

Rethinking the Public Interest:

Evolving Trends in Values and Attitudes

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#Can2020 Conference

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www.ekos.com

1. Values and Ideology:
Big Shift? Progressive Wave

2. Economy and Social Class

3. Democracy, Public Institutions, and
Role of Government

4. Conclusions

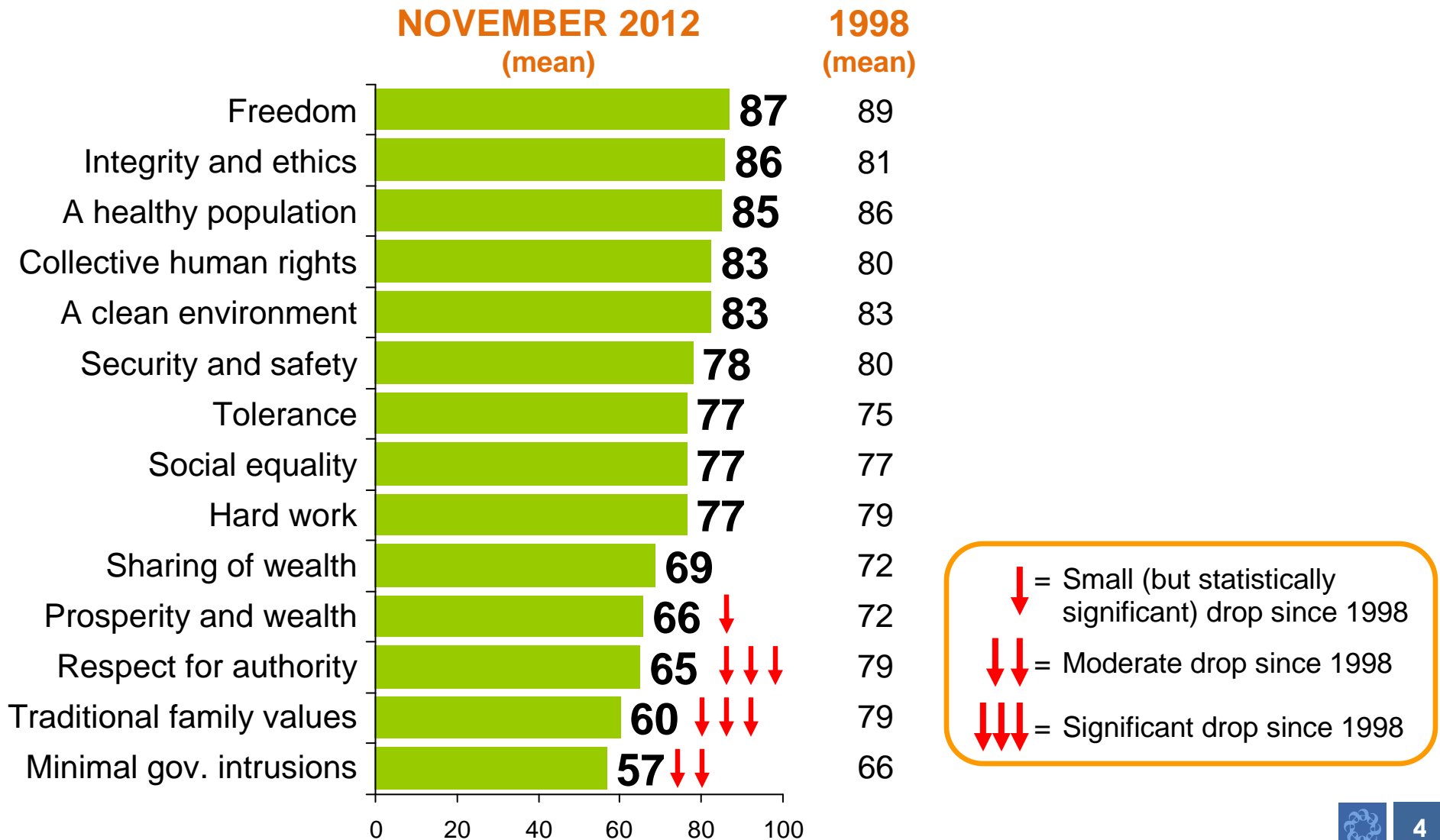
Why Values?

- » Ultimate yardsticks of societal preference; normative indicators of right/wrong, good/bad
 - Glacial, not mercurial
- » No monolithic consensus possible in increasingly pluralistic society
- » Progressive values which dominate and enjoy momentum societally are given short shrift by current government
 - Growing gap a source of tension with public interest
- » Finally, values produce emotional engagement (emotions win elections)
- » Progressives have not played their value cards well



Most Important Goals and Values

Q. If you were to direct Canadian society, how important would you say each of the following goals and values should be?



BASE: Canadians; November 20-29, 2012 (n=1,181), MOE +/- 2.9%, 19 times out of 20

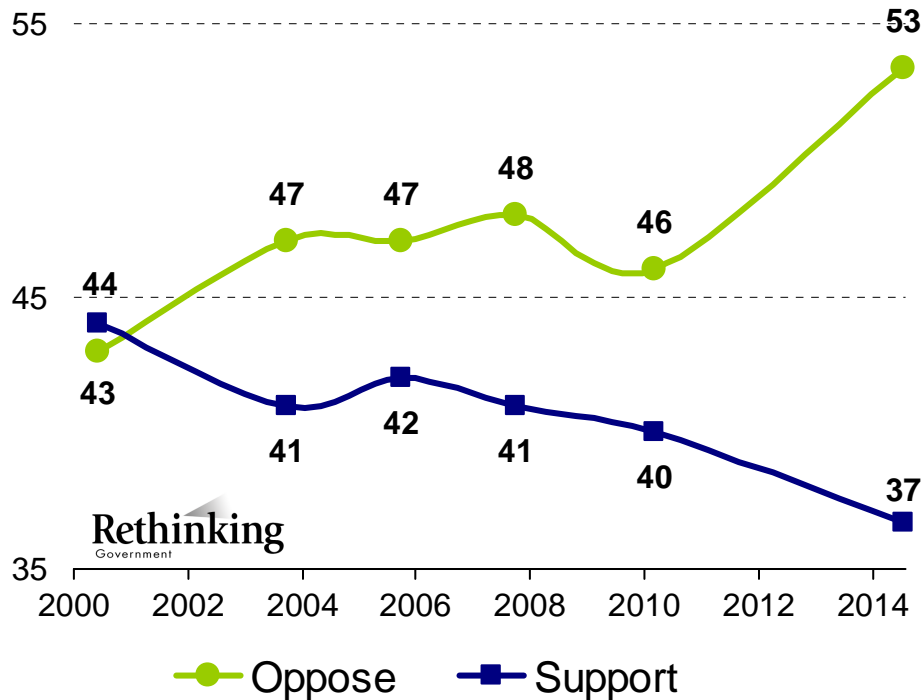
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Attitudes on Key Social Issues (i)

