Black Empowerment and Whites' Counter-Mobilization: The Effect of the Voting Rights Act*

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Abstract

The 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) dismantled the institutional barriers that had suppressed political participation of African Americans in the U.S. South since the end of Reconstruction. Did it also win hearts and minds in the racially conservative South? In this paper, we study this question using newly collected data on county-level voter registration rates by race. Exploiting variation induced by a special provision of the VRA ("coverage"), we find that covered counties with higher shares of African Americans experienced a larger increase in Black *and* white registration rates. White counter-mobilization was concentrated in counties where Black empowerment was more likely to represent a political threat to the white majority, and was accompanied by higher hostility against African Americans, as observed in local newspapers. Additional analysis shows that the negative effects of the VRA on whites' racial attitudes persisted over time, and are still evident today.

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It's so important to get Negroes registered in large numbers in the South. It would be this coalition of the Negro vote and the moderate white vote that will really make the new South.

— Martin Luther King Jr., on the phone with President Johnson on January 15, 1965

As a man whose roots go deeply into Southern soil I know how agonizing racial feelings are. I know how difficult it is to reshape the attitudes and the structure of our society.

— Lyndon B. Johnson, *We Shall Overcome*, 1965

1 Introduction

From the end of Reconstruction until the the early 1960s, African Americans in the U.S. South have endured suppression of their constitutional rights to vote by violence, intimidation, and institutionalized disenfranchisement (Kousser, 1992; Wright, 2013). In 1965, at the height of the civil rights movement, and one week after the outrage of Selma's Bloody Sunday, President Johnson announced his decision to initiate legislation that "will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections, federal, state and local, which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote."[1] Five months later, on August 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was signed into law. The federal legislation caused an immediate increase in turnout (Cascio and Washington, 2014), leading to Black representation gains and other tangible improvements for African American communities.[2] Did the VRA also win hearts and minds in the racially conservative South?

Although the hope was that Black enfranchisement would "brighten the lives of every American," talking to the Nation in 1965, President Johnson was well aware of the obstacles ahead.[3] The political realignment on civil rights led to the massive exodus of racially conservative southern whites from the Democratic Party (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018). Yet, little is known about how Black progress, which first and foremost took place locally, affected race relations in the U.S. South. Also, the impact of the VRA on race relations is *ex-ante* ambiguous. More generally, whether policy interventions improving minority status lead to more empathy or hostility among members of the majority group is an important question, which remains open to debate (Beaman et al., 2009).

[1] Lyndon B. Johnson: "We Shall Overcome" March 15, 1965 Washington, D.C.

[2] Southern counties covered by the VRA experienced an increase in Black representation in county offices (Bernini et al., 2022), in spending on education and infrastructure (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2022) as well as improvements in labor market outcomes (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019) and in policing practices (Facchini et al., 2020).

[3] While President Johnson asserted that "[t]he time of justice has now come. I tell you that I believe sincerely that no force can hold it back," he also noted that "[a]s a man whose roots go deeply into Southern soil... I know how difficult it is to reshape the attitudes and the structure of our society" (Johnson, 1965).

On the one hand, many of the gains experienced by Black Americans also spilled over to segments of the white society (Wright, 2013). In addition, the VRA might have fostered inter-group contact, thereby lowering racial prejudice and stereotypes (Allport, 1954; Hajnal, 2001; Bursztyn et al., 2021) and reducing whites' initial opposition to racial equality. On the other hand, racially conservative whites saw Black advancement as a threat to the "old way of life." Fears of "Black takeover" were common among southern whites, and might have been amplified by the nature of the VRA, which was perceived as a strong form of federal intervention imposing a new social order. Since mandated departures from existing social norms can generate strong reactions to preserve the status quo (Rudman and Fairchild, 2004), the very success of the VRA in promoting Black empowerment may have triggered persistent backlash among the dominant white group.

In this paper, we study if and how the VRA affected race relations in the U.S. South at the local level. We assemble a unique dataset on county-level voter registration rates by race for ten states of the former Confederacy over the period between 1956 and 1980. Voter registration records are collected and maintained by county offices, and are not routinely collated in official publications. To the best of our knowledge, registration by county *and* race has never been systematically gathered for the entire U.S. South over the period considered in this study. We combine our newly collected data with several other sources, including data on local Black elected officials, to examine the effects of the VRA on political participation by race.

As shown in previous work, pre-determined variation in the Black population share is related to changes in overall turnout (Cascio and Washington, 2014) and Black representation (Bernini et al., 2022) induced by the VRA. We expect racial patterns of mobilization to also be related to the pre-existing share of African Americans. However, a key concern when studying the effects of the VRA is that the pre-determined county racial composition might have had direct effects on changes in registration rates and political preferences even in the absence of the special provision of the VRA (known as "coverage"). For this reason, following Cascio and Washington (2014) and Bernini et al. (2022), we use counties in the former Confederacy – that were not subject to the special provision of the VRA – to form a suitable comparison group. In other words, we compare the evolution of Black and white registration rates, before and after the VRA, between covered and non-covered counties with different 1960 African American population shares. The identifying assumption is that, absent federal intervention, registration rates by race would have evolved along parallel trends in the two groups of counties.

Using a triple difference-in-differences (DDD) research design, we find that Black regis-

tration rates grow faster in covered counties with larger 1960 shares of African Americans, compared to similar counties that were not covered. According to our estimates, a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population share leads to a 33%, or 8 percentage points, increase in the growth of Black registration rates in covered counties between 1960 and 1980, as compared to a 7%, or 3.6 percentage points, surge across non-covered counties over the same period. In other words, a 10 percentage points increase in the Black population share is associated with an additional 26%, or 4.4 percentage points, rise in Black registration rates in covered, relative to non-covered, counties. The rise in Black political participation is mirrored by a lower, but nonetheless substantial, increase in white registration rates. We estimate that a 10 percentage points higher Black population share in 1960 increases white registration rates in covered counties, compared to non-covered counties, by an additional 5.3%, or 2.7 percentage points, between 1960 and 1980.

These findings indicate that, even if the VRA led to a decline in the Black-white gap in registration rates, whites' political reaction partly offset the rise in Black political efficacy (and the resulting surge in political representation) that the VRA intended to achieve. Indeed, absent the political response of white voters, a 10 percentage points higher Black population share would have led to a 4.4 percentage points additional decline in the Black-white gap in registration rates in covered, as compared to non-covered, counties. Accounting for whites' counter-mobilization reduces this figure by 60%, to 1.7 percentage points.

We probe the robustness of our findings in several ways. First, we check that, before the VRA, Black and white registration rates were not evolving differentially in covered counties with different Black population shares. Second and related, we document the absence of pre-trends in a large set of economic, political, and socio-demographic characteristics that might be correlated with the evolution of registration rates after 1964. Third, as in Bernini et al. (2022), we implement a Geographic Regression Discontinuity (GRD) design that focuses on counties located at the border between covered and non-covered states, and that are thus more similar to one another. Fourth, we show that results are robust to: *i*) estimating alternative specifications; *ii*) excluding potential outliers; *iii*) adjusting standard errors for spatial correlations in multiple ways; and, *iv*) replicating the analysis using only the set of counties that had similar 1964 turnout rates (one of the variables defining the VRA's coverage status in 1965). We describe these and additional robustness checks below, after presenting the main results.

We interpret the rise in white registration rates as evidence of counter-mobilization, or backlash, in response to Black empowerment. We corroborate this interpretation using

the local press. We show that local newspapers in covered counties with a higher Black population share not only mention the words "Black" and "Negro" more frequently after the VRA, but also become more likely to talk about Black Americans using stereotypical and disparaging terms. After 1965, mentions of George Wallace – the staunch segregationist politician known for his opposition to civil rights – also increase more in newspapers of covered counties with a higher Black population share. Consistent with whites' political (counter-)mobilization, the surge in references to Wallace peaks in 1968, when he ran for presidency for the American Independent Party, and is stronger when the name of the segregationist politician appears together with the word "Negro."

Then, we explore the drivers of whites' behavior. First, we focus on the most immediate and visible mark of Black progress: the election of African American officials at the local level. We exploit differences in pre-existing electoral rules, which are crucial for minority representation (Trebbi et al., 2008; Bernini et al., 2022). As a preliminary step, we document that the VRA leads to gains in Black office holding only in counties electing their governing body members (i.e., county commissioners) by single member districts (SMD), as opposed to an at-large or a mixed system.[4] Importantly, white registration patterns mirror those of Black representation. In particular, covered counties with larger shares of African Americans witness an increase in white registration rates in the aftermath of the VRA. Conversely, in covered counties without single member districts voting rules, the evolution of white registration rates does not depend on the 1960 Black population share.

We obtain similar results relying on a different source of variation. Specifically, as the threat to the status quo could be more salient in response to local events, we present event studies to track the evolution of white registration rates before and after the election of the first African American to a local office. We find that, while covered counties do not experience any differential change in white political participation before the election of the first African American official, white registration rates spike right after the event and continue to increase for at least ten years.

Next, we examine additional mechanisms for whites' counter-mobilization. First, we study whether whites' backlash is stronger in counties with more ingrained racism. Perhaps surprisingly, we find only limited evidence of stronger effects in covered counties with

[4]The effect of electoral rules on minority representation depends on the size of the group. At-large elections penalize minority groups more when the latter represent a small share of the total population, because their vote gets diluted. As the share of minority voters increases, majority-minority districts reduce their ability to gain representation, making elections at-large preferable. See also Davidson and Grofman (1994), Trebbi et al. (2008), and Ricca and Trebbi (2022).

a larger Black population share and with a stronger legacy of white supremacy (proxied for using pre-1960 lynchings and KKK klaverns). We also do not observe heterogeneous effects depending on the presence of key Black organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Moreover, even though Black registration rates increase more in counties where African Americans are more educated, no such pattern is visible for white registration rates. Finally, we test the possibility that our results might be partly driven by changes in the demographic, economic, or social characteristics prevailing in covered counties. Contrary to this idea, we do not find evidence of changes in: total, white, and Black population; different proxies for economic activity; and, the prevalence of riots and protests (in support of or against civil rights).

An important question is whether the short-run dynamics discussed thus far persisted over time, resulting in a permanent shift in whites' racial attitudes. Using FBI records, we find that the number of hate crimes committed by white perpetrators against African American victims between 2000 and 2018 is higher in covered counties with higher Black population shares in 1960. These patterns do not merely reflect an overall increase in violence, since we do not observe any such relationship when considering white victims. However, and in line with findings in McConnell and Rasul (2021), we detect spillovers against non-Black minorities: covered counties with a higher 1960 Black population share witness a surge in hate crimes committed against non-Black minority victims, even though the effects are roughly half as those against Black Americans. We uncover similar dynamics for mass shootings committed by white offenders against Black individuals.

Our paper contributes to the growing literature on the effects of the VRA, which has documented that the legislation increased turnout (Cascio and Washington, 2014) and African American representation in local offices (Bernini et al., 2022), and ameliorated conditions for African Americans in different domains, such as public goods provision (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2022), labor markets (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019), and policing practices (Facchini et al., 2020). We complement these papers by leveraging novel data on race-specific registration rates at the county level to provide a causal analysis of whether and how the VRA affected whites' racial attitudes and political behavior.

Existing studies at the state level provide evidence of white resistance to civil rights. Kuziemko and Washington (2018) show that racially conservative whites leave the Democratic Party after it embraces the civil rights agenda. Ang (2019) finds a similar pattern focusing on the broadening of federal intervention in 1975 to tackle discrimination against language minority groups, but no change in white mobilization. At the local level, due to

data limitations, the evidence is scant. Focusing on four southern states between 1967-1988, Alt (1994) documents that white registration rates are positively correlated with Black population shares. For North Carolina, Fresh (2018) finds an increase in both Black and white registration rates within covered counties. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to systematically analyze the political behavior of both Black and white voters at the county level in the entire U.S. South. This allows us to provide causal evidence on the impact of the VRA on political behavior along racial lines. In addition, we combine our novel dataset with data on local Black office holding, to study the mechanisms through which Black empowerment influenced racial attitudes of southern whites.

Our findings also speak to the broader literature on race relations in the United States. Despite Black advances in labor market outcomes (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019; Derenoncourt and Montialoux, 2021), the income and wealth gap between Black and white Americans persists (Bayer and Charles, 2018; Chetty et al., 2020; Derenoncourt et al., 2022).[5] We complement existing work on the difficult path towards Black progress by studying the effect of the VRA on inter-group relations.[6] Our findings indicate that, while the Act brought significant gains in Black representation, provisions aimed at ameliorating the conditions of minority groups can trigger backlash among majority group members with long lasting effects.[7]

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides background information on the VRA and its enforcement. Section 3 introduces the dataset used in the analysis. Section 4 describes the empirical strategy and presents the main results. Section 5 examines the mechanisms, and Section 6 studies the long-run effects of the VRA on whites' racial attitudes. Section 7 concludes.

2 Background

The passage of the VRA marked a dramatic change in the balance of power between state and federal governments in the United States. Section 4 of the Act placed under strict federal monitoring all the jurisdictions that: *i*) imposed a test or device restricting the right to vote and, *ii*) where the turnout rate in the 1964 presidential election was

[5]See also Smith and Welch (1989) and Neal and Johnson (1996) for earlier important contributions, and Altonji and Blank (1999) for a review of the literature.

[6]Findings in Ang (2020) and Ottinger and Posch (2022) point to the importance of white propaganda in fueling negative racial stereotypes, which may in turn hamper social and economic progress of racial minorities.

[7]In this respect, our results are also related to recent work by Wheaton (2022), who shows that all major U.S. social policy laws introduced since the 1960s were followed by significant opposition.

below 50%. As a result, six of the eleven states of the former Confederacy – Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia – were fully covered by the Act's special provisions, and one state – North Carolina – was partially covered.[8] Section 5 also required that any change in legislation affecting voting had to obtain pre-clearance by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia or by the Attorney General.[9] In addition, Federal examiners could be dispatched to monitor activities in the polling places of covered jurisdictions, which were required to eliminate literacy test provisions.[10]

The VRA was met with open defiance by the white ruling political class. Its constitutionality was immediately challenged (*South Carolina v. Katzenbach 1966*).[11] As its special measures stood the scrutiny of the court, numerous attempts to circumvent the Act with vote dilution tactics followed (Trebbi et al., 2008). However, such tactics proved to be short-lived, as courts promptly redressed violations of the VRA, preventing a remake of the institutional disenfranchisement that took place at the end of the Reconstruction era. In particular, the enforcement of the VRA's pre-clearance provisions guaranteed that pre-existing electoral rules that were more favorable to the election of minority candidates (chiefly, in local elections, the single member districts rule), were safeguarded in court (Bernini et al., 2022). As the legal apparatus put in place by the Act withstood the attacks of racially conservative whites, African Americans scored significant wins in county-level elective offices, and experienced considerable gains in several other domains, from public spending to labor markets and policing.

As pointed out by Wright (2013), "for most part, these gains have not been realized at the expense of white residents," and, in many urban areas, "[B]lack representation did not threaten economic progress but fostered instead a biracial coalition for economic growth." Hence, the VRA could have led to improvements in race relations in the U.S. South. Yet, those "shared economic gains" came into place against the backdrop of a social order deeply rooted in the Jim Crow laws that had shaped southern society since the end of the Reconstruction era. President Johnson himself, while announcing the introduction of this federal legislation put in place to tackle Black disenfranchisement, stressed how difficult it would be "to reshape the attitudes and the structure of our society." Indeed, racial attitudes, more than economic factors, have been shown to drive the fall of the fortunes of

[8] In North Carolina, 39 counties were covered by the special provisions of the policy, while 61 counties remained exempt. See Table B2 for a summary of coverage status by state.

[9] Specifically, pre-clearance was needed in order to assess whether the proposed change affecting voting would have discriminated against protected minorities.

[10] See also Cascio and Washington (2014) for more details about the VRA and its provisions.

[11] In *South Carolina v. Katzenbach, 383 U.S. 301 (1966)*, the Supreme Court rejected South Carolina's attack to the constitutionality of the policy, ruling the VRA's pre-clearance constitutional.

the Democratic party in the U.S. South since the early 1960s (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018).

The ruling white political class was not ready to relinquish or share power with Black Americans, and fears of "Black takeover" were widespread. In 1973, as the victory of Maynard H. Jackson, the first Black Mayor of Atlanta, was imminent, his white opponent's billboards proclaimed "Atlanta's too young to die... One can almost see them singing and dancing in the street in anticipation of a [B]lack takeover" (McDonald, 2003, pp. 95–96). Fear and mistrust of Black leadership could wane once Black elected officials had the opportunity to prove that their election did not harm white interests. At the same time, the persistence of cultural stereotypes involving social groups and the change in social norms mandated through legislation could just as well stoke racial resentment, leading to backlash by those groups feeling threatened by the new social order.

