



2018 Voter Mobilization Evaluation of COLD SMS

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Agenda

- Program description
- Mobilizing for in-person voting
- Mobilizing return of mail ballots
- Lessons about program targeting & timing
- Message tests to refine tactics

VOTE.ORG GOTV “Cold” SMS Program

- Peer-to-Peer texting
 - No prior relationship or communication = “cold” SMS
- Texting centers operated by Vote.org
 - Oakland, CA & Austin, TX
 - Using Hustle and Relay
 - Paid operators

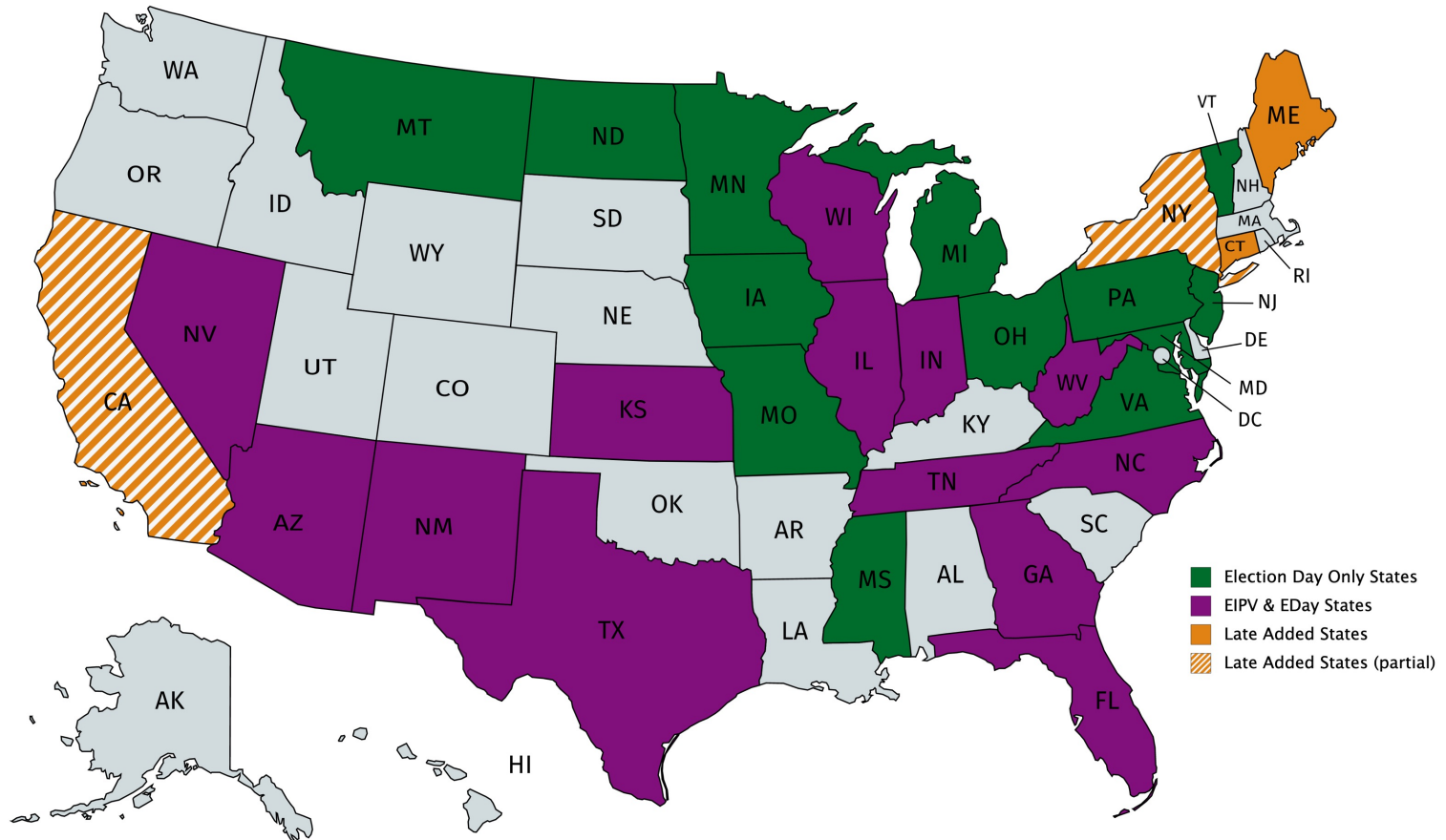
VOTE.ORG GOTV “Cold” SMS Program

- Randomized control trials: random assignment to treatment or untreated control
- 2016: [Vote.org’s “cold” SMS GOTV program](#) covered 1.2 m young people of color and unmarried women in 7 states
 - Increased turnout by 0.2 percentage points.
- 2017, [Vote.org’s “cold” SMS GOTV program](#) covered 714k young people of color and unmarried women in Virginia
 - Increased turnout by 0.6 percentage points
- Identified Standard Practices for timing and message
- Meta-analysis (Green and Gerber 2019): SMS GOTV produces 0.29 percentage point increase in turnout across all types of elections

VOTE.ORG GOTV “Cold” SMS Program

In Person Voting

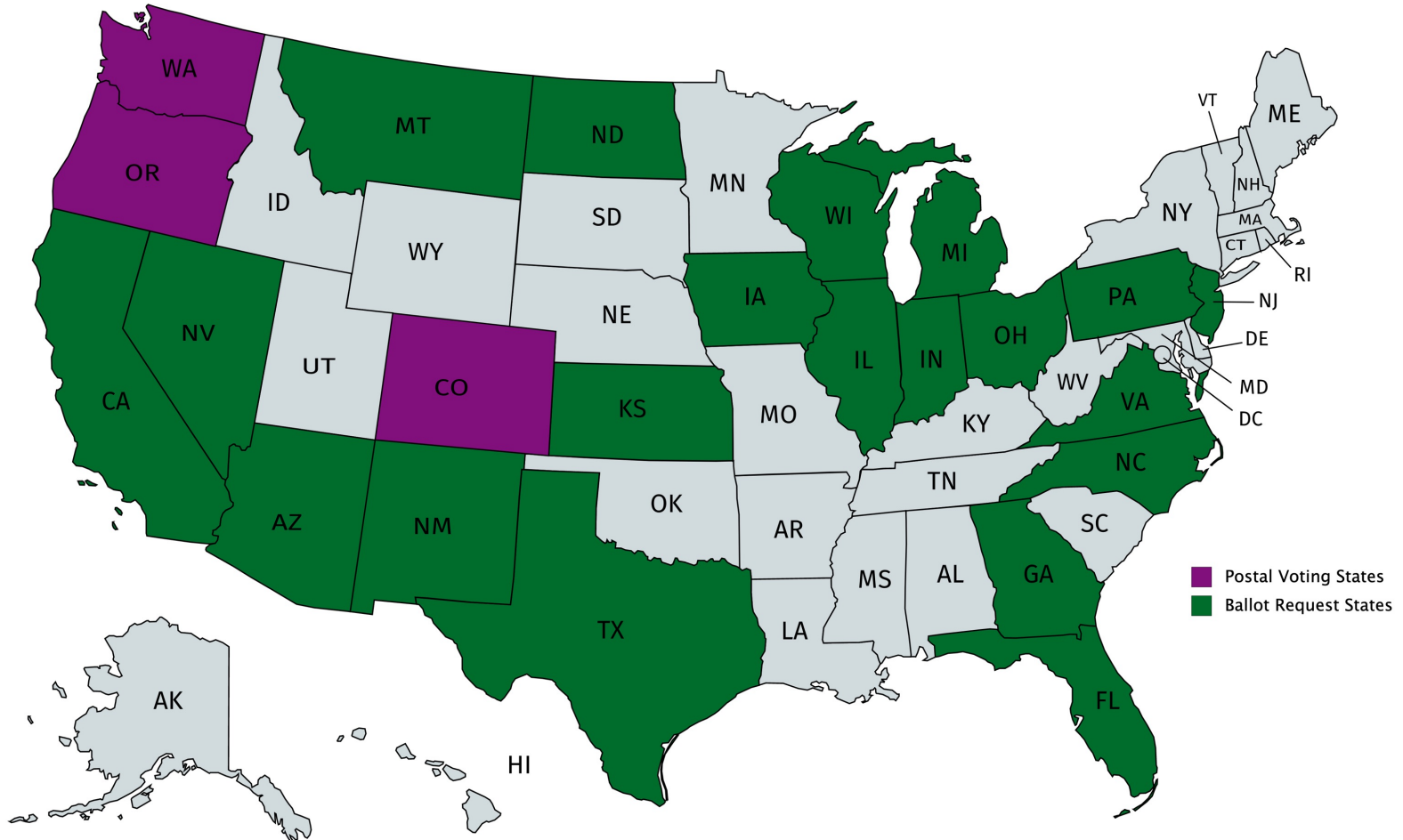
- EDay only states: 4,054,613 voters in 13 states
- EIPV+EDay states: 4,973,943 voters in 13 states
- Late Added States: 1,305,687 voters in 4 states



VOTE.ORG GOTV “Cold” SMS Program

Mail Ballot Chase

- Ballot request states: 753,499 voters in 19 states
- Postal voting: 448,992 voters in 3 states



Standard Practice

- Series of 3 text messages for Election Day

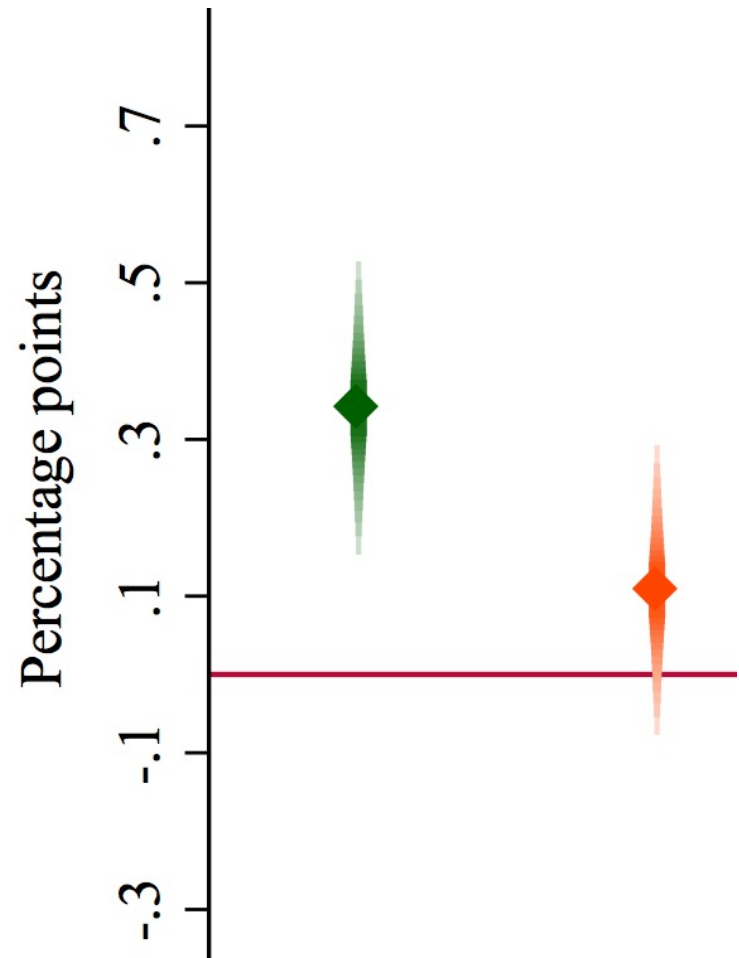


□ Based 2016 & 2017 testing by

VOTE.ORG

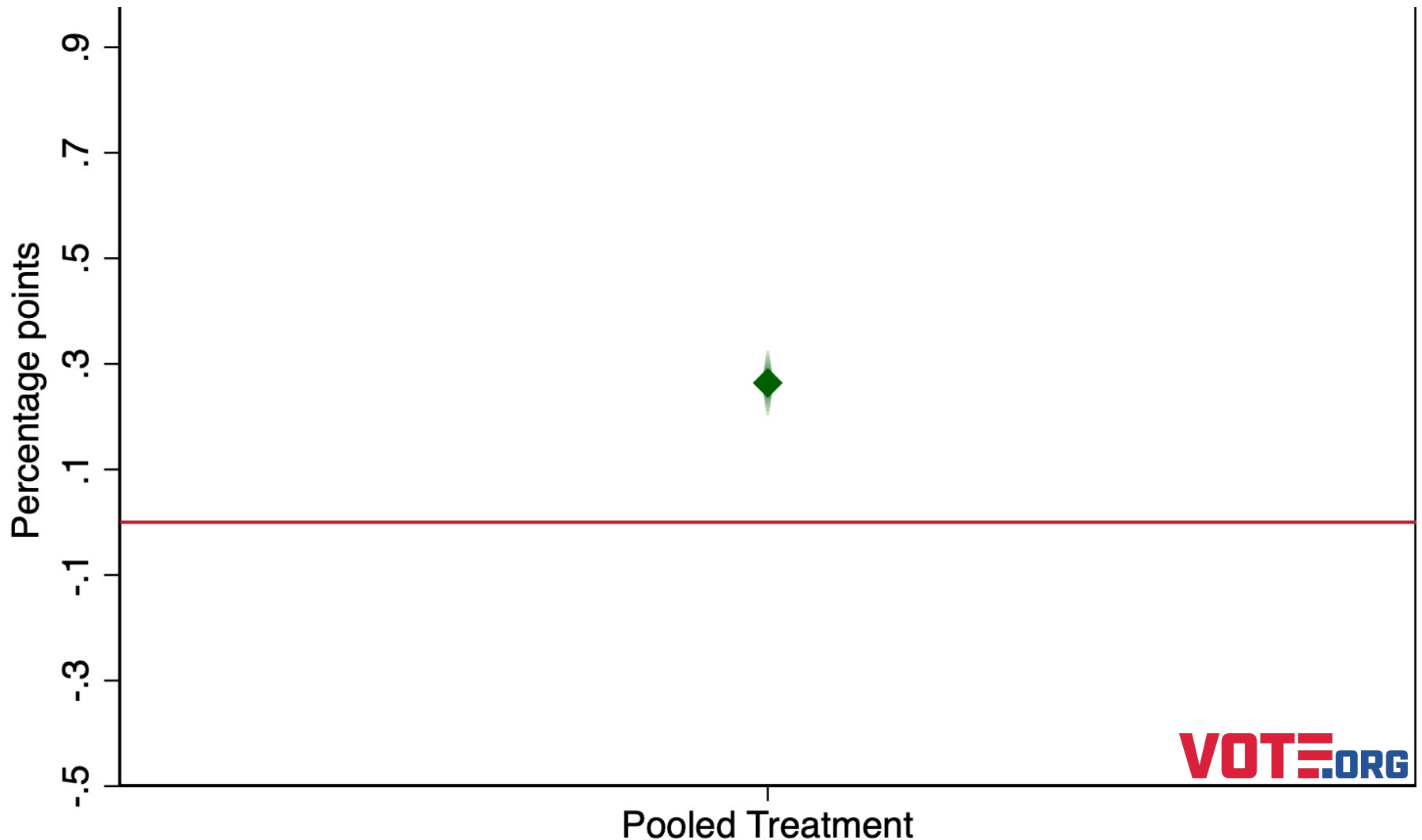
Reading figures in this report

- ◆ = best estimate of difference from untreated control group
- Confidence interval bars: width & intensity = prob. of true effect
- Statistical significance: ctrl vs. tx @ 95% confidence
 - CI bar crosses zero (red) line = not statistically significant
 - Example:
 - Orange: not significant
 - Green: significant
- Statistical significance: tx vs. tx
 - Overlap of CI bars (width & intensity)



In Person Voting Programs

Average Effect (all in person voting treatments)

