

# Was Freedom Road a Dead End? Political and Socio-economic effects of Reconstruction

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NP7233 \* 95c \* A BANTAM BOOK



# Freedom Road

Howard Fast

THE WORLD-FAMOUS NOVEL  
OF AN  
EX-SLAVE IN  
THE HATE-  
SEARED POST-  
CIVIL-WAR  
SOUTH

THE MOST WIDELY-  
PUBLISHED  
BOOK OF THE  
20TH CENTURY

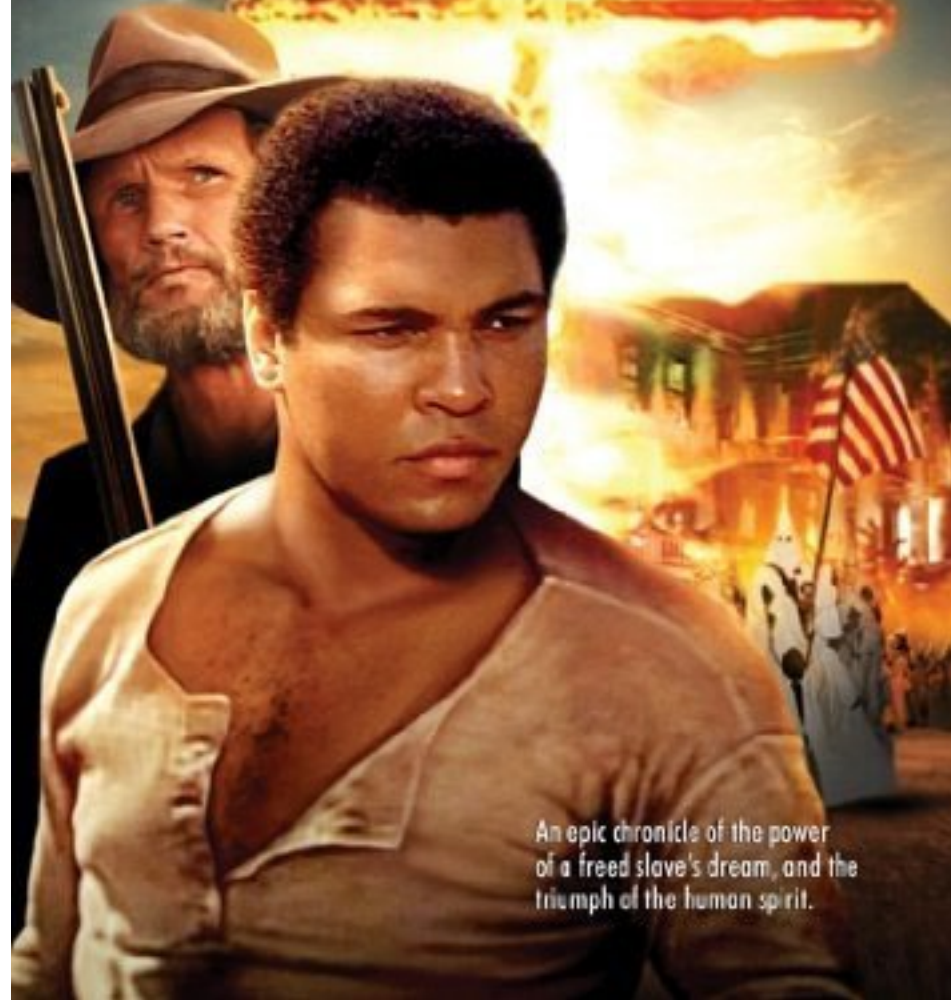
Bama

MUHAMMAD ALI

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

BASED ON THE BEST-SELLING NOVEL BY HOWARD FAST

# FREEDOM ROAD



An epic chronicle of the power  
of a freed slave's dream, and the  
triumph of the human spirit.

# Research question

- What was the impact of Reconstruction on Black political engagement and socio-economic achievement?
- Did this impact persist after the reversal of Reconstruction and the (re)imposition of white supremacy (Jim Crow)?
- Very much a work in progress – lots to do

# Preview of findings

- More Federal presence (troops, Freedmen's Bureau) associated w/more Black voter registration, Black (Republican) voting, Black officeholders
- More Black political engagement, and greater Federal presence, associated with higher level of social and economic achievements
- Effects persist into early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- We're aware of threats to identification

# Roadmap

- Brief overview of Reconstruction
- Theory and expectations
- Empirical strategy
  - Data
  - Descriptions
  - Analysis
- Objections, extensions, and implications

# The Reconstruction Era

1865: Freedman's Bureau established; Thirteenth Amendment ratified.

1866: Civil Rights Act passed over Johnson's veto.

1867: First Reconstruction Act passed.

1868: Fourth Reconstruction Act passed. Fourteenth Amendment ratified. Ku Klux Klan begins.

1870: Fifteenth Amendment ratified; first Force Act passed.

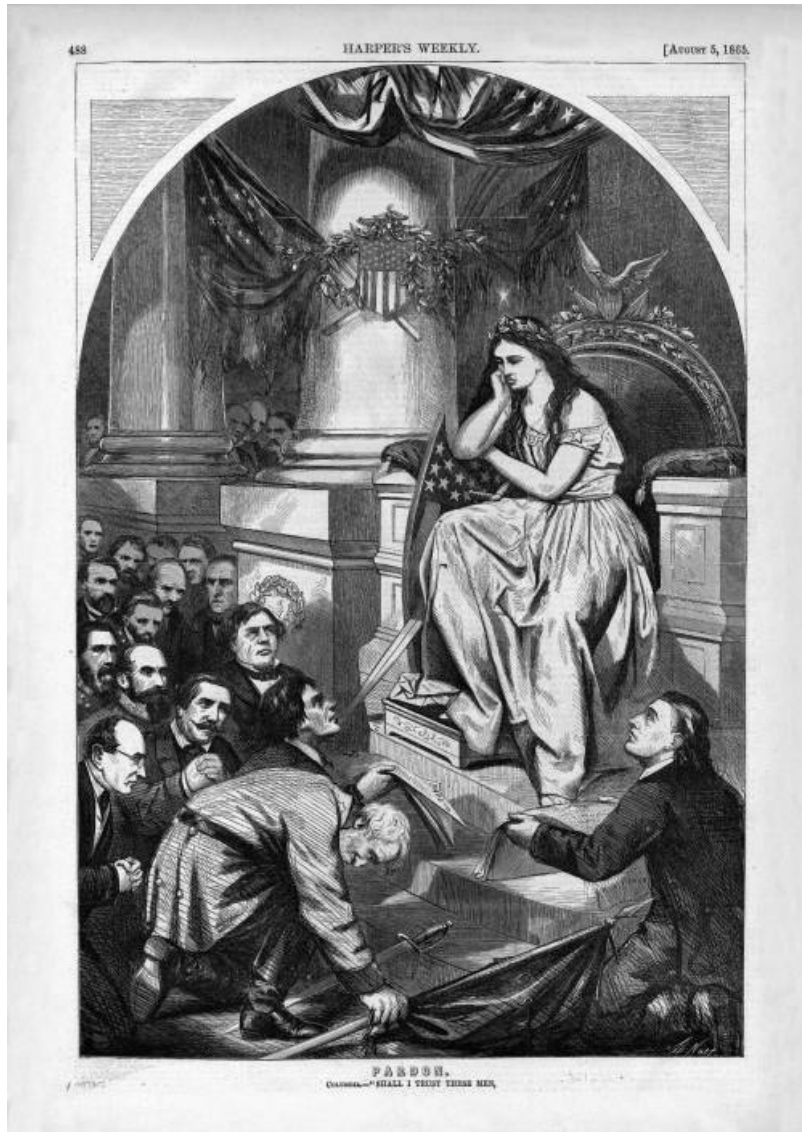
1875: Civil Rights Act passed.

1877: President Hayes withdraws Federal troops.

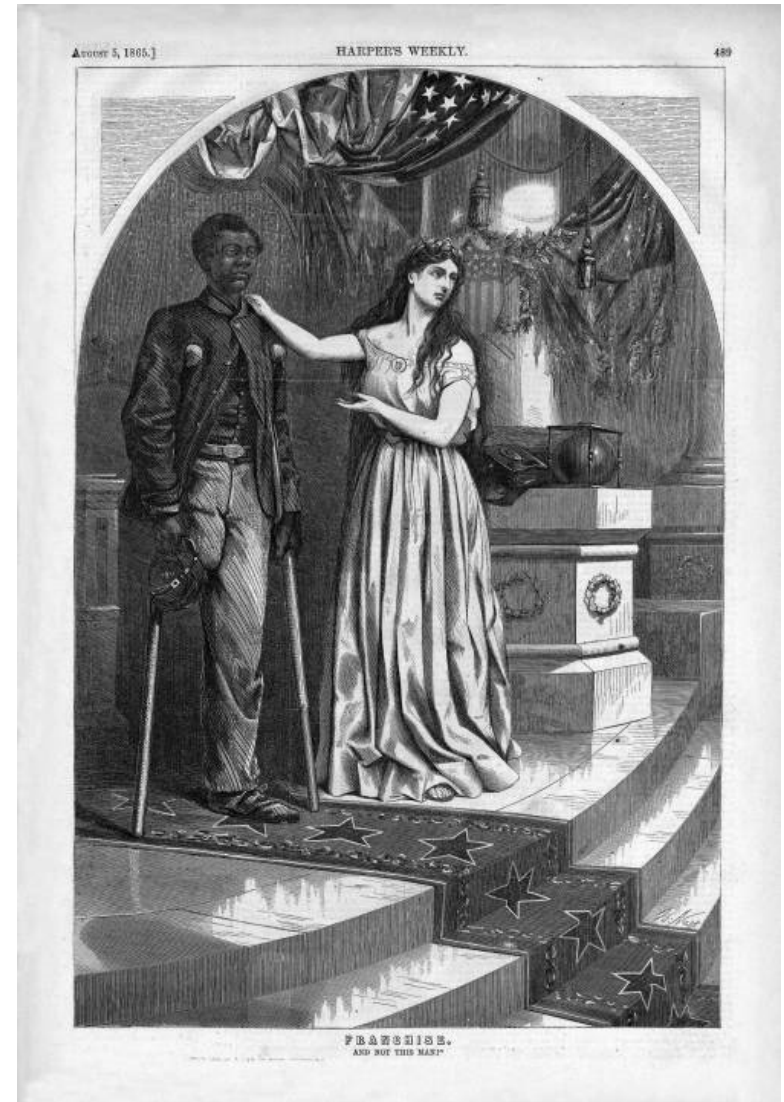
1890-1905: Blacks are deprived of the vote in the South.

