

# All Along the Watchtower: The Localised Effects of Public Space Protection Orders in London

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Crime Before Christmas  
19th Dec 2024

# Motivation

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  - **Voter turnout** (Laniyonu, 2018)



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Question:

**How do policies increasing police discretionary power affect crime and social welfare?**

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- We examine how **police discretionary power** affects
  - Crime and stop and search rates
  - S&S of ethnic minorities and young people
  - Perception of patrolling **TO DO!**
  - Social welfare (homelessness and housing prices) **TO DO!**
  - Political outcomes **TO DO!**



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  - Social welfare (homelessness and housing prices) **TO DO!**
  - Political outcomes **TO DO!**
- Preliminary results show an increase in **crime** and **stop and search** rates, particularly focusing on **youth** and **innocent suspects**

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- ① Research on **policing policies** and crime (Facchetti, 2024; Blanes i Vidal and Mastrobuoni, 2018; Machin et al., 2011) mainly focused on deployment policing measures (Owens, 2022)
  - The socio-economic effects of police discretionary power

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→ Localised prohibitions on public spaces and social welfare

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- ③ Effects of policing and perception of police forces on **voting behaviour** (Laniyonu, 2018; Tankebe, 2009)  
→ First causal evidence bridging police power and political economy in the UK  
  
→ **Policy relevance: first evaluation of the socio-economic effects of PSPOs in the UK**

# Institutional Background

# What is a PSPO?

"PSPOs are **local authorities Orders** placing restrictions, by the threat of criminal sanction, on the use of a specific public space to prevent anti-social behaviour" (Brown, 2017)



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→ The issued Order needs to specify

- the targeted anti-social behaviour
- the targeted area
- the duration of the restrictions

► Examples

## Legal and institutional background

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- ② **Implementation:** **local councils** discuss the PSPO proposal with the local community bringing supported evidence
- ③ **Enforcement:** **police forces** provide warnings or fines if they *perceive* the PSPO has been breached

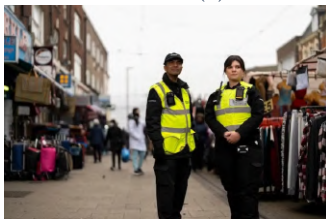
# PSPOs in practice



(a) Local council **formulation**



(b) Local council **implementation**



(c) Police forces **enforcement**

# Data



# PSPOs Data

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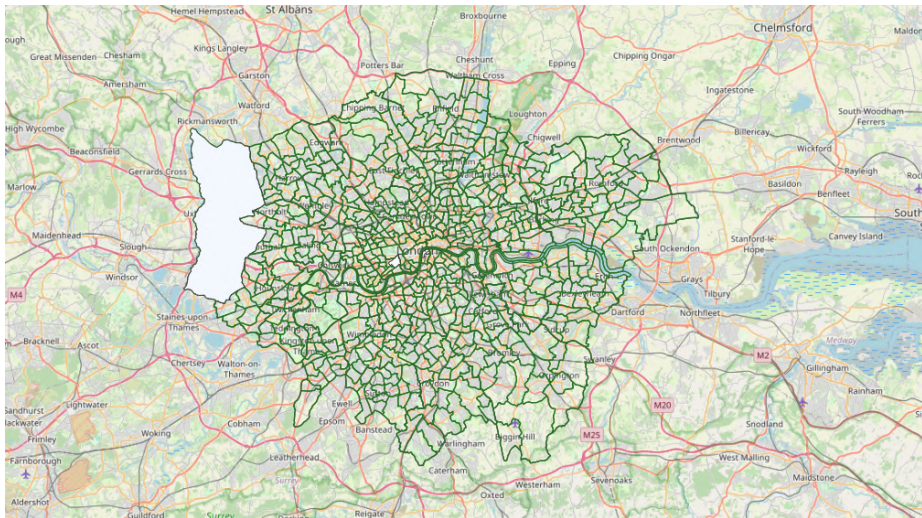
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- Digitalised from the **London Councils websites** [▶ Details](#)

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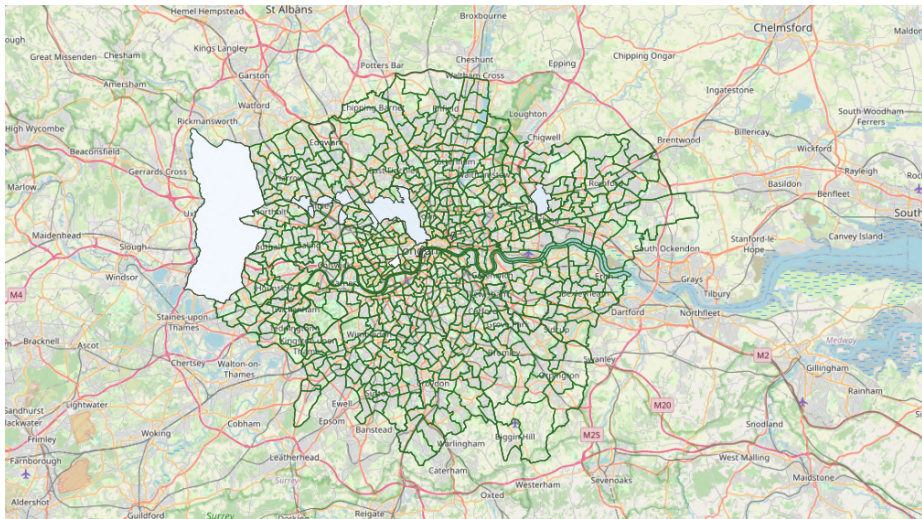
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- Panel data: **Nov 2015 - Oct 2024**

