

The Politics of Locating Polling Places

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Less attention given to perversion through the discretion exercised by **local election administrators**.

e.g. polling place locations, voting machine allocations, early voting rules, etc.

QUESTION

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Do partisan local election administrators in North Carolina systematically move precinct boundaries and polling place locations to manipulate turnout for partisan electoral gain?



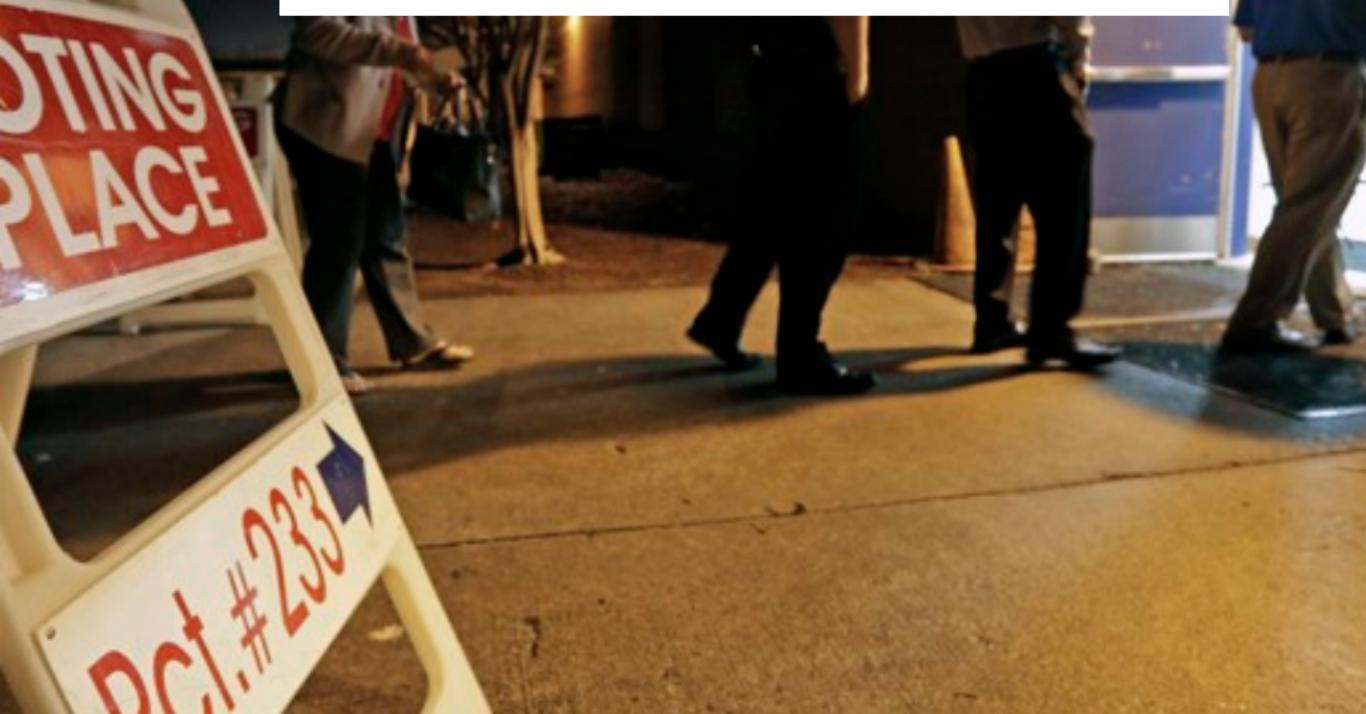
VOTING
PLACE

Dist. #233

POLITICS & ELECTIONS

Polling Places in Black Communities Continue to Close Ahead of November Elections

BY STATELINE | SEPTEMBER 5, 2018 AT 9:51 AM



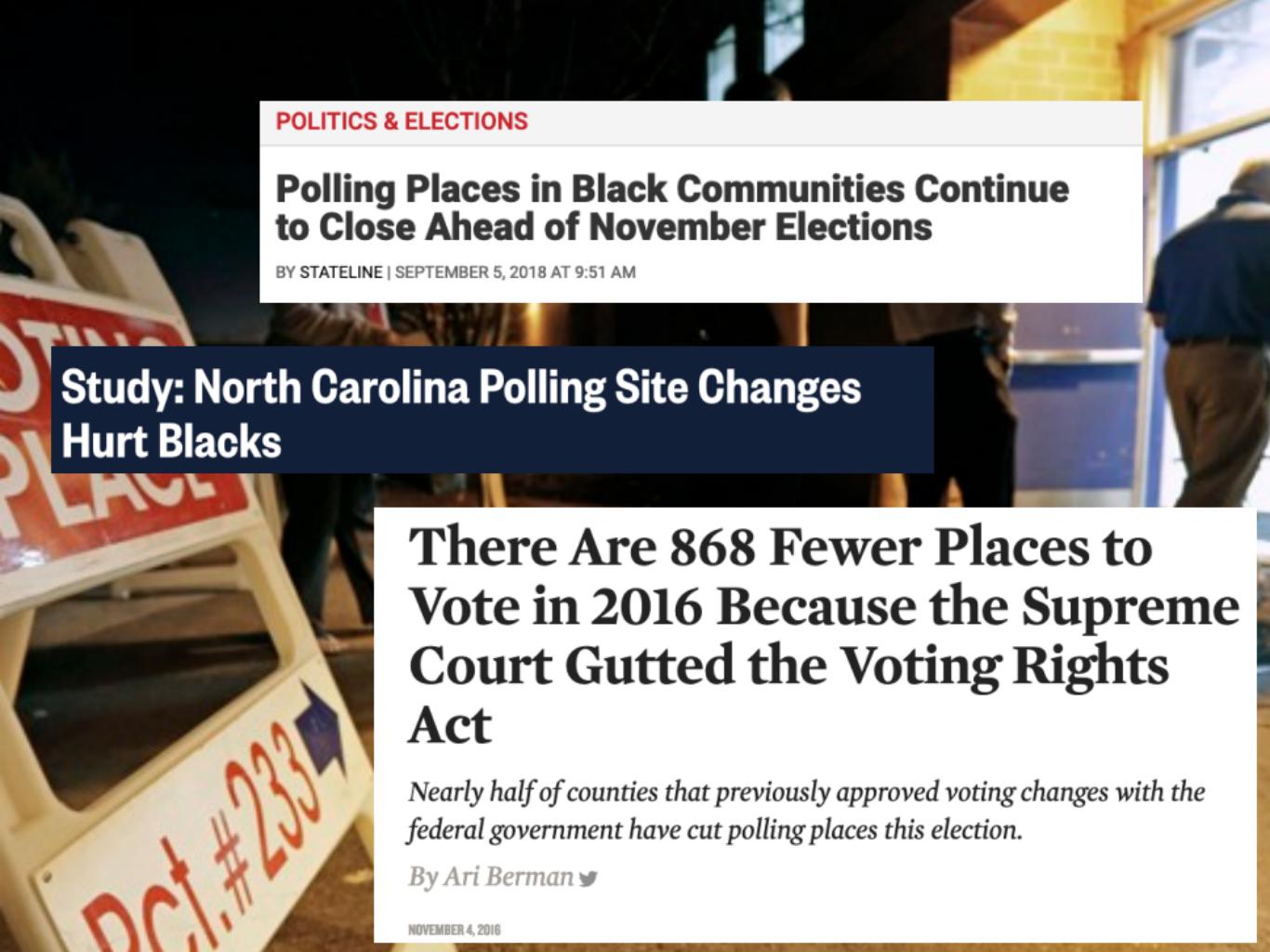
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Nearly half of counties that previously approved voting changes with the federal government have cut polling places this election.

