

# Fired Up? A comparison of survey metrics in predicting electoral turnout



# Experiment Background: 2018 Nevada Senate Race



- February – October 2018
  - 5 Phone Surveys between Sept-Oct
  - 6,930 Likely Nevada Voters
- Randomly split between two turnout metrics
- Sample excludes:
  - Survey screener included only those who said they were certain to vote, would probably vote, or chances were 50/50
  - Excludes voters who early-voted by the time of the survey

# Question & Response Text

## Excitement

How excited are you to vote in the November election for U.S. Senate, Congress and Governor?

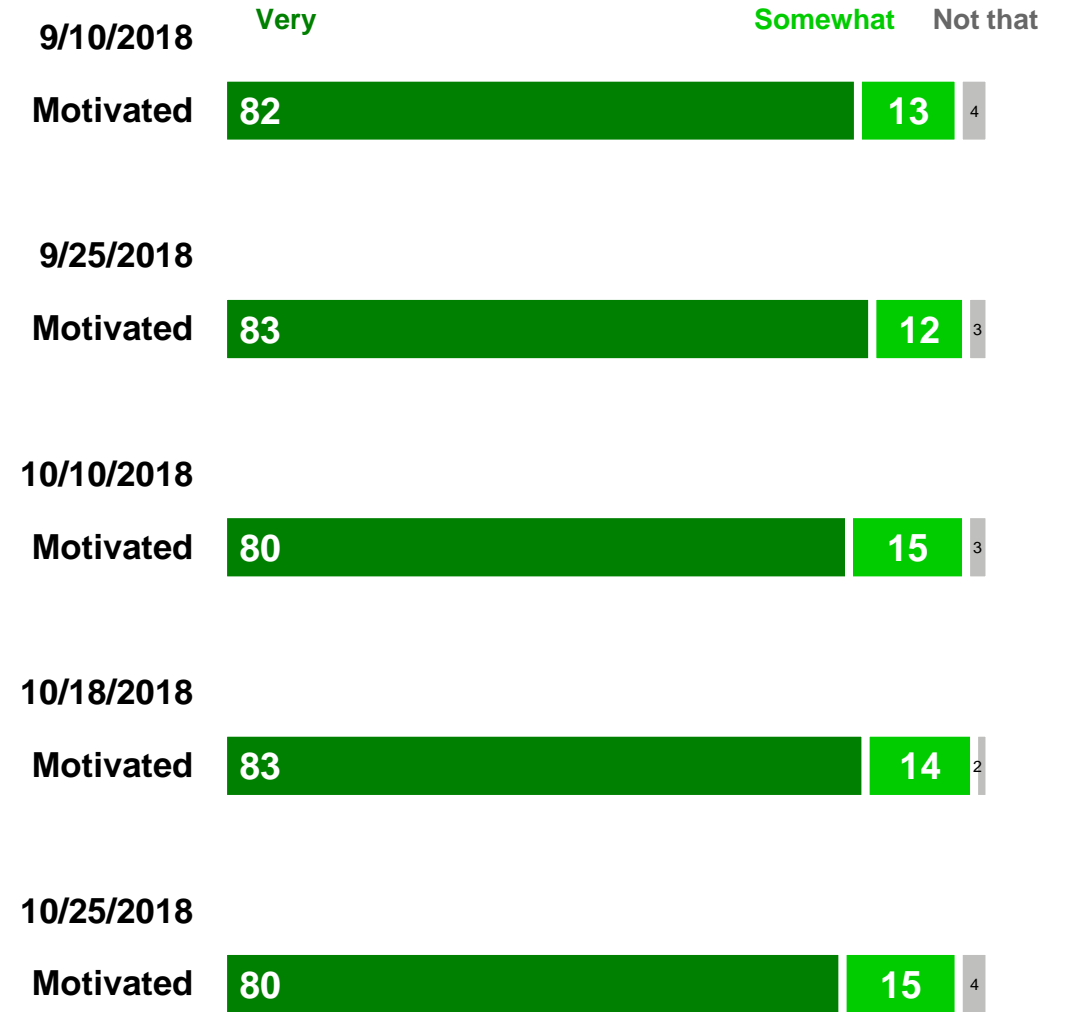
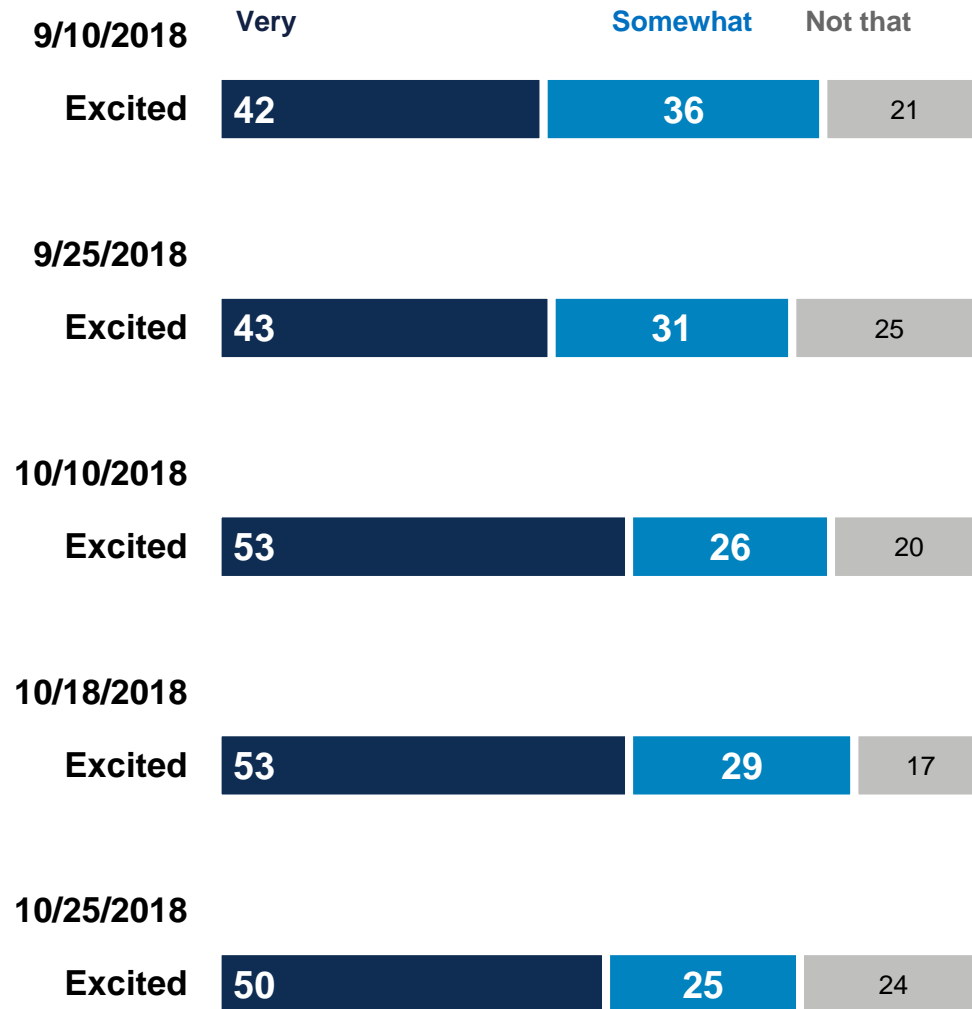
1. Not that Excited
2. Somewhat Excited
3. Very Excited
4. (Don't Know/Refused)