3 Data

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of U.S. states adopted registration laws to keep track of voters and prevent electoral fraud (Keyssar, 2009). Voter registration takes place either at the county or at the municipality level. In all the eleven states of the former Confederacy, county offices (also known as election administrators or registrars) are in charge of maintaining voter registration records. Individual states have ample leeway on the administration of federal, state, and local elections. Even if the Fifteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits states from restricting voting rights on the basis of race, in the pre-VRA era, several registration procedures were put in place to disenfranchise African Americans across the South. Furthermore, states "allow local registrars wide latitude. As a result of this discretion, registration practices of some states vary widely from county to county" (James, 1987).

Given that voter registration records are collected and maintained by county offices, and not routinely collated in official publications, data by race at this level of granularity is difficult to obtain. To the best of our knowledge, such information has never been systematically gathered for the entire U.S. South over the period considered in this study. One contribution of this paper is to fill this gap.

From the archive of the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project (VEP), based in Atlanta, we located official records on voter registrations for all states of the former Confederacy, except for Texas.[12] Most records originate from reports of the Secretary

[12]Following the 1966 federal decision to strike down the Texas poll tax as unconstitutional – *United*

of State, the Board of Registrations, the Auditor of State and the Election Commissioner. Others were obtained from the U.S. Justice Department and surveys of local governments carried out by the Southern Regional Council. We complemented these records with additional information from the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961). We digitized all these records, and combined them with supplementary data from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (1992) to obtain a dataset on the number of registered voters by race at the county-level for 820 counties spanning the period between 1956 and 1980. Finally, using county-level data on the voting age population by race, we built race-specific voter registration rates. More details on the data are reported in Appendix B.1.[13]

Figure 1 displays the geographic pattern of data availability at the county level. While data is not available for all southern counties, Table A1 indicates that our sample (Panel A) is broadly comparable to the entire South (Panel B), except for the 1960 Black population share, which is higher in the counties included in our analysis. We return to the potential issue of sample selection, and how we address it, when presenting the identification strategy below.

Table A1 also documents that, in 1960, Black Americans were substantially less likely to register than whites in both covered and non-covered counties. Not surprisingly, Black registration was much lower in covered jurisdictions where, on average, only 30% of voting age Black individuals were registered, compared to 49% in non-covered counties. However, by 1980, political participation among African Americans had increased substantially, especially in covered counties, where registration rates reached 62%. The surge in Black registration rates was more limited in non-covered counties (from 49% in 1960 to 56% in 1980). White registration rates were instead similar in covered and non-covered counties before the VRA (82 v. 86%, respectively). Moreover, and in contrast with patterns observed for Black Americans, between 1960 and 1980 white registration rates declined by 6 percentage points in covered counties, and by 16 percentage points in non-covered counties.[14]

Table A1 presents additional summary statistics: covered counties had a larger Black population share, compared non-covered ones, in 1960. Covered and non-covered counties

States v. Texas, 252 F. Supp. 234 (W. D. Tex.), aff'd, 384 U.S. 155 (1966) – Texas began a system of annual registrations that eliminated information on voters' race (Doty, 1969).

[13]We also refer the interested reader to Appendix B for a description and the corresponding source of all variables used in the paper.

[14]The drop in white registration rates is consistent with the overall decline observed during this period, which was at least in part due to lower efforts by parties to mobilize the electorate (Fullerton and Stern, 2010).

are similar in terms of unemployment rates, but the former are smaller, poorer, slightly less urban, have a less educated population, and are more reliant on cultivation of cotton. Covered counties also experienced more episodes of anti-Black protest in the years before the VRA, although no such difference exists in terms of pro-Black protests. Overall, these patterns suggest that covered and non-covered counties differ along several observable characteristics; in some cases (e.g., the share of African Americans), such differences are large and statistically significant.

Our empirical strategy, presented in the next section, accounts for those differences, as well as for other potential sources of unobservable heterogeneity. In particular, to tackle the concern that heterogeneity in observables might increase the sensitivity to potential bias due to unobservables, in Section 4.3, we implement a Geographic Regression Discontinuity (GRD) design that focuses on counties spanning the border between covered and non-covered states, which do not exhibit any statistically significant difference in observable characteristics.

4 The VRA and Political Participation

4.1 Empirical Strategy

Our empirical strategy exploits a special measure introduced by the VRA – known as coverage – to protect African Americans from the infringement of their political rights. As explained in Section 2, jurisdictions that imposed a test or device restricting the right to vote and experienced a turnout rate below 50% in the 1964 presidential election were placed under strict federal monitoring. As a result, six of the eleven states of the former Confederacy – Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia – were fully covered by the policy's special provisions, and one state – North Carolina – was partially covered.

The increase in Black turnout caused by the VRA was positively related to the pre-existing share of African Americans in the county population (Cascio and Washington, 2014). We thus expect coverage to lead to a greater increase in Black registration rates in counties with a larger Black population share. But did Black empowerment win the hearts and minds of white Southerners or did it trigger white counter-mobilization? To answer this question, we study the effects of the VRA over the period between 1960 and 1980.[15]

[15]We use 1980 as the end period for two reasons. First, the 1982 re-authorization of the Act encompassed a major amendment that subsequently led to the introduction of majority-minority districts

A straightforward way to estimate the effect of the VRA would be to implement a difference-in-differences (DD) design, and compare registration rates by race before and after the Act, between covered counties with a different 1960 Black population share. A key concern, though, is that racial attitudes and political behavior might have changed differentially across covered counties in a way that is correlated with the 1960 Black population share, even absent federal intervention. Hence, as in Cascio and Washington (2014) and Bernini et al. (2022), we augment the DD strategy just described with the introduction of a suitable comparison group that includes the remaining counties of the former Confederacy – with a similar history of racial discrimination – that were not covered by the VRA.

We use a triple difference-in-differences (DDD) design to test whether covered counties with a larger 1960 Black population share experienced a differential change in Black and white registration rates, from before to after the VRA, as compared to non-covered southern counties with the same 1960 Black population share. Specifically, we estimate the following long-difference model:

$$\Delta y_{c,s} = \gamma Black_{1960} + \theta Black_{1960} \times VRA_{c,s} + \mathbf{X'}_{c,s} + I_s + \epsilon_{c,s} \tag{1}$$

where $\Delta y_{c,s}$ is the 1980-1960 change in the log of registration rates (total and by race) in county c, state s; $Black_{1960}$ is the 1960 Black population share in the county; $VRA_{c,s}$ is an indicator taking a value of one for counties covered by the policy in 1965 and zero otherwise; $\mathbf{X'}_{c,s}$ is a vector of pre-VRA controls fully interacted with the $VRA_{c,s}$ indicator; and, I_s are state dummies.[16] Since district courts played a key role in enforcing the provisions of the VRA, we cluster standard errors by judicial divisions to account for potential correlation at this level.[17] Regressions are weighed by 1960 county population.

The identifying assumption is that, in the absence of the VRA, covered and non-covered counties with the same 1960 Black population share would have experienced similar trends in voter registration. Since our data does not include the universe of

following the Supreme Court ruling on *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986). Second, VEP data on voter registration becomes sparse after 1980, with entire states missing after this period.

[16]Similar to Bernini et al. (2022), $\mathbf{X'}_{c,s}$ includes: the unemployment rate, the share of families below the poverty line, the share of unskilled workers, the share of urban population – all measured in 1960; the share of land cultivated in cotton – measured in 1964; and, pro- and anti-Black protests for the 1960-1964 period. We include separate state indicators for covered and non-covered counties in North Carolina. See Table B4 for more details about each variable.

[17]State district courts are organized by judicial divisions serving group of counties. For more details on mapping between counties and judicial divisions, see Bernini et al. (2022). Results are robust to using alternative cluster structures and accounting for potential spatial correlation in other ways (Table C3).

southern counties, an important concern is that missing counties systematically differ by treatment status. To rule out the possibility that selection might bias our results, we examine the probability of a county being included in the sample varies by treatment status. Reassuringly, our analysis in Section 4.3 shows that, while inclusion in the sample is positively correlated with the 1960 Black population share, there is no difference by coverage status.

Below, we further corroborate the identifying assumption by: *i*) inspecting pre-trends in registration rates by race; and, *ii*) verifying that covered counties with a higher 1960 Black population share did not experience differential changes along several political, economic, and social characteristics before 1960. We discuss these and many other robustness checks in Section 4.3, after presenting our main results.

4.2 Main Results

Table 1 reports results from equation (1), for total, Black, and white registration rates in columns (1) to (3), respectively.[18] The coefficient on the interaction between the coverage (VRA) dummy and the 1960 Black share in column (1) is positive and statistically significant. This indicates that, consistent with findings in Cascio and Washington (2014), total registration rates increase more in covered counties with a higher Black population share, between 1960 and 1980. As intended by the Act, the rise in registration is strongly linked to higher propensity to register among Black Americans (column 2). According to our estimates, a 10 percentage points higher Black population share is associated with a 26% (or, 4.4 percentage points) increase in the growth rate of Black registration in covered, as compared to non-covered, counties between 1960 and 1980.[19]

Column (3) presents our central result: the VRA leads to a stronger growth in *white* registration rates in counties with a higher Black population share. While the effect is smaller than that for Black Americans, it is nonetheless quantitatively relevant. In particular, covered counties with a 10 percentage points higher 1960 Black population share experience a 5% faster increase in white registration from 1960 to 1980. Replicating the analysis for the change in registration rates (rather than in their log), we find that a

[18]The number of observations varies across columns because we restrict the sample to counties reporting registration rates of the relevant population in each column (column 1 requires that the county reported registration rates of either race). Results are robust to focusing on counties that report registration rates of both races in both years (see Table 5, column 2).

[19]To convert the implied percent change into a percentage point change, we estimated equation (1) using as dependent variable the change in registration rates (rather than the change in their log). See also Table C3.

10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population share leads to a 2.7 percentage points higher growth in white registration between covered and non-covered counties.

In column (4), we quantify the net effect of the VRA on the racial gap in registration rates: a 10 percentage points higher Black population share leads to a 22% faster reduction in the Black-white gap in registration rates between 1960 and 1980. In other words, absent any reaction among white voters, a simple back of the envelope calculation implies that the VRA would have caused a 4.4 percentage points decline in the racial gap in registration rates. Yet, whites' counter-mobilization reduces this figure by 60%, down to 1.8 percentage points.

We interpret the change in white registration as evidence of political backlash and counter-mobilization. This is consistent with historical and anecdotal accounts that white voters opposed the VRA, and actively tried to maintain the pre-existing political and social order (Alt, 1994; McDonald, 2003). We provide additional evidence for our interpretation below, when examining the mechanisms. Before doing so, in the next section, we assess the validity of our research design and probe the robustness of our findings.

4.3 Robustness Checks

Testing for Pre-Trends. In Table 2, we address the potential concern that our results may be driven by the fact that registration rates (total and by race) were evolving differentially in covered and non-covered counties with a similar share of African Americans in 1960. Specifically, we replicate our baseline specification – equation (1) above – replacing the 1980-1960 change in registration rates with the corresponding change occurring over different time windows before the VRA. In Panel A, we consider the change in (the log of) registration rates between 1964 and 1956; in Panels B and C, we turn to the 1964-1960 and 1960-1956 change, respectively. Reassuringly, the coefficient on the interaction between the coverage dummy and the 1960 Black share is quantitatively small, different from the baseline estimates of Table 1, and not statistically significant.

A related concern is that, even though we do not find evidence of pre-trends in registration rates, covered and non-covered counties with a similar 1960 Black population share may have experienced differential changes along other economic, social, and political characteristics before the VRA. As argued by Mickey (2015), although the suppression of civil rights had turned the South into an enclave of authoritarian rule, pushed by the northern wing of the Democratic Party, the Outer South started to become more acquiescent towards the civil rights agenda since the late 1940s. Hence, one may be worried that differential changes along social and political dimensions might spuriously influence

the evolution of registration rates in the post-VRA period, thereby biasing our results. We address these concerns in Table 3 (Panel A), where, following Bernini et al. (2022), we replicate equation (1) using as outcomes the pre-VRA change in a number of variables (reported at the top of each column).[20]

First, we examine different proxies for the degree of white supremacy: KKK presence and lynchings against African Americans (columns 1 and 2), and the share of land devoted to cotton production, a proxy for Black labor coercion (column 3). In column (4), we consider the presence of NAACP chapters, which capture the degree of Black political activism. Then, we turn to electoral outcomes. Starting with voters' behavior in response to partisan realignment on civil rights, in column (5), we compare the vote share of 1964 Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, who ran on an openly anti-civil rights agenda, with that of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952.[21] In column (6), we instead consider the 1960-1940 change in the GOP vote share in presidential elections.

As institutional changes surrounding the white primary (*Smith v. Allwright* 1944) in the post-WWII period might have affected turnout as well as competitiveness of gubernatorial races, we consider the 1960-1940 change in: *i*) turnout in presidential (column 7) and gubernatorial (column 8) elections; and, *ii*) the vote share received by the lead candidate in the Democratic primary, a proxy for competitiveness of gubernatorial races (column 9). Finally, in columns (10) and (11), we examine the 1960-1950 change in malapportionment of the State House and Senate, which has been linked to the disproportionate power of racially conservative rural areas (Mickey, 2015).[22]

The interaction between the coverage dummy and the 1960 Black population share is statistically significant only for the share of land devoted to cotton (column 3). The positive and statistically significant coefficient for this variable indicates that covered counties with larger shares of African Americans remained more reliant on cotton production, historically related to the coercion of Black workers.[23] Reassuringly, in all other cases, coefficients are quantitatively small and not statistically significant.

Geographic Regression Discontinuity. Despite the evidence in support of our empirical design provided thus far, one may still be concerned that differences in demographic and economic characteristics between the treatment and control groups could exacerbate

[20] See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

[21] Even though the position taken by Eisenhower on civil rights issues has remained controversial, it was never openly against racial equality (Lawson, 1976; Schickler, 2016).

[22] We consider the 1960 to 1950 change because data on malapportionment is not available for earlier periods.

[23] This might imply a "negative selection" into treatment: in the absence of federal intervention, covered counties might have experienced a smaller increase in Black political participation.

the sensitivity to potential bias due to differences in unobservables. To tackle this issue, we implement a Geographic Regression Discontinuity (GRD) design, comparing counties straddling the border between covered and non-covered states.

Table A1 already documented that, in the full U.S. South sample, covered and non-covered counties differ in the 1960 Black population share (32.5% v. 13.2%, respectively). However, this difference becomes indistinguishable from zero, when focusing on contiguous border counties. Figure A1 shows that, along state borders (Panel B), the 1960 Black population share is similar between covered and non-covered counties.[24] In Figure 2, we conduct a formal balancing test for the 1960 Black population share and for all other controls included in our baseline specification. The figure indicates that the border sample is fully balanced between covered and non-covered counties, both in levels (Panel A) and in changes (Panel B).

Having verified that contiguous counties that belong to covered and non-covered states are comparable to each other, as in Bernini et al. (2022), we combine the long-difference analysis presented above with a GRD design. We estimate the following model:

$$\Delta y_{c,s} = \gamma Black_{1960} + \theta Black_{1960} \times VRA_{c,s} + I_{c,p} + \epsilon_{c,p,s} \tag{2}$$

where all variables are as above, except for the fact that now we include county pair fixed effects, $I_{c,p}$.[25]

Results, reported in Table 4, confirm that covered counties with a larger 1960 Black population share experience faster growth in both Black and white registration rates. Also, and importantly, coefficients remain quantitatively very similar to those reported in Table 1.[26] Since some pre-existing institutional characteristics might vary discontinuously at the border, even the GRD design cannot completely rule out the issue of selection into treatment. To address this concern, in Panel B of Table 3, we repeat the pre-trends analysis described above focusing on the border sample. Reassuringly, there is no evidence of a statistically significant relationship between any of the variables considered and the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the coverage dummy.[27]

[24] Panel A presents the same figure for the entire voter registration sample: consistent with Table A1, the difference in the share of African Americans is starker in this case.

[25] As in Bernini et al. (2022), regressions are weighed by the inverse of the counties' appearance in the sample, and standard errors are clustered by judicial division and corresponding border segment.

[26] Only in column (4), the point estimate is no longer statistically significant at conventional levels, even though the magnitude remains unchanged. The reduction in precision is not surprising, since the the border sample is about four times smaller compared that of Table 1.

