Ballot, Badge, and Bench: Black Representation in Southern Justice[†]

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Abstract

The election of law enforcement and judicial officials is a distinctive feature of American democracy, yet its democratic promise sits uneasily alongside enduring racial disparities in the justice system. We assess whether Black Americans have closed their historical representation gap. To this end we compile the most comprehensive dataset to date on the racial makeup of the local justice system across the former Confederacy between 1964 and 2024. We exploit variation in Black political inclusion stemming from the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which expanded the electorate and eased access to candidacy. We show that early gains were limited by weak professional pipelines, a barrier the Act did not address. Over time, as these constraints eased and civil rights organizations intensified mobilization, Black representation increased substantially, particularly following Black Lives Matter. Our findings highlight how political institutions, structural constraints, and mobilization jointly shape Black representation in the justice system.

Keywords: Black Representation, Law Enforcement, Judicial Elections, Shelby County *v.* Holder, Black Lives Matter

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1 Introduction

A distinctive feature of American democracy is the popular election of justice officials: judges, prosecutors, and sheriffs are frequently chosen at the ballot box. Virtually no other country relies as extensively on elections to fill judicial or policing positions (Lim and Snyder, 2021). Originating in the mid-nineteenth century, this system sought to curb elite control and enhance public accountability (Shugerman, 2012). In the South, however, the democratic promise of elected justice was systematically undermined by entrenched racial hierarchies. During the Jim Crow era, sheriffs "…were linchpins in the maintenance of white supremacy …" (Moore, 1997), prosecutors were vested with unreviewable discretion, and courts operated on the premise that "…white status was a sole claim to credibility" (Meyn, 2021). This legacy endured. On the eve of the civil rights era, "the badge of inequality persists in the judicial systems of many southern counties" (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1961).

The American practice of electing justice officials raises fundamental questions about political representation. Civil rights leaders viewed access to the ballot as a means of transforming the justice system: "Give us the ballot, and we will place judges on the benches of the South who will do justly" (King, 1957). Yet, Black communities, disproportionately affected by racial profiling, sentencing disparities, and incarceration, remain underrepresented in judicial and law enforcement offices (Farris and Holman, 2024). The tension between democratic design and racial inequality has gained renewed attention amid national debates over policing and justice. Especially since the rise of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, advocates of criminal justice reform have emphasized that greater Black representation is essential to strengthening community trust and accountability.

Despite the prominence of these debates, systematic evidence on Black officeholding in the justice system remains scant, due to the lack of comprehensive data. This stands in stark contrast to a rich literature examining Black representation in legislative bodies at the federal, state, and local

levels.[1] In this paper, we fill this gap by assembling the most comprehensive dataset to date on Black officials in law enforcement and judicial positions in the U.S. South, spanning 1964–2024, to examine the extent to which Black Americans have closed longstanding representation gaps among judges, prosecutors, and sheriffs.

To understand these patterns, we draw on theories of descriptive representation that consider different constraints to minority officeholding in the justice system. One perspective emphasizes voter demand: voters favor candidates with punitive approaches to crime (Sances, 2023), and white voters in particular — more supportive of such measures (Eckhouse, 2019) — may disadvantage Black candidates if they believe race correlates with how the law is interpreted or enforced. A related argument highlights racial backlash: Black political gains provoke white countermobilization (Bernini et al., 2025; Komisarchik, 2026; Rahnama, 2025), constraining representation in offices central to social order. A complementary perspective focuses on candidate supply, emphasizing the role of professional pipeline constraints. Offices such as judge or district attorney typically require formal credentials — most notably a law degree — that historically excluded many Black candidates (Burnett, 2009), while sheriff positions, though less formally restricted, are typically filled by professionals with prior law enforcement experience, shaped by informal institutional norms (Farris and Holman, 2024).

To study the evolution of Black representation in the justice system, we use the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. We focus on one of its most consequential provisions, coverage. Section 4(a) immediately suspended discriminatory devices — mainly literacy tests — in covered jurisdictions with a history of Black disenfranchisement, identified by the coverage formula spelled out in Section 4(b).[2] Because jurisdictions could respond to the suspension of literacy tests by adopting new barriers to political participation, Section 5 further required covered jurisdictions to obtain federal preclearance before implementing changes to their voting rules.

As a result of Section 4's automatic trigger, covered counties with larger Black population

[1] For overviews of the literature on minority representation in legislative bodies, see Davidson and Grofman (1994), Marschall, Ruhil and Shah (2010), Shah (2014), and Atsusaka (2021).

[2] For a more in-depth discussion of the role of Section 4, see Alt (1994); Issacharoff (2004).

shares experienced a rapid expansion of Black political participation (Cascio and Washington, 2014) and white voter mobilization (Bernini et al., 2025). Suspending literacy tests also lowered direct barriers to candidacy, since voter registration was typically required to run for office, while expanding the Black electorate shaping Black candidates' decisions to run (Shah, 2014). The VRA thus affected both candidate supply and voter demand.

Because these supply- and demand-side channels operate largely through the size of the Black electorate, we exploit this variation in a difference-in-differences design with continuous treatment intensity, comparing covered counties to non-covered former-Confederacy counties with similar racial make-up. In the justice system, however, an important caveat applies: the limited availability of qualified professionals may attenuate the relationship between coverage and Black representation.

For our analysis, we compile data on Black officeholding in local law enforcement and judicial positions between 1964 and 2024, drawing on both historical and contemporary sources. We find that in the first three decades following the Act, Black officeholding grew only modestly. By 1980, just 5.7% of covered counties had elected a Black judge, a figure that rose only slightly to 8.3% by 1990 — a limited gain compared with other local bodies, such as county commissions or city councils (Shah, Marschall and Ruhil, 2013; Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023). For above-county offices, such as prosecutors, the picture is even bleaker. As of 1980, there were no Black prosecutors in the South and, a decade later, districts with larger Black population shares in covered jurisdictions do not record any significant progress. A similar dynamic applies to sheriff elections. Even by 1990, more than 96% of covered counties continued to elect white sheriffs.

Why was progress so slow? We consider the main constraints to minority descriptive representation: voter demand and candidate supply. If voter preferences were decisive, Black candidates should perform well in majority-Black constituencies, where white backlash and voter bias against them are less likely to dominate. Yet even by 1990, only 13% of majority-Black counties had elected a Black sheriff and just 14% a Black judge. We also consider the role of white backlash to Black empowerment. Electing a Black county commissioner is associated with a decline in the

probability of electing a Black sheriff, but the effect is modest and unlikely to fully explain the pattern.

Supply-side theories posit that gains in representation hinge on the size of the qualified candidate pool. Historically, institutional barriers to Black Americans' access to legal education and policing careers substantially constrained this pipeline. Using county-level data on Black lawyers (for judicial offices) and Black police officers and detectives (for sheriffs), we find no evidence that these constraints were relaxed in the medium run, consistent with a central role for supply-side limitations.

Next, we examine the long-run trajectory of Black representation amid the changing political and legal landscape of the 2010s and 2020s, including the end of federal preclearance following *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) and the rise of BLM (Reny and Newman, 2021; Gethin and Pons, 2024). We find that formerly covered jurisdictions experienced substantial gains in Black officeholding after 2000. These gains persisted and, in some cases, accelerated after *Shelby County v. Holder*. This pattern speaks only to the trajectory of Black officeholding and does not imply that the decision had no effects on voter access or participation.

Having shown that supply-side constraints to professional pipelines limited early gains, we next examine whether they eased in the long run. We find that, beginning in the early 2000s, the number of Black lawyers and law enforcement officers increased substantially, expanding the pool of potential candidates. This expansion coincided with the growth of grassroots political infrastructure that had developed in covered areas during the civil rights era. Building on this foundation, civil rights and advocacy organizations increasingly focused on recruiting, training, and supporting Black candidates for law enforcement and judicial offices. Evidence from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) filings shows that, following the rise of the BLM movement, real revenues of civil rights organizations nearly doubled between 2012 and 2021, growing at more than twice the rate of the rest of the nonprofit sector and providing substantial new resources for candidate development and electoral support. Consistent with this pattern, rare administrative data on candidate race for local offices in Louisiana show a marked increase in the supply of Black candidates: the Black

share of sheriff candidates rose from 10.7% in 2007 to 18.7% in 2023, and of judicial candidates from 15.2% in 2008 to 20.1% in 2020.

At the same time, expanded candidate supply would be unlikely to translate into electoral success without voter engagement. Consistent with this view, survey evidence from the Cooperative Election Study (2006–2022) shows that post-*Shelby*, Black respondents in covered states with historically larger Black populations were more likely than whites to be contacted by campaigns, to register, and to vote. Together, these patterns indicate that long-run gains in Black representation reflected the interaction of expanded candidate pipelines and organizational investments that simultaneously supported candidate recruitment and sustained voter engagement.

This paper makes both empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of minority representation in local government and the justice system. Empirically, we shift attention away from well-studied legislative bodies — such as city councils, county commissions, and school boards — to elected law enforcement and judicial offices, which play a central role in the administration of justice, but remain understudied due to data limitations. Existing datasets on candidates in local elections — even the most comprehensive — provide only partial coverage of these offices and span much shorter time periods (de Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2023). To address this gap, we compile the most comprehensive dataset to date on the race of elected sheriffs and judges, covering more than six decades and all counties in the 11 former Confederate states.

Theoretically, we advance the understanding of representation in law enforcement by identifying and evaluating constraints that shape Black officeholding. We show that candidate supply — long recognized as a key constraint (Gonzalez Juenke and Shah, 2016; Fraga, Gonzalez Juenke and Shah, 2020; Lee, 2026) — was limited by professional pipelines that adjusted slowly to post-VRA enfranchisement. In the long run, however, this constraint eased, and its effects were amplified by sustained civil society mobilization, particularly after *Shelby* and the rise of the BLM movement. Existing work has documented an increase in minority mobilization following *Shelby* (Cantoni and Pons, 2021; Komisarchik and White, 2025), and in response to police violence (Ang and Tebes, 2024). By linking changes in professional pipelines to interest group–led mobilization and voter

outreach, our findings highlight how political institutions, structural constraints, and grassroots mobilization interact to reshape trajectories of Black political representation in the justice system.

2 Black Representation in Law Enforcement and the Judiciary

Salience of Local Justice Institutions. Local political institutions and descriptive representation matter because they shape citizens' most frequent interactions with the state. This is especially true in public safety and law enforcement. In 2020, 21% of U.S. residents aged 16 or older — roughly 53.8 million individuals — had some form of contact with the police (Tapp and Davis, 2022), far exceeding interactions with most other elected officials (Harris, 2024). Local courts also handle large caseloads; Louisiana's courts alone process about 440,000 cases annually, making them a central point of contact with the judicial system (Supreme Court of Louisiana, 2023).

Importantly, there is substantial evidence that minorities in the United States interact with the justice system at disproportionately high rates. Black citizens are more likely to be stopped and searched by police (Pierson et al., 2020), arrested and incarcerated (Facchini, Knight and Testa, 2025; Pettit and Gutierrez, 2018). High-profile incidents — from the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson (Missouri) to the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis — brought renewed scrutiny to the issue of race within the justice system (Reny and Newman, 2021).

Gaps in Minority Representation. A growing body of research highlights the severe under-representation of minorities in the justice system. Extensive recent surveys conducted on sheriffs and prosecutors show that an overwhelming 92% of sheriffs and 90% of prosecutors are white (Farris and Holman, 2024; Robertson, Wright and Baughman, 2022). Likewise, the American bench remains disproportionately white. Although systematic data on local courts are not readily available, Ifill (1997) documents that Black Americans are severely under-represented in state courts, where Black judges make up only 3.8% of the bench. The call for reform of the justice system rests on the premise that the racial composition of law enforcement shapes its interactions

with citizens — an assumption supported by empirical evidence that racial diversity influences how laws are enforced (Ba et al., 2021; Hoekstra and Sloan, 2022; Jackson, Neshkova and Meier, 2023).

Candidate Supply and Professional Barriers. As argued by Shah (2014), an important determinant of minority representation is the supply of candidates. This supply might be shaped by a range of factors, including constituency characteristics, electoral rules, levels of trust in political institutions and organized grassroots mobilization. A unique feature of the justice system is that professional experience and qualifications play a first-order role in shaping candidate entry. Most states require judicial and prosecutorial candidates to hold a law degree, be licensed to practice, and meet additional requirements such as age, experience, and residency. Historically, limited access to legal education severely constrained the development of a professional pipeline for Black candidates. Although Howard University established a law school already in 1869, most white institutions excluded Black students well into the twentieth century. Even after landmark Supreme Court rulings mandated desegregation (e.g., the 1950 *Sweatt v. Painter* and the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*), many Southern law schools resisted integration (Kidder, 2003).

Efforts to broaden access to the legal profession, including the introduction of affirmative action in the late 1960s, yielded only gradual progress. A Carnegie Corporation report found that across 17 prominent Southern law schools, the number of Black first-year students rose from just 22 in 1969 to 171 in 1973 — still only 3% of total enrollment (Evans, 1973). The resulting scarcity of Black lawyers was striking. In Mississippi, for example, only three Black lawyers were practicing in 1965, a figure that rose to just 49 by 1973 — roughly one Black lawyer per 16,000 Black residents, compared with one white lawyer per 450 white residents (Evans, 1973).

Professional pipelines play an important role for sheriffs too. Although statutory requirements are less stringent, in some states professional credentials are mandated and recent work by Farris and Holman (2024) indicates that more than 95% of them have prior law enforcement experience in senior positions. Before the civil rights movement, Black police officers in the South were rare (Rudwick, 1962). Even if, over time, their numbers increased, their duties and promotion prospects

remained limited (Dulaney, 1996), constraining their ability to compete for the county's top law enforcement position.

Voter Preferences and Electoral Dynamics. Voter preferences may further reinforce these barriers. Public opinion has long favored punitive "tough-on-crime" policies (Enns, 2014; Gordon and Huber, 2002; Sances, 2023). As a result, Black candidates, who may be less inclined to embrace such stances, may face electoral disadvantages. Research shows that Black law enforcement officials tend to use less force, particularly in encounters with minority civilians (Ba et al., 2021; Hoekstra and Sloan, 2022), and affect the arrest and prosecution of Black youth (Jackson, Neshkova and Meier, 2023); greater racial diversity among judges also reduces the Black-white gap in the probability of incarceration (Harris, 2024). Voter responses to these patterns may disadvantage Black candidates for law enforcement and judicial elections. A related constraint is white voter backlash in response to Black political advances. Prior research documents a surge in white mobilization following the VRA, particularly in counties where Black empowerment became visible (Bernini et al., 2025). This suggests that gains in Black representation in local legislative institutions may have triggered counter-mobilization that slowed progress in offices administering justice.

The VRA as Empirical Leverage. The VRA of 1965 automatically suspended tests and devices restricting access to the ballot in jurisdictions covered under Section 4(b). These provisions generated a sharp and geographically uneven expansion in political inclusion across the South. In covered counties, Black registration rates surged (Cascio and Washington, 2014), but these gains were accompanied by white counter-mobilization, including increases in white registration (Alt, 1994; Fresh, 2018; Bernini et al., 2025), efforts to suppress elective offices (Komisarchik, 2026), and other strategies to blunt the Act's effects (Trebbi, Aghion and Alesina, 2008; Eubank and Fresh, 2022). Section 5 complemented the immediate suspension of voting restrictions by requiring covered jurisdictions to obtain federal approval before implementing subsequent changes to electoral rules. Early Department of Justice (DOJ) review focused mainly on barriers to reg-

istration and candidacy, and its scope broadened after *Allen v. State Board of Elections* (1969) extended preclearance to all changes in voting practices (Davidson and Grofman, 1994). At the same time, civil rights organizations built durable grassroots infrastructure that supported sustained mobilization and monitoring. In particular, coordinated litigation efforts, facilitated by the Section 5 preclearance provisions, helped sustain the Act's effectiveness and contributed to the first durable wave of Black officeholding. To assess the relevance of preclearance to the offices we study, we reviewed all 822 DOJ Section 5 objection records. Although many objections concerned voter registration, candidate access, and legislative or municipal elections, others directly addressed the electoral structures of judicial and law enforcement offices.[3]

The VRA therefore affected both voter demand and candidate supply at the local level. It expanded the Black electorate in covered counties and lowered direct barriers to candidacy by removing registration-based restrictions. Yet it did not directly eliminate an important constraint specific to justice offices: the limited number of Black lawyers and law enforcement professionals from whom candidates for these offices could emerge. This distinction allows us to examine whether the expansion of political opportunity translated into Black representation differently in offices requiring specialized professional backgrounds.

