Trends in Australian Political Opinion

Results from the Australian Election Study
1987–2016

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> **australianelectionstudy.org**

> Access complete data files and documentation to conduct your own analysis

> Download a PDF of this report including a full online appendix with question wording and data tables

Political opinion polls are an inescapable part of everyday life. Government or opposition policies rarely see the light of day without some poll evidence to gauge the public's response to them. Party leaders are constantly evaluated against their poll ratings, not least by their colleagues, and consistently low ratings can often spell a leader's demise. And not least, Prime Ministers call elections when they consider the polls to be most favourable to them.

Interpreting political opinion polls is sometimes difficult. On particular issues or with regard to particular personalities, opinions may change significantly in a short period of time as a result of an event or a changed circumstance. Small changes in question wordings or in sample design may cause what appear to be significant changes in public opinion when such changes are, in fact, an artefact of the survey's methodology. The most reliable way in which to monitor trends in public opinion is to examine responses over an extended period of time, using questions asked in the same way and included in surveys that use the same methodology.

This monograph presents trends in Australian public opinion on politics over an extended period of time. In most cases, our trends run from 1987 until 2016; in some cases, the same questions have been asked in surveys conducted in 1967, 1969 and 1979, allowing us to extend the time series back another two decades. The 1987 to 2016 trends are based on the Australian Election Study (AES) surveys, comprehensive post-election surveys of political opinion that have asked the same questions and used the same methodology. The 1967, 1969 and 1979 surveys are also comprehensive academic surveys of political opinion; all three surveys were conducted by Don Aitkin, who pioneered the use of the mass public opinion survey in the academic study of politics in Australia.

The AES provides the most sophisticated and exhaustive set of data ever collected in Australia on the dynamics of political behaviour. Each of the AES surveys contains questions relating to the role of media and media exposure; general political interest and knowledge; perceptions of the election campaign; party identification and prior voting history; parents' and partner partisanship; vote in the election and the explanations given for it; party images; perceptions of the major party leaders and the content of their public images; election issues; social policy issues; and a range of socio-demographic measures including education, occupation, religious behaviour, family circumstances, and income.

In this monograph, we draw on the main recurring themes of the AES to trace long-term changes in the political opinion of the electorate. The appendix provides a detailed overview of the methodology used in each survey. The exact question wordings and response categories, and the complete sets of responses to the questions, appear in a full online appendix at australianelectionstudy.org.

The AES is also a founding member of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project, details of which can be found at www.cses.org.

Sarah M. Cameron
Ian McAllister

Canberra
December 2016

Followed the election in the mass media

- ━━━ Television
- ━━━ Radio
- ━━━ Newspapers
- ━━━ Internet
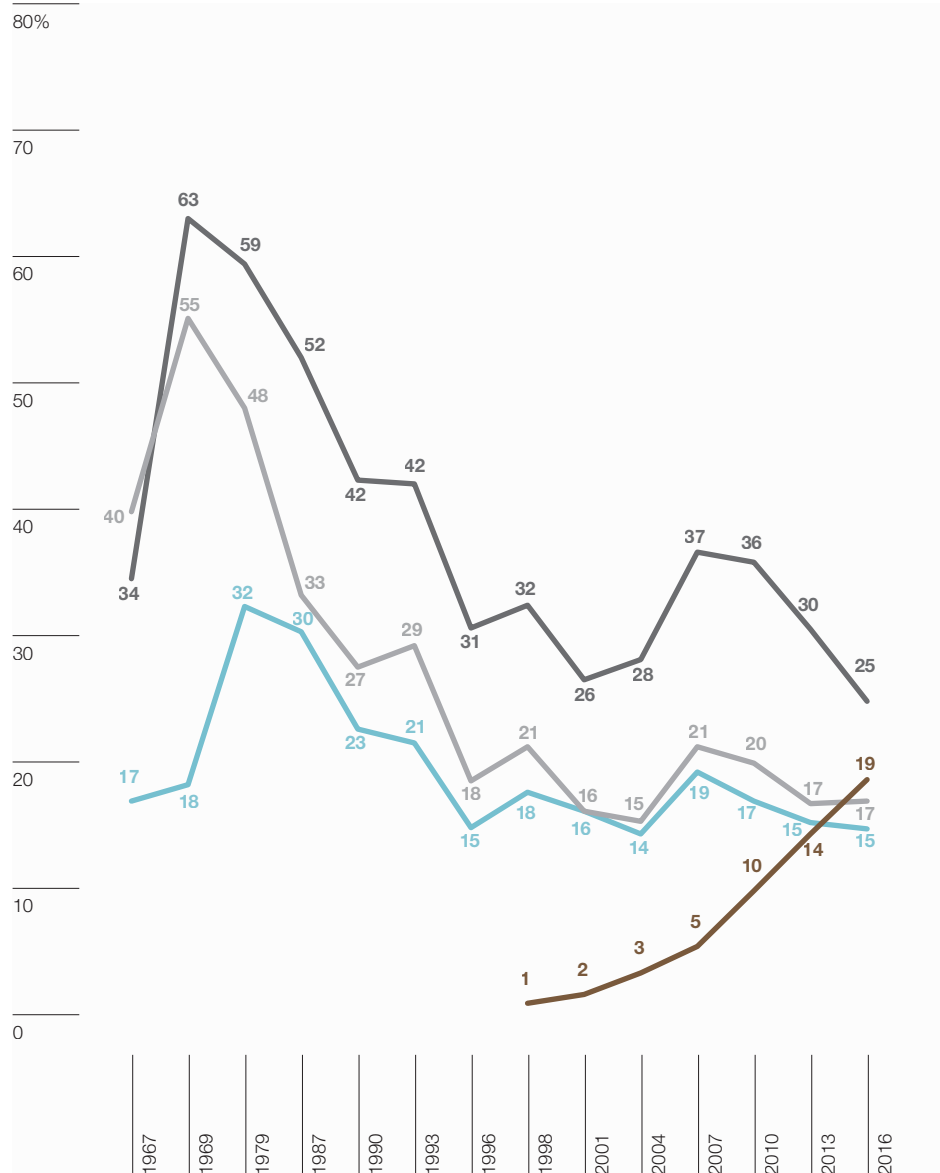
Watched the leaders' debates

- ━━━ Watched debate
- ━━━ Did not watch debate
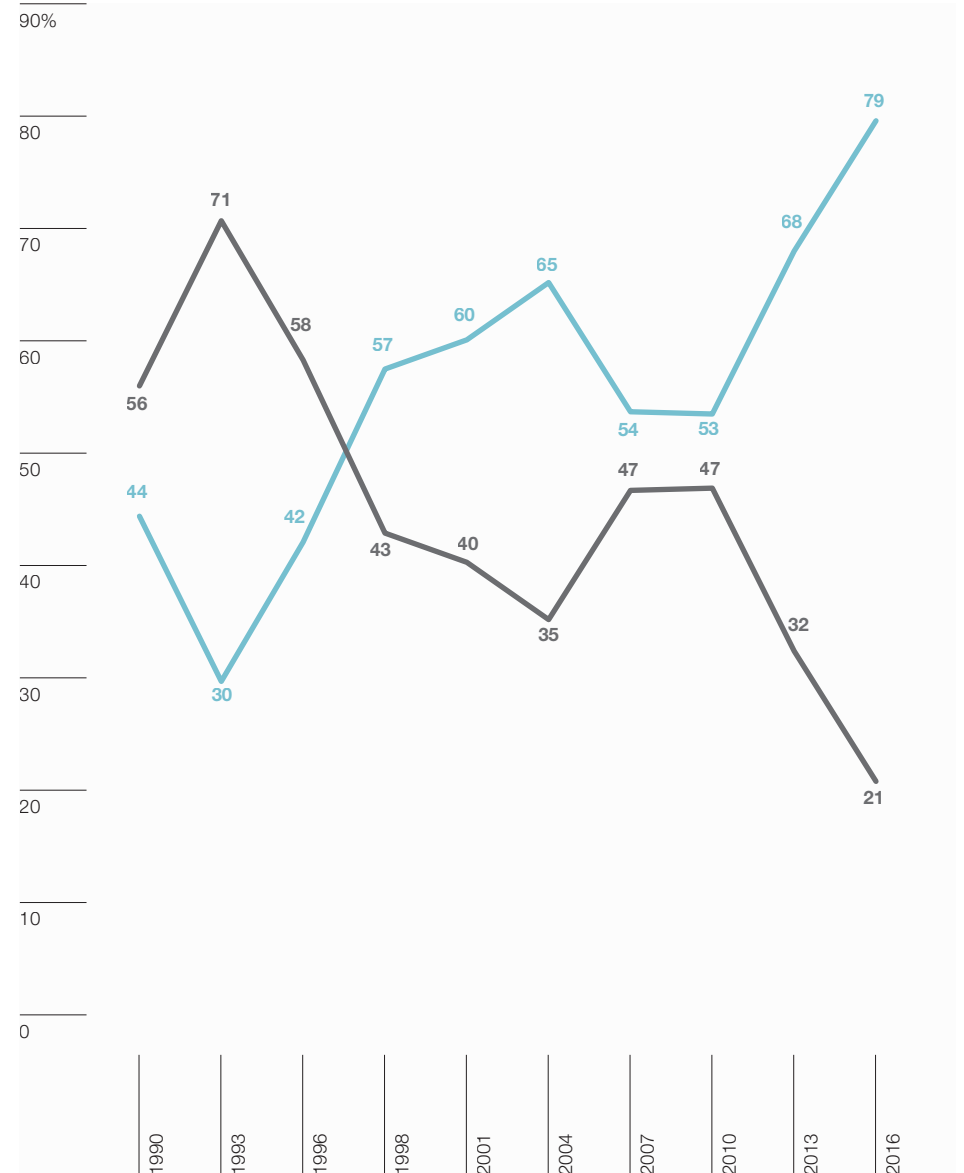
Interest in the election

— **Care a good deal who wins the election**
— **A good deal of interest in the election**

Care a good deal who wins the election:
1967: 60, 1969: 66, 1987: 79, 1993: 83, 1996: 75, 1998: 74, 2001: 65, 2004: 72, 2007: 76, 2010: 68, 2013: 68, 2016: 65

A good deal of interest in the election:
1993: 50, 1996: 34, 1998: 38, 2001: 31, 2004: 30, 2007: 40, 2010: 34, 2013: 33, 2016: 30
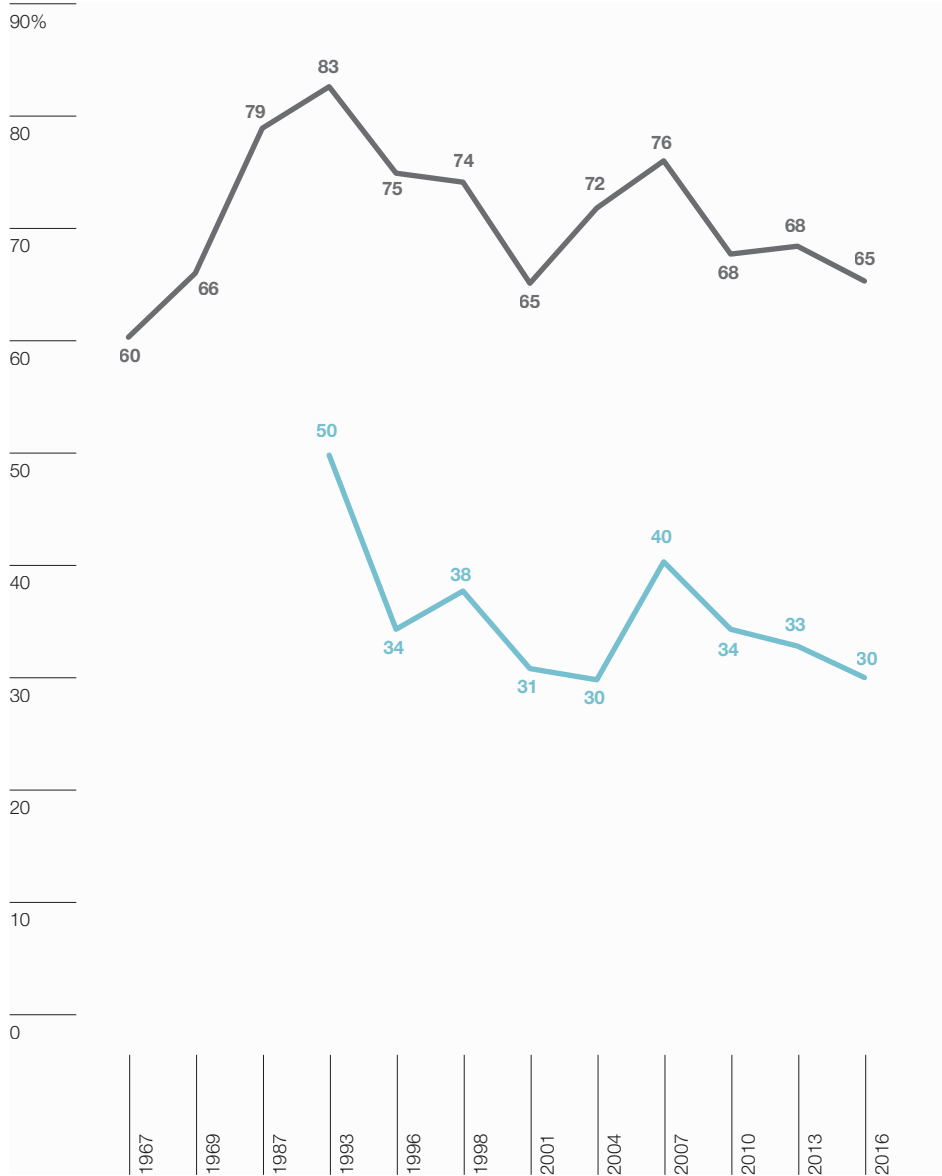
Contacted by candidate or political party

— **Contacted by a party during the campaign**

Contacted by a party during the campaign:
2001: 28, 2004: 29, 2007: 33, 2010: 45, 2013: 60, 2016: 57
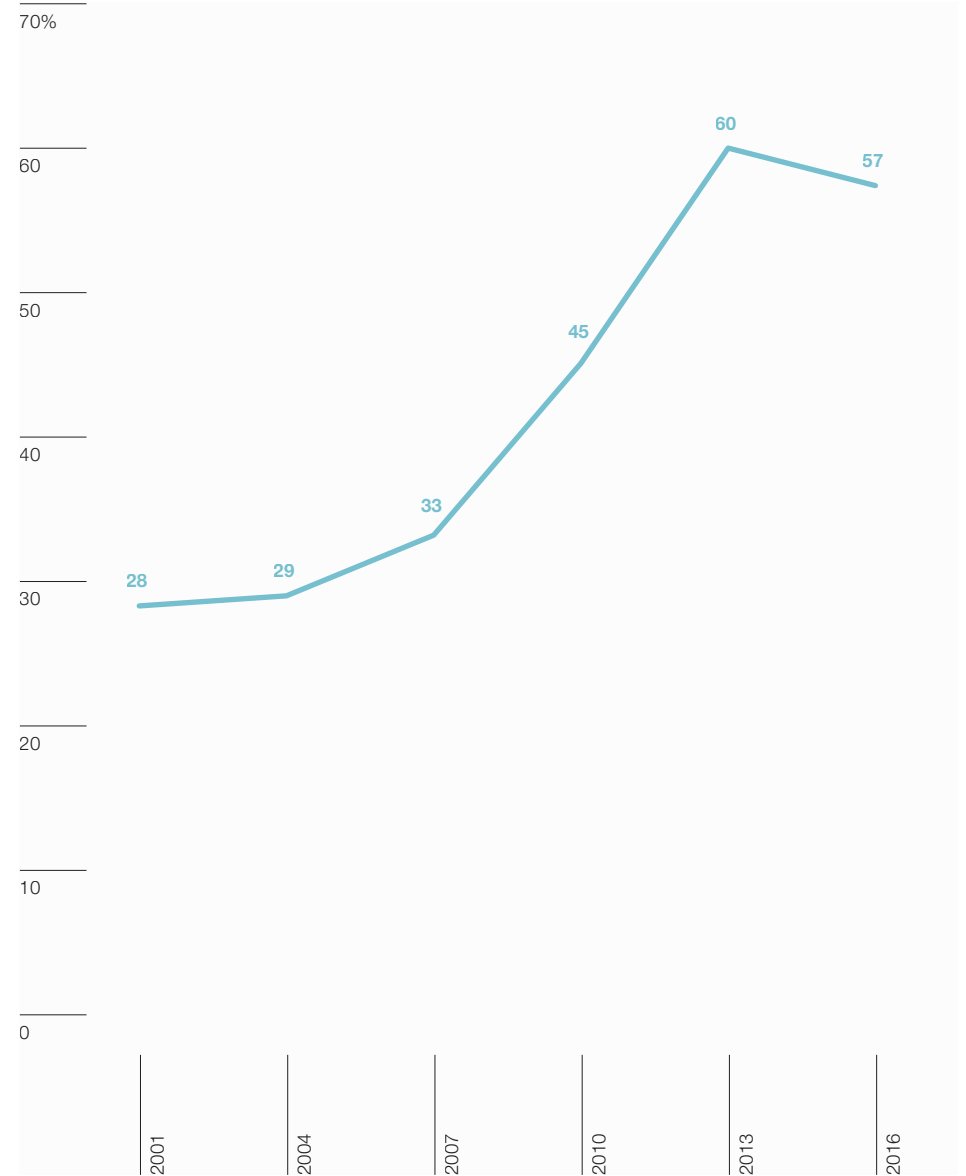
Discussing the election campaign with others

— **Discuss politics**
— **Persuade others how to vote**

100%

88
82
84
88
78
75
76
73
72

49
42
35
32
27
18
14
14
15

80

60

40

20

0

1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
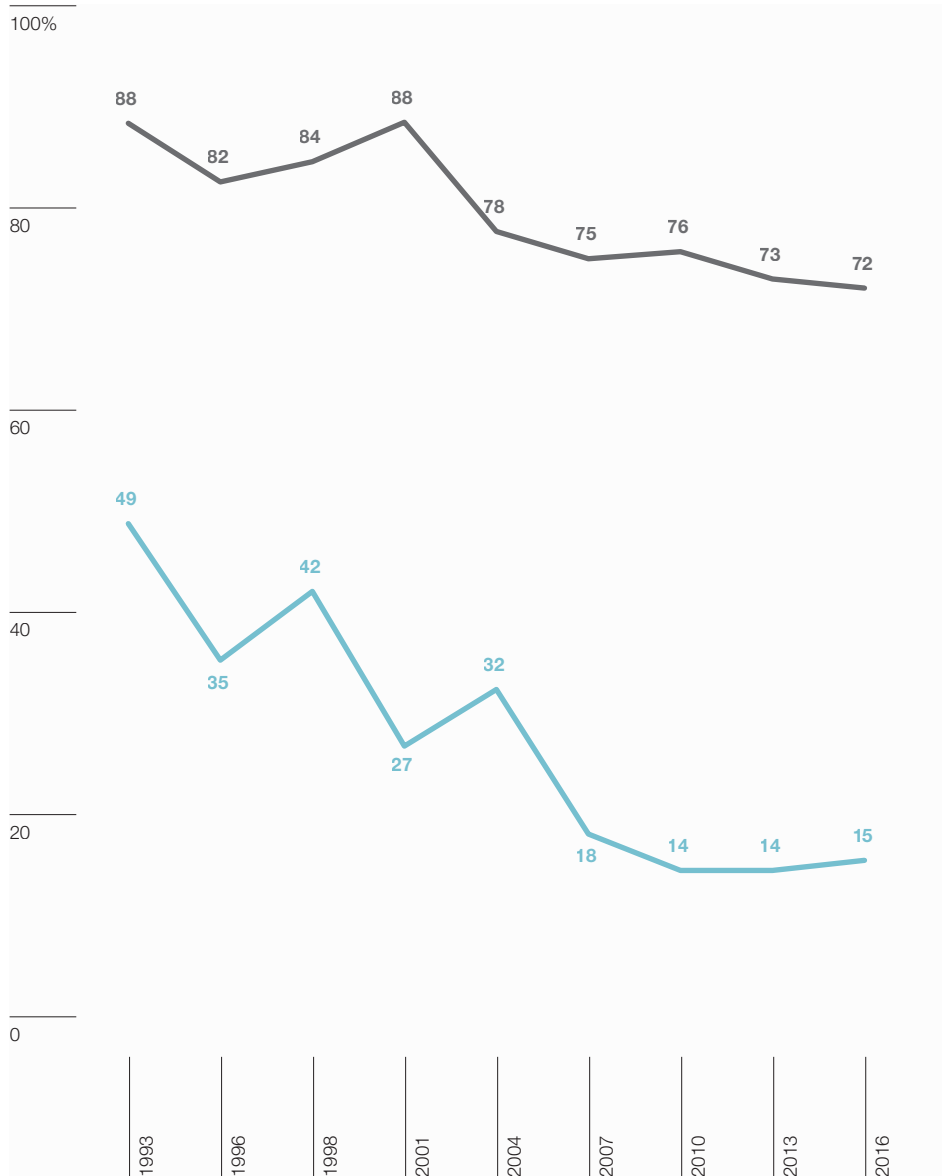
Involvement in the election campaign

— **Attend meeting**
— **Work for party or candidate**
— **Contribute money to a political party or election candidate**

14%

12
11
9
8
7
8
5
5
4
4
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
2
2
2
2
2
2
2

12

10

8

6

4

2

0

1969 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
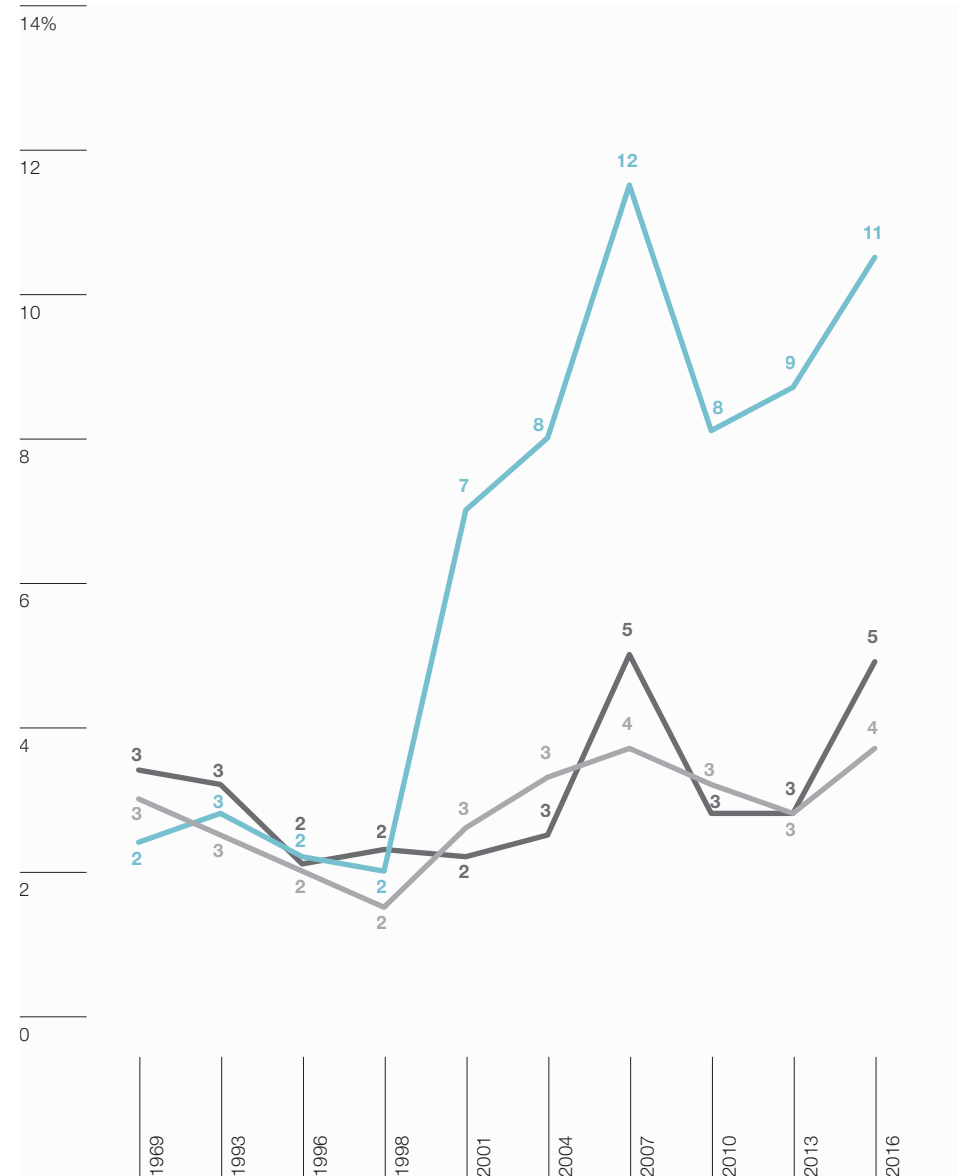
Websites accessed during the election campaign

- ▬ **Party or candidate campaign sites**
- ▬ **Mainstream news media**
- ▬ Federal Parliament
- ▬ **Australian Electoral Commission**
- ▬ Unofficial online videos
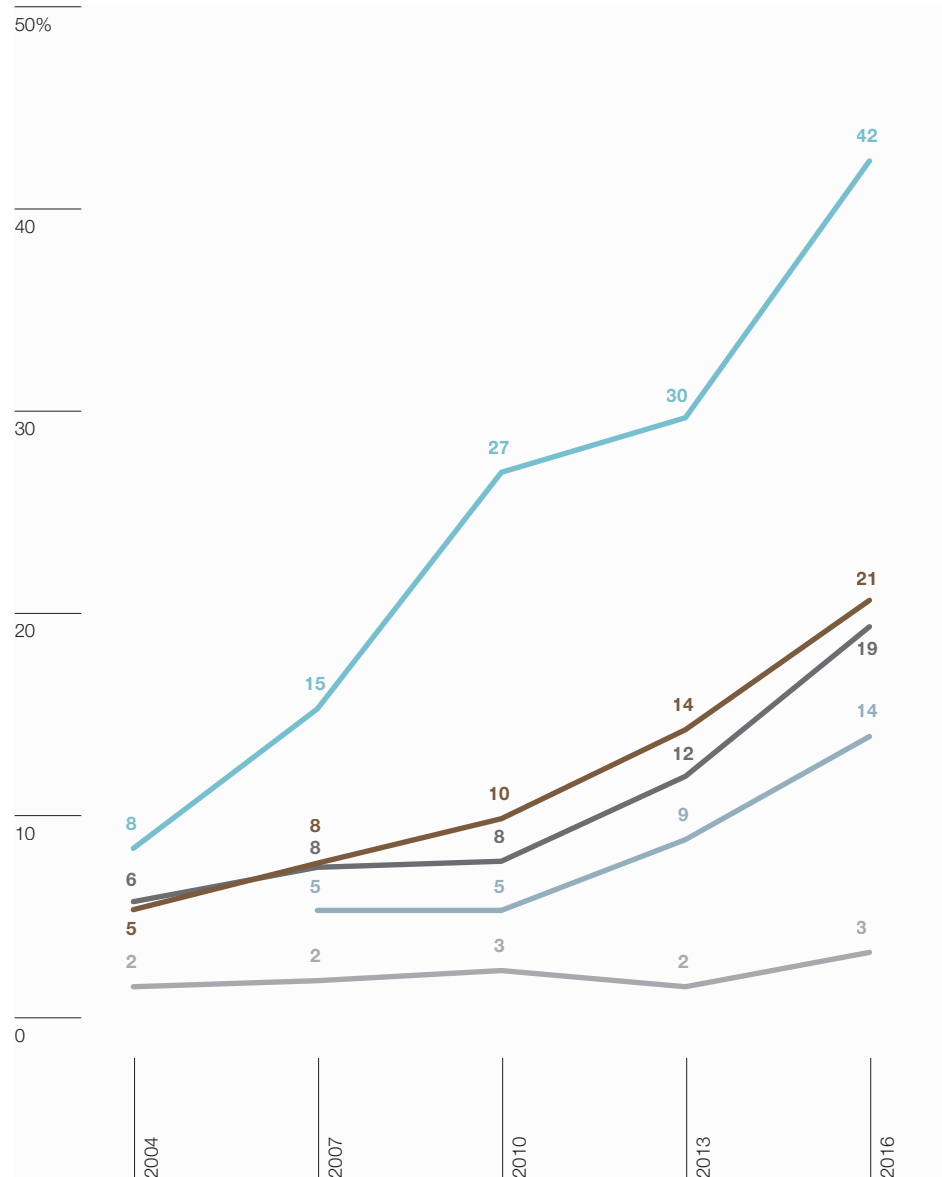
Online activity during the election campaign

- ▬ **Shared unofficial political content online**
- ▬ **Joined a political group on a social networking site**
- ▬ Signed up to receive information from a party or candidate
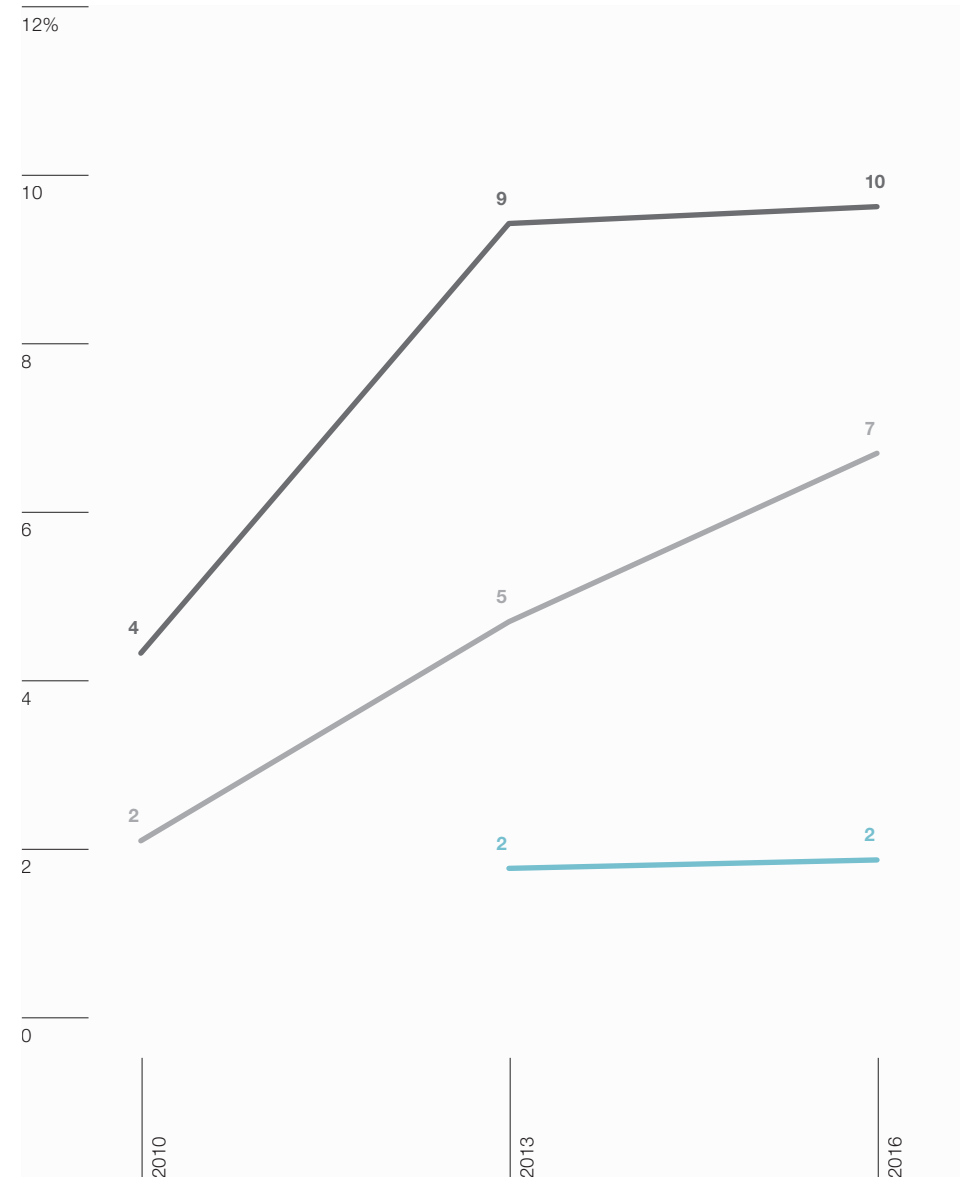
Notes

Followed the election in the mass media
1998–2004: Estimates for internet is 'many times.' 2007–2016: Response categories for all media are 'a good deal'.