By Ari Berman 

BUT...

The plural of anecdote isn't evidence, so we want to be systematic.

LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF DIFFERENTIAL TARGETING OF OPPOSITION VOTERS

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Changes made in 2012 were made by **Democrats**.

Changes made in 2016 were made by **Republicans**.

No evidence of systematic differential targeting of changes by partisanship or race.

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North Carolina: 3-person appointed county boards, 2 from Governor's party.

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Estimate the differential change in the number of voters per precinct.

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Leverage **change** to Democratic control (2004-2008) and subsequent **change** to Republican control (2008-2012)

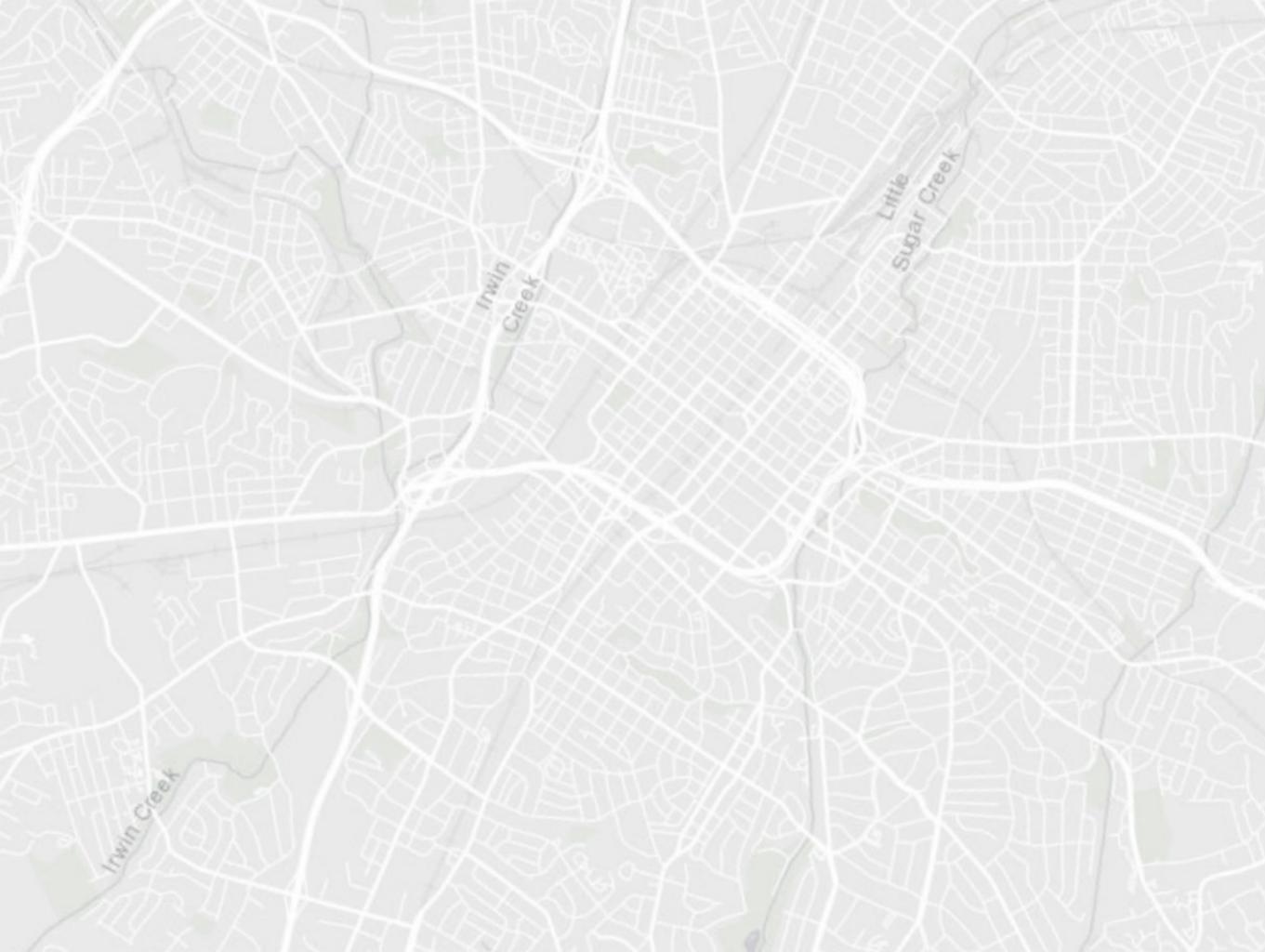
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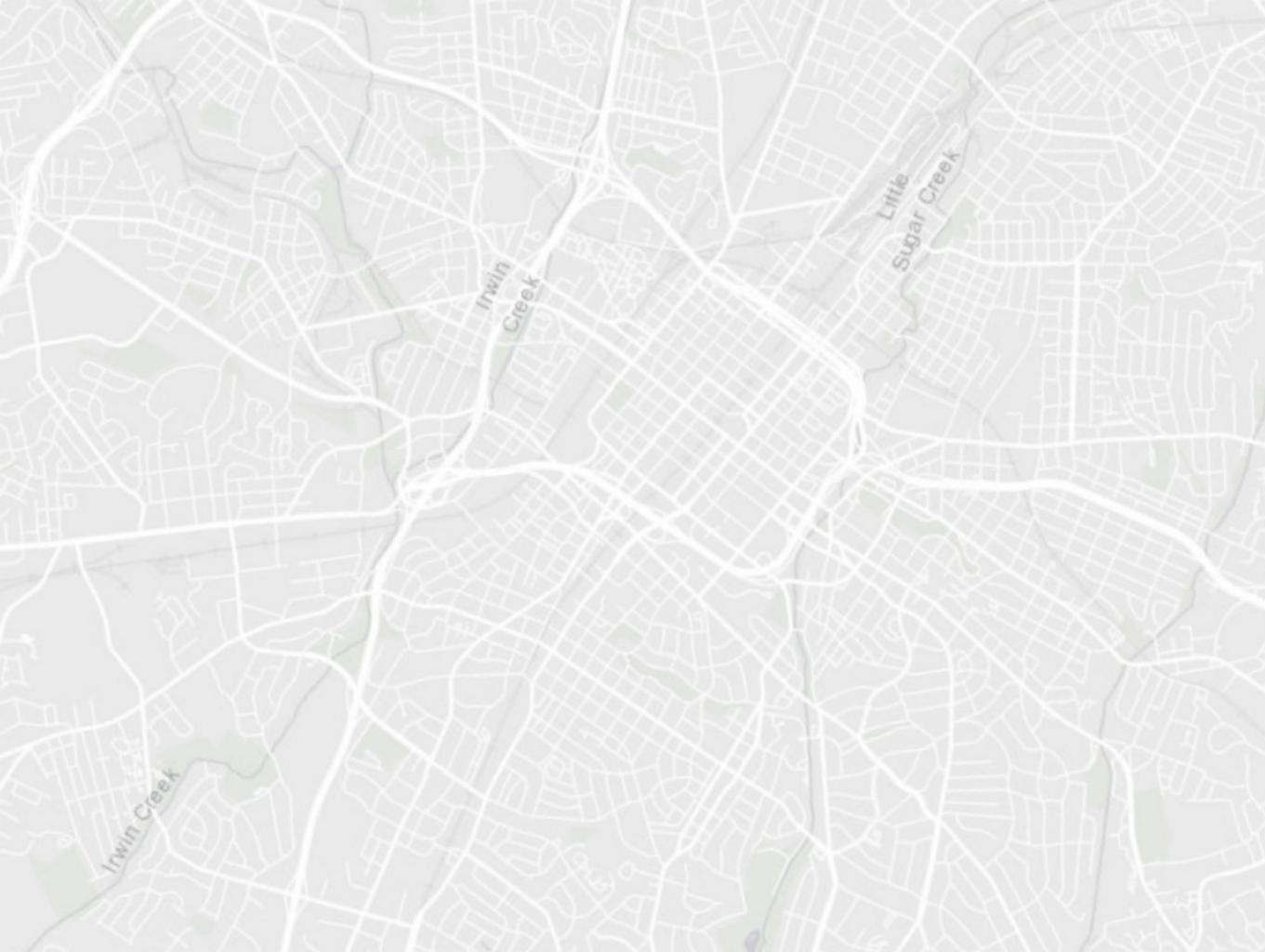
- Precludes us from mis-identifying general temporal trends, like polling places availability decreasing everywhere.



