



WHEN WE ALL
VOTE civic
nation

Vote by Mail Experiments Pennsylvania

May 2020

When We All Vote

When We All Vote—a national, nonpartisan not-for-profit—brings together influential voices, institutions, brands, media companies, and organizations from across the country to increase voter registration and turnout, reduce participation gaps among underrepresented communities, and change the culture of voting across the country.



The Challenge

Young people and people of color have historically been less likely to vote by mail than older and white voters.

Increasing VBM engagement requires behavior change:

- **Among consistent voters of color:** *Changing* a well- developed behavior/habit.
- **Among new/young voters of color:** *Adopting* a new behavior/habit.



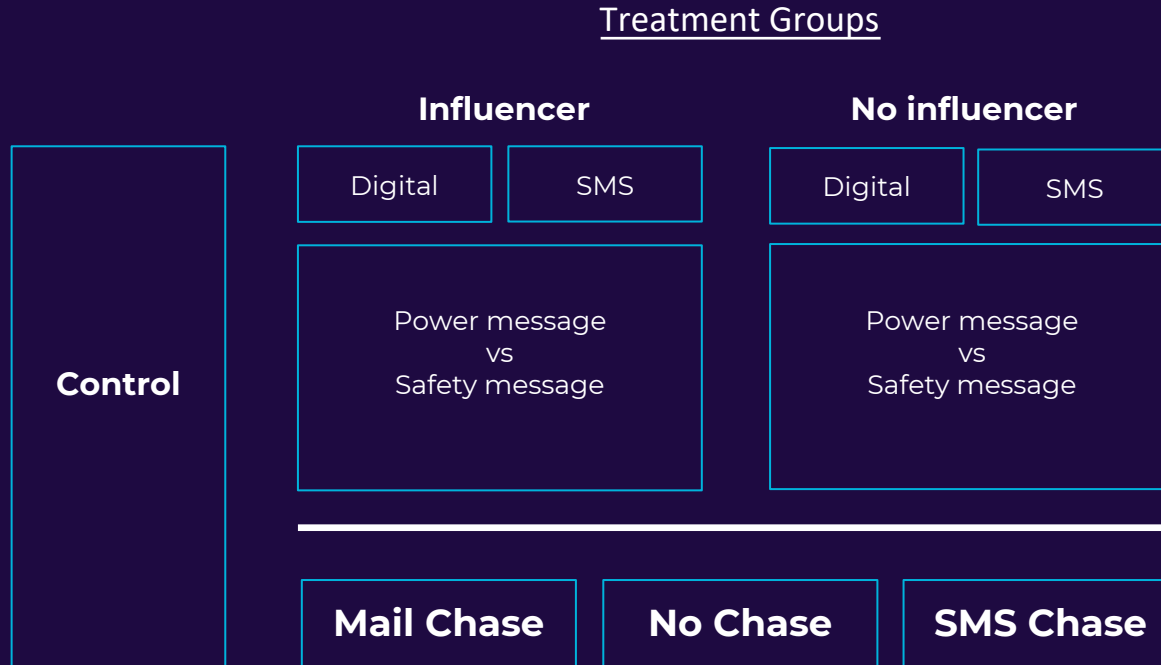
Overview of PA Tests

Goal: Learn about best ways to encourage voters of color and young voters to request mail-in ballots in context of PA primary election.

Executed a randomized controlled test in two phases:

- Phase 1: Digital ads or SMS with variation in message and messenger
- Phase 2: Follow up contact with SMS or mail, with variation in message and messenger

Research Design



Creative: “Voting is your power” message



**“VOTING
IS YOUR
POWER.
USE IT.”**

— KIYA & MIKE TOMLIN

REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT TODAY.

VISIT [WEALL.VOTE/VOTE3](#) TO FILL OUT YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUEST FORM.

URGENT! MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUESTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY TUESDAY, MAY 26 AT 5:00 P.M.



**“VOTING
IS YOUR
POWER.
USE IT.”**

— BLACK THOUGHT
& QUESTLOVE

REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT TODAY.