- » While Harper government is decidedly blue, little evidence to support a “Big Shift” to the right
 - In fact, all indicators suggest a shift away from the right

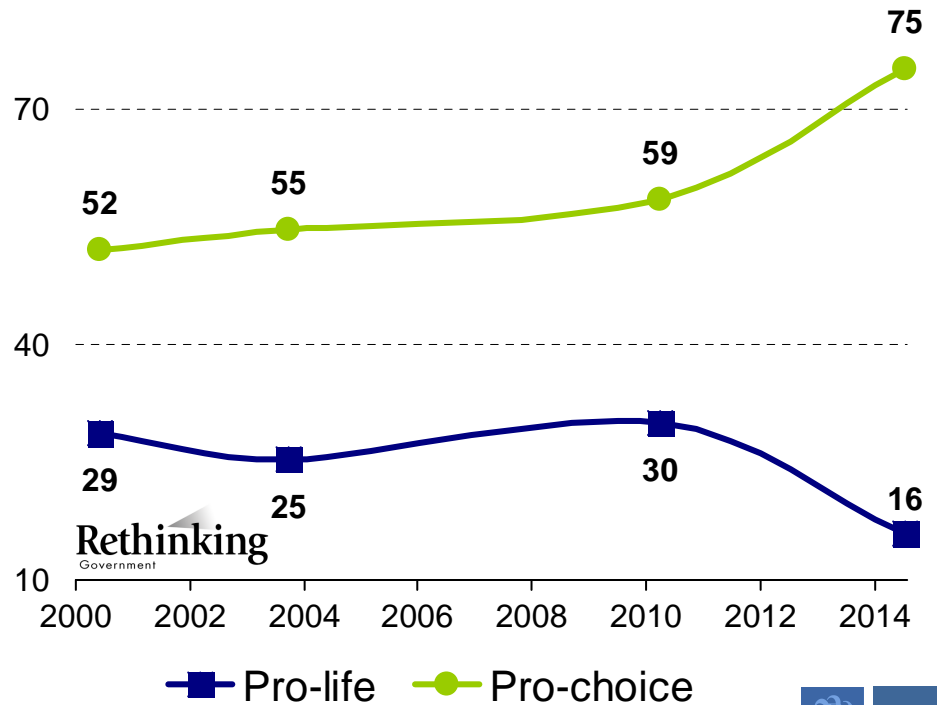
Support for Capital Punishment

“Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: I would support the reintroduction of capital punishment”



Views on Abortion Rights

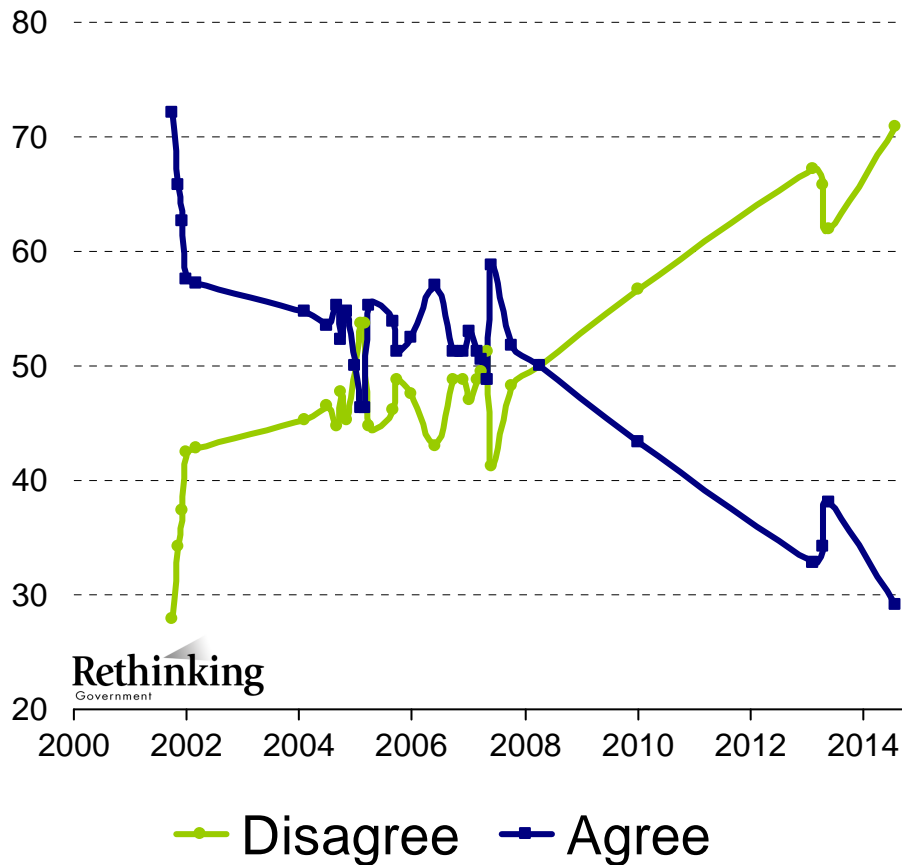
“Thinking about your general views on abortion, would you say you are more pro-life or pro-choice?”



Attitudes on Key Social Issues (ii)

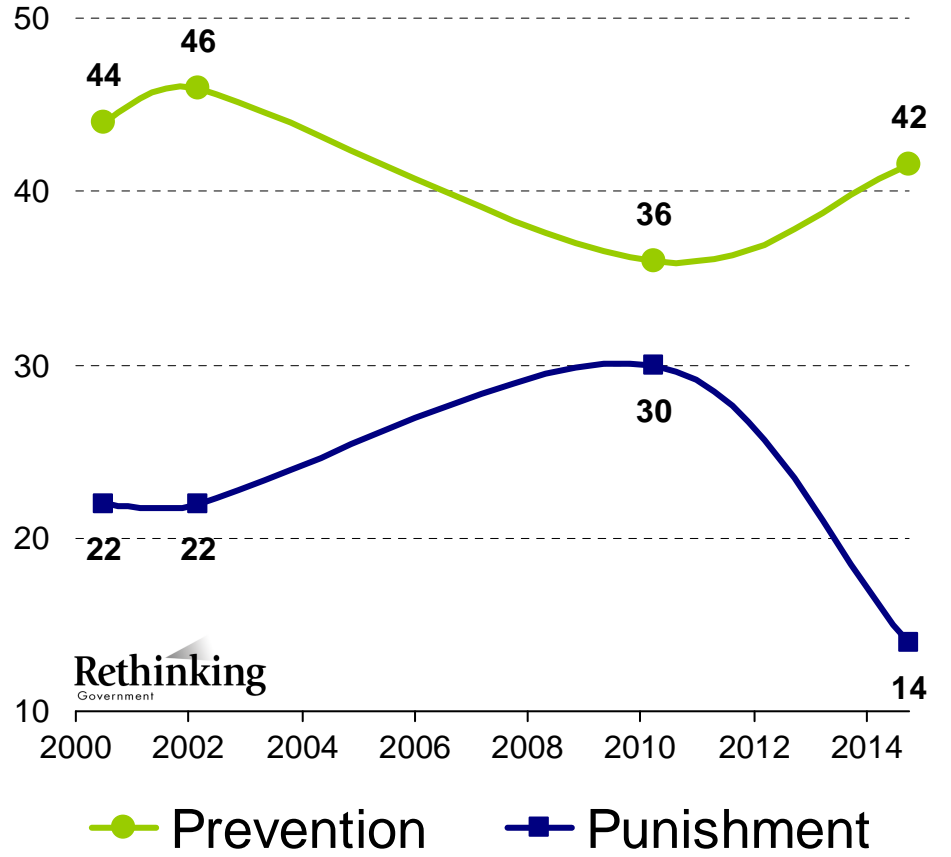
Additional Powers for Law Enforcement

“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: police and intelligence agencies should have more powers to ensure security even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy safeguards?”



