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

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September 2024

Abstract

How did southern whites respond to the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA)? Leveraging newly digitized data on county-level voter registration 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 white counter-mobilization, the surge in white registrations is concentrated in counties where African Americans represent a political threat. Counter-mobilization leads to a short run increase in support for racially conservative candidates, and to a slow-down in local public spending salient to Black Americans, such as public sector employment and education.

Keywords: Civil Rights, Race, Voting Behavior, Enfranchisement
JEL Classification: D72, J15, H70, N92

*We thank the editor, Leonardo Bursztyn, four anonymous referees, Jim Alt, Desmond Ang, Carlos Avenancio-Leon, Eric Chaney, Andy Ferrara, Martin Fiszbein, Jeff Frieden, Mayya Komisarchik, Sebastian Ottinger, Simon Quinn, Hunter Rendleman, Jesse Shapiro, Tara Slough, Jim Snyder, Mara Squicciarini, Guido Tabellini, Mathias Thoenig, Melissa Thomasson, Felipe Valencia, Gavin Wright, Noam Yuchtman, and participants at several conferences and seminars for useful comments and suggestions. We are also grateful to the staff at the Atlanta University Robert W. Woodruff Library Archives Research Center for their assistance. Angelo Azzolini, Tanvi Goyal, Riccardo Graziani, Baran Iscen, Marta Leva, Marco Panunzi, Monia Tomasella, Francesco Toti, Hao Yang, and Zhengyang Zhou provided outstanding research assistance. All remaining errors are ours.

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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

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 gains in Black representation and other tangible improvements for African American communities.[1]

President Johnson hoped that Black enfranchisement could "brighten the lives of every American" (Johnson, 1965), and indeed many of the gains experienced by Black Americans spilled over to segments of the white society (Wright, 2013). Yet, President Johnson was also aware of the hostile reactions that the VRA might generate among southern whites. Since the end of Reconstruction, African Americans in the U.S. South had endured suppression of their constitutional rights to vote by violence, intimidation, and institutionalized disenfranchisement (Kousser, 1992; Foner, 2013; Anderson, 2016, 2018). Attempts to eliminate racial discrimination had been systematically followed by whites' hostile reactions (Dickerson, 2003; Naidu, 2012; Parker and Barreto, 2014) – a pattern that continued also with the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s (Morris, 1984). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the VRA triggered white opposition at the local level (Reed, 1966), and historical accounts and case studies from specific southern states are consistent with this idea (Alt, 1994; Fresh, 2018).

The notion that white mobilization was a response to the so called "Black threat" goes back to seminal work by Key (1949), who noted that "the hard core of the political South – and the backbone of southern political unity – is made up of those counties and sections of southern states in which Negroes constitute a substantial proportion of the population."

[1] 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.

Consistent with Key (1949)'s insight, the southern counties targeted by the VRA to redress Black disenfranchisement were precisely those where the presence of African Americans was perceived as a challenge to the existing political and social order. However, despite a large body of work on southern white behavior in the aftermath of the VRA (Davidson and Grofman, 1994), the notion of Black threat remains elusive. While Key (1949)'s focus was on the size of the local African American community, institutional differences (e.g., pre-existing electoral rules) within the South were important to translate enfranchisement into descriptive representation and actual political power at the local level (Trebbi et al., 2008; Bullock and Gaddie, 2009).[2] Data limitations have prevented the literature to systematically analyze if white voters responded to the surge in actual or perceived Black political threat induced by the VRA, and whether such response had an impact on the overall effectiveness of the Act.

In this paper, we seek to fill this gap by leveraging newly assembled county-level voter registration rates by race, and reach two main conclusions. First, while the VRA increases Black political participation across the board, whites mobilize more in counties where the Black threat is higher because African Americans are more likely to gain local representation. Second, white counter-mobilization has tangible consequences. Despite the unquestionable gains brought about by the VRA, counties where white mobilization is higher experience a stronger increase in support for racially conservative candidates and a slower growth in local public spending most likely to benefit the Black constituency.

To study the effects of the VRA on political participation by race, we assembled data spanning ten states of the former Confederacy, over 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.

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

[2]Bateman et al. (2015) have extended Key (1949)'s original analysis by examining how the behavior of elected Congress members in the U.S. South varied across issue areas, and how their preferences diverged from those of legislators representing the rest of the country.

in the former Confederacy to form a suitable control group. Estimating a triple difference-in-differences (DDD) specification, we compare the evolution of Black and white registration rates, before and after the VRA, between covered and non-covered counties with different 1960 Black population shares. The identifying assumption is that, absent the VRA, 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.

We find that Black registration rates increase more in covered counties with a higher share of African Americans, but that this pattern is mirrored by a substantial increase in white registration. Hence, even if the VRA lowers the Black-white gap in registration rates, within fifteen years from the passage of the VRA, the reaction of white voters 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.

These findings continue to hold when using a Geographic Regression Discontinuity (GRD) design that focuses on more similar counties spanning the border between covered and non-covered states. They are also robust to: *i*) controlling for additional variables that might be correlated with coverage, such as proxies for the influence of the Civil Rights Act (CRA), Black migration, and funds received through the War on Poverty; *ii*) excluding potential outliers; *iii*) adjusting standard errors for spatial correlations; and, *iv*) replicating the analysis using only the set of counties that had similar 1964 turnout, which was used to determine coverage.

Our results confirm Key (1949)'s insight that the size of the African American community plays an important role in shaping white political behavior in the U.S. South. In the second part of the paper, we examine in more detail the notion of Black threat, and document that the size of the African American constituency matters, but only when it is associated with actual or perceived gains in Black office holding. In a first exercise, we exploit differences in pre-existing electoral rules, which are crucial for minority representation.[3] As shown by Bernini et al. (2023), the VRA leads to gains in Black office holding only in counties electing their governing bodies by single member districts (SMD), as opposed to at large

[3]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 Trebbi et al. (2008).

or mixed systems. To study whether office holding represents a source of Black threat, we estimate a quadruple-differences design, allowing the effect of coverage to vary by SMD status. We document that white mobilization mirrors the patterns of Black representation: the differential increase in white registration is concentrated in covered SMD counties with a larger Black population share, where African Americans are more likely to gain office. We provide further evidence on the role of electoral rules in shaping perceived political threat leveraging a newly compiled list of local-level court cases, filed between 1965 and 1980, challenging elections at large. Estimating event studies, we document that white registration rates increase right after the court case, and remain higher for at least 10 years since then.

Our evidence is consistent with the idea that white political participation is an attempt to counteract Black empowerment. However, if voting is costly, group-based models (Feddersen, 2004; Coate and Conlin, 2004; Feddersen and Sandroni, 2006) predict that participation depends on the degree of political competition: it should increase as groups become more similar in size and decrease when one group outnumbers the other. Consistent with group-based models of political competition, we find that, while the surge in white registration is always higher in SMD counties with a higher Black population share, the growth of white registration accelerates as the two groups become more similar, and declines when the number of Black Americans greatly exceeds that of whites.

Next, we explore the role of Black office holding 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. Consistent with this idea, we show that these elections were salient: in covered counties with a larger Black population share, the first Black elected official is more likely to be mentioned by local newspapers than white officials elected at the same time. We also find that, while covered counties do not experience differential changes 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, our results are consistent with the idea that Black enfranchisement fuels white counter-mobilization. We further corroborate this interpretation using data from historical local newspapers. We document that the frequency of racially-charged terms as well as mentions of white mobilization and backlash increase in newspapers with headquarters in covered counties with a higher Black population share soon after the VRA. More directly in support of the political threat channel, we also find that mentions of white mobilization are more likely to occur together with mentions of the race issue and of George Wallace, a key figure within the southern white supremacist movement. However, this increase in mentions

is concentrated during gubernatorial election years, precisely when the Black threat is more likely to bite.

We also explore other factors that might 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 do not observe differential changes in the occurrence of race riots or other forms of protests. This suggests that white counter-mobilization is not a reaction to increased insecurity, possibly instilled by race riots or local-level conflicts. Finally, we provide evidence against the possibility that our results might be partly driven by white out-migration.

Having shown that political motivation is the main driver behind white reactions to the VRA, we then examine the implications of white counter-mobilization for state and national politics as well as policies salient for the Black electorate. First, we document a short-term spike in support for segregationist candidates. In the 1968 presidential election, in the set of SMD counties, where white counter-mobilization is stronger, we observe a larger increase in the vote share of George Wallace as compared to Strom Thurmond, the segregationist 1948 presidential candidate. We document similar patterns in gubernatorial elections between 1956 and 1968, classifying candidates according to their stance on racial segregation. Second, using data on employment and spending by county governments between 1957 and 1982, we show that SMD counties are more likely to choose local spending policies that bring diffused benefits (e.g., capital spending) and are less likely to allocate public spending on categories that would benefit more the African American community (e.g., education and public employment). Together, our findings paint a nuanced picture of the VRA, and showcase the significance of white counter-mobilization: even though Black empowerment brought tangible gains to African American communities, such gains were partly offset by white backlash to the VRA.

Finally, we explore which segments of the white electorate mobilized in response to the Black threat. We leverage historical survey data from Gallup that measure whites' racial attitudes and policy preferences. Similar to Kuziemko and Washington (2018), we use as proxy for whites' racial views a specific question that asks respondents whether they would vote for a Black presidential candidate. Estimating individual level regressions that exploit state-level variation in coverage, electoral rules, and Black population shares, we provide suggestive evidence that whites who are male, live in rural areas, are older, and have lower levels of education are more likely to oppose the election of a Black candidate after the VRA. These findings are consistent with the argument that opposition to Black empowerment was stronger in the rural South (Wirt, 1997) since most of the economic benefits of the VRA accrued to urban and more educated whites (Wright, 2013).

A growing literature on the effects of the VRA 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 many 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). However, despite these gains, a line of work in political science that builds on the seminal contribution of Key (1949) has documented evidence of white resistance to Black empowerment. Alt (1994) focuses on four southern states between 1967 and 1988, and shows that white registration rates are positively correlated with Black population shares. Fresh (2018) finds an increase in both Black and white registration rates in North Carolina's covered counties, but does not explicitly consider the role of the size of the African American population, which instead plays a fundamental role in Key (1949)'s racial threat hypothesis.

To the best of our knowledge, by leveraging novel data on race-specific registration rates at the county level, we are the first to provide systematic evidence on the effects of the VRA on both Black and white mobilization in the entire South. We make two additional contributions to the literature. First, we identify the role played by local African American office holding as a key source of Black political threat and a driver of white counter-mobilization. Second, we show that white counter-mobilization has tangible consequences for electoral outcomes and for local public policies. More specifically, we complement existing studies on partisan realignment triggered by civil rights legislation (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018; Ang, 2019), showing that Black political empowerment leads to a spike in segregationist vote in the immediate aftermath of the VRA. We also provide new evidence that counter-mobilization reduces the pace of improvement in policy domains salient to African Americans (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019; Bernini et al., 2023).[4]

Our results also speak to papers showing that new laws intended to benefit minority groups can trigger backlash among majority group members (Zonszein and Grossman, 2024; Wheaton, 2022). We complement these papers by focusing on one of the most fundamental laws in American history and leveraging newly collected voting registration data. Our findings indicate that the removal of laws that perpetuate racial exclusion might generate backlash among members of the majority group. This has important implications for the design of policies that seek to eliminate racial disparities in the political, social, and economic domains.

[4]Our findings also speak to the broader literature on U.S. race relations. 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., 2024).

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.[5] 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.[6] 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.[7]

The VRA was met with open defiance by the white political class. Its constitutionality was immediately challenged.[8] As its special measures stood the scrutiny of the court, 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, when announcing the introduction of the VRA,

[5] 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.

[6] Pre-clearance was needed in order to assess whether the proposed change would have discriminated against protected minorities.

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

[8] 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.

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 to register 60,000 white voters in the city of New Orleans alone to counter a Black voter registration drive.[9] White mobilization efforts intensified over time as Black candidates started to appear on the ballot box. When Black civil rights attorney Nils Douglas ran for the Louisiana state legislature, the CCGNO urged its members to cast their ballot for the white racially conservative candidate Ernest J. Hessler, Jr., writing that: "The white voters of the 9^{th} Ward are faced with the most serious challenge since Reconstruction time."[10]

White voter 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 whites to "stand up for America and for individual freedom," and "discriminate against anyone we may choose."[11] As a result of voter registration drives, new white voters "in many localities outnumbered the new [Black] bloc voters."[12]

[9]The Times-Picayune (New Orleans, Louisiana), August 23, 1965.

[10]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).

[11]The Times-Picayune (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 8, 1965.

[12]Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, Mississippi), August 11, 1968.

3 Data

In this section, we describe the novel data on registration rates by race and county that we collected. We provide more details in Appendix B, where we also present the additional data sources and variables used throughout the paper.

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 Confederacy.[13] 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 spanning the period between 1956 and 1980.[14] We then built registration rates using county-level data on the voting age population by race.[15]

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 1 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

[13] 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 eliminated information on the race of registered voters (Doty, 1969). Since race-specific information is missing for all the years following the VRA, Texas is not included in our sample.

[14] 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.

[15] Appendix B provides a description and the corresponding sources for all variables used in the paper.

we address it, when presenting the identification strategy below. Table 1 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.[16]

Table 1 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, 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 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 GRD design that focuses on counties spanning the border between covered and non-covered states, which do not exhibit any statistically significant difference in observable characteristics.

4 The VRA and Political Participation

4.1 Empirical Strategy

Our 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,

[16]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).

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 a larger pre-existing Black population share (Cascio and Washington, 2014). As coverage was meant to protect Black voting rights, we expect this 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.[17]

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 begin by examining 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. We control for state fixed effects and the vector of 1960 variables typically considered in the literature (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini et al., 2023).[18]

[17]Since five counties in Florida became covered after the 1975 re-authorization of the VRA, we verify that our results are robust when we drop these counties from our sample (Table C2).

[18]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.

Our results show that, before the VRA, counties with a larger Black population share 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 with the passage of 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 1968, a 10 percentage points increase in the 1960 Black population 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:

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

where y_{cst} is the log of registration rates (of either race) in county c of state s at time t; $Black_{1960}$ is the 1960 Black population share in the county; 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 VRA_{cs} indicator; and, I_{st} are state-year interactions and I_c are county fixed effects.[19] 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.[20] Regressions are weighed by 1960 county population.

[19] 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.

[20] 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), and for the sources used, see Table B3. In Table C3, we assess

The parameter of interest is θ_n, which captures the treatment-control difference in the change in the gradient of voter registration rates on 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.[21]

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 period, both Black and white registration rates increase more in covered counties with a higher 1960 Black population share.[22] The jump observed immediately after the VRA is consistent with anecdotal accounts of Black mobilization and white counter-mobilization (see also Section 2). The event study shows that these patterns are not temporary: white registration rates keep increasing for at least fifteen years after the passage of the VRA.

4.3 Main Results

Our main goal is to understand how white political participation responds to Black empowerment, which took time to materialize. Thus, to summarize our main findings and later assess their robustness, in this section we build on the graphical evidence presented above, and consider a long difference model focusing on two points in time – before (1960) and after (1980) the VRA. We omit the years in between since, as detailed in Appendix B.1, while registration data for the ten states of the former Confederacy are available at the beginning and at the end of our sample period, this information is not continuously reported in some of the intermediate years. More precisely, we estimate the following equation:

the robustness of our results to using alternative cluster structures.

