

Office of Evaluation
and Oversight

**Comments on Villa and Restrepo “Do
bans on carrying firearms work for
violence reduction? Evidence from a
department-level ban in Colombia”**

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Contributions of Villa and Restrepo

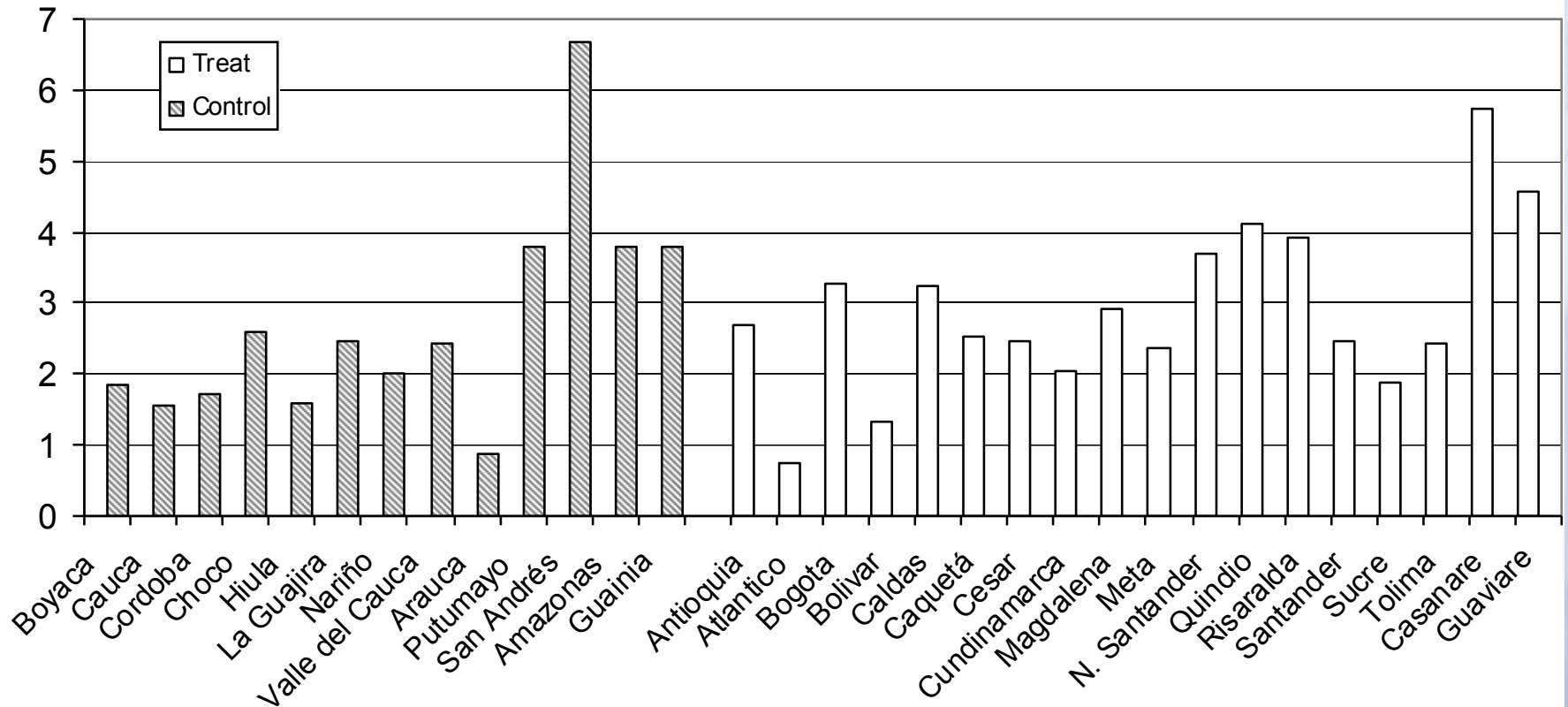
- **Novel approach to modeling the motivation for theft.**
- **Useful comparative statics, with specific predictions from the model.**
- **Capitalizes on a context in which both the policy enabling a treatment and the actual treatments are observed.**
- **Adds to the literature of “gun buyback” programs and violence.**

But is it the “right” model for LAC?

