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THE ROOTS OF THE MODERN AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

Campaign tours have become an essential component of U.S. presidential elections. How and when did they begin? We explore the early history of in-person political campaigning in the United States by reconstructing the first presidential campaign tours from historical newspaper clippings. We analyze the decision to campaign, the determinants of where candidates campaigned, and the outcomes of early in-person campaigns. We document an evolving norm of campaigning. This norm evolved well after the expansion of the railroad network. While a national railroad network was a necessary precondition for campaigning to evolve, our findings point to other factors – such as growing urbanization and the decline of federal patronage machines – playing a more important role in the growth of campaigning. We find evidence that being visited on a campaign tour increased voter turnout in a county. However, we do not find a clear effect of campaign visits of a given candidate on his electoral performance.

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An online appendix is available at <http://www.nber.org/data-appendix/w34447>

1 Introduction

Campaign tours have become an essential component of U.S. presidential elections. During the 2024 election cycle, the Republican and Democratic candidates attended a total of 285 campaign events.¹ Despite its ubiquity and abundant anecdotal records (Segal, 2024), little is known about the emergence of in-person campaigning and the effects it had on voter turnout and electoral performance. We explore the early history of in-person political campaigning in the United States by reconstructing the first presidential campaign tours from historical newspaper clippings. We analyze the decision to campaign, the determinants of where candidates campaigned, and the outcomes of early in-person campaigns.

Before the 1840s, presidential candidates were not expected to campaign at all, in person or otherwise. The general feeling was that the office of the president should be “neither sought nor declined” (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997). While it became more common in the years that followed, the practice of actively campaigning for the presidency remained controversial late into the 19th century (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997). Even as campaigning for the presidency became more normal, the method by which candidates reached the electorate differed. Some candidates used the railroad to make campaign visits all over the country in the run-up to presidential elections. Others decided to stay home and greet visitors with short speeches. This was known as “front-porch campaigning” (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997). By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, large campaign tours had become typical of presidential campaigns.

What caused the shift to in-person presidential campaigning? There are a number of potential explanations, which can roughly be divided into “supply” and “demand” side factors. Certain factors lowered the cost of campaigning, while other factors increased the potential electoral return to campaigning. On the supply side, the shift to in-person presidential campaigning could not have happened without the construction of the railroad. Beginning in the early 1830s, the railroad network grew rapidly, reaching 3,328 miles by

¹<https://www.wvtm13.com/article/where-candidates-campaigned-most-2024-election/62806165> (accessed on Sep 11, 2025). This figure considers official public campaign events for Kamala Harris, Tim Walz, Donald Trump and JD Vance between July 21 and November 4, 2024.

1840 and more than 30,000 miles by 1860 (Taylor, 1951). This represented a massive decline in the cost of long-distance travel, making national campaign tours possible for the first time.

The end of the 19th century saw several institutional changes that may have increased the electoral return to campaigning. The Pendleton Act of 1883 marked the beginning of the end of patronage appointments to federal civil service jobs (Johnson and Libecap, 1994). Federal patronage had been an important mechanism for garnering support for the parties, both financially and at the ballot box. At the same time, print media – which had been dominated by openly partisan publications for much of the 19th century – was becoming less partisan (Gentzkow, Glaeser, and Goldin, 2006). Both of these factors represented a decline in the importance of decentralized party operatives in ensuring local political support. In the absence of these alternatives, conducting in-person campaign tours may have become more attractive.

Another plausible explanation is that candidates gradually learned about the impact of campaigning on electoral outcomes, and this is why the importance of campaigning increased over time. To understand the importance of this channel, it is necessary to document the effects of campaigning on electoral outcomes, such as voter engagement and electoral performance.

We build a unique dataset containing every presidential and vice presidential campaign from 1872 to 1908, which captures the period in which in-person political campaigning became normal. We do this from historical newspaper clippings, using the website newspapers.com. Presidential campaign visits were big news, and were highly likely to be reported in a local or regional paper. We search the database for mentions of presidential and vice-presidential candidates on every day between the party convention in early July and the election in early November, and we collect information from clippings on the whereabouts of these candidates on each day. The end result is a county-year panel that indicates whether each county was visited on a campaign tour in each election year. We combine this dataset with county-year level data on voting behavior, railroad access, demographic composition,

industrial and occupational structure, and other characteristics.

This novel database allows us to conduct several empirical exercises. First, we are able to document changes in the extent of campaigning over time. There is a clear secular trend in the extent of campaigning, with average combined distance travelled by presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the run-up to an election increasing from roughly 6,000 miles in the 1870s to more than 18,000 miles in the 1900s. Perhaps more interesting is the development of the coefficient of variation, which follows an inverse U-shaped pattern over time. This demonstrates an evolving norm of campaigning. Presidential and vice-presidential campaigns move from being uniformly small in the 1870s to uniformly large in the 1900s, with a period in between in which there was a great deal of variation across candidates during the 1880s and 1890s. We additionally examine the characteristics of those candidates who chose to conduct campaigns. We find that younger candidates and vice presidential candidates were more likely to undertake large campaigns, while incumbents were less likely to do so.

We are also able to analyze the determinants of where candidates chose to campaign. This gives some insight into what caused the growth of campaigning. Suppose, for example, that the expansion of the railroad caused national campaign tours to become commonplace. Then, expanding railroad access into a particular county should increase its likelihood of being visited on a campaign. This is something we can test with our dataset. Because we have panel data, we can analyze the characteristics of counties that receive visits conditional on county fixed effects, which strengthens the causal conclusions we can draw.

We find some evidence that candidates chose routes strategically. Even conditional on county and region-year fixed effects, they were more likely to visit counties with a previously close election. And, candidates were more likely to visit more urban counties with more middle-skilled clerical workers. These are the types of counties in which federal patronage machines were most likely to be important, which suggests that the decline of federal patronage may have been a factor driving campaign decisions. Interestingly, we find little evidence that changes in railroad accessibility influenced the likelihood of campaigning in

a given place. While campaigning always occurred by rail, the changes in the density of a railroad network do not positively affect the likelihood of campaigning in a given county. Rather, candidates were travelling to established urban areas with established railroad networks.

Finally, we analyze the consequences of campaigning. We find that counties that were visited in a campaign experienced a significant increase in turnout, ranging between 1.2 and 5.4 percentage points, depending on the specification. The effect is similar in magnitude for counties located along a campaign route. These results are similar across parties, but larger for presidential visits (vis-à-vis vice-presidential visits).

Our results on electoral competition, on the other hand, are less conclusive. There is no consistent effect of campaigning on the electoral performance of the campaigner. We find that Republican vice-presidential candidates tend to improve the relative performance of the Republican ticket, but this result does not survive the inclusion of regional trends. The only effect that is robust to all specifications is the effect of Democratic presidential visits, which reduce the difference between Republican and Democratic votes by 1.2 percentage points (24 percent). These results are likely driven by the extensive campaigns of Theodore Roosevelt in 1900 (R, VP) and William Jennings Bryan in 1896, 1900 and 1908 (D, P).

Our results raise the possibility that the norm of campaigning developed through a process of learning about the effects of campaign visits on voter engagement. If a candidate could boost turnout in a particularly favourable county, it would increase his chances of winning the electoral votes from that state. In addition, we have evidence suggesting that one-sided campaigns – which occurred in years where only one of the two major party candidates campaigned – were more effective at improving electoral performance than were two-sided campaigns. One-sided campaigns are virtually non-existent in the modern era. The ability to observe what happens when a campaign is one-sided is another advantage of our setting. The narrative evidence suggests that candidates in the early 20th century were starting to believe it risky to allow an opponent to run a one-sided election campaign (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997). Our quantitative evidence supports this, largely through the channel

of voter engagement.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we discuss the contribution of this article to the existing literature. In Section 3, we describe the history of campaigning in the 19th century, from secondary sources. In Section 4, we describe the construction of our dataset. In Section 5, we analyze the characteristics of candidates who chose to do campaign tours, while in Section 6 we analyze the choice of campaign stops. In Section 7, we analyze the effect of campaigning on voter turnout and electoral competition. Finally, in Section 8 we discuss how our results help understand the evolution of campaigning in the U.S.

2 Related Literature

There are three main contributions of our article to the literature on the determinants and effects of campaign visits. First, the direct effect of campaigning on turnout has not been well documented in the literature to date. Estimating its causal effect is difficult because campaigning is endogenous to electoral outcomes. Candidates may campaign in places where they believe it will be more effective. For example, [Strömberg \(2008\)](#) shows that swing states with more electoral votes get more visits from presidential candidates during election years. In order to obtain casual estimates of the effect of campaigning on electoral outcomes, it is necessary to identify plausibly exogenous variation in campaigning. One potential source of variation is physical accessibility – some places are simply more difficult to get to than others, and we should expect to see fewer campaign visits in these places. A change in physical accessibility – through, for example, the introduction of a new transportation technology – may facilitate identification of the causal effect of campaigning on electoral outcomes. One example of this is [Selb and Munzert \(2018\)](#), who analyze the effect of Hitler’s campaigning between 1927 and 1933. The authors exploit variation in distance to the nearest airfield, as Hitler chartered a plane to get to some campaign events.

In a paper closely related to ours, [Bugge and Vlachos \(2022\)](#) study the effect of the

1896 campaign of William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate for president, on electoral outcomes. The authors show that the Democratic vote share was higher in counties where Bryan gave a speech during his 1896 campaign, and they offer strong evidence of a causal effect. We will explore the effect of campaigning on electoral performance for *all* campaigns during our sample period. We reproduce the finding that Bryan’s 1896 campaign stops yielded greater Democratic vote shares. However, this results does not hold across campaigns. Other articles have analyzed the effects of more recent US Presidential campaigns on electoral outcomes, with mixed findings. [Heersink and Peterson \(2017\)](#) analyze the campaigns of Truman and Dewey in the 1948 election. They find that only Truman’s visits increased his vote share, while Dewey’s visits had no effect. [Jones \(1998\)](#) and [Holbrook \(2002\)](#) analyze campaigns in the 1980s and early 1990s, finding a positive effect on turnout, while the effect on voteshares is only present among Democratic candidates. [Herr \(2002\)](#) studies the 1996 election, finding a positive effect of Clinton’s visits on voteshares, but only those occurring after October 1st, while no effects for Dole’s. Finally, [Snyder Jr and Yousaf \(2020\)](#) analyze campaign rallies in 2008-2016, and find that only Trump’s rallies had a temporary effect on his support.²

Second, our paper is also related to a broader literature studying the connection between technological change and political participation and competition. There are three main areas in which technological change can impact electoral outcomes. First, changes in the media industry can affect how information is transmitted to voters ([Strömberg, 2015](#)). Previous research finds that voter turnout increased after the introduction of new newspapers ([Gentzkow, Petek, Shapiro, and Sinkinson, 2015](#)) and radio ([Strömberg, 2004](#)), but decreased after the introduction of television ([Gentzkow, 2006](#)) and broadband internet ([Falck, Gold, and Heblich, 2014](#); [Campante, Durante, and Sobbrío, 2018](#)). Even in the early 19th century, voter turnout in the U.S. increased with connection to the telegraph

²Other articles analyze the effect of visits of political and religious leaders as well as religious leaders on various socioeconomic outcomes, such as traffic stops after a Trump rally ([Grosjean, Masera, and Yousaf, 2022](#)), fertility after a Papal visit ([Bassi and Rasul, 2017](#)), the adoption of Protestantism after a visit of Luther ([Becker, Hsiao, Pfaff, and Rubin, 2020](#)) or the adoption of Turkish names after a visit of Atatürk ([Assouad, 2025](#)).

network, which allowed local communities to be kept up to date on news from Washington (Wang, 2025). Second, changes in the voting technology have been shown to have an effect on turnout (Cantoni, Pons, and Schäfer, 2024). For instance, the introduction of electronic voting positively affected turnout (Fujiwara, 2015). This is not the case for early voting: studies show a small positive effect or even a negative effect (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, and Toffey, 2008; Burden, Canon, Mayer, and Moynihan, 2014). The secrecy of the ballot does not seem to improve turnout (Heckelman, 1995); however, changing voters’ perception about it does (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, and Hill, 2013). The secrecy of the ballot can also have an effect on voting behavior itself (Baland and Robinson, 2008). Free mail delivery in the U.S. increased voter turnout during the early 20th century (Perlman and Schuster, 2016). Third, there is an incipient literature analyzing the effects of physical infrastructure on electoral outcomes. Voigtlaender and Voth (forthcoming) find that places closer to the Autobahn construction in Germany had more support for the Nazi regime. Cantoni (2020) shows that an increase in travel distance to polling locations reduces turnout. We are contributing to this literature by constructing candidates’ campaign routes using the existing railroad network and analyzing its effect on political outcomes.

Third, our paper contributes to the recent literature studying the alternative means that candidates’ have to persuade voters. Le Pennec and Pons (2023) analyze TV debates and find no effects on vote choice. Kalla and Broockman (2018) show that personal contact of candidates with voters has zero effect on electoral outcomes. Analyzing François Hollande’s door-to-door visits during his presidential campaign of 2012, Pons (2018) finds that they had no effect on turnout but increased the candidate’s vote share. Spenkuch and Toniatti (2018) find that TV advertising has no effect on turnout but a positive effect on candidates’ voteshares, while Sides, Vavreck, and Warshaw (2022) find that TV advertising has more effect on down-ballot elections than in presidential elections, and that the effect is through persuasion rather than mobilization of partisans. Similarly, Hewitt, Broockman, Coppock, Tappin, Slezak, Coffman, Lubin, and Hamidian (2024) analyze advertising experiments conducted by political campaigns, finding small effects, specially for presidential elections.