Purpose of Criminal Justice System

“Which of the following four possibilities should be the main goal of the criminal justice system? 1.) Prevention; 2.) Rehabilitation; 3.) Deterrence; or 4.) Punishment”



BASE (right): Canadians; September 21-25, 2014 (n=1,549), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

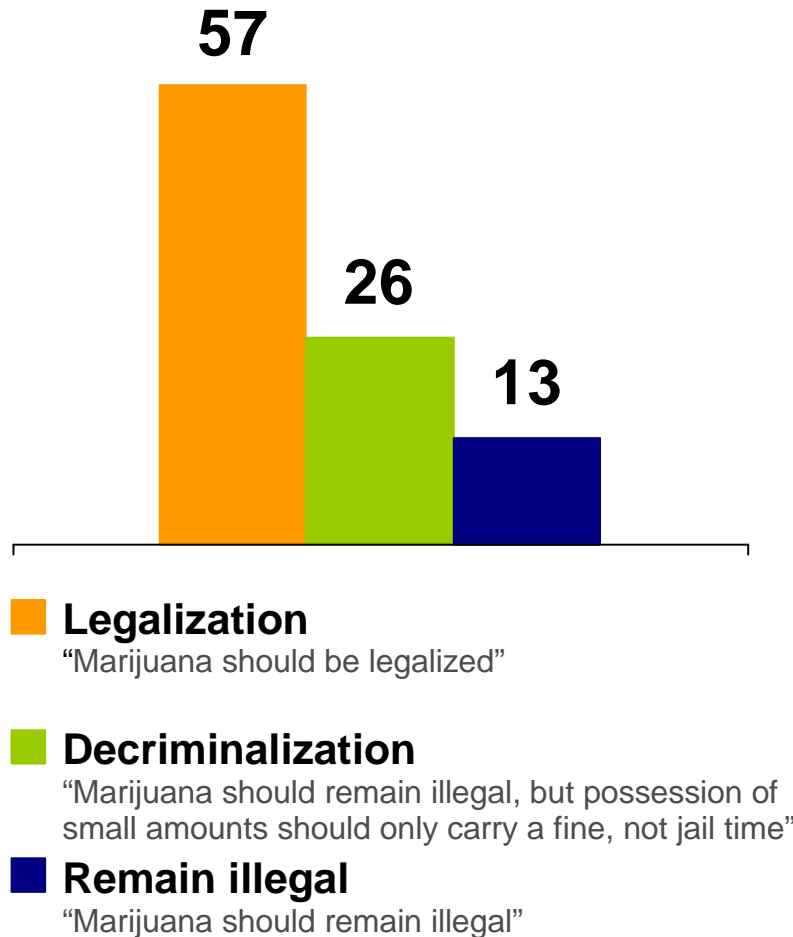
BASE (left): Canadians July 16-23, 2013 (n=2,620), MOE +/- 1.9%, 19 times out of 20

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Attitudes on Key Social Issues (iii)

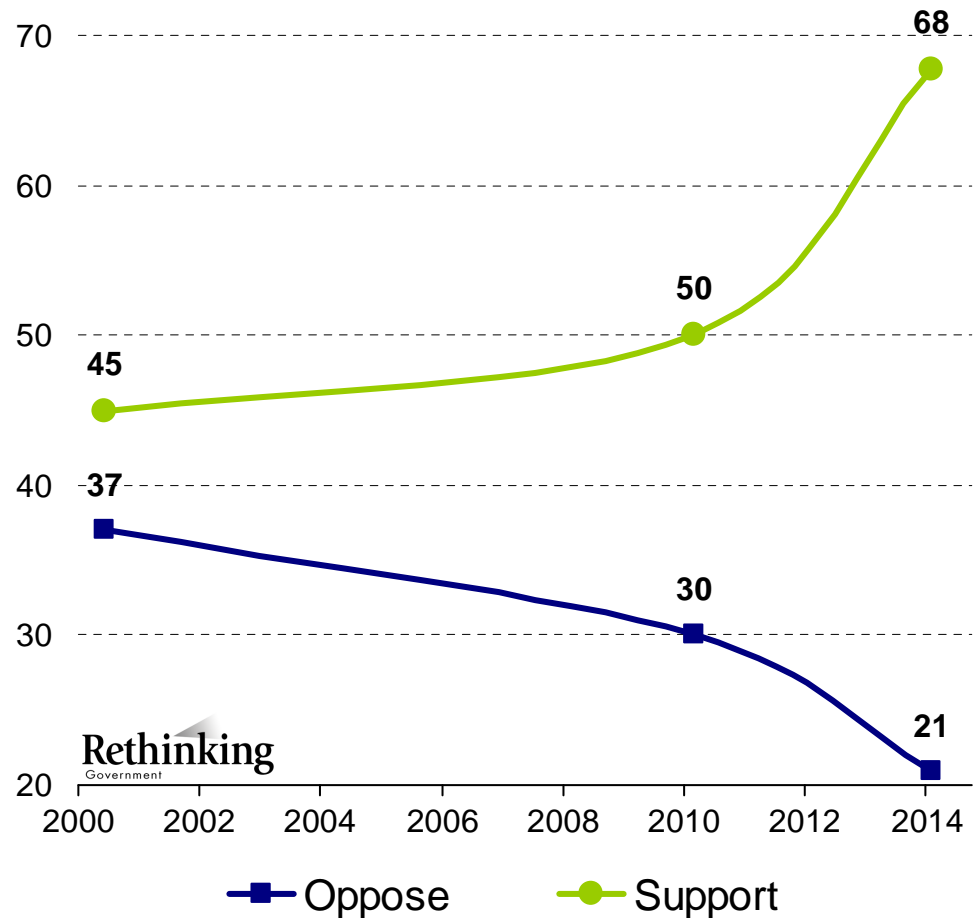
Legalization of Marijuana

"Which of the following statements comes closest to your own point of view about the use of marijuana by adults?"