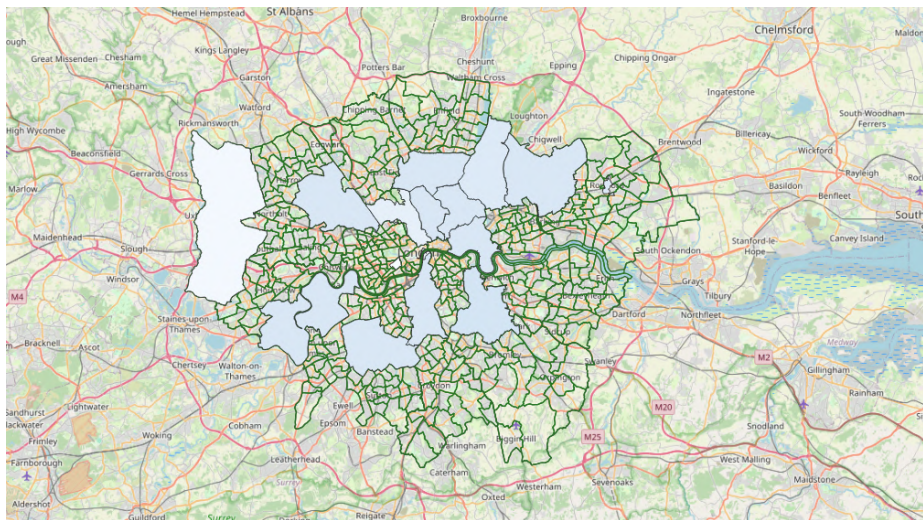
# PSPO staggered implementation



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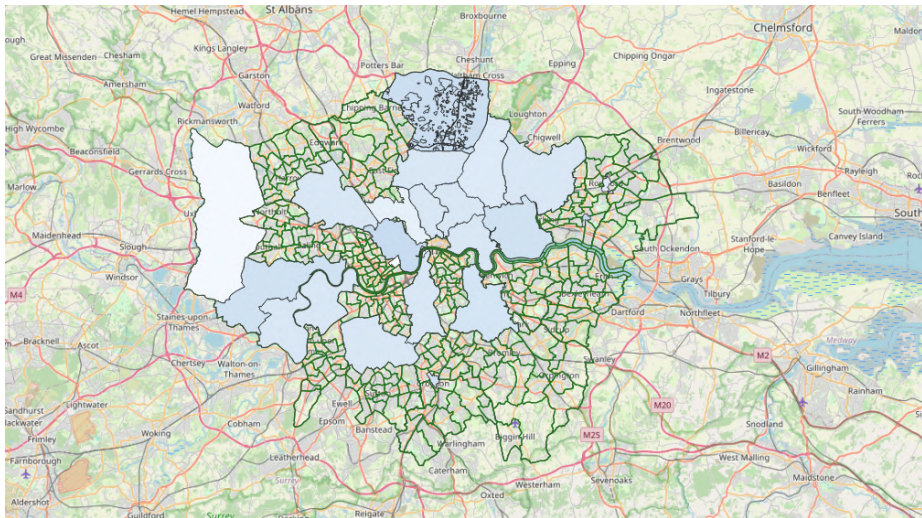


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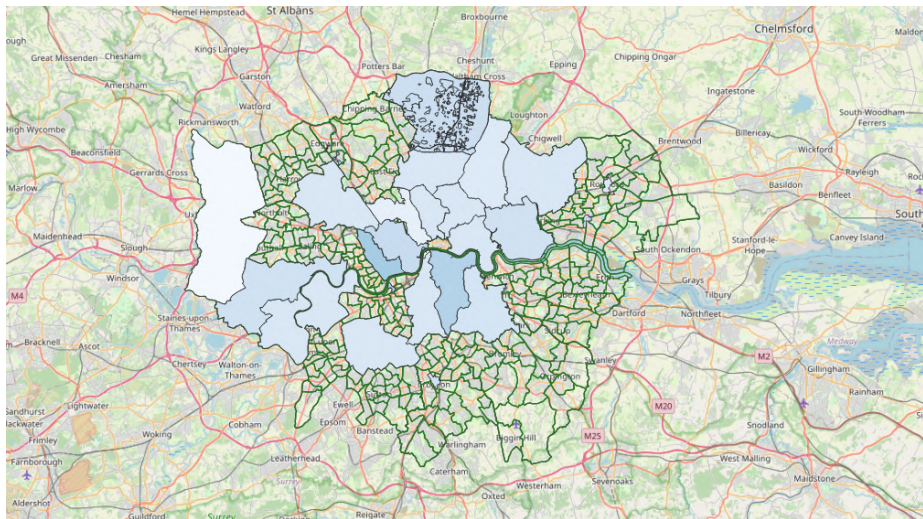


