

Beyond the War on Drugs:
Evidence from Portugal's Drug Decriminalization
Reform and the *Retornados* Migration

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Drug decriminalization



Overdose deaths hit record levels, murders surge after blue state decriminalizes hard drugs

2001 Portuguese drug legislation reform

- ▶ Portugal decriminalized public and private use, acquisition, and possession of **all drugs**
 - Now an administrative offense
 - No longer punishable by imprisonment
 - No criminal record

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 - Now an administrative offense
 - No longer punishable by imprisonment
 - No criminal record
- ▶ Addiction seen as a public health issue, not a criminal one

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 - Continuous measure of exposition to treatment
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 - Has no long-term effect on voting for advocating parties
 - Has no effect on hospital admissions
 - Lowers property crime
- Potentially welfare improving without hurting policy makers

Related Literature and Contribution

Drug policy reforms

- ▶ MML: Gavrilova (2019), Rice (2019), Miroff (2014)
 - Find reduction in violent crime, organized crime activity
 - Marijuana as a substitute for other drugs
- ▶ Decriminalization: Portugal and Tavares (2012), Rasul et al. (2014), Hughes and Stevens (2010)
 - Mixed results

- ▶ **Contribution:** Hard drugs, identification, political

Portugal before 1974



- ▶ 1933 to 1974: *Estado Novo* – Authoritarian regime
 - Closed country
- ▶ 1960s and 1970s: Colonial War
 - Independence movements in Portuguese colonies in Africa
- ▶ 1974: Carnation Revolution
 - Deposition of *Estado Novo* regime
 - Transition to democracy

The *Retornados* Migration



- ▶ Post 1974: Carnation Revolution's Aftermath
 - Democratic Portugal opens to the world
 - Threat of civil war in African colonies
- ▶ The *Retornados* migration
 - 600,000 *retornados* from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor (Asia)
 - Portuguese population increased by 6%

The Influence of the *Retornados* on Drug Use

- ▶ Downward social mobility
 - In Africa: White Portuguese settlers
 - In Portugal: Second-class Portuguese citizens (Marques, 2013)
- ▶ Lack of opportunities in Portugal
 - Slow economic growth, high inflation, unemployment
 - No connections
- ▶ Angola and Mozambique were drug-producing countries
- ▶ The *retornados* established the foundations of the drug market in Portugal (Fernandes, 1993; Nunes Dias, 2004; Calado, 2016)

▶ **Portugal Census**

- 1960: Population (parish level - 2882), educational attainment (municipality level - 278)
- 1981: Microdata, place of residence in 1973 and 1981 (country to parish)
- 2001: Population

▶ **Survey on Drug Use**

- European Values Study (1999)
- National Survey on the Consumption of Psychoactive Substances in the Portuguese Population (2001)

▶ **Parliament records**

- Parties' position with respect to the legislation in 2001

▶ **Electoral Outcomes**

- Parliamentary elections from 1976 until 2019
- Voting outcomes by party at the parish level

▶ **Health Outcomes**

- Portuguese National Health System (SNS)
- Drug-related hospital admissions at the parish-year level (2000-2021)

▶ **Crime Outcomes**

- Ministry of Justice
- Arrests at the municipality-year level (1993 - 2021)

The *Retornados* Migration and Pre-Reform Drug Use

	OLS				O. Probit
	Soft Drugs		Hard Drugs		Soft Drugs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	0.500 (2.036)	0.365*** (0.097)	0.069 (0.748)	0.126*** (0.034)	0.006*** (0.001)
Marginal Effects:					
Almost none					-0.005 (0.000)
Some					-0.009 (0.001)
Many					0.011 (0.000)
Almost all					0.002 (0.000)
Pop. 1960	×	×	×	×	×
Region Level	×		×		
Municipality Level		×		×	
Individual Level					×
Mean Outcome	7.44	7.44	1.42	1.42	2.56
25p to 75p Effect	23%	17%	17%	30%	
Observations	5	278	5	278	907
R ²	0.402	0.121	0.131	0.463	

Estimation Strategy

$$y_{l,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \frac{Ret.Ang.Moz.l}{Ret.Total_l} \times Post2001_t + X_l' \mu_t + District_l \mu_t + \lambda_l + \mu_t + \varepsilon_{l,t}$$

- ▶ $y_{l,t}$: outcome variables at locality l and year t
- ▶ $Ret.Ang.Moz.p$: number of retornados from Angola and Mozambique at locality l
- ▶ $Ret.Total_p$: total number of retornados at locality l
- ▶ $X_{l,1960}$: population and average educational level in 1960 at locality l
- ▶ $District_l$: locality l 's district
- ▶ λ_l : locality fixed effects
- ▶ μ_t : year fixed effects
- ▶ Standard errors are clustered at the locality level

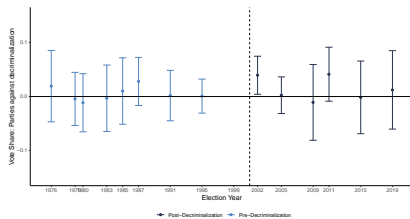
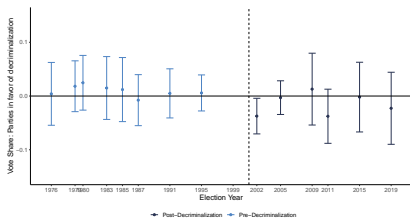
Results: Electoral Outcomes