Tracking Decriminalization of Marijuana

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use **SHOULD NOT BE A CRIME.**"



BASE (left): Canadians; September 21-25, 2014 (n=1,549), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

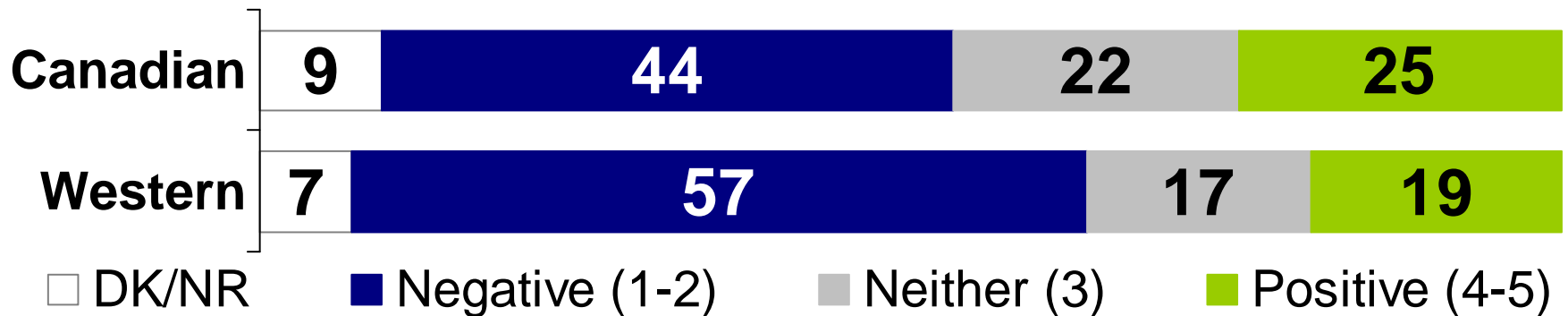
BASE (right): Canadians; January 22-27, 2014 (n=1,501), MOE +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20

Rethinking Canada's Place in the World

- » Public judgement of both Canadian and Western decade of interventions is largely negative
- » Strong preference for traditional model of soft power approach over new attempts at militarism
- » The public are drifting away from a focus on security to other priorities

Impact of Western / Canadian Interventions in the Middle East

"Thinking about Canadian/Western interventions in the Greater Middle East since 2000, do you think the net impact has been mostly negative or mostly positive?"



Preferred Focus of Canada's Foreign Policy

"In discussions about Canada's foreign policy, what do you think should be the most important consideration?"



Political Ideology: Recent Movements (i)

- » Canadians historically less entrenched than Americans and less small “c” conservative
- » Three moments of ideological evolution:
 - i. Historical pattern of plurality small “l” liberal, close minority of small “c”, large “neither” (stable in latter part of 20th century)
 - ii. End of ideology phase where “neither” dwarfs left/right
 - iii. New moment sees the dominance of progressive and nadir for “neither”
- » Dialectical response to unprecedented government from the right?
- » Collapse of “neither” position reflects a regrettable shift from the politics of consensus to a divided and fragmented electorate

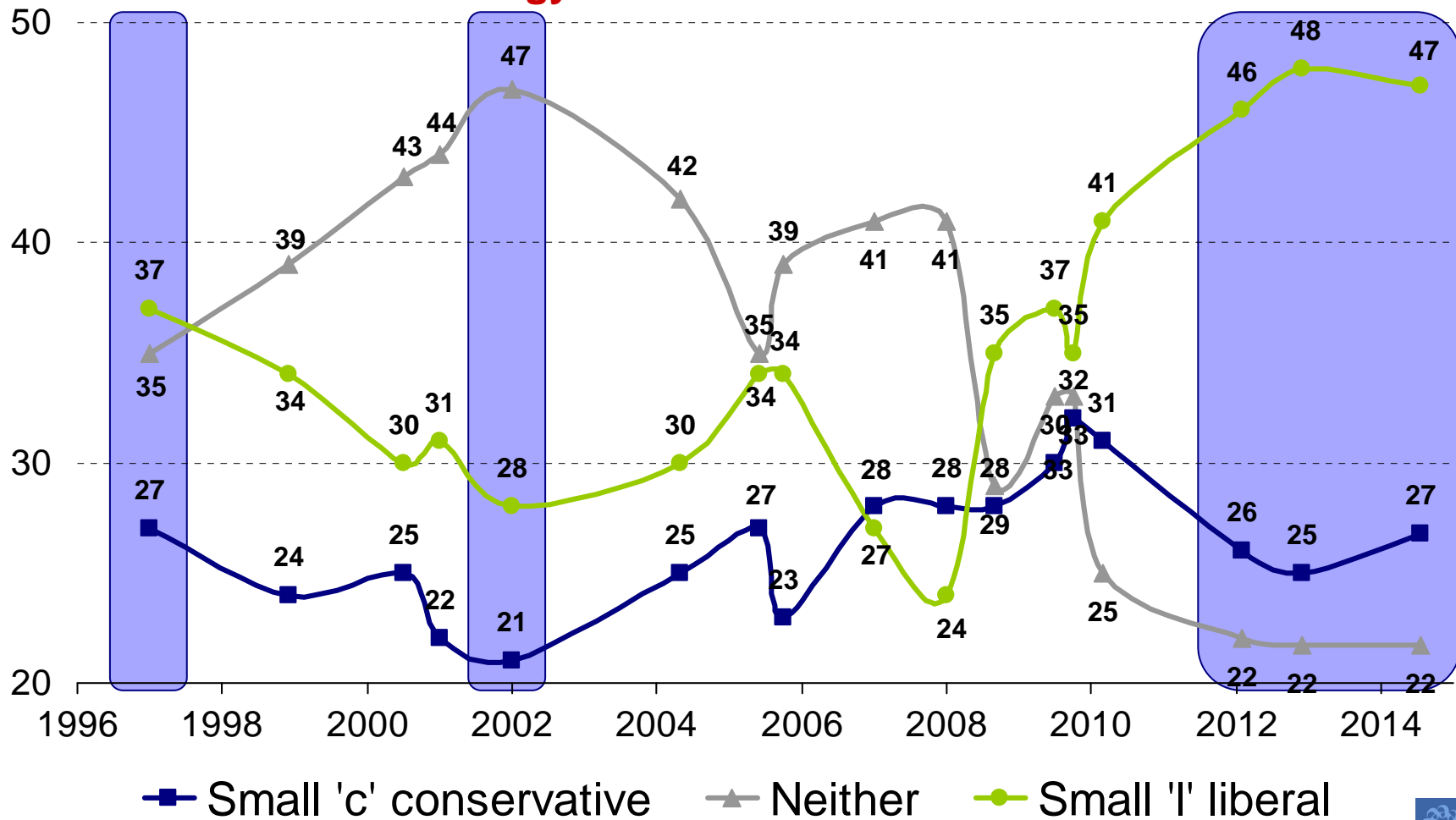
Political Ideology: Recent Movements (ii)

Q. Forgetting about your current party choice, do you consider yourself a small "l" liberal or a small "c" conservative?

I. Stable Historical Result

II. End of Ideology?

III. New Progressive Wave



Conclusions: Values

- » Values matter
- » Growing mismatch between partisan and overall public values and trajectories
- » All evidence points to a profound progressive wave (attitudes, values, and ideology)
- » Progressive values must also be central to recovery of public interest (and political success)
- » Canadians value both conservative *and* progressive values, but current skew is increasingly unreflective of shifting Canadian centre

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A Troubling Syllogism?