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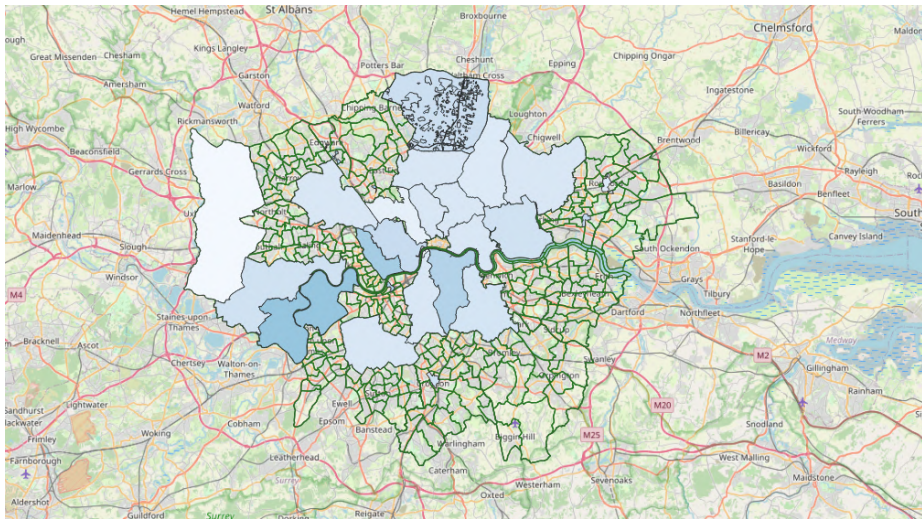




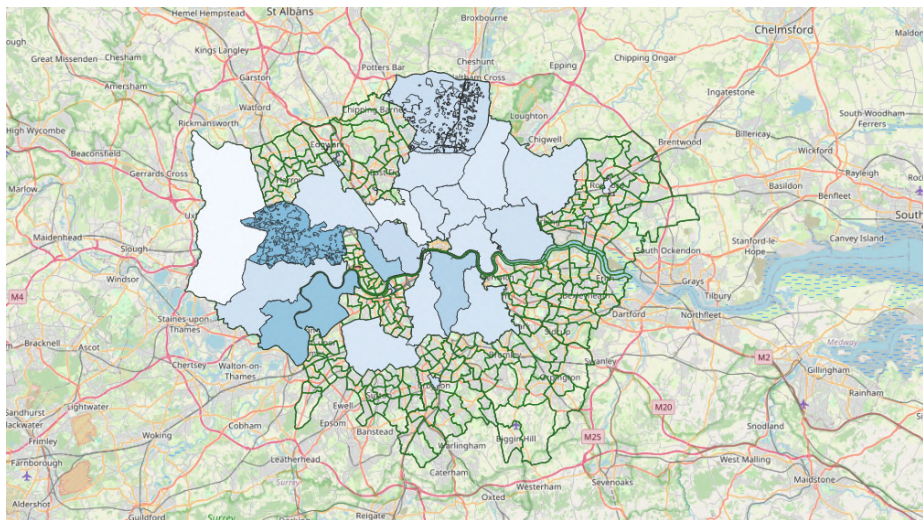
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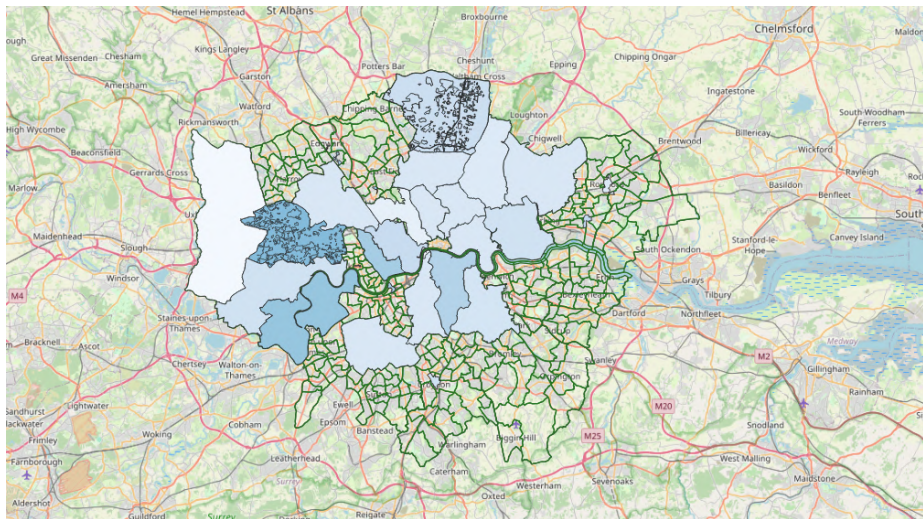
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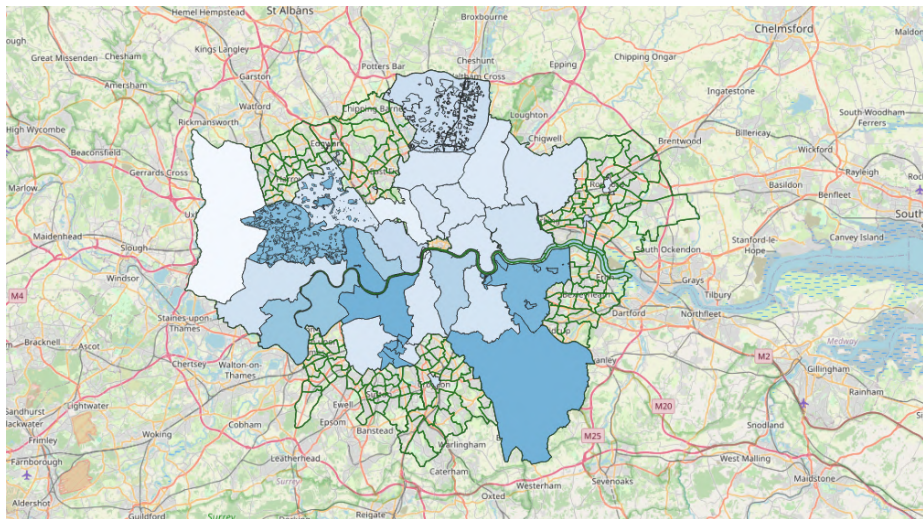


