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Abstract

In this paper we show that political campaigning can influence the behavior of law enforcement officers. We follow monthly arrests for 1383 police agencies in 40 American States from January 1984 to December 1990. During these years the Presidents of the United States developed a strong rhetoric against drug abuse. The main target of the presidential rhetoric was crack cocaine, a drug that the media associated with Blacks. We implement both a difference in differences and a reduced-form-Bartik-type approach to test if exposure to the presidential rhetoric affected the behavior of law enforcement officers. We generate a novel measure of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse by running a topic model analysis of all the public papers of Presidents Reagan and Bush. We find that arrests for drug possession of Blacks increased more in counties more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse –even when accounting for state specific policies and baseline differences in county characteristics–, while we find no effect for Whites. We find qualitatively similar results when considering the effect of Reagan's political rallies.

JEL codes: D72, J15, K42, P00

Keywords: Crack cocaine, Political campaigning, Racial discrimination

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1   Introduction

Political campaigning can have direct consequences on the behavior of individuals. The recent Capitol Hill attack, during which a mob of Trump supporters attacked the Capitol building in Washington D.C. (New York Times, 2021) is a clear example of how citizens, ignited by harsh political campaigning, can resort to violence. A recent literature in the social sciences has studied how political campaigning can lead to violence against minorities, and found that social media activity of politicians, as well as political rallies or merely winning an election are sufficient to trigger the violent behavior of certain individuals (Müller & Schwarz, 2020; Romarri, 2020; Feinberg et al., 2022; Grosjean et al., 2022).

In this paper we study how political campaigning can affect the behavior of law enforcement officers. In particular, we focus on the United States of America (US) during the second Reagan mandate. During these years, Republicans pushed a strong *tough on crime* campaign. This campaign focused on the *War on Drugs* and in particular on fighting crack cocaine, a smokable form of cocaine that started becoming popular in the mid 80's. Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr. played a central role in this campaign and developed a strong presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. Alexander (2011) argues that the *War on Drugs*, is to blame for a change in enforcement behavior at all levels of the American Justice System, leading to large racial inequalities in arrests for possession of illicit substances (see Figure 1).[1] Beckett (1999) and Haney-López (2014) argue that the *War on Drugs* served as a *dog whistle*, a coded racial appeal that carefully manipulated hostility towards non-whites. It is therefore important to answer the following questions: did the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse influence the behavior of law enforcement officers? If the behavior of law enforcement officers did change, did this change in behavior disproportionately affect minorities?

We focus on two landmark moments in the history of the US's *War on Drugs*: the introduction of the 1986 and of the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts (ADAA). These two laws marked a punitive turn against the possession of illicit substances. In particular, they both

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[1]This view is contrasted by Boggess & Bound (1997); Grogger (1998), who attribute the increase in the racial gap in arrests to the rise of crack cocaine and a fall in real wages that hit Blacks particularly hard during the 80's.

contained severe penalties for possession of crack cocaine. Crucially, however, these two laws were not supposed to affect the vast majority of arrests for possession of illicit substances, as federal laws focus on crimes that involve an inter-state component, such as drug trafficking.[2] For this reason, we consider the 1986 and 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts as an example of *dog whistle* politics (Haney-López, 2014): a way for the President to convey a call to action against the stereotypical crack cocaine abuser. Or, in another way, a signal of the President to shift individual efforts of law enforcement agents by *going public* (Kernell, 2006). In this paper, we investigate the link between the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and arrests for possession of crack cocaine. We provide extensive evidence that more politically competitive counties — counties with similar vote shares for Republicans and Democrats in previous election rounds — were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse — measured by the occurrence of specific war-on-drugs-related keywords in local newspapers —.

We estimate the causal impact of presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for crack cocaine. Using a difference-in-differences (DD) methodology, we exploit geographic variation in exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and time variation in the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, proxied by the enactment of the 1986 and 1988 ADAAs. We estimate separate DD models for arrests for possession of cocaine for Blacks and Whites. Crucially, in our main specification, along with unit and time fixed effects, we also include state by year fixed effects. This approach allows us to control for any state specific policy that was passed either before or after the passage of the 1986 and 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts, making the interpretation of our findings consistent with a change in enforcement behavior caused by exposure to the presidential rhetoric and not by state-specific policies. We compare *changes* in arrests for possession of crack cocaine across police agencies in different counties, but in the same year and in the same state. The identifying assumption behind this design is that the trends in arrests for possession of crack cocaine would have been the same for agencies in counties with high and low political

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[2]Bringing drugs from New York to California would be a crime that has an inter-state component and could be dealt with by federal agencies, consuming drugs in New York would not, and would be dealt with by local authorities. Therefore, arrests for possession of illicit substances should be unaffected by the 1986 and 1988 ADAA, as individuals arrested for possession of illicit substances would normally be arrested by local police agencies that apply the laws of the states they are in.

competition —conditional on our set of fixed effects and covariates— in the absence of the Republican *tough on crime* electoral campaign.

Our results show that exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse caused a sharp increase in arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Blacks and had no statistically significant effect for arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Whites. In particular, we find that arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin increase by 6.6% in counties that are more exposed to the presidential rhetoric after the introduction of the 1986 ADAA.[3] Consistent with the arrests being caused by the exposure to the anti-crack cocaine presidential rhetoric, we find no statistically significant impact of political campaigning on arrests for other drugs such as marijuana or synthetic drugs or for other crimes such as prostitution, robbery, driving under the influence or murder — crimes that are also normally associated with an increase in consumption of crack cocaine —. We estimate a triple difference in differences model, whereby we test for differential impact of the presidential rhetoric by race by comparing the impact of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Blacks and for Whites. Our results indicate that law enforcement officers arrested 8% more Blacks in counties that were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.

We construct a novel measure of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. We collect 11,171 public papers (speeches, statements, and official papers) released by Reagan and Bush from 1984 to 1990. We use the text of these documents as data and let a Latent Dirichlecht Allocation (LDA) algorithm identify the topics that are most often mentioned in this corpus of text. This procedure allows us to identify the topics that characterize the presidential rhetoric and to get an intensity measure for each topic that varies over time. Reassuringly, the unsupervised algorithm clearly defines a topic for the *War on Drugs*. We show that this topic started becoming more relevant immediately after the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act and became even more relevant after the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Act. We complement our DD analysis with a Bartik-type approach, whereby we interact a measure of exposure to the presidential rhetoric with our measure of intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse — which has the advantage to vary over

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[3]Our data groups arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin in a single category

time, measuring in a more precise way when the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse was stronger —. The results of this exercise are in line with those obtained from the DD analysis.[4]

We show that our results are driven by exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. We provide evidence that counties that were more politically competitive were also more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. Previous literature has shown how the media can affect the behavior of law enforcement officers and influence individuals' perceptions and beliefs (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007; Snyder Jr & Strömberg, 2010; Mastrorocco et al., 2020). We collect articles from 1329 local newspaper and count the occurrences of words related to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. We find that local newspapers in counties that were politically competitive were more likely to talk about the *War on Drugs*, about crack cocaine, and about classic examples of *dog whistle* politics, like *welfare queen* and *Willie Horton*.[5] Moreover, consistent with increased exposure to Republican campaigning, we also show that municipalities that were in counties that were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric were more likely to have a Republican mayor being elected after the introduction of the 1986 and 1988 ADAAs. We implement a regression discontinuity design at the municipality level and show that having a republican mayor does not increase arrests for crack cocaine for Blacks. We interpret this finding as evidence that our findings are driven by the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and not by a *chain-of-command* effect.

In the spirit of Grosjean et al. (2022) we test whether Reagan's political rallies caused a racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine. Implementing a triple differences event study, we find that the racial gap in arrests increased by 50 percentage points in cities where rallies were held and during the month in which the rally was held, while we do not find any statistically significant differences in the racial gap both before and after the rallies.

We find that in counties that were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse individuals shift their attitudes toward Blacks. We exploit individual-level survey data

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[4]We obtain similar results when using the raw count of the times the word *drug* has been used in Presidential papers.

[5]*Welfare Queen* is a derogatory term used in the United States to refer to women who allegedly misuse or collect excessive welfare payments through fraud, child endangerment, or manipulation. *Willie Horton* was the name of felon whose case played a crucial role in the debate preceding the 1988 presidential election.

from the American National Election Studies (ANES). We find that individuals in counties more exposed to the rhetoric tend to hold more negative attitudes towards Blacks, perceiving them as receiving more than they deserve and needing to try harder to succeed.

We show that our findings are not driven by law enforcement officers who operate in counties with higher racial bias at baseline — proxied by historical indicators of racial bias, such as the presence of enslaved people in 1860, cotton suitability, and the number of lynchings of Black people —. This finding is compatible with the presidential rhetoric being targeted at politically competitive counties, as one of the main correlates of the past presence of slavery is the Republican vote share at the county level.

We reconcile these facts with the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse acting as an enabling tool for institutional discrimination. Supporting the view of Alexander (2011), we present evidence that the rhetoric re-directed law enforcement effort towards the prosecution of a minority group, contributing to the systemic discrimination and unequal treatment experienced by this community.

This paper contributes to a strand of the literature in economics that examines racial discrimination in law enforcement and in the Criminal Justice System. Knowles et al. (2001) show that Black motorists are more likely to be stopped than white motorists, although they find this behavior to be consistent with statistical discrimination. This finding is also consistent with Grogger & Ridgeway (2006), who use stops of motorists at night to test for racial bias in stops, under the assumption that racial profiling of stops is more difficult at night. Antonovics & Knight (2009), on the other hand, argue against the results obtained in Knowles et al. (2001) and by extending their model they find evidence for preference-based discrimination when the race of the officer differs from the race of the driver, moderate evidence for racial bias in stop and searches is also found in Anwar & Fang (2006). Related to our paper (Grosjean et al., 2022) find that Trump rallies increase racial bias in car stops. Evidence for racial bias in criminal trials is less ambiguous than evidence on racial bias in stops. Anwar et al. (2012) finds that white jury pools are more likely to punish black defendants, Rehavi & Starr (2014) finds that Blacks are more likely to be charged for crimes with a mandatory minimum sentence, leading to higher conviction rates. Similar findings are obtained by Arnold et al. (2018) when considering bail decisions, by West (2018) when

considering police investigations, by Goncalves & Mello (2021) when considering discount on speeding tickets and by Tuttle (2019) when considering charges for drug offenses and by Hoekstra & Sloan (2020) when considering police use of force. We expand upon this literature and show that political campaigning strongly contributed to the large racial gap in arrests for possession of illicit substances that characterized the US throughout the last century.

This paper also contributes to a strand of literature in other social sciences that explicitly considers political competition as a driver of tougher law enforcement. Jacobs & Helms (1996) test if political competition for votes during presidential campaigns is correlated to a larger number of arrests, they find that the number of arrests increases in years immediately following elections.[6] Stucky et al. (2007) find that state-level spending for corrections is positively correlated with strengths of the Republican party and finds only limited evidence for a reduction in spending for corrections when political competition is tighter. However, Stucky et al. (2005) find that imprisonment rates increase in states where Republicans control the state legislature and political competition is tighter. This strand of the literature only analyzes correlations between political variables and criminal justice outcomes. We contribute to this literature in two ways: firstly, we employ a research design that can estimate the causal impact of political campaigning on the racial gap in arrests. Secondly, we explicitly consider how political campaigning affects the racial gap in arrest, a point that has not yet been addressed empirically in the literature.

2 Institutional Context

2.1 The War on Drugs

The *War on Drugs* is a global campaign led by the US federal government to combat the illegal drug trade and drug abuse in the US. The term *War on Drugs* was popularized after a press conference by Richard Nixon in 1971. The former US president called for a strong offensive against drug abuse, which was described as public enemy number one in the

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[6]Similar results are obtained in Caldeira (1983) for correctional spending

US. The *War on Drugs* has been at the center of the political debate since then, gaining considerable attention from the media.

Young black males have been the biggest victims of the huge media attention that the *War on Drugs* gained. Blacks were overtly represented in media news about drug crimes. By 1986 terms like *crack babies* started making the headlines of the main news outlets, depicting children of drug abusers as a biological underclass of children who would require state support for the rest of their lives (Ahrens, 2009).

The disproportionate impact of the *War on Drugs* on Blacks is rooted in the strong fear that Americans had about law and order collapsing due to a strong rise in crimes committed by Blacks. As Beckett (1999) and Moriearty & Carson (2012) show, by 1968 the overwhelming majority of Americans believed that crime was on the rise and that "Negroes who start riots" Beckett (1999) were the cause.

Arrests for possession of illicit substances for Blacks almost doubled from 1986 to 1988. Arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine – the category that includes crack cocaine – more than tripled from 1986 to 1988. The same did not happen for Whites, who experienced an increase in arrests for possession of illicit substances, but to a much lesser extent. This racial disparity in the increase in arrests for possession of illicit substances continued for decades. We illustrate this point in Figure 1, where we report an index for arrests for possession of illicit substances for Blacks and Whites from 1984 to 2010.

2.2   Reagan and the punitive approach to the *War on Drugs*

In September 1986 Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy addressed the Nation on the Campaign against Drug Abuse, calling for a national crusade against drugs. President Reagan proudly announced that under his administration spending for drug law enforcement tripled since 1981, increasing seizures of illegal drugs and causing shortages of marijuana. Nancy Reagan launched the *Just Say No* campaign, stressing the importance of individual responsibility in fighting the *War on Drugs*. During the speech, President Reagan announced a series of measures aiming at creating a "Drug Free America" (Reagan, 1986).

After September 1986, the *War on Drugs* became a central topic of the Republican political platform. Figure 2 shows the importance of the *War on Drugs* topic in public

Arrests Possession of Illicit Drugs (Base 1984)

Blacks

Whites

Year

Arrests Possession of Heroin and Cocaine (Base 1984)

Blacks

Whites

Year

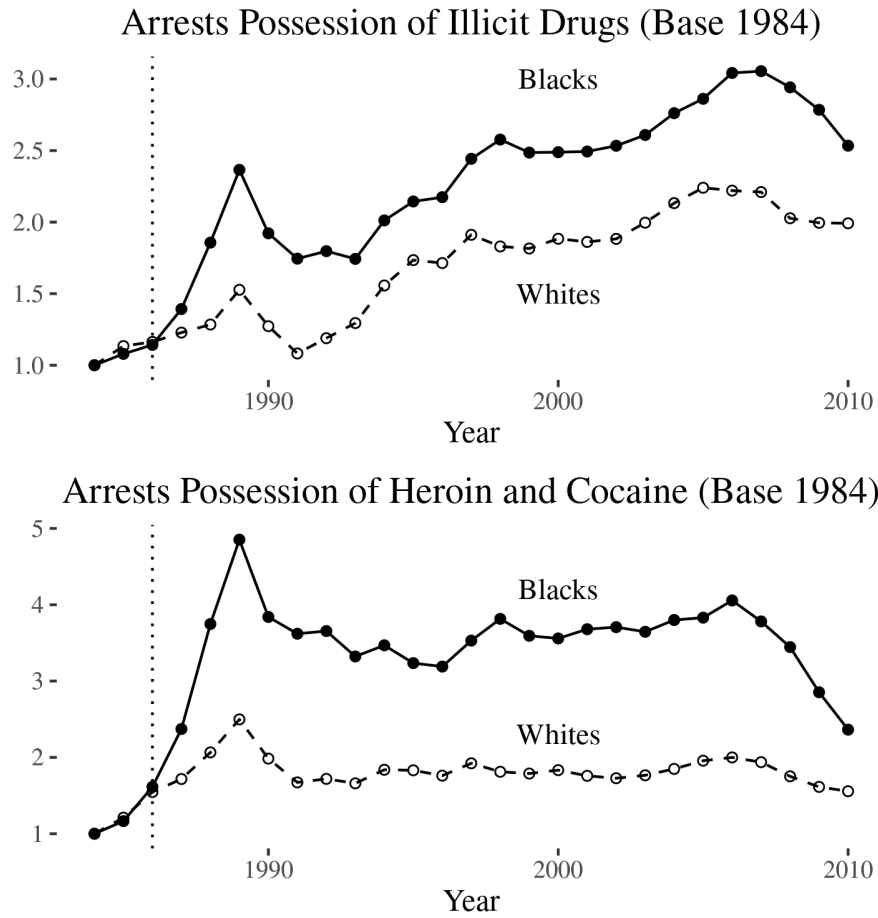Figure 1: Trends in Arrests for Possession of Illicit Substances