Our article complements these findings by showing that campaigning does have an effect on turnout but not a consistent effect on persuasion.

3 Historical background

For much of the 19th century, presidential candidates rarely addressed the public in the run-up to an election. In fact, there was a strong social norm against candidates participating openly in campaign activity. Conventional wisdom in the early 19th century held that the office of the president should be “neither sought nor declined” (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997). The party played a larger role in political campaigning, and it operated through several channels. One was print media. A large majority of newspapers published in the mid-19th century – upwards of 80 percent – were openly partisan (Gentzkow, Glaeser, and Goldin, 2006). The partisan press could be relied on to boost support for a party’s candidate while the candidate himself remained above the fray. Another channel was patronage. This refers to the practice of exchanging material rewards or employment for political loyalty. Patronage “machines” were a dominant force, especially in urban politics, throughout the 19th century (Reid and Kurth, 1992). These patronage machines oversaw an area’s federal civilian labor force, which consisted almost entirely of political appointees. These appointees were expected to participate in campaign activities and to make financial contributions to political campaigns (Johnson and Libecap, 1994). Thus, 19th century political campaigning was largely undertaken by a network of local political media and patronage machines.

The political landscape changed over the course of the 19th century. There was a gradual increase in the share of newspapers with no stated political affiliation. By 1920, 62 percent of political newspapers claimed to be independent (Gentzkow, Glaeser, and Goldin, 2006). The Pendleton Act of 1883 mandated that certain appointments to the public service be “merit based,” which made patronage appointments less common. This institutional development was accompanied by changes in fundamentals which made patronage less effective. Reid and Kurth (1992) account for patronage as the product of heterogeneity in the voting

population, which declined with increasing homogeneity of interests and ease of communication. When individuals in different parts of the country have disparate interests, then it is worthwhile to incur the outreach costs of a large network of party bosses engaged in patronage. When interests converge, it can be more efficient to target groups of voters by way of policies they all prefer. For example, the growth of steam power and electrification led to manufacturing growth and trade, and relatively uniform demand by industrialists for quick mail delivery service and customs clearings. [Johnson and Libecap \(1994\)](#) emphasize the growing costs associated with monitoring local patronage machines. The sheer size of the federal workforce made managing patronage networks infeasible. The federal civil service increased dramatically after the Civil War, from 26,000 in 1851 to 51,000 in 1871 and then 100,000 by 1881 ([Johnson and Libecap, 1994](#)). It became more cost effective to appeal to voters on the basis of general policy goods than to offer patronage appointments.

A reduction in the availability of alternative forms of campaigning may have encouraged presidential candidates to get more involved in campaigning themselves. The feasibility of candidates campaigning also increased during the second half of the 19th century with the expansion of the railroad. The railroad spanned 3,328 miles by 1840, surpassing the canal network. By 1860, the railroad network had grown tenfold, to more than 30,000 miles ([Taylor, 1951](#)). The railroad has been linked to higher trade and regional price convergence ([Donaldson, 2018](#)), higher agricultural land values ([Donaldson and Hornbeck, 2016](#)), urbanization ([Atack, Bateman, Haines, and Margo, 2010](#)), school enrollment ([Atack, Margo, and Perlman, 2011](#)), banking ([Atack, Jaremski, and Rousseau, 2014](#)) and industrialization ([Atack and Margo, 2011](#); [Berger, 2019](#)). The railroad lowered the cost of campaign travel as well. Describing Abraham Lincoln’s first term as state representative, [Starr \(1927\)](#) remarks that he “had made his first journey to Vandalia [Illinois’ state capitol at the time], of seventy-five miles, in a jolty stage and over impossible roads. So a little later when he and the other lawmakers heard of the approach of the railroads, it is not surprising that they welcomed them with open arms and unsound legislation”.³

³[Starr \(1927\)](#) also describes how travelling during the Lincoln-Douglas debates was not always granted for Lincoln due to the availability of passenger trains, as opposed to Douglas who travelled on a special

The social norm against presidential campaigning also eroded over time. One of the early candidates to deviate from this norm was William Henry Harrison in 1840. [Ellis and Dedrick \(1997\)](#) write that, in the early run-up to the 1840 election, Harrison made no public appearances, insisting that “the dignity of the presidency... prevented any man from actively seeking office” (p. 209). He radically changed course in September of 1840, undertaking a month-long speech-giving tour by rail. Interestingly, this appears to have been motivated by a desire to demonstrate to the public that he was not too old for the job, as his detractors claimed. This objective is apparent in the partisan press coverage of his September tour. For instance, the Cincinnati Gazette published the following description of a speech in Dayton, Ohio: “Compared with other men the writer of this has lately seen and heard, less in years than the General, there is not any marked difference of manner or matter. The fire of his eye is not dimmed by age, nor has the strength of his manly intellect suffered in the least. He will go into the Presidential Chair a veteran in wisdom and experience, and he will grasp the helm of state with a steady hand and firm resolution” ([Harrison, 1840](#)).

Andrew Johnson was the first incumbent president to campaign by train ([Segal, 2024](#)). But he was criticized by Congress for lowering the dignity of office, and thus did not win the nomination from the Republican party.

Candidates’ participation in political campaigning became gradually more common during the second half of the 19th century. While some candidates traveled by rail to give speeches, others decided to stay home and greet visitors with short speeches, a strategy that became known as “front-porch” campaigning. The 1896s Presidential campaign is famous for William Jennings Bryan’s ambitious speaking tour as well as William McKinley’s front-porch campaign. Bryan gave 600 speeches during this campaign, attended by roughly 5 million Americans in 27 states. McKinley’s 300 speeches from home were seen by roughly

train: “a special train or a special car was furnished to Judge Douglas; but Mr. Lincoln, when he failed to get transportation on the regular trains in time to meet his appointments, was reduced to the necessity of going as freight. There being orders from headquarters to permit no passenger to travel on freight trains, Mr. Lincoln’s persuasive powers were often brought into requisition. The favor was granted or refused according to the politics of the conductor.”

750,000 people (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997). While Bryan was not the first to undertake a significant campaign tour, his 1896 tour was the most extensive to date.

Campaigning for president remained somewhat controversial into the early 20th century. Criticisms of candidates’ campaigning practices had a distinctly partisan flavor. Ellis and Dedrick (1997) quote Republican John Hay as praising Blaine’s 1884 speaking tour as “bold” and “brilliant” while in 1896 “condemned Bryan for ‘begging for the Presidency as a tramp might beg for a pie’” (p. 213). Figure 1 includes a political cartoon that derides Bryan’s campaign strategy, implicitly connecting his decision to speak directly to the people with populist policies. Even in 1904, Theodore Roosevelt, a gifted campaigner who had undertaken an extensive tour in 1900 as McKinley’s running mate, opted not to take the stump as a sitting president, indicating that political speeches were still considered undignified.

4 Data

4.1 Campaign stops and routes

We generate the first comprehensive database of campaign routes of presidential and vice presidential candidates from 1872 to 1908, inclusive. While there are published accounts of a few notable presidential campaigns from this period,⁴ we are the first to produce a detailed accounting of the physical location of every presidential and vice-presidential candidate on every day between the party convention and the election.⁵

We create our campaign database using the website newspapers.com. This is an online repository for digital images of historical newspapers. The site contains images from more

⁴For instance, William Jennings Bryan published a book about his historic 1896 campaign tours (Bryan, 1897), and this includes a list of speeches as well as a map of his campaign route.

⁵We document campaigns of all candidates who received more than 3% of the popular vote. This includes every Republican and Democratic candidate, as well as one third party candidate. James B. Weaver, who ran for the Greenback party in 1880 and the Populist party in 1892, is the only third party candidate to receive more than 3% of the popular vote during our period. While there were other third party candidates in other elections, none managed to reach this electoral threshold and are thus omitted. We test the sensitivity of our results to omitting all third party candidates.

than 9,000 American newspapers, going back as far as the 18th century. All newspaper articles are searchable.

For each election, we know the names of the major party candidates and the date of each party’s convention, which is where the party’s candidate is formally nominated. We search for mentions of each candidate’s name in U.S. newspapers on every day between the convention and the election. The key insight is that the appearance of a presidential candidate in a county would have been considered newsworthy and would certainly have been noted in a local or regional newspaper. Figure 2 includes an example of such a clipping, about William Jennings Bryan’s 1896 presidential campaign. Candidate visits were frequently reported in multiple newspapers. We use these newspaper searches to generate a chronological list of campaign stops for every presidential and vice-presidential candidate.

The accuracy of our method can be verified by checking our routes against secondary sources. Campaign histories have been written about select presidential campaigns, such as that of William Jennings Bryan in 1896. Figure 3 superimposes a map of Bryan’s 1896 campaign as reconstructed from newspaper clippings over a map published in Bryan (1897), a book recounting his historic campaign tour. There is more or less perfect overlap between these two routes.

Our database does not just contain a list of campaign stops. It also contains campaign *routes*. We construct campaign routes by connecting campaign stops, in chronological order, along the railroad network. It is clear from the press coverage that campaigning took place exclusively by rail. We assume that candidates took the most direct route between consecutive stops. We use GIS data from Atack (2017), who digitizes maps of the railroad network from approximately every five years from 1840 to 1890, except for the 1850s where maps were available every two years. We describe the precise method for imputing campaign routes in Appendix A. Appendix B contains maps of all presidential and vice-presidential campaign routes from 1872-1908. Table 1 shows the list of campaigns included in our data. It also shows candidates’ party, age, number of states and counties visited, and distance

traveled, in miles. Panel A of Table A.1 in the Appendix shows descriptive statistics for our measures of campaign stops and routes used in the paper.

4.2 Electoral outcomes and county characteristics

Data on electoral outcomes are from [Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale \(2006\)](#). These are county-level presidential election returns data, indicating the number of votes each candidate in each election received. These data also include voter turnout, which is the number of votes cast divided by the eligible population, which is linearly interpolated between census years.

We use [Atack \(2017\)](#) to measure railroad density at the county level over time. The number of local newspapers in each county was constructed using data from the U.S. Newspaper Directory of the Library of Congress, generously provided by the Bill Lane Center for the American West, Stanford University.

All remaining county-level variables come from the U.S. Census. Whenever possible, these are taken from the published county-level census, digitized by [Haines \(2010\)](#). Certain variables – like the occupational distribution at the county level – are not available in the published census. We construct these from full count census microdata ([Ruggles, Fitch, Goeken, Jacker, Nelson, Roberts, Schouweiler, and Sobek, 2021](#)). All census variables are linearly interpolated between decades.

Panel B of Table A.1 in the Appendix shows descriptive statistics for all control variables used in the paper.

5 Who campaigned?

We have collected information on 11 presidential election campaigns spanning more than 40 years. Table 1 shows all presidential and vice-presidential candidates from these elections. The table presents data on the candidate’s age and party. It reports the number of states and counties visited by each candidate, as well as distance traveled on campaigns. This information comes from our constructed campaign routes, which are described in the

previous section.

Figure 4 plots the distance traveled and number of counties visited by presidential candidates in our sample. We can broadly divide candidates into three classes. The first consists of avid campaigners: Blaine, Bryan (thrice), Taft, and Weaver (twice). These candidates traveled more than 6,000 miles and visited at least 40 counties. The second class consists of candidates who did an intermediate amount of campaigning: Cleveland (twice), Garfield, Grant, Greeley, Hayes, Harrison (twice), McKinley in 1900, Parker, Seymour, and Tilden. The third class consists of candidates who did very little traveling. When candidates in this third class did travel, it was usually between their home and vacation residences. These candidates are Cleveland in 1892, Hancock, McKinley in 1896, and Roosevelt.

The extent of campaigning broadly increased over time. However, there is substantial variation in the extent of campaigning across candidates within decades, especially in the 1880s and 1890s. Two of the most extensive presidential campaigns occurred in the 1880s (Blaine in 1884 and Weaver in 1880), while two of the least extensive campaigns occurred after 1890 (McKinley in 1896 and Roosevelt in 1904). A clearer time trend emerges when we combine presidential and vice-presidential campaign tours in Figure 5. The top tercile of combined presidential and vice-presidential campaigns occurred almost exclusively after 1890. At this point, there are large campaigns for virtually every ticket, although whether the presidential or vice-presidential candidate is the dominant campaigner varies by ticket.

The difference between Figures 4 and 5 reflects the tendency for incumbent presidential candidates to travel less. With the exceptions of Harrison and McKinley, all incumbents traveled less than they did when they were running for the first time. Roosevelt’s 1904 campaign is an interesting example of this tendency. Roosevelt campaigned as McKinley’s running mate in 1900. Nonetheless, he was the incumbent president in 1904 because McKinley was assassinated in 1901. He is by far the candidate with the most miles traveled during the 1900 campaign (roughly 25,000). However, in 1904, he is classified as a “stayer,” with fewer than 300 miles traveled and 4 counties visited. Roosevelt explicitly changed his behavior because he thought it would be inappropriate for a sitting president to take the

stump (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997).⁶

In Figure 6, we plot the mean number of counties visited and distance travelled among combined presidential and vice-presidential campaign tours by decade. We also plot the coefficient of variation. This figure shows a clear secular increase in the extent of campaigning over the period. It also shows an inverse U-shaped pattern in variation in campaigning over time. This points to an emerging norm of campaign touring. The 1880s and 1890s were a period of transition, in which some candidates embarked on large campaign tours but many others did not. By the 1900s, campaign tours were a relatively established political norm.

