# Racial Diversity and Racial Policy Preferences: The Great Migration and Civil Rights*

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**Abstract**

Between 1940 and 1970, more than 4 million African Americans moved from the South to the North of the United States, during the Second Great Migration. This same period witnessed the struggle and eventual success of the civil rights movement in ending institutionalized racial discrimination. This paper shows that the Great Migration and support for civil rights are causally linked. Predicting Black inflows with a shift-share instrument, we find that the Great Migration raised support for the Democratic Party, increased Congress members' propensity to promote civil rights legislation, and encouraged pro-civil rights activism outside the US South. We provide different pieces of evidence that support for civil rights was not confined to the Black electorate, but was also shared by segments of the white population.

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# 1 Introduction

Between 1940 and 1970, more than 4 million African Americans left the US South for the North and West in one of the country's largest internal migration movements, referred to as the Second Great Migration (henceforth, Great Migration). The Great Migration temporally coincided with the development and eventual success of the civil rights movement – a turning point in the history of race relations in the US – which culminated in the passage of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965. Given the resistance of southern politicians to extend the franchise to Black Americans, northern legislators and grassroots organizations based in the North, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), played a key role in the process of enfranchisement (Lawson, 1976). Are these trends causally related? Did northward migration contribute to the growth of the civil rights movement?

The inflow of Black voters may have shifted northern politicians' incentives to introduce civil rights legislation, since African Americans were largely disenfranchised in the South, but faced no voting restrictions in the North. A growing Black population might have also expanded the organizational capacity of the Black civil rights movement (McAdam, 1982), promoting the development of Black activism. At the same time, a large literature has documented that racial diversity often triggers backlash among members of the majority group (Alesina et al., 1999; Dustmann et al., 2019; Enos, 2016). Black migrants may have thus generated political opposition among northern whites, reducing support for civil rights. Moreover, recent work in economics has found that the Great Migration increased residential segregation (Boustan, 2010) and lowered the economic and social mobility of African Americans in the long run (Derenoncourt, 2022). This, together with whites' backlash, may have reduced Black Americans' political empowerment and hindered the development of the civil rights movement.

The idea that the Great Migration lowered whites' support for civil rights seems at odds with the evidence presented in Figure 1. The figure plots the relationship between the 1940 to 1960 change in the Black population across non-southern US states and racial attitudes of *white* survey respondents in 1964 – the year in which the Civil Rights Act was passed.[1] White respondents living in states that received more Black migrants were more likely to consider civil rights as the most important problem facing

[1]The underlying OLS regressions partial out Census divisions dummies, the 1940-1960 change in state population, individual characteristics of survey respondents, and 1940 state-level socio-economic controls.

the country (Panel *a*) and to express warmer feelings towards Black Americans (Panel *b*). They had similarly warmer feelings towards the NAACP (Panel *c*) and the CORE (Panel *d*) – two grassroots organizations that played a key role in the success of the civil rights movement (Schickler, 2016; Sugrue, 2008).

In this paper, we show that these correlations reflect a causal relationship between the Great Migration and support for civil rights in the US North and West, not only among Black Americans but also among segments of the white electorate. We measure support for civil rights outside the US South using two sets of political outcomes. The first one captures voters' preferences. We focus on the county-level Democratic vote share in Congressional elections. This choice is motivated by recent evidence that, although the Democratic Party was openly segregationist and stubbornly defended white supremacy in the South until the early 1960s (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018; Lawson, 1976), by the end of the 1930s in the North and West it had unambiguously become the party defending Black people's interests and pushing for racial equality, especially at the local level (Schickler, 2016; Wasow, 2020).[2] To isolate support for civil rights from economic or other considerations of voters driving party choice, we complement this outcome with more direct proxies, such as the presence and activity of civil rights grassroots organizations (the CORE and the NAACP) as well as survey data. The second set of political variables captures the race-related ideology and behavior of Congress members. We measure this focusing on Congressional Districts (CDs), and using ideology scores derived from past voting behavior on civil rights bills (Bateman et al., 2017) and signatures on discharge petitions – a procedure used in US Congress to force bills out of legislative committees and to the floor for a vote – to promote civil rights legislation (Pearson and Schickler, 2009; Schickler, 2016).

To establish causality, we estimate stacked first difference regressions, controlling for state time-varying unobservable characteristics, and allowing counties and CDs to be on differential trends depending on their initial Black population share and political conditions. To account for potentially endogenous migration, we construct a version of the shift-share instrument (Card, 2001; Boustan, 2010) that assigns Black outflows from each southern state to northern counties based on pre-existing settlements of African Americans outside the South. One way to express the identifying assumption behind the instrument is the following. Conditional on controls (county and state by decade fixed effects, and differential trends for 1940 Democratic Party incumbency and

[2] Below, we provide evidence consistent with this idea. On party realignment see also Caughey et al. (2020).

Black population share), support for civil rights after 1940 should not be simultaneously correlated with the 1940 composition of African Americans' enclaves in northern counties *and* with patterns of out-migration from different southern states after 1940. After presenting the main results below, we perform several robustness checks to corroborate the validity of our empirical approach, building on insights from the recent econometric literature on shift-share designs (Adao et al., 2019; Borusyak et al., 2022; Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020; Jaeger et al., 2018).

Using this strategy, we find that Black in-migration had a strong, positive impact on the Democratic vote share in Congressional elections. Our estimates imply that one percentage point increase in the Black population share raised the Democratic vote share by 1.8 percentage points, or 4% relative to the 1940 mean. This is a large effect: even under the aggressive assumption that all Black migrants immediately voted for the Democratic Party upon arrival, support for the Democrats must have increased among northern residents because of Black inflows. Consistent with the view that African Americans were quickly incorporated in the political life of northern cities (Moon, 1948), we find that Black in-migration had a positive but quantitatively small impact on turnout. Given existing evidence that the Great Migration caused "white flight" (Boustan, 2010; Shertzer and Walsh, 2019), we verify that Black inflows did not lead to white out-migration or to changes in the composition of white residents at the county level, and replicate our analysis at the commuting zone (CZ) level.

Changes in voting patterns are mirrored by shifts in the ideology and behavior on racial issues of legislators. Similar to Autor et al. (2020), we construct a cross-walk that matches counties to CDs, and develop a procedure that assigns CD boundaries, which changed over time due to redistricting, to the geography of Congress 78 (1943-1945), which we take as our baseline. CDs that received more African Americans were represented by legislators with a more liberal ideology on racial issues, who were also more likely to sign discharge petitions aimed at promoting civil rights bills. These average effects mask substantial heterogeneity and increasing polarization across and within parties.

Next, we explore the mechanisms linking Black migration to support for civil rights. One pathway for our results is the changed composition of the electorate. Local northern fringes of the Democratic Party, which were better positioned to incorporate Black voters both in terms of racial ideology and of economic policies, benefited from the entry of African Americans in the northern electorate (Grant, 2020; Schickler, 2016).

A second pathway was local activism, which may have exerted additional pressure on northern legislators. Black in-migration fed into local grassroots actions, by allowing existing civil rights organizations to reach a critical mass and by favoring the development of new ones (Biondi, 2021; McAdam, 1982). Confirming this idea, we find that Black arrivals increased both the presence of local NAACP chapters and the frequency of non-violent pro-civil rights demonstrations organized by CORE.

Our electoral results, however, suggest that the direct effect of Black voters alone is not enough to explain the increase in the Democratic vote share caused by the Great Migration. Estimated magnitudes indicate that some white voters had to switch to the Democratic Party. A back of the envelope calculation that rests on estimates on Black registration and voting behavior from historical accounts (Glantz, 1960) confirms this idea. This exercise shows that approximately 7 white voters would have to switch to the Democratic Party for every 10 Black migrants in order to match the estimated coefficient on the change in the Black population share. We corroborate this interpretation using historical survey data, estimating state level cross-sectional regressions.[3] In the years preceding the 1964 Civil Rights Act (CRA), white respondents living in states that received more Black migrants between 1940 and 1960 held more favorable views on race relations, considered racial equality as one of the most fundamental issues for the country, and were more likely to vote for the Democratic Party. Furthermore, using a subset of the CORE data, we document that not only Black, but also white individuals joined pro-civil rights protests.

One mechanism driving whites' support for civil rights might have been heightened awareness of conditions faced by Black people in the South. Writing in 1944, Swedish economist and Nobel Prize winner Gunnar Myrdal noted that "[t]he average Northerner does not understand the reality and the effects of such [Southern] discriminations...[t]o get publicity is of the highest strategic importance to [Black people]" (Myrdal, 1944). To test this channel, we compiled a list of all known lynchings committed by white offenders against Black victims in the US South between 1940 and 1964. We searched for these episodes in local newspapers of non-southern counties, identifying them with the joint mention of the name of the victim and the place of the lynching. By conducting a series of event studies, we document that, in the weeks following a lynching, northern local newspapers were more likely to report the episode in counties that had received more African Americans in previous years.

[3]There is no county level survey data with a sufficiently large sample size for this period.

A second, possibly complementary, mechanism is the formation of a cross-race alliance between Black voters and progressive segments of the Democratic coalition, as suggested by the political science literature (Adams, 1966; Frymer and Grumbach, 2020; Schickler, 2016). In line with this idea, we document that CORE demonstrations were more frequent where, at baseline: the share of whites employed in manufacturing was higher; the presence of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) – the main force behind industrial unionism – was stronger; and elections were more competitive.[4] Consistent with labor unions supporting a cross-race coalition only, or especially, when labor markets were tight (Bailer, 1944), pro-civil rights demonstrations occurred only where labor demand, predicted using a Bartik-style approach, was stronger.

Additional heterogeneity analyses further support the notion that progressive whites were more likely to respond to Black in-migration. Pro-civil rights protests were concentrated in counties with a history of lower racial discrimination, and higher racial tolerance, for instance as measured by the presence of miscegenation laws. These patterns are consistent with the Great Migration raising support for civil rights among socially progressive whites through channels like increased salience of the "race problem" (Allport, 1954; Myrdal, 1944).

Our findings should be interpreted in the temporal context of our study, which covers the pre-1964 period. The southern focus of the civil rights agenda during this time may have facilitated support for civil rights among northern whites, as it concerned a relatively abstract national-level issue with little direct impact on the North.[5] At the same time, the developments of that period persisted until today. Using county-level data for the contemporary period, we find that white residents living in counties that received more Black migrants between 1940 and 1970 hold warmer feelings towards Black people and commit fewer hate crimes against them.

Our results speak to several strands of literature in economics and political science. Most centrally, they contribute to a large literature on the civil rights movement. Several papers have studied the consequences of the Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Acts (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019; Bernini et al., 2018; Cascio et al., 2010; Cascio and Washington, 2014; Reber, 2011), while many others, building on Carmines and

[4]While we cannot directly test this conjecture, it is possible that a cross-race coalition spurred by the labor movement favored the emergence of a shared identity around economic class, rather than race, leading some working class white voters to embrace the civil rights cause (Bonomi et al., 2021; Shayo, 2020).

[5]For instance, it was not until the 1968 Federal Housing Act that the US government prohibited residential discrimination – one of the main tools used in the US North to *de facto* segregate African Americans. Busing, a highly contentious issue for race relations in the North, did not become a major point of conflict until the early 1970s.

Stimson (1989), have investigated the causes of the southern "dealignment" (Besley et al., 2010; Kousser, 2010; Kuziemko and Washington, 2018; Trende, 2012; Wright, 2013). Although several other forces contributed to the development of the civil rights movement, our work sheds light on the specific role of the Great Migration. Our findings are also consistent with and complement Schickler (2016) and Grant (2020) who, respectively, argue that the incorporation of African Americans into the Democratic coalition after the New Deal and the rising pivotal role of Black voters at the national level due to the Great Migration were important mechanisms behind party realignment in American politics.

Our work also complements the literature on the relationship between voters' demand and politicians' behavior (Caughey and Warshaw, 2018; Jones and Walsh, 2018; Kroth et al., 2016; Lott and Kenny, 1999; Mian et al., 2010; Miller, 2008). Closest to our paper, Cascio and Washington (2014) document that the Voting Rights Act (VRA) shifted the distribution of local spending across southern counties towards Black Americans' preferences, once the latter became eligible to vote. We expand on their findings by focusing on the US North rather than the South, and by analyzing one of the potential causes, rather than consequences, of the VRA – i.e., the response of northern politicians to the change in the characteristics and demands of their constituency due to Black in-migration.

Finally, we contribute to the vast literature on the Great Migration (Collins, 2021). Although several papers in economics have studied the effects of the Great Migration on whites' residential decisions, intergenerational mobility, immigrant assimilation, and public finance (Boustan, 2010; Derenoncourt, 2022; Fouka et al., 2021; Shertzer and Walsh, 2019; Tabellini, 2018), little evidence exists on its political effects.