Notes: This Figure plots the number of arrests for possession of illicit drugs (top panel) and for possession of cocaine or heroin (bottom panel) in the UCR data. Arrests are indexed with respect to the number of crimes committed in 1984. The dashed vertical line indicates 1986, the year during which the first Anti Drug Abuse Act was passed.
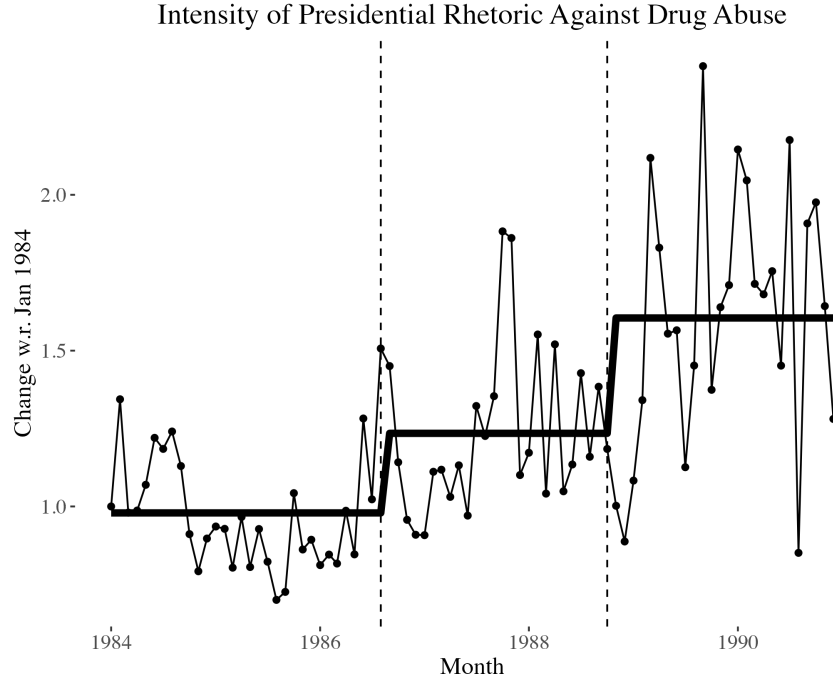
Figure 2: The Evolution of the Relevance of Drugs

Notes: This figure plot the change in intensity in the drug topic in the US President public papers (Reagan and Bush) from 1984 to 1990. The solid bold black lines represent the averages before the 1986 ADAA and after the 1986 ADAA and the 1988 ADAA.

papers (statements, speeches, and official papers) by President Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush from 1984 to 1990.[7] The pattern displayed in Figure 2 is clear, and shows how after September 1986 the *War on Drugs* played a central role in the republican policy platform. The importance of the *War on Drugs* topic further increased after the Presidential Election of 1988 and the passage of the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Act.

During his presidency, Ronald Reagan pushed for a tougher and more punitive approach to illicit drug trade and illicit drug use. In 1984, the Reagan administration passed the Comprehensive Crime Control act, which expanded penalties towards possession of cannabis and established a federal system of mandatory minimum sentences. The 1984 Comprehensive Crime Control Act was followed in September 1986 by the Anti Drug Abuse Act, which

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[7]We obtain this measure through a topic modeling analysis conducted on all public papers by Reagan and Bush sr. between 1984 and 1990. We give a detailed description of how we obtain this measure in the data section of the paper.

substantially increased the number of drug offenses with mandatory minimum sentencing. Moreover, the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act introduced the 100:1 weight ratio between crack cocaine and powder cocaine. This act mandated a minimum sentence of five years without parole for possession of 5 grams of crack cocaine while it mandated the same for possession of 500 grams of powder cocaine. At the end of Reagan's second term, in 1988, Congress passed an additional Anti Drug Abuse Act, that toughened the measures contained in the 1986 Act, especially for crack cocaine, and restored the use of the death penalty at the federal level.

The Reagan administration strongly pushed for tougher penalties for illicit drugs users and dealers. The majority of drug crimes, however, are normally prosecuted by local and state authorities. If a drug crime does not involve any crossing of state borders, federal policies do not play a role in determining how that crime should be prosecuted. For this reason we consider the 1986 and 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts as a way for the President to steer the actions of state governments and law enforcement authorities towards a harder stance with respect to possession of illicit drugs, especially crack cocaine. In particular, in Reagan's — and later on in Bush's Sr. — presidential rhetoric this attention to crack cocaine has been considered as a *dog whistle* to focus the efforts of law enforcement officers towards the prosecution of Black Americans using crack cocaine (Yates & Whitford, 2009; Haney-López, 2014). A number of governors responded to the President's call to action against drug abuse and passed laws that were using the 1986 and 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts as a blueprint for tougher drug laws (Malone, 2018; Britton, 2021). Moreover, the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act allowed for direct transfers from the federal government to states and police agencies in the form of grants for state and local law enforcement, administered by the Office of Justice Assistance (Hogan & Walke, 1987).

2.3 *Tough on Crime* policy and the 1988 election

Tough on Crime policies were at the center of the 1988 presidential Election, won by the Republican Candidate George H.W. Bush. In May 1988 the Democratic presidential candidate and Governor of the State of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis, was leading the polls for the upcoming presidential election with a margin of 16pp. Since June 1988, the Republican campaign focused on the case of Willie Horton. A black convicted felon who — while serving a

life sentence for murder — was the beneficiary of a Massachusetts weekend furlough program strongly endorsed by Dukakis. Horton did not return from his furlough, and twice raped a woman after pistol-whipping, knifing, binding, and gagging her fiancé. The case happened in 1987, while Dukakis was still Governor of Massachusetts, but did not gain much attention until it was used by Republicans – starting from June 1988 – to earn the trust of voters with strong preferences for *tough on crime* policies. Bush's campaign manager at the time, Lee Atwater, said: "By the time we're finished, they're going to wonder whether Willie Horton is Dukakis's running mate" (Runkel, 1989).

3 Data and Descriptive Evidence

We construct a panel at the police agency year-month level. In total, we combine data from different sources which we describe in more detail in the following subsections. Summary statistics for the main variables of interest can be found in the Appendix (Table A.1).

Data about Crime   The Uniform Crime Report dataset (UCR) reports monthly arrests at the police agency level from 1978. We use the data provided by Kaplan (2020). Participation in the program is not mandatory, and police agencies often do not report during some months. This feature of the dataset makes it problematic to use information about all police agencies included in the dataset, in particular if there would be some unobserved selection mechanism in reporting to the UCR program, any causal analysis could be biased by selection into reporting. We mitigate this issue by restricting our sample to agencies that continuously report in all months from January 1984 to December 1990 – i.e. we follow the same police agencies over time – .[8]

All crime variables report the number of arrests for a given police agency in a given month by race. The main outcome of interest is arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine, which includes arrests for crack cocaine. Furthermore, as a robustness check, we use arrests for driving under the influence (DUI), murder, prostitution and robbery, as well as arrests for possession of other substances. We transform these variables using the inverse hyperbolic

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[8]We show in the appendix that our results are robust to alternative ways of cleaning the data, following Evans & Owens (2007); Chalfin & McCrary (2018); Mello (2019).

sine transformation. This transformation is similar to the natural logarithm transformation, but allows to account for the prevalence of zeros, while still allowing to interpret estimates as elasticities (Bellemare & Wichman (2020)). This transformation is particularly convenient in this setting, as oftentimes there are zero crimes registered in a particular police agency in a given month.[9] Our final dataset consists of a panel dataset balanced at the police agency level where we observe 1383 different police agencies in 662 counties in 40 US states from January 1984 to December 1990.

We choose to use the police agency as our unit of observation, as we have differential coverage across counties and states in our sample (i.e. for some counties and for some states there is only a fraction of the police agencies continuously reporting to the program). Using the police agency as the unit of observation in our dataset allows us to exploit the information about the population that every agency is supposed to cover and to obtain a rough measure of the coverage by county. In the robustness checks section, we estimate our main specifications on a sub-sample of our main dataset, where we only include counties for which the police agencies in our dataset are supposed to cover at least 80% of the population in that county.[10]

Data on Electoral Outcomes We obtain data on county-level electoral outcomes for elections of presidents and governors from the General Election Data for the United States. We use data on the 1984 presidential elections to generate our measure of electoral competition at the county level as the absolute difference between the vote share for Republicans and Democrats at the county level:

$$\text{Political Competition}_{c,1984} = 1 - |\text{Rep Share}_{c,1984} - \text{Dem Share}_{c,1984}|$$

where subscript c indicates any given county, and $\text{Rep Share}_{c,1984}$ and $\text{Dem Share}_{c,1984}$ in-

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[9]For empirical applications of the inverse hyperbolic sign transformation see Bahar & Rapoport (2018),Card et al. (2020) and Facchetti (2020). In an alternative specification, in the robustness section of the paper, we also use the number of arrests instead of the IHS and poisson pseudo maximum likelihood (Silva & Tenreyro, 2006) instead of OLS.

[10]On this same sample we estimate our main specifications using the crime rate as our dependent variable. As we need race-specific crime rate and we do not observe the racial composition of the population that a given police agency is supposed to patrol, we only estimate our model using crime rates as the dependent variable when we can observe a reasonably high share of the county's population and by using the 1980 census to calculate race-specific crime rates. We show these results in the robustness section.

dicate the vote shares of Republicans and Democrats in county c for the 1984 presidential election.[11] We choose to use the vote shares for the presidential elections in 1984 as they represent the closest election to the 1988 presidential election. Crucially, we measure political competition before the 1986 ADAA, to avoid the potential direct impact of the 1986 ADAA on political competition. In the robustness section of the paper we show that our results are largely unaffected by using a measure of political competition that is obtained from presidential elections in alternative years, or from the average results of elections in the previous 12 years.

We define a county to be treated if its value of Political Competition$_{c,1984}$ is greater than the median value (0.74). According to our definition a county is defined as treated if the difference in vote shares between Republicans and Democrats in 1984 was less than 26%. Figure A.1, in the appendix, shows a map of treated and control counties. Figure 3 shows the sum of arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Blacks in treated and control counties. It is clear how arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine started increasing immediately after the 1986 ADAA in both the treatment and the control group. Figure A.2, in the appendix, shows an histogram of our measure of political competition.

Data on presidential rethoric - Public papers by the President   We construct a novel dataset containing all public papers by President Reagan and by President Bush from 1984 to 1990. We obtain this information from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and from the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library.[12] This dataset contains the text of all the public speeches, statements and papers from both libraries, as well as the date of the speeches.

We construct a measure of the importance of the *War on Drugs* in the presidential rhetoric. We first pre-process the text of all public papers by Reagan and Bush following Gentzkow et al. (2019). We normalize the text by removing all the "stopwords", punctuation, numbers and we apply the 'stemmatization" of the words using Porter et al. (2002) procedure. We then implement a Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model (Blei et al., 2003; Martin &

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[11]In the section of the paper dedicated to robustness checks, we estimate our model using previous election years and an average of elections between 1972 and 1984

[12]https://www.reaganlibrary.gov and https://bush41library.tamu.edu
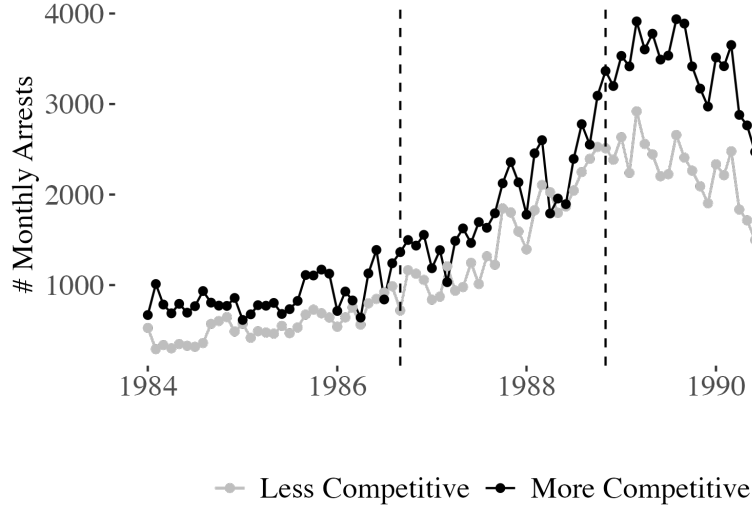
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Figure 3: Monthly Arrests for Possession of Heroin and Cocaine

Notes: This Figure plots the total number of monthly arrests for possession of heroin or cocaine by Blacks in our treated and control counties. The two solid lines indicate the passage of the 1986 and 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts

McCrain, 2019). This unsupervised technique characterizes what the most discussed topics among all public papers by the president are and what are the words that most often recur within each topic. In Figure A.3, in the appendix, we report the result of our LDA topic modeling showing the 10 bigrams (combination of two words) with the highest weights for each topic. We identify *topic 10* as the one characterizing the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. This topic is characterized by the bigrams *law enforcement, supreme court, attorney general, drug abuse* and *illegal drug*. We use the importance of this topic — i.e. its weight among all topics identified in presidential papers — as our measure for the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.

In Figure 2 we plot the evolution of the relevance of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse over time, along with the average intensity before and after the 1986 and 1988 ADAA (the bold solid line).[13] The time series shows a clear increase in how important the topic of drug abuse is after both the 1986 ADAA and the 1988 ADAA,

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[13]In Figure A.4, in the appendix, we plot the number of times that the word *drug* has been used in Reagan and Bush's public papers. In Figure A.5, in the appendix, we compare the importance of the topic *Economy* with the importance of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.

immediately after the 1988 presidential elections.

Data on the content of newspapers We scrape the content of 1329 local newspapers on newspapers.com. We count the number of times that a local newspaper in a given county mentions keywords that are related to the *War on Drugs*. Unfortunately, we are not able to observe the universe of local newspapers and to match that to the counties that we observe in our main dataset. Because of these constraints we obtain data about the occurrence of words related to the *War on Drugs* for 1117 cities in 377 counties in 45 states. We focus on different *War on Drugs* terms used by Reagan during his presidency: *"crack cocaine"*, *"crack babies"*, *"war on drugs"*, *"welfare queen"*, *"just say no"*, *"Willie Horton"*. Some of these terms directly refer to illicit drugs, while some others (such as *"Willie Horton"* and *"welfare queen"*) are words that have been used during the presidential campaign (and before that) and are commonly considered as ways to depict Blacks as either criminal or welfare state abusers. We use this data to measure the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.

Reagan Visits We collect the domestic visits of Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1989 from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. We then match the places visited by the US President with the police agencies over time. We end up with 258 visits undertook by Ronald Reagan during his presidency. We can observe the date, the place (and the state) and the motivation (event) of the visit. Of these visits, just 107 were motivated as political rallies. We use this data to test if places that were visited by Ronald Reagan experienced an increase in arrests for possession of crack cocaine after his visit. As we are interested in political rallies that happened at the peak of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse we restrict our analysis to political rallies after the implementation of 1986's ADAA (during the 1988 presidential electoral campaign). This leaves us with 14 political rallies by President Reagan between 1986 and 1988 in places where we also have data about crime outcomes.

Data on crack cocaine prevalence We obtain the crack prevalence index from Fryer Jr et al. (2013). In particular, we use annual crack prevalence indices at the state level for all US states. We are interested in the state level crack prevalence index in 1985, as we use it

as a non-parametric control for crack prevalence before the passage of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act.

Data on municipality elections   We obtain data about the results of 895 mayoral elections in the US between 1984 and 1990 from de Benedictis-Kessner (2018). We use this data to test whether in counties that were more exposed to the republican presidential campaign, Republicans had an electoral advantage in local elections. Moreover, we implement a regression discontinuity design to test if the election of a Republican Mayor influenced the behavior of law enforcement officers.

Data on racial resentment   We collect data on the presence of enslaved people in 1860, cotton suitability and the number of lynchings of Black people from (Acharya et al., 2016). We use this data as a proxy for racial resentment. We then test whether counties that have higher racial resentment experienced a higher increase in the racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine.

Socio Economic Characteristics of Counties   We use the 1980 census data to retrieve information at the county level about counties' socio economic characteristics. In particular, we gather information at the county level for population, the share of population under 10, between 10 and 18, and over 18, the share of female, the share of black and the percent below poverty level. We use this data to analyze whether counties that are included in our sample – for which we observe at least one police agency continuously reporting between 1984 and 1990 – do systematically differ from an average county in the US. Moreover we use this data to test whether counties that we consider as treated systematically differ from control counties in our sample.