## Motivation

How motivated are you to vote in the November election for US Senate, Congress and Governor?

1. Not that Motivated
2. Somewhat Motivated
3. Very Motivated
4. (Don't Know/Refused)

# Nevada voters were more likely to report higher levels of motivation than excitement



# Theory and Expectations

## Theory

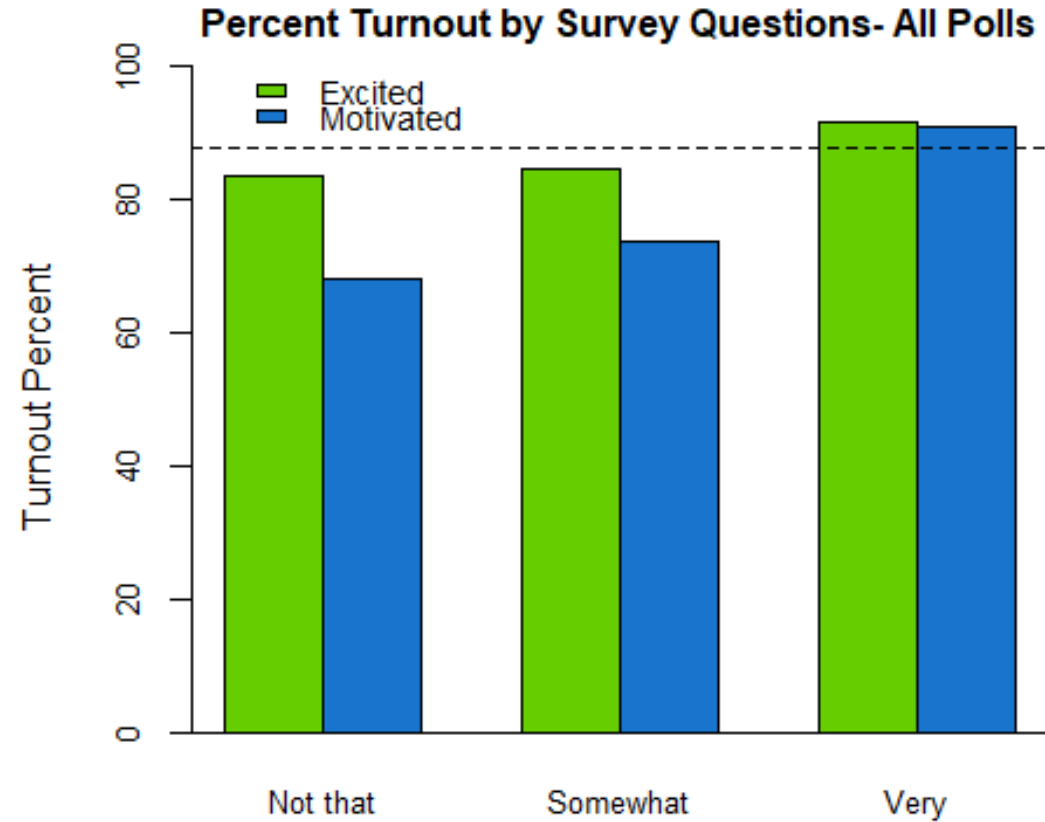
Excitement captures positive feelings and is a stronger predictor when voters are showing up to vote for someone or to affirm something. Motivation captures a broader range of feelings and is a stronger predictor when voters are showing up to express dissatisfaction.

## Expectation

Much of the communication surrounding the Nevada Senate race focused on Heller as untrustworthy and bad on healthcare; therefore we expect motivation might outperform excitement in predicting turnout.

