

# The Impact of Internal Oversight on Arrest and Use of Force

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## Research question

- What is the effect of internal oversight on police behavior?
- Internal oversight = internal affairs investigations of complaints against police officers.

## Motivation

- Only 51% of civilians report having confidence in the police (Brenan, 2021).
- Significant interest in holding police officers accountable for misconduct, especially excessive use of force.
- Evidence that increased police reduce crime (e.g., Levitt, 1997) → desire to find accountability methods that do not generate unintended consequences such as de-policing.
- Most common accountability method: **internal affairs investigations**.
- Scarce evidence on the impact of internal affairs investigations (Rozema & Schanzenbach, 2020).

## Methodology

- Regression discontinuity design:** compare the behavior of investigated officers right before and after a complaint was filed.

$$Y_{cit} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \times \mathbf{1}(After_{cit}) + \alpha_2 \times Diff_{cit} + \alpha_3 \times \mathbf{1}(After_{cit}) \times Diff_{cit} + u_{cit}$$

Note:  $Diff = Call\ date - Complaint\ filing\ date$ ;  $After = 1$  if  $Diff \geq 0$ .

**Identifying assumption:** All other determinants of the outcome variables vary smoothly across the threshold.

- Difference-in-differences design:** compare investigated officers to uninvestigated officers, before and after a complaint.

$$Y_{cit} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \times PostTreat_{cit} + Officer_i + MonthYear_t + u_{cit}$$

**Identifying assumption:** Absent complaint, the behavior of officers who were investigated would have changed similarly to other officers who had never investigated.

## Data

Police data from one of the 30 largest US cities, by population:

- Internal affairs: complaints filed between 2014-2021, including officer names, allegation type, date filed, finding (sustained or not), disciplinary action.
- 911 calls for service: officer names, call description, priority, location.
- Outcome variables: arrest, use of force.

	(1) All Allegations	(2) Sustained	(3) Not Sustained
Unlawful Arrest/Detention	0.0361 (0.187)	0.00988 (0.0990)	0.0647 (0.246)
Unlawful Search/Entry	0.128 (0.334)	0.106 (0.308)	0.151 (0.358)
Excessive Use of Force	0.198 (0.399)	0.0123 (0.111)	0.402 (0.491)
Discrimination	0.0129 (0.113)	0 (0)	0.0270 (0.162)
Unprofessional/Verbal	0.0451 (0.208)	0.0148 (0.121)	0.0782 (0.269)
Non-civilian Allegation	0.744 (0.437)	0.862 (0.346)	0.615 (0.487)
Disciplined	0.518 (0.500)	0.985 (0.121)	0.00809 (0.0897)
Observations	776	405	371

Standard deviations in parentheses

Table 1: Summary statistics (allegation types)

