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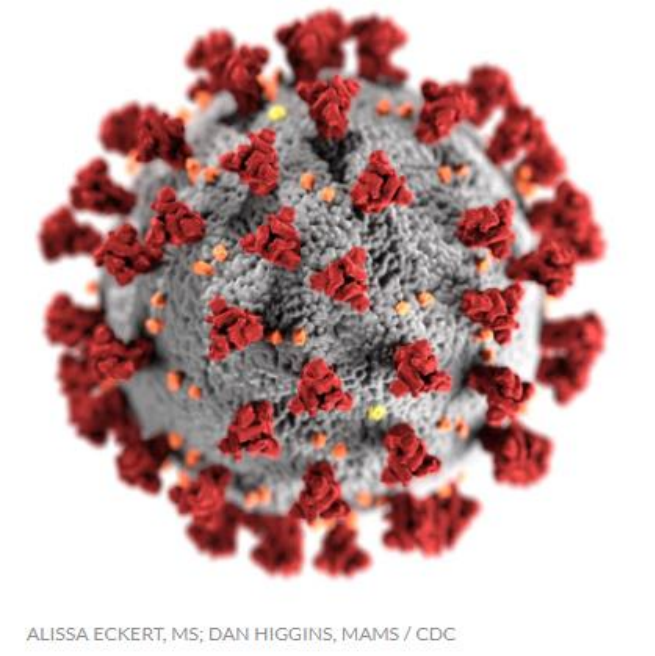

A Comparative Study of Police Organizational Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

- **COVID-19 pandemic (March 11, 2020):**
  - **WHO called on countries "to take urgent and aggressive action"**
  - **Within a month, 3.9 billion people in 90+ countries ordered to stay at home by their governments (Sandford, 2020)**
  - **Roche's analysis (2020) did not find strong correlation between the strictness of European governments' decisions and the intensity of the pandemic**

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Questionnaire

Sections	Shorthand
What has changed?	Absolute change
How much has it changed?	Valence
What are the anticipated consequences of these changes?	Consequences

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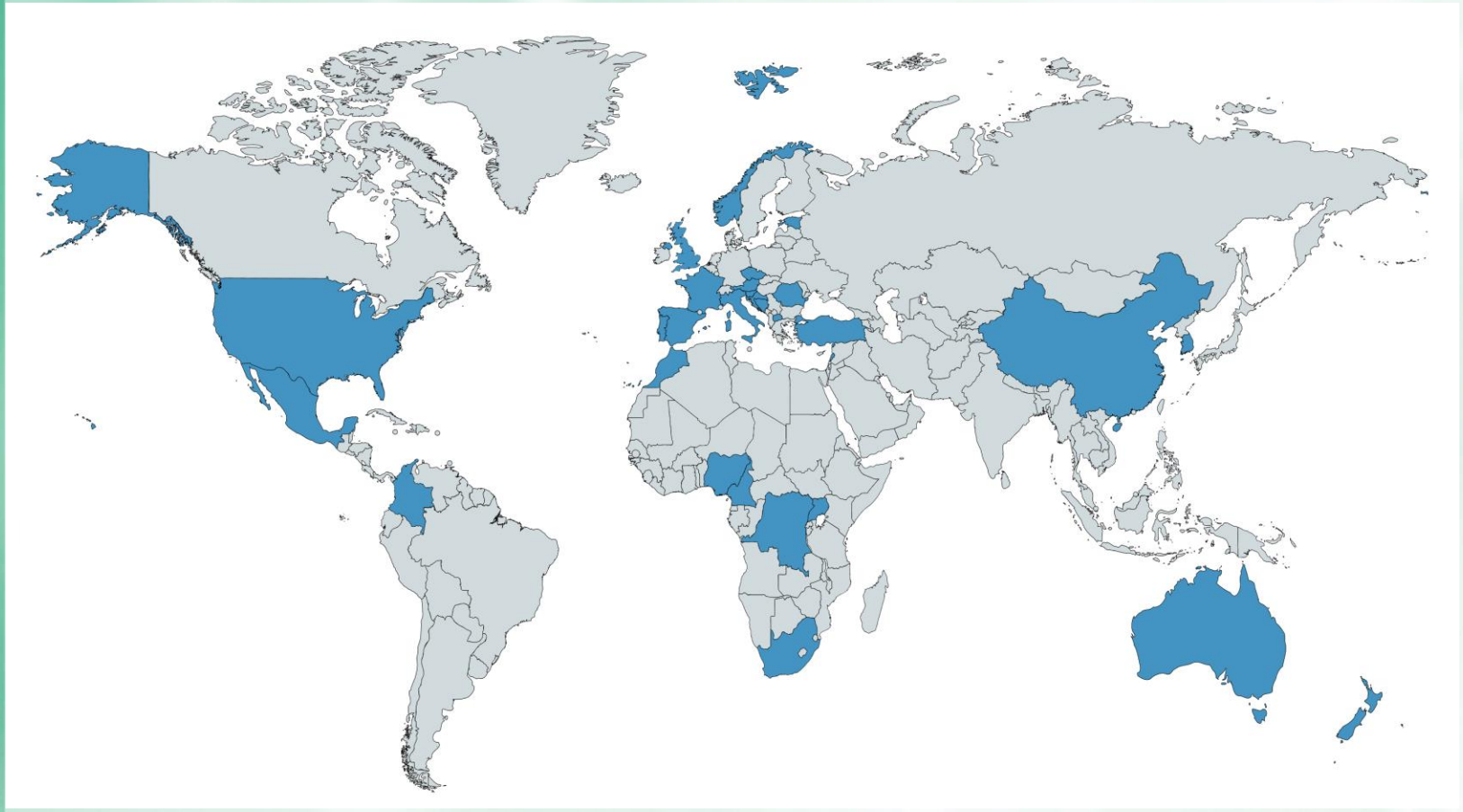
Survey



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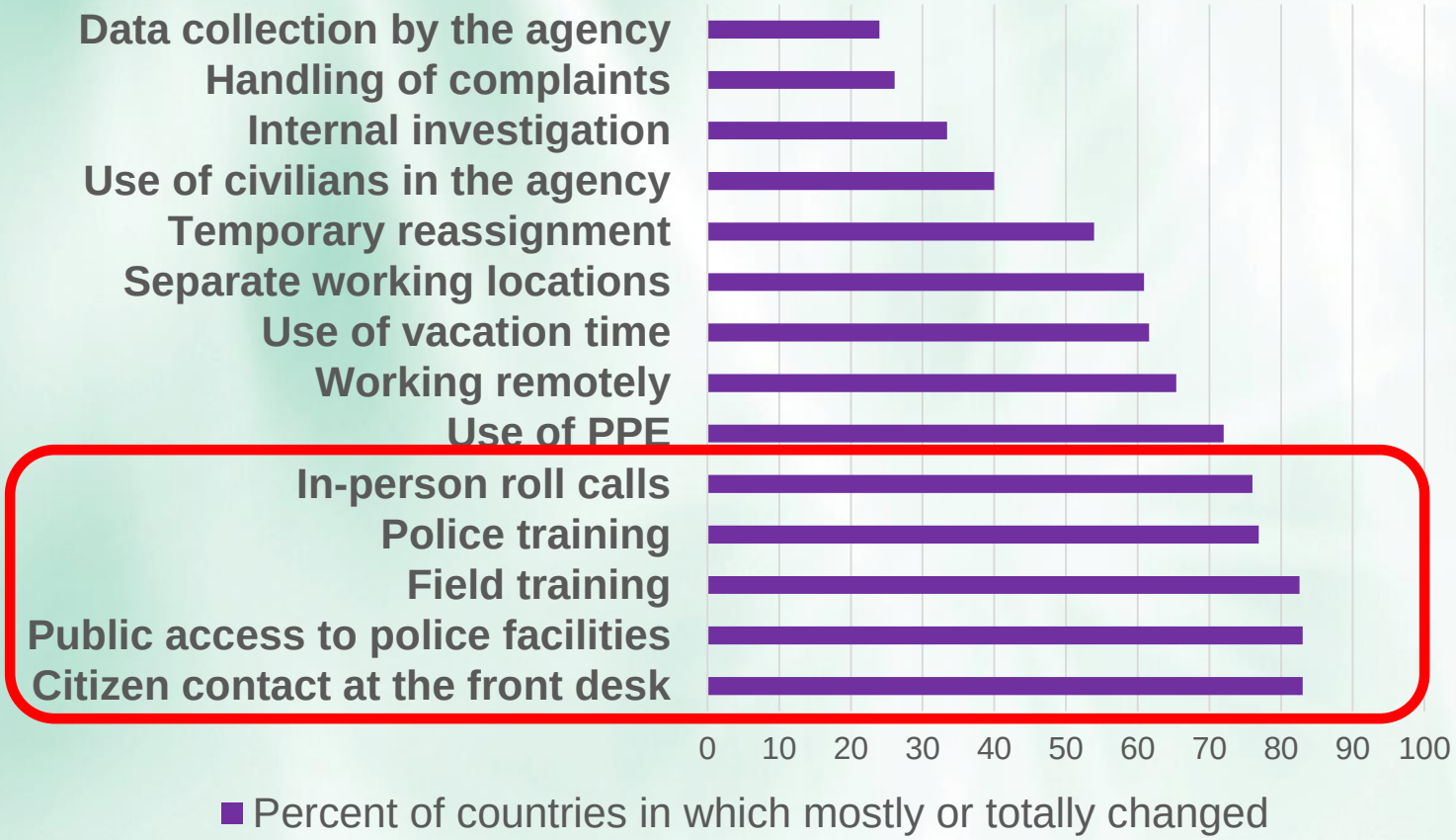
What Has Changed: Organization



