

Conflict exposure and health: Evidence from the Gaza Strip

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Abstract

Using individual-level longitudinal data and geo-localized information on conflict-related violent events, we study the impact of conflict on health in the Gaza Strip. Results show that individuals living in localities exposed to more conflict events have a higher probability of suffering from a physical impairment and a chronic disease. The effect is larger for men and older individuals. Two mechanisms contribute to explain why living in conflict-affected area increases the incidence of physical impairment: conflict increases the difficulty to reach health facilities and it decreases individual income. The conflict-induced increase in the probability of having high blood pressure is instead consistent with the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to the exposure to conflict-related violent events.

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1. Introduction

More than 1.4 billion people live in countries affected by violence and conflict (World Bank, 2020). Medical case studies have consistently documented that being exposed to violence and conflict events is correlated with worse population health conditions (Cohen et al, 2007; Levy and Sidel, 2016). Yet rigorous evidence of a causal effect of conflict exposure on health is still scarce and mostly limited to children's health (Bundervoet et al., 2009; Akresh et al., 2012; Mansour and Rees, 2012; Minoiu and Shemyakina, 2014; Zachary et al., 2018; Tsujimoto and Kijima, 2020).

This paper documents the effect of conflict exposure on health conditions of young and adult individuals in the context of the Gaza-Israel conflict.³ Taking advantage of unique individual-level longitudinal health information and of detailed geo-localized information on conflict events, we show that higher conflict exposure worsens health conditions of people in the Gaza Strip: living in more conflict-affected localities increases the probability of having a physical impairment and a chronic disease. These effects are heterogeneous across gender and age groups: the effects are larger for men and older individuals. We also provide suggestive evidence on the possible mechanisms explaining these effects. Individuals living in more conflict-exposed localities - even if themselves not directly affected by violence - have a higher probability of suffering from a physical impairment because conflict increases their difficulty to reach health facilities when needed and it decreases individual income, reducing available resources to protect and improve health. The conflict-induced increase in the probability of having high blood pressure is instead consistent with the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to the exposure to conflict-related violent events.

Our paper is related to different strands of literature. First, it contributes to the economics of conflict literature by providing evidence of the negative effect of conflict exposure on various types of health diseases, by considering both young and adult individuals, and by documenting possible mechanisms explaining these effects. Second, by focusing on the indirect effect of conflict, i.e. living in a locality affected by conflict-related events, our results speak to the medical literature on the link between being exposed to local violence and having a chronic disease (Wilson et al., 2004; and Tung et al, 2018). Finally, our analysis adds to the growing economic literature on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by providing novel evidence on the effects of the Gaza-Israel conflict on the Gaza Strip population.⁴

³ The Gaza-Israel conflict started in 2006 and it is still on-going (see Assaf, 2014).

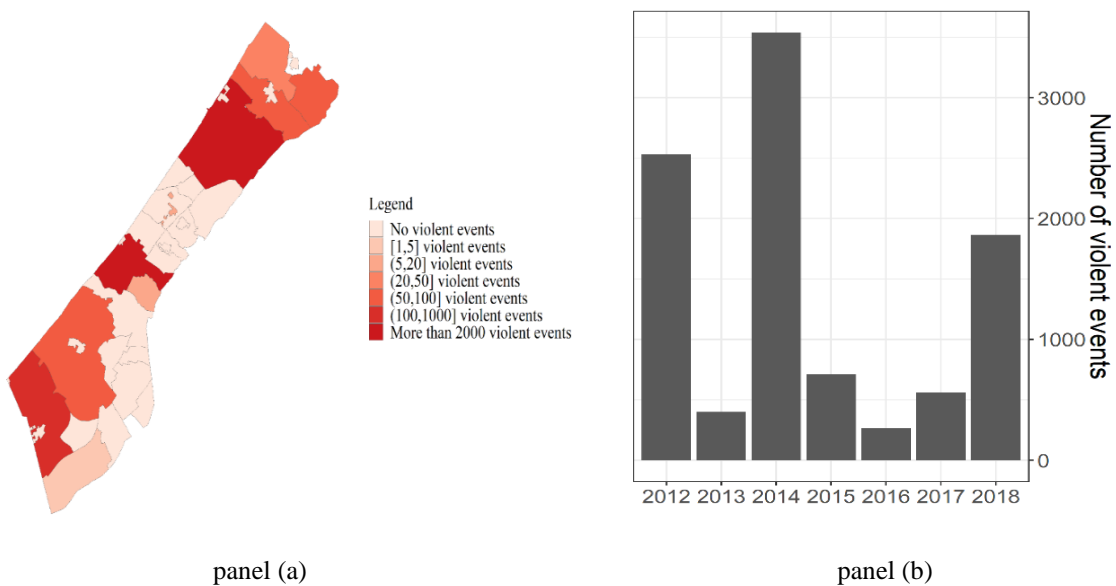
⁴ Most of previous studies have investigated the Second Intifada (2000-2006) (Cali and Miaari, 2018; Di Maio and Nisticò, 2019) while only few have analysed the effect of the sequent phases of the conflict. Etkes and Zimring (2015) document the negative impact of the Israeli-imposed 2007 blockade on Gaza Strip economy. Bruck et al. (2019) show that the 2014 Gaza conflict reduced households' resilience capacity.

