 2019, the vast majority of criminal cases prosecuted by public prosecutors were referred to correctional courts (84% of prosecuted cases) or juvenile courts (8%) (SDSE, 2019).

A.3 Legal concepts and procedures

Case orientation refers to the decision taken by the public prosecutor regarding how to proceed with a case, generally leading either to prosecution or to case dismissal. **Prosecution** corresponds to the initiation of criminal proceedings aimed at bringing the alleged offender before a criminal court. **Dismissal** (*classement sans suite*) is the prosecutor's decision not to prosecute the alleged offender. This may occur in different situations: non-prosecutable cases, failure to prosecute, or after a successful alternative to prosecution. **Non-prosecutable cases** are dismissed because prosecution is impossible, either due to factual reasons (e.g., unknown offender, insufficiently established offense) or legal reasons (e.g., statute of limitations). **Failure to prosecute** refers to cases that could be prosecuted but are dismissed in consideration of the public interest, legal principles, justice, or fairness. An **alternative to prosecution** is a measure imposed by the prosecutor aimed at compensating the harm done to the victim, addressing the disturbance caused by the offense, or promoting the rehabilitation of the offender, without initiating formal prosecution. If the measure is successfully completed, the case is dismissed. Alternatives to prosecution are not recorded on the criminal record—except in the case of a **penal composition**, which is considered a more formalized type of alternative.

Unlike prosecutorial dismissals, a **judicial dismissal** (*ordonnance de non-lieu*) is issued by an investigating judge when the facts are not established, do not constitute an offense, when the prosecution is no longer possible, or when the perpetrator could not be identified. Judicial dismissals, which typically concern serious crimes requiring referral to an investigating judge, are not included in the dataset and are therefore excluded from the analysis. However, they represent only a small share of prosecuted cases. For instance, in 2019, judicial dismissals accounted for only 3% of all prosecuted cases referred to investigating judges (SDSE, 2019).

A.4 Legal qualification of offenses

Sexual violence refers to situations in which a person imposes sexual behavior or comments on another person. It covers different forms of violence. **Rape** is defined as any act of sexual penetration, of any kind, or any oral-genital act committed on another person or on the perpetrator by means of violence, coercion, threat, or surprise. **Sexual assault** is a sexual act committed with violence, coercion, threat, or surprise. It also requires physical contact but excludes penetration, which characterizes rape. **Sexual harassment** consists of repeatedly imposing sexual remarks or behaviors on a person that either violate their dignity due to their degrading or humiliating nature, or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Rape is classified as a **felony** (*crime*), the most serious category of offense, punishable by more than 15 years of imprisonment. Sexual assault and sexual harassment are classified as **misdemeanors** (*délits*), i.e., acts prohibited by law and punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment of less than 10 years (or up to 20 years in case of repeat offenses).

Intimate partner violence refers to all forms of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, and economic) committed within couples, whether married, in civil unions, cohabiting, or separated. intimate partner violence is generally classified as a misdemeanor, except in cases of voluntary homicide or rape, which are considered crimes.

Downgrading of charges refers to the process by which an offense initially classified as a felony is requalified as a misdemeanor (for instance, a rape reclassified as a sexual assault). This can be done by the public prosecutor at the end of the preliminary investigation or by the investigating judge. Such reclassification may reflect a justified **legal reassessment** of the facts when the elements constituting rape are not sufficiently established by the investigation and is inherent to the functioning of the judicial system. In contrast, **undercharging** or **declassification** refers to cases where the offense is recognized as rape but still sent to the correctionnal court (*tribunal correctionnel*) instead of the higher criminal court (*cour d'assises*), for example to reduce court backlog or when it is believed that the victim is unlikely to succeed before a jury. Several studies based on judicial file reviews estimate that nearly half of the sexual assaults prosecuted before the correctionnal court are in fact rapes that were downgraded, although no reliable official statistics are available on this matter (Le Goaziou,

2019).

B Appendix B: Additional elements on judicial data

B.1 Further information on the data source and construction

The data used in this study come from the CASSIOPÉE case management software. This system is used by French courts to process all criminal offenses, including fifth-class contraventions, misdemeanors (*délits*), and felonies (*crimes*), involving either individuals (adults and minors) or legal entities. The information is primarily entered by court clerks. The dataset used here was extracted from the statistical version of CASSIOPÉE by the French Ministry of Justice. It includes information on all criminal cases received by public prosecutors, dismissed or prosecuted in first instance by correctionnal courts or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2023.

While this database is primarily used by the Ministry of Justice for official statistical publications, it has only recently been made accessible to researchers via the secure data access center (CASD). This paper is among the first to exploit these data. However, since the data only cover closed cases and not those still under investigation, time-series trends for the most recent years should be interpreted with caution, which is why I stop the analysis before 2020. In addition, the dataset does not include cases dismissed following an investigative phase or those tried in criminal courts (*cours d’assises* or *cours criminelles*) — although such cases represent a small share of the total criminal caseload.

Each case is classified using an official coding system (NATAFF), which assigns one to three main offense types to each case based on the transmitted file. This provides a broad categorization of the case (among 350 different codes at the most detailed level). The NATAFF code is case-level and shared across all suspects involved. It is less detailed than the offense-level NATINF code, which is assigned to individual suspects. However, unlike NATINF — which is often missing, especially for cases that are dismissed (43% missing in this dataset) — NATAFF is systematically recorded for all cases and thus provides a consistent classification across the dataset.

Given that legal qualifications can evolve throughout the judicial process (as new elements are uncovered or depending on who is in charge of qualifying the offense), I rely primarily on the NATAFF code as recorded when the case enters the prosecutor’s office. This allows a consistent application of case classification across the entire sample, regardless of whether the case was dismissed or prosecuted. Judicial outcome statistics (e.g., convictions and sentencing) are based on the NATAFF recorded at the time of the decision — that is, the final qualification assigned by the prosecutor.

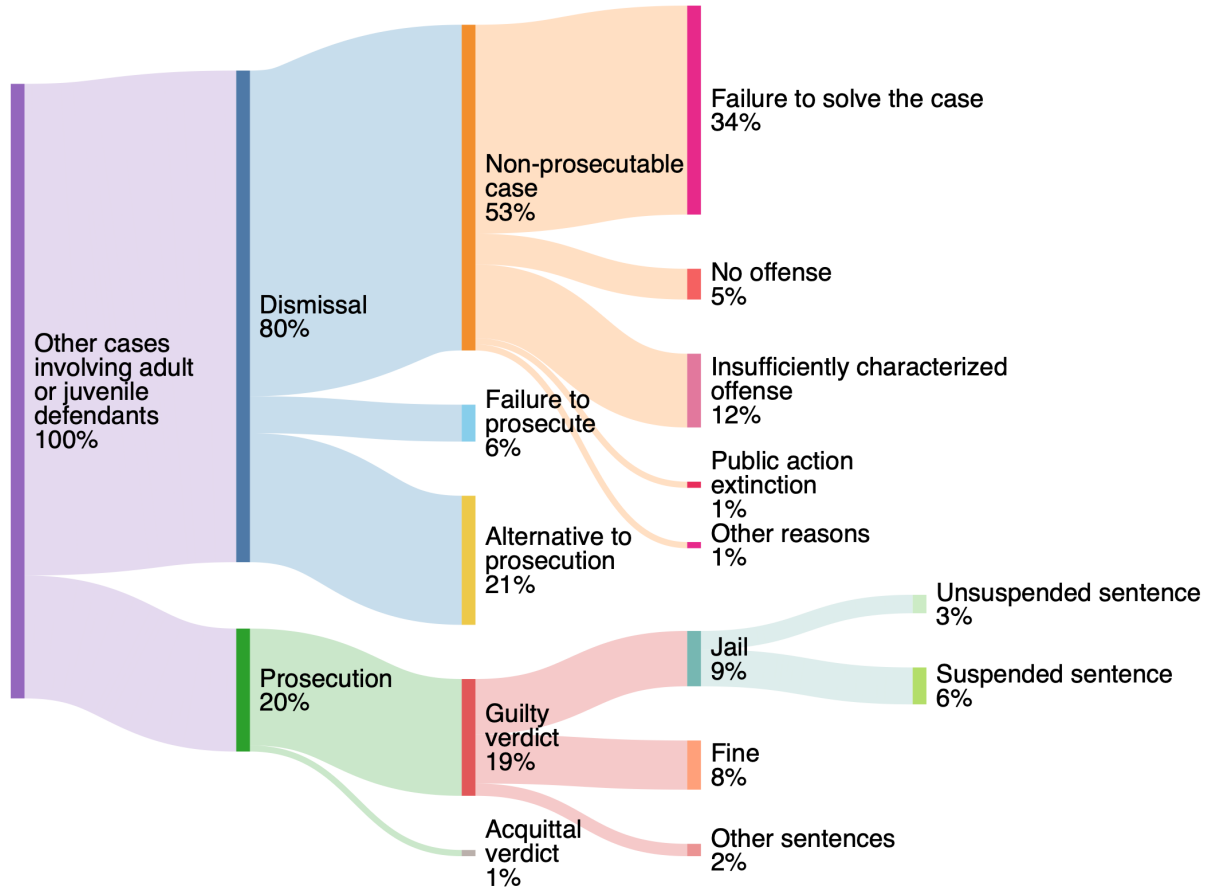
I use this classification (NATAFF at entry or at decision) to restrict the sample to cases involving sexual violence (identified as rape, sexual assault, or sexual harassment) and intimate partner violence (intimate partner violence; identified as violence committed by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner).

These two categories may overlap — for instance, in cases of marital rape.

Rape is legally classified as a felony in France and should in principle be adjudicated in criminal courts (*cours d'assises*). However, a significant share of rape cases are reclassified either at the prosecutor's office or after an investigation. As such, the study focuses on cases recorded as rape upon entry into the judicial system but which were either dismissed or downgraded to a lesser charge (*correctionnalisation*) (see Section A.1). These downgraded rape cases are either requalified as misdemeanors (e.g., sexual assault) because the legal definition of rape is not met ("requalification") or are deliberately prosecuted as lesser offenses despite fulfilling the definition of rape ("disqualification").

B.2 Further descriptive results

Figure B1: Judicial handling of other crimes involving persons (2012-2019)

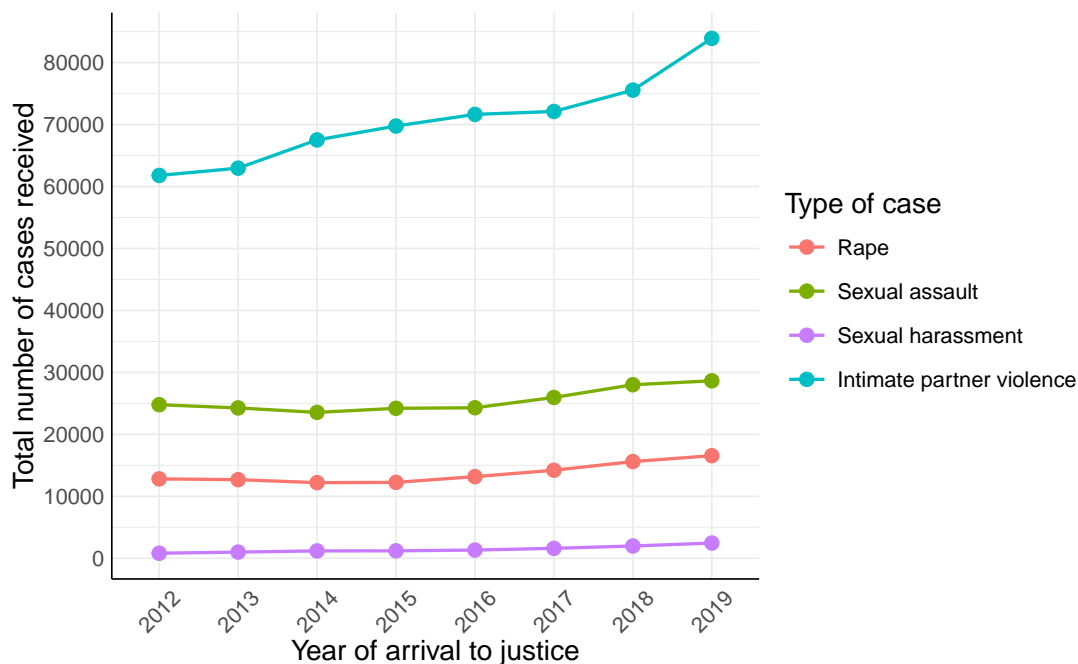


Notes: Share of cases at each stage of the criminal justice system process, among all cases other than sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) involving adult or juvenile defendants received across all French jurisdictions and either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. These are mainly cases of thefts or burglaries (28.62%), driving violations such as driving under alcohol or drugs (8.76%), physical violence (8.40%) or destruction (8.34%).

Reading: 80% of all cases other than sexual or intimate partner violence completed between 2012 and 2019 were dismissed, with 54% of all cases dismissed because they were deemed not prosecutable. The perpetrator was prosecuted in 20% of cases and found guilty in 19%, with a prison sentence imposed in 9% of all cases.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

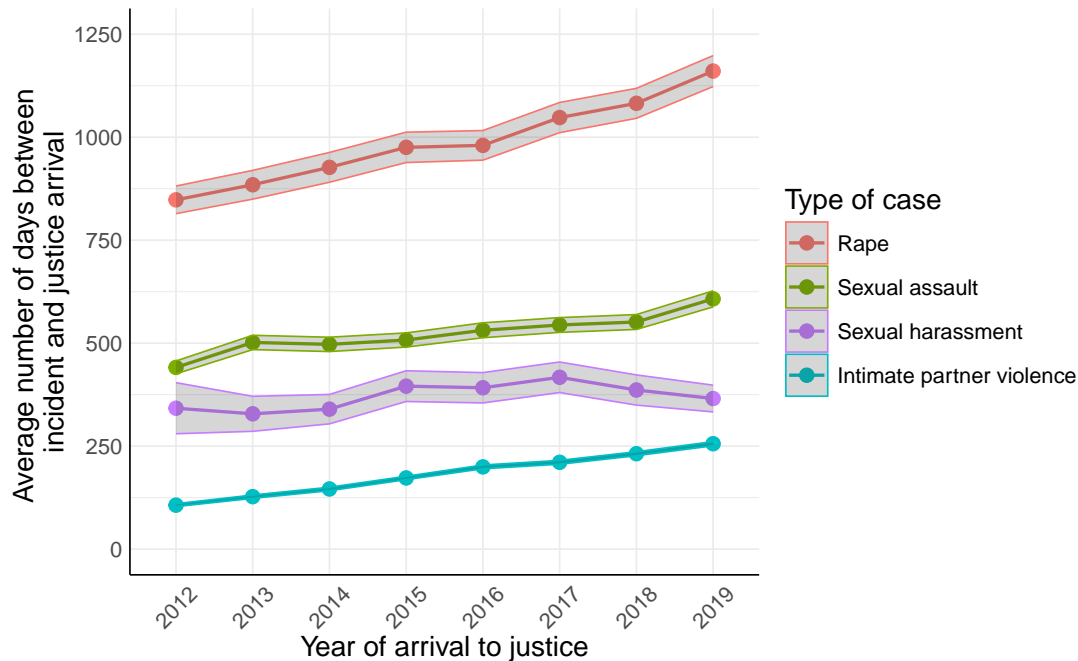
Figure B2: Number of cases of sexual or intimate partner violence registered within the criminal justice system, by type of case



Notes: Time evolution of the number of cases of sexual violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and other crimes reported to the French criminal justice system between 2012 and 2019 (and later dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts), in absolute numbers.
Reading: The total number of new intimate partner violence cases registered within the criminal justice system grew from around 61,000 in 2012 to almost 85,000 in 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Figure B3: Time elapsed between date of incident and justice arrival, by type of case

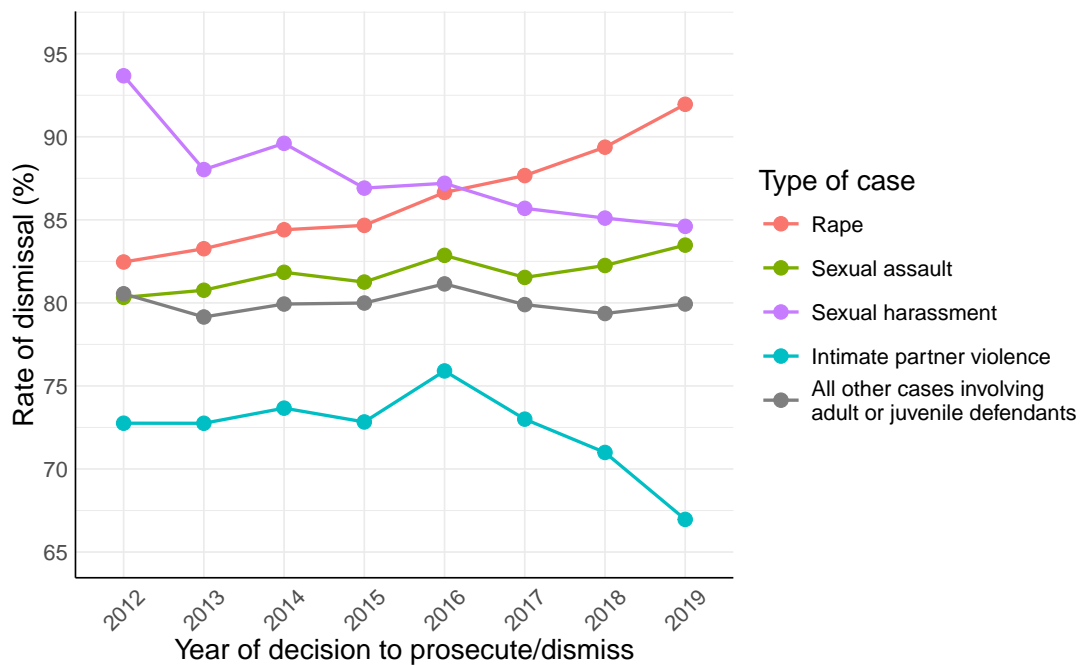


Notes: Time evolution of the average number of days elapsed between the start of the incident and its arrival to justice, for cases of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) registered within the French criminal justice system between 2012 and 2019 (and later dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts).

Reading: The rape reporting delay increased from around 2 years in 2012 to 3 years in 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Figure B4: Dismissal rate by type of case – Zoom on sexual violence type

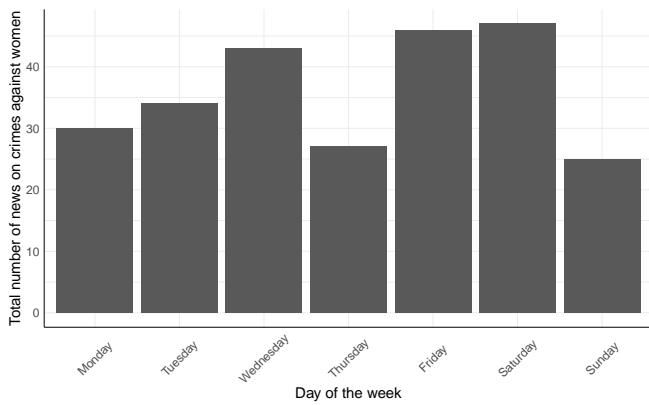


Notes: Time evolution of the share of cases of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence (IPV), and other crimes dismissed by public prosecutors across all French jurisdictions between 2012 and 2019.

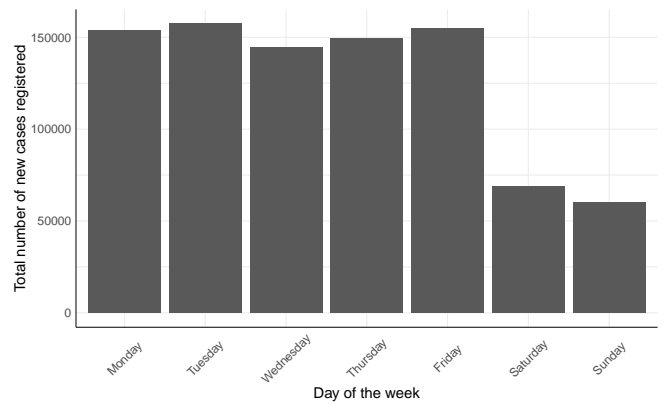
Reading: The dismissal rate for intimate partner violence cases decreased from an average of 73% in 2012 to 67% in 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

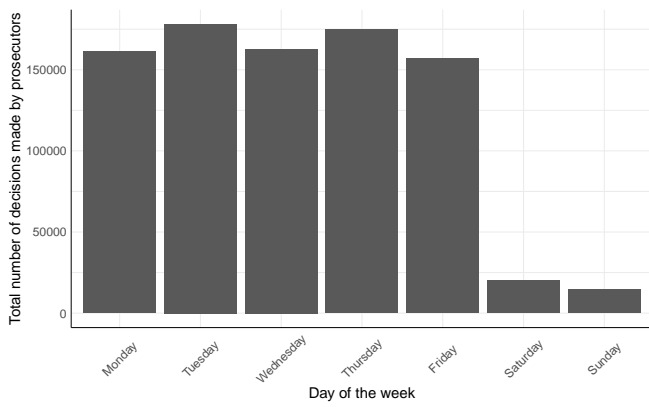
Figure B5: Seasonality of the number of news and judicial decisions by day of the week



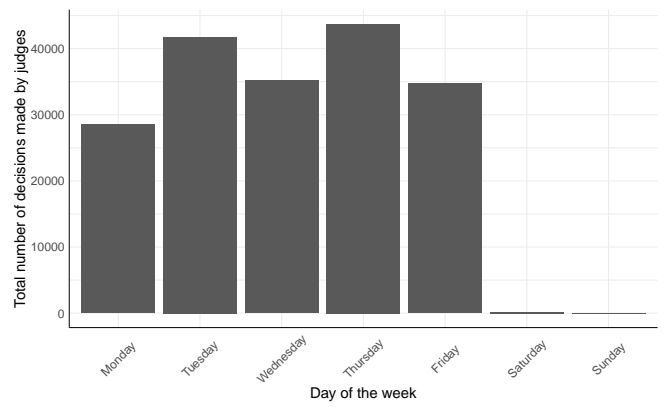
(a) Number of news



(b) Number of cases registered



(c) Number of decisions by prosecutors



(d) Number of decisions by judges

Notes: Total number of decisions regarding cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) taken by prosecutors by day of the week, for cases that reached the criminal justice system and were either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

C Appendix C: Additional elements on TV news data

C.1 Further information on the data source and construction

Figure C1: Example of INA data structure

Title	Channel	Date	Hour	Length (sec)	Descriptors	Summary
[Serial Rapist in Paris: Police Launch Witness Appeal]	TF1	2012-01-13	20:15:20	78	Parisian region, news story, rape, witness appeal, judicial police	Report in Paris where a serial rapist has been active since December. The Paris Judicial Police launch a witness appeal to find him. Interview with a witness. Excerpts from statements by Christian FLAESCH, Director of the Judicial Police of the Prefecture of Police in Paris, alternating with factual images.
[Analysis Segment: Plan Against Violence Against Women]	France 2	2013-11-22	20:12:02	82	society, women's condition, women's rights, woman, violence (domestic violence), couple, plan, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem	Analysis on set by Perrine Bonnet of the plan against violence against women recently launched by Najat Vallaud-Belkacem. She highlights the statistics on violence and the measures outlined in this plan. Her statements are accompanied by factual images and infographics.
[Brief News Segment: Alain Penin Sentenced to Life Imprisonment]	France 2	2014-01-23	20:30:03	15	trial, verdict, murder, young girl, conviction, Alain Penin (life imprisonment)	Brief. The Northern Assize Court has sentenced Alain PENIN to life imprisonment, with a minimum sentence of 22 years, for the murder of Natacha MOUGEL. Commentary on factual images.

Notes: Example of the TV news data structure. Source: TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure C2: Words cloud



Notes: Words cloud of the most common words appearing in the list of keywords describing the content of the TV news stories on violence against women (VAW) during the 8pm news broadcast of the main French national TV channels (TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte).

Source: Author’s calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure C3: Examples of news on crimes against women in 8pm TV news (TF1 & France 2)

Title	Date	Summary
[Serial Rapist in Paris]	2012-01-13	In Paris, the police have issued a search warrant for a dangerous man suspected of being a serial rapist after the rape of three women: two women on December 23rd, one of whom was assaulted with a knife.
[Investigation: Marie Jeanne Meyer, Jogger Found Dead]	2012-01-21	Report in Tournon-sur-Rhône dedicated to the ongoing investigation into the murder of Marie Jeanne Meyer, a jogger found dead in Ardèche last June. Update on the lead involving a suspected outsider.
[Discovery of Marie Bouchard's Body in Dijon]	2012-03-01	Incident in Dijon. The body of a 21-year-old woman, Marion Bouchard, was found. Her partner confessed to strangling and dismembering her after a violent dispute.
[Chloe's Kidnapping: Opening of a Judicial Investigation for Rape]	2012-11-19	Chloe's kidnapping: announcement of the opening of a judicial investigation for rape.
[A Woman Found Dead in Nîmes]	2013-01-25	A 33-year-old woman was killed while jogging on a path in Nîmes.
[Double Assault in Colombes]	2013-08-13	A man has been arrested for two extremely violent sexual assaults committed in Colombes. The suspect was captured on surveillance cameras. He is a repeat offender. Convicted in 2009 for rape and in 2012 for several offenses, he was on parole. The mother of a victim, currently in a coma, is filing a complaint against the justice system for endangering lives. The suspect faces 20 years in prison.
[DNA Tests on High School Students]	2014-04-12	At a private school in La Rochelle, DNA samples will be collected from male students and staff members to identify the person who raped a female student at the school last September.
[Rape Case in the Police Force]	2014-04-25	Extended custody of the three police officers indicted for the rape of a Canadian tourist in the premises of the judicial police in Paris.
[Highly Disturbing Disappearance in Haute-Saône]	2017-10-29	Haute-Saône, news story: the worrying disappearance of a 29-year-old jogger, Alexia Daval, near the town of Gray.
[North: Arrest of a Rapist]	2018-02-28	Reportage on the arrest of a serial rapist in the North.
[Femicide: Woman's Body Found in a Parking Lot]	2019-09-01	The body of a 21-year-old woman was found in the parking lot of a dump in Cagnes-sur-Mer, and her partner was apprehended. She is the hundredth woman killed by her partner since the beginning of the year.

Notes: Examples of news on crimes against women in the national 8pm TV news broadcast on TF1 and France 2.