Irwin
Creek

Little
Sugar Creek

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Little
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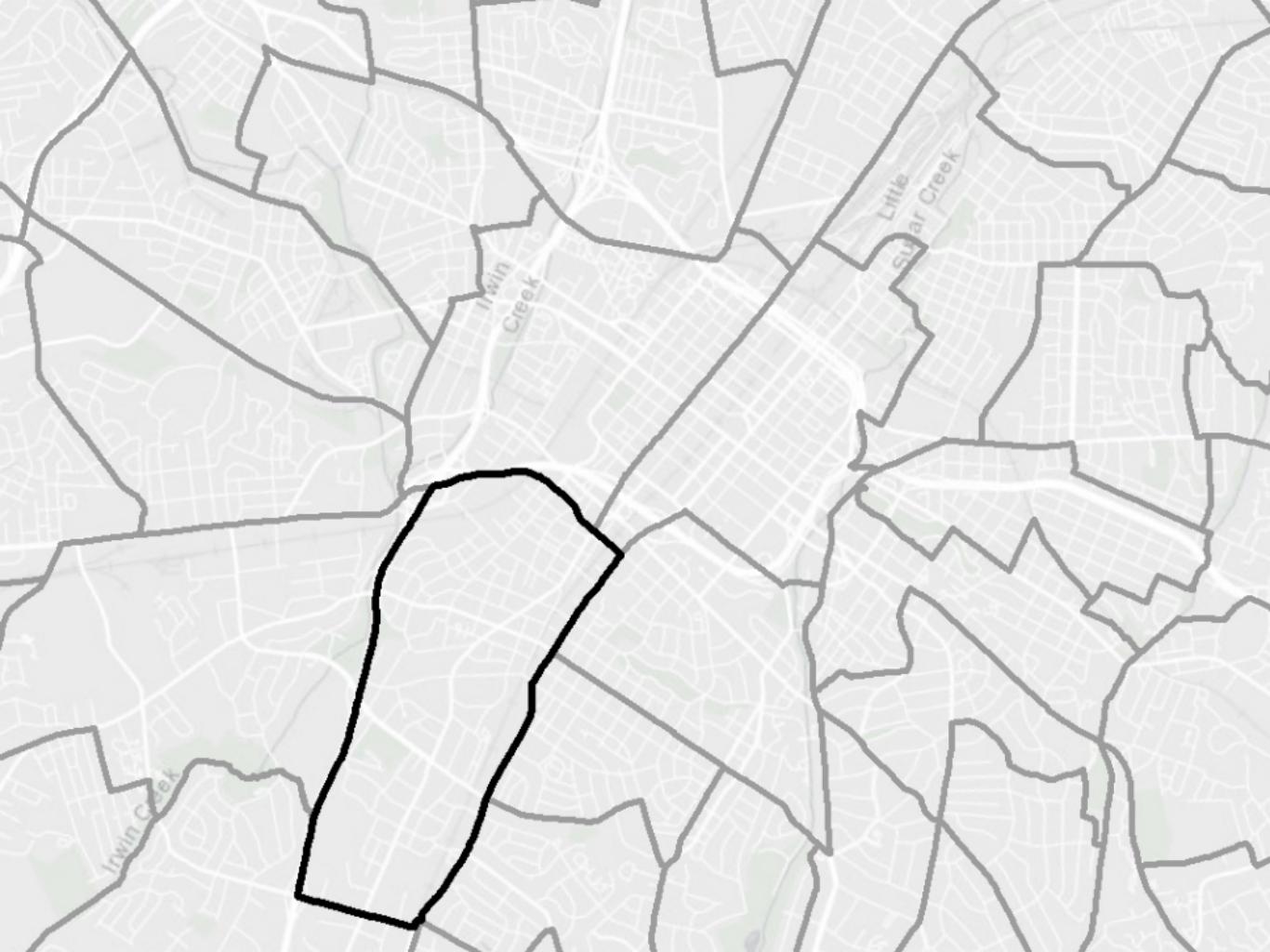
Irwin Creek



Main
Creek

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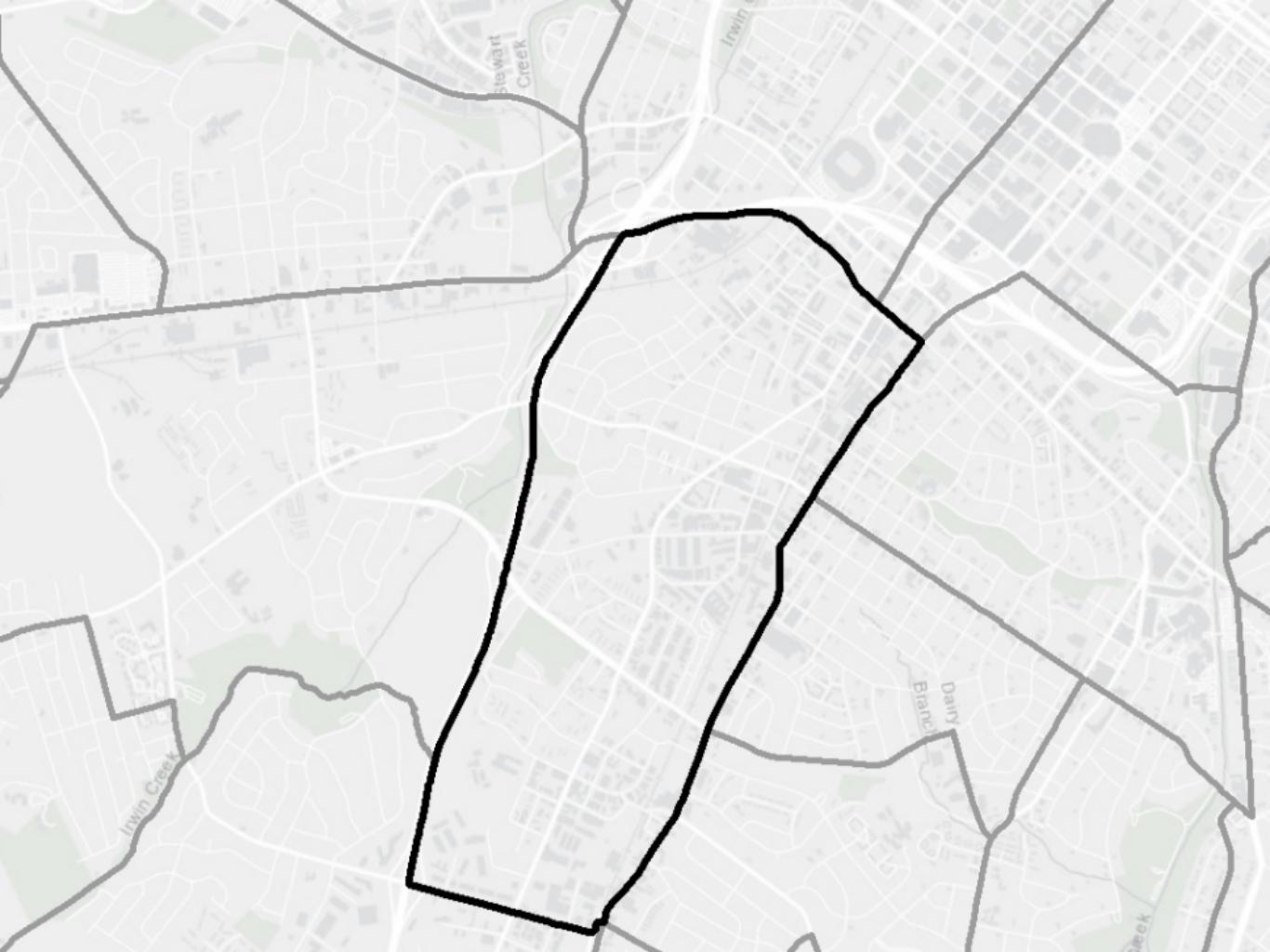
Irwin Creek

