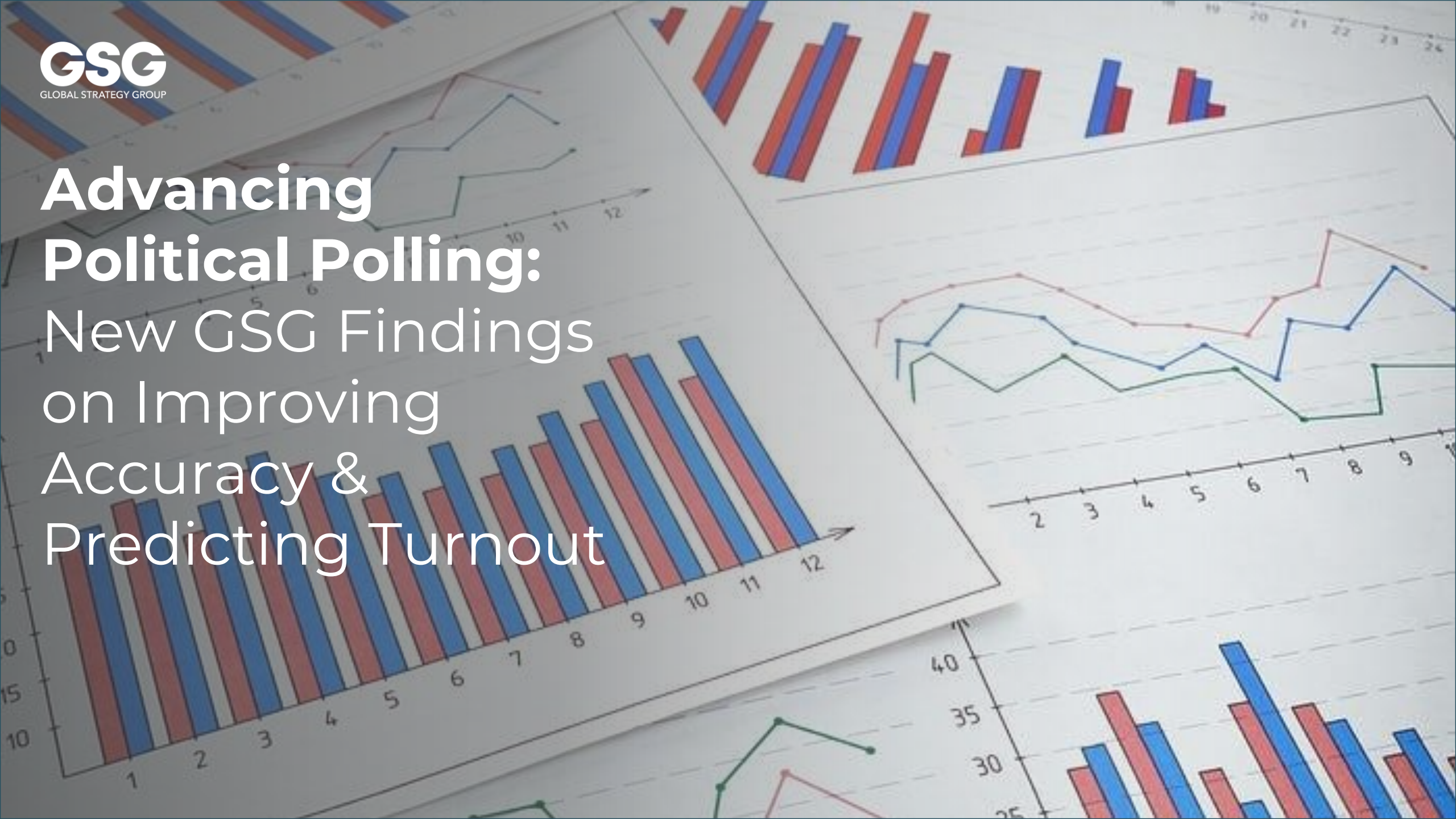


Advancing Political Polling: New GSG Findings on Improving Accuracy & Predicting Turnout





Improving Accuracy in 2022 and Beyond

In 2020 we and others identified non-response bias as a major source of error, though turnout error also played a role – and these are not the only possible sources of error



Non-Response Bias

The main cause of polling error in 2020. People who responded to polls were attitudinally different than those who did not respond to polls in ways that our normal partisan and demographic controls did not account for.



Turnout Error

An additional, smaller contributing factor of polling error in 2020. Pre-election projections slightly underestimated Republican turnout, but our analysis suggests turnout error contributed to a smaller amount of the problem as compared to non-response bias.



Late Movement

A potential cause of error in any campaign. People may change their minds between the final poll and Election Day based on ads or events. May manifest in base consolidation, undecideds deciding, or vote shifting.



Sampling Error

A potential cause of error in any poll but won't impact ALL polls in the same way. Every poll has a margin of error, but this is not a reason for multiple polls and large aggregate data sets to be wrong in the same direction.

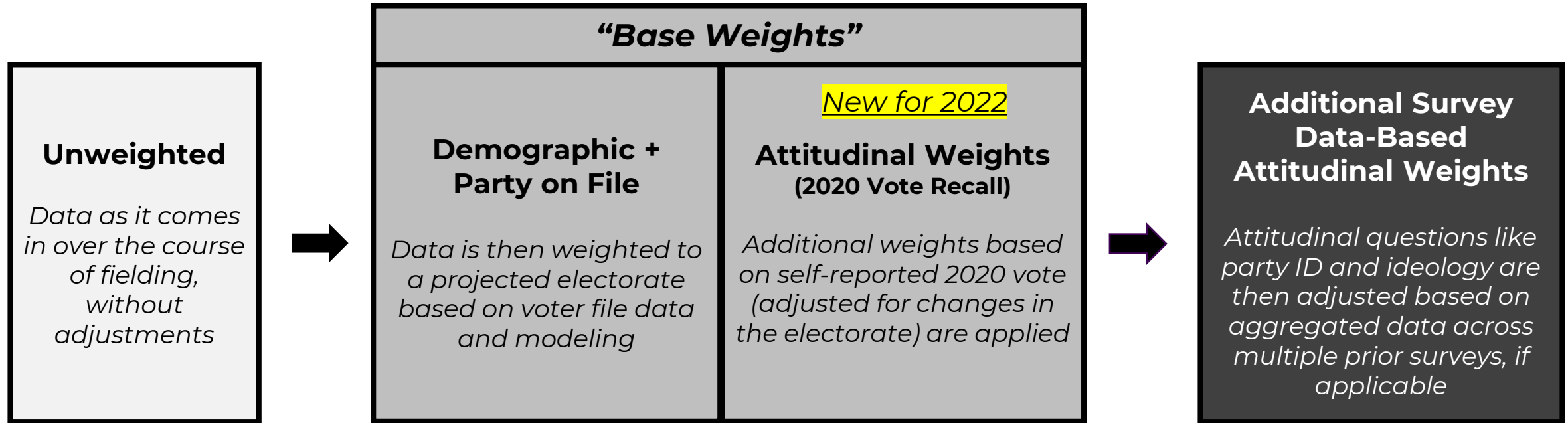
Specifically, we found that an attitudinal weight (recalled presidential vote) corrected for bias beyond demographics and partisan metrics like modeled party and party registration