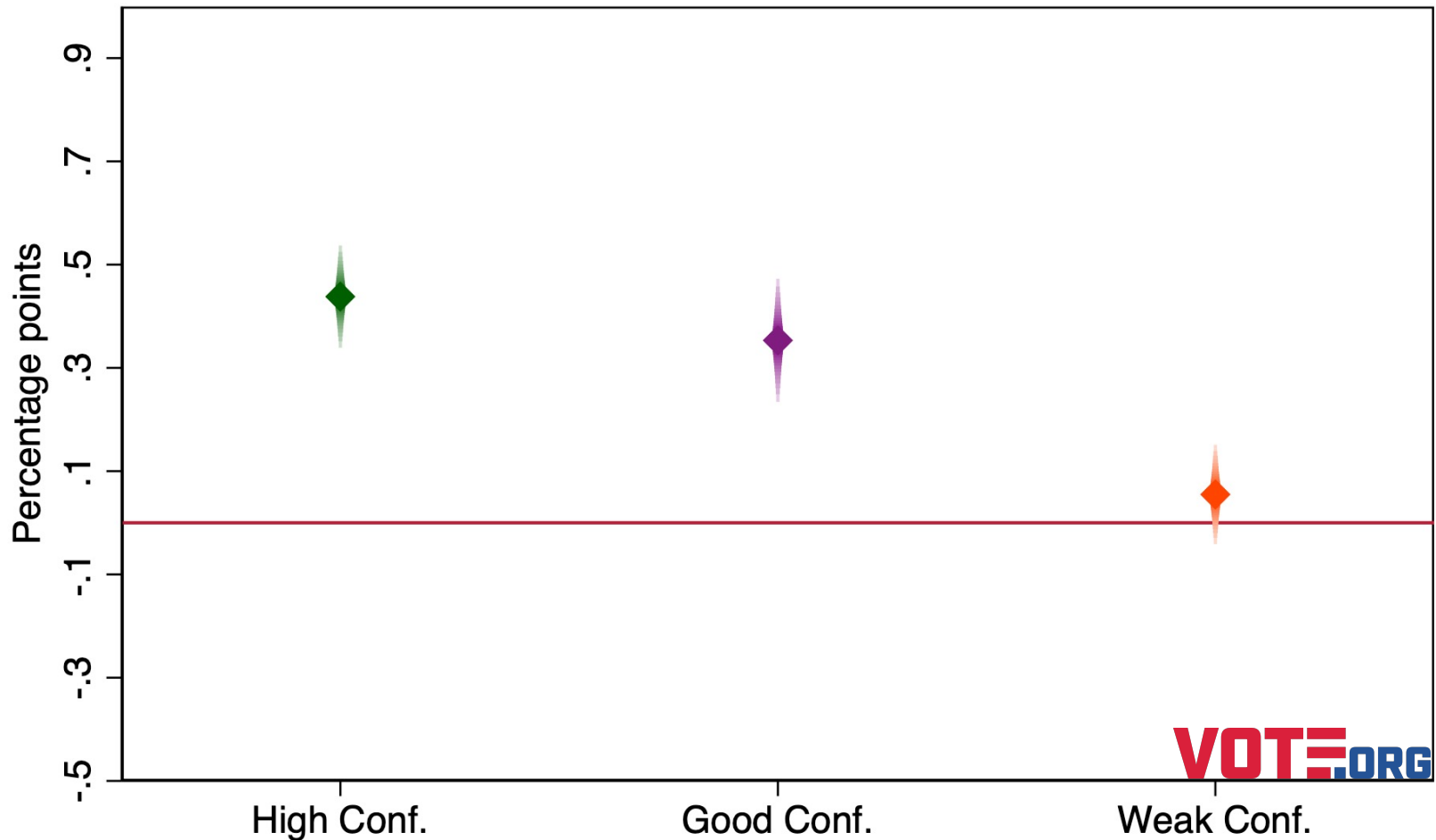


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Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Can't mobilize if can't reach

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Cell Match

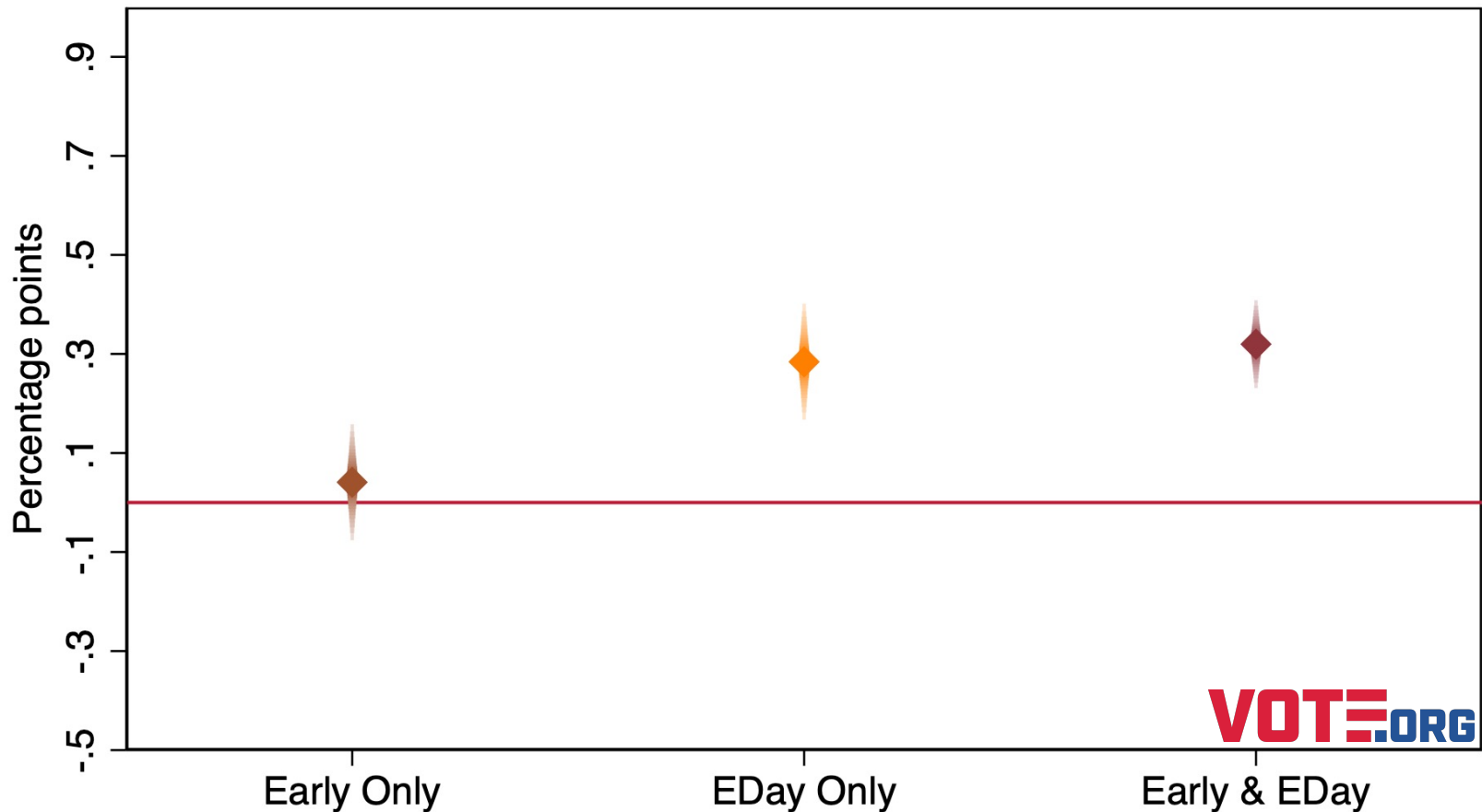


VOTE.ORG

Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects across cell match confidence is statistically significant (p=0.000).

Early: gets worms but not votes

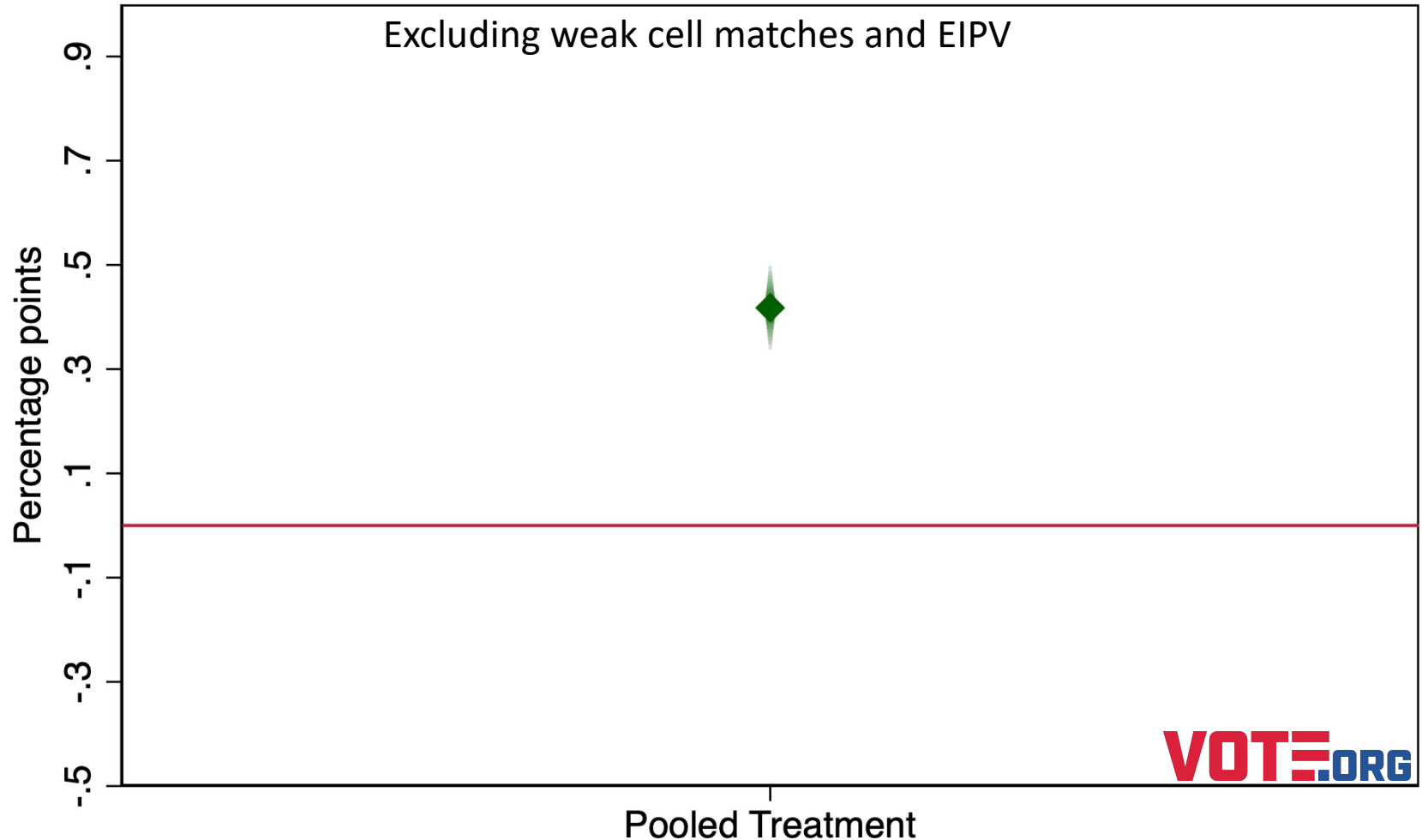
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Timing of Treatment (pooled)



Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.
Difference between Early Only vs. EDay Only is statistically significant ($p=0.002$).
Difference between Early+EDay vs. EDay Only is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.586$).
Difference between Early+EDay vs. EIPV Only is statistically significant ($p=0.000$).

Avg. Treatment Effect with best practice

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout



Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

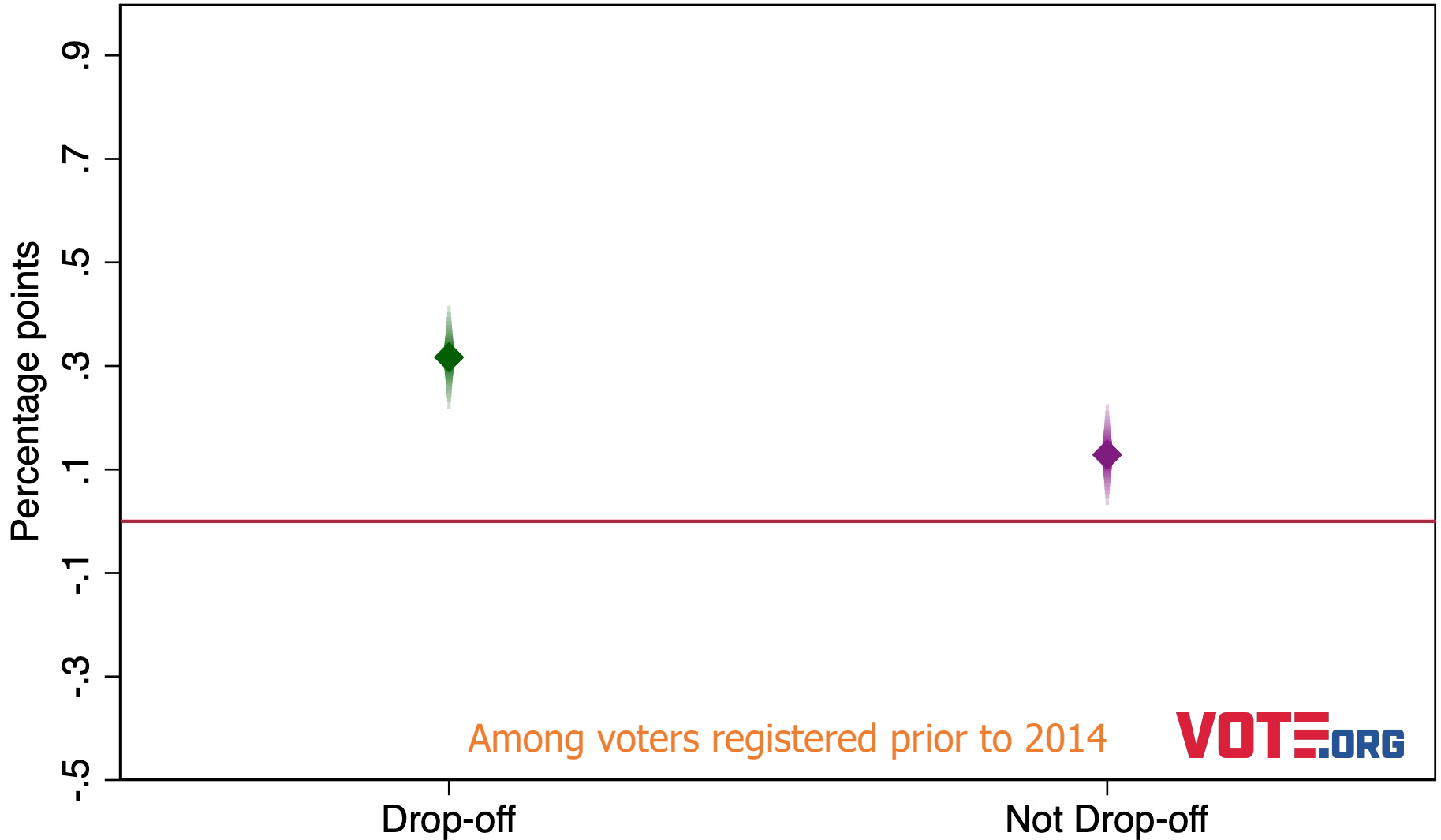
Heterogeneous Effects

Significant Variation Among Subgroups
In Person Voting Programs

Following graphs use all data.