Table A.2 shows the mean, the standard error and the normalized difference for counties that are in our sample and counties that are not. The main differences between sampled and not sampled counties, those for which the normalized difference is higher that the threshold of 0.25 suggested by Imbens & Rubin (2015) are that sampled countries have a higher population and a lower share of the population below the poverty level (roughly 4% less). These differences do not affect the internal validity of our study but need to be taken into

account when interpreting our estimates, as they are only going to be generalizable to highly populous and slightly richer counties. Crucially, counties that are included in our sample do not display significant differences in the average level of political competition.

Table A.3 shows the mean, the standard error and the normalized difference for counties that are in our treatment group and counties that are in our control group. As political competition is not randomly assigned to counties, we find that treated counties are systematically different from control counties. Our treated counties have a significantly higher proportion of Blacks, female and individuals below the poverty line. In our identification strategy we correct for this imbalance in two ways. Firstly we include a battery of fixed effects and rely on a parallel trend assumption to identify a causal effect — the standard difference in differences approach —. Secondly, we control for the impact of differences in baseline characteristics by adding an interaction between baseline characteristics and the start of our treatment.

4   Empirical Strategy

The goal of this paper is to estimate if political campaigning can influence the behavior of law enforcement officers. In particular, we focus on the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse that characterized the Republican agenda during the second Reagan mandate and the 1988 presidential campaign. We concentrate on arrests for possession of crack cocaine, as the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse was heavily focused on this type of crime.

Estimating and isolating the causal effect of exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on law enforcement behavior presents several challenges. Firstly, the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse can affect law enforcement officer's behavior both directly – by making the issue of drug abuse more salient to them – or indirectly – as state governors might implement tougher laws against drug abuse – . As we are dealing with police officers from local police agencies, their law enforcement behavior should be driven by state laws, a feature that poses a problem in isolating only the direct influence of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on law enforcement behavior. Secondly, it is challenging to find places that are exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and places that are not. Moreover,

even with geographical variation in the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, this variation can co-vary with several characteristics that are also correlated with law enforcement behavior.

To estimate the impact of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for crack cocaine, one would like to randomly allow some places to be exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse – the *treated* units –and some places to be not exposed to it – the *control* units –. In this case by simply comparing the arrests for crack cocaine in control and treated units, one would be able to obtain a causal estimate of the effect of the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for crack cocaine. Moreover, by comparing outcomes for Blacks and Whites in treated units with outcomes for Blacks and Whites in the control units, one would be able to state whether the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse caused a racial gap in arrests for crack cocaine. This approach would guarantee that the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse is affecting some places but not others, and by picking these places randomly, would also allow us to disentangle the direct effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse from the indirect effect. This is because, by design, states with tougher anti-drug laws will appear both among the treated and the control units.

We approximate this ideal setting through two complementary identification strategies: a difference-in-differences approach and a Bartik-type approach. Both approaches rely on the assumption that more politically competitive counties are more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, for which we provide extensive evidence in the mechanism section of the paper. The underlying logic of this approach is that officers who are operating in more politically competitive counties are more exposed to political campaigning and to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. In both identification strategies we measure political competition at the county level. This approach will allow us to include – on top of the traditional battery of unit and time fixed effects – state by year fixed effects, that will absorb state-specific policies. This approach will allow us to separate the direct and indirect effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, by comparing counties that face the same state laws but have different levels of the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.

4.1 The effect of political competition on arrests for crack cocaine

Difference in Differences We identify the effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for crack cocaine using a difference in differences research design. We exploit geographical variation in political competition and time variation in the intensity of the presidential rhetoric. We consider counties to have a high level of political competition if the absolute difference in vote shares for Republicans and Democrats was less than the median absolute difference in vote shares between Republicans and Democrats in 1984. We assume that counties that were more politically competitive were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and provide extensive evidence in support of this assumption in the mechanism section of the paper.

We estimate separate difference in differences model for Blacks and for Whites, whereby we compare the *changes* in arrests for possession of cocaine in counties with high and low levels of political competition before and after the passage of the 1986 and the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts, which we consider as a way for the President to re-direct law enforcement officers' effort. We do this by estimating the following model by OLS:

$$y_{pt} = \beta \text{Pol. Comp.}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \delta_p + \delta_t + \delta_{sy} + \mathbf{X}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \text{population}_{pt} + \epsilon_{pt} \qquad (1)$$

The outcome is the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation for arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks or Whites in police agency p in month t (in county c). We regress the outcome on our measure of pre-1986 political competition at the county level and a post dummy variable, which takes value one after the passage of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act. We control for police agency (δ_p) and month $\times$ year (δ_t) fixed effects. The fixed effects absorb any feature that does not vary over time across police agencies and account in a non-parametric way for national time trends in crime rates, consumption of crack cocaine and any national trend in the propensity to record crimes. Moreover, in our main specification we control for state by year fixed effects (δ_{sy}) that absorb any state specific shock in a certain year, such as state specific policies. Finally, we control non-parametrically for baseline difference in covariates $\mathbf{X}_c$ by interacting these covariates with a Post dummy. These covariates include: a state level indicator of the prevalence of crack cocaine in 1985 at the state level

from Fryer Jr et al. (2013), the percentage of Blacks, the percentage of individuals below the poverty line, the percentage of female, the percentages of population over 18 and under 10, as well as baseline population, all measured at the county level according to the 1980 census. These controls account for the differential effect of anything that happened after 1986 and that was related to the controls. Most importantly, they ensure that our effects are not driven by baseline differences in the percentage of Blacks. The identifying assumption behind this design is that the trends in arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Blacks and Whites would have been the same for agencies in counties with high and low political competition —conditional on our set of fixed effects and covariates— in absence of the 1986 and the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts.

We also estimate dynamic treatment effects through a flexible difference-in-difference model whereby the post-treatment dummy is replaced by month dummies δ_t when we estimate the treatment effect,

$$y_{pt} = \sum_t^T \beta_t \text{Pol. Comp.}_c + \delta_p + \delta_t + \delta_{sy} + \mathbf{X}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \text{population}_{pt} + \epsilon_{pt} \qquad (2)$$

In both equations, the error term summarizes all the time-varying determinants of arrest for possession of illicit drugs that are not captured by the regressors. To account for serial correlation in the error terms within a given county —the level at which treatment is assigned—, we cluster the standard errors at the county-level.

Triple Differences We estimate a triple differences model where we compare arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks in counties with high versus low exposure to the presidential rhetoric to arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Whites in counties with high versus low exposure to the presidential rhetoric. This approach has two main advantages. Firstly, it allows us to control for any common shock that affects both Blacks and Whites across counties that might be correlated with exposure to the presidential rhetoric, as well as for the heterogeneous effect that exposure to the presidential rhetoric can have depending on unobserved characteristics of counties, but that does not vary between Blacks and Whites. Secondly, it allows us to get an estimate of the racial gap in the effect of ex-

posure to the presidential rhetoric on arrests for possession of crack cocaine. In particular, estimating a triple differences model amounts to estimate the difference between two difference in differences models — in this case the difference in differences model for Whites and the difference in differences model for Blacks— (Olden & Møen, 2020). More formally, we want to estimate $\xi \equiv \beta_{\text{Blacks}} - \beta_{\text{Whites}}$, where β_{Blacks} and β_{Whites} represent the effect of political competition on arrests for Blacks and Whites and, by definition ξ represents the racial gap in the effect of political competition. To estimate the triple differences model we include outcomes for Blacks and Whites in the same dataset and add an additional dummy variable R that takes value one for outcomes for Blacks. We then interact the dummy variable R with all the independent variables in equation 1 in a static triple differences estimation. We then estimate the following:

$$
\begin{aligned}
y_{ptr} = &\xi \text{Pol. Comp.}_c \times \text{Post}_t \times R + \gamma \text{Pol. Comp.}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \\
&+ \delta_p \times R + \delta_t \times R + \delta_p + \delta_t + \delta_{sy} \times R + \delta_{sy} + \mathbf{X}_c \times \text{Post}_t \times R + \mathbf{X}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \quad (3) \\
&+ \text{population}_{pt} + \text{population}_{pt} \times R + \epsilon_{ptr}
\end{aligned}
$$

Where y_{ptr} is the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of the number of arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin in policy agency p in month t and for race r. The right-hand side of the equation is the same as the right-hand side of equation (1) where every variable is interacted with the race dummy R, crucially this allows us to separately control for differential trends for crack cocaine consumption across races ($\delta_t \times R$). The coefficient of interest ξ represents the racial gap in the effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, proxied political competition. The stochastic error term ϵ_{ptr} is again clustered at the county level, to allow for serial correlation of the error term within a given county.

Bartik-type approach   We validate our findings using an alternative identification strategy that exploits our novel measure of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. We estimate a fixed effect panel regression that is similar to a reduced form Bartik-type approach (Bartik, 1991). We use the interaction of a continuous version of our measure of political competition, which varies at the county level, and our monthly measure of the

intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.[14]. This empirical setup creates variation by month and county, that we exploit using the following regression model:

$$
\begin{aligned}
y_{pt} =& \psi \text{Pol. Comp.}_c \times \text{presidential rhetoric}_t + \delta_p + \delta_t + \delta_{sy}+ \\
&+ \mathbf{X}_c \times \text{presidential rhetoric}_t + \text{population}_{pt} + \epsilon_{pt}.
\end{aligned}
\tag{4}
$$

This framework allows us to test whether when the president focuses more on the *War on Drugs* topic, counties that are more exposed to the presidential rhetoric experience more arrests for crack cocaine. This approach does not suffer from reverse causality as arrests for crack cocaine in one county are likely to not affect the way in which the President talks about the *War on Drugs* in the whole country. Moreover our full set of fixed effects controls for unobserved heterogeneity across police agencies, as well as shocks that affect all police agencies, such as changes in the nationwide propensity to consume crack-cocaine for Blacks. Furthermore, our set of controls $\mathbf{X}_c$ account for the effect that the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse can have on arrests due to baseline differences in, for example, the percentage of Blacks or the percentage of individuals below the poverty level in a given county.

The main concern with estimating Equation 4 is that political competition — our measure of exposure to the presidential rhetoric — may be correlated with other county characteristics that could explain differences in how arrests for possession of crack cocaine co-vary with the intensity of the presidential rhetoric about the *War on Drugs*. In that case our coefficient of interest ψ would not be solely capturing the effect of political competition. We address this issue by explicitly controlling for the factors that are correlated with political competition — our $\mathbf{X}_c$ — and interacting them with the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse.

We estimate a triple difference version of Equation 4 where we also include arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Whites. This exercise will alleviate the concern that some unobserved county characteristic might co-vary with the presidential rhetoric about the *War on Drugs* and be driving our results. This is because the county characteristics that co-vary with the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse should have a differential effect for Blacks

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[14]To make the interpretation of our coefficient easier we multiple both measures by 100.

and Whites to bias our estimates, but should not be captured by our control for baseline differences in the share of Blacks the county level.

5 Results

5.1 Difference-in-Differences

Table 1 shows estimates of Equation 1 across different model specifications. In the top panel the outcome is the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of the number of monthly arrests for heroin and cocaine at the police agency level for Blacks, the second panel reports estimates for the same outcome for Whites. The number of observations is given by the number of police agencies (1383) multiplied by the number of months in the data (84). Columns (1) to (4) report different model specifications.[15]

Estimates of the effect of political campaigning on arrests for Blacks are always positive and show little variation through different model specifications. According to our main specification in Column (4), police agencies in counties that were more exposed to political campaigning — as proxied by political competition in 1984 — experienced a 6.7% increase in arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin after the enactment of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act. On the other hand, we find no effect on the arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Whites. Figure 4, Panel A reports dynamic treatment effect estimates for the effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for possession of illicit drugs for Blacks estimated through Equation 2. Estimates before the passage of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act are close to zero and are never statistically significant at the 5% level, a feature that provides evidence in favor of the parallel trend assumption. Estimates start increasing after the passage of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act, and peak right after the passage of the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Act and the 1988 presidential elections and remain relatively stable after that.

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[15]Table A.5, in the appendix, shows the results of our main specifications when we clean the data following Evans & Owens (2007); Chalfin & McCrary (2018); Mello (2019).

Triple Differences Results   Results from the previous section show that political campaigning had an effect on arrests for possession of illicit drugs for Blacks, but show no statistically significant effect for Whites. We provide evidence for a racial gap in the effect of political campaigning on arrests with a triple differences model. Table A.4 shows results of a triple differences model estimated according to Equation 3. Estimates are similar and stable after accounting for state specific dynamics either through state specific linear trends, column (2) or through state by year fixed effects, as in column (4). These estimates show that political competition exacerbated the racial gap in arrests. We estimate the racial gap in the effect of political competition on arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin between Blacks and White to be of 8% according to our main specification (column 4).

Table 1: Effect of political competition on arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin - DiD

	Dependent variable:			
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pol. Comp. X Post	0.0663**	0.0990***	0.0981***	0.0662**
	(0.0330)	(0.0310)	(0.0320)	(0.0317)
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Whites			
Pol. Comp. X Post	0.0258	-0.0124	-0.0159	-0.0139
	(0.0496)	(0.0317)	(0.0322)	(0.0309)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Time Trends FE	No	Yes	No	No
State x Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	No	Yes
Mean Outcome Blacks	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386
Mean Outcome Whites	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 1 for arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks (top panel) and Whites (bottom panel). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. Different columns report different specifications of Equation 1. Column 1 reports a specification with police agency and month by year fixed effects. In column 2 we add state specific linear time trends. In Column 3 we control for state by year fixed effects and in Column 4 we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 4: Dynamic Treatment Effect on Arrests for Blacks and Whites

Notes: This graph shows dynamic treatment effect estimates of the effect of political competition on arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Blacks (Panel A) and for Whites (Panel B). The dashed black vertical lines indicate the enactment of the 1968 Anti Drug Abuse Act and the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Act (which coincided with the 1988 elections). The gray lines show 95% confidence intervals for standard errors clustered at the county level.

5.2 Bartik-type Approach

Table 2 shows estimates of the interaction term in equation Equation 4. Estimates for Blacks are always positive and statistically significant. Estimates for Whites are negative after we start controlling for state specific dynamics and are never statistically significant.[16] Our estimates show that, holding the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse constant, a 1% increase in political competition causes a 0.07% to 0.1% increase in arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Blacks. These estimates are extremely similar in magnitude to those obtained with our DD estimation strategy. Table A.7, in the appendix, shows estimates of a triple differences version of Equation 4. These results confirm again that our findings are driven by a racial gap in arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Blacks.

Table 2: Effect of political competition on arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin - Bartik

	Dependent variable:			
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pol. Comp. × Pres.Rhet.	0.0007***	0.0009***	0.0010***	0.0007**
	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Whites			
Pol. Comp. × Pres.Rhet.	0.0005	-0.0000	-0.0001	-0.0001
	(0.0005)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Time Trends FE	No	Yes	No	No
State x Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	No	Yes
Mean Outcome Blacks	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386
Mean Outcome Whites	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 4 for arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks (top panel) and Whites (bottom panel). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the prevalence of the topic drugs in the US President public papers (shift) and the continuous measure of political competition (share) at the county level. In order to make the interpretation of the coefficient easier, we multiple both measures by 100. Different columns report different specifications of Equation 4. Column 1 reports a specification with police agency and month by year fixed effects. In column 2 we add state specific linear time trends. In Column 3 we control for state by year fixed effects and in Column 4 we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
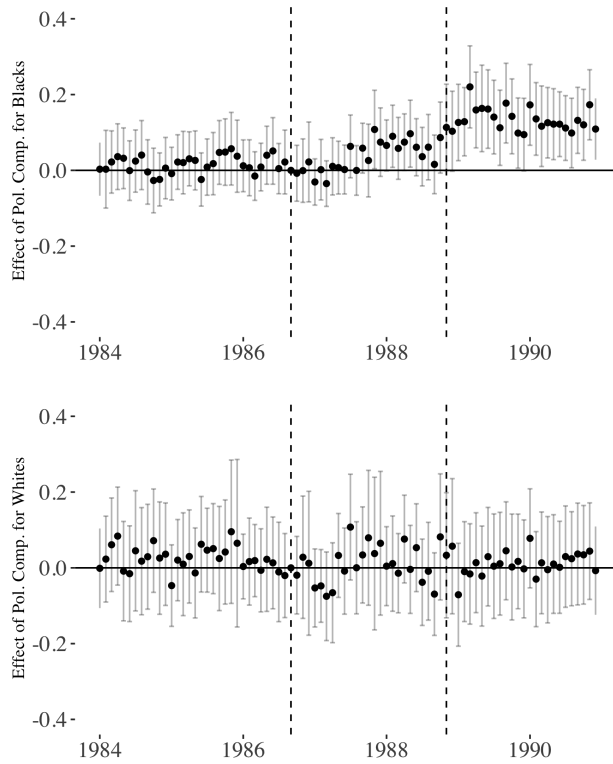
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[16]Table A.6, in the appendix, shows the results of our main specification, when we use a simpler measure of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse: the number of times the Presidents used the word *drug*, over the total number of words in the presidential papers in a given month.

