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# Black Empowerment and White Mobilization: The Effects of the Voting Rights Act

*Andrea Bernini, Giovanni Facchini, Marco Tabellini & Cecilia Testa*

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# Black Empowerment and White Mobilization: The Effects of the Voting Rights Act\*

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## Abstract

The 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) paved the road to Black empowerment. How did southern whites respond? Leveraging newly digitized data on county-level voter registration rates by race between 1956 and 1980, and exploiting pre-determined variation in exposure to the federal intervention, we document that the VRA increases both Black and white political participation. Consistent with the VRA triggering counter-mobilization, the surge in white registrations is concentrated where Black political empowerment is more tangible and salient due to the election of African Americans in county commissions. Additional analysis suggests that the VRA has long-lasting negative effects on whites' racial attitudes.

**Keywords:** Civil Rights, Race, Voting Behavior, Enfranchisement

**JEL Classification:** D72, J15, H70, N92

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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.*

— President Johnson, *We Shall Overcome*, 1965

## 1 Introduction

From the end of Reconstruction until the early 1960s, African Americans in the U.S. South had 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 would “strike down restrictions to voting in all elections, federal, state and local, which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote” (Johnson, 1965). On August 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was signed into law. This 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.<sup>1</sup> How did the VRA affect whites’ political behavior in the racially conservative South?

In general, whether policy interventions targeting minorities lead to more empathy or trigger hostility among members of the majority group is an important question, which remains open to debate (Beaman et al., 2009). The VRA is no exception, and its impact on whites’ political behavior and racial attitudes is *ex-ante* ambiguous. On the one hand, President Johnson hoped that Black enfranchisement would “brighten the lives of every American” (Johnson, 1965). Indeed, as noted by Wright (2013), many of the gains experienced by Black Americans spilled over to segments of the white society. Moreover, if the VRA promoted inter-group contact, it may have lowered racial prejudice and stereotypes.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, President Johnson was well aware of the obstacles ahead, as the white political class viewed the potential extension of the franchise with fear, and predictions of “Black takeover” were common.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In the U.S. South, the VRA led to an increase in Black representation in county offices (Bernini et al., 2023) and in spending on education and infrastructure (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2023). The VRA also improved conditions in the labor market (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019) and in policing practices (Facchini et al., 2020) for Black Americans.

<sup>2</sup>A number of studies have shown that, under certain conditions, inter-group contact can ameliorate inter-group relations (Boisjoly et al., 2006; Bazzi et al., 2019; Lowe, 2021; Bursztyn et al., 2022).

<sup>3</sup>For instance, the mayor of Montezuma City (Georgia) expressed his concerns by noting that: “Lord knows what would happen if we turned the rabble of their race loose at the polls... they would take over Macon county and run it according to their own belief and consciences” (Wright, 2013).



Anecdotal accounts suggest that, soon after the re-enfranchisement of African Americans, competition for the registration of white and Black voters intensified.<sup>4</sup> In principle, white mobilization needs not impede Black progress. However, if elections are contests between different (racial) groups and voters maximize their group’s utility (Coate and Conlin, 2004), political mobilization along racial lines might endanger minorities’ rights and offset the impact of legislation designed to reduce racial inequality. In fact, as pointed out by Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg: “[R]acial polarization means that racial minorities are at risk of being systematically outvoted and having their interests underrepresented in legislatures.”<sup>5</sup>

Since African Americans gained the right to vote, racial polarization has remained a distinctive feature of southern political life (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018). Yet, systematic evidence on whether post-VRA white mobilization embodied resistance to Black advancement remains scant. As Black progress took place first and foremost locally, understanding if the VRA triggered white counter-mobilization at the county level is important to evaluate the full implications of what President Johnson defined as “one of the most monumental laws in the entire history of American freedom” (Johnson, 1965).

In this paper, we tackle these issues by studying how the VRA affected whites’ voting behavior, and more broadly race relations, in the U.S. South at the local level. To this end, we assemble a unique dataset on county-level voter registration rates by race for ten states of the former Confederacy spanning the period 1956-1980. 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.

One way to identify the effects of the VRA on political participation would be to compare counties covered by the special provisions of the Act (known as “coverage”) that had different Black population shares in 1960. As shown in previous work (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2023), pre-determined variation in the Black population share is related to changes in overall turnout and Black representation induced by the VRA. We thus expect similar patterns to hold for registration rates by race. Yet, a key concern with this strategy is that the Black population share might have direct effects on the change in registration rates even in the absence of coverage.

For this reason, as in Cascio and Washington (2014) and Bernini et al. (2023), we use non-covered counties in the former Confederacy to form a suitable control group. Estimating

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<sup>4</sup>For example, the decision of the Alabama State Democratic committee to eliminate the “white supremacy” slogan from the party emblem led to objections of segregationists and newspapers reporting that: “Striking the [white supremacy] slogan may intensify a voter registration competition between Alabama whites and Negro. The competition had already been given impetus by the Justice Department’s announcement that it was sending federal voting examiners Monday to Birmingham” (Reed, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>See the dissenting opinion in *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013), which eliminated federal oversight from previously covered counties.

a triple difference-in-differences (DDD) specification, we compare the evolution of Black and white registration rates, before (1960) and after (1980) the VRA, between covered and non-covered counties with different 1960 Black population shares. The identifying assumption is that, absent the federal intervention, registration rates by race would have evolved along parallel trends in the two groups of counties. To corroborate the validity of our identification strategy, we verify that there are no pre-trends either in registration rates or in other outcomes that could correlate with political participation.

Turning to our main results, we find that, as intended, the VRA leads to an increase in Black registration rates, which is higher the larger the share of enfranchised African Americans. At the same time, the rise in Black political participation is mirrored by a substantial increase in white registration rates. Hence, even if the VRA lowers the Black-white gap in registration rates, whites' reaction partly offsets the rise in Black political efficacy that the VRA intended to achieve. Our estimates imply that, absent the response of white voters, a 10 percentage points higher Black population share would have led to a 3.6 percentage points additional decline in the Black-white gap in covered, as compared to non-covered, counties. Accounting for white mobilization reduces this figure to as little as 0.3 percentage points.

We conduct several checks to probe the robustness of our findings. First, we address the concern that white mobilization could in part be driven by the anti-segregation measures introduced by the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964. Although the CRA applied to the entire U.S. South, it is possible that it had a more pronounced effect on counties covered by the VRA. For this reason, in addition to standard economic and demographic characteristics, we allow for heterogeneous effects by coverage status of pre-existing patterns of segregation in public accommodation – which was targeted by the CRA – and other forms of political mobilization. Second, we implement a Geographic Regression Discontinuity (GRD) design as in Bernini et al. (2023), focusing on counties spanning the border between covered and non-covered states, which are more similar to each other. This deals with the possibility that, even though the fully saturated model accounts for a number of observable differences between covered and non-covered counties, heterogeneity in observables might increase sensitivity to potential bias due to unobservables. Third, 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).

Having provided evidence that the enfranchisement of African Americans brought about by the VRA increases white political participation, we explore if other factors could explain

the observed patterns. First, we rule out the possibility that the re-enfranchisement of illiterate white voters – following the removal of literacy tests – mechanically increases white registration rates. Second, we test whether the VRA leads to an increase in race riots, which may have instilled a sense of insecurity among white voters, inducing them to register more. Contrary to this hypothesis, we do not observe any differential change in the occurrence of race riots or other forms of demonstrations initiated by Black Americans in the aftermath of the VRA. Finally, we examine the possibility that our results might be partly driven by white out-migration in response to the VRA. Reassuringly, the VRA does not lead to changes either in the number of whites or in their characteristics.

We interpret the rise in white registration rates as evidence of counter-mobilization in response to Black empowerment. To corroborate our interpretation, we use local newspapers to document that, soon after the VRA, the race issue becomes more salient. Then, we turn to the most visible sign of Black empowerment, namely the election of African Americans to local office. Civil rights activists considered Black office holding as the main path for the advancement of African Americans. At the same time, anecdotal evidence suggests that southern whites looked at the prospect of Black office holding with fear. Hence, we expect greater white mobilization when African Americans are more likely to gain office.

We exploit differences in pre-existing electoral rules, which are crucial for minority representation (Trebbi et al., 2008; Bernini et al., 2023). As a preliminary step, we document that the VRA leads to larger gains in Black office holding in counties electing their governing bodies (i.e., county commissions) by single member districts (SMD), as opposed to at large or mixed systems.<sup>6</sup> Then, we show that white mobilization mirrors the patterns of Black representation: the differential increase in white registration is concentrated in covered SMD counties with larger Black population shares. Interestingly, instead, Black registration rates evolve similarly in counties characterized by different electoral rules. We also rule out that our results might be due to pre-existing cultural, economic, and social forces that could conflate the estimated impact of SMD electoral rules.

We further corroborate the importance of the electoral channel relying on a different source of variation: the election of the first African American into office. For white voters, this event likely represented a signal that Black political empowerment was real, and could have consequences for the (political) balance of power at the local level. We provide evidence in support of this idea by exploring the salience of the first election of Black officials in the local press and analyzing patterns of white registration rates following these events.

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<sup>6</sup>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).

Leveraging newly digitized data, we show that the election of the first Black official is reported more frequently by local newspapers in covered counties with larger Black population shares. Next, we find that, while covered counties do not experience any differential change in white political participation before the election of the first Black official, white registration rates spike right after the event and continue to increase for at least ten years since then. Taken together, these results support the notion that the political threat associated with Black empowerment is an important mechanism driving whites’ political reactions to the VRA.

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 larger Black population shares. These patterns do not merely reflect an overall increase in violence, since we do not observe any such relationship when considering white victims.

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 Black representation in local offices (Bernini et al., 2023), and ameliorated conditions for African Americans in a range of different domains, such as public goods provision (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2023), labor markets (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019), and policing practices (Facchini et al., 2020).<sup>7</sup> 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’ 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 left the Democratic Party after it embraced the civil rights agenda.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.

Finally, by combining our novel dataset with information on local Black office holding, we

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<sup>7</sup>Our findings also speak to the broader literature on race relations in the United States. Several papers have documented that, despite Black advances in labor market outcomes (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).

<sup>8</sup>Bazzi et al. (2023) document that the migration of southern racially conservative whites caused the political and ideological realignment of the U.S. North.

<sup>9</sup>Focusing on four southern states between 1967 and 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.

can study whether this key manifestation of Black empowerment influenced racial attitudes of southern whites. Our findings indicate that, while the VRA brought significant gains in Black representation, provisions aimed at ameliorating the conditions of minority groups can trigger opposition among majority group members with long-lasting effects. As such, our results complement the existing evidence from other contexts documenting that actual or perceived loss of status and economic advantages may trigger hostility among majority group members (Rudman and Fairchild, 2004; Jardina, 2019; Grossman and Zonszein, 2021; Wheaton, 2022). Moreover, they are consistent with theoretical contributions showing that policies raising the salience of minority traits may induce the majority group to exert more effort to sustain norm-based discrimination (Dewan and Wolton, 2022).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides background information on the VRA and its enforcement. Section 3 describes the data, while Section 4 presents the empirical strategy and the main results. Section 5 provides evidence on the mechanisms. 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 policy placed under strict federal monitoring all the jurisdictions that imposed a test or device restricting the right to vote and that displayed a turnout rate in the 1964 presidential election 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 VRA’s special provisions, and one state – North Carolina – was partially covered.<sup>10</sup> Section 5 of the VRA 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.<sup>11</sup> In addition, federal examiners could be dispatched to monitor activities in the polling places of covered counties, which were required to eliminate literacy test provisions.<sup>12</sup>

The VRA was met with open defiance by the white political class. Its constitutionality was immediately challenged.<sup>13</sup> As its special measures stood the scrutiny of the court,

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<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>11</sup>Specifically, pre-clearance was needed in order to assess whether the proposed change would have discriminated against protected minorities.

<sup>12</sup>See also Cascio and Washington (2014) for more details about the VRA and its provisions.

<sup>13</sup>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 mechanism constitutional.

numerous attempts to circumvent the policy 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 more favorable to the election of minority candidates (chiefly, the SMD electoral rule present across local elections), were safeguarded in court (Bernini et al., 2023). As the legal apparatus put in place by the VRA 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 the labor market 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, which had shaped southern society since the end of the Reconstruction era. President Johnson himself, while announcing the introduction of the VRA, 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 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. In 1968, as 200 southern Black officials gathered in Atlanta, Lawrence T. Guyot, a functionary of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, addressed them with a stark warning: “This is not the time to rejoice but to gird for new white resistance” (Valentine, 1968). Among whites, fears of “Black takeover” became 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 Black takeover” (McDonald, 2003).

White supremacist organizations, such as the White Citizens’ Council (WCC), quickly ramped up efforts to mobilize white voters. For instance, soon after the passage of the VRA, the Citizens’ Council of Greater New Orleans (CCGNO) proclaimed its intention of registering 60,000 white voters in the city of New Orleans alone.<sup>14</sup> White mobilization efforts intensified over time as Black candidates started to appear on the ballot box. When Nils Douglas, a Black civil rights attorney, ran for the Louisiana state legislature, the CCGNO

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<sup>14</sup>“Citizens Council Rally Planned,” *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), August 23, 1965.

wrote to its members: “The white voters of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward are faced with the most serious challenge since Reconstruction time,” urging its members to cast their ballot for the white racially conservative candidate Ernest J. Hessler, Jr.<sup>15</sup>

White mobilization drives often used a mix of conservative rhetoric of law and order, morality, and individual responsibility and freedom (Brückmann, 2019). During a 1965 rally in Bogalusa (Louisiana), district judge (and future member of Congress) John Rarick openly criticized the VRA, declaring that he favored “segregation not because of hate or fear” but because he was “a free man.” The judge encouraged to “stand up for America and for individual freedom,” and “discriminate against anyone we may choose.”<sup>16</sup> As a result of registration drives, new white voters “in many localities outnumbered the new [Black] bloc voters.”<sup>17</sup>

To what extent are these episodes emblematic of a broader phenomenon? In this paper, we move beyond anecdotal evidence. First, we explore whether Black progress brought about by the VRA led to systematic white counter-mobilization. Second, we examine if whites’ reactions to Black enfranchisement were short-lived or if instead became a persistent feature of U.S. southern politics.

### 3 Data

Since the end of the nineteenth century, most 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. 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 the states of the former

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<sup>15</sup>Circular letter by the CCGNO, ca. February 1966, *Leander Henry Perez Papers, 1954-1969*, Box 1, Folder “Hessler Campaign, CC Letter,” New Orleans Public Library, Special Collections (NOPL).

<sup>16</sup>“Return of Conservatism Urged at Bogalusa Rally,” *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 8, 1965.

<sup>17</sup>“Voting Becomes Issue,” *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi), August 11, 1968.