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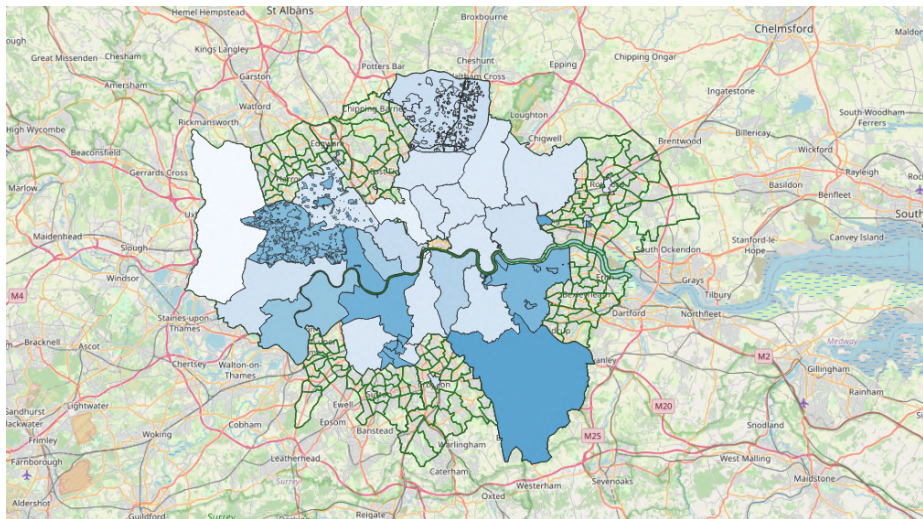




