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This Time is Different: Evaluating the Effect of the March for Our Lives GOTV Campaign on the Outcomes of the U.S. 2018 Midterm Election

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Abstract:

This study evaluates the impact of the youth anti-gun violence advocacy group March for Our Lives and its "Road to Change" Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) campaign on political participation in the 2018 midterm elections. Specifically, it asks whether the peer-led voter mobilization effort organized by survivors of the Parkland, Florida, school shooting in 2018 increased registration and turnout, particularly among young people in the areas the campaign visited during the 2018 midterms. This paper explores the link between political salience, youth and adult socialization, and electoral behavior by analyzing the real-world effects of youth-driven activism and mobilization activity on democratic participation. To evaluate whether this campaign successfully mobilized potential voters in 2018, we use a quasi-experimental design with difference-in-differences and synthetic control models, applied to registration and validated voting outcome data from the Congressional Election Study (CES). Results show that counties visited by the campaign experienced significantly higher registration and turnout rates than non-visited counties. Furthermore, the synthetic control estimates suggest that turnout rates among youth voters (ages 18-29) appear to have increased due to this campaign, although results fall short of statistical significance. These findings suggest that peer-led, issue-salient advocacy campaigns can positively shape civic behavior and help close longstanding generational gaps in political participation.

1. Introduction

Historically, political participation among young Americans aged 30 and under has been the lowest among all age groups. Census data show that youth voter turnout during presidential elections has hovered between 30% and 50% in the last 40 years, whereas older cohorts participate at levels 20-30% points higher at 50-80%, signaling a substantial turnout gap between young voters and their older counterparts (US Census 2018, Holbein and Hillygus 2020). Beyond merely contributing to lower levels of political engagement among young Americans, this voting gap has produced stark generational inequalities in political representation, most notably in the lack of institutional responsiveness to youth-salient issues such as gun violence, climate change, and social justice (Kelly 2018).

Yet, recent election cycles have disrupted this narrative. In the 2018 midterms, youth voting surged by nearly 20% compared to the previous midterm election in 2014[1], and up by more than 13% from the 2010 midterms (Clement and Mellnik 2019)[2]. Moreover, although voter turnout increased across all age groups in 2018, youth turnout increased by nearly 80% relative to the 2014 midterms, significantly outpacing the gains seen among older voters[3]. This upward trend continued through the 2020 general election, in which youth turnout exceeded 50% for the first time, and remained stable into the 2022 midterm election (Nadeem 2023).

In this study, we examine the potential causes of these shifts in political engagement, with a specific focus on the 2018 election, the first of the recent higher-turnout elections among

[1] From 12% in 2014 to 33% in 2018 (Gallup, 2020).
[2] The 2010 youth voting rate was 21% (CIRCLE).
[3] Youth turnout for 2020 has been estimated at 50% (CIRCLE)

young people under 30. We argue that the *March for Our Lives* movement (MFOL), a highly visible and youth-led response to a mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, in February 2018, likely contributed to this boost in youth turnout in the 2018 midterms.

Specifically, the MFOL movement resulted from the violent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL on February 14, 2018–an attack that killed 14 students and 3 staff members and injured 17 others. This tragedy was certainly not the first mass shooting (or even mass school-shooting)[4] young Americans had seen in the news, nor the first to prompt a swell of activism. However, this event marked the first time that survivors of mass gun violence, most of whom were high school students on the verge of political enfranchisement, converted their grief into a coordinated, national movement. These survivors became the public face of the MFOL movement, advocating for changes to gun control policies and for increased youth political engagement in the policy area of gun control. These youth leaders and their burgeoning advocacy organization were immediately thrust into the gun control policy debate, which coalesced to organize a high-profile, media-amplified outdoor protest in Washington, D.C., in March 2018, in conjunction with over 850 smaller marches and school walkouts across the country, organized primarily by youth in solidarity (Sit 2018). Notably, this event was an explicitly and vocally pro-gun control protest with the added aim to register young, newly eligible, and apathetic voters (CIRCLE 2019; Zoller and Casteel 2022) Additionally, the leaders of the newly formed MFOL organization rapidly established local chapters throughout the United States. Leveraging political and media savvy from their early online experiences as

[4] Of particular note is the Sandy Hook mass school shooting that killed 26 people including 20 children between six and seven years of age.

"digital natives" and members of Generation Z, the MFOL leaders garnered sustained attention to contemporary gun policy debates (Hexagon 2018; Lithwick 2018; Stevens 2018; Zoller and Casteel 2022)[5] adding new moral framing of the issue, such as 'Fairness' and 'Cultural Identity' to the discussions (see Figure 2 for framing and media coverage visualization). As one vocal member, 17-year-old Cameron Kasky, a junior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas, told the audience during the MFOL rally in Washington, D.C., "Politicians either represent the people or get out. Stand with us or beware, the voters are coming. Our voices are powerful, and our votes matter." (Sit 2018).

To further capitalize on their national platform, the MFOL organization also launched a Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) campaign in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections, which primarily consisted of a voter-mobilization tour titled the "Road to Change." This mobilization campaign visited more than 60 cities during the summer and fall of 2018[6], targeting political engagement and youth turnout through the lens of gun policy, using peer-led outreach and in-person appeals. According to the movement's organizers, the Road to Change endeavored to "educat[e] young voters on two things: the gun-reform measures they believe will stop senseless deaths and whether or not their local candidate has the support of the NRA (Edwards 2018) (Edwards 2018)." To this end, youth organizers worked with local groups and chapters to register new voters, including pre-registering eligible 16 and 17-year-olds (Sit 2018) and provided general information about voters' national, state, and local political environments.

This study asks: *What effect did the March for Our Lives (MFOL) – Road to Change Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) campaign have on registration and voting rates during the 2018*

[5] March for Our Lives continues to operate today in this capacity.
[6] Operated in partnership with Rock the Vote, Headcount, NAACP, Mi Familia Vota, and the Townhall Project (Edwards 2018)

election in the areas the campaign visited? To answer this question, we use a novel quasi-experimental approach that leverages the comprehensive, voting-validated data from 2010-2018 from the Congressional Election Study (CES) Cumulative Content Module. Specifically, we use a difference-in-differences design with two-way fixed effects to elucidate the mobilizing effect of the "Road to Change" tour on general election registration and turnout rates. Then, to test how the campaign specifically mobilized young voters, ages 18-29, we use a synthetic control model (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010) to elucidate the extent to which this campaign was successful in its goal of boosting youth turnout in counties visited by the tour in the lead-up to the 2018 election.

We find that counties visited by the MFOL campaign experienced significantly higher voter registration and turnout rates relative to counties not visited. These findings suggest that this youth-led, issue-salient advocacy movement may have been a highly effective tool for activating political participation during the 2018 U.S. midterm elections, leading to an estimated 3.2-point increase in general election voter registration and a nearly 4-point increase in turnout among eligible voters in visited counties. Furthermore, the synthetic control results show a positive directional boost of 2.8 points in voter turnout among youth under 30, although this estimate is not statistically significant, likely due to power losses associated with the relative scarcity of youth respondents in our sample. These results underscore the potential for youth-led grassroots mobilization efforts to increase turnout, galvanize broader political participation, and impact electoral outcomes, particularly when campaigns engage directly with communities on issues of personal and political salience**.**

2. Background

Issue Salience of Guns for Youth and Leveraging a National Platform

Past scholarship on gun control policy issues has shown that stopping gun violence and general interest in gun policy, as well as taking action to stop gun violence, are highly salient issues for many Americans (Andolina 2024; Turanovic, Lloyd, and La Tosa 2025; Wu 2018). This salience is particularly acute for young people, who have grown up with the constant presence of mass school shootings and routine active shooter drills in their educational environments from a very young age (Dermody and Hanmer-Lloyd 2004; Wasike 2017). From Columbine High School in 1999, to Virginia Tech in 2007, to Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012, these tragedies have become defining generational experiences, shaping not only public discourse but the lived realities of youth coming of age (Zoller and Casteel 2022). More recent mass shootings, including those in Parkland (2018), Boulder (2021), Uvalde (2022), and Nashville (2023), have further reinforced the issue's visibility and urgency (Turanovic, Lloyd, and La Tosa 2025). Given this context and the high salience of this issue, it is reasonable to expect that gun violence would politically mobilize individuals with strong attitudes on the issue, particularly those who are dissatisfied with the status quo and support gun control reforms. As Schattschneider (1960) argues, political mobilization is often driven by demand for policy change rather than satisfaction with existing conditions. In this case, it is likely that young Americans who support stricter gun control are more activated by the salience of gun violence than those who are content with current policies.

This theoretical framework also builds on the catalyst model of political socialization (Abramowitz and Saunders 2006; Gordon and Taft 2011; Sears and Valentino 1997) which holds that early, formative political experiences can shape long-term participation patterns. For today's youth, gun violence represents a generationally salient issue, one that can activate political agency, particularly when coupled with mobilization from trusted, peer-based sources. Youth-

driven activism efforts, such as the MFOL movement, have focused on raising youth awareness of their political agency and encouraging them to participate in electoral processes, sometimes for the first time in their lives. Because youth frequently have less experience with, and more barriers to, political participation than older adults (Fisher 2012; Holbein and Hillygus 2020), activism efforts may produce a more potent effect compared to adults.

In addition, this connection between attitudes toward gun control issues, exposure to information about the MFOL Road to Change campaign, and voter turnout among young people in 2018 should be strengthened by exposure to gun violence prevention activism efforts in general, as well as youth-driven activism in particular (Bowyer, Kahne, and Middaugh 2017; Earl, Maher, and Elliott 2017). As noted, the saliency of gun violence influences issue attitudes among both youth and older adults. However, because many young people have not yet fully crystallized in their partisan attachments, the saliency of gun violence provides an opening for the issue to influence their political decision-making in more profound ways than older adults (Ansolabehere and Puy 2018; Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008; A. Campbell et al. 1960; Sears and Valentino 1997).

