

# Can community policing build trust in police or reduce crime in the Global South?

Graeme Blair, Assoc. Prof., Political Science, UCLA

Based on work with Jeremy Weinstein, Fotini Christia, and the EGAP Metaketa IV collaboration



Bogotá, 2021



Lagos, 2020



Stop-and-frisk



**Stop-and-frisk**



**Militarized policing**



Stop-and-frisk



Militarized policing



Broken windows policing

# Theory of change

Crime rate

# Theory of change

**Police actions**

Arrest perpetrators,  
preventative patrols



**Crime rate**

# Theory of change



# Theory of change



**Policy problem:**  
Not enough citizen input

# Theory of change



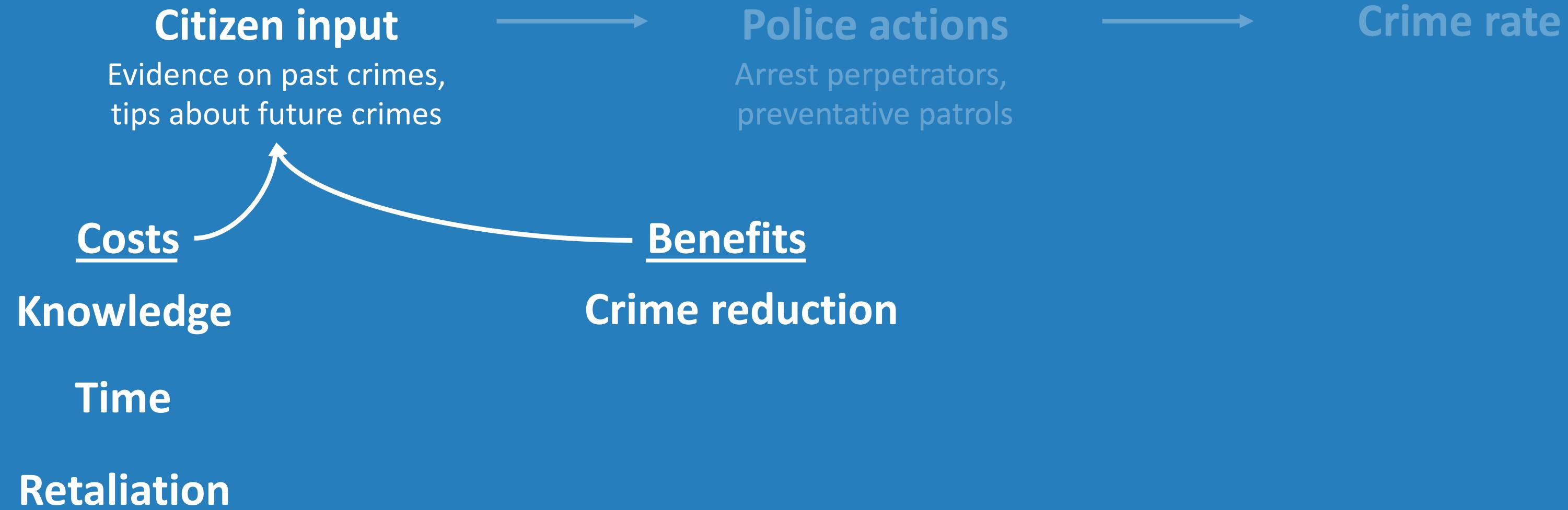
**Policy problem:**  
Not enough citizen input

*High costs to individual, diffuse benefits*

# Theory of change



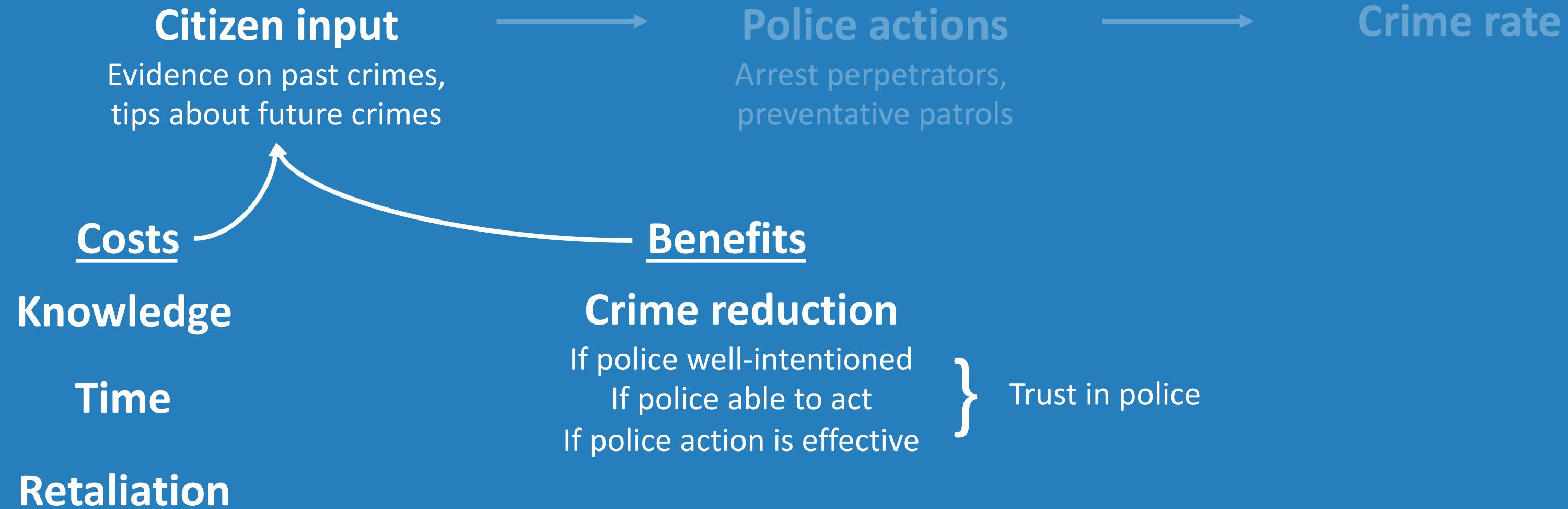
# Theory of change



# Theory of change



# Theory of change



# Community policing

**a.k.a. community-oriented policing**

# Community policing

A strategy for encouraging the public to partner with the police in preventing crime based on the specific needs of the community

Green and Mastrofski (1988), Skogan (2004), Skogan and Hartnett (1997)

# Community policing

Frequent, local beat patrols

Decentralized decision-making

Community engagement

Problem-oriented policing

# Theory of change



# Theory of change





This Study

Cluster-randomized experiments

Six contexts in the Global South

ITT effects of community policing

Standardized surveys, admin. data

# Preview

We find no evidence community policing reduces crime or builds trust

Ex post qualitative analysis → why community policing failed



# Boston



# Chicago

**Who advocates for community policing?**

**Police agencies on every continent**

**30% of U.S. police agencies, 90% of largest**

**“Key operational philosophy” – Intl. Chiefs Council**

**“Essential part of peace building” – UN**

**Response to #BlackLivesMatter,  
#LaVozDeUribeSomosTodos, #EndSARS**

# What is the evidence base for community policing?

- Past trials: U.S., U.K., and Australia
- Patrols, problem-oriented policing reduce crime
- Mixed (and limited) evidence on effects on trust
- Almost no evidence from the Global South
- None study community policing practices together

# Motivation for our design:

**Build evidence in Global South**

**Improve generalizability**

- Intervention comparability
- Outcome comparability

**Test common bundle of practices**

# Six diverse study sites



# Six diverse study sites

	Political freedoms	Regime type	Corruption score	Income group
Brazil	Partly free	Democracy	45 / 100	Upper mid.
Colombia	Partly free	Democracy	39	Upper mid.
Liberia	Partly free	Democracy	32	Low
Pakistan	Partly free	Autocracy	31	Lower mid.
Philippines	Partly free	Autocracy	46	Lower mid.
Uganda	Not free	Autocracy	26	Low

# **Intervention**

**Locally appropriate  
increase in community  
policing practices**



## Intervention standardization

Detailed discussions with police about what would work

“Standardization” workshop  
→ classification of status quo  
→ adjustment of interventions

Approval by police partners

# **Intervention components:**

**Townhall citizen-police meetings**

**Increased frequency of foot patrols**

**Citizen feedback hotlines**

**Community watch forums**

# Interventions by site

	Townhall meetings	Foot patrols	Citizen feedback	Watch forums	Duration (months)
Brazil	Semi-Annual	-	WhatsApp Groups	-	7
Colombia	Bi-Monthly	-	-	-	12
Liberia	Bi-Monthly	Bi-Monthly	-	Yes	11
Pakistan	Monthly	Frequent	Hotline	Yes	6
Philippines	Small groups	Weekly	Hotline	-	17
Uganda	Bi-Monthly	-	-	Yes	13