# 2 Historical Background

## 2.1 The Great Migration

Between 1940 and 1970, more than 4 million African Americans left the US South for northern and western destinations. This unprecedented migration episode is usually referred to as the Second Great Migration. From 1915 to 1930, the First Great Migration brought to the North 1.5 million Black migrants. However, the Second Great Migration – from now onwards the Great Migration – was substantially larger in magnitude and had more profound implications for American politics and race relations (Boustan,

2016). Most Black migrants moved to urban centers in the Northeast and mid-West, but the Great Migration was a geographically widespread phenomenon, which also affected the West and less urbanized areas outside the South (Figure 2).[6]

Black migrants were pulled to the North and West by economic opportunities and pushed out of the South by racial oppression, political disenfranchisement, and poor working conditions (Boustan, 2016). On the one hand, the outbreak of WWII increased demand for labor in northern and western factories, raising the potential gains from migration. Even after the WWII-related labor demand shock was over, higher expectations of upward social and economic mobility kept attracting African Americans to the North at least until the late 1960s. On the other hand, widespread violence and disenfranchisement, together with a separate and unequal school system, provided strong incentives for Black Americans to leave the South (Feigenbaum et al., 2020; Margo, 1991). Moreover, the mechanization of agricultural harvest in the 1940s and 1950s reduced demand for labor in the already depressed southern agricultural sector, further increasing the pool of prospective migrants (Grove and Heinicke, 2003; Whatley, 1985).

Out-migration from the South was strongest during the 1940s, with a Black emigration rate of almost 15%, but remained high until the late 1960s (Figure A.1). As a consequence of this migration episode, during which the US South lost 40% of its 1940 Black population, the racial profile of the United States changed dramatically. While only 25% of African Americans were living outside the South in 1940, this figure had increased to more than 50% by 1970. On average, the Black population share of the population in northern and western cities moved from less than 4% to more than 15% in just three decades. These numbers were an order of magnitude higher for main hubs like Chicago, Detroit, or St. Louis, where the Black population share of the population moved from 8, 9, and 11% to 32, 43, and 41% respectively (Gibson and Jung, 2005).[7]

## 2.2 Black Migrants and Northern Politics

The demographic change induced by the Great Migration had the potential to alter the political equilibrium, especially in industrial and urban centers. In the US South, Black Americans faced *de jure* disenfranchisement through the use of literacy tests,

[6] When defining the US South, we follow the Census classification but, as in Boustan (2010), we exclude Maryland and Delaware – two states that received net Black inflows during the Great Migration (Table A.1). As Figure 2 makes clear, most counties in California are missing from our sample due to the lack of data on Congressional elections at the county level for this historical period. We return to this point in Section 3 and in Appendix D.

[7] In rural counties, the Black population share remained substantially lower and rarely exceeded 2 or 3%.

poll taxes, and grandfather clauses (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Lawson, 1976). On the contrary, they could, and in fact did, vote in the North (Moon, 1948). The literature on social movements suggests that the enfranchisement of Black migrants may have increased both the organizational capacity of the civil rights movement and the pressure exerted by the Black community on local politicians (McAdam, 1982). This is consistent with the patterns that we observe in the data: in 1940, 213 northern and western counties had at least one local NAACP chapter; this number had increased to 293 by 1960 (Figure A.2). Similarly, the CORE was created by a group of students from the University of Chicago in 1942, and its activity (e.g., non-violent demonstrations and sit-ins) increased substantially over time: while only about 20 CORE events were organized in the 1940s, this number increased to more than 75 in the 1950s, and more than quadrupled in the early 1960s (Figure A.3).[8]

During the First Great Migration, both Democrats and Republicans had tried to incorporate African Americans into their voting bloc. However, the New Deal had better equipped the Democratic Party to address the demands of Black Americans outside the US South (Caughey et al., 2020; Schickler, 2016). Figure A.4 plots the share of northern Democrats (blue bars) and Republicans (red bars) voting in favor of civil rights bills between Congresses 78 (1943-1945) and 88 (1963-1965). Both in the 1940s and in the 1950s, Democrats in the North were more likely to support civil rights bills.[9] However, the partisan difference was rather small. As noted in Schickler et al. (2010), even though roll call votes are informative for inferring legislators' preferences, they have an important limitation: only a small number of issues were actually considered for a vote in the House. This was especially true of civil rights bills during this historical period, which were often blocked by Congressional committees led by powerful southern Democrats (Schickler, 2016).[10] To more precisely evaluate party positions on civil rights, we thus rely on a more direct measure of legislators' commitment to racial equality: signatures on discharge petitions (Pearson and Schickler, 2009; Schickler et al., 2010).

Discharge petitions are a means to circumvent Congressional committees, and move bills to the floor for a vote, and were frequently used by northern Congress members

[8]Between 1960 and 1964 alone, the CORE organized 290 events. The frequency of CORE demonstrations then steadily declined after the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

[9]Figure A.5 documents that the pattern is reversed once the US South is included. See Table A.2 for the detailed list of bills, and Table A.3 for the mapping of Congress years to calendar years and the definition of Congress periods.

[10]Between 1933 and 1948, only 19 civil rights bills reached the floor of the House (Schickler et al., 2010).

to promote civil rights bills.[11] Relative to voting behavior, signatures on discharge petitions reflect both legislators' ideal points and their preference intensity (Schickler et al., 2010). Since signing discharge petitions was sometimes considered as going against Congressional norms (Oleszek, 2013), such an action was potentially costly for legislators. Hence, signatures on discharge petitions are more likely to reflect legislators' commitment to racial equality, relative to voting on final bills.[12]

Confirming the evidence presented in Schickler (2016) and Schickler et al. (2010), Figure 3 documents that non-southern Democratic Congress members were at least 30 percentage points more likely than their Republican counterparts to sign a discharge petition to promote civil rights legislation between Congress 78 (1943-1945) and Congress 82 (1951-1953). The gap rose to more than 50 percentage points in the following decade (Figure 3).[13] Democratic legislators were more likely to sign petitions on any topic during the period of interest (Schickler et al., 2010), but this difference does not drive the patterns we observe. Comparing the party-level difference in propensity to sign petitions on civil rights versus other topics, we find that to be higher for Democrats in all Congress periods (Figure A.6).

The previous discussion indicates that, during the period of our study, non-southern Democrats were more committed to supporting civil rights legislation than Republicans. This pattern was reflected in the voting behavior of African Americans. Existing evidence suggests that at least 70% of registered Black voters outside the South were voting Democratic already in 1936 – a share that gradually increased over time (Bositis, 2012). Similar estimates emerge from historical case-studies. For instance, focusing on eight northern cities, Glantz (1960) documents that between 70% and 85% of Black registered voters voted for the Democratic Party in the 1948 and 1952 elections. Moon (1957) provides evidence that the majority of voters living in wards of northern and western cities predominantly inhabited by Black residents voted for the Democratic Party in the 1952 and 1956 elections.

While northern Black residents and Black migrants were attracted to the Democratic Party because of its position on racial issues, they were also more closely aligned

[11] More specifically, discharge petitions could be filed if a proposed bill remained stuck in the Rules Committee (resp. a legislative committee) for more than seven (resp. twenty) days (Beth et al., 2003). Petitions required 218 signatures for the bill to be moved to the floor. See also Appendix C.

[12] In order to focus on petitions that were politically relevant, we adopt the convention used in Pearson and Schickler (2009) and Schickler (2016), restricting attention to discharge petitions that received at least 25 signatures. Relaxing this restriction leaves all statistics and results unchanged.

[13] See Table A.4 for detailed summary statistics on discharge petitions signatures by civil rights topics.

to its economic agenda than to that of Republicans. The incorporation of Black voters into the Democratic bloc was further facilitated by the more progressive fringes of the Democratic coalition. Organized labor, headed by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), had started to actively include African Americans in labor union ranks since the 1930s.[14] As more traditional crafts unionism represented by the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was openly segregationist, this meant a shift away from traditional labor union practices. Abundant anecdotal evidence exists that labor unions openly endorsed civil rights and backed African Americans in their fight for racial equality (Adams, 1966; Bailer, 1944). For instance, CIO leader J. Brophy declared in 1944 that "behind every lynching is the figure of the labor exploiter...who would deny labor its fundamental rights". Similarly, in 1942 Walter Reuther, a highly influential figure in the United Automobile Workers (UAW), declared that "...[racial discrimination] must be put on top of the list with union security and other major union demands" (Zieger, 2000).

In line with the previous statements, evidence from the Congressional Quarterly Almanac shows that, for the 42 cases in which the NAACP took a clear position on a proposed piece of legislation between 1946 and 1955, the CIO openly took the very same position in 38 cases, and never took a position conflicting with that of the NAACP (Schickler, 2016). A class-based racially and economically liberal coalition offered additional leverage to Black activists pressuring northern Democrats on the civil rights agenda.

# 3 Data

This section describes the key outcomes of the paper. Appendix C provides a more detailed description of all data sources, which are also listed in Table C.1.

**Political outcomes.** We rely on two main political outcomes to measure support for civil rights. First, we consider the county-level Democratic vote share in Congressional elections from 1940 to 1970 (Clubb et al., 1990). This choice is motivated by the evidence discussed in Section 2.2 that, by the early 1940s, Democrats had become the champions of racial equality outside the US South, and that such support was more likely to emerge in Congressional rather than Presidential elections (Caughey et al.,

[14] Using data from Gallup, Farber et al. (2021) document that, while non-southern white men were significantly more likely than Black men to be union members in 1940, this pattern had been reversed by 1960.

2020; Schickler, 2016). To enrich our understanding of the political effects of the Great Migration, we also examine voter turnout.

Our second main outcome is legislators' ideology on racial issues. We measure it using the scores constructed in Bateman et al. (2017), which are a function of legislators' past voting behavior on race-related bills. As the commonly used DW Nominate scores (Poole and Rosenthal, 1985), the Bateman et al. (2017) scores take more negative values for more liberal positions.[15] We complement this outcome by using signatures on discharge petitions on racial issues, taken from Pearson and Schickler (2009). Both ideology scores and signatures on discharge petitions are measured at the CD, rather than county, level. We harmonize CD boundaries using a time-invariant cross-walk, described in detail in Appendix B. In order to end our analysis with the Congress that passed the Civil Rights Act, and to minimize issues posed by redistricting, we restrict attention to years between Congress 78 (1943-1945) and Congress 88 (1963-1965).[16]

**Local support for civil rights.** Since the aforementioned political outcomes may also capture factors unrelated to support for civil rights, we complement them with two additional variables. The first one is the presence of chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), available for the early 1940s and the early 1960s from Gregory and Estrada (2019). The second one is the number of non-violent demonstrations organized between 1942 and 1970 by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) – an inter-racial group of students from the University of Chicago that coordinated sit-ins and similar forms of civil disobedience mainly across northern cities to protest against segregation in the South – taken from Gregory and Hermida (2019).

**Whites' attitudes.** A central goal of our analysis is to understand if the political changes caused by Black in-migration were at least in part driven by changes in whites' racial attitudes. We measure these using the American National Election Studies (ANES). The ANES is a nationally representative survey that elicits individuals' preferences, political ideology, and socioeconomic and demographic characteristics over time. Starting from the mid to late 1950s, the ANES began to include questions on attitudes towards racial equality and on support for civil rights. While the ANES con-

[15] Bateman et al. (2017) develop two versions of the scores – one that assumes that the ideal points of legislators remain constant over time ("constrained" scores), and one that instead does not make such assumption ("agnostic" scores). Our results are robust to using either measure.

[16] See Table A.3 for the definition of Congress periods used in our analysis. Since signatures on discharge petitions are available only for selected Congresses, we are forced to end our analysis with Congress 82 (1951-1953), when considering this variable.

tains respondents' county of residence, we are unable to leverage county-level variation due to the limited number of counties included in the survey and to the low number of respondents per county. We instead rely on cross-state variation in attitudes of white respondents interviewed between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s.

We measure whites' attitudes also using data from historical Gallup surveys, and from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) and FBI hate crime records, for more recent years. These data and the corresponding sources are described in detail in Appendix C, and are introduced as they become relevant.

**Descriptive statistics.** Our final dataset is composed of the 1,263 non-southern counties (and, for the analysis on legislators, 285 CDs) for which electoral data are available for all Census years. Since data on Congressional elections are not available for all years in several counties in California, our baseline analysis excludes most of the state (Figures 2 and A.7). All results are unchanged when considering the unbalanced sample, which includes California (Appendix D).

Table 1 presents summary statistics for our main variables, reporting 1940 levels in Panel A and their (decadal) changes in Panel B. The Black population share in the average county in our sample was around 3.5% in 1940, and increased to almost 9% in 1970 (not shown). These average values mask substantial heterogeneity. Figure A.7 plots the 1940 Black population share for the counties in our sample. In 1940, non-southern Black residents were concentrated in the urban centers of the Northeast and the Midwest, in border states, and in the West. In 1940, the Black population share was already as high as 8% in Cook County (IL), and rose to 21.5% by 1970. Similarly, the Black population share in Philadelphia County (PA) increased from around 12% in 1940 to almost 35% in 1970, whereas that in Clark County (NV) rose from less than 3% to about 10% during the same period (Figure A.8).