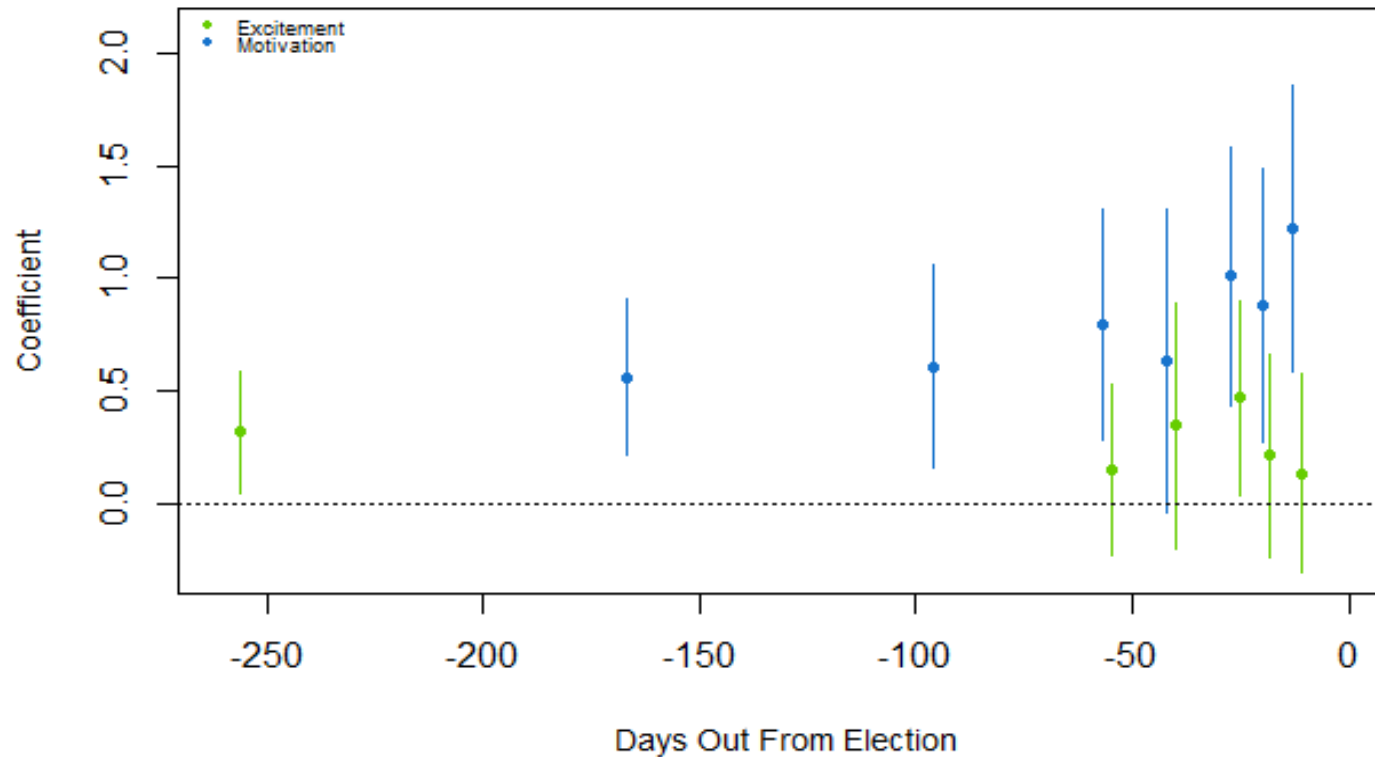
# Motivation captured more variation in actual turnout