VISIT [WEALL.VOTE/VOTE1](#) TO FILL OUT YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUEST FORM.

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**VOTING IS YOUR
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REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT TODAY.

VISIT [WEALL.VOTE/VOTE5](#) TO FILL OUT YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUEST FORM.

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Creative: “Safe, easy and secure” message

A photograph of Kiya and Mike Tomlin, a Black couple, standing outdoors. Kiya is wearing a light green top and Mike is wearing a white polo shirt.

**“VOTING
FROM HOME
IS EASY,
SAFE AND
SECURE.”**

— KIYA & MIKE TOMLIN

REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT TODAY.

VISIT [WE ALL VOTE/VOTE2](https://www.wv.gov/vote) TO FILL OUT YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUEST FORM.

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A black and white photograph of Black Thought and Questlove. Black Thought is in the foreground wearing a hat and sunglasses, and Questlove is behind him.

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VOTING FROM HOME IS
EASY, SAFE AND SECURE.

A blue outline map of West Virginia with county boundaries.

**REQUEST A MAIL-IN
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VISIT [WHENWEALLVOTE.COM/TBD](https://www.wv.gov/vote) TO FILL OUT YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUEST FORM.

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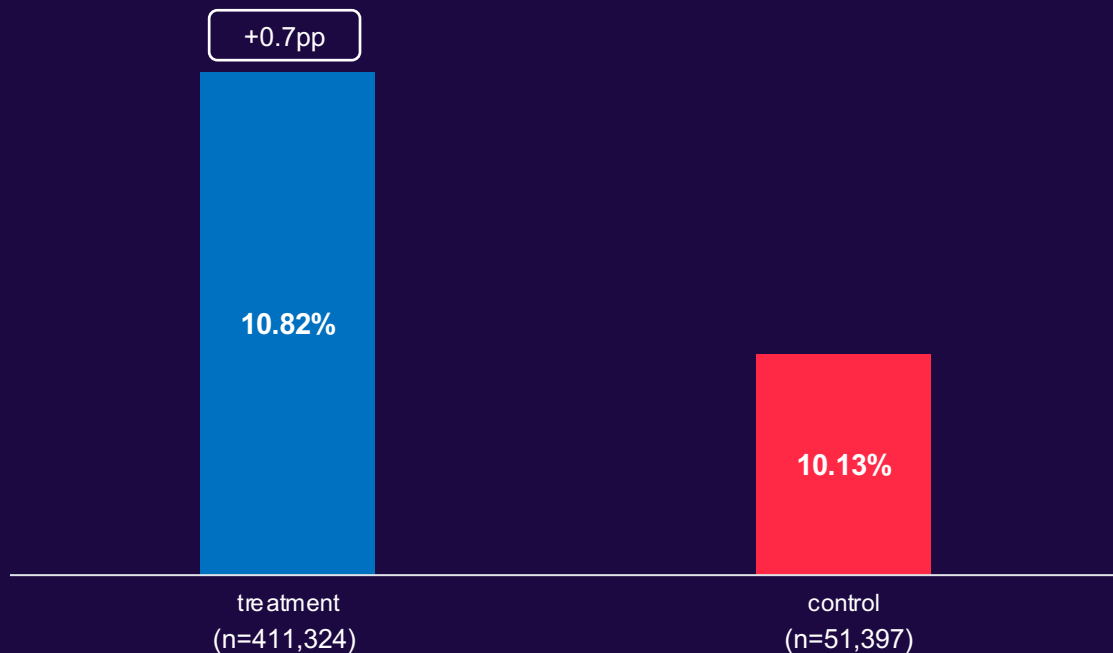
Results

Summary of Key Results

- 1) Digital ads, SMS, and postcards all had statistically significant effects on voters of color requesting mail-in ballots.
- 2) SMS + SMS chase was most effective contact method for getting voters to request mail in ballot.
- 3) One chase contact DOUBLED the effect of the initial outreach.
- 4) Biggest effects among Black (0.8pp) and Latinx (0.9pp) voters and among higher propensity voters (1.7pp vs 0.2pp).