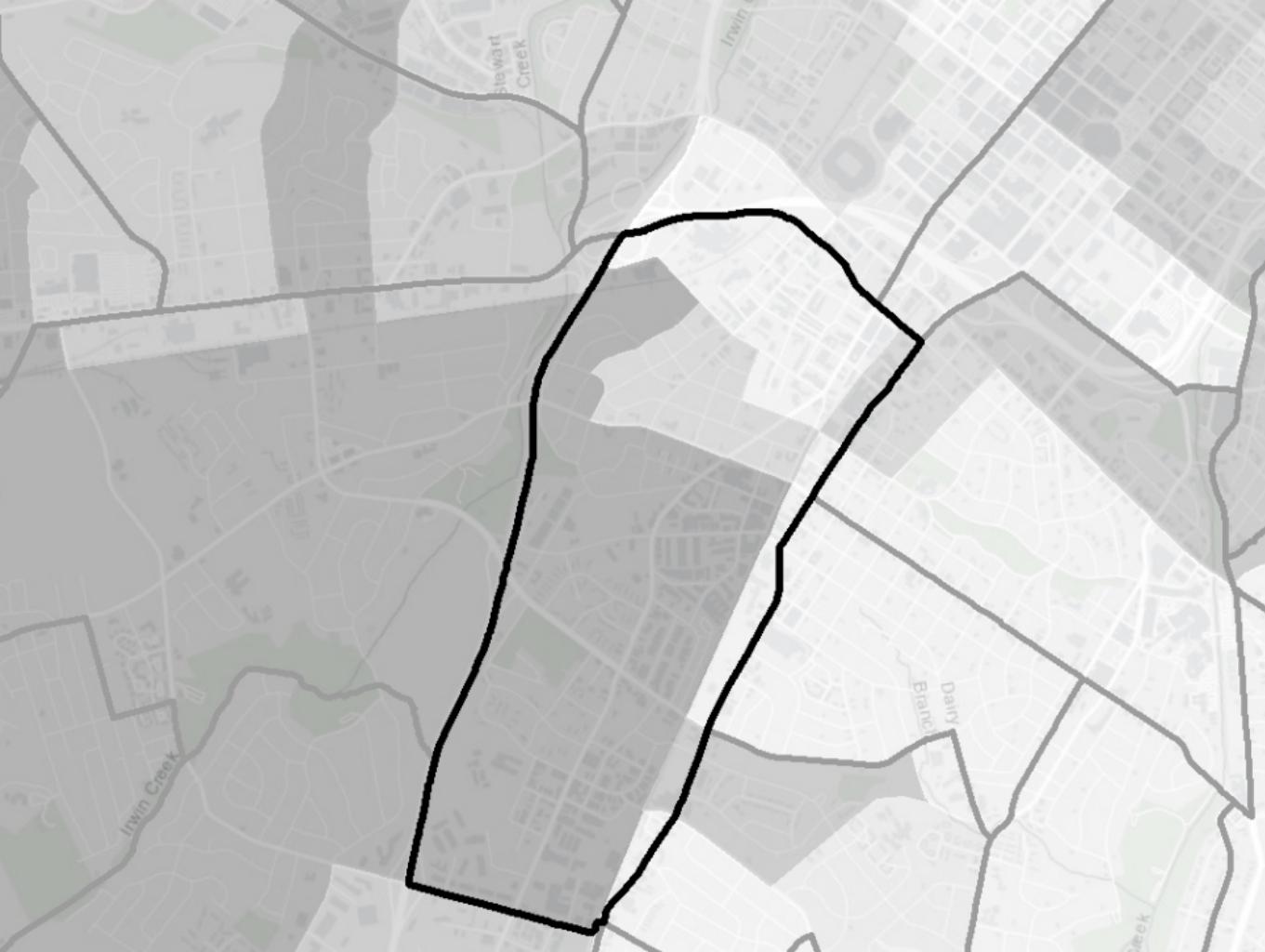


Twin
Creek

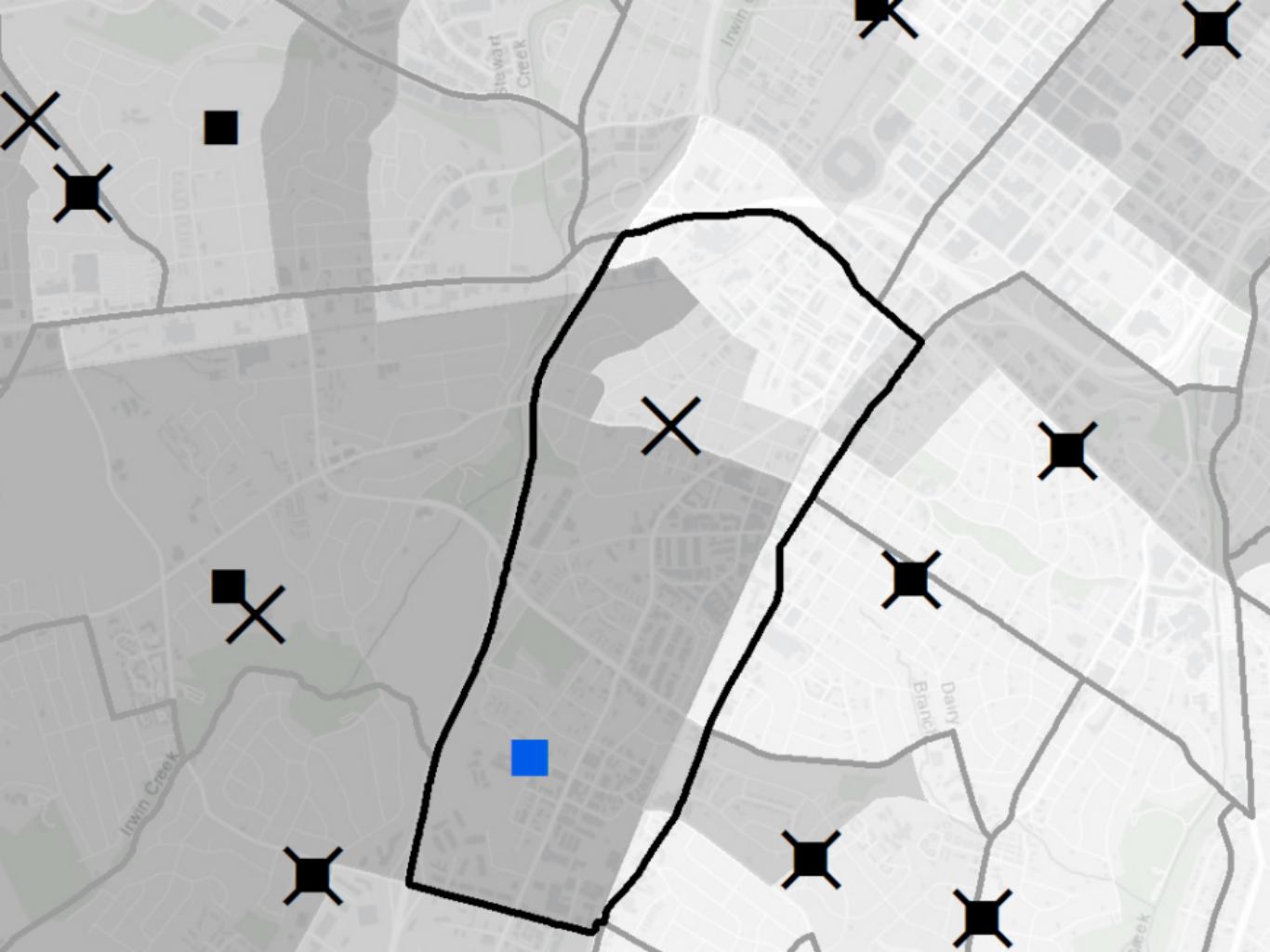
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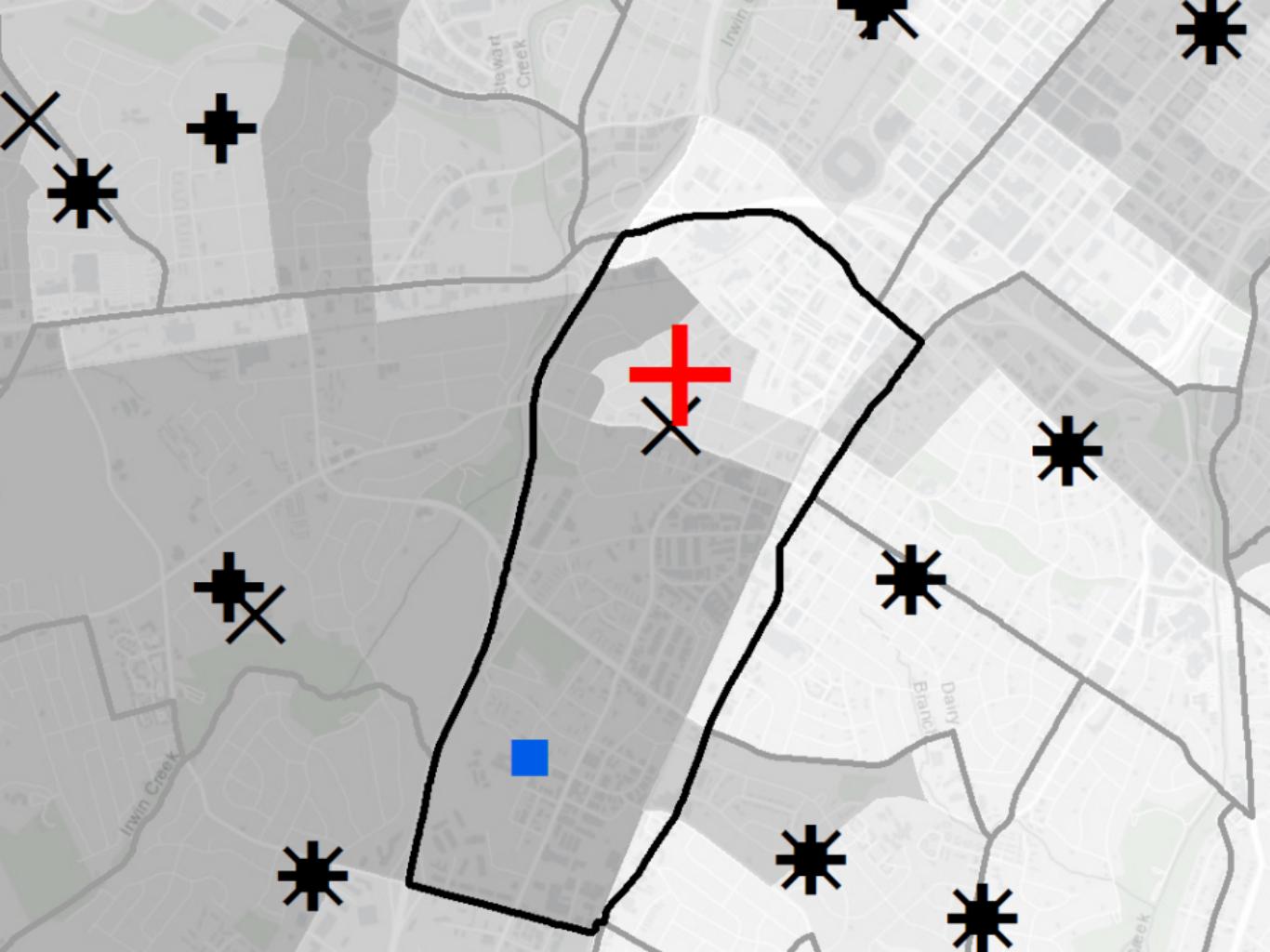
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Collect panel data on every registered voter in North Carolina,
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(North Carolina State Board of Election (NCSBE))

