

# The Public Outlook on Electoral Reform

*What do Canadians want?*

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*Presented to Special Committee on Electoral Reform*

*October 20, 2016*

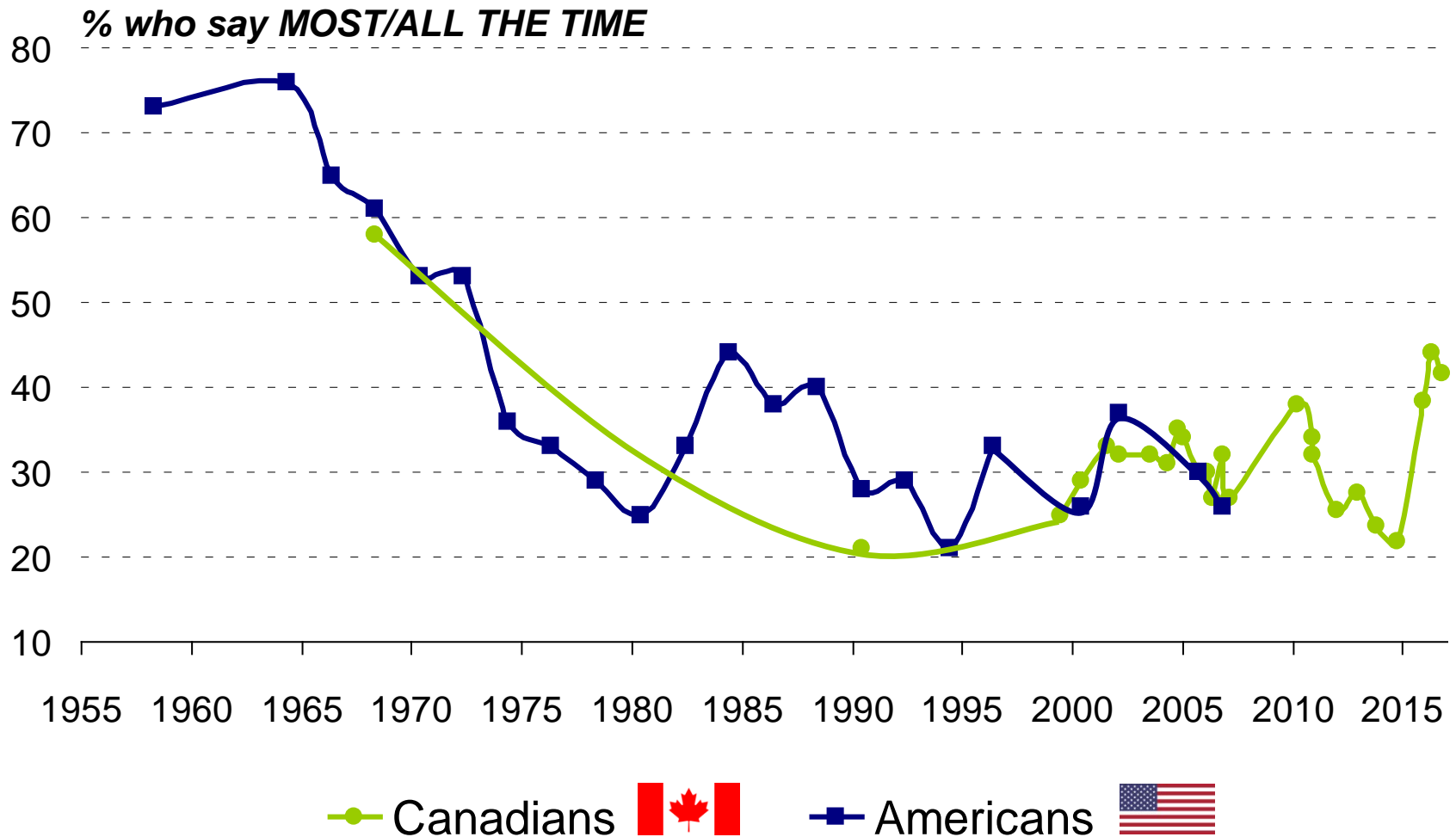


# Current state of health of democracy

- » Precipitous decline in trust over past several decades
- » Broad sense among Canadians that governments do not care what they think
- » The system is in disrepair, but not hopelessly broken
- » Canadians want to rethink – not reinvent – democracy

