

October 18, 2016

Caitlin Urquhart  
St. John's, NL

Dear Members of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform,

**RE: How to make a VIRAL Facebook Event with over 9,000 members – Call for Electoral Reform**

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**i. MY STORY**

My name is Caitlin Urquhart. On election night 2015, I sat in my living room in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, with several friends watching the election results roll in. The emotional turmoil that followed led me to contemplate what actions I might take to rectify what appeared to me to be a broken electoral system.

As a political science major, I was familiar with some other electoral systems in place around the world. I recalled the sad situation Ontario found itself in in the wake of the 2007 referendum (I had been involved in the reform movement at that time).

**ii. A NEED FOR CHANGE**

Trudeau and the Liberals ran on a campaign promise that within 18 months, we would have electoral reform and that the election of 2015 would be the last under the old first past the post regime. I figured I would create a reminder in my calendar to follow up and hold Prime Minister Trudeau to his promise. I made a Facebook event called "Trudeau promised electoral reform" scheduled for 18 months from the after Election Day (April 20, 2017) and I invited a few friends. Within days thousands of people responded that they wanted to attend. The [event](#) went viral!

**iii. GOING VIRAL**

As of today's date, there are 9,455 people "attending" and another 1,405 "interested", not to mention the 13,645 invited to the event. I believe that the call for electoral reform struck a cord with people across Canada. It went viral because people recognize the need for electoral reform is urgent.

#### iv. HOW TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN?

Together with a volunteer from Fair Vote Canada, we developed a survey, which I posted in the event page on Monday October 3, 2016. We received 215 responses, a summary of which is attached hereto.

Due to the word limit, I could not include the qualitative responses provided by 78 survey participants. As such, I have summarized them as best I was able.

##### Principles of a new system

**Proportionality** and **making every vote count** (or equality of votes) were mentioned the most frequently, in 10 and 9 responses respectively. Respondents advised the committee to consider **diversity** of perspectives, **local/ regional** representation, **long-term policy** perspectives and **cooperation/** consensus-based decision-making as foundational principles for any new electoral system (garnering 5, 5, 3 and 5 comments respectively). There was a cluster of responses about **untethering representatives from their party**, increasing free votes (6) and more independents/ issue candidates (4). These comments also addressed concerns that MPs should represent their constituents first and their party if it aligned with the constituents. Respondents cited **simplicity** as an important consideration in choosing the next system (3).

##### How to achieve Reform and why

Interestingly, the topic of **referendum** was also mentioned 10 times; 8 people felt that there should not be a referendum, 1 thought it should be held after a few election cycles under a new system, and another proposed a ranked ballot referendum. People also wanted the process to involve **consultation**, be **non-partisan**, and **Canadian** designed. Respondents felt that **accountability** for the campaign promise of electoral reform was essential (6). Increasing **voter engagement** and education was a significant issue, mentioned 8 times with 2 calls for mandatory voting and 1 against mandatory voting. Concerns over Internet voting and call for greater Elections Canada oversight were included 3 times.

##### Which System would they choose?

Anything but FPTP	3
Single Transferable Vote	2
Mixed Member Proportional	2
Jean-Pierre Derriennic	1
Ranked ballot	1

**v. MY PERSONAL OPINION**

In my opinion the most pressing issue is **greater representation of minorities and women.**

The problem was not with “First-Past-the-Post” specifically but with the way this system functions in a multi-party democracy. Voters become disenfranchised because they don’t feel that their vote counts. While there is value and efficiency in consistently having majority governments (for example the government can pass legislation that may be unpopular for the majority but may provide advantages to minority groups), the current system does not create protection for minority groups. This power can be wielded to pass legislation that benefits the privileged elites and not those who actually need assistance and legislation to facilitate their self-actualization. Where women and visible minorities have a voice in the House of Commons, their views will not be silenced. This is the Canada we want and need to be.

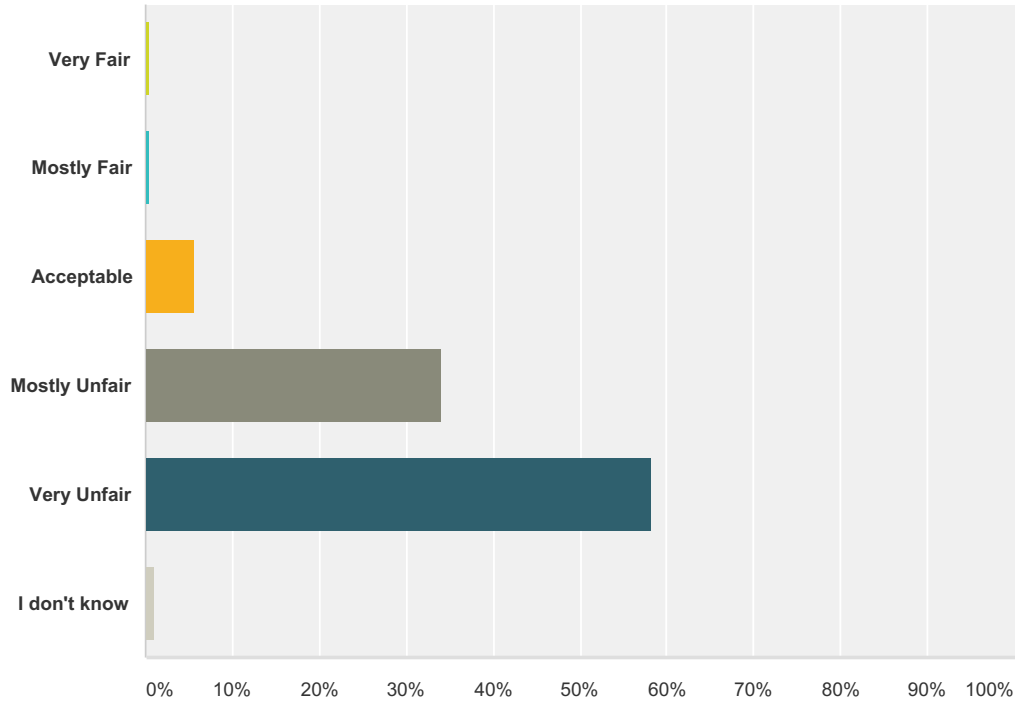
I thank you for the opportunity to provide this report. I hope you have found it informative. I welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these matters further.

