

Progressive Ideology and Support for Punitive Crime Policy: Experimental Evidence from Brazil and Argentina

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Abstract:

Citizen support for crime policy has commonly linked broader ideological views to two opposing approaches to fighting crime: conservatives are typically believed to support punitive approaches, while progressives support preventative solutions. Although ideology may correspond to preferences on other issues, I argue that ideology is an insufficient explanation of public security preferences. Focusing on Latin America, I point to evidence that elite educative influences on this issue are weak, and in such a context, perceptual factors and experiences are more crucial. Using a conjoint experiment in Argentina and Brazil simulating an election for governor, I demonstrate that perceptions regarding insecurity, effectiveness of social policy, and the sources of crime explain support for punitive solutions. Moreover, these factors affect progressives more strongly than conservatives, driving both economic and sociocultural progressive citizens to support punitive policies. I demonstrate the external validity of my results by replicating them with data from the AmericasBarometer.

Word Count: 10,094

Introduction

In 2018, the incumbent governor of Bahia, Rui Costa of Brazil's left-leaning Workers' Party (PT), won the state's gubernatorial race as a progressive candidate, but with a tough-on-crime, punitive rhetoric aimed to capture voters concerned with worsening violence (Kinosian 2017). Along with social policies to address economically motivated crime, he proposed additional civil and military police units, strengthening police to combat homicide and drug trafficking, and increased arms investments. He also boasted his administration's increase in the arrest rate by over 18% and the issuance of arrest warrants by about 95% between 2015 and 2017 (Costa 2018; Holland 2013). Costa's candidacy was wildly successful, receiving over 75% of the vote in the first round of elections.

The popularity of Costa's platform may not seem unexpected, particularly in the age of Bolsonaro, who won Brazil's 2018 presidential race defending tough-on-crime ideas such as "a good criminal is a dead criminal" (Jardim 2018). However, Costa was a left-wing candidate from a party (PT) known for programmatic leftist positions, including massive public assistance programs, a focus on inequality, and progressive social rights (Hunter 2014; S. Mainwaring, Power, and Bizzarro 2018).¹ In fact, existing research on the attitudes of progressive voters and on party positioning would not lead us to expect a punitive platform from a candidate like Costa with a progressive voter base (Wiesehomeier and Doyle 2012; Yashar 2011; Martínez-Gallardo, de la Cerda, et al. 2022). So what explains Costa's success and the success of other candidates like him in places like Argentina (Bonner 2018) and Mexico (Pskowski 2018)?

¹ Given, the PT has undergone some changes of party brand in recent years (Baker et al. 2015), but even through these changes still remains the most institutionalized and programmatic party on the left.

In this article I argue that the perceived dichotomy between progressive voters who support social policy-oriented tactics to reduce crime, and right-wing voters who support punitive, iron fist policies (Cohen and Smith 2016) is a misconception. Instead, I argue that in contexts where crime and insecurity are salient² and party systems are relatively inchoate and unstable (Ames and Smith 2010; Lucas and Samuels 2010; Mainwaring 2018), progressives on economic and sociocultural issues may also be attracted to punitive, “conservative” rhetoric regarding public security. In these places, citizens are not operating within rigid ideological schema and elite educative influences regarding public security policies are weak. Thus, we might not expect there to be a strong, fixed relationship between individuals’ preference for other commonly polarized issues – such as economic and social policies – and their preferences on crime. Rather, we should look to important circumstantial factors which are instrumental in moving individuals to support candidates who offer preventative vs. punitive crime policy, regardless of their economic and social stances.

I hypothesize that three factors are key in explaining support for punitive candidates not only among the general population, but particularly among progressives: 1) perceptions of insecurity and victimization, 2) the belief that illicit groups constitute the main source of crime, and 3) the perceived ineffectiveness of social policy, a common foil to punitive approaches to crime. Although scholars have argued that various related perceptions and experiences often influence support for punitive or iron fist crime-fighting strategies (Ayres 1998; Cohen and Smith 2016; Gerber and Jackson 2016; 2017; Muggah 2017; Gerber 2021), they have predominantly treated ideology as an ancillary factor in this relationship or only focused on authoritarian or conservative values. Here, I dedicate explicit attention to ideology, specifically examining

² According to the AmericasBarometer, in 2018 18.5% of respondents in Brazil and 9.2% of respondents in Argentina rated “security” as the most important problem in the country.

individuals with sociocultural or economically progressive ideology (Rosas 2010; Bobbio and Cameron 1997; Wiesehomeier and Doyle 2012). I examine how the three perceptions and experiences listed above affect crime policy preferences of not only the general population, but also progressive voters, who we have typically been considered to be against punitive measures.

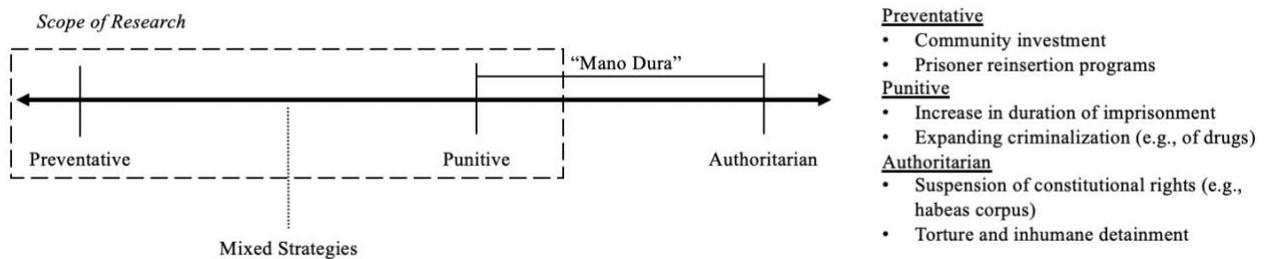
To test my argument, I field a conjoint survey experiment in Argentina and Brazil, countries where insecurity is a salient but elites (such as Rui Costa) provide weak educative influences regarding public security. Respondents were presented with profiles of candidates for governor with randomized attributes across a variety of policy areas, including public security. I find that voters who perceive social policy as ineffective and those who believe gangs overwhelmingly drive crime in their communities are more likely to support punitive candidates. Importantly, this pattern remains strong among progressives, and they seem to experience bigger shifts in their preferences compared to conservatives. However, I find mixed results when examining insecurity. Although perceived community insecurity is associated with an increased likelihood of selecting a punitive candidate, victimization is not. Following this analysis, I validate my results using observational data from the AmericasBarometer survey, supporting results from the conjoint experiment.

In the following sections, I proceed as follows: I first discuss relevant literature and my hypothesized relationships. I then present my data collection strategy, discussing the fielded survey and conjoint experiment. Finally, I present my results, elaborate on implications of this work, and conclude.

Understanding Public Security Policy

In considering support for crime policy, there is a wide menu of options available to voters (Figure 1).³ Scholars of public security typically discuss public security policies as either bottom-up, prevention based strategies or top-down, repressive and punitive policies. On the punitive side of the spectrum, the term “mano dura” or “iron fist” is commonly used to describe a range of policies. In particular, preferences for the most extreme repressive and authoritarian measures, and their use, have been widely studied,⁴ especially after prominent authoritarian leaders such as Bolsonaro (Brazil), Duque (Colombia), and Bukele (El Salvador) endorsed them.

Figure 1: Theoretical Spectrum of Public Security Policy with Illustrative Examples



Just as prevalent as authoritarian repressive policies are punitive solutions to crime. These are often short of authoritarian measures in terms of outright human rights violations, but seek to increase prison sentences, increase the deployment of security forces, and condemn criminals to harsher sentences (Holland 2013; Muggah, Garzón, and Suárez 2018). Some previous conceptualizations have pointed to a simple trade-off between extreme mano dura approaches, on one hand, and prevention on the other (e.g., Muggah 2019). In this paper I suggest a more nuanced view of public security policy and limit my focus to punitive policies, which are both used and

³ For a deeper exploration and conceptualization of public security policies, see Muggah (2017).

