

# Crime, Politics and Policing: Evidence from India

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March 23, 2022

## Abstract

Why are state institutions in poor democracies often ineffective? This paper shows that the election of politicians facing criminal charges empowers decision makers with a vested interest in a weak and manipulable police force. It tests this claim in the context of Indian state elections, using a regression discontinuity design that focuses on races where a politician facing a serious criminal charge barely won or lost. The close election of a criminal politician is associated with senior police officers in their districts serving for shorter periods. Criminal politicians are also associated with an on paper reduction in types of crime especially vulnerable to selective reporting, and no change in other types of crime. The results suggest that the criminalization of politics can create a self-reinforcing cycle of institutional weakness.

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# 1 Introduction

Why do states have problems enforcing their authority? Many explanations have been proposed for state weakness, including geography, ethnic diversity and inequality, under-resourcing and political attribution problems (Dasgupta and Kapur, 2020), “legibility” (Lee and Zhang, 2017), and difficulty in monitoring bureaucratic agents and historical legacies. All of these explanations assume that those in charge of the state are doing their best to extend the state’s authority, and are frustrated by one of these exogenous factors. However, it is equally plausible that state weakness is a result of policy choices made by self-interested politicians. Authors such as Suryanarayan (2017), Acemoglu et al. (2013) and Alesina et al. (2019) have shown that weakness in state institutions may be an endogenous product of political conflict empowering specific types of elites.

This paper shows evidence for an extreme version of the endogenous state weakness hypothesis: that criminals win elections and weaken the state from within. In many developing democracies, elected leaders frequently commit illegal acts. They may engage in violence or intimidation against non-supporters, collect bribes or protection money, or engage in a business enterprise that would ordinarily be illegal. In India, where the phenomenon is best known, the rise of criminal politicians has been remorseless. Twenty four percent of elected MPs faced a pending criminal charge in 2004, 30% faced one in 2009, 34% did so in 2014 and 44% in 2019. Criminal politicians tend to be more politically successful than otherwise similar non-criminals, indicating that voters may see some value in a well-funded representative with a “Robin Hood” image (Vaishnav, 2017; Chauchard, 2016). Others have found that criminal or criminally connected politicians are worse at encouraging economic development and investment (Prakash et al., 2019; Cheng and Urpelainen, 2019), perhaps due to higher rent-seeking (Lehne et al., 2018;

Asher and Novosad, 2018).

The effects of the election of criminal politicians might be not only distributional, but institutional. Since criminal politicians gain rents and political support from engaging in illegal activity, they will attempt to either weaken state institutions that might restrict these activities, or gain influence over these institutions to inhibit them from doing so. While a broad range of state institutions might be in a position to restrict the actions of lawbreakers, the most directly affected are those institutions charged with law enforcement, especially the police. These efforts may have spillover effects on the community as a whole, since a police force where advancement is based on political loyalty might be less capable and willing to investigate crime on behalf of ordinary people.

This paper tests these claims in India, a democracy notable both for the high level of illegal activity among politicians and for the understaffing, inertia and politicization of the police force. It uses a combination of existing data on politician criminal activity (as reported in affidavits required for candidacy), and new data on the backgrounds of the senior police officers who control the police in each district, including their caste, education and previous experience. Since criminal politicians are not randomly distributed, it uses a regression discontinuity design that compares outcomes in constituencies where a criminal politician (one facing serious criminal charges) barely beat a non-criminal to constituencies where a non-criminal barely beat a criminal. The findings are robust to using alternative definitions of politician criminality.

The most important way that politicians influence the police is through the selection of senior police officers. Representatives can select officers who are either ineffective or personally sympathetic to them, or simply transfer officers frequently to reduce their

effectiveness. We find that in terms where criminals barely win election, senior police officers serve shorter terms of office, a reduction of 149 days, or 31% of the average term length. Criminal politicians also appear to favor younger and less experienced officers, though these results are not robust. This effect is larger when the members is part of the ruling coalition than when they are part of the opposition.

A police force selected for loyalty rather than efficiency will tend to ignore crime when possible, either because it is committed by the politically connected or because lazy or incompetent officers prefer to ignore citizens reports of crime or falsify statistics. This effect is apparent in reported crime statistics, which in India are widely thought to be susceptible to underreporting and manipulation. Reported levels of a set of crimes thought to be especially vulnerable to underreporting—rape, kidnapping, and ordinary theft—drop in legislative terms where a criminal politician barely won. A set of crimes where crime “minimization” is more difficult—murder and auto theft—are not effected by the election of criminal politicians.

The results suggest that the election of criminal politicians undermines law enforcement institutions from within. They provide an explanation for the state’s poor performance in law enforcement. While the police suffer from the underresourcing and shirking that are well-documented in other Indian bureaucracies ([Dasgupta and Kapur, 2020](#)), these problems may be the result captured by self-interested elites in addition to more standard monitoring and attribution problems.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Crime and Politics

Who is a criminal? We adopt a minimal definition: A criminal is a person who engages or has engaged in serious illegal activity. We do not consider criminals as being a distinct class in sociological or psychological terms, since a wide variety of people engage in illegal activity for a wide variety of reasons. Especially in developing countries, members of the social elite frequently engage in extralegal activities, which they mix with legal strategies for personal enrichment. However, we believe that there is variation in the willingness of individuals to pursue extralegal strategies, and in their need to do so. Some people's livelihood is entirely based on illegal activity, while others have strong moral commitments against illegal activity, or have attractive alternative options.

There are a variety of reasons for criminals to enter politics. Perhaps the most important motive, protection from prosecution, will be discussed in greater detail below. Holding office may also offer further opportunities to profit from illegal activity. A politician may take bribes to change state policy, alter state policy in a way that benefits their own business interests, or simply divert state funds to their own pockets.

In theory, the entry of criminals into politics should be checked by voters, who should refuse to vote for candidates who will alter policy in a way that benefits themselves rather than the community as whole, and who may view criminals as generally untrustworthy. However, there are several potential factors which would convince voters to ignore a candidate's criminal background. Firstly, a criminal candidate might have an advantage in fundraising, particularly in contexts where campaign finance laws conflict with everyday practice. Secondly, a criminal candidate might be more able or more willing to use

violence to intimidate voters or opponents into voting for her. Thirdly, a criminal candidate may have skills or contacts that make them more politically effective than other candidates, particularly in clientelistic or informal distribution. Finally, voters may romanticize criminals, and view their illegal activity as a sign of authenticity, effectiveness, or lack of cooptation by a corrupt elite.

Measuring the criminal status of politicians is a difficult problem, to which we will return below. However, one point is worth making here. Since in most jurisdictions those convicted of serious crimes cannot serve in office, all measures of politician crime are necessarily measures of suspicion or accusation rather than conviction. An individual actually convicted of a crime, in the majority of cases, ceases to be a politician. To the extent that suspicion or accusation are imperfect guides to actual conduct, empirical estimates of the effect of criminal politicians are biased toward zero.