1896: Plessy vs. Ferguson upholds Jim Crow

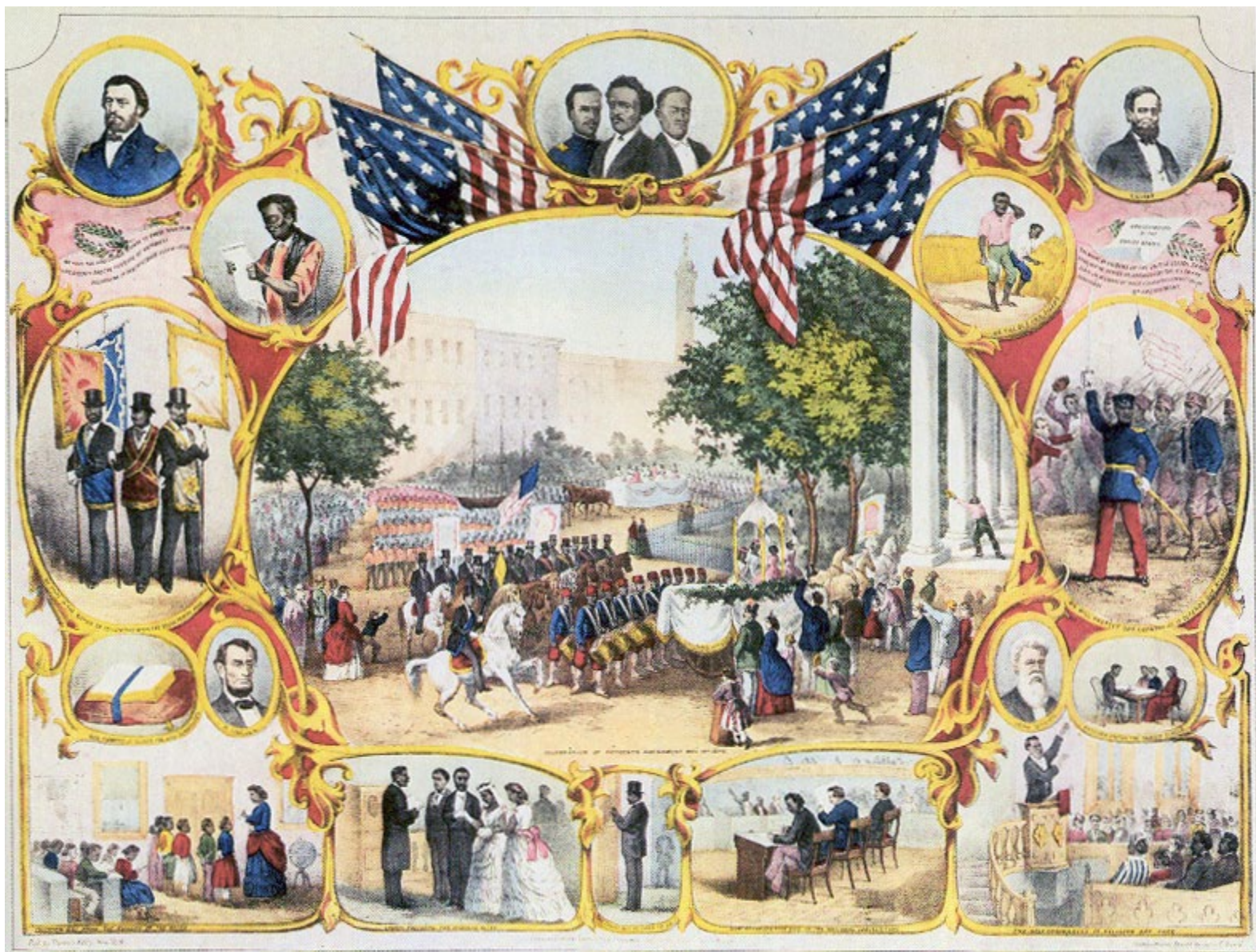
**Pardon: "Shall I trust these men?"**



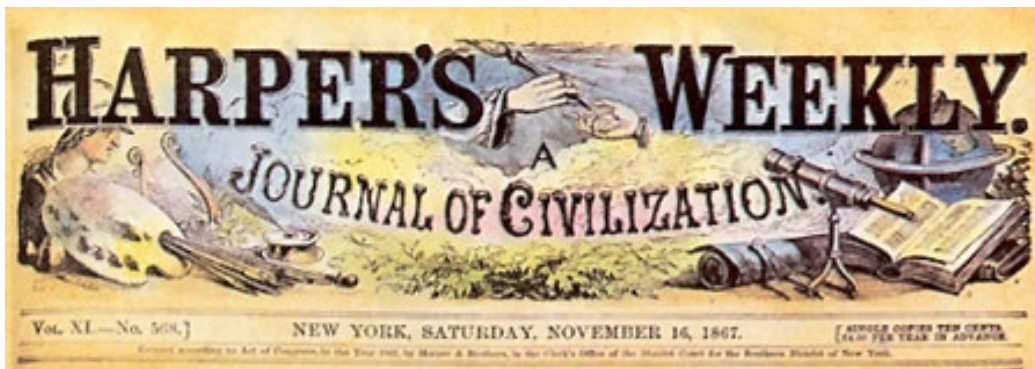
**Franchise: "And not this Man?"**



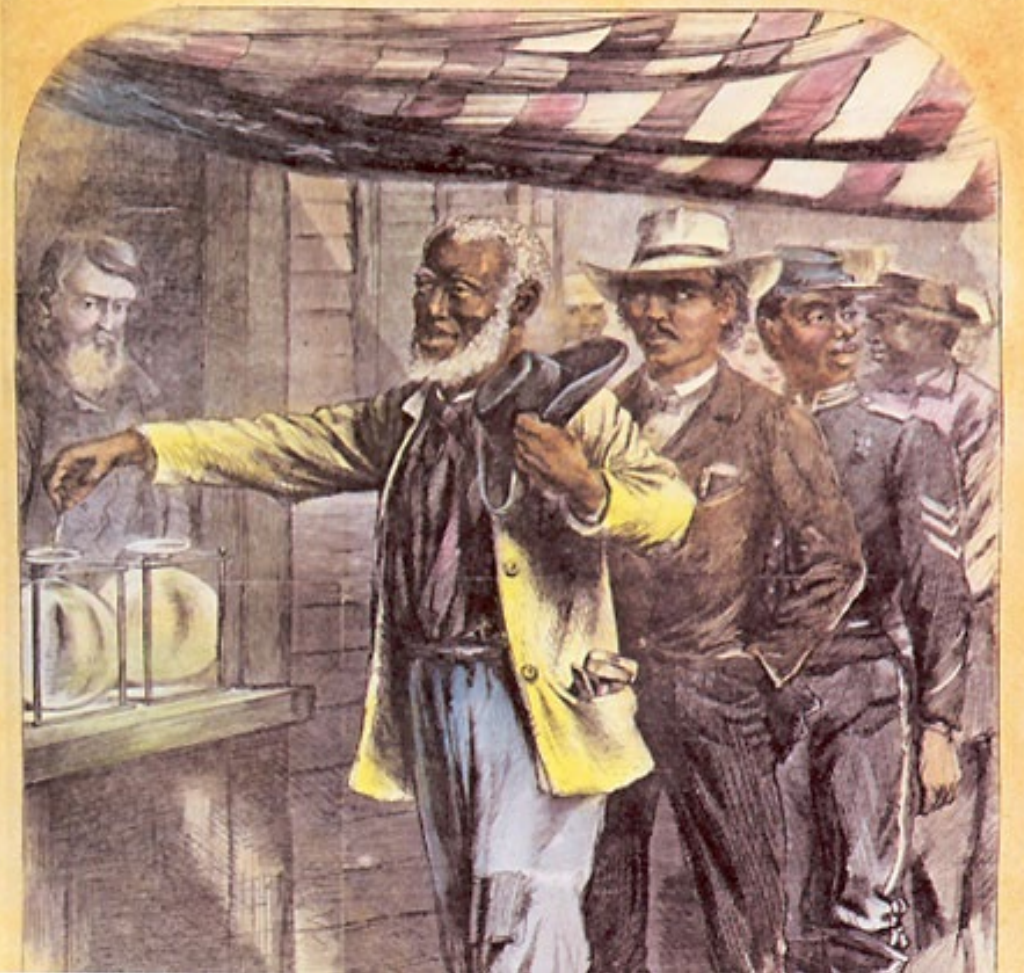
Harper's Weekly, August 5, 1865



THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT.



# The First Vote





**"Electioneering at the South," Harper's Weekly, July 25, 1868.**



# From the Civil Rights Act of 1866

Citizens, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude...shall have the same right...to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens...any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom, to the contrary notwithstanding.

# Context and policies

- Expansion of Black political engagement
- Organized Southern hostility/opposition (“planter elite”)
- Garrisoning of Federal troops
  - Originally 20,000; Gradually reduced but sizable
- Freedmen’s Bureau offices
- Principal targets:
  - Effective franchise (registration, voting)
  - Justice, military and civil
  - Education
    - Primary and secondary
    - Higher, including teachers’ colleges

# Theory

- Institutions: In context of Black mobilization and organization, Federal (military) power helps enforce and enable Black political participation, policy, economic advance
- Franchise expansion → better Black social and economic outcomes (A/R)
- Factor endowments: However, plantation society and entrenched planter elite could block or limit threatening political and social change (E/S)

# Huge literature

- DuBois, Foner, Hahn debunk apologists for white supremacy
- Modern historical school (Gates, others)
- More recent quantitative analyses
  - Logan, IV w/free Blacks → more officeholders, higher taxation, literacy, landholding (also Suryanarayan and White)
  - Jensen et al. more troops, FB → more taxation
  - Many related studies on aftermath of slavery, Jim Crow, etc.

