

## **The effect of policing and public security on nature and scale of violence and atrocities**

Policing and public security interventions show no effects on violence and atrocities. Effects tend to be moderated by implementation context and type of program.

Geographic region: East Asia and Pacific, South Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa

Effect size: No effect ( $g=0.007$ )

Confidence in study findings: Low (6 studies with 20 effect sizes)

### **Short summary**

Policing and public security interventions have no effect on the nature and scale of violence and atrocities. However, the effects varied across studies in the cell. Integrated policing in Iraq reduced ethnic tensions and support for anti-government violence by signaling fairness, while increased police presence in Afghanistan failed to curb election violence. Community policing across six countries showed no significant reductions in violence, trust, or cooperation. In Liberia, retrained police reduced domestic violence.

### **Long summary**

#### *The intervention*

Policing and public security interventions target diverse populations and areas affected by violence, with strategies including integrated policing, increased security deployment, and community policing. In Iraq, integrated policing aimed to reduce ethnic tensions by diversifying police units, while Afghanistan focused on securing polling centers through heightened police presence during elections. Liberia's "Confidence Patrols" deployed retrained officers to rural communities, enhancing security over 14 months. These interventions, ranging from temporary to long-term, sought to reduce violence, improve security, and foster trust, though outcomes were influenced by governance quality and local dynamics.

#### *How the intervention is expected to affect this outcome*

Policing and public security interventions are expected to reduce violence and atrocities by addressing the root causes of the lack of security, fostering trust in security institutions, and improving law enforcement capabilities. For instance, integrated policing is expected to reduce ethnic tensions and prevent violence by creating diverse, representative police units that signal fair treatment and reduce the likelihood of repression. Meanwhile, increased security deployment could deter insurgent violence and safeguard critical events, like elections, by providing a visible security presence. Community policing emphasizes engagement between police and communities through foot patrols, meetings, and problem-solving strategies. This approach seeks to build trust and cooperation, creating a virtuous cycle of security and accountability.

#### *The evidence base*

This cell includes six impact evaluations, presenting heterogeneous results on the effects of policing and public security interventions on the nature and scale of violence.

The review discusses the effects of different interventions (which include security and policing) on mitigating or preventing armed violence in developing and middle-income countries.

Three primary studies were included: one involving six field experiments conducted in Brazil, Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Uganda; another conducted in Liberia, and Papua New Guinea. In addition, two studies utilized secondary data: one focused on Afghanistan and another analyzed a global dataset.

### *Evidence findings*

Overall there is no effect of policing and public security interventions on violence and atrocities. But there are variations between studies. Increased police deployment in Afghanistan led to decreased voter turnout due to negative perceptions of security forces, with no significant reduction in election violence. Community policing in six countries showed no significant effects on trust, cooperation, or crime reduction, highlighting challenges in implementation and structural issues. Confidence Patrols in Liberia improved property security and reduced domestic violence but faced backlash from customary authorities.

### *The review evidence*

The review identifies a moderate sized but low-quality evidence base on the impact of security and policing practices on urban violence, with high heterogeneity. High-quality studies highlight the importance of political leadership and localized approaches.

### *The impact evaluation evidence*

This cell includes 6 impact evaluation studies. Thus, 6 summaries are provided below.

**Blair et al. (2019)** analysed the "Confidence Patrols" program in Liberia. This involved deploying teams of newly retrained, better-equipped police officers on recurring patrols to rural communities across three counties: Bong, Lofa, and Nimba. This initiative aimed to increase citizens' knowledge of the police and Liberian law, enhance security of property rights, and reduce crime, particularly in areas governed by customary authorities like chiefs and secret societies. The program was part of a broader effort to decentralize security and justice provision in rural Liberia, especially as the UN peacekeepers withdrew. The study employed a randomized controlled trial design, focusing on 74 communities with at least 500 residents, near usable roads, and with limited prior exposure to the program. These communities were grouped into nine geographic blocks, with four communities in each block randomly assigned to treatment and the rest to control. The evaluation began in June 2014 and continued until September 2015, with most treatment communities visited four or five times over 14 months. The findings indicate that the program reduced the incidence of simple assault and domestic violence. It also increased crime reporting, particularly for felonies, by approximately 50% compared to control communities. Notably, the increase in crime reporting was concentrated among residents who were not members of secret societies, suggesting the program provided an "exit option" for these individuals. The study is rated low confidence because of the lack of information on attrition rate and unclear evaluation questions.

