



Making Sense of Honour Killings

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Tragic case

Basma was a married woman in Jordan who ran away with another man. Although her husband already divorced her and she married the man whom she ran away with, her family's honor was tarnished in the eyes of the community. After six years of ostracism and taunting, Basma's 16 years old brother killed her. "Now we can walk with our heads held high" said Basma's 18 years old sister (Jehl 1999)

Honour killings

What they are (not)

Honour crimes [killings] “acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members who are perceived to have brought dishonor upon the family.” (HRW 2001) by, e.g.

- Committing adultery, flirting, refusing to marry, seeking a divorce...

Different to domestic violence or “crimes of passion” (Chesler 2009; Churchill 2018)

- Family-decided and committed, and publicised

Tragically widespread

- United Nations Population Fund: 5,000 (UNFPA 2000:29)
- NGOs: 20,000 (reported in D’Lima, Solotaroff, and Pande 2020)



Puzzle 1: Honour norm enforcement

*What **motivates** people to **kill one of their own children** or family members?*

Killing one's own family member is an **extraordinarily costly act**

- Rational choice?
- Evolutionary accounts?

Existing explanations

Honour killings **motivated by** (e.g. Dayan 2021; Faqir 2001; Gengler et al. 2018; Ne'eman-Haviv 2021a, 2021b)

- Honour, culture, religion, gender inequality, patriarchy, low socio-economic status, rapid modernization...

Partly **unsatisfactory explanations**

- (Quasi)tautological
- Vague & black box - what are the decision making processes?

Reexamining the literature

Community as the key

Community punishes with ostracism, taunting, economic costs (Uskul & Cross 2019):

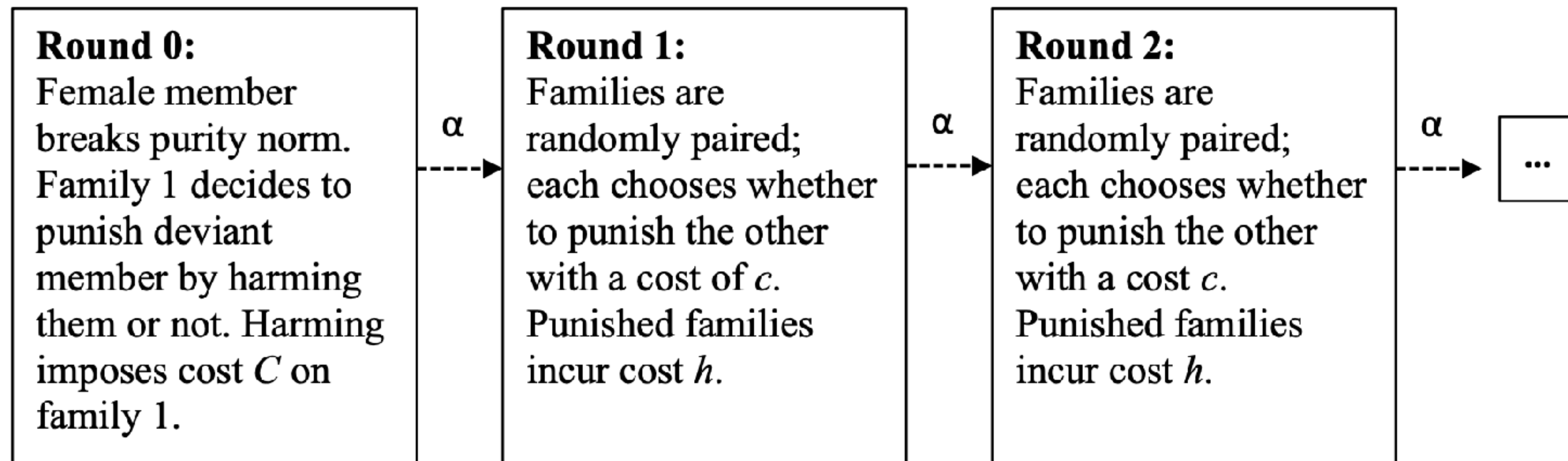
- **Basma**: “we were the most prominent family, with the best reputation... Then we were disgraced. Even my brother and his family stopped talking to us. No one would even visit us.”
- “...nobody would say hello to this man. We walked together in the center of the village, the man greeted everybody, but no one responded to him... Just because he did not kill his wife and did not clean his honor” (Kardam 2006:30)

Chief judge of High Criminal Court in Jordan: “Nobody really wants to kill his wife or daughter or sister but ... sometimes, it's society that forces him to do this because the people won't forget” (Faqir 2001)

Theorising honour killings

Inter-family norm enforcement

Figure A1. The repeated inter-family norm-enforcement game



Honour killing strategy:

- Round 0: **punish family member**
- Round 1: **punish** all other **family** that **did not punish** in **round 0** (second-order punishment)
- Round 2: **punish** all other **families** that **should have punished** in round 0 and in the **prior round** but **failed to do so** (higher order punishment)

(Adapted from Hoffman and Yoeli 2022)

