

**A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

October 10, 2023, @ 5:30 p.m.  
REMOTE ONLY – VIA ZOOM

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation at meetings of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee.

The zoom link is: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/83253118929>

Meeting ID: 832 5311 8929

One tap mobile +13092053325,,83253118929# US

Agenda Items – Tuesday, October 10, 2023

- I. Roll Call 5:30 PM
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from the meeting of September 12, 2023, and September 26, 2023.
- IV. Meeting Materials Submitted to the Committee to be placed on file
  - Communications from Committee Members
    - i.* A communication was received from Niko Bowie, transmitting two working papers on historical tension between multiracial democracy and city manager forms of government
      1. The Insulation of Local Governance from Black Electoral Power: Northern Cities and the Great Migration
      2. The Political and Economic Effects of Progressive Era Reform in U.S. Cities
  - Communications from Council Members
  - Communications from the Public
  - Other Meeting Materials
- V. Public Comment
  - Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee.
- VI. Public Engagement Article: Resident Assembly
  - **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Review comments and decision points and vote on each decision point.
    - i.* Resident Assembly Decision Points
    - ii.* Resident Assembly Draft Language with committee comments

VII. Elections Article

- **Facilitator:** Anna. **Goal:** Discuss decision points of the elections article and vote on each decision point.
  - i.* Elections Article Decision Points
  - ii.* Elections Article Draft Language
  - iii.* Elections - Supplemental Information

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE  
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Kathleen Born, Chair  
Kaleb Abebe  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo  
Mosammat Faria Afreen  
Nikolas Bowie  
Kevin Chen  
Max Clermont  
Jennifer Gilbert  
Kai Long  
Patrick Magee  
Mina Makarios  
Lisa Peterson  
Ellen Shachter  
Susan Shell  
Jim Stockard

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 2023. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via Zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Absent  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent\*  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent\*  
Nikolas Bowie – Present  
Kevin Chen – Present  
Max Clermont – Present  
Jennifer Gilbert – Present  
Kai Long – Present  
Patrick Magee – Absent  
Mina Makarios – Absent  
Lisa Peterson – Present  
Ellen Shachter – Absent  
Susan Shell – Present  
Jim Stockard – Present  
Kathleen Born – Present

**Present – 9, Absent – 6. Quorum established.**

\*Jessica DeJesus Acevedo was marked present at 5:40p.m.

\*Mosammat Faria Afreen was marked present at 6:05p.m.

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stockard who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from August 15, 2023.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Absent  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent  
Nikolas Bowie – Yes  
Kevin Chen – Yes  
Max Clermont – Yes  
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes  
Kai Long – Yes  
Patrick Magee – Absent  
Mina Makarios – Absent  
Lisa Peterson – Yes  
Ellen Shachter – Absent  
Susan Shell – Yes  
Jim Stockard – Yes  
Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 9, No – 0, Absent 6. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Kevin Chen who made a motion to adopt communications that were received from Committee members, City Councillors, and the public.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Absent  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Absent  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent  
Nikolas Bowie – Yes  
Kevin Chen – Yes  
Max Clermont – Yes  
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes  
Kai Long – Yes  
Patrick Magee – Absent  
Mina Makarios – Absent  
Lisa Peterson – Yes  
Ellen Shachter – Absent  
Susan Shell – Yes  
Jim Stockard – Yes  
Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 9, No – 0, Absent 6. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born opened Public Comment.**

The committee heard public comment from **Heather Hoffman**.

Anna Corning, Project Manager, shared that she would like to take votes on the proposed draft language for City Council Goal Setting, City Council Budget Priorities, and the City Manager Annual Review.

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Susan Shell who made a motion to adopt the proposed language for City Council Goal Setting. (See attached)**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Absent  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent  
Nikolas Bowie – Yes  
Kevin Chen – Yes  
Max Clermont – Yes  
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes  
Kai Long – Yes  
Patrick Magee – Absent  
Mina Makarios – Absent  
Lisa Peterson – Yes  
Ellen Shachter – Absent  
Susan Shell – Yes  
Jim Stockard – Yes  
Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 10, No – 0, Absent 5. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stockard who made a motion to adopt the proposed language for City Council Budget Priorities. (See attached)**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Absent  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent  
Nikolas Bowie – Yes  
Kevin Chen – Yes  
Max Clermont – Yes  
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes  
Kai Long – Yes  
Patrick Magee – Absent  
Mina Makarios – Absent  
Lisa Peterson – Yes  
Ellen Shachter – Absent  
Susan Shell – Yes  
Jim Stockard – Yes  
Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 10, No – 0, Absent 5. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Susan Shell who made a motion to adopt the proposed language for the City Manager Annual Review. (See attached)  
Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Absent  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Absent  
Nikolas Bowie – Yes  
Kevin Chen – Yes  
Max Clermont – Yes  
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes  
Kai Long – Yes  
Patrick Magee – Absent  
Mina Makarious – Absent  
Lisa Peterson – Yes  
Ellen Shachter – Absent  
Susan Shell – Yes  
Jim Stockard – Yes  
Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 10, No – 0, Absent 5. Motion passed.**

Anna Corning recognized Member Max Clermont who gave an overview of a presentation (Attachment A) on Lottery-Selected Panels. The presentation reviewed the principles and benefits, types of lottery-selected panels, and the process design options. Member Clermont and Anna Corning were available to respond to comments and concerns from Committee members. Many Committee members offered comments that were in support of a resident assembly or citizen panel, and shared their excitement and suggestions on how the Charter and the City can move forward with one. In addition to Anna Corning and Member Clermont, representatives from the Collins Center, Michael Ward and Patricia Lloyd, were available to provide information on the topic. Committee members shared that they would like to continue the discussion on resident assemblies and citizen panels to have the opportunity to create language that would be appropriate to bring to the City Council.

Anna Corning shared that when the Charter Review working group on resident/citizen assemblies met, the intention was to have a short-term resident/citizen group to be tasked with a specific topic or policy that may be related to a goal from the City Council. Anna Corning asked Committee members to consider whether that is the type of group they would be interested in creating language for, or would they be more interested in having a resident/citizen group that is created to meet on a long-term basis and tasked with more than one topic or policy throughout their term. Anna Corning shared on the screen a preliminary draft document from the Collins Center on Public Communication and Engagement, which was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The document included two proposed options for potential language in the Charter. Member Nikolos Bowie offered a detailed explanation of the proposed option number two. Anna Corning opened the discussion to Committee members, with members offering their opinions and suggestions on the proposed language.

It was noted by Anna Corning that the Zoom recording only began halfway through the meeting, so only a portion of the meeting would be able to be viewed by the public.

**The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:30p.m.**

Attachment A – Presentation on Lottery Selected Panels

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/573?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=73db1671a06847e72d376b376c4ff023](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/573?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=73db1671a06847e72d376b376c4ff023)

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE  
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Kathleen Born, Chair  
Kaleb Abebe  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo  
Mosammat Faria Afreen  
Nikolas Bowie  
Kevin Chen  
Max Clermont  
Jennifer Gilbert  
Kai Long  
Patrick Magee  
Mina Makarios  
Lisa Peterson  
Ellen Shachter  
Susan Shell  
Jim Stockard

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, September 26, 2023. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via Zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Present  
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Present  
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present  
Nikolas Bowie – Present  
Kevin Chen – Absent  
Max Clermont – Present  
Jennifer Gilbert – Absent  
Kai Long – Present  
Patrick Magee – Absent\*  
Mina Makarios – Absent\*  
Lisa Peterson – Present  
Ellen Shachter – Present  
Susan Shell – Present  
Jim Stockard – Present  
Kathleen Born – Present

**Present – 11, Absent – 4. Quorum established.**

\*Member Patrick Magee was marked present at 5:35p.m.

\* Member Mina Makarios was marked present at 6:15p.m.



**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Susan Shell who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from September 5, 2023.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mossamat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Yes

Jennifer Gilbert – Absent

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Absent

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Ellen Shachter who made a motion to adopt communications from Committee members and the public.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mossamat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Yes

Jennifer Gilbert – Absent

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Absent

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

**Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.**

**The Chair, Kathleen Born opened Public Comment.**

Jameson Quinn shared their excitement for the upcoming discussion on voting mechanisms.

John Hawkinson offered comments on fractional transfer and voting mechanisms.

Anna Corning, Project Manager shared that the focus of the discussion for the meeting was going to be on the proposed language for resident assemblies. Anna Corning recognized Committee members to offer comments and suggestions related to resident assemblies.

Anna Corning shared on the screen language from member Nikolas Bowie regarding resident assemblies. Member Bowie noted that this language, which was provided as a communication in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet, was created to help guide members to create draft language that everyone agrees on relative to resident assemblies. Committee members offered their concerns and comments on the proposed language and provided suggestions on how they believe the proposed language would best serve the City. Member Bowie was available to respond to questions and concerns brought forward by fellow Committee members. Michael Ward from the Collins Center shared that the language that has been provided is good and he believes the Committee is on track to make progress and positive change. Anna Corning added the suggested changes to the working document on the screen as Committee members made them during the discussion (Attachment A).

Anna Corning shared that she would like to change the focus of the meeting discussion to elections. She made note of the suggested changes towards elections that have been brought up in previous meetings, which included granting 16 and 17 years old as well as non-citizens the ability to vote in municipal elections and changing the municipal election year to line up with State and Presidential elections. Anna Corning recognized Committee members to provide additional topics they would like to discuss relative to elections at the next meeting.

Michael Ward reminded Committee members that the Secretary of States Office is usually opposed to municipalities moving to an even numbered year for elections and provided the reasoning as to why they are opposed, but encouraged the Committee to continue to try and move forward with the changes they best see fit. Member Stockard shared that it is important for Committee members to continue with the idea of even numbers to encourage residents to come out and vote and double the number of people who are showing up for municipal elections.

Member Mina Makarious shared that they believe it is important for the Committee to discuss how they would like the City Council to present the new Charter language to the Legislature. They noted that they believe the Legislature should not have the ability to take language out of the proposed Charter.

Member Nikolas Bowie shared that at a future meeting they would like to discuss campaign finance and noted how Cambridge currently has zero authority over elections under the State Constitution and would like to push for the City to have some authority of campaign finance laws. Member Bowie also shared that they would like to discuss the methods of proportional representation.

Member Patrick Magee shared concerns about making too many changes to elections which could potentially complicate the language moving forward in the State Legislature's Office. Member Magee did share he was in favor of 16 and 17 year olds and non-citizens having the ability to vote.

**The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:30p.m.**

**Attachment A** – Working document on proposed draft language for resident assembly.

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed

at:[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/581?view\\_id=1&redirect=true&h=d86657c5ed3d9c6c397a499c3f345cf4](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/581?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=d86657c5ed3d9c6c397a499c3f345cf4)


## Re: Feedback Request: Charter Review Resident Assembly

Bowie, Nikolas <[nbowie@law.harvard.edu](mailto:nbowie@law.harvard.edu)>

Mon 10/2/2023 3:06 PM

To: Cambridge Charter Review Committee <[CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov](mailto:CharterReviewCommittee@Cambridgema.gov)>

Cc: Michael Ward <[Michael.Ward@umb.edu](mailto:Michael.Ward@umb.edu)>; Patricia J Lloyd <[Patricia.Lloyd@umb.edu](mailto:Patricia.Lloyd@umb.edu)>; Hayes, Patrick <[phayes@cambridgema.gov](mailto:phayes@cambridgema.gov)>

 2 attachments (2 MB)

grumbach\_mickey\_ziblatt\_insulation-2.pdf; SSRN-id4206025.pdf;

Hi Anna,

Could you please share two new working papers with the rest of the charter committee as a communication before the next meeting? They're both by political scientists examining the historical tension between multiracial democracy and city manager forms of government. I don't expect to relitigate the question of a manager vs mayor, but members might consider it as we offer commentary on the final charter proposal.

The first, "The Insulation of Local Governance from Black Electoral Power: Northern Cities and the Great Migration," is an examination of the history of city manager forms of government by three political scientists who specialize in democratic institutions. It offers a historical argument that the committee might find interesting about why so many northern cities, like Cambridge, adopted manager-council forms of government after the 1940s. From the abstract:

We argue that, in response to the threat of growing Black electoral power resulting from the Great Migration, Northern cities moved to insulate governmental institutions from their diversifying electorates. Using a shift-share instrument, we find that greater migration of Black Americans from the South between 1940 and 1970 led cities to switch from mayor-council to city manager systems, shifting the administration of local government, including budgeting and bureaucratic hiring, in the office of an appointed manager. We illustrate how the Great Migration shaped the decision of city elites to switch to city manager government through a case study of Santa Monica, CA. Our findings show how, at a critical juncture in the course of the country's national democratization, local governments acted to stymie it.

The second, "The Political and Economic Effects of Progressive Era Reform in U.S. Cities," documents the impact of Progressive-era reforms on political participation and economic inequality. It describes how a switch to manager forms of government before the 1940s reduced democratic participation, and that turnout remains relatively lower in these cities.

Niko

Nikolas Bowie  
Louis D. Brandeis Professor of Law  
Harvard Law School  
[nbowie@law.harvard.edu](mailto:nbowie@law.harvard.edu)  
617 496 0888

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### Resident Assembly Draft Decision Points

1. Do you want to establish a Resident Assembly in the Charter?
  - i. Yes - (Move forward with Resident Assembly discussion)
  - ii. No - (No Resident Assembly at all)
2. Does the committee approve the purpose section of the Resident Assembly Draft (1. Purpose)
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
3. Does the committee want the charter to establish whether the resident assembly is a decision-making or advisory body (and have the next CRC review)?
  - i. Decision Making
  - ii. Recommend next CRC considers decision making after Resident Assembly has been put into practice.
4. Does the committee want to add requirements for city council action with certain thresholds of resident assembly approval (2b.)
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
5. Does the committee want to allow city council to delegate its statutory powers to a resident assembly? (2.a.iii.)
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
6. If yes, does the committee want to specify additional powers/options for a Resident Assembly?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - b. If Yes, what other powers? - *new suggestions from committee member*
    - i. 2.a.ii. The power to issue endorsements or counter-endorsements for initiatives submitted to the city council or voters, including initiatives that satisfy Section \_\_'s procedural requirements.
    - ii. 2.a.iii. Powers that would otherwise be exercised under state or municipal law by a city board or commission, including the planning board.
    - iii. 2.a.iv. The power to dispense with requirements under state or municipal law for public hearings and public comment, provided that the Resident Assembly's procedures comply with federal and state constitutional requirements of due process.
    - iv. 2.a.v. The power, on its own initiative, to make recommendations or propose draft legislation for review by the city council or voters.
7. What language does the committee want to include regarding the selection process?
  - i. Sortition
  - ii. Random lottery such that the Resident Assembly is proportionally representative of the city's population
8. Does the committee wish to specify a minimum number for a resident assembly?
  - i. Yes (if yes, think about what number)
  - ii. No
9. Does the committee approve the discretionary specifications section?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

SECTION \_\_: RESIDENT ASSEMBLY

1. PURPOSE.

- a. In order to expand access to city government generally and include voices not typically heard in decisionmaking, the city council has the authority to establish and maintain one or more Resident Assemblies.

2. POWERS.

- a. Notwithstanding any other section of this charter, the city council may, by ordinance, delegate the following powers to the Resident Assembly:
  - i. The power to determine whether a resident initiative petition commenced under Section \_\_\_ should be submitted to the city council or voters as provided in Section \_\_\_ notwithstanding the petition's failure to meet that Section's procedural requirements.
  - ii. The power to issue recommendations on questions posed by the city council and to specify deadlines by which the city council or city manager must publicly respond to the recommendations by hearing or other means.
  - iii. Any other power that can be exercised by the city council or school committee.
  - iv.
- b. For any recommendation or proposal passed by the assembly by
  - i. a simple majority of members present and voting, the council shall hold a public hearing on the matter not later than three months after notice is filed with the clerk of the council.
  - ii. two-thirds of the members present and voting, the council shall hold a public hearing on the matter not later than three months after notice is filed with the clerk of the council. The council shall then take a vote on the matter not later than one month after the public hearing.

3. MANDATORY SPECIFICATIONS.

- a. Any Resident Assembly created pursuant to this section must have the following characteristics:
  - i. SELECTION

Commented [1]: Mina: Here is my only comment for now: the purpose should make clear that the Council has the authority to create and maintain multiple assemblies. I think we can also address the concern about the interplay between this and other bodies:

In order to expand access to city government and include voices not typically heard in decisionmaking, the city council has the authority to establish and maintain Resident Assemblies (including multiple Assemblies concurrently) in the manner provided (... [1])

Commented [2]: Niko: To make it clearer that the city council could create multiple resident assemblies (... [2])

Commented [3]: Ellen: (a) In order to expand access to city government generally, and to include voices (... [3])

Commented [4]: Kathy: Purpose of resident assembly should be to issue specific recommendations on (... [4])

Deleted: a

Deleted: y

Commented [5]: Kathy: Each 2 year cycle, the City Council should task the Resident Assembly with (... [5])

Commented [6]: Kathy: After a lot of consideration, I am reluctant to support a charter provision that enable (... [6])

Commented [7]: Faria: The city council should be able to delegate powers and give decision making pow (... [7])

Commented [8]: Susan: I strongly support an advisory rather than a decision-making body

Commented [9]: Susan: So long as it is an advisory body, I favor relative discretion being left the City (... [8])

Commented [10]: Could we add a requirement where another body has to approve a binding (... [9])

Commented [11]: Niko: Resident assemblies have been used successfully to explain or endorse ballot (... [10])

Commented [12]: For any recommendation or proposal passed by the assembly by a simple majority of (... [11])

Commented [13]: Lisa: "After a minimum of three (3) completed Resident Assemblies have taken plac (... [12])

Commented [14]: Put limits on this? Explicitly exclude certain city council powers - hiring, approving (... [13])

Commented [15]: Niko - We talked as a committee earlier this year about possibly using resident (... [14])

Commented [16]: Ellen: Comment: I would eliminate iii (Any other power that can be exercised.....). Th (... [15])

Commented [17]: Niko: A resident assembly would also come with the distinct advantage of serving as a (... [16])

Commented [18]: Niko: The city council might also want to give a resident assembly the power to draft its (... [17])

Commented [19]: Kathy: No fewer than 40 or more than 60. Random selection from respondents to a ran (... [18])

Commented [20]: Susan: In general, I am strongly in favor of a selection method that is as close as pr (... [19])

1. The assembly shall be created via a sortition process to be provided by ordinance and shall be open to all citizen and non-citizen residents over the age of 16.

2.

3. The procedures for selecting membership must ensure the Resident Assembly is demographically representative of the city's resident population. |

4. Membership on the Resident Assembly must be voluntary, and members must be permitted to resign for any reason.

5. No fewer than 50 people may serve on the Resident Assembly at any given time.

ii. RESOURCES |

1. The Resident Assembly must receive sufficient resources to exercise its powers effectively, including financial resources, staff support, translation and space for deliberation. |

2. To ensure that participation is not a financial burden, assembly members must be offered a stipend that is sufficient to compensate members for their time and for reasonable costs incurred by participation, including transportation to the meeting, dependent care, or similar expenses.

4. DISCRETIONARY SPECIFICATIONS:

a. Subject to the other provisions of this section, the city council has discretion to define, by ordinance, other powers and specifications of a Resident Assembly, including:

- i. The time and place of the Resident Assembly's deliberation.
- ii. Issues or questions upon which the Resident Assembly must deliberate.
- iii. The procedures by which the Resident Assembly deliberates.
- iv. The length of term for members of the Resident Assembly.
- v. The method by which members of the Resident Assembly may be replaced. |

**Deleted:** Membership on the Resident Assembly must be open to all citizen and non-citizen residents of Cambridge over the age of 16.

**Deleted:** include a random lottery such that

**Deleted:** proportionally

**Commented [21]:** Niko: 3.a.i.2. The procedures for selecting membership on the resident assembly must include a simple random sampling lottery method.

**Commented [22]:** Ellen: I like this language but am confused where we landed - did we decide there would be a random lottery and then people would select in order of those that would make the RA reflective of the demographics of Cambridge? If yes I think this should be clarified. If no, I am not sure where we landed on all this?

**Commented [23]:** Previous language left this TBD

**Commented [24]:** Ellen: Comment: I am not sure where the 50 came from and not sure we got to discuss this. I am fine with this or another number but would like to understand if it came from other RA's etc.

**Commented [25]:** Kathy: 40-60?

**Commented [26]:** Lisa: HD 30-50

**Commented [27]:** Faria: The meeting should be accessible virtually and in-person. It should also be held during a time after normal working hours.

**Commented [28]:** Lisa: add translation

**Commented [29]:** Ellen: Just wondering how this fee would be set and who would set it - - I assume this would be the CM through the budget process? Would we have to say "subject to appropriation?"

**Commented [30]:** Ellen: This talks about both "powers" and "specifications" . However all the provisions refer to specifications and not new powers except for ii. issues or questions upon which the Resident Assembly must deliberate" I think this is already covered in 2 and I dont think powers should be mixed in with procedural issues. I am not sure this adds anything else to powers?

**Deleted:** the

**Commented [31]:** Niko: 4.a.v. The method for replacing members of the Resident Assembly who resign, decline to participate, or fail to abide by city rules, provided that such a method must use a simple or stratified lottery to ensure that the resulting Resident Assembly is representative of the city's population along dimensions deemed important by the city council.

Page 1: [1] Commented [1] Anna Corning 10/2/23 6:40:00 PM

Mina: Here is my only comment for now: the purpose should make clear that the Council has the authority to create and maintain multiple assemblies. I think we can also address the concern about the interplay between this and other bodies:

In order to expand access to city government and include voices not typically heard in decisionmaking, the city council has the authority to establish and maintain Resident Assemblies (including multiple Assemblies concurrently) in the manner provided in this section, in addition to boards, committees, commissions and other bodies the Council is permitted to establish pursuant to other provisions of this Charter and applicable law.

Page 1: [2] Commented [2] Anna Corning 10/2/23 6:42:00 PM

Niko: To make it clearer that the city council could create multiple resident assemblies, I would change the language in the draft to reflect that:  
E.g., "establish and maintain one or more Resident Assemblies" in 1.a. and changing "the" to "a" in 4.a.

Page 1: [3] Commented [3] Anna Corning 10/3/23 4:02:00 PM

Ellen: (a) In order to expand access to city government generally, and to include voices not typically heard in decision-making, the city council may, by ordinance, delegate the following powers to the Resident Assembly...

Page 1: [4] Commented [4] Anna Corning 10/4/23 3:04:00 PM

Kathy: Purpose of resident assembly should be to issue specific recommendations on difficult or contentious issues facing the city, such as new affordable housing, tall buildings, bicycle lanes, uses for recently acquired pieces of land, rent control.

Page 1: [5] Commented [5] Anna Corning 10/4/23 3:04:00 PM

Kathy: Each 2 year cycle, the City Council should task the Resident Assembly with making specific recommendations for one or two of the highest Council priorities.