⁴ For example, see Visconti (2020), Holland (2013) Fuentes (2005), and Fernandez and Kuenzi (2010).

supported across the region particularly in post-dictatorship contexts (Bonner 2019; Tiscornia et al. Working Paper), and prevention based measures. I restrict this focus, as punitive policies can represent a more programmatic approach to solving crime than *mano dura* policies, which are often poorly defined, characterized by a complete disregard for human rights, and often proposed by authoritarian, populist, and personalist leaders (Holland 2013; Krause 2014; Hunter and Power 2019).⁵⁶

Generally speaking, existing research on crime policies has generated two conclusions, somewhat at odds with one another. One camp of work argues that conservatives prefer punitiveness (Cohen and Smith 2016; Gerber and Jackson 2016; 2017; Gerber 2021), implying that progressives do not. For example, Gerber & Jackson (2017) demonstrate that preferences for punitive policies are tied to right-wing or authoritarian ideals, particularly preferences for a proper moral and social order. In the second camp, scholars focus on overall support for punitiveness, with little attention to ideological divisions. For example, research finds that certain experiences and perceptions shape citizens preferences for crime policy, such as community context and recent experiences with crime (e.g., victimization) (Visconti 2020; Altamirano and Ley 2020) or perceptions of deservingness (Tiscornia et al. Working Paper).

⁵ Although “mixed” policies that include both sides are not uncommon, I focus on support for pure types to establish a stronger foundation to contribute to a better understanding of preferences for nuanced positions.

⁶ The tie between forces such as authoritarianism, populism, and personalism and extremist approaches to public security has been previously explored in depth, and is out of the scope of understanding a tie between ideology and truly programmatic public security policies. Even so, polarization on these extremist positions is limited, as left-wing leaders endorsing *mano dura* policies have also presented themselves in the region. For example, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico has been criticized for furthering empowering the military in its fight against crime, even as they have been accused of significant human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings (Agren 2018).

Literature regarding ideology and policy preferences provides some support to the first set of conclusions -- that ideology and policy preferences should be linked. Even in Latin America, where ideology has been shown to be relatively unstable at both the individual and party level (Ames and Smith 2010; Hawkins and Morganstern 2012), ideology can be consistently tied to a variety of citizen beliefs such as the economy, religion, and social issues (Zechmeister and Corral 2013). Views regarding the economy, in particular, can root citizens' ideological placement. Wiesehomeier and Doyle (2012), for example, show that theoretical concepts about the roots of, and responsibility for, societal inequality and how these beliefs translate into attitudes regarding the state vs. market divide can distinguish those who identify with the left vs. the right. This work suggests that ideology and crime policy preferences could exist as well.

Importantly, this work relies on an assumption about the extent of ideological polarization at the elite level. Ames and Smith (2010) argue that ideological polarization among elites can help voters think in terms of a left-right spectrum, having an educative effect. Martínez-Gallardo et al. (2022) demonstrate that this elite influence is present in Latin America, at least among certain issues, where party competition is still polarized along socioeconomic and cultural dimensions (although to a lesser degree compared to Europe). However, research in Latin America shows that the relationship between voters and their party system is sensitive to degrees of issue polarization and changes in elite cues, particularly as party systems continue to evolve in these new democracies (Singer 2016). This suggests that where elites do *not* provide clear polarizing cues, voters may not tie certain issues to a clear left-right ideological label.

This caveat poses an issue in applying this literature to policy preferences regarding crime. Ideological polarization at the elite level regarding public security -- which helps organize voters ideologically (Ames and Smith 2010) -- is not consistently present. In both Brazil and Argentina,

recent subnational elections provide ample evidence of this. Beyond the introductions' discussion of Rui Costa, for example, in 2018 João Azevêdo, running for governor of the state of Paraíba for the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB)⁷ offered a similarly complex series of policies. In addition to investment in social programs to reduce recidivism, Azevêdo proposed investing in both land and air resources for police and creating two new battalions of military police . Costa and Azevêdo were both elected in the 2018 elections, indicating support for their proposed punitiveness.

In Argentina, determining the ideology of candidates can be complicated with the strong presence of personalism, but evidence still exists. For example, the largely Peronist Frente de Todos coalition, a more progressive coalition of parties, fielded multiple candidates in the 2019 election with a platform that emphasized not only human rights, but a crackdown on narco-trafficking (Cottet 2021). Similarly, when the Frente de Todos governor of Buenos Aires province, Axel Kicillof, announced he would seek re-election in the 2023 elections he promised to increase the amount of police officers in the street by 40,000 (a personnel increase of about 40%) (Lucesole 2021). These widely considered “progressive” candidates campaigning on what has been considered to be “conservative” public security platforms suggests that strong elite cues on public security are largely absent.

Thus, although other issue positions (e.g., the economy, certain sociocultural issues) may be well polarized in the region, and enforced by elite educative influences, this does not seem to be present with regard to crime. Further, the amount of support that these punitive, but otherwise progressive, candidates receive challenges the perspective that conservative ideology among

⁷The PSB can be difficult to place ideologically. However, this party has a history of supporting progressive and socialist policies, and has supported progressive candidates such as Lula da Silva in the recent past.

voters strictly determines support for punitive policy. This suggests that in environments marked by inconsistent party cues regarding crime policy we should not expect the connection between citizen ideology and their preferences for crime policy to be clear. Particularly when significant polarization does not exist on an issue, and few elite educative effects are present, what factors prevail in determining preferences for such policies? Does ideology still play any role? This paper investigates these issues.

Support for Punitive Policy

If elite educative influences tying ideology and crime policy preferences are not strongly present, what factors determine support for crime policy? In this section, I examine non-ideological factors which may be important determinants of support for various crime policies and can override the influence of ideology has on preferences. I draw on various literatures, including authors which have identified certain factors which can contribute to “blanket” support for punitiveness. However, I extend on these works in a variety of ways, namely by 1) proposing how they might override any influence of ideology on these preferences, 2) applying them to an electoral context rather than only policy preferences, and 3) proposing additional perceptions and experiences which have not been previously explored in this context. I then propose hypotheses regarding the influence of crime exposure and feelings of insecurity, effectiveness of certain policies aimed to combat crime, and the source of crime in communities on preferences for crime policy among both the general population and ideologically progressive citizens.

Insecurity

Scholars have increasingly demonstrated that personal insecurity has a strong effect on one’s preference for different forms of crime policies. Victimization and exposure to violence

leads to an increased desire for *mano dura* polices and extralegal violence (Cruz and Kloppe-Santamaría 2019; Visconti 2020; García-Ponce, Young, and Zeitzoff 2022). Perceived insecurity or fear of crime also influences support for similar policies (Krause 2014; Cruz and Kloppe-Santamaría 2019).

Apart from *mano dura* policies, some research in Latin America has considered support for traditionally punitive policies, such as increasing the punishment of criminals rather than the use of preventative crime measures. This research finds that fear of crime strongly influences the desire for increased punishment, even when controlling for ideology (A. J. Singer et al. 2020). Work outside of the region reiterates such findings, suggesting fear of crime influences preferences for punitive strategies, including support for punishment and increased sentencing for criminals rather than their rehabilitation (Langworthy and Whitehead 1986; Dowler 2003).

In addition to this focus on support for punitive policies, scholars have considered the role that perceived insecurity plays in affecting preferences for welfare provision, often seen as an alternative to punitive measures (Guetzkow 2020). Rueda and Stegmueller (2016) demonstrate in Europe that fear of crime is often associated with increased demands for redistribution, with the hope that redistribution will reduce crime. However, this stems from the assumption among citizens that crime is economically driven, which may not apply to all contexts. Preferences for “bottom up” approaches seem to be attenuated by fear of crime and perceived risk of victimization. Although at the aggregate level, citizens across the ideological spectrum tend to prefer investment in rehabilitative crime policies by the state, such experiences reduce the odds that an individual will express preference for these policies (Baker et al. 2015). The support for public welfare provision also decreases as fear of crime increases due to overall

distrust in government based on its inability to properly reduce inequality, and subsequently crime (Altamirano, Berens, and Ley 2020).

In considering contexts where preferences regarding crime policies do not seem to be clearly dictated by elite-level polarization on the issue, this literature suggests insecurity – both perceived and experienced – may lead even progressive citizens to prefer punitive approaches. However, existing work has yet to clearly demonstrate this relationship.

