

Does covert contraceptive use increase women's risk of abuse?

A longitudinal study in Kenya

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Covert Contraceptive Use (CCU)

Describes use of a contraceptive method by a female without the knowledge of their male partner.

- Accounts for 1-20% of all female contraceptive use depending on context. ^{1,2}
- Higher prevalence among those in polygamous marriage and those in relationships but are unmarried. ¹
- Usually measured via single dichotomous item.
- Women may also use contraceptives in secret from other family members. ¹





Resistance to
opposition to
contraceptive
use

Motivations of Covert Contraceptive Use ^{3,4}



Low or stressful
communication
around
contraceptives



Gender norms
assigning
family planning
to females

Research has shown consistent and strong associations between CCU and violence, including:

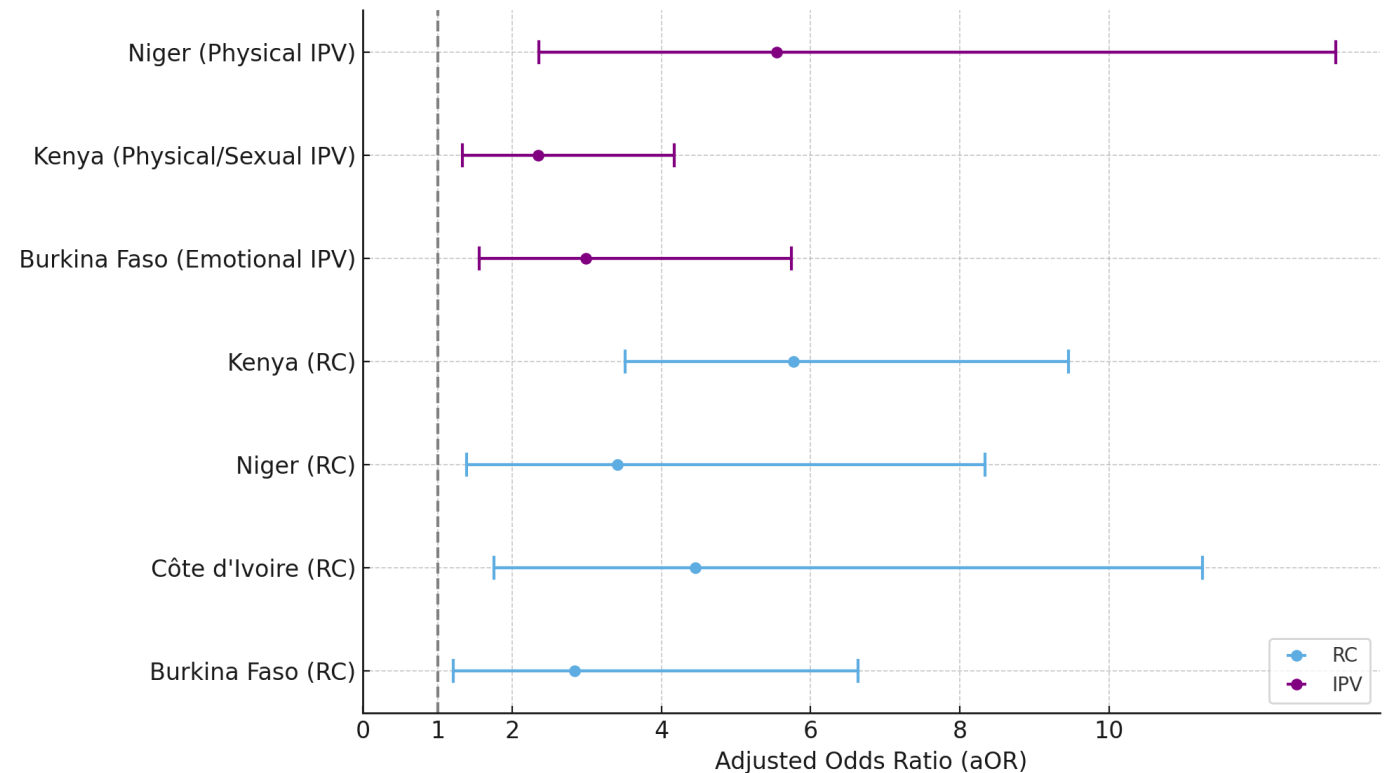
- Reproductive coercion
- Intimate partner violence



However, no studies have assessed the relationship between CCU and violence over time to determine if CCU increases risk of abuse.