2. Data

Our individual-level data come from the Socio-Economic and Food Security (SEFSec) survey provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). This a representative survey of the Palestinian population living in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2016). The panel nature of the data allows us to track the same individual for the period 2013-2018. One important feature of this survey is that, in addition to questions related to household characteristics and food security, it also includes a set of questions related to the individual’s health condition.⁵ Our sample includes all individuals aged 11-70. Definitions and summary statistics for all variables used in the analysis are reported in Appendix A1. Results for the attrition analysis are reported in Appendix A2.

To measure conflict intensity, we use the geo-localized information on political violence provided by the ICEWS dataset (Shilliday and Lautenschlager 2012). This dataset collects information from international, national, and local news publishers to record any violent interaction occurred between socio-political actors. These data are considered highly reliable and have been already used in studies on the Gaza Strip (Amodio et al., 2020). Figure 1 shows the geographical (panel a) and the yearly distribution (panel b) of conflict events during the period of analysis: conflict intensity exhibits large variations both across localities and over time (see also the summary statistics on the conflict-related violent events reported in Appendix A1, Table A1).

Figure 1: Number of conflict-related violent events in the Gaza Strip (2012-2018)



Source: Authors’ elaboration on ICEWS data. The map shows the boundaries of the Gaza Strip localities.

⁵ The 2013 survey and the 2018 survey include the question: “Are you suffering from difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement?”. The 2015 survey and the 2018 survey include the question: “Are you suffering from high blood pressure?”.

3. Estimation strategy

We estimate the effect of conflict exposure on individual health using the following model:

$$Health_{it} = \alpha + \beta \text{Number of Conflict Events}_{10km(i,t-1)} + \mu X_{it} + \pi_i + \rho_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

where $Health_{it}$ is our proxy for individual-level health conditions for individual i at time t . As a first health outcome, we consider *Physical impairment* $_{it}$, a dummy variable which takes value 1 if individual i at time t reports suffering from any difficulty in vision, hearing, or movement, and zero otherwise. As an additional outcome, we consider *High Blood Pressure* $_{it}$, a dummy variable which takes value 1 if individual i at time t reports suffering from high blood pressure, and zero otherwise. *Number of Conflict Events* $_{10km(i,t-1)}$ is the number of conflict-related violent events which occurred in the 10 km radius from the place of living of the individual during the 12 months before the date of the interview.⁶ X_{it} is a vector of individual time-varying characteristics. π_i and ρ_t are individual and time fixed effects, respectively. Individual fixed effects control for all time-invariant unobservable individual characteristics. Year fixed effects capture overall trends in local condition common to all individuals. Finally, ε_{it} is the error term. In the analysis, $t = 2013$ and 2018 for *Physical impairment* $_{it}$ and $t = 2015, 2018$ for *High Blood Pressure* $_{it}$.

There are three main threats to our identification strategy. The first one is that of reverse causality: if people with health problems attribute their condition to the conflict situation they may be more willing to participate in demonstrations, possibly increasing the number of conflict events. This possibility is not supported by the data: conflict intensity at the locality level is not predicted by the locality-level percentage of people with health problems (see Appendix A4, Table A4 column 1). At the same time, conflict intensity does not depend on the unemployment level or the share of drop-out students in the locality (columns 2 and 3).⁷ Secondly, our measure of conflict intensity may suffer from measurement bias. For instance, reporting of conflict events may be biased toward certain regions or types of events. Previous studies have shown that this is not the case for the ICEWS dataset (Amodio et al. 2020). Third, individuals may respond to an increase in conflict intensity by changing residential location. If migrating individual were healthier, the negative effect of conflict on health conditions would just be the result of individuals relocating away from high-conflict areas. This is unlikely to be the case for the Gaza Strip. International migration is nearly zero due to the Israeli-imposed restrictions and internal mobility is traditionally low (PCBS, 2011; Etkes and Zimring, 2015). These observations

⁶ This is similar to the measure used in Tsujimoto and Kijima (2020). The list of the events included in our measure of conflict intensity is reported in Appendix A3.

