

The Public Outlook on Electoral Reform

What do Canadians want?

By FRANK GRAVES

Presented to Special Committee on Electoral Reform

October 20, 2016

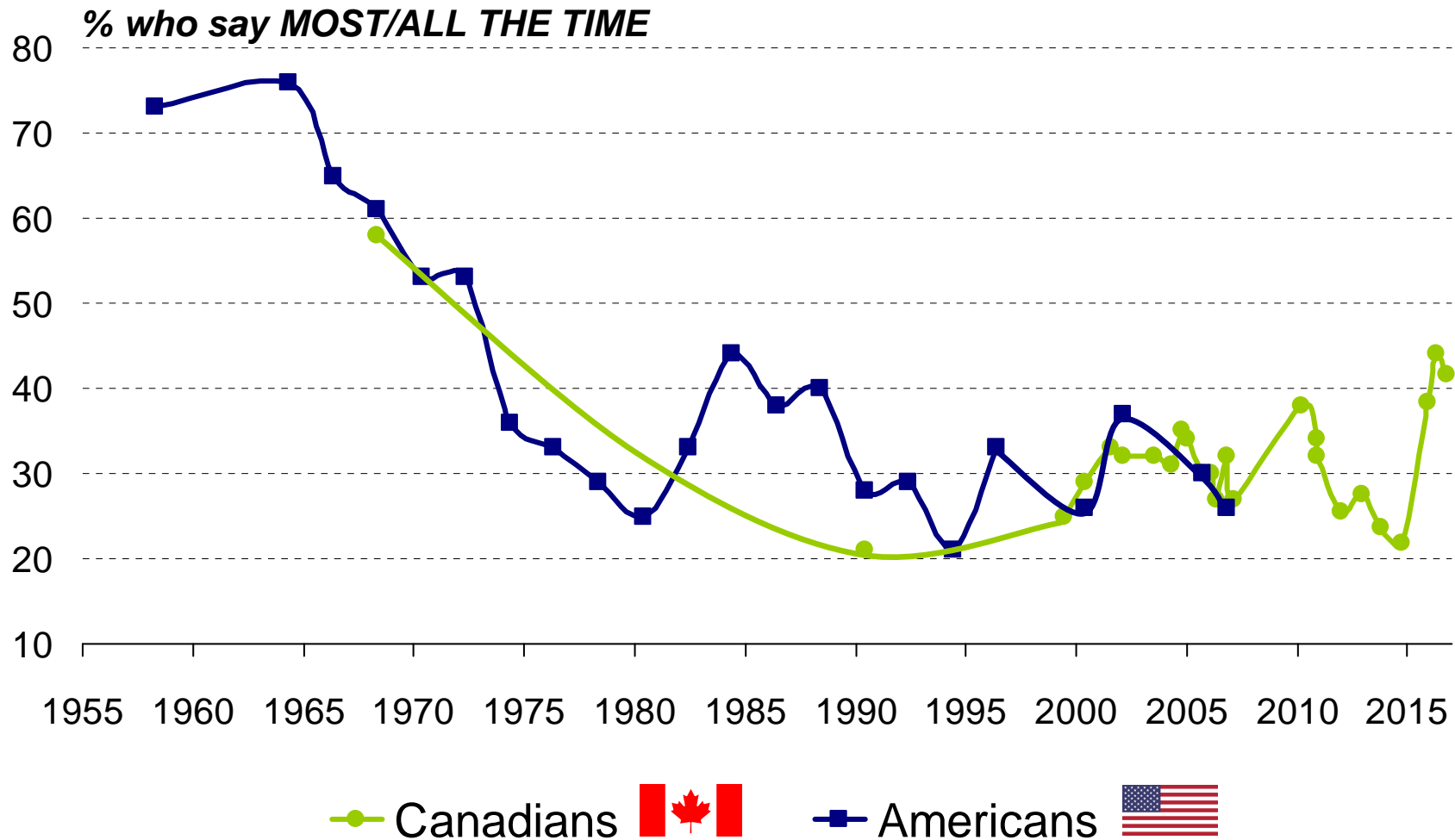


Current state of health of democracy

- » 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?