What do we know about CCU and violence?

Associations of RC, IPV and CCU ^{5,6}



Research Question



Is covert contraceptive use associated with a change in reporting of reproductive coercion or physical, sexual, and emotional IPV over time, as compared to overt contraceptive use, among a population-based sample of married and cohabitating women in Kenya?



Sample Overview

- Secondary analysis of panel data from Performance Monitoring for Action (PMA) 2020 surveys (2020, 2021)
- Completed among Kenyan women (n=2727) who, at the time of the first survey, were:
 - Age 15-49
 - Married or cohabitating
 - Self-reported not being currently pregnant or sterilized
 - Had used a contraceptive method

Analysis Methods Overview

Exposure: covert contraceptive use at time 1 (covert vs. overt)

Outcomes:

- Reproductive coercion
- Physical IPV
- Sexual IPV
- Emotional IPV

Covariates: Selected a-priori

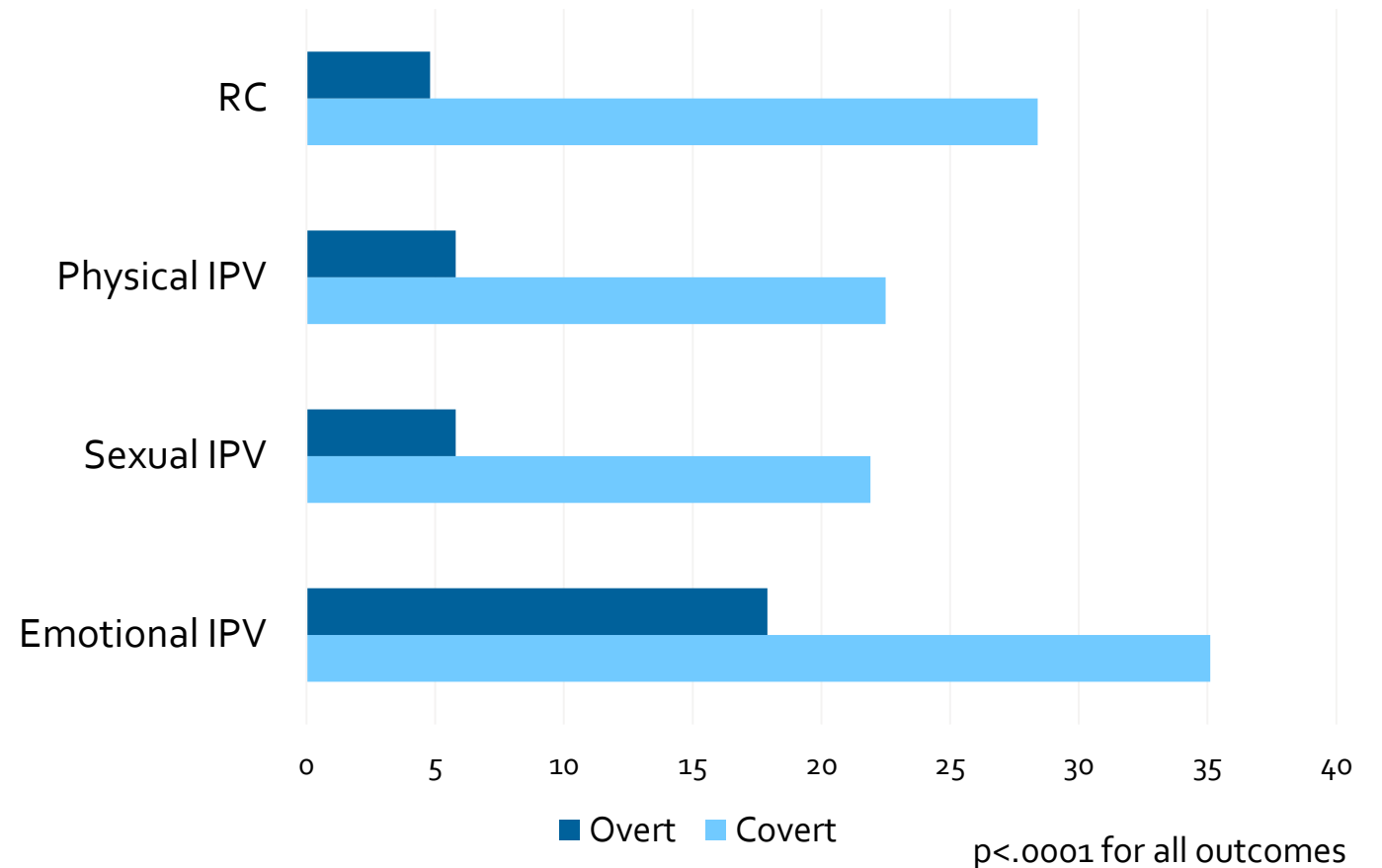
Random effects for repeated observations