Confederacy.<sup>18</sup> Most records originate from reports of the Secretary of State, the Board of Registrations, the Auditor of State, and the Election Commissioner. Other reports were obtained from the U.S. Department of Justice and from surveys of local governments carried out by the Southern Regional Council. We complemented these records with information from the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961). We digitized all these reports, 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 for 676 counties spanning the period between 1956 and 1980.<sup>19</sup> We then built registration rates using county-level data on the voting age population by race.<sup>20</sup>

Figure A1 displays the geographic pattern of data availability at the county level. While information on registered voters is not available for all southern counties, Table A1 indicates that our sample (Panel A) is broadly comparable to the entire South (Panel B) across many socio-economic characteristics. 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 counties where, on average, only 27% of voting age Black individuals were registered, compared to 45% in non-covered counties. However, by 1980, political participation among African Americans had increased substantially, especially in covered counties, where registration rates reached 59%. The surge in Black registration rates was more limited in non-covered counties, reaching 56% in 1980. Before the VRA, white registration rates were instead similar in covered and non-covered counties (78% and 79%, respectively). Moreover, and in contrast with patterns observed for Black Americans, between 1960 and 1980 white registration rates declined by 2 and 7 percentage points in covered and non-covered counties, respectively.<sup>21</sup>

Table A1 presents additional summary statistics: covered counties have a larger Black population share in 1960, compared to non-covered counties. Covered and non-covered counties are more similar in terms of unemployment rates, rural farms, cotton production, and poverty rates, but covered counties are smaller and have a less educated population. Covered counties also experience more episodes of anti- and pro-Black protests in the years

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<sup>18</sup>Following the 1966 federal decision to strike down the Texas poll tax as unconstitutional in *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 the race of registered voters (Doty, 1969). As race-specific information is missing for all the years following the VRA, Texas is not part of our sample.

<sup>19</sup>We use 1980 as the end period for two reasons. First, the 1982 re-authorization of the VRA encompassed a major amendment that subsequently led to the introduction of majority-minority districts following the Supreme Court ruling in *Thornburg v. Gingles*, 478 U.S. 30 (1986). Second, data on race-specific voter registration become sparse after 1980.

<sup>20</sup>Appendix B presents the description and the corresponding source of all variables used in the paper.

<sup>21</sup>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 exerted by political parties to mobilize the electorate (Fullerton and Stern, 2010).



before the VRA, and have fewer Green Book establishments (relative to Black population) in 1955.

Overall, these patterns suggest that covered and non-covered counties differ along several observable characteristics. Our empirical strategy, presented in Section 4.1, accounts for these differences, as well as for other potential sources of unobservable heterogeneity. To specifically tackle the concern that heterogeneity in observables might increase the sensitivity to potential bias due to unobservables, in Section 4.4, 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 differences in observable characteristics.

## 4 The VRA and Political Participation

### 4.1 Empirical Strategy

Our analysis exploits variation induced by a special measure introduced by the VRA – known as coverage – to protect African Americans from the infringement of their political rights. As described in Section 2, counties 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. Six of the eleven states of the former Confederacy – Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia – were fully covered by the VRA’s special provisions, and one state – North Carolina – was partially covered. The VRA led to an increase in overall turnout, which was more pronounced in counties with larger pre-existing Black population shares (Cascio and Washington, 2014). As coverage was meant to protect Black voting rights, we expect the federal intervention to generate a more substantial increase in Black registration rates in counties with a larger share of African Americans. Likewise, if white voters reacted to Black enfranchisement, we expect their political mobilization to be stronger where Black registration rates increased more following the VRA.

One 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 policy, 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. (2023), we augment the DD strategy 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 counties with the same Black population share. The identifying assumption is that, in the absence of the VRA, covered and non-covered counties with the same Black population share would have experienced similar trends in voter registration rates.

## 4.2 Event Study

We start by inspecting the evolution of the relationship between registration rates and the share of African Americans over time. In Figure 1, we plot coefficients obtained by regressing (the log of) race-specific registration rates on the 1960 Black population share, separately by year and treatment status. The models also control for state fixed effects and the vector of 1960 variables typically considered in the literature (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2023).<sup>22</sup>

Our results show that, before the VRA, counties with larger Black population shares exhibit lower Black registration rates (Panel A). As expected, this relationship is more pronounced in covered counties, where discriminatory registration procedures were particularly widespread. In 1956, a 10 percentage points increase in the share of African Americans is associated with a 28% (11%) reduction in Black registration rates in covered (non-covered) counties. This negative association starts to weaken between 1960 and 1964, but the gap between covered and non-covered counties remains virtually unchanged. A clear break emerges right after the VRA, and the gap disappears already in 1968.

In the pre-VRA period, we also observe a gap in white registration rates between covered and non-covered counties (Panel B). However, its size is more modest: in 1956, a 10 percentage points increase in the Black population share is associated with a 3.1% reduction and a 1.2% rise in white registration rates in covered and non-covered counties, respectively. Also in this case, a larger Black population share is associated with higher white political participation in both covered and non-covered counties, between 1960 and 1964. After the VRA, the increase in white registration rates linked to the 1960 Black population share becomes stronger for covered counties, whereas it flattens out for non-covered ones. Already in the first election after the VRA, a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black popula-

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<sup>22</sup>The control variables are poverty and unemployment rates, the share of the population living in farms, the share of land devoted to cotton production and their interaction with coverage. Models are estimated for the calendar years corresponding to each presidential election between 1956 and 1980, and include separate indicators for covered and non-covered counties in North Carolina.

tion share is associated with a 2.2% increase in white registration rates in covered counties. Instead, no such relationship is evident for non-covered counties.

We analyze the statistical significance of the patterns just described in Figure 2. Here, we plot the coefficients obtained by estimating the following event study specification:

$$y_{cst} = \sum_{n \neq 1960} \gamma_n D_n^t \text{Black}_{1960} + \sum_{n \neq 1960} \theta_n D_n^t \text{Black}_{1960} \times \text{VRA}_{cs} + \mathbf{X}'_{cs} \beta + I_{st} + I_c + \epsilon_{cst} \quad (1)$$

where  $y_{cst}$  is the log of registration rates (of either race) in county  $c$  of state  $s$  at time  $t$ ;  $\text{Black}_{1960}$  is the 1960 Black population share in the county;  $\text{VRA}_{cs}$  is an indicator equal to one for counties covered by the policy in 1965 and zero otherwise;  $D_n^t$  is an indicator taking a value of one if  $n = t$ ;  $\mathbf{X}'_{cs}$  is the vector of pre-VRA county-level controls described above, fully interacted with the  $\text{VRA}_{cs}$  indicator; and,  $I_{st}$  are state-year interactions and  $I_c$  are county fixed effects. As in Figure 1, we consider the calendar years corresponding to the presidential elections between 1956 and 1980. To identify the model, we omit 1960. Since district courts played a key role in enforcing coverage provisions of the VRA, we cluster standard errors by judicial divisions to account for potential correlation at this level.<sup>23</sup> Regressions are weighed by 1960 county population.

The parameter of interest is  $\theta_n$ , which captures the treatment-control difference in the change of the gradient of voter registration rates in the 1960 Black population share, between year  $n$  and the base year (1960). In line with the patterns shown in Figure 1, counties with larger shares of African Americans do not exhibit statistically significant differences in registration rates by coverage status before the VRA. This is reassuring, because it indicates the absence of pre-trends in both outcome variables.

The absence of pre-trends lends support to our identifying assumption. Yet, one may be worried that covered and non-covered counties with a similar 1960 Black population share may have experienced differential changes along other economic, social, and political characteristics that could have in turn affected registration rates after the passage of the VRA. For this reason, below, we verify 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 4.4, after presenting our main results.

After 1964, we observe a positive and statistically significant difference between treatment and control groups for both Black and white registration rates. That is, in the post-VRA pe-

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<sup>23</sup>State district courts are organized by judicial divisions, which serve groups of counties. For more details on the mapping between counties and judicial divisions, see Bernini et al. (2023). In Table C3, we assess the robustness of our results using alternative cluster structures.

riod, both Black and white registration rates increase more in covered counties with a higher 1960 Black population share. Estimated coefficients reveal that the growth in registration rates is faster for Black voters than for white voters. However, since the initial number of registered voters was an order of magnitude higher for white voters, the same percent change in the growth of registration rates would correspond to a higher percentage point change in the number of registered white (as compared to Black) voters. We return to the implied magnitude of our estimates in the next section.

### 4.3 Main Results

In this section, we present our central results, using a long difference model in the spirit of Cascio and Washington (2014). We focus on two points in time – before (1960) and after (1980) the VRA – and estimate the following equation:

$$\Delta y_{cs} = \gamma Black_{1960} + \theta Black_{1960} \times VRA_{cs} + \mathbf{X}'_{cs}\beta + I_s + \epsilon_{cs} \quad (2)$$

where  $\Delta y_{cs}$  is the change in the log of registration rates (by race) between 1960 and 1980;  $I_s$  are state dummies, which capture state specific trends; and, all other variables are as in equation (1) above.<sup>24</sup>

Table 1 reports our findings, separately for Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates.<sup>25</sup> As before, the main coefficient of interest is the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the  $VRA_{cs}$  indicator. We start from a parsimonious specification, which only includes the vector of 1960 controls used in the event study (column 1). Next, we account for other potential drivers of registration rates. In columns (2) and (3), we control, respectively, for education and for other pre-existing forms of political mobilization (in particular, the number of pro- and anti-Black protests between 1960 and 1964).<sup>26</sup>

One important caveat to the interpretation of our estimates is that the patterns we uncover may, at least in part, be driven by voters' mobilization in response to the anti-segregation measures introduced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. To address this possibility, in column (4), we additionally control for pre-existing patterns of segregation in public accommodations. Relying on recently digitized data from Cook et al. (2023), we use the 1955 number of Green Book establishments normalized by Black population. Reassuringly, our estimates remain stable. We take column (4) as our preferred specification. We discuss

<sup>24</sup>As before, regressions are weighed by 1960 population and standard errors are clustered at the judicial division level.

<sup>25</sup>The number of observations varies across panels because we restrict samples to counties reporting registration rates of the relevant population. Results are robust to focusing on counties that report registration rates for both races in both years (see Table A2, column 2).

<sup>26</sup>Table A3 shows that the baseline results hold when estimating less stringent specifications that omit state fixed effects, the set of controls used in the event study, and their interaction with coverage.

several additional robustness checks in Section 4.4 below.

Results in Panel A imply that a 10 percentage points higher Black population share is associated with a 23% (or, 3.6 percentage points) faster increase in the growth rate of Black registration rates in covered counties as compared to non-covered ones, between 1960 and 1980.<sup>27</sup> Panel B presents our central result: the VRA leads to a stronger growth in white registration rates in covered counties with a higher Black population share. Our estimates imply that a 10 percentage points higher 1960 Black population share leads to an additional 6% (or, 3.3 percentage points) increase in white registration rates in covered counties compared to non-covered ones between 1960 and 1980. In Table A4, we quantify the net effect on the Black-white gap in registration rates. We find that a 10 percentage points higher Black population share leads to a 16% faster reduction in the gap between 1960 and 1980. In other words, absent any change in white voters' behavior, the VRA would have caused a 3.6 percentage points decline in the gap in registration rates. Yet, white mobilization reduces this figure by 90%, down to 0.3 percentage points.

We interpret the results in Table 1 as evidence of counter-mobilization. This is consistent with historical and anecdotal accounts that stress how white voters opposed the VRA, and actively tried to maintain the pre-existing political and social order (Alt, 1994; McDonald, 2003).<sup>28</sup> We provide additional evidence for this interpretation below. Before doing so, in the next section, we assess the validity of our research design and probe the robustness of our findings.

## 4.4 Robustness Checks

**Testing for pre-trends in other outcomes.** While the event study in Figure 2 shows the absence of pre-trends in registration rates, covered and non-covered counties might have experienced differential changes along economic, social, and political characteristics before the passage of the VRA. Although the suppression of civil rights had turned the U.S. South into an enclave of authoritarian rule, pushed by the northern wing of the Democratic Party, the Outer South started to become more acquiescent toward the civil rights agenda since the late 1940s (Mickey, 2015; Schickler, 2016). For this reason, differential changes along social, economic, and political dimensions might spuriously influence the evolution of race-specific registration rates in the post-VRA period. We address these concerns in Panel A of Table 2. Here, following Bernini et al. (2023), we replicate equation (2) using as dependent variables

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<sup>27</sup>To convert the implied percent change into a percentage point change, we estimated equation (2) using as dependent variable the change in registration rates (rather than the change in the log). See also Table C3.

<sup>28</sup>Note that this interpretation is not in contrast with recent findings in Lacroix (2023), who documents that the VRA reduced the incidence of political violence in covered counties. In fact, as long as white counter-mobilization took place through voter registration and political actions, it may have coincided with a shift away from overt violence against African Americans.

the pre-VRA changes in a number of outcomes described below.<sup>29</sup>

We begin by examining different proxies for the degree of white supremacy: the presence of KKK Klaverns and lynchings against African Americans (columns 1 and 2), and the share of land devoted to cotton production (column 3), which is considered as a proxy for Black labor coercion. In column (4), we focus on the presence of NAACP chapters, which captures the degree of Black political activism. Then, we turn to electoral outcomes. To measure voters' behavior in response to partisan realignment on civil rights, in column (5), we compare the vote share of the 1964 Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, who ran on an openly anti-civil rights agenda, with that of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952.<sup>30</sup> In column (6), we consider the 1960-1940 change in the GOP vote share in presidential elections.

Next, we address the possibility that institutional changes following the Supreme Court ruling that struck down the white primary – *Smith v. Allwright*, 321 U.S. 649 (1944) – might have affected turnout as well as the competitiveness of gubernatorial races in the post-WWII period. 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 gubernatorial primaries (column 9), which we use as a proxy for the competitiveness of gubernatorial races. 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 (Snyder and Ansolabehere, 2004; Mickey, 2015).<sup>31</sup>

This analysis documents the lack of pre-trends across variables, with the exception of the share of land devoted to cotton (column 3).<sup>32</sup> The positive and statistically significant coefficient for this outcome indicates that covered counties with larger shares of African Americans remained more reliant on cotton production.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, in all our specifications, we account for the pre-existing share of land devoted to the production of cotton.

**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 covered and non-covered counties could exacerbate the sensitivity to potential bias due to differences in unobservables. To tackle this issue, we implement a GRD design, comparing counties straddling the border between covered and

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<sup>29</sup>Each variable is reported at the top of the corresponding column. See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

<sup>30</sup>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).

<sup>31</sup>Data on malapportionment is not available for earlier periods.

<sup>32</sup>The point estimate on the change in the Republican vote share in presidential elections (column 6) is small and statistically significant at the 10% level.

<sup>33</sup>This might imply a “negative selection” into treatment: in the absence of federal intervention, covered counties might have experienced a smaller increase in political participation.

non-covered states.

Table A1 documented that, in our sample, covered and non-covered counties differ in the 1960 Black population share. However, border counties are much more similar (Figure A2, Panel B).<sup>34</sup> In Figure 3, we conduct a formal balancing test for the 1960 Black population share and all other controls included in our baseline specification, showing that the border sample is fully balanced between covered and non-covered counties, in pre-VRA levels (Panel A) and trends (Panel B).

Having verified that contiguous counties are comparable to each other, we combine the long difference analysis presented above with a GRD design. We estimate the following model:

$$\Delta y_{cs} = \gamma Black_{1960} + \theta Black_{1960} \times VRA_{cs} + I_{cp} + \epsilon_{cps} \quad (3)$$

where all variables are as above, except for the fact that now we include county pair fixed effects,  $I_{cp}$ .<sup>35</sup>

Results, reported in column (5) of Table 1, confirm that covered counties with a larger 1960 Black population share experience faster growth in both Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates. Also, and importantly, coefficients remain quantitatively very similar to those reported in column (4). 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 2, 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 VRA indicator.<sup>36</sup>

**Addressing potential sample selection.** An additional concern with our analysis might be that of sample selection. First, 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 is correlated with both coverage and the 1960 Black population share. Second, our baseline analysis includes all counties for which registration rates are available for either African Americans or whites. Hence, the counties considered in the analysis of race-specific registration rates are not necessarily the same. Third, southern counties varied substantially in the extent of Black disenfranchisement. For this reason, one may be worried that the estimated effects of the VRA were driven by large pre-existing differences in Black political

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<sup>34</sup>Panel A presents the same figure for the ten states in our sample: consistent with Table A1, the difference in the Black population share is starker in this case.