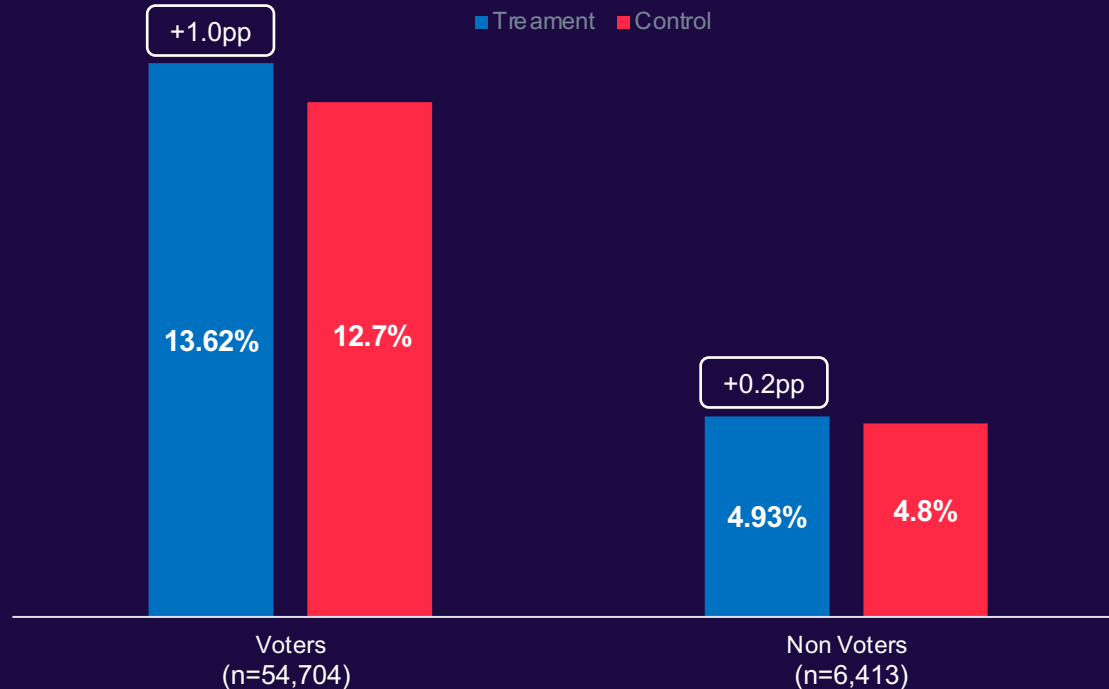
Overall

Our outreach significantly increased the proportion of POC voters requesting VBM ballots online, driving an incremental 2,797 vbm requests at a cost of \$2.99 per ballot request



