



Flight from Fights: School Shootings, Mobility and Neighborhood Sorting



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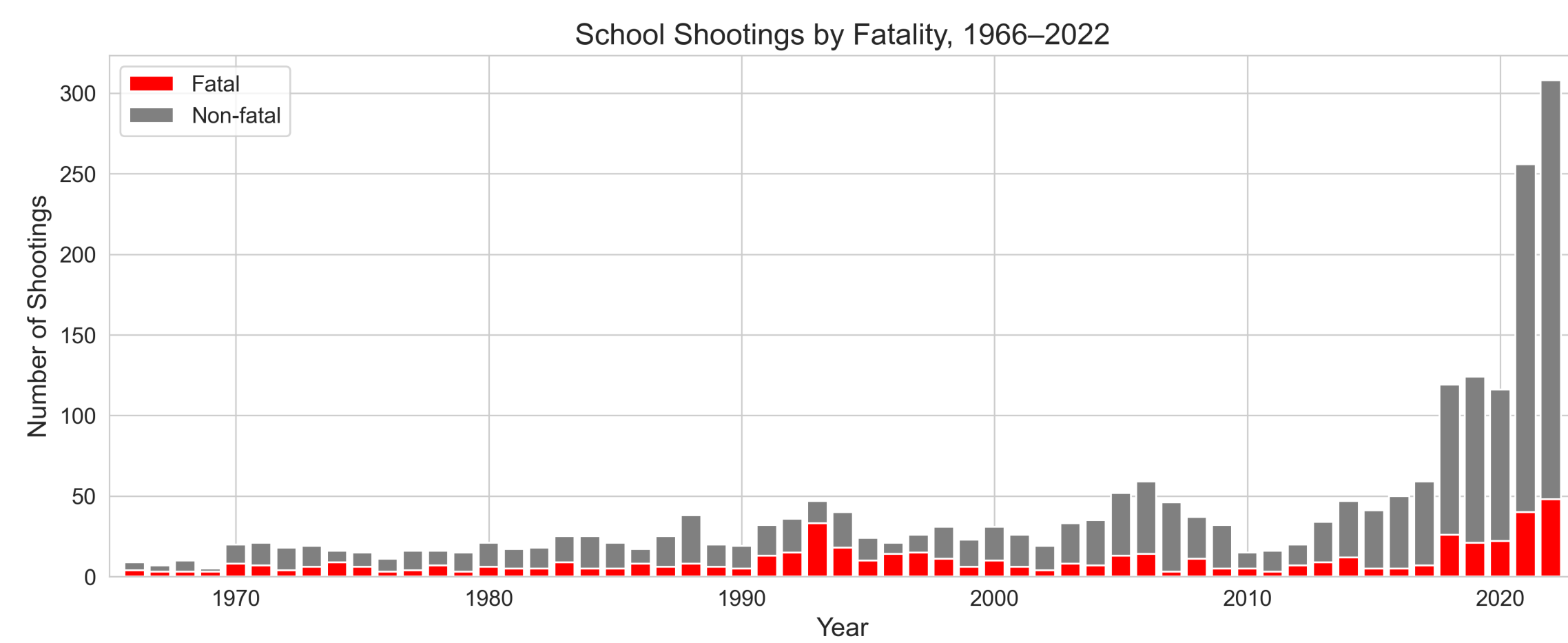
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1. Research Questions on the Impact of School Shootings

- ~300 school shootings in the United States in 2023 alone, roughly 50 fatal
- Shootings create incentives for families to leave

1. Do school shootings reduce enrollment?
2. Non-random outflow of students → increasing socioeconomic segregation?

2. More Shootings Over Time



3. Data and Identification

- Definition of school shooting: A gun brandished, shots fired, or bullets hit school property irrespective of time or day
- ~2,300 affected U.S. K-12 public schools, 1990–2022; enrollment and poverty records from the U.S. Dept. of Education; segregation from Stanford Education Data Archive
- **Staggered Difference-in-Differences** exploiting exogenous shooting timing; never and not-yet-treated schools as control units

