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Migrant Remittances and Violent Responses to Crime

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Abstract

High levels of crime are a key driver of emigration from Latin America and the Caribbean. But can emigration change public opinion about how best to respond to crime? Focusing on the political economy of remittances – the money migrants send to their families and communities – we argue that emigration can increase support for violent responses to crime. Migrants’ families often spend remittances on investment goods, which makes them more vulnerable to crime and more supportive of violence to protect themselves. Our analysis of AmericasBarometer data finds that remittance recipients are more likely to both fear crime and be victims of crime than non-recipients. They are also more approving of vigilantism, more tolerant of police bending the law to apprehend criminals, and more supportive of the deployment of the military in crime-fighting. These findings contribute to our knowledge of the consequences of international migration for political development in migrant-sending countries.

Keywords: international remittances, migration, crime, militarization, police brutality, vigilantism, Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Introduction

Violent responses to crime have become increasingly popular among citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years. In public opinion surveys, a growing number of citizens across the region support the idea of crime being countered through the expansion of military force, the use of police torture and repression in arrests and detention, or through citizens resorting to vigilante actions against real or suspected criminals (Zeichmeister 2016). In the literature on perceptions and attitudes in response to crime, support for citizen- and state-inflicted violence in response to crime has been attributed to factors as diverse as trust in authorities, fear and experiences of crime, media exposure, gender, and education levels (Bateson 2012; Buchanan et al. 2012; Malone 2012, Nivette 2016; Pion Berlín and Carreras 2017; Singer et al. 2019; Visconti 2019; Zizumbo-Colunga 2017). Recent research on the consequences of international migration has also posited a connection between crime and emigration (Hiskey, Montalvo, and Orcés 2014; Ríos Contreras 2014) and has begun to explore how connections with migrants abroad influence the ways in which those left behind view and respond to rising fear and insecurity (Acevedo 2019; Doyle and López García 2019; Ley, Meseguer, and Ibarra-Olivo 2019; López García 2019; López García and Maydom 2019; Pérez Armendáriz and Duquette-Rury 2019).

In this paper we examine how the receipt of financial remittances from abroad shapes individual support for the use of violence in crime-fighting activities. We define “violent responses to crime” as the use or threat of violence in response to a (potential) criminal act. These responses can be perpetrated by both state actors (when the police or the military use brutal/lethal force to apprehend or execute real or suspected criminals) and non-state actors (when individuals engage in acts of self-defense, vigilantism, or

lynching). We propose here that remittance recipients are more likely to support the use of violence in response to crime than non-recipients. We attribute this to remittance-receiving individuals' greater propensity to make investments and purchase durable goods and the higher sensitivity of these types of goods to crime and its externalities (Galiani et al. 2020). Remittance recipients are more likely to experience and be fearful of crime compared with non-recipients, and as a result they are more likely to approve of violent measures being used in response—especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, where crimes are very often accompanied by violence.

To test this argument, we use survey data from the 2008–2018/19 waves of the AmericasBarometer. In line with our theoretical expectations, the quantitative analysis shows that remittance recipients are more likely to report being victims of and afraid of crime than non-recipients. Furthermore, such recipients are more likely to approve of citizens taking justice into their own hands, support the police bending the law to apprehend criminals, and endorse the armed forces' involvement in crime-fighting than non-recipients are. These findings are robust to controlling for a range of variables and matching individuals on observable characteristics. The evidence confirms that receiving remittances can make individuals more supportive of violence as a response to crime. This finding has important implications for attitudes towards the rule of law, the expansion and consolidation of human rights, and democratic development in remittance-receiving countries of Latin America.

Our paper adds to a growing body of research on the consequences of international migration for political development in migrant-sending countries.¹ In particular, it contributes to the study of the relationship between migrant transnationalism and violent origin-country democracies by exploring how migration can influence public

opinion towards crime-fighting strategies (Doyle and López García 2019; Ley, Meseguer, and Ibarra-Olivo 2017, 2019; López García 2019; López García and Maydom 2019; Pérez Armendáriz 2019; Pérez Armendáriz and Duquette Rury 2019). The study also brings new perspectives and insights to current scholarly work on popular support for violent approaches to tackling crime in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bateson 2012; Buchanan et al. 2012; Cruz and Santamaría 2019; Malone 2012; Nivette 2016; Pion Berlín and Carreras 2017; Singer et al. 2019; Visconti 2019; Zizumbo-Colunga 2017).

2. Existing Literature

Punitive attitudes toward and support for violence being used against alleged criminals have often been associated with individuals' exposure to crime and economic anxieties (Costelloe et al. 2009; Hogan et al. 2005; Nivette 2016; Singer et al. 2019). The receipt of remittances has been linked to lower economic anxieties, specifically in the form of more positive evaluations of the household and national economy (Ahmed 2017; Germano 2013, 2018; Tertychnaya et al. 2018). Furthermore, remittances provide extra income to recipients—which according to recent research should increase their ability to access crime-prevention measures (Doyle and López García 2019; Justus and Kassouf 2013; Malone 2012; Tella et al. 2010). If support for violent approaches to countering crime is linked to crime exposure and economic anxieties, and if remittance recipients hold positive perceptions of the household and the national economy and have greater resources to protect themselves against crime than non-recipients do, then we might expect that the receipt of remittances lowers individual support for the use of violence in crime-fighting activities. In this paper, however, we argue the opposite: remittance

recipients are more likely to approve of the use of violence regarding crime than non-recipients.

While remittances can provide recipients with greater resources to ensure their private security, investments in such security can sometimes be violent and run counter to the rule of law (Malone 2012). This is the case for example when citizens buy and carry a gun for self-defense, or either fund or organize themselves into peasant patrols, militias, self-defense forces, or vigilante movements. Recent work by Pérez-Armendáriz and Duquette-Rury (2019) shows that vigilante organizations are more likely to emerge in Mexican municipalities where migrants finance and implement public goods projects through (collective) remittances from the United States. Ley, Meseguer, and Ibarra-Olivo (2019) report similar findings when analyzing the relationship between the share of households receiving remittances from abroad and the emergence of self-defense groups at the municipal level in Mexico.