The 1940 Democratic vote share in Congressional elections was on average 46.5%. In Congress 78, civil rights scores were on average negative (-0.87), and their decadal change was close to zero, even though this masks important differences between both parties and Congress periods (Bateman et al., 2017; Schickler, 2016). Signatures on discharge petitions were more common in the 78 to 82 than in the 83 to 88 Congress period (Table A.5), and their subjects changed markedly over time. While the poll tax and anti-discrimination employment (FECP) legislation were the most common topics during the 1940s, 5 of the 8 discharge petitions filed between Congress 83 and Congress

88 concerned the CRA.[17]

# 4 Empirical Strategy

## 4.1 Estimating Equation

To study the political effects of the Great Migration, we stack the data for the three decades between 1940 and 1970, and estimate

$$\Delta y_{c\tau} = \delta_{s\tau} + \beta \Delta Bl_{c\tau} + \gamma X_{c\tau} + u_{c\tau} \tag{1}$$

where $\Delta y_{c\tau}$ is the change in the outcome of interest in county (or, CD) $c$ during decade $\tau$. In the county-level analysis, $y_{c\tau}$ refers to the Democratic vote share and turnout in Congressional elections. When examining the mechanisms, we introduce additional outcomes, such as the presence of local NAACP chapters and the occurrence of pro-civil rights demonstrations organized by the CORE.

The key regressor of interest, $\Delta Bl_{c\tau}$, is the change in the Black population share in county $c$ during decade $\tau$. $\delta_{s\tau}$ includes interactions between decade and state dummies, and $X_{c\tau}$ is a vector of interactions between decade dummies and 1940 county characteristics. In order to identify the effects for the average county, we weigh regressions by 1940 county population, but results are robust to estimating unweighted regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

Our preferred specification includes the 1940 Black population share and a dummy equal to one for Democratic incumbency in 1940 Congressional elections. In Appendix D, we add more interactions to probe the robustness of our results. Since equation (1) is taken in stacked first differences and always controls for interactions between period and state dummies, the coefficient of interest, $\beta$, is estimated from changes in the Black population share within the same county over time, as compared to other counties in the same state in a given period.

In the CD-level analysis, $y_{c\tau}$ is the ideology scores from Bateman et al. (2017) or the signature on discharge petitions on civil rights related legislation. In order to minimize changes in CD boundaries and to end our analysis with the Congress that passed the CRA (Congress 88, 1963-1965), we restrict attention to two – rather than three – periods: from Congress 78 (1943-1945) to Congress 82 (1951-1953); and,

[17] See Appendix C for the list of discharge petitions on civil rights by topic and Congress (Table C.2).

from Congress 82 (1951-1953) to Congress 88 (1963-1965).[18] Instead, for signatures on discharge petitions, we are forced to estimate equation (1) only for the 78-82 Congress period, when a sufficient number of petitions were filed both at the beginning and at the end of the decade. As for the county-level analysis, regressions are weighed by CD population, and standard errors are clustered at the CD level.

## 4.2 Instrument for Changes in Black Population

The key empirical challenge for our analysis is that Black migrants might have sorted in places that were already undergoing economic and political changes. To overcome these and similar concerns, we predict Black inflows in northern area $c$ during decade $\tau$ using a version of the shift-share instrument commonly adopted in the migration literature (Boustan, 2010; Card, 2001). The instrument predicts the change in the Black population in county $c$ during decade $\tau$ by interacting the share of Black migrants born in southern state $j$ and living in northern county $c$ in 1940 (relative to all Black migrants born in state $j$ living outside that state in 1940), $sh_{jc}$, with the number of Black migrants who left state $j$ during period $\tau$, $Bl_{j\tau}$:

$$Z_{c\tau} = \sum_{j \in South} sh_{jc} Bl_{j\tau} \tag{2}$$

Since we are interested in the effects of changes in the Black population share, we scale $Z_{c\tau}$ by 1940 county population.

As discussed in Boustan (2010) among others, Black settlements in the North were highly persistent over time. At the turn of the twentieth century, as African Americans started to move northwards, migration patterns were influenced by the newly constructed railroad network. For instance, the presence of the *Illinois Central*, which connected several Mississippi counties to Chicago and a number of southern railroads to northern hubs in Missouri and Illinois, explains why Black migrants from Mississippi were disproportionately concentrated in Chicago or St. Louis (Grossman, 1991). The stability of Black enclaves was further reinforced by the process of chain migration during the First Great Migration (Collins and Wanamaker, 2015). Figure A.9 plots the share of Black migrants born in Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas living in selected northern counties in 1940, documenting the wide variation in settlement patterns across

[18] Appendix D documents that results are not sensitive to the exact definition of Congress periods, and that there is no evidence that strategic redistricting is driving any of our findings.

both destination and origin areas.

### 4.2.1 Identifying Assumptions and Instrument Validity

Several recent papers discuss the conditions for the validity of shift-share designs (Adao et al., 2019; Borusyak et al., 2022; Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020; Jaeger et al., 2018). One way to express the identifying assumption behind the instrument is as follows. Conditional on controls, third factors affecting the trajectories of political conditions after 1940 must not be simultaneously correlated with both: *i*) the 1940 mix, in terms of southern state of origin, of Black enclaves across non-southern counties, and *ii*) emigration rates from different southern states after 1940.

As formalized in Borusyak et al. (2022), a large number of shocks that are orthogonal to changes in outcomes in the destination (in our setting, support for racial equality in non-southern counties) guarantee the validity of the shift-share design. Our instrument combines actual out-migration flows with a (southern) state to (northern) county migration matrix. For these reasons, we cannot immediately invoke the result in Borusyak et al. (2022). However, as described in detail in Appendix D, we verify that our results are unchanged when using versions of the instrument that are likely to meet the conditions in Borusyak et al. (2022).

First, as in Boustan (2010), we replace actual out-migration from southern states with that estimated by exploiting only conditions across southern counties (and then aggregated up to the state level), such as WWII spending, 1940 cotton acreage, and 1940 employment share in agriculture, manufacturing, and mining.[19] Second, and similar to Derenoncourt (2022), we develop an alternative version of the shift-share instrument, based on a linked sample of African American migrants between 1910 and 1930 from Abramitzky et al. (2020). This instrument, which is based on a county-to-county (rather than state-to-county) migration matrix, effectively exploits variation in predicted migration from more than 1,200 southern counties.[20] Since conditions across southern counties are plausibly orthogonal to the evolution of political ideology in northern counties (Derenoncourt, 2022), the identifying assumption is likely to hold

[19] Predicting out-migration using southern push factors also assuages the potential concern of serial correlation in migration flows from the same location to the same destination (Jaeger et al., 2018) over time.

[20] As discussed in Bailey et al. (2020), linked sample datasets have some important limitations. First, individuals that are matched using linking-algorithms may be "selected". Second, especially for non-white population, the match rate is low, implying that the migration matrix is quite sparse. For these reasons, we use the linked sample instrument only as a robustness check.

in this case (Borusyak et al., 2022).[21]

Push instruments already reduce concerns about spurious correlation with specific shocks hitting northern counties that both affected local conditions and influenced out-migration across southern states over time. We provide two additional pieces of evidence against this possibility. First, we document that the instrument is uncorrelated with either WWII spending or the generosity of New Deal relief programs – two of the most important pull factors for southerners migrating to northern destinations. Second, similar to Sequeira et al. (2020), we replicate the analysis by separately controlling for a measure of predicted labor demand, constructed by interacting the 1940 industrial county composition with the national growth rate of different industries between 1940 and 1970.

We also show that pre-period changes in the outcomes of interest are not correlated with the instrument. In addition, we interact period dummies with several 1940 county characteristics (e.g., the Black and the urban share of the population, support for the Democratic Party, and the share of employment in manufacturing) and with time-invariant geographic controls (e.g., distance from the Mason-Dixon line, latitude and longitude, distance from the closest city where the Forty-Eighters settled).[22]

These exercises assuage the concern that the characteristics of counties where Black migrants from specific states settled before 1940 may be correlated both with post-1940 Black migration and with changes in support for civil rights in northern counties (Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020). In particular, controlling for the interaction between the 1940 Black population share and period dummies, as we do in our preferred specification, implies that the instrument only exploits variation in the (southern state) composition of African Americans' enclaves across counties, holding constant the size of their Black populations.

Additional robustness checks are discussed after presenting our main results (Section 5.3), and described in detail in Appendix D.

[21] In Appendix D, we also present standard errors corrected using the procedure from Adao et al. (2019).

[22] Dippel and Heblich (2021) show that the Forty-Eighters – leaders of the failed 1848-1849 German revolution who migrated to the US – had long-lasting and profound effects on support for racial equality. One may thus be worried that distance from cities where the Forty-Eighters settled might be correlated both with enclaves of Black individuals born in southern states that sent more migrants after 1940 and with the evolution of political preferences in the US North and West.

# 5 Main Results

## 5.1 Congressional Elections

We start by studying the effects of the Great Migration on the Democratic vote share in Congressional elections. Panel A of Table 2 estimates equation (1) with OLS in columns 1 to 3, and with 2SLS from column 4 onwards. Column 1 only includes state by decade fixed effects, while columns 2 and 3 add interactions between decade dummies and, respectively, the 1940 Black population share and an indicator for Democratic incumbency in 1940. In all cases, the point estimate on the change in the Black population share is positive and statistically significant.

Turning to 2SLS, Panel C shows that the instrument is strong, and the F-stat for weak instruments is always above conventional levels. In our preferred specification – which includes interactions between period dummies and: *i*) state dummies; *ii*) the 1940 Black population share; and *iii*) an indicator for Democratic incumbency in 1940 – the first stage coefficient implies that one percentage point increase in the predicted Black population share raises the actual Black population share by 0.75 percentage points (column 6).

2SLS estimates confirm OLS results, but are larger in magnitude, especially for our preferred specification (column 6) and when estimating long difference regressions (column 7). According to our preferred specification, one percentage point increase in the Black population share raised the Democratic vote share by 1.88 percentage points, or 4% relative to the 1940 mean. For large recipient counties such as Cook (IL) or Wayne (MI) county, where the Black population share increased by more than 15 percentage points between 1940 and 1970, Black in-migration had the potential to alter the political landscape dramatically. These findings likely reflect a combination of *i*) migrants' direct political engagement, and *ii*) changes in the preferences and voting behavior of existing residents. We return to this point in Section 6 below, when exploring the mechanisms, but we already note that the 2SLS coefficient in column 6 of Panel A is statistically different from 1 at the 5% level.

The difference between OLS and 2SLS estimates indicates that Black migrants selected areas where support for the Republican Party was rising faster. This might have happened because these counties were experiencing faster income growth.[23] Another

[23] Consistent with this idea, in our sample there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between the change in the Democratic vote share and a number of proxies for economic growth, such as population growth, population density, and industrial expansion.

possibility, not in contrast with the previous one, is that the IV identifies a local average treatment effect (LATE) for counties that received more Black migrants because of family networks and not because of economic conditions. If Black individuals moving to a specific location due to the presence of networks were more politically engaged relative to economic migrants, this could explain why OLS coefficients are smaller than 2SLS ones.

Panel B of Table 2 estimates the impact of Black in-migration on turnout in Congressional elections. The coefficient in our preferred specification (column 6) is positive and statistically significant, although smaller than for the Democratic vote share. Specifically, our estimates indicate that one percentage point increase in the Black population share raised turnout by around 0.75 percentage points, or 1% relative to its 1940 mean. As for vote shares, OLS coefficients are smaller than 2SLS ones – in this case even negative. The positive effect on turnout is in line with qualitative evidence that Black migrants were quickly incorporated in the political life of northern and western counties (Moon, 1948; Schickler, 2016).

A potential concern with the interpretation of our findings is that Black arrivals induced white residents that opposed the civil rights cause to move (Boustan, 2010). To address this issue, in column 8 of Table 2, we replicate the analysis considering a larger geographic unit, the commuting zone (CZ), which contained both central cities and their suburbs. Reassuringly, the magnitude and the precision of the estimates for the Democratic vote share is unchanged (if anything, the coefficient becomes somewhat larger).[24] In Section 5.3, we summarize additional robustness checks conducted to assuage the concern of (potentially selective) "white flight".

The effects on Democratic vote share are driven primarily by changes in the 1940s and 1960s (Table E.1 in Appendix E.1.1).[25] They are present not only in Congressional, but also in Presidential elections (Appendix E.1.1), though estimated magnitudes are smaller in the latter case, consistent with civil rights support originating primarily from local northern Democrats in contrast to the party's national platform (Schickler, 2016).

[24]The coefficient for turnout remains similar in magnitude, but loses statistical precision.

[25]One interpretation for these patterns is that the economic downturns of the 1950s temporarily halted the progress of race relations, cooling off whites' support for racial equality (Sugrue, 2014). Conducting the analysis separately by decade also assuages concerns raised by the recent econometric literature on the presence of heterogeneous effects in generalized difference-in-differences designs (De Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille, 2020; Goodman-Bacon, 2021). We return to this point below (Section 5.3 and Appendix D).

## 5.2 Ideology Scores and Discharge Petitions

**Ideology scores.** In Table 3, we consider the ideology scores from Bateman et al. (2017), which, as noted above, take more negative values for more liberal voting behavior on civil rights bills. Columns 1 to 3 present results for the change in agnostic ideology scores, stacking the data for the 78 (1943-1945) to 82 (1951-1953) and the 82 (1951-1953) to 88 (1963-1965) Congress periods, reporting OLS, 2SLS, and first stage coefficients in Panels A, B, and C respectively. Following Autor et al. (2020), to deal with mean reversion, in addition to the controls included in our preferred specification above, we also add the interaction between period dummies and the baseline ideology score of legislators. The 2SLS coefficient reported in column 1 (Panel B) is negative, but quantitatively small and imprecisely estimated.[26]

When examining results separately by Congress period, a more nuanced picture emerges. Black in-migration had a strong, negative effect on the ideology scores of legislators in the first Congress period (column 2), and a negligible, positive, and not statistically significant effect in the second period (column 3). While the F-stat falls below conventional levels in column 2, suggesting that our estimates should be interpreted with caution, these findings indicate that legislators' ideology moved to the left between Congress 78 and Congress 82, and did not change significantly afterwards.[27] Results are robust to focusing on the constrained version of the ideology scores (columns 4 to 6).