- ✓ Secondary analysis of **panel data over two time points**
- ✓ **Difference-in-differences (DID)** approach
- ✓ **Generalized estimating equations (GEE)** with logistic link
- ✓ **Inverse probability by treatment and censoring weighting (IPTCW)** to account for non-randomized sample and selection biases in loss-to-follow-up
- ✓ **Survey weights** to adjust for complex sampling design
- ✓ Generated DID estimates and **graphed predicted probabilities** from models
- ✓ **Explored mediating effects of incident pregnancy** for significant relationships

- Age 33.4 years
- 1 in 10 polygamous
- 1 in 2 low/no education
- 3.7 average births
- Covert users higher polygamy, births and lower education

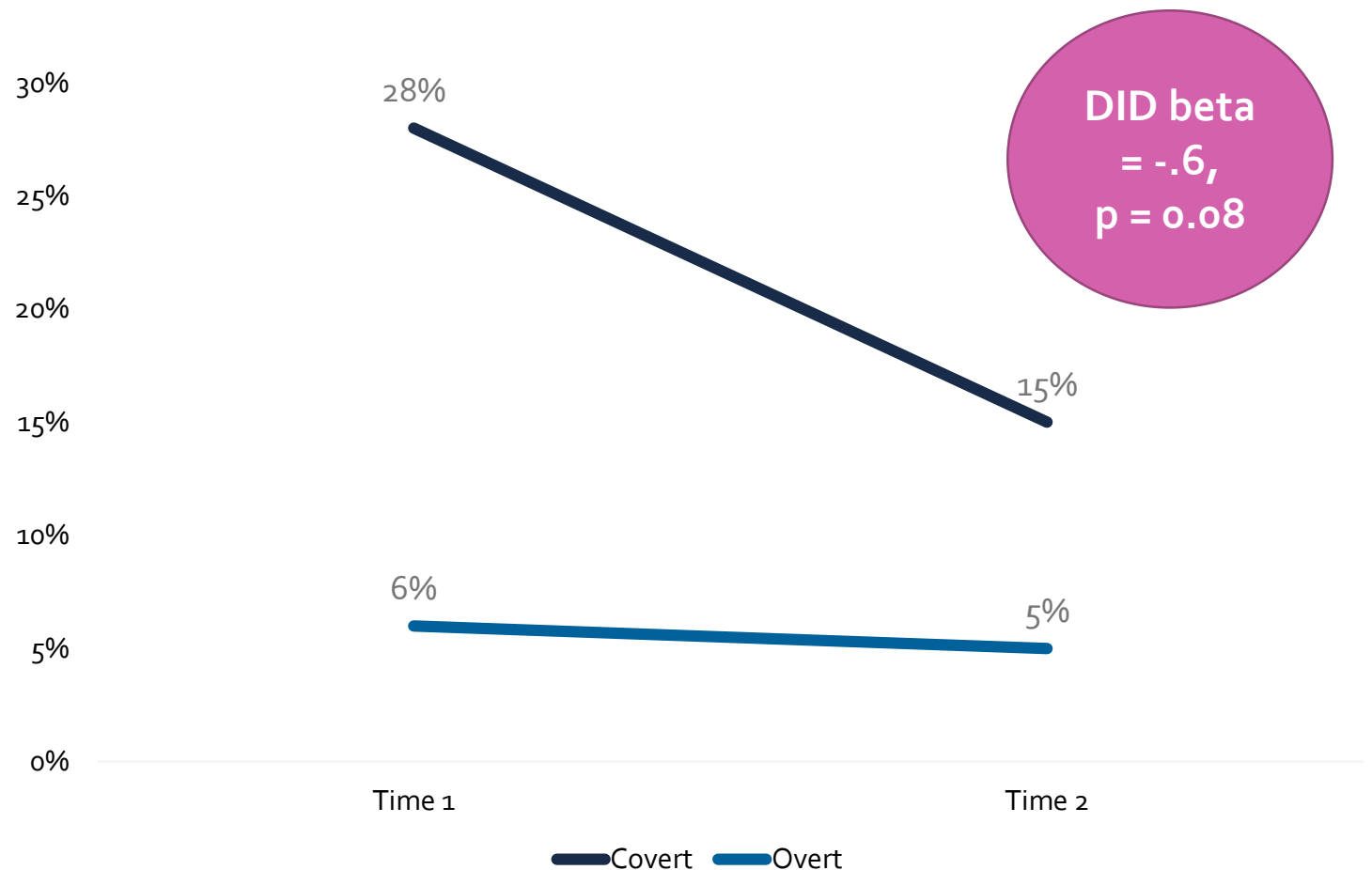
Sample Attributes at Time 1

Violence Outcomes for Overt v. Covert User at Time 1



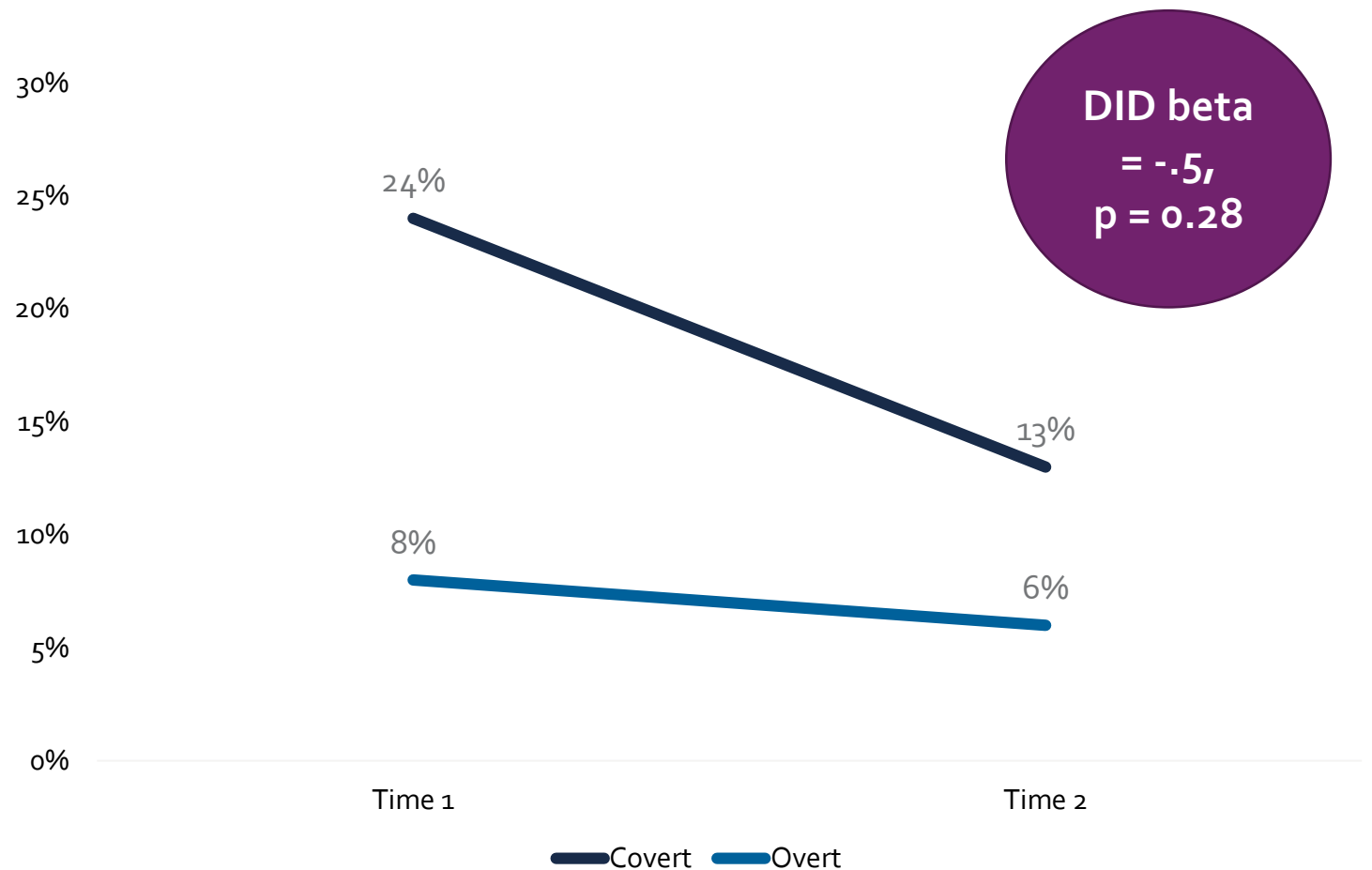
Women who reported covert use had a marginally significant decrease in reporting of RC over time as compared to overt users. Incident pregnancy did not mediate this effect (-1.3%, $p=0.37$).