Further accounts show that remittances do not make recipients immune or indifferent to the lack of public insecurity within the society in which they live. López García and Maydom (2019) find that even though remittances depress voter turnout, recipients are more likely to go to the polls in contexts of crime and violence in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America—behavior spurred by the desire to influence government policies on the provision of public security. Likewise, Acevedo (2019) explores survey data from Latin America and the Caribbean and demonstrates that in hypothetical scenarios of rising corruption and rising criminality, remittance recipients would be more tolerant of supporting military coups than non-recipients. From existing studies, it is therefore unclear how the receipt of remittances from abroad influences responses to fear and insecurity in contexts of emigration.

3. Theory

Our starting point is the New Economics of Labor Migration (Stark 1991; Stark and Bloom 1985). According to this theoretical approach, families strategically send one or more members to live and work in a labor market abroad that is not correlated to the one at home. Through the financial remittances that migrant family members send back home, households overcome restricted access to labor, insurance, and/or credit markets—thereby promoting investment in durable goods and physical as well as financial assets (such as vehicles, farming equipment, housing, land, new businesses or other capital goods). Furthermore, asset accumulation is more likely among remittance-receiving households due to the temporary and uncertain character of remittance income. Evidence for this theoretical approach is offered by research showing that, relative to other sources of income, remittance recipients use the money they receive from abroad to make investments and purchase durable goods more than to finance everyday consumption (Adams Jr. 1991; Adams Jr. and Cuecuecha 2010; Durand et al. 1996; Massey and Parrado 1998; Woodruff and Zenteno 2001; Yang 2008).

Recent work by Galiani et al. (2020) has posited a connection between the durability of goods and the incidence of crime. Durable goods are more valuable than consumables due to their longer lifespan and the greater returns or services that they yield. Because criminals can get more utility from them, and even resell them in secondary (illegal) markets, durable goods are more likely to be stolen than nondurable ones are. In sum, the greater the durability of a good, the higher the likelihood that it will be subject to a crime. If the receipt of remittances is linked to a greater individual propensity to make investments and purchase durable goods, it follows that the receipt of remittances also increases the supply side of goods that can be stolen from a given

person. Remittance recipients are **therefore** more likely than non-recipients to fall victim to crime since they are more likely to buy durable goods and therefore have more valuable items to be stolen.

That said, the relationship between income and crime victimization is not linear (Gaviria et al. 2010; Gaviria and Pagés 2002; Justus and Kassouf 2013; Tella et al. 2010). Wealthier individuals are the most attractive to criminals because of their capacity to make investments and purchase durable goods. At the same time, **however**, the wealthy are more capable than lower-income groups of protecting themselves and their assets from criminality. They can insure their goods, pay for private security measures, and even afford replacements. With lower levels of security protection than the rich, but greater resources than their poorer peers regarding investments and durable goods, middle-income citizens are most likely to fall victim to crime. This is important, since international migration is a costly, risky, and selective process, and so most migrant and remittance-receiving households are from the middle of income distribution (De Haas 2007, McKenzie and Rapoport 2007).

Let us now take two households that are similar in their income, rely on the same crime-prevention measures, and are equal in all other relevant characteristics, but that vary in their receipt of remittances. A criminal (group) prefers to steal durable goods and has two choices: stealing from the non-recipient household or stealing from the remittance-receiving one. At the same level of income, the non-receiving household is more likely to purchase consumables (e.g. food, clothing, entertainment), whereas the remittance-receiving one is more likely to make investments and buy durable goods (e.g. purchase of a car to use it as a taxi, a bicycle to get to work, or a new tractor or water

pump to use on the family farm). In this scenario, the remittance-receiving household will be more attractive to the criminal (group) than the non-receiving one.

Besides being more likely to be targeted by criminals, investments and durable goods—and therefore remittance-receiving households—are more vulnerable to suffer from the externalities caused by crime (Galiani et al. 2020; Jaitman et al. 2017; Soares 2015). Crime endangers property, hinders business development and opportunities, and has negative effects on health and education outcomes—sectors in which remittances are often invested. For instance, the returns of a small grocery store or market stall acquired through remittance income can be affected due to declining customer security; similarly, the value of a house bought with remittance income can plunge due to rising insecurity in the neighborhood. In sum, members of remittance-receiving households are more likely to suffer from the physical, psychological and economic dislocations produced by crime.

Given the propensity of remittance-receiving households to invest and to purchase durable goods, and with the sensitivity of these to crime and its externalities, we posit that remittance recipients are more likely to support tougher measures against crime than non-recipients, all else being equal.

If remittance recipients are more vulnerable to crime, they are also more likely than non-recipients to fear falling victim to it. Latin America and the Caribbean is the most violent of world regions and crime often involves violence (Galiani et al. 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2013). According to the UNODC (2013), six out of ten robberies in the region involve violence, and the share of homicide victims who are killed during a robbery, assault, or a theft is larger in Latin America and the Caribbean than in other parts of the world. The likelihood of being killed during a crime's occurrence can have important psychological consequences for (potential) victims. When

facing a violent threat, potential victims are more likely to react with violence. Previous research shows that experiences with and fear of crime are important factors driving individuals to support the use of violence against alleged criminals, including vigilantism, harsh policing, and the militarization of public security (Bateson 2012; Nivette 2016; Visconti 2019). In the specific context of Latin America and the Caribbean, where people are more likely to die or be injured during the course of a crime being committed, we thus expect that the receipt of remittances is linked to greater support for the use of violence in response to crime at the individual level.

Our argument is consistent with aggregate-level studies showing that remittances promote the emergence of privately funded security groups (such as self-defense forces) across Mexican municipalities (Ley et al. 2019; Pérez Armendáriz and Duquette-Rury 2019). However, we expand upon this scholarship by arguing that, besides being more likely to support citizen-inflicted violence responding to crime, remittance recipients will also be more tolerant of state authorities using violence—such as police brutality and torture in the course of arrest and detention, or the militarization of policing functions. Remittances can *certainly* provide recipients with extra resources to provide security for themselves. It is unlikely, however, that these flows of money allow recipients to take full ownership of their own security. Remittances cannot easily or effectively substitute private security for the full range of security issues potentially affecting remittance recipients. Thus, we posit that the receipt of remittances will also increase individual approval of giving extra power to state forces to counter crime. This idea builds on previous research showing that crime and violence scenarios increase the incentives of remittance recipients to participate in elections, as well as their tolerance for military

coups in scenarios of rising criminality (Acevedo 2019; López García and Maydom 2019).

