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External Shocks and Police Behaviour: Evidence from Terrorist Attacks in the UK

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External Shocks and Police Behaviour: Evidence from Terrorist Attacks in the UK

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Abstract:

Shocks, such as terrorist attacks, may shift policing through profiling (group-targeted enforcement driven by salience) or operational changes. We test these channels using administrative data from London's Metropolitan Police Service on use-of-force incidents and stop-and-searches, linked to UK terrorist attacks between April 2017 and November 2019. Exploiting attack timing in a regression discontinuity-in-time design, we compare outcomes in narrow windows around each event. Across both datasets we find little evidence of short-run ethnic profiling after Muslim extremist or far-right attacks. In contrast, Muslim extremist attacks – substantially more lethal in our sample – are followed by a shift toward weapons searches, more public-protection-focused force, and greater use-of-force intensity for both White and Non-white subjects. The evidence is consistent with heightened alertness rather than discriminatory targeting

Keywords: Policing; Terrorism; Use of force; Stop and search; Salience; Bias

JEL classification: K42; J15; D74; C21

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1. Introduction

Terrorist attacks generate abrupt shocks to the risk environment in which police organisations operate. In the immediate aftermath of an attack, police face an acute allocation problem, whether to reorient attention and tactics towards public protection (e.g., searches for weapons and more forceful interventions). At the same time, decision-making could shift in ways that produce discriminatory targeting of groups perceived to be associated with the perpetrator. These channels have distinct implications for organisational performance, public safety, and legal legitimacy. Yet credible evidence on how policing changes in the days immediately following attacks – and which of the plausible channels could explain those changes – remains limited.

This paper studies short-run changes in policing after terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom, focusing on London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). We link terrorist incidents from the Global Terrorism Database to two administrative datasets from the MPS: (i) the universe of use-of-force records with timestamps in five-minute intervals and detailed indicators of force type and injury outcomes; and (ii) the universe of stop-and-search records with exact dates and information on the subject's ethnicity, the object of the search (e.g., weapons, drugs), and the stated grounds (including public-protection motivations). The combination allows us to examine both changes to targeting, i.e., who is policed more strongly after an attack, and changes to tactical intensity and mission focus, i.e., how policing is conducted.

We exploit the timing of attacks in a sharp regression discontinuity-in-time (RDiT) design (similar in spirit to, e.g., Lovett and Xue, 2022), comparing policing outcomes in narrow windows immediately before and after each attack date while allowing for smooth time trends and day-of-week and seasonal patterns. Intuitively, identification relies on the fact that frontline policing activity is unlikely to anticipate the exact timing of an attack, so discontinuous changes at the cutoff can be attributed to the attack rather than to slowly evolving confounders.

We organise our analysis around two complementary mechanisms detailed in Section 2. A discrimination channel predicts that attacks with ethnically identifiable perpetrators lead to disproportionate enforcement against the associated group, such as increased stops of Non-white groups after Muslim extremist attacks or increased stops of White subjects after far-right attacks). An operational alertness channel predicts shifts in tactics and objectives – toward weapons detection, public protection motives, and more severe uses-of-force – without corresponding shifts in ethnic targeting and potentially scaling with the lethality of the attack.

Our findings are threefold: First, we find little evidence of short-run ethnic profiling: the ethnic composition of civilians targeted by stop-and-searches or uses-of-force shows no discontinuous shift consistent with the targeting of demographics aligned with the perpetrators. Second, we document pronounced changes in tactics after Muslim extremist attacks: use-of-force incidents become more severe with officers more likely to justify them with the need to protect the public, while stops-and-searches are become more targeted towards searches for weapons with offsetting declines in drug- and theft-oriented searches. Third, these operational shifts do not differ systematically across White and Non-white subjects. We motivate the asymmetric effect across perpetrator type with the fact that Muslim extremist attacks are, on average, more lethal, consistent with heightened alertness rather than salience-driven discrimination.

Our paper contributes to a recent literature on ethnicity-based and racial bias in policing. For instance, Fryer (2019) finds that Black and Hispanic subjects are 50% percent more likely to be targets of non-lethal use-of-force relative to White subjects. A similar result is also found by Hoekstra and Sloan (2022) who document significant increases in white relative to minority officers' use-of-force against Black and Hispanic civilians. Furthermore, Goncalves and Mello (2021) document that ethnic minority drivers receive less leniency compared to White drivers when it comes to speeding tickets.[1] However, even in the absence of systematic bias, agents working under pressure may overemphasise highly salient events, such as terroristic attacks with a clear association to ethnic groups, regardless of their relevance, resulting in biased decisions against members of that community (Bordalo et al., 2012; 2015). For instance, an emerging literature focuses on salience in judges' decision-making. Philippe and Ouss (2018) find that, in France, judges inflict longer sentences when the verdict is reached after high levels of crime coverage in the news. Other work shows that following 9/11, Muslim inmates in the US were less likely to be granted parole and served longer sentences (McConnell et al., 2024) and that such bias spilt over to Hispanic civilians interacting with the criminal justice system, who experienced worse sentence outcomes (McConnell and Rasul, 2021). Hanemaaijer et al. (2026) leverage a highly salient event linked to Moroccan organised crime, the assassination of a defence attorney, and find that, while police and prosecutors did not change their behaviour following the event, judges passed longer sentences (71%) for individuals of Moroccan descent. Finally, Shayo and Zussman (2011) link anti-Arab biases in civil trials to terroristic activity in Israel. Outside of law enforcement and the judicial system, some studies document behavioural changes by the general population. For example, Balcells and Torrats-Espinosa (2018) document that attacks by Basque terrorist organisation ETA increased turnout in future elections, while Bove et al. (2025) and Efthyvoulou et al. (2025) find that the salience of Islamic and far-right terrorist attacks impacts political polarisation and national identity in the UK.

Despite this evidence on the criminal justice system, much less is known about the impact on frontline policing. To the best of our knowledge, the only studies on this matter are Legewie (2016), who studies changes to police behaviour following high-profile shootings of police officers and – as mentioned earlier – Hanemaaijer et al. (2026). Legewie (2016) find evidence for increases in racial bias in police stops in New York City following the shootings of two police officers, by Black suspects, but no corresponding increases for White and Hispanic civilians or for shootings of officers by White and Hispanic suspects. As already mentioned, the latter found little evidence in for changes in police behaviour towards people of Moroccan descent following a high-profile murder associated with Moroccan organised crime. In addition, several papers consider the effects of shocks to individual officers, such as injures to peers from the officer's time at police academy (Holz, Rivera and Ba, 2023) or homicides in the officers' residential neighbourhoods on subsequent behaviour during patrols (Donahue and Torrats-Espinosa, 2025). Finally, several papers study effects of other outside influences on officer behaviour. For example, Grosjean et al (2023) find that, following Trump rallies during the 2015-16 Presidential election campaign, Black drivers are nearly 6% more likely to be stopped by the police, with the effect being stronger when Trump's speeches include racial issues. Similarly, Barilari and Zambiasi (2026) find that racially-coded rhetoric employed by Ronald Reagan during the 1980s affected officer behaviour.

[1] Other studies on ethnic-based bias in police stops are Alpert et al. (2005); Coviello and Persico (2015); Gaston (2019); Gelman et al. (2007); Hargreaves (2018); Lehrer and Lepage (2020); Rojek et al. (2012); Warren et al. (2006).

Understanding how police behaviour is affected by external shocks matters for a number of reasons: First, as highlighted in a recent review by Roché and Fleming, 2025, little is known about the effects of exogenous shocks on police behaviour.[2] Second, frontline officers and their behaviour play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of and trust in law enforcement, especially when those encounters involve the excessive or biased use of force.[3] Indeed, several papers have documented that civilian's interactions with the police are shaped by high-profile uses of force, such as the murder of George Floyd murder in the summer of 2020. While some studies document a reduction in civilian engagement with the police (Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk 2016; Wright 2021; Ang, Bencsik, Bruhn, and Derenoncourt 2025), others find no effect (e.g. Cohen, Gunderson, Jackson, McLachlan, Clark, Glynn, and Owens 2019; Zoorob 2020). However, most of this data is based on the US, which is internationally unusual in terms of law enforcement killings of civilians: While recent evidence from the US suggest that circa 30,800 people were killed by the police between 1980 and 2018 (GBD 2019 Police Violence US Subnational Collaborators 2021), and that on average 1,000 people fell victims of the police between 2017 and 2022 (Mapping Police Violence, 2023), these occurrences are sporadic in the UK by comparison – there were only 3.5 deaths per year in England and Wales between 1990 and 2023 (INQUEST, 2023). Beyond these figures, UK and US law enforcement constitute an interesting comparison. UK policing operates on the principle of 'policing by consent' (Home Office, 2012), tracing back to Sir Robert Peel, the founder of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Key features include officers being "citizens in uniform", a duty to the public rather than the state, and force as a last resort (Yesberg et al., 2021). This is reflected in the fact that most British officers do not carry firearms, making use-of-force typically less violent than in the US.

UK police forces are, however, not immune to bias. Two major investigations into the MPS – the 1999 Macpherson Report, following the racially motivated murder of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence, and a 2022 inquiry led by Baroness Cummins for the Mayor of London – both concluded that the MPS was institutionally racist and pervaded by systemic misogyny. The latter was prompted by, among other incidents, the abduction, rape, and murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 by serving MPS officer Wayne Couzens. These institutional failures are reflected in public attitudes: polling by YouGov (2023a) found that in 2022 and 2023 more than 40 per cent of British adults considered the MPS institutionally racist. Trust in the MPS is similarly low, with only 38 per cent of ethnic minority Londoners expressing confidence in the force (YouGov, 2023b). Disparities in the use-of-force further underscore these inequities: approximately one-third of all MPS use-of-force incidents are directed at Black individuals, despite Black residents comprising only around 13 per cent of London's population. Indeed, Braakmann (2025) finds evidence similar to the US, specifically that crime reporting behaviour and clearance rates change after high-profile civilian fatalities – the fatal shooting of Chris Kaba in London on 5 September 2022 by armed police – as well as through more common uses of force.

This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents a conceptual framework used to frame the analysis. Sections 3 and 4 describe the data and the empirical strategy respectively. Section 5 presents the results. Section 6 concludes.

[2] In their review, Roché and Fleming (2025) define exogenous shocks are those '*arising from broader societal causes like economic crises, political turmoil, or pandemics*'.

[3] See, for instance Jefferson and Walker (1993); Weitzer (2002); Weitzer and Tuch (2005); Brunson and Miller (2006); Sharp and Atherton (2007); Tankebe (2013); Miller and D'Souza (2016); Slocum and Wiley (2018); Braga, Brunson, and Drakulich (2019); Brunson and Miller (2006)

2. Conceptual framework

In this section, we provide a minimal framework to motivate two distinct channels through which terrorist attacks may affect policing in the short run: (i) *operational alertness* (a rational reweighting of mission priorities and a shift in tactical thresholds under heightened perceived danger), and (ii) *profiling/discrimination* (group-specific distortions in beliefs or preferences that change targeting). The framework combines a search-and-screening logic as in canonical police-search models such as Knowles, Persico and Todd (2001) with a multi-task organisational constraint covering the allocation of police resources across mission outputs. The aim is not to fully characterise equilibrium policing, but to generate sharp, empirically testable predictions for (a) who is targeted and (b) how encounters are conducted.

2.1 Setup

Consider an officer (or patrol unit) who encounters civilians indexed by i. Each civilian belongs to a group $g \in \{0,1\}$, e.g., "attacker-associated" vs "other", and generates a publicly observable signal x, such as behaviour, location, time or call type. The officer chooses:

1. Engagement / intensity $a \in \{0,1\}$ (e.g., stop/search or not; engage with force or not),
2. Operational focus $o \in \{W, R\}$, where W denotes *public protection / weapons-related* focus and R denotes *routine crime control* focus (e.g., drugs/theft),
3. Force intensity $f \in \{0,1\}$ (low vs high; or, equivalently, a threshold that governs escalation).

Let $q_o(x, g)$ denote the perceived probability of detecting/averting an outcome relevant to mission o if the officer engages (e.g., probability of finding a weapon when searching with a weapons objective, or probability of detecting routine contraband under routine enforcement). Let $d(x, g)$ denote the perceived danger to officer/public conditional on engagement (risk of harm/escalation). Officer effort and attention are constrained: focusing on W reduces attention to R, and vice versa.

The officer's reduced-form expected payoff from engaging with focus o and force level f is:

$$U(a, o, f \mid x, g) = a[\lambda_o * B_o(q_o(x, g)) - C(f) - \kappa * d(x, g) * L(f)] - a * \tau_g ,$$

where λ_o is the organisational weight placed on output o (public protection vs routine crime), $B_o(q_o(x, g))$ is the benefit from mission-relevant crime detection (increasing in (q_o). $C(f)$ is a direct cost of higher force such as procedural constraints, paperwork or discipline risk, while $d(x, g) * L(f)$ captures expected harm costs, which depend on perceived danger and escalation choice (e.g., a higher f could reduce harm probability but also increase the social/legal costs). τ_g is a group-specific term capturing either taste-based prejudice or group-specific perceived "social costs" of stopping (community relations, scrutiny), as in canonical discrimination formulations in police search models. In equilibrium search models such as Knowles, Persico, and Todd (2001), group effects can also arise from group-specific priors or behaviour; here we treat them as reduced-form.

This setting nests two ideas: The idea – coming from search/targeting models – that officers' decisions whom to engage and how depends on perceived returns and costs of engagement and

the idea – from standard multi-task principal-agent logic – that officer decisions are influenced by organisational and mission priorities.

2.2 How terrorist attacks shift policing

Within this framework, a terrorist attack can be understood as a shock that can change (i) mission weights and danger perceptions (alertness) and/or (ii) group-specific beliefs or tastes (profiling).

Channel A: operational alertness, mission reweighting and tactical thresholds

An attack can increase the marginal value of public protection, raising λ_W relative to λ_R. It can also change perceived danger $d(x, g)$ for encounters in general, for example through a higher perceived of risk of civilians carrying weapons, fear of copycat behaviour or heightened vigilance, potentially changing escalation thresholds. In this channel, we would expect λ_W to increase (and/or λ_R to decrease) and $d(x, g)$ to increase for a wide set of encounters (not necessarily group-specific).

This yields two testable predictions:

Prediction A1 (reallocation of search objectives): Conditional on engagement, the officer is more likely to select $o = W$ rather than $o = R$, shifting activity towards weapons/public protection and away from routine objects. This is a classic multi-task implication: when the principal places more weight on one output, effort shifts toward that output, especially when tasks are substitutes.

Prediction A2 (tactical intensification without targeting): The distribution of f shifts toward higher intensity uses-of-force (more severe force, more equipment use) if the perceived harm from under-reacting rises. This can occur without any systematic change in the group composition of targets if τ_g and group-specific beliefs are unchanged.

Empirically, this channel suggests a higher severity of use-of-force, reallocation of stop-and-search efforts towards searches for weapons, increased justification of actions through public protection rather than crime-prevention and little or no change in the ethnicity composition of encounters.

Channel B: profiling/discrimination as group-specific distortions

An attack can also generate a group-specific shift in perceived risk or costs, for example because changes to salience or belief distortion / salience. The perceived threat becomes disproportionately associated with the attacker-linked group, raising $d(x, g)$ or lowering perceived $q_o(x, g)$ thresholds for that group even when objective risk is unchanged. A behavioural foundation is representativeness-based stereotyping, where salient representative types are overweighted in beliefs. Another possible justification is changes to taste-based discrimination or the perceived relaxation of social constraints if the social/organisational cost of targeting the attacker-linked group falls (i.e., $\tau_{g=1}$ reduces), for example, because officers anticipate greater public support, reduced internal scrutiny, or different political incentives.

Both of these imply the following testable predictions:

Prediction B1 (targeting shifts): Holding x fixed, the threshold for engagement a falls for the attacker-associated group, producing a discontinuous change in the composition of those stopped and searched/subjected to force.

Prediction B2 (possibly weak links to tactic choice): Profiling can occur with or without changes in o and f. The defining feature of this channel is compositional change of civilians targeted by policy, not necessarily any further changes to tactics. A pure profiling shock can generate more encounters with the attacker-linked group even if overall tactics are unchanged.

Empirically, this channel suggests changes in the ethnic distribution of stop-and-search targets and/or use-of-force subjects and potentially stronger effects for attacks with clearer group identity signals (but not necessarily correlated with lethality).

