



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Technology and Democratic Participation

Friend or Foe?

Involve | Centre for the Study of Democracy

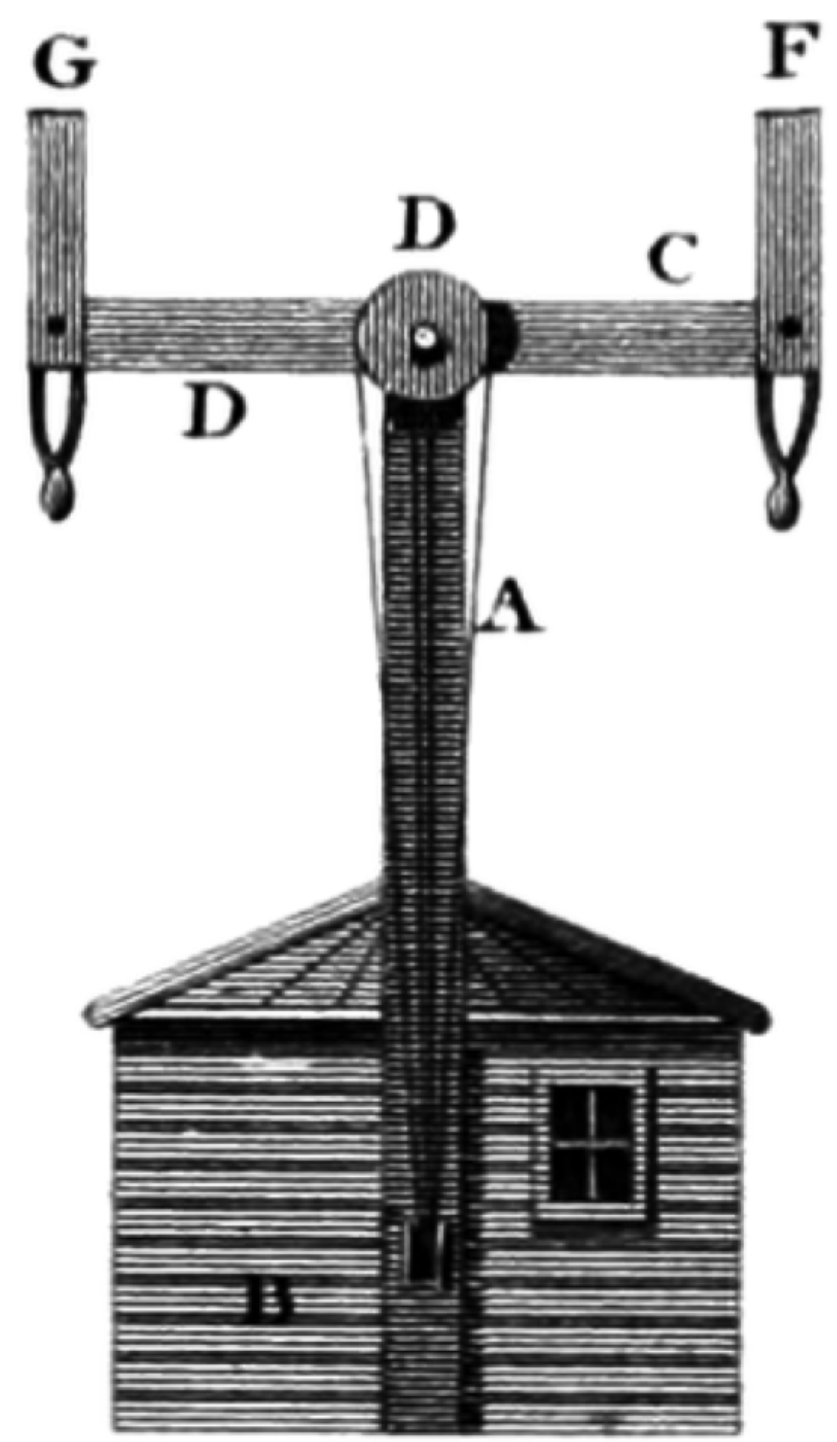
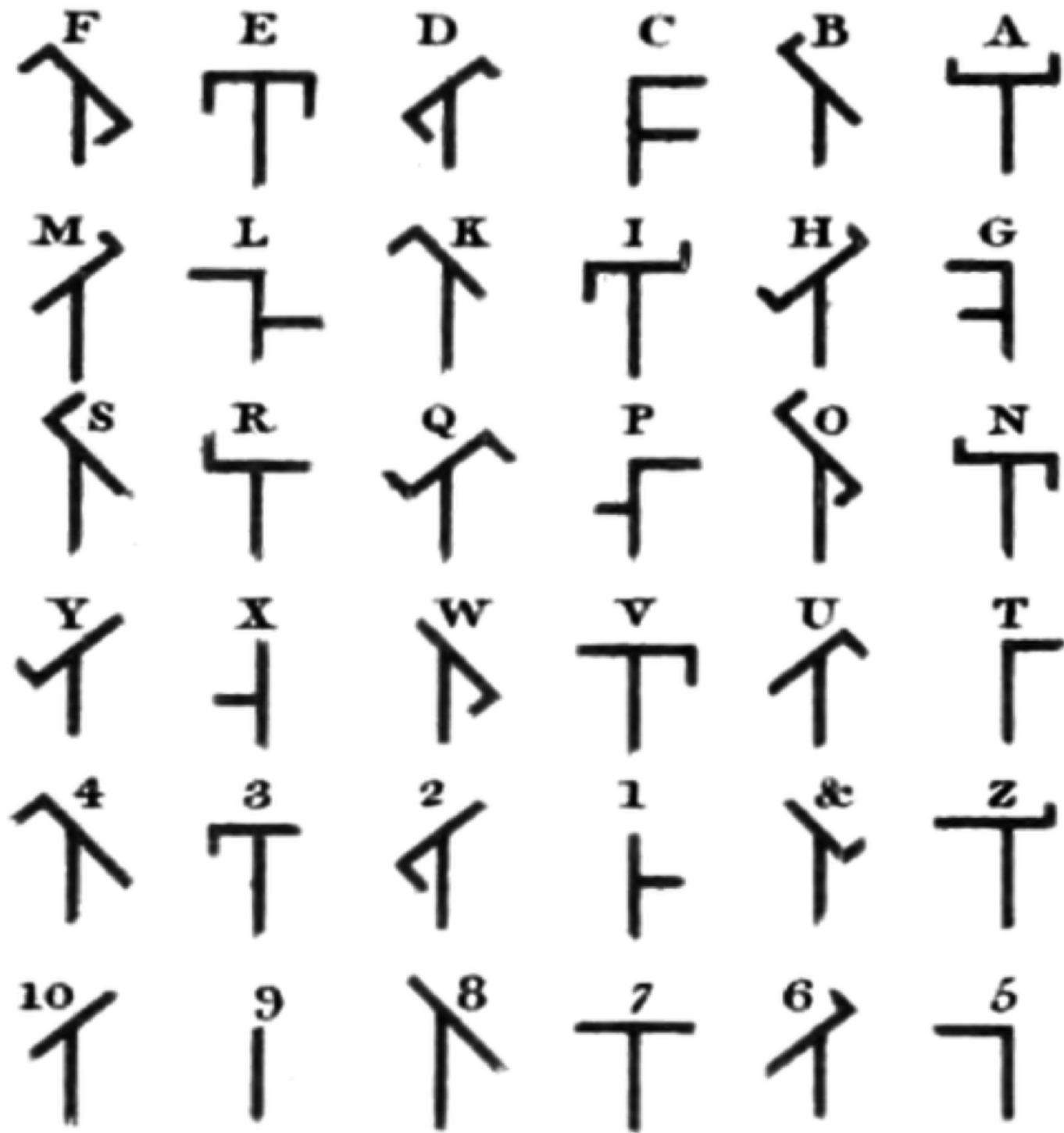
Tiago Peixoto
@participatory