Hypotheses 1-3

Honour killing equilibrium

Equilibrium SPNE if: $a > C / (h + C)$, $a > c/h$

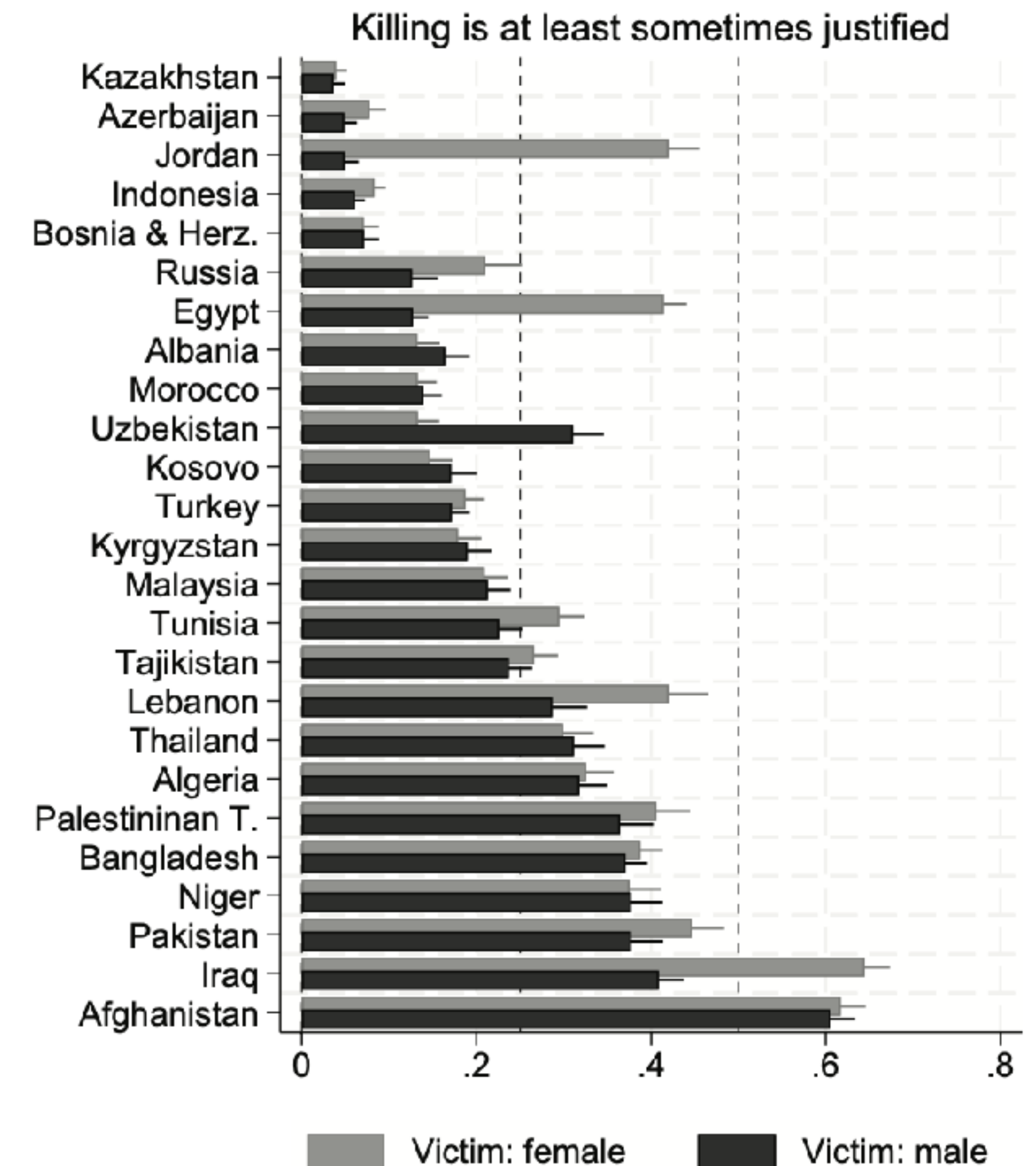
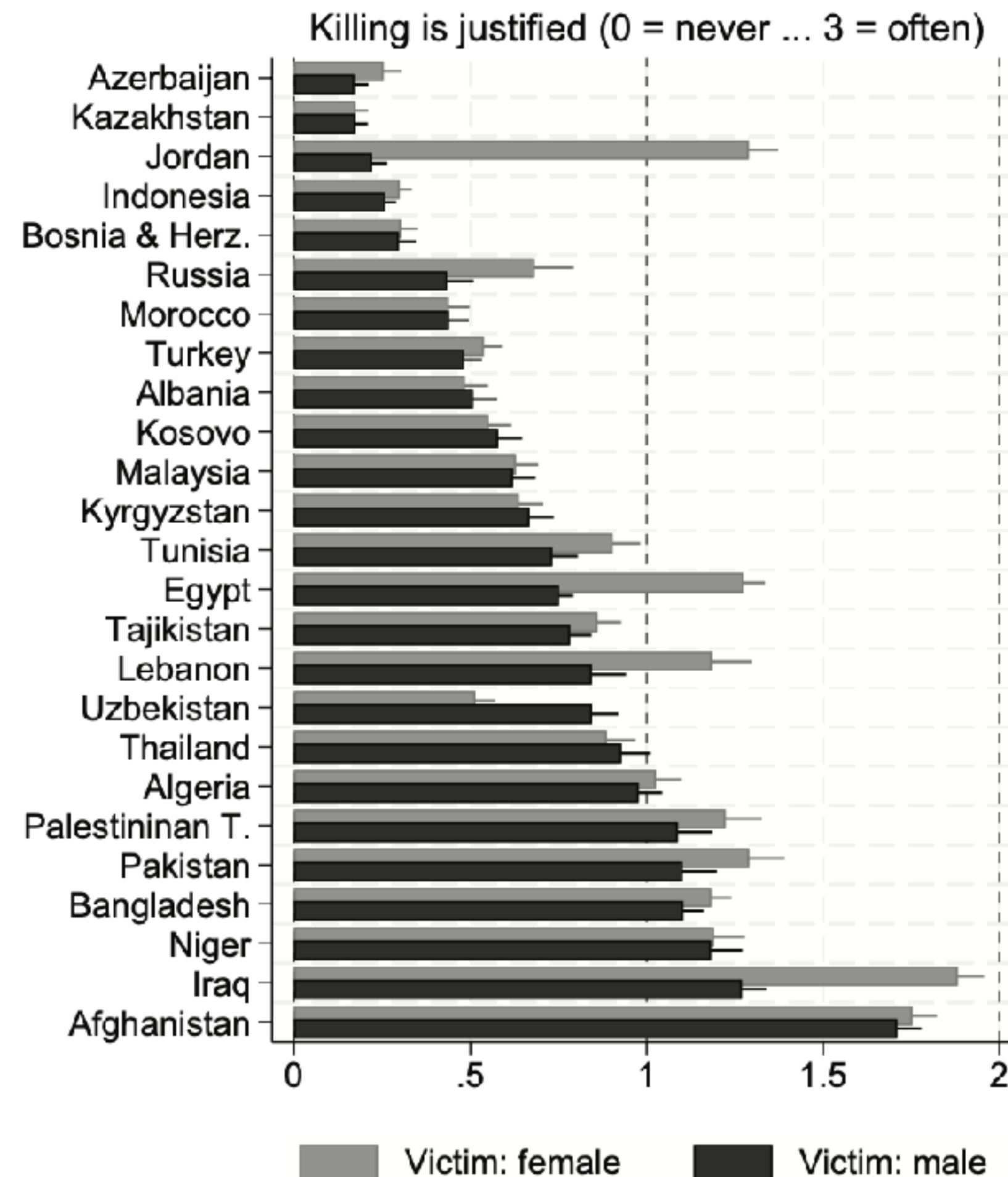
Honour norms are likelier to be observed:

- Lower the cost of punishing a family member (C) (Hypothesis 1)
- Higher cost incurred (h) from second-order punishment, e.g. cost to being ostracised (Hypothesis 2)
- Stronger the community closure/shadow of the future (a) (Hypothesis 3)