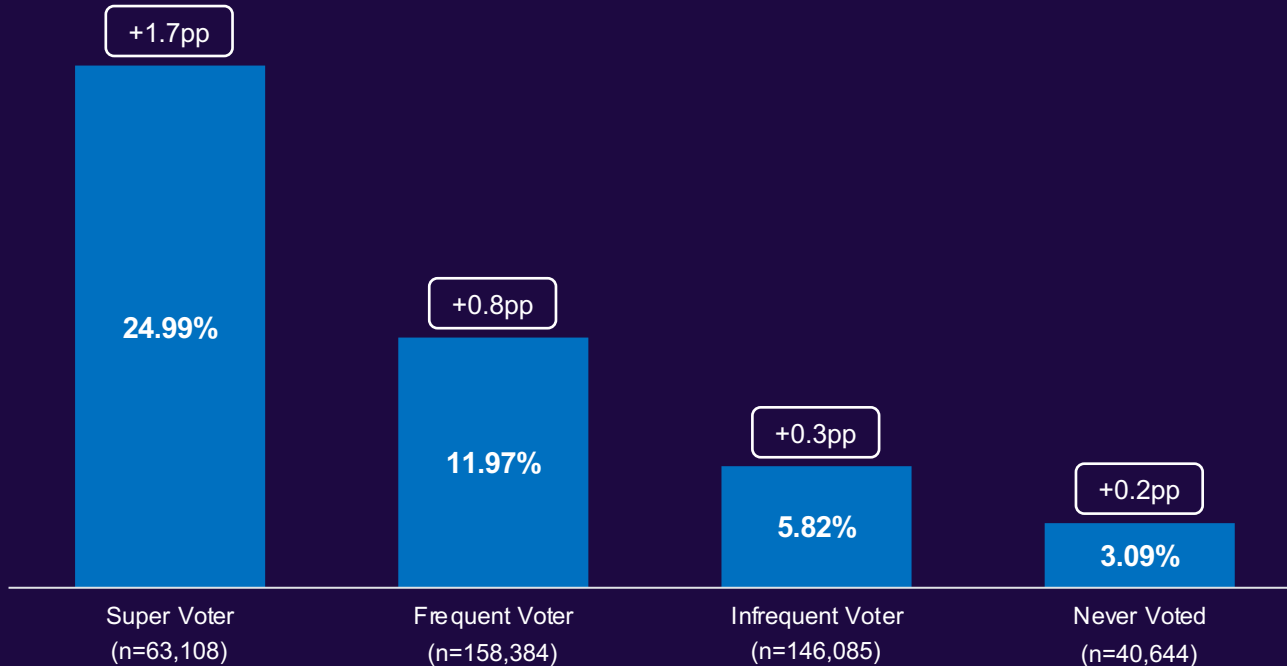
Behavior Change

Our outreach was very effective in convincing frequent voters to vote by mail, but had no detectable effect on non-voters.



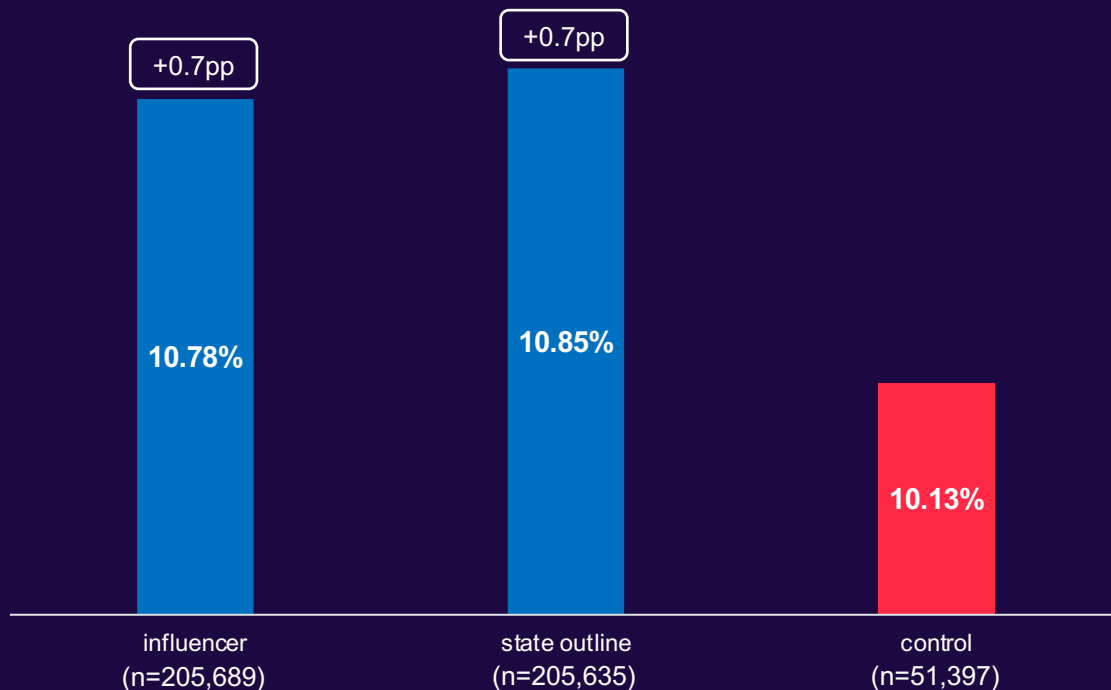
Behavior Change (cont.)