2.3 Empirical implications

A key feature of our data is that we observe outcomes across three broad categories, namely (1) targeting, i.e., who is encountered, specifically, the ethnicity composition in stops and use-of-force targets (2) measures of mission focus, i.e., what the police-civilian encounter aimed at, e.g., searches for weapons vs drugs/theft objects or use-of-force due rationalised by the need to protect the public and (3) measures of tactical intensity, i.e., how coercive the encounter is, such as severity of force use, the use of certain types of equipment and measures of injuries resulting from the use of force.

Against this background we can make two simple empirical statements: (1) The profiling/discrimination channel dominates if, immediately after attacks, we observe a discontinuous composition shift toward the attacker-associated group (Prediction B1), especially without corresponding mission reweighting. (2) The operational alertness channel dominates if we observe discontinuous shifts in mission focus and/or tactical intensity (Predictions A1–A2) with no composition shift in targets.

3. Data

We combine three core sources of data: (i) the Global Terrorism Database (GTD); (ii) administrative records on use-of-force data incidents the MPS (Metropolitan Police Service, 2023); and (iii) administrative records on stop and searches incidents by the MPS, available at https://data.police.uk/.

The GTD contains detailed records of all terrorist attacks that have occurred worldwide from 1975 to the present. We follow Enders, Sandler, and Gaibulloev (2011, 321)'s definition of terrorism as "*the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or sub-national groups against noncombatants in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims*". For each terrorist attack, we observe the exact date and city in which these occurred, alongside information on the number of casualties and injuries that these provoked. Most importantly for our purposes, we can observe information on the perpetrators of these attacks, whether standalone or part of an organisation, i.e. Irish Republican Army, Golden Dawn, ISIS etc. We restrict our focus to attacks that occurred in the UK between April 2017 and November 2019 and exclude attacks related to the Irish Troubles. Using information on the perpetrator or the organisation credited with the attack, we distinguish between Far-right (FR) and Muslim extremist (ME) attacks.

As a benchmark we also use all terrorist attacks regardless of perpetrator. In total, we have 47 days with terrorist attacks, 16 (34%) of which had attacks committed by far-right terrorists[4] and 6 (13%) by Muslim extremists[5] – see Panel (a) of Table 1. These include some high-profile attacks such as the Manchester Arena bombing (ME, May 22, 2017), the Finsbury Park attack (FR, June 19, 2017), and the London Bridge stabbing (ME, November 29, 2019). The Manchester Arena bombing was an ME attack at a pop-concert venue in Manchester on 22 May 2017, killing 22 people, and injuring over 1,000. The Finsbury Park attack, on the other hand, was motivated by FR extremist ideologies and targeted the local Muslim community, when a man drove his van into a crowd outside a Mosque in North London, causing 1 casualty and several injuries. Finally, the London Bridge stabbing involved five victims, two of whom died. The perpetrator, who was fatally shot by the police on the same day, had been previously linked to jihadist organisations. In addition, 8.5% of these attacks had at least one fatality, while 34% resulted in injuries to at least one person.

(Table 1 about here.)

The use-of-force data contains the universe of police-civilian interactions in the 32 boroughs of London. The data covers the period from April 2017 until the present day. We observe the borough, broad location (stadia, pubs/bars, public transport), date and time (in 5-minute intervals) of each use-of-force event. We also observe information on the ethnicity of the subjects, the severity of the interaction (subject compliant, subject resisted/resisted heavily, hand-cuffing, use of restraining techniques, use of equipment) and the outcome (subject/officer injured/hospitalised, arrest). In the original data, if two officers use force against a single subject, this incident results in two observations, i.e. data are at the subject-officer interaction level. To build an incident-level dataset, we follow Braakmann (2025), and aggregate the data using combinations of borough, broad location, date, time and subject characteristics, keeping the respective more severe outcomes. For example, consider an (hypothetical) event where two officers used force against a White subject in Islington, outside a bar on 10 May 2017, at 20:45–20:50. One officer used restraining techniques resulting in an arrest and the second used equipment resulting in an arrest and hospitalisation. In the raw data, this would consist of two separate observations; in the cleaned data, we count this as one use-of-force resulting in an arrest and hospitalisation of the (White) subject. We consider all use-of-force incidents between April 2017 and December 2019, i.e., between the point at which data became available and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. From Panel (b) of Table 1, we can see that the majority of these incidents are characterised by some sort of resistance from the subject (66% of cases), and in circa 23% of cases, the subject resisted heavily. In 34.4% of incidents, the police used unarmed techniques (e.g., restraining holds, strikes or the use of pressure points) and 10.6% were characterised by the use of equipment (e.g., batons, pepper spray etc.). White individuals make up the relative majority of use-of-force targets (43.5%), followed by Black individuals (36.6%) and Asian (11.7%). Our final sample comprises 168,326 use-of-force incidents. Of these 50,509 occur within a 7-day window around a far-right attack and 20376 around a Muslim extremist attack.

The stop and search data are at the level of an individual search. They are available from December 2014 to the present day. We observe the exact date of each search. The location of each event is anonymised to correspond to the centre point of a street, a square or a park, close to where the search happened. The data contain information on the ethnicity, gender and age

[4] In our data, these are 10 attacks by "Anti-Muslim extremists", 4 by "Anti-Semitic extremises" and 1 each by "Neo-Nazi extremists" and "Right-wing extremists"

[5] These are 2 attacks each by "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)", "Jihadi-inspired extremists" and "Muslim extremists".

of the subject, the legal base and object of the search (weapon, drug, stolen items). The object of the search is what motivated the initial search but does not necessarily correspond to what is eventually found. For instance, if an officer initiates a search due to a reasonable suspicion of someone carrying a knife, this is recorded. We also observe the outcome of the search, which we group into four categories; No further action (i.e., nothing was found), arrest, court summons and cautions and related (including, e.g. fines). Note that officers can arrest someone for carrying, say, illegal drugs even if the reason for the search was weapons-related. Using the coordinates of the search and Ordnance Survey Point of Interest data, we construct a broad measure of location, specifically whether the search was within a 100m radius of a government building, a place of worship, a tube or railway station or an entertainment venue – all locations that might plausibly receive more attention following a terrorist attack. We also use Census 2011 data on ethnic concentration by output area to create a variable indicating whether a search takes place in a black or Asian output area.[6] Following Braakmann (2025), neighbourhoods are classified based on the most prevalent ethnic group, i.e. Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani, as well as other Asian groups, including Chinese) and Black (African or Caribbean).[7] From Panel (c) of Table 1 we observe that the large majority of these search do not lead to any further action by the police officers (circa 72%) and that 16.1% conclude with an arrest. Nearly 60% of searches are initiated on the suspicion of finding drugs, and 17% relate to weapons. In terms of demographics, Black civilians make up nearly 42% of the individuals targeted by searches, followed by White (circa 37%), "Other" ethnicity (18%), Chinese/other Asian (6.3%), Pakistani/Bangladeshi (5.9%) and Indian (3.4%). Our data contains 295,667 searches, of which 92608 are within a 7-day window around an attack by the far-right and 34648 within a window around an attack by Muslim extremists.

4. Empirical strategy

Our goal is to estimate changes in the types of use of force/stop-and-search following terrorist attacks. We employ a regression discontinuity-in-time (RDiT) design, whereby we focus on use of force/stop-and-search episodes within a few days of the attacks. We operationalise this by estimating the following regression

$$y_{ita} = \tau * post - attack_{ita} + \beta * elapsed_t + \gamma * post - attack_{ita} \times elapsed_{ta} + \delta * X_{ita} + \varepsilon_{ita} \qquad (1)$$

where *i* denotes a use of force/stop-and-search incident, *t* is day, and *a* is the specific attack. Our vector of outcome variables, y_{ita}, represent a series of binary, episode-level characteristics. For use-of-force data, these indicate the ethnicity of the subject (White, Black, Asian), the location of the incident (stadia, pubs/bars, public transport), the reasons why force was used (to protect the public, to prevent crime), the severity of the incident (subject compliant, police officer injured, use of equipment). For stop-and-search, y_{ita} also indicates the ethnicity of the subject, what the object of the search (drug, weapon, stolen items), the location, and the outcome of the search (arrest, no further action).

The term *elapsed* is our running variable, counting the number of days to and from attack *a*. We estimate (1) in various forms, using a split-linear trend in the running variable and a 14-, 7- and 3-day window around each attack as well as an optimal bandwidth based on Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik (2014). The treatment variable, $post - attack_{ita}$, takes value 1 for the days following the attack, and 0 otherwise. Our coefficient of interest is τ and measures the

[6] Output areas include between 40 and 125 households, with an average population of 297. There are slightly more than 20,000 output areas in London.

[7] The average Black population share in Black areas is 39 per cent, while the average Asian population share in Asian areas is 49 per cent.

change in probability of a certain type of use of force/stop-and-search directly following a (specific type of) terrorist attack. For instance, if y_{ita} is an indicator for a searched individual being white, τ would be the percentage point change in the probability of a white individual being searched directly after an attack. The term X_{ita} is an array of strictly exogenous control variables. These include weather and air quality information, specifically maximum temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind strength as well as the daily air quality index, all measured at the London borough level and capturing weather effects on footfall, anti-social behaviour and police activities (e.g., Braakmann, 2024). X_{ita} also includes day-of-the-week and incident fixed effects. Unless otherwise specified, this is our baseline specification, using data within a 7-day window around each attack.

Clearly, terrorist attacks are not completely random events in the way that, say, a natural disaster would be. For instance, if the police receive credible intelligence of an impending terrorist attack, police behaviour might change in the days before an attack. Our strategy assumes continuity of the outcome in the absence of the attack, i.e., police behaviour would have evolved smoothly through the time of the attack. In other words, while police deployment may respond to security conditions and intelligence signals, these factors are assumed not to generate a discrete change in police behaviour at the time of the attack. The central implication is that the police must not be aware of the *exact* time of the attack. If this holds, any discontinuous change in police behaviour at the time of the attack can be causally attributed to the attack itself rather than to underlying trends or anticipation effects. Importantly, this design does not require the timing of attacks to be random. Terrorist attacks may be planned well in advance and may occur at systematically chosen times. Identification instead relies on the assumption that any anticipatory responses by the police—such as increased vigilance or gradual changes in deployment driven by intelligence—manifest smoothly over time rather than as a discrete jump at the moment of the attack. As a result, the estimated treatment effects are a local, short-term response to the attack. This is a plausible assumption, given that the attacks in our sample are predominantly self-initiated or small-cell operations — precisely the type that intelligence services find hardest to detect in advance (McCallum, 2022; Anderson, 2017). Independent reviews of the 2017 attacks found that, where intelligence fragments existed, they were either not acted upon or not processed in time (Anderson, 2017; ISC, 2018), rather than generating a coordinated pre-attack policing response that would violate the smoothness assumption.[8] Similarly, terrorist attacks aimed at maximising fatalities or impact might well be more likely to occur at times when footfall is high and police activity is already diverging from its average trend, e.g., around concerts or sporting events, on public transport during rush hour or in parks on sunny days. For this reason, our preferred specification includes day-of-the-week fixed effects and weather controls. Finally, we include event fixed effects in all specifications to take into account that general circumstances and wider policing strategies, and perhaps reporting, will change over time and hence attacks.

5. Results

5.1 Ethnic composition of policing targets

We begin by presenting graphical evidence for a 14-day window around each attack by either the far-right or Muslim extremists in Figures 1 (use of force) and 2 (stops and searches) using a local polynomial regression on each side of the threshold. There is relatively little clear

[8] One of the perpetrators of the London bridge attack, Khuram Butt, was subject of a MI5 investigation opened mid-2015, however, as "*Material relating to Khuram Butt received in the two weeks prior to the attack on 3 June added little to the intelligence picture and did not identify the activity that led up to the attack*." (Anderson, 2017, p.19)

evidence that would point towards a systematic shift towards either white subjects after far-right attacks or minority ethnic groups following Muslim extremist attacks. While there are sometimes possible discontinuities, such as an increase in the use-of-force against whites and a drop in the use-of-force against black following a far-right attack in Figure 1, panels (b) and (c), these changes are usually small in magnitude and not statistically significant.

(Figures 1 and 2 about here.)

As noted by Hausman and Rapson (2018), choosing a long time period around the threshold may lead to biased results, as excessive weights is put on observations far away from the event. In fact, the large drop (increase) in use of force and stop and searches against White (Black or Others) on the 10th day following far-right attacks, which we observe in Figures 1 and 2, is mainly driven by a 2019 attack, i.e. the assault of the Guardian journalist Owen Jones by a far-right extremist, whose 14-day window overlaps with the 2019 Notting Hill Carnival, which over the years has been characterised by a large number of arrests within a short space of time (BBC, 2025; London Assembly, 2024).[9] For this reason, in the remainder of our analysis, we restrict the focus to use of force and stop and search encounters within mainly a 7-day window. In Table 2 and Figure 3 we presents estimates of the treatment effect τ from equation (1), focusing on a 7-day window around the date of each attack and our preferred specification with split linear trends (i.e. the number of days elapsed from/to the attack interacted with the 'post-attack' indicator), the full set of weather and air quality information described in Section 3, as well as terrorist attack and day-of-the-week fixed effects. Table 2 focuses on attacks by the far right and Muslim extremists. In columns (1)-(4), our outcome variable measures whether Asian, Black, White and 'Other ethnicity' individuals, respectively, were targeted by use of force. In columns (6)-(10), we repeat the same exercise, using the more detailed ethnicity categories available within the stop-and-search data, that is, Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese/Other Asian, Black, White, and Other, respectively. Panel (a) focuses on attacks by far-right (FR) groups, whereas Panel (b) focuses on attacks by Muslim extremists (ME). Similar to Figures 1 and 2, we find little to no evidence that the police disproportionally target individuals belonging to the ethnic group of the perpetrators for either far-right or Muslim extremist terrorist attacks. Point estimates are usually small and not statistically significant at any conventional level, e.g. increased searches of Whites following far-right attacks. Conversely, estimates largely suggest effects of the opposite sign that could have been expected, e.g., a decrease in searches of those with Bangladeshi, India or Pakistani ethnicity – all countries with significant Muslim populations – and an increase in searches of Whites after Muslim extremist attacks.

(Table 2 and Figure 3 about here.)

In Figure 3, we broaden these comparisons by presenting additional estimates for all attacks (including those with unknown perpetrators), attacks resulting in fatalities and attacks resulting in injuries. The specification used is the same as in Table 2. There is again little evidence for any systematic pattern across the different events that would be suggestive of targeting of specific ethnic groups.

In Table 3, we present basic robustness checks to different specifications, specifically fewer controls in Panels (a2) and (b2), a reduced window of 3-days in Panels (a3) and (b3) and an optimal bandwidth based on Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik (2014) in Panels (a4) and (b4). While there are some minor changes to magnitudes and sometimes statistical significance, the

[9]The Notting Hill Carnival is an annual Caribbean cultural festival held in the Notting Hill neighbourhood in the West of London, during August's last Sunday and Monday.

overall pattern of results is essentially identical to Table 2. One thing to note is that the change in searches of Whites after far-right attacks changes in magnitude and it becomes statistically significant in panel (a4) when using Calonico et al (2014) optimal bandwith, suggesting a 2.1 percentage points increase. Given the sensitivity of this result to the specification being used, we are cautious about interpreting this as evidence of bias/profiling.

(Table 3 about here.)

The null effects we have observed so far are may be due to the fact that some terrorist incidents are small and localised and hence might not be expected to change officer behaviour very much. To test this idea, we focus on the three high-profile attacks mentioned in Section 2. Panel (a) focuses on the effects of the Manchester Arena bombing, whereas Panels (b) and (c) present estimates of the effects of the London Bridge and Finsbury Park attacks. The latter is classed as an attack by the far-right, while the former two are attacks by Muslim extremists. We indeed find some effects that are larger in magnitude than those in previous tables. However, there is little evidence for any pattern that would suggest ethnic targeting. For example, following the London Bridge attack – an attack where the perpetrators were of Pakistani and Northern African ethnicity – we see decreases in stops and searches of those with Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani ethnicity and see increases in searches of Chinese and White individuals. Similarly, following the Finsbury Park attack – where the perpetrator was a White man from Wales – we see increases in stops and searches of black individuals and decreases in searches of Whites. Neither of these can plausibly suggest that police officers target ethnic groups associated with the perpetrators of attacks.

(Table 4 about here.)