Table: Effect on voting according to the parties' position with respect to the reform

	Voting share	
	In favor (1)	Against (2)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-0.003 (0.008)	0.001 (0.009)
Pop. 1960 \times Year FE	\times	\times
Education 1960 \times Year FE	\times	\times
District \times Year FE	\times	\times
Parish FE	\times	\times
Year FE	\times	\times
Mean Outcome	42.32	52.03
25p to 75p Effect	0%	0%
Parishes	3527	3527
Observations	47,503	47,503
Adjusted R ²	0.923	0.916

Event Study

Figure: Effect on the share of voting for parties that supported and opposed the decriminalization



Results: Health – Hospital Admissions

Table: Effect on drug-related hospitalization rates

	Hospital Admission rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
Panel A: Drug Use	Cannabis (1)	Cocaine (2)	Opioid (3)	Hallucinogen (4)	Ot. Stimulants (5)	Ot. Sedative (6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-0.732 (0.509)	-0.157 (0.129)	-0.091 (0.099)	0.022 (0.024)	0.237 (0.624)	-0.056 (0.123)
Mean Outcome	5.89	2.44	0.34	0.15	15.34	3.65
25p-to-75p Effect	-42%	-22%	-91%	51%	5%	-5%
Panel B: Substitution and Contamination	Alcohol (7)	Nicotine (8)	Newborn Mom (9)	Newborn Milk (10)	HIV (11)	Hepatitis (12)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-5.005 (3.661)	-13.506* (7.572)	-0.052 (0.069)	0.360 (0.390)	-0.166 (1.353)	-1.958 (1.824)
Mean Outcome	207.34	177.92	0.29	1.23	26.59	40.2
25p-to-75p Effect	-8%	-26%	-61%	99%	-2%	-17%
Municipalities	271	271	271	271	271	271
Observations	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687

Results: Crime – Arrest Rates

Table: Effect on crime rates

	Crime rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
	Homicide (1)	Assault (2)	Theft (3)	Burglary (4)	Robbery (5)	Sexual Assault (6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-0.205 (0.181)	-3.195 (2.576)	-15.185*** (5.715)	-5.240** (2.236)	0.659 (0.427)	0.023 (0.114)
Pop. 1960 × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Education 1960 × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Ret. Total × Year FE						
District × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Municipality FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Mean Outcome	5.54	416.92	563.55	335.1	27.06	6.44
25p to 75p Effect	-13%	-3%	-9%	-5%	8%	1%
Municipalities	271	271	271	271	271	271
Observations	7,859	7,859	7,859	7,859	7,859	7,859
Adjusted R ²	0.278	0.568	0.807	0.758	0.846	0.336

Takeaways and next steps

- ▶ Political parties do not experience long-term backlash for supporting drug decriminalization

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- ▶ Next step
 - Mechanisms

Takeaways and next steps

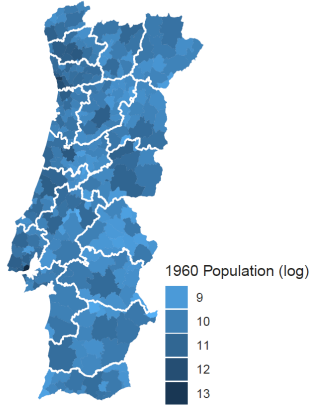
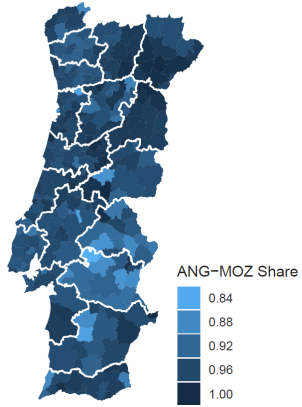
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Thank you for your attention!

Identification and Robustness

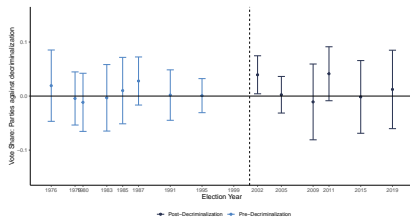
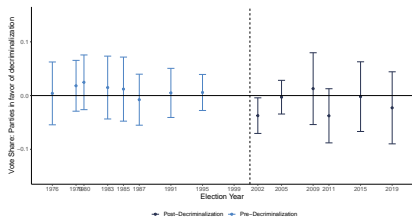
- ▶ Event Studies Electoral Health Crime
- ▶ Placebo Test Electoral Crime
- ▶ Drug Use – Ordered Logistic Specification Drug Use
- ▶ Alternative Specification Drug Use Electoral Health Crime
- ▶ Inverse Probability Weighted Estimation Electoral Health Crime
- ▶ Doubly Robust Estimation Electoral Health Crime
- ▶ Balance Table
- ▶ Clustering
- ▶ Multiple Hypothesis Testing

Retornados Distribution



Event Study

Figure: Effect on the share of voting for parties that supported and opposed the decriminalization

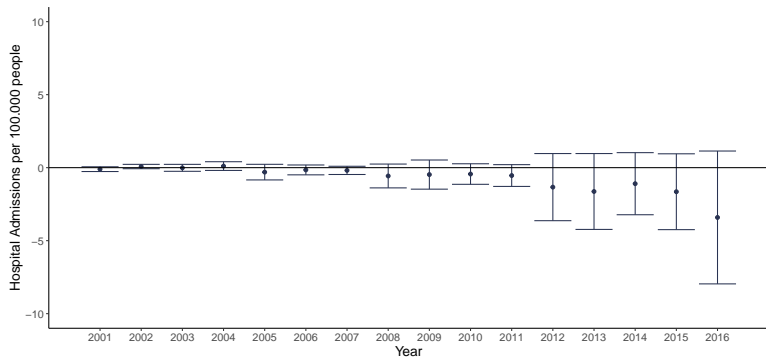


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Cannabis-related disorder hospitalization rate

