

Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Initiatives and Conservative Mobilization in the 2004 Election

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Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Initiatives

- 📌 initiatives banning marriage for same-sex couples appeared on the ballot in 11 states
- 📌 all 11 passed comfortably: from 86% in Mississippi to 56% in Oregon

Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Initiatives

- 5 states - Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Utah - legislature-initiated
- 6 states - Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio and Oregon - citizen-initiated via petitions

Conservative Mobilization?



- did the presence of same-sex marriage initiatives boost turnout among conservatives?
- in turn, did the presence of SSMLs generate higher vote shares for Bush than would otherwise have occurred?

or, more bluntly...

...did the Massachusetts Supreme Court and Gavin Newsom cost John Kerry the presidency?


Early Reports...

*"Same-Sex Marriage Issue Key to Some G.O.P. Races",
New York Times, 11/04/2004, Section P, p4.*

-  *"In Ohio ... political analysts credit the ballot measure with increasing turnout in Republican bastions in the south and west, while also pushing swing voters in the Appalachian region..."*
-  *"I'd be naïve if I didn't say it helped", said Robert T. Bennett, chairman of the Ohio Republican Party.*

Early Reports...

*"Same-Sex Marriage Issue Key to Some G.O.P. Races",
New York Times, 11/04/2004, Section P, p4.*

 *Opponents of the measures acknowledged that the proposed amendments might have increased Republican turnout. But they said most of those voters would have gone to the polls anyway, galvanized by a host of social issues, including abortion, stem cell research and gun control.*

"From Day 1 of the Bush administration, they have done everything possible to cater to their conservative, evangelical base," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "They were energized to vote for him, and same-sex marriage was just one of those issues that energized them."

...slightly later reports

- 📌 *Senator Dianne Feinstein, the California Democrat, said that the thousands of same-sex weddings at San Francisco City Hall "did energize a very conservative vote." She added: "So I think that whole issue has been too much, too fast, too soon. And people aren't ready for it." Other Democrats are privately saying similar things.*