Yours truly,

Caitlin Urquhart

### Q1 How would you describe the fairness of the current first-past-the-post system for voters and political parties?

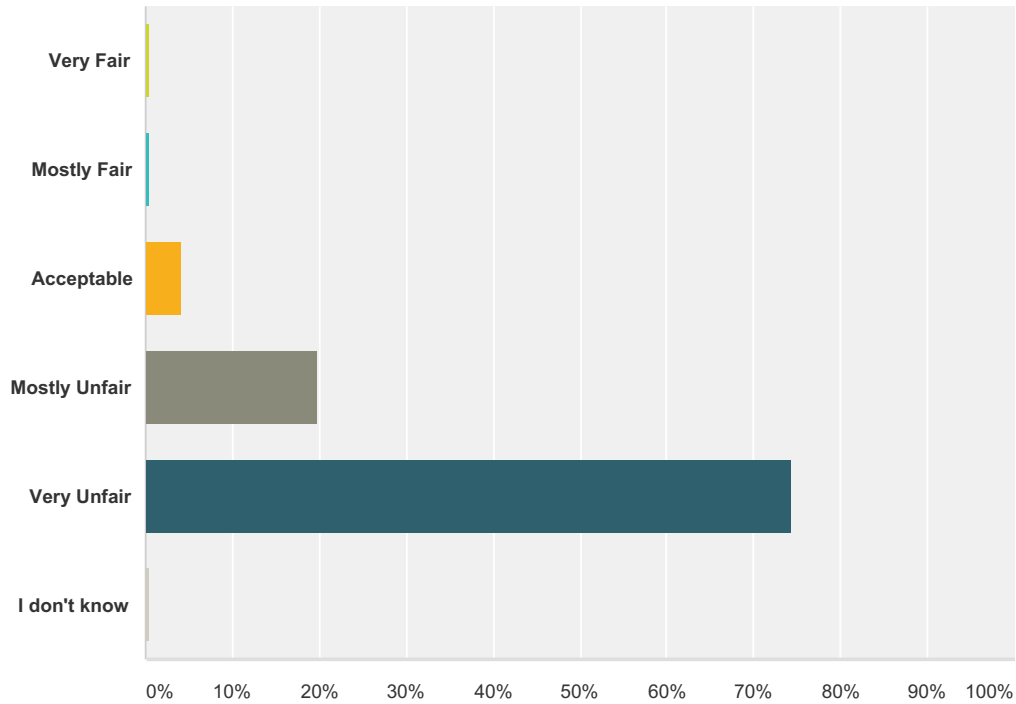
Answered: 211 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Very Fair	0.47%	1
Mostly Fair	0.47%	1
Acceptable	5.69%	12
Mostly Unfair	34.12%	72
Very Unfair	58.29%	123
I don't know	0.95%	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>211</b>

**Q2 Under our current first-past-the-post system, the winning party can form a majority government without majority voter support. Which of the following best summarizes your views about this?**

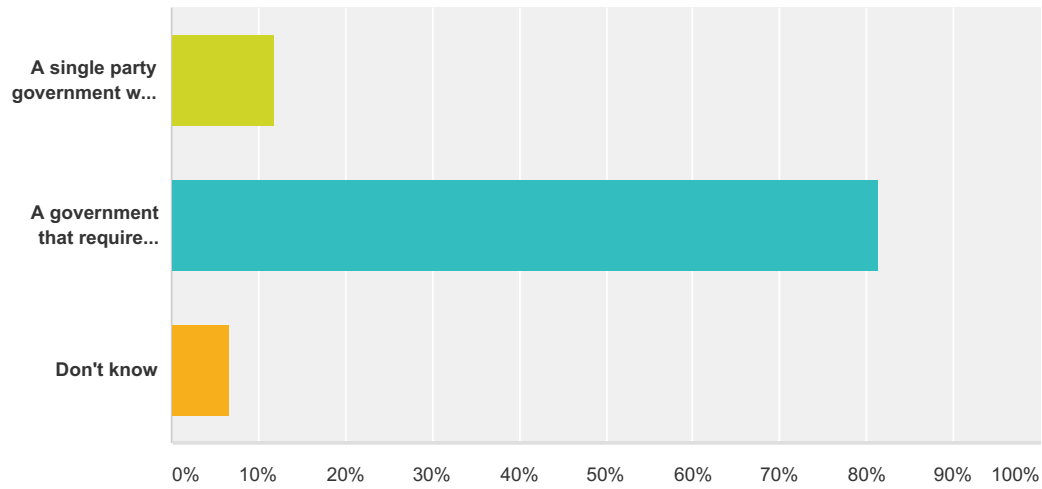
Answered: 211 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
Very Fair	0.47% 1
Mostly Fair	0.47% 1
Acceptable	4.27% 9
Mostly Unfair	19.91% 42
Very Unfair	74.41% 157
I don't know	0.47% 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>

### Q3 Under the current system, which of the following describes your preferred process for Parliament to pass legislation?