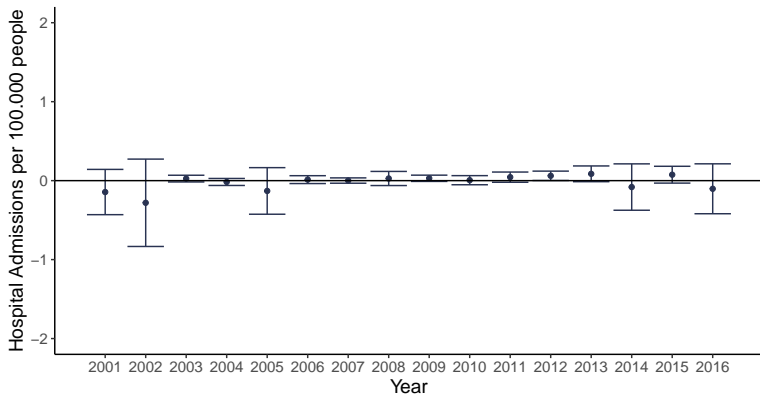


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Cocaine-related disorder hospitalization rate

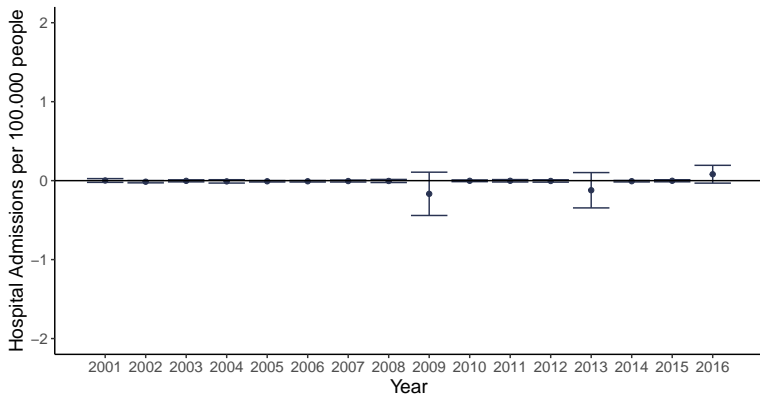


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Opioid-related disorder hospitalization rate

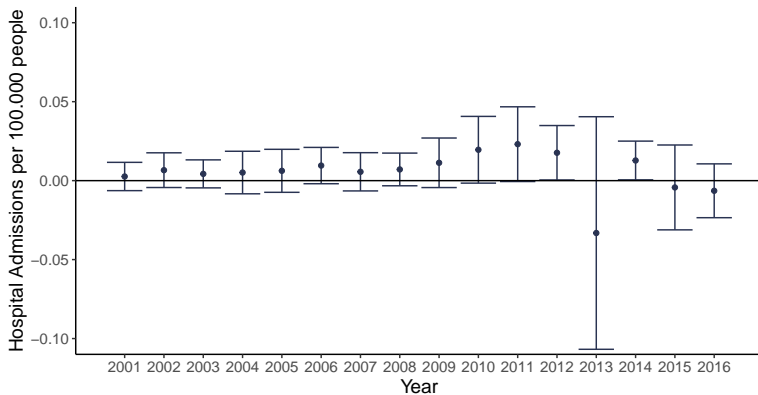


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Hallucinogen-related disorder hospitalization rate

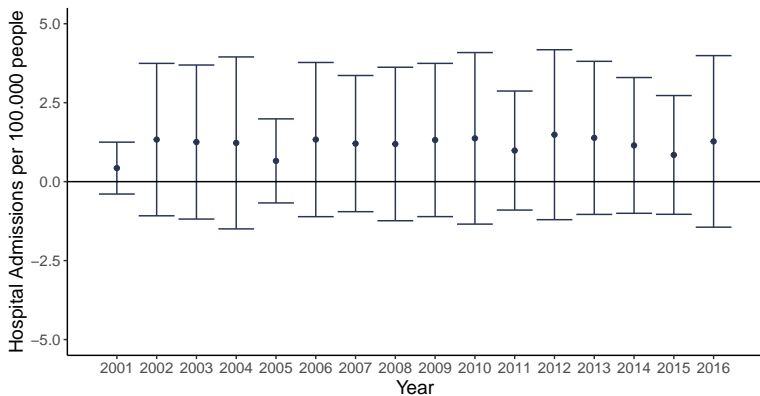


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Other stimulant-related disorder hospitalization rate