6 Mechanism

We provide evidence that the mechanism driving our results is the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. We provide evidence that local newspapers in politically competitive counties mention more words related to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse more often, validating the use of political competition in 1984 as a good proxy for exposure to political campaigning. We provide evidence that places that have been visited by Reagan for a rally after 1986 (during the 1988 presidential electoral campaign) experienced a racial gap in arrests for crack cocaine during the month of the rally. We show that —- consistently with higher exposure to electoral campaigning — municipalities that were located in more competitive counties, have a higher chance of electing a republican mayor after the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse intensifies, however, the election of a Republican mayor does not cause an increase in the racial gap in arrests.

Local Newspapers and the Presidential rhetoric Against Drug Abuse   We provide evidence that counties that were more politically competitive were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. Figure 5 plots the average number of monthly mentions of words related to the *War on Drugs Campaign* for different levels of political competition. In Figure 5 we include the average monthly mentions of the words *War on Drugs*, *Crack Cocaine*, *Willie Horton* and *Welfare Queen*. For all the words we plot the average mentions after the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act (in black) and before the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act (in grey), along with regression lines. For each word there is a clear positive relationship between political competition and the mentions of words related to the *War on Drugs*. This relationship holds both before and after the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act, however it is always stronger after the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act. The case of *Welfare Queen* is the only one in which the relationship is similar before and after the enactment of the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act. This is consistent with the term being used as a *dog whistle* before the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act (Haney-López, 2014). We obtain similar results when focus on survey data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). In particular, Figure A.6, in the Appendix, reports the same results for the fraction of people who gave a positive answer to the question *did you see the Republican candidate on TV?*.
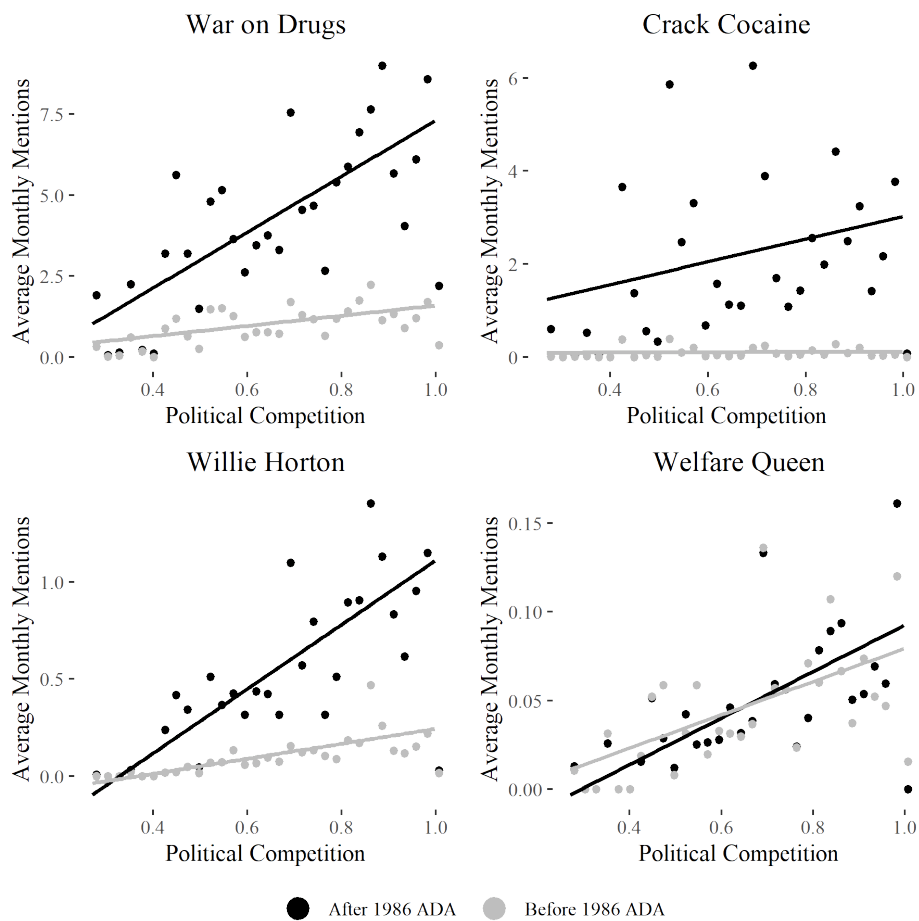
Figure 5: Mentions of Words Related to the War on Drugs

Notes: This Figure plots the correlation between the number of times local newspapers mention words related to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and the political competition in that counties before (in grey) and after (in black) the first Anti Drug Abuse (September 1986)

More formally, we test the effect of political competition on the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. To do this we estimate the following difference-in-differences model:

$$y_{ct} = \beta \text{Pol. Comp}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \delta_p + \delta_t + \delta_{sy} + \mathbf{X}_c \times \text{Post}_t + \epsilon_{ct}. \tag{5}$$

The model is identical to the one described in Equation 1, where the only difference is that we change the outcome to be the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of the number of mentions of words related to presidential rhetoric against drug abuse for a local newspaper that is serving a specific county. Moreover, the sample is smaller, as we are only able to match a subset of counties for which we were able to find a local newspaper.

Table 3 shows the effects of being a politically competitive county after the start of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on the number of mentions of words related to the *War on Drugs*. [17] We estimate the model separately for the words *War on Drugs*, *Just say no*, *Crack cocaine*, *Crack babies*, *Welfare queen* and *Willie Horton*. The estimated coefficients confirm the findings obtained by looking at Figure 5. All words show positive coefficients, with *Just say no* and *Welfare Queen* being the only two where we are not able to reject the null hypothesis of a zero effect. This comes as no surprise, as already in Figure 5 we showed that *welfare queen* was positively associated with political competition already before the 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act.

Reagan Visits If the mechanism that drives the estimates of our main specification is the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, one would expect arrests for possession of crack cocaine to grow around Regan's political rallies.

We estimate a triple differences model where we compare the racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine between Blacks and Whites around Ronald Reagan's political rallies after 1986.[18] To account for the fact that Reagan visits different places at different

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[17]In the appendix, in Table A.8 and Table A.9 we conduct a similar exercise using both our measures of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and the frequency of the use of the word *drug* in the Presidential public papers. This alternative designs answers directly the question: do local newspaper talk more about the *War on Drugs* in more politically competitive counties when the President talks more about drugs? The results are qualitatively similar to those shown in Table 3.

[18]We estimate a model where treatment is assigned at the city level and where we include the same set of fixed effects and controls that we included in our main specification.

Table 3: Effect of political competition on presidential rhetoric on local Newspapers

	Dependent variable:					
	Ihs Count					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	War on drugs	Just say no	Crack cocaine	Crack babies	Welfare queen	Willie Horton
Pol. Comp X Post	0.1195**	0.0139	0.1164**	0.0260**	0.0089	0.0503**
	(0.0566)	(0.0116)	(0.0567)	(0.0132)	(0.0057)	(0.0237)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome	1.0177	0.0545	0.4242	0.0541	0.0443	0.2257
Observations	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 5 for the number of mentions of words related to the *War on Drugs*. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. Different columns report results for the different words: *War on Drugs*, *Just say no*, *Crack cocaine*, *Crack babies*, *Welfare queen* and *Willie Horton*. We show the most complete specification including police agency, month by year, state by year fixed effects and we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

points in time — i.e. staggered adoption — we implement the methodology proposed by (Borusyak et al., 2021). These models are identical to our main specification, with the only difference that the treatment is assigned at the city level and not at the county level, as we are able to observe the exact city where the rally was held.

Figure A.7, in the appendix, shows dynamic treatment effect estimates of our triple differences model. Estimates before Reagan's rallies are not statistically different from zero before the rally and are not statistically different from zero after the rally. During the month of Reagan's rally, however the racial gap in arrests increases by roughly 50 percentage points and is statistically different from zero. Figure A.8 and Figure A.9, in the Appendix, report the same results for two separate difference in differences model estimated separately for Blacks and Whites, where we show that, when a longer time period is considered, Reagan's visits have a persistent effect on arrests for possession of crack cocaine both for Blacks and Whites.

Disentangling the Effect of Reagan Visits and Exposure to the Presidential Rhetoric Political campaign rallies are generally held by Presidential candidates in competitive counties. This would lead to a big overlap between the areas where presidential candidates go for political rallies and our treated counties. We look at the intersection between these two categories and perform a horse-race between the two measures: political competitiveness and political rallies to see which is the one driving the results. We do this by interacting a dummy that takes value one if a county hosted a political rally by Reagan after 1986 with our DiD and triple DiD interaction terms. We perform this exercise both on our difference in differences model and on our triple differences model. The results are shown in Table A.10, in the appendix. The coefficient on political competition after 1986 remains positive and similar to our main specifications, and the triple interaction with Reagan's visits is also positive and statistically significant. We interpret this result as evidence that Reagans's political rallies have exacerbated the effect of exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse but are not able to fully explain it.

Spillover on Municipal Elections If our estimates are the result of an increase in exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse in the areas that were more politically competitive, we should register a spillover on local elections. We merge our dataset with the data about municipal election results (de Benedictis-Kessner, 2018). We then only consider municipalities that had an election both between 1984 and 1986 and after 1986. We then compare the chances of a republican mayor being elected before and after 1986 in politically competitive versus non politically competitive findings. We report results of this exercise in Table A.11, where we show that the probability of observing a republican winning mayoral elections is 28 percentage points higher in highly competitive places after the introduction of the September 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act. We then compare arrests for possession for cocaine and heroin in municipalities where Republicans won by a small margin in a regression discontinuity setup (Eggers et al., 2015). We test whether electing a Republican mayor has a direct effect on arrests for possession of crack cocaine. Table A.12 shows the results of this exercise. For both Blacks and Whites we can not reject the null hypothesis that a Republican mayor does not have a causal impact on the number of arrests for possession of

cocaine or heroin. The results of these two exercises confirm that municipalities that were in counties that were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric experienced an increase in electoral campaigning, however, the election of Republican mayors is not able to explain the racial gap in arrests that results from this increase in exposure to the presidential rhetoric. The absence of a direct effect of electing a Republican mayor is also consistent with the absence of a *line of command* effect, whereby mayors collaborate with police agencies and re-direct their law enforcement effort towards the prosecution of crack cocaine crimes.

Effect on Changes in Attitudes Towards Blacks We posit that our effect is driven by a change in law enforcement behavior by police officers. Ideally, one would like to have a repeated survey that elicits officers' attitudes toward racial minorities. By comparing the attitudes of officers in areas that are more and less exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, one would be able to understand if officers changed their view about minorities. We approximate this design by exploiting several questions contained in the ANES surveys from 1984 to 1990 that elicit attitudes of individuals towards minorities.[19] We then compare answers to these questions from individuals who were living in more or less competitive counties before and after the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse in a DiD framework. Table A.13 reports the results of this exercise. The estimated coefficients reveal that individuals in counties that were more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse started viewing Blacks less favorably. We interpret this result as evidence in favor of the hypothesis that law enforcement officers changed their law enforcement behavior as a consequence of being more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse — under the assumption that the average police officer has similar beliefs to the average respondent to the ANES survey —-.

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[19]We focus our attention on 5 questions: Black-thermometer (a value going from 0 to 97, where 0 means very bad feelings and 97 means very good feelings); "Past slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks their way out of the lower class"; "Blacks should not have special favors to succeed such as Irish, Italians and Jewish"; "Blacks gotten less than they deserve over the past few years"; "Blacks must try harder to succeed". For each of these questions we create a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 0 when he/she answered "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree". We exclude respondents interviewed by Blacks to avoid social desirability bias.

Discrimination: Taste Based, Statistical and Institutional A racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine caused by exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse could be the result of taste based discrimination (Becker, 1971), statistical discrimination (Knowles et al., 2001) or institutional discrimination (Small & Pager, 2020) — or a combination of all three —. Our approach does not allow us to distinguish between these three different types of discrimination. Higher exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse could prompt police officers to patrol neighborhoods that have a higher share of Black individuals, under the assumption that race is a good proxy for crack cocaine consumption — statistical discrimination —. Higher exposure to the presidential rhetoric could embolden a taste based animus police officers, who gain some utility by arresting more Black Americans because they do not like them — taste based discrimination —.

Finally, the racial gap in arrests between Blacks and Whites could be caused by institutional discrimination. Institutional discrimination, as defined by Small & Pager (2020) is the *differential treatment by race that is either perpetrated by organizations or codified into law.* Institutional discrimination can be the consequence of statistical discrimination, essentially because disparities breed discrimination (Lang & Kahn-Lang Spitzer, 2020). In our context, the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse was heavily focused on crack cocaine, a drug that was strongly associated with Black communities. We can therefore expect that officers who were more exposed to the rhetoric concentrated their effort on patrolling neighborhoods with a higher density of Blacks, which generated the racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine. In this case, we would have a clear example of institutional discrimination, whereby police officers do discriminate because race is considered a good predictor of usage, but the rhetoric –albeit being race-neutral – is clearly affecting Blacks more than Whites by heavily focusing on crack cocaine, despite the lack of medical evidence justifying the huge treatment disparity between crack cocaine and other drugs (Hatsukami & Fischman, 1996).

We test whether counties that have higher racial resentment experienced a higher increase in the racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine. We follow (Acharya et al., 2016; Grosjean et al., 2022) and estimate heterogeneous treatment effects for areas that have higher racial resentment. In particular, we interact our treatment variable with the presence of enslaved people in 1860, cotton suitability — a commonly used exogenous predictor of

slavery — and the inverse hyperbolic sign transformation of the number of lynchings of Black people — as a proxy racial violence in the Jim Crow era —.

Table A.14 and Table A.15, in the appendix, show the results of this exercise both for our differences in differences identification strategy and our reduced form Bartik approach. We do not find any evidence that the effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse is magnified by racial resentment. The coefficient for the interaction of our treatment variable and the three measures of racial resentment is always negative, and our main treatment effect always remains positive and statistically significant. We report our main effect and the marginal effect for counties with higher racial resentment in figures Figure A.10 and Figure A.11 in the appendix. These results show that the effect of exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for possession of crack cocaine is entirely driven by counties with low racial resentment. We interpret these findings as evidence that police officers were using race as a proxy for crack cocaine usage. This finding is compatible both with statistical and institutional discrimination.

7   Robustness

Political competition can impact arrests for crack cocaine through a different causal path than the one we hypothesized. It is possible, for example, that officers who live in counties that experience more political competition feel pressured to exert a stronger effort in fighting crime, independently from the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. In that case, our estimates would reflect the effect of political competition in itself. Moreover, political competition can be correlated to several unobservable characteristics of counties that also correlate with crime. For example, counties that are more politically competitive have more individuals below the poverty line. If economic conditions harden, and individuals in these counties get unemployed they might resort to crime as an alternative source of income. In this case, our estimates would be biased, as they would reflect the impact of a tighter labor market on poorer areas. This bias would arise because political competition is correlated with poverty, and economic conditions harden at the same time as the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse becomes more intense.

Table 4: Other Crime Outcomes - DiD

	(1) Robbery Blacks	(2) Robbery Whites	(3) Prostitution Blacks	(4) Prostitution Whites	(5) DUI Blacks	(6) DUI Whites	(7) Murder Blacks	(8) Murder Whites	(9) Mtr Veh Theft Blacks	(10) Mtr Veh Theft Whites
Pol. Comp x Post	-0.0192 (0.0126)	-0.0137 (0.0103)	-0.0057 (0.0109)	0.0012 (0.0108)	0.0239 (0.0152)	0.0079 (0.0278)	-0.0041 (0.0070)	-0.0046 (0.0063)	0.0201 (0.0170)	-0.0353** (0.0180)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome	0.3531	0.4254	0.1469	0.2147	0.6646	2.8986	0.0772	0.1101	0.2817	0.6905
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 1 for arrests for crime not related with drug possession. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. Different columns report different crime outcomes for Blacks and for Whites. We show the most complete specification including police agency, month by year, state by year fixed effects and we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

In these scenarios, however, one would expect that arrests for other crimes than for crack cocaine would increase as well. If law enforcement officers become tougher because of political competition, they should arrest more people for other crimes as well. If individuals resort to crime because economic conditions harden and more politically competitive counties are poorer, one would expect property crimes and prostitution to increase as well. In particular, Grogger & Willis (2000) estimate that the arrival of crack cocaine in American cities caused both violent and property crimes to increase.