*"Maybe Same-Sex Marriage Didn't Make the Difference",
New York Times, 11/07/04*

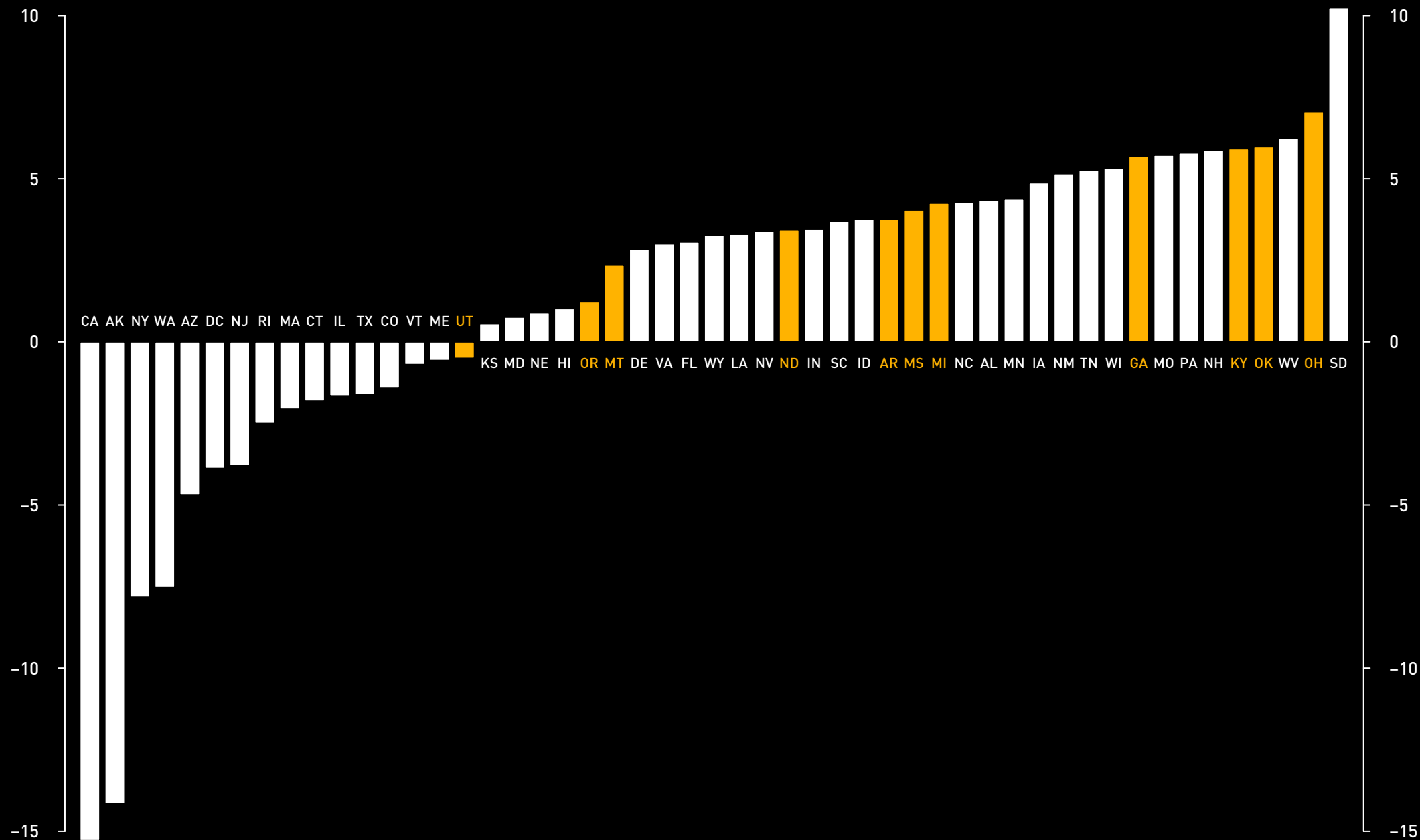
...slightly later reports

- 📌 *"To blame gay people for the failure of the Democratic message to motivate people is frankly unfair, and frankly, it's homophobic," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Yes, the right wing was energized as never before to turn out for George Bush, but it's energized over a whole range of issues. Karl Rove has catered to their every need, with stem-cell research, the ban on late-term abortion, faith-based initiatives, restrictions on funding for overseas contraception, prayer in the schools. Was gay marriage a factor? Yes, along with a lot of factors."*

*"Maybe Same-Sex Marriage Didn't Make the Difference",
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Evidence