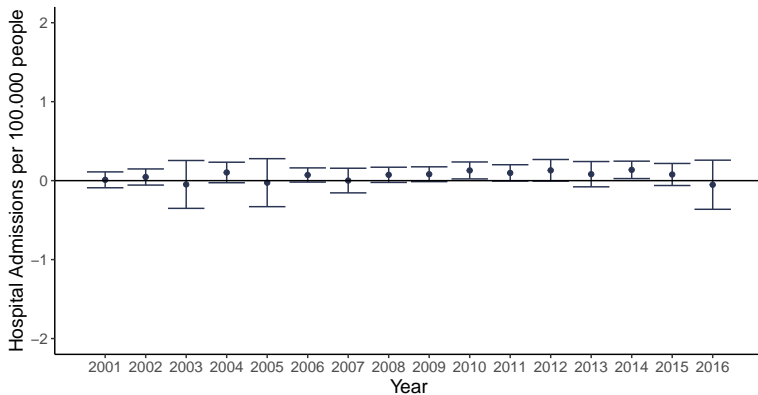


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Other sedative-related disorder hospitalization rate

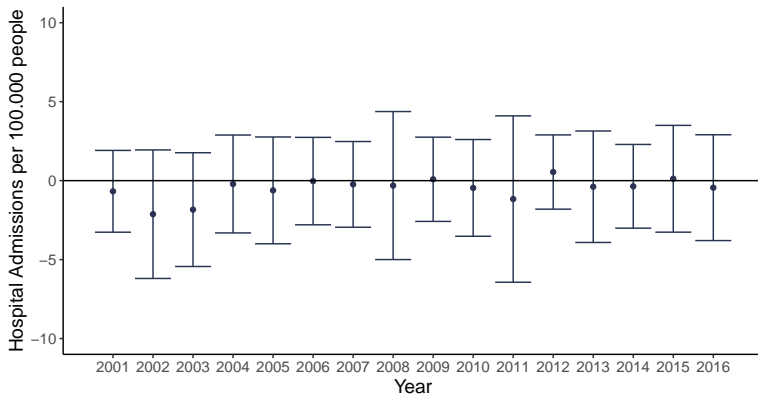


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Alcohol-related disorder hospitalization rate

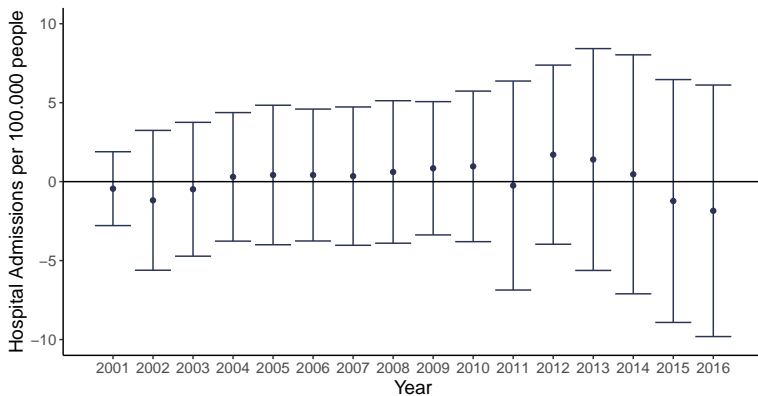


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Nicotine dependence hospitalization rate

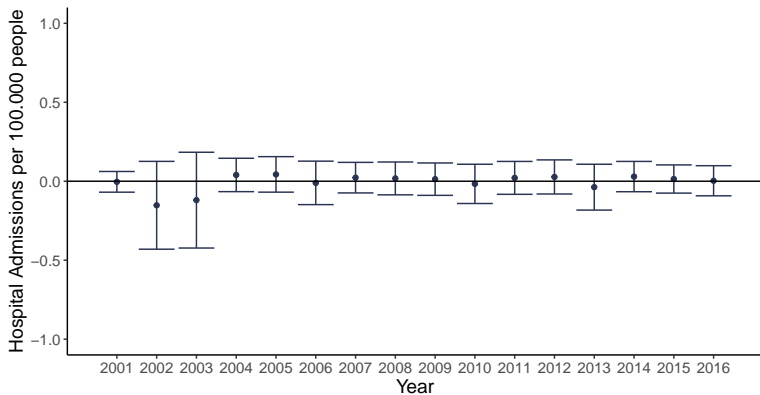


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Hospitalization rate of newborns (suspected to be) affected by maternal use of drugs of addiction

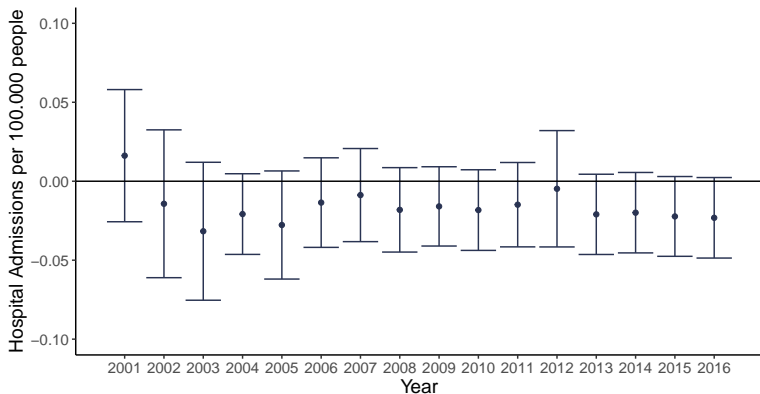


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Hospitalization rate of newborns (suspected to be) affected by noxious substances transmitted via placenta or breast milk