## **2.2 Controlling Institutions**

It might be thought that the first act of criminal politicians on attaining office would be to legalize their own illegal acts, or grant themselves legal immunity as with former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. However, this type of action may be difficult, because of the opposition of non-criminal politicians or marginal voters. Criminal politicians, therefore, tend to pursue *de facto* rather than *de jure* impunity. They wish to ensure that the state is unable or unwilling to prosecute them for their crimes.

Since the police, prosecuting agencies, and the courts are all involved in law enforcement, politicians seeking *de facto* impunity may try to influence any and all of these institutions. While the data in this paper will focus on the police, it is important to note that the same broad set of incentives may lead criminal politicians to pursue similar

strategies with respect to the courts and the police, with the exact choice of institutional “target” depending on the institutional setting of the country concerned. In countries with a strong corps of investigative magistrates, or traditions of prosecutorial and judicial discretion, control of the police may be of secondary political importance, though the police usually maintain an informal power to harass criminals.

In Section 3.2 we discuss the relative role of the police and the courts in India, our primary empirical case. We believe that control of the police is more important than control of the courts in the Indian context, and thus focus on the police in our empirics. However, in other contexts, criminal politicians may have a stronger effect on other institutions, such as the judiciary.

To control the police, criminal politicians seek to ensure that decision making roles in the police are filled with people who are sympathetic to them. These may include ideological sympathizers, coethnics, or family members who have affective reasons for the politician avoiding prosecution. However, in many cases they are simply policemen known to be venal, and those willing to not prosecute the politician in return for part of the gains. When the local police are fully staffed with voluntary or paid political allies, a police force can serve as an integral part of a politician’s criminal empire, as it did in many large American cities for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Alternatively, politicians may encourage the recruitment and promotion of incompetent, unmotivated, or inexperienced employees, making any type of institutional action more difficult.

To the extent that promotions and advancement depend on affective preference for the criminal politician, they will tend to ignore other factors such as efficiency and commitment. Even when preference for the criminal politician is uncorrelated with efficiency and commitment, selection on preference will hurt behavior if either trait is

scarce. Alternatively, criminal politicians might preferentially hire corruptible police officers, who will ignore their illegal behavior in return for money instead of preferences. This “loyalty-competence tradeoff” is a well studied phenomenon in the study of both democratic and undemocratic regimes (Zakharov, 2016; Edwards III, 2001). The individuals least likely to “subvert” the politicians goals are not always those likely to be effective in administering the institution.

Criminal politicians are far more likely to choose loyalty over competence of other types of politicians because the costs of police institutions that they do not control are much higher.<sup>1</sup> An honest and efficient police force might be able to actually deprive the politician of office and liberty. Even when this is not a realistic possibility, the police might easily be able to harass them and their employees, dragging them into court, raiding their offices, and seizing their property. In summary, we should expect criminals to promote officers who are corrupt, incompetent, or with whom they are friendly.

In addition to shaping personal decisions, politicians may also seek to reduce the threat of institutional subversion that may reduce the funding and staffing level of the police, or burden these institutions with complex formal procedures, until they are unable to pursue complex investigations or take a great deal of time in doing so. In related work, the authors examine this alternative method for limiting the ability of the police to threaten politicians.

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<sup>1</sup>While the idea of criminals lobbying for weak law enforcement may seem cynical, those making these demands do not usually perceive of themselves as criminals, or their demands as illegitimate. They may believe themselves to have been unjustly targeted for personal or ethnic reasons, or believe the laws or procedures under which they are prosecuted are illegitimate, or that the facts of the cases actually support them. Such forms of self-justification are well attested in the literature on the legitimacy of criminal justice systems (Rocque, 2011).



## 2.3 Spillover Effects

Criminal politicians, in our formulation, are self-centered, focused on the interrelated goals of retaining office while maximizing the flow of rents to themselves and their associates. They have no interest in the growth of illegal activity by others, and may seek to suppress such activity. However, in their quest for a loyal and non-threatening police, politicians may create conditions that degrade the overall functioning of the institution. The small proportion of crime conducted by the politically connected thus may have an influence on how police handle ordinary crime.

The promotion of allies or the corrupt may also have negative spillover effects. Inefficient officers selected because of their loyalty may choose to ignore crime against the non-politically connected, or simply neglect all aspects of their duties in return for a quiet life. Officers willing to take bribes in return for giving a politician impunity may also offer the same service to non-political bribe-payers, politicians cannot easily make themselves monopsonist bribe payers.

The impact of this inefficiency on the actual level of crime is ambiguous. While an inefficient police force might encourage crime, an efficient organized crime sector may reduce unorganized crime significantly. However, a police force selected on political loyalty will certainly attempt to ignore crime when possible, either because the criminals are connected or wealthy, because the police are uninterested in exerting effort to help the less connected, or because they are in general less able to prosecute crime. Low levels of *reported* crime may also improve the image of the politician and the police, deflecting attention from the impunity granted to the connected.

A key conclusion of this section, is that the election of criminal politicians will be associated with a decline in the institutional efficiency of the police, and that this decline

will stem from deliberate policy choices intended to make the police more amenable to political control. This decline will result in lower levels of reported crime in contexts where underreporting is possible. In the rest of this paper, we test these claims.

## 3 Background

### 3.1 Criminal Politicians in India

India is a federal parliamentary democracy, the world’s largest. While the central government possesses fiscal and emergency powers, everyday responsibility for law and order is concentrated at the state level. Each state is administered on the Westminster model by a cabinet, led by a Chief Minister (CM). Given the political importance of policing, in the majority (75%) of cases the CM herself holds the Home Ministry, otherwise it is held by an ally under close supervision (Lee, 2020). The Chief Ministers answers to the state legislatures, each of which is made up of between 32 and 403 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The MLAs themselves are elected from single member districts under a first past the post system.

MLAs’ constituencies are nested within districts, which are the main unit of administration for both policing and other services.<sup>2</sup> MLAs, even members of opposition, expect to have some influence over the bureaucrats who administer the district (Bussell, 2019).

The criminal charges Indian politicians face vary widely. Some are trumped up by opponents—rioting and sedition charges are often used for this purpose. Many however, represent criminal conduct by any definition: murder, rape, kidnapping extortion, etc. Usually these acts are not individual or ad hoc, but part of a pattern of organized

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<sup>2</sup>In a small number of cases an administrative district contains more than one “police district.”

criminal activity. Many parts of both urban and rural India are controlled or contested by “mafias,” who make their money by extorting protection money from legal businesses or by operating their own illegal businesses. Many of these individuals are relatively wealthy for their localities, are members of families with traditionally high social status, and are more often organized in loose networks than in tight criminal organizations.

Raghuraj Pratap Singh, known as Raja Bhaiya (big brother), MLA for Kunda in Uttar Pradesh since 1993, is an example of this type of mafia leader. Like many criminal politicians, Singh is from a prosperous, upper caste background: His family were large landlords in Pratapgarh district during the colonial period. In Pratapgarh he collects a share of local government spending, and “not even a leaf can flutter without Raja Bhaiya’s permission” (Vaishnav, 2017, 63-4). This control is reinforced by violence: Singh is alleged to keep a pond full of crocodiles in which he disposes of the bodies of his opponents (Vaishnav, 2017, 63-4). Singh often is in power at the state level, serving stints as Minister of Food and Prisons. In 2017, Singh was faced charges for grievous hurt, criminal intimidation, armed robbery, attempted murder and kidnapping, that had been pending since 2011.