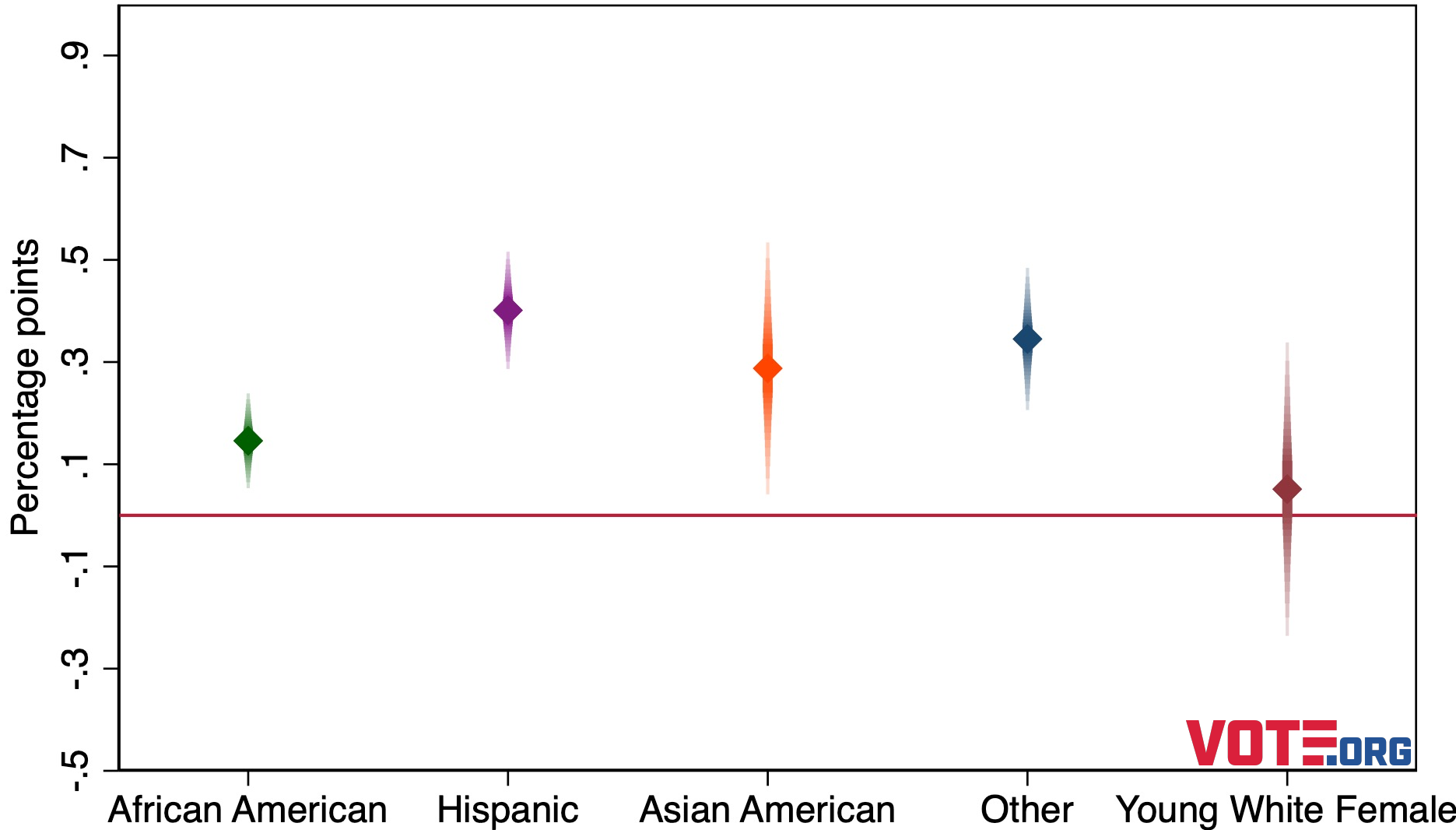
Same patterns (shifted ↑) for best data

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Drop-off Voting



Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects between Drop-off and Not Drop-off is statistically significant (p=0.025).

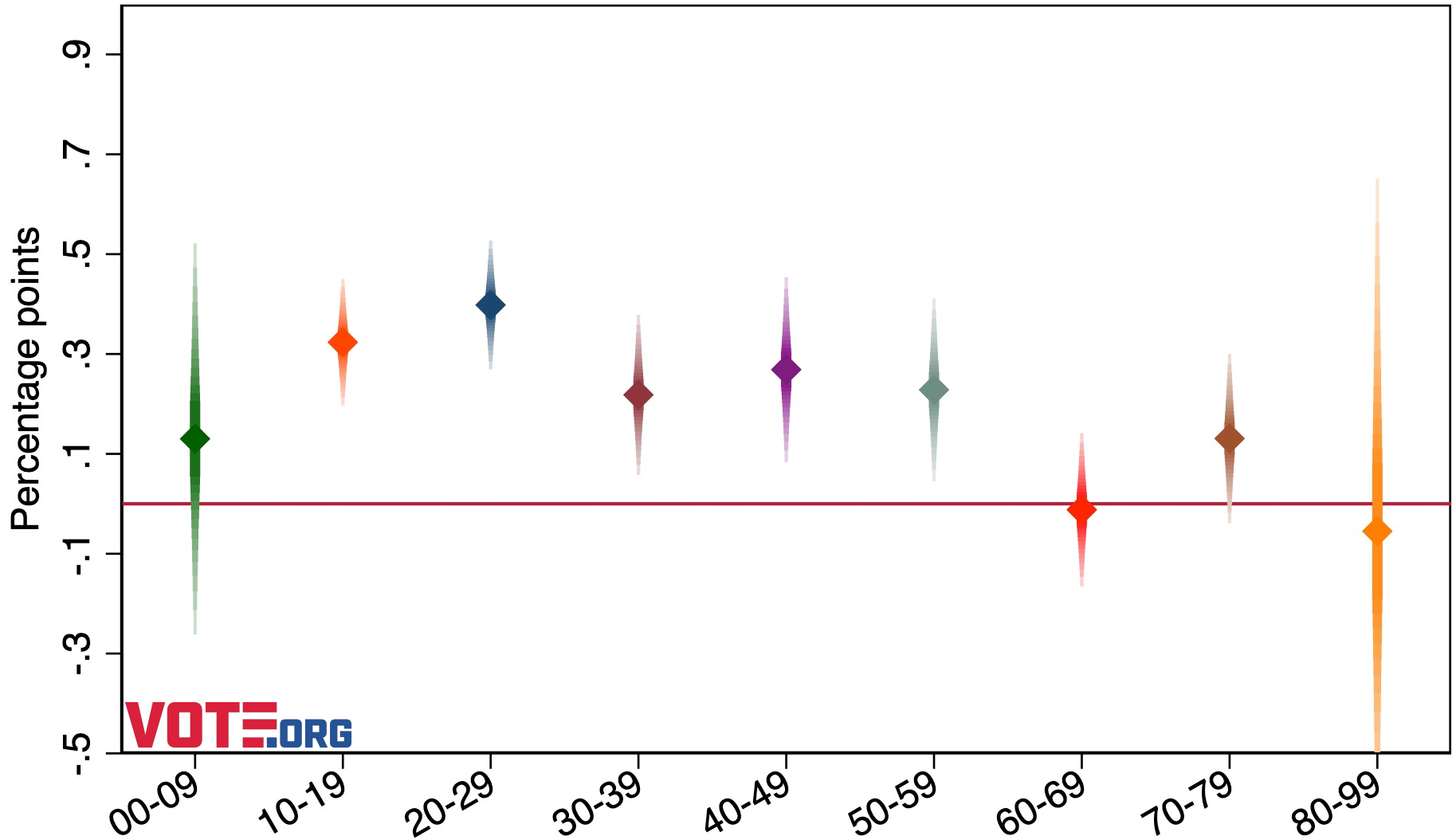
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Race & Ethnicity



VOTE.ORG

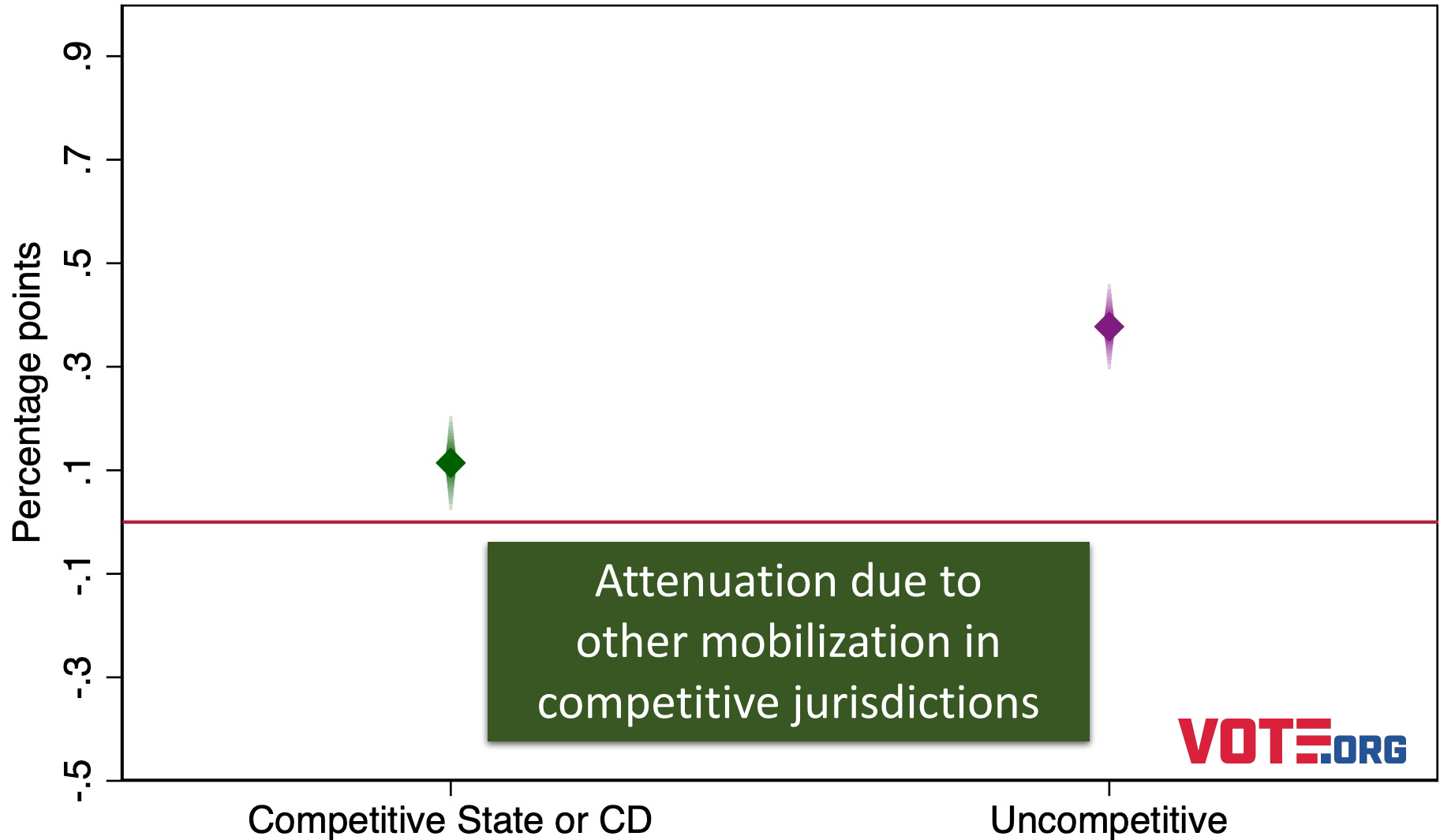
Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects across race/ethnicity is statistically significant (p=0.030).

Avg. Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Projected Turnout



Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects between age groups is **marginally** statistically significant (p=0.070).

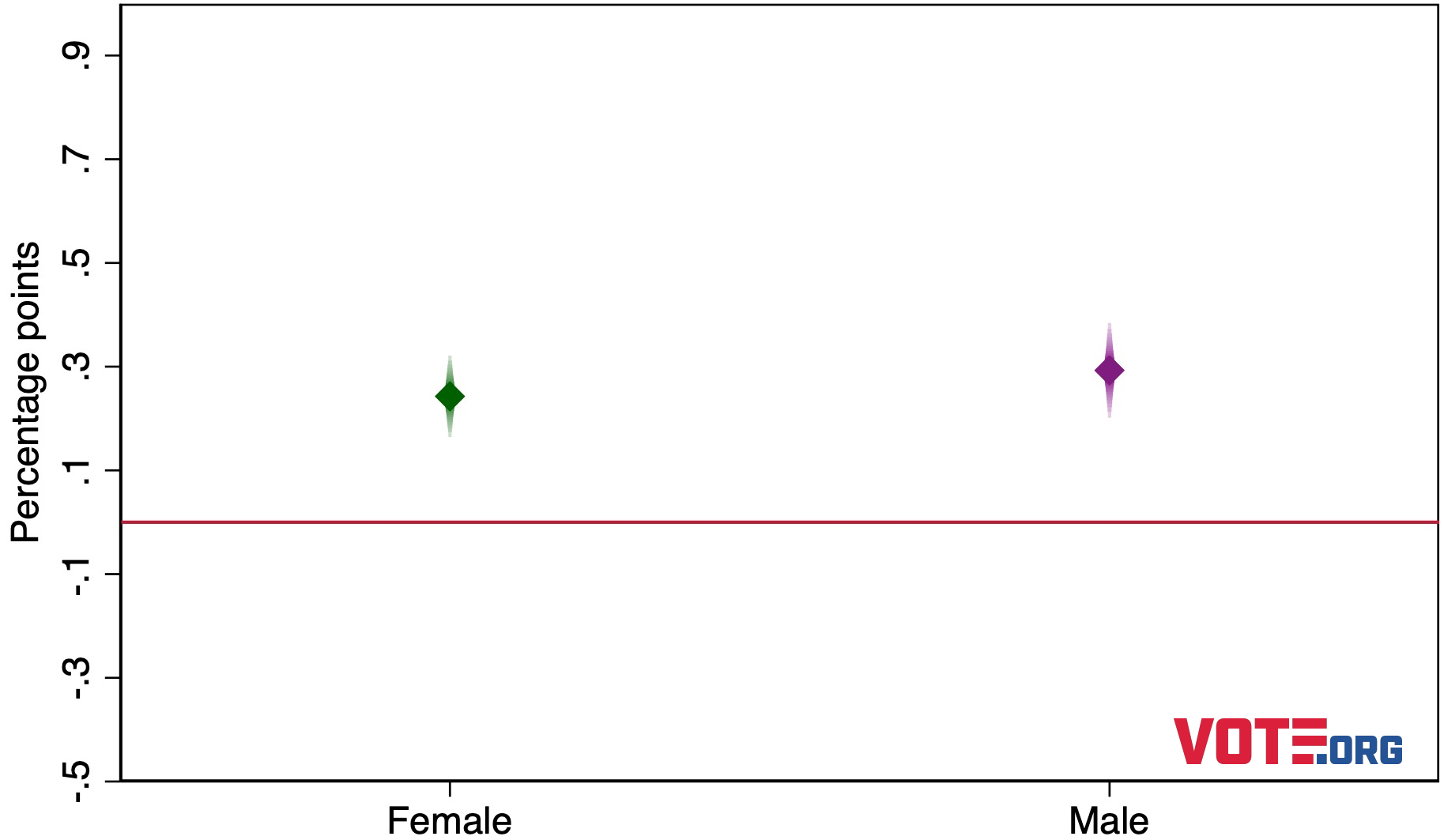
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Competitive State or CD



Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects by state competitiveness is statistically significant (p=0.000).

