

## **The Labor Market Effects of the 1960s Riots**

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Between 1964 and 1971, hundreds of riots erupted in American cities, resulting in large numbers of injuries, deaths, and arrests, as well as in considerable property damage that was concentrated in predominantly black neighborhoods. There have been few studies of a systematic, econometric nature that examine the impact of the riots on the relative economic status of African Americans, or on the cities and neighborhoods in which the riots took. We present two complementary empirical analyses. The first uses aggregate, city-level data on income, employment, unemployment, and the area's racial composition from the published volumes of the federal censuses. We estimate the "riot effect" by both ordinary least squares and two-stage least squares (relying on plausibly exogenous variation in city government structure and weather in April 1968 for the two-stage least squares estimates). The second empirical approach uses individual-level census data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series for 1950, 1970, and 1980. The findings suggest that the riots had negative effects on blacks' income and employment that were economically significant and that may have been larger in the long run (1960-1980) than in the short run (1960-1970). We view these findings as suggestive rather than definitive for two reasons. First, the data are not detailed enough to identify the precise mechanisms at work. Second, the wave of riots may have had negative spillover effects to cities that did not experience severe riots; if so, we would tend to underestimate the riots' overall effect.