3 Data and Descriptive Patterns

We construct a novel dataset that integrates historical and contemporary records on Black elected officials in judicial and law enforcement offices between 1964 and 2024, together with data on Black professionals in the legal and policing fields, across the 11 former Confederate states.[4] For the pre-VRA period, we rely on data from Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). From the enactment

[3]For example, the DOJ objected to Alabama's 1971 law changing justices from elected to appointed positions; its 1975 combination of Bibb and Hale Counties into a single judicial district; North Carolina's numbered-post and staggered-term provisions for superior-court judgeships; and Mississippi's anti-single-shot provisions in multi-judge circuit and chancery court districts. The objection records are available at https://www.justice.gov/crt/section-5-objection-letters.

[4]Our sample includes the 1,103 counties across the 11 former Confederate states. The county is the unit of analysis. We exclude Virginia's independent cities because their boundaries underwent numerous changes.

of the VRA through 1990, our primary source is the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO), published by the Southern Regional Council starting from 1969 and later maintained by the Joint Center for Political Studies. After 1990, we rely on additional sources described below.

Judges. The NRBEO systematically recorded the names and positions of Black elected officials but listed courts only by title and address, without specifying their jurisdiction. To address this, we rely on the American Bench (AB) directory (The American Bench, 1977), which enables us to identify whether a court's jurisdiction was county-level or spanned multiple counties. We hand-digitized the NRBEO data, cross-referenced them with the AB directory, and reconstructed consistent institutional structures over time. This procedure allows us to classify judicial offices into two categories: *i*) county-level courts; and, *ii*) above-county courts. For the latter, we use the AB directory and state Blue Books to reconstruct judicial-district boundaries and assign counts of Black judges accordingly. The result is a harmonized dataset covering 24 distinct courts, summarized in Appendix Table A1.

After 1990, the NRBEO ceased publication. For subsequent decades, we draw on the Directory of Minority Judges of the United States (American Bar Association, 2001, 2008) and the American Bench Directory (Forster-Long, 2024), from which we digitized information on judges' race across state and local courts. For consistency, we restrict our attention to trial-level courts with stable institutional structures and link them back to the courts identified in the NRBEO summarized in Appendix Table A1.[5]

Sheriffs. Through 1990, the NRBEO also reported the names of Black sheriffs, who are elected at the county level. For more recent years, we draw on a comprehensive panel database of sheriffs compiled by Daniel Thompson, which records their names and tenure, but does not report their race. Using this as a foundation, we manually coded the race of sheriffs by consulting official state

[5]Since some local courts were renamed, merged, abolished, or underwent changes in jurisdiction or selection methods, we identify trial courts that can be consistently defined and observed over time. For courts above the county level, we use state Blue Books and the American Bench directory to define consistent boundaries over time.

records (e.g., Secretary of State publications), state-level sheriffs' associations, obituaries, news articles, and archival materials. This procedure enables us to identify the race of more than 90% of sheriffs serving in 2001, 2008 and 2016. For 2024, we code race directly from official directories maintained by sheriffs' associations in each state.

District Attorneys. The NRBEO reports information on the names of Black prosecutors until 1990. Because district attorneys are elected at the judicial-district level, encompassing multiple counties, we map NRBEO records to judicial districts reconstructed using the AB directory and state Blue Books. We supplement these historical sources with information from state Blue Books and state-level district attorneys' associations.

Professional Pipeline. To capture Black representation in the broader legal and law enforcement professions, we compile county-level occupational data from the U.S. Census across multiple decades. For 1940 and 1950, we use full-count Census data to calculate the number of lawyers and police officers (Ruggles et al., 2024, 2025). For 1980 and 1990, we rely on comparable measures from the Census Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Tabulations (Manson et al., 2024). From 2000 onward we extend the series using the 2000 1% state Census sample and the American Community Survey (ACS) five-year samples.[6] These data allow us to trace the evolution of the professional pipeline and evaluate whether constraints in candidate supply shaped Black representation in judicial and law enforcement offices.

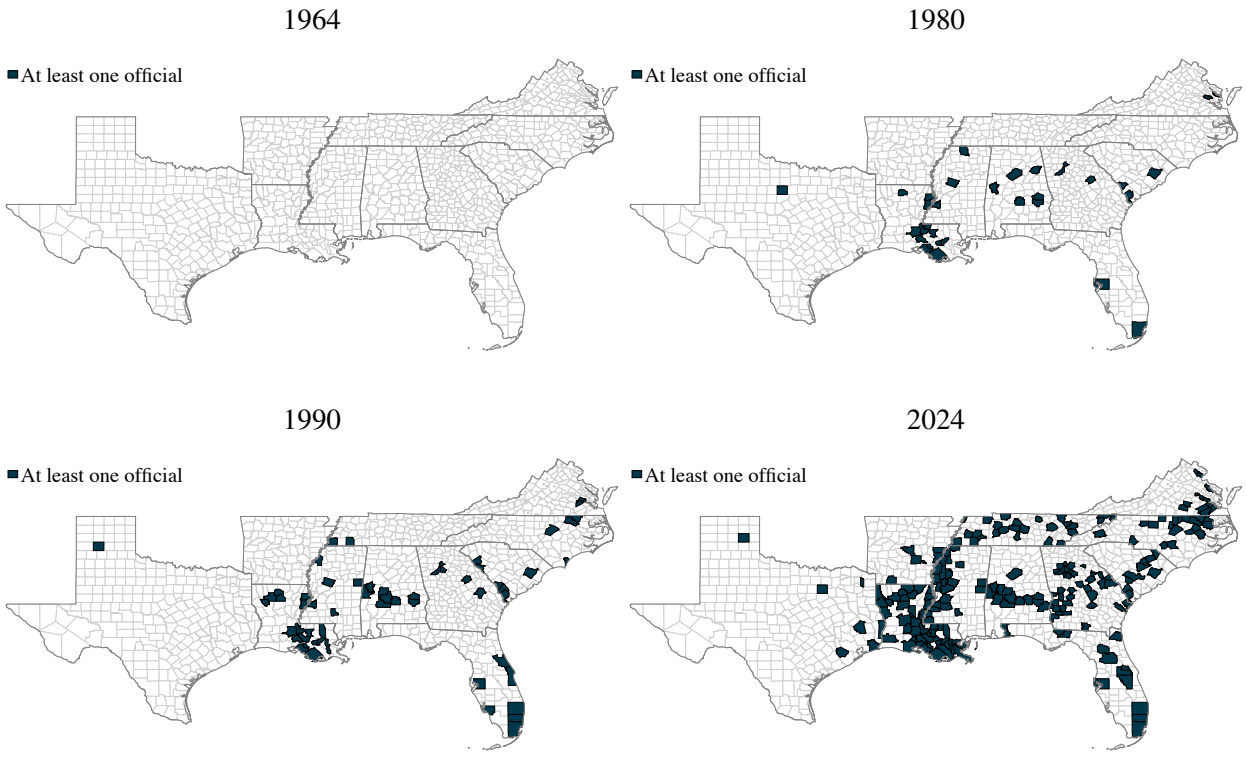
Descriptive Patterns in Black Officeholding. The descriptive picture is stark. All counties elect a sheriff, and 826 counties across eight states have at least one elective county-level court.[7] Before the VRA, there were no Black sheriffs or county-level judges anywhere in the South. By 1980, there were only 13 Black sheriffs and 26 Black county-level judges, concentrated in a handful of

[6]This source only reports state-level information.

[7]As shown in Appendix Table A1, five of these states have one such court in each of their 536 counties, while Alabama, Georgia, and some Louisiana parishes have more than one.

counties with large Black populations; many counties with similarly large Black populations still had none (Figure 1 and Appendix Figure A1). Overall, only 2.9% of counties had a Black sheriff or county-level judge, rising to 5% by 1990 (Figure 2). The contrast with county commissions — the South's main county governing bodies, which exercise both legislative and executive authority — is striking: 16% of counties had at least one Black commissioner by 1980 and 32% by 1990.[8]

Figure 1: County-Level Black Elected Officials in the U.S. South



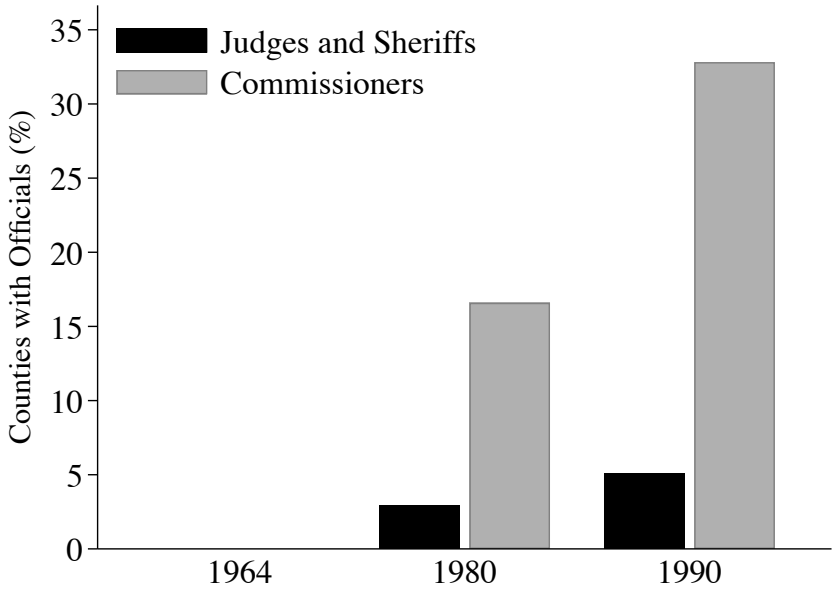
Notes: Shaded counties are those with at least one Black sheriff or county-level judge.

Representation in above-county offices was similarly limited: among districts with constant boundaries, there were only 13 Black judges across the 201 districts that elect them and no Black prosecutors in any of the 306 prosecutorial districts. By 1990, Black representation across law-enforcement and judicial offices remained modest.

Only in the long run did Black representation increase substantially and become more widespread (bottom right panel of Figure 1). Figure 3 presents key summary statistics on Black representation

[8]See Appendix Figure A2. NRBEO data on Black elected commissioners are available only through the early 1990s.

Figure 2: Black Representation in County Offices



Notes: Share of the counties with at least one Black elected official.

by coverage status.[9] The top two panels report county-level offices and the bottom two above-county offices. For positions with multiple officeholders (judges), we measure representation as the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents.[10] For single-office positions (sheriffs and district attorneys), we report the share of counties or districts with a Black officeholder. Gains were significantly larger in covered than in non-covered areas. By 1980, 2.1% of covered counties had a Black sheriff, compared with 0.2% of non-covered counties; by 1990, this share rose to 3.8% in covered counties while remaining negligible elsewhere. Judicial representation grew more slowly: by 1990, covered counties had on average only 0.005 Black judges per 1,000 residents, compared with virtually none in non-covered counties. Gains were even more limited above the county level: no district had elected a Black prosecutor by 1980, and only 13 Black above-county judges were in office. By 1990, multi-county districts averaged only 0.001 Black judges per 1,000 residents in both groups, with just three Black district attorneys in total.

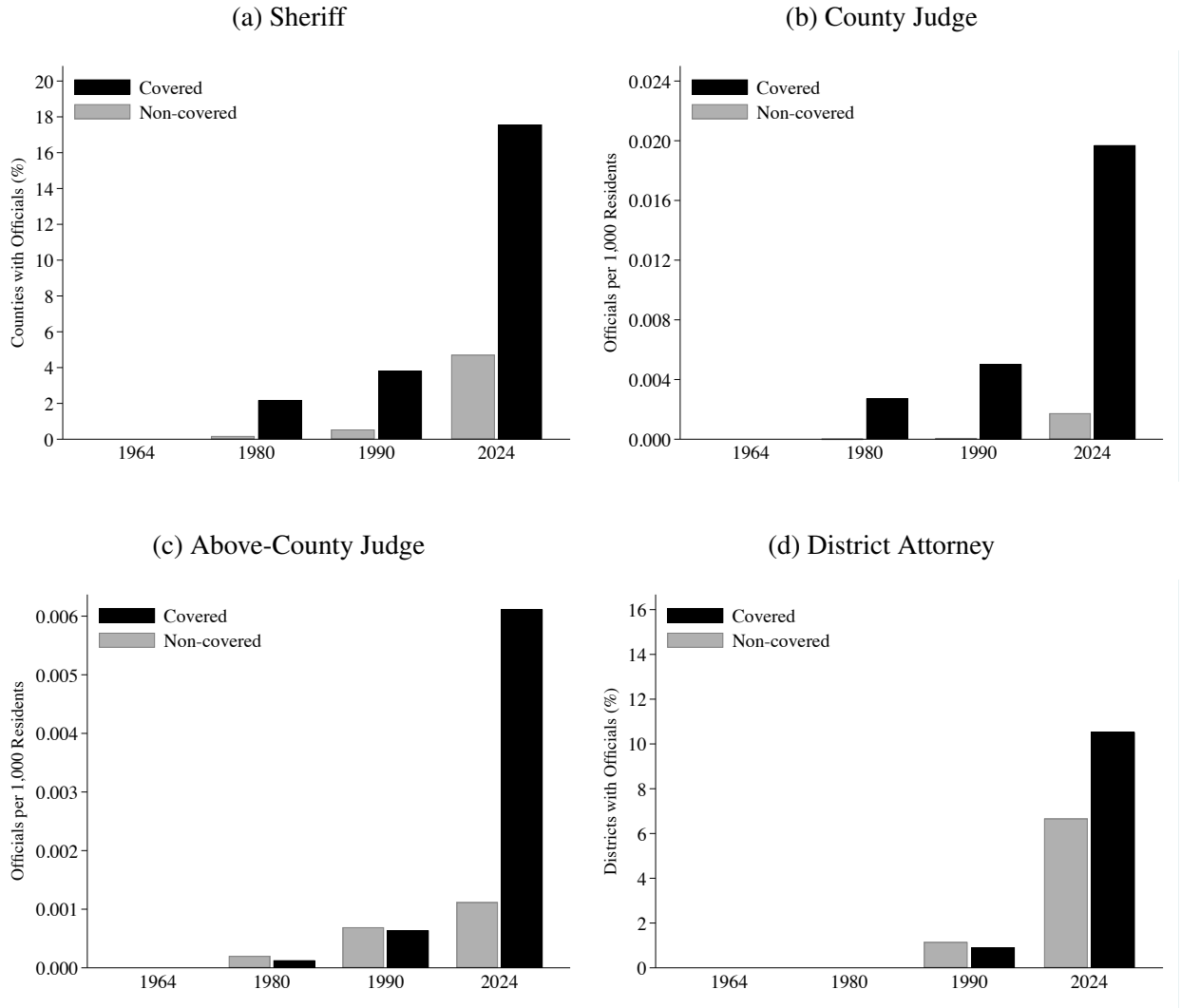
The long-run data, however, show a striking shift. By 2024, nearly 18% of covered counties

[9] See Appendix Table A2 for more details.

