

# Canada Evolving:

*Sources of Stability and Change in Canadian Social Fabric*



*Presentation for "Being Canadian Today"  
State of the Federation 2012*

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December 1, 2012

# **Outline**

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**1.0 Changing national outlook: Trust and directional approval**

**2.0 Social class changes: End of progress?**

**3.0 Values, ideology, and identity: Government moves right, societal values don't**

**4.0 Conclusions and implications**

# 1. Changing national outlook: Trust and directional approval

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## Changing national outlook

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- Overall Canadian values and identities reveal more stability than change
- But some important shifts as well and major changes in outlook on national direction and trust in democracy
- Confidence in national and federal direction down significantly and major shifts in who is happy and who isn't (from +30 to -17). Alberta, men, conservatives, and seniors happy while others such as BC, Quebec, university graduates, and those under 40 are not
- Long term decline in trust/deference continues

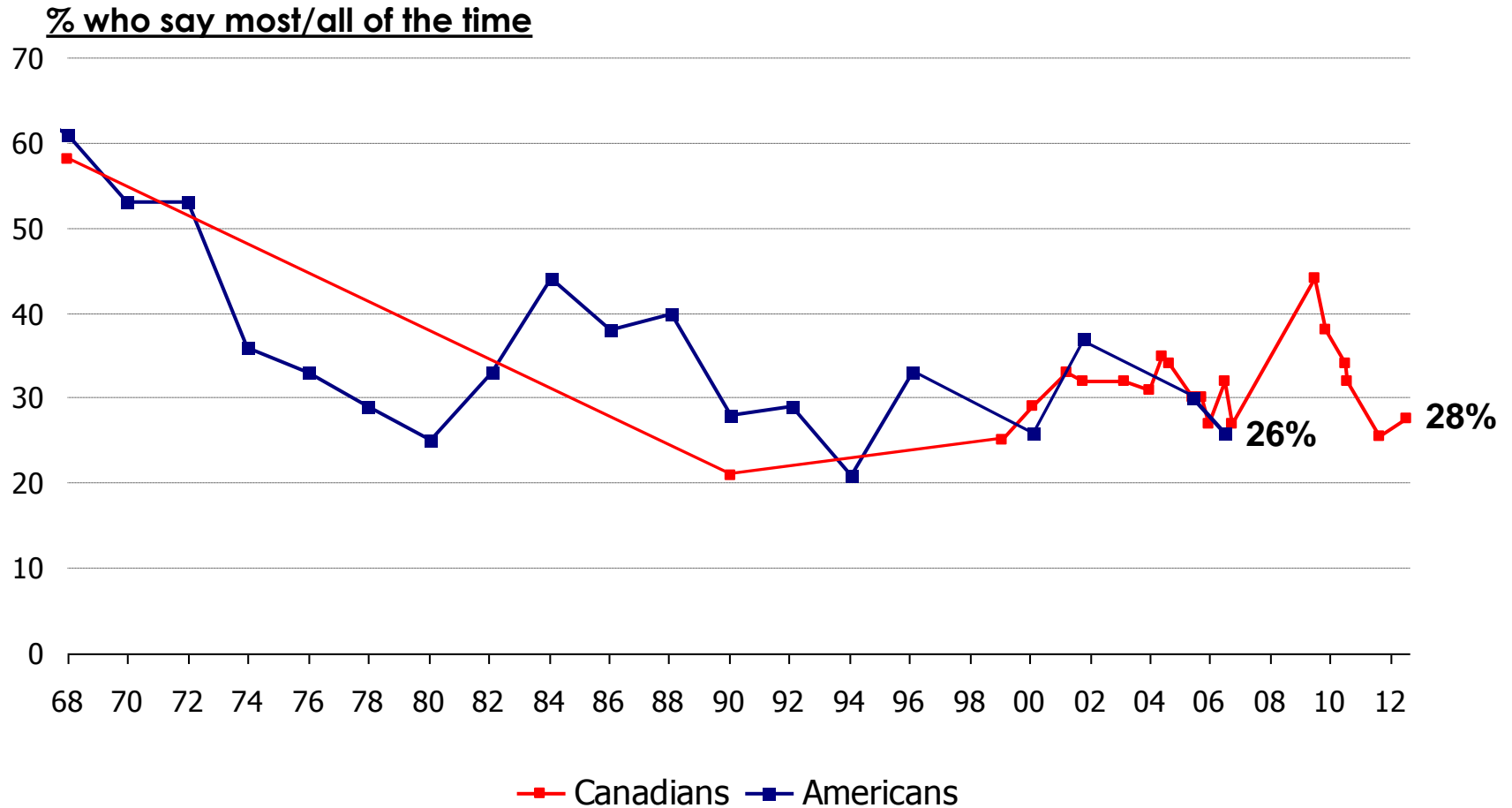
# Direction of government

Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?



