

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.

$$Y_{cit} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \times \mathbf{1}(\text{After}_{cit}) + \alpha_2 \times \text{Diff}_{cit} + \alpha_3 \times \mathbf{1}(\text{After}_{cit}) \times \text{Diff}_{cit} + u_{cit}$$

Note: Diff = Call date – Complaint filing date; After = 1 if Diff ≥ 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.

$$Y_{cit} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \times \text{PostTreat}_{cit} + \text{Officer}_i + \text{MonthYear}_t + u_{cit}$$

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)

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%.

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Results: Regression discontinuity design

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

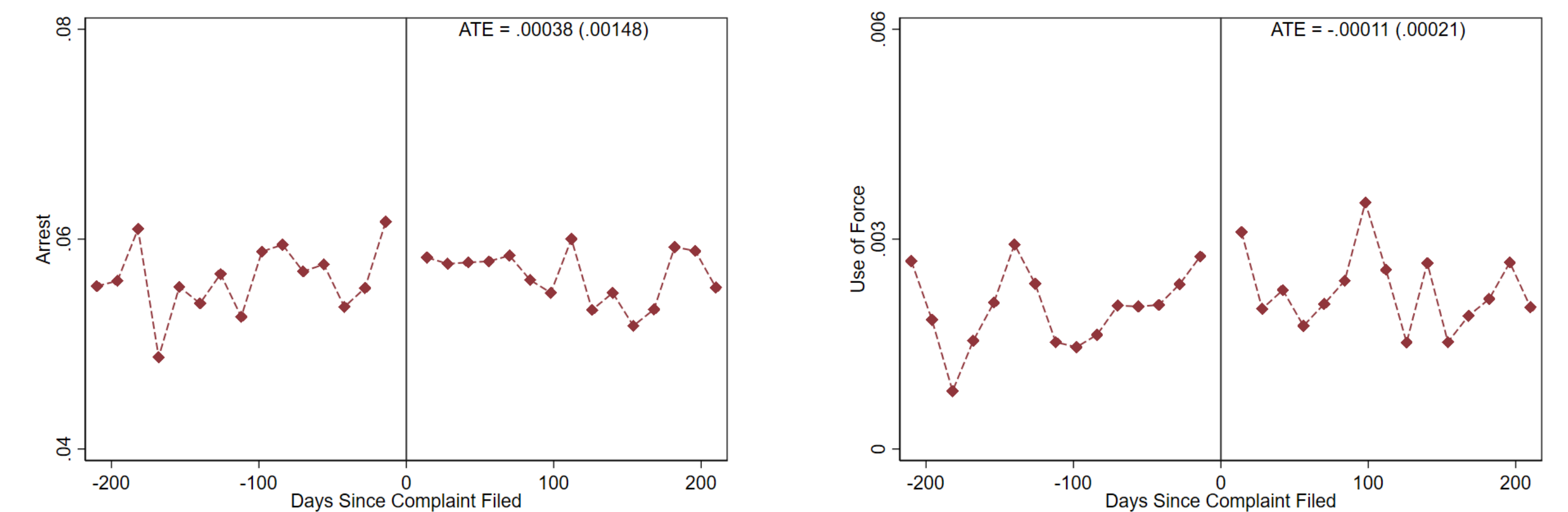


Figure 1: Raw data

- 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?