These results suggest no change in the composition of police-civilian encounters, conditional on the encounter occurring. However, a post-attack increase in volumes of use-of-force and/or stop-and-searches would still represent an important behavioural change, even if the ethnic composition of the subjects is unchanged. Given the relatively limited number of attacks in our sample and the restricted time span required by the RDiT, we believe that regression results at the attack-by-day level would lack sufficient statistical power to draw firm conclusions. Instead, we present some descriptive evidence in Figure A1. We can see that use-of-force and stop-and-searches did not experience visible deviations following either type of attack across areas and ethnicity.

Overall, our estimates suggest relatively little support for the profiling/discrimination channel to be of importance. In particular, given the lack of any clear shifts towards ethnicities associated with the respective perpetrators, there is essentially no empirical support for prediction B1.

5.2 Mission focus

As highlighted by channel A, in particular prediction A1, terrorist attacks may also affect the way police operations are conducted, specifically, we would expect to see a shift in activity towards weapons/public protection and away from routine objects. In what follows, we aggregate ethnic minorities into a single Non-white category. This aggregation preserves statistical power, since splitting tactical outcomes by detailed ethnic group may yield cell sizes too small for reliable inference (see Table 1).

(Figure 4 about here.)

In Figure 4, we focus on stop and search outcomes. We plot the treatment effect τ from equation (1) using our main specification, within a 7-day window from each attack. We again find very little differences across ethnic groups for any outcome. There are also few changes in the probability of unsuccessful searches or those ending with arrests, which would be indicative of changes to decision-making. We do, however, find evidence in line with prediction A1, namely changes in the objects that are searched for. Specifically, Panel (b) suggests an increase in weapons searches as well as a corresponding decrease in searches for drugs and theft-related searches following an attack by Muslim extremists. Interestingly and somewhat counterintuitively, Panel (a) suggests a reversed pattern following a far-right attack. One plausible explanation is that the reallocation of search objectives scales with perceived threat severity. Far-right attacks in our sample are substantially less lethal than Muslim extremist attacks and may therefore be insufficient to trigger a shift toward weapons detection. Instead, the heightened police presence that follows any attack — without an accompanying weapons-focused alert — may free up officer capacity for routine enforcement such as drugs and theft searches. Finally, the change in searches triggered by different types of attacks is the result of genuine discontinuity, as opposed to underlying trends, as shown in Figure A2.

Panels (a) and (b) in Figure 4 show no change in the probability that a search would conclude with an arrest or without further actions.

(Figure 5 about here.)

Panel (a) of Figure 5 compares changes to the location of uses of force, as well as two prominent reasons for use-of-force (public safety, crime prevention) across the two types of terrorist attacks. The location of each use-of-force incident is recorded by the officer at the time of reporting, rather than derived from our own geocoding. The data distinguish a small number of specific settings — sports venues, public transport stations, pubs and bars, and outdoor spaces — with all remaining incidents grouped under a residual 'elsewhere' category, which accounts for the large majority of cases. There is little evidence for systematic changes in locations where force is used for either type of attack. There is, however, some evidence for an increase in use-of-force due to public safety considerations following attacks by Muslim extremists. In Panels (b) and (c) we again split the outcome by uses-of-force against White and Non-white subjects and by type of attacks. There are again few notable changes with the exception that Panel (c) suggests that the increase in uses-of-force for public protection is driven by uses-of-force against non-white subjects.

(Figure 6 about here.)

Figure 6 repeats this for stops and searches. Panel (a) again suggests few meaningful changes to the location of searches. A notable exception is that searches in Asian areas become less likely following both far-right and Muslim extremist attacks. Panels (b) and (c) suggest few meaningful ethnic differences in terms of who gets searches where. While there are significant increases in searches of Whites near entertainment venues after far-right attacks and decreases in searches of Whites near places of worship after Muslim extremist attacks, these changes hardly constitute a clear pattern.

One key aspect in our context is that Muslim extremist attacks are, on average, more lethal than far-right attacks. As such, they can plausibly trigger higher alertness and perceived danger. Therefore, this pattern of results suggests changes in line with prediction A1: higher alertness leads to reallocation of stop-and-search efforts towards searches for weapons, increased justification of actions through public protection rather than crime-prevention and little or no change in the ethnicity composition of encounters.

5.3 Higher intensity of use of force

Finally, we consider prediction A2, namely that the intensity of uses-of-force should increase after a terrorist attack, but possibly without any change in target composition. The distribution of f shifts toward higher intensity uses-of-force (e.g., more severe force, more equipment use) if the perceived harm from under-reacting rises.

(Figure 7 about here.)

We look at use-of-force outcomes in Figure 7, i.e., indicators that describe the severity of the interaction (subject compliant, subject resisted/resisted heavily, non-compliant hand-cuffing, use of restraining techniques, use of equipment). We split estimates by White civilians and a composite Non-white group that combines the remaining ethnic groups. Panel (a) suggests relatively small changes following far-right attacks: Effects are generally small and not statistically significant. The only exception is an increase in non-compliant handcuffing and a corresponding decrease in the use of equipment (such as batons, teargas or tasers) against non-white subjects. We observe a different picture when we look at the effect of Muslim extremist attacks in Panel (b). On average, subjects are 7-10 percentage points more likely to resist the police, 2-5 percentage points more likely to resist heavily and police officers become 2.5 – 3.7 percentage points more likely to be assaulted. In addition, we observe less compliant handcuffing (5-10 percentage points), and corresponding increases in non-compliant handcuffing and the use of unarmed techniques by the police. Once again, these results are consistent with the increased lethality of Muslim extremist attacks, and possibly the increased level of alertness resulting from it. Crucially, these changes are essentially identical for White and Non-white subjects, thus supporting the finding from Section 4.1 that salient events are not reinforcing potential existing biases.

5.4 Placebo

Finally, we need to rule out the possibility that our results are simply due to generalised alertness driven by media exposure, and that they are indeed a result of local security response. In this respect, we repeat the same exercise as above but using terrorist attacks that occurred in Europe in the same period, and that received high media coverage in the UK.[10]

The estimates are reported in Figures 8, 9 and 10.[11] These are analogous to Figures 4, 5 and 7, but only consider a 7-day window around international attacks. As for mission focus, we find no evidence that international attacks shift policing priority analogously to domestic attacks.

(Figures 8 and 9 about here)

[10] These events are the 17 August 2017 Barcelona attack, where a van was driven into crowds on Las Ramblas, killing 14 people and injuring more than 100 in an Islamic extremist attack; the 7 April 2017 Stockholm attack, in which a truck was driven into a department store area, killing 5 people in an Islamist extremist attack; the 23 March 2018 attacks in Trèbes and Carcassonne, France, when an Islamic extremist carried out three attacks, killing four people and injuring 15; the 11 December 2018 Strasbourg Christmas market attack, involving firearms and a knife, which killed 5 people and injured 11; the 29 May 2018 Liège attack, where a man killed two police officers and a bystander in an ISIS-linked attack; the 9 October 2019 Halle attack, in which a far-right extremist attacked a synagogue on Yom Kippur, killing 2 people; and the 18 March 2019 Utrecht tram shooting, where a gunman opened fire on a tram, killing 4 people in an Islamic extremist attack.

[11] We present estimates by type of attack. However, it should be kept in mind that 6 out of 7 international attacks were perpetrated by Muslim extremists, so the results for far-right attacks are ultimately based on one event.

Panel (b) of Figure 8 suggests an increase in drug searches and a decrease in weapon searches following international Muslim extremist attacks. While it would be hard to attribute this shift to the attacks themselves, it is clear that international attacks, while very violent in nature, do not drive the same priority shifts that we observed for domestic attacks. There is no visible change following international far-right attacks (panel (b)), aside from an increase in theft-related searches against non-white subjects. As for use-of-force, we find no evidence that they were more likely to occur as a form of protection of the public following international attacks.

Finally, we consider the intensity of use of force after international attacks. We largely find that police-civilian interactions were less violent following the attacks, regardless of the ethnicity of the subjects. Again, while these patterns cannot be attributed to the attacks themselves, the fact that they are different from those following domestic attacks is consistent with prediction A2, i.e. tactical intensification if the perceived harm from under-reacting rises.

(Figure 10 about here)

Overall, these findings help confirm the presence of channel A (operational alertness, mission reweighting and tactical thresholds) over channel B (profiling/discrimination). International attacks may be characterised by lower danger perception compared to domestic ones, and therefore are less likely to trigger similar operational alertness and mission focus shifts.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This paper evaluated two competing mechanisms through which terrorist attacks may change policing in the short run. We built a simple conceptual framework, emphasising two mechanisms: A profiling/discrimination shock predicting discontinuous changes in who police stop or use force against (composition shifts toward the perpetrator-associated group) and an operational alertness shock predicting changes in how policing is conducted—reallocation toward public protection (e.g., weapons searches) and tactical intensification—without group-specific targeting. Using administrative data from London's Metropolitan Police Service on the universe of use-of-force incidents and stop-and-searches, which we linked to UK terrorist attacks between April 2017 and November 2019, we estimated a regression discontinuity-in-time design comparing police–civilian interactions in narrow windows immediately before and after each attack date.

The resulting evidence aligns closely with the alertness channel and provides little support for short-run profiling in this setting. Specifically, three broad results stand out. First, we find little evidence of short-run ethnic profiling. After Muslim extremist attacks we do not detect a discontinuous increase in enforcement directed at the ethnic groups most closely associated with the perpetrators, and after far-right attacks we do not detect a discontinuous shift toward White targets. This result emerges consistently across use-of-force and stop-and-search data, across bandwidth choices, and in analyses of major individual attacks. Second, we document clear changes along mission and tactical margins, concentrated after Muslim extremist attacks: stop-and-search reallocates away from drugs and theft-related objects and toward weapons, and use-of-force incidents become more severe and more often framed in terms of public protection. Third, these tactical changes look broad-based rather than group-specific: they are similar for White and Non-white subjects, which is hard to reconcile with a pure profiling mechanism and instead points to heightened alertness.

A key interpretive issue is whether these differences reflect perpetrator identity or attack severity. In our sample, Muslim extremist attacks are substantially more lethal, on average, than far-right attacks. The observed post-attack reallocation toward weapons searches and the intensification of force are therefore consistent with a rational or organisational response to perceived threat, i.e., an increase in the marginal value of public protection, rather than an identity-driven relaxation of constraints on discriminatory targeting. This distinction matters because it suggests that the short-run welfare consequences of attacks may operate primarily through tactical changes, not through immediate group-targeted enforcement.

The results have practical implications for policing under threat. The absence of detectable short-run profiling in London suggests that immediate post-attack enforcement does not mechanically translate into disproportionate targeting of perpetrator-associated ethnic groups in this setting. At the same time, the evidence of tactical intensification and a shift toward weapons searches after more lethal attacks highlights operational risks: heightened alertness may increase the probability of coercive encounters and escalation. Policies aimed at decision-making under acute stress, clear operational guidance on proportionality, and supervisory support during high-threat periods may therefore yield high returns by reducing harmful encounters without undermining public protection.

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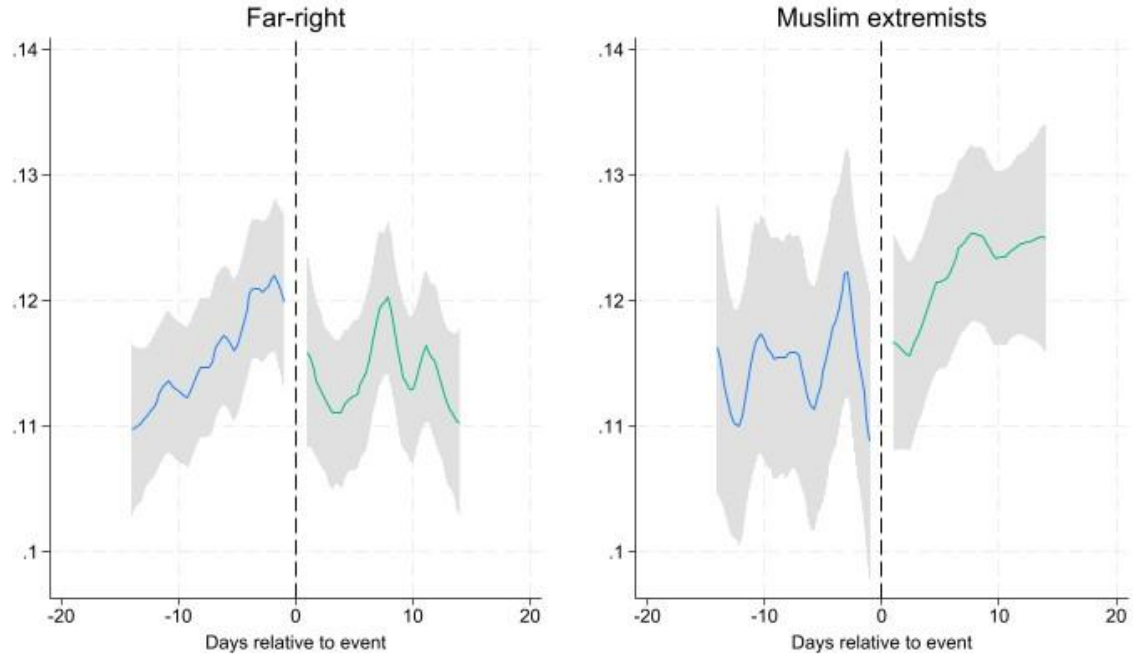
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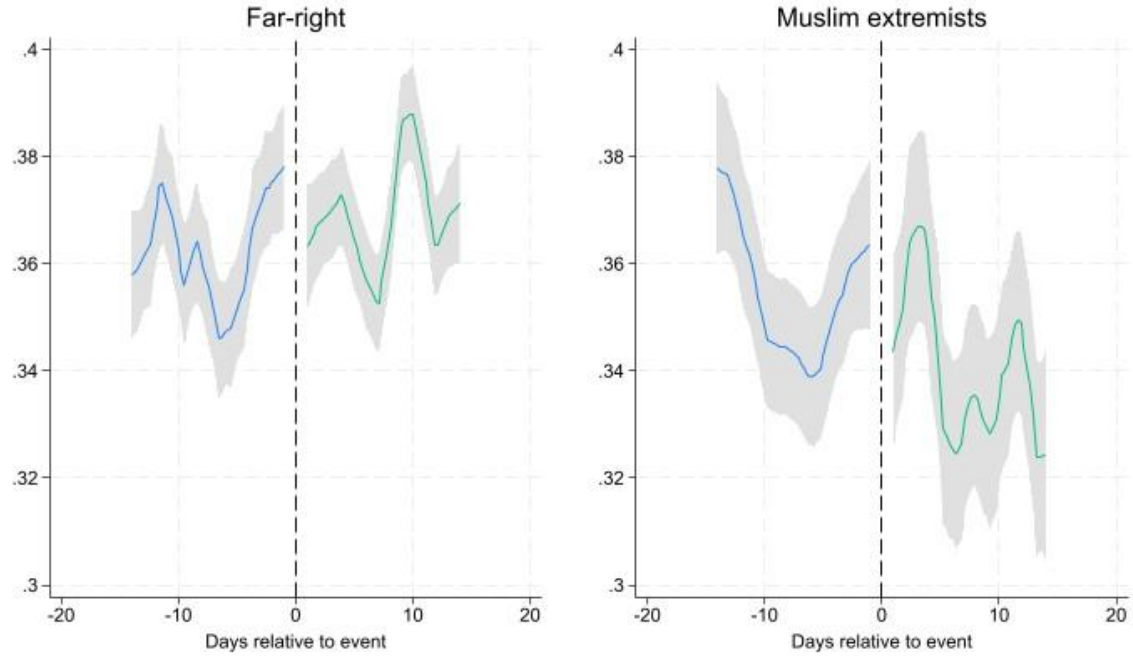
Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Ethnicity of targeted person, all events, use-of-force