# Tracking trust in government

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



## 2. Social class changes: End of Progress?

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EXOS

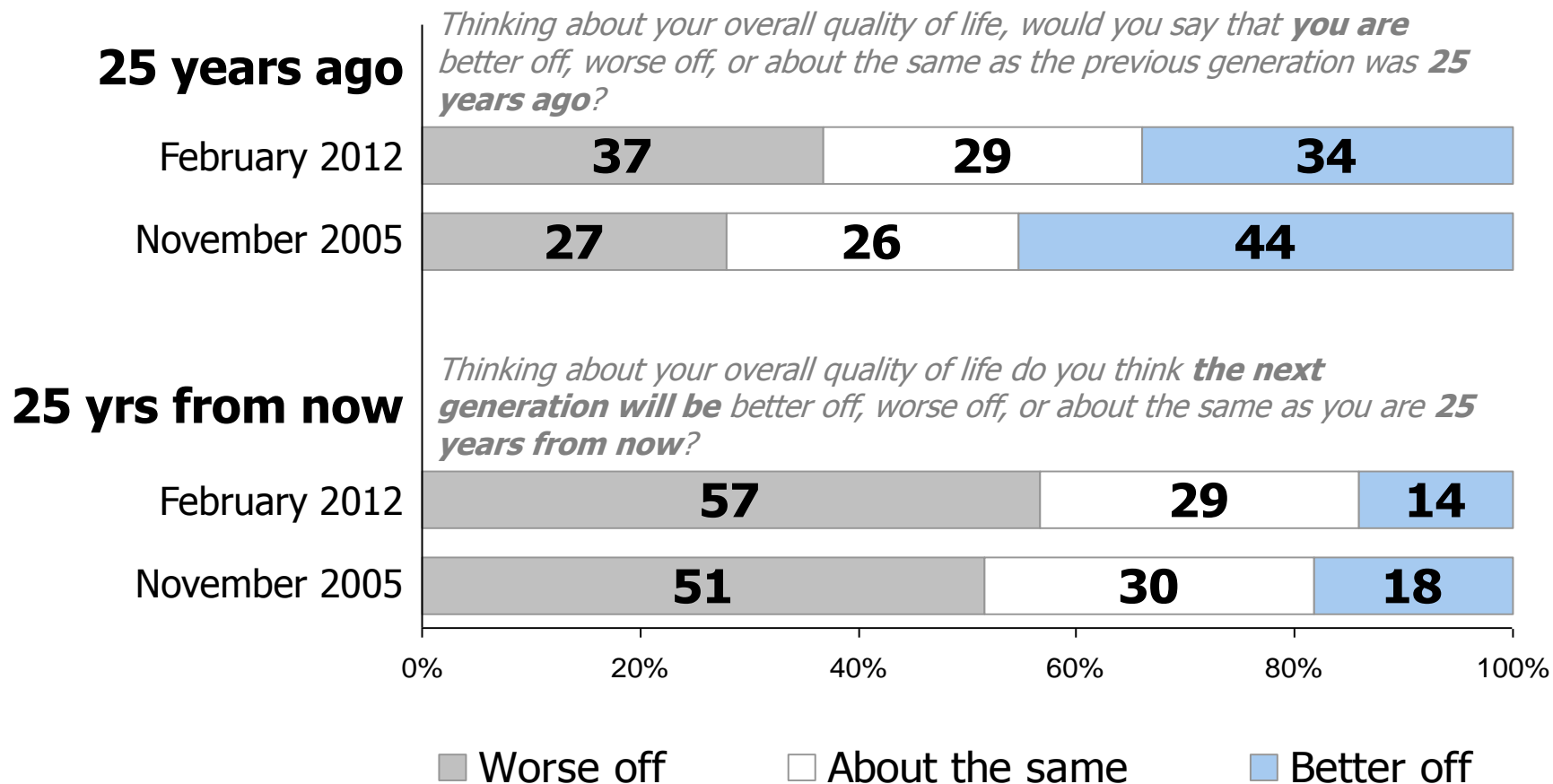
## **Social class changes: End of progress?**

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- Economy changing profoundly and affecting societal outlook
- Evidence that the ethic of progress is unraveling
- Current generation sees themselves falling backward and sees more precipitous decline in future
- Typical youth optimism muted
- Rooted in fears of Western decline and rising concentration of wealth at top
- The middle class eroding, primary victim-loser over longer term
- Growing resentment to the upper classes
- Rising skepticism about dominant economic narrative of lower taxes/less government