<sup>35</sup>As in Bernini et al. (2023), regressions are weighed by the inverse of the counties' appearance in the sample, and standard errors are clustered by judicial divisions and corresponding border segments.

<sup>36</sup>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 the Republican vote share in the 1964 presidential election as an additional control.

participation by coverage status.

We tackle these concerns in Table A2. 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 on the interaction between coverage and the 1960 Black population share is close to zero and not statistically significant. In column (2), we restrict the sample to the set of counties for which both Black and white registration rates are always available. This reduces the number of observations, but leaves the magnitude and the precision of results unchanged.

In columns (3) and (4), we address the concern that large pre-existing differences in Black political participation by coverage status might be driving our results. We exploit a key feature of the VRA’s coverage formula, namely that the 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 (3), we restrict the sample to counties with turnout rates ranging between 40% and 60% (i.e., a 10 percentage points window on either side of the coverage cutoff). In column (4), we impose a stricter bandwidth of 5 percentage points around the cutoff. Despite the considerable reduction in sample size, results are unchanged.<sup>37</sup>

**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 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 C1, we document that results are robust to omitting potential outliers and estimating alternative specifications. In Table C3, we also adjust standard errors in different ways, so as to account for potential spatial correlation in the error term. Finally, in Tables C4 and C5, we verify that our findings are unchanged when we control for alternative proxies of: *i*) historical segregation; and, *ii*) forces that might have promoted Black political activism. The first set of interactions confirms that our findings are robust to alternative proxies of residential segregation targeted by the Civil Rights Act. The second shows that our results hold when we consider additional drivers of Black political activism.

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<sup>37</sup>Figure A3 presents the graphical analogue of this analysis, confirming results reported in columns (3) and (4) of Table A2.



## 4.5 Alternative Channels

As noted above, our preferred interpretation of results is that the surge in white registration reflects counter-mobilization, motivated by the threat – actual or perceived – posed by the political empowerment of Black voters. In this section, we consider a number of additional mechanisms.

**Literacy test and white re-enfranchisement.** An alternative explanation to the white counter-mobilization argument is that the VRA-mandated removal of literacy tests led to the re-enfranchisement of illiterate white voters. Even though it is well known that registration requirements, such as literacy tests, were used in a discriminatory fashion to disenfranchise Black voters (Lawson, 1976; Cascio and Washington, 2014), it is possible that they disproportionately affected counties with less educated residents, independently of their race. If less educated individuals (and, whites in particular) were concentrated in covered counties with a larger share of African Americans, our estimates might partly capture the re-enfranchisement of both Black and white voters.

Note that our preferred specification already includes the 1960 share of the county population that had less than a high school diploma. However, average education may hide important heterogeneity by race. Moreover, the share of individuals with less than a high school degree may be a poor proxy for the proportion of the (white) population disenfranchised by the literacy test. For this reason, in Table 3, we replace this baseline county-level control with different measures of educational attainment that are county-race specific.<sup>38</sup> We report results for Black and white registration rates in Panels A and B, respectively. In column (1), we use the same level of educational attainment as in our baseline analysis, but allowing it to be race-specific. Then, in columns (2) and (3), we consider the share of individuals who completed less than five years of schooling and who were illiterate, respectively. In all cases, both the sign and the significance of our main coefficients of interest remain unchanged.

Next, in column (4), we augment our preferred DDD specification (Table 1, column 4) by interacting the Black population share and the VRA indicator with the share of Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) individuals who completed less than five years of schooling in 1960.<sup>39</sup> We fully saturate the regression by including all lower order interaction terms, but for the sake of brevity, we only report the coefficients on: the Black population share;

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<sup>38</sup>Data on education by race at the county level was digitized from the 1960 Census of Population, which reports the number of white and non-white individuals with different levels of education. Information exists only for counties with at least 1,000 non-white individuals in 1960. For this reason, the number of observations in Table 3 is lower than in the baseline analysis. Results (not reported for brevity) are virtually unchanged when using 1940 data, obtained from the full count Census of Population.

<sup>39</sup>As noted above, data on the number of individuals who completed less than five years of schooling by race in 1960 is not available for all counties in our sample. In unreported analyses, we verified that results are unchanged when using shares calculated (for the entire sample) from the 1940 full count Census of Population.

the interaction between the Black population share and the VRA indicator; and, the triple interaction. In both Panels A and B, the coefficient on the triple interaction is close to zero and not statistically significant.<sup>40</sup> Importantly, the finding in Panel B indicates that white mobilization is not stronger in counties with a higher share of less educated whites. This, together with results in columns (1) to (3), weighs against the idea that the surge in white registration rates was driven by the mechanical re-enfranchisement of uneducated whites.

**White registration as a reaction to riots and ethnic conflicts.** It is also possible that the violent and non-violent demonstrations and protests occurring in the aftermath of the VRA instilled a sense of fear and insecurity among white voters. Between 1964 and 1971, 752 Race Riots occurred across the U.S., with 228 deaths, almost 70,000 arrests, and 16,000 episodes of arson and other destructive events.<sup>41</sup> Besides the Race Riots of the 1960s, other forms of violent conflict (including spontaneous disruptions, boycotts, and ethnic vandalism) and non-violent collective events (such as meetings, rallies, and picketing) occurred. If these events were more likely to occur in covered counties with a higher Black population share, the effects we have uncovered could, at least in part, be due to ethnic conflicts rather than the Black political empowerment brought about by the VRA.

In Figure A4, we test this possibility by focusing on the Race Riots of the 1960s (Panel A) and all ethnic conflicts initiated by African Americans (Panel B).<sup>42</sup> We plot the coefficient on the interaction between the Black population share and the VRA indicator from the specification presented in equation (1). Coefficients are always close to zero and not statistically significant at conventional levels. We replicate the analysis aggregating all Race Riots occurring between 1965 and 1971, and reporting results in column (1) of Table A5. Also in this case, the point estimate is small (and negative) and not statistically significant. In columns (2) to (5) of Table A5, we consider the pre-post VRA change in different types of events and demonstrations organized by African Americans.<sup>43</sup> Coefficients are again quantitatively small and imprecisely estimated. Taken together, results in Figure A4 and Table A5 weigh against the possibility that white mobilization was a direct response to riots or other forms of violent and non-violent events organized by Black Americans.

**White flight.** Whites might have expressed their opposition to the VRA not only by registering more, but also by moving to counties that were less affected by the policy. The

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<sup>40</sup>Similar results hold when replacing the share of individuals with less than 5 years of schooling with the share of illiterate individuals in the county. However, we prefer to use the former measure because, as of 1960, only 2% of the white population (above the age of 25) was illiterate.

<sup>41</sup>In the U.S. South alone, 189 Race Riots have been identified (Bernini, 2023).

<sup>42</sup>Data on Race Riots and ethnic conflicts come from Carter (1986) and Olzak (2015), respectively. See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

<sup>43</sup>See Appendix B and the notes to Table A5 for a detailed description of each dependent variable. In all cases, we construct the dependent variable by first computing the average number of events between 1980 and 1976 and between 1964 and 1960, respectively, and by then taking the difference between the two. Results are unchanged when using alternative timing conventions or when using the cumulated number of events, rather than the average.

process of “white flight,” documented for northern cities during the second Black Great Migration (Boustan, 2010; Derenoncourt, 2022), resonates with Hirschman (1970)’s idea that, when individuals are unhappy with a given policy, they may decide to “vote with their feet.”<sup>44</sup> While this channel is not necessarily in contrast with our preferred interpretation, one may be worried that sample selection (associated with white migration) could bias our results. To address this concern, in Table A6, we explore the potential migration response and the associated change in the characteristics of white individuals.

In columns (1) and (2), we replicate our preferred long difference specification using as dependent variable the 1980-1960 change in white population and in the white population share, respectively. If anything, covered counties with a higher Black population share experience an increase in the number of white residents between 1960 and 1980, even though the point estimate is not statistically significant. When considering the white population share, the coefficient is negative, but very small and imprecisely estimated. Next, we consider the 1980-1960 change in: the white unemployment rate (column 3); the share of white families in poverty (column 4); and, the share of the white population (age 25+) with less than a high school diploma (column 5).<sup>45</sup> Reassuringly, coefficients on the interaction between the VRA indicator and the Black population share are small and imprecisely estimated. These results do not support the notion that the effects of the VRA on white registration rates were mediated by the (selective) migration of potentially dissatisfied voters.

## 5 Black Empowerment and White Mobilization

### 5.1 Evidence from Local Newspapers

The surge in white registration rates is consistent with white voters reacting to the threat of heightened Black political empowerment, which was made more salient and immediate by the VRA. To explore these ideas, we turn to the local press, whose language largely responds to readers’ demands (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010), and analyze patterns in the salience of the race issue and the potential deterioration of whites’ racial attitudes in the immediate aftermath of the VRA.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Recent work by Bazzi et al. (2023) shows that the 1900-1940 migration of southern born whites favored the spread of right-wing and racially conservative ideology outside the U.S. South.

<sup>45</sup>Data on county characteristics by race was digitized from the 1960 Census of Population. While information on white characteristics is not reported in the 1960 Census, we computed them as the difference between total characteristics and Black characteristics (the latter are reported for counties with at least 1,000 non-white individuals in 1960). Information on 1980 characteristics by race are also available from the Census of Population, and have been obtained from Manson et al. (2022). See Appendix B for more details on the definition of the dependent variables in Table A6.

<sup>46</sup>Both the American National Election Studies (ANES) and Gallup began to elicit whites’ racial attitudes in the mid-1950s. Yet, due to limitations in both geographic coverage and sample size, neither survey can be used for a systematic analysis at the county level: the most detailed geographic identifier in Gallup is the state of residence, while, even though the ANES includes the county of residence of respondents, the sample size and the number of counties covered are both very small.

We compile a list of local newspapers from Newspapers.com to measure the frequency of selected terms in each county and year, and zoom in on the 5 years before and the 5 years after the VRA.<sup>47</sup> Then, we replicate the DDD design using an event study approach, and estimate the following model:

$$y_{cst} = \sum_{n < 1960} \gamma_n D_n^t \text{Black}_{1960} + \sum_{n > 1960} \theta_n D_n^t \text{Black}_{1960} \times \text{VRA}_{cs} + \mathbf{X}'_{cs} \beta + I_{st} + I_c + \epsilon_{cst} \quad (4)$$

where  $y_{cst}$  is the frequency of a selected term in newspapers published in county  $c$  of 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);  $I_{st}$  are interactions between state and year dummies; and,  $I_c$  are county fixed effects. All other controls are as defined in equation (2), and are interacted with both year dummies and the VRA indicator. We omit the interactions with the first year of the sample to identify the model, and assess how the slope changes over time relative to 1960. We plot the estimated coefficients  $\theta_n$ , which capture the difference in the gradient between covered and non-covered counties, in Figure 4.

In Panel A, the dependent variable is the frequency of the word “Black” in a county-year.<sup>48</sup> 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. After the VRA, the frequency of this term increases in covered counties with a higher Black population share, becoming statistically significant in 1968. This is consistent with the VRA increasing the salience of the race issue more where the Black population may have represented a higher (economic, political, or social) threat to the white population. 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. Again, there is no evidence of pre-trends. Instead, after the VRA, newspapers in covered counties with a higher Black population share become more likely to use racially charged terms when mentioning the word “Black.” Similar to results in Panel A, these effects are evident at least until 1970.

Panels C and D 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, but the magnitudes and precision decline in 1970, possibly reflecting the fact that the term “Negro” became racially charged in the immediate aftermath of the VRA, and subsequently

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<sup>47</sup>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 newspapers’ data varies over time, with an average of 193 counties over the period. Table A7 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.

<sup>48</sup>To ease interpretation, all dependent variables are standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation.

disappeared from the national press in the early 1970s (Martin, 1991). However, the overall message is similar, and suggests that, after the VRA, the salience of the race issue rose and the attitudes of whites worsened more in covered counties with a higher 1960 Black population share.

Interestingly, coefficients in Figure 4 peak around 1968. In that year, George Wallace – a staunch opponent of racial integration and a key figure within the southern white supremacist movement – ran for presidency as the candidate of the American Independent Party. It is thus conceivable that the behavior and the attitudes of white voters were, at least in part, influenced by the inflammatory rhetoric used by strategic political entrepreneurs, such as Wallace.<sup>49</sup> Figure A5 provides suggestive evidence consistent with this idea, showing that the frequency of the term “Wallace” (Panel A) and its joint occurrence with the term “Negro” (Panel B) also jumped in 1968.

## 5.2 Black Office Holding as a Source of Political Threat

The previous section documents that, in the immediate aftermath of the VRA, covered counties with larger shares of African Americans experience an increase in mentions of racial issues with a negative connotation. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that southern whites looked at the prospect of Black office holding with fear, and that concerns of a possible “Black takeover” became widespread soon after the VRA (McDonald, 2003). If whites perceived the enfranchisement of Black Americans as a political threat, we would expect 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.

Civil rights activists considered Black office holding as the primary route for the advancement of African American interests (Bernini et al., 2023).<sup>50</sup> Even if Black progress did not necessarily take place at the expense of the white majority (Wright, 2013), heightened Black political power might have reinforced between-group distinctions, increasing racial animosity and triggering concerns among white voters that their pre-existing status might be challenged (Jardina, 2019; Bursztyrn et al., 2020; Bonomi et al., 2021). As a result, the election of Black officials could act as a catalyst of white political mobilization.

**Heterogeneity by electoral rules.** To shed light on the Black office holding channel, we exploit differences in pre-existing electoral rules, which were crucial for the election of

<sup>49</sup>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).

<sup>50</sup>As pointed out by Wirt (1997): “Many [B]lacks had first wanted their local representatives to be symbolic, that is to be [B]lack like themselves. In time though they wanted representatives to provide individual or group services and to secure the public policies that would provide sufficient resources.” A large literature has studied how minorities’ descriptive representation can enhance their substantive representation. For an overview, see Bernini et al. (2023).

African Americans in the aftermath of the VRA. We distinguish between counties belonging to states that, before the VRA, elected their county governing bodies by single member districts (SMD) and those that used elections at large or mixed systems.<sup>51</sup> The enforcement of the VRA’s pre-clearance provisions in covered counties safeguarded SMD arrangements, which are more favorable to the election of minorities (Trebbi et al., 2008). Bernini et al. (2023) find that the VRA increases Black office holding only in covered counties with larger Black population shares where local elections were governed by SMD electoral rules. In column (1) of Table 4, we confirm this finding in our sample by augmenting the baseline model of equation (2) with the triple interaction between the VRA indicator, the Black population share, and an indicator of SMD elections.<sup>52</sup>

Next, we turn to 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. These results imply that a 10 percentage points higher Black population share is associated with a 9% (or, 5.2 percentage points) faster increase in the growth rate of white registration rates in covered counties with SMD electoral rules, between 1960 and 1980. 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 office in the U.S. South – triggers white mobilization.

Although these patterns are consistent with white counter-mobilization in response to a key manifestation of Black political empowerment, the impact of the VRA could be mediated by other pre-existing county characteristics. If these characteristics are correlated with electoral rules, we may be attributing the effect of the VRA to the Black office holding channel instead of alternative factors. To rule out this possibility, we explore the heterogeneity of white and Black voters’ response to the VRA, by interacting the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share with different measures of the pre-existing economic, social, and cultural environment in the county.<sup>53</sup> First, we consider the legacy of white supremacy, proxied for by the presence of KKK Klaverns and lynchings against African Americans.<sup>54</sup> Second, we investigate the potential role of Black political engagement, measured using the presence of local NAACP chapters in the county. Third, we analyze race-specific employment levels. Finally, we consider the share of Black and white individuals living in urban areas –

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<sup>51</sup>Southern states with SMD electoral 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 in the relevant jurisdictions (e.g., the county or the municipality) elects all the representatives.