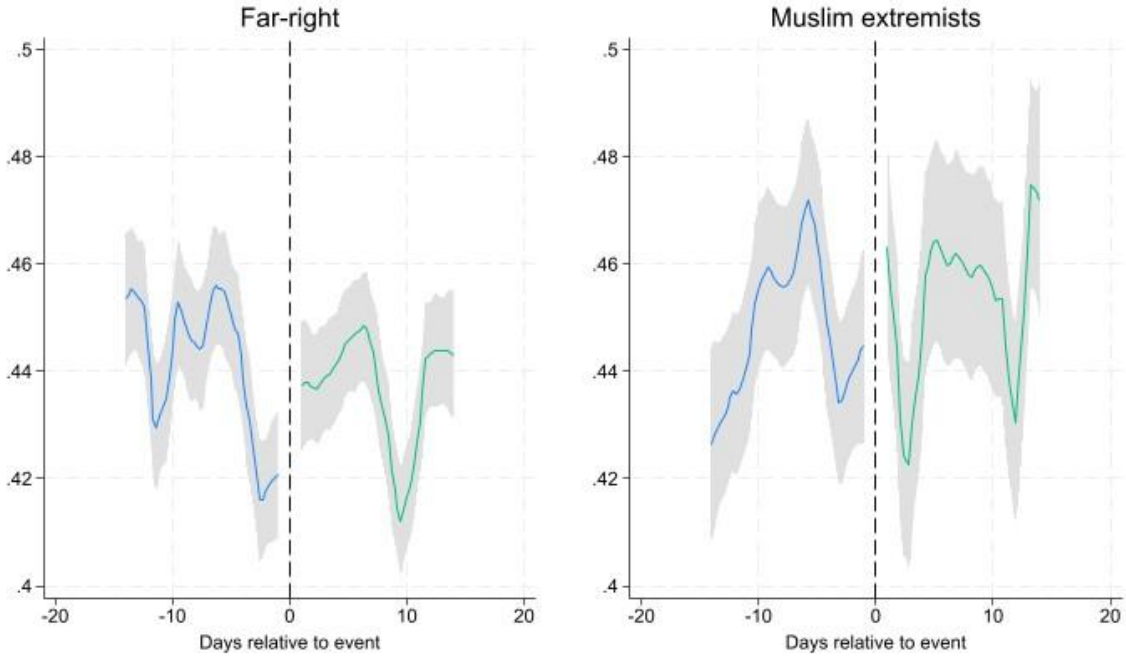
Panel (a): Asian



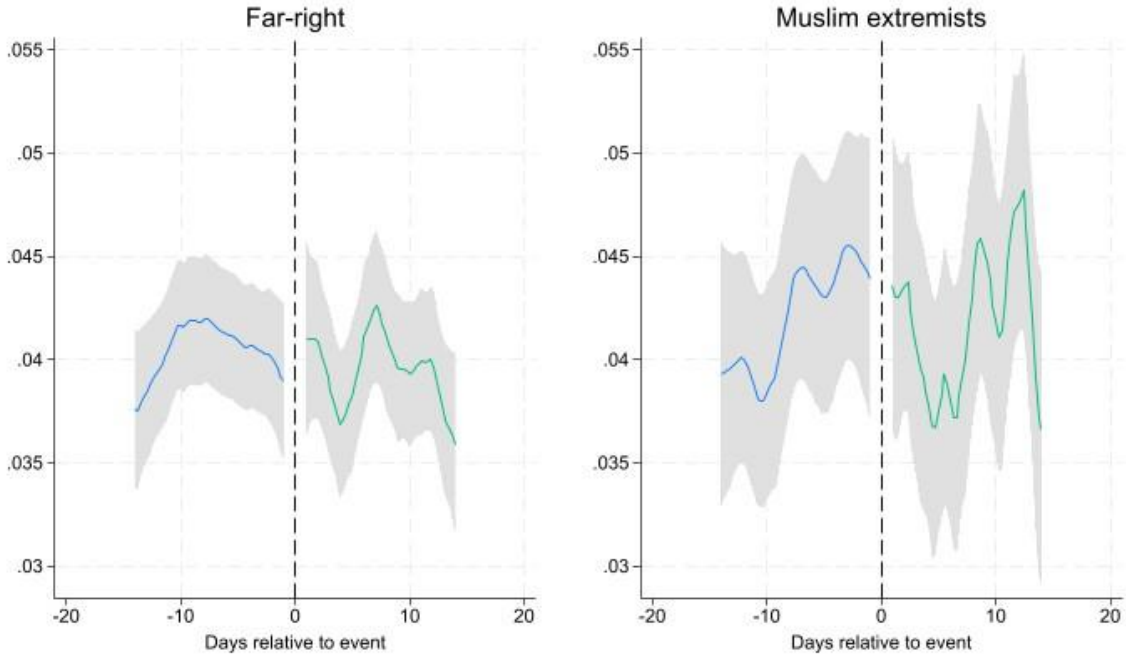
Panel (b): Black



Panel (c): White



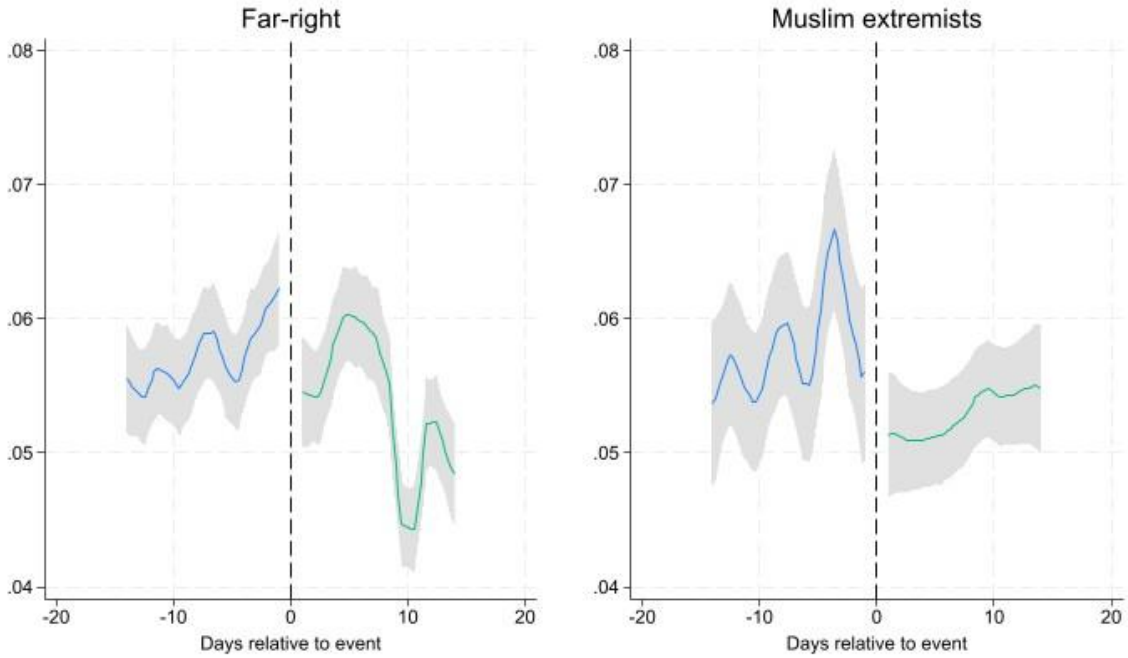
Panel (d): Other



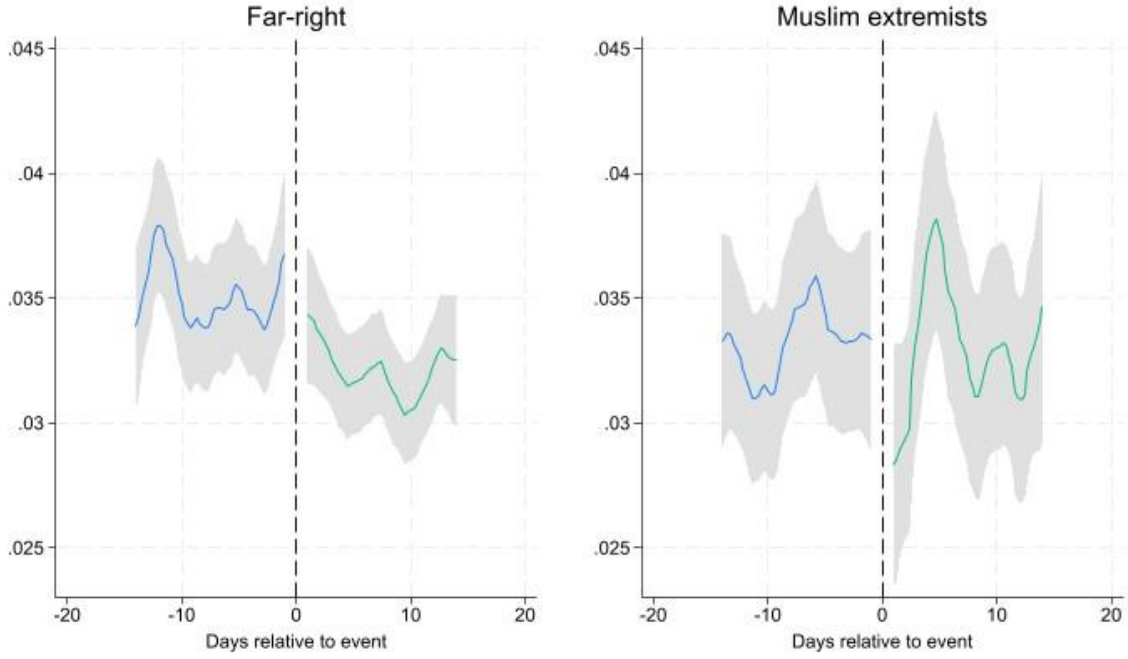
Note: Estimates of a local polynomial regression, using a 14-day window on each side of the threshold. The dependent variable is the probability that the subject against whom force is used is: Asian (panel (a)), Black (panel (b)), White (Panel (c)) and Other (panel (d)). Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 2: Ethnicity of targeted person, all events, stops and searches