Our claims are also consistent with qualitative accounts on Brazil and the Dominican Republic showing that those who support the use of vigilantism and other forms of citizen-administered justice are also more likely to endorse the implementation of so-called *mano dura* policies (Bobeá 2011; Caldeira and Holston 1999; Hume 2007; Moser et. al 2005). There is also evidence that state authorities endorse the use of citizen justice in the face of crime. In Haiti, consecutive presidents have for decades condoned the use of vigilantism (Hockstader 1991; Moser et al. 2005). In Mexico, President Felipe Calderón would exhort citizens to become involved in the provision of security in the context of the “War on Drugs”—during the course of which the military was deployed to a number of Mexican states to help fight criminal organizations (Payán 2015; Pérez Arméndariz and Duquette-Rury 2019). In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro recently approved of citizens carrying and using guns for self-defense (Casado and Londoño 2020). Across the region, collaboration between citizen security groups and public security forces in cracking down on crime is a common occurrence (Bargent 2015; Davis and Pereira 2003; Malone 2012). As Moncada (2017) notes, it is difficult to define and theorize vigilantism and other forms of citizen-provided justice as opposed to state ones—especially in Latin America, where vigilantism has been instrumental rather than opposed to the discourse and purposes of those in power.

In sum, we argue that in the specific context of Latin America and the Caribbean—where most crimes are accompanied by violence—the receipt of remittances is linked to greater support for the use of violence vis-à-vis crime by both citizens and state forces. Based on the above, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Remittance recipients are more likely to experience crime than non-recipients.

H2: Remittance recipients are more likely to fear crime than non-recipients.

H3: Remittance recipients are more likely to approve of citizens engaging in acts of vigilantism than non-recipients.

H4: Remittance recipients are more likely to approve of the police bending the law to capture criminals than non-recipients.

H5: Remittance recipients are more likely to endorse military intervention in crime-fighting than non-recipients.

Support for violent approaches to countering crime represents a challenge to democracy in Latin America and elsewhere. Civil and human rights are violated when criminal suspects are tortured upon arrest, abused in detention, sentenced to death, or lynched by citizens. Nevertheless, our argument is not inconsistent with recent studies that attribute the positive impact of remittances on democratization to recipients' demands for property rights, since such guarantees are essential for remittances' investments to be protected and to thrive (Bastiaens and Tirone 2019; Bearce and Park 2019). However, we suggest an alternative outcome in the context of Latin American democracies. To protect themselves and (the value and returns of) their investments and durable goods against crime and its externalities, remittance recipients will support concrete and tougher mechanisms to counter crime—including the use of violence. This idea echoes claims on the growing use of (non-state and state) violence and coercion to

protect property rights against crime in contemporary Latin America (Foweraker and Kznaric 2000; Pearce 2010; Pereira and Davis 2000).

4. Data and Empirical Strategy

We test the above hypotheses using survey data from Latin America and the Caribbean. Data was gathered from the 2008–2018/19 waves of the AmericasBarometer (LAPOP 2019). Since the key questions remain the same throughout the different waves, we pool the data and include country- and wave-fixed effects to control for cross-national and -temporal variation.

The main independent variable in this study is individuals' status as remittance recipients. This is a binary variable, coded 1 if respondents answered affirmatively to the question "Do you or any members of your household receive remittances from abroad?" and 0 otherwise. To capture respondents' exposure to crime, we use a dichotomous variable measuring whether they themselves or a member of their household had been the victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. To measure respondents' fear of crime, we employ an index variable constructed from a battery of questions asking whether, in response to fear of crime, they had restricted their movements to safe places or certain times of day, avoided activities such as walking at night or through dangerous areas, felt the need to move to a different neighborhood, changed jobs, or organized with neighbors. Our index ranges from 0 to 1, with higher levels indicating a greater propensity to take crime-prevention measures, suggesting more acute fears of crime.

To measure citizen support for violent responses to crime, we use three dependent variables. The first is based on the question: "Of people taking the law into their own hands when the government does not punish criminals. How much do you approve or

disapprove?” This is an ordinal variable ranging from 0 (strongly disapprove) to 9 (strongly approve). Our second measure is a dichotomous variable in response to the question: “In order to apprehend criminals, do you think that police authorities should always respect the law, or that occasionally they can operate on the margins of the law?” Those who selected “they can operate at the margin of the law, occasionally” were coded as 1, and all those who disagreed were coded as 0. Our third measure captures support for military involvement in crime-fighting activities, and is based on the question: “To what extent do you support the involvement of the armed forces to combat crime and violence (in the country)?” This is an ordinal variable, ranging from 0 (strongly disapprove) to 6 (strongly approve).²

We also include a range of control variables in our models that could also be related to stronger preferences for the use of violence vis-à-vis crime. Alongside respondents’ views of crime as a national problem and their experiences and fear of crime, our models account for respondents’ perceptions of insecurity and gang presence in their own neighborhood, levels of trust in neighbors, experiences with police corruption, and trust in law-enforcement agencies (the police, the courts, and the military). Since support for violent approaches to tackling crime might be driven by economic insecurities (Costelloe et al. 2002; Hogan et al. 2005; Nivette 2016; Singer et al. 2019), our models also include respondents’ evaluations of their personal economic situation and of the national economy. To address the possibility of remittance recipients being more likely to support violent responses to crime when they intend to stay in (i.e. not migrate from) their country of origin, a variable measuring individuals’ intentions to work or live abroad in the future is included as well.

Additionally, we control for other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics likely to affect individual support for the use of violence in crime-fighting: gender, age, rural/urban residence, education (with the reference category being primary/no schooling) and employment status. All models control for a wealth index (constructed additively from responses to a series of questions about respondents' possession of various durable goods). Any correlations we identify between remittances and support for violence in the face of crime are therefore unlikely to be driven purely by a resource effect wherein those with greater amounts of resources (including from remittances) are more likely to support tougher crime-fighting measures. Rather, as suggested above, one of the reasons why remittance-receiving individuals are more likely to support these approaches is their greater propensity to make investments and purchase durable goods. A full description of all the variables used in the models is available in the online supplementary material.