To further explore the determinants of campaigning, we estimate the following linear regression model of ticket-level campaigning.

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + Pres_{it} + X_{it}\beta + \delta_t + e_{it} \quad (1)$$

Y_{it} is a measure of the extent to which candidate i campaigned in election year t . We estimate the model using two measures of campaigning: the number of counties visited, or the log of miles traveled. $Pres_{it}$ is an indicator equal to one if the candidate is running for president. X_{it} is a matrix of candidate characteristics, including age, age squared, party, region of birth, and occupation.

Table 2 contains results from these regressions. The dependent variable is the number of counties visited in columns 1-3, or log miles travelled in columns 4-6. The results show that presidential candidates travel fewer miles than vice-presidential candidates (columns 4-5), although the difference is not statistically significant when we include ticket fixed effects (column 6). There is no significant difference in the number of counties visited. There is some suggestive evidence that younger candidates campaign more (again, it does not

⁶He did travel extensively in 1903, in a trip later dubbed “The Great Loop Tour” (Blake, 2020). Roosevelt avoided calling it a campaign tour, and wrote his speeches himself so that they would not appear as partisans. Blake (2020) recounts that in the first stop of his tour (Chicago), Republican party members had planned that only them should greet him at the station and attend a banquet in his honor. When alerted of these plans, Roosevelt “dashed off telegrams to the city’s Republican Party stating that if Mayor Carter Harrison Jr. and other Democrat-elected leaders were not included, he would simply scratch Chicago entirely from his trip.” Because the trip occurred before he had secured the nomination, we have not included it in our dataset.

survive the inclusion of ticket fixed effects), and there are no party-based differences in the propensity to campaign.

Our analysis of the decision to undertake large campaign tours does not point to individual factors that strongly predict campaigning, aside from incumbency. Rather, it illustrates a gradual shift in political norms that occurred over the course of the 1880s and 1890s. By the end of the 1900s, a norm of campaigning during presidential elections seems to have been established.

6 Where did candidates campaign?

In this section, we characterize the counties that were visited by presidential candidates. Figure 7 plots the share of counties that receive a presidential campaign visit, unweighted and weighted by county population. The unweighted share (Panel A) captures the share of counties that are visited, and the weighted share (Panel B) captures the share of the population living in a county that is visited. In the early 1870s, very few counties received presidential visits. However, counties that did receive visits were typically very populous. For example, in 1872, only three percent of counties in the United States were visited. Nonetheless, 15 percent of the U.S. population lived in counties that received a visit in that year. In the run-up to the 1908 election, 12 percent of counties were visited on presidential campaign tours, and a full 33 percent of the U.S. population lived in counties that were visited. The northeast and midwest were significantly more likely to be visited than other regions of the country, and this remains true throughout the sample period.

Table 3 contains mean characteristics of counties that were and were not visited during each decade of our sample period. Visited counties (even columns) had a denser railroad network than counties that were not visited (odd columns), although this difference became less dramatic over time. In the 1870s, the mean visited county had almost twice the railroad coverage (measured as the share of the county’s area located within roughly three miles, or five kilometres of a railroad) as the mean non-visited county. In the 1900s, this ratio had

fallen to 1.4. Visited counties were substantially more likely to have had a close previous election, and this remains true through the period. Visited counties were significantly larger, more urban, more white, more literate, and had a larger share of workers employed in manufacturing.

These descriptive figures are difficult to interpret. First, there are substantial differences in the likelihood of being visited across regions. County characteristics, such as the urban population share, also vary systematically by region. For example, the urban population share is much higher in the northeast than it is the south, and the northeast was a much more popular campaign destination than the south. So, were visited counties more likely to have large urban populations because candidates preferred to campaign in cities or large towns? Or, is this simply a by-product of candidates' preference for campaigning in the Northeast and Midwest, which happened to be more urban than the South?

To say something more concrete about causality, we run a series of regressions, at the county-year level, of an indicator for a county being visited on a matrix of salient county characteristics (which vary across time and space). We include a series of fixed effects, which allows us to approach an estimate of the causal effect of these characteristics on the likelihood of being visited. Our most stringent specification is:

$$D_{ct}^{stop} = \alpha + X_{ct}\beta + \delta_{rt} + \gamma_c + e_{ct} \quad (2)$$

Here, X_{ct} is a matrix of county characteristics; δ_{rt} are region-by-year fixed effects; and γ_c is a county fixed effect. Thus, β captures the effect of a change in X in a particular county, controlling for region-specific annual shocks to both X and the likelihood of being visited. We cluster standard errors at the county level.

In addition to offering descriptive evidence about where candidates chose to campaign, this section aims to shed light on the drivers of the growth of campaigning. The basic argument is as follows. Suppose a certain factor, X , makes campaigning more attractive, and the growth in X over time is a factor contributing to the growth in campaigning. Then, in the cross-section, counties in which X is larger should be more likely to be visited on a

presidential campaign.

We are especially interested in the relative importance of supply and demand factors in affecting the growth of campaign travel. An obvious supply-side factor is the cost of travel, which was greatly affected by the growth of the railroad network during the 19th century. It is clear that the existence of the railroad was necessary for national campaign touring. There was no other way to travel the country in a timely fashion. To this point, every campaign stop has a railway station. Moreover, many newspaper clippings we use to construct campaign routes make explicit reference to the way in which the candidate travelled there. It is always by rail.⁷

On the demand side, we consider county characteristics that might make campaigning in a particular place more desirable. One obvious factor is electoral competitiveness. This affects the return to visiting a county. If a county is a safe bet for a given party, there is probably no benefit attached to visiting that county. However, if the previous election in that county was close (say, a margin of victory of less than 10 percentage points), a visit from the presidential candidate has the potential to change the result in that county. Voter turnout may also matter for decisions about where to visit.

Outside of electoral variables, we consider socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of counties that may affect the return to visiting them on a campaign. Some of these have an intuitive theoretical impact on the gains from campaigning. For instance, it may be beneficial to visit counties with a larger urban population share, as greater population density increases the share of voters exposed to a single campaign visit. In other cases, it is useful to think about how campaign visits may have complemented or substituted for more traditional approaches to garnering votes.

Newspaper media was an alternative method of reaching voters during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. William McKinley gave hundreds of political speeches during his 1896 presidential campaign, all from his home in Canton, Ohio. A rotating cast of visitors heard these speeches live; however, many more had access to the text via print media. To

⁷There is one campaign stop that is not connected to the railroad. The newspaper article that mentions this stop explicitly says that the candidate made a special trip to this location by boat.

give a colorful example, McKinley was visited by several thousand cyclists during October 1896, mostly members of cycling advocacy clubs such as the League of American Wheelmen (Taylor, 2008). In an effort to court the ‘bicycle bloc,’ McKinley gave a speech in favor of better roads for cyclists to multiple such groups of visitors. The speech was titled “A Poem in Metal,” and the complete text was published in several newspapers (see, for example, the Lincoln Evening Call, October 18, 1896). If newspapers exposed voters to the candidate’s words without seeing him speak, then newspaper access and campaign visits may have been substitutes, in which case we should expect fewer campaign visits in places with greater newspaper density. On the other hand, local newspaper coverage of a campaign visit may make it more salient to voters, thus increasing its impact. Then, newspapers and campaign visits would be complementary, and we should expect more visits in places with greater newspaper density.

Regional politics likely played a role in early campaigning decisions. The South was deeply uncompetitive during this period. The Democratic party – at the time, the party of the southern white elite – was the dominant force in the region, owing in large part to measures that effectively disenfranchised the large Black population. Institutions like poll taxes and literacy tests, as well as extrajudicial tactics such as lynchings, acted to suppress the Black vote, and were more common in areas with a larger Black population (Naidu, 2012; Kousser, 1974; Eli and Salisbury, 2016; Cook, Logan, and Parman, 2018; Testa and Williams, 2025; Jones, Troesken, and Walsh, 2025). These measures may have limited the return to campaigning. As such, we investigate the relationship between a county’s racial composition and the probability of being visited on a campaign. A priori, the fact that southern counties were much less likely to find themselves on a campaign route than were counties in the Northeast or Midwest suggests that this channel may be important.

The growth of in-person campaigning coincided with a decline in the importance of patronage in federal elections. Here, patronage refers to the practice of appointing party members to the federal bureaucracy in exchange for helping to deliver the vote and contributing a share of earnings to the party’s political activities. This was a major vehicle for

party fundraising. Patronage diminished in importance with the Pendleton Act of 1883, which required certain public service appointments to be merit based and not political. The share of federal public service appointments required to be merit based increased gradually, from 10% in 1883 to more than 50% by 1905 (Johnson and Libecap, 1994). The decline in federal patronage has been explained in several ways. Reid and Kurth (1992) argue that patronage is an efficient system when different localities have disparate interests. As regional interests converge – due, for instance, to the growth of manufacturing and interregional trade – it becomes more efficient for candidates to offer general political goods than to cater to individual districts through a complex and costly patronage network. Johnson and Libecap (1994) emphasize increasing costs of monitoring local patronage machines, due largely to territorial expansion and population growth. To investigate the importance of the decline in patronage in encouraging in-person campaigning, we look at a few county-level characteristics, including the urban population share and the county occupational structure. The decline in patronage would have had the largest impact in more urban areas with greater public sector employment. It is possible that candidates preferred to visit counties in which this traditional method of garnering votes was in decline.

The introduction of the secret ballot, which occurred at the state level during this period, may have changed electoral behavior and the return to campaigning (Rusk, 1970). We investigate the relationship between the state-level implementation of the secret ballot and the likelihood of campaigning (Heckelman, 1995).

We report coefficients from a regression of D_{ct}^{stop} on a series of county characteristics in Figures 8-10. We report coefficients from five specifications: (1) including only year fixed effects, a control for distance from Washington, DC, and the indicated county characteristics; (2) adding all other county characteristics; (3) adding state fixed effects; (4) adding county fixed effects; (5) adding a region-specific linear time trend. In Figure 8, we report two different methods of measuring railroad density. The first is the share of the county that is within roughly three miles, or five kilometres, of a railroad. This is the default version that we include as a control for the other coefficients reported in these figures. The second

is a measure of the cost of transportation from Washington, DC, based on [Donaldson and Hornbeck \(2016\)](#).⁸

With respect to transportation, places with greater railroad density are more likely to be visited, even controlling for year fixed effects. However, this does not survive the inclusion of competing county-level controls, such as population and urban concentration. Moreover, when county fixed effects are included, the coefficient on railroad density becomes *negative*, indicating that counties that experienced growth in their railroad network were *less* likely to be visited.

Electoral variables have a more expected impact on the probability of a campaign visit. These are also reported in Figure 8. Candidates were more likely to visit counties in which the margin of victory in the last election was fewer than 10 points. Candidates were more likely to visit counties with higher turnout in the previous election, but this does not survive the inclusion of county fixed effects. Candidates were more likely to visit places with a secret ballot in place, but this does not survive the inclusion of county characteristics and remains insignificant with additional fixed effects.

The impact of select county characteristics on the probability of being visited are reported in Figure 9. These are linearly interpolated between census years. Our results show that candidates targeted more urban counties, a finding that is robust to the inclusion of all controls and fixed effects. County demographics seem to matter as well: having a larger white and native-born population share predicts being visited on a presidential campaign. Having more newspapers also predicts being visited during a campaign, suggesting that, on net, media and campaign stops were complementary.

In Figure 10, we explore the relationship between a county’s occupational structure and campaign stops. The most dramatic and robust finding is that the share of the workforce in lower-skilled white-collar occupations (e.g. clerical and sales jobs) is associated with an

⁸The cost to travel from A to B depends on two factors: the distance between A and B and the extent of railroad connection between A and B . The lowest cost way to travel is always by rail. If B does not have a railroad connection, the lowest cost way to travel from A is to cover as much distance as possible by rail and the remainder by wagon, which costs 35 times more per unit of distance than rail. See Appendix A.1 for more details of the construction of these variables.

increased likelihood of being visited during a campaign. This effect is driven by clerical rather than sales occupations.⁹

Federal patronage appointments were typically clerical jobs given out in cities. For example, post offices were major employers of federal workers, and these jobs were largely clerical in nature (Aneja and Xu, 2024). Campaign visits were likely to occur in counties with a larger urban population share and in which there were more clerical workers. Thus, it is entirely possible that candidates preferentially visited places in which federal patronage was happening on a larger scale. It is difficult to tell from data what the motivation was. Candidates may have been conducting oversight of urban patronage machines. Or they may have been directly courting the votes of federal clerical workers who were no longer winnable through patronage, as the importance of this institution waned.

In summary, our results provide several insights into the determinants of campaign routes during this period. Strikingly, improvements in a county’s railroad accessibility did not make them more likely to be visited. This suggests that accessibility was not a limiting factor in candidates’ decisions about where to go. In other words, presidential and vice-presidential candidates were not “supply constrained.” It seems that the construction of the railroad was a necessary but not sufficient condition for campaigning to take hold. The growth of campaigning lagged substantially behind the construction of the railroad.