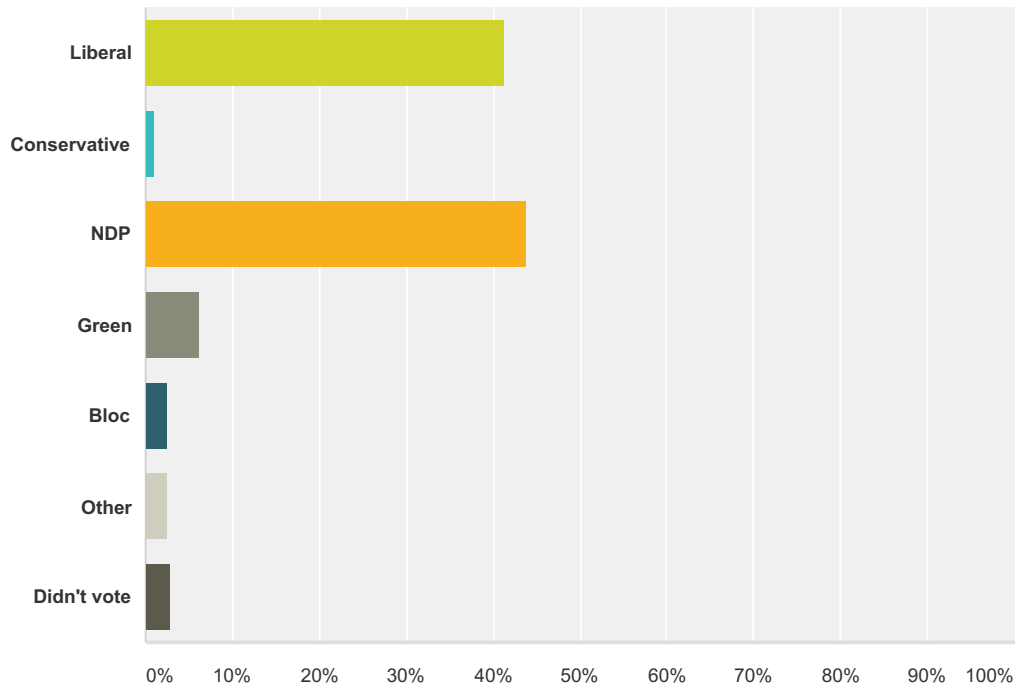
Answered: 210 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
A single party government with a majority able to pass legislation without the support of other parties	11.90% 25
A government that requires the support of other parties to pass legislation	81.43% 171
Don't know	6.67% 14
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>

### Q4 Which political party did you vote for in the last federal election on October 19, 2015?

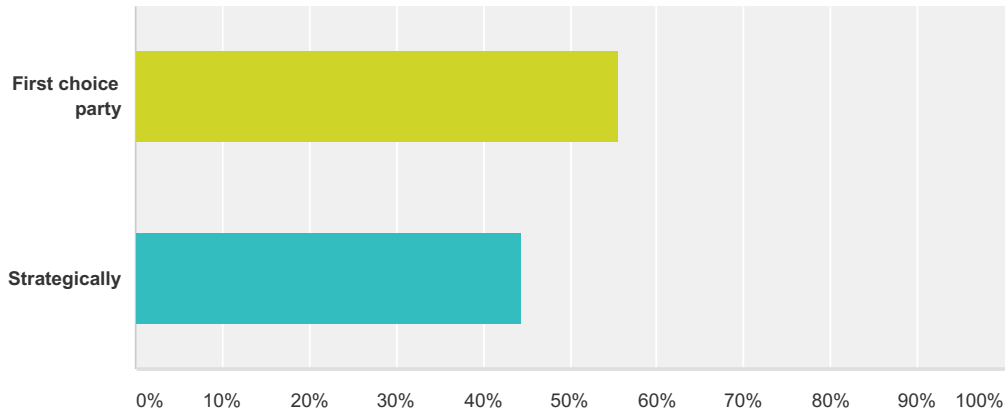
Answered: 208 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses
Liberal	41.35% 86
Conservative	0.96% 2
NDP	43.75% 91
Green	6.25% 13
Bloc	2.40% 5
Other	2.40% 5
Didn't vote	2.88% 6
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>

**Q5 In that election, did you vote for your first choice party, or did you vote strategically? Strategic voting means supporting a candidate that is not your first choice in order to prevent an undesirable candidate or party from winning.**