Change in Turnout (%VAP), 2000-2004



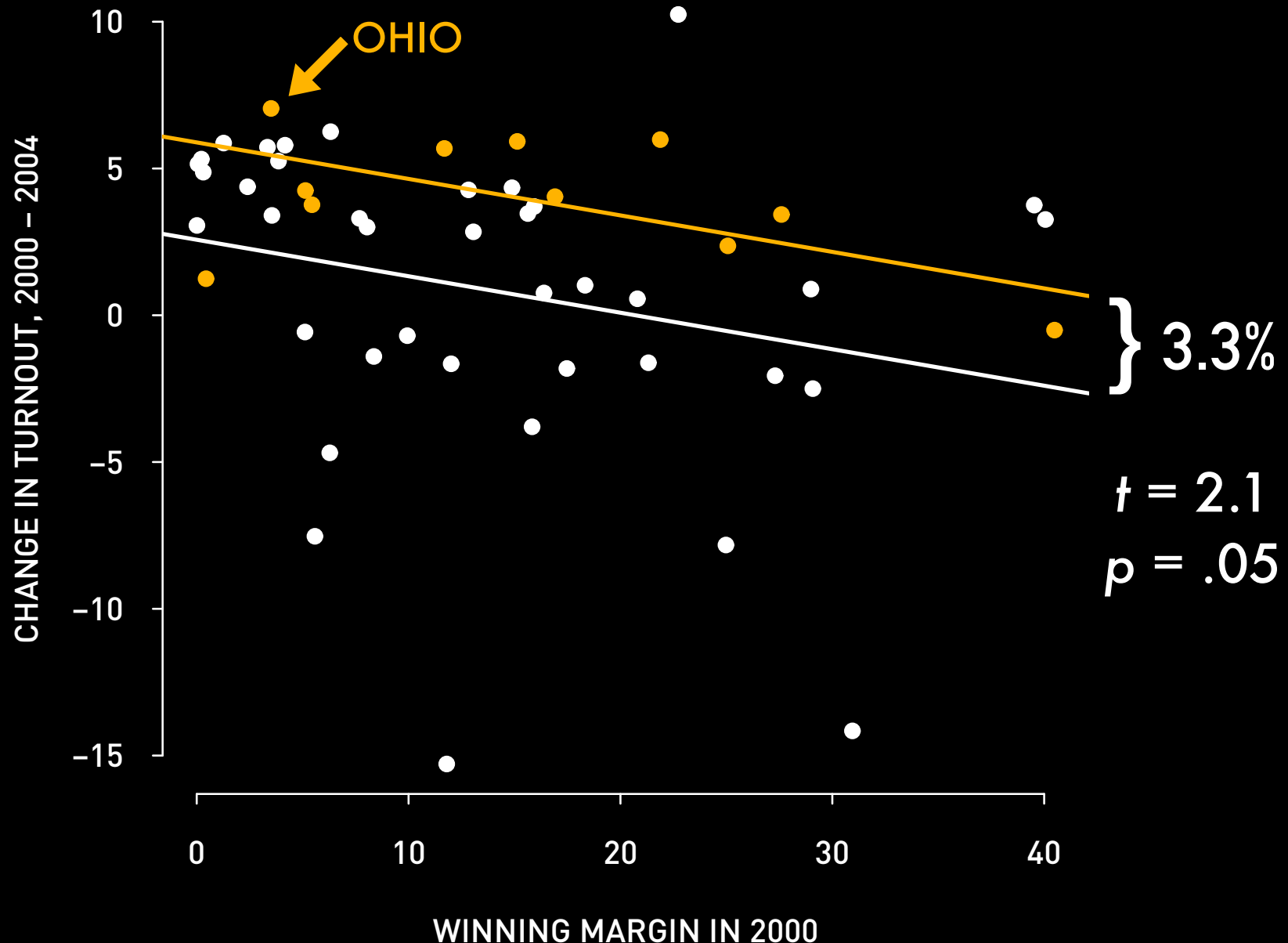
States with SSMLs have higher turnout

	with SSMLs	no SSMLs
mean increase in turnout, 2000-04	3.9	0.8
standard deviation	2.6	5.3
n	11	40