Contacted by candidate or political party
For contacted by a party during the campaign, the response categories are (2001–2007) 'Yes', (2010) 'Yes, by telephone', 'Yes, by mail', 'Yes, by face-to-face', and 'Yes, by email or through the web', (2013–2016) 'Yes, by telephone', 'Yes, by mail', 'Yes, (2013: by) face-to-face', 'Yes, by text message or SMS', 'Yes, by email', and 'Yes, by social network site or other web-based method'.

Discussing the election campaign with others
For 2001–2016 estimates combine 'frequently' and 'occasionally'.

Involvement in the election campaign
For attend meeting, the response categories are (1969) 'yes'; (1993–2016) 'go to any political meetings or rallies'. For work for a party or candidate, the response categories are (1969) 'yes'; (1993–1998) 'do any work for a political party or election candidate'; (2001–2016) 'show your support for a particular party or candidate by, for example, attending a meeting, putting up a poster, or in some other way'. For contribute money to a political party or election candidate, the response categories are, (1969) 'yes'; (1993–2007, 2013–2016) 'contribute money to a political party or election candidate'; (2010) combined responses to 'contribute money to a political party or election candidate by mail or phone' and 'contribute money to a political party or election candidate using the internet'. For 2001–2016 all estimates combine 'frequently' and 'occasionally'.

Websites accessed during the election campaign
For party or candidate campaign sites estimates (2004–2007) combine 'party site', 'your own MP's site', 'individual candidate site in your electorate' and 'other candidate/MPs sites outside your electorate', for (2010–2013) the response category is 'party or candidate campaign sites', and for (2016) 'official party or candidate campaign sites'. For unofficial online videos, the response categories are (2007) 'YouTube; (2010–2013) 'unofficial online videos'; (2016) 'unofficial online content (i.e. non-party produced campaign material (e.g. YouTube))'.

Online activity during the election campaign
For 'signed up to receive information from a party or candidate' this includes registering as their follower/friend/supporter on social media.

The election campaign
Voting and partisanship
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The economy
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Democracy and institutions
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Appendix: Methodology

Timing of the voting decision

▬▬ **A long time ago**
▬▬ **During the election campaign**
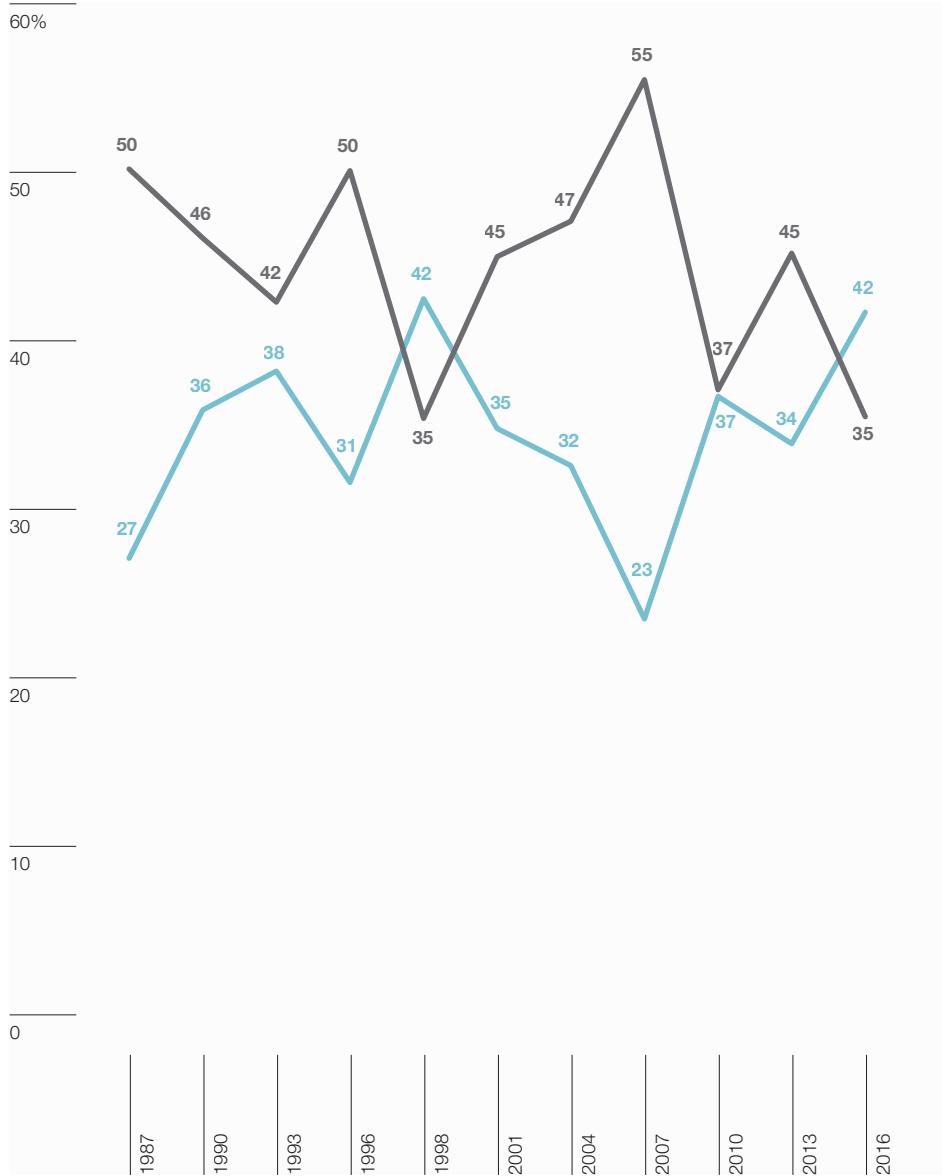
The use of voter prompts on polling day

▬▬ **Followed 'How to Vote' card for House of Representatives**
▬▬ **Voted above the line for Senate**
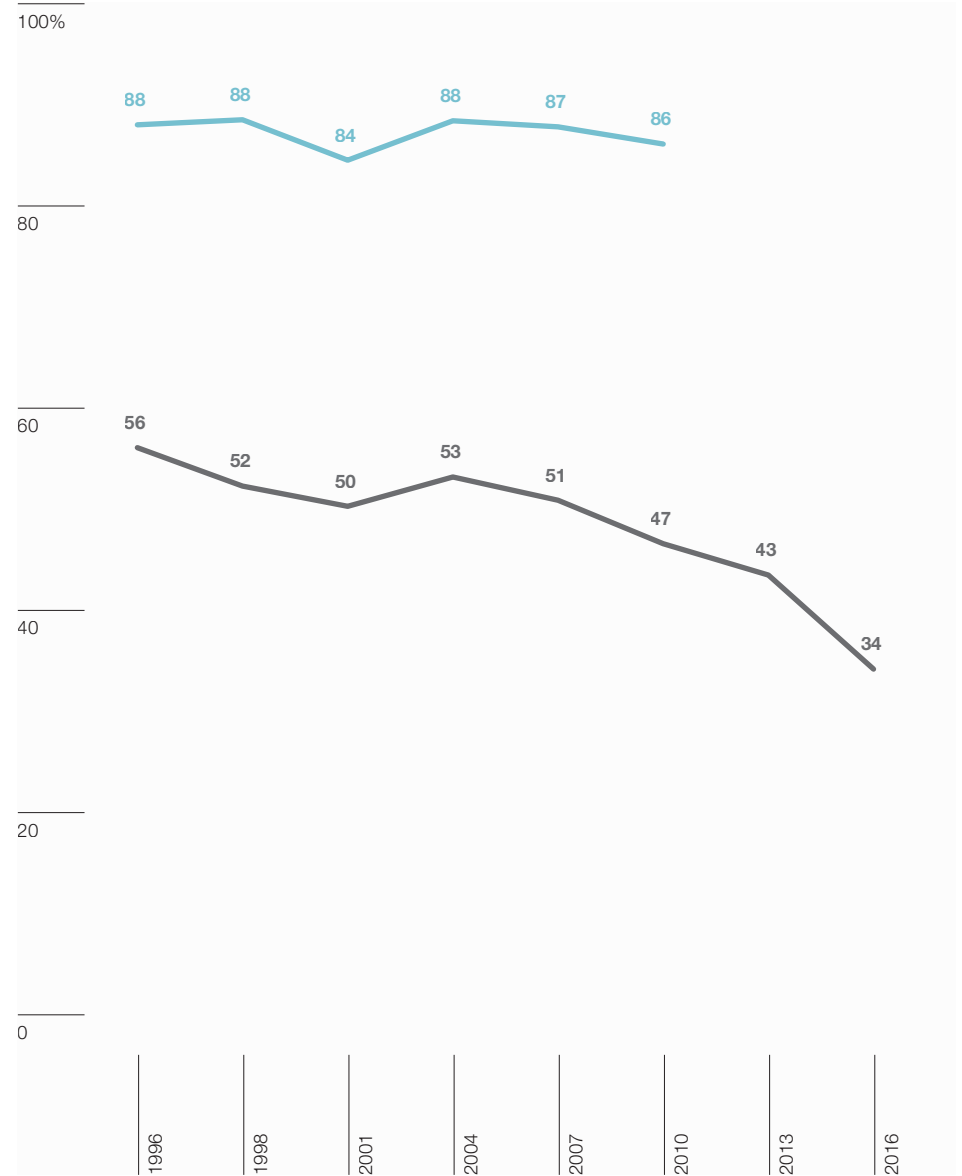
Split ticket voting — cast different vote in House of Representatives and Senate

━━━ Split tickets
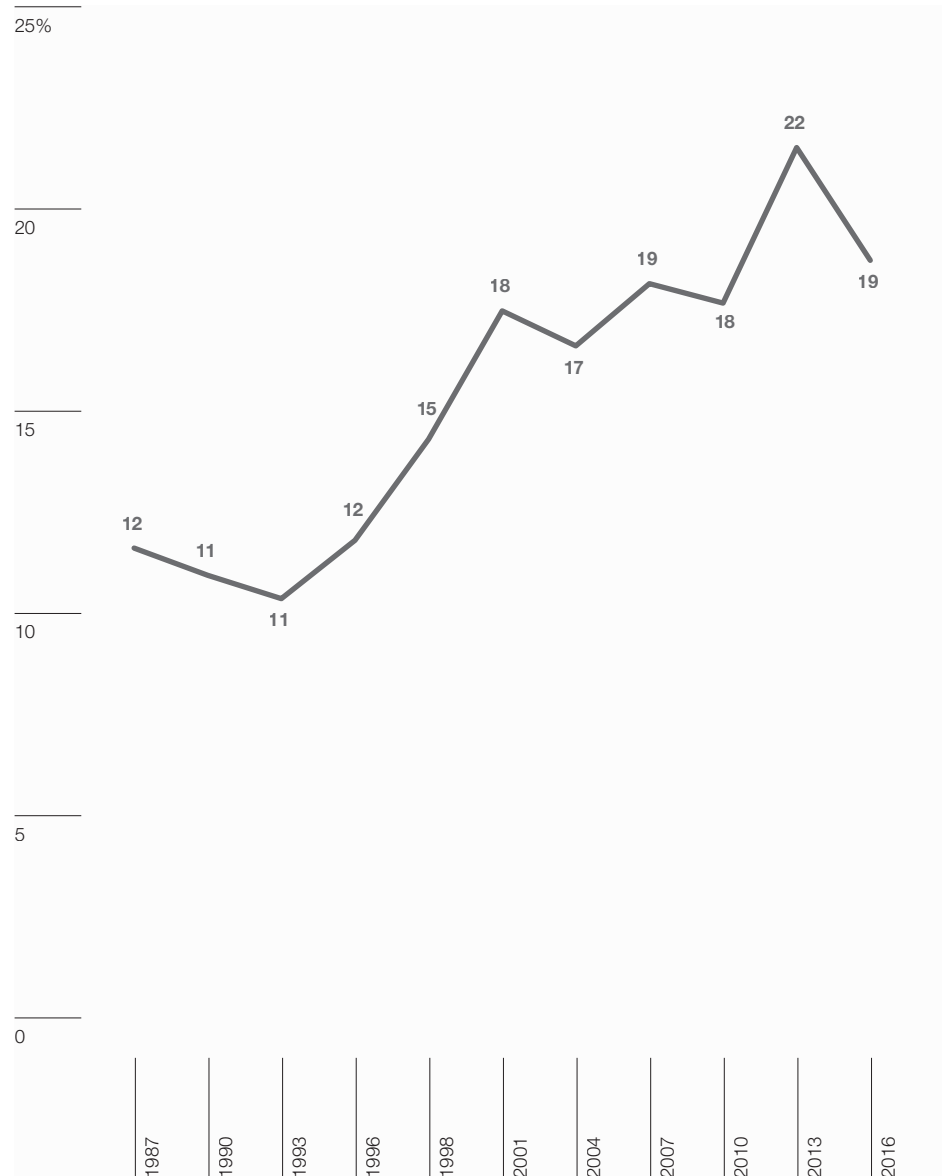
The extent of voting volatility

━━━ Always voted for same party
━━━ Considered voting for another party
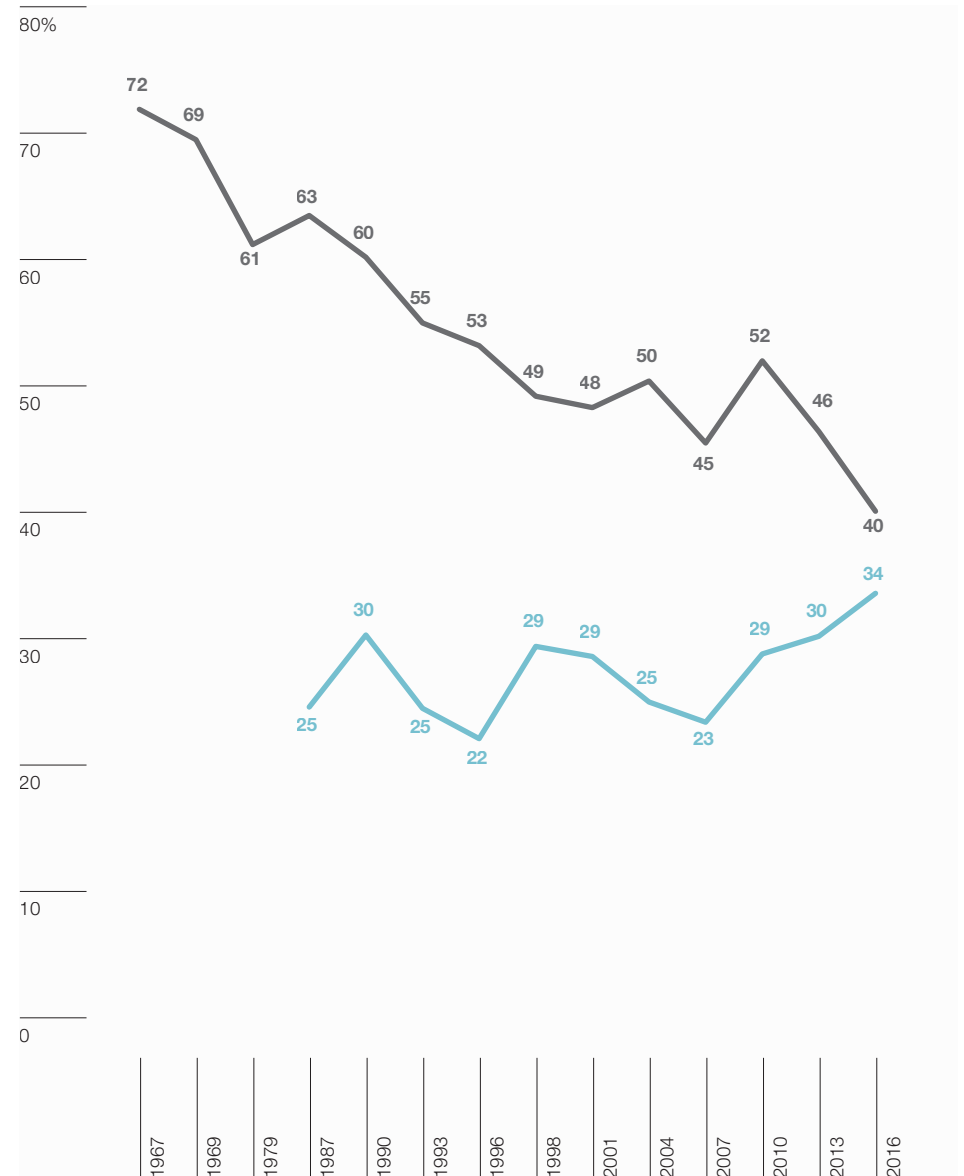
Considered changing vote during campaign

— Liberal-National voters
— **Labor voters**

Labor voters: 28, 30, 27, 26, 27, 31, 28, 25, 33, 37, 36
Liberal-National voters: 23, 24, 18, 16, 27, 20, 17, 17, 20, 19, 25

1987 1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
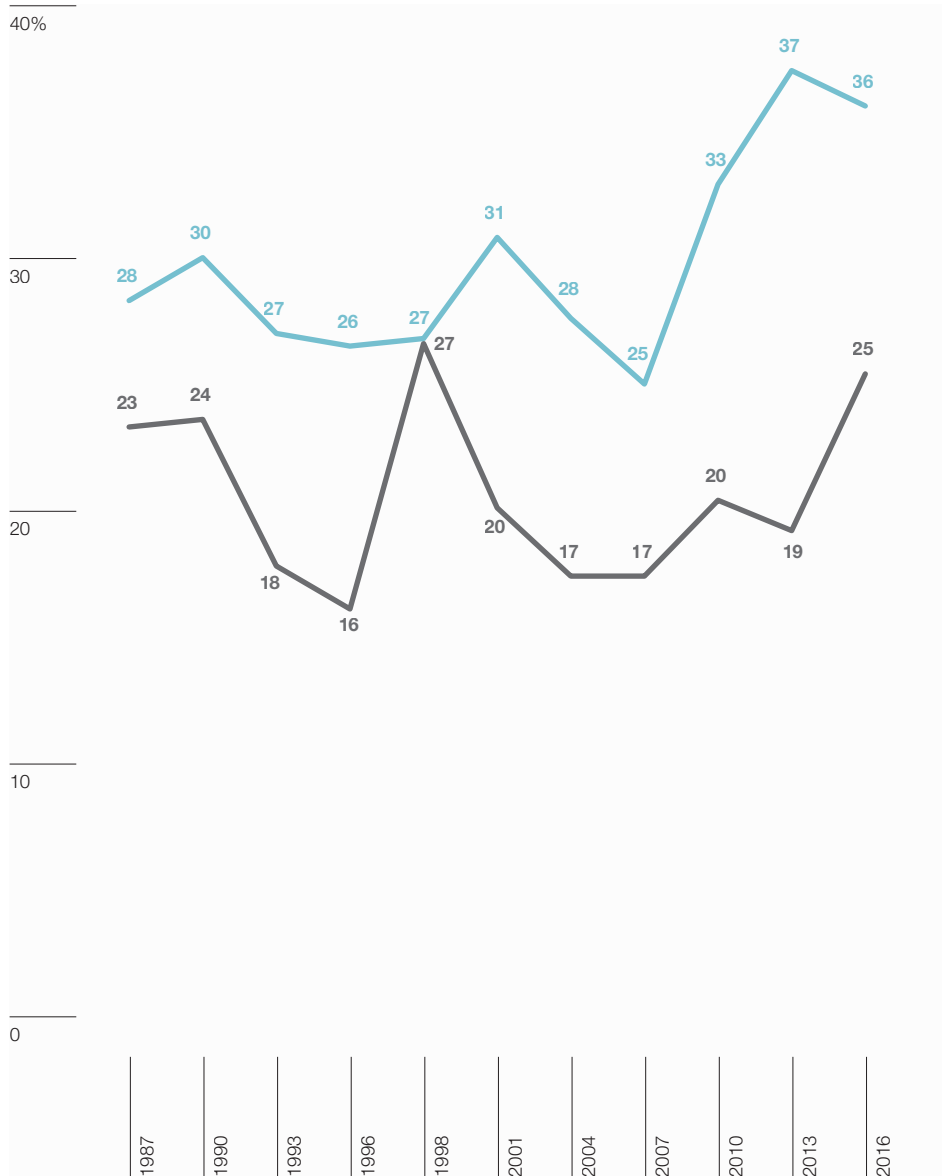
Lifetime voting

— Stable Liberal-National
— **Stable Labor**

Stable Liberal-National: 36, 35, 27, 24, 29, 23, 25, 20, 20, 25, 24, 25, 31, 21
Stable Labor: 32, 32, 33, 38, 27, 29, 23, 23, 21, 19, 20, 22, 24, 16

1967 1969 1979 1987 1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
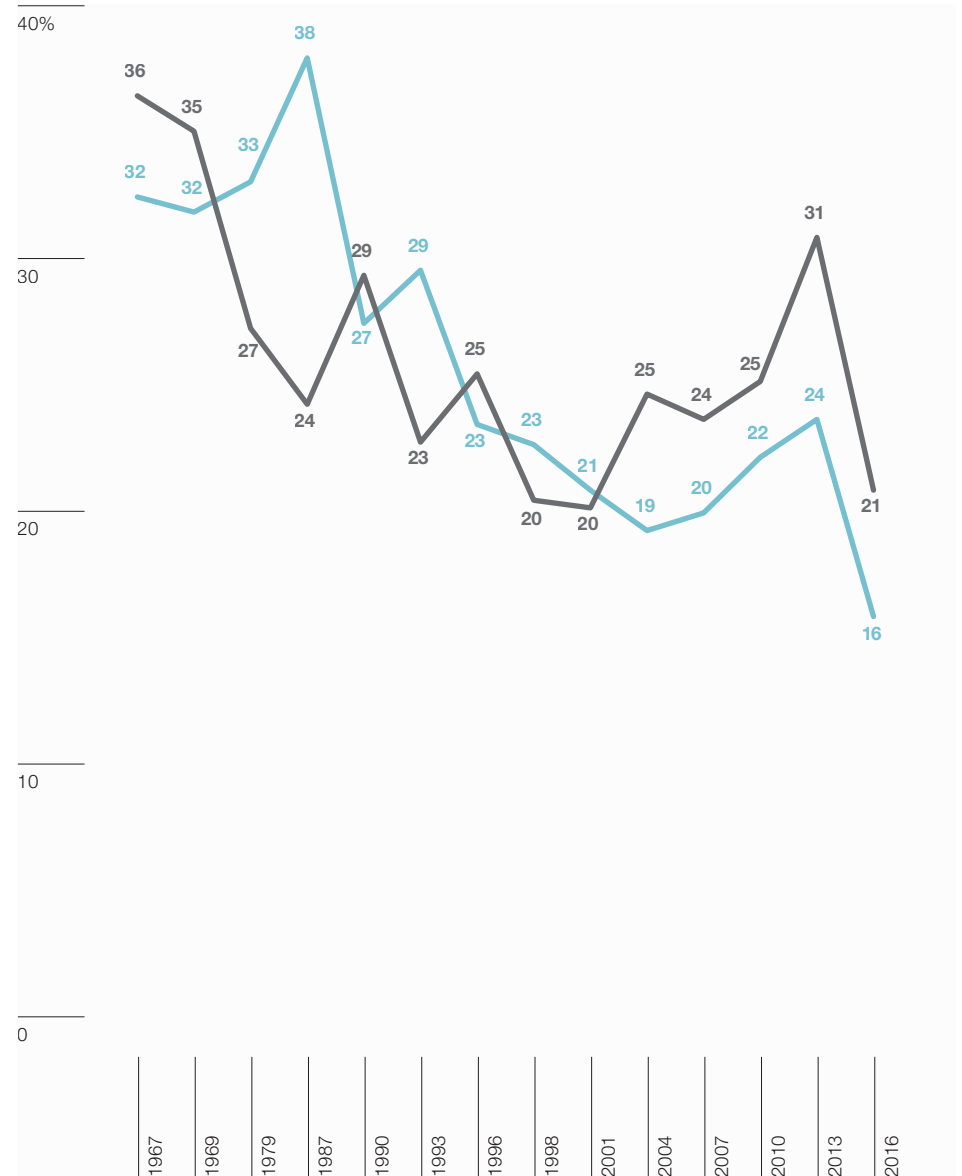
Considerations in the voting decision

- Party leaders
- Policy issues
- Candidates in your electorate
- Parties taken as a whole
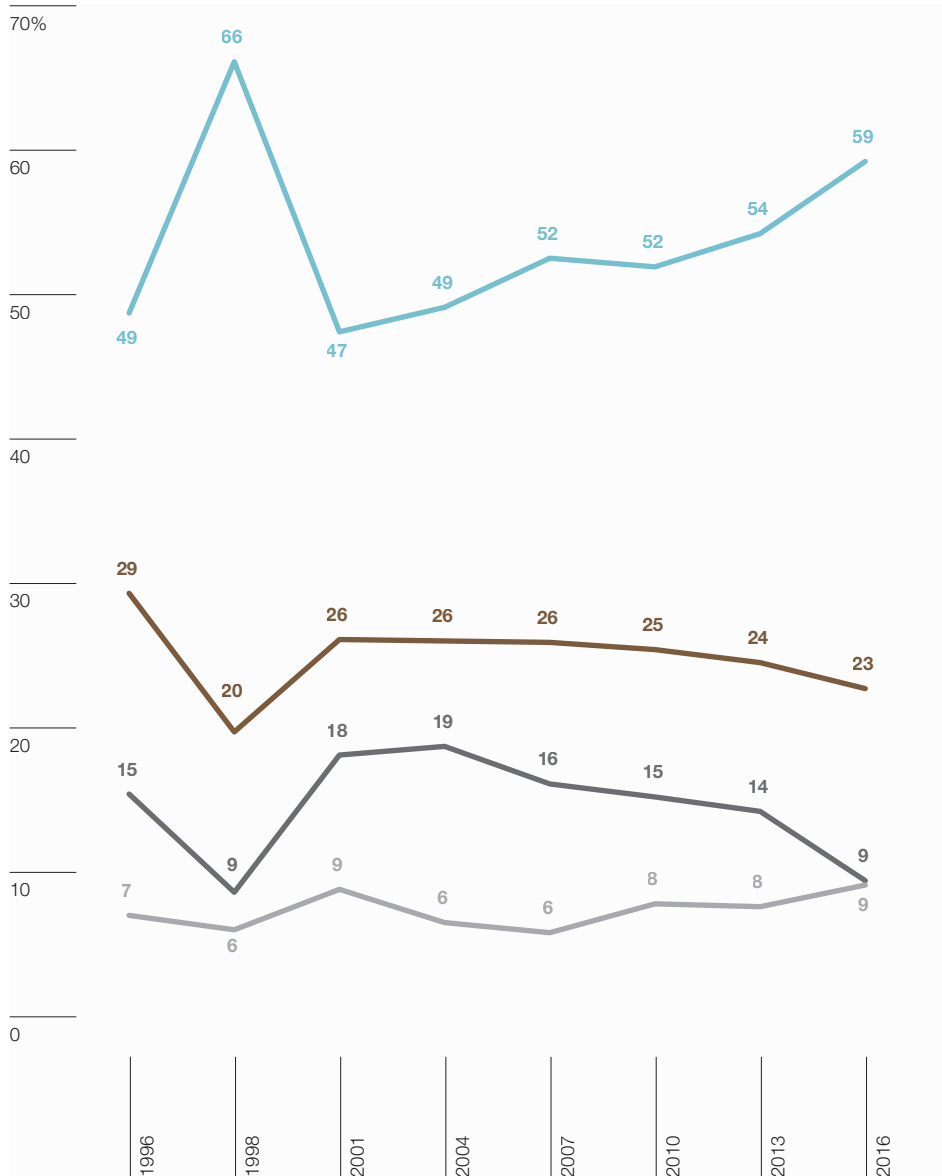
Destination of minor party votes in the House of Representatives