Answered: 207 Skipped: 5

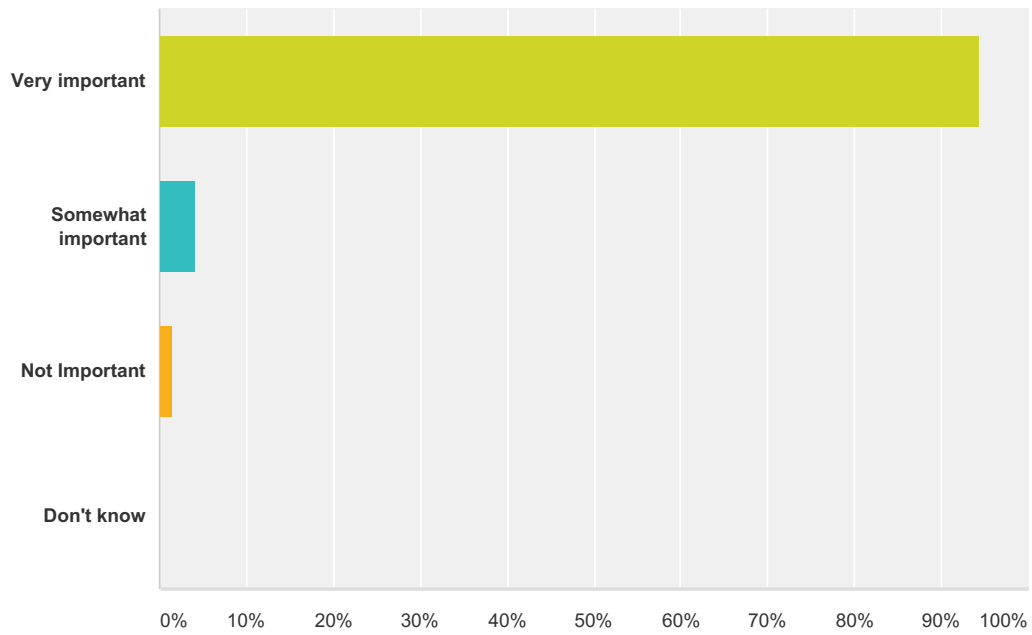


Answer Choices	Responses
First choice party	55.56% 115
Strategically	44.44% 92
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>



### Q6 How important is electoral reform to you?

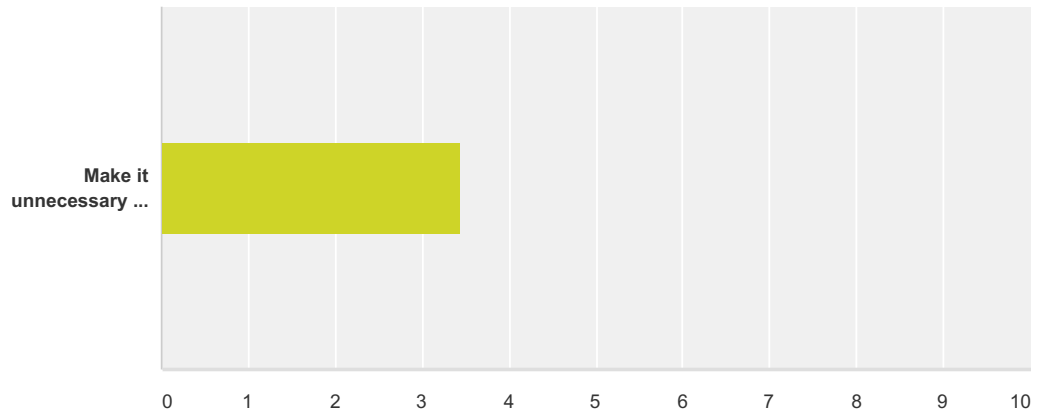
Answered: 211 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
Very important	94.31% 199
Somewhat important	4.27% 9
Not Important	1.42% 3
Don't know	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>

### Q7 Reducing strategic voting

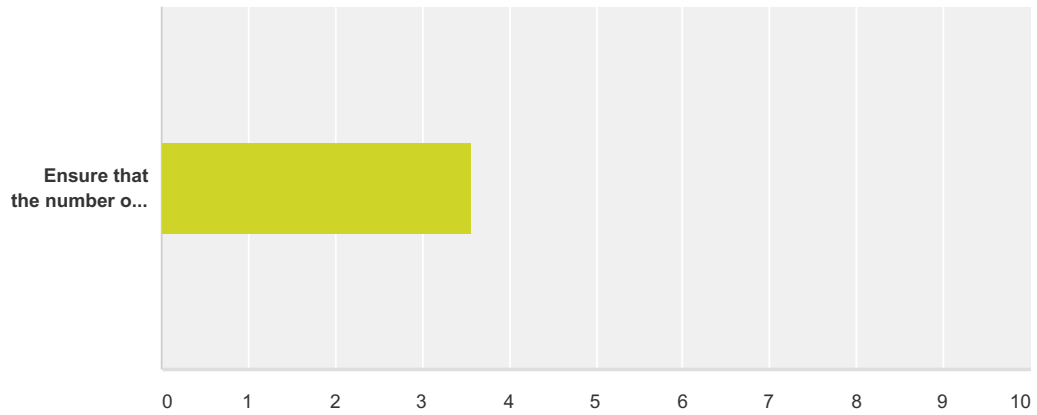
Answered: 198 Skipped: 14



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Make it unnecessary for voters to vote strategically	4.04% 8	1.52% 3	5.05% 10	24.24% 48	65.15% 129	198	3.45

### Q8 Proportional

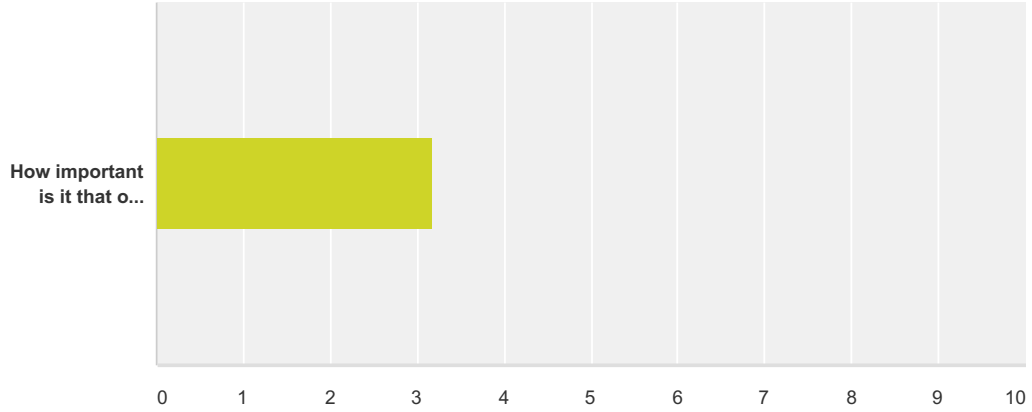
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Ensure that the number of parliamentary seats of each party should correspond to its share of the popular vote, and that voters for different parties are fairly represented in Parliament	1.51% 3	0.50% 1	5.53% 11	23.12% 46	69.35% 138	199	3.58