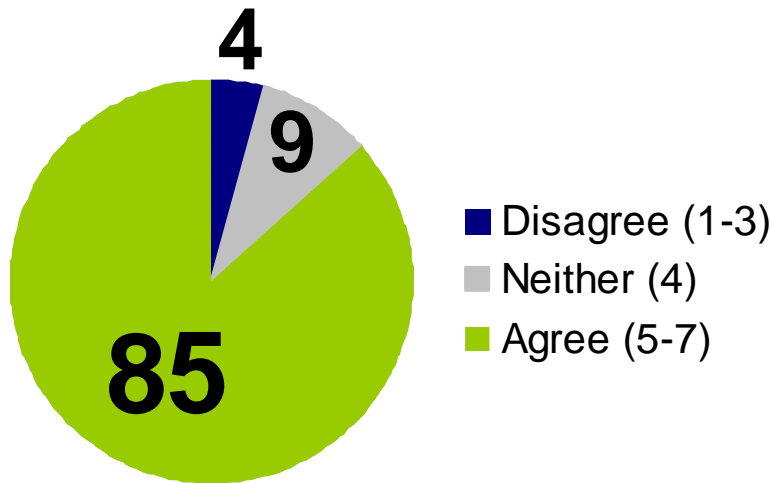
Proposition 1: **IF** a healthy society and a strong economy require a growing, optimistic middle class

Proposition 2: **AND IF** the middle class is *neither* growing nor optimistic

Implication: **THEN** societal health and economic progress will be in peril if these negative conditions persist

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

“A growing and optimistic middle class is an essential component of societal progress”



Q. Overall, which of the following choices do you believe best describes Canada's middle class?



The Debate Over the Middle Class Crisis



MARGARET WENTE

The phony crisis of the middle class

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 

NATIONAL POST 

Andrew Coyne: It might not actually be the richest middle-class on the planet, but Canada certainly isn't struggling

 **iPOLITICS**

Conference Board report warns of intergenerational income inequality
By BJ Stiekierski | Sep 23, 2014 12:01 am

thestar.com

GTA

Middle-class communities disappearing

According to a U of T study, Toronto is undergoing an increase in both poor and rich districts – and that means subtle but significant changes to individual neighbourhoods.

By: Daniel Dale STAFF REPORTER

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 



MICHAEL BABAD

Canada's middle class richest in study of big nations

NATIONAL POST 

Michael Den Tandt: The faltering 'middle class' is a real issue, regardless of who wins the next election

thestar.com
COMMENTARY

Closer reading of StatsCan report troubling for middle class

Most of the net worth increase in Statistics Canada survey is due to phenomenal inflation in home values, not in income growth.

By: Eugene Lang Frank Graves



Perceived State of Canada's Middle Class

- » While the punditry debates reality and severity of the middle class crisis, this discourse is not reflected in public attitudes towards or experiences of the economy
 - By a margin of 74 to 17, Canadians believe the middle class is shrinking and falling back

- » Largest differences emerge between age cohorts:
 - Much of what benefits older Canada harms younger Canada

- » This new crisis of the middle class is possibly the defining issue of our time and, at the very least, one of the pinnacle issues demanding urgent attention

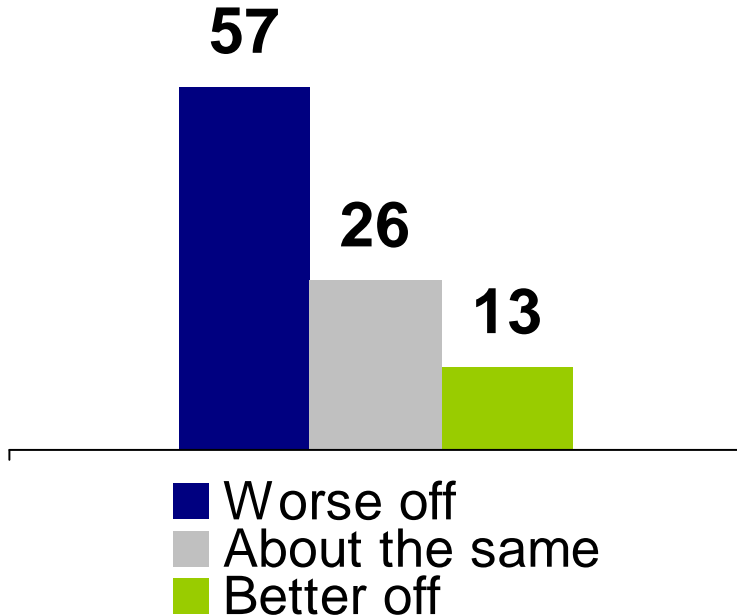


Generational Outlook and Social Class

- » Fears are highest when turned to the future, particularly concerns about retirement
- » The grey outlook on the present turns almost black as the public ponder the fate of future generations
- » It appears that we have at least temporarily reached the end of progress, the defining achievement of liberal capitalism

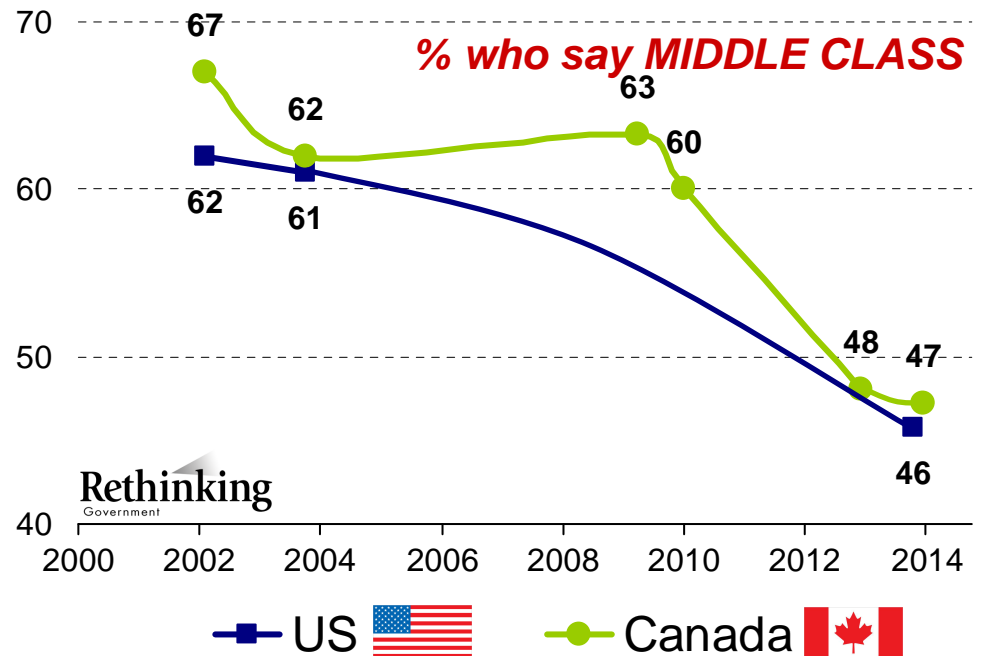
Generational Outlook

“Thinking about your overall quality of life do you think the next generation will be better off, worse off, or about the same as you are 25 years from now?”