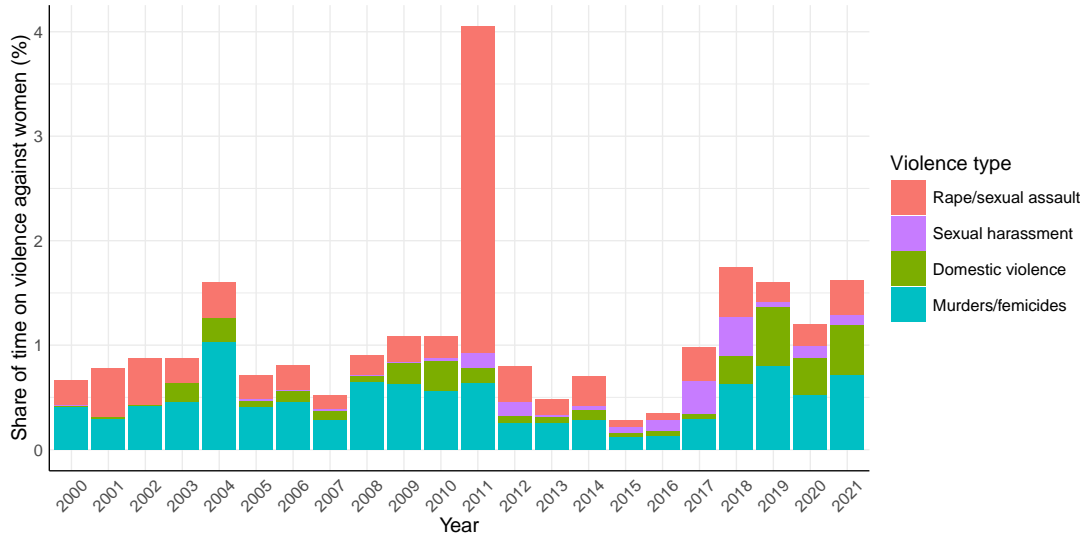
Source: TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Keywords used for VAW stories classification. Below is the list of words used to define the aggregate measures of media coverage of VAW for each content category. The categories have been created in the following order. News stories in later categories were selected only if they did not already fit into a former category, with the exception of certain word combinations.

1. **Trial:** trial, lawsuit, court, appeal, assizes, criminal, Cassation, courthouse, judge, justice, recourse, procedure, requisition, court transcript, hearing, judicial hearing, verdict, conviction, indictment, convicted, guilty, criminal confinement, dismissal, without prosecution, acquitted, acquittal, release, released, freedom, defamation, appeal, appealed, judicial control, compensation, civil procedure, grace measure, imprisonment, pardoned, commutation of sentence, parole, rejection of parole.
2. **Law and society** – Subdivided into:
 - **Preventative campaigns, protective measures, associations:** campaign, advertising campaign, toll-free number, listening number, helpline, 119, 3919, information campaign, communication campaign, advertising, information, security device, association, support group, SOS Solidarité Femmes, collective, training, prevention, care, reception center, medical treatment, phone call, reception, internship, self-defense, advertising message, screening, platform, emergency police, medical check-up, medical aid, human relations, legal aid, dog, BLAST, surveillance system, support group.
 - **Laws, government, criminal policy:** criminal procedure, criminal justice, criminal law, reform, law, jurisprudence, experimentation, experience, political program, Grenelle, plan, budget, device, bracelet, emergency phone, mobile phone, grand danger device, virtual reality, restorative justice, report, council of ministers, Matignon, minister, brigade, domestic policy, public policy, measure, Raffarin, circular, National Education, State Secretariat, constitution, constitutional, Macron, President of the Republic.
 - **Society, women’s rights, events, arts:** women’s rights, international day, thematic day, World Day, tribute, march, observatory, society, opinion poll, demonstration, protest, tribune, white march, gathering, social network, social phenomenon, film, documentary, music video, book, play, exhibition, TV series, novel, short film, sexism, testimony, feminine condition, condition of women, figure, insecurity, numerical data, journalism, media.
3. **Crime:** disappearance, abduction, kidnapping, body, blood, dead, miscellaneous facts, news item, serial killer, police investigation, arrest, custody, indicted, police sketch, false testimony, public prosecutor’s office, judicial inquiry, accusation, accused, complaint, rape, rapist, serial rapist, murder, death, suspected, assault, harassment, judicial procedure, immolation, genetic footprint, DNA, confession, actively sought, lifted.

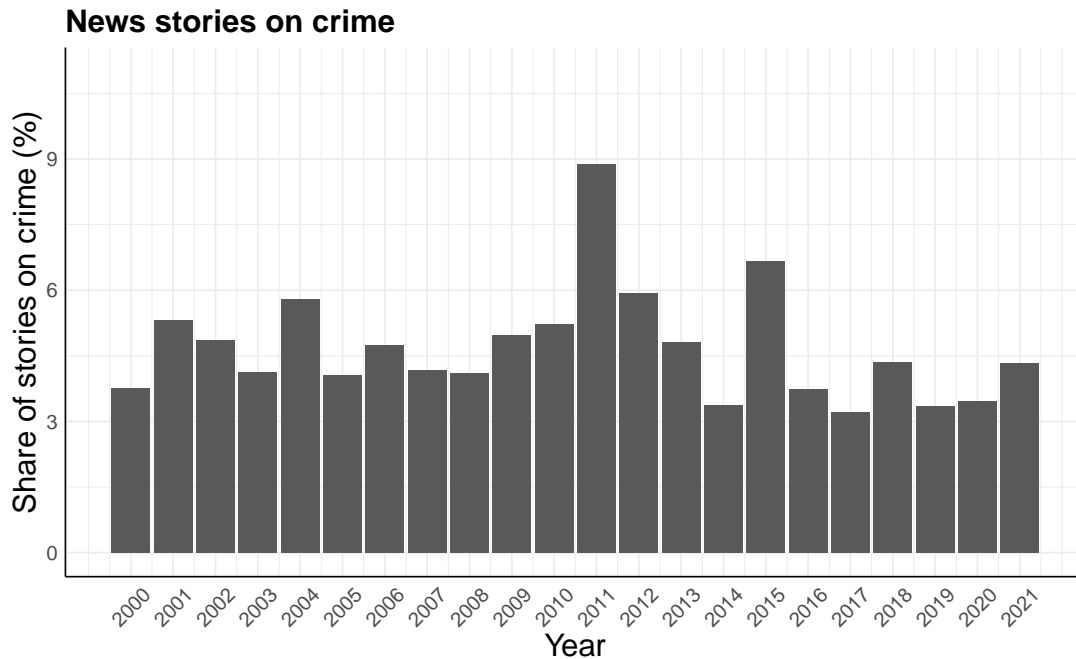
C.2 Further descriptive results

Figure C4: Share of stories on VAW (time) in national 8pm TV news, by type of VAW



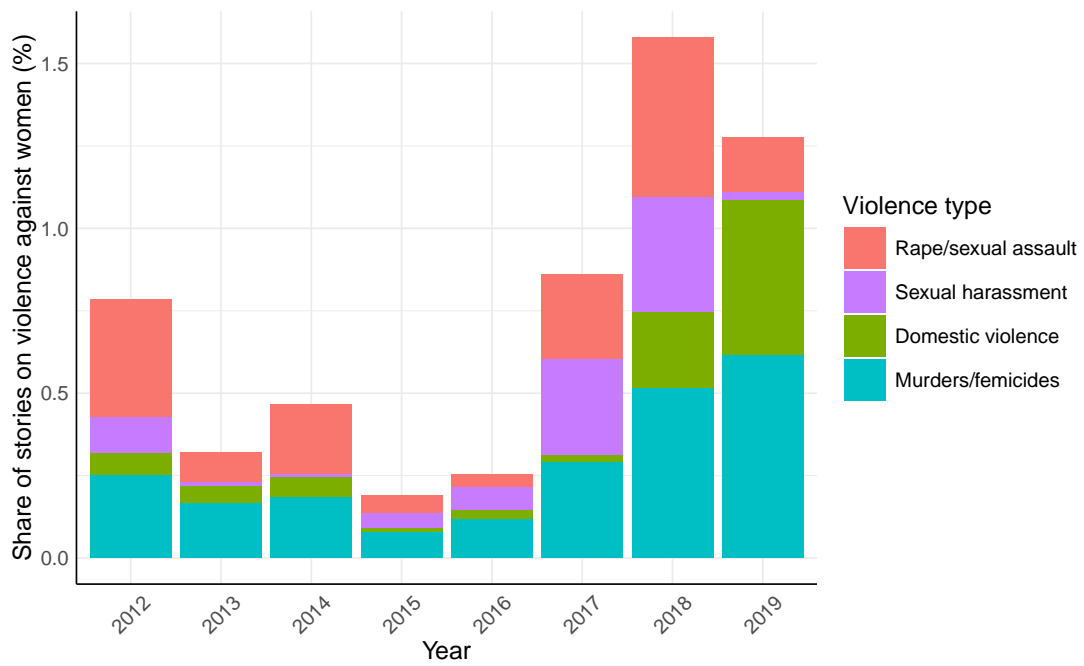
Notes: Time evolution of the share of TV news stories (in time) about violence against women (VAW) in the 8pm news broadcast of the main French national TV channels (TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte), by type of violence.
Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure C5: Share of stories on any crime in national 8pm TV news

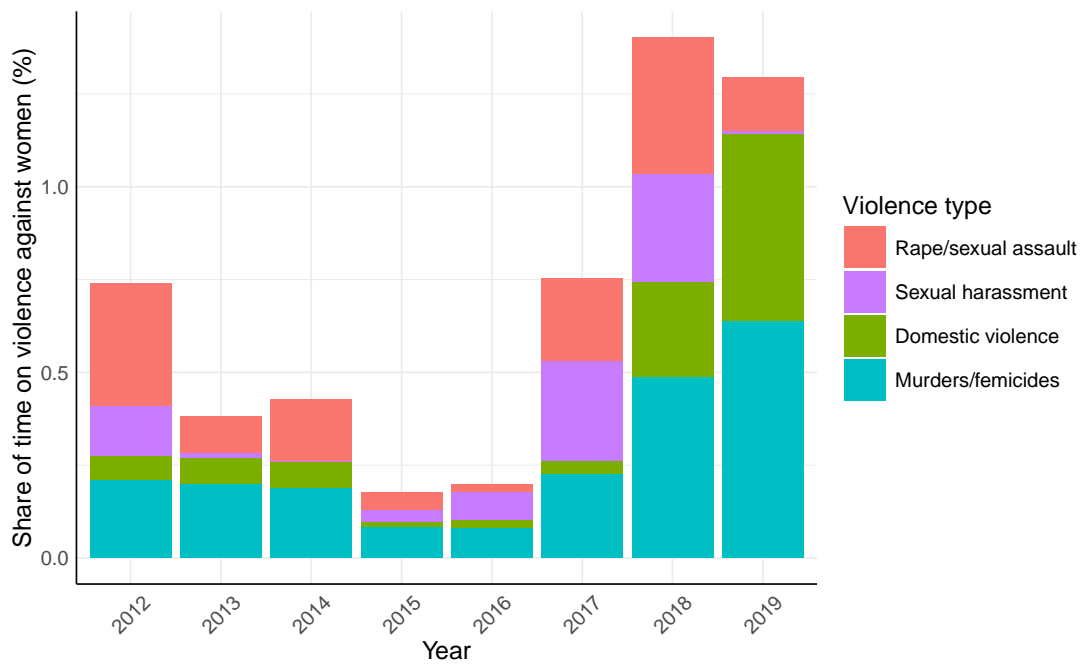


Notes: Time evolution of the share of TV news stories about crime in general (including crimes against women) in the 8pm news broadcast of the main French national TV channels (TF1, France 2, France 3, Canal+, France 5, M6, Arte), by type of violence.
Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure C6: Evolution of VAW coverage in TF1 & France 2 8pm TV news, by violence type



(a) Share of news stories (number)



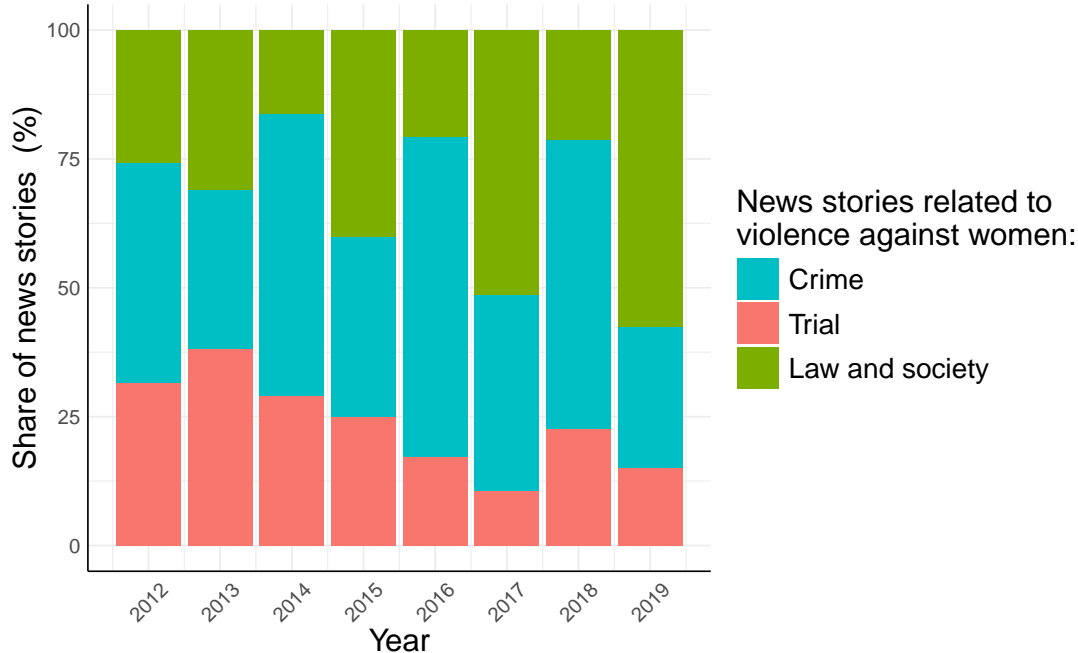
(b) Share of news stories (time)

Notes: Time evolution of the share of TV news stories about violence against women (VAW) in the 8pm TV news broadcast on TF1 and France 2, by type of violence.

Reading: The topic of VAW represented on average 0.75% of all news stories broadcast on TF1 and France 2 prime time news in 2012.

Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure C7: Content of VAW stories in TF1 & France 2 8pm TV news, by news category

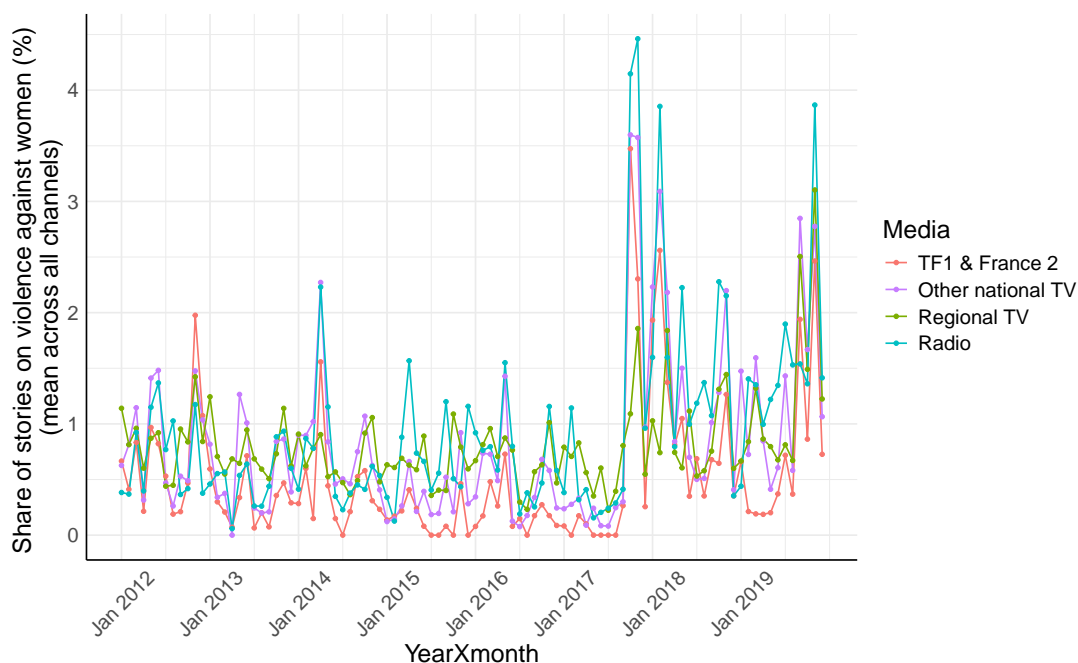


Notes: Time evolution of the share of news stories on violence against women (VAW) in the 8pm TV news broadcast on TF1 and France 2, within each exclusive content category: (i) crime, (ii) trial or (iii) law and societal issues related to VAW.

Reading: In 2012, news stories on VAW in TF1 and France 2 prime-time news were divided as follows: 45% focused on crimes, 30% on trials, and 25% on law and societal issues.

Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure C8: Correlation between news coverage on 8pm TV news and other media



Notes: Correlation of the share of news stories on VAW across different media outlets: national TV, regional TV and radio.

Source: Author's calculations based on TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table C1: Breakdown of news stories of crimes against women, by distance to the court

News story that occurred...	Proportion of news stories on crimes against women
...in the same county	2.3%
...in adjacent county	6.7%
...in other counties	91%

Reading: 2.3% of news stories on crimes against women covered in the 8pm TV news broadcasts of TF1 and France 2 occurred in the same county as the jurisdiction, and only 6.7% occurred in an adjacent county.

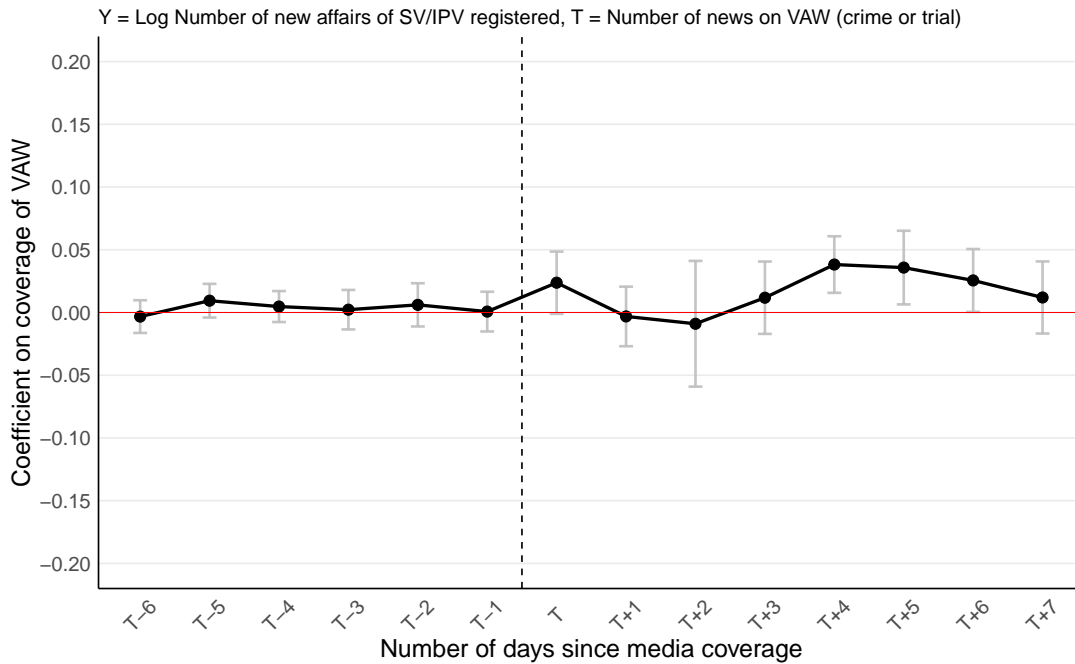
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée*, provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute (a subsample of TF1 and France 2 news story transcriptions on crimes against women).

D Appendix D: Additional results on reporting

D.1 Additional results on the number of cases reported

This appendix provides additional results on the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on reporting to the justice system. Figure D1 shows that the increase in the number of cases reported to justice still holds when news on trials related to VAW cases is included, while Figure D8 shows that it also holds when restricting the analysis to cases that occurred before the coverage episode surrounding the registration of the case. No clear additional effects emerge when examining a longer time period (Figure D2). Figure D3 indicates that the result is similar for both sexual and intimate partner violence cases, and Figures D4 and D5 reveal no other significant heterogeneity.

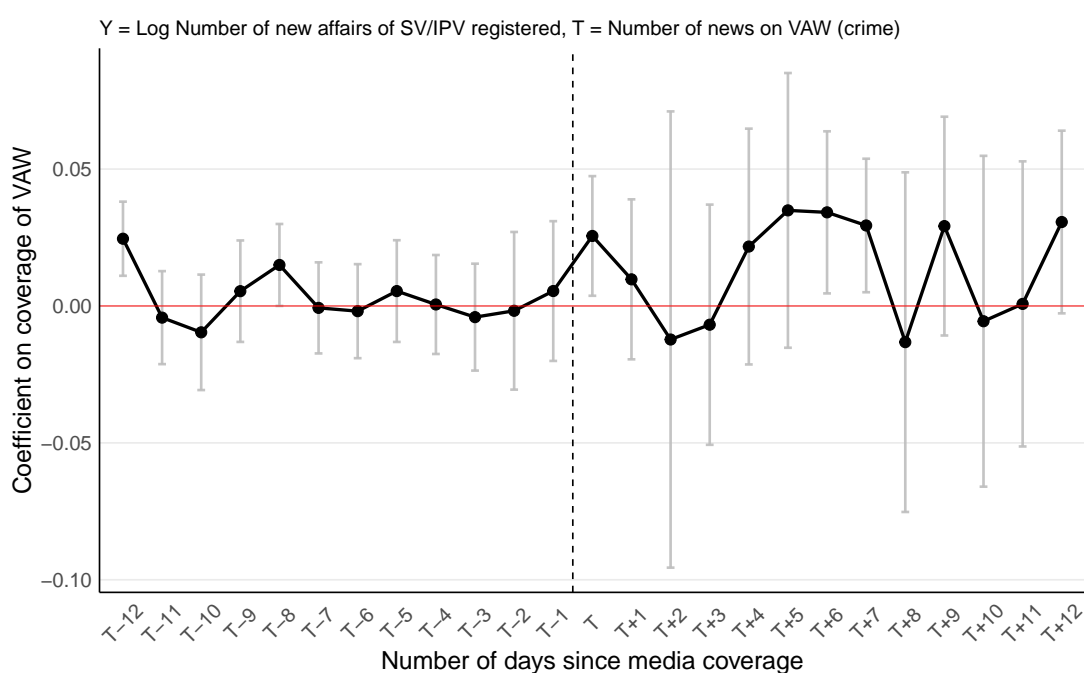
Figure D1: Effect of news coverage on number of sexual or intimate partner violence cases reported to justice, including news on trials



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women or related trials on the reporting of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women or related trials broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

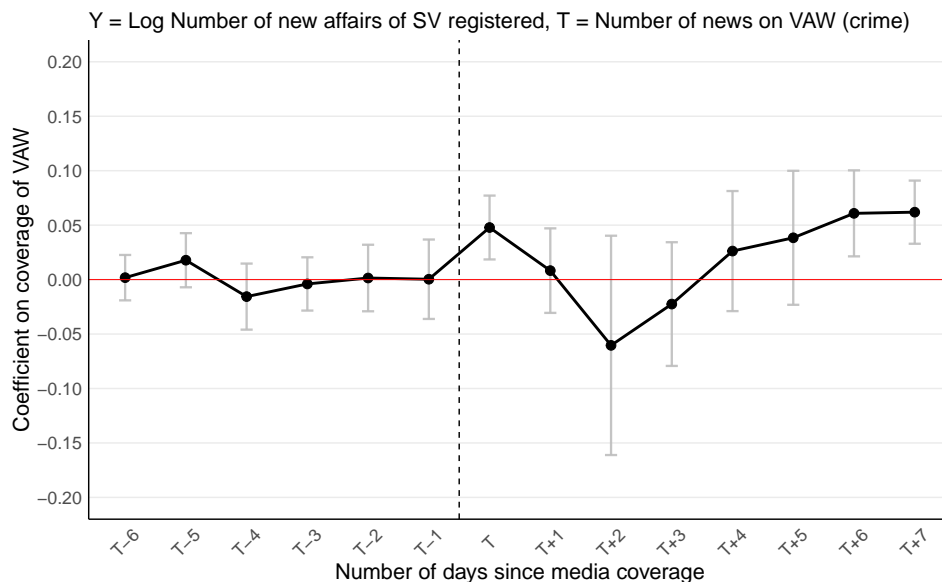
Figure D2: Effect of news coverage on number of cases of VAW reported to justice – Using more periods



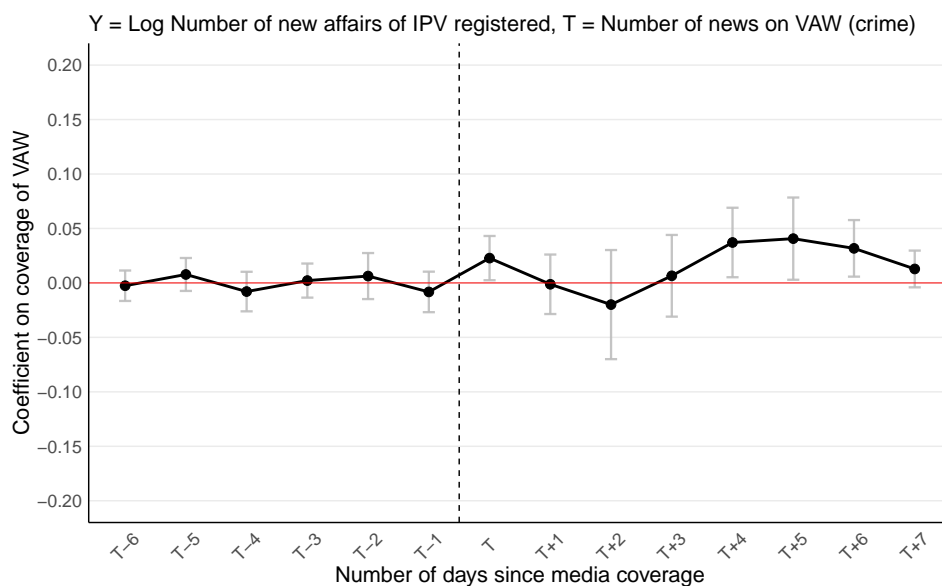
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the reporting of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure D3: Effect of news coverage on the number of VAW cases reported to justice: sexual violence vs. intimate partner violence



(a) Sexual violence

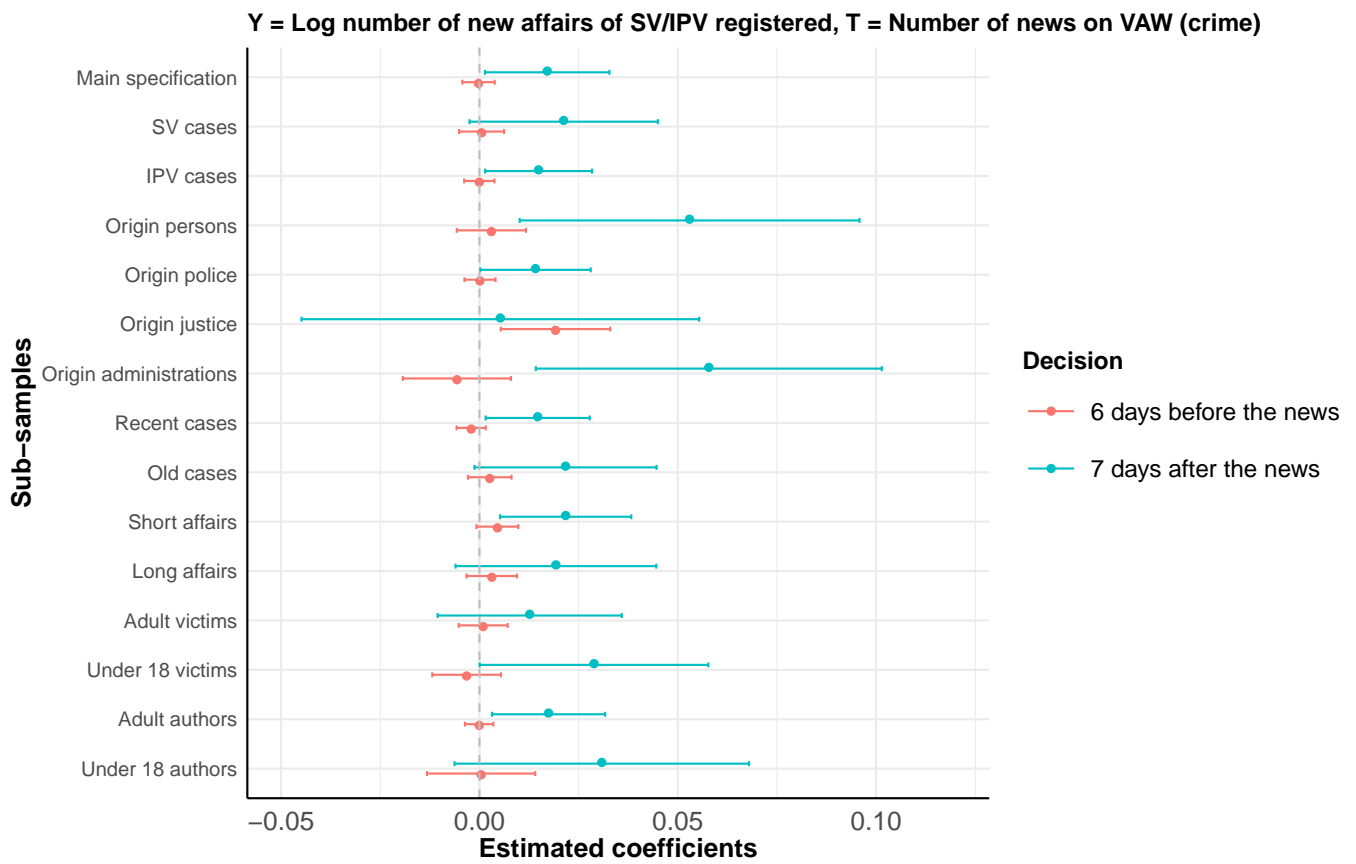


(b) Intimate partner violence

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the reporting of such violence by violence type, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel (sexual violence), the sample is restricted to judicial cases of sexual violence (rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment). In the lower panel (intimate partner violence), the sample is restricted to judicial cases of intimate partner violence (violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner).