[21] In Appendix C.6, we provide additional evidence on the lack of pre-trends by implementing the test proposed in Roth (2022).

[22] The growth in registration rates is faster for Black voters than for white voters. However, note that, 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.

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

where Δy_{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.[23]

Table 2 reports our findings, separately for Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates.[24] As before, the main coefficient of interest is the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and the VRA_{cs} indicator. We start with 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 voter registration rates. In columns (2) and (3), we additionally 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).[25]

One 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 CRA 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 several additional robustness checks in Section 4.4 below.

Results in Panel A indicate that a 10 percentage points increase in the 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 compared to non-covered ones, between 1960 and 1980.[26] 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 A3, we quantify

[23] As before, regressions are weighed by 1960 population and standard errors are clustered at the judicial division level. In Appendix C, we show that our findings are not sensitive to the use of alternative starting and ending points to estimate the long difference regression.

[24] The number of observations varies across panels because we restrict samples to counties reporting registration rates of the relevant population. The results are robust to focusing on counties that report registration rates for both races in both years (see Table A1, column 2).

[25] Table A2 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.

[26] 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.

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 this 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 results in Table 2 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).[27] 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 3. Here, following Bernini et al. (2023), we replicate equation (2) using as dependent variables the pre-VRA changes in a number of outcomes described below.[28]

We begin by examining 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 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. Next, 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 for Barry Goldwater, the 1964 Republican presidential candidate, who ran on an openly anti-civil rights agenda, with that of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952.[29] In column (6),

[27] 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.

[28] Each variable is reported at the top of the corresponding column. See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

[29] Even though the position taken by Eisenhower on civil rights issues has remained controversial, it was never openly against

we examine 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).[30]

This analysis documents the lack of pre-trends across variables, with the exception of the share of land devoted to the production of cotton (column 3).[31] The positive and statistically significant coefficient for this outcome indicates that covered counties with a larger share of African Americans remained more reliant on cotton production.[32] 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 non-covered states.

Table 1 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).[33] In Figure 3, we conduct a formal balancing test for the 1960 Black population share and all other controls included in our baseline specification. The results show that the border sample is fully balanced between covered and non-covered counties in terms of pre-VRA levels (Panel A) and trends (Panel B).

Having verified that contiguous counties are comparable to each other, we combine the

racial equality (Lawson, 1976; Schickler, 2016).

[30]Data on malapportionment are not available for earlier periods.

[31]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. In Table C2, we verify that results are unchanged when including the Republican vote share in the 1960 presidential election as additional control.

[32]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.

[33]Figure A2, Panel A presents the same figure for the ten states in our sample. Consistent with Table 1, the difference in the Black population share between covered and non-covered counties is more pronounced in this case.

long difference analysis presented above with a GRD design. We estimate the following model:

$$\Delta y_{cps} = \gamma Black_{1960} + \theta Black_{1960} \times VRA_{cps} + I_{cp} + \epsilon_{cps} \tag{3}$$

where all variables are as above, except for the fact that we now include county pair fixed effects, I_{cp}.[34]

Results, reported in column (5) of Table 2, confirm that covered counties with a larger Black population share in 1960 experience faster growth in both Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates. 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, Panel B of Table 3 repeats 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.[35]

Addressing potential sample selection. An additional concern with our analysis is 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. Therefore, 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 participation by coverage status.

We address these concerns in Table A1. In column (1), we replicate the baseline specification using an indicator variable as dependent variable, which equals 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.

[34] 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.

[35] The only exception is the Republican vote share, for which the coefficient on the interaction is statistically significant at the 5% level. In Table C2, we verify that results are unchanged when including the Republican vote share in the 1960 presidential election as an additional control.

In columns (3) and (4), we address the concern that large pre-existing differences in Black political participation by coverage status might be influencing our results. We leverage 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.[36]

Additional robustness checks. In Appendix C, we discuss additional robustness checks, which we briefly summarize here. First, in Table C1, we show that results remain 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 present several sensitivity checks to assess the quality of our data. Third, in Table C3, we document that results are robust to omitting potential outliers, estimating alternative specifications, and accounting for potential spatial correlation in the error term. Finally, we show that our findings are unchanged when we control for: *i*) alternative proxies for historical segregation (Tables C4 and C5); *ii*) forces that might have promoted Black political activism (Table C6); *iii*) exposure to the War on Poverty (Table C7); *iv*) pre-1960 Black migration (Table C8); and, *v*) historical measures of Black political power from the Reconstruction era (Table C9).

5 Mechanisms

Our preferred interpretation for the surge in white registration documented above is that, by increasing (actual or perceived) Black political power, the VRA triggered white countermobilization. In this section, we first provide evidence consistent with this interpretation (Sections 5.1 to 5.4). Then, we show that additional mechanisms are unlikely to explain our results (Section 5.5).

5.1 Exploiting Variation in Electoral Rules

Historical accounts suggest 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

[36] Figure A3 presents the graphical analogue of this analysis, confirming results reported in columns (3) and (4) of Table A1.

VRA (McDonald, 2003). If whites perceived the enfranchisement of Black Americans as a political threat, we would expect greater mobilization efforts when the prospects for 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).[37] 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 racial animosity and triggered concerns among white voters that their pre-existing status might be challenged. The election of Black officials could thus act as a catalyst of white political mobilization.

Baseline estimates. To shed light on the Black office holding channel, we exploit differences in pre-existing electoral rules, which were crucial for the election of Black Americans in the aftermath of the VRA. We distinguish between counties belonging to states that, before the VRA, elected their county governing bodies by SMD and those that used elections at large or mixed systems.[38] 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 a larger Black population share where local elections are 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 coverage, the Black population share, and an indicator of SMD elections.[39]

Next, we turn to registration rates. Column (2) shows that Black 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 Black 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.[40]

[37] 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 tough 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).

[38] 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 jurisdiction (e.g., the county or the municipality) elects all the representatives.

[39] We fully saturate the regression by including all lower order interaction terms.

[40] The positive effects on white mobilization hold throughout the post-VRA period, as shown in Figure A4.

Robustness. 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 examine the robustness of our results presented in Table 4, columns (2) and (3), by controlling for the interaction between the VRA indicator, the 1960 Black population share, and various measures of the county's pre-existing economic, social, and cultural environment.[41]

First, we consider the legacy of white supremacy, proxied for by the presence of KKK Klaverns and lynchings against African Americans.[42] 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 – 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.[43] We report results in Figure A5. 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.[44]

Evidence from court cases. Our analysis thus far has exploited differences in pre-existing electoral rules, isolating the set of jurisdictions that, before the VRA, elected their county governing bodies by SMD. Soon after the enactment of the VRA, following local lawsuits that challenged at large electoral rules, many local jurisdictions modified their election structure toward SMD rules (Bernini et al., 2023). If white voters mobilized to counteract electoral rules that increased the likelihood of Black American politicians being elected, we would expect white voter registration rates to rise in counties without pre-existing SMD rules around the time of the first local lawsuit challenging at large voting rules.

To test this mechanism, we collected data from Davidson and Grofman (1994) and United States Commission on Civil Rights (1975), and compiled the list of local court cases that, directly or indirectly, challenged at large elections. We estimate event studies to trace out the evolution of white voter registration rates by coverage status, before and after the filing of the first lawsuit challenging at large voting rules. We bin observations into 2-year periods and estimate models that include: county and state by year fixed effects; interactions between

[41] As before, regressions are fully saturated, and include all lower order interaction terms.

[42] See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details on these variables.

[43] As explained in Appendix B, data on the urban population share and on employment rates by race are taken from the full count of the U.S. Population Census, measured in 1940.

[44] Panel A of Figure A5 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.

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 first lawsuit filed in the county. To reduce concerns that counties that experienced a lawsuit may differ from those that did not, we restrict attention to counties that had at least one lawsuit between 1965 and 1980. This guarantees that our analysis only exploits the timing, rather than the location, of court cases.

We present the results in Figure 4. In Panel A, we include all 106 first court cases filed between 1965 and 1980. In Panel B, we restrict the sample to the 98 cases that led to a change toward SMD. When interpreting the results, it is important to note that the timing of the filings might not be random. Reassuringly, however, there is no evidence of pre-trends. Immediately after the lawsuits are filed, white registration rates increase and continue to rise for at least ten years. These patterns further corroborate the idea that white voters swiftly react to the political threat posed by the VRA.

5.2 Black Political Competition

To what extent is the rise in white registration driven by concerns about actual or perceived political competition? By linking group competition to political participation, group-based voter models (Feddersen, 2004; Coate and Conlin, 2004; Feddersen and Sandroni, 2006) provide a useful framework for answering this question in our context. In these settings, like-minded individuals participate in elections where voting decisions are made as if determined at the group level. An appealing feature of this class of models is that – besides providing a rationale for why people vote – they yield predictions about the relationship between political participation and the relative size of the groups. According to group-based voting, participation should increase as the two groups become more similar. Hence, if white mobilization is due to heightened political competition, we expect the growth of white registration to: *i*) peak when the relative size of the two groups becomes more similar; and, *ii*) decline as white voters are outnumbered by African Americans.

To explore this idea, we re-estimate the specification of Table 4, column (3), using local binscatter regressions, where a data-driven approach is deployed to select the optimal number of bins.[45] We present results from this exercise in Figure 5, where we plot the estimated coefficient on the triple interaction between coverage, the 1960 Black population share, and the SMD indicator. While white registration rates in SMD counties always increase with the share of African Americans, the pattern is non-linear. Growth accelerates as the Black population share exceeds 45%, and starts declining once the Black population share is above 62%. These patterns are in line with the predictions of group-based voter models, and

[45]The selected number of bins is optimal in minimizing the (asymptotic) integrated mean squared error (IMSE).

suggest that white mobilization is a reaction to the increase in political competition induced by the VRA.

5.3 First Election of Black Officials

From the perspective of white voters, the election of the first African American into office represented a signal that Black political empowerment was real and might have altered the balance of political power at the local level. In a preliminary step, we explore the salience of these events in the local press. For all counties that elected at least one Black official in their county governing bodies during our sample period, we digitized the names of all (168) Black officials elected for the first time from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO).[46] 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 (and white) officials are mentioned in local newspapers, compiling the list of historical newspapers available on Newspapers.com.[47]

The estimates from our preferred specification are presented in column (1) of Table A4. The coefficient on the interaction between the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share is positive and precisely estimated, indicating that 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 as the first Black official. Here, the coefficient of interest is small and imprecisely estimated, reducing concerns that the results in column (1) were driven by local newspapers mentioning all board members more frequently, regardless of 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.[48] Columns (4) to (6) of Table A4 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.

[46] See Appendix B.2 for more details.

[47] We map each historical newspaper to the county where its headquarter is located. 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. It is important to note that, when using data on local newspapers, we include Texas, which is instead excluded from the rest of the paper. Dropping Texas reduces the sample by about 40%, leaving us with insufficient variation to estimate our models. The probability is constructed by dividing the number of Black (resp., white) officials that have received at least one 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.

[48] Specifically, we reshape the data at the county-race level and include a triple interaction term with a dummy variable equal to one if the elected official is Black, along with all lower-order interaction terms. The triple interaction term reveals that the difference between the estimated coefficients for mentions of Black and white officials is statistically significant.

Next, we analyze how white voters react to the election of the first Black official in county governing bodies. If white mobilization is motivated by political threat, we expect white registration rates to increase soon after the election of the first Black official at the local level. Since the VRA was 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 variable equal to one for the election of the first Black official in the county. To address concerns that counties electing Black officials may differ from those that do not, we focus on counties that elected at least one Black official between 1965 and 1980. This ensures that our analysis leverages the timing rather than the location of the first election.[49]

We report results in Figure 6, using the period before the first election as omitted category. Reassuringly, for both Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates, there is no evidence of differential pre-trends.[50] Interestingly, Black registration does not seem to respond to the event.[51] Instead, white registration increases almost immediately after the election of a Black official and continues to rise for at least ten years. Although there are no pre-trends in white registration rates, the timing of the election of the first Black official might still be non-random. For this reason, we view the evidence presented in Figure 6 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.

5.4 Evidence from Local Newspapers

In this section, we provide additional evidence on whites' racial attitudes and the salience of the Black political threat using data from historical local newspapers from Newspapers.com mentioned in Section 5.3 above. Since the newspapers in our sample are small and tend to circulate only locally, their slant is likely to respond to readers' demands (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010), although we cannot rule out the possibility that voters' attitudes are also

[49] Results (not reported for brevity) remain unchanged when including counties that never elect a Black official during our sample period.

[50] We further corroborate the lack of pre-trends in Appendix C.6, where we perform the test proposed in Roth (2022).

[51] 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 a larger Black population share.

influenced by newspaper rhetoric.[52] To assess racial attitudes and the prominence of the political channel, we measure the frequency of selected terms at the county level for each year, focusing on the 5 years before and the 5 years after the VRA.

The VRA might have led to a general increase in racial animosity. However, if white reactions are politically motivated, we should observe differences in the language used by newspapers in proximity to elections. We focus on gubernatorial elections, since they are highly relevant political events and governors' role as chief executive has made them central figures during the civil rights era (Black, 1971).[53] We separately consider years with and without gubernatorial elections, estimating regressions of the form:

$$y_{cst} = \theta \left(Post_t \times Black_{1960} \times VRA_{cs} \right) + \mathbf{X}'_{cst}\beta + I_{st} + I_c + \epsilon_{cst} \tag{4}$$

where I_c and I_{st} are county and state by year fixed effects, $Post_t$ is a dummy equal to one for the post-1965 years, $\mathbf{X}'_{cst}$ includes all lower order interaction terms, the interaction between baseline county characteristics and the $Post_t$ dummy, and the triple interaction between baseline characteristics, the $Post_t$ dummy, and the VRA indicator.[54]

We present results in Table 5, focusing on years with (Panel A) and without (Panel B) gubernatorial elections, and reporting the coefficient on the triple interaction between the post-VRA dummy, the VRA indicator, and the 1960 Black population share. In column (1), the dependent variable is the frequency of the word "Negro," scaled by the frequency of the word "and" to account for differential newspapers' circulation, as in Fouka et al. (2022).[55] Since the term "Negro" began to carry a negative connotation in the immediate aftermath of the VRA (Martin, 1991), we interpret the variable in column (1) as reflecting more than just the salience of race. In column (2), we more explicitly examine racial hostility, using as dependent variable the joint frequency of the word "Negro" and a series of stereotypically disparaging terms (again scaled by the frequency of the term "and").

Even though the coefficient in column (1) is more precisely estimated in the election year sample, it is positive in the non-election year sample as well. The coefficients in column (2) are positive, statistically significant, and quantitatively similar. This indicates that, in general, whites' racial attitudes worsen more after the VRA in covered counties with a higher

[52] Due to the nature of our data, we assign the observed mentions to the county where the newspaper's headquarter is located. This method may introduce measurement error when newspapers circulate in multiple counties. However, less than 30% of the newspapers in our sample are included in the periodic Audit Bureau of Circulation reports, which typically cover larger newspapers that circulate across more than one county.

[53] Governors, like presidents, are executives. The singular nature of their office makes them more vulnerable to public scrutiny and consequently more likely to be held responsible for state issues. Historical evidence indeed documents that governors are held accountable by their constituency for perceived state conditions (Tidmarch et al., 1984; Atkeson and Partin, 1995).