<sup>52</sup>We fully saturate the regression by including all lower order interactions.

<sup>53</sup>As before, regressions are fully saturated, and include all lower interaction terms.

<sup>54</sup>We measure KKK presence between 1915 and 1940, and lynchings between 1902 and 1964, respectively. See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

which might affect voting behavior, both because of proximity to registration facilities and because of greater Black economic independence from the old white agrarian powers.<sup>55</sup>

We report results in Figure 6, where we plot coefficients on the triple interaction between the 1960 Black population share, the VRA indicator, and each of the characteristics described above. Panel A shows that the VRA leads to a stronger increase in Black registration rates in counties with a longer history of violence against African Americans. This is consistent with African Americans mobilizing more in areas where they had suffered more discrimination. 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 all the other demographic and economic characteristics. There is also no evidence of heterogeneity for white registration rates (Panel B).

To further assess the relative importance of electoral rules with respect to other pre-existing characteristics, in Figure A6, we replicate columns (2) and (3) of Table 4, by controlling separately for each of the triple interactions considered in Figure 6. Reassuringly, when focusing on white registration rates (Panel B), estimates on the interaction between the Black population share, the VRA indicator, and the SMD indicator are very stable and remain positive and statistically significant.<sup>56</sup>

**First election of Black officials.** We complement the previous analysis by exploiting a different source of variation: the election of the first African American into office. From the perspective of white voters, 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. We provide evidence in support of this idea by first exploring the salience of these events and then analyzing patterns of white registration following their occurrence.

For the 120 counties that elected at least one Black official in their county governing bodies until 1980, we digitized the names of all (168) Black officials elected for the first time from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO).<sup>57</sup> From state-specific sources, described in Table B2, we also retrieved and digitized the names of all the other (1,250) members of county governing bodies elected at the same time as the first Black official. Then, we derive the probability that elected Black (white) officials are mentioned in local newspapers.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>As explained in Appendix B, data on the urban population share and on employment rates by race are taken from the full count U.S. Population Census, and are thus measured in 1940.

<sup>56</sup>Panel A of Figure A6 also confirms the results for Black registration rates reported in Table 4, column (2): the coefficient on the triple interaction with the SMD indicator is always close to zero and never statistically significant.

<sup>57</sup>See Appendix B.2 for more details.

<sup>58</sup>The probability is constructed by dividing the number of Black (resp., white) officials that have received at least one

The estimates from our preferred specification are reported in column (1) of Table A8. The coefficient on the interaction between the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share is positive and precisely estimated. That is, local newspapers of covered counties with a larger Black population share are more likely to mention Black officials elected for the first time. In column (2), we replicate the analysis focusing on white officials elected in the same year when a Black official was elected for the first time. Now, the coefficient of interest is small and imprecisely estimated. This reduces concerns that results in column (1) were driven by local newspapers mentioning all board members more frequently, regardless of their race, in covered counties with a larger Black population share. In column (3), we confirm that a Black official elected for the first time is significantly more likely to be mentioned than a white official elected at the same time.<sup>59</sup> Columns (4) to (6) of Table A8 show that results are similar when using as dependent variable a dummy equal to one if the probability of being mentioned is positive, and zero otherwise.

Having shown that the election of the first Black official in county governing bodies is salient, we now analyze how white voters react to this event. If white mobilization was, at least in part, motivated by – actual or perceived – political threat, we expect white registration rates to increase soon after the election of the first Black official at the local level. Moreover, since the VRA was arguably responsible for gains in Black office holding, the rise in white registration rates should be stronger when the election of the first Black official occurs in covered (as opposed to non-covered) counties.

To test our hypothesis, we estimate event studies that trace out the evolution of white and Black 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 our baseline controls; and, the interaction of the VRA indicator with leads and lags of a dummy equal to one for the election of the first Black official in the county. To reduce concerns that counties that elected Black officials may differ from those that did not, we restrict attention to counties that elected at least one Black official between 1965 and 1980. This guarantees that our analysis only exploits the *timing*, rather than the location, of the first election.<sup>60</sup>

We report results in Figure 5, using the period before the first election as omitted category.

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mention in local newspapers by the total number of Black (resp., white) officials elected in the board of the county governing body. To this end, we searched for the joint occurrence of: *i*) the name of the official; *ii*) the county of election; and, *iii*) the specific title used to name the county governing body in each state. See Table B2 for the full list of titles by state.

<sup>59</sup>Specifically, we reshape the data at the county-race level and include a triple interaction term with a dummy equal to one if the race of the elected official is Black, as well as all the other lower order interaction terms. The triple interaction shows that the difference between the estimated coefficients for Black and white mentions is statistically significant.

<sup>60</sup>Results (not reported for brevity) are unchanged when also including the set of counties that never elect a Black official during our sample period.



Reassuringly, for both Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates, there is no evidence of differential pre-trends. Interestingly, Black political engagement does not seem to respond to the event.<sup>61</sup> Instead, white registration rates increase almost immediately after the election of a Black official, and keep rising for at least ten years.

Despite the lack of pre-trends in white registration rates, the timing of the election of the first Black official might be non-random. For this reason, we view the evidence presented in Figure 5 as suggestive. Nonetheless, the patterns are consistent with the other results presented above, and support the notion that white voters reacted to the – actual or perceived – threat of Black political empowerment promoted by the VRA.

## 6 Long-Run Effects

An important question is whether the effects of the VRA 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, southern whites’ negative stereotypes against Black Americans might have gradually declined, as shown in other contexts (Bursztyn et al., 2022). 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 test these ambiguous predictions, we examine the relationship between the VRA and racially motivated hate crimes in the long-run. As in Calderon et al. (2023), we restrict attention to hate crimes committed between 2000 and 2018, and estimate regressions that include state fixed effects, the vector of baseline pre-VRA controls, and the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the VRA indicator.<sup>62</sup> We present results in Table 5.

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, over this period, 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

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<sup>61</sup>This finding is similar to the result presented in column (2) of Table 4, which shows that Black registration does not increase more in covered counties with SMD elections and larger Black population shares.

<sup>62</sup>For more details, see Appendix B and Calderon et al. (2023).

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 large, although not statistically significant. When focusing on white victims, the relationship between the VRA and hate crimes disappears.<sup>63</sup>

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 on hate crimes committed by white offenders, since for only about 65% of the cases the race of the perpetrator is reported (and, when race is reported, 90% of hate crimes against Black victims are committed by a white offender). The coefficient is slightly smaller than that reported in column (1), but remains large. According to our estimates, a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population share (in covered counties) is associated with 2.2 more hate crimes committed by white offenders against Black Americans per 100,000 people, or about 12% relative to the sample mean.

## 7 Conclusions

On August 6, 1965, the VRA 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 Black progress in multiple domains, it is less clear whether the policy 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 opposition 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 policy (coverage), and implement a triple difference-in-differences (DDD) design. We find that, as intended by the VRA, covered counties with a larger 1960 Black population share experience a faster growth in Black registration rates between 1960 and 1980. However, the VRA also triggers a steep increase in white registration rates, which we interpret as counter-mobilization. We argue and provide evidence that whites' response is driven by the – actual or perceived – threat posed by heightened Black political representation. Using data on hate crimes for the post-2000 period, we also document that the surge in racial animosity induced

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<sup>63</sup>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 to ethnicity, religion, or other dimensions.

by the VRA persists over time.

Findings in this paper paint a nuanced picture of the effects 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 many, fascinating questions. Can governments introduce legislation to ameliorate the conditions of minority groups without generating resistance among majority group members? Specifically for the U.S. context, how can laws improve whites' racial attitudes toward African Americans? More generally, under what conditions do government policies change individuals' beliefs and social norms? We leave these questions to future research.

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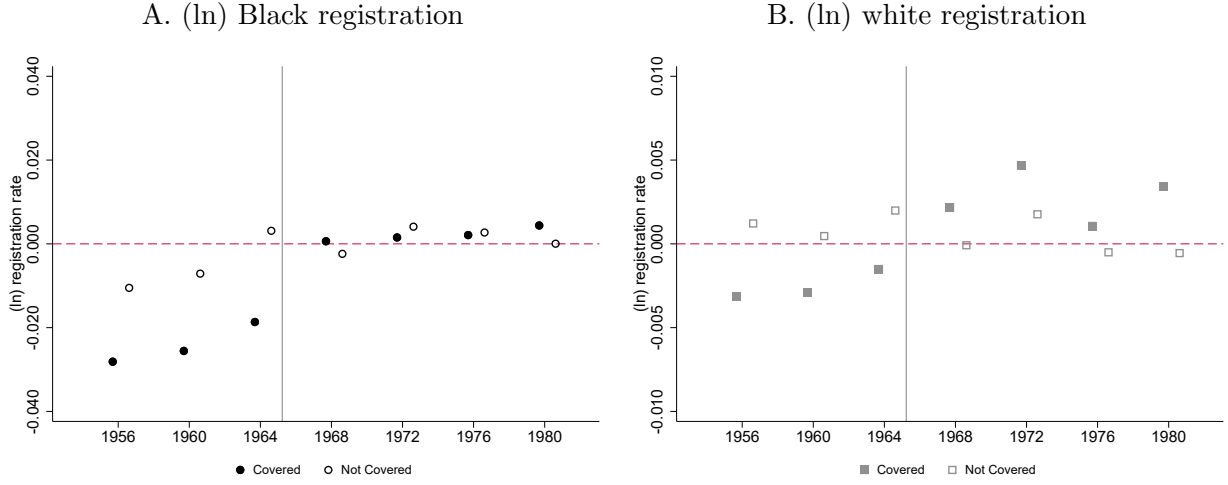
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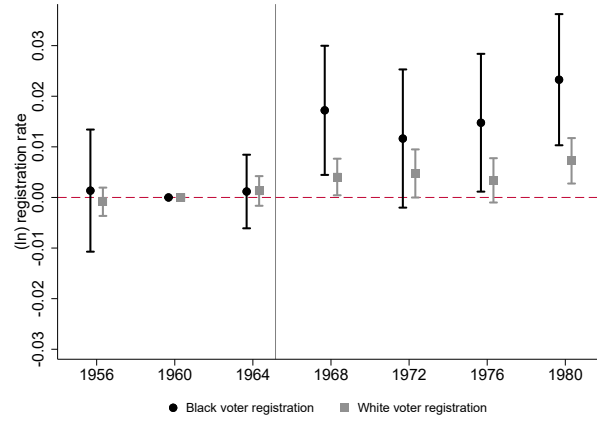
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Figure 1. Registration rates: Trends in the gradient



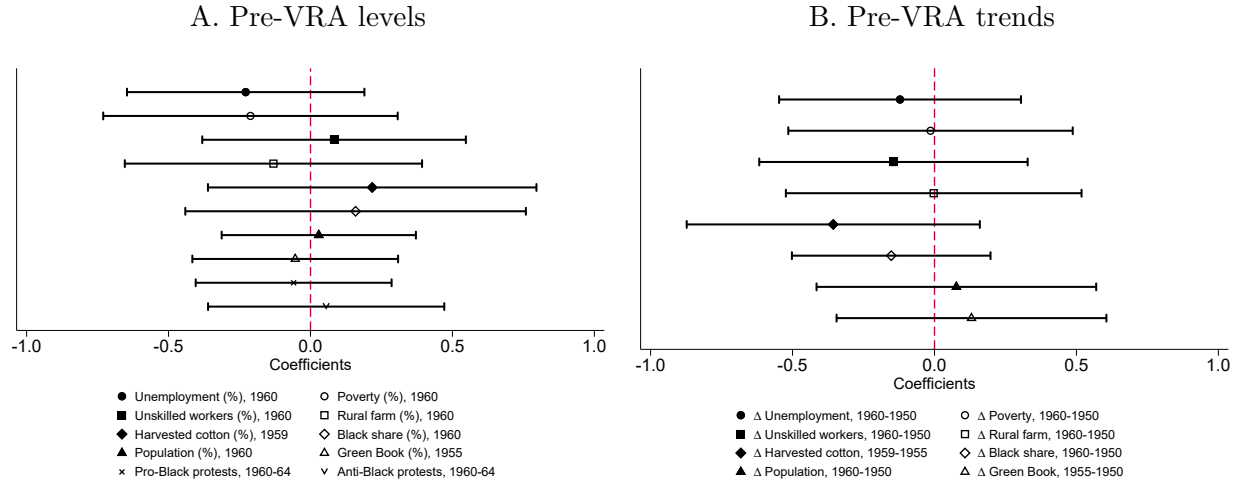
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient on the interaction between the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share, separately by year and treatment status, in models that also include: county and state fixed effects; and interactions between the VRA indicator and the vector of controls. Controls are: Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure 2. Registration rates: Difference in the gradient



Notes: The figure plots the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA indicator, 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 indicator, and the vector of controls. Controls are: Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

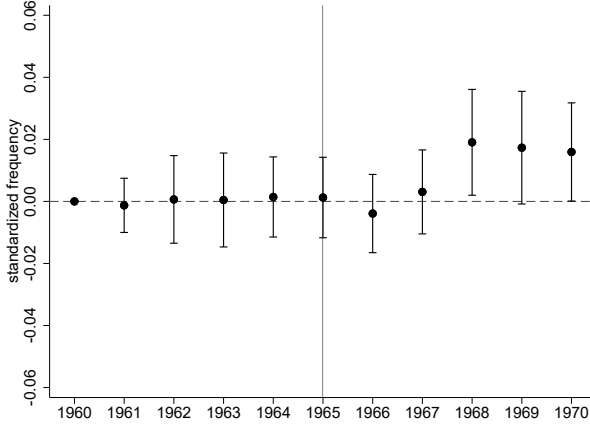
Figure 3. Balancing tests in the border sample: Pre-VRA levels and trends



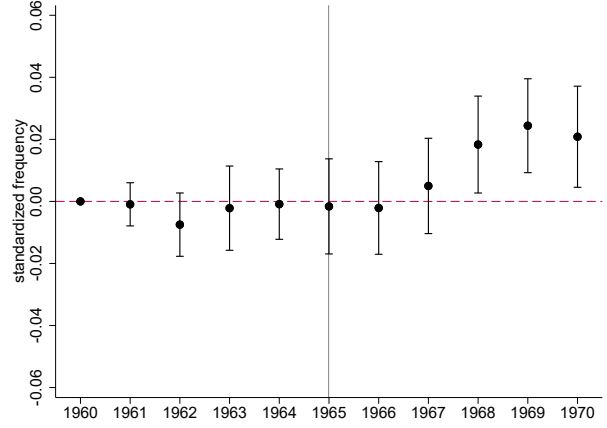
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the VRA indicator. Panels A and B consider levels and changes, respectively. To ease the interpretation of coefficients, all variables are standardized by subtracting their mean and dividing through their standard 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 4. Evidence from local newspapers

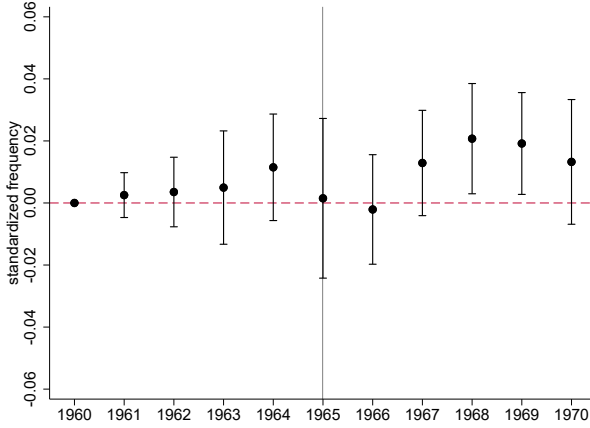
A. Word “Black”