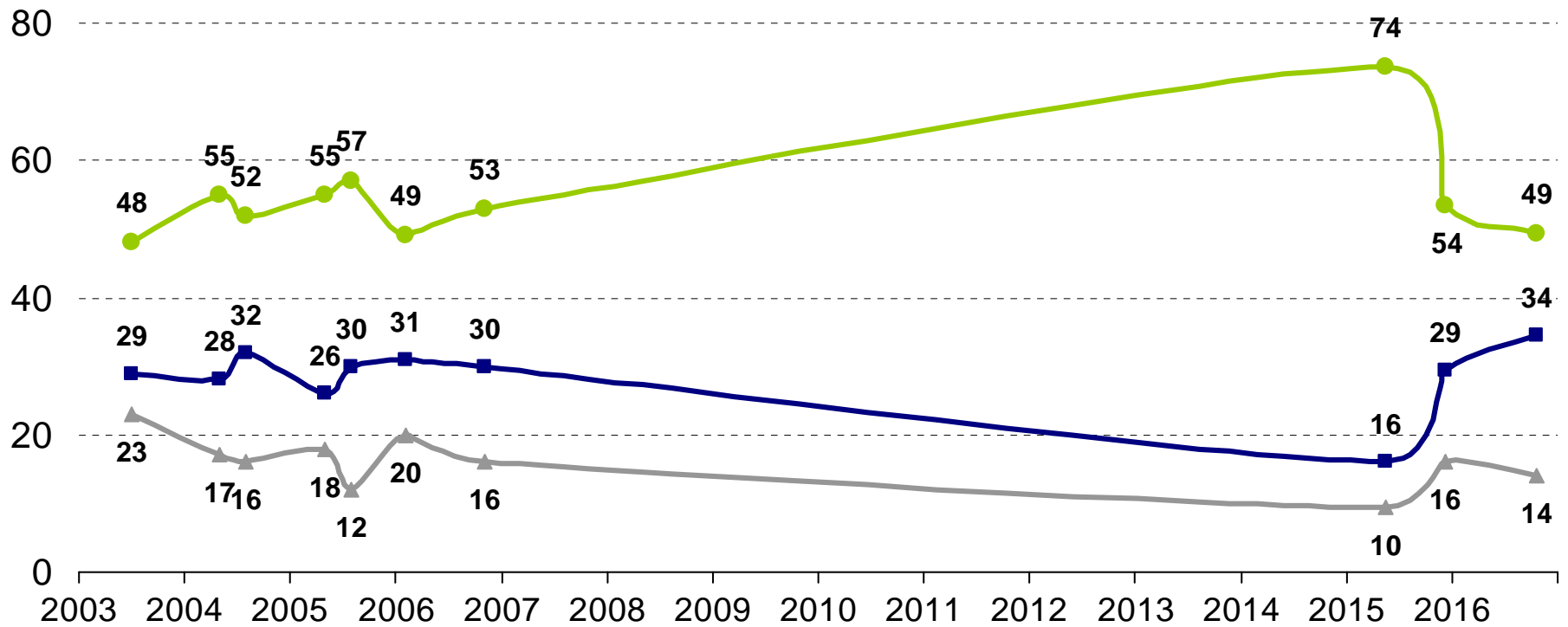
BASE: Canadians (online only); October 12-18, 2016, n=1,622, MOE +/- 2.4%, 19 times out of 20

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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)

