



Influence at Work
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION

The Power of Social versus Economic and Regulatory Factors in Behavior Change

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Contentions

- **Government can rely too much on economic and regulatory levers when seeking to motivate citizens toward policy goals.**
- **Policy-makers would do well, as well, to consider what is known from behavioral and social science research about psychological motivators that can be at least as effective, yet less costly.**

The Six Universal Principles of Social Influence

1. Reciprocation
2. Scarcity
3. Authority
4. Friendship/Liking
5. Commitment/Consistency
6. Consensus (Social Proof)

Principle 5:

Commitment/Consistency

People try to act in ways that are consistent with what they have already said or done.

Behavioral scientists have labeled what people have already said or done as commitments.

What's more, they've found that the most *persisting* commitments have four features.

Lasting Commitments Are:

- Active
- Public
- Voluntary (Owned)
- Written-down

Principle 6: Consensus

People try to follow the lead of those around them, like them.

**Thus, people are influenced by
the actions and opinions of:**

- **Many others**
- **Similar others**

Impact of Social Influence

Let's consider how these two simple principles of social influence can impact behavior in a pair of arenas relevant to government policy:

1. The Efficiency of Healthcare Delivery
2. Energy Conservation

Impact of Social Influence

The case of:

The UK's Behavioural Insights Unit

and

the National Health Service's problem of

Did Not Attends (No-Shows) at
appointments for medical visits and
procedures

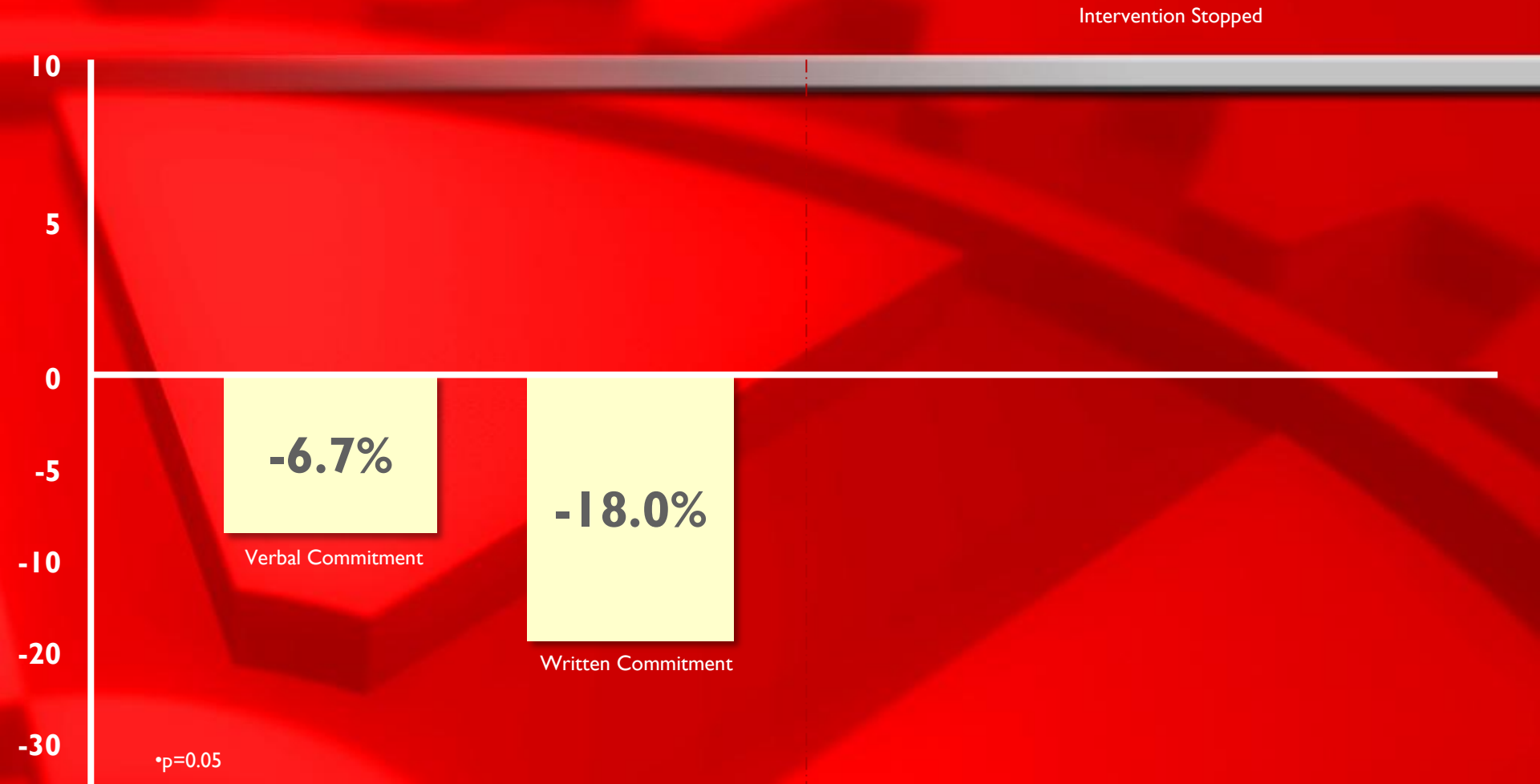
Influence At Work / NHS Bedford DNA Study