Under Indian law, those convicted of a serious crime are disqualified from political office.<sup>3</sup> However, the very long, multi-year delays that are characteristic of the Indian court system mean that large numbers of people are still eligible for office as their cases wend their way through the court system. The exceptions—senior politicians who have faced consequences for their actions—tend to be leaders being punished for being out of power rather than for their crimes. The corruption cases against Uttar Pradesh Pradesh Chief minister Mulayam Yadav were launched immediately after his 2007 loss of power,

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<sup>3</sup>Until 2013, members were allowed to serve while appealing their convictions.

slowed when he supported the Congress government in a trust vote, sped up when refused to agree to a seat sharing deal, and then quietly ended when he agreed to support the Congress government.<sup>4</sup>

The electoral process is a similarly weak constraint on politician behavior. Criminal politicians are elected and reelected at higher rates than other politicians. The existing literature and in particular the pathbreaking work of Milan Vaishnav (2017), has focused on the reasons for this advantage, especially the positive, Robin Hood reputation enjoyed by some criminals, their advantages in providing illegal campaign funding, and their ability to provide “muscle” to intimidate opponents at election time. Others have focused on the effects of criminal politicians on local economic development and public goods distribution (Prakash et al., 2019; Chemin, 2012; Cheng and Urpelainen, 2019; Lehne et al., 2018).

The effective impunity of criminal politicians does not mean that they are invulnerable to pressure from the police. While the glacial pace of the Indian courts can make final conviction difficult, it can by the same token make even unjust proceedings frustratingly difficult and costly to resolve, which is why so many are filed. More importantly, underneath the politicians lie a class of “big men” who are either employees of the politician or supply him with money and votes in return for protection. In many cases, these men are involved in illegal businesses: unauthorized mining or timber extraction, liquor distribution in states with prohibition, fraud or collusion in government contracting, illegal property development on government land, or the seizure of private property (“land grabbing”). Friendly treatment by the police is essential to the success of these men. The very obtrusiveness and permanence of their local presence makes

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<sup>4</sup>For this and other examples see <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/investigation/cbi-ineffective-in-dealing-with-political-cases>. Accessed 3/31/20.

them vulnerable to pressure. Illegal buildings can be sealed, houses can be raided and the inevitable illegal weapons and piles of mysteriously acquired cash confiscated, illegal mines can be “discovered” and closed. A less scrupulous police officer might jail a local criminal’s relatives under various pretexts, or conduct extrajudicial executions of his followers. A politician who cannot protect his followers and supporters from such indignities may soon see his sources of money and “muscle” dry up.

To keep the police at bay, criminal elites follow two strategies, usually jointly: The bribery of police, and seeking of political influence in the state capital to keep the police under control. Criminals may give money to politicians or put their networks of influence and armed men at their disposal, or even run for office themselves.

### **3.2 The Indian Police**

For criminal politicians in India, control of the police is thus vital. Prosecuting attorneys have little discretion, and act simply as presenters of facts assembled by police.<sup>5</sup> While the court system can be (and is) manipulated to benefit powerful defendants, the extraordinary delays and costs in the Indian system (with many cases dragging on for several decades) mean that even a “successful” outcome can be inconvenient and costly. Moreover, the police have the ability to extralegally sanction criminals even when they cannot win convictions, with the most spectacular example being the practice of extrajudicial killing of suspects (“encounter killings”). In consequence, while Indian criminals are interested in friendly or quiescent judges, they are much more immediately interested in securing friendly or quiescent policemen, though criminal politicians can be successful in manipulating the court system in their favor as well (Poblete-Cazenave, 2020).

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<sup>5</sup>Before 1973, prosecution office were directly subordinate to the police, and often staffed with serving officers.

The Indian police are widely regarded as one of the country's least effective institutions. This stems in part from severe underresourcing. India has the second lowest police population ratio in the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010) and massive vacancies at all levels (in 2012, 23% of authorized positions), that force 90% of officers in 2014 worked more than 8 hours a day, and 68% percent reported working more than 11 hours a day (Bureau of Police Research, 2014). Vehicles, computers, housing and even office supplies are similarly scarce and obsolete.

Each Indian state has a single police force responsible for all aspects of law enforcement and criminal investigation, controlled by a state director general of police, who works closely with the CM. The key unit for policing is the district, which is controlled by a district superintendent of police (SP), seconded by several deputy superintendents or additional superintendents.<sup>6</sup> The District SP (DSP) is an important local figure, with powers that go beyond the police, including the regulation of public meetings and festivals, the issuance of gun licenses, the regulation of traffic flow, and the registration of foreigners. He also has the power to shift the investigation of cases, and to discipline and fire lower ranking officers.

Each force has a hierarchical career structure, with four separate groups of recruits entering at different levels, and very little opportunity to move between the levels. The highest level of the system, the Indian Police Service, is a national institution, recruited through a highly competitive national examination. After training, IPS officers are allotted to state cadres (with one third of officers being from the state and two thirds outsiders), in which they spend most of their careers. IPS officers fill a few of the additional superintendent positions, nearly all the DSP positions, and all of the senior

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<sup>6</sup>Some urban areas are controlled by deputy commissioners, who have slightly more autonomy from the civil bureaucracy, though they are equally subject to the CM.

supervisory positions. IPS officers cannot be fired except for cause, and have their pay and promotion determined by the central government.

Each state also possesses a state police service (SPS), usually slightly larger in size than the state's IPS cadre. Like IPS officers, directly recruited state police service officers are recruited through a competitive written exam, and must be university graduates. Unlike IPS officers, they are all residents of the state they serve in, and they do not receive the national training of the IPS, instead being trained in state police academies. After they are promoted to SP, the primary goal of state police officers is to gain promotion (primarily by seniority) to the IPS, and one third of IPS vacancies are reserved for them. However, the combination of their late start and the strict retirement age means that few reach the top ranks of the service.

