



Demographic Change and the Crime Rate

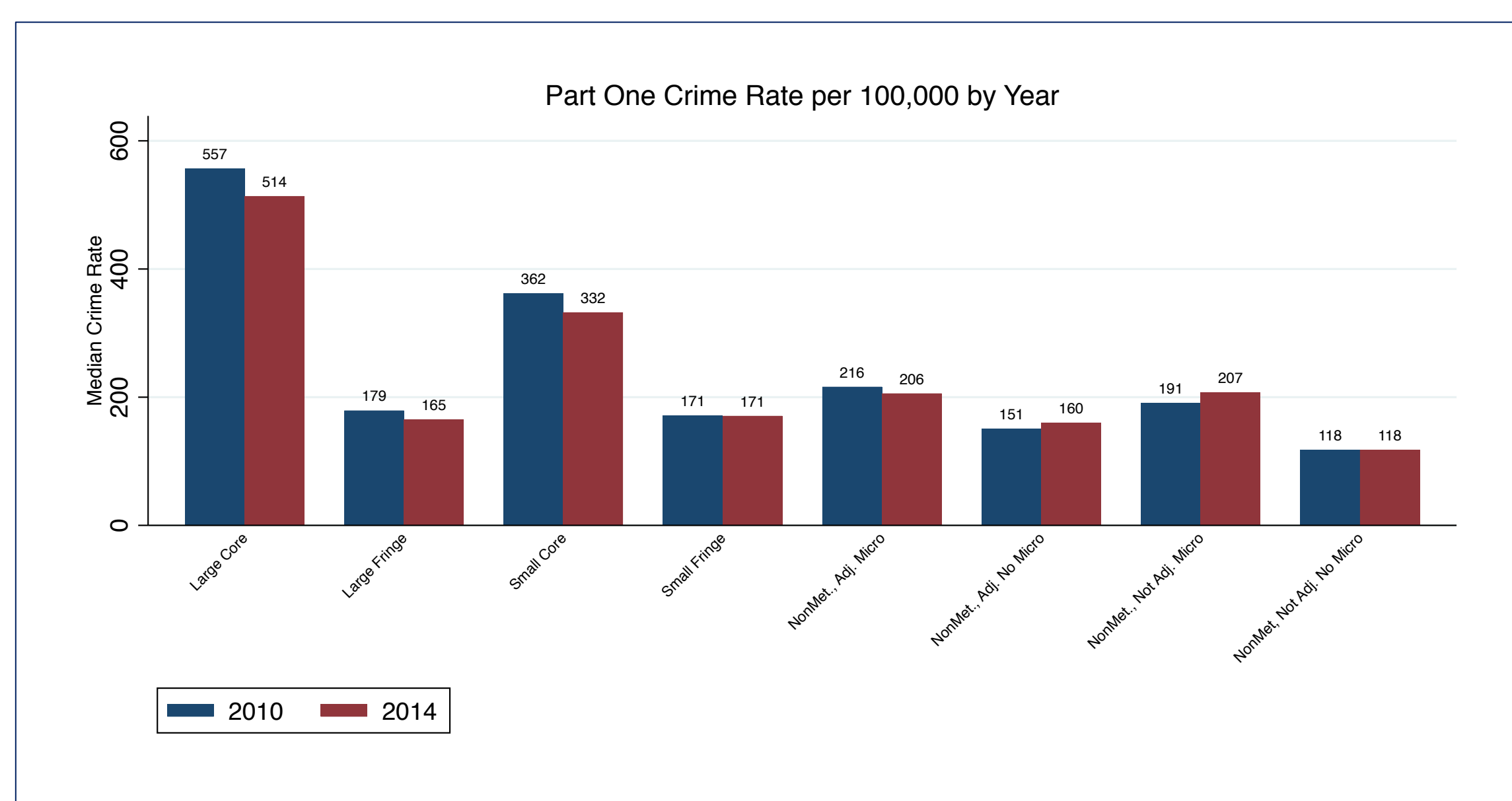
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Introduction

Social Disorganization Theory has long been used to explore the connections between crime and place. At its core, the theory argues that where a person lives matters more than their individual characteristics and biology. Recent developments in the theory emphasize the need for models of research that explore changes over time in place of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay's original work and subsequent research which focused on cross-sectional analysis (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). Variables associated with Social Disorganization Theory are racial composition and heterogeneity, population change via migration and poverty.

Crime Rate



Data

- Crime Rates**
- County level data obtained using the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (UCR reports) through the ICSPR database for years 2010 and 2014.
 - Only data for Part One crimes was used in this analysis. Part One crimes are murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.
 - Population data was obtained through the American Community Survey and decennial census.