In the full sample, 15% of respondents in Latin America and the Caribbean reported receiving remittances from abroad—ranging from less than 5% in Brazil and Chile to over 20% in Guyana, Haiti, and Jamaica. The average proportion who approved of police operating outside the law to apprehend criminals was 37%, ranging from 24% in Jamaica to 50% in Chile. The mean score of individual support for citizens taking justice into their own hands (recoded to a scale of 0–1, with poles of strongly disagree and strongly agree) was 0.31, ranging from 0.19 in Brazil to 0.40 in Ecuador. The proportion of respondents who supported giving the military a role in providing domestic security was 75%, ranging from 60% in Uruguay to 80% in El Salvador.

To test the hypothesis that the receipt of remittances leads individuals to be more supportive of the use of violence against crime, we estimate a series of regression models. We use linear, logit and ordered logit estimators depending on the dependent variable. As

noted above, all our models include dummies for every country and every wave of the LAPOP survey to control for any unobserved or unmeasured differences across countries and over time.³

Addressing threats to causal inference

As noted above, members of remittance-receiving households are not randomly assigned amongst the population. To mitigate the problem of “selection of observables,” we use matching such that treated and control groups have similar covariate distribution (Ho et al. 2007). We employ the Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) method (Iacus, King, and Porro 2012). CEM is a non-parametric matching method that helps to reduce the imbalance between treated and untreated groups. In this study, the treatment group is made up of respondents who receive remittances. They were matched on the pretreatment variables of age, gender, size of place of residence, years of education, employment status, and wealth. By adjusting for the distribution of covariates between recipients and non-recipients, matching can allow us to separate the effect of remittances from other factors shaping individuals’ support for violent crime-control measures—and therefore create comparisons that are more valid. One caveat is the loss of observations to obtain balance. However, matching ensures that self-selection is not the main driver of our results.

5. Results

From Table 1 below we see that wealth is nonlinearly related to views about crime as the main problem afflicting the country, perceptions of insecurity in the neighborhood, fear of crime, and experiences of crime. These results suggest that most of the people who

worry about, perceive, are victims of, and/or fear crime are middle-class. There is also a nonlinear relationship between the receipt of remittances and wealth. Although remittance recipients tend to concentrate in rural areas, the majority of remittance recipients are also members of the middle class. These preliminary models thus lend support to our initial assumptions.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Crime Victims and Remittance Recipients

	(1) Crime as a problem	(2) Insecurity in neighborhood	(3) Victim of crime	(4) Fear of crime	(5) Remittance recipient
Urban	-0.122*** (0.015)	-0.420*** (0.011)	-0.491*** (0.017)	-0.091*** (0.003)	0.050** (0.018)
Female	0.185*** (0.013)	0.168*** (0.010)	-0.065*** (0.014)	0.022*** (0.003)	-0.053** (0.016)
Age	0.001 (0.002)	0.014*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.002*** (0.000)	-0.043*** (0.003)
Age ²	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000* (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Secondary	0.058** (0.019)	0.086*** (0.015)	0.240*** (0.022)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.092*** (0.025)
Postsecondary	0.020 (0.017)	0.055*** (0.013)	0.392*** (0.020)	0.028*** (0.003)	0.160*** (0.022)
Wealth	0.120*** (0.010)	0.060*** (0.007)	0.080*** (0.011)	0.018*** (0.002)	0.484*** (0.012)
Wealth ²	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.030*** (0.001)
Employed	0.010 (0.014)	-0.019 (0.010)	0.148*** (0.015)	0.005* (0.003)	-0.164*** (0.017)
N	158,353	156,702	122,353	92,334	158,353

Notes: Models 1, 2, 3, and 5 are logit models; Model 4 is a linear model. Year and

country dummies are included, but omitted here for ease of presentation. Standard

errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Next, we explore whether remittance recipients differ from non-recipients in their experiences with and fear of crime, and their support for the use of violence in response. The models presented in the tables below show the coefficients obtained after matching, as described above. Results of the statistical models using unmatched data are reported in the online supplementary material.

As reported in Table 2 below, remittance recipients do not vary from non-recipients in their views about whether crime is the most important problem in their country or in their perceptions of insecurity in their own neighborhood. While perceptions of insecurity in their neighborhood indicate that respondents are aware of the security risks where they live, this variable does not necessarily capture their personal fear of crime. A better measure of how fearful people are of crime is modified behavior because of insecurity. In this regard, our models suggest that, compared to non-recipients, remittance recipients are more likely to act out of fear of crime. They are also more likely to experience crime: the odds hereof for remittance recipients are 1.31 times those for non-recipients. This provides evidence for the main hypothesis of this study. The results of Table 2 are displayed graphically in Figure 1 below.

Table 2: Remittance Receipt and Experiences with and Fear of Crime

	(1) Crime as a problem	(2) Insecurity in neighborhood	(3) Victim of crime	(4) Fear of crime
Remittance receipt	-0.032	-0.003	0.268***	0.025***
	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.004)
Urban	-0.122***	-0.396***	-0.506***	-0.101***
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.003)
Female	0.193***	0.165***	-0.064***	0.021***
	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.003)
Age	0.000	0.016***	0.003	0.003***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.000)

Age ²	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
Secondary	0.053* (0.022)	0.070*** (0.017)	0.202*** (0.026)	0.024*** (0.004)
Postsecondary	0.032 (0.020)	0.066*** (0.015)	0.366*** (0.023)	0.023*** (0.004)
Wealth	0.043*** (0.003)	-0.012*** (0.003)	0.050*** (0.004)	0.003*** (0.001)
Employed	0.012 (0.015)	-0.020 (0.011)	0.157*** (0.016)	0.007* (0.003)
N	134,709	133,370	104,009	76,786

Notes: Models 1, 2 and 3 are logit models; Model 4 is a linear model. Matched sample.

Year and country dummies are included, but omitted here for ease of presentation.