### Q9 Improving diversity: representation of women, First Nations and minorities in Parliament

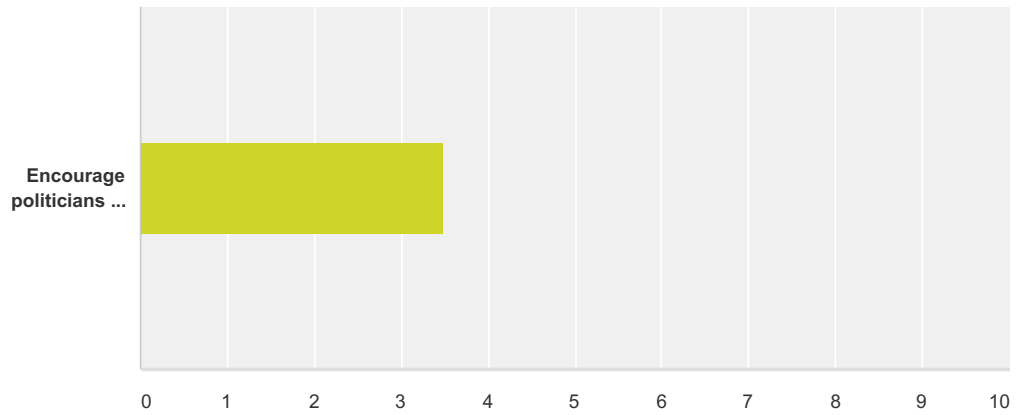
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
How important is it that our Parliament reflect the diversity of Canada?	1.51% 3	3.02% 6	15.58% 31	36.68% 73	43.22% 86	199	3.17

### Q10 Policy Perspective

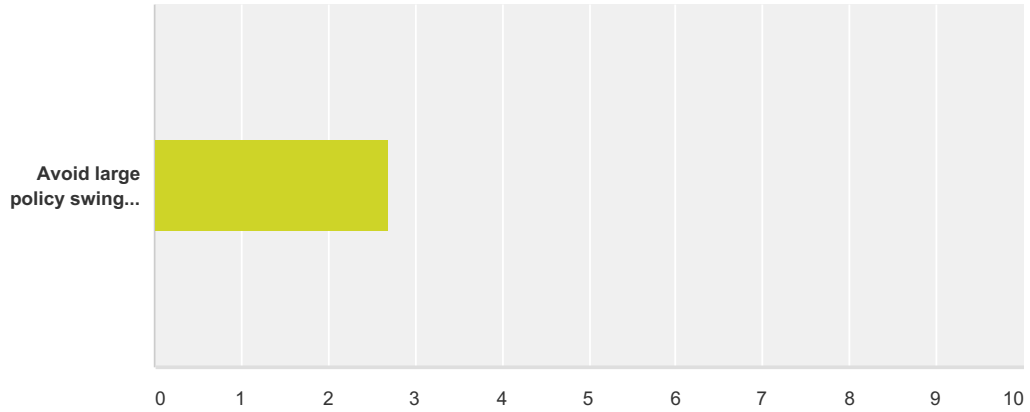
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Encourage politicians to take a long-term policy perspective	0.50% 1	1.01% 2	10.55% 21	25.13% 50	62.81% 125	199	3.49

### Q11 Policy Swings: How important is it to avoid drastic policy swings from one government to the next?

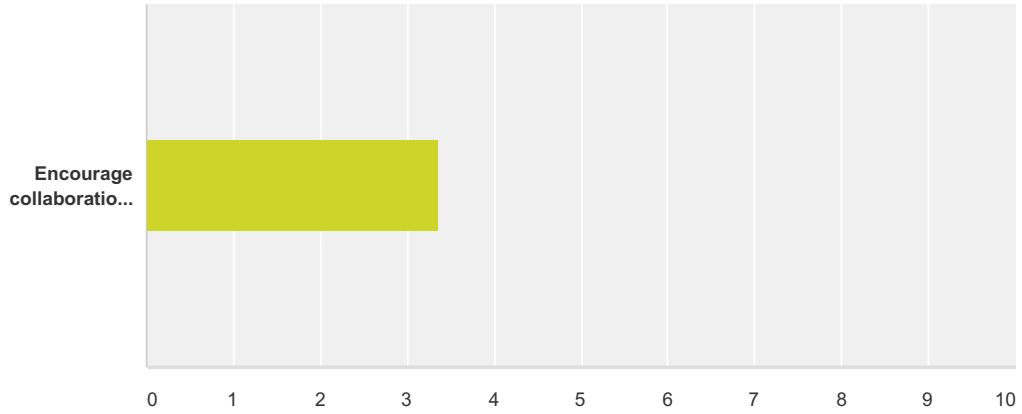
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Avoid large policy swings from one government to the next due to small changes voter preferences	3.52% 7	9.55% 19	28.64% 57	30.15% 60	28.14% 56	199	2.70