There is a strong correlation between the voting frequency for general and primary elections and responsiveness to VBM outreach.



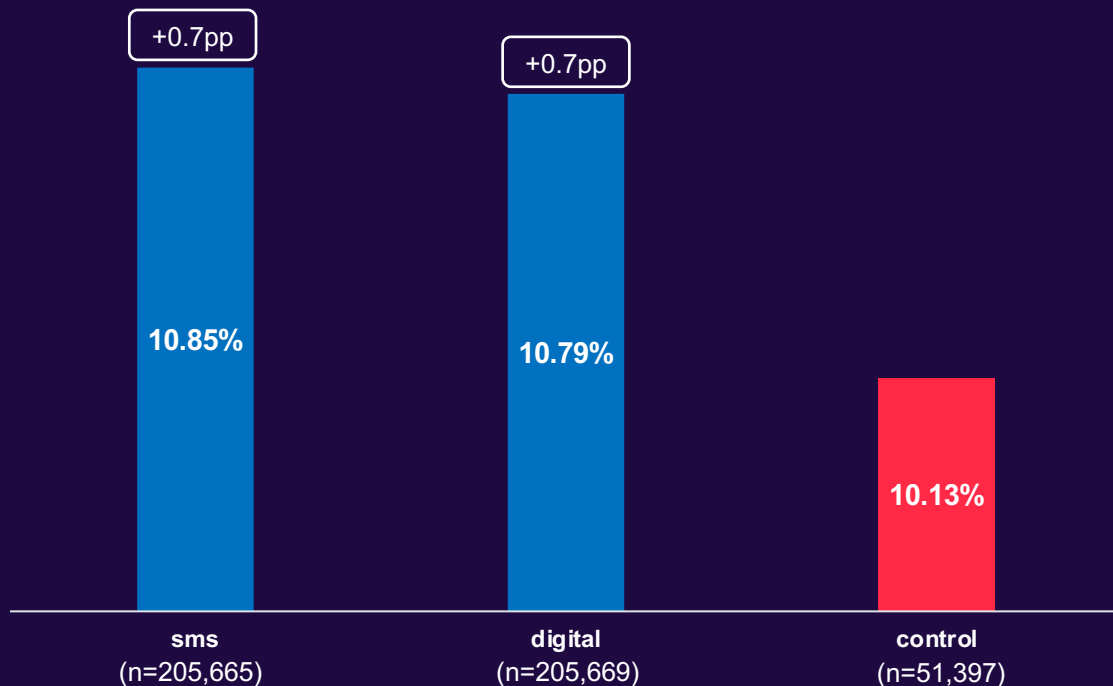
Influencer

Overall, both the State Outline (placebo) and Influencer messengers had a significant effect but there was little differentiation between them.