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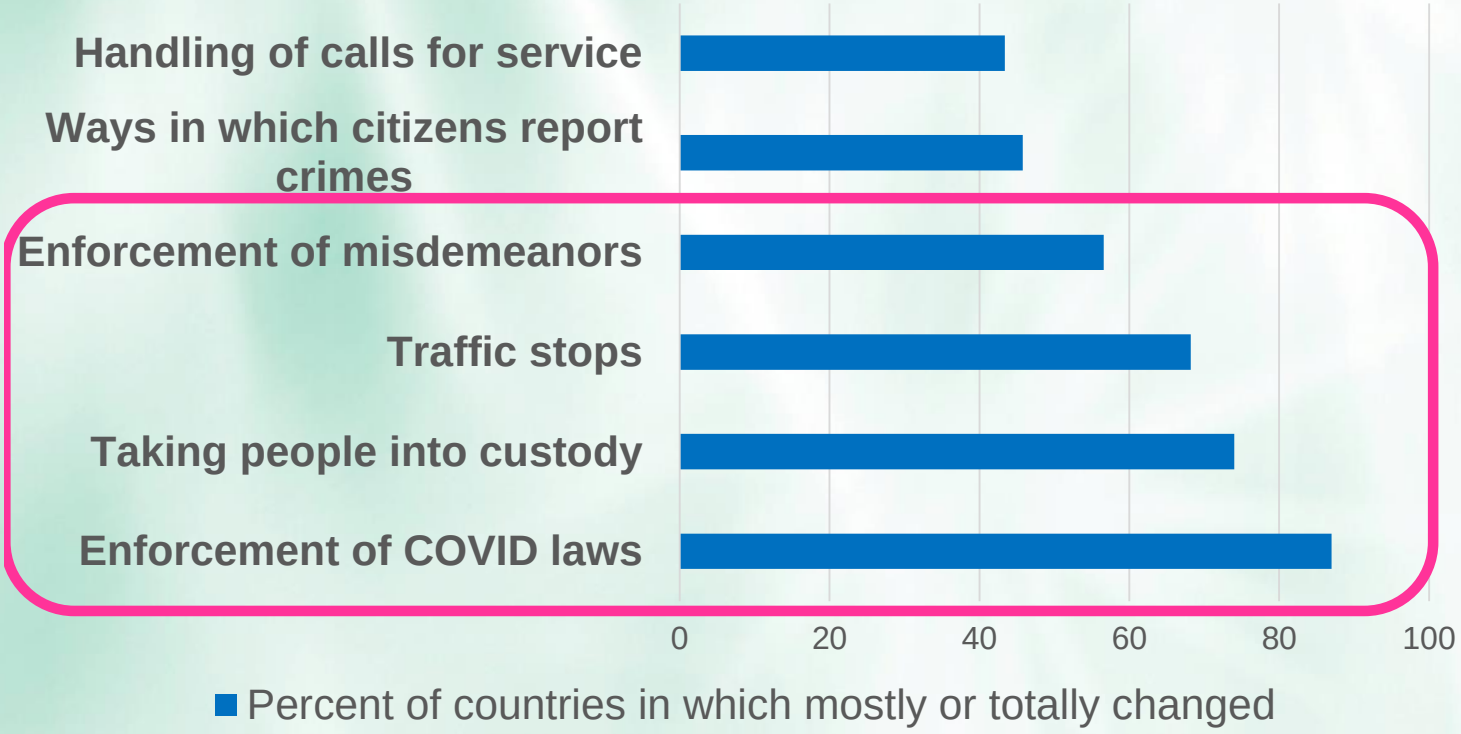
What Has Changed: Reactive P.



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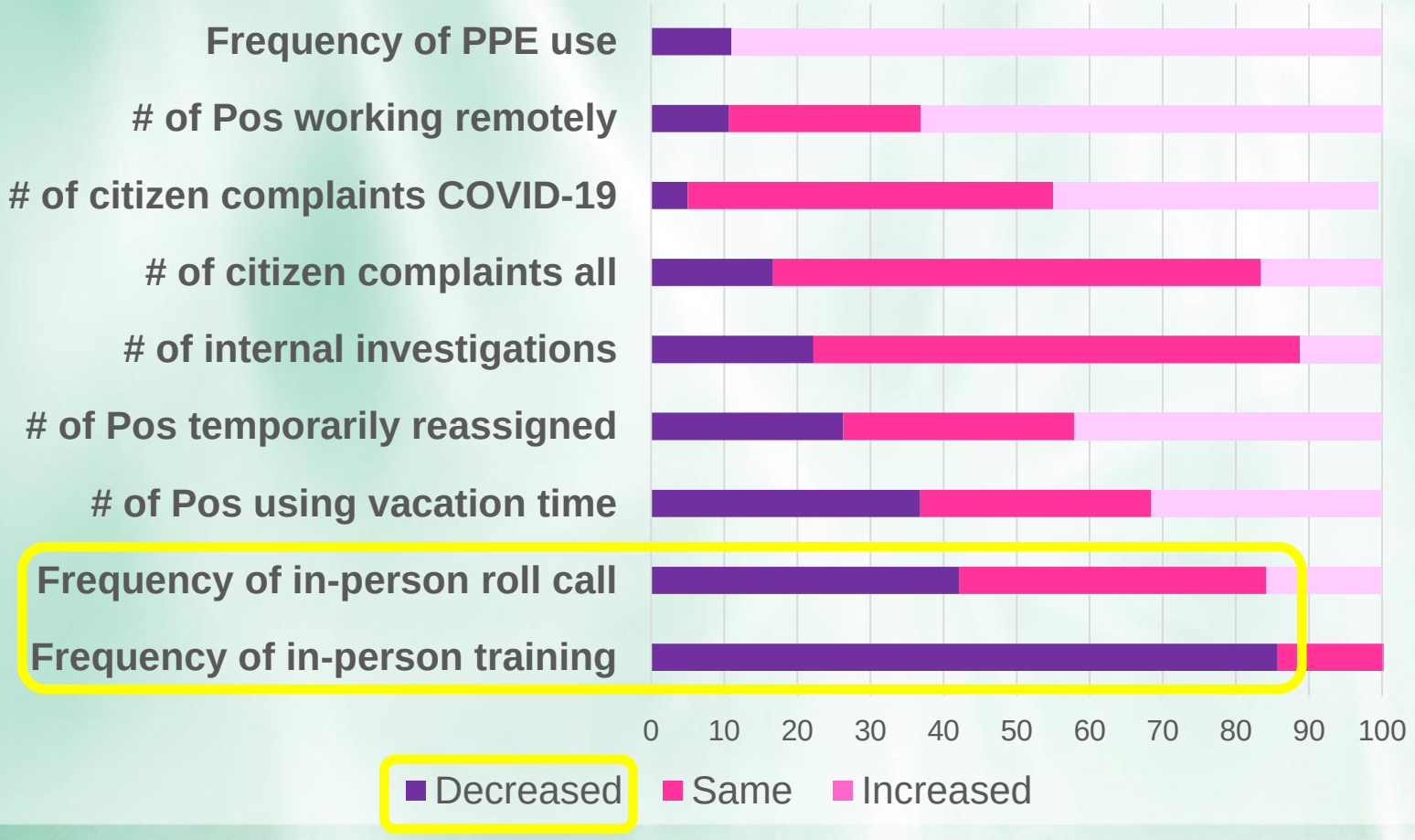
How Much Changed: Organization



