

Progressivism En Vogue?

An Analysis of Electoral Support for House Co-sponsors of H.R. 1384 (Medicare for All Act of 2019)

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Introduction

- In spring of 2019, Rep. Pramila Jayapal introduced H.R. 1384: the largest, most sweeping iteration of the late John Conyers' longstanding 'United States National Healthcare Act,' this time dubbed the 'Medicare for All Act of 2019'
- Despite ultimately dying in committee, it marked a massive revival and revision of the act first introduced in 2003; it was co-sponsored by 118 progressive Democrats in the House, roughly aligning with Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) membership (plus some additional)
- While not called to a floor vote, the bill served as huge political theatre and had a rallying effect on its co-sponsors' campaign coffers/profiles with countless liberal PACs & special interest groups endorsing them, fundraising, and providing unearned media attention
- **H.R. 1384 was the most definitive progressive-left policy of the 116th Congress**, so, how did its co-sponsors' electoral performances fare afterwards?

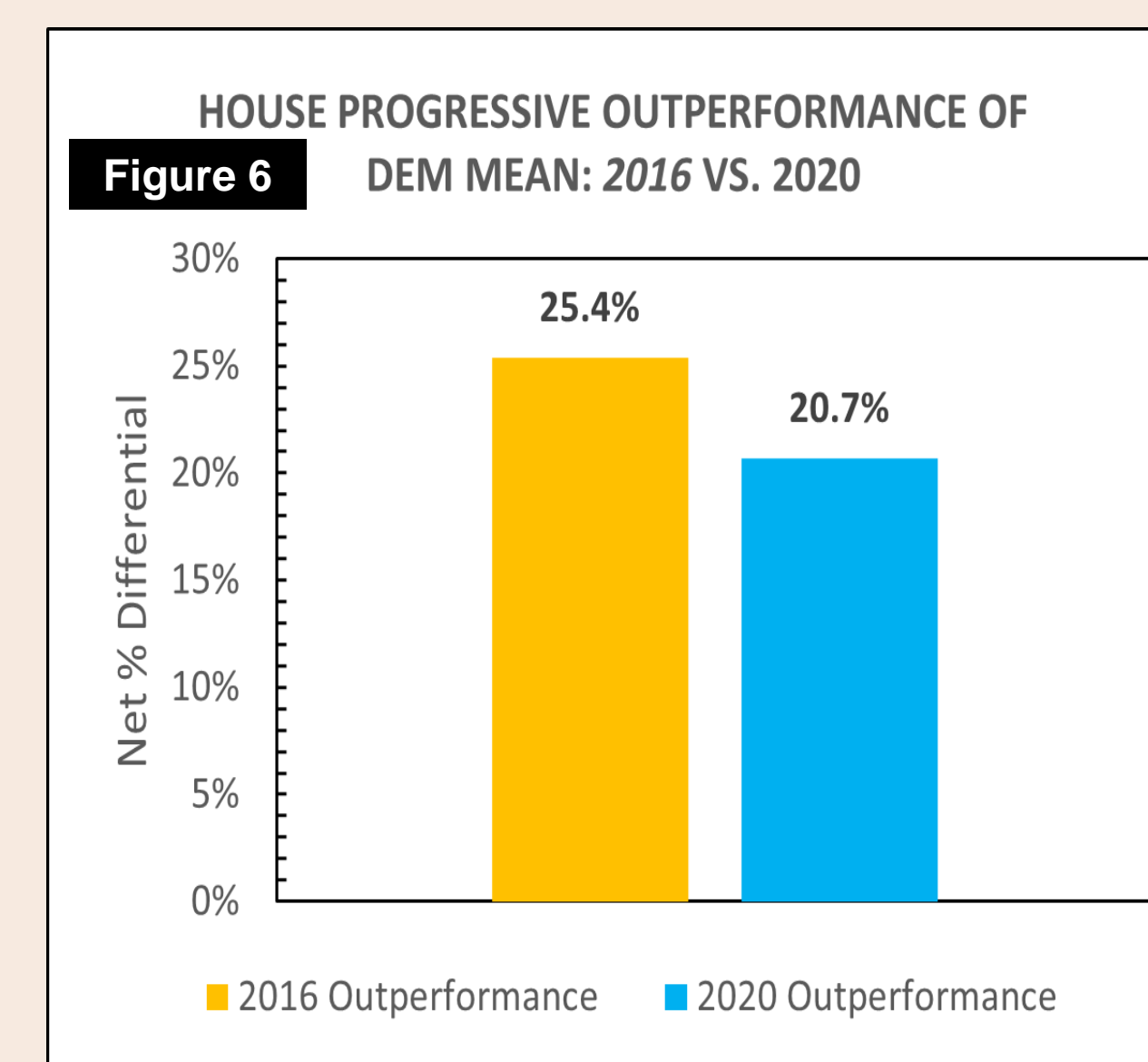
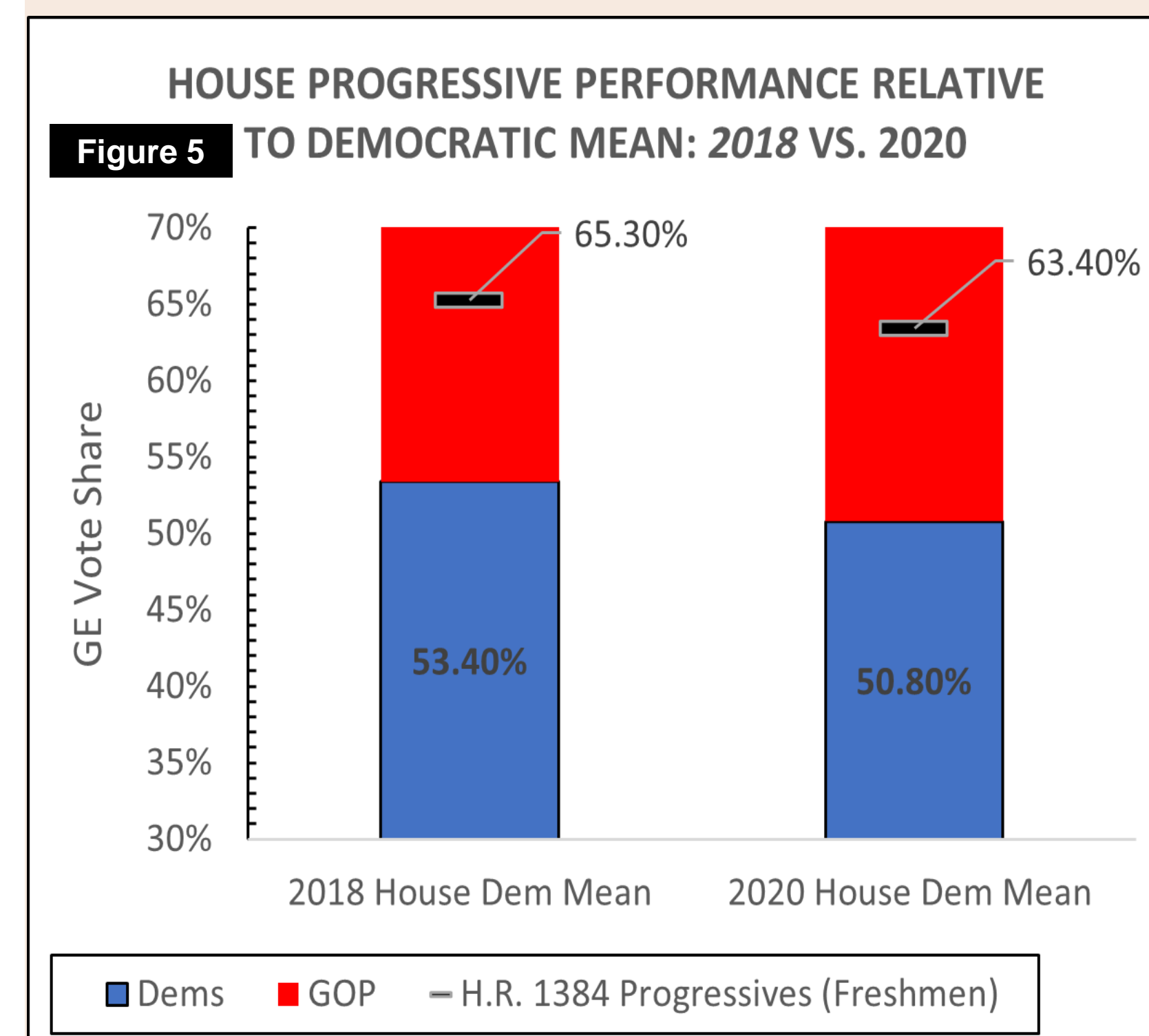
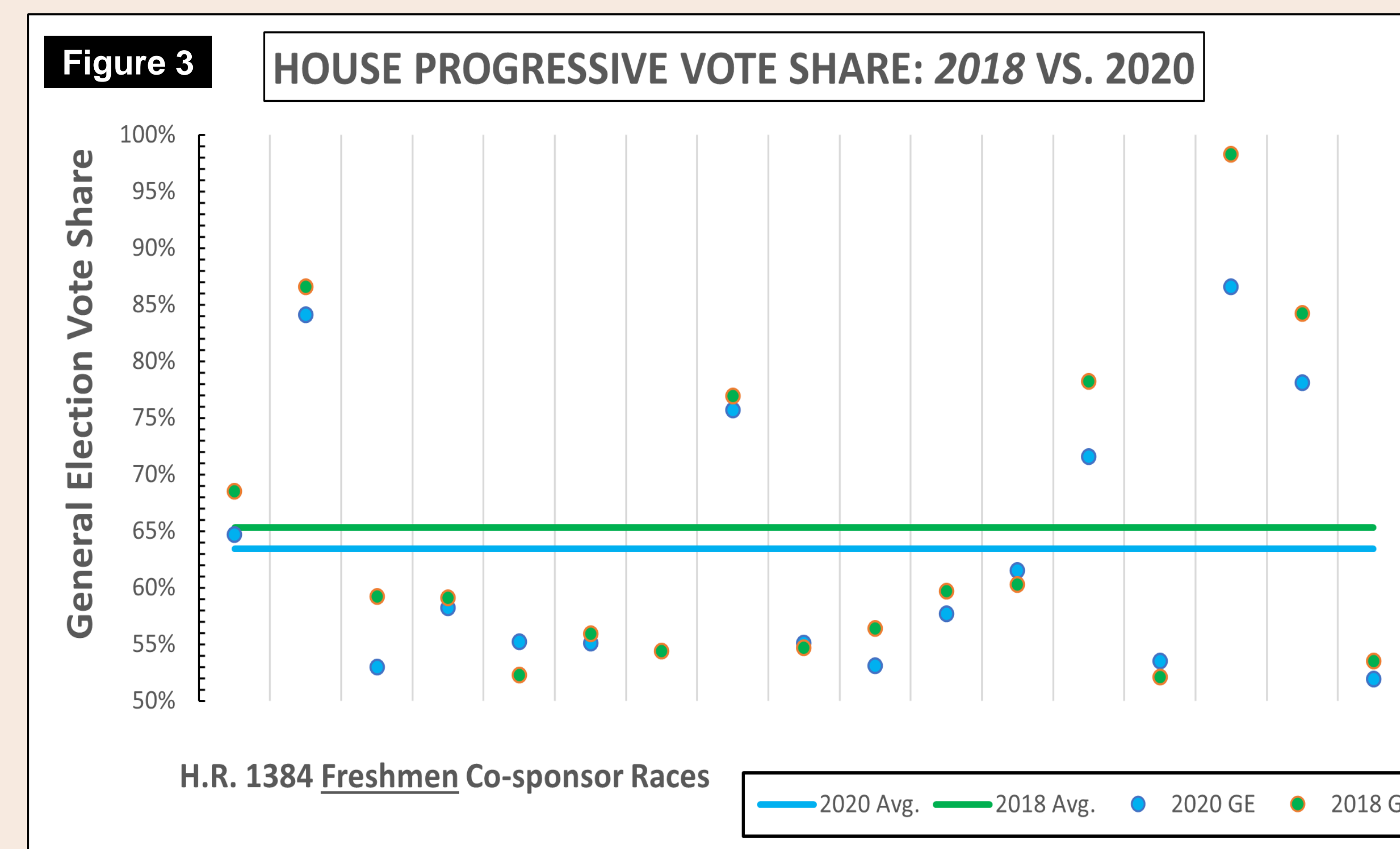
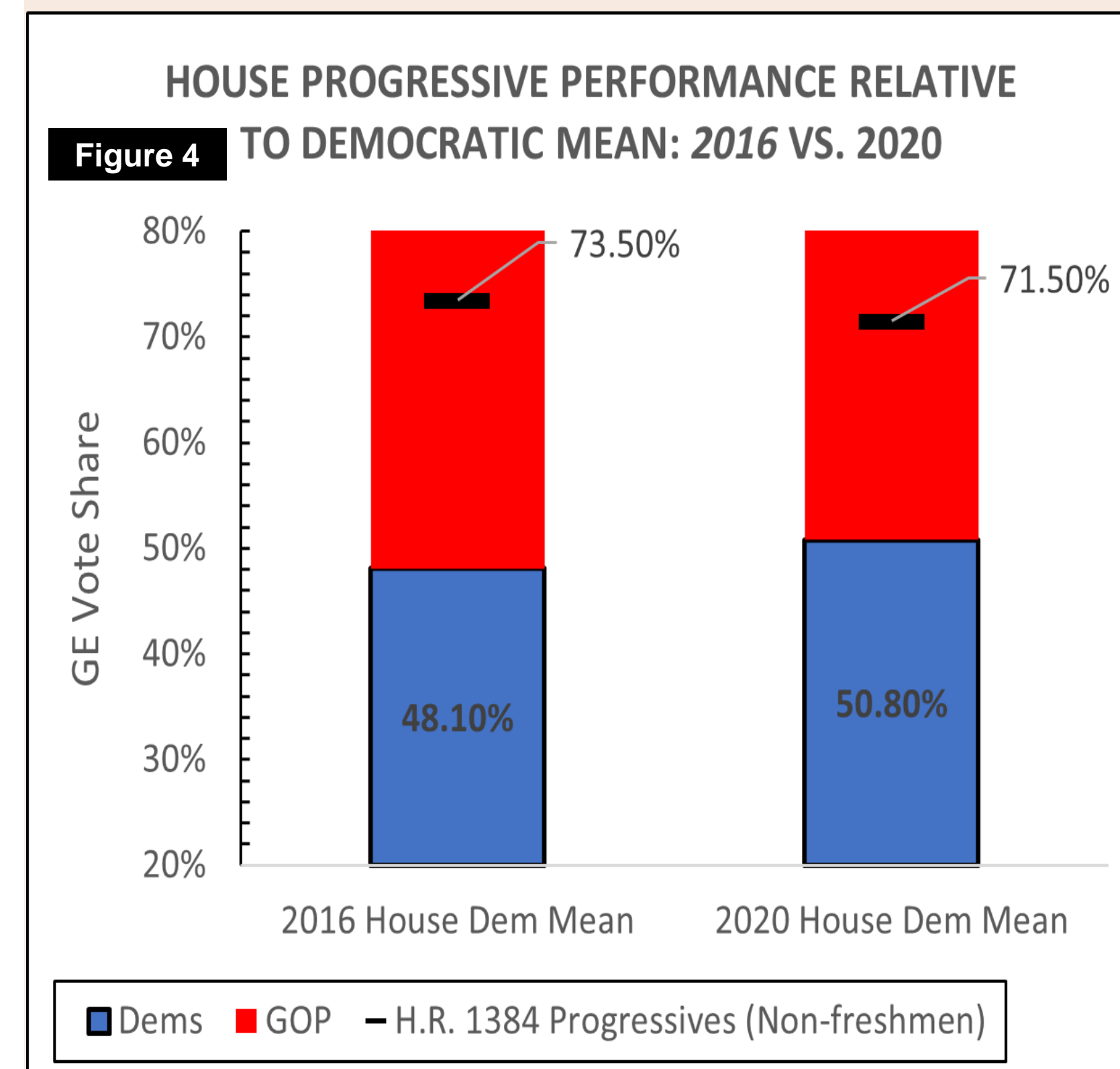
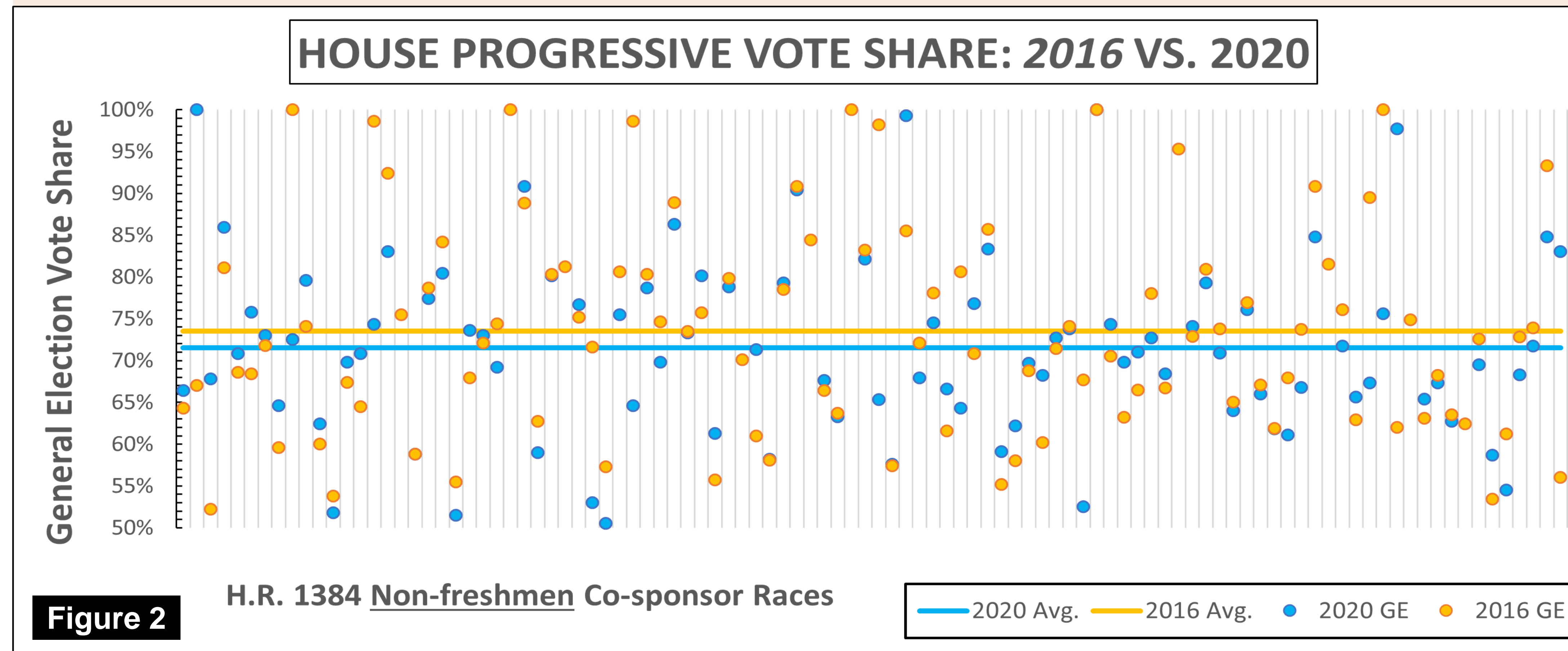
Research Goal

