

# Politicians Help Citizens Access Justice: Evidence from India

International Access to Justice Forum 2025

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**Main finding:** 2x more cases are filed by citizens from councils with additional politicians

# Contributions

- Interventions to improve legal mobilization (Acemoglu et al. 2020; Thompson 2023)

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- Local intermediaries in dispute resolution (Galanter 1981; Baldwin and Ricart-Huguet 2023)

This paper → Focuses on elected members of village bodies

1. Theoretical Framework
2. Context
3. Big Data and Causal Inference
4. Politicians Help Citizens Access Justice
5. Mechanisms
6. Discussion

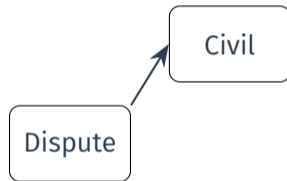
# 1/ Theoretical Framework

# Path to Justice

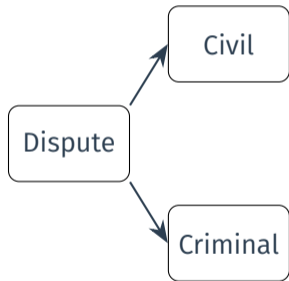
# Path to Justice

Dispute

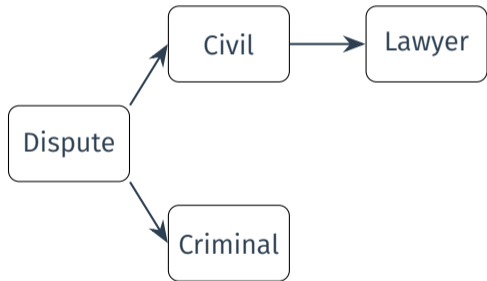
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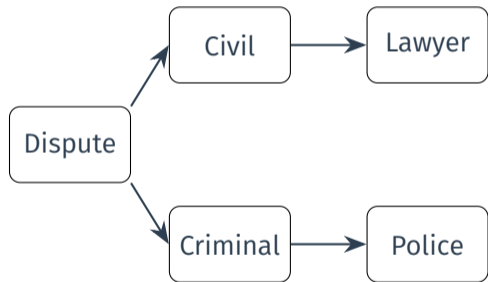
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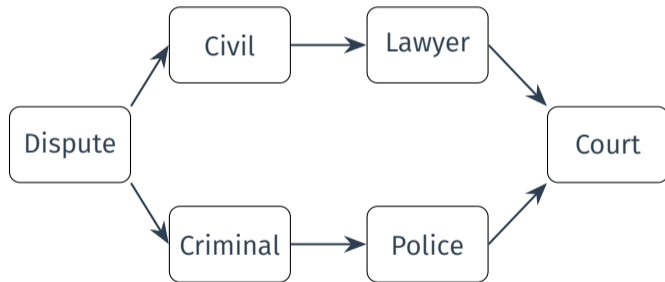
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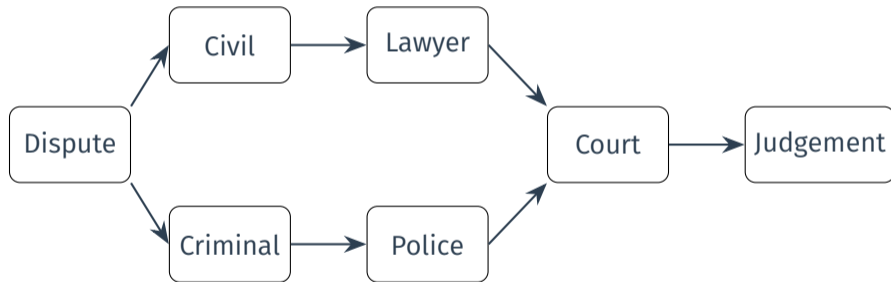
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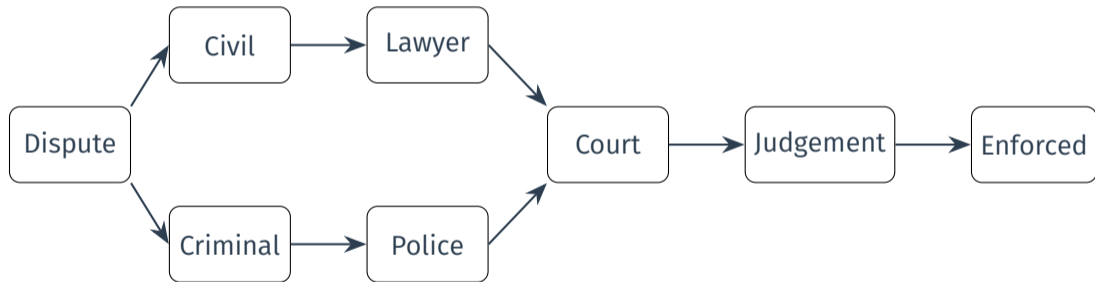
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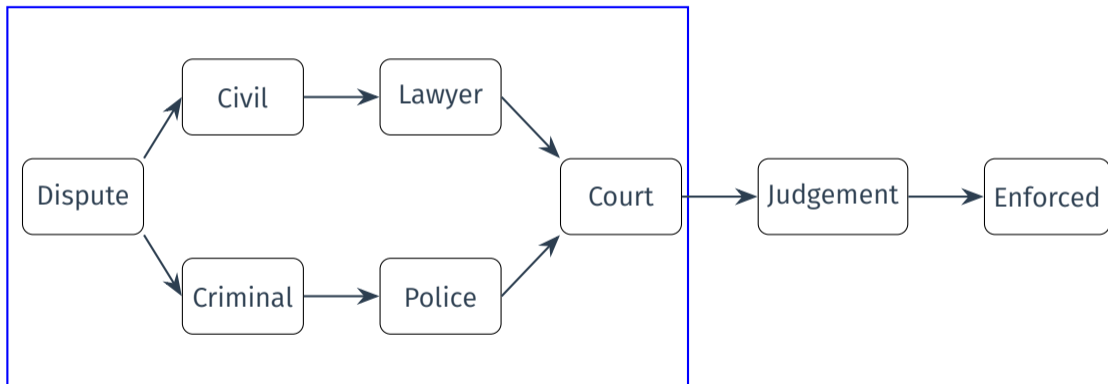
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# Theoretical Framework