Perceived Source of Crime

Citizen preferences for certain crime policies also may hinge on the perceived source of crime in one's community. Notably, perceptions do not always reflect reality and can be affected by exogenous sources, such as the media (Martinez Barahona and Lejarraga 2011; Krause 2014; Bonner 2018). Regardless, these perceptions can influence which policies respondents may see as most appropriate to address crime, and subsequently which policy propositions they prefer among candidates.

As discussed, Rueda & Stegmüller (2016) find that preferences for increased redistribution are high when fear of crime is high, but in a context where crime is seen as primarily economically motivated. However, in contexts where crime is seen as non-economic, such as driven by criminal groups, respondents tend to prefer more punitive solutions (Martinez Barahona and Lejarraga 2011; Bonner 2018).⁸ Bonner (2018) demonstrates that where the media influences public opinion to see crime as driven by criminal groups and paints the police

⁸ Of course, crime that is driven by criminally groups is not entirely divorced from being “economically motivated.” However, a distinction can be made between crime which may be driven by an individual's economic need and one which is driven by an organized effort by illicit groups. Of course, organized efforts may attempt to involve the participation of average citizens in need of income, but often involve additional elements such as coercion (García-Ponce et al. Working Paper).

favorably, punitive populist candidates tend to see more support. For example, in Argentina, organizations such as the Network of Mothers and Family Members of Drug Victims serve as journalistic sources, often discussing the presence of criminals and gangs as a main source of crime. Importantly, the rise of *mano dura* policy is often attributed to the rise in illicit criminal organizations, as a policy solution employed by states in attempts to eradicate this challenge to their authority (Rodgers 2009).

Even though both *mano dura* and punitive policies have seen mixed success in achieving their goals, they are often advertised and accepted as the most appropriate solutions to solve crime. In particular, this seems to be the case where crime is seen to be caused more by illicit groups also associated with drug trafficking and extortion than by poverty and inequality. However, few studies have tested this idea directly and empirically, suggesting a clear connection must still be made between perceived sources of crime and preferred policy solutions. Further, understanding if the perceived source of crime may outweigh the influence of ideology, if any, has yet to be tested.

Perceived Policy Effectiveness

Voters may also respond to past experiences and perceived effectiveness of policies proposed by candidates. In considering policies aimed to address insecurity, individuals must determine which candidate and proposed policies they expect to be most effective. Even if an individual supports the *idea* of a policy, expected success of policies can influence the degree to which the electorate supports a candidate who offers said solution. Holland (2018), for example, shows that against conventional expectations, the poor in many Latin American countries often do not support redistributive policy. This is not because the logic of such a policy is unattractive, but because it is *expected* to be unsuccessful. This idea can be applied to consider public security

policies, particularly preventative policies, which often rely on redistribution and social programs, as analyzed by Holland (2018). Altamirano and Ley (2020), make this connection by arguing that citizens' low expectations regarding the success of social policy to reduce inequality, and therefore crime, results in these policies being perceived as an ineffective solution to insecurity. This is tied to the fact that crime is often driven by organized groups, and may involve collusion between the government and illicit organizations.

This mechanism also relates to the idea of prospective voting, which argues that individuals evaluate candidates less on the basis of their past performance and more on the likelihood that candidates will accomplish their goals based on promises for the future (Lewis-Beck and Tien 1996; M. M. Singer and Carlin 2013). Applied to this research, voters may make prospective voting calculations then based on their expected effectiveness of public security crime policy, particularly where public security is salient.

Importantly, conceptions of progressivism, particularly economic progressivism, suggest support for social policy should be high among these voters (Bobbio and Cameron 1997). Furthermore, research indicates that progressives are more likely to attribute crime to structural factors, such as those related to racism, inequality, and poverty (Gabbidon and Boisvert 2012). However, the research discussed above suggests that the way in which these beliefs translate into policy preferences during an election may be overruled by expected policy success. If voters do not see social policy solutions are being effective, they are unlikely to support for them to combat insecurity.

Hypotheses

Based on existing literature, I propose that support by voters for punitive policy can often be explained through non-ideological factors, even if individuals hold progressive views on other types of policies. Although past literature suggests ideology may have a degree of influence, other work suggests this effect may be attenuated by certain experiences and perceptions. I argue that the three key factors should be explored: 1) victimization and insecurity, 2) perceived effectiveness of social policy, and 3) perceived source of crime in one's community. When these three factors are considered, we should see clear patterns among the general population and ideologically progressives, and observe circumstances under which they will support punitive policies. I test these relationships in the domain of electoral choice. I argue that we should see the influence of these factors when voters evaluate candidates for political office. First, I propose:

H1A: Victims of crime and those who perceive significant insecurity in their communities will prefer candidates who offer punitive solutions to crime

H1B: Even among ideologically progressive individuals, this relationship will hold

I propose these hypotheses based on knowledge that victimization and insecurity often increase support for conservative crime policies, although this has predominantly been explored outside of electoral scenarios. I extend this consideration to examine not only electoral scenarios, but also to punitive crime policy, instead of preferences for extreme *mano dura* policies often explored in past literature. I then argue:

H2A: Those who see the main source of crime as gang-related will prefer candidates who offer punitive solutions to crime

H2B: Even among ideologically progressive individuals, this relationship will hold

I advance these hypotheses based on previous research which suggests punitive and *mano dura* policies are typically supported in contexts where violence is seen as driven by gangs or criminal groups, while social policy oriented solutions tend to be preferred in areas where crime is seen as economically motivated. Finally, I propose:

H3A: Those who see social policy-oriented, redistributive policies as ineffective will prefer candidates who offer punitive solutions to crime

H3B: Even among ideologically progressive individuals, this relationship will hold

I propose this relationship based on the role of expected policy success and prospective voting. If individuals do not see social policy-oriented, preventative approaches as effective, they will be less likely to elect individuals who offer such policies. Even if these policies are more coherent with citizens' broader ideological beliefs, candidates will not be preferred if their proposals are expected to produce few results. In turn, citizens will be more likely to support punitive candidates.

I also analyze the preferences of conservatives to demonstrate a comparison with their progressive counterparts. Although these analyses were not preregistered, this comparison is an important step in isolating possible differential influences of perceptual and experiential factors on different ideological camps. I test these hypotheses in the contexts of Brazil and Argentina, which vary in terms of a few key characteristics: although crime is salient in both countries, it is of greater concern in Brazil, and Brazil is more unequal.⁹ However, in each country, both punitive policies and social policy-oriented solutions to crime have been pursued by political

⁹ A more in depth explanation of characteristics of these cases can be found in the Appendix.

authorities, as discussed. In the following sections, I discuss the mechanisms I use to test these hypotheses in these contexts, including data collection and statistical analyses. I then discuss the results and conclude.

Data and Analysis

To test these hypotheses, I utilize an original survey fielded in Brazil (n = 1512) and Argentina (n = 1521) of respondents age 18 or older. The survey was fielded utilizing an online panel, collected via convenience sampling in March 2021. Within this survey, I embedded a conjoint experiment to evaluate citizen preferences for policies proposed by gubernatorial candidates. The experimental manipulation presented in the survey is that of a punitive or preventative crime platform proposed by a candidate, and was fully randomized. The full conjoint experiment is presented in the following sections. All hypothesized relationships were pre-registered prior to the fielding of the survey.¹⁰

The samples were designed to reflect the countries' populations in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status, and region. Although the sample is over-representative of individuals of higher socioeconomic status (see Appendix), convenience samples are still useful research tools and can be confidently used for causal inference (Druckman and Kam 2011; Mullinix et al. 2015). In particular, convenience samples do not pose issues in terms of inference if the treatment effect depends on a characteristic which exhibits variance (Druckman and Kam 2011). Statistics in the Appendix confirm variance exists in the survey sample across all four dependent characteristics (victimization, insecurity, crime perceptions, policy perceptions). Further, to

¹⁰ Pre-analysis plan #XXXXXX filed with XXXXXXX on XXXXXXXX.

address remaining concerns about representativity, I replicate the analysis using available observational data on a nationally representative sample of respondents collected in a face-to-face survey administered by LAPOP. The analysis is presented in subsequent sections, and replicates the experimental findings.