We test whether our treatment had an effect on a battery of crime-related outcomes and find no positive statistically significant effect. We interpret this as evidence that the increase in arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine is indeed not related to an underlining differential trend in crime. Moreover, we show that no other type of crime displayed significantly diverging trends between treated and control counties either before or after the 1986 ADA. We interpret this finding as evidence that the underlying factors that cause criminal behavior did not drastically change in treated counties in a different way than in control counties.

Effect on Other Crimes   We test whether political competition has an impact on other crimes than arrests for possession of crack cocaine after the 1986 ADAA. Table 4 shows estimates of equation Equation 1 – our DD identification strategy – for robbery, prostitution,

Table 5: Other Type of Drugs - DiD

	(1) Cannabis Blacks	(2) Cannabis Whites	(3) Synthetic Narc Blacks	(4) Synthetic Narc Whites	(5) Other Drugs Blacks	(6) Other Drugs Whites
Pol. Comp x Post	0.0127	-0.0268	0.0022	-0.0240*	0.0183	-0.0588
	(0.0151)	(0.0257)	(0.0070)	(0.0144)	(0.0206)	(0.0419)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome	0.3337	1.1257	0.0230	0.0872	0.1124	0.3920
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 1 for arrests for possession of other type of drugs (different from heroin and cocaine). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. Different columns report the different type of drugs for Blacks and for Whites. We show the most complete specification including police agency, month by year, state by year fixed effects and we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

driving under the influence, murder and motor vehicle theft for both Blacks and Whites. Table A.16, in the appendix, reports the same results for estimates of Equation 4 – our Bartik-type approach –. The results of this exercise show that in both cases no other crime experienced a statistically significant increase, with arrests for motor vehicle thefts for Whites being the only result that is statistically significant – with a point estimate of -0.03 – at the 5% level for our DD specification. These results show that other crimes besides arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Blacks did not increase. Moreover, Figure A.12, in the appendix, shows dynamic treatment effect estimates for robbery, prostitution, driving under the influence, murder and motor vehicle theft for both Blacks and Whites. We can notice that all outcomes do not display significant deviations in trends between treatment and control counties both before and after the passage of the 1986 ADAA. This evidence is consistent with our results being driven by higher exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and not by differences in unobservable determinants of criminal activity.

Effect on Other Type of Drugs   We test whether political competition has an impact on other crimes than arrests for possession of crack cocaine after the 1986 ADAA. Table 5 shows estimates of Equation 1 – our DD identification strategy – for marijuana, synthetic drugs and other drugs for both Blacks and Whites. Table A.17, in the appendix, reports the same results for estimates of Equation 4– our Bartik-type approach –. The results of this exercise show that in both cases no other type of drug experienced a statistically significant increase at the 5% level. Moreover, Figure A.14, in the appendix, shows dynamic treatment effect estimates for possession of marijuana, synthetic drugs, and other drugs for both Blacks and Whites. All outcomes do not display significant deviations in trends between treatment and control counties both before and after the passage of the 1986 ADA. This evidence is consistent with our results being driven by higher exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse This evidence is consistent with our results being driven by higher exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, specifically against crack cocaine, and not by differences in unobservable determinants of illicit drugs trading.

Federal Grants Financing the War on Drugs   The presidential rhetoric against drug abuse could affect arrests for crack cocaine through a different channel than a change in the enforcement behavior of law enforcement officers. It is possible that police agencies in more competitive counties experienced an increase in federal funding. If that would be the case, our estimates would incorporate the effect of an increase in funding as well. We overcome this issue by testing whether agencies in more politically competitive counties experienced an increase in the number of police officers. Table A.18, in the appendix, shows the results of estimating Equation 1 and Equation 4 on the number of employees per capita in the police agencies in our sample with a breakdown by gender and by role (officer/administrative). The results show that the number of employees per capita did not increase in the treated units compared the controlled ones. These results are in line with police officers re-directing their law enforcement behavior when exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse and go against the alternative explanations that the counties that we considered as treated

experienced an increase in funding.[20]

Selection in Reporting and Covariates   Our dataset uses police agencies as a unit of observation. We do this as we are only able to observe some agencies continuously reporting to the UCR program throughout our sample period. Some of the variables that we include as controls, and most importantly our treatment, are measured at the county level. If there is some selection on these variables in reporting to the UCR program and these variables are heterogeneously distributed in space within counties, our estimates could be biased. We re-estimate our main specifications on a subset of counties for which the population that agencies in our sample cover in 1980 – when we have precise census data about the population at the county level – is higher than the 80% of the population of the county. Table A.19, in the appendix, reports estimates of Equation 1 and Equation 4 obtained after restricting the sample following the criteria described above. Results are qualitatively similar to those obtained in our main specification, showing a statistically significant positive effect for Blacks and no statistically significant effect for Whites.

Sensitivity to 1984 Elections   The 1984 presidential election was a very unusual election. Reagan won by a huge margin and one could expect that places that were electorally competitive in that election are not electorally competitive in a different election. We address this concern by estimating our main specification using measures of political competition that are obtained from election results in 1972, 1976, 1980 and an average of 1972-1984 elections. Table A.20 and Table A.21, in the appendix, show the results of our main specifications, when we use different elections to calculate political competition. The results of this exercise show that our estimates remain largely unchanged when using other elections to proxy for political competition. The sizes of our estimated coefficients are similar in magnitude to the estimated coefficients in our main specification and are always positive and statistically significant for Blacks and never statistically different from zero for Whites.

The only exception is the estimated coefficient for our DD model estimated with the

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[20]Cox & Cunningham (2021) Analyse Byrne grants, the main federal funds targeted at combating illicit drugs, and find that cities and states that got funded by these grants experienced an increase in police officers and in arrests for the sale of illicit drugs for Blacks, but not an increase for possession of illicit drugs, irrespectively from ethnicity.

1976 election, which is still positive but smaller in size and not statistically different from 0. We attribute this difference to the fact that, if anything, the 1976 election was even more idiosyncratic than the 1984 election. The 1976 election came after the 1974 Watergate scandal and saw many southern states vote democratic for this election only. This argument becomes clear when looking at Figure A.16, where we show that the measure of political competition at the county level is strongly correlated for the 1988, 1984 and 1972 elections, but the correlation is less strong when we consider the 1976 presidential elections.

Rates, Shares and Zeroes   Our main specification uses the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of the number of arrests as the outcome variable. We show that our estimates are robust to alternative specifications of the outcome variable and to estimators that better perform with a large prevalence of zeroes. In Table A.22, in the appendix, we show that our estimates increase in magnitude and are still statistically significant if we estimate our main specification using the Poisson pseudo-maximum-likelihood estimator (Silva & Tenreyro, 2006). Moreover, in table Table A.23, in the appendix, we show that our estimates are robust to alternative specifications of the outcome variable. In particular, we estimate our main specifications on the number of arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin over the total arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin (columns one and two), the total arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin for Whites, the total number of arrests for possession of any drug, and the total number of arrests for any crime. Overall, this exercise shows that our estimates are not sensitive to alternative choices of the dependent variable. Finally, we use the arrest rate by race as our outcome variable, we implement this analysis on our restricted sample where can observe at least 80% of the population within a county. This choice is motivated by the fact that we can only observe ethnic composition at the county level. Table A.24, in the appendix, reports the results of this exercise. We find positive effects of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks, however, for our Bartik-type approach, we are not able to reject the null of the absence of an effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks. We attribute the absence of statistical significance to the smaller sample size, due to the loss of observations caused by the fact that we can not

observe more than 80% of the population for all the counties in our data.

Different Rhetoric for Republicans and Democrats   A potential concern with our conceptual framework is that, in theory, counties that face higher political competition could be less exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. This would be true, for example, if individuals who live in more competitive counties are exposed to opposing rhetoric about illicit drug abuse. One could hypothesize, that while Republicans adopted a *tough on crime* rhetoric, democrats were more inclined to a more rehabilitative approach, therefore *diluting* the Republican *tough on crime* rhetoric. We exploit data on congressional speeches to show that Republicans and Democrats talked about illicit drugs at the same time and in a remarkably similar way. Figure A.17 and Figure A.18, in the appendix, show the number of times that the word *drug* has been used in the Congressional speeches of the House of Representatives and of the Senate during our sample period.[21] It can be noticed that the black and grey lines, indicating Republicans and Democrats, are essentially overlapping, showing that Republicans and Democrats congressmen talked about drugs at the same time and with the same intensity. Moreover, we run an *A La Carte* (ALC) embedding analysis (ALC) (Khodak et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2021), to check what are the words that are more often associated with the word *drug* by Republicans and Democrats. Figure A.19, in the appendix, plots the probability that a specific words is associated with the word *drug* in congressional speeches. The horizontal axis shows the probability for Republicans and the vertical axis shows the probability for Democrats. If the probability that a given word is associated to the word *drug* is the same for both Republicans and Democrats the word will lie on the 45° line. It can be noticed that all words lie extremely close to the 45° line, indicating that Republicans and Democrats talked in a similar way about illicit drugs.

Sensitivity to *Tough on Crime*   Another concern is that agencies that are located in more politically competitive counties are more responsive to any shock that is affecting illicit drugs consumption, or the toughness of law enforcement against drug crimes. We overcome this concern by showing that we only find an effect immediately after the 1988 ADAA and

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[21]the number is divided by the number of speakers for each party to account for the fact that democrats tended to have more speakers during our sample period.

the 1988 presidential campaign, even when we follow police agencies until 2010. Figure A.20, in the appendix, shows estimates of Equation 2, where we estimate treatment effects until December 2010. Equation 2 shows that our treatment effect estimates start growing after the 1986 ADAA, peak after the 1988 ADAA and presidential elections, and then decrease shortly after that and remain constant and close to zero after that until the end of 2010, even if the topic of illicit drugs has had constant attention from the general public even after that.[22] These results are consistent with estimates of our main specification reflecting the impact of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse on the behavior of law enforcement officers.

8   Conclusion

While a large literature has studied how much the criminal justice system can be racially biased, little is known about the impact of political campaigning on racial discrimination by law enforcement officers. Recent literature has shown how Trump's presidential rhetoric has triggered anti-minority behaviors in individuals (Müller & Schwarz, 2020; Feinberg et al., 2022) and discriminatory behavior by law enforcement officers (Grosjean et al., 2022). In this paper, we show that the exposure to political campaigning and to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse influenced law enforcement behavior way before the Trump era and right at the start of the large historical racial disparity in arrests for drugs that have characterized the US during the last century.

We find those police agencies that were more exposed to political campaigning and to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse between 1986 and 1990, experienced a sharp increase in arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Blacks— also when accounting for baseline drug prevalence and differences in determinants of drug abuse, as well as state specific policies—, while arrests for Whites did not increase significantly. We create a new measure of the intensity of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse through text analysis algorithms that we apply to the corpus of speeches, statements and official papers released

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[22]We show that illicit drugs have been a relevant topic in the public discourse throughout the decades after the end of our sample period. Figure A.21, in the appendix, plots the number of mentions of the word *drugs* in books available from google books.

by Presidents Reagan and Bush senior. We find that when the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse is stronger, arrests for possession of crack cocaine increase in counties that are more exposed to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse. Consistently with our effect being completely driven by the exposure to the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse, we do not find any effect on arrests for other types of crime that are normally associated with the consumption of crack cocaine, such as murder and robberies, nor on arrests for other types of drugs. We ensure that our effect is driven by political campaigning by running a triple differences model where we compare arrests for possession of crack cocaine for Blacks and Whites in places where Reagan held a political rally after 1986. We find that in the month of a Reagan rally, the racial gap in arrests increases by 50%, with no statistically significant difference between arrests for Blacks and Whites both before and after Reagan's rallies.

We show that the effect of the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse is not driven by counties that had a higher racial resentment at baseline. This result goes against the interpretation that the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse between 1986 and 1990 is driven by taste-based discrimination (Becker, 1971). We interpret this result as evidence that the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse induced police officers to use race as a signal for the probability of using crack cocaine, a behavior that is consistent with statistical discrimination (Knowles et al., 2001). We argue that this discriminatory behavior, albeit resulting from the belief that Blacks are more likely to consume crack cocaine, stems from institutional discrimination. The presidential rhetoric heavily focused on crack cocaine and codified the punitive approach against crack cocaine in the 1986 and 1988 ADAA, despite the lack of medical evidence of crack cocaine being more dangerous than other drugs (Hatsukami & Fischman, 1996).

This study shows that politicians need to carefully consider the potentially discriminatory implications of their policy platform. We provide evidence that the presidential rhetoric against drug abuse that Reagan and Bush sr. developed during the second half of the 80's resulted in a sizeable racial gap in arrests for possession of crack cocaine. Our results are specific to the political situation in the US in the 80s, but still provide general insights on how a *tough on crime* rhetoric and political platform can contribute to exacerbate racial

inequalities. These findings are particularly relevant in the current policy debate, especially with respect to the recent attacks to *Capitol Hill* and the protests by the *Black Lives Matter* movement.

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A Appendix

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

	Level	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Ihs possession heroin or coke blacks	Agency-Month	116,172	0.339	0.931	0	4.605
Ihs possession heroin or coke whites	Agency-Month	116,172	0.706	1.246	0	4.970
Vote Share 1984 Presidential Election	County-1984	116,172	0.757	0.148	0.379	0.994
Dummy Political Competition	County-1984	116,172	0.552	0.497	0	1
Drugs Topic Weight	US-Month	116,172	0.049	0.015	0.027	0.094
Share female	County-1980	116,172	0.511	0.011	0.474	0.534
Share pop over 18	County-1980	116,172	0.677	0.031	0.580	0.747
Share under 10	County-1980	116,172	0.148	0.021	0.105	0.221
Percent below poverty level	County-1980	116,172	0.117	0.049	0.036	0.297
Share black	County-1985	116,172	0.089	0.109	0	0.452
Crack index	State-1980	116,172	0.686	0.501	-0.045	1.542
Population	Agency-Year	116,172	47,365.378	100,852.282	2,871	489,749

Notes: This table shows the summary statistics of our main variables.

Figure A.1: Treated and Control Counties Map

Notes: This map plots treated and control counties.

Figure A.2: Histogram of Political Competition

Notes: This graph shows the histogram of political competition. The dashed black line indicates the median level of political competition (0.74).

Figure A.3: Topic Model - Public Papers by President Reagan and Bush

Notes: This graph shows the different topics identified by the LDA model on the corpus of the public papers by President Reagan and Bush from 1984 to 1990. Topic number 10 is our topic of interest: drugs.

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Figure A.4: Number of times the word drug is used in Reagan and Bush public papers

Notes: This graph plots the number of times the word drug is used by Reagan or Bush over time in their public papers. The dashed line are respectively the 1986 and 1988 ADAA

Figure A.5: The Evolution of the Relevance of Drugs and Economy and Trade topics

Notes: This graph shows the comparison between the importance of the drug topic over time with the economy and trade topic.

Table A.2: Balance Table In/Out Sample

| | | (1) | | (2) | Normalized |
| | | Out of Sample | | In Sample | difference |
Variable	N	Mean/SE	N	Mean/SE	(1)-(2)
population	2202	40.120	662	180.967	-0.582
		(2.393)		(17.210)	
share under 10	2202	0.155	662	0.150	0.185
		(0.000)		(0.001)	
share pop 10-18	2202	0.176	662	0.177	-0.092
		(0.000)		(0.001)	
share pop over 18	2202	0.670	662	0.672	-0.073
		(0.001)		(0.001)	
share female	2202	0.508	662	0.511	-0.168
		(0.000)		(0.000)	
share black	2202	0.080	662	0.087	-0.054
		(0.003)		(0.005)	
percent below poverty level	2201	0.166	662	0.126	0.553
		(0.002)		(0.002)	
political_competition	2202	0.450	662	0.500	-0.101
		(0.011)		(0.019)	

Notes: This table shows the mean, the standard error and the normalized difference for counties that are in our sample and counties that are not.