On the other hand, candidates seem to have made intentional choices about which counties to visit based on their anticipated electoral return. They visited more contested counties. They also visited counties with particular socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, including urban counties with many clerical workers. Campaign routes were largely “demand driven.” This raises the natural question of what generated the increase in demand for campaigning. It may be that a slow process of learning the outcomes of campaigning drove its widespread adoption. We explore these outcomes in the next section.

⁹Appendix Figure C.1 further disaggregates this occupational category. The share of the workforce in a sales occupation has no significant impact on the likelihood of being visited.

7 What were the effects of in-person campaigning?

In this section, we explore the relationship between campaign visits and electoral outcomes at the county level. Before investigating the causal effect of campaigning on electoral outcomes, we present some suggestive evidence about the relationship between campaigning and outcomes in aggregate. Then, we analyze the effect of campaigning on turnout and electoral competition separately.

7.1 Campaigning and electoral outcomes in aggregate

Figure 11 plots voter turnout in Panel A and the share of the national popular vote to the Republican candidate in Panel B. Both panels plot the same series for the entire country and for the entire country excluding the South. We do this because our period of analysis overlaps with the enactment of measures intended to disenfranchise Black voters in southern states, and these measures affected both turnout and partisan vote shares (Kousser, 1974). While Republican vote shares do not obey much of a secular time trend, there is a clear decline in voter turnout over the period, particularly following the 1890s, which is not limited to the South. This is documented in the literature, and may be partially driven by a reduction in fraudulent voting behavior over time (Burnham, 1986).

Figure 12 plots national turnout against total distance travelled by presidential and vice presidential candidates in a single election year. Even when the South is excluded from this scatter plot (Panel B), there is a clear negative relationship between overall voter turnout and the extent of campaigning. This is not surprising, however, as the downward trend in voter turnout coincided with an upward trend in the extent of campaigning. We investigate the relationship between campaigning and voter turnout more thoroughly later in this section.

How was campaigning related to electoral performance? It is not obvious at first glance that campaigning improved the performance of individual candidates. In fact, most of the famous early campaigners (e.g. Greeley in 1872, Blaine in 1884, Bryan in 1896, 1900, and

1908) were not elected. In Figure 13 we plot popular vote share against campaign distance travelled at the ticket-year level, and there is evidence of a weak positive relationship between campaign distance travelled and electoral performance at the national level. In Figure 14, we plot the gap in popular vote share (Republican - Democrat) against the gap in campaign distance travelled (again, Republican - Democrat). Here, there is slightly stronger suggestive evidence that campaigning *more* than one’s opponent may have helped at the ballot box. Again, we investigate this in more detail later in the section.

7.2 Turnout

We estimate linear fixed effects models of the impact of campaign visits on voter turnout. Our most stringent empirical specification is:

$$y_{ct} = \alpha + \phi D_{ct}^{campaign} + X_{ct}\beta + \delta_{rt} + \gamma_c + e_{ct} \quad (3)$$

y_{ct} is voter turnout in county c in election year t . $D_{ct}^{campaign}$ is an indicator constructed in three alternative ways. The first is equal to one if county c was visited by a presidential or vice-presidential candidate in year t ($D^{campaign} = D^{stop}$); the second is equal to one if the route connecting candidate c ’s campaign visits intersects county c ($D^{campaign} = D^{route}$). The third is the intersection between the first two: it is equal to one if *either* a stop or the route are in county c ($D_{campaign} = D^{stop+route}$). Our preferred specification is the latter, as it should include any stops that are missed in the newspaper record.¹⁰ Moreover, when describing Bryan’s 1896 campaign tour, Segal (2024) recounts that the candidate “was awakened in the small hours of the morning to wave from his observation platform to enthusiastic crowds gathered at tiny country depots along his route”. Thus, campaign routes might have a direct effect on mobilizing voters to the polls.

X_{ct} is a matrix of county characteristics; δ_{rt} is a region-by-year fixed effect; and γ_c is

¹⁰This may occur if a stop was unscheduled, or if the candidate only waved or shook hands with the crowd but did not give a speech. For instance, Hilpert (2015) describes several unscheduled stops during Roosevelt’s 1900 “whistle-stop” campaign. These incidental visits are more arguably exogenous to voter turnout.

a county fixed effect. We generally estimate this equation using OLS, except when X_{ct} includes lagged turnout, in which case we use the Arellano-Bond estimator (Arellano and Bond, 1991). In Equation 3, ϕ captures the change in expected turnout in a county that is visited during a campaign, holding county characteristics (fixed and unobservable, as well as variable and observable) constant, and controlling for region-specific annual shocks to both turnout and the likelihood of being visited. We cluster standard errors at the county level.

7.2.1 Main result

We present our main results graphically in Figure 15. Full regression results are presented in Appendix D. Figure 15 plots the coefficient on $D_{campaign}$ from equation 3, progressively adding fixed effects to the regressions. The top panel, our preferred specification, includes counties with campaign stops and those that were part of the campaign route in the treatment group. The middle panel includes only campaign stops. The bottom panel includes only counties on a campaign route, thus excluding counties with campaign stops from the treatment group.

Across specifications in the top panel, counties with campaign visits experience significantly higher voter turnout. The coefficients shrink as geographic fixed effects are added, suggesting a degree of selection in the choice of campaign locations. Even in the most stringent specification, which controls for lagged turnout and region-specific annual shocks, receiving a campaign visit increases voter turnout by 1.1 percentage points, which implies a 1.6 percent increase in turnout. Results in the middle panel are strikingly similar, although they are smaller in magnitude. The bottom panel shows similar results, although the effect is no longer significant at the 5% level when regional trends are included.

Robustness

The results in Figure 15 are estimated including all counties in our sample. Thus, we are comparing counties on a campaign route to all others, even those that are very unlikely

to be visited. Appendix Figure C.2 restricts the control group to counties that neighbor ever-visited counties. Even though most estimates are smaller in magnitude than in our benchmark specification, they are remarkably similar once geographic fixed effects are included. For instance, the estimated effect of campaigning conditional on county fixed effects is 1.15 percentage points when the control group is restricted to counties that neighbor treatment counties, and it is 1.66 percentage points in the baseline specification.

We investigate the robustness of our results to omitting the South in Appendix Figure C.3. Measures aimed at disenfranchising Black voters in southern states coincided with a secular increase in campaigning, and little campaigning occurred in that region. Thus, we are concerned that the positive relationship between turnout and campaign visits may be driven by developments unrelated to campaigning in the southern U.S. Excluding the South reduces the coefficient on campaign visits, especially for specifications with fewer geographic fixed effects. However, the positive relationship between turnout and campaign visits remains quite robust.

Finally, we are concerned that campaign visits may be endogenous to turnout, and our fixed effects model may not fully control for this. For instance, there may be time-varying, unobservable county characteristics that jointly affect campaigning and turnout. To account for this possibility, we implement an instrumental variable strategy that exploits exogenous variation in campaign visits generated by railroad accidents. The rationale behind this approach is that campaigns may have been re-routed away from the site of a recent accident. Thus, a railroad accident in county c exogenously lowers its probability of being visited. Our instruments are railroad accident-related deaths, and the interaction between this and railroad density.¹¹ We include details about this exercise in Appendix E. We do not have data on railroad accidents for all election years, only 1896, 1900 and 1904. When the sample is restricted to these election years, the estimated effect of campaigning on turnout in our baseline fixed effects model becomes small and insignificant. (See columns 1-3 of Appendix Table E.2). Nonetheless, we estimate a 2SLS model of the effect of campaigning on turnout

¹¹A similar strategy is used in Garcia-Jimeno, Iglesias, and Yildirim (2022) to study the spread of the Temperance Crusade.

for these election years. These results appear in columns 4-6 of Appendix Table E.2). The instrument performs well, with a first stage F-statistic above 10. The results are not as precise as our benchmark estimates, but they do provide support for the positive effect of campaign stops on turnout. For example, in column 6 (in which we restrict the sample to ever-visited counties), we find that a campaign stop in a county increases turnout by 4 percentage points (with a p-value of 0.11).

7.2.2 Heterogeneous effects

Party affiliation

In Figure 16, we investigate the effect of campaigning on turnout by party.¹² The results indicate that Republican visits have a positive and statistically significant effect on turnout in all specifications. For Democrats, the effect is smaller and becomes insignificant when county fixed effects or lagged turnout are included. Visits from third parties, which includes Greenback and Populist candidates, have a positive and significant effect in most specifications.

Presidential vs Vice-Presidential

Figure 17 separately estimates the effect of visits by presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Controlling for regional trends and county fixed effects, visits by the presidential candidate have a positive and significant effect on turnout. Visits from the vice-presidential candidate do not have a significant effect on turnout.

Election year

We analyze heterogeneity by election year in Figure 18. As these regressions are run separately by election year, the samples contain a single observation for each county. Thus, we omit county fixed effects but include continuous county controls and state fixed effects.

¹²Figures C.4 and C.5 in the Appendix replicate Figure 16 for only stops and only routes, respectively. Figure C.6 omits the South.

We group elections according to which party engaged in intensive campaigning in that year: only the Republican candidate (green diamonds), only the Democratic candidate (blue squares), only the third party candidate (yellow triangle), or multiple parties (red circles). The estimates are much less precise, potentially due to smaller sample sizes, and the reliance on cross-sectional variation means that identification is weaker. Still, Figure 18 indicates a broadly similar effect on turnout across election years.¹³

Timing of campaign visits

In Figure 19, we investigate whether the timing of a campaign visit impacted its effect on turnout. We classify a county as “visited early” if all visits to that county during an election cycle happened before October 1st. A county is considered “visited late” if all visits occurred after October 1st. The category “other” is reserved for counties visited both early and late. Notice that almost two thirds of visits occur late in the campaign season. About one quarter of visited counties are only visited early in the campaign, while 12 percent of counties are visited both early and late. However, Figure 19 shows that the effect of these visits is similar regardless of the timing. For example, when considering the estimates with county fixed effects, late visits have the smallest effect (1.16 percentage points), followed by early visits (2.17 percentage points). Counties visited both early and late have the largest effect, with an increase in turnout of 3.92 percentage points.

Taken together, these findings suggest that campaigning had a positive, causal effect on voter engagement. While there is no relationship between the extent of campaigning and voter turnout at the national level, this masks a significant local effect. Counties that received campaign visits – even short or incidental campaign stops – experienced an increase

¹³Notable exceptions are 1892 and 1904. The 1892 election is peculiar, as candidates from three parties conducted in-person campaigns. Interestingly, it seems their visits did not generate enthusiasm among the electorate. The 1904 campaign, on the other hand, saw the Republican ticket travelling significantly more than its Democratic counterpart. However, the main campaigner on the Republican ticket was the vice-presidential candidate, Charles Fairbanks. The (very popular) presidential candidate, Theodore Roosevelt, did not campaign widely, as he was the incumbent president at the time. This may explain why campaign visits did not increase turnout during this election year.

in voter turnout, and this effect is robust across parties and decades. This may explain why campaigning became a common practice by the early 20th century.

7.3 Electoral competition

Next, we explore the effect of campaigning on the margin of victory at the county level. Our most stringent specification is:

$$mv_{ct} = \alpha + \phi_R D_{ct}^{campaign,R} + \phi_D D_{ct}^{campaign,D} + \phi_O D_{ct}^{campaign,O} + X_{ct}\beta + \delta_{rt} + \gamma_c + e_{ct} \quad (4)$$

Here, mv_{ct} is equal to the Republican vote share minus the Democratic vote share in county c in year t . The campaign indicators are disaggregated by party: $D_{ct}^{campaign,R}$ is equal to 1 if county c was visited by a Republican candidate in year t , $D_{ct}^{campaign,D}$ is defined similarly for Democratic candidates, and $D_{ct}^{campaign,O}$ for third parties. All other variables are defined as in Equation 3. If visiting a county causes the candidate’s vote share to increase, we should see $\phi_R > 0$ and $\phi_D < 0$.

7.3.1 Main result

We report results from our baseline specification in Figure 20 (full regression results are presented in Table D.6). In this specification, a county is part of a campaign if it is either a campaign stop or on a campaign route.¹⁴ Our results underscore the importance of selection into being visited during a presidential campaign, especially for Republican candidates. Without county fixed effects, we estimate positive and significant values for ϕ_R , suggesting that a Republican candidate visiting a county improves Republican performance. However, this effect vanishes when we include county fixed effects, and even changes sign when we control for lagged margin of victory. Thus, it appears that Republican candidates visited places where they had historically performed well. However, visiting these counties did not

¹⁴We repeat this specification using only stops and only routes in Figures C.8 and C.9. We also repeat this exercise using only neighboring counties as controls in Figure C.10, and omitting the South in Figure C.11. The results are virtually unchanged.

improve their performance relative to past years.