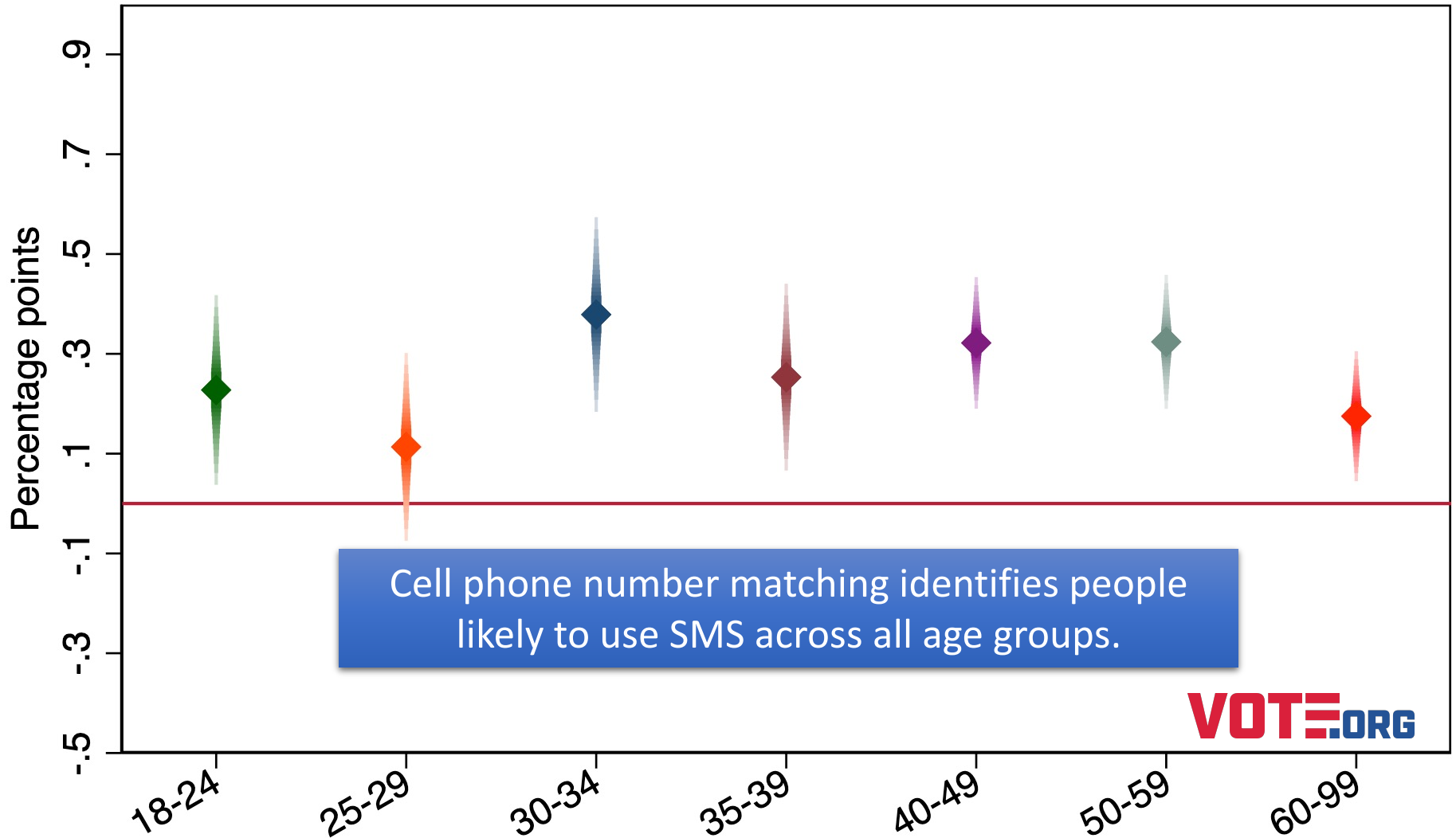
Notable non-heterogeneity

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Gender



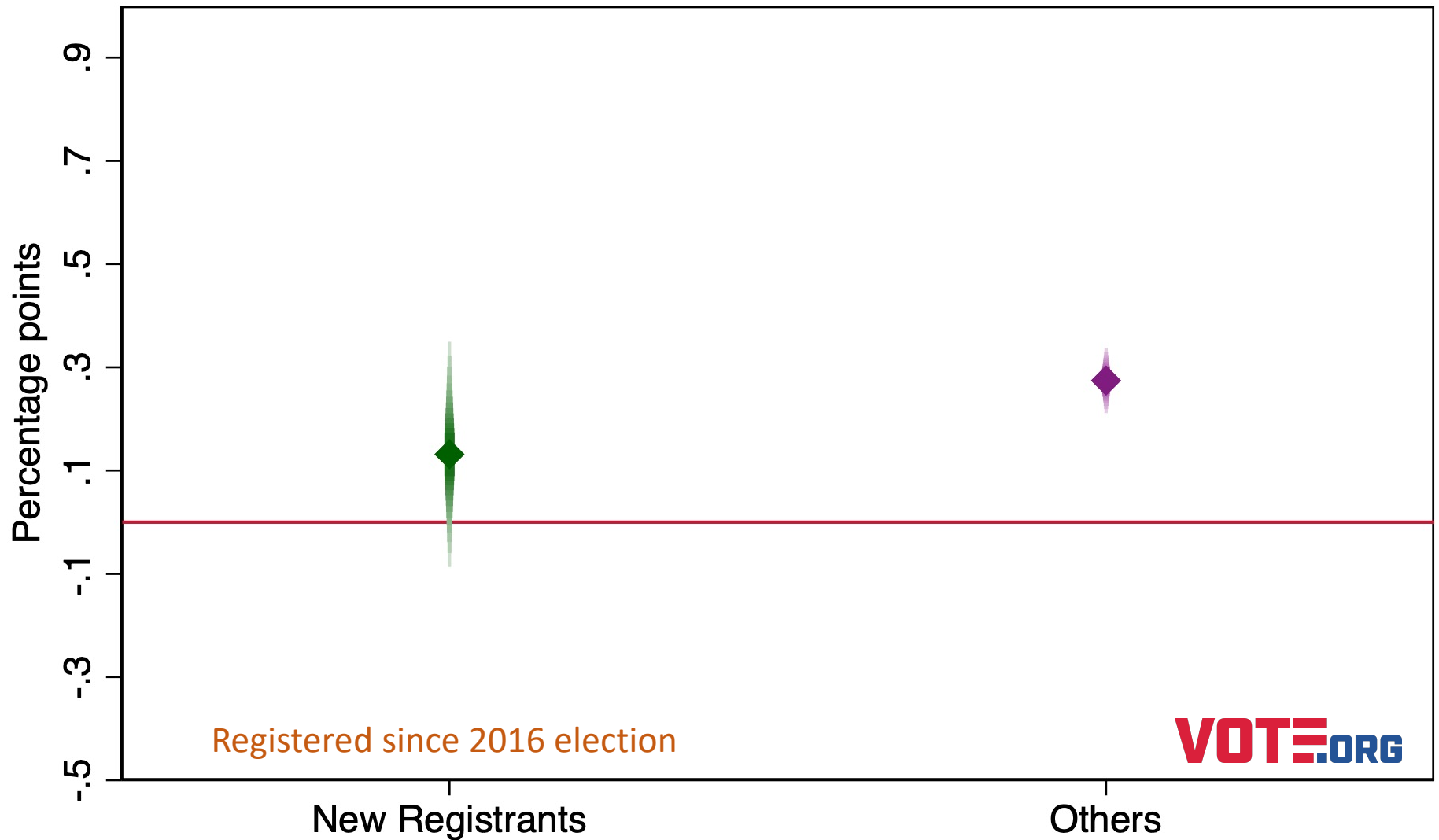
Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects between male and female voters is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.484$).

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Age Group



Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects between age groups is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.525$).

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by New Registrants

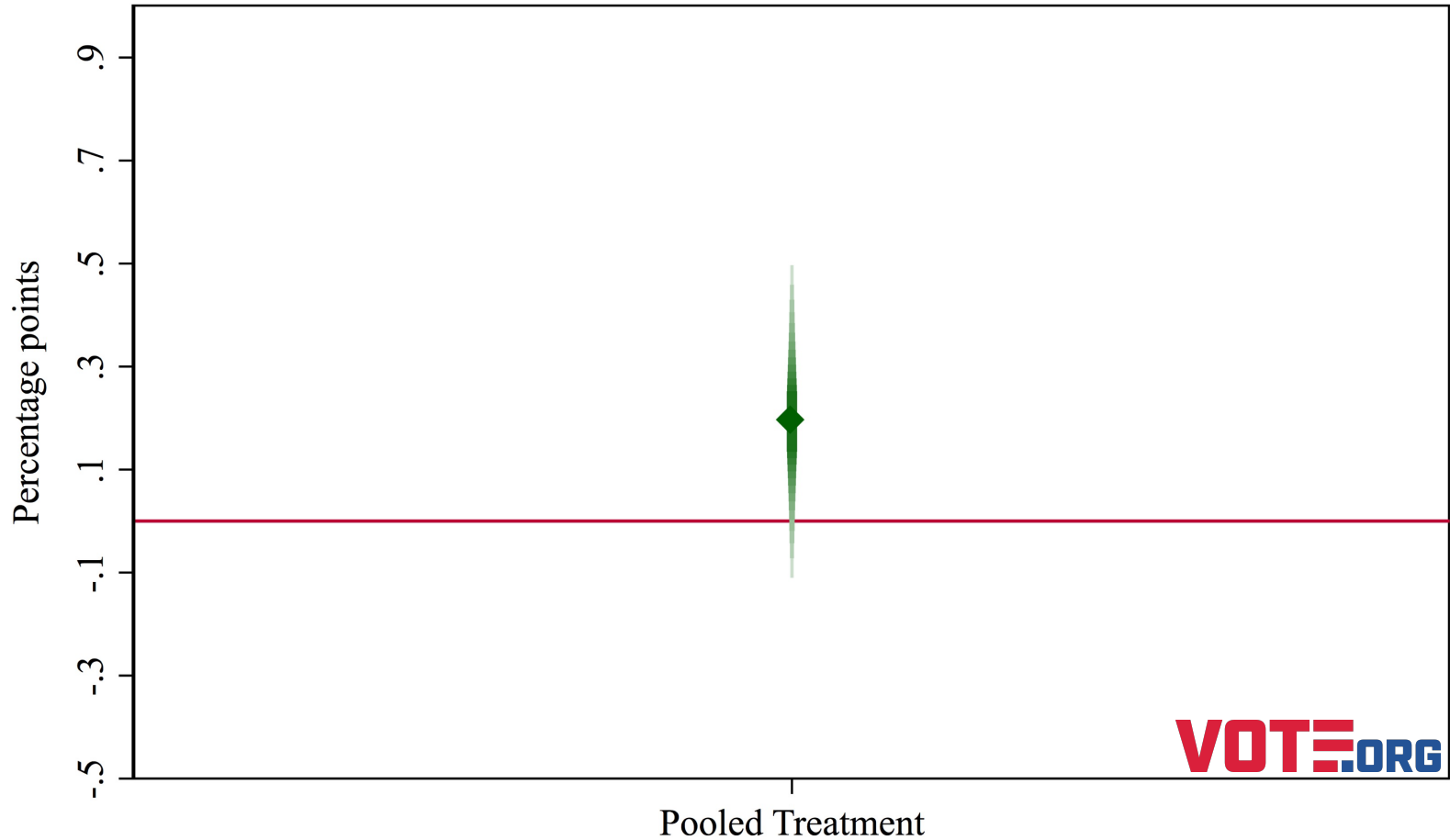


Notes: Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant. Difference in effects between New Registrants and Others is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.299$).

Mail Ballot Chase Programs

Chase in Postal Ballot States

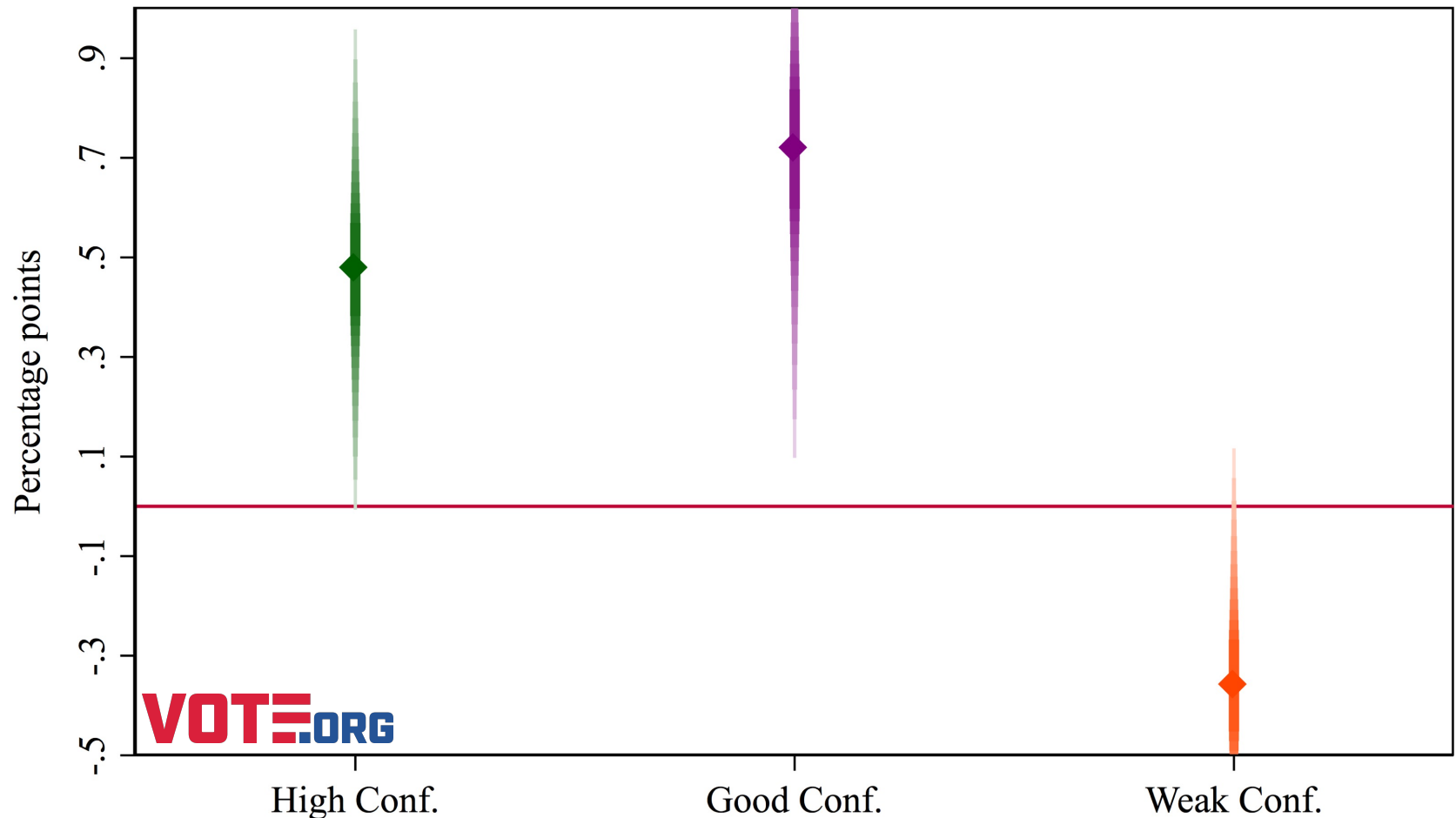
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 58.42%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Chase in Postal Ballot States: Cell Match

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Cell Match



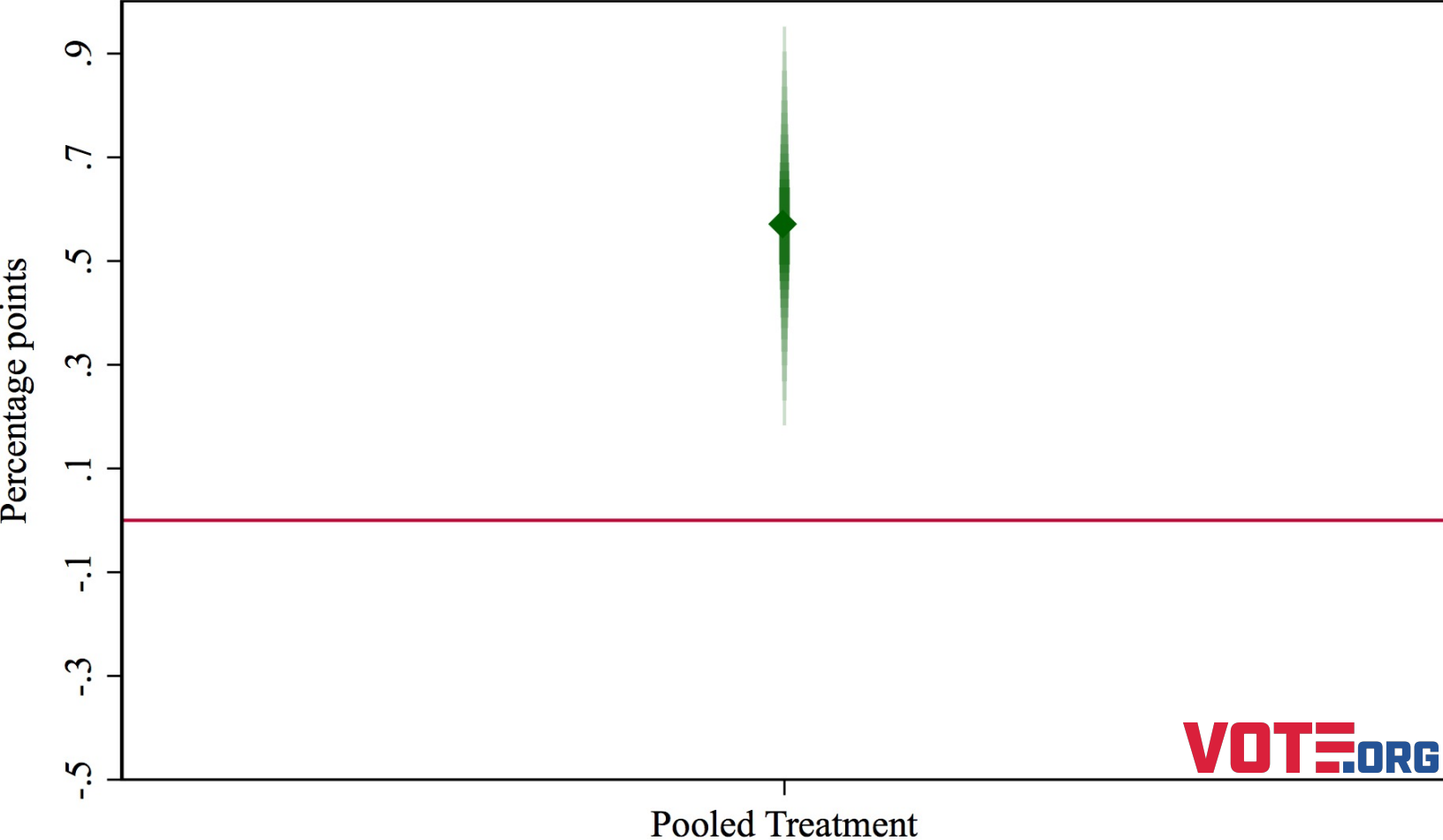
Notes: Turnout in control group: best match = 61.84%; good match = 58.73%; weak match = 55.13%.