[27] The only exception is the Republican vote share, for which the coefficient on the interaction is statistically significant at the 10% level. In Table C2, we verify that results are unchanged when including

Addressing Potential Sample Selection. One additional concern is that our dataset does not encompass all southern counties. This might lead to selection bias, if the probability that a county is included in our sample were correlated with both coverage and the 1960 Black population share. To address this concern, we perform several exercises, reported in Table 5. In column (1), we replicate the baseline specification using as dependent variable an indicator equal to one if a county is included in the sample and zero otherwise. Reassuringly, the coefficient of the interaction between coverage and the 1960 Black share is close to zero and not statistically significant.[28]

In column (2), we estimate our long-difference specification on the sample of counties for which both Black and white voter registration statistics are always available. This reduces the sample to 630 counties, but leaves the magnitude and the precision of results unchanged. In column (3), we consider the set of states for which we could locate registration data in all presidential years between 1968 and 1980. Even though the number of observations drops by about half, estimated coefficients are quantitatively unchanged. In column (4), we restrict the sample to states that report registration rates in all presidential election years between 1956 and 1980. In this case, the sample size shrinks by more than 60%. However, the point estimate for white registration rates remains positive and, if anything, larger than that of the baseline specification.[29]

Finally, in columns (5) and (6), we exploit a necessary condition for coverage: for a county to be covered, its turnout rate in the 1964 presidential election had to be below 50% (see also Section 2). We focus on counties close to this threshold, conducting an analysis that, in spirit, is similar to a regression discontinuity design. In column (5), we focus on southern counties with turnout rate in the 1964 presidential election ranging between 40% and 60% (i.e., a 10 percentage point window on either side of the coverage cutoff). In column (6), we impose a stricter bandwidth of 5 percentage points around the cutoff. Despite the considerable reduction in sample size, results remain similar to those obtained in Table 1.[30]

Additional Robustness Checks. Appendix C presents additional robustness checks, which we briefly summarize here. First, in Table C1, we show that results are unchanged when balancing covariates between covered and non-covered counties: using a coarsened

the Republican vote share in the 1964 presidential elections.

[28]Similar results, omitted for brevity, hold when using as outcome a dummy for overall voter registrations (i.e., the dependent variable considered in column 1 of Table 1).

[29]Coefficients for white registration rates in columns (3) and (4) become statistically significant at the 10% level (with a p-value of .09). This is not surprising, given the reduction in sample size.

[30]Figure C1 presents the graphical analogue of this analysis, confirming results reported in columns (5) and (6) of Table 5.

exact matching algorithm; dividing the observations into strata with similar propensity scores; and, trimming the sample to the common support. Second, in Table C2, we perform several sensitivity checks to assess the quality of our data. Third, in Table C3 and Figure C2, we document that results are robust to omitting potential outliers and estimating alternative specifications. In Table C3, we also estimate and adjust standard errors in different ways, so as to account for potential spatial correlation in the error term.

4.4 Evidence from Local Newspapers

We have interpreted the surge in white registration rates in covered counties with larger shares of African Americans as whites' backlash. In this section, we provide evidence consistent with this interpretation. Starting from the mid to late 1950s, both the American National Election Studies (ANES) and Gallup began to elicit whites' racial attitudes. However, due to limitations in both geographic coverage and sample size, neither survey can be used for a systematic analysis of the effects of the VRA at the county-level.[31] For this reason, to measure the salience of racial issues among the public, we turn to local newspapers, whose language largely responds to readers' demands (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010).

We compile a list of articles from Newspapers.com to measure the frequency of selected terms in local newspapers in each county and year from 1960 to 1980.[32] The granularity of the data allows us to exploit yearly variation. For this reason, we implement the main DDD design using an event study approach, and estimate the following model:

$$y_{c,s,t} = \sum_{n>1960} \gamma_n D_n^t Black_{1960} + \sum_{n>1960} \theta_n D_n^t Black_{1960} \times VRA_{c,s} + \mathbf{X'}_{c,s}\beta + I_{s,t} + I_c + \epsilon_{c,s,t} \quad (3)$$

where $y_{c,s,t}$ is the frequency of a selected term in a newspaper published in county c in state s and year t, scaled by the frequency of the word "and" to account for differential newspapers' circulation, as in Fouka et al. (2022); $I_{s,t}$ are interactions between state and year dummies; and, I_c are county fixed effects. All other controls are as defined in

[31] The most detailed geographic identifier in Gallup is the state of residence. Even though the ANES includes the county of residence of respondents, the sample size and the number of counties covered are both very small.

[32] Our sample includes only 6 Black newspapers (out of a total of 400 newspapers), and results, not reported for brevity, are robust to excluding them. The availability of southern counties with newspaper data varies over time, with an average of 193 counties over the period. Table A2 presents summary statistics for the sample of counties with newspapers data, and documents that, along most characteristics, they are comparable to those in the full sample. In unreported analyses, we verified that results for registration rates are unchanged when focusing on counties in the newspapers sample.

equation (1), and are interacted with both year dummies and coverage status. Since the specification includes county fixed effects, we omit the interactions with the first year of the sample to identify the model, using the first year (1960) as the omitted category to assess how the slope of the relationship with the 1960 share of Blacks in the population changes over time. In Figure 3, we plot the estimated coefficients θ_n, which capture the difference in the gradient between covered and non-covered counties.

In Panel A, the dependent variable is the frequency of the word "Black" in a county-year.[33] Reassuringly, there is no evidence of pre-trends. That is, local newspapers in covered and non-covered counties with a similar Black population share mention the word "Black" to a similar extent before 1965. However, after the VRA, the frequency of the term "Black" increases steadily in covered counties with a higher Black population share, remaining substantially higher for several years after the VRA passage. This is consistent with the Act raising the salience of the race issue more where the Black population may have represented a higher (economic, political, or social) threat to the white majority.

In Panel B, we consider the joint frequency of the word "Black" and a series of disparaging terms to measure how the local press talked about African Americans.[34] Again, there is no evidence of pre-trends. Instead, after the VRA, newspapers in covered counties with a higher share of African Americans become more likely to use racially charged terms when mentioning the word "Black." In Panels C and D, we replicate the previous analysis by replacing the word "Black" with the term "Negro." Compared to results in Panels A and B, the effects appear sooner and the coefficients are larger in size. As noted in Carmichael and Hamilton (1967), the term "Negro" became racially charged precisely during this time period, leading mainstream news agencies like the *Associated Press* and outlets like the *New York Times* to abandon it. This suggests that the stronger effects observed for "Negro" than for "Black" are consistent with the VRA triggering backlash and leading to a deterioration of racial attitudes among southern whites.

Finally, in Figure A2, we consider the frequency of the term "Wallace" (Panel A) and its joint occurrence with the term "Negro" (Panel B).[35] We conjecture that, if the VRA triggered whites' backlash, as suggested by our previous results, mentions of George Wallace should increase more in covered counties with a higher Black population share, especially when considering them jointly with the word "Negro." Figure A2 confirms this

[33]To ease interpretation, all dependent variables are standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation.

[34]In this analysis, we consider four disparaging terms associated with violence and crime. Including additional terms related to more extreme forms of violence and racial stereotypes leaves results unchanged.

[35]George Wallace was a staunch opponent of racial integration, and a key figure within the southern white supremacist movement.

prediction. Interestingly, coefficients on the triple interaction term peak in 1968, when Wallace ran for presidency as the candidate of the American Independent Party. They gradually decline since then, but remain statistically significant and positive when George Wallace is mentioned together with the word "Negro" for several years thereafter. The patterns depicted in Panel B are also consistent with the idea that part of white voters' backlash was triggered, or at least reinforced, by strategic political entrepreneurs.[36]

5 Mechanisms

Our analysis so far has uncovered an increase in white (counter-)mobilization in counties covered by the VRA with larger Black population shares. We have interpreted this finding as a response of the white majority to Black political empowerment. In this section, we explore the mechanisms behind our results.

5.1 Black Office Holding as a Source of Political Threat

Anecdotal evidence suggests that southern whites looked at the prospect of Black office holding with fear, and that concerns of a possible "Black takeover" became widespread after the VRA (McDonald, 2003). If whites perceived the enfranchisement of Black Americans as a political threat, we would expect counter-mobilization efforts to be larger when prospects of Black political progress were stronger. To test this idea, we analyze the impact of one of the most visible signs of Black political empowerment: the election of Black officials at the local level.

Heterogeneity in Electoral Rules. We exploit differences in pre-existing electoral rules, which turned out to be crucial for the election of Black officials in the aftermath of the VRA (Bernini et al., 2022). We distinguish between counties belonging to states that, before the VRA, elected their county governing bodies by single member districts (SMD) as opposed to those that used elections at-large or mixed systems.[37] The enforcement of the VRA's pre-clearance provisions in covered counties safeguarded SMD arrangements more favorable to the election of minorities (Trebbi et al., 2008). We thus expect the VRA

[36]This interpretation is in line with theoretical models in Murphy and Shleifer (2004) and Glaeser et al. (2005), as well as with empirical findings in Ottinger and Posch (2022).

[37]Southern states with SMD rules are: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Of these, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia were covered by the VRA (see also Table B2). SMD electoral rules split counties into electoral districts, which elect a single representative in the legislative body. In contrast, in at-large elections, the majority (e.g., in the county, municipality, etc.) elects all representatives.

to induce stronger political gains in terms of Black representation in covered counties with a higher share of African Americans where elections were governed by SMD rules.

In column (1) of Table 6, we test this conjecture, and examine how pre-existing electoral rules affect the election of Black officials in the county governing body between 1962 and 1980. We replicate the baseline long-difference regression (equation (1)) by including a triple interaction between the VRA dummy, the Black population share, and a dummy for having SMD elections before the VRA. We fully saturate the regression by including all lower-order interactions. Results indicate that, consistent with Ricca and Trebbi (2022) and Bernini et al. (2022), among others, the increase in Black office holding promoted by the VRA is concentrated in covered SMD counties with larger Black population shares.

Next, we turn to voter registration rates. Column (2) shows that African Americans in covered counties with a larger Black population share are not more likely to register in the presence of SMD elections. However, column (3) reveals that white registration rates do increase more in the presence of SMD elections. In other words, even if African Americans do not mobilize more, the presence of electoral rules increasing their odds of winning local offices in county governing bodies – the most powerful local governments in the U.S. South – triggers white counter-mobilization.

Black Office Holding and Whites' Mobilization. We complement the previous results exploiting a different source of variation: the election of the first African American into office. From the perspective of the white dominant group, this event likely represented a signal that Black political empowerment was real, and had potentially important consequences for the (political) balance of power at the local level. If whites' backlash was, at least in part, motivated by (actual or perceived) political threat, we expect white registration rates to increase right after the first election of a Black official at the local level. Moreover, since federal intervention (i.e., the VRA) was arguably responsible for gains in Black office holding, white registration rates should increase more when the election of the first Black official occurs in covered (as opposed to non-covered) counties.

We present event studies that trace out the evolution of registration rates by coverage status, before and after the election of the first Black official in a county (after 1965). We bin observations into 2-year periods, and estimate models that include: county and state by year fixed effects; interactions between year dummies and the vector of baseline controls; and, crucially, the interaction of the VRA dummy with leads and lags for an indicator equal to one for the election of the first Black official in the county. To reduce concerns that counties with the election of a Black official may differ from those without any election, we restrict attention to places that elected at least one Black official between

1965 and 1980. That is, our analysis only exploits the *timing*, rather than the location, of the first election.[38]

We report results in Figure 4, using the period right before the first election as omitted category. Reassuringly, for both Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates, there is no evidence of differential trends prior to the first election of a Black official. Interestingly, Black political engagement does not seem to respond to the event. This is in stark contrast with the evolution of white registration rates, which increase almost immediately after the first election of a Black official, and keep rising since then for at least 8 years.

Discussion. The evidence provided in Table 6 and Figure 4 is consistent with at least two, non-mutually exclusive, explanations. First, the white majority may have perceived the Black political empowerment caused by the VRA as a threat to the pre-existing social hierarchy, cemented by decades of oppression and exploitation against African Americans. This is in line with "group threat theories," where the growth of a minority group triggers hostility among majority group members (Blalock, 1957; Blumer, 1958). In our context, threat does not come from the larger size of the Black community, but rather from its stronger political efficacy. This view is also consistent with identity politics models (Bonomi et al., 2021; Jardina, 2019): heightened Black political power might reinforce between-group distinctions, increasing racial animosity, and triggering concerns among white voters that their pre-existing status might be challenged.

A second possibility is that whites' reactions were due to concerns that the policies implemented by Black officials would have been in contrast with their economic interests. For one, white and Black voters may hold diverging views over the allocation and the amount of public spending (Alesina et al., 1999). Since the VRA did increase redistribution, likely because of Black empowerment (Cascio and Washington, 2014), whites' countermobilization might reflect an attempt to limit the political clout of African Americans. Moreover, the VRA led to tangible improvements in Black economic conditions, especially in the public sector (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019). Whites may have viewed such gains as a direct threat to their economic well-being, either in terms of higher labor costs for white employers or in terms of stronger labor market competition (and thus lower wages and employment rates) for white workers.

While we are unable to isolate the two mechanisms just described, the existing evidence suggests that whites' backlash is, at least in part, due to concerns over the loss of social

[38]Results are unchanged when including also counties that never elected a Black official during our sample period.

status resulting from Black political advancement. On the one hand, Wright (2013) notes that the economic advancement experienced by Black Americans was often shared by segments of the white society.[39] Also, the economic gains experienced by African Americans might have triggered fears of status competition among the white majority, even if the latter group did not suffer any loss (Craig and Richeson, 2014). On the other hand, Bernini et al. (2022) find that the VRA led to an increase in capital, but not current, public expenditures. Even though spending on infrastructure (e.g., schools and roads) was often intended to benefit Black Americans, it seems unlikely that this generated direct negative effects on whites.

5.2 Economic and Social Determinants of Backlash

In this section, we examine additional mechanisms, exploring the extent to which whites' backlash varies with economic, social, and cultural factors. As for electoral rules, we replicate the baseline long-difference regression allowing the effects of the 1960 Black population share in covered (as opposed to non-covered) counties to vary along a number of pre-determined county characteristics. That is, we augment our model by adding a triple interaction between the VRA dummy, the 1960 Black population share, and different measures of the pre-existing economic, social, and cultural environment in the county.

We begin by asking whether whites' backlash is more pronounced in counties with a stronger legacy of white supremacy, proxied for by the presence of KKK klaverns and historical lynchings against African Americans prior to the introduction of the VRA in 1965.[40] We also investigate the potential role of Black political engagement, measured using the presence of local NAACP chapters in the county. Next, we test if race-specific education and employment levels influence whites' political response to the VRA. Finally, we consider the share of Black and white individuals living in urban areas – something that might affect voting behavior, both because of proximity to registration facilities and because of greater Black economic independence from the old white agrarian powers.[41]

We report results in Figure 5, where we plot the coefficients (with corresponding 95%

[39] Indeed, Aneja and Avenancio-Leon (2019) find that the reduction in the racial gap in economic outcomes was largely due to gains among Black Americans rather than losses among whites.

[40] In particular, we measure KKK presence between 1915 and 1940, and lynchings from 1902 and 1964, respectively. See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

[41] As explained in Appendix B, all race-specific variables are taken from the full count U.S. Population Census, and are thus measured in 1940. This is because county by race statistics on employment, education, and urban status are not available for later periods.

confidence intervals) on the triple interaction between the 1960 share of African Americans, the coverage dummy, and each of the characteristics described above. As shown in Panel A, the VRA leads to a stronger increase in Black registration rates in counties with a longer history of violence against African Americans and with a more educated Black population. These patterns are consistent with African Americans mobilizing more in areas where they had suffered more discrimination. They are also in line with findings in Croke et al. (2016) and Larreguy and Marshall (2017), according to which political engagement is increasing in the level of education. Instead, the presence of NAACP chapters is associated with a slower growth in Black registration rates, possibly because in these counties the Black community was already better equipped to overcome systematic voter suppression before the VRA. We do not detect any heterogeneity along urban or employment levels of either the Black or the white population.

Turning to whites' behavior (Panel B), we observe a much smaller degree of heterogeneity. In particular, the only variable for which the triple interaction coefficient is positive and statistically significant is the presence of KKK klaverns. However, the point estimate is quantitatively very small. For all other measures considered, we do not find any statistically (and economically) significant difference in whites' counter-mobilization. The fact that increased political participation of more educated Black voters is not perceived as a threat by whites is consistent with the idea that larger and more educated Black communities could lead to shared economic gains and promote the formation of a "biracial coalition for economic growth" (Wright, 2013).

