

Read Disturb Errors

in MLC NAND Flash Memory:

Characterization, Mitigation, and Recovery

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Executive Summary

- **Read disturb errors** limit flash memory lifetime today
 - Apply a **high pass-through voltage (V_{pass})** to multiple pages on a read
- We **characterize read disturb** on real NAND flash chips
 - Slightly **lowering V_{pass}** greatly reduces read disturb errors
 - Some flash cells are **more prone to read disturb**
- **Technique 1: Mitigate** read disturb errors online
 - **V_{pass} Tuning** dynamically finds and applies a lowered V_{pass}
 - Flash memory **lifetime improves by 21%**
- **Technique 2: Recover** after failure to prevent data loss
 - **Read Disturb Oriented Error Recovery (RDR)** selectively corrects cells more susceptible to read disturb errors
 - **Reduces raw bit error rate (RBER) by up to 36%**

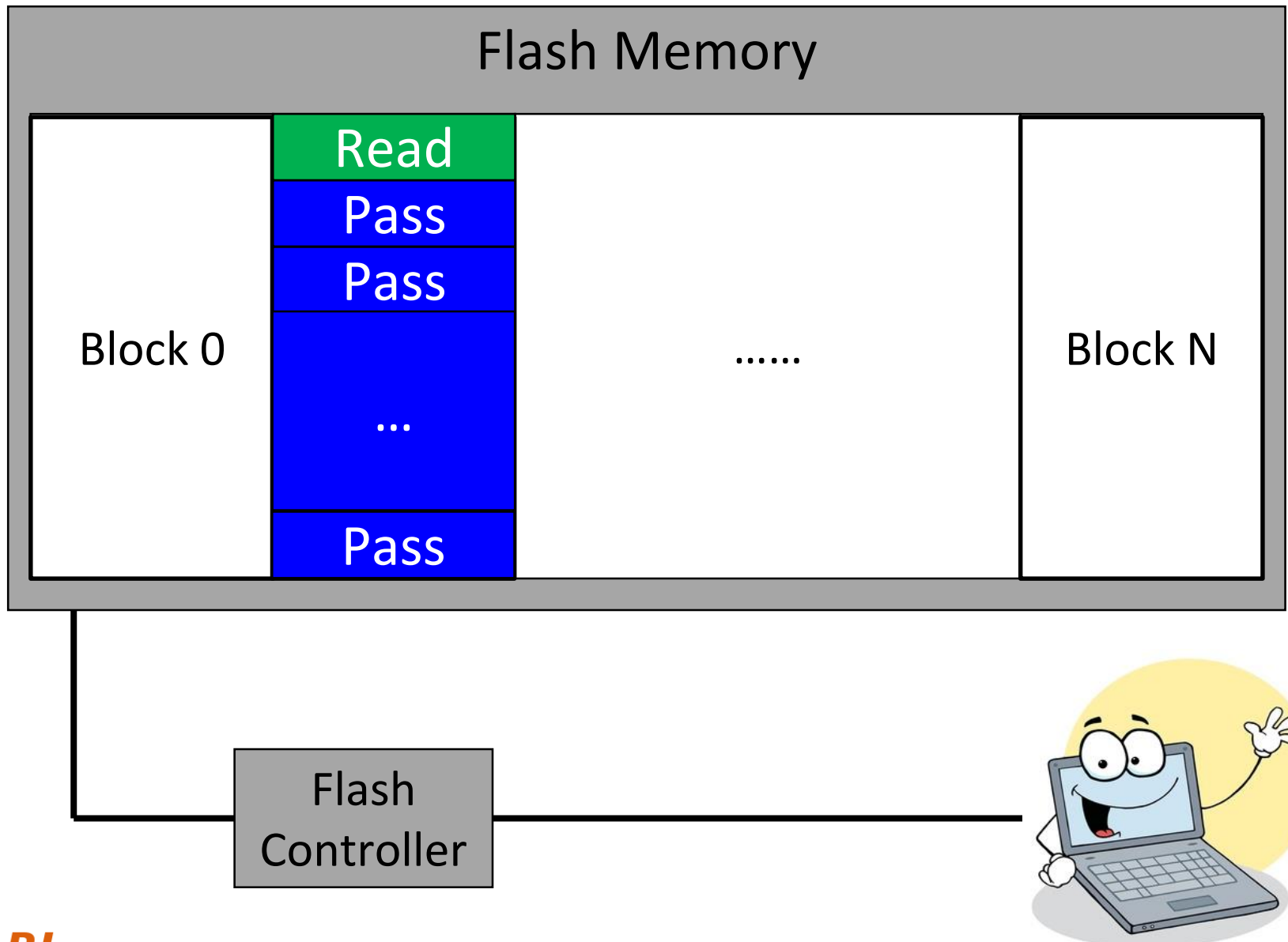
Outline

- Background (Problem and Goal)
- Key Experimental Observations
- Mitigation: V_{pass} Tuning
- Recovery: Read Disturb Oriented Error Recovery
- Conclusion

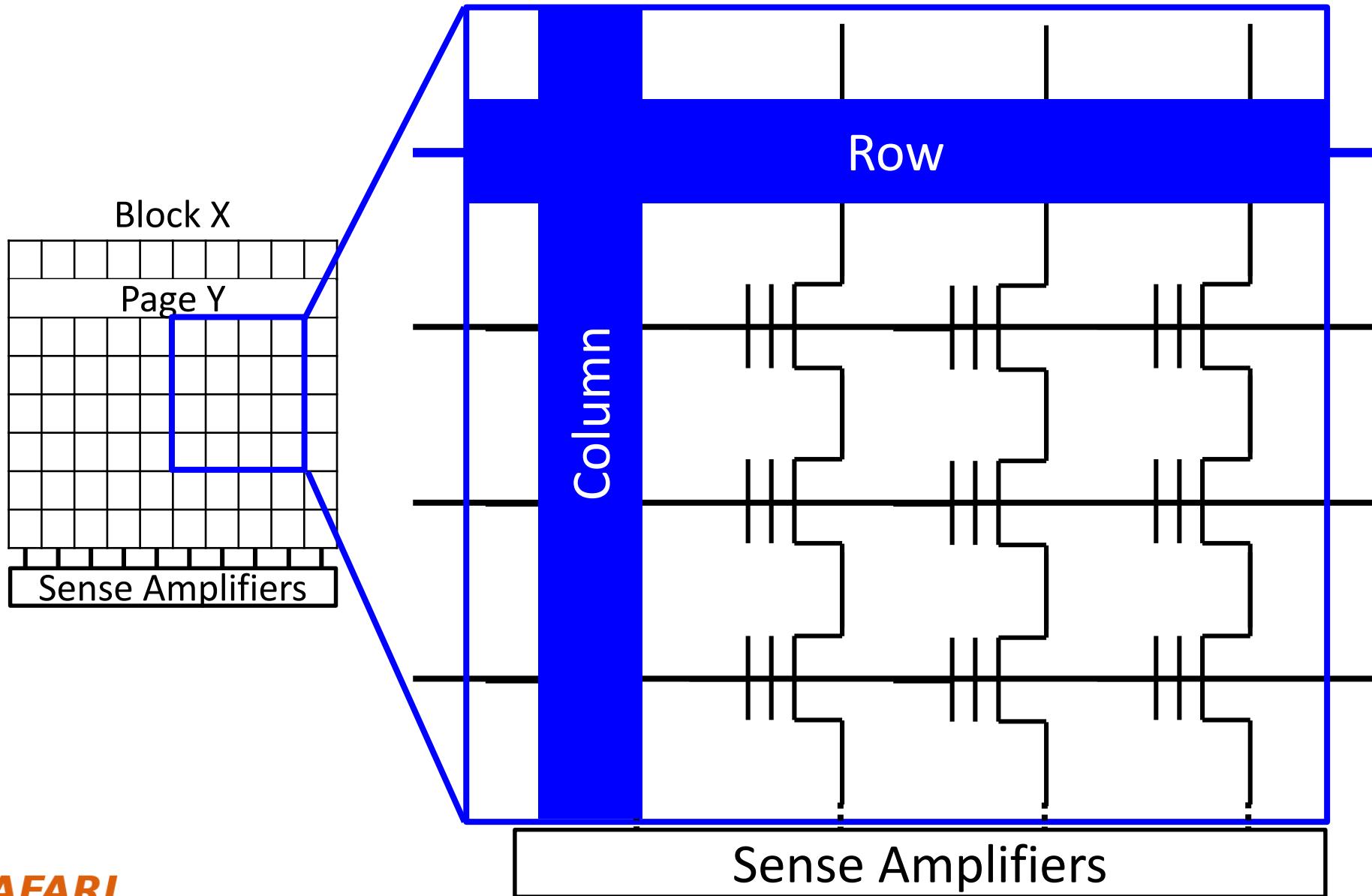
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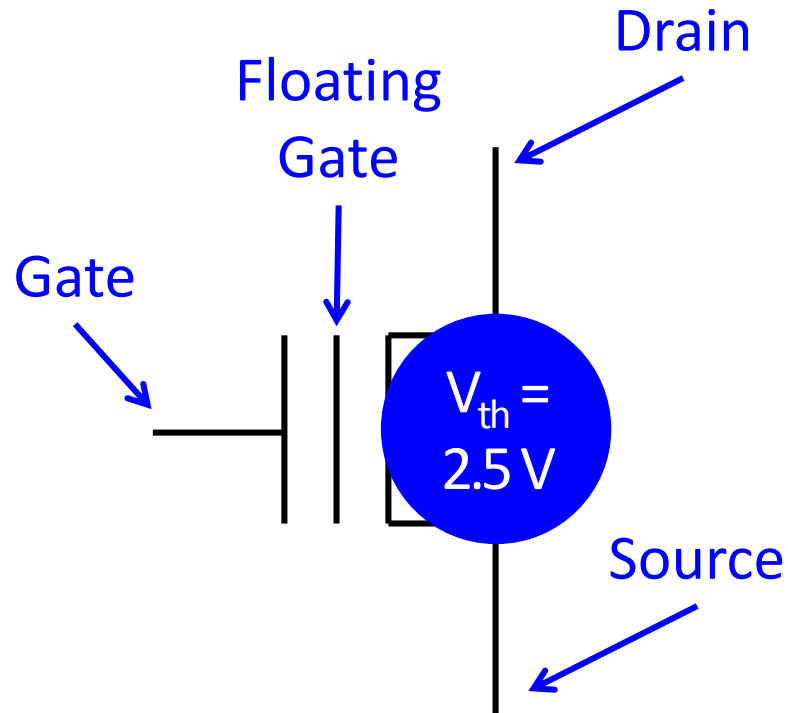
NAND Flash Memory Background