**Blair et al. (2021)** analysed community policing as a reform strategy aimed at building trust between citizens and police by increasing engagement through foot patrols, community meetings, and problem-oriented policing strategies. The study involved six field experiments conducted in Brazil, Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Uganda. Researchers collaborated with local police agencies to implement community policing practices tailored to each context. The interventions reached approximately 9 million people across 516 treated

areas. The study design included random assignment of areas to either community policing practices or a control group, with data collected from 18,382 citizens and 874 police officers. Both self-reported and administrative data show no significant reduction in crime victimization. No significant effect was observed in any country, although Brazil shows wide confidence intervals, indicating variability in the data. No significant changes were observed in crime reporting or tips provided to the police. The study is considered to have low confidence due to the absence of detailed information on the attrition rate. While the study involved a large sample size, with surveys conducted on 18,382 citizens and 874 police officers, there is no explicit mention of attrition rates in the document.

**Condra et al. (2019)** examine the effect of security provisions in Afghanistan where the government deployed varying levels of Afghan National Police to polling centers to safeguard against insurgent violence. This intervention aimed to secure the election process and enhance public trust in the government amidst a backdrop of significant pre-election violence and concerns about insurgent attacks. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design, leveraging the unintentional variation in police deployment across polling centers with similar histories of violence. This allowed the researchers to isolate the effects of police presence on voter turnout. Data sources included internal government records, event-level violence data, certified voter turnout numbers, and pre- and post-election survey data from potential voters. Overall results suggest that the level of police deployment and historical violence did not significantly impact the level of violence during the election period, indicating that other factors not captured by these variables might be influencing the situation. The confidence level is considered medium confidence as it is a non-experimental study.

**Cooper (2018)** in Papua New Guinea aimed at enhancing policing in areas with limited state presence. The program empowers selected community members with police powers, including arrest and investigation, to address local offenses, particularly focusing on gender-based violence. These officers are unarmed and operate within their own communities, providing a bridge between the state and remote villages. The study employs a randomized controlled trial design, conducted in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. It involves 39 villages and a sample size of 1,950 households and 45 candidates. The randomization was implemented through a lottery system at the Council of Elders level, resulting in cluster-level assignments for households and individual-level assignments for candidates. The study also includes a historical analysis using panel data from villages with CAP officers. The findings indicate that while the presence of community police does not significantly reduce the number of criminal incidents, it strongly reduces the perception of violence against women and property crime in the community. The study also finds that the presence of female CAP officers increases the probability of crimes being reported and resolved with the involvement of both police and chiefs. However, there is no conclusive evidence of a reduction in the crime rate itself. The intervention's completion status is marked as "No," indicating ongoing data collection or analysis. The study is rated medium due to its partial description of the evaluation questions.

**Daugherty (2016)** analysed the role of governmental and non-governmental actors in influencing intergroup conflict after war, particularly when group differences have been a significant aspect of war mobilization. The context of this study spans various countries, with specific case studies in Iraq and North Carolina, USA. The dissertation aims to understand how post-conflict institutions and policies can either exacerbate or mitigate group-based violence and identity politics. The study design includes cross-national, national, and sub-national analyses to explore the incentives for actors to institutionalize group differences after war. The research utilizes data from sources like Princeton's Empirical Studies of Conflict project and public records, focusing on variables such as ethnic violence, political competition, and demographics in Iraq from 2003 onwards. In North Carolina, the study examines lynching violence and its correlation with state capacity and political competition, using historical data and imputation methods to address missing data. Findings from the Iraq case study indicate that higher representation ratios at the governorate level correlate with decreased sectarian

violence, while increased budget allocations are associated with higher casualties. In North Carolina, the study finds that higher levels of county-level tax extraction relative to state-level extraction correlate with increased lynching violence, suggesting a political nature to racial violence. The study is rated **low confidence** as it is a non-experimental study with no clear description of the intervention, as the document primarily focuses on analysing variables such as representation ratios and budget allocations without explicitly detailing the intervention process or its implementation.. The study's reliance on existing datasets and imputation methods further complicates the understanding of the intervention's scope and impact.

### *Confidence Assessment*

Overall low: This cell is rated low given that the findings tend to vary across the studies.

### *Link to review summaries*

Cramer (2016)

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.

### **Other outcomes in this study:**

Community and state governance / government performance

Community and state governance / presence and quality of social safety nets

Human security / political security

Social cohesion / feelings of trust and acceptance of diversity

Human security / physical security