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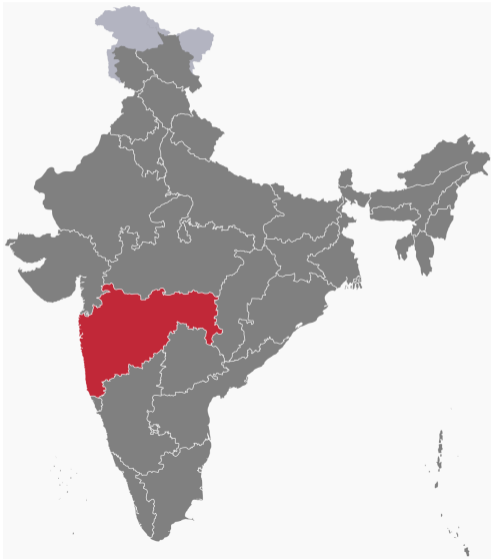
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- **Initial Advisors:** Confidant, legal remedies, informal mediation

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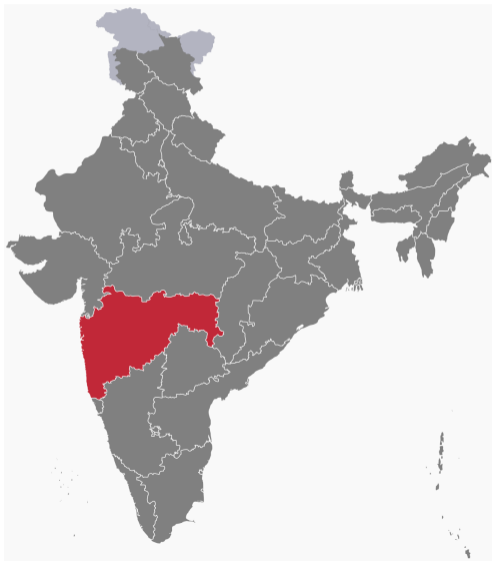
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- **Recording (Criminal only)**: Pressure authorities to register complaints