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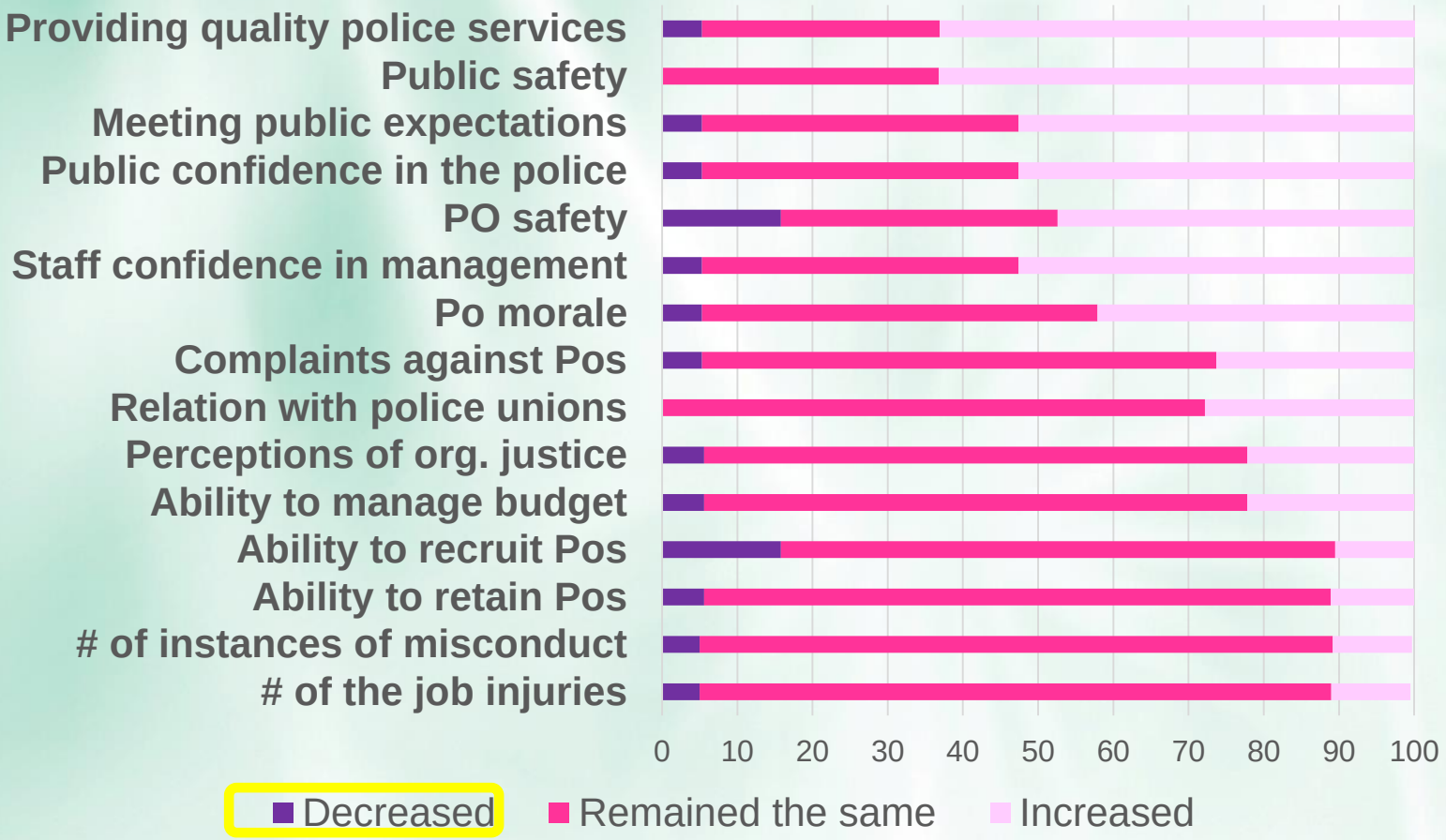
What Are Expected Consequences?



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Looking for explanations: WGI?

- **Grouping of countries:**
  - Factor analysis of World Governance Indicators
- **World Governance Indicators (2020):**
  - Voice and accountability
  - Political stability
  - Government effectiveness
  - Regulatory quality
  - Rule of law
  - Corruption control

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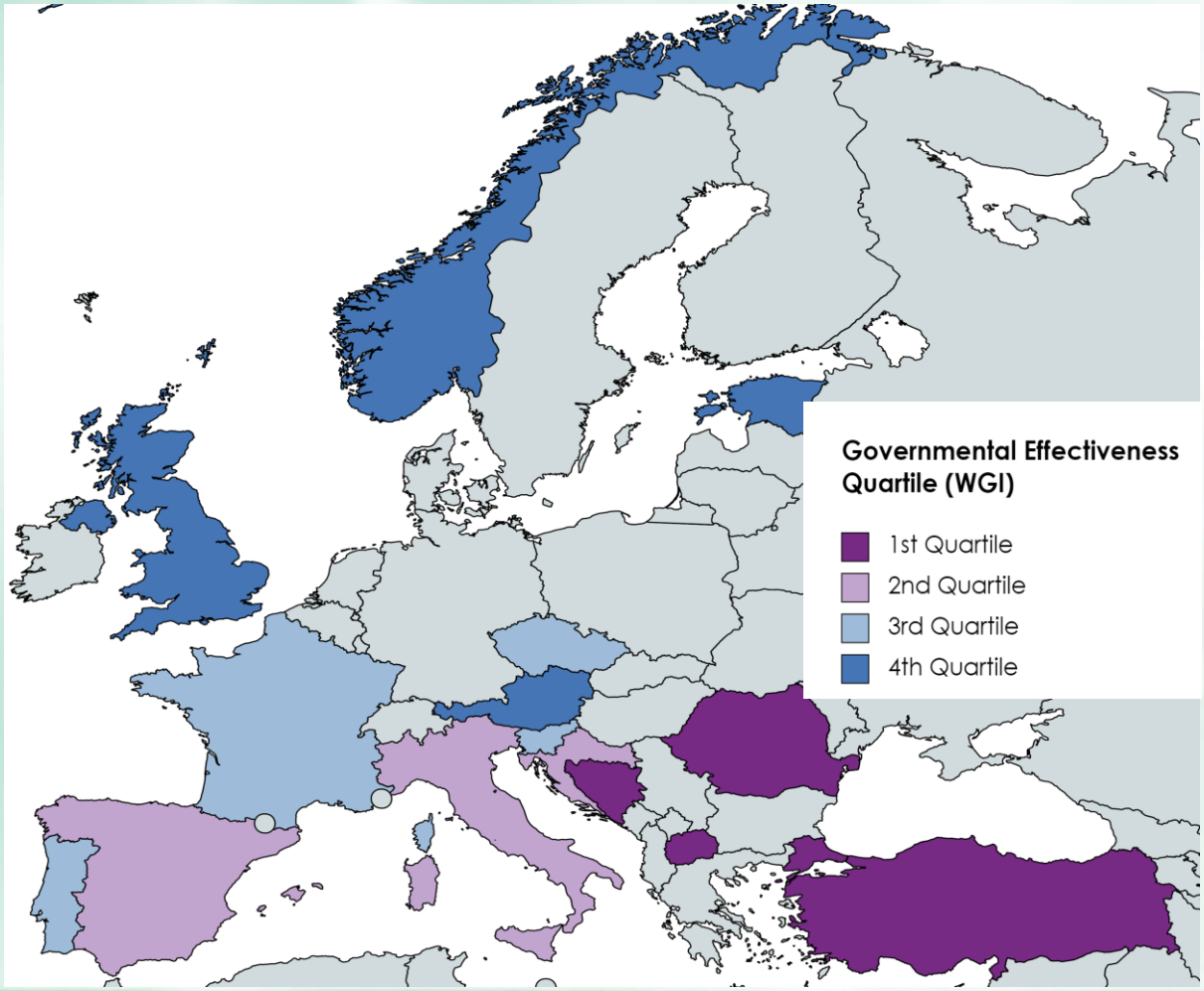
WGI in Europe