# Empirical strategies

- Maintained hypothesis: Black political engagement and socio-economic advance facilitated by more intense Reconstruction implementation; greater impact and longer-lasting impact
- Indicators
  - Federal troops
  - Freedmen's Bureau offices
  - Counteracted by cotton suitability
- Many possible ways to measure; our preferred (for now)
- Outcome variables primarily from census (now possible)
- Endogeneity! More intense Reconstruction/our indicators probably correlate with many things. So suggestive, for now

# Objections

- Threats to identification
  - Fort and garrison placement
  - Freedmen's Bureau placement
  - Generally speaking, endogeneity
- Omitted variables
- Mechanism is inferred



# Freedmen's Bureau office, Beaufort NC



# A Freedmen's Bureau school, St. Helena SC

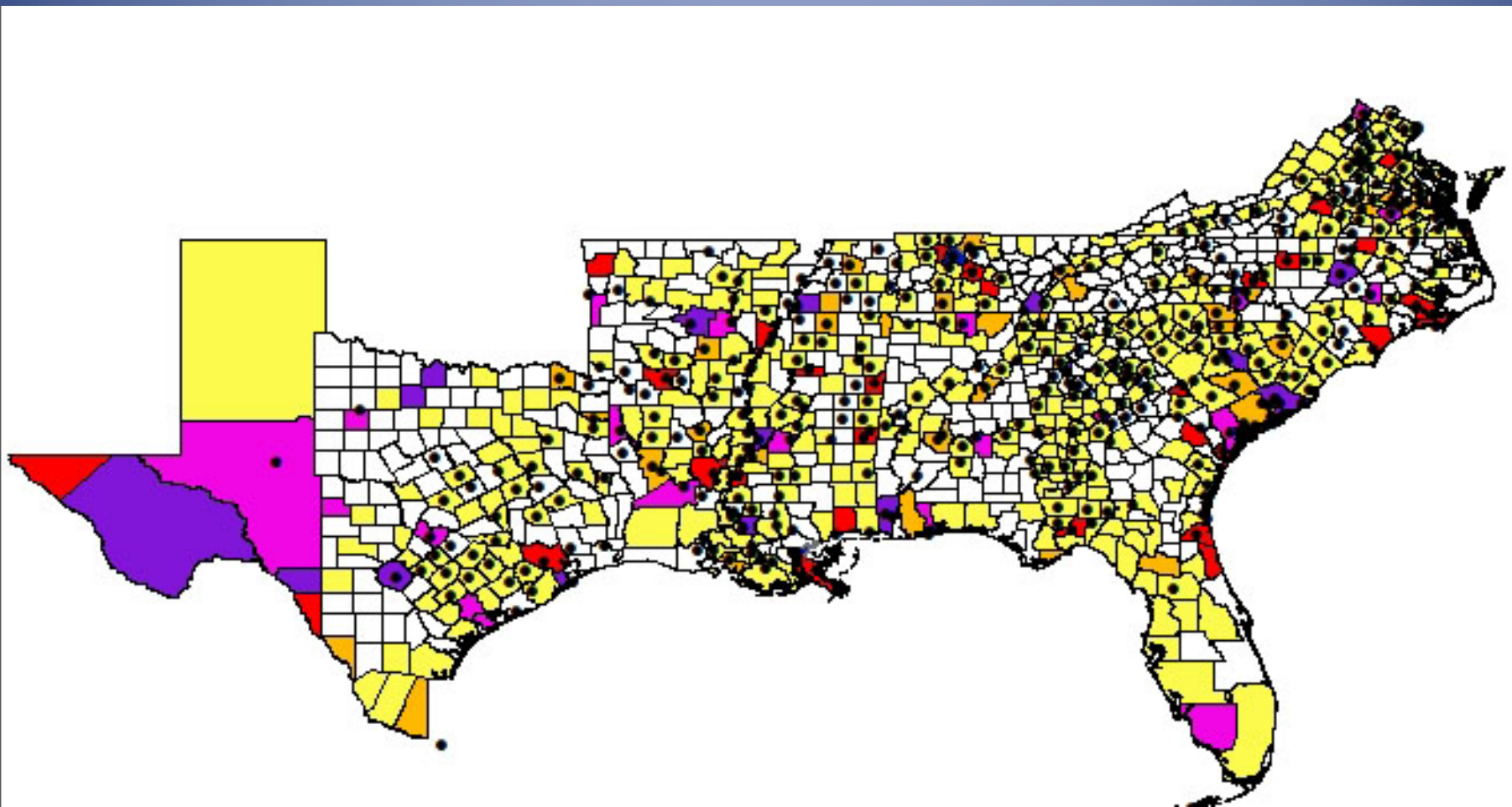
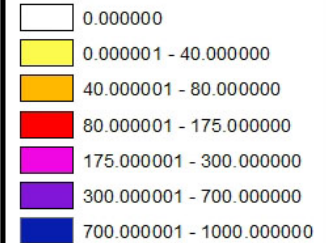


# Federal troops through 1876 and Freedmen's Bureau offices

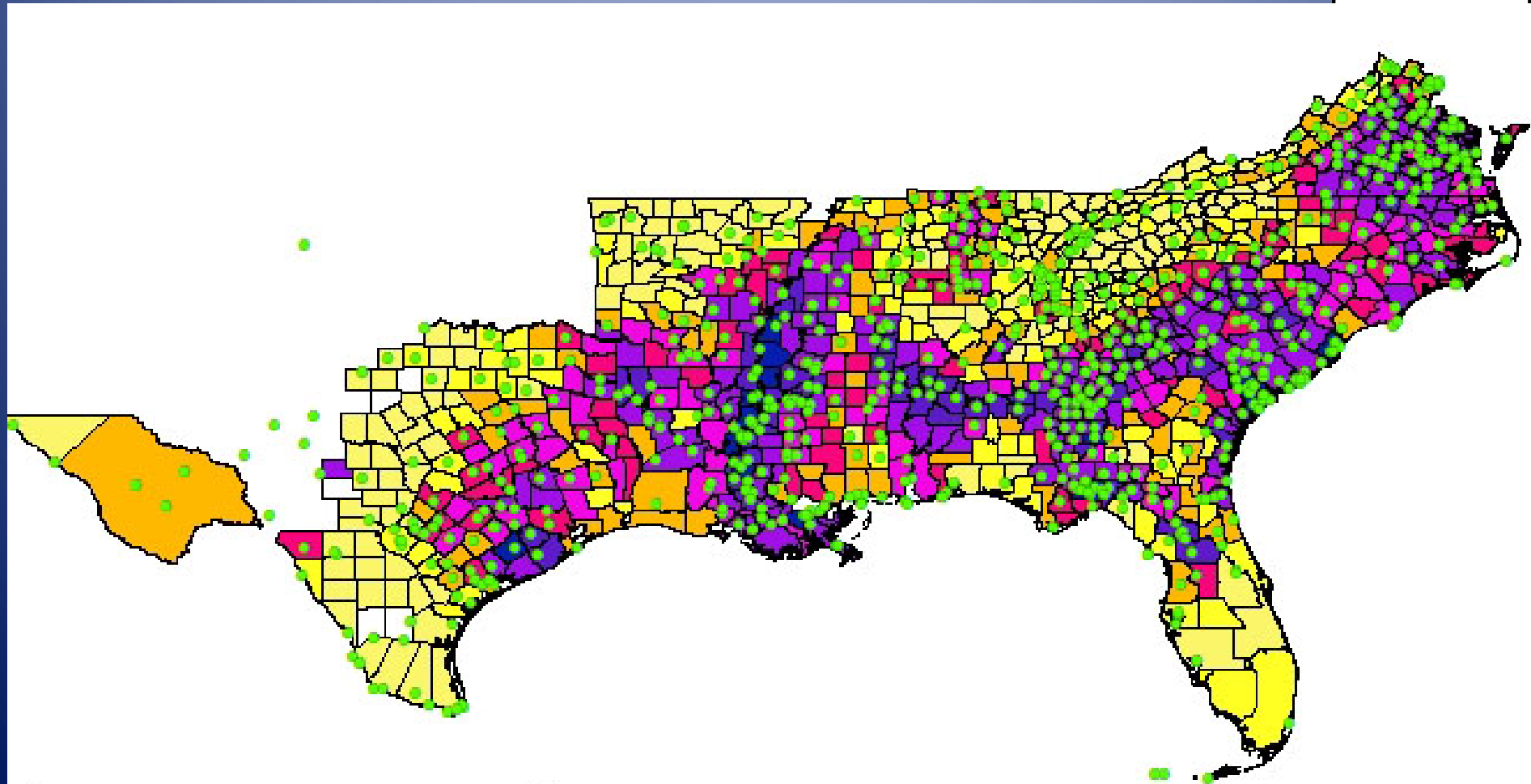
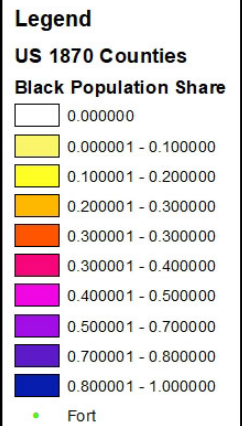
## Legend

### US 1870 Counties

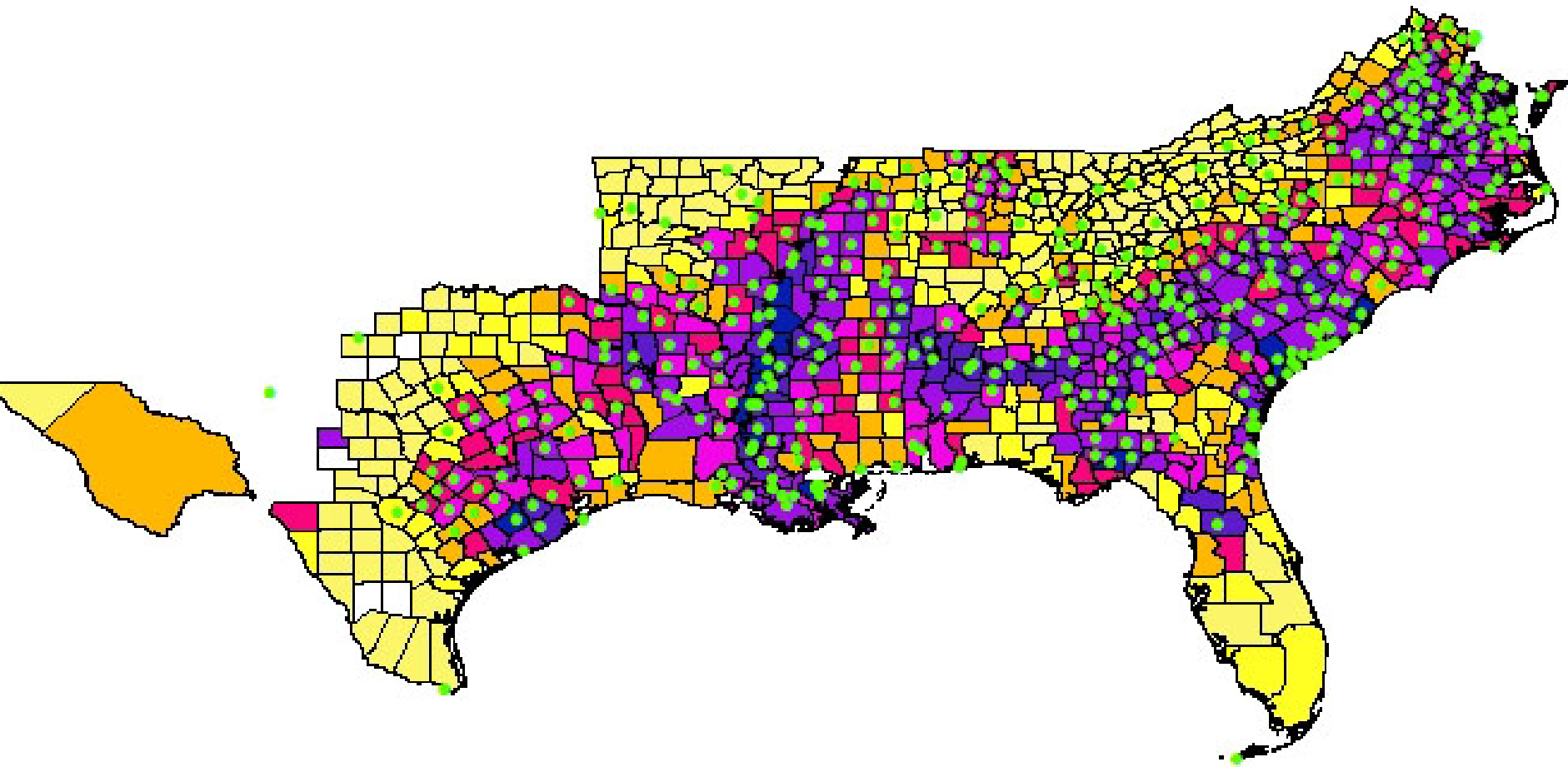
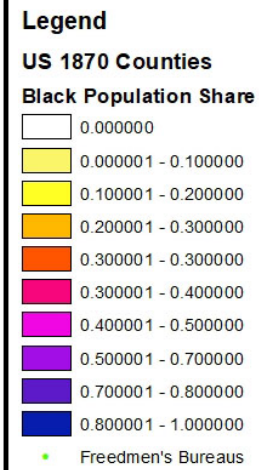
#### Average Troops Until 1876



# Share of population Black in 1870 and Federal garrisons



# Share of population Black 1870 and Freedmen's Bureau offices



# First step

- Was Black political engagement and success facilitated by Reconstruction intensity?