- Liberal-National
- Labor
- Not sure / don't know
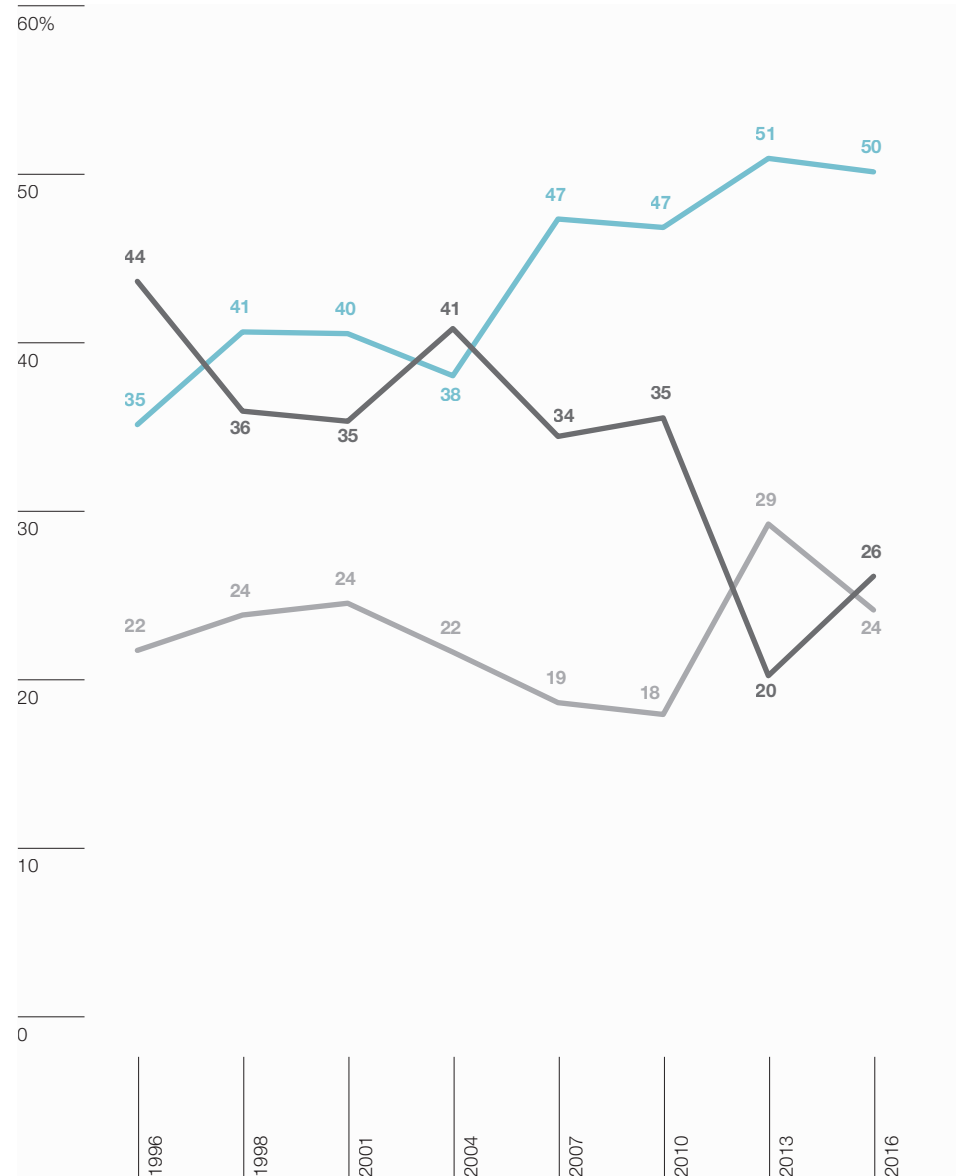
Destination of minor party votes in the Senate

- **Liberal-National**
- **Labor**
- **Not sure / don't know**
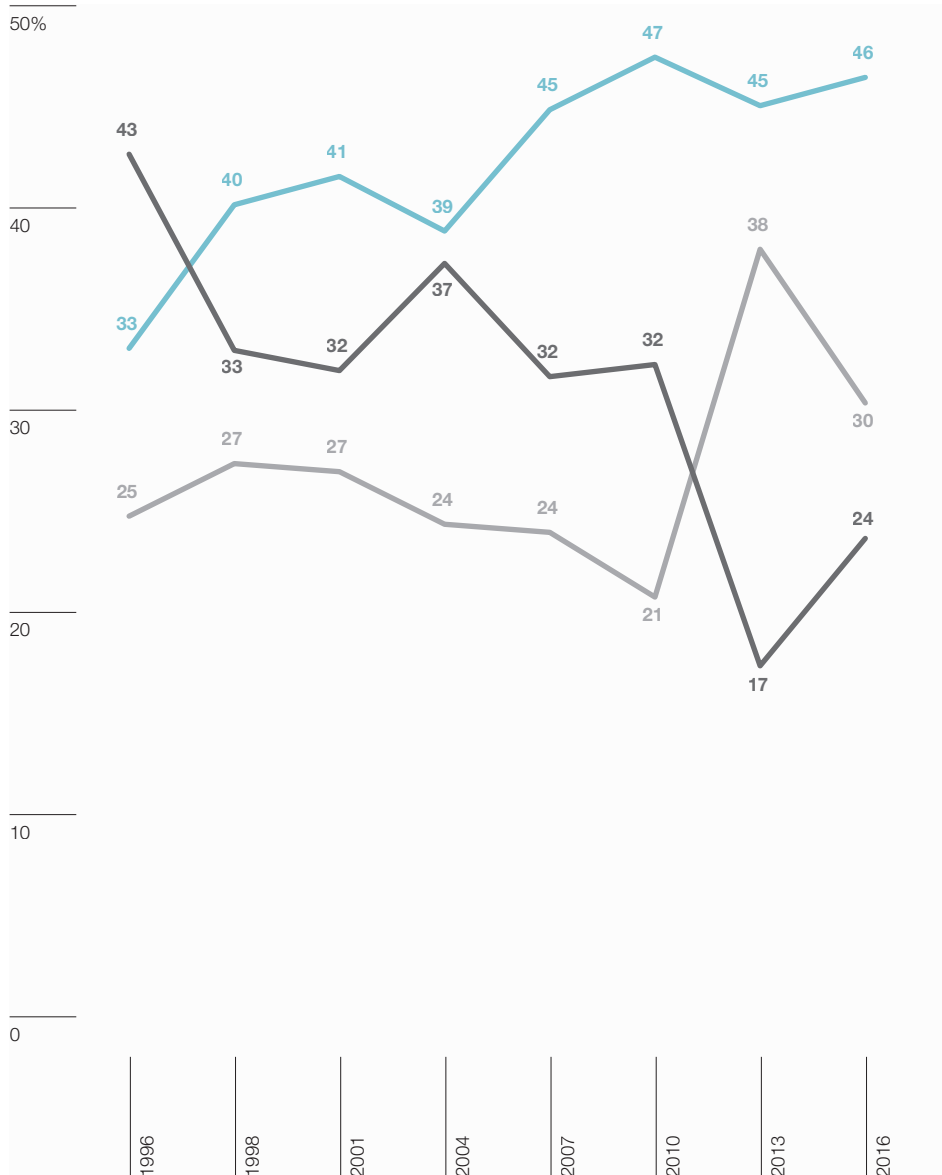
Difference between the parties

- **Good deal of difference**
- **Some difference**
- **Not much / no difference**
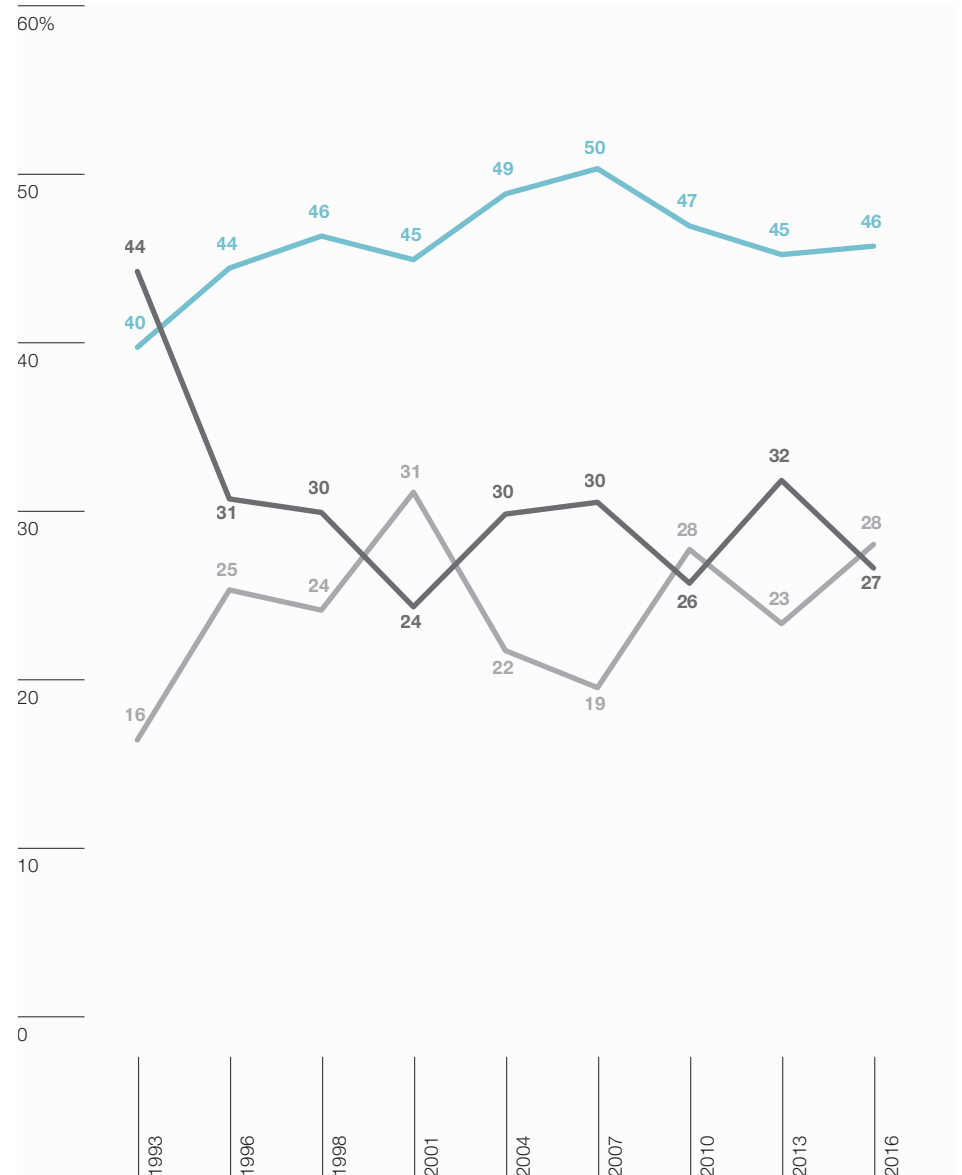
Direction of political partisanship

Legend:
- Liberal
- Labor
- Greens
- None

Liberal: 41, 40, 36, 34, 36, 36, 37, 34, 36, 42, 37, 36, 34, 33, 30

Labor: 38, 40, 42, 49, 47, 44, 37, 41, 36, 32, 37, 38, 35, 30

Greens: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 6, 6, 9

None: 11, 10, 14, 6, 4, 12, 17, 14, 15, 16, 16, 14, 17, 19

X-axis: 1967, 1969, 1979, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

Y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60%
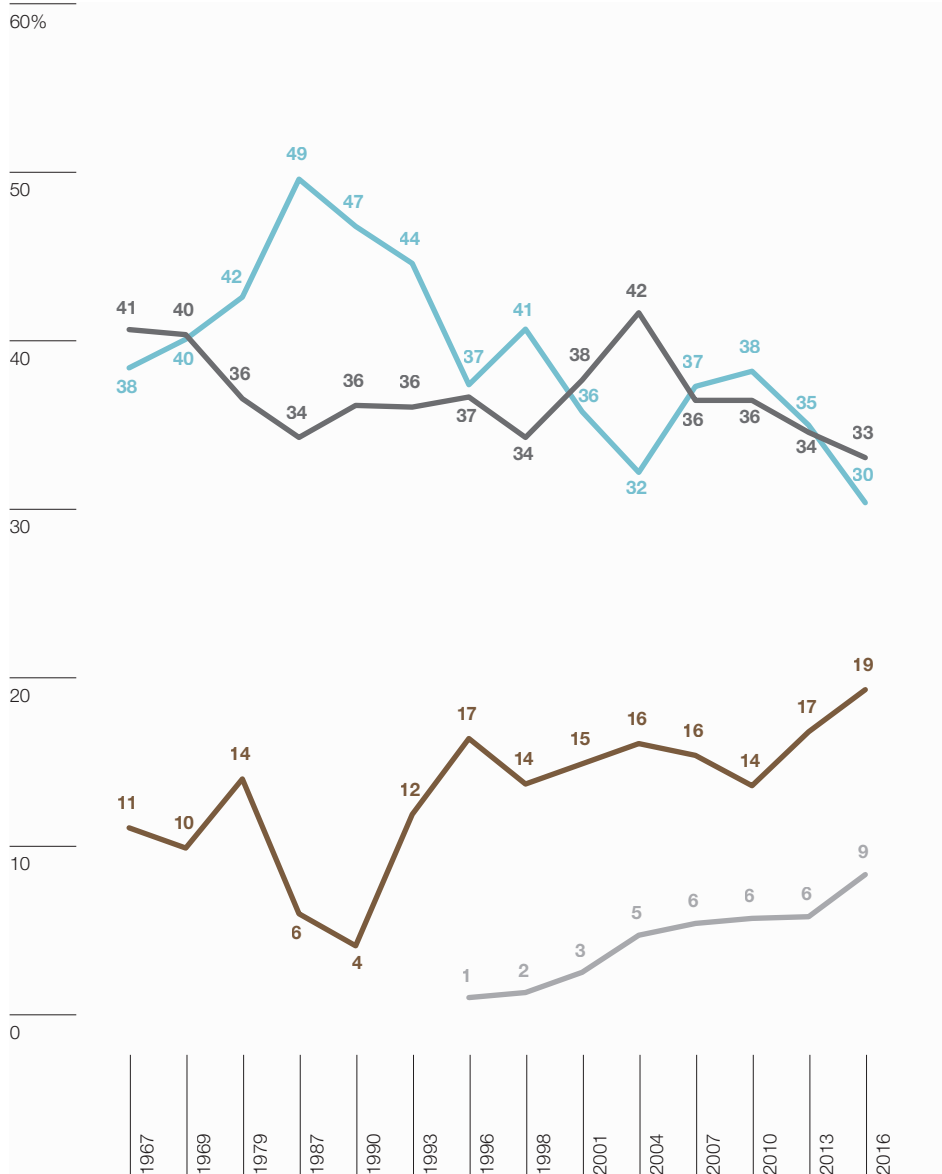
Strength of political partisanship

Legend:
- Very strong
- Fairly strong
- Not very strong

Very strong: 33, 34, 34, 20, 18, 19, 19, 18, 18, 21, 24, 19, 21, 21

Fairly strong: 44, 48, 47, 47, 48, 49, 46, 50, 48, 48, 49, 52, 50, 50

Not very strong: 23, 18, 19, 33, 35, 32, 36, 32, 34, 32, 27, 29, 29, 29

X-axis: 1967, 1969, 1979, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

Y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60%
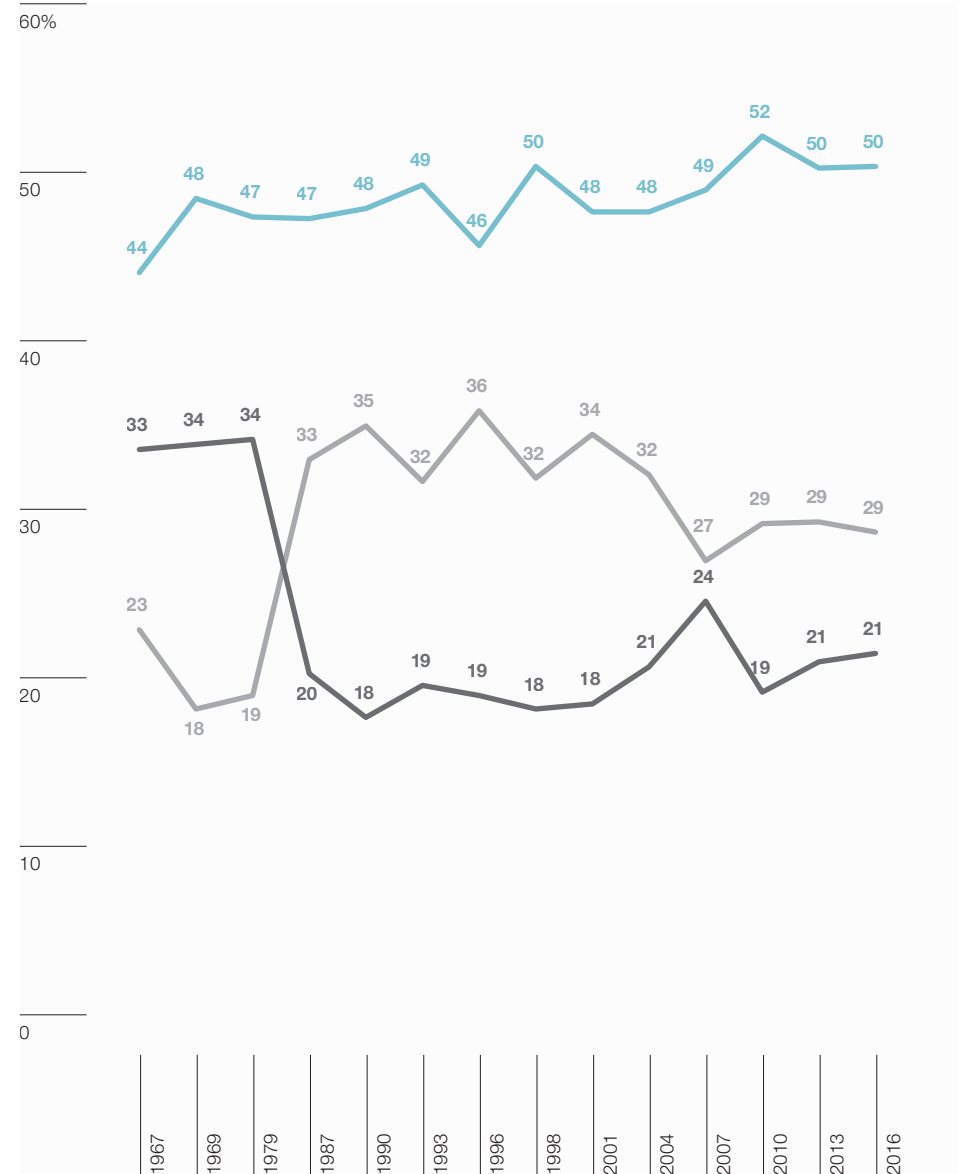
Notes

Timing of the voting decision
For 1990–2016 during the election campaign combines 'in the first few weeks of the campaign', 'a few days before election day' and 'on election day'.

Split ticket voting
Estimates are based on voters preferring a different party in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Liberal and National parties are treated as a single group.

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Appendix: Methodology

Most important economic election issues

- ▬ Education
- ▬ Taxation
- ▬ Industrial relations
- ▬ Unemployment
- ▬ Management of the economy

Education: 5, 7, 11, 6, 17, 15, 11, 13, 15, 12
Taxation: 11, 18, 23, 16, 16, 11, 7, 11, 11
Industrial relations: 7, 1, 1, 2, 16, 3, 3
Unemployment: 11, 27, 13, 9, 4, 2, 2, 3
Management of the economy: 21, 28, 20

30%
25
20
15
10
5
0

1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
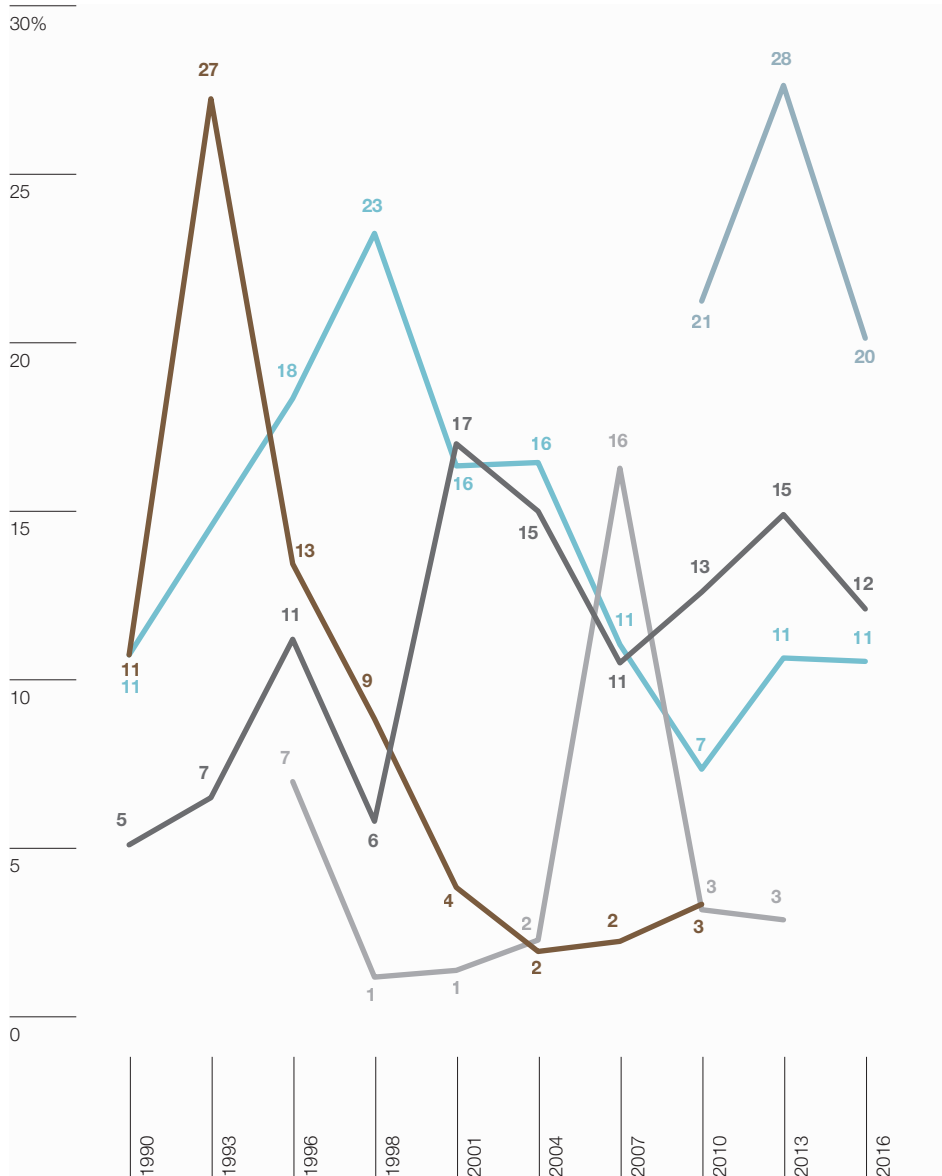
Most important non-economic election issues

- ▬ Health
- ▬ Environment
- ▬ Global Warming
- ▬ Refugees and asylum seekers

Health: 9, 6, 26, 10, 16, 30, 21, 23, 19, 24
Environment: 11, 4, 5, 3, 4, 6, 8, 5, 6, 6
Global Warming: 7, 8, 4, 4
Refugees and asylum seekers: 13, 3, 6, 10, 6

30%
25
20
15
10
5
0

1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
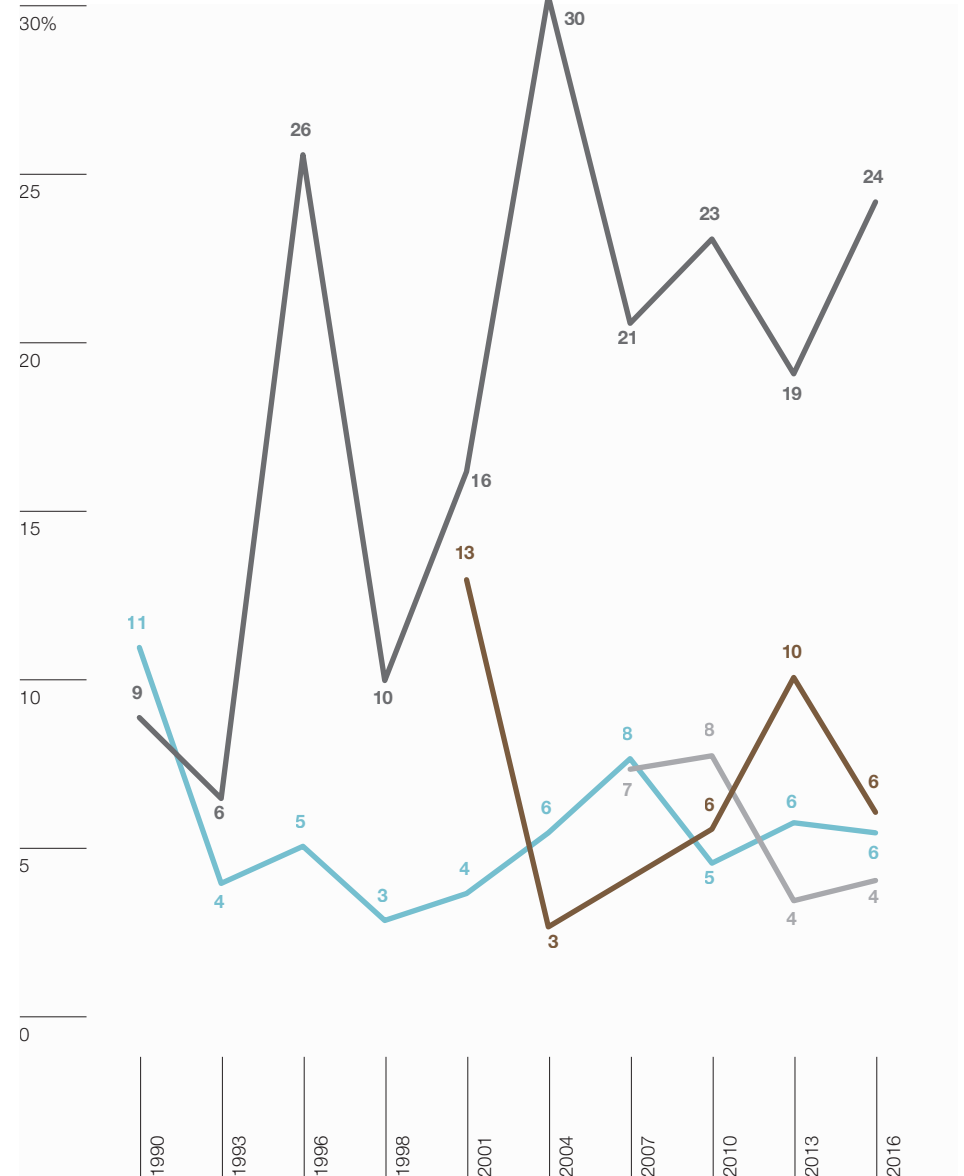
Preferred party policy on management of the economy

- ALP
- Coalition
- No difference
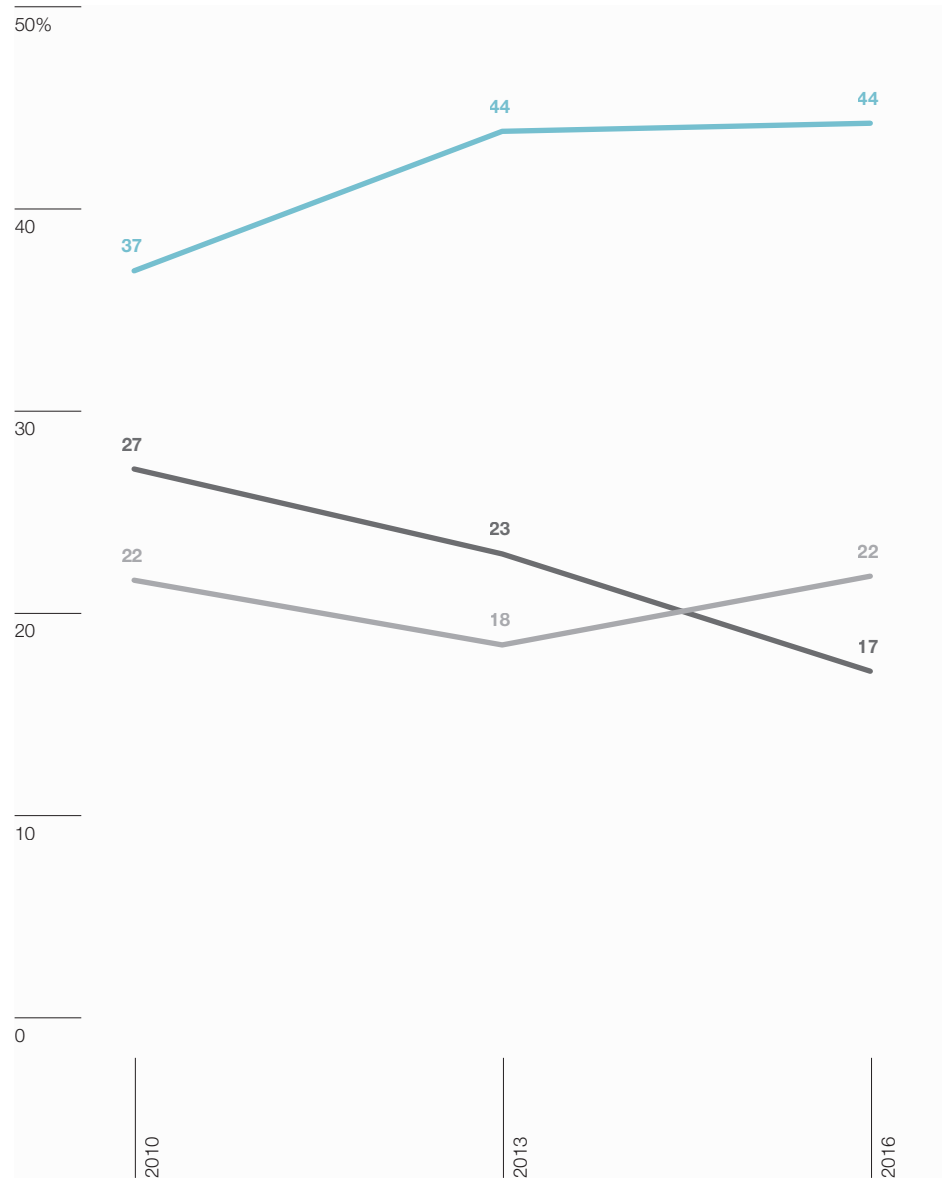
Preferred party policy on education