[10] We standardize by population because systematic data on court size are unavailable.

had a Black sheriff, compared with fewer than 5% of non-covered counties, while Black county-level judges per capita increased four-fold since 1990 in covered counties, whereas representation in non-covered counties remained minimal. Above-county offices show a similar pattern from a lower baseline: covered districts had substantially more Black judges and were about 60% more likely to have a Black district attorney.

Figure 3: Black Representation by Coverage



Notes: Panels (a) and (d) report the share of counties with a Black sheriff and districts with a Black district attorney, respectively. Panels (b) and (c) report Black county- and above-county judges per 1,000 residents, respectively.

Together, these data highlight two patterns. Through 1990, progress was limited relative to other important elective offices and geographically concentrated, leaving many covered counties

with large Black populations without Black judges or sheriffs. Only in the longer run did representation become more widespread, with consistently higher levels in covered than in non-covered counties.

4 The VRA and Black Representation in the Justice System

4.1 Empirical Strategy

To study the evolution of Black representation in the justice system, we exploit the Section 4 automatic trigger, whereby jurisdictions that maintained a test or device restricting the right to vote and had either voter registration below 50% on November 1, 1964, or turnout below 50% in the November 1964 presidential election were required to immediately suspend such devices — mainly literacy tests.[11] All counties in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia, as well as 39 counties in North Carolina were covered.[12]

The VRA generated large and geographically uneven expansions in Black electoral participation, creating a unique opportunity to examine how changes in enfranchisement interacted with local demographics to shape representation. As Black representation might have changed independently of the VRA, we use Southern counties with a shared history of Black disenfranchisement, but not subject to coverage, as a comparison group.

Our empirical strategy thus follows a difference-in-differences design with continuous treatment intensity, leveraging cross-county variation in pre-VRA Black population shares. The idea is that Section 4 coverage should have produced greater gains in Black officeholding after 1965 in counties with larger pre-VRA Black population shares, where more Black residents stood to gain from the removal of barriers to political participation. Thus, although coverage — assigned mainly at the state level, except in North Carolina — applied uniformly to all counties within covered ju-

[11] DOJ, 52 U.S.C. §10303(b) coverage criteria: https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-52-voting-and-elections-subtitle-i-and-ii.

[12] In the 1975 reauthorization of the VRA, coverage was extended to take into account potential discrimination against language minorities. Given that our focus is on the effect of the VRA on Black representation, we adopt the 1965 definition of coverage. Results are robust if we drop counties covered by the 1975 reauthorization.

risdictions, its potential impact varied with the size of the Black population enfranchised by the VRA.

We operationalize this approach using two complementary specifications. First, an event-study traces the dynamic effects of coverage before and after 1965, allowing us to assess the timing of representation gains. In particular, we estimate the following specification:

$$y_{ct} = \sum_{n \neq 1964} \gamma_n D_n^t \, Black_{c,1960} + \sum_{n \neq 1964} \theta_n D_n^t \left(Black_{c,1960} \times VRA_c \right) + \mathbf{X}_c' \beta + I_{st} + I_c + \varepsilon_{ct} \quad (1)$$

where y_{ct} denotes Black representation in county c at time t, measured either on the extensive or intensive margins. $Black_{c,1960}$ denotes the Black share of the county population in 1960, VRA_c equals one for covered counties, and D_n^t is an indicator equal to one when $n = t$.[13] $\mathbf{X}_c$ is a vector of pre-VRA county-level socioeconomic and demographic controls (defined below), fully interacted with VRA_c and D_n^t.[14] The model also includes state-year fixed effects (I_{st}) and county fixed effects (I_c).[15] The reference year is 1964, the last election before the passage of the VRA. Thus, θ_n captures how the relationship between the 1960 Black population share and Black officeholding in covered counties diverged from the corresponding relationship in non-covered counties in year n, relative to 1964. Because state-year fixed effects absorb statewide changes, identification mainly comes from the comparison of within-state gradients across covered and non-covered states.

Second, we estimate a long-difference specification that summarizes how Black representation in local offices evolved over longer horizons. By focusing on changes across decades, this specification abstracts from year-to-year fluctuations and captures medium- to long-run shifts in Black representation associated with VRA coverage:

$$\Delta y_c = \gamma Black_{c,1960} + \theta \left(Black_{c,1960} \times VRA_c \right) + \mathbf{X}_c' \beta + I_s + \varepsilon_c \quad (2)$$

[13] We include separate indicators for covered and non-covered counties in North Carolina.

[14] In other words, each time-invariant control enters the specification analogously to $Black_{c,1960}$, allowing its relationship with Black officeholding to vary over time and by VRA coverage status.

[15] Because federal district courts played a central role in enforcing Section 5, we cluster standard errors at the judicial-division level to account for correlated shocks across counties within the same division. Federal district courts are organized by judicial divisions, which group multiple counties; our sample contains 137 such divisions. The mapping draws on information from the United States Attorney's Office and the United States District Courts.

where Δy_c is the change in Black officeholding between 1964 and subsequent periods. I_s are state dummies that capture state-specific trends, and all pre-VRA county-level variables described above are interacted with the coverage indicator.[16] Our main parameter of interest, θ, captures the difference between covered and non-covered counties in the relationship between the 1960 Black population share and subsequent changes in Black officeholding.

In all our specifications, we control for the standard pre-VRA county-level socioeconomic and demographic characteristics used in the literature (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023), summarized in panel C of Appendix Table A2.[17] Appendix Figure A1 illustrates the design, highlighting how we combine variation in pre-VRA Black population shares with coverage status to identify differences in the evolution of Black officeholding.

Our identification assumption is that, absent the VRA, trends in Black representation would have evolved similarly in covered and non-covered counties. The uniform absence of Black officials before the VRA is consistent with the former Confederacy as an enclave of authoritarian rule (Mickey, 2015). However, parts of the Outer South became more receptive to civil rights during the postwar period (Schickler, 2016), raising the possibility of differential pre-trends in underlying political conditions that are not visible in officeholding data. We address this concern in Appendix Table C1 by examining pre-VRA trends in a range of outcomes capturing political change in the South (Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023). We find little evidence of differential pre-trends, with two exceptions: the share of land devoted to cotton production and the change in the Republican presidential vote share between 1940 and 1960. As shown in Appendix Table D1, our results remain robust to controlling for the 1959 cotton share (column (2)) and the 1960 Republican presidential vote share (column (3)).

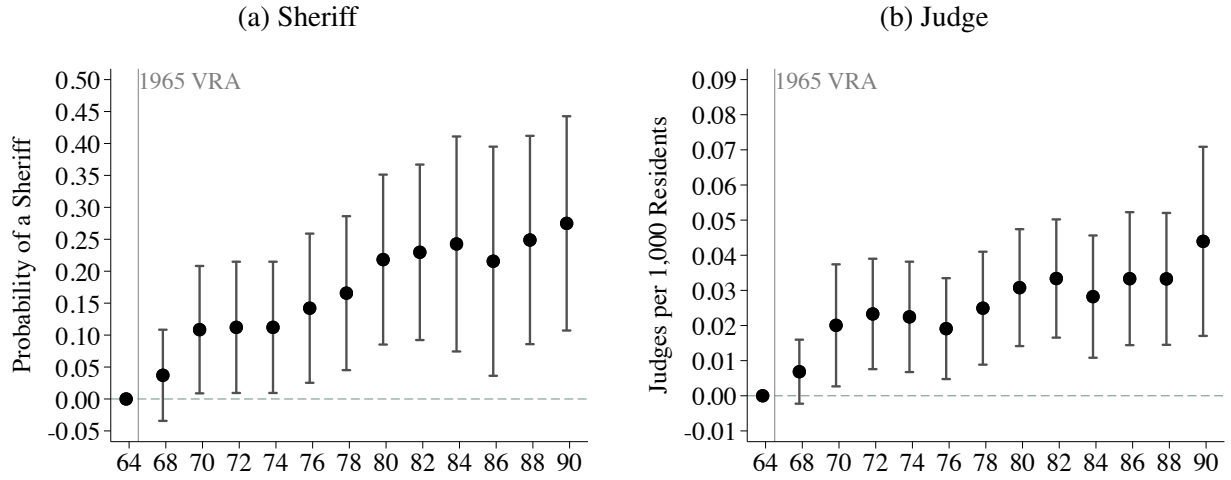
[16] Standard errors are clustered at the judicial-division level, consistent with the event-study specification.

[17] In particular, we account for population, educational attainment, poverty, unemployment, share of population living in rural areas, cotton suitability, historical incidence of lynching and racial protests.

4.2 Patterns of Representation in the Local Justice System

Sheriffs and County Judges. Figure 4 illustrates the effects of VRA coverage on Black officeholding for sheriffs and county-level judges through 1990. It plots the coefficient θ_n from equation (1), which captures the difference between covered and non-covered counties in the relationship between the 1960 Black population share and Black officeholding, relative to 1964.

Figure 4: Event-Study Estimates, 1964–1990



Notes: This figure plots the difference between covered and non-covered counties in the relationship between the 1960 Black population share and Black representation, relative to 1964, with 95% confidence intervals.

Panel (a) shows that covered counties with larger Black populations began electing Black sheriffs soon after 1965, with the gap relative to non-covered counties widening steadily over time. The long-difference estimates in Table 1 confirm the magnitude of these effects: by 1980, a 10 percentage-point increase in the Black population share was associated with a 2.2-percentage-point greater increase in the probability of electing a Black sheriff in covered than in non-covered counties (column (1)), rising to 2.7 percentage points by 1990 (column (2)). These represent meaningful, yet limited, breakthroughs in a single-seat office where Black sheriffs had been virtually absent before the VRA.

Panel (b) shows a gradual but persistent increase in Black representation among judges. Column (3) of Table 1 quantifies these gains: by 1980, a 10 percentage-point increase in the Black

population share was associated with 0.003 more Black judges per 1,000 residents in covered than in non-covered counties, increasing to 0.004 by 1990 (column (4)). While measured on a different scale than sheriffs, these effects are significant, but the increase in Black judges remains small, particularly compared with other important local offices, such as county commissioners (columns (5)–(6), Table 1), which do not require comparable professional qualifications or experience.[18]

Taken together, these results suggest that while the VRA created openings for Black representation in county-level justice offices, progress remained modest and was concentrated in covered jurisdictions with large Black populations.

Table 1: Black Elected Officials in County-Level Offices Through 1990

Dep. Variable:	Sheriff		Judge		Commissioner	
	1964–1980	1964–1990	1964–1980	1964–1990	1964–1980	1964–1990
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.217**	0.270**	0.031**	0.044**	0.081*	0.121**
	(0.067)	(0.077)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Black Share, 1960	–0.012	0.037	–0.000	–0.000	0.068**	0.106**
	(0.012)	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.014)	(0.021)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.011	0.021	0.001	0.002	0.013	0.026
Adj. R-Square	0.08	0.13	0.18	0.22	0.30	0.43
N	1022	1022	756	756	1022	1022

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2). In columns (1) and (2) the dependent variable is the change in an indicator equal to one if the county has a Black sheriff. In columns (3) and (4) it is the change in the number of Black county-level judges per 1,000 residents, and in columns (5) and (6) the change in the number of Black county commissioners per 1,000 residents. Robust standard errors in parentheses are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. $*$ p < .05; $**$ p < .01.

Above-County Judges and Prosecutors. Unlike sheriffs and county-level judges, prosecutors and above-county judges are elected at the judicial-district level, typically encompassing multiple counties and under at-large electoral rules. This institutional design not only reduces the number of observations relative to county-level offices but also makes minority votes more susceptible to

[18]We find similarly larger effects for constables. Like county commissioners, these elected officials generally do not require professional qualifications or experience. The data, however, cover only six states (see Appendix Table D2, columns (1) and (2)).

dilution. A further complication is that district boundaries are not always stable over time. To ensure comparability, we restrict the analysis to districts whose boundaries remained unchanged over the period examined. For 1964–1990, this yields 306 districts covering 731 counties, roughly two-thirds of our county sample. The judge sample is smaller, at 201 districts, because South Carolina and Virginia do not popularly elect above-county judges.[19] Because only two non-covered districts had a Black population share above 35% in 1960, the baseline model would rely on extrapolation for covered districts with larger Black population shares due to limited common support. We therefore estimate the relationship between Black population share and Black officeholding separately for covered and non-covered districts.

The results, reported in panels (a) and (b) of Figure 5, show no evidence of progress in Black representation in these higher-level offices. By 1990, the estimated effects remain close to zero for both prosecutors and judges.[20] While these null results should be interpreted with caution given the nature of the sample, they are consistent with the expectation that larger, at-large constituencies posed greater barriers to Black officeholding (Trebbi, Aghion and Alesina, 2008).

4.3 Sources of Limited Progress

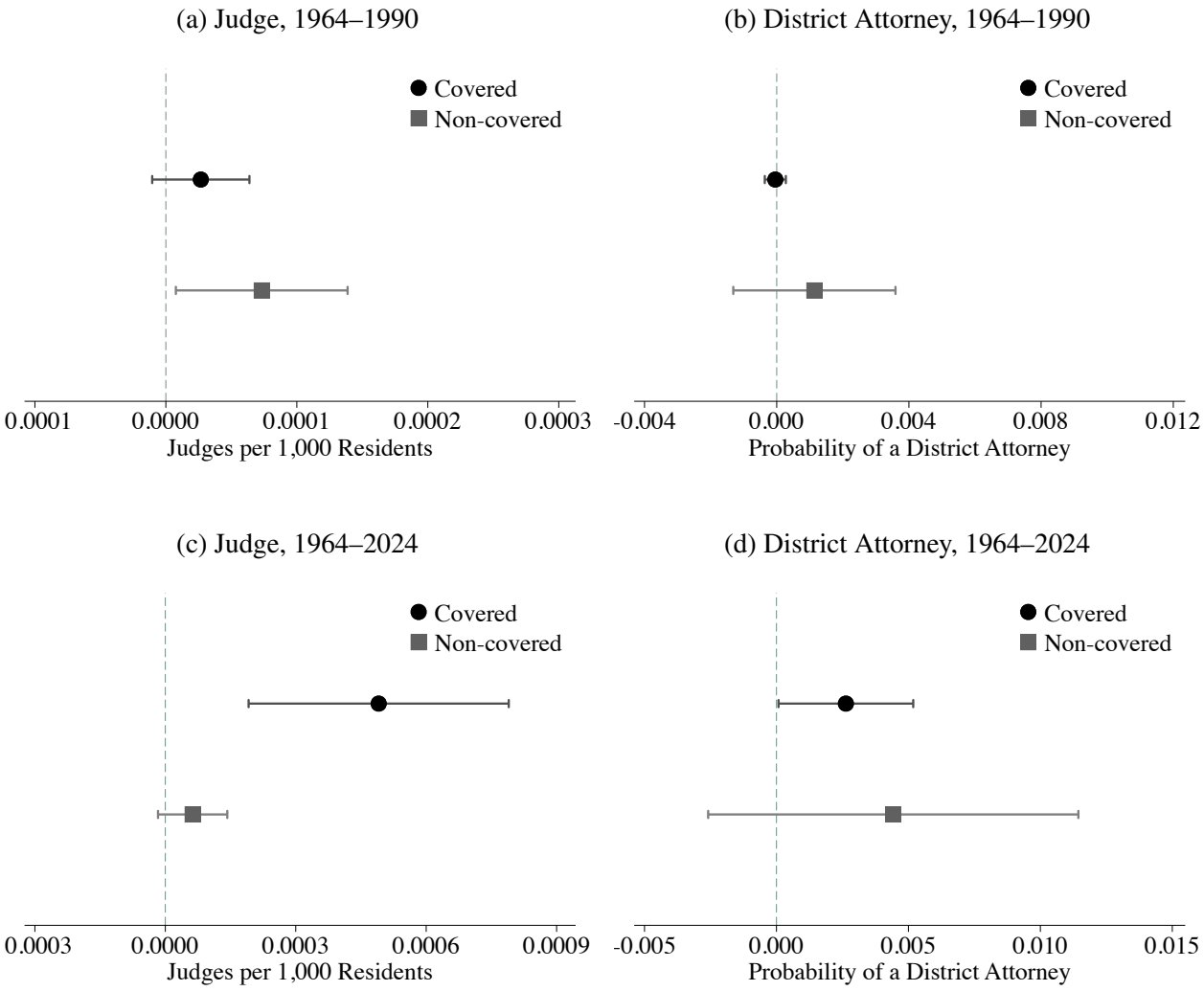
The persistent under-representation of Black officials in law enforcement and judicial offices — relative to other local bodies such as county commissions — suggests the presence of barriers specific to these roles. In this section, we examine how constraints related to voter demand and candidate supply help account for these patterns.