For Democrats, the picture is slightly different. When no county fixed effects are included, there is no significant relationship between Democratic campaign visits and Democrats' performance. However, when county fixed effects are included, ϕ_D has the expected sign and is significantly different from zero. Thus, when a Democratic candidate visits a particular county, the performance of the Democratic candidate improves relative to that county's average. The effect is sizeable. A county on a Democrat's campaign route experiences an improvement in Democratic performance of 1.5 percentage points, which is 28 percent of the mean margin of victory. Still, this result does not survive the inclusion of region by year fixed effects, or the inclusion of lagged margin of victory. So the results are not totally clear. The picture looks similarly muddy when we restrict the control group to neighboring counties or omit the South.

7.3.2 Heterogeneous effects

Presidential vs Vice-Presidential

Figure 21 shows results of splitting visits into those by presidential (P) and vice-presidential (VP) candidates. For the Republican party, our results show a stark difference between the effect of visits by the two candidates: While vice-presidential visits display positive and significant coefficients for ϕ_R even after controlling for county fixed effects, presidential visits have a small and statistically insignificant effect that even becomes negative and significant when county fixed effects are included. This effect is likely driven by the extensive campaigning carried out by Republican vice-presidential candidates Roosevelt in 1900 and Fairbanks in 1904. Again, the effect of vice-presidential candidates does not survive the inclusion of regional trends and lagged margin.

For the Democratic ticket the results for presidential and vice-presidential visits are comparable in magnitudes, although slightly more precise for vice-presidential visits when county fixed effects are included. However, both again become statistically insignificant when regional trends and lagged margin are included.

Results by election year

In Figure 22, we estimate a version of Equation 4 at the election year level. By necessity, this specification omits county and year fixed effects, but it includes census controls and state fixed effects. In the figure, we differentiate between types of election cycles: those with one-sided campaigns (in which one party’s candidate campaigned significantly more than the others), and an “other” category, which captures years in which more than one party conducted a major campaign. Years in which no significant campaign tours occurred are indicated in grey.

In most campaign years, there is no significant relationship between campaign visits and electoral performance. There are, however, some interesting exceptions. In the post-1890 period, there are two one-sided campaigns: William Jennings Bryan’s (D) 1896 campaign, and Theodore Roosevelt’s (R) 1904 campaign (which was in fact conducted by his running mate, Charles Fairbanks). In both of these campaigns, visiting a particular county was associated with an improvement in electoral performance. This reproduces the result from Bugge and Vlachos (2022) for Bryan’s campaign. However, it paints a slightly more nuanced picture. Campaigning seems most likely to be correlated with electoral performance in years in which the campaign is one-sided.

Perhaps there is no consistent relationship between electoral performance and campaign visits because both Republican and Democratic candidates tended to campaign in the same counties. We test this conjecture by regressing the margin of victory against indicators for Republican-only visits, Democrat-only visits, and an interaction between the two. The coefficient on Republican visits captures the effect of being visited by the Republican candidate and *not* the Democratic candidate. We present these results in Figure 23. The results show a slightly larger positive effect of *exclusive* own-party visits on own-party performance for both Republicans and Democrats. However, this does not survive the inclusion of region-year fixed effects, or the exclusion of the South (Figure C.12).

8 Discussion

We uncover a number of interesting facts about the growth of presidential campaigning in the United States. First, the evidence belies a straightforward narrative about the impact of technological change on political behavior. Certainly, the expansion of the railroad was a necessary precondition for campaign travel to occur. However, campaign travel was technologically feasible long before it became commonplace. Instead, we see evidence of a gradually evolving norm of political behavior that lagged behind technological change.

Our findings suggest several factors that contributed to the growth of campaigning in the United States. One is the waning of alternative approaches to increasing vote shares. The decline of the urban patronage machine coincided with the rise in presidential campaigning. Moreover, campaigning was more likely to occur in urban areas with a larger share of the adult population employed in clerical jobs. In other words, presidential candidates were likely to visit places in which federal patronage had been most important. This raises the possibility that campaigning was seen as a substitute for patronage, and it grew in importance as patronage machines declined.

Another explanation for the evolving norm of campaigning may be a process of learning the effects of this practice (Bursztyn, Egorov, and Fiorin, 2020). Our results indicate a robust association between campaign visits and voter turnout. Moreover, it seems candidates preferentially visited counties in which their party was favored to win. It may be that candidates learned the impact of campaigning on voter engagement, and they used this to bolster enthusiasm among voters sympathetic to their party. This behavior is consistent with some recent literature on digital advertising (Aggarwal, Allen, Coppock, Frankowski, Messing, Zhang, Barnes, Beasley, Hantman, and Zheng, 2023).

Interestingly, we do not find evidence that campaign visits had a consistent impact on electoral performance. Rather, the impact of campaigning on performance appears to have been idiosyncratic across individual candidates and parties. In particular, we can only detect a positive effect of campaigning on performance for *Democratic presidential* candidates. This may reflect the particular historical context. The Democratic party's area

of strength was the South, in which party affinity cut across racial lines, and Democratic victory was ensured through measures aimed at disenfranchising Black voters. Campaign visits to the South were relatively infrequent, perhaps for this reason. It is conceivable that Republican candidates were focused on getting out the vote in traditional areas of Republican control, while Democrats were trying to make inroads outside their region of strength.

It is also conceivable that the personalities of the individuals running for office affected the way in which their campaigns were received. William Jennings Bryan was responsible for three of the large Democratic campaigns during our period of focus. As such, it is difficult to know how much of his success at improving performance through campaigning was due to a party versus an individual effect. Anecdotal evidence from Roosevelt’s 1900 campaign suggests that in-person campaigning not only mobilized supporters, but also those opposed to the candidate. Hilpert (2015) recounts that during the campaign “hecklers frequently interrupted his speeches with cheers for opponents, antagonistic questions, insults, or blasts from horns or steam whistles. Depending upon his mood and the situation, Roosevelt ignored, answered, or even shouted back while shaking his fist at the disrupters”.¹⁵

If campaigning in a county did not consistently improve a candidate’s electoral performance there, then why did the norm of campaigning develop? Taken together, our findings suggest that allowing an opponent to run a one-sided campaign was risky. By the end of the 1890s, it appears that candidates believed this to be the case. The narrative evidence supports the idea that an opponent’s campaigning decision had an effect on a candidate’s behavior:

The 1908 campaign began with both candidates, William Howard Taft as well as

¹⁵In addition, Hilpert (2015) registered twenty-two incidents (out of 480 stops) where protestors tried to intimidate the candidate (or his supporters) with physical threats or violence. One such example is what took place in Victor, Colorado on September 26, 1900, where “shouted insults during the Roosevelt rally by an organized mob of radical miners became a physically threatening situation. Several of Roosevelt’s party surrounded him to escort him from the meeting hall to the train, but noisy protestors marched alongside with Bryan banners. Fifteen hundred people were in the streets, and several fights ensued. One protestor assaulted Roosevelt by poking a two-by-four pole into his chest. He safely regained the train, but the next day there were reports that he had also sustained a knee injury.”

Bryan, intent on conducting a front-porch campaign reminiscent of McKinley’s 1896 campaign. By the end of the summer, though, Bryan had reverted to his old ways. Taft, concerned with Bryan’s popularity as well as by the paucity of people visiting his Cincinnati front stoop, decided that he, too, needed to take the stump (Ellis and Dedrick, 1997).

It is possible that the risk candidates perceived from allowing their opponents to run one-sided campaigns stemmed from the effect of campaigning on turnout. For example, a Republican candidate would not want to allow his Democratic opponent to increase turnout in traditionally Democratic counties at the expense of Republican counties. The Electoral College system makes this imperative especially acute. Suppose, for example, that some counties in state s are Republican-leaning, while others are Democrat-leaning. If a Republican candidate can increase turnout in Republican-leaning counties, and there is not a corresponding increase in turnout in Democrat-leaning counties, this could cause the Republican candidate to capture a majority in state s , thus earning all of that state’s electoral votes. Moreover, we find suggestive evidence that electoral performance *in aggregate* was correlated with imbalances in campaign activity – candidates who campaigned more than their opponent did better overall. Finally, we have suggestive evidence that electoral performance may have been more responsive to campaign visits in election years in which one party ran a one-sided campaign. This further increases the potential cost of allowing one’s opponent to run such a campaign.

Further research is needed to understand how campaign visits mobilize voters. In particular, text analysis methods can help to understand which specific elements of the speech are more relevant to the public (Ash and Hansen, 2023). Recent articles have analyzed the use of emotion vs. reason and interruptions in the speeches of politicians in the U.S. congress (Gennaro and Ash, 2022; Miller and Sutherland, 2023), as well as the use of violent language by Donald Trump and other world leaders (Savin and Treisman, 2024). The evidence shows that Trump’s rallies were more likely to produce biased traffic stops after campaign speeches including references to racial issues (Grosjean, Masera, and Yousaf, 2022). A deeper understanding of candidates’ tone, charisma and choice of topics during

speeches might help quantify why only some candidates are able to improve their vote share after campaign tours.

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Figures

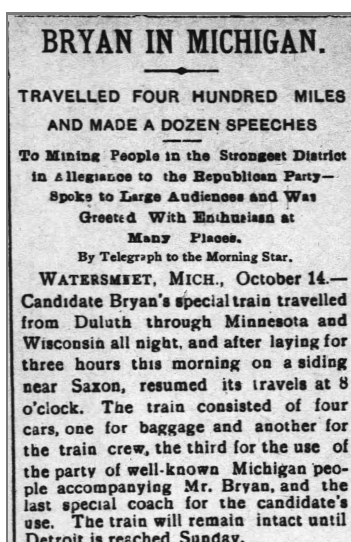
Figure 1: Cartoon ridiculing campaign of W. J. Bryan, 1896



Notes: “Blowing himself around the country”, by John S. Pughe.

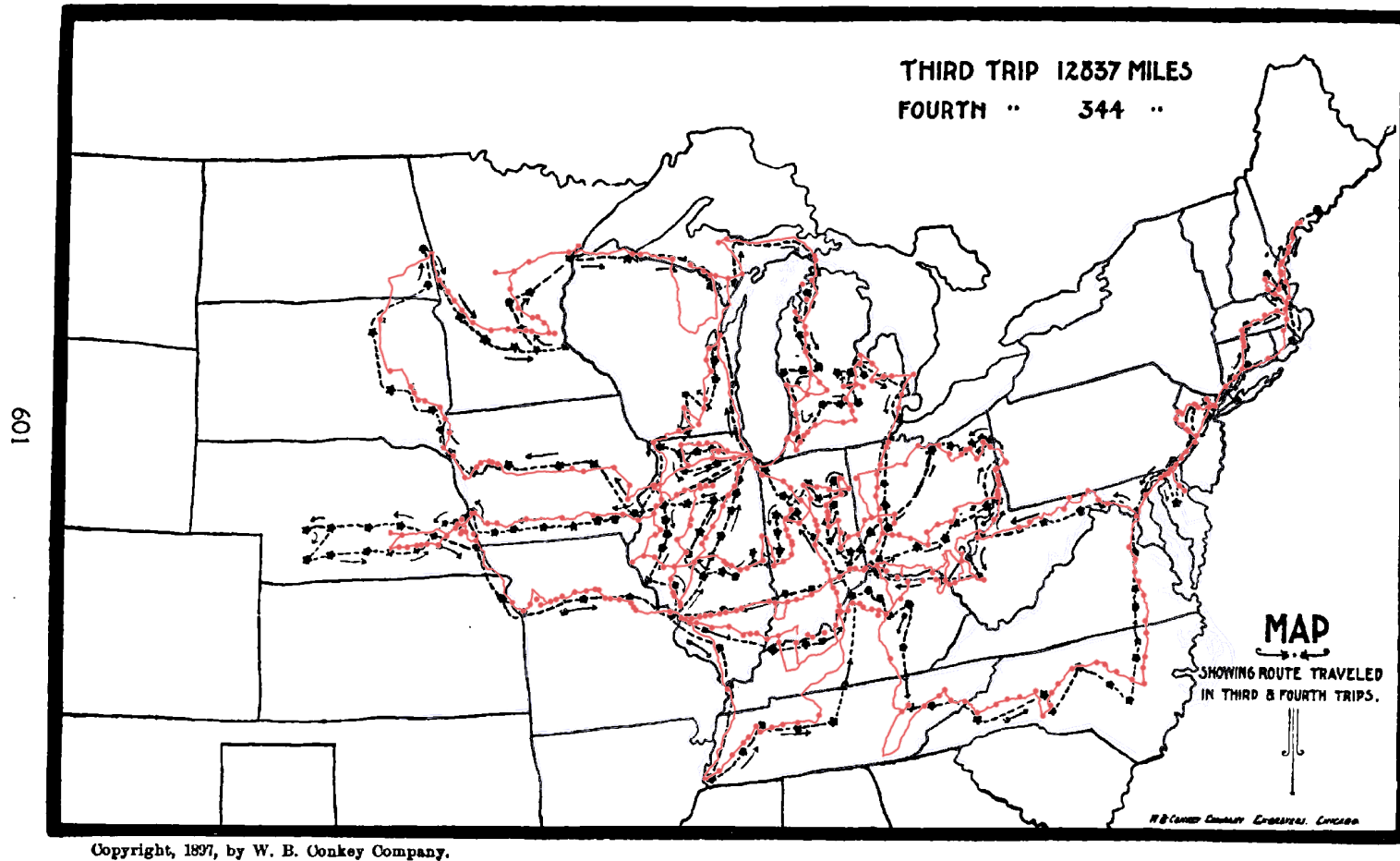
Source: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/91482121/>.