Turnout percent by  
survey response

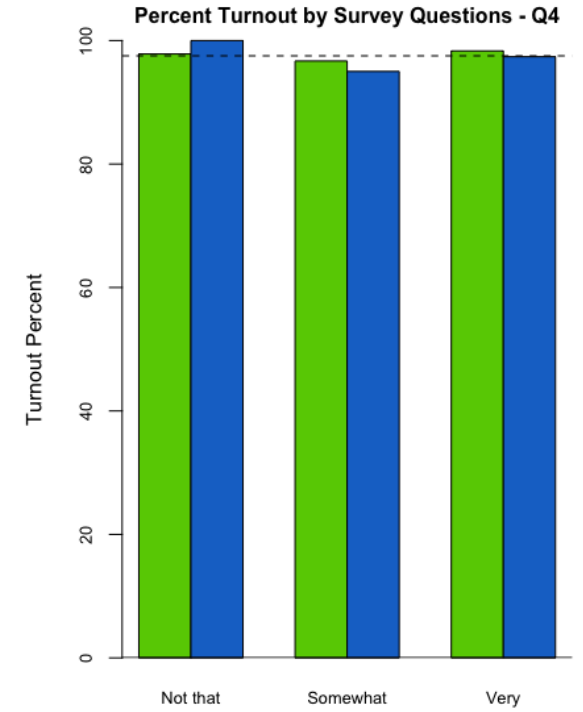
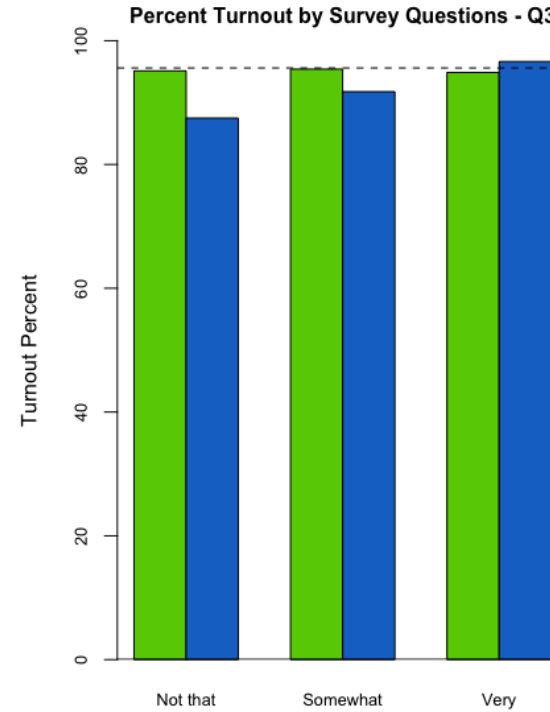
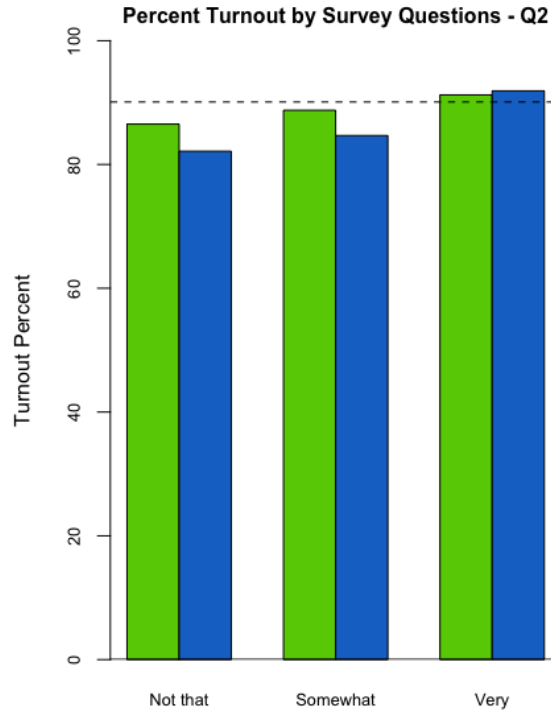
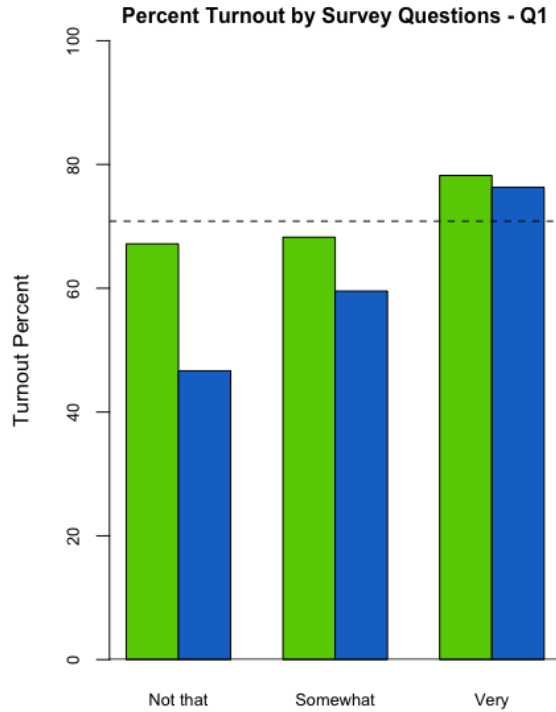
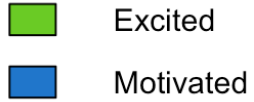


# For the most part, motivation appears to be a significant predictor over time, while excitement has little impact

Each model controlled for Age, Gender, Education, Race/Ethnicity, and Party ID (Not Turnout Score)