# Tracking trust in government

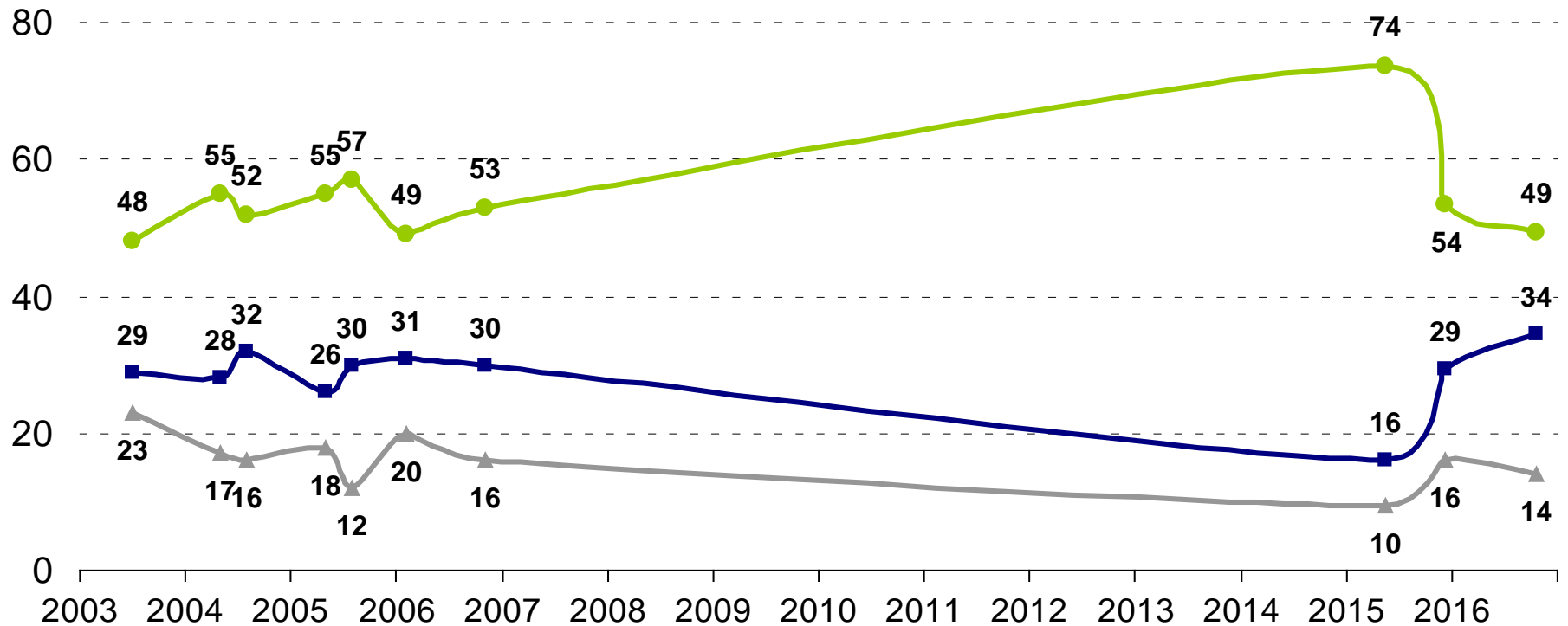
Q. How much do you trust the government in Ottawa/Washington to do what is right?



