



June 2022 Experiment Testing the Impact of Volunteer Postcards

Key findings from a randomized controlled trial testing pre-designed and scripted volunteer postcards mailed to drop-off voters in the June 28, 2022 Colorado state primary

1. Key Findings

- The Environmental Voter Project’s volunteer postcarding campaign for the June 28, 2022 Colorado state primary **increased turnout by +1.3 percentage points (pp)** over our control group.
- The campaign’s rigorous messaging discipline – with uniform postcard design and identical hand-written messages – gives us the confidence that similar postcarding campaigns can achieve successful results in the future.

2. Introduction

The Environmental Voter Project (EVP) works year-round in hundreds of elections to improve the voting habits of low propensity environmental voters. As part of that work, we run randomized controlled trials to (a) measure our impact on voter turnout and (b) discover which messages work best with certain subgroups of voters. For the June 28, 2022 Colorado state primary, EVP volunteers filled out and mailed a single 6” x 4.25” postcard to a “treatment group” of 79,990 Coloradans whom EVP had identified as having the following characteristics:

- Each recipient was listed as an active, registered voter
- Each recipient was at least 30 years old
- Each recipient had a high likelihood of listing climate/environment as their top issue priority
- Each recipient had voted in the 2020 General Election
- Despite voting in the 2020 General Election, each recipient otherwise had a poor voting history and was unlikely to vote in the June 28, 2022 Colorado state primary election

41,454 similarly identified voters were randomly set aside in a “control group” that received no postcards or other communications from EVP.

We found that receiving this one postcard from EVP’s volunteers led to +1.3pp higher turnout in EVP’s treatment group than in the control group.

3. Messaging and Design Tested

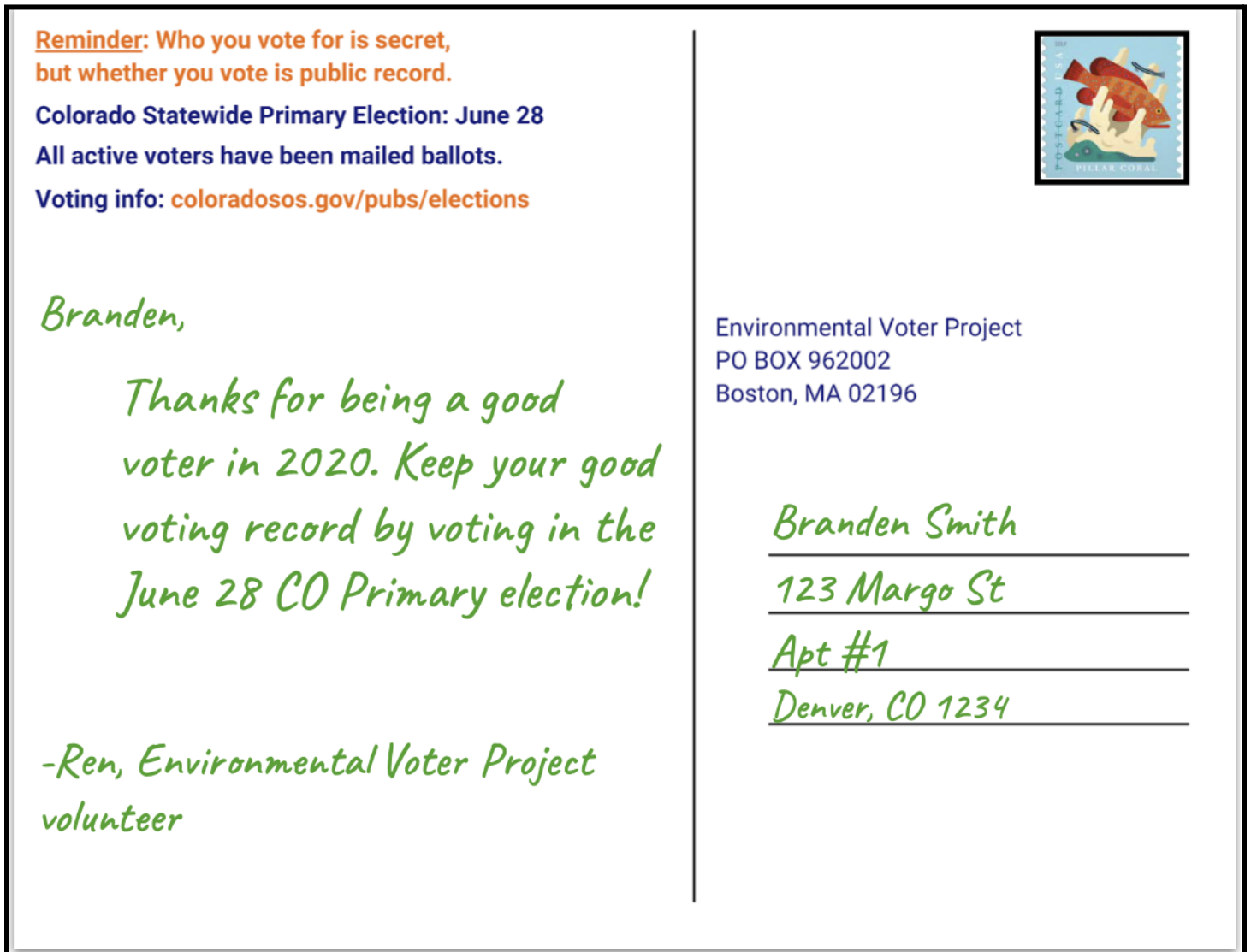
This particular experiment tested whether volunteer postcards that leverage “loss aversion” and “social pressure” messaging could increase voter turnout.