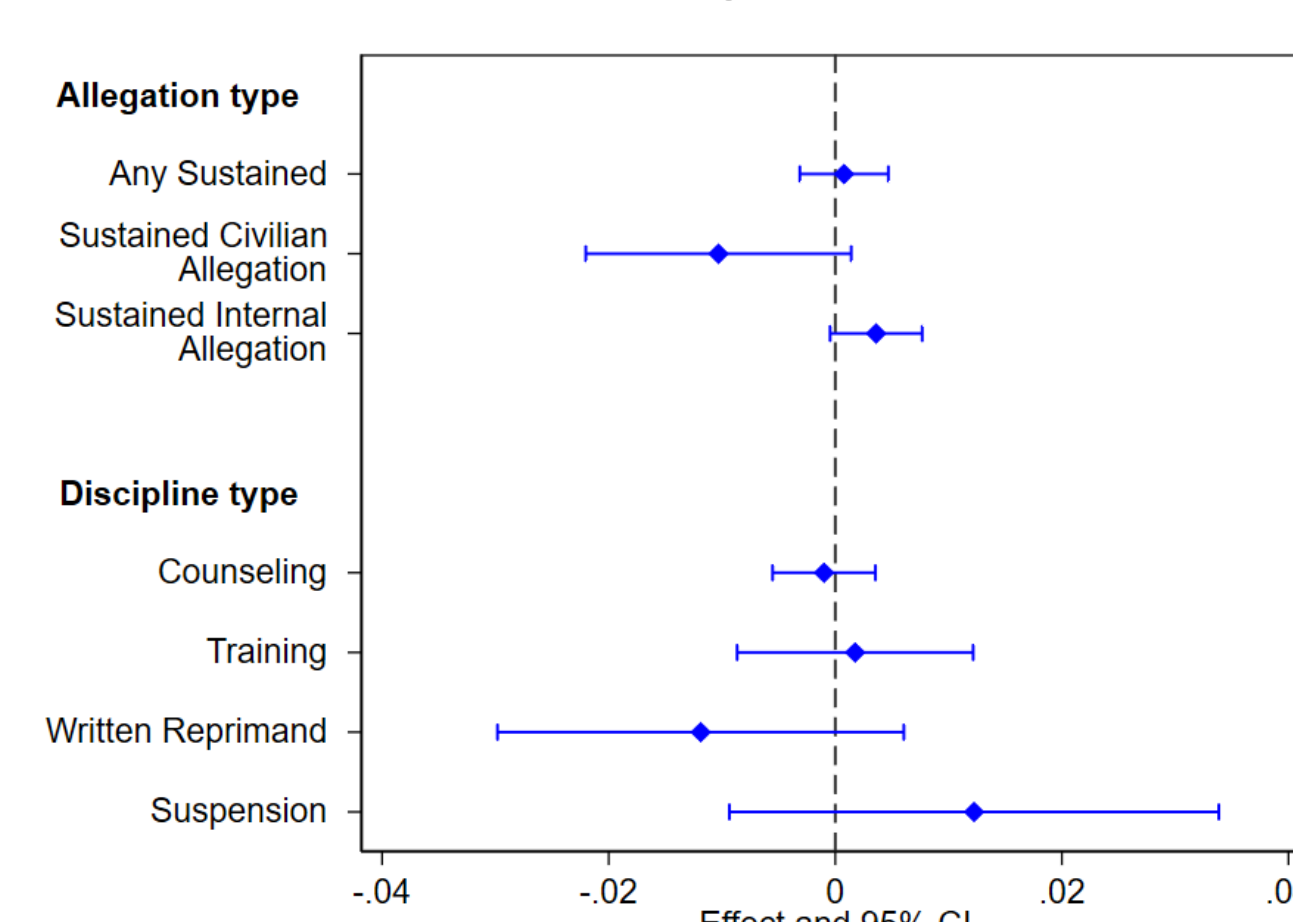


Figure 2: Arrest

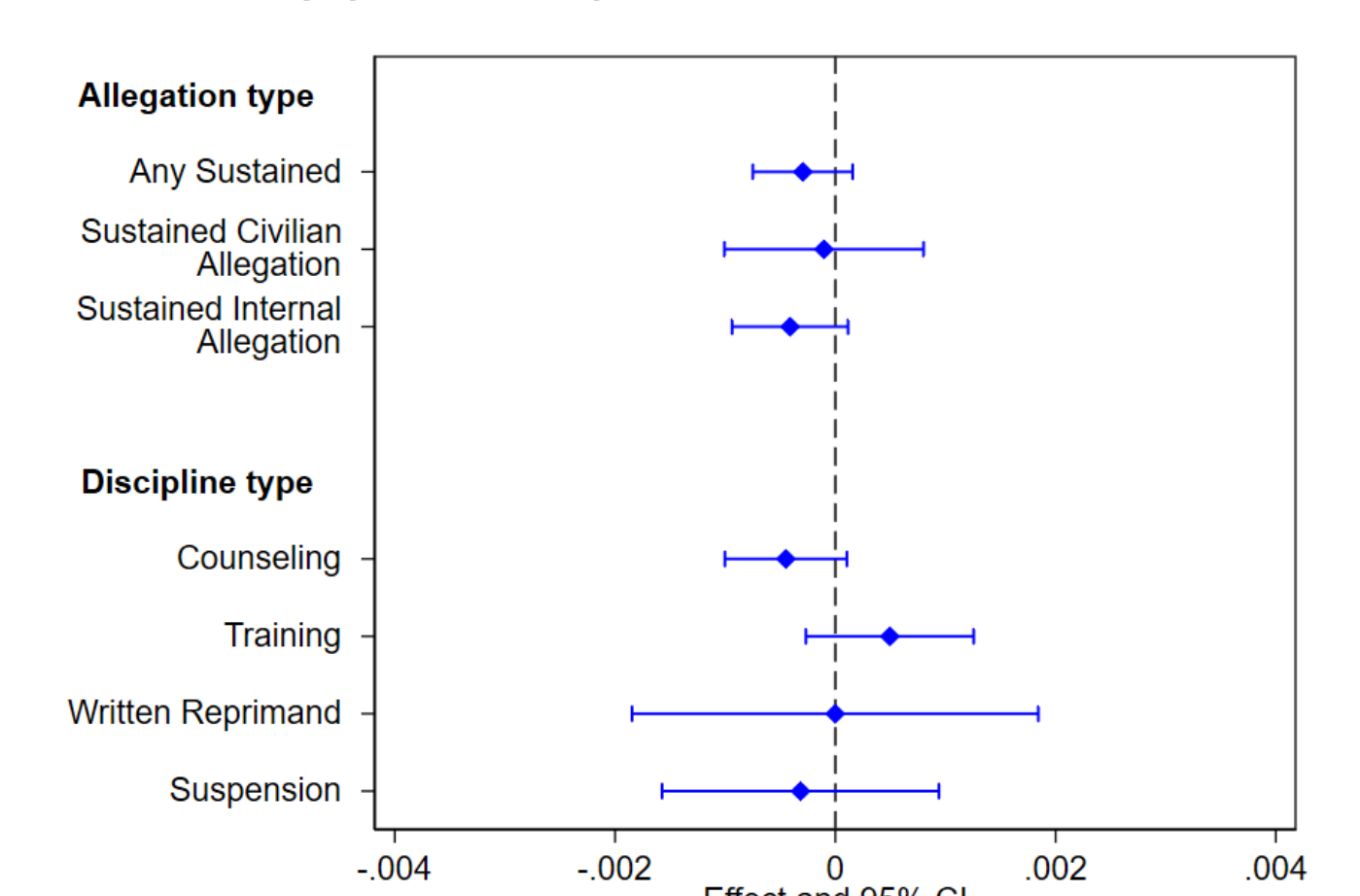


Figure 3: Use of force

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

Results: Difference-in-differences design