# Tracking political cynicism

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

*"I don't think the government cares much about what people like me think"*



■ Disagree (1-3)

▲ Neither (4)

● Agree (5-7)

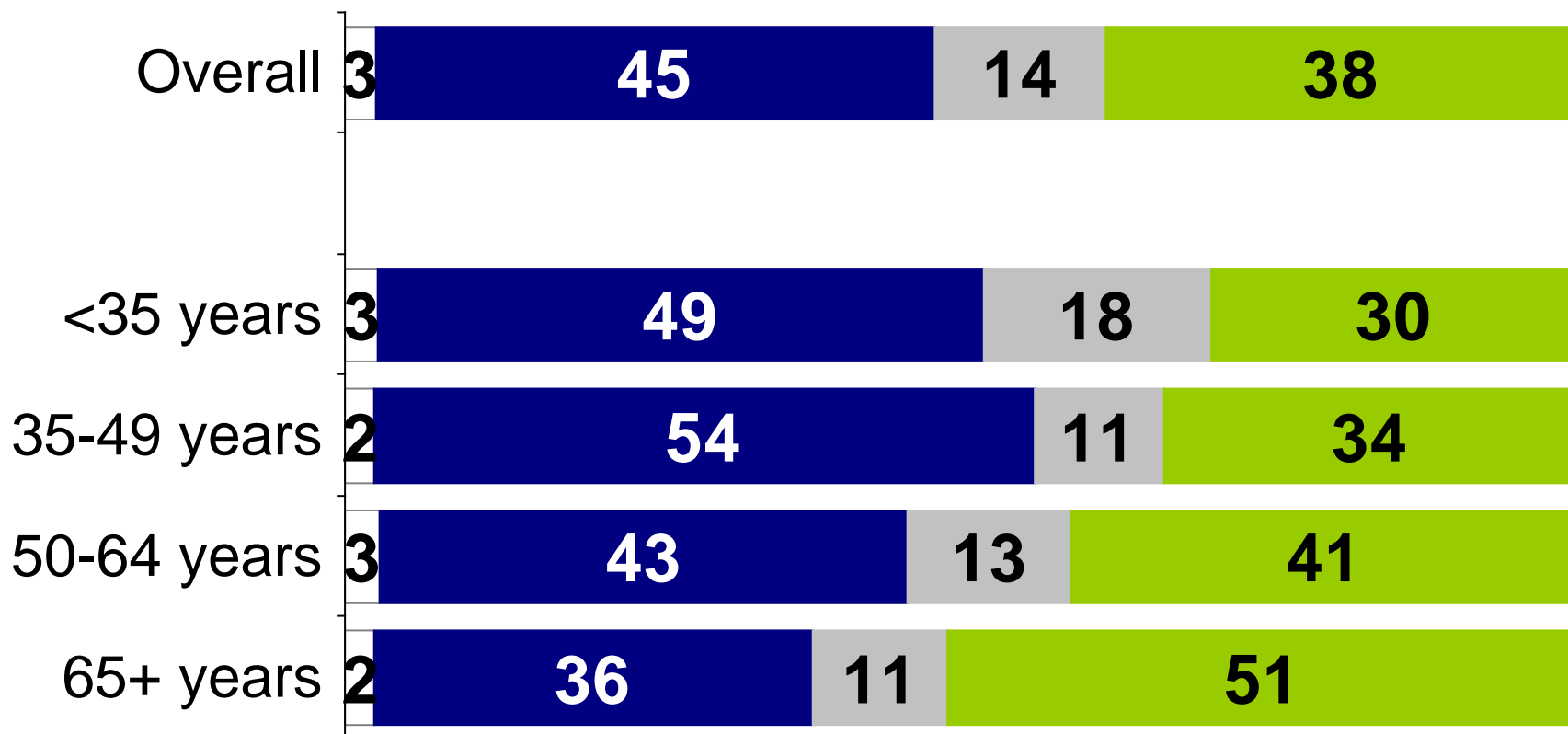
# Dominant principles of electoral reform

- » The public are split, but most want to move forward with electoral reform
  - Modest majority think changes are needed, but a third think current system is sound
- » There are **three** dominant principles which capture the essence of an ideal electoral system:
  1. Legitimacy
  2. Good government
  3. Equality (i.e., all votes should be of equal value)