- Measurement error – imprecision – in “on-file” partisan metrics like modeled party and party registration limits the error and bias correction we get from using those metrics alongside demographic weights when there is nonresponse bias
- We knew we needed more correction, so we looked to **vote recall**, which in 2020 would have provided significantly more correction than demographic and partisan weights alone

	Estimate of 2020 Bias Corrected
<i>Only Demographics</i>	10%
<i>Demos + Party on File</i>	31%
<i>Demos + Party on File + Vote Recall</i>	69%

- For the 2022 cycle, we asked 2020 presidential vote in all our electoral surveys and implemented these weights

Our new weighting process



“Base weights” as referenced here include demographic, partisan (from voter file), and vote recall weights – the core weights that we use for every survey. Elsewhere, we may show these weights with or without vote recall.

Scope of 2022 Analysis in this Presentation

Data was collected by GSG

Statewide pre-election polls across 8 states

- AZ, IL, ME, MI, NC, NV, NY, PA

41,814 total interviews in these states

- Presentation covers 16,352 interviews from the final two surveys for each client, all conducted post-Labor Day

18 surveys

- Mix of phone, text, and voter-file matched panel

The primary focus will be on Gubernatorial and Senate votes in these states

Summary of Findings

The final two polls in each state had 0.3 points of pro-GOP bias when using demographic, partisan, and vote recall weights

- This is a major improvement from 2020, when polling had 2.6 points of pro-Democratic bias without the use of vote recall weights

Weighting to the actual electorate introduced some pro-Democratic bias, resulting in an overall bias of D+0.4, a shift of +0.7 toward Democrats

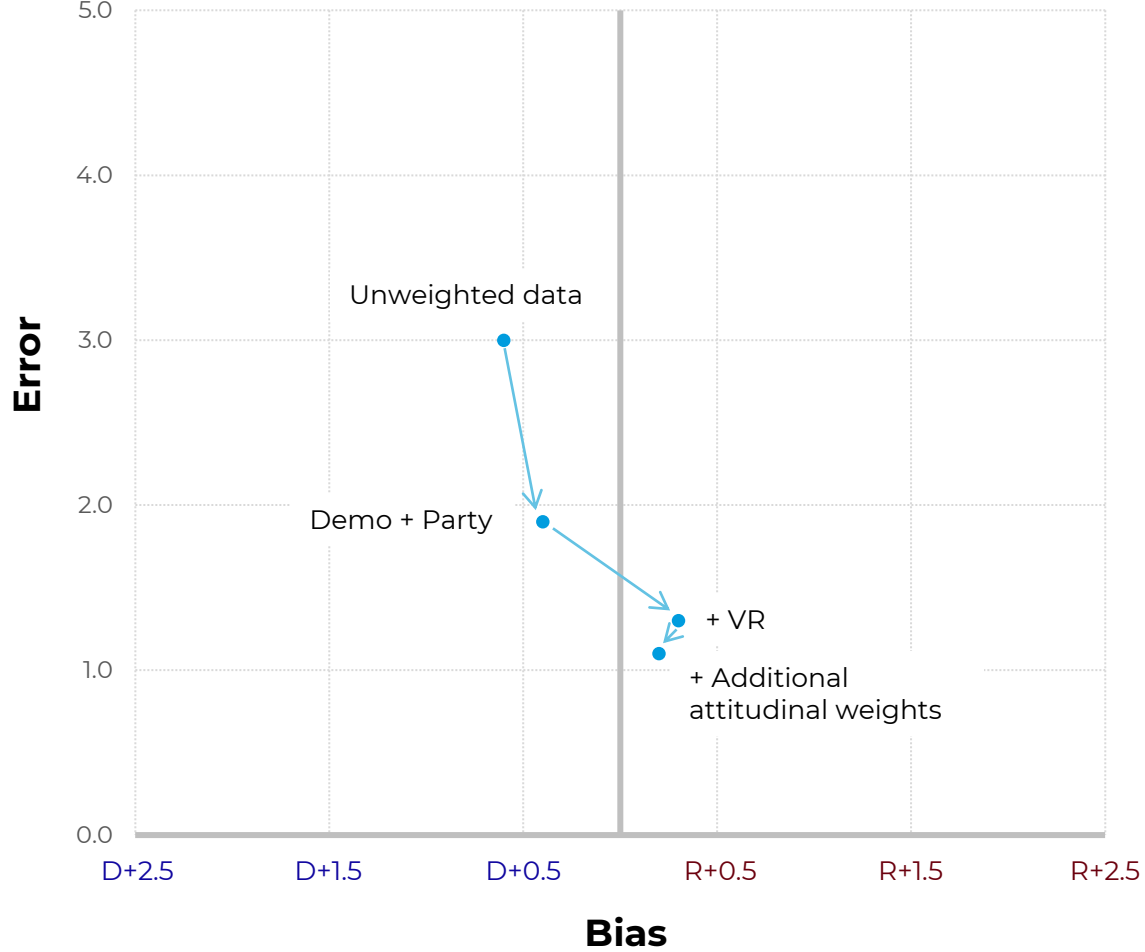
- The small size of the shift suggests that our pre-election models were generally very accurate and turnout error was only a minor concern for us this cycle
- Our data was slightly too Democratic when weighted to the actual electorate, which may suggest that our underlying data was too Democratic in other ways due to non-response or other factors