Page 1: [6] Commented [6] Anna Corning 10/4/23 3:05:00 PM

Kathy: After a lot of consideration, I am reluctant to support a charter provision that enables the City Council to delegate final decision-making to the Resident Assembly.  
First, I believe that there are some City Council powers that cannot be delegated, for instance the hiring of a City Clerk and Auditor. There may be others that I am unaware of but I would hope that any decisions that involve personnel in a direct or indirect way, would be exempted from those which the City Council can assign to a Residents Assembly.

Second, I believe that the voters of Cambridge currently elect a City Council for the purpose of giving the Council specific decision-making powers, such as approving the annual budget and setting the tax rate, hiring and firing the City Manager, the Clerk, and the Auditor, and making ordinances and other city policies. If the voters of Cambridge want to authorize an alternate, un-elected body to share these or other decision-making powers, then this choice should be put specifically to the voters, If the voters agree, then and only then would I support granting decision-making to the Residents Assembly after the successful convention and completion of two Resident Assemblies.

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Faria: The city council should be able to delegate powers and give decision making power on policy orders of their choosing. They should also be able to make decisions on petitions that do not meet the threshold to be addressed by the city council.



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Susan: So long as it is an advisory body, I favor relative discretion being left the City Council on this matter, both in principle and to promote constructive experimentation. I would exclude matters directly pertaining to budgeting and to issues ordinarily addressed by the School Committee. In the case of a decision-making body, I would constrain the remit more more narrowly, subject to further discussion by our committee.

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Could we add a requirement where another body has to approve a binding recommendation? Or add language that the assembly's recommendation has "significant weight"

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Niko: Resident assemblies have been used successfully to explain or endorse ballot questions, which is a way of adding a deliberative element to what otherwise is a binary question. E.g., when it submits an initiative to the city council or voters, it might want to say "This was supported by 70% of a resident assembly for the following reasons . . . . 30% of the assembly opposed the initiative for the following reasons . . . ." Or its endorsement/opposition could be useful for initiatives that already have a lot of support and wouldn't go through the resident assembly. An additional provision—in language suggested by Jameson Quinn at the last meeting—could be:

2.a.ii. The power to issue endorsements or counter-endorsements for initiatives submitted to the city council or voters, including initiatives that satisfy Section \_\_\_'s procedural requirements.

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For any recommendation or proposal passed by the assembly by a simple majority of members present and voting, the council shall hold a public hearing on the matter not later than three months after notice is filed with the clerk of the council.

For any recommendation or proposal passed by the assembly by two-thirds of the members present and voting, the council shall hold a public hearing on the matter not later than three months after notice is filed with the clerk of the council.

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Lisa: "After a minimum of three (3) completed Resident Assemblies have taken place, the CC may delegate powers... by a 2/3 vote.

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Put limits on this? Explicitly exclude certain city council powers - hiring, approving appropriations?

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Niko - We talked as a committee earlier this year about possibly using resident assemblies in place of some of the boards and committees that are currently appointed by the city manager, including important committees like the planning board or BZA. I, for one, think the current planning board would welcome another body that could be responsible for drafting and reviewing amendments to the zoning ordinance. Currently, the board's time is overbooked with special permit applications and has very little time for actual planning. Potential language could include:

2.a.iii. Powers that would otherwise be exercised under state or municipal law by a city board or commission, including the planning board.

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Ellen: Comment: I would eliminate iii (Any other power that can be exercised.....). This feels overbroad and likely to raise confusion and concerns. Instead I would add the following:

The City Council should consider whether during the next Charter Review the powers delegated to the Resident Assembly should be expanded and, if so, how

Page 1: [16] Commented [17] Anna Corning 10/3/23 3:56:00 PM

Niko: A resident assembly would also come with the distinct advantage of serving as a faster, more comprehensive, and more democratic alternative to public comment / public hearings, which an enormous body of evidence from Massachusetts has demonstrated is structurally biased. In some circumstances, however, like MGL c. 40A § 5, a public hearing is mandatory for zoning initiatives. To this end, I would also propose language like:

2.a.iv. The power to dispense with requirements under state or municipal law for public hearings and public comment, provided that the Resident Assembly's procedures comply with federal and state constitutional requirements of due process.

Page 1: [17] Commented [18] Anna Corning 10/3/23 3:56:00 PM

Niko: The city council might also want to give a resident assembly the power to draft its own petitions or to propose its own questions for response:

2.a.v. The power, on its own initiative, to make recommendations or propose draft legislation for review by the city council or voters.

Page 1: [18] Commented [19] Anna Corning 10/4/23 3:05:00 PM

Kathy: No fewer than 40 or more than 60. Random selection from respondents to a random outreach. Professionally managed selection process. Guaranteed representation of census-verified demographic groups. Participants receive stipend and are reimbursed for expenses for childcare, elder care etc. All participants will be categorized as Special City Employees and must agree to file annual financial disclosure like City Councillors and other members of Boards and Commissions.

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Susan: In general, I am strongly in favor of a selection method that is as close as possible to random, based on the pool of eligible voters and other legal residents. I would also strongly favor financial compensation to facilitate participation by residents for whom it might represent a hardship. If the body in question is to be advisory only, I would allow the City Council discretion to include residents below the voting age, and/or other factors relevant to the issue in question. (e.g., in the case of transportation matters including a representative number of disabled persons). I am generally opposed to efforts to represent proportional distributions based on specific demographic categories whose choice is necessarily a matter of politics, not mathematics, and should be left as much as possible to the voters, not to non-elected bodies (like ourselves). As to the political question: the selection, in my considered view should aim wherever possible less at promoting the current interests of a particular group or set of groups (e.g., bikers vs. car owners; the able-bodied vs. the handicapped, etc.) than at fostering the long term interests of the City of Cambridge and its residents. This is, I realize, likely to be a fraught question among members of our committee and would favor further discussion if possible.

## **Elections - Decision Points**

1. Does the committee want to maintain PR system in Cambridge?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
2. Does the committee want to enshrine 16 and 17-year-olds eligibility to vote in municipal elections?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
3. Does the committee want to enshrine non-citizen eligibility to vote in municipal elections?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
4. Does the committee want to move municipal elections to even years to align with statewide and presidential elections?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
5. Does the committee want to establish a Campaign Finance Study Committee in the Transition Provisions?

*Draft Text:*

Within 6 months of the adoption of this charter, the city council shall create a Campaign Finance Committee to study public financing mechanisms and prepare recommendations with the goal of making running for office in Cambridge more accessible. The study committee shall consider a full range of options, including but not limited to voucher programs, campaign spending, and contribution limits. The committee shall provide an analysis of the potential benefits and barriers of each option. No action is necessary if the city council has already taken action consistent with this provision.

The committee shall consist of \_ members: one shall be a representative of the Elections Commission or designee, two shall be community members appointed by the city council, two shall be community members appointed by the school committee, and two shall be community members appointed by the city manager. The committee shall elect a chair and establish the schedule of its meetings.

The committee shall issue recommendations to the city council AND/OR the next charter review committee within 12 months of creation. The city council shall take action (or refer recommendations to next charter review committee?) on the recommendations within 90 days of receipt.

6. Does the committee want to recommend election procedure language be changed to authorize the election commission to use modern tabulation methods (sec. SECTION 7-\_\_ METHODS OF COUNTING FIRST CHOICES in draft elections article)?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No

7. Does the committee recommend the remaining election procedures and relevant laws be compiled, updated and drafted by the City, Election Commission and Law Department? (section 7-\_\_ in draft elections article)
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No

## ARTICLE 7 ELECTIONS

### SECTION 7-1: CITY ELECTION (Based upon MGL Chapter 43, Sec. 109.)

The regular municipal election shall take place on the Tuesday next following the first Monday of November in every **even**-numbered year.

### SECTION 7-2: ELIGIBILITY OF VOTERS (Based upon current House Bills 3576 and 671)

Every citizen and noncitizen with legal immigration status who (i) is at least 16 years old, (ii) is not temporarily or permanently disqualified by law because of corrupt practices in respect to elections, (iii) is a resident of Cambridge at the time at the time they register and (iv) has otherwise complied with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 51 may have their name entered on the list of voters in Cambridge and may vote therein in any municipal election.

### SECTION 7-3: PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

All members of the city council and the school committee shall be elected at large by proportional representation.

### SECTION 7- METHODS OF COUNTING FIRST CHOICES

(Revision of language in the repealed MGL Chapter 54A, which is followed by the City of Cambridge with respect to voting procedures.)

Any method of counting the voters' first choices and treating any such choices in excess of the quota, ~~provided for under any system of proportional representation which on January first, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight was in effect for the purpose of municipal elections in any city of the United States~~, may be substituted for the method of counting such choices set forth in this chapter, if the registrars of voters determine that such substitution is advisable; provided, that they issue regulations embodying the method so substituted and provided, further, that such regulations shall not be effective with respect to

any election unless at least thirty days prior thereto copies of such regulations are available for delivery to such of the voters as may request them.

SECTIONS 7-\_\_\_ and following:

[The remaining procedural sections of the charter that have been adopted by Cambridge require updating by the Elections Commission and the Law Department in line with current best practices, modern language, the use of modern voting equipment, and current legal requirements.]

## Elections - Supplemental Information

### 1. Eligibility in Municipal elections.

Recommending to include two changes to eligibility, that the city council has previously submitted special acts to the state. 1) Lowering the voting age to 16 and 2) allowing non-citizens to vote in municipal Elections. Currently, there are six other communities in Massachusetts that have current special legislation at the state level to make one or both of these changes at the municipal level.

The Joint Committee on Elections Laws held a hearing on June 21st, 2023 where state representatives and senators as well as the public were able to make statements regarding these (and other election-related) changes. It's unclear what the next steps are for these pieces of legislation at the state level. <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4610>

#### a. Allow 16-and-17 year olds who are otherwise eligible, to vote in all Cambridge municipal elections.

General Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S438>

Cambridge Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H3576>

### Massachusetts

There are four other municipalities in Massachusetts that have current bills at the state legislature requesting this change. Including:

- Southborough - 17-year-olds
- Somerville - 16/17-year-olds
- Northhampton - 16/17-year-olds
- Boston - 16/17-year-olds

In previous sessions other municipalities have had bills before the legislature: Shelburn, Ashfield and Wendell.

### U.S.

Outside of Massachusetts: Tacoma, MD currently allows 16-and 17-year-olds to vote in all local elections, as does Hyattsville, Takoma Park Greenbelt, and Riverdale Park, MD. Oakland and Berkley, CA have lowered the voting age to 16 for school board elections.

San Francisco recently, in 2016, put this charter amendment to voters and it was defeated 52 to 47 percent.

### Arguments

Advocates of this change argue:

- Youth are highly affected by education policy and school board decisions
- “The 26th Amendment to the US Constitution, which lowered the voting age to 18, was passed because of the clear double standard of making 18-year-olds fight for their country when they didn’t have a political voice. The idea that anyone directly affected by political decisions should have a right to voice their opinions on such decisions should not be limited to only military conscription.”

- Youth are politically knowledgeable and score higher than their adult counterparts in civic understanding
- Youth voter participation can have a positive affect on turnout overall for a household, in addition to the early establishment of voting as a habit

Critics argue:

- Youth might lack the ability or motivation to efficiently engage in elections
- Some argue youth might not take the responsibility seriously or be knowledgeable enough on the issues presented

### Resources:

[Classroom Magazines: Should Teens Be Allowed to Vote?](#)

[Youth Rights: Voting Age](#)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716210382395>

Professors Daniel Hart and Robert Atkins argue that 16- and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in both state and federal elections by identifying the core components of citizenship and illustrating that 16- and 17-year-olds possess them.

[Are People More Inclined to Vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the First-Time Voting Boost Among 16- to 25-Year-Olds in Austria](#)

Political scientists Eva Zeglovits and Julian Aichholzer examine voter turnout of people aged 16 to 17 in Austria and conclude lowering voting age contributes to higher voter turnout rates.

### **b. Allow non-citizens who are otherwise eligible, to vote in all Cambridge municipal elections.**

General Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H712>

Cambridge Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H671>

### Massachusetts

There are three other municipalities in Massachusetts that have current bills at the state legislature requesting this change. Including:

- Sharon - permanent resident aliens
- Amherst - lawful permanent residents
- Northampton - noncitizens

Previously other municipalities have made an initiative or submitted bills before the legislature: Boston, Newton, Brookline, Wayland, Shelburn, Ashfield and Wendell.

### U.S.

Outside of Massachusetts: Oakland, MD, and San Francisco, CA allow non-citizens to vote in school board elections. Eleven towns in Maryland enfranchised non-citizens for all local elections: Barnesville, Cheverly, Chevy Chase, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, Hyattsville, Martin's Additions, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park, Somerset, Takoma Park. Two Vermont municipalities Montpelier and Winooski recently made this change, as did Washington, DC.

New York City City Council passed legislation in 2021 extending the right to vote in municipal elections to lawful permanent residents and other non-citizens authorized to work in the US (800,000 individuals).



However, following a lawsuit in early 2023 claiming the law diluted the vote of “legitimate U.S. citizens.”. New York State Supreme Court for Staten Island overturned the law, ruling it violated the state constitution.

[Noncitizens’ Right to Vote Becomes Law](#)  
[Noncitizens' Voting Right Change - Ruling](#)

### Arguments

Proponents:

- Supporters state that Noncitizens are established parts of the community, living, working, paying taxes, and attending school they deserve to have a say
- Supporters argue often timelines between work permission and citizenship can often take decades, leaving residents out of the political process

Opposition:

- Several states have made state constitutional amendments (with varying language) specifying only citizens are eligible to vote at all election levels including, Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Ohio, Louisiana, Arizona, Minnesota, and North Dakota.
- Opponents suggest this change will disincentivize non-citizens from striving to become lawful citizens.
- Similarly opponents argue it is a violation of the constitution

### Resources

[Noncitizens allowed to vote spurs backlash](#)  
[Understanding voting rights](#)  
[Our City Our Vote](#)  
[Ballotopedia - Arguments for and against noncitizen voting](#)

## 2. Change Municipal Elections to Even Years in November

Recently, Cambridge sees turnout rates typically in the low 30s for municipal elections and 50-80% in state and/or presidential elections. Within Massachusetts, cities and towns have similar or lower levels of turnout in their local elections.

### Cambridge Election Turn Out

2022 State Election	52%
2021 Municipal Election	33%
2020 State/Presidential Election	75%
2019 Municipal Election	32%

Several communities outside of Massachusetts have moved their municipal elections to even years including Florida, Washington, Texas, California, Colorado and New Mexico. Many of these changes are recent, so there isn't documentation on the change in turnout.

San Francisco previously elected their city council on even years and the mayor on odd years. Mayoral elections saw turnout rates in the low 40s, but in council/state/ president elections the turnout rate ranged from 65-85 percent.

California passed legislation requiring any city with turnout more than 25% lower in local elections than in the most recent presidential elections must change their city elections to even-years

Based on Cambridge election data, even year turnout is at least 1.5 and sometimes as high as 2.5 times higher than the previous years odd year turnout.

**Possible Charter Language:** “Regular Elections. The regular city election shall be held on the Tuesday following the first Monday, in November in each even-numbered year, and every 2 years thereafter. “

**Argument:**

Proponents:

- Elected officials are less responsive to the general public because they are only directly accountability to a small fraction of voters.
- Will have a positive effect on voter turnout
- Advocates also suggest this isn't a solution for all elections-related concerns including informed and engaged voters but is an important step to reduce barriers

Opponents:

- Logistical hurdles and complications in the implementation of this change, especially in Massachusetts where elections are run at the city level rather than the county level
- Another common criticism is that local politics will be drowned out by statewide and national races. And some question if it would lead to increased turnout but not engagement, or ballot drop-off.

**Resources**

[Governing: Voter Turnout Plummeting in Local Elections](#)

[Research Brief Odd Year vs Even Year Consolidated Elections in California](#)

[Governor Oks Consolidated Most Local Elections](#)

[Michigan House Votes](#)

[MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS AND VOTER TURNOUT IN LOCAL ELECTIONS](#)

[Boulder Voters Approve Move to Even Year City Council Elections](#)

[Committee - Elections Data](#)

# The Insulation of Local Governance from Black Electoral Power: Northern Cities and the Great Migration

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October 2, 2023

Word Count: 12,611

## Abstract

Why has America's democratization remained incomplete? Democratic institutions in the U.S. are decentralized, and lower level governments have the potential to counteract national democratization. We argue that, in response to the threat of growing Black electoral power resulting from the Great Migration, Northern cities moved to insulate governmental institutions from their diversifying electorates. Using a shift-share instrument, we find that greater migration of Black Americans from the South between 1940 and 1970 led cities to switch from mayor-council to city manager systems, shifting the administration of local government, including budgeting and bureaucratic hiring, in the office of an appointed manager. We illustrate how the Great Migration shaped the decision of city elites to switch to city manager government through a case study of Santa Monica, CA. Our findings show how, at a critical juncture in the course of the country's national democratization, local governments acted to stymie it.

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\*For helpful discussions and guidance on data, we thank Ellora Derenoncourt, Jessica Trounstine, and Vesla Weaver. For outstanding research assistance, we thank Rachel Funk Fordham, Brian Leung, Ewan McCartney, and Ben Rex. We are grateful for the generous support of the Russell Sage Foundation (project grant G-2107-33329).

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## Introduction

By nearly any formal definition of democracy (Dahl 1971), America's twentieth-century democratization was distinctive in two ways. First, it came relatively late—achieved only with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Voting Rights Acts, which promised civil and voting rights for all Americans. Second, it reflected the unusual imprint of America's federal political system. While national level reforms promised political equality for all citizens, they did not erase enduring local practices of racial authoritarianism (Weaver and Prowse 2020; Hinton 2021). Indeed, the most striking gap between democracy's promise of political equality and its practice is found at the local level, where citizens interact most directly with the coercive apparatus of the state (i.e., police)—where they experience the uneven application of the rule of law on the basis of race and ethnicity.

Why has racial inequality in American democracy persisted despite national democratizing reforms? We provide an historical-institutionalist perspective to the problem. In particular, we propose an answer that is anchored in America's distinctive institutional path of democratization. America's late and incomplete democratization and its federal system meant that the most significant resistance to democratization often happened at the *local* level—not only in the U.S. South but also in the diversifying municipalities of the U.S. North. Our motivating proposition is that assessments of America's democracy must take into account not just state and national forces such as Jim Crow laws and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but also state governments, and—especially—local governments. Thus, this question is key: *why have local governments themselves over the 20th century adopted insulating institutional reforms that have made them less accountable to voters?*

Our argument begins by noting that, like elsewhere, America's transition to democracy was not conflict-free. As America has become more diverse *and* more democratic, efforts to secure key

democratic reforms have met the resistance of powerful actors who have sought to thwart, forestall, and even subvert democratic changes. Promises of political equality, when combined with the reality of greater ethnic diversity, have prompted pushback. As is true elsewhere, this pushback has meant that America's democratic transition has been incomplete, leaving traces of the past regime visible, where former incumbents carved out zones of continued influence (Valenzuela 1992). Put differently, we contend that, in response to democratizing impulses, incumbents effect a "clawing-back" of political power from emerging coalitions and their officeholders. This dynamic is familiar to scholars of democratization in other contexts. Democratic transitions often include efforts to provide outgoing incumbents with a leg-up to protect their interests. This was the case at the national level in Chile's transition in the 1980s, as well as those in Poland and South Africa in the 1990s (Albertus and Menaldo 2018). Likewise, democratic changes often bring with them the creation of independent or partly autonomous agencies—such as central banks and independent judiciaries—that sit "beyond the reach" of the new majorities (Starr 2019.) In the American context, these more general dynamics took a distinctive form because of its federal system: it was often *local* incumbents who pushed back, insulating institutional reforms to dilute the impact of growing ethnic diversity and a national context of greater civil rights.

In this paper, we focus on local pushback that came in a series of reforms to the structure of municipal governments—particularly the introduction of "city manager" models of governments in the twentieth century, which supplemented or replaced directly-elected mayors.<sup>1</sup> Strongly opposed by local Black political interests across mid-20th century cities, these reforms reduced voter turnout and weakened the link of accountability between voters and elected officials by transferring authority over budgeting and bureaucratic administration from a directly elected mayor to an appointed manager.

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<sup>1</sup> About two-thirds of U.S. cities still use at-large elections for city council positions (Abott and Magazinnik 2020: 717).

To test whether local institutional insulation was the result of racial threat, we investigate whether the Great Migration of African Americans from the South led Northern cities to insulate their political institutions by switching to city manager systems. To address threats of endogeneity, we use a shift-share instrumental variable design to isolate exogenous variation in Black migration (Derenoncourt 2022). Consistent with our argument, we find that greater Black in-migration led Northern cities to switch to city manager systems. While the Great Migration of Black Americans out of Jim Crow states was a democratizing force for the U.S. overall, White responses to the Great Migration weakened local level democratization through the insulation of policymaking Northern cities' diversifying electorates. We illustrate the channels by which the Great Migration produced institutional insulation through a case study of Santa Monica, California.

Today, the incomplete nature of subnational democratization remains evident in other ways as well. For instance, Republican-controlled state legislatures, motivated by growing splits between Republican rural areas and Democratic-run cities, have recently weakened hundreds of local governments by preempting their lawmaking with state statutes (Briffault 2018). On scores of issues, from police reform (Su, Roy, and Davidson 2022) to public health, from education to election administration, state laws now block municipal and county governments from crafting their own policies, thereby weakening local democracy.

## **Choice of Municipal Governance**

The United States is distinctive for the dynamic nature of its municipal level governance structures. This may be due in part to the Constitution's unusual silence on politics below the state level. Indeed, many of the country's some 7,500 cities—in those states that allow them the

option—adopt their own “little constitutions” (Davidson 2020; Stevenson 2009) in the form of city charters. Long-established cities continue to alter their formal structures (Svara and Watson 2010; Hassett and Watson 2007; Frederickson 2003).

Municipal structures—for scholars focused on national politics, akin to systems of inter-branch relations—establish frameworks within which the public official “sets the rules of participation, exercises authority by making and carrying out the law (statues, ordinances, or regulations), selects persons to politically represent all residents or some subset of residents, operates a permanent bureaucracy, provides services, and determine who will pay what in taxes” (Frederickson et al 2004: 321).

Over time, there have been just a few major such structures: a mayor-council system, a city manager (also known as “council-manager”) system, a commission government, or—least common—New England’s town meeting system. Until the onset of the twentieth century, the mayor-council system dominated. In this system, a popularly elected, “strong” mayor invested with substantial powers—usually including the power to veto decisions by a popularly elected (either via district or at-large elections) council—governed a town or city. The mayor-council system has always been very much a “separation of powers” structure in that executive and legislative functions remain separated (Newland 1985).

Claiming (and often sincerely preoccupied by) a desire to stamp out corruption, partyism, machine politics, and inefficient government, Progressive Era-reformers developed alternatives and campaigned successfully for them through impressive national networks of experts and other allies (Finegold 1995). Popular especially in the first two decades of the twentieth century was the commission system, whereby three to seven officials, usually chosen at-large via nonpartisan elections, each oversaw a particular policy domain—public safety, sanitation, education,

etc.—“while collectively they serve[d] as the policymaking council for the city” (Adrian 1955: 190; Rice 1977). A ceremonial office of mayor was usually popularly elected from among those candidates competing to serve as a commissioner. Commission governments avoided “separate institutions sharing powers” (Neustadt 1990: 29) and instead fused legislative and executive functions. Criticized for lacking a single, powerful chief policymaker, by 1950 fewer than 400 cities retained the commission system (Adrian 1955: 194).