Table A.3: Balance Table Political Competition treated/control

| Variable | Below Median Pol. Comp. | | Above Median Pol. Comp. | | Normalized difference |
	N	Mean/SE	N	Mean/SE	(1)-(2)
population	331	139.765	331	222.169	-0.186
		(13.891)		(31.357)	
share under 10	331	0.152	331	0.149	0.139
		(0.001)		(0.001)	
share pop 10-18	331	0.178	331	0.177	0.015
		(0.001)		(0.001)	
share pop over 18	331	0.671	331	0.674	-0.102
		(0.002)		(0.002)	
share female	331	0.509	331	0.513	-0.352
		(0.001)		(0.001)	
share black	331	0.067	331	0.108	-0.329
		(0.005)		(0.008)	
percent below poverty level	331	0.112	331	0.140	-0.519
		(0.002)		(0.003)	

Notes: This table shows the mean, the standard error and the normalized difference for counties that are in our treatment group and counties that are in our control group.

Table A.4: Triple Differences Estimates

	Dependent variable:			
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pol.Comp. × Post × Black	0.0405	0.1114***	0.1139***	0.0801***
	(0.0407)	(0.0262)	(0.0263)	(0.0269)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Time Trends FE	No	Yes	No	No
State x Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	No	Yes
Mean Outcome	0.5222	0.5222	0.5222	0.5222
Observations	232,344	232,344	232,344	232,344

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 3 (triple DiD) for arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin. The regressor of interest is the triple interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level, a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed and a dummy representing the race. Different columns report different specifications of equation 3. Column 1 reports a specification with police agency and month by year fixed effects. In column 2 we add state specific linear time trends. In Column 3 we control for state by year fixed effects and in Column 4 we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.5: Effect of political competition on arrests for possession of cocaine on heroin - Different UCR cleaning

	Arrest rate for possession of cocaine or heroin			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Blacks		Whites	
	No Cleaning	Mello (2019)	No Cleaning	Mello (2019)
Political Comp X Post	0.0259***	0.0219***	0.0116*	0.0098
	(0.0069)	(0.0066)	(0.0065)	(0.0061)
Bartik-type	0.0002***	0.0001**	0.0001	0.0001
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	751,804	799,932	751,804	799,932

Notes: This table reports estimates of Equation 1 and Equation 4 obtained using the UCR without cleaning procedures (columns 1 and 3) and using the Mello (2019) UCR dataset cleaning process (columns 2 and 4). The outcome variables are computed as the ihs of the number of arrests for Blacks (columns 1 and 2) or for Whites (columns 3 and 4). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed (up panel). While in bottom panel we use as main regressor our Bartik reduced form. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table A.6: Bartik Reduced Form with Share Word Drug

	Dependent variable:	
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin	
	(1)	(2)
	Blacks	Whites
Bartik-share word drug	0.0171***	0.0044
	(0.0064)	(0.0065)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table reports estimates of Equation 4. The outcome variables are computed as the ihs of the number of arrests for Blacks (column 1) or for Whites (column 2). The regressor of interest is the a Bartik reduced form computed as the interaction of a continuous variable representing the share of time the word "drug" has been used by the presidents in their public paper and our continuous variable for political competition. Both variables are multiplied by 100 to simplify the interpretation of the coefficient. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.7: Triple Differences Estimates - Bartik

	Dependent variable:			
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Bartik-type	0.0002	0.0009***	0.0010***	0.0008***
	(0.0005)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
State Time Trends FE	No	Yes	No	No
State x Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	232,344	232,344	232,344	232,344

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 3 (triple differences) for arrests for possession of crack cocaine. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the prevalence of the topic drugs in the US President public papers (shift) and the continuous measure of political competition (share) at the county level. Different columns report different specifications of Equation 3. Column 1 reports a specification with police agency and month by year fixed effects. In column 2 we add state specific linear time trends. In Column 3 we control for state by year fixed effects and in Column 4 we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$
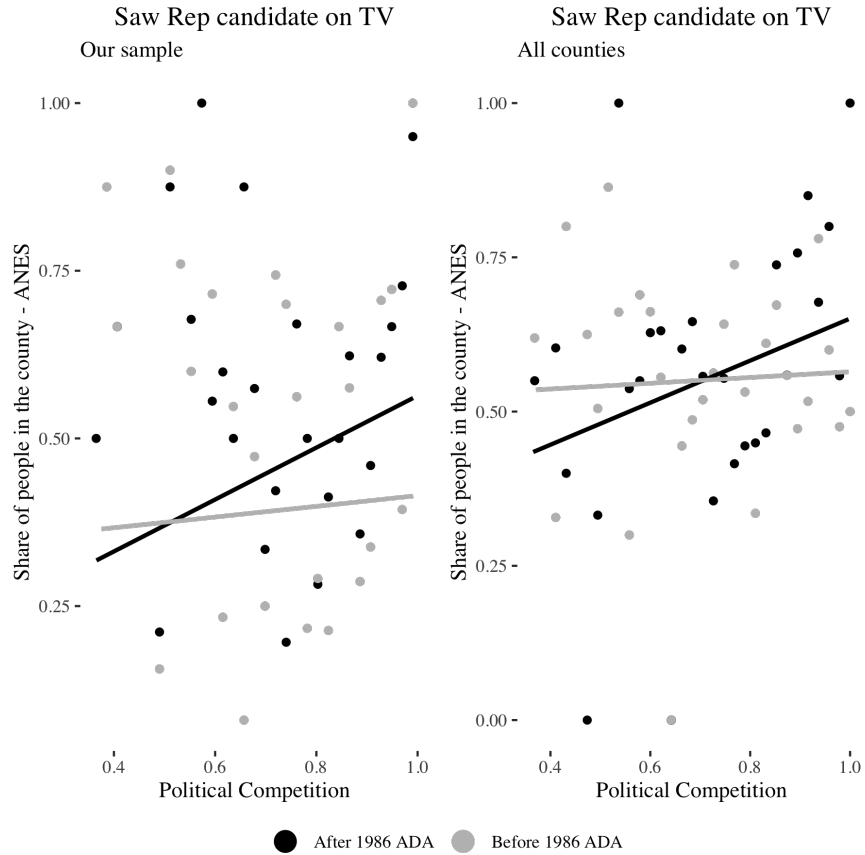
Figure A.6: ANES

Notes: The figure shows that in highly competitive counties the probability to see a candidates on TV is higher. Using ANES survey data we show how our measure of political competition positive correlates with the probability to see a Republican candidate on TV after 1986 ADAA, while there is not correlation before the policy implementation. On the left we show this correlation using our sub-sample of counties, while on the right we show it exploiting the entire sample provided by ANES.

Table A.8: Effect of political competition and presidential rhetoric on local Newspapers - Intensity of presidential rhetoric

	Dependent variable:					
	Ihs Count					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	War on drugs	Just say no	Crack cocaine	Crack babies	Welfare queen	Willie Horton
Bartik-type	0.0016***	0.0002**	0.0008	0.0004**	-0.0001	0.0003
	(0.0005)	(0.0001)	(0.0005)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome	1.0177	0.0545	0.4242	0.0541	0.0443	0.2257
Observations	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 5 for the number of mentions of words related to the *War on Drugs*. Different columns report results for the different words: *War on Drugs*, *Just say no*, *Crack cocaine*, *Crack babies*, *Welfare queen* and *Willie Horton*. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the prevalence of the topic drugs in the US President public papers (shift) and the continuous measure of political competition (share) at the county level. In order to make the interpretation of the coefficient easier, we multiple both measures by 100. We show the most complete specification including county, year-month, state by year fixed effects and we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.9: Effect of political competition on presidential rhetoric on local Newspapers - Share of the word drug in presidential papers

	Dependent variable:					
	Ihs Count					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	War on drugs	Just say no	Crack cocaine	Crack babies	Welfare queen	Willie Horton
Bartik-share word drug	0.0633***	0.0051	0.0333***	0.0070*	-0.0006	-0.0049
	(0.0176)	(0.0033)	(0.0123)	(0.0036)	(0.0016)	(0.0050)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome	1.0177	0.0545	0.4242	0.0541	0.0443	0.2257
Observations	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080	31,080

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 5 for the number of mentions of words related to the *War on Drugs*. Different columns report results for the different words: *War on Drugs*, *Just say no*, *Crack cocaine*, *Crack babies*, *Welfare queen* and *Willie Horton*. The regressor of interest is the a Bartik reduced form computed as the interaction of a continuous variable representing the share of time the word "drug" has been used by the presidents in their public paper and our continuous variable for political competition. Both variables are multiplied by 100 to simplify the interpretation of the coefficient. We show the most complete specification including county, year-month, state by year fixed effects and we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
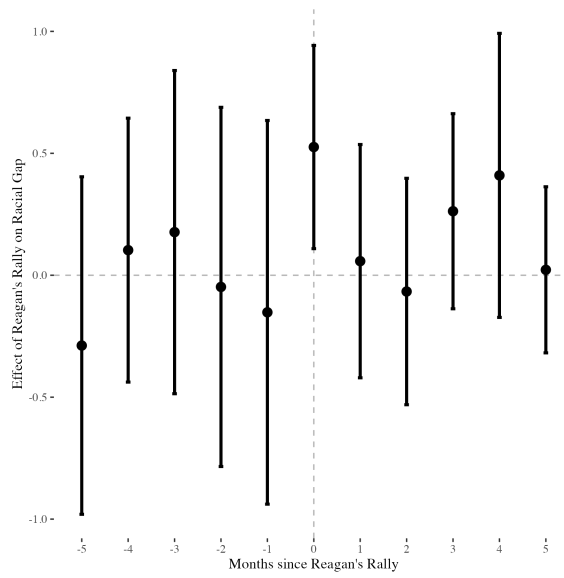
Figure A.7: Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin after a Reagan visit - Triple DiD

Notes: This graph shows dynamic treatment effect estimates of the effect of a Reagan visit after 1986 on the racial gap in arrests, estimated through a dynamic triple differences specification. The dashed black vertical lines indicate a Reagan visit after the 1968 Anti Drug Abuse Act. The gray lines show 95% confidence intervals for standard errors clustered at the county level.

Figure A.8: Borusyak et all. (2021) - Arrest for possession of cocaine or heroin Blacks after a Reagan visit

Notes: This graph shows dynamic treatment effect estimates using the Borusyak et all. (2021) machinery of the effect of a Reagan visit after 1986 ADAA on arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Whites. The dashed black vertical lines indicate the timing of the Reagan's visit. The gray lines show 95% confidence intervals for standard errors clustered at the county level.
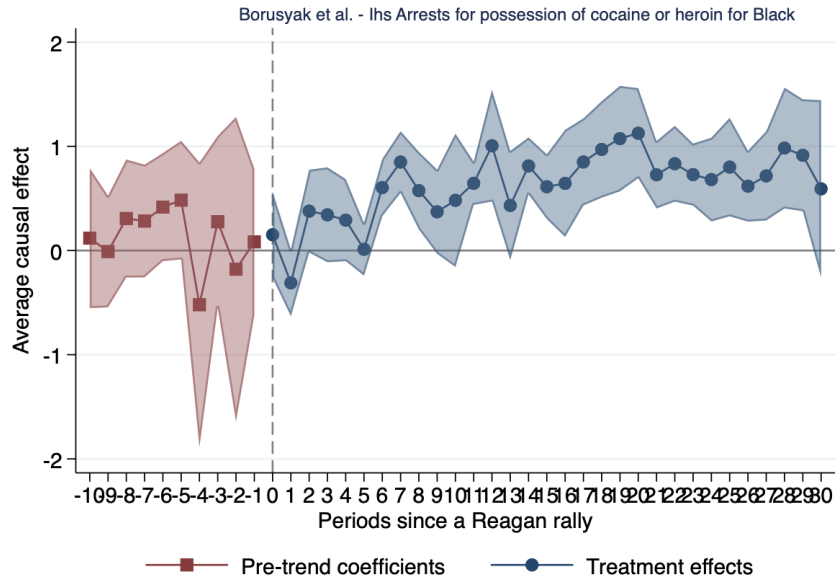
Figure A.9: Borusyak et all. (2021) - Arrest for possession of cocaine or heroin Whites after a Reagan visit

Notes: This graph shows dynamic treatment effect estimates using the Borusyak et all. (2021) machinery of the effect of a Reagan visit after 1986 ADAA on arrests for possession of heroin and cocaine for Blacks. The dashed black vertical lines indicate the timing of the Reagan's visit. The gray lines show 95% confidence intervals for standard errors clustered at the county level.
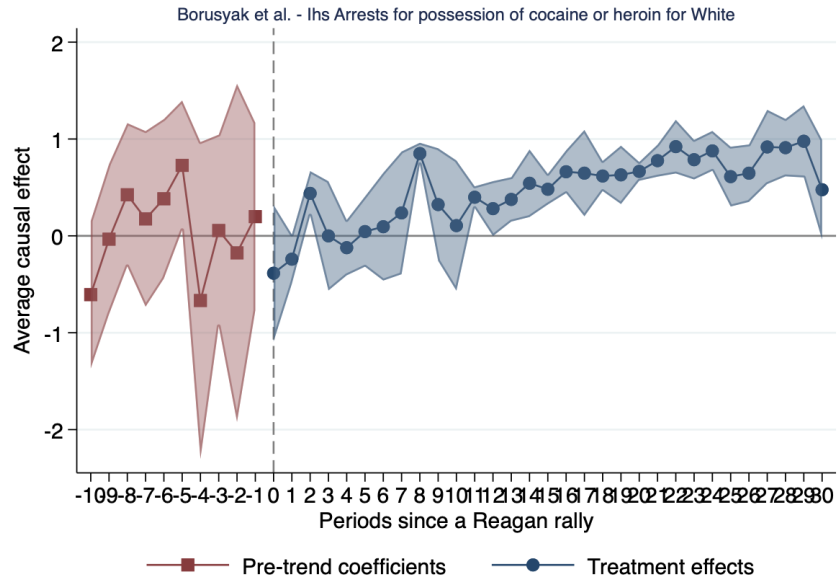
Table A.10: DiD and Triple Differences Estimates interacted with places visited by Reagan

	Dependent variable:	
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin	
	(1)	(2)
	Blacks DiD	Triple DiD
Pol.Comp x Post	0.0563*	
	(0.0313)	
Pol.Comp x Post x Black		0.0753***
		(0.0268)
Pol.Comp x Post x Reagan visit	0.7067**	
	(0.2631)	
Pol.Comp x Post x Black x Reagan visit		0.3402**
		(0.1702)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes
State x Year	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	232,344

Notes: This table report results of the interaction of our main DiD treatment with a dummy identifying those places visited by Reagan after 1986 (column 1), and of our triple DiD treatment interacted with the same dummy. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.11: Effect of political competition on Municipal Elections

	(1) Mayor Rep	(2) Mayor Rep
Pol Comp Pres X Post	0.1562*	0.2751**
	(0.0888)	(0.1110)
Population	Yes	Yes
Place FE	Yes	Yes
Election Year FE	Yes	No
State x Election Year FE	No	Yes
Mean Outcome	0.3548	0.3548
Observations	436	436

Notes: This table show results for the probability to have a Republican mayors in places in county highly competitive after the September 1986 Anti Drug Abuse Act. We consider only municipalities that had an election both between 1984 and 1986 and after 1986. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. In column 1 we include place, election year fixed effects and we control for the population in the place. While in column 2 we include state x year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the place level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.12: The Effect of a Republican Mayor
RD Estimates

Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin		
	(1) Blacks	(2) Whites
Republican Mayor	0.0445	-0.1920
	(0.4025)	(0.2808)
Observations	2,015	2,015

Notes: This table reports estimates of regression discontinuity design where the running variable is the republican margin of victory for a municipal election and the outcome is the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.13: Effect of political competition and war on drugs on attitudes towards Blacks

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
			Dependent variable:		
			ANES answer attitudes towards Blacks		
	Black Thermometer 0-100	Dummy Agree Past slavery and discrimination have created current negative conditions for Blacks	Dummy Agree Blacks should not have special favors to succeed such as Irish, Italians and Jewish	Dummy Agree Blacks gotten less than they deserve over the past few years	Dummy Agree Blacks must try harder to succeed
Pol.Comp. X Post	-2.190**	-0.0617	0.0566	-0.1044**	0.0839**
	(1.103)	(0.0459)	(0.0420)	(0.0477)	(0.0357)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	6,422	2,840	2,843	2,473	2,737