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Restrict the sample to voters who have not moved.

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Geolocate voter residences, match to precincts & polling places.

	$Pr(\Delta PollingPlace)$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Opposition</i>	-0.0083 (0.0055)	0.0028 (0.0025)					
<i>WhiteOpposition</i>							
<i>BlackOpposition</i>							
County FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE		✓			✓		
County x Year FE		✓		✓			
Controls		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Sample	Full Panel	Full Panel	2012	2016	Full Panel	2012	2016
Observations	4677529	4677529	2338992	2338537	4677529	2338992	2338537
Mean of DV	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.16
SD of DV	0.25	0.25	0.37	0.36	0.25	0.37	0.36

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<i>Opposition</i>	-0.0083 (0.0055)	0.0028 (0.0025)	0.0031 (0.0047)	0.0020 (0.0046)			
<i>WhiteOpposition</i>							
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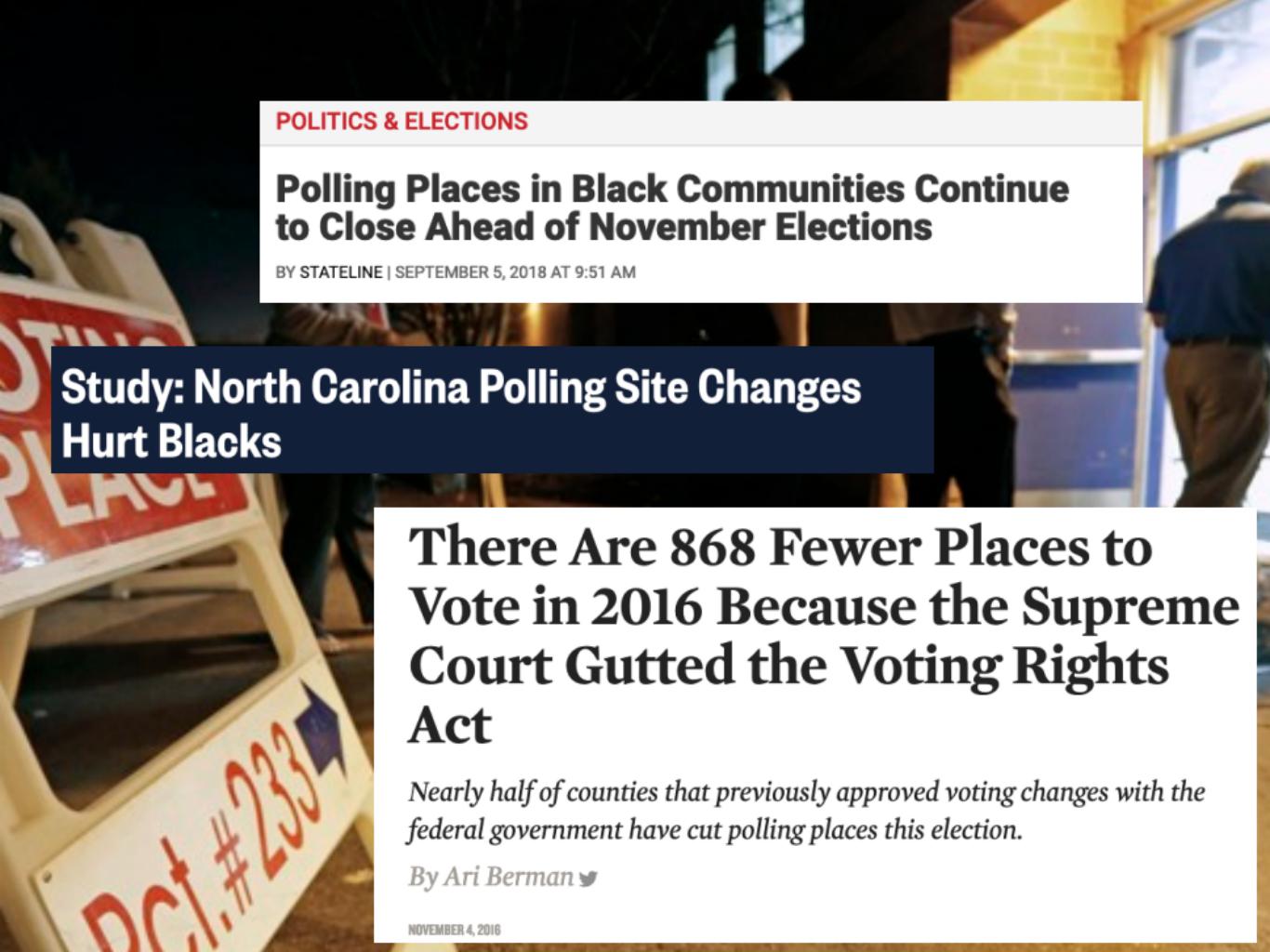
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<i>WhiteOpposition</i>					0.0016 (0.0023)		
<i>BlackOpposition</i>					0.0061 (0.0092)		
County FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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<i>WhiteOpposition</i>					0.0016 (0.0023)	0.0033 (0.0050)	-0.00035 (0.0030)
<i>BlackOpposition</i>					0.0061 (0.0092)	0.0012 (0.0063)	0.0054 (0.010)
County FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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	$Pr(PollingPlaceMovedFarther)$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>Opposition</i>	0.0036 (0.0094)	0.0067 (0.0088)					
<i>WhiteOpposition</i>							
<i>BlackOpposition</i>							
County FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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Observations	754298	754298	386564	367734	754298	386564	367734
Mean of DV	0.16	0.16	0.087	0.090	0.089	0.087	0.090
SD of DV	0.25	0.25	0.28	0.29	0.20	0.28	0.29