Beginning in the early 1910’s, the city manager system quickly overtook commission governance. Here, a city council, usually elected at-large, would hire a city manager, a professional who would centralize and then devise policy and oversee local bureaucracies within (often very broad) parameters set by the council. Like the commission, the city manager was not a separation-of-powers system, but it did feature a chief administrator. In other words, it centralized authority more effectively. In another departure from the commission system, the ceremonial post of mayor was usually chosen by the council from among its own number (Banfield and Wilson 1963: ch. 13).

The city manager—unconstrained by a delimited term in office and serving at the pleasure of the council—could not be removed by the voters. Capturing the enthusiasm at the time for the science of administration and the cult of business-like efficiency, advocates of this system viewed the manager as a professional able to engineer efficient policy outcomes, freed from the corrupting influence of party politics. In fact, nearly one-half of city managers surveyed in the 1930s had earned a B.A. in Engineering (Stillman 1974: 39). The discipline of political science mainly concurred. Early on, one scholar swooned, “Democracy need fear no setback through the introduction of this new form of administration; and efficiency, so long absent from the councils of democracy, can come into her own at last” (James 1914: 611-612). Four decades later, the discipline’s preference



continued: “[f]or many years city managers and their form of government have been the darlings of political science professors from coast to coast” (Mathewson 1959: 183). Yet another political scientist claimed that the system “allows the best possible combination of democracy and efficiency in local government” (Alderfer 1956: 308). Banfield and Wilson (1963: ch. 13) show that much of the support for city manager governance was based on expectations—later dashed—that this system would result in lower tax burdens for middle- and upper-class residents.

Soon after World War II, the city manager system became the country’s modal municipal structure (Adrian 1955: 197). Strong mayor systems dominated the country’s largest cities, while weaker mayor systems were more common in small-to-medium-sized cities (but see Choi et al 2013). Since the 1980s, while the city manager system remains most common, differences between the two dominant types of mayor-council and city manager have shrunk. Mayor-council cities have hired and further empowered more technocrats, while city manager systems have somewhat more powerful mayors and made other changes in the name of democratic accountability (Hassett and Watson 2007). Still, despite some scholars’ claims that the differences have narrowed so much that there is no longer a significant difference between them (Frederickson 2003), most view these two systems as importantly different (Svara and Watson 2010).

Regionally, strong (and partisan) mayor-council systems have predominated in the country’s northeast, as well as in the midwest (though more of these mayors are elected in nonpartisan elections). The commission system and, soon after, city manager systems have been most common in the South and West. Despite decades of research, efforts to explain variation in municipal structures have produced contradictory and inconclusive answers (Wei et al 2019; Choi et al 2013).

Historians and social scientists have generally argued that social class has best explained cities’ choices. Here, class has been critical either because of differences across classes in their

values or in their material interests (Hays 1964, 1974). The values or “ethos theory” (Banfield and Wilson 1963) holds that the native-born (especially Protestant) White middle class, stuck between the “private-regarding” ethos of working class European immigrants and the very wealthy, chose to adopt reforms that would destroy the corrupt and inefficient politics of party machines.<sup>2</sup> In addition, middle-class residents were demanding the efficient provision of local public goods in the areas of education, transport, public safety, public health, and so on. Middle-class activists led the call for structural reforms—and especially the city manager system—and their precincts strongly backed referenda to revise municipal structures. Meanwhile, European immigrants and working class voters and their allied organized interests, including labor unions, most strongly opposed the reform movement (Bridges and Kronick 1999, Bridges 1997a). But because pre-World War II American cities were “overwhelmingly working class” (Bridges and Kronick 1999: 693), efforts to explain variation in municipal institutions with a class theory were unsuccessful (Gordon 1968; Knoke 1982).

Bridges and Kronick (1999) rescue the class approach by emphasizing the undemocratic nature of much of the “reform” movement. They show that if scholars compare the class composition of local *electorates* rather than populations, they would recognize that reformers won in those cities—mainly in the South and West—where they succeeded first in rewriting rules to shrink working class turnout. This sequence reprised the strategy of conservative Democrats in the late 19th century South. There, Democrats first reduced Black and poor White turnout via statutes and only then drafted and ratified state constitutions that founded one-party, authoritarian enclave rule (Perman 2003; Kousser 1974; Mickey 2015: ch. 2). In 20th century cities, reformers triumphed in citywide referenda to choose a new municipal structure less by persuading a majority of voters than

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<sup>2</sup> According to Banfield and Wilson (1963: 170), the “lower class . . . preferred favors, ‘friendship,’ and ‘recognition’ to the public-serving and self-denying virtues of efficiency, honesty, and impartiality.”

by disarming their opponents and thereby “creating electorates more middle-class than the adult population as a whole” (Bridges and Kronick 1999: 703).

Many of the same White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant activists in the North’s reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries also helped pass state and local measures restrict immigrants’ access to the polls via long residency requirements, onerous new registration requirements, literacy tests, and nonpartisan ballots (Keyssar 2000: ch. 5; Banfield and Wilson 1963: 114). Western reform activists did the same with respect to Asian and Hispanic (and Mormon) voters (Bridges and Kronick 1999: 697-698). Usually, opponents in the largest cities were able to beat back reform by relying on the partisan nature of big-city machines.

The largest cities may have resisted the city manager system because, as larger and more heterogeneous with respect to culture and interests, their voters prized the greater “political management” that a strong mayor-council system offered (Kessel 1962; Bridges and Kronick 1999: 695). Similarly, residents of smaller and more socially homogeneous communities were believed to be more comfortable turning the keys of the city over to a city manager (Lineberry and Fowler 1967; but see Wolfinger and Field 1966).

Again, these claims assume municipal institutional choices were made in a democratic fashion and on the basis of persuasion. Big cities may have resisted reform because they could resist suffrage restrictions. Already partly incorporated into local party politics and often relying on public sector employment, the party allegiance of otherwise vulnerable working class and immigrant voters helped them avoid “strict enforcement of literacy testing or other disfranchising laws” (Bridges and Kronick 1999: 698). Bridges and Kronick (1999: 701) show that in cities where turnout was lower in 1908, the probability of a switch to city manager government by 1934 was much higher.

The assignment to various collective actors of preferences over municipal institutions must be approached with care. Municipal reform in the 20th century encompassed a bewildering array of reform ideas and movements and coalitions, and, at different moments and places, many coalition members defied expectations. For instance, while by the eve of World War I, the National Municipal League, the leader of the nationwide movement to reform the governance of America's cities, landed upon the city manager plan as its preferred system, for a time it offered a model city charter featuring a city council elected by proportional representation (Stewart 1950; Santucci 2022). In other moments, unions and other working class actors backed city manager systems and other structural reforms (Liazos 2020).

Still—as echoed in our Santa Monica case study below—advocates and opponents of reform agreed that efficiency and democracy were in tension or even outright conflict. working class opponents of reform “saw in [these] proposals new institutions that would be less responsive to them,” while “[m]iddle-class voters found reform arguments persuasive because they saw their own interests aligned with the civic leaders proposing new charters.” The latter “continued to support reform regimes as they delivered (for a time) growth, quality services, and low taxes” (Bridges and Kronick 1999: 694; Bridges 1997a, 1997b). Consistent with this line of thought, Carreri, Payson, and Thompson (2023) find that switches to city manager systems between 1901 and 1940 reduced voter turnout.

Building on Bridges (1997a, 1997b), Trounstine's (2008) landmark work urges scholars to abandon the machine/reform dichotomy and instead see proponents of one-party machines and their “good-government” reform opponents as united by a shared goal to establish political monopolies. As many have shown (Erie 1988; Shefter 1994), strong-mayor systems in the context of machine politics were, in numerous respects, highly undemocratic in their own right. But the insights of

Bridges and Trounstein help illuminate how many switches from mayor-council to city manager system were doubly undemocratic: a system of government less responsive to residents—especially working class residents and residents of color—was often forged by, in effect, democratic backsliding on voting rights and the administration of free and fair elections.

## **Preferences for and Consequences of City Manager Government**

Is our outcome variable, the city manager system, a meaningful proxy for institutional insulation? It is conventional wisdom that directly elected officeholders are more responsive to the electorate than appointed ones, both theoretically and empirically in the case of the direct election of the U.S. Senate after the 17th Amendment, for instance (Gailmard and Jenkins 2009). But is this the case with respect to municipal institutions and in the context of 20th century U.S. racial politics?

In terms of group preferences over municipal institutions, the answer is clearly yes. African-American voices—at least those civic leaders and others given voice by Black newspapers—generally opposed city manager government, and on the same grounds that ‘reformers’ championed it. In the view of Black commentators, by separating city management from ‘politics,’ the system diluted emerging Black electoral influence. For example, when reformers sought to reinstate city manager governance in Depression-era Cleveland—defeated with the crucial help of Black voters in 1931 (Durham 1963: 235-236; Davis 1966)—the African-American *Cleveland Call and Post* (1935) framed these reformers as “anti-Negro.” The paper assailed both the return of the centralization of policymaking authority in the hands of a manager as well as a move to at-large elections, which the *Call and Post* saw as “a means of eliminating [Cleveland’s] three Negro councilmen.”

Similarly, in 1940, when a “League for Efficient Government” sought to bring city manager governance to Atlantic City, the *Afro-American* described a tense meeting of Black and White civic leaders. One Black speaker suggested that the majority-black Third Ward would drop its opposition to the plan if provided assurances that the city’s public accommodations would finally be desegregated. After he received no answer, another African-American speaker pressed the plan’s main advocate to describe how much authority would be situated in the office of a city manager. She only stammered, “The colored man has . . . made his contribution to the cultural and economic life of the country, and now he must give himself as a citizen, forget self and race and work for the interest of the community as a whole.” For the *Afro-American*, this answer confirmed Black suspicions of the consequences of city manager government.

Whereas the *ex ante* preferences of racial groups over city manager systems were clear, were these Black voices right about their effect on local democracy? It is difficult to tell. Certainly, case studies of city politics confirm the suspicion of Black communities that city manager government would weaken Black political power (e.g., Bridges 1999). Large-*n* analyses focusing on our time period of study have been rarer. Traditionally, the full reform package enacted by many mid-century cities combined council-manager governance with non-partisan and at-large council elections (Leland and Whisman 2014: 418). The fact that multiple institutional changes were made at once complicates efforts to divine their impact. This package is thought to have a larger, additive effect on political participation, the influence of various organized interests and social groups, and policy outcomes.

One consequence about which there is a strong consensus is that city manager cities feature lower levels of voter turnout (Carr 2015: 679; Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Carreri, Payson, and Thompson 2023). Indeed, it makes sense that a rational, policy-motivated voter would be less likely

to vote as the payoff of voting, influence over the behavior of the elected officeholder, becomes smaller as agency problems increase between the voter and the appointed officeholder. Moreover, lower turnout—especially in combination with at-large (Davidson and Korbel 1981; Davidson and Grofman 1994; Abott and Magazinnik 2020) and off-cycle elections—reduces the descriptive representation of racial minorities (Hajnal 2010; Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022).

It is worth noting that research suggests a convergence between city manager and mayor-council systems since the 1980s in terms of both institutional design and political outcomes. Mayor-council systems have begun employing professional administrators in an effort to increase their efficiency, while city manager cities have undertaken some reforms to enhance their democratic responsiveness by, for example, strengthening their mayoral offices (Frederickson et al 2003). In the contemporary period, these kinds of cities appear equally responsive to local aggregate public opinion (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014). That said, other research on contemporary cities finds that city manager governments with at-large elections were least likely to feature at least one incumbent losing reelection. Moreover, for cities of almost any size, city-manager governments with district elections were less likely to have a loser incumbent than mayor-council governments (Oliver et al 2012: 129). While city manager governments conduct less spending has been contradicted more recently (Hajnal and Trounstine 2010; Carr 2015; de Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw 2016: 1136), since the financial crisis, council-manager cities, “insulated from the demands of voters,” had more solvent budgets than their mayoral counterparts (Jimenez 2020: 126) and implemented greater austerity measures than council-mayor cities (Aguado 2018).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Most scholars, finding higher quality data in the contemporary period, focus their attention only after this blurring had occurred. Thus, it may be that advocates and opponents of city manager governance were correct about its consequences. Case study research concludes that, where reformers won, “off-year elections, at-large districts, [and] council-manager forms of government . . . effectively depressed participation among minority groups and lower-income, poorly educated voters” (Erie and Kogan 2016: 314).

## The Great Migration and Urban Institutional Choice

The Great Migration occurred in two large waves. In the first, from 1910 to 1930, about 1.25 million African Americans departed the former member-states of the Confederacy for the North and West. In the second, from 1940 to 1970, more than double this number—3.37 million—left the South. All told, across these decades, about 5 million African Americans and nearly 12 million Whites (about one-half of whom later returned) departed the region. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, they were joined by more than one-half million Hispanic Americans, who streamed out of the southern countryside for western cities (Gregory 2005: 15, Table 1.2, and 16).<sup>4</sup>

Several forces fueled the first wave, including the pull of better-paying jobs, which was prompted by the sudden demand in Northern cities for industrial labor in support of the Great War, combined with the war's halting of European immigrants (Wilkerson 2010; Tolnay 2003; Collins 2021). Even after the war's end, chain migration momentum, growing recruitment by Northern employers and Black media, continued repression within the authoritarian South, and agricultural hardship continued the stream of migrants, three-fifths of whom settled in just five cities: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Philadelphia (Boustan 2017: 9). By 1930, the share of all African Americans who lived outside the South had increased from ten percent in 1910 to twenty-five percent; a majority did so by 1970 (Tabellini 2020: 8).

While African Americans continued to move north during the 1930s, the second wave began in earnest in 1940. Its causes were the “push” of the economic devastation wrought by the Great Depression, the unintended consequences of the New Deal's cotton subsidies (which weakened planters' demand for farm labor (Whatley 1983)), continued political repression at home, and the

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<sup>4</sup> While the second wave is typically dated as 1940-1970, it is worth noting that during the 1970s, more African-Americans left the South (1.55 million) than in any other decade, and another 2.66 million Whites also departed (Gregory 2005: 15, table 1.2).



increasing pull of recruitment from Black networks and communities in the North. Most important was the onset of World War II. While the South quickly became the year-round training ground for the military (Kryder 2000), the North and the West became home to military production. The federal government's rapid expenditure of more than \$3 *trillion* (in 2018 dollars) in military supply contracts and related investments (Rhode, et al 2018: 145) meant a massive demand to fill relatively high-paying jobs.

Most importantly, the Great Migration transformed the demographics of the North and West. On the eve of the Great Migration in 1910, less than 2 percent of the non-southern U.S. population was African American.<sup>5</sup> While the typical non-southern city was 5 percent Black in 1940, by 1970 the African American share reached 22 percent (Boustan 2017: 1). This demographic shift, even during the smaller first wave, meant a sharp rise in interracial contact, tensions, and crowd violence, especially at the boundaries of racially demarcated neighborhoods, biracial public housing projects, and in public leisure settings (Elkins 2018; Hirsch 1995; Sugrue 1995). This shift also accelerated already existing segregation,<sup>6</sup> resulting in the consolidation of the “ghetto.” While in 1890, the typical African American city dweller lived in a neighborhood that was 27 percent Black, by 1940 that share had risen to 43 percent, and by 1970 to 68 percent (Cutler et al 1999: 456).

Unsurprisingly, White residents and their local politicians in cities with even tiny Black populations were responsive to racial demographics well before the Great Migration. Recent research illustrates actions by both cities and White consumers that produced “White flight” as early as 1910, before the first wave (Shertzer and Walsh 2018). And as early as the 1920s, cities in the North and West used zoning to incentivize high-density construction in Black neighborhoods,

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<sup>5</sup> Among larger Northern cities, Philadelphia had the largest Black population share, but that share was less than six percent. Smaller Northern cities--St. Louis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Indianapolis, Kansas City--had more sizeable shares, but none reached even ten percent of those cities' populations (Collins 2021: 11 and fn. 28).

<sup>6</sup> Drawing on their innovative new measure, Logan and Parman (2017) report much higher levels of segregation--in both urban *and* rural settings, within the South and beyond it--much earlier than previously thought.

thereby contributing further to future residential segregation (Shertzer, Twinam, and Walsh 2019; also see Trounstine 2018). Besides increasing levels of segregation, White responses to the Great Migration served to shrink non-southern cities, as “each Black arrival encouraged more than one White departure from the central city” (Boustan 2017: 94). Another recent study finds that influxes of Black residents from the Great Migration reduced the perceived intergroup distance between European immigrants and native-born Whites in Northern cities, generating assimilation into a broader White American ethnicity. In other words, the new presence of African Americans helped fuse a pan-ethnic White identity (Alba 1990), often to the detriment of African Americans, who now faced off against a more unified adversary.

Besides remaking the racial demographics of the non-South (and the South, for that matter (Gregory 2005)),<sup>7</sup> White consumers’ responses to the Great Migration had important fiscal and political consequences. Noting that more than ninety percent of municipal revenues came from local property taxes (Fisher 1996), Tabellini (2020) finds that, all else equal, the Great Migration substantially reduced public spending and therefore public goods provision during the first wave. Further, he finds that this decline was due not to a reduction in tax rates, but to a sharp fall in assessed property values brought about by White residents’ refusing to purchase homes in Black or liminal neighborhoods. Tellingly, he finds no change in the allocation of spending across budget categories, which he would not have found had reductions in spending been driven by White residents’ (or authorities’) resistance to spending that they considered redistributive or otherwise

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<sup>7</sup> Southern cities were major destinations for African Americans streaming out of the southern countryside (Gregory 2005: 32). Many of these cities experienced similar shifts to city manager systems in response to growing Black and interracial working class power in local politics, especially after the abolition of the Whites-only primary in the 1940s (which motivated African Americans to register and vote in non-partisan municipal elections as well as Democratic primaries). During the 1950s in Little Rock, Arkansas, the expanding influence of Black and labor-affiliated voters in mayoral elections prompted the “old guard” coalition of wealthy families and segregationists to champion a switch to the city manager system. As historian Michael Pierce (2019: 168) concludes, “[t]he adoption of Little Rock’s city manager system curtailed a biracial working class insurgency, ensured that real political power remained firmly in the hands of the economic elite, and was helped along by virulent racists who worked to separate Whites and Blacks in public life.”

benefiting African Americans. Tabellini also argues that cities receiving more migrants during the first wave were more likely to fragment their local jurisdictions via suburbs (Alesina et al 2004) and special districts (Burns 1994), and more likely to resist annexation (Danielson 1976).

## **Political Consequences of the Great Migration**

The Great Migration is now viewed as a key engine of the country's democratization. As Black Americans moved from Jim Crow states that enforced mass disenfranchisement to Northern states with secure voting rights, the growing Northern Black electorate became a force within state level Democratic parties and presidential elections and then pushed Northern politicians to support landmark national civil rights legislation (Schickler 2016; Grant 2020). Particularly in the Great Migration's second wave, Black migrants broke through White unions. They helped pull the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to the racial left, thereby contributing to the development of the ideology of racial liberalism, another motor of race reform agitation within the Democratic Party (Schickler 2016: ch. 3; Zieger 1995; Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988; also see Frymer and Grumbach 2021). The Great Migration also contributed to building a new Black militancy, particularly during World War II. Besides helping forge immediate gains on fair employment at the national (Kryder 2000) and state (Chen 2009) levels, these southern migrants used higher war incomes to produce a seven hundred percent increase in the number of NAACP branches nationally, as well as a boost to a broader and growing movement structure (e.g., Meier and Rudwick 1973). As Sugrue (2008: ch. 5) shows, African-American activists not only battled to destroy Northern cities' Jim Crow regulation of public accommodations, but became indispensable partners and resources to the southern movement.

Of course, White urban residents responded to these trends, often in offsetting ways. Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini (2023) find that the Great Migration generally benefited the Democratic Party, congressional civil rights legislation, and civil rights activism in the North, in part through liberalizing White racial attitudes (but see Sahn 2021). That said, White residents also sparked crowd violence against fellow Black residents, especially during World War II (Kryder 2000; Herman 2005). As Sugrue (1996) and Hirsch (1983) show, for instance, Detroit and Chicago were both sites of “massive resistance” to a range of violations of the color line by Black residents, many of them newly arrived. These cities thereby became key cogs in the liberalization of the national Democratic Party, especially through their organized interests, their impact on state Democratic parties, and congressional representatives (Ogorzalek 2018; Grant 2020), but significantly ambiguous ones.

While Black migrants to the North earned better incomes, Derenoncourt (2022) finds that the historical legacies of the Great Migration were much grimmer: all else equal, Northern cities that received more Black migrants during the Great Migration produced lower rates of upward mobility for Black children born in the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps relatedly, these same cities spent less per capita on education, and more on policing, than other cities (2022: 405). And Eriksson (2019) shows that the Great Migration is responsible for a substantial increase in Black incarceration rates before World War II. Thus, somewhat parallel to the work of political historians, economists trace from the Great Migration contradictory legacies, many of which now serve as transmission belts of continuing racial inequality in social and economic outcomes (Sharkey 2013).

## **Expectations for the Great Migration and Urban Institutional Choice**

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<sup>8</sup> There was no such effect from white migration from the South on Northern cities.

Based on this discussion, we expect cities “treated” by the Great Migration to be more likely to act to insulate their political decisionmaking and administration from diversifying electorates, especially (but not only) via a switch to a city manager system. Consistent with the work of Alesina et al (1999), Alesina et al (2004), Alesina and Glaeser (2004), and Alesina and Tabellini (2023), on average we expect White voters *and* elites both to oppose sharing public goods with new African American and Hispanic residents.

A quick glance at the policy domain of policing supports this expectation. Black residents and organizations acting on their behalf held views on policing and state violence at mid-century that differed greatly from those of most local authorities (Francis 2014). In particular, these residents and organizations sought to reduce rampant police brutality, a problem so severe that President Hoover’s own commission on law enforcement devoted an entire volume to “lawlessness in law enforcement” (Wickersham 1931: vol. 13; Elkins 2018: ch. 2). They also sought to reduce crime and improve police-community relations, in part through the hiring of Black police—a policy demand with important fiscal and coalitional ratifications given the place of public sector employment in the maintenance of urban coalitions. For example, Chicago’s NAACP focused a great deal on policing during the Great Migration. However, the city machine’s reliance on a highly politicized police force frustrated the ability of Black voters and organizations to make and secure their policy demands (Balto 2019; Krinitsky 2017). This fact points again to the importance of municipal level formal institutions, as well as structures of local electoral coalitions, in mediating how—and how successfully—new residents could secure change through democratic channels.