# Need for democratic change by age

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

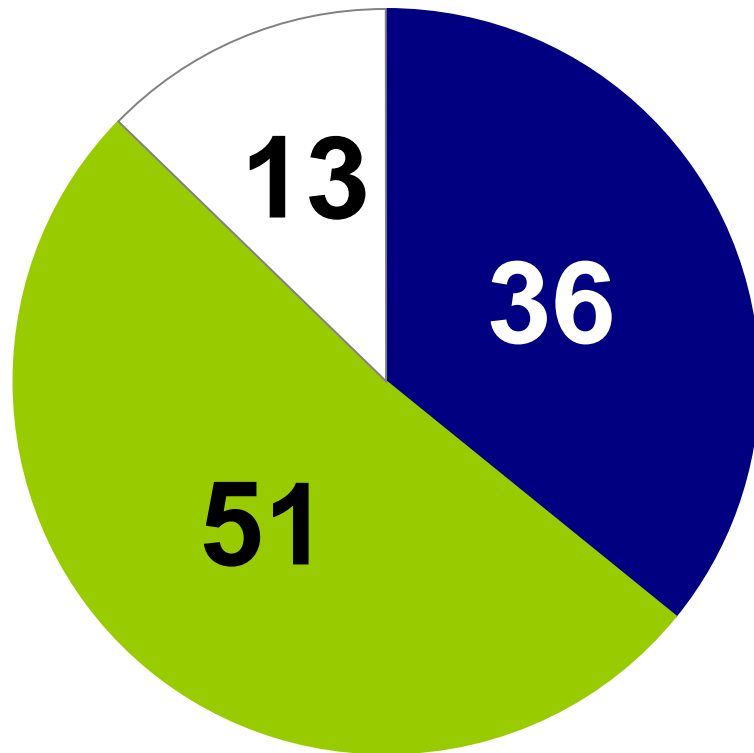
*"I see no reason to make major changes in how democracy in Canada works"*



□ DK/NR   ■ Disagree (1-3)   ■ Neither (4)   ■ Agree (5-7)

# Perceived need for electoral reform

*Q. Which of the following views comes closest to your own?*



- Canada's electoral system does a good job in representing the will of voters and doesn't need to be changed
- Canada's electoral system does not do a good job in representing what voters want and needs to be changed
- DK/NR

# Preferences for electoral reform

- » We tested two descriptions of the two main alternatives to first-past-the-post (FPTP)
  - Similar results, but FPTP performed better under more detailed description
- » The clear lean is to go ahead with some form of proportional representation which meets the ideal of a more equal democracy
  - This will leave certain groups unhappy, but there will be greater unhappiness in the (much larger) rest of Canada if there are no changes
- » The public expect the current government to deliver on its campaign promise to reform electoral system
  - However, the public see no need for undue haste
  - Clear lean to wanting this solved before the next election, but margin not huge