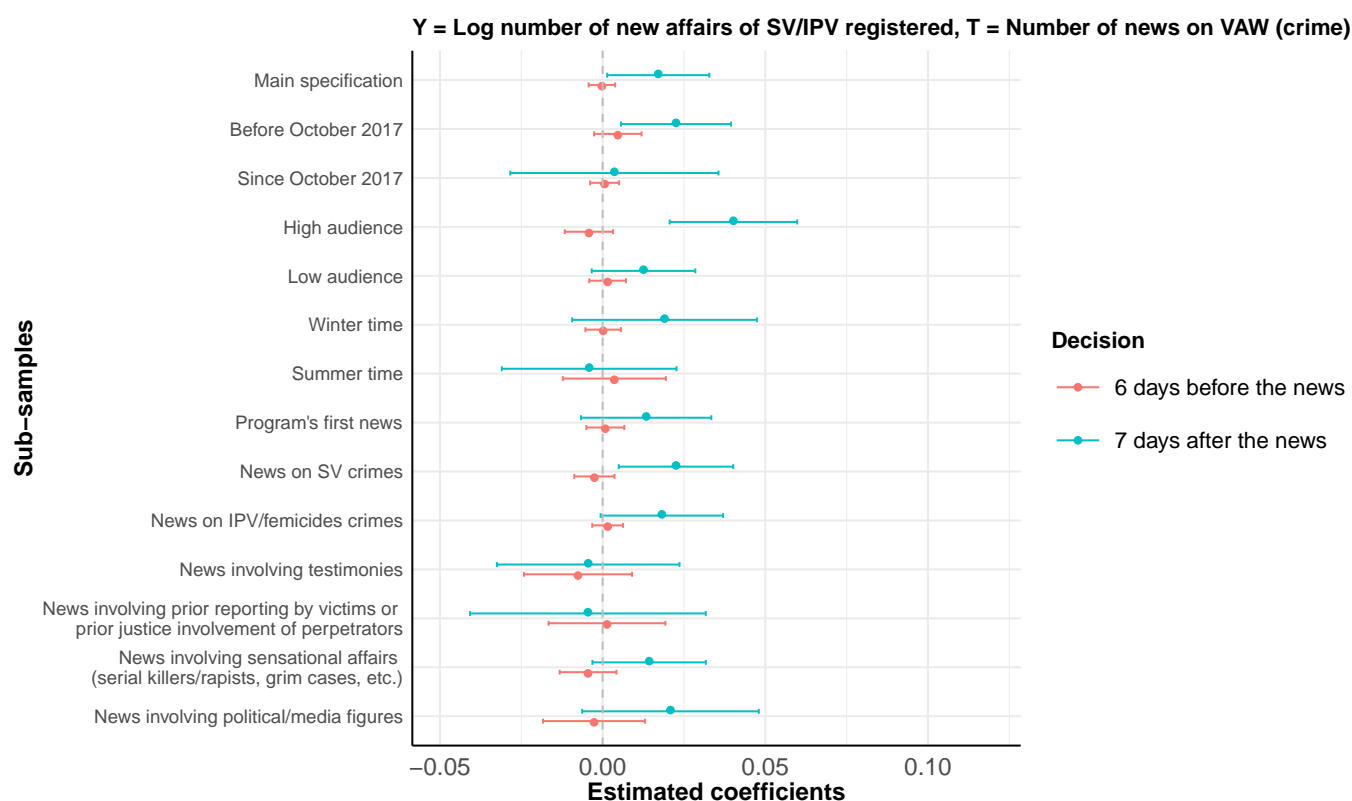
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopee* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure D4: Effect of news coverage on number of cases of sexual or intimate partner violence reported to justice: heterogeneity by cases



Notes: Effect of TV news on VAW about trials (upper panel) and law and society (bottom panel) on the log number of cases reported to justice. OLS estimates (dots) of leads and lags and corresponding 95% confidence intervals from Equation 1. The sample consists of cases of sexual or intimate partner violence involving male perpetrators that were registered daily in the justice system from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. *Source:* Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure D5: Effect of news coverage on number of cases of sexual or intimate partner violence reported to justice: heterogeneity by period/news attention



Notes: Effect of TV news on VAW about trials (upper panel) and law and society (bottom panel) on the log number of cases reported to justice. OLS estimates (dots) of leads and lags and corresponding 95% confidence intervals from Equation 1. The sample consists of cases of sexual or intimate partner violence involving male perpetrators that were registered daily in the justice system from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. *Source:* Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

D.2 Reporting or incidence?

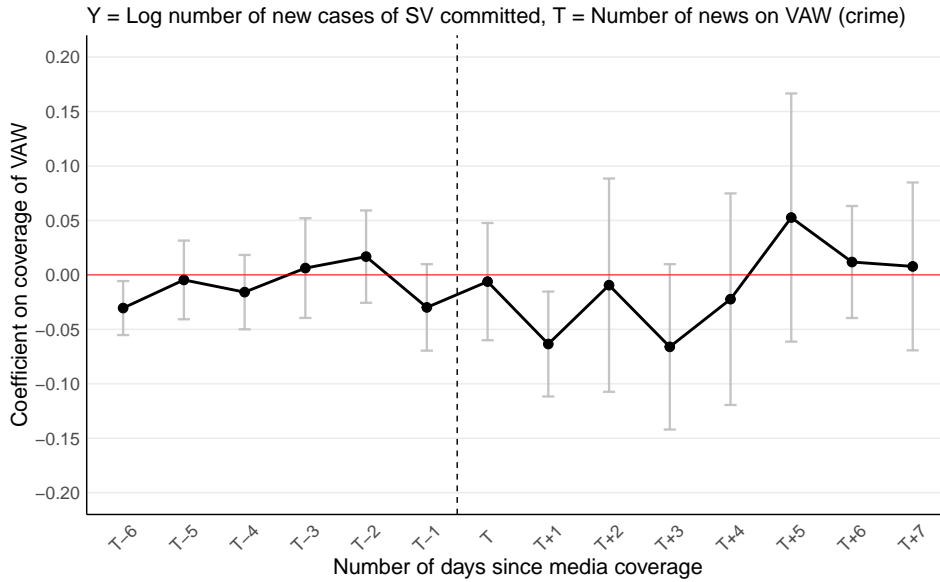
A key question in the literature investigating the determinants of reporting in VAW cases is whether observed effects are driven by increased reporting per se or by changes in incidence. Although the increase in reporting of sexual or intimate partner violence cases following TV news coverage of crimes against women is not entirely robust (see Section 5.2), I nonetheless attempt to assess whether this effect could reflect an actual rise in violence using several strategies.

First, I perform a similar analysis as in Section 5.2 but focusing on the effect of news coverage around the starting date of an incident. Although this does not allow for measuring the true prevalence of VAW, as I only observe cases that were reported to justice, Figure D6 suggests no increase in violence around the time of news coverage.

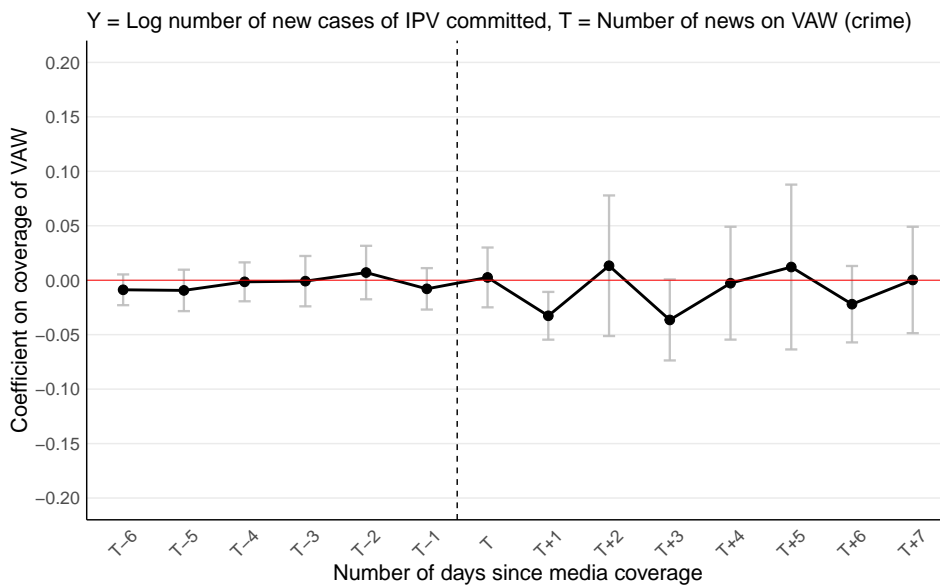
Second, I focus on the reporting of female homicides, which are arguably less subject to under-reporting. Figure D7 shows no increase in the reporting of female homicides following news coverage of crimes against women, whether in general or specifically related to femicides.

Third, using the incident start date, I restrict the analysis to cases in which the offense occurred before the coverage episode that anchors the case's registration event window, so their occurrence could not have been triggered by the news coverage. Figure D8 shows results that are indistinguishable from those in the full sample, indicating that the effect is driven by increased reporting rather than changes in incidence.

Figure D6: Effect of news coverage on the incidence of sexual and intimate partner violence cases



(a) Sexual violence

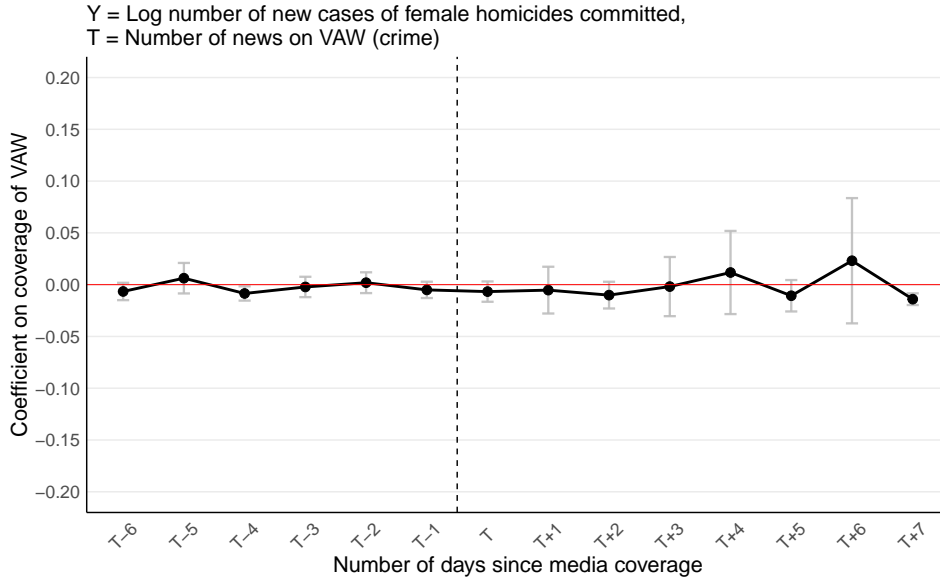


(b) Intimate partner violence

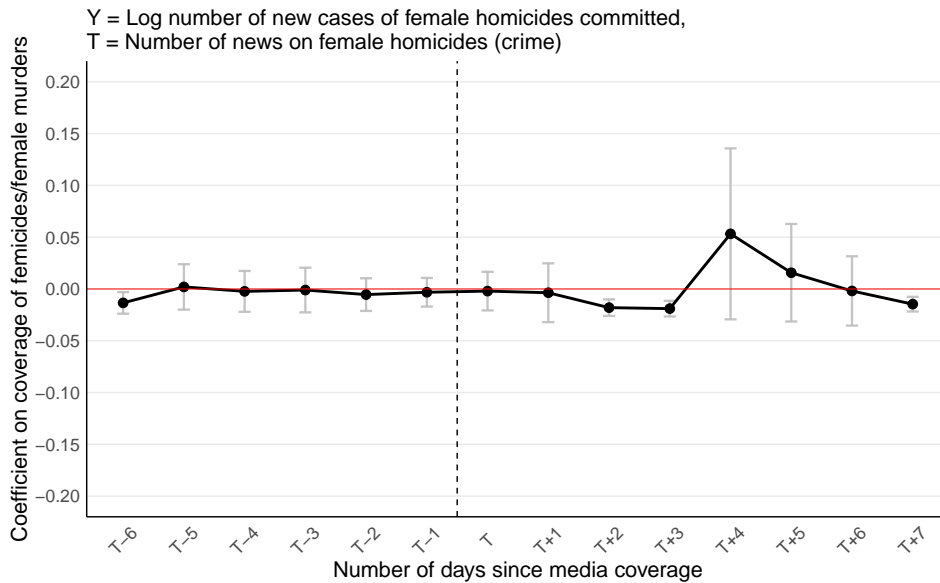
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the incidence of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases occurring. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel (sexual violence), the sample is restricted to judicial cases of sexual violence (rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment). In the lower panel (intimate partner violence), the sample is restricted to judicial cases of intimate partner violence (violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner).

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure D7: Effect of news coverage on the incidence of female homicides



(a) News on crimes against women

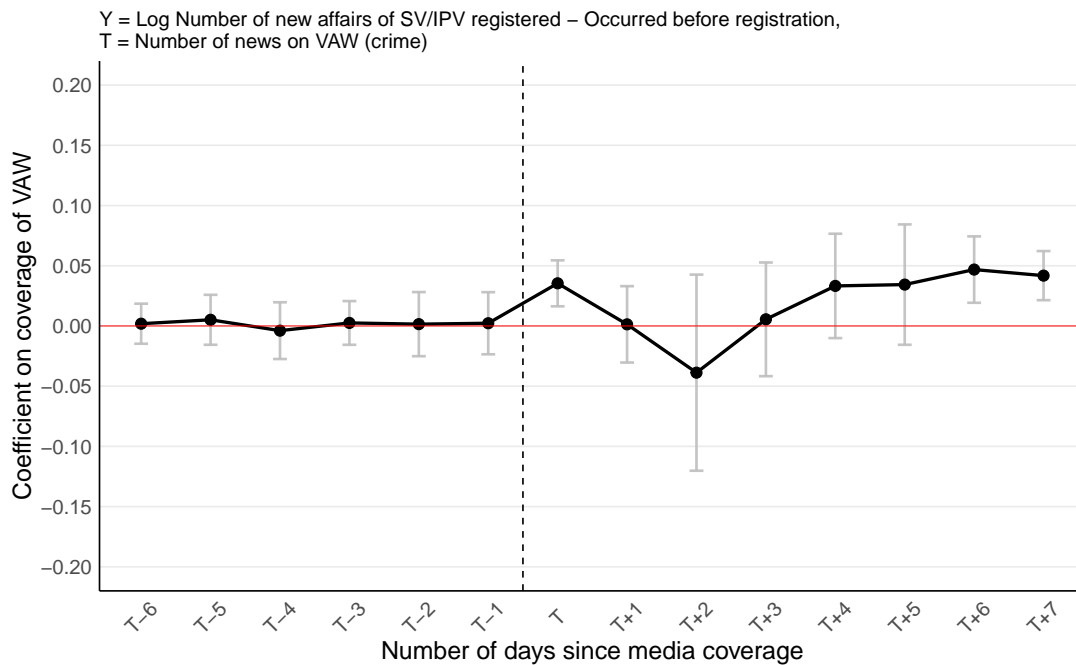


(b) News on female homicides

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the incidence of female homicides, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of female homicides registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$), defined as "Homicide volontaire" or "Coups mortels ou atteintes volontaires à la personne ayant entraîné la mort" where there is at least one female victim and no male victim. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases occurring. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel, the sample is restricted to news about VAW crimes in general. In the lower panel, the sample is restricted to femicide news.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure D8: Effect of news coverage on number of cases reported to justice, restricting to cases that occurred before the news coverage (82% of cases)

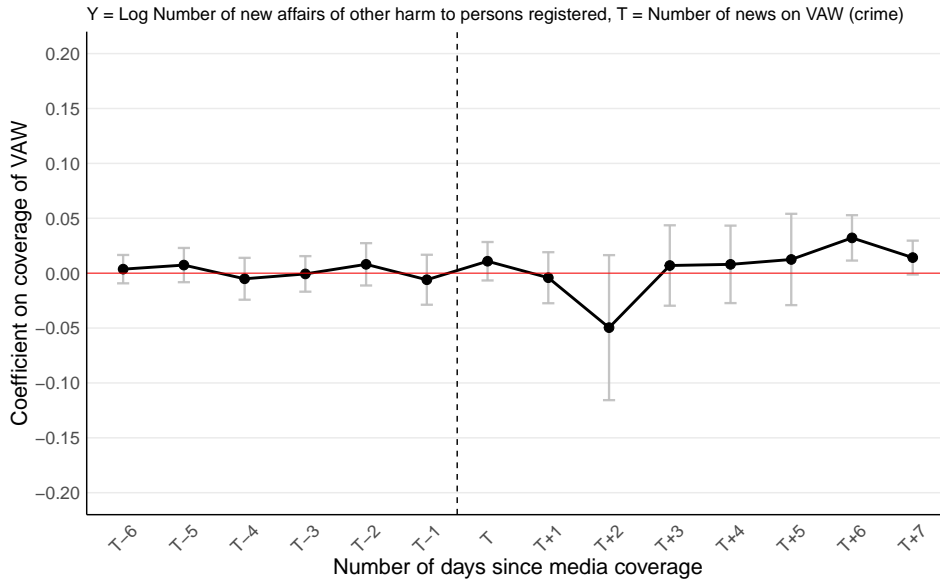


Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the reporting of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$), restricting to cases that occurred before the news coverage. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

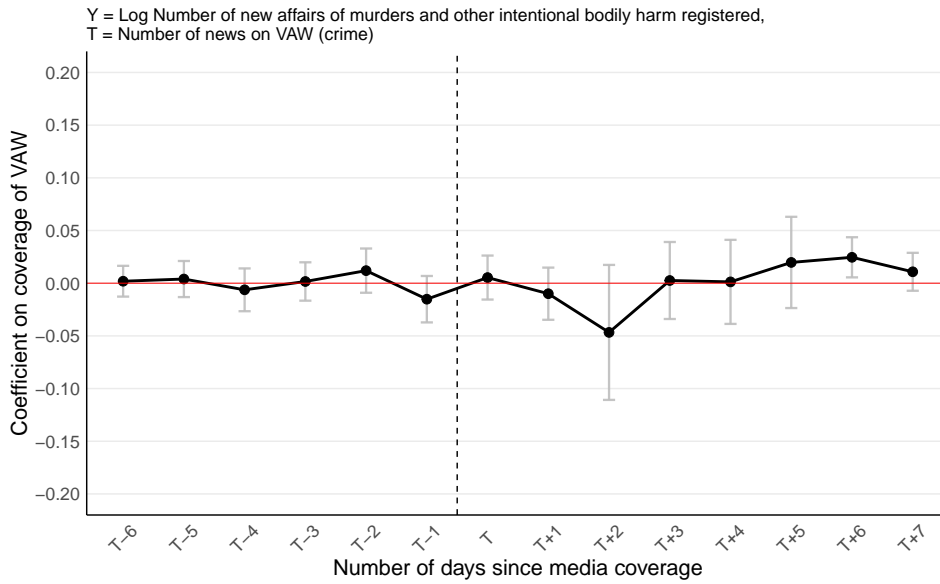
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

D.3 Placebos

Figure D9: Effect of news coverage on the number of unrelated violence cases reported to justice



(a) Other offenses against the person



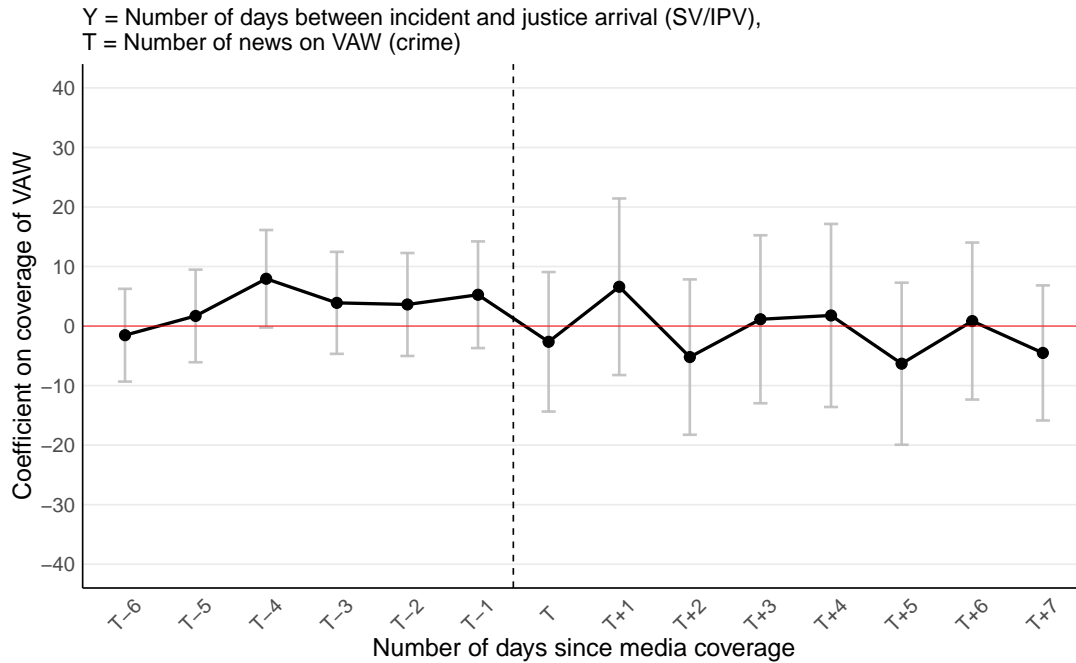
(b) Murders and other intentional bodily harm

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the reporting of other offenses against the person, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. In the upper panel, the sample consists of cases of other offenses against the person unrelated to VAW that were registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). In the bottom panel, the sample consists of a subsample of murders or intentional bodily harm excluding VAW that were registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$). The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of new cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

D.4 Reporting delay

Figure D10: Effect of news coverage on number of days elapsed between incident and justice arrival