Flash Cell Array

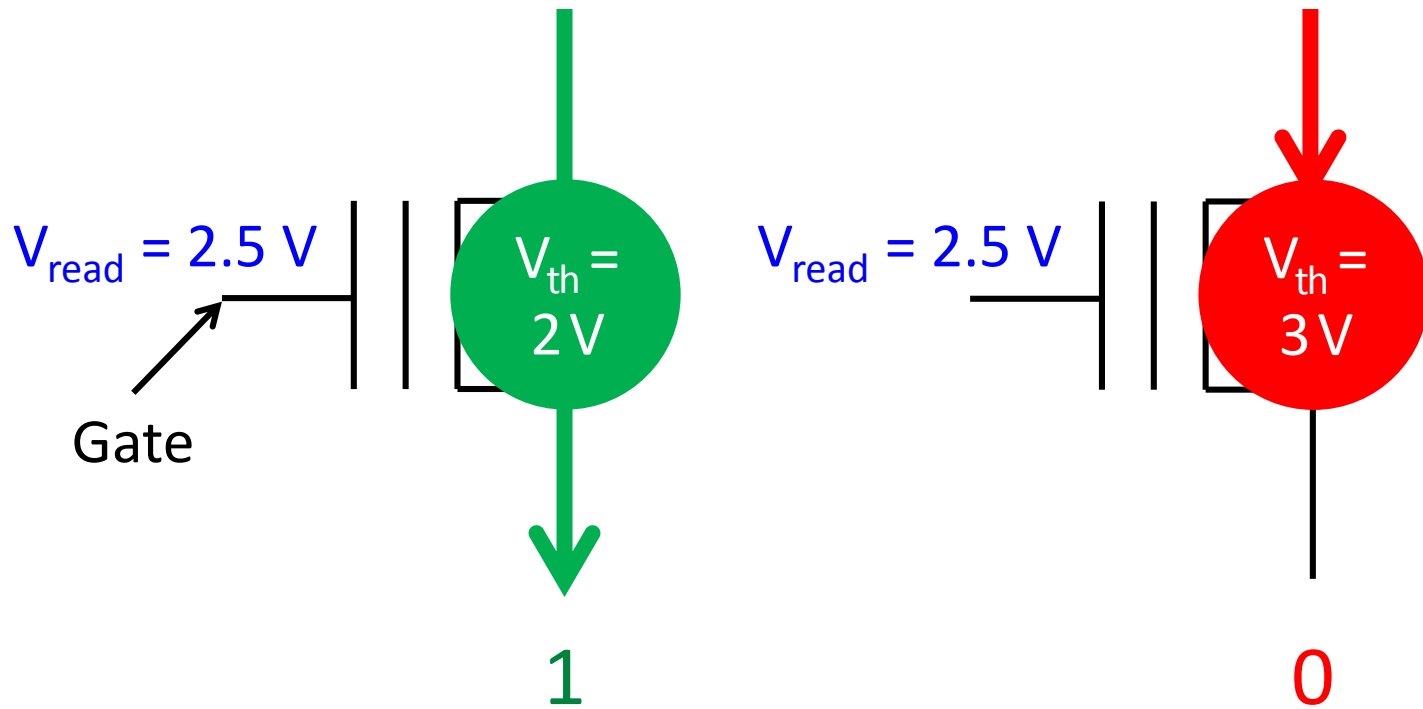


Flash Cell

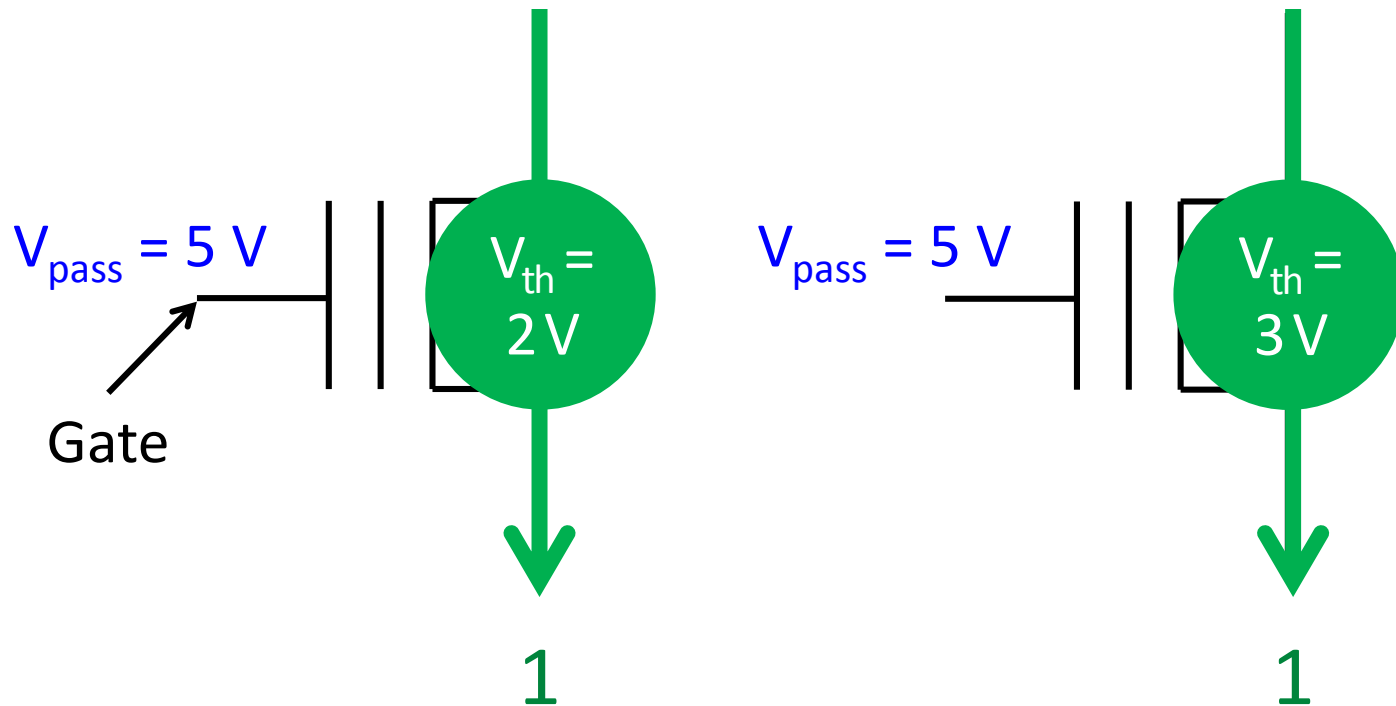


Floating Gate Transistor
(Flash Cell)