Someone made a remark about the telegraph which seems to me infinitely correct, and which brings out its full importance, namely that, at bottom, this invention might suffice to make possible the establishment of democracy among a large population. Many respectable men, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, thought that the establishment of democracy was impossible among large populations. How could such a people deliberate? Among the Ancients, all the citizens were assembled in a single place; they communicated their will...

The invention of the telegraph is a new factor that Rousseau did not include in his calculations. It can be used to speak at great distances as fluently and as distinctly as in a room. There is no reason why it would not be possible for all the citizens of France to communicate their will, within a rather short time, in such a way that this communication might be considered instantaneous.

Alexander Vandermonde, 1795. In: Mattelart 2003:22



*Technology and Participation:
Friend or Foe?*

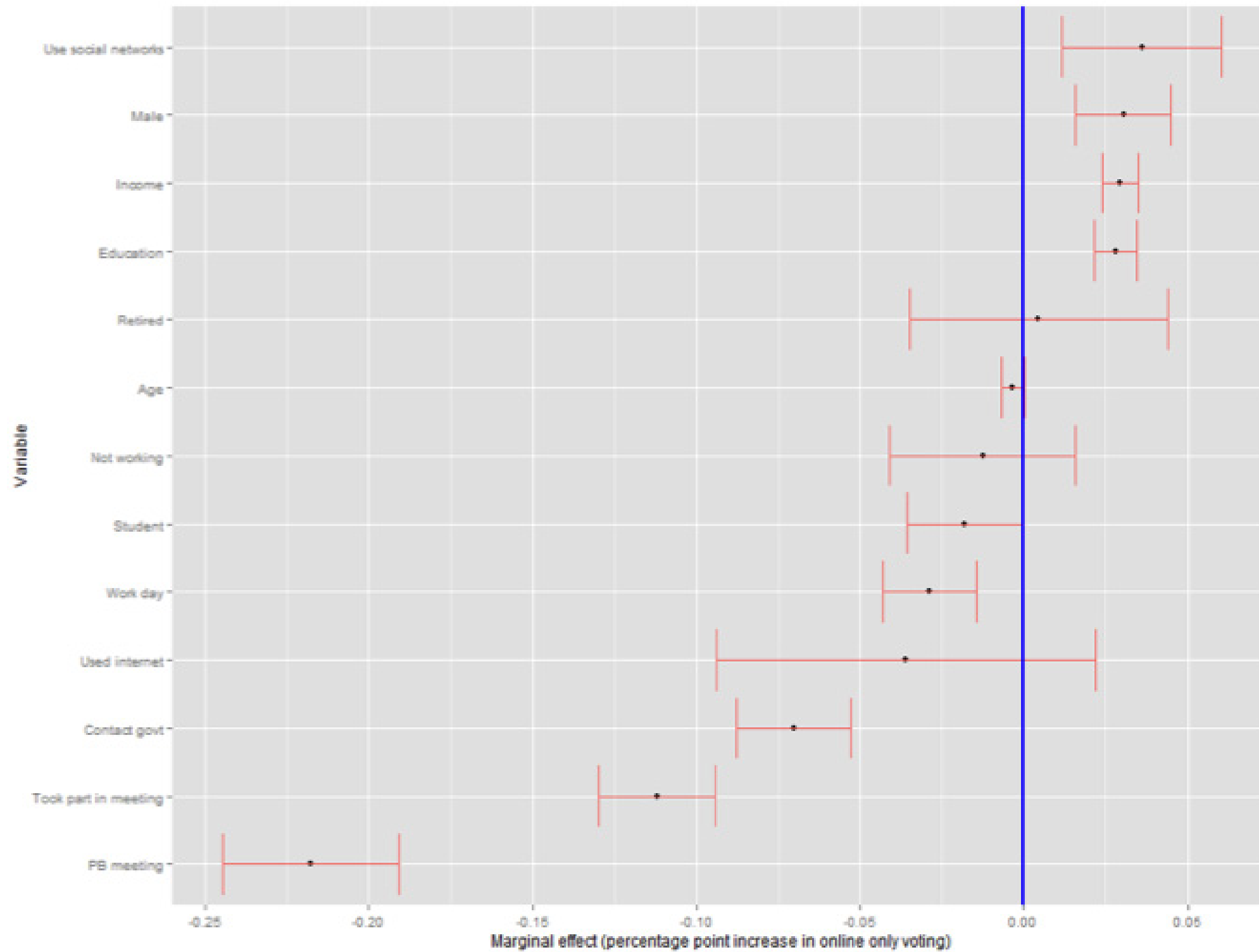
Rationale

Lowering Transaction Costs

Mobilization X Normalization Hypotheses:
Conflicting Findings

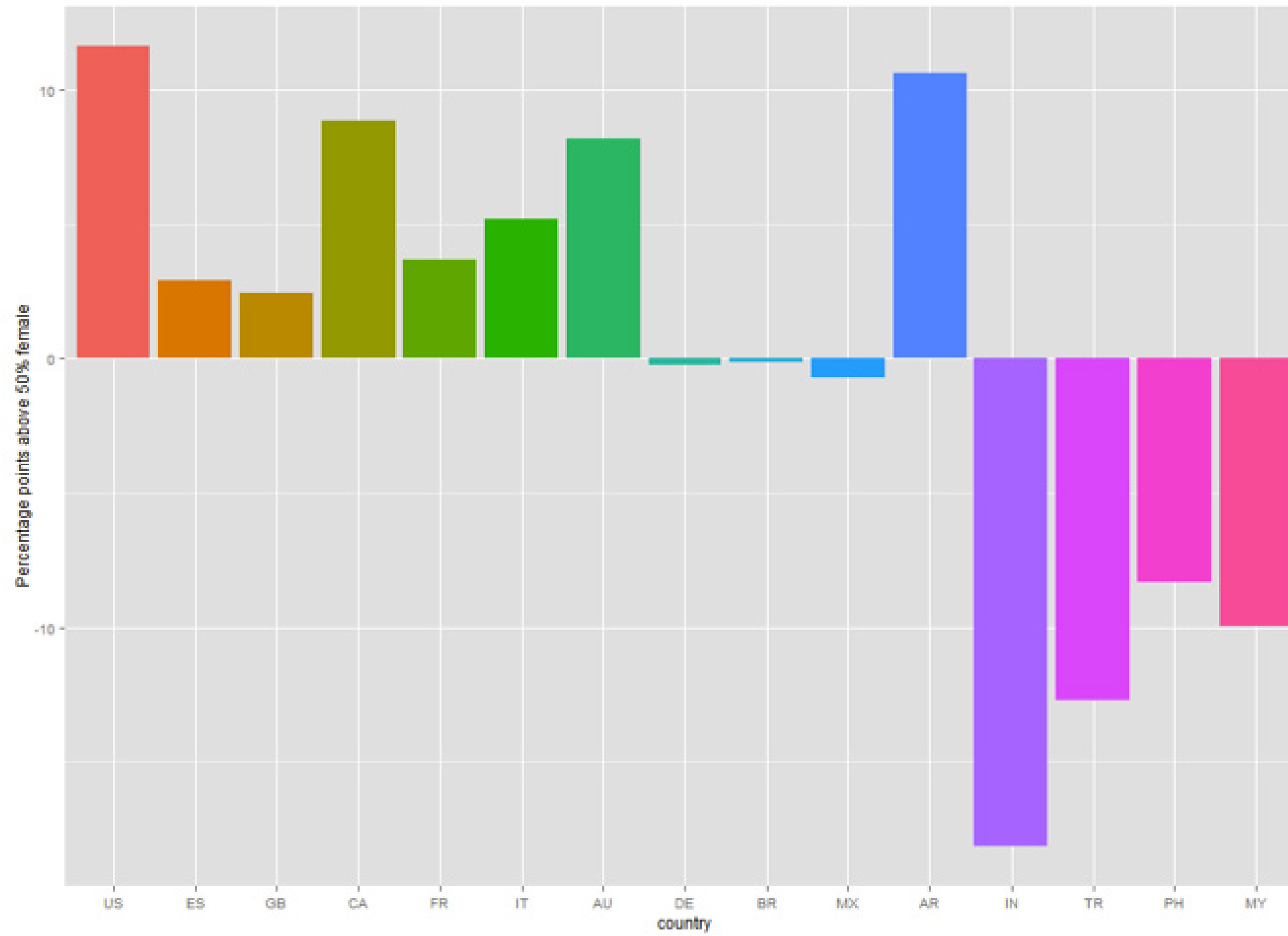
Some Findings

Rio Grande do Sul State | Multi-channel PB



N = 23,000

change.org



N > 4,000,000

Why technology often fails?