Notes: This table reports estimates of Equation 1. From ANES data from 1984 to 1990 we exploit 5 different questions from this survey data. In column (1), we report results using the Black thermometer score as outcome (a value going from 0 to 97, where 0 means very bad feelings and 97 means very good feelings); in column (2) we use a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent agree with the sentence "Past slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks their way out of the lower class"; in column (3) we use a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent agree with the sentence "Blacks should not have special favors to succeed such as Irish, Italians and Jewish"; in column (4) we use a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent agree with the sentence "Blacks gotten less than they deserve over the past few years"; and in column (5) we use a dummy variable taking value 1 if the respondent agree with the sentence "Blacks must try harder to succeed" The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. We show results controlling for county and year fixed effects and removing from the sample all the individuals interviewed by a Black interviewer. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table A.14: Heterogeneity by taste based discrimination - DiD

Arrest for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks			
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pol. Comp x Post	0.0719**	0.2504***	0.1068***
	(0.0323)	(0.0622)	(0.0395)
Pol. Comp x Post x Lynchings	-0.0572		
	(0.0390)		
Pol. Comp x Post x Cotton Suitability		-0.3608**	
		(0.1444)	
Pol. Comp x Post x Any Slaves			-0.1512**
			(0.0611)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	71,652	95,256

Notes: This table shows results for the taste based discrimination. The outcome variable is the number of arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks. We interact our DiD treatment with three different predetermined county characteristics that proxy taste based discrimination. In column (1) we interact our treatment with the IHS of the number of lynchings of Blacks; in column (2) with the presence of slaves in 1860; and in column (3) with a variable expressing the soil suitability for growing cotton (Acharya et al. (2016)). In the three columns we are including police agency, month by year fixed effects and state by year fixed effects. We control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.15: Heterogeneity by taste based discrimination - Bartik

Arrest for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks			
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Bartik	0.0007**	0.0016***	0.0006*
	(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)
Bartik x Lynchings	-0.0002**		
	(0.0001)		
Bartik x Cotton Suitability		-0.0004	
		(0.0004)	
Bartik x Any Slaves			-0.0004**
			(0.0001)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	71,652	95,256

Notes: Notes: This table shows results for the taste based discrimination. The outcome variable is the number of arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks. We interact our Bartik type reduced form with three different predetermined county characteristics that proxy taste based discrimination. In column (1) we interact our treatment with the IHS of the number of lynchings of Blacks; in column (2) with the presence of slaves in 1860; and in column (3) with a variable expressing the soil suitability for growing cotton. In the three columns we are including police agency, month by year fixed effects and state by year fixed effects. We control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
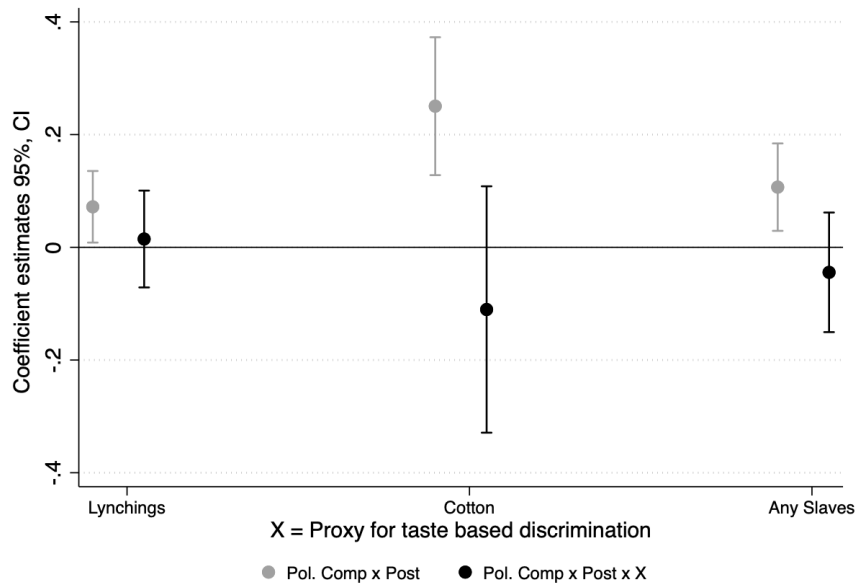
Figure A.10: Heterogeneity by taste based discrimination - DiD

Notes: This figure show heterogeneity by taste based discrimination. In grey we report estimates for places with a lower taste based discrimination. In black we report the estimates for places with higher taste based discrimination. We estimates these coefficients by interacting our DiD treatment with each measure of taste based discrimination. We proxy taste based discrimination using: IHS of the number of lynchings of Blacks, soil suitability for growing cotton and presence of slaves in 1860 (Acharya et al. (2016)).

Figure A.11: Heterogeneity by taste based discrimination - Bartik

Notes: This figure show heterogeneity by taste based discrimination. In grey we report estimates for places with a lower taste based discrimination. In black we report the estimates for places with higher taste based discrimination. We estimates these coefficients by interacting our Bartik reduced form with each measure of taste based discrimination. We proxy taste based discrimination using: IHS of the number of lynchings of Blacks, soil suitability for growing cotton and presence of slaves in 1860 (Acharya et al. (2016)).
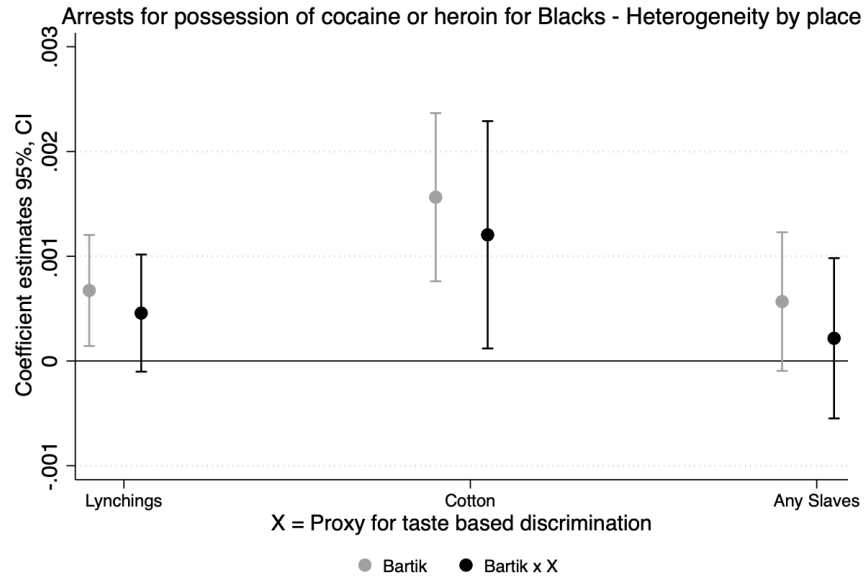
Table A.16: Other Crime Outcomes - Bartik

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Robbery	Robbery	Prostitution	Prostitution	DUI	DUI	Murder	Murder	Mtr Veh Theft	Mtr Veh Theft
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
Bartik-type	0.0000	-0.0001	0.0001	0.0002**	0.0001	0.0000	0.0000	-0.0001	0.0002*	-0.0000
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 4 for arrests for crime not related with drug possession. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the prevalence of the topic drugs in the US President public papers (shift) and the continuous measure of political competition (share) at the county level. We show results with police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$
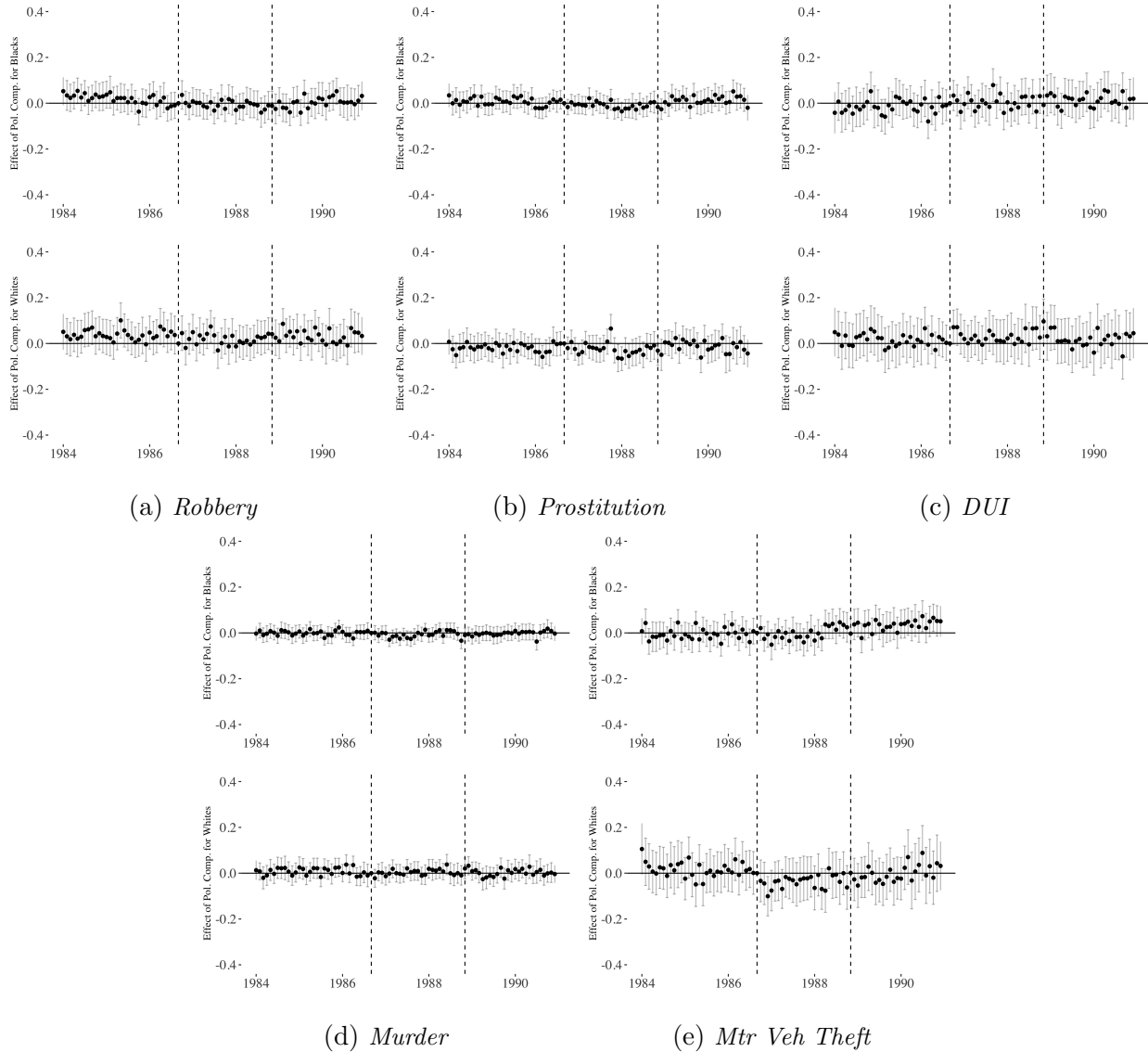
Figure A.12: Event Study - Other Crime Outcomes

Notes: This graph shows dynamic treatment effect estimates of the effect of political competition on arrests for all the other crime outcomes (robbery, prostitution, DUI, murder and Motor vehicle theft) for Blacks (Panel A) and for Whites (Panel B). The dashed black vertical lines indicate the enactment of the 1968 Anti Drug Abuse Act and the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Act (which coincided with the 1988 elections). The gray lines show 95% confidence intervals for standard errors clustered at the county level.This graph plots the event study

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Table A.17: Other Type of Drugs - Bartik

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Cannabis	Cannabis	Synthetic Narc	Synthetic Narc	Other Drugs	Other Drugs
	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites
Bartik-type	0.0001	-0.0002	-0.0000	-0.0001*	0.0000	-0.0005
	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0004)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 4 for arrests for possession of other type of drugs (different from heroin and cocaine). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the prevalence of the topic drugs in the US President public papers (shift) and the continuous measure of political competition (share) at the county level. We show results with police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
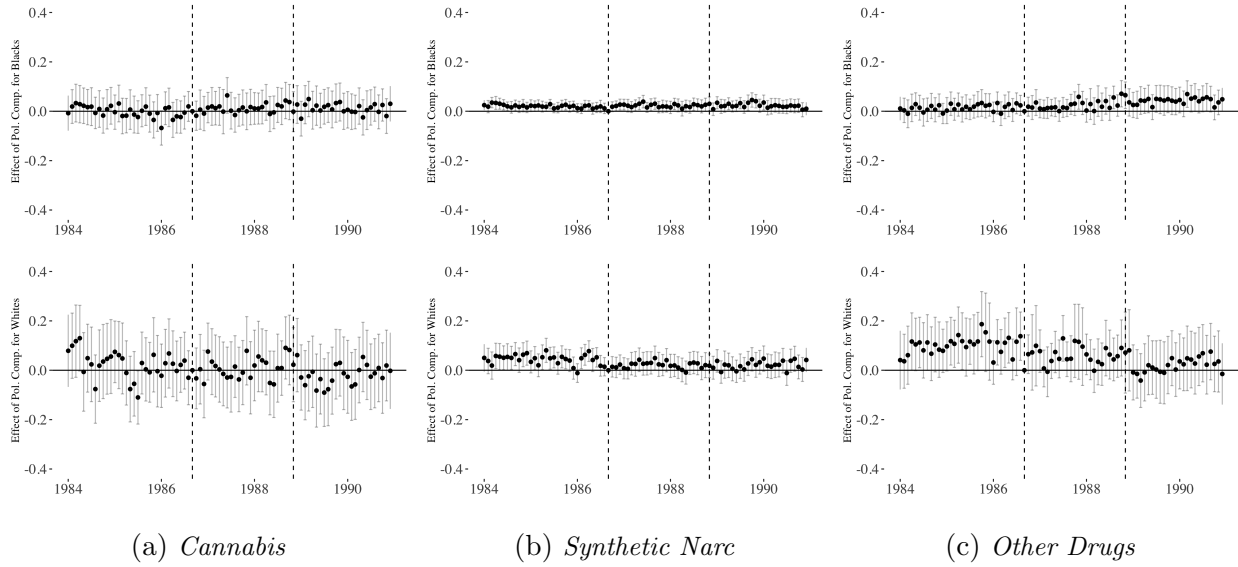
Figure A.14: Event Study - Other Type of Drugs

Notes: This graph shows dynamic treatment effect estimates of the effect of political competition on arrests for possession of other type of drugs (cannabis, synthetic, other drugs) for Blacks (Panel A) and for Whites (Panel B). The dashed black vertical lines indicate the enactment of the 1968 Anti Drug Abuse Act and the 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Act (which coincided with the 1988 elections). The gray lines show 95% confidence intervals for standard errors clustered at the county level.This graph plots the event study

Table A.18: Effect on Law Enforcement Personnel

	(1) Employees	(2) Female Employees	(3) Male Employees	(4) Civilian Employees	(5) Civilian Female	(6) Civilian Male	(7) Officers	(8) Female Officers	(9) Male Officers
Pol. Comp X Post	-0.0026	-0.0008	-0.0019	-0.0006	-0.0006	-0.0000	-0.0020	-0.0002	-0.0018
	(0.0028)	(0.0011)	(0.0021)	(0.0027)	(0.0011)	(0.0019)	(0.0020)	(0.0004)	(0.0018)
Bartik-type	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	-0.0000	0.0000	-0.0000
	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 1 and Equation 4 for the number of law enforcement personel. The outcome variables are computed as the share of law enforcement employees with respect the population of the police agency. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

Table A.19: Effect of Political Competition - Restricted Sample

	Arrest for possession of crack cocaine			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Black		White	
Political Comp X Post	0.1233**		0.0282	
	(0.0535)		(0.0500)	
Bartik-type		0.0014**		0.0001
		(0.0006)		(0.0006)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	44,688	44,688	44,688	44,688

Notes: This table reports estimates of Equation 1 and Equation 4 obtained after restricting the sample to counties where we observe more than 80% of the population. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed (columns 1 and 3). While in columns 2 and 4 we use as main regressor our Bartik reduced form. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.20: Effect of political competition in previous Presidential elections (1972-1980) on arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin - DiD