In Appendix E.1.2, we document that the average effects estimated in Table 3 mask rising polarization on racial issues along party lines. Figure E.1 plots 2SLS coefficients for the impact of the Great Migration on the probability of electing a legislator with a given ideology (from most liberal to most conservative), for each of the two Congress periods respectively. During the 1940s (Panel A), Black in-migration had a strong, positive effect on the probability of electing a liberal Democrat, while reducing the probability of electing both moderate Democrats and conservative Republicans. If anything, the probability of electing a moderate Republican increased with Black inflows, even though results are not statistically significant. During the 1950s (Panel B), instead, Black in-migration increased the probability of electing a conservative Re-

[26] As for other tables, the discrepancy between OLS and 2SLS estimates indicates that Black migrants were more likely to move to areas with growing support for Republican, more conservative legislators.

[27] In unreported results, we verify that the level of statistical significance of the coefficient in column 2 of Table 3 is unchanged when using identification-robust Anderson-Rubin confidence intervals, which are robust to weak identification (Andrews et al., 2019).

publican, while reducing that of electing a moderate Republican. Such rightward shift may have been motivated by strategic considerations, as the GOP tried to win the votes of whites who were becoming increasingly concerned about the racial mixing of their neighborhoods (Sugrue, 2014). The effects of Black in-migration on the probability of electing Democrats with different ideological stances are very small in size and imprecisely estimated. Since results during the 1940s are quantitatively larger than those in the 1950s, on average, legislators' ideology moved to the left. However, when inspecting these dynamics more carefully, polarization becomes evident.

**Signatures on discharge petitions.** For the analysis of discharge petitions, we focus on the 1940s, when multiple petitions were filed and signed on the same topics – fair employment legislation (FEPC), the poll tax, and anti-lynching legislation – both at the beginning and at the end of the decade. The small number of petitions filed during the 82-88 Congress period does not allow such an analysis for the later period.

We estimate a first difference regression for the 78-82 Congress period, plotting 2SLS coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals) in Figure 4. Black in-migration increased the probability of signing a discharge petition on all topics, with the effect being quantitatively larger and more precisely estimated for FEPC legislation than for the other categories.[28] These effects are not driven by Democrats' tendency to sign more discharge petitions on average (see Section 2.2). Estimates in Figure 4 are unchanged when controlling for the average number of discharge petitions signed by legislators in each CD between Congress 78 and Congress 82 (Figure A.10); moreover, Black in-migration has no effect on the change in the probability of signing a discharge petition on non-civil rights topics (column 5 of Table A.6).

## 5.3 Robustness Checks

### 5.3.1 Addressing White Flight

We already showed that our findings are unchanged when conducting the analysis at the CZ level (Table 2, column 8), reducing concerns about white flight. In Appendix D, we perform additional exercises, briefly summarized here. First, we replicate the analysis conducted in Boustan (2010), and document that Black in-migration did lead to white

[28]Table A.6 reports the coefficients associated with Figure 4. The change in the probability of signing a petition on FEPC, anti-lynching legislation, and the poll tax is taken over Congresses 81 to 78, 80 to 77, and 79 to 77 respectively. Since petitions on the three topics were not always signed in the same Congress year and were not always comparable with each other (Table C.2), we checked the robustness of our results using alternative time windows. Reassuringly, they always remained similar to those presented in Figure 4.

departures in central cities, but not in counties in our sample (Tables D.1, D.2, D.3, and D.4). Since the central city-suburb divide does not overlap with county boundaries, the reallocation of whites between cities and suburbs was likely absorbed within counties. Second, we show that Black inflows were not associated with changes in the composition of white residents and, consistent with Boustan (2009), did not have any impact on whites' labor market outcomes (Tables D.5 and D.6).

### 5.3.2 Summary of Additional Robustness Checks

Appendix D presents additional robustness checks. First, we verify that results remain unchanged when constructing versions of the instrument that only exploit variation in push factors across southern counties (Tables D.7 and D.8), and that rely on a county-to-county migration matrix to construct the initial shares (Table D.9). Second, we show that the instrument is uncorrelated with two potential pull factors: WWII spending and New Deal relief programs (Table D.10), and we replicate the analysis controlling for predicted industrialization, constructed by exploiting the 1940 industrial composition of non-southern counties (Table D.11). Third, we check that there are no pre-trends in the outcomes (Tables D.12 and D.24). Fourth, we show robustness to interacting period dummies with several 1940 or time-invariant county characteristics, such as county geographic coordinates, distance from the Mason-Dixon line and from the closest city where the Forty-Eighters moved to, the employment to population ratio, and the urban share (Table D.13).

We also verify that results: *i*) are robust to considering an unbalanced sample that includes all county-decade observations for which outcomes are available, excluding potential outliers, estimating alternative specifications, and measuring electoral outcomes in different ways (Tables D.14, D.15, D.16, and D.17); *ii*) are not driven either by the inflow of southern whites (Table D.15) or by the simultaneous entry of news outlets such as television or the radio (Table D.18); *iii*) are robust to accounting for heterogeneous treatment effects in generalized difference-in-differences designs discussed in De Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille (2020) and Goodman-Bacon (2021) among others (Tables D.19 and D.20); and, *iv*) are robust to clustering standard errors at the CZ level and to using the procedure suggested in Adao et al. (2019) to adjust standard errors (Tables D.21 and D.22).

Finally, we document that CD-level results: *i*) are unchanged when using different timing conventions (Tables D.25 and D.26); *ii*) are robust to restricting the sample to

CDs that only span the counties from the balanced dataset (Table D.27); and, *iii*) are not influenced by strategic gerrymandering, possibly induced by Black in-migration (Table D.28, Figures D.8 and D.9).

# 6 Mechanisms

Results in Section 5 show large changes in the political equilibrium as a result of the Great Migration. Here, we investigate in more detail the channels behind these changes. The influx of Black voters with distinct preferences could have driven support for racially progressive Democratic Congress members and exerted pressures on them to promote civil rights legislation. We show that an additional pathway for pressure on politicians was the growth of civil rights organizations and grassroots activism in northern in-migration areas.

Next, we explore the reactions of the white electorate. White voters might have responded to Black in-migration with backlash against policies promoting racial equality. Findings in this section suggest the opposite: the Great Migration increased support for civil rights among whites. We provide evidence that the salience of southern conditions in northern counties and the role of the labor movement and progressive Democrats are two important pathways for this effect.

## 6.1 Black Organizations and Pro-Civil Rights Activism

In a seminal contribution, McAdam (1982) stresses the importance of Black organizations in the development of the civil rights movement. McAdam's argument focuses on the South, but northern destinations of Black migrants also became centers of organized activism. The growth of the Black population raised the number of grassroots civil rights groups and promoted denser activist networks. These organizations' targets were primarily local, protesting discrimination in employment, schools and local politics in cities like New York, Detroit, and Philadelphia (Biondi, 2021; Countryman, 2007). Despite their local nature, such events played a critical role in escalating the battle for equality to the national level (Theoharis and Woodard, 2016). Black churches, the institutional center of the civil rights movement in the South (McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1986), also played a similar role in northern migrant destinations. Examples include Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, led by Adam Clayton Powell Jr., a prominent civil rights figure and the first African American to represent New York in Congress.

Besides the density of migrant networks, the experience of migration, the distance from the oppressive South, and the newfound sense of political efficacy gave northern Black organizations greater militancy. Describing Black communities in the US North, Bloom (2019) writes that these were "independent of whites, aggressive, and insistent upon equality, and had cast off the sense of black inferiority. These new behavioral characteristics blossomed as they became independent of white domination and developed some measure of organization, including the growth of the NAACP."

Our own data provides direct causal evidence for the effect of the Great Migration on the growth of Black social movements. In Table 4, we focus on the 1940-1960 change in the probability that a county had a NAACP chapter in place, presenting OLS and 2SLS estimates in column 1 and in columns 2-3, respectively.[29] 2SLS results indicate that Black in-migration had no effect on the presence of the NAACP (column 2). However, the impact of Black inflows becomes positive, statistically significant, and quantitatively relevant for counties that did not have a chapter in 1940 (column 3).[30] This pattern is consistent with the idea that the Great Migration favored the geographic expansion of the NAACP (see also Figure A.2). The data do not allow us to capture the effects of Black in-migration on the change in the number of NAACP members. Thus, we are likely under-estimating the impact that the Great Migration had on the overall growth of the NAACP.

In the remainder of Table 4, we turn to the frequency of protests organized by CORE in support of civil rights. The key regressor of interest is the decadal change in the Black population share. We replicate our preferred specification using OLS and 2SLS in columns 4 and 5, respectively. Black in-migration strongly affected protest activity, with one percentage point increase in the Black population share leading to a 5.7 percentage point increase in the likelihood of protests. CORE was created in 1942, and the frequency of events in our sample of counties between 1942 and 1944 (included) was 0.09. Our estimates thus imply that one percentage point increase in the Black population share raised CORE demonstrations by more than 60% relative to their pre-1945 values. Another way to gauge the magnitude of these estimates is to consider that the average change in the probability of CORE-led protests in our sample is 0.138. Hence, one percentage point increase in the Black population share explains more than one third of the change in pro-civil rights demonstrations across non-southern counties

[29] As noted above, data on NAACP chapters are only available for 1940 (or earlier) and 1960.

[30] In column 3, the F-stat falls below conventional levels, but statistical precision is unchanged when using identification-robust Anderson-Rubin confidence intervals.

between 1940 and 1970. We refer the interested reader to Appendix E.2, where we use information on the cause and the target of the protest to analyze the heterogeneity of results across type of events (Figures E.2-E.3 and Table E.3). These results reveal the local nature of civil rights organizing in the North, with demonstrations protesting access to goods, education and housing.

## 6.2 White Political Preferences and Racial Attitudes

**Quantifying white voting behavior.** Table 2 shows that Black in-migration increased the Democratic vote share by more than one for one, pointing to the importance of changes in northern residents' voting patterns. Said differently, the increase in the Democratic vote share documented in Section 5.1 cannot be explained by the inflow of Black migrants alone. Because not all Black eligible voters were voting in 1940, and not all of those who voted cast their votes for the Democratic Party, at least some of the potential switchers were African American. To understand whether party switching came exclusively from Black voters, we perform a back of the envelope calculation of the number of white voters who needed to switch for every Black migrant in order to match our preferred 2SLS estimates. In a nutshell, our exercise relies on the best available estimates of voting behavior of both races in 1940, and estimates the number of whites who would have to switch to the Democratic Party for different scenarios of Black voting behavior in 1960.

To quantify the role of white voters, one would need disaggregated data on voting behavior by race, which is not systematically available for this historical period.[31] We rely instead on estimates of Black voting patterns from areas of selected cities whose residents were disproportionately Black. The most comprehensive study that we could retrieve is Glantz (1960). The author focuses on census tracts of eight northern cities (Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, New York City, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis) whose population was at least 90% African American. Matching demographic information with voting and registration records for these census tracts, Glantz (1960) estimates voting behavior among Black residents in the Presidential elections of 1948, 1952, and 1956.

Before detailing how we use these estimates to compute the number of white switch-

[31] The Current Population Survey (CPS) voting and registration supplements are available only starting from 1976. See also https://cps.ipums.org/cps/codebooks.shtml#voter_codebooks. Historical surveys, such as the ANES or Gallup are not well suited to estimate Black political participation because of the limited (and possibly selected) sample.

ers, a few remarks are in order. First, the estimates are obtained from eight large cities, and may thus not be fully representative of our sample. Nonetheless, given that most Black migrants moved to industrial centers, the setting considered in Glantz (1960) is likely not very different from the average county in our context. Moreover, the numbers from Glantz (1960) are similar to those obtained in different studies, for a different period and a different sample of cities (Bositis, 2012; Moon, 1957). Second, Glantz (1960) focuses on Presidential, rather than Congressional, elections. Since Black voters were more likely to support the Democratic Party in Congressional elections (see Section 2.2), we should if anything over- (resp. under-) estimate the number of potential Black (resp. white) switchers. Third, Glantz (1960) is silent about the behavior of Black migrants. We assume that the latter behaved in the same way as northern Black residents. Given historical evidence that Black migrants were quickly incorporated in the political life of northern cities (Moon, 1948), this assumption is relatively innocuous.

With these caveats in mind, we proceed as follows. We begin by relying on the 1948 estimates from Glantz (1960) to fix turnout and number of votes cast for Democrats among Black northerners in 1940. These numbers are 42.48% and 74.46% for turnout and Democratic support, respectively. Next, we calculate the total number of votes for the Democratic Party for the average county in our sample in 1940, and use that to back out turnout and total votes cast for the Democrats among white northerners. Having fixed voting behavior by race in 1940, we compute the number of new votes for the Democrats implied by one percentage point increase in the Black population share according to the 2SLS estimate of our preferred specification (1.885). Finally, we ask how many white votes are needed to match that number, under different assumptions about Black voters' behavior.[32] We compute the total number of white switchers as the difference between the implied number of votes cast for the Democrats by white northerners and the counterfactual number of votes that whites would have cast based on their 1940 turnout and Democratic support.