Given that suffrage restriction by midcentury was more difficult to engineer, especially outside the South (Keyssar 2000), weakening the potential electoral influence of non-White voters to avoid paying for these public goods would require either a vote dilution device (such as at-large

election districts for council seats) or a greater reliance on policymakers out of the direct reach of these voters. Relatedly, research on American political development also suggests that the addition of non-White voters would trigger an institutional response by urban incumbent elites. While many Northern states refused to reenfranchise (after a Jacksonian era wave of disfranchisement (Bateman 2018; Masur 2021)) Black voters after the Civil War, the Fifteenth Amendment in the long run succeeded in safeguarding *non*-southern voting rights. We could imagine that their own racism, their own perception of having different policy preferences than African Americans, or their own concerns for the impact of Black voters on their own governing coalitions might have motivated them to frustrate the electoral participation and political influence of non-White voters.

But it is significant that, in the latter half of the 19th century, the reentry of Black voters into Northern elections bore few costs for political incumbents precisely because there were so few such voters (Walton et al 2012; Davis 2011). The Great Migration could thus alter those calculations. In other words, we imagine that the Great Migration raised the prospect of the long-delayed potential costs of Black reenfranchisement for local authorities. In the 20th century, a new wave of suffrage restrictions might have been opposed by a diverse set of actors; thus, insulating municipal policymaking from non-White voters may have been a common response to a rapidly diversifying electorate.

There are multiple pathways to effect such insulation. For instance, as Black voters grew more numerous, city authorities in Oakland, CA intentionally transferred policymaking bodies involving policing, economic planning, and other matters to non-profits more easily controlled by incumbent elites and out of reach of the city's voters (Rhomberg 2004: ch. 7). At the limit, political elites use their influence in state legislatures—some of them so gerrymandered as to be classified as “countermajoritarian” bodies (Seifter 2021)—in effect to override democratically elected authorities

through the state level appointment of emergency managers (Berman 2019: ch. 7). This corrosion of local democracy is much more likely in areas with larger African-American populations (Seamster 2018; Nickels, Clark, and Wood 2020). However, the most common pathway for municipal authorities, was, and remains, the city manager system.

## **Data and Methods**

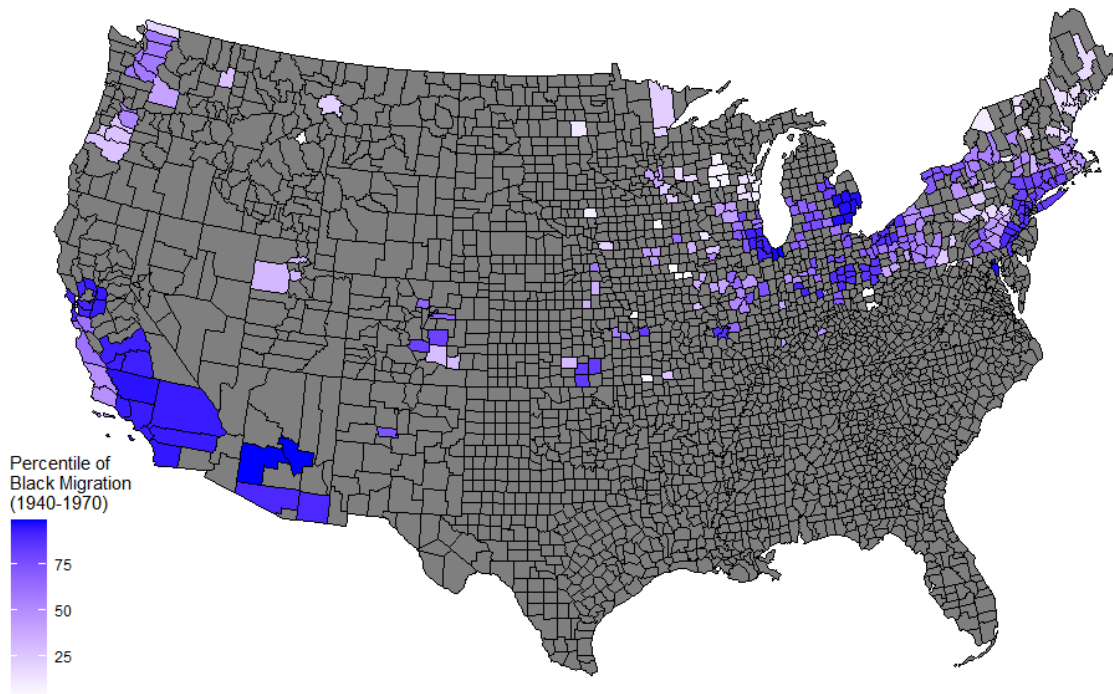
### **Great Migration Instrument**

We use the Great Migration shift-share instrument developed by Derenoncourt (2022). Building on a Great Migration shift-share instrument from Boustan (2017), Derenoncourt uses the complete count 1940 Census microdata on the entire population of Black southern migrants into Northern cities to create a dataset of all possible dyads of southern counties and Northern commuting zones (CZs). Importantly, Boustan (2017) and Derenoncourt (2022) find that, in general, even nearby southern counties had very distinct patterns of Black migration to Northern cities. Derenoncourt (2022) then uses machine learning to predict inflows and outflows of African Americans between these dyads based on many characteristics of local economies and societies. For instance, she finds that domestic World War II spending was especially helpful for explaining differences in outmigration from high-military spending areas in Virginia, where many Black residents moved to Baltimore, in contrast to Alabama, where many Black residents moved to Detroit after negative shocks to the cotton economy (2022: 379-380).

Based on these machine learning predictions, *predicted* Great Migration patterns serve as an instrument for *actual* migration patterns of the Great Migration. The instrument isolates exogenous variation in Black migration to Northern cities by estimating the amount of migration that is above or beyond what the model would predict based on observed local characteristics. For example, some cities were very high on both predicted and actual Great Migration influxes, such as Gary, Indiana.

Other cities, such as Burlington, Vermont, had low predicted and actual Great Migration influxes. By contrast, some cities like San Diego, California had low predicted but high actual Black in-migration, while other cities, such as nearby Santa Barbara, had real Great Migration influxes that were far smaller than the shift-share instrument would predict.

**Figure 3: Destinations for the Great Migration of Black Americans, 1940-1970**



Note: Figure 3 shows the distribution of Black migration (1940-1970) to US counties in non-southern states (Derenoncourt 2022). Migration is measured at the commuting zone level; commuting zones are clusters of counties.

The final sample of Great Migration destinations for our main analyses includes commuting zones in states that, on net, increased their Black populations between 1940 and 1970: states in the northeastern, midwestern, and western Census regions, as well as Maryland and Delaware.<sup>9</sup>

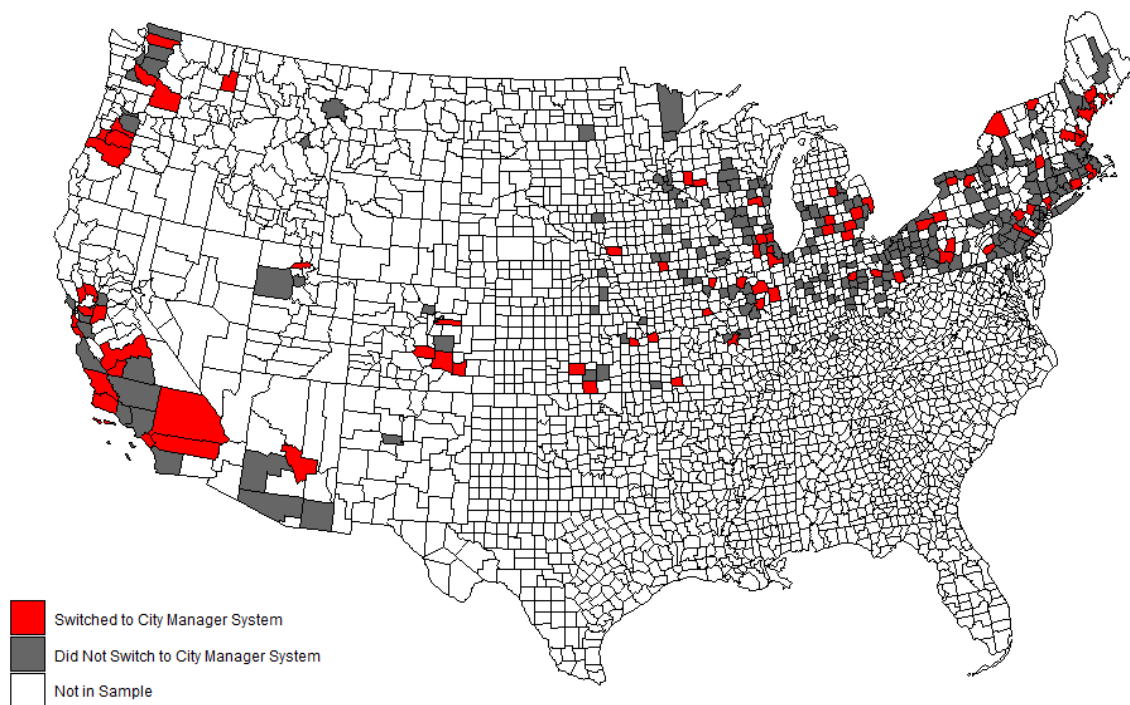
<sup>9</sup> The cities of Boise City, ID; East Providence, RI; Huntington Park, CA; West Haven, CT; and Warwick, RI were not included due to missing historical Black population data.



## Local Political Institutions

Our data on cities' political institutions come from historical issues of the *Municipal Yearbook* (published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA)). Research assistants scanned physical copies of *Municipal Yearbook* tables and cleaned the digitized datasets for errors in optical character recognition. *Municipal Yearbook* data has been used in major studies of political competition in urban regimes (Trounstine 2008), enforcement of the Voting Rights Act (Ang 2019), proportional representation in local government (Santucci 2022), race and municipal employment (McClain 1993), and land zoning (Sahn 2021). However, we believe that ours is the first study to use a measure of switches to city manager systems over this time period.

**Figure 4: Switches to City Manager System, 1940-1972**



Note: Figure 4 shows Great Migration destination counties in our sample in which no municipalities switched to a city manager system (gray), or at least one municipality switched to a city manager system (red).

In 1940, 15 percent of cities in our sample featured city manager systems. By 1972, that number had grown to 42 percent, a 27 percentage-point increase. Of the 167 cities in our sample that switched to city manager government between 1940 and 1972, 125 switched from a mayor-council system. Three switched from town meeting systems, and 39 from town commissions.

**Table 1: Switches to City Manager System, 1940-1972**

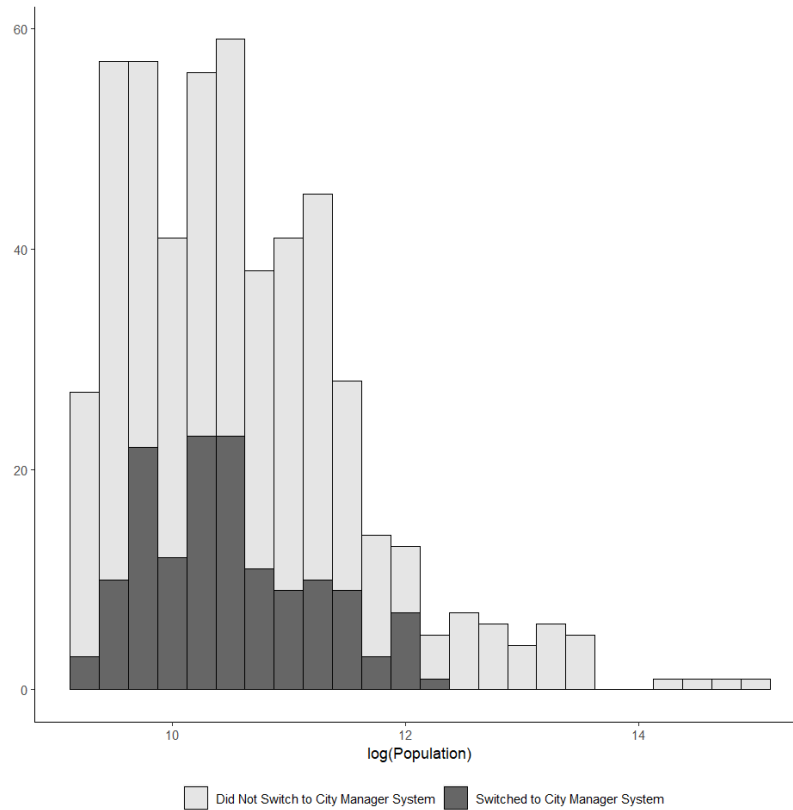
City	1940	1972	City	1940	1972	City	1940	1972
Globe, AZ	MC	CM	DeKalb, IL	MC	CM	Lodi, NJ	MC	CM
Albany, CA	MC	CM	Downers Grove, IL	CO	CM	Ridgewood, NJ	CO	CM
Martinez, CA	MC	CM	Glen Ellyn, IL	MC	CM	Newton, NJ	TM	CM
Fresno, CA	CO	CM	Hinsdale, IL	MC	CM	Batavia, NY	MC	CM
Hanford, CA	MC	CM	Lombard, IL	MC	CM	Long Beach, NY	MC	CM
Arcadia, CA	MC	CM	Naperville, IL	CO	CM	Geneva, NY	MC	CM
Bell, CA	MC	CM	Villa Park, IL	MC	CM	Troy, NY	MC	CM
Bev. Hills, CA	MC	CM	Wheaton, IL	CO	CM	Ogdensburg, NY	MC	CM
Culver City, CA	MC	CM	Elgin, IL	CO	CM	Bronxville, NY	MC	CM
Hunt. Park., CA	MC	CM	Highland Park, IL	CO	CM	Hastings, NY	MC	CM
Inglewood, CA	MC	CM	Decatur, IL	CO	CM	Mount Kisco, NY	MC	CM
Lynwood, CA	MC	CM	Wood River, IL	MC	CM	Ossining, NY	CO	CM
Monrovia, CA	MC	CM	Centralia, IL	CO	CM	Peekskill, NY	MC	CM
Montebello, CA	MC	CM	Woodstock, IL	MC	CM	Rye, NY	MC	CM
S. Fernando, CA	MC	CM	Bloomington, IL	MC	CM	Delaware, OH	MC	CM
San Gabriel, CA	MC	CM	Normal, IL	MC	CM	Zanesville, OH	MC	CM
S. Monica, CA	CO	CM	Peoria, IL	MC	CM	Sidney, OH	MC	CM
Torrance, CA	MC	CM	Joliet, IL	CO	CM	Corvallis, OR	MC	CM
Whittier, CA	MC	CM	Burlington, IA	CO	CM	Eugene, OR	MC	CM
Napa, CA	MC	CM	Des Moines, IA	CO	CM	Albany, OR	MC	CM
Anaheim, CA	MC	CM	Sioux City, IA	CO	CM	Salem, OR	MC	CM
Fullerton, CA	MC	CM	Lawrence, KS	MC	CM	Dormont, PA	MC	CM
Santa Ana, CA	MC	CM	Hutchinson, KS	CO	CM	Oakmont, PA	MC	CM
Corona, CA	MC	CM	Wellington, KS	CO	CM	Wilkinsburg, PA	MC	CM
Riverside, CA	MC	CM	Brunswick, ME	TM	CM	Hollidaysburg, PA	MC	CM
Colton, CA	MC	CM	Augusta, ME	MC	CM	Bristol, PA	MC	CM
Ontario, CA	MC	CM	Gardiner, ME	MC	CM	Lehighton, PA	MC	CM
Redlands, CA	MC	CM	Rockland, ME	MC	CM	West Chester, PA	MC	CM
Natl. City, CA	MC	CM	Bath, ME	MC	CM	Meadville, PA	CO	CM
Lodi, CA	MC	CM	Gloucester, MA	CO	CM	Mechanicsburg, PA	MC	CM
S. Luis Ob., CA	MC	CM	Concord, MA	TM	CM	Middletown, PA	MC	CM
Burlingame, CA	MC	CM	Lowell, MA	MC	CM	Indiana, PA	MC	CM
Daly City, CA	MC	CM	Medford, MA	MC	CM	Allentown, PA	CO	CM
S. Barbara, CA	MC	CM	Worcester, MA	MC	CM	East Stroudsburg, PA	MC	CM
Santa Maria, CA	MC	CM	Albion, MI	MC	CM	Stroudsburg, PA	MC	CM
Santa Clara, CA	MC	CM	Battle Creek, MI	CO	CM	Pottstown, PA	MC	CM
Santa Cruz, CA	CO	CM	Marshall, MI	MC	CM	Tamaqua, PA	MC	CM
Santa Paula, CA	MC	CM	Charlotte, MI	MC	CM	Oil City, PA	CO	CM
Woodland, CA	MC	CM	Adrian, MI	CO	CM	Warren, PA	MC	CM
Englewood, CO	MC	CM	Roseville, MI	CO	CM	Latrobe, PA	MC	CM
Longmont, CO	MC	CM	Midland, MI	MC	CM	Barrington, RI	MC	CM
Canon City, CO	MC	CM	Berkley, MI	CO	CM	Newport, RI	MC	CM
La Junta, CO	MC	CM	Holland, MI	MC	CM	East Providence, RI	MC	CM
Pueblo, CO	CO	CM	Port Huron, MI	CO	CM	Ogden, UT	CO	CM

Hartford, CT	MC	CM	Ann Arbor, MI	MC	CM	Saint Albans C., VT	MC	CM
Norwich, CT	MC	CM	Ypsilanti, MI	MC	CM	Puyallup, WA	MC	CM
Champaign, IL	CO	CM	G. Pointe Pk., MI	MC	CM	Tacoma, WA	CO	CM
Brookfield, IL	MC	CM	Springfield, MO	CO	CM	Anacortes, WA	MC	CM
Elmwood Prk, IL	MC	CM	Independence, MO	MC	CM	Spokane, WA	CO	CM
Evanston, IL	MC	CM	Joplin, MO	CO	CM	Yakima, WA	CO	CM
La Grange, IL	MC	CM	Clayton, MO	MC	CM	Menomonie, WI	CO	CM
Maywood, IL	MC	CM	W. Groves, MO	CO	CM	Eau Claire, WI	CO	CM
Oak Park, IL	MC	CM	Concord, NH	MC	CM	Fond du Lac, WI	CO	CM
Park Ridge, IL	MC	CM	Portsmouth, NH	MC	CM	Whitefish Bay, WI	MC	CM
Skokie, IL	MC	CM	Dover, NH	MC	CM	Oshkosh, WI	MC	CM
DeKalb, IL	MC	CM	Fair Lawn, NJ	MC	CM			

In summary, our treatment variable is a measure of Black migration at the commuting zone level, and our outcome measure, switching to a city manager system, is measured at the municipality level clustered within commuting zones.

Not all kinds of cities tend to have or switch to city manager systems during the 20th century. City manager systems are mostly concentrated among smaller and midsize cities rather than the U.S.'s largest metropolises. It is worth noting that in 1950, a majority of Americans inhabiting cities lived beyond the one hundred largest cities (authors' calculations, 1950 Census). Comparing cities that do and do not switch to city manager government between 1940 and 1972, the median populations are similar: 32,263 for cities that switch to city manager, and 35,862 for cities that do not. However, the country's largest metropolises, virtually all of which retain mayor-council government, produce more distinct *mean* populations: about 46,500 for cities that switch to city manager, and 126,000 for those that do not. (In our sample overall, the mean city population as of 1972 is about 104,000, and the median is about 33,500.) This is apparent in Figure 3 below, where we plot the distribution of city populations of cities that do and do not switch to city manager. As we describe in more detail in later sections, the fact that no large U.S. metropolis switches to a city manager system prompts us to perform additional empirical analyses that focus on smaller and midsize cities.

**Figure 5: Switches to City Manager System by Population**



## Estimation Strategy

We implement our instrumental variables design with traditional two-stage least squares models, which provide our main results of the effect of the Great Migration on municipal institutions. Our preferred specification uses a binary indicator of city manager status in 1972 as the dependent variable and adjusts for 1940 city manager status (a lagged dependent variable) to estimate the effect of the Great Migration on *change* to a city manager system.<sup>10</sup> We also follow

<sup>10</sup> Robustness checks in the Appendix instead use a “change score” that takes on a value of 1 if a city changes to a city manager system between 1940 and 1972.

Derenoncourt (2022) in our main specification by adjusting for Census region fixed effects and pretreatment (as of 1940) educational upward mobility, the share of the labor force in manufacturing in commuting zones, and Black in-migration. We show in Appendix Table A3 that these pretreatment covariates are relatively balanced across cities that do and do not switch to city manager systems.

We cluster standard errors at the commuting zone level in all specifications because this is the geographic level at which the Great Migration instrument is assigned. For the main two-stage least squares estimates, we report both traditional cluster-robust (CR1) standard errors and bootstrapped standard errors based on the cluster bootstrap-t procedure in Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller (2008).

**Table 2: First Stage**

	Model 1	Model 2
City Manager (1940)	8.1336 (3.1663)	7.1832 (2.1899)
$\hat{GM}$	0.7160 (0.0875)	0.2846 (0.0877)
Region FEs	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes
F statistic	47.8394	59.9200
Num. obs.	593	593
Num. clusters	129	129

Note: Table 2 presents the first stage regression for predicted Great Migration as an instrument for the actual Great Migration. Robust standard errors clustered on commuting zone are in parentheses.

Table 2 shows the results for the first stage of the two-stage least squares estimator. As expected, predicted Great Migration flows are strongly and significantly correlated with real

education flows. The F-statistic in this first-stage regression, which helps us understand the strength of the instrument (Bound, Jaeger, and Baker 1995), is 47.8 for the specification without controls and 59.9 for the specification with controls, suggesting that the Great Migration instrument is reasonably strong.

## Results

Table 3 presents our main results of the effect of the Great Migration on switching to a city manager system. As a reminder, the OLS results are from a regression of city manager system on a city's Great Migration percentile; the reduced form (RF) results are from a regression of city manager system on predicted Great Migration; and our IV specifications are from a two-stage least square model using predicted Great Migration as an instrument for actual Great Migration patterns with city manager system as the outcome.

In our main IV results, we find that a one-percentile increase of in-migration of Black Americans to a city's commuting zone increases a city's likelihood of switching to a city manager system by between 0.23 (no controls) and 0.75 (controls) percentage-points.<sup>11</sup> In other words, an exogenous increase in Black migration that is equivalent to the difference in Black migration to the Lancaster-Reading-Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle commuting zone (44th percentile of Great Migration destinations) on the one hand, and the Philadelphia-Vineland-Millville-Bridgeton commuting zone (89th percentile of Great Migration destinations), on the other, would translate to a 10 to 34 percentage-point increase in the probability of switching to a city manager system. We believe this effect size is substantial. For context, recall that 27 percent of cities in our sample switch to city manager systems during this time.

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<sup>11</sup> We do not include stars for significance, but the p-values for these treatment effect estimates are 0.088 and 0.039, respectively.