Voter Demand. If voters — particularly white voters — favor candidates who adopt punitive approaches to crime and perceive candidates' racial backgrounds as correlated with their law enforcement preferences, Black candidates may face greater electoral challenges where white voters constitute a dominant voting bloc. These challenges may be further intensified because elections

[19]The restricted sample is balanced on observables relative to the overall sample.

[20]For 1990, 12 of the covered districts in North Carolina include some counties that were not subject to Section 5 provisions. If we exclude these districts, there are no Black district attorneys in the sample.

Figure 5: Black Elected Officials in Above-County Offices



Notes: The figure plots the coefficient on the 1960 Black population share, with 95% confidence intervals, estimated from separate regressions for covered and non-covered districts.

for these offices are typically held at large and Black residents comprised a minority of the electorate in most counties. If a larger Black electorate relaxes voter-demand constraints — and turnout is higher where Black residents constitute a larger share of the population (Fraga, 2016) — we would expect greater gains in Black representation in counties where Black voters constitute a majority.

Although the number of majority-Black counties was relatively small (136 in 1960), precluding a full regression analysis, the descriptive patterns are nonetheless revealing. Table 2 compares

outcomes across majority- and non-majority-Black counties. In 1980, virtually no non-majority-Black county had a Black sheriff, and only 2% had a Black judge; by 1990, these figures were essentially unchanged. Majority-Black counties experienced greater gains, but representation remained limited. In 1980, 89% of majority-Black counties had no Black judge and 92% had no Black sheriff. By 1990, these shares declined only slightly, to 86% and 87%, respectively.

Table 2: Voter Composition and Black Representation

	Sheriff		Judge	
	Black	Non-Black	Black	Non-Black
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Majority-Black Counties				
1980	8%	92%	11%	89%
1990	13%	87%	14%	86%
Panel B: Non-Majority-Black Counties				
1980	0%	100%	2%	98%
1990	1%	99%	3%	97%

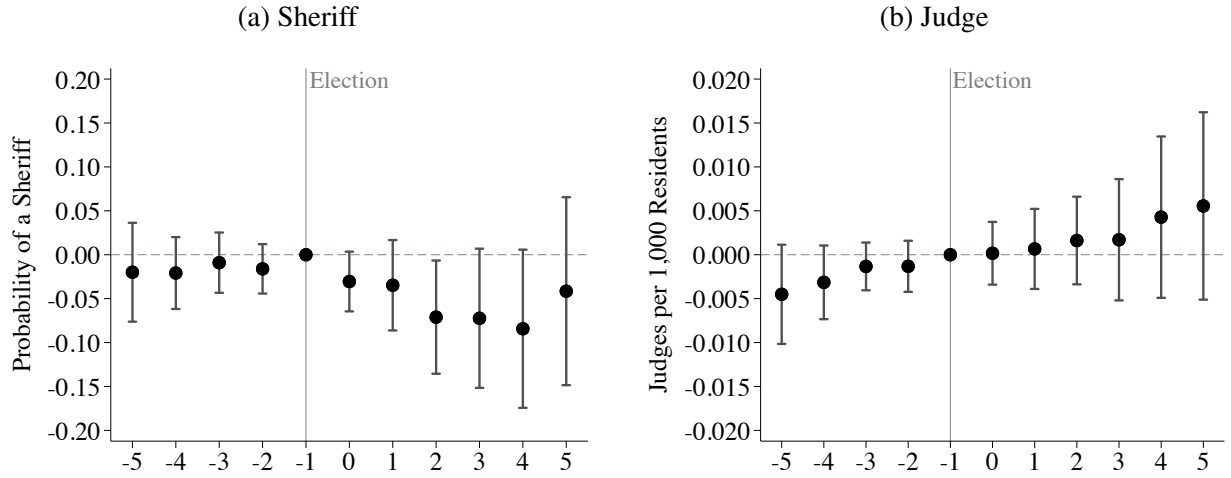
Notes: The table reports the share of counties with at least one Black sheriff (columns (1)–(2)) and at least one Black county-level judge (columns (3)–(4)) in 1980 and 1990; columns (2) and (4) are the complements and include counties with no such officeholder. Majority-Black counties are those whose 1960 Black population share exceeded 50%. The sheriff columns cover all 1,103 sample counties; the judge columns cover the 826 counties with an elective county-level court.

Next, we examine whether Black breakthroughs in other local offices help explain the limited progress of Black representation in the justice system. Following Bernini et al. (2025), we treat a county's first Black commissioner election as a salient event that may trigger racial backlash. Using a leads-and-lags framework centered on that election year, we trace subsequent changes in the likelihood of electing Black sheriffs and judges. To reduce concerns that differences across counties drive the results, we restrict the sample to counties that elected at least one Black official between 1965 and 1990, thereby exploiting variation in the timing of Black political breakthroughs rather than cross-sectional differences.[21]

[21]The data are grouped into two-year intervals, and the models include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed

Figure 6 reports the results, using the pre-election period as the omitted baseline. First, we find no evidence of differential pre-trends for either Black sheriffs (panel a) or judges (panel b). Second, following the election of a Black commissioner, the likelihood of Black representation in law enforcement offices did not increase — and for sheriffs, it may even have declined. Although the timing of these elections may be partly endogenous, this pattern is consistent with white voter mobilization against visible Black political gains limiting subsequent progress in other single-seat offices.

Figure 6: Representation in Law and Justice Around the First Black Commissioner Election



Notes: The figure plots event-study coefficients, with 95% confidence intervals, on the interaction between VRA coverage and leads and lags of the first election of a Black county commissioner, measured in biennial election cycles.

Overall, these results provide limited support for voter-demand–based explanations of under-representation in the justice system. While we find some evidence of racial backlash following Black political breakthroughs elsewhere, voter preferences alone cannot account for the slow progress — particularly given the limited gains even in majority-Black counties.[22] This suggests that other constraints, notably candidate supply and institutional design, also played an important

effects, interactions between year dummies and baseline covariates, and interactions between VRA coverage and the timing of the first Black commissioner election.

[22] Another form of backlash that may have limited observed gains was the conversion of elected offices to appointed positions (Komisarchik, 2026). Because our data only provide information on the race of elected officials, we cannot systematically track Black representation in appointed offices to examine this channel. This concern does not apply to sheriffs, whose offices remained elective throughout our study period.

role.

Candidate Supply. To assess the role of candidate supply, we examine the professional pipeline into judicial and law enforcement offices. Because a law degree is typically required for county-level judgeships, the number of lawyers in a county provides a natural proxy for the potential pool of judicial candidates. For sheriff positions, we use the number of Black police officers and detectives at the county level as a corresponding measure of candidate supply, since the overwhelming majority of sheriffs have prior law enforcement experience (Thompson, 2020; Farris and Holman, 2024).

Appendix Figure A3 illustrates the stark racial disparities in the professional pipeline. Before the VRA, there were only 370 Black lawyers in the South, concentrated in a few urban areas and historically Black population centers (panel a). By 1990, their number had risen to over 6,800, but their geographic reach remained limited. White lawyers (panel b), by contrast, increased from over 25,000 to nearly 162,000. Thus, although one in five Southern residents was Black in 1990, only one in 25 lawyers was Black. Moreover, while white lawyers were active in nearly every county, large parts of the South with substantial Black populations still had no Black lawyers.

The picture looks somewhat different for law enforcement (panel c): Black police officers and detectives were more numerous before the VRA (796 across the South) and more geographically dispersed. Their numbers grew substantially, reaching more than 19,000 by 1990. This reflected, among other factors, the recommendations of the 1968 Kerner Commission to diversify police departments and a series of lawsuits brought by the NAACP against major metropolitan police forces in the South, which resulted in court-ordered racial hiring requirements (McCrary, 2007). As a result, counties with larger Black population shares experienced substantial growth in the number of Black police officers across the South.[23]

Overall, the data indicate that Black access to the legal profession remained very limited, sub-

[23] Appendix Table A3 formalizes these descriptive patterns. Using our baseline long-difference specification, we show that the number of Black police officers and detectives grew more in counties with larger Black population shares, with no significant difference by coverage status. For Black lawyers, by contrast, we find no significant correlation.

stantially restricting the pool of potential Black candidates for local judicial office. Relative to the legal profession, the pathway into policing was broader and less constrained by formal educational requirements, providing a potentially more accessible pipeline into sheriff positions. Yet, as argued by Dulaney (1996), Black officers often faced restrictions in their duties and opportunities for promotion, limiting their prospects of advancing to the position of county sheriff.

5 Black Representation in the Long Run

So far, we have documented limited progress in Black officeholding through 1990. What happened in subsequent decades? Several developments may have altered the constraints identified above. The supply of qualified Black candidates likely expanded, driven by rising law school enrollments, higher bar passage rates, and efforts to diversify law enforcement recruitment. At the same time, the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* invalidated the VRA's coverage formula, weakening voting rights protections, while the durable grassroots organizational infrastructure that emerged from the civil rights movement may have helped counteract these effects. To assess how Black representation evolved amid these changes, we extend our analysis of Black officeholding in the justice system through 2024.

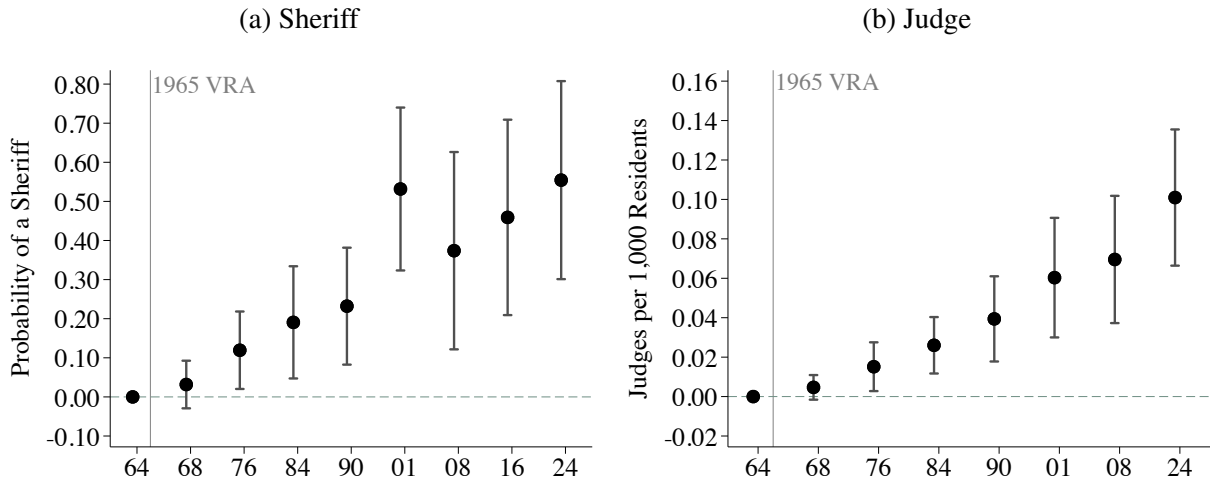
Once again, we deploy our difference-in-differences design with continuous treatment intensity to estimate the long-term effects of coverage. One concern is that county racial composition and socioeconomic conditions may have changed substantially since 1960. Appendix Figure A4 shows, however, that the Black population share is very persistent over time.[24] We also test whether our treatment variable (the interaction of 1960 Black share and VRA coverage) is associated with subsequent changes in education, unemployment, poverty, or population growth. Appendix Figure A5 shows no evidence of differential post-treatment trends, providing additional support for our research design.

Figure 7 presents the extended event-study results, and Table 3 reports the long-difference estimates. Covered counties with historically larger Black population shares experienced greater

[24]The correlation between the 1960 and 2000 Black population shares is 0.91; between 1960 and 2020 it is 0.87.

increases in Black officeholding over the long run, for both sheriffs (panel a) and judges (panel b). Notably, this upward trajectory persisted even after *Shelby County v. Holder*. Despite concerns over voter suppression — e.g., voter ID laws and polling place closures — Black representation in covered counties continued to increase. Progress also extended to above-county offices, as shown in panels (c) and (d) of Figure 5.[25] Why did gains persist, and in some cases accelerate, after the VRA's core enforcement mechanism was dismantled? In the remainder of this section, after probing the robustness of our findings, we explore two mechanisms: candidate supply and mobilization.

Figure 7: Event-Study Estimates, 1964–2024



Notes: Difference between covered and non-covered counties in the gradient of Black representation with respect to the 1960 Black population share, with 95% confidence intervals.

Robustness Checks. To ensure our results are not driven by model specification, sample selection, or unobserved historical differences, we conduct a series of robustness checks.

Our analysis compares covered and non-covered counties with similar racial composition. Although there is substantial common support in Black population shares, covered counties have larger Black populations on average. This raises a concern that our results may be driven by cov-

[25]Restricting the sample to districts with boundaries that remained constant through 2024 yields a sample of 250 districts for prosecutors and 145 districts for judges over the 1964–2024 period. The difference between the estimated coefficients in panel (c) is positive (0.000428) and statistically significant at the 1% level (standard error=0.000157); the corresponding difference in panel (d) is not statistically significant.

Table 3: Black Elected Officials in County-Level Offices in 2024

Dep. Variable:	Sheriff	Judge
	1964–2024	1964–2024
	(1)	(2)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.121**
	(0.155)	(0.029)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.003
	(0.095)	(0.004)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.114	0.010
Adj. R-Square	0.34	0.29
N	1022	756

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2). In column (1) the dependent variable is the change in an indicator equal to one if the county has a Black sheriff between 1964 and 2024. In column (2) it is the change in the number of Black county-level judges per 1,000 residents over the same period. Robust standard errors in parentheses are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

ered counties outside the common support, particularly in the presence of nonlinearities. Only 21 covered counties fall outside the common support, but they have disproportionately high rates of Black officeholding.[26] Still, the same pattern holds within the common support: covered counties are consistently more likely to elect Black sheriffs and judges.[27] To assess the sensitivity of our results, we first restrict the sample using Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) on Black population share and, separately, exclude counties outside the common support. We then allow for nonlinearities by identifying counties outside the common support with a separate indicator and dividing the remaining counties into low-, medium-, and high-Black-share bins using two alternative sets of thresholds (Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu, 2019).

As shown in Appendix Figure D1, our coefficient of interest remains positive and precisely estimated in both the CEM-matched and common-support samples for sheriffs and judges alike. In the binning exercise, the coefficients for sheriffs remain positive and precisely estimated across both

[26] In 2024, 90% of covered counties outside the common support had a Black sheriff and 43% a Black judge.

[27] Within the common support, the share of counties with a Black sheriff or judge is approximately two and a half times larger in covered than in non-covered counties.

alternative specifications. For judges, the coefficients are positive across bins, although estimates are more precise in the upper common-support bin. Our estimates are also virtually unchanged when dropping or adding baseline controls, excluding Florida and Texas counties covered under the 1975 reauthorization, or excluding Virginia counties with unstable boundaries or the entire state (Appendix Table D1).