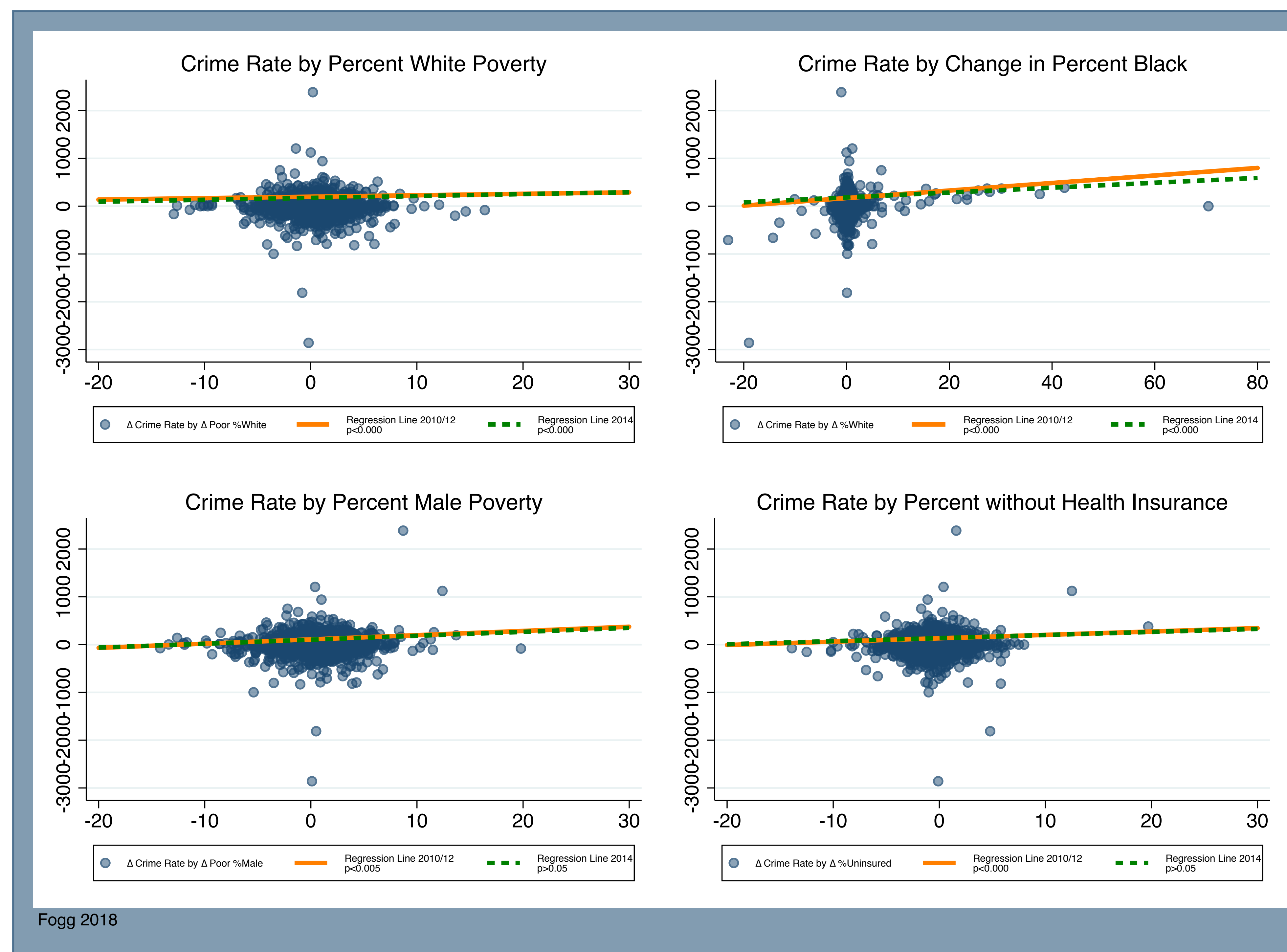
Demographic Data

- Population data gathered using 2010 decennial census data through the American Fact Finder.
- 2014 data obtained using the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates through the American Fact Finder.