## **2/** Context

# Context: Maharashtra, India



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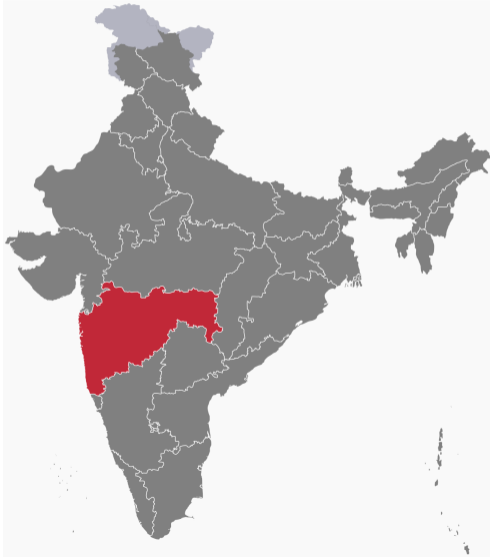
*The New York Times*

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## ***‘A Lifelong Nightmare’: Seeking Justice in India’s Overwhelmed Courts***

With 50 million criminal and civil cases pending, it would take 300 years to clear the country’s judicial backlog.

# Context: Maharashtra, India



*The New York Times*

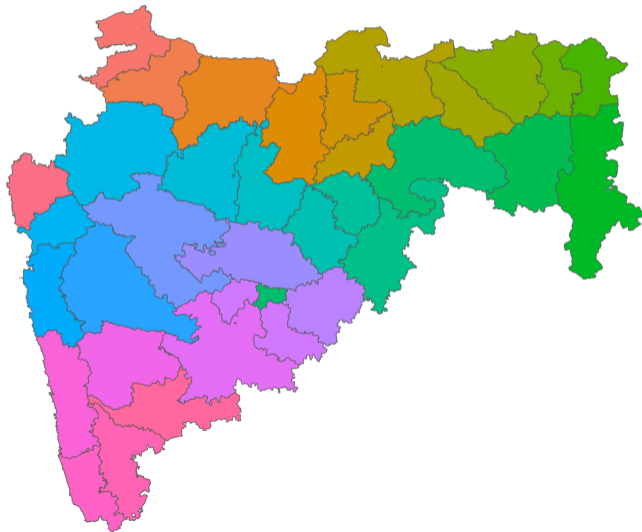
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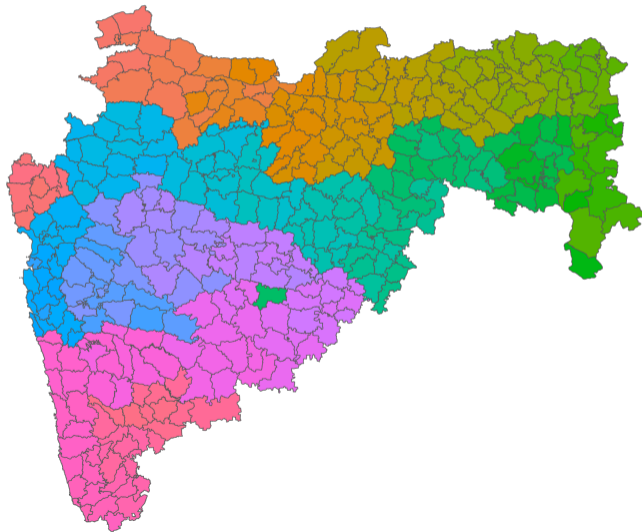