Difference in effects across cell match confidence is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.036$).

Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, effect is not statistically significant.

Postal states with best targeting

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout excluding weak cell matches

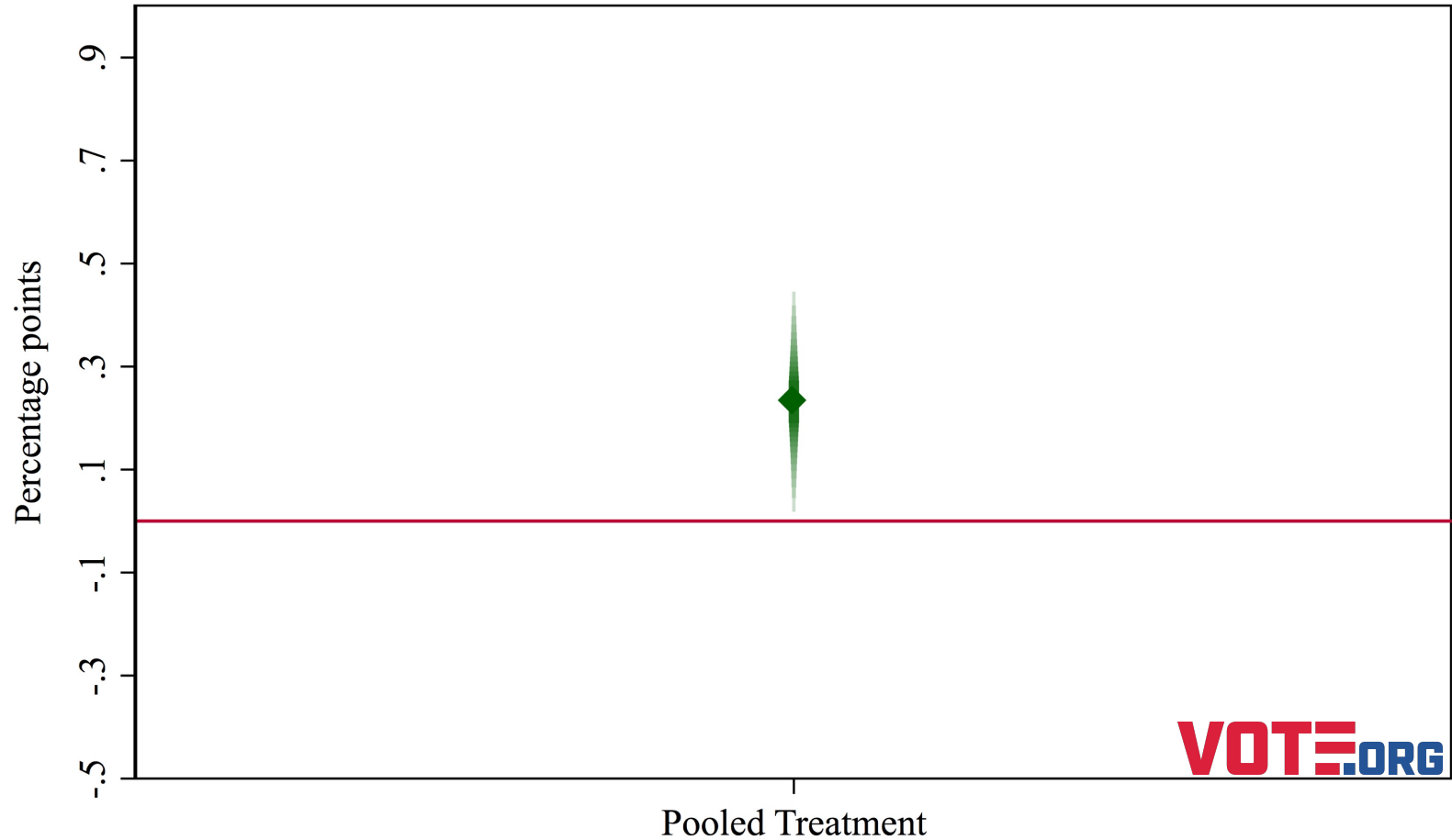


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Notes: Turnout in control group = 60.65%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Mail Ballot Request States

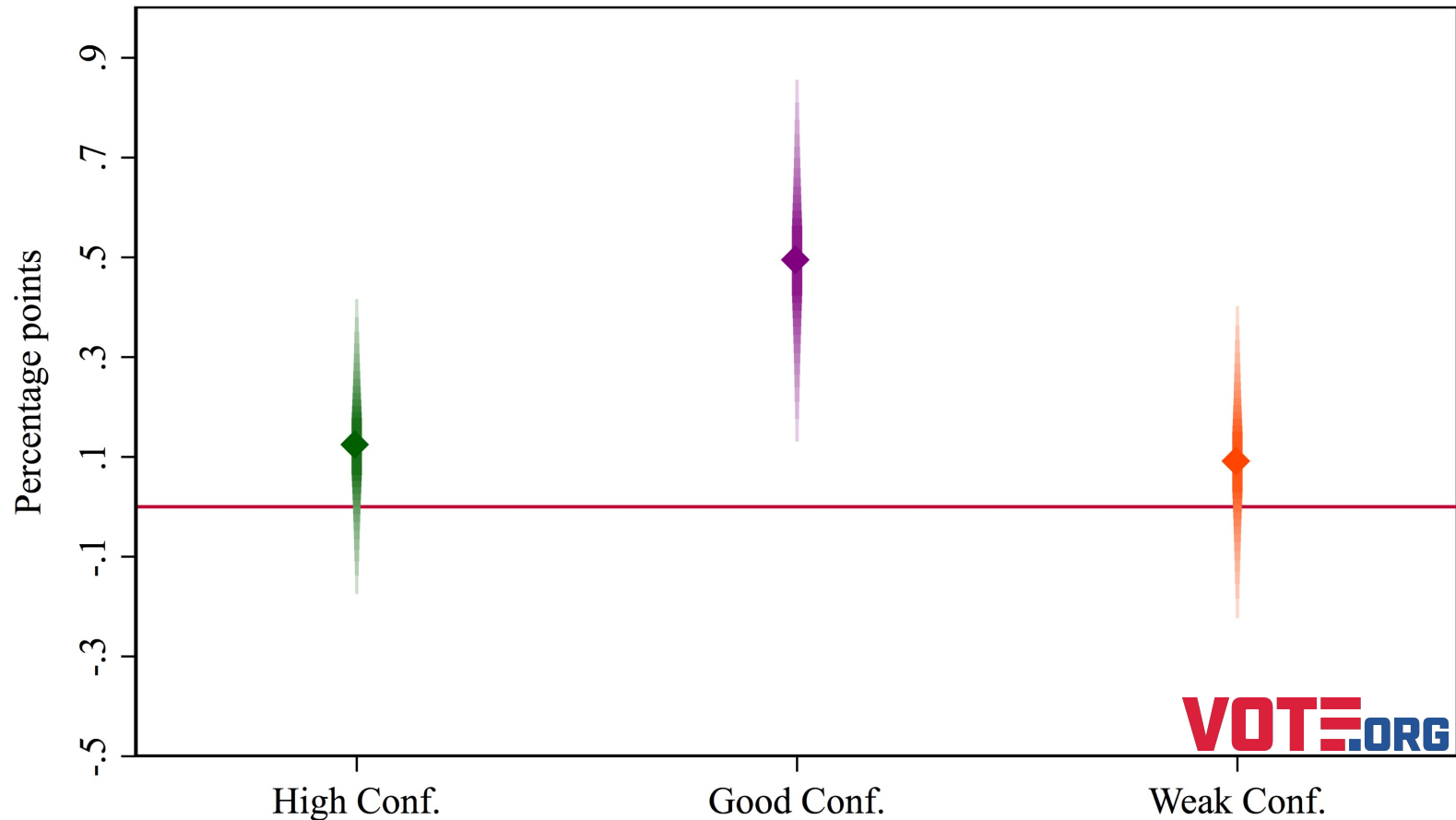
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 75.61%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Mail Ballot Request States: Cell Match

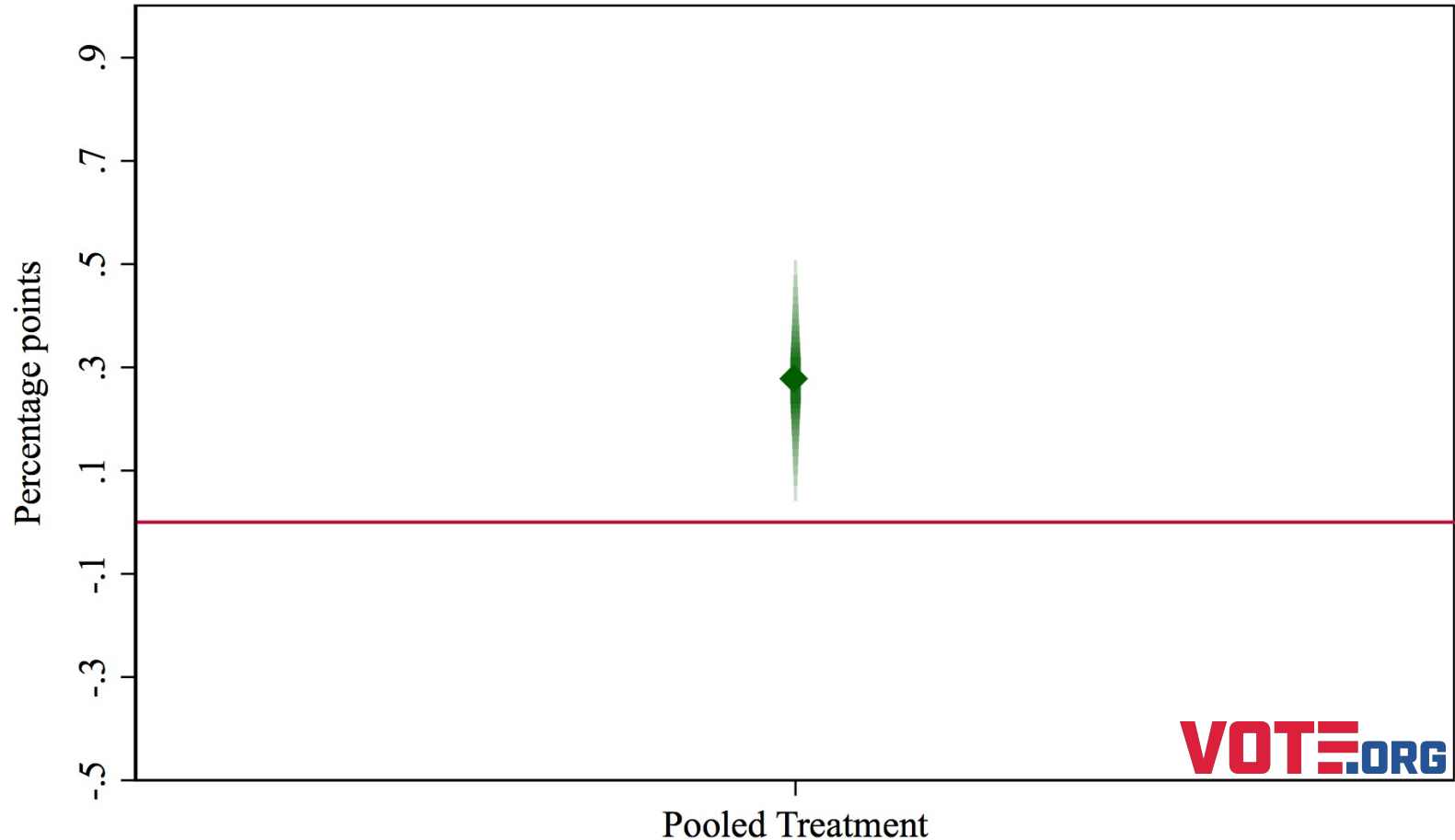
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Cell Match



Notes: Turnout in control group: best match = 75.41%; good match = 71.04%; weak match = 67.86%.
Difference in effects across cell match confidence is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.303$).
Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, effect is not statistically significant.