Testing hypotheses 1-3

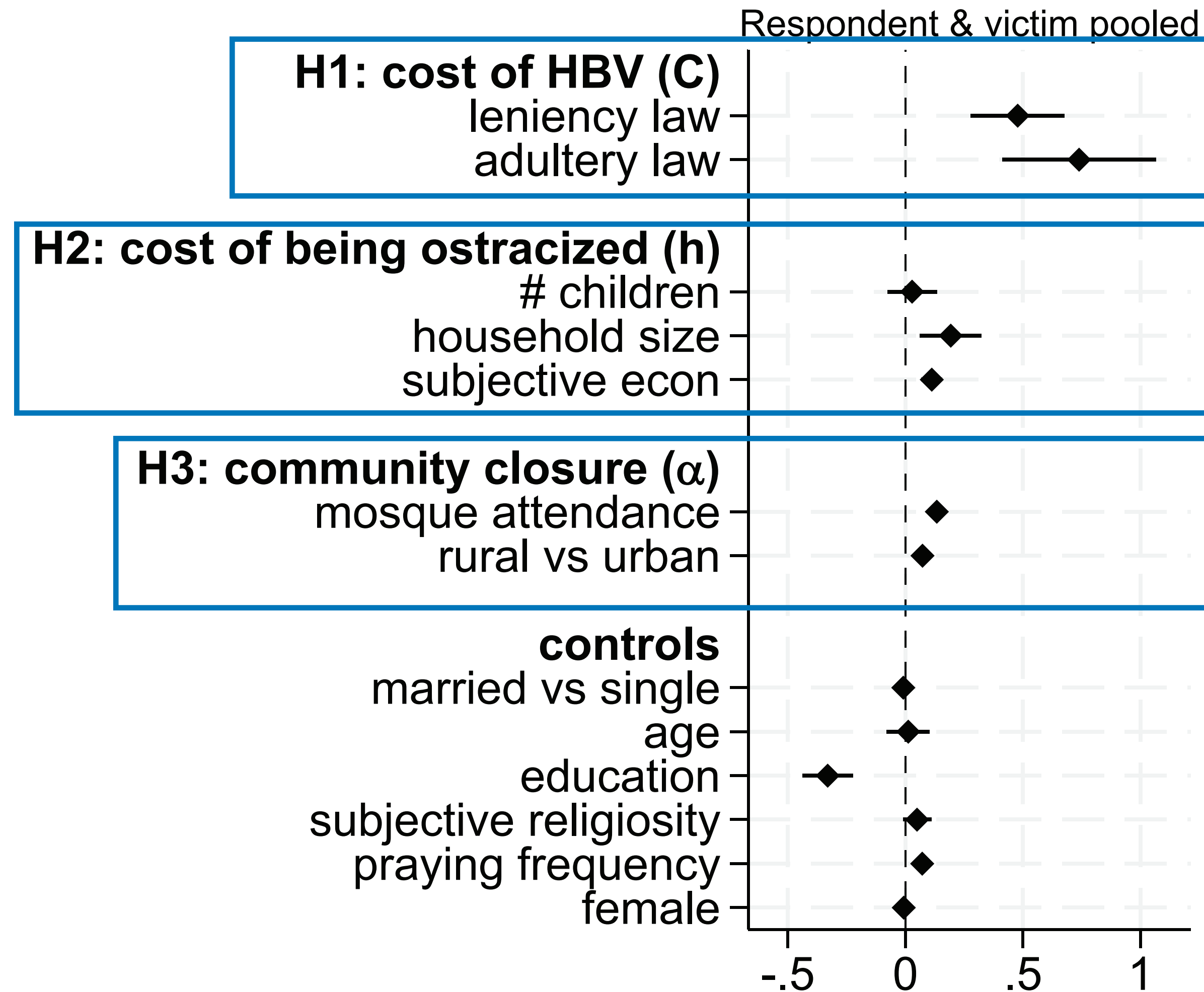
Pew World's Muslims 2011-12, $n_j=24$, $n_i \approx 26,500$

“Some people think that if a man (woman) engages in premarital sex or adultery it is justified for family members to end his (her) life in order to protect the family’s honor. Others believe that this practice is not justified, no matter the circumstances. Do you personally feel that this practice is often, sometimes, rarely, or never justified?”



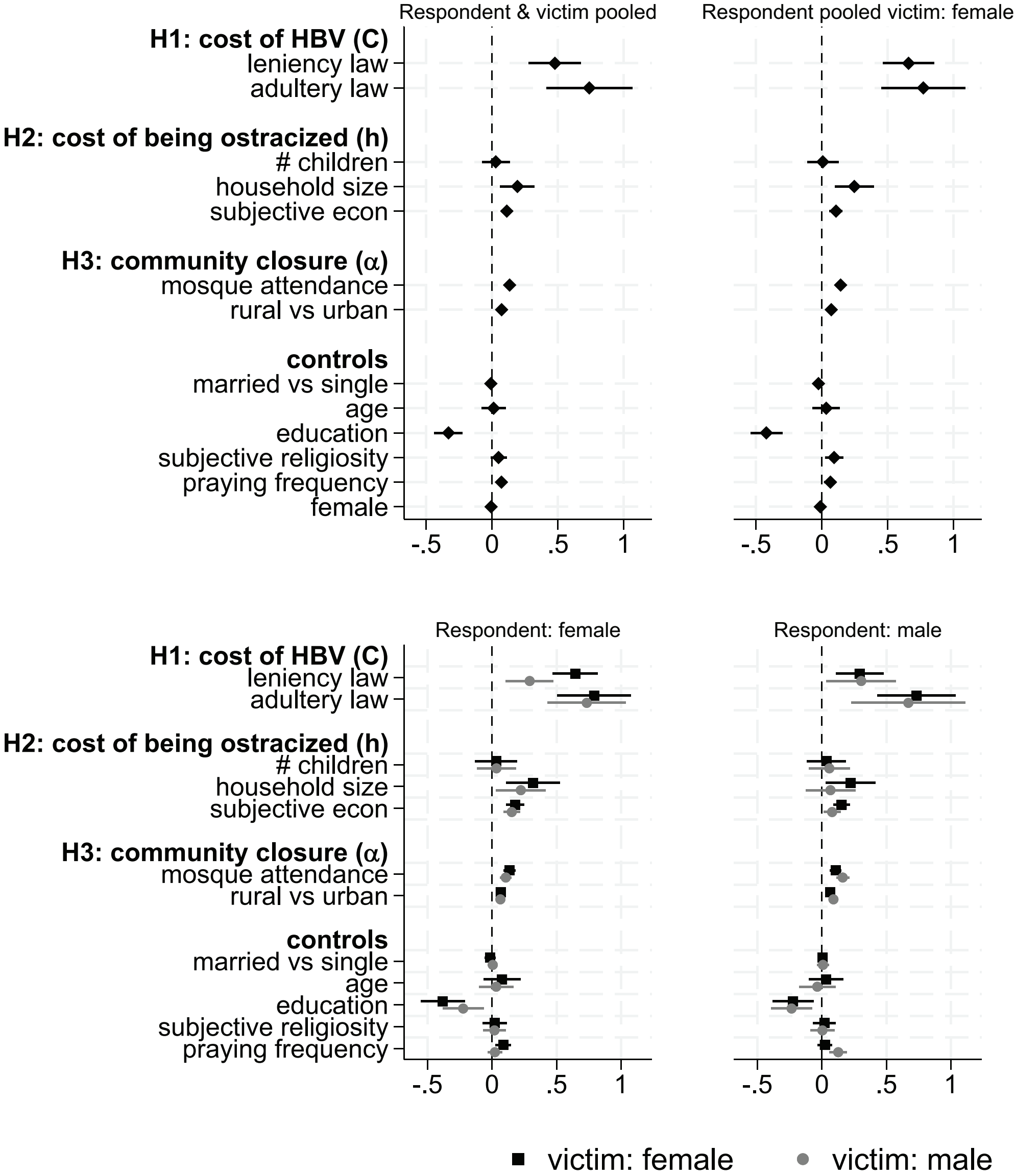
Testing hypotheses 1-3

Results



Testing hypotheses 1-3

Results



Summary

Our answer

Community-level norm that enforces costly punishment of “deviators”

Honor norm stronger when:

- Lower cost to HBV
- Cost to being ostracised higher
- Community closure stronger

The end....?