Dependent Variable:  
Black voters as share of total

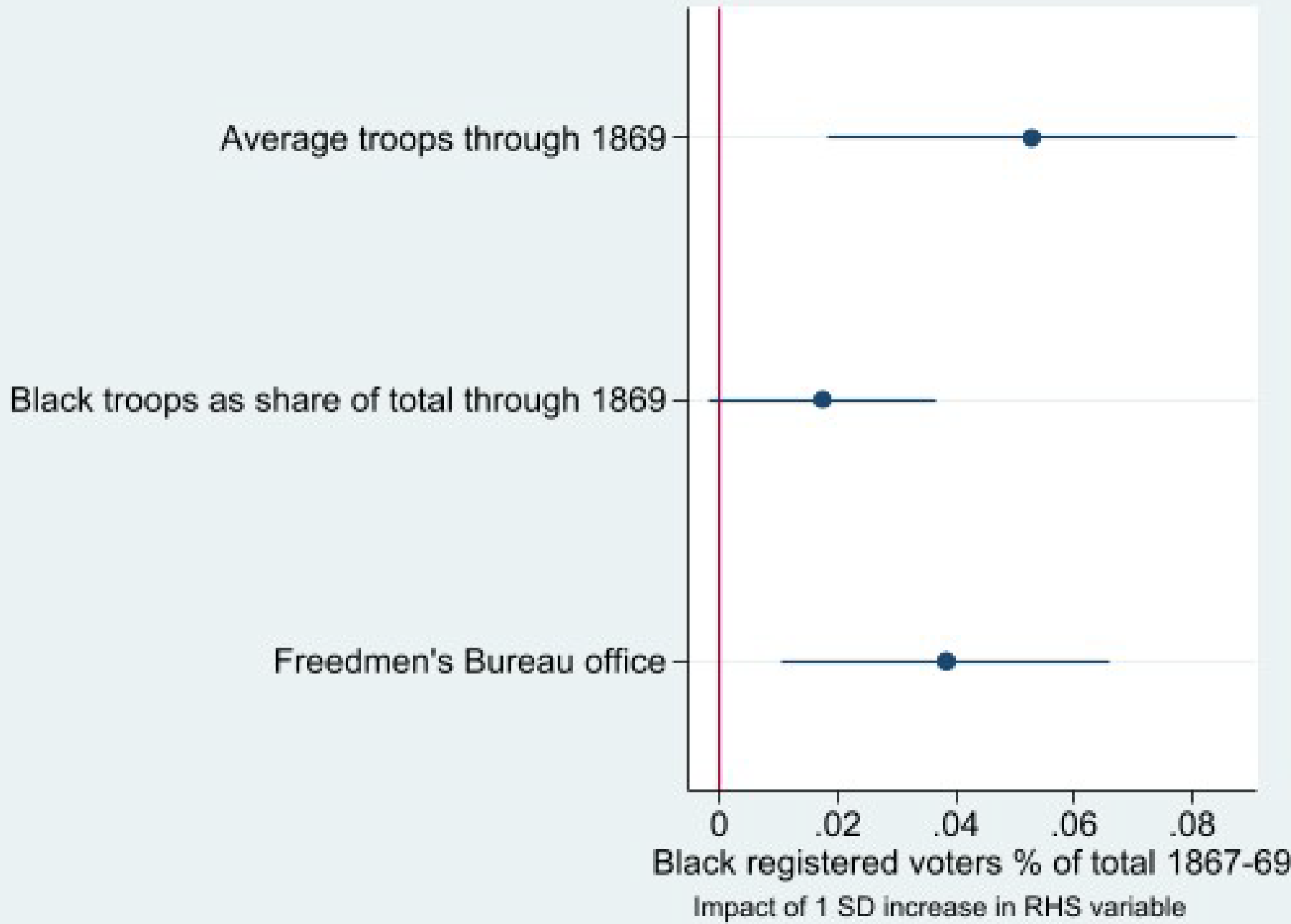
Percent Black population, 1870	0.972*** (0.0129)
Average troops until 1869	7.34e-05*** (2.43e-05)
Share of Black troops until 1869	0.0194* (0.0109)
Freedmen's Bureau office	0.0195*** (0.00690)
Constant	0.0421*** (0.00436)

Observations 1,099  
R-squared 0.908

Dependent variable:  
Black officeholders elected 1860s

Black share registered voters, 1867-69	2.505*** (0.298)
Average troops until 1869	0.00306* (0.00181)
Share of Black troops until 1869	0.139 (0.307)
Freedmen's Bureau office	0.339** (0.137)
Distance to nearest fort	-7.48e-06*** (1.72e-06)
Constant	0.105 (0.163)

Observations 1,100  
R-squared 0.163



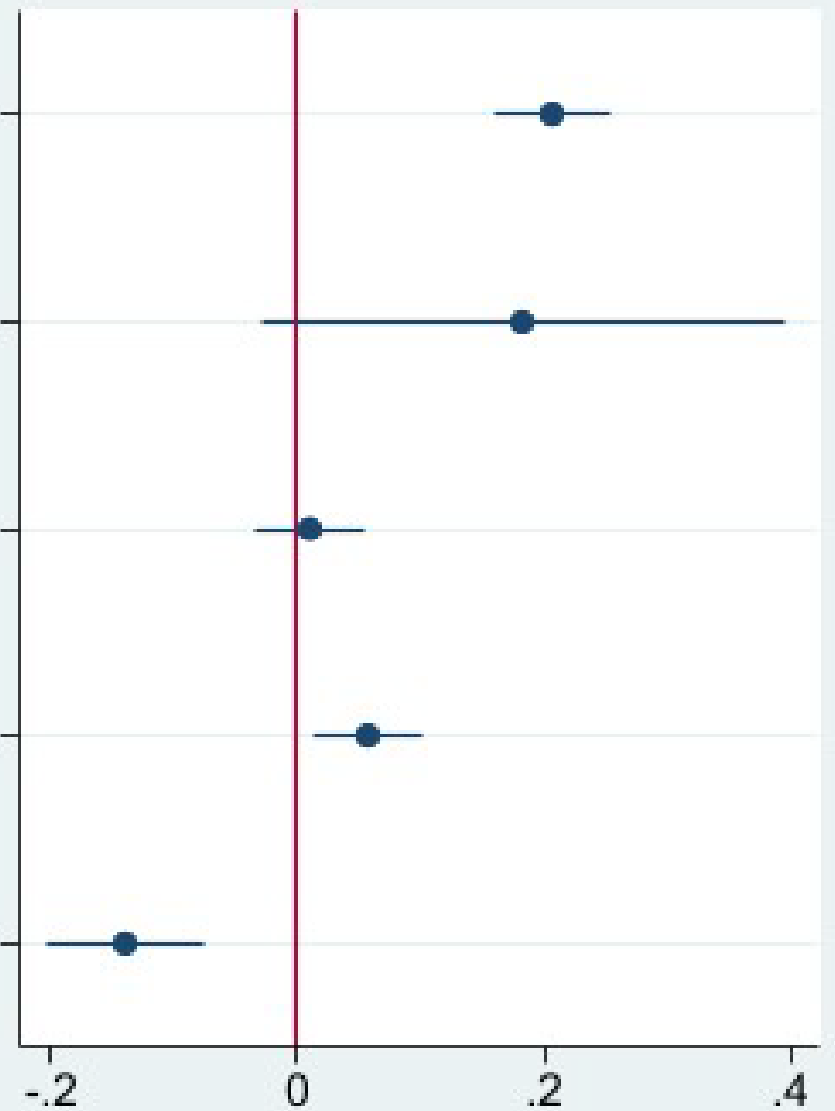
Black share of registered voters 1867-69