Taken together, results in this and the previous section suggest that the political threat associated with Black empowerment is likely more important, compared to other economic and social forces, to explain whites' reactions to the VRA. One potential concern with this interpretation is that electoral rules might be correlated with some of the variables included in Figure 5, and we may thus be attributing to the former effects that are instead caused by the latter. To address this concern, in Figure A3, we replicate columns (2) and (3) of Table 6, by controlling separately for each of the triple interactions considered in Figure 5. Reassuringly, when focusing on white registration rates (Panel B), the coefficient on the interaction between the 1960 Black population share, the VRA dummy, and the SMD indicator is very stable and remains positive and statistically significant.[42]

[42]Panel A of Figure A3 also confirms results for Black voters reported in Table 6, column (2): the coefficient on the triple interaction with the SMD indicator is always close to zero and never statistically significant.

5.3 Exploring Additional Forces

Our analysis thus far points to Black office holding, and the associated perception of political threat among white voters, as the main driver of whites' backlash. However, results might also be driven by contemporaneous changes in the demographic, social, and economic environment induced by the VRA. To test this possibility, in Table 7, we re-estimate the baseline long-difference regression using as dependent variable the 1980-1960 change in a number of socio-economic and demographic variables.

In columns (1) to (3), we consider the change in the (log of) total, white, and Black population. Weighing against the idea that the VRA might have caused "white flight," inducing whites to leave covered counties with a larger Black population share, we do not find any impact on either total or white population. If anything, covered counties with a larger Black population share seem to experience a slight decline in Black population after the VRA. However, the coefficient is only marginally significant and quantitatively small. Column (4) provides additional evidence against the role of white flight, by documenting that the VRA does not trigger within county migration, away from more urban and towards more rural areas.

Next, in columns (5) to (7), we examine the possible effect of the VRA on the economic structure of covered (compared to non-covered) counties. We consider the 1982-1964 change in the share of farmland devoted to cotton production (column 5), and the 1980-1960 change in employment to population ratio and the employment share in manufacturing (columns 6 and 7). In all cases, we do not observe differential changes in the structure of production or in economic opportunities between covered and non-covered counties.[43]

Another possibility is that white counter-mobilization might be driven, at least in part, by the rising protests, demonstrations, and riots that took place in the U.S. South as the civil rights movements gained momentum.[44] Previous work documented that race riots reduced the value of African American property (Collins and Margo, 2007; Collins and Smith, 2007) and worsened labor market outcomes for African Americans (Collins and Margo, 2004). It is also possible that race riots instilled a sense of fear and insecurity in white voters, who reacted by mobilizing more and demanding a restoration of the pre-VRA social order.

[43]The coefficients for cotton share and employment share in manufacturing are consistent with covered counties becoming less reliant on manufacturing and more likely to cultivate cotton. However, point estimates are small and not statistically significant at conventional levels.

[44]Between 1964 and 1971, the U.S. South experienced 465 days of riots, during which 30 people lost their lives, 2,290 got injured, and 8,980 were arrested (see also Bernini, 2022 for more details).

To examine the potential link between conflicts and white counter-mobilization, in Table A3, we estimate our baseline long-difference model focusing on violent and non-violent riots as well as on pro- and anti-Black protests.[45] Columns (1) to (3) reveal that covered counties with a larger Black population share do not witness a stronger increase in non-violent conflict (either overall or involving Black and white individuals, respectively). Even though there is a slight increase in the frequency of violent conflicts involving Black Americans in covered counties with a higher Black population share (column 5), the point estimate is quantitatively small and only marginally significant. Finally, columns (7) to (9) document that covered counties with a larger Black population share experience a reduction in the total number of protests, driven by fewer pro-Black protests (while no change is visible for anti-Black demonstrations).

6 Long-Run Effects

An important question is whether the effects of the VRA on whites' backlash persisted over time, resulting in a permanent shift in racial attitudes. On the one hand, whites' hostility may have disappeared, as the salience of the VRA faded away and as whites came to realize that Black Americans did not represent a threat to the pre-existing (political, economic, or social) order. Moreover, if the VRA favored inter-group interactions, whites' negative stereotypes against Black Americans might have gradually declined, as shown in other contexts (Allport, 1954; Bursztyn et al., 2021). On the other hand, the VRA may have permanently increased whites' hostility. For instance, whites might have viewed the political and economic gains accruing to Black Americans as a direct threat to the racial hierarchy prevailing in the U.S. South for centuries. Hatred and grievances for the (actual or perceived) loss of status might have reinforced whites' racial animosity.

To make progress on these ambiguous predictions, we examine the relationship between the VRA and racially motivated hate crimes in the long-run. As in Calderon et al. (2022), we restrict attention to racially motivated hate crimes committed between 2000 and 2018, and estimate regressions that include state fixed effects, the vector of historical controls (see equation 1), and the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the coverage dummy.[46] We present results in Table 8.

[45]Data on conflicts and protests comes from Olzak (2015) and Olzak et al. (2011), respectively. See also Appendix B.3 and Table B4 for more details.

[46]For more details on hate crime data, see Calderon et al. (2022) and Appendix B. As before, standard errors are clustered at the judicial division level, and regressions are weighed by 1960 population. Since we cannot estimate DDD regressions, which exploit pre-post VRA variation and include county fixed

In column (1), the dependent variable is the average number of hate crimes against Black victims committed by any perpetrator between 2000 and 2018, per 100,000 Black people. The positive and statistically significant coefficient indicates that, between 2000 and 2018, more hate crimes against Black Americans were committed in counties covered by the VRA with a higher 1960 Black population share. In columns (2) and (3), we consider hate crimes committed against non-Black minority and white victims, respectively. Consistent with the spillover of racial animosity against non-Black minority groups, the point estimate in column (2) is positive and statistically significant; however, it is an order of magnitude smaller than the coefficient for hate crimes against Black victims.[47] When focusing on white victims (column 3), instead, the relationship between the VRA and hate crimes disappears.[48]

In column (4), we replicate column (1) by restricting attention to hate crimes against Black Americans committed by white perpetrators. Note that this likely represents a lower bound to the overall effect of the VRA on hate crimes committed by white offenders against African Americans, since for only about 65% of the cases the race of the perpetrator is reported (and, when race is reported, 90% of the hate crimes against Black victims are committed by a white offender). The coefficient is about half of that reported in column (1), but remains quantitatively large. According to our estimates, a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population share (in covered counties) is associated with 6.8 more hate crimes committed by white offenders against Black Americans per 100,000 people, or about 14% relative to the sample mean.

In Table A4, we provide additional evidence on the long-run effects of the VRA on whites' racial attitudes leveraging data on mass public shootings from Peterson and Densley (2019).[49] We estimate regressions identical to those presented in Table 8, using as dependent variable the number of mass shootings occurred between 2000 and 2019. Column (1) reveals that mass shootings committed by a white perpetrator against Black victims are more likely to occur in covered counties with a higher Black population share. Although the coefficient for shootings with non-Black minority victims is positive and large (column 2), it is not statistically significant. We are thus unable to conclude whether,

effects, we interpret results obtained in this section as suggestive evidence on the (long-run) effects of the VRA on whites' racial attitudes.

[47] These patterns are in line with the evidence presented in McConnell and Rasul (2021), who show that, after 9/11, whites' animosity against Arab Muslims resulted in higher hostility also against Hispanics.

[48] In unreported results, we also verified that the VRA has no effect on hate crimes against individuals who belong to the majority group, as defined by the FBI according ethnicity, religion, or any other dimension.

[49] See also Appendix B.3 and Table B4 for more details.

as for hate crimes, also for shootings there is evidence of spillovers of animosity against non-Black minorities. Instead, and consistent with results in Table 8, the VRA is not associated with a higher probability of shootings against white individuals (column 3). Columns (4) to (6) verify that there is no relationship between the VRA and shootings committed by Black offenders.

7 Conclusions

On August 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act was signed into law, striking down the legal barriers that had disenfranchised Black Americans since 1890. Soon after, Black political participation soared, leading to tangible political and economic improvements for African American communities. While a large literature has documented that the VRA succeeded in promoting African American progress along several dimensions, it is less clear whether the Act also won the hearts and minds of racially conservative southern whites. More broadly, the extent to which policy interventions aimed at ameliorating the conditions of minority groups are successful in generating empathy among majority group members or, instead, trigger backlash remains an open, important question.

In this paper, we assemble a novel dataset on county-level voter registration rates to examine the effects of the VRA on political participation by race. We exploit a key provision of the VRA, coverage, and implement a triple difference-in-differences (DDD) design. We find that, as intended by the Act, covered counties with a larger 1960 Black population share experience a faster growth in African American registration rates between 1960 and 1980. However, the VRA also triggers a steep increase in white registration rates, which we interpret as counter-mobilization, or backlash. We argue and provide evidence that whites' response is driven by (actual or perceived) threat posed by heightened Black political representation. Using data on hate crimes and shootings for the post-2000 period, we also document that the surge in racial animosity induced by the VRA persists over time.

Findings in this paper paint a nuanced picture of the VRA. While the Act improved the conditions of Black Americans along multiple dimensions, it also triggered significant and long-lasting opposition among the white majority. Our results open the door to several, important questions. Can governments introduce legislation to ameliorate the conditions of minority groups without generating backlash among majority group members? Specifically for the U.S. context, how can laws improve whites' racial attitudes towards African Americans? More generally, under what conditions do government poli-

cies change individuals' beliefs and social norms? We leave these questions to future research.

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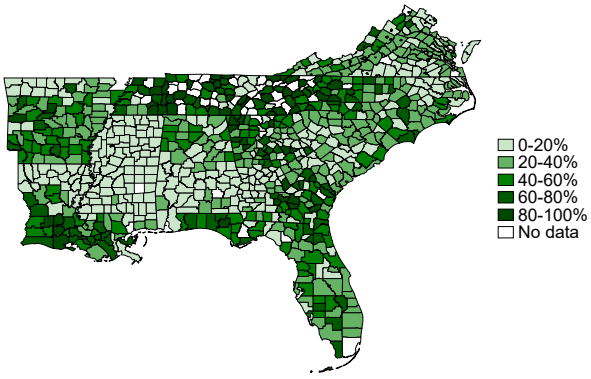
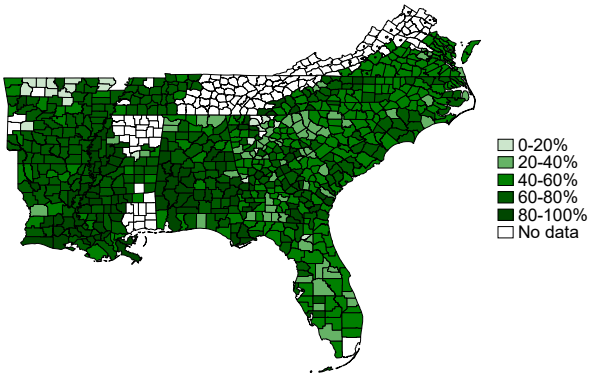
Figure 1. Voter registration rates by race, 1960-1980

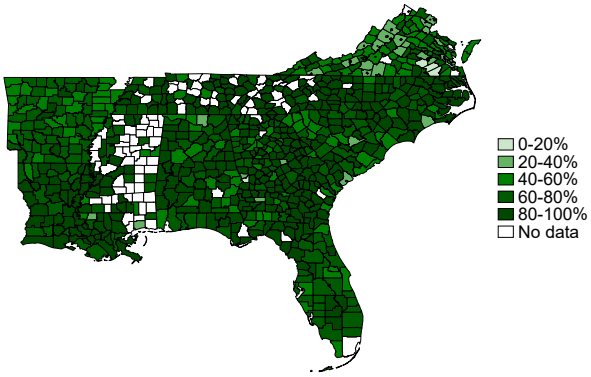
A. Black voter registration rates, 1960



B. Black voter registration rates, 1980



C. White voter registration rates, 1960



D. White voter registration rates, 1980

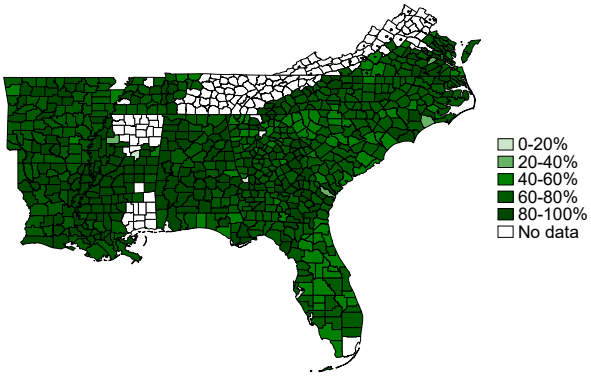
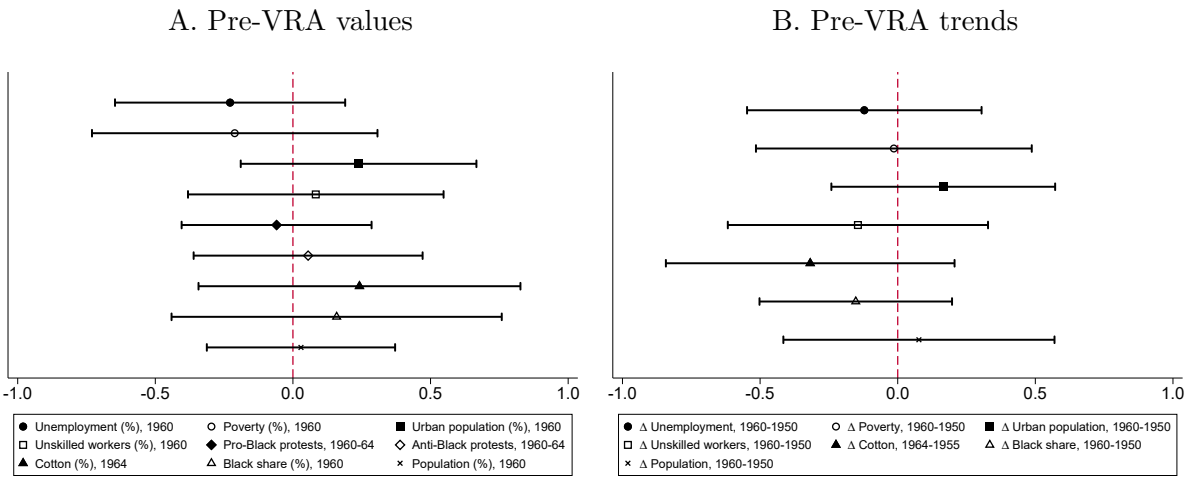
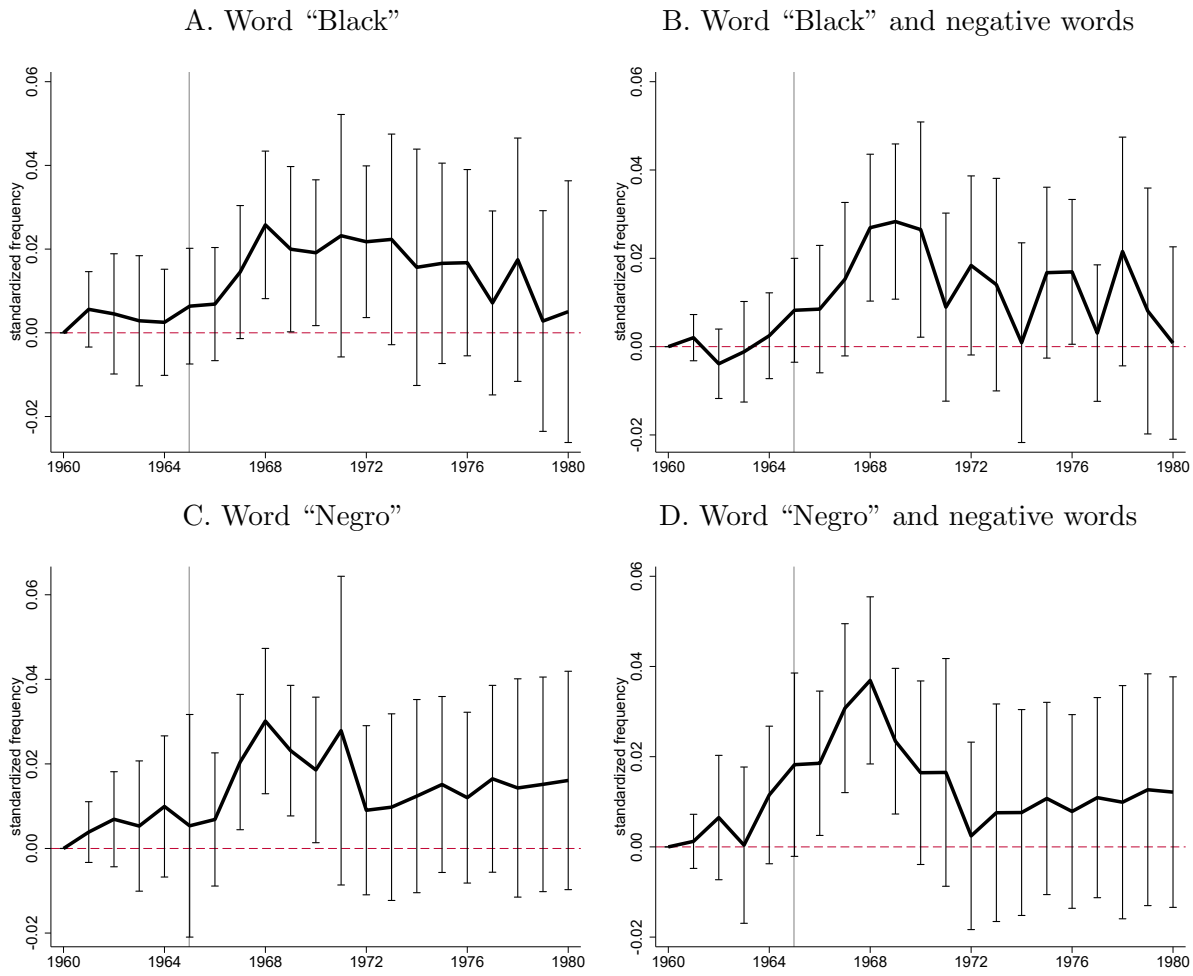


Figure 2. Balancing tests in the border sample: levels and trends



Notes: The figures plot coefficients (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the coverage indicator. Panels A and B consider levels and changes, respectively. To ease the interpretation of coefficients, all variables are standardized by subtracting their mean and dividing through their standard deviation. Regressions are weighed by the inverse of the counties' appearance in the sample, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions and border segments.