Newly-implemented vote recall weights reduced mean error by a quarter when weighted to the actual electorate, from 2.0 to 1.5, without any significant change to bias – promising due to the difficulty of estimating vote recall targets for a midterm election

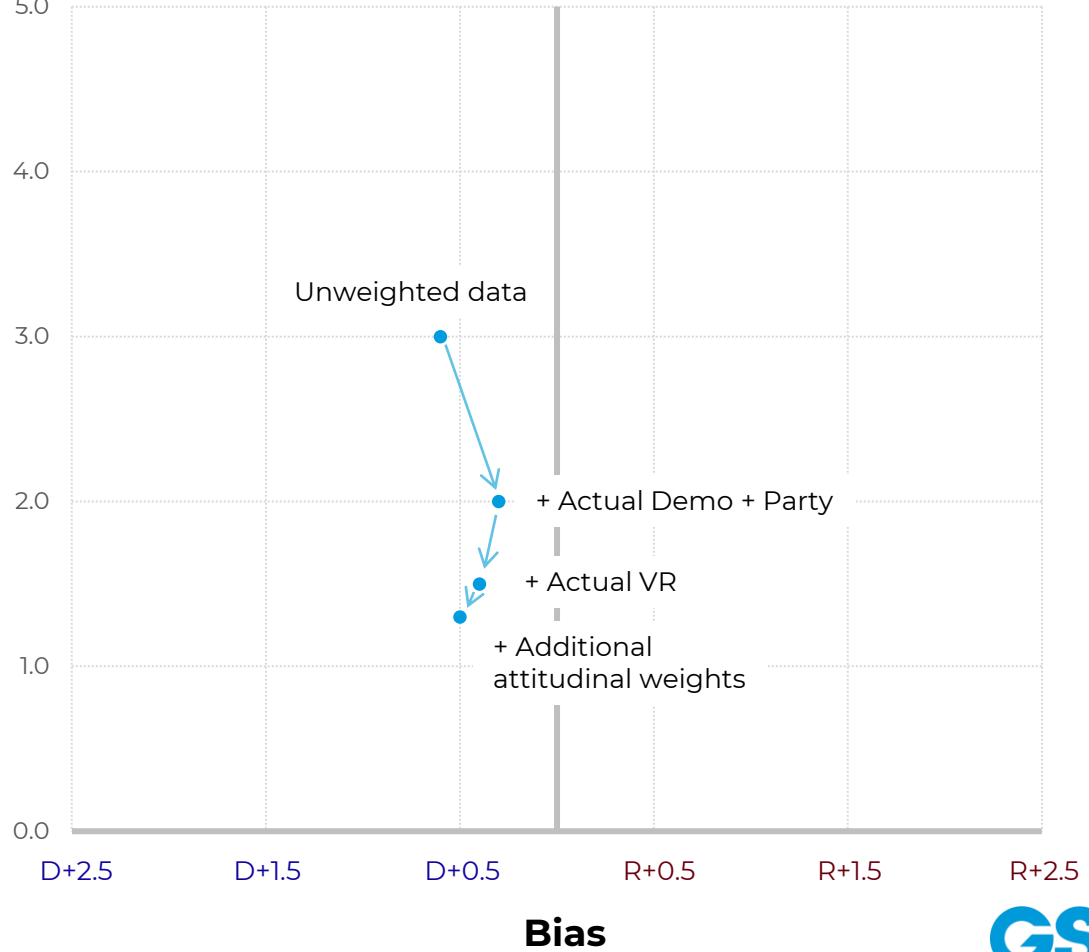
- In 2022, vote recall weights reduced error but not bias
- In 2020, vote recall weights reduced both error and bias
- For weighting to 2020 vote recall in 2022, targets were generated using scores that adjusted 2020 actual results based on projected changes to demographics of the midterm electorate