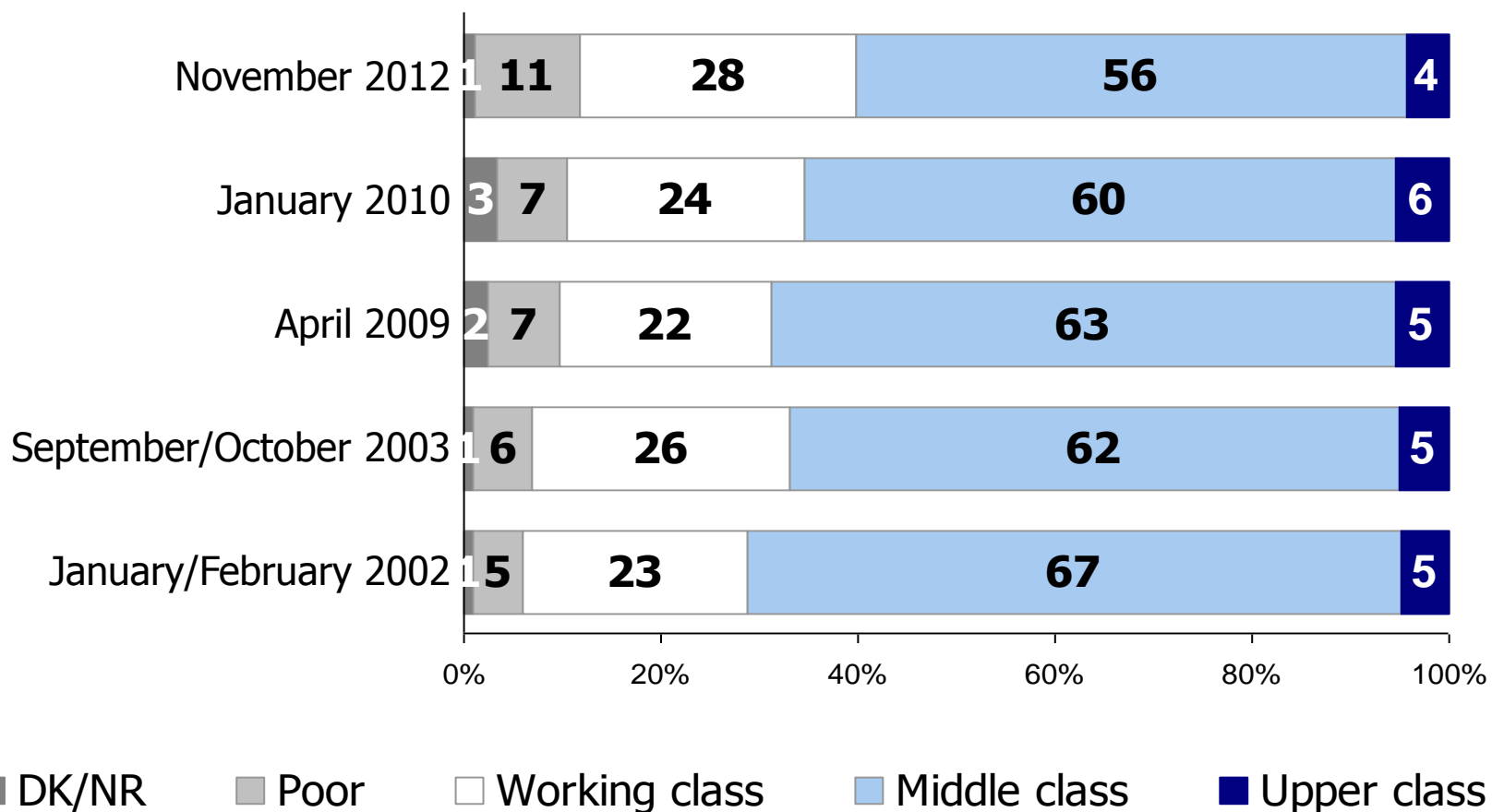


# Perceived changes in quality of life over time



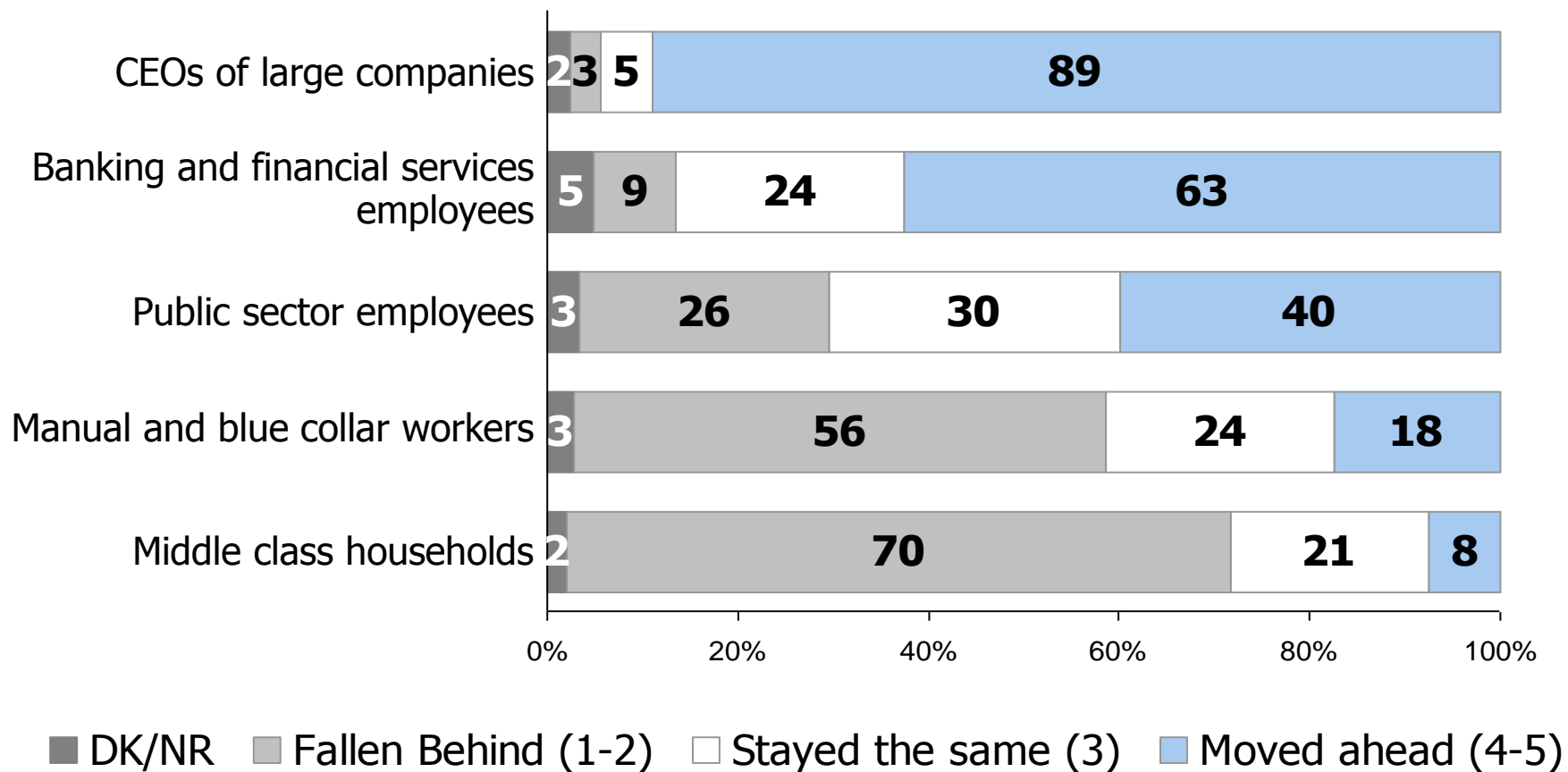
# Tracking self-rated social class

Q. *Would you describe you and your household as poor, working class, middle class, or upper class?*



# Long-term winners and losers

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



### **3. Values, ideology, and identity: Government moves right, societal values don't**

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**EXOS**

## Values, ideology, and identity (i)

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- Value shifts running at cross-currents with political landscape
- The “bluing” of Canada is more apparent than real
- While the Harper Government is decidedly blue, there is little evidence to suggest a societal shift to the right
- In fact, all indicators suggest a movement away from the right
- Self-professed ideology is a potent predictor of overall values
- Canadians have historically been less ideologically entrenched than Americans and less small “c” conservative
- At outset of this century, “neither” dominated reflecting pragmatism, eclecticism and political promiscuity
- Around 5 years ago, we see increased polarization as center is displaced and, more recently, a rise in small “l” liberal ideology
  - Dialectical response to unprecedented government from the right?