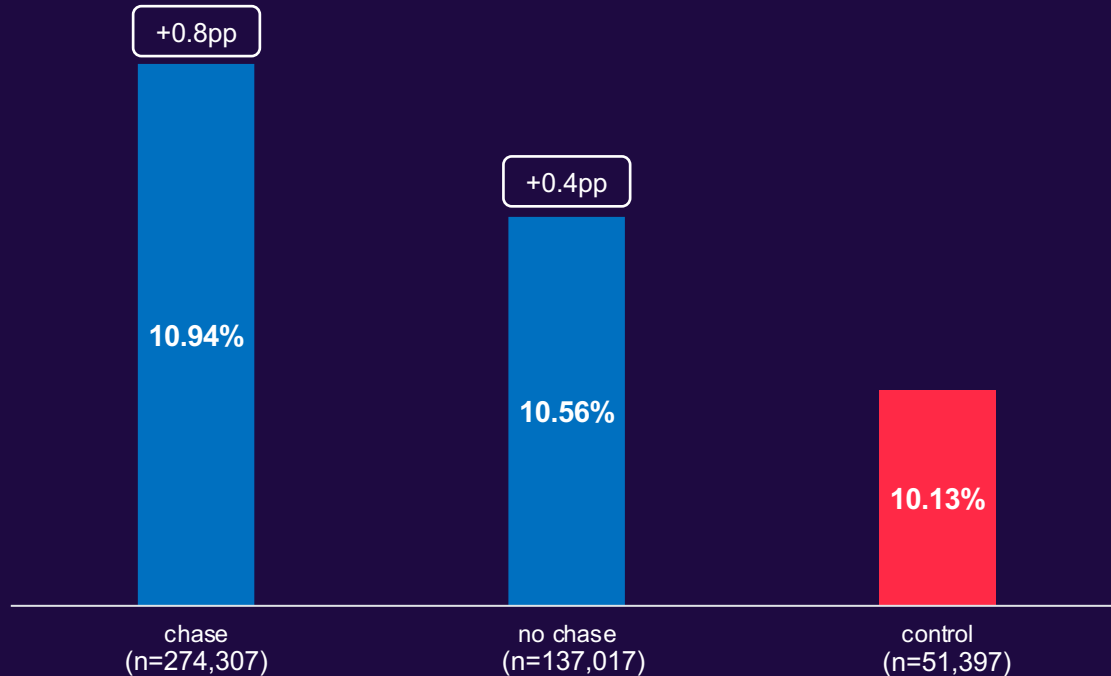
Mode of Contact

Both SMS and digital ads had a significant effect in moving POC voters to request VBM ballots, but considering the added effectiveness (directional) and cost-efficiency, SMS was definitely the most effective method.



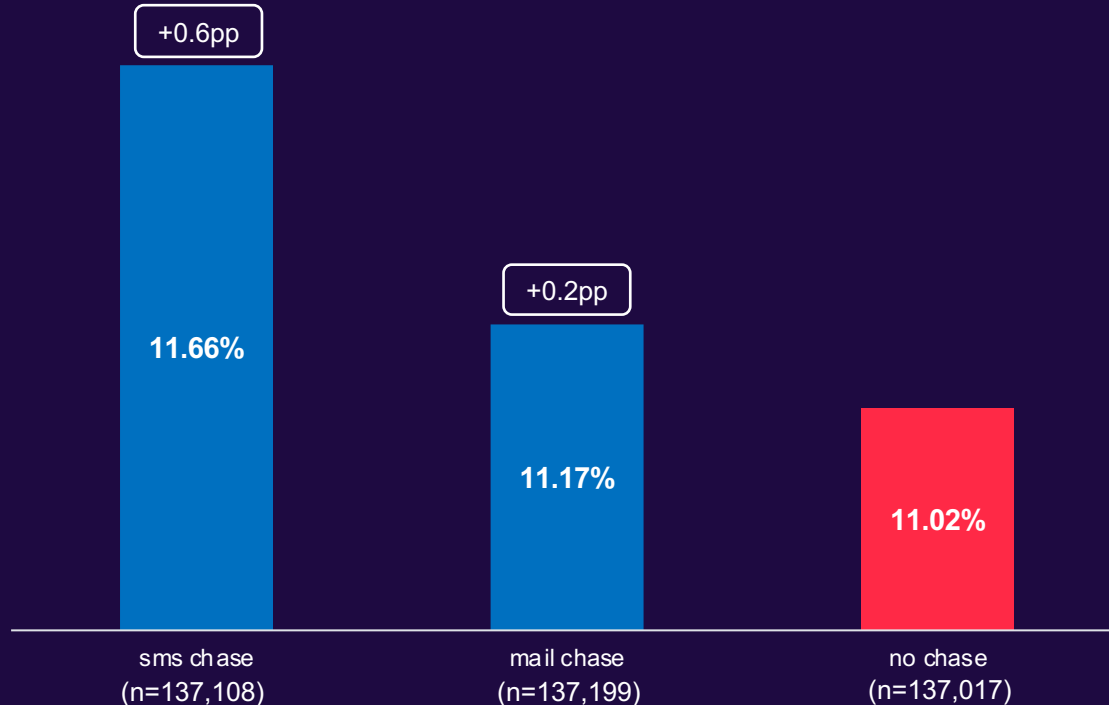
Chase

Adding a chase program doubled the impact on VBM request and produced detectable effects over both the control and no chase segments.