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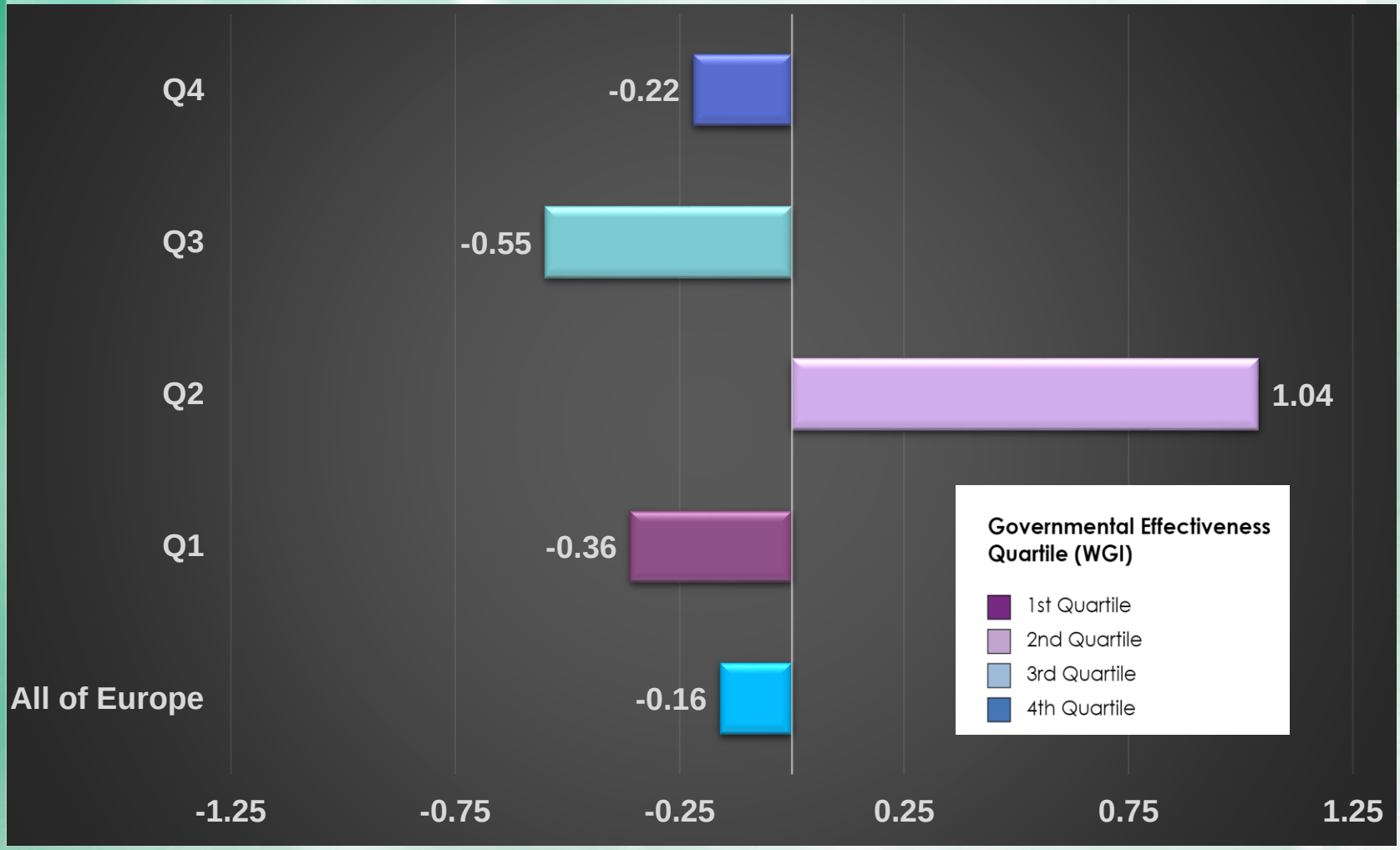
What Changed: Risk Reduction



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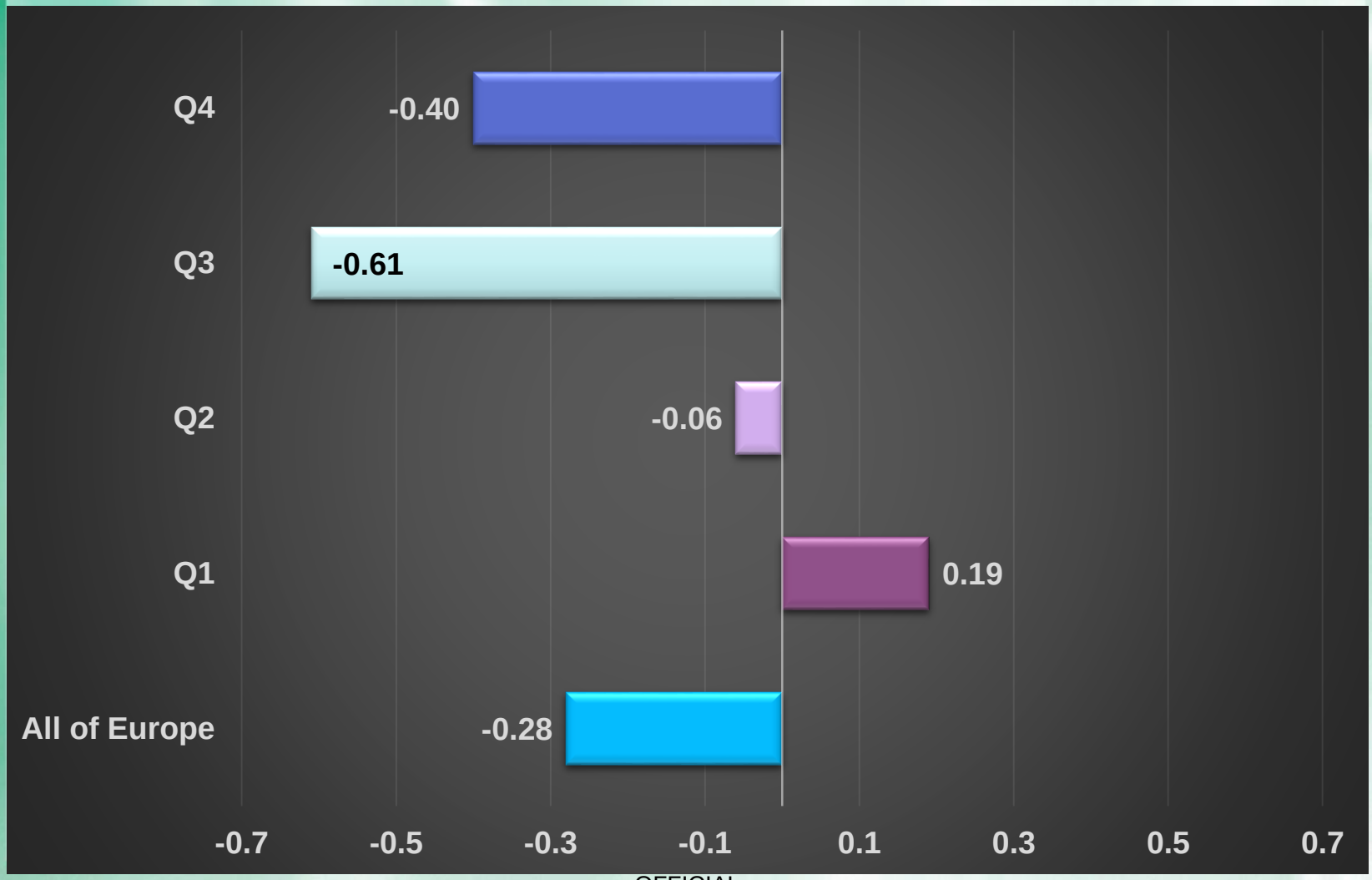
What Changed: Proactive Policing