- ▶ *Focus on technology*
- ▶ *Political will x incentives*

- ▶ *Simplification (easy to do, heightened by technology)*
- ▶ *Poor understanding of incentives*
- ▶ *Bad participatory engineering (e.g. participant selection, deliberative x aggregative, sequencing)*
- ▶ *Lack of articulation with institutions, processes and systems*
- ▶ *Deliberative paternalism / limits of online participation*
- ▶ *Bad technological design (re-introducing participation costs) and graphic design*

*For a new agenda on
democratic participation
and technology*

*renewal of the
argumentative body*

For a new research agenda:

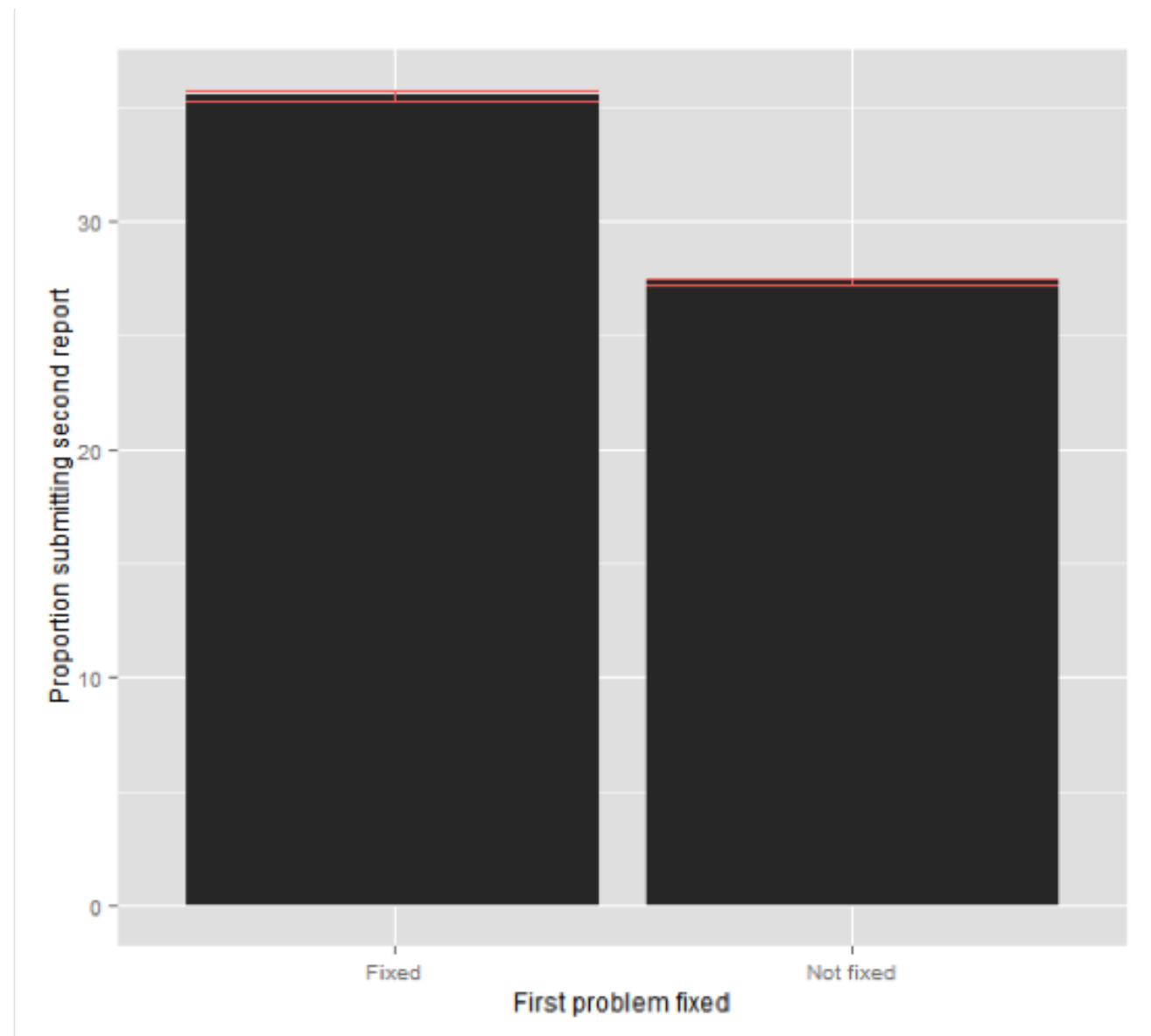
- ▶ *Evidence on effectiveness of participatory processes*
- ▶ *Evidence on role of ICT*
- ▶ *Bringing “nudge” and “think” together: choice architecture for participation?*