**Table 3: Effect of Great Migration on City Manager System**

	OLS	OLS	RF	RF	IV	IV
City Manager (1940)	0.5239 (0.0590)	0.5149 (0.0584)	0.5343 (0.0532)	0.5328 (0.0532)	0.5156 (0.0593)	0.4789 (0.0668)
GM	0.0012 (0.0011)	0.0021 (0.0013)				
$\hat{GM}$			0.0016 (0.0010)	0.0021 (0.0009)	0.0023 (0.0013)	0.0075 (0.0036)
Bootstrap SE					(0.0015)	(0.0031)
Region FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num. obs.	593	593	593	593	593	593
Num. clusters	129	129	129	129	129	129

Note: Table 3 presents OLS, reduced form (RF), and instrumental variables (IV) estimates for the effect of the Great Migration (1940-1970) on switching to a city manager system (1940-1972). Robust standard errors clustered on commuting zone are in parentheses. We provide additional cluster bootstrap standard errors for the IV models.

As discussed earlier and presented in Figure 3, smaller and midsize cities are those that tend to switch to city manager systems. If large metropolises have virtually zero probability of switching they would make problematic comparison cases. We therefore run our models on a restricted sample, eliminating cities that have 1972 populations above 654,153—the population level of the largest US city with a city manager system as of 1972 (San Antonio, TX).<sup>12</sup> Table 4 presents these results, which are very similar to our main results in Table 3. In general, the magnitude of the estimates and the standard errors are very slightly larger using the restricted sample in Table 4.

<sup>12</sup> This restricted sample eliminates the following cities (in descending order of 1972 population): New York, NY; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Detroit, MI; Baltimore, MD; Cleveland, OH; Indianapolis, IN; Milwaukee, WI; San Francisco, CA; San Diego, CA; Boston, MA; and St. Louis, MO.

**Table 4: Effect of Great Migration on City Manager System (Excluding Large Cities)**

	OLS	OLS	RF	RF	IV	IV
City Manager (1940)	0.5133 (0.0649)	0.5050 (0.0636)	0.5287 (0.0585)	0.5264 (0.0587)	0.5043 (0.0649)	0.4686 (0.0728)
GM	0.0017 (0.0012)	0.0023 (0.0013)				
$\hat{GM}$			0.0020 (0.0010)	0.0021 (0.0010)	0.0028 (0.0014)	0.0077 (0.0040)
Bootstrap SE					(0.0016)	(0.0032)
Region FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num. obs.	505	505	505	505	505	505
Num. clusters	127	127	127	127	127	127
First Stage F-Stat.					51.0529	67.5691

Note: Table 4 presents OLS, reduced form (RF), and instrumental variables (IV) estimates for the effect of the Great Migration (1940-1970) on switching to a city manager system (1940-1972) on a sample of cities with 1972 populations below 654,153. Robust standard errors clustered on commuting zone are in parentheses. We provide additional cluster bootstrap standard errors for the IV models.

Taken together, the results show a robust relationship: exogenous influxes of Black residents increased the likelihood that Northern cities switched to city manager systems. Next, we delve into the possible mechanisms behind this relationship with a case study of Santa Monica, CA.

## The Case of Santa Monica, California



Santa Monica, California illustrates these dynamics well.<sup>13</sup> This might seem surprising given its reputation as a haven for the New Left and racial liberalism, and its status as the political base of Tom Hayden’s highly successful rent control movement (Kann 1986). However, as we show here, White elites’ concerns about the political consequences of the Great Migration sparked an overhaul of the city’s political system in 1946 that insulated policymaking from residents of color and organized labor.

In 1906, Santa Monica, like most California cities, adopted a city charter providing for a strong mayor (with the power to veto council-approved ordinances) and a seven-member city council whose members were elected via districts. As efforts to spread commission government increased, in 1914 it switched to a commission system. Each of three commissioners, elected at large, would supervise one of three domains: public safety, public works, and finance. The Public Safety Commissioner was also *ex officio* Mayor and Commission chair (Kousser 2018: 6; Santa Monica City Council 2021). In the citywide referendum on the new charter, the only opposition came from the city’s poorest precincts (Kousser 2018: 52-53).

By the early 1920s, national discussions pointed out several flaws with commission government. In particular, critics considered the division of policy areas—one per commission member—as discouraging city administrators from seeing the city and its interrelated problems as one whole. National networks of reformers soon coordinated on their preference for centralizing political authority in a single city manager (Rice 1977; Stewart 1950).

As World War II drew to a close, Santa Monica’s elites, led by the Chamber of Commerce and encouraged by the *Santa Monica Evening Outlook*, the city’s dominant (and right-wing)

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<sup>13</sup> This case study benefits from many years of litigation concerning the city’s likely violation of the California Voting Rights Act (Greenwood and Stephanopoulos 2023). This has yielded vast amounts of material in the form of amicus briefs and, most importantly, the expert testimony of Morgan Kousser (2018). The California Supreme Court ruled on this case last week (Aug. 24, 2023) largely in favor of the plaintiffs.

newspaper, formed a “citywide” Citizens Charter Committee. This Committee called for elections to a “Board of Freeholders” that would draft a new charter. All fifteen freeholders elected were White; 14 lived in the town’s wealthiest area, and 13 received the endorsement of the *Evening Outlook* (*Pico Neighborhood Association v. Santa Monica* 2020: 3; Kousser 2018: 6). The freeholders proposed a switch from a commission to a city manager system. Rather than three commissioners, voters would elect seven city councilors, all at-large. As with most city manager governments, Santa Monica would retain a mayor, but the merely ceremonial office would be chosen and filled by a member of the city council (Santa Monica City Council 2021).

Critiques of commission governance were old hat by 1920; why did Santa Monica wait until 1946 to consider seriously a switch to a city manager system? Perceptions of the city’s demographic changes clearly provide part of the answer. The town had long been home to a large non-Hispanic White majority, a small Hispanic minority, as well as smaller communities of Asian- and African-Americans. However, Santa Monica grew sharply during the war. This growth was spurred by the Douglas (later McDonnell-Douglas) Corporation’s military transport aircraft factory, which itself employed more individuals (43,000) than lived in the town in 1930 (about 37,000) (Parker 2013: ch. 2). The city had grown by 44% from 1930 to 1940, to 53,500. Six years later, Santa Monica’s population had grown another 26%, to more than 67,000. While the share of non-Anglos remained small, the *Evening Outlook* repeatedly discussed the city’s non-White population. Segregated in a small area, it had grown by 69% in just six years, more than half of that growth driven by an influx of African-Americans (Kousser 2018: 54, 191). Moreover, more than *six thousand* African-Americans moved to neighboring Los Angeles each month in 1943; 200,000 arrived in the 1940s alone (Sides 2003: 43).

Interracial tensions were also growing, as was inflammatory rhetoric among White elites about California's demographic transition. This transition, and the growing support among Democrats and some Republicans (including Republican Governor Earl Warren) for state level actions to reduce racial discrimination, increased the political salience of race relations and anxieties about demographic change (Chen, Mickey, and Van Houweling 2008; HoSang 2010).

In a series of editorials in favor of the switch to city manager government, the *Evening Outlook* argued that the city "can and should develop into a remarkably homogeneous community. . . . The cry that 'minorities must be represented' " should be rejected. The Freeholders "s hould not allow special groups to write any part of the charter for them." Moreover, the "interests of minorities is always best protected by a system which favors the election of liberal-minded persons who are not compelled to play peanut politics," a mode of politics made much more likely in the absence of the centralization of authority in a city manager and in a world without at-large elections (Kousser 2018: 7, 60).

Opponents of the new charter agreed that district elections would help elect African-American, Hispanic, and pro-labor candidates. More importantly for our purposes, they echoed charges across the country by working class interests that the centralization of authority in unelected (and unrecallable) managers was undemocratic, even—in the words of labor spokesmen in Houston—a system fit for "Hitler" (Bridges 1997a: 113). As Santa Monica's "Anti-Charter Committee" argued,

[w]ith seven councilmen elected at-large . . . and a city manager responsible to the seven councilmen plus a dictatorship that has so long ruled Santa Monica (without regard to minorities) where will these people be? The proposed ruling groups control the chief of police . . . and through him the police force . . . and the city attorney, the personnel director, the health officer, etc. Where will the laboring man go? Where will the Jewish, colored, or Mexican go for aid in his

special problems? . . . The proposed charter is not fair -- it is not democratic. It is a power grab (quoted in Kousser 2018: 61).

Proposition 11, a statewide ballot referendum appearing on the same November, 1946 ballot as a referendum to accept or reject the city's switch to city manager government, called for California to establish fairly robust anti-discrimination regulation of workplaces through a state level Fair Employment Practices Committee (Chen, Mickey, and Van Houweling 2008). Ecological analysis of voting returns for Proposition 11—which failed by more than a two-to-one margin—makes clear two important dynamics. First, Republican precincts throughout the state were highly opposed to Proposition 11, despite backing from party leadership; this held true for Santa Monica's political leaders (as evidenced by the *Evening Outlook*) as well (Kousser 2018: 58). Meanwhile, Democratic Party-aligned organized interests, party leaders, and voters strongly backed the measure.

Second, in Santa Monica, support for the new charter and opposition to a state level FEPC were highly correlated: about 85% of residents who opposed the FEPC backed the new charter, while more than two-thirds of those who supported the FEPC opposed the charter (Kousser 2018: 63-65). Given the usefulness of the Proposition 11 referendum as a window onto racial attitudes (Chen, Mickey, and Van Houweling 2008; HoSang 2010), these high correlations suggest a strong racial dimension to voters' preferences over municipal governance. Further, they corroborate our view that racial demographic change motivated efforts to insulate municipal policymaking from more racially diverse electorates.

The effects of the change in Santa Monica's governance have continued to reverberate for decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, the all-white, elite-dominated city government implemented “urban renewal” and freeway construction that decimated Hispanic and African-American neighborhoods and dispersed thousands of their residents, many of them outside of the city (Kousser 2018: 67).

Municipal elections remain highly polarized by race, with Hispanics, now about 13% of the population, “usually quite cohesive in their voting behavior,” and non-Hispanic whites “sufficiently cohesive as to insure that Latino candidates usually lost.” In the sixty years since the switch to an at-large, city manager system, fifteen of sixteen Hispanic candidates have failed to capture a local office (Kousser 2018: 32). Indeed, the self-styled racial liberals running the city since the late 1970s (Kann 1986) have continued to block changes to the city’s political structure, in large part because their ‘party’—Santa Monicans for Renters’ Rights—has benefited from slate nominations that benefit from the continued use of at-large elections (Kousser 2018: 91-92, 94). As Morgan Kousser told a journalist, in light of Santa Monica, Los Angeles, and other cities’ experiences, “we’ve realized California is not all that different from the South” (Kramer 1992; Kousser 1999: ch. 2).

## **Conclusion**

The conventional story of democratization in the 20th century United States highlights the triumph of national democratic reforms over the subnational authoritarianism of Jim Crow states. More recently, scholars have highlighted a counter-narrative that stresses the incompleteness of this democratization on the ground, with its manifestations in racially authoritarian policing (Soss and Weaver 2017) and persistent and even expanding *de facto* segregation in housing and education (Massey and Denton 1989). Additional research has documented how many state governments, enabled by Supreme Court decisions, have rolled back democratization through extreme gerrymandering and voter suppression laws in recent decades (Grumbach 2022). Importantly, much of this research on America’s incomplete democratization, especially research on policing and mass incarceration, has focused on the local level.

Yet even as we have learned much about the local manifestations of unequal democracy and the role of state governments in weakening democratic institutions, we know much less about the role of formal *local institutions* in the incomplete democratization of the U.S. These local institutions are key because they mediate the relationship between political inputs, such as the political preferences and participation of local residents, and outputs, such as the rise of authoritarian policing (Gonzalez 2020) and mass incarceration. Here, we consider the effect of the Great Migration on local institutions. The Great Migration expanded Black electorates in northern cities, creating new incentives for politicians to respond to the concerns of Black Americans and increasing the presence of Black elected officials. But why did this diversifying democracy in northern cities fail to create a more racially egalitarian democracy?

We argue that one answer to this question is that, in response to the Great Migration, Northern cities moved to *insulate* their political institutions from their increasingly Black electorates. We study this question quantitatively using a shift-share instrument that isolates exogenous influxes of Black Americans to northern cities. We find that greater influxes of Black migrants caused northern cities to switch to city manager systems, which insulate municipal administration from voters. Our finding helps make sense of incomplete political incorporation and continuing political inequality (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 2003a, 2003b; Mollenkopf 1991) brought about by disempowering city council members, mayors, and their Black supporters in local electorates. Relatedly, our study helps to make sense of other findings in the political economy literature, such as the finding that the Great Migration led to an increase in police spending per capita but not education per capita at the local level (Derenoncourt 2022), and intensified efforts to displace residents of color via “urban renewal” (Shi et al 2022).

Our inquiry opens up paths for further research on democratic institutions at the local level. In comparative view, America's democratization was shaped to an unusual degree by its distinctive federal system. We thus see a need to study the links between municipal institutions and downstream outcomes related to local policy and bureaucratic responsiveness to constituents, as well as outcomes related to civil rights and liberties in practice. Nowhere is this more urgent than in the area of policing, where, despite nominal democratic equality in law, policing remains highly authoritarian and unresponsive to race-class subjugated communities. What is the relationship between municipal institutional structure and racially authoritarian policing?

Reflecting on an analysis of a century of efforts to build political monopolies at the local level, Jessica Trounstine (2009: 93) concludes, "[T]hose in power can be expected to build defenses against durable shifts in governing authority, and when they succeed, as both machine and reform coalitions did, portions of the population are likely to suffer." We believe that Trounstine's conclusion has broad implications for American democratization as a whole. The decentralized system of American federalism means that any assessment of American democracy must account for the state of democracy at the national, state, and local levels, as well as feedbacks among these levels. Despite increased scholarly attention on the role of the state level in American democracy, literature on local democracy has been relatively isolated from mainstream literature on American democracy as a whole. We argue that this has obscured how changes at the local level served to corrode many of the gains of national democracy reforms in the 20th century.

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Appendix for  
“The Insulation of Local Governance from Black Electoral Power:  
Northern Cities and the Great Migration”



## Robustness Checks

**Table A1: First Stage (Alternate Specification)**

	Model 1	Model 2
$\hat{GM}$	0.7140 (0.0913)	0.2793 (0.0936)
Region FEs	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes
F statistic	33.07	58.66
Num. obs.	590	590
Num. clusters	129	129

Note: Table A1 presents the first stage regression for predicted Great Migration as an instrument for the Great Migration. In contrast to the main specifications in Table 2, Model 1 and Model 2 do not control for 1940 municipal government type. Robust standard errors clustered on commuting zone are in parentheses.

**Table A2: Main Results (Alternate Specification)**

	OLS	OLS	RF	RF	IV	IV
GM	0.0006 (0.0012)	0.0004 (0.0012)				
$\hat{GM}$			0.0018 (0.0010)	0.0025 (0.0009)	0.0025 (0.0015)	0.0089 (0.0049)
Bootstrap SE					(0.0016)	(0.0046)
Region FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Num. obs.	590	590	590	590	590	590
Num. clusters	129	129	129	129	129	129

Note: Table A2 presents OLS, reduced form (RF), and instrumental variables (IV) estimates for the effect of the Great Migration (1940-1970) on switching to a city manager system (1940-1972). In contrast to the main specifications in Table 3, these models use change to a city manager system as the dependent variable and therefore do not control for 1940 municipal government type. Robust standard errors clustered on commuting zone are in parentheses. We provide additional cluster bootstrap standard errors for the IV models.

**Table A3: Balance on Pretreatment Covariates**

Treatment	Black Migration (1935-1940)	Upward Mobility (1940)	Manufacturing Share (1940)
Switched <i>from</i> city manager system	0.03	56.13	20.69
Did not switch	0.13	54.25	25.47
Switched <i>to</i> city manager system	0.15	55.11	22.21

# The Political and Economic Effects of Progressive Era Reforms in U.S. Cities: Evidence from Newly Digitized Data \*

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August 29, 2022

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## Abstract

How did Progressive era reforms affect the lives of urban residents across U.S. cities? The historical record is unclear. Some scholars argue that many of the progressive reforms were motivated by nativist and racist animus and explicitly designed to benefit white business elites at the expense of disadvantaged groups. Others point out that reformers often sought to improve urban living and working conditions and expand access to education, which generated new opportunities for social mobility. We inform this debate leveraging new data on 455 U.S. cities from 1900-1940 combining *i*) dates of adoption of reform-style government, *ii*) deanonymized census data, *iii*) data on political participation, and *iv*) detailed municipal budget data. Using a difference-in-differences design, we document the impact of Progressive reforms on political participation, public goods spending, and the relative socioeconomic well-being of black, immigrant, and working class residents vis-a-vis whites, natives, and business elites. Despite finding that voter turnout decreased in reformed cities, we uncover only a modest increase in earnings inequality across more and less advantaged groups and no significant differences in expenditure patterns as a consequence of reform. This approach provides a comprehensive portrait of the legacy of Progressive municipal institutions and suggests that, on average, the reforms of this era may have exacerbated political inequality more than economic inequality, at least in the first decades following their adoption.

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# 1 Introduction

How did the municipal reform movement of the Progressive era affect the social and economic lives of urban residents? A lively historical debate offers conflicting accounts as to whether the Progressive agenda helped or harmed less advantaged communities, including immigrants, African Americans, and the less affluent. Some researchers emphasize the fact that reformers of this era sought to clean up government corruption, address the poor living conditions of the working class, introduce basic forms of social insurance, and end exploitative labor practices (Bremner 1956; Davis 1984; Faulkner 1937). But other scholars have pointed out that the Progressive movement was comprised primarily of white, Protestant, and highly educated middle and upper-class Americans (Weinstein 1969; Hays 1964; Buenker 1973). This research tradition concludes that racist and nativist streaks permeated many of the movement's goals, and achieving reform often required disenfranchising poor, working class, and immigrant voters (Bridges 1999).

The question of how harmful or beneficial the Progressive agenda was for these groups remains unresolved in part because the historiography often focuses on the experiences of particular communities in particular cities. Scholars have documented the rise and fall of Irish machines in major cities like New York in the early 20th century (Erie 1990), described how Italians fared in Boston's West End (Gans et al. 1982), and analyzed the political dynamics of Germans, Irish, and Poles in Detroit (Zunz 2000). Bridges (1999) explores the ascent of municipal reformers in the Southwest with a focus on the political participation of the poor and racial minorities, while Stone, Price, and Stone (1940) describes the opposition of working class residents to reforms in nine urban cities. While these rich case studies offer nuanced accounts of who benefited from Progressive policies across specific local contexts, to date we largely lack systematic empirical research on the overall effects of the Progressive reform movement on the socioeconomic lives of urban residents across the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a review of the historical and sociological literature, see Fox (2012) and Leonard (2016).

We bring new data to bear on these old questions, including (1) de-anonymized census records at the individual level, (2) newly digitized city financial statistics, (3) dates of municipal reform which we hand collected from primary sources, and (4) estimates of electoral participation at the county level. Collectively, our data cover 455 U.S. cities and span the period from 1900 to 1940. We focus specifically on reforms that led to the adoption of a council-manager or city commissioner form of government. Considered the most extreme example of municipal reform (e.g. Holli 1969; Bernard and Rice 1975), this change was often accompanied by the adoption of at-large elections and non-partisan ballots Banfield and Wilson (1966); Bridges (1999) and serves as an effective proxy for when Progressives gained control of the city government. In addition to being one of the most institutionally dramatic reforms of this era, changes to the structure of government have been one of the longest lasting Progressive legacies. We further discuss the theoretical and empirical rationale for focusing on this particular reform in section 2.

Our research design exploits the fact that U.S. cities varied in whether and when they reformed. This allows us to study how city life changed around the time of the reform by comparing changes in socioeconomic and political outcomes of various groups in reformed cities vis-a-vis in cities that did not reform. In order to avoid bias arising from heterogeneous treatment effects in staggered difference-in-differences designs (e.g. Xu 2017; Goodman-Bacon 2021; De Chaisemartin and d'Haultfoeuille 2020), we follow the approach proposed by Cengiz et al. (2019) and compare reform cities only to cities that never reform. Importantly, since the timing of reform cannot be considered random, we then employ a weighting strategy introduced by (Hazlett and Xu 2018), which ensures that outcomes in reform and non-reform cities follow similar trends in the pre-reform period.

We use individual-level census data covering the period 1900-1940 to construct measures of the socioeconomic standing of several groups of urban residents. In particular, we compare the outcomes of more advantaged groups—natives, whites, and members of the business elite—to those of immigrant, black, and non-business workers. As our primary measure of

economic well-being we use the average predicted wage earnings of each group, which we compute following the procedure outlined in Abramitzky et al. (2021). We also analyze four additional socioeconomic outcomes: the employment rate within each group, the share holding a local government job, the group's literacy rate, and city-level occupational segregation across groups.

Overall, our results show that the adoption of Progressive era reforms modestly increased the earnings gap between more and less advantaged residents, but the magnitude of the effects is small. The reform had no significant impact on the earnings of immigrant and native residents. The earnings of business residents increased by 0.6 percent following the reform, while the earnings of black and non-business residents decreased by 1.5 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively. These effects result in a statistically significant but relatively small widening of the white-black and business-nonbusiness earnings gap. Consistent with these limited effects on earnings, we show that reforms did not lead to systematic changes across other socioeconomic outcomes. Crucially, we find that failing to account for the endogeneity in the timing of reform adoption would significantly affect our estimates: an estimation strategy that does not employ our weighting method would result in estimates that are twice as large as the true treatment effect on the native-immigrant gap. While we observe some evidence of distributional effects, we show that a wider earnings gap between more and less advantaged groups was not the price for more city growth: we document that reform cities did not experience higher aggregate growth in earnings, population, or employment.

We next examine the effect of reform on political participation. As we discuss in the next section, there is little disagreement in the historiography that one of the consequences of the municipal reform movement was to restrict popular participation in politics (Martin 1933; Banfield and Wilson 1966; Judd and Hinze 2018). Fox (2012) provides suggestive evidence that, in aggregate, voter turnout in presidential elections decreased more in regions with a large number of reform cities, and Hajnal and Lewis (2003) shows that turnout is lower today in California cities that maintain various Progressive-era reforms. We offer new evidence

that the adoption of reform-style government decreased turnout. Using historical data from Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale (2006), we show that turnout in presidential and congressional elections decreased significantly in counties where cities reformed. This finding is consistent with ample evidence suggesting that the reforms enacted during this period stripped political power from immigrants, minorities, and poorer residents (Holli 1969; Karnig and Walter 1983; Caren 2007).

Finally, we also show that the reduction in electoral participation did not go hand in hand with significant changes in public goods provision. Leveraging newly digitized data from the Financial Statistics of Cities Bulletins, we show that cities that reformed did not decrease public spending, nor significantly change the allocation of government funds across different types of public goods. These results suggest that, on average, the Progressive agenda neither helped nor harmed disadvantaged communities to the extent suggested by existing literature, at least economically. The well-documented reduction in terms of electoral participation and descriptive representation of immigrants and working class residents (Weinstein 1969; Davidson and Korbel 1981; Trounstine 2009) appears to have only modestly hurt their economic prospects. In the next section, we describe the historical background of the municipal reform movement and flesh out the theoretical debates at stake.