Lasting Commitments Are:

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Influence At Work / NHS Bedford DNA Study



Impact of Social Influence

What happened when the principle of Consensus was added to the mix?

Commonly employed signage in UK Health Centres



67

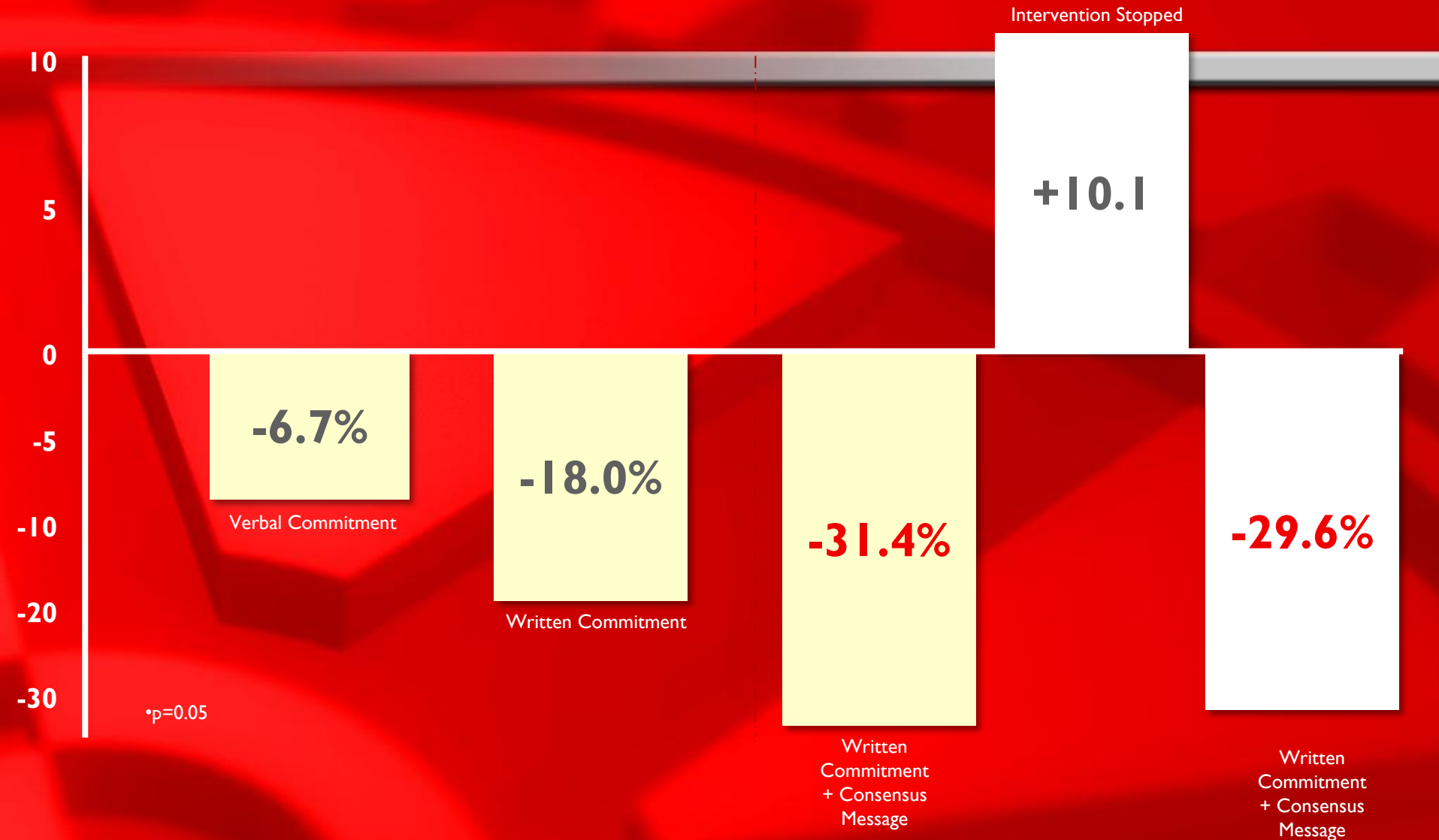
**PATIENTS FAILED TO
ATTEND THEIR
APPOINTMENT IN THIS
PRACTICE LAST MONTH**

Intervention Signage in UK Health Centres

95%

**OF OUR PATIENTS DID
ATTEND THEIR
APPOINTMENT IN THIS
PRACTICE LAST MONTH**

Influence At Work / NHS Bedford DNA Study



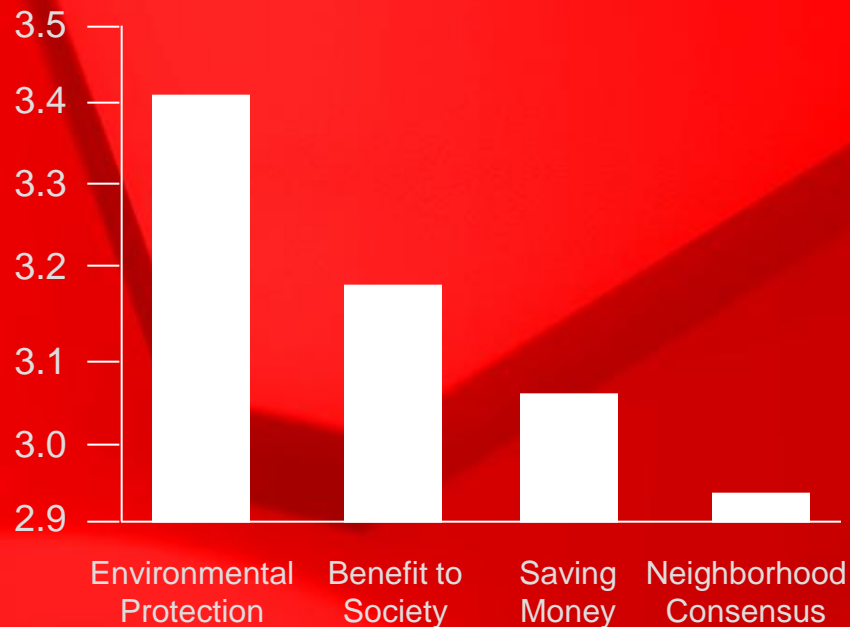
Impact of Social Influence

But, is there any evidence that information about the actions of multiple, similar others would work in other domains, such as household energy usage choices?

There is.