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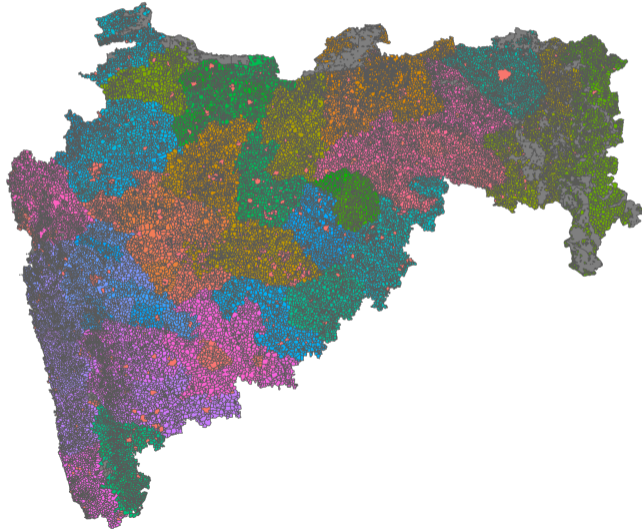
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## **3/** Big Data and Causal Inference

# Data

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- Case metadata and progress

District and Session Court ,Dhule

Case Details

Case Type	: R.C.A.			
Filing Number	: 100160/2013	Filing Date:	21-11-2013	
Registration No.	: 100160/2013	Registration Date:	21-11-2013	
CNR NO	: MHDH01-403184-2013 (Note the CNR number for future reference)			
	<a href="#">View QR Code / Cause File</a>			
Case Status				
First Hearing Date	: 21st November 2013			
Decision Date	: 23rd April 2019			
Case Status	: CASE DISPOSED			
Nature of Disposal	: Contested- DISMISSED			
Court No. and Judge	: 1-Principal District and Sessions Judge Dhule			
Petitioner and Advocate				
1) Anup Singh Jinaga Pawara Advocate- A.S.Jagdeo				
Respondent and Advocate				
1) State of Maharashtra Advocate - B. B. Borse				
Acts				
Under Act(s)		Under Section(s)		
CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE		41Rule1		
Subordinate Court Information				
Court No. and Name		: Jt. Civil Court S.D. Dhule		
Case No. and Year		: R.C.S. - 0200049 - 2004		
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IA Details				
IA Number	Party	Date of Filing	Next Date	IA Status
History of Case Hearing				
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- Case metadata and progress
- Data on census, local elections 2018-2022

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- Population-based thresholds determine council size

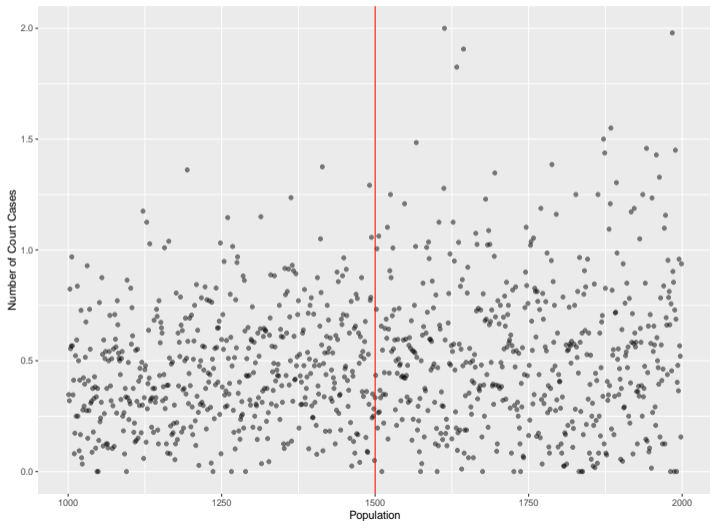
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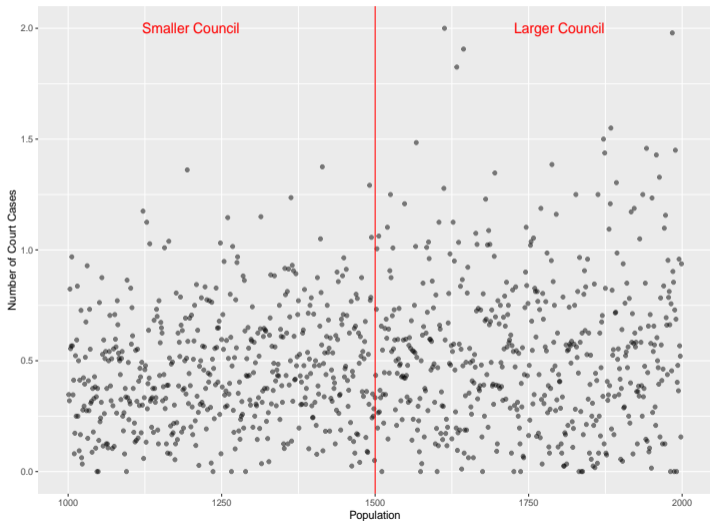
Population	Number of Council Members
<1500	7
1500-3000	9
3000-4500	11
4500-6000	13
6000-7500	15
>7500	17