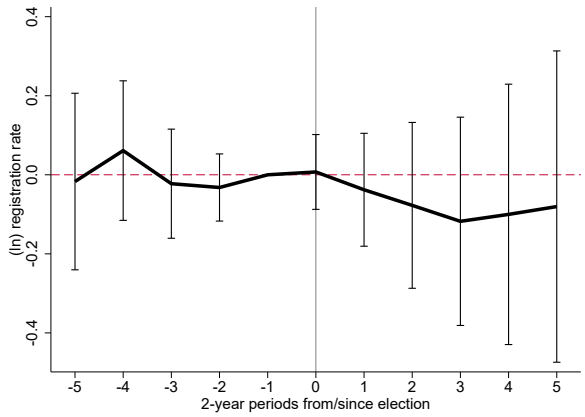
Figure 3. Newspapers in the U.S. South



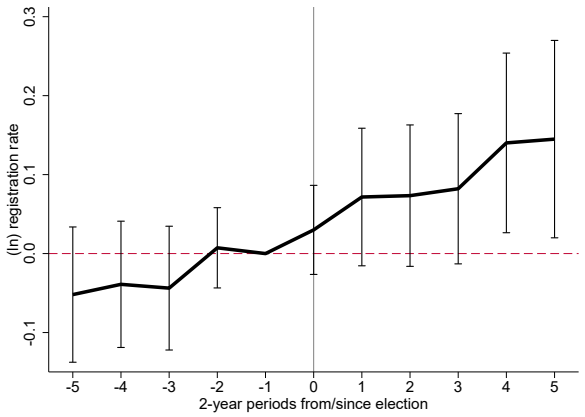
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA dummy, year dummies, and the 1960 Black population share in models that also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and, interactions between year dummies, the VRA dummy, and the vector of baseline controls. Year 1960 is used as omitted category. In Panels A and C, the dependent variable is the frequency of the word "Black" and "Negro", relative to the word "and", in local newspapers of each county in each year. Panels B and D consider the joint frequency of the above words with four disparaging terms associated with violence and crime, scaled by the frequency of the word "and". All variables are standardized by subtracting their mean and dividing through their standard deviation. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure 4. First Black elected official

A. Black (ln) voter registration



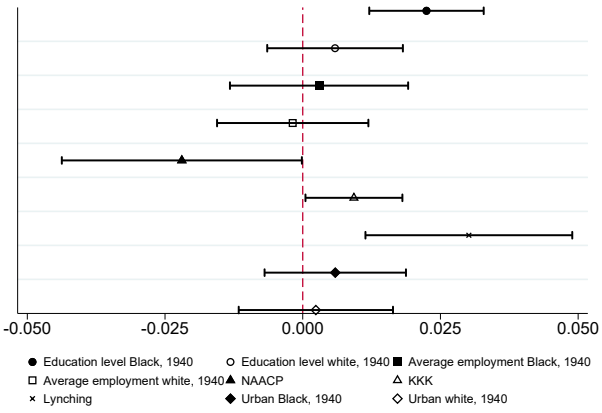
B. White (ln) voter registration



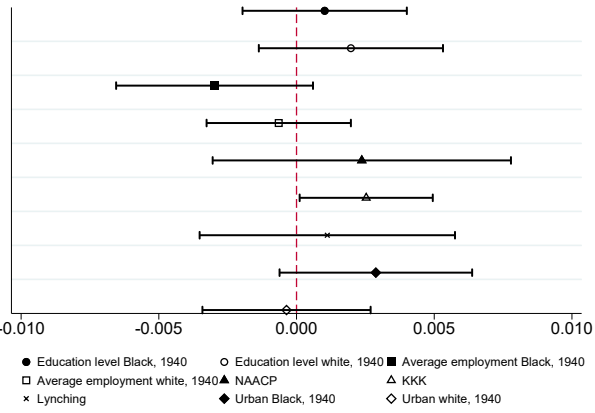
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA dummy and leads and lags for an indicator equal to one for the election of the first Black official in the county, in models that bin observations into 2-year periods, and also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and, interactions between year dummies and the vector of baseline controls. The year before the first election (indicated as period 0) is used as omitted category. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure 5. Quadruple difference models, 1980-1960

A. Change in (ln) Black registration



B. Change in (ln) white registration



Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the triple interaction coefficient between the VRA dummy, the 1960 Black population share, and each of the variables reported in the legend. All other variables are as in the long-difference model of equation (1). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Table 1. Change in (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates			
	Total	Black	White	Gap
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Balance within each variable				
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.008***	0.026***	0.005***	0.022***
	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.007)
Black share (%), 1960	0.003**	0.007	–0.002**	0.009**
	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	60.414	32.585	69.498	-36.251
	(18.723)	(20.672)	(18.419)	(22.539)
Black share (%), 1960	25.190	27.935	27.487	27.521
	(15.846)	(15.235)	(15.336)	(14.984)
Adj. R-Square	0.73	0.74	0.54	0.69
N	788	653	662	630

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (1). The dependent variable is the 1980-1960 change in the: log of registration rates in columns (1) to (3), and in the difference in the log of Black and white registration rates in column (4). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions also include interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 2. Change in (ln) registration rates, pre-VRA

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates			
	Total	Black	White	Gap
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: 1964-1956				
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.001	–0.006	0.002	–0.008
	(0.002)	(0.013)	(0.002)	(0.012)
Black share (%), 1960	0.003**	0.013	–0.000	0.013
	(0.001)	(0.012)	(0.001)	(0.011)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable at baseline	52.674	27.742	61.315	-31.514
	(16.330)	(18.668)	(17.988)	(21.536)
Adj. R-Square	0.27	0.11	0.23	0.12
N	592	620	592	553
Panel B: 1964-1960				
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.001	–0.001	0.002	–0.004
	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.004)
Black share (%), 1960	0.002***	0.004	–0.000	0.004
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable at baseline	57.303	30.402	64.174	-31.886
	(16.984)	(20.127)	(17.478)	(21.129)
Adj. R-Square	0.32	0.08	0.21	0.06
N	690	659	631	596
Panel C: 1960-1956				
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.000	–0.002	–0.000	–0.001
	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.007)
Black share (%), 1960	0.000	0.006	–0.000	0.005
	(0.001)	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.006)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable at baseline	55.522	29.410	64.327	-33.281
	(18.024)	(19.512)	(19.254)	(22.431)
Adj. R-Square	0.11	0.08	0.06	0.08
N	684	703	684	644

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (1). The dependent variable is the change in the: log of registration rates in columns (1) to (3), and in the difference in the log of Black and white registration rates in column (4). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions also include interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy. The change in registration rates is computed over the period: 1964-1956 in Panel A, 1964-1960 in Panel B, and 1960-1956 in Panel C. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, ** and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively.

Table 3. Pre-trends

Dep. variable:	KKK	Lynching	Cotton	NAACP	Goldwater	Republican	President turnout	Governor turnout	Governor win	State House	State Senate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Panel A: Full sample											
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	–0.001	–0.000	0.029***	–0.001	–0.001	0.003	–0.000	0.003	0.003	–0.000	–0.000
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black share (%), 1960	0.001***	–0.001	–0.029***	0.001	0.026***	0.017***	0.004**	0.004***	–0.001	0.000	–0.001
	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:											
Dep. variable at baseline	0.024	0.162	2.563	0.037	38.643	18.331	26.609	19.269	50.366	150.366	136.242
	(0.055)	(0.890)	(4.310)	(0.126)	(17.746)	(16.163)	(13.912)	(14.627)	(19.904)	(114.827)	(79.507)
Black share (%), 1960	27.105	27.072	27.432	27.116	26.956	26.976	27.215	27.211	27.211	27.148	27.148
	(19.986)	(19.973)	(20.132)	(19.981)	(19.855)	(19.860)	(19.978)	(19.974)	(20.016)	(19.997)	(19.997)
Adj. R-Square	0.153	0.006	0.300	0.021	0.833	0.765	0.397	0.780	0.337	0.537	0.355
N	818	820	789	817	804	802	811	811	806	815	815
Panel B: Border sample											
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.000	0.000	0.008	–0.002	0.015	0.013*	–0.003	–0.005	–0.006	0.002	0.003
	(0.001)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Black share (%), 1960	–0.000	0.020	–0.032**	0.003	0.025**	0.021*	0.012	0.040**	0.001	0.008*	0.009
	(0.002)	(0.019)	(0.013)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:											
Dep. variable at baseline	0.021	0.233	2.950	0.039	39.315	19.780	30.414	22.298	48.891	147.054	140.556
	(0.046)	(0.894)	(4.576)	(0.154)	(16.867)	(17.608)	(17.045)	(18.434)	(19.879)	(105.987)	(94.540)
Black share (%), 1960	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067	24.067
	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)	(19.954)
Adj. R-Square	0.373	0.094	0.650	–0.214	0.653	0.566	0.100	0.130	0.243	0.108	–0.030
N	223	223	222	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (1) using as outcome the change in the variable at the top of each column. All changes refer to 1960-1940, except for column (1) (1966-1940), column (3) (1964-1955), column (4) (1964-1942), column (5) (1964-1940), columns (10) and (11) (1960-1950). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions also include interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls in Panel A are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960. The sample of Panel A is based on the availability of voter registration data. Robust standard errors in parenthesis clustered by judicial divisions in Panel A, and by judicial divisions and border segments in Panel B. ***, ** and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively.

Table 4. Change in (ln) registration rates in border counties, 1980-1960

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates			
	Total	Black	White	Gap
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.026**	0.004**	0.022
	(0.001)	(0.011)	(0.002)	(0.014)
Black share (%), 1960	0.013***	0.048	–0.000	0.048
	(0.004)	(0.032)	(0.003)	(0.034)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	60.827	33.857	70.223	-36.365
	(17.849)	(21.759)	(16.662)	(19.852)
Black share (%), 1960	25.521	25.521	25.521	25.521
	(14.862)	(14.862)	(14.862)	(14.862)
Adj. R-Square	0.57	0.27	0.30	0.11
N	209	167	167	163

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1) using a GRD approach (see equation (2)). The sample is restricted to contiguous counties that belong to covered and non-covered states. The dependent variable is the 1980-1960 change in the: log of registration rates in columns (1) to (3), and in the difference in the log of Black and white registration rates in column (4). All regressions include county pair trends, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions are weighed by the inverse of the counties' appearance in the sample, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions and border segments. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 5. Robustness: sample selection

Dep. variable:	In sample	Voter Registration				
		Balanced Sample	Always 1968-1980	Always 1956-1980	Turnout 40%-60%	Turnout 45%-55%
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Black voter registration						
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	–0.001	0.027***	0.021**	0.021	0.023***	0.023**
	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.010)
Black share (%), 1960	0.007***	0.007	0.016**	0.016	0.004	0.002
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable at baseline	0.838	33.184	33.024	29.567	32.993	34.875
	(0.368)	(20.493)	(19.183)	(17.151)	(19.709)	(17.566)
Black share (%), 1960	25.617	27.521	26.183	26.608	26.636	25.238
	(16.169)	(14.984)	(13.682)	(13.634)	(13.929)	(14.188)
Adj. R-Square	0.80	0.71	0.71	0.72	0.67	0.69
N	1103	630	330	235	418	244
Panel B: White voter registration						
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.001	0.005**	0.004*	0.008*	0.004*	0.006**
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Black share (%), 1960	0.006**	–0.002*	–0.003*	–0.007	–0.003*	–0.004**
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable at baseline	0.830	69.436	71.572	67.021	70.672	70.550
	(0.376)	(18.403)	(17.199)	(14.598)	(18.290)	(16.237)
Black share (%), 1960	25.617	27.521	26.387	26.887	26.786	24.967
	(16.169)	(14.984)	(14.001)	(14.039)	(14.213)	(14.018)
Adj. R-Square	0.82	0.54	0.62	0.59	0.57	0.66
N	1103	630	337	241	426	246

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1): i) using a dummy for being in the sample in column (1); ii) restricting the sample to the counties with both black and white voter registration data in column (2); iii) restricting the sample to the states that always report registration data from 1968 until 1980 in column (3); iv) restricting the sample to the states that always report registration data from 1956 until 1980 in column (4); v) restricting the sample to the counties with a 1964 presidential turnout rate between 40% and 60%, and between 45% and 55%, respectively, in columns (5) and (6). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 6. Electoral rules, electoral outcomes, and (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

Dep. variable:	Elections	(ln) Registration Rates	
	County Governing Bodies	Black	White
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA X SMD	0.121**	0.008	0.009***
	(0.055)	(0.012)	(0.003)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.045	0.021**	0.004*
	(0.035)	(0.008)	(0.002)
Black share (%), 1960 X SMD	0.008	–0.013	0.002
	(0.031)	(0.008)	(0.002)
Black share (%), 1960	0.055**	0.013**	–0.003*
	(0.024)	(0.006)	(0.002)
Summary statistics:			
Dep. variable	0.000	32.585	69.498
	(0.000)	(20.672)	(18.419)
Black share (%), 1960	24.632	27.935	27.487
	(16.045)	(15.235)	(15.336)
Adj. R-Square	0.46	0.74	0.57
N	776	653	662

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1) augmented with the triple interaction between the 1960 Black population share, the coverage (VRA) dummy, and an indicator equal to 1 if the county belongs to a state with SMD electoral rules. The dependent variable is: i) the 1980-1964 change in the share of Black county commissioners; ii) the 1980-1960 change in Black (resp., white) log registration rates in column (2) (resp., column 3). All regressions are fully saturated and include all lower order interactions as well as state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions also include interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 7. Population, county characteristics, and employment

Dep. variable:	(ln) Total Pop	(ln) White Pop	(ln) Black Pop	Urban Share	Cotton Share	Employment to Pop	Manufacturing Share
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	–0.000	0.001	–0.003*	–0.013	0.048	0.011	–0.035
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.056)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Black share (%), 1960	–0.002	0.002	0.001	0.009	–0.027	–0.119***	–0.003
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.044)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.023)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable at baseline	44.003	22.313	9.884	32.628	2.423	66.957	21.323
	(94.388)	(35.535)	(21.945)	(28.997)	(4.643)	(7.409)	(12.446)
Black share (%), 1960	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681
	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)
Adj. R-Square	0.59	0.67	0.29	0.22	0.07	0.55	0.55
N	1103	1103	1039	1103	790	1103	1103

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1) using as dependent variable the change in each of the variable reported at the top of each column. For all variables, except cotton share, the change is measured over the 1980-1960 period. For cotton share, the change is computed between 1982 and 1964. The dependent variables at baseline that are presented in columns (1), (2), and (3) show the population in 1,000 people. All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions also include interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 8. Hate crimes

Dep. variable:	Hate Crime Rates			
	Any perpetrator			White perpetrator
Victim:	Black	Oth. min.	White	Black
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	1.536**	0.680**	-0.006	0.675**
	(0.592)	(0.277)	(0.009)	(0.323)
Black share (%), 1960	-1.789***	-0.294*	0.009	-0.807**
	(0.588)	(0.154)	(0.008)	(0.321)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	12.055	13.487	0.338	4.934
	(330.337)	(59.188)	(2.622)	(39.771)
Black share (%), 1960	22.601	22.601	22.601	22.601
	(15.838)	(15.838)	(15.838)	(15.838)
Adj. R-Square	-0.02	0.12	0.01	0.06
N	1104	1104	1104	1104