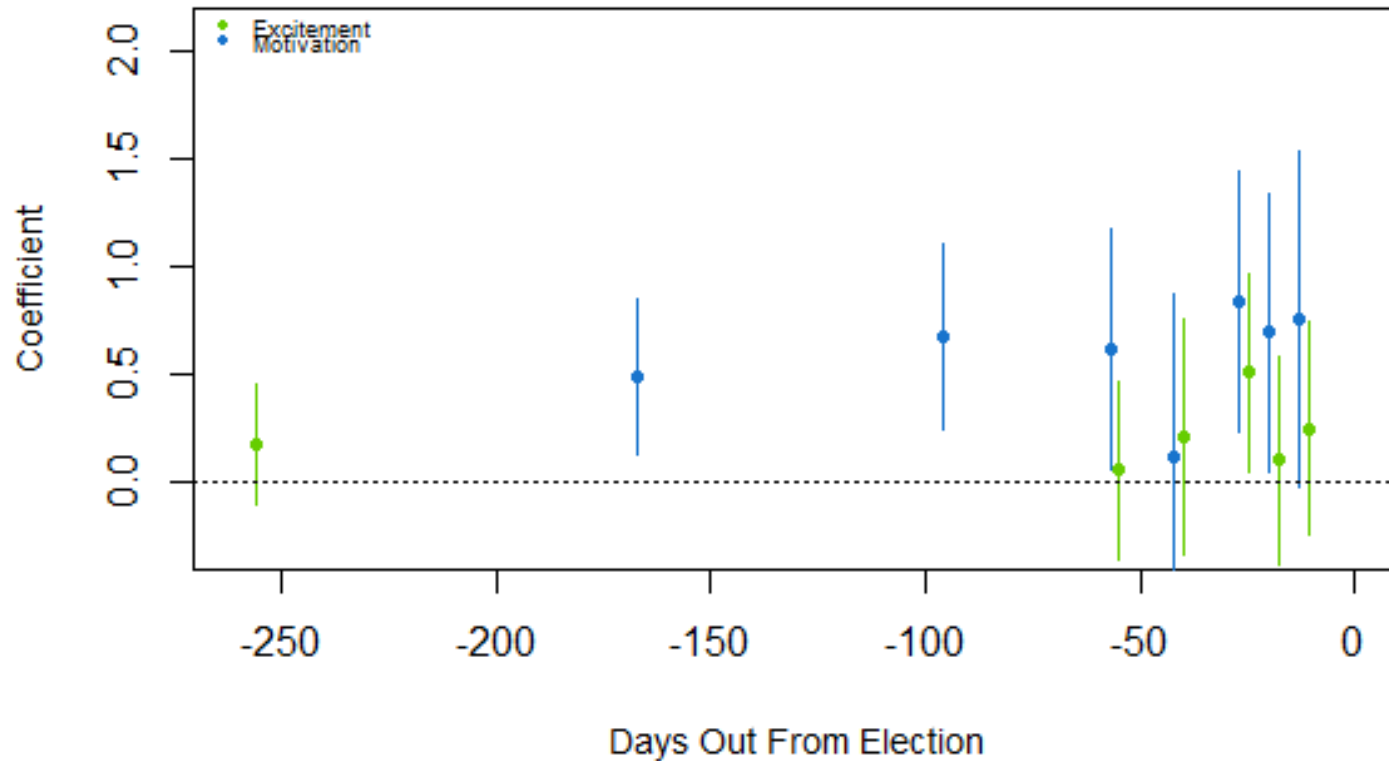
# Motivation/Excitement by Survey Turnout Score Quartiles





# Even when modeled turnout score is included, asking voters how motivated they feel is still significant

Each Model Controlled for Turnout Score (Not Controlled for Demographic Variables)