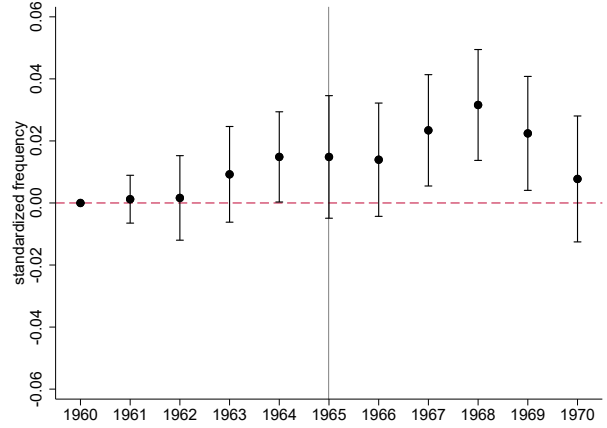
B. Word “Black” and negative words



C. Word “Negro”



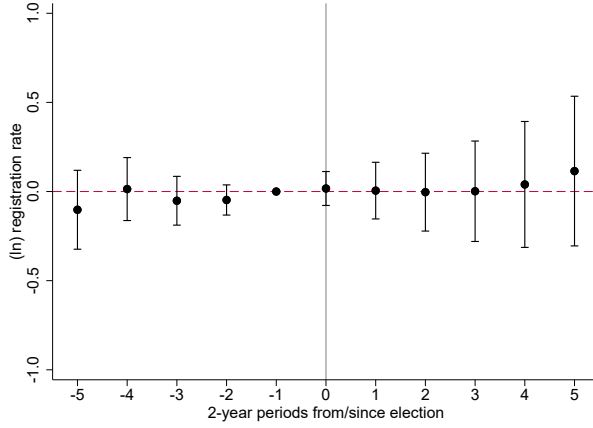
D. Word “Negro” and negative words



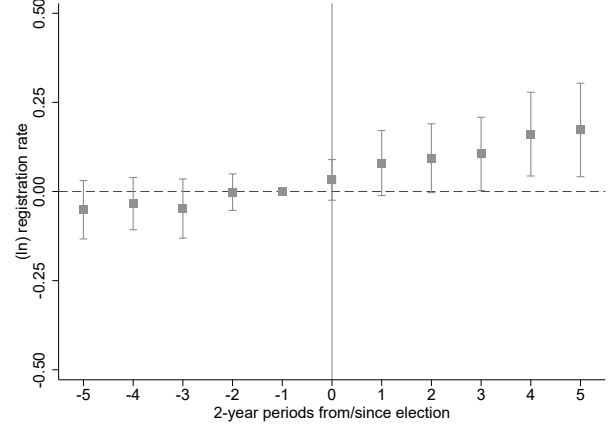
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA indicator, year dummies, and the 1960 Black population share in models that also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and interactions between year dummies, the VRA indicator, 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure 5. The local election of the first Black official

A. (ln) Black registration



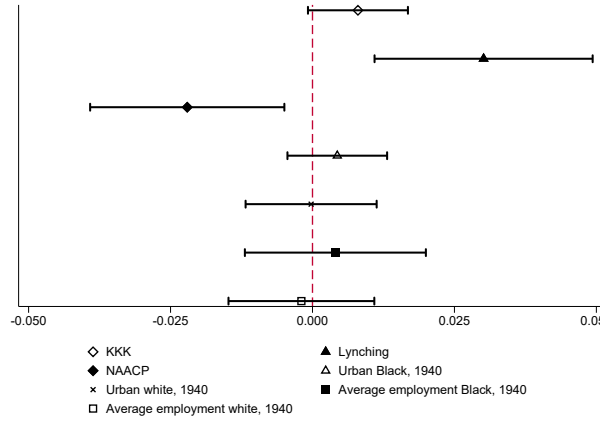
B. (ln) white registration



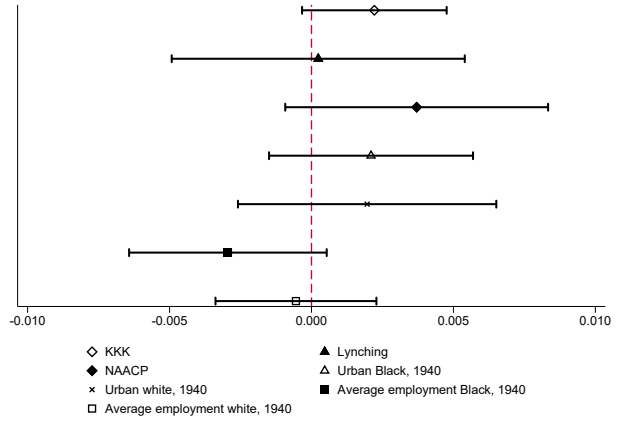
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA indicator and leads and lags for an indicator equal to one for the election of the first Black official in the county, in models that bin observations into 2-year periods, and also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and interactions between year dummies, the VRA indicator, and the vector of baseline controls. The year before the first election (indicated as period -1) is used as omitted category. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure 6. Quadruple difference models

A. Change in (ln) Black registration, 1980-1960



B. Change in (ln) white registration, 1980-1960



Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the triple interaction between the VRA indicator, 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 (2). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates				
	Event Study	Less Than High School	Pro-, Anti-Black Protests	Green Books	Border GRD
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>					
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023*** (0.006)	0.023*** (0.006)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.023*** (0.007)	0.026** (0.011)
Black share, 1960	0.007 (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)	0.048 (0.032)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>					
Dep. variable	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.343 (20.355)	33.857 (21.759)
Black share, 1960	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.064 (15.055)	25.521 (14.862)
Adj. R-Square	0.73	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.27
N	666	666	666	664	167
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>					
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)
Black share, 1960	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.003)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>					
Dep. variable	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.719 (18.578)	70.223 (16.662)
Black share, 1960	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.649 (15.145)	25.521 (14.862)
Adj. R-Square	0.44	0.48	0.50	0.50	0.30
N	676	676	676	671	167

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1980-1960 change in the log of registration rates in Panels A and B. 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 column (1) are: Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959. Controls are added sequentially across columns: Low-skilled (%), 1960 in column (2); Pro-Black protest, 1960-64 and Anti-Black protest, 1960-64 in column (3); Green Book establishments, 1955 in column (4). Column (5) replicates the long difference model in equation (2) using the GRD design of equation (3) and restricting the sample to contiguous counties that belong to covered and non-covered states. In column (5), all regressions also include county pair trends, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. In columns (1) to (4) (resp., column 5) regressions are weighed by 1960 population (resp., by the inverse of the counties' appearance in the sample), and robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions (resp., by judicial divisions and border segments). \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table 2. Pre-VRA trends

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	KKK	Lynching	Cotton	NAACP	Goldwater	Republican Party	President Turnout	Governor Turnout	Governor Win	State House	State Senate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
<i>Panel A: Voter registration sample</i>											
Black share, 1960 X VRA	−0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)	0.057*** (0.019)	−0.000 (0.001)	0.002 (0.004)	0.006* (0.004)	−0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Black share, 1960	0.002*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)	−0.057*** (0.017)	0.001 (0.001)	0.021*** (0.003)	0.014*** (0.003)	0.005* (0.003)	0.004*** (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.001 (0.001)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>											
Dep. variable	0.027 (0.059)	0.164 (0.886)	4.398 (6.245)	0.035 (0.109)	35.045 (16.564)	14.274 (12.878)	25.445 (14.023)	18.624 (14.812)	48.476 (19.585)	152.922 (119.706)	138.396 (82.196)
Black share, 1960	31.286 (18.498)	31.286 (18.498)	31.286 (18.498)	31.286 (18.498)	30.978 (18.385)	31.017 (18.378)	31.262 (18.502)	31.286 (18.498)	31.299 (18.531)	31.286 (18.498)	31.286 (18.498)
Adj. R-Square	0.154	−0.004	0.328	0.071	0.789	0.735	0.413	0.807	0.344	0.573	0.378
N	641	641	641	641	633	631	640	641	637	641	641
<i>Panel B: Border sample</i>											
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.009)	0.028 (0.020)	−0.002 (0.003)	0.015 (0.010)	0.013* (0.007)	−0.003 (0.006)	−0.005 (0.011)	−0.006 (0.010)	0.002 (0.005)	0.003 (0.006)
Black share, 1960	−0.000 (0.002)	0.020 (0.019)	−0.124*** (0.041)	0.003 (0.003)	0.025** (0.012)	0.021* (0.011)	0.012 (0.008)	0.040** (0.017)	0.001 (0.013)	0.008* (0.005)	0.009 (0.005)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>											
Dep. variable	0.022 (0.049)	0.237 (0.891)	4.543 (6.408)	0.040 (0.158)	36.099 (15.284)	15.333 (13.561)	29.065 (17.790)	21.361 (19.583)	46.705 (19.325)	151.424 (114.419)	143.011 (100.135)
Black share, 1960	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)	24.067 (19.954)
Adj. R-Square	0.373	0.094	0.625	−0.214	0.653	0.566	0.100	0.130	0.243	0.108	−0.030
N	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2) 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) (1959-1949), 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. Controls in Panel A are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959 is not included as a control in column (3). The sample of Panel A is based on the availability of voter registration data. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering 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 3. Change in (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates			
	Same Race			
	Less Than High School (1)	Less Than 5 Years (2)	No School (3)	Less Than 5 Years (4)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023*** (0.008)	0.021*** (0.008)	0.021*** (0.007)	0.019 (0.019)
Black share, 1960	0.012** (0.005)	0.013*** (0.005)	0.013*** (0.005)	-0.015 (0.016)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X Less 5 Years				-0.000 (0.000)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	31.826 (19.906)	31.826 (19.906)	31.826 (19.906)	31.826 (19.906)
Black share, 1960	28.897 (14.563)	28.897 (14.563)	28.897 (14.563)	28.897 (14.563)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.75
N	602	602	602	602
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.009** (0.005)	0.010*** (0.004)	0.008*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.006)
Black share, 1960	-0.007** (0.003)	-0.004* (0.003)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.005)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X Less 5 Years				-0.001 (0.000)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	68.447 (18.484)	68.447 (18.484)	68.447 (18.484)	68.447 (18.484)
Black share, 1960	28.677 (14.535)	28.677 (14.535)	28.677 (14.535)	28.677 (14.535)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.48	0.48	0.49
N	589	589	589	589

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1980-1960 change in the log of registration rates in Panels A and B. 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: Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. The education variables are computed for the population above 25 years of age (by race): column (1) includes the share of the population with less than a high school diploma; columns (2) and (4) the share of the population with less than 5 years of education completed; columns (3) the share of the population without education. 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 4. Electoral rules and registration rates

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	Elections	(ln) Registration Rates	
	County Governing Bodies	Black	White
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X SMD	0.162** (0.067)	0.005 (0.012)	0.009** (0.004)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.051 (0.034)	0.019** (0.009)	0.004* (0.002)
Black share, 1960 X SMD	0.003 (0.031)	-0.009 (0.008)	0.002 (0.002)
Black share, 1960	0.062** (0.025)	0.014** (0.007)	-0.003 (0.002)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>			
Dep. variable	0.000 (0.000)	32.343 (20.355)	68.719 (18.578)
Black share, 1960	27.130 (15.179)	28.064 (15.055)	27.649 (15.145)
Adj. R-Square	0.45	0.74	0.53
N	624	664	671

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) augmented with the triple interaction between the 1960 Black population share, the coverage (VRA) dummy, and an indicator equal to one 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 officials elected in county governing bodies in column (1); 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighted 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 5. Hate crimes

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	Hate Crimes			
<i>Perpetrator:</i>	Any			White
<i>Victim:</i>	Black	Other Minority	White	Black
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.273* (0.150)	0.373 (0.243)	-0.017 (0.010)	0.216** (0.083)
Black share, 1960	-0.491*** (0.103)	-0.214 (0.178)	0.015* (0.008)	-0.306*** (0.064)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	3.509 (12.871)	11.356 (35.043)	0.417 (0.965)	1.794 (7.374)
Black share, 1960	27.659 (14.803)	27.659 (14.803)	27.659 (14.803)	27.659 (14.803)
Adj. R-Square	0.22	0.16	0.40	0.19
N	641	641	641	641

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, its interaction with 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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

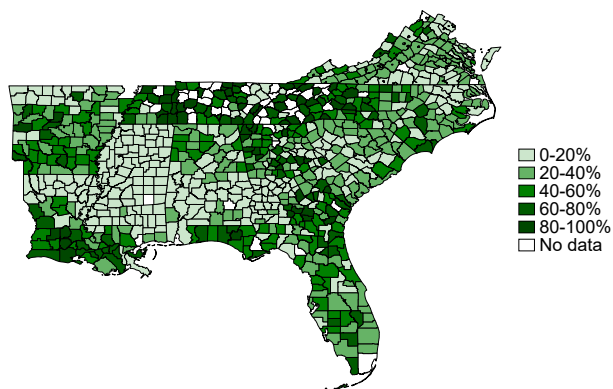
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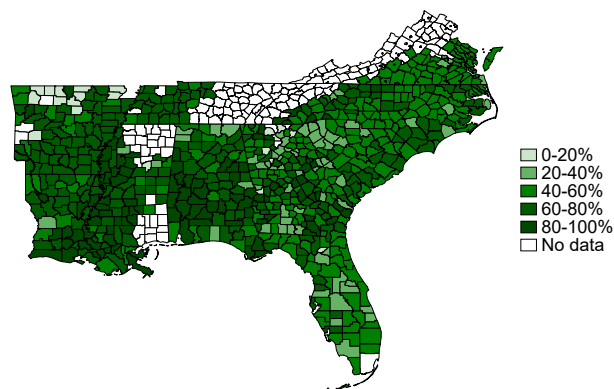
## A Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1. Registration rates by race

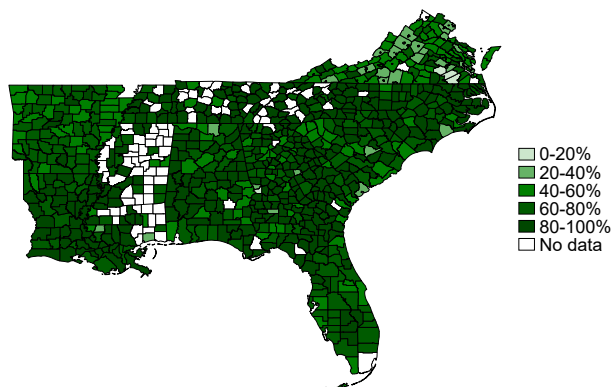
A. Black registration rates, 1960



B. Black registration rates, 1980



C. White registration rates, 1960



D. White registration rates, 1980

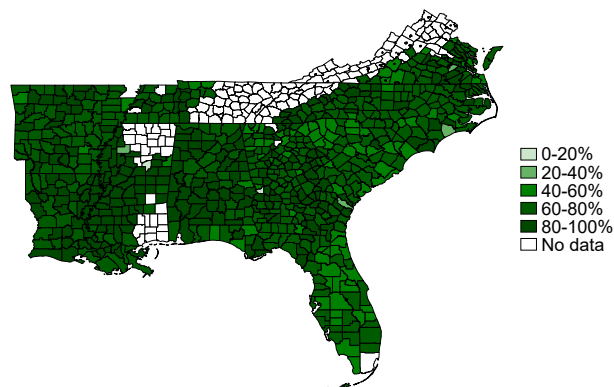
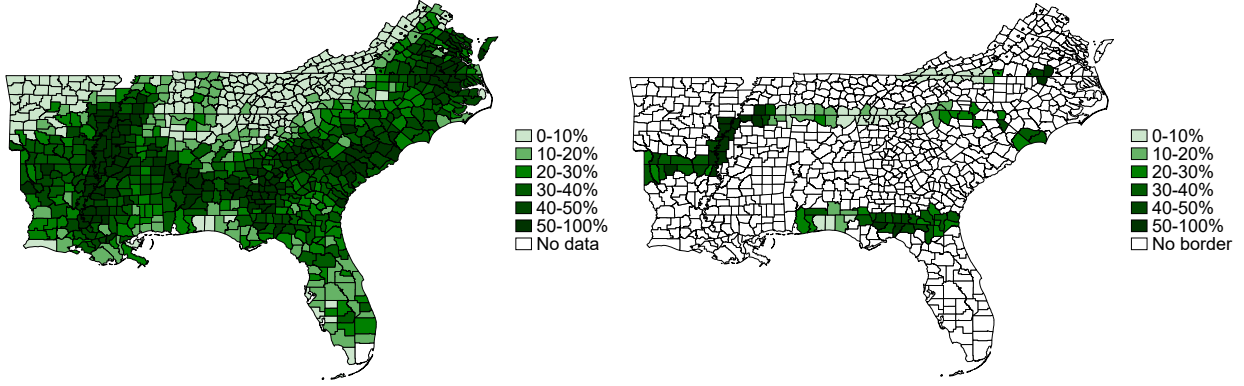