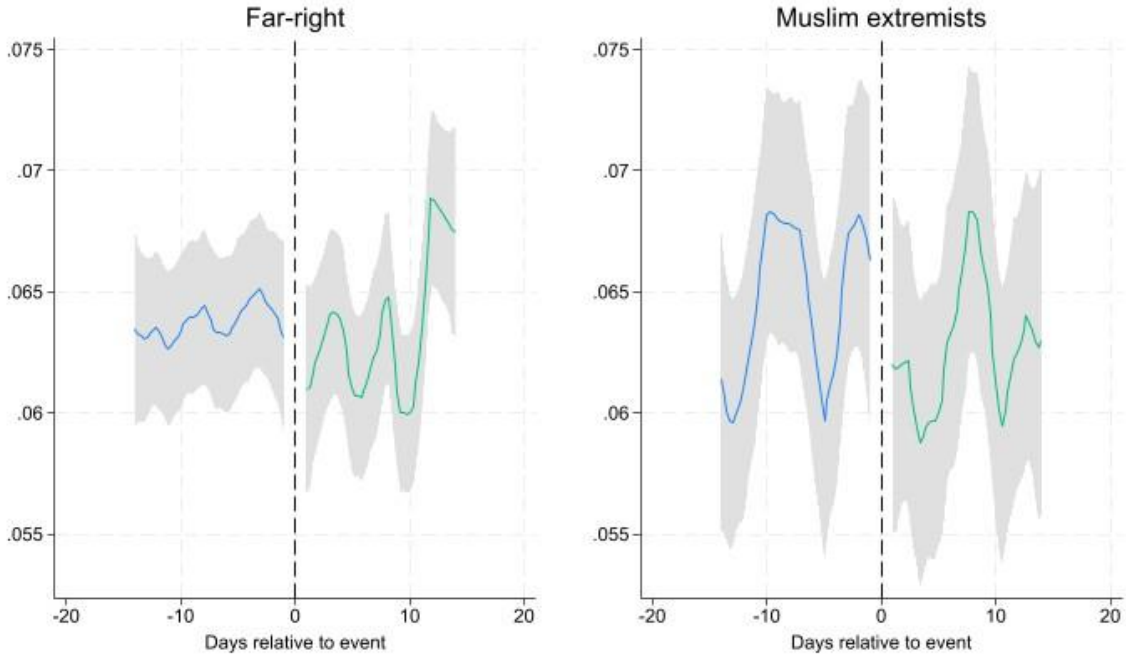
Panel (a): Bangladeshi/Pakistani



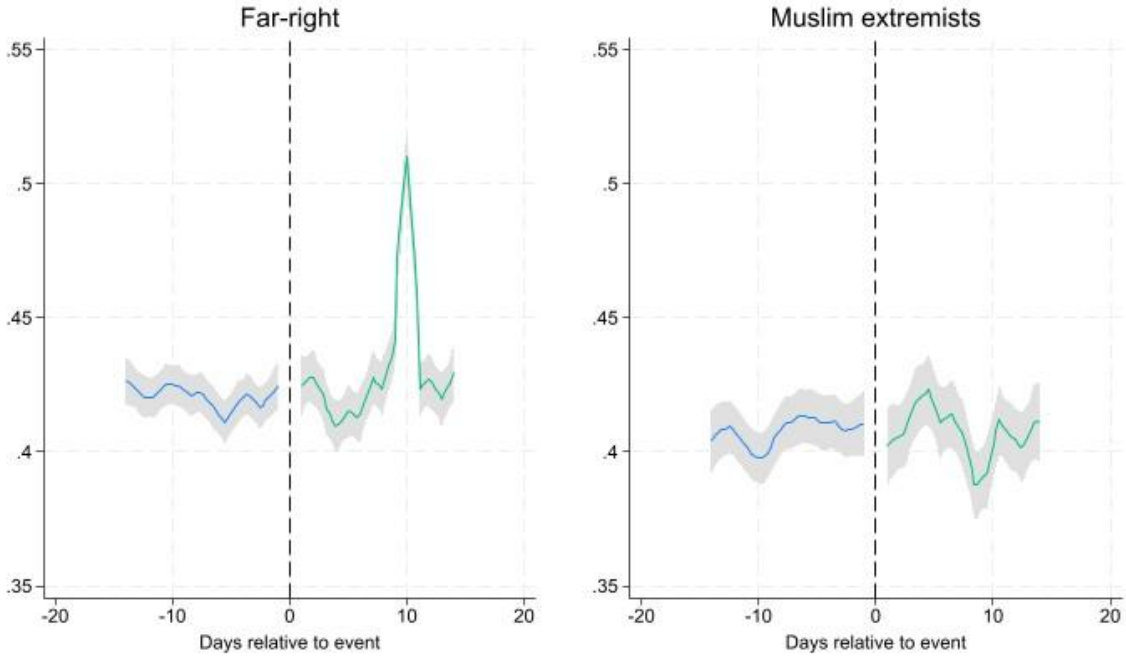
Panel (b): Indian



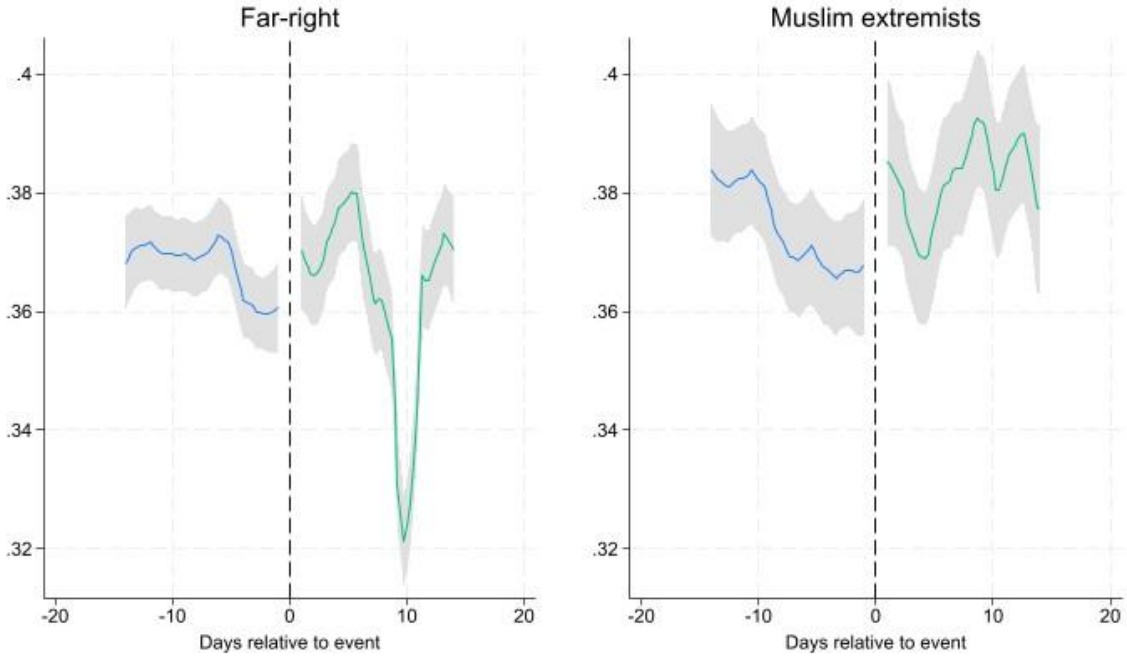
Panel (c): Other Asian



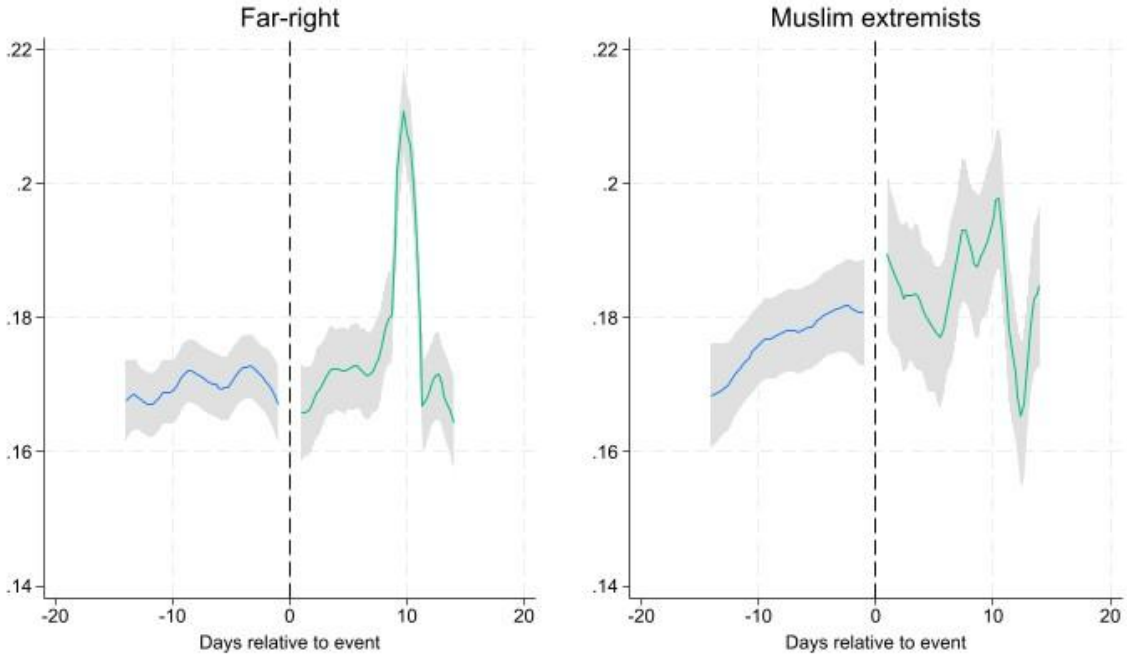
Panel (d): Black



Panel (e): White



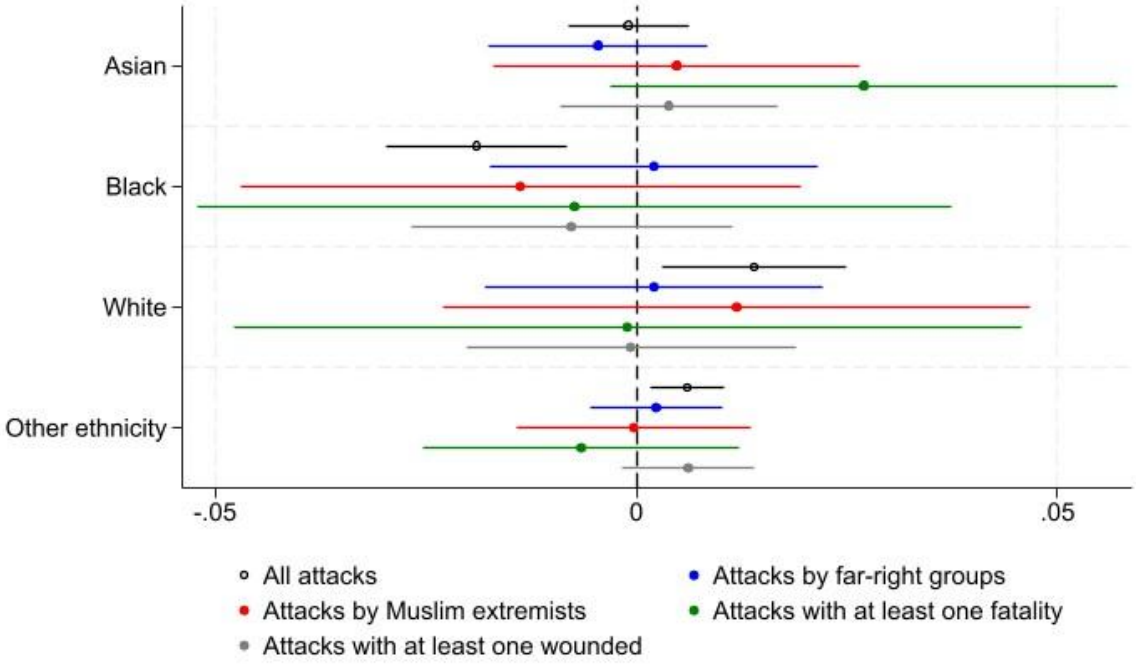
Panel (f): Other



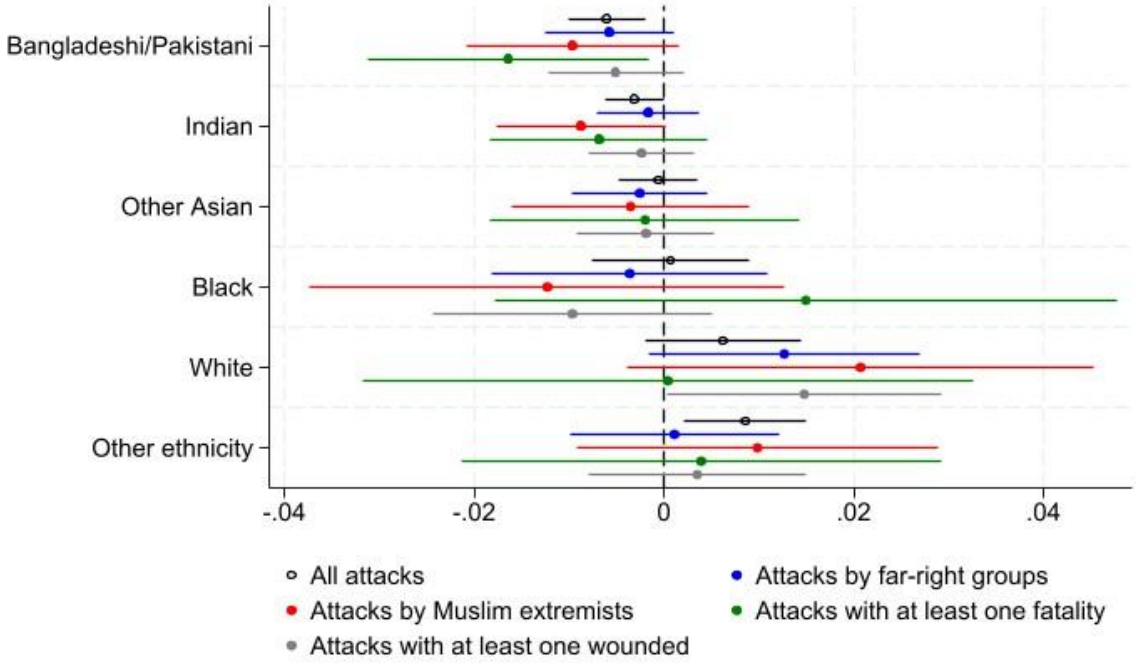
Note: Estimates of a local polynomial regression, using a 14-day window on each side of the threshold. The dependent variable is the probability that the subject being stopped is: Bangladeshi/Pakistani (panel (a)), Indian (panel (b)), Other Asian (Panel (c)), Black (Panel (d)), White (Panel (e)), and Other (panel (f)). Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals

Figure 3: Ethnicity of targeted person across events

Panel (a): Use-of-force



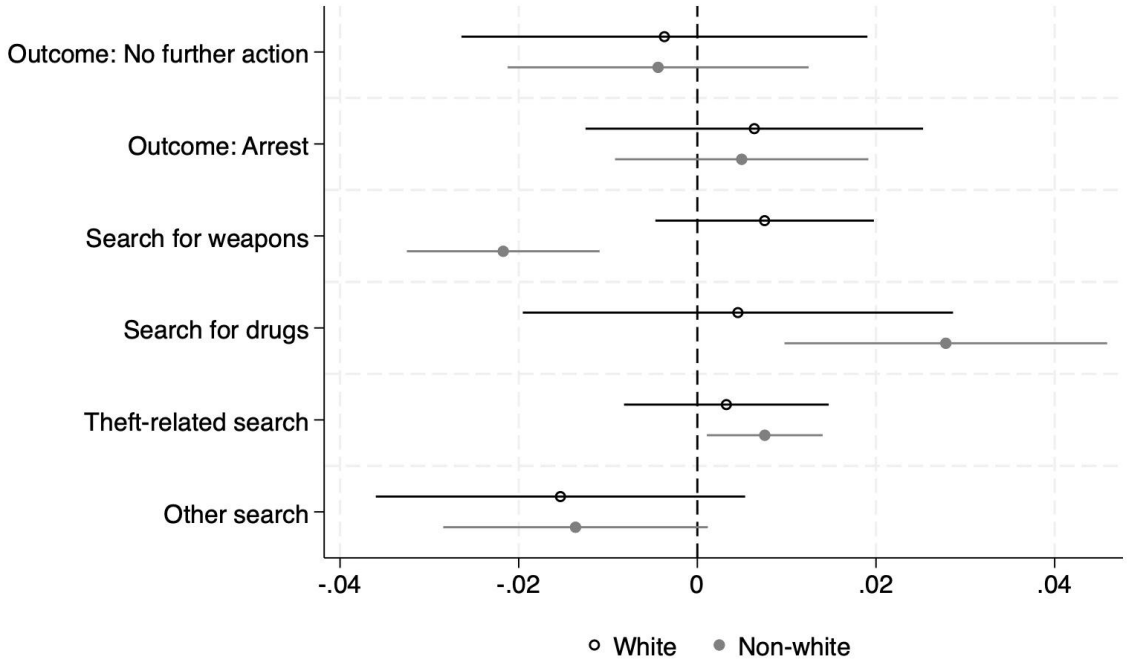
Panel (b): Stops and searches



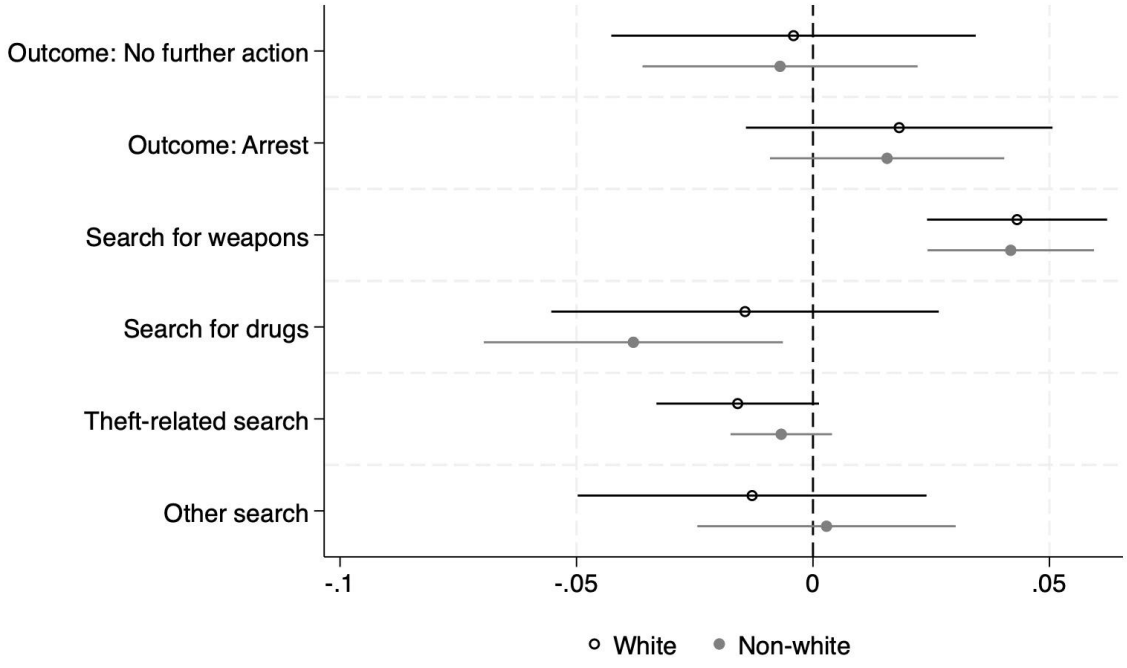
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 4: Mission focus: Outcomes and reasons for stop and search outcomes

Panel (a): Attacks by far-right groups



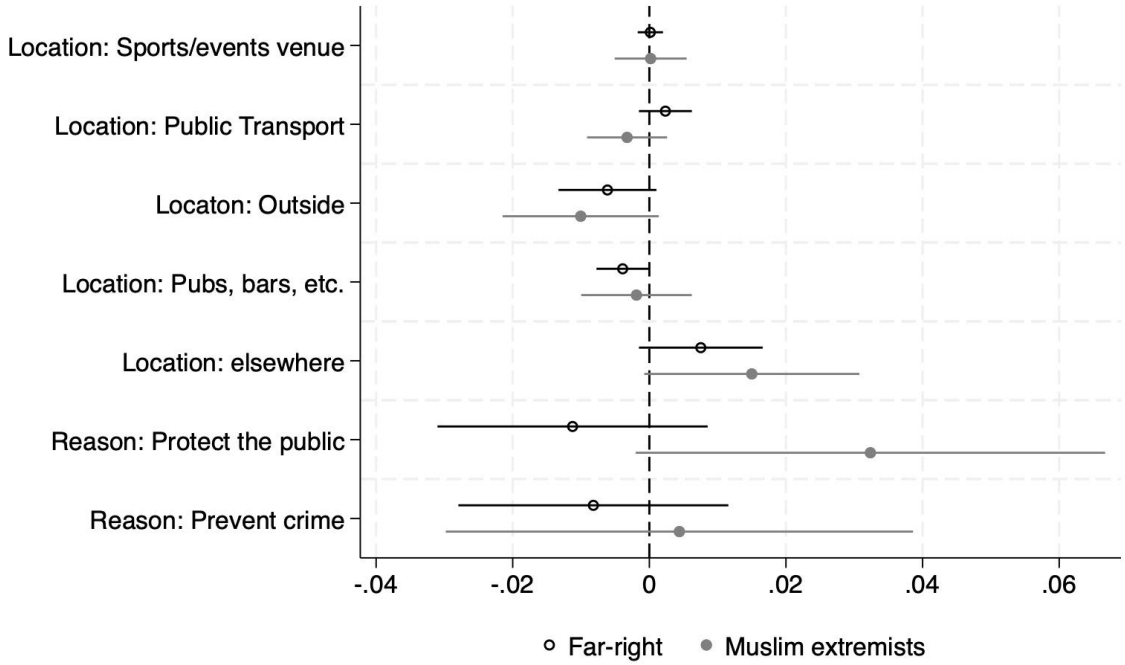
Panel (b): Attacks by Muslim extremists



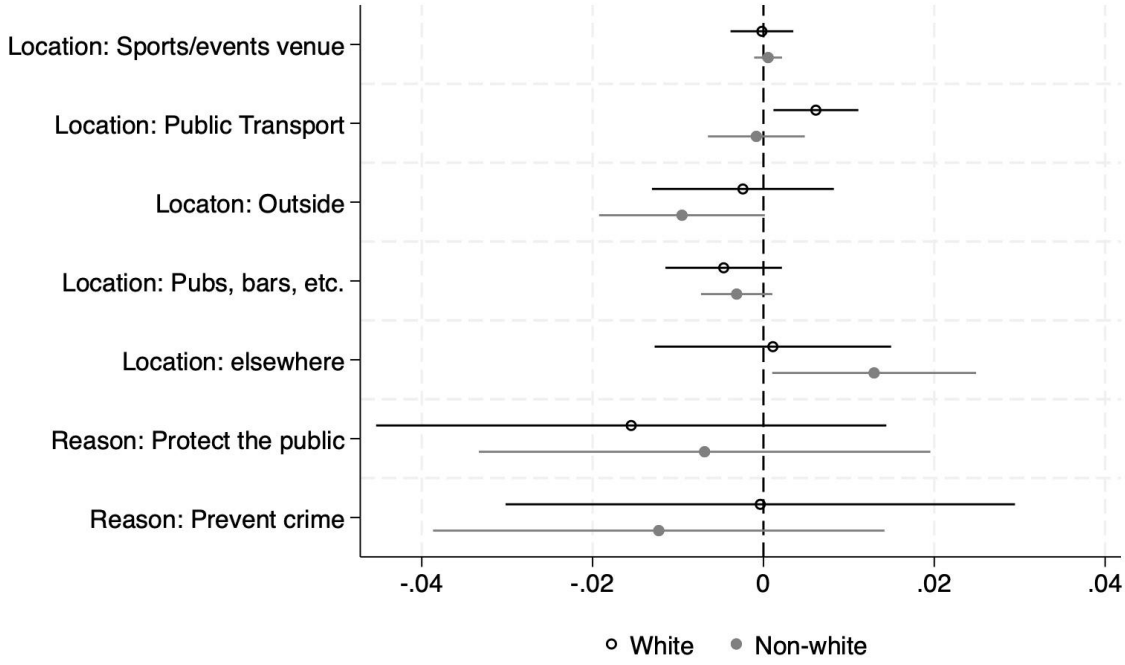
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 5: Mission focus: Locations and reasons for use-of-force