Puzzle 2: Honour norm breaking

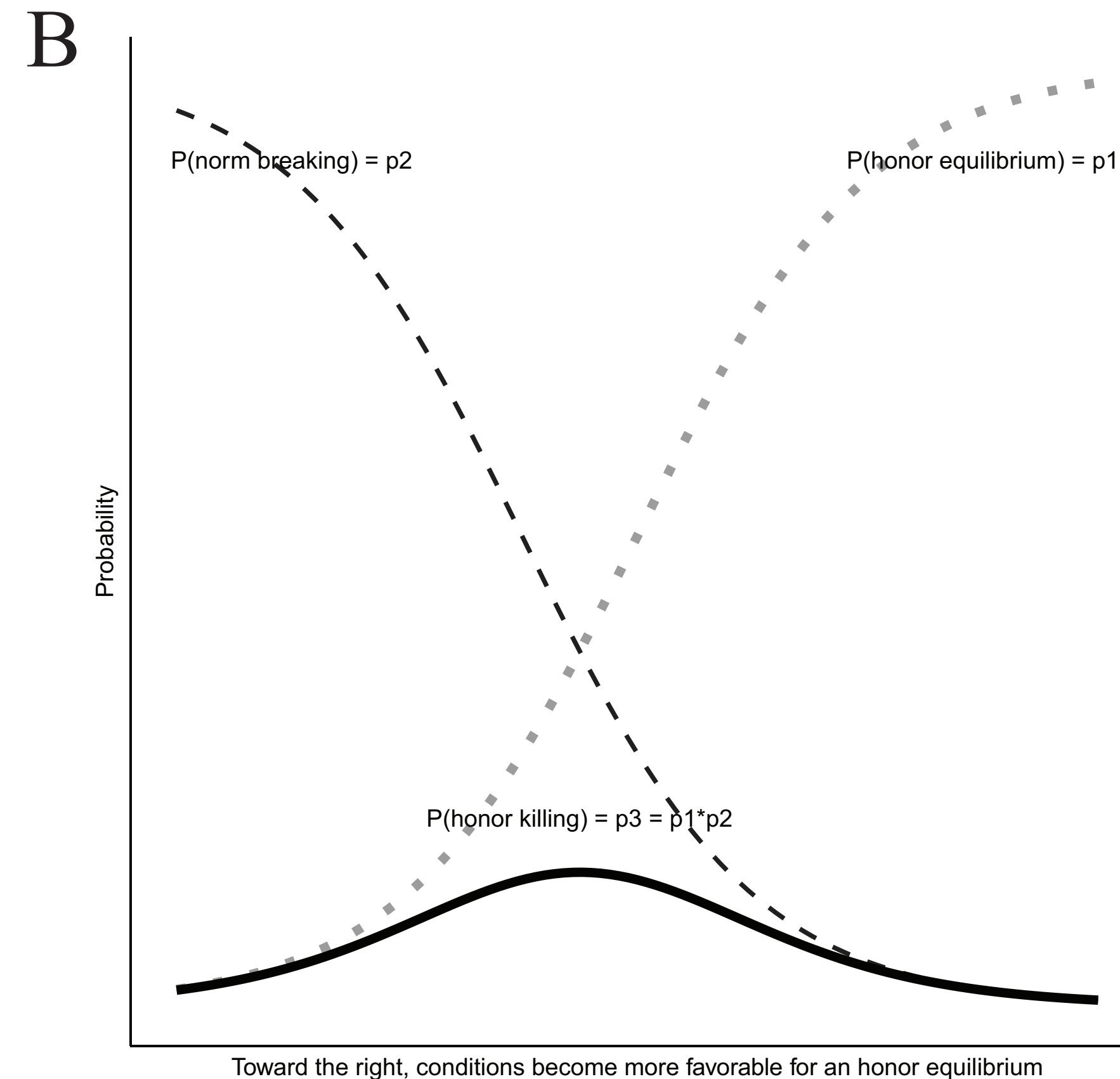
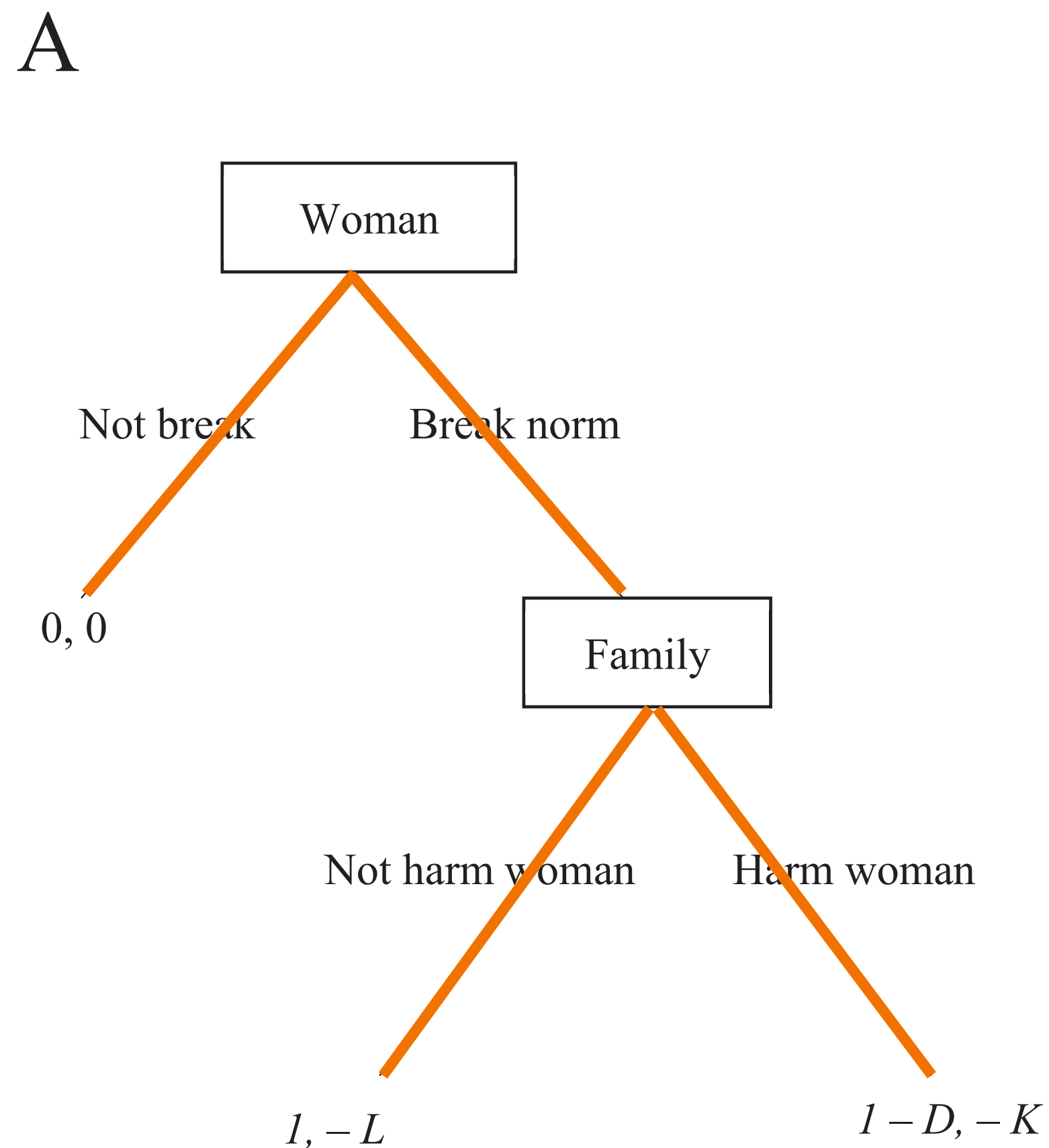
Community enforcement explains *norm stability*