Figure A2. Black population in the sample

A. Black population, 1960

B. Black population in border sample, 1960

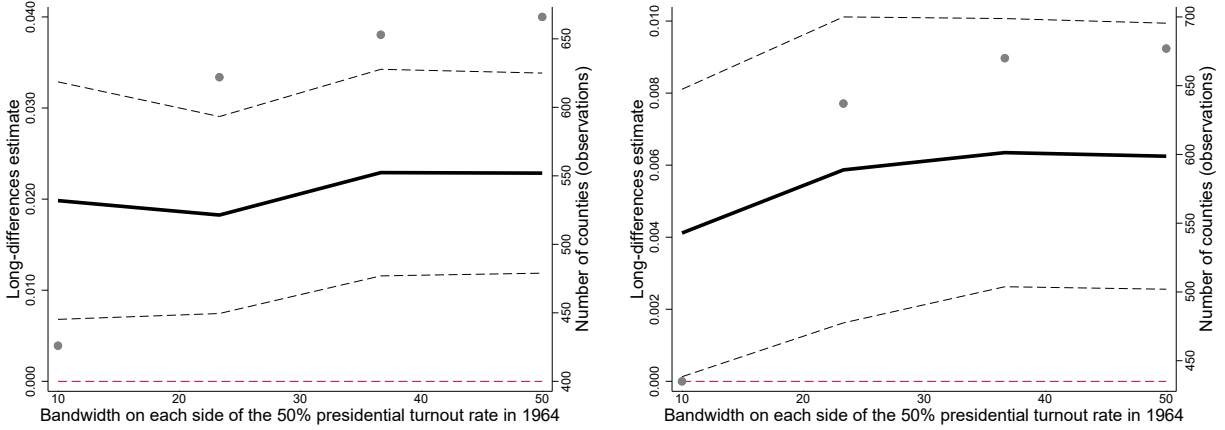


Notes: The sample in Panel B is restricted to the set of counties located at the border between covered and non-covered states.

Figure A3. Discontinuity around the 50% turnout rate

A. Change in (ln) Black registration, 1980-1960

B. Change in (ln) white registration, 1980-1960

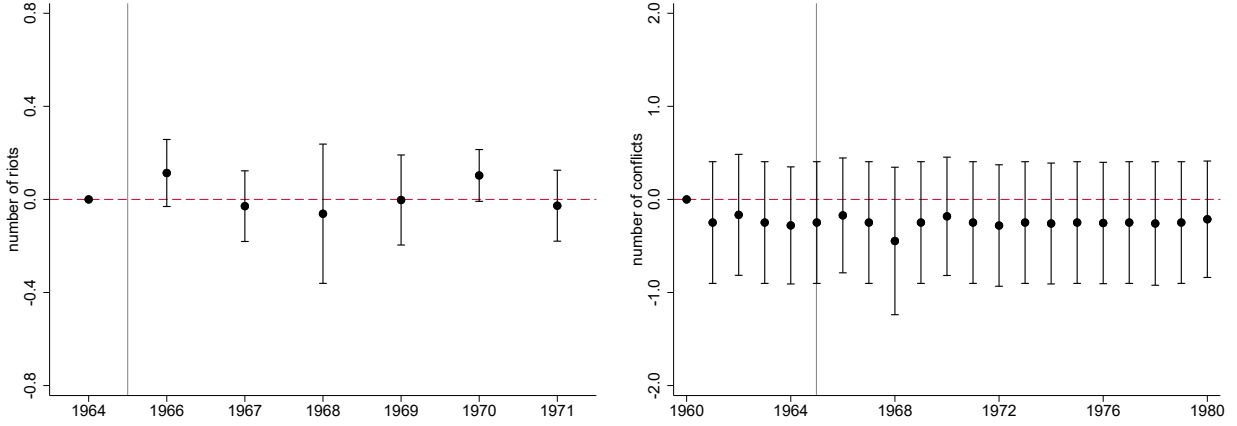


Notes: The figures plot the coefficient and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals in solid and dashed lines, respectively. The long difference model in equation (2) is estimated using a rolling window: from a sample that only includes the counties with a turnout rate around 50% during the 1964 presidential election (bandwidth:  $\pm 10$  percentage points around 50%) to the whole sample of available southern counties (bandwidth:  $\pm 50$  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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure A4. Race Riots and ethnic conflicts

A. Race Riots, 1964-1971

B. Ethnic conflicts, 1960-1980

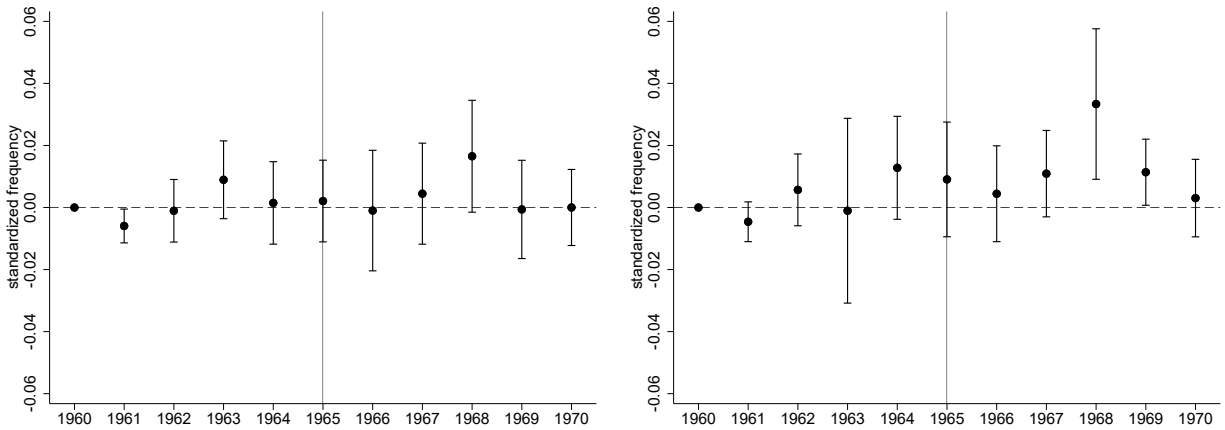


Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA indicator, year dummies, and the 1960 Black population share in models that also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and, interactions between year dummies, the VRA indicator, and the vector of baseline controls. Year 1964 (resp., 1960) is used as omitted category in Panel A (resp., Panel B). The dependent variable is the number of Race Riots (Panel A) and the number of all ethnic conflicts (Panel B). The latter includes both non-violent collective events (meeting or rally; picketing), and violent conflicts (spontaneous disruption; boycott; riot; ethnic vandalism). All dependent variables are multiplied by 100. Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure A5. Evidence from local newspapers: Wallace

A. Word “Wallace”

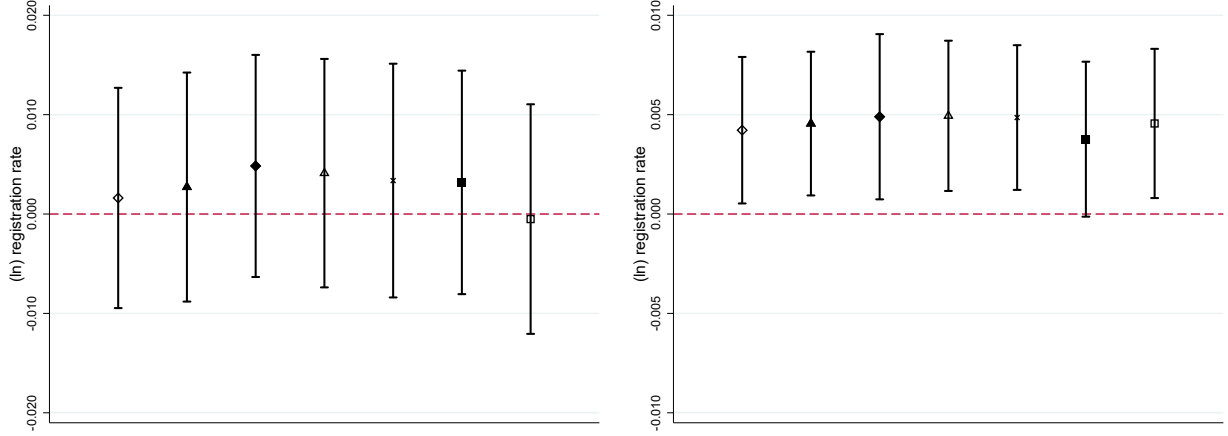
B. Word “Wallace” and word “Negro”



Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA indicator, 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 indicator, and the vector of baseline controls. Year 1960 is used as omitted category. The dependent variable is the frequency of the word “Wallace” (Panel A) and its joint frequency with the word “Negro” (Panel B), 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Figure A6. Quadruple difference models: Electoral rules (SMD)

A. Change in (ln) Black registration, 1980-1960    B. Change in (ln) white registration, 1980-1960



Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the triple interaction coefficient between the VRA indicator, the 1960 Black population share, and the SMD indicator. In each of the seven dots (from the left), the following variables are also included (one at a time) as a triple interaction term with the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share: KKK; Lynching; NAACP; Urban Black, 1940; Urban white, 1940; Average employment Black, 1940; Average employment white, 1940. All other variables are as in the long difference model of equation (2). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

Table A1. Summary statistics

	Covered Counties				Non-covered Counties			
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Panel A: Voter registration sample</i>								
<i>Political participation in 1960</i>								
Black voter registration rates (%)	27.4	22.9	0.0	100.0	45.0	25.0	0.0	100.0
White voter registration rates (%)	77.7	21.5	5.5	100.0	78.6	16.9	46.3	100.0
Gap in registration: Black - white (%)	-50.2	29.0	-100.0	30.1	-33.5	23.7	-95.2	44.7
<i>Political participation in 1980</i>								
Black voter registration rates (%)	59.3	19.4	0.0	100.0	55.9	18.5	0.0	100.0
White voter registration rates (%)	75.6	15.0	8.7	100.0	71.9	11.7	45.7	100.0
Gap in registration: Black - white (%)	-16.3	15.6	-100.0	30.5	-16.0	19.2	-94.9	14.0
<i>County characteristics</i>								
Black share (%), 1960	36.4	18.4	0.0	83.4	19.5	15.9	0.0	68.9
Population (thousands), 1960	38.1	63.7	1.9	634.9	48.0	97.4	2.9	935.0
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	74.7	7.7	42.6	93.5	72.3	9.0	45.6	86.4
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.1	1.7	1.3	11.9	5.4	1.9	1.8	11.4
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	48.0	13.9	7.8	77.8	47.1	14.0	17.6	78.0
Rural farms (%), 1960	20.8	14.3	0.0	63.6	19.7	15.3	0.1	66.8
Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959	2.1	3.1	0.0	28.9	1.9	4.5	0.0	32.8
Pro-Black protests, 1960-64	1.3	6.5	0.0	74.0	0.9	3.8	0.0	34.0
Anti-Black protests, 1960-64	0.4	2.3	0.0	37.0	0.1	0.7	0.0	9.0
Green Book establishments, 1955	0.9	3.5	0.0	49.0	1.3	4.7	0.0	42.0
<i>Panel B: Full U.S. South sample</i>								
<i>County characteristics</i>								
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
Rural farms (%), 1960	20.8	15.2	0.0	64.8	21.4	15.2	0.1	77.3
Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959	2.0	3.2	0.0	28.9	2.8	5.7	0.0	37.5
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
Green Book establishments, 1955	0.8	3.1	0.0	49.0	0.9	3.9	0.0	42.0



Table A2. Robustness: Sample selection

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	In Sample	(ln) Registration Rates		
		Balanced Sample	Turnout 40%-60%	Turnout 45%-55%
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.001 (0.003)	0.023*** (0.007)	0.020** (0.008)	0.022* (0.011)
Black share, 1960	0.007*** (0.002)	0.010** (0.005)	0.007 (0.005)	0.004 (0.006)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	0.834 (0.373)	32.916 (20.180)	32.993 (19.709)	35.259 (17.261)
Black share, 1960	25.663 (15.982)	27.667 (14.810)	26.636 (13.929)	24.337 (12.788)
Adj. R-Square	0.55	0.72	0.62	0.62
N	873	641	426	244
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.003 (0.003)	0.006** (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)	0.005* (0.003)
Black share, 1960	0.005** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.004** (0.002)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	0.825 (0.380)	68.661 (18.553)	70.667 (18.287)	70.358 (16.246)
Black share, 1960	25.663 (15.982)	27.667 (14.810)	26.790 (14.210)	24.158 (12.904)
Adj. R-Square	0.60	0.50	0.58	0.67
N	873	641	426	241

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2): 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 counties with a 1964 presidential turnout rate between 40% and 60%, and between 45% and 55%, respectively, in columns (3) and (4). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. Regressions are weighted 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 A3. Change in (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates						
	Black Share	Poverty Rate	Unempl. Rate	Rural Farms	Cotton Produc.	State FE	Interaction x VRA
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.021*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.006)	0.023*** (0.006)
Black share, 1960	0.013*** (0.003)	0.005 (0.005)	0.008 (0.005)	0.008* (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)	0.008* (0.004)	0.007 (0.005)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>							
Dep. variable	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)	32.342 (20.351)
Black share, 1960	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)	28.061 (15.053)
Adj. R-Square	0.58	0.58	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.73	0.73
N	666	666	666	666	666	666	666
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006*** (0.002)	0.005*** (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.001)	0.005** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Black share, 1960	-0.003** (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.001)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>							
Dep. variable	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)	68.720 (18.570)
Black share, 1960	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)	27.621 (15.159)
Adj. R-Square	0.08	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.42	0.44
N	676	676	676	676	676	676	676

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1980-1960 change in the log of registration rates in Panels A and B. All regressions include the 1960 Black population share and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Controls are added sequentially across columns: Families below poverty line (%), 1960 in column (2); Unemployment rate (%), 1960 in column (3); Rural farms (%), 1960 in column (4); Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959 in column (5); state dummies in column (6); interactions between county controls and the coverage (VRA) dummy in column (7). 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. Change in the gap of (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	Gap in (ln) Registration Rates			
	Event Study	Less Than High School	Pro-, Anti-Black Protests	Green Books
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.016** (0.006)	0.016** (0.007)	0.018** (0.008)	0.016** (0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.008* (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.011** (0.005)	0.012*** (0.004)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	-35.745 (22.312)	-35.745 (22.312)	-35.745 (22.312)	-35.745 (22.312)
Black share, 1960	27.665 (14.808)	27.665 (14.808)	27.665 (14.808)	27.667 (14.810)
Adj. R-Square	0.67	0.67	0.68	0.69
N	643	643	643	641