# **Ethics of working with the police:**

**Obligations above academic  
review**

**Unit-specific assessment of risk**

**Risk monitoring and mitigation  
plan**

# Experimental design:

**Randomly-assign community policing to neighborhoods, villages, or beats within each country**

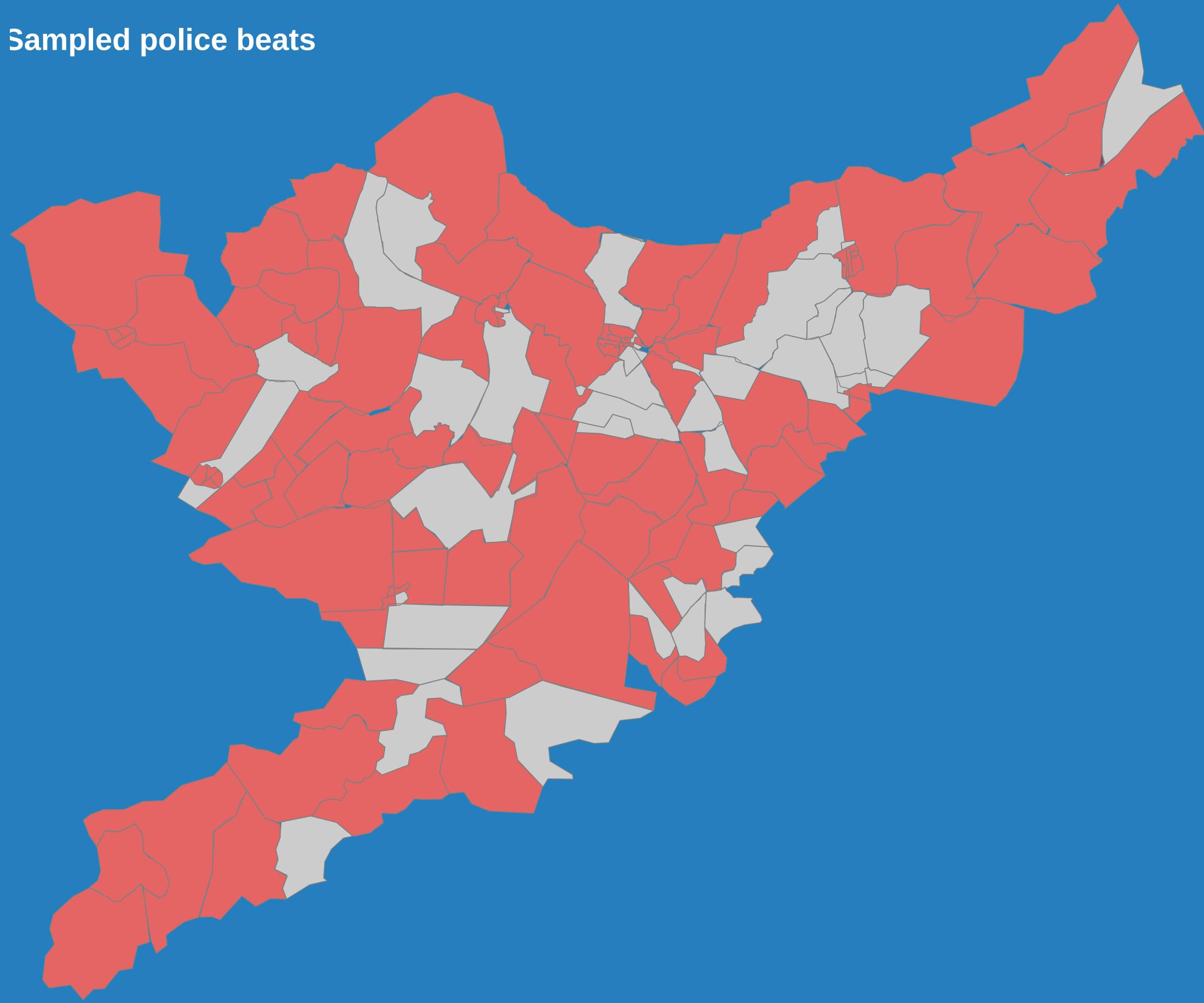
## Study units: police beats



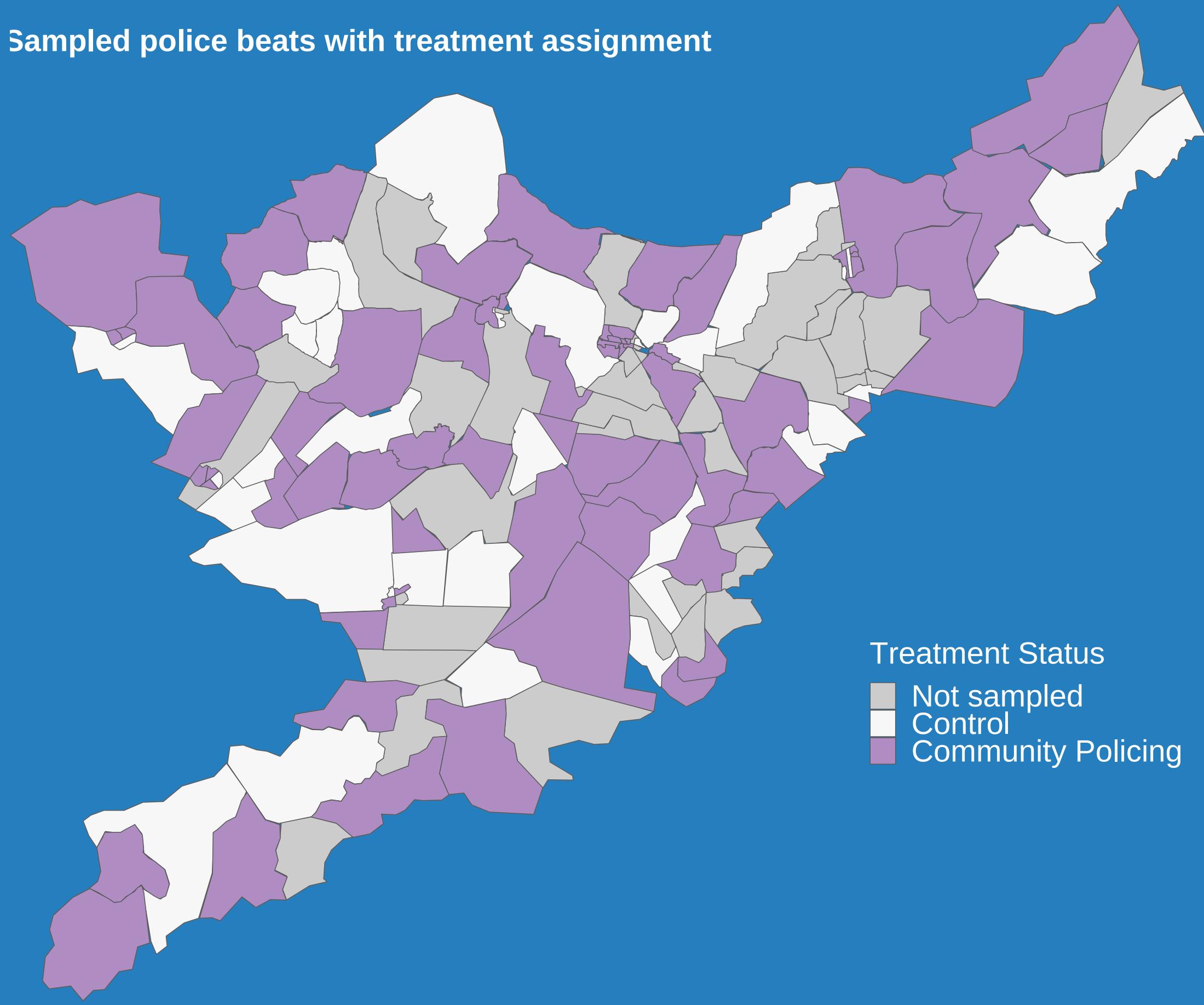
## Study units: police beats



## Sampled police beats



## Sampled police beats with treatment assignment



# Outcomes

1. Crime rate
2. Perceptions of police
3. Police perceptions
4. Cooperation with police

# Theory of change



# Measurement design:

## Face-to-face surveys:

- Randomly-sampled citizens
- Treated and untreated areas
- Baseline and endline

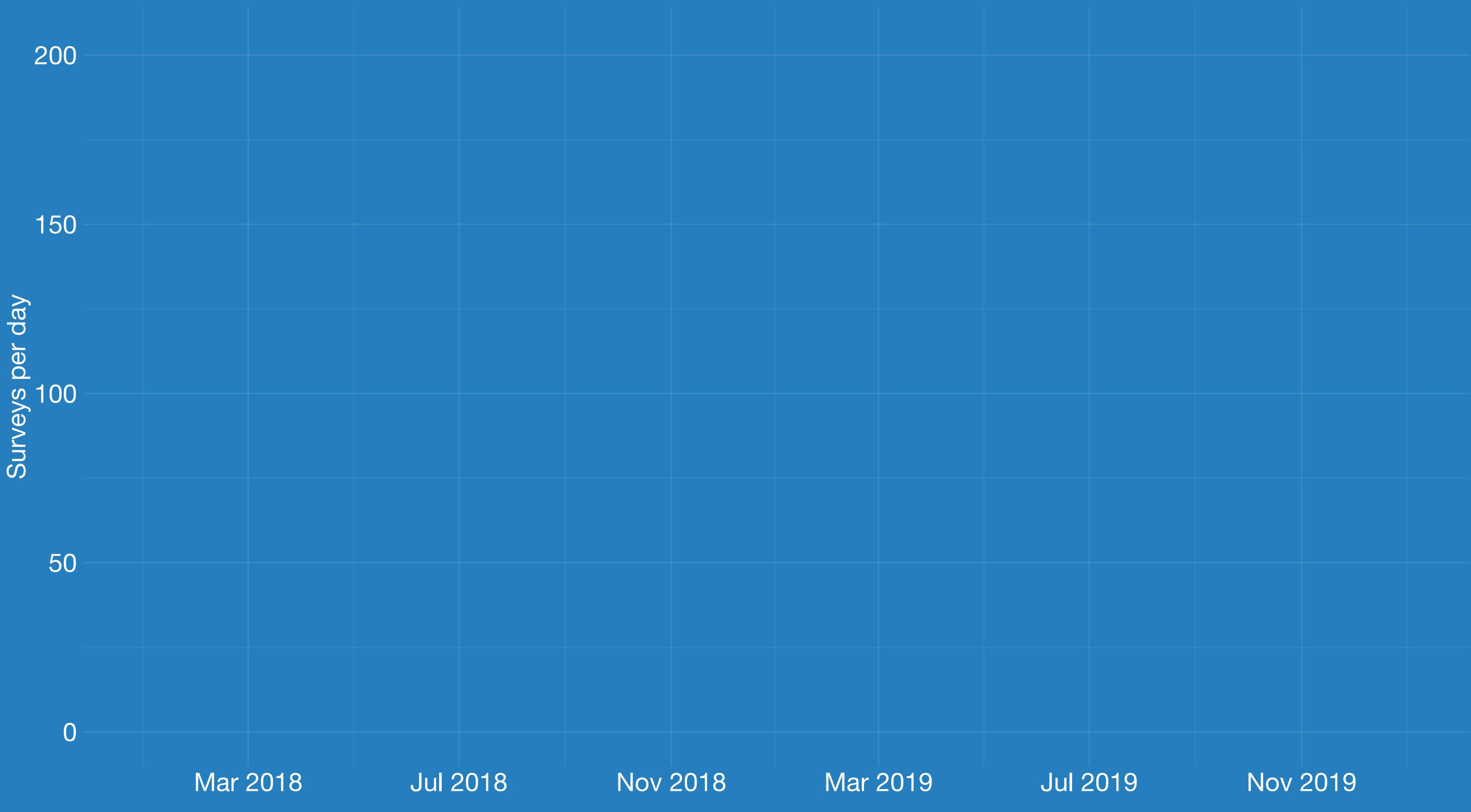
Administrative data from police  
(daily or monthly police blotters)