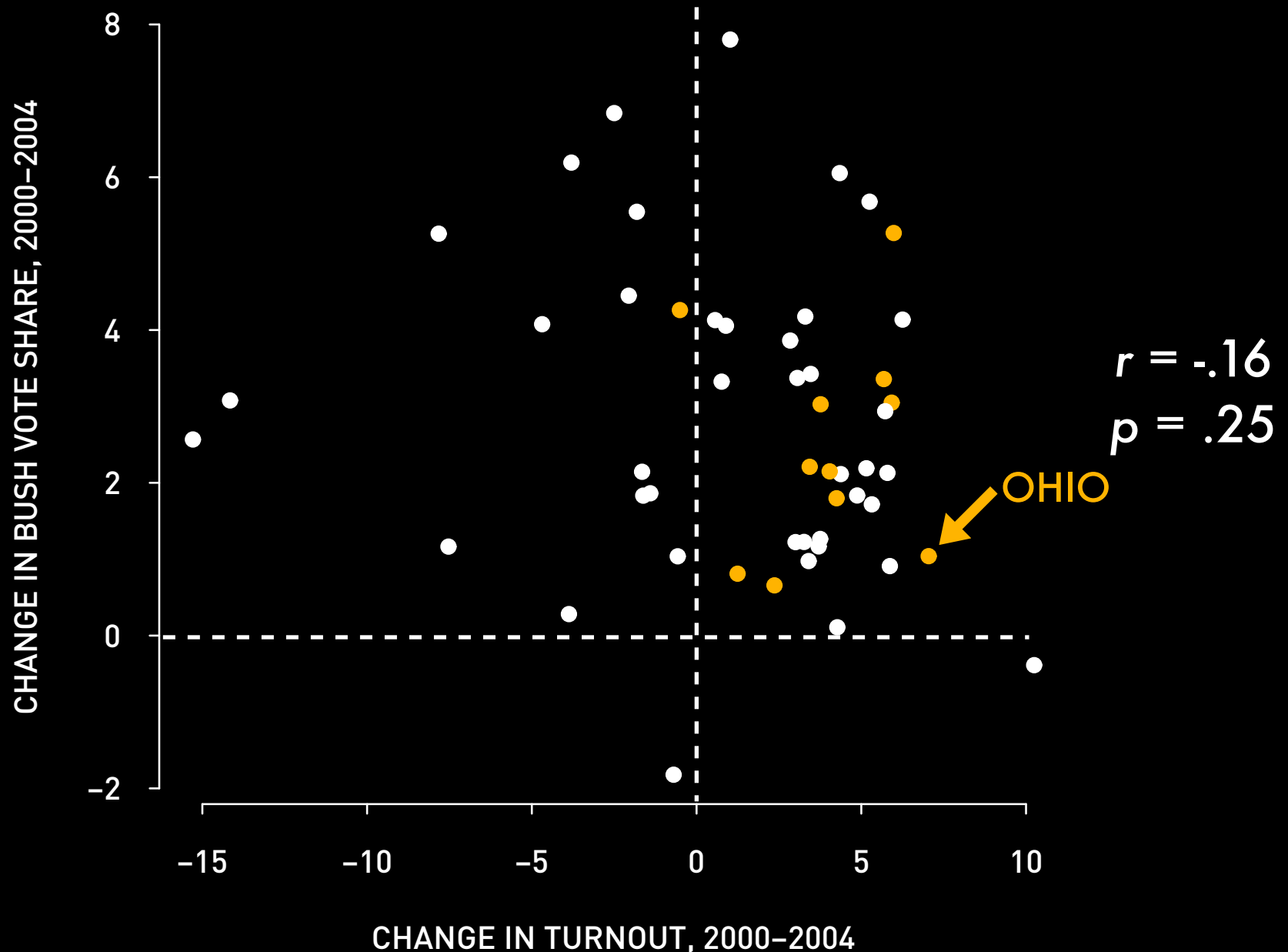
Welch two-sample t-test: $t = 2.91, p < .01$