Average troops through 1869

Share of Black troops through 1869

Freedmen's Bureau

County center distance from fort



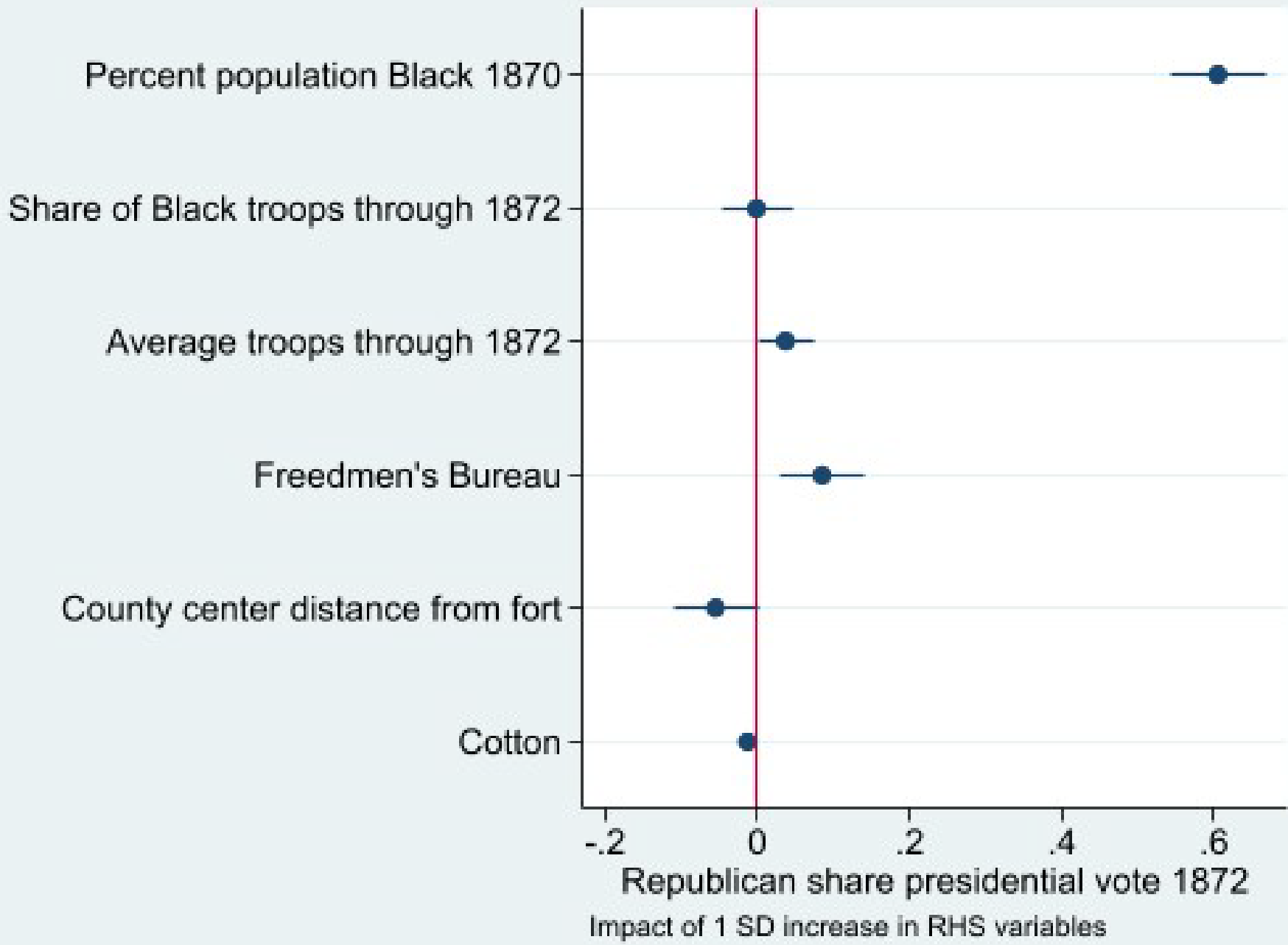
Black state and local officeholders 1860s

Impact of a 1 SD increase in RHS variables

Dependent variable: Republican presidential vote share 1872

	(1)	(2)
Percent Black population, 1870	0.495*** (0.0297)	0.552*** (0.0314)
Share of Black troops through 1872	-0.112** (0.0449)	-0.0653 (0.0464)
Percent Black population, 1870 x Share of Black troops through 1872	0.303*** (0.0887)	0.193** (0.0894)
Average troops until 1872	9.82e-05*** (3.52e-05)	6.60e-05** (3.34e-05)
Freedmen's Bureau dummy		0.0366*** (0.0119)
Distance to nearest fort (open 5 years)	-2.10e-07** (9.64e-08)	-1.88e-07* (9.62e-08)
Cotton		-0.00291*** (0.000449)
Constant	0.312*** (0.0167)	0.400*** (0.0226)
Observations	1,210	1,210
R-squared	0.349	0.392

Robust standard errors in



# First step

- Was Black political engagement and success facilitated by Reconstruction intensity?
- Yes. Closeness to troops, numbers of troops, Black troops, and Freedmen's Bureau offices generally associated with higher levels of Black voter registration, Republican voting, Black officeholders
- Registration was the crucial hurdle
- Black troops helped in Black areas, hurt in white

## Second step

- Was Black socio-economic achievement facilitated by Reconstruction intensity?

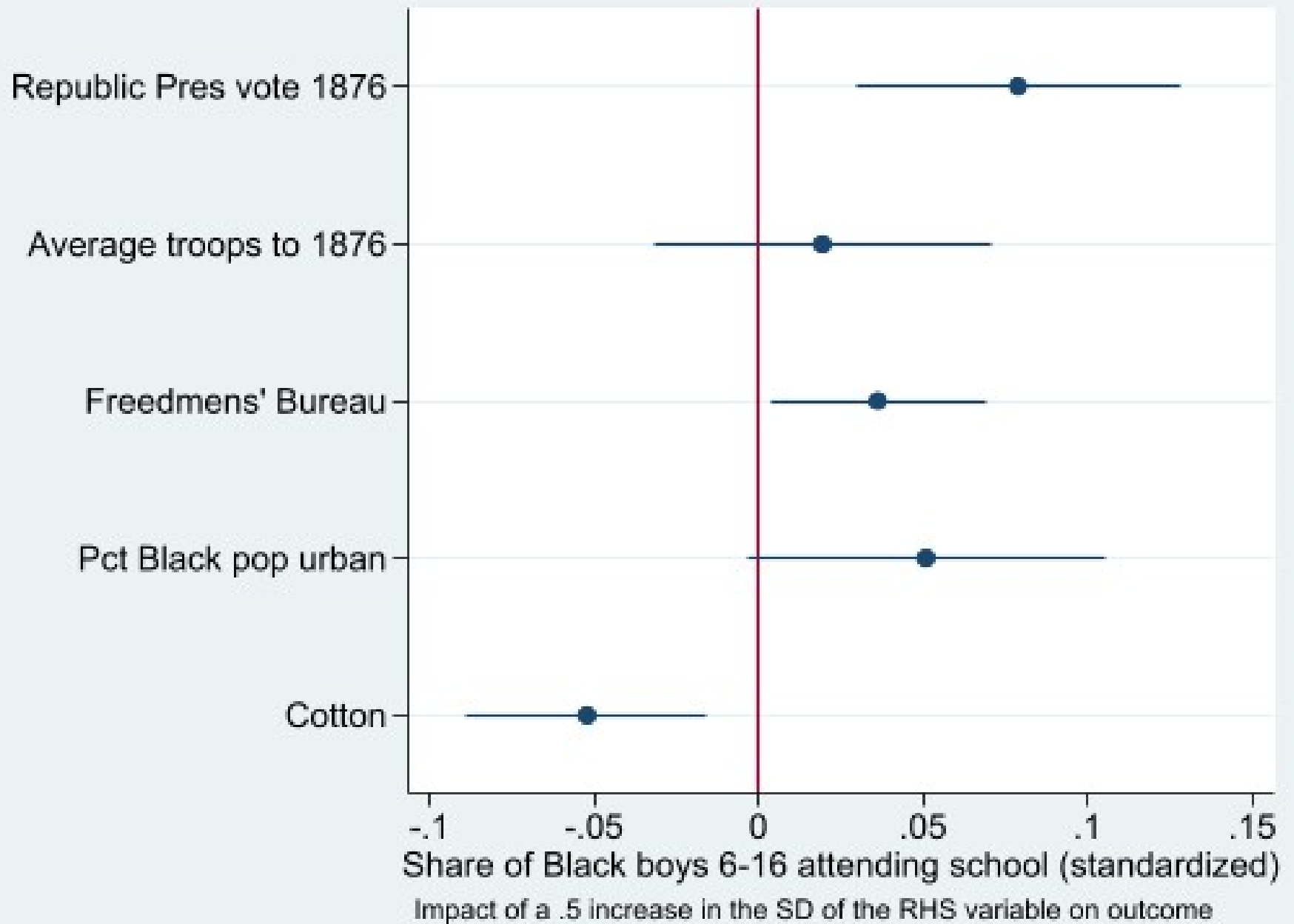
Table 5

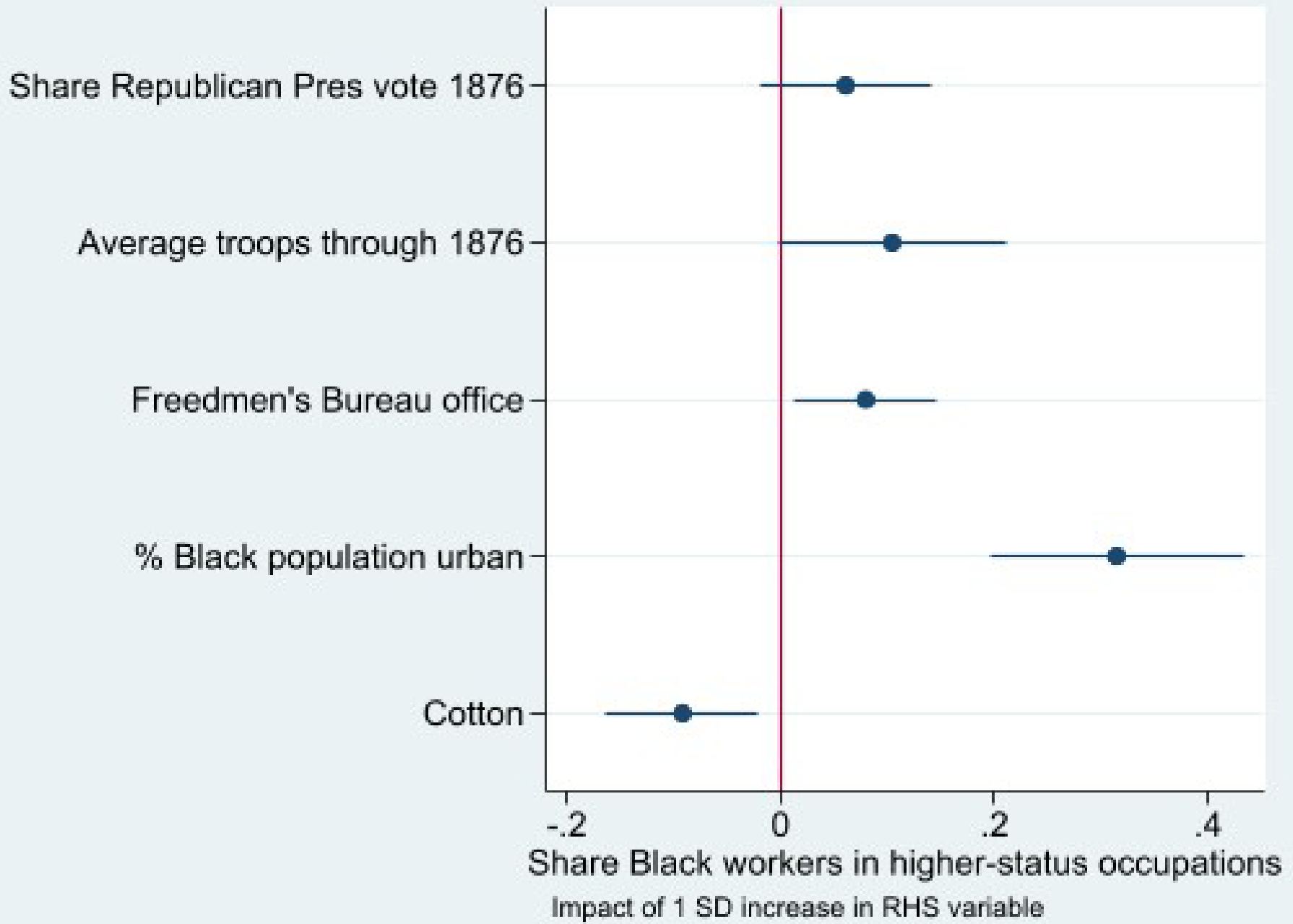
Dependent variable: Share of Black males attending school aged 6-16, 1880