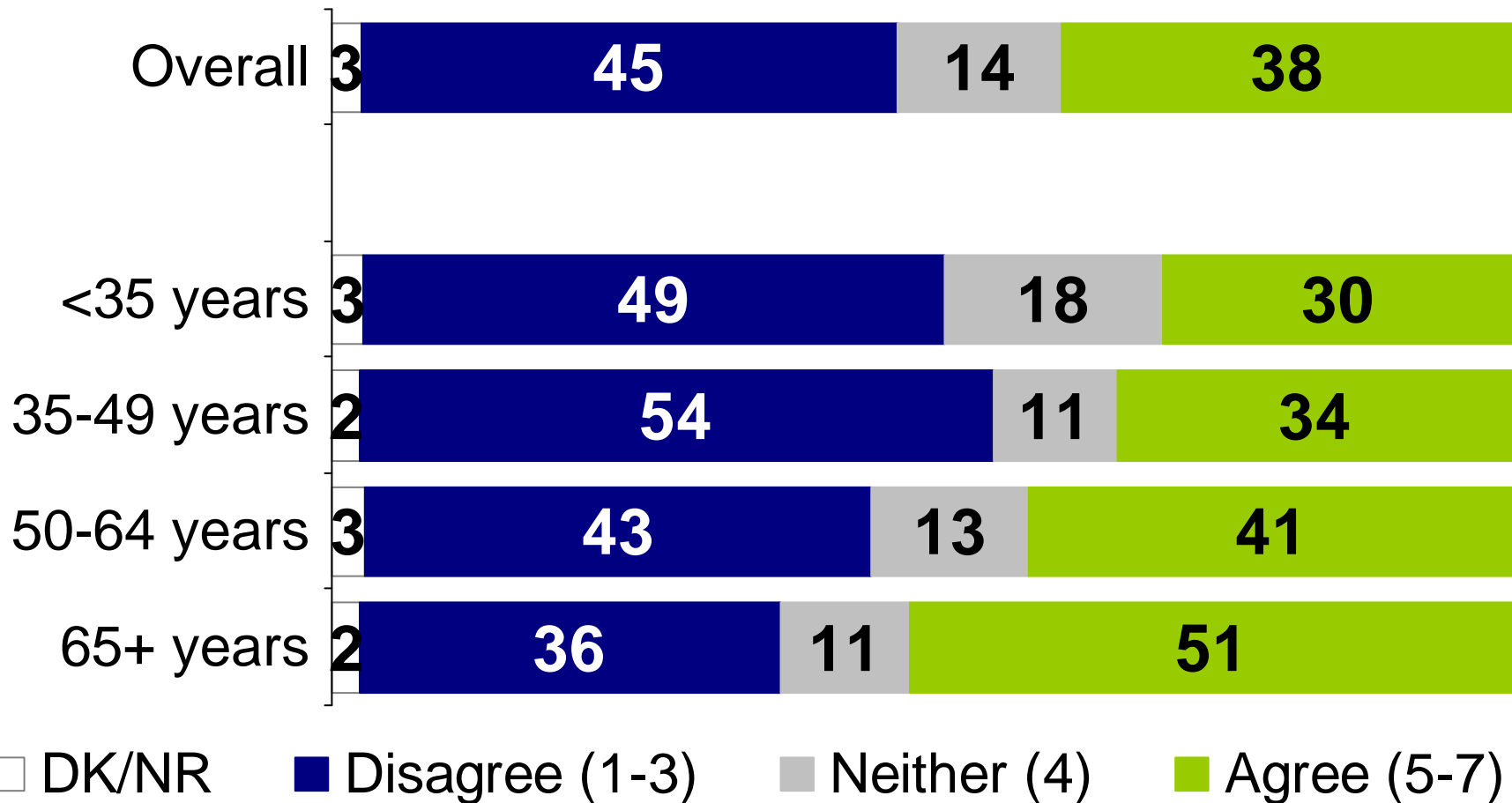
Dominant principles of electoral reform

- » 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

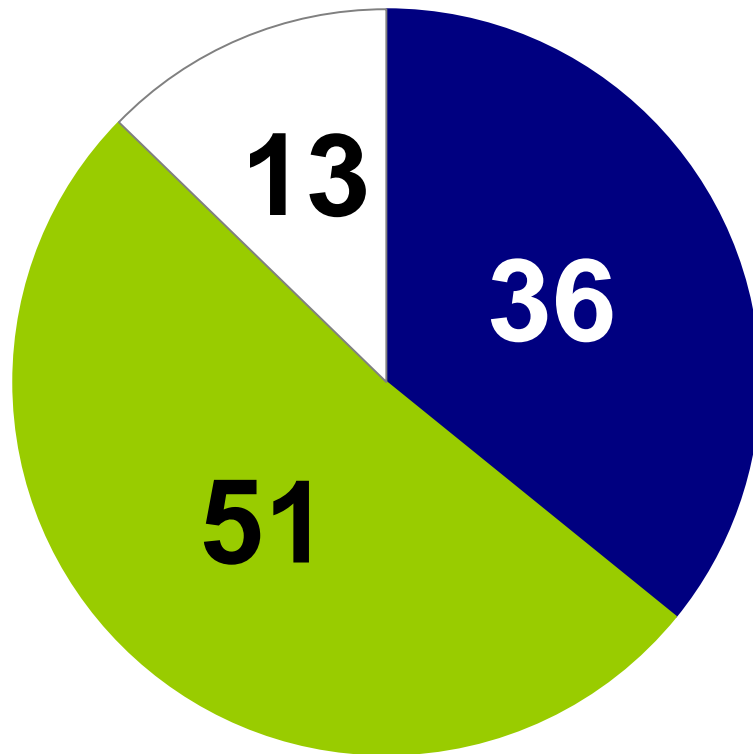
Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

“I see no reason to make major changes in how democracy in Canada works”