without California: $t = 2.70, p = .01$

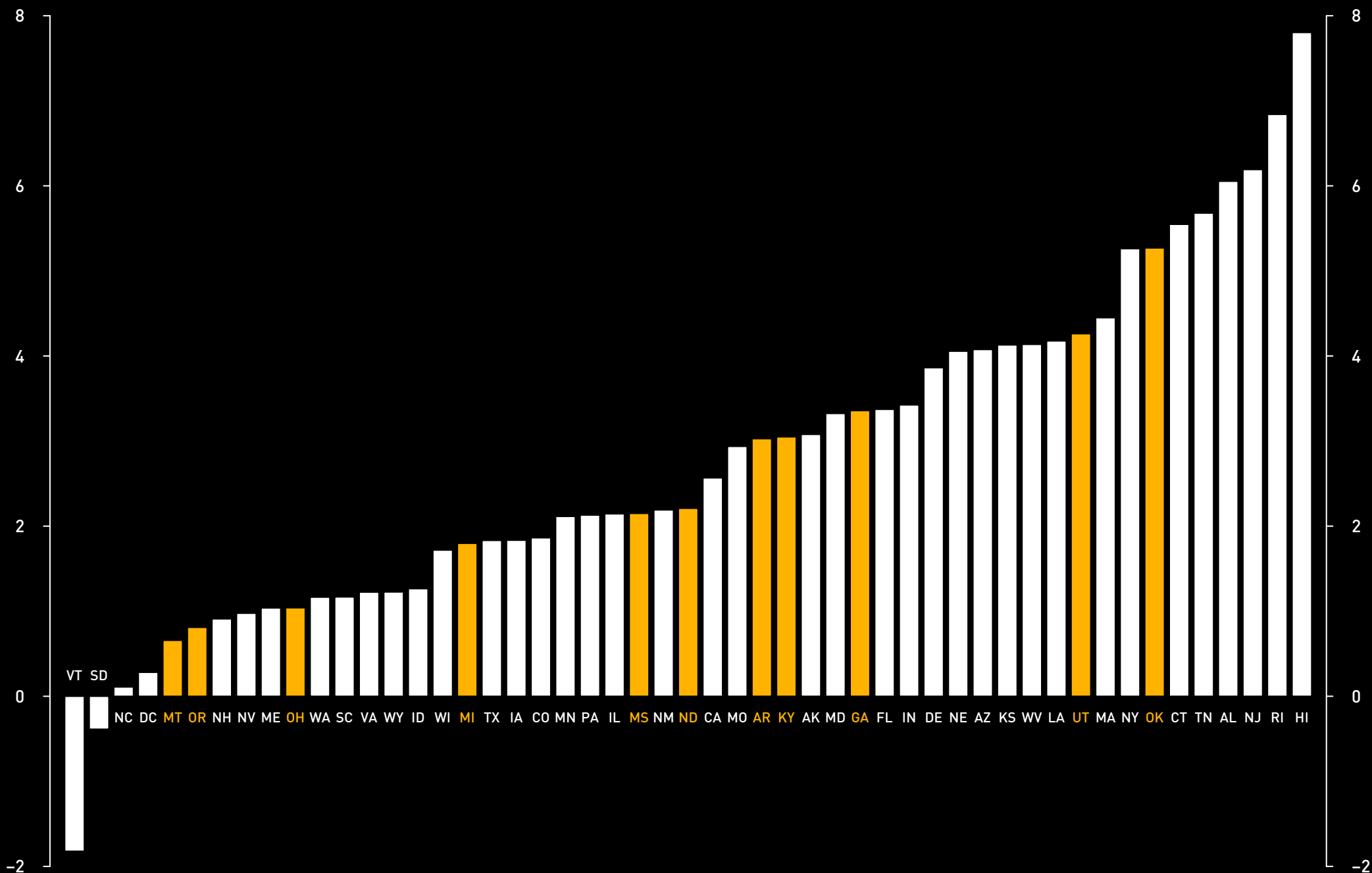
SSMs appear to boost turnout, net of intensity of race



...but there is no relationship between change in Bush support and change in turnout