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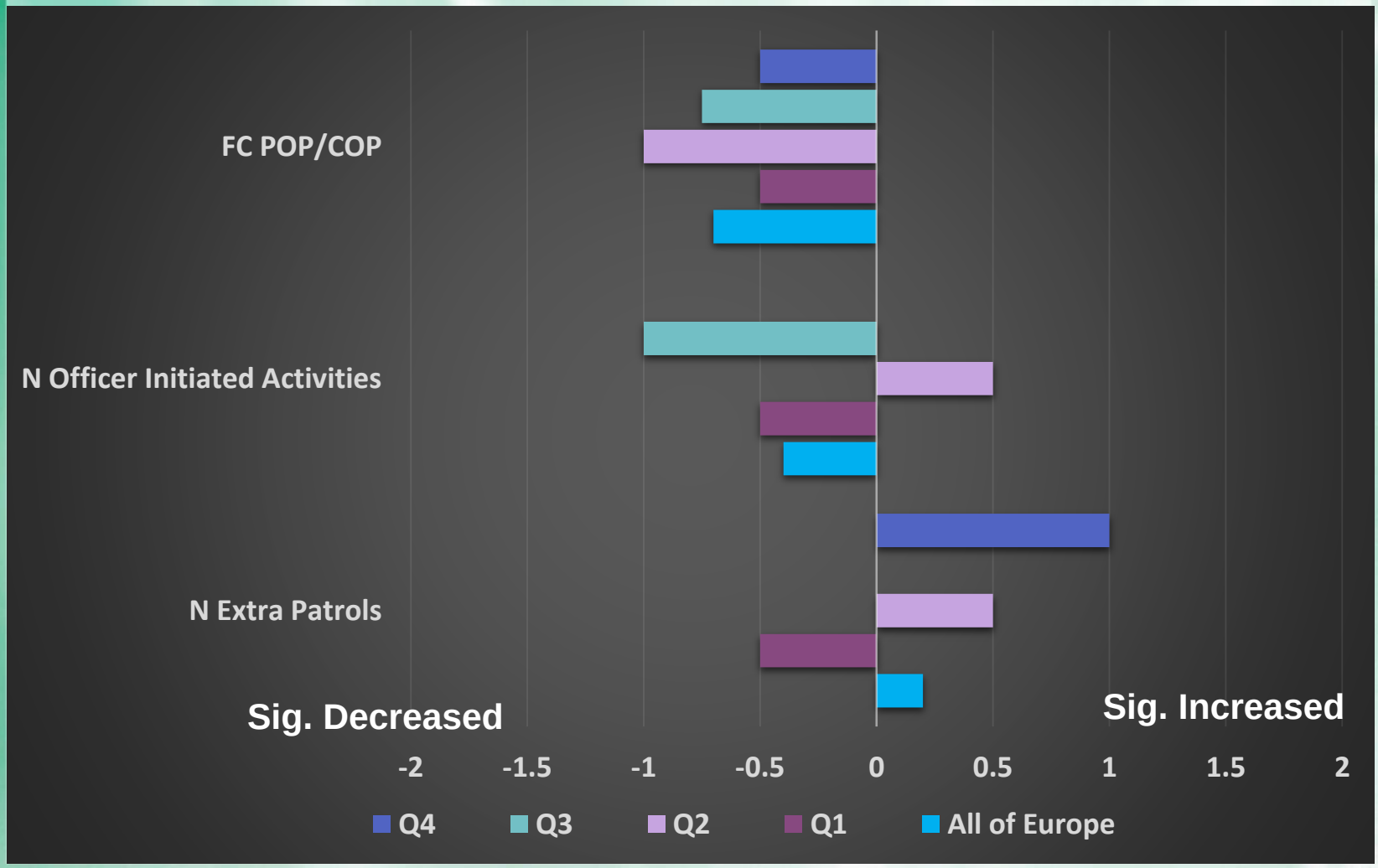
Valence: Proactive Policing



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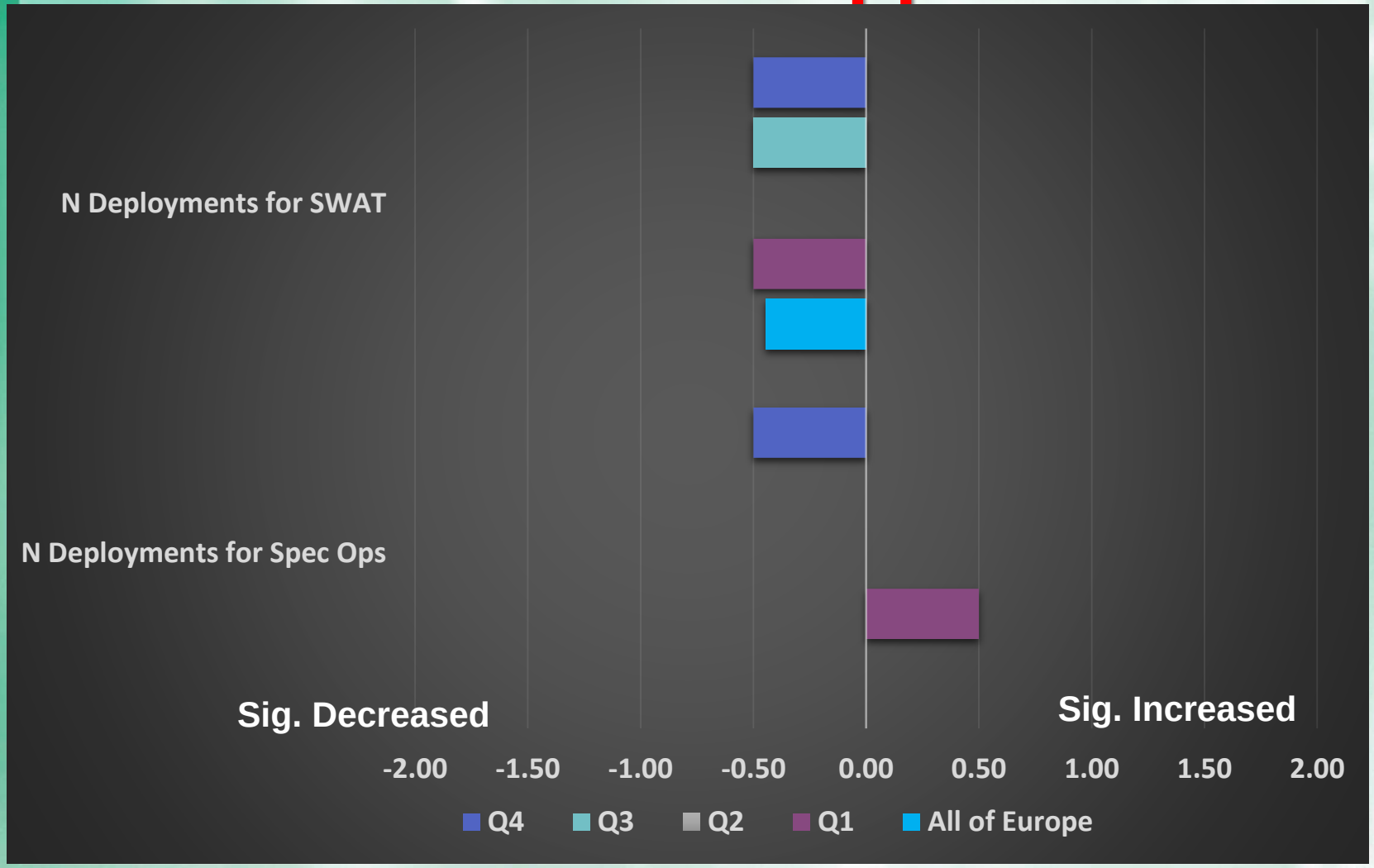
Valence: Crime Suppression