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1980-1960 change in the difference in the log of Black and white registration rates. 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 column (1) are: Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959. Controls are added sequentially across columns: Low-skilled (%), 1960 in column (2); Pro-Black protest, 1960-64 and Anti-Black protest, 1960-64 in column (3); Green Book establishments, 1955 in column (4). 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 A5. Riots and conflicts

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	Race Riots	Non-violent Collective Events	Riots	Violent Conflicts	Pro-Black Protests
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	-0.079 (0.414)	0.003 (0.115)	-0.035 (0.065)	0.042 (0.120)	-0.921 (0.629)
Black share, 1960	0.530 (0.374)	-0.088 (0.094)	-0.041 (0.054)	-0.119 (0.103)	-0.547 (0.350)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>					
Dep. variable	19.958 (83.574)	0.913 (1.046)	0.327 (0.496)	0.829 (0.783)	1.356 (1.970)
Black share, 1960	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)
Adj. R-Square	0.42	0.36	0.11	0.32	0.14
N	641	641	641	641	641

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2). For column (1), the dependent variable measures all the Race Riots that occurred between 1965 and 1971. For columns (2) to (5), all variables are measured as the change in the average values between 1976 and 1980 with the average values between 1960 and 1964. Non-violent collective events led by African Americans include: meeting or rally; picketing. Violent conflicts led by African Americans include: spontaneous disruption; boycott; riot; ethnic vandalism. All dependent variables are multiplied by 100. 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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 A6. Changes in white population and its characteristics

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	White Population	White Population Share	White Unemployment Rate	White Poverty Rate	White Less Than High School
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	207.898 (335.655)	-0.042 (0.116)	-0.011 (0.012)	-0.049 (0.037)	0.036 (0.039)
Black share, 1960	-235.530 (323.538)	0.366*** (0.101)	0.004 (0.008)	0.353*** (0.034)	0.063* (0.032)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>					
Dep. variable	22.313 (35.535)	72.226 (39.001)	3.797 (9.397)	34.199 (12.142)	64.587 (9.888)
Black share, 1960	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)	23.681 (19.600)
Adj. R-Square	0.45	0.76	0.39	0.97	0.99
N	641	641	554	567	532

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) using as dependent variable the change in the variable reported at the top of each column. For all columns, the change is measured over the 1980-1960 period. The dependent variable at baseline that is presented in column (1) shows 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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 A7. Summary statistics: Local newspapers

	Covered Counties				Non-covered Counties			
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>County characteristics</i>								
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
Rural farms (%), 1960	19.5	14.1	0.0	58.6	13.6	13.6	0.2	77.3
Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959	3.0	4.4	0.0	28.9	3.6	6.6	0.0	37.5
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
Green Book establishments, 1955	1.4	3.6	0.0	27.0	2.7	5.7	0.0	33.0

Table A8. Evidence from local newspapers: Mentions of elected officials

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	County Governing Bodies					
	Mentions/Board Members			1[At Least One Mention]		
	Black	White	Stacked	Black	White	Stacked
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	2.289** (1.095)	0.398 (0.582)	0.816 (0.731)	0.029*** (0.011)	-0.007 (0.007)	0.001 (0.007)
Black share, 1960	-2.058** (0.956)	-0.005 (0.462)	-0.806 (0.583)	-0.021** (0.010)	0.011 (0.007)	0.002 (0.006)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X Race			1.056* (0.596)			0.019** (0.007)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>						
Dep. variable	67.866 (45.261)	74.897 (34.373)	71.381 (40.342)	0.703 (0.458)	0.946 (0.226)	0.825 (0.381)
Black share, 1960	31.818 (16.387)	31.818 (16.387)	31.818 (16.387)	31.818 (16.387)	31.818 (16.387)	31.818 (16.387)
Adj. R-Square	0.83	0.95	0.88	0.85	0.96	0.89
N	120	120	240	120	120	240

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) using as dependent variable the probability of being mentioned in the local press during election time, for counties that elect a Black official in their county governing bodies for the first time. For columns (1) and (2), the variable is the probability, calculated as the number of Black (resp., white) officials that are mentioned in the local press, out of all Black (resp., white) officials that are elected to the board. For columns (4) and (5), the variable is an indicator equal to 1 whenever the probability of being mentioned is non-zero, and zero otherwise. Columns (3) and (6) present a fully-saturated regression on the stacked dataset. 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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 description of the data on voter registration rates 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.<sup>64</sup> The availability of race-specific registration statistics 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 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 registration statistics by race for this period. However, as shown in Table B1, our data are not available for all states and years. In our main analysis, we consider the change in registration rates between 1960 and 1980 (see equation (2) 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).<sup>65</sup> We also replaced missing 1964 values using 1963 figures for Arkansas.

In the analysis, we consider race-specific registration rates, dividing the number of registered voters by the voting age population by race from Manson et al. (2022).<sup>66</sup> Due to changes in the legal requirements to vote, we define the voting age population as: age 21+ for 1970 and prior years; and, and age 18+ for 1980 and later years.<sup>67</sup> Since official information on voting age population is available every 10 years, we follow Cascio and Washington

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<sup>64</sup>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 race-specific information (Doty, 1969).

<sup>65</sup>Reassuringly, results are robust to excluding these four states (Table C2).

<sup>66</sup>Whenever the registration rate is above 100%, we winsorize it. However, results are robust to excluding county-year observations for which registration rates are above 100% (Table C2).

<sup>67</sup>On June 22, 1970, President Nixon signed into law *H.R. 4249*, lowering the voting age requirement to 18 starting on January 1, 1971.

(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 come from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO). This directory was first set up by the Southern Regional Council in 1969, and included information on all Black officials elected at the national, state, and local level.<sup>68</sup> 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 information 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 the directory to construct the total number of Black officials elected in each southern local office in 1969, 1971, and for the period 1973-1980.

In our analysis (see Section 5.2 and Table 4), 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 Black 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. First, from the County and City Data Book 1947-1977 (Inter-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 share of families with income below 3,000 U.S. dollars in 1960; *iii*) the 1960 unemployment rate; *iv*) the share of individuals 25 years old or more without a high school diploma in 1960; *v*) the share of the population living in rural farms in 1960; and, *vi*) the average net Black migration rate between 1940 and 1960. Second, we use the United States Census of Agriculture (Haines et al., 2018) to measure the share of land in the county devoted to cotton production in 1955; the corresponding variable for 1959 is from Haines (2010). Third, we obtain an index for cotton suitability based on the maximum potential cotton yield by county from Hornbeck and Naidu (2014).

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<sup>68</sup>The data include Black elected officials in: county governments, municipality governments, and school boards.

**Additional political variables.** In addition to data on registration rates 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 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. (2022), we calculate voter turnout in gubernatorial elections for 1940 and 1960 as the ratio between votes cast and voting age population.<sup>69</sup> Third, we take the vote shares received by the lead candidates 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 variables. First, our main treatment variable (a dummy equal to one if a county was subject to the special provisions of the VRA) is defined using information from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.<sup>70</sup> Second, we collect data on electoral rules from the Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments (1957) and from the 1980 volume of the NRBEQ. Finally, we collect data from the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the U.S. District Courts to map counties to the judicial districts and their corresponding judicial divisions.

**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 protests that occurred between 1960 and 1980 from Olzak et al. (2011).<sup>71</sup> 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 obtain 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 count the number of local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

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<sup>69</sup>For elections cast in years other than 1960 or 1940, we use the first off-cycle election after the corresponding decade.

<sup>70</sup>Source: <https://www.justice.gov/crt>.

<sup>71</sup>We matched the original dataset, reported at the city-level, to the counties in our sample.



People (NAACP), scaled by the Black population, in 1942 and 1964 using data from Gregory (2018).<sup>72</sup> Lastly, we use local newspapers data from the website Newspapers.com to measure the frequency of selected terms relative to the frequency of the word “and” (used to proxy for circulation) in each county and year between 1960 and 1980.<sup>73</sup>

Additional historical proxies for race relations include: all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 from Cook et al. (2023); three indicators of segregation from Logan and Parman (2017): the Segregation Index, the Dissimilarity Index, and the Isolation Index; the number of Black draftees and volunteers in U.S. military enlistment during WWII, divided by the eligible (14-45) Black population; and two principal component indicators to measure, respectively, political and economic discrimination at the county level from Qian and Tabellini (2021).<sup>74</sup>

**The Race Riots of the 1960s.** In the context of the Race Riots of the 1960s, the first systematic collection of these events was conducted by Spilerman (1970). The original dataset was subsequently refined by Carter (1986), which extended the dataset to include all Race Riots from 1964 until 1971. These datasets are based on several sources, which include: *i*) the Riot Data Review compiled by the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University; *ii*) the Congressional Quarterly’s Civil Disorder Chronology of 1967; *iii*) the Kerner Commission report of 1968; and *iv*) newsclips from both the New York Times and the Washington Post. To be classified as a Race Riot, the incident had to be a spontaneous event, involving at least 30 people, some of whom African Americans, resulting in either aggressive behavior, looting, or property damage.<sup>75</sup>

**Ethnic conflicts.** Olzak (2015) collected information on all ethnic conflicts that occurred during the period 1954-1992. In this paper, we have split ethnic conflicts into two groups: *i*) non-violent collective events (meeting or rally; picketing), and *ii*) violent conflicts (spontaneous disruption; boycott; riot; ethnic vandalism). When focusing on riots using this dataset, the definition used considers demonstrations involving at least 50 people, with some form of violence, and lasting for at least two hours. The main source of information to collect these data are newsclips from the New York Times.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Since the original data is available at the city level, we mapped each city to the corresponding county.

<sup>73</sup>For more details on newspapers data, see Fouka et al. (2022) and Calderon et al. (2023).

<sup>74</sup>See Table B4 for a description of the variables included in each measure.

<sup>75</sup>This definition excludes all the events that occurred inside of school settings and civil rights demonstrations.

<sup>76</sup>For a comparison between the data on riots included in Carter (1986) and Olzak (2015), see Bernini (2023). In line with Carter (1986), which focused explicitly on the Race Riots of the 1960s, the bulk of riots found in Olzak (2015) also occurred in the same period, with a clear overlap between the two datasets over 1964-1971. However, as mentioned in Bernini (2023), Olzak (2015) might understate the actual number of riots, by considering only the New York Times and by imposing a threshold of minimum 50 participants.

**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).<sup>77</sup> 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. (2023), we focus on hate crimes reported from 2000 (included) onward, since the number of agencies collecting records grew during the 1990s, stabilizing only toward the end of the decade. 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 data 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).<sup>78</sup> 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.

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<sup>77</sup>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).

<sup>78</sup>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.

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, county governing bodies, and electoral rules in the U.S. South

<i>State</i>	<i>Coverage</i>	<i>County governing bodies</i>	<i>Electoral rules</i>	<i>Source</i>
Alabama	Covered	Commissioner	Mixed system	Alabama Official and Statistical Register
Arkansas	Not covered	Justice of the peace	Single member districts	Certified Election Returns of Arkansas Precincts and Counties <sup>b</sup>
Florida	Not covered	Commissioner	At-large system	The Sheriff's Star: Special Yearbook Edition. Official Publication of the Florida Sheriffs Association
Georgia	Covered	Commissioner	At-large system	Georgia Official and Statistical Register
Louisiana	Covered	Police jury	Single member districts	Louisiana Roster of Officials
Mississippi	Covered	Supervisor	Single member districts	Mississippi Official and Statistical Register
North Carolina	Partially covered <sup>a</sup>	Commissioner	Mixed system	North Carolina Manual
South Carolina	Covered	Commissioner	Mixed system	South Carolina Governmental Guide <sup>c</sup> and South Carolina Directory of County Officials <sup>d</sup>
Tennessee	Not covered	Magistrate	Single member districts	
Virginia	Covered	Supervisor	Single member districts	Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia

<sup>a</sup> 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.

<sup>b</sup> Microfilms from the "Arkansas Elected Justices of the Peace Returns."

<sup>c</sup> Until 1973.

<sup>d</sup> After 1973.

Table B3. Judicial divisions

<i>State</i>	<i>Source</i>
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)
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. (2023) 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. (2023) for more details.	Authors' calculations from the Census of Governments (1957) and the NRBE0 (1980)
Control Variables		
Cotton share	Share of land devoted to cotton production in 1959 and 1955.	Authors' calculations from the United States Census of Agriculture (Haines et al., 2018) and Haines (2010)
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)
Green Book establishments	Number of all Green Book establishments present in 1955 (standardized by the Black population in 1950).	Authors' calculations from Cook et al. (2023)
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)

Rural farms	Share of the population living in rural farms in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
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)
<hr/> Additional Variables <hr/>		
Cotton suitability index	Index of cotton suitability based on maximum potential cotton yield by county.	Hornbeck and Naidu (2014)
Discrimination principal component	Principal component measures of political and economic discrimination from Qian and Tabellini (2021). The political discrimination index includes: i) the average vote share in Presidential elections, for each election between 1900 and 1930; ii) the average vote share in Congressional elections, for each election between 1900 and 1930; iii) the presence of KKK klaverns between 1915 and 1940; iv) the number of lynching against Black Americans between 1803 and 1939; v) the 1940 residential segregation index from Logan and Parman (2017). The economic discrimination index includes the racial gap (white minus Black) in: i) the employment share; ii) the logarithm of the average occupational income scores. Both variables are measured for men 18-65 years old in the labor force.	Qian and Tabellini (2021)
Education	Share of individuals 25 years old or more, by race: i) without a high school diploma; ii) with less than 5 years of education; iii) without education.	Authors' calculations from the Census of Population, 1960
Ethnic conflicts and protests	Violent conflicts include spontaneous disruptions, boycotts, riots, and ethnic vandalism between 1960 and 1980. Non-violent conflicts include meetings or 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)
Green Book establishments (other)	Average number of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955; and the growth rate of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955.	Authors' calculations from Cook et al. (2023)
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)
Measures of segregation	Residential Segregation Index, Dissimilarity Index, Isolation Index. See Logan and Parman (2017) for more details.	Logan and Parman (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)
Net migration rate	Net Black migration rate between 1940 and 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
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)
Race Riots	Number of Race Riots between 1964 and 1971.	Authors' calculations from Carter (1986)
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)
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)
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)
U.S. military enlistment during WWII	Total number of Black draftees and volunteers (per 100,000 individuals) divided by the eligible Black population in the county as of 1940 (14-45 years old).	World War II Army Enlistment Records (NARA-AAD), 1938-1946
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. (2022)
White characteristics	Unemployment rate defined as the number of unemployed divided by the labor force; poverty rate as the share of families below 3,000 USD (resp., 7,500 USD) in 1960 (resp., 1980); share of the population above 25 years of age with less than a high school diploma.	Authors' calculations from the Census of Population, 1960, and the Census of Population and Housing, 1980

## 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 4.4). 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 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.<sup>79</sup>

Next, we present estimates obtained from propensity score stratification and from trimming the sample on the propensity scores. 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, 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.

Finally, since the 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 reported in column (4) of 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 column (4) of Table 1; if anything, they become somewhat larger for Black registration rates. Then, we address the concern that results might be biased by non-random measurement error in the registration data. In column (2), we trim observations with registration rates equal to or higher than 100% in either 1960 or 1980.<sup>80</sup> In column (3), we drop counties that, in any year between 1956 and 1980, report a

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<sup>79</sup>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.

