

A global analysis of the impact of COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions on crime

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Violence and the Pandemic

Urgent Questions for Research

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Regulations to Control COVID-19

Stay at Home Orders, Alcohol Bans, Social Distancing

Social Determinants of Violence

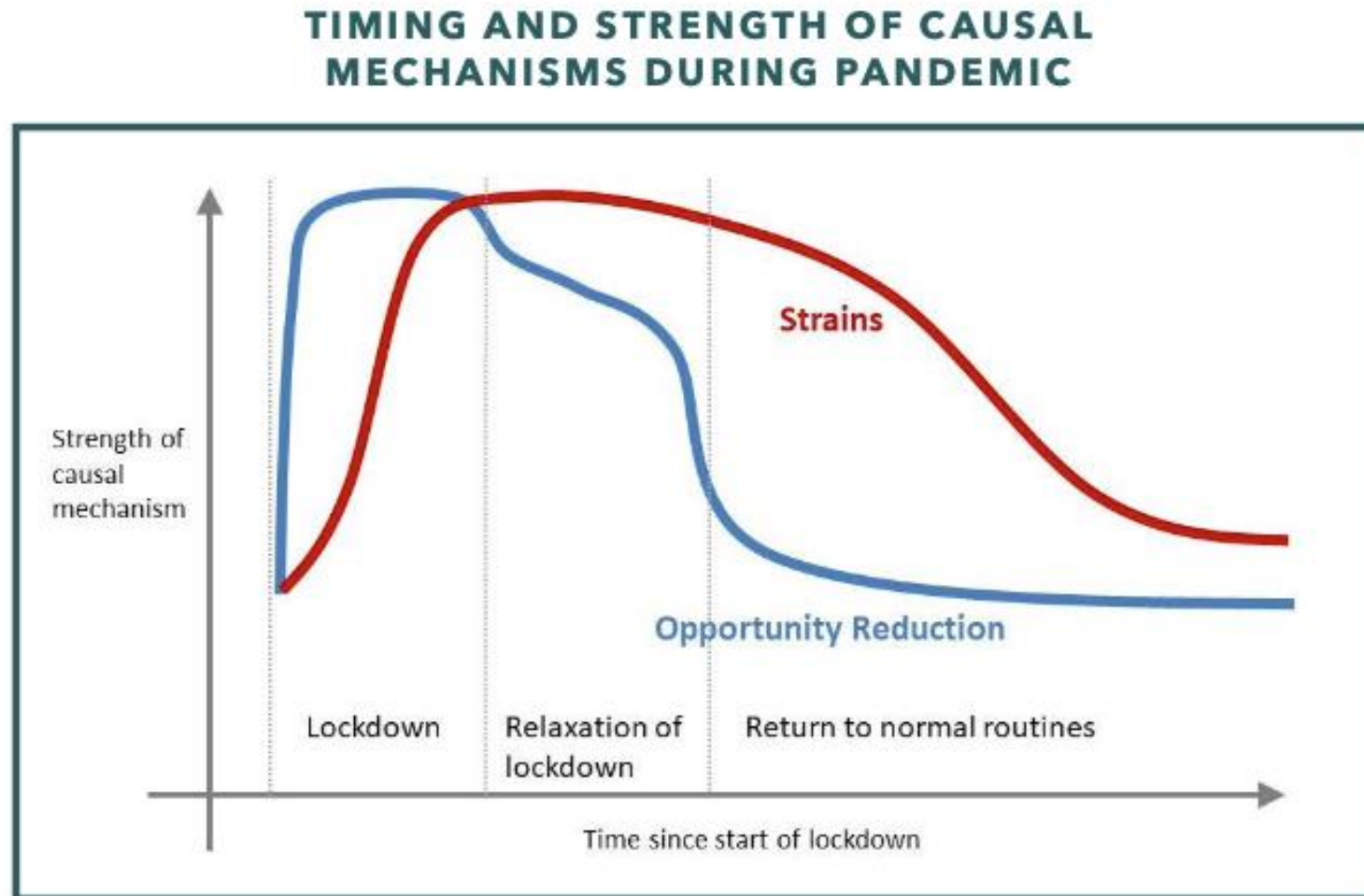
Opportunities
Social Control and
Routine Activities