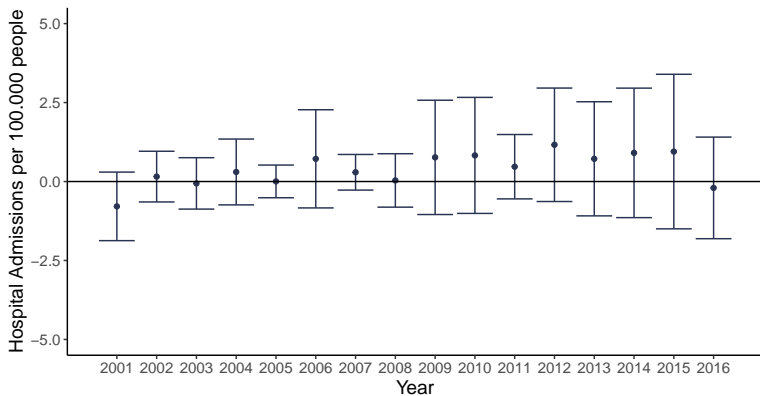


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) hospitalization rate

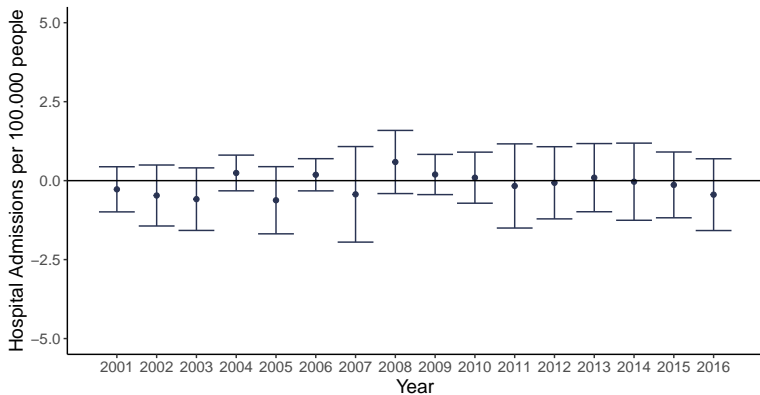


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Hepatitis hospitalization rate

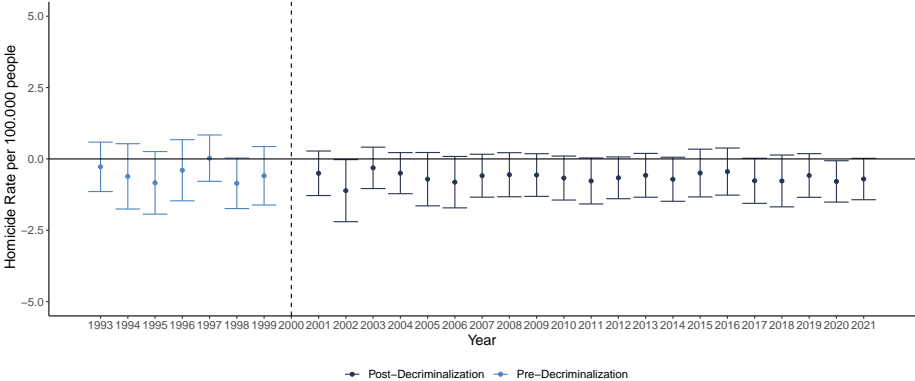


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Homicide rate per 100.000 inhabitants

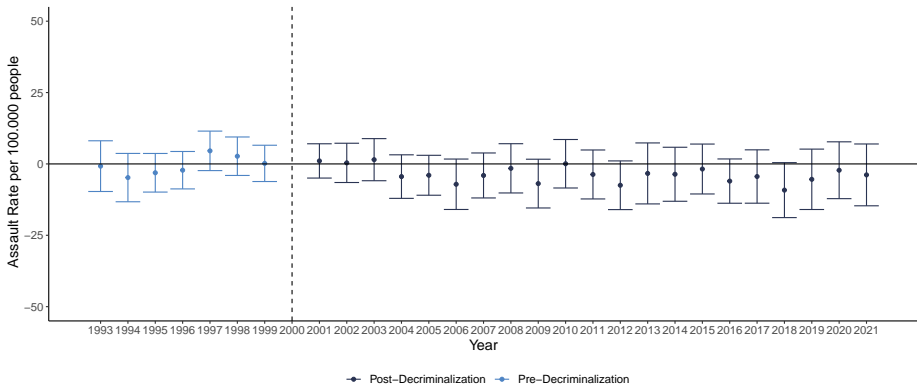


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Assault rate per 100.000 inhabitants

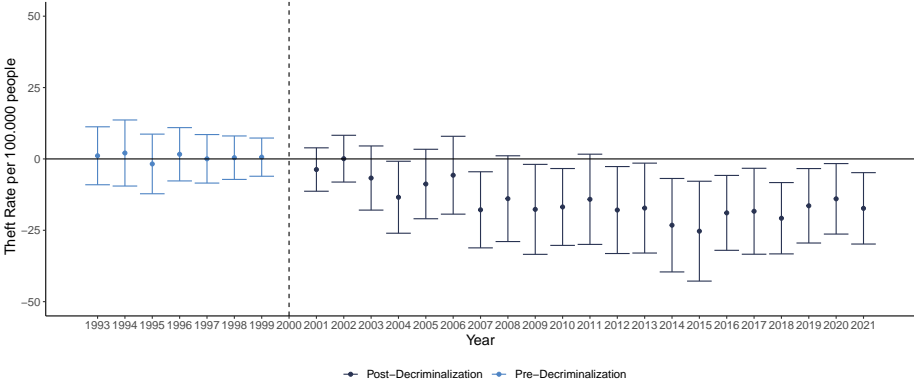


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Theft rate per 100.000 inhabitants