The same holds true if we include additional judicial offices for which information is available until 1990, or if we drop contemporary offices with imperfect historical matches (Appendix Table D2). Results are similarly robust to restricting to counties near the 1964 turnout cutoff, varying the clustering of standard errors (Appendix Table D3), and controlling for residential segregation and for the local presence of Green Book establishments (Appendix Tables D4 and D5), local civil rights activism (Appendix Table D6), federal anti-poverty spending (Appendix Table D7), Black migration (Appendix Table D8), and Reconstruction-era political participation (Appendix Table D9).

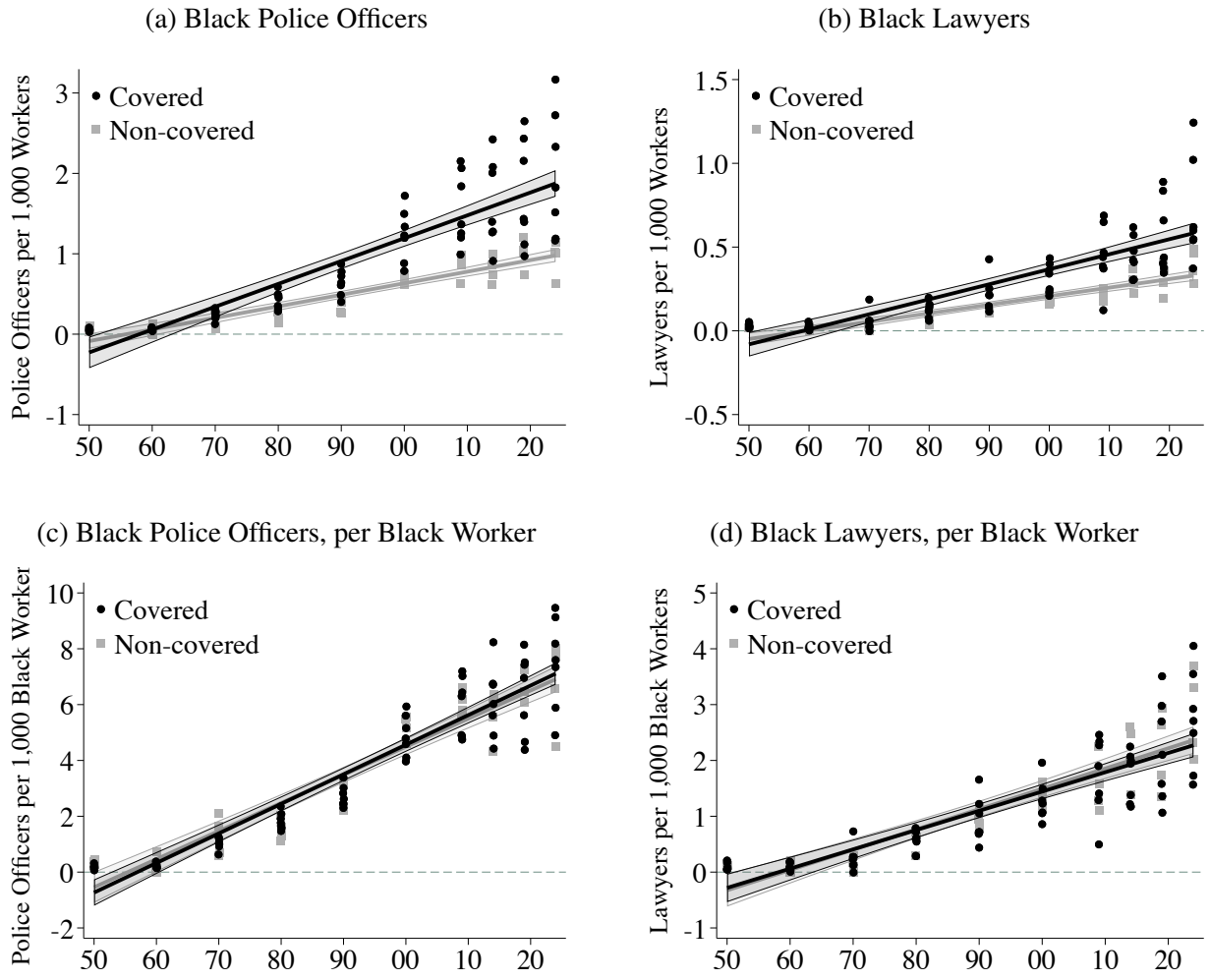
Candidate Supply. Rising Black educational attainment and access to professional careers helped ease supply-side constraints. The number of Black lawyers in the South increased by 77% between 1990 and 2000, to over 12,000, and exceeded 37,000 by 2024. The number of Black police officers similarly increased from just over 19,000 in 1990 to more than 90,000 in 2024. This expansion was widespread across the South. Figure 8 traces the long-run evolution of Black professionals in covered and non-covered states, using state-level Census occupational data through 2024.[28] Panels (a) and (b) show steady growth in Black police officers and lawyers per thousand workers across the South. Trends were similar in covered and non-covered states through 1990, after which growth became steeper in covered states, particularly for police officers and, after 2000, lawyers.

This divergence, however, might partly reflect differences in the size of the Black labor force across covered and non-covered states. To better capture Black presence in these professions, we

[28] Because post-1990 EEO tabulations do not report county-level data, we construct a consistent series between 1950 and 2024 using additional data from the decennial censuses for 1960, 1970, 2000 and from the American Community Survey for the more recent years.

alternatively normalize the number of Black professionals by the size of the Black labor force (panels c and d). By this measure, Black participation in both the legal profession and law enforcement increased at broadly similar rates in covered and non-covered states. Together, these patterns indicate a substantial expansion of Black professional pipelines across the South, gradually easing the supply-side constraints that had limited Black representation in earlier decades.

Figure 8: Long-Run Access to Law Enforcement and Legal Careers



Notes: Each marker is a state-year observation from decennial census and ACS data, for 1950 to 2000 by decade and for 2009, 2014, 2019 and 2024. Panels (a) and (b) report the number of Black police officers and Black lawyers per 1,000 workers; panels (c) and (d) report the same counts per 1,000 Black workers. Lines are linear fits with 95% confidence bands, estimated separately for covered and non-covered states.

Ideally, we would also like to know whether the growth in the pool of potential candidates translated into more Black individuals actually running for office. Louisiana provides a rare sys-

tematic source, as the state reports the race of all candidates for sheriff and judicial offices on the Secretary of State's website. Using these data, we find that between 2007 and 2023 the share of Black sheriff candidates nearly doubled (from 10.7% to 18.7%), while between 2008 and 2020 the share of Black judicial candidates increased from 15.2% to 20.1% (Louisiana Secretary of State, 2025). We observe a similar pattern in the data from de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023), who infer candidate race for local offices in a sample of large counties. The share of Black candidates in covered counties rose from about 12% in the late 1990s to roughly 22% in 2020, while remaining flat at around 17% in non-covered counties. Taken together, these patterns point to a long-run expansion in both the potential and actual pool of Black candidates.

Mobilization. Civil rights grassroots organizations, which expanded following the VRA's passage, became a durable feature of the Southern political landscape.[29] Following *Shelby County v. Holder* and the rise of the BLM movement, organizations such as the ACLU and NAACP — long active in challenging violations of the VRA's coverage provisions — expanded their efforts beyond litigation to recruit Black candidates and promote voter engagement in law enforcement and judicial elections. Advocacy groups increasingly targeted sheriff, judge, and prosecutor races (traditionally low-salience contests) with recruitment and support for Black candidates. Color of Change, for example, launched a 2018 initiative to elect progressive Black prosecutors, combining recruitment with voter education, while The Collective PAC, founded in 2016, trains and supports Black candidates for judicial and law enforcement offices across the South.[30]

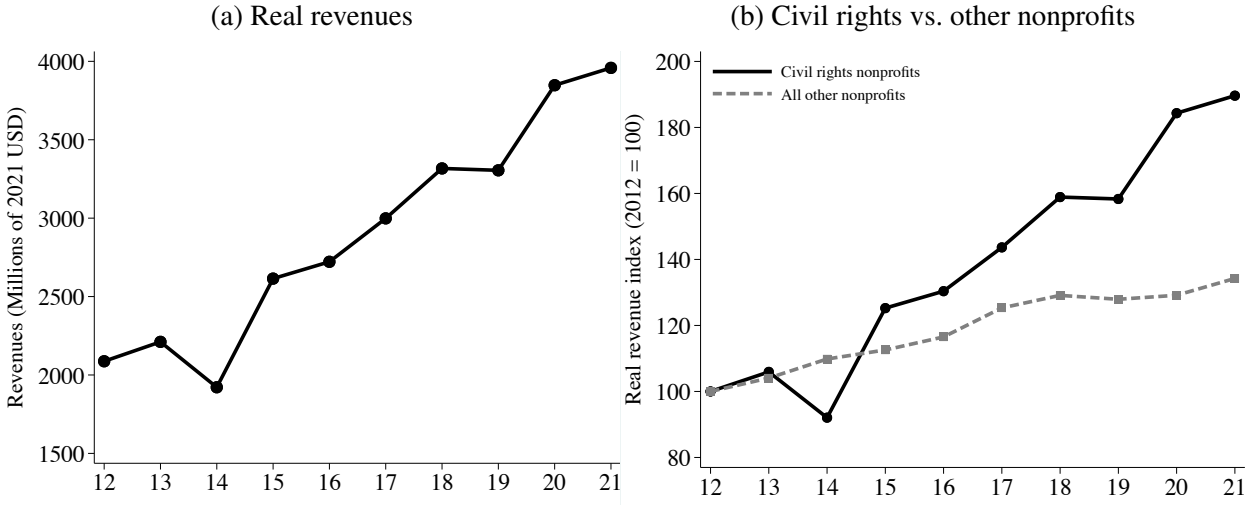
We provide two pieces of suggestive evidence of this mobilization. First, IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics show that real revenues of civil rights and voter engagement nonprofits rose sharply over the past decade (Figure 9). Panel (a) shows that revenues grew from $2.1 billion in 2012 to $4.0 billion in 2021 in constant 2021 dollars, an increase of 90%,

[29]For example, in all Southern states other than Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina (for which data are unavailable), between 1964 and 2025 the share of covered counties with an NAACP branch more than doubled, rising from 40% to 83%, while the share in non-covered counties increased only from 22% to 34%.

[30]Partnering with HBCUs, bar associations, and reform-oriented legal groups, The Collective PAC has endorsed over 1,000 Black candidates and helped elect dozens to office.

with the largest single-year gain of 16% occurring between 2019 and 2020. Panel (b) benchmarks this growth against the rest of the nonprofit sector: over the same period revenues of all nonprofits outside the civil rights classification grew by 34%, meaning that civil rights organizations expanded at more than twice the annual real rate of the sector as a whole (7.4 versus 3.3% per year). This expansion coincides with renewed attention to racial justice. For instance, Color of Change's membership quadrupled in days following Floyd's murder in 2020, while the National Bail Fund Network raised $75 million in just two weeks (Goldmacher, 2020). These patterns suggest that the rise of the BLM movement was a major catalyst for expanding the resources of organizations supporting Black candidates.

Figure 9: Revenues of Civil Rights Nonprofit Organizations

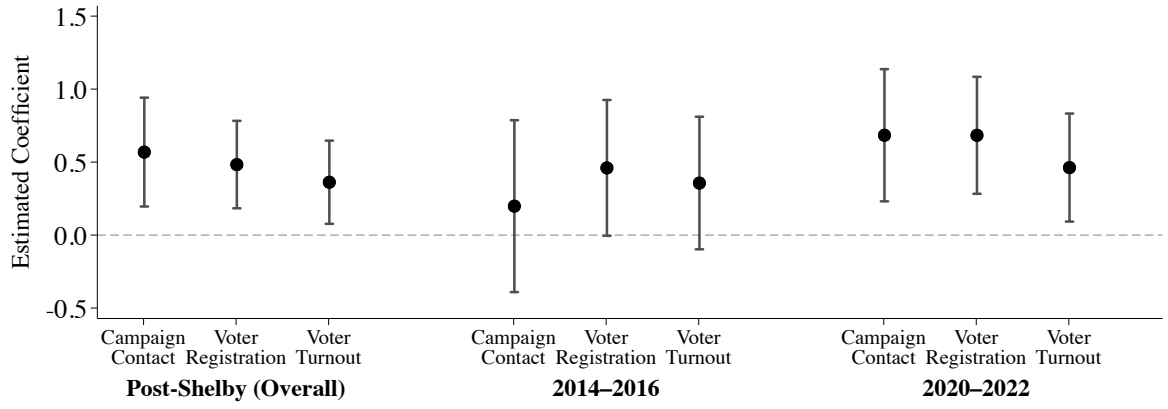


Notes: The figure reports revenues of civil rights nonprofit organizations from IRS Form 990 filings compiled by the National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2012–2021. Civil rights organizations are defined by National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities codes R20 (civil rights), R22 (minority rights), R40 (voter education and registration), and R60 (civil liberties). All revenues are expressed in constant 2021 dollars using the annual average CPI-U. Panel (a) reports total real revenues in millions of dollars. Panel (b) indexes revenues to 100 in 2012 and compares them with the corresponding index for all nonprofits outside the four civil rights categories.

Second, we examine Black voter mobilization using Cooperative Election Study data from 2006 to 2022, focusing on campaign contact, registration, and turnout across the 11 Southern states in our sample (Schaffner, Ansolabehere and Shih, 2023). We analyze differences by race, by coverage status (interacting the 1965 VRA coverage indicator with the 1960 Black share), and across pre- and post-*Shelby* periods. As shown in Figure 10, after *Shelby*, Black voters in covered

states with historically large Black populations became significantly more likely than white voters to report being contacted by campaigns, registering, and voting. These effects are strongest in 2020–2022, coinciding with the peak of the BLM movement.

Figure 10: Black Mobilization Outcomes



Notes: The figure plots the estimated coefficients, with 95% confidence intervals, on the interaction of respondent race (Black vs. white), treatment (VRA coverage $\times$ 1960 Black share) and a post-Shelby indicator, estimated on Cooperative Election Study data for the 11 sample states (Schaffner, Ansolabehere and Shih, 2023).

Taken together, these findings suggest that the convergence of an expanded candidate pipeline and heightened civil society mobilization reshaped the political landscape for judicial and law enforcement offices. Despite the rollback of formal federal oversight, Black representation accelerated in the long run, pointing to the importance of sustained grassroots activism and structural investments in candidate supply.

6 Conclusions

After the killing of George Floyd, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund renewed its call to "reimagine public safety" by increasing Black representation in leadership across the justice system — arguing that communities cannot build trust in the justice system when those enforcing the law do not reflect the people they serve (NAACP, 2021). This call echoed decades of frustration over the persistent under-representation of Black Americans among sheriffs and judges, even in counties with sizable

Black populations and formal voting protections. The urgency of this issue was underscored in a June 2020 congressional hearing organized by the House Judiciary Committee, where lawmakers and advocates stressed that achieving racial justice requires not only reforming policing practices but also addressing who holds power within the courts and law enforcement.[31]

Our study contributes to this debate by documenting the long-run evolution of Black representation in elected law enforcement and judicial offices across the U.S. South. For decades following the civil rights movement, progress was modest: while some breakthroughs occurred in local legislative bodies, sheriffs' and judges' offices remained overwhelmingly white. We show that this stagnation reflected mutually reinforcing barriers: persistent supply-side bottlenecks (especially in the legal profession) and racial backlash against early Black political advances. Over time, however, the trajectory shifted. Beginning in the early 2000s, Black representation in covered counties increased substantially, even after federal oversight of elections was curtailed by the Supreme Court in 2013. We attribute these gains to the convergence of two forces: the gradual expansion of candidate supply, as more Black lawyers and law enforcement officers entered the professions, and intensified mobilization by civil rights organizations, amplified by the rise of the BLM movement. Together, these developments reversed decades of stagnation and reshaped the racial composition of local justice leadership.