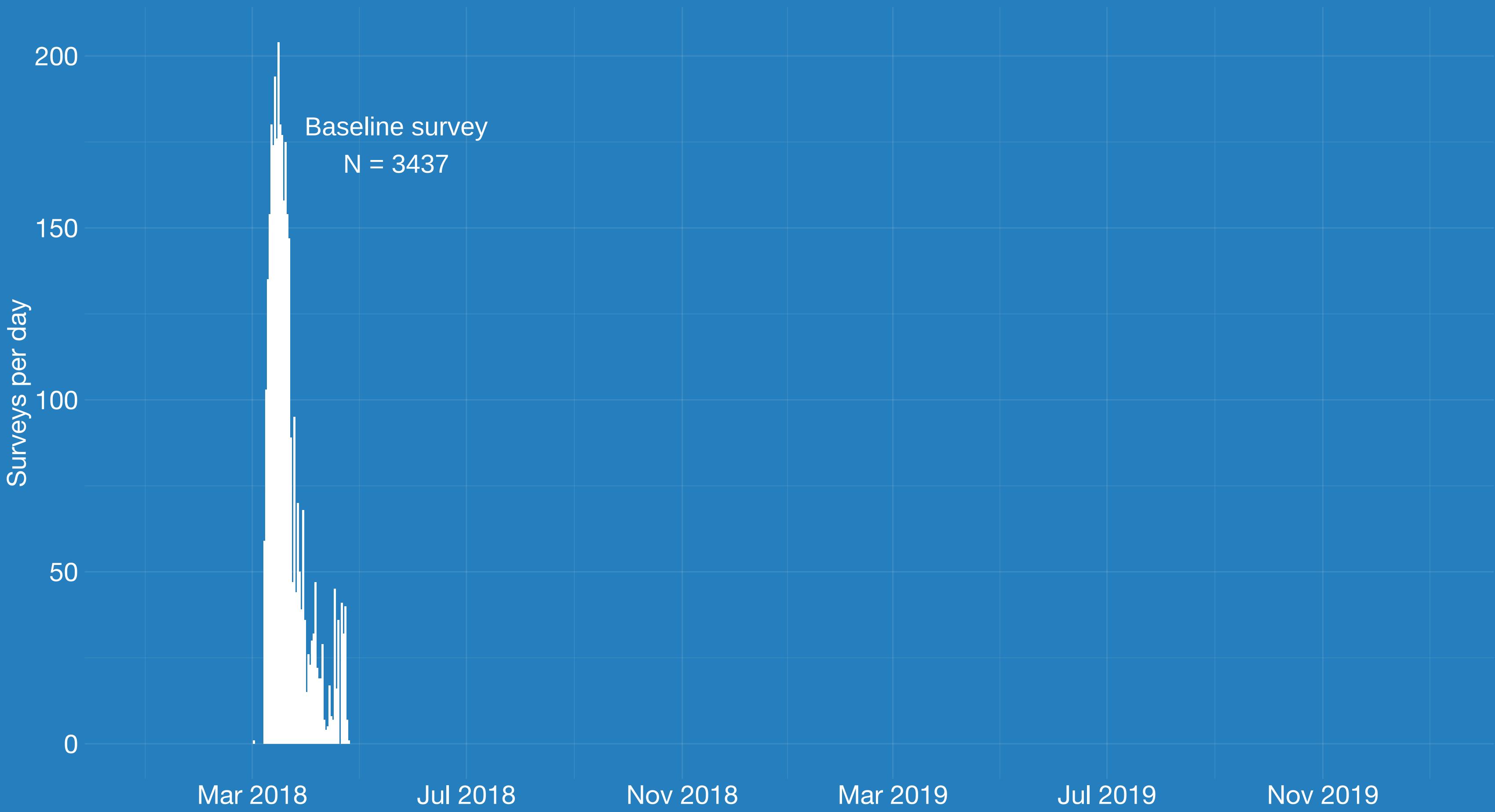
# Standardized measurement

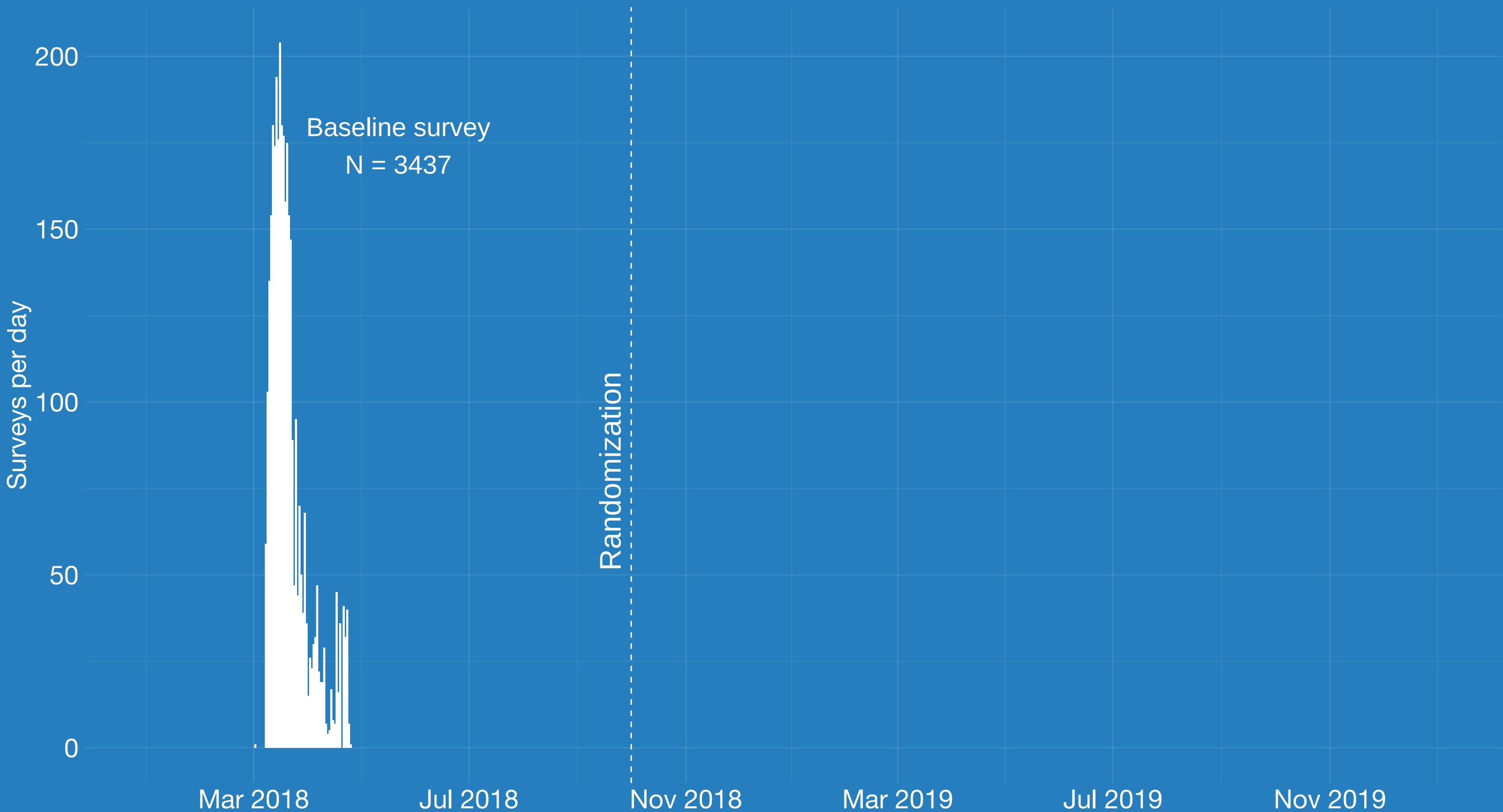
## 1) Develop questionnaire

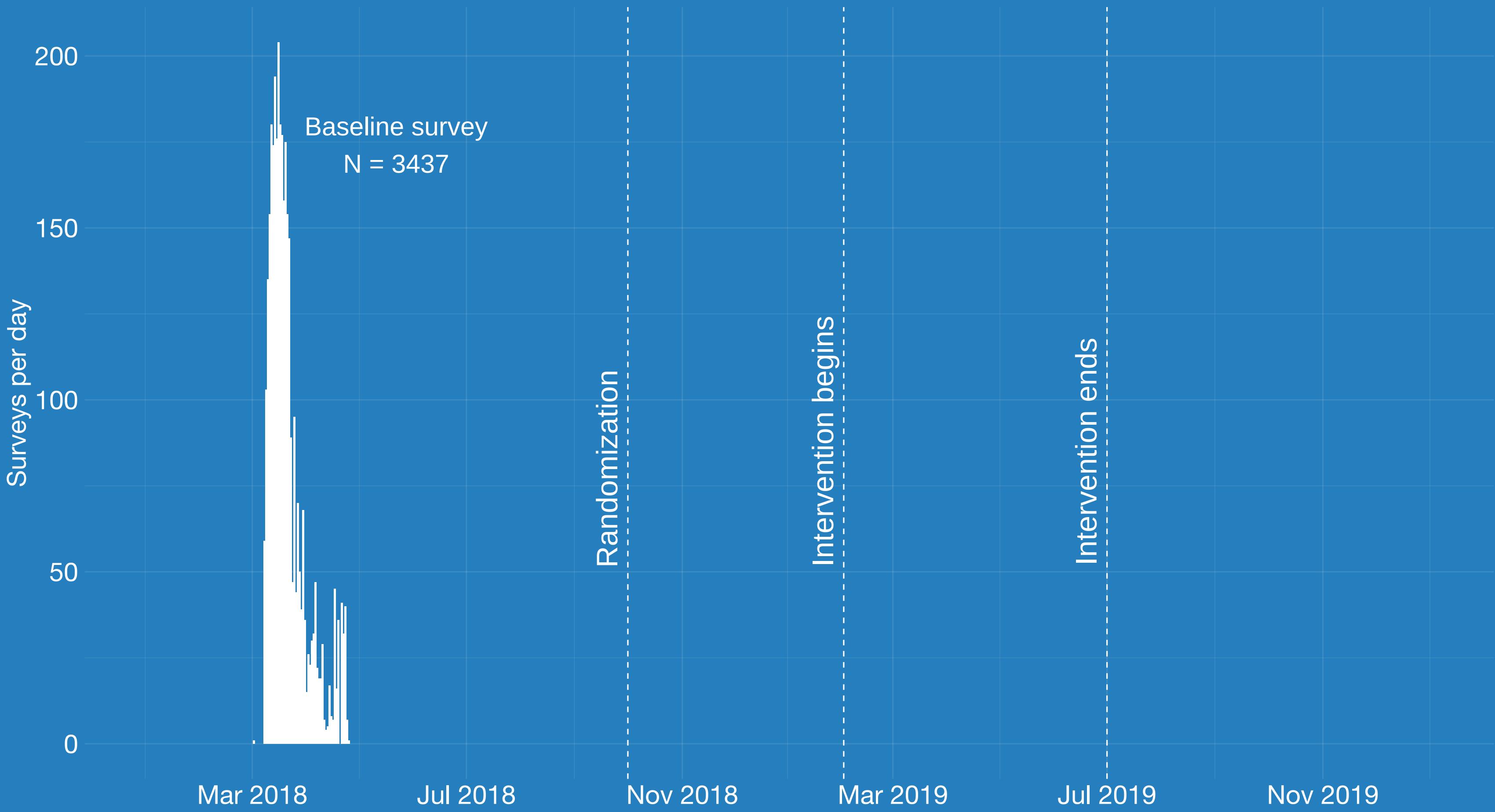
Goal: ask same question that measures same concept