[54] As in the rest of the analysis, regressions are weighed by 1960 population, and standard errors are clustered at the judicial division level.

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

Black population share. In columns (3) and (4), we examine whether political motives are important drivers of racial attitudes by analyzing the joint frequency of the term "white" with, respectively, "backlash" and "mobilization" as dependent variables. The coefficients are again positive and statistically significant, but they are an order of magnitude larger in the election year sample.

To further corroborate the importance of the political channel, in column (5), we search for the joint occurrence of terms "Negro," "white mobilization," and "Wallace" – one of the key figures within the southern white supremacist movement. The coefficient is positive and statistically significant – but only during gubernatorial election years. Column (6) shows that the patterns are unchanged when using the frequency of the word "Negro" (rather than "and") as the denominator. This suggests that results in column (5) do not simply capture the mechanical increase in the frequency of racially charged terms documented in columns (1) and (2).

5.5 Alternative Channels

The evidence documented thus far supports the idea that the surge in white registration reflects counter-mobilization, driven by the threat – actual or perceived – posed by the political empowerment of Black voters. In this section, we examine several alternative explanations and conclude that none adequately account for our findings.

Literacy test and white re-enfranchisement. The increase in white political participation could be driven by the re-enfranchisement of illiterate white voters following the VRA-mandated removal of literacy tests. While it is well known that these provisions were used in a discriminatory fashion to disenfranchise Black voters (Lawson, 1976; Cascio and Washington, 2014), it is possible that they also disproportionately affected counties with less educated residents, regardless of race. If less educated individuals (and whites in particular) were concentrated in covered counties with a larger share of African Americans, our estimates might partially reflect 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 an imprecise proxy for the proportion of the (white) population disenfranchised by the literacy test. For this reason, in Table 6, we replace this baseline county-level control with different measures of educational attainment that are county-race specific.[56]

[56]Data on education by race at the county level were 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 6 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

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 specification (Table 2, 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.[57] 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; 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.[58] Importantly, the finding in Panel B indicates that white mobilization is not stronger in counties with a higher share of less educated whites. Together with the results in columns (1) to (3), this suggests that the surge in white registration rates is unlikely to be driven by the mechanical re-enfranchisement of uneducated whites.

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. 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 A5, 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 specification using as dependent variable the 1980-1960 change in the 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

Population.

[57] As noted above, data on the number of individuals who completed less than five years of schooling by race in 1960 are 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.

[58] 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) is illiterate.

high school diploma (column 5).[59] 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.

White registration as a reaction to riots and ethnic conflicts. Even though most Race Riots that occurred between 1964 and 1971 took place in cities outside the U.S. South, one may still wonder whether these events as well as other forms of violent and non-violent conflict were concentrated in covered counties with a larger Black population share.[60] If this were to be the case, we may be partly capturing white voters' reactions to ethnic conflicts, and the resulting sense of fear and insecurity. In Figure A6, we provide evidence against this possibility by documenting that there is no differential occurrence of the Race Riots of the 1960s (Panel A) or other ethnic conflicts initiated by African Americans (Panel B) in covered counties with a larger Black population share.[61] Similar results hold when aggregating all Race Riots occurring between 1965 and 1971, or when considering the pre-post VRA change in different types of events and demonstrations organized by African Americans (Table A6).[62]

6 White Mobilization and Black Progress

Having established that political motivation is the main driver behind white reactions to the VRA, this section examines the implications of white counter-mobilization for both electoral outcomes (Section 6.1) and policies salient to the Black electorate (Section 6.2).

6.1 Electoral Outcomes

Historically, the Democratic Party dominated southern political life and represented the interests of racially conservative white voters. With the exception of presidential races, cross-party competition was virtually unknown (Caughey, 2019). The VRA fundamentally altered the political landscape of the U.S. South: while enfranchised African Americans found a new home in the Democratic Party, the GOP began to court dissatisfied racially

[59] Data on county characteristics by race were 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 is also available from the Census of Population, obtained from Manson et al. (2022). See Appendix B for more details on these variables.

[60] In the U.S. South alone, 189 Race Riots have been identified (Bernini, 2023).

[61] Data on Race Riots and ethnic conflicts come from Carter (1986) and Olzak (2015), respectively. See Appendix B and Table B4 for more details.

[62] See Appendix B and the notes to Table A6 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 considering the cumulative number of events rather than the average.

conservative white voters (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018). In this section, we study if and how white mobilization induced by the VRA reshaped political competition across races and over time in the U.S. South.

Short-run backlash. We begin by focusing on the first post-VRA (1968) presidential election. In that year, former Alabama Governor George Wallace, whose explicitly segregationist platform had been rejected by the Democratic Party, entered the race as the candidate of the American Independent Party. The Republican nominee Richard Nixon run on a more moderate platform, rejecting segregation while seeking to appeal to southern white voters promising a slowdown in civil rights reforms (Heersink and Jenkins, 2020). Wallace's success in five states of the former Confederacy represented a setback for the civil rights movement. Despite the surge in Black political participation, a third-party presidential candidate won the largest share of electoral votes in U.S. history, becoming the leading figure of a movement that included several southern governors openly advocating for segregation (Black, 1976).

As in our baseline analysis, we estimate a long difference specification to compare George Wallace's performance with that of Strom Thurmond, who ran as the candidate of the segregationist States' Rights Democratic Party in the 1948 presidential election and won four southern states. As previously shown, the odds of Black Americans gaining office were higher in the presence of SMD voting rules. Therefore, if the perceived threat of Black empowerment fueled white counter-mobilization, we expect support for segregationist candidates to be stronger in covered SMD counties with a larger Black population share.

We present results in Panel A of Table 7. In line with our hypothesis, column (1) shows that support for Wallace is stronger in covered SMD counties with a larger Black population share. According to our estimates, which are statistically significant at the 10% level, a 10 percentage points increase in the Black population share is associated with a 17% faster growth in support for segregationist candidates in covered counties belonging to SMD states. The higher support for white supremacist candidates is mirrored by a decline in the vote share of Nixon (column 2), who ran on a more moderate anti-civil rights agenda. Instead, while the coefficient for the vote share of Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey is negative and larger in absolute value, it is not statistically significant at conventional levels (column 3).[63]

In column (4), we turn to gubernatorial elections. These elections were highly salient to voters, and display substantial variation in the presence of racially conservative candidates across states and over time (Black, 1976). Building on Black (1976), we identify racially conservative candidates running on openly segregationist platforms and compute the change

[63] For consistency with column (1), the change in both Republican and Democratic vote shares is calculated over the 1948-1968 period. In 1948, Democratic candidate Harry Truman defeated GOP candidate Thomas Dewey.

in their vote shares between 1956 and 1968.[64] The coefficient of interest is positive and statistically significant at the 10% level. This implies that white counter-mobilization increases support for racially conservative gubernatorial candidates – mirroring the findings for presidential elections.

Comparing the coefficient on the interaction between coverage and the Black population share reveals an interesting difference between presidential and gubernatorial elections. While covered counties with a larger Black population share show increased support for the pro-civil rights Democratic candidate Humphrey, they also display greater support for segregationist governors. One possible explanation for these seemingly contrasting findings is that presidential campaigns address many issues and may lead to the formation of biracial coalitions, as suggested by Wright (2013). In contrast, statewide races often focus on a single, highly salient issue, which at the time was civil rights (Black, 1971), with the white majority disproportionately favoring racially conservative candidates.

Medium-run political realignment. Next, we explore the medium-term electoral effects of white counter-mobilization. While the increased support for segregationist candidates was a relatively short-term phenomenon and openly segregationist political platforms largely disappeared by the 1970s (Mendelberg, 2001), the rise in white registration in covered SMD counties with a larger Black population share persists at least until 1980. It is *ex-ante* unclear how white mobilization influenced electoral outcomes across different races in the medium term, and, to our knowledge, there is little evidence on this.

It is well known that the Democratic Party's shift on civil rights led to the exodus of racially conservative white voters, a decline in party identification, and the end of the southern enclave of authoritarian rule (Mickey, 2015; Kuziemko and Washington, 2018). However, the evolution of the Democratic Party's fortunes in the region is more complex. On the one hand, southern whites identifying as Democrats began voting for Republican candidates in presidential elections even before the 1960s.[65] On the other hand, the ability of the Republican Party to win elections in the two decades after the VRA remained limited to specific offices. While the GOP was more successful in Senate and gubernatorial elections (Bullock, 1988; Hood III et al., 2012), the Democratic Party retained control of the House until the 1990s.

In Panel B of Table 7, we examine how white mobilization influenced electoral outcomes across races from 1956 to 1980. We estimate the quadruple differences design, focusing on House, Senate, gubernatorial, and presidential elections, respectively. While no clear

[64] Following Black (1976)'s methodology, we have collected information on the platforms of gubernatorial candidates up to 1980. In 1956, over half of the candidates ran on a segregationist platform. By 1968, this share had decreased to approximately 30%, and by 1980, no candidates were running on openly segregationist platforms. See Appendix B.3 for further details.

[65] For instance, in the 1956 election, Eisenhower carried five southern states.

pattern emerges for House elections (column 1), covered SMD counties with a larger Black population share experience a decline in Democratic support in both Senate (column 2) and gubernatorial (column 3) elections. These results align with the idea that statewide races, with their larger constituencies and more heterogeneous populations, facilitate the entry of new candidates (Bullock, 1988). Turning to presidential elections (column 4), we do not detect any change in support for Reagan compared to Eisenhower. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that presidential races were historically the only contested elections in the region.

Overall, our results present a nuanced view of the effects of white mobilization on electoral outcomes. On the one had, white mobilization increased support for segregationist candidates shortly after the VRA, in both presidential and statewide elections. This finding suggests that, at least in the short run, white mobilization more than offset the direct effect of Black enfranchisement on opposition to white supremacist candidates. Additionally, in gubernatorial elections, where the size of the constituency and the composition of the electorate made it difficult for the Democratic Party to maintain control by building biracial coalitions of voters, the effect of white counter-mobilization persisted over time. On the other hand, the magnitude and precision of our estimates varies across races, indicating that, by 1980, the Republican-Democratic divide along racial lines was still incomplete in state and national elections.

6.2 Local Public Goods Provision

Black office holding has been credited for bringing tangible benefits to Black communities through policies that promoted education, public sector jobs, and infrastructure development (Wright, 2013; Cascio and Washington, 2014; Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019). At the same time, our analysis indicates that white counter-mobilization emerged precisely in areas where the election of Black local officials was more likely. Did white counter-mobilization affect Black progress in the domain of public policy salient for the Black electorate? To answer this question, we use data on employment and spending by county governments, focusing on salaries (the largest item in county government budgets), education, and capital spending between 1957 and 1982.[66]

In Panel C of Table 7, we present the main coefficients of interest from the quadruple difference specification used throughout the table. Focusing on county government employment, our findings in column (1) show that covered counties with a larger share of African Americans experience faster growth in county government employment. However, this effect

[66]Education spending includes outlays by county governments, school districts, and municipalities due to the overlap of jurisdiction within county areas. See Appendix B.3 for more details on variable definitions and sources.

is curtailed in SMD counties, where white mobilization is concentrated. We uncover similar patterns in column (2), which examines the overall county government wage bill, and in column (3), which analyzes spending on education. For capital spending, we find that covered SMD counties with a larger Black population share experience faster growth in capital spending, both overall (column 4) and as a share of total spending (column 5). This result supports earlier findings by Bernini et al. (2023).

This analysis indicates that white mobilization had tangible effects, altering both the size and the composition of local public spending. On the one hand, Black communities that elected more African Americans to county governments and experienced a surge in white registration rates benefited from increased spending on infrastructure. On the other hand, these same constituencies saw lower growth in local public employment and school spending. This suggests that, even though Black empowerment brought gains to African American communities, such gains were limited to the provision of public goods with diffused benefits. When Black Americans were the main recipients, however, Black empowerment coincided with *slower* growth in public spending, reflecting the negative impact of white counter-mobilization on Black progress.

7 Which White Voters Counter-Mobilized?

In this final section, we explore which segments of the white electorate were more likely to mobilize in response to the VRA, using historical survey data from Gallup. Starting from 1958, Gallup asked respondents about their racial views in the context of politics. As in Kuziemko and Washington (2018), we focus on the question: "Between now and ... [election] ... there will be much discussion about the qualifications of presidential candidates. If your party nominated a well-qualified man for president, would you vote for him if he happened to be a [Black American]?"[67] We consider the seven survey waves from 1958 to 1971 to capture the change in racial attitudes and political preferences that happened shortly after the VRA was passed.[68] Since Gallup includes only the state, rather than the city or county of residence, the evidence presented here should be viewed as suggestive.[69]

We estimate individual level regressions that correlate the intention not to vote for a Black candidate with the interaction between the post-1965 dummy and the following state level variables: coverage, the 1960 Black population share, and the SMD indicator. Regressions

[67] We code "no" as one, and both "yes" and the rare "don't know" as zero.

[68] In later Gallup surveys, the question is asked less frequently. A similar question is posed in the General Social Survey (GSS), but the characteristics of respondents are not fully comparable to those in the Gallup polls.

[69] We omit North Carolina from the analysis because we cannot determine whether individuals reside in covered or non-covered counties. Results are unchanged if we include North Carolina in the analysis, assigning it to either covered or non-covered states.

also include state and survey year fixed effects, all lower order interaction terms, and a vector of individual controls.[70] We present results in Figure 7, where we plot the coefficient, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals, on the quadruple interaction term of interest. The first dot refers to the full sample of southern white respondents. The coefficient is positive, indicating that whites living in covered states with SMD voting rules and a higher Black population share are less likely to report that they would vote for a Black candidate after the VRA. However, the point estimate is not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Existing historical accounts suggest that this average effect might mask heterogeneity along individual dimensions, such as age and education (Schuman et al., 1985), gender (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986), and place of residence (Wright, 2013). Confirming this idea, when we split the sample along these characteristics, several interesting patterns emerge. The effects become precisely estimated for respondents living in rural areas and those with no more than eight years of schooling. In contrast, coefficients are close to zero and not statistically significant for urban residents and individuals with at least some high school. These findings align with the argument by Wirt (1997) that opposition to Black empowerment was stronger in the rural South and that many of the economic benefits of the VRA accrued to urban and more educated white individuals (Wright, 2013). A similar divide appears when splitting the sample by age and gender: the point estimate is positive and statistically significant for older and male respondents, while it is either negative or small (and imprecise) for younger and female whites living in the U.S. South. These results are consistent with broader patterns identified by Schuman et al. (1985) and Shapiro and Mahajan (1986).

8 Conclusions

On August 6, 1965, the VRA was signed into law, dismantling the legal barriers that had disenfranchised Black Americans since 1890. Soon after, Black political participation surged, leading to tangible political and economic improvements for African American communities. While a substantial body of literature has documented the VRA's role in advancing Black progress across various domains, existing studies at the national or state level, as well as anecdotal accounts, suggest that it also triggered white political opposition. However, due to data limitations, there is little systematic evidence on the extent of white counter-mobilization at the local level. Since the VRA was designed to eliminate local barriers to Black political participation, quantifying white political reactions at the county level is crucial for evaluating its full effects.

[70] We omit the survey conducted in 1965, since this year overlaps with the passage of the VRA. We follow Kuziemko and Washington (2018) and include fixed effects for age (in ten-year intervals), gender, education categories (6), city-size categories (12), and occupation categories (13).