- This research project seeks to analyze the changes in electoral performance for the 118 progressive House co-sponsors of H.R. 1384 (Medicare for All Act of 2019) pre- and post- their formal co-sponsorship of said bill, while also theorizing reasons for said changes in electoral performance.

Methods

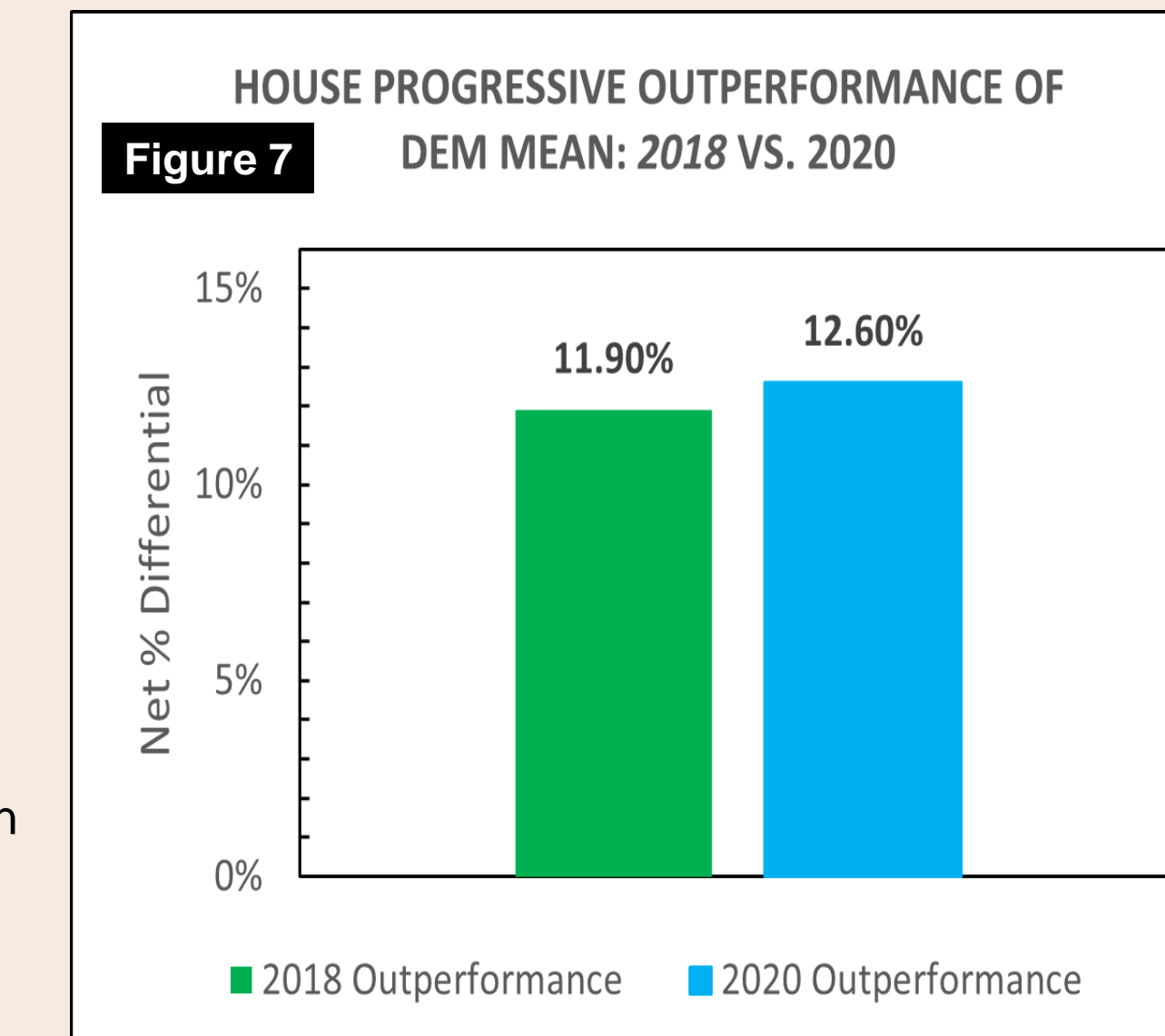
- In the spirit of statistical consistency, this analysis primarily consisted of comparing presidential-year election cycles to one another due to midterm years being too different in context and extraneous variables
- First, the H.R. 1384 co-sponsor cohort was separated into two groups: **freshmen** (those elected in 2018 and whose first Congress was the 116th) and **non-freshmen** (longer-standing Members who had won House elections prior to the 116th Congress)
- This meant that this study primarily compared 2016 and 2020 datasets, **except for** the aforementioned Members who were freshmen during their 2019 sponsorship
- For freshmen, 2018 was used as the "before" year in place of 2016, and was still compared to the 2020 GE dataset; the freshmen grouping was only 17 Members, thus it was reasonable to do a midterm-to-presidential year analysis for such a small sample
- In the end, the average General Election (GE) vote share of all non-freshmen in 2016 was compared with the same in 2020 and the GE vote share of all freshmen in 2018 was compared to 2020
- These progressive averages were then compared to the Democratic Party's overall mean House vote share in each respective year to see how much they outperformed their average non-progressive Democratic counterparts
- The outperformance differentials were then compared amongst the two groups: 2016 vs. 2020, 2018 vs. 2020