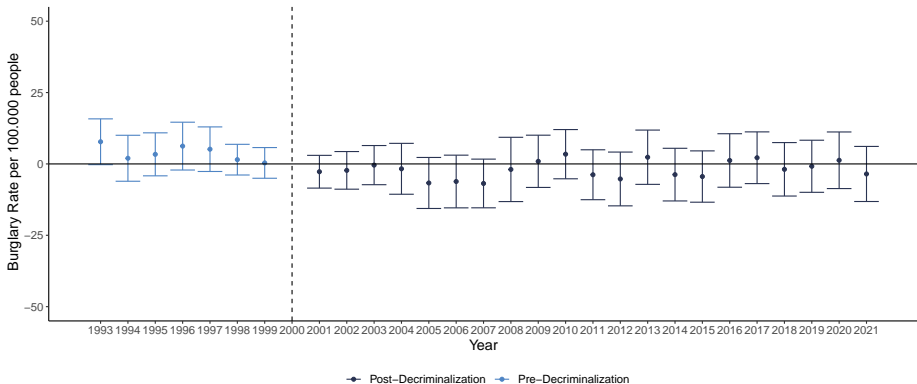


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Burglary rate per 100.000 inhabitants

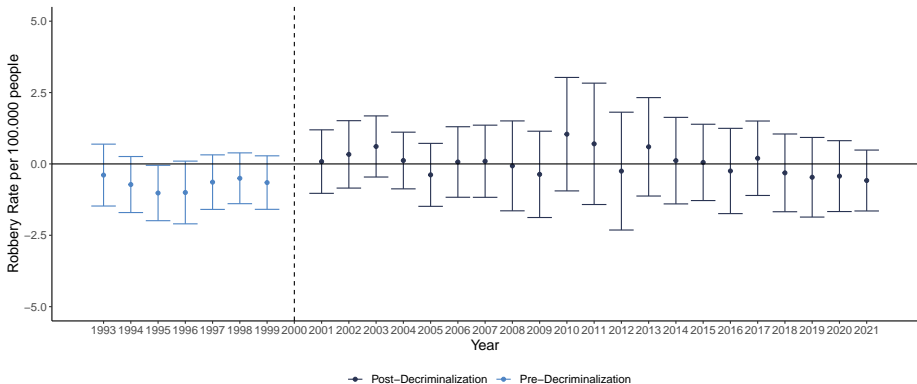


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Robbery rate per 100.000 inhabitants

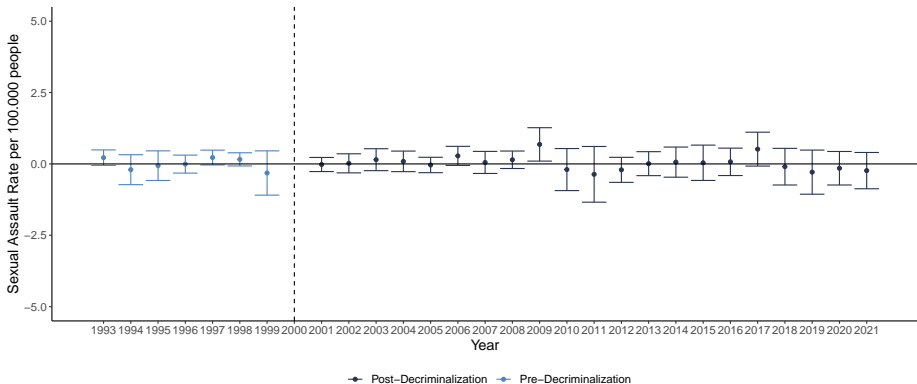


Regression Results

Robustness

Event Study

Figure: Sexual Assault rate per 100.000 inhabitants

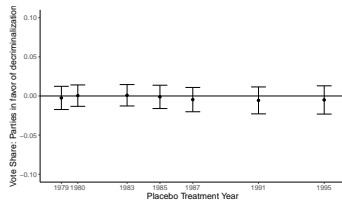
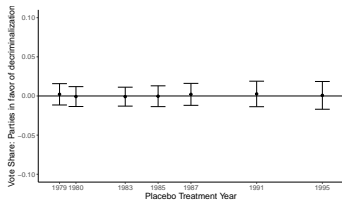


Regression Results

Robustness

Placebo Test

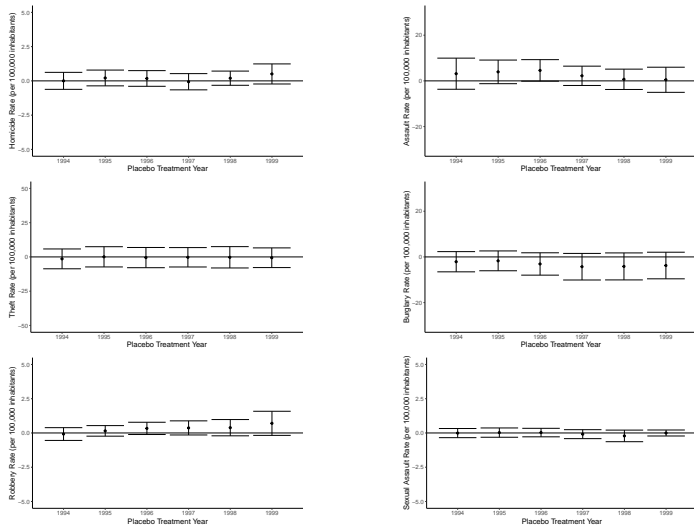
Figure: Placebo Regressions – Electoral Outcomes