Change in RC Over Time by Covert v. Overt User

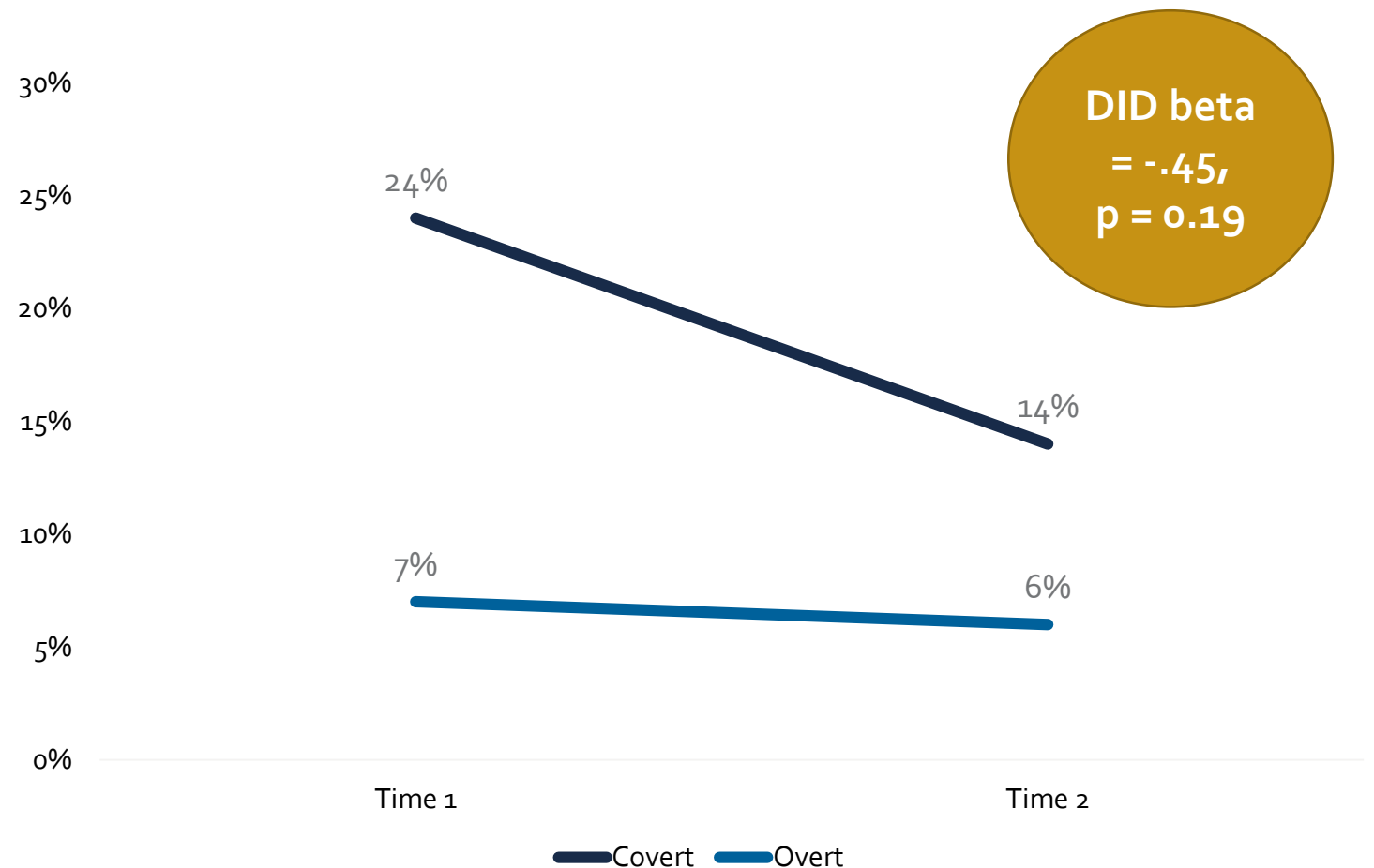


Change in Physical IPV Over Time by Covert v. Overt User

Women who reported covert use had no significant change in reporting of physical IPV over time as compared to overt users.