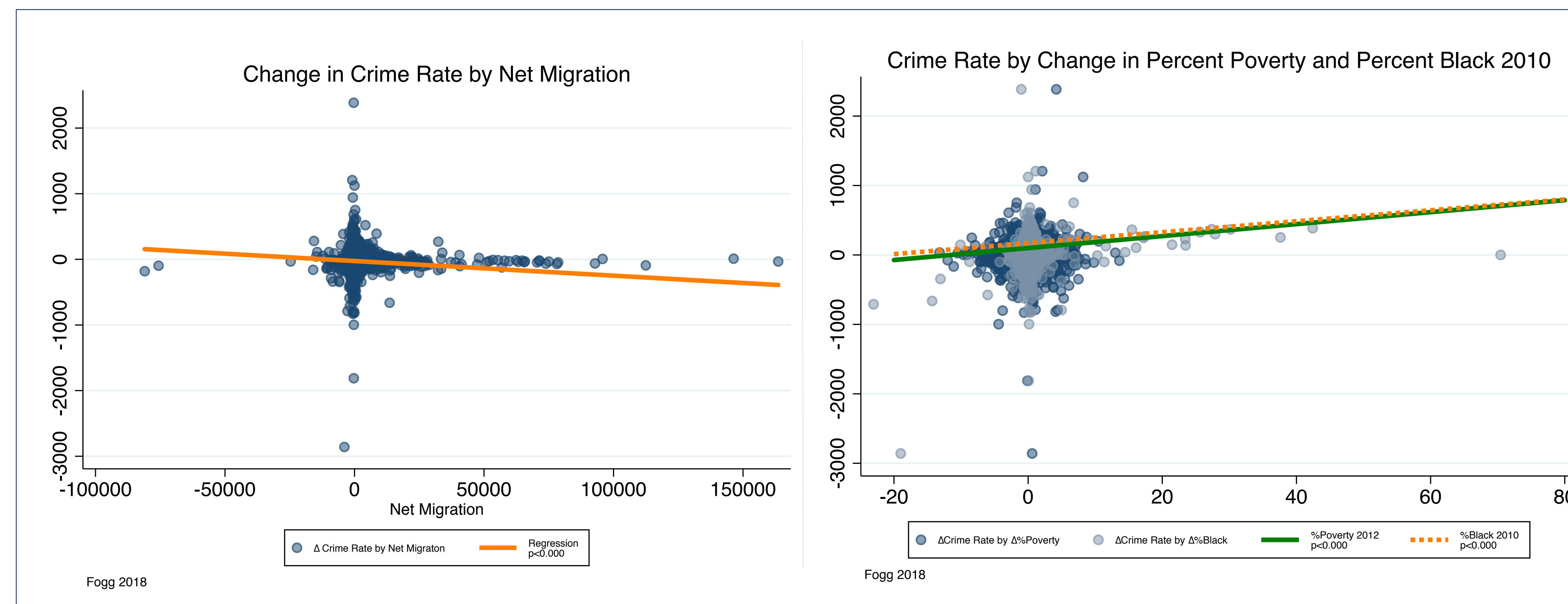
County Classifications

- Rural and Urban identifiers based on system of classification created by Scala and Johnson (2017).

Changes in the Crime Rate by Demographic Variables



Population Change



Results

Robust regression results of demographic variables on the crime rate:
 The percent black is a significant predictor of an increased crime rate in 2010 and 2014 at $p < 0.000$
 The percent of the population below poverty is a predictor of an increased crime rate in 2010 ($p < 0.000$), but not in 2014*
 White poverty is a significant predictor of an increased crime rate in 2010 and 2014 at $p < 0.000$
 Male poverty is a significant predictor of an increased crime rate in 2010 ($p < 0.005$), but not in 2014
 The percent of the population without health insurance is a significant predictor of the crime rate in both 2010 ($p < 0.000$), but not 2014.
 *when accounting for other independent variables

Conclusions

Race and Poverty

- The overall percent of the population in poverty does not affect the crime rate when the effect of the Recession begins to fade as more people return to work and leave poverty.
- The percent of the population that is Black and also might be in poverty, continues to have a positive effect on the crime rate as Black populations are more likely to be in poverty than white populations (Isaacs 2008). Evidence links minority populations to geographic isolation and concentrated disadvantage, resulting in more criminal activity (Sampson 2011).

Male Poverty

- That males commit crimes at a higher rate than females is one of the most consistent and uncontested facts of criminology (Lauritsen et al. 2009).
- When the Great Recession hit, men were more likely to lose their jobs (Sahin et al. 2010) than women. Much of the package deal of family life for men is based in being able to provide financially making work central to their identities as men and fathers (Townsend 2002).
- Agnew (1992) argues through his theory on General Strain that when people lose positively valued goals, like their job, they are more likely to engage in delinquency.
- This is supported by the data as the percent in male poverty is a positive predictor of the crime rate in 2010, when the effects of the 2007-2009 recession were still impacting the nation. By 2014, the relationship between male poverty and crime is no longer significant.

Net Migration

- Although frequently cited as a cause of crime by popular media, research finds that immigration results in lower crime rates as immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native born individuals (Stowell et al. 2009). The current analysis supports these findings as increased net migration is associated with lower crime rates from 2010 to 2014.

Health Insurance

- A lack of health insurance indicates a lack of access to other resources and neighborhood disadvantage, which has been linked to higher crime rates (Kirby and Kaneda 2005).
- A lack of health insurance can also be an indicator of a lack of employment. Future studies would include a measure of unemployment given how related other variables are to it.

References

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