## **2 Historical Context and Theoretical Perspectives**

The late 19th and early 20th century marked a period of rapid urban growth in the United States. Cities spread beyond their original boundaries, and suburban communities emerged thanks to the development of new methods of urban transportation in the second half of the 19th century (Jackson 1987). This process of rapid urban expansion led to increasing administrative challenges, and city government often struggled to provide urban residents with adequate services (Glaab and Brown 1967). Population growth and density were associated with a rise in diseases, fires, water pollution, and overcrowding, which tended to dispropor-

tionately impact the living conditions of working class and immigrant residents in urban cores (Trounstine 2018). In this period, political machines often emerged in American cities as important providers of services for immigrants as well as poor communities generally and facilitated economic and social integration in exchange for political support (Schiesl 1977).

By the late 1800s, a reform movement began to emerge whose stated goal was to improve city life and living conditions and eliminate the graft, corruption, and patronage associated with machine-style politics (Buenker 1973; Renner and DeSantis 1993). Part of the broader Progressive movement in American politics, these municipal reformers sought to reorganize city administration. As pointed out by (Schiesl 1977) “Political reform appeared to be a matter of running municipal government along the lines of the business corporation.” The reforms of this era centered around the introduction of the council-manager form of government, the introduction of at-large elections and non-partisan ballots, and civil service rules for municipal employees. However, while reformers often claimed that their agenda was designed to broadly improve city governance and provide better services for all residents (Stewart 1950), the movement combined contradictory impulses.

On the one hand, some historians have pointed out that the Progressive reform movement was fueled primarily by business interests and upper-middle class whites who feared the political influence wielded by foreigners, racial minorities, and poor people (Merton 1968; Fox 2012; Lane 1962). Although urban poverty shocked the sensibilities of Progressives, many reformers believed the solution to such societal ills could only be achieved by reigning in the power of the lower classes (Weinstein 1969; Leonard 2016; Banfield and Wilson 1966). To achieve their goals, reformers called for various structural measures that would limit the ability of immigrants and ethnic minorities to exercise political power. While often enacted under the guise of reducing election fraud and streamlining governance, reforms such as voter registration, at-large elections, and non-partisan ballots made it more difficult for poor and minority voters to cast ballots and achieve representation on city councils (Buenker 1973). Additionally, early accounts portrayed the political machines of this era as sources of



political power and vehicles of upward mobility for immigrants (DiGaetano 1988). Perhaps not surprisingly, the most active opposition to these reform efforts came from immigrant and working class voters (Bridges and Kronick 1999).

On the other hand, subsequent research has demonstrated that most machines relied on petty favors rather than encouraging immigrant communities to organize around their common economic and political interests. City machines often benefited only one ethnic group at the expense of others (usually the Irish), and machine politicians did little to improve the dangerous living and working conditions experienced by many immigrants (Judd and Hinze 2018; Erie 1990; Trounstein 2009). Moreover, even as Progressive Era reformers sought to weaken immigrant voting blocs politically, they also made important improvements to workplace conditions, passed child labor laws, advocated for safer housing, and expanded social services (Fox 2012). According to Kirschner (1975), early scholarship on the Progressive movement tended to sing the praises of urban reformers. “Their generous efforts to ease the burdens of the poor by limiting the working hours of women and children, improving factory, housing and health conditions, and introducing rudimentary forms of social insurance, according to this interpretation, mark[ed] them as path breakers to the New Deal and the modern welfare state” (Kirschner 1975).

Ultimately, while historians largely agree that the government reforms of this era resulted in a reduced political participation of disadvantaged residents in cities (Stone, Price, and Stone 1940; Cassel 1986; Bridges and Kronick 1999), it is unclear what the overall socioeconomic impact was. While Progressives were often blatantly suspicious of immigrants, racial minorities, and the urban poor, their social policies may have still improved the economic well-being of those communities both directly and indirectly. As Leonard (2016) summarizes, “The great contradiction at the heart of Progressive Era reform was its view of the poor as victims deserving state uplift and as threats requiring state restraint. The unstable amalgam of compassion and contempt helps explain why Progressive Era reform lent a helping hand to those it deemed worthy of citizenship and employment while simultaneously

narrowing that privileged circle by excluding the many it judged unworthy.” The net effect on the economic and social lives of more disadvantaged groups and, more generally, which groups benefited when reformers gained power in cities, remains an empirical question that is largely unresolved.

We shed light on this question by analyzing socioeconomic outcomes for various groups of residents around the time during which a city switches to a council-manager or city commissioner form of government. While the Progressive movement was characterized by a series of reforms, we use the adoption of this new form of government as a proxy for Progressives gaining control of the apparatus of city government. Beyond being one of the most dramatic and long-lasting structural reforms of this era (Chambers 2000), this is one of the few reforms for which the date of adoption was systematically collected for every municipality across the country via the City Managers’ Association (now the International City Management Association). Broadly, these reforms sought to remove power from elected mayors and city council members and place policymaking authority with appointed city managers or city commissioners. The goal was to streamline decision-making, increase efficiency, and—importantly—make it difficult for machines and party bosses to engage in patronage (Judd and Hinze 2018). Existing historical work suggests that reforming the city charter itself was the most extreme example of reform (e.g. Holli 1969; Bernard and Rice 1975), and the vast majority of council-manager systems adopted other Progressive reforms at some point (Banfield and Wilson 1966).

We emphasize that adopting reform-style government represents a bundled treatment that was often accompanied by other reforms—such as non-partisan ballots and new voter registration rules—and marked a shift both culturally and politically (Bridges 1999). Some of these Progressive reforms and policies likely had direct effects on the jobs and social lives of less advantaged city residents. For example, we know that at-large elections and non-partisan ballots reduced turnout in immigrant neighborhoods and led to a higher proportion of occupational elites on city councils (Fox 2012; Cassel 1986). Civil service reforms also

made it more difficult for immigrants to obtain municipal jobs via patronage, although recent research has demonstrated that these concerns are likely overstated (Kuipers and Sahn 2022). We view the adoption of reform-style government as a proxy for Progressives gaining power and being able to advance their agenda. Any of the effects we observe are almost certainly the result of the multiple reforms that were part of the Progressive agenda. The goal of this paper is not to isolate the impact of a specific reform, but to contribute to the debate about the overall effect of the Progressive legacy on the economic and social well-being of urban residents.

## 3 Data

### 3.1 Data Collection

In this paper, we study the effect of the adoption of reform-style government, which entailed a switch to a council-manager or city commissioner form of government. The City Managers' Association (now the International City Management Association) kept detailed historical records of the list of cities that adopted this reform, along with the date of adoption.<sup>2</sup> Drawing from the Municipal Yearbooks of 1934 and 1940 and archival records available in Rice (2014), we collected data on the year of adoption of reform-style government for the 1,100 largest cities in the U.S.

Data on socio-economic outcomes are constructed from individual-level census data available via the Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) for the years 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940. Every 72 years, the Census Bureau releases data at the individual level, which allows us to track a variety of outcomes for different groups of urban residents as cities experimented with new government institutions over the first half of the 20th century.

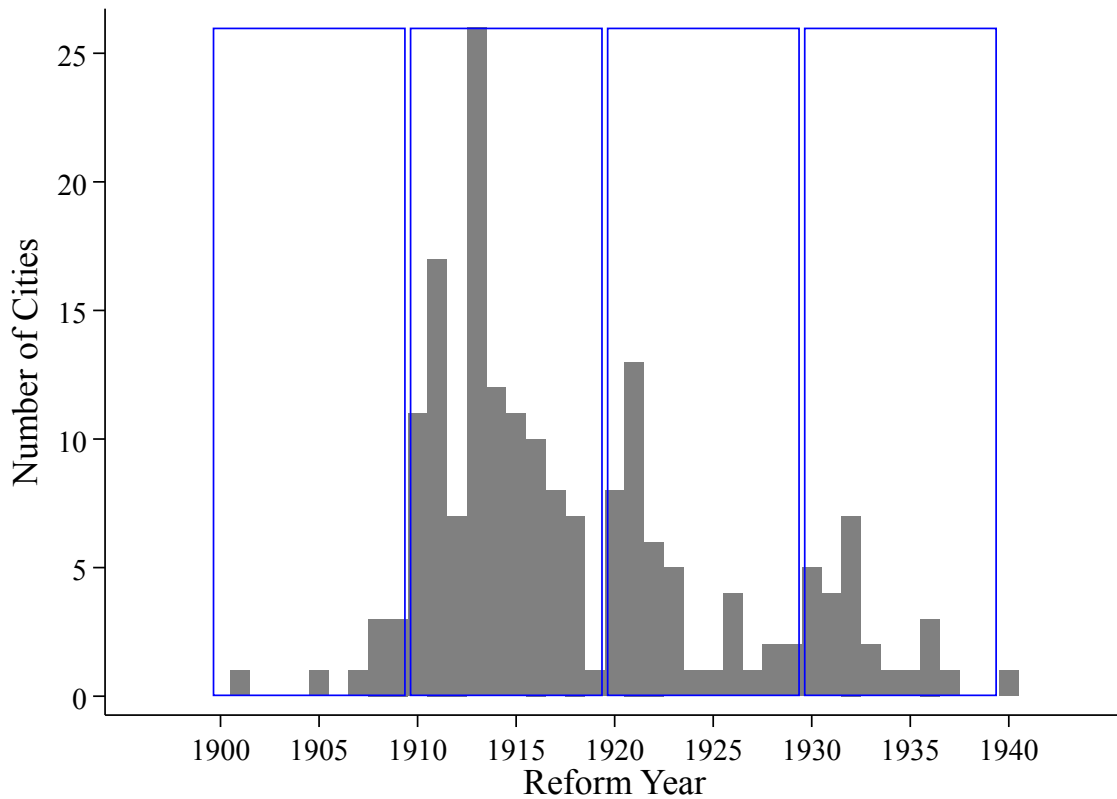
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<sup>2</sup>Unfortunately, no systematic data exist on the year of adoption of at-large elections and non-partisan ballots, which were two of the other common reforms of this time. We attempted to hand collect this data from [newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com) and by emailing local municipal archives but had little luck. However, as described in Section 2, historians describe how these reforms were usually introduced after a transition to the council-manager form of government.

Crucially, such comparisons are not possible with the more commonly used Census data aggregated at the location level, which does not allow one to construct socio-economic variables that vary both at the city- and at the group-level.

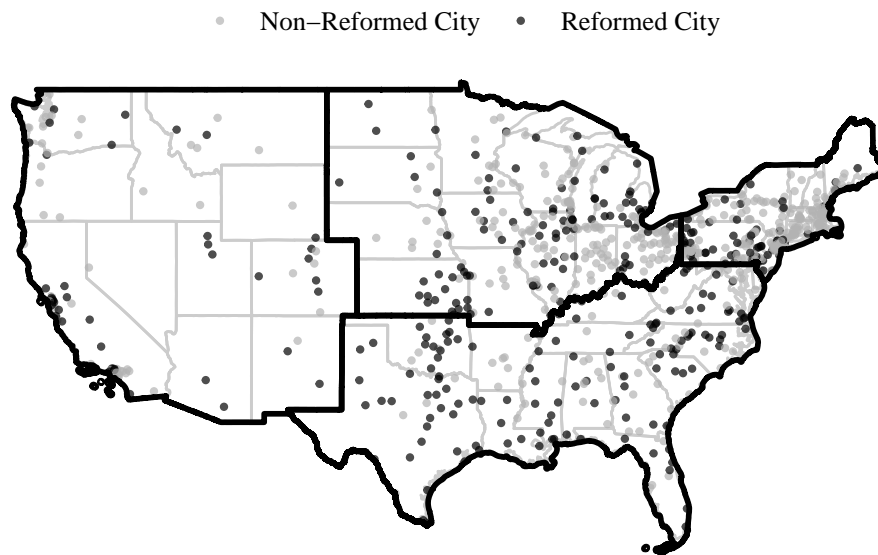
We combined data on the date of adoption of reform-style government with census data for the 1900-1940 period. In total, there were 455 cities that appeared in both the census data (for all five decades) and our dataset on municipal form of government, 186 of which reformed during our sample period. Figure 1 shows the number of cities that adopted a reform-style government in every year between 1900 and 1940. While the majority of reforms took place between 1910 and 1920, cities continued to reform their charters over the course of the sample.

Figure 1: Number of Reforms by Year



Notes: the plot above shows the year of adoption for each of the 186 reformed cities in our sample of 455 cities in the U.S. between 1900 and 1940. Blue lines highlight census decades.

Figure 2: Geographic Distribution of Reformed Cities



Notes: the plot above shows the geographic distribution of cities that reformed (in black) and did not reform (in gray) during the period 1900-1940.

Figure 2 depicts the geographic distribution of cities that reformed at some point during the 40 year period and cities that never reformed. Non-reformed cities were particularly common in the Northeast and Midwest. Examples of reformed cities can be found in every state, although they are particularly common in the South and Southwest.

To study the effect of the adoption of reform-style government on political participation, we rely on data on voter turnout in both congressional and presidential elections from 1900 to 1940 available from Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale (2006). Unfortunately, the smallest administrative unit at which data on voter turnout is available is the county. We thus map each city in our sample to a county, and assign to the city the turnout in the county where the city is located.

Finally, to study the effects of reform on public spending, we digitized information on city financial spending from the yearly Financial Statistics of Cities Bulletins provided by the U.S.

Census Bureau between 1902 and 1940. Our efforts build on work by Trounstine (2018) and Janas (2022) who have also transcribed portions of these data. These reports were released by the Census Bureau yearly from 1902 to 1938 and contain detailed information on the revenues, expenditures, debts, and public service enterprises for all cities with a population above 30,000 (until 1931) and then for all cities with a population above 100,000 (from 1932 to 1938). Importantly, the data contain information not only on the aggregate amount of public expenditures, but also on the specific amount spent by the city for specific public services. Of the 455 cities in the sample that we used for our socioeconomic outcomes analyses, 136 appear in the Financial Statistics bulletins. For each available year, we digitized city expenditures on schools, fire and police services, sanitation, public health, highways, recreation, hospitals, as well as total municipal spending.

### 3.2 Variable Definition

To assess how different groups fared in reformed vs. non-reformed cities, we split the residents of each city along several dimensions. First, we divide residents between immigrants and natives: we define “immigrant” to include both foreign-born individuals and respondents whose parents were born outside the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Second, we divide residents between African American and non-immigrant white residents, relying on the *RACE* variable provided by IPUMS. Finally, we use census occupation codes to investigate whether Progressive reforms differentially affected business elites by dividing residents into those employed in business occupations and those employed in non-business professions. Specifically, we follow existing literature (Buchmann and McDaniel 2016: e.g.) and define “business” to include occupations classified under the Managers, Officials, and Proprietors category according to IPUMS.<sup>4</sup>

We use wage earnings as our measure of economic well-being of different groups. For each of these groups, we compute the variable *Predicted Log Earnings*, which reflects the predicted average wages earned by the members of the group. Specifically, while data on respondent

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<sup>3</sup>For this classification, we rely on the variable *NATIVITY* provided by IPUMS.

<sup>4</sup>For specific details on the IPUMS variables used in each of our analyses, see the Appendix.

occupation exist over the course of the panel, the census only began collecting information on wages starting in 1940. Following the procedure outlined in Abramitzky et al. (2021), we first predict wages in 1940 based on occupation, age, and region. We then impute wages in previous census years based on the same characteristics.<sup>5</sup> While this measure cannot capture changes in earnings over time within an occupation or city, it reflects the local value of each resident’s occupation had they performed it in 1940. Finally, we average predicted wages at the city-decade-group level, and we take its logarithm.

To further explore the socioeconomic impact of reform, as well as to explore possible mechanisms behind the relationship between reform and wages, we look at five additional outcomes available in the Census data. First, we calculate the variable *Employment*, which is the share of each group that is employed. This indicator is based on the IPUMS variables *labforce* and *classwrkr*, and additional details about variable construction can be found in the Appendix. Second, we construct the variable *Local Government Job*, which is an indicator that takes a value of one if an individual holds a job in “local government” as defined by industry classification in the census. Third, we use the variable *Literacy* as a measure of cultural assimilation and human capital. It is an indicator that takes a value of one if a respondent could read and write. Fourth, we construct the variable *Group Population Share*, which is the share of each group among the residents of a city.

Finally, we calculate the variable *Occupational segregation*, which indicates the degree to which workers belonging to different groups are clustered in different occupations. We employ two standard approaches to measure segregation: a dissimilarity index and an isolation index, both widely used measures in the literature (Cutler, Glaeser, and Vigdor 1999; Iceland, Weinberg, and Steinmetz 2002; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2011). The two indices are defined in a given city-year as:

$$Dissimilarity = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k \in K} \left| \frac{immigrants_k}{immigrants} - \frac{natives_k}{natives} \right| \quad (1)$$

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<sup>5</sup>We make predictions using only cities that had not reformed by 1940 to avoid projecting any consequences of reform into the past.

$$Isolation = \sum_{k \in K} \frac{immigrants_k}{immigrants} \frac{immigrants_k}{immigrants} - \frac{natives_k}{natives} \quad (2)$$

where  $k$  is one of the  $K$  occupations present in that city-year. Both indices range between 0 (no segregation) and 1 (perfect segregation). The dissimilarity index can be interpreted as the share of minority residents (or majority) that would need to switch occupations for the minority share to be uniform across the labor market. The isolation index measures the extent to which minority residents are only exposed to one another in their occupations (White 1986; Cutler, Glaeser, and Vigdor 1999; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2011).

With the exception of our occupational segregation measures, which by construction can be computed only at the city-year level, we compute all our measures both at the city-year-group level, to study the impact of reform on specific demographic groups, and at the city-year level, to study the aggregate impact of reform on the socio-economic evolution of a city. Additionally, in order to directly measure the distributional impacts of reform, we also calculate the gap in each measure between the more advantaged groups – natives, whites, and members of the business elites – and the more disadvantaged ones – immigrants, African Americans, and non-business workers.

## 4 Empirical Approach

Our goal is to study the effect of reform across U.S. cities at the turn of the 20th century. Our identification strategy exploits the staggered introduction of the reform across cities shown in Figure 1 to study the effect of progressive reforms on three sets of city-level outcomes: socioeconomic outcomes for different groups of residents, voter turnout, and public expenditures. Census outcomes are aggregated at the city-year-group and are recorded every decade. Turnout is measured at the county level and is available every two years for congressional elections and every four years for presidential elections. Finally, city budget outcomes are measured at the city-year level directly and are measured every year for the



subset of cities for which this information is available. The standard difference-in-differences specification for our setting would be the following

$$y_{ct} = \gamma_c + \delta_t + \beta Reformed_{ct} + \varepsilon_{ct} \quad (3)$$

where  $y_{ct}$  is the outcome for city  $c$  and decade  $t$ .  $Reformed_{ct}$  is an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 after city  $c$  reforms. City and year fixed effects are represented by  $\gamma_c$  and  $\delta_t$  respectively.<sup>6</sup> For census outcomes, we are most interested in whether city reforms affect more and less advantaged residents differently. For every outcome, we always show results for less advantaged residents (immigrants, black people, and non-business workers) and more advantaged residents (natives, whites, and business people) separately, and we then show the effect on the gap in that outcome between the two groups. Standard errors are clustered by city.

Standard difference-in-differences regressions, like in Equation 3, are biased when the treatment goes into effect at different times for different units if treatment effects change over time (e.g. Xu 2017; Goodman-Bacon 2021; De Chaisemartin and d’Haultfoeuille 2020). This is likely to be the case in our setting if reform affects the fortunes of various groups differentially over the course of our panel. To avoid this source of bias, we follow the stacked approach proposed by Cengiz et al. (2019) and compare reform cities only to cities that never reform (“clean control” cities). As they propose, we create as many copies of each never-reformed city as treatment periods in our data. For instance, when looking at census data which is available for each decade during 1900-1940, we create four copies of never-reformed cities, one for each decade highlighted in Figure 1 in which treated cities reformed (1901-1910, 1911-1920, 1921-1930, 1931-1940). We refer to each set of reform cities and their corresponding never-reformed cities as a “timing group.” We then compare reform cities only to the never-reformed cities in the same timing group by estimating:

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<sup>6</sup>Across all analyses, we limit our data to cities for which we have data in all relevant years. This means that the exact number of treated and control units varies across analyses.

$$y_{cgt} = \gamma_{cg} + \delta_{tg} + \beta Reformed_{cgt} + \varepsilon_{cgt} \quad (4)$$

where  $g$  identifies the timing group,  $\delta_{tg}$  represents period-by-timing group fixed effects, and  $\gamma_{cg}$  represents city-by-timing group fixed effects.<sup>7</sup> Standard errors are clustered at the city level. We can interpret  $\beta$  as the effect of reform under the assumption that reform and non-reform cities would have been on the same average trajectory had neither reformed.

Of course, the timing of reform is not random: cities may choose to adopt a city manager in response to changing socioeconomic conditions. For example, the reform movement gained strength in the west at the same time as many people were moving to the region. To address this issue, we re-weight our data to ensure that the never-reformed cities match the average outcome for the reform cities in their timing group before reform (Imai, Kim, and Wang 2018). This approach is similar to the strategy proposed in Hazlett and Xu (2018). Specifically, we use entropy balancing to find weights that minimize the difference between the average reform and never-reform cities on all pre-reform observations of the outcome while maintaining weights as close to 1 for all control units (Hainmueller 2012). This method is well-suited to cases with many treated units and few pre-treatment periods, which is not the case with standard synthetic control methods for panel data.

To investigate pre-trends and the dynamic evolution of the treatment effect, we also estimate a non-parametric event-study specification:

$$y_{cgt} = \gamma_{cg} + \delta_{tg} + \sum_{\tau=-3}^{+3} \beta_{\tau} Reformed_{cgt} \times \mathbb{1}[t = \tau] + \varepsilon_{cgt} \quad (5)$$

where the coefficients of interest,  $\beta_{\tau}$ s, measure the change in outcomes of treated cities  $\tau$  decades before or after treatment, relative to the decade preceding the introduction of reform in each city and compared to the change in outcomes of pure control cities.

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<sup>7</sup>Note that city-by-timing group fixed effects are effectively city fixed effects in our analysis using census data. This is because, differently from our analysis using political and fiscal outcomes, which leverages more granular time variation, in our census analysis each pure control city enters each timing group for the same number of decades (all the decades in the 1900 to 1940 period).

## 5 Reforms Had Minimal Socioeconomic Impact

In this section, we begin by presenting our results on socioeconomic gaps between more vs less advantaged groups of city residents. Table 1 reports estimates from equation 4, which measures the impact of the reform on the evolution of earnings for different groups of residents. Columns 1-3 focus on immigrants versus natives, columns 4-5 focus on blacks versus whites, while columns 7-9 focus on residents in non-business versus business occupations. Overall, we find that the reform had at most moderate distributional effects. The reform led to a 1 percent reduction in earnings for immigrant residents (p-value 0.095), while it had a negligible impact for natives, resulting in an insignificant 0.007 increase in the native-immigrant earnings gap (i.e. the difference in log earnings between natives and immigrants).