Figure 2: Newspaper clipping from campaign of W. J. Bryan, 1896



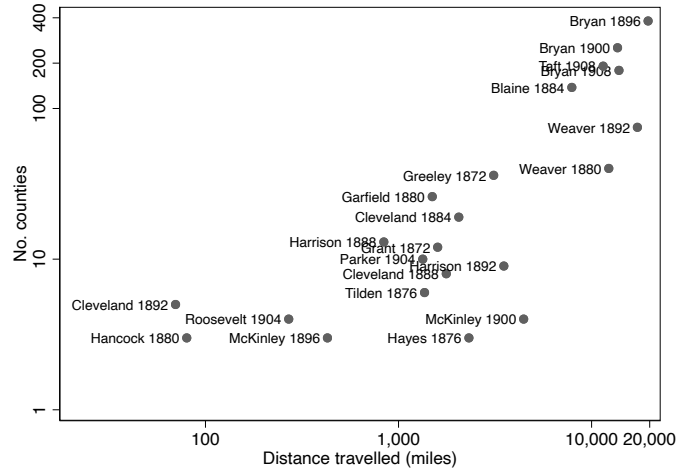
Notes: Published in The Wilmington Morning Star on October 15, 1896. Obtained from newspapers.com on August 17, 2017.

Figure 3: Campaign Route for W. J. Bryan, 1896: comparison between Bryan's map and our reconstruction



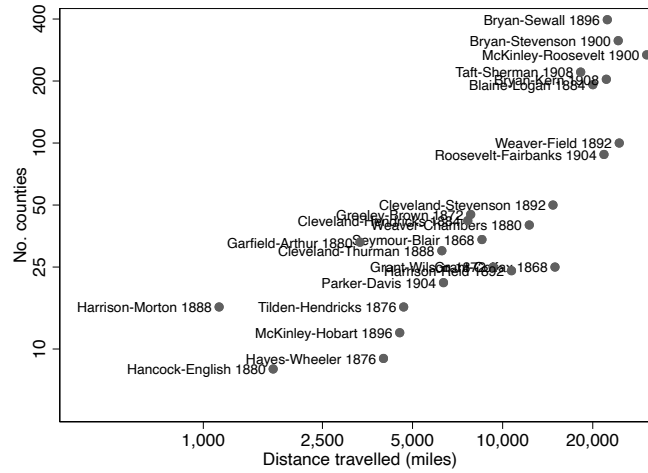
Notes: Segments in red show the campaign route of Bryan in 1896, constructed by connecting campaign stops obtained from newspapers clippings. The map shows Bryan's third and fourth trips, from September 11 to November 2, 1896. Source: [Bryan \(1897\)](#) and own calculations.

Figure 4: Presidential visits



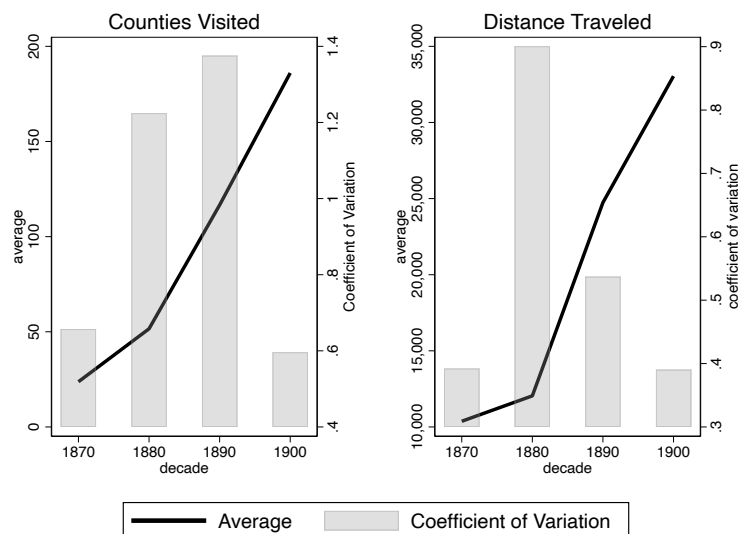
Notes: The figure shows total distance traveled by each presidential candidate in miles on the x-axis, and the number of counties visited on the y-axis. The data was constructed by connecting campaign stops obtained from newspapers clippings. Table 1 shows details on each presidential and vice-presidential campaign in 1872-1908.

Figure 5: Combined Presidential and Vice-Presidential visits



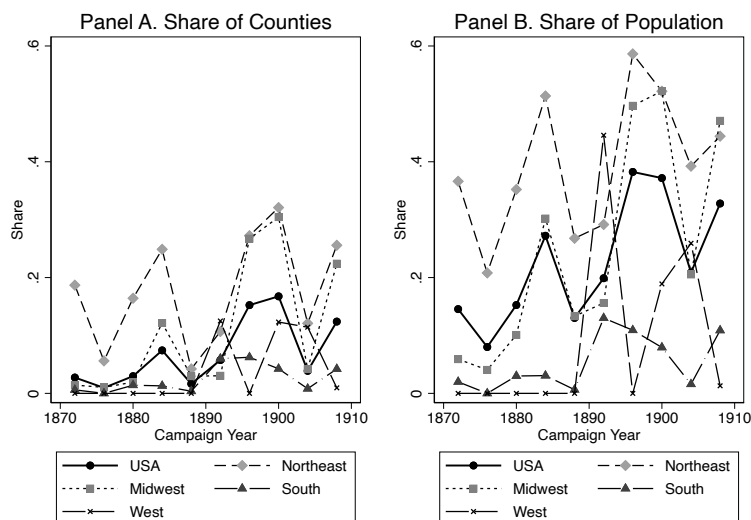
Notes: The figure shows total distance traveled by each presidential ticket in miles on the x-axis, and the number of counties visited on the y-axis. The data was constructed by connecting campaign stops obtained from newspapers clippings. Table 1 shows details on each presidential and vice-presidential campaign in 1872-1908.

Figure 6: Average and Coefficient of Variation of Counties Visited and Distance Travelled by Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates by Decade



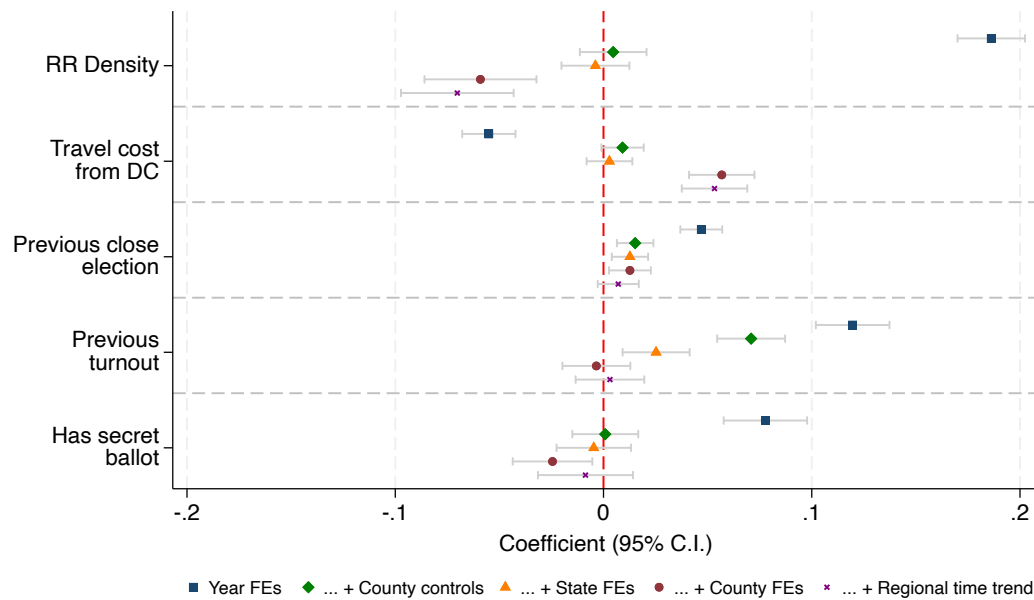
Notes: The figure shows the average and the coefficient of variation of counties visited (left panel) and distance traveled (right panel) by presidential and vice-presidential candidates in each decade.

Figure 7: Share of Counties Visited



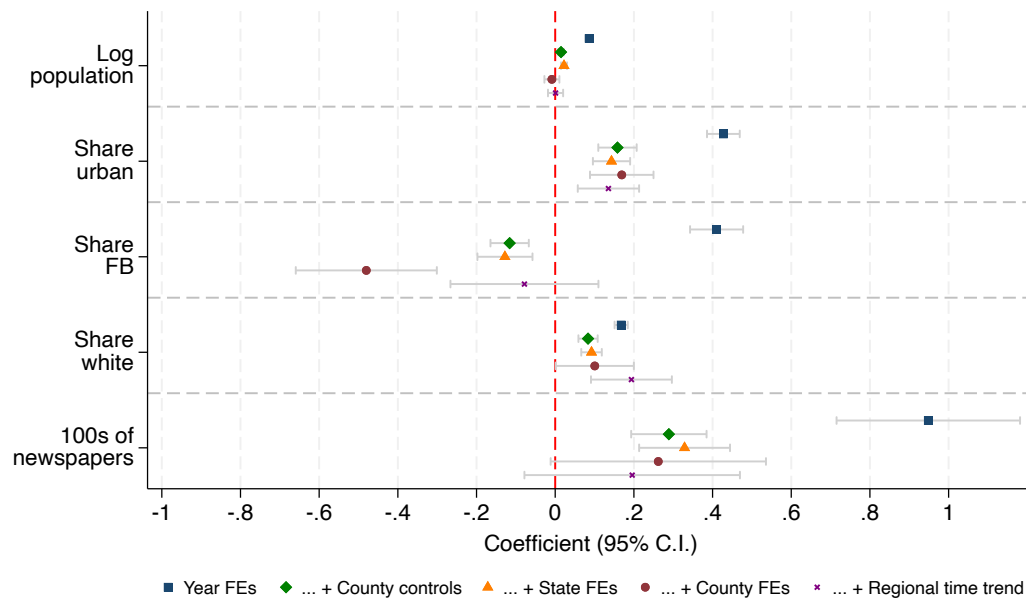
Notes: Panel A contains the share of counties visited in each year, unweighted. Panel B contains the share of counties visited in each year, weighted by population size.

Figure 8: Coefficients from Regression of Campaign Stop Indicator on County Characteristics



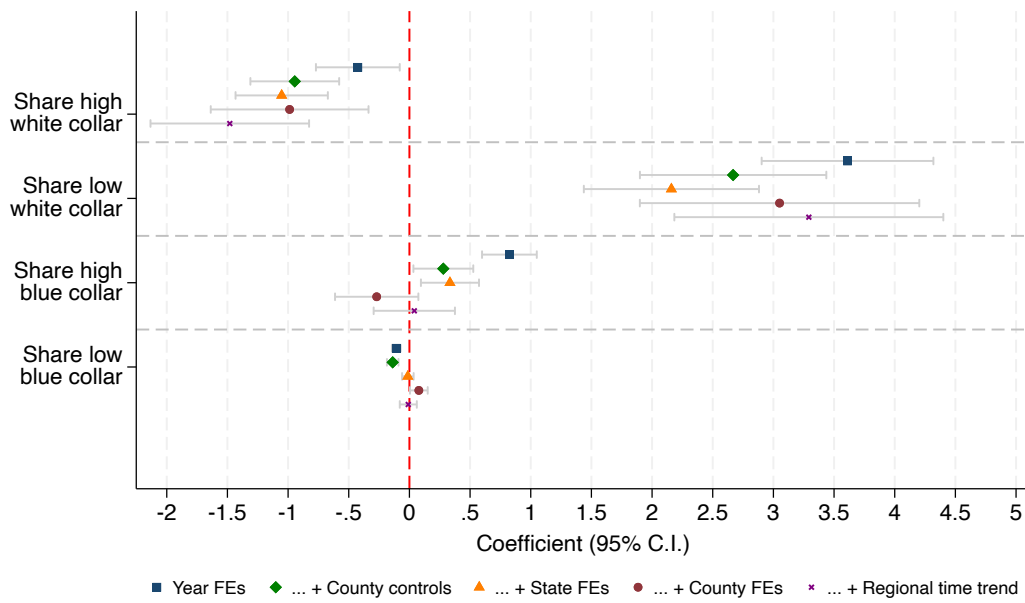
Notes: Figure plots coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from regression of an indicator for county c being a campaign stop in year t on a set of time-varying county characteristics. Each specification includes a different set of fixed effects.