These findings carry two important implications. First, legal protections such as the VRA, while essential, are not sufficient on their own; long-lasting change requires parallel investments in candidate pipelines, grassroots mobilization, and political infrastructure. Second, the trajectory of recent decades underscores the central role of civil society (advocacy groups, community organizations, and activist networks) that expanded opportunities for Black candidates and sustained mobilization even after federal oversight was weakened. As national debates over policing and racial justice continue, understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for democratic accountability but also for community trust and the legitimacy of the justice system.

[31] House Judiciary Committee Oversight Hearing on Policing Practices and Law Enforcement Accountability, June 10, 2020 (https://www.congress.gov/event/116th-congress/house-event/110775).

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Supporting Information for

Ballot, Badge, and Bench:

Black Representation in Southern Justice

A Additional Figures and Tables **A1**

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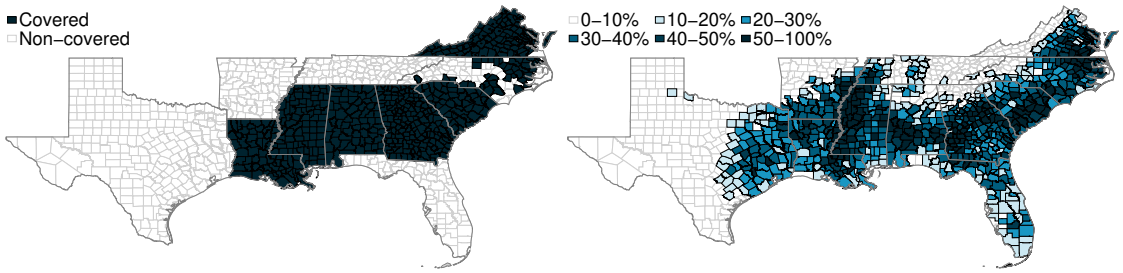
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A Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Identification Strategy

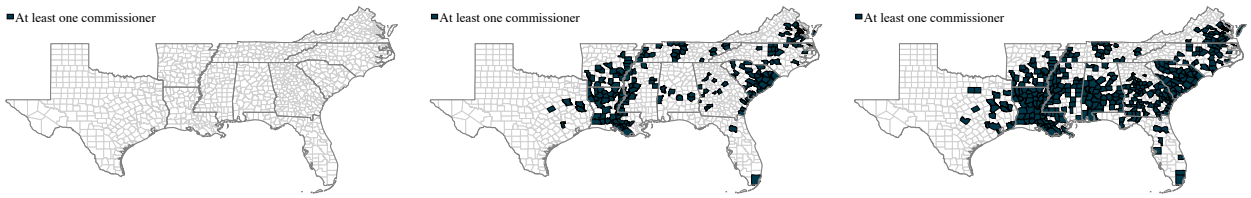
(a) VRA Coverage (b) 1960 Black Population Share



Notes: The maps depict the geographic and demographic components of the identification strategy. Panel (a) indicates counties covered by Section 5 of the 1965 VRA. Panel (b) shows counties grouped by their 1960 Black population share.

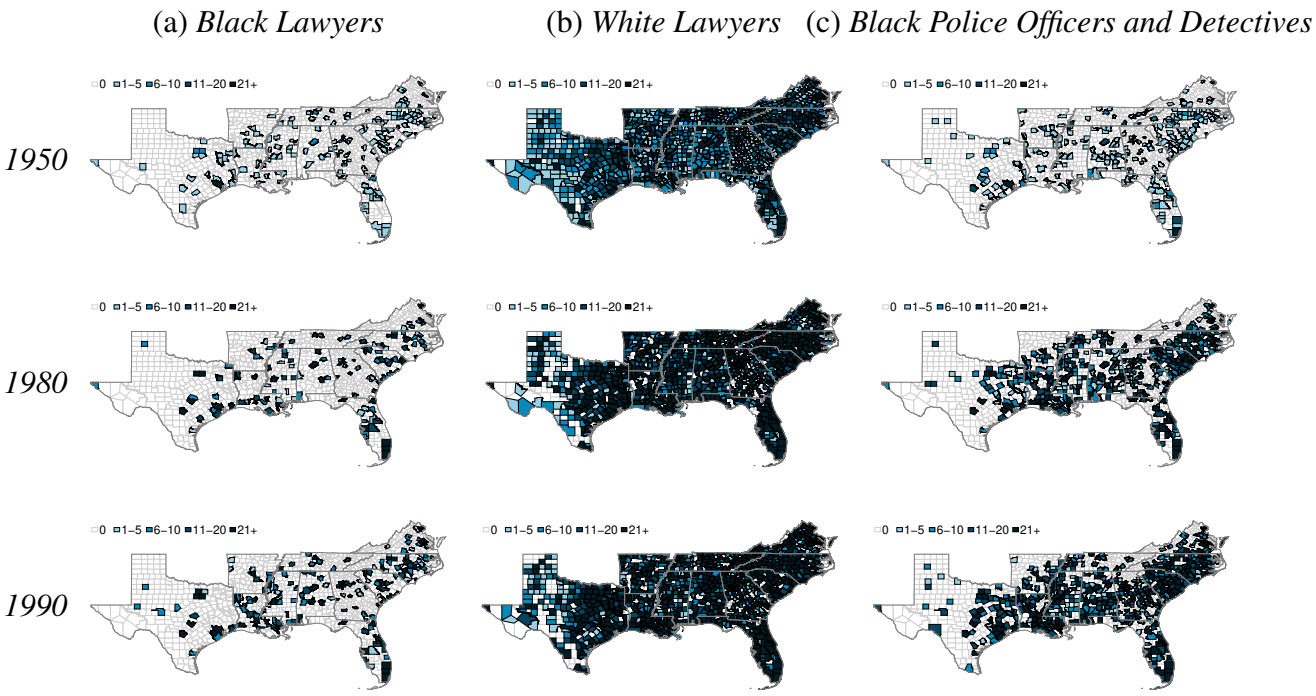
Figure A2: Black County Commissioners in the U.S. South

(a) 1964 (b) 1980 (c) 1990



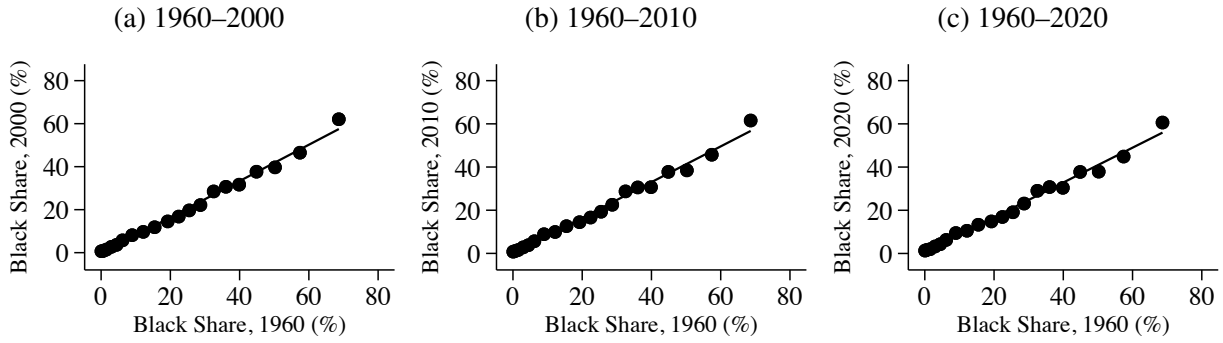
Notes: Shaded counties are those with at least one Black county commissioner.

Figure A3: Number of Legal and Law Enforcement Professionals by Race and Year



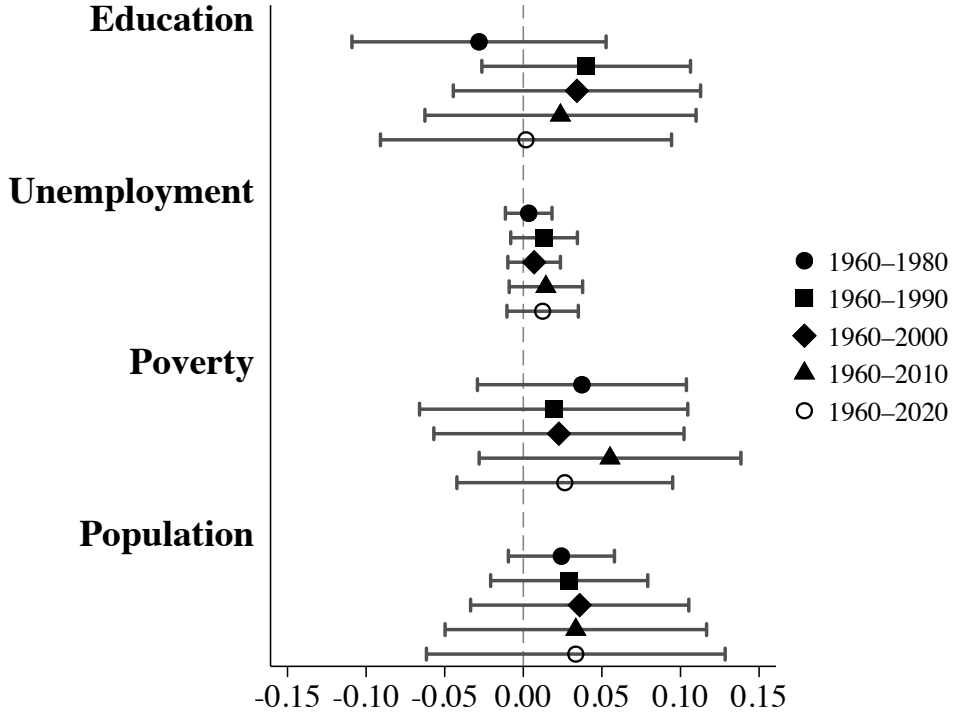
Notes: The maps depict the number of Black lawyers (left column), white lawyers (middle column), and Black police officers and detectives (right column) across counties in 1950, 1980, and 1990.

Figure A4: Persistence of Black Population Shares, 1960–2020



Notes: The figure plots the relationship between the Black population share in 1960 and the Black population share in subsequent decades (2000, 2010, 2020) at the county level. Each panel reports a binscatter with counties grouped into 20 equal-sized bins of the 1960 distribution.

Figure A5: Post-Trends in Socioeconomic Characteristics



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients on the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and VRA coverage, with 95% confidence intervals, for four county-level socioeconomic outcomes: education, unemployment, poverty, and population. Coefficients are estimated for changes in each outcome relative to 1960, at 10-year intervals (1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020).

Table A1: Elected Courts by Jurisdiction

State	*County-Level*	*Above-County*
Alabama	County / District Court Probate Court	Circuit Court
Arkansas	County Court	[a]
Florida	County Court	Circuit Court
Georgia	County / State Court Court of Ordinary / Probate Court	Superior Court
Louisiana	City Court Justice of the Peace	Civil District Court Criminal District Court District Court
Mississippi	[b]	Chancery Court Circuit Court
North Carolina	*Not popularly elected*	Superior Court
South Carolina	Probate Court	*Not popularly elected*
Tennessee	General Sessions	Chancery Court Circuit Court
Texas	County Court [c]	District Court
Virginia	*Not popularly elected*	*Not popularly elected*

Notes: The table lists the popularly elected courts used to measure Black judicial representation classified by level of jurisdiction. We include only courts that can be consistently tracked across data sources through 2024. Where a court was renamed, the predecessor is listed first.
[a] Data on judicial and prosecutorial districts not available.
[b] No consistent institutional structure over time.
[c] Data on Texas' Justices of the Peace available through 1990.

Table A2: Summary Statistics

	Covered Counties					Non-covered Counties				
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Obs	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Obs
Panel A: Black Elected Officials in County Offices										
Judge (Per 1,000 People)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	336	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	490
1980	0.003	0.0	0.0	0.1	336	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	490
1990	0.005	0.0	0.0	0.2	336	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	490
2024	0.020	0.1	0.0	0.6	336	0.002	0.0	0.0	0.1	490
Sheriff (% of Counties)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	552	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	551
1980	2.174	14.6	0.0	100.0	552	0.181	4.3	0.0	100.0	551
1990	3.804	19.1	0.0	100.0	552	0.544	7.4	0.0	100.0	551
2024	17.572	38.1	0.0	100.0	552	4.719	21.2	0.0	100.0	551
Panel B: Black Elected Officials in Above-County Offices										
Judge (Per 1,000 People in Districts)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	114	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1980	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	114	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1990	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	114	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
2024	0.006	0.0	0.0	0.1	85	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	60
District Attorney (% of Districts)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	219	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1980	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	219	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1990	0.913	9.5	0.0	100.0	219	1.149	10.7	0.0	100.0	87
2024	10.526	30.8	0.0	100.0	190	6.667	25.2	0.0	100.0	60
Panel C: County Characteristics										
Black share, 1960	0.344	0.2	0.0	0.8	552	0.134	0.1	0.0	0.7	551
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.133	1.8	1.3	11.9	552	4.878	2.2	0.0	15.9	551
Poverty line (%), 1960	48.809	13.6	5.8	77.8	552	43.746	14.8	0.0	78.0	551
Population (thousands), 1960	34.891	57.9	1.9	634.9	552	40.956	101.9	0.6	1243.2	551
No high school diploma (%), 1960	74.772	7.6	28.4	93.5	552	70.742	9.6	31.9	89.8	551
Rural farms (%), 1960	22.566	14.5	0.0	64.8	552	21.387	15.2	0.1	77.3	551
Cotton suitability	0.261	0.2	0.0	1.3	506	0.586	0.4	0.0	1.4	516
Pro-Black protest, 1960–64	1.129	5.9	0.0	74.0	552	0.543	3.2	0.0	46.0	551
Anti-Black protest, 1960–64	0.319	2.1	0.0	37.0	552	0.054	0.5	0.0	9.0	551
Lynchings (%), 1930–40	0.188	0.9	0.0	12.1	552	0.126	0.9	0.0	15.2	551

Notes: The table reports summary statistics on Black elected officials in county offices (Panel A) and in above-county offices (Panel B), and on county characteristics (Panel C), separately for covered and non-covered counties. Panel A covers the 1,103 sample counties; the judge rows cover the 826 counties with an elective county-level court. Panel B is measured over judicial and prosecutorial districts, defined on constant 1960–1980 boundaries through 1990 and on constant 1960–2024 boundaries in 2024. In Panel C the Black share in 1960 is reported as a proportion (ranging from 0 to 1) rather than a percentage.

Table A3: Candidate Supply

Dep. Variable:	Policeman & Detective		Lawyer	
	1950–1980	1950–1990	1950–1980	1950–1990
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	–0.034	0.170	0.029	0.164
	(0.105)	(0.155)	(0.034)	(0.113)
Black Share, 1960	0.430**	0.722**	0.023	0.076
	(0.072)	(0.102)	(0.021)	(0.048)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.110	0.198	0.013	0.028
Adj. R-Square	0.34	0.48	0.11	0.18
N	1022	1022	1022	1022

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2). In columns (1) and (2) the dependent variable is the change in the number of Black police officers and detectives per 1,000 residents, over 1950–1980 and 1950–1990 respectively. In columns (3) and (4) it is the change in the number of Black lawyers per 1,000 residents, over the same two periods. Robust standard errors in parentheses. $*$ p < .05; $**$ p < .01.