While these rules might seem to insulate the IPS from political influence by the state government, CMs possess an important weapon: the unreviewable power to transfer officers at will. In general, transfers are very common. The average officer serving in a district serves only about 15 months, and tenures of longer than three years are rare and discouraged. Officers who please the CM can be posted to large urban centers, while officers who displease her can be posted to isolated backwaters or unimportant desk jobs, or simply transferred so frequently that they have no time to settle down. The overuse of the transfer mechanism has negative consequences for the police as whole, since it means that the average tenures of supervisory personnel are often brief. In an average year, 46% of IPS officers are transferred after less than two years of service, with the ratio of yearly transfers to posts reaching nearly 2.07 during Mayawati's period as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Two years is a widely used norm for the minimum amount of time an officer must hold his position to gain local familiarity and act effectively. (Lee, 2020)

Local MLAs may request particular officers to serve in the district that they represent, and CMs usually honor these requests, sometimes in return for cash payments (Lee, 2020). MLAs may simply request an officers from the same caste, or with whom they have a personal relationship. Alternatively, they may use the threat of a transfer as a way to intimidate unsympathetic officers, or simply transfer such officers when they appear to have acquired enough experience in the district to be threatening.<sup>8</sup> One police officer told *The Hindu* that:

This hurts us both ways. You have to approach the MLA or a politician, especially from the ruling party, to get transfers or postings. Otherwise, you will be thrown to an inconvenient place or position. But if you get transferred on the recommendation of a politician, you will end up obeying him till the end of your term. Several times, what he says and what your senior officer orders can be two different things. This takes away your independence and makes you susceptible to punishment.<sup>9</sup>

An officer with the courage to work against politicians could be summarily transferred to other duties. For instance, in 2020, Prayagraj SSP Satyarth Anirudh Pankaj was summarily transferred following his making arrests in a major case of fraud in government hiring, leading to street protests and government statements that the transfer was for “personal reasons.”<sup>10</sup>

MLAs with extensive illegal activities may have stronger reasons to prefer such a sympathetic officer, or and officer known to be corruptible, since the stakes for them

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<sup>8</sup>For detailed discussions of the transfer regime in the context of the Indian Administrative Service and primary education, see Iyer and Mani (2012) and Beteille (2009)

<sup>9</sup><https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/Political-interference-is-the-biggest-issue-say-police-personnel/article14383531.ece> Accessed April 22 2021.

<sup>10</sup>See <https://www.jagran.com/politics/state-opposition-against-the-transfer-ips-officer-satyarth-anirudh-pankaj-from-ssp-of-prayagraj-20398578.html> Accessed 4/22/21.



are much higher, involving their own personal liberty and freedom to conduct business. These MLAs are also more likely to be in conflict with honest officers. We should thus expect these officers to have stronger incentives to demand that officers in their districts serve only short periods of time, keeping them from becoming effective challengers to the MLA and his network.

Raja Bhaiya, MLA for Kunda, is well known for using the transfer mechanism to ensure that the police in Pratapgarh do not intervene in his illegal activities. After a one-year period in which five district superintendents were transferred, one anonymous official told the *Deccan Herald* that “From district police chiefs to the station house in-charge, Raja Bhaiya’s interference is everywhere.”<sup>11</sup> This in fact was Singh’s defense when a Deputy Superintendent in Pratapgarh was killed for intervening in a local gang war “Had I been so opposed to the CO, I would have easily got him transferred instead of getting him murdered.”<sup>12</sup>

The Indian system of policing is highly proceduralized, and makes great demands on those making complaints. They must file a formal first information report (FIR) stating what they believe occurred, which the police are then required to “register” and then investigate. Given the high level of understaffing and often unrealistic norms about case clearance rates, the police are often reluctant to register cases, especially when the victims are poor or the culprits are rich and influential. One survey found that the police only registered criminal complaints immediately (the legal requirement) in 31%

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.deccanherald.com/content/318725/raja-bhaiya-enjoys-clout-over.html> Accessed 4/2/20

<sup>12</sup><http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/raja-bhaiya-why-would-i-kill-police-officer-when-i-could-easily-transfer-him/1082900/> Accessed 4/2/20. However, six years earlier another DSP died in a mysterious road accident after filing charges against Singh <https://web.archive.org/web/20121014072702/http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Night-before-HC-says-yes-to-his-plea-for-CBI-probe-UP-cop-dies/21077/> Accessed 4/2/20

of cases. In 91 percent of cases, the crime is only registered after the intervention of a third party—a senior officer, lawyer, or politician. In some cases, the police actually use physical threats to dissuade petitioners—and approximately half had to pay a bribe. Many citizens do not even bother to try—in 56 percent of disputes, the subject was dissuaded from approaching the police (Lee, 2020). Indian crime statistics thus bear little relationship to social reality: By one calculation, 99.1% of rapes in India go unreported (Lee, 2020). A paradoxical consequence of this “refusal to register” is that police reform efforts in India are usually associated with *rises* in crime, as the police register complaints they previously would have ignored and citizens bring to them complaints they previously would have resolved informally (Banerjee et al., 2012, 7). These patterns of underreporting have been shown to be sensitive to the identity of elected representatives, with the election of female representatives, for instance, being associated with higher levels of reported rapes (Iyer et al., 2012).

## 4 The Data

### 4.1 Crime Data

The most obvious measure of the effectiveness of policing is the crime rate. This data, which in India is collected and disseminated annually by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), and to most common way in which police effectiveness is accessed in the press.<sup>13</sup> However, the NCRB data have several major limitations. In addition to the ubiquitous “refusal to register,” police face pressure to reduce reported crime, leading them to reclassify incidents as less serious, or as non criminal (Eterno and Silverman,

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<sup>13</sup>See for instance *Times of India* “Delhi, Kerala record highest crime rate, says NCRB data” December 1, 2017

2012), game of statistical manipulation known in the Indian context as “minimization.” In assessing the effect of negative shocks institutional shock on police, it is thus difficult to separate the increase in crime due to lax enforcement and investigation from the decrease due to higher underreporting.

To separate these effects, we separately analyze categories of crime where underreporting is thought to be relatively uncommon (where we expect the first effect to dominate) and those where we believe underreporting to be especially common (where we expect the second effect to dominate). Murder is often viewed in the literature as a crime less susceptible to underreporting, since bodies are difficult to conceal, and the seriousness of the crime give families an incentive to be persistent in approaching police. Auto theft also tends to be relatively well-reported, since victims need a registered FIR to file a claim with their insurance companies giving them a strong incentive to pressure police to register cases.<sup>14</sup> Crimes especially prone to underreporting include rape (where there are strong biases that prompt police to not take victims seriously), kidnapping (where victims will prefer to deal with the kidnappers unless they have trust in the police), and “ordinary” theft (which is difficult to solve and easy to recategorize as accidental loss). Rape in particular is notorious for its high levels of underreporting, making reported rates sensitive to changes in police policy, and to changes in the priorities of the local representative (Iyer et al., 2012).

For each category of crime, we calculate a rate for each administrative district in each year between 2004 and 2017, which we then log. Population between 2001 and 2011 was interpolated using the censuses in those years, and those from 2011 to 2017

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<sup>14</sup>One sign of the relative lack of underreporting is that auto theft is India’s least solved crime. See <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/police-data-show-motor-vehicle-theft-the-least-solved-crime/article25954331.ece> Accessed 9/22/20.

were extrapolated using the 2001-2010 growth rates. Districts that split were pooled into synthetic fixed districts, as were police districts that are subdivisions of a larger administrative district.

## 4.2 Political Crime Data

Since 2004, every Indian candidate for office must file an affidavit listing their assets and the details of all pending criminal cases against them. This data has been digitized by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an Indian NGO, and a summary form of the data is available on their website. Since we wish to adopt a conservative definition of “criminal politician,” we focus on the crimes categorized as “serious” by ADR, which include murder, rape, kidnapping, theft, criminal intimidation and public corruption.<sup>15</sup> We code criminal politicians as those with at least one serious charge against them at the time of their nomination. In supplemental tests, we define criminals as being those with at least two or three ordinary criminal cases against them, which produce estimates that are similar (Appendix Table A.5).