## Results: Regression discontinuity design

- Do investigated officers change their arrest and use of force behavior?**

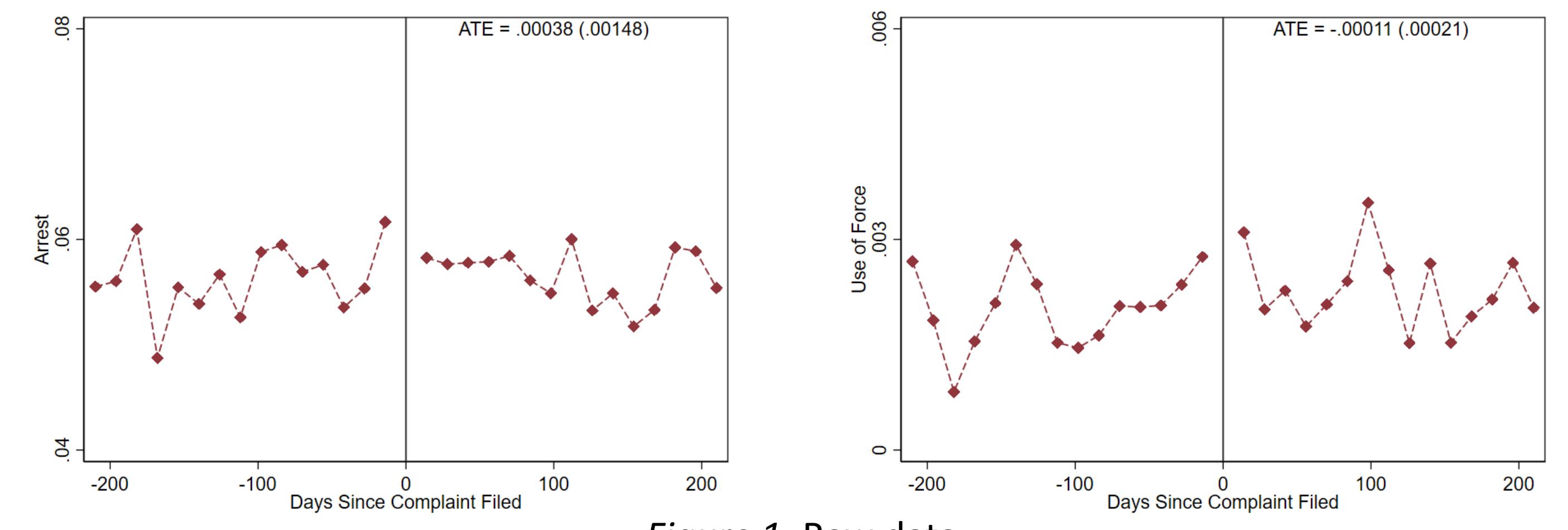


Figure 1: Raw data

- An internal affair investigation of a complaint *does not have a statistically significant effect* on arrest or use of force. The estimated effects are 0.6% and 5.5%, respectively.

## Validity threats

- Does their assignment change as a result of an investigation?**

	(1) Dispatched	(2) Predicted Arrest	(3) Predicted UOF
After Complaint	-0.00658 (0.00571)	0.000228 (0.00104)	-0.0000686 (0.000105)
N	153324	168835	148354
Control Mean	0.245	0.0569	0.00200
Bandwidth	147.9	129.1	110.5

Standard errors in parentheses

Table 2: Effect of internal oversight on officer assignment

- The results are not driven by an incapacitation effect nor a change in the types of calls that the officers are dispatched to.