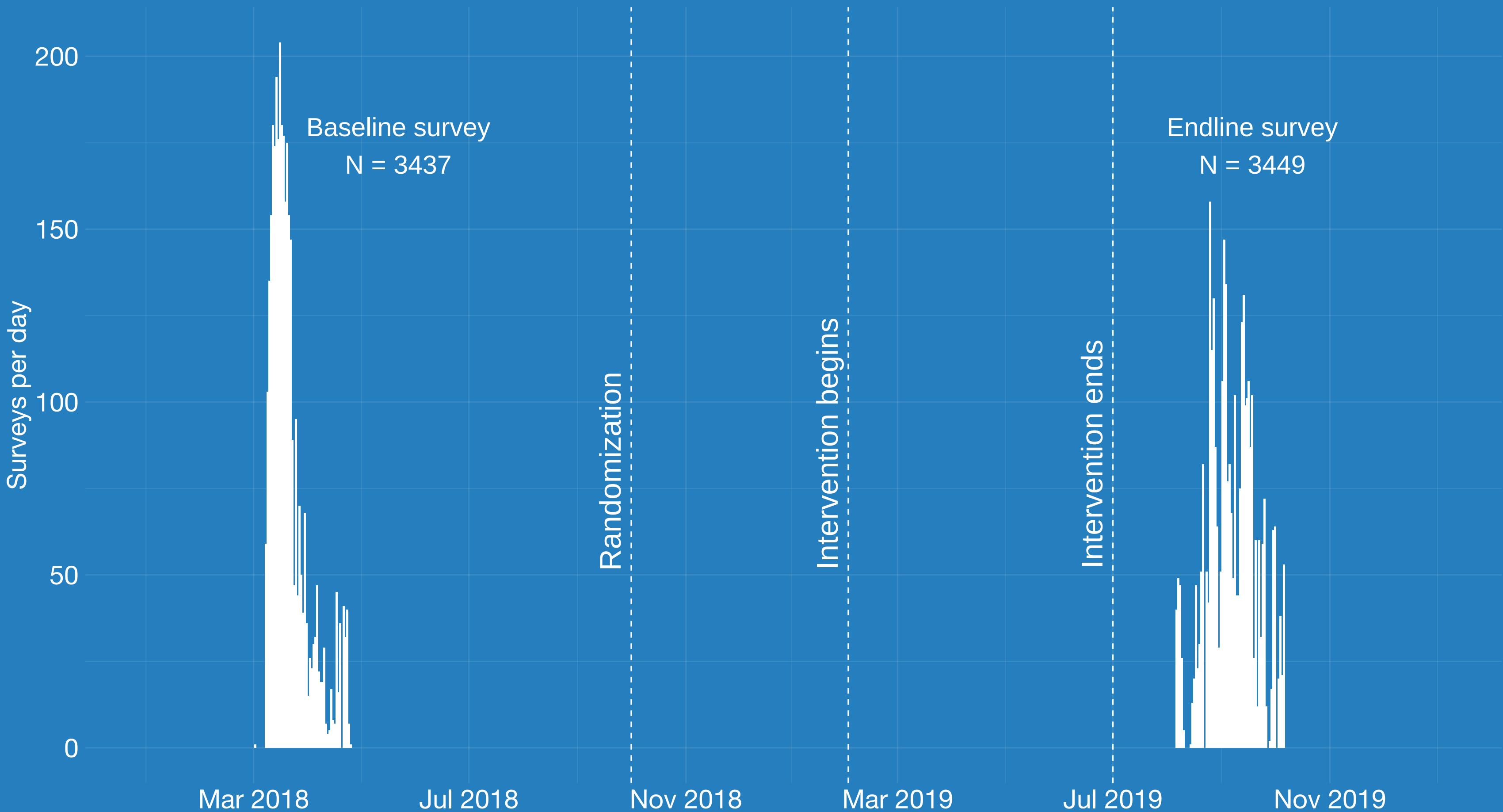
## 2) Localize, adjust common questions, translate











**Coordinated data collection:**

**17,000 citizen interviews**

**650 officer interviews**

**Crime data on 600  
neighborhoods, villages**

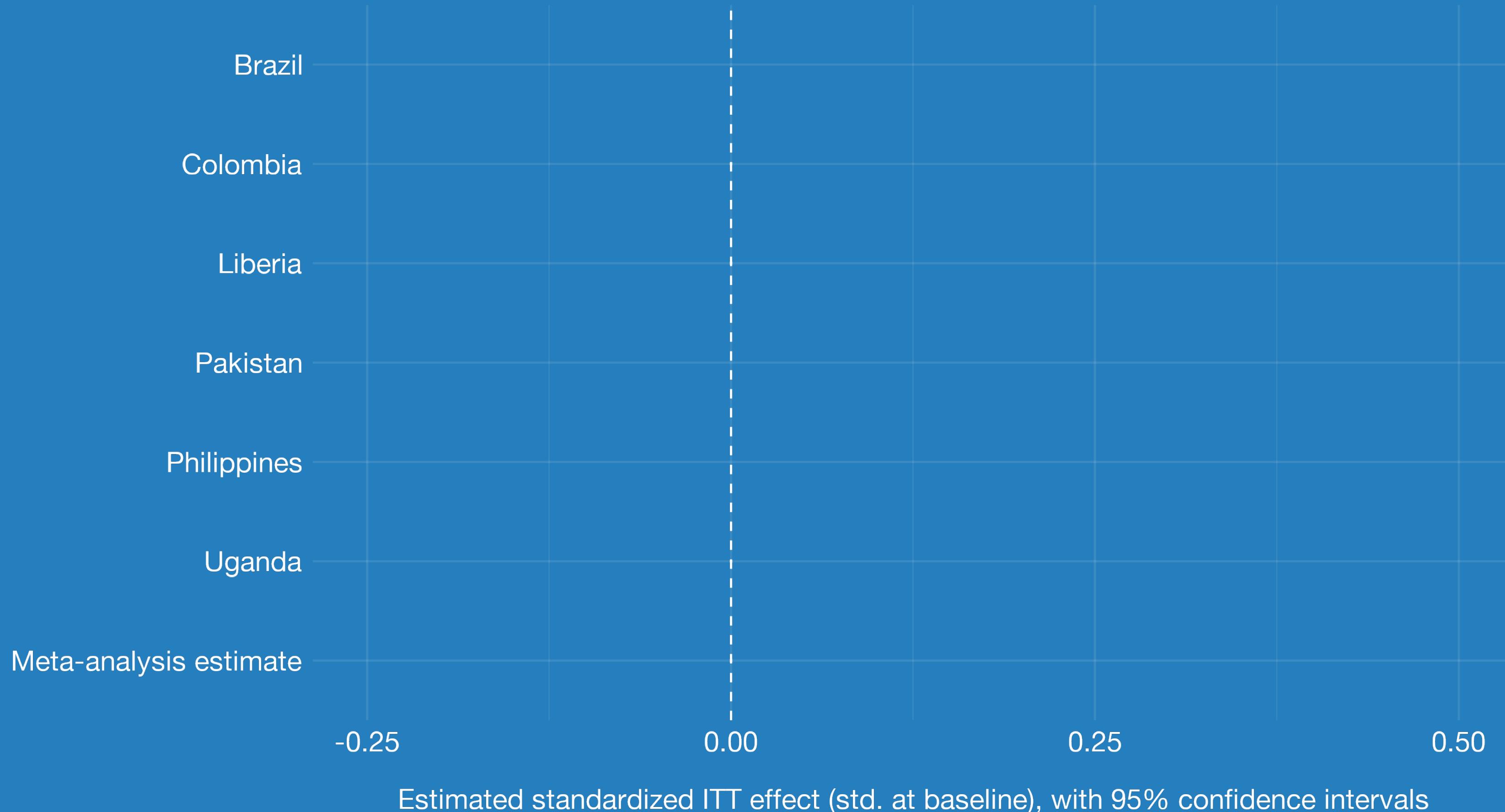
# Meta-analysis design

**Standard random effects estimator**

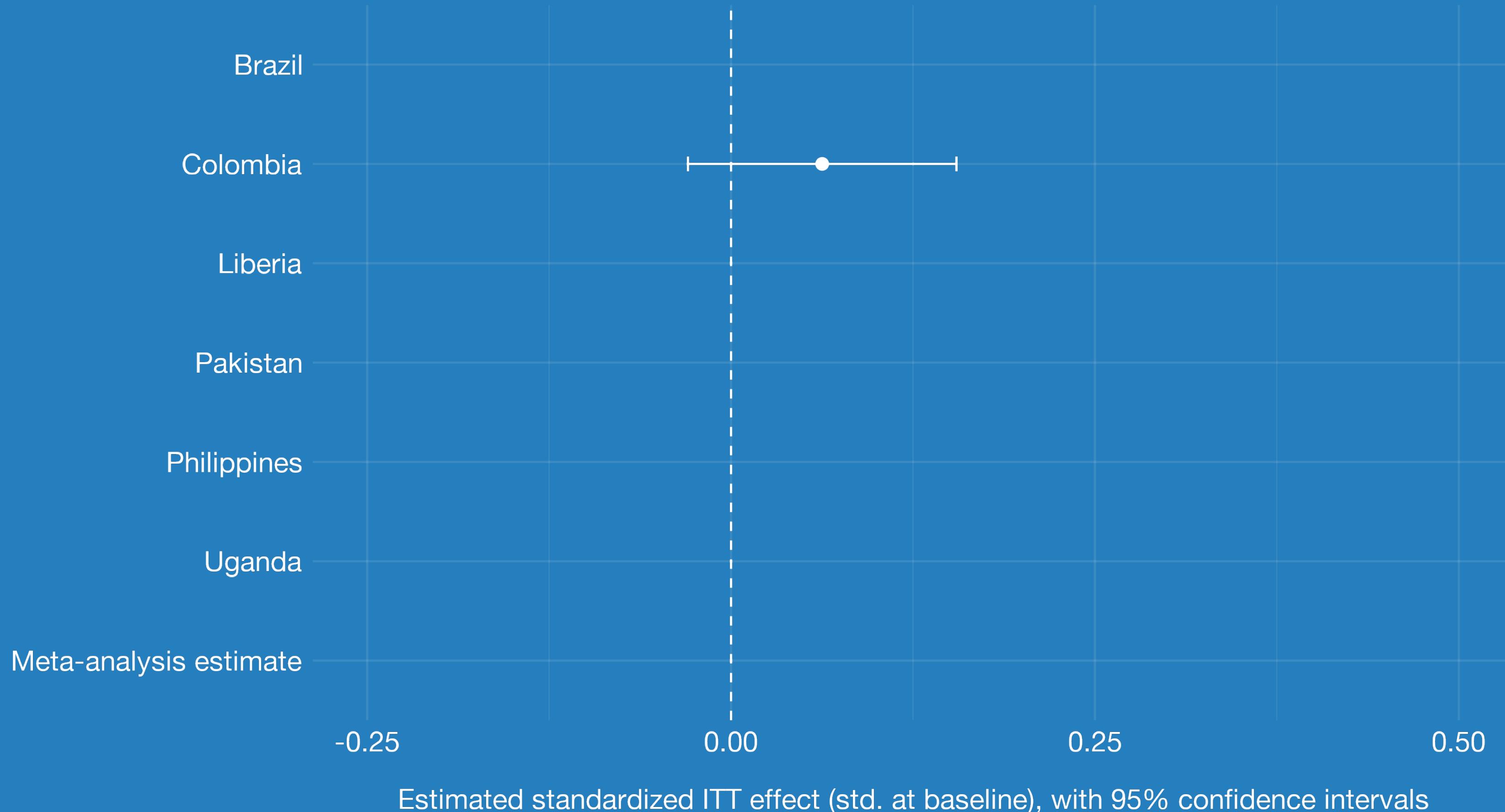
**Weighted by precision of effect estimate, across-study variance**