Table 1: The Impact of Reform on Earnings Across Groups

	Predicted Log Earnings								
	Immigrant (1)	Native (2)	Gap (3)	Black (4)	White (5)	Gap (6)	Non-Business (7)	Business (8)	Gap (9)
Reform	-0.010 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.007 (0.006)	-0.015 (0.008)	0.002 (0.005)	0.017 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.004)	0.006 (0.002)	0.013 (0.004)
Num Obs	6,305	6,305	6,305	4,845	4,845	4,845	6,310	6,310	6,310
Num Cities	454	454	454	366	366	366	455	455	455
Outcome Mean	7.065	7.100	0.035	6.650	7.097	0.447	6.911	7.438	0.527
Outcome Stdv	.137	.115	.114	.181	.12	.127	.157	.101	.112
City FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

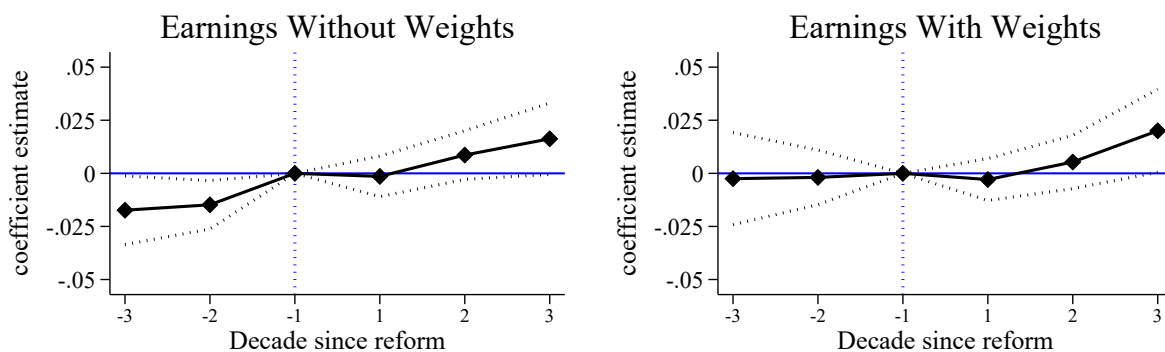
*Notes:* Gap is defined as the difference between the more and less privileged group (e.g. native - immigrant, white - black, and business - non-business). Regressions estimated using all men age 19 to 50 living in cities from 1900 to 1940. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city reported in parentheses. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in the table..

Importantly, we can show that a failure to account for the possible endogenous timing in the adoption of the reform would result in significantly inflated estimates. A regression that does not employ entropy balancing weights results in an estimated effect on the earnings gap that is twice as large (estimate of 0.014, p-value 0.005). Indeed, as we show in Figure 3, Panel A, cities that reformed were already experiencing an increase in the immigrant-native earnings gap, relative to unreformed cities, in the decades leading up to the reform. When we apply our weighting procedure, which ensures that reform and never-reformed cities are

on similar trends before the reform, we estimate a significantly smaller effect of the reform (see Panel B of Figure 3).

The remaining columns of Table 1 provide some evidence that the reform increased the earnings gap between more and less advantaged residents, but the economic magnitude of these effects is modest. The white-black earnings gap increased by 0.017 following the reform, with the effect mainly resulting from a 1.5 percent drop in earnings among black residents. The earnings gap between residents in business versus non-business occupations increased by 0.013, as a result of a 0.7 percent decrease in earnings for non-business residents and a 0.6 percent increase for business residents. Appendix Figure A.1 presents event-study estimates from equation 5 and shows evidence of immediate increases in the gaps in the first decade after the adoption of the new form of government. To put these effects in perspective, the average gap in log earnings between white and black in unreformed cities over the sample period is 0.414, and the one between business and non-business residents is 0.506; thus, the reform increased the gaps by 4.1 and by 2.6 percent, respectively, relative to the average unreformed city.

Figure 3: Event Study Estimates for the Native-Immigrant Earnings Gap



*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 5 for the gap in earnings between native born and immigrants residents. The figure on the left uses raw data, and the figure on the right employs balancing weights as described in Hainmueller (2012). Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.

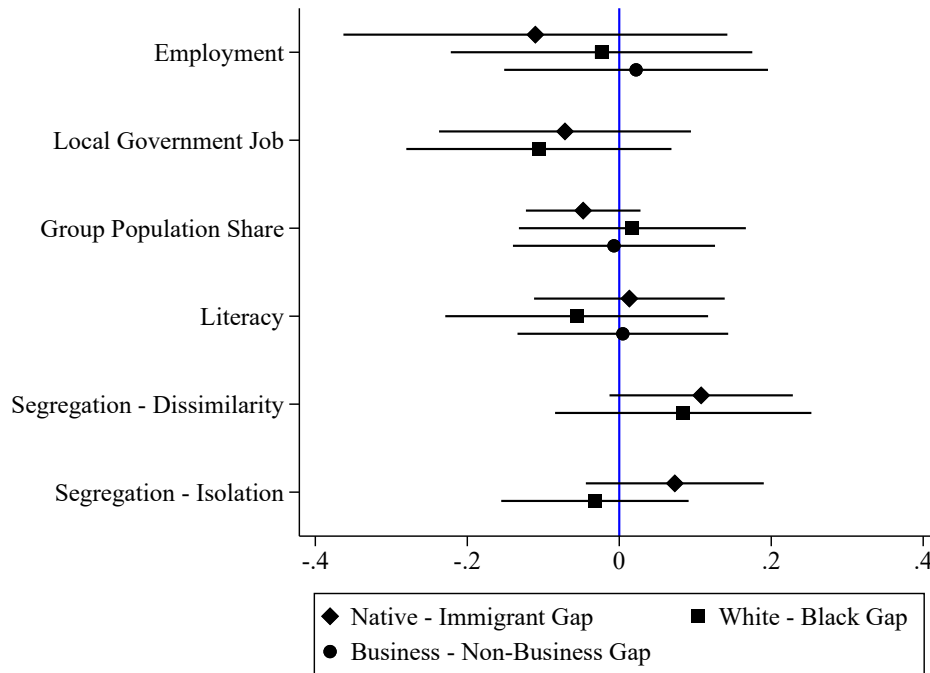
In line with the small earnings effects uncovered in Table 1, we find small and mostly statistically insignificant effects on other measures of socioeconomic standing. Figure 4 reports the coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals from estimating equation 4 for all our additional socioeconomic variables (where coefficients are expressed in standard deviation units of their respective dependent variable). For each outcome, we estimate the impact of the reform on the gap between more and less advantaged groups of residents.

If the adoption of reform-style government made it more difficult for machines to offer employment opportunities to disadvantaged residents, we would expect the effect of the reform on their probability of employment in general, and on their probability of having a public job more specifically, to be negative. As Trounstine (2006) observes, public sector jobs in the early 20th century often paid better wages than private employment. If instead less advantaged residents in cities that reformed were not particularly reliant on patronage for employment, or if reforms did not significantly reduce their likelihood of employment, we would observe no effect of the form of government on labor force participation. In line with this second possibility, we find no evidence that the reform widened employment gaps or gaps in the probability of holding a local government job. In addition, we find that the literacy gaps between groups were not affected by the adoption of reform.

We use our segregation measures to investigate whether cities that reformed had higher degrees of occupational segregation. Importantly, such clustering is not necessarily a negative thing for minorities. For instance, co-ethnic niches can capitalize on particular skill sets and human capital attributes to provide employment opportunities to members of the same communities (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). At the same time, existing empirical work finds little evidence that such occupational segregation benefits minorities in terms of their earnings and educational attainment (Wilson 1999; Model 2018). We do find some

evidence that cities that reformed had higher degrees of occupational segregation, although the estimates are imprecise.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 4: The Impact of Reform on Other Socioeconomic Outcomes



*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals from the model described in equation 4. See section 3.2 for a description of the dependent variables shown on the y axis. Results in table format are presented in Tables A.3, A.4, A.5.

Finally, we look at the overall share of each group in the population. We do this for two reasons. First, worsening economic conditions for a particular demographic group in the decades following the reform could lead to a decrease in that group’s population share through a combination of increased mortality rates, lower birth rates, and negative net migration rates. Second, we can use this variable to investigate whether any changes to earnings are driven by changes in the relative size of the groups under study. If, for example, the reforms in a particular city led to a reduction in the white population, we might expect higher wages for this group because of lower competition for similar jobs. In line with the

<sup>8</sup>Note that our occupational segregation measure is constructed at the city level directly and it is equal to 1 by definition when the groups we look at are residents in business and non-business occupations, which is why we omit this comparison from Figure 4. See the previous section for details.

small to null distributional effects we uncover, we do not find significant changes in the shares of the city population belonging to any of the groups we study.

Despite the small distributional effects, the adoption of reform-style government may have had aggregate welfare effects, leading to differential economic growth relative to unreformed cities. While the absence of significant treatment effects for most of the outcomes and groups in Table 1 and Figure 4 already suggests this is not the case, we can provide direct evidence on the absence of significant aggregate welfare effects by re-estimating equation 4 on a sample at the city-census decade level. Table 2 shows that the adoption of reform-style government was not associated with differential changes to overall earnings, city population, or employment trajectories in the decades following the reform. Similarly, the share of employment in local government jobs and literacy rates did not change after the reform.

Table 2: The Impact of Reform on Aggregate Outcomes

	Log Predicted Earnings (1)	Log Total Population (2)	Employment (3)	Local Government Job (4)	Literacy (5)
Reform	-0.007 (0.004)	-0.007 (0.046)	-0.000 (0.006)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.003)
Num Obs	6,310	6,310	2,112	6,310	5,048
Num Cities	455	455	435	455	455
Outcome Mean	7.025	23.349	0.801	0.011	0.952
Outcome Stdv	.129	89.981	.074	.008	.043
City FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Notes:* Shows estimates of the aggregate effect of the reform. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city reported in parentheses. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in the table.

Overall, our empirical analysis paints a picture that is inconsistent with large distributional or aggregate effects of Progressive reforms. Our estimates show that, on average, the relative socioeconomic standing of less advantaged groups was either unaffected (for the case of immigrants) or only moderately worsened (for the case of African Americans and non-business residents) in the decades following the reform.

## 6 Political Participation Decreased in Reformed Cities

We next examine how the adoption of reform-style government affected political participation. Here, the theoretical predictions are more clear-cut, and existing empirical work tends to support the idea that the reforms of the Progressive era reduced democratic participation, consistent with them being partially designed to weaken popular participation in machine politics at the city-level (Banfield and Wilson 1966; Buenker 1973). Table 3 reports results from equation 4, estimated on a panel that includes all presidential and congressional elections from 1900 to 1940. While the treatment remains at the city-level, turnout data are not available below the level of the county. The dependent variable is thus turnout in the county where the city is located in each two or four year cycle (for congressional and presidential elections, respectively). Odd columns present unweighted coefficient estimates, while even columns present coefficient estimates from our preferred specification employing entropy balancing weights as described in section 4.<sup>9</sup> Standard errors are clustered at the city level and Appendix Tables A.6 shows robustness to clustering standard errors at the county level. Figure 5 presents event-study estimates from equation 5.

We find large negative effects for both congressional and presidential elections. When a city reforms, turnout in that city's county decreases by 2.045 percentage points in congressional elections and 2.242 percentage points in presidential elections. The event study estimates show that the drop in electoral participation is already visible in the first election post-reform, and it becomes larger over time. These results are in line with Fox (2012), which suggests that turnout decreased more quickly in the south and southwest than in the reform resistant north in the early 20th century. Today, turnout remains 6 to 8 percentage points higher in mayor-council cities compared to council-manager cities in California, according to estimates by Hajnal and Lewis (2003). It is worth noting that coefficients from the specifi-

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<sup>9</sup>Election results are available for a larger number of cities than the 455 included in the balanced sample of cities in our main analysis using census data and shown in Table 1. For consistency, Appendix Table A.7 shows robustness to restricting the electoral analysis to the sample of 455 cities present in census data. Note that 2 cities cannot be included because election results are available for one year only.

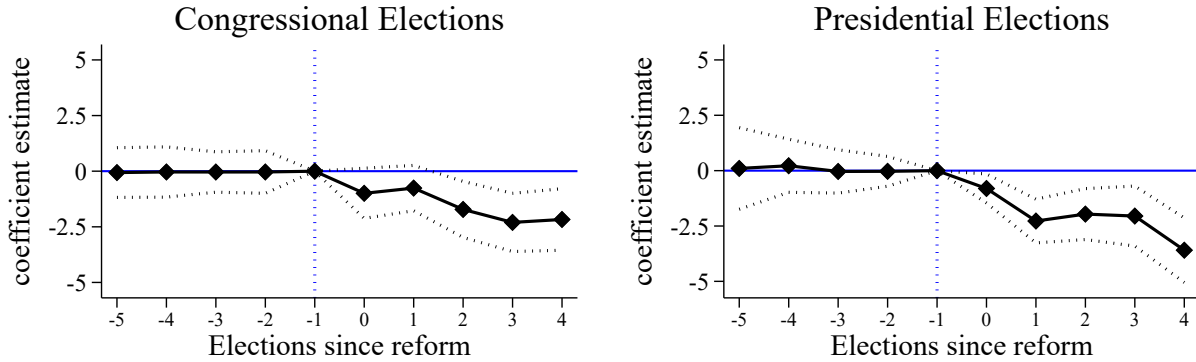


Table 3: The Impact of Reform on Voter Turnout

	Turnout Congressional Elections		Turnout Presidential Elections	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Reform	-3.366 (0.584)	-2.045 (0.588)	-3.313 (0.595)	-2.242 (0.635)
Num Obs	425,586	383,754	137,929	137,929
Num Cities	1342	1342	1649	1649
Outcome Mean	53.364	48.780	60.642	55.449
Outcome Stdv	17.617	18.932	18.356	20.409
City $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Shows estimates of the effect of the reform on voter turnout. The dependent variable is turnout in the county where each city is located in each two year period (for Congressional elections) or four year period (for Presidential elections). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city reported in parentheses. The mean and standard deviation of the unweighted dependent variable are shown in column (1) and column (3) of the table. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in column (2) and column (4) of the table.

Figure 5: Event Study Estimates for Voter Turnout



*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 5 for congressional and presidential turnout with balancing weights. Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.

cation not accounting for endogenous timing of reform, in columns 1 and 3 of Table 3, are 65% and 48% larger than coefficients in columns 2 and 4 for Congressional and Presidential elections respectively. Our results provide some of the first historical evidence at the local level and using a before-and-after design that reform-style government decreased turnout—a

widely assumed consequence of Progressive institutions (Martin 1933; Banfield and Wilson 1966; Judd and Hinze 2018). Moreover, by showing that the reform led to a significant shock to electoral participation, we can provide direct evidence that the mostly insignificant socio-economic effects that we uncovered in the previous section are not simply the result of a weakly specified treatment. The adoption of reform-style government mattered for the residents of American cities, but the consequences were more pronounced in the political rather than the economic sphere.

## 7 No Change in Public Expenditures After Reform

Finally, we examine whether and how the adoption of reform-style government influenced the allocation of spending on public goods. The theoretical predictions here are mixed. On the one hand, qualitative work suggests that the middle and upper-class supporters of the Progressive movement favored investment in amenities like parks, libraries, museums, and infrastructure improvements that would benefit downtown business districts (e.g. Hays 1964). But reformers also sought to expand access to education and social services (e.g. Buenker 1973). And while municipal reformers also claimed that their efforts would make city government more cost-effective and efficient (Schiesl 1977), existing empirical work shows that overall spending is no lower in council-manager cities (Lineberry and Fowler 1967; Ruhil 2003) and in fact is sometimes even higher (Coate and Knight 2011).

Here, we examine how spending across several key categories evolved in reformed vs. non-reformed cities.<sup>10</sup> Following Trounstine (2018) and Janas (2022), we draw from the Financial Statistics of Cities bulletins. Out of the 455 cities in our socioeconomic outcomes analysis, 136 cities also appear in the bulletins. For these cities, we digitized yearly information on aggregate municipal public spending, as well as on the amount spent on eight categories of

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<sup>10</sup>Given the higher frequency of city budget data with respect to census and elections data (yearly *vs.* decennial and quadriennial/biennial respectively), and in order to be consistent with the weighting strategy used in the previous analysis and described in 4, we here use entropy balancing to find weights that minimize the difference between the average reform and never-reform cities only on the last three pre-reform years .

services: schools, fire, police, sanitation, public health, highways, recreation, and hospitals. This newly collected data allow us to paint a comprehensive portrait of how municipal budgets were affected by the adoption of Progressive reforms.

Interestingly, we find few differences in the evolution of public goods spending between cities that reformed and those that did not. Table 4 shows the results. In Column 1, we find a modest and statistically insignificant increase in total spending of around 2% among cities that reformed. These results point in the same direction but are substantively smaller than Coate and Knight (2011), who find that per capita spending increased by just under 8% when cities switched to council-manager government in the 1980s and 1990s. Although reformers of the Progressive Era frequently claimed that their proposals would cut costs and improve services (Bruere 1913; Taylor 1919), reformed cities did not actually reduce their overall expenditures in the early 20th century.

Table 4: The Impact of Reform on Public Expenditures

	Total (1)	School (2)	Police (3)	Highways (4)	Hospitals (5)	Fire (6)	Sanitation (7)	Recreation (8)	Health (9)
Reform	0.022 (0.018)	0.030 (0.018)	-0.010 (0.024)	0.013 (0.034)	-0.055 (0.142)	-0.000 (0.022)	0.026 (0.032)	0.055 (0.064)	-0.085 (0.046)
Num Obs	5,106	8,435	8,268	8,436	5,437	8,268	8,268	7,930	8,268
Num Cities	121	136	136	136	122	136	136	135	136
Outcome Mean	5955.3	2000.9	534.2	475.7	572.7	409.3	383.4	160.7	125.6
Outcome Stdv	25459.6	9897.4	2877.6	1467.3	2705.4	1532.9	2108.6	651.9	512
City × Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Notes:* Dependent variables are the natural log of spending in each budget category measured in thousands of dollars. The mean and standard deviation of the unlogged weighted dependent variable are shown in the table. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city reported in parentheses.

Despite the fact that reform coalitions were widely perceived as supporting public goods like parks and libraries in the more affluent parts of their community, we uncover only a noisy (but positive) effect of the reform on spending on recreation. In general, across individual policy categories, we do not observe consistent patterns in the expenditure priorities of city governments after they reform. Spending did increase modestly on education—the largest expenditure category—but the estimates are not statistically distinguishable from zero.

The null results in this section offer some suggestive evidence as to why we fail to detect meaningful increases in the socioeconomic gaps between different groups of more and less advantaged residents in reformed cities. While the historical literature gives us reason to believe that the municipal Progressive agenda may have disproportionately catered to white and middle-class business elites, the actions of city leaders may not have translated into observable increases in inequality if spending on public goods remained fairly constant. Of course, we cannot observe how funding was allocated at the sub-city level, and case study evidence suggests that reform governments tended to neglect poorer neighborhoods (e.g. Judd and Hinze 2018; Beach et al. 2018). But the aggregate differences in the policy priorities and overall spending of reformed vs. non-reformed governments appear to be quite small overall.

## 8 Discussion

According to Judd and Hinze (2018), “The municipal reforms of the early nineteenth century were designed to undercut the electoral influence of working-class and immigrant voters” (77). What is less clear is whether these reforms reduced the economic power of these groups as well. In this paper, we study whether the adoption of reform-style government affected a variety of socioeconomic outcomes for immigrants, African Americans, and the working class compared to native-born, white, and business elites. Using de-anonymized census data to construct estimates of the wage earnings of city residents, we find that the earnings gap increased only marginally in reformed relative to non-reformed cities. We also find some modest evidence that occupational segregation increased, particularly for immigrants. Crucially, a naive difference-in-difference approach would have uncovered a much larger effect of reform on earnings inequality. After accounting for the non-random adoption of reform institutions with trajectory balancing, we find that much of the difference in earnings gaps

can be explained by differences in the wage dynamics of cities that reformed vs. those that did not.

To show that these minimal effects are not simply the result of a weakly specified treatment, we use the same empirical setup to show that voter turnout did decrease in counties where more cities reformed. These results remain consistent even after employing trajectory balancing and are consistent with existing literature suggesting that the reforms of the Progressive era reduced political participation. While we cannot state with certainty whether this reduction in turnout disproportionately impacted working class and racial and ethnic minorities, one consistent explanation for this result is the fact that Progressive reformers tended to implement stricter voter registration and literacy requirements once they gained power.

Finally, we find no meaningful differences in public goods expenditures across reform and non-reformed cities. While we lacked clear *ex ante* theoretical predictions for these analyses, we include these results to paint the most comprehensive portrait possible about how municipal government evolved in cities before and after the adoption of Progressive institutions. We hope that these newly digitized data from the Financial Statistics of Cities Bulletins will be a resource for other scholars of historical political economy.

Together, these findings speak to important debates today about the contemporary legacy of Progressive-era reforms—particularly for poor and racial minorities. Many cities still rely on non-partisan ballots and at-large elections, and voter turnout remains much lower at the local level (Hajnal and Trounstine 2005). In some states, like California, a spate of recent lawsuits have aimed to overturn these electoral institutions with the goal of achieving more equitable representation for communities of color.<sup>11</sup>

Overall, this paper provides a comprehensive portrait of the economic, political, and public policy landscapes for a large sample of American cities in the early 20th century. Most scholarly work on the effects of Progressive institutions has focused specifically on their

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.commoncause.org/california/resource/california-municipal-democracy-index/>

consequences for participation and representation, and we have learned a great deal about the conditions under which local institutions are more or less responsive to the interests of racial minorities (Engstrom and McDonald 1981; Davidson and Korbel 1981; Karnig and Welch 1982; Hajnal and Trounstine 2007; Trebbi, Aghion, and Alesina 2008; Trounstine and Valdini 2008; Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah 2010; Abott and Magazinnik 2020). The findings in this paper suggest that the economic and social consequences of these reforms may also warrant additional scrutiny in the contemporary political environment. To the extent that the design of local political institutions exacerbates other types of socioeconomic inequalities, reforming these institutions becomes all the more urgent. On the other hand, if the consequences are largely confined to the political sphere, creating more equitable electoral institutions is no less urgent—but such efforts are likely insufficient to address broader socioeconomic disparities.

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# Online Appendix

Intended for online publication only.