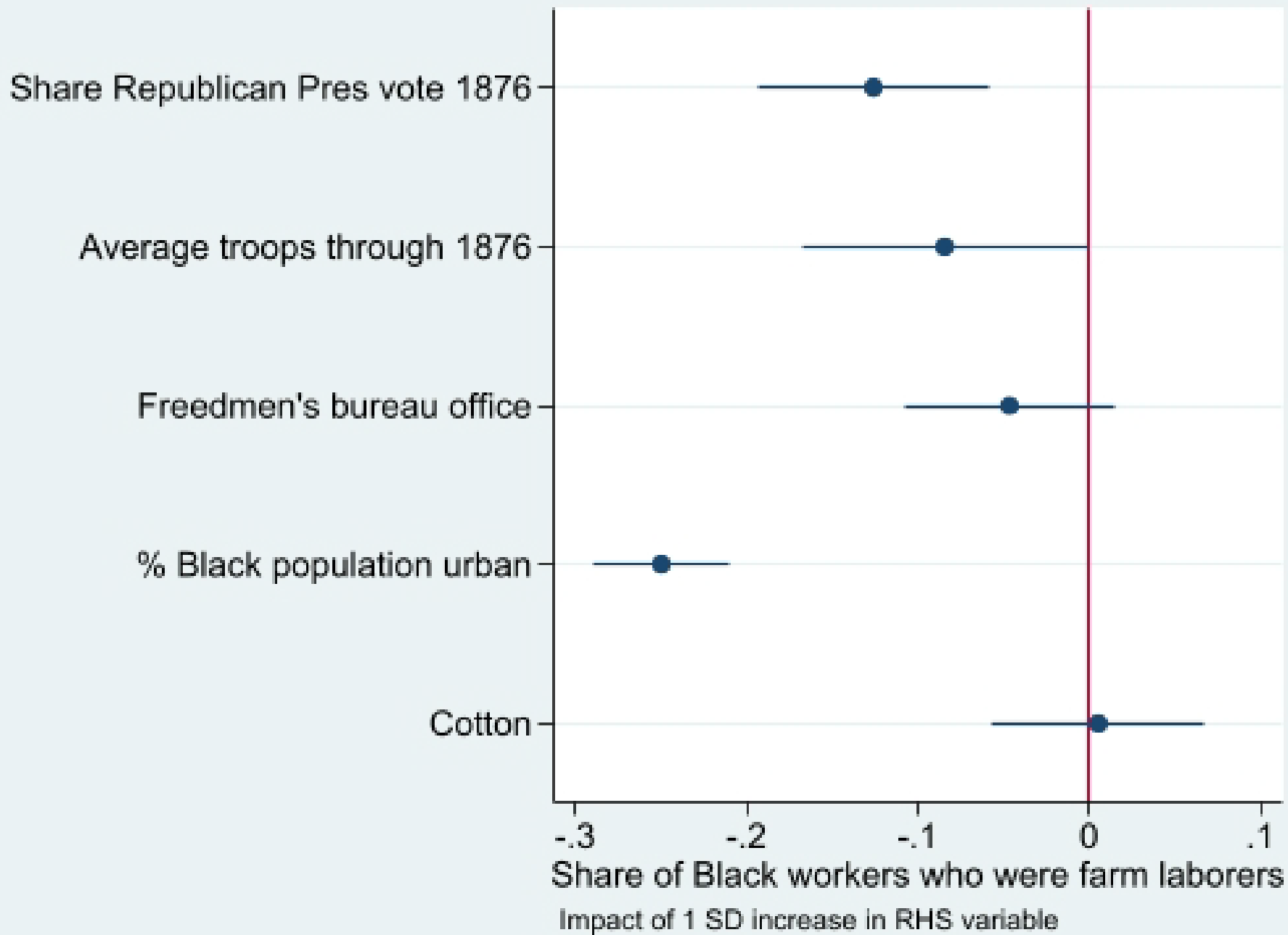
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Republican vote 1876	0.119*** (0.0313)		0.113*** (0.0312)	0.100*** (0.0318)
Average troops through 1876		2.89e-05 (5.99e-05)	3.52e-05 (5.92e-05)	3.36e-05 (6.04e-05)
Freedmen's Bureau office		0.0224*** (0.00835)	0.0189** (0.00832)	0.0183** (0.00827)
% of population Black	-0.0704*** (0.0268)	-0.0349* (0.0195)	-0.105*** (0.0263)	-0.0757*** (0.0288)
% Black population urban	0.170*** (0.0370)	0.0984* (0.0517)	0.0922* (0.0510)	0.100* (0.0524)
Total population		1.59e-06*** (3.82e-07)	1.28e-06*** (3.44e-07)	1.24e-06*** (3.48e-07)
Cotton suitability				-0.000840*** (0.000301)
Constant	0.186*** (0.00954)	0.178*** (0.00992)	0.175*** (0.0101)	0.206*** (0.0156)
Observations	1,193	1,240	1,193	1,193
R-squared	0.060	0.062	0.079	0.086

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1







## A sense of the substantive impact: 1880

VARIABLES	Share Black boys 6-16 attending school	Share Black males fully literate	Share Black males higher occupations	Share Black males farm laborers
Mean of DV	20%	27%	6.1%	35%
Republican vote 1876	+2%	+1.5%		-2.6%
Avg troops thru 1876		+1%	+0.7%	-1.6%
Freedmens' Bureau	+1.8%		+1.3%	
Cotton suitability	-1.3%		-0.7%	

## Second step

- Was Black socio-economic achievement facilitated by Reconstruction intensity?
- Yes.
- Schooling, literacy, occupational status, and agricultural position were all better in counties where Blacks voted in larger numbers *and* with Federal troops and/or Freedmen's Bureau offices
- Both Black political engagement and Federal presence mattered