Strains
Inequality, Anger, Fear,
Stress

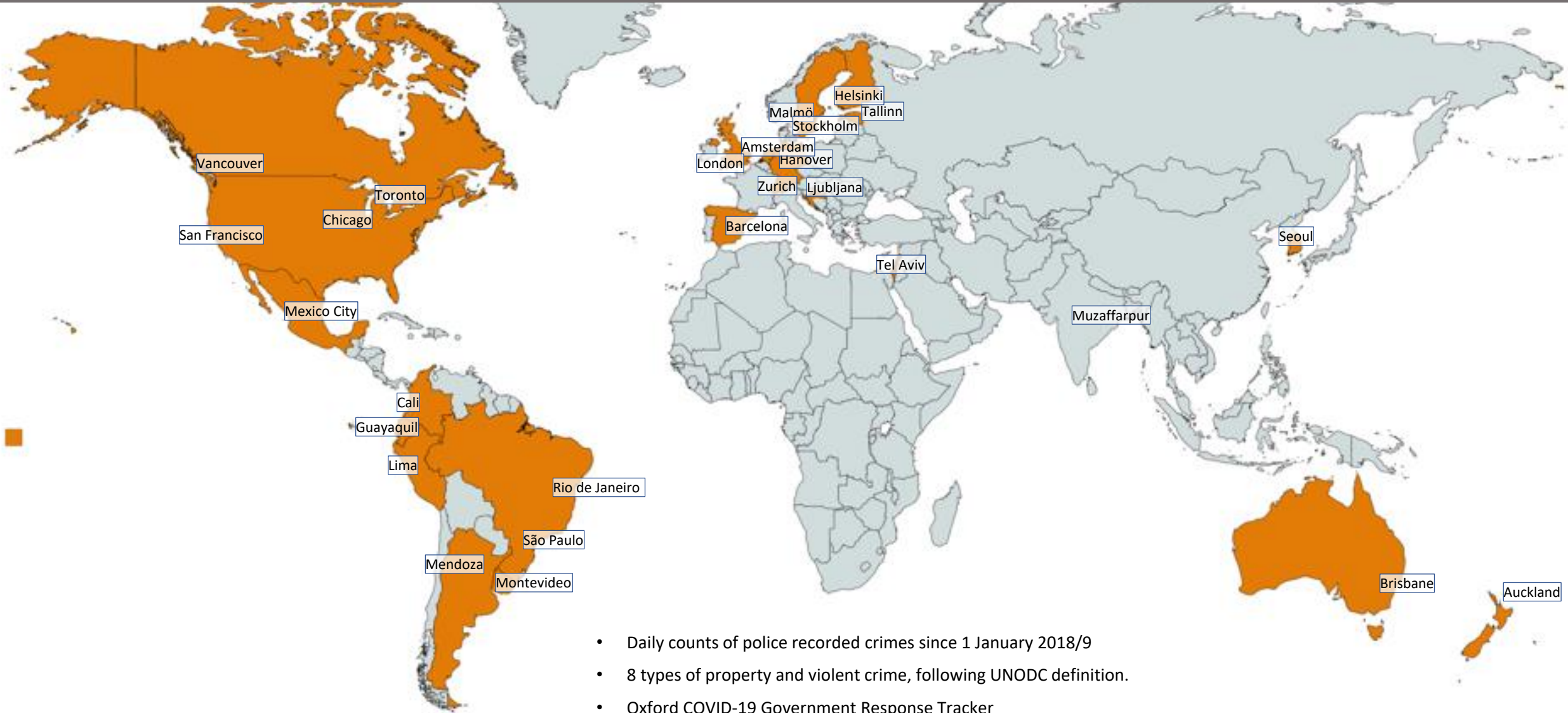
Extent and Manifestations of Violent Crime

Assault, Robbery, Domestic Violence, Homicide, Sexual
Violence, Cyberviolence, Political Violence