Norm existence $\neq$ honour based violence

*Why does **norm breaking** happen in the first place?*

Theorising honour killings

Intra-family norm enforcement



Hypotheses 4-5

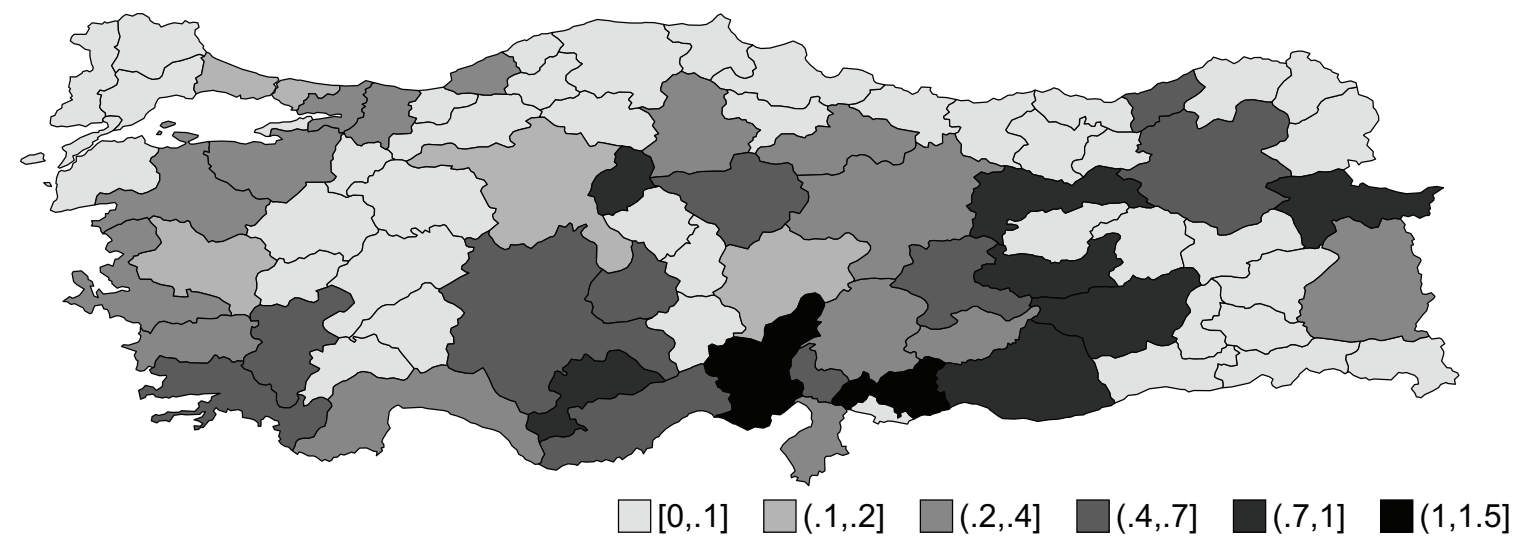
Honour killings

Honour killings and honour norms will be related through an inverse-U shaped (Hypothesis 4)

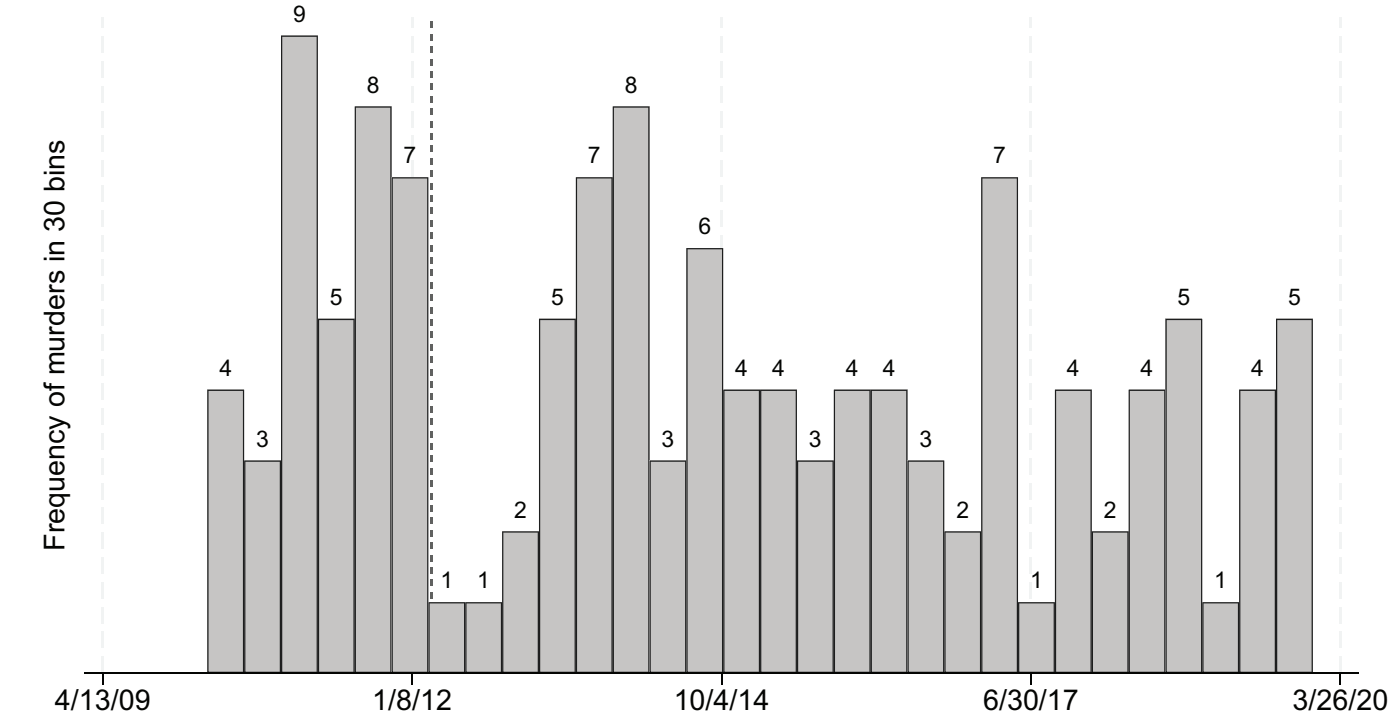
Interventions to reduce the incidence of honour killings will be most effective at intermediate levels of honour norms (Hypothesis 5)

Evidence from Turkey (Bianet, Kadın Cinayetleri)