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<i>Opposition</i>	0.0036 (0.0094)	0.0067 (0.0088)	0.0066 (0.011)	0.0066 (0.011)			
<i>WhiteOpposition</i>							
<i>BlackOpposition</i>							
County FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE		✓			✓		
County x Year FE		✓			✓		
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<i>WhiteOpposition</i>					0.0043 (0.0052)	0.0062 (0.011)	0.0047 (0.0077)
<i>BlackOpposition</i>					0.014 (0.022)	0.015 (0.014)	0.012 (0.023)
County FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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NOVEMBER 4, 2016

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We think polling places regularly have to be moved, and so some of those moves will necessarily advantage party in power.

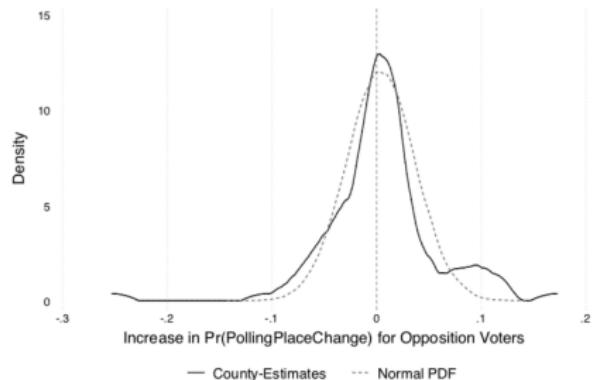
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We think polling places regularly have to be moved, and so some of those moves will necessarily advantage party in power.
But others will *disadvantage* party in power.

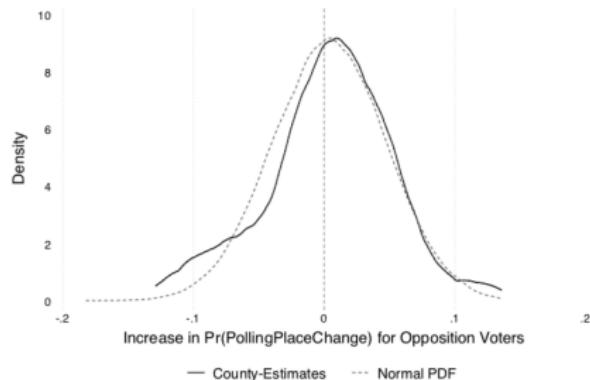
We think there's a selection effect in reporting.

Figure 3: Distribution of County-Level Estimates of Targeting

(a) Democrat-Appointed Officials (2012)

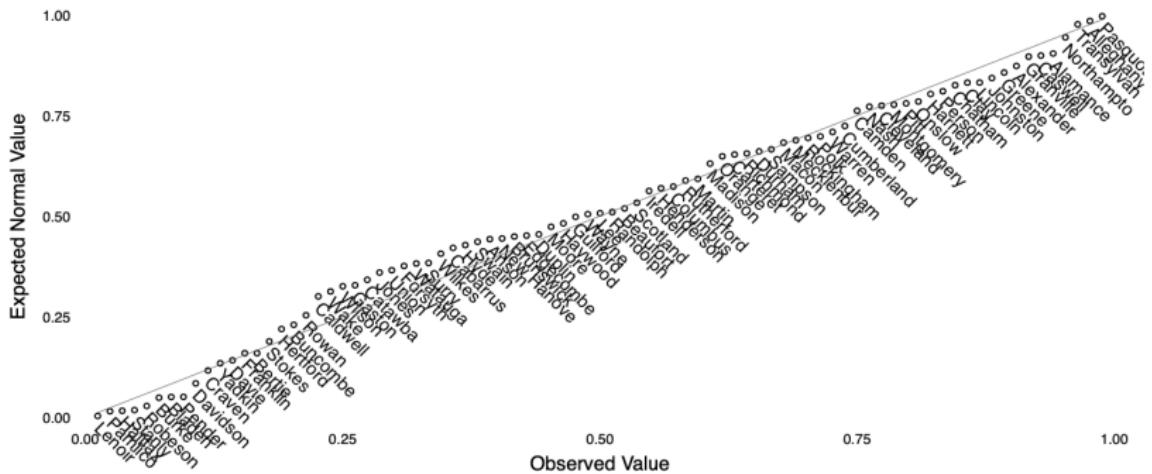


(b) Republican-Appointed Officials (2016)



Notes: The above plot presents the distribution of the estimates of the increase in the probability of experiencing a polling place change for voters of the opposition party to the Governor (and thus local election officials) ($\hat{\beta}_1$) from estimating equation 1 for each county individually. Some county estimates are omitted because they cannot be estimated because no precincts in those counties experienced a polling place change. Normal distributions are simulated.

(b) Republican-appointed (2016)



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This is specific to North Carolina, and the period being studied.