Figure 9: Coefficients from Regression of Campaign Stop Indicator on County Characteristics



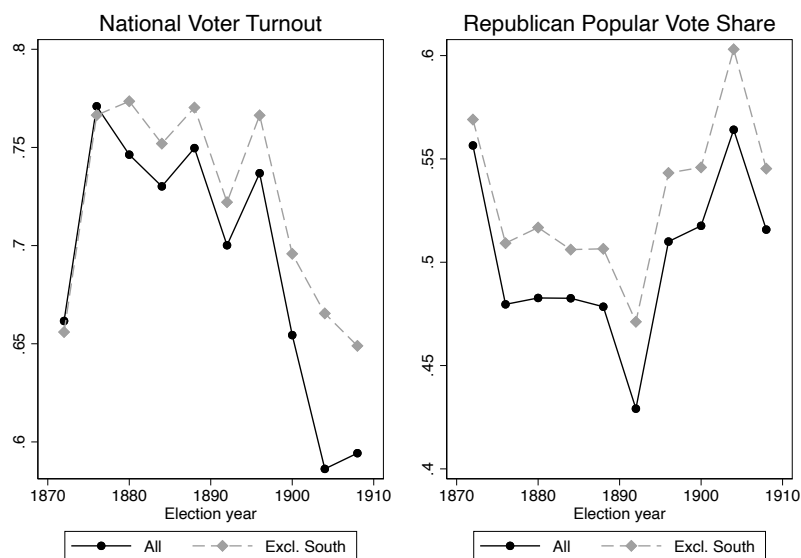
Notes: Figure plots coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from regression of an indicator for county c being a campaign stop in year t on a set of time-varying county characteristics. Each specification includes a different set of fixed effects.

Figure 10: Coefficients from Regression of Campaign Stop Indicator on County Characteristics



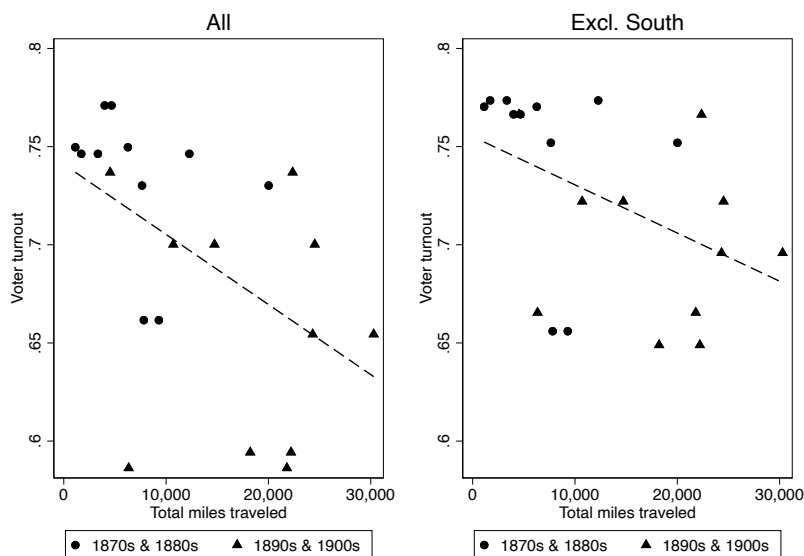
Notes: Figure plots coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from regression of an indicator for county c being a campaign stop in year t on a set of time-varying county characteristics. Each specification includes a different set of fixed effects.

Figure 11: Electoral Outcomes in Aggregate



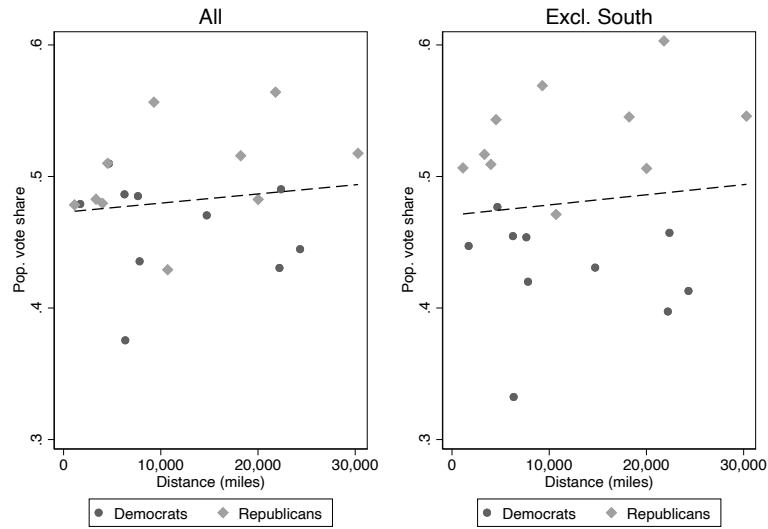
Notes: The figure shows aggregate voter turnout (left panel) and Republican vote share (right panel) in 1872-1908. Dark dots include all counties in the data, while grey dots excludes counties in the South.

Figure 12: Campaigning and National Voter Turnout



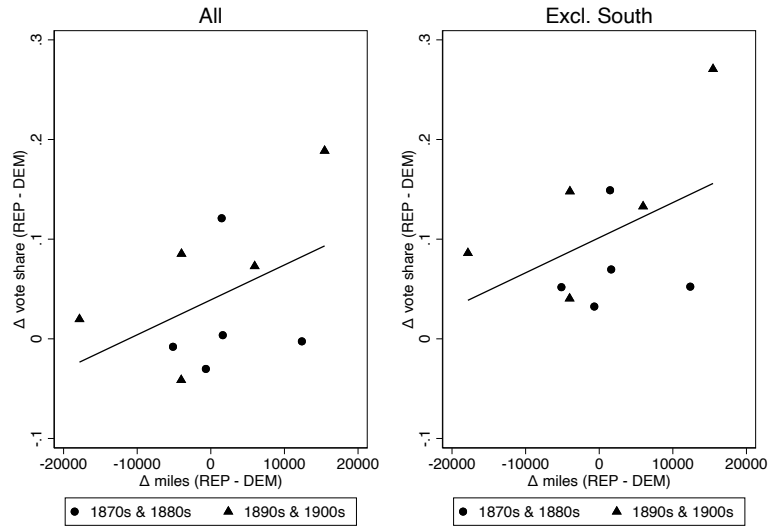
Notes: The figure shows the correlation between distance traveled in miles and voter turnout in 1872-1908. The left panel includes all counties in the data, while the right panel excludes counties in the South.

Figure 13: Campaigning and National Popular Vote Share



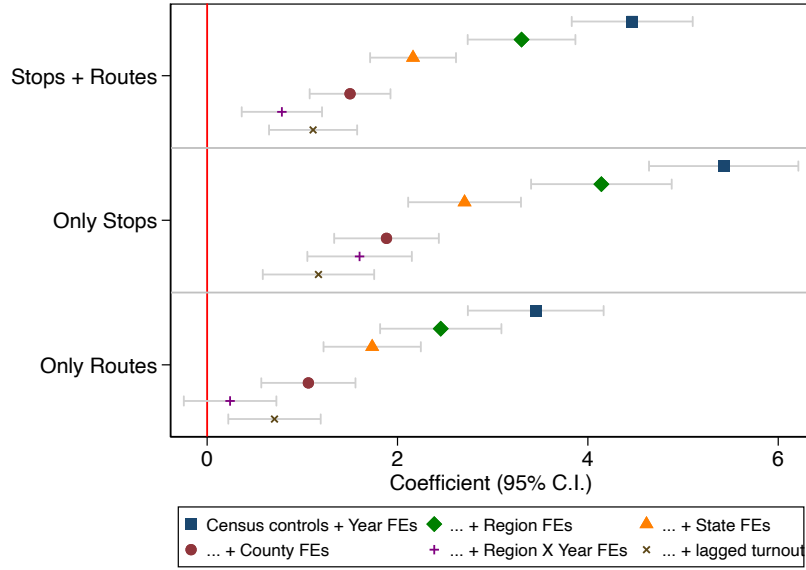
Notes: The figure shows the correlation between distance traveled in miles and popular vote share in 1872-1908. The left panel includes all counties in the data, while the right panel excludes counties in the South.

Figure 14: Campaigning Gaps and National Popular Vote Gaps



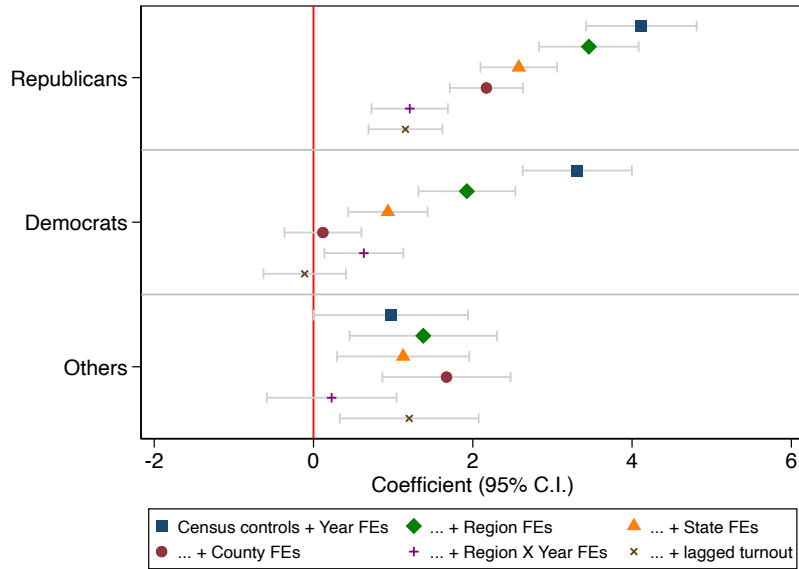
Notes: The figure shows the correlation between the gap in distance traveled (the difference between Republicans and Democrats) in miles and the gap in popular vote share (the difference between Republicans and Democrats) in 1872-1908. The left panel includes all counties in the data, while the right panel excludes counties in the South.

Figure 15: The effect of campaign visits on turnout



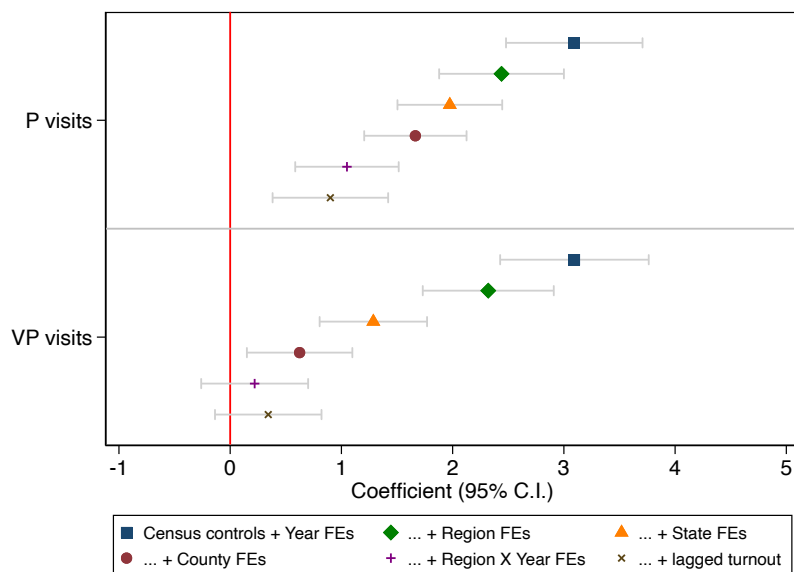
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 3, progressively including controls and fixed effects. Detailed results are shown in Tables D.1, D.2 and D.3 in the Appendix.

Figure 16: The effect of campaign visits on turnout: Republicans vs Democrats



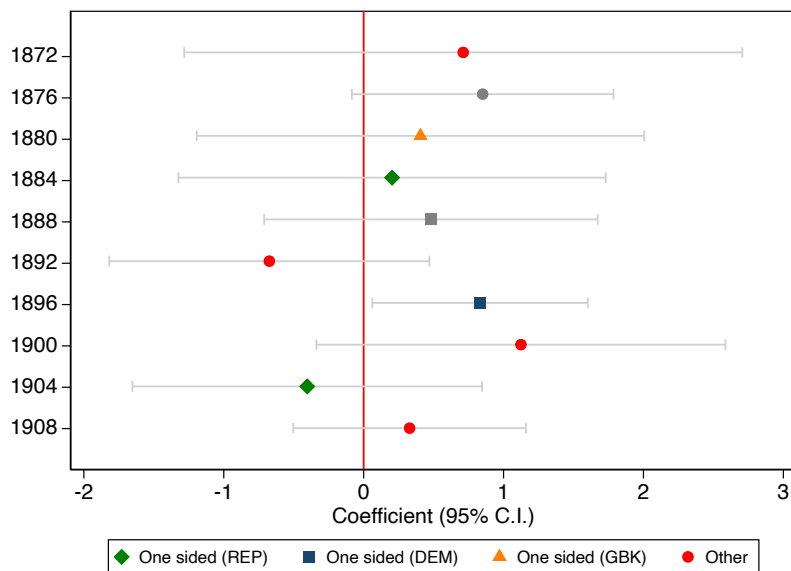
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 3, considering campaign stops and routes for Republican, Democrats and Other candidates separately, and progressively including controls and fixed effects. Detailed results are shown in Panel B of Table D.4 in the Appendix.