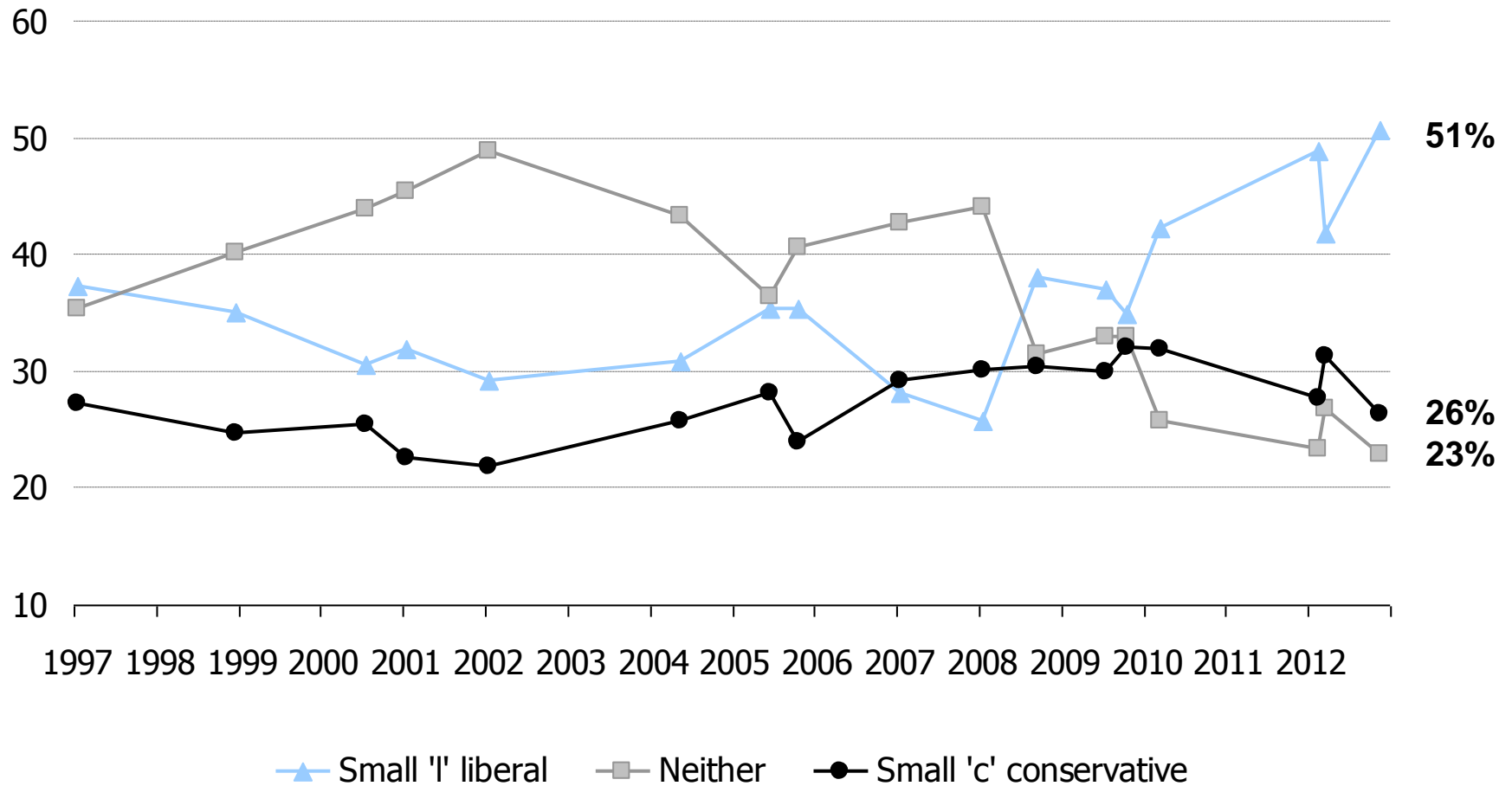
## Values, ideology, and identity (ii)

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- New fractures with profound ideological tensions across old and young, men and women, university and college, scientific versus moralistic world view, and regional differences transformed
- Value shifts clearly mirror this phenomenon
- While most values are stable (as we expect) there are significant changes across those values which are linked to small “c” conservatism; most notably declining emphasis on traditional family values, respect for authority and minimal government
- These declines are much more vivid in under 40 Canada
- The dissatisfaction with societal trajectory is partly linked to the growing contradiction of a right wing gerontocracy and an emerging “next Canada” which is eschewing those values
- Identities/attachments are all modestly declining; ethnic and more local identities in sharper decline
- While national attachment remains robust it is more weakly rooted in next Canada and has shifted West and older