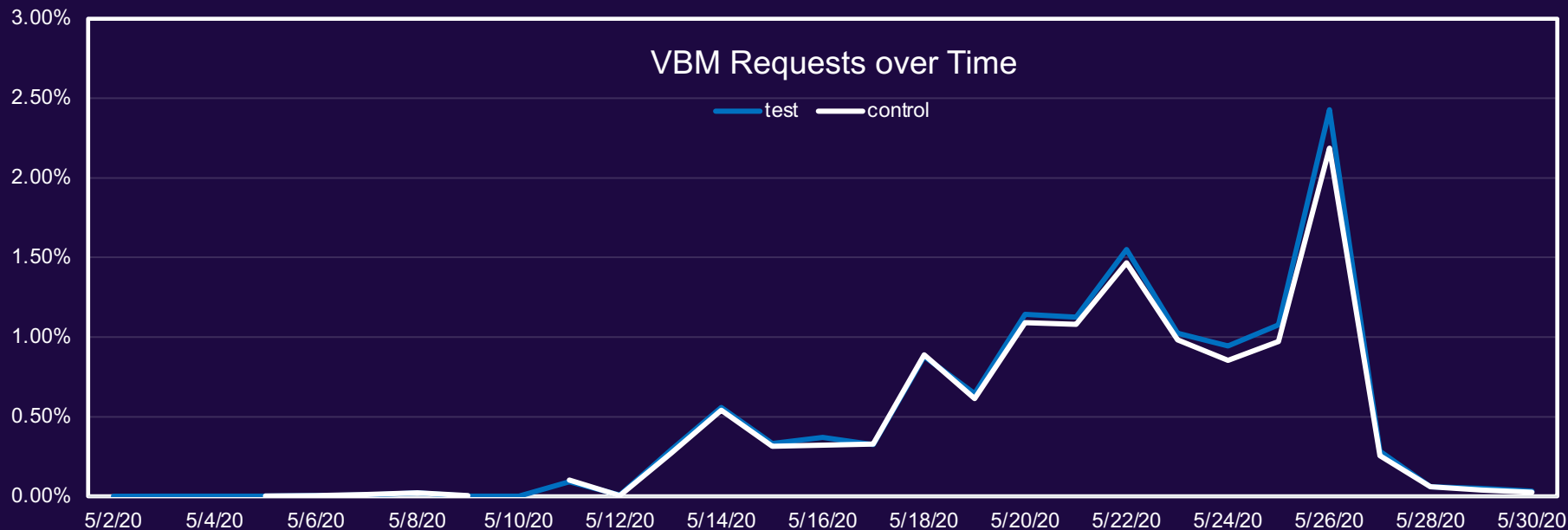
Chase Mode of Contact

SMS is the most effective and cost efficient chase strategy and was significantly more effective than our postcard reminder, which did not yield a detectable effect over the no chase segment.



VBM Requests Over Time

What concerns us most is the percent of voters that request their ballot in the last week. Processing and sending out VBM ballots was a challenge for many states during primary elections where the number of voters is much lower. A flood of last-minute VBM submissions will almost certainly overwhelm most states.



Lessons for VBM programs in 2020

1. SMS can be used to efficiently drive online VBM request.
2. Follow up with at least one chase contact, maybe more.
3. The right messenger with the right audience can boost effectiveness (e.g. Tomlin in Pittsburgh).
4. To mitigate a flood of late requests and long lines at polling sites, critical to encourage voters to request ballots as early as possible, older , reliable .
5. Older and high propensity voters may be most responsive to VBM outreach; we still have much to learn about how to encourage young and low propensity voters to adopt vote by mail.

Thank you