Change in Bush Vote Share, 2000-2004



SSMIs have no association with change in Bush vote share

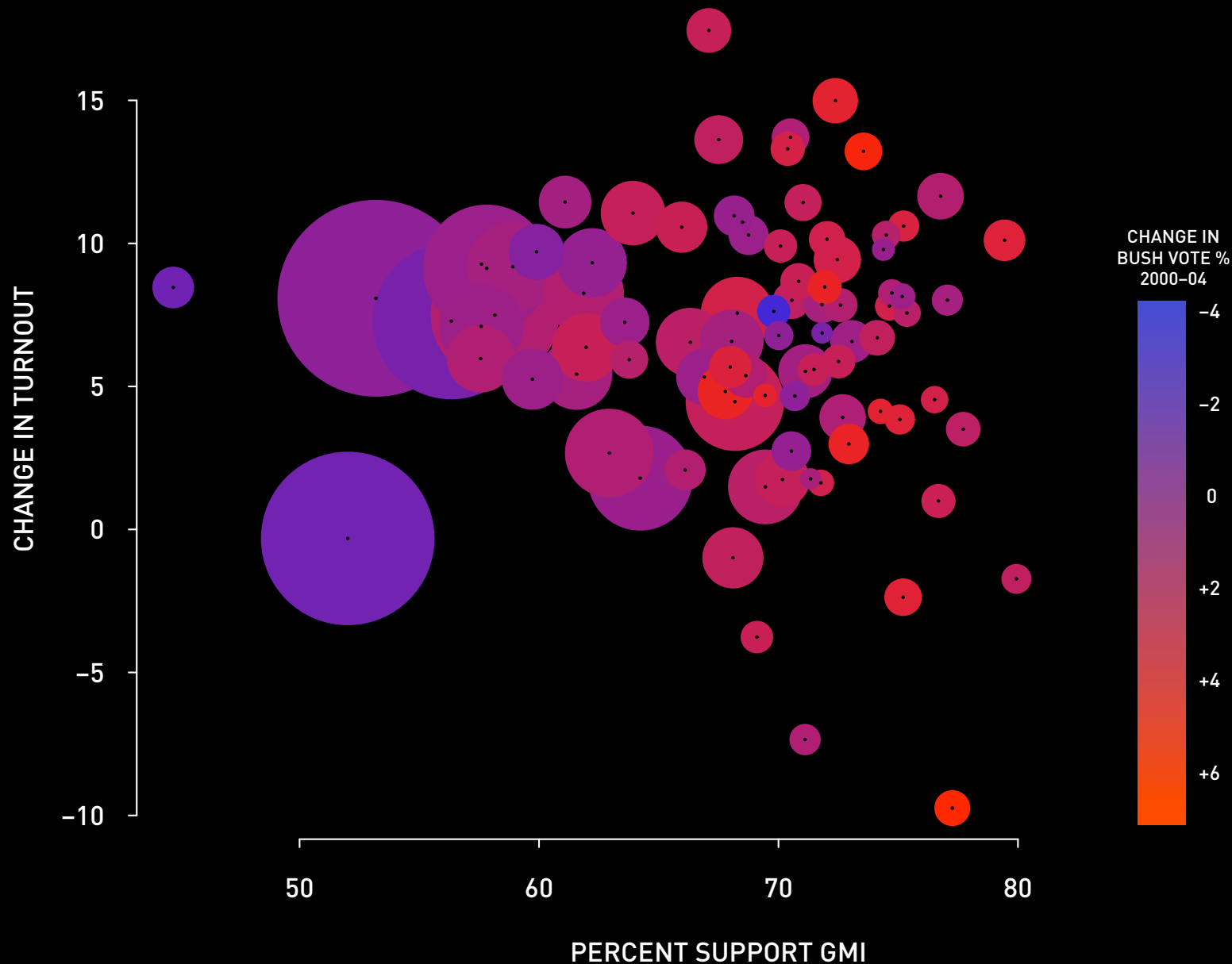
	with SSMIs	no SSMIs
mean increase in Bush vote share, 2000 - 2004	2.5	2.8
standard deviation	1.4	2.1
n	11	40