# Tracking political ideology

Q. Do you consider yourself a small "c" conservative or a small "l" liberal?



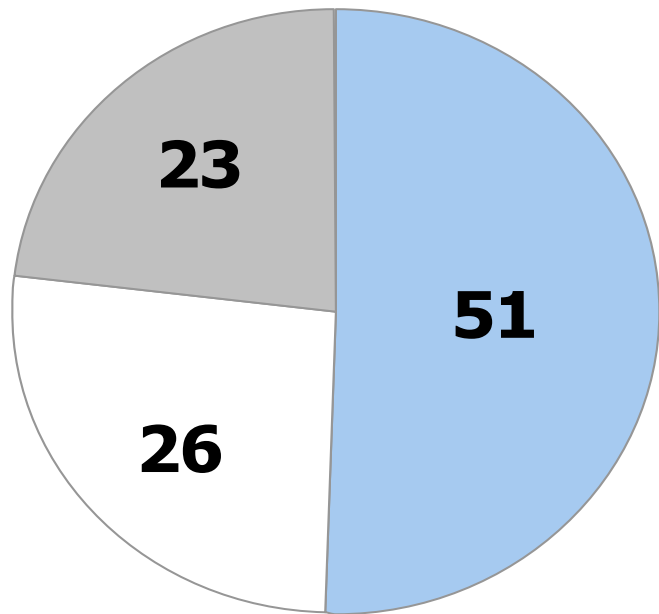
Note: Figures adjusted to exclude those who did not provide valid responses.

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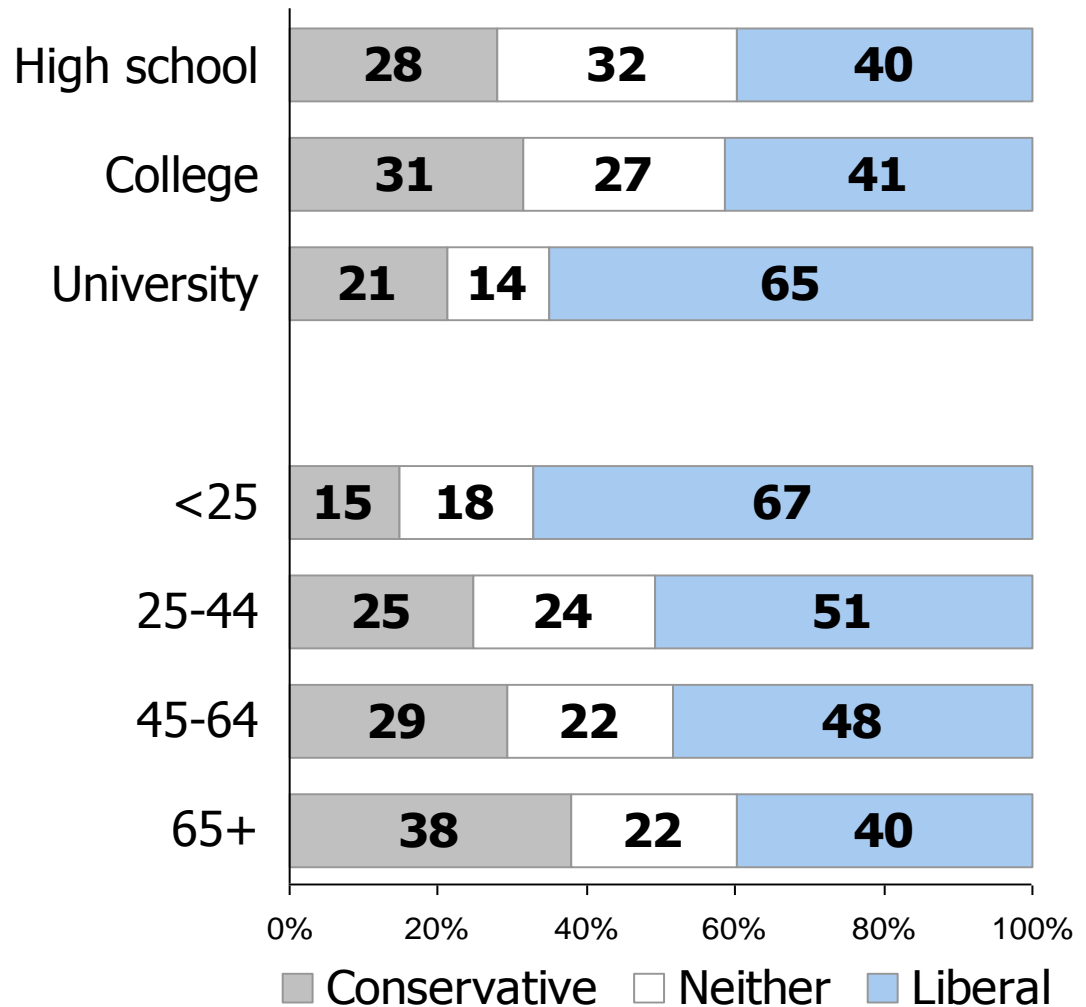
BASE: Canadians; most recent data point November 20-28, 2012 (n=1,181)