Self-Rated Social Class

“Would you describe you and your household as poor, working class, middle class, or upper class?”



BASE (left): Canadians; September 21-25, 2014 (n=774), MOE +/- 3.5%, 19 times out of 20

BASE (right): Canadians; December 12-15, 2013 (n=3,468), MOE +/- 1.7%, 19 times out of 20

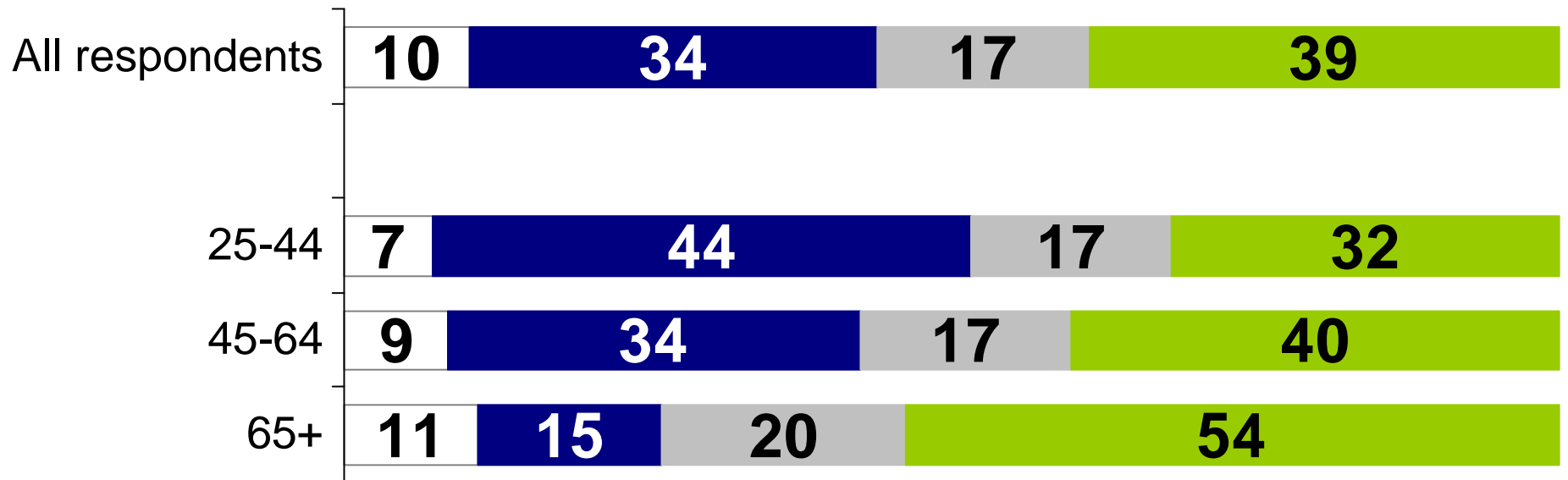
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Income Relative to Father*

* Lower female labour force participation rate and historical gender inequality confound mother comparison

- » Typical youth optimism muted
- » Current generation sees itself falling backward and sees an even steeper decline in future
- » Downward intergenerational mobility has trebled from seniors to under 45

Q. Thinking about your current annual income and comparing that to what your father earned at the same age as you are now, would you say that, using inflation-adjusted dollars, you earn more, less, or about the same as your father?



NA/DK/NR
 Less (1-3)
 About the same (4)
 More (5-7)

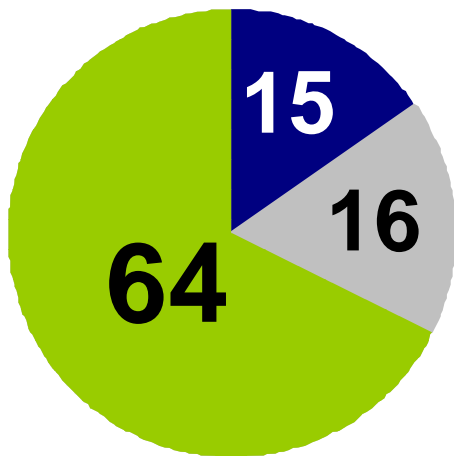


Incentives and Long-Term Winners

- » Canadians no longer convinced that the economy is providing the balance of incentives and fairness which permit economic and societal progress
- » Middle class sees itself as the primary loser over longer term

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

“Our incentive systems are broken and hard work is no longer producing the same rewards that it used to”



■ Disagree
■ Neither
■ Agree

Q. Do you believe the following groups have moved ahead, fallen behind, or stayed the same over the last 25 years?

CEOs of large companies



Banking/financial services employees



Public sector employees



Manual and blue collar workers



Middle class households



■ Fallen Behind ■ Stayed the same ■ Moved ahead



Consequences of Inequality

- » Too little growth is going to an increasingly slender cohort and the rest are left with a simmering sense of betrayal and despair
- » Most foresee serious generational strains as these pressures grow dramatically as we unbundle the data from older to younger citizens

“Age Rather than Gender Becoming the New Income Divide”

-Conference Board of Canada (Sept 2014)

- » Shockingly, the majority sees this trajectory leading to the possibility of **violent class conflicts** if these trends continue