### Q12 Collaboration: How important is it that parliamentarians collaborate and compromise?

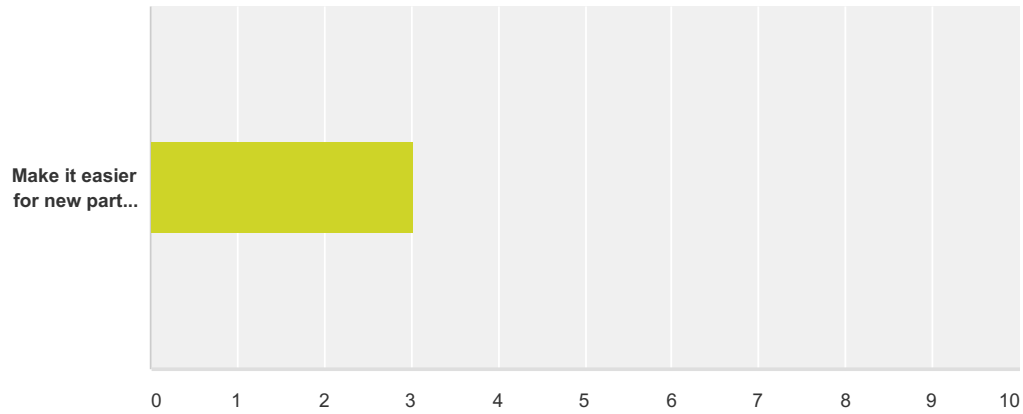
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Encourage collaboration and compromise among parties when discussing policy options	0.50% 1	2.01% 4	11.06% 22	34.17% 68	52.26% 104	199	3.36

### Q13 New Parties and Independents: How important is it to ensure that new and/or smaller parties be represented in parliament (based on popular vote)

Answered: 198 Skipped: 14

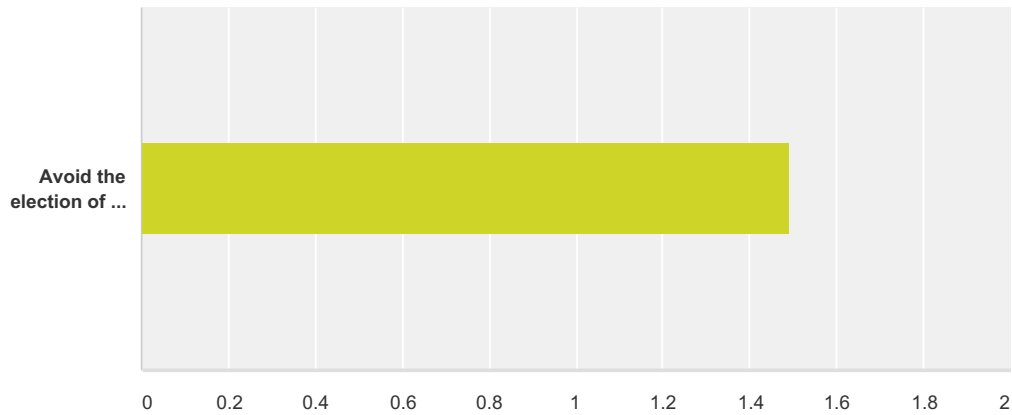


	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Make it easier for new parties to form and achieve representation	2.02% 4	6.57% 13	18.69% 37	31.82% 63	40.91% 81	198	3.03



### Q14 New Parties: How important is it to avoid the election of MPs from too many small parties?

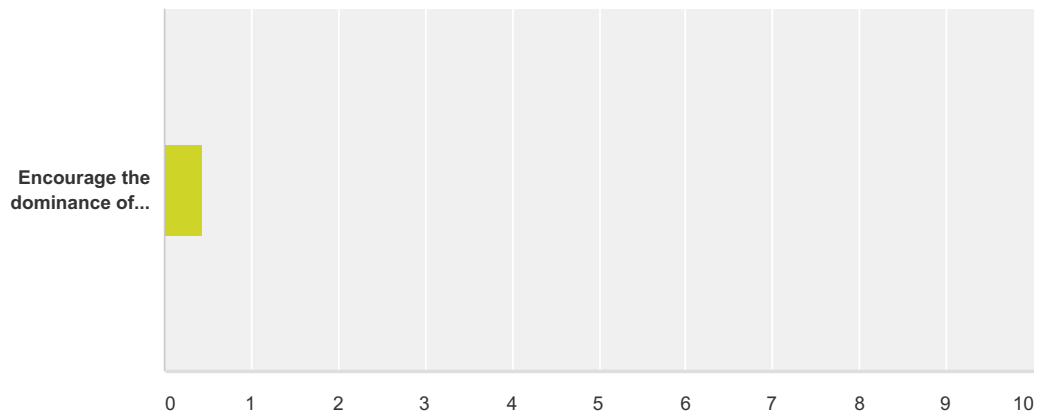
Answered: 198 Skipped: 14



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Avoid the election of MPs from too many small parties	24.75% 49	29.29% 58	24.75% 49	14.65% 29	6.57% 13	198	1.49

### Q15 Large parties: How important is it that there are two major parties?

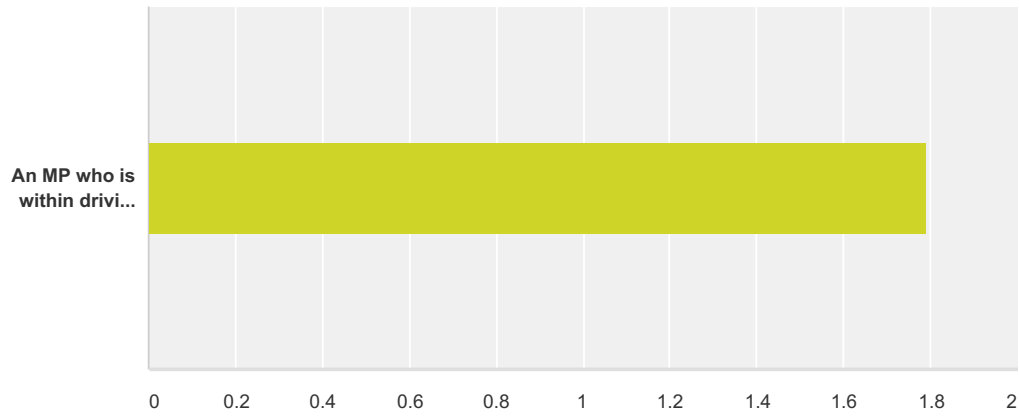
Answered: 198 Skipped: 14



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Encourage the dominance of two major parties	71.21% 141	19.19% 38	5.56% 11	2.53% 5	1.52% 3	198	0.44