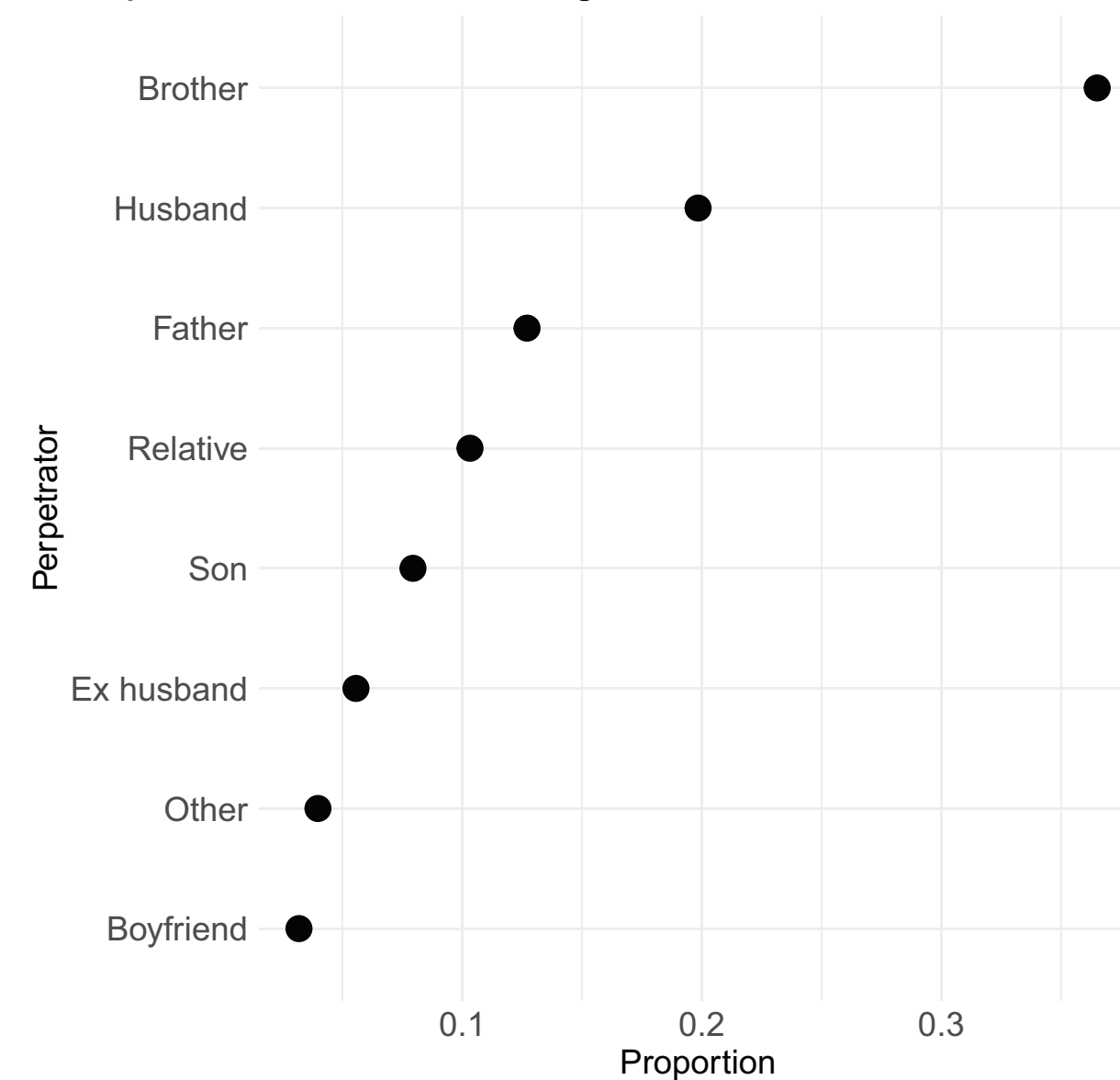
A: Monthly honor killings per 100k women (2009-2020)



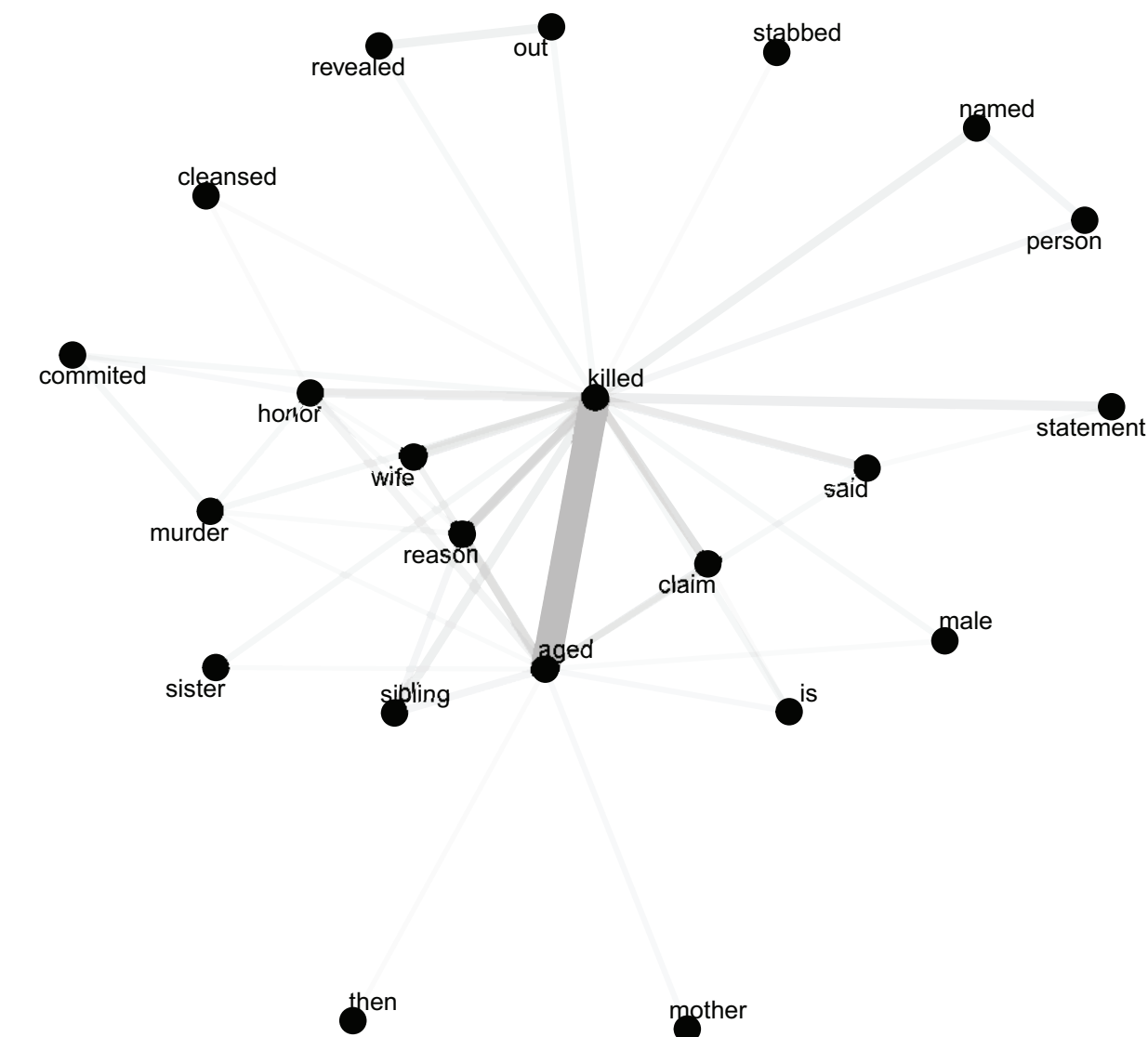
B: Passing of law #6284 & honor killings over time