Ballot request states with best targeting

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout excluding weak cell matches



Notes: Turnout in control group = 73.59%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Mobilization after Natural Disasters

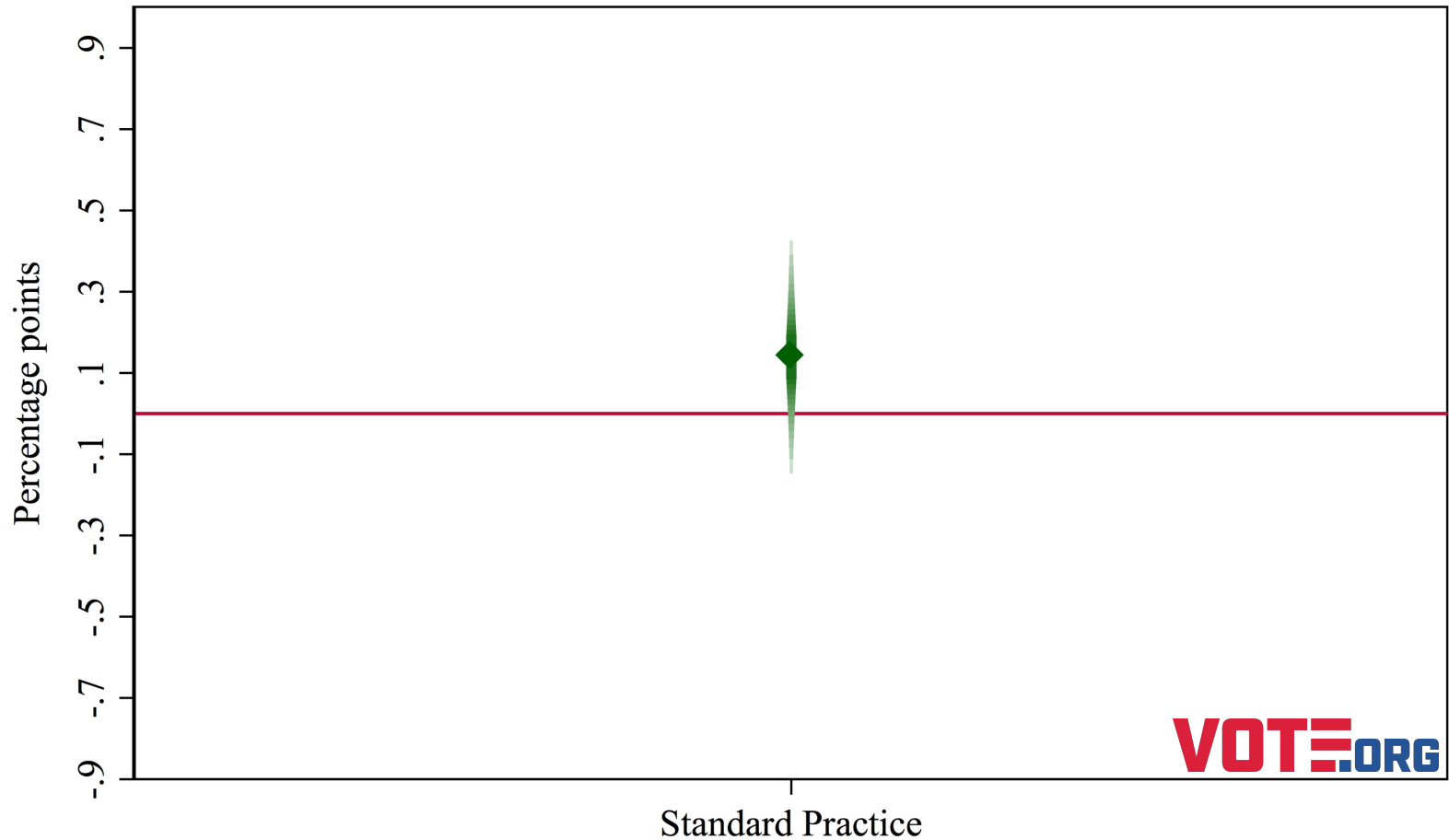
2018 Hurricanes:

Florence (NC)

Michael (FL & GA)

Post Hurricane: High Propensity Voters

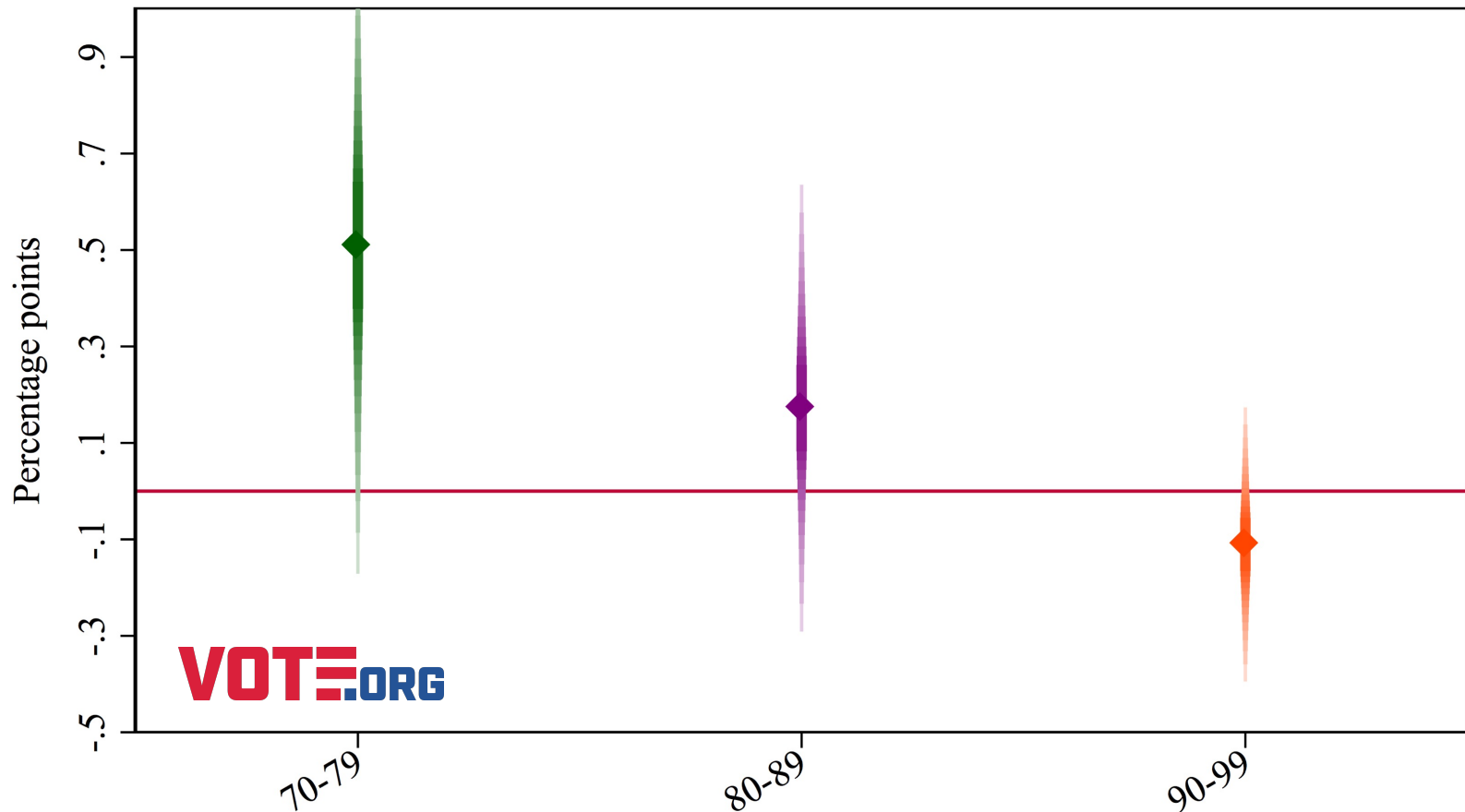
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 93.19%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Post Hurricane: Room for Impact

Avg. Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Tx by Projected Turnout

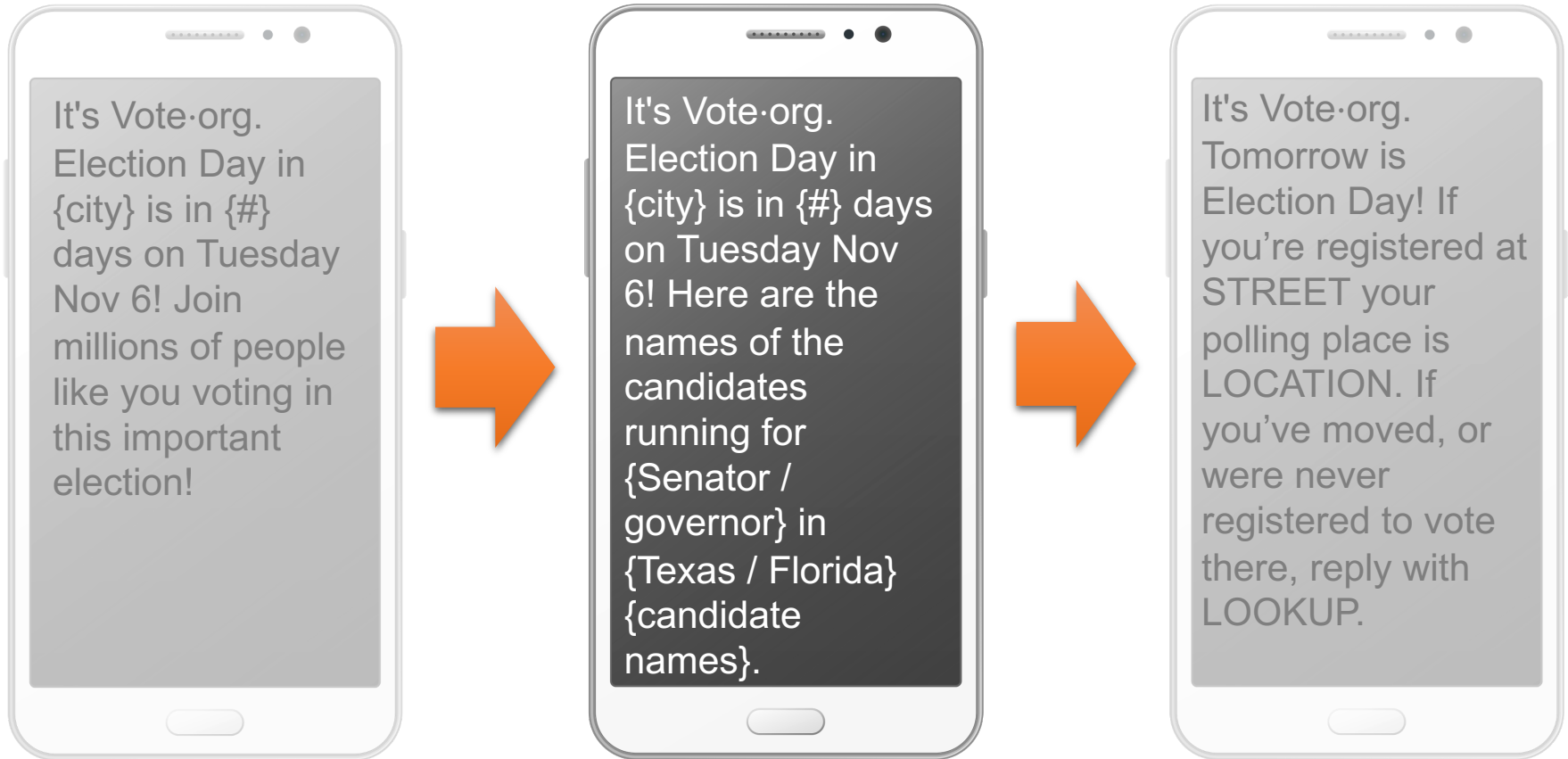


Notes: Projected turnout from TargetSmart Midterm model. Turnout in control group: 70-79= 87.43%; 80-89= 93.55%; 90-99= 97.95%. Difference in effects between age groups is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.323$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, effect is not statistically significant.

Message Tests

Applying successful tactics to cold SMS GOTV

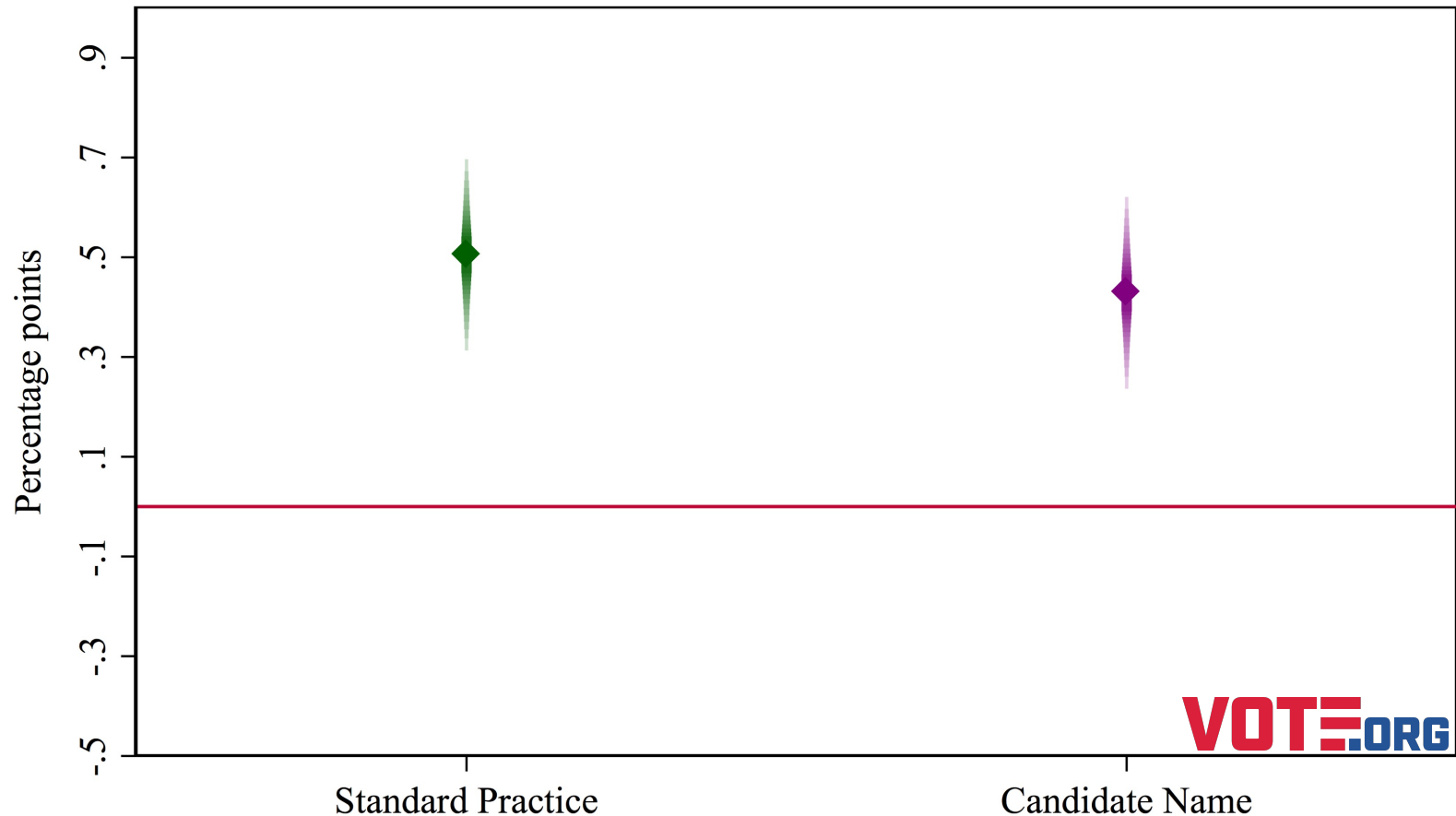
Providing Candidate Names



- Based on Panagopoulos & Green 2008

Providing Candidate Names

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 60.88%. Difference in treatment effects is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.513$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