The primary unit of analysis in this paper is the constituency-term. Data that varies annually was averaged within terms, which are legally five years but are sometimes shorter. We study state legislative constituencies during the 2004-2017 period. Data on vote shares for each candidate was taken from Jensenius and Verniers (2017). This constituency-level data was then merged to the ADR criminal case data, and to the district NCRB data. Split districts are coded as part of the parent district until the end of legislative terms. Police districts were merged to match administrative districts, and crimes reported by the railway police or state CID were ignored.

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<sup>15</sup>For a full list see: <https://adrindia.org/content/criteria-categorization-serious-criminal-cases>. Accessed 9/22/20.

The ADR data is open to two interrelated critiques, both related to the fact that they are based on accusation rather than fact. Firstly, skillful or wealthy criminals might be able to avoid facing any charges at all, either by avoiding detection or by bribing or intimidating complainants. Qualitatively, there are reasons to expect that this would not influence a binary coding, since complainants can strategically pick the time and place they file complaints, and use lawyers to overcome police objections. Certainly, the politicians mentioned in the Indian press and authors such as [Vaishnav \(2017\)](#) as notorious criminals all face serious charges. Moreover, if the most capable criminal politicians are those that are most effective in avoiding charges, any estimate of the effect of filed charges on policing would be biased toward zero, rather than exaggerated.

Secondly, honest politicians might have frivolous charges against them to hurt their reputation or as a form of harassment. Anecdotally, this is very common, with India’s broadly drawn laws against hate speech and unlawful assembly being a particularly common excuse for such cases. To some extent, the focus on serious cases, which exclude these laws, deals with this problem, as does the use of the supplemental multiple case threshold. Like the problem of non-filing, such false cases should also attenuate estimates of the effect of the election of criminals toward zero—if everyone is formally a criminal, why should the close election of “criminals” change anything?

### 4.3 Police Data

To study the mechanism by which criminal politicians influence crime, we also study the traits of IPS officers, using an average of the traits of the officers serving within each constituency term weighted by the length of their service.<sup>16</sup> IPS officers are required to

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<sup>16</sup>Officers are allocated based on the term in which their service began. Officers posted in the last three months before an election, where the election commission plays a role in posting decisions, are

post basic biographical details and a full listing of their postings to a central website.<sup>17</sup> [Anonymized] kindly provided us with a scraped version of this website, dating from February 2017.. Since many officers neglected to post their details, this dataset is not a complete listing of IPS postings during this period.<sup>18</sup> However, in Appendix Table A.1 we show that district-terms where we have information on the posted IPS officers for a high proportion of years are similar on pretreatment traits to those where we have little information.

The IPS career data was laboriously matched to administrative districts by hand. We excluded all postings for which we could not associate an officer to a particular district, including postings in the armed police, state secretariat, and central government. We excluded all postings in the state capital, since we believe that these postings are so important to the state government that they are unlikely to be influenced by local politicians. We also excluded postings in the Assam, Goa and Union Territories Cadre, where postings are controlled by the central government. The majority of officers in our data thus held the position of DSP, though we also include some additional superintendents, range inspector generals, and holders of a few specialized positions in large districts.

Note that each administrative district contains multiple MLAs, who might have conflicting goals for the police. In general, this should bias our estimates toward zero, since the effect of the election of a criminally charged MLA on district-level appointments may be counterbalanced by the election of a non criminally charged MLA in a neighboring constituency. To explore this effect, in Appendix Table A.8, we show that regardless of district capacity, the election of criminal politicians lead to a reduction of the average

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<sup>17</sup><https://ips.gov.in>. At the time of writing, this website is not functional.

<sup>18</sup>The data is also incomplete due to retirements. However, the relatively junior posts we focus on are unlikely to be held by officers in the 13 years before retirement, which occurs at age 60.

police term length, but that the effect is smaller for larger districts.

Our information on each officer includes their age, gender, relative ranking on the entrance exam, possession of a graduate degree, recruitment source (from the exam or from the state police service), regional origin (local or outsider), and the length of their tenure in the district (indirectly, a measure of transfer frequency).

The scraped IPS data does not have information on two key variables: absolute exam score (the number of points earned) and caste (membership in the SC, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Classes Caste Categories). For this information, we obtained the original exam result sheets from each year, using sheets originally obtained through the Right to Information Act by (Bhavnani and Lee, 2019). The future IPS officers were then matched to their career records. Note that this data only covers officers recruited directly, and not officers promoted from the SPS.

## 5 Analysis

### 5.1 The Regression Discontinuity Estimator

Selection effects complicate any attempt to estimate the effect of criminal politicians on events in the subsequent term. In particular, since the capabilities of the police can influence the ability of criminal politicians to win office, the underlying strength of the state and police in each constituency is an unobserved confound. To address this issue, we estimate a regression discontinuity (RD) design with the vote share for criminal politicians as the running variable. Intuitively, we compare constituency-terms where a seriously criminal barely beat a non-criminal to constituency-terms where a seriously criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Constituency-terms where both the winner and

runner up were serious criminals are excluded, as are constituency-terms where both were non-criminals and constituency-terms where the election was not close.

The model we estimate is given in Equation 1.

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \rho D_{it} + \beta_i(X_{it} - c) + \theta_i(X_{it} - c) + \nu_i X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}, \quad (1)$$

where  $Y_{it}$  is the outcome variable within constituency  $i$  at term-year  $t$ .  $c$  is the cutoff point, and  $D_{it}$  is the treatment dummy variable, which equals 1 if observation  $i$  belongs to the treatment group, in other words, if  $X \geq c$ .  $\rho$  indicates the treatment effect at the cutoff point.  $\alpha_i$  is an individual dummy that captures the unit-specific error component.  $\nu$  represents the clustered standard errors at the district-term levels, and  $\epsilon_{it}$  is the error term.

Since our outcomes are measured at the administrative district level-term, the standard errors of all our models are clustered at that level. The bandwidths for the RD model are estimated using the procedure described in [Calonico et al. \(2014\)](#). We use a locally linear link function and a triangular kernel. In the appendix, we show that the results are robust to the use of a locally quadratic link function. We also show that the use of alternative placebo cutoffs does not lead to spurious estimates of causal effects.

A descriptive summary of statistics is included in Appendix Table [A.2](#) that compares outcomes in constituencies where a criminal politician barely beat non-criminal politicians to constituencies where a non-criminal politician barely beats a criminal politician. This serves to understand the external generalizability of the context in which constituencies are included and excluded from our analysis. Overall, included constituencies have larger populations with higher literacy rates. The turnout and vote share percentage,



on the other hand, are similar in both groups of constituencies.