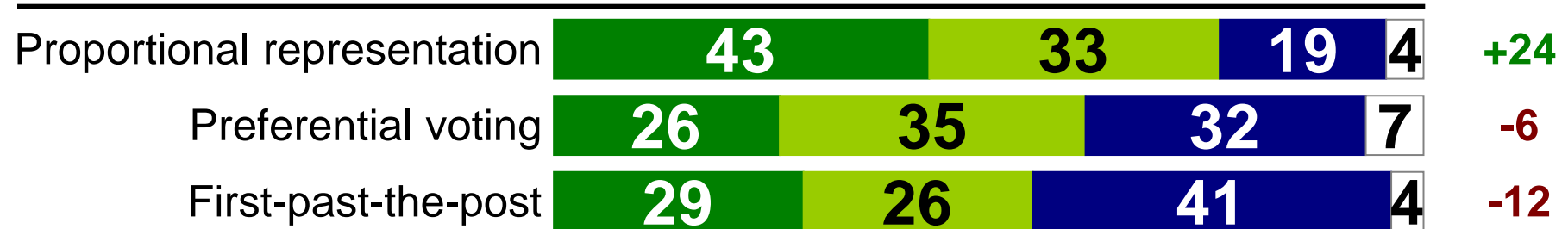


# Preferred form of electoral reform

Q. Please rank these three systems from best to worst in terms of how beneficial you think they would be for Canada.

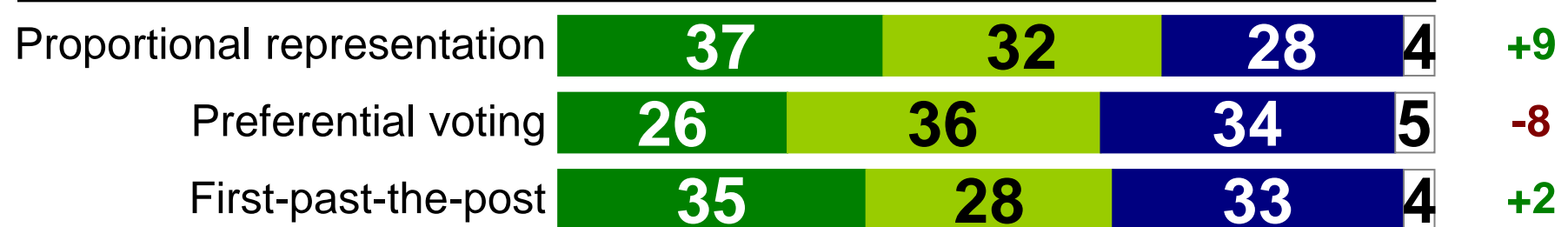
**NET ADV.**  
(best minus worst)

## Brief introduction



BASE: Canadians (half-sample, online only); October 12-18, 2016, n=815, MOE +/- 3.4%, 19 times out of 20

## Detailed introduction (i.e., 'informed' respondents)



BASE: Canadians (half-sample, online only); October 12-18, 2016, n=807, MOE +/- 4.5%, 19 times out of 20

- Best option for Canada
- Second-best option for Canada
- Worst option for Canada
- DK/NR

# Views on electoral reform

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

*Electoral reform is something the Liberal Party campaigned on, so they should deliver on this promise*



*Electoral reform is too important to be rushed; the process should be slowed down and subjected to more public consultations*



*Electoral reform is crucially important and should not be delayed for another election cycle*