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

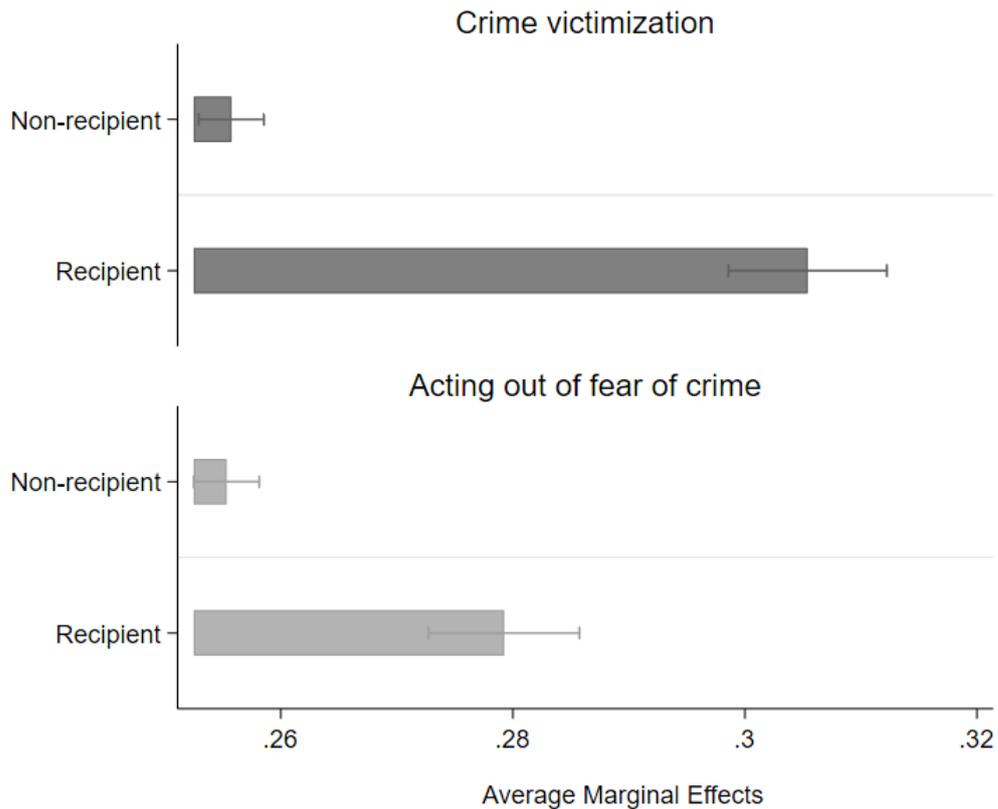


Figure 1: (Fear of) Crime Victimization - Average Marginal Effects by Remittance

Receipt with 95 Percent Confidence Intervals.

In a third step, we examine the relationship between the receipt of remittances and support for violent responses to crime. We estimate four models for each dependent variable. The first represents a baseline model including basic socioeconomic and demographic control variables; the second adds variables related to fear of and experiences with crime; the third adds measures of trust in citizens and state authorities; and, the fourth model includes measures of emigration intentions and economic insecurity. To avoid bias from dropping observations, regression models using only non-missing observations are reported.

From Table 3 below we can see that the coefficient of remittance receipt is positively and statistically significant across all four models. These results suggest that a remittance recipient—as compared with a non-recipient—is more likely to support citizens taking criminal justice into their own hands, to approve of military intervention in policing tasks, and to tolerate police bending the law to capture criminals. More specifically, the odds of moving from one category of support for vigilantism versus the next-lowest or all lower categories are (on average) 11% greater for remittance recipients than for non-recipients when all other variables in the model are held constant. The odds of remittance recipients tolerating the police bending the law in crime-fighting are 14% greater than those for non-recipients. The odds of moving from one category of approval for the militarization of crime-fighting versus lower categories thereof are 11% greater for remittance recipients compared with non-recipients.⁴

Regarding crime-related variables, our models corroborate the findings of recent studies showing that those who have experienced crime are more likely to support violent approaches being used as part of crime-fighting activities (Bateson 2012; Nivette 2016; Visconti 2019). The coefficient for remittance receipt remains positive and statistically

significant across models after accounting for respondents' experiences and fear of crime. Once we control for these crime-related variables, the coefficient of remittances decreases, which is consistent with our hypothesis of remittances working through that channel. It is not, however, the full story. Our models suggest that migrant remittances influence individual support for violence against crime in other ways – as we also expected.

The conditional correlation between remittance receipt and support for the use of violence to tackle crime is also robust to the inclusion of variables measuring respondents' levels of trust in law-enforcement agencies, and trust in neighbors. It is worth noting that the coefficient of remittance receipt remains significant when emigration intentions and respondents' pocketbook and sociotropic economic evaluations are included in the models. These are interesting findings: as noted above, the receipt of remittances is usually linked to more positive economic views (Ahmed 2017; Doyle 2015; Germano 2018; Tertytchanaya et al. 2018) and economic insecurities are commonly related to increased support for iron-fist crime-reduction policies and vigilantism (Costelloe et al. 2002; Hogan et al. 2005; Nivette 2016; Singer et al. 2019).

Figure 2 below displays the predicted probabilities across remittance-recipient and non-recipients based on the models in Table 3.

Table 3: Remittances and Support for Violence against Crime. Logit models

	Vigilantism				Repressive policing				Militarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Remittance receipt	1.112** *	1.101** *	1.098** *	1.076**	1.135**	1.118**	1.117**	1.108*	1.106** *	1.094**	1.101** *	1.084**
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Urban	0.924** *	0.996	1.015	1.017	0.908**	0.982	0.999	1.000	1.101** *	1.126** *	1.109** *	1.109** *
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Female	0.875** *	0.867** *	0.884** *	0.891** *	0.843** *	0.828** *	0.832** *	0.835** *	0.976	0.970	0.992	0.999
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Age	0.981** *	0.981** *	0.979** *	0.980** *	1.007	1.006	1.006	1.007	1.002	1.002	1.006	1.008*
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age ²	1.000	1.000*	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Secondary	0.967	0.954	0.944*	0.944*	1.122*	1.101*	1.098*	1.096*	1.059	1.050	1.076*	1.074*
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Postsecondary	0.906** *	0.892** *	0.883** *	0.880** *	1.041	1.018	1.013	1.011	0.922**	0.915**	0.944*	0.942*
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Wealth	0.972** *	0.972** *	0.971** *	0.971** *	1.014*	1.009	1.009	1.009	0.996	0.993	0.996	0.995
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Employed	1.010	1.007	0.998	1.004	0.996	0.985	0.981	0.980	1.065**	1.061**	1.060**	1.054*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Crime as a problem		0.938** *	0.947**	0.951**		1.171** *	1.169** *	1.168** *		1.142** *	1.110** *	1.105** *
		(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)		(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)		(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)