### Q16 How important is the following to you when considering local representation?

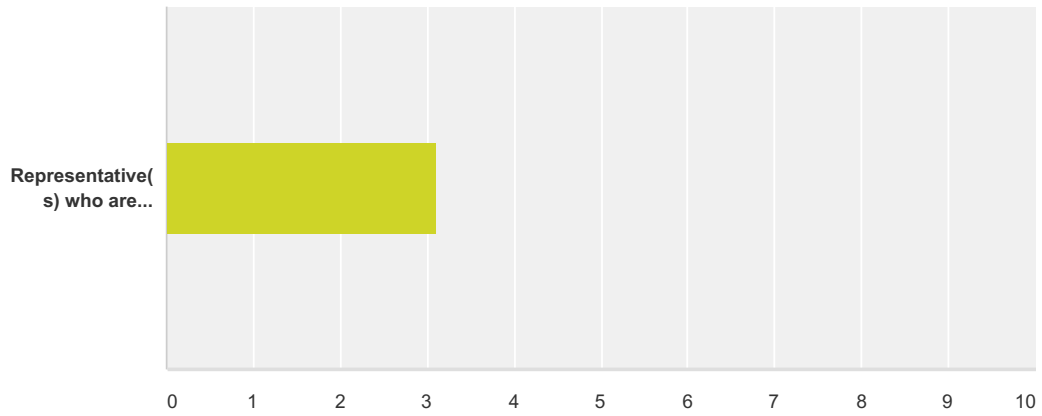
Answered: 198 Skipped: 14



	Not important at all	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
An MP who is within driving distance	19.70% 39	21.21% 42	30.30% 60	17.68% 35	11.11% 22	198	1.79

### Q17 How important is the following to you when considering local representation?

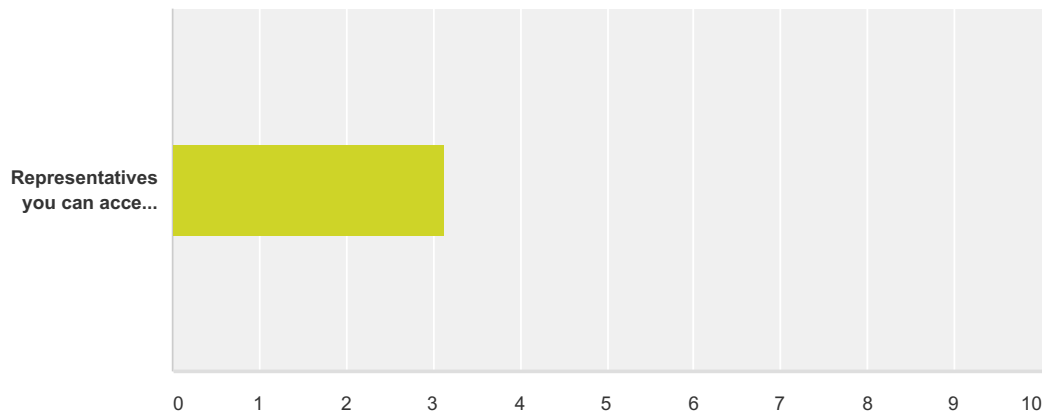
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Representative(s) who are accountable to you in your area and understand local issues	1.51% 3	3.52% 7	18.59% 37	35.18% 70	41.21% 82	199	3.11

### Q18 How important is the following to you when considering local representation?

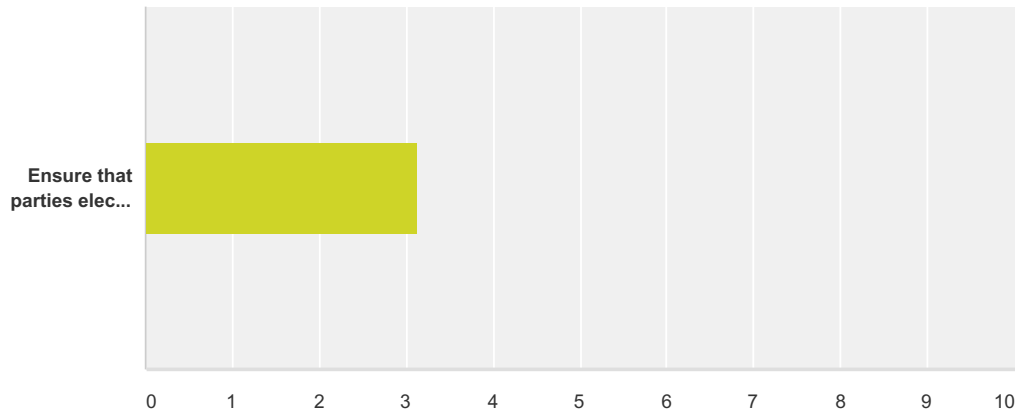
Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Representatives you can access via online resources	0.50% 1	5.03% 10	16.58% 33	36.18% 72	41.71% 83	199	3.14