C: Perpetrators of honor killings



D: Network of most common words in honor killing articles



Adding two key variables

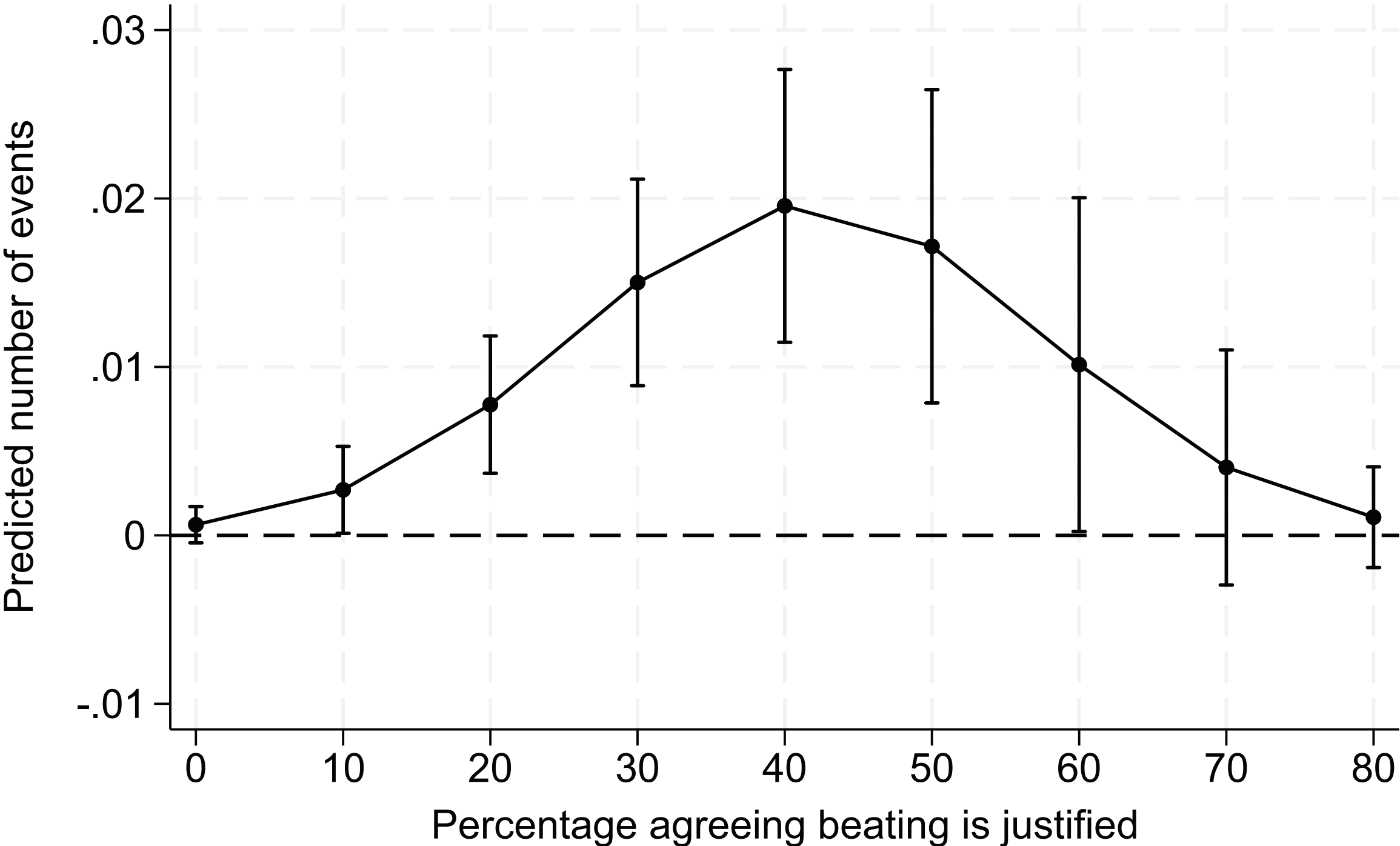
Prevalence of HBV norms: “when a husband learns that his wife has been unfaithful, is husband beating his wife justified?” (TUIK survey, aggregated at the province level)

Passing Law 6284 (8th March 2012), post-Istanbul convention aimed to “protect family and prevent violence against women”

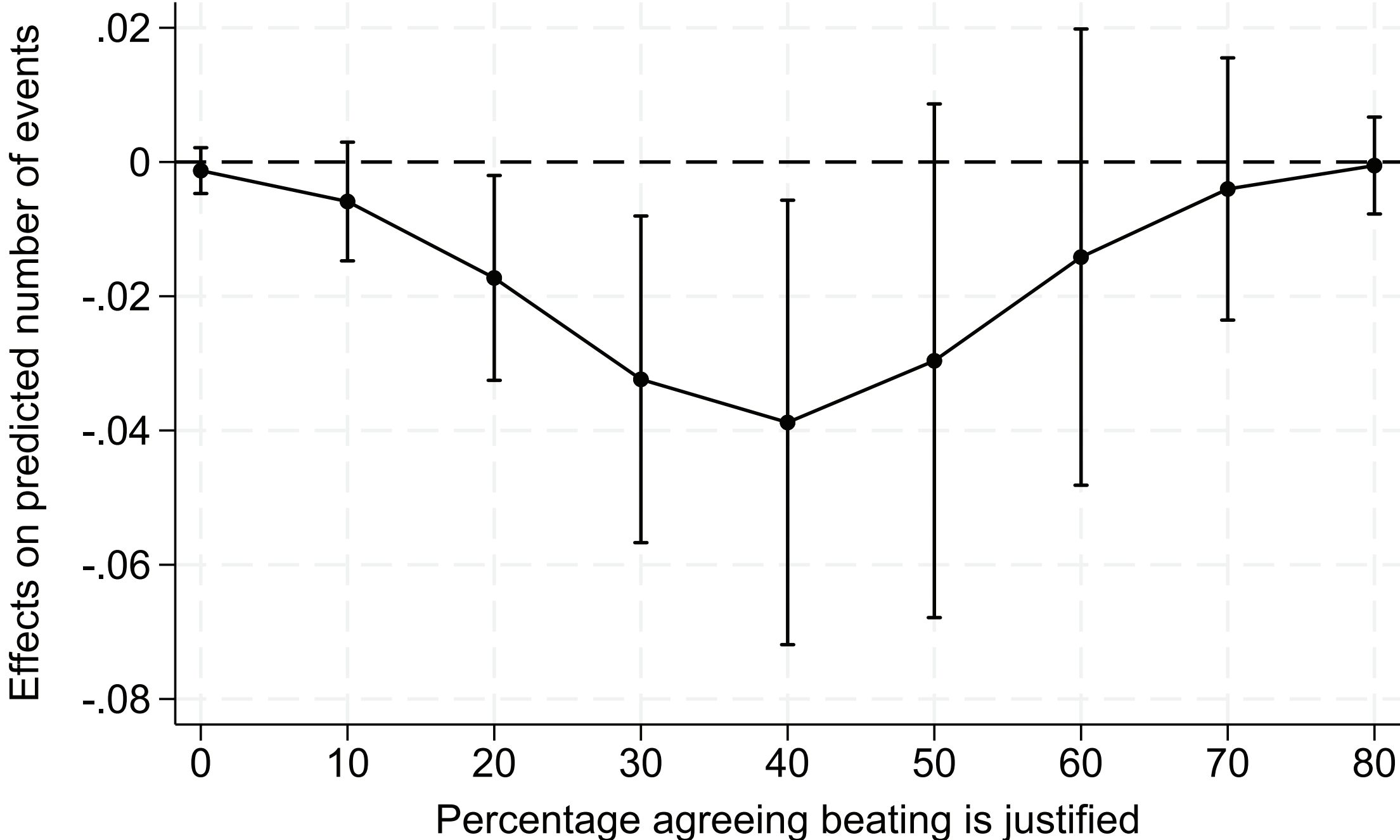
- Victim protection (e.g. shelter)
- Tools for police/prosecutors (e.g. detain potential perpetrators)
- Special courts to expedite female cases