Opportunity & strain

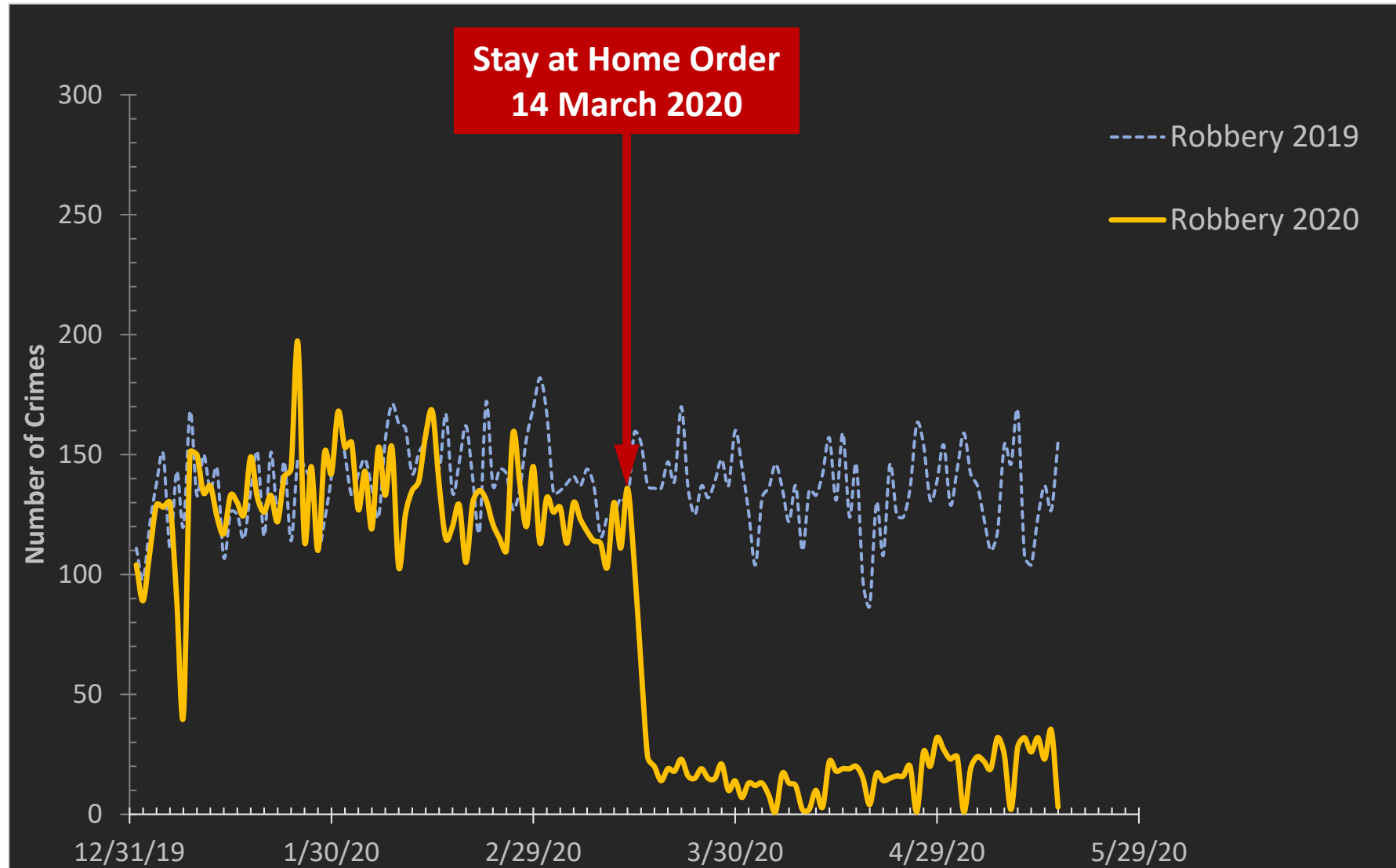


Effects of Stay-at-Home Policies on Crime : Current Study Sites



- Daily counts of police recorded crimes since 1 January 2018/9
- 8 types of property and violent crime, following UNODC definition.
- Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