Moreover, because of the personal feelings of threat associated with gun violence and mass school shootings felt by young people (CIRCLE 2019; Wu 2018). Youth, in turn, also influenced their parents and other close adults, such as teachers, doctors, and other kinds of authority figures, which we argue resulted in spillover effects (Bond et al. 2012; McDevitt and Chaffee 2002). Specifically, we argue that these connections may have increased the likelihood that adults over 30 were exposed to the Road to Change, especially if the tour visited their county and these older adults had close connections with one or more youth who may have attended a nearby event, posted about the issue on social media, or talked to their friends about the issue.

Although these adults may or may not have had an initial interest in the issue of gun control, their proximal connections to young people's perceptions of threat raised the salience of the movement and its activities. The high likelihood of these intergenerational spillovers explains our analytical decision to examine all respondents rather than youth alone in our difference-in-differences models, to capture the campaign's full mobilizing effect. Consequently, these connections likely increased the likelihood that proximate adults over 30 were exposed to the MFOL movement's messaging; in turn, increasing the likelihood that older adults turned out or registered to vote *because* of the movement's mobilization efforts. These activated young people, who lived in counties the campaign visited and were therefore exposed to MFOL's direct communications, advocacy messaging, and media coverage surrounding gun violence and gun control policy more generally, may also have influenced the adults in their lives, creating a feedback loop that promoted mobilization and activism in the 2018 midterms.

The potential interpersonal influence was likely amplified when youth were further exposed to face-to-face appeals from the campaign, which has long been considered one of the most effective means of increasing voter turnout (Cox 2015; Gerber and Green 2000; Green and Gerber 2019). March for Our Lives members say the reasoning behind where they visited was to go where gun violence rates were high and places that had also experienced mass shootings. The movement, born in Parkland, Florida, visited communities in Florida multiple times, as well as the cities of Chicago, Las Vegas, and Orlando, not necessarily for electoral reasons or to sway races, but for community connection. "We've met so many amazing people from those communities, so it's important for us to stand with them because they don't get as much media coverage as we do. It's about uniting communities that you might not think have anything in common," said Jaclyn Corin, who was 17 at the time (Edwards 2018).

3. Literature Review

Youth Political Behavior and Socialization: A Brief Overview

Young Americans under 30 have historically exhibited the lowest levels of voter turnout among all age groups of voters (Andolina 2024; File n.d.; Holbein and Hillygus 2020; Nadeem 2023). A large body of research attributes this to the underdevelopment of political identities, lower levels of political trust, and structural barriers that make participation less habitual and more costly for youth (A. Campbell et al. 1960; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Holbein and Hillygus 2020). However, the political socialization literature also suggests that formative civic experiences during young adulthood can have immediate and lasting effects, shaping political identity, participation habits, and trust in institutions (A. Campbell et al. 1960; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Putnam 2001; Sears and Valentino 1997).

The literature on political socialization emphasizes the outsized impact that early mobilization can have on voting behavior, particularly among first-time or episodic voters (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Holbein and Hillygus 2020). For youth, exposure to emotionally resonant political stimuli, especially when paired with accessible entry points to politics, such as issue advocacy, can lead to long-term civic habit formation (Ansolabehere and Puy 2015; Delli Carpini 2000; Hobbs 2018, Holbein and Hillygus 2020). When people, and especially youth, live in times when policy issues of interest to them are at the forefront of the media and political agenda, it can create an environment that softens the barriers to politics and, importantly, to participation and potentially to social change ((Boydstun, Laufer, Card and Smith 2026).

Issue Salience: Gun Violence as a Generational Catalyst

Gun violence issues and gun control policies in general g, have emerged as uniquely generational issues for young Americans. Mass shootings have not only shaped national policy debates but also the lived realities of youth who have grown up with lockdown drills and constant exposure to school violence (Wasike 2017; Wu 2018). The shooting events and gun prevention activities created strong emotional resonance and helped define what Schattschneider (1960) calls "conflict displacement," wherein previously disengaged groups enter political life due to a sense of misalignment with the status quo.

Empirical research shows that young people are among the strongest supporters of gun control measures (Della Volpe 2022; Newman and Hartman 2019), and youth-centered movements like MFOL have demonstrated an ability to translate issue salience into political action (Earl, Maher, and Elliott 2017; Stevens 2018). These movements frame political participation not as an institutional duty, but as a personal and moral obligation, often rooted in lived trauma (Aldrich 1993; Strupp-Levitsky et al. 2020). Case in point, the MFOL movement emerged directly from the trauma of the 2018 Parkland shooting, and, unlike with previous school shootings, the survivors of this tragedy were old enough to speak for themselves, organize, and lead. This unique backdrop laid the groundwork for these efforts, which coalesced into a national movement that emphasized peer-led activism, youth voter registration, and policy reform.

Furthermore, scholarship on protest movements and youth-led organizing notes that issue-based mobilization campaigns such as MFOL often play a dual role: they provide expressive outlets for discontent and instrumental pathways to political incorporation (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1999; Della Volpe 2022). Earl et al. (2017) describe these campaigns as "hybrid movements" that blur the lines between social protest and electoral mobilization, making

them especially effective when they resonate with a generation shaped by shared trauma and policy neglect related to the same issues.

Trickle-Up Influence of Youth to Adults

Traditional models of political socialization often emphasize top-down transmission of political attitudes from parents to children (A. Campbell et al. 1960; Highton and Kam 2011). However, that political influence can also flow in the reverse direction, from children to adults. Research on spillover political effects by McDevitt and Chaffee (2002) proposes the theory of "trickle-up influence" to explain how adolescents, when exposed to civic curricula or political mobilization efforts, can increase political engagement among their parents through youth-initiated political discussions. This work shows that these youth-led discussions can prompt parents to pay greater attention to news media, increase their political knowledge, and form political and issue opinions. The mechanism underlying these spillover effects is straightforward: when young people become politically activated through campaigns or movements, they initiate conversations with family members and other adults about political issues. The effects can extend beyond immediate family members through broader social networks, including teachers, extended family, and community members, creating community-level increases in political engagement (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002).

Media Exposure as a Secondary Mobilization Mechanism

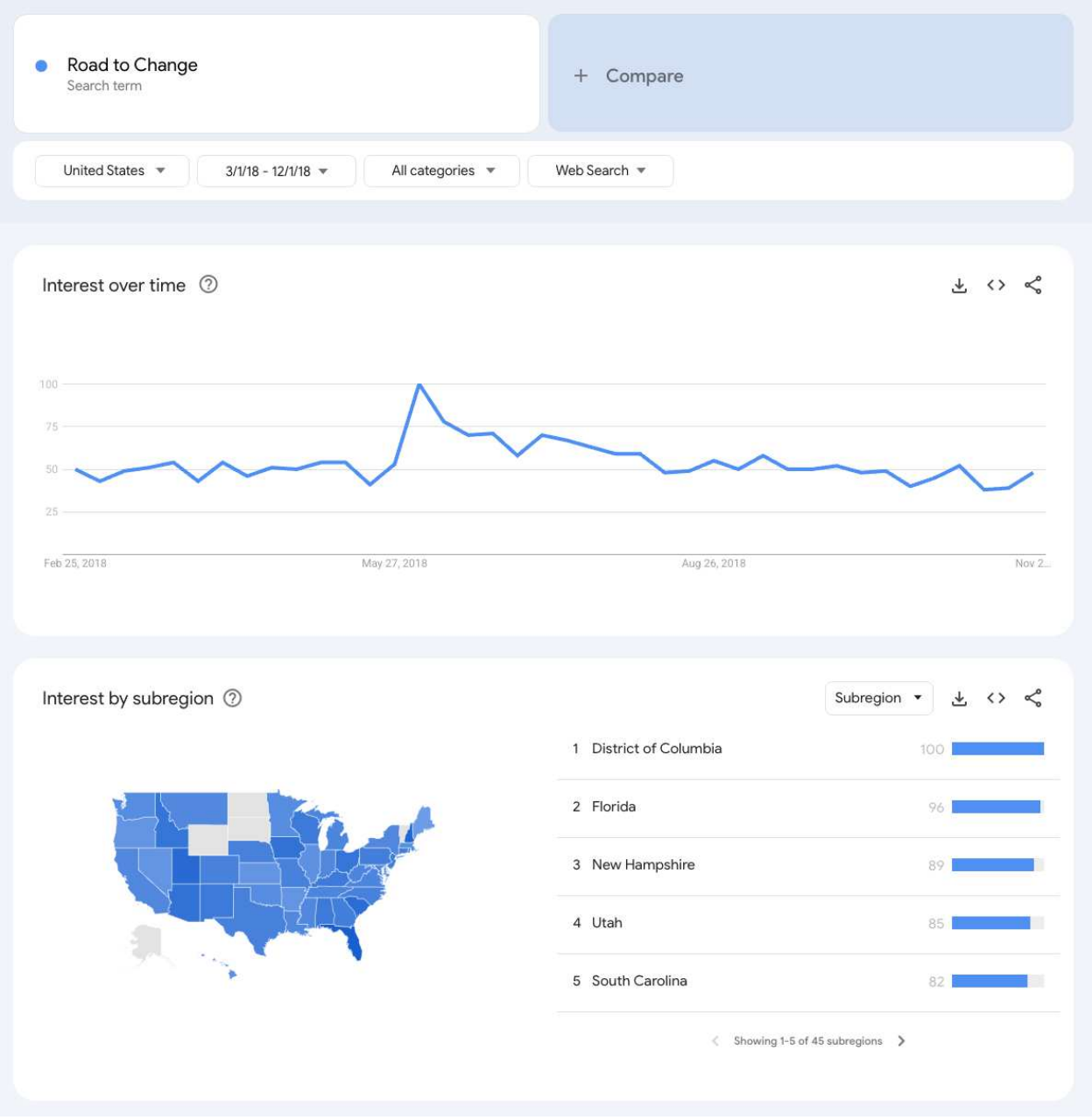
While interpersonal influence through peer, family, and social networks represents one path to political mobilization, exposure to media coverage of campaign activities and policy issues provides a complementary, secondary mobilization mechanism. Work in this area shows that exposure to political information, whether through traditional news media or social media

platforms, can significantly influence political participation and voting behavior (Barberá et al. 2019; Bond et al. 2012; Broockman and Kalla 2023; Johann 2022). People most likely to see MFOL posts on a connection's social media account are also likely to have seen them elsewhere in the news or through other algorithmic content platforms (e.g., YouTube, Snapchat) (Abrajano, Hajnal, and Hassell 2017; Cowart, Blackstone, and Riley 2022; Johann 2022).