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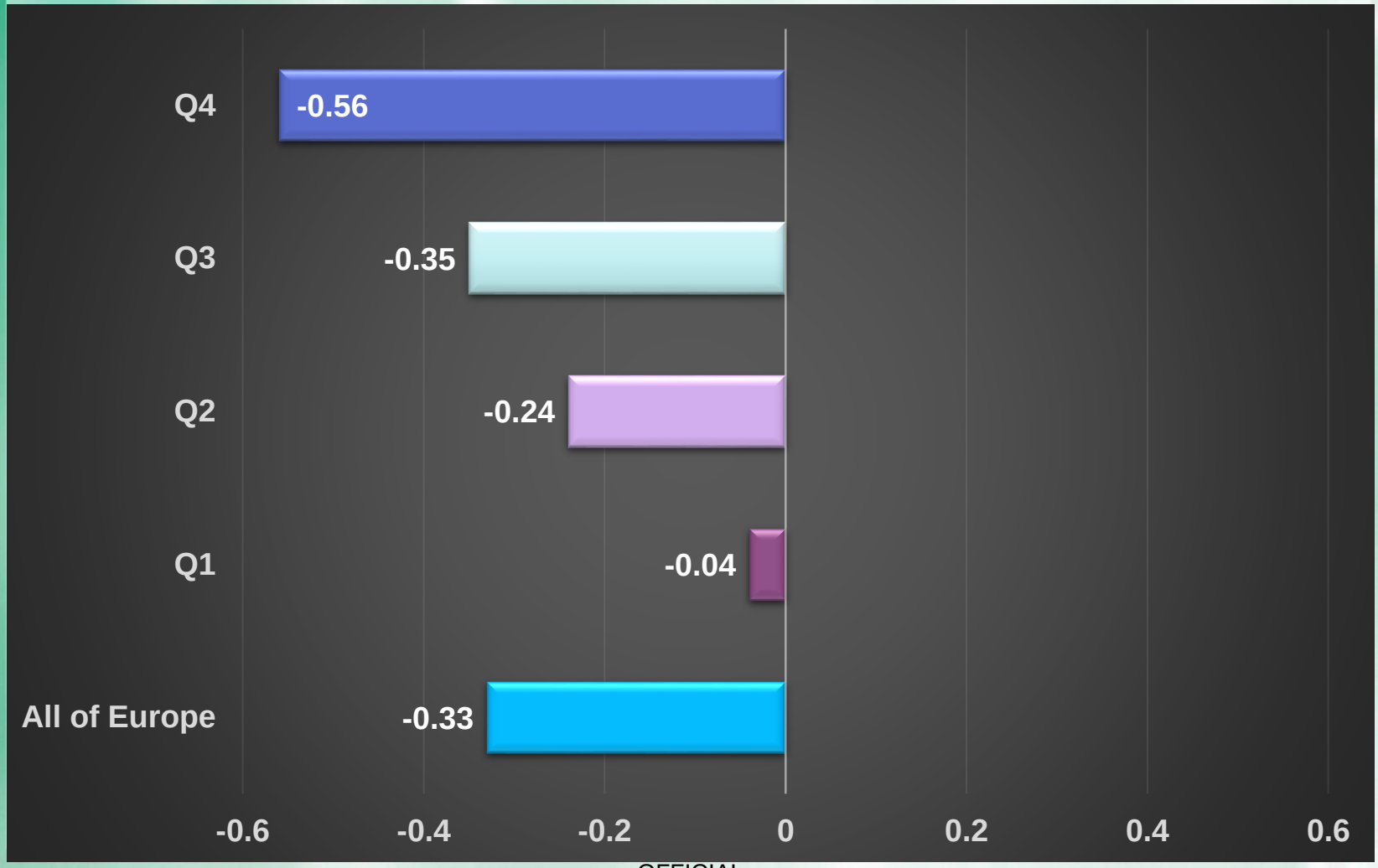
What Changed: Reactive Policing



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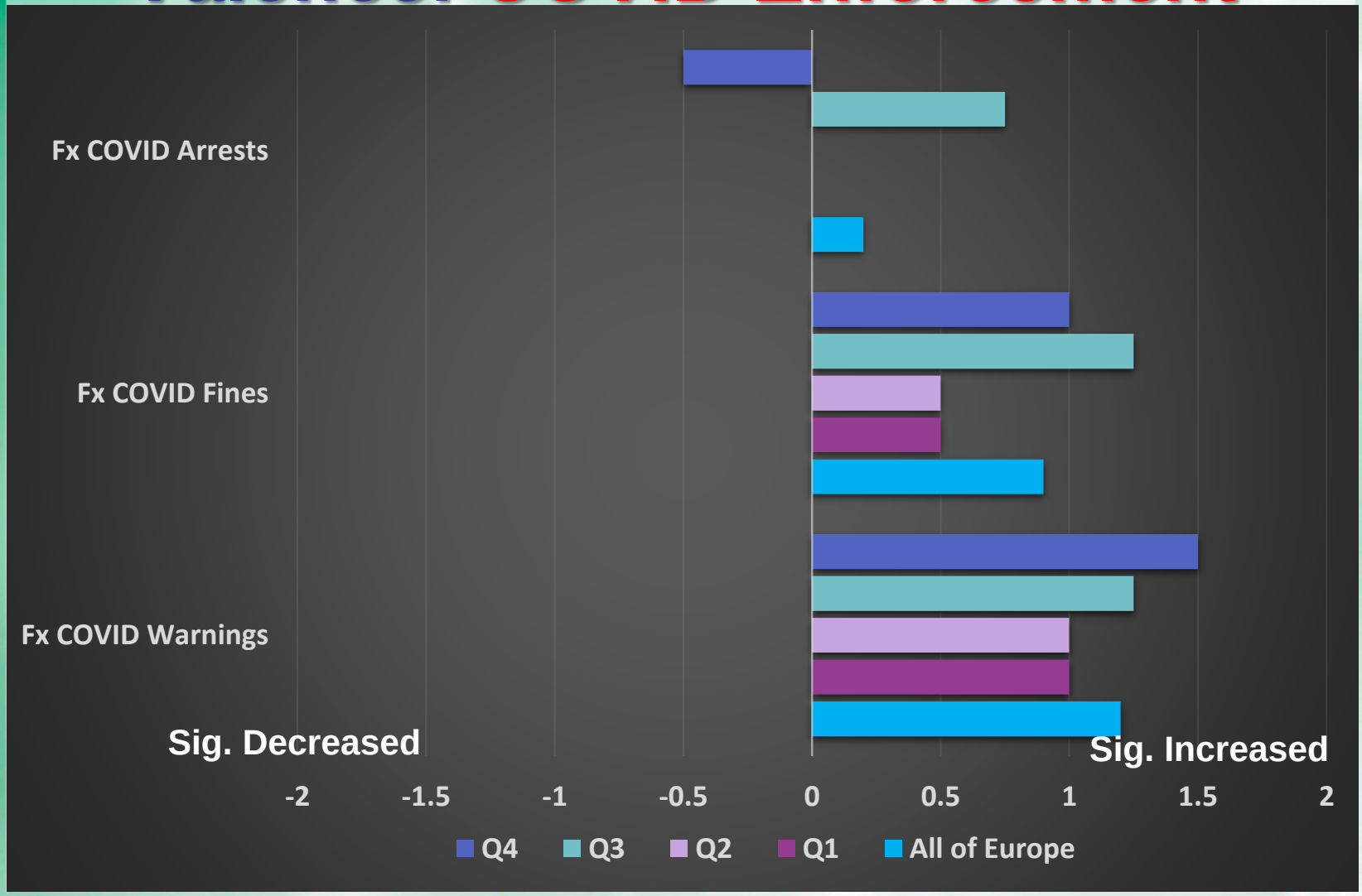
Valence: COVID Enforcement