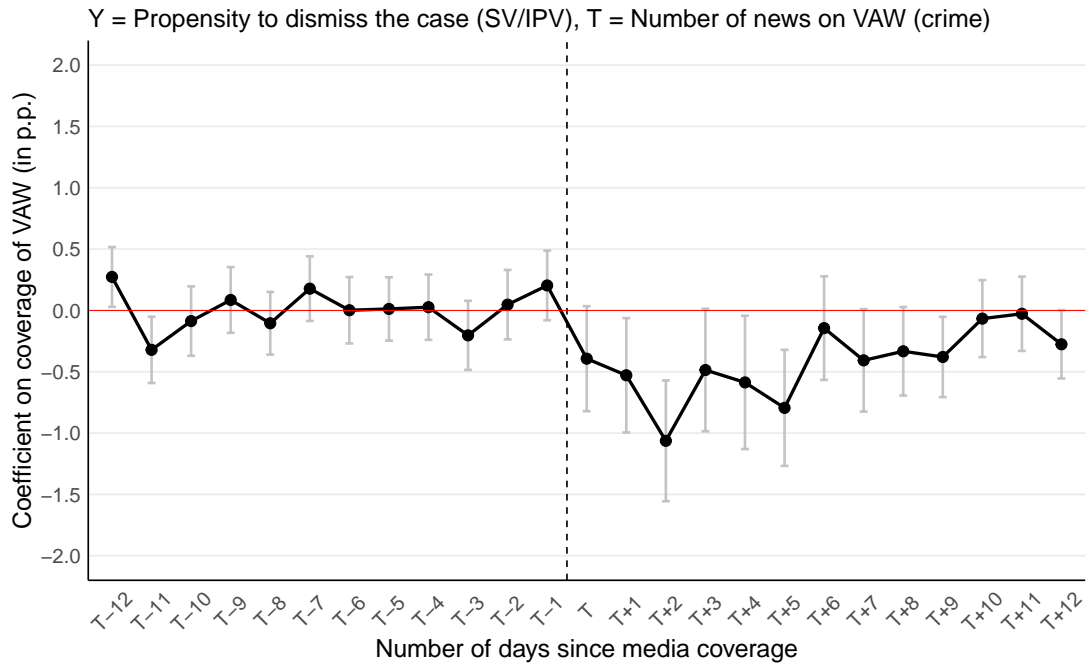
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the time elapsed between the incident and justice arrival, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) registered daily within the French criminal justice system and dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts from 2012 to 2019 ($N = 2,921$), restricting to cases that occurred before the news coverage. The dependent variable is the number of days elapsed between the start of the incident and its arrival to justice for cases reported to justice. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopee* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

E Appendix E: Additional results on prosecution

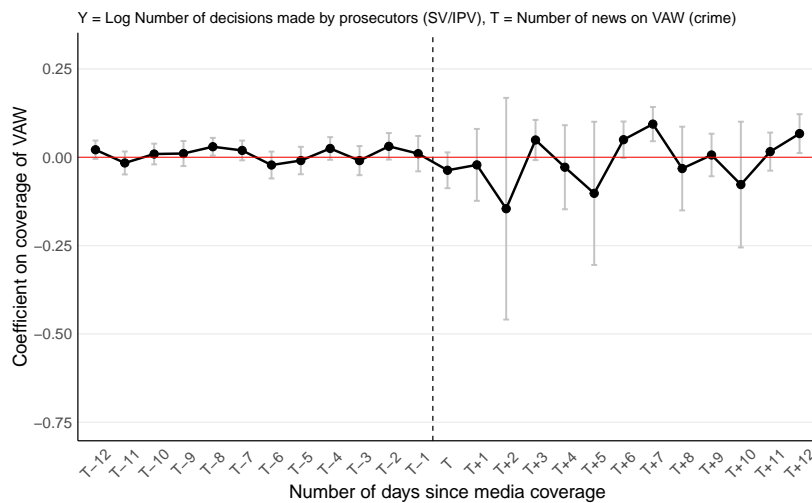
E.1 Additional results on the decision to dismiss a case

Figure E1: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases – Using more periods

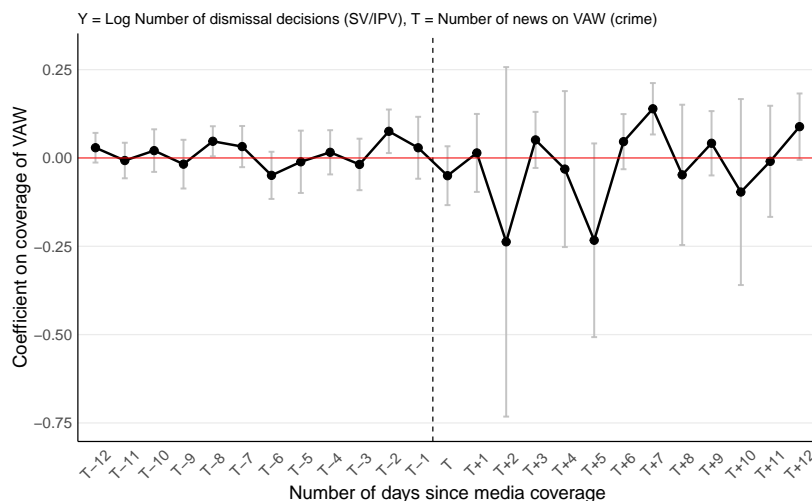


Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

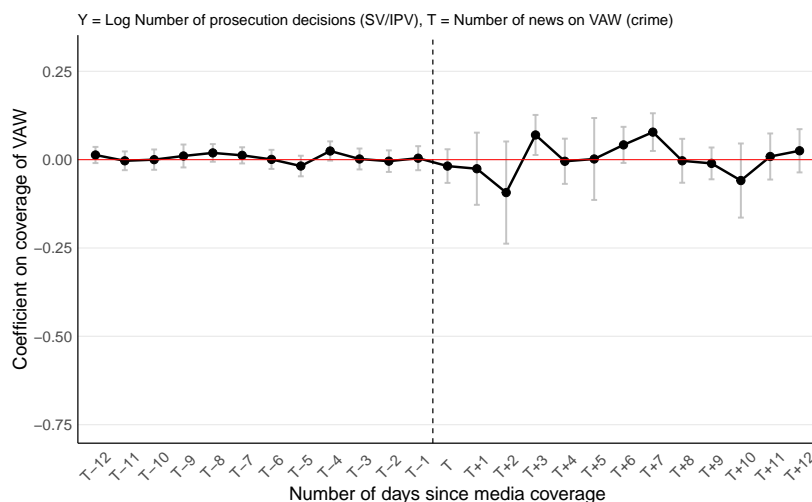
Figure E2: Effect of news coverage on the number of sexual or intimate partner violence cases examined by prosecutors



(a) Log number of decisions by prosecutors (total)



(b) Log number of dismissal decisions

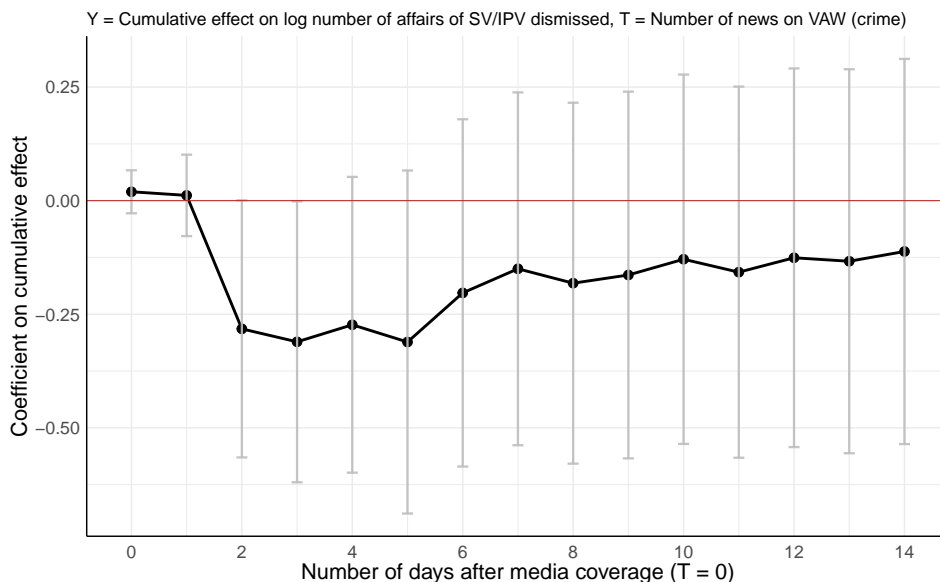


(c) Log number of prosecution decisions

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the number of decisions taken by prosecutors by type of decision, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted daily in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of decisions taken by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel, the sample is restricted to cases prosecuted. In the middle panel, the sample is restricted to cases dismissed.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure E3: Cumulative effect of news coverage on the number of sexual or intimate partner violence cases dismissed or prosecuted



(a) Log number of affairs dismissed



(b) Log number of affairs prosecuted

Notes: OLS estimates of cumulative lag coefficients from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the number of cases dismissed or prosecuted in the two weeks following the coverage, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. Coefficients are normalized by the average value of the lead coefficients, and standard errors are corrected to account for cumulation. The sample includes cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. In the first panel, the dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of cases dismissed by prosecutors. In the second panel, the dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of cases prosecuted by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time $T = 0$.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table E1: Covariate balance: Characteristics of cases examined by prosecutors, by media coverage on the days before the prosecutorial decision

Dependent Variables:	Socio-demographics			Affair's origin			Type of offense				Other case's characteristics			
	Male	French	Age	Police	Justice	Other	Rape	Sexual assault	Sexual harassment	IPV	# Victims	Incident length	Reporting length	Orientation length
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
<i>News on VAW crimes</i>														
# of news 7 days before	0.0014* (0.0007)	-0.0004 (0.0011)	-0.0050 (0.0340)	-0.0003 (0.0008)	4.73×10^{-5} (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0007)	0.0002 (0.0018)	3.77×10^{-5} (0.0018)	-0.0002 (0.0007)	0.0023** (0.0011)	-0.0021 (0.0019)	-3.483 (3.477)	-1.993 (2.564)	-0.0762 (0.7669)
<i>Fit statistics</i>														
Observations	672,085	579,460	605,586	753,759	753,759	753,759	274,370	274,370	274,370	753,759	753,759	283,119	749,888	752,008
R ²	0.00221	0.09597	0.00456	0.01893	0.00448	0.01837	0.00576	0.00624	0.00473	0.01592	0.00631	0.00354	0.00723	0.02196
<i>News on VAW crimes & trials</i>														
# of news 7 days before	0.0005 (0.0006)	-0.0010 (0.0009)	0.0235 (0.0282)	-0.0006 (0.0006)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0007 (0.0006)	-0.0015 (0.0014)	0.0016 (0.0015)	-6.77×10^{-5} (0.0006)	0.0017* (0.0009)	0.0004 (0.0017)	-0.3759 (2.877)	-3.063 (2.113)	0.4921 (0.6245)
<i>Fit statistics</i>														
Observations	626,363	540,164	564,491	702,384	702,384	702,384	255,312	255,312	255,312	702,384	702,384	264,001	698,887	700,770
R ²	0.00220	0.09606	0.00457	0.01895	0.00431	0.01841	0.00582	0.00616	0.00475	0.01593	0.00645	0.00349	0.00726	0.02197
<i>Fixed-effects</i>														
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean	0.90	0.75	36.35	0.87	0.02	0.11	0.33	0.63	0.03	0.64	1.28	359.55	345.25	210.31
<i>Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses</i>														
<i>Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1</i>														

Notes: OLS estimates of regressions on the effect of TV news coverage of violence against women (VAW) on various characteristics of judicial cases investigated by prosecutors. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variables are the case characteristics of the cases examined by prosecutors, listed in the first row of the table. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. The first panel uses news on VAW crimes, while the second panel also includes news on VAW-related trials.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table E2: OLS results for the effect of news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases

Model:	<i>Dependent Variable: Dismissal (0/1)</i>		
	SV/IPV	IPV only	SV only
	(1)	(2)	(3)
7 days after the news	-0.0055*** (0.0021)	-0.0052* (0.0028)	-0.0042 (0.0028)
6 days after the news	-0.0017 (0.0021)	-0.0032 (0.0029)	0.0004 (0.0029)
5 days after the news	-0.0080*** (0.0024)	-0.0091*** (0.0033)	-0.0057* (0.0032)
4 days after the news	-0.0055** (0.0028)	-0.0056 (0.0037)	-0.0053 (0.0038)
3 days after the news	-0.0051** (0.0025)	-0.0046 (0.0034)	-0.0043 (0.0035)
2 days after the news	-0.0109*** (0.0025)	-0.0147*** (0.0034)	-0.0038 (0.0034)
1 day after the news	-0.0051** (0.0024)	-0.0033 (0.0032)	-0.0075** (0.0033)
Same day as the news	-0.0040* (0.0022)	-0.0021 (0.0029)	-0.0070** (0.0031)
1 day before the news	0.0017 (0.0014)	0.0041** (0.0019)	-0.0021 (0.0020)
2 days before the news	-4.55×10^{-5} (0.0014)	0.0010 (0.0020)	-0.0004 (0.0020)
3 days before the news	-0.0020 (0.0014)	-0.0016 (0.0019)	-0.0038* (0.0020)
4 days before the news	-4.55×10^{-5} (0.0013)	0.0009 (0.0018)	0.0005 (0.0018)
5 days before the news	3.7×10^{-5} (0.0013)	0.0006 (0.0018)	-0.0010 (0.0018)
6 days before the news	0.0003 (0.0013)	0.0021 (0.0017)	-0.0028 (0.0018)
Year, month, day-of-the-week fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Case-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	687,198	430,096	262,684
R ²	0.18650	0.16281	0.21285
Within R ²	0.12851	0.08817	0.17953

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

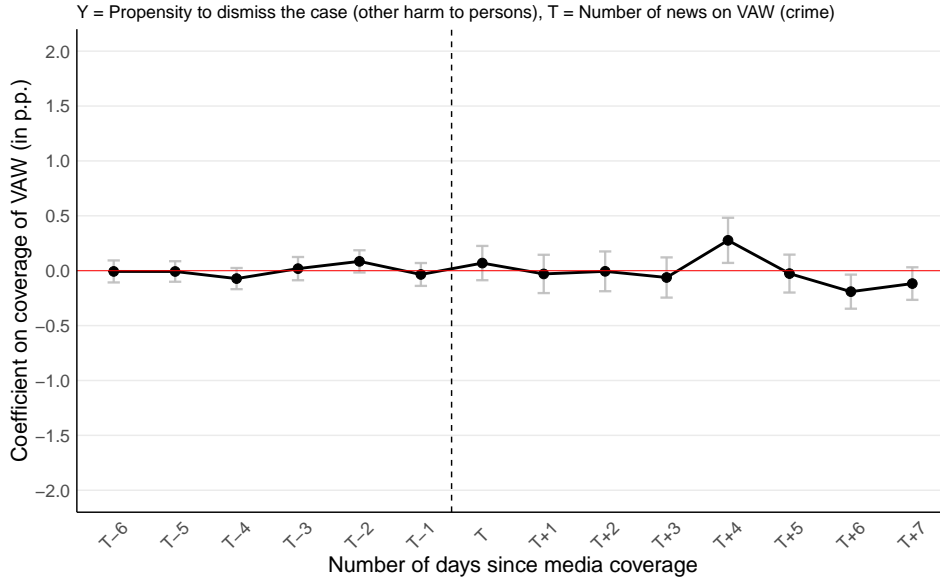
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . Case-level controls include: French-born author, author's age, number of victims, type of assault.

Reading: Two days after the TV news coverage, the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases decreases by 0.51 percentage point (significant at the 5% level).

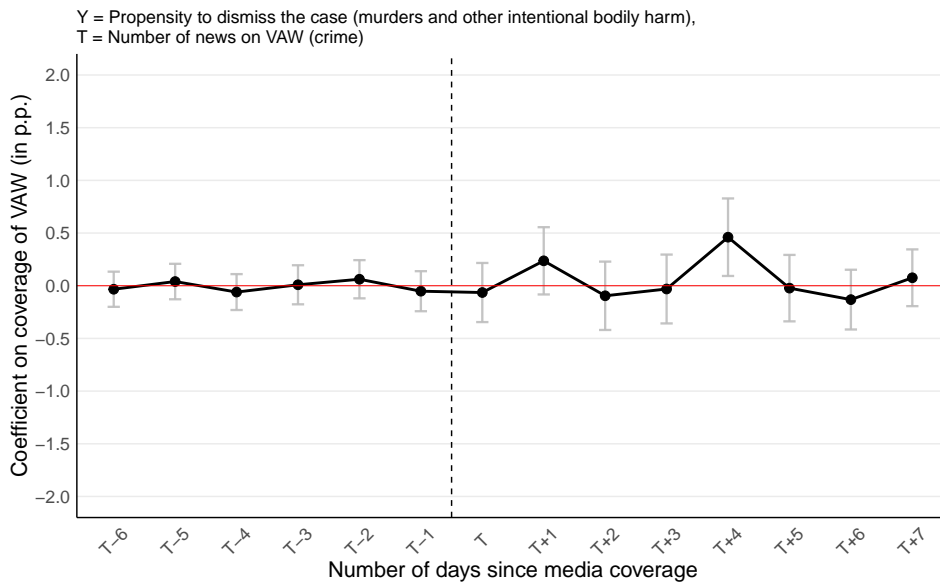
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

E.2 Placebos

Figure E4: Effect of news coverage of crimes against women on propensity to dismiss unrelated violence



(a) Other offenses against the person

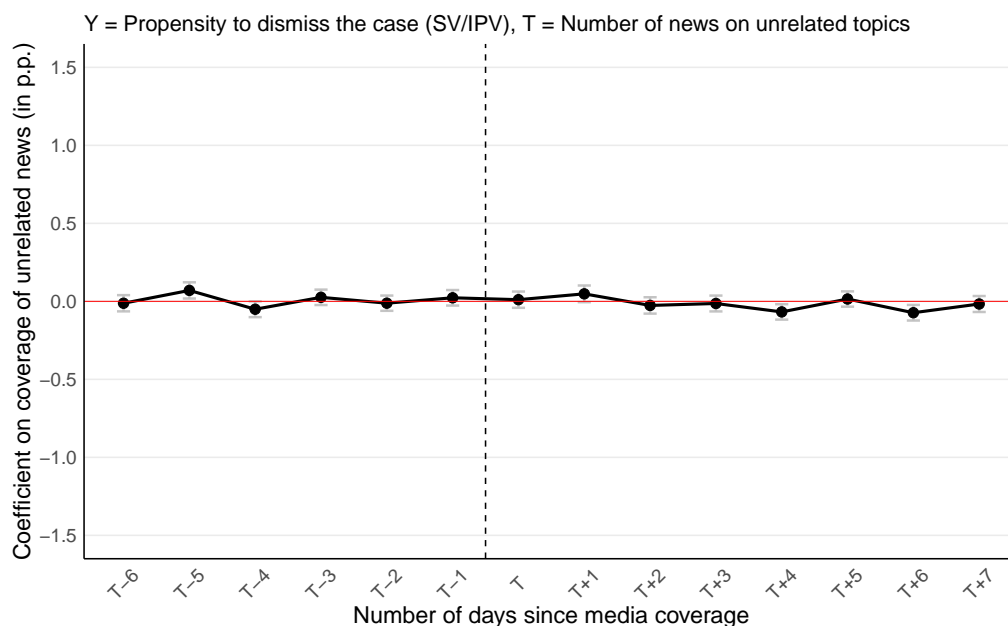


(b) Murders and other intentional bodily harm

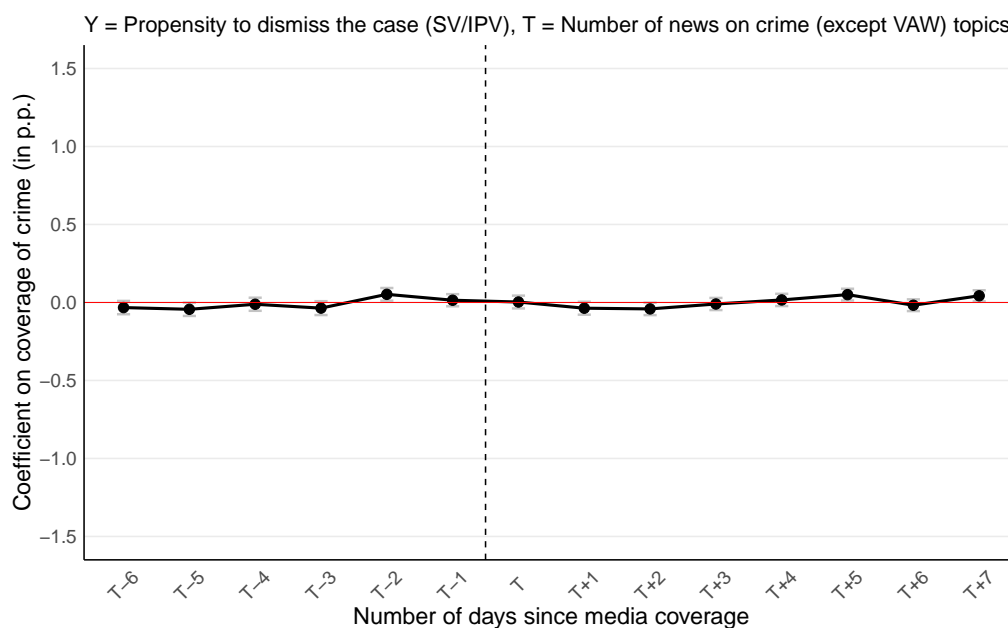
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss other offenses against the person, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). In the upper panel, the sample consists of cases of other offenses against the person unrelated to VAW that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. In the bottom panel, the sample consists of a subsample of murders or intentional bodily harm excluding VAW that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Reading: Up to seven days after the TV news coverage, the propensity to dismiss other cases of intentional bodily harm remains unaffected. *Source:* Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure E5: Effect of unrelated news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases



(a) News on unrelated topics



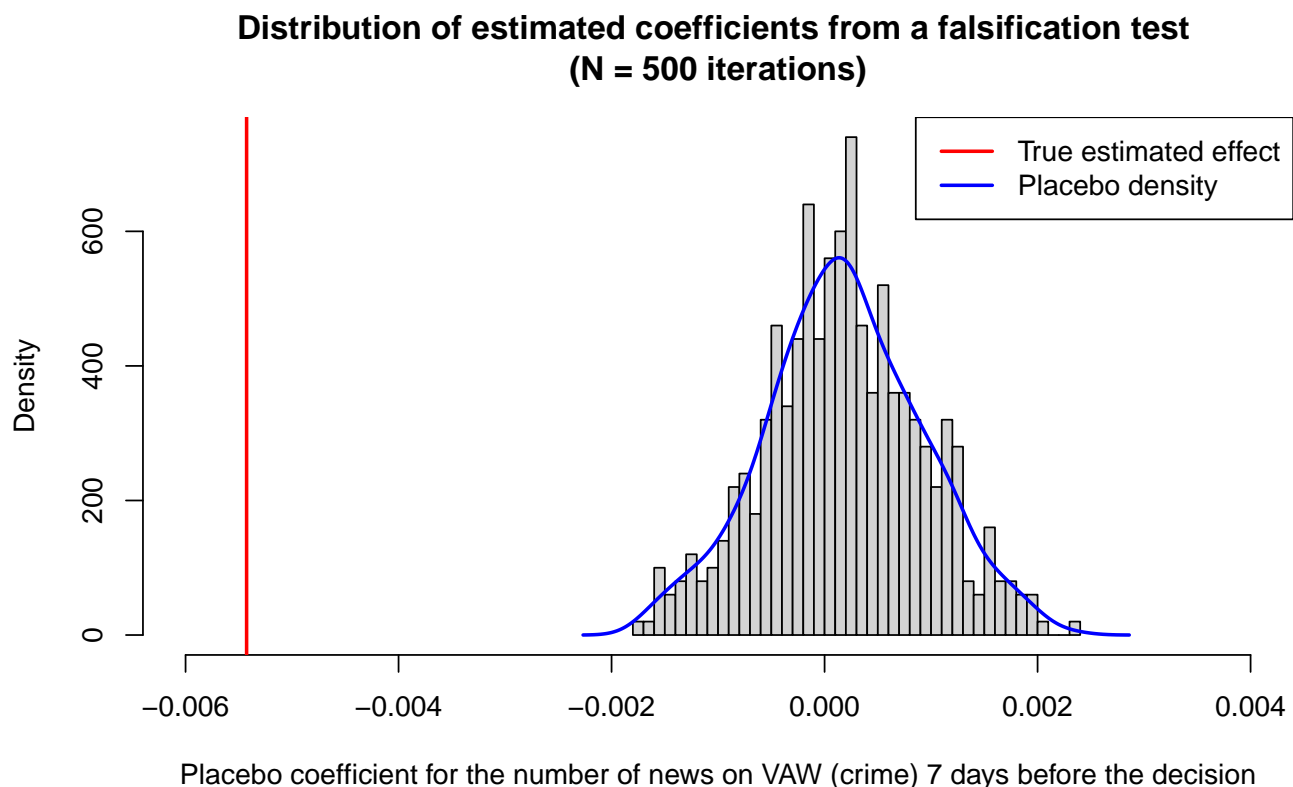
(b) News on crimes except VAW

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crime news not related to violence against women (VAW) on the propensity to dismiss VAW, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. The upper panel shows the effect of other news unrelated to VAW (gardening, crafts, leisure, and travel). The bottom panel shows the effect of TV news on crimes except VAW. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on each topic broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Reading: Up to seven days after the TV news coverage of crime news unrelated to VAW, the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases remains unaffected.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

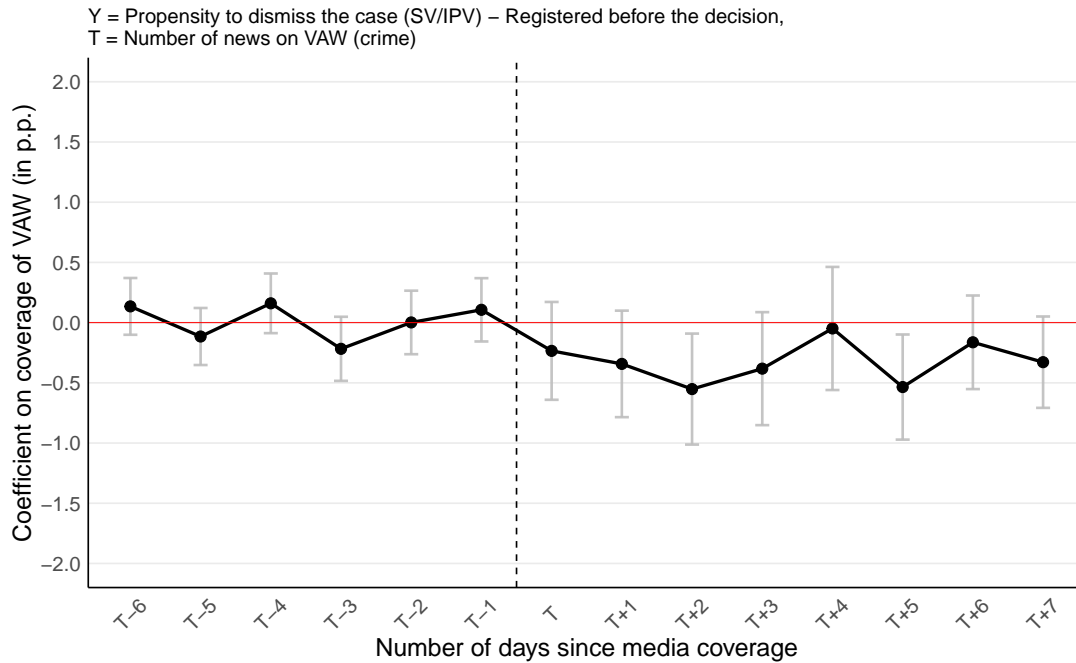
Figure E6: Falsification test for the effect of news coverage on the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases



Notes: Falsification test of the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, using 500 placebo dates. The results show the distribution of the 500 estimated coefficients at $T + 2$, compared to the actual estimated effect.
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

E.3 Robustness checks

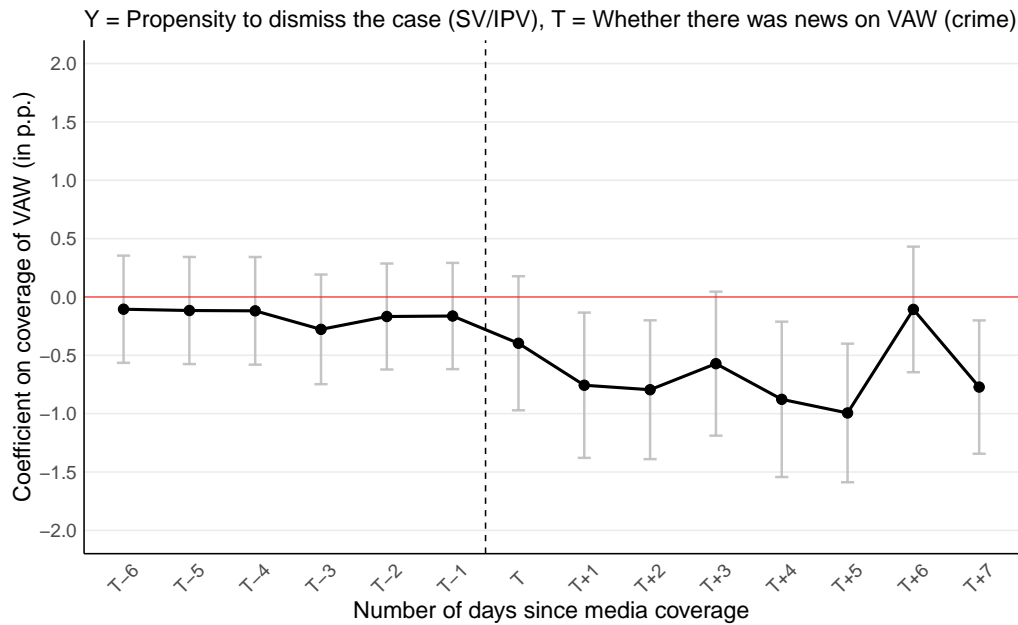
Figure E7: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases, restricting to cases registered before the prosecutors' decision (87% of cases)



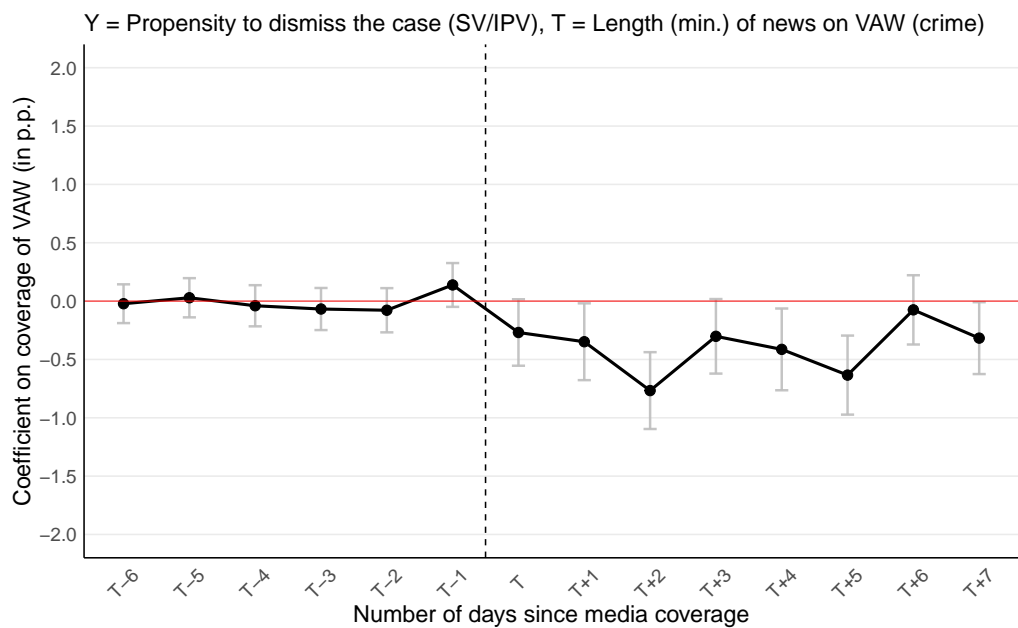
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019, restricting to cases registered before the news coverage. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopee* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure E8: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases – Using other measures of news coverage



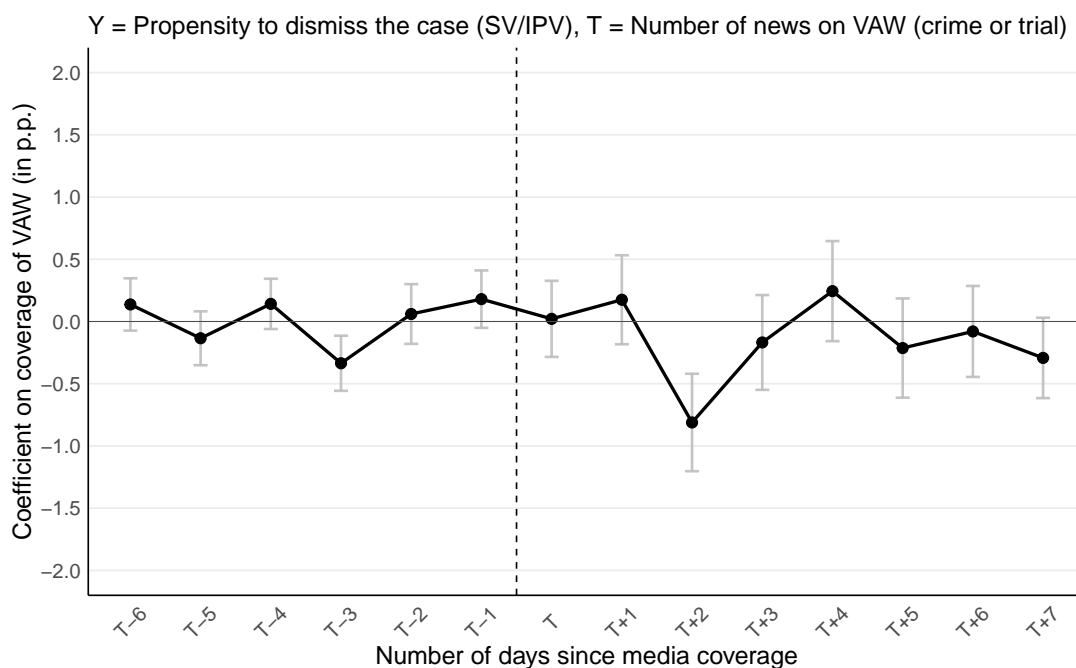
(a) Using occurrence of news stories (0/1)



(b) Using duration of news stories (minutes)

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence using alternative measures of news coverage, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. In the upper panel, news coverage is measured with a dummy indicating whether there was any news on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2. In the lower panel, news coverage is measured with the length of stories (in minutes) on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2. The TV news coverage occurs at time T . Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopee* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

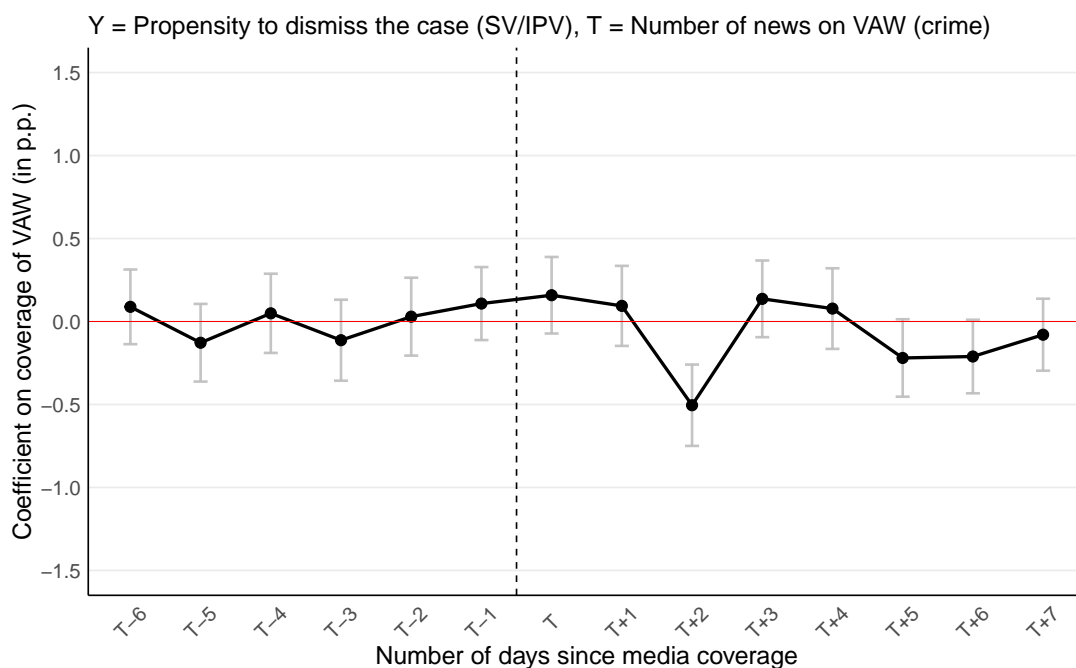
Figure E9: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases, including news on trials



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women or related trials on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women or related trials broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

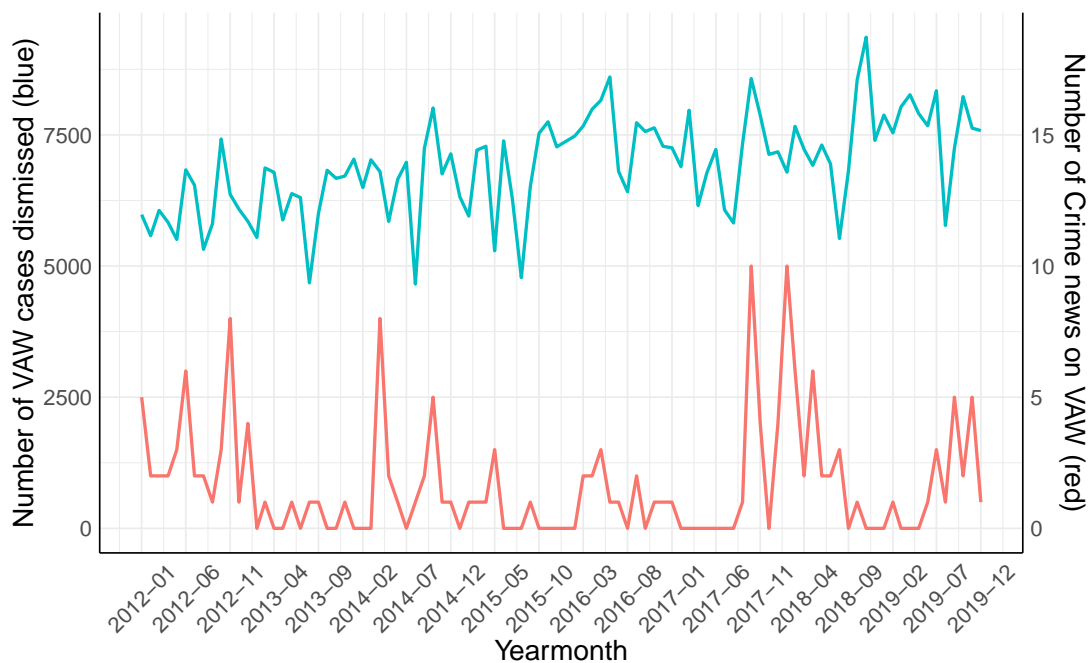
Figure E10: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases, including periods with multiple days of VAW news coverage in the 7 days before the decision



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, restricting to periods with one unique news day in the seven days before the decision, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopee* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

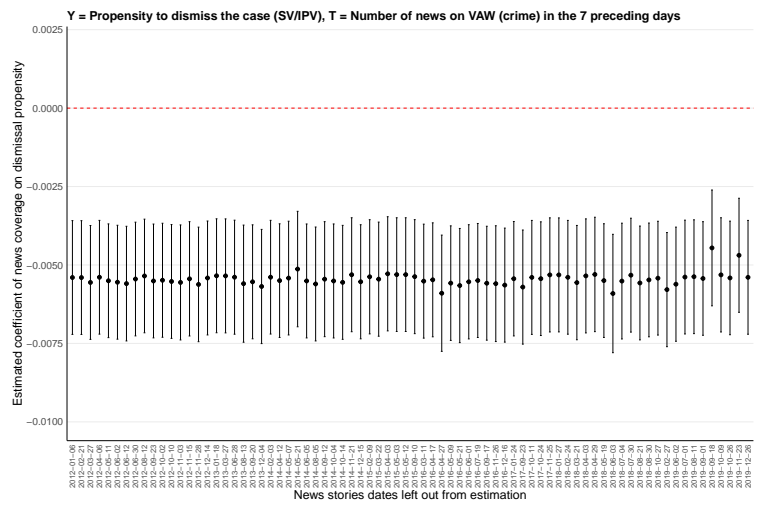
Figure E11: Time evolution of number of news on crimes against women and number of dismissals for sexual or intimate partner violence cases



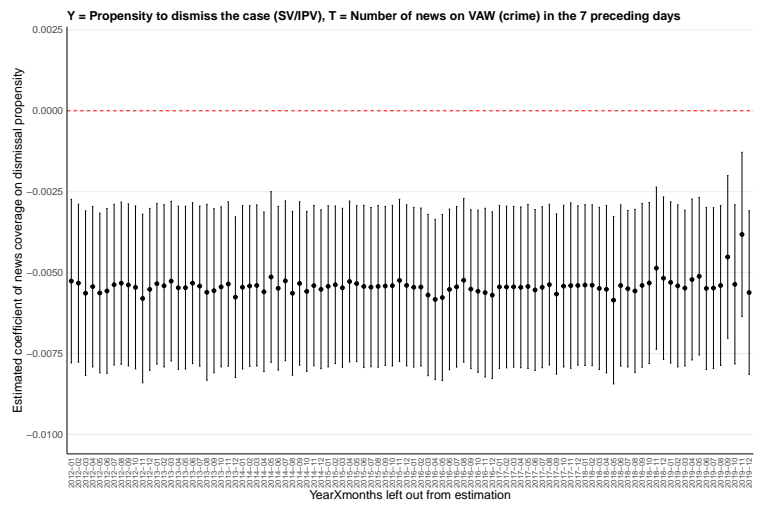
Notes: Time evolution of the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, as well as the absolute number of dismissal decisions regarding cases of sexual violence (SV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) by month of the year.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

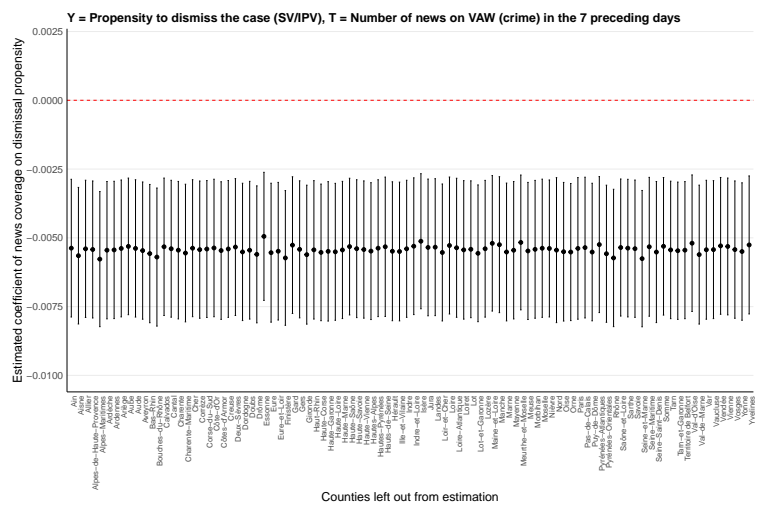
Figure E12: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases, leaving out each news event day, month, and county



(a) Leaving out each news event day



(b) Leaving out each month

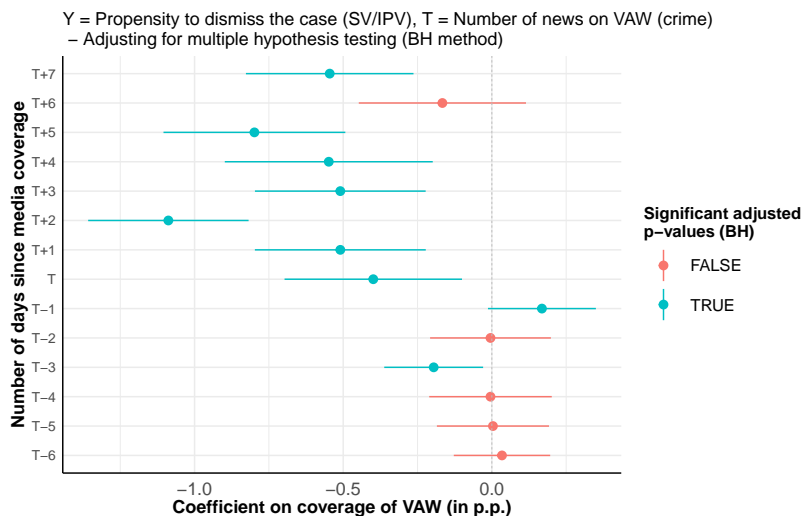


(c) Leaving out each county

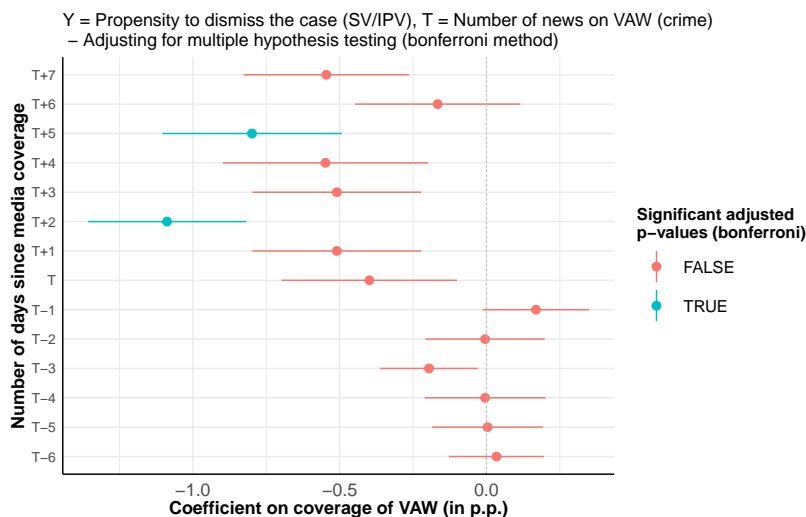
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points), performing leave-one-out analyses. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. The upper panel replicates the main analysis while sequentially removing each of the 76 isolated days with news coverage. The middle panel sequentially removes each of the 96 months from the 2012–2019 analysis period, and the bottom panel sequentially removes each of the 96 French metropolitan counties.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

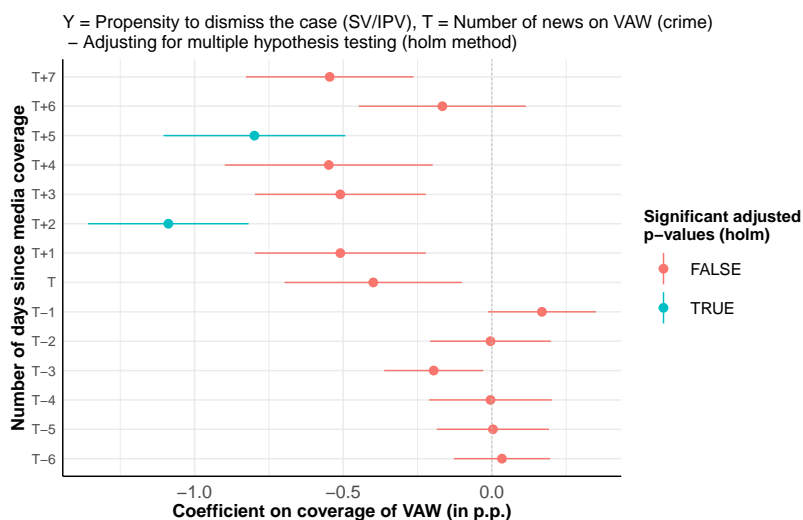
Figure E13: Effect of news coverage on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases, adjusting for multiple hypothesis testing



(a) BH method



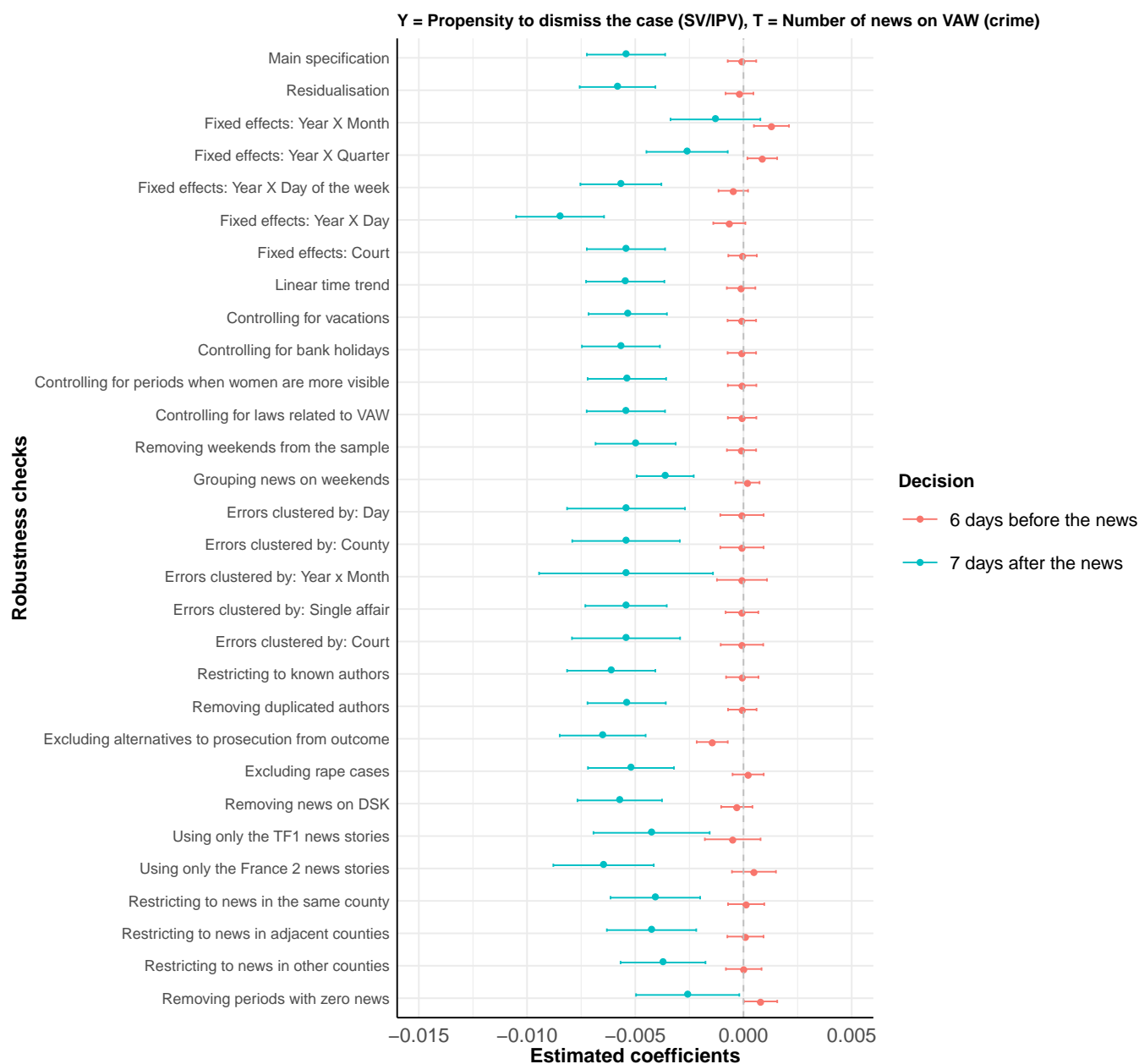
(b) Bonferroni method



(c) Holm method

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points), correcting for multiple hypothesis testing with three different methods. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopee* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure E14: Other robustness checks visualization for the effect on propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases



Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points), for various robustness checks. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table E3: Robustness checks for the effect of news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases

Model:	<i>Dependent Variable: Dismissal (0/1)</i>											
	Main specification	Probit model	Residualization	Interacting Year*Month	Interacting Year*Quarter	Interacting Year*Weekday	Interacting Year*Day	Court fixed effects	Linear time trend	Controlling for vacations	Controlling for bank holidays	Controlling for periods when women more visible
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
<i>Variables</i>												
# of news 7 days before	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	-0.022 (0.004)	-0.0058*** (0.0009)	-0.0013 (0.0011)	-0.0026*** (0.0010)	-0.0057*** (0.0010)	-0.0085*** (0.0010)	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	-0.0055*** (0.0009)	-0.0053*** (0.0009)	-0.0057*** (0.0009)	-0.0054*** (0.0009)
# of news 6 days after	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0003)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.0002 (0.0003)	0.0013*** (0.0004)	0.0009** (0.0004)	-0.0005 (0.0003)	-0.0007* (0.0004)	-4.29×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	-7.69×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-7.62×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-6.44×10^{-5} (0.0003)
<i>Fit statistics</i>												
Observations	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198
R ²	0.18649		0.13301	0.18734	0.18696	0.18665	0.14701	0.18851	0.18650	0.18650	0.18906	0.18649
Within R ²	0.12849		0.12707	0.12837	0.12838	0.12850	0.13672	0.12779	0.12850	0.12850	0.13125	0.12849
Log.Lik.		-298797.508										
RMSE		0.38										
<i>Fixed-effects</i>												
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
I(year * month), dow fixed effects				✓								
I(year * quarter), dow fixed effects					✓							
I(year * weekday), dow fixed effects						✓						
I(year * day), dow fixed effects							✓					
Year, week, dow fixed effects					✓							
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Court fixed effects								✓				
Time trend <i>t</i>									✓			

*Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses (unless otherwise specified). Case-level controls: offender's age, nationality, number of victims, type of violence. Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

(Table D2: To be continued on next page)

(Table D2: continued)

Model:	<i>Dependent Variable: Dismissal (0/1)</i>											
	Controlling for VAW-related laws	Removing weekends	Grouping weekends	Errors clustered per day	Errors clustered per county	Errors clustered per Year*Month	Errors clustered per affair	Errors clustered per court	Restricting to known authors	Removing duplicated authors	Excluding alternatives to prosecution	Excluding rape cases
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)
<i>Variables</i>												
# of news 7 days before	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	-0.0050*** (0.0009)	-0.0036*** (0.0007)	-0.0054*** (0.0014)	-0.0054*** (0.0013)	-0.0054*** (0.0020)	-0.0054*** (0.0010)	-0.0054*** (0.0013)	-0.0061*** (0.0010)	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	-0.0065*** (0.0010)	-0.0052*** (0.0010)
# of news 6 days after	-6.45×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-9.13×10^{-5} (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0003)	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0005)	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0005)	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0006)	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0004)	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0005)	-5.57×10^{-5} (0.0004)	-5.5×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-0.0014*** (0.0004)	0.0002 (0.0004)
<i>Fit statistics</i>												
Observations	687,198	659,022	636,291	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	687,198	605,524	686,414	687,198	598,930
R ²	0.18649	0.13523	0.13494	0.18649	0.18649	0.18649	0.18649	0.18649	0.15522	0.18631	0.25635	0.17938
Within R ²	0.12849	0.12735	0.12709	0.12849	0.12849	0.12849	0.12849	0.12849	0.09470	0.12811	0.23039	0.11787
<i>Fixed-effects</i>												
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Clusters</i>												
Errors clustered by day				✓								
Errors clustered by county					✓							
Errors clustered by year * month						✓						
Errors clustered by single affair							✓					
Errors clustered by court								✓				

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses (unless otherwise specified). Case-level controls: offender's age, nationality, number of victims, type of violence.