Consequently, we argue that exposure to the MFOL movement is generally comparable across social and news media platforms and modes of activation. These exposure effects hold especially true among youth; as 'digital natives', young people under 30 consistently report higher levels of Internet usage and online presence compared to adults (Andolina 2024; Atske 2023). Social media is an important dimension of political mobilization. Bond et al. (2012) find that political mobilization messages on social media directly influence political self-expression, information seeking, and real-world voting behavior. Importantly, these effects extend beyond direct message recipients to their friends and friends of friends through social transmission, with these indirect effects actually exceeding the direct effects of the messages themselves (Barberá et al. 2015; Bond et al. 2012; Wasike 2017). This suggests that media exposure to campaign activities can mobilize voters both directly, through information provision, and indirectly, through social network effects. Adults who may not have direct contact with youth activists can still be exposed to campaign messaging, youth testimonials, and policy debates through media channels (Boydstun et al. 2026; McDevitt and Chaffee 2002).

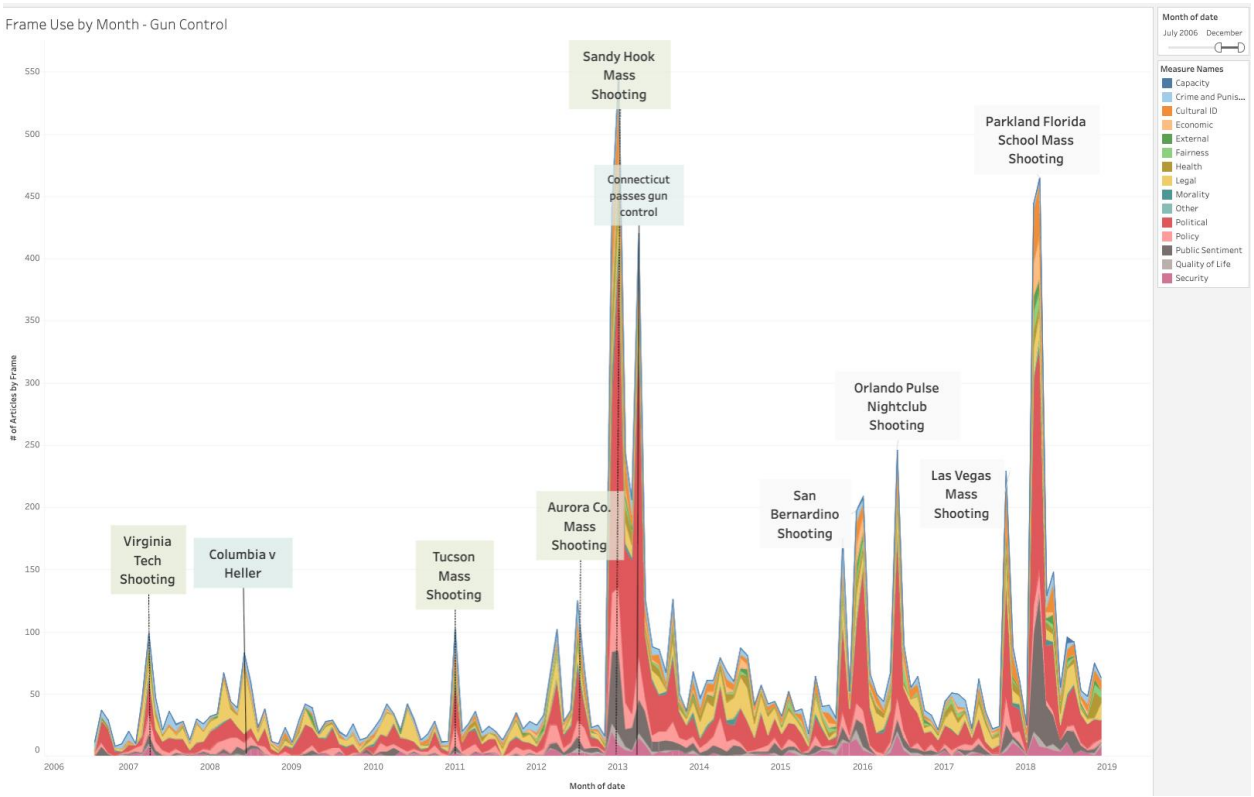
Thus, the March for Our Lives movement's initial emergence and subsequent campaigns garnered intense national interest that sustained through 2018 (see Figure 1), media coverage (see Figure 2), and a social media presence with high engagement metrics (see Figure 3).

Figure 1. Overview of the Google Trends for "Road to Change": March 1, 2018, through December 1, 2018.



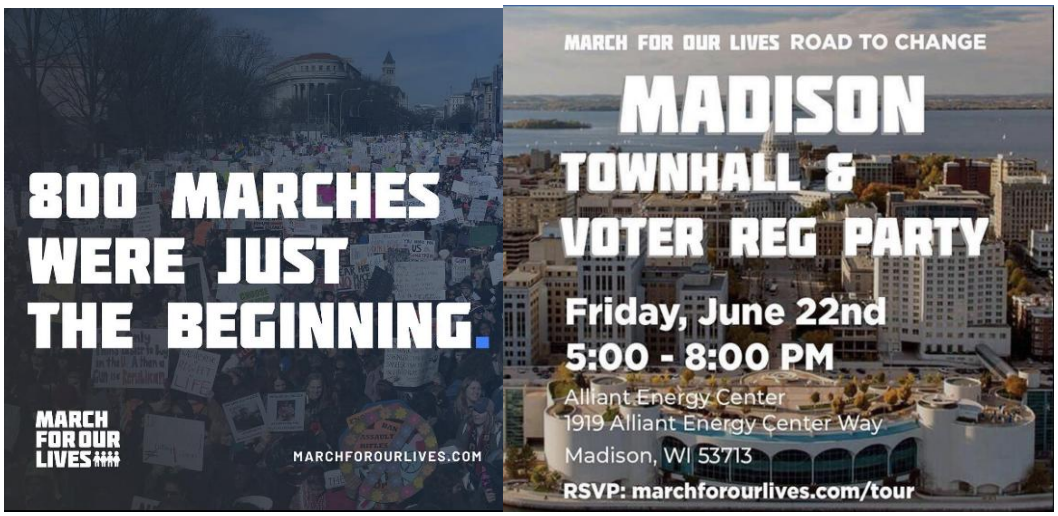
Google searches for the "Road to Change" March 1, 2018 – December 1, 2018. Their Washington D.C inaugural rally event took place on March 24, 2018. Road To Change GOTV tour launched in Chicago, Ill. on June 16, 2018, corresponding to spike in searches (See Appendix A for full list of dates and locations visited).

Figure 2. Media Coverage and Article Topical Frames for Gun Control Policy Area 2006–2019. Media Storms are Annotated, including Key Mass Shootings and Policy Updates.



Media coverage of the policy issue of gun control from 2006-2019, including mass shooting media storms with media framing information. The Parkland shooting is the final media storm displayed with colored areas showing new framing dynamics in media coverage including Fairness (green), Cultural Identity (dark orange) and Public Sentiment (charcoal). These introduced a shift in the how the issue of gun control was discussed in the cultural zeitgeist (Boydstun Laufer, Card and Smith 2026).

Figure 3. Instagram posts from MFOL about the Road to Change during 2018.





Social media posts (Instagram) of Road to Change events in 2018.

Face-to-Face Mobilization and GOTV

The broader literature on voter mobilization emphasizes that in-person, face-to-face contact remains the most effective method of increasing turnout. Field experiments consistently find that live conversations, particularly those involving social norms and personalized appeals, significantly outperform mailers, texts, or social media nudges in terms of voter activation (Gerber and Green 2000; Green and Gerber 2019; Kalla and Broockman 2018).

MFOL's 2018 "Road to Change" tour visited over 60 cities across the U.S., combining traditional organizing strategies (rallies, canvassing, voter registration drives) with online amplification and emotionally resonant storytelling (Edwards 2018; Lithwick 2018). The campaign blended visibility and proximity: youth activists went directly to schools, community centers, and neighborhoods to speak with peers face-to-face (Jensen 2023; Stevens 2018). This model was different from conventional top-down mobilization strategies from traditional Get-Out-the-Vote campaigns and leveraged a policy-specific means of reaching potential voters (Gerber and Green 2000; Rice and Moffett 2021; Soler-i-Martí 2015). By combining the proven effectiveness of face-to-face contact with peer-to-peer messaging on an emotionally salient issue, MFOL created conditions particularly favorable for mobilizing both youth and the adults in their social networks.

4. Theory and Hypotheses

Although prior work has documented the power of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts and the role of issue salience in youth political behavior, few studies have empirically tested the electoral effects of youth-led, in-person mobilization. Gerber and Green's (2000) foundational work demonstrated the efficacy of canvassing in various ways, finding that in-person appeals were the most effective, but it did not account for peer-based or issue-driven variation in effectiveness. Nor do most voter mobilization studies evaluate the distinctiveness of youth constituencies as both messengers and targets. This project draws on Gerber and Green's insights, as well as theories of political socialization (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Della Volpe 2022; Highton and Kam 2011; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Sears and Valentino 1997) by examining whether MFOLs*'* youth-led, issue-salient, and digital and physical hybrid model

led to measurable gains in participation among residents of counties that the campaign visited in the lead-up to the 2018 general election.

Youth voters differ from older cohorts in ways that make them both harder to reach and potentially more responsive to peer-driven mobilization. As a group, youth tend to have weaker partisan attachments and lower institutional trust than older voters (A. Campbell et al. 1960; Highton and Kam 2011; Highton and Wolfinger 2001), meaning that they may be particularly responsive to personal outreach—especially when the messenger is another young person. While traditional GOTV campaigns tend to generalize their outreach, the MFOL movement combined peer-driven messaging with emotionally salient content and direct community engagement—conditions especially conducive to activation among youth populations (Della Volpe 2022; Kiousis and McDevitt 2008). This approach, based on political socialization theories (A. Campbell et al. 1960; Gordon and Taft 2011; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Sears and Valentino 1997), recognizes early adulthood as a critical period for shaping long-term civic identity. For today's young people, gun violence is a generationally defining issue, experienced not abstractly but through lockdown drills, media coverage, and lived trauma. A catalytic moment like the Parkland shooting can thus become a "crystallization moment," transforming concern into action.