Notes: The table estimates county-level regressions for the average hate crime rates between 2000 and 2018 against: state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the coverage (VRA) dummy, the vector of county controls, and their interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Appendix: Additional material

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A Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1. Black population share, 1960

A. Black population, 1960 B. Black population in border sample, 1960

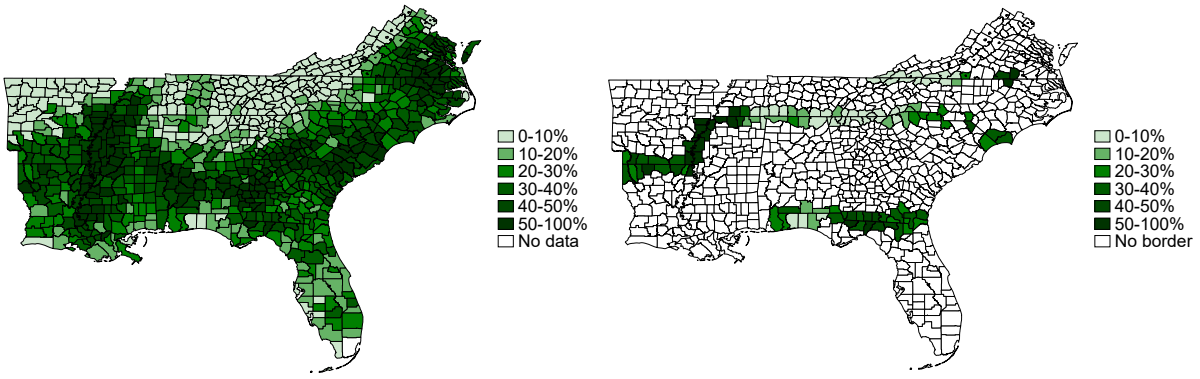
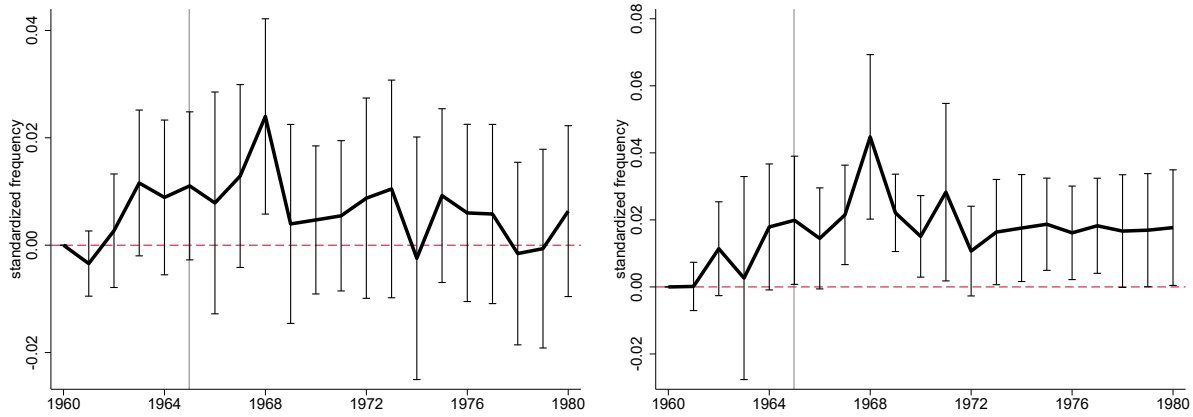


Figure A2. Newspapers in the U.S. South: Wallace

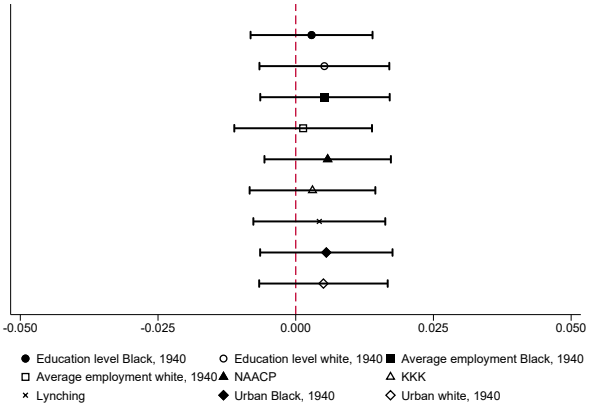
A. Word "Wallace" B. Word "Wallace" and word "Negro"



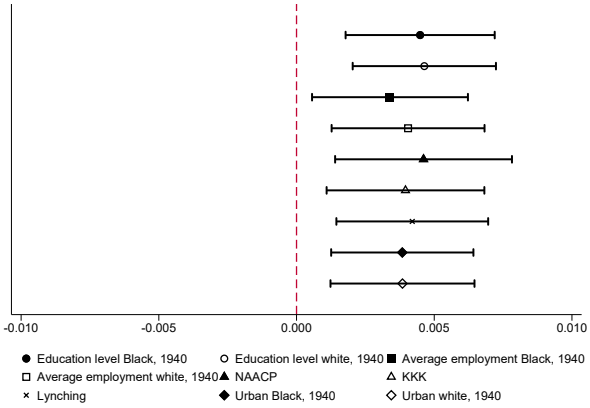
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA dummy, year dummies, and the 1960 Black population share in models that also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and, interactions between year dummies, the VRA dummy, and the vector of baseline controls. Year 1960 is used as omitted category. In Panels A and B, the dependent variable is the frequency of the word "Wallace" and its joint frequency with the word "Negro", relative to the word "and", in local newspapers of each county in each year. Both variables are standardized by subtracting their mean and dividing through their standard deviation. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure A3. Quadruple difference models, 1980-1960: SMD

A. Change in (ln) Black registration



B. Change in (ln) white registration



Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the triple interaction coefficient between the VRA dummy, the 1960 Black population share, and the SMD indicator. Each of the variables reported in the legend is also included (one at a time) as a triple interaction term with the VRA dummy and the 1960 Black population share. All other variables are as in the long-difference model of equation (1). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Table A1. Summary statistics

	Covered				Not covered			
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Panel A: Voter registration sample								
Political participation in 1960								
Black voter registration rates (%)	30.1	24.0	0.0	100.0	48.7	24.0	0.4	100.0
White voter registration rates (%)	82.2	18.2	5.5	100.0	85.6	15.5	52.2	100.0
Total voter registration rates (%)	65.3	19.9	4.6	100.0	79.0	17.3	30.6	100.0
Gap Black-white (%)	-52.1	27.7	-100.0	30.1	-36.9	24.7	-95.2	44.7
Political participation in 1980								
Black voter registration rates (%)	62.0	19.4	0.0	100.0	56.4	15.0	18.5	100.0
White voter registration rates (%)	76.3	14.5	8.7	100.0	70.4	12.1	45.7	100.0
Total voter registration rates (%)	72.9	15.7	7.1	100.0	66.9	12.0	40.1	98.9
Gap Black-white (%)	-14.4	14.4	-93.3	30.5	-14.0	11.2	-51.5	9.2
County characteristics								
Black share (%), 1960	35.9	18.3	0.1	83.4	20.6	13.9	0.7	68.9
Population (thousands), 1960	41.1	68.9	1.9	634.9	64.7	121.8	2.9	935.0
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	75.2	7.1	42.6	91.0	69.2	9.5	45.6	86.4
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.2	1.7	1.3	11.9	4.9	1.7	1.8	11.1
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	49.0	12.8	12.5	77.8	41.5	13.5	17.6	75.3
Urban population (%), 1960	29.2	23.9	0.0	100.0	32.4	27.4	0.0	96.6
Cotton share (%), 1964	2.3	3.0	0.0	22.5	0.4	1.4	0.0	12.1
Pro-Black protests, 1960-64	1.2	5.5	0.0	63.0	1.3	4.6	0.0	34.0
Anti-Black protests, 1960-64	0.4	2.6	0.0	37.0	0.2	1.0	0.0	9.0
Panel B: Full U.S. South sample								
County characteristics								
Black share (%), 1960	32.5	20.0	0.0	83.4	13.2	14.1	0.0	68.9
Population (thousands), 1960	34.7	57.8	0.0	634.9	40.9	101.9	0.2	1243.2
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	73.9	8.7	26.6	93.5	70.7	9.6	31.9	89.8
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.0	1.9	0.0	11.9	4.9	2.2	0.0	15.9
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	46.2	16.2	0.0	77.8	43.7	14.9	0.0	78.0
Urban population (%), 1960	28.2	29.0	0.0	100.0	33.0	28.2	0.0	97.7
Cotton share (%), 1964	2.1	3.4	0.0	28.6	2.6	5.4	0.0	40.2
Pro-Black protests, 1960-64	1.1	5.7	0.0	74.0	0.5	3.2	0.0	46.0
Anti-Black protests, 1960-64	0.3	2.0	0.0	37.0	0.1	0.5	0.0	9.0

Table A2. Summary statistics: Newspapers

	Covered				Not covered			
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
County characteristics								
Black share (%), 1960	32.6	19.4	0.0	83.4	13.8	11.8	0.0	53.6
Population (thousands), 1960	57.8	81.4	0.0	634.9	105.3	183.4	5.2	1243.2
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	72.7	9.0	43.4	86.7	65.1	9.6	31.9	88.6
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.1	1.5	0.0	9.7	4.7	1.7	1.5	11.0
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	46.5	15.6	0.0	75.2	35.9	13.0	10.9	78.0
Urban population (%), 1960	36.1	28.3	0.0	100.0	54.2	27.9	0.0	97.7
Cotton share (%), 1964	3.2	4.6	0.0	28.6	3.3	6.4	0.0	40.2
Pro-Black protests, 1960-64	2.7	9.8	0.0	74.0	1.2	3.5	0.0	21.0
Anti-Black protests, 1960-64	0.5	2.3	0.0	24.0	0.1	0.3	0.0	2.0

Table A3. Conflicts and protests

Dep. variable:	Non-violent Conflicts			Violent Conflicts			Protests		
	Total	Black	White	Total	Black	White	Total	Pro-Black	Anti-Black
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.000	0.001	–0.000	0.001	0.001*	0.000	–0.011**	–0.011**	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.001)
Black share (%), 1960	–0.001	–0.001	–0.000	–0.001	–0.001*	–0.000	–0.005***	–0.004**	–0.002***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:									
Dep. variable at baseline	1.050	0.913	0.464	0.951	0.829	0.398	1.582	1.356	0.226
	(1.070)	(1.046)	(0.643)	(0.837)	(0.783)	(0.571)	(2.295)	(1.970)	(0.534)
Black share (%), 1960	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681
	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)
Adj. R-Square	0.31	0.35	0.24	0.30	0.28	0.23	0.13	0.13	0.06
N	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1) using as dependent variable the change in each of the variable reported at the top of each column. All variables are measured as the change in the average values between 1976 and 1980 with the average values between 1960 and 1964. All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Regressions also include interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table A4. Shootings

Dep. variable:	Shootings					
Perpetrator:	White			Black		
Victim:	Black	Oth. min.	White	Black	Oth. min.	White
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.009**	0.020	0.003	0.002	-0.002	-0.006
	(0.004)	(0.021)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Black share (%), 1960	-0.007**	-0.023	-0.004	-0.000	0.002	0.005
	(0.003)	(0.021)	(0.008)	(.)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable	0.093	0.284	0.212	0.044	0.068	0.199
	(0.740)	(1.809)	(1.232)	(0.401)	(0.447)	(1.093)
Black share (%), 1960	22.601	22.601	22.601	22.601	22.601	22.601
	(15.838)	(15.838)	(15.838)	(15.838)	(15.838)	(15.838)
Adj. R-Square	0.20	0.12	0.11	0.13	0.19	0.22
N	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104	1104

Notes: The table estimates county-level regressions for the sum of shootings between 2000 and 2019 against: state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the coverage (VRA) dummy, the vector of county controls, and their interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

B Variable Definitions and Sources

Appendix B.1 and B.2 provide a detailed description of the data on voter registration statistics and on Black elected officials, respectively. Appendix B.3 presents all other variables.

B.1 Voter Registration Rates

We located official records on voter registrations for all states of the former Confederacy, except for Texas, from the archive of the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project (VEP), based in Atlanta.[50] The availability of voter registration statistics by race for each state and year, together with the corresponding source, is presented in Table B1. Most records originate from reports of the Secretary of State, the Board of Registrations, the Auditor of State, and the Election Commissioner. In some instances, we retrieved that data from the U.S. Justice Department and surveys of local governments carried out by the Southern Regional Council. We complemented these records with additional information from the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961). After digitizing these records, we combined them with total registration data from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (1992) to obtain a county-level panel dataset on the number of registered voters (total and by race) for the period between 1956 and 1980.

To the best of our knowledge, the dataset we assembled represents the most comprehensive list of southern voter registration statistics by race at the county level for this period. However, as shown in Table B1, our data is not available for all states and years. In our main analysis, we consider the change in registration rates between 1960 and 1980 (see equation (1) in Section 4.1). In order to maximize the sample size, we replaced 1980 missing values with registration rates measured in subsequent years for Arkansas (1983), Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia (1984). We also replaced missing values using figures from neighboring years (to match the chosen 4-year frequency of the dataset) for Arkansas, using 1963 instead of the missing year 1964.[51]

In the analysis, we consider race-specific voter registration rates, which are constructed by dividing the number of registered voters by the voting age population by race from Manson et al. (2019).[52] Due to changes in the legal requirements to vote, we define the

[50] As noted in the main text, following the 1966 federal decision to strike down the Texas poll tax as unconstitutional – *United States v. Texas, 252 F. Supp. 234 (W. D. Tex.), aff'd, 384 U.S. 155 (1966)* – Texas began a system of annual registrations that eliminated information on voters' race (Doty, 1969).

[51] Reassuringly, results are robust to excluding these four states (Table C2).

[52] Whenever the voter registration rate is above 100%, we windsorize it. However, results are robust to

voting age population as: age 21+ for 1970 and prior years; and, and age 18+ for 1980 and later years.[53] Since official information on voting age population is available every 10 years, we follow Cascio and Washington (2014) and use a linear interpolation to obtain information on each intercensal year from 1950 onwards.

B.2 Black Elected Officials

Data on Black elected officials comes from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO). This directory was first set up by VEP in 1969, and included information on all Black officials elected at the national, state, and local level.[54] For more than two decades, the NRBEO was maintained by the Joint Center for Political Studies, which kept and updated information on Black office holders mostly via questionnaires sent to previously known officials. The data was then checked via phone calls to the appropriate jurisdictions. News clippings, government and state offices, associations of officials, and organizations interested in Black political participation helped to further tailor the directory. The NRBEO is available only in paper format; we thus digitized it to construct the total number of Black elected officials in each southern local office by counting the number of officials by office reported in the NRBEO in 1969, 1971, and for the period 1973-1980.[55] For the pre-VRA period, we used information both from reports of the Southern Regional Council and from local newspapers' archives. This allowed us to construct a directory of Black elected officials also for years 1962 and 1964.[56]

In our analysis (see Section 5.1 and Table 6), we scale the number of Black elected officials just described by the number of all elected officials in the county and year, in order to derive the share of African American office holders.

B.3 Additional Variables

County demographic and economic characteristics. In the paper, we use several additional variables (either as controls or as outcomes) on county demographic and economic characteristics. First, from the County and City Data Book 1947-1977 (Inter-

exclude county-year observations for which registration rates are above 100% (Table C2).

[53]On June 22, 1970, President Nixon signed into law *H.R. 4249*, lowering the voting age requirement to 18 starting on January 1, 1971.

[54]The data includes Black elected officials in: county governments, municipality governments, and school boards.

[55]We matched officials to the represented county using the address provided in the documents.

[56]We verified that our data are consistent with aggregate counts published at the time by Voter Education Project (1969). For more details on data on Black elected officials, see also Bernini et al. (2022).

university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012), we obtain county-level data on: *i*) Black, white, and total population (for each decade); *ii*) the percentage of families with income below 3,000 U.S. dollars in 1960; *iii*) the 1960 unemployment rate; *iv*) the percentage of individuals 25 years old or more without a high school diploma in 1960; and, *v*) the urban population share in 1960. Second, we use the United States Census of Agriculture (Haines et al., 2018) to measure the share of farmland in the county devoted to cotton production in 1964 and 1955. Third, we obtain an index for cotton suitability based on the maximum potential cotton yield by county from Hornbeck and Naidu (2014).