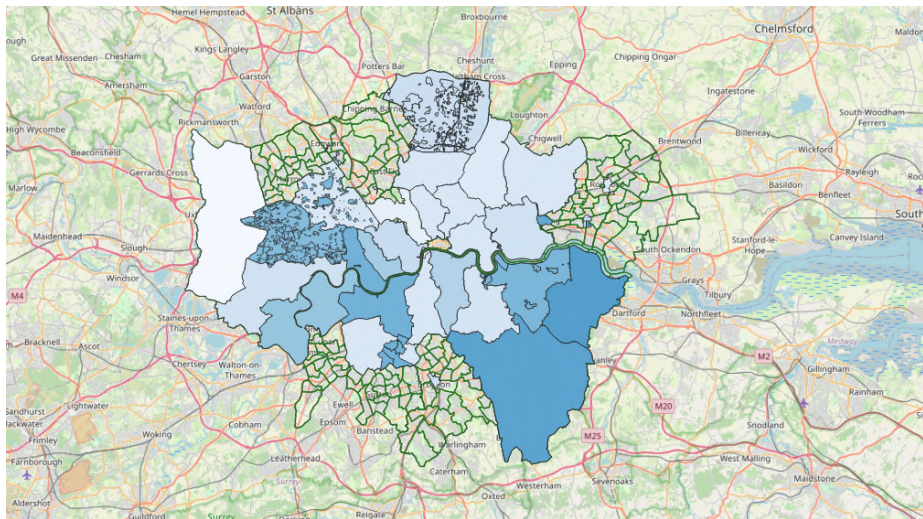
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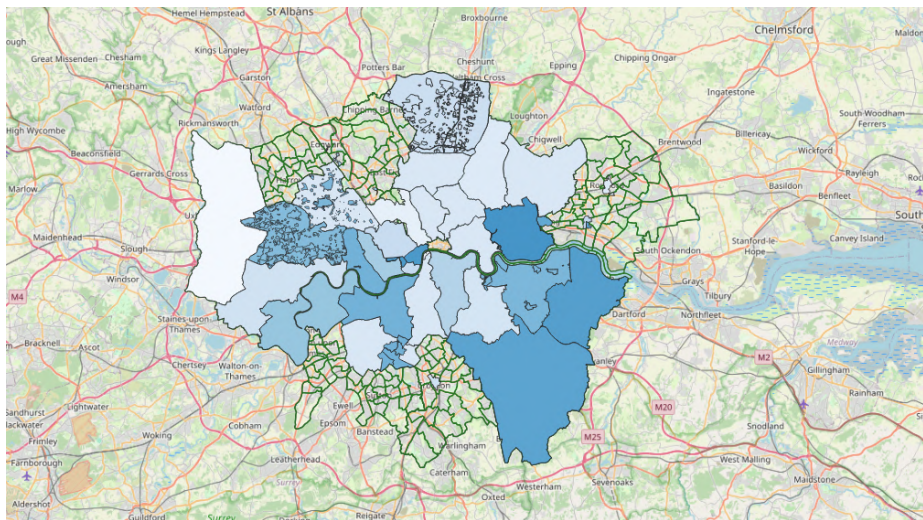
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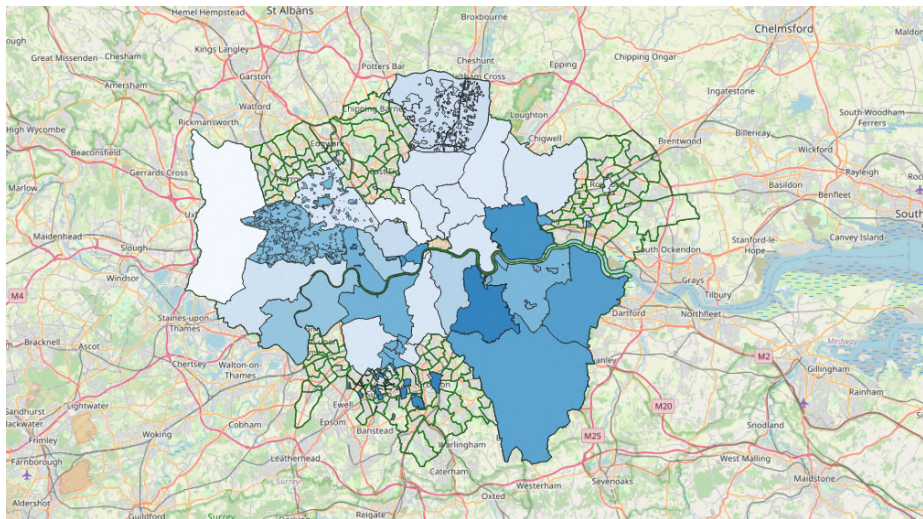


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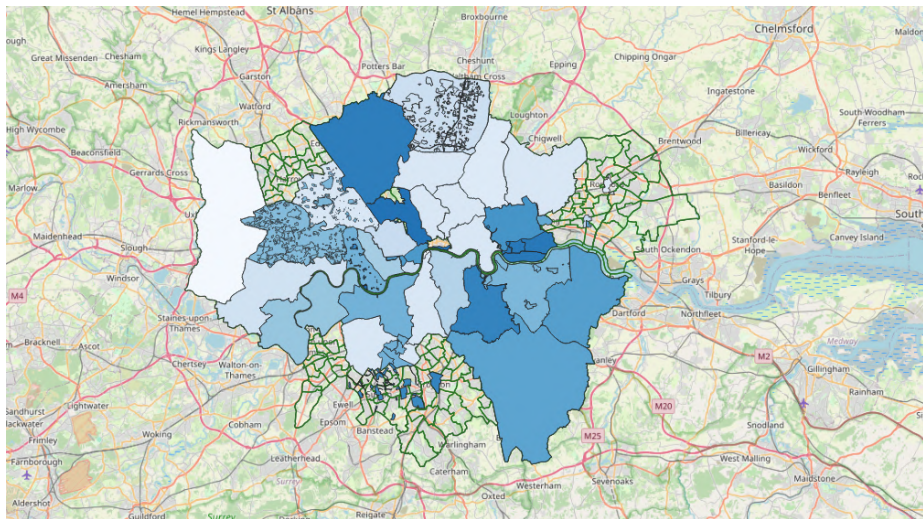