I Voted Sticker on Social Media

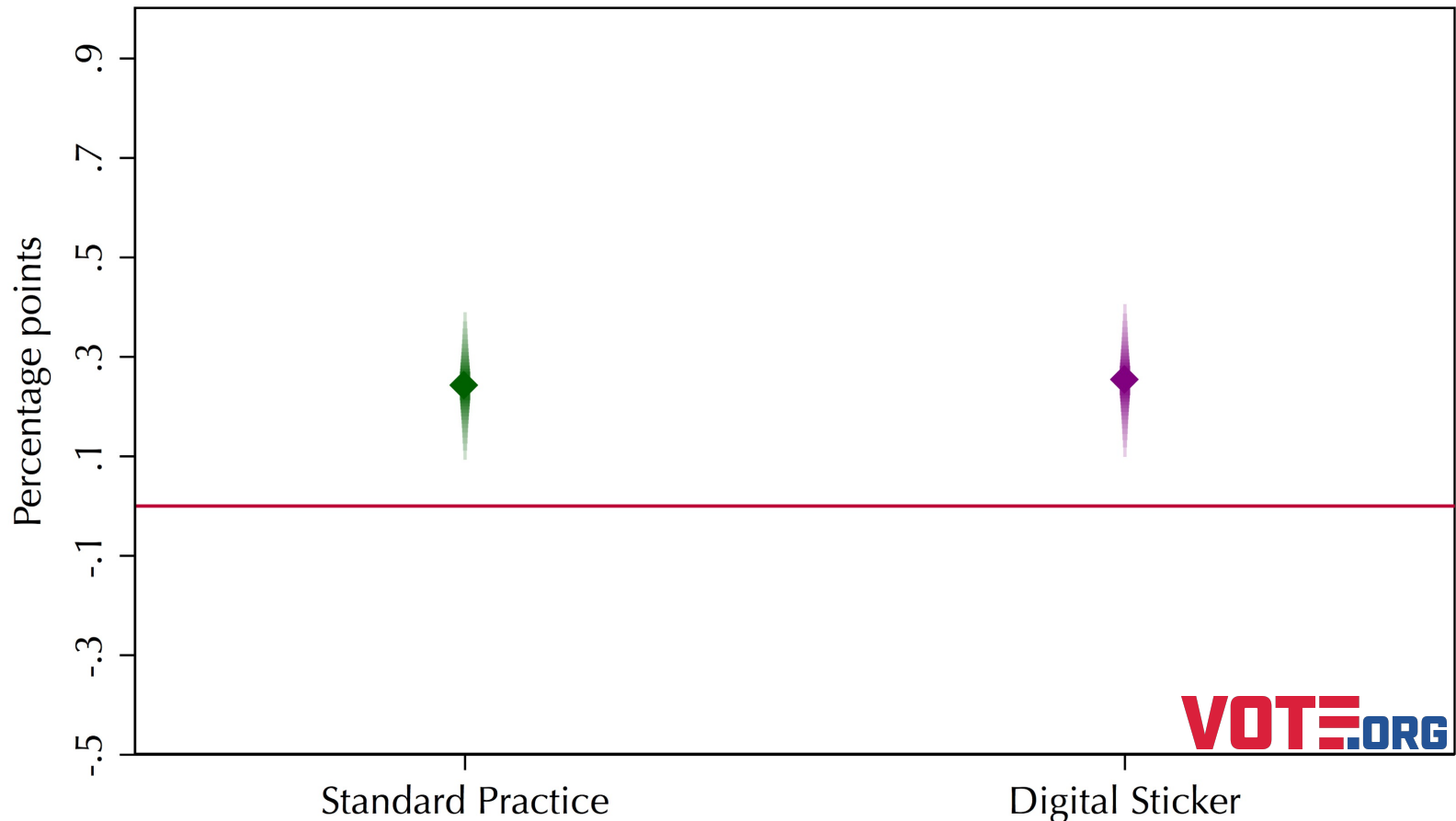


- Based on Bond et al (2012)

* Designed and evaluated with Hannah Fishman

I Voted Sticker on Social Media

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 62.02%. Difference in treatment effects is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.905$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Adopt-a-Voter



- Based on successful SMS mobilization in Portland, OR 2017 (Mann 2018)

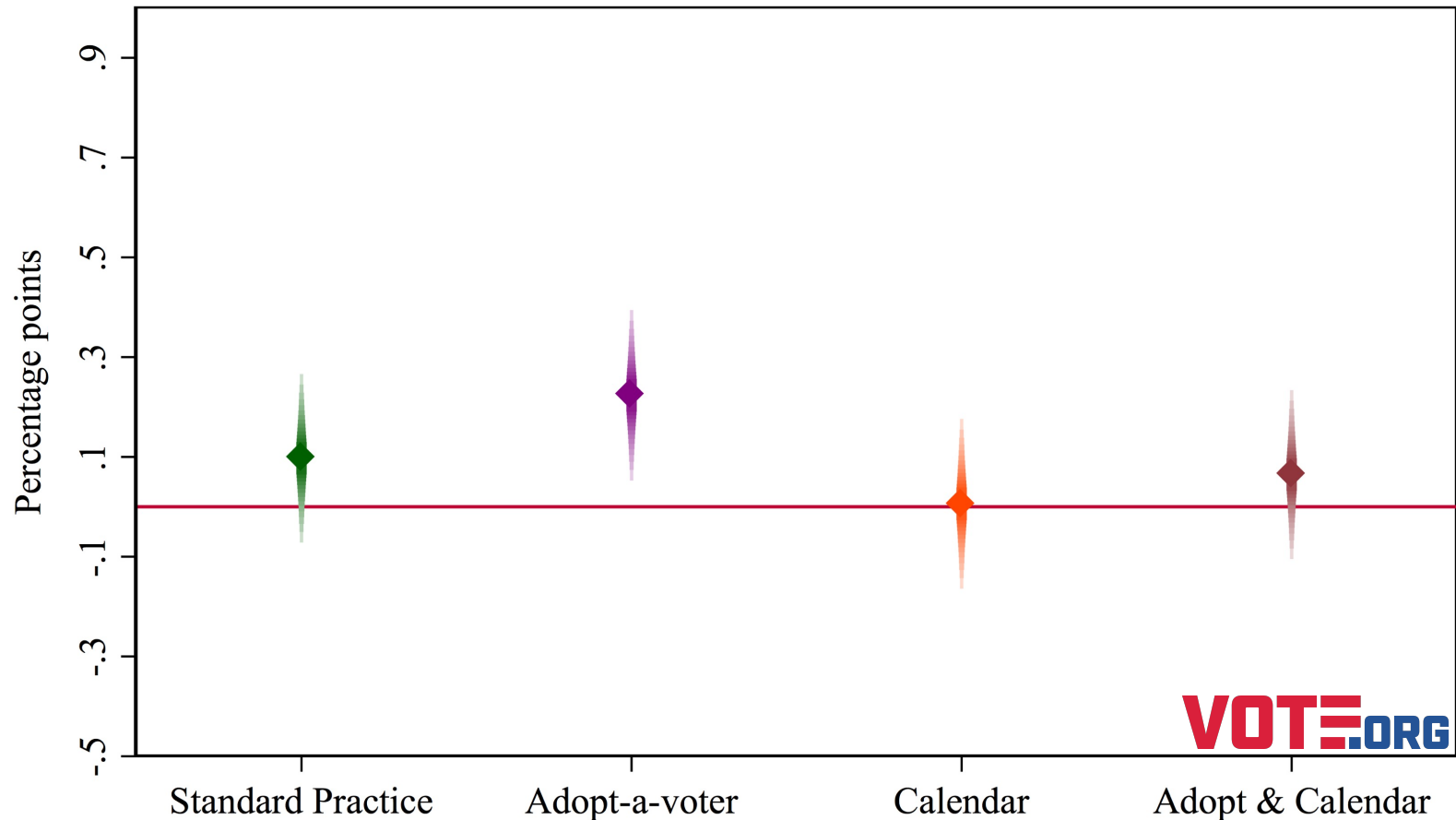
Calendar



- Based on successful SMS mobilization in Portland, OR 2017 (Mann 2018)

Adopt-a-Voter & Calendar [in person voting]

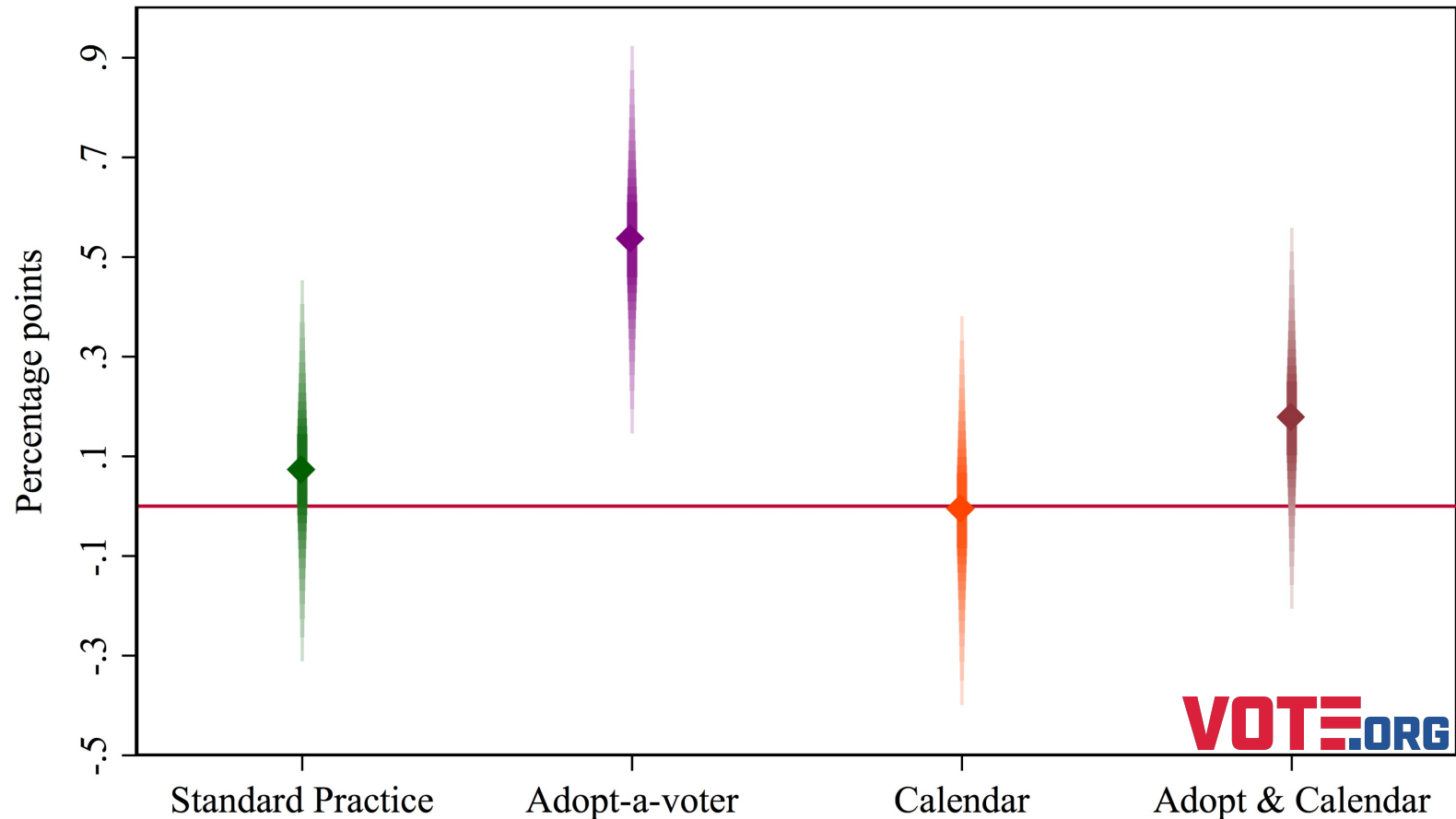
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 58.78%. Difference in treatment effects is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.197$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Adopt-a-Voter & Calendar [postal ballot chase]

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 58.42%. Difference in treatment effects is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.111$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Social Pressure with survey threat



- Based on many successful social pressure GOTV tests with direct mail (see Green & Gerber 2015), esp. (Mann 2010) using survey

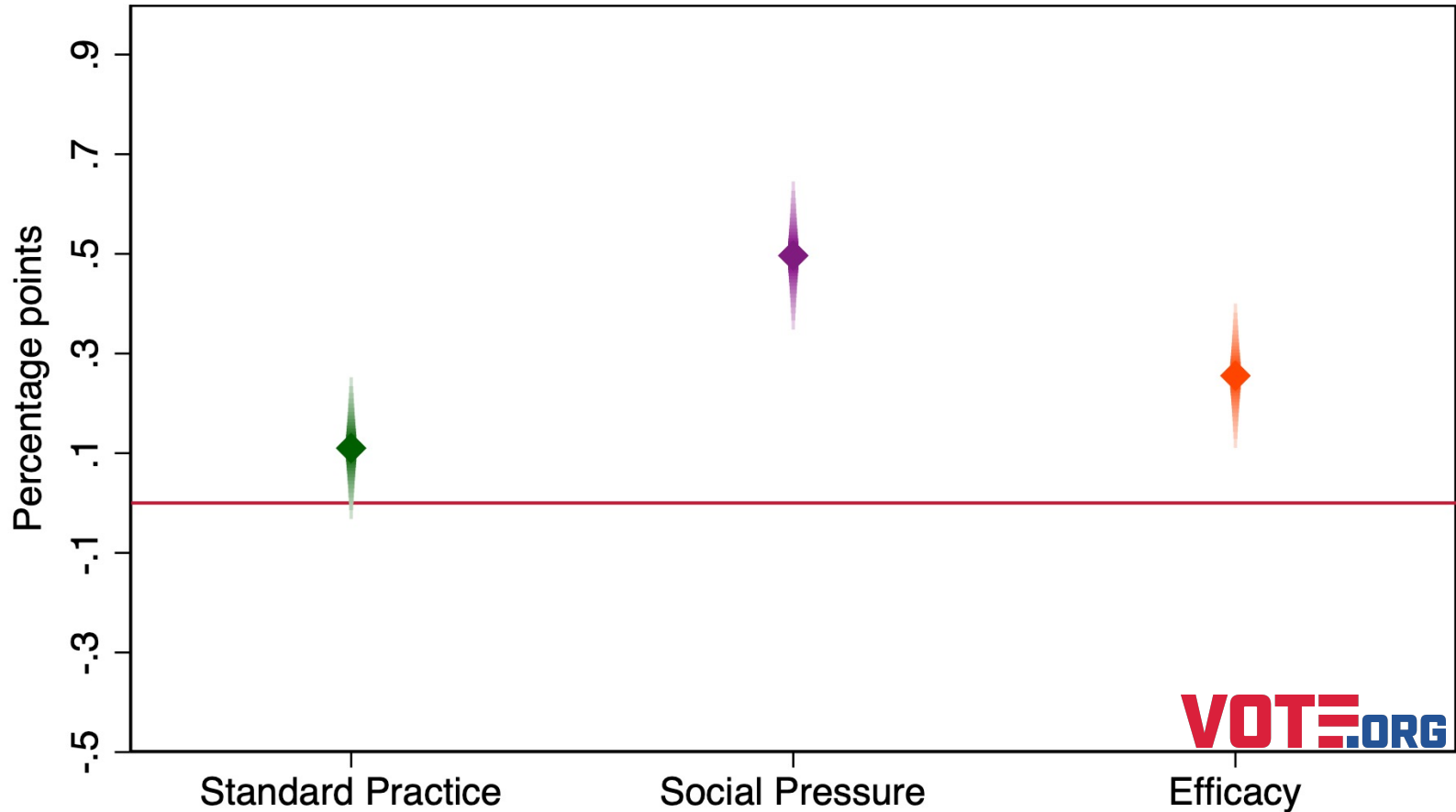
Efficacy



- Based on positive relationship between voters' perceived efficacy and political participation (Niemi, Craig & Mattei 1991)

Social Pressure & Efficacy [in person voting]

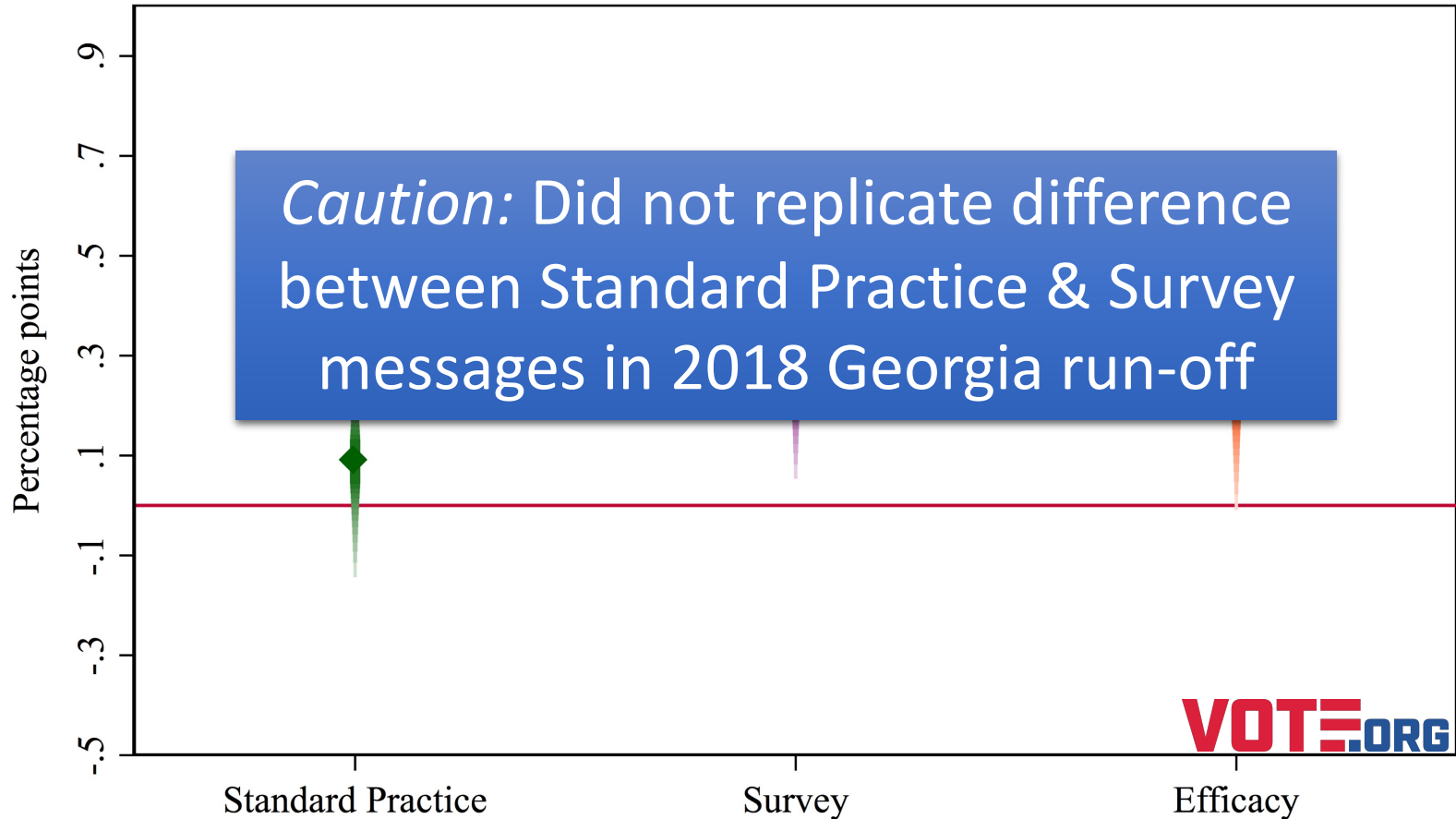
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 56.34%. Difference in treatment effects is statistically significant ($p=0.000$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Social Pressure & Efficacy [ballot request chase]

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment

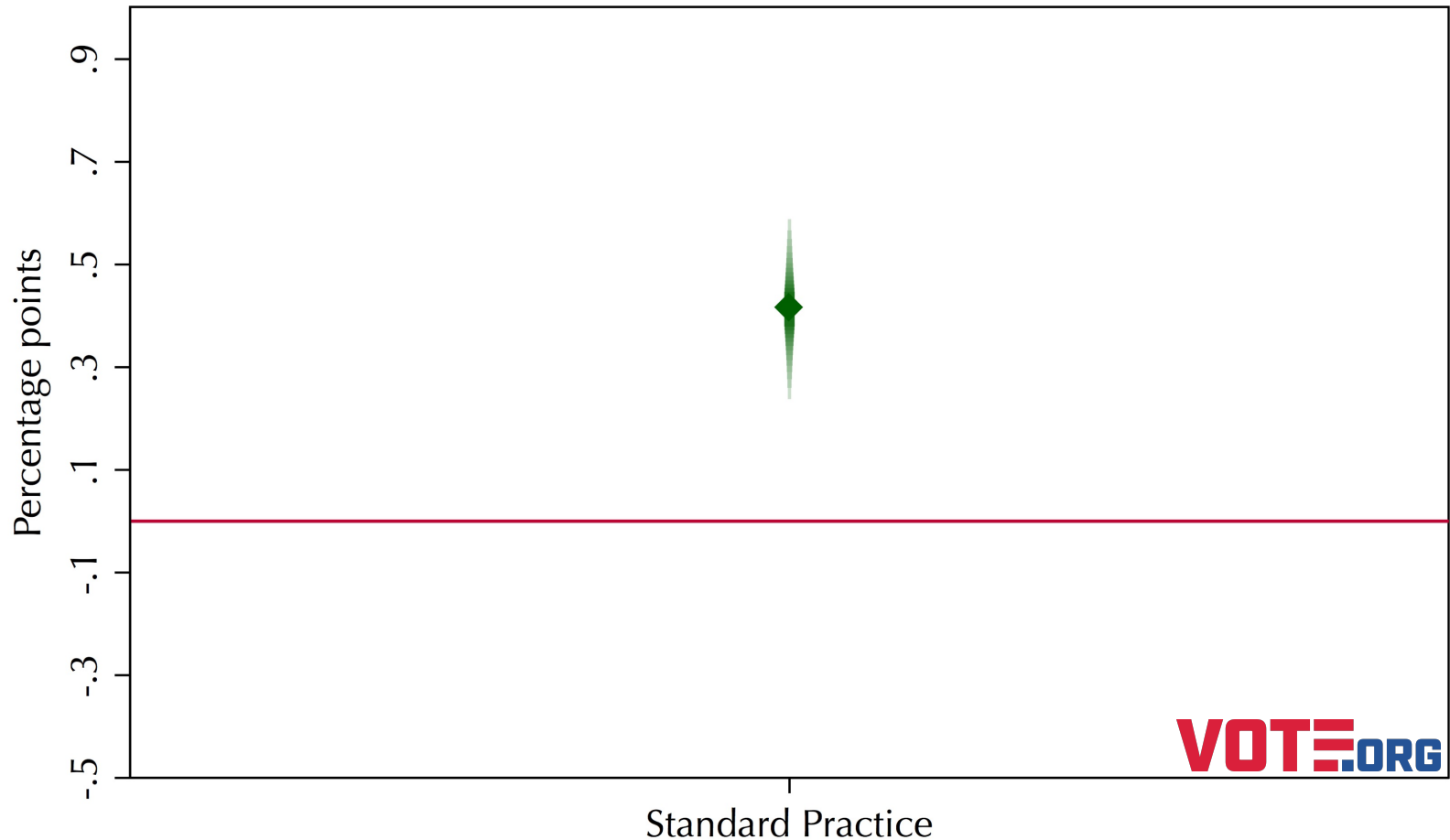


Notes: Turnout in control group = 71.42%. Difference in treatment effects is *not* statistically significant ($p=0.345$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

How many & when

Late additions to EDay: Just two msgs [Late Added EDay States: CA, CT, ME, NY]

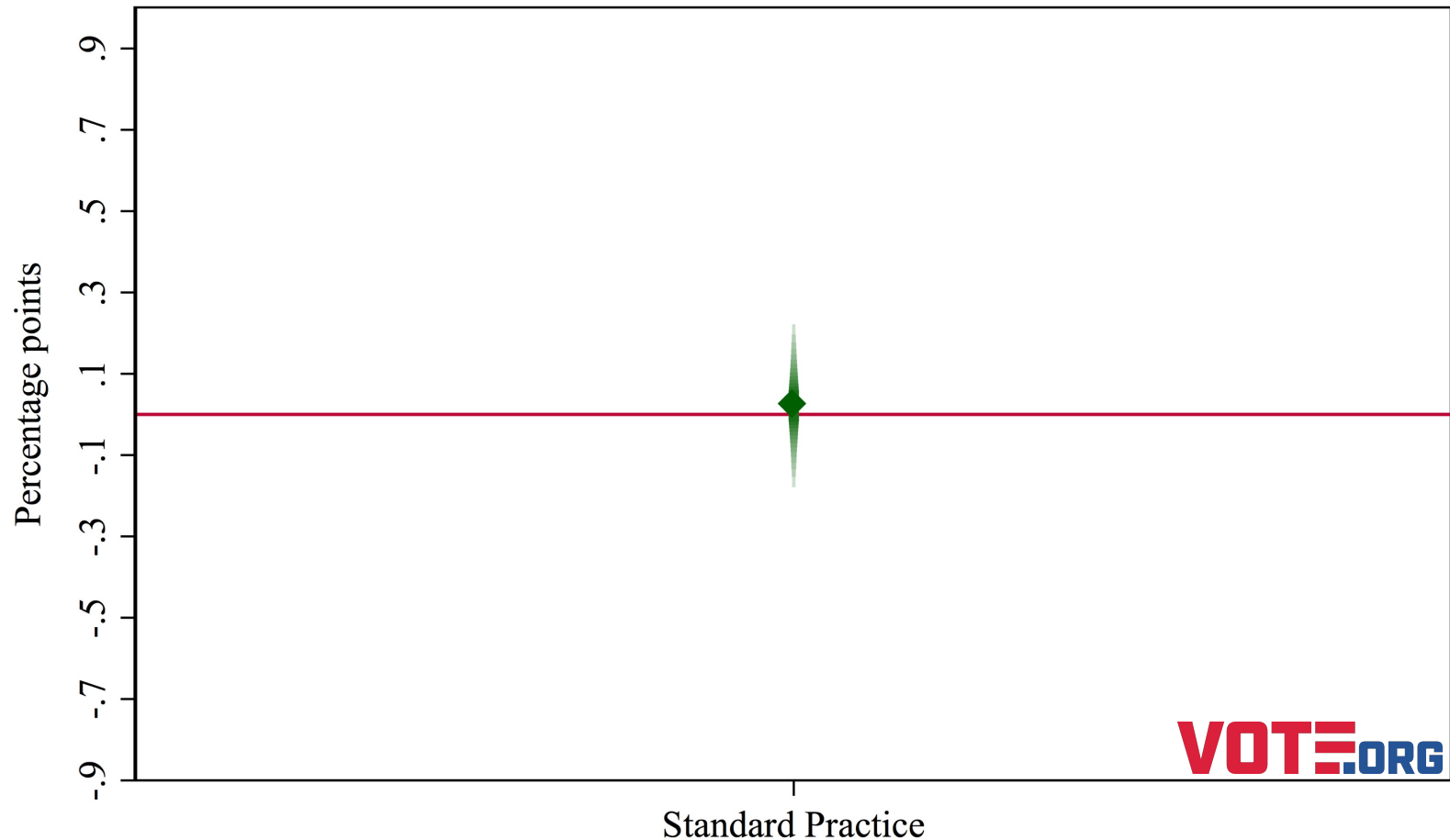
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 57.68%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

(Too) Late Mail Ballot Chase [Late Addition: CA, Monday before EDay]

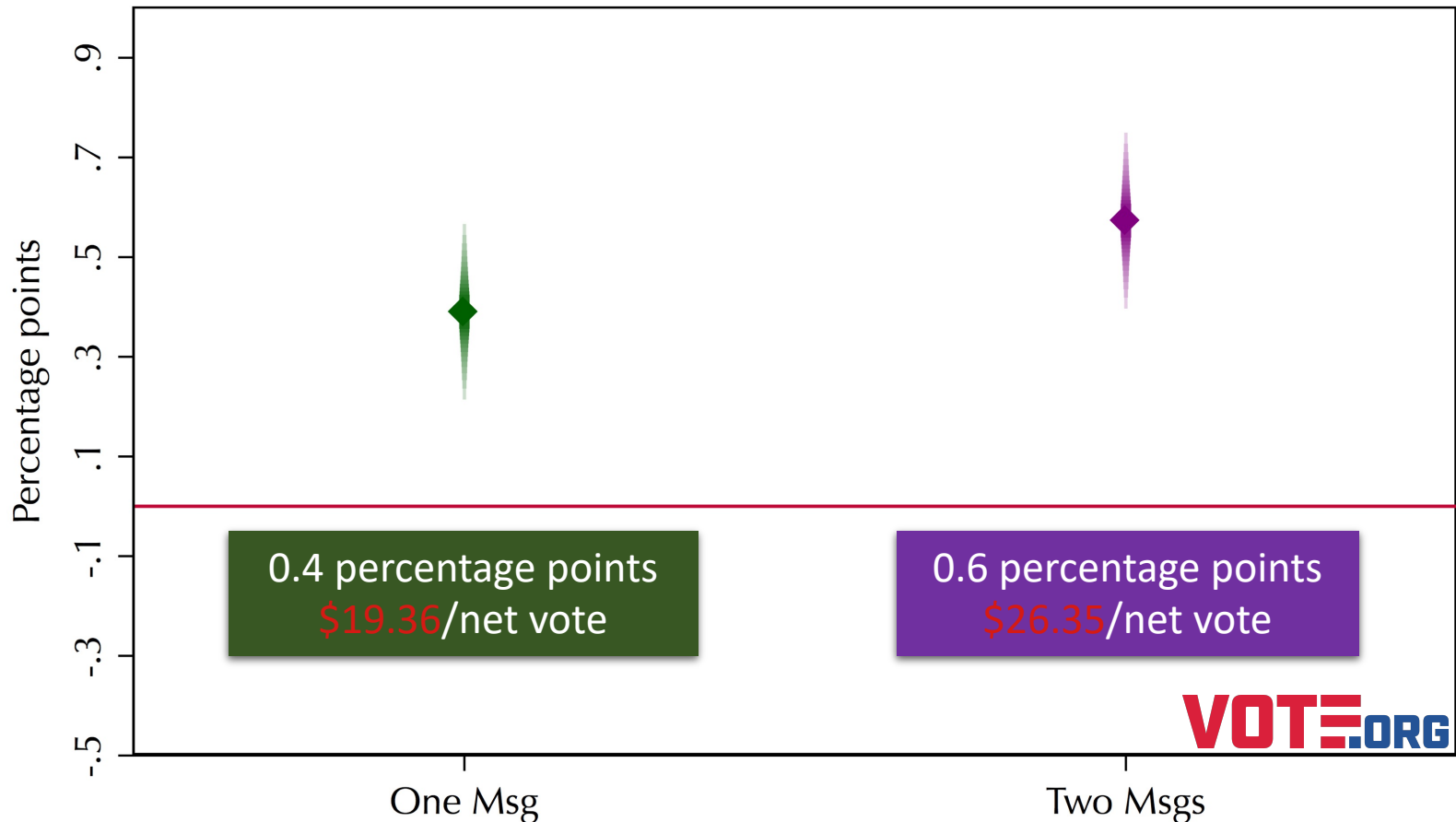
Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Pooled Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 56.36%. Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

One vs. Two Msgs (Georgia Run-off)

Avg Treatment Effect on Turnout by Each Treatment



Notes: Turnout in control group = 19.92%. Difference in treatment effects is statistically significant ($p=0.038$). Treatment effects estimated from regression with covariates for precision. Gradient confidence intervals by line width and intensity (max=95% c.i.). If confidence intervals cross line at zero, then effect is not statistically significant.

Summary – SMS mobilizes



Cost per net vote^{*}

AI “best” tactic: \$46/net vote (21.7/\$1000)⁺

In person:

0.26 percentage points; \$85.69/net vote (11.7/\$1000)

Postal Voting:

0.19 percentage points; \$144.43/net vote (6.9/\$1000)

Ballot Requests:

0.21 percentage points; \$75.14/net vote (13.3/\$1000)

⁺Analyst Institute meta analysis for midterms: **social pressure mail** (2018)

^{*}Using 2018 costs for managing and delivering SMS messages. **VOTE.ORG**

Cost per net vote*

AI “best” tactic: \$46/net vote (21.7/\$1000)⁺

In person:

0.26 percentage points; \$85.69/net vote (11.7/\$1000)

0.42 percentage points \$53.14/net vote (18.8 net votes/\$1000)

Excl. weak cell matches & EIPV

Postal Voting:

0.2 percentage points; \$144.43/net vote (6.9/\$1000)

0.6 percentage points \$49.20/net vote (20.3 net votes/\$1000)

Excluding weak cell matches

Ballot Requests:

0.21 percentage points; \$75.14/net vote (13.3/\$1000)

0.27 percentage points \$58.54/net vote (17.1 net votes/\$1000)

Excluding weak cell matches

⁺Analyst Institute meta analysis for midterms: **social pressure mail** (2018)

^{*}Using 2018 costs for managing and delivering SMS messages. **VOTE.ORG**

Lessons

- **SMS works for voter mobilization**
- Implementation lessons
 - *Don't* attempt weak confidence cell matches
 - *Don't* contact for early voting only
 - *Do* contact for Election Day voting
 - *Do* contact for postal voting
 - *Do* contact to chase ballot requests
 - *Do* deliver multiple messages
- Message improvements
 - Adopt-a-voter
 - Social pressure with survey threat



2018 Voter Mobilization Evaluation of COLD SMS

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