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

(Table D2: To be continued on next page)

(Table D2: continued)

Model:	<i>Dependent Variable: Dismissal (0/1)</i>											
	Restricting to cases registered before the decision (25)	Using occurrence of news stories (26)	Using length (min.) of news stories (27)	Including news on trials (28)	Removing news on DSK (29)	Using only the TF1 news stories (30)	Using only the France 2 news stories (31)	Using news in the same county (32)	Using news in an adjacent county (33)	Using news in neither same nor adjacent county (34)	Including periods with multiple VAW news days (35)	Removing periods with zero news (36)
<i>Variables</i>												
# of news 7 days before	-0.0032*** (0.0009)	-0.0064*** (0.0012)	-0.0037*** (0.0006)	-0.0013* (0.0008)	-0.0057*** (0.0010)	-0.0042*** (0.0014)	-0.0065*** (0.0012)	-0.0041*** (0.0011)	-0.0042*** (0.0011)	-0.0037*** (0.0010)	-0.0007*** (0.0002)	-0.0026** (0.0012)
# of news 6 days after	7.64×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-0.0016** (0.0007)	-0.0001 (0.0006)	-5.94×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-0.0003 (0.0004)	-0.0005 (0.0007)	0.0005 (0.0005)	0.0001 (0.0004)	9.07×10^{-5} (0.0004)	1.04×10^{-5} (0.0004)	0.0002 (0.0003)	0.0008** (0.0004)
<i>Fit statistics</i>												
Observations	592,378	687,198	687,198	640,220	558,827	710,650	713,391	681,513	682,143	694,049	758,305	236,566
R ²	0.13839	0.18649	0.18649	0.18595	0.18622	0.18688	0.18680	0.18655	0.18659	0.18688	0.18767	0.19311
Within R ²	0.09276	0.12849	0.12849	0.12773	0.12738	0.12880	0.12882	0.12832	0.12836	0.12852	0.12922	0.13431
<i>Fixed-effects</i>												
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses (unless otherwise specified). Case-level controls: offender's age, nationality, number of victims, type of violence.

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

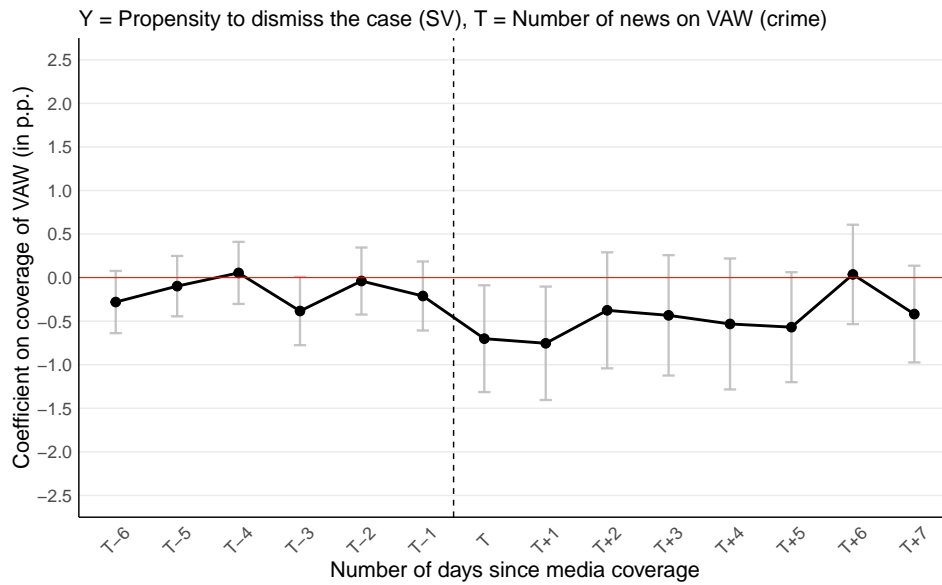
Notes: Robustness checks of the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision.

Reading: Each column corresponds to a different robustness check or model specification: (1) Main specification; (2) Probit model; (3) Residualization of the outcome variable to remove time and weekday trends; (4)–(7) Interactions of fixed effects with year and time indicators: year*month (4), year*quarter (5), year*weekday (6), year*day (7); (8) Adds court fixed effects; (9) Includes a linear time trend; (10)–(11) Control for school vacations (10) and bank holidays (11); (12) Controls for periods of increased female visibility (e.g., Women's Day, #MeToo); (13) Controls for legislative changes on VAW; (14) Excludes weekend decisions; (15) Aggregates weekend decisions; (16)–(20) Vary the level at which standard errors are clustered: by day (16), county (17), year*month (18), case/affair (19), and court (20); (21) Restricts to cases involving known authors; (22) Removes duplicated authors within the same case; (23) Excludes alternatives to prosecution from the dismissal outcome; (24) Excludes rape cases; (25) Restricts to cases registered before the decision; (26) Measures treatment as the occurrence (rather than number) of news stories; (27) Measures treatment using the duration (minutes) of news stories; (28) Includes news on VAW-related trials; (29) Excludes coverage of the DSK case; (30) Restricts the treatment to TF1 news only; (31) Restricts the treatment to France 2 news only; (32) Restricts treatment to news in the same county; (33) Restricts treatment to news in adjacent counties; (34) Restricts treatment to news in neither the same nor adjacent counties; (35) Includes periods with multiple days of news coverage in the 7-day window; (36) Excludes periods with zero news coverage.

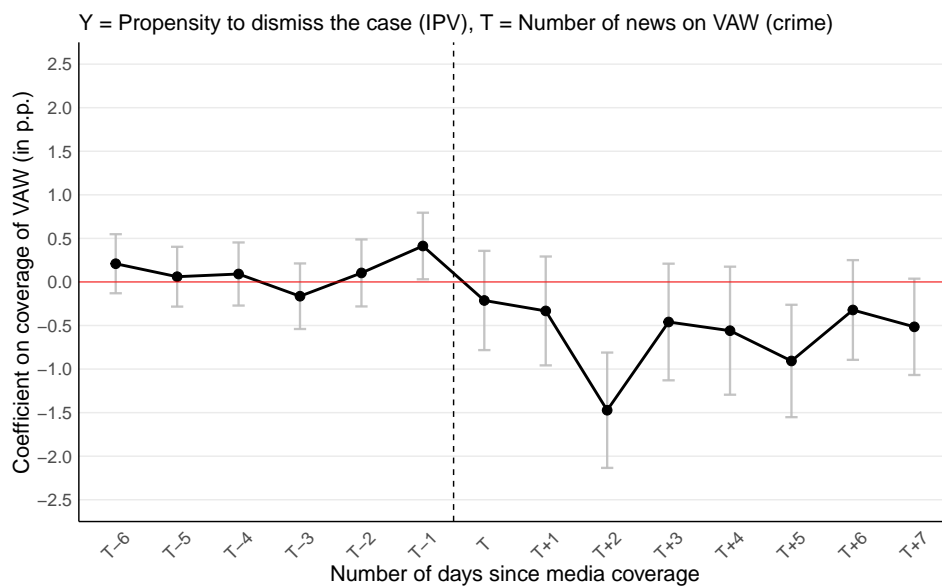
Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

E.4 Heterogeneity analysis

Figure E15: Effect of news coverage on the propensity to dismiss – sexual violence vs. intimate partner violence



(a) Sexual violence



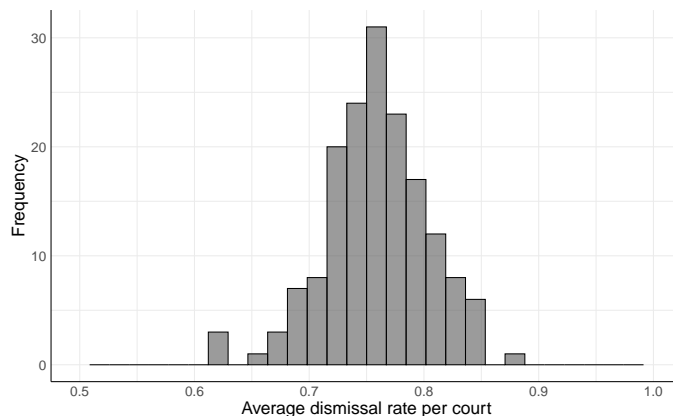
(b) Intimate partner violence

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence by violence type, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel, the sample is restricted to judicial cases of sexual violence – rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment. In the lower panel, the sample is restricted to judicial cases of intimate partner violence – violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner.

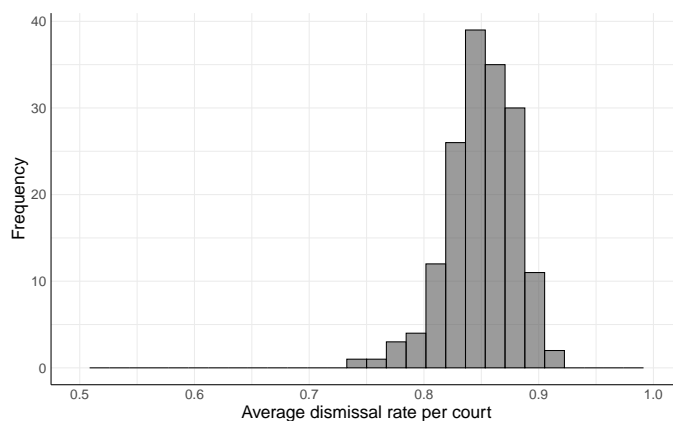
Reading: Two days after the TV news coverage, the propensity to dismiss intimate partner violence cases decreases by 0.9 percentage point (significant at the 5% level), while it remains unaffected for sexual violence cases.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

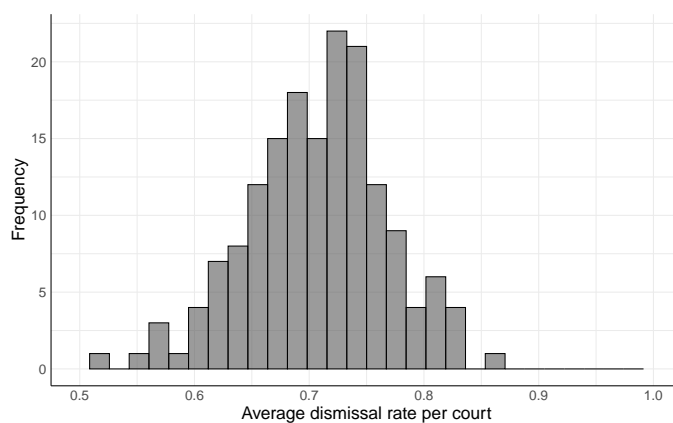
Figure E16: Distribution of the average propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases per court



(a) Sexual or intimate partner violence



(b) Sexual violence

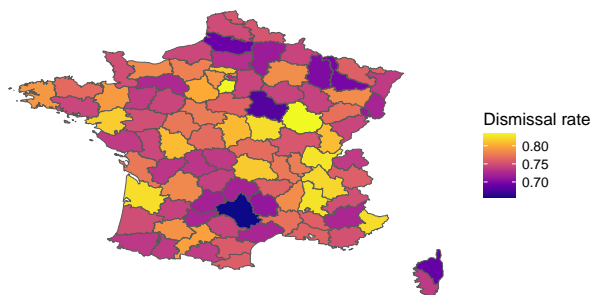


(c) Intimate partner violence

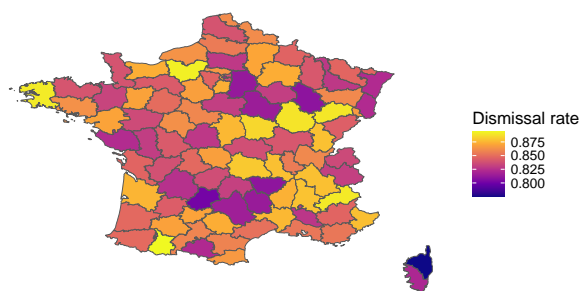
Notes: Distribution of the average propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases per court over 2012-2019. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The mean is 0.76, with a standard deviation of 0.05, a min of 0.61 and a max of 0.88. The first quartile is 0.73 and the third quartile 0.79.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

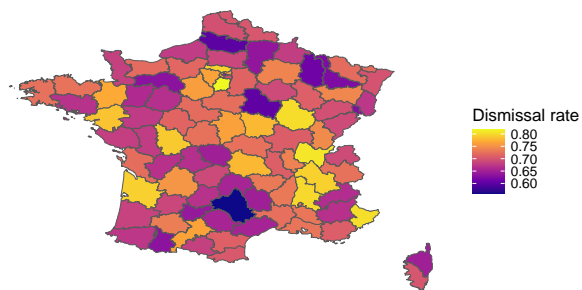
Figure E17: Distribution of the average propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases per county



(a) Sexual or intimate partner violence



(b) Sexual violence



(c) Intimate partner violence

Notes: Distribution of the average propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases per county over 2012-2019. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table E4: Effect of news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases – heterogeneity by cases/courts

Model:	<i>Dependent Variable: Dismissal (0/1)</i>																		
	Main specification	SV cases	IPV cases	Factual reason dismissal	Legal reason dismissal	Quick decision	Long decision	Recent cases	Old cases	Adult victims	Under 18 victims	Adult authors	Under 18 authors	Few cases in court in past 14 days	Many cases in court in past 14 days	Q1 of courts' average dismissal rate	Q2 of courts' average dismissal rate	Q3 of courts' average dismissal rate	Q4 of courts' average dismissal rate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
<i>Variables</i>																			
# of news 7 days before	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	-0.0046*** (0.0013)	-0.0056*** (0.0013)	-0.0055*** (0.0010)	2.78×10^{-5} (0.0006)	-0.0062*** (0.0014)	-0.0026** (0.0010)	-0.0037*** (0.0013)	-0.0063*** (0.0013)	-0.0064*** (0.0020)	-0.0033** (0.0017)	-0.0064*** (0.0011)	-0.0015 (0.0031)	-0.0039*** (0.0014)	-0.0072*** (0.0012)	-0.0079*** (0.0026)	-0.0026 (0.0021)	-0.0012 (0.0017)	-0.0089*** (0.0015)
# of news 6 days after	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0003)	-0.0015*** (0.0005)	0.0010** (0.0005)	0.0002 (0.0004)	-0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0005 (0.0005)	-5.26×10^{-5} (0.0004)	0.0018*** (0.0005)	-0.0014*** (0.0004)	-0.0012* (0.0007)	-0.0018*** (0.0006)	0.0002 (0.0004)	-0.0020 (0.0012)	-0.0008 (0.0005)	0.0002 (0.0004)	-0.0004 (0.0010)	-6.97×10^{-5} (0.0007)	0.0005 (0.0006)	-0.0005 (0.0006)
<i>Fit statistics</i>																			
Observations	687,198	262,684	430,096	687,198	687,198	343,507	341,994	341,060	342,437	113,440	149,244	551,256	54,268	327,959	359,239	97,235	141,280	197,835	250,848
R ²	0.18649	0.21282	0.16278	0.10978	0.03224	0.23116	0.09815	0.22508	0.14287	0.20414	0.23537	0.15616	0.16138	0.18420	0.19423	0.22345	0.20365	0.19679	0.15125
Within R ²	0.12849	0.17950	0.08814	0.06691	0.02403	0.15692	0.07876	0.14732	0.10973	0.15495	0.21003	0.09128	0.12617	0.13582	0.12384	0.17237	0.15249	0.13721	0.09991
<i>Fixed-effects</i>																			
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Case-level controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Robustness checks of the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. Case-level controls include: French-born author, author's age, number of victims, type of assault.

Reading: Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table E5: Effect of news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases – heterogeneity by period/news attention

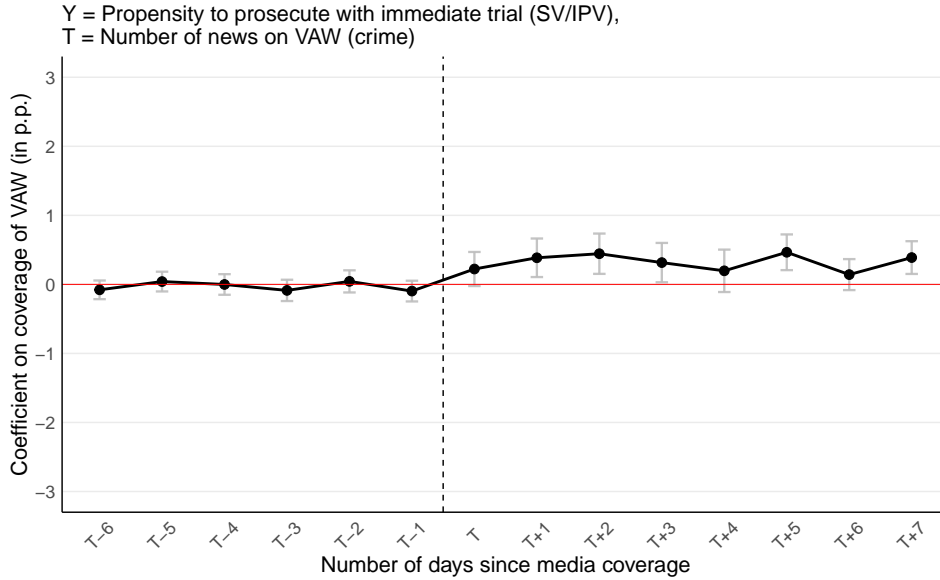
Model:	<i>Dependent Variable: Dismissal (0/1)</i>													
	Main specification	Before October 2017	Since October 2017	High audience	Low audience	Winter time	Summer time	Program's first news	News on SV crimes	News on IPV/femicides crimes	News involving testimonies	News involving prior reporting by victims or prior offenders' involvement	News involving sensational affairs (serial killers/rapists, grim cases, etc.)	News involving political/media figures
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
<i>Variables</i>														
# of news 7 days before	-0.0054*** (0.0009)	-0.0015 (0.0012)	-0.0123*** (0.0016)	-0.0050*** (0.0014)	-0.0036*** (0.0010)	-0.0081*** (0.0016)	-0.0016 (0.0019)	-0.0030*** (0.0011)	-0.0029*** (0.0011)	-0.0083*** (0.0011)	-0.0053*** (0.0017)	-0.0041** (0.0019)	-0.0019 (0.0015)	-0.0006 (0.0017)
# of news 6 days after	-7.02×10^{-5} (0.0003)	3.95×10^{-5} (0.0006)	-0.0002 (0.0004)	0.0004 (0.0007)	-0.0002 (0.0005)	-0.0007 (0.0004)	-0.0024 (0.0016)	0.0005 (0.0005)	0.0002 (0.0005)	0.0007 (0.0004)	-0.0014 (0.0012)	-0.0029* (0.0016)	-0.0008 (0.0008)	0.0013 (0.0009)
<i>Fit statistics</i>														
Observations	687,198	486,555	200,643	740,954	697,233	291,435	168,198	732,145	721,884	722,788	742,177	750,636	738,948	739,202
R ²	0.18649	0.18087	0.21095	0.18768	0.18698	0.17977	0.19235	0.18753	0.18720	0.18698	0.18761	0.18722	0.18743	0.18765
Within R ²	0.12849	0.12406	0.14710	0.12898	0.12877	0.12271	0.13161	0.12924	0.12888	0.12898	0.12902	0.12892	0.12874	0.12919
<i>Fixed-effects</i>														
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Case-level controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Robustness checks of the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to dismiss such violence. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. Case-level controls include: French-born author, author's age, number of victims, type of assault.

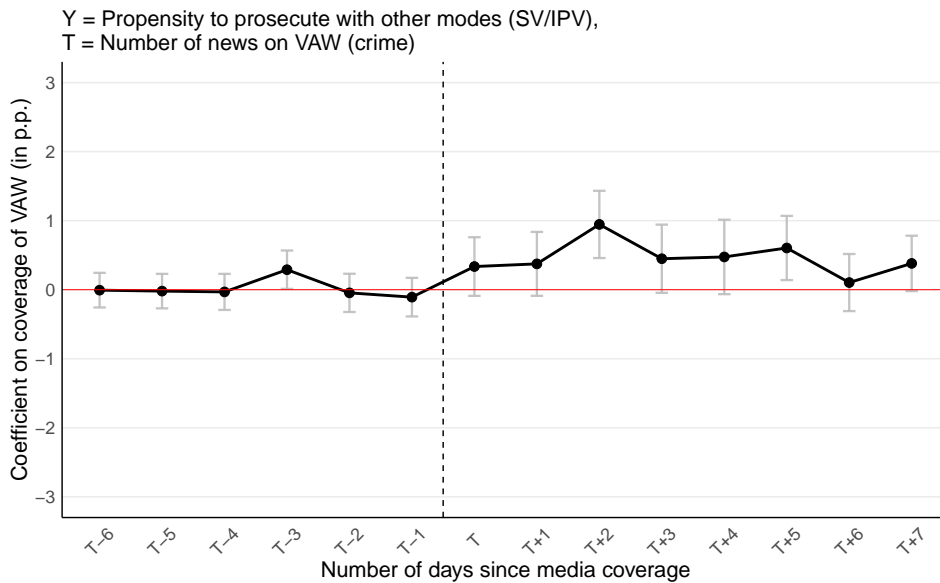
Reading: Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

E.5 Prosecution mode and delay

Figure E18: Effect of news coverage on propensity to prosecute sexual or intimate partner violence cases, by prosecution mode



(a) Prosecution with immediate trial

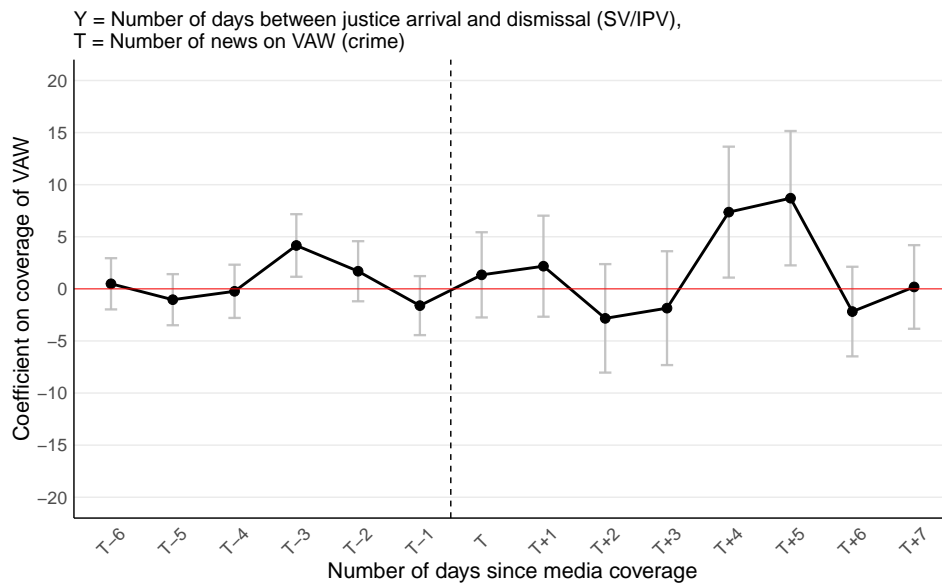


(b) Prosecution with other modes

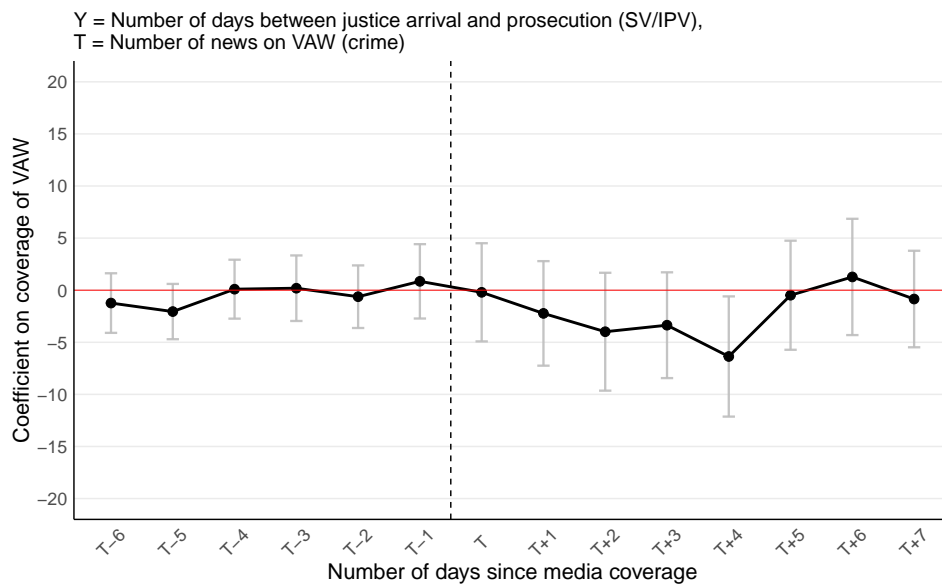
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to prosecute such violence by mode of prosecution, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case was dismissed by prosecutors. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel (immediate trial), the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the case was prosecuted with immediate trial and zero otherwise. In the lower panel (other modes), the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the case was prosecuted with any other mode (penal orders, summons, investigation) and zero otherwise.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure E19: Effect of news coverage on number of days elapsed between justice arrival and prosecutor’s decision – Dismissal vs. Prosecution



(a) Time until dismissal



(b) Time until prosecution

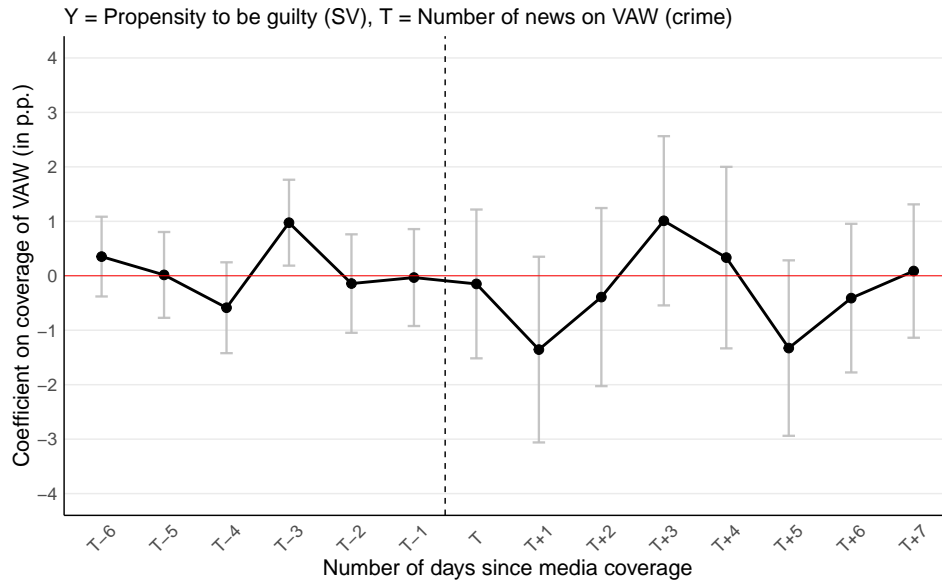
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the time elapsed between the justice arrival and prosecution decision, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is the number of days elapsed between the date of the case arrival to justice and the decision to dismiss or prosecute the case. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel (time to dismiss), the sample is restricted to cases which were dismissed. In the lower panel (time to prosecute), the sample is restricted to cases which were prosecuted.