Our Approach: The Example of Robbery in Lima



Before Lockdown
141.7 robberies/day

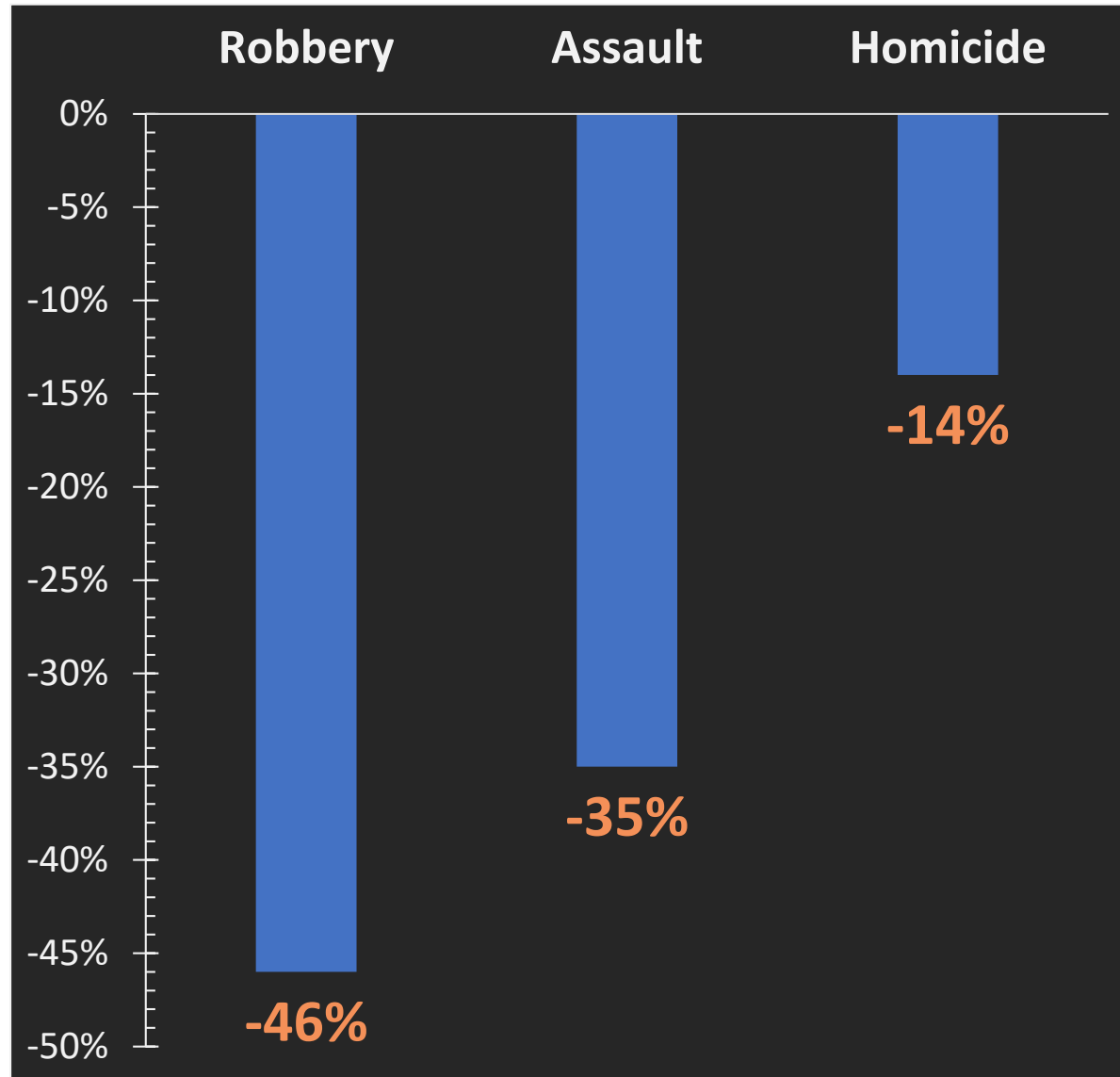
After Lockdown
19.0 robberies/day

Reduction
- 87%

Statistical Analysis

- Daily counts of police recorded crimes
- Time-series regression
- Stay at home orders as intervention
- Various controls
- Meta-regression to examine variation in size of decline

Did Violent Crime go Up or Down during Stay-at-home Orders?



Finding 1

All forms of police-recorded violent crime declined.

The decline was stronger for opportunistic street crimes (robbery) and violence related to public entertainment (Assault).

Were there differences in crime trends between cities?