Crime victim	1.111** *	1.072** *	1.067** *	1.342** *	1.314** *	1.311** *	1.148** *	1.161** *	1.155** *
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Fear of crime	1.103** *	1.080** *	1.072** *	1.048	1.034	1.030	1.251** *	1.257** *	1.250** *
	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Insecurity in neighborhood	1.058** *	1.027** *	1.023* *	1.091** *	1.058** *	1.059** *	0.973* *	1.004	1.006
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Gangs in neighborhood	1.096** *	1.079** *	1.078** *	1.046** *	1.039** *	1.040** *	0.968** *	0.985	0.985
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Paid bribe to police		1.338** *	1.328** *		1.160** *	1.157** *		1.010	1.005
		(0.036)	(0.036)		(0.053)	(0.053)		(0.033)	(0.033)
Trust in the police		0.950** *	0.952** *		1.008	1.007		0.999	0.998
		(0.004)	(0.004)		(0.008)	(0.008)		(0.006)	(0.006)
Trust in the Judiciary		0.988	0.989		0.939** *	0.937** *		0.977*	0.973**
		(0.008)	(0.008)		(0.014)	(0.014)		(0.010)	(0.010)
Interpersonal trust		1.066** *	1.066** *		1.087** *	1.087** *		1.001	1.002
		(0.010)	(0.010)		(0.018)	(0.018)		(0.012)	(0.012)
Trust in the military								1.257** *	1.256** *
								(0.008)	(0.008)
Emigration intentions			1.155** *			1.033			1.081**

Worse personal economy				(0.023) 0.947*				(0.037) 1.032				(0.026) 1.103** *
Worse national economy				(0.020) 0.935**				(0.038) 1.080				(0.028) 1.116** *
N	54,597	54,597	54,597	(0.022) 54,597	24,770	24,770	24,770	(0.043) 24,770	39,885	39,885	39,885	(0.032) 39,885

Matched sample. Models in Panels 1 and 3 are ordinal logit models, and models in Panel 2 are logit models. Country- and year-dummies are included but omitted from the table for ease of presentation. Exponentiated coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients are significant at * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

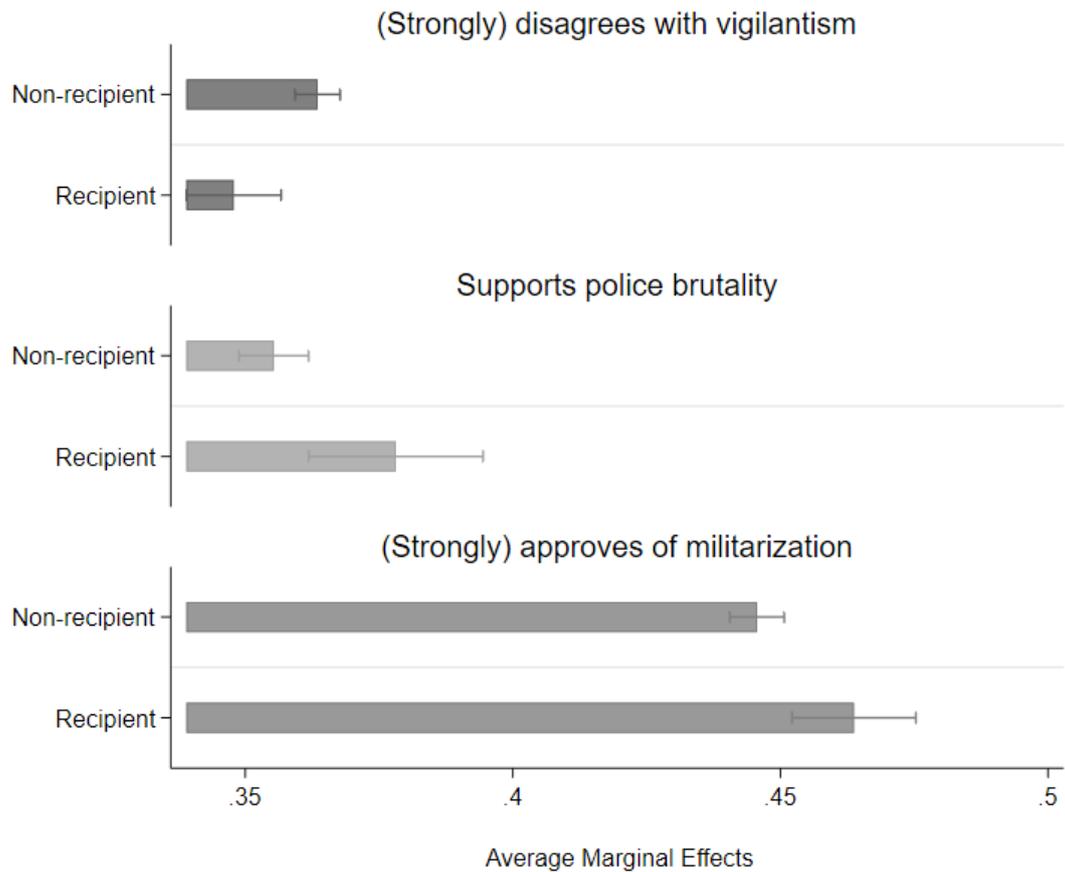


Figure 2: Support for Violence - Average Marginal Effects by Remittance Receipt with 95 Percent Confidence Intervals.

6. Additional Robustness Checks

In the online supplementary material, we report a series of additional models including additional control variables including measures of trust in the executive, presidential approval, evaluations of the government's job in providing security, and electoral intentions regarding the incumbent. The conditional correlation between remittance receipt and support for the use of violence to counter crime remains positive and

meaningful above and beyond individuals' backing of the executive. Again, these findings are consistent with those of the baseline models.

So far, the evidence suggests that remittance recipients are more likely to support the use of violence in countering crime. The regression models described above assume that support for the use of violence in crime-fighting and individual attributes are similarly associated across all countries. However, support for the use of violence against crime might be context-dependent. For instance, vigilantism or the militarization of public security might mean different things to respondents in different countries. To simultaneously control for the individual-level characteristics and country-level factors that may influence the probability of approving of violent responses to crime and therefore allow for more precise articulation, we estimate a series of multilevel models with individual respondents nested in countries across which intercepts vary.

Our models include the following country-level predictors: remittance inflows as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (as a proxy for both country levels of economic development and dependence on remittances); and homicide rates from the Igarapé Institute (as a proxy for the incidence of crime).⁵ We use the latter as a measure of crime given that data on other types (such as robbery, theft, assault, or burglary) may vary according to citizens' propensity to report or not crimes to state authorities; differences also exist in the classification and collection of crime statistics by state agencies too. Since homicide rates are registered by health institutions, they are considered the most reliable cross-regional and cross-national measure of crime (Fearon 2011).