Results are reported in Figure 5, which plots the Democratic vote share and turnout among Black northerners on the x- and y-axes, respectively. Contour lines depict the implied number of white switchers per 10 Black migrants needed to match our estimate of the effect of Black migration for different values of each of these two components of

[32]For the average county, one percentage point increase in the Black population share corresponds to 654 individuals – or, 206 new votes for Democrats, and 72 for Republicans (remember that not all Black migrants were eligible to vote; and not all eligible voters did vote).

Black voting behavior. For a given level of Democratic support, higher turnout among Black eligible voters reduces the number of whites needed to switch to Democrats to explain our estimate; similarly, the number of white switchers is decreasing in the Democratic vote share among Black Americans, for given Black turnout. The figure also makes it clear that, for a large range of values of Black voting behavior, the number of white switchers implied is positive. Only for very large values of the parameters, there are no white switchers or whites move in the opposite direction, i.e., from the Democratic to the Republican Party. These scenarios correspond to the area above the black contour line in the top-right part of Figure 5.

To benchmark plausible scenarios for Black voting behavior in 1960, we turn to the estimates obtained in Glantz (1960). The red cross marks the values of turnout and Democratic vote share estimated among Black northerners in 1956. According to these estimates, the implied number of white northern residents who would have to switch to the Democrats in 1960 in order to match the estimated effect of the increase in the Black population is 7 (per 10 Black migrants). Since Glantz's calculation rests on several assumptions, the exact number should be taken as approximate. Nonetheless, this exercise suggests that the effects of the Great Migration on the northern political equilibrium did not come from Black voters alone. Indeed, the values of Democratic support and turnout among Black voters that would prevail in a scenario without white switchers, or with white voters increasing their support for the GOP, are an order of magnitude larger than those estimated in Glantz (1960) and in other works in the historical literature (Bositis, 2012; Moon, 1957).

**Evidence from historical survey data.** We complement the previous results with historical survey data from the ANES, which records individual-level responses and the respondent's race. We are unable to conduct a county-level analysis because of the limited number of counties and of respondents per county included in the survey (see Appendix C). We instead perform this exercise at the state level. Since questions on racial views are available only from the end of the 1950s, we estimate cross-sectional regressions, correlating whites' racial attitudes and political preferences in surveys conducted in years close to the CRA with the (instrumented) 1940-1960 change in the Black population share in their state of residence.[33] We include survey year and Census region

[33] Although some of these questions were asked also after 1964, we refrain from using any post-CRA survey because of the potential effect of the bill on whites' racial attitudes (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018; Wheaton, 2020). In Appendix E.5, however, we document that the effects of the Great Migration on whites' racial attitudes were long-lasting.

fixed effects and a set of 1940 state (manufacturing share, urban share, share of unionized workers, Black population share, and an indicator for Democratic incumbency in Congressional elections) and individual (gender, marital status, and fixed effects for both age and education) controls.[34] We restrict attention to white respondents living in non-southern states. To deal with the potential concern that white respondents may have moved across states because of Black in-migration, we further restrict attention to whites living in their state of birth.

In Table 5, the dependent variable is the feeling thermometer of white respondents towards African Americans, the NAACP, and the Democratic Party in columns 1 to 3 respectively.[35] Confirming the OLS regressions plotted in Figure 1, white respondents living in states that received more African Americans between 1940 and 1960 expressed warmer feelings towards Blacks. The magnitude is substantive: one percentage point difference across states in the change in the Black population share implies a 3.3 percentage point (or 5% relative to the mean) difference in respondents' thermometers. Similar results obtain for feelings towards the NAACP. Black in-migration is also positively associated with feeling thermometers towards the Democratic Party, even though coefficients are smaller in magnitude and less precisely estimated.

In column 4, the outcome is a dummy equal to one if support for civil rights was considered by respondents as one of the most important problems for the country in 1960 and 1964. Since this variable is positively correlated with the Black thermometer, we interpret it as a proxy for whites' support for civil rights. Black in-migration significantly increases the probability that respondents consider civil rights one of the country's most important problems. The coefficient implies that one percentage point increase in the Black population share between 1940 and 1960 is associated with a 3.4 percentage points (or, 30% higher probability) of reporting civil rights as the most important problem in the two ANES surveys asked before the CRA.

Finally, we consider whites' political preferences. Black in-migration increases support for the Democratic party among white respondents (column 5). The relationship is an order of magnitude stronger when restricting attention to 1964 (column 6), consistent with civil rights being a more prominent issue during the year that led to the

[34]Since party identification may be endogenous to Black inflows, we do not include it in our baseline specification. Adding this control, as well as union membership, does not change any of our results. Results are also robust to including further 1940 state level controls such as the share of immigrants, the share of unskilled workers, and other socioeconomic or political variables.

[35]Since feeling thermometers towards African Americans and other racial organizations were not asked before 1964, we restrict attention to this year. Thermometers range from 0 to 100, with higher numbers reflecting more positive attitudes.

passage of the CRA. Appendix E.3.1 verifies that similar patterns hold when using data from Gallup (Table E.4).

**Evidence from protests.** The evidence on whites' attitudes and policy preferences from the ANES is consistent with findings on whites' behavior. Returning to CORE demonstrations, we restrict attention to a subset of protests for which the race of participants can be identified. Column 6 of Table 4 replicates column 5 using as dependent variable the change in the probability of CORE protests with both Black *and* white participants. This represents a (very conservative) lower-bound for the probability that whites joined pro-civil rights demonstrations, since participants' race was reported only for approximately 40% of CORE events, and we define a protest as having white participants only when their presence was explicitly reported. The point estimate is smaller than that of the baseline specification (column 5), but remains positive and statistically significant at the 5% level. This result is evidence for greater direct involvement of whites in the civil rights movement in Great Migration destinations, likely facilitated by the growth in the density and organizational capacity of Black organizations in those locations.

## 6.3 What Can Explain Whites' Support for Civil Rights?

Multiple mechanisms can explain why Black in-migration shifted some whites' political preferences and racial attitudes. We explore two prominent explanations identified by prior literature: increased awareness of Black oppression in the South (Myrdal, 1944), and the formation of a class-based cross-race coalition between white and Black members of the working class (Adams, 1966; Sugrue, 2008).

It is worth pointing out that we are unable to quantify the relative importance of each mechanism, both because it is hard to measure them in isolation and because economic and social factors likely interacted, reinforcing each other. For instance, frequent contacts in an environment where Black and white workers had common goals and shared a common class identity may have reduced some of the barriers that traditionally inhibited the formation of a racially diverse coalition (Allport, 1954; Bonomi et al., 2021).

**Evidence on information transmission.** We begin by testing Myrdal's hypothesis on the role of information. We use a list of known lynchings against African Americans between 1940 and 1964 in the US South, compiled from the Monroe Works Today

project.[36] We searched for mentions of these episodes in non-southern newspapers available on the website Newspapers.com. We identify a lynching using the joint mention of the name and surname of the victim and the place where the lynching occurred in the same newspaper page. We restrict attention to a window of 4 weeks before and 26 weeks after each episode, and focus on the subsample of 492 counties for which newspaper data is available.[37] Our dataset comprises a total of 1,041 newspapers, only 5 of which explicitly targeted an African American audience. In what follows, we consider all newspapers, but results are unchanged when excluding from our sample the 5 African American ones.

We organize the data at the (northern) county-week-episode level, defining as "week 0" the week in which the lynching occurred (in a southern state). We create an indicator variable if, in a given week, at least one mention of the lynching was found in a county's local newspapers. Focusing on weeks 0 to 26, we regress this indicator against the instrumented 1940-1960 change in the Black population share in the county. We include state, episode, and week fixed effects.[38] Results from this exercise are reported in Table 6.

Column 1 considers any lynching that occurred between 1940 and 1964. In the weeks following the lynching of a southern Black victim, local newspapers of northern counties were more likely to report the episode in areas that had received more African Americans between 1940 and 1964. No effect is present for lynchings that occurred between 1940 and 1944 (column 2). This indicates that Black in-migration, and not other county-specific characteristics, increased the probability that a southern lynching was reported in a northern newspaper. Consistent with an information transmission mechanism driven by migration, columns 3 to 5 show that the coefficient on the change in the Black population share becomes larger as we focus on lynchings that happened in later years.

We next explore the dynamics behind the patterns just described in an event-study

[36] See also https://plaintalkhistory.com/monroeandflorencework/explore/map2-credits.html.

[37] Table A.7 compares the characteristics of the full sample and the counties in the "newspapers' sample". Not surprisingly, counties in the newspapers' sample had a higher total population, a higher Black population share, and were more likely to be urban in 1940. They also experienced a slightly larger increase in their (actual and predicted) Black population share. However, reassuringly, the Democratic vote share and turnout – both in 1940 levels and in changes – are remarkably similar between the two sets of counties. Table A.8 verifies that our main results are unchanged when focusing on the sample of counties for which local newspapers could be located.

[38] Since the regressor of interest is defined at the county level, we cannot include county fixed effects. As in the main analysis, regressions are weighed by 1940 county population, and standard errors are clustered at the county level.

design. In Table 7, we consider a window of 4 weeks before and up to 26 weeks after a lynching, and interact the change in the Black population share with an indicator equal to one for weeks after the lynching. We control for a full battery of county, episode, and week by state fixed effects.[39] Panel A focuses on the 1940-1960 change in the Black population share. Mentions of a lynching increase significantly when considering years after 1945 (column 3), and the pattern becomes stronger for episodes that occurred later (columns 4 to 6). As before, Black in-migration has no effect on mentions of lynchings that happened between 1940-1944 (column 2). Panel B confirms results of Panel A focusing on the 1940-1950 (resp. 1950-1960) change in the Black population share in columns 1 to 3 (resp. 4 to 6). Figure 6 visually displays the dynamics, zooming in on the 12 weeks around the event – 4 weeks before and 8 weeks afterwards. There is no relationship between the mention of a lynching and the change in the Black population share in the weeks before the event. The effect of Black in-migration jumps on the week of the lynching, and then gradually fades away, persisting for at least one month after the event.

Consistent with an information transmission mechanism, the effect of Black in-migration on the probability of a lynching being mentioned in a northern county is larger when that lynching happened in the predicted southern origin of the county's Black migrants (Table A.9).

Appendix D.8 shows that these results are not driven by outliers and hold when replicating the analysis separately for each lynching, verifying robustness to possible treatment effect heterogeneity in the case of two-way fixed effects estimation (De Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille, 2020; Goodman-Bacon, 2021). Appendix D.8 also documents that newspaper mentions of lynchings are not correlated with other trends in media markets, and remain unchanged when controlling for TV penetration and radio connectivity.

**Evidence on cross-race political coalition.** As discussed in Section 2.2, starting in the late 1930s, labor unions led by the CIO became a crucial ally to African Americans' struggle for equality. The labor movement coordinated with the NAACP and other Black organizations on a joint agenda of civil rights and progressive economic policy (Schickler, 2016). To explore the role of the labor movement, we split counties above and below the median of different proxies for the presence and strength of organized labor, or for its incentives to align with Black voters. We report results in Figure

[39] County (resp. state by week) fixed effects absorb the main effect of the change in the Black population share (resp. the post-event dummy).

7 and Table A.10, always defining the variables so that higher values refer to stronger presence of, or incentives for, unions to support the civil rights movement.

The surge in civil rights protests was concentrated in counties with a higher share of white workers in manufacturing – the sector where unions were most widespread (Bailer, 1944; Farber et al., 2021). In line with these results, the effects of the Great Migration were stronger, although not statistically different, in counties belonging to states where CIO membership rates were higher.[40] Pro-civil rights protests were also more frequent where political competition – defined as one minus the absolute value of the margin of victory in 1940 Congressional elections – was higher. This finding is consistent with labor unions (and the Democratic Party) having stronger incentives to coordinate events where the Black vote was more valuable. Precisely in these areas, a better organized political machine could have made a difference in attracting and mobilizing pivotal, Black and white, voters (McAdam, 1982).

Labor unions, and white workers more generally, should have supported racial equality more when labor markets were tighter. Indeed, inter-group contact is more likely to lead to cooperation when it happens in contexts with no competition over scarce resources (Allport, 1954; Blalock, 1967).[41] Consistent with this idea, Black in-migration led to more demonstrations only where predicted labor demand was stronger. Instead, when predicted labor demand was low, Black inflows significantly reduced the probability of pro-civil rights demonstrations.[42] These findings are in line with anecdotal accounts noting that backlash was more likely to emerge during economic downturns (Bailer, 1943; Sugrue, 2014). They also accord with the electoral results discussed in Appendix E.1.1 (Table E.1), which document that the Great Migration had no effect on the Democratic vote share in the 1950s – a decade characterized by slack labor markets and economic recession.

Individual-level data from the ANES also support the idea of a cross-race coalition in which organized labor played a crucial role. In Figure E.4, we replicate the analysis of Table 5 (column 4), examining the effects of Black in-migration on perceptions of civil rights as the most fundamental issue facing the country, for different groups of respondents. The relationship is stronger among union members and self-identified

[40] CIO membership rates are not available at the county level in a systematic way. We thus rely on 1939 state-level CIO membership from Troy (1957).