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. Our findings reveal that, as intended by the VRA, covered counties with a larger Black population share in 1960 experience 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 provide evidence that whites' response is driven by the – actual or perceived – threat posed by heightened Black political representation. We conclude by demonstrating that white counter-mobilization had tangible consequences for both electoral outcomes and public goods provision at the local level, partially offsetting the goals that the VRA was designed to achieve.

Findings in this paper paint a nuanced picture of the effects of the VRA. While the policy improved conditions for Black Americans across multiple dimensions, it also triggered significant opposition among the white majority, which, in turn, influenced electoral and policy outcomes. Our results open the door to many important questions. Can governments enact legislation to improve 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 affect individuals' beliefs and social norms? We leave these questions to future research.

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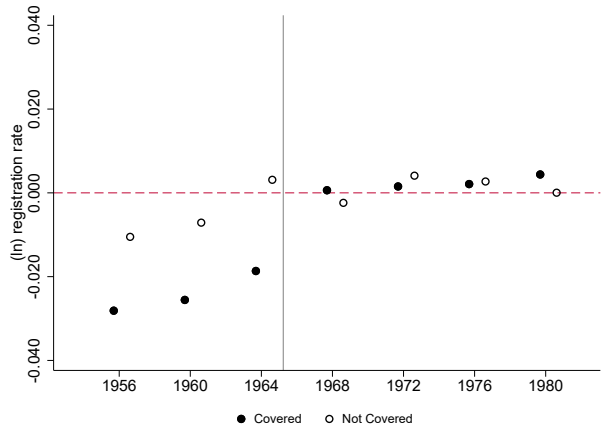
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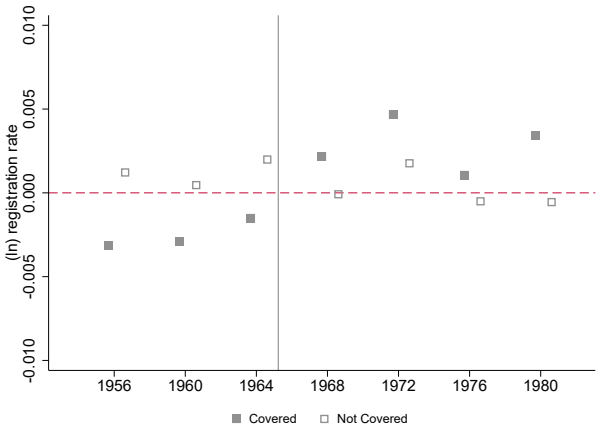
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Figure 1. Registration rates: Trends in the gradient

A. (ln) Black registration

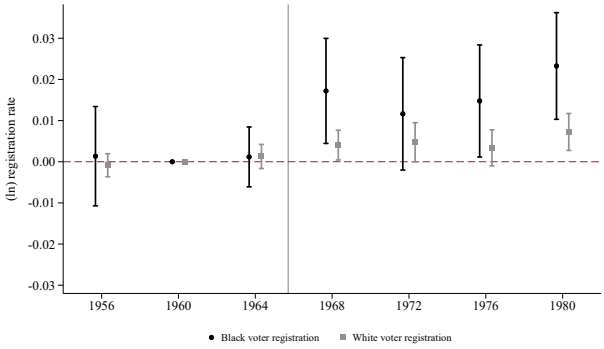


B. (ln) white registration



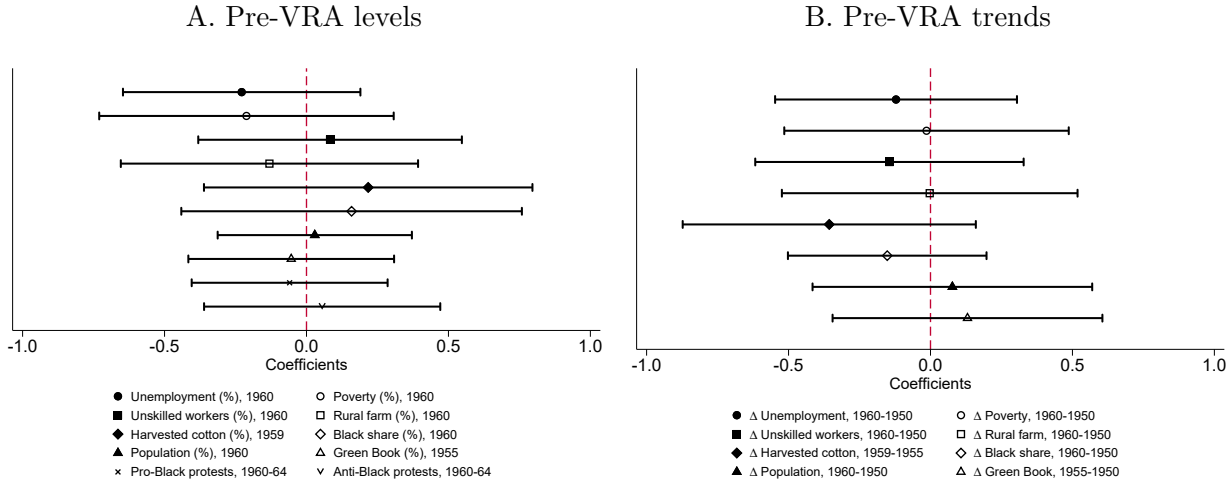
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient on the interaction between the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share, separately by year and treatment status, in models that also include: county and state fixed effects; and interactions between the VRA indicator and the vector of controls. Controls 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



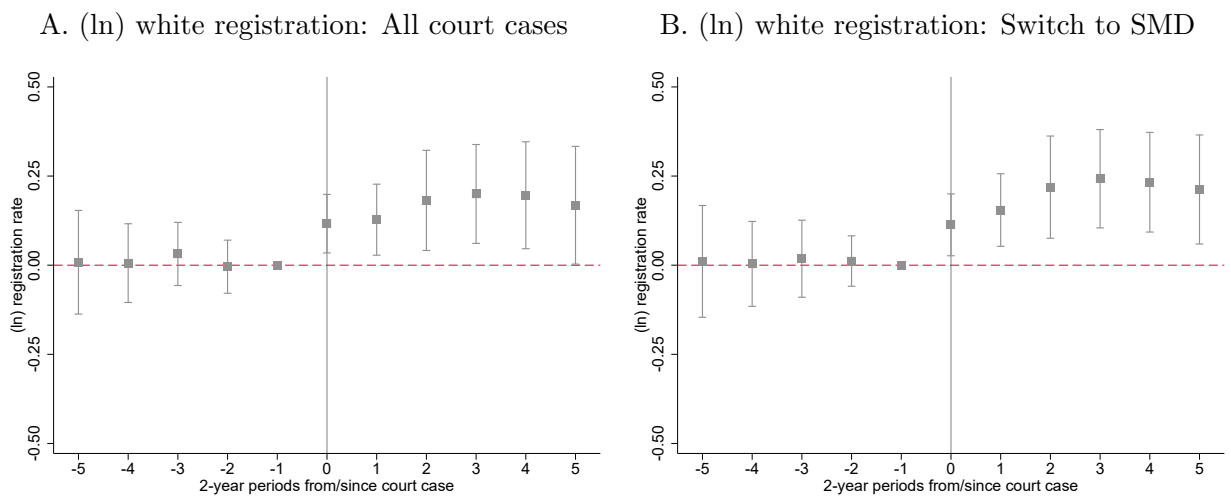
Notes: The figure plots the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the VRA indicator, year dummies, and the 1960 Black population share in models that also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and interactions between year dummies, the VRA indicator, 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



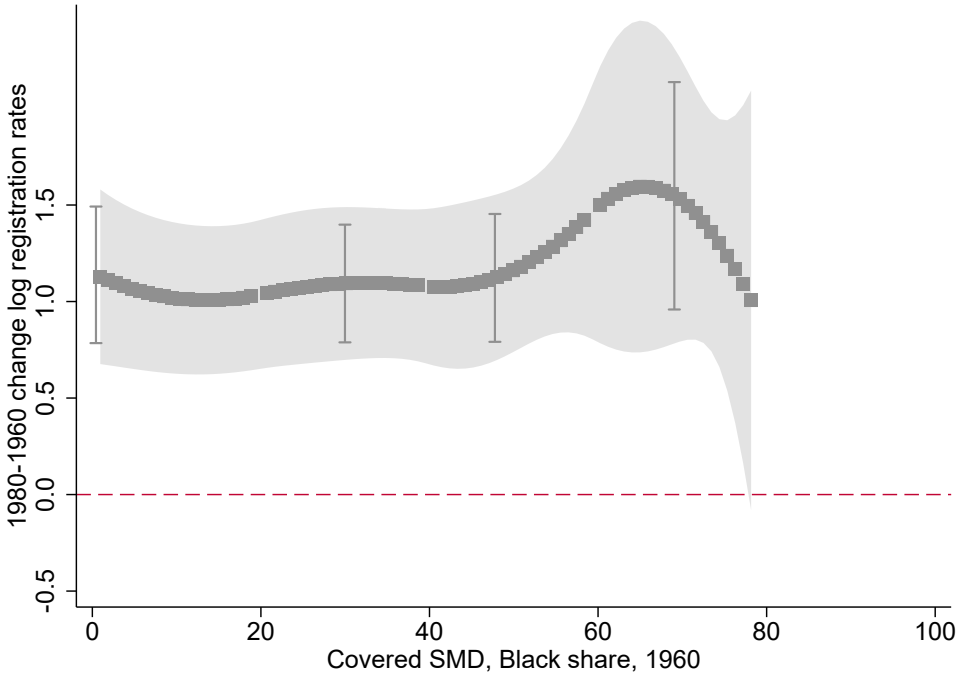
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the VRA indicator. Panels A and B consider levels and changes, respectively. To ease the interpretation of coefficients, all variables are standardized by subtracting their mean and dividing through their standard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

Figure 4. Local court cases



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 presence of the first court case 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 period before the first court case (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.

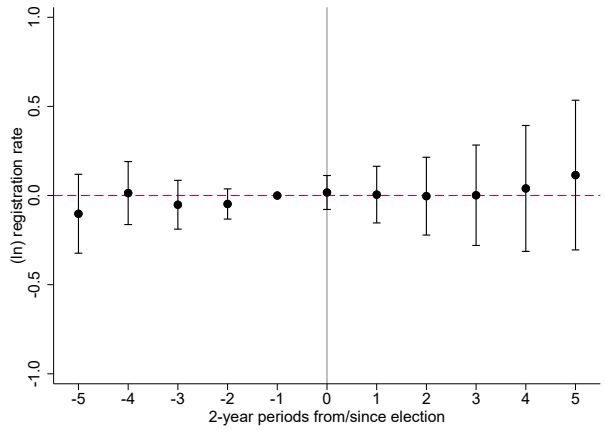
Figure 5. White registration and political competition



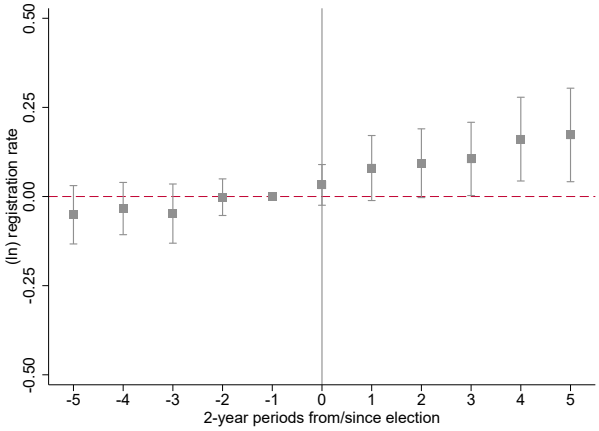
Notes: The figure plots the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the log of the measure of potential competition and the VRA indicator, in models that also include: county and state fixed effects; the VRA indicator and the 1960 Black population share; and interactions between the VRA indicator and the vector of baseline controls. The figure is constructed using the command binsreg, alongside binsregselect to select the optimal number of bins to minimize the (asymptotic) integrated mean squared error (IMSE). 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. The local election of the first Black official

A. (ln) Black registration



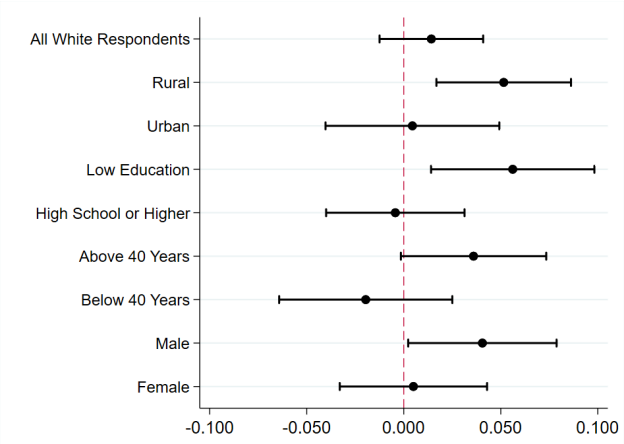
B. (ln) white registration



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 period 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 7. Gallup data: Opposition to a Black president

A. Post X Black share, 1960 X VRA X SMD



Notes: The figure plots the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the post-VRA dummy, the VRA indicator, the 1960 Black population share, and the SMD indicator, in models that also include: state and survey year fixed effects, all lower order interaction terms, and a vector of individual controls. As in Kuziemko and Washington (2018), we focus on the question: "Between now and ... [election] ... there will be much discussion about the qualifications of presidential candidates. If your party nominated a well-qualified man for president, would you vote for him if he happened to be a [Black American]?" We code "no" as one (a higher value means more opposition to Black political empowerment). We consider the survey waves from 1958 to 1971 (included), but omit year 1965 as the survey overlaps with the passage of the VRA. The first dot considers the full sample of southern white respondents. In subsequent dots, we cut the sample along four broad demographic groups: rural v. urban respondents; education; age; gender. For the vector of individual controls, we follow Kuziemko and Washington (2018) and include fixed effects for age (in ten-year intervals), gender, education categories (6), city-size categories (12), and occupation categories (13).