- ALP
- Coalition
- No difference
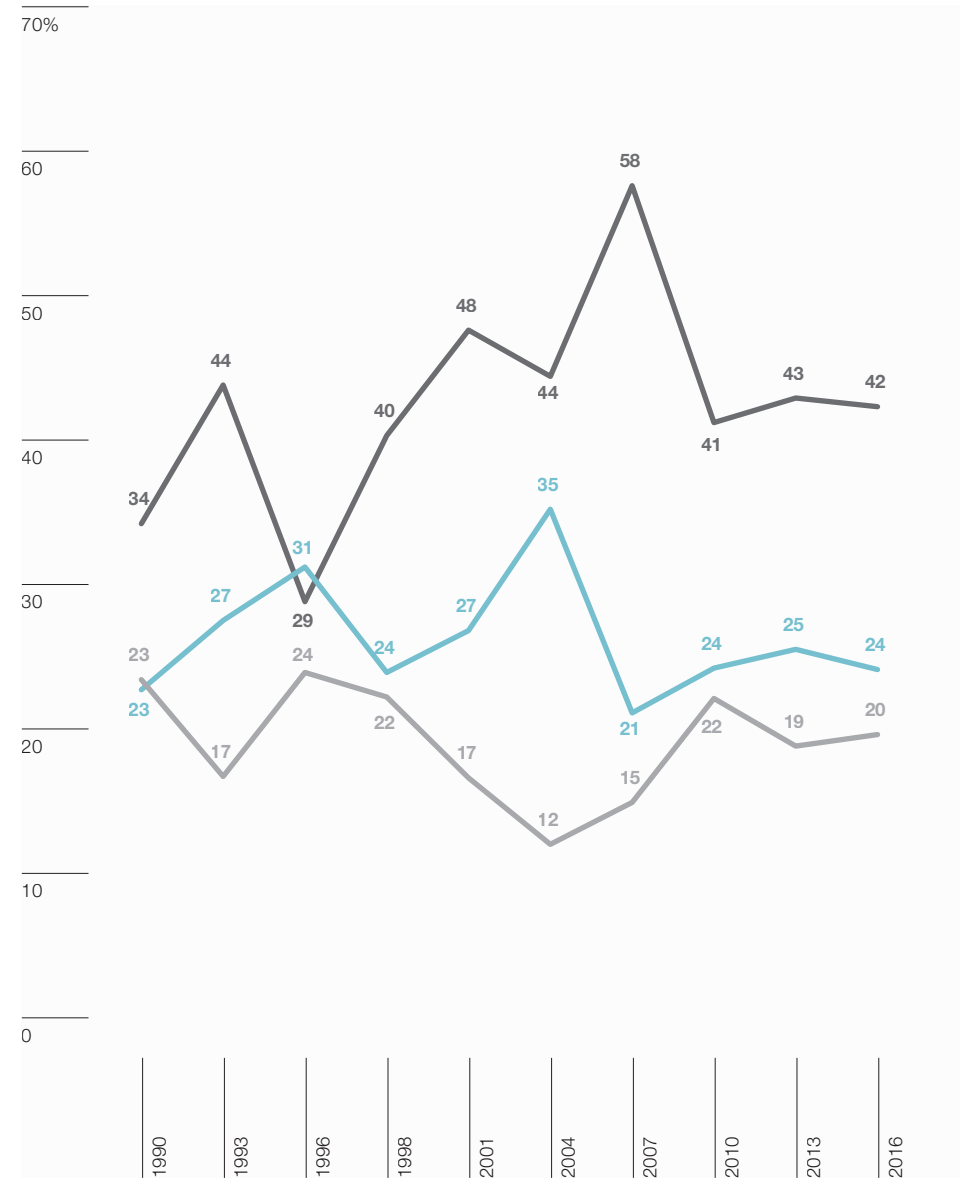
Preferred party policy on taxation

- ALP
- Coalition
- No difference

	1990	1996	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
ALP	27	21	36	33	27	30	27	25	31
Coalition	39	42	45	39	41	32	33	34	33
No difference	17	21	11	18	18	27	24	22	19
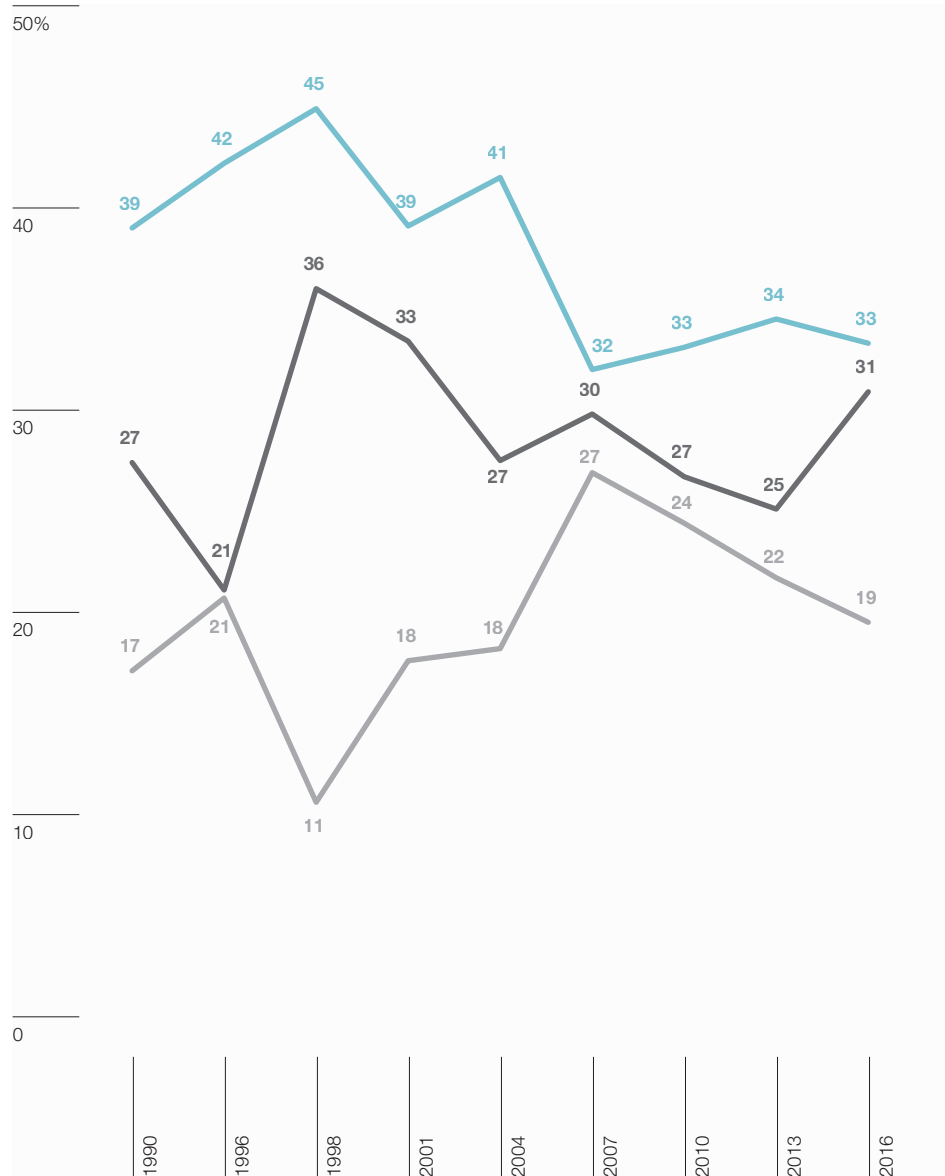
Preferred party policy on health

- ALP
- Coalition
- No difference

	1990	1993	1996	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
ALP	46	53	39	41	41	44	48	37	37	45
Coalition	29	32	38	27	28	37	25	26	27	26
No difference	13	8	14	17	20	11	18	23	22	17
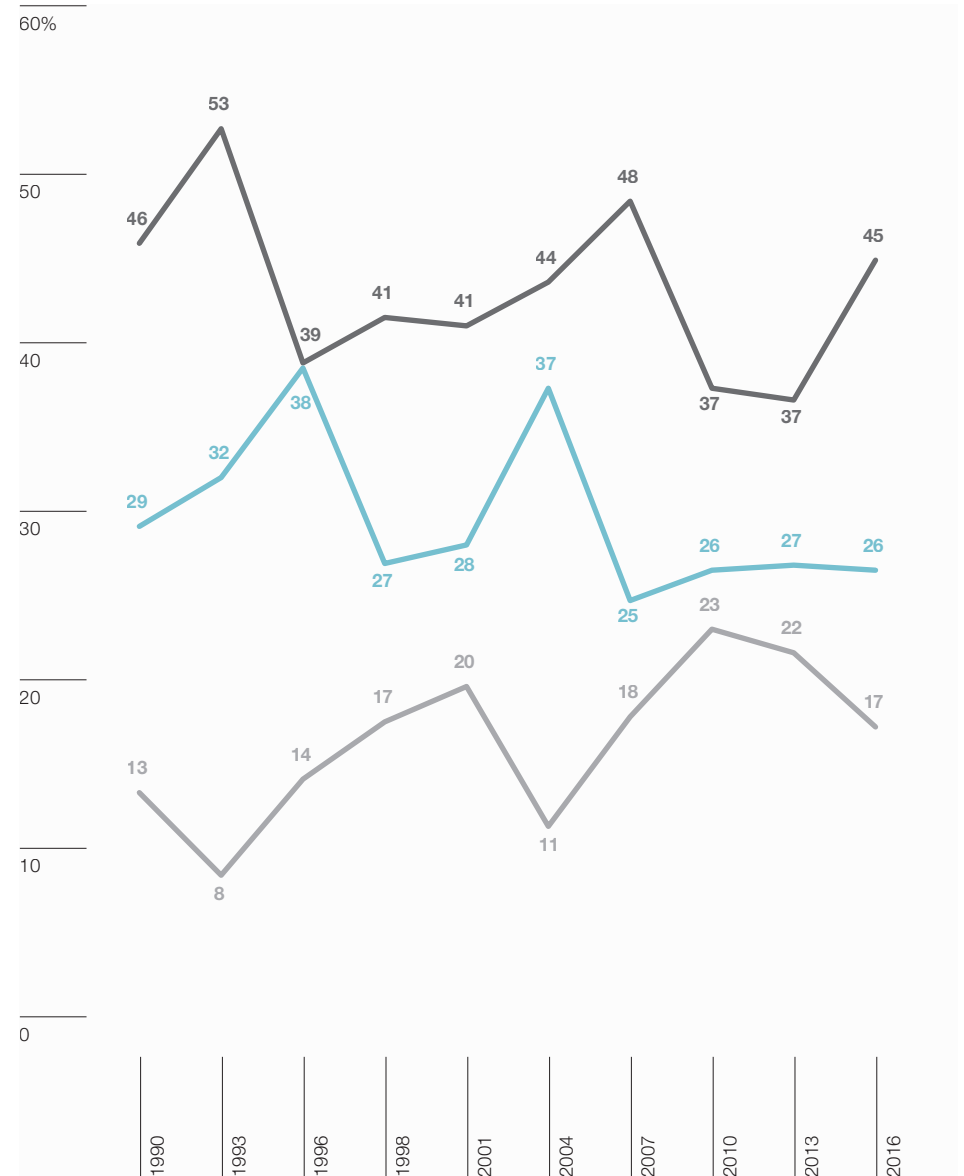
Preferred party policy on the environment

- —— ALP
- —— Coalition
- —— No difference
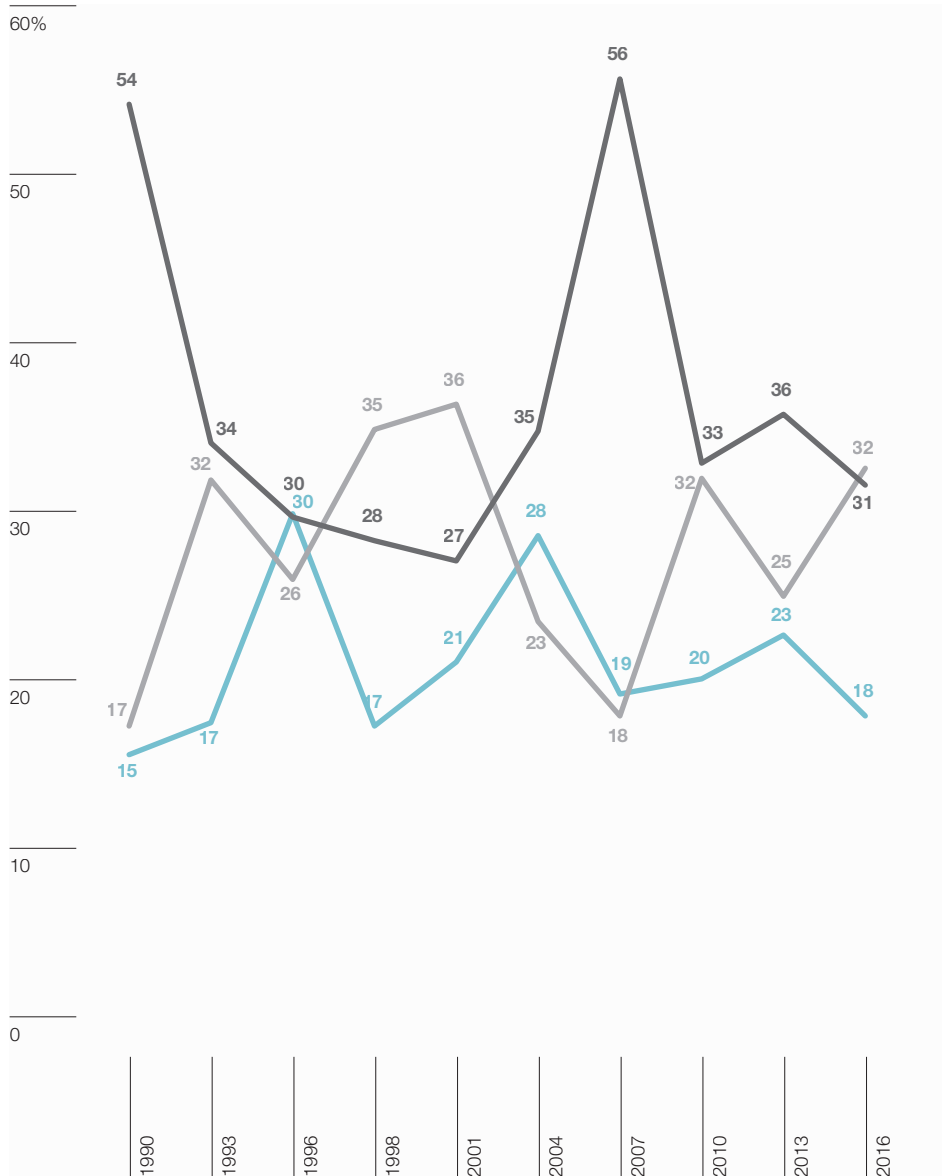
Preferred party policy on global warming

- —— ALP
- —— Coalition
- —— No difference
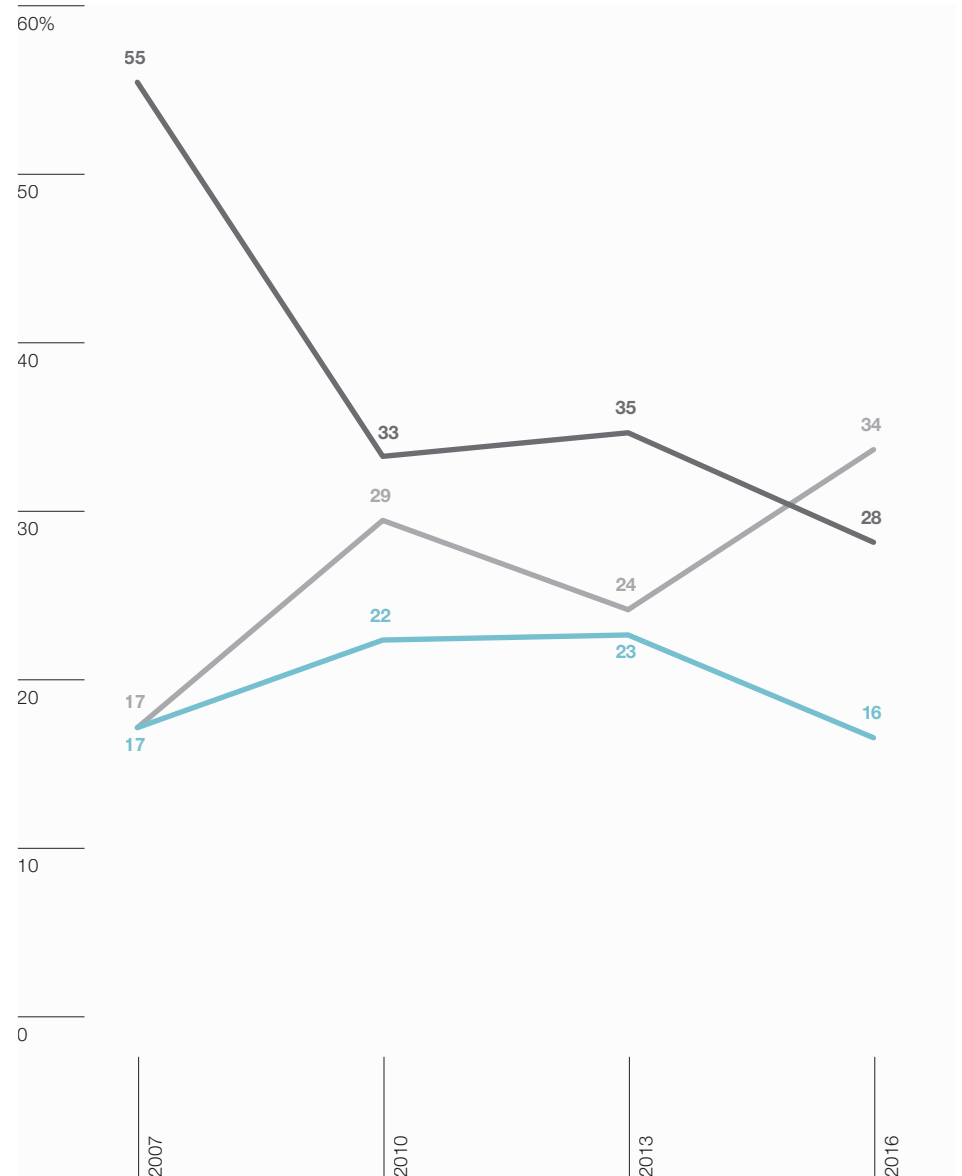
Preferred party policy on immigration

```
—— ALP
—— Coalition
—— No difference
```


60%

50

46

47

39

50

40

37

35

30

30

26

28

30

26

26

25

23

22

22

20

23

21

20

20

16

10

0

1996   1998   2001   2004   2007   2013   2016
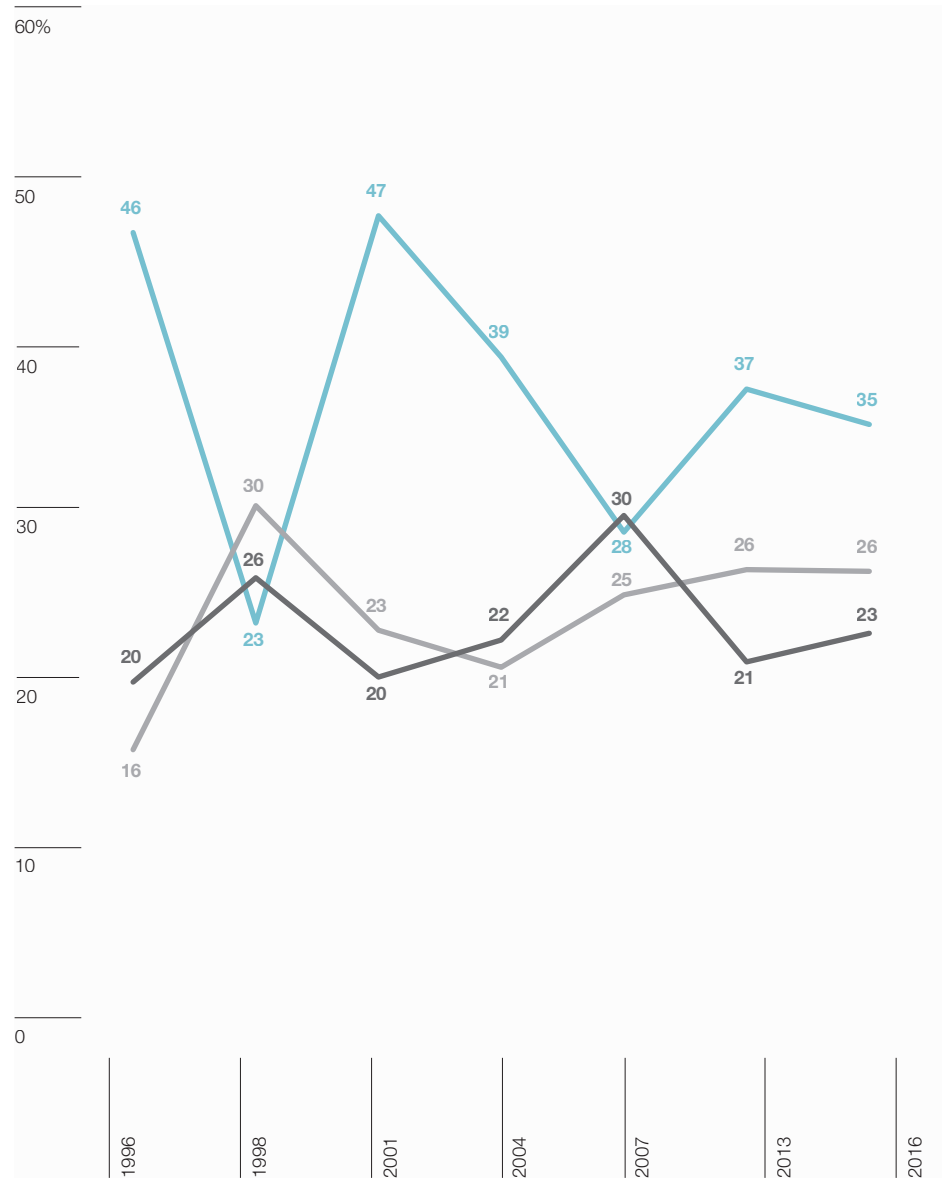
Preferred party policy on refugees and asylum seekers

```
—— ALP
—— Coalition
—— No difference
```


50%

46

41

40

38

36

34

31

30

27

27

27

22

21

20

22

19

19

15

10

0

2001   2004   2010   2013   2016
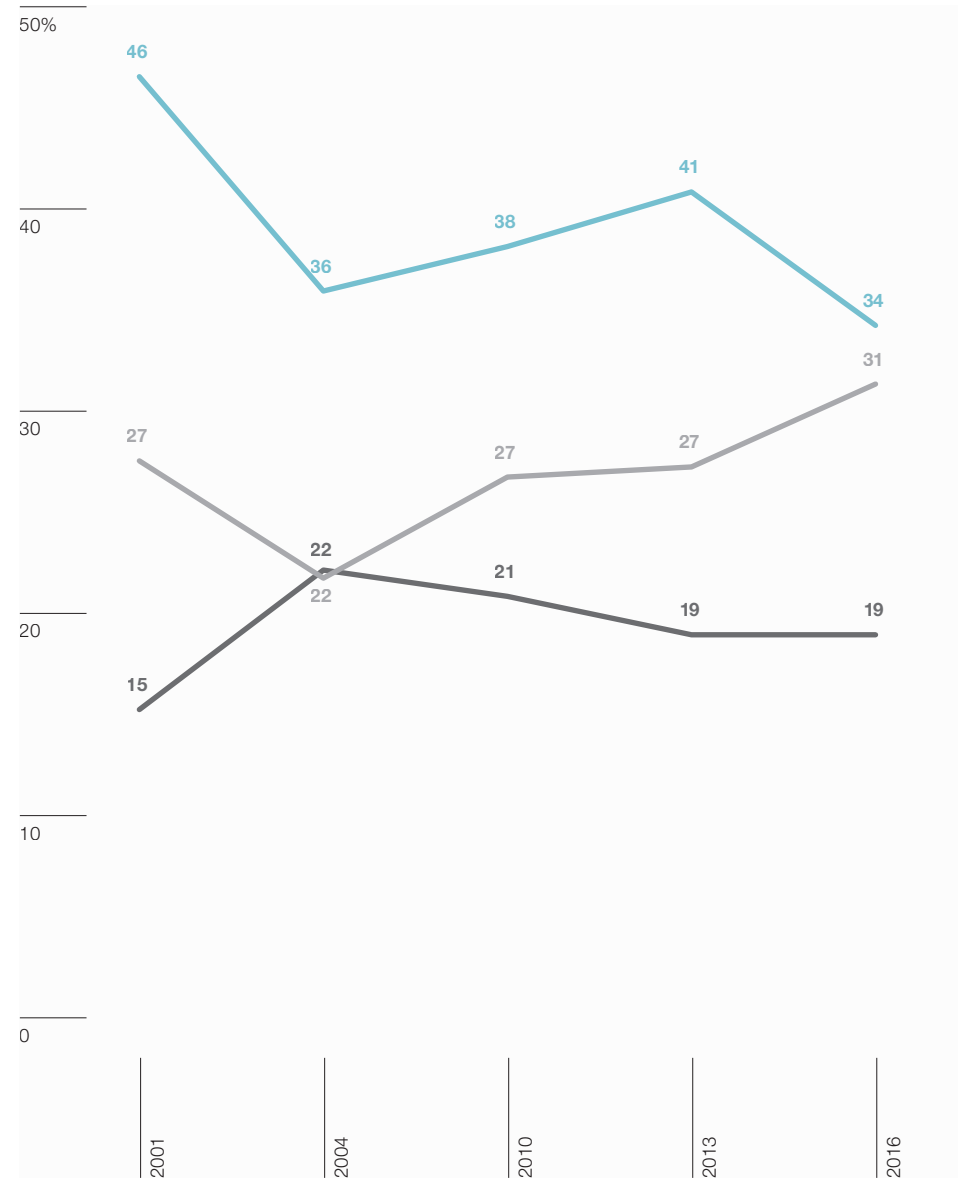
Notes

Most important economic election issues
'Taxation' was not included in 1993.

Most important non-economic election issues
In 1996–2016 estimates for health are for 'Health and Medicare'. 'Refugees and asylum seekers' was not included in 2007.