B Variable Definitions and Sources

Appendix B.1 provides a description of the data on Black elected officials and the other outcome variables considered in this paper. Appendix B.2 and B.3 presents the details of the main regressors and all the additional variables, respectively. Table B1 summarizes each variable, its definition, and its source.

B.1 Outcome Variables

Judges. For the pre-VRA period, we rely on Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). From the enactment of the VRA through 1990, our main source is the *National Roster of Black Elected Officials* (NRBEO). First published by the Southern Regional Council in 1969, the NRBEO provided information on Black elected officials across national, state, and local levels beginning in 1968. For over two decades, the Joint Center for Political Studies updated the roster through questionnaires sent to known officeholders, phone verifications with jurisdictions, news clippings, and information from government offices and civil rights organizations. As the NRBEO is only available in paper form, we digitize these data to construct the number of Black judges elected. For later years we use information from `https://voterportal.sos.la.gov/electedofficials` for Louisiana, from `https://tncourts.gov/courts/general-sessions-courts/judges` for Tennessee, and from the *Directory of Minority Judges of the United States* (American Bar Association, 2001, 2008) for judges elected in 2001 and 2008, and the *American Bench Directory* (Forster-Long, 2024) for judges elected in 2024 for the remaining states.

Sheriffs. For the pre-VRA period, we again rely on Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). From 1965 through 1990, we use the NRBEO, which systematically recorded Black sheriffs across Southern counties. For the 2001, 2008, and 2016 elections, we build on Daniel Thompson's comprehensive database of sheriffs, which provides names and tenure but not racial identifiers. To address this gap, we manually coded the race of officeholders using multiple independent sources, including Secretary of State publications, state sheriffs' associations, obituaries, news articles, and archival materials. This coding procedure enables us to recover the racial composition of sheriffs with over 90% coverage in these years. For 2024, we compile race-coded information directly from the official directories of sheriffs' associations in each of the 11 Southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

District attorneys. Before the VRA, data are from Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). Through

1990, the NRBEO serves as the main source. Because district attorneys are elected at the judicial-district level, we map NRBEO records to district boundaries reconstructed from the *American Bench Directory* and state Blue Books. For 2024, we rely on state-level associations and official directories: the Alabama District Attorneys Association, Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, Louisiana District Attorneys Association, the Mississippi Judiciary Directory from the Secretary of State's Office, the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, the South Carolina Judicial Branch, the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, the Texas State Directory, and the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council.

Lawyers and law enforcement. To measure the professional pipeline into judicial and law enforcement offices, we compile historical and contemporary data on occupational categories closely linked to these positions. For 1940 and 1950, we use full-count Census data to obtain the number of: *i*) lawyers and judges; *ii*) sheriffs and bailiffs; *iii*) police officers and detectives; and, *iv*) marshals and constables (Ruggles et al., 2024, 2025). For 1980 and 1990, we draw on the Census Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Tabulations, which provide comparable data on *i*) lawyers; *ii*) judges; *iii*) sheriffs and bailiffs; and, *iv*) police officers and detectives (Manson et al., 2024). For 2000, we supplement these series with the 1% state Census sample. Finally, we use the American Community Survey five-year samples through 2019–2023.

B.2 Main Regressors

VRA coverage. Our coverage variable is an indicator equal to one for the counties that were covered by Section 5 of the VRA in 1965 and zero otherwise. All counties of six states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia) were covered, whereas only 39 of the 100 counties of North Carolina were covered. Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee, and Texas were not covered. The North Carolina counties covered in 1965 are as follows: Anson, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Camden, Caswell, Chowan, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gaston, Gates, Granville, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Hertford, Hoke, Jackson, Lee, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Onslow, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Robeson, Rockingham, Scotland, Union, Vance, Washington, Wayne, and Wilson.

Black population share. We calculate the Black population share in 1960 from the County and City Data Book 1947–1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012).

B.3 Additional Variables

Control variables. We construct nine county-level controls to capture baseline demographic, socioeconomic, and historical conditions. From the *County and City Data Book 1947–1977* (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012), we obtain 1960 measures of: *i*) total population; *ii*) the share of adults (25+) without a high school diploma; *iii*) the unemployment rate; *iv*) the share of families with income below $ 3,000; and *v*) the share of residents living on farms. Cotton suitability is measured using a county-level index of maximum potential cotton yield from Hornbeck and Naidu (2014). To capture racial mobilization and conflict in the years immediately preceding the Voting Rights Act, we use data on pro- and anti-Black protests between 1960 and 1964 from Olzak et al. (2011) and matched from cities to counties. Finally, we account for historical racial violence using the number of lynchings of Black individuals between 1930 and 1940, scaled by the Black population, based on data we digitized from Ramey and McWilliams (2017). Together, these controls provide a comprehensive portrait of the demographic, economic, and racial landscape of Southern counties prior to the VRA.

Judicial divisions. We construct judicial divisions from several sources. Alabama: U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District), U.S. District Court (Southern District). Arkansas: U.S. Attorney's Office (Eastern District), U.S. District Court (Western District). Florida: U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District), U.S. District Court (Southern District). Georgia: U.S. Attorney's Office (Southern District), U.S. District Court (Northern District and Middle District). Louisiana: U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District), U.S. District Court (Middle District and Eastern District). Mississippi: U.S. District Court (Northern District and Southern District). North Carolina: U.S. District Court (Western District, Middle District, and Eastern District). South Carolina: U.S. District Court. Tennessee: U.S. Attorney's Office (Middle District), U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District). Texas: U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District, Northern District, and Eastern District), U.S. District Court (Southern District). Virginia: U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District).

Electoral rules. Information on the electoral system used to select members of county governing bodies in the pre-VRA period comes from the *Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments* (1957). Based on this source, we construct an indicator equal to one for counties in covered states where members of county governing bodies were elected under single-member district (SMD) rules (Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia) and zero otherwise.

Candidate-level data. We draw on two complementary sources. First, the Louisiana Secretary

of State provides official records reporting the race of all candidates, including those running for sheriff and judicial offices (Louisiana Secretary of State, 2025). Second, we use the dataset assembled by de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023), which systematically infers candidate race for local offices across the United States. Together, these sources supply rare and consistent evidence on the racial composition of candidates in sheriff and judicial elections.

Civil society and voter mobilization data. We use two sources to capture trends in mobilization. First, IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics provide information on civil rights nonprofit organizations between 2012 and 2021. We classify nonprofits according to the IRS National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities — civil rights (R20), minority rights (R22), voter education and registration (R40), and civil liberties (R60) — and report both the number of active organizations and their combined revenues, deflated to 2021 dollars with the annual average CPI-U. As a benchmark we also construct the corresponding revenue series for all nonprofits classified outside major group R. Second, we draw on the Cooperative Election Study from 2006 to 2022 to examine campaign contact, voter registration, and turnout across the 11 Southern states in our sample (Schaffner, Ansolabehere and Shih, 2023).

Socioeconomic characteristics and Black population shares, 1980–2020. We extend our baseline county-level controls to later decades using U.S. Census and related sources. Educational attainment (share of adults aged 25+ without a high school diploma), unemployment rates, and total population are drawn from the decennial Census in 1980, 1990, and 2000, as provided through the IPUMS NHGIS database (Manson et al., 2024), while for 2010 and 2020 we rely on ACS five-year estimates from NHGIS (2009–2013 and 2019–2023 samples). Poverty rates are obtained from NHGIS for 1980, 1990, and 2000, and from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program for 2010 (Poverty and Median Income Estimates, Small Area Estimates Branch) and 2020 (Poverty and Median Household Income Estimates). County-level Black population shares for 2000, 2010, and 2020 are taken from StatsAmerica.

Table B1: Variable Description

Variable	Description	Source
Outcome Variables		
Judges	Number of Black judges elected, per 1,000 residents.	Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023) for pre-VRA; NRBEO (through 1990); American Bar Association (2001, 2008); Forster-Long (2024).
Sheriffs	Number of Black sheriffs elected.	Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023) for pre-VRA; NRBEO (through 1990); Thompson database with supplemental coding from state records, associations, obituaries, news, and archives (2001, 2008, 2016); state sheriffs' association directories (2024).
District attorneys	Number of Black district attorneys elected.	Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023) for pre-VRA; NRBEO (through 1990), mapped to judicial-district boundaries using the *American Bench Directory* and state Blue Books; state associations and directories (2024).
Lawyers and law enforcement	Number of Black professionals in law and law enforcement occupations.	U.S. Census full-count data (1940, 1950); Census EEO Tabulations (1980, 1990); 1% state Census (2000); ACS five-year samples (through 2019–2023). Categories include lawyers and judges, sheriffs and bailiffs, police officers and detectives, and marshals and constables.
Main Regressors		
Black population share	Share of Black residents in county population (1960).	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Coverage (VRA)	Indicator for counties covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.	U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division.
Control Variables		
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	Share of families with income below $3,000.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Population, 1960	Total county population.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	Share of adults (25+) without a high school diploma.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Rural farms (%), 1960	Share of residents living on farms.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Cotton suitability	Index of maximum potential cotton yield by county.	Hornbeck and Naidu (2014).
Pro-Black protest, 1960–64	Number of pro-Black protest events.	Olzak et al. (2011).
Anti-Black protest, 1960–64	Number of anti-Black protest events.	Olzak et al. (2011).
Unemployment (%), 1960	County unemployment rate.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Lynchings (%), 1930–1940	Lynchings of Black individuals per Black population, 1930–1940.	Ramey and McWilliams (2017).
Additional Variables		
Judicial divisions	Judicial division boundaries used for clustering.	Constructed from U.S. Attorney's Offices and U.S. District Court districts.
Electoral rules	Indicator for counties with single-member district (SMD) rules in the pre-VRA period.	*Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments* (1957).
Candidate-level data	Racial composition of candidates in sheriff and judicial elections.	Louisiana Secretary of State (2025) and de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023).
Civil society and voter mobilization data	Measures of nonprofit activity and voter engagement.	IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2012–2021); Cooperative Election Study (2006–2022).
Socioeconomic characteristics and Black population shares, 1980–2020	Educational attainment, unemployment, poverty, population, and Black population shares.	IPUMS NHGIS Census data (1980, 1990, 2000); ACS 5-year estimates (2009–2013, 2019–2023); SAIPE poverty estimates (2010, 2020); StatsAmerica (2000, 2010, 2020).

C Pre-VRA Trends

The Outer South grew more receptive to civil rights beginning in the postwar period (Schickler, 2016), raising the possibility of differential pre-trends in underlying political conditions, not visible in officeholding data. We address this concern in Table C1 by examining pre-VRA trends in a series of outcomes capturing political change in the U.S. South (Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023): indicators of white supremacy (KKK Klaverns and lynchings, columns (1)–(2)) and labor coercion (cotton acreage, column (3)); Black political activism (NAACP chapters, column (4)); partisan realignment on civil rights, comparing 1964 Goldwater support to 1952 Eisenhower support (column (5)) and the change in GOP presidential vote share, 1940–1960 (column (6)); turnout and competitiveness in post-WWII gubernatorial races, potentially affected by *Smith v. Allwright, 321 U.S. 649 (1944)* (columns (7)–(8)); and changes in State House and Senate malapportionment, 1950–1960, linked to the power of racially conservative rural areas (Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2004; Mickey, 2015) (columns (9)–(10)).

Table C1: Pre-VRA Trends

Panel A: White Supremacy, Labor Coercion, and Black Activism						
Dep. variable:	KKK Klaverns	Black Lynchings	Cotton Share	NAACP Chapters		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)		
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.000	–0.000	0.046*	0.005		
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.021)	(0.006)		
Black share, 1960	0.001	0.000	–0.063**	–0.005		
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.019)	(0.005)		
Mean Dep. Variable	0.010	–0.147	–2.399	0.069		
Adj. R-Square	0.19	0.98	0.17	–0.01		
N	1022	1022	1103	1022		
Panel B: Electoral Outcomes						
Dep. variable:	Republican Vote Share		Gubernatorial Elections		Malapportionment Of the State	
	1952–64	1940–60	Turnout	Competitiv.	House	Senate
	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	–0.003	0.008**	0.001	–0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black share, 1960	0.009**	0.013**	0.005**	0.001	–0.001	–0.001
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.261	1.301	0.610	–0.032	0.123	0.093
Adj. R-Square	0.84	0.75	0.81	0.31	0.52	0.31
N	1022	1010	1007	1012	1022	1022

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2) on pre-VRA outcomes. The dependent variable is the change in the outcome indicated in each column heading; the outcomes in Panel B are log differences. KKK Klaverns are scaled by the 1960 white population and NAACP chapters by the 1960 Black population. When the dependent variable is the share of land devoted to cotton, the control set excludes the share of rural farms and cotton suitability. Robust standard errors in parentheses are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions. $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

D Robustness Checks

This appendix provides a series of robustness checks that complement the results reported in Sections 4 and 5. Unless a table note states otherwise, the dependent variable in Panel A of each table is the change in an indicator equal to one if the county has a Black sheriff between 1964 and 2024, and in Panel B it is the change in the number of Black county-level judges per 1,000 residents over the same period, so that each table speaks to the long-run effects of the VRA. Robust standard errors in parentheses are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions, except where a table note specifies otherwise.

D.1 Heterogeneity in the Black Population Share

Covered and non-covered counties differ systematically in the size of their Black population, and the interaction in equation (2) imposes a constant gradient over the whole range of that variable. Figure D1 relaxes both restrictions. The first three rows of each panel report the continuous specification: on the full sample, on a sample matched on the 1960 Black share by coarsened exact matching, which balances the distribution of the share across covered and non-covered counties, and on the common-support sample. The remaining rows replace the continuous share with a low, a moderate and a high bin, so that covered and non-covered counties are compared only within ranges of the share where both are observed. We report two binning rules: the median of the common support plus and minus one standard deviation, and the terciles of the non-covered distribution. Every bin contains both covered and non-covered counties under both rules.

D.2 Alternative Specifications and Definitions

Table D1 explores the robustness of our findings to alternative model choices. Column (2) adds the share of land devoted to cotton in 1959, interacted with coverage, to the baseline control set. In column (3), we add the 1960 Republican vote share, to ensure that baseline political alignment does not confound the treatment effect. Columns (4) and (5) exclude subsets of counties that could plausibly drive the results: the five Florida counties and all Texas counties brought under coverage in 1975. Columns (6) and (7) address the stability of county boundaries. Column (6) drops the counties whose boundaries changed after 1960, all of them in Virginia; column (7) excludes Virginia altogether. Across all specifications, the estimates are nearly identical to the baseline, indicating that results are not driven by modeling choices or influential subsets of the sample.

Table D2 examines alternative definitions of the offices included in our analysis. Columns (1) and (2) consider constables, an elected law enforcement office that generally does not require pro-

fessional qualifications or experience, in the six states where the office remained elective through 1990. Columns (3) and (4) add Texas justices of the peace, whose race can be tracked in the NR-BEO only through 1990, to the baseline definition of county-level judges. Columns (5) and (6) exclude Alabama's district courts and Georgia's state courts, whose historical counterparts are not fully comparable. In all cases, the coefficient on the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and VRA coverage remains positive and statistically significant.

D.3 Treatment and Clustering

Table D3 examines alternative definitions of treatment and inference. In column (2), we restrict the sample to counties with a 1964 presidential turnout rate between 40% and 60%, thereby excluding counties with unusually high or low turnout. Coverage was triggered where a test or device was in use and either registration or turnout in 1964 fell below 50%, so restricting to counties near the turnout threshold approximates a comparison across that margin. In columns (3) and (4), we vary the clustering of standard errors. Clustering at the state level provides a conservative adjustment for correlated shocks within states, while the Conley method accounts for spatial correlation in errors across neighboring counties (using a 100 km radius). Across all alternatives, the results remain robust.