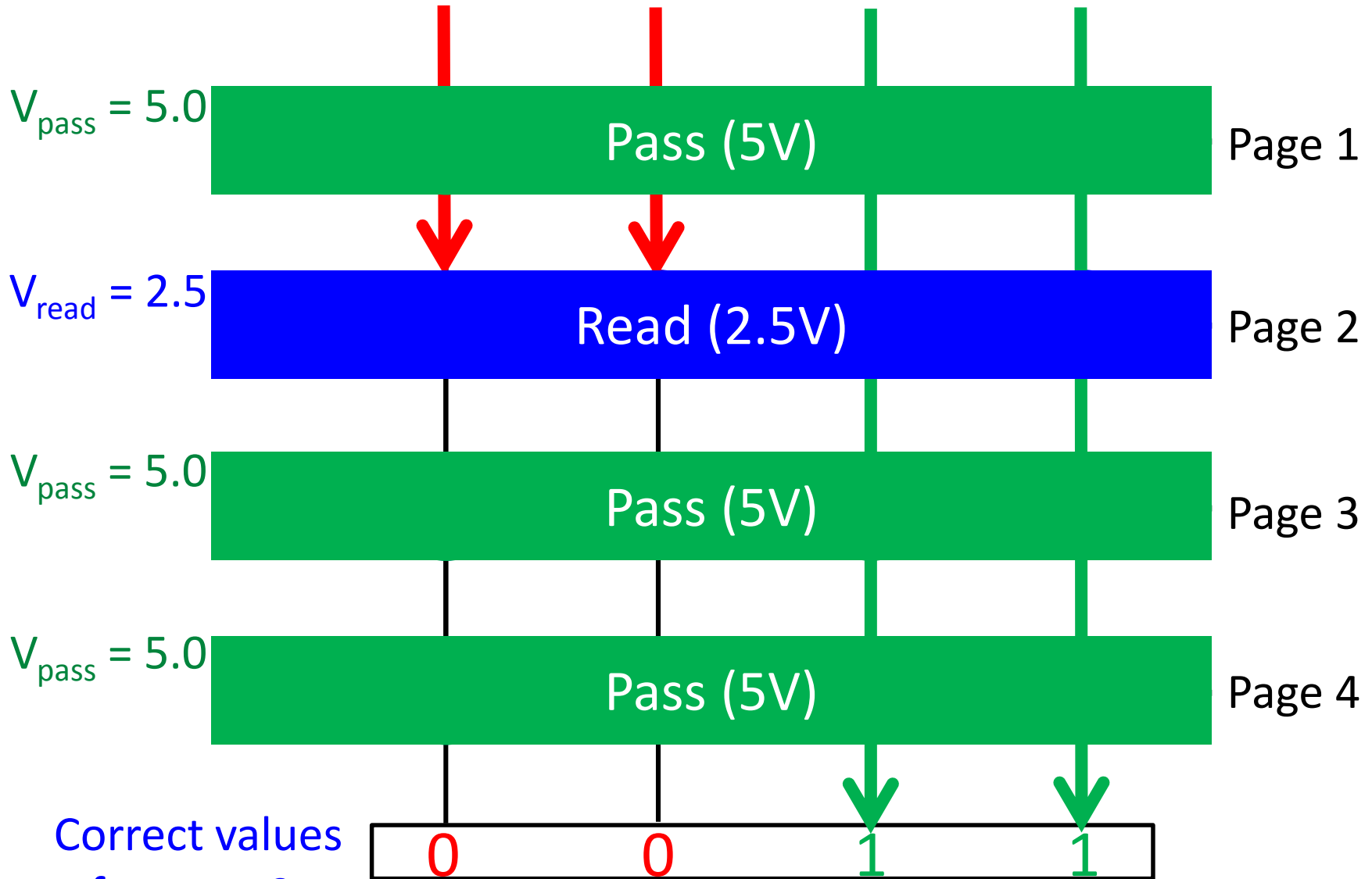
Flash Read



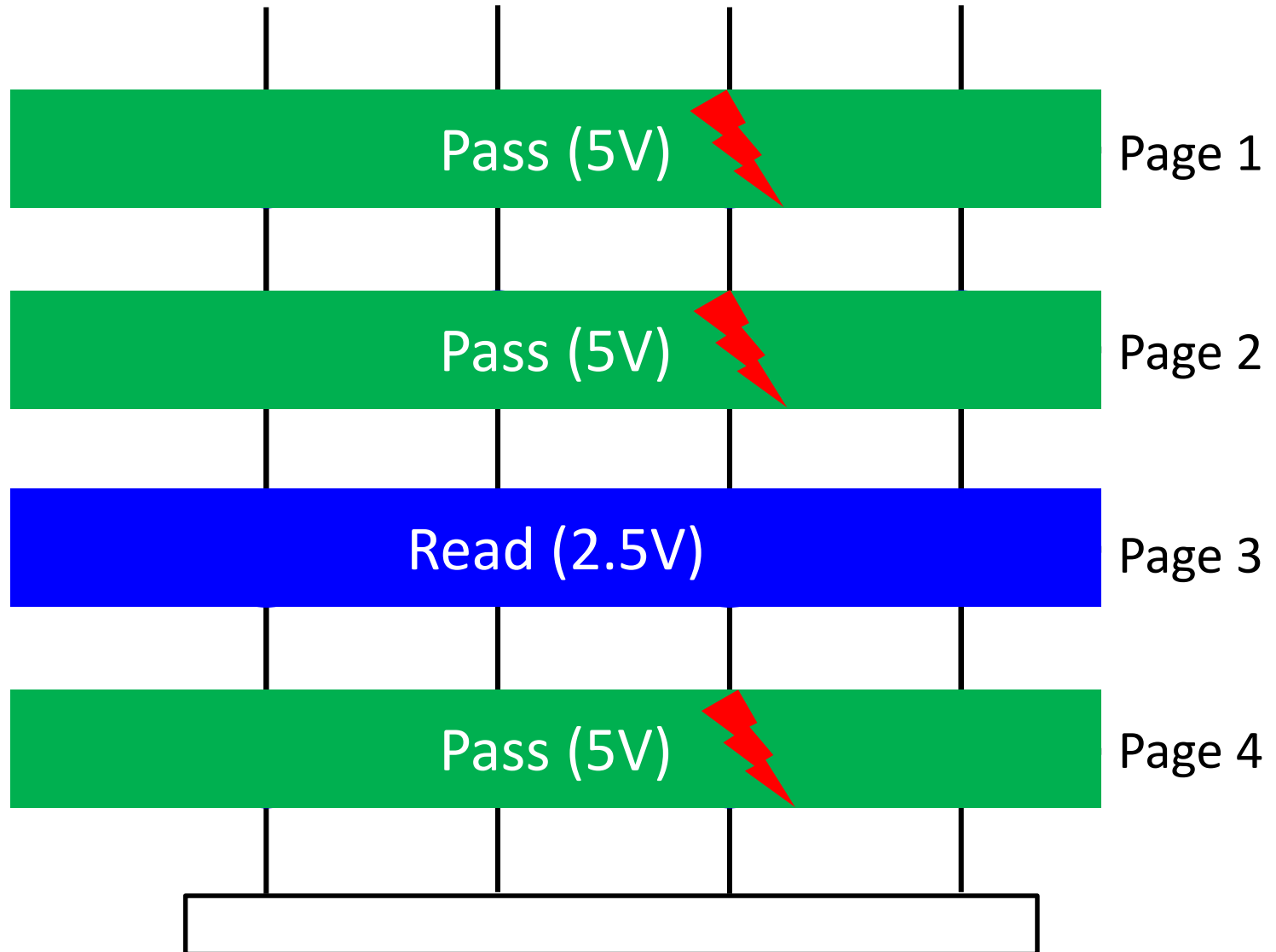
Flash Pass-Through



Read from Flash Cell Array

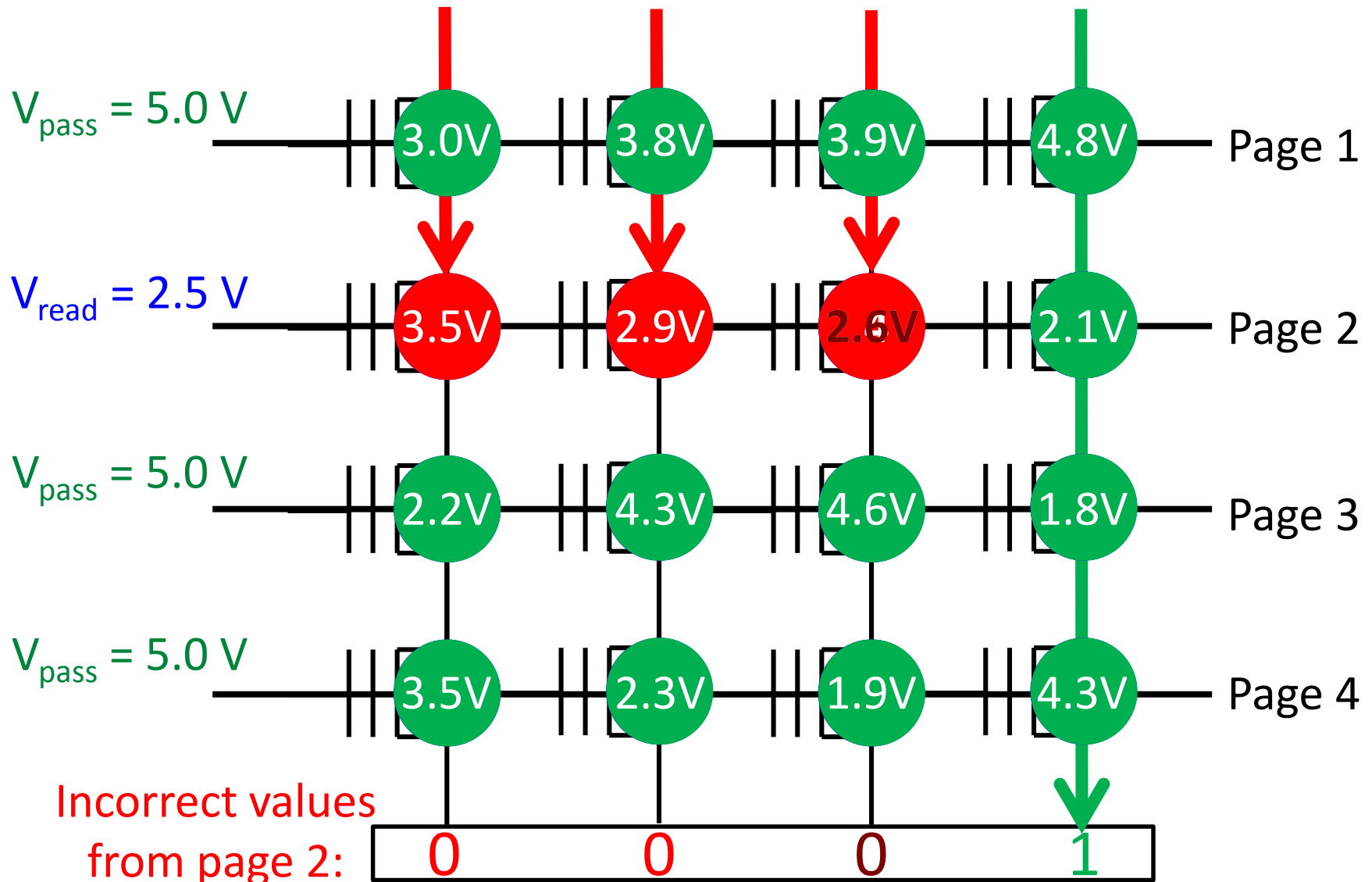


Read Disturb Problem: “Weak Programming” Effect



SAFARI Repeatedly read page 3 (or any page other than page 2)