**Average ITT effect, s.d. of effects**

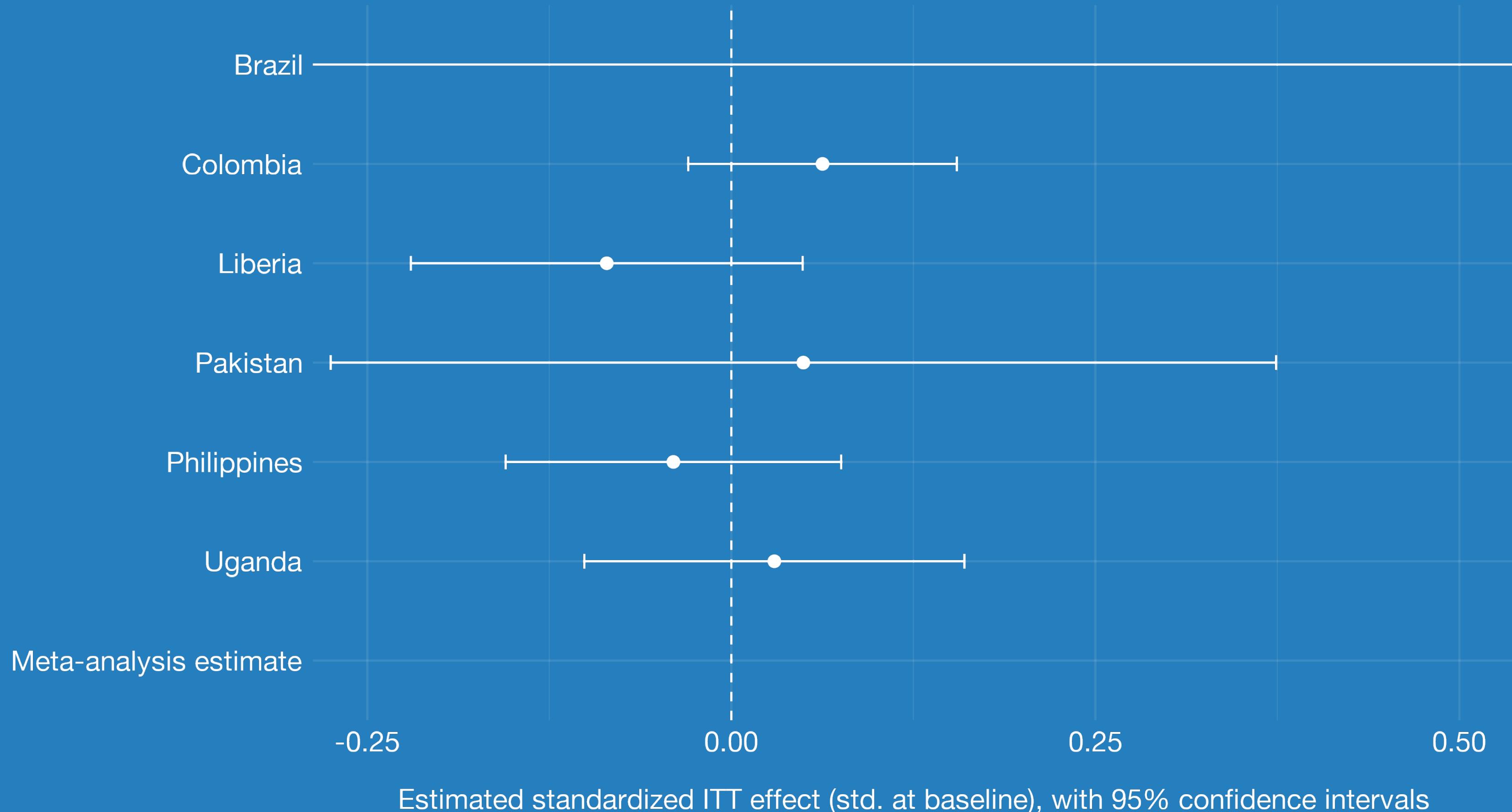
# ITT effect of community policing on crime tips



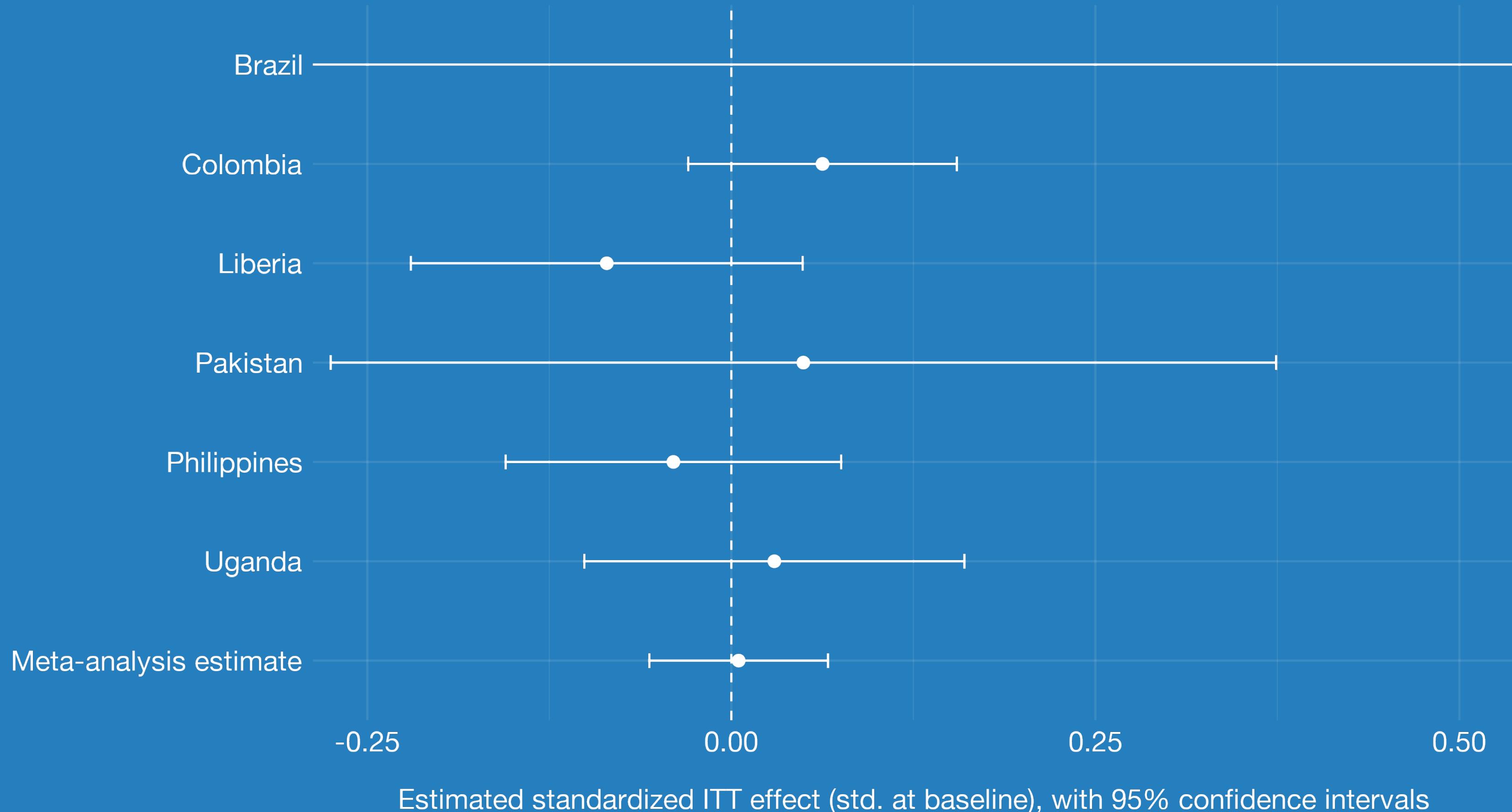
# ITT effect of community policing on crime tips



# ITT effect of community policing on crime tips



# ITT effect of community policing on crime tips



## Brazil study design:

**Encouragement:** one community meeting, encouragement to form police-community WhatsApp group

**Treatment:** group actually formed

**Compliance rate below 5%**

**IV estimates of complier average causal effect**



**Overall findings:**

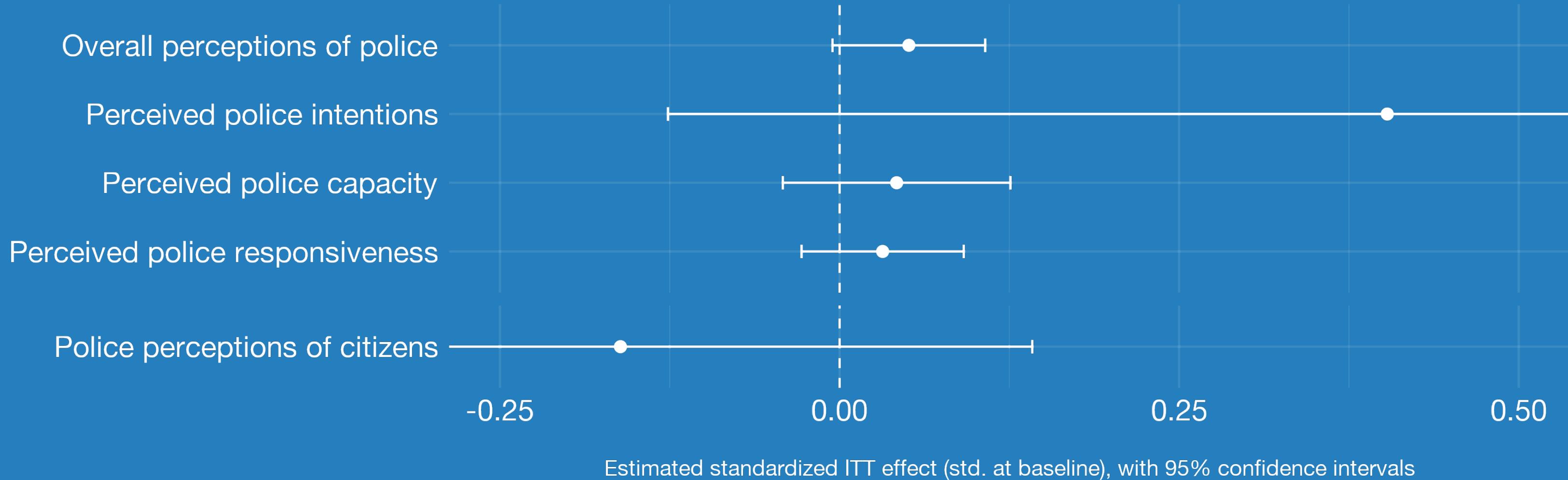
**No impact on crime, trust,  
or cooperation**