In practice, our weighting processes progressively reduced both error and bias

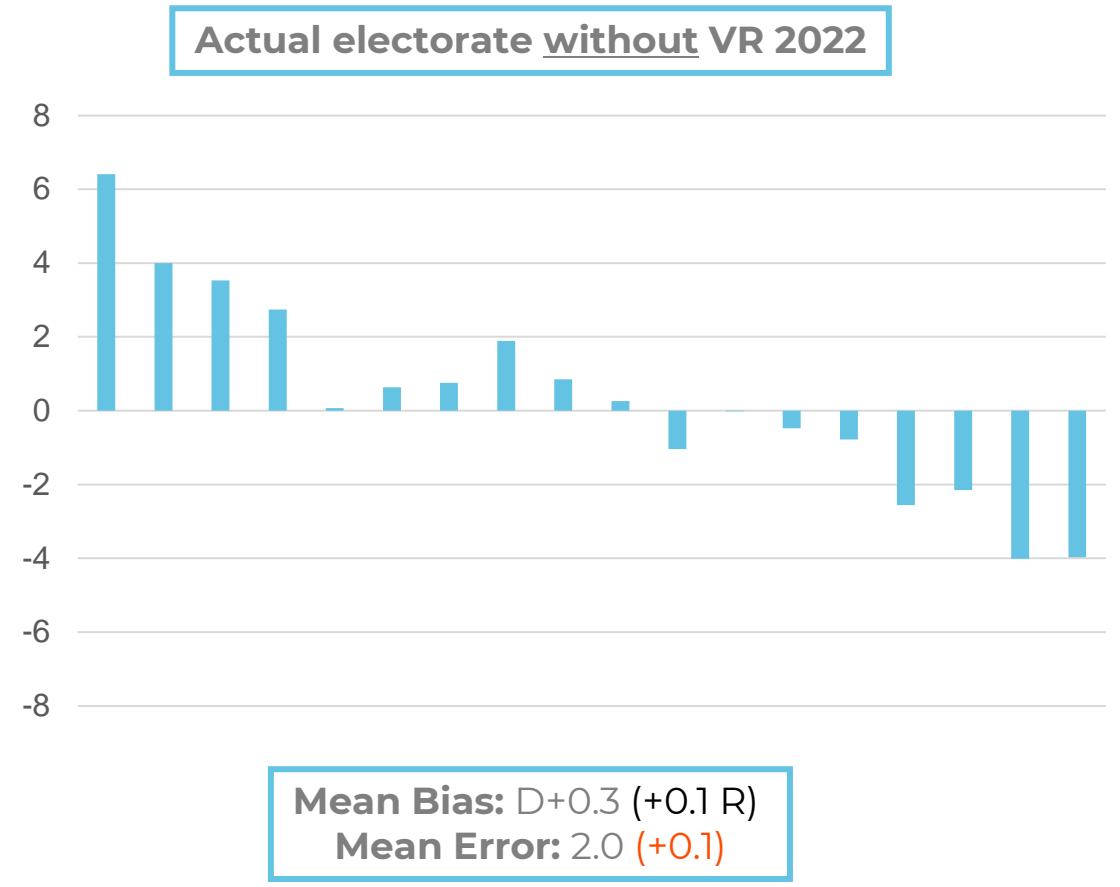
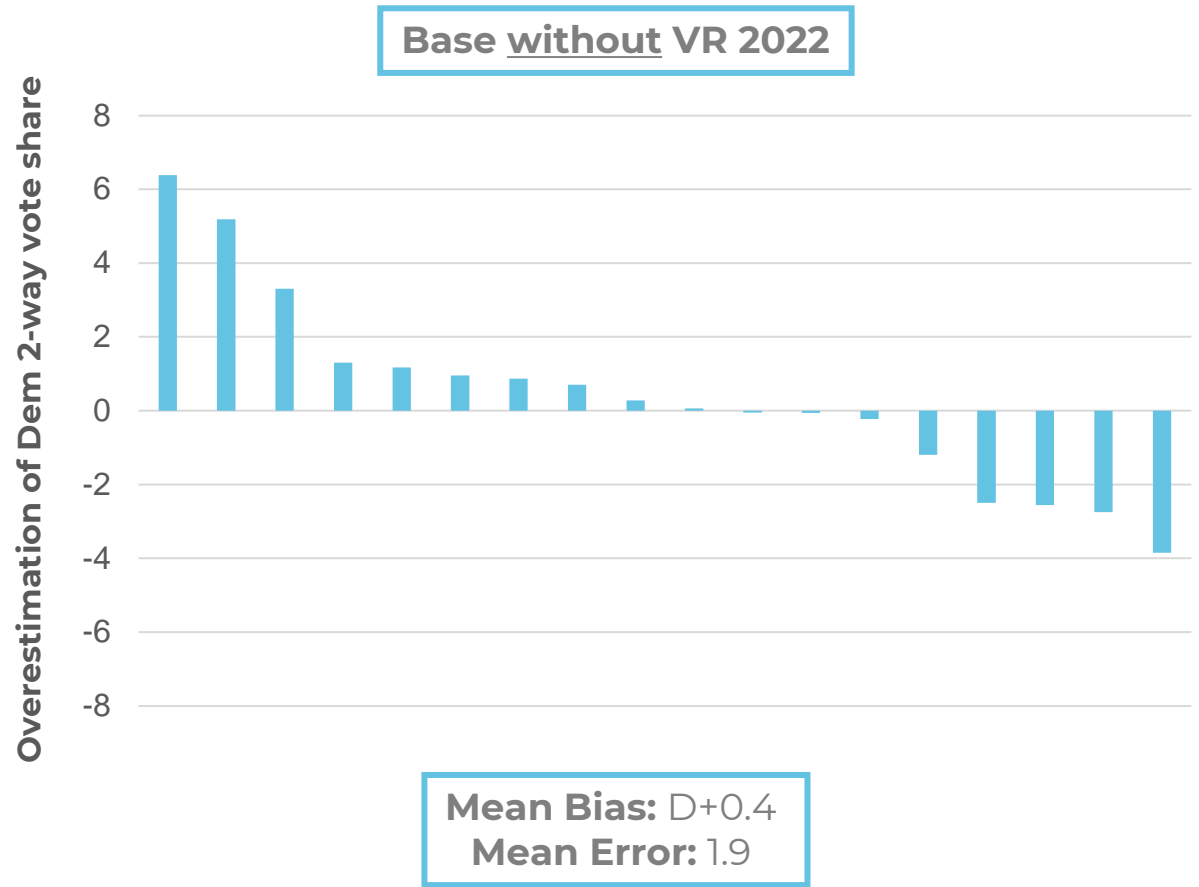
Weighting Steps in Practice