[41] Several papers document that anti-minority sentiments are more likely to arise during times of hardship (Grosfeld et al., 2020; Oster, 2004; Voigtländer and Voth, 2012).

[42] We predict labor demand using a Bartik-style approach, interacting 1940 industry shares at the county level with national growth rates of each industry in each subsequent decade.

Democrats. The opposite is true for self-identified Republicans. We note that party identification is endogenous; nonetheless, these patterns confirm the existence of a class-based alliance. Consistent with results on the behavior of Congress members, they also indicate that Black inflows might have increased polarization on racial issues within the northern electorate.

**Additional mechanisms.** Other complementary mechanisms could explain the effect of the Great Migration on support for civil rights in the North. First, news outlets such as the TV and the radio may have amplified the information channel documented above. Data availability allowed us to measure information diffusion on lynchings using newspapers. It is likely that similar dynamics were at play in radio and TV programs. Our results are not confounded by these processes (Table D.23 and Figures D.6 and D.7), but they may represent a lower bound of information effects, as various news outlets likely complemented each other, reinforcing the effects of the Great Migration.

Second, and consistent with a channel of information diffusion, it is possible that southern Black leaders strategically organized events in the South to attract attention of northern residents in migration destination counties. Studying this additional force goes beyond the scope of our paper. Such strategic activism by Black leaders is, however, entirely consistent with our results on media reporting of southern lynchings.

A third potential mechanism is selective sorting of white residents, correlated with patterns of Black migration. This does not only encompass white flight in direct response to Black arrivals, but also other migration patterns; for instance, the spread of air conditioning during the 1960s made the South a more attractive destination for older white residents, who may have held more conservative racial attitudes (Glaeser and Tobio, 2008). Various tests indicate that such patterns are unlikely to be correlated with movements of Black Southerners to the North and West (column 8 of Table 2 and analyses in Appendix D).[43]

Several of the above channels, like the spread of the TV and strategic organizing by Black activists, could have promoted support for civil rights in the North even in the absence of the Great Migration. Our research design does not allow us to assess the relative importance of the Great Migration relative to these other factors; we do not claim it was the single, or even the most important, determinant of northern racial attitudes. Nonetheless, our analysis shows that the Great Migration had a significant and quantitatively large effect on the northern political and social equilibrium, both

[43] ANES analyses are conducted at the state level, further reducing the plausibility of a sorting mechanism.

directly, by changing the composition of the electorate, and indirectly, by influencing the views of white northern residents.

## 6.4 Heterogeneity and Long Run Effects

**Heterogeneity in whites' responses.** Which northern white residents were most likely to support civil rights in in-migration counties? The salience of racial violence in the South might have been more impactful for northerners with pre-existing liberal tendencies. To test this idea, we split the sample above and below the median of different proxies for progressive attitudes in the local electorate. We report results in Figure A.11, rescaling the variables so that higher values refer to socially more progressive counties.[44]

Results are an order of magnitude larger in counties with lower historical discrimination, as proxied by a discrimination index constructed in Qian and Tabellini (2020). The index combines historical data from a variety of sources, such as local presence of the KKK and the lynching of Black Americans up to 1939. The same pattern, though less pronounced, is evident when splitting counties as belonging to states with (light grey bars) and without (dark grey bars) miscegenation laws (Dahis et al., 2020). Civil rights protests also increased more in counties located closer to a destination of German political migrants of the failed 1848 revolutions. Dippel and Heblich (2021) show that the presence of the "Forty-Eighters" was associated with stronger support for racial equality.

Our findings do not necessarily imply that all white residents welcomed Black migrants into their neighborhoods. Both existing work (Boustan, 2010) and our own analysis (Table D.3) indicate that the Great Migration increased within-county racial segregation as whites exerted more effort to avoid sharing public goods with Black Americans (Alesina et al., 1999). At the same time, segregation responses might have been compatible with support for civil rights. For one, civil rights legislation was, at least until 1965, a matter that affected mostly the US South. Additionally, increased segregation may itself have helped defuse whites' animosity caused by Black migration into white neighborhoods.

Appendix E.4 provides evidence consistent with the latter conjecture (Table E.6).

[44] Formal 2SLS estimates are reported in Table A.10. In a few instances, the F-stat falls below conventional levels. Reassuringly, the level of significance presented in the table is consistent with that derived using identification-robust Anderson-Rubin confidence intervals, which are reported in the case of weak instrument as suggested in Andrews et al. (2019).

First, Black in-migration increased the frequency of CORE demonstrations only in counties with higher 1940 residential segregation. That is, support for civil rights increased more in counties where inter-group contact in the housing market was lower. Second, in line with results in Alesina et al. (2004), Black inflows led to the creation of more school districts in counties where residential segregation was higher. One interpretation of these patterns, consistent with historical evidence (Sugrue, 2008), is that population sorting within counties and the creation of independent jurisdictions might have reduced potential backlash by allowing whites to live in racially homogeneous communities, where the probability of sharing public goods with Black Americans was low. This, in turn, could have facilitated support for civil rights as a national-level policy issue, and progressive voting motivated by abstract principles of racial equality.

**Persistence of whites' racial attitudes.** An important question is whether the short run patterns documented above persisted over time, resulting in a permanent shift in whites' racial attitudes. To examine this possibility, we rely on survey and racially motivated hate crime data for the more recent period at the county level. To save space, this discussion is extensively presented in Appendix E.5, but we briefly summarize the key findings here. First, relying on survey questions asked in the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES) between 2008 and 2018, we document that white respondents living in counties that received more African Americans during the Great Migration (measured as the 1940 to 1970 change in the Black population share of the county population) are more supportive of affirmative action and express lower racial resentment (Table E.7). Second, using data from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program, we find that higher Black in-migration between 1940 and 1970 reduces hate crimes against African Americans after 2000 (Tables E.8 and E.9). This relationship is largely driven by a lower number of hate crimes against African Americans committed by white perpetrators, and it is absent for racially motivated hate crimes against non-minority groups (Table E.10).

These results are consistent with findings in Bursztyn et al. (2021) for attitudes towards Muslim immigrants across US counties in the long run. Examining the mechanisms of persistence – including intergenerational transmission of preferences, horizontal social spillovers, and geographic sorting over the long run – goes beyond the scope of this paper. We leave these fascinating questions for future research.

# 7 Conclusions

The Great Migration was one of the largest episodes of internal migration in American history. Between 1940 and 1970, more than 4 million Black Americans left the US South for northern and western destinations. During this same period, the civil rights movement struggled and eventually succeeded in eliminating institutionalized discrimination and formal impediments to Black political participation. In this paper, we show that these two phenomena are causally linked.

Using a shift-share instrument, we find that Black in-migration increased the Democratic vote share in Congressional elections and favored the election of legislators who were more likely to promote a civil rights agenda outside the US South. An important mechanism identified in our work is the growth of Black organizations, which increasingly mobilized not only Black but also white residents. We provide further direct and indirect evidence for the mobilization of white northerners. We identify the diffusion of information on Black Americans' oppression in the South and cross-race political alliances with roots in the New Deal coalition as important channels driving progress towards racial equality in the northern United States.

When contrasted with other works on the political effects of migration, our results raise an intriguing set of questions. Under what conditions can migration and inter-group contact more broadly lead to the formation of cross-group coalitions? When, instead, is backlash from original residents more likely to prevail? In the specific context of the Great Migration and of the civil rights movement, our evidence suggests that cross-race cooperation can emerge when individuals belonging to different groups share similar goals and identities (in this context, class-based), and when information about discrimination becomes available to majority group members, particularly those already more open to diversity.

At the same time, for such cooperation to be sustained, inter-group competition and conflict over resources cannot be too large. Civil rights before 1965 was a national-level issue with direct ramifications mainly for the South. This likely facilitated support for racial equality among northern whites who were not materially affected. Our analysis also indicates higher support for civil rights in time periods and counties with better economic conditions. Taken together, these results support the conclusions of an emerging literature, which shows that context is an important determinant of the effects of inter-group contact on cross-group relations and attitudes (Bazzi et al., 2019; Lowe, 2021; Rao, 2019; Steinmayr, 2020).

**Data Availability Statement:** The data underlying this article are publicly available on Zenodo, at http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6371352

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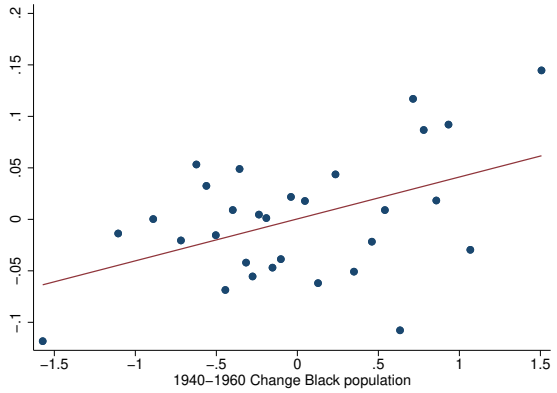
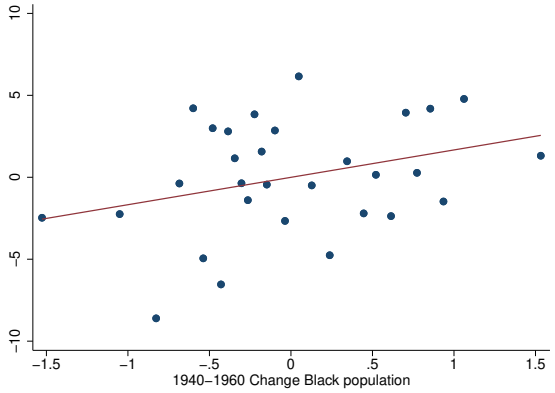
# Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Great Migration and Northern Whites' Attitudes

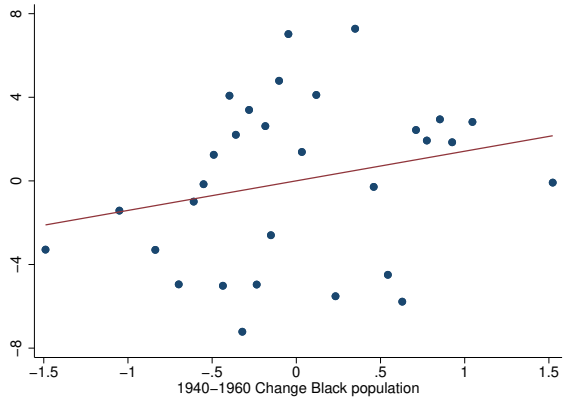
(a) Most Important Issue: Civil Rights



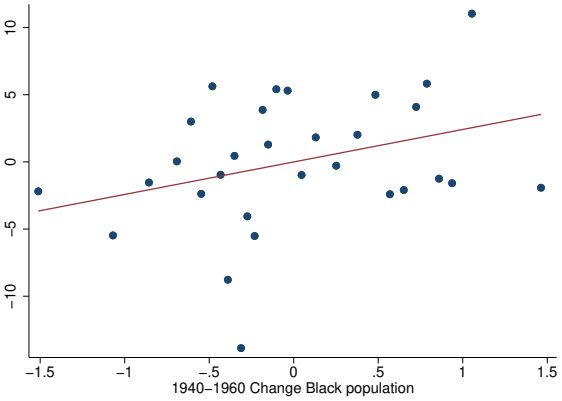

(b) Thermometer: Blacks




(c) Thermometer: NAACP

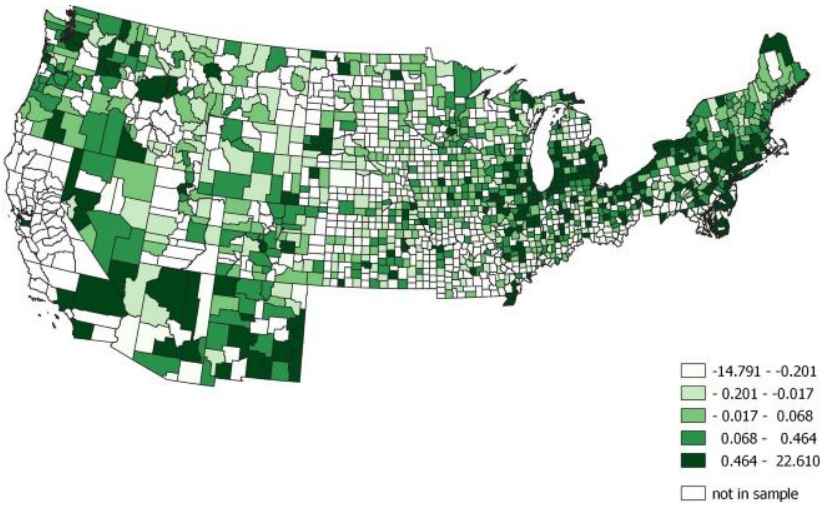



(d) Thermometer: CORE



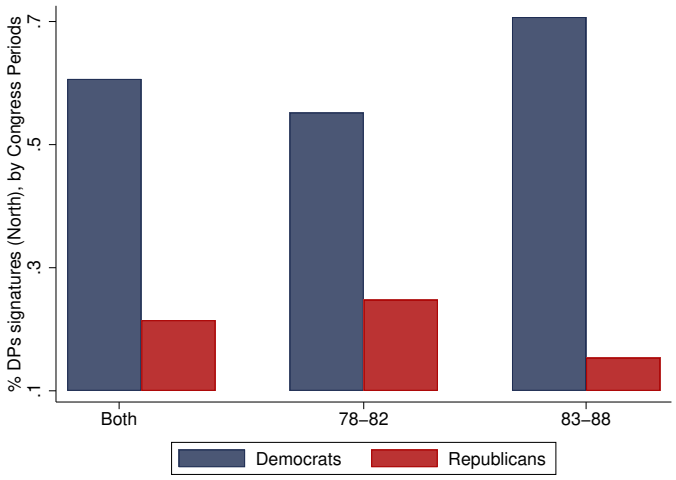

*Notes:* Each panel plots the relationship between the 1940 to 1960 change in the Black population across non-southern US states and racial attitudes of white ANES respondents in 1964. The underlying OLS regressions partial out Census divisions dummies, the 1940-1960 change in state population, individual characteristics of survey respondents, and 1940 state-level socio-economic controls. Individual controls include: age, gender, educational attainment, and marital status. State-level controls include: Black population share, Democratic incumbency, share in manufacturing, share of workers in the CIO, and urban share. *Source:* ANES Cumulative File (2015).