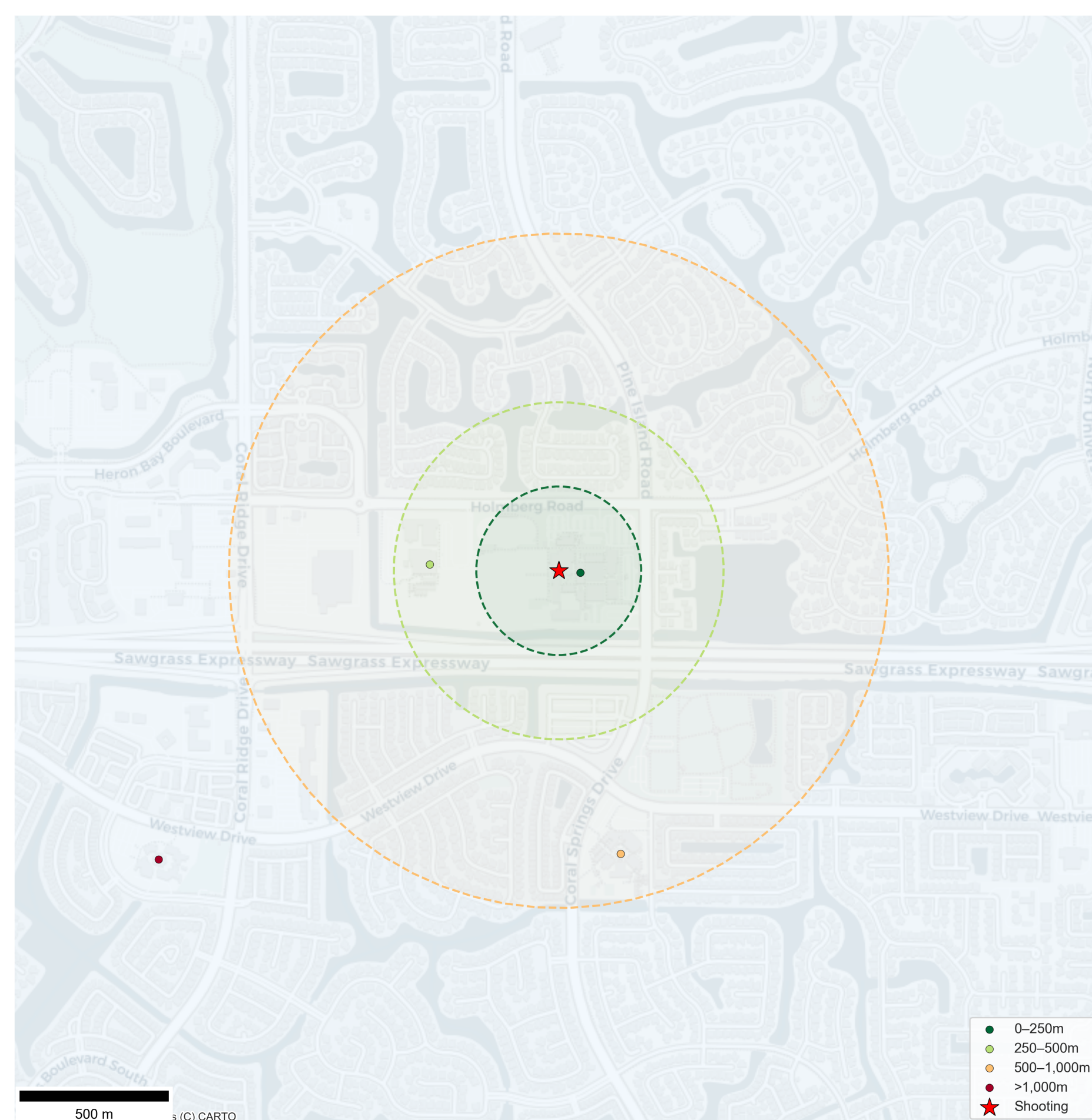


Figure 1. Treatment buffers—Marjory Stoneman Douglas H.S. (Parkland, FL, 2018). Schools within 500m of the site are classified as treated.