⁷ Being a dropout may increase rebellion in adolescents and thus the number of conflict events (Di Maio and Nisticò 2019).

together with the results of the attrition analysis (Appendix A2) indicate that conflict-induced relocation is not a serious threat to our identification strategy.

4. Results

4.1 Main results

Table 1 shows our main results. Column 1 reports the baseline estimate for our regression model when we use as dependent variable *Physical impairment*_{it}. An increase in the individual's level of conflict exposure (as proxied by the number of conflict-related events which occurred in the 10 km radius from the place of living of the individual during the 12 months before the date of the interview) increases her probability of having difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement.⁸ The magnitude of the effect is large: 100 more conflict events in the last 12 months increase by 31% the probability of having a physical impairment with respect to the sample average. The magnitude of the effect is unchanged when we add a set of (time-varying) individual controls, including having a health insurance and having received (any) form of assistance or aid (column 2). The positive significant coefficient for the latter control suggests that aid targeting works well in the Gaza Strip.⁹ Finally, in column 3, we control for spatial autocorrelation in the effect of conflict by including the variable *Number of Conflict Events (spatial lag)*_{i,t-1}, i.e. the weighted sum all conflict-related events occurred in the Gaza Strip in the last 12 months, where the weights are the distance of each event from individual *i*. When controlling for the potential spill-over effect of conflicts events across all the Gaza Strip, the coefficient of our variable of interest remains significant and its magnitude increases with respect to the baseline.

Column 4 reports the baseline results when we use as dependent variable *High Blood Pressure*_{it}: 100 more conflict events in the locality of residence of the individual increases by 29% the probability of having high blood pressure with respect to the sample average. The magnitude and the significance of the effect is unchanged when we include individual controls (column 5) and it increases when we also control for spatial autocorrelation (column 6).

⁸ This effect is not due to the *direct* impact of conflict-related violence on the individual. In the 2018 wave (the only one for which this information is available) only 0.02% of the individuals reports that the reason for suffering from physical impairment is having being victim of a conflict-related violent act.

⁹ In addition to the Palestinian Authority, numerous other international organizations and NGOs provide assistance in the Gaza Strip (WHO, 2018).

Table 1: Effect of conflict exposure on health conditions

	Suffers from difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement (1 = Yes)			Suffers from high blood pressure (1 = Yes)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{10km(i,t-1)}	0.0004** (0.0001)	0.0004** (0.0001)	0.0005** (0.0002)	0.0003** (0.0001)	0.0003** (0.0001)
Age	0.0589*** (0.0055)	0.0584*** (0.0056)	0.0583*** (0.0055)	0.0269 (0.0208)	0.0276 (0.0208)	0.0284 (0.0209)
Has health insurance (1 = Yes)		0.3181 (0.2839)	0.3260 (0.2861)		0.4622** (0.2109)	0.4785** (0.2112)
Received (any) assistance or aid (1 = Yes)		0.4916*** (0.1137)	0.4932*** (0.1138)		0.0640 (0.0781)	0.0617 (0.0786)
<i>Number of Conflict Events (spatial lag)</i> _{i,t-1}			0.0000 (0.0000)			0.0000 (0.0000)
Individual controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	10566	10566	10566	10462	10462	10462

Note: Conditional logit estimated coefficients. In column 1-3, the dependent variable is *Physical impairment*_{it}, a dummy variable which takes value 1 if individual *i* at time *t* reports suffering from any difficulty in vision, hearing, or movement, and zero otherwise. In column 4-6, the dependent variable is *High Blood Pressure*_{it}, a dummy variable which takes value 1 if individual *i* at time *t* reports suffering from high blood pressure and zero otherwise. The sample in column (1-3) includes individuals in SEFSec wave five and seven (*t* = 2013, 2018). The sample in column (4-6) includes individuals in SEFSec wave six and seven (*t* = 2015, 2018). The mean of the outcome variables is 0.12 and 0.11, respectively. *Individual (time-varying) controls* are: employment status, number of hours worked; household size; household number of children. *Number of Conflict Events (spatial lag)*_{i,t-1} is the total number of conflict-related events occurred in the Gaza Strip in the previous 12 months, weighted by their distance from individual *i*. Robust standard errors are clustered at the individual level. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively. Data sources: ICEWS, SEFSec.