Figure 2. Change in Black Population Share, 1940 to 1970



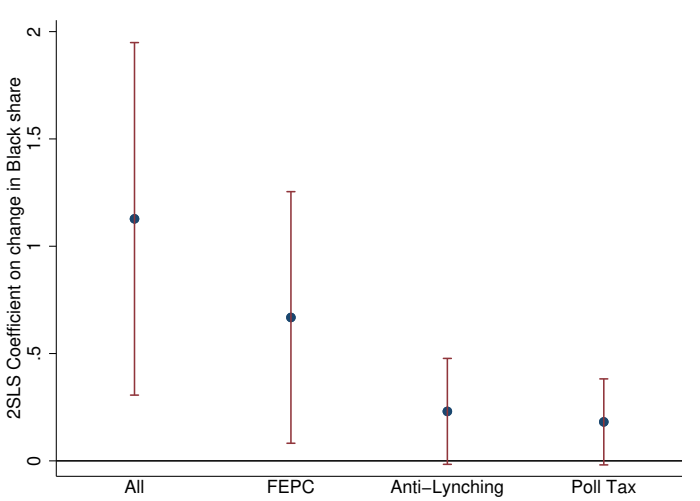

*Notes:* The map plots the 1940 to 1970 change in the Black population share for the non-southern counties (1,263) in our sample. *Source:* Authors' calculations from Ruggles et al. (2020).

Figure 3. Discharge Petitions on Civil Rights Signed by Non-Southern Legislators



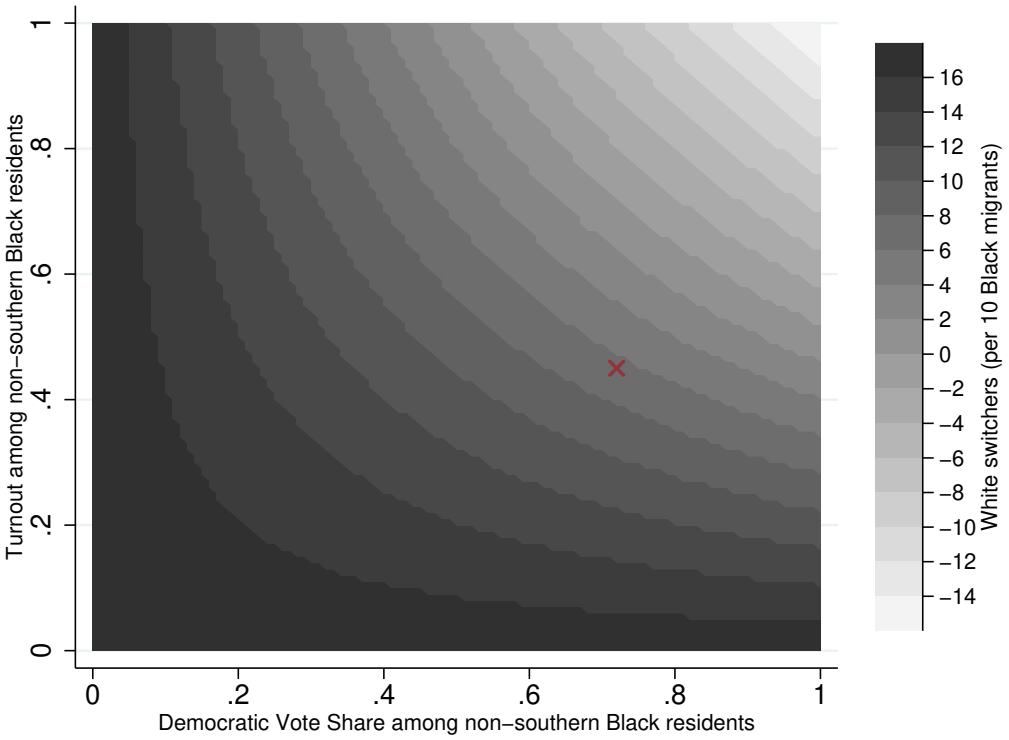

*Notes:* Blue (resp. red) bars plot the share of non-southern Democratic (resp. Republican) members of Congress signing discharge petitions in favor of civil rights bills between Congress 78 (1943-1945) and Congress 88 (1963-1965). The first two bars refer to the average between the 78-82 and the 83-88 Congress periods, while the remaining bars display results for each of the two Congress periods separately. See Table A.3 for the mapping of Congress numbers to calendar years. *Source:* adapted from Pearson and Schickler (2009).

Figure 4. Change in Signatures on Discharge Petitions



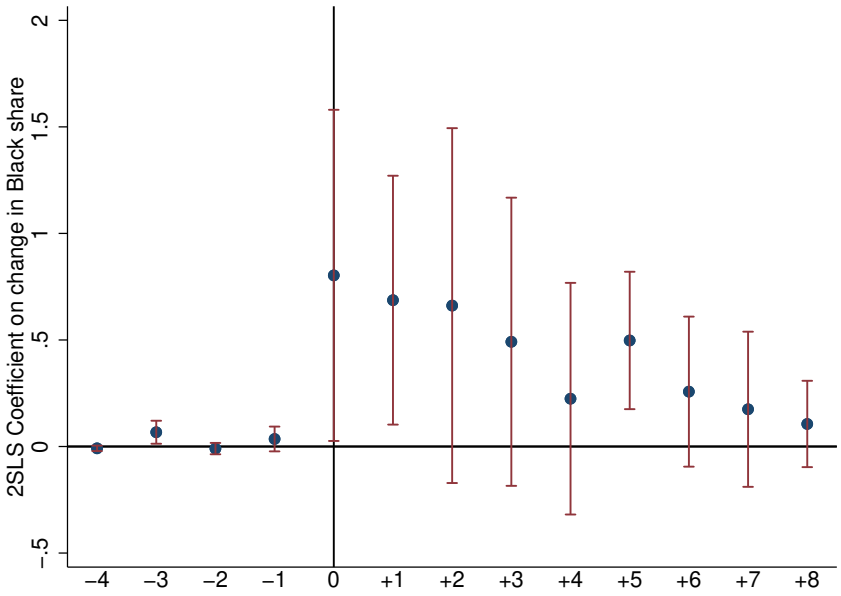

*Notes:* The figure plots the 2SLS coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) for the effects of the 1940-1950 change in the Black population share on the corresponding change in the number of signatures on discharge petitions per legislator. The first dot on the left ("All") includes discharge petitions on employment protection legislation (FEPC), to promote anti-lynching legislation, and to abolish the poll tax. The three remaining dots refer to each of the three issues. Results and details of the specification are reported in Table A.6.

Figure 5. Estimates on the Behavior of White Voters



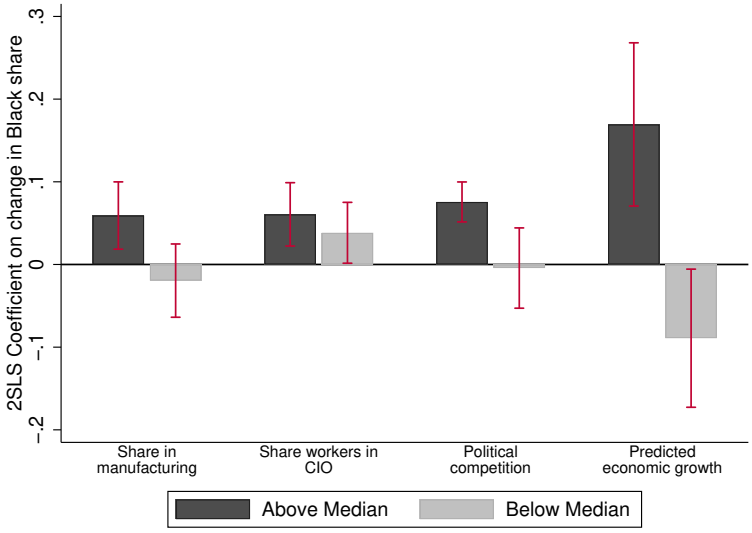

*Notes:* The figure plots the number northern white residents who would have to start voting for the Democratic Party per 10 Black migrants, given turnout and Democratic vote share among non-southern Black residents. The solid line in black indicates combinations of turnout and Democratic vote share among non-southern Black residents that are associated with 0 white switchers. The red cross indicates the number of white switchers corresponding to the preferred scenario indicated in Glantz (1960).

Figure 6. Newspapers – Event Study




*Notes:* The figure plots 2SLS coefficients (with corresponding 95% intervals) on the 1940-1960 change in the Black population share in county-week level regressions where the dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if any mention about the lynching of a Black individual in the US South appeared in newspapers of the (non-southern) county in each week. Week 0 refers to the week when the lynching occurred. See the main text for more details. All regressions control for state and lynching episode fixed effects, and are weighed by 1940 county population. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

Figure 7. Heterogeneity by County Characteristics – Political and Economic Forces




*Notes:* The bars report the 2SLS coefficient (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the change in the Black population share for the change in the probability of CORE demonstrations for counties with each 1940 variable above (resp. below) the sample median in dark (resp. light) grey. Section 6.3 describes how each variable is constructed. Coefficients and standard errors reported in Table A.10.

Table 1. Summary Statistics

| Variables | Mean | St. Dev. | Median | Min | Max | Obs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A: 1940 levels* | | | | | | |
| Black Share (County) | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0 | 0.47 | 1,263 |
| Black Share (CD) | 0.07 | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0 | 0.25 | 285 |
| Democratic Vote Share | 46.55 | 12.91 | 49.00 | 0 | 85.00 | 1,263 |
| Turnout | 69.39 | 8.30 | 69.60 | 23.00 | 97.90 | 1,263 |
| Civil Rights Scores | -0.09 | 0.71 | -0.81 | -2.01 | 1.43 | 285 |
| *Panel B: Changes* | | | | | | |
| Black Share (County) | 1.78 | 2.53 | 0.72 | -11.88 | 12.79 | 3,789 |
| Black Share (CD) | 5.25 | 2.81 | 5.58 | -1.26 | 12.86 | 570 |
| Democratic Vote Share | 1.53 | 11.12 | 0.67 | -67.19 | 72.80 | 3,789 |
| Turnout | -6.49 | 17.06 | -13.50 | -64.30 | 43.00 | 3,789 |
| Civil Rights Scores | 0.07 | 0.71 | 0 | -2.91 | 1.95 | 570 |

*Notes:* The sample includes the 1,263 non-southern US counties (see Table A.1 for the list of southern states) for which electoral returns in Congressional elections are available for all Census years between 1940 and 1970, and with at least one African American resident in 1940. When relevant, county variables are collapsed at the Congressional District level, fixing boundaries to Congress 78 (1943-1945) as explained in the text. Democratic vote share and turnout refer to Congressional elections, and civil rights scores are the agnostic ideology scores from Bateman et al. (2017). Panel A presents 1940 values (except for ideology scores, which refer to Congress 78, 1943-1945), while Panel B reports decadal changes for each of the variables.