Read Disturb Problem: “Weak Programming” Effect



Read disturb errors: Reading from one page can alter the values stored in other unread pages

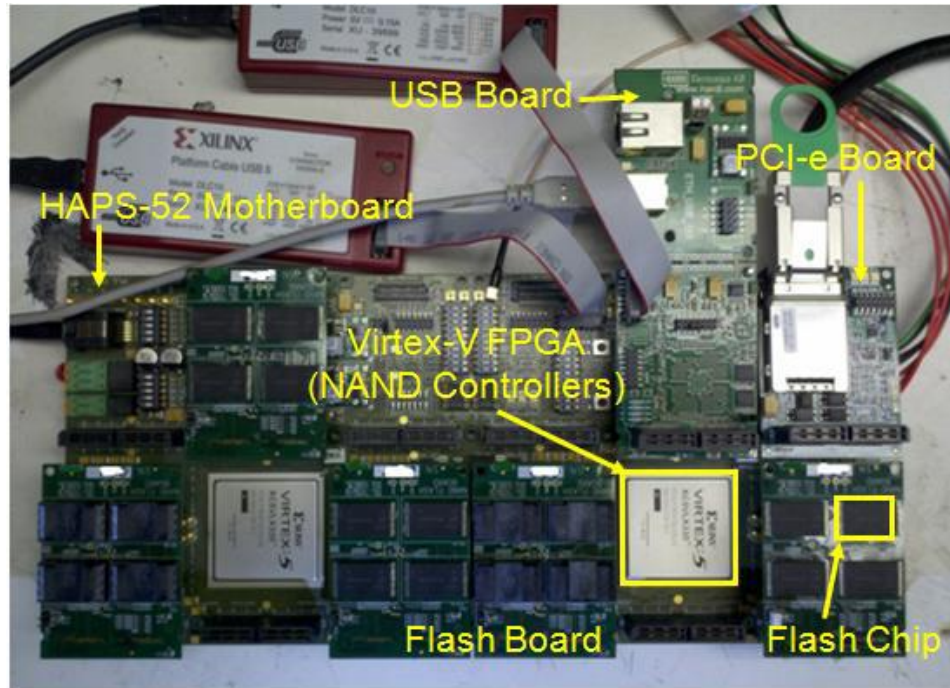
Goal: Mitigate and Recover Read Disturb Errors

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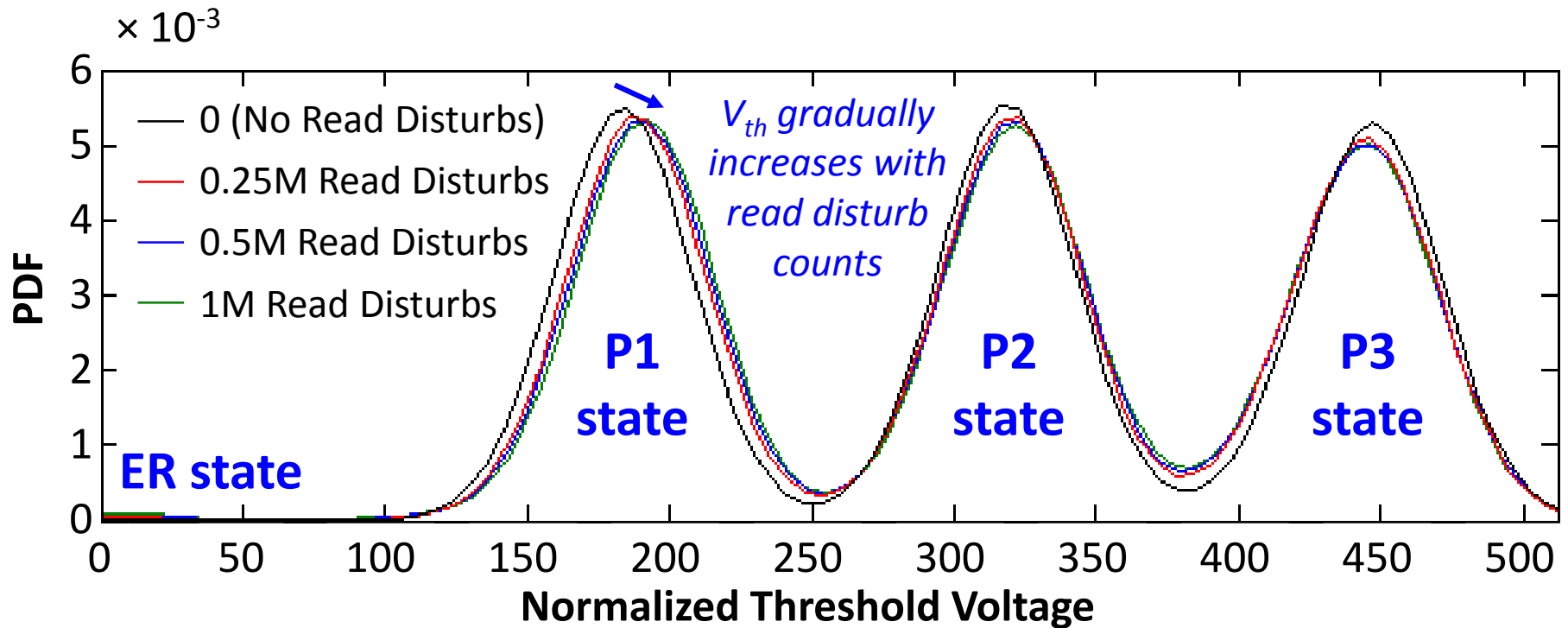
Methodology