Welch two-sample t-test: $t = -.61$, $p = .54$

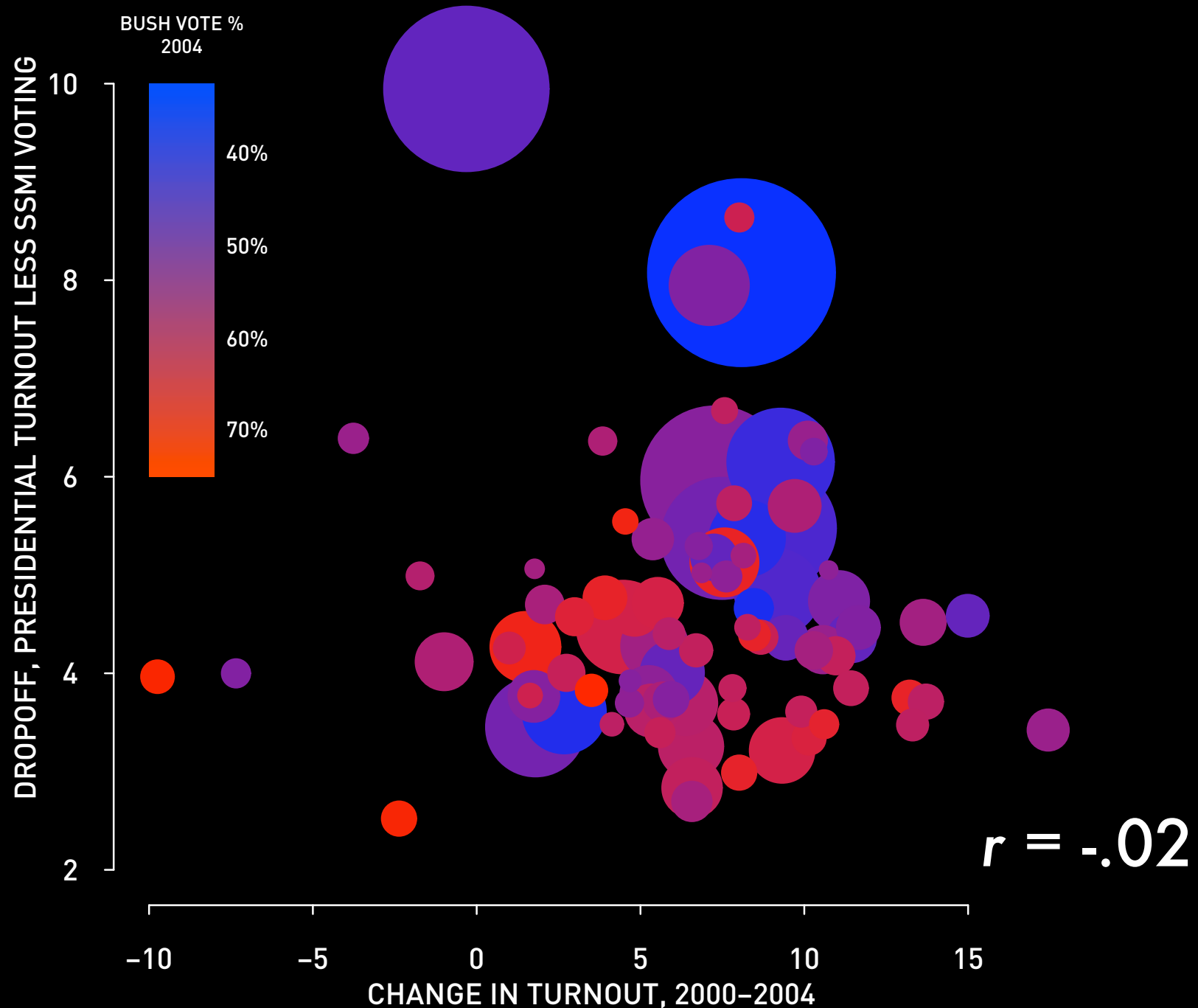
But the election was decided in Ohio...

- 📌 Kerry lost OH by 136,000 votes (*OH Secretary of State website*). Margin of 2.5%.
- 📌 is there any evidence to indicate that Kerry might have carried OH if not for SSMI?