### Q19 How important is the following to you when considering local representation?

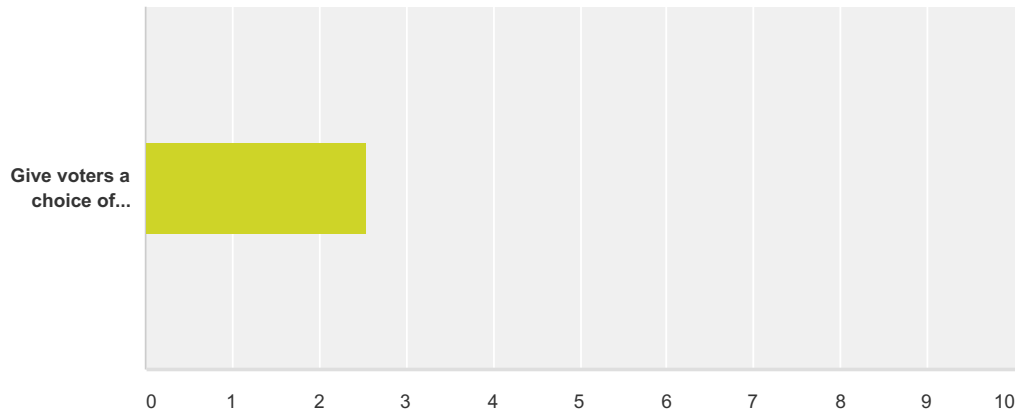
Answered: 198 Skipped: 14



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Ensure that parties elect representatives across the country in proportion to their share of the votes in each region (each region reflects the political diversity of its voters)	1.52% 3	5.56% 11	10.61% 21	41.92% 83	40.40% 80	198	3.14

### Q20 Voter choice

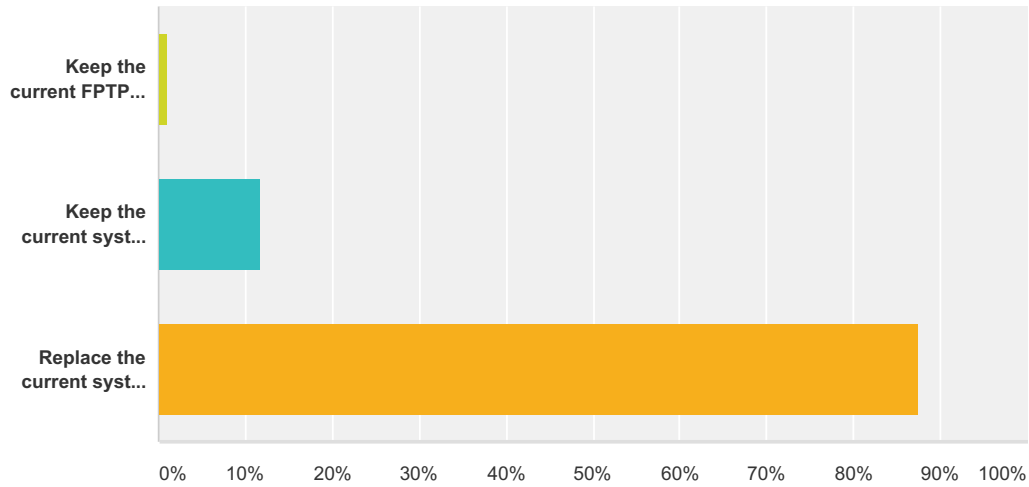
Answered: 200 Skipped: 12



	Not important at all/bad thing	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Fundamental importance	Total	Weighted Average
Give voters a choice of candidates from the same party to make sure that we elect the best representatives in each party	5.50% 11	11.00% 22	30.00% 60	31.00% 62	22.50% 45	200	2.54

### Q21 Given a choice between keeping the current First-past-the-Post system, or changing it, what would be your preference?

Answered: 198 Skipped: 14

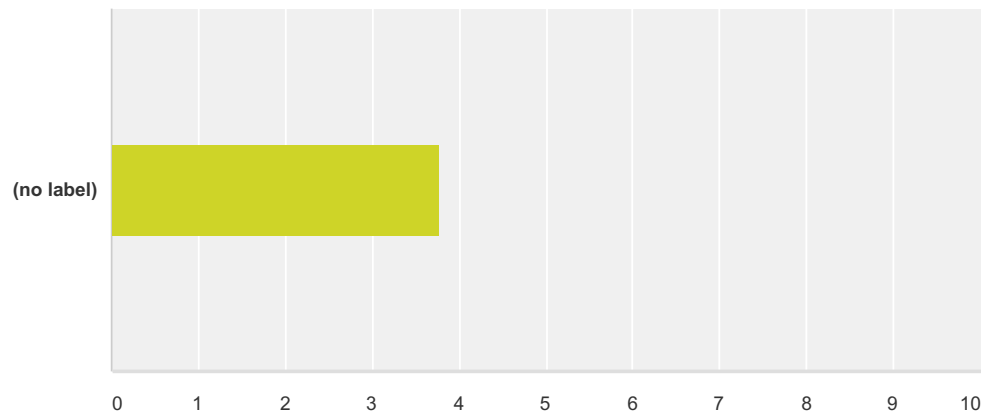


Answer Choices	Responses
Keep the current FPTP system based on single-member ridings in which the candidate with the most votes is elected MP	1.01% 2
Keep the current system but add the option of ranked ballots with instant runoff, otherwise known as the Alternative Vote system, which also uses single member ridings and elects a single winner per riding. AV is a majoritarian system. The difference with FPTP is that the winner must earn 50% of either first or second-order preferences to be elected.	11.62% 23
Replace the current system with some form of proportional representation, where the number of seats in Parliament approximates each party's share of the vote.	87.37% 173
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>



### Q22 Please indicate how strongly you feel about this issue?

Answered: 199 Skipped: 13



	Very limited importance	(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Utmost importance	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.01% 4	17.59% 35	80.40% 160	199	3.78