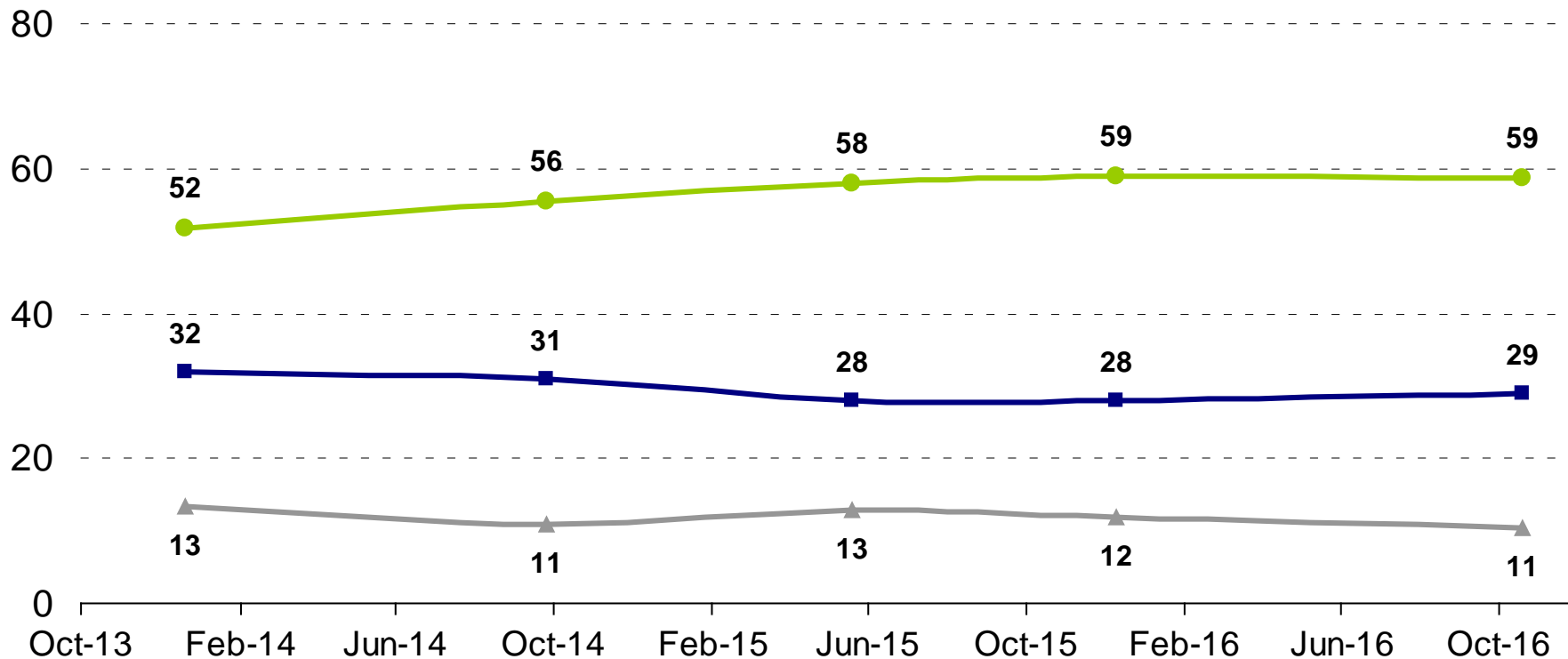
DK/NR     Disagree (1-3)     Neither (4)     Agree (5-7)

# Broadening the horizons of reform

- » Public warm to other innovations such as mandatory voting and an online ballot
  - Strong case for doing both
- » Huge demand for routinizing informed, reflected, and representative citizen engagement in federal governance

# Support for compulsory voting

**Q.** A number of countries such as Australia and Brazil have implemented compulsory voting, where citizens are required to vote in elections. Would you oppose or support introducing compulsory voting in Canada?



■ Oppose (1-3)
▲ Neither (4)
● Support (5-7)

# Popularity of online voting

*Q. If Elections Canada offered a safe way of voting online - that is, on the internet - how likely is it that you would vote online in the next federal election?*