## 5.2 Core Results

### IPS Transfers

As we have seen, transfers of IPS officers are the principal policy lever by which politicians can influence the police. Politicians who desire a sympathetic police officers must use transfers to do so, politicians who frequently quarrel with officers (perhaps over their illegal activity) will be more likely to request transfers, and politicians who dislike having any kind of police presence may request officers to be transferred so frequently that they are unable to learn about the district. We thus use average officer tenure as a measure of political interference with the police.

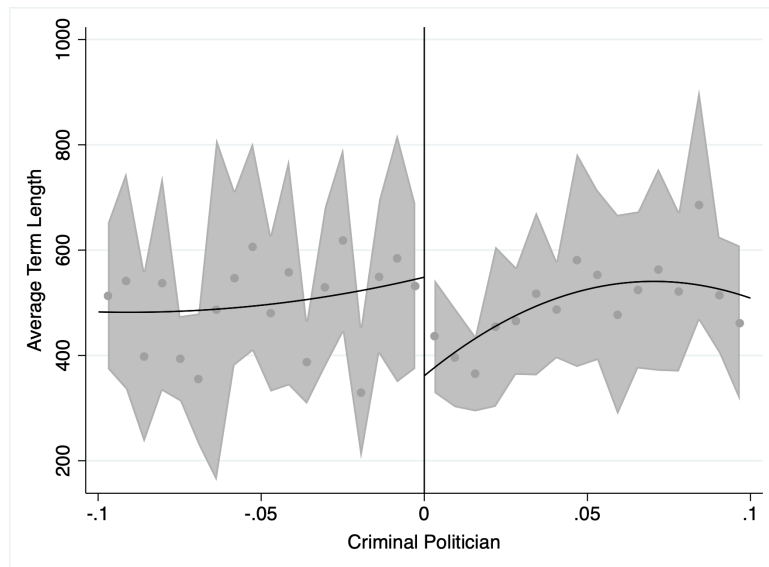
Table 1 examines the influence of the election of criminal politicians on the weighted average of IPS officers traits during the subsequent term. Model 1 examines the claim that criminal politicians use their power to transfer officers frequently, either as a punishment for crossing them or as a way of keeping officers from building up enough local knowledge to challenge them. In constituencies where a politician with serious criminal charges beats one without such charges, the average term length for IPS officers whose term began in the subsequent election cycle was reduced by 149 days. This is primarily driven by the increase in short term postings (Model 2), of less than a year duration, by approximately fourteen percentage points. Officers on such short postings might well have trouble learning about the problems of a large district, let alone developing policy solutions.

Table 1: IPS Transfers

	Avg. Term Length	Short-Term Posts	Ruling Party Winners	Other Winners
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RDD estimate	-149.04**	0.145**	-181.52**	-85.423
	(66.214)	(0.073)	(92.041)	(83.483)
Bandwidth	0.084	0.088	0.116	0.070
Observations	1,037	1,026	505	532

Notes: \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The outcome variable for Model 1 is the average term length for IPS officers whose term began in the subsequent election cycle. The outcome variable for Model 2 is the short-term length of police officers. The estimates represent the difference in outcomes between constituency-terms where a serious criminals barely beat a non-criminal and where a serious criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.

Figure 1: IPS Transfers



Plots are based on the average term length of each district.

One additional implication of our theory is that the effect of having a criminal MP

elected on IPS tenures should be larger in constituencies where the criminal’s predecessor was a member of the ruling party, and thus better able to ask the chief minister for favors. Models 3 and 4 show that the effect of a politician facing a criminal charge being elected is more than twice as large when the politician is from the ruling party.

### **IPS Traits and Experiences**

Table 2 examines the hypothesis that criminal politicians choose less experienced or less competent officers. Criminal politicians have no effect on whether IPS officers have a graduate degree, or their relative rank on the recruitment examination—an unsurprising result given the narrow range of academic performance within this extraordinarily talented group, and the uncertain relationship between academic qualifications and abilities as a police administrators. Officers in criminal MLA constituencies are slightly more male than in other constituencies, though neither of these effects is statistically significant. Again, this is not especially unsurprising given the small number of women in the IPS. Overall, the election of criminals is negatively associated with weighted average the age of IPS officers (Model 4 of Table 2), though the tight compression of this variable means that the effect is not statistically significant.

Model 5 of Table 2 tests whether the criminal MLAs are more likely to favor promotees from the state police services (SPS). Recall that these officers are all residents of the state, and are substantially more experienced than IPS officers in similar positions. Criminal MLAs appear less likely to favor these officers. This effect does not appear to stem from an aversion to local officers, since overall the election of a criminal has only a slight effect on the posting of locals, and cannot entirely be explained by age differences. More plausibly, the effect stems from a preference by criminals for less experienced officers. However, given that SPS officers differ from direct recruits on a variety of observables and unobservables, we cannot be entirely confident in this interpretation.

Table 2: IPS Experience

	Education	Gender	Exam Rank	Age	SPS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
RDD estimate	0.054 (0.074)	0.045 (0.047)	0.172 (0.161)	-1.365 (1.385)	-0.141* (0.081)
Bandwidth	0.097	0.095	0.098	0.081	0.071
Observations	1,031	997	886	1,031	1,031

Notes: \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The outcome variables for Table 2 reflect IPS officer traits- education, gender, exam rank, age and SPS positions, respectively. The estimates represent the difference in outcomes between constituency-terms where a serious criminals barely beat a non-criminal and where a serious criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.

### 5.3 Crime

Panel A of Table 3 shows the results of our models of district crime rates, which are also show graphically in Figure 2. The bare election of an MLA facing serious criminal charges does not have a statistically significant effect on the reported incidence of two crimes were underreporting is less common, murder and auto theft. However, the election of a criminal politician has a statistically significant and negative effect on the reported incidence of three types of crime where we believe underreporting to be common: rape, kidnapping and “other theft.” On average, the election of a criminal politician decreases reported incidences of rape and other theft by about 0.2 percentage points. The substantive size of the effect for kidnapping and abduction is considerably

larger, indicating a decrease of reported incidence of 0.74 percentage points. There is no effect on total crime. We interpret these results as indicating that the election of a criminal politician is associated with a decrease in criminal investigation, either due to lower willingness of citizens to report crime or a lower willingness of police to register it. Since offenses uninfluenced by reporting bias do not change, we do not believe that the unobserved “true” crime rate is decreasing—in fact, it might very well be rising.