Table 2: Effect of conflict exposure on health conditions: Heterogeneity

	Panel A				
	Suffers difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement (1 = Yes)				
	Male (1)	Female (2)	Young (3)	Middle (4)	Old (5)
<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{10km(i,t-1)}	0.0003* (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0009)	0.0003* (0.0002)	0.0019** (0.0008)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	5234	5332	1716	7748	1102
	Panel B				
	Suffers from high blood pressure (1 = Yes)				
	Male (1)	Female (2)	Young (3)	Middle (4)	Old (5)
<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{10km(i,t-1)}	0.0006** (0.0002)	0.0002 (0.0002)	0.0000 (0.0090)	0.0006** (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	5182	5280	1614	7713	1135

Note: Conditional logit estimated coefficients. In Panel A, the dependent is *Physical impairment*_{it} (see Table 2 for a definition) and the sample includes individuals in SEFSec wave five and seven. In Panel B, the dependent is *High Blood Pressure*_{it} (see Table 2 for a definition) and the sample includes individuals in SEFSec wave six and seven. *Young* is defined to be an individual aged 11-20 years old; *Middle* is 21-54 years old; *Old* is 55-67 years old. *Individual (time-varying) controls* are the same as in Table 2. Robust standard errors are clustered at the individual level. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively. Data sources: ICEWS, SEFSec.

4.2 Heterogeneity

As shown in Table 2, the effect of conflict exposure on the probability of having a physical impairment is significant only for male and increases with the age of the individual. This is consistent with the fact that in the Gaza Strip women are more likely to stay at home and thus they are less likely to conduct activities which may lead to physical impairment (ESCWA, 2018). In line with previous medical studies, the effect of living in violence-affected localities on the probability of suffering from high blood pressure is stronger for men and for middle-age individuals (Wilson et al., 2002).

4.3 Mechanisms

There are various possible mechanisms explaining the negative effect of (indirect) conflict exposure on having a physical impairment. The first mechanism is the impact of conflict on the access to health services. Table 2 column (1) shows that higher conflict exposure increases the difficulty to reach the (closest) health facility, controlling for both individual and time fixed effects. In turn, the more difficult is to reach a health facility, the higher the probability of having a physical impairment (column 3). These results are consistent with a situation in which the incidence of having a physical impairment worsen because - due to the conflict situation - individuals have more difficulties to see a doctor when needed and thus they may end up not treating their disease.¹⁰ The second mechanism is the conflict-induced reduction in income. Table 3 column (2) indicates that conflict intensity has a negative and significant effect on income, controlling for individual and time fixed effects. Column (4) in turn shows that a lower income increases the probability of having a physical impairment. This is in line with the fact that lower income is associated with reduced resources available for medications, poorer-quality housing¹¹ and dietary intake, higher probability of risky behaviour, etc. Taken together, these considerations suggest that conflict - by reducing income - increases the probability of suffering from a physical impairment.

While the exact mechanisms underlying the effects of exposure to violence on high blood pressure are still debated in the medical literature, there is evidence that violence-induced elevated sympathetic nervous system activity (Wilson et al., 2004) and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Gerin, 2005; Tung et al., 2019) may play a role.¹² We cannot directly test for these channels due to data limitation. Yet, we interpret the large evidence showing that conflict exposure increases PTSD cases

¹⁰ WHO (2018) documents that the conflict has reduced the health sector capacity in the Gaza Strip, damaging and destroying health facilities.

¹¹ Poor-quality housing is associated with various negative health outcomes, including injury (Krieger and Higgins, 2002).

¹² Allostatic load theory suggests that cumulative prolonged exposure to violent events (e.g, frequently hearing gunshots at night) may activate physiologic response pathways that lead to metabolic or autonomic dysfunction (McEwen, 1998).

in the Gazan population as providing indirect support for this mechanism being at work (Ayer et al., 2017; Thabet et al., 2008).