We incorporated loss aversion – a cognitive bias where people tend to fear losing things more than they appreciate gaining them – by thanking our targets for voting in 2020, then presenting the act of voting in a primary for the first time as a way to avoid losing the good voting record they had begun building in 2020. The postcard also includes “social pressure” messaging that reminds voters that their voting history is public record, which is language that has been proven to increase voter turnout in multiple experiments across various communications techniques.

Side A of the postcard:



Side B of the postcard:



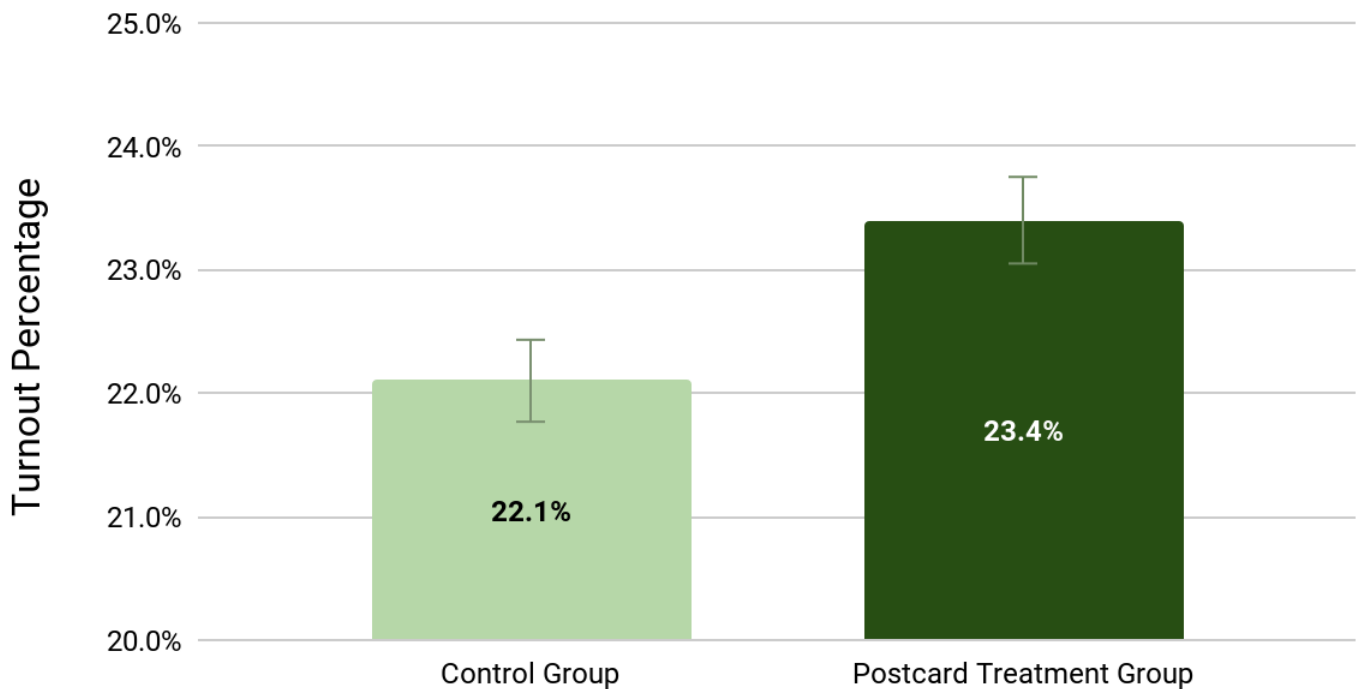
Green text in the image above represents information that volunteers hand-wrote on each postcard. All other text was pre-printed on each postcard.

All EVP postcarding volunteers attended an online training which stressed the importance of using this exact language when filling out their postcards. Then, EVP staff sent blank postcards and mailing lists to over 600 volunteers, who then filled out 79,990 postcards and dropped them in mailboxes on June 6.

4. Impact on Turnout

This single postcard led to a statistically significant +1.3pp increase¹ in voter turnout over our control group of similar voters who did not receive any communications. Although we do not anticipate that a single postcard like this would have a dramatic impact in high-turnout general elections, this result is still instructive in that it highlights the turnout power of specific types of volunteer postcards — if executed with message discipline — whether they are part of a larger messaging campaign or used as an isolated communications stream.

Turnout: Treatment vs. Control



¹ Statistically significant at the $p = 0.05$ level.

5. Conclusion

Every election is an important opportunity to improve environmentalists' voting habits, and the Environmental Voter Project is proud to have had a measurable impact on turnout among our targeted voters in the 2022 Colorado primary. This further adds to the long-term impact we have had in Colorado, where from 2017–2021, we helped 177,096 non-voting and seldom-voting environmentalists become consistent super-voters who now vote in every election. We are also pleased to have confirmed that a specific type of volunteer postcarding campaign can yield a statistically significant impact on voter turnout, and we look forward to further tests to optimize this particular voter mobilization technique.