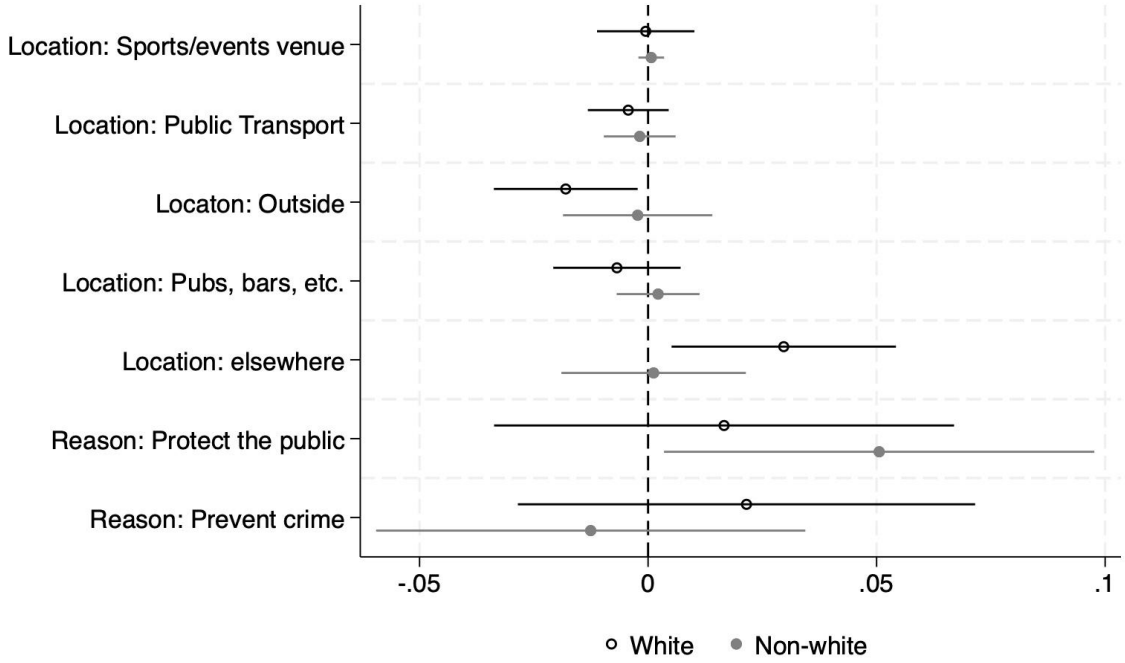
Panel (a): Changes by attack type



Panel (b): Attacks by far-right groups



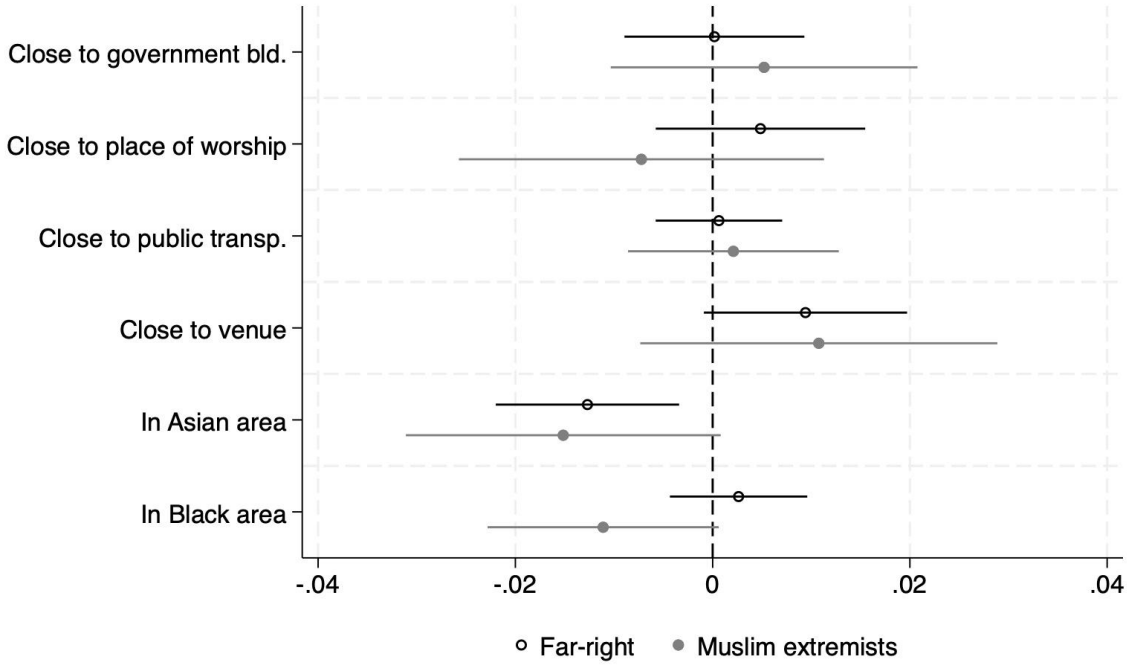
Panel (c): Attacks by Muslim extremists



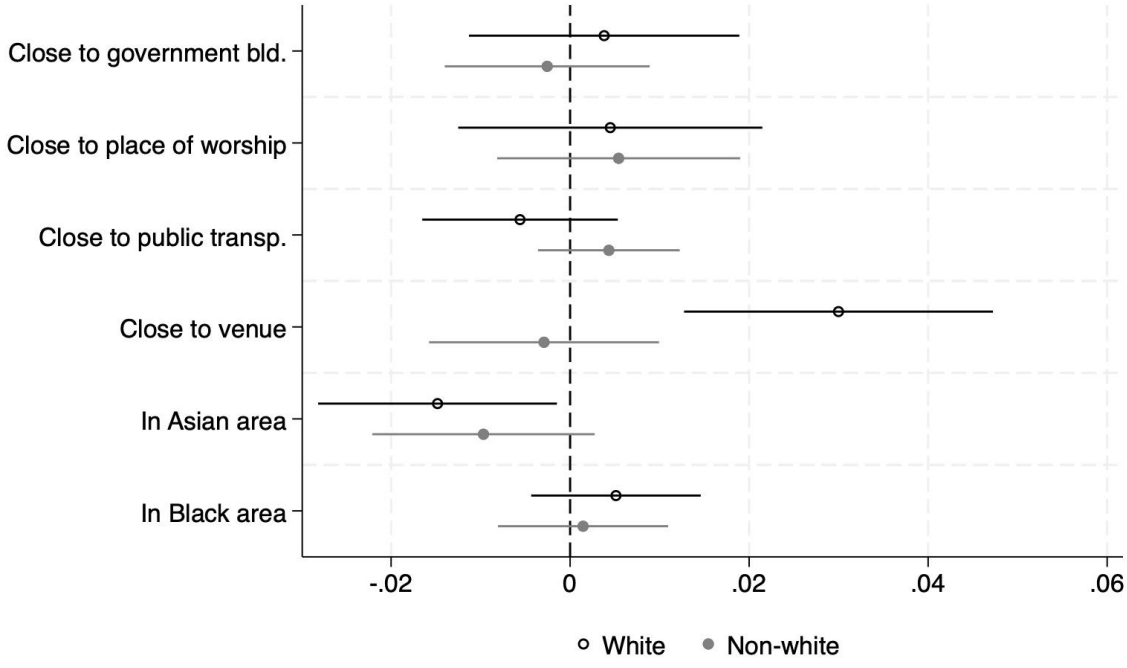
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 6: Mission focus: Locations ofstops and searches

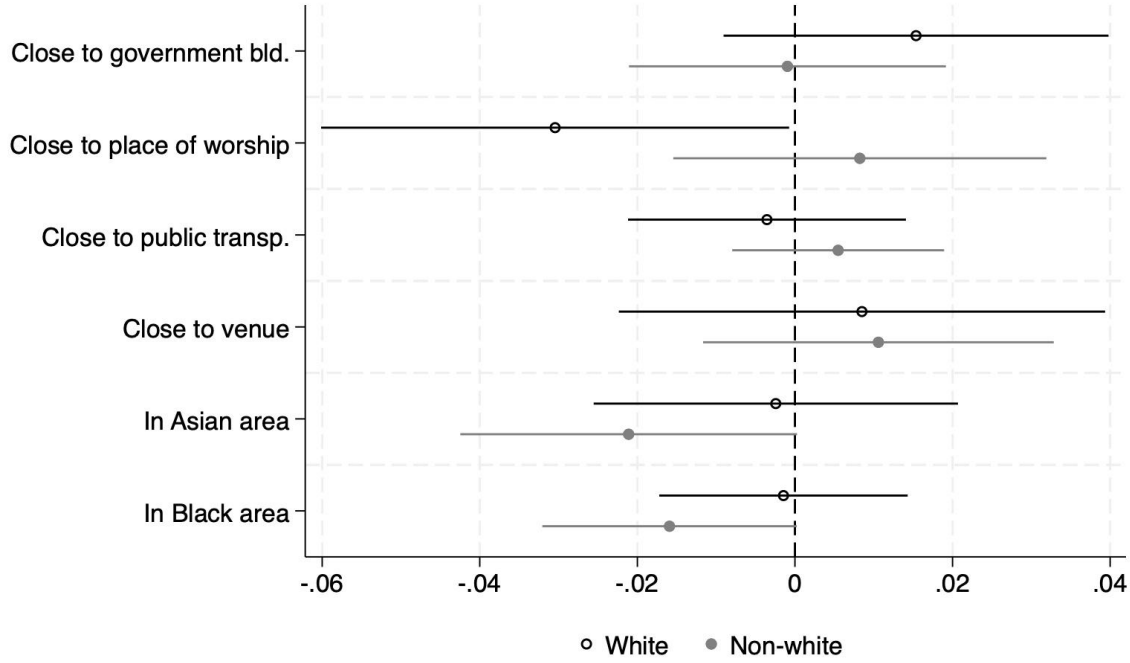
Panel (a): Changes by attack type



Panel (b): Attacks by far right groups



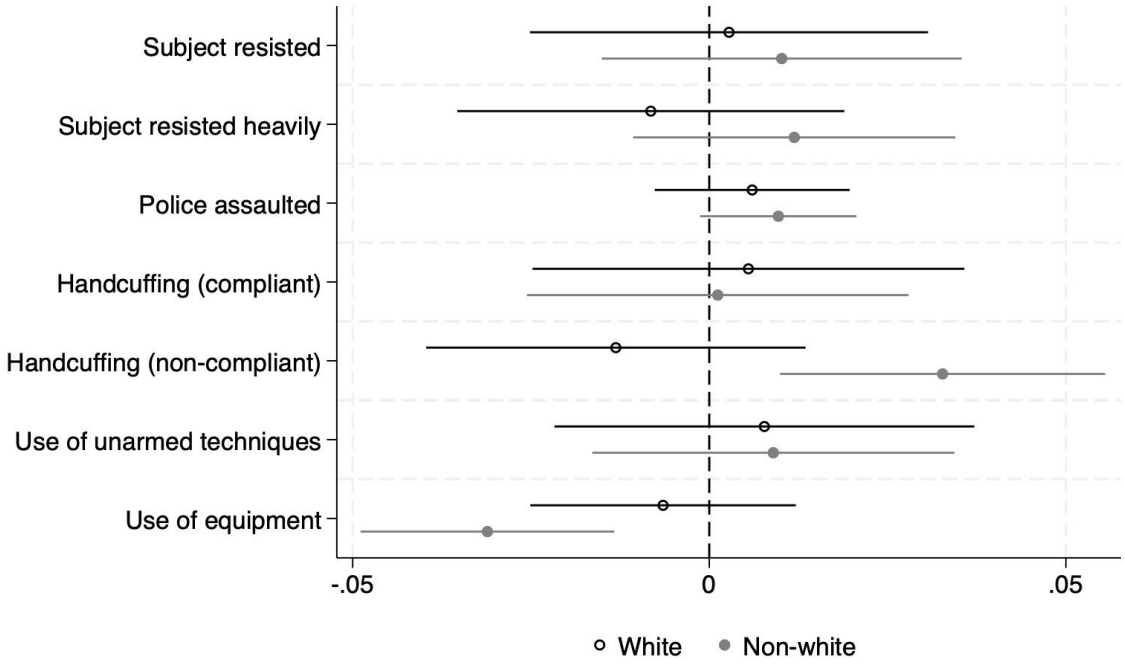
Panel (c): Attacks by Muslim extremists



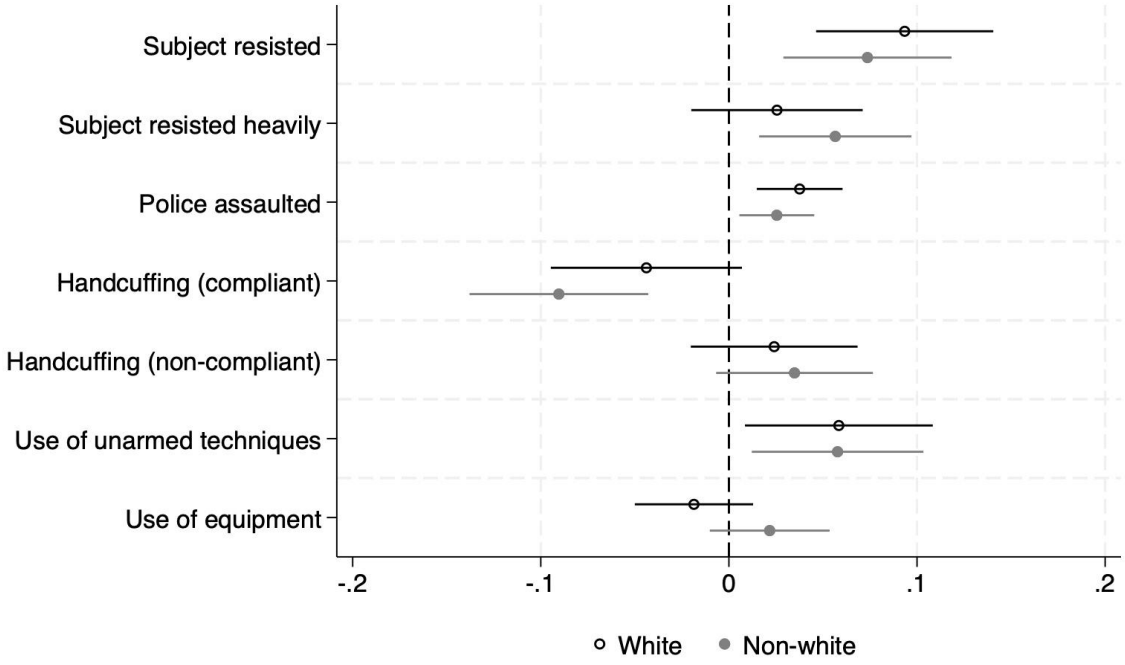
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 7: Intensity of use-of-force