Additional political variables. In addition to data on voter registration and Black elected officials described, respectively, in Appendix B.1 and B.2, we use several sources to measure the political environment across southern counties. First, we collect data on the 1940 and 1960 Republican vote shares in presidential elections from Clubb et al. (2006). From the same source, augmented with the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2013), we obtain data on: *i*) voter turnout in presidential elections of 1960 and 1940; and, *ii*) the vote shares of Barry Goldwater and Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1964 and 1952 presidential elections. Second, using data from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (1999), Bartley and Graham (2006), and Manson et al. (2019), we calculate voter turnout in gubernatorial elections for 1940 and 1960 as the ratio between votes cast in gubernatorial elections and voting age population.[57] Third, we take the vote share received by the lead candidate in the Democratic primaries of 1940 and 1960 from Bartley and Graham (2006). Fourth, we use data from David and Eisenberg (1961) to calculate the number of seats per person in the State Senate and House of the county, relative to those in the state, in 1950 and 1960.

Besides electoral outcomes, we consider additional political variables. First, our main treatment variable ("coverage status", or a dummy equal to one if a county was subject to the special provisions of the VRA in 1965) is defined using information from the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.[58] Second, we collect data on the electoral rules of county governing bodies from the Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments (1957) and from the 1980 volume of the NRBEO. Finally, we collect data from the United States Attorney's Office and the United States District Courts to map counties to the judicial districts and their corresponding judicial

[57]For elections cast in years other than 1960 or 1940, we use the first off-cycle election after the corresponding decade.

[58]Source: `https://www.justice.gov/crt`.

divisions.[59]

Historical proxies for race relations. In the paper, we consider several proxies for racial attitudes, discrimination, and political engagement within the Black community across southern counties. First, we obtain the number of anti- and pro-Black riots and protests that occurred between 1960 and 1980 from Olzak et al. (2011).[60] Second, we measure the presence of Ku Klux Klan organizations (known as Klaverns), standardized by the size of the white population, from two sources. For the 1915-1940 period, we use the geographic coordinates of each headquarter, reported from Kneebone and Torres (2015); for the 1964-1966 period, we instead rely on data from the House of Representatives (1967). Third, we obtained the number of lynchings of Black individuals, scaled by the Black population, between 1930 and 1964, by digitizing information from Ramey and McWilliams (2017). Fourth, we counted the number of local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), scaled by the Black population, in 1942 and 1964 using data from Gregory (2018).[61] Fifth, we record violent conflicts (which include spontaneous disruptions, boycotts, riots, and ethnic vandalism) and non-violent conflicts (meetings, rallies, and picketing) between 1960 and 1980 from Olzak (2015). Lastly, we use local newspapers data from the website Newspapers.com to measure the frequency of selected terms (and their occurrence with the words "Black" and "Negro"), relative to the frequency of the word "and" (used to proxy for circulation) in each county and year between 1960 and 1980.[62]

Hate crimes. We examine the long-run impact of the VRA on whites' racial attitudes using hate crime data compiled by the FBI as part of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program, and distributed by Federal Bureau of Investigation (2016).[63] We match incidents to southern counties, based on the location of the reporting agency, as provided by the Originating Agency Identifier (ORI), restricting the sample by dropping counties for which an agency did not report any hate crime for all years within a 5-year interval. The data is available from 1991 to 2018. However, as in Calderon et al. (2022), we focus on hate crimes reported from 2000 (included) onward, since the number of agencies collecting records grew during the 1990s, stabilizing only towards the end of the decade.

[59] This piece of information is used in the paper to better capture the local nature of the legal battles for the VRA's enforcement.

[60] We matched the original dataset, reported at the city-level, to the counties in our sample.

[61] Since the original data is available at the city level, we mapped each city to the corresponding county.

[62] For more details on newspapers data, see Fouka et al. (2022) and Calderon et al. (2022).

[63] Hate crimes are defined as "criminal offenses that are motivated, in whole or in part, by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity" (FBI Report, 2015).

This implies that, until the late-1990s, the quality and the comparability of the data is rather low.

Exploiting the fact that the data records the race of the victim, we define hate crimes against: African Americans, non-Black minorities, and whites. In 65% of the cases, the FBI records also report the race of the perpetrator. We use this piece of information to count the number of hate crimes committed by a white perpetrator against a Black American victim (almost 90% of the hate crimes against Black Americans for which the race of the perpetrator is reported have a white offender).[64] For each of the four variables, we derive the average number of hate crimes over the 2000-2018 period; then, we scale it by the corresponding population at baseline to obtain a measure of average hate crime rates, which is used as outcome in our analysis.

Shootings. We consider the information on all the mass public shootings between 2000 and 2019 from The Violence Project Database of Mass Shootings in the United States, 1966-2019 (Peterson and Densley, 2019).[65] The database includes episodes of shootings with at least 4 casualties (excluding the shooter), and codes nearly 200 life history variables, including mental health history, trauma, interest in past shootings, and situational triggers. We exploit the race of the perpetrator that is coded in the dataset to identify episodes with either a Black shooter or a white shooter. Similarly, we exploit the available data to record the race of the victim, defining a shooting against African Americans if there is at least one Black casualty. Similarly, we define a shooting against non-Black minorities (whites) if there is at least one non-Black minority (white) casualty in the mass public shooting event.

[64]Note that, since not all hate crimes committed by whites against Black American victims include the race of the perpetrator, this measure will be an under-estimate of the number of hate crimes with a white perpetrator against African Americans.

[65]For the analysis, we matched the original dataset, reported at the city-level, to the counties in our sample.

Table B1. The dataset on voter registration by race

	Alabama	Arkansas	Florida	Georgia	Louisiana
1956	Commission on Civil Rights 59	Commission on Civil Rights 59	Commission on Civil Rights 59	Commission on Civil Rights 59	Commission on Civil Rights 59
1960	Commission on Civil Rights 61	Commission on Civil Rights 61	Secretary of State	Commission on Civil Rights 61	Board of Registration
1964	Boards of Registrars	Auditor of State (63)	Secretary of State	Voter Education Project	Board of Registration
1968	Boards of Registrars		Secretary of State	Voter Education Project	Board of Registration
1972	Boards of Registrars		Division of Elections	Secretary of State	Board of Registration
1976	Boards of Registrars (74)		Division of Elections		Board of Registration
1980	Boards of Registrars	Auditor of State (83)	Division of Elections	Secretary of State	Commissioner of Elections

	Mississippi	North Carolina	South Carolina	Tennessee	Virginia
1956	Commission on Civil Rights 59	Commission on Civil Rights 59	Secretary of State (58)		Commission on Civil Rights 59
1960	Commission on Civil Rights 61	Commission on Civil Rights 61	Secretary of State	Commission on Civil Rights 61	State Board of Elections
1964	Voter Education Project		Secretary of State	Election Commission Registrar	State Board of Elections
1968	Voter Education Project	State Board of Elections	Voter Education Project	Election Commission Registrar	
1972	Voter Education Project	State Board of Elections	State Election Commission	Election Commission Registrar	
1976		State Board of Elections	State Election Commission		
1980	Secretary of State (84)	State Board of Elections	State Election Commission	Voter Education Project (84)	State Board of Elections (84)

Notes: The Commission on Civil Rights 59 and the Commission on Civil Rights 61 stand for United States Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961). For Mississippi, only Black voter registration statistics are available for 1956 and 1960. When a neighboring year is considered, this is shown in parenthesis next to the source.

Table B2. Coverage, governing bodies, and electoral rules in the U.S. South

State	*Coverage*	*County governing bodies*	*Electoral rules*
Alabama	Covered	Commissioner	Mixed system
Arkansas	Not covered	Justice of the peace	Single member districts (SMD)
Florida	Not covered	Commissioner	At-large system
Georgia	Covered	Commissioner	At-large system
Louisiana	Covered	Police jury	Single member districts (SMD)
Mississippi	Covered	Supervisor	Single member districts (SMD)
North Carolina	Partially covered[a]	Commissioner	Mixed system
South Carolina	Covered	Commissioner	Mixed system
Tennessee	Not covered	Magistrate	Single member districts (SMD)
Texas	Not covered	Commissioner/Magistrate	Single member districts (SMD)
Virginia	Covered	Supervisor	Single member districts (SMD)

[a] Only 39 of the 100 counties are covered: Anson, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Camden, Caswell, Chowan, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gaston, Gates, Granville, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Hertford, Hoke, Jackson, Lee, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Onslow, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Robeson, Rockingham, Scotland, Union, Vance, Washington, Wayne, Wilson.

Table B3. Judicial divisions

State	*Source*
Alabama	U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District) U.S. District Court (Southern District)
Arkansas	U.S. Attorney's Office (Eastern District) U.S. District Court (Western District)
Florida	U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District) U.S. District Court (Southern District)
Georgia	U.S. Attorney's Office (Southern District) U.S. District Court (Northern District and Middle District)
Louisiana	U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District) U.S. District Court (Middle District and Eastern District)
Mississippi	U.S. District Court (Northern District and Southern District)
North Carolina	U.S. District Court (Western District, Middle District, and Eastern District)
South Carolina	U.S. District Court
Tennessee	U.S. Attorney's Office (Middle District) U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District)
Texas	U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District, Northern District, and Eastern District) U.S. District Court (Southern District)
Virginia	U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District)

Table B4. Variable description

Variable	Description	Source
Outcome Variables		
Black elected officials	Number of Black elected officials in local governments between 1962 and 1980, divided by the total number of elected officials for the corresponding offices. See Bernini et al. (2022) for more details.	Authors' calculations from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials and the Census of Governments
Hate crime rates	Average number of hate crimes against a target group between 2000 and 2018, divided by the population of the corresponding group in 2000. A similar measure is constructed for hate crimes against African American victims with a white perpetrator.	Authors' calculations from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016)
Newspapers' mentions	Frequency of selected terms, scaled by the frequency of the word "and," in local newspapers in each southern county and each year from 1960 to 1980.	Newspapers.com
Voter registration rates	Log of registered voters divided by voting age population, total and by race, between 1956 and 1980 (see also Appendix B.1).	Archive of the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project (VEP), the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961) and Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (1992)
Main Regressors		
Black population share	Number of Black Americans over county population in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Coverage (VRA)	Dummy variable equal to one for the counties that were covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and zero otherwise.	Authors' calculations using information available from the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice
Single member districts (SMD)	Indicator equal to one for covered states where members of county governing bodies are elected by single member districts and zero otherwise. See also Bernini et al. (2022) for more details.	Authors' calculations from the Census of Governments (1957) and the NRBEO (1980)
Control Variables		
Cotton share	Share of farmland devoted to cotton production in 1964.	Authors' calculations from the United States Census of Agriculture (Haines et al., 2018)
Cotton suitability index	Index of cotton suitability based on maximum potential cotton yield by county.	Hornbeck and Naidu (2014)
Families below poverty line	Share of families with income below 3,000 U.S. dollars in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Population	County population (measured in different decades).	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Pro- and anti-Black protests	Number of pro-and anti-Black events between 1960 and 1964.	Authors' calculations from the Dynamics of Collective Action Dataset (Olzak et al., 2011)

Unemployment Rate	Unemployment rate in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Unskilled share	Share of individuals 25 years old or more without a high school diploma in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Urban	Share of urban population in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Additional Variables		
Conflicts and protests	Violent conflicts include spontaneous disruptions, boycotts, riots, and ethnic vandalism between 1960 and 1980. Non-violent conflicts include meetings, rallies, and picketing between 1960 and 1980. Pro- and anti-Black protests are recorded between 1960 and 1980.	Conflicts data from Olzak (2015) and protests data from the Dynamics of Collective Action Dataset (Olzak et al., 2011)
Goldwater	Log of the vote shares of Republican candidates Dwight D. Eisenhower and Barry Goldwater in the 1952 and 1964 presidential elections.	Authors' calculations from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2013)
Governor turnout	Log of votes cast in the 1940 and 1960 gubernatorial elections divided by voting age population.	Authors' calculations from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (1999) and Bartley and Graham (2006)
KKK	Number of Ku Klux Klan klaverns, divided by the white population, between 1915 and 1966.	Authors' calculations from: i) for the 1915-1940 period, the Virginia Commonwealth University's project "Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan" (Kneebone and Torres, 2015); and ii) for the 1964-1966 period, "The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement: Report by the Committee on Un-American Activities" (House of Representatives, 1967)
Lynching	Number of lynchings against Black Americans, divided by the Black population, from 1930 to 1964.	Authors' calculations from Ramey and McWilliams (2017)
NAACP	Number of local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1942 and 1964, scaled by the 1940 and 1960 Black population.	Authors' calculations from Gregory (2018)
Presidential turnout	Log of the number of votes cast in the 1940 and 1960 presidential elections divided by voting age population.	Authors' calculations from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2013)
Republican vote share	Log of vote shares of Republican candidates in the 1940 and 1960 presidential elections.	Authors' calculations from Clubb et al. (2006) and i) Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2013)
Shootings	Mass public shootings with at least 4 casualties (excluding the shooter) between 2000 and 2019.	Authors' calculations from The Violence Project Database of Mass Shootings in the United States, 1966-2019 (Peterson and Densley, 2019)
State House	Number of seats per person in the county, divided by the figure for the state overall, in 1950 and 1960.	David and Eisenberg (1961)
State Senate	Number of seats per person in the county, divided by the figure for the state overall, in 1950 and 1960.	David and Eisenberg (1961)

Voting age population	Due to changes in the legal requirements to vote, age 21+ are used for 1970 and prior years, and age 18+ for 1980 and later years. Official information on voting age population is available every 10 years. A linear interpolation is considered for intercensal years.	Authors' calculations from Manson et al. (2019)

C Robustness Checks

C.1 Heterogeneity and Selection

We already showed in the main text that results are unlikely to suffer from sample selection bias (Section 4.3). We now provide additional evidence against this potential threat. We also test whether heterogeneity based on either observable or unobservable factors may be driving our estimates. We report results in Table C1 for Black and white voter registration rates in Panels A and B, respectively. In column (1), we replicate the long-difference specification on a sample obtained from the coarsened exact matching (CEM) algorithm, which reduces the potential imbalance in covariates between covered and non-covered counties.[66]

Next, we present estimates obtained from propensity score stratification and from trimming the sample on the propensity scores, respectively. Propensity scores are first calculated through a logistic regression. In order to move from a skewed to a normal distribution, we compute the linear predictor (i.e., the log of the odds of the propensity scores). Then, we implement the stratification, which allows us to estimate the effects of coverage by comparing covered and non-covered counties within each stratum. In column (2), we present results based on stratifying the sample into quintiles, whereas in column (3), we trim the sample to its common support (constructed from the propensity scores just described).

Finally, since the 1960 Black population share is substantially larger in covered than in non-covered counties (see also Table A1), in column (4), we replicate results by trimming the sample on the common support defined by the share of African Americans in 1960.

Reassuringly, in all cases, results are in line with those obtained from the baseline specification and reported in Table 1.

C.2 Data Quality

In Table C2, we test the quality of our data, presenting again results for Black and white registration rates in Panels A and B, respectively. In column (1), we verify that results are not driven by the choice of the base year (1960) in the long-difference regression. Specifically, we re-estimate the baseline specification over the period 1964 to 1980. Reassuringly, results remain in line with those reported in Table 1; if anything, they become somewhat

[66] The algorithm first temporarily coarsens the data and then computes exact matches on these coarsened data. The analysis is run on the uncoarsened, matched data. See also Iacus et al. (2012) for more details on CEM.

larger for Black voter registration. Then, we address the concern that results might be biased by non-random measurement error in voter registration data. In column (2), we trim observations with registration rates equal to or higher than 100% in either 1960 or 1980.[67] In column (3), we drop counties that, in any year between 1956 and 1980, report a measure of total registered voters (i.e., our numerator) higher than total turnout.[68] In both cases, results remain unchanged.

In column (4), we exclude the four southern states (Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Virginia) that do not report registration values for the year 1980.[69] In column (5) we define the dependent variable as the change between the average value of 1960-1964 and the average value of 1976-1980.[70] In column (6), we omit from the set of controls the share of the land in the county devoted to cotton production in 1964. This is because this variable, obtained from the U.S. Census of Agriculture, does not exist for the independent cities in Virginia. Finally, in column (7), we include the Republican vote share in the 1964 presidential election. This is because we observe a slight pre-trend in the border sample of Table 3 (Panel B). Once again, results always remain in line with those from our baseline specification.