Table 1. Summary statistics

	Covered Counties				Non-covered Counties			
	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Panel A: Voter registration sample								
Political participation in 1960								
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
Political participation in 1980								
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
County characteristics								
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 protest, 1960-64	1.3	6.5	0.0	74.0	0.9	3.8	0.0	34.0
Anti-Black protest, 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
Panel B: Full U.S. South sample								
County characteristics								
Black share (%), 1960	32.5	20.0	0.0	83.4	13.2	14.1	0.0	68.9
Population (thousands), 1960	34.7	57.8	0.0	634.9	40.9	101.9	0.2	1243.2
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	73.9	8.7	26.6	93.5	70.7	9.6	31.9	89.8
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.0	1.9	0.0	11.9	4.9	2.2	0.0	15.9
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	46.2	16.2	0.0	77.8	43.7	14.9	0.0	78.0
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 protest, 1960-64	1.1	5.7	0.0	74.0	0.5	3.2	0.0	46.0
Anti-Black protest, 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 2. Change in (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

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

Dep. variable:	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)
Panel A: Voter registration sample											
Black share, 1960 X VRA	–0.001	0.001	0.057***	–0.000	0.002	0.006*	–0.002	0.003	–0.002	0.000	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.019)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black share, 1960	0.002***	0.001	–0.057***	0.001	0.021***	0.014***	0.005*	0.004***	0.002	–0.001	–0.001
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.017)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:											
Dep. variable	0.027	0.164	4.398	0.035	35.045	14.274	25.445	18.624	48.476	152.922	138.396
	(0.059)	(0.886)	(6.245)	(0.109)	(16.564)	(12.878)	(14.023)	(14.812)	(19.585)	(119.706)	(82.196)
Black share, 1960	31.286	31.286	31.286	31.286	30.978	31.017	31.262	31.286	31.299	31.286	31.286
	(18.498)	(18.498)	(18.498)	(18.498)	(18.385)	(18.378)	(18.502)	(18.498)	(18.531)	(18.498)	(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
Panel B: Border sample											
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.001	–0.001	–0.001	–0.002	0.014	0.013**	–0.005	–0.001	–0.008	0.001	0.003
	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.026)	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Black share, 1960	–0.000	0.017	–0.122***	0.004	0.019*	0.018*	0.010	0.033**	–0.000	0.008*	0.008*
	(0.002)	(0.017)	(0.037)	(0.003)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Summary statistics:											
Dep. variable	0.021	0.253	5.365	0.042	34.928	15.505	29.321	22.035	47.202	154.166	146.411
	(0.049)	(0.927)	(7.789)	(0.165)	(14.967)	(14.061)	(18.435)	(20.202)	(19.627)	(115.777)	(102.829)
Black share, 1960	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302	24.302
	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)	(20.879)
Adj. R-Square	0.399	0.184	0.714	–0.089	0.677	0.626	0.120	0.305	0.200	0.166	0.035
N	222	222	222	222	222	222	222	222	222	222	222

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 4. Electoral rules and registration rates

Dep. variable:	Elections	(ln) Registration Rates	
	County Governing Bodies	Black	White
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X SMD	0.162**	0.005	0.009**
	(0.067)	(0.012)	(0.004)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.051	0.019**	0.004*
	(0.034)	(0.009)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960 X SMD	0.003	–0.009	0.002
	(0.031)	(0.008)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	0.062**	0.014**	–0.003
	(0.025)	(0.007)	(0.002)
Summary statistics:			
Dep. variable	0.000	32.343	68.719
	(0.000)	(20.355)	(18.578)
Black share, 1960	27.130	28.064	27.649
	(15.179)	(15.055)	(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 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 5. Newspapers in gubernatorial elections

Dep. variable:	Newspapers					
	Negro	Negro, Disparaging	White, Backlash	White, Mobilization	White Mobilization, Wallace, Negro	
					/ And	/ Negro
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Years with Gubernatorial Elections						
Post X Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.022*	0.027**	0.073*	0.083*	0.067***	0.043***
	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.019)	(0.015)
Summary statistics:						
Black share, 1960	17.997	17.997	17.997	17.997	17.997	17.997
	(12.198)	(12.198)	(12.198)	(12.198)	(12.198)	(12.198)
Adj. R-Square	0.53	0.36	0.30	0.61	0.32	0.44
N	599	599	599	599	599	599
Panel B: Years without Gubernatorial Elections						
Post X Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.012	0.025**	0.027*	0.023*	0.022	0.007
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.007)
Summary statistics:						
Black share, 1960	22.568	22.568	22.568	22.568	22.568	22.568
	(13.914)	(13.914)	(13.914)	(13.914)	(13.914)	(13.914)
Adj. R-Square	0.39	0.28	0.64	0.47	0.32	0.23
N	1087	1087	1087	1087	1087	1087
Panel C: Difference in Coefficients (Panels A – B)						
P-value (Panels A – B)	0.456	0.789	0.161	0.130	0.023	0.016

Notes: The table includes the interaction between the post-VRA dummy, the VRA indicator, and the 1960 Black population share in models that also include: county and state by year fixed effects; and interactions between the post-VRA dummy, the VRA indicator, and the vector of baseline controls. The dependent variable is: the frequency of the word Negro, scaled by And (column 1); the joint frequency of the word Negro with four disparaging terms associated with violence and crime, scaled by the frequency of the word And (column 2); the joint frequency of the words White and Backlash, scaled by the frequency of the word And (column 3); the joint frequency of the words White and Mobilization, scaled by the frequency of the word And (column 4); the joint frequency of the words White Mobilization, Wallace, and Negro, scaled by the frequency of the word And (column 5) and Negro (column 6). The sample is split into years with and without gubernatorial elections between 1960 and 1970 in Panels A and B, respectively. 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 6. Change in (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates			
	Same Race			
	Less Than High School	Less Than 5 Years	No School	Less Than 5 Years
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Black registration				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023***	0.021***	0.021***	0.019
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.019)
Black share, 1960	0.012**	0.013***	0.013***	–0.015
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.016)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X Less 5 years				–0.000
				(0.000)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	31.826	31.826	31.826	31.826
	(19.906)	(19.906)	(19.906)	(19.906)
Black share, 1960	28.897	28.897	28.897	28.897
	(14.563)	(14.563)	(14.563)	(14.563)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.75
N	602	602	602	602
Panel B: White registration				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.009**	0.010***	0.008***	0.015***
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Black share, 1960	–0.007**	–0.004*	–0.002	–0.012***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X Less 5 years				–0.001
				(0.000)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	68.447	68.447	68.447	68.447
	(18.484)	(18.484)	(18.484)	(18.484)
Black share, 1960	28.677	28.677	28.677	28.677
	(14.535)	(14.535)	(14.535)	(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 7. Electoral outcomes and local public goods provision

Dep. variable:	Wallace-Thurmond (1)	Nixon-Dewey (2)	Humphrey-Truman (3)	Segregationist Governors (4)	
Panel A: Electoral outcomes up to 1968					
Black share, 1960 X VRA X SMD	0.017*	–0.009*	–0.014	0.015*	
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.009)	
Black share, 1960 X VRA	–0.006	0.003	0.024***	0.008**	
	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.004)	
Adj. R-Square	0.80	0.87	0.69	0.96	
N	869	870	804	729	
Dep. variable:	House Dem. Vote (1)	Senate Dem. Vote (2)	Governor Dem. Vote (3)	Reagan-Eisenhower (4)	
Panel B: Electoral outcomes up to 1980					
Black share, 1960 X VRA X SMD	0.001	–0.007*	–0.006*	–0.003	
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.012	0.005*	0.004*	–0.007*	
	(0.010)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.004)	
Adj. R-Square	0.52	0.93	0.86	0.53	
N	719	872	871	872	
Dep. variable:	Employment (1)	Spending Salaries (2)	Spending Education (3)	Capital Spending (4)	Sh. Capital Spending (5)
Panel C: Spending up to 1982					
Black share, 1960 X VRA X SMD	–0.022***	–0.022***	–0.007*	0.041**	0.005***
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.021)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.016**	0.016***	0.007**	0.012	–0.001
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.015)	(0.001)
Adj. R-Square	0.88	0.90	0.97	0.30	0.31
N	809	772	856	746	817

Notes: The table considers 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. In Panel A, the dependent variable is: i) the change in the vote cast for Wallace (1968) and Thurmond (1948) in column (1); ii) the change in the vote cast for Nixon (1968) and Dewey (1948) in column (2); iii) the change in the vote cast for Humphrey (1968) and Truman (1948) in column (3); iv) the change in the vote cast for racist gubernatorial candidates (1968 and 1956) in column (4). In Panel B, the dependent variable is: i) the change in the vote cast for Democratic candidates in the House of Representatives (1980 and 1956) in column (1); ii) the change in the vote cast for Democratic candidates in the Senate (1980 and 1956) in column (2); iii) the change in the vote cast for gubernatorial Democratic candidates (1980 and 1956) in column (3); iv) the change in the vote cast for Reagan (1980) and Eisenhower (1956) in column (4). In Panel C, the dependent variable is: i) the change in total employment (1982 and 1957) in column (1); ii) the change in total spending on salaries (1982 and 1957) in column (2); iii) the change in educational spending (1982 and 1957) in column (3); iv) the change in capital spending (1982 and 1957) in column (4); v) the change in the share of capital spending (1982 and 1957) in column (5). 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.

Appendix: Additional material

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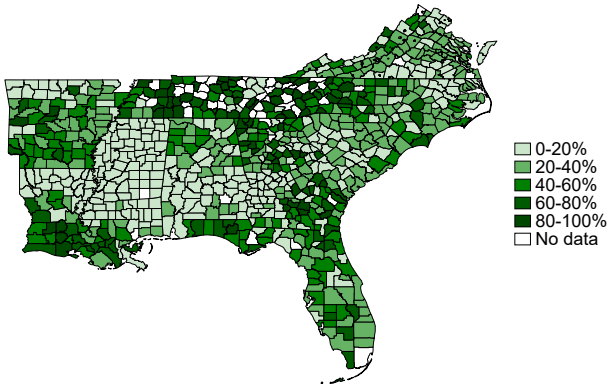
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C.6 Testing for Parallel Trends 78

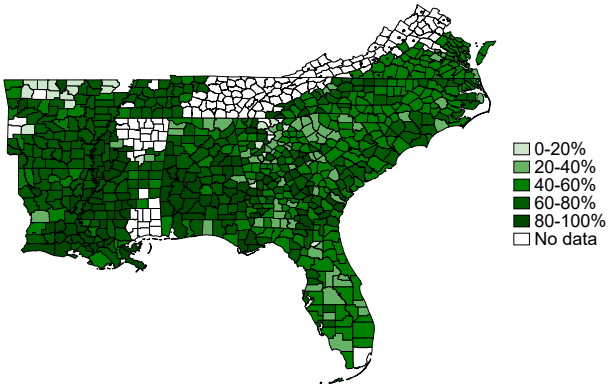
A Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1. Registration rates by race

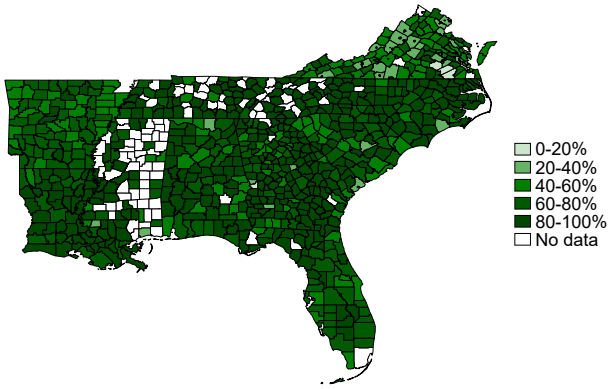
A. Black registration rates, 1960



B. Black registration rates, 1980



C. White registration rates, 1960



D. White registration rates, 1980

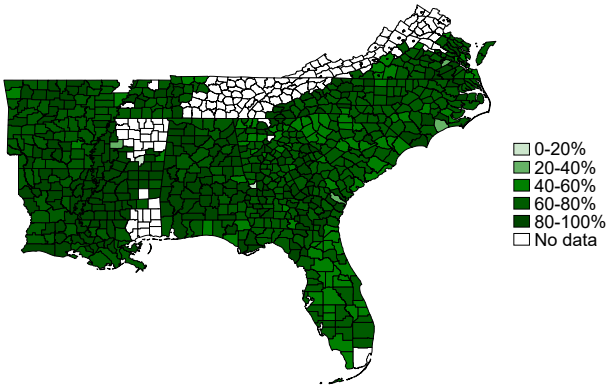
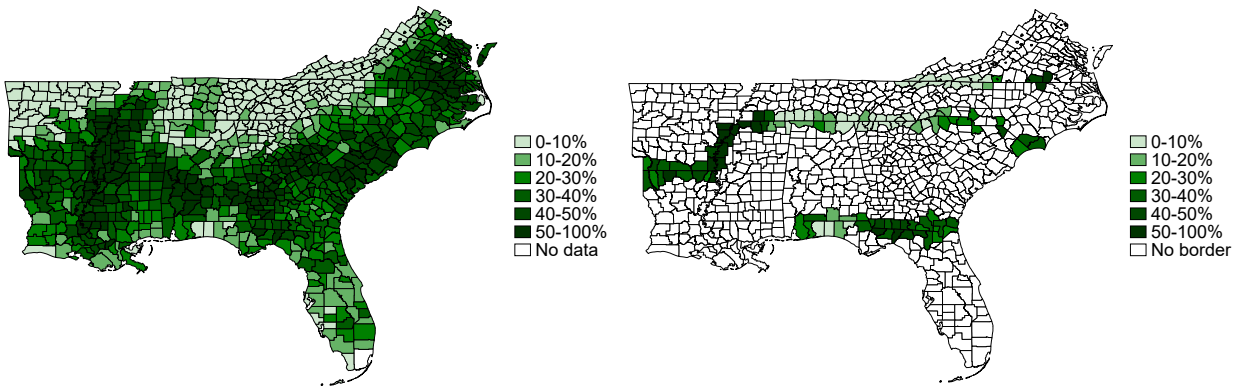


Figure A2. Black population in the sample

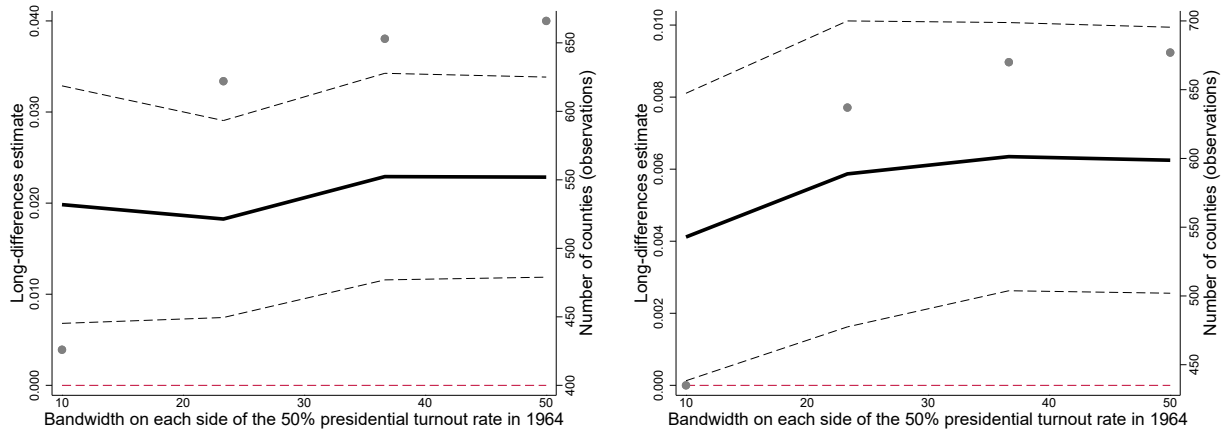
A. Black population, 1960 B. Black population in border sample, 1960



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

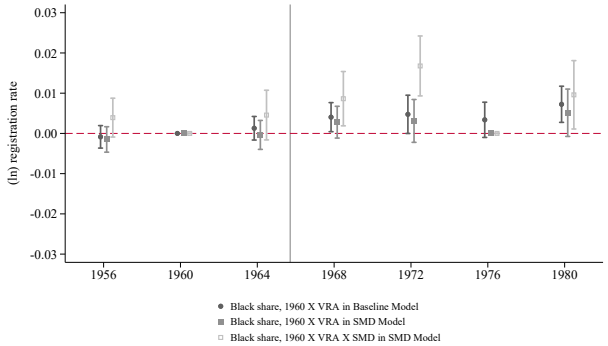
Figure A3. Discontinuity around the 50% turnout rate

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: ± 10 percentage points around 50%) to the whole sample of available southern counties (bandwidth: ± 50 percentage points around 50%). Dots represent the number of counties in each bandwidth (measured on the right vertical axis). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; 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.