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

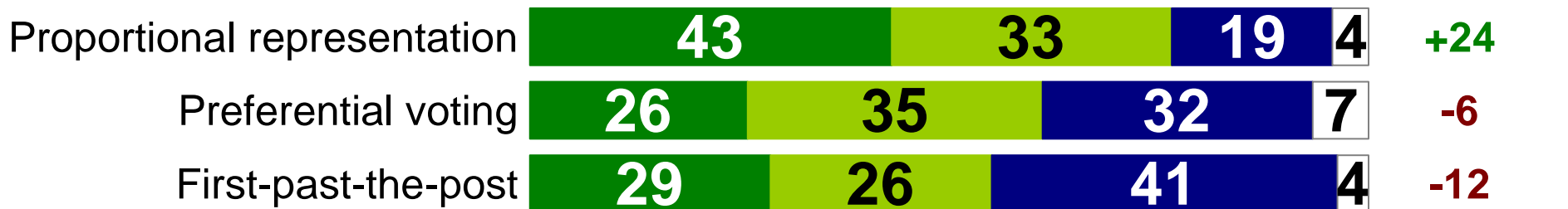
Preferences for electoral reform

- » 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

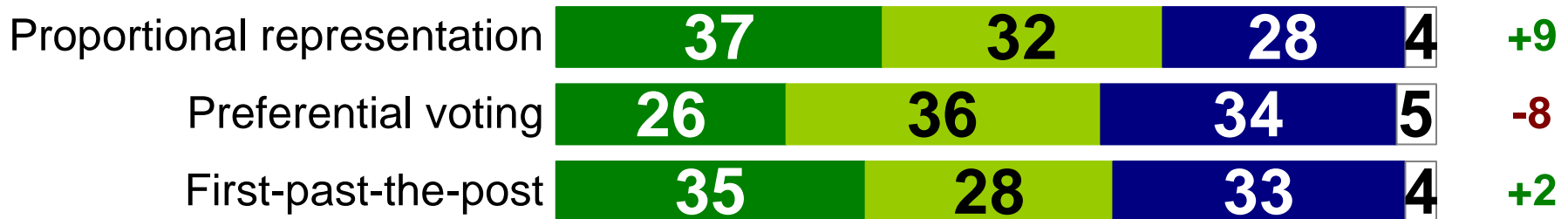
Q. Please rank these three systems from best to worst in terms of how beneficial you think they would be for Canada.