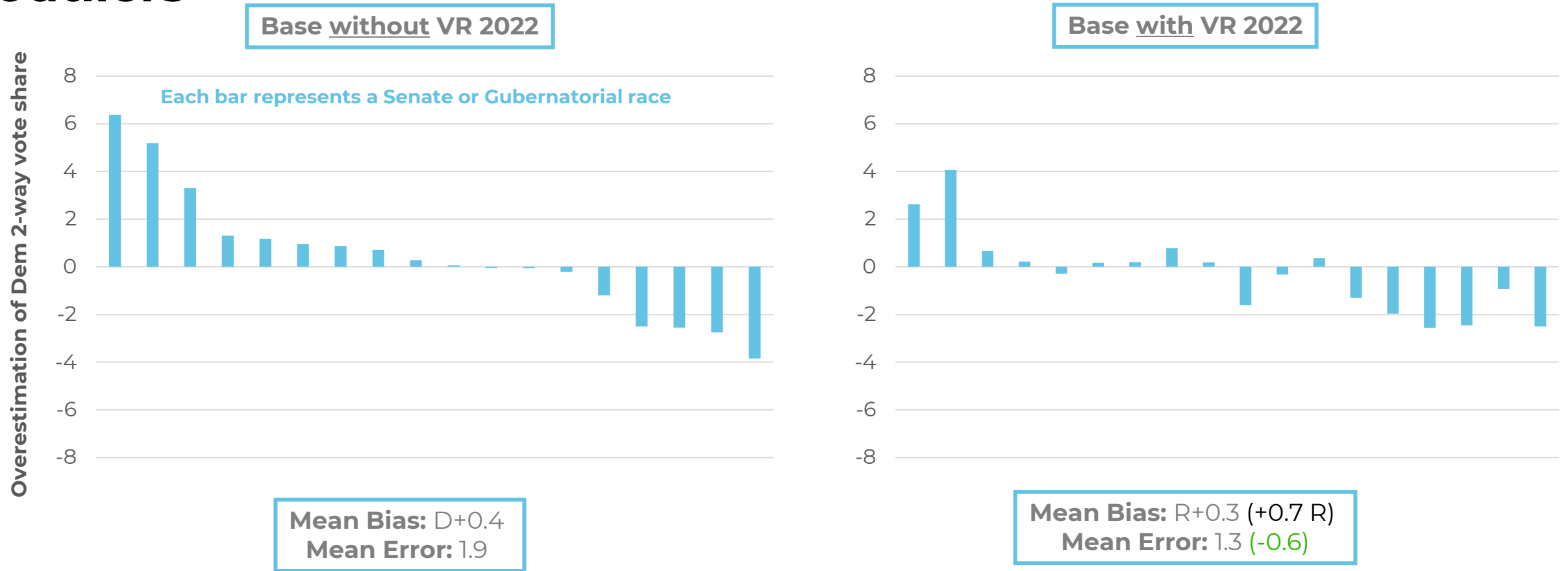
Impact of Weighting with Known Turnout



Without vote recall, re-weighting to the demographics of the actual electorate makes very little difference – in other words, turnout models were largely accurate, or not a source of meaningful error



In 2022, vote recall weights helped to reduce error and variance between surveys, decreasing the prevalence of outliers



Vote recall weights did flip the direction of bias (from a slight pro-Democratic bias to a slight pro-Republican bias).

2022 data featured less bias and error at every stage than data in 2020

Weighting 2022 data to the actual electorate had only a very small impact on bias and error, suggesting that pre-election models were generally quite accurate

Vote recall provided less additional correction than in 2020, but the effect was larger in 2020 in part because pre-VR weighted data featured more bias and error

	2020		2022		2022 vs. 2020	
	Bias	Error	Bias	Error	Bias	Error
Unweighted	D+4.4	4.4	D+0.6	3.0	-3.8	-1.4
Base No VR	D+2.6	3.1	D+0.4	1.9	-2.2	-1.2
Actual No VR	D+1.7	3.0	D+0.3	2.0	-1.4	-1.0
Actual With VR	D+1.4	1.8	D+0.4	1.5	-1.0	-0.3
Actual With Attitudinal	D+1.2	1.4	D+0.5	1.3	-0.7	-0.1

Looking ahead, we have continued to work to understand other sources of response bias

After 2020, we worked with several other Democratic polling firms to explore sources of error that could not be corrected using our conventional methods (including vote recall)

- We used costly, unconventional methods, including incentives, mail interviews, and in-person interviews to achieve a far higher response rate than a traditional phone survey
- We asked a range of exploratory questions – demographic and attitudinal – and compared responses using the unconventional, higher response rate survey to those collected using traditional methods

We identified a question that had important features – it was associated with partisan political attitudes, but traditional methods appeared to “miss” certain voters

- We asked this question on virtually every political survey in 2022, yielding significant data that will be the source of investigation going forward
- While we don't yet have hard targets for weighting this variable, we adjust it based on aggregated data from past surveys, much like we do with ideology or party ID

How important is politics to your personal identity?

- Very important*
- Somewhat important*
- Not too important*
- Not at all important?*

Data collected in 2022 continues to underscore the importance of political engagement to understanding political attitudes

- For example, less “political” Republicans were especially likely to vote against partisanship, and defect from presidential voting. Democrats did not have this characteristic.
- To increase stability, in 2022 we averaged political engagement responses across surveys, in lieu of a target with external validity.
- Outside of strict accuracy, this question can be used to help identify respondents who are at risk of defection or are weaker partisans.

How important is politics to your personal identity?

	Very important			Somewhat important			Not that / Not at all important		
	ID Dem	ID Ind	ID Rep	ID Dem	ID Ind	ID Rep	ID Dem	ID Ind	ID Rep
2022 Dem Candidate	96%	52%	6%	97%	60%	11%	95%	56%	16%
Biden 2020 Vote (Recalled)	96%	51%	5%	96%	56%	7%	93%	52%	10%
2022 Dem vs. Biden	+0.4%	+0.6%	+1.1%	+1.0%	+3.5%	+3.7%	+1.3%	+4.7%	+6.0%

(2-way Dem vote share averaged across 8 states, gubernatorial and US Senate pre-election surveys)

We are also exploring approaches to illustrating other sources of error – such as late movement

Call-back studies led to a surprising conclusion about what voters actually do after responding to our survey: nearly as many “defect” as “decide”