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Appendix: Methodology

Financial situation of household over past year

- Become better
- Become worse
- About the same
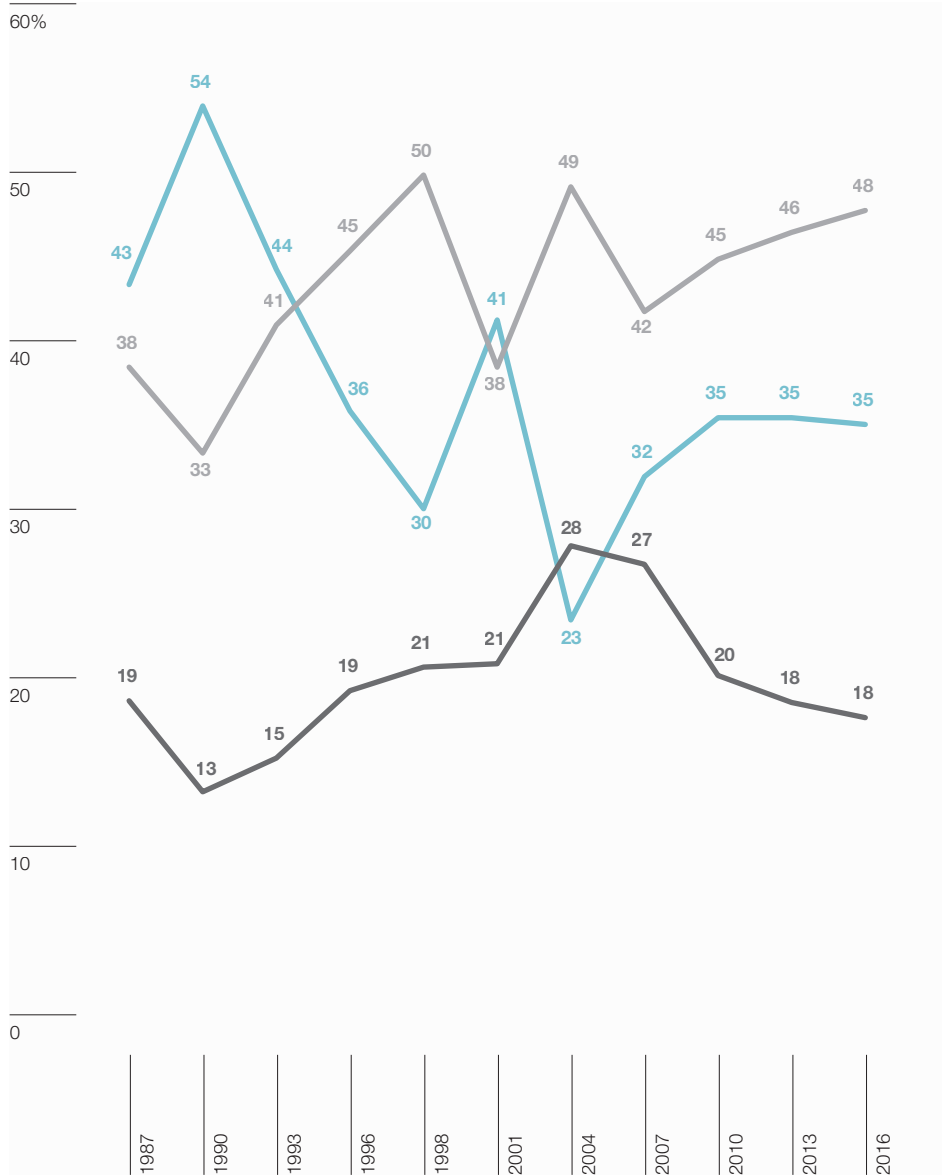
Become worse: 43, 54, 44, 36, 30, 41, 23, 32, 35, 35, 35

About the same: 38, 33, 41, 45, 50, 38, 49, 42, 45, 46, 48

Become better: 19, 13, 15, 19, 21, 21, 28, 27, 20, 18, 18

Years: 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

Financial situation of country over past year

- Become better
- Become worse
- About the same

Become worse: 46, 74, 62, 47, 36, 41, 15, 29, 36, 46, 47

About the same: 22, 18, 22, 36, 35, 34, 42, 35, 36, 38, 43

Become better: 31, 8, 16, 17, 30, 26, 43, 36, 28, 16, 10

Years: 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016
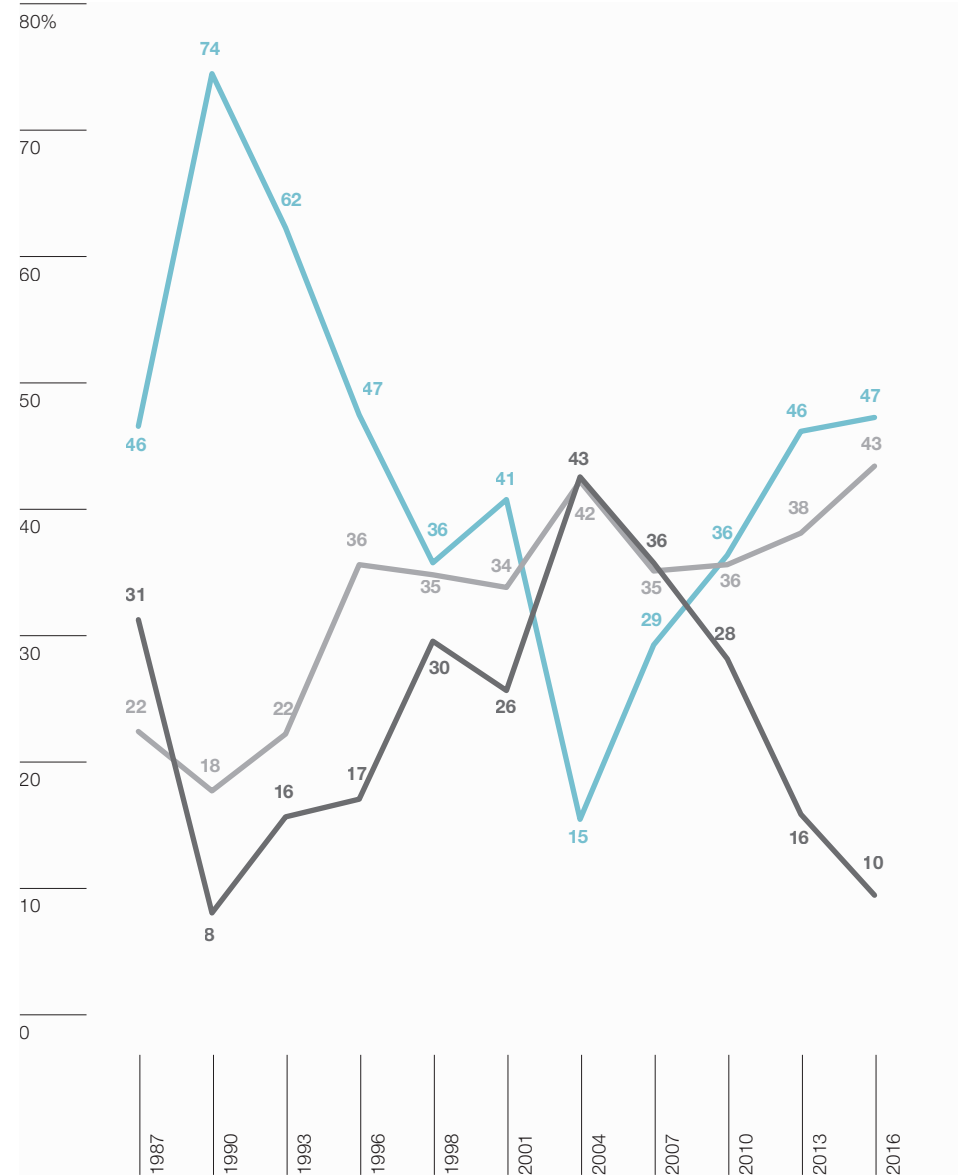
Government effect on household finances over past year

- **Good effect**
- **Not much difference**
- **Bad effect**
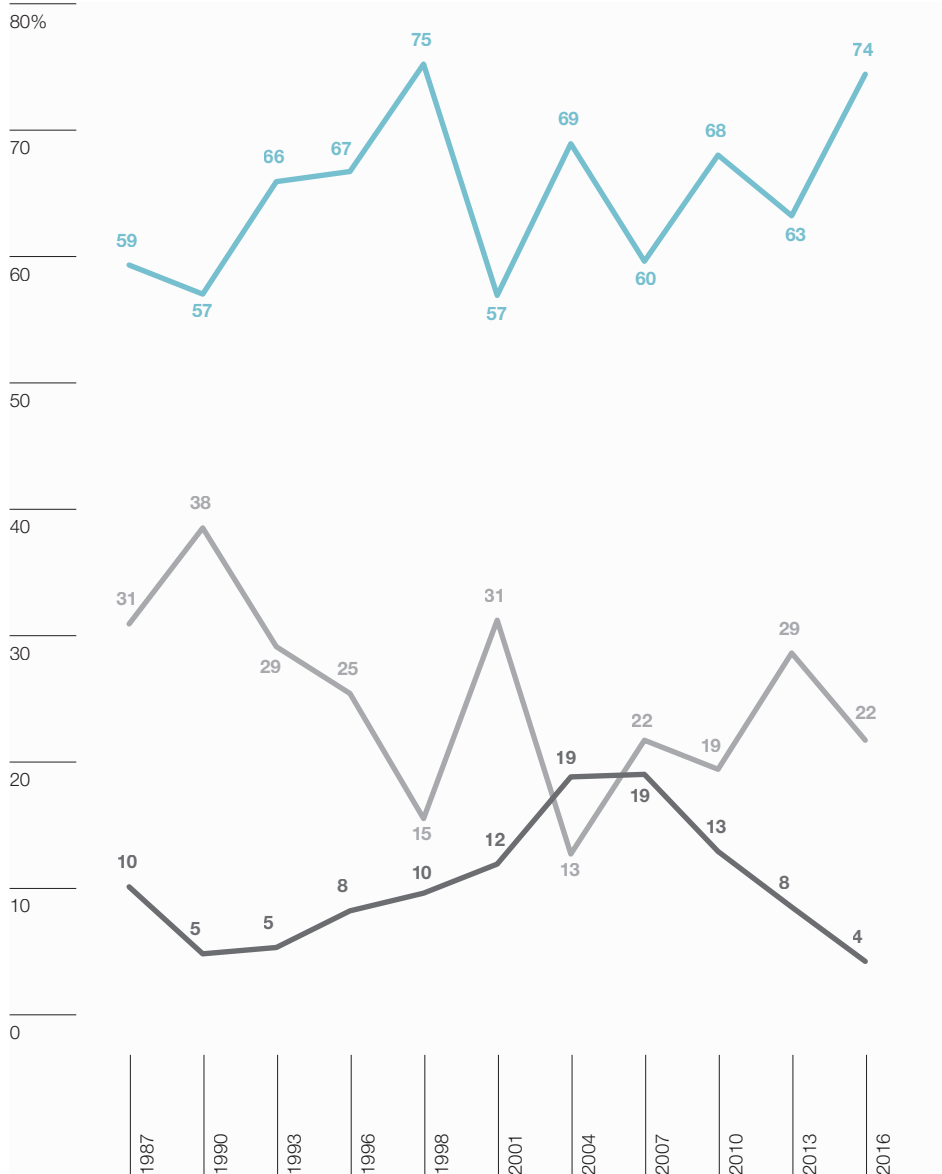
Government effect on country's finances over past year
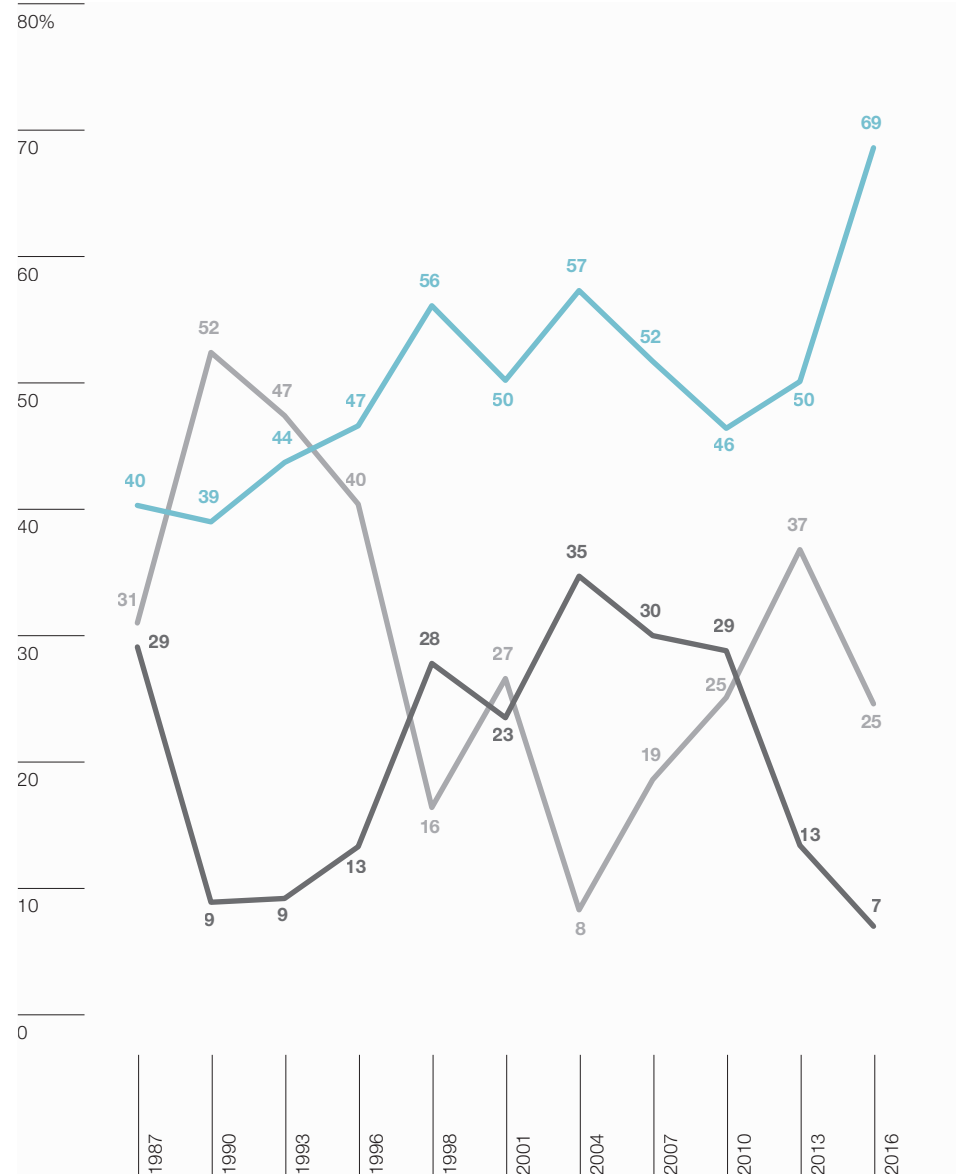
- **Good effect**
- **Not much difference**
- **Bad effect**

Financial situation of household in a year's time

```
—— Will be better
—— Will be worse
—— About the same
```
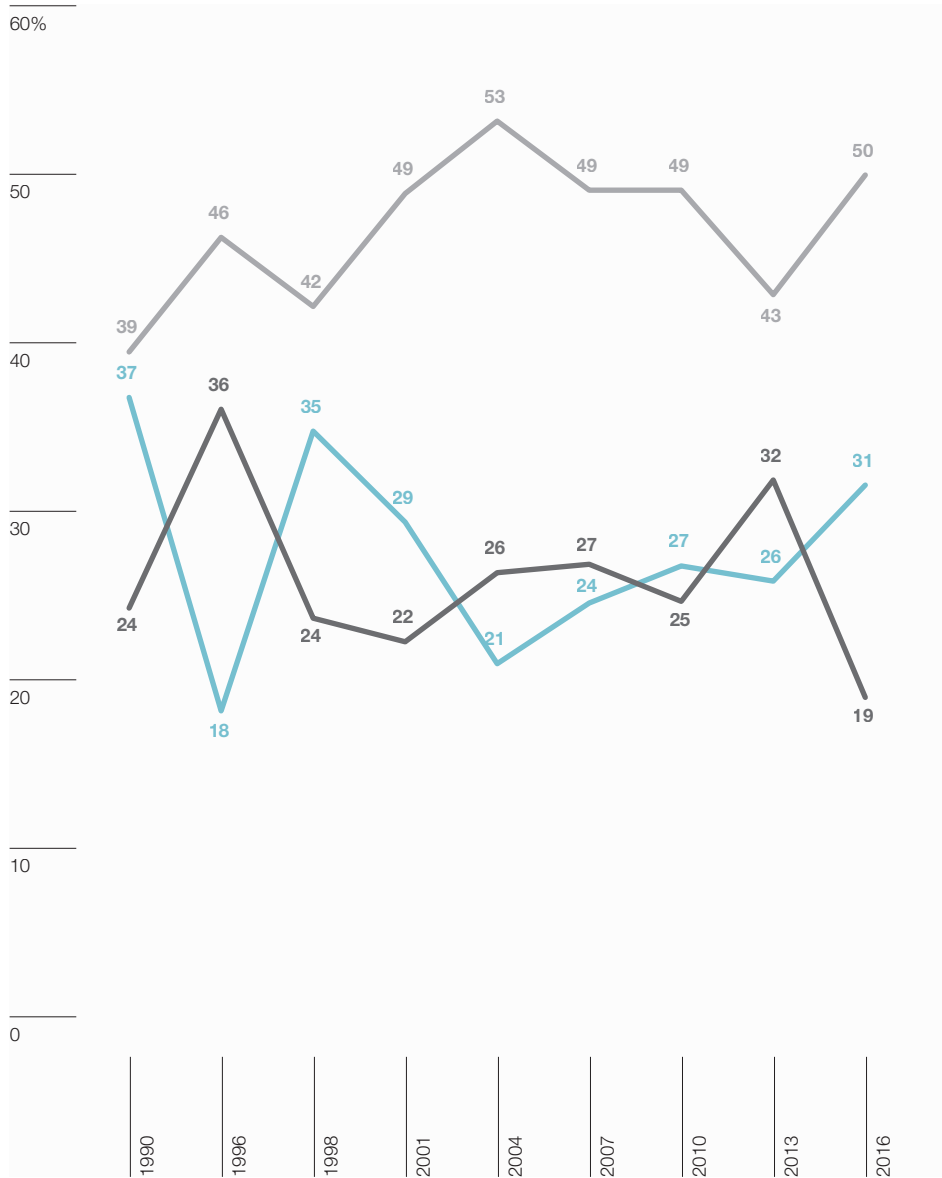

Will be worse: 37, 18, 35, 29, 21, 24, 27, 26, 31

Will be better: 24, 36, 24, 22, 26, 27, 25, 32, 19

About the same: 39, 46, 42, 49, 53, 49, 49, 43, 50

Years: 1990, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

Financial situation of country in a year's time

```
—— Will be better
—— Will be worse
—— About the same
```


Will be worse: 50, 28, 22, 40, 36, 22, 36, 42, 27, 38

Will be better: 23, 43, 40, 25, 22, 30, 20, 28, 37, 16

About the same: 27, 29, 39, 36, 42, 48, 44, 30, 36, 46

Years: 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016
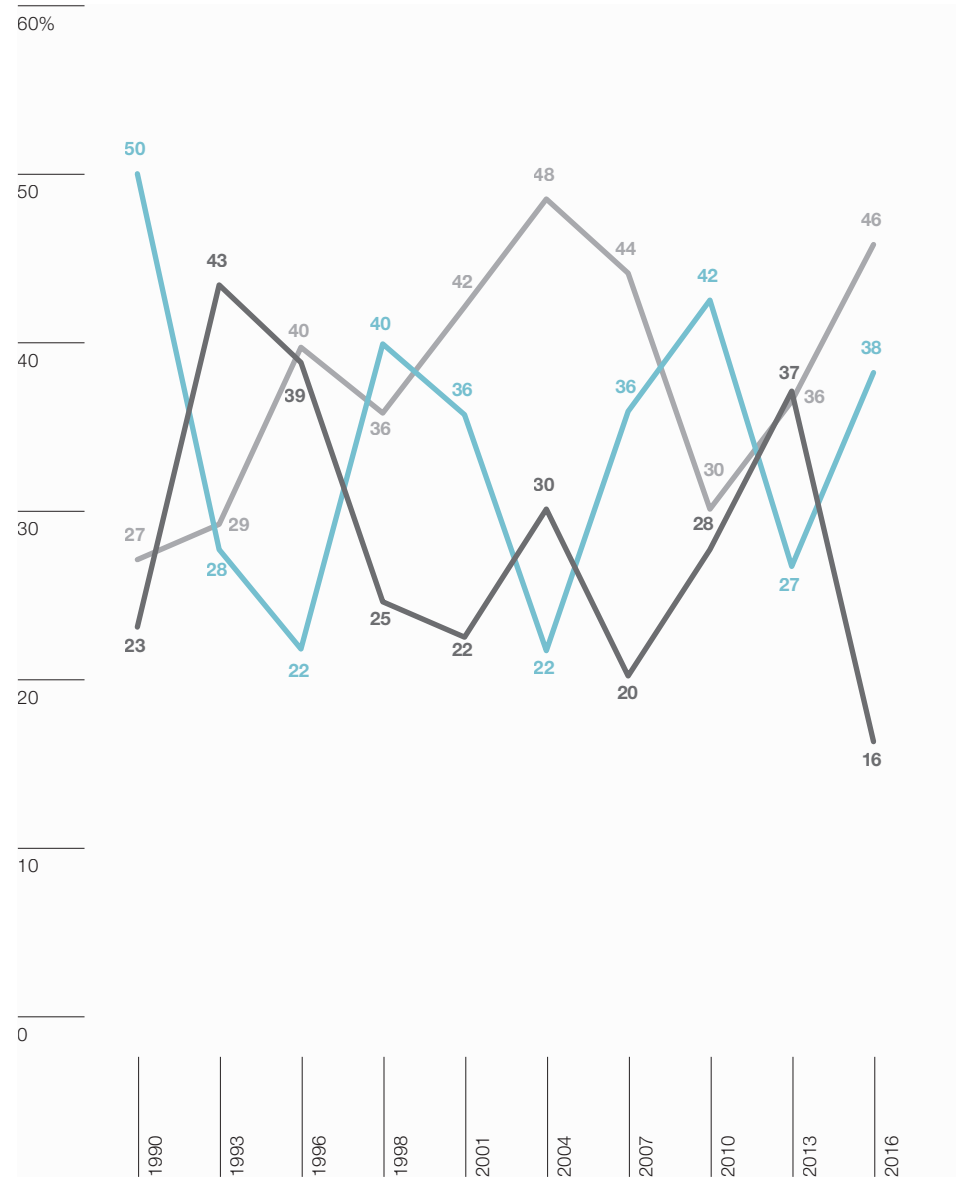
Government effect on household finances in a year's time

- **Good effect**
- **Bad effect**
- **No difference**
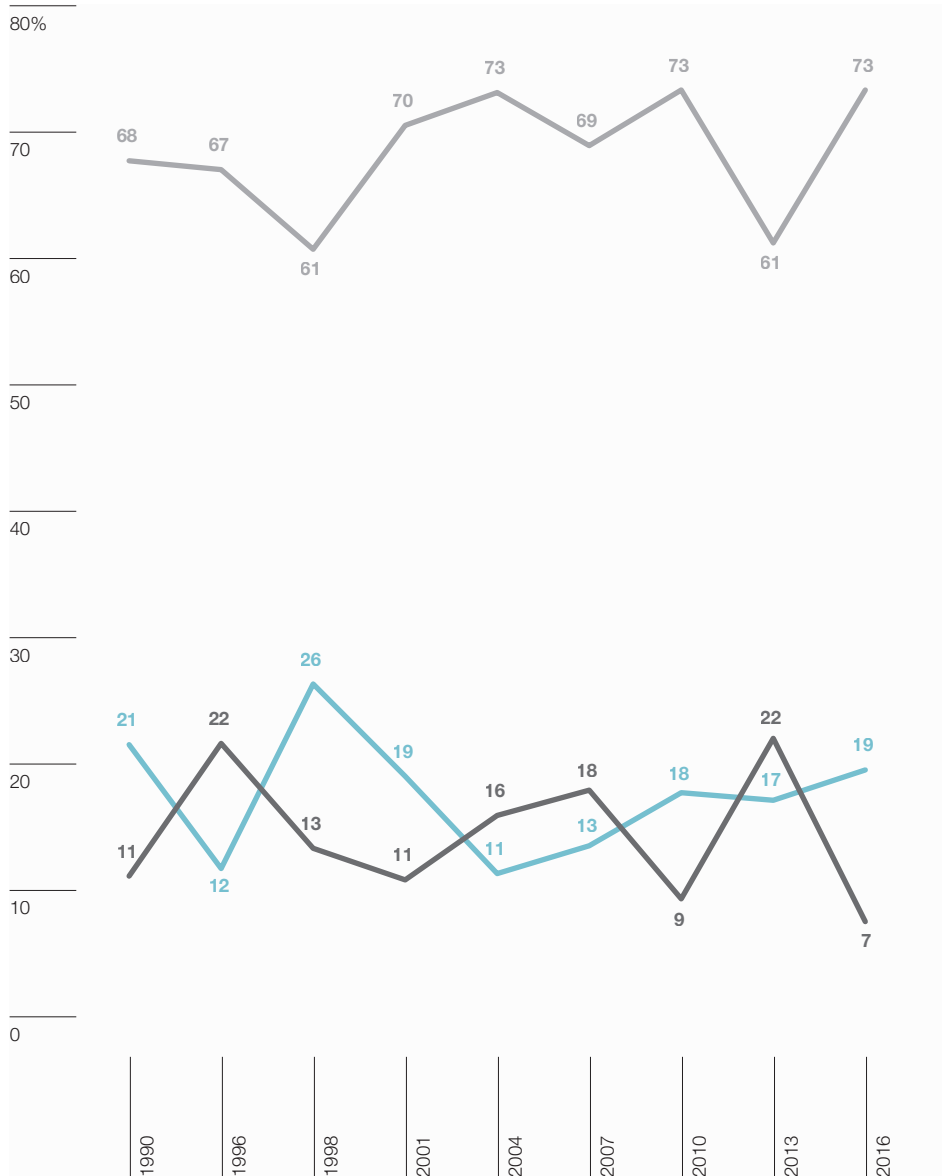
Government effect on country's economy in a year's time

- **Good effect**
- **Bad effect**
- **No difference**
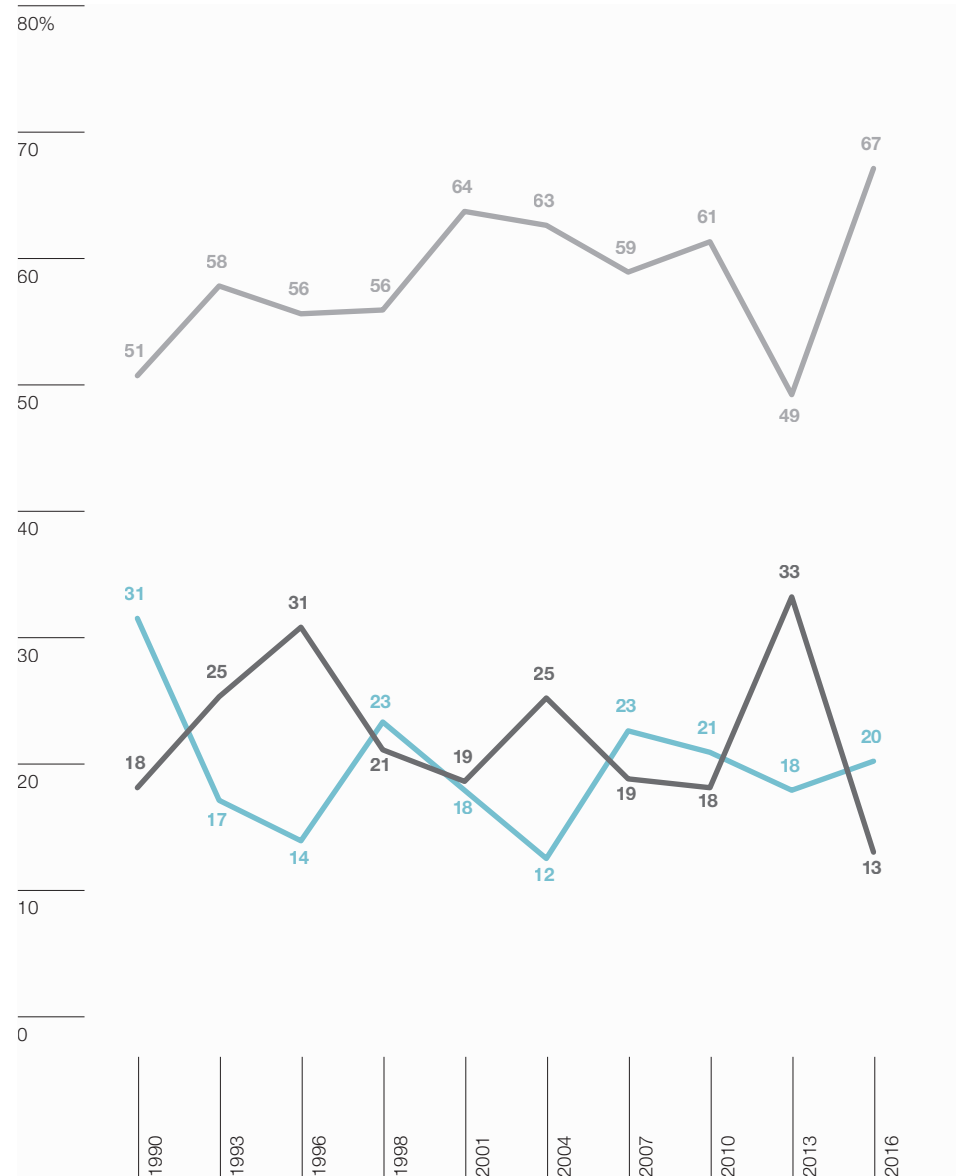
Notes

**Financial situation of household
over past year**
For become better, estimates
combine 'a lot better' and 'a
little better'. For become worse,
estimates combine 'a little worse'
and 'a lot worse'.

**Financial situation of country
over past year**
For become better, estimates
combine 'a lot better' and 'a
little better'. For become worse,
estimates combine 'a little worse'
and 'a lot worse'.

**Financial situation of household
in a year's time**
For will be better, estimates
combine 'a lot better' and 'a little
better'. For will be worse, estimates
combine 'a little worse' and 'a lot
worse'.

**Financial situation of country
in a year's time**
For will be better, estimates
combine 'a lot better' and 'a little
better'. For will be worse, estimates
combine 'a little worse' and
'a lot worse'.