C.3 Non-linearities, Outliers, and Alternative Specifications

Our main analysis assumes that the effects of the VRA are linear in the 1960 Black population share. However, the successful implementation of the VRA might have varied (non-linearly) with the share of African Americans in the county. For instance, if vote dilution tactics or intimidation practices were less prevalent in majority-Black counties, VRA adoption might have been more effective there, as compared to majority-white counties. We test the linearity assumption in Figure C2, where we present bin scatterplots of the 1980-1960 change in the log of Black and white voter registration rates (y-axis) against the 1960 Black population share (x-axis), for covered and non-covered counties, after partialling out the same set of controls included in the baseline model.[71] In line with previous work (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2022), results lend support to the linearity in the effect of the VRA, both in the full sample (Panels A and B), and

[67] Note that in the main analysis, we windsorize registration rates above 100%.

[68] Since turnout is not available separately by race, we can only compare voter turnout and registration numbers overall, and not by race.

[69] In the main analysis, we impute 1984 registration data when 1980 ones are missing. See Appendix B.1 and Table B1 for a description of the dataset on voter registration statistics by race.

[70] This could only be performed for four states: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina.

[71] The bin scatterplots are computed using a least squares estimation with robust inference procedure, following Cattaneo et al. (2019).

in the set of counties within the common support (Panels C and D).[72]

In Table C3, we present additional robustness checks. First, in columns (1) and (2), we verify that results are robust to dropping outliers, defined as counties with the 1980-1960 change in the log of voter registration rates above and below the 1st and 99th (resp., the 5th and the 95th) percentiles of the distribution.[73] Next, we address the potential concern that results may be driven by a mechanical effect of the Black population share both on coverage status and on the probability of registering to vote. In column (3), we document that results are unchanged when adding a quartic polynomial for the 1960 African American population share.

Finally, in columns (4), (5), and (6), we show that results are robust to defining the dependent variable as: *i*) registration rates (i.e., without taking the logarithm); *ii*) the log of (1+rates); *iii*) the log number of registered voters (i.e., without scaling the number of registered voters by the eligible voting population). Also in this case, results are in line with those presented in Table 1. Specifically, coefficients in column (4) indicate that a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population share in covered (relative to non-covered) counties raises Black and white voter registration rates by 4.4 and 2.7 percentage points, respectively. Coefficients in column (6) suggest that a 10 percentage points increase in the Black population share increases the number of Black and white registered voters by 29% and 7%, respectively, between covered and non-covered counties.

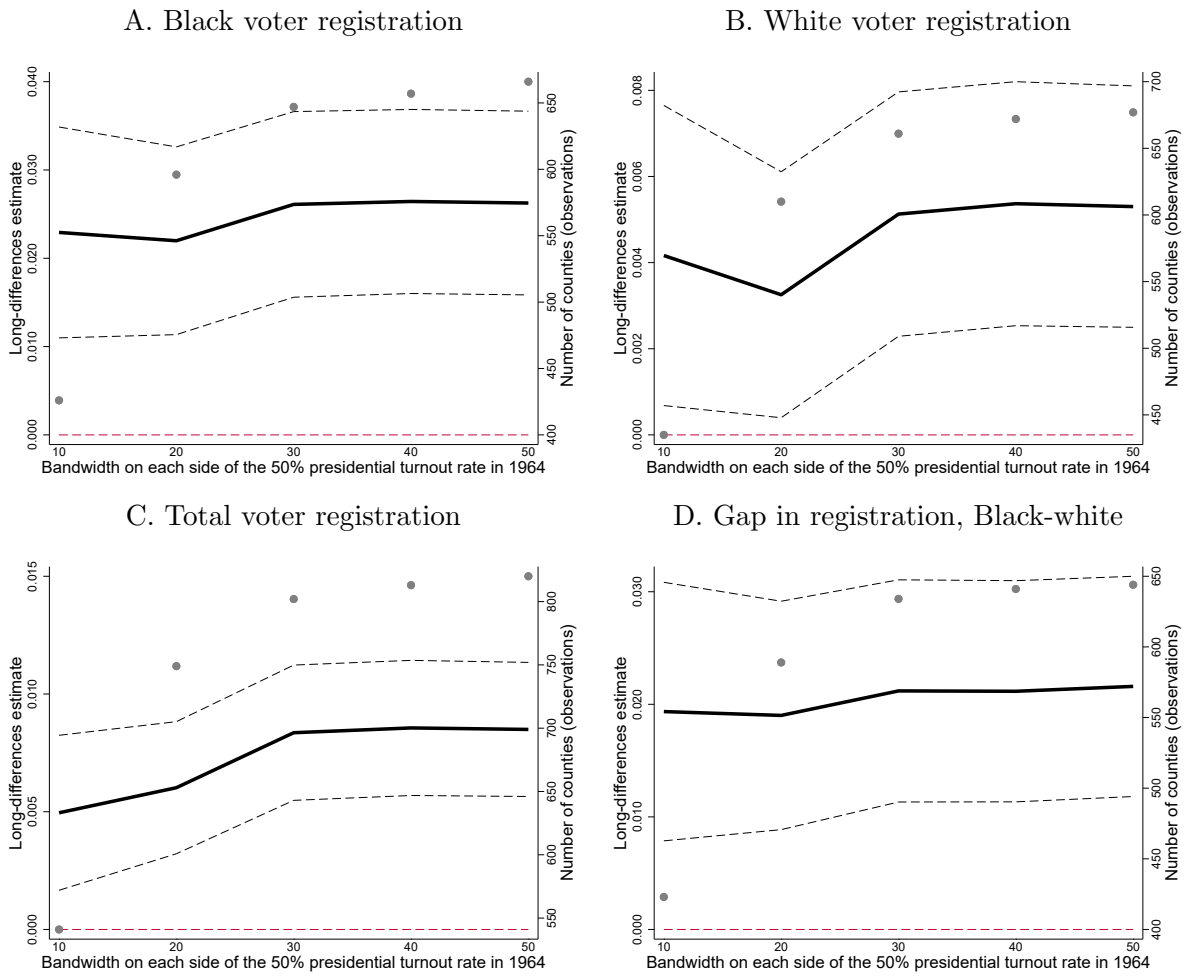
C.4 Standard Errors Correction

In the paper, we cluster standard errors by judicial divisions to reduce concerns of spatial correlation due to the fact that most legal battles for the enforcement of the VRA were fought across southern district courts. In Table C3, we further address the possibility of spatial correlation in the error term. In column (7), we cluster standard errors at the state level. In column (8), we instead adjust standard errors relying on the methodology proposed by Conley (1999) using a spatial lag, and estimate spatial HAC standard errors using a 100km cut-off. Reassuringly, the precision of the results is virtually unchanged to considering alternative spatial lags (e.g., 50km or 1,000km).

[72] The common support includes the set of counties with a Black population share below 68.9%.

[73] Outliers are constructed separately for Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) voters.

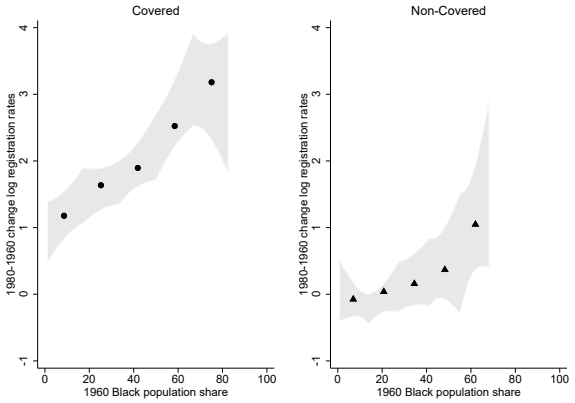
Figure C1. Voter registration rates over time



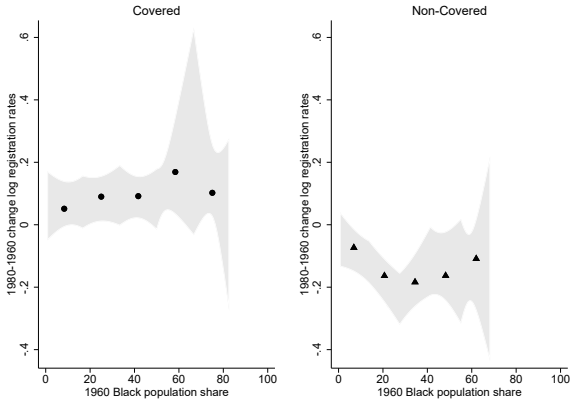
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) in solid and dashed lines, respectively. The long-difference model in equation (1) is estimated using a rolling window: from a sample that only includes the counties with a turnout rate around 50% during the 1964 presidential election (bandwidth: ± 10 percentage points around 50%) to the whole sample of available southern counties (bandwidth: ± 50 percentage points around 50%). Dots represent the number of counties in each bandwidth (measured on the right vertical axis). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure C2. Non-linearities

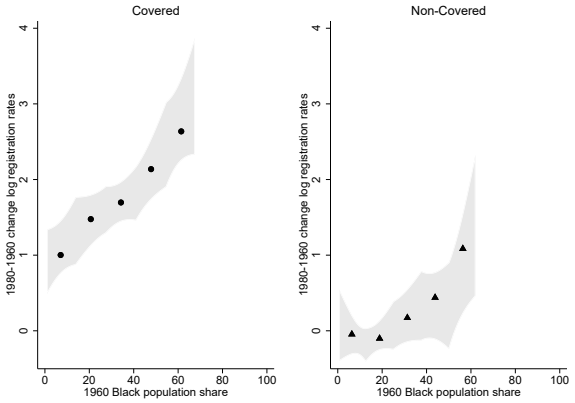
A. Black registration



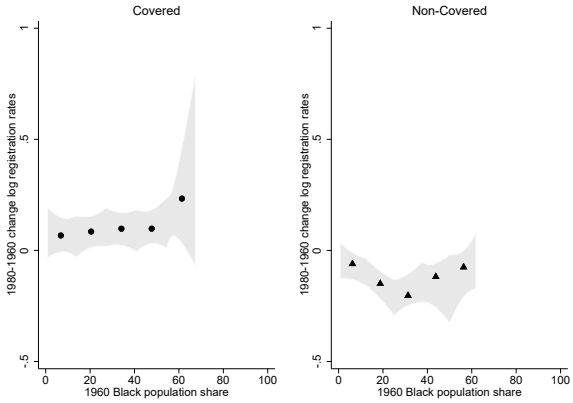
B. White registration



C. Black registration: common support



D. White registration: common support



Notes: The figures plot the point estimates (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) of long-difference regressions for the 1980-1960 change in the log of Black (Panels A and C) and white (Panels B and D) voter registration rates against the 1960 Black population share, after partialling out the set of controls included in the baseline model. Panels C and D include only counties within the common support (i.e., with a Black population share below 68.9%). The bin scatterplots are computed using a least squares estimation with robust inference procedure, following Cattaneo et al. (2019). Robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Table C1. Robustness: heterogeneity (and selection) on observables and unobservables

Dep. variable:	Voter Registration			
	CEM	Stratif. Propens.	Trim Propens.	Trim Black pop.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Black voter registration				
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.028***	0.012*	0.028***	0.027***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share (%), 1960	0.007	–0.010	0.006	0.007
	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable at baseline	32.675	32.585	33.439	32.857
	(20.646)	(20.672)	(20.814)	(20.581)
Black share (%), 1960	27.756	27.935	27.134	27.457
	(14.954)	(15.235)	(14.896)	(14.565)
Adj. R-Square	0.73	0.75	0.73	0.72
N	647	653	624	636
Panel B: White voter registration				
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.004	0.005***	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share (%), 1960	–0.002**	–0.003	–0.003**	–0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable at baseline	69.374	69.498	69.860	69.198
	(18.372)	(18.419)	(18.352)	(18.293)
Black share (%), 1960	27.220	27.487	26.563	26.931
	(14.916)	(15.336)	(14.784)	(14.532)
Adj. R-Square	0.55	0.54	0.54	0.55
N	653	662	625	643

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1): i) using a coarsened exact matching sample on the distribution of the sample in column (1); ii) stratifying the sample in 5 strata based on the propensity score in column (2); iii) trimming the sample to common support based on the propensity score in column (3); iv) trimming the sample based on 1960 Black population shares in column (4). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table C2. Robustness: data quality

Dep. variable:	Voter Registration						
	1980-1964 Registr.	Above 100%	Below Turnout	1980 Registr.	Average Registr.	Cotton Share	Rep Share 1964
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Black voter registration							
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.027***	0.028***	0.027***	0.018**	0.020**	0.024***	0.024***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Black share (%), 1960	0.001	0.005	0.007	0.016**	0.013*	0.008*	0.007
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable at baseline	41.214	32.056	33.335	36.096	35.236	32.342	32.585
	(21.364)	(19.605)	(20.567)	(19.269)	(17.552)	(20.351)	(20.672)
Black share (%), 1960	27.921	27.858	27.574	26.471	26.785	28.061	27.935
	(15.247)	(14.936)	(15.029)	(14.789)	(13.813)	(15.053)	(15.235)
Adj. R-Square	0.75	0.73	0.71	0.68	0.76	0.74	0.75
N	656	620	608	480	240	666	653
Panel B: White voter registration							
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.004**	0.006***	0.004***	0.004*	0.005	0.007***	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share (%), 1960	–0.002	–0.003**	–0.002**	–0.003*	–0.004	–0.002*	–0.003**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable at baseline	70.684	65.231	69.955	71.304	68.028	68.720	69.498
	(16.797)	(15.436)	(18.121)	(16.111)	(13.199)	(18.570)	(18.419)
Black share (%), 1960	27.396	26.803	27.515	26.086	26.914	27.621	27.487
	(15.264)	(14.200)	(15.337)	(14.625)	(14.040)	(15.159)	(15.336)
Adj. R-Square	0.54	0.55	0.58	0.63	0.61	0.50	0.54
N	659	479	638	493	242	676	662

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1): i) with the change between 1980 and 1964 in column (1); ii) removing observations with a registration rate of 100% in column (2); iii) removing observations with a total registration above total turnout in column (3); iv) excluding the states without information in 1980 (Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia) in column (4); v) taking the average between 1960 and 1964, and also between 1976 and 1980 (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina) in column (5); vi) removing the control Cotton share (%), 1964 in column (6); vii) adding the control Republican share (%), 1964 in column (7). Controls in columns (1)-(5) are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table C3. Robustness: outliers, non-linearity, variable definition, and clustering

Dep. variable:	Voter Registration							
	1st-99th Percent.	5th-95th Percent.	Quartic Polyn.	Rate	(ln) Rate	Individ.	State Cluster	Conley 100km
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Black voter registration								
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.025***	0.023***	0.021***	0.443***	0.022***	0.029***	0.026**	0.023***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.151)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)
Black share (%), 1960	0.006	0.004	0.038	0.357***	0.011***	0.008*	0.007	0.006
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.038)	(0.114)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable at baseline	32.520	32.157	32.585	32.302	32.302	33.480	32.585	32.585
	(20.506)	(18.840)	(20.672)	(20.808)	(20.808)	(19.851)	(20.672)	(20.672)
Black share (%), 1960	27.906	27.767	27.935	27.961	27.961	26.582	27.935	27.935
	(15.102)	(14.546)	(15.235)	(15.582)	(15.582)	(14.050)	(15.235)	(15.235)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.77	0.74	0.78	0.74	0.12
N	640	586	653	681	681	681	653	653
Panel B: White voter registration								
Black share (%), 1960 X VRA	0.003**	0.003**	0.005**	0.269**	0.005***	0.007**	0.005**	0.005***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.106)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share (%), 1960	–0.002**	–0.003**	0.009	–0.154**	–0.002**	–0.005***	–0.002**	–0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.009)	(0.074)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable at baseline	69.525	70.639	69.498	69.498	69.498	71.086	69.498	69.498
	(17.923)	(16.635)	(18.419)	(18.419)	(18.419)	(18.204)	(18.419)	(18.419)
Black share (%), 1960	27.427	27.420	27.487	27.487	27.487	26.655	27.487	27.487
	(15.196)	(15.427)	(15.336)	(15.336)	(15.336)	(14.200)	(15.336)	(15.336)
Adj. R-Square	0.63	0.58	0.55	0.58	0.55	0.83	0.54	0.01
N	648	598	662	662	662	662	662	662

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (1): i) dropping counties with registration rates above/below the 1st and 99th percentiles, and the 5th and 95th percentiles, respectively, in columns (1) and (2); ii) using a quartic polynomial regression of the Black population in column (3); iii) measuring voter registration as rates (%) instead of ln(rates) in column (4); iv) measuring voter registration as ln(1 + rates) in column (5); v) measuring voter registration as ln(1 + registered individuals) in column (6); vi) with robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the state level in column (7); vii) with spatial HAC standard errors using a 100km cutoff (Conley, 1999) in column (8). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Urban population (%), 1960; Cotton share (%), 1964; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions (in columns 1 to 6). ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.