	Dependent variable:			
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pol. Comp. 1972 X Post	0.0757**			
	(0.0350)			
Pol. Comp. 1976 X Post		0.0250		
		(0.0316)		
Pol. Comp. 1980 X Post			0.0793***	
			(0.0305)	
Pol. Comp. Av. 1972 1984 X Post				0.0916***
				(0.0321)
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Whites			
Pol. Comp. 1972 X Post	0.0180			
	(0.0291)			
Pol. Comp. 1976 X Post		-0.0193		
		(0.0327)		
Pol. Comp. 1980 X Post			0.0161	
			(0.0284)	
Pol. Comp. Av. 1972 1984 X Post				0.0064
				(0.0317)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome Blacks	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386
Mean Outcome Whites	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058
Observations	116,088	116,172	116,172	116,088

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 1 for arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks (top panel) and Whites (bottom panel). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition for different Presidential elections (1972, 1976, 1980 and average 1972-1984) at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed. We report our main specification with police agency and month by year fixed effects; we control for state by year fixed effects and for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.21: Effect of political competition in previous Presidential elections (1972-1980) on arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin - Bartik

	Dependent variable:			
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pol. Comp. 1972 X Pres.Rhet.	0.0006**			
	(0.0002)			
Pol. Comp. 1976 X Pres.Rhet.		0.0008**		
		(0.0003)		
Pol. Comp. 1980 X Pres.Rhet.			0.0010***	
			(0.0003)	
Pol. Comp. Av. 1972 1984 X Pres.Rhet.				0.0013***
				(0.0004)
	Arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Whites			
Pol. Comp. 1972 X Pres.Rhet.	0.0001			
	(0.0003)			
Pol. Comp. 1976 X Pres.Rhet.		-0.0001		
		(0.0003)		
Pol. Comp. 1980 X Pres.Rhet.			0.0001	
			(0.0003)	
Pol. Comp. Av. 1972 1984 X Pres.Rhet.				0.0000
				(0.0005)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Outcome Blacks	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386	0.3386
Mean Outcome Whites	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058	0.7058
Observations	116,088	116,172	116,172	116,088

Notes: This table shows estimates of Equation 4 for arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin for Blacks (top panel) and Whites (bottom panel). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the prevalence of the topic drugs in the US President public papers (shift) and the continuous measure of political competition for different Presidential elections (1972, 1976, 1980 and average 1972-1984) (share) at the county level. In order to make the interpretation of the coefficient easier, we multiple both measures by 100. We report our main specification with police agency and month by year fixed effects; we control for state by year fixed effects and for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
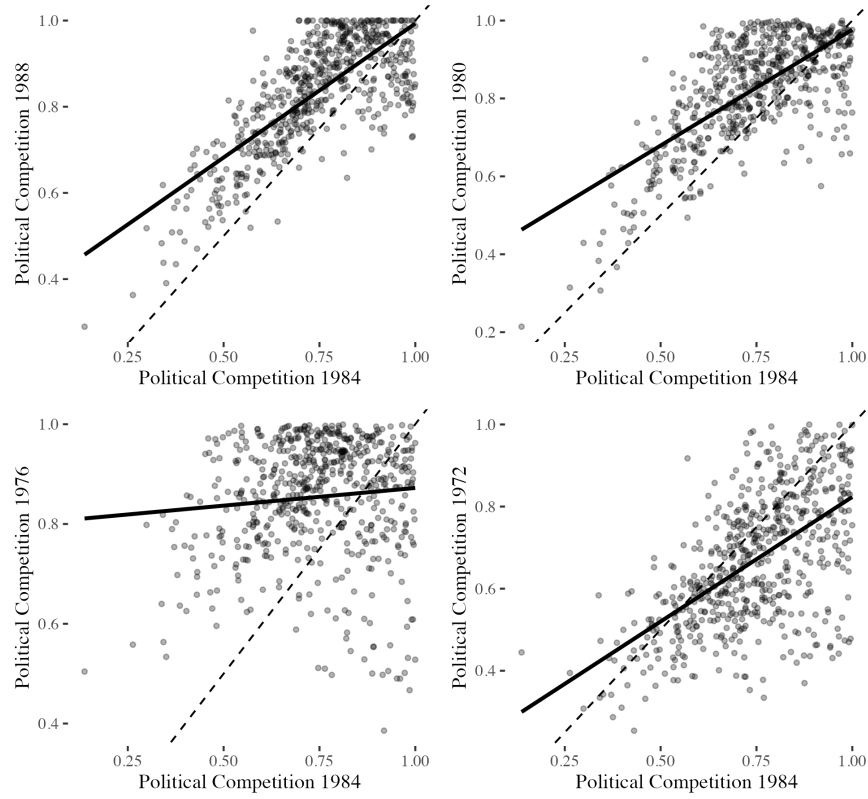
Figure A.16: Political competition in other elections

Notes: This figure plots the value for political competition across different elections. The solid black lines represent regression lines, the dashed black lines represent a 45 degree line.

Table A.22: Poisson Model

	Arrest for possession of cocaine or heroin			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Blacks		Whites	
Political Comp X Post	0.3980**		0.0554	
	(0.1583)		(0.0780)	
Bartik-type		0.0022***		0.0003
		(0.0005)		(0.0004)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	80,412	80,412	111,492	111,492

Notes: This table reports estimates of Equation 1 and Equation 4 using a Poisson model for count data. The outcome variables are the number of arrests for possession of cocaine and heroin for Blacks or Whites. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed (columns 1 and 3). While in columns 2 and 4 we use as main regressor our Bartik reduced form. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A.23: Different Outcome Variable Choice

	Share of Blacks arrests for possession of cocaine or heroin							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Over	Over	Over	Over	Over	Over	Over	Over
	Total arrests for	Total arrests for	Total arrests for	Total arrests	Total arrests for	Total arrests for	Total arrests	Total arrests
	Possession of cocaine	Possession of cocaine	Whites	Whites	Drugs possession	Drugs possession		
Political Comp X Post	0.0122*		0.1365**		0.0094*		0.0041*	
	(0.0073)		(0.0541)		(0.0049)		(0.0023)	
Bartik-type		0.0002***		0.0011***		0.0001***		0.0000**
		(0.0001)		(0.0004)		(0.0000)		(0.0000)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172	116,172

Notes: This table shows results for the share of Blacks arrested for possession of cocaine or heroin. We construct different shares: number of Blacks arrested for possession of cocaine over total arrests for possession of cocaine (columns 1 and 2); number of Blacks arrested for possession of cocaine over number of Whites arrested for possession of cocaine (columns 3 and 4); number of Blacks arrested for possession of cocaine over number of arrests for drug possession(columns 5 and 6); number of Blacks arrested for possession of cocaine over number of arrests (columns 7 and 8). The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed (columns 1, 3, 5, 7). While in columns 2, 4, 6 and 8 we use as main regressor our Bartik reduced form. We show results with police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects we control for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $p<0.1$; **$p<0.05$; ***$p<0.01$

Table A.24: Effect of campaigning on arrest rate by race

	Arrest rate for possession of cocaine or heroin			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Blacks		Whites	
Political Comp X Post	13.2708**		0.3847	
	(6.3225)		(0.9181)	
Bartik-type		0.0995		-0.0048
		(0.0714)		(0.0078)
Agency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month x Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	44,688	44,688	44,688	44,688

Notes: This table reports estimates of Equation 1 and Equation 4 obtained after restricting the sample to counties where we observe more than 80% of the population. The outcome variables are computed as the number of arrests for Blacks (columns 1 and 2) or for Whites (columns 3 and 4) over the total Black or White population. The regressor of interest is the interaction between the dummy measure of political competition at the county level and a dummy for months after September 1986, the date in which the first Anti Drug Abuse act was passed (columns 1 and 3). While in columns 2 and 4 we use as main regressor our Bartik reduced form. We show results using the most complete specification including police agency, month by year and state by year fixed effects, and controlling for the population in the agency and non parametric controls for crack prevalence at the state level, black share, female share, share of population under 10 and over 18, share of population below the poverty level at the county level. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. $^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$
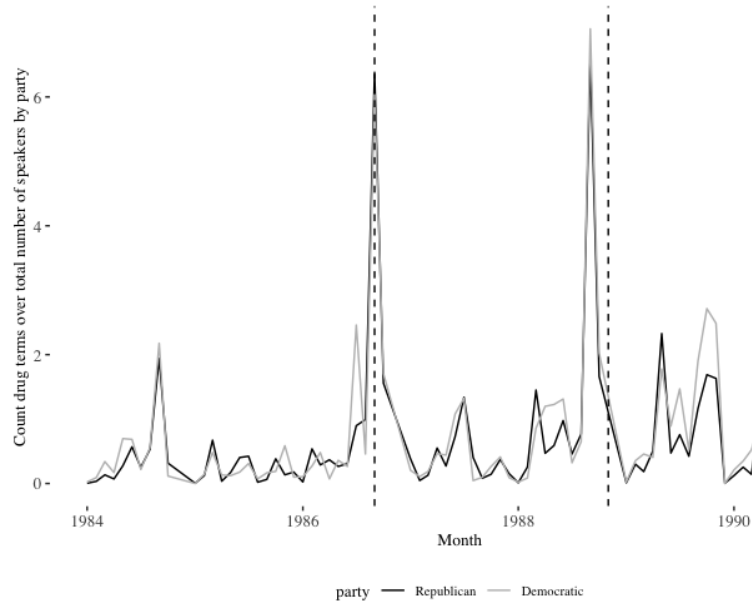
Figure A.17: Relative frequency of the drug word - House of Representatives

Notes: This graph shows the number of times that the word drug has been used in the Congressional speeches of the House of Representatives from January 1984 to December 1990 over the number of speakers by party. In black we present this relative frequency for the Republican party, and in grey for the Democratic party
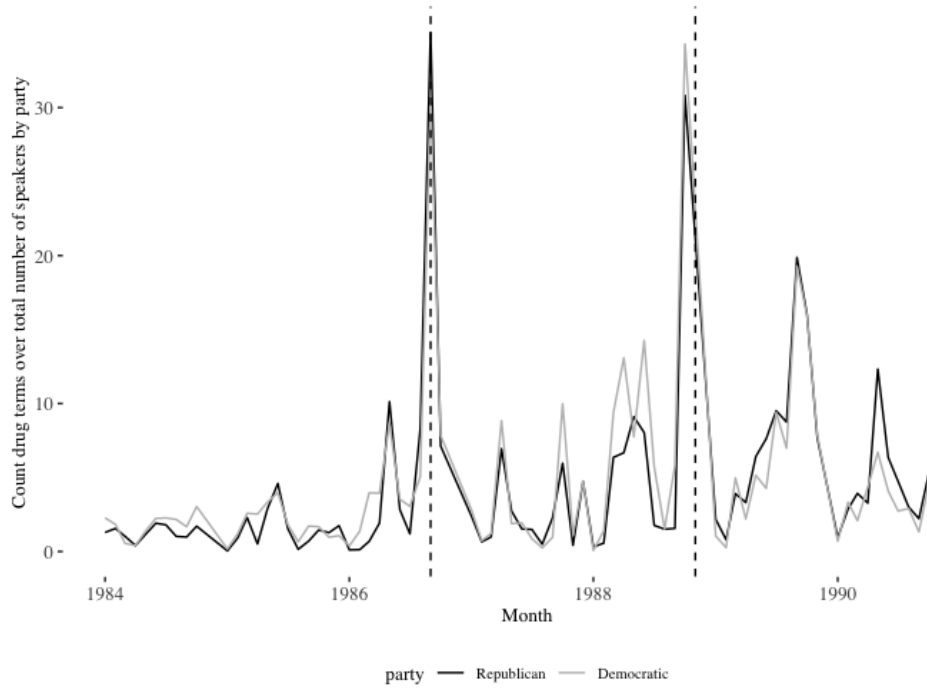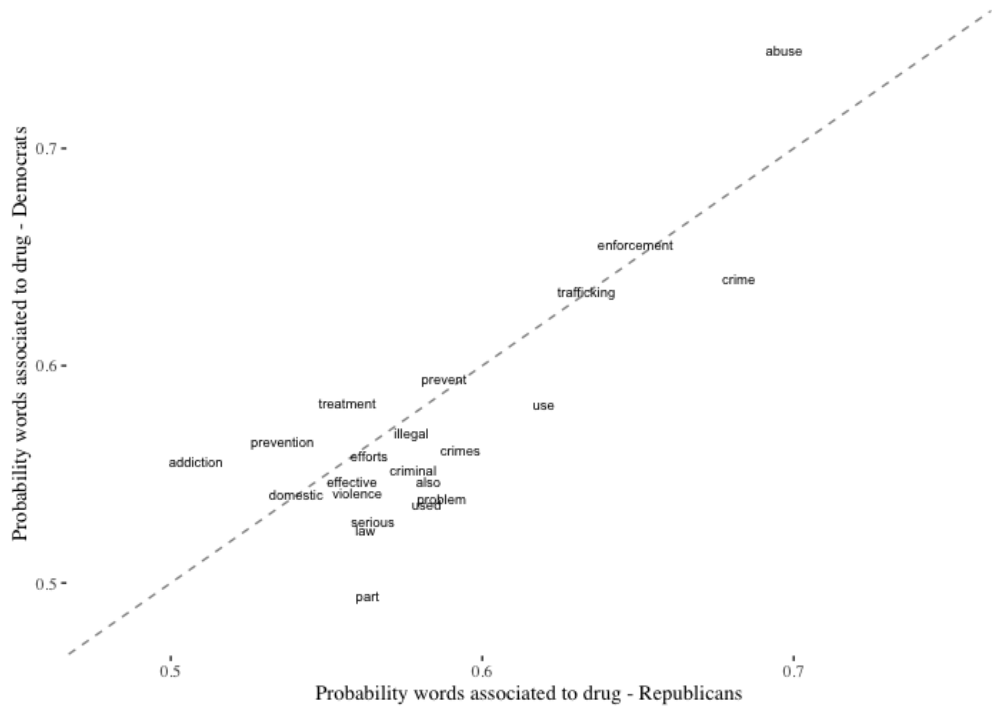
Figure A.18: Relative frequency of the drug word - U.S. Senate

Notes: This graph shows the number of times that the word drug has been used in the Congressional speeches of the U.S. Senate from January 1984 to December 1990 over the number of speakers by party. In black we present this relative frequency for the Republican party, and in grey for the Democratic party

Figure A.19: Words linked to the word drug. ALC embedding

Notes: This graph shows the 20 most probable words used when talking about drug in the congressional speeches. We plot on the y axis the probability assigned to the democratic candidates and in the x axis the one assigned to the republican party. The dashed grey line is a 45 degree line.
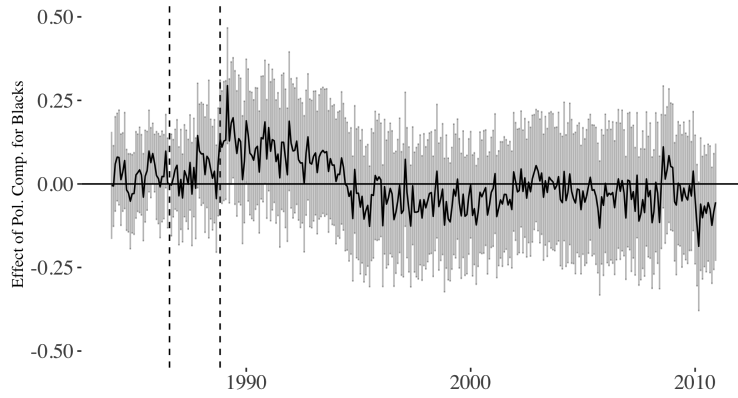
Figure A.20: Average number of crimes for possession of illicit drugs committed by Blacks

Notes: This graphs shows our dynamic treatment effect for Blacks from 1984 to nowadays.
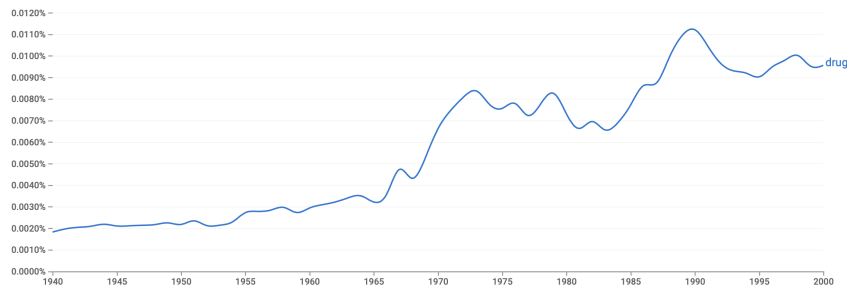

Figure A.21: Frequency of the word "drug" from Google Books Data

Notes: This graph shows the frequency of the word "drug" in Google Books data over time