Panel (a): Attacks by far-right groups



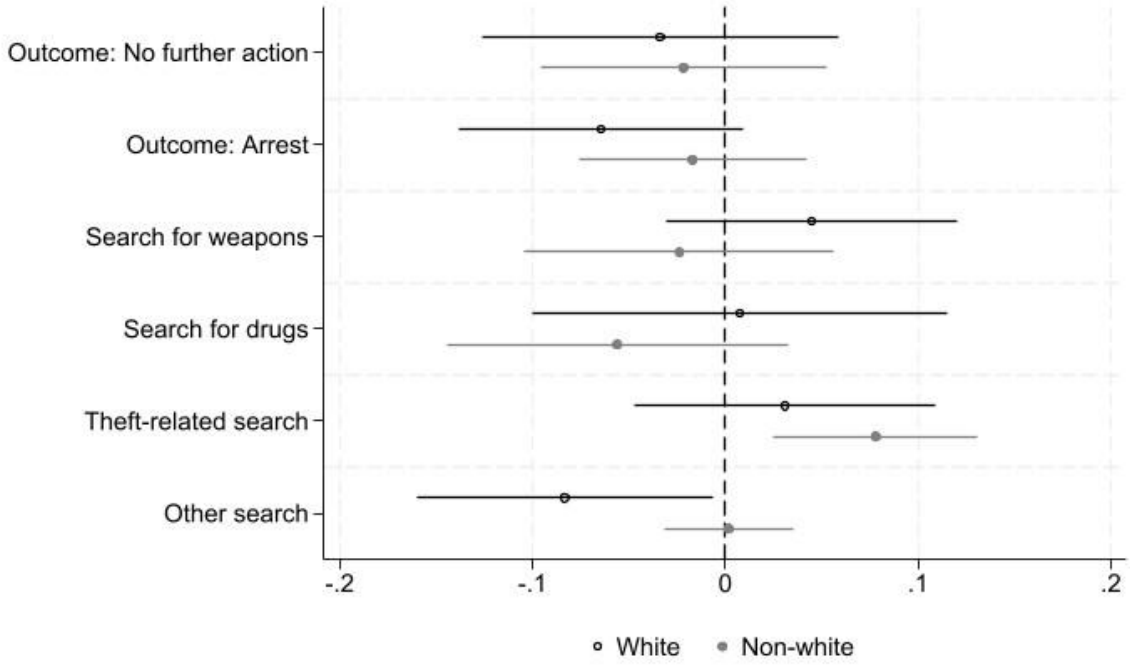
Panel (b): Attacks by Muslim extremists



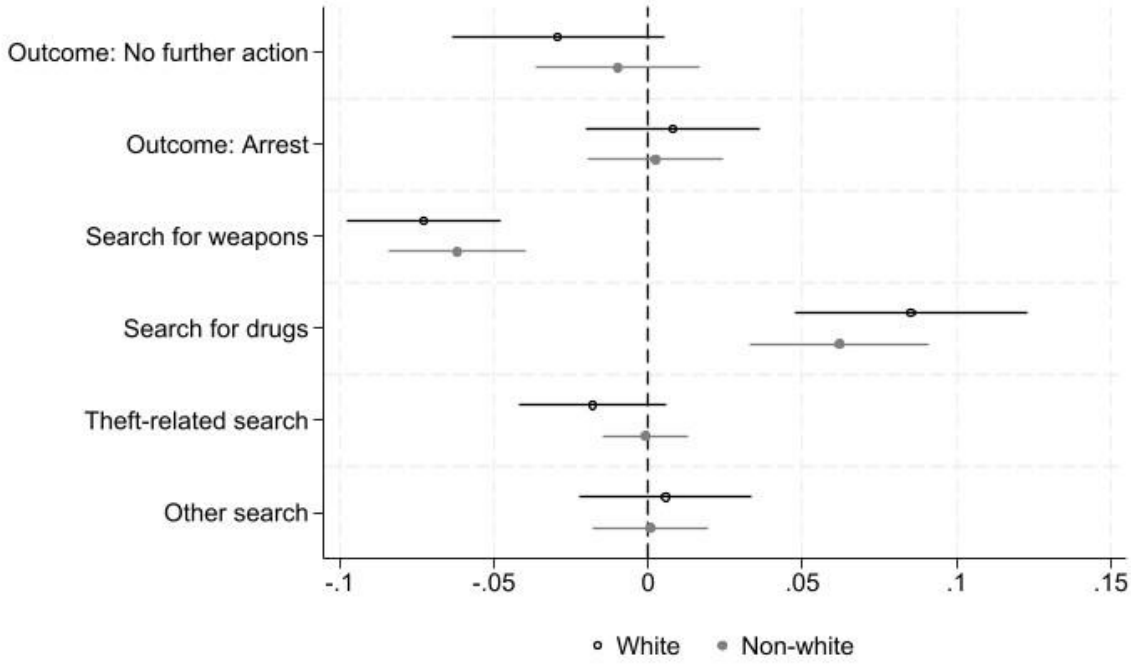
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 8: Mission focus after international attacks: Outcomes and reasons for stop and search outcomes

Panel (a): attacks by far-right groups



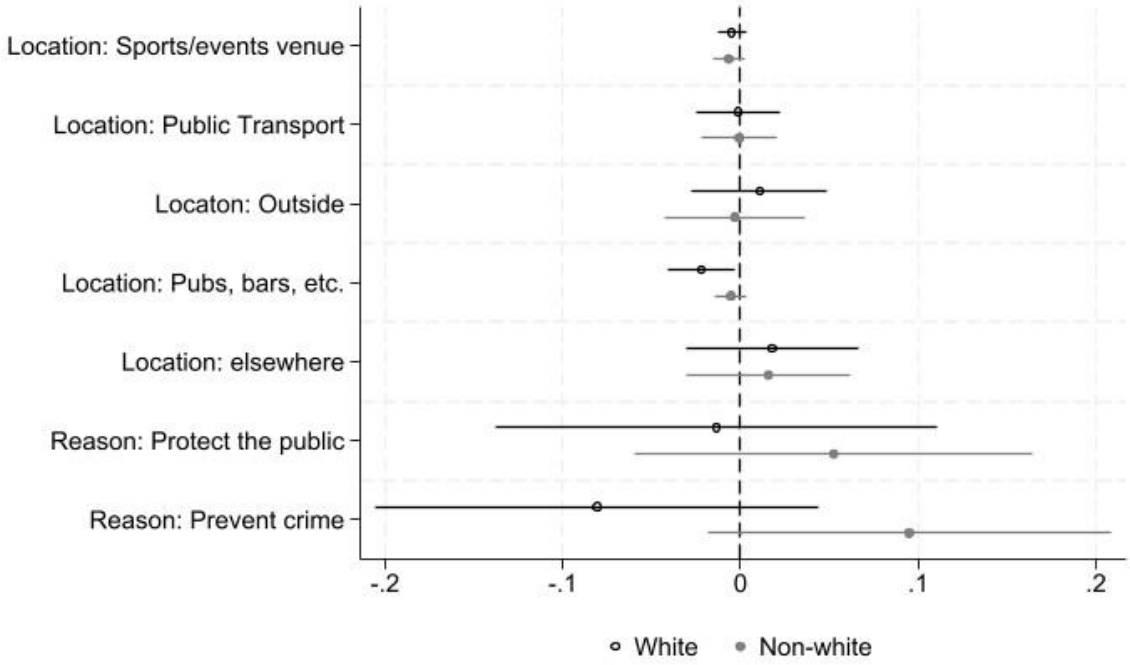
Panel (b): attacks by Muslim extremists



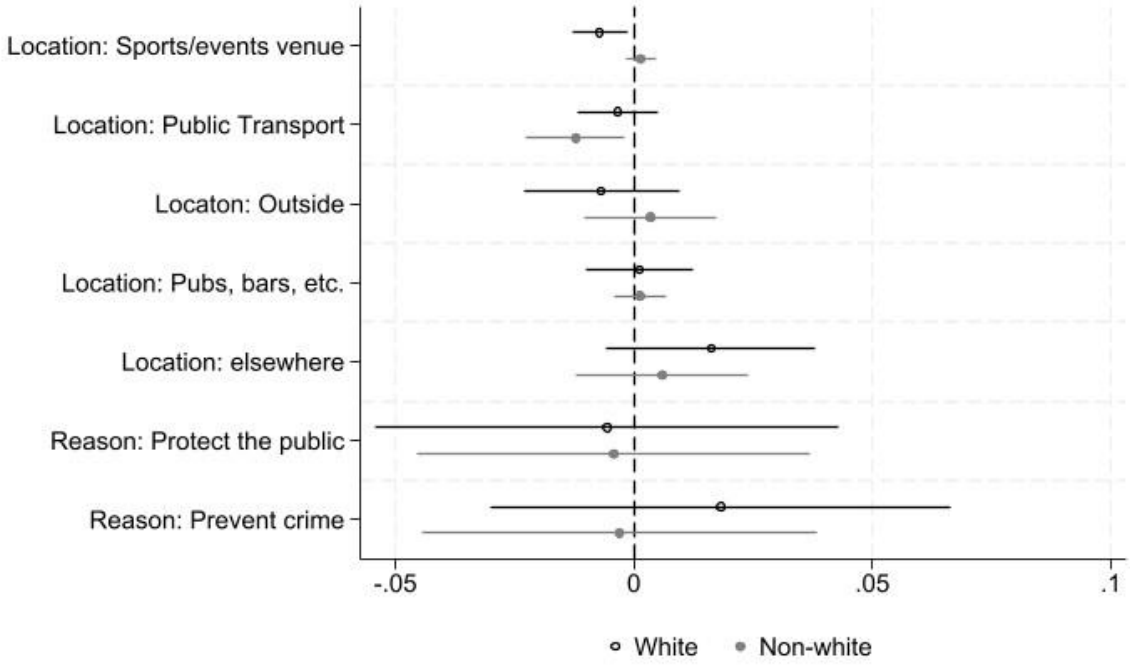
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 9: Mission focus after international attacks: Locations and reasons for use-of-force

Panel (a): attacks by far-right groups



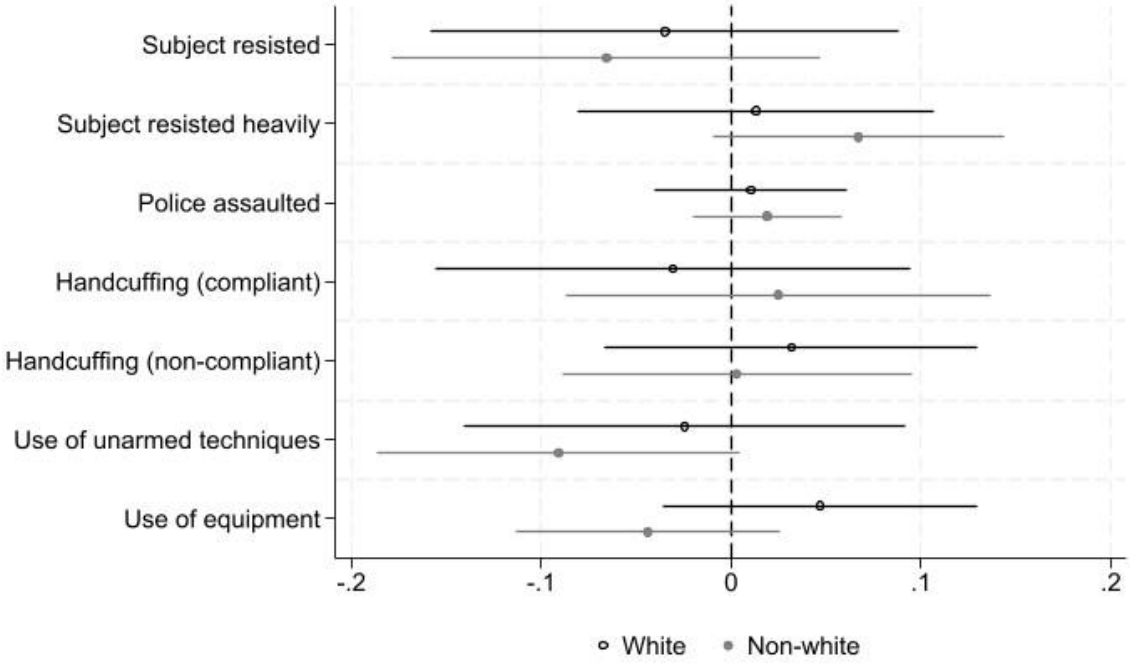
Panel (b): attacks by Muslim extremists



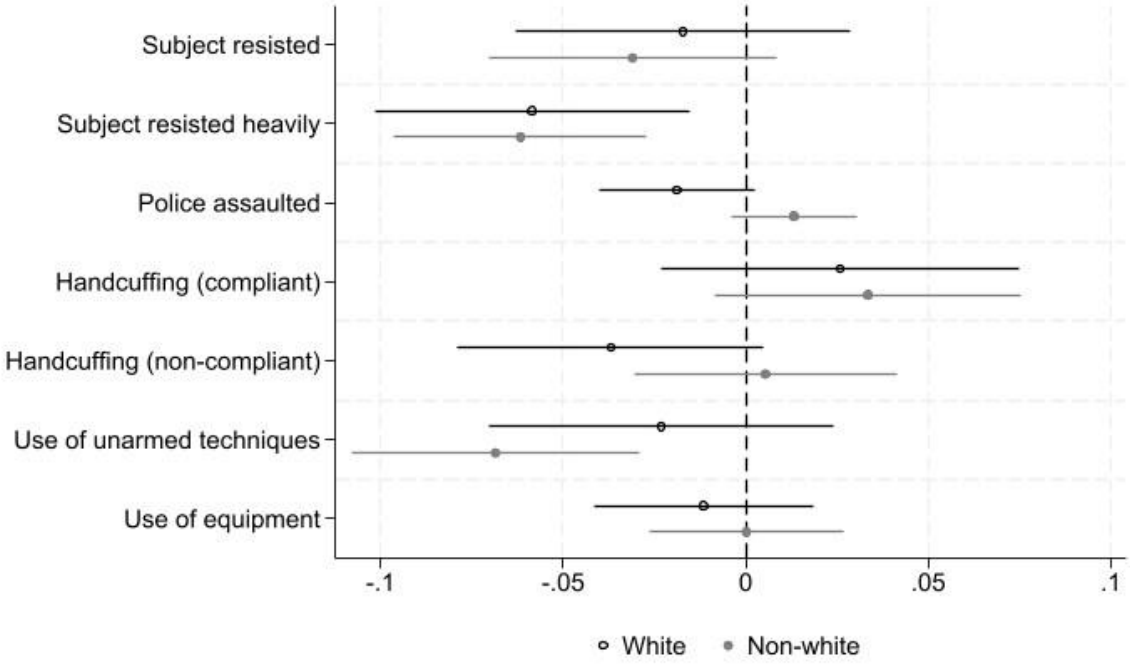
Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Figure 9: Intensity of use-of-force after international attacks

Panel (a): attacks by far-right groups



Panel (b): attacks by Muslim extremists



Note: Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality.

Table 1: Descriptives

	Mean	Std. dev.
Panel (a): Terrorist incidents		
Attack by far right	0.340	0.479
Attack by Muslim extremists	0.128	0.337
Any fatality	0.085	0.282
Any wounded	0.340	0.479
Observations	47	
Panel (b): Police uses-of-force		
Target of UoF: Asian	0.117	0.321
Target of UoF: Black	0.366	0.482
Target of UoF: White	0.435	0.496
Target of UoF: Other	0.040	0.197
Subject resisted	0.660	0.474
Subject resisted heavily	0.232	0.422
Police was assaulted	0.046	0.210
Compliant handcuffing	0.484	0.500
Non-compliant handcuffing	0.236	0.424
Use of unarmed techniques	0.344	0.475
Use of equipment	0.106	0.308
Observations	168,326	
Panel (c): Police stop and searches		
Target of search: Pakistani/Bangladeshi	0.059	0.235
Target of search: Indian	0.034	0.181
Target of search: Chinese / other Asian	0.063	0.243
Target of search: Black	0.418	0.493
Target of search: White	0.368	0.482
Target of search: Other	0.181	0.385
Outcome: No further action	0.719	0.449
Outcome: Arrest	0.161	0.368
Seach for weapons	0.169	0.374
Search for drugs	0.571	0.495
Search for theft-related items	0.069	0.253
Search for other objects	0.192	0.394
Observations	295,667	

Note:

Table 2: Main estimates

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Use-of-force				***Stops and searches***					
Target of UoF/search:	Asian	Black	White	Others	Asian, of which:			Black	White	Other
					Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Other Asian			
	Panel (a): Attacks by far-right groups									
Treatment effect	-0.005	0.002	0.002	0.002	-0.006	-0.002	-0.003	-0.004	0.013*	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Observations	50509	50509	50509	50509	92608	92608	92608	92608	92608	92608
Mean of dep var	0.116	0.363	0.440	0.040	0.058	0.034	0.063	0.419	0.368	0.170
	Panel (b): Attacks by Muslim extremists									
Treatment effect	0.005	-0.014	0.012	-0.000	-0.010*	-0.009*	-0.003	-0.012	0.021*	0.010
	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.010)
Observations	20376	20376	20376	20376	34648	34648	34648	34648	34648	34648
Mean of dep var	0.117	0.348	0.452	0.042	0.055	0.034	0.063	0.412	0.373	0.182
Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daily weather controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daily air quality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Estimated treatment effects from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality. Coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/*** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1% level respectively.