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## A.1 Data Appendix

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

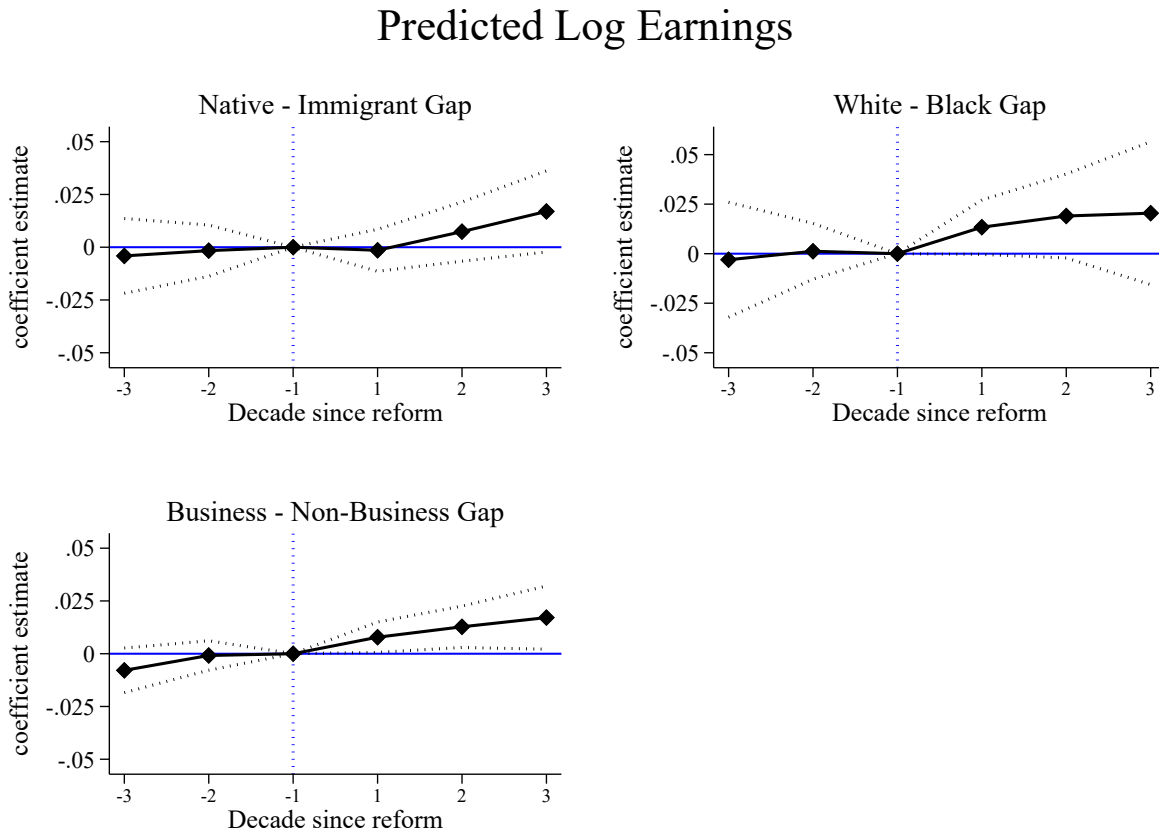
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Reformed City	0.409	0.492	0	1	455
<b>Elections</b>					
Turnout Congressional Elections	53.354	17.62	0.3	98.900	383754
Turnout Presidential Elections	60.642	18.356	0	99.2	137929
<b>Census - Earnings</b>					
Predicted Log Earnings (Immigrant)	7.057	0.132	6.5	7.509	6305
Predicted Log Earnings (Native)	7.124	0.105	6.607	7.468	6305
Predicted Log Earnings (Gap: Native - Immigrant)	0.067	0.11	-0.47	0.409	6305
Predicted Log Earnings (Black)	6.707	0.157	6.11	7.543	4845
Predicted Log Earnings (White)	7.127	0.103	6.642	7.468	4845
Predicted Log Earnings (Gap: White - Black)	0.42	0.12	-0.442	0.874	4845
Predicted Log Earnings (Non-Business)	6.944	0.139	6.377	7.291	6310
Predicted Log Earnings (Business)	7.453	0.087	7	7.675	6310
Predicted Log Earnings (Gap: Business - Non-Business)	0.509	0.11	0.2	0.924	6310
<b>Log of Finance Spending</b>					
Total	14.657	1.309	12.411	19.719	5106
School	13.565	1.287	11.155	18.812	8435
Police	12.249	1.406	9.384	17.861	8268
Highways	12.43	1.275	9.817	17.248	8436
Hospitals, Charities and Corrections	11.727	1.982	3.951	17.574	5437
Fire	12.328	1.197	9.832	17.03	8268
Sanitation	11.89	1.437	8.654	17.549	8268
Recreation	11.043	1.687	0	16.407	7930
Health Conservation	10.587	1.618	5.74	15.849	8268
<b>Census - Other Outcomes</b>					
Employment (Gap: Native - Immigrant)	-0.011	0.048	-0.225	0.295	2109
Employment (Gap: White - Black)	0.036	0.13	-0.37	0.883	1650
Employment (Gap: Business - Non-Business)	0.182	0.084	-0.237	0.532	2112
Local Government Job (Gap: Native - Immigrant)	0.002	0.01	-0.071	0.073	6305
Local Government Job (Gap: White - Black)	0.006	0.013	-0.149	0.083	4845
Group Population Share (Immigrants)	0.498	0.238	0.017	0.969	6305
Group Population Share (Black)	0.118	0.141	0.001	0.781	4845
Group Population Share (Non-Business)	0.93	0.02	0.823	0.987	6310
Segregation - Dissimilarity (Immigrant)	0.252	0.079	0.062	0.6	5044
Segregation - Dissimilarity (Black)	0.584	0.091	0.159	0.999	3876
Segregation - Isolation (Immigrant)	0.093	0.046	0.015	0.386	5044
Segregation - Isolation (Black)	0.26	0.119	0.007	0.653	3876
Literacy (Gap: Native - Immigrant)	0.055	0.057	-0.065	0.495	5044
Literacy (Gap: White - Black)	0.082	0.08	-0.021	0.639	3876
Literacy (Gap: Business - Non-Business)	0.039	0.041	-0.06	0.306	5048

Table A.2: Description of IPUMS Variables Used in Analysis

IPUMS Variable	Description & Notes
LABFORCE	A dichotomous variable indicating whether a person participated in the labor force. See EMPSTAT for a non-dichotomous variable that indicates whether the respondent was part of the labor force – working or seeking work – and, if so, whether the person was currently unemployed. <i>Notes:</i> we combine this variable with CLASSWKR to identify if an individual is employed. Note that the variable EMPSTAT referenced in the IPUMS definition above is only available for the years 1910, 1930, and 1940. However, LABFORCE alone cannot distinguish between employed workers and unemployed individuals who are in the labor force but currently out of work. Our variable Employment takes a value of 1 if an individual is listed as being in the labor force AND has a current occupation listed for the CLASSWKR variable
CLASSWKR	Indicates whether respondents worked for their own enterprise(s) or for someone else as employees. <i>Notes:</i> in combination with LABFORCE, allows us to distinguish between employed and unemployed individuals in the labor force.
INCWAGE	Reports each respondent’s total pre-tax wage and salary income - that is, money received as an employee - for the previous year. <i>Notes:</i> we use wages in 1940 to build a prediction model that allows us to impute wages to previous years based on an individuals’ occupation, immigration status, age, and place of residence. Used to construct our variable Predicted Log Earnings
OCC1950	Applies the 1950 Census Bureau occupational classification system to occupational data, to enhance comparability across years. Note: used to predict Log Earnings
NATIVITY	Indicates whether respondents were native-born or foreign-born; for native-born respondents, it indicates whether their mothers and/or fathers were native-born or foreign-born. <i>Notes:</i> we define an individual as an immigrant if they are foreign-born or if either of their parents is foreign-born
RACE	Indicates whether respondents were white, African American, Native American, Chinese, Japanese, or classified as “other”

## A.2 Additional Statistical Results

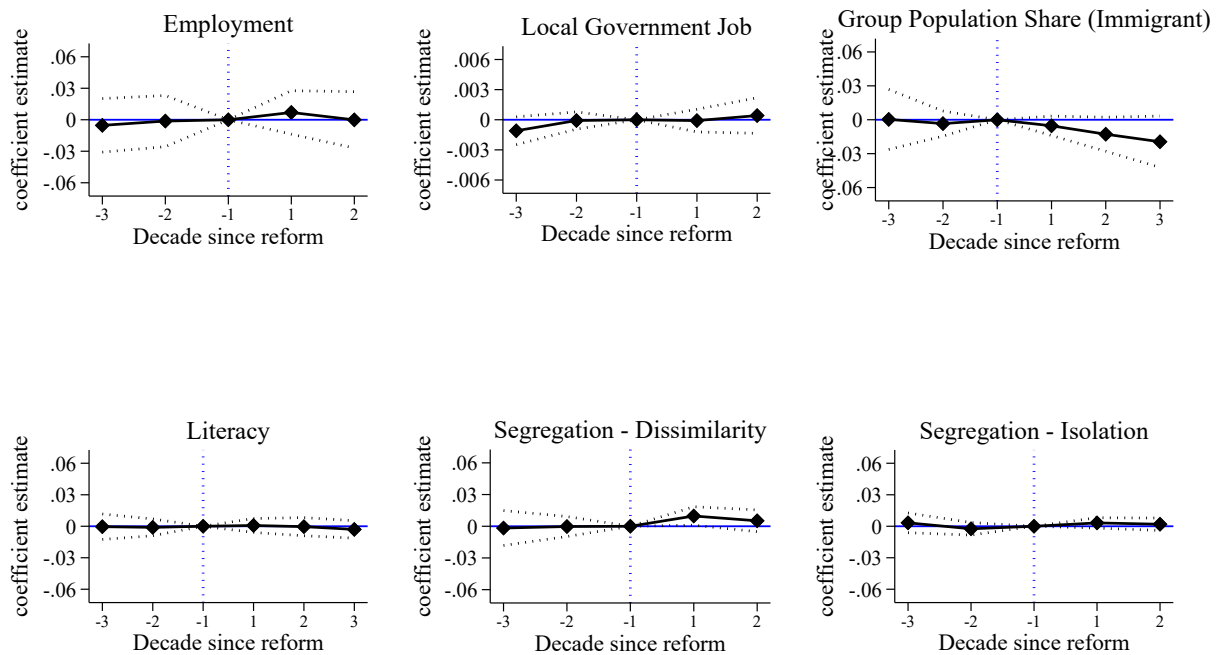
Figure A.1: The Impact of Reform on Earnings Gap



*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 4 employing balancing weights for outcomes shown in Table 1. Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure A.2: Event Study Estimates for the Native-Immigrant Gap in Other Socioeconomic Outcomes

## Native - Immigrant Gap

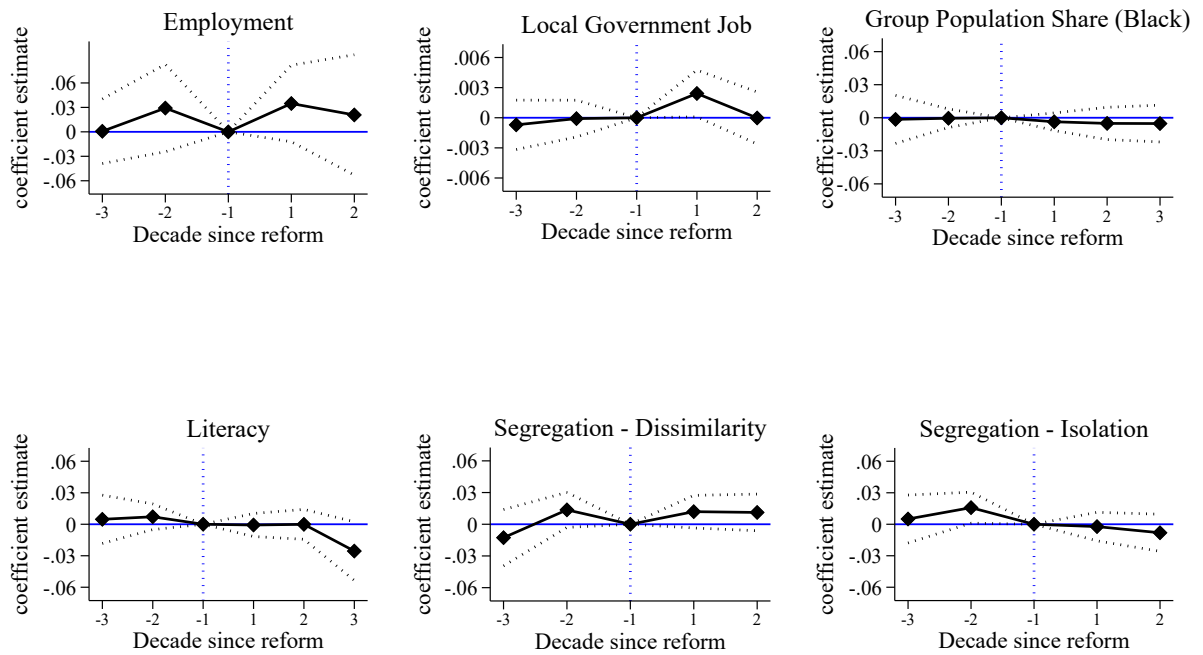


*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 4 employing balancing weights for outcomes shown in Figure 4 for native and immigrant residents. Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.



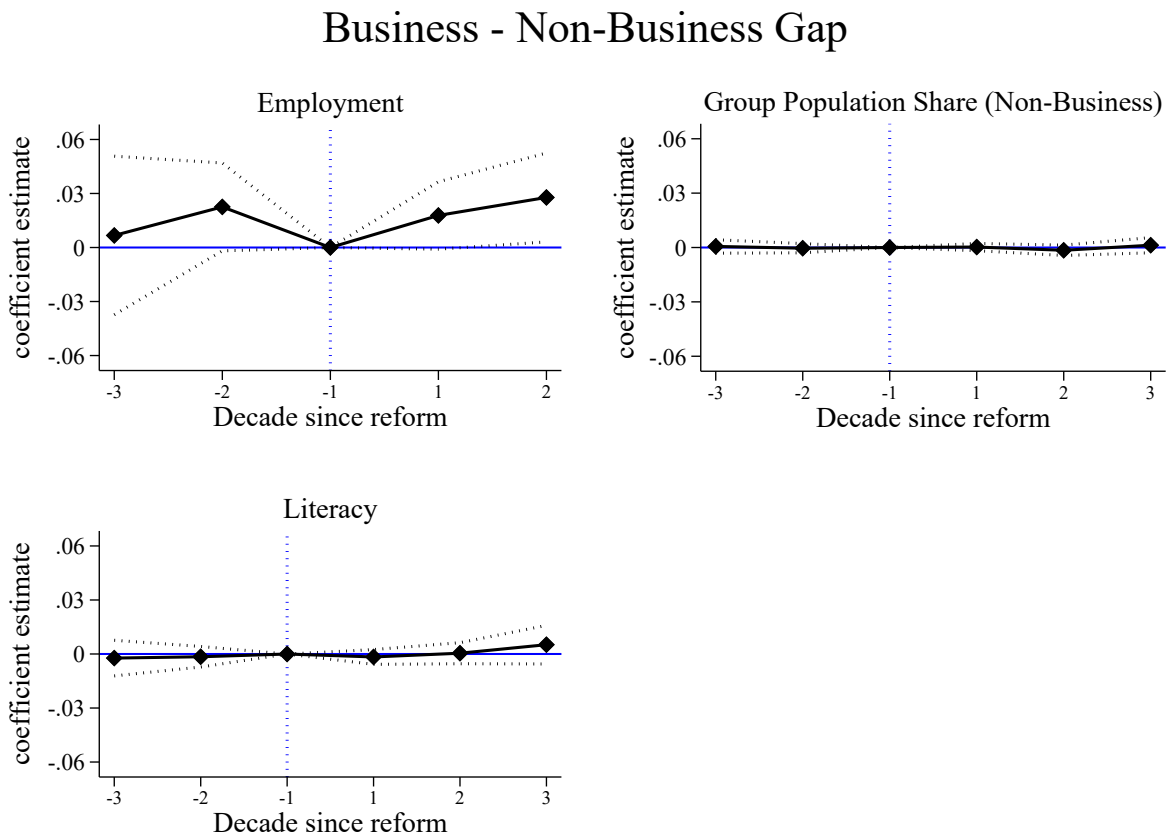
Figure A.3: Event Study Estimates for the White-Black Gap in Other Socioeconomic Outcomes

## White - Black Gap



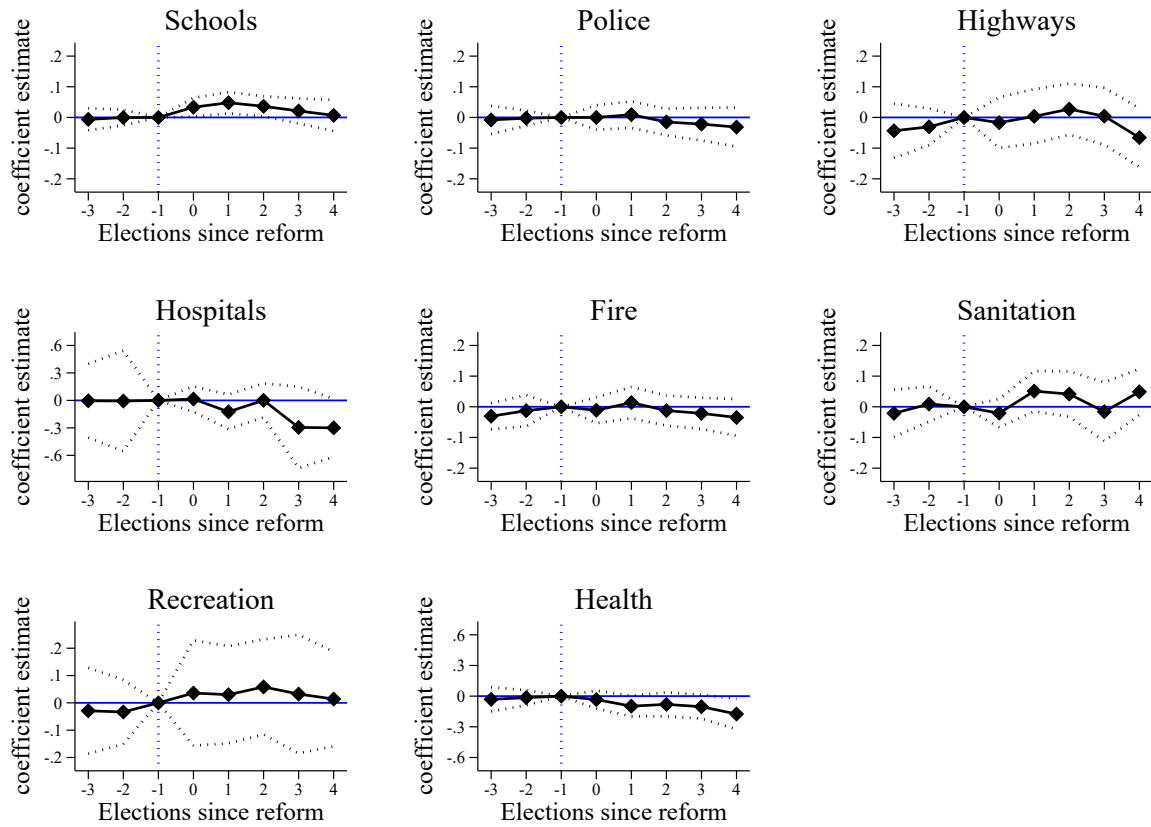
*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 4 employing balancing weights for outcomes shown in Figure 4 for white and black residents. Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure A.4: Event Study Estimates for the Business-Non-Business Gap in Other Socioeconomic Outcomes



*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 4 employing balancing weights for outcomes shown in Figure 4 for residents in business and non-business occupations. Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure A.5: Event Study Estimates for Public Expenditures



*Notes:* Shows coefficient estimates from the model described in equation 4 employing balancing weights for outcomes shown in Table 4. Dotted line shows the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Table A.3: The Impact of Reform on the Native-Immigrant Gap in Other Socioeconomic Outcomes

	Native - Immigrant Gap					
	Employment	Local Government Job	Group Population Share	Literacy	Segregation Dissimilarity	Segregation Isolation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Reform	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.011 (0.009)	0.001 (0.003)	0.008 (0.004)	0.003 (0.002)
Num Obs	2,109	6,305	6,305	5,044	5,044	5,044
Num Cities	434	454	454	454	454	454
Outcome Mean	-0.009	0.002	0.401	0.043	0.235	0.084
Outcome Stdv	.047	.009	.232	.05	.072	.04
City FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Notes:* the table above reproduces estimates shown in figure 4 for native and immigrant residents. The two indices of segregation do not refer to the gap because they are city-wide measures. The group population share refers to the share of immigrant men. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in the table.

Table A.4: The Impact of Reform on the White-Black Gap in Other Socioeconomic Outcomes

	White - Black Gap					
	Employment	Local Government Job	Group Population Share	Literacy	Segregation Dissimilarity	Segregation Isolation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Reform	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.005 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.008)
Num Obs	1,650	4,845	4,845	3,876	3,876	3,876
Num Cities	349	366	366	366	366	366
Outcome Mean	0.036	0.006	0.076	0.087	0.581	0.286
Outcome Stdv	.13	.014	.019	.081	.086	.123
City FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Notes:* the table above reproduces estimates shown in figure 4 for white and black residents. The two indices of segregation do not refer to the gap because they are city-wide measures. The group population share refers to the share of black men. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in the table.

Table A.5: The Impact of Reform on the Business-Non-business Gap in Other Socioeconomic Outcomes

	Business - Non-Business Gap		
	Employment	Group Population Share	Literacy
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Reform	0.002 (0.007)	-0.011 (0.009)	0.000 (0.003)
Num Obs	2,112	6,305	5,048
Num Cities	435	454	455
Outcome Mean	0.183	0.401	0.036
Outcome Stdv	.082	.232	.038
City FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Notes:* the table above reproduces estimates shown in figure 4 for residents in business and non-business occupations. The group population share refers to the share of non-business men. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in the table.

Table A.6: The Impact of Reform on Voter Turnout – Robustness to County Clustering

	Congressional Elections Turnout		Presidential Elections Turnout	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Reform	-3.366 (0.753)	-2.045 (0.611)	-3.313 (0.674)	-2.242 (0.641)
Num Obs	425,586	383,754	137,929	137,929
Num Cities	1342	1342	1649	1649
Outcome Mean	53.364	48.780	60.642	55.449
Outcome Stdv	17.617	18.932	18.356	20.409
City $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year $\times$ Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* the table above reproduces estimates shown in Table 3 with standard errors clustered at the county level. See Table 3 for additional table notes.

Table A.7: The Impact of Reform on Voter Turnout – Same Sample as Earnings Results

	Turnout		Turnout	
	Congressional Elections	Presidential Elections	Congressional Elections	Presidential Elections
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Reform	-4.350 (0.922)	-1.946 (0.958)	-4.887 (1.006)	-3.145 (0.948)
Num Obs	122,139	58,674	33,965	28,403
Num Cities	453	402	453	447
Outcome Mean	53.444	49.059	60.816	56.543
Outcome Stdv	18.322	18.8	18.213	19.984
City × Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × Timing Group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balancing Weights	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Notes:* Reproduces results shown in Table 3, restricting the sample to the cities also appearing in Table 1. The mean and standard deviation of the unweighted dependent variable are shown in column (1) and column (3) of the table above. The mean and standard deviation of the weighted dependent variable are shown in column (2) and (4) of the table above.