4. Enrollment Drops After a Shooting

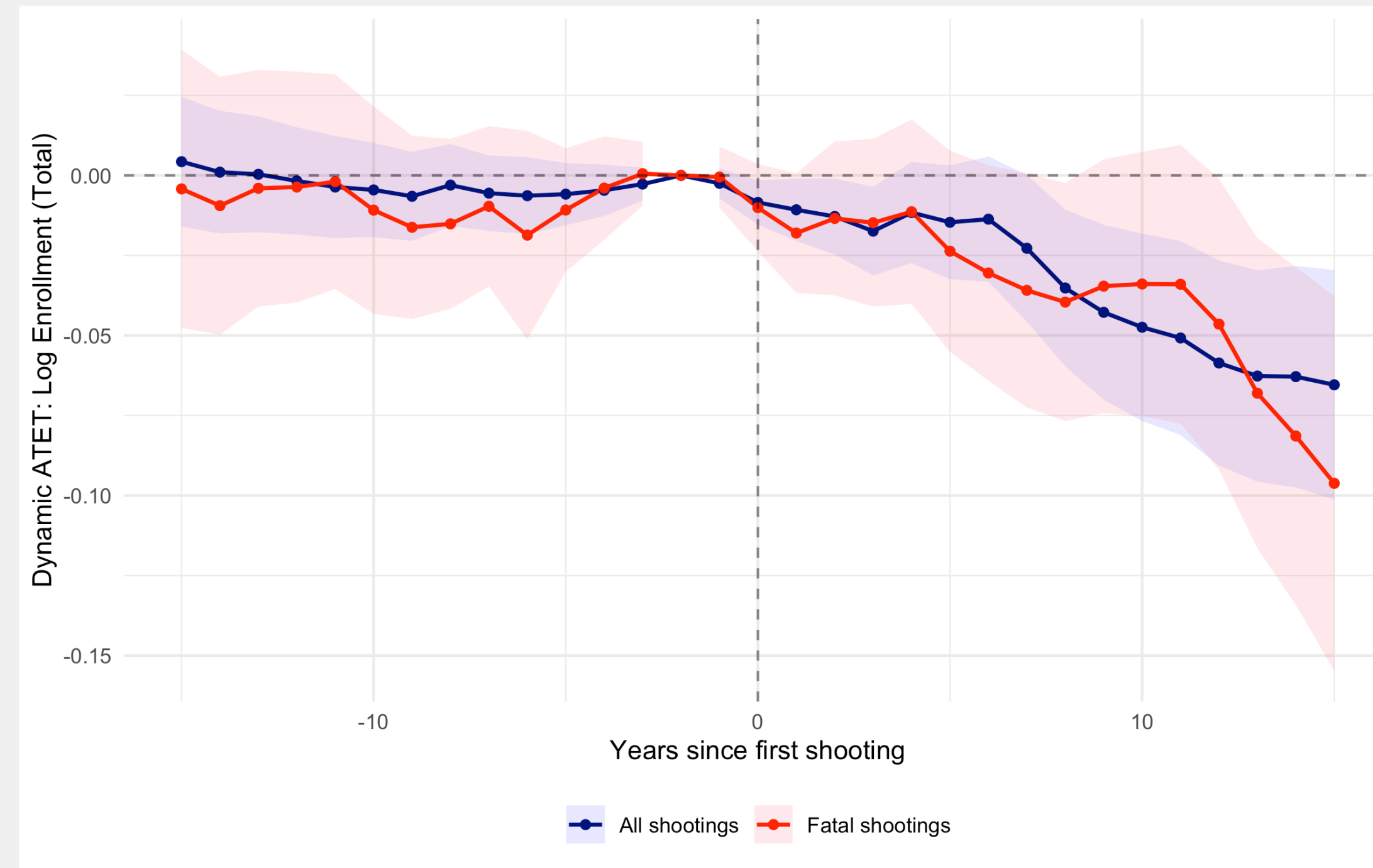


Figure 2. Effect on log enrollment: all shootings (solid) vs. fatal shootings only (dashed). Year 0 is the shooting year. 95% confidence interval in shaded area.

- **Average effect:** –4% (≈25 students in a typical 632-student school); fatal shootings reach –10% at longer horizons
- Consistent with well-known cases: Columbine –5%, Sandy Hook –12%