Interest in politics

Legend:
- A good deal
- Some
- Not much
- None

50%

Some (teal): 37, 47, 44, 45, 46, 45, 47, 45, 44, 46, 44, 46, 43, 43

A good deal (dark): 18, 22, 27, 35, 36, 38, 32, 37, 32, 33, 39, 34, 32, 34

Not much (light grey): 34, 26, 23, 15, 15, 15, 18, 16, 19, 18, 14, 17, 20, 18

None (brown): 12, 6, 6, 5, 3, 3, 4, 3, 5, 3, 3, 3, 5, 5

Years: 1967, 1969, 1979, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016
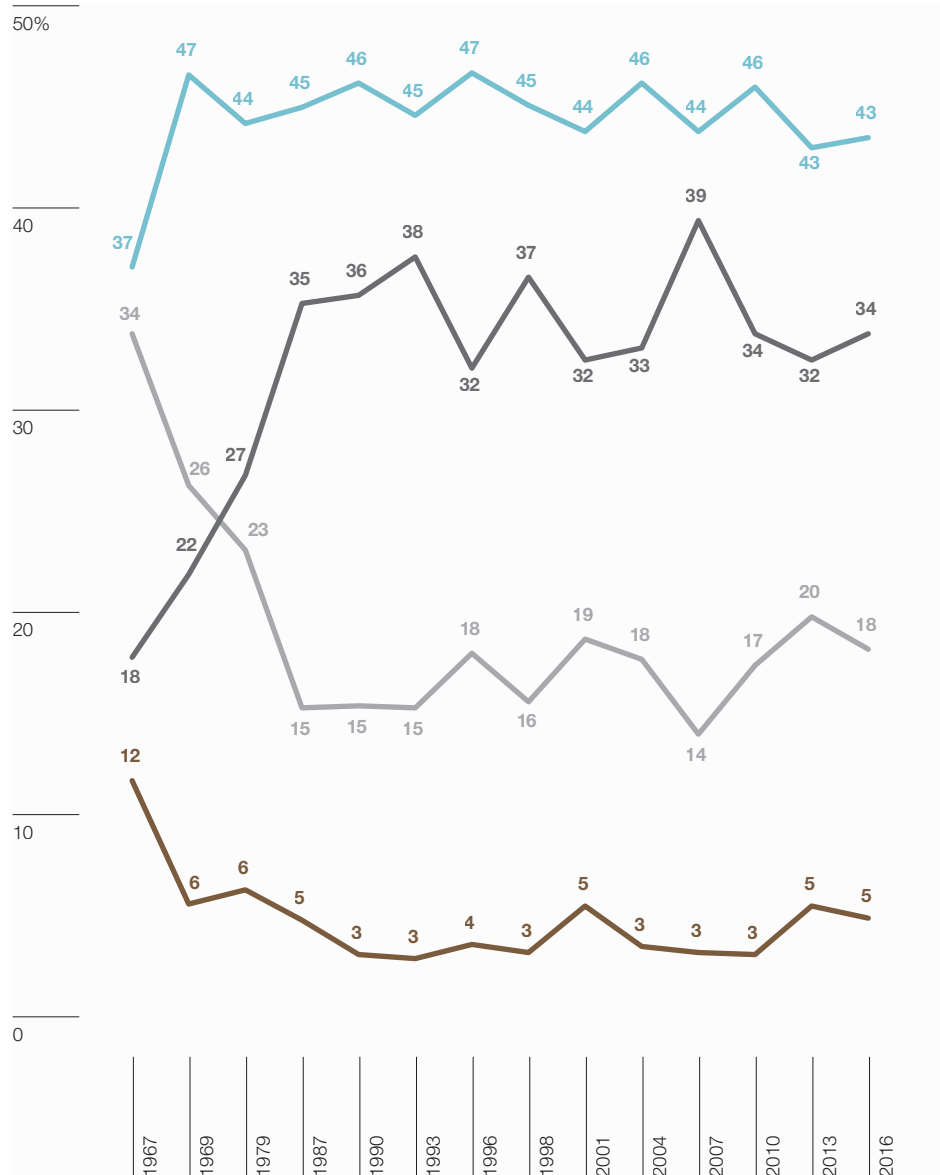
Compulsory voting and likelihood of voting if voluntary

Legend:
- Supports compulsory voting
- Would have voted if voluntary

100%

Supports compulsory voting (dark): 76, 77, 69, 64, 68, 71, 71, 69, 74, 77, 69, 70, 70

Would have voted if voluntary (teal): 86, 85, 80, 86, 88, 83, 79, 80

Years: 1967, 1969, 1979, 1987, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016
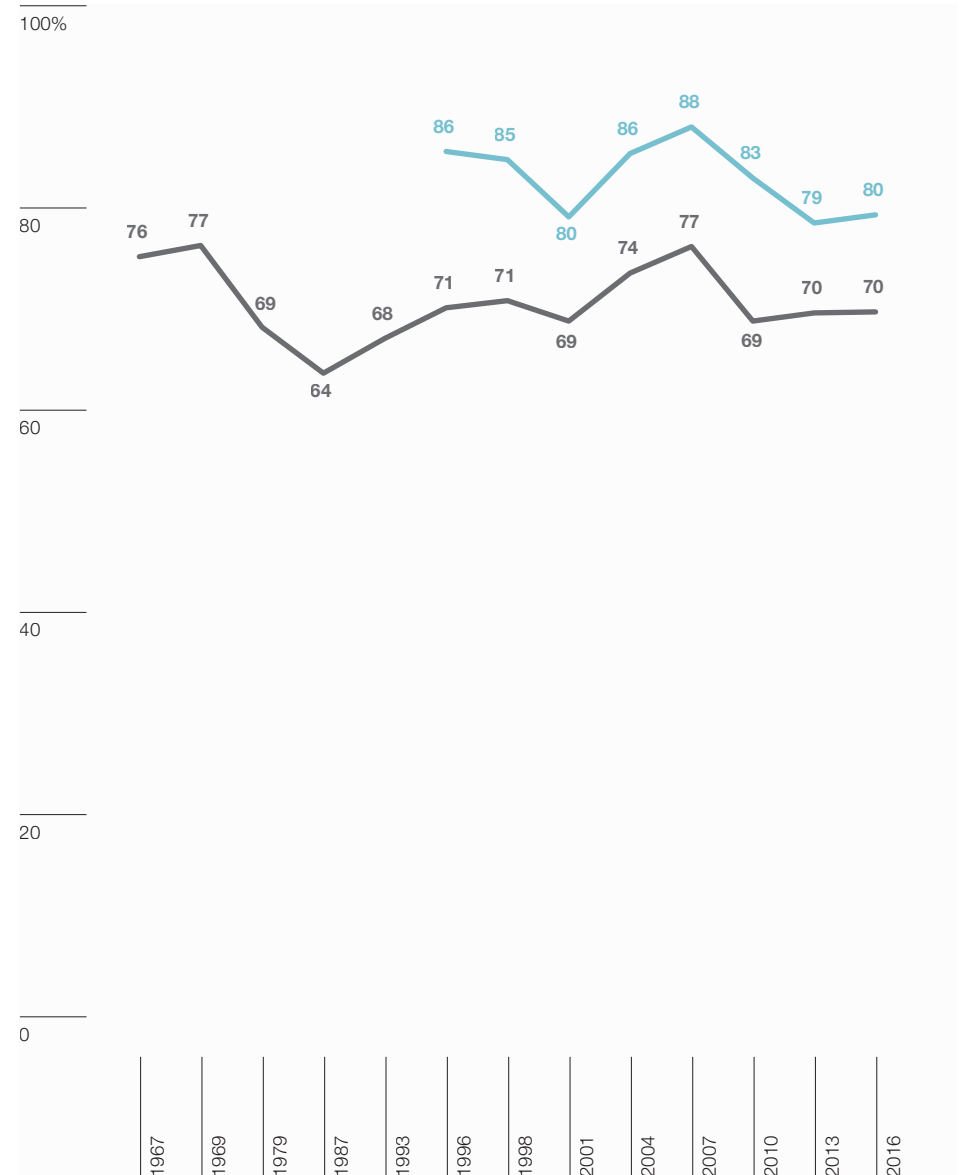
Political participation in the past five years

— **Contacted official via email**
— **Contacted official in person or in writing**
— **Worked together with others**

35%

30

27
29
23
24
22
24
20
18
19
17
15
13

25

20

15

10

5

0

2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

19
17
23
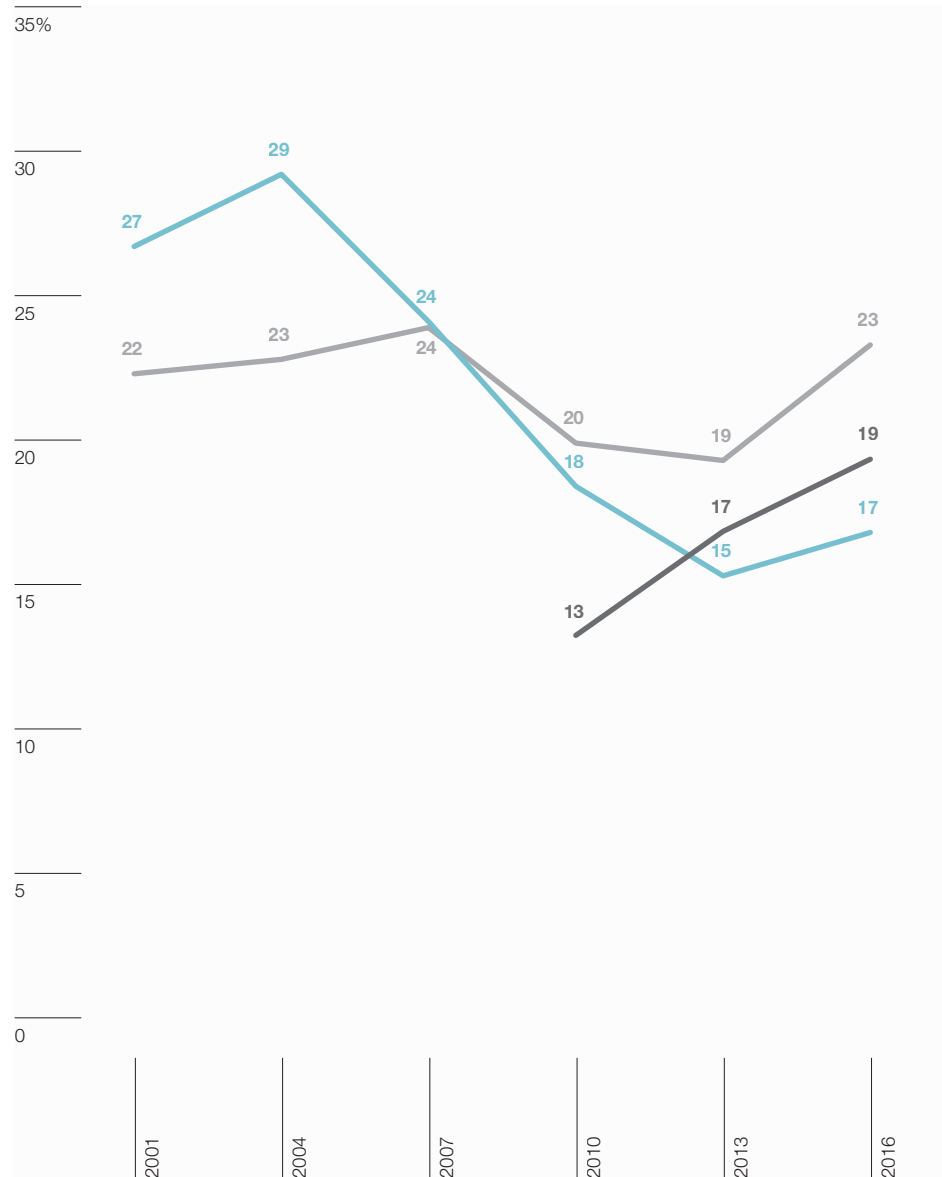
Political participation in the past five years

— **Taken part in a protest**
— **Signed a written petition**
— **Signed an online petition**

80%

72

70

60

56

50

44   44   43   44

40

39

30

29

21

20

17

13   12   14   13   12

11   10   12

10

0

1987 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
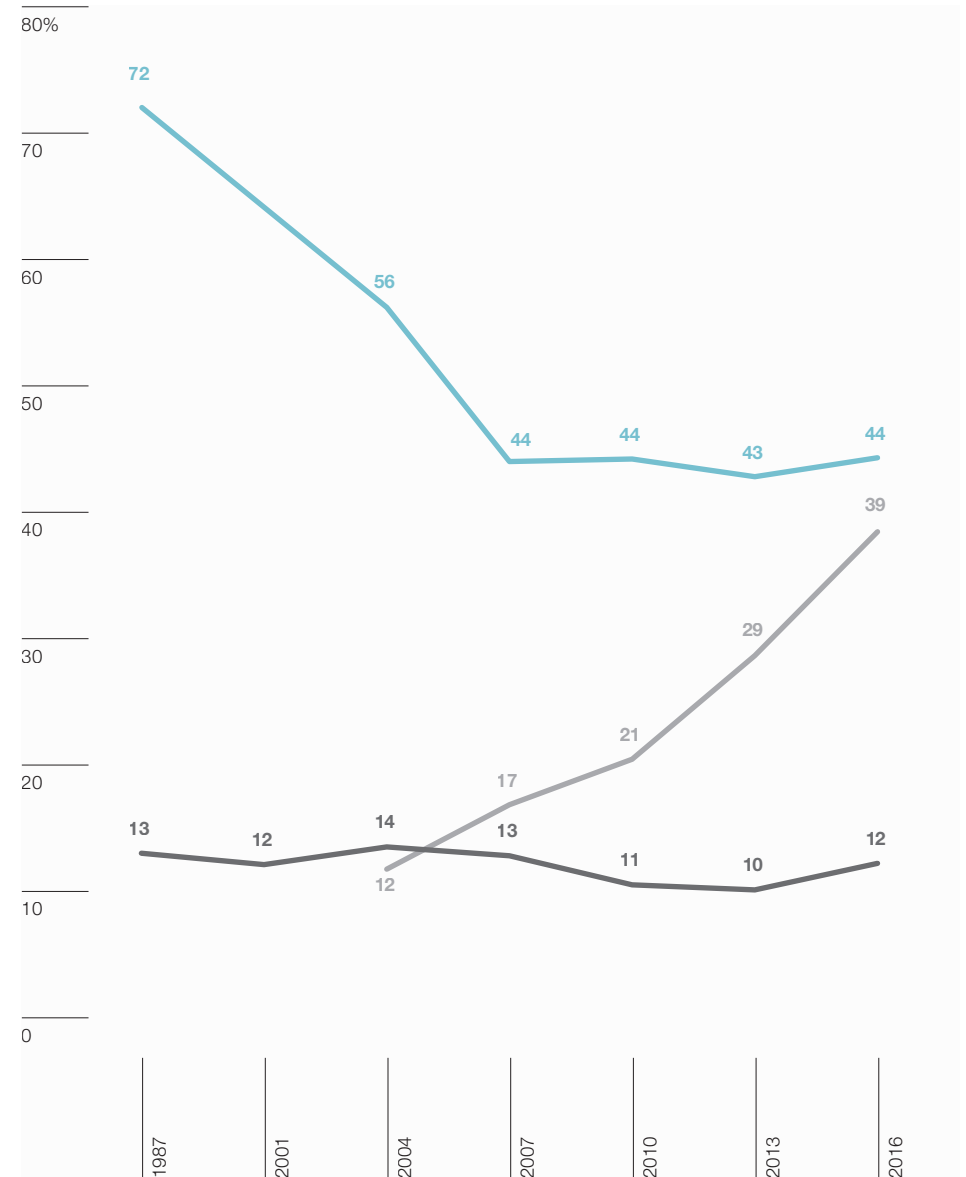
Feelings about political parties

- **Liberal** (dark line)
- **Labor** (teal line)
- **National** (light grey line)

Estimates are means
The scale runs from 0 (strongly dislike party)
to 10 (strongly like party) with a designated
midpoint of 5 (neither like nor dislike).

Liberal: 5.3 (1993), 5.8 (1996), 5.4 (1998), 5.6 (2001), 5.8 (2004), 5.3 (2007), 5.1 (2010), 5.0 (2013), 4.8 (2016)
Labor: 5.4 (1993), 5.0 (1996), 5.7 (1998), 5.5 (2001), 5.4 (2004), 5.9 (2007), 5.1 (2010), 4.8 (2013), 4.9 (2016)
National: 4.2 (1993), 4.8 (1996), 4.7 (1998), 4.7 (2001), 4.8 (2004), 4.4 (2007), 4.3 (2010), 4.5 (2013), 4.4 (2016)
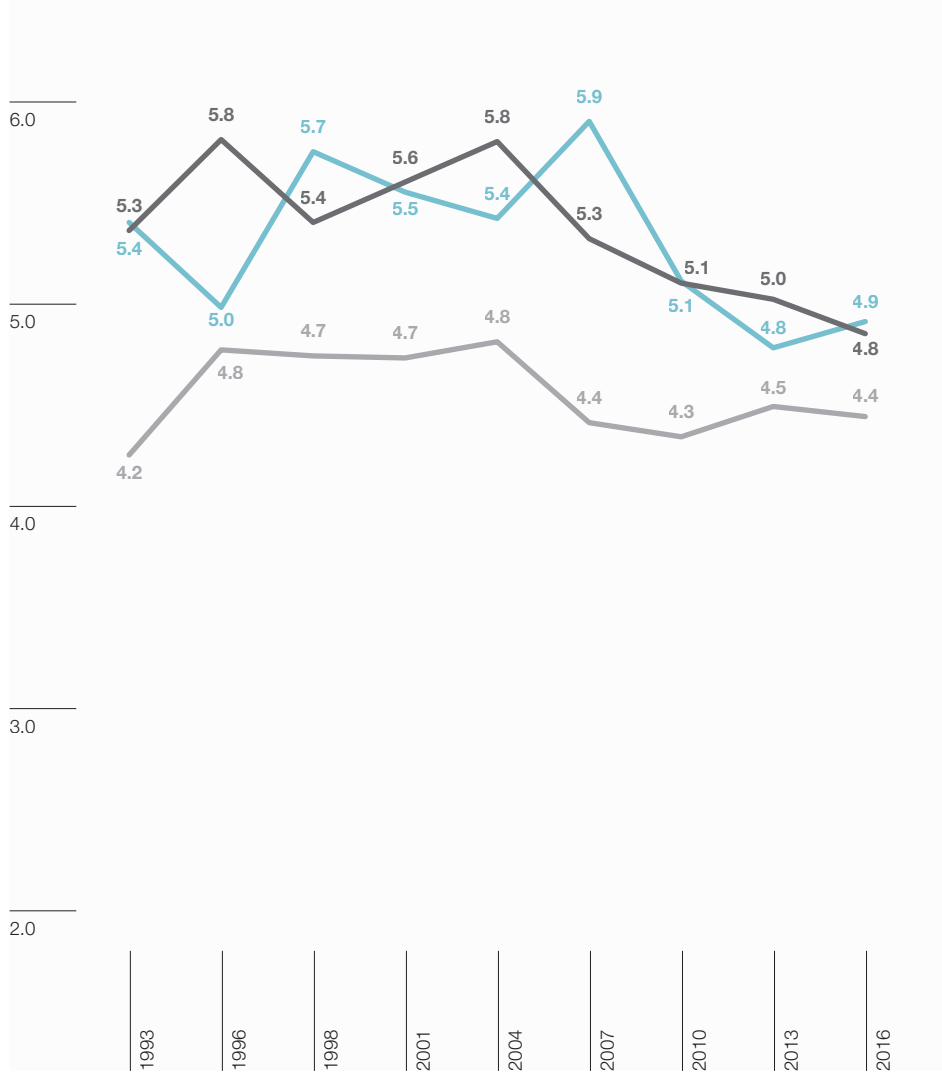
Feelings about political parties (continued)

- **Greens** (dark line)
- **Democrat** (teal line)
- **One Nation** (light grey line)

Estimates are means
The scale runs from 0 (strongly dislike party)
to 10 (strongly like party) with a designated
midpoint of 5 (neither like nor dislike).

Democrat: 3.9 (1993), 5.2 (1996), 5.1 (1998), 4.6 (2001), 4.0 (2004)
Greens: 3.9 (1993), 4.0 (1996), 4.4 (1998), 4.7 (2001), 4.2 (2004), 4.4 (2007), 4.2 (2010), 3.8 (2013), 3.9 (2016)
One Nation: 2.3 (1998), 2.6 (2001), 2.6 (2004)
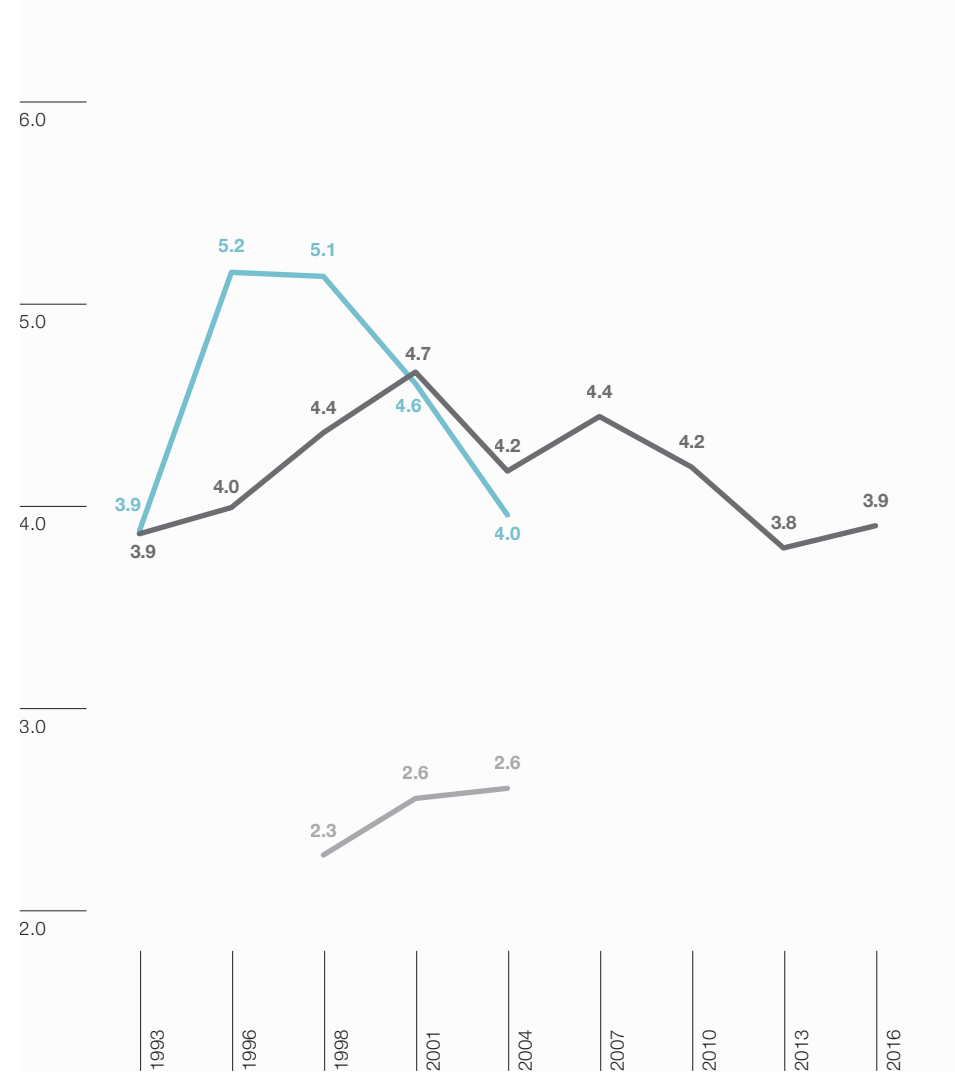
Perceptions of the role of political parties

— **Good deal of difference between parties**
— **Parties care what people think**
— Parties necessary to make political system work

90%

80

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

0

Parties necessary to make political system work:
71, 68, 68, 74, 77, 68, 69, 65

Good deal of difference between parties:
34, 40, 40, 44, 31, 30, 24, 30, 30, 26, 32, 27

Parties care what people think:
23, 21, 24, 28, 32, 28, 30, 22

1967 1969 1979 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
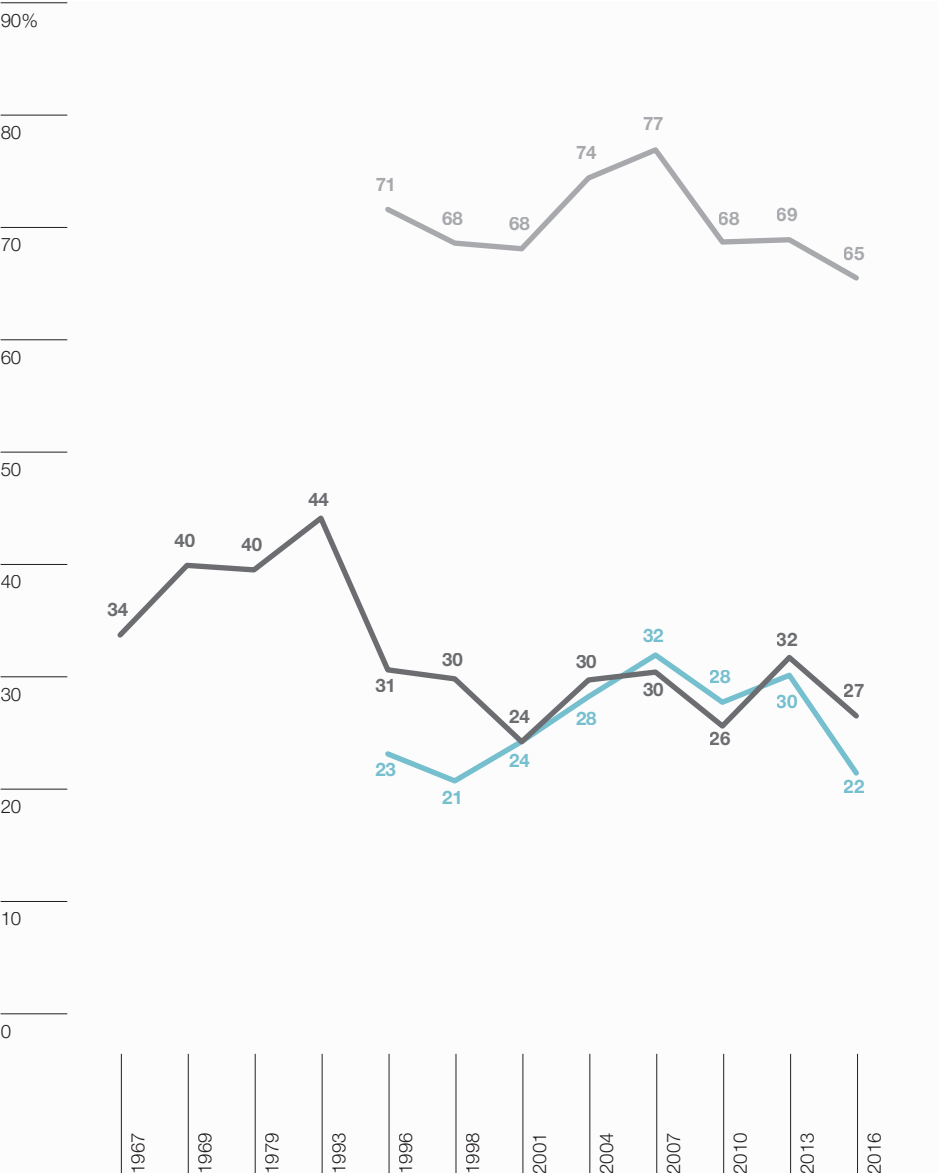
Notes

Compulsory voting and likelihood of voting if voluntary
For supports compulsory voting, estimates are (1967–1979) 'compulsory better'; (1987–2016) 'favour compulsory voting' and 'strongly favour compulsory voting'. For would have voted if voluntary, estimates combine 'definitely would have voted' and 'probably would have voted'.

Political participation in the past five years
For contacted official via email the response category is (2010–2016) 'contacted a politician or government official by email'. For contacted official in person or in writing the response categories are (2001–2007) 'contacted a politician or government official either in person, or in writing, or some other way' and (2010–2016) 'contacted a politician or government official either in person, or in writing'. For worked together with others the response category is (2001–2016) 'worked together with people who shared the same concern'.

Political participation in the past five years (continued)
For taken part in a protest, the response categories are (1987) 'attending lawful demonstrations', and (2001–2016) 'taken part in a protest, march or demonstration'. For signed an online petition, the response categories are (2004–2007) 'signed an electronic petition', and (2010–2016) 'signed an online or e-petition'. The response category (1987) for all forms of participation is 'have done', unlike 2001–2016, the 1987 estimate does not refer to the past five years only.

Perceptions of the role of political parties
For parties care what people think and parties necessary to make political system work, estimates combine '1' and '2' on the five point scale.

Voters' left-right position

━━━ Left-right position

Estimates are means
The political left-right scale runs from
0 (far left) to 10 (far right) with a designated
midpoint of 5 (neither left nor right).

5.5

5.0

4.5

4.0

5.46
5.36
5.30
5.34
5.29
5.03
5.03
4.91

1996
1998
2001
2004
2007
2010
2013
2016
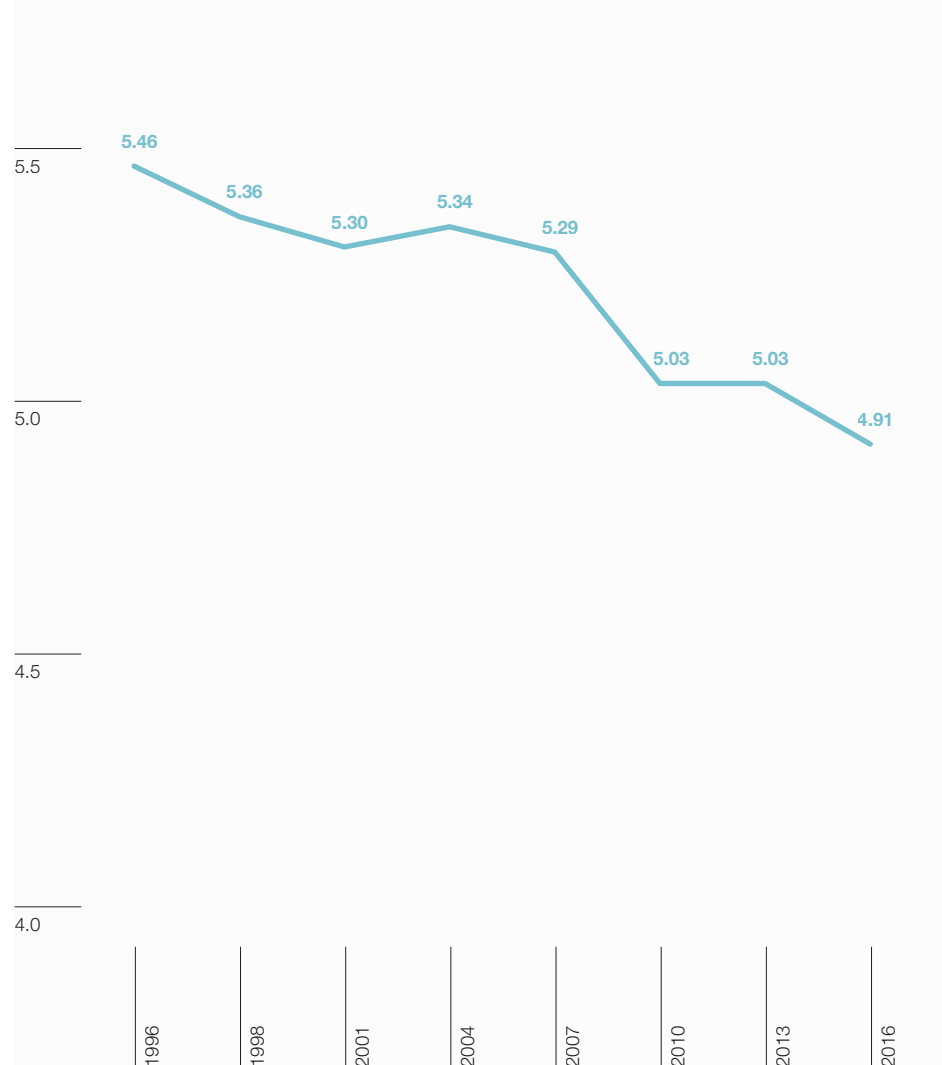
Where voters place the parties on the left-right scale

━━━ Labor	━━━ Democrat
━━━ Liberal	━━━ One Nation
━━━ Greens	━━━ National

Estimates are means
The political left-right scale runs from
0 (far left) to 10 (far right) with a designated
midpoint of 5 (neither left nor right).