# Political ideology

Q. Do you consider yourself a small "c" conservative or a small "l" liberal?



- Liberal
- Conservative
- Neither



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BASE: Canadians; November 20-28, 2012 (n=1,181)



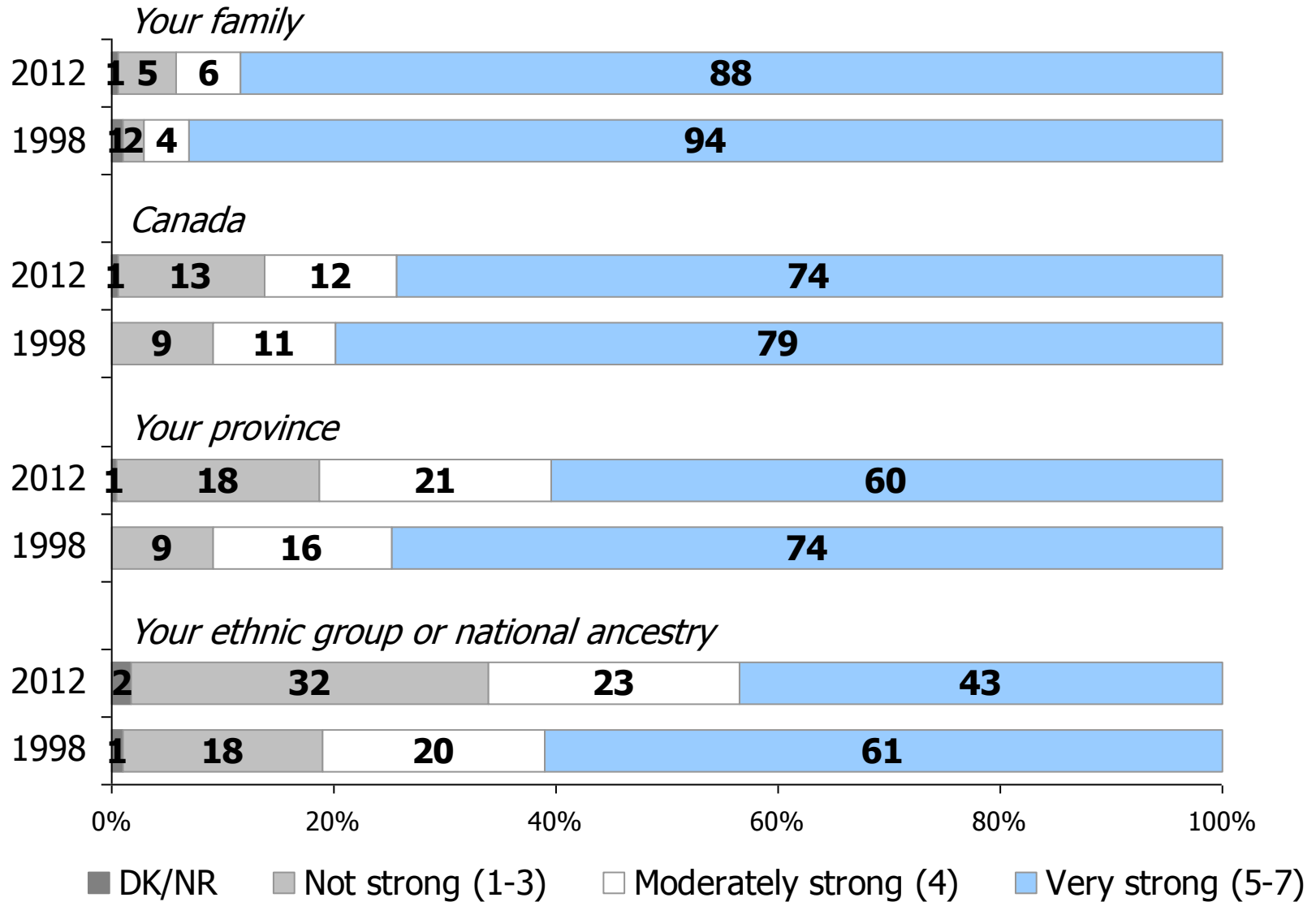
# Most important goals and values

Q. If you were to direct Canadian society as to which goals or values should be most important in its direction, how important would you say each of the following goals and values should be?