Table 3: The Effect of Electing Criminal Politicians on Reported Crime Incidents

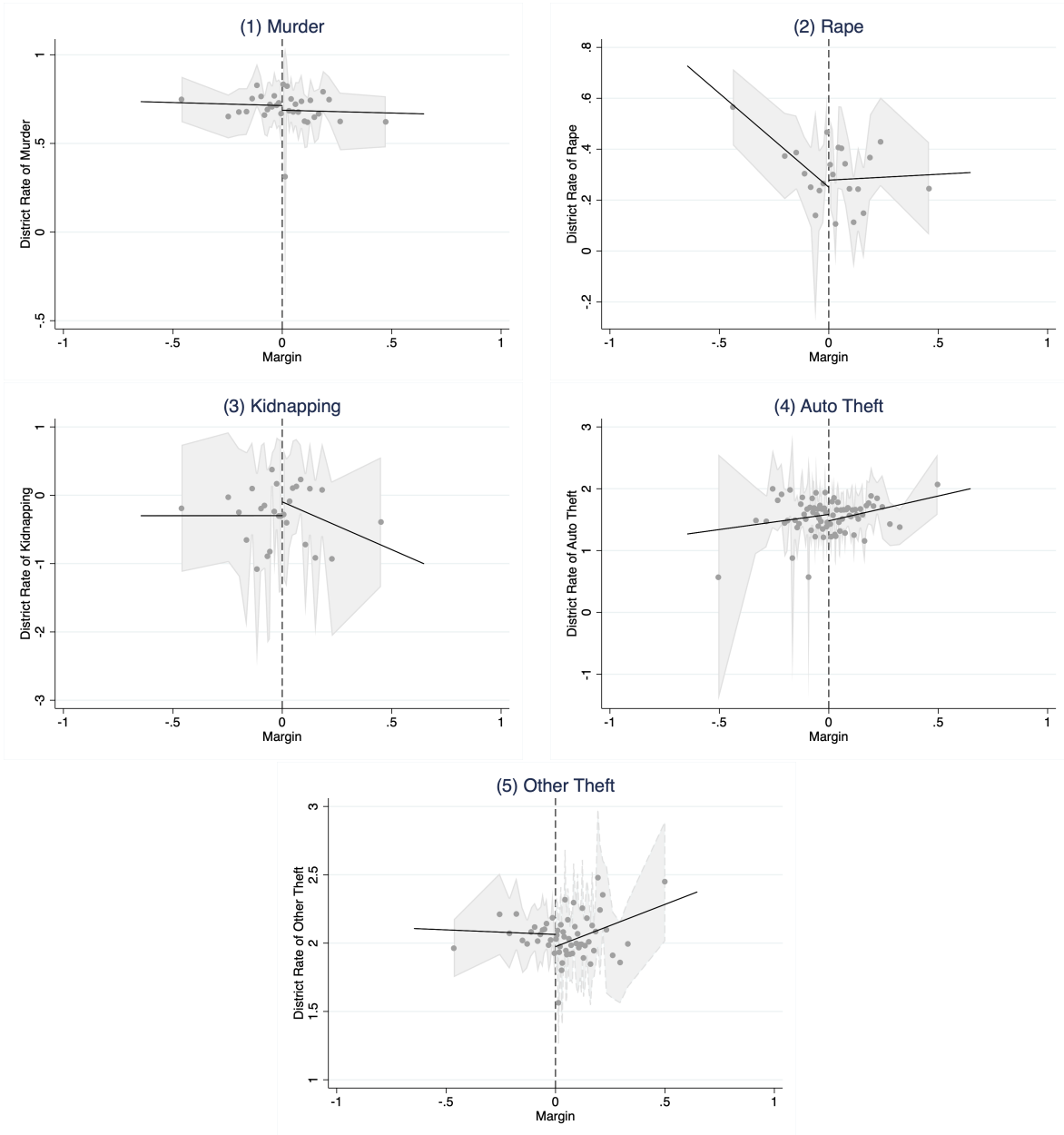
Panel A: District Crimes Rates					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Murder	Rape	Kidnapping	Auto theft	Other theft
RD_Estimate	-0.028 (0.091)	-0.197** (0.080)	-0.739* (0.422)	0.001 (0.112)	-0.115* (0.067)
Bandwidth	0.128	0.124	0.118	0.084	0.127
Observations	2,081	2,081	2,068	2,068	2,068

\*Notes: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ . Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.

## 5.4 Robustness

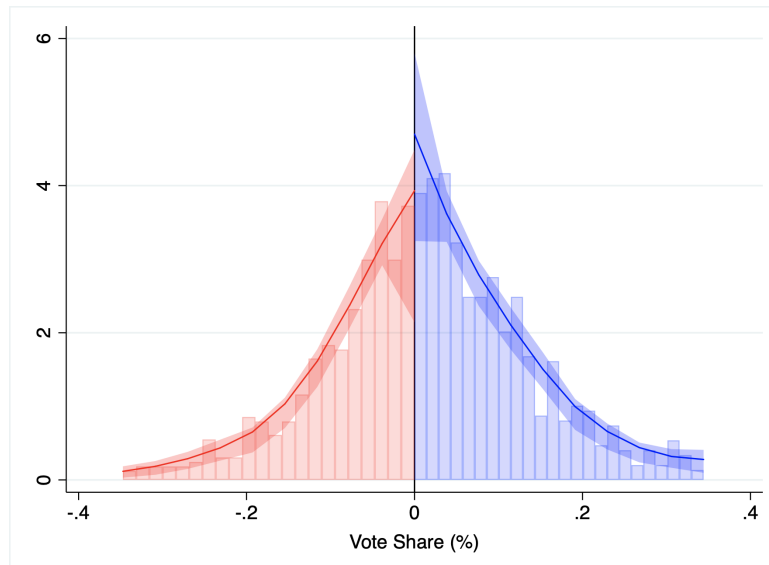
To test for any possible manipulations in the density of vote share differences for serious criminal politicians at the cutoff point, we use the methodology from [McCrary \(2008\)](#). [Figure 3](#) presents the density function of the vote share difference between serious criminal candidates. The magnitude of the jump in vote share at the cutoff point is small and statistically insignificant, validating the exogenous assignment assumption behind the regression discontinuity design and allowing us to interpret the effects of a criminal candidate victory in causal terms.

Figure 2: District Crime Rates



Plots are based on the average crime rates of each district: (1) murder, (2) rape, (3) kidnapping, (4) auto theft, (5) other theft.

Figure 3: Density of the Running Variable



The plot shows the density of the running variable, or the vote share of criminal politicians.

We also test for the discontinuity in outcome variables at cutoffs other than vote difference of 0%. We consider +5% and -5% as well as +10% and -10% as alternative cutoff points. The outcome variable should be similar around these cutoffs since the criminal status of the winning candidate should not change around these cutoffs. In appendix table A.3, we report placebo models using alternative cutoffs, which show no significant results.

We also present alternative models using a quadratic link function, shown in appendix table A.4. We find that the outcome variables do not exhibit a significant change around these alternative cutoffs.

To alleviate concerns that an unmeasured confounding variable may be mistaken for the treatment effect, we conducted a post-estimation sensitivity analysis to assess how strong a relationship would have to be between an unmeasured confounder and the treatment assignment. Based on the methodology proposed by VanderWeele and Ding (2017), we observe the risk-ratio scale to see how an unmeasured confounder would

need to be associated with both the treatment and the outcome. This method reports how strongly an unmeasured confounder must be related to the treatment assignment and outcome to explain an effect estimate. As Panel A of Appendix Table A.6 reports, to explain away the observed risk ratio of  $RR=297.6$ , an unmeasured confounder that was associated with criminal MLA election and with IPS posting length would have to exceed the measured confounders by a risk ratio of 38-fold each to explain the results.