Call-Backs: What Respondents/Voters Did on Election Day



Decided – Were no longer undecided

Defected – Switched to vote for opposing candidate

Average Impact on Error





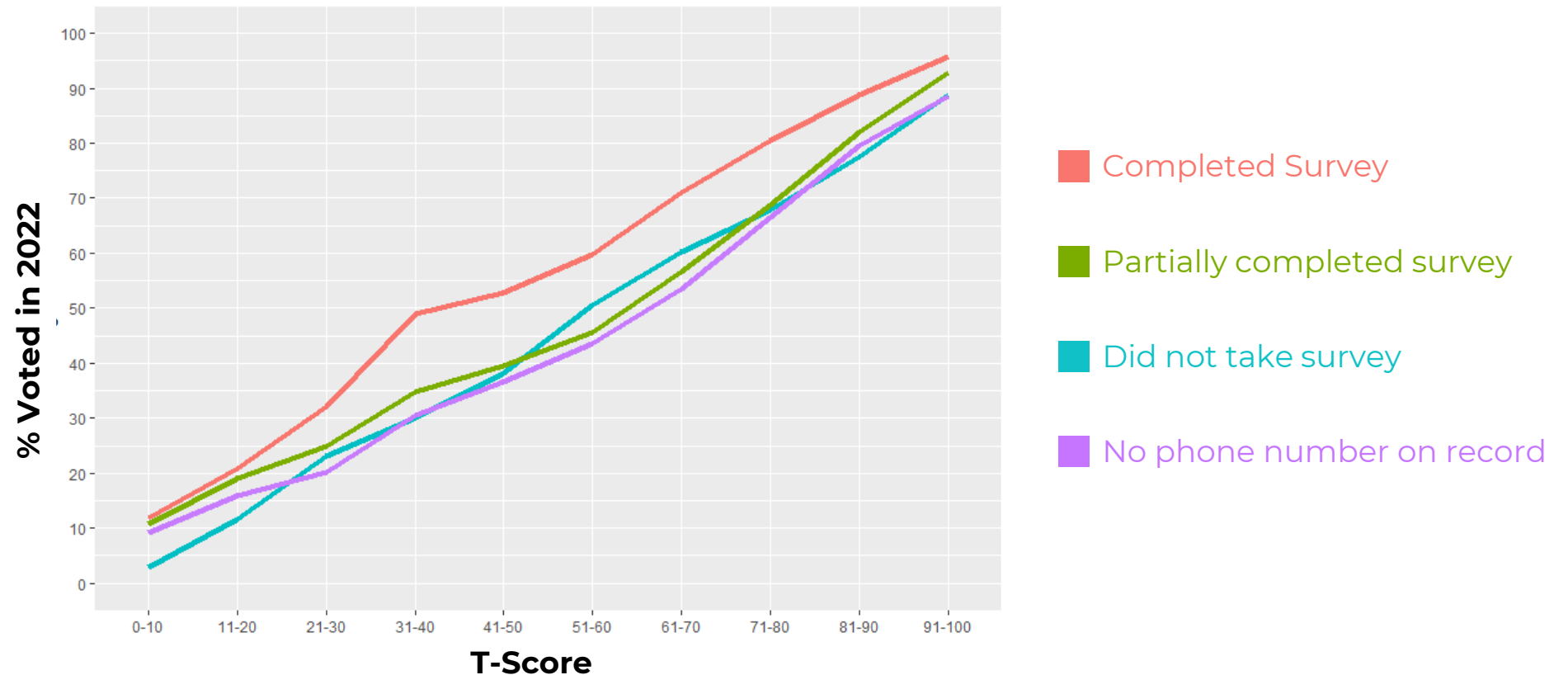
Predicting Turnout Using In-Survey Data

What survey responses predict turnout?

Responses to some survey questions -- as well as responsiveness -- are associated with turnout propensity after controlling for known characteristics (such as age or past vote history). This is not limited to self-reported "likelihood to vote." Specifically:

1. Registered voters who participate in political surveys are more likely to turn out than those who don't participate in political surveys.
 2. Self-reported likelihood to vote and motivation to vote is associated with higher turnout propensity, all else being equal.
 3. "High information" respondents who are more familiar with candidates running for office at the top of the ticket are more likely to turn out, all else being equal.
- This data and research represents an initial step in a longer process to ultimately utilize survey response data to help inform future election turnout projections.

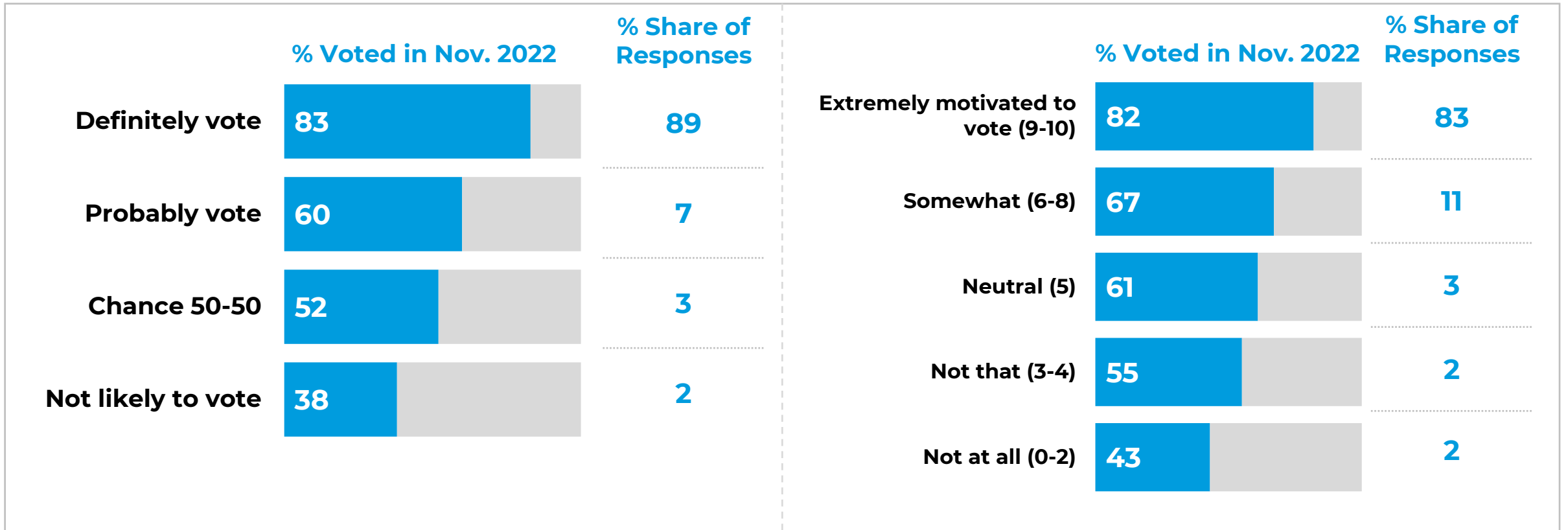
Registered voters who completed political surveys were more likely to turn out in the 2022 midterm election than those that did not complete nor take political surveys



T-score is a score applied to each voter at the individual level estimating their propensity of turning out from 0 to 100 based on demographic and administrative data collected from publicly available voter files and other commercial vendors.