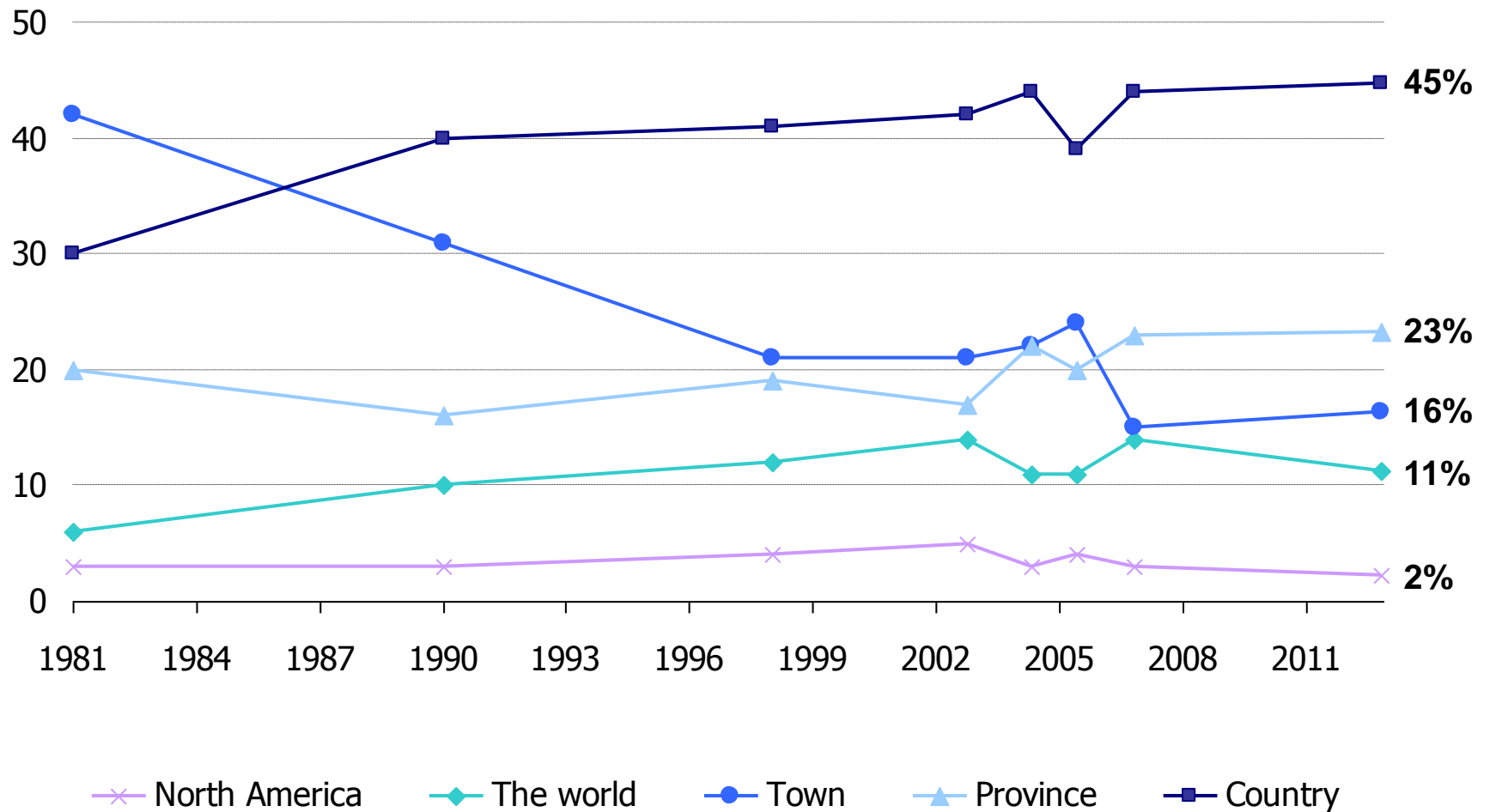
# Personal sense of belonging

Q. How strong is your own personal sense of belonging to...



# Tracking Canadian identity

Q. To which of these groups would you say you belong to first and foremost?



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# 4. Conclusions

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## Conclusions (i)

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- Overall values and identities show both stability and some key changes
- Growing unease with national direction, democracy, and the economic future is evident
- While the federal government has moved right, Canadians haven't
- In the case of younger Canada and university educated, these gaps may be approaching a crisis of legitimacy
- Can an older Canada afford to have the relatively scatter "next Canada" so disconnected from key national institutions?
- Growing fears of the end of progress, Western economic decline, and a less inclusive class structure are part of this malaise

# FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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