<sup>80</sup>Note that in the main analysis, we winsorize registration rates above 100%.



measure of total registered voters (i.e., our numerator) higher than total turnout.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> In column (5), we define the dependent variable as the change between the average value of 1976-1980 and the average value of 1960-1964.<sup>83</sup> In column (6), we omit from the set of controls the share of rural farms and the land in the county devoted to cotton production. 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 2 (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, compared to majority-white counties. We test the linearity assumption in Figure C1, where we present bin scatterplots of the 1980-1960 change in the log of Black and white 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.<sup>84</sup> In line with previous work (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2023), results lend support to the linearity in the effect of the VRA, both in the full sample (Panels A and B), and in the set of counties within the common support (Panels C and D).<sup>85</sup>

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 registration rates above and below the 1st and 99th (resp., the 5th and 95th) percentiles of the distribution.<sup>86</sup> 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 Black population share.

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<sup>81</sup>Since turnout is not available separately by race, we can only compare total voter turnout and registration numbers.

<sup>82</sup>In the main analysis, we impute 1984 registration data when 1980 ones are missing. See Appendix B.1 and Table B1.

<sup>83</sup>This could only be performed for four states: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

<sup>84</sup>The bin scatterplots are computed using a least squares estimation with robust inference procedure, following Cattaneo et al. (2022).

<sup>85</sup>The common support includes the set of counties with a Black population share below 68.9%.

<sup>86</sup>Outliers are constructed separately for Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) voters.

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 the log); *ii*) the log of (1+rates); *iii*) the log of registered voters (i.e., without scaling the number of registered voters by the eligible population). Coefficients in column (4) indicate that a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population share in covered (relative to non-covered) counties increases Black and white registration rates by 3.6 and 3.3 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 25% and 8%, respectively.

## 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).

## C.5 Controlling for Residential Segregation

One caveat to the interpretation of our results is that they might, at least in part, capture the effects of the Civil Rights Act (CRA), which was passed in 1964. Specifically, one may worry that white mobilization was a direct response to the anti-segregation measures introduced by the CRA. In the main text (Table 1, column 4), we address this possibility by controlling for pre-existing patterns of segregation in public accommodations, using data on the 1955 number of Green Book establishments from Cook et al. (2023).

In Table C4, we verify that results are robust to controlling for several other measures related to the degree of (pre-VRA) segregation. In column (1), we restate the baseline specification, controlling for the interaction between the VRA indicator and the number of all Green Book establishments present in 1955 (the last data point in the Green Book dataset), standardized by the Black population in 1950. Next, in columns (2) and (3), we interact the VRA indicator with the average number of Green Book establishments and with their growth rate, between 1939 and 1955 (the first and the last year in the Green Book dataset). Then, in columns (4) to (6), we turn to three measures of racial residential segregation taken from Logan and Parman (2017). In particular, we interact the VRA

indicator with, respectively: the Residential Segregation Index, the Dissimilarity Index, and the Isolation Index. Reassuringly, in all cases, results remain in line with those from our preferred specification.

## C.6 Controlling for Potential Forces Promoting Black Activism

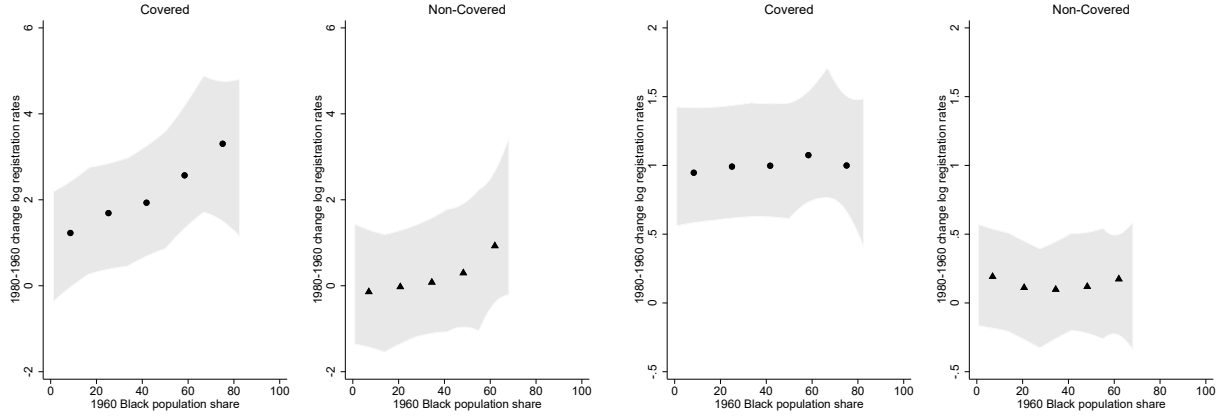
One remaining concern is that our results might be driven by the correlation between coverage status, the Black population share, and other variables related to Black political activism, which might have independently triggered white mobilization after the VRA. In our preferred specification (Table 1, column 4), we tackle this concern by interacting the VRA indicator with the frequency of pro- and anti-Black protests occurring between 1960 and 1964.

In Table C5, we show that results are robust to considering additional variables. In column (1), we restate the preferred specification. Next, in column (2), we include the interaction between the VRA indicator and the presence of local NAACP chapters in 1964. In column (3), we instead consider the Black draft enlistment rate during World War II, which is viewed as a potential force behind the rise of the civil rights movement (Guglielmo, 2018). Then, in column (4), we interact the coverage dummy with the 1940 to 1960 Black out-migration rate – another variable that has been associated with political change in the U.S. South (Margo, 1991; Feigenbaum et al., 2020). Finally, in column (5), we include the interaction between the VRA indicator and two index of historical economic and non-economic discrimination from Qian and Tabellini (2021).

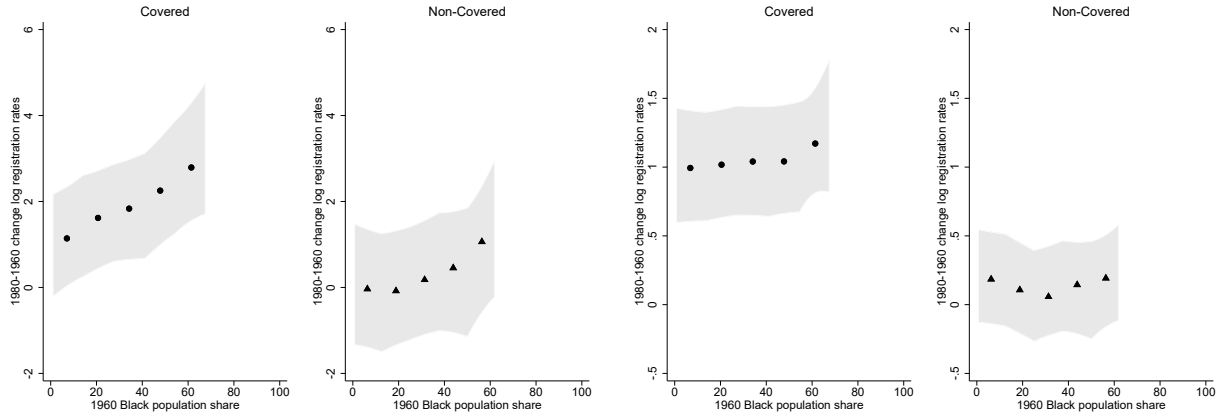
Reassuringly, the coefficient on the interaction between the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share remains stable and close to that from our preferred specification.

Figure C1. Non-linearities

A. Change in (ln) Black registration, 1980-1960    B. Change in (ln) white registration, 1980-1960



C. Change in (ln) Black registration, 1980-1960: Common support    D. Change in (ln) white registration, 1980-1960: Common support



Notes: The figures plot the point estimate (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) registration rates against the 1960 Black population share, after partialling out the set of baseline controls. Panels C and D include the set of 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. (2022). Robust standard errors are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

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

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates			
	CEM	Stratifying Propensity	Trimming Propensity	Trimming Black Pop.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.024*** (0.007)	0.019*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.023*** (0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010** (0.005)	0.011 (0.010)	0.010** (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	32.429 (20.329)	32.343 (20.355)	32.425 (20.332)	32.603 (20.266)
Black share, 1960	27.892 (14.781)	28.064 (15.055)	27.875 (14.757)	27.604 (14.404)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.75	0.74	0.73
N	658	664	657	647
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.007*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Black share, 1960	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.008** (0.003)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>				
Dep. variable	68.595 (18.528)	68.719 (18.578)	68.584 (18.522)	68.420 (18.447)
Black share, 1960	27.393 (14.737)	27.649 (15.145)	27.375 (14.712)	27.115 (14.364)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
N	662	671	661	652

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2): 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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates						
	1980-1964 Registr.	Above 100%	Below Turnout	1980 Registr.	Average Registr.	Cotton Share	Rep Share 1964
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.026*** (0.005)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.023*** (0.007)	0.015* (0.008)	0.019* (0.011)	0.019*** (0.006)	0.021*** (0.007)
Black share, 1960	-0.001 (0.002)	0.008* (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)	0.019** (0.007)	0.013 (0.009)	0.010** (0.004)	0.010** (0.005)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>							
Dep. variable	40.726 (20.991)	31.829 (19.297)	33.068 (20.244)	36.160 (18.984)	35.236 (17.552)	32.343 (20.355)	32.343 (20.355)
Black share, 1960	28.641 (15.230)	27.992 (14.760)	27.735 (14.849)	25.947 (13.718)	26.785 (13.813)	28.064 (15.055)	28.064 (15.055)
Adj. R-Square	0.76	0.74	0.72	0.69	0.76	0.74	0.76
N	572	631	617	480	240	664	664
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.005** (0.002)	0.008*** (0.003)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.004 (0.002)	0.005 (0.003)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)
Black share, 1960	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>							
Dep. variable	67.029 (15.236)	64.513 (15.571)	69.169 (18.295)	70.970 (16.149)	68.028 (13.199)	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)
Black share, 1960	28.076 (15.259)	27.013 (14.197)	27.704 (15.134)	25.760 (13.887)	26.914 (14.040)	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.63	0.63	0.50	0.50
N	572	489	644	492	242	671	671

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2): 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 two controls Rural farms (%), 1960; and Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959 in column (6); vii) adding the control Republican share (%), 1964 in column (7). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates							
	1st-99th Percent.	5th-95th Percent.	Quartic Polyn.	Rate	(ln) Rate	Individ.	State Cluster	Conley 100km
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.021*** (0.007)	0.020*** (0.006)	0.020*** (0.007)	0.356** (0.170)	0.020*** (0.006)	0.025*** (0.008)	0.023** (0.007)	0.020*** (0.006)
Black share, 1960	0.009* (0.005)	0.007 (0.004)	0.061* (0.032)	0.432*** (0.139)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.011** (0.004)	0.010* (0.005)	0.009** (0.004)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>								
Dep. variable	32.279 (20.188)	31.917 (18.538)	32.343 (20.355)	32.091 (20.480)	32.091 (20.480)	33.480 (19.851)	32.343 (20.355)	32.343 (20.355)
Black share, 1960	28.037 (14.923)	27.910 (14.374)	28.064 (15.055)	28.104 (15.385)	28.104 (15.385)	26.582 (14.050)	28.064 (15.055)	28.064 (15.055)
Adj. R-Square	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.77	0.75	0.79	0.74	0.12
N	651	597	664	690	690	690	664	664
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.005** (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.332** (0.135)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.008** (0.003)	0.006* (0.003)	0.006*** (0.002)
Black share, 1960	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003* (0.001)	0.004 (0.009)	-0.125 (0.094)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>								
Dep. variable	68.733 (18.107)	69.788 (16.934)	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)	71.082 (18.202)	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)
Black share, 1960	27.594 (15.006)	27.583 (15.203)	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)	26.659 (14.197)	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)
Adj. R-Square	0.59	0.55	0.50	0.55	0.50	0.77	0.50	0.02
N	657	604	671	671	671	671	671	671

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2): i) dropping observations 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 registration as rates (%) instead of  $\ln(\text{rates})$  in column (4); iv) measuring registration as  $\ln(1 + \text{rates})$  in column (5); v) measuring registration as  $\ln(1 + \text{registered individuals})$  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; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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.

Table C4. Controlling for residential segregation

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates					
	Green Books Establishments			Residential Segregation		
	Baseline Specification	All Estab. 1939-1955	Growth Rate 1939-1955	Segregation Index	Dissimilarity Index	Isolation Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>						
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023*** (0.007)	0.022*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.023*** (0.007)	0.022*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010** (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)	0.012** (0.005)	0.009** (0.005)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>						
Dep. variable	32.343 (20.355)	32.343 (20.355)	32.343 (20.355)	32.402 (20.462)	32.402 (20.462)	32.402 (20.462)
Black share, 1960	28.064 (15.055)	28.064 (15.055)	28.064 (15.055)	27.937 (15.082)	27.937 (15.082)	27.937 (15.082)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.75	0.74
N	664	664	664	654	654	654
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>						
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006** (0.003)	0.006** (0.002)	0.007** (0.003)
Black share, 1960	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>						
Dep. variable	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)	68.721 (18.591)	68.721 (18.591)	68.721 (18.591)
Black share, 1960	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)	27.611 (15.109)	27.611 (15.109)	27.611 (15.109)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
N	671	671	671	651	651	651

Notes: Using data on Green Book establishments from Cook et al. (2023), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of all Green Book establishments present in 1955, standardized by the Black population in 1950 in columns (1); ii) the average number of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 (both years included) in columns (2); iii) the growth rate of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 in columns (3). Using the index present in Logan and Parman (2017), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: iv) the Segregation Index, the Dissimilarity Index, and the Isolation Index, respectively, in columns (4), (5), and (6). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64. Green Book establishments, 1955 is added as a control in columns (4) to (6). 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 C5. Controlling for potential forces promoting Black activism

<i>Dep. variable:</i>	(ln) Registration Rates				
	Baseline Specification	NAACP Chapters	WWII Enlistment	Black Net Migration	Discrimination Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Panel A: Black registration</i>					
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023*** (0.007)	0.023*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.006)	0.022*** (0.007)	0.023*** (0.008)
Black share, 1960	0.010** (0.005)	0.010** (0.005)	0.009** (0.004)	0.010** (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>					
Dep. variable	32.343 (20.355)	32.343 (20.355)	32.585 (20.672)	32.343 (20.355)	32.691 (20.716)
Black share, 1960	28.064 (15.055)	28.064 (15.055)	27.935 (15.235)	28.064 (15.055)	28.022 (15.244)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.76
N	664	664	653	664	638
<i>Panel B: White registration</i>					
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.008** (0.003)
Black share, 1960	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.002)
<i>Summary statistics:</i>					
Dep. variable	68.719 (18.578)	68.719 (18.578)	69.521 (18.433)	68.728 (18.574)	69.489 (18.500)
Black share, 1960	27.649 (15.145)	27.649 (15.145)	27.609 (15.260)	27.659 (15.139)	27.678 (15.251)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.50	0.57
N	671	671	649	670	632

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of NAACP chapters in 1964, standardized by the Black population in 1960 in column (2); ii) the number of Black U.S. military enlistment during the onset of WWII, standardized by the number of eligible men in 1940 in column (3); iii) the Black net migration rate between 1940 and 1960 in column (4); iv) two indicators (obtained via principal component analysis, PCA) for political components and economic components in column (5). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; Rural farms (%), 1960; Land devoted to harvested cotton (%), 1959; Pro-Black protest, 1960-64; Anti-Black protest, 1960-64; Green Book establishments, 1955. 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.