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



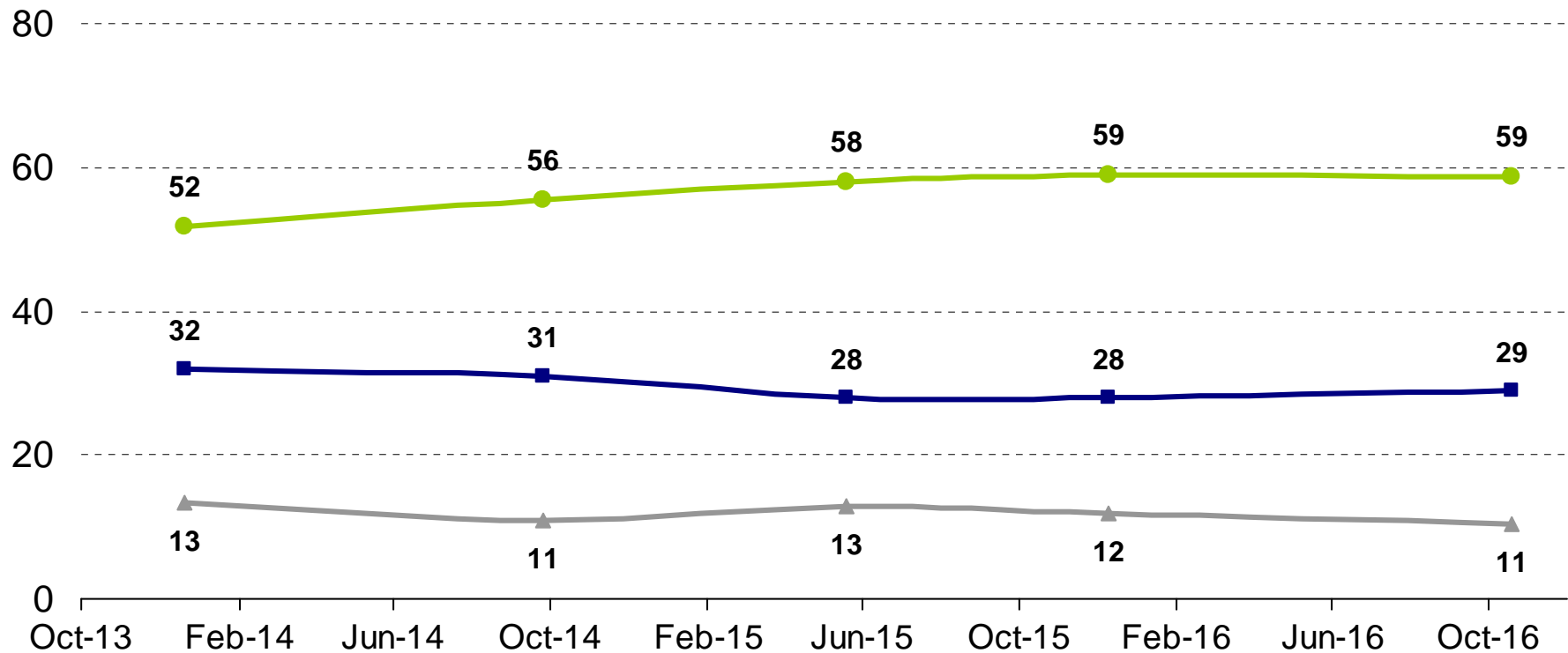
DK/NR Disagree (1-3) Neither (4) Agree (5-7)