## October 2016



**BASE:** Canadians (online only); October 12-18, 2016, n=1,622, MOE +/- 2.4%, 19 times out of 20

## December 2015



**BASE:** Canadians (online only); December 7-10, 2015, n=1,811, MOE +/- 2.3%, 19 times out of 20

## December 2009

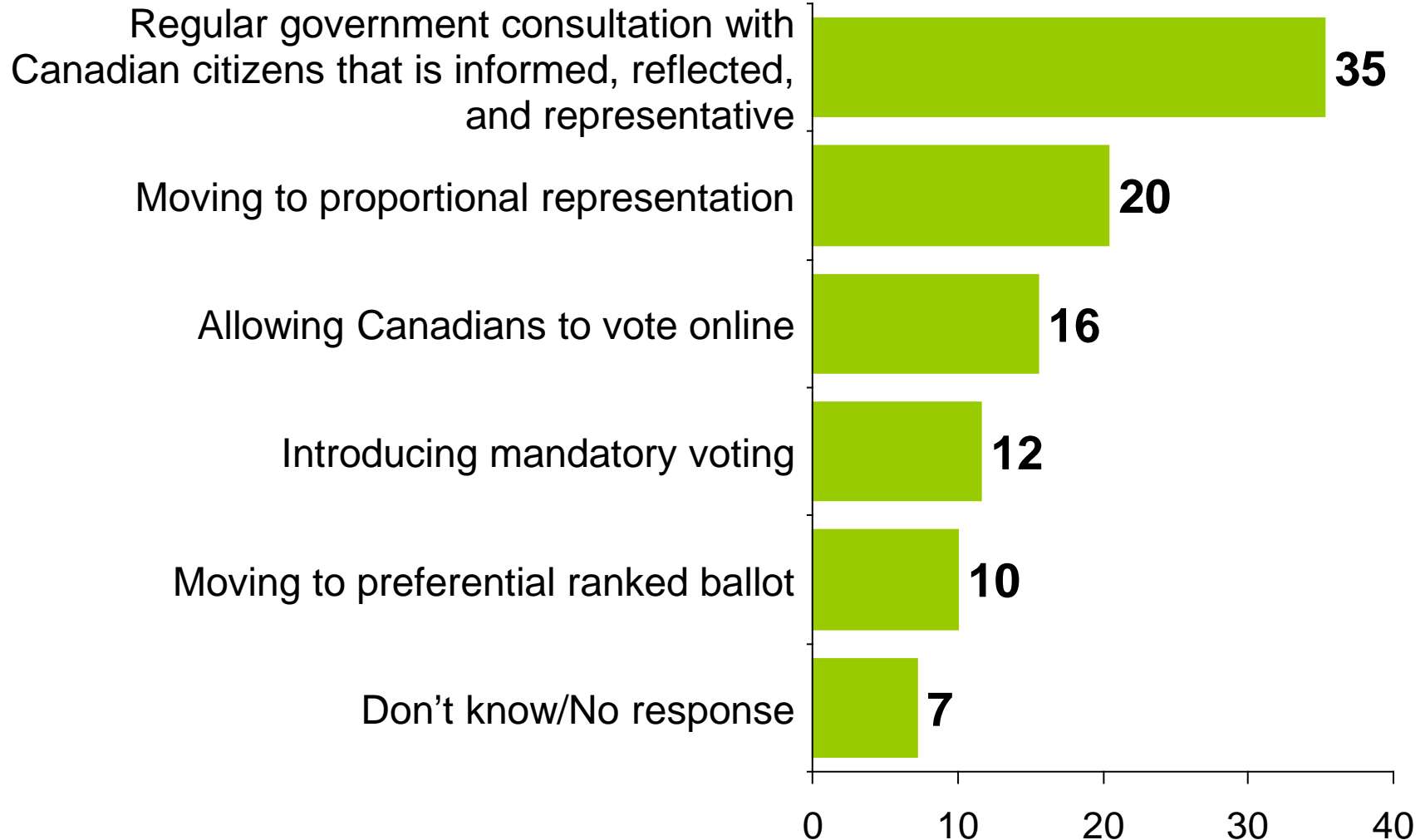


**BASE:** Canadians; December 9-15, 2015 (n=3,300), MOE +/- 1.7%, 19 times out of 20

□ DK/NR/NA ■ Not at all likely ■ Not very likely ■ Somewhat likely ■ Very likely

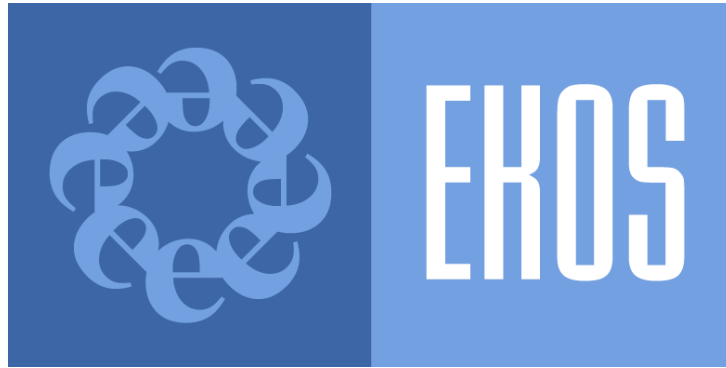
# Best method for improving democratic health

*Q. In your opinion, which of the following would be the best way of improving democratic health in Canada?*



# Conclusions

- » The public want reforms which will enhance legitimacy, equality, and good government
- » No need for recklessness or speed, but there is a will and a need to move forward to the next level



## For more information:

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