A final set of robustness checks uses alternative definitions of criminal politicians. In Table A.5, we show that the results are substantively similar when we define criminal politicians as having been charged with more than 2 or 3 “ordinary” crimes. To validate the findings that the RDD threshold determines only the election of criminal politicians, we also run placebo tests. We use these placebo tests to show that there is no other likelihood to observe other factors correlated with criminal politicians that may otherwise effect the results, as these correlates could explain the results if significantly larger above the threshold. For the placebo tests, we test for politicians’ gender, education, caste status and incumbency. The results are reported in Appendix Table A.7, where we report that these factors do not effect the election of criminal politicians.

## 6 Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicate that the election of criminals has important, and disquieting, consequences for political institutions. While criminal politicians may be better than others at clientelist distribution, they seek to ensure that the police will not weaken their local position. To do so, they ensure that senior police officers spend significantly shorter periods of time in their districts. This may indicate that politicians are either intentionally keeping officers in the district for short periods to keep them from becoming knowledgeable about local conditions, or that they are removing officers who show signs



of challenging them. While we cannot adjudicate between these possibilities, both have negative implications for police effectiveness

Officers that do serve in districts with criminal MLAs differ somewhat from others, being slightly (and not always significantly) more likely to be younger and to come from the lower status state police service. This finding has interesting implications for the design of Indian bureaucracies, since the SPS officers are usually considered inferior to IPS officers, and have worse pay and poorer promotion prospects.

These changes have measurable impacts on local conditions. In areas where the member faces criminal charges, crimes declines, but only for types of crime subject to reporting bias. This indicates that the police are less actively investigating cases, either because the perpetrators are politically connected or because the institutional efficiency and moral of the police suffer.

The results have affinities with the literature on endogenous state weakness and state capture (Suryanarayan, 2017; Suryanarayan and White, 2021; Acemoglu et al., 2013; Alesina et al., 2019). At least some of the weakness of the Indian state stems not from rough terrain, or poverty, or colonial legacies, or poor institutional design, but from the fact that those in charge of the state have direct and obvious interests in the state being weak. This pattern has the potential to be self-reinforcing. Criminals take office and weaken the police, allowing more criminals to take office and weaken the police still further. The gradual rise of illegal activity among political candidates in India, which has occurred during a period of perceived institutional decline for the police, is consistent with this theory. Future research may wish to concentrate on how regions and countries can escape this type of political trap, and build political coalitions that will support a police force that focuses on law enforcement rather than as an enabler for the socially powerful.

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# Appendices

# Appendix

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## A.1 Balance Test

Table A.1: Covariate balance tests for police pretreatment traits

	High			Low			Difference
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Age	2,337	39.299	6.418	1,743	38.875	7.276	0.424
Education	2,337	0.527	0.403	1,743	0.481	0.440	0.087
Gender	2,259	0.963	0.140	1,673	0.908	0.262	0.055
Exam Rank	2,034	0.065	0.803	1,369	-0.043	0.856	0.108
SPS	2,337	0.310	0.363	1,743	0.313	0.412	-0.003
Local	2,196	0.511	0.388	1,527	0.475	0.442	0.036

## A.2 External Generalizability

Table A.2: Summary statistics for excluded and included districts

	Excluded			Included		
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Population (ST)	1,718	185,253	286,932	551	205,613	334,778
Population (SC)	2,342	508,891	423,610	751	635,883	459,790
Population (All)	1,718	2,805,193	1,912,538	551	3,457,934	2,270,311
Literacy	1,718	1,793,799	1,373,442	551	2,209,638	1,686,022
Turnout Percentage	3,334	68.840	13.802	1,037	66.386	14.310
Vote share Percentage	3,334	43.968	9.481	1,037	42.792	9.241

## A.3 Alternative Models

### A.3.1 Alternative Cutoffs

Table A.3: Alternative Cutoffs for IPS Average Tenure Length

	-10% Cutoff (1)	-5% Cutoff (2)	5% Cutoff (3)	10% Cutoff (4)
RDD estimate	-80.501 (69.092)	2.944 (66.735)	47.394 (65.544)	-80.625 (79.189)
Bandwidth	0.102	0.108	0.111	0.078
Observations	1,037	1,037	1,037	1,037

Notes: \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The outcome variables alternative cutoffs at -10%, -5%, 5%, and 10%, respectively. The estimates represent the difference in outcomes between constituency-terms where a serious criminals barely beat a non-criminal and where a serious criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.

### A.3.2 Alternative Quadratic Link Function

Table A.4: Alternative Quadratic Link Function

	Avg. Term Length (1)	Short-Term Posts (2)
RDD estimate	-180.02** (76.188)	0.187** (0.087)
Bandwidth	0.134	0.132
Observations	1,037	1,026

Notes: \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The outcome variable for Model 1 is the average term length for IPS officers whose term began in the subsequent election cycle. The outcome variable for Model 2 is the short-term length of police officers. The estimates represent the difference in outcomes between constituency-terms where a serious criminals barely beat a non-criminal and where a serious criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.

### A.3.3 Alternative Measures

Table A.5: Alternative Measures for Criminal Politicians

	2+ crimes (1)	3+ crimes (2)
RDD estimate	-117.33** (55.345)	-105.57* (64.052)
Bandwidth	0.107	0.104
Observations	1,057	723

Notes: \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The outcome variable for Model 1 is the average term length of for IPS officers. The outcome variable for Model 2 is the short-term length of police officers. The estimates represent the difference in outcomes between constituency-terms where a serious criminals barely beat a non-criminal and where a serious criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.

### A.3.4 Sensitivity Analysis

Table A.6: Sensitivity Analysis

Panel A: IPS Avg. Tenure		
	Point Estimate	C.I.
Avg. Term Length	297.579	38.026
Short-Term Posts	13.276	6.378
Panel B: IPS Experience		
	Point Estimate	C.I.
Education	36.292	9.498
Gender	43.625	13.960
Exam Rank	11.127	3.528
Age	2.070	0.431
SPS	13.644	6.142

### A.3.5 Placebo Tests

Table A.7: Placebo Tests

	Gender (1)	Education (2)	Caste (3)	Incumbent (4)
RDD estimate	-23.352 (101.45)	53.878 (59.314)	38.275 (46.171)	-74.126 57.773
Bandwidth	0.091	0.107	0.083	0.090
Observations	646	1,751	276	510

### A.3.6 MLAs and District Size

Table A.8: Effect of District Size on Average Term Length

	Smaller Districts (1)	Larger Districts (2)
RDD estimate	-173.98** (84.249)	-128.25* (76.578)
Bandwidth	0.081	0.105
Observations	272	765

Notes: \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The outcome variable is the average term length of for IPS officers. Smaller districts are those with five or fewer MLAs. The estimates represent the difference in outcomes between constituency-terms where a serious criminals barely beat a non-criminal and where a serious criminal barely lost to a non-criminal. Standard errors are clustered at the administrative district-level terms. All estimations use local linear regressions and triangular kernels on each side of the cutoff.