# Even when controlling for Trump favorability, motivation remains an important predictor

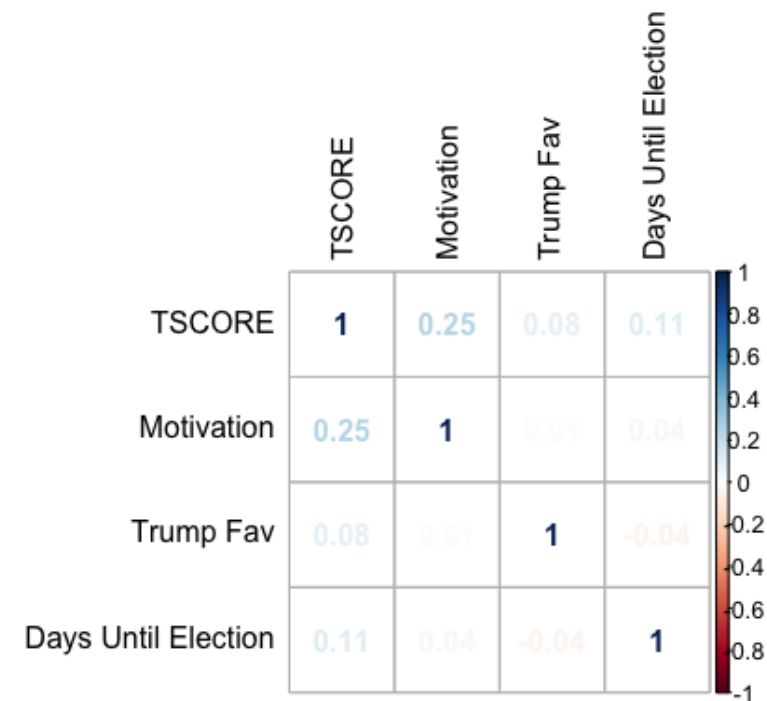
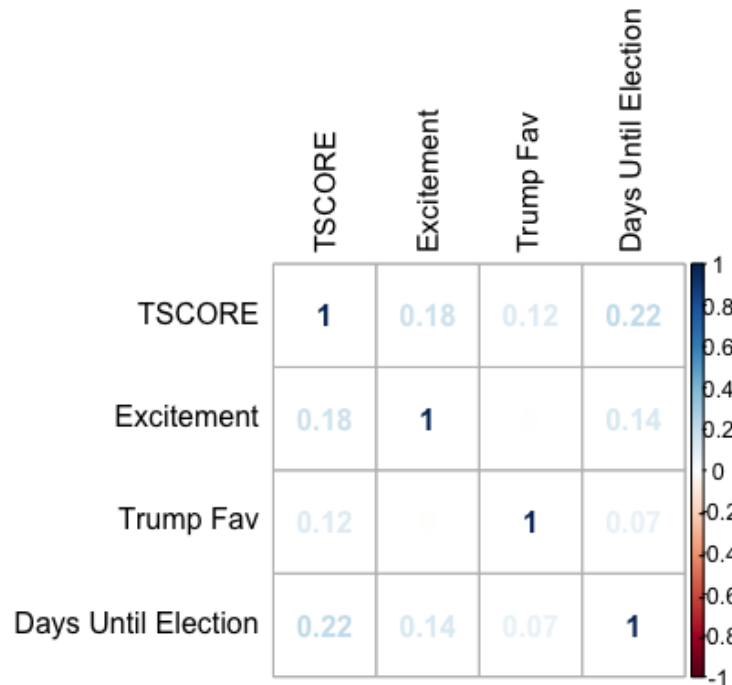
**Effect of Survey Questions on Actual Turnout**

	Exc-Total	Exc-Late	Mot-Total	Mot-Late
Excitement	0.20* (0.09)	0.21 (0.11)		
Motivation			0.58*** (0.11)	0.62*** (0.15)
Turnout Score	0.04*** (0.003)	0.04*** (0.003)	0.04*** (0.002)	0.04*** (0.003)
Trump Fav	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.11 (0.07)
Days	-0.0000 (0.001)	0.01 (0.01)	0.002* (0.001)	0.002 (0.01)
Observations	2,457	1,759	3,307	1,765