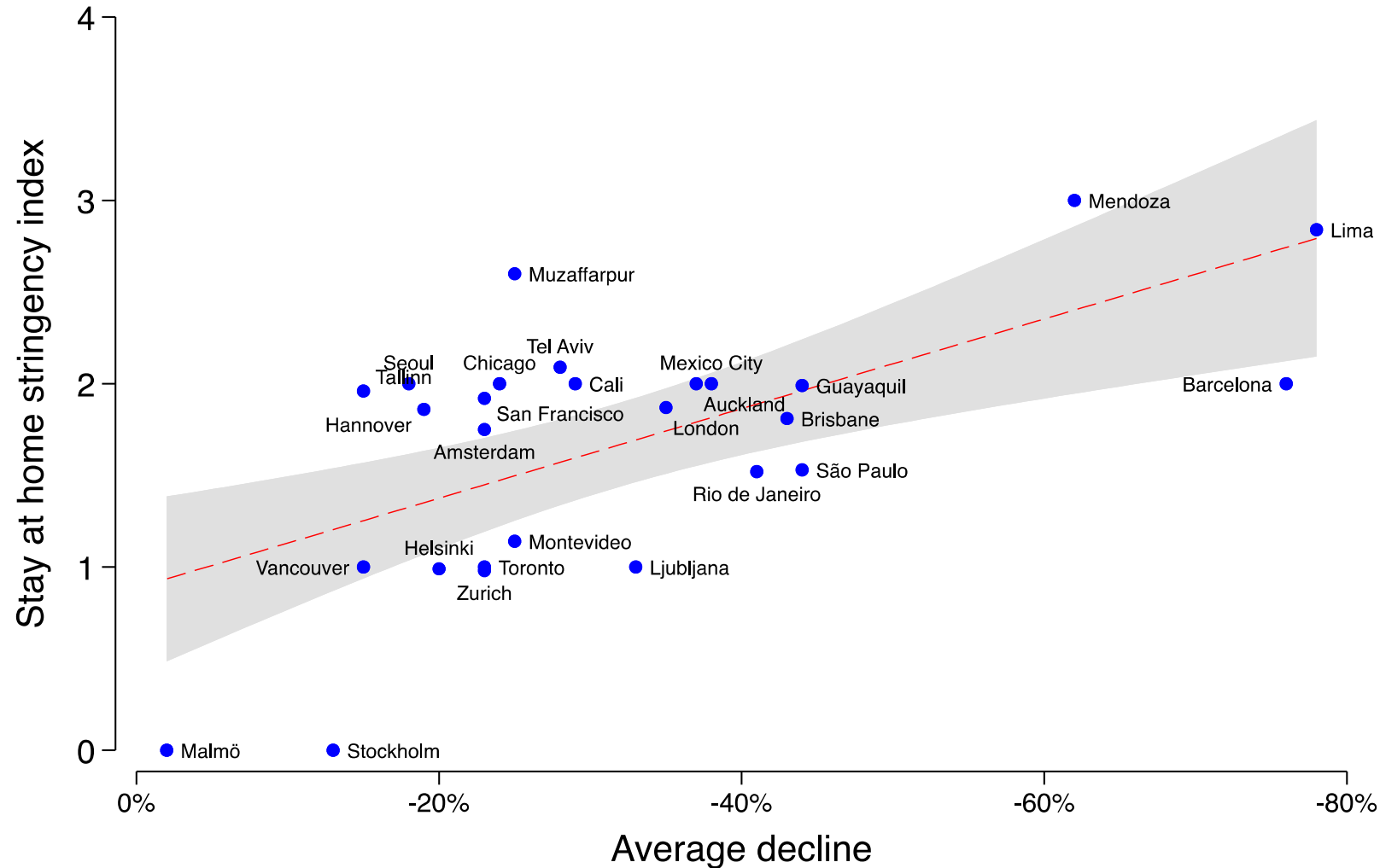


Finding 2

We find substantial differences between cities in violence patterns during the period of stay-at home recommendations.