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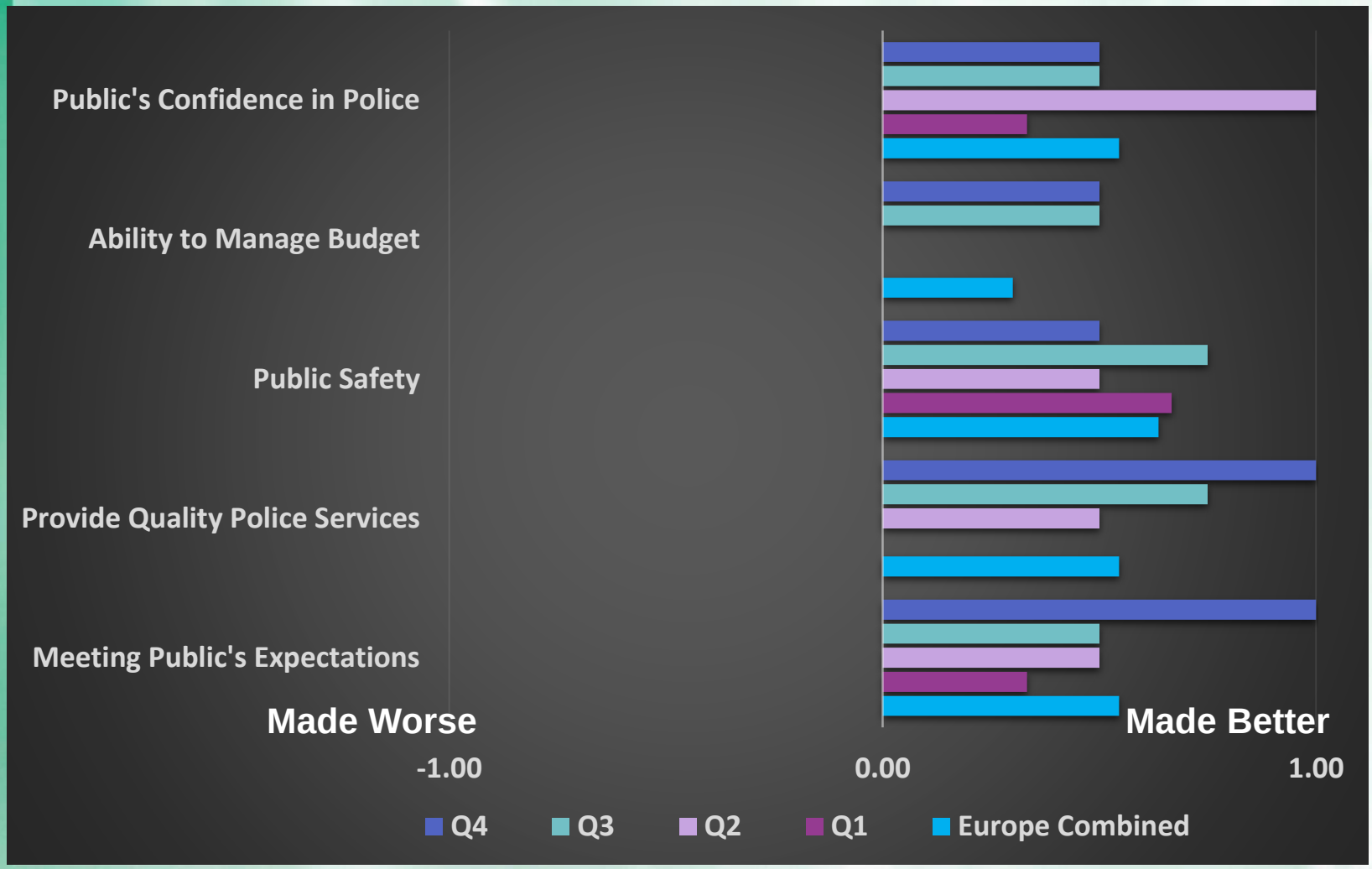
Expected Consequences?



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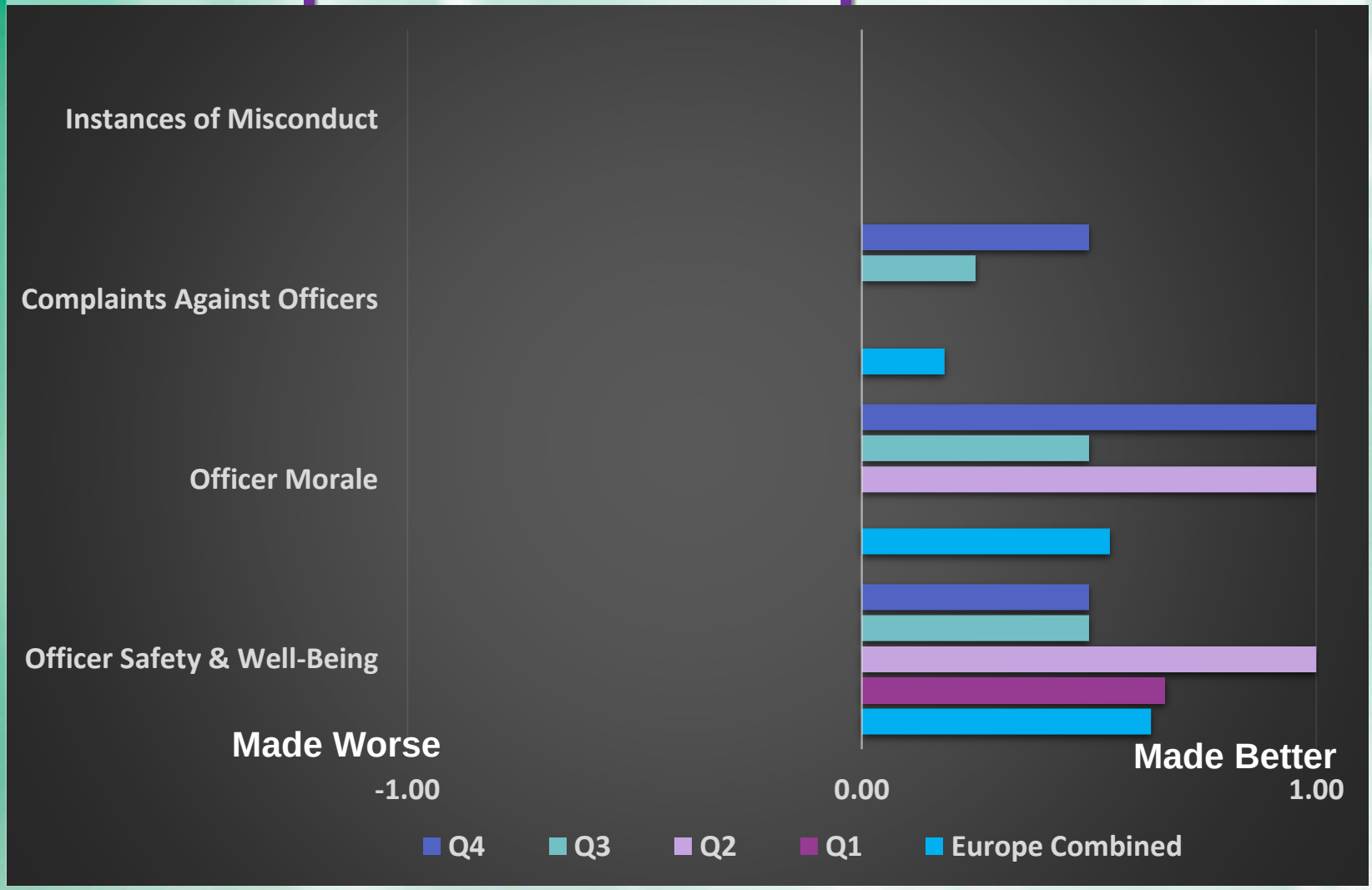