D.4 Residential Segregation

Table D4 incorporates historical measures of segregation to test whether our results simply reflect underlying differences in racial segregation across counties. We first draw on Cook et al. (2023), who compile the number of Green Book establishments across Southern counties in 1939, 1948, and 1955. The presence of such establishments provides a proxy for the degree of racial exclusion in local economies. We include both the levels and growth rates of Green Book entries across these periods. In columns (5)–(7), we consider segregation indices from Logan and Parman (2017), including the overall segregation index, the Black-white dissimilarity index, and the Black isolation index, which capture the intensity of residential segregation and racial isolation in the early to mid-twentieth century. Estimates remain highly stable across all specifications, suggesting that historical segregation patterns do not drive our findings. Finally, Table D5 disaggregates the Green Book data by category in both 1939 and 1948, providing a more detailed test of whether specific dimensions of segregated local economies account for our results.

D.5 Black Activism and Political Mobilization

Table D6 introduces controls for historical Black activism to test whether our estimates are driven by variation in local mobilization prior to the VRA. We include several measures from different sources. First, we add the number of NAACP chapters in 1964, normalized by the Black population in 1960, to capture the local organizational infrastructure of the civil rights movement. Second, we include an indicator for the presence of at least one Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) protest event between 1942 and 1964. Third, we use the number of Black church members in 1936 (per Black population) as a proxy for religious-based civic capacity. Fourth, we incorporate the number of Black U.S. military enlistments at the onset of WWII, standardized by the number of eligible men in 1940, which has been shown to correlate with civic engagement and subsequent activism. Fifth, we add indices of racial discrimination derived from a principal components analysis of political and economic measures of exclusion. Finally, we control for the number of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) Klaverns operating between 1964 and 1966, standardized by the white population in 1960, to account for local repression. Across all specifications, the inclusion of these controls does not alter our results, suggesting that the estimated effects are not simply capturing pre-existing differences in Black political mobilization or white resistance.

D.6 War on Poverty Spending

Table D7 tests whether our results are confounded by federal anti-poverty initiatives of the 1960s. We focus on the Community Action Program (CAP), one of the central pillars of the War on Poverty, which directed substantial resources to local governments between 1965 and 1968. Using data from Bailey and Duquette (2014), we replicate the long-difference model in equation (2), interacting VRA coverage with measures of baseline poverty as well as with several indicators of CAP expenditures. These include thresholds of household income in 1960, child poverty rates, and per capita CAP funding over different horizons. Across all specifications, the estimates remain virtually unchanged, indicating that federal anti-poverty spending does not account for our findings.

D.7 Migration

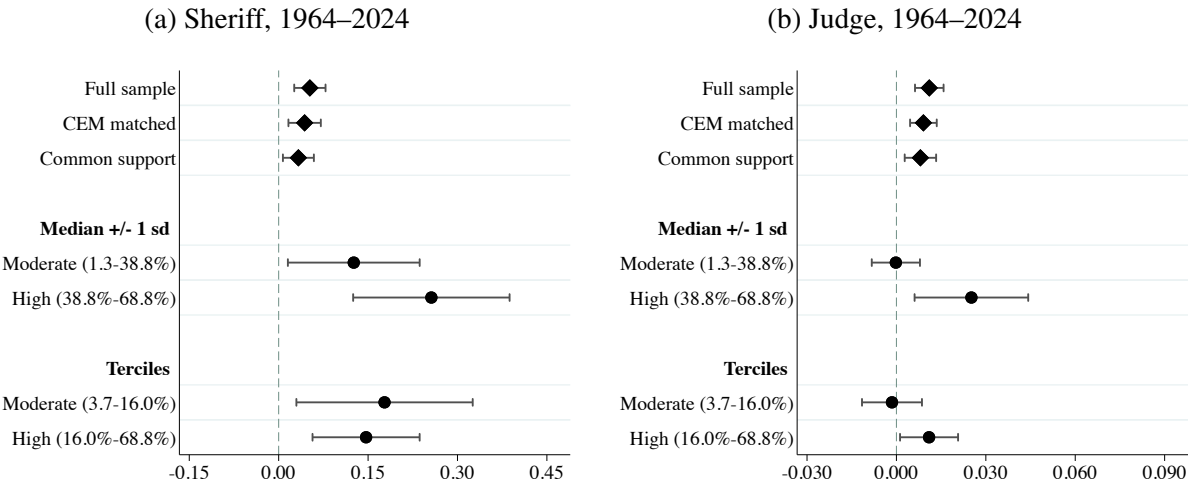
Table D8 examines whether postwar migration patterns confound our results. Counties with higher rates of Black in- or out-migration after WWII may have experienced different political and demographic trajectories, potentially influencing representation independently of VRA coverage. To address this concern, we incorporate measures of net Black migration over the entire 1940–1960 period, as well as separately for the 1940–1950 and 1950–1960 decades. In all cases, the estimates

remain stable, indicating that migration dynamics do not drive our findings.

D.8 Historical Black Political Power

Table D9 examines whether our results are confounded by county-level variation in Black political participation during Reconstruction. Places with stronger Black political traditions may have followed distinct representational trajectories even in the absence of the VRA. To address this concern, we use data on race-specific registration rates in 1867 from Williams (2022) and on the presence of Black politicians during 1865–1880 from Logan (2020). We interact coverage with measures of both voter registration (Black and white) and political officeholding (whether a county elected at least one Black politician, and the share of Black politicians relative to the 1900 Black population). We also estimate a specification including all interactions simultaneously. In all cases, the results remain consistent with the baseline, indicating that our findings are not driven by deep historical legacies of Black political power.

Figure D1: VRA Coverage and Black Representation, by 1960 Black Population Share



Notes: The figure plots the coefficient on the interaction between VRA coverage and the 1960 Black population share, with 95% confidence intervals, from equation (2). The first three rows of each panel report the continuous specification: on the full sample, on a sample matched on the 1960 Black share by coarsened exact matching, and on the common-support sample; all three are rescaled to a 10 percentage-point increase in the share. The remaining rows replace the continuous share with a low, a moderate and a high bin, under two alternative cut-off rules: the median of the common support plus and minus one standard deviation (1.3 and 38.8%) and the terciles of the non-covered distribution (3.7 and 16.0%). The low bin is the omitted category. In panel (a) the dependent variable is the change in an indicator equal to one if the county has a Black sheriff; in panel (b) it is the change in the number of Black county-level judges per 1,000 residents. Standard errors clustered by judicial division.

Table D1: Robustness: Alternative Specifications

	Baseline	Cotton Share	1960 Rep. Share	Reauthorization		Boundary Changes	Dropping Virginia
				Florida	Texas		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.535**	0.526**	0.544**	0.528**	0.584**	0.632**
	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.155)	(0.178)	(0.158)	(0.197)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.387**	0.421**	0.397**	0.413**	0.401**	0.401**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.098)	(0.095)	(0.127)	(0.095)	(0.095)
N	1022	1022	1020	1020	780	999	928
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.123**	0.131**	0.121**	0.118**	0.121**	0.121**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.006	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	756	756	754	754	514	756	756

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2). Column (1) is the baseline specification. Column (2) adds the 1959 cotton acreage share interacted with the coverage (VRA) dummy, and column (3) the log 1960 Republican vote share interacted with coverage. Column (4) drops the five Florida counties brought under coverage by the 1975 reauthorization, and column (5) drops Texas for the same reason. Column (6) drops the 23 counties whose boundaries changed after 1960, all of them in Virginia, where changes operate through annexations by and incorporations of independent cities; changes that transferred only unpopulated land are not counted. Column (7) excludes Virginia altogether. $*$ p < .05; $**$ p < .01.

Table D2: Black Constables and Black County-Level Judges Under Alternative Court Definitions

Dep. Variable:	Constable		Judge, incl. TX JP		Judge, excl. AL district, GA state	
	1964–1980	1964–1990	1964–1980	1964–1990	1964–1990	1964–2024
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.143**	0.145*	0.030**	0.040**	0.030**	0.099**
	(0.037)	(0.055)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.026)
Black Share, 1960	0.005	0.011	0.001	0.004	–0.000	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.004)
N	612	612	756	756	756	756

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2) for constables and under alternative definitions of the county-level court. In columns (1) and (2) the dependent variable is the change in the number of Black constables per 1,000 residents, restricted to Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. In columns (3) and (4) it is the change in the number of Black county-level judges per 1,000 residents, adding the Texas justices of the peace to the baseline definition. In columns (5) and (6) the dependent variable is the baseline measure excluding Alabama's district courts and Georgia's state courts. $*$ p < .05; $**$ p < .01.

Table D3: Robustness: Treatment and Clustering

	Baseline	Turnout 40%-60%	State Cluster	Conley 100km
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.369*	0.540**	0.540**
	(0.155)	(0.169)	(0.133)	(0.086)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.360**	0.401**	0.401**
	(0.095)	(0.115)	(0.069)	(0.075)
N	1022	684	1022	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.097*	0.121*	0.113**
	(0.029)	(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.017)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.002	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
N	756	557	756	756

Notes: The table estimates the long-difference model in equation (2). Column (1) is the baseline specification. Column (2) restricts the sample to counties with 1964 presidential turnout between 40 and 60%. Columns (3) and (4) change the level at which inference is conducted. Robust standard errors in parentheses are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions in columns (1) and (2), by state in column (3) (11 clusters), and computed as Conley spatial standard errors with a 100 km distance cutoff in column (4), where the outcome and the regressors of interest are first residualized on the controls and state fixed effects. $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table D4: Controlling for Residential Segregation

	Baseline	Green Books Establishments			Residential Segregation		
		1955	All Estab. 1939–55	Growth 1939–55	Segregat. Index	Dissimil. Index	Isolation Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.551**	0.551**	0.547**	0.548**	0.690**	0.518**
	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.154)	(0.153)	(0.157)	(0.170)	(0.157)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.403**	0.401**	0.393**	0.408**	0.420**	0.389**
	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.094)	(0.091)	(0.096)	(0.104)	(0.095)
N	1022	1015	1015	1021	970	1010	1010
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.121**	0.121**	0.121**	0.118**	0.125**	0.116**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.033)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.005	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	756	750	750	756	707	746	746

Notes: Using data on Green Book establishments from Cook et al. (2023), the table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of all Green Book establishments present in 1955, standardized by the Black population in 1950 in columns (2); ii) the average number of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 (both years included) in columns (3); iii) the growth rate of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 in columns (4). Using the index present in Logan and Parman (2017), the table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: iv) the Segregation Index, the Dissimilarity Index, and the Isolation Index, respectively, in columns (5), (6), and (7). $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table D5: Controlling for Green Book Establishments as a Share of Total Establishments

	Baseline	Establishments in 1939			Establishments in 1948		
		Restaur.	Gas Station	Total	Restaur.	Gas Station	Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.543**	0.522**	0.544**	0.534**	0.573**	0.568**
	(0.155)	(0.161)	(0.162)	(0.163)	(0.156)	(0.153)	(0.159)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.393**	0.396**	0.377**	0.398**	0.366**	0.373**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.100)	(0.092)	(0.102)
N	1022	1008	1017	1019	1015	1019	1021
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.124**	0.121**	0.122**	0.121**	0.121**	0.121**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	756	747	752	754	750	753	755

Notes: Using data on Green Book establishments and total establishments from Cook et al. (2023), the table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of Green Book restaurants in 1939, standardized by the total number of restaurants in 1935 in column (2); ii) the number of Green Book gas stations in 1939, standardized by the total number of gas stations in 1935 in column (3); iii) the number of Green Book restaurants, gas stations, and hotels in 1939, standardized by the total number of restaurants, gas stations, and hotels in 1935 in column (4). Columns (5) to (7) replicate the previous analysis for 1948 Green Book establishments and 1948 total establishments. $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table D6: Controlling for Potential Forces Promoting Black Activism

	Baseline	NAACP Chapters	CORE Events	Black Church	WWII Enlistment	Discrimin. Index	KKK
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.540**	0.569**	0.547**	0.566**	0.644**	0.473**
	(0.155)	(0.156)	(0.151)	(0.157)	(0.161)	(0.188)	(0.153)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.401**	0.383**	0.404**	0.412**	0.345**	0.439**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.092)	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.104)	(0.092)
N	1022	1022	1022	1022	988	958	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.105**	0.120**	0.122**	0.134**	0.144**	0.094**
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.034)	(0.039)	(0.029)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.004	0.002	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	756	756	756	756	723	697	756

Notes: The table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of NAACP chapters in 1964, standardized by the Black population in 1960 in column (2); ii) an indicator for the presence of a Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) event between 1942 and 1964 in column (3); iii) the number of members in Black churches in 1936, standardized by Black population in column (4); iv) the number of Black U.S. military enlistment during the onset of WWII, standardized by the number of eligible men in 1940 in column (5); v) one indicator of discrimination (obtained via principal component analysis, PCA) for political components and economic components in column (6); vi) the number of KKK Klaverns between 1964 and 1966, standardized by the white population in 1960 in column (7). $*$ p < .05; $**$ p < .01.

Table D7: Controlling for Spending on the War on Poverty

	Baseline	Poverty			CAP Expenditure p.c.		
		Below 1,000	Below 2,000	Child Poverty	Total 1965–68	Average 1965–68	1965
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.484**	0.478**	0.530**	0.545**	0.546**	0.538**
	(0.155)	(0.146)	(0.145)	(0.146)	(0.157)	(0.156)	(0.159)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.365**	0.352**	0.315**	0.400**	0.402**	0.406**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)
N	1022	1022	1022	880	1022	1021	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.094**	0.099**	0.114**	0.122**	0.122**	0.121**
	(0.029)	(0.020)	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.001	–0.001	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	756	756	756	686	756	756	756

Notes: Using data on the War on Poverty from Bailey and Duquette (2014), the table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the share of the population with an income below 1,000 U.S. dollars in 1960 in column (2); ii) the share of the population with an income below 2,000 U.S. dollars in 1960 in column (3); iii) the child poverty rate in column (4); iv) the real federal CAP expenditure per capita, 1965–1968, in column (5); v) the average real federal CAP expenditure per capita, 1965–1968, in column (6); vi) the real federal CAP expenditure per capita, 1965, in column (7). $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table D8: Controlling for Black Net Migration Rate

	Baseline Specification	Migration Rate 1940–60	Migration Rate 1940–50	Migration Rate 1950–60
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.552**	0.531**	0.532**
	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.162)	(0.155)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.401**	0.412**	0.400**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.098)	(0.095)
N	1022	1022	1000	1018
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.124**	0.126**	0.120**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.004	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	756	756	735	755

Notes: The table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the Black net migration rate 1940–1960 in column (2); ii) the Black net migration rate 1940–1950 in column (3); iii) the Black net migration rate 1950–1960 in column (4). $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table D9: Controlling for Historical Black Political Power

	Baseline	1867 Registration		1865–80 Politicians		All
		Black Registr.	White Registr.	Dummy Variable	Share	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964–2024						
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.453**	0.425*	0.631**	0.558**	0.550**
	(0.155)	(0.163)	(0.170)	(0.186)	(0.161)	(0.202)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.482**	0.482**	0.361**	0.393**	0.450**
	(0.095)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.100)	(0.089)	(0.122)
N	1022	810	816	1022	1022	810
Panel B: Judge, 1964–2024						
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.121**	0.119**	0.113**	0.121**	0.116**	0.131**
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.001)
N	756	546	552	756	756	546

Notes: Using data on Black and white registration from Williams (2022), and on Black politicians from Logan (2020), the table replicates the long-difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the Black registration rate in 1867 in column (2); ii) the white registration rate in 1867 in column (3); iii) a dummy variable equal to 1 for the counties with at least one Black politician between 1865 and 1880 in column (4); iv) the share of Black politicians between 1865 and 1880, relative to 1900 Black population, in column (5); v) all interactions simultaneously in column (6). $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.