Table 2. Congressional Elections

| | (1) OLS | (2) OLS | (3) OLS | (4) 2SLS | (5) 2SLS | (6) 2SLS | (7) 2SLS | (8) 2SLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A: Change in Democratic Vote Share (1940 mean: 46.55)* | | | | | | | | |
| Change Black | 0.537*** | 0.538*** | 0.611*** | 0.712*** | 1.255*** | 1.885*** | 1.938*** | 2.015*** |
| Share | (0.108) | (0.124) | (0.146) | (0.162) | (0.277) | (0.439) | (0.464) | (0.626) |
| *Panel B: Change in Turnout (1940 mean: 69.39)* | | | | | | | | |
| Change Black | -0.274** | -0.298*** | -0.293*** | 0.094 | 0.399* | 0.756** | 0.809** | 0.665 |
| Share | (0.121) | (0.112) | (0.109) | (0.187) | (0.235) | (0.348) | (0.356) | (0.459) |
| *Panel C: First stage* | | | | | | | | |
| Predicted Change | | | | 0.976*** | 1.002*** | 0.758*** | 0.803*** | 0.859*** |
| Black Share | | | | (0.261) | (0.260) | (0.233) | (0.249) | (0.283) |
| Specification | FD | FD | FD | FD | FD | FD | LD | FD |
| Unit | County | County | County | County | County | County | County | CZ |
| 1940 Black Share | | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| 1940 Dem Incumbent | | | X | | | X | X | X |
| F-Stat | | | | 13.95 | 14.88 | 10.57 | 10.42 | 9.21 |
| Observations | 3,789 | 3,789 | 3,789 | 3,789 | 3,789 | 3,789 | 1,263 | 1,200 |

*Notes:* The sample includes the 1,263 non-southern US counties (see Table A.1 for the definition of southern states) for which electoral returns in Congressional elections are available for all Census years between 1940 and 1970, and with at least one African American resident in 1940. The table reports stacked first difference regressions in columns 1 to 6, and long difference regressions in column 7. Column 8 replicates column 6 by aggregating the unit of analysis to the commuting zone (CZ). The dependent variable is the decadal change in the Democratic vote share (resp. turnout) in Congressional elections in Panel A (resp. Panel B). Panel C reports the first stage associated with 2SLS regressions. Columns 1 to 3 estimate equation (1) in the text with OLS, while remaining columns report 2SLS estimates. The main regressor of interest is the change in the Black population share, which is instrumented with the shift-share instrument described in equation (2) in the text from column 4 onwards. All regressions are weighed by 1940 county population, and include interactions between period dummies and state dummies. 1940 Black share (resp. 1940 Dem Incumbent) refers to interactions between period dummies and the 1940 Black population share (resp. a dummy equal to 1 if the Democratic vote share in 1940 was higher than the Republicans vote share). F-stat is the K-P F-stat for weak instruments. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. In column 8, controls and clustered standard errors are at the CZ level. Significance levels: *** $p< 0.01$, ** $p< 0.05$, * $p< 0.1$.

Table 3. Changes in Legislators' Ideology

| Dependent Variable | Change in Civil Rights Ideology (Lower Values = More Liberal Ideology) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agnostic Scores (Baseline Mean: -0.873) | | | Constrained Scores (Baseline Mean: -0.854) | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| *Panel A: OLS* | | | | | | |
| Change Black Share | 0.008 | -0.139*** | 0.049** | 0.002 | -0.150*** | 0.044** |
| | (0.014) | (0.036) | (0.020) | (0.015) | (0.041) | (0.022) |
| *Panel B: 2SLS* | | | | | | |
| Change Black Share | -0.051 | -0.300*** | 0.046 | -0.054 | -0.337*** | 0.058 |
| | (0.039) | (0.116) | (0.056) | (0.041) | (0.124) | (0.059) |
| *Panel C: First stage* | | | | | | |
| Predicted Change | 1.570*** | 1.054*** | 1.944*** | 1.553*** | 1.050*** | 1.917*** |
| Black Share | (0.438) | (0.377) | (0.557) | (0.442) | (0.377) | (0.564) |
| F-Stat | 12.87 | 7.81 | 12.19 | 12.35 | 7.77 | 11.57 |
| Observations | 570 | 285 | 285 | 570 | 285 | 285 |
| Congress Period | 78-82; 82-88 | 78-82 | 82-88 | 78-82; 82-88 | 78-82 | 82-88 |

*Notes:* The dependent variable is the change in the civil rights ideology scores from Bateman et al. (2017) – "Agnostic" scores in columns 1 to 3, and "Constrained" scores in columns 4 to 6. Lower values of the score refer to more liberal ideology (see also Bateman et al., 2017, for more details). Columns 1 and 4 (resp. 2-3, and 5-6) estimate stacked first difference regressions (resp. first difference regressions for Congress period 78-82 and 82-88). See Table A.3 for the mapping of Congress numbers to calendar years. Panel A reports OLS results and Panel B reports 2SLS results, while Panels C presents first stage estimates. The main regressor of interest is the change in the Black population share, which is instrumented with the shift-share instrument described in equation (2) in the text. All regressions are weighed by 1940 congressional district population, and include interactions between period dummies and: *i*) state dummies; *ii*) the 1940 Black population share in the district; *iii*) a dummy equal to one for Democratic incumbency in the district in Congress 78; and *iv*) the ideology score in the district in Congress 78. First difference regressions do not include interactions with period dummies since these are automatically dropped. F-stat refers to the K-P F-stat for weak instruments. Robust standard errors, clustered at the Congressional district level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p< 0.01, ** p< 0.05, * p< 0.1.

Table 4. NAACP Chapters and CORE Demonstrations

| Dependent Variable | Change in | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1[NAACP Chapter] | | | 1[CORE Demonstrations] | | |
| | (1) OLS | (2) 2SLS | (3) 2SLS | (4) OLS | (5) 2SLS | (6) 2SLS |
| *Panel A: Main Estimates* | | | | | | |
| Change Black Share | -0.022** | -0.029 | 0.070** | 0.025*** | 0.057*** | 0.033** |
| | (0.008) | (0.024) | (0.035) | (0.007) | (0.018) | (0.016) |
| *Panel B: First Stage* | | | | | | |
| Predicted Change Black Share | | 0.780*** | 0.624** | | 0.758*** | 0.758*** |
| | | (0.231) | (0.247) | | (0.233) | (0.233) |
| F-stat | | 11.41 | 6.39 | | 10.57 | 10.57 |
| Observations | 1,263 | 1,263 | 1,069 | 3,789 | 3,789 | 3,789 |
| No NAACP in 1940 | | | X | | | |
| White Participants | | | | | | X |

*Notes:* The sample includes the 1,263 non-southern US counties (see Table A.1 for the definition of southern states) for which electoral returns in Congressional elections are available for all Census years between 1940 and 1970, and with at least one African American resident in 1940. The dependent variable is the 1940-1960 change in the presence of NAACP chapters (columns 1-3) and the change in the probability of non-violent demonstrations in support of civil rights coordinated by the CORE (columns 4-6). Column 3 restricts attention to counties with no NAACP chapter in 1940. Column 6 defines the dependent variable as a dummy equal to one only for demonstrations that were joined by at least some white participants. The main regressor of interest is the 1940-1960 (resp. decadal) change in the Black population share in columns 1-3 (resp. columns 4-6), which is instrumented with the shift-share instrument described in equation (2) in the text in columns 2, 3, 5, and 6. All regressions are weighed by 1940 county population, and include interactions between period dummies and: *i*) state dummies; *ii*) the 1940 Black population share; and, *iii*) a dummy equal to one for Democratic incumbency in 1940. F-stat is the K-P F-stat for weak instruments. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p< 0.01, ** p< 0.05, * p< 0.1.

Table 5. Whites' Attitude from the ANES

| Dependent Variable | Feeling Thermometer Towards | | | MIP | 1[Vote] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Blacks | NAACP | Democrats | Civil Rights | Democratic | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| *Panel A. 2SLS* | | | | | | |
| Change Black Share | 3.262*** | 2.821** | 1.895* | 0.034** | 0.039*** | 0.080*** |
| | (1.169) | (1.404) | (1.041) | (0.014) | (0.008) | (0.015) |
| *Panel B. First Stage* | | | | | | |
| Predicted Change Black Share | 2.609*** | 2.763*** | 2.611*** | 2.748*** | 2.845*** | 2.490*** |
| | (0.415) | (0.458) | (0.416) | (0.439) | (0.436) | (0.392) |
| F-stat | 39.57 | 36.47 | 39.36 | 39.20 | 42.63 | 40.28 |
| Observations | 561 | 453 | 562 | 927 | 1,648 | 402 |
| Mean Dep. Variable | 68.96 | 54.93 | 68.91 | 0.11 | 0.49 | 0.60 |

*Notes:* The sample is restricted to white ANES respondents living in the US North, and residing in their state of birth. All columns, except columns 4 and 5, refer to 1964 only. Columns 4 and 5 include respondents interviewed in survey waves: 1960 and 1964; and 1956 to 1964, respectively. The dependent variable in columns 1 to 3 is the feeling thermometer towards each group at the top of the corresponding column. Higher values of the thermometer refer to warmer feelings. In column 4, the dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent reports that supporting civil rights is among the most important issues facing the country at the time of the interview. See Appendix C for exact wording and additional details on the construction of the variable. In columns 5 and 6, the dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent voted (resp. intended to vote) for the Democratic Party in the previous (resp. upcoming) election. The main regressor of interest is the 1940 to 1960 change in the Black population share in the state, which is instrumented with the shift-share instrument described in equation (2) in the text. All regressions are weighed with ANES survey weights, include region fixed effects, and control for individual characteristics of respondents (gender, age and education fixed effects, and marital status) as well as for 1940 state characteristics (Black population share; Democratic incumbency in Congressional elections; share in manufacturing; share of workers in the CIO; urban share). Columns 4 and 5 include survey year fixed effects. F-stat refers to the K-P F-stat for weak instruments. Robust standard errors, clustered at the state level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p< 0.01$, ** $p< 0.05$, * $p< 0.1$.

Table 6. Evidence from Northern Newspapers: Cross-sectional Regressions

| Dependent Variable | 1[Any Mention] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
| *Panel A: Main Estimates* | | | | | |
| Change Black Share | 0.253** | 0.135 | 0.348** | 0.532** | 0.677** |
| | (0.128) | (0.086) | (0.163) | (0.235) | (0.301) |
| *Panel B: First Stage* | | | | | |
| Predicted Change | 1.071*** | 1.032*** | 1.098*** | 1.093*** | 1.081*** |
| Black Share | (0.289) | (0.287) | (0.291) | (0.291) | (0.289) |
| F-stat | 13.76 | 12.95 | 14.26 | 14.08 | 13.96 |
| Observations | 311,803 | 141,332 | 170,471 | 79,721 | 59,665 |
| State FE | X | X | X | X | X |
| Episode FE | X | X | X | X | X |
| Week FE | X | X | X | X | X |
| Sample | 1940+ | 1940-1944 | 1945+ | 1950+ | 1955+ |

*Notes:* The sample is restricted to the 492 counties in our sample for which newspapers' data are available. The table reports county-week-episode level regressions where the dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one mention about the lynching of a Black individual in the US South appeared in the local newspapers of the county in each week from 0 to 26. Week 0 is defined as the week in which the lynching occurred. The main regressor of interest is the 1940 to 1960 change in the Black population share in the county, which is instrumented with the shift-share instrument described in equation (2) in the text. All regressions include state, week, and episode fixed effects, and are weighed by 1940 county population. The last row of the table indicates the sample of lynchings considered. When the last year is not specified, it corresponds to 1964 (included). F-stat refers to the K-P F-stat for weak instruments. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** $p< 0.01$, ** $p< 0.05$, * $p< 0.1$.

Table 7. Evidence from Northern Newspapers: Event-Study Design

| Dependent Variable | 1[Any Mention] | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| *Panel A. 1940-1960 Change in Black Share* | | | | | | |
| Change Black Share * POST | 0.237* | 0.113 | 0.325** | 0.476** | 0.691** | 1.050*** |
| | (0.126) | (0.085) | (0.162) | (0.228) | (0.306) | (0.262) |
| F-stat | 13.61 | 12.76 | 14.04 | 13.78 | 13.5 | 12.87 |
| Observations | 357,979 | 162,303 | 195,671 | 91,544 | 68,520 | 22,047 |
| Events | 1940+ | 1940-1944 | 1945+ | 1950+ | 1955+ | 1960+ |
| *Panel B. Decadal Changes in Black Share* | | | | | | |
| Change Black Share * POST | 0.248 | 0.764** | 1.127** | 0.262 | 1.194* | 1.825*** |
| | (0.161) | (0.317) | (0.447) | (0.189) | (0.625) | (0.534) |
| F-stat | 20.96 | 22.95 | 22.51 | 8.43 | 8.62 | 8.23 |
| Observations | 162,303 | 195,671 | 91,544 | 266,429 | 68,520 | 22,047 |
| Change Black share | 1940-1950 | 1940-1950 | 1940-1950 | 1950-1960 | 1950-1960 | 1950-1960 |
| Events | 1940-1944 | 1945+ | 1950+ | 1940-1949 | 1955+ | 1960+ |
| County FE | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Episode FE | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| State-week FE | X | X | X | X | X | X |

*Notes:* The sample is restricted to the 492 counties in our sample for which newspapers' data are available. The table reports county-week-episode level regressions where the dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one mention about the lynching of a Black individual in the US South appeared in the local newspapers of the county in each week from -4 to 26. Week 0 is defined as the week in which the lynching occurred. The main regressor of interest is the 1940 to 1960 (resp. decadal) change in the Black population share in the county in Panel A (resp. Panel B) interacted with an indicator for weeks 0 and above (POST). The change in the Black population share is instrumented with the shift-share instrument described in equation (2) in the text. All regressions include county, state by week, and episode fixed effects, and are weighed by 1940 county population. Columns 1 to 3 (resp. 4 to 6) of Panel B consider the 1940-1950 (resp. 1950-1960) change in the Black population share. The last row of the table indicates the sample of lynchings considered. When the last year is not specified, it corresponds to 1964 (included). F-stat refers to the K-P F-stat for weak instruments. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. Significance levels: *** p< 0.01, ** p< 0.05, * p< 0.1.