**Limited positive results on some  
citizen attitudes, but only in some  
contexts**

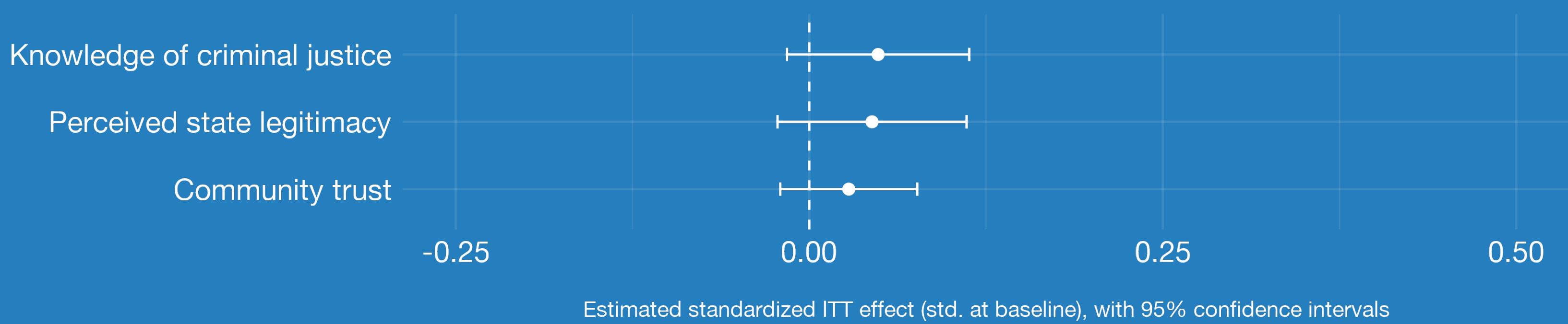
# Theory of change



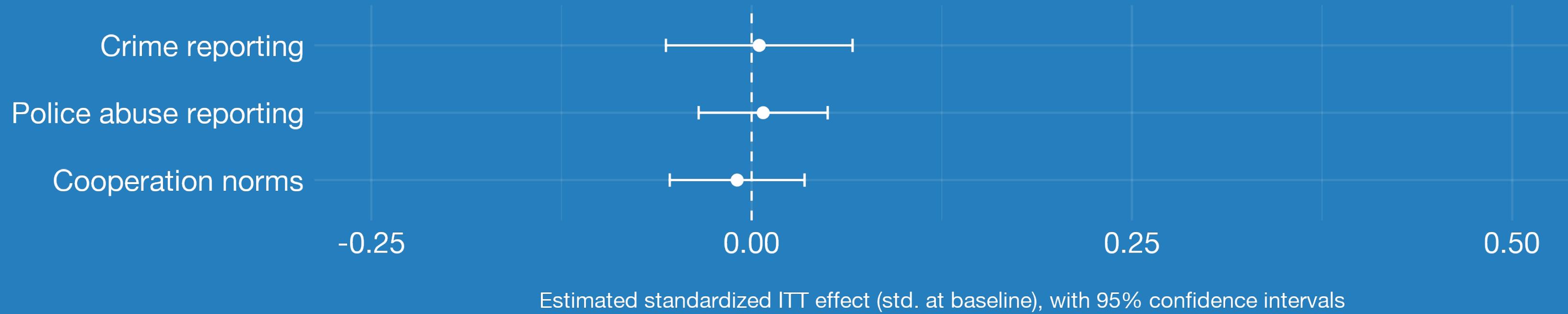
# Trust police will act



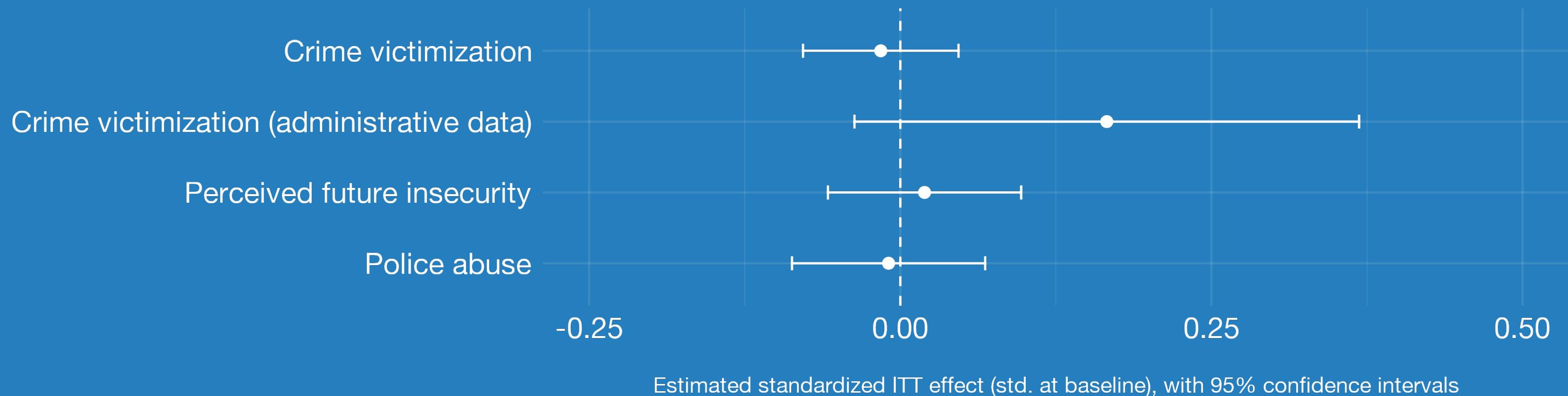
# Other mechanisms



# Cooperation with police

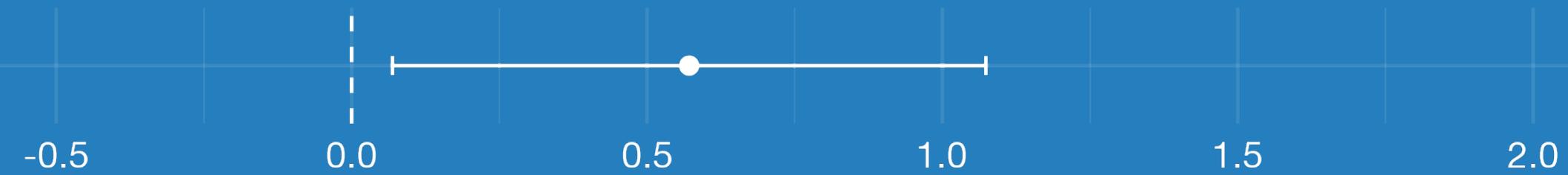


# Crime and insecurity



Overall

Compliance



Study

Brazil

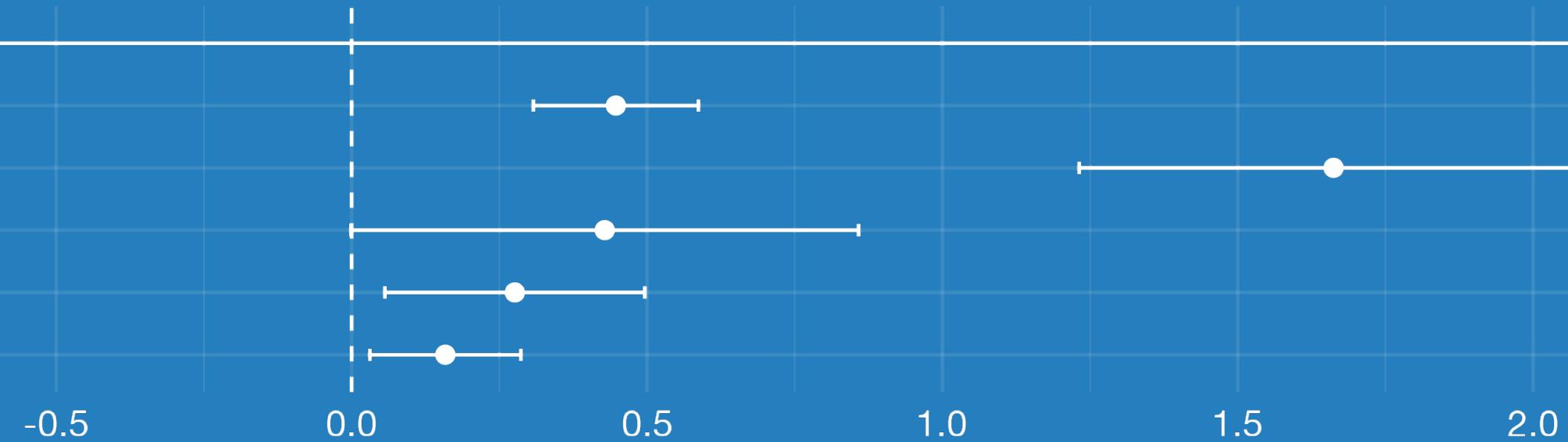
Colombia

Liberia

Pakistan

Philippines

Uganda



Component

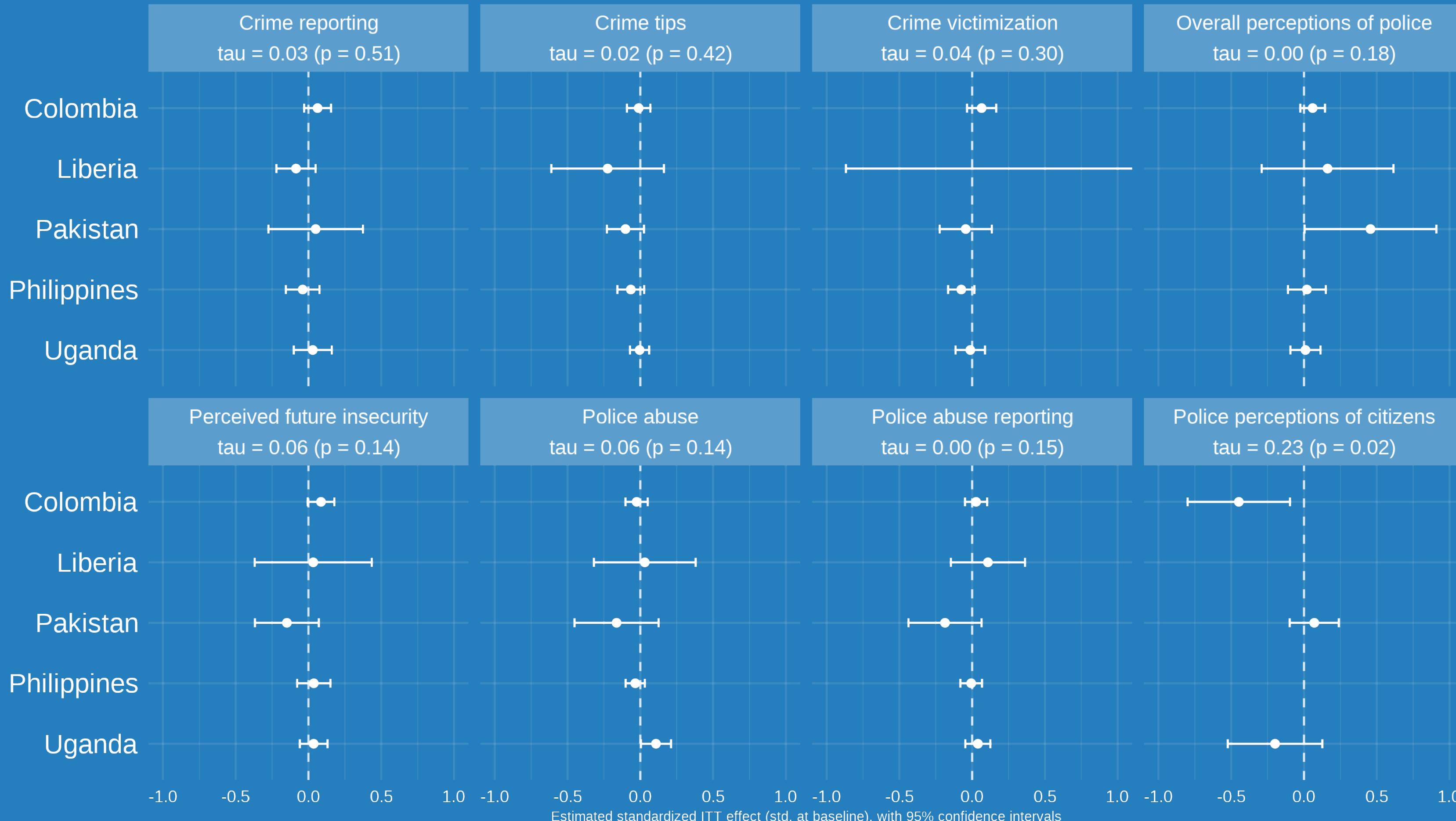
Community meeting awareness

Foot patrol frequency

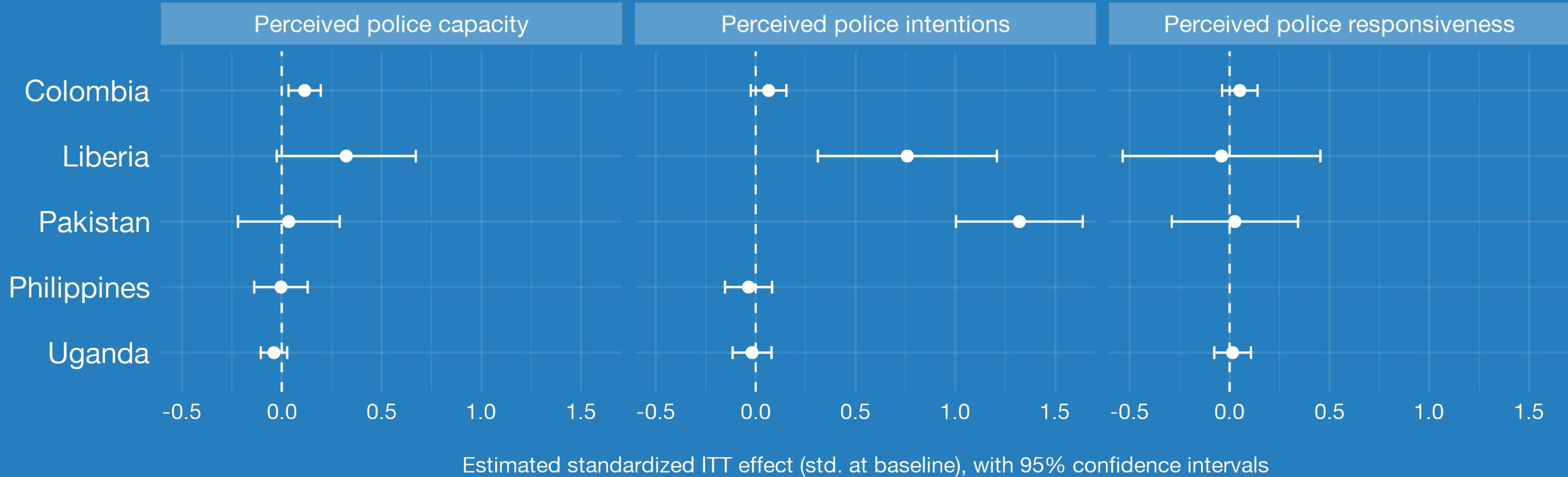
Vehicle patrol frequency



Estimated standardized ITT effect (std. at baseline), with 95% confidence intervals