MFOL's approach also leveraged peer signaling and issue framing. Studies have shown that people are more likely to engage with politics when the stakes feel personally urgent and when the status quo threatens their values (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008; Schattschneider 1960). For youth who feel directly affected by gun violence, and disillusioned by government inaction, political engagement becomes both emotionally and morally compelling. By positioning youth as both the audience and the advocates, MFOL activists

became “trusted intermediaries,” engaging their peers in spaces where traditional political actors might lack credibility (Earl, Maher, and Elliott 2017; Soler-i-Martí 2015; Zoller and Casteel 2022). This strategy is especially powerful among first-time voters, whose partisan cues are often underdeveloped and for whom the act of voting itself can be a hurdle (Holbein and Hillygus 2020). Framing participation as a meaningful act of personal and moral responsibility, as the MFOL Road to Change campaign did, rather than institutional obligation, helped translate emotional urgency into measurable action.

Youth who attended gun-control campaign events, such as the Road to Change tour, brought their activism, information, and heightened political interest into their households and communities (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002). Thus, this “trickle-up influence” manifested as increased political discussion, information sharing about gun policy, and the transmission of campaign messaging from youth to adults, thereby leading to the mobilization of parents and other adults at campaign locations, even if they did not directly participate in youth activities.

Moreover, secondary exposure among adults and youth alike, driven by extensive media coverage and online and social network interactions of the Road to Change events, reinforced these discussions. They could also have provided nudges and reminders for voting and registration deadlines, with the issue of gun policy debates staying top of mind (Zaller 1992). In short, MFOL's Road to Change campaign created multiple avenues for increasing turnout through direct contact, peer influence, and sustained media attention that extend well beyond the youth activists themselves.

Hypotheses

From this theoretical foundation, we derive three testable hypotheses:

- **H1a**: Individuals residing in counties visited by the MFOL "Road to Change" campaign will exhibit **greater increases in voter registration** than individuals in unvisited counties.
- **H1b**: Individuals in MFOL-visited counties will exhibit **greater increases in voter turnout** than individuals in unvisited counties.
- **H2**: For respondents under the age of 30, those in MFOL-visited counties will show **larger increases in voter turnout** than in control counties.

These hypotheses enable the evaluation of both overall treatment effects (H1a, H1b) and youth-specific effects (H2). This analysis is operationalized through a quasi-experimental design using the CES-validated voting dataset paired with difference-in-difference and synthetic control models. The specifics of these two empirical strategies are discussed in detail in the following section.

5. Research Design and Methods

Overview of Research Design

How did exposure to the MFOL Road to Change GOTV tour affect election voter registration and turnout rates during the 2018 midterm election? This study employs a quasi-experimental design, using validated, unweighted general-election voter registration and turnout data from the Congressional Elections Survey (CES) Cumulative Content module for the 2010, 2014, and 2018 midterm elections to estimate these effects.

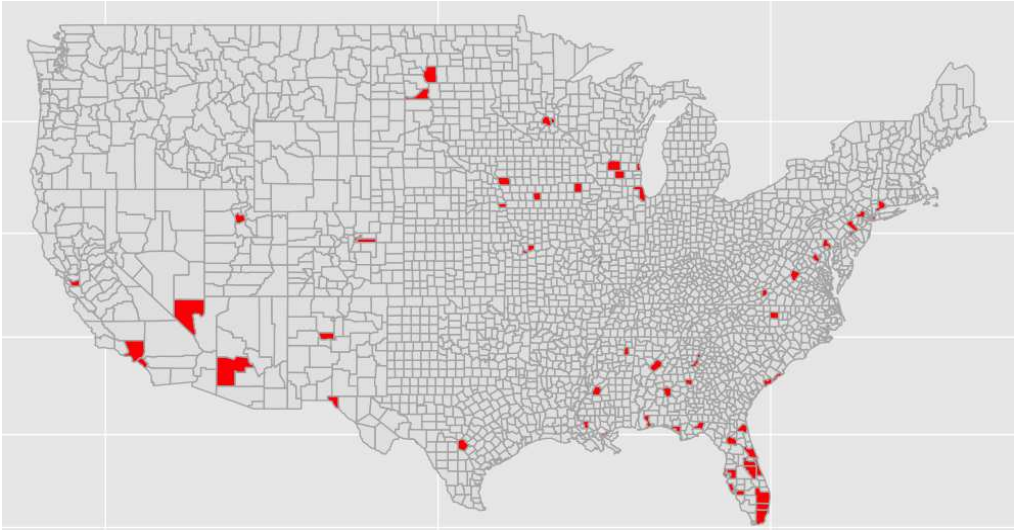
The analysis is conducted in two ways. First, we use a standard difference-in-difference model with two-way fixed effects (TWFEs) to evaluate changes in county-level registration and turnout among all general election voters attributable directly to the 2018 mobilization campaign.

Second, because the main goal of the MFOL Road to Change campaign was to mobilize youth, we also evaluate changes in midterm turnout among young voters aged 18-29 using a synthetic control model (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010, 2015). This supplementary analysis allows us to determine whether the Road to Change tour achieved its intended purpose of mobilizing youth voter turnout in the 2018 general election.

For both models, the binary treatment variable is defined as residency in a county visited by the MFOL campaign tour in 2018, identified using the published tour schedule of verified campaign stops and corresponding FIPS codes.[7] Visited counties are highlighted on the map in Figure 4**.**

[7] The full list of "Road to Change" tour stops is available in Appendix A.

Figure 4. Map of MFOL County Visits in 2018.



Visited counties for Road to Change highlighted in red.

6. Overall Participation Outcomes

Difference-in-Difference Model Specifications

To assess how exposure to the mobilization campaign affected general election registration and turnout, we specify a standard difference-in-differences model that includes two-way fixed effects at the county and election-year levels.[8]

Although parallel trends hold for registration and turnout outcomes in the main model, the substantive premise of this analysis does not provide strong support for the stable unit treatment values assumption (SUTVA), which threatens the validity of the design. There are several reasons why SUTVA is unsupported. First, there is no guarantee that MFOL rally attendees are residents of the same county where the tour stopped. Additionally, political mobilization is often conducted through one's social network (Campbell 2013; Rosenstone and

[8] As a robustness check, we also estimate a difference-in-difference model that includes state*year fixed effects. The specifications and the results of this supplementary analysis are available in Appendix F.

Hansen 1993), and such rallies frequently urge attendees to mobilize others in their networks. This implies that attending the rally likely resulted in treatment spillover effects that impede our ability to obtain a reliable causal estimate.

To mitigate SUTVA violations, we use geospatial mapping tools to restrict our analysis to control-group outcomes in counties more than 100 miles from any county with MFOL campaign stops.[9] While this restriction does not completely eliminate the risk of spillovers, it substantially reduces their frequency. This is because it is much less likely that an individual would drive more than 200 miles round-trip to attend an MFOL event than for someone residing in a county adjacent to a rally. By the same logic, rally attendees likely have more close connections who live locally than those residing more than 100 miles away. This further reduces the risk of spillovers that would otherwise confound treatment effects.

5.2 Difference-in-Difference Results

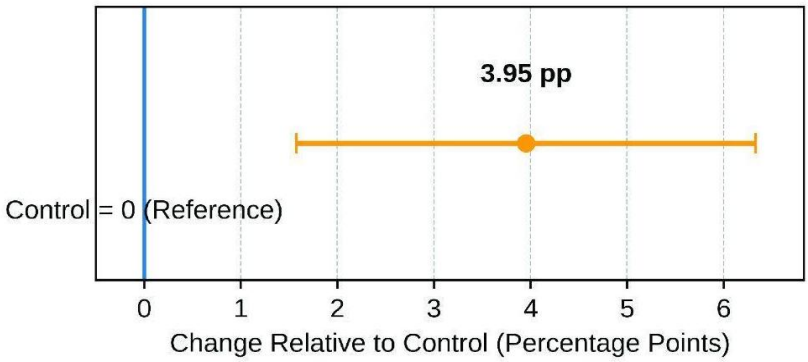
Table 1 and Figure 5 present the results of the two difference-in-difference models, both analyzing how residency in a county visited by the Road to Change tour impacted election results among all adults aged 18 and over. Model 1 considers how residency in a tour-stop county affects one's likelihood of registering to vote in the 2018 general election, while Model 2 considers voter turnout.

The treatment effect coefficients in both registration and turnout models are positive and significant. This implies that residency in an MFOL Road to Change tour-stop county increased both voter registration and turnout. Specifically, individuals residing in counties where the Road to Change tour held a rally increased their likelihood of registering to vote by 3.2 points.

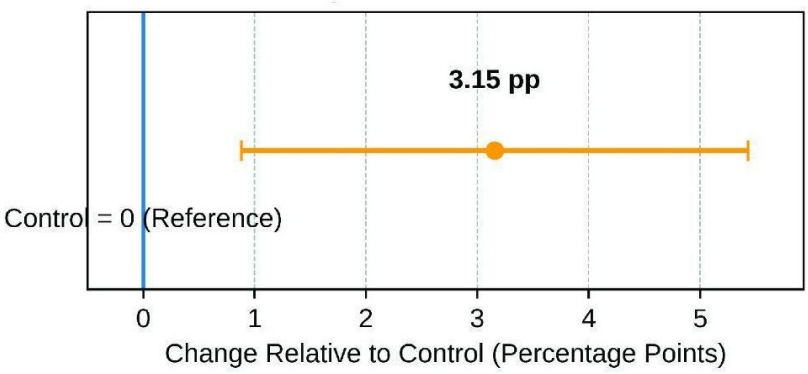
[9] Specifics of our geospatial mapping methodology are available in Appendix E.

Similarly, residence in a tour stop county increases the likelihood of turnout to vote in the 2018 general election by nearly 4 points (both coefficients $p < 0.001$). The strength of both treatment effect coefficients suggests that the March for Our Lives movement had substantial mobilization effects on general election participation among adults residing in a county visited by the Road to Change tour in the lead-up to the 2018 general election.

Figure 5. Results of Difference-in-Difference Models



Treatment Effect for Voter Turnout - Full Sample



Treatment Effect for Registration Rates - Full Sample

Table 1: Effects of Road to Change Campaign Visits on County-Level General Election Outcomes (All Voters).

Standard Errors Clustered at County Level

Table 1: Effects of Road to Change Campaign Visits on County-Level General Election Outcomes (All Voters)

Dependent Variables:	Registration	Turnout
Model:	(1)	(2)
Republican	0.0020	0.0207***
	(0.0057)	(0.0062)
Independent	-0.1366***	-0.1454***
	(0.0078)	(0.0082)
Black	-0.1195***	-0.1449***
	(0.0099)	(0.0107)
Hispanic	-0.1549***	-0.1745***
	(0.0112)	(0.0129)
Asian	-0.2295***	-0.2445***
	(0.0196)	(0.0180)
Low Income	-0.0076	-0.0533***
	(0.0060)	(0.0063)
High Income	0.0288***	0.0129
	(0.0097)	(0.0105)
Married	-0.0012	0.0167***
	(0.0056)	(0.0060)
College Degree	-0.2238	-0.1529
	(0.9836)	(1.142)
High School Graduate	0.0635***	0.0389**
	(0.0174)	(0.0161)
Some College	0.1544***	0.1497***
	(0.0170)	(0.0162)
2 Year Degree	0.3735	0.2965
	(0.9870)	(1.141)
4 Year Degree	0.3783	0.3260
	(0.9848)	(1.142)
Post-Grad	0.3891	0.3568
	(0.9862)	(1.141)
Youth (18-29)	-0.2116***	-0.2637***
	(0.0076)	(0.0083)
ATE	0.0316***	0.0396***
	(0.0116)	(0.0121)
County Fixed-effects	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed-effects	Yes	Yes
Observations	34,868	34,868
R^2	0.16047	0.20633
Within R^2	0.08948	0.12931

Standard errors (clustered at the county-level) in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

It is also important to note that none of the covariates considered in either model interact with the treatment coefficient, meaning that the direction and magnitude of these estimates apply to registration and turnout outcomes across all three election years. This explains why the

estimate for youth respondents appears to contradict our theoretical expectations: this coefficient captures effects from the 2010 and 2014 elections, in addition to the 2018 midterms. Furthermore, both the 2010 and 2014 elections were high-turnout years for Republicans due to backlash against the Democratic presidential administration in each midterm election year. This trend explains why the coefficients for Republican respondents are positive across both models. It also offers a plausible explanation for the coefficients of the educational attainment covariates; although we might expect that college degree holders are more likely voters than high school graduates, the 'diploma divide' in American politics suggests that Democrats are much more likely to hold college degrees than Republicans (Goidel, Moreira, and Armstrong 2024; Grossmann and Hopkins 2024). See **Appendix A** for visualizations of these covariate-level effects.

6. Case Study: Youth Turnout Outcomes

Youth Turnout Identification Strategy: Synthetic Controls

The difference-in-difference results presented in Table 1 provide strong evidence that the Road to Change tour had substantial mobilization effects on registration and turnout in the 2018 midterm election. But, to what extent did this campaign achieve its intended goal of mobilizing young voters in this election? To explore this question, we specify a synthetic control model

(Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010) that estimates how the "Road to Change" campaign impacted youth voter turnout at the county level[10] during the 2018 general election.[11]

Intuitively, the synthetic control method reweights control group observations to emphasize control units with similar characteristics to those of treated observations. To do so, this method employs a flexible weighting approach that allows differential weighting of control units to emphasize those similar to those in the treatment group (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010). This creates a "synthetic control" unit with simulated counterfactual outcomes in the post-treatment period, which allows us to gain causal estimates. Put another way; by minimizing the size of confounding differences between treated and control units, this method reweights control units to create a synthetic control unit with the characteristics of treated units. Per Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller (2010, 2015), we define the synthetic control unit weights, W^*, as values of individual control unit weights, W, that minimize:

$$\sum_{m=1}^{k} v_m (X_{1m} - X_{0m}W)^2 \tag{1}$$

Where v_m is a weight reflecting the relative importance assigned to the m-th variable when measuring the differences between a set of characteristics for counties in the treatment (X_1) and control (X_0) groups that might affect post-intervention outcomes (Abadie, Hainmueller, and

[10] We examine youth turnout at the county level, rather than the individual level, because the CES Cumulative Content Module does not have a sufficient time-series sample of young respondents (ages 18-29) over this period. This is due to the age of youth respondents: the CES only samples adults over the age of 18, which severely limits the number of respondents ages 18-29 who were both sampled across all three time periods, 2010-2018, and remained under 30 years of age in 2018.

[11] Due to subgroup-level parallel trends assumption violations among youth respondents, we are unable to simply specify an additional difference-in-difference model to evaluate these effects among young voters. This motivates our use of synthetic controls as an alternative identification strategy.

Diamond 2014). Because our outcome of interest is county-level general election turnout rates among young voters ages 18-29, our covariates include education, income, partisanship, and race, all factors that have been extensively linked to political participation (Campbell et al. 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

After identifying the set of unit weights, W^*, best suited to create a synthetic control unit for control group counties, we can use these weights to estimate the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT). To do so, we compare the observed post-intervention turnout outcomes for the treated counties, Y_{1t} , to the post-intervention outcomes for the synthetic control group that is not exposed to the intervention, incorporating the set of synthetic control unit weights, W^*, into the following equation (Abadie, Hainmueller, and Diamond 2014):

$$Y_{1t} - \sum_{j=2}^{J+1} W_j^* Y_{jt} \tag{2}$$

Where Y_{jt} are the outcomes for county j at time t in the post-intervention period (the 2018 election), W_j^* are the sum of the synthetic control weights and post-intervention outcomes for each control group county, j, in the set of all control group counties J (Abadie, Hainmueller, and Diamond 2014). Intuitively, this process is similar to taking a simple difference of means, Y_{1t} - Y_{0t} , using outcomes in the post-intervention period t to estimate the ATT, but with the addition of the unit weights W* for control group counties.

Synthetic Control Results: Mobilizing Youth Turnout

Results of the synthetic control analysis are presented in Table 2. Furthermore, Figure 6 visualizes the over-time trajectories of average youth turnout rates for treated counties compared

to untreated counties in the synthetic observations used to compute the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), our causal estimate of interest. The ATT coefficient provides an estimate of the mobilizing effects of the Road to Change campaign on youth turnout in visited counties during the 2018 election. The direction and magnitude of this coefficient (0.028) are comparable to the estimated effect given by the difference-in-difference model in Table 1 of the campaign among all voters (0.0396). Unlike the difference-in-difference results, however, this estimate is not statistically significant and therefore cannot be confidently distinguished from zero. This result indicates that we cannot conclude that the Road to Change campaign increased county-level turnout among young voters aged 18-29 in the counties visited.

However, these inconclusive results are potentially due to an underpowered sample size among youth respondents. Furthermore, the synthetic control analysis was conducted on the county level, rather than the individual level, which meant that the total number of observations dropped from over 34,000 CES respondents in the difference-in-difference model to just 603 counties in the synthetic control analysis. As noted in Footnote 10, this shift in units of analysis was an unavoidable consequence of the lack of a sufficient time-series sample among youth in the CES data. However, it is possible that doing so has introduced Type II error into the synthetic control model, meaning that the lack of significance of the youth result is simply a byproduct of the power losses associated with the synthetic control model. The fact that the ATT coefficient is positive and comparable in magnitude with the treatment effect estimate among all respondents lends additional credence to this possibility.

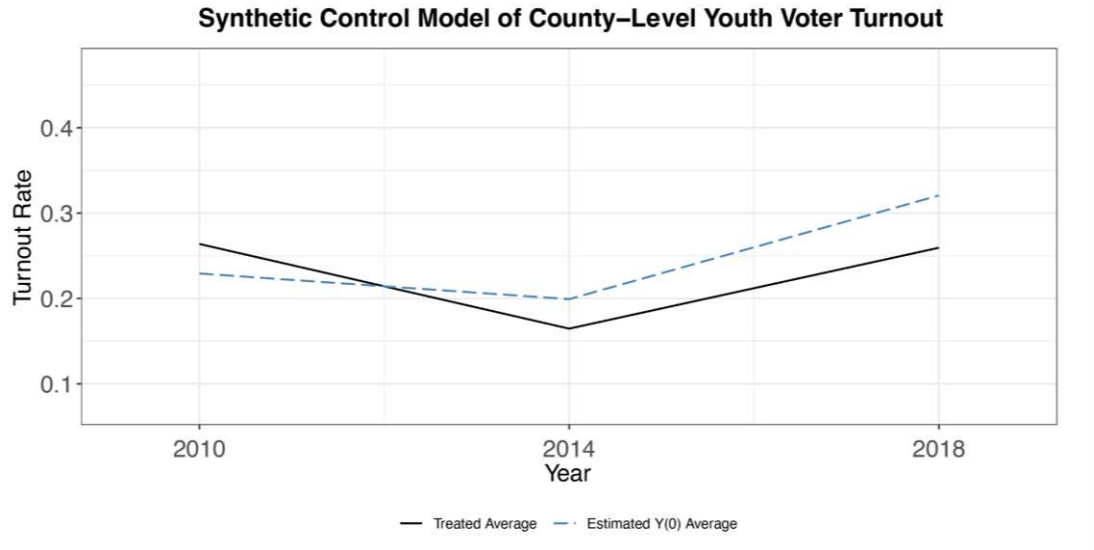
Table 2: Synthetic Control Model of Effects of MFOL Mobilization Campaign Visits on County-Level General Election Turnout Outcomes (Youth Voters Ages 18-29).

Table 2: Synthetic Control Model of Effects of MFOL Mobilization Campaign Visits on County-Level General Election Turnout Outcomes (Youth Voters, Ages 18-29)

Dependent Variable:	Youth Turnout
ATT	0.028
	(0.078)
College Degree	-0.17***
	(0.05)
Low Income	-0.09**
	(0.04)
Non-White	-0.13**
	(0.06)
Democrat	0.16***
	(0.05)

Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Figure 6. Synthetic Control Plot of County-Level Youth Voter Turnout.



Notes: The solid black line shows the over-time trends in average youth voter turnout rates across treated counties, whereas the dotted blue line shows these trends for untreated counties used to create the synthetic control unit.

The directionality and significance of the estimate for college-educated youth in Table 2 is also noteworthy. Unlike the other covariates in the synthetic control model, this coefficient's negative sign contradicts conventional expectations that better-educated individuals are more likely to vote (Campbell et al., 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). However, there is a plausible explanation for the unexpected direction of this coefficient. The synthetic control model considers only youth under 30; consequently, members of this group are less likely to report having college degrees because this age cohort includes the primary demographic of current college students who have not yet earned their degrees. Thus, limiting the sample to individuals under 30 provides a plausible explanation for the negative sign of this coefficient. Furthermore, the fact that all other covariates in this model align with conventional demographic expectations regarding which types of individuals are more likely to be mobilized and to vote (Campbell et al. 1960, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). This lends additional credence to the validity of the synthetic control results.

In a similar vein, among respondents under 30, the positive coefficient on Democratic identification is consistent with expectations, reflecting the broader tendency among young Democratic voters to prioritize gun control as a salient policy issue (Wasike 2017; Wu 2018).

7. Discussion

The face-to-face, youth-driven, and peer-to-peer structure of the MFOL movement's Road to Change campaign, as well as its strong focus on the salient policy issue of gun violence prevention and gun control, had a significant impact on political mobilization among residents in

the counties the tour visited. Our findings demonstrate that the Road to Change campaign increased voter registration and turnout in counties visited by the tour and where it held events. Specifically, counties visited saw an estimated 3.2-point increase in voter registration and a nearly 4-point increase in voter turnout among all respondents; these effects are both statistically significant and substantively meaningful, demonstrating that youth-driven mobilization campaigns positively impact electoral participation. Furthermore, the synthetic control analysis indicates a positive directional effect of 2.8 points on turnout among youth voters under 30, although this estimate is not statistically significant. However, the direction and magnitude of these effects indicate that this is likely due to the relative scarcity of youth respondents at the county level. While we are unable to fully rule out the possibility of a false negative result given these limitations on statistical power, the direction and magnitude of these coefficients are worth noting, as they suggest the possibility that these results understate the mobilizing effects of the MFOL tour among young voters in counties visited in the lead-up to the 2018 general election. Fully exploring this possibility is a valuable endeavor for future research on youth-targeted mobilization movements.

Together, these results support Hypotheses H1a and H1b (increases in overall voter registration and turnout). They also offer directional support for H2 (increases youth-specific voter turnout). All of these findings are particularly notable given the historically low youth turnout prior to 2018, especially in midterm elections (Andolina 2024; U.S. Census 2018).

The strength of the difference-in-difference results among all voters presented in Table 1 also reflect the intergenerational spillover mechanisms outlined in the theory section, as the Road to Change tour's mobilization effects likely spread beyond event attendees through peer networks, family influence, and sustained media coverage. The substantively large and

statistically significant treatment effects observed among all adults are consistent with the trickle-up influence framework (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002) and also suggest that youth activists served as conduits for broader civic activation in the communities they visited. This evidence also supports arguments from the persuasion and mobilization literatures. Moreover, consistent with Lupia and McCubbins (1998) and Gerber and Green (2000), the campaign's in-person outreach made its messages more salient and persuasive; thus making it more likely that adults and youth alike would be mobilized by and act upon this messaging.

The patterns in the covariate estimates further support this interpretation. The negative coefficient on college degree among youth respondents is not unexpected, as many respondents in the 18-29 cohort have not yet completed college, meaning the youngest and least politically experienced members of this group are likely driving the positive directional effects observed in the synthetic control. Similarly, the positive coefficient on Democratic identification is consistent with the ideological alignment between the campaign's framing of gun control as a major issue impacting youth and the majority policy preferences of young people under 30 (Stevens 2018; Wu 2018).

Consequently, the salience of gun violence as an activating issue, coupled with the Parkland survivors' and the credibility of the movement's peer-to-peer mobilization and engagement strategies, created a moment of political resonance that the Road to Change campaign and broader MFOL movement successfully amplified to mobilize voters in the 2018 election. While this movement was difficult to ignore among youth and adults alike, it was particularly salient among young people under 30, virtually all of whom have grown up with lockdown drills and recurring mass shootings as background features of their lives. MFOL

succeeded in converting this resonance into action; in doing so, this movement modeled civic engagement in highly visible and compelling ways.

Conclusion

This study isolates the impact of the MFOL movement and, specifically, the Road to Change campaign against the backdrop of broader national trends, leveraging registration and validated voting outcome data from the Congressional Election Study (CES) Cumulative Content Module with difference-in-difference and synthetic control designs. These results affirm that the campaign's peer-to-peer, youth-driven structure contributed to civic engagement that extended beyond its primary youth audience. Ultimately, this movement and campaign did not rely on institutional authority or elite credibility; instead, it mobilized through shared experience, grassroots organizing, and collective voice in terms of generational identity. In doing so, this movement not only increased voter registration and turnout in the 2018 election but also demonstrated a method of democratic engagement that spread throughout households and communities in ways conventional campaigns have a hard time achieving. As political scientists, organizers, and educators seek strategies to address political and civic disengagement, particularly among youth, the lessons of the Road to Change campaign are both relevant and instructive: young people are not apathetic and can be responsive when the issue is personal, the messenger is trusted, and the entry point is accessible. This, in turn, can motivate adults in their lives to engage with issues that matter to them and to mobilize them to become politically active.

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Declarations

1. Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

2. Data Availability

The base dataset is the Congressional Election Survey (CES) Cumulative Common Content 2006-2024 module available on Dataverse.

Replication files have been uploaded with submission:

• Cleaning code for variable transformations: > **Nature cleaning code.R**
• Analysis code for DiD and synthetic controls: Replication code: > **FINAL MFOL.R**
• Final dataset that was used in DiD analysis: > **finaldata.zip**
• GIS file with 100 mile radius and control county mapping: > **Controlcounties100miles.dbf**
• March for Our Lives county list (FIPS): > **MFOL Visit List by County.csv**

3. Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study. The research relies exclusively on secondary analysis of publicly available, de-identified survey data and involves no direct interaction with human participants.

4. Informed Consent

Informed consent is not applicable. This study uses publicly available, de-identified secondary data and does not involve direct contact with or recruitment of human participants.

5. Funding Declaration

No funding was received for this research project.

Appendix A: MFOL Road to Change Campaign Information and Materials

Figure A1. Materials from Road to Change Campaign showing dates and places of campaign stops in 2018.

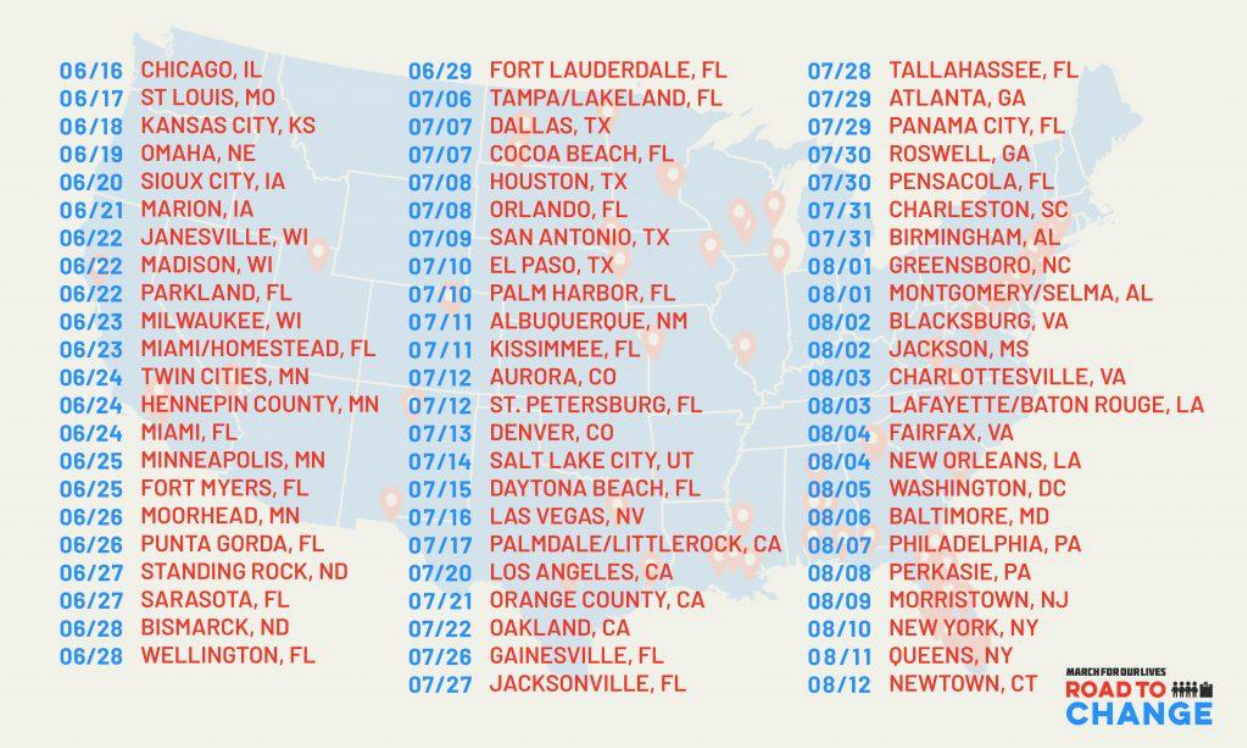


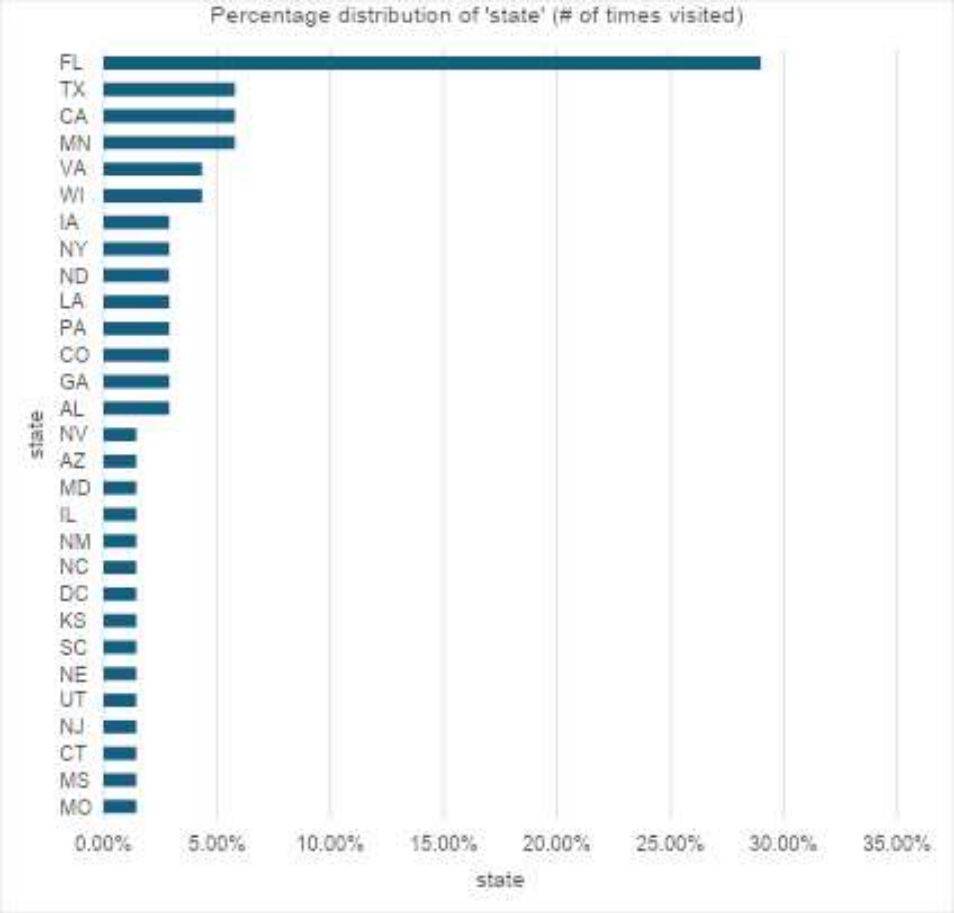


Table A1. Road to Change Tour Dates and Locations with Associated County FIPs Codes

18 Summer Tour Dates	Name of Area Visited	FIPS/CNTY	Visited in the Fall	Fall Dates
16-Jun	CHICAGO, IL	17031		
17-Jun	STLOUIS, MO	29510		
18-Jun	KANSAS CITY, KS	20209		
19-Jun	OMAHA, NE	31055		
20-Jun	SIOUX CITY, IA	19193		
21-Jun	MARION, IA	19113		
22-Jun	JANESVILLE, WI	55105		
22-Jun	MADISON, WI	55025		
22-Jun	PARKLAND, FL	12011	X	6-Nov
23-Jun	MILWAUKEE, WI	55079		
23-Jun	MIAMI/HOMESTEAD, FL	12086		
24-Jun	TWIN CITIES, MN	27123		
24-Jun	HENNEPIN COUNTY, MN	27053		
24-Jun	MIAMI, FL	12086	X	27-Oct
25-Jun	MINNEAPOLIS, MN	27123	X	26-Oct
25-Jun	FORT MEYERS, FL	28081		
26-Jun	MOORHEAD, MN	29047		
26-Jun	PUNTA GORDA, FL	12015		
27-Jun	STANDING ROCK, ND	38085		
27-Jun	SARASOTA, FL	12115	X	30-Oct
28-Jun	BISMARCK, ND	38015		
28-Jun	WELLINGTON, FL	12099		
29-Jun	FORT LAUDERDALE, FL	12011		
6-Jul	TAMPA/LAKELAND, FL	12057		
7-Jul	DALLAS, TX	19049	X	2-Nov
7-Jul	COCOA BEACH, FL	12009		
8-Jul	HOUSTON, TX	13145	X	1-Nov
8-Jul	ORLANDO, FL	12095	X	31-Oct
9-Jul	SAN ANTONIO, TX	48029		
10-Jul	EL PASO, TX	48141		
10-Jul	PALM HARBOR, FL	12103		
11-Jul	ALBUQUERQUE, NM	35001		
11-Jul	KISSIMMEE, FL	12097		
12-Jul	AURORA, CO	8005		
12-Jul	S.T.PETERSBURG, FL	12103		

13-Jul	DENVER, CO	8031		
14-Jul	SALT LAKE CITY, UT	49035		
15-Jul	DAYTONA BEACH, FL	12127		
16-Jul	LAS VEGAS, NV	32003		
17-Jul	PALMDALE/LITTLEROCK, CA	6037		
20-Jul	LOS ANGELES, CA	6037		
21-Jul	ORANGE COUNTY, CA	6059	X	4-Nov
22-Jul	OAKLAND, CA	6001		
26-Jul	GAINESVILLE, FL	12001	X	5-Nov
27-Jul	JACKSONVILLE, FL	12031	X	4-Nov
28-Jul	TALLAHASSEE, FL	12073	X	5-Nov
29-Jul	ATLANTA, GA	13121	X	28-Oct
29-Jul	PANAMA CITY, FL	12005		
30-Jul	ROSWELL, GA	13121	X	28-Oct
30-Jul	PENSACOLA, FL	12033		
31-Jul	CHARLESTON, SC	45019		
31-Jul	BIRMINGHAM, AL	1073		
1-Aug	GREENSBORO, NC	37081	X	29-Oct
1-Aug	MONTGOMERY/SELMA, AL	1101		
2-Aug	BLACKSBURG, VA	51121		
2-Aug	JACKSON, MS	28049		
3-Aug	CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA	51003		
3-Aug	LAFAYETTE/BATON ROUGE, LA	22033		
4-Aug	FAIRFAX, VA	51059		
4-Aug	NEW ORLEANS, LA	22071		
5-Aug	WASHINGTON, DC	11001		
6-Aug	BALTIMORE, MD	24005		
7-Aug	PHILADELPHIA, PA	42101		
8-Aug	PERKASIE, PA	42017		
9-Aug	MORRISTOWN, NJ	34027		
10-Aug	NEW YORK, NY	36047		
11-Aug	QUEENS, NY	36081		
12-Aug	NEWTOWN, CT	9001		
	TEMPE, AZ	4013	X	3-Nov

Figure A2. Road to Change Campaign Visit Frequencies by State



Appendix B: Evaluating the Parallel Trends Assumption

To assess the validity of a standard two-way fixed-effects (TWFEs) difference-in-differences model, we use the following plots to visualize pre-treatment trends. Figures A1 and A2 show support for the parallel-trends assumption among all voters recorded in the CES.

Figure B1: Parallel Trends Plot of Voter Registration Rates in Midterm General Elections. (All Registered Voters)

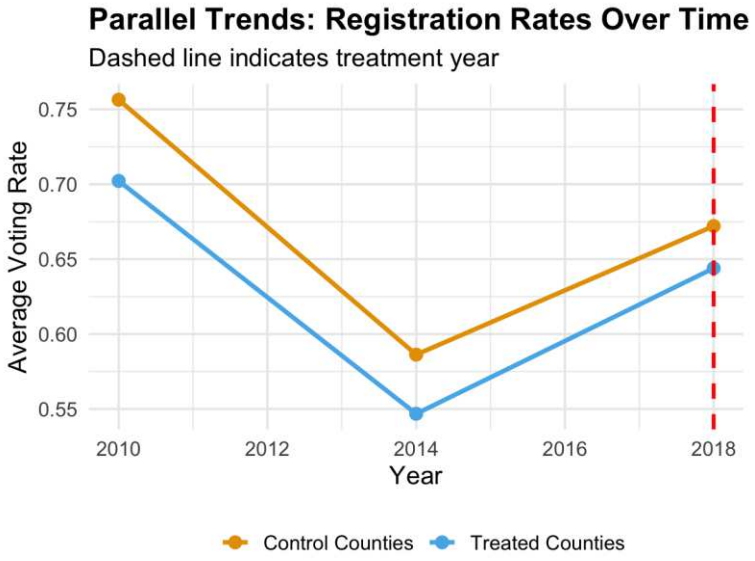
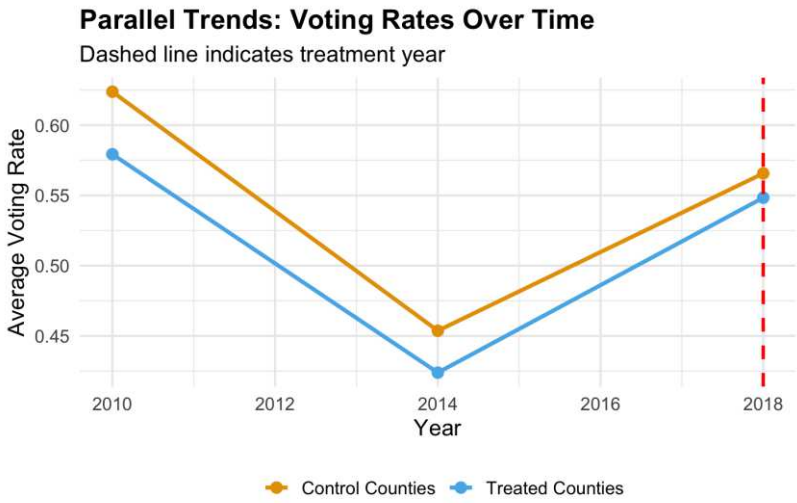
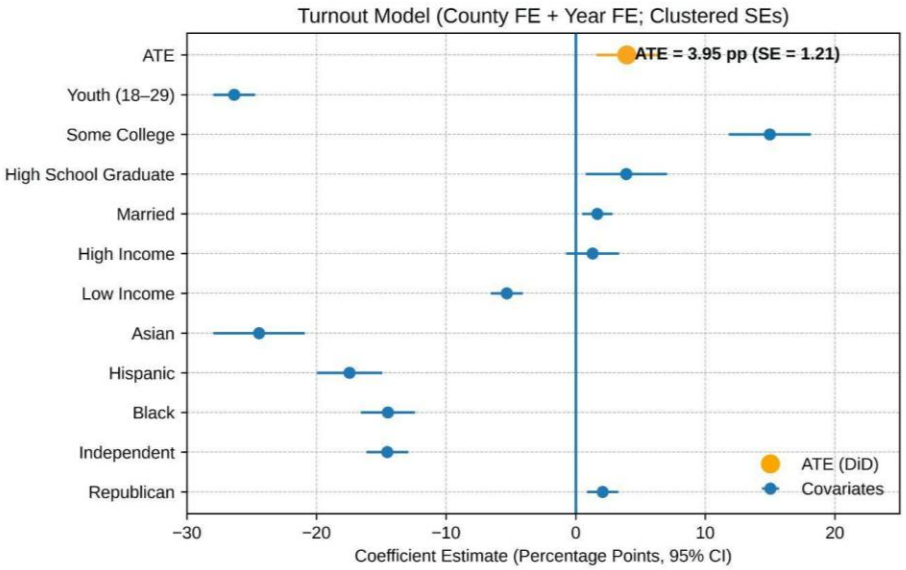