5. Negative Effects Also in Schools Nearby; Spillovers Further Away

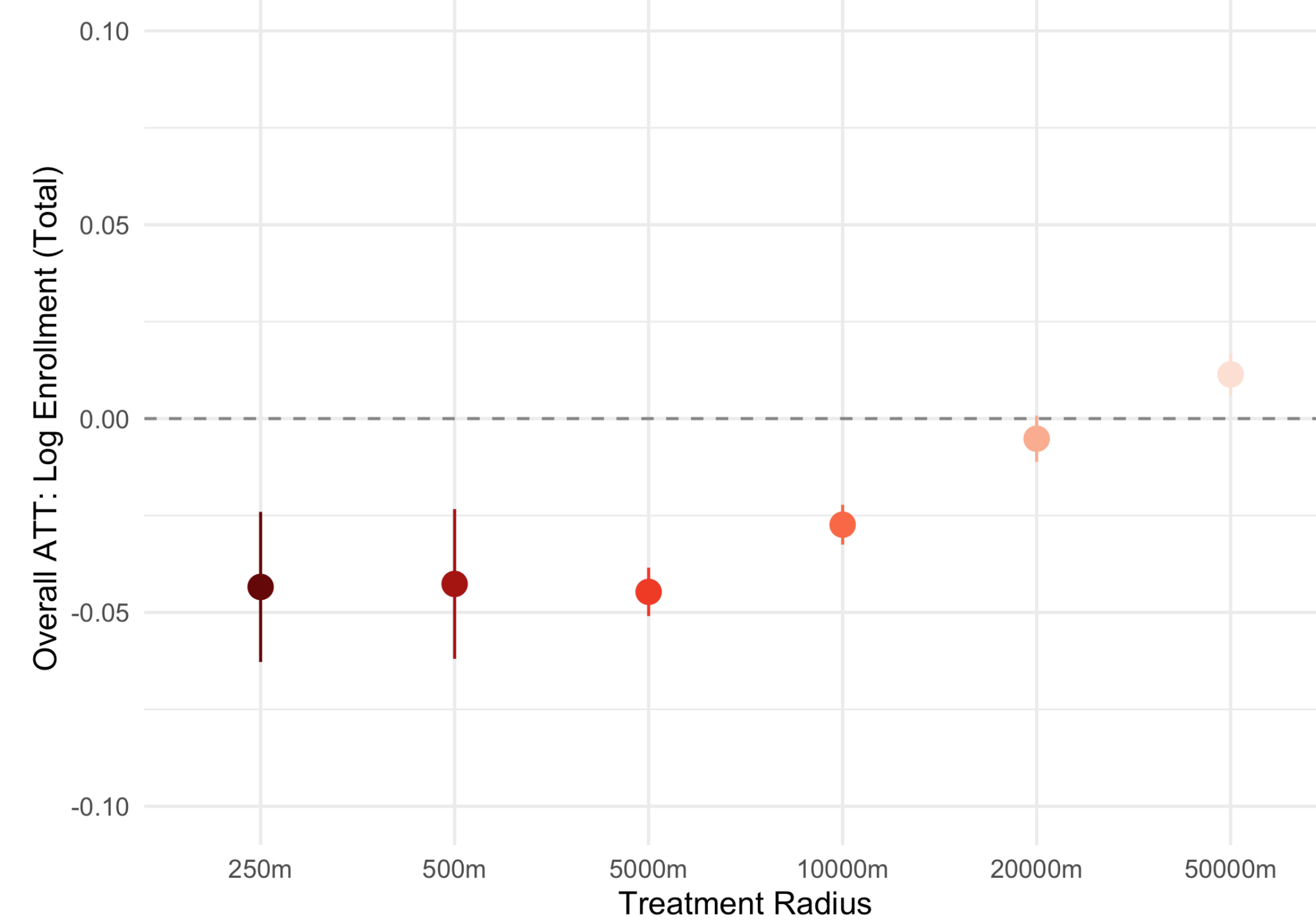


Figure 3. Overall ATT on log enrollment by treatment radius (250m–50km).

- Results robust from 250m up to 5km, not sensitive to the exact radius cutoff
- Spillover reversal at 50km: receiving schools absorb displaced students