- FPGA-based flash memory testing platform [Cai+, FCCM '11]



- Real 20- to 24-nm MLC NAND flash chips
- 0 to 1M read disturbs
- 0 to 15K Program/Erase Cycles (PEC)

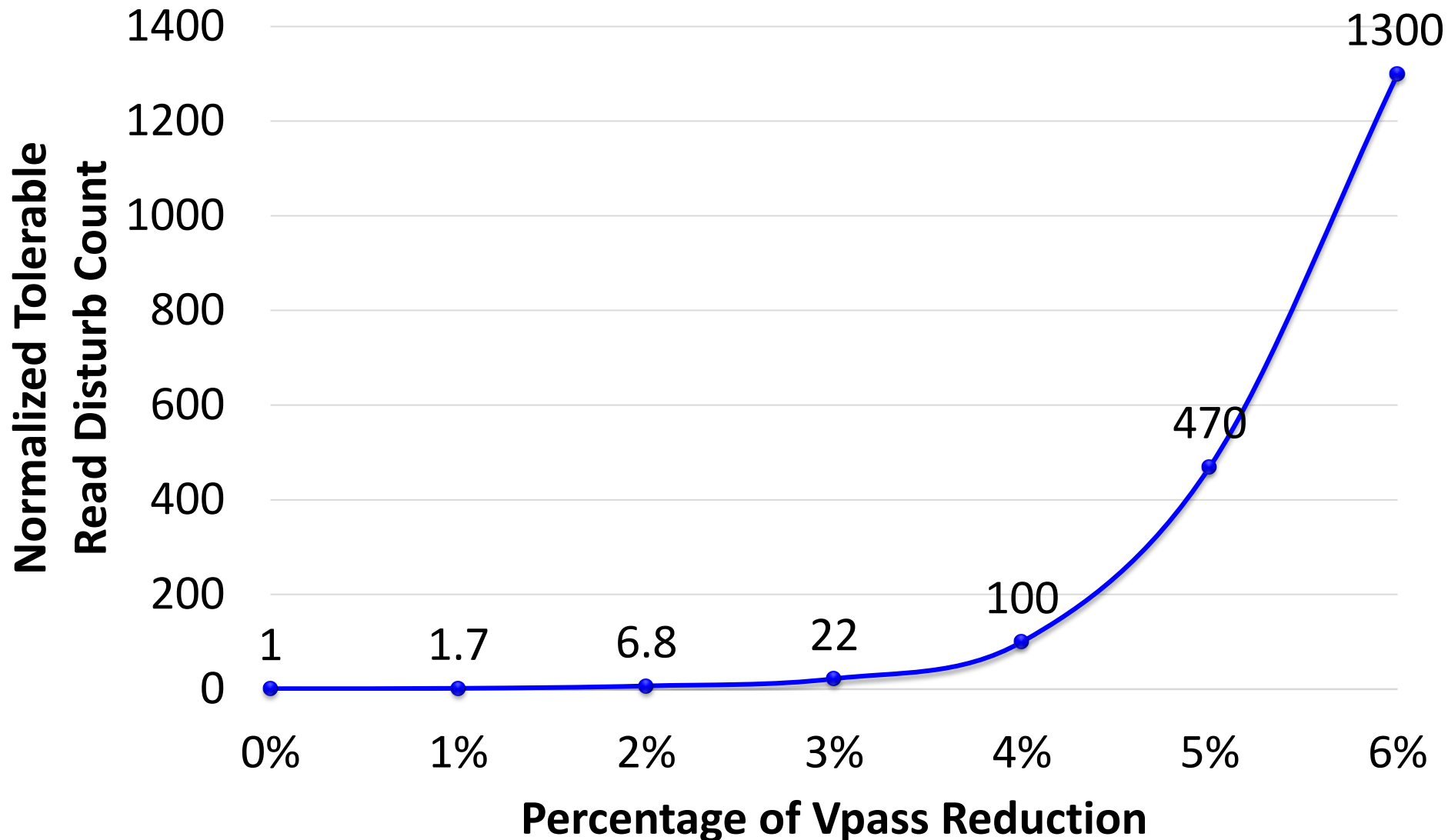
Read Disturb Effect on V_{th} Distribution



Other Experimental Observations

- Lower threshold voltage states are affected more by read disturb
- Wear-out increases read disturb effect

Key Observation 1: Slightly lowering V_{pass} greatly reduces read disturb errors



Outline

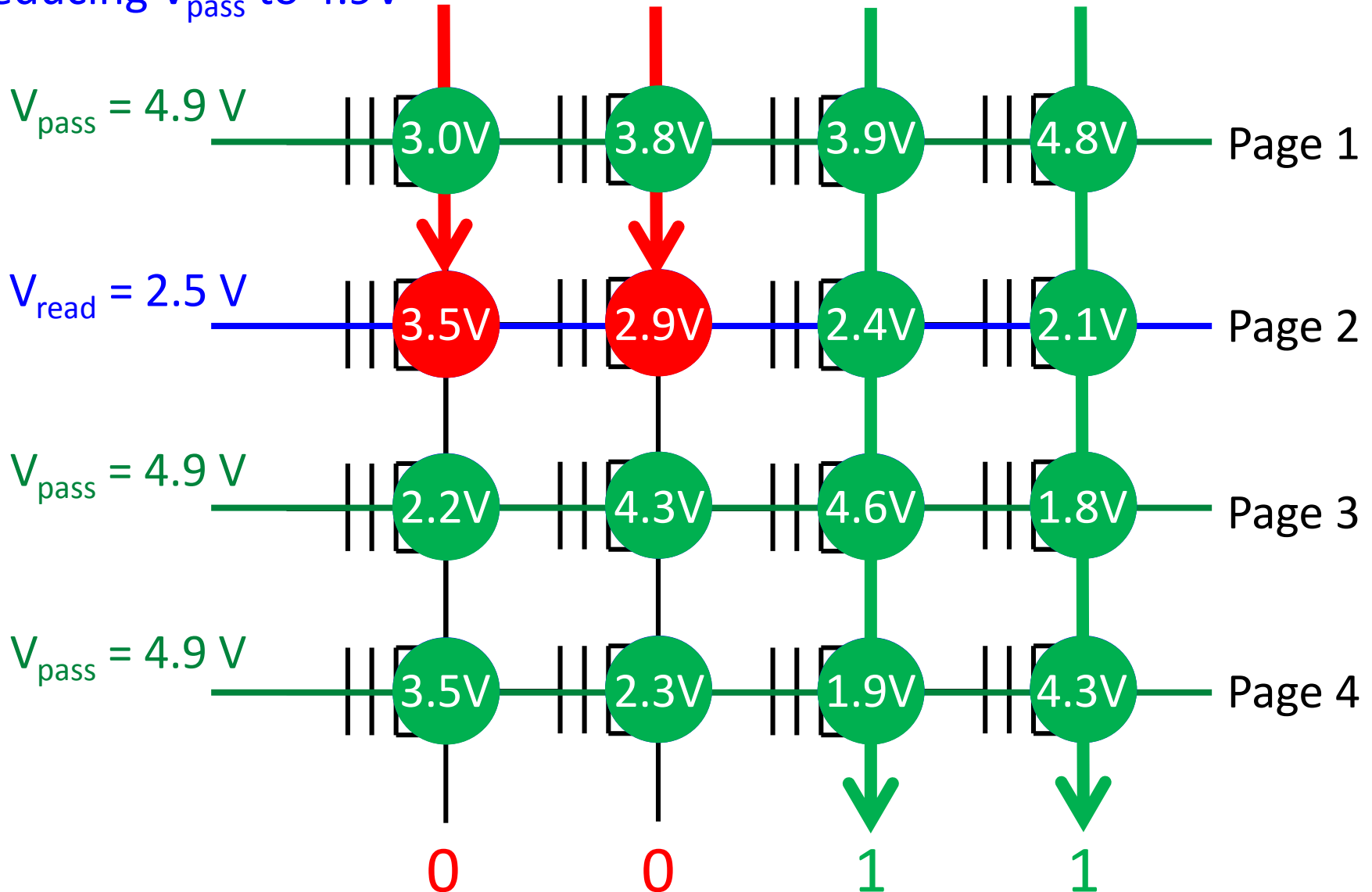
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Read Disturb Mitigation: V_{pass} Tuning