# Empirical Strategy: Regression Discontinuity Design

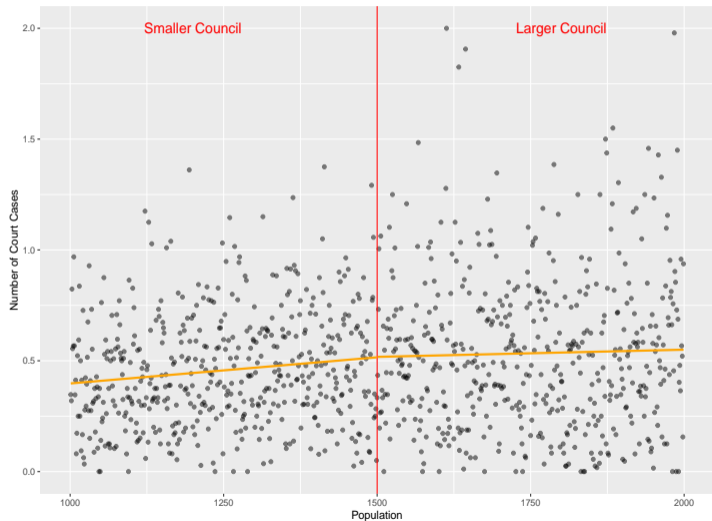
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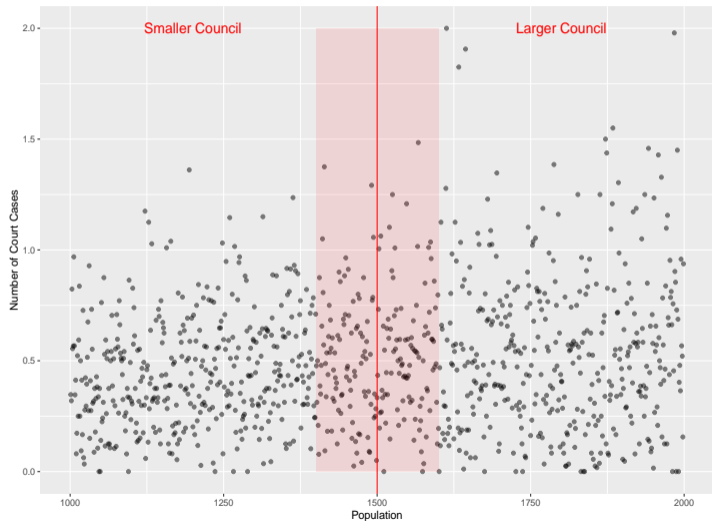
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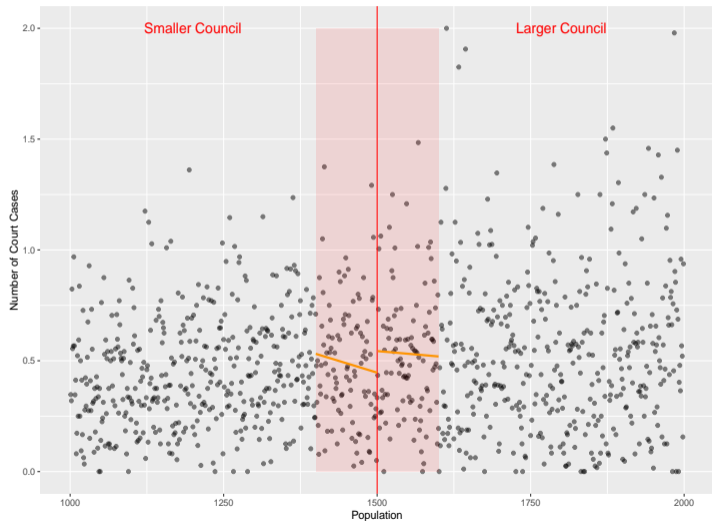
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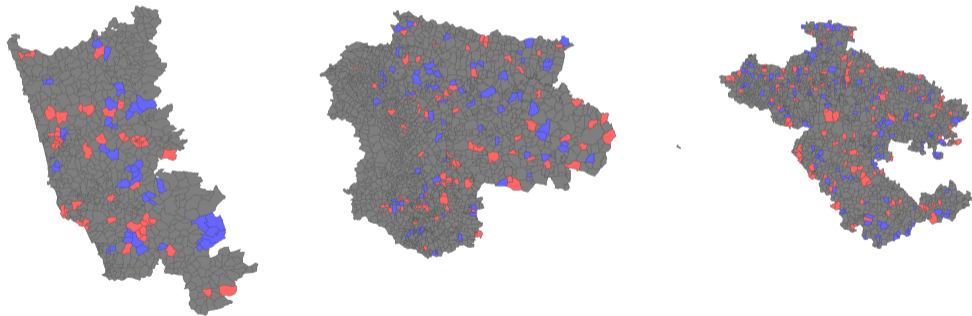
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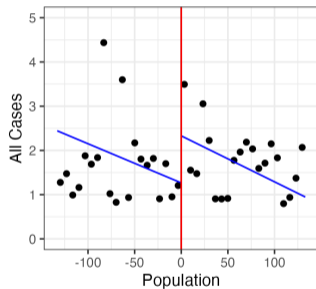
# Councils with Additional Politicians



