Abstract:

We study whether faster police response times help to combat crime by increasing the likelihood of an arrest. To identify causal effects, we exploit discontinuities in distance to the response station across locations next to each other, but on different sides of division boundaries. We find that faster response times lead to a large increase in the likelihood of detecting (i.e. ’clearing’) crimes. The effects are stronger for higher priority calls. Part of the mechanism is the higher likelihood that a suspect will be named by a victim or witness when the police attend the scene more promptly.