# Mixed attitudes results



**Significant results shown survive multiple comparisons adjustment.**

# Inferential threats

- 1. Crime displacement**
- 2. Duration of intervention**
- 3. Differential attrition**

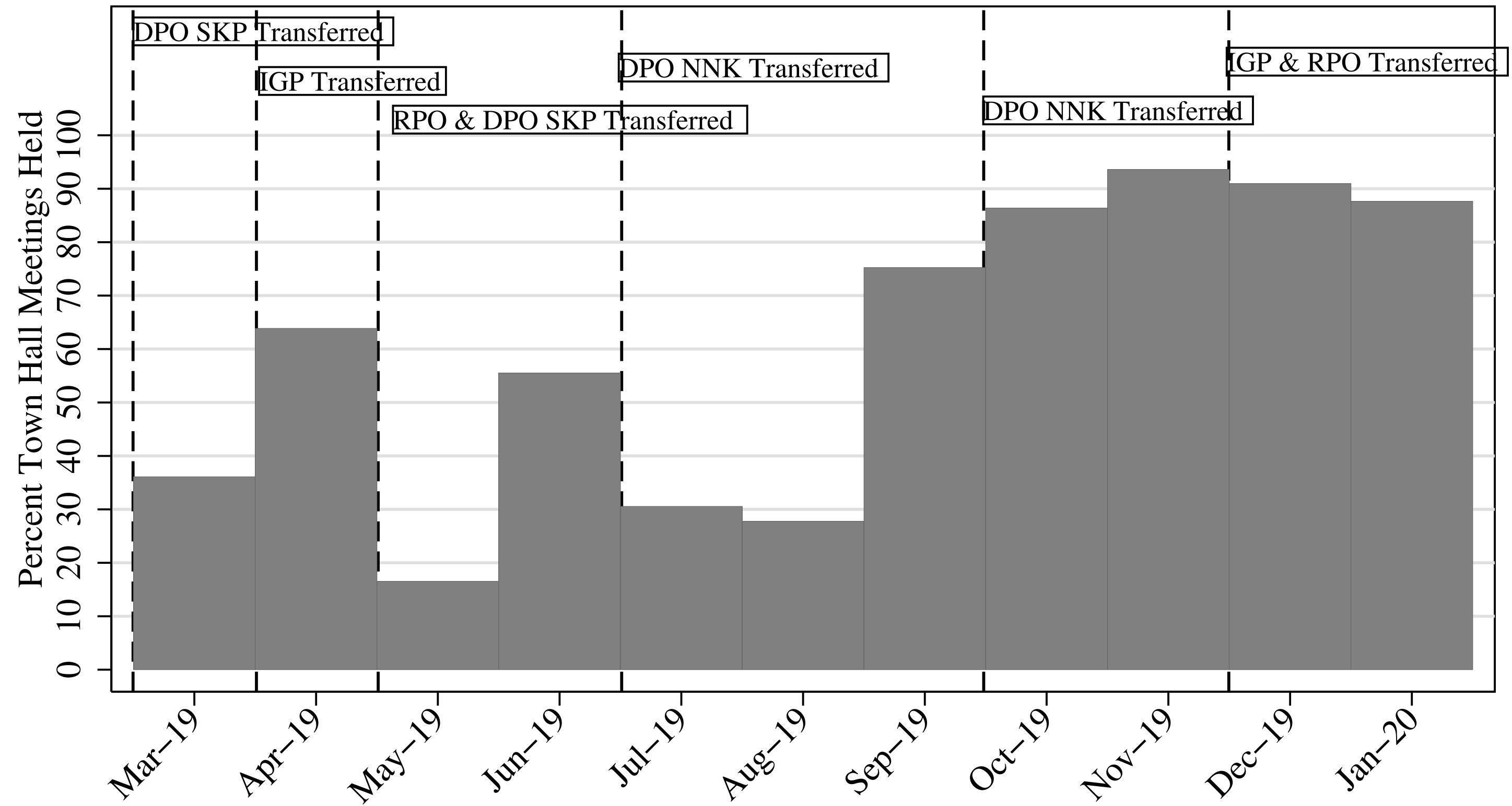
# **Explanations of null:**

- 1. Lack of prioritization by leaders**
- 2. Rapid officer rotation**
- 3. Low capacity to respond**

# Rapid officer rotation

In many sites, officers are regularly rotated between stations

	Officer rotation rate
Colombia	15 months
Pakistan	1 month
Philippines	2.75 months
Uganda	17 months



Source: Police administrative records of the monthly town hall meetings (Feb 2019– Feb 2020)

Note: (1) IGP is Inspector General of Police, RPO is Regional Police Officer; DPO is District Police Officer

(2) RPO oversees our intervention at the Range level and directs any actions related to intervention.