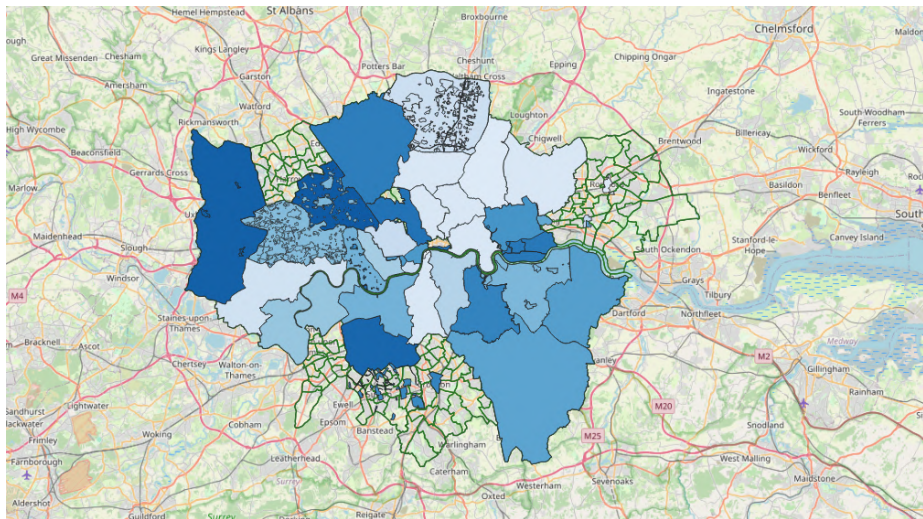
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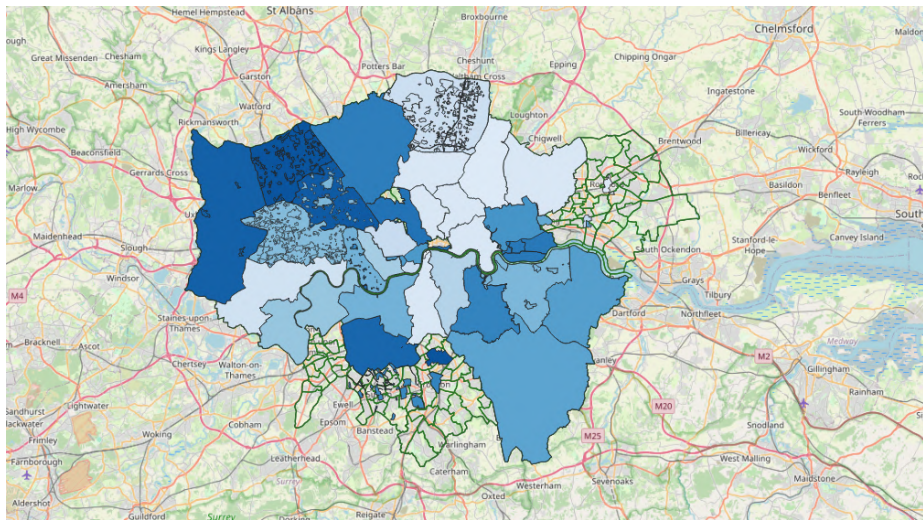
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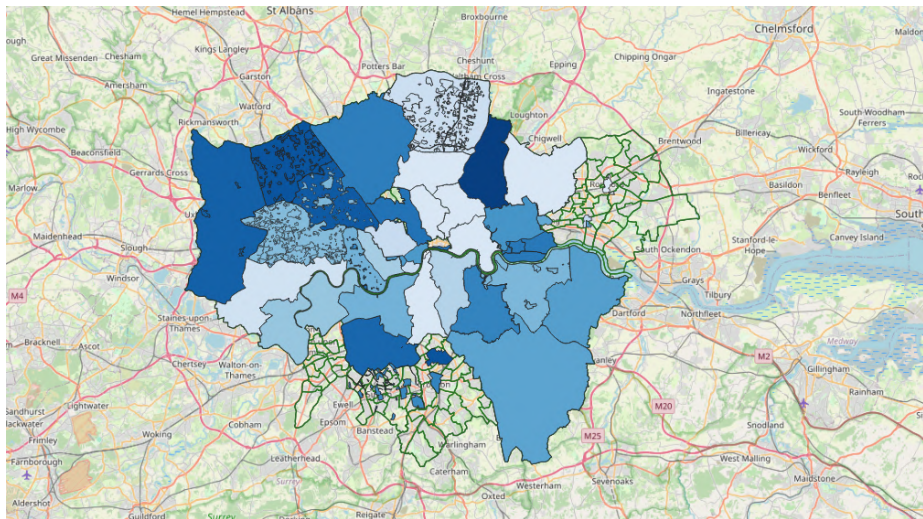


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# What are PSPOs prohibiting?