California Energy Savings Survey

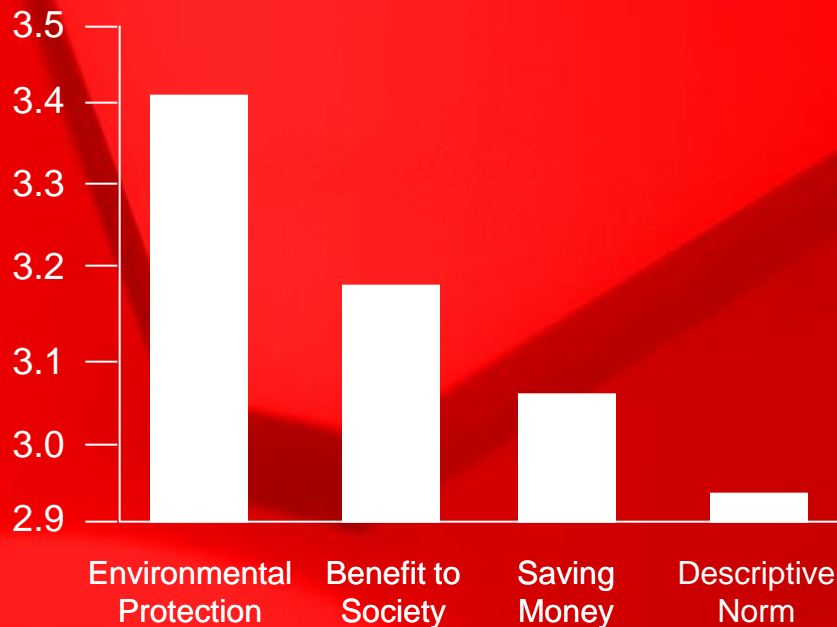
**Reported Beliefs Regarding the
Influence of Each Motive**