Table 3
Mechanisms: conflict exposure and physical impairment

	Difficulty reaching health facility	(Log) Individual income	Suffers difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement (1 = Yes)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{10km (i,t-1)}	0.0003** (0.0001)	-0.0001* (0.0000)		
Difficulty reaching health facility			0.237* (0.122)	
(Log) Individual income				-0.388*** (0.063)
Individual Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Observations	10566	10566	10566	10566

Note: Column 1, 3, and 4 report conditional logit estimated coefficients. Column 2 reports OLS estimated coefficients. In column 1, the dependent variable is *Difficulty reaching health facility*, a dummy variable which takes value 1 if the answer is “high difficult” or “low difficult” and zero if the answer is “no difficult”. In column 2, the dependent variable is *(Log) Individual income* which is computed as the log of per-capita household income. In column 3 and 4, the dependent is *Physical impairment_{it}* (see Table 2 for the definition). The sample includes individuals in SEFSec wave five and seven ($t = 2013, 2018$). In all regressions, robust standard errors are clustered at the individual level. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level, respectively. Data sources: ICEWS, SEFSec.

5. Conclusions

The Gaza-Israel conflict has been attracting much attention both in the media and among researchers in different disciplines. Yet its consequences on population health have been largely overlooked. Using longitudinal individual-level data combined with geo-localized data on conflict events, we show that higher conflict exposure worsens health conditions of people in the Gaza Strip: living in more conflict-affected localities increases the probability of having a physical impairment and high blood pressure. Two mechanisms contribute to explain the conflict-induced increase in the probability of having a physical impairment: conflict increases the difficulty to reach health facilities and decreases individual income. The conflict-induced increase in the probability of having high blood pressure is instead consistent with the development of PTSD due to the continuous exposure to conflict-related violent events. Our results suggest that individuals living in a conflict affected area - even if not being victims of a violent act – suffer large negative health effects which need to be accounted for not to underestimate the true effect of conflict on public health.

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Appendix – Additional tables not intended for publication

A1 - Variables definition and summary statistics

Table A1 reports the definition, the mean, and the standard deviation for the variables used in the analysis.

Table A1
Variables definition and summary statistics

Variable name	Variable definition	2013-2018		2015-2018	
		Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.
Suffers difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement (1 = Yes)	Dummy variable taking value of one if the respondent suffers from any difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement, and zero otherwise	0.12	0.32	-	-
Suffers from high blood pressure (1 = Yes)	Dummy variable taking value of one if the respondent suffers from high blood pressure, and zero otherwise.	-	-	0.11	0.31
<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{10km}	Number of conflict-related violent events which occurred in the 10 km radius from the place of living of the individual during the 12 months before the date of the interview. The list of the events included is reported in Appendix A3.	628.79	574.47	1340.03	149.11
Age	Age of the respondent at the time of the interview.	35.17	13.68	35.69	13.64
Has health insurance (1 = Yes)	Dummy variable taking value of one if the respondent had a health insurance, and zero otherwise.	0.95	0.21	0.94	0.23
Received (any) assistance (1 = Yes)	Dummy variable taking value of one if the respondent declared to have received any assistance from Palestinian Authority agencies, international agencies, public organizations or unions, private entities or citizens, and zero otherwise.	0.69	0.46	0.79	0.41
(Log) Monthly Income per capita	(Log) Monthly income reported by the respondent (Israeli New Shekel, NIS).	0.83	0.76	-	-
Difficulty reaching health facility	Dummy variable taking value of one if the respondent declared to have any difficulty in reaching a health facility, and zero otherwise.	0.14	0.35	-	-
Number of observations		10566		10462	

Notes: Summary statistics for all variables used in the analysis. Sources: Sources: SEFSec datasets and ICEWS dataset.

A2 - Attrition analysis

Individuals exiting the sample across waves potentially pose a selection bias problem. To check for attrition across waves, for each outcome (namely *Physical Impairment* and *High Blood Pressure*), we consider the sample of all individuals present in the first wave for which the outcome is available. Recall that these are different samples because data for the variable *Physical Impairment* is available only in the 2013 and 2018 surveys, while data for the variable *High Blood Pressure* is available only for the 2015 and 2018 surveys. For each of these two samples, we then compare the individuals who remain in the panel with those who exit the panel in the following wave.