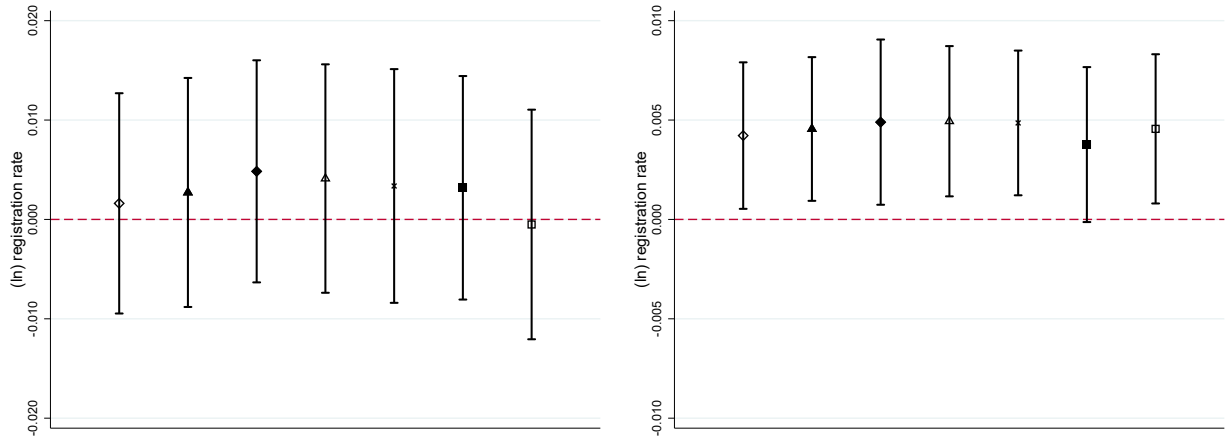
Figure A4. Registration rates: Difference in the gradient and SMD



Notes: The figure plots the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) 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 A5. Quadruple difference models: Electoral rules (SMD)

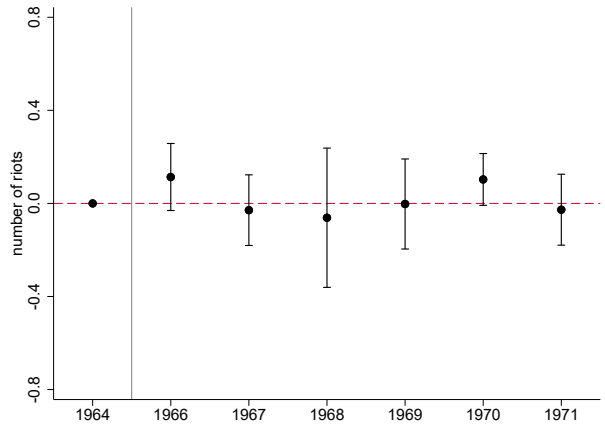
A. Change in (ln) Black registration, 1980-1960 B. Change in (ln) white registration, 1980-1960



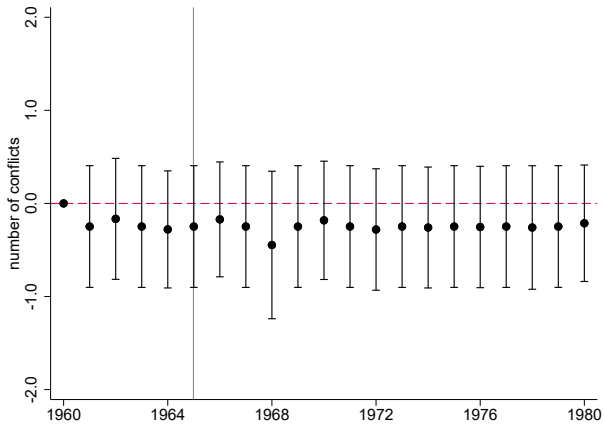
Notes: The figures plot the coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the triple interaction coefficient between the VRA indicator, the 1960 Black population share, and the SMD indicator. In each of the seven dots (from the left), the following variables are also included (one at a 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.

Figure A6. 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.

Table A1. Robustness: Sample selection

Dep. variable:	In Sample	(ln) Registration Rates		
		Balanced Sample	Turnout 40%-60%	Turnout 45%-55%
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Black registration				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.001	0.023***	0.020**	0.022*
	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.011)
Black share, 1960	0.007***	0.010**	0.007	0.004
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	0.834	32.916	32.993	35.259
	(0.373)	(20.180)	(19.709)	(17.261)
Black share, 1960	25.663	27.667	26.636	24.337
	(15.982)	(14.810)	(13.929)	(12.788)
Adj. R-Square	0.55	0.72	0.62	0.62
N	873	641	426	244
Panel B: White registration				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.003	0.006**	0.004*	0.005*
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Black share, 1960	0.005**	–0.002	–0.003	–0.004**
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	0.825	68.661	70.667	70.358
	(0.380)	(18.553)	(18.287)	(16.246)
Black share, 1960	25.663	27.667	26.790	24.158
	(15.982)	(14.810)	(14.210)	(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 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 A2. Change in (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

Dep. variable:	(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)
Panel A: Black registration							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.021***	0.022***	0.021***	0.021***	0.022***	0.021***	0.023***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Black share, 1960	0.013***	0.005	0.008	0.008*	0.006	0.008*	0.007
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable	32.342	32.342	32.342	32.342	32.342	32.342	32.342
	(20.351)	(20.351)	(20.351)	(20.351)	(20.351)	(20.351)	(20.351)
Black share, 1960	28.061	28.061	28.061	28.061	28.061	28.061	28.061
	(15.053)	(15.053)	(15.053)	(15.053)	(15.053)	(15.053)	(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
Panel B: White registration							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.005***	0.005***	0.005***	0.006***	0.005**	0.007***
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.003**	0.001	–0.000	–0.000	–0.001	0.000	–0.001
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable	68.720	68.720	68.720	68.720	68.720	68.720	68.720
	(18.570)	(18.570)	(18.570)	(18.570)	(18.570)	(18.570)	(18.570)
Black share, 1960	27.621	27.621	27.621	27.621	27.621	27.621	27.621
	(15.159)	(15.159)	(15.159)	(15.159)	(15.159)	(15.159)	(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 A3. Change in the gap of (ln) registration rates, 1980-1960

Dep. variable:	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**	0.016**	0.018**	0.016**
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.008*	0.007*	0.011**	0.012***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	-35.745	-35.745	-35.745	-35.745
	(22.312)	(22.312)	(22.312)	(22.312)
Black share, 1960	27.665	27.665	27.665	27.667
	(14.808)	(14.808)	(14.808)	(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 A4. Evidence from local newspapers: Mentions of elected officials

Dep. variable:	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**	0.398	0.816	0.029***	–0.007	0.001
	(1.095)	(0.582)	(0.731)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	–2.058**	–0.005	–0.806	–0.021**	0.011	0.002
	(0.956)	(0.462)	(0.583)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Black share, 1960 X VRA X Race			1.056*			0.019**
			(0.596)			(0.007)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable	67.866	74.897	71.381	0.703	0.946	0.825
	(45.261)	(34.373)	(40.342)	(0.458)	(0.226)	(0.381)
Black share, 1960	31.818	31.818	31.818	31.818	31.818	31.818
	(16.387)	(16.387)	(16.387)	(16.387)	(16.387)	(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.

Table A5. Changes in white population and its characteristics

Dep. variable:	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	–0.042	–0.011	–0.049	0.036
	(335.655)	(0.116)	(0.012)	(0.037)	(0.039)
Black share, 1960	–235.530	0.366***	0.004	0.353***	0.063*
	(323.538)	(0.101)	(0.008)	(0.034)	(0.032)
Summary statistics:					
Dep. variable	22.313	72.226	3.797	34.199	64.587
	(35.535)	(39.001)	(9.397)	(12.142)	(9.888)
Black share, 1960	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681	23.681
	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(19.600)	(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 A6. Riots and conflicts

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

B Variable Definitions and Sources

Appendix B.1 and B.2 provide a description of the data on voter registration rates and Black elected officials, respectively. Appendix B.3 presents the details of 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.[71] 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 create a county-level panel dataset on the number of registered voters from 1956 to 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).[72] We also replaced missing 1964 values using 1963 figures for Arkansas.

In the analysis, we use race-specific registration rates, calculated by dividing the number of registered voters by the voting-age population by race, using data from Manson et al. (2022).[73] Due to changes in legal voting requirements, we define the voting age population as: 21+ for 1970 and prior years; and, 18+ for 1980 and later years.[74] Since official information on voting age population is available every ten years, we follow Cascio and Washington (2014) and use a linear interpolation to obtain information on each intercensal year from

[71] As noted in the main text, following the 1966 federal decision that declared the Texas poll tax unconstitutional – *United States v. Texas, 252 F. Supp. 234 (W. D. Tex.), aff'd, 384 U.S. 155 (1966)* – Texas implemented a system of registrations that eliminated race-specific information (Doty, 1969).

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

[73] Whenever the registration rate is above 100%, we windsorize it. However, results are robust to excluding county-year observations for which registration rates are above 100% (Table C2).

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

1950 onwards.

B.2 Black Elected Officials

Data on Black elected officials come from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO) for the period 1968-1980 and from Bernini et al. (2023) for the period 1962-64. This directory was first published by the Southern Regional Council in 1969, and included information on all Black officials elected at the national, state, and local level in 1968. The data include Black elected officials in county governments, municipal governments, and school boards. For over two decades, the NRBEO was maintained by the Joint Center for Political Studies, which updated information on Black office holders primarily through questionnaires sent to known officials. This information was then verified via phone calls to the relevant jurisdictions. News clippings, government and state offices, associations of officials, and organizations interested in Black political participation also contributed to refining the directory. The data collection methodology improved over time, so undercounting of black elected officials is more likely to have occurred in the earlier years. Since the NRBEO is available only in paper format, we use digitized information from Bernini et al. (2023) to construct the total number of Black officials elected in each southern local office for the years 1969, 1971, and the period 1973-1980. In our analysis, we scale the number of Black elected officials by the total number of elected officials in the county and year to calculate 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 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.$ in 1960; *iii*) the 1960 unemployment rate; *iv*) the share of individuals (25+) without a high school diploma in 1960; *v*) the share of the population living in farms in 1960; and, *vi*) the average net Black migration rate between 1940 and 1960. Second, we use the U.S. Census of Agriculture (Haines et al., 2018) to measure the share of land in the county devoted to cotton production in 1955, with the corresponding variable for 1959 obtained 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).

Additional political variables. In addition to the data on registration rates and Black elected officials described in Appendix B.1 and B.2, respectively, 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 the 1960 and 1940 presidential elections; 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 of votes cast to the voting age population.[75] Third, we obtain the vote shares of the leading 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, for 1950 and 1960.

When analyzing electoral outcomes in the short run (1968-1948) and in the long run (1980-1956), we collect data on votes cast in the presidential, senatorial, House, and gubernatorial elections from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2013) and Heard and Strong (2006). For public goods provision in 1957 and 1982, we use data on the number of employees, capital spending, and spending on salaries and education from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1957, 1982, 2012, 2023).[76]

In addition to electoral outcomes, we consider several other 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.[77] Second, data on electoral rules are obtained from the Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments (1957) and from the 1980 volume of the NRBEO. Finally, we use 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 use data on the number of anti- and pro-Black protests that occurred between 1960 and 1980 from Olzak et al. (2011).[78] Second, we measure the presence

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

[76] Figures are reported in real per capita terms by dividing nominal figures by county population and converting to 2000 U.S.$ using the consumer price index (CPI).

[77] Source: https://www.justice.gov/crt.

[78] We matched the original city-level dataset to the counties in our sample.

of Ku Klux Klan organizations (known as Klaverns), standardized by the size of the white population, using 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 quantify 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 People (NAACP), scaled by the Black population, in 1942 and 1964 using data from Gregory (2018).[79] Lastly, we analyze local newspapers data from Newspapers.com to measure the frequency of selected terms in each county between 1960 and 1970.[80]

Additional historical proxies for race relations include: data on 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 enlistments during WWII, scaled by the eligible (14-45) Black population; and a principal component indicator measuring political and economic discrimination at the county level from Qian and Tabellini (2021).[81]

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). This dataset was later refined and extended by Carter (1986), which includes Race Riots from 1964 to 1971. The data were compiled from several sources: *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*) news clips from the New York Times and the Washington Post. To qualify as a Race Riot, an incident had to be a spontaneous event involving at least 30 people, including some African Americans, and resulting in either aggressive behavior, looting, or property damage.[82]

Ethnic conflicts. Olzak (2015) collected information on all ethnic conflicts occurring between 1954 and 1992. In this paper, we categorize ethnic conflicts into two groups: *i*) non-violent collective events (such as meetings, rallies, and picketing); and, *ii*) violent conflicts (including spontaneous disruptions, boycotts, riots, and ethnic vandalism). For our focus on riots, the dataset defines them as demonstrations involving at least 50 people, some

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

[80] For more details on newspapers data, see Fouka et al. (2022) and Calderon et al. (2023).

[81] See Table B4 for a description of the variables.

[82] This definition excludes events occurring within school settings or during civil rights demonstrations.

form of violence, and lasting for at least two hours. The primary source for this information is news clips from the New York Times.[83]

Measuring segregationist candidates. To measure voters' support for racist candidates, we need to classify gubernatorial candidates based on their policy orientation regarding racial segregation. Research on this issue is limited. The most comprehensive classification comes from Black (1976), which covers gubernatorial candidates from 1950 to 1973. In that study, campaign stances of gubernatorial candidates are obtained from a selection of state newspapers. Specifically, Black (1976) used two newspapers per state, except for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, where only one source was used.[84] Coverage typically began six weeks before the first primary.

In Black (1976), gubernatorial candidates were classified based on their campaign stances on racial segregation. However, this classification has several limitations. First, it relies on a restricted set of newspapers, which might not uniformly cover campaign stances across different states and time periods. Second, it only included general elections where the Republican candidate won a minimum of 33.3% of the total vote, which reduced the number of post-Brown general elections from 66 to 29. Third, additional general elections were excluded, even if the Republican candidate secured a vote share of one third or more, if it was determined that there was minimal serious campaigning by the candidates.[85] Fourth, the classification ends in 1973. Because of these limitations, we decided to: *i*) revisit the original Black (1976)'s classification, classifying again all candidates based on our own reading of all the available newspapers discussing each candidate (based on the universe of local newspapers available from Newspapers.com); *ii*) expanding the classification to include all general elections; and, *iii*) extending the classification to 1980.

In terms of racial segregation, we categorize gubernatorial campaigners as either segregationists or non-segregationists. Our definition of non-segregationist follows closely Black (1976)'s original classification.[86] Non-segregationists include both a minority of governors

[83]For a comparison between the data on riots included in Carter (1986) and Olzak (2015), see Bernini (2023). While Carter (1986) specifically focuses on the Race Riots of the 1960s, there is considerable overlap between it and Olzak (2015) for the period 1964-1971. However, as noted by Bernini (2023), Olzak (2015) may understate the number of riots due to its reliance on the New York Times and the minimum participant threshold of 50.