Measuring Ideology

To measure respondent ideology, I rely on a battery of questions regarding various beliefs and policy preferences. I focus on two sets of questions, the first which elicits information about beliefs regarding social and cultural issues and the second regarding economic issues. The questions for each of these groups can be seen in Table 1 which I use to create two measures of ideology (sociocultural and economic). A unidimensional measure of ideology has been shown to misrepresent or not fully capture respondent ideology generally speaking (Treier and Hillygus 2009; Laméris, Jong-A-Pin, and Garretsen 2018; Harbers, de Vries, and Steenbergen 2013) and research demonstrates that the unitary left-right dimension is context-specific and unstable in Latin America (Ames and Smith 2010; Harbers, de Vries, and Steenbergen 2013; Zechmeister and Corral 2013). Although these ideological dimensions are often highly correlated and complementary, their relationship can vary by individual and context (Johnston and Ollerenshaw 2020). Therefore, separating out ideology into multiple dimensions is most prudent.

In defining these dimensions, I draw on (Rosas 2010) conception of the economic divide, which pertains to both economic governance and social protection concerns, where conservatives favor limited government involvement and assistance in reducing inequality. I also build on (Bobbio and Cameron 1997) (also utilized by (Wiesehomeier and Doyle 2012) conceptualization, where progressives see inequalities between individuals as artificial, and to be overcome through explicit action. Conservatives see such inequalities as natural or a product of

personal responsibility, and are outside of the purview of the state to solve. In terms of the sociocultural divide, I rely upon Rosas' (2010) conception of the religious dimension, which I refer to as a sociocultural dimension. This dimension captures traditional religious and cultural values, where conservatives do not approve of abortion nor same sex marriage and believe in the involvement of the church in public affairs. Ideologically progressives hold opposite views.

In creating the indexes, I utilize the questions outlined in Table 1 which were asked on a five point scale, where "1" indicates the individual strongly disagrees with the statement, and "5" strong agreement. With these questions, I develop an index of progressive vs. conservative ideology for each dimension. To do so, I engage in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and model two latent variables of ideology (sociocultural and economic). Similar practices have been used to examine contemporary voter ideology in the past, and has been shown to out-perform unidimensional left-right voter identification in capturing multi-dimensional ideologies (Rosas 2010; Laméris, Jong-A-Pin, and Garretsen 2018).

I confirm that a two-dimensional structure for ideology is superior to a unidimensional measure in this context. I do so by exploring both a one- and two-dimensional structural equation model for ideology. I find that a two-dimensional measure which separates out sociocultural and economic dimensions provides indices with a stronger fit. This is inspired by previous work of other scholars of ideology in Latin America (Martínez-Gallardo, de la Cerda, et al. 2022). Comparisons between the one- and two-dimensional indices, fit statistics, and further description of the creation of the indices can be found in the Appendix.¹¹

¹¹ Robustness checks are included in the Appendix to demonstrate the degree of association with left-right self-placement of participants. Although left-right self-placement is an imperfect measure, an association between left-right placement and the measures I create using CFA lends credence to the validity of the CFA measures.

With these indices, I divide respondents into progressive and conservative groups along both ideological spectra. The indices created, which capture latent measures of ideology as discussed above, are centered at zero. Respondents with scores greater than 0 are progressive along these issue dimensions, and below 0 are conservative. I divide respondents into two groups based on this centered value. I then use the progressive respondents (n = 762 sociocultural progressives, n = 768 economic progressives) as a subset of data on which to test my hypotheses regarding preferences for punitive candidates among ideological progressives.

Table 1: Ideological Measurement Questions

The response nature (agree vs. disagree) to the following questions do not directly correspond to conservative vs. progressive. All responses were recoded so lower values corresponded to agreement with conservative ideas, and higher values corresponded to agreement with progressive ideas. Recoding procedures can be found in the Appendix.

Economic Dimension	Sociocultural Dimension
The government should NOT spend a lot to help the poor	The government should consult with religious authorities in interpreting laws
The majority of the unemployed could encounter work if they really tried	Religious considerations should guide/influence government actions
The economy functions better and the country develops more when the government does not intervene in the economy	Same sex couples should NOT have the right to marry
	Abortion should be legal in all circumstances

Respondent Attributes

Included in the survey are questions which measure additional variables of interest. With these questions, I determine respondents' personal experience with crime (victimization), perceived insecurity in their neighborhoods, perceived source of crime, and beliefs about the effectiveness of social assistance. These questions are included in the Appendix. Respondents are divided into subgroups based on their responses to these questions to test my hypotheses.

Conjoint Experiment

To measure citizen preferences for punitive vs. social-assistance oriented crime policies proposed by candidates, I field a conjoint forced choice experiment. Respondents were presented with a choice between two candidates for state office (governor) with each choice presenting five varying political beliefs and policy propositions. Candidates also varied by gender. I choose a gubernatorial election as state or provincial governments in Brazil and Argentina are typically in charge of the majority of day-to-day policing, and have a high degree of control over other public security matters. The main policy belief of interest for this analysis is the proposed public security platform. Via a conjoint experiment, I can isolate the effect of the public security platform presented, as such experiments allow for the determination of precisely which components of the experimental manipulation influence observed effects (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). All experimental attributes were randomized and each respondent completed the experiment five times. In Table 2, I present the conjoint experimental design.

The conjoint experiment was forced choice. These designs have been demonstrated to perform well across country contexts in replicating real-life choice behavior (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Yamamoto 2015). Similar designs have been employed across political science and social science research, and elucidate the role of various candidate attributes and expressed policy positions or beliefs on respondents' sincere preferences (Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto 2020; Christensen, Rosa, and Grönlund 2020). Such designs remain useful even when exploring valence issues, position issues, and personal candidate attributes (Franchino and Zucchini 2014). No restrictions were imposed on the possible attribute combinations for each candidate as it is possible that any combination may occur in reality.

Table 2: Conjoint Experimental Design

The experiment was presented in Spanish in Argentina and Portuguese in Brazil. Each respondent was presented with this experiment five times. Candidate attributes were fully randomized.

<p>Next, we will present two candidate choices for governor and a series of their beliefs and political positions. Which of the candidates would you choose for governor or your state/province (mayor in Buenos Aires)? Even if you are not completely sure, please indicate your preference.</p> <p>Which of the following candidates would you choose for governor of your state/province? Please choose one.</p>
<p>Candidate (Present Two):</p>
<p><i>Sex:</i> [Female/Male]</p>
<p><i>Public Security:</i> [Investment in community-based social programs, such as prisoner reinsertion and jobs training programs, will reduce crime / Harsher sentencing, increased presence of police in high violence areas, and increased use of force by the police will reduce crime]</p>
<p><i>Abortion:</i> [In the majority of cases, abortion should be illegal / Abortion should be legal]</p>
<p><i>Taxes:</i> [Taxes should be reduced in general / Taxes should be increased on the rich]</p>
<p><i>Same-Sex Marriage:</i> [Same sex marriage should not be permitted / Marriage should be permitted, irrespective of the individuals' gender identities]</p>
<p><i>The Environment:</i> [Believes in investment in business and the economy, regardless of its impact on the environment / Believes in investment in "green" practices and in the protection of natural resources (for example Patagonia / the Amazon)]</p>

Analysis

I estimate the marginal mean for each experimental attribute as the quantity of interest, and divide respondents by subgroups of interest (e.g., victims vs. non-victims) (Leeper et al. 2020). In a forced choice experiment with two alternatives, the marginal mean of an attribute can be interpreted as a probability of candidate choice given the specified attribute by the respondent. If a marginal mean is equal to 1, it indicates there is a 100 percent chance (probability of 1) that respondents will choose the presented candidate with that given attribute. A value which exceed

0.5 indicates a candidate feature increases candidate profile favorability, while a value below 0.5 indicates the feature decreases favorability.