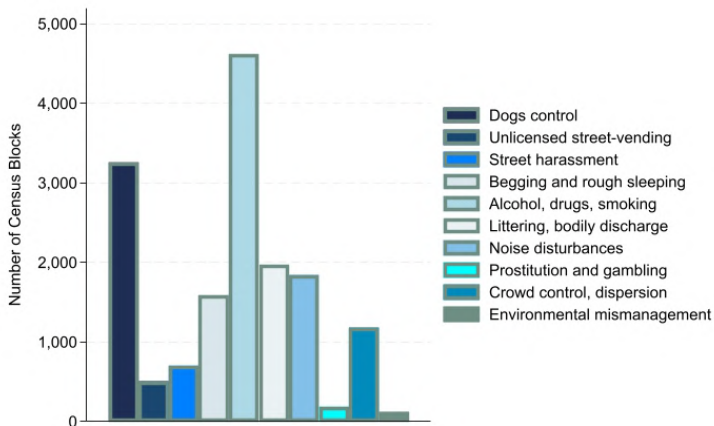


Figure: Distribution of PSPOs based on ASB prohibitions

# Crime and Police Data

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# Descriptive Statistics

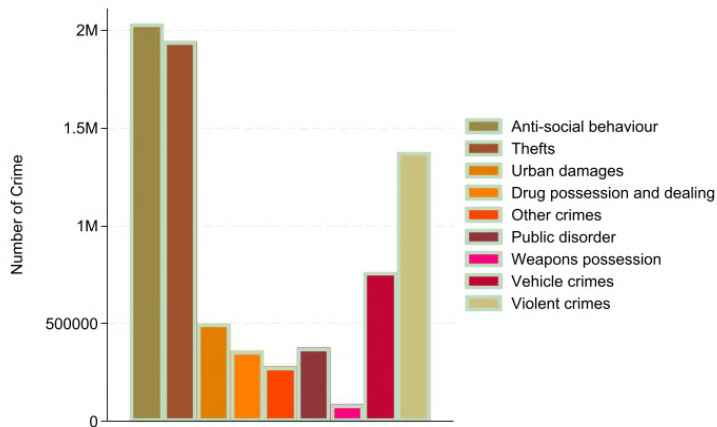


Figure: Distribution of types of crime within GLA

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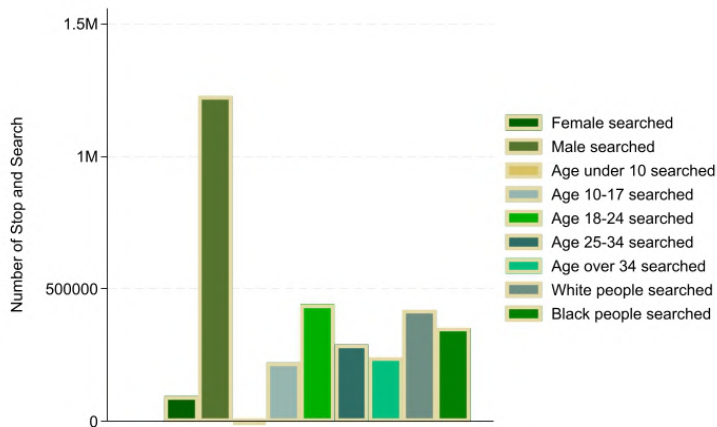


Figure: Distribution of crime outcomes within GLA

# Preliminary Results

# Preliminary results - Crime Type

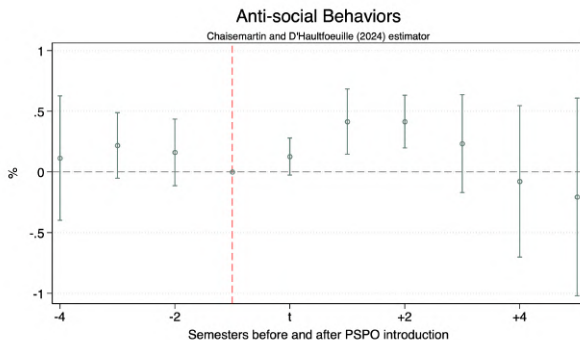


Figure: The effect of PSPOs on the share of anti-social behavior



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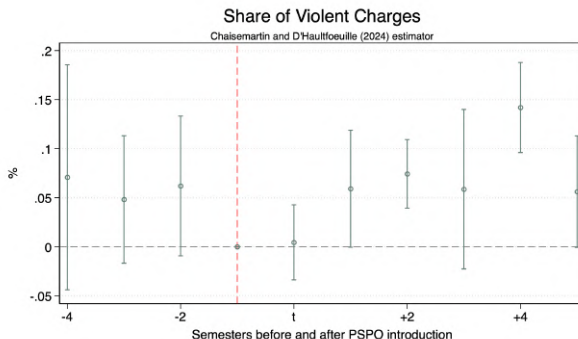