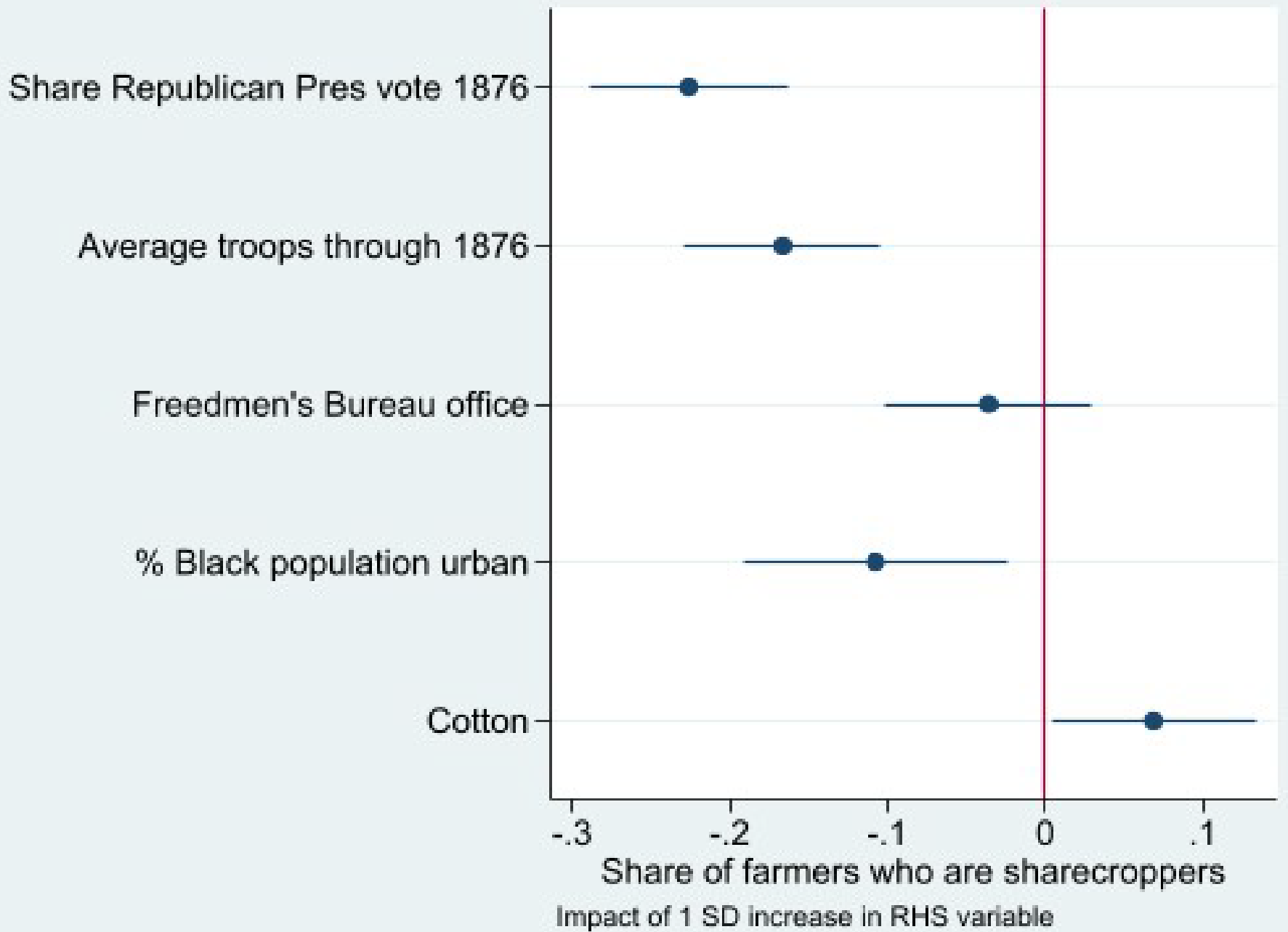
# Third step

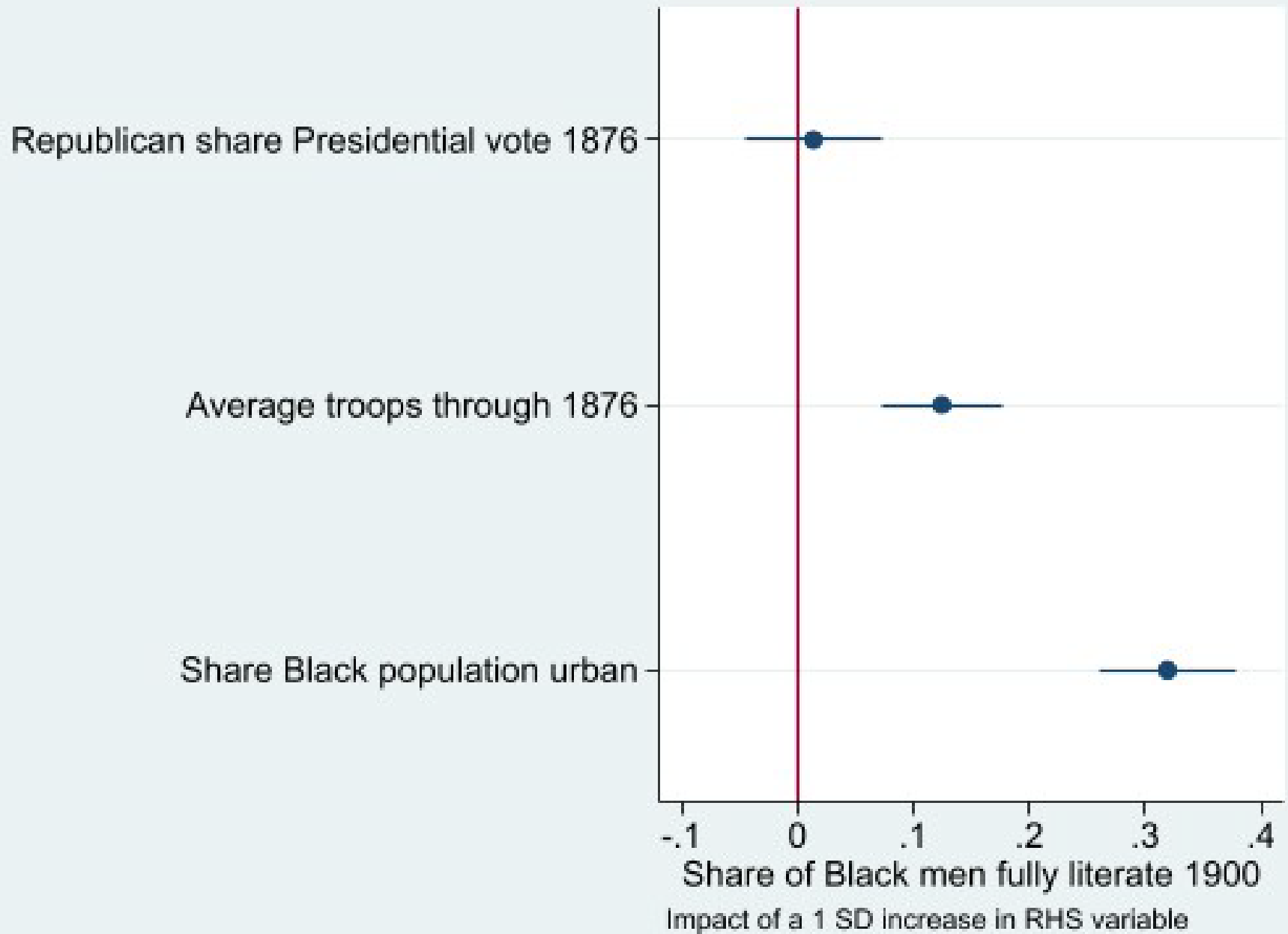
- Persistence: Was subsequent Black socio-economic achievement affected by the Reconstruction-era experience?

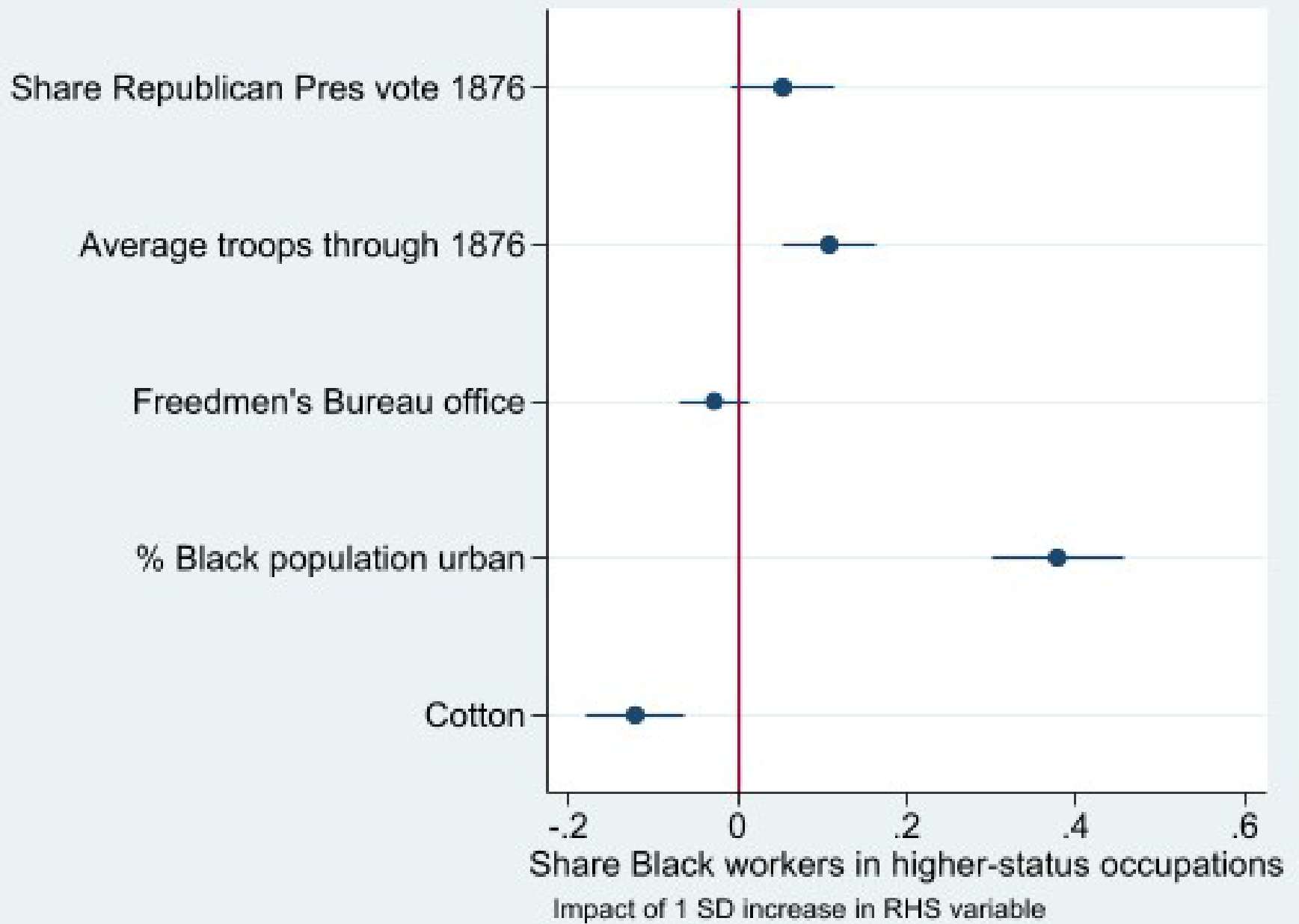
Table 9  
Dependent variable: Share of Black farmers who are owners and sharecroppers, 1900

VARIABLES	(1) Share Black farmers who own farm	(2) Share Black farmers who own farm	(3) Share Black farmers who own farm	(4) Share Black farmers who own farm	(5) Share Black farmers who sharecrop
Republican vote 1876	0.223*** (0.0394)		0.212*** (0.0387)	0.185*** (0.0395)	-0.167*** (0.0399)
Average troops thru 1876		0.000228*** (7.90e-05)	0.000202*** (7.47e-05)	0.000204*** (7.07e-05)	-0.000392*** (6.47e-05)
Freedmen's Bureau office		0.0292* (0.0162)	0.0178 (0.0159)	0.0164 (0.0157)	0.0115 (0.0157)
% of population Black	-0.451*** (0.0298)	-0.352*** (0.0327)	-0.423*** (0.0323)	-0.356*** (0.0363)	-0.229*** (0.0373)
% Black population urban	0.0188 (0.0501)	0.132** (0.0629)	0.167*** (0.0628)	0.171*** (0.0629)	-0.167*** (0.0508)
Total population		-3.69e-06*** (9.64e-07)	-3.81e-06*** (9.87e-07)	-3.74e-06*** (9.54e-07)	2.51e-06*** (7.94e-07)
Cotton suitability				-0.00194*** (0.000558)	0.00237*** (0.000547)
Constant	0.418*** (0.0181)	0.505*** (0.0198)	0.464*** (0.0222)	0.533*** (0.0290)	0.392*** (0.0277)
Observations	1,303	1,340	1,303	1,303	1,303
R-squared	0.157	0.170	0.202	0.213	0.130

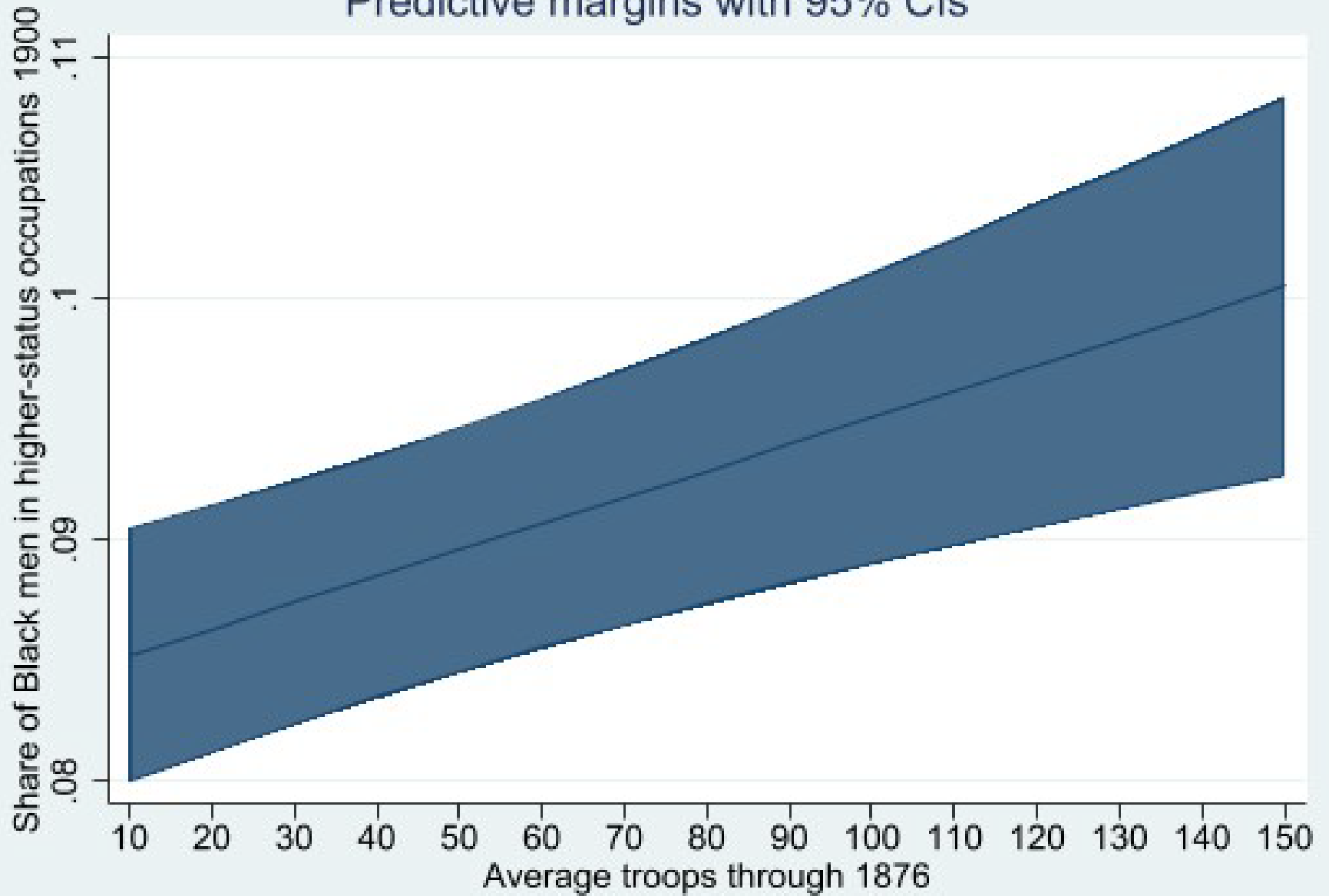
Robust standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