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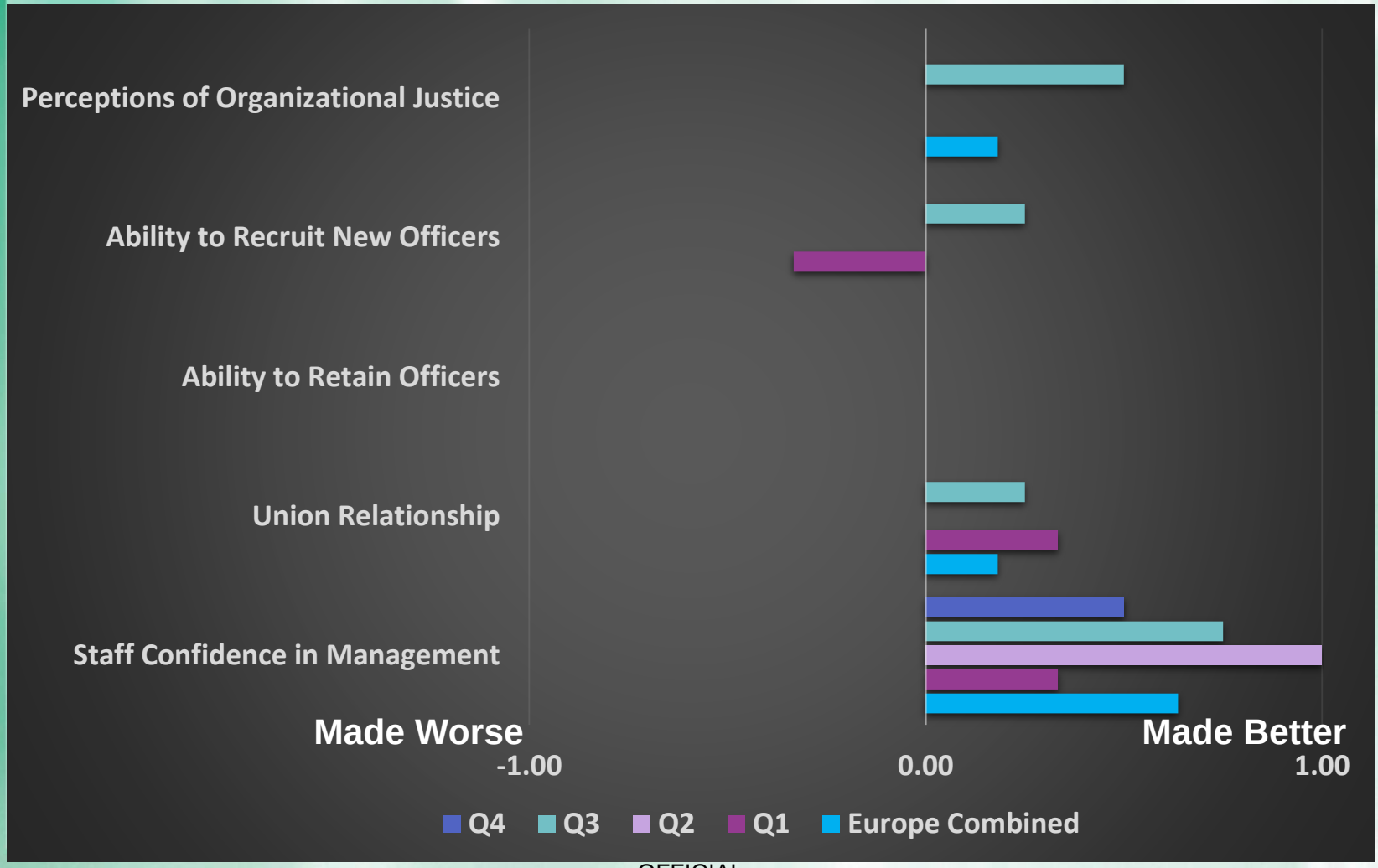

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Conclusion

- **Comparative insight into how police organizations have changed:**
  - **Changes across internal organization and operation mostly similar across European countries**
  - **Decrease in proactive and reactive policing**
  - **Expectation that the changes will not affect police morale, administrators' ability to monitor the agency, and the relationship with the community**
  - **Changes may be related to World Governance Indicator factors after allowing for shared variance of COVID deaths and infections**

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Common Issues

- General experience of "frenetic pace of change in policies and procedures"
- Unclear and muddled requirements rushed out and poorly communicated

> **"The changes that were necessary should be communicated in as clear and succinct manner as possible so that the people who are responsible for enforcing these changes know more precisely what they are meant to be doing."**

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COVID Policing, Enforcement, and Outcomes

- Community policing was most significantly affected
- Many police agencies seem to have used more SWAT/Public order policing
  - Not clear whether this was to counter anti-lockdown protest
- Whilst there have been large shifts in some crimes and harms, these were not consistent

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Policing post Pandemic in Endemic

- As the third wave falls and vaccination programs take effect, we (in Europe) have reached a "tipping point" where:
  - Majority have been vaccinated
  - Infection levels remain significant but pressure on hospitals is not critical
  - Most people have had enough of restrictions
- Planning a policing strategy for police to shift to "normal police priorities" whilst sustaining a capability to respond to shifts in public situation

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Policing the Future

- Pandemic has accelerated changes to police demand management: leadership challenge is retaining the most effective changes
- Cybercrime: has grown in last 12 months
- Terrorism and radicalization: a post-COVID world may well be more fragile
- Rebuilding legitimacy: Community policing as a post-COVID strategy

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Continuation of Our Study

- **Police administrator survey:**
  - Data collected from 28 countries
- **Police officer survey:**
  - Organizational and operational changes
  - Stress and coping mechanisms
  - COVID-19 enforcement
- **Citizen survey:**
  - Adherence to COVID-19 regulations
  - Stress and coping mechanisms
  - COVID-19 enforcement

You are cordially invited to participate!

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