Results for the attrition analysis when the outcome of analysis is *Physical Impairment* are presented in Table A2a. The table shows the mean difference in covariates as for year 2013 (i.e. the first year in which the outcome variable is available) between individuals in the sample used in the analysis and individuals who are not included in the analysis (because they exit the panel in the following wave). As for the variable *Physical Impairment*, results indicate that individuals included in the sample of analysis are not statistically different from those who exit the panel for any age group except for the older ones. In this latter case, the incidence of *Physical Impairment* is lower for those in the sample of analysis. If anything, this would go against finding a significant negative effect of conflict on the outcome variable. Results also indicate that the two samples are not different as for: the number of conflict events they have been exposed to; the probability of having health insurance and of having received any assistance. Individuals in the sample have a higher per-capita income and report a lower difficulty to reach a health facility. If anything, also in this case, these differences go against finding a negative effect of conflict on these variables. Taken together, these results indicate that attrition is unlikely to be a serious threat to our analysis and thus we interpret them as being reassuring as for the validity of our results.

Table A2a: Attrition analysis (1): *Physical Impairment* regression

	Respondents in both	Respondents not in	Difference (significance of t test)
	the first and third wave	the first and third wave	
	Mean	Mean	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Suffers difficulties in vision, hearing, or movement (1 = Yes)			
Less than 20 years	0.048	0.036	0.012
Between 20 and 30 years	0.046	0.063	-0.016
Between 30 and 40 years	0.055	0.044	0.011
Between 40 and 50 years	0.082	0.089	-0.007
More than 50 years	0.141	0.412	-0.271***
<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{<i>i,t-1</i>}	231.947	232.250	-0.302
Has health insurance (1 = Yes)	0.971	0.964	0.007
Received (any) assistance (1 = Yes)	0.672	0.673	-0.001
(Log) Per-capita income	0.930	0.850	0.080***
Difficulty reaching health facility	0.080	1.000	-0.920***
Number of Observations	5320	4433	

Note: For each metric reported, Column (1) shows the average value in the panel dataset used in the analysis. Column (2) shows the average value in the population not used in the panel dataset, because it was not present in one or more waves. Column (3) shows the difference in mean between Column (1) and Column (2). Column (3) also reports the p-value of a t test performed under the null hypothesis that such difference is not significant. *, **, *** indicate that there is no statistically significant difference with a level of confidence at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level. Sources: 2013 SEFSec datasets and ICEWS dataset.

Results for the attrition analysis when the outcome of analysis is *High Blood Pressure* are presented in Table A2b. The table shows the mean difference in covariates in year 2015 (i.e. the first year in which the outcome variable is available) between individuals in the sample used in the analysis and individuals who are not included in the analysis (because they exit the panel in the following wave). As for the variable *High Blood Pressure*, results indicate that the two samples are not statistically different for any age group but for the older ones, for which the incidence of *High Blood Pressure* is lower for those in the sample of analysis. Also in this case, if anything, this would go against finding a significant effect of conflict on the outcome variable. Results also indicate the two samples are not different as for: the number of conflict events they have been exposed to; the probability of having health insurance and having received any assistance. Taken together, these findings indicate that attrition is unlikely to be a serious threat for our analysis and thus we interpret them as being reassuring as for the validity of our results.

Table A2b: Attrition analysis (2): *High Blood Pressure* regression

	Respondents in both the first and third wave	Respondents not in the first and third wave	Difference (significance of t test)
	Mean	Mean	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Suffers from high blood pressure (1 = Yes)			
Less than 20 years	0.000	0.001	-0.001
Between 20 and 30 years	0.005	0.002	0.002
Between 30 and 40 years	0.057	0.047	0.001
Between 40 and 50 years	0.148	0.109	0.038
More than 50 years	0.354	0.500	-0.146***
<i>Number of Conflict Events</i> _{<i>i,t-1</i>}	1651.916	1647.594	4.322
Has health insurance (1 = Yes)	0.950	0.949	0.001
Received (any) assistance (1 = Yes)	0.672	0.673	-0.001
Number of Observations	5320	4433	

Note: For each metric reported, Column (1) shows the average value in the panel dataset used in the analysis. Column (2) shows the average value in the population not used in the panel dataset, because it was not present in one or more waves. Column (3) shows the difference in mean between Column (1) and Column (2). Column (3) also reports the p-value of a t test performed under the null hypothesis that such difference is not significant. *, **, *** indicate that there is no statistically significant difference with a level of confidence at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level. Sources: 2015 SEFSec datasets and ICEWS dataset.