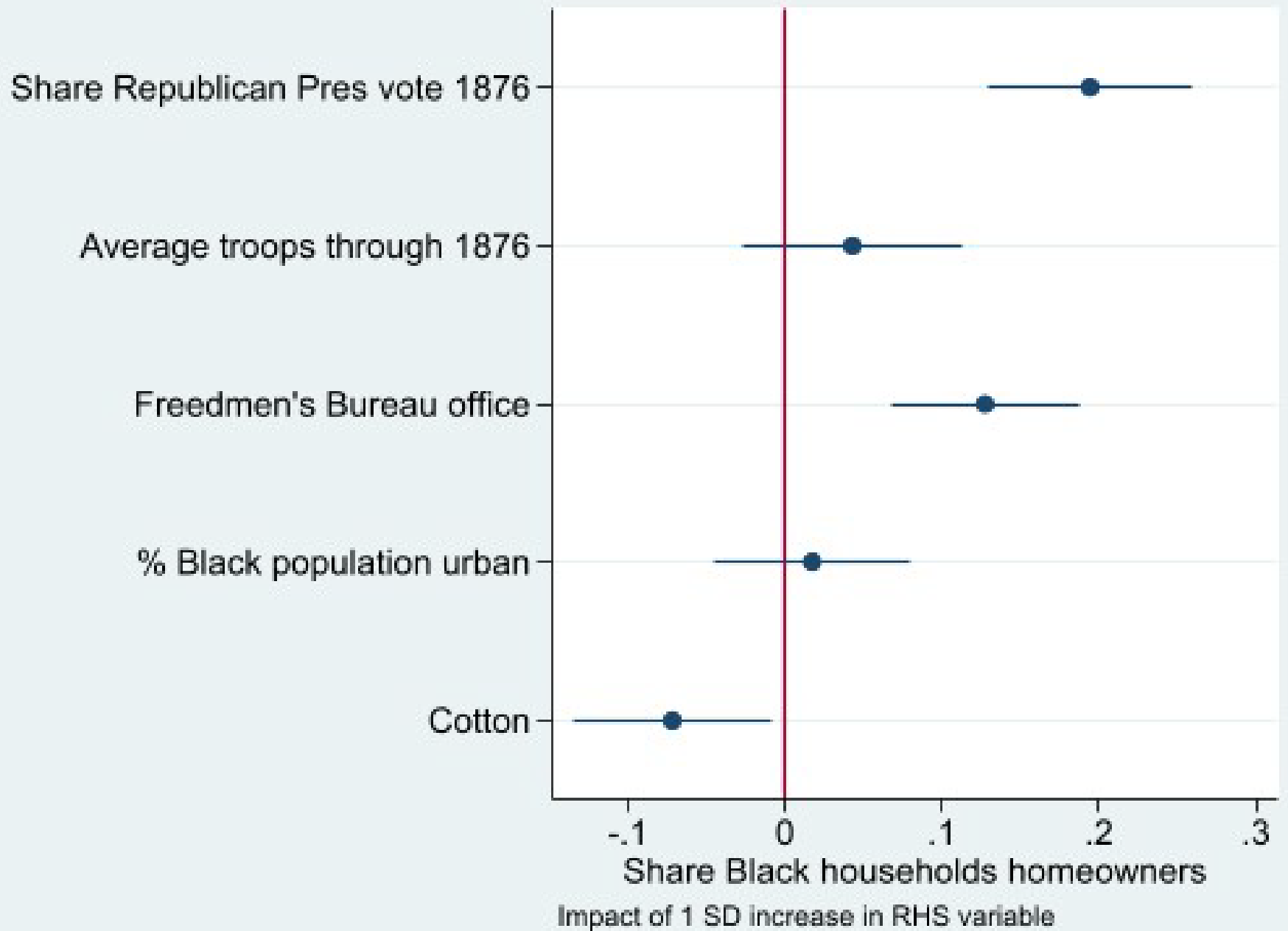




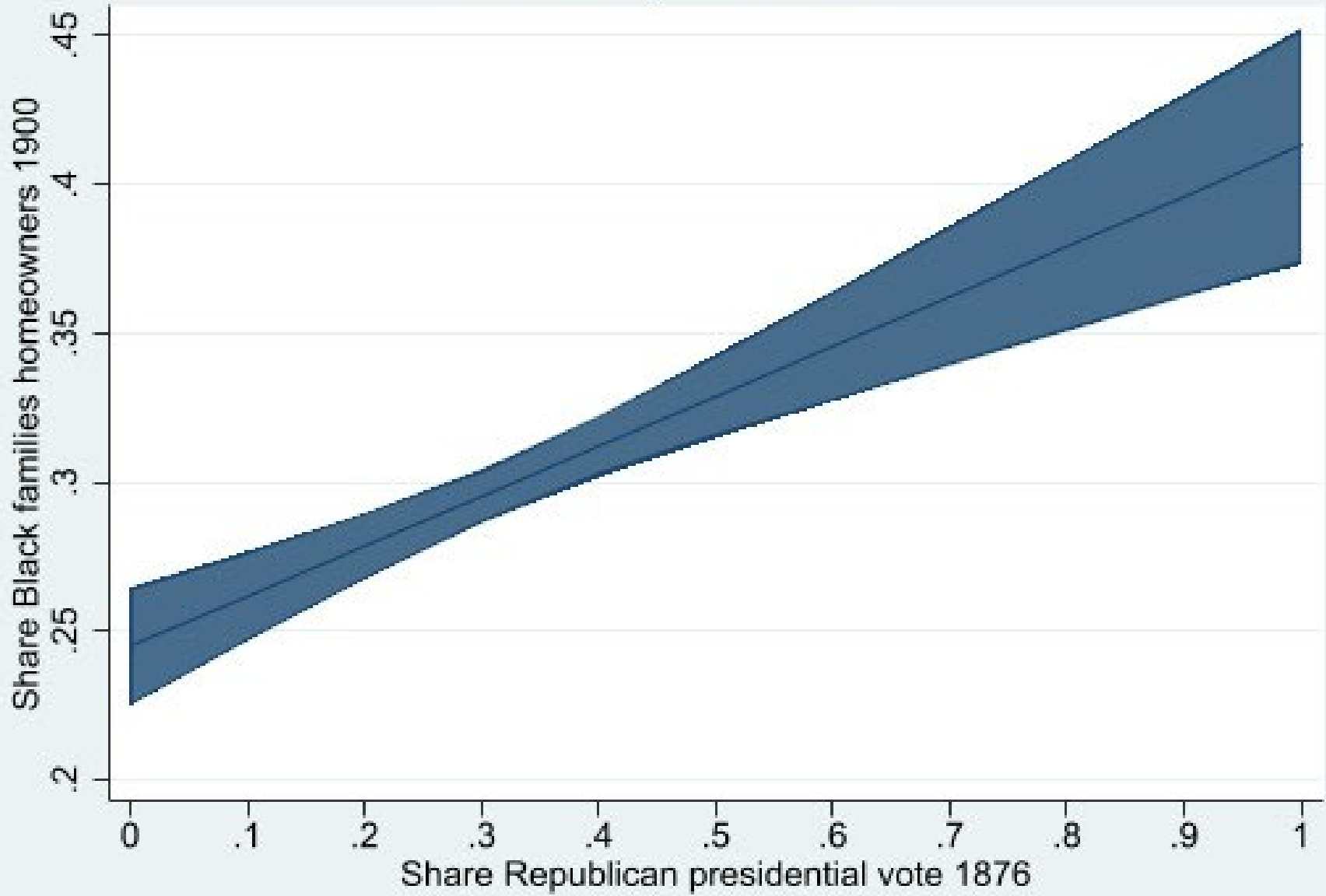


Predictive margins with 95% CIs





Predictive margins with 95% CIs



# A sense of the substantive impact: 1900

VARIABLES	Share Black farmers who own farm	Share Black farmers who sharecrop	Share of Black males fully literate	Share Black males in higher occupations	Share Black households who are homeowners
Mean of variable	33%	39%	50%	9.1%	30%
Republican vote 1876	+3.7%	-4%			+3.3%
Avg troops thru 1876	+2.1%	-4.2%	+1.9%	+1.2%	+3.4%
Cotton suitability	-3%			-1.5%	-1.2%

# Third step

- Persistence: Was subsequent Black socio-economic achievement affected by the Reconstruction-era experience?
- Yes.
- Literacy, occupational status, homeownership, and agricultural position were all better in “more Reconstructed” counties
- Effects last through 1910 (fading after)

# Implications

- Political institutional change – franchise expansion and others – associated with Black political participation, socio-economic achievement
- Institutional change required state power – military and otherwise to be enforced
- Underlying economic structure limited or blocked impact of institutional change

# Conclusions

- Reconstruction a dramatic period in American history – reversal a tragedy of lasting import
- Major institutional changes → high levels of political participation and success, and socio-economic achievements by previously enslaved people. Impact persisted for decades.
- Crucially backed by military and other state power – and receded when state receded
- Lessons both for history, and US, and theory
- Worthy of far more research