Source: Author’s calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

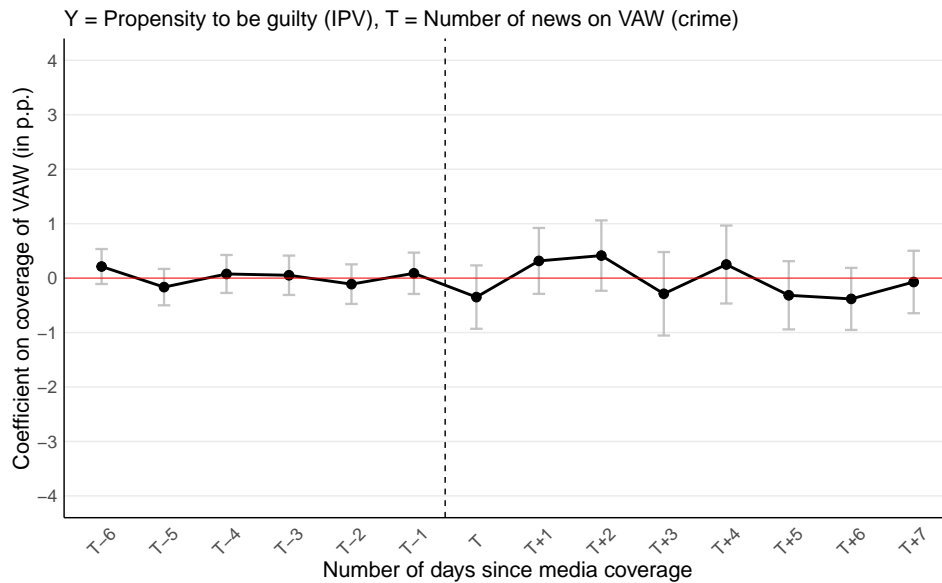
F Appendix F: Additional results on conviction

F.1 Additional results on the decision to convict and the sentence length

Figure F1: Effect of news coverage on conviction – sexual violence vs. intimate partner violence



(a) Sexual violence

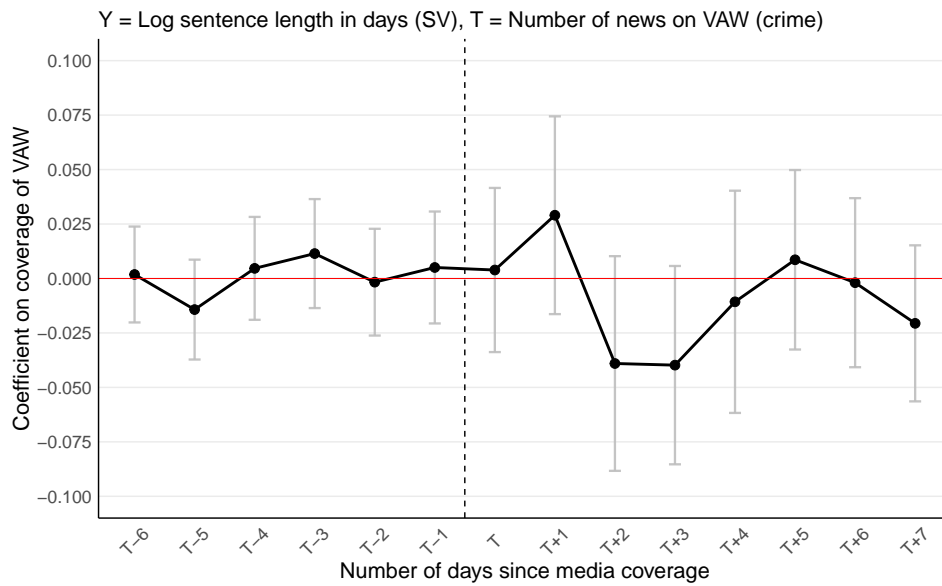


(b) Intimate partner violence

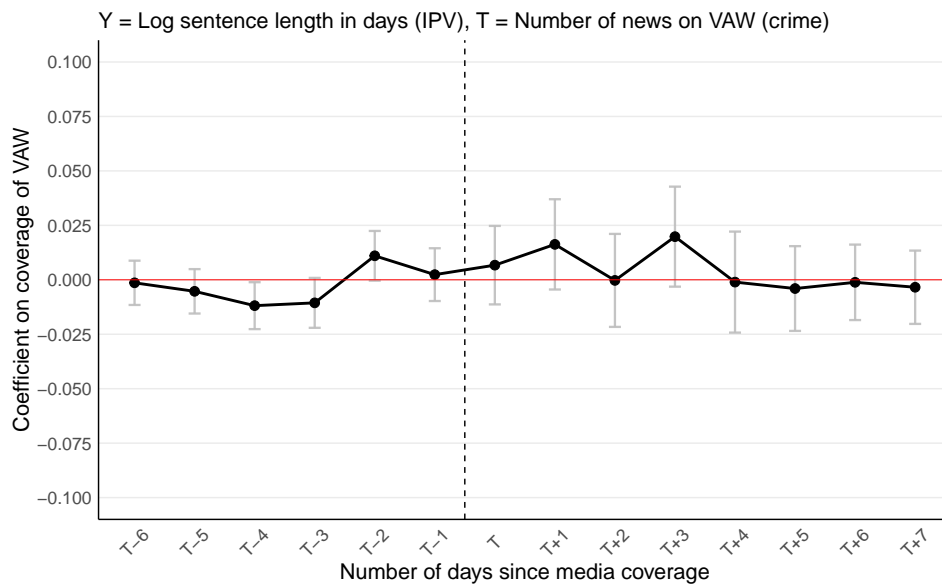
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to convict such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (in percentage points). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the perpetrator was convicted at trial. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel, the sample is restricted to perpetrators of sexual violence – rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment. In the lower panel, the sample is restricted to perpetrators of intimate partner violence – violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure F2: Effect of news coverage on log sentence length – sexual violence vs. intimate partner violence



(a) Sexual violence

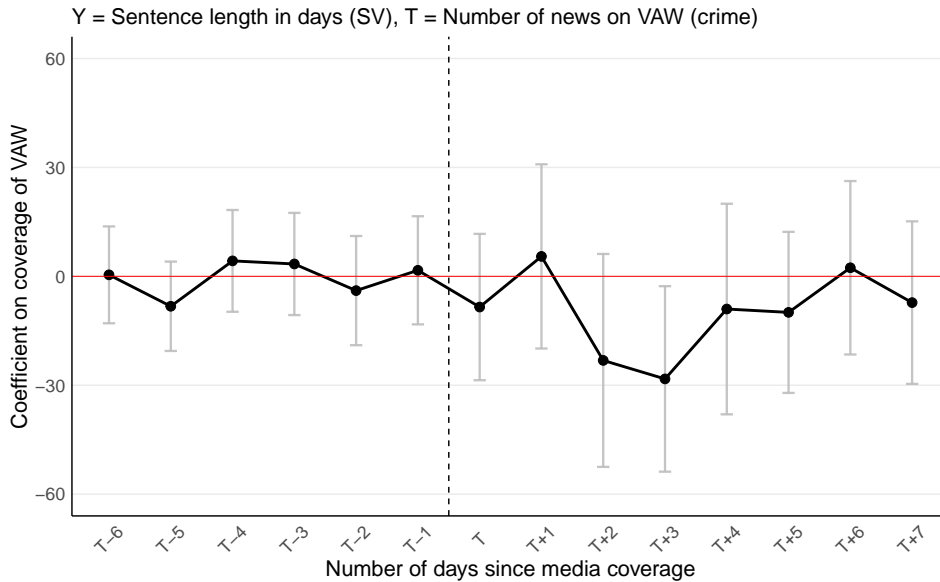


(b) Intimate partner violence

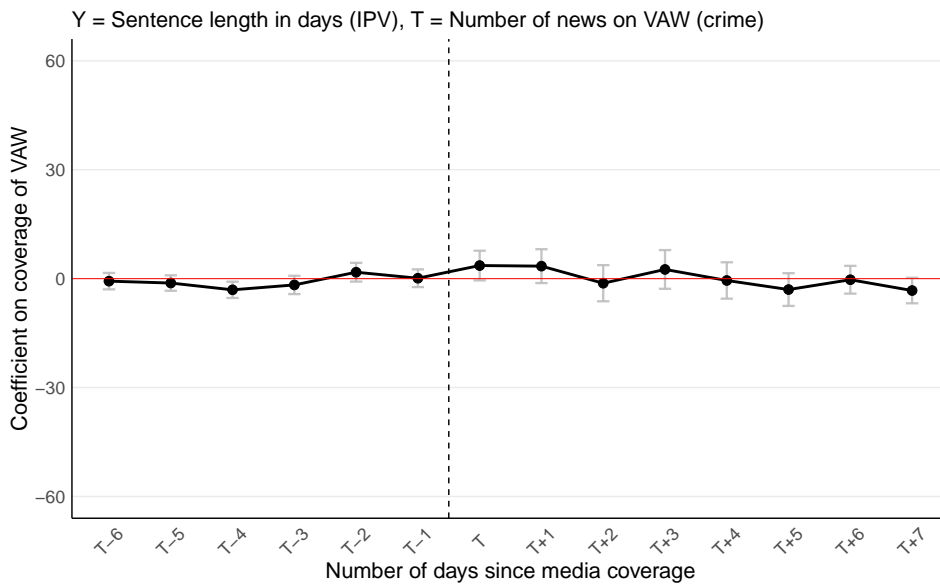
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the sentence length for convicted perpetrators of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel, the sample is restricted to convicted perpetrators of sexual violence – rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment. In the lower panel, the sample is restricted to convicted perpetrators of intimate partner violence – violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure F3: Effect of news coverage on sentence length – sexual violence vs. intimate partner violence



(a) Sexual violence

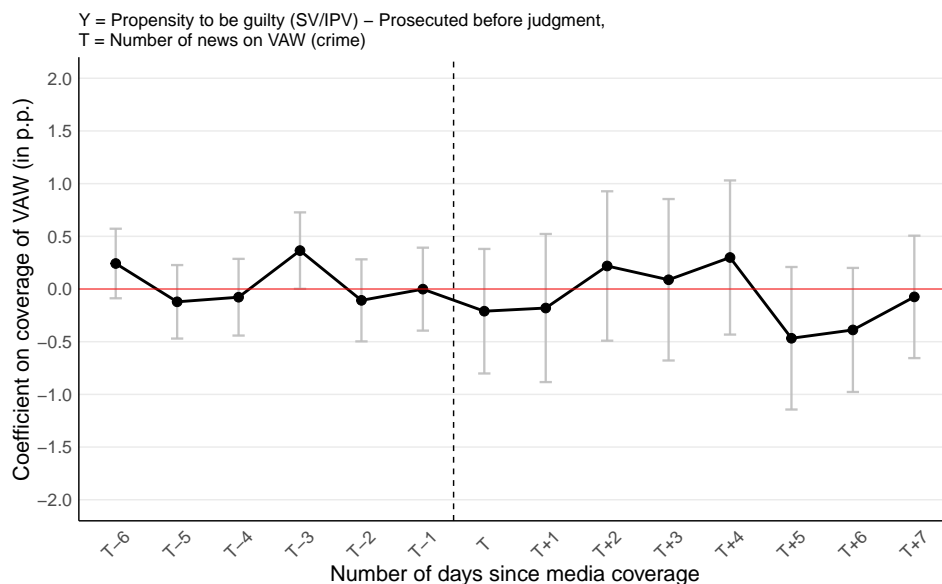


(b) Intimate partner violence

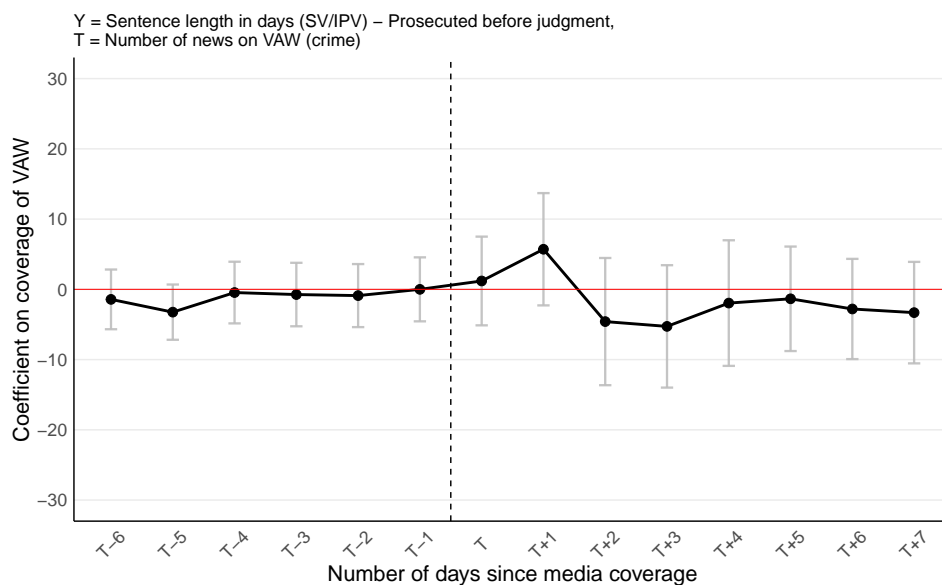
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the sentence length for convicted perpetrators of such violence, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T . In the upper panel, the sample is restricted to convicted perpetrators of sexual violence – rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment. In the lower panel, the sample is restricted to convicted perpetrators of intimate partner violence – violence by a spouse, partner, or ex-partner.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure F4: Effect of news coverage on conviction and sentence length for sexual or intimate partner violence cases, restricting to cases prosecuted before the judge’s decision (91% of cases)



(a) Conviction

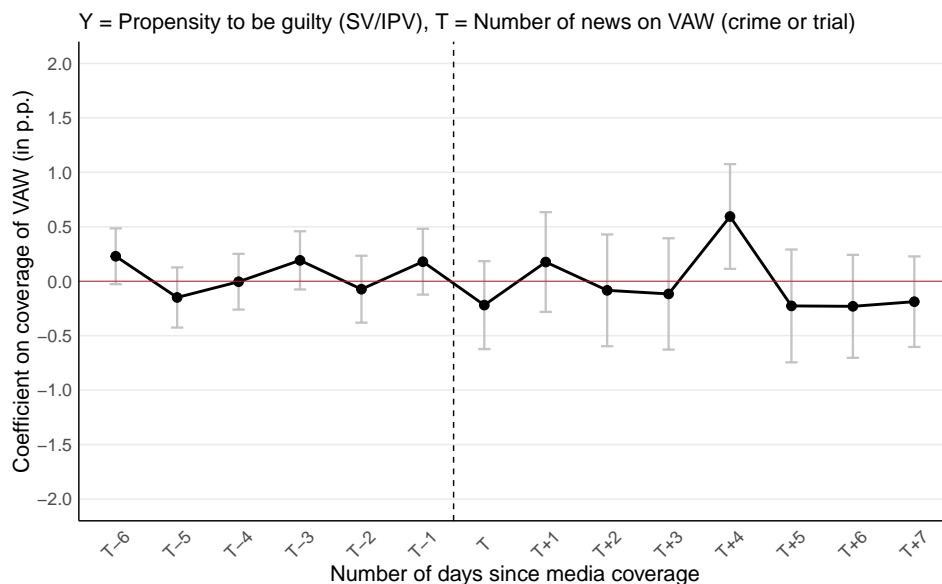


(b) Sentence length

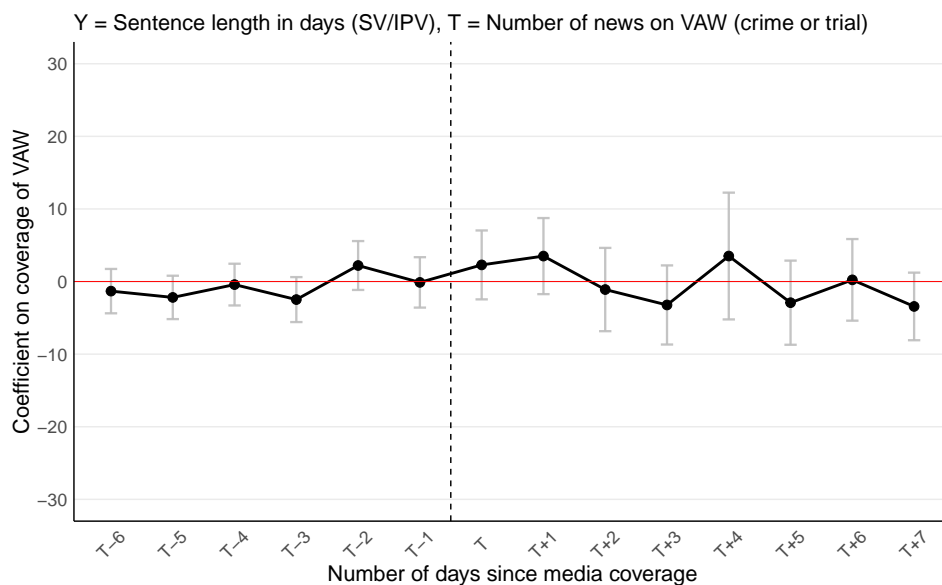
Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to convict such violence and the sentence length, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019, restricting to cases prosecuted before the news coverage. In the upper panel, the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the perpetrator was convicted at trial, with the estimated coefficient in percentage points. In the lower panel, the dependent variable is the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author’s calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure F5: Effect of news coverage on conviction and sentence length for sexual or intimate partner violence cases, including news on trials



(a) Conviction



(b) Sentence length

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women or related trials on the propensity to convict such violence and the sentence length, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. In the upper panel, the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the perpetrator was convicted at trial, with the estimated coefficient expressed in percentage points. In the lower panel, the dependent variable is the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women or related trials broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table F1: Covariate balance: Characteristics of cases investigated by judges, by media coverage on the days before the judge decision

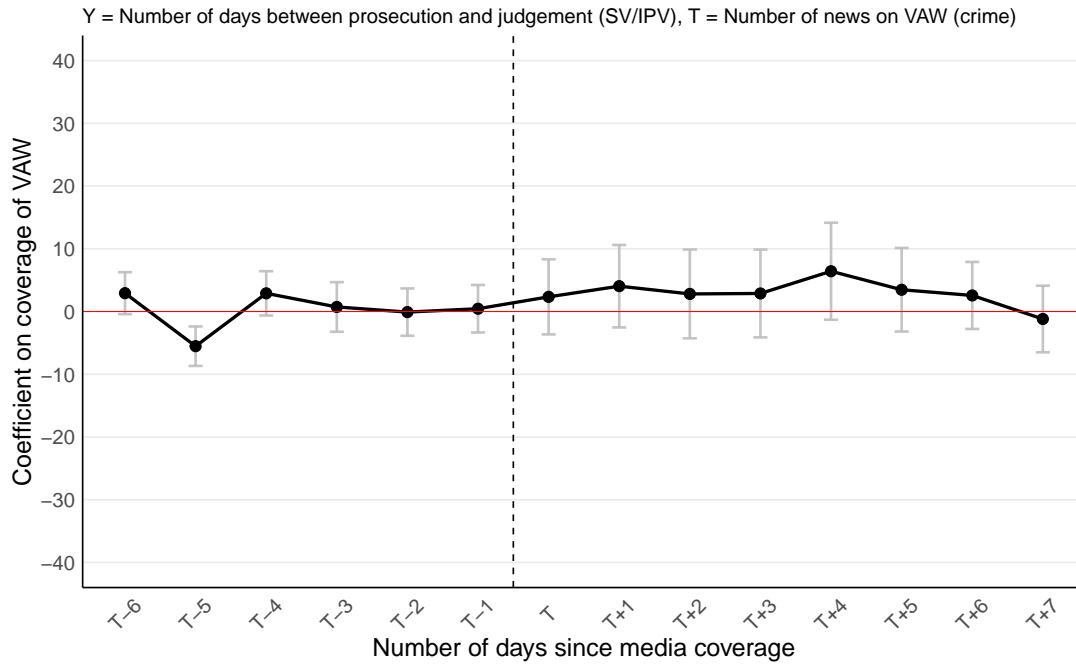
Dependent Variables:	Socio-demographics			Affair's origin			Type of offense				Other case's characteristics				
	Male	French	Age	Police	Justice	Other	Rape	Sexual assault	Sexual harassment	IPV	# Victims	Incident length	Reporting length	Prosecution length	Total case duration
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	
<i>News on VAW crimes</i>															
# of news 7 days before	0.0002 (0.0009)	-7.17×10^{-5} (0.0020)	0.0303 (0.0636)	-0.0024** (0.0012)	0.0020*** (0.0006)	-3.31×10^{-5} (0.0010)	0.0003 (0.0020)	0.0002 (0.0024)	-0.0006 (0.0014)	-0.0019 (0.0021)	0.0104* (0.0059)	-0.9425 (6.313)	2.104 (4.083)	-0.1812 (1.093)	7.508 (5.056)
<i>Fit statistics</i>															
Observations	158,099	157,921	157,374	158,099	158,099	158,099	39,669	39,669	39,669	158,099	158,099	58,832	156,561	155,461	157,675
R ²	0.00463	0.10363	0.00730	0.01412	0.00677	0.01427	0.01341	0.01248	0.01310	0.02054	0.01430	0.00895	0.00867	0.01825	0.01521
<i>News on VAW crimes & trials</i>															
# of news 7 days before	0.0008 (0.0007)	0.0014 (0.0016)	0.0379 (0.0519)	-0.0003 (0.0010)	0.0004 (0.0004)	-0.0003 (0.0008)	-0.0018 (0.0016)	0.0022 (0.0019)	-0.0004 (0.0012)	-0.0038** (0.0017)	0.0001 (0.0045)	-3.869 (4.912)	1.084 (3.316)	-0.8859 (0.8994)	4.585 (4.125)
<i>Fit statistics</i>															
Observations	146,424	146,261	145,782	146,424	146,424	146,424	36,610	36,610	36,610	146,424	146,424	54,583	145,034	144,004	146,053
R ²	0.00485	0.10391	0.00741	0.01418	0.00680	0.01445	0.01401	0.01254	0.01339	0.02076	0.01457	0.00873	0.00888	0.01825	0.01553
<i>Fixed-effects</i>															
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year, month, dow fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean	0.97	0.75	35.83	0.94	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.94	0.02	0.75	1.49	319.08	245.72	85.81	584.37
<i>Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses</i>															
<i>Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1</i>															

Notes: OLS estimates of regressions on the effect of TV news coverage of violence against women (VAW) on various characteristics of judicial cases examined by judges. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variables are the case characteristics of the cases examined by judges, listed in the first row of the table. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the decision. The first panel uses news on VAW crimes, while the second panel also includes news on VAW-related trials.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

F.2 Judgment delay

Figure F6: Effect of news coverage on number of days elapsed between prosecution and final court decision

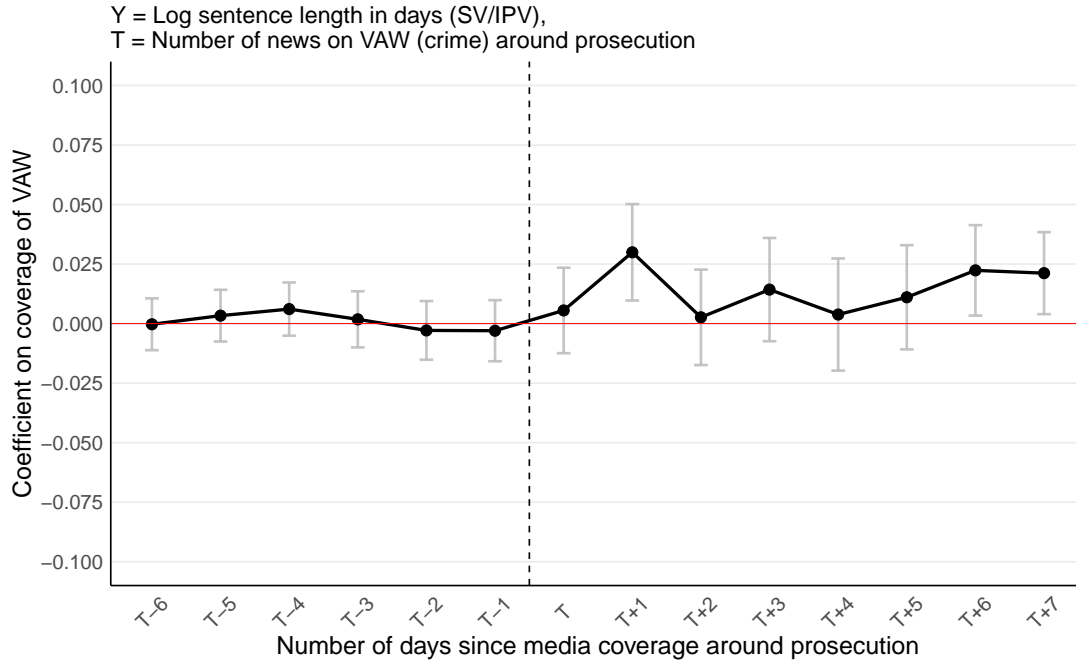


Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women on the time between prosecution and final judgment, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that underwent trial in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. The dependent variable is the number of days elapsed between prosecution and the final trial decision. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

F.3 Additional results on long-term effects

Figure F7: Long-term effect of news coverage on sentence length for sexual or intimate partner violence cases

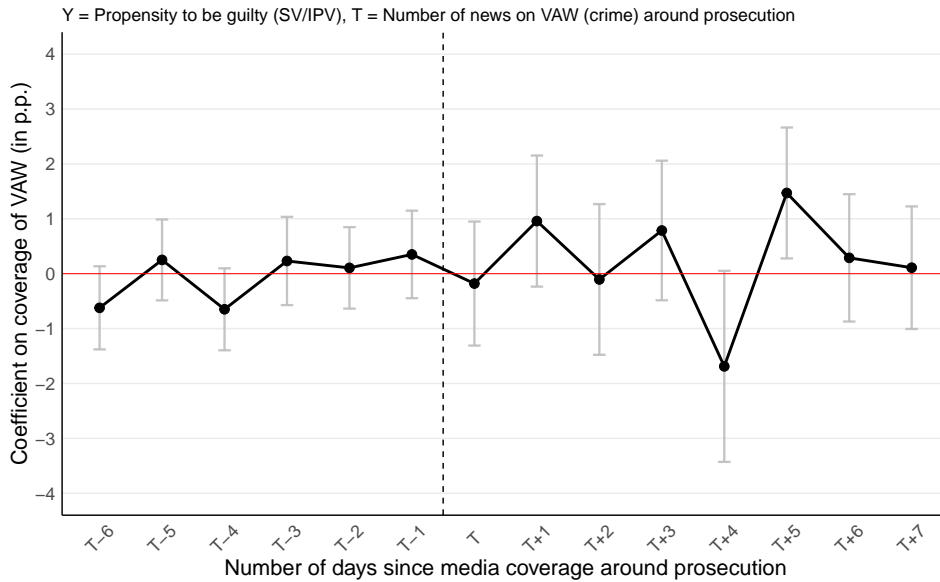


Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women around the time of prosecution on the long-term sentence length, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of all cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were completed between 2012 and 2019, either dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts. The dependent variable is the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 around the prosecutor’s decision, with coverage occurring at time T .