Table 3: Main estimates, alternative specifications

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Use-of-force				***Stops and searches***					
Target of UoF/search:	Asian	Black	White	Others	Asian, of which:			Black	White	Other
					Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Other Asian			
(a) Attacks by far right groups										
Panel (a1): Baseline specification; 7-day window, split linear trends, full controls										
Treatment effect	-0.005	0.002	0.002	0.002	-0.006	-0.002	-0.003	-0.004	0.013*	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Observations	50509	50509	50509	50509	92608	92608	92608	92608	92608	92608
Mean of dep var	0.116	0.363	0.440	0.040	0.058	0.034	0.063	0.419	0.368	0.170
Panel (a2): 7-day window, split linear trends, no controls beyond event FE										
Treatment effect	-0.009	-0.011	0.021**	0.003	-0.007**	-0.003	-0.002	-0.004	0.018**	0.000
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Observations	50509	50509	50509	50509	92608	92608	92608	92608	92608	92608
Mean of dep var	0.116	0.363	0.440	0.040	0.058	0.034	0.063	0.419	0.368	0.170
Panel (a3): 3-day window, split linear trends, full controls										
Treatment effect	0.023*	-0.010	-0.027	0.010	-0.003	-0.003	0.003	-0.005	-0.002	0.007
	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Observations	21635	21635	21635	21635	3969	39699	39699	39699	39699	39699
Mean of dep var	0.116	0.374	0.427	0.041	0.058	0.033	0.063	0.427	0.361	0.183
Panel (a4): Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik (2014) optimal bandwidth, no controls										
Treatment effect	-0.003	-0.023	0.021	0.009	-0.004	-0.001	-0.002	-0.010*	0.021***	-0.007
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Observations	100249	100249	100249	100249	187264	187264.	187264	187264	187264	187264
Mean of dep var	0.115	0.366	0.439	0.040	0.055	0.034	0.064	0.427	0.365	0.173
Panel (b): Attacks by Muslim extremists										
Panel (b1): Baseline specification; 7-day window, split linear trends, full controls										
Treatment effect	0.005	-0.014	0.012	-0.000	-0.010*	-0.009*	-0.003	-0.012	0.021*	0.010
	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.010)
Observations	20376	20376	20376	20376	34648	34648	34648	3464	34648	34648
Mean of dep var	0.117	0.348	0.452	0.042	0.055	0.034	0.063	0.412	0.373	0.182
Panel (b2): 7-day window, split linear trends, no controls beyond event FE										
Treatment effect	-0.005	-0.010	0.012	0.002	-0.012**	-0.003	-0.007	-0.007	0.015	0.006
	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.009)
Observations	20376	20376	20376	20376	34648	34648	34648	3464	34648	34648
Mean of dep var	0.117	0.348	0.452	0.042	0.055	0.034	0.063	0.412	0.373	0.182
Panel (b3): 3-day window, split linear trends, full controls										
Treatment effect	0.037*	-0.064*	0.027	0.011	-0.008	-0.003	-0.006	-0.016	0.025	0.024
	(0.022)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.019)
Observations	9109	9109	9109	9109	1507	15078	15078	15078	1507	15078
Mean of dep var	0.116	0.359	0.441	0.045	0.056	0.032	0.066	0.406	0.373	0.185
Panel (b4): Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik (2014) optimal bandwidth, no controls										
Treatment effect	0.008	-0.035*	0.018	0.005	-0.006	-0.010*	-0.006	-0.013	0.022	0.016
	(0.011)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.012)
Observations	40875	40875	40875	40875	71578	71578	71578	71578	71578	71578
Mean of dep var	0.118	0.348	0.450	0.042	0.055	0.033	0.064	0.407	0.378	0.180

Note: Full controls: event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality. Coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/*** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1% level respectively.

Table 4: Major terrorist events

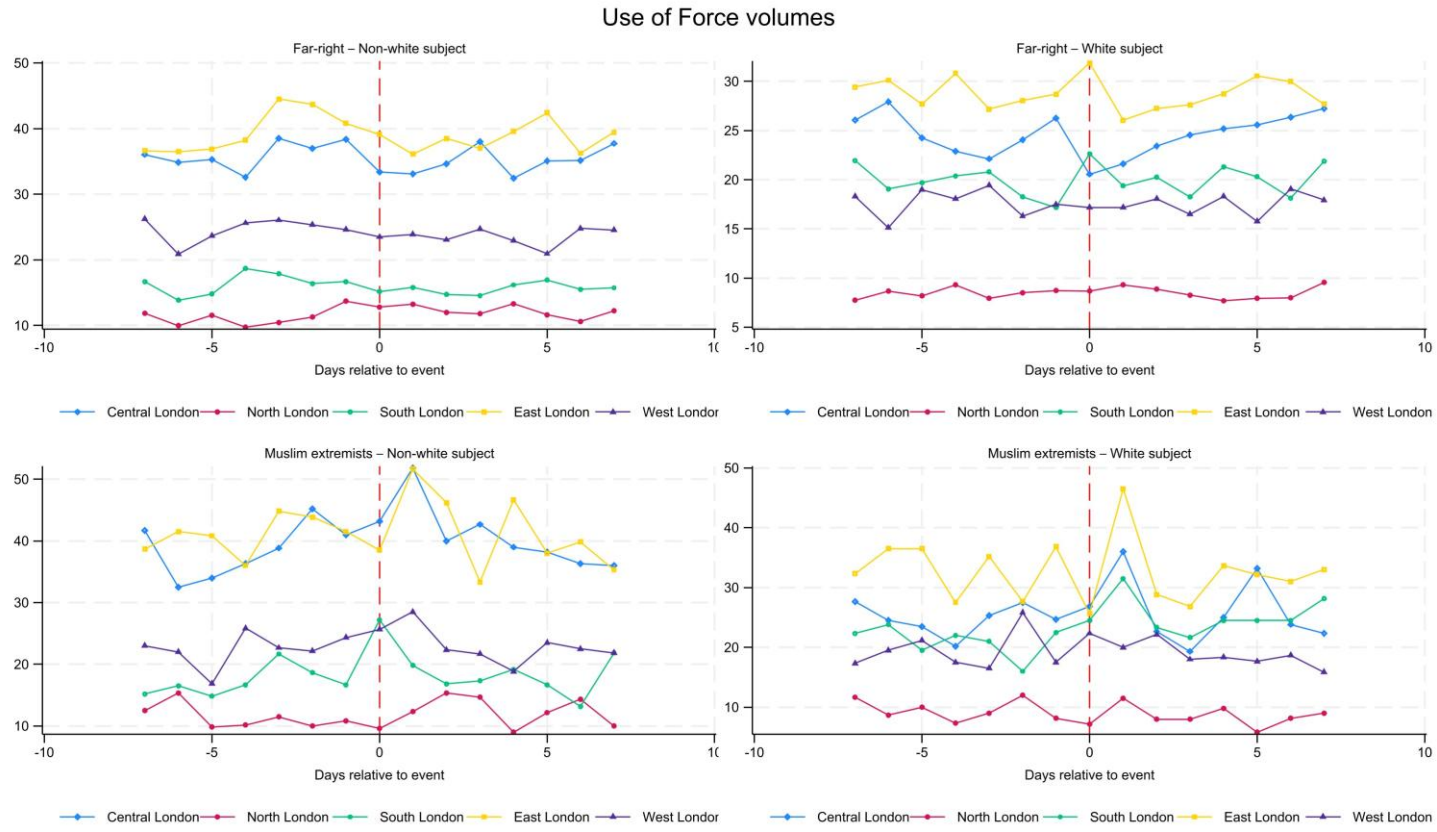
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Use-of-force				***Stops and searches***					
Target of UoF/search:	Asian	Black	White	Others	Asian, of which:			Black	White	Other
					Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	Indian	Chinese/ Other Asian			
					Panel (a): Manchester Arena attack					
Treatment effect	0.030	0.014	-0.038	0.003	-0.000	-0.002	-0.022	0.023	-0.028	-0.017
	(0.031)	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.022)
Observations	2026	2026	2026	2026	5190	5190	5190	5190	5190	5190
Mean of dep var	0.116	0.363	0.440	0.040	0.058	0.034	0.063	0.419	0.368	0.170
					Panel (b): London Bridge attack					
Treatment effect	-0.027	-0.044	0.086*	0.002	-0.031**	-0.023**	0.045***	-0.028	0.064*	-0.039
	(0.027)	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.024)
Observations	2298	2298	2298	2298	4588	4588	4588	4588	4588	4588
Mean of dep var	0.097	0.340	0.491	0.036	0.048	0.027	0.058	0.443	0.366	0.150
					Panel (c): Finsbury Park attack					
Treatment effect	0.040	0.113**	-0.120**	-0.008	-0.018	-0.005	-0.002	0.105***	-0.067*	-0.062**
	(0.031)	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.027)
Observations	2169	2169	2169	2169	4370	4370	4370	4370	4370	4370
Mean of dep var	0.124	0.338	0.460	0.036	0.051	0.035	0.060	0.449	0.359	0.146
Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daily weather controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daily air quality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Estimated treatment effects from sharp RDD in a 7-day window around the event, split linear trends, full controls with event fixed effects, day-of-the-week fixed effects and daily controls for weather conditions and air quality. Coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/*** denote statistical significance at 10%, 5% and 1% level respectively.

Appendix

Figure A1: Police activity volumes by area, day, type of attack and ethcnicity of the subject

Panel (a): Use of Force volumes



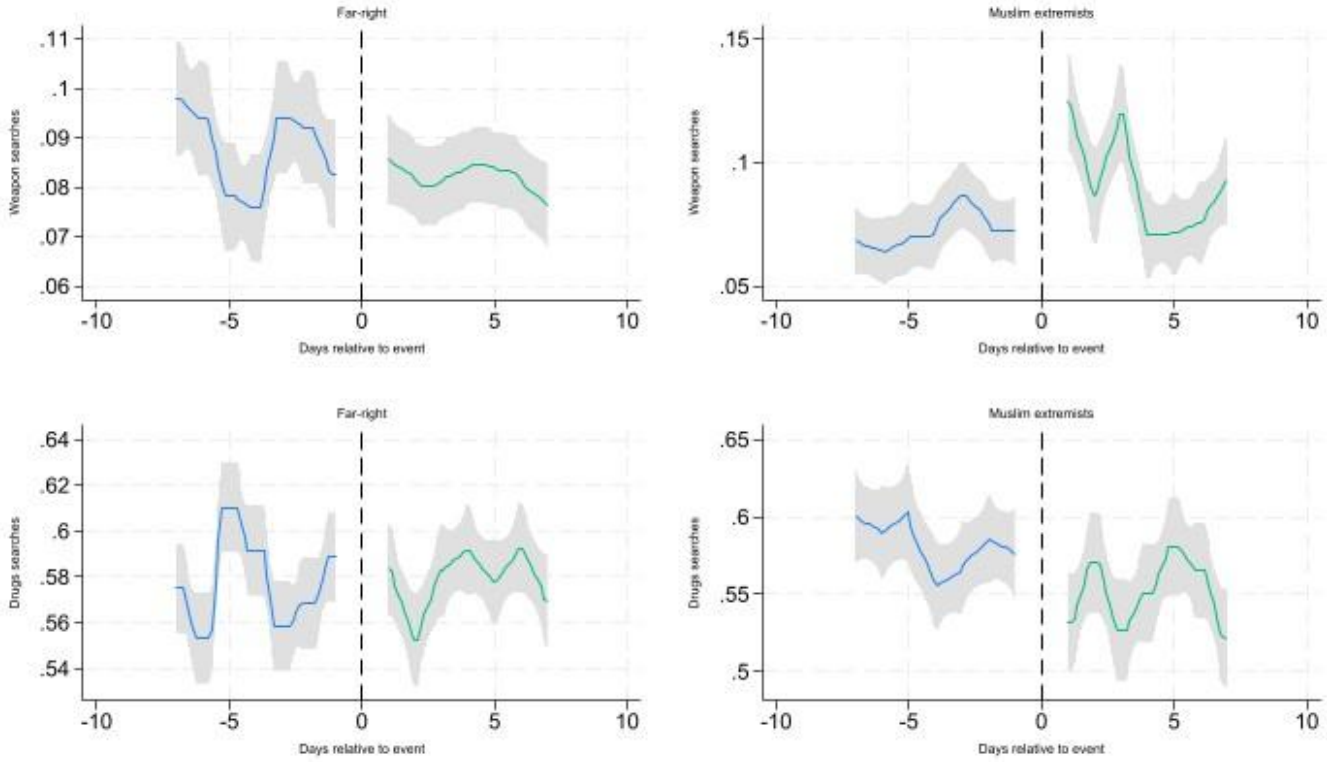
Panel (b): Stop and Search volumes



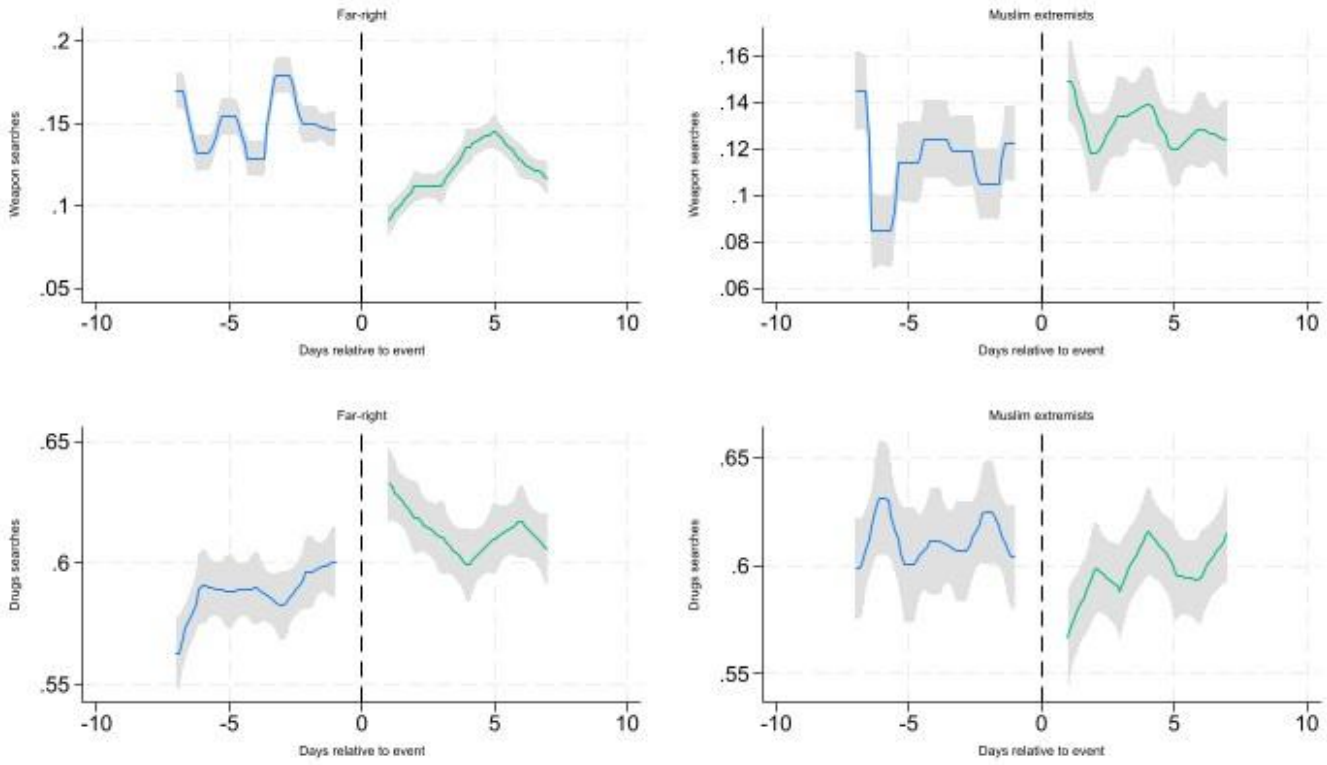
Note: Each dot represents the average number of use of force/stop and search across all attacks on any given day before/after the attack.

Figure A2: Mission focus: stop and search objectives

Panel (a): White subjects



Panel (b): Non-white subjects



Note: Estimates of a local polynomial regression, using a 7-day window on each side of the threshold. The dependent variable is the probability that the subject being stopped is: White, in panel (a); Non-white (Bangladeshi/Pakistani, Indian, Other Asian, Black, and Other), in panel (b). Estimated treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals