Does Partisan Politics Affect Crime Incidence?

Evidence from US States

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(Version: September 2019)

Abstract

This paper investigates the causal relationship between partisan allegiance (Republican or Democratic) of an Attorney General and the crime rate of their state. A regression discontinuity design approach is used to describe the relationship by exploiting the quasi-random properties of close elections for this office. Using aggregate state-level data during 1970-2016 and across parametric and non-parametric specifications, the results show that Democrats being in office decrease most types of crime during their tenure as compared to a Republican.

Key Words: US Attorney General Election, Crime Rate, Republican, Democratic, RDD

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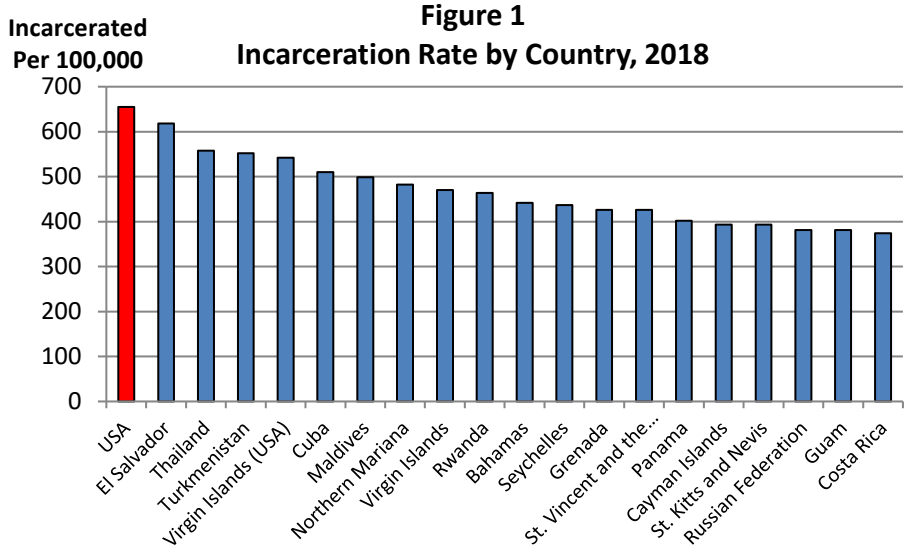
1 Introduction

What effect does electoral politics have on crime? Can ideological partisanship explain differences in crime impact? If there is an impact of politics on crime, is it an immediate effect or a staggered euphoria following an election? With more than 2 million individuals incarcerated and an incarceration rate of 655 per 100,000 individuals, the United States dominates as having the largest prison population and prison rate across the entire world (World Prison Brief, 2016).

Figure 1
Incarceration Rate by Country, 2018

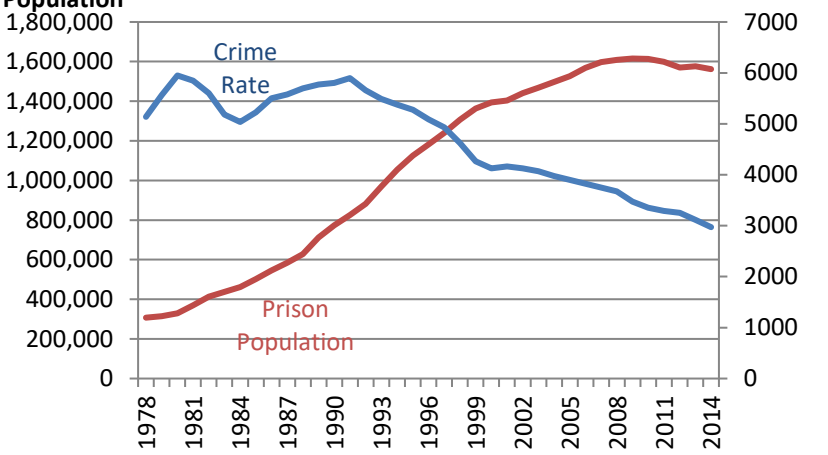


Source: World Prison Brief, top 20 countries

The persistent effect of this on American society has been documented and researched by numerous studies as having an adverse impact on individuals and communities (CEA, 2016)[1]. Since the 1970s, the United States has had an explosive rise in incarceration; however it has also seen gradual decreases in crime rate during that time.

[1] A comprehensive literature review on the impact of crime and incarceration in the United States was published by the Obama Administration under the study of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA).

Figure 2
Incarceration and Crime Trends, 1978-2014



Source: National Prisoner Statistics Program and Uniform Crime Reporting

At a glance, one can hypothesize that a negative correlation exists between the two variables. Indeed, Stuntz (2006) describes the horizontal process of the criminal justice system. He states that there are legislators who write the law, the police who arrest a criminal based on the law, the prosecutor who charges the defendant, and then the judge who exercises sentencing discretion. Therefore one can state that the rise in incarceration (the final stage) is correlated with decreases in crime (the initial stage), however this view lacks a fundamental causal explanation.

In the US, each state has an executive office for a chief prosecutor, called the Attorney General (also known as the State's Attorney). It is an elected position[2] in 42 states and holds varying influences in the criminal justice system of their state. More importantly, this office makes important decisions relating to the judicial system. Criminals under the state's jurisdiction are charged with a crime that is generally decided by the Attorney General's office. The accused enter a court proceeding where they challenge a prosecutor's charges. Since the 1970s, this office is almost always occupied by either a Democrat or a Republican. These parties have ideologically contrasting views on how to manage the criminal justice system. This can relate to attitudes towards certain misdemeanours, gun control and sentencing discretion (Chernoff, Kelly & Kroger, 1996; Simon, 1998, Estrich 1999).

[2] It is an appointed position is the other states, and is generally determined by the state's governor or the legislature.

The underlying purpose of this paper seeks to investigate whether there are differences in crime outcomes when a Democrat or Republican Attorney General is elected in their state and run their term. This paper contributes to the literature of understanding the partisan impact of policy outcomes within the United States (Leigh, 2008; Reed 2006; Lee, Moretti and Butler, 2004; Beland, 2015), but also contributes towards the scarce investigation on the causality of a prosecutor's party alignment on crime.

As it is an elected position, this paper can exploit the quasi-random properties of close elections to extract the fundamental causal impact of these parties on crime (Lee, 2008). Indeed the difference between regressing an outcome variable against a candidate's victory with and without controlling for the margin of victory is what defines an analysis of correlations and causation respectively.

This paper uses the state as the unit of analysis and utilises aggregate state level data on crime, elections and socio-economic controls for the period between 1970 and 2016. Since close elections are measured through votes casted to a candidate, data on the margin of victory was collected from each state's electoral commission by manual online and archival research methods. The lack of this compiled data set across those years can explain why studies of this kind are relatively scarce (Arora, 2018; Miller and Wright, 2002). However a case can be made as to how much influence this office can have on crime outcomes, as compared to the interactions of other institutional apparatuses (the governor, the state legislators, congress, and federal departments).

Using a RD design, this paper finds that a Democratic AG decrease most types of violent crime across their tenure (particularly, burglary and murder) compared to Republican AGs. Moreover, Democratic AGs in office tend to decrease all types of property crime, but that this impact is not statistically significant. Moreover, there is no staggered euphoric effect during each year the AG is in office. These results are consistent across a range of validity checks, particularly on parametric and local linear specifications as well as a control of state-characteristics that influence these outcomes.

The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 discusses the institutional background regarding the political structure of the US as well as the power and duties of the AG. Section 3 provides a

review of the theoretical and empirical literature that relates politics to crime. Section 4 discusses the identification strategy, model specification and data. Section 5 presents the exploratory and confirmatory results alongside a discussion with validity checks. Section 6 discusses the methods used to confirm validity and robustness checks.

2 Institutional Background

2.1 Political Structure of the United States

The United States of America (USA) is a federal republic, which is made up of 50 states and 14 territories. The constitutional framework divides the USA as a power-sharing sovereignty between the (national) federal government and the governments of the 50 states within it. Each state is also further divided into counties which have local governments that serve their communities, but are not sovereign entities. In each state, the government is divided into three independent branches that form the executive, legislative and judicial institutions. Each state is allowed to form a government in any way that does not infringe the U.S constitutional framework. In all states, the head of government is an elected position known as the Governor which is generally *plural executive*, in the sense that their authority is divided with other (typically) elected offices (such as the secretary of state, attorney general and lieutenant governor).

2.2 The Office of the State's Attorney General and the Local Prosecutor

The constitutional provision of many states regards the Attorney General (AG) as the chief law officer of the state (De Long, 1934). The constitutions of 42 states establish that this executive position must be elected[3] for generally a term of four years[4]. In terms of power structures, there can be local prosecutors (county level) and state level prosecutors (state-level) with varying degrees of powers as to how they interact across different states. For example, in terms of

[3] In states where this office is appointed; New Hampshire, Alaska, Hawaii, New Jersey and Wyoming is determined by the Governor. Tennessee is determined by the state Supreme Court, and Maine by the state legislature.
[4] The attorney general of the state of Vermont is tenured for two years

criminal prosecution, some states allow the AG to have full responsibility in criminal proceedings, while others give them powers to only supervise the work of the local prosecutors or work concurrently with them (ibid, p.24). For example, two states (Rhode Island and Delaware) allow full responsibility of criminal prosecution to the Attorney General. There are 11 states[5] where the AG has the power to supervise the work of local prosecutors. There are 8 states[6] where they can supervise but are not granted control alongside local prosecutors[7] (ibid, 28) however De Long (1934) describes how control over criminal prosecution can be centralised by overly aggressive AGs who use their powers to strengthen their authority to supervise local prosecutors. Moreover the statute of 20 states allow AGs to assume control of any criminal case, where 15 others allow them a wide degree of control if directed by the Governor (ibid, p34-5).

Ultimately, the AG of the state is generally defined over varying differences between their powers and their duties in their role over criminal prosecution, but their overbearing influence over the state's criminal justice process should be recognised as the key portion in this paper's hypothesis. Mainly, this paper examines the partisan differences between Democrats and Republicans in criminal justice policy, the economic literature of crime and the different RD election studies conducted in the United States.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Literature: Democrats and Republicans on Crime

In order to understand the partisan differences between Democrats and Republicans on criminal justice policies, it would be important to review its history. The presidential election of 1964 marks an early time when the crime issue was addressed by Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater. In his acceptance speech, he remarked how there is "…*violence in our streets, corruption in our highest offices, aimlessness among our youth, anxiety among our elderly…"*

[5] These states are Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, South Dakota and Utah.

[6] These states are Alabama, Arkansas, Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas and West Virginia.

The crime issue was further exemplified in 1968 with Richard Nixon's *Law and Order* mantra and ultimately emerged as an important social issue with Republican Presidents such as Ronald Reagan and H.W Bush (Simon, 1998). Freeman (1999) speaks of a "crime wave" that was subsequently followed by a substantial rise in incarceration between 1970 and 1995. It was during this time that McCollum (1995) marked that the American voter identified crime as the biggest issue of the country.

The divergence in criminal justice policy between these parties did not seem to be based entirely on policy[8], but rather on how voters perceived as being better in handling the crime issue. For example, Lauter (1988) notes how Republicans had a unified belief in handling crime by channelling into the punitive passion of the conservative electorate. Indeed, Chernoff et al. (1996) describe Republicans as having a natural advantage on issues related to crime. They note that "*No matter how much Democrats appeared to be tougher on crime, the Republicans could always move to the right until the Democrats could no longer follow"* (Chernoff et al. p.8). This perspective was embodied in a famous presidential debate between Republican H.W Bush and Democrat Michael Dukakis on the issue of Willy Horton[9] and the death penalty. This created a view that Democrats were disconnected from law-abiding voters and being too entrenched in liberalism to undertake the policies necessary to keep violent crime in check (Simon, 1998).

During his presidency in 1991, Congress passed a series of anti-crime bills that had popular criminal justice reforms. This included a severe limitation to *habeas corpus* (a statute that allowed criminals on death row to constantly file appeals to federal courts), exclusionary rule reform (protecting evidence in warrantless searches) and time-served reform. However in what is seen as a political ambush, Democrat legislators introduced amendments that altered the language of these reforms that would have ultimately reversed nearly twenty Supreme Court rulings (McCollum, 1995) which forced President H.W Bush to veto the bill.

[8] Simon (1998) notes how Democrats had generally voted for Republican legislation on crime under Reagan and H.W Bush.

[9] Willie Horton was a prisoner in Massachusetts (where Dukakis is the Governor), who was released as part of an experimental weekend furlough program (where criminal offenders were released on parole). During this parole, Willie Horton had killed a woman and Michael Dukakis was asked on live television if he would support the death penalty had this been happened to his wife. The Governor responded that he would not.

At this point, Democrat Congressmen Joseph Biden and Charles Schumer were determined to take the crime debate away from Republicans. A series of laws were proposed that would increase funding for police officers, reform the *habeas corpus* statute, and even expanding the list of offenses that would result in the death penalty. However H.W Bush was not willing to allow Democrats to win on the crime debate and vetoed the proposal as being weak on crime (Chernoff et al. 1996).

It was not until the 1992 presidential election that the crime debate had reversed in favour of Democrats. In this election, Bill Clinton had sent a strong message of being tough on crime as part of an offensive strategy of his campaign. The ambitious plan proposed by Biden and Schumer was used as a talking point, essentially attacking Bush for suggesting that the bill was weak on crime. The Clinton campaign had made crime a positive issue for Democrats and had ultimately defeated H.W Bush for the presidency (Chernoff, Kelly & Kroger, 1996).

The Biden-Schumer proposal was formalised as the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which initially received bi-partisan support[10] but had ultimately clashed on ideological lines. When the bill reached the House of Representatives, many of its provisions had been amended by legislators[11]. Congressional Republicans, who were originally for the bill, had reneged and began to attack it (despite it including many reforms that Republicans originally supported). It was becoming clear that the Republicans were against the bill in order to sabotage the Democrats for pure partisan gains for the upcoming mid-term elections[12].

Despite the disagreements, the bill was popular enough to have it reached to President Clinton's desk to be signed into law. However even after it was signed, the bill was never given any special attention for the 1994 mid-terms. Once again, the Democrats were unable to match the Republicans on the crime agenda, echoing the perception of the 1988 Dukakis campaign. Ultimately against an intense opposition from gun advocates and a wave of conservative

[10] The bill was passed in the senate by 95-4 margin

[11] This was ultimately based on provisions related to the Democrat proposal of the Racial Justice Act and the Republican's opposing Equal Justice Act. These laws were designed to allow racial discrimination to be a fundamental part of the sentencing outcome when it relates to certain types of violent crime (McCollum, 1995).

[12] Their intentions becoming increasingly blatant as Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisconsin) stated that "*If we work together, we can defeat this crime bill and craft a real crime bill that will give the crime issue back to republicans for the upcoming election*".

resurgence had led to a large republican victory in congressional, gubernatorial and state legislative elections[13]. The newly empowered Republican congressional leadership had immediately introduced a series of crime reforms and repealed the 1994 Clinton crime bill, which eliminated funding for the expansion of the police force and instead expanded prison construction, limited *habeas corpus* appeals and restricted exclusionary rule.

This review section reflects a perspective of how truly divided Republicans and Democrats were in the crime debate. It cannot be ignored that there are contrasting ideas that these parties have on criminal justice policy. For example, Susan Estrich explains how there can be two reasons why liberals were resistant on being tough on crime. First, she believed that the criminal justice system reflected systematic racism that disproportionally affected the African American population. Second, she believed that tough penalties does not equate to justice, given that the government has a role in ensuring that children who were born in poverty should not turn towards crime (Estrich, 1999; Simon 1998).

However in the political spotlight of legislative agendas, the division was not particularly based on policy, but of partisanship. The Republicans *law and order* mantra, alongside the Democrats *tough and smart* did not disagree entirely on policy (both parties had advocated for police hiring, the death penalty, *habeas corpus* and exclusionary rule reform) but were simply determined to claim electoral victory by sabotaging legislative agendas in order to win favour with the electorate. This attitude has changed over the course of time, however it does provide insight as to how the criminal justice system is managed by both parties.

3.2 Empirical Literature: Crime in the USA and RD Studies

There must be a strong motivation for policy makers to tackle the crime issue of their state and country. The executive office of the Attorney General has a role in facilitating defendants between the first and last stages of crime. However it is important to understand the impact of these crimes as a matter of the public policy debate.

There is an established link between unemployment and income with relation to crime (Rapheal and Winter-Ebmer, 2001; Gould, Winberg and Mustard, 2002). Factors that influence the

[13] Not a single republican incumbent had lost their seat in that election

decrease of crime also relate to demographic changes (Levitt, 1999; Tittle et al. 2003; Blumstein and Nakamura, 2009), changes in police tactics (Weisburd et al., 2010; Braga, Papachristos and Hureau, 2014; Roeder, Eisen and Bowling, 2015), and declines in alcohol consumption and substance abuse (Markowitz, 2000; Fryer et al., 2013; Evans, Garthwaite, and Moore, 2012).

There is also literature on the relation of crime and incarceration as well as the impact of sentencing differences. Raphael and Stoll (2013b) find that it is unlikely that the rise in convictions is explained by case-specific factors. During the *tough on crime* movement of the 1980s, federal and state laws that increased sentencing lengths, introduced new laws on mandatory minimums, repeat offender laws and exclusionary rule changes (Travis, Redburn and Western, 2014, Ch. 3) and that popular support for tough sanctions influenced election of judges that translated to higher conviction rates (Weiss, 2016). However the impact of incarceration on crime reduction is small, where a 10% increase in incarceration only decreases crime by 2% (Donohue, 2009; Chalfin and McCrary, 2014).

With regards to the role of prosecutors, Devers (2011) states that guilty pleas involve concessions from prosecutors which can possibly lead to probation or shorter sentences. This can explain why the majority of defendants agree to plea bargains rather than a jury trial, and that in an environment of please bargaining and prosecutorial discretion, these defendants may plead guilty through pressure (CEA, 2016). Ultimately, the threat of longer sentences does not deter youth offenders (Lee and McCrary, 2005, 2009; Hjalmarsson, 2009a) and there is mixed evidence on repeat offender laws and enhanced sentencing guidelines in reducing crimes (Kessler and Levitt, 1999; Kovandzic, 2001; Webster, Doob, and Zimring, 2006). Helland and Tabarrok (2007) also finds that it can reduce crime, but that its implementation costs outweigh the benefits in California, while Owens (2009) finds that changes in Maryland's sentencing guidelines had resulted of a year incarcerated led to a decrease of 1.5 crimes per offender released. Donohue (2009) finds that longer sentences can reduce crime while Hjalmarsson (2009b) and Kuziemko (2013) see that longer sentences are associated with lowering re-offending rates (however that truth-in-sentencing reform had significantly increased recidivism). Durlauf and Nagin (2011) warn however that sentencing laws may confuse impacts of recidivism, incapacitation and deterrence and this can ignore the impact of longer sentences on crime.

With regards to RD designs, there are multiple investigations on US close elections, however those relating to AG race are scarce. In a recent working paper, Aurora (2018) uses an RD design to show that Republican District Attorney's lead to an increase in incarceration sentence periods when they are in office as compared to Democrats, but that this did not result in any decrease in criminal arrests.

There are other close election studies in the US that investigate partisan impact on policy outcomes outside of crime. For example, Ferreira and Gyourko (2007) use county-level elections for mayors in the US and find that there is no evidence of policy differences between Democrats and Republicans. This is explained by the possibility that, at least at the local-level, there is an incentive to be moderate and hence discourages any form of partisan extremes. However this is not the case everywhere, as there are electoral rewards that can be gained for local level elections (Dey and Sen, 2016). At the state level, Lee (2008) finds an incumbency effect in U.S House elections, where Democrats who win just above the margin are more likely to win the next election as compared to those who barely lose. For gubernatorial elections, Beland (2015) observes a discontinuous increase in labour market outcomes for African Americans when Democrats are elected as compared to Republicans. Other US RDD studies include Lee, Moretti and Butler (2004) which finds that voting behaviour in congress is explained by partisan alignment. Fredriksson, et al. (2013) use an RD design to show that tax policy implementation by Democrat and Republican governors depends on their re-electability. Leigh (2008) similarly investigates how Democrat governors tend to implement lower taxes and lower rates of incarceration.

4 Methodology

4.1 Identification Strategy

This paper will utilise a sharp regression discontinuity design as its identification strategy with a parametric and non-parametric specification. By exploiting the quasi-random properties of close elections, Lee (2008) determined that it would be possible to extract identification of the causal impact. One of the main advantages of using an RDD in the context of close elections is that it neutralises endogeneity concerns and allows estimation of the local average treatment effect (Beland, 2015).

This paper will follow the basic RD design as described by Imbens and Lemieu (2007) which is motivated by the Rubin Causal Model to extract causal and treatment effects (Rubin, 1974). The unit of analysis of this paper is the state, and the treatment is defined as the winning party of the Attorney General election. The hypothesis is that the treatment will have a discontinuous effect on crime rate within the state. This can be formally modelled:

$$Y_{st} = (1 - D_{st}) \cdot Y_{st}(0) + D_{st} \cdot Y_{st}(1) = \begin{cases} Y_{st}(0) \; if \; D_{st} = 0 \\ Y_{st}(1) \; if \; D_{st} = 1 \end{cases}$$

Where Y_{st} is the crime rate outcome of a state s at the year t, and that the treatment is $D \in \{0,1\}$ representing the winning party. In this case, D=0 representing a Republican AG victory and D=1 representing a Democrat AG victory.

The effect of the treatment can be heterogeneous across different states, and the fundamental problem of causal analysis is that we cannot observe the state at an election year that has a Democrat AG or a Republican AG at the same time. Therefore the above model extracts the Local Average Treatment Effect (LATE) over different states across time in the neighbourhood of the cut-off.

In addition to the above, we also introduce the role of the forcing variable X_{st} and other covariates Z_{st}. In this case, the forcing variable represents the margin of victory.

In this model, the margin of victory is defined as:

$$X_{st} = \frac{Votes\ Casted\ to\ Democrat\ Candidate - Votes\ Casted\ to\ Republican\ Candidate}{Total\ Vote\ Casted}$$

In a sharp RD design[14], the treatment assignment D_{st} is a deterministic function of the forcing variable X_{st}. Indeed, in context of elections, the winner is the candidate that receives a vote share above 0%, and hence $X_{st} \in [-100,100]$. This can be modelled:

[14] This paper does not include votes casted to third party candidates in the total pool of casted votes. This is because it will transform the study to a fuzzy RD design (as the cut-off will no longer be defined at 50%). Moreover the data set excludes any victories by third party candidates during the time period.

$$D_{st} = \begin{cases} 1, & if\ X_{st} > 0 \\ 0, & if\ X_{st} < 0 \end{cases}$$

In this case, the treatment group is defined as the states which have a Democrat AG (X>0%) and the control group are the states which have a Republican AG (X<0%). For a sharp RD design, the conditional expectation of the crime rate around the winning threshold can allow us to extract the LATE:

$$\lim_{x \downarrow 0} E[Y_{st}|X_{st} = x] - \lim_{x \uparrow 0} E[Y_{st}|X_{st} = x]$$

Where $x \in [-100,100]$ and the LATE is ultimately modelled as:

$$ATE = E[Y_{st}(1) - Y_{st}(0)|X_{st} = 0\%]$$

However note that by construction, there are no variables such that $E[Y_{st}(0)|X_{st} = 0\%]$. That is, there are *no elections where a republican wins with over 0% of the margin.* Therefore, Imbens and Lemieu (2007) suggest that we can instead observe causal impact of the states that are nearly around 0.

The theoretical explanation of this would be that the states that just barely elect a Democrat AG should possess similar observational characteristics as those that just barely elect a Republican AG. This is a plausible perspective to have since many states that are around the threshold will possibly be battleground states. That is, they are states which are heavily fought by Democrat and Republican opponents, such as the swing states of Ohio or Florida. This means that these states will generally be around the threshold in the space of this paper's analysis.

4.2 Model Specification

We follow an estimation strategy similar to Brollo and Troiano (2012), where they first estimate a simple OLS equation:

$$Y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{st} + \beta_2 Z_{st} + \rho_t + \epsilon_{st} \quad (1)$$

Where $Y_{st}$is the outcome variable that represents crime rate for state *s* at year *t*, and we have the treatment dummy variable D_{st} that is represented by a Democrat winning the AG election, with

ρ_t capturing year fixed effects[15] and Z_{st} containing the covariates. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. It is important to note that this model will not be able to report the causal impact as the treatment variable can be correlated with the error term[16].

In order to extract causal inference, the model is adjusted in order to estimate the LATE, by employing a parametric (global) specification that involves assigning a *p*-order polynomial to fit the forcing variable on both sides of the cut-off $X_{st} = 0$, adding interactive terms and using the full bandwidth *h* available:

$$Y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{st} + \sum_{k=1}^{p}(\beta_2 X_{st}^k) + D_{st}\sum_{k=1}^{p}(\beta_3 X_{st}^k) + \rho_t + \beta_4 Z + \epsilon_{st} \quad (2)$$

The parametric strategy is useful as it allows the use of all the observations in the analysis; however it can be argued that only the observations around the threshold are more useful for causal inference. Therefore Imbens and Lemieux (2008) propose a local-linear (non-parametric) estimation strategy that confines the observations used to those around the threshold such that $X_{st} \in [-h, +h]$:

$$Y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{st} + \beta_2 X_{st} + \beta_1 D_{st} \cdot X_{st} + \rho_t + \beta_3 Z + \epsilon_{st} \quad (3)$$

4.3 Data

Outcome Variables

The set of outcome variables are defined as the state's arrests for a particular type of crime. The two main outcome variables are violent and property crime. These crimes are further subdivided as murder, sexual assault, robbery and assault for violent crime categories, and burglary, larceny and vehicle theft for property crime categories. The crime rate is interpreted as a crime occurrence per 100,000 residents within that state at that time. This data was acquired from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistic.

[15] For the parametric specification, including state fixed effects created a multicollinearity issue that could not be fixed. As a result, to be consistent across all the models, this paper will only use year-fixed effects.

[16] Beland (2015) highlights the potential endogeneity concerns as "*…labor-market conditions, voter characteristics, the quality of candidates, which party is the incumbent, the resources available for campaigns, and other unmeasured characteristics of states and candidates that would bias estimates*…"(Beland, 2015, p.3)

Forcing Variable

This is defined as the vote share of a Democrat candidate minus the vote share of the Republican candidate. The discontinuity is therefore defined at 0, where positive values indicate a margin of victory for a Democrat and negative values indicate a margin of victory for a Republican. This variable was compiled by hand from various state electoral commission and secretary of state websites through archival and online research. Not all states publish electoral return data for every year and so the data set is unbalanced. Between 1970 and 2016, there are 1361 state-year observations.

Covariates

Data on each state's expenditure data between 1970 and 2016 were compiled from various areas of institutional importance in estimating crime outcomes. This includes expenditure on the police force, corrections, unemployment insurance, health and education. These were collected from the Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances (1970 to 1976) and the Urban Institute Tax Policy Centre (1977 to 2016). Data on unemployment insurance was taken from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. These are represented as dollar variables and have been normalised to 2016 price levels. The expenditure is further divided by the population. Population estimates of each state were acquired from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics.

A set of binary variables are included that indicate whether the Democrats or Republicans occupy the state's governor office as well as whether they control the upper and lower state legislature of that state. Note that in the event of an equal split of the house/senate occurring, the situation was dealt with on a case by case basis. This included whether the speaker of the chamber was a democrat or a republican or whether what the party of the governor was at that time. Nebraska, which only has a single chamber, is treated as having two chambers in our data set that are the same. Moreover since Nebraska does not allow legislatures to affiliate themselves with a party, various manual research was done to determine the party control of the chamber between 1970 to 2016. This data was extracted from Klarner (2018) and the UKCPR National Welfare Data between 1967 and 2017. Data of each state's personal income rate was also extracted from those data sets.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Exploratory Analysis

5.1.1 Correlation between Crime and Party of the Incumbent Attorney General

To motivate the research question, we first examine the 10 most crime prevalent states with the 10 least crime prevalent states, with the incumbent AG's party affiliation:

Table 1
Crime Ranking and Incumbent Attorney General's Party Affiliation, 2016

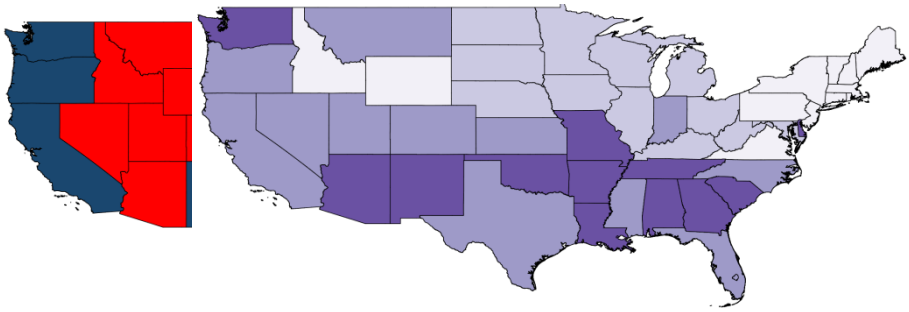
Highest Crime Per 100,000	Ranking	S.A Party
New Mexico	50	D
Alaska	49	R
Louisiana	48	R
Arkansas	47	D
Washington	46	D
South Carolina	45	R
Tennessee	44	R
Alabama	43	R
Arizona	42	R
Oklahoma	41	R

Lowest Crime Per 100,000	Ranking	S.A Party
New Hampshire	1	D
Maine	2	D
New Jersey	3	R
Vermont	4	D
New York	5	D
Massachusetts	6	D
Idaho	7	R
Connecticut	8	D
Pennsylvania	9	D
Virginia	10	D

Crime data from FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program and ranking index based on VueVille. Incumbent AG based on the current incumbent as of 2016. For states where it is not an elected position, the party of the governor is used.

It is possible to hypothesize that states with higher crime rates are more likely to have a Republican AG, where states with the lowest crime rate are more likely to have a Democrat AG. This can also be visualised on this map:

Figure 3
Incumbent Chief Prosecutor Party Affiliation and Crime Rate Heat Map, 2016



Note: The figure on the left represents incumbents of the Republican Party (red) and Democrat party (blue) as of 2016. The figure on the right is a crime rate per 100,000 heat map. The darker the shade, the higher the crime rate compared to other states (Data Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2016).

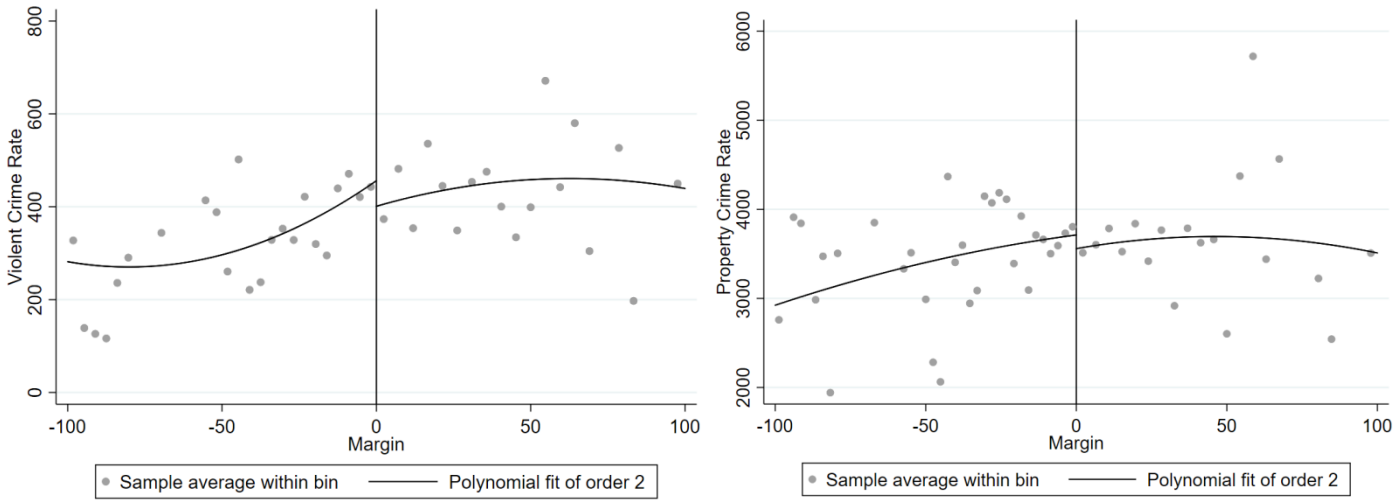
From the map, it is possible to see that southern states are more likely to have Republican AGs, where crime rate total is relatively high. On the other hand, states on the east coast are more likely to have Democrat AGs where crime rate totals are relatively low.

It is important to note that this visualisation does not contain the full story. For example, is it that the electorate is more likely to vote Republican when crime rate is high, or is it that Republicans do a good job at dealing with high crime than Democrats that allow them to be elected? There is also the concern that voters are likely to vote for their party of preference regardless of their performance in office. However it also motivates the need to causal analysis as to what impact Democrats and Republicans have on their state when it comes to crime.

5.1.2 Visualising the Discontinuity

The following graphs depict the discontinuity for the two main outcome variables, violent and property crime rate per 100,000 residents:

Figure 4
Violent and Property Crime Rate for Republican and Democrat States



Note: The discontinuity is defined when the margin is 0. Republican and Democrat winners are represented on the left and right side of the discontinuity respectively with ISME-optimised bins.

There is a negative discontinuous effect in both crime rates when a Democrat AG is just barely elected in the state as compared to a Republican AG. Moreover, what can be stipulated is that the treatment effect of a Democrat winning is more effective for violent crime rates than it is for property rates. Refer to the appendix Figures A.10 for visuals of the other outcome variables.

5.2 Confirmatory Analysis

5.2.1 Main Results

In this section, the results of the LATE of all crime variables are reported using the models highlighted in section 3.2:

Table 2: The Impact of a Democrat Attorney General on Violent Crime

	Total Violent Crime Rate	Murder Rate	Sexual Offence Rate	Robbery Rate	Assault Rate
Parametric	-71.97***	-1.080***	-0.557	-14.74*	-55.61***
(*h*=100, *n*=1320)	(22.71)	(0.358)	(1.968)	(8.115)	(16.32)
Local Linear	-109.368***	-1.540**	-2.851	-35.589***	-69.405***
(*h*=10, *n=356*)	(37.593)	(0.550)	(3.311)	(13.391)	(24.291)

Notes: This table presents the estimates of the LATE for Violent Crime Rate. All the covariates specified in the section 4.3 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the parametric specification (Model 2), the estimate uses the full bandwidth and a third order polynomial to control the forcing variable. For the local linear specification (Model 3), a bandwidth level of 10 is used with a triangular kernel.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

Table 3: The Impact of a Democrat Attorney General on Property Crime

	Total Property Crime Rate	Burglary Rate	Larceny Rate	Vehicle Theft Rate
Parametric	-12.45	-32.17	-19.25	38.94
(*h*=100, *n*=1320)	(142.0)	(47.76)	(93.51)	(28.83)
Local Linear	-124.735	-57.081	-41.832	-25.975
(*h*=10, *n=356*)	(225.460)	(68.516)	(151.485)	(50.002)

Notes: This table presents the estimates of the LATE for Property Crime Rate. All the covariates specified in the section 4.3 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the parametric specification (Model 2), the estimate uses a third order polynomial to control the forcing variable. For the local linear specification (Model 3), a bandwidth level of 10 is used with a triangular kernel.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

Table 2 and Table 3 show the estimates for the impact of a Democratic AG being elected as the on crime rate in their state as compared to a Republican AG. The above estimates are based on the models highlighted in Section 4.2, which includes the parametric and local linear (non-parametric) specifications. The OLS model results are reported in the appendix Table A.8 and A.9. Note that there is no expectation that the OLS estimates are causal, however they provide a useful observation when considering correlations of this impact.

The detailed results (which include covariate coefficients) are presented in Table A.2 and A.3 for the parametric specification and Table A.4 and A.5 for the local linear specification.

The important detail to notice when viewing the results is that Democratic AGs decrease all types of violent crime and most types of property crime. For total violent crime arrests, Democratic AGs decrease crime rate by 71.97 and 107.383 per 100,000 residents compared to Republican AGs for the parametric and local linear specification respectively. This effect is highly statistically significant for both cases and the effect seems to be concentrated on murder, robbery and assault rates. For total property crime arrests Democratic AGs decrease crime rate by 12.45 to 331.405 per 100,000 residents compared to Republican AGs for the parametric and local linear specification respectively. This effect is not significant for both cases, however it is important to note that there is a large difference in magnitude when examining the whole sample and those around the threshold.

For the local linear method, the bandwidth h is set to 10. When varying for h values that are lower than 10, refer to Tables A.6 and A.7 which displays results for total violent and property crime.

5.2.2 Discussion

When comparing the two RDD specifications, it can be seen that the standard errors of the parametric method is lower than that of the local linear method, however the magnitude reported is lower for the parametric model. This is expected as the parametric specification uses the full bandwidth available in the regression and controls the forcing variable with a third order polynomial functional form. This means that in utilising more observations and smoothing the effect of the vote share, the results are expected to be more precise, but less causal than the local

linear approach. In contrast, the local linear approach uses less observations but uses those that are concentrated around the threshold.

To explain this result in terms of the institutional setting, one can relate the role of the AG in the court process, particularly on what to charge criminal offenders. The charge carries a sentencing period that public prosecutors should try and influence the court to carry out the sentence. It could be that Democrat AGs are more likely to assign lenient criminal charges that effectively decrease crime in the short run. Admittedly, the results are surprising given that Republicans are associated with assigning higher sentencing periods than (Aurora, 2018), and that can mean that the threat of sanctions are higher under a Republican AG's tenure than that of a Democrat. However there can be several reasons for this, for example, if Democrats are more likely to hand out probations than prison sentences, then this may dis-incentivise criminals from re-offending. It could also be that the association of criminal justice policy of the *tough and smart* Democrats is superior to that *law and order* policy of Republicans.

Another explanation as to why this could occur can relate to the division in the responsibility of a State's Attorney General and the Local Prosecutor. As discussed in the earlier section, there is a state-varying overlap between the degree of control an AG has over the local prosecutor's office. As it is a political office, an AG would be more likely to intervene in higher profile cases that attract visibility (such as violent crime) than that of lower visibility cases (such as property crimes) that occur within counties. The differences in magnitude can be explained in a different way. It could be that in certain key battleground states, the attorney general and local prosecutors are far more likely to exert higher effort levels in order to improve chances for re-election.

The results also allow a discussion on the prevalence of the median voter theory in the context of an electoral democracy. The median voter theory is an idea that political parties in an ideological spectrum recognise (after a sequence of iterative eliminations) that optimal electoral gains are made by espousing their ideas to the moderate voter. In the local linear approach, only the states around the neighbourhood of the cut-off are considered for analysis, and if the median voter theory is prevalent, then it should be that Democrats and Republicans within those close-election states are not actually very different from each other.

We can consider a different perspective: if Democrat AGs are not only associated with decreases in all types of crime (as shown by the OLS model and the results of the exploratory analysis) but also account for a degree of causal impact in those decreases, then why don't Democratic AGs win every election? There can be a theoretical and technical answer to this. First, a theoretical explanation, and that is that voters are aligned to the party that they most identify with and would vote for a candidate strictly because they also identify with that party and has nothing to do with performance. Second, a technical explanation, is that voters cannot differentiate the impact of both parties because overall crime is unchanged. That is to say, Democrats do decrease crime, but only in comparison to Republicans. This is by construction of the model, that the treatment coefficient will have a value that needs to be compared to the reference variable (which in this case is a Republican AG victory).

Overall, these estimations are useful for interpretation purposes. On average, Democrat AGs decrease crime across multiple categories, and all increases in crime are small and not significant. The OLS estimates reveal associations, where the RDD estimates neutralise endogeneity concerns and provides estimates for all elections and elections close to the threshold.

5.2.3 Further Discussion: Euphoria in the Attorney General's Impact Across their Tenure

In this section, the tenure-specific effect on crime is examined when a Democratic AG is elected into office:

Table 4: The Impact of a Democrat on Violent Crime Across their Term

	Total Violent Crime Rate	Murder Rate	Sexual Offence Rate	Robbery Rate	Assault Rate
Parametric	3.717	-0.00877	0.391	0.687	2.654
(*h*=100, *n*=1320)	(4.633)	(0.0723)	(0.340)	(1.482)	(3.564)
Local Linear	1.103	-0.132	1.108	-3.131	3.261
(*h*=10, *n=356*)	(9.123)	(0.136)	(0.922)	(3.300)	(6.187)

*Notes: This table presents the estimates of the interactive term Winner * Term for violent crime. All the covariates specified in the section 4.2 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level.*

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

Table 5: The Impact of a Democrat on Property Crime Across Their Term

	Total Property Crime Rate	Burglary Rate	Larceny Rate	Vehicle Theft Rate
Parametric	2.023	-4.957	9.423	-2.371
(*h*=100, *n*=1320)	(28.18)	(8.743)	(19.07)	(4.875)
Local Linear	-39.071	-20.891	-12.564	-5.629
(*h*=10, *n=356*)	(70.407)	(20.077)	(48.756)	(13.095)

*Notes: This table presents the estimates of the interactive term Winner * Term for property crime. All the covariates specified in the section 4.2 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level.*

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

The above estimations attempt to capture the effect of a Democratic AG on crime across their term. This is captured by the interactive term Winner x Term that would reveal whether the effect diminishes or increases from term to term. The most important result of these estimates is that there is no statistically significant effect across a Democratic AGs term. However an interesting result that can be highlighted is the fact that for total violent and property crime, the parametric result is positive where the non-parametric is generally negative. If these results were to be believed, then this is consistent with an interpretation that political offices would generally exert higher effort levels on the end of their term so as to improve chances of re-election. In battleground states (those close to the threshold), it can be expected that these Democratic AGs would exert higher effort levels than those compared to stronghold states (those far from the threshold), which would explain why the local-linear specification reveals a negative coefficient and the parametric is positive.

5.2.3 Internal Validity Condition: Covariates are not discontinuous at the threshold

One of the most important assumptions of an RD design is that the conditional expectation of the outcome variable with respect to the forcing variable should be a continuous function at the cut-off (when X=0). The reason this assumption should be maintained is because the treatment should be the only explanation as to why a discontinuity exists. One method of testing the continuity assumption is to see if the covariates jump discontinuously at the threshold.

Table 6
Significance Test for Covariates of 5% around the Threshold

5% Margin of Victory	Governor	Control of the Upper Legislature	Control of the Lower Legislature	Population	State Expenditure on Police	State Expenditure on Correction
Republican	0.582	0.392	0.493	5818227	0.230	0.164
Democrat	0.491	0.669	0.618	5880432	0.218	0.161
p-value	0.2131	0.000***	0.0834*	0.9531	0.312	0.8276

	Personal Income Per Capita	State Expenditure on Unemployment Insurance	State Expenditure on Education	State Expenditure on Health	Hired Police Per Capita
Republican	36.99	0.00019	2.486	0.553	0.0022
Democrat	35.95	0.00016	2.441	0.510	0.0022
p-value	0.3717	0.0506**	0.5485	0.1696	0.5496

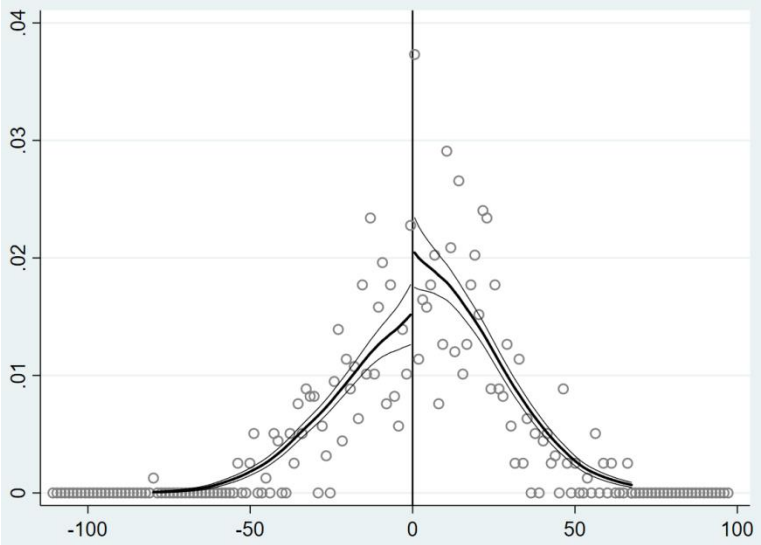
*** *Significant at the 1% level*
** *Significant at the 5% level*
* *Significant at the 10% level*

The above displays that most covariates are not significantly different from each other near the threshold. The one that does prove a concern is the significant difference of the control of the state legislature. This can be a threat to validity because this chamber has significant impact on public policy within a state. Theoretically it may not be a concern as we would expect a particular party to occupy state offices (such as the AG, state legislators and governor) if the election year favoured them. Nevertheless, local linear estimates that exclude these covariates are reported as a robustness check (see Section 6.4.1).

5.2.4 Internal Validity Condition: Imprecise Control over the Forcing Variable

Another way of maintaining the continuity assumption is by checking if the forcing variable can be influenced. In the context of elections, this would mean that Democrats or Republicans are able to precisely control the margin of victory in order to obtain the benefits of winning the election. This leads to violations to the RD identification assumption. One way of testing for this assumption is to see if the distribution of the forcing variable is discontinuous, and this was proposed by McCrary (2008).

Figure 5
McCrary (2008) Density Plot



As it can be seen, the distribution of the forcing variable is not entirely smooth around the cut-off, which may threaten the validity of the model. The idea that agents are able to manipulate the margin of victory is not entirely ruled out in the context of the office of the Attorney General. As chief prosecutor, an incumbent may be able to incentivise forces that could interfere in fair election outcomes (such as electoral fraud) by signalling their unwillingness to punish these crimes harshly. On the other hand, what can be interpreted from the McCrary test is that the margin is not necessarily discontinuous, but rather an artefact of the data collection that over-represent Democrat victories (on the right of the cut-off) than Republican victories (on the left of the cut-off).

6 Robustness Checks

6.1 Different Functional Forms

The parametric specification is based on the model:

$$Y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{st} + \sum_{k=1}^{4} (\beta_2 X_{st}^k) + D_{st} \sum_{k=1}^{4} (\beta_3 X_{st}^k) + \rho_t + \beta_4 Z + \epsilon_{st}$$

Table 7 and 8 shows the estimates of a Democratic AG on crime with functional forms of the forcing variable ranging of 1 to 4:

Table 7: Impact of a Democrat on Total Violent Crime for Different Functional Forms

	1st Order	2nd Order	3rd Order	4th Order
Democrat Wins	-36.03**	-61.96***	-71.97***	-93.84***
	(16.01)	(19.09)	(22.71)	(25.53)

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Total Violent Crime Rate when a Democrat AG wins. All the covariates specified in the section 4.2 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

Table 8: Impact of a Democrat on Total Property Crime for Different Functional Forms

	1st Order	2nd Order	3rd Order	4th Order
Democrat Wins	-109.1	-49.31	-12.45	-276.6*
	(97.16)	(118.8)	(142.0)	(164.0)

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Total Property Crime Rate when a Democrat AG wins. All the covariates specified in the section 4.2 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

The fourth order polynomial of both outcome variables provides the most efficient estimates of a Democrat AG compared to a Republican. However it would be best not to use this functional form, given that the fourth order tends to be skewed by observations farther from the discontinuity. In this study, battleground states provide greater insight on the LATE than stronghold states.

6.2 Bandwidth and Functional Form Optimisation

The non-parametric specification is based on the following model:

$$Y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{st} + \beta_2 X_{st} + \beta_3 D_{st} \cdot X_{st} + \beta_4 Z + \rho_t + \epsilon_{st}$$

Such that $X_{st} \in [-h, +h]$. In this section, the non-parametric estimates are reported for different bandwidths and polynomial powers.

Table 9: Impact of a Democrat on Total Violent Crime

	h=5	h=9	h=10	h=11	h=14	h=20
P(1)	-126.978***	-111.331***	-109.368***	-102.130***	-86.709***	-83.037***
	(45.643)	(46.373)	(37.593)	(35.672)	(31.013)	(26.774)
P(2)	-41.190	-116.012**	-107.961**	-113.221**	-108.627***	-90.484***
	(47.160)	(46.373)	(44.897)	(43.943)	(38.903)	(32.742)
P(3)	-75.232	-63.223	-90.646*	-88.983*	-102.376**	-108.514***
	(57.439)	(50.491)	(48.688)	(47.470)	(45.592)	(38.792)
P(4)	-103.418	-13.118	-4.414	-48.761	-70.499	-105.227**
	(67.422)	(56.313)	(55.569)	(53.105)	(47.847)	(45939)
n	190	316	354	407	527	721

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Total Violent Crime Rate when a Democrat AG wins for different functional forms and bandwidth levels using the local linear specification. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level, account for year-fixed effects and uses a triangular kernel

Table 10: Impact of a Democrat on Total Property Crime

	h=5	h=9	h=10	h=11	h=14	h=20
P(1)	110.555	-99.001	-124.735	-129.941	-169.771	-225.006
	(296.080)	(239.730)	(225.460)	(214.306)	(192.667)	(172.911)
P(2)	483.896	15.056	-65.343	-157.423	-256.295	-296.918
	(316.472)	(268.167)	(256.693)	(244.989)	(218.641)	(194.873)
P(3)	-29.546	209.956	116.740	45.391	-170.253	-303.645
	(325.255)	(286.279)	(276.079)	(269.452)	(254.854)	(221.860)
P(4)	-1119.917***	135.274	163.821	165.655	14.000	-298.064
	(414.340)	(307.517)	(290.914)	(276.842)	(272.512)	(260.033)
n	190	316	354	407	527	721

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Total Property Crime Rate when a Democrat AG wins for different functional forms and different bandwidth levels using the local linear specification. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level, account for year-fixed effects and uses a triangular kernel
**** Significant at the 1% level, ** Significant at the 5% level, * Significant at the 10% level*

6.3 Placebo Test: Different Threshold Levels for the Treatment Variable

A placebo test can be performed in order to see how the estimates behave around different threshold levels. The placebo (or falsification) test investigates the validity of the local randomisation assumption of an RD design. The non-parametric specification is used to alter the treatment variable:

$$D_{st} = \begin{cases} 1, & if\ c > 0 \\ 0, & if\ c < 0 \end{cases}$$

Where $c \in [-100,100]$, the following estimates are computed for different thresholds:

Table 11: Impact of a Democrat on Crime with Different Winning Thresholds

	c = 5	c = -5
Violent Crime Rate	60.058*	-94.365**
	(33.193)	(37.819)
Property Crime Rate	-187.9	272.2
	(207.5)	(319.9)
n	405	352

Notes: This table presents local linear (model 3) estimates for the impact of a Democratic AG on crime. The bandwidth level is set at h=10, using a triangular kernel, and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. The win condition is now defined as 5.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

The first detail to note is that a cut-off set on the right should be interpreted with caution. This is because the model has defined that all values to the right of the cut-off are assigned the treatment with a probability of 1 and so a discontinuity is not expected. Indeed, even though the results for c=5 do indicate a discontinuity for violent crime, it still is weakly significant. On the other hand, a win condition set for c=-5 indicate more significant discontinuous jump, which suggests that there are multiple win conditions in the model. This ultimately harms the identification assumptions in place for an RD design, however this does not change the general interpretation of a Democrat AG's impact on crime. Indeed, despite setting a higher win condition, Democrats are still capable of decreasing violent crime rates.

6.4 Adjusted Estimates

6.4.1 Impact Estimates when Excluding Certain States

As discussed in section 2.2, De Long (1936) finds that there are some states where the authority of the AG is diminished in favour of the local prosecutor. It is possible that these states hurt the validity of the results as they may not have total control over the prosecution process. These states are Alabama, Arkansas, Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas and West Virginia.

Table 12: The Impact of a Democrat on Crime when Excluding States

	Total Violent Crime Rate	Total Property Crime Rate
Parametric (*h*=100, *n*=1076)	-96.87*** (28.07)	-126.7 (157.6)
Local Linear (*h*=10, *n=278*)	-197.690*** (44.353)	-859.301*** (262.245)

Notes: This table presents the estimates for total violent and property rate. All the covariates specified in the section 4.3 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the parametric specification (Model 2), the estimate uses the full bandwidth and a third order polynomial to control the forcing variable. For the local linear specification (Model 3), a bandwidth level of 10 is used with a triangular kernel.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

The results are consistent with the previous estimates, except for the fact that the magnitude are larger and when considering the local linear model, total property crime decreases drastically with highly statistical significance. This can suggest that these excluded states were negatively impacting the previous estimates by the AG's lowered powers in those states. Note however, that the states that were excluded are mainly southern states. Figure 2 showed that southern states tended to have higher levels of crime rate *and* that they were more likely to have Republican AGs. By excluding them, it could have over-represented Democrat AG elections, that explained the more pronounced magnitude effect. Nevertheless, analysing the impact of an AG on certain regions (east coast, west coast, southern, etc.) can provide valuable insight on heterogeneity of crime impact across states.

6.4.1 Impact Estimates when Excluding Discontinuous Covariates

As discussed in section 5.2.3, there are certain discontinuous covariates that could harm the validity of the RD results. In this table, these covariates (control of the legislature and state spending on unemployment insurance) are excluded:

Table 13: The Impact of a Democrat on Crime when Excluding Discontinuous Covariates

	Total Violent Crime Rate	Total Property Crime Rate
Parametric (*h*=100, *n*=1320)	-53.23** (22.49)	-13.44 (140.9)
Local Linear (*h*=10, *n=354*)	-76.657* (39.484)	-82.021 (223.338)

Notes: This table presents the estimates for total violent and property rate. All the covariates specified in the section 4.3 are used except State Spending on UI and the party in control of the legislature. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the parametric specification (Model 2), the estimate uses the full bandwidth and a third order polynomial to control the forcing variable. For the local linear specification (Model 3), a bandwidth level of 10 is used with a triangular kernel.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

There is indeed a difference in significance, but the overall result does not change. Democrats still discontinuously decrease all types of crime compared to Republicans.

7 Conclusion

This paper investigates the causal impact of an Attorney General's party affiliation on a state's crime rate by using a regression discontinuity design. The data constraints, especially within states and across different years may explain the scarcity of such investigations. By compiling data on votes casted to individual candidates and estimating an average treatment effect from the quasi-random properties of close elections, this paper is able to extract causal estimates of party affiliation on crime.

The OLS results find that, on average, Democrats are associated and lower levels of crime during their tenure in office, but because of endogeneity concerns, the magnitude of these results cannot be interpreted as causal. The first RD specification employs a parametric approach, where the full bandwidth length is used. The results show that across all elections and controlling for the vote share, Democrats decrease violent crime rates compared to Republicans, where the effect is concentrated around murder, assault and robbery rates. However there is no significant impact on property crime rates, despite it decreasing as well. When adopting the non-parametric approach, the specification allows us to view results that are local around the threshold. The results show that in election years which are close, Democrats decrease both violent and property crime rates compared to Republicans and that these effects are greater in magnitude than the parametric specification. Moreover, this paper also investigates whether there is a term specific effect with crime, and although the effect diminishes term-to-term, it is not statistically significant.

Although the investigation has revealed a causal explanation in the role of the Attorney General's party affiliation on crime, there is still a need to understand the theoretical explanation as to how this occurs. This paper does go into length to control for other partisan factors that could have influenced crime, such as the winner of the gubernatorial election or the party that controls the upper and lower legislatures. Since the roles and duties of an attorney general varies and the complexity of how state and local prosecutors interact across different states, then this would motivate further studies in the role of this office on crime.

Opportunities for further research would involve using the vote share of the gubernatorial election as the forcing variable to investigate whether party affiliation of the governor could have influenced crime rates. Elections for state justices or county prosecutors could also be conducted in order to get an in-depth view of the criminal justice process. Moreover, the AG election forcing variable could instead be matched to results of the National Crime and Victimisation Survey (NCVS). This nationally representative survey has micro-data on individuals who have been victims of crime in their state across different time periods; however a state identifier variable is not made available for public use.

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Appendix

A.1 Summary Statistics

Table A.1: Summary Statistics of State Variables

	Mean	n	SD
Demographic Data			
Population	5401000	1,361	6354000
Personal Income Rate	38.38	1,361	9.189
Police Per Capita	0.00227	1,361	0.000669
Crime Data			
Total Violent Crime Rate	411.2	1,361	204.3
Murder Rate	5.264	1,361	2.965
Sexual Offence Rate	34.14	1,361	13.15
Robbery Rate	110.6	1,361	75.88
Assault Rate	261.2	1,361	139.3
Total Property Crime Rate	3,601	1,361	1,167
Burglary Rate	836.2	1,361	387.8
Larceny Rate	2,438	1,361	728.8
Vehicle Theft Rate	327.6	1,361	196.1
Institutional Data			
Democrats Control Upper House	0.547	1,361	0.498
Democrats Control Lower House	0.566	1,361	0.496
Governor is Democrat	0.482	1,361	0.500
Expenditure Data			
State Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	0.000173	1,361	0.000126
State Expenditure on Police	0.234	1,320	0.0849
State Expenditure on Health	0.579	1,320	0.269
State Expenditure on Correction	0.176	1,320	0.0890
State Expenditure on Education	2.491	1,320	0.575

Note: This data summarises the covariate and outcome variables used in this paper. Section 3.4 explains the data sources for each variable in this table.

A.2 Parametric Specification Estimates (Violent Crime)

Table A.2: The Impact of a Democratic AG on Violent Crime

	Violent Crime Rate	Murder Rate	Sexual Offence Rate	Robbery Rate	Assault Rate
Treatment (Democrat Wins)	-71.97***	-1.080***	-0.557	-14.74*	-55.61***
	(22.71)	(0.358)	(1.968)	(8.115)	(16.32)
Winner * Term	3.717	-0.00877	0.391	0.687	2.654
	(4.633)	(0.0723)	(0.340)	(1.482)	(3.564)
Forcing Variable (Margin)	2.450	0.0700***	-0.209	1.018	1.571
	(1.747)	(0.0266)	(0.144)	(0.639)	(1.254)
Margin (Square)	0.0474	0.00172**	-0.00480	0.0166	0.0339
	(0.0520)	(0.000779)	(0.00408)	(0.0179)	(0.0378)
Margin (Cube)	0.000263	1.14e-05**	-2.88e-05	8.14e-05	0.000200
	(0.000382)	(5.67e-06)	(2.91e-05)	(0.000127)	(0.000279)
Winner * Margin	-0.0358	-0.0136	-0.0794	-1.094	1.151
	(2.182)	(0.0358)	(0.199)	(0.811)	(1.563)
Winner * Margin (Square)	-0.0787	-0.00247**	0.0128**	-0.00233	-0.0868*
	(0.0634)	(0.00105)	(0.00521)	(0.0218)	(0.0466)
Winner * Margin (Cube)	-0.000127	-8.44e-06	-2.57e-05	-0.000221	0.000128
	(0.000456)	(8.27e-06)	(3.86e-05)	(0.000170)	(0.000329)
Governor is Democrat	3.721	0.0664	-0.0982	0.903	2.854
	(7.996)	(0.125)	(0.650)	(2.692)	(6.057)
Democrats Control Upper House	47.70***	0.289**	0.884	-0.810	47.34***
	(10.52)	(0.143)	(0.911)	(3.517)	(7.657)
Democrats Control Lower House	12.57	1.318***	-2.169**	20.54***	-7.131
	(10.55)	(0.146)	(1.022)	(3.280)	(7.881)
Population	3.15e-07	1.41e-08	-6.10e-07***	1.44e-06***	-5.31e-07
	(8.44e-07)	(1.14e-08)	(5.00e-08)	(3.44e-07)	(5.51e-07)
Expenditure on Police	864.2***	3.452**	26.86***	288.0***	545.9***
	(97.10)	(1.582)	(8.125)	(34.46)	(71.49)
Expenditure on Correction	1,044***	13.90***	91.09***	349.5***	589.1***
	(95.71)	(1.681)	(8.508)	(38.89)	(70.83)
Personal Income Rate	-2.796***	-0.0777***	-0.311***	1.531***	-3.939***
	(0.859)	(0.0134)	(0.0681)	(0.261)	(0.680)
Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	-186,819***	-6,593***	-2,738	-20,224	-157,277***
	(52,950)	(815.1)	(4,106)	(16,634)	(39,608)
State Expenditure on Education	-141.5***	-2.395***	-4.505***	-55.52***	-79.05***
	(12.87)	(0.203)	(1.060)	(4.561)	(9.246)
State Expenditure on Health	167.6***	2.414***	3.154**	35.87***	126.1***
	(19.75)	(0.255)	(1.304)	(5.532)	(16.00)
Police Per Capita	69,478***	1,054***	-895.5	28,469***	40,855***
	(8,426)	(140.7)	(709.2)	(2,717)	(6,203)
Observations	1,320	1,320	1,320	1,320	1,320
R-squared	0.598	0.535	0.373	0.661	0.508

Notes: The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the parametric specification (Model 2), the estimate uses the full bandwidth and a third order polynomial to control the forcing variable.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A.3 Parametric Specification Estimates (Property Crime)

Table A.3: The Impact of a Democratic AG on Property Crime

	Property Crime Rate	Burglary Rate	Larceny Rate	Vehicle Theft Rate
Treatment (Democrat Wins)	-12.45	-32.17	-19.25	38.94
	(142.0)	(47.76)	(93.51)	(28.83)
Winner * Term	2.023	-4.957	9.423	-2.371
	(28.18)	(8.743)	(19.07)	(4.875)
Forcing Variable (Margin)	-11.90	1.671	-13.82**	0.250
	(10.51)	(3.783)	(6.759)	(1.822)
Margin (Square)	-0.163	0.0939	-0.302	0.0446
	(0.292)	(0.100)	(0.190)	(0.0524)
Margin (Cube)	-0.000349	0.000801	-0.00156	0.000409
	(0.00205)	(0.000683)	(0.00134)	(0.000378)
Winner * Margin	8.806	-1.539	13.27	-2.909
	(13.52)	(4.699)	(8.714)	(2.522)
Winner * Margin (Square)	0.257	-0.0583	0.253	0.0616
	(0.359)	(0.123)	(0.237)	(0.0773)
WinMar3 * Margin (Cube)	-0.000643	-0.00124	0.00190	-0.00130**
	(0.00258)	(0.000912)	(0.00167)	(0.000526)
Governor is Democrat	71.25	0.501	67.95**	2.676
	(47.94)	(15.97)	(30.91)	(8.491)
Democrats Control Upper House	44.21	57.79***	-19.43	5.615
	(68.35)	(20.62)	(44.18)	(10.87)
Democrats Control Lower House	-21.09	59.09***	-104.5**	24.38**
	(62.03)	(19.70)	(40.52)	(10.66)
Population	-2.09e-05***	-5.47e-06***	-1.56e-05***	9.48e-08
	(4.28e-06)	(1.42e-06)	(2.71e-06)	(8.63e-07)
Expenditure on Police	3,552***	875.8***	2,265***	410.9***
	(646.8)	(201.9)	(417.9)	(120.5)
Expenditure on Correction	3,975***	1,087***	1,953***	936.3***
	(538.5)	(188.4)	(356.7)	(89.25)
Personal Income Rate	-30.27***	-11.47***	-22.06***	3.252***
	(3.828)	(1.238)	(2.624)	(0.869)
Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	257,920	225,933**	-315,996*	348,047***
	(282,512)	(94,730)	(188,209)	(68,141)
Expenditure on Education	-167.7*	-156.3***	148.9***	-160.2***
	(87.26)	(26.91)	(55.37)	(15.50)
Expenditure on Health	1,114***	400.0***	590.4***	123.4***
	(91.14)	(27.47)	(60.91)	(15.07)
Police Per Capita	240,496***	91,048***	123,403***	25,947***
	(38,124)	(13,590)	(25,008)	(8,122)
Observations	1,320	1,320	1,320	1,320
R-squared	0.561	0.571	0.524	0.517

Notes: The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the parametric specification (Model 2), the estimate uses the full bandwidth and a third order polynomial to control the forcing variable.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A.4 Local Linear Specification Estimates (Violent Crime)

Table A.4: The Impact of a Democratic AG on Violent Crime

	Violent Crime Rate	Murder Rate	Sexual Offence Rate	Robbery Rate	Assault Rate
Treatment (Democrat Wins)	-109.368	-1.54	-2.851	-35.589	-69.405
	(37.593)***	(0.550)***	-3.311	(13.391)***	(24.291)***
Governor is Democrat	-4.335	0.265	-1.058	-15.244	11.707
	-17.773	-0.266	-1.483	(6.615)**	-11.784
Democrats Control Upper House	101.555	0.782	3.058	19.137	78.577
	(21.678)***	(0.298)***	-2.245	(7.710)**	(13.971)***
Democrats Control Lower House	6.64	0.708	-6.257	18.908	-6.713
	-21.31	(0.316)**	(2.402)***	(7.056)***	-14.409
Population	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	(0.000)***	(0.000)**	0
Expenditure on Police	1,557.26	4.795	99.278	440.252	1,012.86
	(182.736)***	-3.066	(17.327)***	(59.584)***	(136.100)***
Expenditure on Correction	732.071	13.641	25.481	156.496	536.282
	(155.078)***	(3.418)***	-16.839	(67.549)**	(111.096)***
Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	45,144.28	-2,377.36	-127.346	88,215.81	-40,596.67
	-133,027.95	-2,207.17	-11,696.96	(46,719.710)*	-83,363.99
Expenditure on Education	-62.831	-2.912	2.508	-36.554	-25.841
	(29.244)**	(0.531)***	-2.988	(11.307)***	-19.975
Expenditure on Health	84.9	3.386	5.891	33.57	42.004
	(39.315)**	(0.729)***	-3.961	(15.706)**	-27.21
Personal Income Rate	-10.558	-0.062	-0.356	0.624	-10.762
	(2.125)***	(0.028)**	(0.189)*	-0.705	(1.544)***
Police Per Capita	65,272.87	744.263	-131.254	33,687.02	30,978.51
	(13,936.500)***	(262.466)***	-1,612.24	(5,203.510)***	(10,614.528)***
Winner * Term	1.103	-0.132	1.108	-3.131	3.261
	-9.123	-0.136	-0.922	-3.3	-6.187
Observations	354	354	354	354	354
R-squared	0.68	0.53	0.45	0.76	0.63

*Notes: The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the local linear specification (Model 3), a bandwidth level of 10 is used with a triangular kernel. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

A.5 Local Linear Specification Estimates (Property Crime)

Table A.5: The Impact of a Democratic AG on Property Crime

	Property Total Rate	Burglary Rate	Larceny Rate	Vehicle Theft Rate
Treatment (Democrat Wins)	-124.735	-57.081	-41.832	-25.975
	-225.46	-68.516	-151.485	-50.002
Governor is Democrat	156.668	51.82	110.176	-5.476
	-124.142	-40.742	-79.847	-20.042
Democrats Control Upper House	258.915	125.375	68.89	64.455
	(145.601)*	(44.078)***	-92.656	(23.400)***
Democrats Control Lower House	-260.255	-3.119	-233.735	-23.119
	(148.444)*	-46.312	(96.835)**	-26.498
Population	0	0	0	0
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)*
Expenditure on Police	8,183.98	2,514.24	5,095.66	574.891
	(1,390.207)***	(430.664)***	(976.358)***	(249.195)**
Expenditure on Correction	-1,686.85	-667.731	-1,699.06	679.86
	-1,228.35	-432.426	(850.816)**	(264.100)**
Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	188,816.72	488,743.01	-1,251,450.06	950,911.94
	-730,995.36	(242,349.750)**	(478,444.262)***	(251,377.693)***
Expenditure on Education	-463.714	-250.921	-40.841	-171.781
	(240.165)*	(78.924)***	-152.571	(42.891)***
Expenditure on Health	1,220.39	500.009	668.499	51.19
	(300.291)***	(107.703)***	(186.129)***	-54.061
Personal Income Rate	-39.47	-14.573	-19.238	-5.647
	(11.121)***	(3.424)***	(7.552)**	(2.301)**
Police Rate Per Capita	416,715.46	152,950.70	215,446.00	48,225.30
	(105,117.051)***	(33,137.168)***	(71,630.396)***	(24,166.951)**
Winner * Term	-39.071	-20.891	-12.564	-5.629
	-70.407	-20.077	-48.756	-13.095
Observations	354	354	354	354
R-squared	0.64	0.67	0.6	0.57

Notes: The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. For the local linear specification (Model 3), a bandwidth level of 10 is used with a triangular kernel.
**** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

A.6 Local Linear Specification Estimates for Different Bandwidths (Total Violent Crime)

Table A.5: The Impact of a Democratic AG on Total Violent Crime for Different Bandwidths

	h=10	h=9	h=8	h=7	h=6	h=5
Treatment (Democrat Wins)	-109.368	-111.331	-119.758	-125.848	-140.661	-126.978
	(37.593)***	(39.570)***	(40.253)***	(42.328)***	(44.738)***	(45.643)***
Governor is Democrat	-4.335	-8.613	-17.996	-29.704	-40.172	-51.547
	-17.773	-18.693	-20.213	-22.653	-26.495	(28.777)*
Democrats Control Upper House	101.555	101.117	99.2	96.769	89.635	92.018
	(21.678)***	(22.480)***	(22.786)***	(23.536)***	(24.705)***	(26.097)***
Democrats Control Lower House	6.64	15.109	20.261	21.612	40.704	54.42
	-21.31	-22.388	-23.582	-25.47	-27.428	(30.712)*
Population	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	(0.000)*
Expenditure on Police	1,557.26	1,636.51	1,688.56	1,703.70	1,672.82	1,626.04
	(182.736)***	(192.404)***	(203.021)***	(221.604)***	(249.404)***	(274.337)***
Expenditure on Corrections	732.071	713.937	721.154	674.479	646.941	526.063
	(155.078)***	(158.379)***	(164.171)***	(177.423)***	(196.333)***	(224.978)**
Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	45,144.28	14,737.11	-24,509.61	-47,491.83	-70,939.95	-82,182.29
	-133,027.95	-143,854.39	-150,723.62	-155,047.70	-160,622.87	-169,251.65
Expenditure on Education	-62.831	-58.177	-50.133	-33.804	-11.184	19.569
	(29.244)**	(30.626)*	-31.336	-33.863	-38.728	-47.964
Expenditure on Health	84.9	64.397	40.514	22.204	-21.706	-33.163
	(39.315)**	-42.365	-43.726	-49.832	-61.849	-76.176
Personal Income Rate	-10.558	-10.957	-12.63	-14.773	-14.805	-14.013
	(2.125)***	(2.315)***	(2.648)***	(2.752)***	(2.835)***	(3.037)***
Police Per Capita	65,272.87	63,385.44	68,057.32	81,623.23	86,004.08	92,065.01
	(13,936.500)***	(14,998.666)***	(15,646.078)***	(18,109.378)***	(21,268.486)***	(24,502.213)***
Winner * Term	1.103	1.152	1.103	1.522	1.474	1.446
	-9.123	-9.516	-9.979	-10.528	-11.293	-12.371
Observations	354	316	290	260	218	190
R-squared	0.68	0.7	0.71	0.73	0.76	0.8

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Total Violent Crime Rate when a Democrat AG wins for bandwidth levels. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level and a triangular kernel is used.
**** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