Back

Placebo Test

Figure: Placebo Regressions – Crime Outcomes



The *Retornados* Migration and Pre-Reform Drug Use – Ordered Logistic Specification

Table: Effect on Pre-Reform Drug Use – Ordered Logistic Specification

	Soft Drugs
	O. Logit
	(1)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	0.011*** (0.001)
Marginal Effects:	
Almost none	-0.001*** (0.000)
Some	-0.002*** (0.001)
Many	0.002*** (0.000)
Almost all	0.000*** (0.000)
Population 1960	×
Individual Level	×
Mean Outcome	2.43
Observations	907

The *Retornados* Migration and Pre-Reform Drug Use – Alternative Specification

Table: Effect on Pre-Reform Drug Use – Ordered Logistic Specification

	OLS				O. Probit
	Soft Drugs		Hard Drugs		Soft Drugs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	0.575 (2.826)	0.384*** (0.105)	0.154 (0.731)	0.104*** (0.027)	-0.003 (0.002)
Marginal Effects:					
Almost none					-0.005 (0.000)
Some					-0.009 (0.001)
Many					0.011 (0.000)
Almost all					0.002 (0.000)
Population 1960 × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×
<i>Retornados</i> Total × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×
Region Level	×		×		
Municipality Level		×		×	
Individual Level					×
Mean Outcome	7.44	7.44	1.42	1.42	2.56
25p-to-75p Effect	14%	9%	19%	13%	
R ²	0.464	0.145	0.731	0.655	
Observations	5	278	5	278	907

Results: Electoral Outputs – Alternative Specification

Table: Effect on Voting – Alternative Specification

	Voting share	
	In favor (1)	Against (2)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-0.003 (0.008)	0.001 (0.009)
Pop. 1960 × Year FE	×	×
Education 1960 × Year FE	×	×
<i>Retornados</i> Total × Year FE	×	×
District × Year FE	×	×
Parish FE	×	×
Year FE	×	×
Mean Outcome	42.32	52.03
25p to 75p Effect	0%	0%
Parishes	3527	3527
Observations	47,503	47,503
Adjusted R ²	0.923	0.916

Regression Results

Robustness

Results: Health Outputs – Alternative Specification

Table: Effect on drug-related hospitalization rates

Panel A: Drug Use	Hospital Admission rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
	Cannabis (1)	Cocaine (2)	Opioid (3)	Hallucinogen (4)	Ot. Stimulants (5)	Ot. Sedative (6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-0.832 (0.528)	-0.161 (0.138)	-0.087 (0.106)	0.024 (0.025)	0.236 (0.683)	-0.083 (0.127)
Mean Outcome	5.89	2.44	0.34	0.15	15.34	3.65
25p-to-75p Effect	-48%	-23%	-87%	55%	5%	-8%
Panel B: Substitution and Contamination	Alcohol (7)	Nicotine (8)	Newborn Mom (9)	Newborn Milk (10)	HIV (11)	Hepatitis (12)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-5.716 (3.866)	-15.252* (7.937)	-0.088 (0.083)	0.376 (0.417)	-0.222 (1.407)	-2.131 (1.954)
Mean Outcome	207.34	177.92	0.29	1.23	26.59	40.2
25p-to-75p Effect	-9%	-29%	-105%	105%	-3%	-18%
Municipalities	271	271	271	271	271	271
Observations	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687	4,687

Regression Results

Robustness

Results: Crime Outputs – Alternative Specification

Table: Effect on Crime Rates – Alternative Specification

	Crime rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
	Homicide (1)	Assault (2)	Theft (3)	Burglary (4)	Robbery (5)	Sexual Assault (6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-0.185 (0.181)	-3.195 (2.660)	-14.172** (5.870)	-4.873** (2.265)	0.686 (0.444)	0.102 (0.121)
Pop. 1960 × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Education 1960 × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Retornados Total × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
District × Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Municipality FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Year FE	×	×	×	×	×	×
Mean Outcome	5.54	416.92	563.55	335.1	27.06	6.44
25p to 75p Effect	-11%	-3%	-9%	-5%	9%	5%
Municipalities	271	271	271	271	271	271
Observations	7,859	7,859	7,859	7,859	7,859	7,859
Adjusted R ²	0.278	0.568	0.807	0.758	0.845	0.337

Regression Results

Robustness

Results: Electoral Outputs – IPW Estimation

Table: Effect on voting according to the parties' position with respect to the reform – Inverse Probability Weighted Estimator (Abadie, 2005)

	Voting share	
	In favor	Against
	(1)	(2)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	0.981 (0.619)	-0.415 (0.658)
Population 1960 × Year FE	×	×
Education 1960 × Year FE	×	×
<i>Retornados</i> Total × Year FE		
District × Year FE	×	×
IPW	×	×
Mean Outcome	42.23	51.69
Effect	2%	-1%
Parishes	2,459	2,459
Observations	4,918	4,918

Results: Health Outputs – IPW Estimation

Table: Effect on drug-related hospitalization rates – Inverse Probability Weighted Estimator (Abadie, 2005)