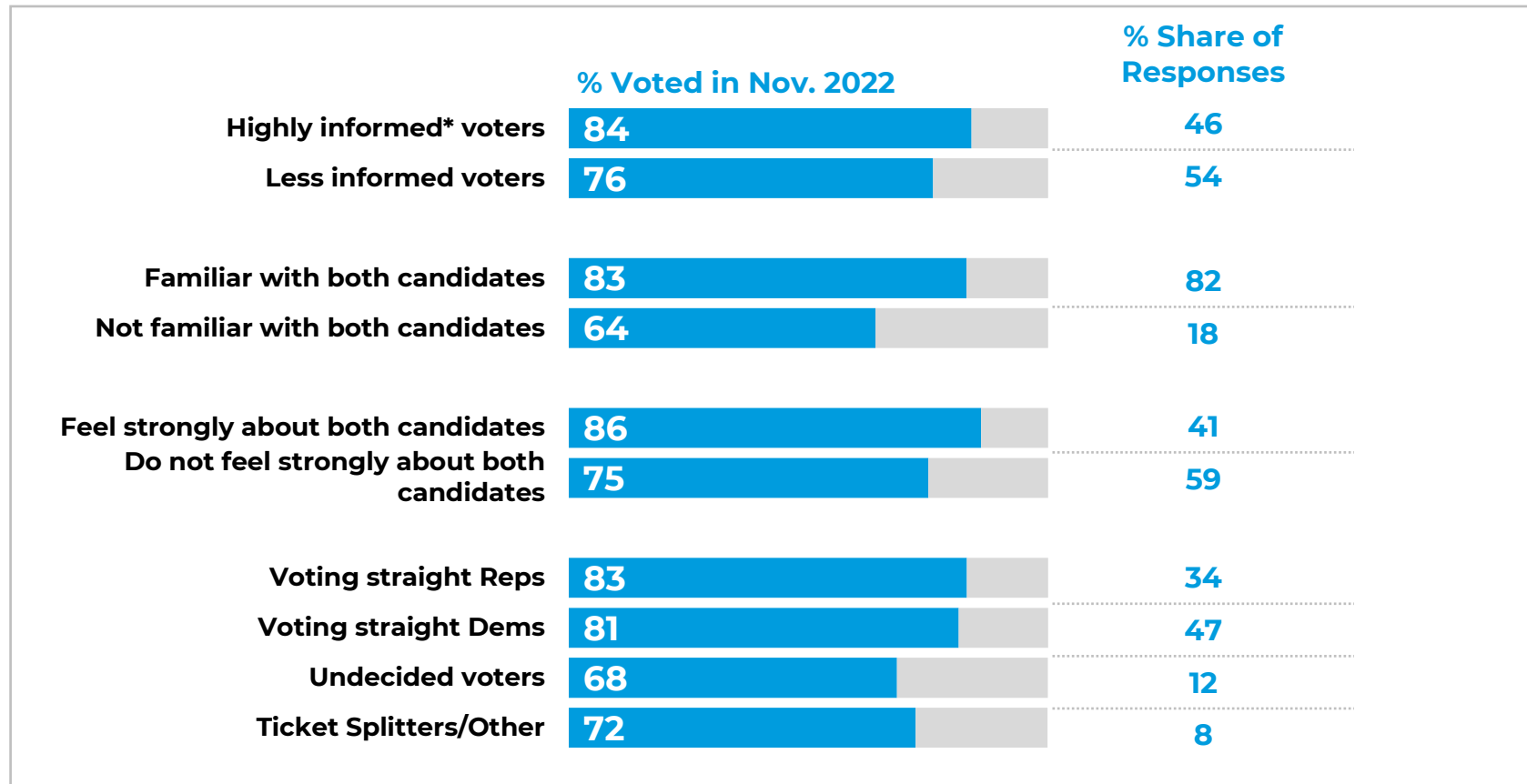
Self-reported vote likelihood and “motivation” to vote were clear predictors of actual turnout

Descriptive Statistics: Self-Reported Likelihood to Vote and Motivation to Vote (0-10 scale)



Voters' level of information, familiarity with both candidates, and tendency to vote down party lines also correlates with their likelihood to vote in the 2022 midterm election

Descriptive Statistics: Other Attitudinal and Awareness Questions



*Highly informed – Has seen/heard/read about both candidates, or has not seen/heard/read about either candidate

The links between survey response and turnout behavior mostly persist even after controlling for a voters' turnout history and demographic characteristics

Association between attitudes and Actual turnout	
	Dependent variable:
	Actual turnout
Definitely vote	0.19*** (0.03)
Probably vote	0.09** (0.03)
50:50 or DK	0.10** (0.03)
Extremely motivated to vote	0.10*** (0.03)
Somewhat motivated to vote	0.09** (0.03)
Neutral	0.08** (0.03)
Not that motivated to vote	0.07* (0.03)
Engaged	-0.01 (0.004)
Highly informed about both candidates	0.04*** (0.01)
Familiar with both candidates	0.04*** (0.01)
Feels strongly about both candidates	0.01 (0.01)
Feels strongly about one candidates	0.01 (0.01)
Voted straight ticket Dem	0.04* (0.01)
Voted straight ticket Rep	0.05*** (0.01)
Undecided voters	0.02 (0.01)
Observations	15,176
Adjusted R ²	0.27

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Definitely vote

Probably vote

50:50 or DK
(Baseline: Not likely to vote)

Extremely motivated to vote

Somewhat motivated to vote

Neutral

Not that motivated to vote
(Baseline: Not at all motivated to vote)