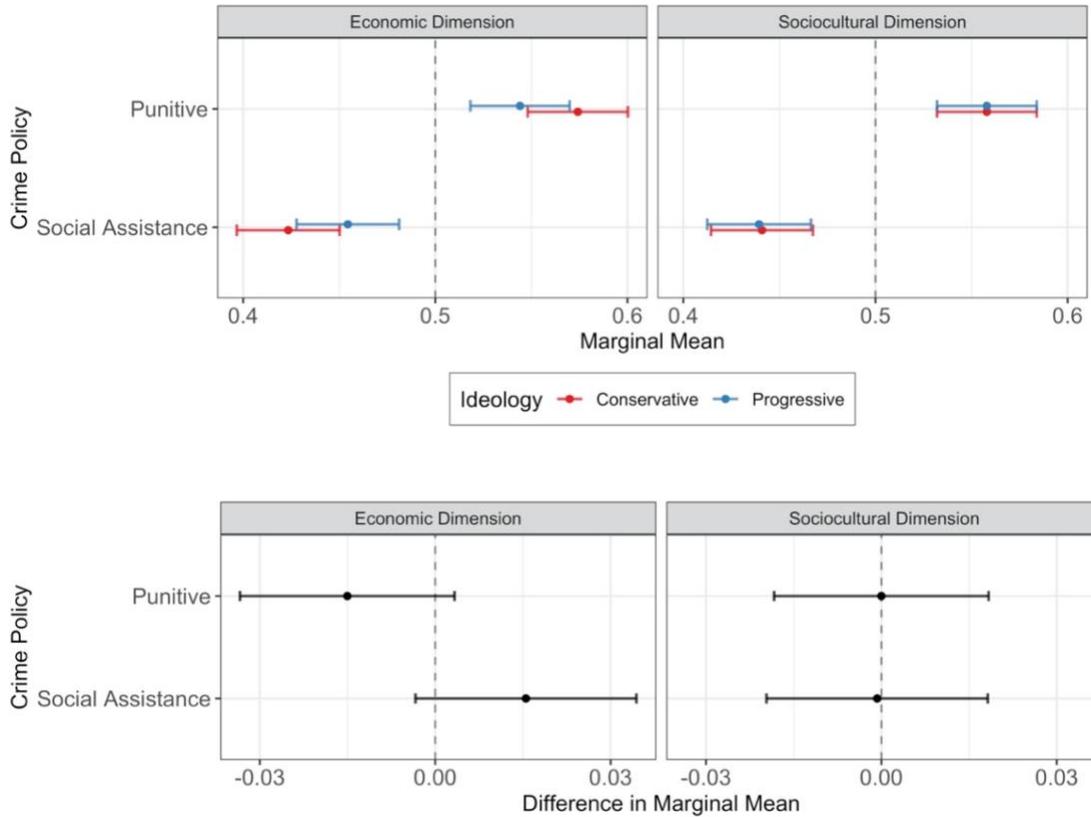
Although the average marginal component effect (AMCE) is also popularly used in conjoint experiments, researchers have demonstrated shortcomings with this quantity of interest (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020; De la Cuesta, Egami, and Imai 2022; Abramson, Kocak, and Magazinnik 2022). Particularly when comparing subgroup preferences, marginal means have been determined as more appropriate. (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020) demonstrate that the AMCE is not sensitive to reference categories, which severely affect this quantity when used to examine subgroup differences. Using marginal means, I examine subgroup preferences based on respondent-reported victimization, perceived safety, perceived effectiveness of social assistance, and perceived source of crime. These factors are all considered pre-treatment, or experiences or perceptions which are not affected at any point by the survey or conjoint experiment.

Results

Here, I present results from the conjoint experiment, separating each subgroup by relevant experiential or perceptual factors and ideology. All results are presented at the $p < 0.05$ level. I also present differences in marginal means ($p < 0.05$). I present results disaggregated by country in the Appendix, which are directionally consistent.¹²

¹² This is worth noting as the sample size of the respondents when divided by ideology decreases significantly. When separating the sample, it is reduced to about 800 respondents in each ideological group (762 sociocultural progressives, 768 economic progressives). When further dividing by country, these groupings are reduced to between 300 and 500 respondents. Testing hypotheses on such small samples reduces the statistical power of calculations, making it more likely that the null hypothesis is incorrectly rejected.

Figure 2: Candidate Attribute Preferences Across Divided by Ideology



Pooled results (Figure 2) demonstrate an aggregate preference for punitive policies among conservatives and progressives. If respondents are disaggregated along economic and sociocultural dimensions, the preference for candidates who offer punitive policy is only stronger among conservatives if we examine the economic dimension. However, the differences in preferences among conservatives and progressives is not statistically different from zero. This provides an initial challenge to previous ideas about the role of ideology in influencing preferences for punitive vs. social-assistance oriented crime policy. In particular, it is unexpected that progressives seem to prefer candidates who offer punitive policies. This support my claim that ideology is an insufficient explanation for support for punitive vs. social policy-oriented

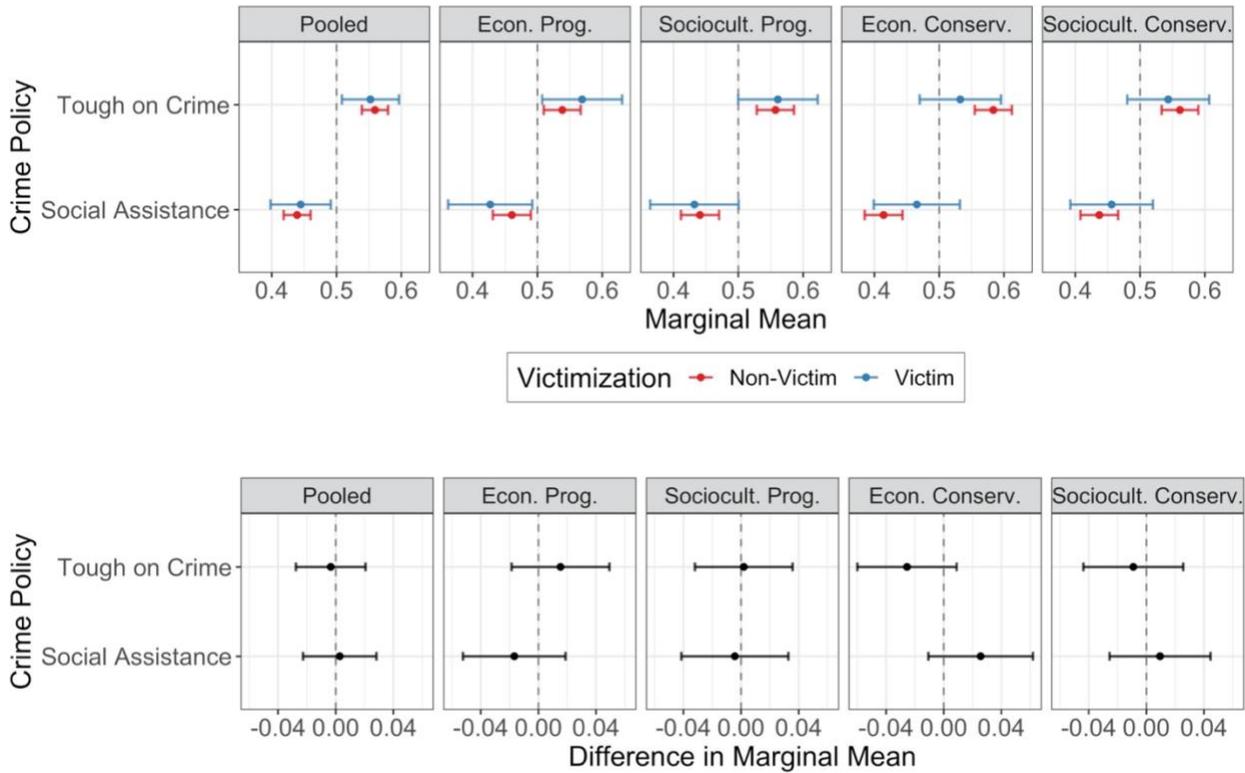
crime policies. In the following sections, I demonstrate that the perceptions and experiences I identify often explain the preference for punitive policy, particularly among progressives.

Victimization and Personal Insecurity

Results which examine H1A and H1B, focusing on the preferences for crime policy among victims/non-victims of crime and those who perceive their communities to be safe/unsafe, are presented in Figure 3 (victimization) and Figure 4 (community safety). Overall, results show some support for the hypotheses, although this depends on the subgroups examined. Models exploring the role of victimization indicate that H1A and H1B are not supported. Across the pooled sample, both non-victims and victims prefer candidates who propose punitive policies to combat crime (Figure 3). The marginal mean for the punitive policy attribute across candidates is greater than 0.5 and statistically significant. This effect holds when just examining both economic and sociocultural progressive respondents (Figure 3, 2nd and 3rd column). In some cases, it seems that victims have an increased preference for candidates that offer punitive policies (economic progressives). But, this difference is not statistically significant.