Methodological opportunities

*data on existing citizen
engagement platforms*

FixMyStreet

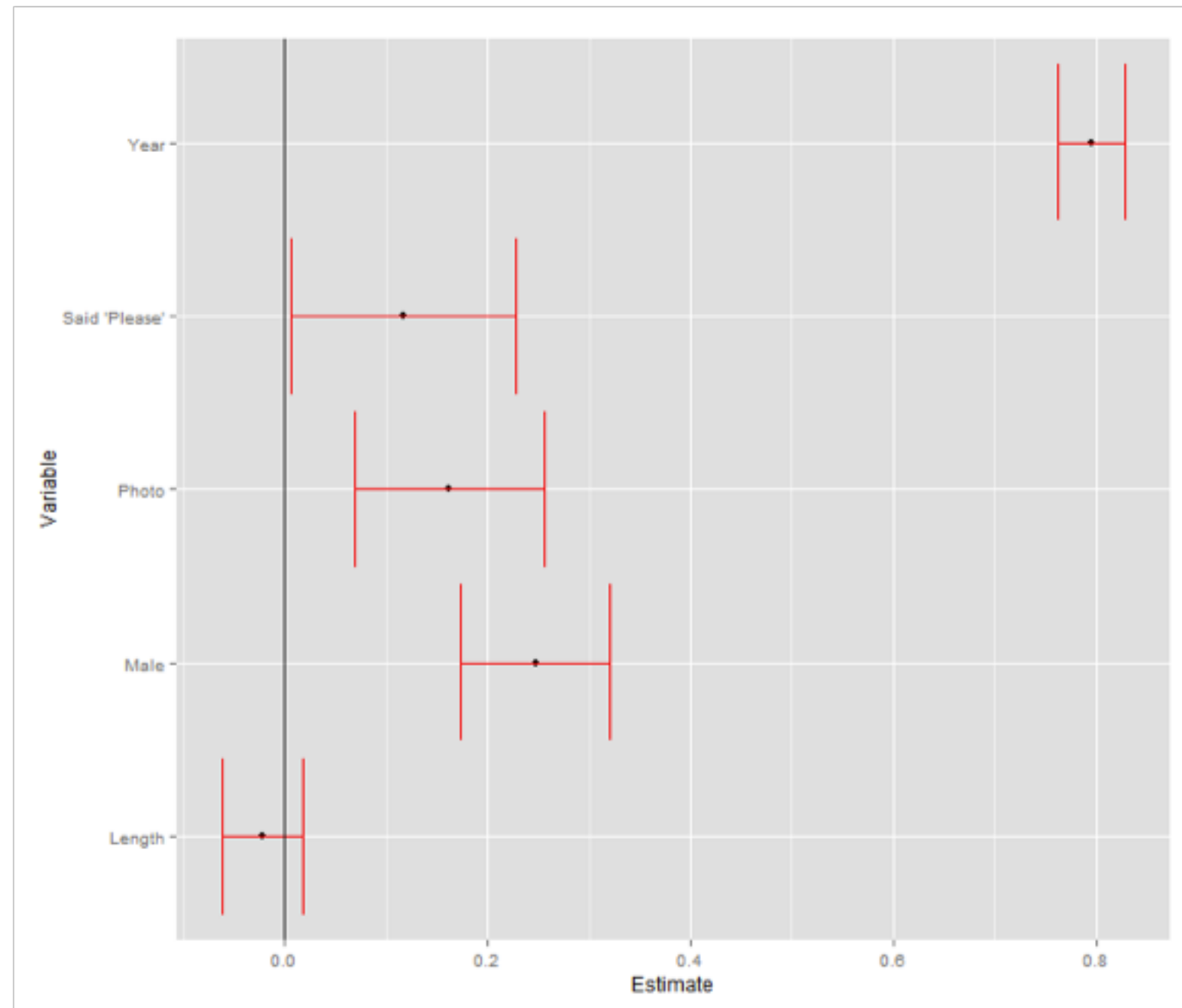
Effect on responsiveness and propensity to participate



