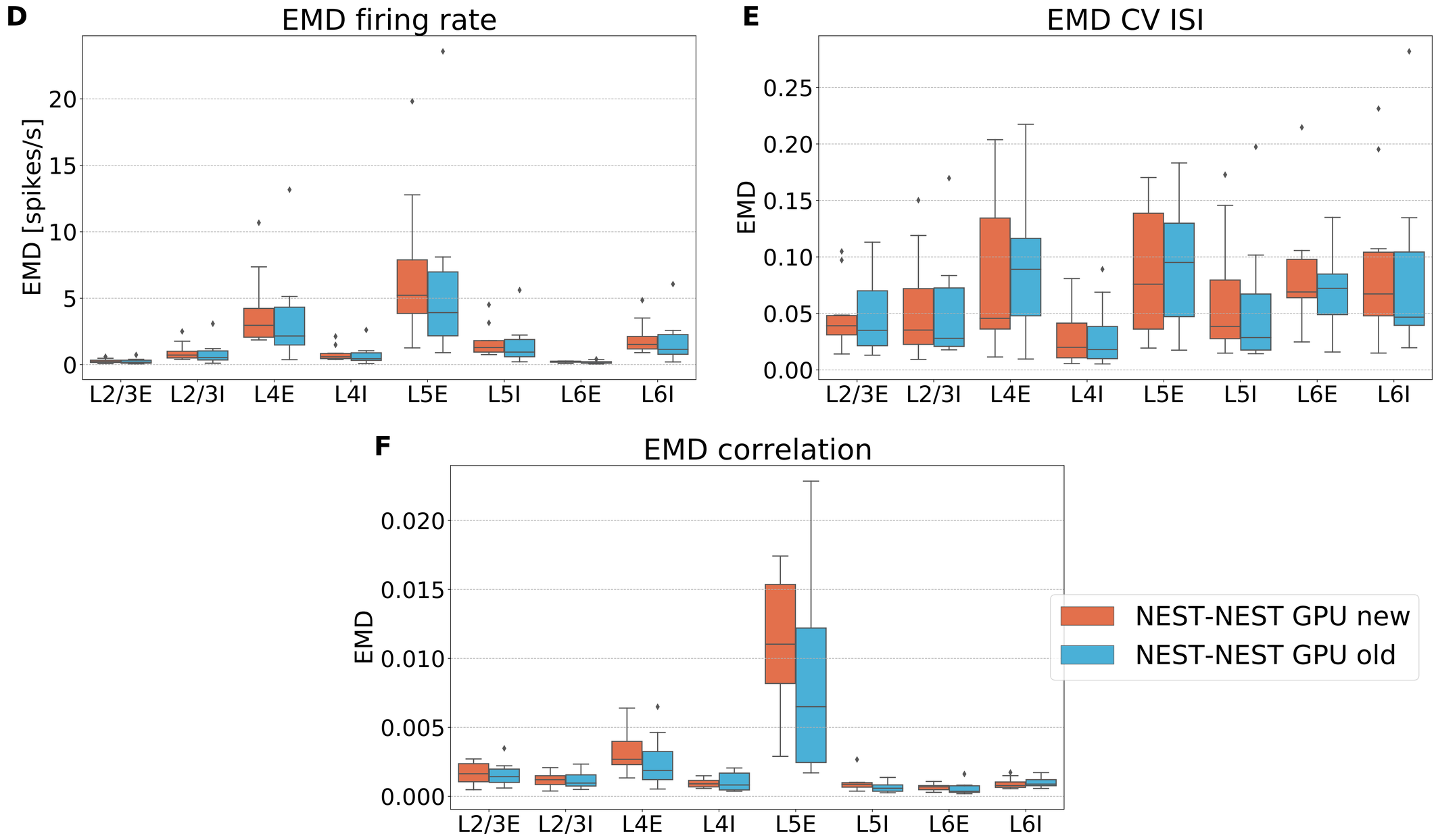metastable state