Figure: The effect of PSPOs on the share of violent charges

# Preliminary results - Stop & Search

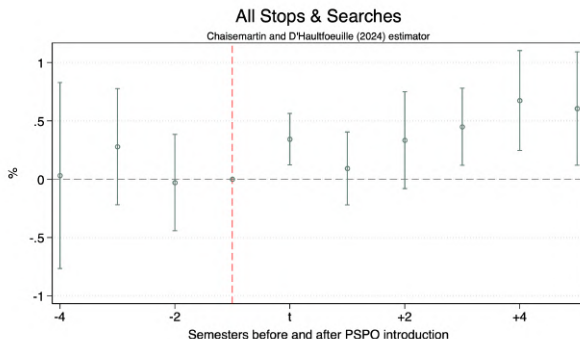


Figure: The effect of PSPOs on Stop & Search

# Preliminary results - Stop & Search by Found Guilty

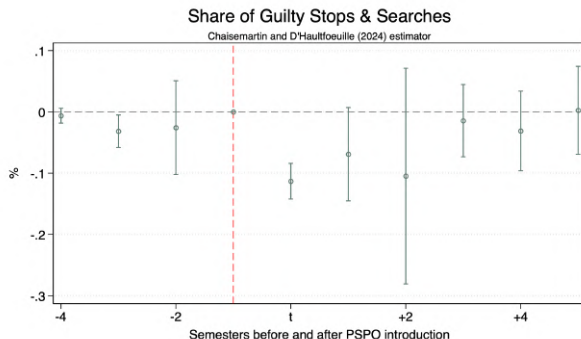


Figure: The effect of PSPOs on Stop Search by found guilty

# Preliminary results - Stop & Search by Ethnicity

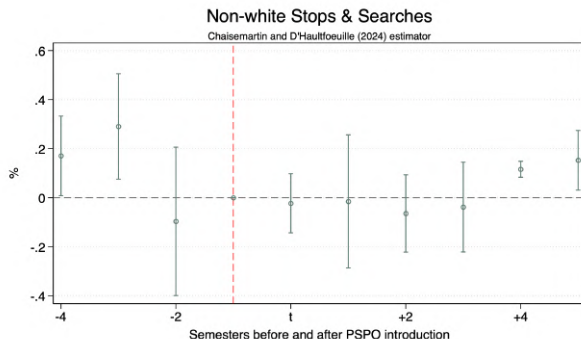


Figure: The effect of PSPOs on Stop Search by ethnicity

# Preliminary results - Stop & Search by Age

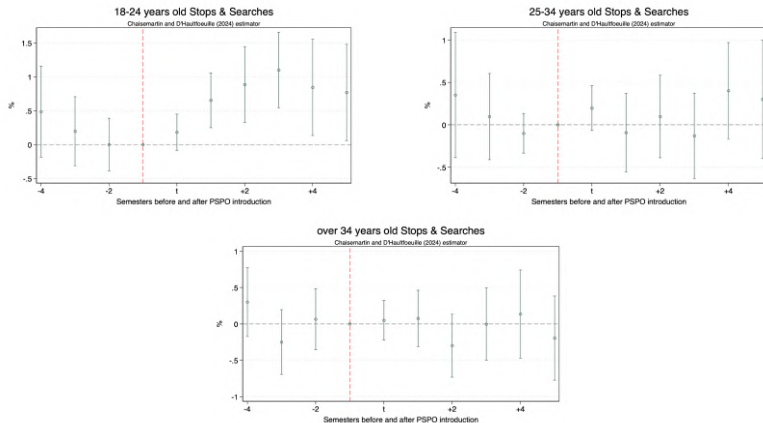


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- We will include **census block, month and year FEs** as well as several covariates from the Census data

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- **Geographical Donut RDD Design**

- We will exploit the **distance to the PSPOs boundaries** to identify the treated and the control census blocks
- We will adjust the **bandwidth** from the closest blocks to the boundary
- We will look into **spillover effects**

# Thank you!

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# PSPOs in the UK local news

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Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live

## Council drops fines for drunk people on riverside

4 June 2024

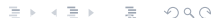
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Adam Laver  
BBC News



A protection order covering Ilkley riverside was introduced in May 2021 to curb anti-social behaviour

An order to fine people for anti-social behaviour such as drunkenness and drug use in areas of Ilkley has been scrapped.



# PSPOs in the UK local news

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## Homelessness

**Patrick Greenfield and  
Sarah Marsh**

Thu 7 Mar 2019 07:00 CET

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● This article is more than 5 years old

## Rising number of councils issuing fines for rough sleeping

Use of public spaces protection orders in England and Wales comes despite guidance not to target homeless



📷 Growing numbers of vulnerable homeless people are being fined, given criminal convictions and even imprisoned for begging and rough sleeping. Photograph: Oli Scarff/Getty Images

# Barking and Dughenam PSPO Order

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## Barking and Dagenham Council

### Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

#### **BARKING AND DAGENHAM COUNCIL,**

#### **PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER**

Barking and Dagenham Council (herein "the Council") makes this Order under section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ("the 2014 Act"), having consulted as required by section 72.

The order takes effect on 03 September 2021 and has a duration of 36 months.

It applies to the public place: As marked in red on the attached map. This will be known as "The Restricted Area".

The Council is satisfied that activities have been carried out in this Restricted Area which have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. Further, it is satisfied that the effect of these activities is or is likely to be of a persistent or continuing nature and is or is likely to be such as to make the activities unreasonable and the effect justifies the restrictions imposed.

The activities carried out are as follows:

1. Begging
2. Consumption of alcohol in a public place
3. Spitting
4. Public urination
5. Groups engaging in behaviour which causes residents and other users of the area nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress.

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