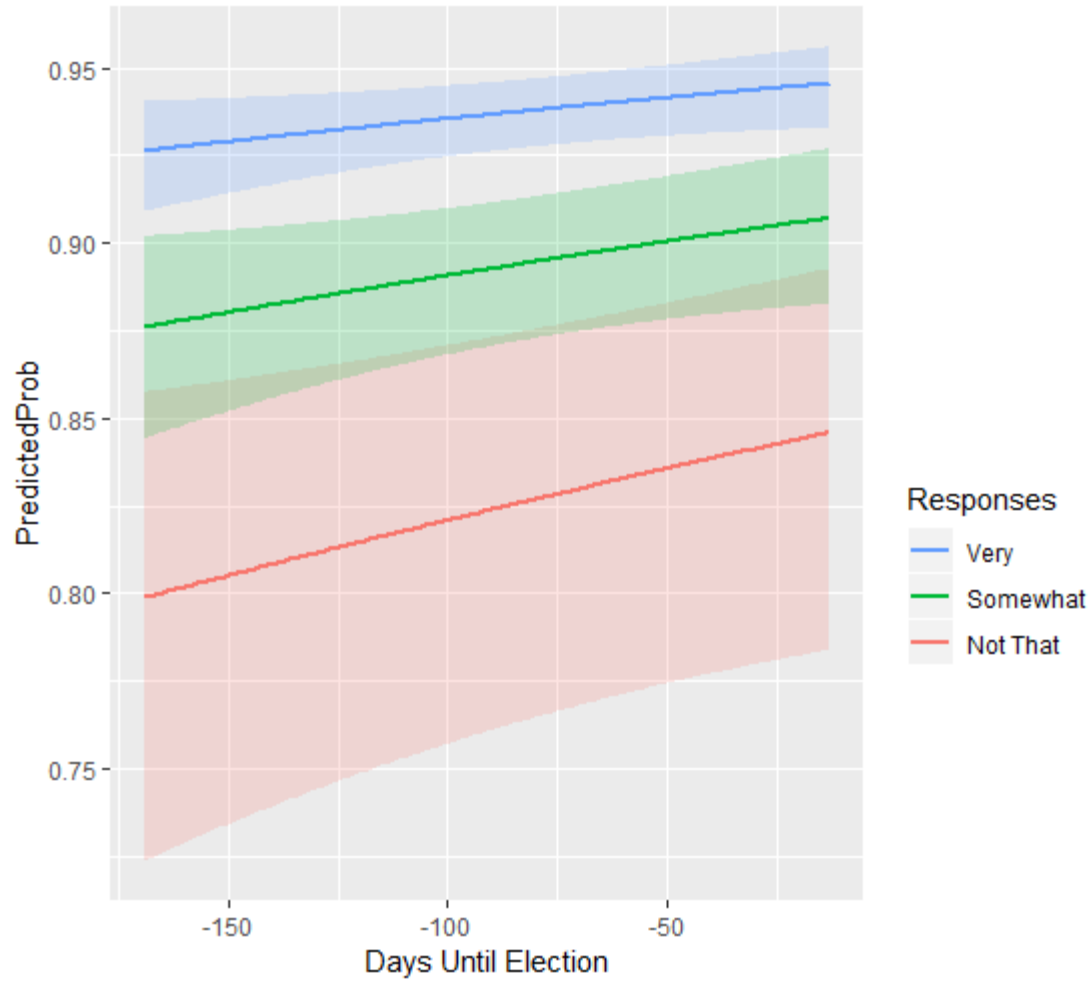
*Note:* \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

# Lack of relationship between motivation and dislike for Trump suggests there is more to the story than an unpopular president

## Relatively Uncorrelated Independent Variables



# Motivation Model Predicted Probabilities by Response Level



Predicted probabilities of turning out at mean level of Trump Fav and TScore

# Findings + Takeaways

- ✓ **Reported motivation was a better predictor of turnout than reported levels of excitement among 2018 Senate voters in Nevada.**
- ✓ **Even when turnout score is available, asking how motivated voters feel has additional value.**
- ✓ **Motivation appears to be capturing more than just Nevada voters' dissatisfaction with President Trump.**
- ✓ **Results are still preliminary and more explanation is needed.**

# Future Research Questions/Lanes

1. How do the survey metrics perform in different electoral environments?
2. How do these survey metrics perform among groups without a voting history?
3. Develop a more flushed out theory of the case as to what excitement taps into versus motivation.

# Thank You

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