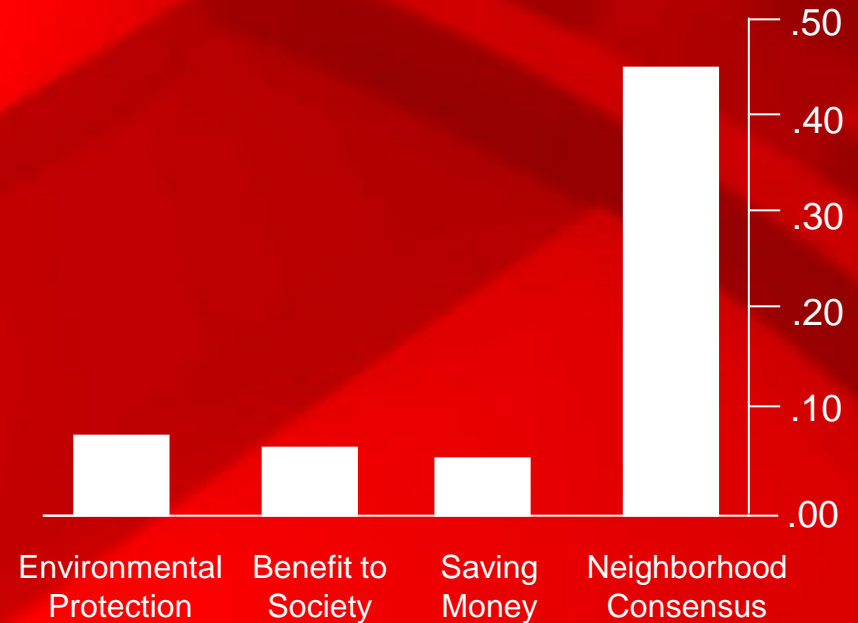
Different Motives to Conserve Energy

California Energy Savings Survey

Reported Beliefs Regarding the Influence of Each Motive

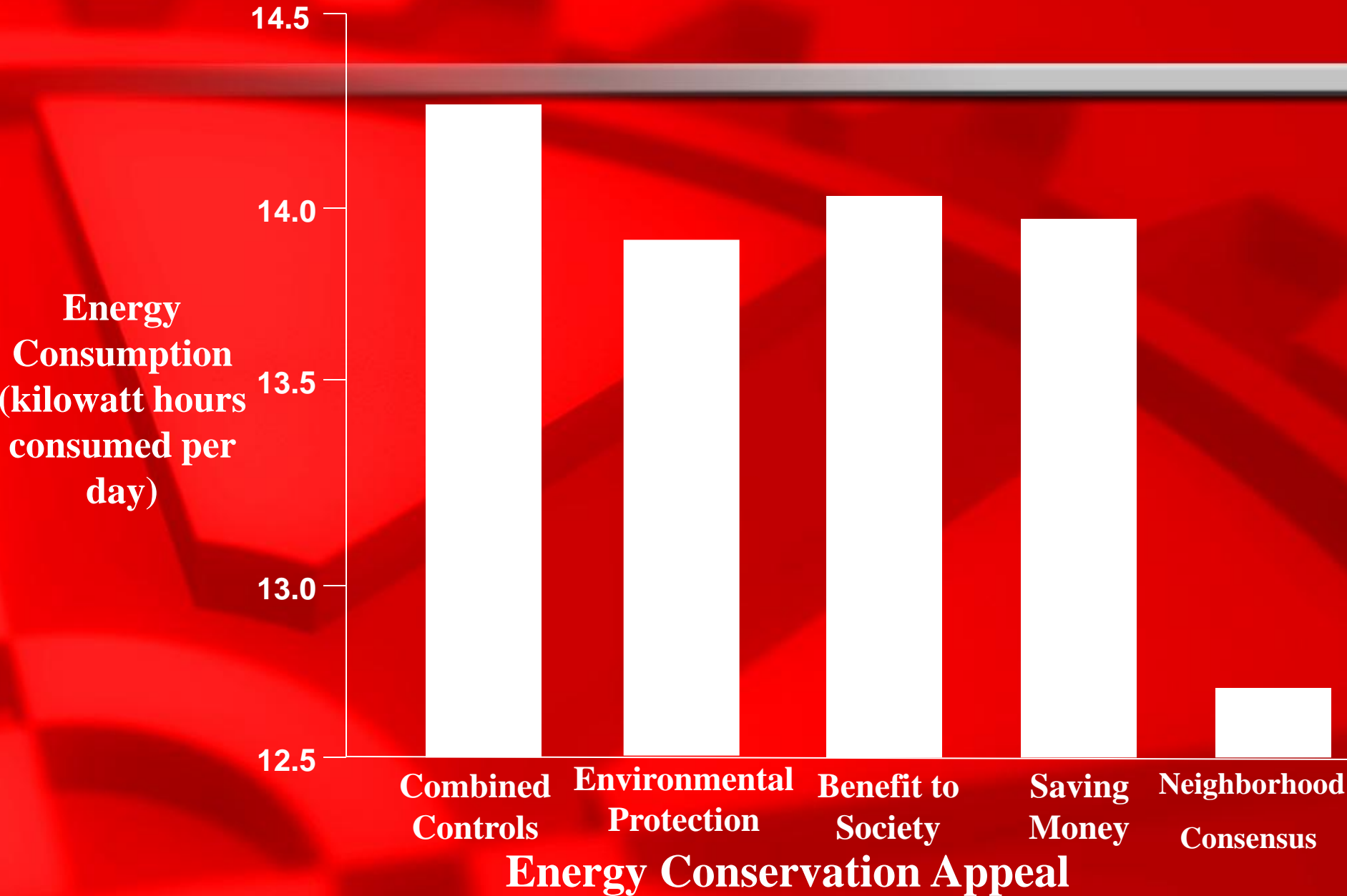


Correlation of Each Motive with Conservation Behavior



Different Motives to Conserve Energy

Field Experiment



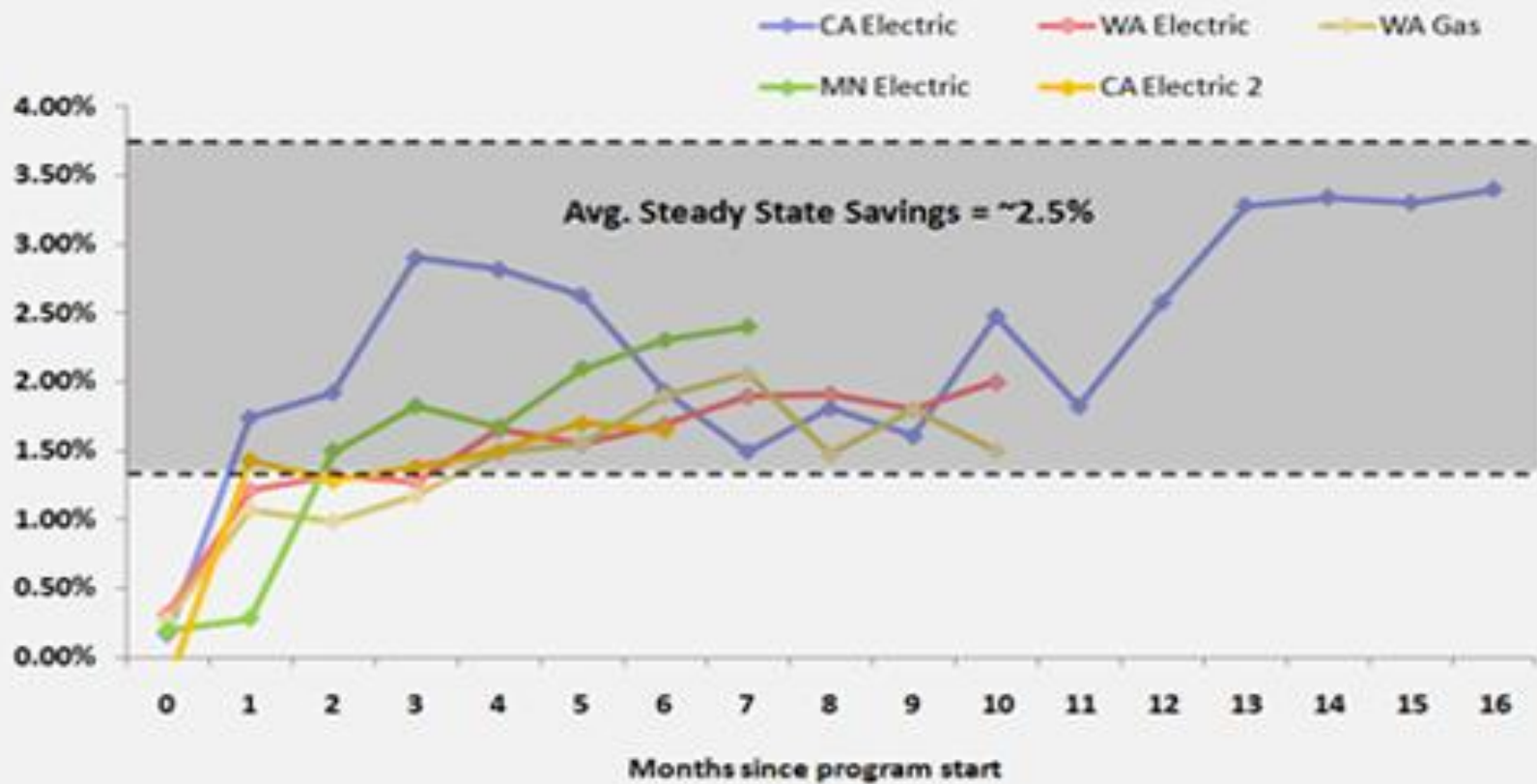
Consensus

How can we use this principle to advance national environmental goals?

One possibility would be to engage the private sector in the process.

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OPOWER Results



OPOWER Results

In less than 5 years of operation, Opower has partnered with 90 US utilities and has:

- reduced consequent U. S. energy consumption by over 3 billion kilowatt hours,
- cut CO² emissions by nearly 5 billion pounds,
- and saved residents \$355 million in energy costs.

Conclusions

- **Government can rely too much on economic and regulatory levers when seeking to motivate citizens toward policy goals.**
- **Policy-makers would do well, as well, to consider what is known from behavioral and social science research about psychological motivators that can be at least as effective, yet less costly.**
- **Government and its citizens are entitled to know and use the results of that sometimes game-changing research because they have paid for it.**