Figures & Results



Figures 4-5 show how far above the Democratic mean that progressive avg. performances are amongst both non-freshmen & freshmen in each year; Figures 6-7 compare the performance differentials between years

Figures 2-3 feature the 2016/2020 or 2018/2020 vote shares of every non-freshman or freshman co-sponsor as individual scatter-plot values, and the progressive averages in each year as a horizontal line of best fit



Analysis & Conclusions

- As can be seen from the figures at left, the average vote share of non-freshmen H.R. 1384 co-sponsors decreased (73.5% to 71.5%) from 2016 to 2020, as did the freshmen co-sponsor average from 2018 to 2020 – both results confirming my hypothesis
- Where things got more interesting was in comparing these progressive electoral performances to the mean Democratic performance in each year; unsurprisingly, progressive outperformed their overall party's average strikingly each year, however, while the non-freshmen group's outperformance differential also went down from 2016 to 2020, the freshmen grouping actually *increased* their net differential in 2020
- This was something I had not predicted in my hypothesis; however, it makes sense: the freshmen class, filled with more left-leaning progressives as opposed to older liberal traditionalists likely increased their outperformance value in 2020 because H.R. 1384 & talk of M4A was the sort of policy they got elected for in 2018 to begin with; H.R. 1384 was red meat to their 'Solid D' bases
- Longer-standing liberal Members did not build their careers on supporting M4A and were all but forced into co-sponsoring the H.R. 1384 for fear of being primaried from their Left; they might have been hurt by such a left-leaning proposal in the GE's since most do not come from as liberal of districts as most 2018 freshmen
- In my ancillary analysis of 'Medicare for All's popularity in public polling data in the post-2016/pre-2020 timeframe (see Figure 8 in research paper), I can see that as we got closer to 2020, more and more people started having opinions on M4A as it increasingly saturated the national political discourse thanks to H.R. 1384
- Because up to 97% of America had an opinion on it in my final poll entry, this shows that its popularity became more polarized; while its levels of support remained the same, its levels of opposition rose as people shifted from "no opinion" to "oppose"
- M4A's net favorability shifted from +20 in 2017 to as little as +4 in 2019 and +8 in 2020
- This polarization of M4A amongst the median voter likely contributed to the losses that many older, less leftist non-freshmen co-sponsors of H.R. 1384 saw in 2020

Acknowledgments

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