- Key Idea: Dynamically find and apply a lowered V_{pass}
- Trade-off for lowering V_{pass}
 - + Allows more read disturbs
 - Induces more read errors

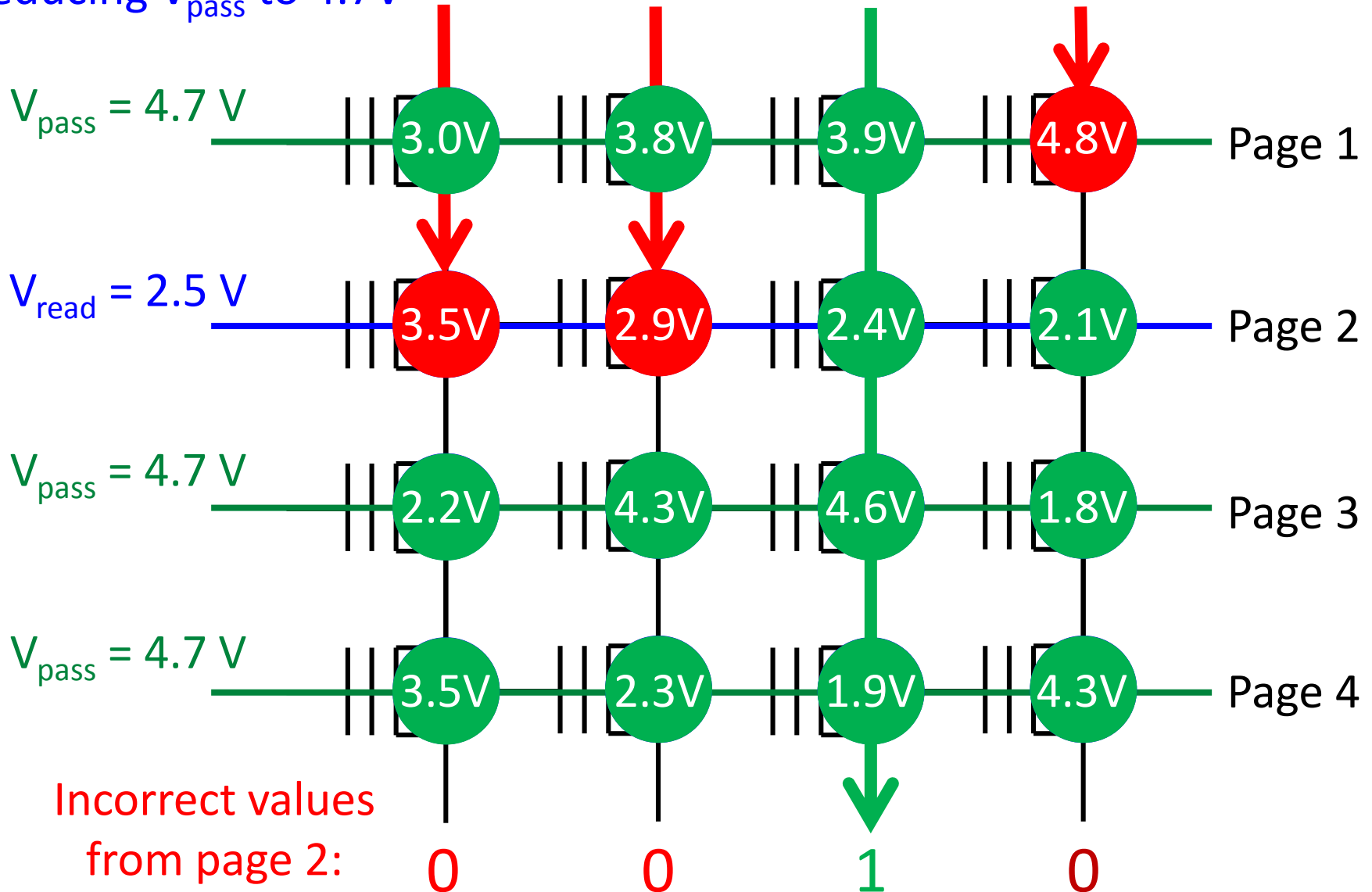
Read Errors Induced by V_{pass} Reduction

Reducing V_{pass} to 4.9V

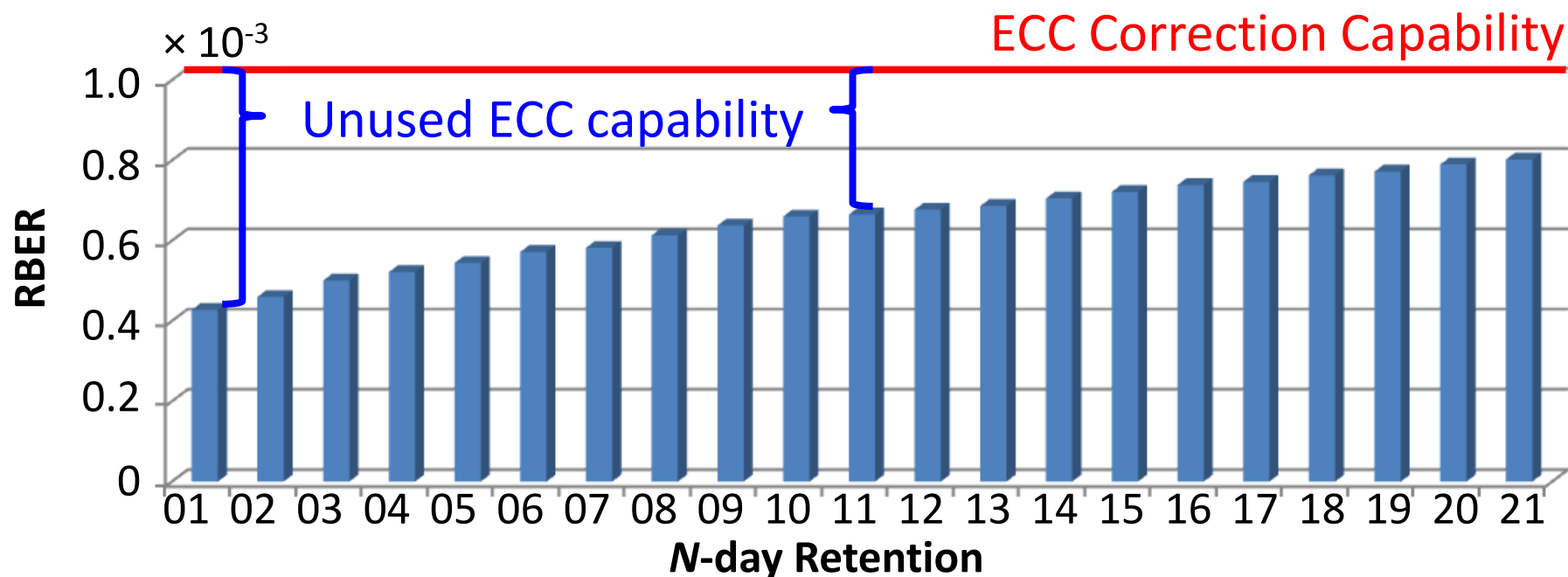


Read Errors Induced by V_{pass} Reduction

Reducing V_{pass} to 4.7V



Utilizing the Unused ECC Capability



1. Huge unused ECC correction capability can be used to tolerate read errors
2. Unused ECC capability decreases over time