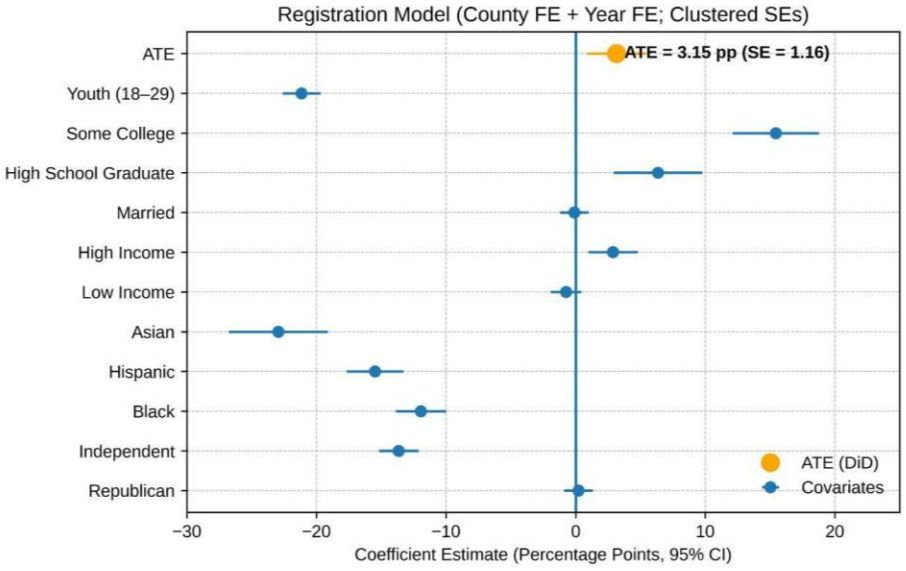
Figure B2: Parallel Trends Plot of Voter Turnout Rates in Midterm General Elections. (All Registered Voters)



Appendix C: Plotted Covariate Estimates from Difference-in-Difference Models

Figure C1: Plots of Covariate Estimates from Difference-in-Difference Analysis: Turnout and Registration Models.





Appendix D: CES Sample Summary Statistics by Age Group

As noted in the main text, we conduct the synthetic control analysis of youth turnout at the county level, rather than the individual level, because the CES Cumulative Content Module does not have a sufficient time-series sample of young respondents (ages 18-29) over this period. This is due to the age of the youth respondents: the CES samples only adults aged 18 and older, which severely limits the number of respondents ages 18-29 who were sampled across all three time periods (2010-2018) and remained under 30 years of age in 2018. Because many respondents under 30 were not surveyed across multiple years, it is not possible to conduct a true time-series analysis at the individual level with the available data, and this informs our decision to conduct the analysis at the county level.

Furthermore, as shown in Table D1, the samples of youth respondents within each election year are much smaller than the full sample, suggesting that even if the time-series data were available to conduct this subgroup analysis on the individual level, this analysis would involve substantial losses in statistical power relative to the full sample of respondents.

Table D1: Summary of CES Sample Size by Age Group, Treatment Status, and Election Year.

CES Sample Size Summary Statistics by Age Group

	2010	**2014**	**2018**
Youth (Full Sample)	1,049	2,117	2,484
Youth (Treated)	476	879	983
All Respondents (Full Sample)	11,406	11,423	12,245
All Respondents (Treated)	4,288	4,296	4,300

Appendix E: Geospatial Mapping Methodology

As noted in the main text, we overcome potential SUTVA violations in the difference-in-difference model by considering only the control group counties that were over 100 miles away from treated counties in our analysis.

To determine these spatial boundaries, we first create a 100-mile outer buffer around the perimeter of each treated county. Then, we erase the buffered area from an ESRI shapefile of all counties in the United States. The result of this process creates two distinct layers: the original layer, which includes all treated counties, and a second control group layer, which only includes non-treated counties with boundaries at least 100 miles from the nearest treated county. These layers inform the counties considered in our final analysis. All geospatial mapping and analysis was conducted in ArcGIS Pro Version 3.4.

Figure E1: ArcGIS Screenshot of Geospatial Mapping Method

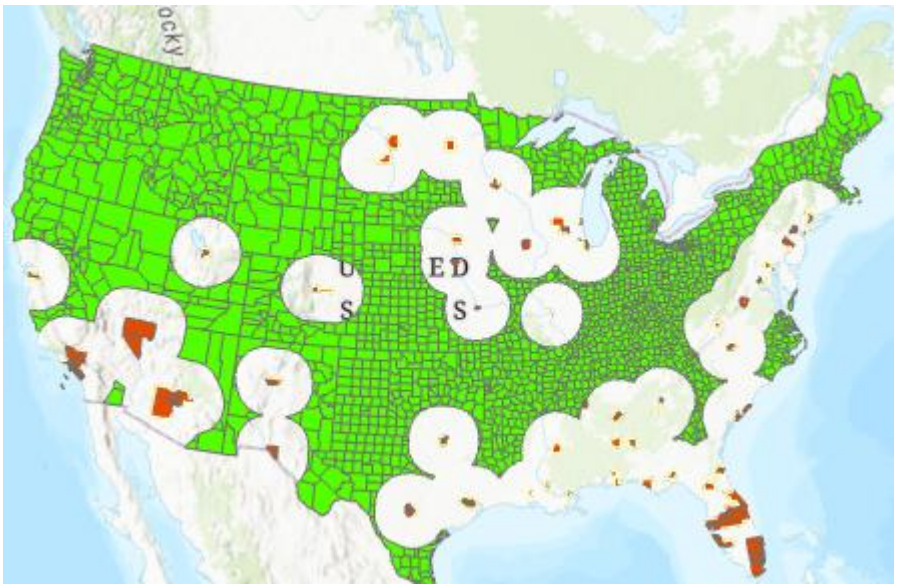


Figure Notes: Visited (treated) counties are in orange. Control group counties included in the analysis (further than 100 miles away from treated counties) are in green. The large circular shapes around the treated counties correspond to areas in the 100-mile buffer zone; counties falling within this zone were excluded from analysis to limit the possibility of SUTVA violations.

Appendix F: Alternate Difference-in–Difference Specifications (State*Year Fixed Effects)

We estimate two additional difference-in-difference models to evaluate the robustness of the main registration and turnout results presented in Table 1. These supplementary models incorporate a state*year fixed effect interaction to account for any statewide shocks – such as particularly high-profile races for Senate or Governor – that could have impacted political participation outcomes.

In both models, the treatment effect coefficients are of similar magnitude and identical directionality and significance to their corresponding estimates in the main paper, indicating that our results are robust to these alternate specifications. Furthermore, the "College Degree" coefficient is now statistically significant and positively signed, which aligns with substantive expectations in the voting behavior literature finding that college-educated individuals are more likely to vote (Campbell et al. 1960; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

Table F1: Robustness Check on Difference-in-Difference Results.
(Model Includes State*Year Fixed Effects)[12]

Table 2: Effects of Road to Change Campaign Visits on
County-Level General Election Outcomes (All Voters)
Model Includes State*Year Fixed Effects for Robustness

Dependent Variables:	Registration	Turnout
Model:	(1)	(2)
Republican	0.0023	0.0218***
	(0.0057)	(0.0061)
Independent	-0.1367***	-0.1445***
	(0.0078)	(0.0082)
Black	-0.1191***	-0.1450***
	(0.0099)	(0.0107)
Hispanic	-0.1548***	-0.1745***
	(0.0112)	(0.0128)
Asian	-0.2308***	-0.2420***
	(0.0196)	(0.0181)
Low Income	-0.0078	-0.0534***
	(0.0060)	(0.0062)
High Income	0.0298**	0.0134
	(0.0097)	(0.0103)
Married	-0.0014	0.0166**
	(0.0057)	(0.0061)
College Degree	0.1652***	0.2035***
	(0.0057)	(0.0164)
High School Graduate	0.0626***	0.0384**
	(0.0174)	(0.0162)
Some College	0.1537***	0.1485***
	(0.0170)	(0.0162)***
2 Year Degree	-0.0154	-0.0614***
	(0.0097)	(0.0105)
4 Year Degree	-0.010	-0.0303***
	(0.008)	(0.0082)
Youth (18-29)	-0.2118***	-0.2629***
	(0.0076)	(0.0083)
ATE	0.0267**	0.0418**
	(0.0134)	(0.0140)
County Fixed-effects	Yes	Yes
State*Year Fixed-effects	Yes	Yes
Observations	34,868	34,868
R^2	0.120	0.173
Within R^2	0.110	0.153

Standard errors (clustered at the county-level) in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

[12] The coefficient for the "post-graduate" covariate is not reported because it was dropped from both models due to collinearity issues with the state*year fixed effects.

Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- replicationcodeFINALMFOL.r
- Naturecleaningcode.r
- MFOLVisitListbyCounty.csv
- Controlcounties100miles.dbf
- finaldata.zip