- **Model assumes that the unemployed will rob the employed, and that the choice of both agent’s to carry guns or knives will depend on expected gains and losses.**
- **But “robbery’s” share of homicide is actually quite small. Examples: Cali 2006 is 5% of “explained” homicides. Rio de Janeiro 2010 is only 3-4% (ISP 2011).**
- **Can the model be made more flexible to incorporate other motivations for conflict which may result in homicide? Family violence, gang/drug activity, etc.**

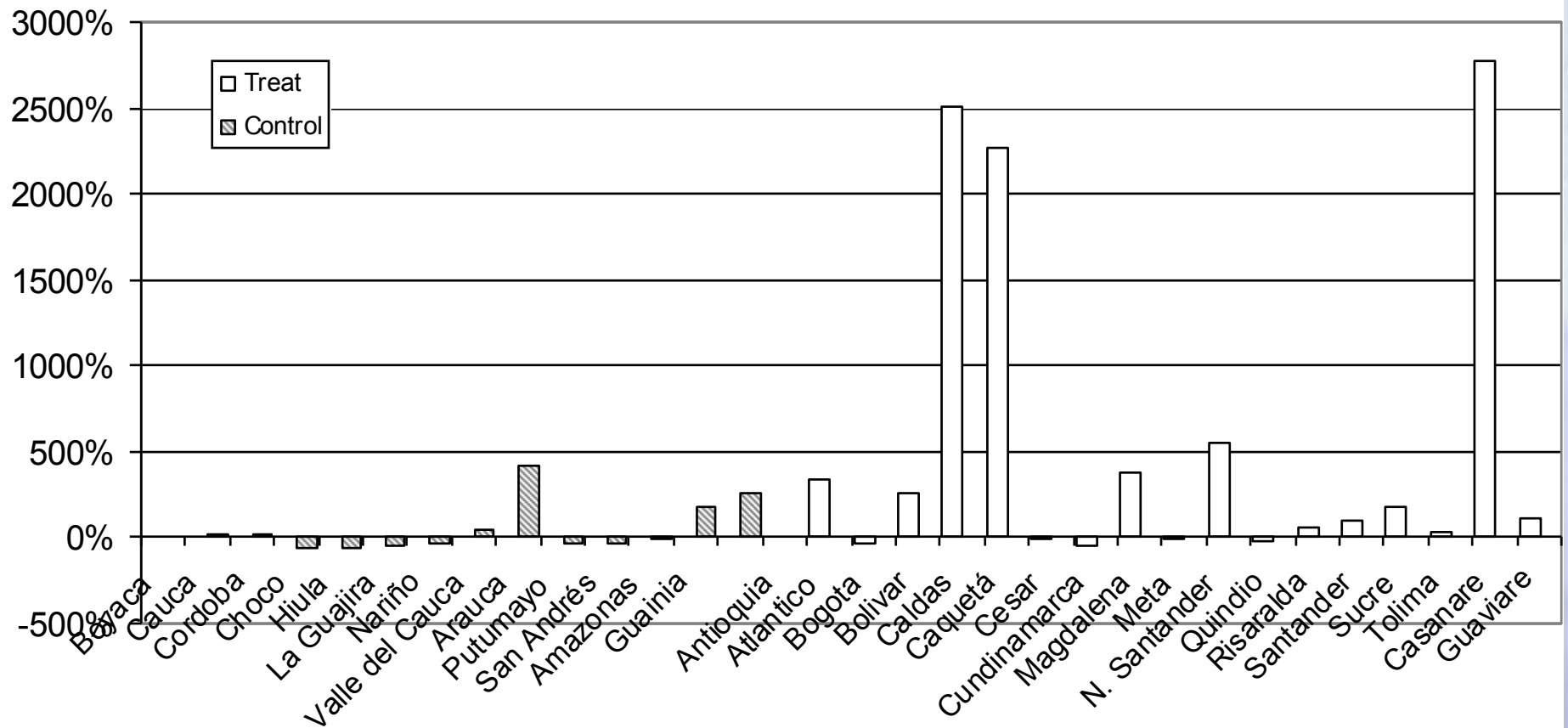
Common trends/policy placement

- Does common trends really hold? Simple difference using the two endpoints of the trend for control and treats shows an increase of more or less (eyeball method) 0.28 for treats and 0.14 for controls.



Empirical approach

- The data clearly show that there was a treatment, and that provinces responded to the policy change with actual enforcement:



Other issues

- The authors use absolute daily averages, and not values per capita. Not clear if this is appropriate.
- This is a more appealing option if the treatment variable is the number of guns collected (which is also an absolute number), than if the treatment is either number of days or the binary dummy for policy change.
- Paper highlights the temporary nature of the change (which is consistent with the literature, by the way). However, there are only two provinces in the sample, Bolivar and Sucre, which sustained the policy for longer than a month.
- I don't believe the interpretation of the days squared is compelling regarding sustained impact—rather, it likely is just measuring the difference from these two provinces and the rest.