## 4/ Politicians Help Citizens Access Justice

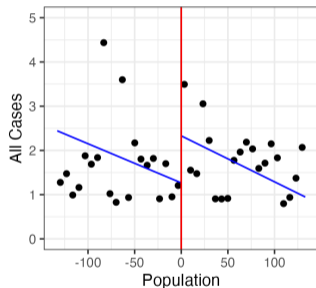
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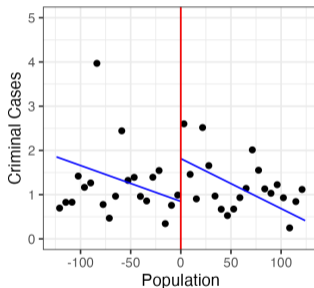


82% increase

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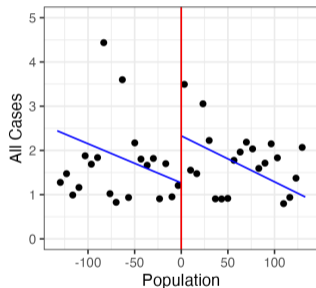


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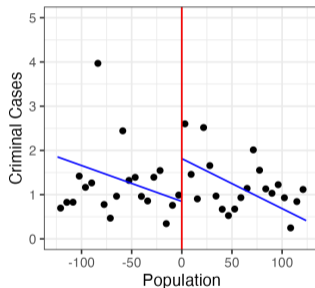


112% increase

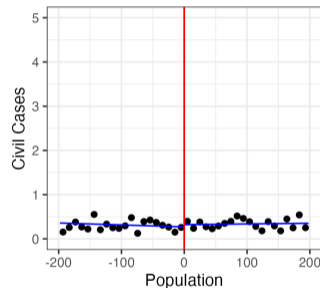
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No change

# Qualitative Evidence: 19 council members

- Civil & criminal cases: evidence of conditional interaction with the police



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- Civil & criminal cases: evidence of conditional interaction with the police
- “Council members try to solve the dispute at the village level itself. In the case of a big crime, police will get involved”



# Qualitative Evidence: Field Notes from Bussell (2020)

- 14 council presidents 'shadowed' by RAs; 6 out of 14 directly interacted with the police



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- "President approached by a woman...helped her write an application to the senior police officer"



## 5/ Mechanisms

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  - (3) Cases filed by female litigants
  - (4) Stronger effects after elections

## 6/ Discussion

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Thank you!

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