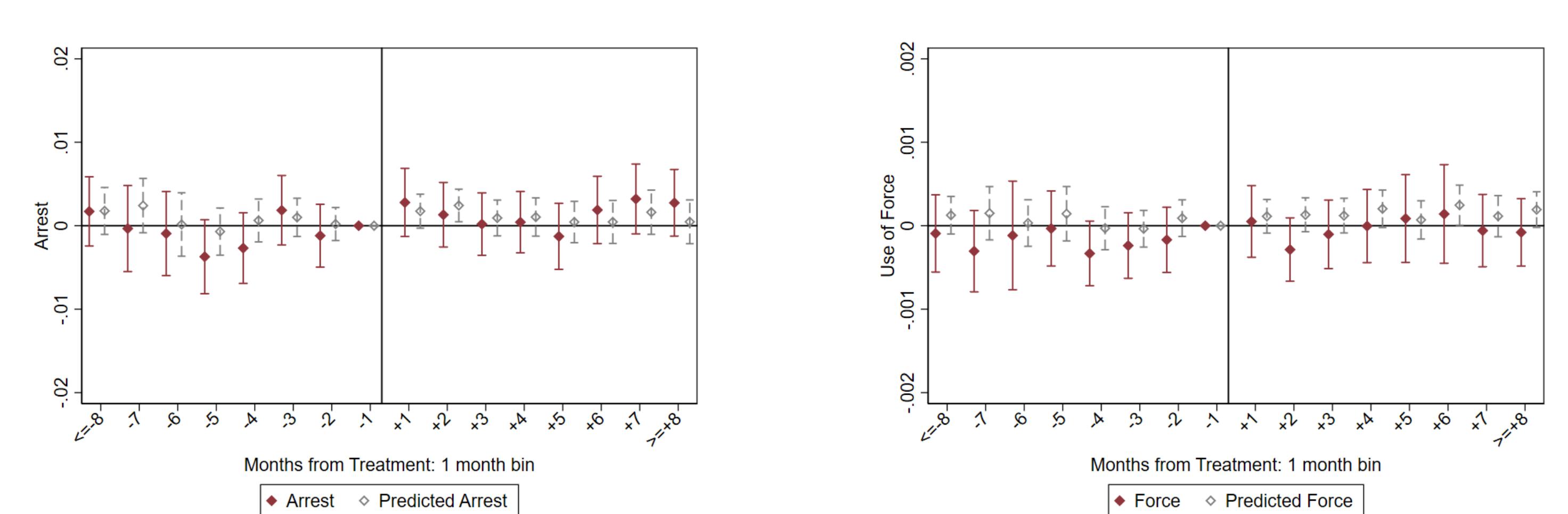


Figure 4: Dynamic difference-in-differences

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

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).