## Heterogeneity

- Do the results depend on the allegation type or punishment?**

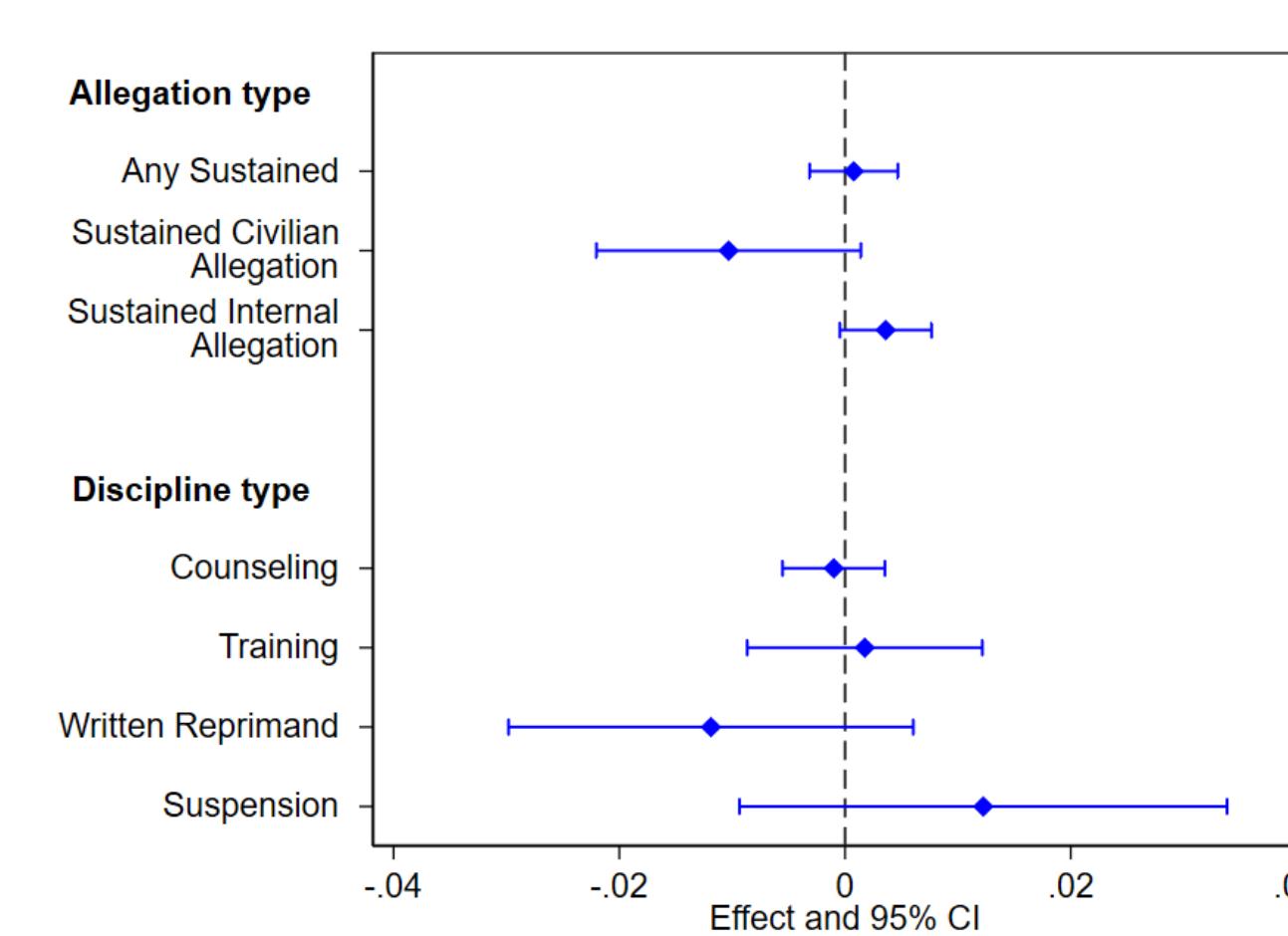


Figure 2: Arrest

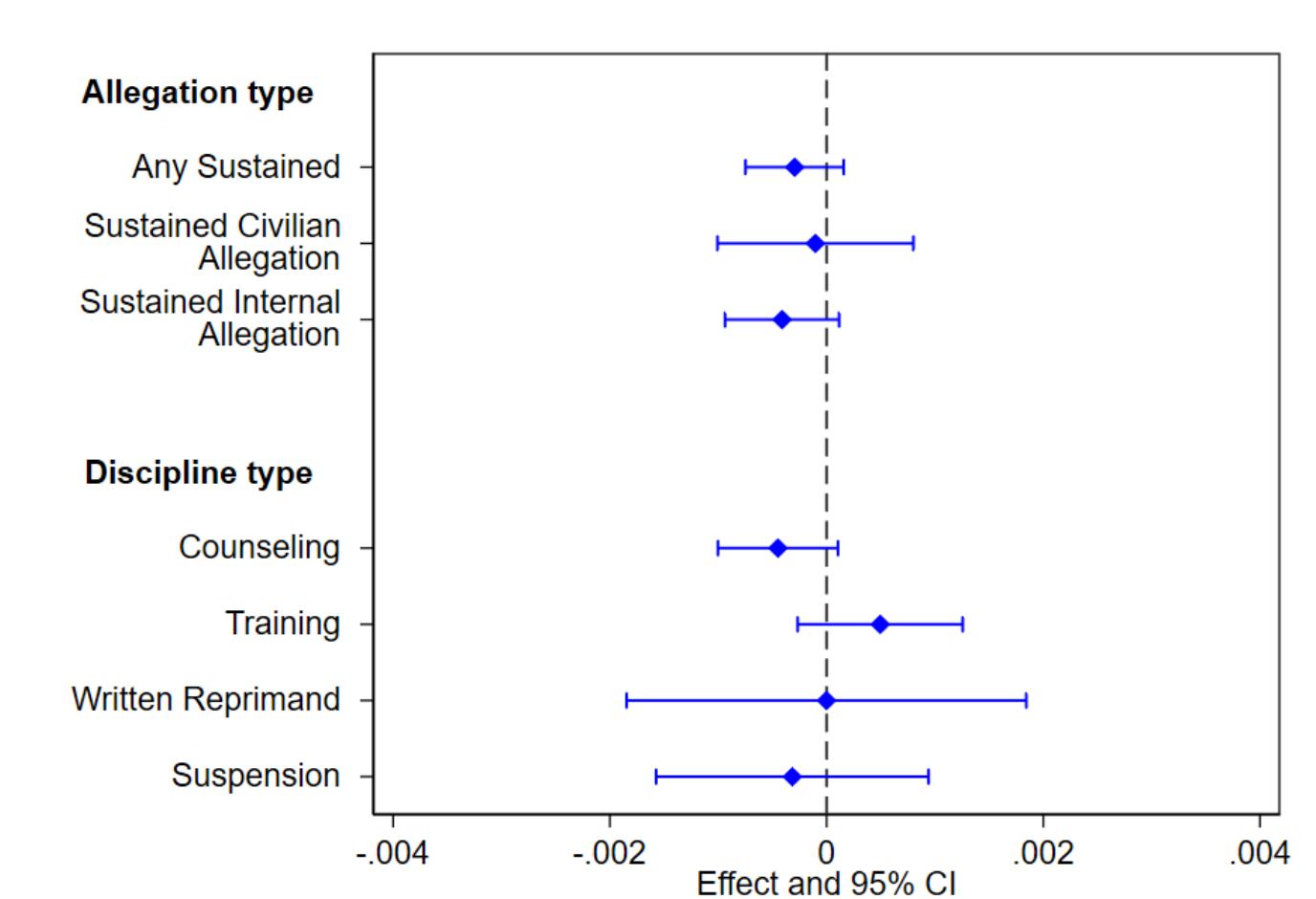


Figure 3: Use of force

- The results do not vary by allegation type nor by the disciplinary action taken.

## Results: Difference-in-differences design

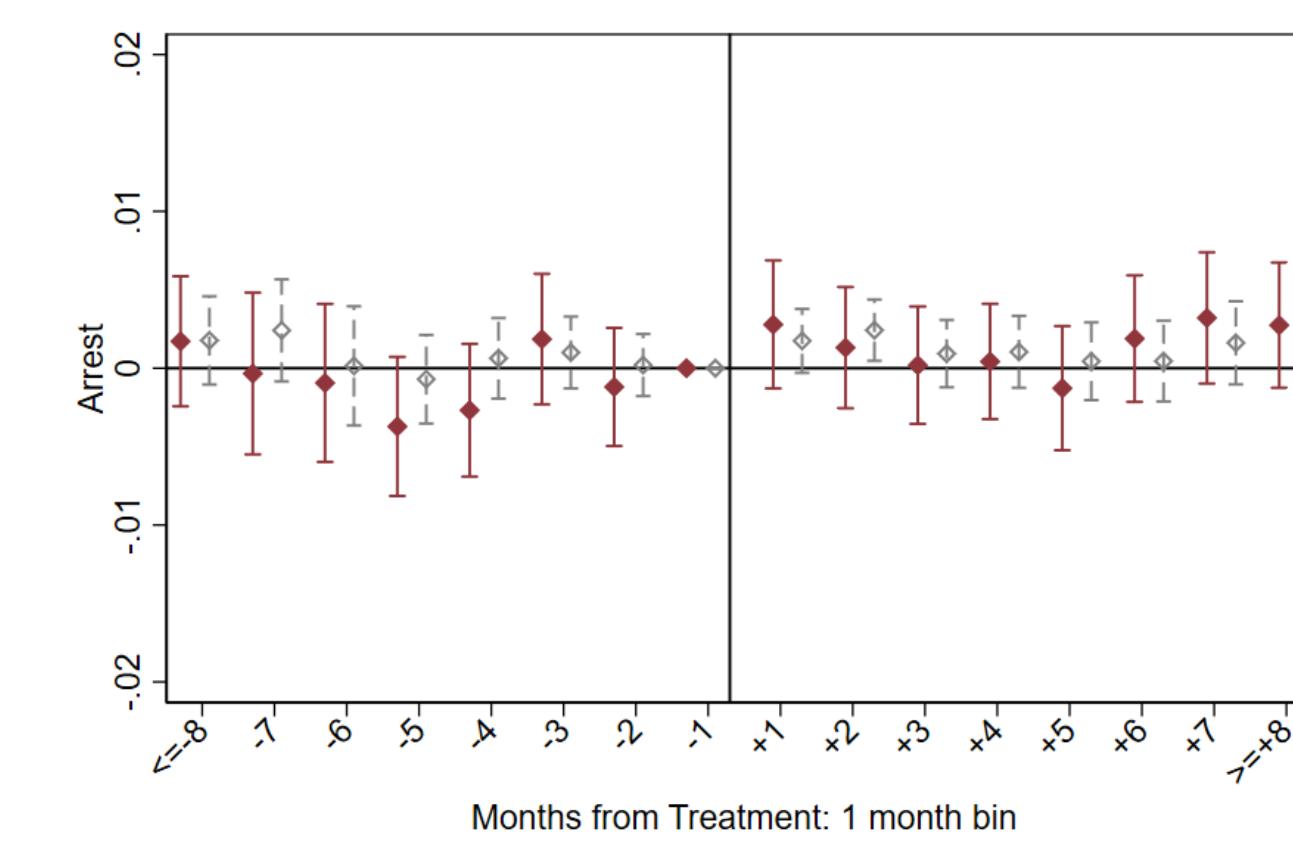
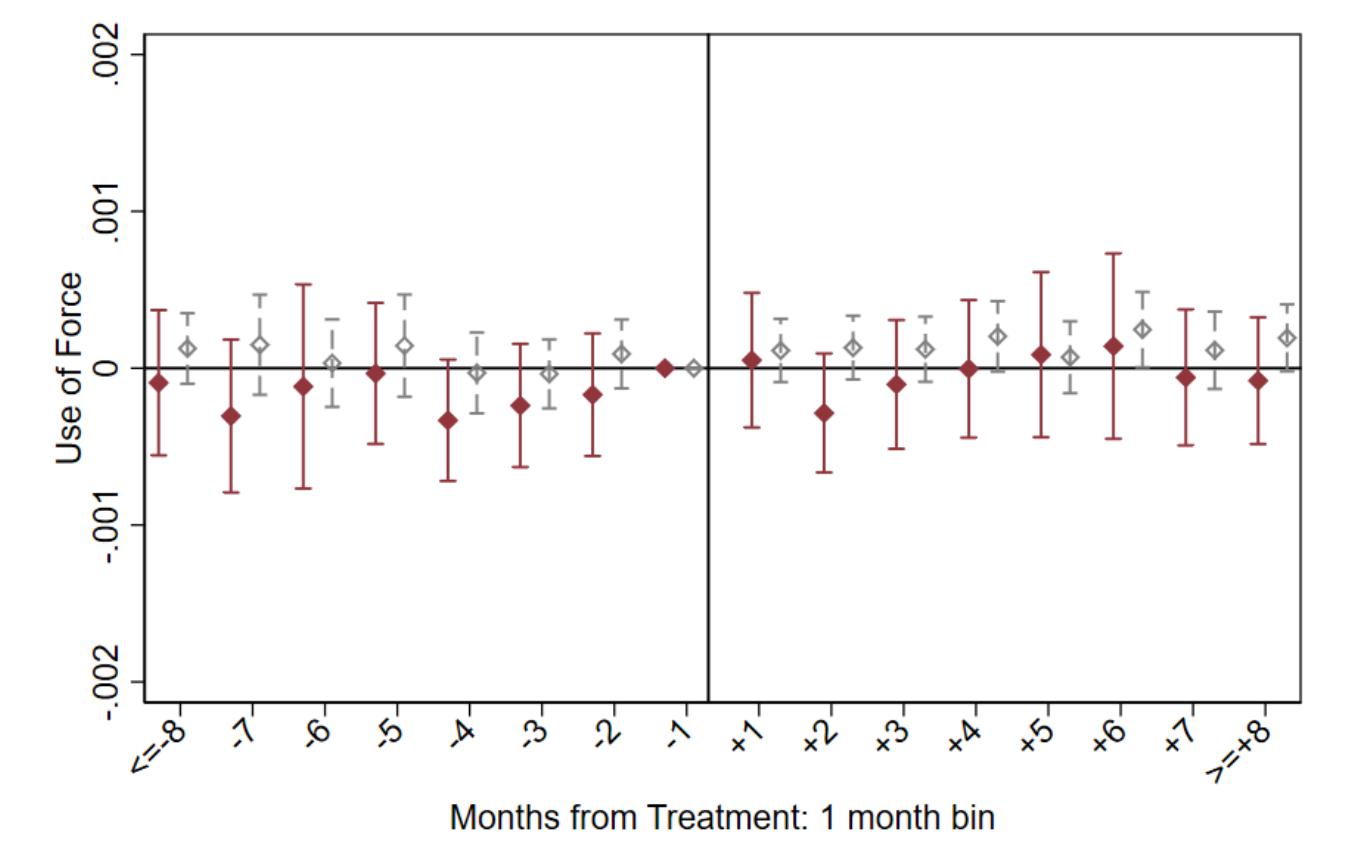


Figure 4: Dynamic difference-in-differences



- The results are robust to using difference-in-differences.

## Conclusion

- Internal oversight *does not improve* officer behavior when dispatched to a call.
  - Can reject a reduction in the probability of use of force of more than 26%.
- Internal oversight does not have unintended consequences with respect to de-policing.
  - Can reject a reduction in the probability of arrest of more than 4% and an increase of more than 6%.

Want to know more? Email me or check out my website!

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## References

- Levitt, Steven D. "Using Electoral Cycles in Police Hiring to Estimate the Effect of Police on Crime," American Economic Review, June 1997, 87 (3), 270–290.
- Rozema, Kyle, and Max M. Schanzenbach. "Does Discipline Decrease Police Misconduct? Evidence from Chicago Civilian Allegations." Evidence from Chicago Civilian Allegations (August 7, 2020) (2020).