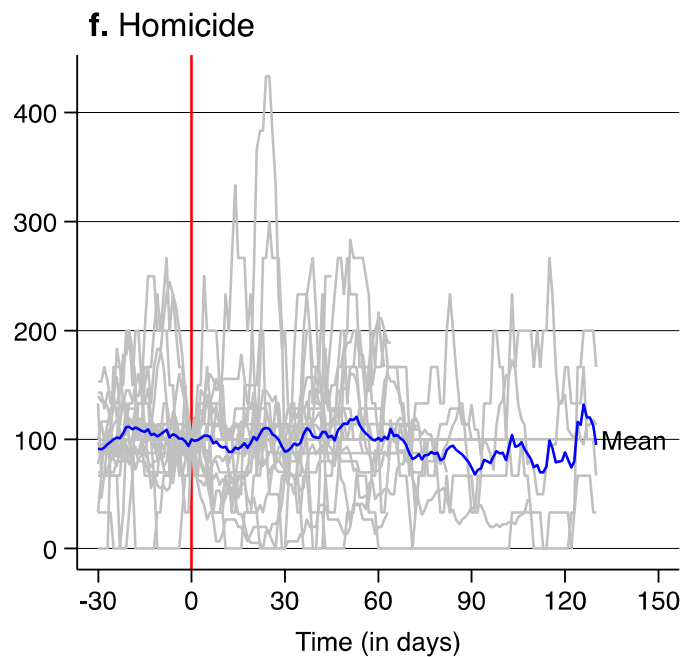
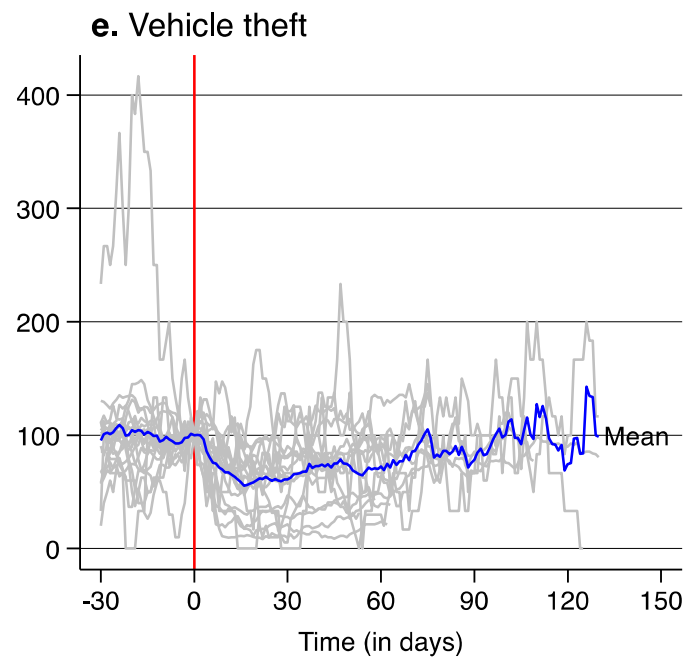
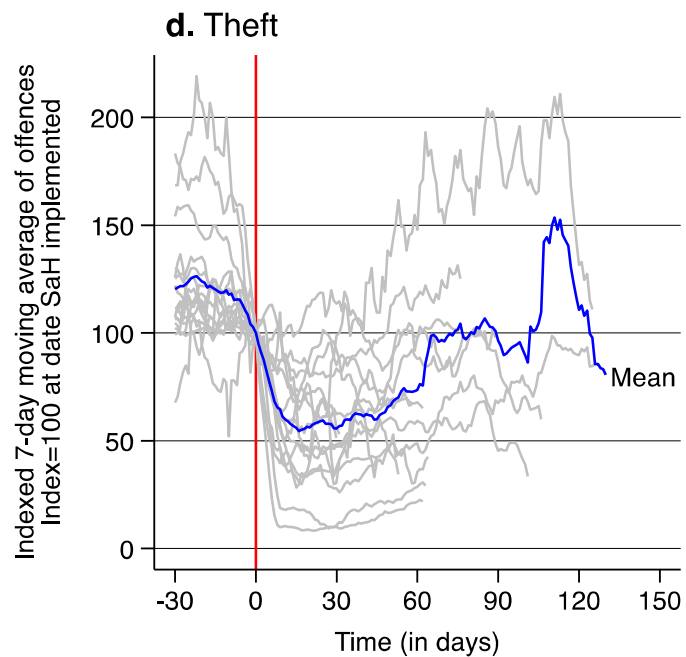
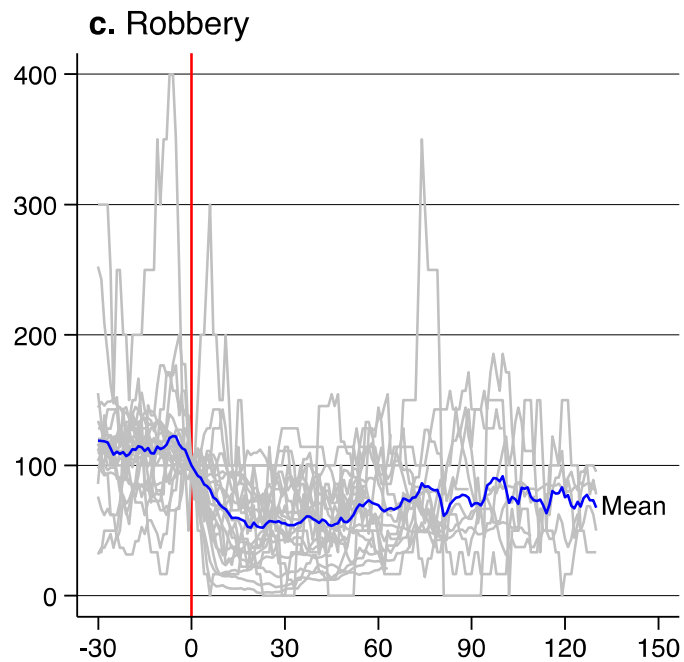
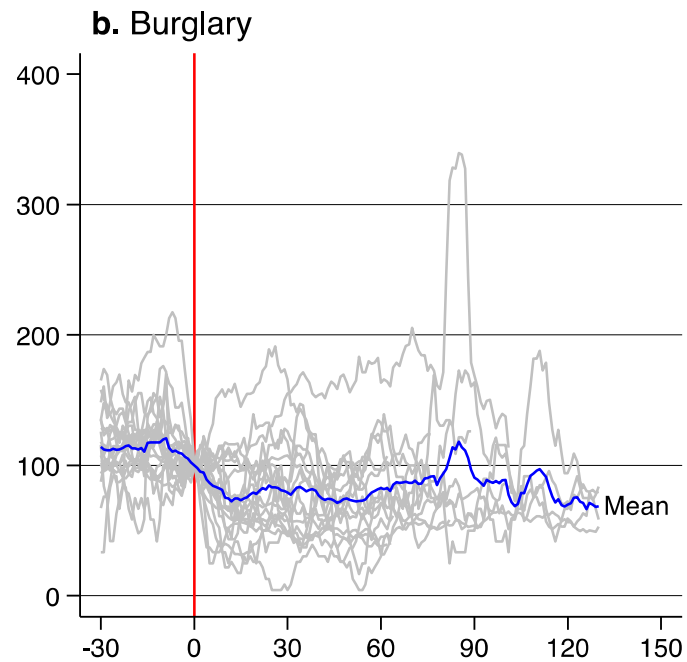
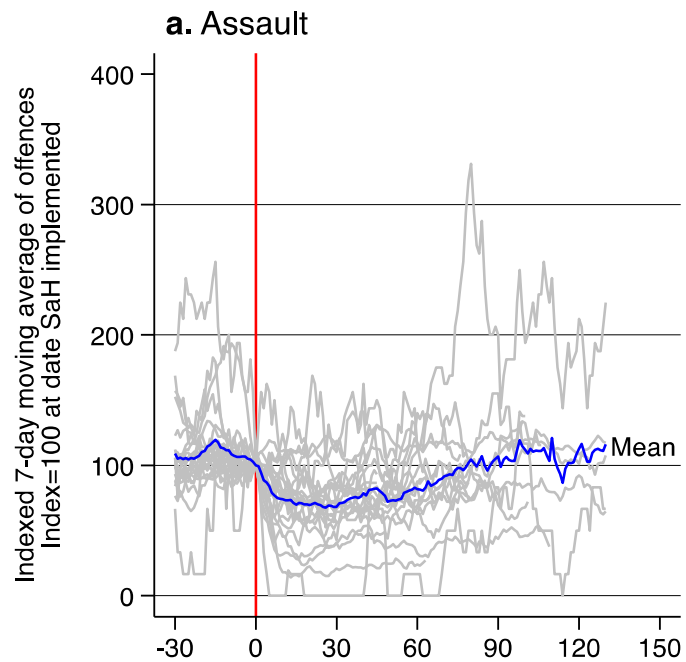
Note: Number of assaults standardized to PrePeriod = 100, 7-day moving averages.