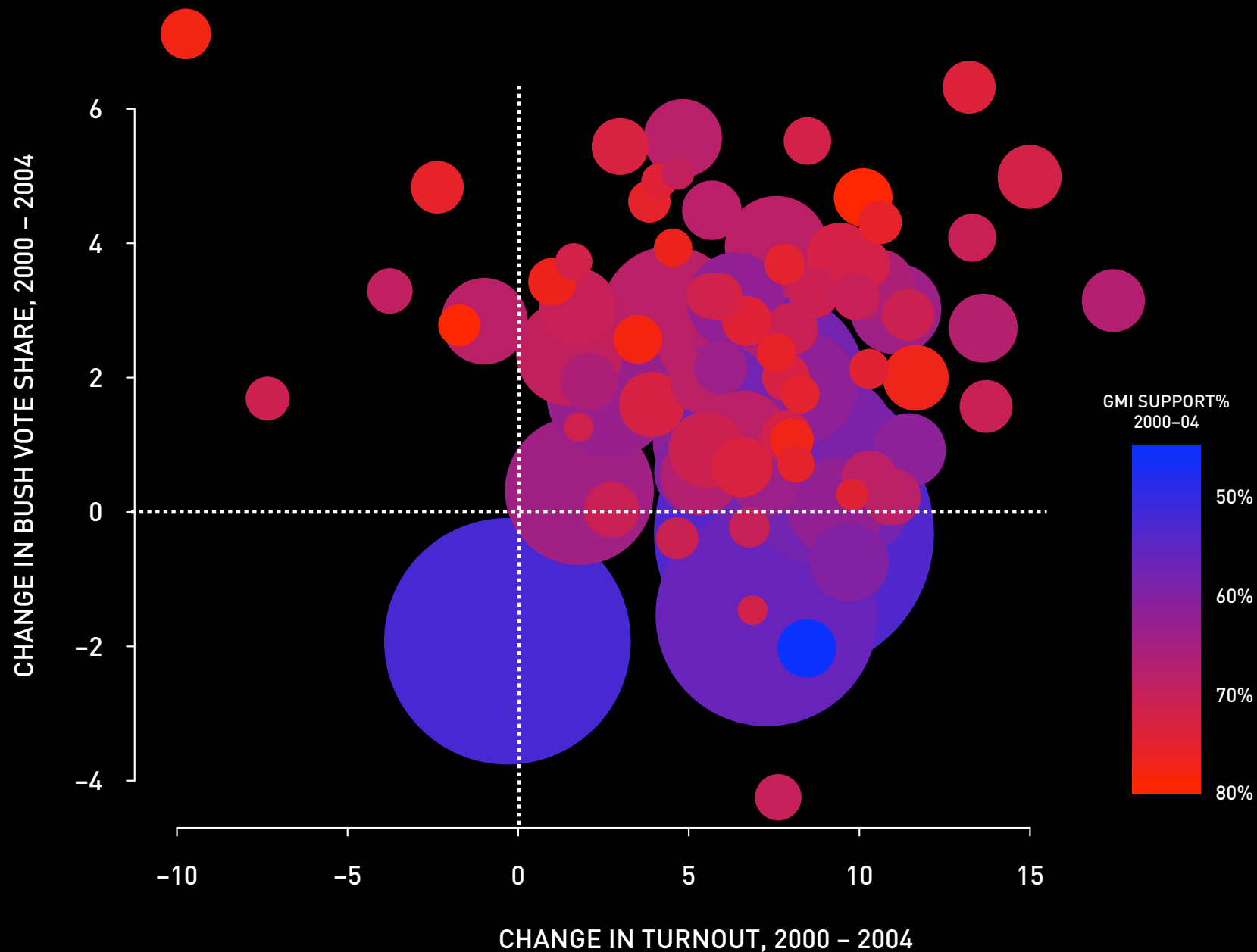
no relationship between increase in turnout and support for SSMI across Ohio's 88 counties



are turnout gains associated with less dropoff?



changes in turnout and in Bush support across Ohio's 88 counties



Conclusions

- 📌 state-level analysis suggests:
 - 📌 SSMLs boost turnout (by about 3.3%)
 - 📌 but don't appear to boost Bush vote share
- 📌 SSMLs mobilize across party-lines, and/or generate counter-mobilization

Conclusions

- 📌 county-level analysis of Ohio:
 - 📌 support for SSMI does not seem related to changes in turnout
 - 📌 no clear relationship between changes in turnout & support for Bush.

Conclusions

- 📌 on balance, no “smoking gun” to suggest SSMI tipped OH
- 📌 need alternative research design, better suited to evaluate the counter-factual of no SSMI in OH
- 📌 SSMI in OH confounded with battleground status: e.g., \$104M in ad spending, many candidate visits, etc.