7.0

6.0

5.0

4.0

3.0

7.0
6.8
6.6
6.6
6.5
6.5
6.5
6.5
6.4
6.3
6.3
6.3
6.3
6.2
6.1
6.0
5.9
5.9

4.7
4.7
4.7
4.5
4.4
4.4
4.4
4.3
4.3
4.3
4.3
4.2
4.2
4.0

3.8
3.7
3.6
3.6
3.3
3.2
3.0
3.0

1996
1998
2001
2004
2007
2010
2013
2016

How politicians were rated

1987
Politician	Rating
Bob Hawke*	6.22
John Howard*	4.87
Andrew Peacock	4.84
Janine Haines	4.71
Paul Keating	4.34
Ian Sinclair	3.58
Joh Bjelke-Petersen	2.58

1990
Politician	Rating
Bob Hawke*	5.46
Andrew Peacock*	3.87
Janine Haines	5.12
John Howard	4.93
Paul Keating	4.01
Charles Blunt	3.60

1993
Politician	Rating
Paul Keating*	4.74
John Hewson*	5.18
Tim Fischer	4.12
John Coulter	3.27

1996
Politician	Rating
John Howard*	5.73
Paul Keating*	4.21
Cheryl Kernot	5.36
Tim Fischer	4.77

1998
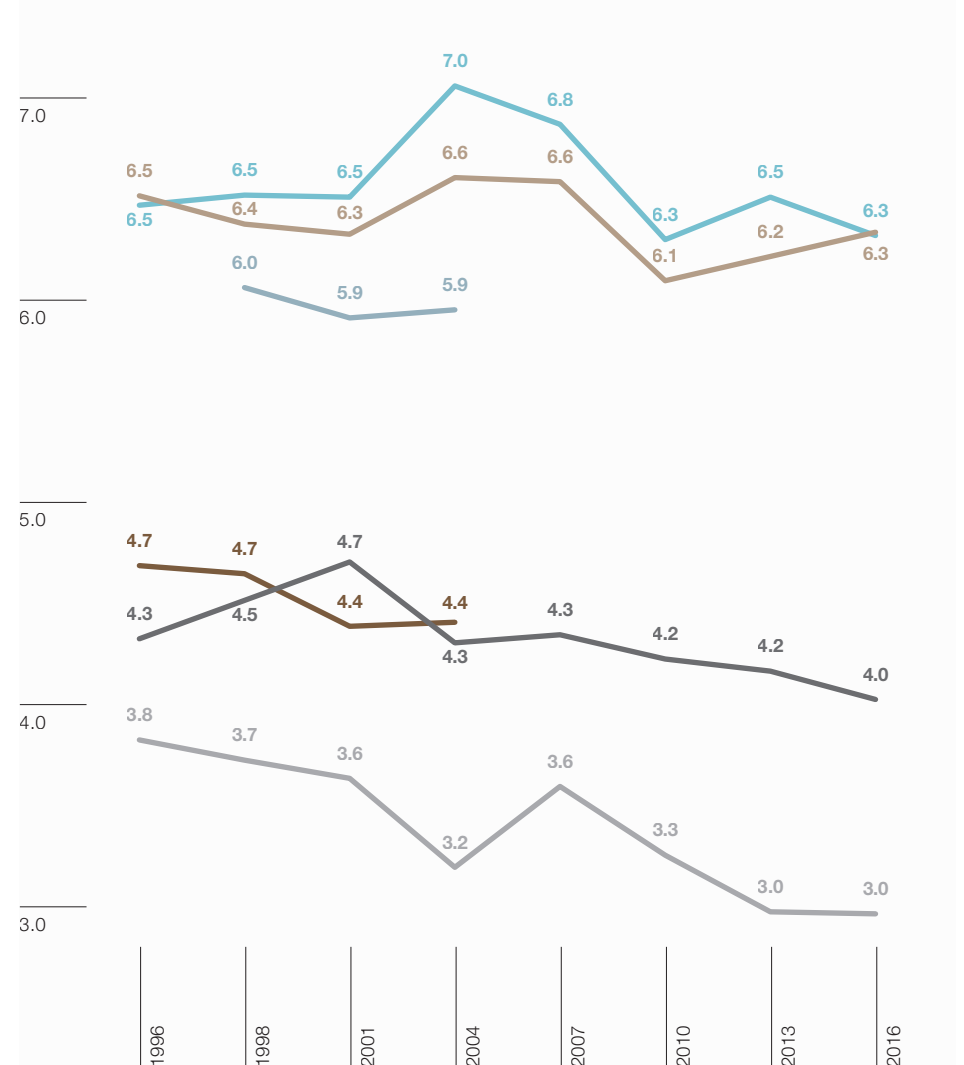| Politician	Rating
John Howard*	5.31
Kim Beazley*	6.11
Tim Fischer	4.76
Cheryl Kernot	4.35
Peter Costello	4.27
Gareth Evans	3.54
Pauline Hanson	2.34

2001
Politician	Rating
John Howard*	5.56
Kim Beazley*	5.73
Natasha Stott-Despoja	5.01
John Anderson	4.92
Bob Brown	4.37
Peter Costello	4.29
Simon Crean	4.01
Pauline Hanson	2.56

2004
Politician	Rating
John Howard*	5.71
Mark Latham*	5.04
John Anderson	5.22
Peter Costello	4.72
Bob Brown	4.01
Andrew Bartlett	3.96
Simon Crean	3.79
Pauline Hanson	3.19

2007
Politician	Rating
Kevin Rudd*	6.31
John Howard*	5.14
Julia Gillard	5.19
Mark Vaile	4.61
Bob Brown	4.48
Peter Costello	4.13

2010
Politician	Rating
Julia Gillard*	4.89
Tony Abbott*	4.26
Kevin Rudd	5.01
Warren Truss	4.12
Bob Brown	4.11
Wayne Swan	4.03

How politicians were rated (continued)

Tony Abbott*	4.29	**2013**
Kevin Rudd*	4.07	
Warren Truss	4.34	
Julia Gillard	4.04	
Christine Milne	3.81	
Malcolm Turnbull*	4.94	**2016**
Bill Shorten*	4.22	
Barnaby Joyce	4.13	
Richard Di Natale	4.12	
Tony Abbott	3.60	

Satisfaction with democracy

— **Satisfied with democracy**
— **Not satisfied with democracy**

90%

80

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

0

Satisfied with democracy: 77 (1969), 56 (1979), 78 (1996), 71 (1998), 74 (2001), 82 (2004), 86 (2007), 72 (2010), 72 (2013), 60 (2016)

Not satisfied with democracy: 23 (1969), 45 (1979), 22 (1996), 29 (1998), 26 (2001), 19 (2004), 14 (2007), 29 (2010), 28 (2013), 40 (2016)

1969 1979 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
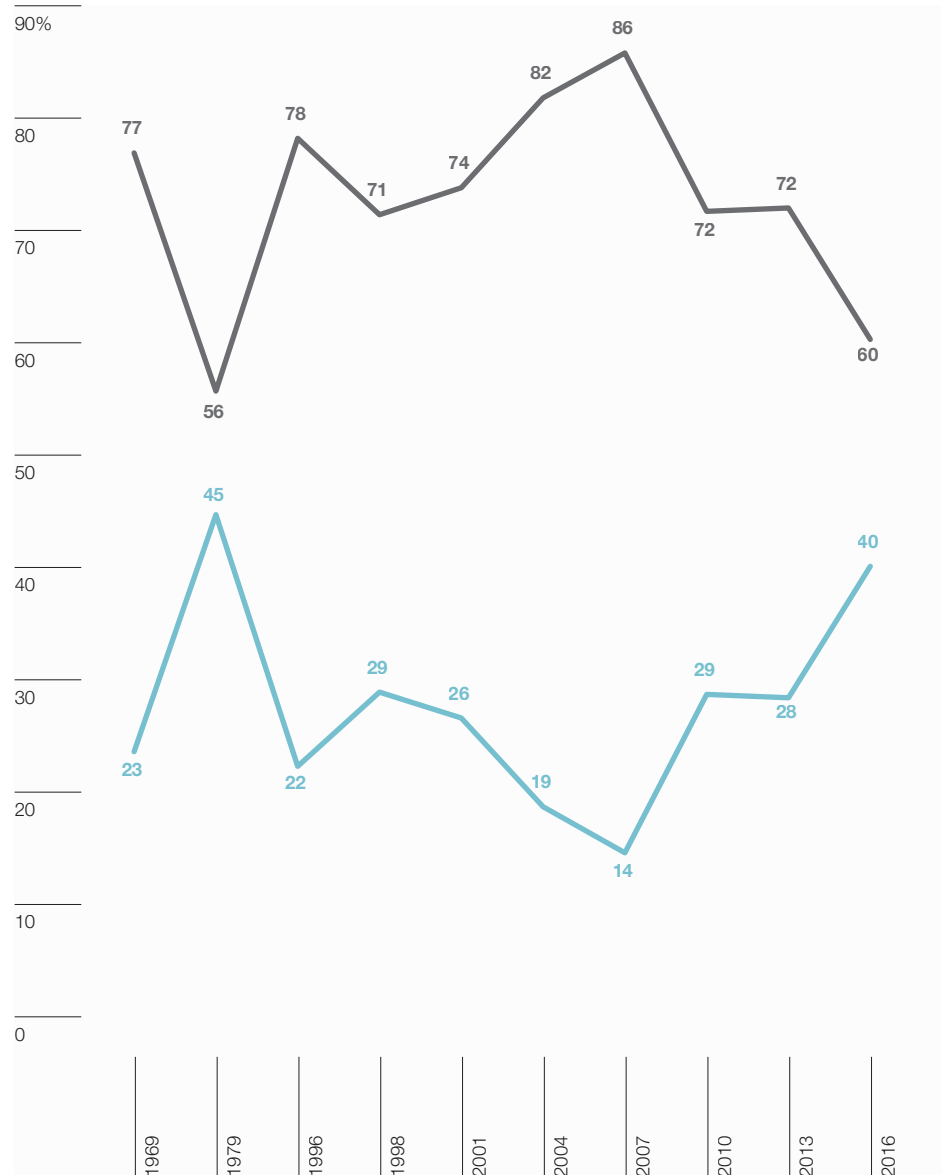
Trust in government

— **People in government look after themselves**
— **People in government can be trusted**

80%

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

0

People in government look after themselves: 49 (1969), 71 (1979), 66 (1993), 52 (1996), 67 (1998), 68 (2001), 61 (2004), 57 (2007), 63 (2010), 66 (2013), 74 (2016)

People in government can be trusted: 51 (1969), 30 (1979), 34 (1993), 48 (1996), 34 (1998), 32 (2001), 40 (2004), 43 (2007), 37 (2010), 34 (2013), 26 (2016)

1969 1979 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
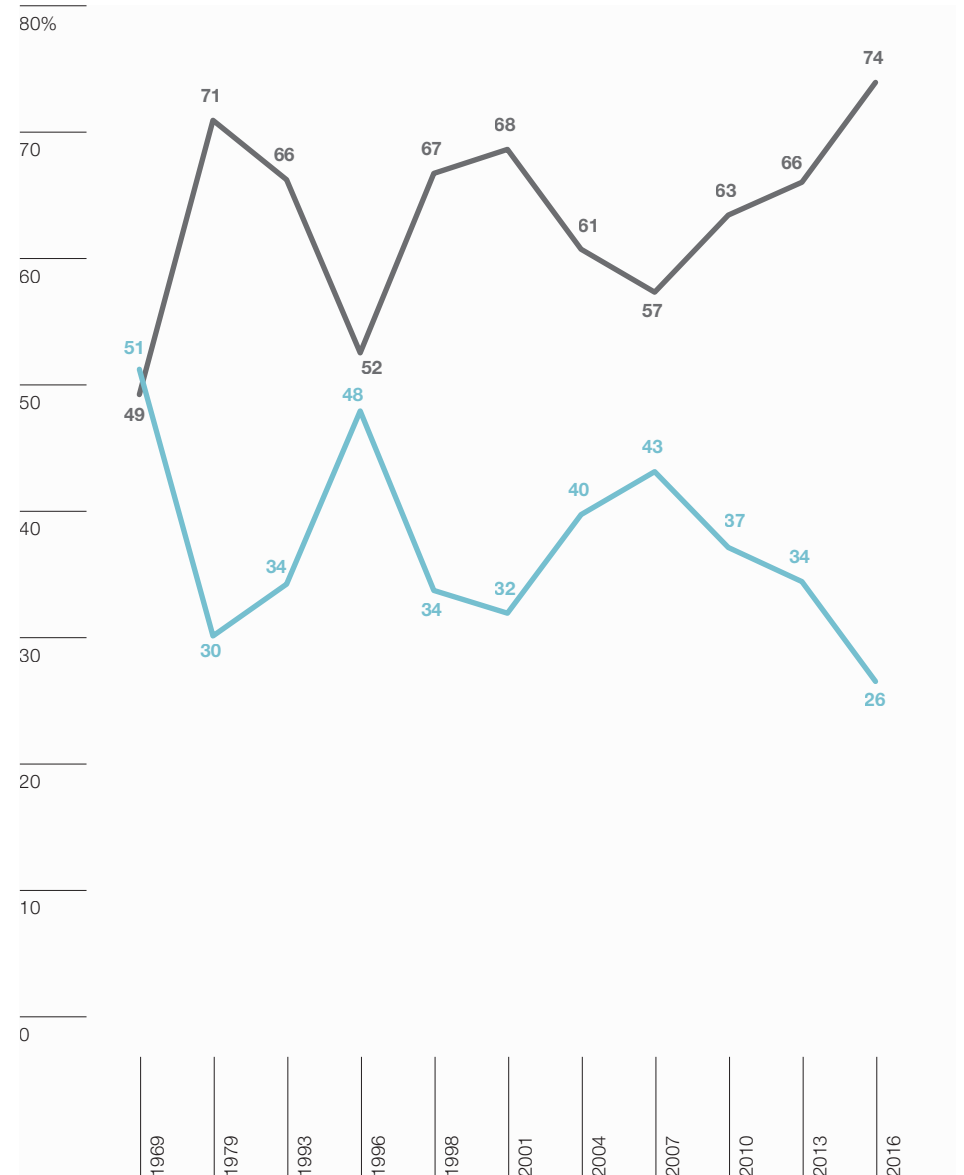
Who the government is run for

— Few big interests
— All the people

```
60%
      53
           48
50                              47              56
      ·         42        44        ·
40                  38
30
           21    20
20    17              16
   12        ·    12    ·    12
10        ·
 0
   1998  2001  2004  2007  2010  2013  2016
```
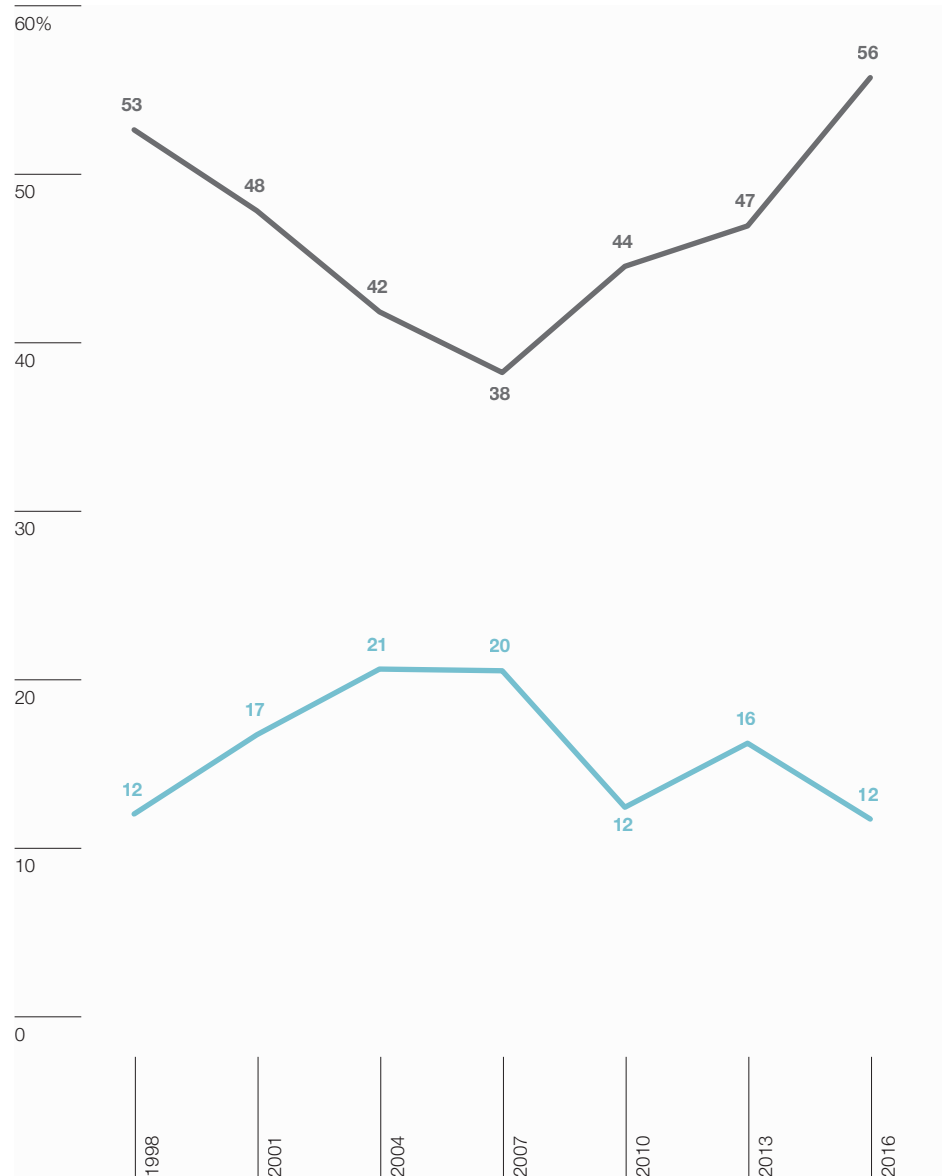
Political efficacy and the use of the vote

— Who people vote for can make a big difference
— Who people vote for won't make any difference

```
80%
      70        66    68
         64              64    64
70              ·            ·    ·    58
60         57
50
40
30
      21    18
20    16        ·         17    20
   13        ·    13  14    ·
10
 0
   1996  1998  2001  2004  2007  2010  2013  2016
```
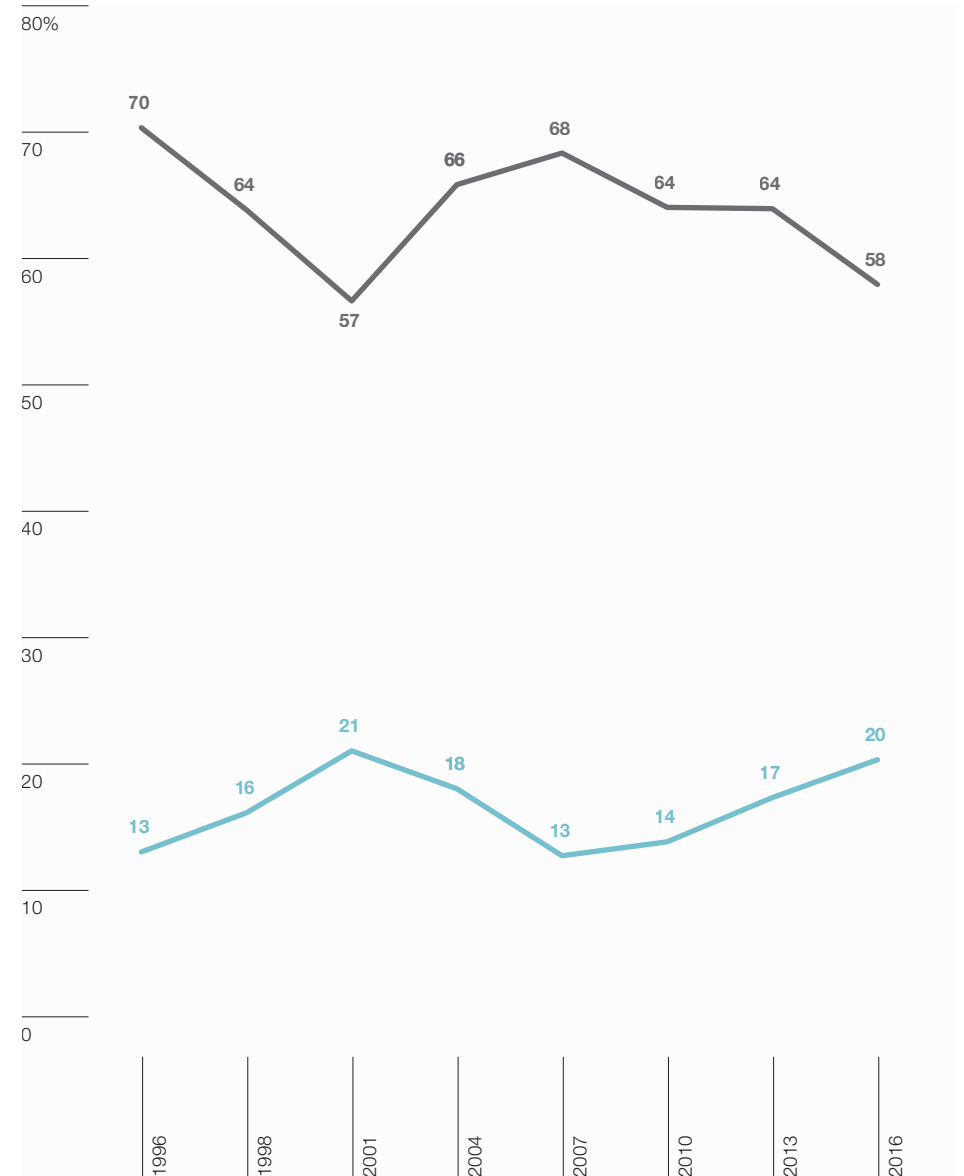
Makes a difference who is in power

—— **It makes a big difference who is in power**

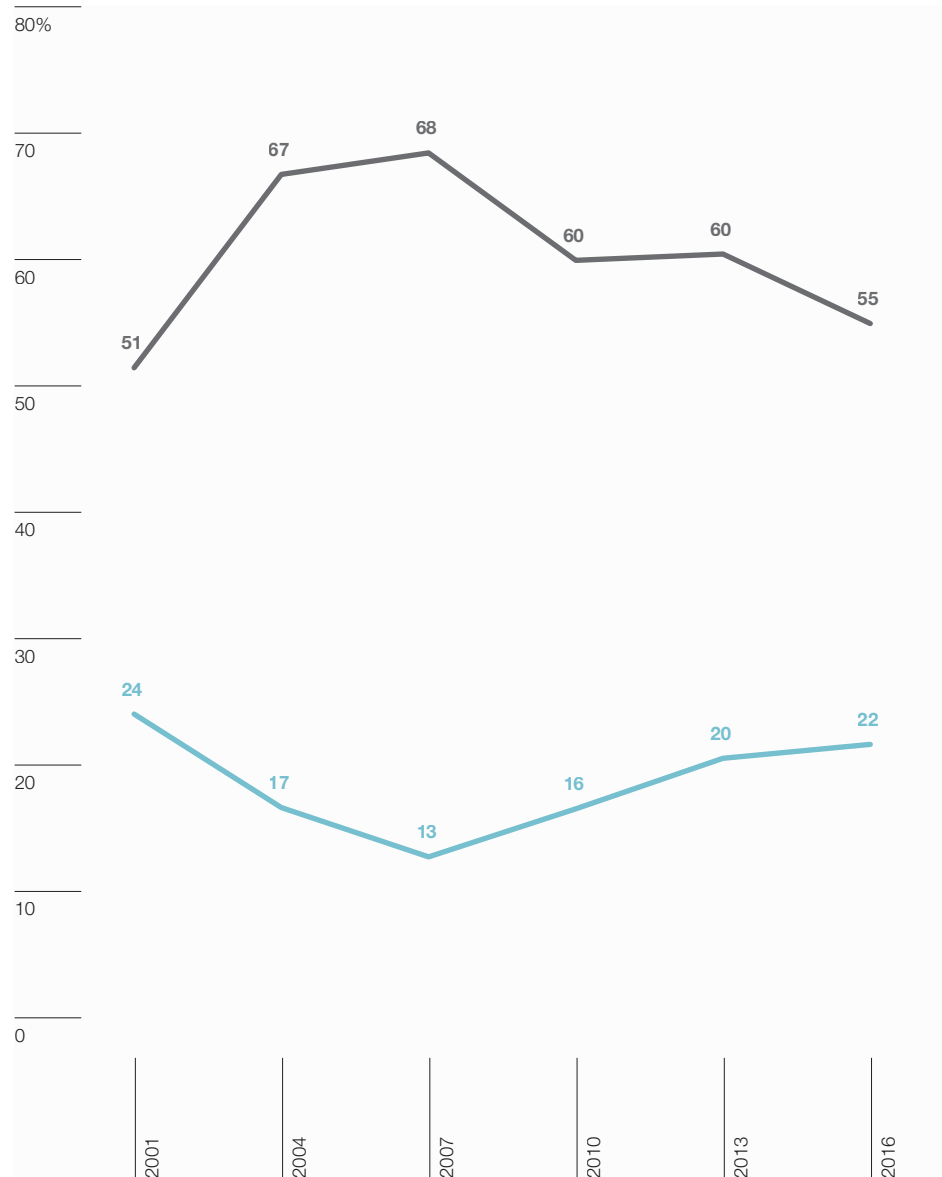—— **It doesn't make any difference who is in power**

80%
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

51
67
68
60
60
55

24
17
13
16
20
22

2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

Politicians know what ordinary people think

—— **Politicians know what ordinary people think**

—— **Politicians don't know what ordinary people think**

60%
50
40
30
20
10
0

49
42
35
48
43
52

16
21
23
16
22
14

2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
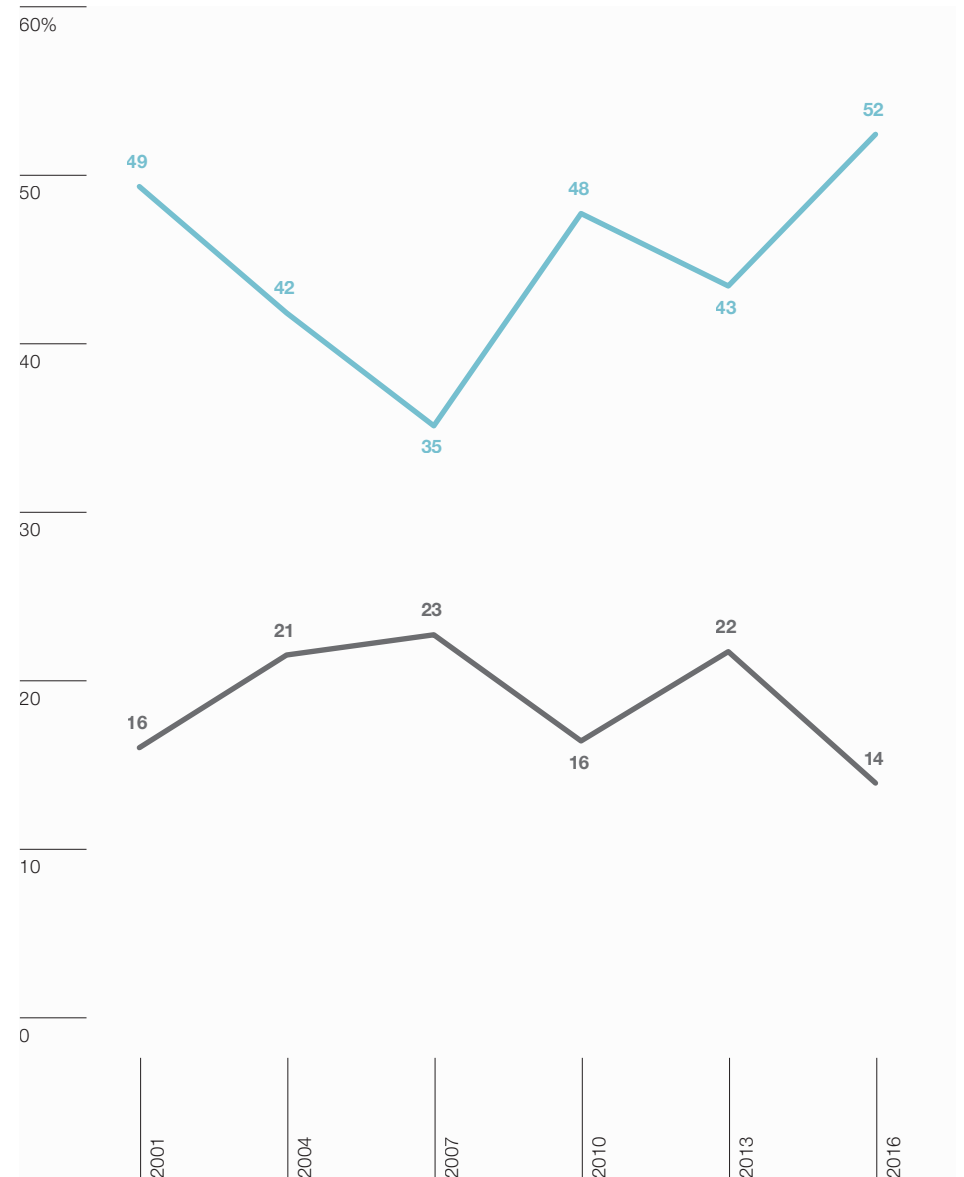
The Queen, the flag and republicanism