6. Socioeconomic Segregation At Different Levels

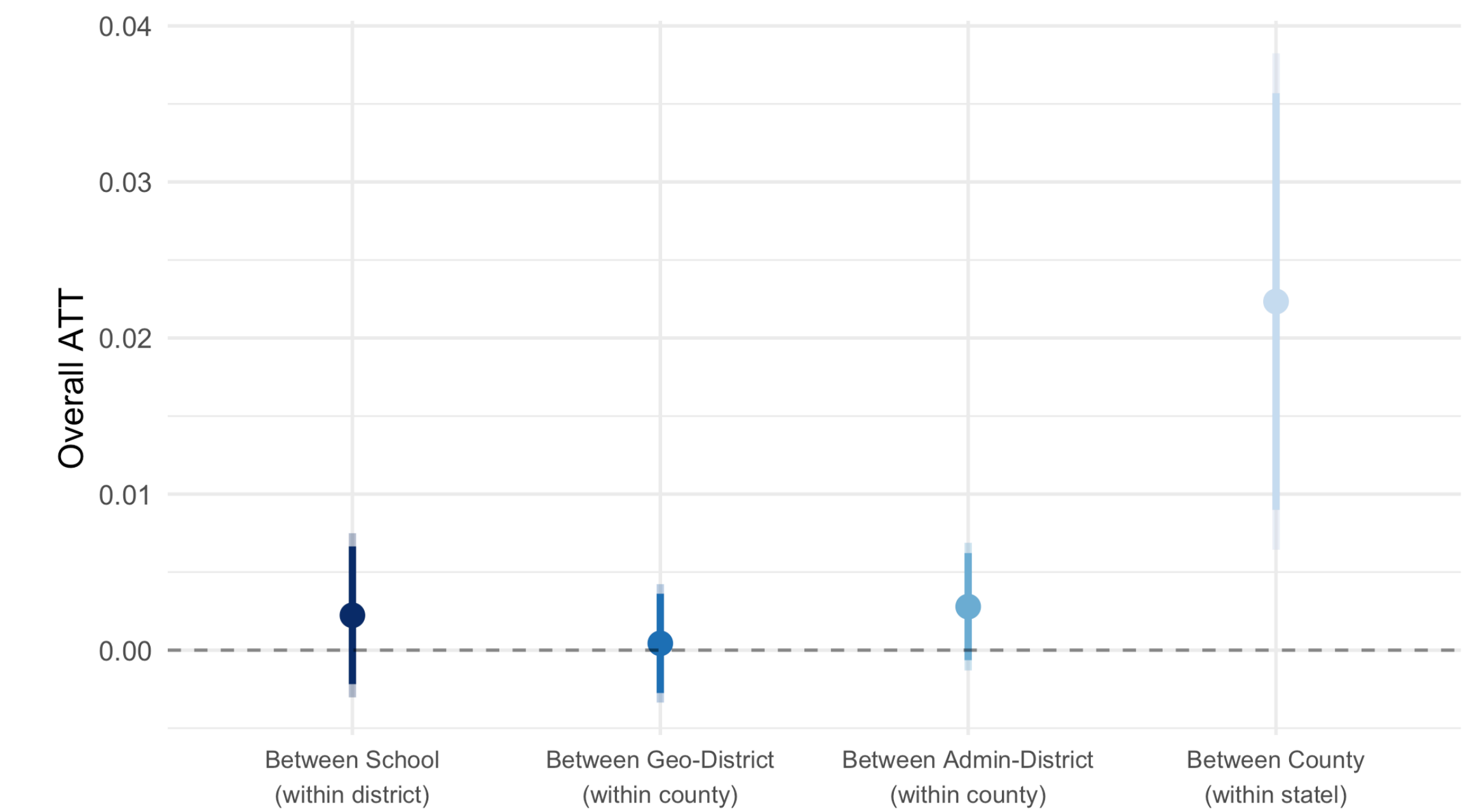


Figure 4. Effect on the Normalized Exposure Index (Free Lunch vs. non-Free Lunch recipients), taking into account changes in number of Free Lunch recipients. No segregation = 0, Complete segregation = 1

- No detectable effect on between-school or between-district segregation
- Between-county (within-state) segregation **increases**, consistent with **non-poor families relocating** across county lines rather than switching schools

7. Heterogeneity

- **Open enrollment** states show significantly larger enrollment declines → more school options amplify exit
- Schools in the **most violent counties** (Q4 homicide rate) see the largest drops; a shooting is the “last straw” for marginal families
- Shooting schools close at ~1 in 66 within five years: true enrollment loss is likely **larger** than estimated

8. Trade-Off Between Choice and Integration

- **Open enrollment** policies expand access but also **accelerate compositional decline** in schools hit by violence
- Policymakers promoting school safety and school choice face a genuine trade-off

School shootings trigger residential flight among families with means, sorting neighborhoods by wealth and leaving behind the most vulnerable students.

Full Paper and Contact



Scan for a draft of the paper, full event-study results, and robustness checks.

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