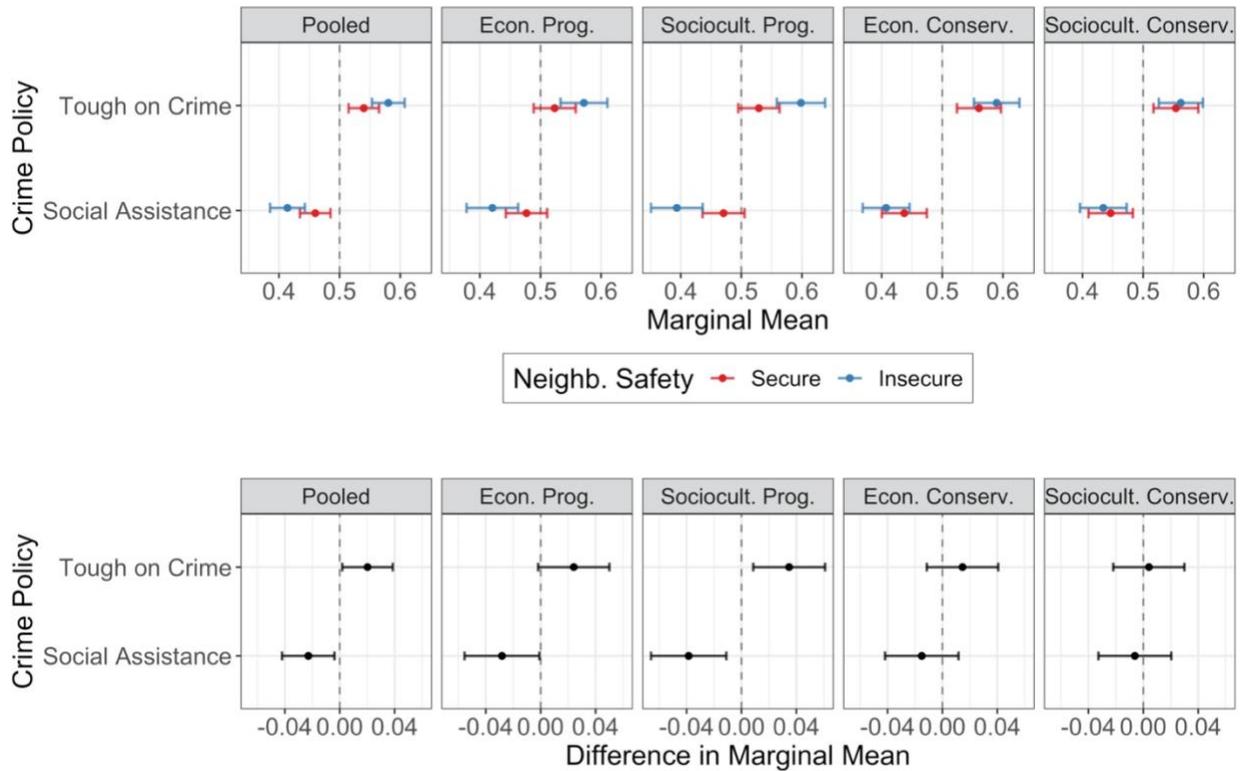
However, results regarding perceived neighborhood safety *do* support hypotheses H1A and H1B (Figure 4). In the pooled sample, those who rate their neighborhoods as “unsafe” or “very unsafe” more strongly prefer candidates who offer punitive crime policy. The difference in marginal means between those who perceive their community to be safe vs. unsafe is statistically significant from zero, supporting H1A.

Figure 3: Victimization and Candidate Attribute Preferences and Differences in Marginal Means



Among the ideologically progressive (both economic and sociocultural), those who live in unsafe neighborhoods prefer punitive candidates, with a marginal mean that is greater than 0.5 and statistically significant. However, the difference in marginal means is only significant if exploring sociocultural progressives, and is not when examining economic progressives. Thus, we see some support for H1B among this subsample. This suggests that even among sociocultural progressives, those who perceive their community to be unsafe prefer candidates who offer punitive policy while those who perceive their community to be safe do not.

Figure 4: Preferences for Candidate Attributes Disaggregated by Community Safety and Differences in Marginal Means



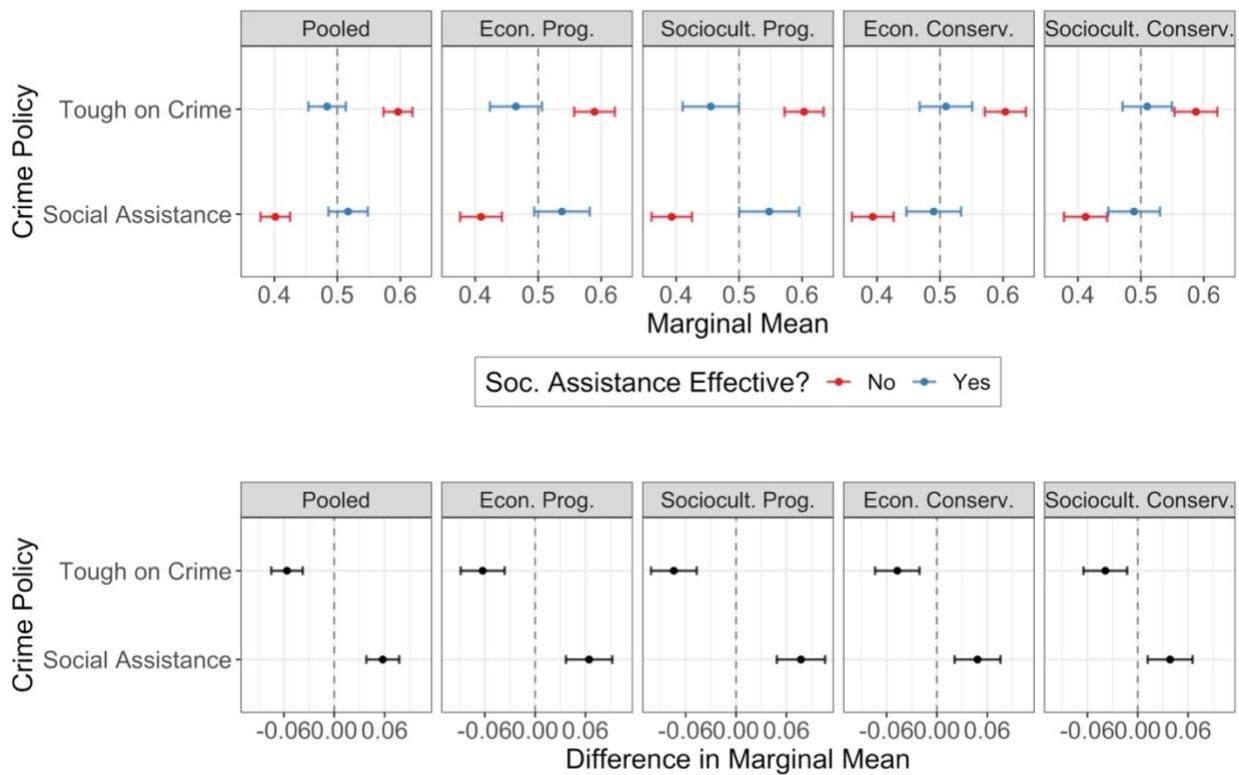
Importantly, perceived insecurity does not seem to influence preferences among conservatives, across either spectrum. In particular, comparing progressives and conservatives on the sociocultural spectrum, perceived insecurity is associated with preferences for punitive candidates among the former but not the latter. This suggests that sociocultural progressives are different from conservatives in their preferences for punitiveness, but if they perceive their neighborhoods to be insecure, their preferences mirror those of their conservative counterparts.