A3 - List of conflict-related events included in the measure of conflict intensity

As discussed in Section 2 and 3, our proxy for the individual-level conflict exposure is given by *Number of Conflict Events* $_{10km(i,t-1)}$ which is constructed as the sum of all the conflict-related violent events which occurred in the 10 km radius from the place of living of the individual during the 12 months before the date of the interview. The events are identified using the ICEWS dataset. The ICEWS dataset collects geo-localized information from international, national, and local news publishers to record any interaction (i.e., both cooperative or hostile actions) occurred between socio-political actors (i.e. individuals, groups, sectors, and nation states). Each entry provides information on the source and target of each interaction and its localization. Among all the events recorded in the ICEWS dataset, we select those which can be considered conflict-related violent events. We show them in Table A3.

Table A3
Events in the ICEWS dataset used to construct the variable *Number of Conflict Events*

ICEWS	
Identification Code	Event definition
173	Arrest, detain, or charge with legal action
181	Abduct, hijack, or take hostage
182	Physically assault, not specified below
183	Conduct suicide, car, or other non-military bombing, not spec below
184	Carry out suicide bombing
190	Use conventional military force, not specified below
193	Fight with small arms and light weapons
194	Fight with artillery and tanks

Source: ICEWS Dataset

[http://data.nber.org/ens/feldstein/NBER%20Sources/ENS%20Conference%20Sources/2016/Predicting%20Conflict%20Via%20Machine%20Learning/ICEWS%20\(Lockheed%20Martin\)/Coded%20Event%20Data/CAMEO.CDB.09b5.pdf](http://data.nber.org/ens/feldstein/NBER%20Sources/ENS%20Conference%20Sources/2016/Predicting%20Conflict%20Via%20Machine%20Learning/ICEWS%20(Lockheed%20Martin)/Coded%20Event%20Data/CAMEO.CDB.09b5.pdf)

A4 - A test for reverse causality

One possible threat to our identification strategy is that of reverse causality: if people with health problems attribute their condition to the conflict situation they may be more willing to participate in demonstrations, increasing the level of violence and, possibly, the number of conflict events. To test for this, we estimate the following model:

$$\text{Number of Conflict Events}_{lt} = \alpha + \beta Y_{lt} + \tau_l + \rho_t + \varepsilon_{lt} \quad (2)$$

where *Number of Conflict Events*_{lt} is the number of conflict-related events occurred in locality *l* in year *t*; τ_l and ρ_t are locality- and year fixed effects, respectively, and ε_{lt} is the error term. Y_{lt} is - alternatively - the locality-level rate of individuals with health problems, the locality-level rate of unemployment, and the locality-level rate of school dropout. Results reported in Table A4 column 1 indicate that the number of conflict-related events at the locality level are not predicted by the locality-level health conditions. We interpret this as suggestive evidence against the possibility of reverse causality between conflict intensity and the number of individuals having health problems, strengthening the confidence in our results. Moreover, results in column 2 and 3 indicate that labour-market local economic conditions or the rate of students out of school do not predict conflict intensity. These findings exclude also these as possible determinants of conflict intensity.

Table A4
Effect of locality-level conditions on conflict intensity in the Gaza Strip

	Locality-level number of conflict events		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Locality rate of individuals with health problems	-0.3387 (1.1193)		
Locality rate of unemployment		0.8998 (2.3340)	
Locality rate of school dropouts			-0.1981 (0.3087)
Locality Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Observations	69	69	69

Note: OLS estimated coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) are reported. Standard errors are robust. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10, 5 and 1 percent level. An intercept is included, but not reported. The dependent variable is the number of violent events occurred over the year in the locality. The years considered are: 2013, 2015, and 2018. There are 23 localities in the Gaza Strip. *Locality rate of individuals with health problems* is the number of respondents declaring to have a health problem (i.e. any difficulties in vision, hearing, or moving, or having high blood pressure) in a locality, over the total number of respondents in that locality. *Locality rate of unemployment* is the ratio of the number of unemployed people in a locality, over the total number of respondents in that locality. *Locality rate of school dropout* is the number of enrolled respondent children who drop out and were between 6 and 11 years old in 2013, over the total number of respondent children enrolled in that locality. Sources: SEFSec datasets and ICEWS dataset.