Figure 17: The effect of campaign visits on turnout: Presidential vs Vice-Presidential



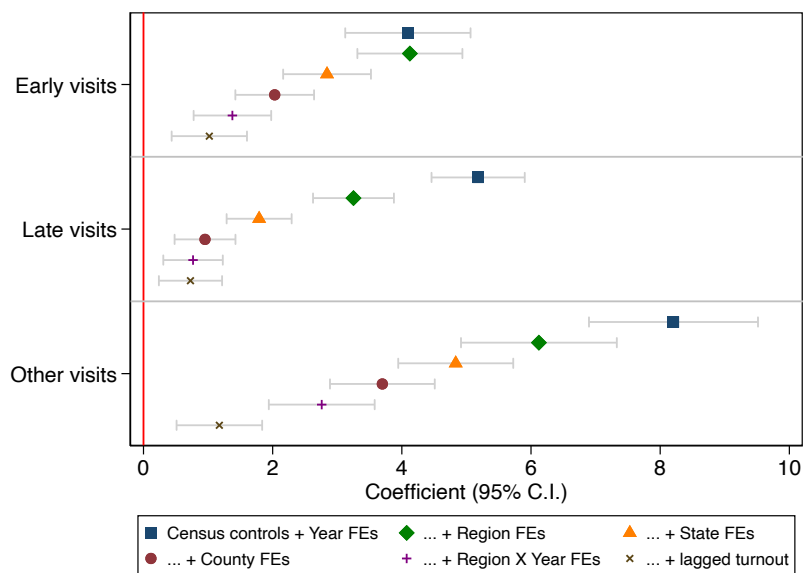
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 3, considering campaign stops and routes, and progressively including controls and fixed effects. Detailed results are shown in Table D.5 in the Appendix.

Figure 18: The effect of campaign visits on turnout: By election



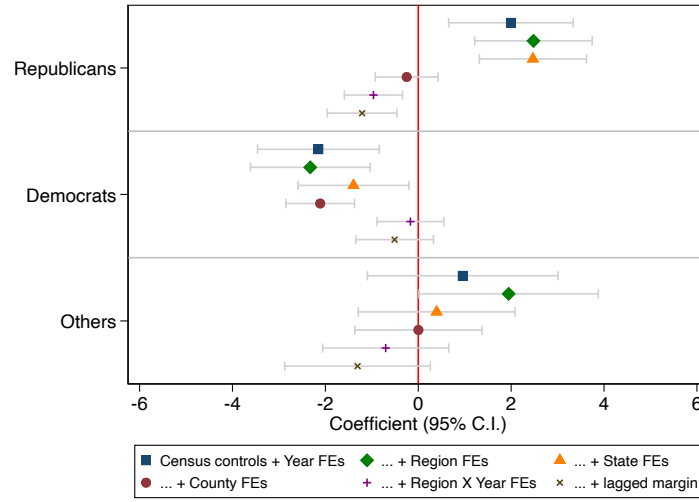
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 3, considering campaign stops and routes, estimated separately for each election in the data. The regression includes controls, year and state fixed effects.

Figure 19: The effect of campaign visits on turnout: Early vs Late



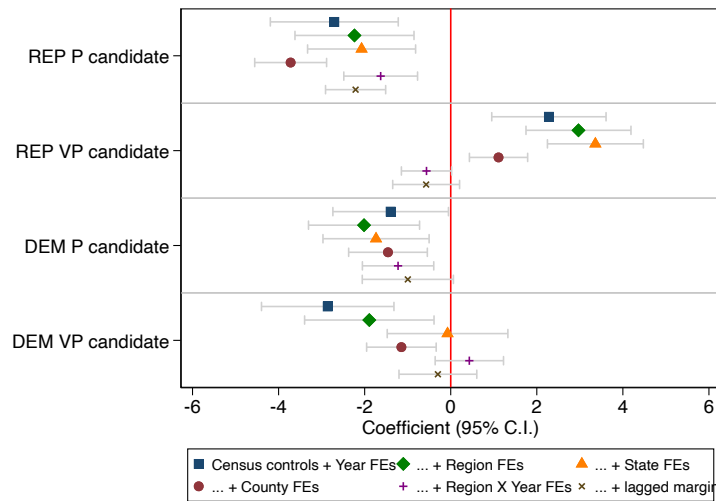
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 3, considering campaign stops and routes for the Republican and Democratic parties, and progressively including controls and fixed effects. Early visits are counties where the last visit occurs before October 1st. Late visits are counties where the last visit occurs after October 1st. The regression includes controls, year and state fixed effects.

Figure 20: The effect of campaign visits on margin of victory: stops + routes



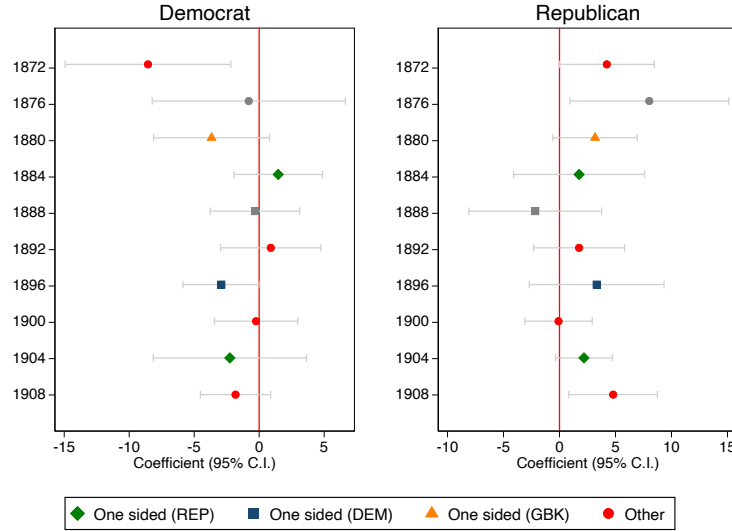
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 4, considering campaign stops and routes for Republican, Democrats and Other candidates separately, and progressively including controls and fixed effects. Margin of victory is computed as the difference between Republican and Democrats vote shares. Detailed results are shown in Table D.6 in the Appendix.

Figure 21: The effect of campaign visits on margin of victory: Presidential vs Vice-Presidential Visits



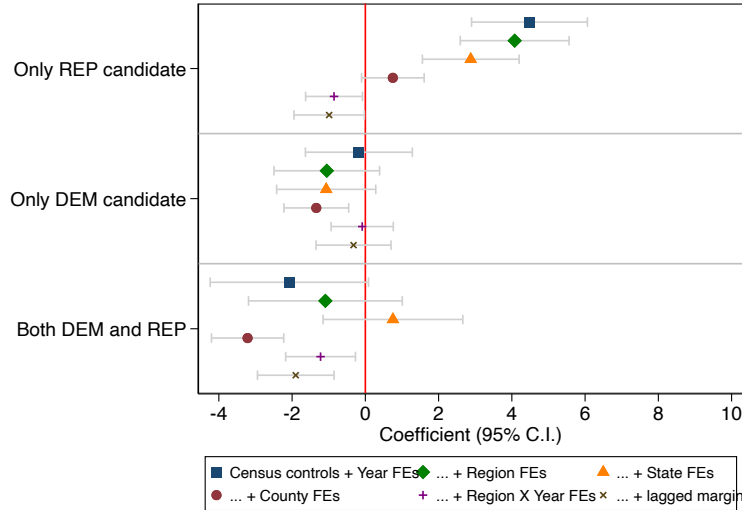
Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 4, considering campaign stops and routes for Republican and Democrat presidential and vice-presidential candidates separately, and progressively including controls and fixed effects. Margin of victory is computed as the difference between Republican and Democrats vote shares.

Figure 22: The effect of campaign visits on margin of victory: by election



Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 4, considering campaign stops and routes for Republican, Democrats and Other candidates separately, estimated separately for each election in the data. The regression includes controls, year and state fixed effects. Margin of victory is computed as the difference between Republican and Democrats vote shares.

Figure 23: The effect of campaign visits on margin of victory: Counties visited by each candidate or both



Notes: The figure shows estimates of equation 4, considering campaign stops and routes, progressively including controls and fixed effects. Margin of victory is computed as the difference between Republican and Democrats vote shares. Only REP candidate is a dummy taking the value of 1 when only the Republican candidate visited county c in election year t . Only DEM candidate is a dummy taking the value of 1 when only the Democrat candidate visited county c in election year t . Both DEM and REP is a dummy taking the value of 1 when both Republican and Democrat candidates visited county c in election year t .

Tables

Table 1: Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates' Campaign Trips

Election		Presidential candidates					Vice-presidential candidates				
Year	Party	Name	Age	States (N)	Counties (N)	Distance (miles)	Name	Age	States (N)	Counties (N)	Distance (miles)
1872	REP	Ulysses S. Grant	50	4	12	2566	Henry Wilson	60	8	13	7699
1872	DEM	Horace Greeley	61	12	36	5005	Benjamin G. Brown	46	7	9	4709
1876	REP	Rutherford B. Hayes	54	2	3	3725	William A. Wheeler	57	4	6	1683
1876	DEM	Samuel J. Tilden	62	2	6	2194	Thomas A. Hendricks	57	5	10	3306
1880	REP	James A. Garfield	48	3	26	2407	Chester A. Arthur	51	2	7	1842
1880	DEM	Winfield Scott Hancock	56	1	3	129	William H. English	58	3	5	1631
1880	GBK	James B. Weaver	47	16	40	19756	Barzillai J. Chambers (*)	62			
1884	REP	James G. Blaine	54	13	138	12712	John A. Logan	58	13	54	12118
1884	DEM	Grover Cleveland	47	3	19	3302	Thomas A. Hendricks	65	6	23	5595
1888	DEM	Grover Cleveland	51	4	8	2844	Allen G. Thurman	75	8	22	4498
1888	REP	Benjamin Harrison	55	2	13	1350	Levi P. Morton	64	1	3	290
1892	DEM	Grover Cleveland	55	3	5	113	Adlai Stevenson	57	14	45	14657
1892	REP	Benjamin Harrison	59	3	9	5650	Whitelaw Reid	55	5	15	7194
1892	POP	James B. Weaver	59	24	75	27791	James G. Field	66	11	25	7256
1896	DEM	William Jennings Bryan	36	27	381	31567	Arthur Sewall	60	8	16	2754
1896	REP	William McKinley	53	1	3	689	Garret Hobart	52	3	9	4102
1900	DEM	William Jennings Bryan	40	20	253	21925	Adlai Stevenson	65	13	61	10706
1900	REP	William McKinley	57	3	4	7157	Theodore Roosevelt	42	22	264	25842
1904	DEM	Alton B. Parker	52	3	10	2148	Henry G. Davis	81	4	11	5009
1904	REP	Theodore Roosevelt	46	2	4	434	Charles W. Fairbanks	52	28	84	21535
1908	DEM	William Jennings Bryan	48	22	179	22308	John W. Kern	58	13	25	8343
1908	REP	William Howard Taft	51	23	191	18474	James S. Sherman	53	7	30	6743

Notes: Data on candidates' age was obtained from Wikipedia. Data on states and counties visited, as well as distance covered in miles, was constructed by connecting campaign stops obtained from newspapers clippings.

Table 2: Who campaigns? Ticket regressions

	N counties			log(distance)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
President	-14.203 (28.002)	10.239 (23.684)	19.212 (35.565)	-1.371*** (0.465)	-1.024** (0.413)	-0.859 (0.624)
Age	-5.603** (2.597)	-5.345*** (1.836)	-4.393 (3.542)	-0.053** (0.025)	-0.050** (0.018)	-0.037 (0.050)
Other party	-30.770 (45.668)	-49.445 (44.248)		1.292*** (0.362)	1.014** (0.371)	
Republican	-35.916 (28.623)	-48.115* (24.311)		-0.408 (0.519)	-0.550 (0.452)	
Incumbent	2.279 (23.004)	47.688 (29.972)		0.544* (0.265)	1.232*** (0.431)	
Midwest	43.688 (27.373)	16.465 (24.524)	5.483 (34.816)	1.019** (0.399)	0.645** (0.300)	0.268 (0.490)
South	15.761 (37.435)	5.645 (34.226)	-9.244 (74.745)	0.376 (0.718)	0.271 (0.648)	0.638 (1.697)
Decade FEs	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Occupation FEs	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Ticket FEs	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Observations	43	43	43	43	43	43
Output mean	50.116	50.116	50.116	8.601	8.601	8.601

Notes: The table shows estimates from equation 1. In columns 1-3 the dependent variable is the number of counties visited, while in columns 4-6 the dependent variable is the log of distance traveled in miles. Standard errors, clustered at the ticket level, are presented in parentheses. ***, ** and * indicate statistical significance at the 99%, 95% and 90%, respectively.

Table 3: Summary Statistics: Counties Visited

Decade	1870s		1880s		1890s		1900s	
Visited	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Share 5km from RR	0.38	0.75	0.49	0.84	0.52	0.80	0.61	0.84
Previous close election	0.24	0.34	0.23	0.43	0.28	0.44	0.21	0.29
Previous voter turnout	0.70	0.70	0.73	0.82	0.74	0.75	0.65	0.79
# Newspapers	3.12	19.68	3.73	16.03	4.44	12.23	4.77	12.25
Population	18,092	118,370	19,691	104,931	20,111	71,220	23,884	81,602
Urban pop share	0.06	0.40	0.07	0.36	0.09	0.32	0.11	0.34
Foreign born pop share	0.10	0.17	0.09	0.14	0.10	0.13	0.08	0.13
White pop share	0.83	0.96	0.83	0.96	0.85	0.91	0.84	0.96
Male pop share	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.53	0.52	0.52	0.52
Adult literacy rate	0.77	0.92	0.82	0.94	0.86	0.92	0.89	0.96
Share manufacturing wkrs	0.02	0.09	0.02	0.07	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.06
N	4,099	77	6,548	274	4,480	527	6,658	843

Notes: The table shows averages for census characteristics in counties where candidates made campaign stops (even columns) and counties where they did not (odd columns).