Dynamically adjust V_{pass} so that read errors fully utilize the unused ECC capability

V_{pass} Reduction Trade-Off Summary

- Conservatively set V_{pass} to a high voltage
 - Accumulates more read disturb errors at the end of each refresh interval
 - + No read errors
- Dynamically adjust V_{pass} to unused ECC capability
 - + Minimize read disturb errors
 - Control read errors to be tolerable by ECC
 - If read errors exceed ECC capability, read again with a higher V_{pass} to correct read errors

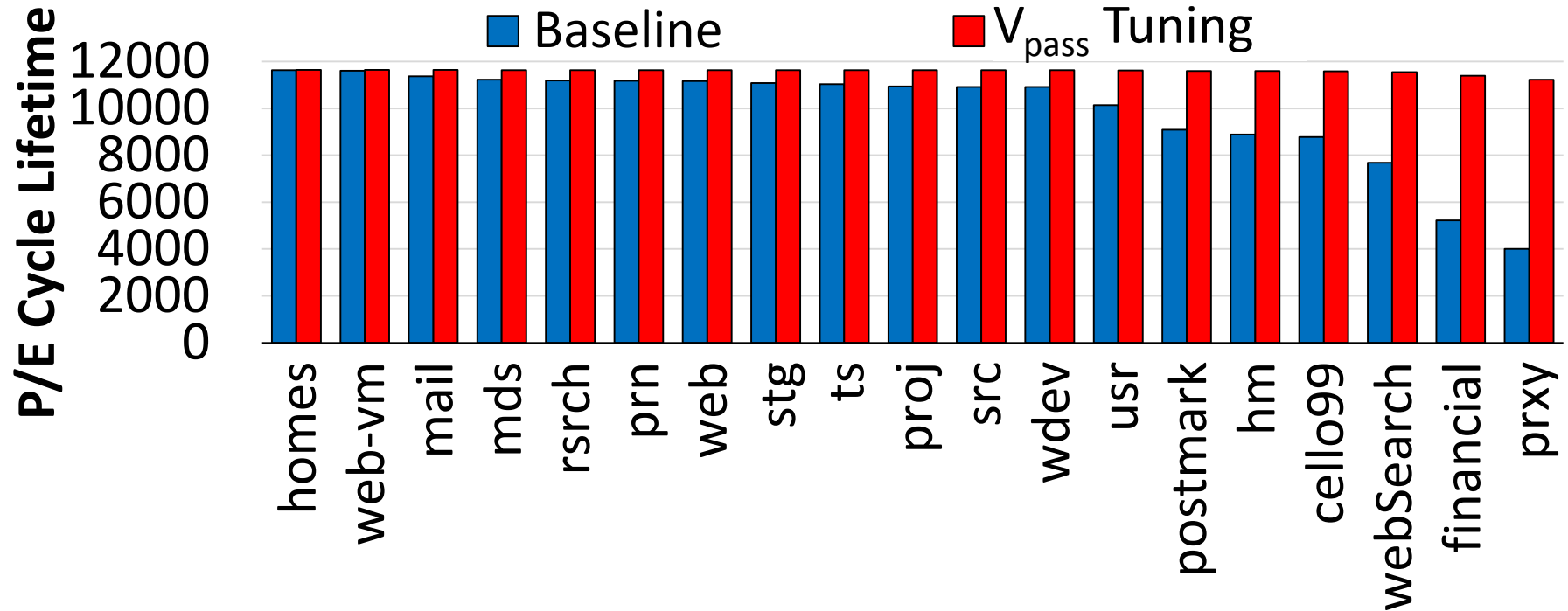
V_{pass} Tuning Steps

- Perform once for each block every day:
 1. Estimate *unused ECC capability*
 2. Aggressively reduce V_{pass} until *read errors exceeds ECC capability*
 3. Gradually increase V_{pass} until read error just becomes less than ECC capability

Evaluation of V_{pass} Tuning

- 19 real workload I/O traces
- Assume 7-day refresh period
- Similar methodology as before to determine acceptable V_{pass} reduction
- Overhead for a 512 GB flash drive:
 - 128 KB storage overhead for per-block V_{pass} setting and worst-case page
 - 24.34 sec/day average V_{pass} Tuning overhead