Social Policy Effectiveness

I proceed by evaluating the role of perceived social assistance effectiveness. Results from this examination support both H2A and H2B. Among all respondents (pooled regardless of ideology), when social assistance is perceived as ineffective, the marginal mean for candidates

who propose punitive policy is greater than 0.5 and statistically significant (Figure 5). That is, the presence of this attribute has a positive and significant effect on that candidate being chosen. The marginal mean for social assistance-oriented crime platforms is negative and significant, suggesting candidates who propose such policies are not popular among those who believe social assistance is ineffective. Punitive platforms do not have a significant effect on candidate choice among respondents who believe that social assistance is effective. Further, the difference between these effects is significant.

Figure 5: Perceived Effectiveness of Social Assistance and Candidate Attribute Preferences and Differences in Marginal Means



When disaggregating respondents by ideology, we see that even among both economic and sociocultural progressive respondents, this effect is present (H2B). Across progressives who believe social assistance is ineffective, the effect of punitive policy on the probability of

candidate choice is greater than 0.5. The difference in marginal means is also statistically significant. Among progressives who see social policy as effective, the marginal mean is greater than 0.5 for those who propose social assistance policies, demonstrating increased preference for these candidates. However, this effect is not distinguishable from zero. Regardless, this result is directionally consistent and supports the idea that progressives may demonstrate preferences that comport with their broader ideological beliefs, but certain perceptions transcend this influence.

Interestingly, this effect is also present among conservatives, but to a lesser degree. Conservatives who perceive social assistance to be effective are indifferent to the type of crime policy proposed, but increase support for punitiveness if they believe social assistance is ineffective. The magnitude of this difference is also smaller than among progressives.

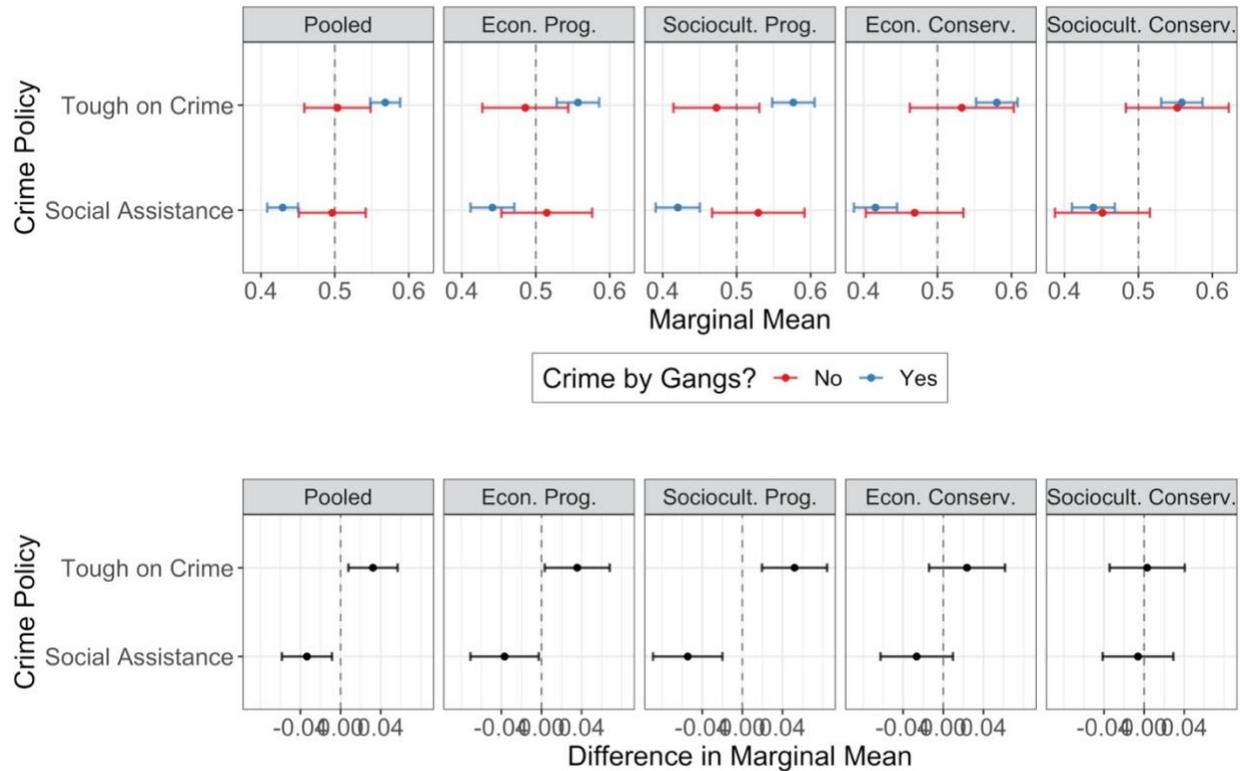
Source of Crime

Finally, I evaluate the role of perceived source of crime. Results also support hypotheses H3A and H3B, shown in Figure 6. Across all pooled respondents, those who report that the main source of crime in their community to be gangs are more likely to choose punitive candidates. Among those who do not perceive gangs as the main source of crime, the marginal mean is greater than 0.5, but is not statistically significant. The difference between these two groups in the pooled sample is significant.

Among both economic and sociocultural progressives, these effects remain, providing support for H3B. Once again, the difference between those who believe the main source of crime is gang-related, and those who do not, is significantly different. Among progressives who do not believe that the main source of crime to be gangs, there is a negative effect on the probability of electing a punitive candidate. However, this effect is not statistically different from 0.5.

Furthermore, we see that among progressive respondents who believe the main source of crime is gang-related, there is a negative effect on the probability of choosing a candidate if she proposes social assistance-oriented solutions to crime.

Figure 6: Perceived Source of Crime (Gangs) and Candidate Attribute Preferences and Differences in Marginal Means



This effect is *not* present among economic or sociocultural conservatives – preferences for punitive candidates does not increase in a statistically significant manner if crime is seen as driven by gangs. This again suggests that progressives are different from conservatives in their sensitivity to perceptual factors; these factors seem to increase the punitiveness of progressives, but not conservatives who may have an underlying preference for punitive candidates regardless of their personal perceptions.

Validation on a Nationally Representative In-Person Survey

Although the experimental results provide strong evidence of the proposed hypotheses, it is worth exploring the external validity on a fully nationally representative and in-person survey. To do so, I analyze data from the 2014 AmericasBarometer survey in both Brazil and Argentina (n = 1500 cases for each). This specific year of the survey, unlike other recent rounds of the in both countries, asks respondents to evaluate their preferences for punitive vs. social-policy oriented solutions to crime (or a combination of both). In particular, the survey asks respondents:

In your opinion, what should be done to reduce crime in a country like ours: Implement preventative measures or increase punishment of criminals? [Option included for 'both']

With this survey, I re-establish the patterns observed from my experimental results. To do so, I conduct a logistic regression to explain differences in responses to the above question.¹³ Responses are coded as a binary response variable where support for punitive policy or “both” is considered punitive, while support for preventative policy alone is considered preventative. I examine the degree to which my hypotheses may explain preferences for punitive vs. progressive policies, although in this case outside of an electoral scenario. I examine how victimization, perceived community safety, the perception that the current administration is effective at managing the economy, and the degree to which there are gangs present in one’s community affect such preferences. Indeed, these variables are not perfect matches for those employed in the first part of this paper, but serve as close proxies. To factor in ideology, I examine the effect of these variables all while controlling for the ideology of respondents, as measured by self-

¹³ In the Appendix, a multinomial logistic regression model (where the outcome variable is either support for preventative, punitive, or a combined policy approach) is presented. Results support findings presented in this section.

reporting on a left-right scale. Unfortunately, I cannot perfectly replicate the sociocultural and economic ideology spectra included in the previous analysis, but results with this control included should produce a close approximation. To validate the use of the left-right control, I show that it is highly correlated with respondent's opinions on issues related to the ideology indices used in the main analysis (e.g., opinions on abortion and same-sex marriage). These results can be seen in the Appendix.