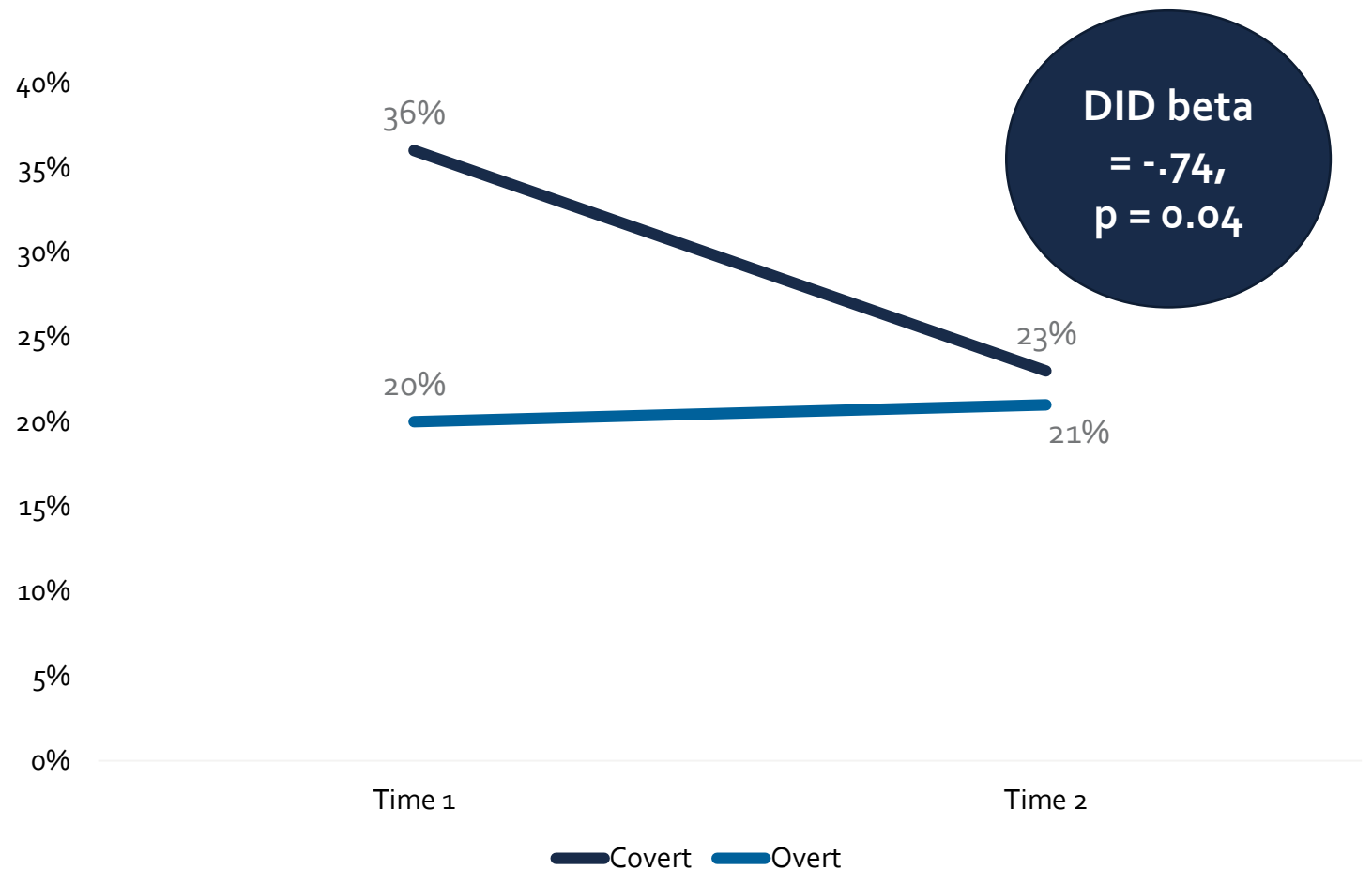


Change in Sexual IPV Over Time by Covert v. Overt User



Women who reported covert use had no significant change in reporting of sexual IPV over time as compared to overt users.

Change in Emotional IPV Over Time by Covert v. Overt User



Women who reported covert use had a significant decrease in reporting of emotional IPV over time as compared to overt users. Incident pregnancy partially mediated this effect (-3.5%, p=0.05).

Summary of Findings



Women who use covertly are more likely to have experienced prior RC/IPV.



No evidence that CCU increases risk for RC or IPV over 1 year and, may decrease risk for RC and emotional IPV.



Incident pregnancy partially mediates the effect of decreases in emotional IPV over time for CCU but the effect is small.



Limitations

- Only considers 1 year follow-up
- Possibility of unmeasured confounding or effect modification
- Does not incorporate non-married women
- Some misclassification bias
- Does not consider other risks or benefits of CCU



Strengths

- First ever longitudinal, panel analysis of CCU on risk of abuse
- Incorporates rigorous modern epidemiology methods
- Considers potential risks of CCU on multiple forms of violence
- Generalizable to all married women in Kenya using contraceptives

Implications & Next Steps

- Findings support that women rely on CCU to maintain reproductive autonomy in the face of opposition
- **Clinic and community-based approaches are needed and available to support women's reproductive agency**
- Community-based approaches are needed to engage men to shift norms around RC, IPV, and fertility



Next steps include repeating the analysis for covert vs. non-users of contraceptives and for other countries with PMA2020 data.

Thank you!

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Special thank you to the PMA2020 team.

ARCHES Events at SVRI!

- **Implementation of ARCHES via mobile app:** today, 5-6:30 PM in Daisy / Freesia / Orchid
- **Adaptations and effectiveness of ARCHES:** Thursday, 3-4:30 PM in Nernia / Protea
- **Open ARCHES breakfast event:** Friday 9:30 AM in Freesia, Register here!



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