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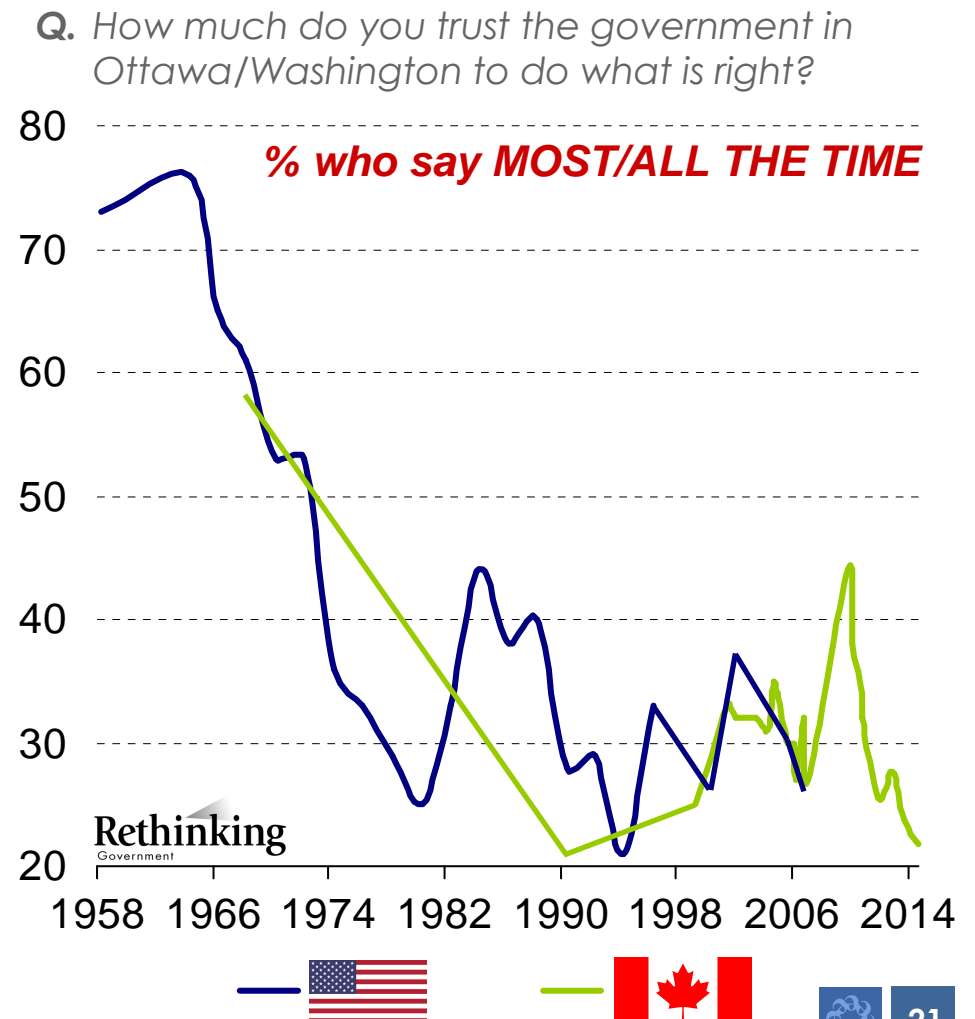
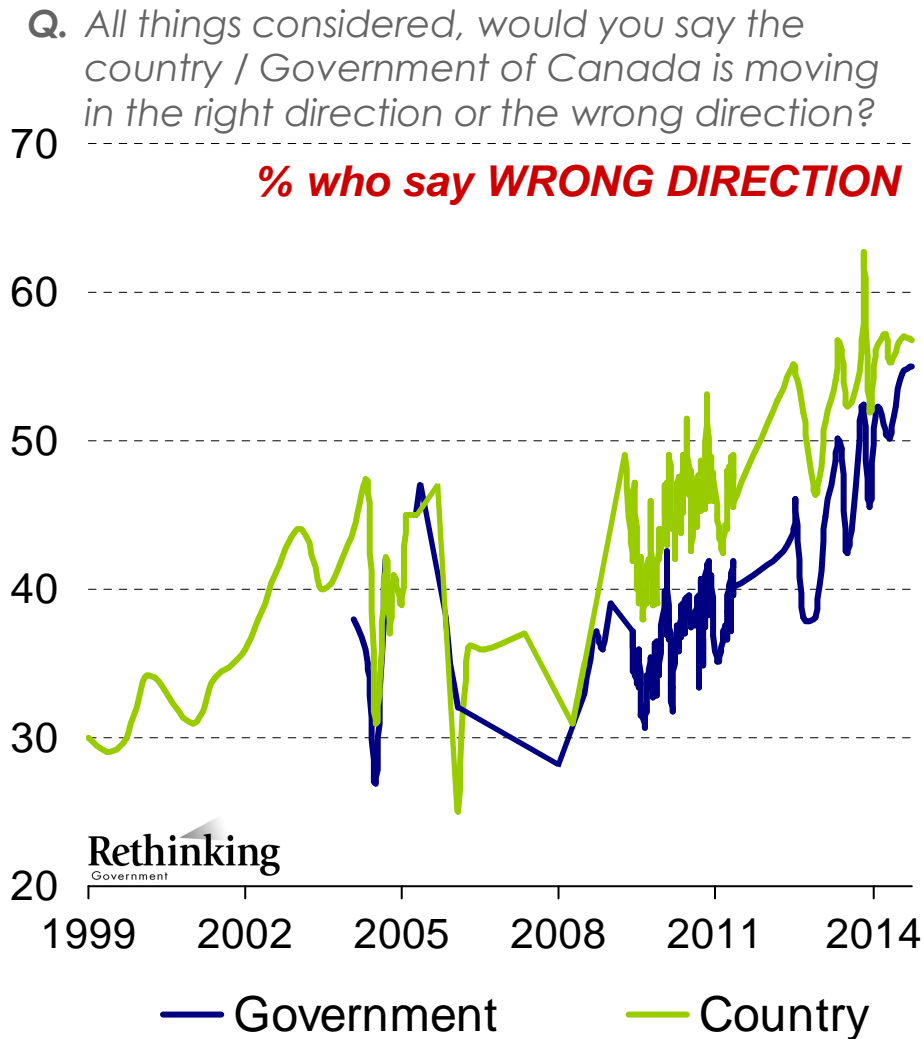
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Direction of Country and Government

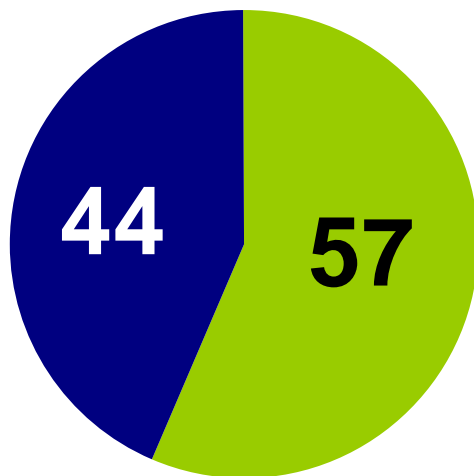
» Public confidence in direction of country and trust in government reaching new lows



Size of Government

- » Canadians are receptive to a more effective and active government
 - Overall trend is away from for lower taxes and smaller government
 - Value of minimal government has declined significantly since 1998