[84]In addition to the New York Times, the newspapers included were: Birmingham News and Montgomery Advertiser (Alabama); Arkansas Gazette (Arkansas); Miami Herald, Tampa Tribune, and St. Petersburg Times (Florida); Atlanta Constitution and Atlanta Journal (Georgia); New Orleans Times-Picayune (Louisiana); Jackson Clarion-Ledger (Mississippi); Raleigh News and Observer and Charlotte Observer (North Carolina); Columbia State and Charleston News and Courier (South Carolina); Nashville Banner, Nashville Tennessean, and Memphis Commercial Appeal (Tennessee); Dallas Morning News, Houston Post, and Texas Observer (Texas); and Richmond Times-Dispatch and Washington Post (Virginia).

[85]As mentioned by Black (1976): "In four cases a judgment was made that the Republicans conducted token campaigns and were not taken seriously by either their Democratic opponents or the press."

[86]In a few instances, our classification of racist candidates differs from that in Black (1976). The differences between our classification and the one present in Black (1976) are: George Wallace (Alabama) in 1974, in our classification set as segregationist; the following three candidates set by us as non-segregationist: Francis Cherry (Arkansas) in 1952, Carl Sanders (Georgia) in 1962, and Mills E. Godwin Jr. (Virginia) in 1973. Results are unchanged when using Black (1976)'s classification.

who openly embraced civil rights and others who, for various reasons, did not publicly align with segregationist views. This category includes those candidates who displayed a general indifference towards the debate between segregation and desegregation during their campaigns, choosing to refrain from taking a stance on this issue.[87]

[87] As described in Black (1976), candidates are classified as non-segregationist if they can be included in one of the following three categories. *i*) Whatever the candidate's private beliefs, the candidate does not campaign openly as a segregationist. For all practical purposes, the candidate seeks to avoid explicit stands on racial issues; the candidate champions neither segregation nor desegregation. *ii*) The candidate does not describe themselves as a segregationist or as pro-integration, but the candidate expresses qualified support for some Black demands. Statements concerning race tend to be indirect and highly abstract (for example, the candidate favors "equality of opportunity"). Black support is welcomed. *iii*) The candidate explicitly and unambiguously favors various Black rights. Racial segregation may be explicitly repudiated; black support is welcomed.

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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

State	*Coverage*	*County governing bodies*	*Electoral rules*	*Source*
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[b]
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[a]	Commissioner	Mixed system	North Carolina Manual
South Carolina	Covered	Commissioner	Mixed system	South Carolina Governmental Guide[c] and South Carolina Directory of County Officials[d]
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

[a] Only 39 of the 100 counties are covered: Anson, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Camden, Caswell, Chowan, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gaston, Gates, Granville, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Hertford, Hoke, Jackson, Lee, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Onslow, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Robeson, Rockingham, Scotland, Union, Vance, Washington, Wayne, Wilson.
[b] Microfilms from the "Arkansas Elected Justices of the Peace Returns."
[c] Until 1973.
[d] After 1973.

Table B3. Judicial divisions

State	*Source*
Alabama	U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District) U.S. District Court (Southern District)
Arkansas	U.S. Attorney's Office (Eastern District) U.S. District Court (Western District)
Florida	U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District) U.S. District Court (Southern District)
Georgia	U.S. Attorney's Office (Southern District) U.S. District Court (Northern District and Middle District)
Louisiana	U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District) U.S. District Court (Middle District and Eastern District)
Mississippi	U.S. District Court (Northern District and Southern District)
North Carolina	U.S. District Court (Western District, Middle District, and Eastern District)
South Carolina	U.S. District Court
Tennessee	U.S. Attorney's Office (Middle District) U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District)
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
Electoral outcomes	Votes cast in the presidential, House of Representatives, senatorial, and gubernatorial elections. To measure voters' support for racist candidates in gubernatorial elections, we classify gubernatorial candidates according to their policy orientation on racial segregation.	Votes cast are from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2013) and Heard and Strong (2006), while our classification of gubernatorial candidates according to their policy orientation on racial segregation follows the work of Black (1976)
Newspapers' mentions	Frequency of selected terms in local newspapers in each southern county and each year from 1960 to 1970.	Newspapers.com
Public goods provision	We consider: i) number of employees (1957 and 1982); ii) capital spending (1957 and 1982); and, iii) spending on salaries and education (1957 and 1982). For expenditure figures, we consider real per capita figures by dividing the nominal figures by the county population and converting them to 2000 U.S.$, using the consumer price index (CPI).	Authors' calculations from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1957, 1982, 2012, 2023)
Voter registration rates	Log of registered voters divided by voting age population between 1956 and 1980 (see also Appendix B.1).	Archive of the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project (VEP), the United States Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961) and Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (1992)
Main Regressors		
Black population share	Number of Black Americans over county population in 1960.	County and City Data Book Consolidated File, County Data 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012)
Coverage (VRA)	Dummy variable equal to one for the counties that were covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and zero otherwise.	Authors' calculations using information available from the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice
Single member districts (SMD)	Indicator equal to one for covered states where members of county governing bodies are elected by single member districts and zero otherwise. See also Bernini et al. (2023) for more details.	Authors' calculations from the Census of Governments (1957) and the NRBEO (1980)
Control Variables		
Families below poverty line	Share of families with income below 3,000 U.S.$ 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)
Land devoted to harvested cotton	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)

Low-skilled	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)
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)

Additional Variables

Cotton suitability index	Index of cotton suitability based on maximum potential cotton yield by county.	Hornbeck and Naidu (2014)
Discrimination principal component	Principal component measure of political and economic discrimination from Qian and Tabellini (2021). The discrimination index includes: i) the average vote share in Presidential elections, for each election between 1900 and 1930; ii) the average vote share in House of Representatives 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); vi) the racial gap (white minus Black) in average educational level; and, vii) the racial gap (white minus Black) in the logarithm of the average occupational income scores. These last two 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 1902 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)
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)
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 U.S.$ (resp., 7,500 U.S.$) 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. Results are reported 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 potential imbalance in covariates between covered and non-covered counties.[88]

Next, we present estimates obtained from propensity score stratification and from trimming the sample based on the propensity scores. Propensity scores are first calculated using logistic regression. To transition from a skewed to a normal distribution, we compute the linear predictor (i.e., the log of the odds of the propensity scores). We then implement stratification, comparing covered and non-covered counties within each stratum. In column (2), we present results based on stratifying the sample into quintiles, while 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 1), column (4) replicates the results by trimming the sample based on the common support defined by the share of African Americans in 1960. Reassuringly, in all cases, the results align with those obtained from the baseline specification reported in column (4) of Table 2.

C.2 Data Quality

In Table C2, we test the quality of our data, presenting 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 from 1964 to 1980. Reassuringly, results remain in line with those reported in column (4) of Table 2; if anything, they become somewhat larger for Black registration rates. Next, 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.[89] In column (3), we drop counties that, in any year between 1956 and 1980, report a

[88] 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.

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

measure of total registered voters (i.e., our numerator) higher than total turnout.[90] 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.[91] In column (5), we define the dependent variable as the change between the average value for 1976-1980 and the average value for 1960-1964.[92] In column (6), we omit the share of rural farms and the land in the county devoted to cotton production from the set of controls.

C.3 Outliers and Alternative Specifications

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.[93] Next, we address the potential concern that results may be driven by a mechanical effect of the Black population share on both coverage status and the probability of registering to vote. In column (3), we document that results remain unchanged when adding a quartic polynomial for the 1960 Black population share.

Finally, in columns (4), (5), and (6), we show that results are robust to alternative definitions of the dependent variable: *i*) registration rates (i.e., without taking the log); *ii*) the log of (1 + rates); and, *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 address concerns of spatial correlation, given that most legal battles for the enforcement of the VRA were fought across southern district courts. In Table C3, we further investigate the possibility of spatial correlation in the error term. In column (7), we cluster standard errors at the state level. In column (8), we adjust standard errors using the methodology proposed by Conley (1999), employing

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

[91] In the main analysis, we impute 1984 registration data when 1980 data are missing. See Appendix B.1 and Table B1.

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

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

a spatial lag and estimating spatial HAC standard errors with a 100km cut-off. Reassuringly, the precision of the results remains virtually unchanged when considering alternative spatial lags (e.g., 50km or 1,000km).

C.5 Controlling for Potential Confounders

In this section, we assess whether results capture the effects of other variables that might be correlated with both our treatment and changes in Black and white political behavior. To this end, we augment our baseline specification (Table 2, column 4) by including several additional controls as well as their interaction with the VRA dummy. For more details on each individual variable, see Appendix B and Table B4.

C.5.1 Residential Segregation

We begin by considering the possibility that our estimates may partly reflect the influence 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 2, column 4), we address this possibility by controlling for pre-existing patterns of segregation in public accommodations, using data on Green Book establishments from 1955 provided by 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 Green Book establishments present in 1955 (the last data point in the Green Book dataset), scaled by the 1950 Black population. In columns (2) and (3), we interact the VRA indicator with, respectively, the average number and the growth rate of Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 (the first and the last year in the Green Book dataset). In columns (4) to (6), we examine three measures of racial residential segregation from Logan and Parman (2017): the Residential Segregation Index, the Dissimilarity Index, and the Isolation Index. In all cases, the results remain consistent with those from our preferred specification.

In Table C5, we further show that results are robust to different measures of the presence of Green Book establishments. In columns (1) to (3), we interact the VRA indicator with the 1939 number of Green Book restaurants, gas stations, and hotels, relative to the 1935 number of corresponding businesses in the county.[94] In column (4), we aggregate the three separate categories considered in columns (1) to (3), again dividing the number of Green

[94]These are the only categories reported separately in the 1935 and 1948 Census of Business.

Book establishments by the total number of establishments in the county. Finally, columns (5) to (8) verify that results are unchanged when using values from 1948.

C.5.2 Potential Forces Promoting Black Activism

A separate concern is that our results might be influenced by the correlation between coverage, the Black population share, and other variables related to Black political activism, which could have independently triggered white mobilization following the VRA.[95] In our preferred specification (Table 2, column 4), we address this concern by interacting the VRA indicator with the frequency of pro- and anti-Black protests occurring between 1960 and 1964.

In Table C6, we consider additional variables. After restating the preferred specification in column (1), we proxy for the extent of Black social and political organization by including: a dummy for the presence of local NAACP chapters in 1964 (column 2), an indicator for the occurrence of at least one event organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) between 1942 and 1964 (column 3), and the share of Black Americans who were members of Black churches in 1936 (column 4). Next, in column (5), we 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). Finally, we address variables related to discrimination and whites' racism – factors that might be correlated with both our treatment and white political mobilization after the VRA. In columns (6) to (8), we include: the index of historical discrimination from Qian and Tabellini (2021); the number of KKK Klaverns between 1964 and 1966, scaled by 1960 white population; and the number of lynchings against African Americans between 1930 and 1940, scaled by 1940 Black population. Reassuringly, the coefficient on the interaction between coverage and the 1960 Black population share remains stable and close to that from our preferred specification.

C.5.3 Alternative Poverty Measures and the War on Poverty

Another concern is that our treatment may be related to the degree of local poverty, which might, in turn, drive white political mobilization after 1965. As in previous work (Bernini et al., 2023), our baseline specification controls for the share of families with an income below 3,000 U.S.$ in 1960. However, there may be concerns that this measure does not adequately capture deep poverty. To address this, in columns (2) and (3) of Table C7, we replicate our baseline specification by interacting coverage with the share of individuals in households with incomes below 1,000 and 2,000 U.S.$ in 1960, respectively. In column (4), we follow

[95] For a discussion of the role played by Black local political leaders throughout American history, see Hahn (2005).

Cascio and Washington (2014), and control for the 1960 child poverty rate, defined as the share of children aged 5 to 17 living in families with incomes below 2,000 U.S.$. In all cases, the results remain consistent with those from the baseline specification (reported in column 1 for ease of comparison).

A somewhat distinct concern is that our findings may be influenced by the roll-out of the federal War on Poverty program, implemented through the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act (EOA), which was geographically distributed according to "the War on Poverty's rhetoric of fighting poverty and racial discrimination" (Bailey and Duquette, 2014). Since the War on Poverty triggered political backlash and resulted in electoral losses for the Democratic Party (Bailey and Duquette, 2014), we aim to isolate the impact of the VRA from that of the EOA. In the remainder of Table C7, we consider different proxies for county-level EOA spending from Bailey and Duquette (2014): total (column 5) and average (column 6) EOA funding between 1965 and 1968; and, total EOA funds disbursed in 1965, when the VRA was enacted (column 7). Reassuringly, results remain unchanged.

C.5.4 Black Net Migration Rate

In our baseline specifications, we interact coverage with the Black population share measured in 1960, after twenty years of Black mass migration to the U.S. North and West (Boustan, 2010). Since earlier waves of the Great Migration were associated with political change in the U.S. South (Margo, 1991; Feigenbaum et al., 2020), one might wonder if our results are capturing the effects of Black departures between 1940 and 1960. In Table C8, we explore this possibility by interacting coverage with the Black net migration rate over different time horizons: 1940-1960 (column 2), 1940-1950 (column 3), and 1950-1960 (column 4). In all cases, our main coefficient of interest remains almost identical to that in the baseline specification (column 1). Interestingly, we also observe that the coefficient on the interaction between coverage and Black migration is quantitatively small, imprecisely estimated, and unstable across columns.

C.5.5 Historical Black Political Power

In Section C.5.2, we confirmed that our results are not unduly influenced by the presence of organizations that promoted Black political activism, such as the NAACP, CORE, or Black churches. However, one remaining concern is that coverage and the 1960 Black population share may be correlated with variables, such as registration rates and the presence of Black elected officials during Reconstruction, which might proxy for historical Black political power. If this were the case, and if historical Black political participation and representation had

long-lasting effects on white political behavior, our estimates might be biased.

To address this concern, we use data on 1867 race-specific registration rates from Williams (2022) and on Black elected politicians after the American Civil War from Logan (2020). In Table C9, we interact coverage with: *i*) the 1867 Black (column 2) and white (column 3) registration rates; *ii*) a dummy equal to one for counties with at least one elected Black politician between 1865 and 1880 (column 4); and, *iii*) the share of Black politicians between 1865 and 1880, relative to the 1900 Black population (column 5). In column (6), we include all interactions simultaneously. Reassuringly, results remain consistent with those from the baseline specification (column 1).

C.6 Testing for Parallel Trends

Baseline event study. Figure 2 in the main text shows that counties with a larger 1960 Black population share do not exhibit statistically significant differences in registration rates (for either Black or white voters) by coverage status before the VRA. This is reassuring, as it suggests the absence of pre-trends in both Black and white registration rates. However, as recently discussed in Roth (2022), one might question whether this conclusion is simply due to the lack of sufficient statistical power to detect pre-trends. To address this possibility, we perform the test proposed by Roth (2022).

Assuming the presence of a linear time pre-trend with slope δ, the test searches for the smallest absolute value of δ such that at least one of the pre-trend coefficients is statistically significant at the λ% significance level. We present results in Table C10, where, following Roth (2022), we consider different values of λ – ranging from 50% (less stringent) to 10% (more stringent). As documented in columns (1) and (2), when focusing on the most demanding version of the test (last row of the table), the smallest value of the slope δ is 0.011 and 0.003 for Black and white registration rates, respectively. Reassuringly, the magnitude of the post-VRA coefficients plotted in Figure 2 is always above these threshold values for both Black and white registration rates. Thus, even in the most restrictive scenario, the potential bias from undetectable pre-trends would not reach the size of the post-VRA point estimates for any of the years from 1968 to 1980.