Results from these mixed models are reported in Table 4 below. The variance is statistically meaningful across models, indicating that there is a significant amount of

between-country variability in the outcome. Nonetheless the coefficient for the receipt of remittances is positive and significant across models. This indicates that remittance recipients are more likely to support vigilantism, the militarization of public security, and the police bending the law even after accounting for the level of dependence of an economy on remittance inflows and the homicide rate in a given country.

We are also interested in examining whether variations in these country-level variables are related to fluctuations in the propensity of remittance recipients to support the use of violence in tackling crime. To do this, we include a series of cross-level interaction terms. The coefficients of these interactions suggest that the relationship between remittance receipt and support for violent responses to crime does not vary according to the level of development of the economy into which remittances flow, or its dependence on those inflows. The relationship between remittance receipt and support for violent responses to crime does not vary according to the homicide rate in a given country either.

Table 4: Remittances and Support for Violence against Crime, Multilevel Logit Models.

	Vigilantism			Repressive policing			Militaryization		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Remittance receipt	1.084*** (0.018)	1.097*** (0.024)	1.077*** (0.019)	1.078** (0.025)	1.042 (0.031)	1.093*** (0.027)	1.150*** (0.035)	1.174*** (0.041)	1.162*** (0.039)
Remittance inflows (% of GDP)	0.997 (0.005)	0.998 (0.005)	0.997 (0.005)	1.104*** (0.010)	1.103*** (0.010)	1.105*** (0.010)	1.016 (0.010)	1.017 (0.010)	1.016 (0.010)
Homicide rates (log)	0.928** (0.025)	0.928** (0.025)	0.922** (0.026)	0.840*** (0.037)	0.840*** (0.037)	0.848*** (0.038)	1.247* (0.116)	1.243* (0.116)	1.252* (0.117)
Receipt*Remittances inflows		0.998 (0.002)			1.006 (0.003)			0.995 (0.004)	
Receipt*Homicide rates			1.032 (0.021)			0.948 (0.028)			0.972 (0.038)
Urban	0.994 (0.014)	0.994 (0.014)	0.994 (0.014)	0.947** (0.018)	0.947** (0.018)	0.946** (0.018)	1.022 (0.025)	1.022 (0.025)	1.022 (0.025)
Female	0.913*** (0.011)	0.914*** (0.011)	0.914*** (0.011)	0.919*** (0.016)	0.919*** (0.016)	0.919*** (0.016)	0.965 (0.021)	0.965 (0.021)	0.965 (0.021)
Age	0.977*** (0.002)	0.977*** (0.002)	0.977*** (0.002)	0.998 (0.003)	0.998 (0.003)	0.998 (0.003)	1.002 (0.004)	1.002 (0.004)	1.002 (0.004)
Age ²	1.000*** (0.000)	1.000*** (0.000)	1.000*** (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)
Secondary	0.987 (0.020)	0.987 (0.020)	0.987 (0.020)	1.191*** (0.033)	1.192*** (0.033)	1.191*** (0.033)	1.004 (0.036)	1.003 (0.036)	1.003 (0.036)
Postsecondary	0.888*** (0.016)	0.888*** (0.016)	0.888*** (0.016)	1.143*** (0.028)	1.144*** (0.028)	1.143*** (0.028)	0.913** (0.029)	0.913** (0.029)	0.913** (0.029)
Wealth	0.976*** (0.003)	0.976*** (0.003)	0.976*** (0.003)	1.009* (0.004)	1.008* (0.004)	1.009* (0.004)	0.980*** (0.005)	0.980*** (0.005)	0.980*** (0.005)
Employed	1.050***	1.050***	1.050***	1.057**	1.057**	1.057**	1.078**	1.077**	1.078**

	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Country variance	1.100**	1.099**	1.100**	1.929**	1.919**	1.944**	1.173*	1.171*	1.172*
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.445)	(0.440)	(0.453)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.077)
<i>N</i>	88,737	88,737	88,737	67,260	67,260	67,260	33,779	33,779	33,779
Number of countries	20	20	20	19	19	19	14	14	14

Notes: Matched sample. Models in Panels 1 and 3 are ordinal logit models, and models in Panel 2 are logit models. Year dummies are included in the analysis, but omitted here for ease of presentation. Exponentiated coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Coefficients are significant at * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Alternative Outcomes

One might also reasonably ask whether the receipt of remittances influences individual support for nonviolent responses to crime, such as penal welfarism or preventative social policy. Although support for these policies makes sense in the longer term, there is strong evidence linking individual experiences with and fear of crime (which recipients are more likely to have) with support for tougher short-term policing measures rather than long-term crime reduction strategies (Bateson 2012; Nivette 2016; Visconti 2019).

To verify this, we run a series of logit models estimating the likelihood that individuals think that the main cause of crime is poverty and the lack of youth and social programs,⁶ that homicides should be reduced through investment in jobs and education,⁷ and the likelihood that individuals they think that crime should be countered through preventive measures.⁸ The results of these models are reported in the online supplementary material. We find no evidence on the receipt of remittances increasing support for social or preventive measures to reduce crime.

Additionally, we explore whether the receipt of remittances is associated with individual support for gun ownership out of fear of crime.⁹ We find that in countries where firearm ownership is allowed, remittance recipients are more likely than non-recipients to carry a gun out of fear of crime and to live in households in which at least one of its members owns a gun. Even in countries where firearm ownership is banned, remittance recipients are more likely than non-recipients to support the idea of owning one for self-protection—should they have this possibility. While these findings do not tell us whether remittance recipients engage in violence themselves, they are nevertheless consistent with our argument. The results of these models are reported in the online supplementary material.

In sum, the results of the statistical analysis offer support for our main hypothesis: migrant remittances make recipients more likely to support the use of violence to counter crime. This finding holds true after matching individuals on observable characteristics and using different dependent variables measuring support for violence in crime-fighting activities. It is also robust to the inclusion of a range of control variables, and accounting for heterogeneous effects associated with different levels of development and violence.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined how the receipt of remittances shapes individuals' support for the use of violence in crime-fighting across Latin America and the Caribbean. Using survey data from the 2008–2018/2019 waves of the AmericasBarometer, a statistical analysis has revealed that the receipt of remittances is positively and significantly related to individual support for the use of violence vis-à-vis crime by both citizens and state actors. Specifically, we find that remittance recipients are (on average) more likely to approve of citizens taking matters into their own hands, more likely to endorse military intervention in policing tasks, and more likely to tolerate the police bending the law to apprehend criminals than non-recipients are. We attribute this to remittance recipients' greater propensity to make investments and purchase durable goods, coupled with the sensitivity of these kinds of goods to violent crime. Remittance recipients are found to be more likely to fear and have experienced crime.