V_{pass} Tuning Lifetime Improvements

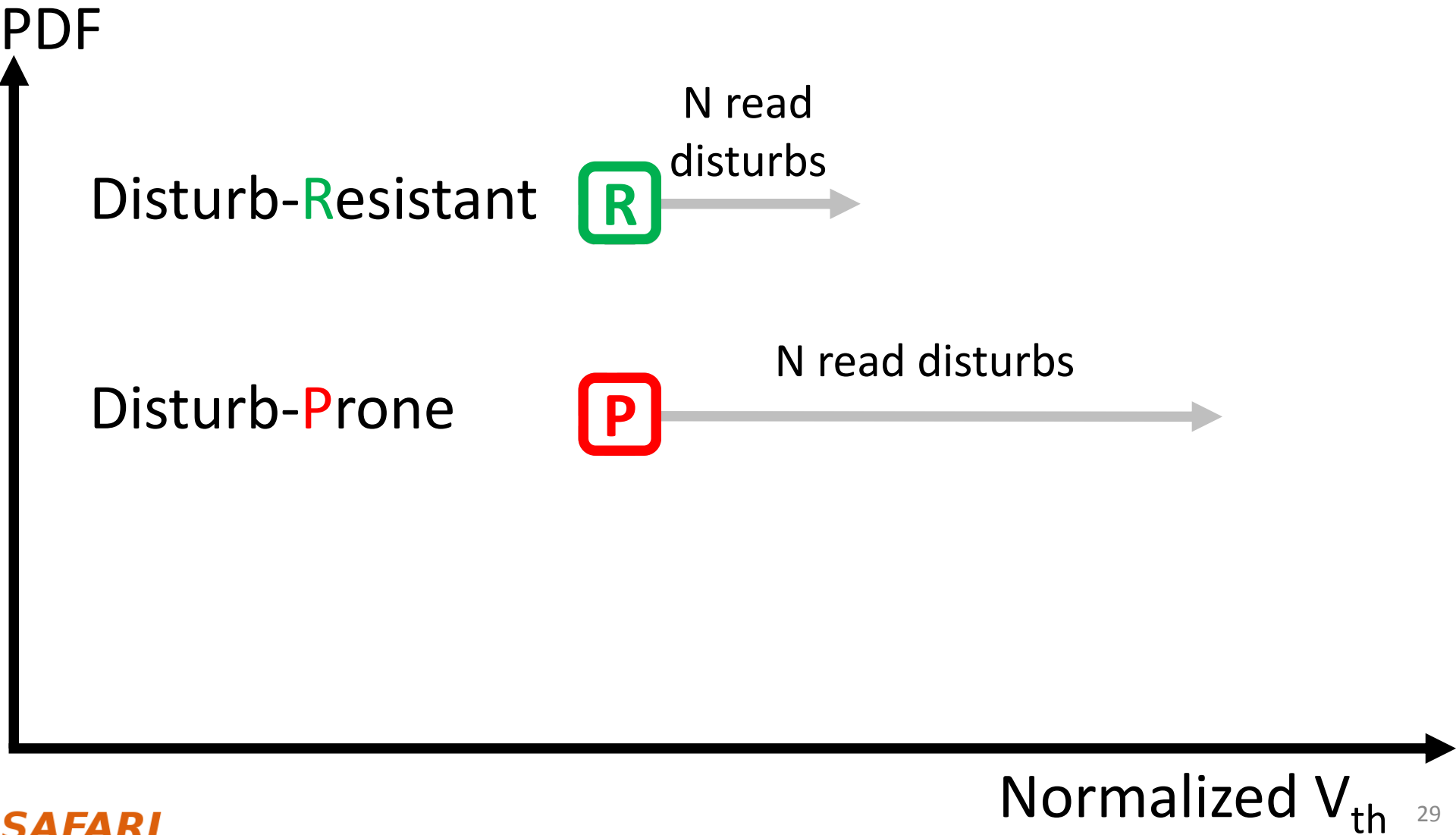


Average lifetime improvement: 21.0%

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Read Disturb Resistance

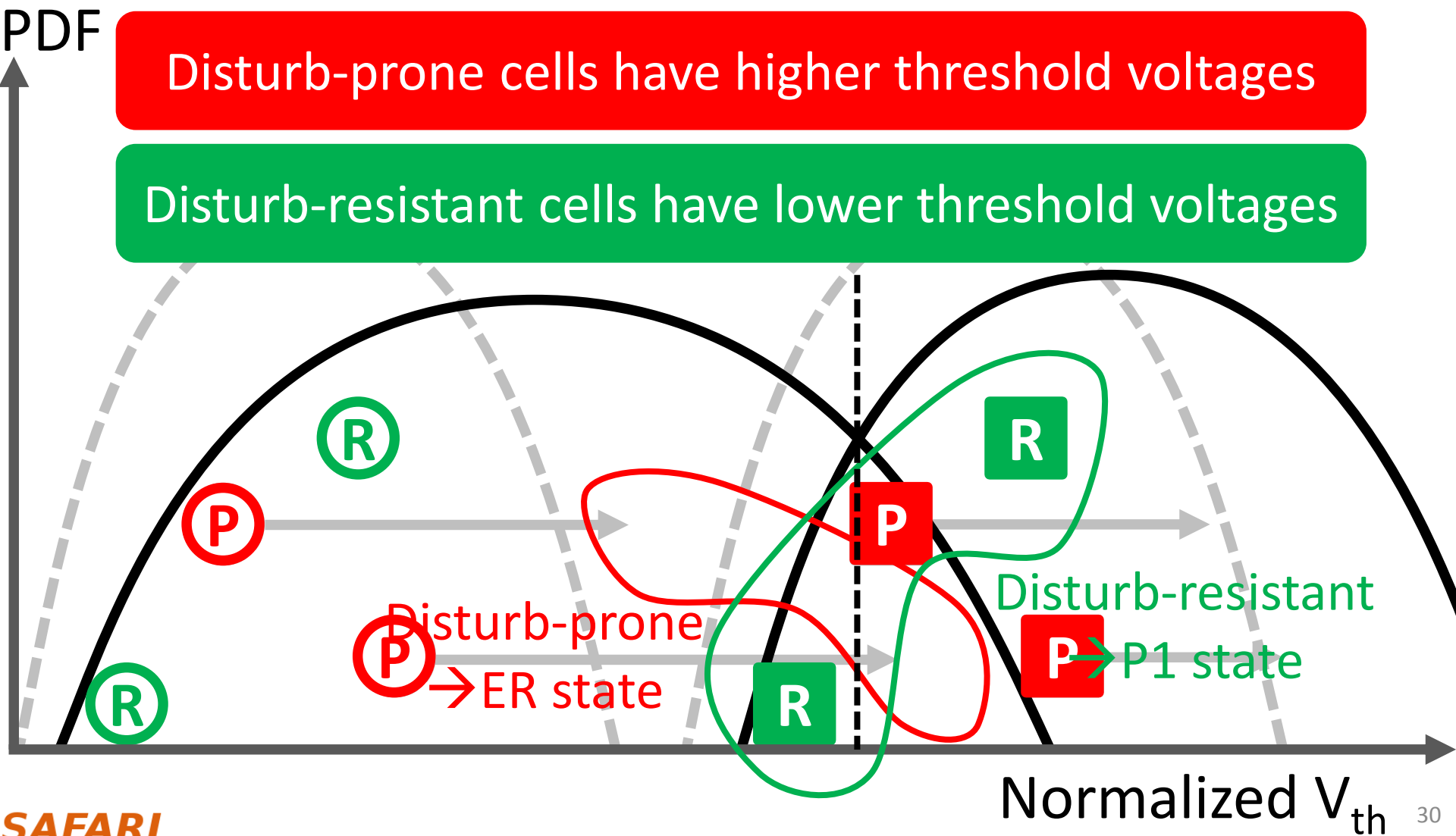


Observation 2: Some Flash Cells Are More Prone to Read Disturb

After 250K read disturb:

Disturb-prone cells have higher threshold voltages

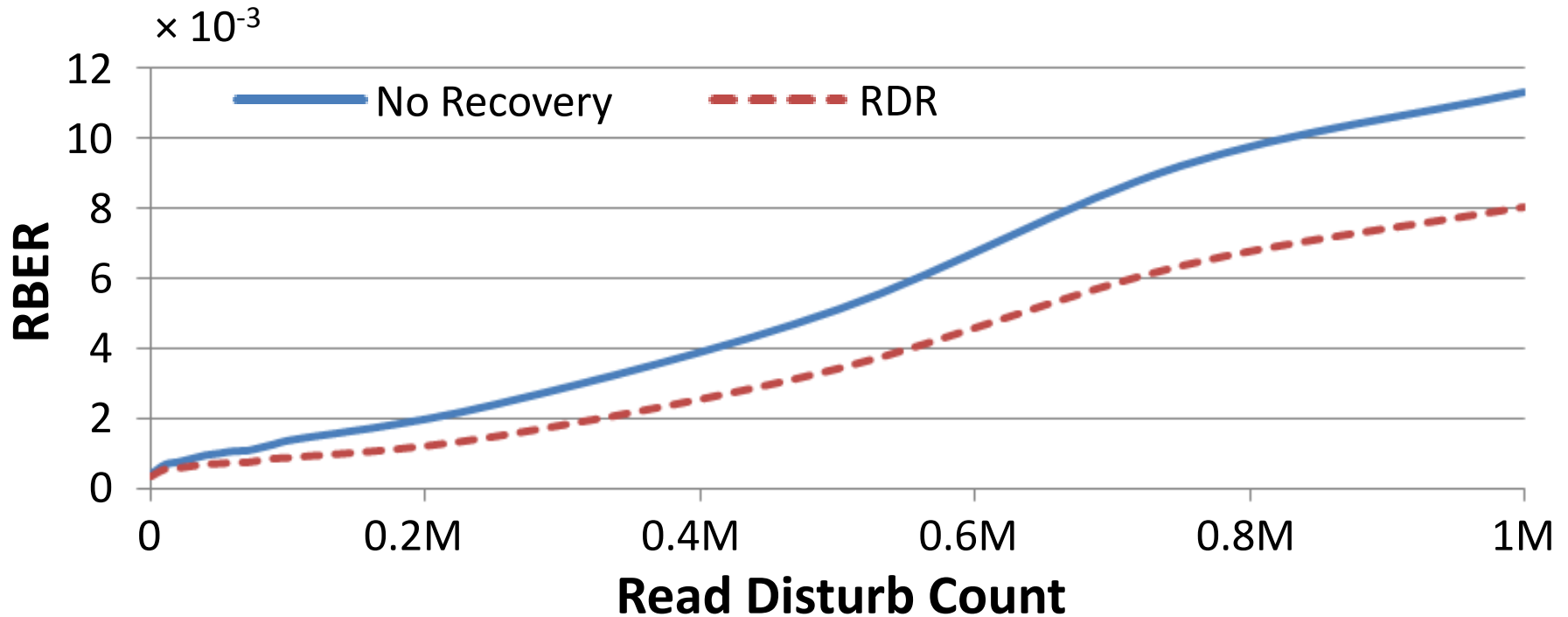
Disturb-resistant cells have lower threshold voltages



Read Disturb Oriented Error Recovery (RDR)

- Triggered by an uncorrectable flash error
 - Back up all valid data in the faulty block
 - Disturb the faulty page 100K times (more)
 - Compare V_{th} 's before and after read disturb
 - Select cells susceptible to flash errors ($V_{ref}-\sigma < V_{th} < V_{ref}+\sigma$)
 - Predict among these susceptible cells
 - Cells with more V_{th} shifts are disturb-prone → Higher V_{th} state
 - Cells with less V_{th} shifts are disturb-resistant → Lower V_{th} state

RDR Evaluation



Reduce total error counts up to 36% @ 1M read disturbs
ECC can be used to correct the remaining errors

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