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

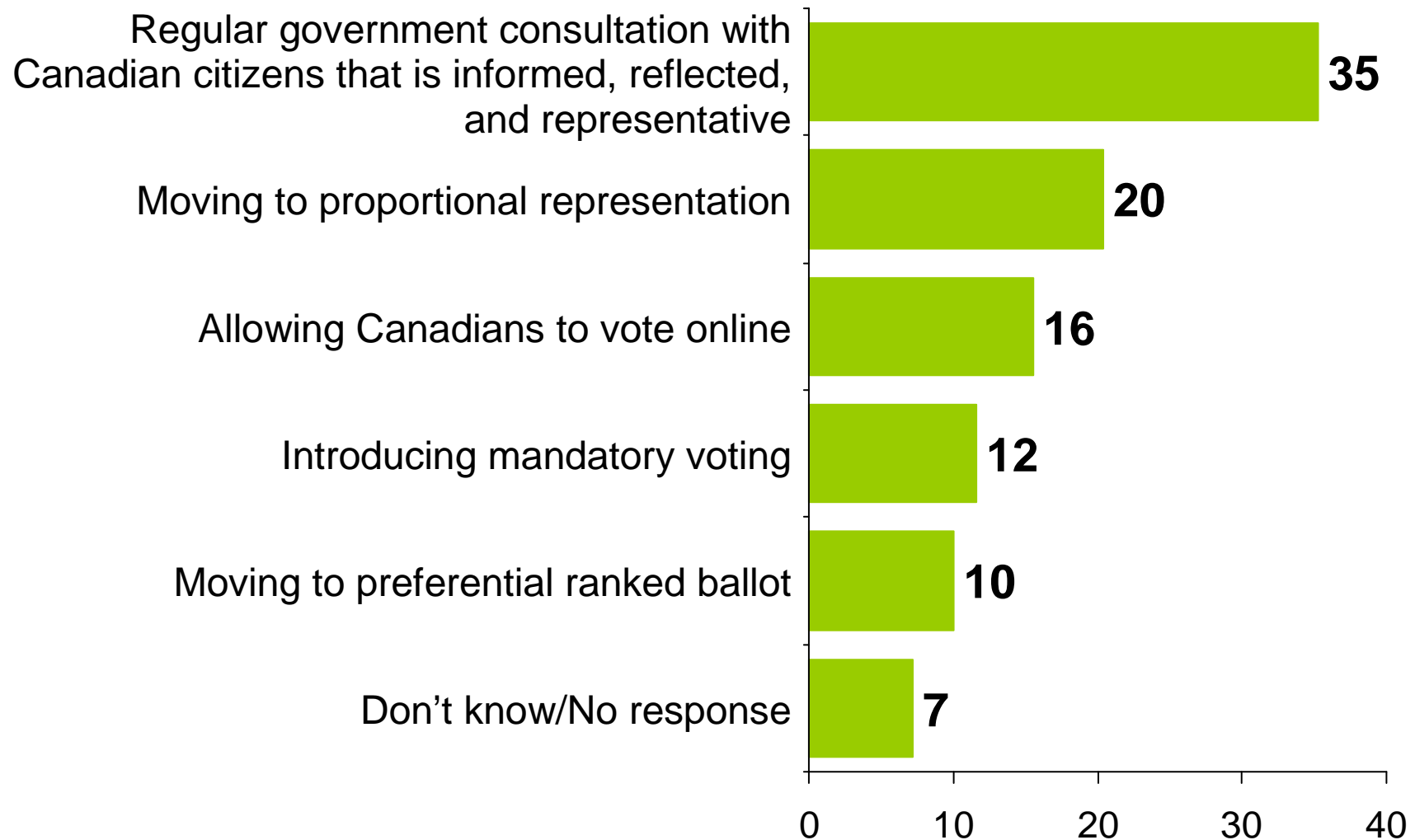


BASE: Canadians; December 9-15, 2015 (n=3,300), MOE +/- 1.7%, 19 times out of 20

□ 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?*



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

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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



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