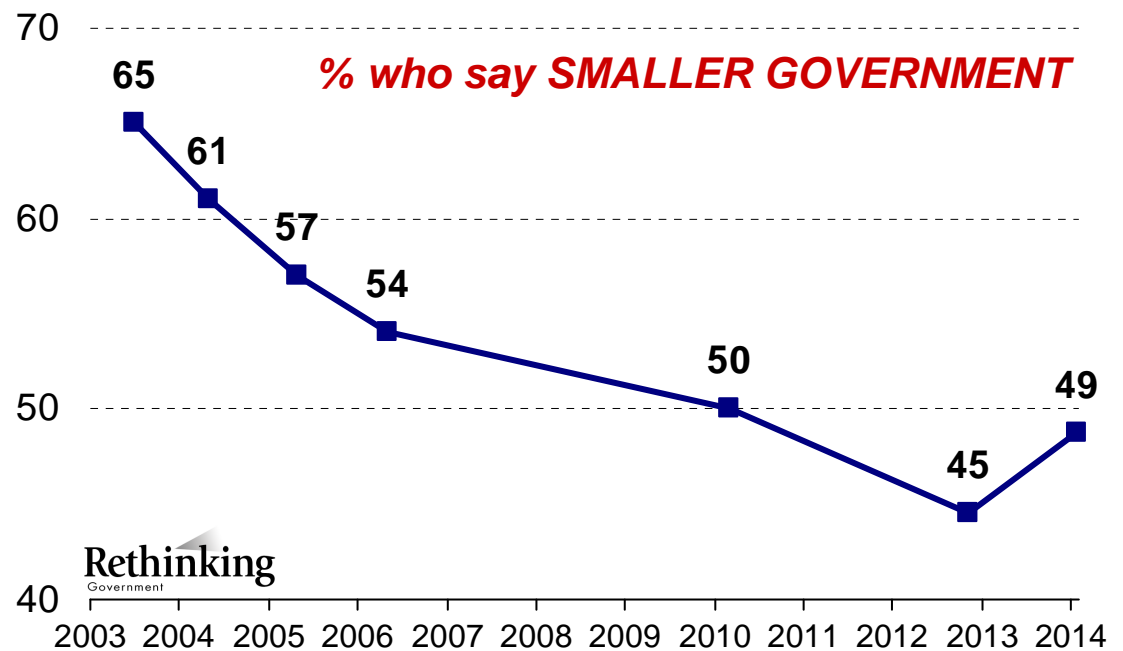
Q. Which of the following do you think would be the best option for **moving Canada forward**?



- **Increasing the role of government**
to invest in new areas such as job creation, public infrastructure, and stronger social security
- **Reducing the size of government**
and providing targeted tax relief in order to allow the private sector to propel growth and jobs

Q. Generally speaking, which of the following would you say that you favour?

- 1) a **larger government** with higher taxes and more services;
- 2) a **smaller government** with lower taxes and fewer services



Need for Transparency/Citizen Engagement

- » As trust and legitimacy further decline, there may be two bookends which can help:
 1. Transform government from black box to glass box
 2. Representative, reflective, and informed citizen input as a routine part of governance between elections

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

“I would personally feel better about government decision-making if governments were **more transparent**”



“I would personally feel better about government decision-making if I knew that government **sought informed input from average citizens** on a regular basis”

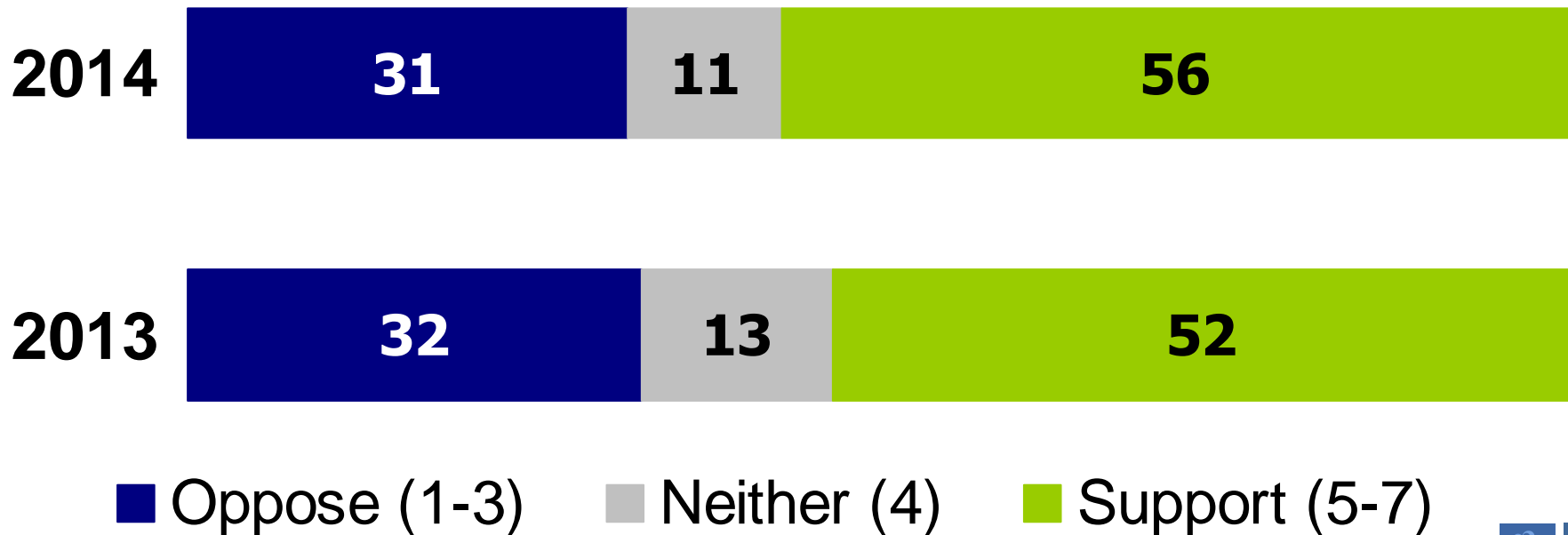


DK/NR Disagree (1-3) Neither (4) Agree (5-7)

Support for Compulsory Voting

- » Mandatory voting might reset democracy, return young Canada to the electorate, and cause parties to shift from get-out-the-vote and retail narrowcasting to the overall public interest

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?



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Conclusions (i)

- » Beneath an apparently placid surface, profound changes are transforming Canada
- » The three most important may be:
 - i. A clear progressive wave which sees mounting unsustainable tension between political status quo and evolving values and ideological orientations.
 - ii. An end to the traditional patterns of progress and a shrinking and pessimistic middle class. Uncorrected, these trends imperil the future of liberal capitalism in North America.
 - iii. An unprecedented collapse of trust in democracy and public institutions which is approaching a legitimacy crisis. Widening fault lines across generations and social class.
- » These profound problems are relatively recent and interdependent. They are also correctable but will not self-correct.
 - Window closing for dealing with this?

Conclusions (ii)

- » A growing failure of our incentive system
- » Canadians are receptive to a bold new vision which incorporates a fresh blueprint for restarting progress and restoring legitimacy
- » The role of state and public institutions will be the critical contested terrain.
 - Values are also a crucial ingredient
 - We need a real commitment to transparency and a citizen-focussed government which routinely engages the public
 - Moreover, we need a new, more active, agile state which acts as a strategic broker, not a large parental bureaucracy
- » The rise of the permanent campaign occurs against a sharply eroding faith in democracy in general and politics in particular
- » Less dark ops and more focus on public interest
 - This starts with listening to Canadians, not manipulating them



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