The results from the pooled models can be seen in Table 3 and reinforce experimental results presented in this paper. Notably, ideology does have an effect: Individuals who identify as right-wing have an increased propensity to support punitive policy. However, the results also demonstrate important factors which influence support for punitive vs. social-policy oriented solutions even when controlling for ideology. Victimization does not seem to influence preferences, while a decrease in community safety increases preferences for punitive policy across the pooled sample. Both perceptions of the administration's economic effectiveness and the presence of gangs in one's neighborhood affect such preferences in the expected direction. Specifically, as perceptions of economic effectiveness increase, preferences for punitive and combined policy decrease. Further, as the perceived presence of gangs increase, preferences for punitive policy (and a combined policy) increases.¹⁴

In addition, I split the sample into left-wing and right-wing respondents to demonstrate whether or not these views can be seen just among progressive respondents, beyond the inclusion

¹⁴ Statistical significance in certain cases disappears when models are fully specified with all covariates. When both the presence of neighborhood gangs and perceptions of community security are considered in the same model, the presence of neighborhood gangs is no longer statistically significant. This is to be expected, as these variables are correlated (0.35). I expect these variables to be causally intertwined, as gang presence is likely to contribute to lower perceived community security. Thus, I consider these coefficients separately.

of a control. Results, provided in the Appendix, show that the results from the pooled sample still hold within the left-wing sample of respondents, providing further support for the conclusions found within the experiment. These results are, of course, not causal conclusions. But they lend credence to my experimental results and suggest they should be observable in a nationally representative sample via an in-person survey.

Discussion & Conclusion

This paper aims to explain why voters, and puzzlingly even progressive voters, support punitive policies in the Latin American context. I argue that although many other issue areas in the region (e.g., the economy, sociocultural issues) may be well predicted by ideology, preferences on crime policies are not as there are weak elite educative influences in this issue area. Instead, I argue that three main factors ultimately influence support for punitive vs. social-policy oriented approaches to crime: insecurity (victimization and perceived community safety), perceived social policy effectiveness, and perceived source of crime. I contend these influences may transcend previously assumed ideological predispositions to prefer punitive vs. social-policy oriented crime solutions. Overall, experimental results show strong support for my proposed hypotheses, with some challenge to the influence of victimization and insecurity. I also engage in secondary analysis of AmericasBarometer data. Results from this analysis supports that my findings are generalizable to a nationally representative sample.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Models: Support for Punitive Crime Policy*Dependent variable: Support for Punitive Crime Policy*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Victim	0.10 (0.12)				-0.01 (0.12)
Comm. Safety		-0.16*** (0.05)			-0.11* (0.05)
Effective Econ			-0.12*** (0.03)		-0.10*** (0.03)
Neighb. Gangs				0.12*** (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)
Right Wing	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
Female	-0.08 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.09)	-0.09 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.10)
Age	-0.01* (0.003)	-0.01* (0.003)	-0.01* (0.003)	-0.01* (0.003)	-0.01* (0.003)
Education	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)
Race/Eth: Black	-0.13 (0.19)	-0.13 (0.19)	-0.14 (0.19)	-0.16 (0.19)	-0.15 (0.20)
Indig.	0.11 (0.36)	0.11 (0.36)	0.15 (0.36)	0.07 (0.37)	0.10 (0.37)
Other	-0.001 (0.10)	-0.005 (0.10)	0.03 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.11)
Brazil	-0.18* (0.10)	-0.20* (0.10)	-0.15 (0.10)	-0.18* (0.10)	-0.17* (0.11)
Constant	2.00*** (0.27)	2.45*** (0.30)	2.33*** (0.28)	1.83*** (0.28)	2.50*** (0.35)
Observations	2,298	2,300	2,286	2,246	2,219
Log Likelihood	-1,364.03	1,361.91	1,351.54	1,328.50	1,305.21
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,748.07	2,743.82	2,723.09	2,677.00	2,636.43

Note:

*p<0.10** p<0.05*** p<0.01

Data from the AmericasBarometer 2014 round, Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt. Logistic regression employed where 1 is equal to support for increased punitive policy OR increase punitive and preventative measures, while 0 is support for increased preventative measure alone. Reference category for Race/Eth is “White”. Victim is a binary variable where 1 signifies victim in the past year and 0 is not a victim. Comm. Safety is a continuous variable from 1-4 where higher values indicate increased perceptions of community safety. Effective Econ is a continuous variable where high values indicate the perception that the government is managing the economy well, while low values indicate the opposite. Neighb. Gangs is a continuous variable where high values indicate the perception that gangs greatly affect one’s neighborhood, while low values indicate the opposite. Controls included are left-right partisan identification, gender, age, education, and country dummies. Income is not included due to high non-response in Argentina.

In particular, I find that both perceived social assistance effectiveness and perceived source of crime influence preferences for punitive vs. social-policy oriented candidates. This effect even holds among ideologically progressive respondents (both economic and sociocultural). Overall, the perception that social policy is ineffective leads respondents to prefer candidates who offer punitive crime policy. Notably, those who believe that social assistance is effective exhibit preferences regarding crime policy that conforms with what previous research suggests: they prefer more social-policy oriented solutions. Similarly, the perception that the local crime is driven by gangs also leads individuals to prefer punitive candidates.

Results, however, do provide mixed support for hypotheses regarding victimization and perceived neighborhood security. Initially, I proposed that we should observe increased support for punitive candidates among both victims of crime and those who perceive their neighborhoods to be insecure. However, I only find support for the influence of community security and do not find evidence for the influence of victimization. When respondents are pooled (regardless of ideology) it seems there is almost equal support for punitive policy among both victims and non-victims. If we examine just ideologically progressive individuals, we similarly do not see statistically significant differences between victims and non-victims.

In considering null results with respect to victimization, it is possible that important information was not considered when developing the hypotheses and appropriate tests. Namely, respondents were not asked *who* victimized them, or *why* they perceive their neighborhoods to be insecure. For ethical reasons, asking such questions may be too sensitive, but could provide the key to understanding the observed effects. In particular, it is well known that police brutality is common, and that many victimized individuals were in fact victimized by the state (Fuentes 2005; Ahnen 2007; French 2013). Police brutality often also occurs in high-crime, insecure areas

(Bonner 2019). For this reason, it is possible that victims do not desire punitive policies as it might increase insecurity and victimization. However, further research must be conducted to determine the validity of this relationship.

Furthermore, I explore the degree to which the three factors I analyze (personal security, crime perceptions, and policy effectiveness) may affect the preferences of conservative and progressive respondents in different ways. Ultimately, evidence suggests that there is some degree of an underlying preference for preventative policies among progressives, and not among conservatives, which are over-ridden by these factors. For example, progressives who see social policy as effective *do support* preventative solutions, while conservatives do not. However, if a progressive voter changes their perceptions to see social policy as ineffective, their preferences move to represent those of conservatives (e.g., preference for punitive policy). This is strong evidence to suggest that, although ideology may indeed have a role in predicting preferences as past literature has suggested (Ayres 1998; Muggah 2017; Cohen and Smith 2016; Gerber and Jackson 2016; 2017; Gerber 2021), experiential and perceptual factors can override this influence.

Overall, I have forwarded a theory which argues that ideology is an incomplete explanatory variable to understand citizen support for punitive crime policy in Latin America. Although previous research suggests it is typically conservatives who support such policies, I instead argue that ideology does not capture support for such policies completely. I demonstrate two factors which challenge these preconceptions. First, I find there are no statistically significant differences in preferences for punitive or social-assistance policies between ideological conservatives and progressives when pooled. But more compellingly, I find that ideological progressives often do express policy preferences (preferences for prevention) we

might expect, but it is largely dependent on certain perceptions. Namely, the belief that social policy is ineffective and the perception that the main source of crime in one's community is gang-related leads individuals to support punitive crime policies at higher levels. To some degree, perceptions of community insecurity also has this effect. This project thus contributes to work which challenges the role of ideology in understanding the continued trend in use of and support for punitive policy in Latin America.

This work is not only relevant to the contexts of Argentina and Brazil, but also to Latin America and countries across the globe. Progressive politicians who run on or offer more conservative solutions can be found in diverse country contexts, such as Mexico and the United States. For example, (Enns 2014) shows that punitive attitudes in the United States have increased substantially over time. This research suggests a possible causal mechanism for what leads to such attitudes across the electorate. Further, as mentioned, future work may investigate the differences between the role of victimization and perceived insecurity in affecting support for punitive policies. Moreover, this work could be extended to examine particular types of punitive policies to determine if there are specific policies which are more, or less, palatable to progressives. This work could also examine if certain perceptions or experiences lead ideologically conservative individuals to prefer more progressive solutions.

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