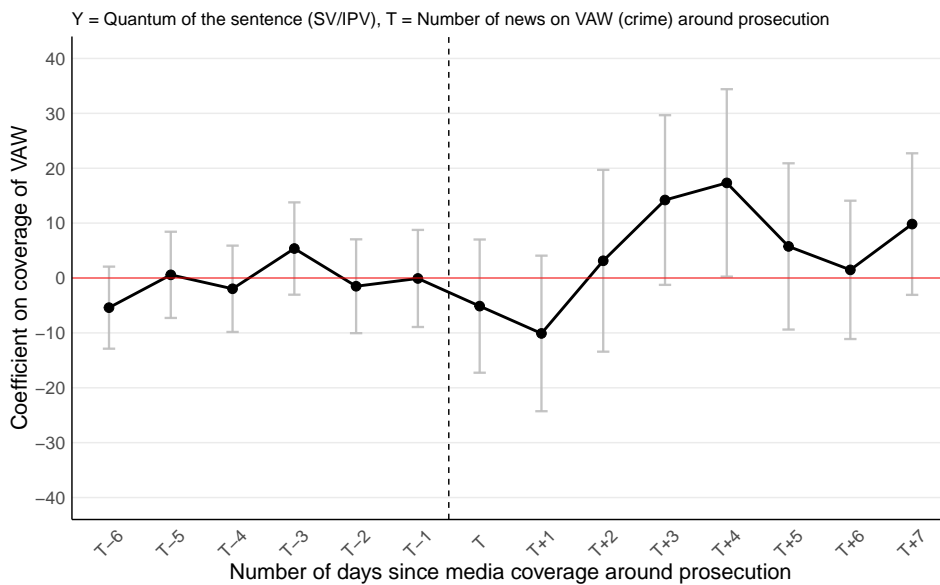
Reading: sexual or intimate partner violence cases prosecuted two days after the TV news coverage see a marginally significant increase in the sentence length for convicted cases.

Source: Author’s calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Figure F8: Long-term effect of news coverage on conviction and sentence length for sexual or intimate partner violence cases, among prosecuted cases only



(a) Conviction



(b) Sentence length

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women around the time of prosecution on the long-term propensity to convict such violence and the sentence length, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals. The sample consists of all cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019 (excluding dismissed cases). In the upper panel, the dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the perpetrator was convicted at trial, with the estimated coefficient expressed in percentage points. In the lower panel, the dependent variable is the number of days of the prison sentence handed down to the convicted perpetrator. News coverage is measured using the number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 around the prosecution decision, with coverage occurring at time T .

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

Table F2: OLS results for the long-term effect of news coverage of crimes against women on the propensity to convict and the sentence length for sexual or intimate partner violence cases

<i>Dependent Variables:</i>	Conviction (0/1)	Sentence length (days)	Log. Sentence length (days)
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Number of news on VAW crimes in the 7 days before the decision	0.0053*** (0.0009)	3.289** (1.426)	0.0141*** (0.0040)
Number of news on VAW crimes in the 6 days after the decision	-3.38×10^{-5} (0.0003)	0.3796 (0.5132)	0.0015 (0.0014)
Year, month, day-of-the-week fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Case-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>			
Observations	687,198	159,182	142,693
R ²	0.17653	0.31962	0.27610
Within R ²	0.12066	0.31089	0.26112

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Notes: OLS estimates of leads and lags from Equation 1, showing the effect of TV news coverage of crimes against women around prosecution on the propensity to convict such violence and the sentence length, pooling the leads and lags together into two event-time dummies. The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (SV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) that were prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019. In Column (1), the dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the case led to a conviction. In Column (2), it is the sentence length (in days) for convicted cases. In Column (3), it is the natural logarithm of the sentence length (in days) for convicted cases. News coverage is measured using the total number of news stories on crimes against women broadcast during the 8pm national TV news on TF1 and France 2 in the 7 days before the prosecution decision. Case-level controls include: French-born author, author's age, number of victims, type of assault.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice and TV news data collected from the National Audiovisual Institute.

G Appendix G: #MeToo analysis

To benchmark the day-to-day effects of TV news coverage documented above, I also examine a larger, one-off salience shock. In particular, I study the #MeToo movement as a macro-level comparison to the high-frequency media variation on violence against women (VAW), allowing me to contrast short-lived coverage effects with a sustained shift in public attention and discourse. In October 2017, a series of public disclosures of sexual harassment and assault in work-related contexts by film producer Harvey Weinstein gave rise to the global #MeToo movement, sparking a flood of statements about experiences of sexual violence. Although the case originated in the United States, it also had a significant media impact in France, leading to the creation of the #BalanceTonPorc movement.

I conduct a difference-in-differences analysis to estimate the effect of the #MeToo movement on judicial decisions in cases of sexual and intimate partner violence, compared to other harm to persons. The model is specified as follows:

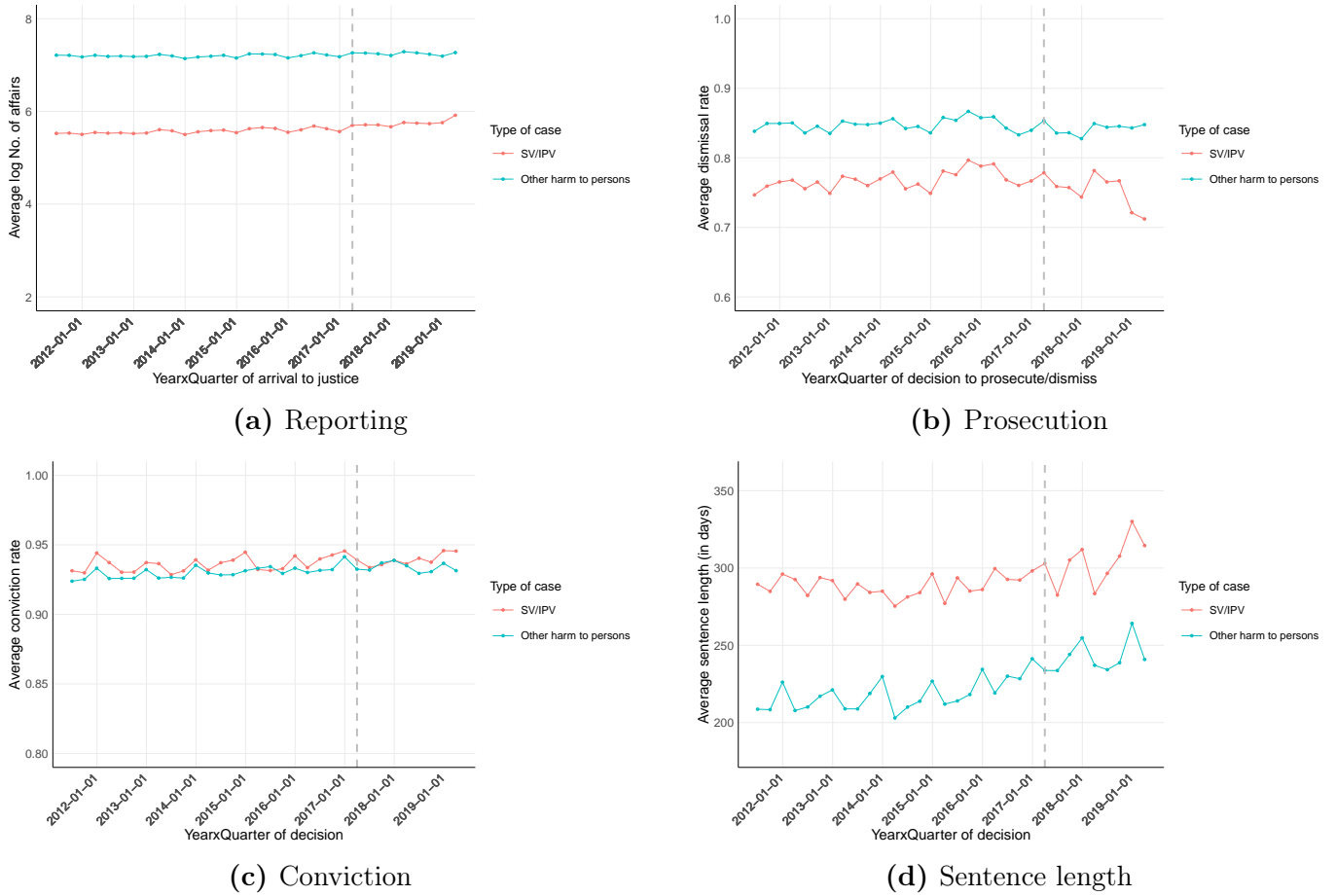
$$Y_{ict} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(SV/IPV_i \times Post\#MeToo_t) + X'_{ict}\gamma + \mu_c + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{ict}, \quad (3)$$

where i indexes cases, c refers to counties of jurisdiction, and t denotes decision dates. The outcome Y_{ict} captures four stages of judicial processing: (i) the log number of cases reported, (ii) the propensity to dismiss, (iii) the propensity to convict, and (iv) the length of prison sentences (in days). $Post\#MeToo_t$ is a dummy equal to one after October 15th 2017, when the movement gained visibility in France. Case-level controls (X_{ict}) include offender and case characteristics such as age, French nationality, number of offenses, number of victims, nature of the offense, as well as dummies for repeat offender status, attempted crime, co-offending, mode of prosecution, and mode of judgment. County fixed effects (μ_c) and decision-date fixed effects (λ_t) account for unobserved heterogeneity across jurisdictions and time. The main specification is estimated by ordinary least-squares (OLS) regressions with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

Identification. The difference-in-differences design relies on the parallel-trends assumption—that, absent the #MeToo shock, outcomes for sexual or intimate partner violence and other harm-to-persons cases would have evolved similarly. Figure G1 supports this assumption: the event-study leads from Eq. 3 show no discernible pre-treatment dynamics. The parallelism appears particularly strong for reporting and prosecution outcomes, while for conviction and sentence length the pre-trends are somewhat less flat, though still broadly comparable across groups. Combined with county and decision-date fixed effects and rich case-level controls, and given the plausibly exogenous timing of the #MeToo salience shock, these pre-trend patterns lend credibility to the identifying assumption that post-#MeToo deviations capture the causal effect of the movement rather than differential

pre-existing dynamics.

Figure G1: Pre-trends of judicial outcomes (raw data)



Notes: Time series of judicial outcomes for cases of violence against women and cases of other harm to persons before and after #MeToo (October 15th 2017). The sample consists of cases of sexual violence (sexual violence), intimate partner violence (IPV) or other harm to persons that were dismissed or prosecuted in correctional or juvenile courts between 2012 and 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Table G1: #MeToo movement and judicial decisions for cases of violence against women versus other harm to persons

	Ln(Number of cases reported)		Propensity to dismiss			Propensity to convict			Sentence length (days)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
<i>Variables</i>											
SV/IPV case × Post #MeToo	0.1308*** (0.0265)	0.1308*** (0.0045)	-0.0106*** (0.0011)	-0.0099*** (0.0011)	-0.0074*** (0.0010)	0.0008 (0.0013)	0.0022 (0.0013)	0.0022* (0.0013)	-8.105*** (2.135)	4.075** (1.691)	3.813** (1.407)
SV/IPV case	-1.637*** (0.0125)	-1.637*** (0.0022)	-0.0765*** (0.0006)	-0.0339*** (0.0010)	-0.0330*** (0.0009)	0.0039*** (0.0008)	0.0108*** (0.0008)	0.0099*** (0.0008)	70.16*** (1.200)	57.87*** (0.9562)	57.76*** (0.9503)
Post #MeToo	0.0212 (0.0181)		-0.0051*** (0.0004)	0.0067*** (0.0004)		0.0039*** (0.0007)	-0.0014** (0.0007)		24.84*** (0.9391)	15.34*** (0.7709)	
<i>Controls and Fixed-effects</i>											
Case controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Decision date fixed effects	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>											
Observations	5,844	5,844	4,757,143	4,757,143	4,757,143	874,307	871,405	871,405	625,540	624,271	624,271
R ²	0.78169	0.99679	0.00607	0.15670	0.20222	0.00011	0.01871	0.02479	0.01057	0.35618	0.36858

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Notes: OLS estimates from Equation 3, showing the effect of the #MeToo movement on different stages of judicial decisions for cases of sexual violence (SV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), compared to other harm to persons. The outcomes are, respectively: the log number of cases reported to the courts (Columns 1–2), the propensity to dismiss the case (Columns 3–5), the propensity to convict (Columns 6–8), and the sentence length in days (Columns 9–11). Each block reports results from progressively saturated specifications including case-level controls (e.g., author’s nationality, age, number of victims, type of assault), as well as fixed effects for decision date and county of jurisdiction. The sample covers cases prosecuted in correctional and juvenile courts in metropolitan France between 2012 and 2019.

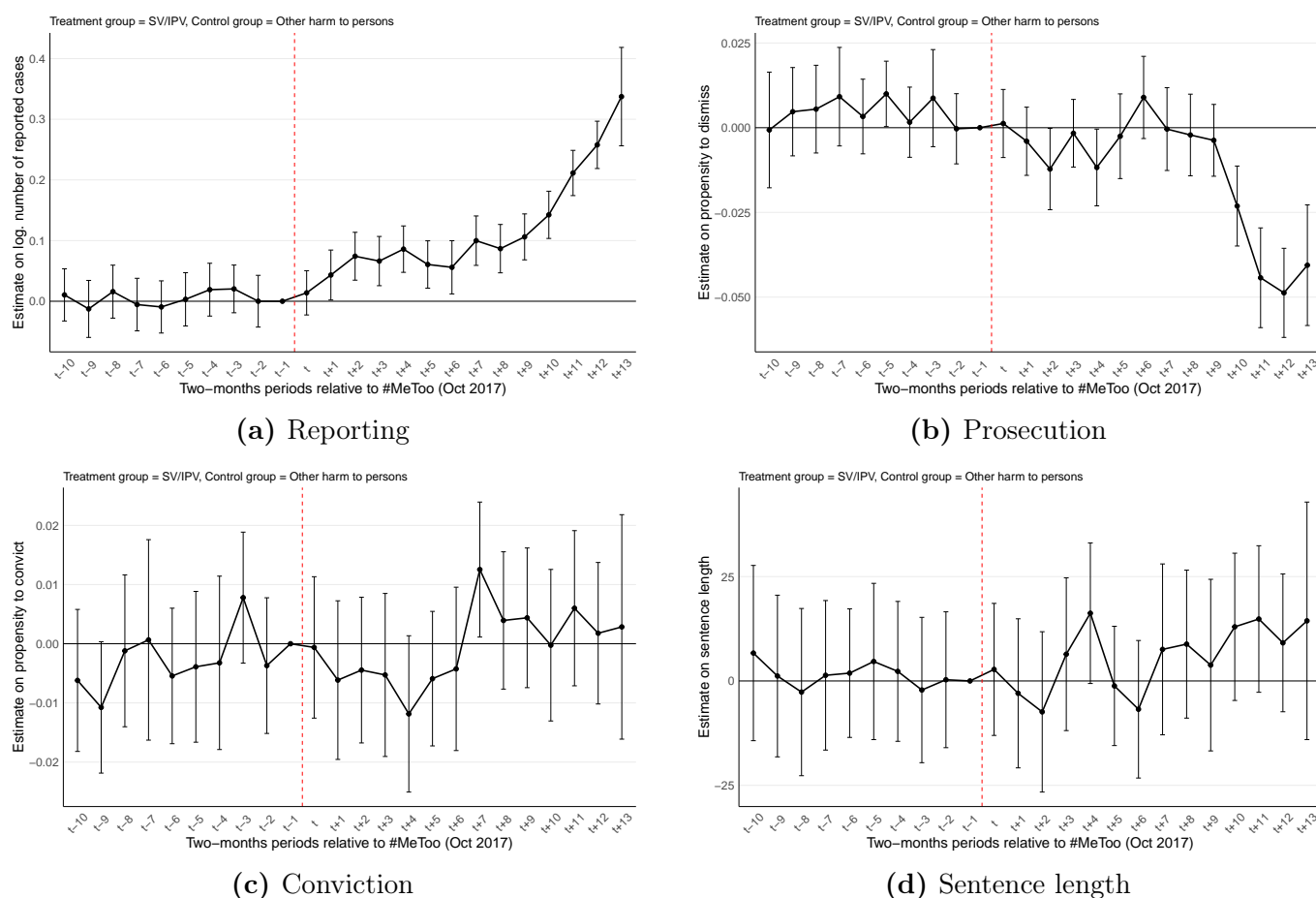
Source: Author’s calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

Results. Table G1 presents the estimates of Equation 3. Across all outcomes, we find large baseline differences between sexual or intimate partner violence and other harm-to-persons cases: violence against women cases are significantly less likely to be reported, less likely to be dismissed, slightly more likely to lead to conviction, and, when convicted, associated with substantially longer sentences. Turning to the interaction with the #MeToo period, the results indicate moderate but consistent changes. For reporting, sexual or intimate partner violence cases are more likely to be registered after the movement. For dismissal, the interaction terms are negative and significant across specifications, suggesting a reduction in the propensity to dismiss such cases. For conviction, the coefficients are small and only marginally significant, pointing to limited changes in conviction rates. Finally, sentencing outcomes show a positive and significant effect: sexual or intimate partner violence cases received somewhat longer sentences in the post-#MeToo period, with effects that remain robust when including controls and fixed effects. Overall, the results suggest that the #MeToo movement was associated with modest but meaningful shifts in judicial responsiveness to violence against women in France, primarily through fewer dismissals and longer sentences.

Dynamic effects. To explore the dynamics of the #MeToo movement, I estimate an event-study specification by interacting the sexual or intimate partner violence dummy with time dummies defined over two-month periods relative to October 2017. The coefficients are displayed in Figure G2. In all four outcomes, the pre-treatment coefficients fluctuate closely around zero and are statistically insignificant, which provides additional support for the validity of the parallel-trends assumption in the DiD framework. After the onset of #MeToo, distinct patterns emerge. For reporting, the estimates rise steadily and remain significantly positive, suggesting a sustained increase in the number of sexual or intimate partner violence cases brought to court in the post-#MeToo period. For dismissal, the interaction coefficients fall below zero and remain significantly negative, indicating a lower propensity to dismiss these cases after #MeToo, mainly toward the end of the period. By contrast, the results for conviction and sentence length are much less precise: the estimated coefficients are small and surrounded by wide confidence intervals, which makes it difficult to conclude on systematic changes in these outcomes. Overall, the event-study analysis confirms that the #MeToo movement was followed by sustained increases in reporting and fewer dismissals of sexual or intimate partner violence cases, while evidence for conviction and sentencing outcomes remains weak.

Heterogeneous effects. Table G2 shows that effects differ markedly between sexual violence (SV) and intimate partner violence (IPV). Reporting rises for both categories, but somewhat more for SV. Prosecutorial decisions diverge: for IPV, dismissal propensities fall after #MeToo, whereas SV shows small positive coefficients on dismissals, implying no reduction—and possibly a slight

Figure G2: Event-study analyses for the effect of #MeToo on judicial decisions



Notes: Event-study estimates of judicial outcomes for cases of sexual and intimate partner violence compared to other harm to persons, before and after the onset of the #MeToo movement (October 15, 2017). The sample includes cases dismissed or prosecuted in correctional and juvenile courts in metropolitan France between 2012 and 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

increase—relative to other harm-to-persons cases. Conviction effects remain close to zero and largely insignificant for both SV and IPV. Sentencing becomes harsher for IPV, while SV sentencing effects are mixed—negative in parsimonious models and small positive in saturated ones. Overall, #MeToo is associated with stronger and more consistent prosecutorial and sentencing shifts for IPV than for SV, despite similar gains in reporting.

Comparison with media coverage. The magnitude of the #MeToo effect on prosecution is larger than the one estimated for day-to-day news coverage. While each additional news story on crimes against women decreases the propensity to dismiss sexual or intimate partner violence cases by about 0.54 percentage point (a 2.3% increase in the likelihood of prosecution given the baseline), the #MeToo movement is associated with a reduction in dismissal propensity of roughly 1 percentage point, sustained over time. This suggests that although prosecutors respond to short-term fluctuations in media salience, the broader visibility shock created by #MeToo had a more persistent

and quantitatively stronger impact on prosecutorial decision-making. This pattern is in line with the view that day-to-day media coverage induces lighter or more transient shifts in prosecutorial behavior, whereas a large-scale social movement such as #MeToo generates a more profound normative shock.

Table G2: #MeToo movement and judicial decisions for cases of violence against women versus other harm to persons – Heterogeneity

	Ln(Number of cases reported)		Propensity to dismiss			Propensity to convict			Sentence length (days)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
<i>Sexual violence</i>											
SV case × Post #MeToo	0.1498*** (0.0325)	0.1498*** (0.0104)	0.0331*** (0.0015)	0.0297*** (0.0014)	0.0280*** (0.0014)	-0.0029 (0.0030)	0.0012 (0.0030)	0.0015 (0.0030)	-14.29** (6.156)	7.683 (5.220)	8.556* (5.178)
SV case	-2.681*** (0.0158)	-2.681*** (0.0057)	-0.0094*** (0.0009)	-0.0185*** (0.0008)	-0.0201*** (0.0008)	-0.0353*** (0.0016)	-0.0260*** (0.0017)	-0.0278*** (0.0017)	360.8*** (3.271)	215.7*** (2.830)	216.5*** (2.806)
Post #MeToo	0.0212 (0.0181)		-0.0051*** (0.0004)	0.0064*** (0.0004)		0.0039*** (0.0007)	-0.0014** (0.0007)		24.84*** (0.9391)	14.69*** (0.7731)	
<i>Fit statistics</i>											
Observations	5,844	5,844	4,267,097	4,267,097	4,267,097	732,341	729,807	729,807	505,066	504,042	504,042
R ²	0.86128	0.99172	0.00012	0.16022	0.20243	0.00142	0.01991	0.02684	0.08720	0.37781	0.39106
<i>Intimate partner violence</i>											
IPV case × Post #MeToo	0.1260*** (0.0242)	0.1260*** (0.0062)	-0.0390*** (0.0015)	-0.0345*** (0.0014)	-0.0294*** (0.0014)	-0.0003 (0.0013)	0.0006 (0.0013)	0.0004 (0.0013)	11.21*** (1.589)	11.07*** (1.304)	10.29*** (1.301)
IPV case	-2.079*** (0.0113)	-2.079*** (0.0029)	-0.1172*** (0.0008)	-0.0439*** (0.0014)	-0.0414*** (0.0013)	0.0191*** (0.0008)	0.0244*** (0.0008)	0.0238*** (0.0008)	-27.90*** (0.8362)	8.100*** (0.6938)	8.013*** (0.6955)
Post #MeToo	0.0212 (0.0181)		-0.0051*** (0.0004)	0.0066*** (0.0004)		0.0039*** (0.0007)	-0.0012* (0.0007)		24.84*** (0.9391)	15.23*** (0.7711)	
<i>Fit statistics</i>											
Observations	5,844	5,844	4,460,983	4,460,983	4,460,983	823,166	820,738	820,738	587,114	586,048	586,048
R ²	0.87580	0.99596	0.01142	0.15637	0.20291	0.00096	0.02001	0.02636	0.00347	0.33387	0.34766
<i>Controls and Fixed-effects</i>											
Case controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Decision date fixed effects	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
County of jurisdiction fixed effects	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Heteroskedasticity-robust standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Notes: OLS estimates from Equation 3, showing the effect of the #MeToo movement on different stages of judicial decisions for cases of sexual violence (SV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), compared to other harm to persons. The outcomes are, respectively: the log number of cases reported to the courts (Columns 1–2), the propensity to dismiss the case (Columns 3–5), the propensity to convict (Columns 6–8), and the sentence length in days (Columns 9–11). Each block reports results from progressively saturated specifications including case-level controls (e.g., author's nationality, age, number of victims, type of assault), as well as fixed effects for decision date and county of jurisdiction. The sample covers cases prosecuted in correctional and juvenile courts in metropolitan France between 2012 and 2019.

Source: Author's calculations based on administrative data extracted from the management software *Cassiopée* provided by the French Ministry of Justice.