Election of the first Black official. In columns (3) and (4) of Table C10, we perform a similar exercise focusing on the event study estimates reported in Figure 6, which plots the coefficients on the effects of the election of the first Black official on Black and white registration rates. Reassuringly, this analysis confirms the absence of differential pre-trends visually apparent in the figure. Specifically, the smallest values of the slope δ such that at least one of the pre-trend coefficients is statistically significant at the 10% significance level

are 0.085 and 0.033 for Black (Panel A) and white (Panel B) registration rates, respectively. As shown in Figure 6, the election of a Black official is followed by a clear break in the patterns of white registration rates. The test from Roth (2022) confirms that we can reject a pre-trend with a slope that is larger than 0.033. This value is consistently well below any of the post-event coefficients found for white registration rates.

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

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

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates								
	1980-1964 Registr.	Below 100%	Below Turnout	1980 Registr.	Average Registr.	Cotton Share	Republican Share 1960		Florida reauthor.
							Overall	Border	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: Black registration									
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.026***	0.024***	0.023***	0.015*	0.019*	0.019***	0.018***	0.025**	0.024***
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	–0.001	0.008*	0.010**	0.019**	0.013	0.010**	0.013***	0.048	0.009*
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.033)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:									
Dep. variable	40.726	31.829	33.068	36.160	35.236	32.343	32.344	33.830	32.020
	(20.991)	(19.297)	(20.244)	(18.984)	(17.552)	(20.355)	(20.364)	(22.607)	(20.365)
Black share, 1960	28.641	27.992	27.735	25.947	26.785	28.064	28.078	25.724	28.315
	(15.230)	(14.760)	(14.849)	(13.718)	(13.813)	(15.055)	(15.048)	(15.821)	(15.062)
Adj. R-Square	0.76	0.74	0.72	0.69	0.76	0.74	0.75	0.26	0.75
N	572	631	617	480	240	664	662	167	659
Panel B: White registration									
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.005**	0.008***	0.005***	0.004	0.005	0.006***	0.005**	0.004**	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.003*	–0.002	–0.003	–0.004	–0.002	–0.001	–0.000	–0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:									
Dep. variable	67.029	64.513	69.169	70.970	68.028	68.719	68.725	71.117	68.871
	(15.236)	(15.571)	(18.295)	(16.149)	(13.199)	(18.578)	(18.587)	(16.573)	(18.689)
Black share, 1960	28.076	27.013	27.704	25.760	26.914	27.649	27.664	25.724	27.897
	(15.259)	(14.197)	(15.134)	(13.887)	(14.040)	(15.145)	(15.138)	(15.821)	(15.160)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.63	0.63	0.50	0.51	0.29	0.49
N	572	489	644	492	242	671	669	167	666

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2): i) with the change in registration rates 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 Republican vote share (%), 1960 in columns (7) and (8); viii) excluding the Florida counties covered by the 1975 reauthorization in column (9). 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, variable definition, and clustering

Dep. variable:	(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)
Panel A: Black registration								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.021***	0.020***	0.020***	0.356**	0.020***	0.025***	0.023**	0.020***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.170)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Black share, 1960	0.009*	0.007	0.061*	0.432***	0.012***	0.011**	0.010*	0.009**
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.032)	(0.139)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable	32.279	31.917	32.343	32.091	32.091	33.480	32.343	32.343
	(20.188)	(18.538)	(20.355)	(20.480)	(20.480)	(19.851)	(20.355)	(20.355)
Black share, 1960	28.037	27.910	28.064	28.104	28.104	26.582	28.064	28.064
	(14.923)	(14.374)	(15.055)	(15.385)	(15.385)	(14.050)	(15.055)	(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
Panel B: White registration								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.005**	0.005**	0.006***	0.332**	0.006***	0.008**	0.006*	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.135)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.003*	0.004	–0.125	–0.002	–0.007***	–0.002	–0.002*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.009)	(0.094)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable	68.733	69.788	68.719	68.719	68.719	71.082	68.719	68.719
	(18.107)	(16.934)	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.202)	(18.578)	(18.578)
Black share, 1960	27.594	27.583	27.649	27.649	27.649	26.659	27.649	27.649
	(15.006)	(15.203)	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.145)	(14.197)	(15.145)	(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(rates) in column (4); iv) measuring registration as ln(1 + rates) in column (5); v) measuring registration as ln(1 + registered individuals) in column (6); vi) with robust standard errors adjusted for clustering at the state level in column (7); vii) with spatial HAC standard errors using a 100km cutoff (Conley, 1999) in column (8). Controls are: Low-skilled (%), 1960; Unemployment rate (%), 1960; Families below poverty line (%), 1960; 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)
Panel A: Black registration						
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023***	0.022***	0.024***	0.023***	0.022***	0.024***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010**	0.010**	0.009*	0.010**	0.012**	0.009**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable	32.343	32.343	32.343	32.402	32.402	32.402
	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.462)	(20.462)	(20.462)
Black share, 1960	28.064	28.064	28.064	27.937	27.937	27.937
	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.082)	(15.082)	(15.082)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.75	0.74
N	664	664	664	654	654	654
Panel B: White registration						
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006**	0.006**	0.007**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable	68.719	68.719	68.719	68.721	68.721	68.721
	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.591)	(18.591)	(18.591)
Black share, 1960	27.649	27.649	27.649	27.611	27.611	27.611
	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.109)	(15.109)	(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 Green Book establishments as a share of total establishments

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates							
	Green Book Establishments in 1939				Green Book Establishments in 1948			
	Restaurants	Gas Stations	Hotels	Total	Restaurants	Gas Stations	Hotels	Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Black registration								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.025***	0.024***	0.028***	0.024***	0.022***	0.023***	0.024***	0.022***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.009*	0.009*	0.004	0.009*	0.011**	0.010**	0.009*	0.011**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable	32.384	32.361	32.345	33.168	32.342	32.346	32.342	32.343
	(20.364)	(20.356)	(20.361)	(18.410)	(20.357)	(20.359)	(20.226)	(20.355)
Black share, 1960	28.016	28.051	28.062	26.892	28.054	28.071	27.884	28.064
	(15.022)	(15.038)	(15.041)	(12.740)	(15.042)	(15.055)	(14.941)	(15.055)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74
N	656	662	295	663	662	663	604	664
Panel B: White registration								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.006***	0.009***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.002	–0.003	–0.002*	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable	68.663	68.669	68.710	66.331	68.724	68.715	68.299	68.730
	(18.546)	(18.546)	(18.560)	(16.330)	(18.568)	(18.562)	(18.362)	(18.570)
Black share, 1960	27.584	27.610	27.631	26.493	27.624	27.640	27.383	27.633
	(15.122)	(15.129)	(15.142)	(12.659)	(15.142)	(15.155)	(14.945)	(15.155)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.61	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
N	663	671	301	672	671	672	607	673

Notes: Using data on Green Book establishments and total 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 Green Book restaurants in 1939, standardized by the total number of restaurants in 1935 in column (1); ii) the number of Green Book gas stations in 1939, standardized by the total number of gas stations in 1935 in column (2); iii) the number of Green Book hotels in 1939, standardized by the total number of hotels in 1935 in column (3); iv) the number of Green Book restaurants, gas stations, and hotels in 1939, standardized by the total number of restaurants, gas stations, and hotels in 1935 in column (4). Columns (5) to (8) replicate the previous analysis for 1948 Green Book establishments and 1948 total establishments. From Cook et al. (2023), the 1935 and 1948 Census of Business is used to obtain county-level data on the total number of restaurants, gas stations, and formal accommodations (hotels and motels). The number of observations depends on the data available from the Census of Business, which only lists specific types of industries and only includes data for counties that meet certain reporting requirements (Cook et al., 2023). 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 C6. Controlling for potential forces promoting Black activism

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates							
	Baseline Specification	NAACP Chapters	CORE Events	Black Church	WWII Enlistment	Discrimination Index	KKK	Lynching
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Black registration								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023***	0.023***	0.024***	0.023***	0.024***	0.016**	0.024***	0.023***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010**	0.010**	0.009*	0.010**	0.009**	0.010**	0.008	0.010**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable	32.343	32.343	32.343	32.343	32.585	32.691	32.343	32.343
	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.672)	(20.716)	(20.355)	(20.355)
Black share, 1960	28.064	28.064	28.064	28.064	27.935	28.022	28.064	28.064
	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.235)	(15.244)	(15.055)	(15.055)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.76	0.74	0.75
N	664	664	664	664	653	638	664	664
Panel B: White registration								
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.004**	0.006**	0.006**	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.000	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:								
Dep. variable	68.719	68.719	68.719	68.728	69.521	69.489	68.719	68.719
	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.574)	(18.433)	(18.500)	(18.578)	(18.578)
Black share, 1960	27.649	27.649	27.649	27.659	27.609	27.678	27.649	27.649
	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.139)	(15.260)	(15.251)	(15.145)	(15.145)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.56	0.50	0.50
N	671	671	671	670	649	632	671	671

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) an indicator for the presence of a Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) event between 1942 and 1964 in column (3); iii) the number of members in Black churches in 1936, standardized by Black population in column (4); iv) the number of Black U.S. military enlistment during the onset of WWII, standardized by the number of eligible men in 1940 in column (5); v) one indicator of discrimination (obtained via principal component analysis, PCA) for political components and economic components in column (6); vi) the number of KKK Klaverns between 1964 and 1966, standardized by the white population in 1960 in column (7); vii) the number of lynchings against African Americans between 1930 and 1940, standardized by the Black population in 1940 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. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Table C7. Controlling for spending on the War on Poverty

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates						
	Baseline Specification	Below 1,000 U.S. Dollars	Below 2,000 U.S. Dollars	Child Poverty	Total CAP Exp. p.c. 1965-68	Average CAP Exp. p.c. 1965-68	CAP Exp. p.c. 1965
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Black registration							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023***	0.017**	0.018**	0.014**	0.023***	0.023***	0.024***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010**	0.012**	0.010**	0.013***	0.010**	0.010**	0.010**
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable	32.343	32.343	32.343	33.496	32.343	32.343	32.343
	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.058)	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.355)
Black share, 1960	28.064	28.064	28.064	27.359	28.064	28.064	28.064
	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.229)	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.055)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.75	0.75	0.73	0.74	0.75	0.75
N	664	664	664	550	664	664	664
Panel B: White registration							
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.008***	0.009***	0.007**	0.007***	0.006***	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002	–0.001	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:							
Dep. variable	68.719	68.719	68.719	69.461	68.719	68.728	68.719
	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.578)	(17.732)	(18.578)	(18.574)	(18.578)
Black share, 1960	27.649	27.649	27.649	27.222	27.649	27.659	27.649
	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.590)	(15.145)	(15.139)	(15.145)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.51	0.53	0.49	0.51	0.52	0.50
N	671	671	671	561	671	670	671

Notes: Using data on the War on Poverty from Bailey and Duquette (2014), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the share of the population with an income below 1,000 U.S. dollars in 1960 in column (2); ii) the share of the population with an income below 2,000 U.S. dollars in 1960 in column (3); iii) the child poverty rate in column (4); iv) the real federal CAP expenditures per capita, 1965-1968, in column (5); v) the average real federal CAP expenditures per capita, 1965-1968, in column (6); vi) the real federal CAP expenditures per capita, 1965, 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 C8. Controlling for Black net migration rate

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates			
	Baseline Specification	Migration Rate 1940-1960	Migration Rate 1940-1950	Migration Rate 1950-1960
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Black registration				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023***	0.022***	0.022***	0.023***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010**	0.010**	0.010**	0.011**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Black Net Migration Rate X VRA		0.003	0.005	–0.005
		(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.012)
Black Net Migration Rate		0.001	–0.005	0.009**
		(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	32.343	32.343	32.342	32.567
	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.357)	(20.640)
Black share, 1960	28.064	28.064	28.054	28.041
	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.042)	(15.148)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.75	0.74	0.75
N	664	664	663	653
Panel B: White registration				
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.005***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002	–0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black Net Migration Rate X VRA		–0.000	–0.002	0.003
		(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Black Net Migration Rate		–0.000**	0.000	0.001
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:				
Dep. variable	68.719	68.734	68.721	69.383
	(18.578)	(18.587)	(18.580)	(18.491)
Black share, 1960	27.649	27.724	27.694	27.623
	(15.145)	(15.097)	(15.097)	(15.235)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.56
N	671	662	663	659

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the Black net migration rate, 1940-1960, in column (2); ii) the Black net migration rate, 1940-1950, in column (3); iii) the Black net migration rate, 1950-1960, 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 C9. Controlling for historical Black political power

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates					
		1867 Registration		1865-1880 Black Politicians		
	Baseline Specification	Black Registration	White Registration	Dummy Variable	Share	All Variables
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Black registration						
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.023***	0.027***	0.028***	0.021***	0.023***	0.026***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Black share, 1960	0.010**	0.007	0.006	0.011**	0.011**	0.008
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable	32.343	31.955	31.134	32.343	32.343	31.955
	(20.355)	(20.561)	(20.137)	(20.355)	(20.355)	(20.561)
Black share, 1960	28.064	28.902	28.708	28.064	28.064	28.902
	(15.055)	(15.308)	(15.437)	(15.055)	(15.055)	(15.308)
Adj. R-Square	0.74	0.74	0.75	0.74	0.74	0.74
N	664	620	622	664	664	620
Panel B: White registration						
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.006***	0.004**	0.004**	0.007***	0.006***	0.004**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Black share, 1960	–0.002	–0.002	–0.001	–0.003*	–0.002	–0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Summary statistics:						
Dep. variable	68.719	68.925	68.872	68.719	68.719	68.925
	(18.578)	(18.983)	(19.199)	(18.578)	(18.578)	(18.983)
Black share, 1960	27.649	28.454	28.240	27.649	27.649	28.454
	(15.145)	(15.419)	(15.550)	(15.145)	(15.145)	(15.419)
Adj. R-Square	0.50	0.55	0.55	0.50	0.50	0.55
N	671	626	629	671	671	626

Notes: Using data on Black and white registration from Williams (2022), and on Black politicians from Logan (2020), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the Black registration rate in 1867 in column (2); ii) the white registration rate in 1867 in column (3); iii) a dummy variable equal to 1 for the counties with at least one Black politician between 1865 and 1880 in column (4); iv) the share of Black politicians between 1865 and 1880, relative to 1900 Black population, in column (5); v) all interactions simultaneously in column (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. 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 C10. Testing for parallel trends

Dep. variable:	(ln) Registration Rates			
Specification:	Baseline Event Study		First Black Official Event Study	
	Black	White	Black	White
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pre-trends power test				
50	0.006	0.002	0.048	0.019
80	0.009	0.003	0.073	0.028
90	0.011	0.003	0.085	0.033

Notes: The table shows the results of the test proposed in Roth (2022). Assuming the presence of a linear time pre-trend with slope δ, the test shows the smallest absolute value of δ such that at least one of the pre-trend coefficients is statistically significant at the λ% significance level. The table shows the slope δ for three different values of λ, from 50% (power test 50) to 10% (power test 90).