A.7 Local Linear Specification Estimates for Different Bandwidths (Total Property Crime)

Table A.6: The Impact of a Democratic AG on Total Property Crime for Different Bandwidths

	h=10	h=9	h=8	h=7	h=6	h=5
Treatment (Democrat Wins)	-124.735	-99.001	-68.488	7.561	41.627	110.555
	-225.46	-239.73	-249.789	-261.898	-284.88	-296.08
Governor is Democrat	156.668	168.35	166.914	163.801	171.444	139.121
	-124.142	-135.045	-150.009	-171.666	-192.409	-199.446
Democrats Control Upper House	258.915	262.877	262.493	260.372	250.987	249.888
	(145.601)*	(149.774)*	(150.997)*	(151.068)*	-154.728	-179.982
Democrats Control Lower House	-260.255	-280.22	-310.457	-378.974	-368.651	-331.984
	(148.444)*	(157.300)*	(167.902)*	(182.746)**	(203.746)*	-229.419
Population	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.000)**	0	0	0
Expenditure on Police	8,183.98	8,402.31	8,569.72	8,754.39	8,975.12	8,999.08
	(1,390.207)***	(1,507.326)***	(1,619.946)***	(1,822.490)***	(2,115.937)***	(2,392.256)***
Expenditure on Correction	-1,686.85	-1,799.54	-1,968.06	-2,275.51	-3,004.55	-4,025.59
	-1,228.35	-1,319.88	-1,475.41	-1,654.88	-1,835.83	(2,037.154)*
Expenditure on Unemp. Insurance	188,816.72	242,198.64	224,433.21	201,506.71	236,167.64	393,672.89
	-730,995.36	-790,683.72	-862,417.23	-950,103.71	-1,019,554.18	-1,093,720.95
Expenditure on Education	-463.714	-551.978	-597.602	-642.205	-559.81	-343.079
	(240.165)*	(252.611)**	(268.079)**	(298.304)**	-341.045	-390.678
Expenditure on Health	1,220.39	1,239.95	1,204.72	1,050.69	897.557	725.849
	(300.291)***	(338.801)***	(373.773)***	(426.297)**	(518.051)*	-593.855
Personal Income Rate	-39.47	-40.242	-45.216	-57.878	-55.122	-49.285
	(11.121)***	(12.456)***	(15.316)***	(16.327)***	(17.583)***	(19.317)**
Police Per Capita	416,715.46	436,604.96	493,004.46	634,735.10	710,046.64	821,959.47
	(105,117.051)***	(114,329.409)***	(121,768.520)***	(141,182.100)***	(176,307.445)***	(221,262.469)***
Winner * Term	-39.071	-38.038	-41.293	-45.804	-48.667	-49.831
	-70.407	-73.499	-77.459	-82.248	-89.298	-97.769
Observations	354	316	290	260	218	190
R-squared	0.64	0.66	0.68	0.7	0.73	0.76

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Total Violent Crime Rate when a Democrat AG wins for different bandwidth levels. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level and a triangular kernel is used.
**** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

A.8 OLS Estimates for Violent Crime Rate

Table 3: The Impact of a Democrat Attorney General on Violent Crime

	Violent Crime Rate	Murder Rate	Sexual Offence Rate	Robbery Rate	Assault Rate
OLS	-16.62	0.198	-4.382***	-1.433	-11.01
	(14.24)	(0.228)	(1.113)	(4.724)	(10.76)

Notes: This table presents the estimates for Violent Crime Rate. All the covariates specified in the section 4.3 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level.

**** Significant at the 1% level*

*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

A.9 OLS Estimates for Property Crime Rate

Table 4: The Impact of a Democrat Attorney General on Property Crime

	Property Crime Rate	Burglary Rate	Larceny Rate	Vehicle Theft Rate
OLS	-181.6**	-29.47	-162.9***	10.83
	(88.63)	(28.69)	(59.93)	(14.50)

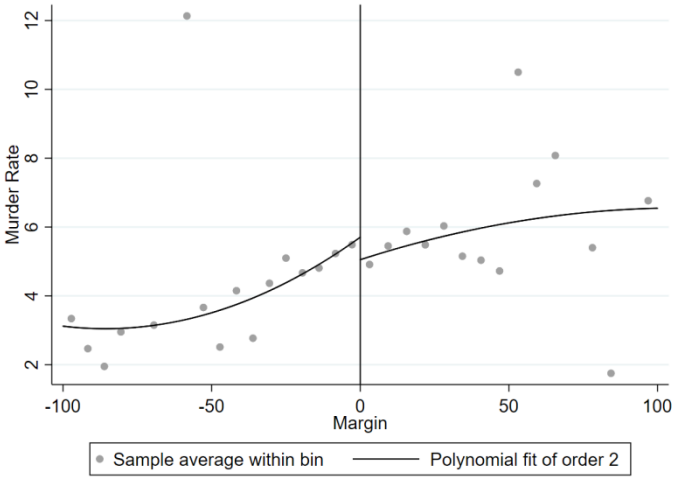
Notes: This table presents the estimates for Property Crime Rate. All the covariates specified in the section 4.3 are used. The estimates are controlled for year fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the state-year level.

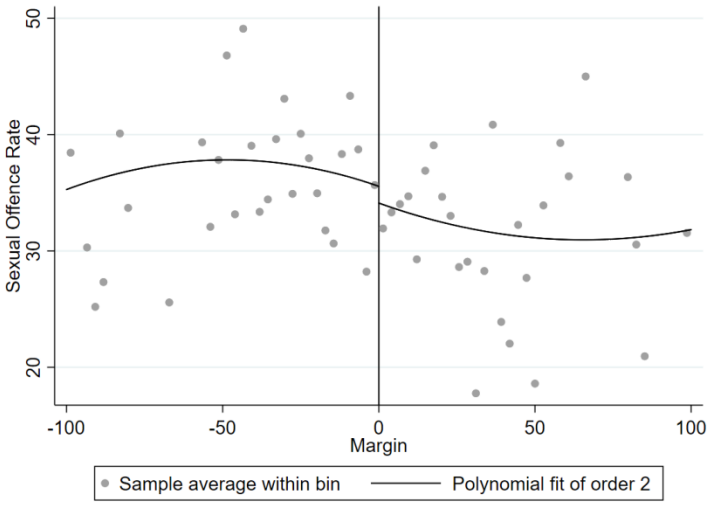
**** Significant at the 1% level*

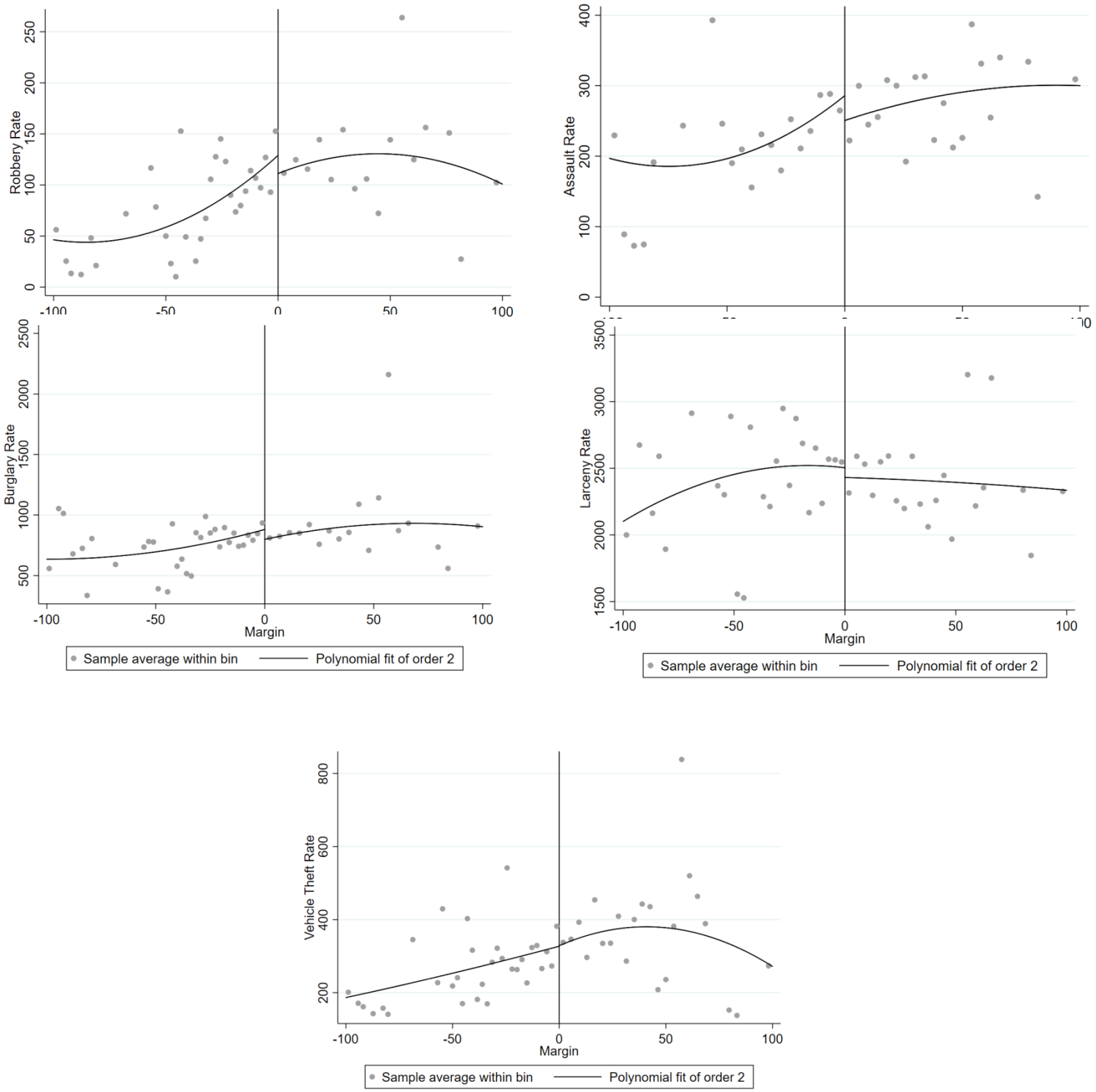
*** Significant at the 5% level*

** Significant at the 10% level*

A.10 Discontinuity Plots







Notes: Graphs were plotted using ***rdplot****. The bins were optimised using the ISME method. Each result uses a second-order polynomial functional form and the full bandwidth is used.*