Panel A: Drug Use	Hospital Admission rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
	Cannabis (1)	Cocaine (2)	Opioid (3)	Hallucinogen (4)	Ot. Stimulants (5)	Ot. Sedative (6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	2.898 (2.350)	0.265 (1.677)	-0.775 (0.510)	0.027 (0.331)	34.758 (28.615)	0.480 (1.443)
Mean Outcome Effect	5.15 56%	2.31 12%	0.48 -161%	0.19 14%	25.83 134%	3.22 14%
Panel B: Substitution and Contamination	Alcohol (7)	Nicotine (8)	Newborn Mom (9)	Newborn Milk (10)	HIV (11)	Hepatitis (12)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-4.292 (43.643)	11.010 (74.801)	-0.089 (0.657)	-0.131 (1.571)	21.747 (19.256)	1.258 (12.660)
Mean Outcome Effect	325.40 -1%	180.84 3%	0.772 -11%	2.29 -5%	39.01 55%	50.50 2%
Population 1960	×	×	×	×	×	×
Education 1960	×	×	×	×	×	×
Retornados Total						
District	×	×	×	×	×	×
IPW	×	×	×	×	×	×
Parishes	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899
Observations	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798

Regression Results

Robustness

Results: Crime Outputs – IPW Estimation

Table: Effect on Crime Rates – Inverse Probability Weighted Estimator (Abadie, 2005)

	Hospital Admission rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
Panel A: Drug Use	Cannabis	Cocaine	Opioid	Hallucinogen	Ot. Stimulants	Ot. Sedative
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	2.898 (2.350)	0.265 (1.677)	-0.775 (0.510)	0.027 (0.331)	34.758 (28.615)	0.480 (1.443)
Mean Outcome Effect	5.15 56%	2.31 12%	0.48 -161%	0.19 14%	25.83 134%	3.22 14%
Panel B: Substitution and Contamination	Alcohol	Nicotine	Newborn Mom	Newborn Milk	HIV	Hepatitis
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-4.292 (43.643)	11.010 (74.801)	-0.089 (0.657)	-0.131 (1.571)	21.747 (19.256)	1.258 (12.660)
Mean Outcome Effect	325.40 -1%	180.84 3%	0.772 -11%	2.29 -5%	39.01 55%	50.50 2%
Population 1960	x	x	x	x	x	x
Education 1960	x	x	x	x	x	x
Retornados Total						
District	x	x	x	x	x	x
IPW	x	x	x	x	x	x
Parishes	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899
Observations	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798

Regression Results

Robustness

Results: Electoral Outputs – Doubly Robust Estimation

Table: Effect on voting according to the parties' position with respect to the reform – Doubly Robust DiD Estimator (Sant'Anna and Zhao, 2020)

	Voting share	
	In favor	Against
	(1)	(2)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	0.924 (0.592)	-0.360 (0.633)
Population 1960 × Year FE	×	×
Education 1960 × Year FE	×	×
<i>Retornados</i> Total × Year FE		
District × Year FE	×	×
Doubly Robust	×	×
Mean Outcome	42.32	52.03
Effect	2%	-0%
Parishes	2,459	2,459
Observations	4,918	4,918

Results: Health Outputs – Doubly Robust Estimation

Table: Effect on drug-related hospitalization rates – Doubly Robust DiD Estimator (Sant’Anna and Zhao, 2020)

Panel A: Drug Use	Hospital Admission rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
	Cannabis (1)	Cocaine (2)	Opioid (3)	Hallucinogen (4)	Ot. Stimulants (5)	Ot. Sedative (6)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	2.754 (2.358)	0.304 (1.585)	-0.781 (0.505)	0.067 (0.302)	32.271 (26.663)	0.717 (1.500)
Mean Outcome Effect	5.15 53%	2.31 126%	0.48 -162%	0.19 35%	25.83 124%	3.22 22%
Panel B: Substitution and Contamination	Alcohol (7)	Nicotine (8)	Newborn Mom (9)	Newborn Milk (10)	HIV (11)	Hepatitis (12)
Share Ret. ANG-MOZ	-6.298 (41.722)	11.870 (72.716)	-0.011 (0.670)	0.127 (1.710)	18.311 (17.016)	0.070 12.477
Mean Outcome Effect	325.40 -2%	180.84 6%	0.772 -1%	2.29 5%	39.01 46%	50.50 0%
Population 1960	×	×	×	×	×	×
Education 1960	×	×	×	×	×	×
Retornados Total						
District	×	×	×	×	×	×
Doubly Robust	×	×	×	×	×	×
Parishes	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899	1,899
Observations	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798	3,798

Regression Results

Robustness

Results: Crime Outputs – Doubly Robust Estimation

Table: Effect on Crime Rates – Doubly Robust DiD Estimator (Sant’Anna and Zhao, 2020)

	Crime rate per 100.000 inhabitants					
	Homicide	Assault	Theft	Burglary	Robbery	Sexual Assault
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANG-MOZ High Group	-1.295 (1.859)	58.699 (45.583)	-45.968 (34.729)	-16.888 (14.058)	0.226 (3.998)	-0.584 (0.920)
Pop. 1960	×	×	×	×	×	×
Education 1960	×	×	×	×	×	×
Ret. Total						
District	×	×	×	×	×	×
Doubly Robust	×	×	×	×	×	×
Mean Outcome	6.39	386.22	482.05	299.29	18.01	4.73
Effect (%)	-20%	15%	-9%	-6%	1%	-12%
Municipalities	182	182	182	182	182	182
Observations	364	364	364	364	364	364

Regression Results

Robustness