What do the results of this paper tell us about the contribution of migrant remittances to crime control and democratic development in Latin America and the Caribbean? If the proportion of remittance-receiving households continues to rise across the region, as it has done over the past few years (Orozco 2019), these findings suggest

that popular support for violent responses to crime will only increase. Through their effect on citizens' support for the use of violence in crime-fighting, remittances may contribute to civil rights violations that stem from the use of coercion and repression by state and non-state actors alike (Cruz 2016; Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019; Muggah 2019; Pérez 2015). Our micro-level results also speak to recent work showing that respect for human rights is negatively related to remittance inflows in developing countries (Bang et al. 2019; Carneiro and Figueroa 2019).

The evidence and propositions advanced here can therefore help us to refine our understanding of the role that migrants and the remittances they send home play in the patterns of coercion and violence in contemporary democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean—where violence is constantly reproduced as an integral part of how rights are perceived, experienced, and defended (Arias and Goldstein 2010; Cruz 2016; Pearce 2010; Pérez Armendáriz 2019; Santamaría and Carey 2019). By illustrating how remittances incentivize support for the use of violence to tackle crime, our paper also contributes to the emerging literature on the individual determinants of preferences for punitive and violent measures vis-à-vis crime in Latin America and beyond.

Future research should investigate how the frequency and amount of remittances affect households' consumption and investment patterns as well as preferences in crime-fighting approaches. Longitudinal survey data (with time-invariant respondent heterogeneity) could also be used to test how support for violent countermeasures to crime varies before and after the receipt of remittances, or across time. Exploring this issue further is vital, since violent approaches to combating crime have proved ineffective in reducing fear and insecurity across the region and have contributed to human rights abuses.

Longitudinal survey data could additionally help to address endogeneity concerns. For example, individuals who receive remittances may be more supportive of the use of violence in addressing crime because their relatives abroad originally emigrated due to rising fears and violence—and hence themselves developed such attitudes. Unfortunately, data availability prevented us from addressing these key issues in this particular study.

Another limitation of this study is that it focuses on only one region: Latin America and the Caribbean (where crimes are often accompanied by violence). As such, our results might be highly context-specific. Relevant data from other world regions and countries (e.g. Indonesia or the Philippines) is therefore needed to better understand how the receipt of remittances affects individual support for violent approaches to tackling crime in other emigration contexts.

Analyzing the ways in which transnational migrants—and the financial resources that they send back home—shape individual support for the use of violence in tackling crime can add nuance to an area of research that has hitherto mostly conceived of migrant-to-country-of-origin engagement as conducive to peace, democratization, and human rights in new democracies (Escriba-Folch et al 2015; Pérez Armendáriz 2014, 2019; Pérez Armendáriz and Crow 2010, 2018; Regan and Frank 2014). As the results presented in this paper have shown, migration and remittances do not always have positive effects on political development and the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law.

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Supplemental info statement

Additional supporting materials may be found with the online version of this article at the publisher's website: Supplementary Material

NOTES

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¹ For recent examples, see Ahmed (2020), Careja and Emmenegger (2012), Córdova and Hiskey (2015, 2019), Doyle (2015), Duquette-Rury (2019), Escribà-Folch et al. (2015, 2018), Germano (2018), López García (2017, 2018), Pérez-Armendáriz (2014), Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010, 2018), Pfutze (2012, 2014), and Tertytchanaya et al. (2018).

² This question is only available starting in the 2012 wave. Excluded from this item are the cases of Costa Rica, Haiti, and Panama, since they lack traditional military institutions.

³ In our models, Mexico serves as the reference category.

⁴ We illustrate in the Supplementary Material the distribution of our two ordinal dependent variables: support for militarization and support for vigilantism. Both variables are skewed: support for the militarization of public security leans towards the higher end of the spectrum, whereas support for vigilantism towards the lower end. As a robustness check to the ordinal logit regression models estimating these variables in Table 3, we run a series of partial proportional odds models. Unlike ordered logit models that are based on the “parallel lines assumption”—that is, the coefficient of an explanatory variable is the same across the various cumulative logits that can be estimated, partial proportional odds models constrain only those variables that meet the parallel lines assumption, but do not impose that constraint for those variables where it is violated (Williams 2006, 2016). The results of these models are reported in the Supplementary Material. Models confirm that remittance receipt meets the parallel lines assumption when estimating support for vigilantism. However, they reveal that the receipt of remittances leads to higher probabilities of support for militarization only among those individuals situated in the highest categories of support for the military. That is, the receipt of remittances is effective in driving people from strong to very strong support for militarization, but ineffective in moving people from zero to very little support for it. Since the proportional odds assumption is not fulfilled in this case, we report in the Supplementary Material a series of binary logistic regression models estimating support for militarization based upon cumulative probabilities.

⁵ Complete data for these country-level indicators was available only for 20 countries.

⁶ This question was asked in the 2008 and 2012 waves of the LAPOP survey only in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

⁷ This item was asked in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico in the 2016/17 and 2018/19 waves of the LAPOP survey.

⁸ This question was asked in 22 countries in the 2012 and 2014 waves of the LAPOP survey. It is measured as an ordinal variable: coded 2 if respondents reported preventative measures should be implemented to reduce crime, 1 if they reported that both preventative measures and higher penalties are needed to reduce crime, and 0 if they reported that increasing the punishment of criminals suffices to reduce crime.

⁹ To examine this issue, we use three variables. The first is a dichotomous variable based on the question: “Have you ever carry a gun out of fear of crime?” The second is a binary variable based on the question: “Does someone in your household own a gun?” These two items were surveyed in the Bahamas, Barbados, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, where firearm ownership is allowed. Meanwhile, our third variable is a dichotomous one based on the question: “If you could, would you have your own firearm for protection?” This question was posed in the remaining LAPOP countries, where there are bans on firearm ownership.