(3) DPO oversees intervention at the district level including scheduling, daily compliance and implementation

# Capacity and resource constraints

	Officers per capita	Budget per officer
Brazil	1:473	\$56,000
Colombia	1:333	\$18,000
Liberia	1:950	\$3,642
Pakistan	1:560	\$3,400
Philippines	1:991	\$18,000
Uganda	1:910	–

# **Explanations of null:**

- 1. Lack of prioritization by leaders**
- 2. Rapid officer rotation**
- 3. Low capacity to respond**

# Explanations of null:

1. Lack of prioritization by leaders
2. Rapid officer rotation
3. Low capacity to respond
4. Citizen selection into townhalls
5. Absence of a social movement

# Implications

1. Structural reforms indicated
2. Exporting reforms → ?!
3. Skepticism about past evidence

# Community policing

## Evidence from six field experiments

Graeme Blair, Fotini Christia, Jeremy Weinstein, Eric Arias, Emile Badran, Robert A. Blair, Ali Cheema, Thiemo Fetzer, Guy Grossman, Dotan Haim, Rebecca Hanson, Ali Hasanain, Ben Kachero, Dorothy Kronick, Benjamin Morse, Robert Muggah, Matthew Nanes, Catlan Reardon, Tara Slough, Nico Ravanilla, Jacob N. Shapiro, Barbara Silva, Pedro C. L. Souza, Lily Tsai, and Anna Wilke

Article in *Science* magazine, 2021

Cambridge University Press book, 2023

# Thank you!

**graeme.blair@gmail.com**

**graemeblair.com**

Hyp.	Outcome index	Index components	Data source
<b>Primary outcomes</b>			
1a.	Crime victimization index <sup>a</sup>	Violent crime (personal); Nonviolent crime (personal); Violent crime (community); Non-violent crime (community)	Citizen survey
1b.	Perceived future insecurity index	Feared violent crime; Feared walking	Citizen survey
2.	Overall perceptions of police index	Trust in police; Trust in service of police	Citizen survey
3a.	Police perceptions of citizens index <sup>b</sup>	Abuse index; Accountability index; Corruption index; Empathy index	Officer survey
3b.	Police abuse	Abuse (binary); Bribe amount; Bribe frequency	Citizen survey
4a.	Crime reporting index	Violent crime (personal); Violent crime (community); Nonviolent crime reporting (community); Nonviolent crime reporting (personal); Resolution of crime index	Citizen survey
4b.	Crime tips index	Crime tips index	Citizen survey
		Tips count (hotline); Tips count (comment box)	Administrative
4c.	Police abuse reporting index	Beating community member; Verbal abuse	Citizen survey
<b>Mechanism outcomes</b>			
M1a.	Perceived police intentions index	Corruption; Treat fairly; Treat seriously	Citizen survey
M1b.	Knowledge of criminal justice <sup>c</sup>	Legal knowledge; Knowledge of how to report crimes	Citizen survey
M1c.	Cooperation norms index	Reporting norm (theft); Reporting norm (domestic abuse); Obey police norm	Citizen survey
M2a.	Perceived police capacity index	Police timeliness; Police investigation capacity	Citizen survey
M2b.	Perceived police responsiveness		Citizen survey
<b>Secondary outcomes</b>			
S1.	Perceived state legitimacy <sup>d</sup>		Citizen survey
S2.	Community trust		Citizen survey
C.	Compliance index	Foot patrol frequency; Vehicle patrol frequency; Community meeting awareness	Citizen survey

	Brazil	Colombia	Liberia	Pakistan	Philippines	Uganda
Unit of assignment	Neighborhoods	Beats	Communities	Beats	Barangays <sup>a</sup>	Police stations (CP); villages (alt.)
Random assignment strategy	Two-arm (control, CP <sup>b</sup> )	Factorial (control, CP, alt. <sup>c</sup> , CP + alt.)	Two-arm (control, CP)	Three-arm (control, CP, alt. <sup>d</sup> )	Two-arm (control, CP) with addl. cross-randomizations <sup>e</sup>	Three arm (Control, CP, CP+alt. <sup>f</sup> )
Blocking variables <sup>g</sup>	Municipality	Police station	Police zone	Police station	Municipality, baseline crime rate	Baseline covariates
Officers randomized <sup>h</sup>	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Duration of treatment	7 months	12 months	11 months	6 months	17 months	13 months
Citizen surveys						
Design	Panel	Panel	Cross-section	Panel	Cross-section	Panel
Baseline	✓	✓	✓	✓	Partial	✓
Endline	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Officer surveys						
Design	Cross-section	Cross-section	Cross-section	Cross-section	Cross-section	Panel
Baseline	✓	✗	✗	✓	Partial	✓
Endline	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Administrative crime data	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Site	Experimental condition	Town hall meetings	Foot patrols	Problem-oriented policing	Citizen feedback	Watch forum
Brazil	Control	Never	Occasional	No	No	No
	Treatment	Semi-annual	Occasional	Yes	WhatsApp	No
Colombia	Control	None	Daily	Yes	Hotline; Mobile application	No
	Treatment	Bi-monthly	Daily	Yes	Hotline; Mobile application	No
Liberia	Control	Occasional	Occasional	No	No	Some
	Treatment	Bi-monthly	Bi-monthly	No	No	Yes
Pakistan	Control	No	Occasional	No	Hotline	No
	Treatment	Monthly	Frequent	Yes	Hotline (use encouraged)	Yes
Philippines	Control	No	Occasional	No	No	No
	Treatment	No	Weekly	Yes	Hotline <sup>a</sup>	No
Uganda	Control	Never	Occasional	No	No	Some
	Treatment	Bi-monthly	Occasional	No	No	Yes

	Brazil	Colombia	Liberia	Pakistan	Philippines	Uganda
Political freedoms <sup>a</sup>	Partly free	Partly free	Partly free	Partly free	Partly free	Not free
Regime type <sup>b</sup>	Democracy	Democracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Autocracy	Autocracy
Corruption score <sup>c</sup>	45 / 100	39	32	31	46	26
Criminal justice score <sup>d</sup>	34 / 100	34	31	35	31	31
Income category <sup>e</sup>	Upper mid.	Upper mid.	Low	Lower mid.	Lower mid.	Low
Inequality (Gini coef.) <sup>f</sup>	54	50	35	33	44	42
Study site	Santa Caterina	Medellín	Monrovia	Punjab Province	Sorgoson Province	-
Type	State	Large city	Large city	Two districts	Province	Country
Rate of crime victimization (pct.) <sup>g</sup>						
Simple assault	1	5	6	5	3	6
Burglary	4	15	17	16	2	19
Armed robbery	0	6	3	10	0	2
Murder	1	9	7	21	1	19
Trust in police (pct.) <sup>h</sup>	79	47	46	23	86	62
Officer intentions (pct.) <sup>i</sup>	-	78	-	64	-	79
Citizen cooperation (pct.) <sup>j</sup>	1	5	-	2	1	5
Police capacity indicators <sup>k</sup>						
Vehicle	✓			✓		
Motorbike	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Gun	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Radio	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Computer	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Printer	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Camera	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Officers per capita	1:473	1:333	1:950	1:560 <sup>l</sup>	1:991 <sup>o</sup>	1:910 <sup>p</sup>
Budget per officer	\$56,000	\$18,000	\$3,642	\$3,400 <sup>l</sup>	\$18,000	-
Citizens per station	-	143,000 <sup>m</sup>	21,428	500,000 <sup>n</sup>	800,000	-
Officer rotation rate	-	15 months	-	1 month	2.75 months <sup>q</sup>	17 months

Group formed var.	Estimate	S.E.	p-value	Conf. Int.	F test statistic	F test p-value
Presence of meeting: June 2018	0.022	0.127	0.866	(-0.237, 0.281)	0.029	0.865
Presence of meeting: Oct 2018	-0.018	0.141	0.902	(-0.306, 0.271)	0.015	0.901
Share of area under RdV: June 2018	0.020	0.054	0.714	(-0.091, 0.131)	0.137	0.711
Share of area under RdV: Oct 2018	0.044	0.056	0.439	(-0.070, 0.158)	0.617	0.432
Know about RdV	-0.005	0.057	0.935	(-0.122, 0.113)	0.007	0.934

Intervention Effect direction	Crime incidence	Perceptions of safety	<i>Outcome measure</i>			Citizen reporting
			Perceptions of police	Police accountability		
<i>Community Fora</i>						
Increase	–	–	1	–	–	–
Null	–	1	–	–	–	–
<i>Community Presence</i>						
Increase	–	2	2	1	1	1
Null	4	3	4	–	–	1
Decrease	10	–	–	–	–	–
Mixed	8 (7 -/o; 1 -/+)	1 (+/o)	1 (+/o)	1 (+/o)	1 (+/o)	–
<i>Citizen Feedback</i>						
Null	–	–	1	–	–	–
Mixed	–	–	1 (+/o)	–	–	–
<i>Problem-Oriented Policing</i>						
Increase	–	2	1	–	–	–
Null	1	1	1	–	–	–
Decrease	6	–	–	–	–	–



## Santa Catarina State, Brazil

**Crime low relative to Brazil, but high in absolute terms**

**Organized crime present**

**Team: Fetzer, Muggah, Silva,  
Souza**

**Partner: Santa Catarina Military  
Police**

**Locations: 196 neighborhoods**

**Duration: 7 months**

# City of Medellin, Colombia

**Most violent city in world in '80s;  
fearsome police reputation**

**Marked improvement in crime,  
but little increase in citizen trust**

**Team: Arias, Hanson, Kronick,  
Slough**

**Partner: Medellin Metro. Police**

**Locations: 347 police beats**

**Duration: 12 months**





## **City of Monrovia, Liberia**

**New police force constituted  
since end of civil war in 2003**

**High crime and vigilantism**

**Limited state reach**

**Team: Morse, Tsai**

**Partner: Liberian National Police**

**Locations: 100 neighborhoods**

**Duration: 11 months**

# **Sheikhupura region, Pakistan**

**Lower crime, but police among least trusted institutions**

**Police constrained in investigating major crimes**

**Team: Cheema, Hasanain, Shapiro**

**Partner: Punjab Police**

**Locations: 108 beats**

**Duration: 6 months**





# Sorsogon Province, Philippines

**Citizens associate police with  
Duterte's drug war taking place  
in other parts of the country**

**Low-level insurgency**

**Team: Haim, Nanes, Ravanilla**

**Partner: Philippines National  
Police**

**Locations: 298 barangays**

**Duration: 17 months**

# Nationwide in Uganda

**Police serve dual role: prevent crime, maintain power for Museveni**

**Trust in police is low, but middle of pack in Africa**

**Team: R. Blair, Grossman, Wilke**

**Partner: Ugandan Police Force**

**Locations: 72 police stations**

**Duration: 13 months**