Testing hypotheses 4-5

H4: Predictive margins (95% CIs)



H5: Average marginal effects of law #6284 (95% CIs)



Making sense of honour killings

Summary and conclusions

1. Community is key for honour norm stability

Low cost to killing, high cost to being ostracised, strong closure

2. Honour killings $\neq$ honour norms

Likeliest with uncertainty/contestation

3. General mechanisms (community and norm punishment) *not* culture specific

4. Legislation (C & Istanbul convention) and community norm-change may help

Especially in intermediate zones of norm strength

BUT norm change should be supported by legal protection

Questions and comments

Thanks for listening



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Making Sense of Honor Killings

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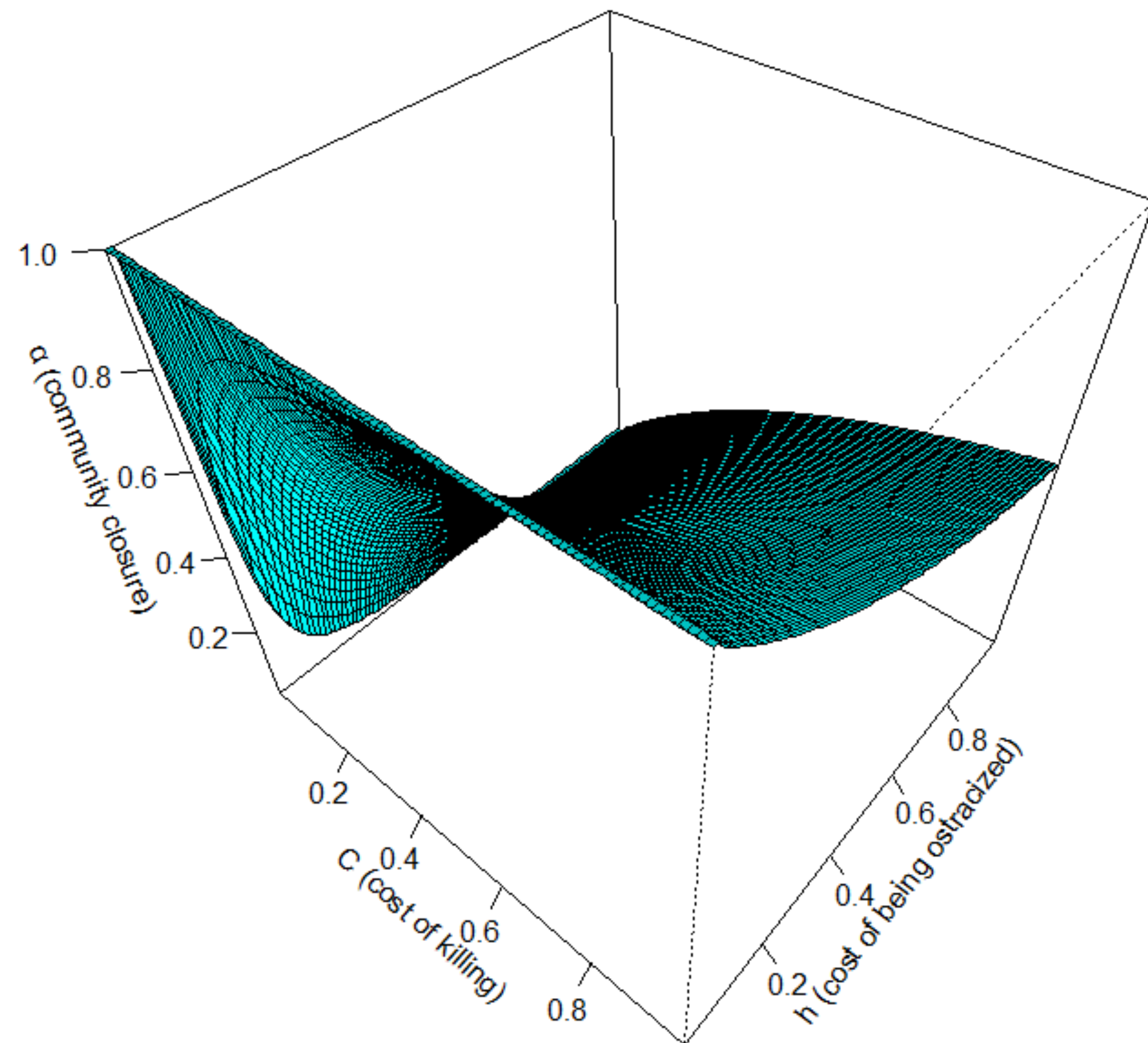
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Honour killing SPNE



Honour killing models

Table 1. Coefficients of Poisson Models That Predict the Monthly Number of Honor Killings

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
% Beating justified	.165***	.049	.169***	.044	.178*	.090	.185	.097
% Beating justified ²	−.002**	.001	−.002**	.001	−.002	.001	−.003	.001
Post law #6284	−2.015*	.919	−2.015*	.919	−2.145	2.222	−2.209	2.448
% Beating justified × Post law #6284					−.013	.095	−.014	.110
% Beating justified ² × Post law #6284					.000	.001	.000	.001
Controls								
GDP			−.220	.705			−.228	.699
GDP growth			.037	.031			.042	.030
% Kurdish			.986	.767			.987	.772
% In-migration			−.539*	.230			−.542*	.231
% Out-migration			−.461*	.207			−.457*	.206
Female pop.	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Year FEs	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Intercept	−7.330***	1.043	−3.943**	1.242	−7.300***	1.581	−3.936*	1.735
N (n)					78 (9,360)			

Turkey: 2011 vs. 2012

	2011			2012		
Cause of death	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
All causes	312,249	171,734	140,515	320,967	175,980	144,987
Suicide and intentional self-harm	1,148	850	298	1,450	1,072	378
Homicide, assault	904	739	165	944	791	153

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute.

Gender and support for honour killings

Figure D1. Best linear unbiased prediction (BLUP) of the random effect of gender on support for honor killings, estimated with a random intercept for countries and random slopes for gender by country while variance between the random intercept and slope are estimated freely