N = 381,623

FixMyStreet

Predictors of Government Responsiveness

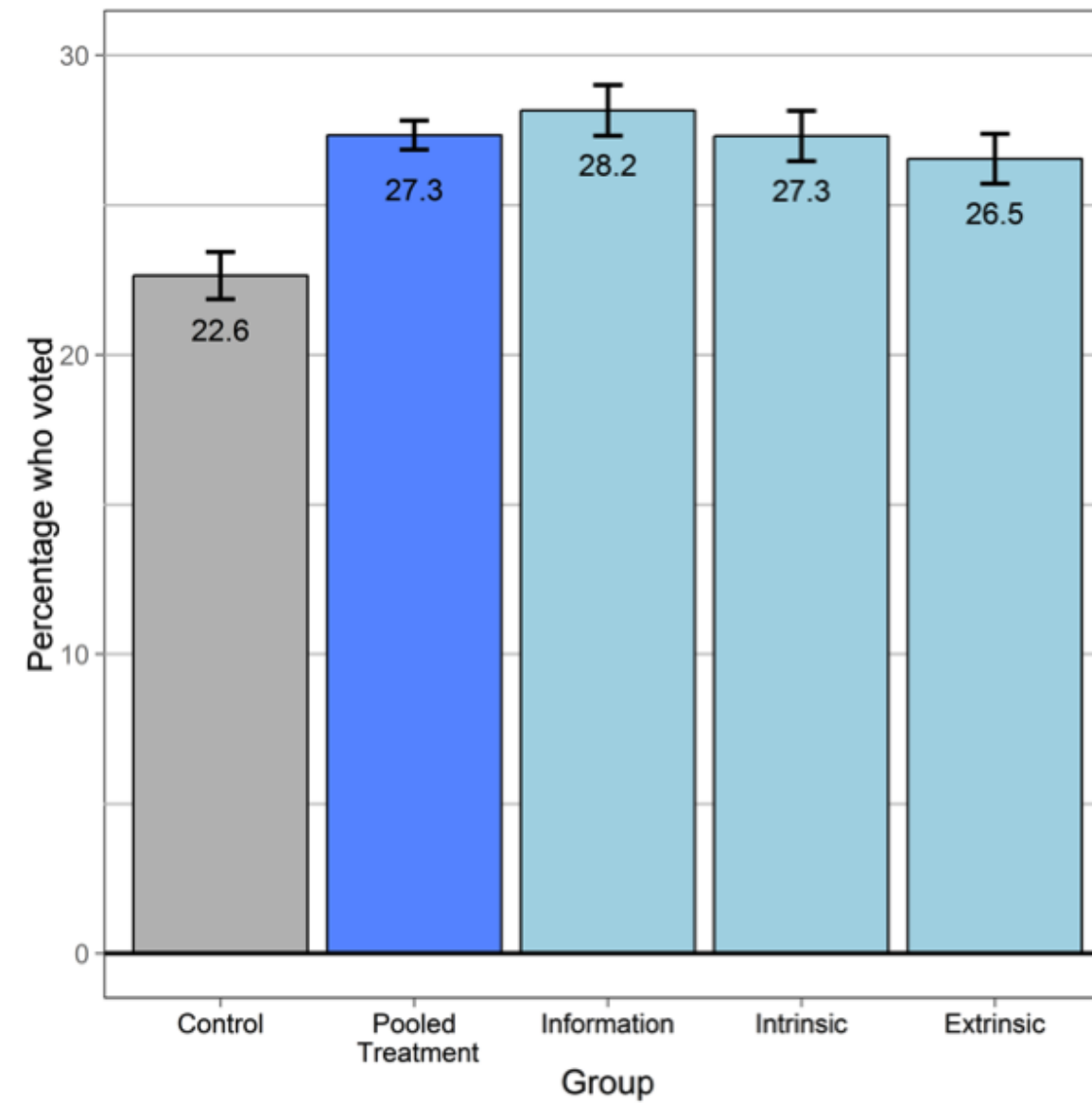


$N = 381,623$

*technological
opportunities
for experiments*

Rio Grande do Sul

GOTV – Randomized Controlled Trial



N = 50,000



Thank You

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