Politically Engaged

Highly informed about both candidates

Familiar with both candidates

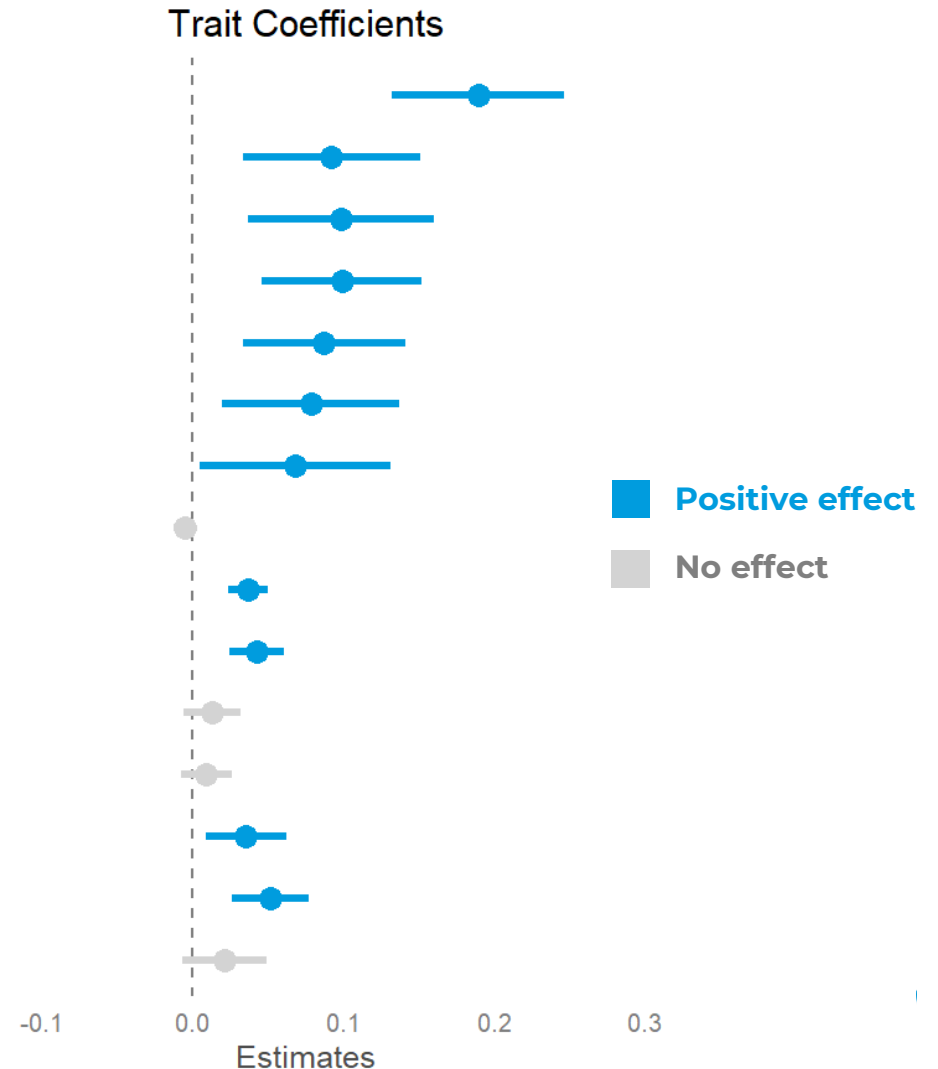
Feels strongly about both candidates

Feels strongly about one candidates
(Baseline: Does Not feel strongly)

Voted straight ticket Dem

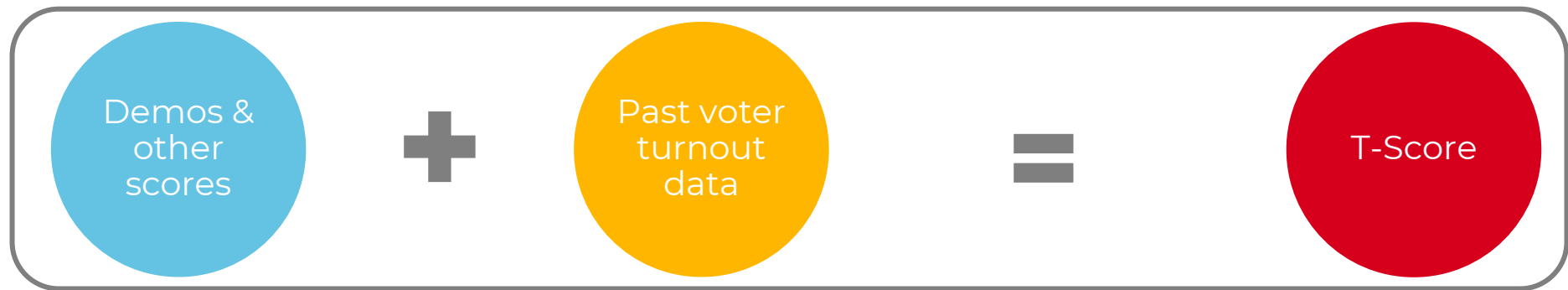
Voted straight ticket Rep

Undecided voters
(Baseline: Ticket Splitters/Everyone else)



We are now exploring whether in-survey measurements – including survey completion propensity – improve existing turnout projections at the individual level

Traditional Propensity Model



Adjusted Propensity Model



In our initial analysis, survey completion data improves turnout predictions, especially for some groups

Logistic Regression

Variable	Coefficients
Intercept	0.15***
Naïve TSCORE	0.51***
Predicted Complete Score	0.93***

* = $p < .10$ ** = $p < .05$ *** = $p < .01$

Race	Party Reg	Age	Density	T-Score Error*	Adj. T-Score Error**
Hispanic	Democrat	18-44	Suburban	9%	4%
Hispanic	Ind/Other	45-64	Suburban	6%	1%
Hispanic	Democrat	45-64	Suburban	5%	0%

*We generate a new T-Score by regressing actual voter turnout on T-Score, which reduces average error to zero but leaves some groups with more error than others.

** We further adjust T-Score by regressing actual voter turnout on T-Score and modeled survey-complete probability, both setting total T-Score error to 0 but also further reducing prediction errors.

Next Steps

- 1. More research.** This data is helpful within the 2022 cycle, but we need to measure the impact of survey responses over multiple election cycles to determine if these initial findings hold true long term.
- 2. Determine if these findings among individuals hold true in the aggregate.** These metrics correlate with turnout at an individual level. But it remains unclear whether this will hold true in the aggregate among voters who are demographically or attitudinally similar to these voters. Potential applications for this research includes:
 - **Improved electorate projections.** We need more research to determine whether or not these findings can help improve our electorate turnout projections.
 - **Improved mobilization targets.** We would like to conduct more research to investigate whether these metrics can help improve mobilization targets in the future.

Thank You

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