Did the Stringency of COVID-Measures Affect Violence?



Finding 3

A greater stringency of the government stay at home measures was associated with a greater decline in crime and violence.



Open Questions?

- What happened when the lockdowns were relaxed?
- What happened in the second phase of lockdowns starting in Dec 2020?

New data

- New round of data-collection up to 2021 (n=45 cities).
- Daily crime counts.
- Smoothed with 7-day (average frequency per day >10 events) or 30-day (average frequency <10 events) averages.
- Each series standardized by its own mean in 2019 = 100.
- Plotted against University of Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker “Stringency Index”
- <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/covid-19-government-response-tracker>

Mendoza

(Argentina)

Police-recorded crimes, 1 Jan 2019 – 31 Dec 2020.

Property Crimes

- Vehicle Theft**
- Simple Theft*
- Robbery*

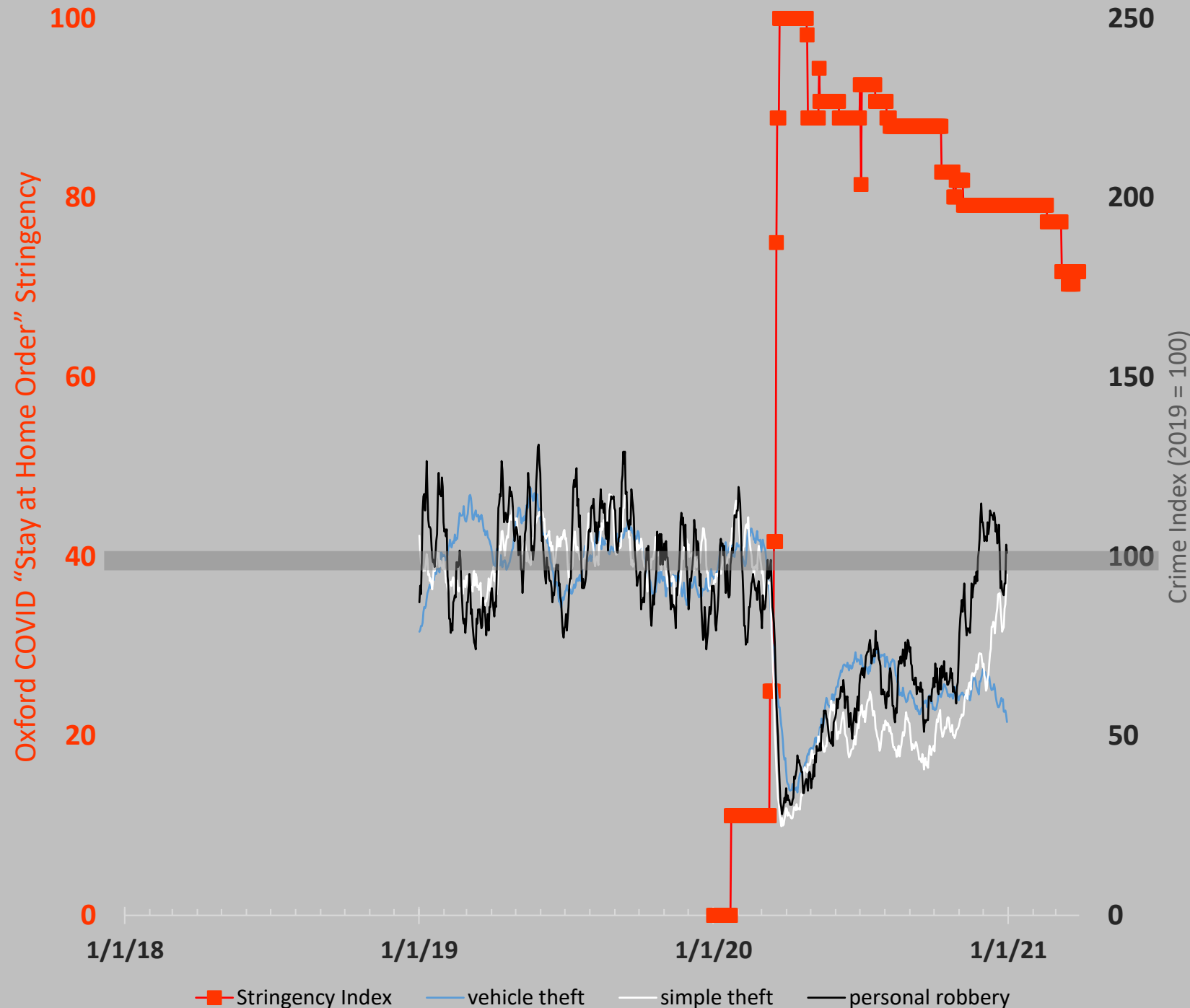
Violent Crimes

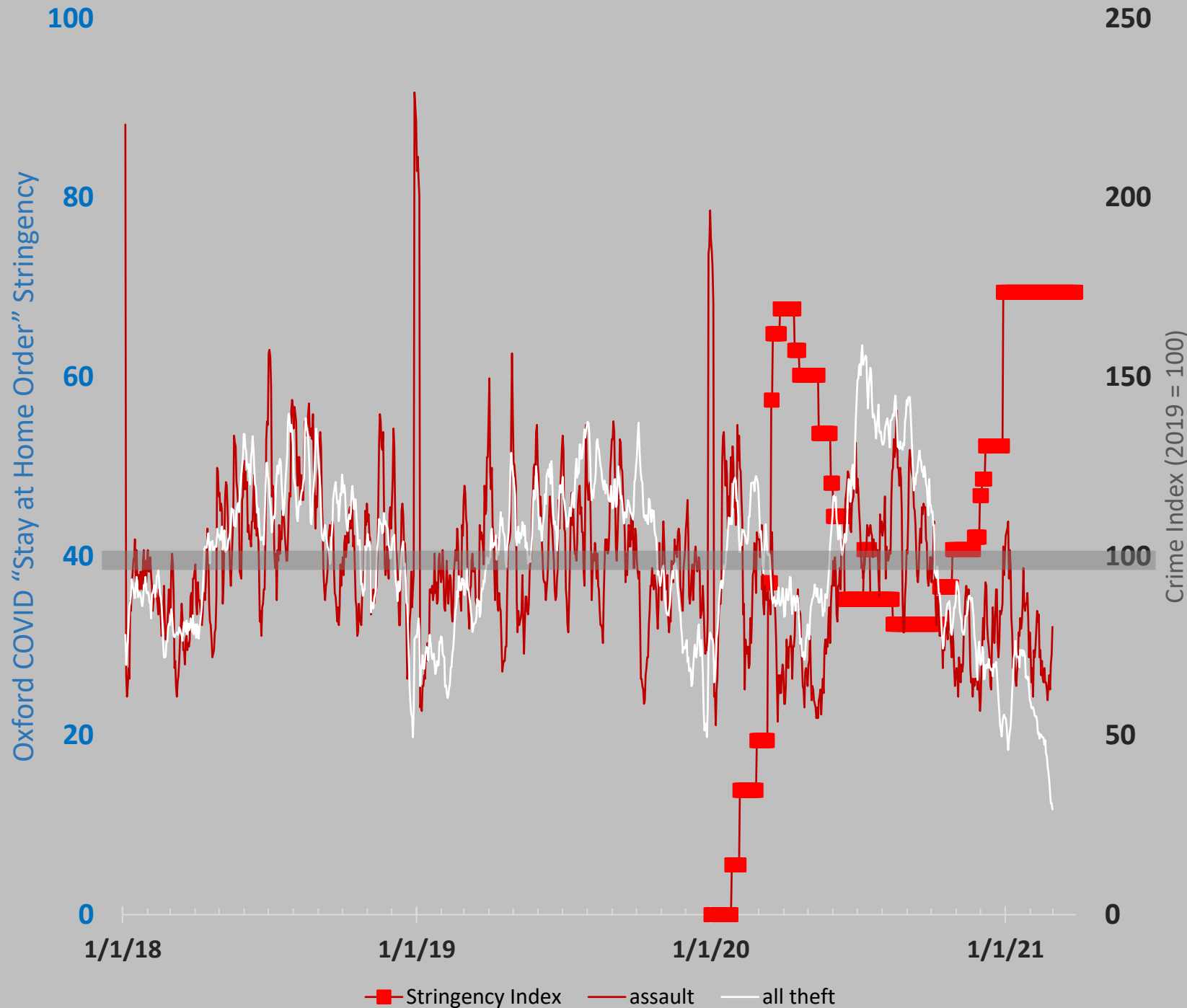
- Homicide**
- Assault*
- Domestic Violence**

**Smoothed with 7-day moving averages.

*Smoothed with 30-day moving averages.

Acknowledgment: Thanks a lot to Diego Fleitas and the Argentina Ministry of Security.





Helsinki

(Finland)

Police-recorded crimes, 1 Jan 2018 – 31 March 2021.

Property Crimes

- All Theft

Smoothed with 7-day moving averages.

Violent Crimes

- Assault

Smoothed with 30-day moving averages.

Conclusions

- Opportunity structures and daily routines important for understanding and preventing crime and violence
- Crime quickly returns to previous levels when the most stringent measures are relaxed
- We need to better understand the specific effects of particular intervention components (e.g. alcohol ban on different homicide risk groups).
- Need for understanding long-term social effects of the COVID-19 measures (i.e. changed mobility patterns, disrupted education careers, job loss), which in turn may affect crime
 - E.g. learning deficits in education due to pandemic, especially among low SES, low-middle income countries (Betthäuser et al., 2022)

Thank you!

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