- **Queen important**
- **Favour republic**
- **Favour flag change**

70%

66
64
62
60
60 59
58
53 54
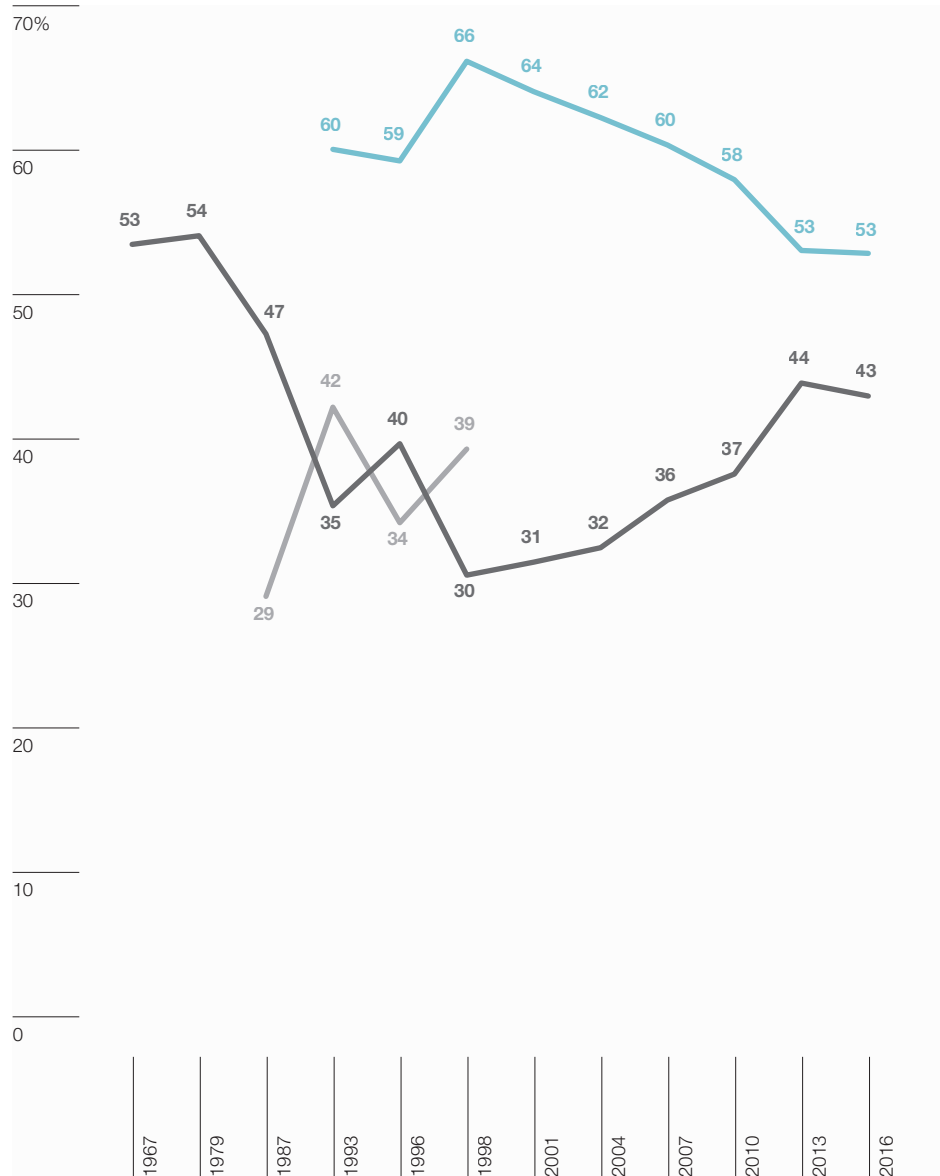53 53
47
44 43
42
40 39
35 37
34 36
31 32
30
29

60

50

40

30

20

10

0

1967 1979 1987 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

Government control of parliament

- **Better when government does not control Senate**
- **Better when government controls both houses**

60%

52 52
47
44
43 43
42
40 40
39 39
39
34 34
31

50

40

30

20

10

0

1993 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
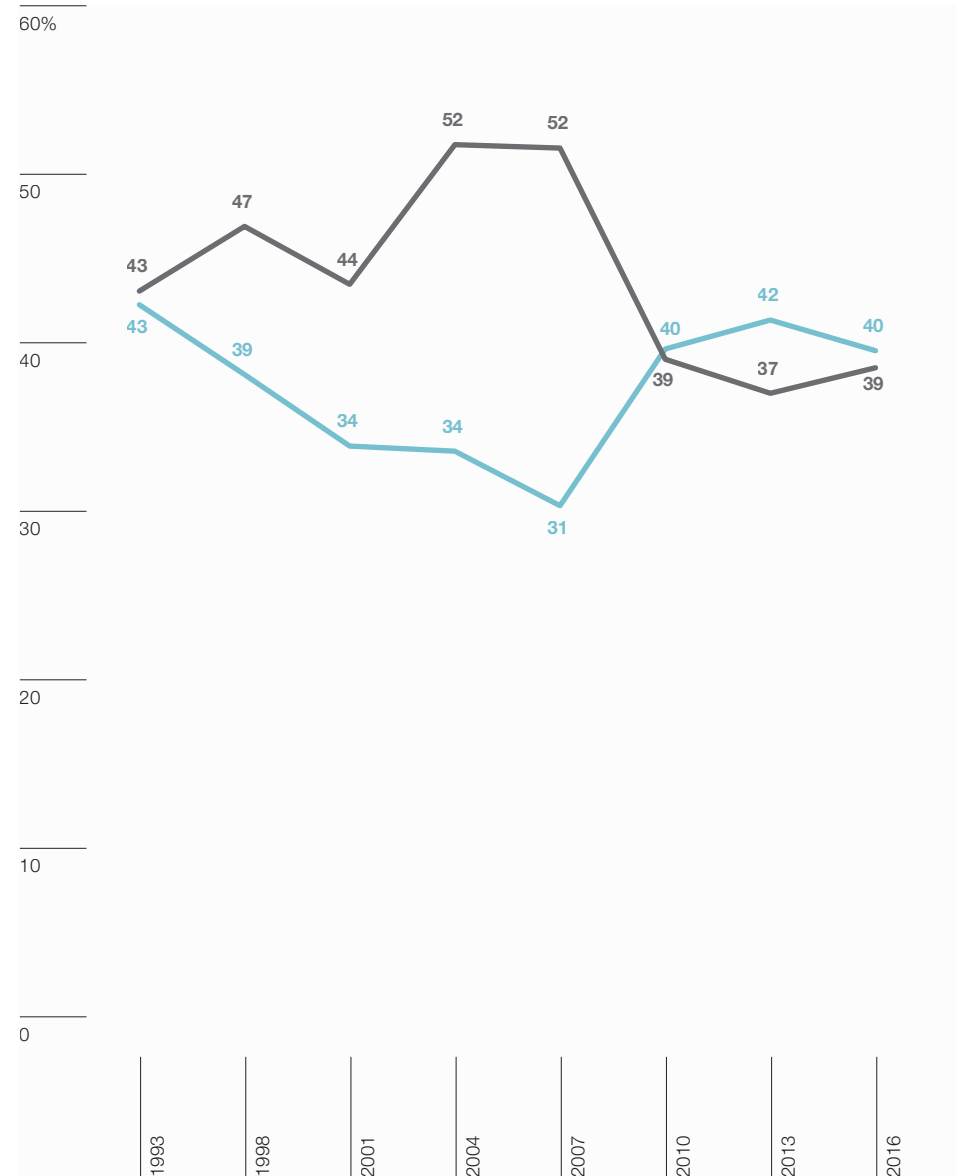
Notes

Satisfaction with democracy

For satisfied with democracy, estimates combine (1969, 1979, 1998–2016) 'very satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied'; (1996) 'satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied'. For not satisfied with democracy, estimates for 1996–2016 combine 'not very satisfied' and 'not at all satisfied'.

Trust in government

For people in government look after themselves, the response categories are (1969, 1979) look after self; (1993–2016) 'usually look after themselves' and 'sometimes look after themselves'. For people in government can be trusted, the response categories are (1969, 1979) 'do the right thing'; (1993–2016) 'sometimes can be trusted to do the right thing' and 'usually can be trusted to do the right thing'.

Who the government is run for

For 'few big interests', estimates combine 'entirely run for the big interests' and 'mostly run for the big interests'. For 'all the people', estimates combine 'mostly run for the benefit of all' and 'entirely run for the benefit of all'.

Political efficacy and the use of the vote

For who people vote for can make a big difference, estimates combine codes '1' and '2'. For who people vote for won't make any difference, estimates combine codes '4' and '5'.

Makes a difference who is in power

For it makes a big difference who is in power, estimates combine codes '1' and '2'. For it doesn't make any difference who is in power, estimates combine codes '4' and '5'.

Politicians know what ordinary people think

For politicians know what ordinary people think, estimates combine codes '1' and '2'. For politicians don't know what ordinary people think estimates combine codes '4' and '5'.

The Queen, the flag and republicanism

For Queen important, estimates combine 'very important' and 'fairly important'. For favour republic, estimates combine (1993–2016) 'strongly favour becoming republic' and 'favour becoming republic'. For favour flag change, estimates combine 'strongly for flag change' and 'for flag change'.

Government control of parliament

The question was not asked in 1996.

The power of trade unions and big business

— **Unions have too much power**
— **Big business has too much power**

Year	Unions	Big business
1967	52	60
1969	60	62
1979	82	68
1987	71	51
1990	69	65
1993	64	62
1996	62	65
1998	53	71
2001	48	72
2004	41	72
2007	37	69
2010	49	72
2013	45	66
2016	47	74

Class self-image

— **Upper**
— **Middle**
— **Working**

| Year	Upper	Middle	Working
1967	1	57	43
1969	2	49	50
1979	1	57	41
1987	1	48	51
1990	1	48	51
1993	2	46	53
1998	2	48	50
2001	2	49	50
2004	2	54	44
2007	2	53	44
2010	2	57	42
2013	2	57	42
2016	2	54	44
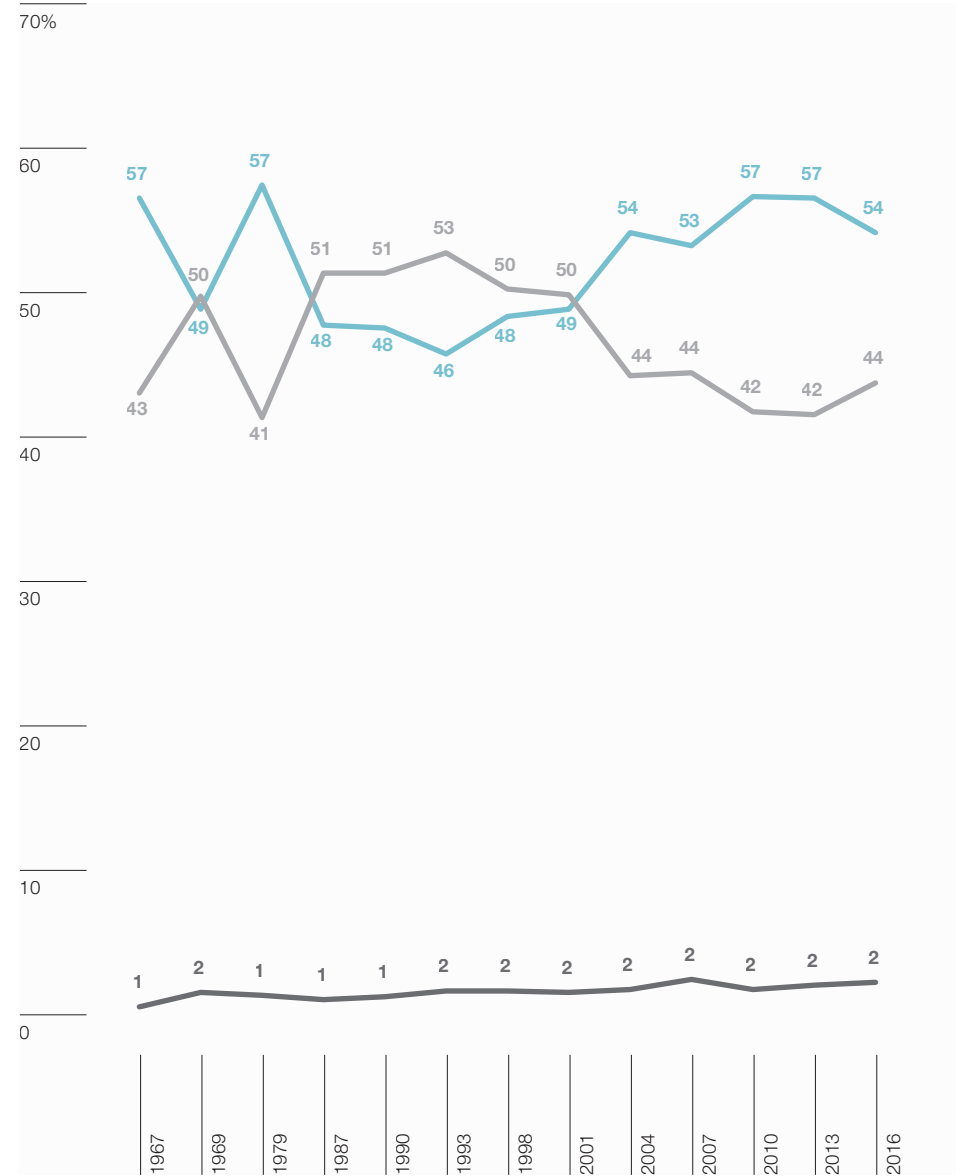
Trade union membership and support for industrial action

— **Belong to union**
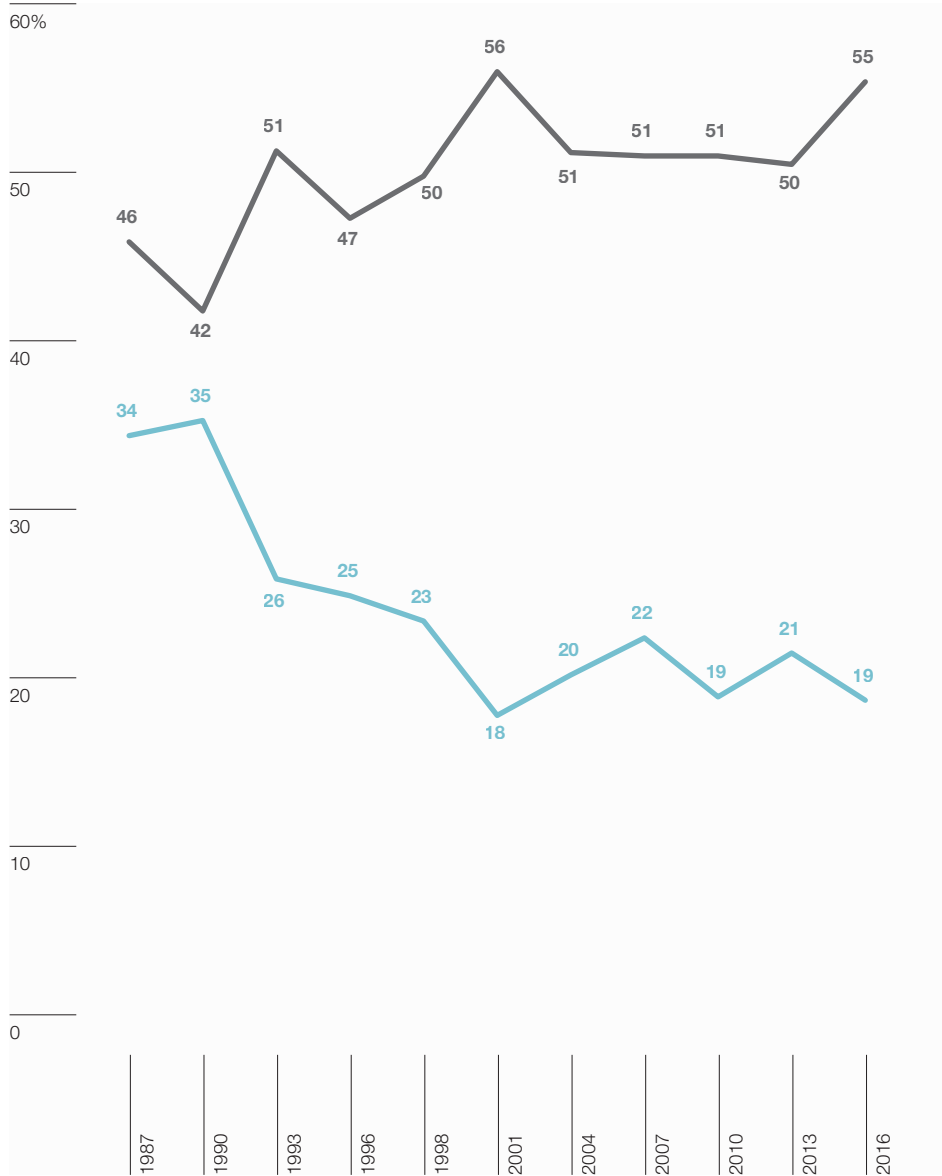— **Stricter laws for unions**
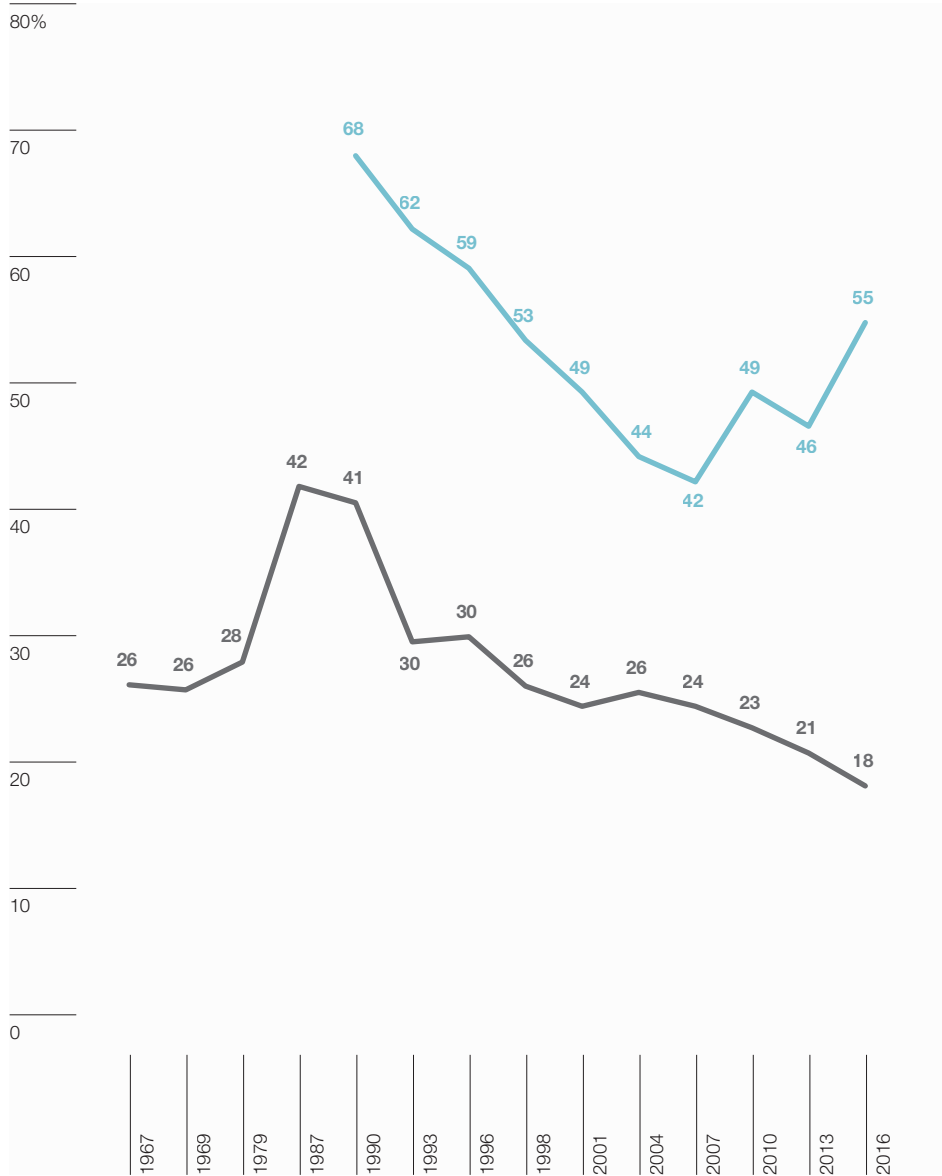
Government spending: less tax or more social services

— **Favours less tax**
— **Favours spending more on social services**
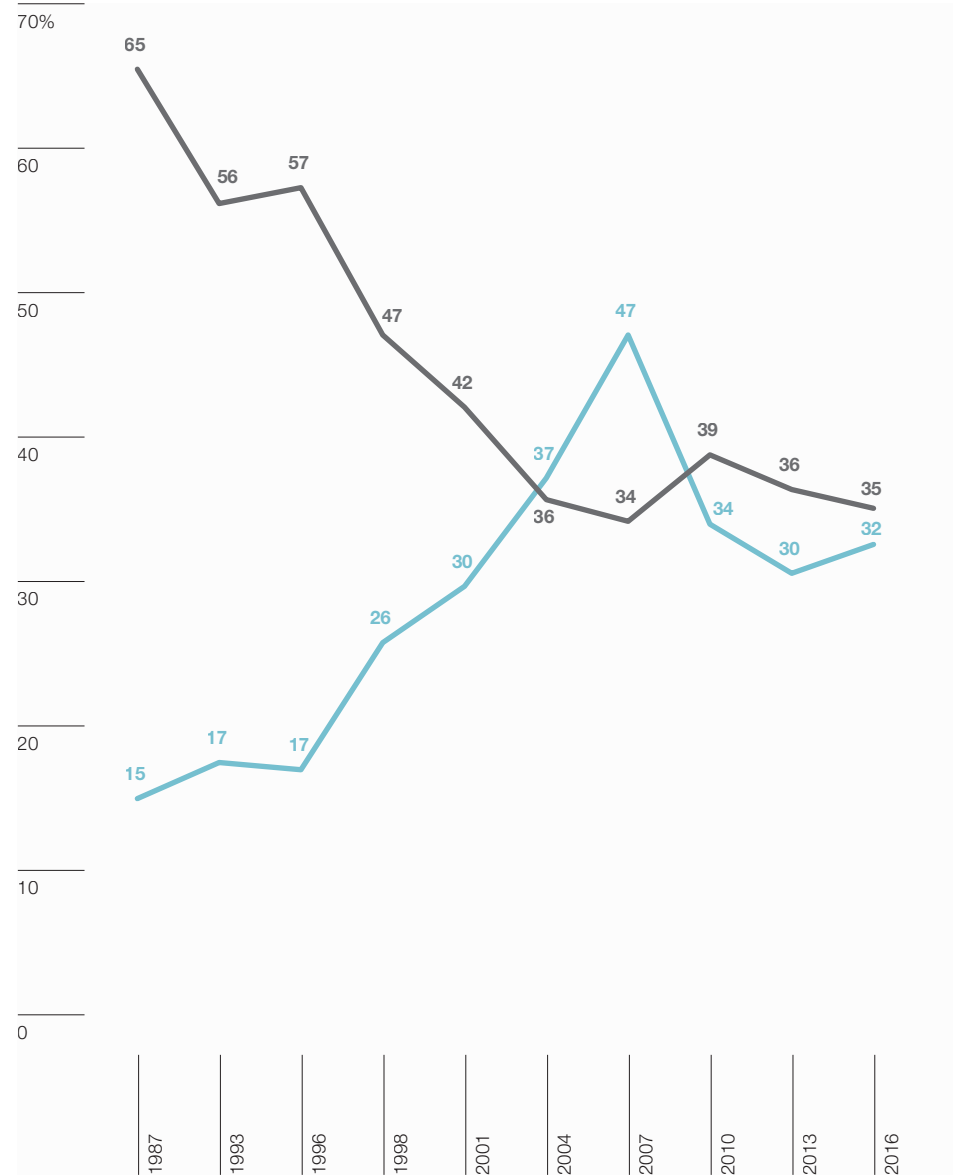
Redistribution of income and wealth

━━━ Income and wealth should be redistributed
━━━ Income and wealth should not be redistributed

60%

50

40

30

20

10

0

46
42
51
47
50
56
51
51
51
50
55

34
35
26
25
23
18
20
22
19
21
19

1987 1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

High tax makes people unwilling to work

━━━ Agree
━━━ Disagree

100%

80

60

40

20

0

74
76
69
65
61
61
48
45

11
10
13
16
17
18
26
30

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
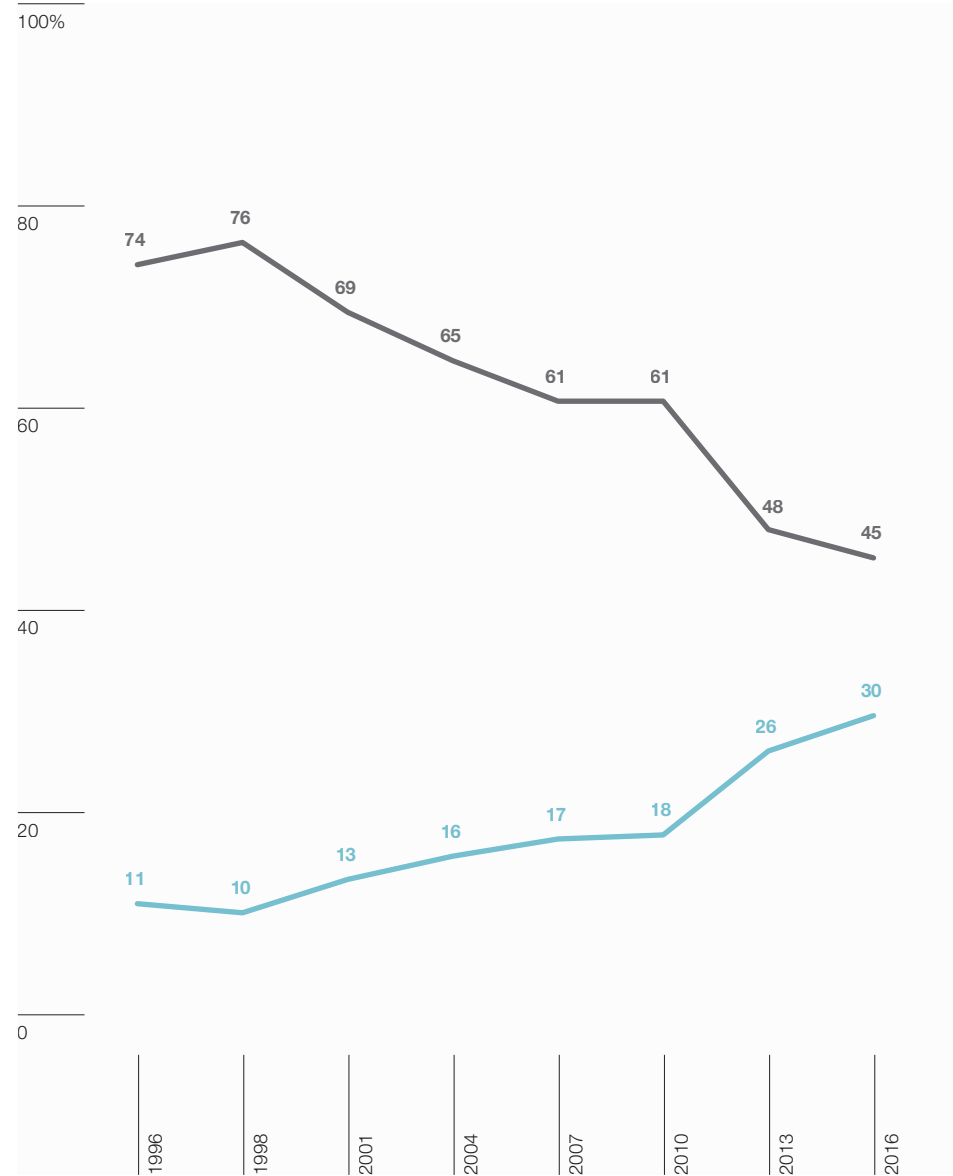
**The power of trade unions
and big business**
For unions have too much power,
estimates for 1990–2016 combine
'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For
big business has too much power,
estimates for 1990–2016 combine
'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Class self-image
From 2010–2016 'None' was
included in the list of responses and
percentages adjusted accordingly.

**Trade union membership and
support for industrial action**
Estimates for stricter laws for
unions combine 'strongly agree'
and 'agree'.

**Government spending:
less tax or more social services**
For favours less tax, the response
categories are (1987–2016)
'strongly favour reducing taxes' and
'mildly favour reducing taxes'. For
favours spending more on social
services, the response categories
are (1987–2016) 'mildly favour
spending more on social services'
and 'strongly favour spending more
on social services'.

**Redistribution of income
and wealth**
For income and wealth should be
redistributed, estimates combine
'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For
income and wealth should not be
redistributed, estimates combine
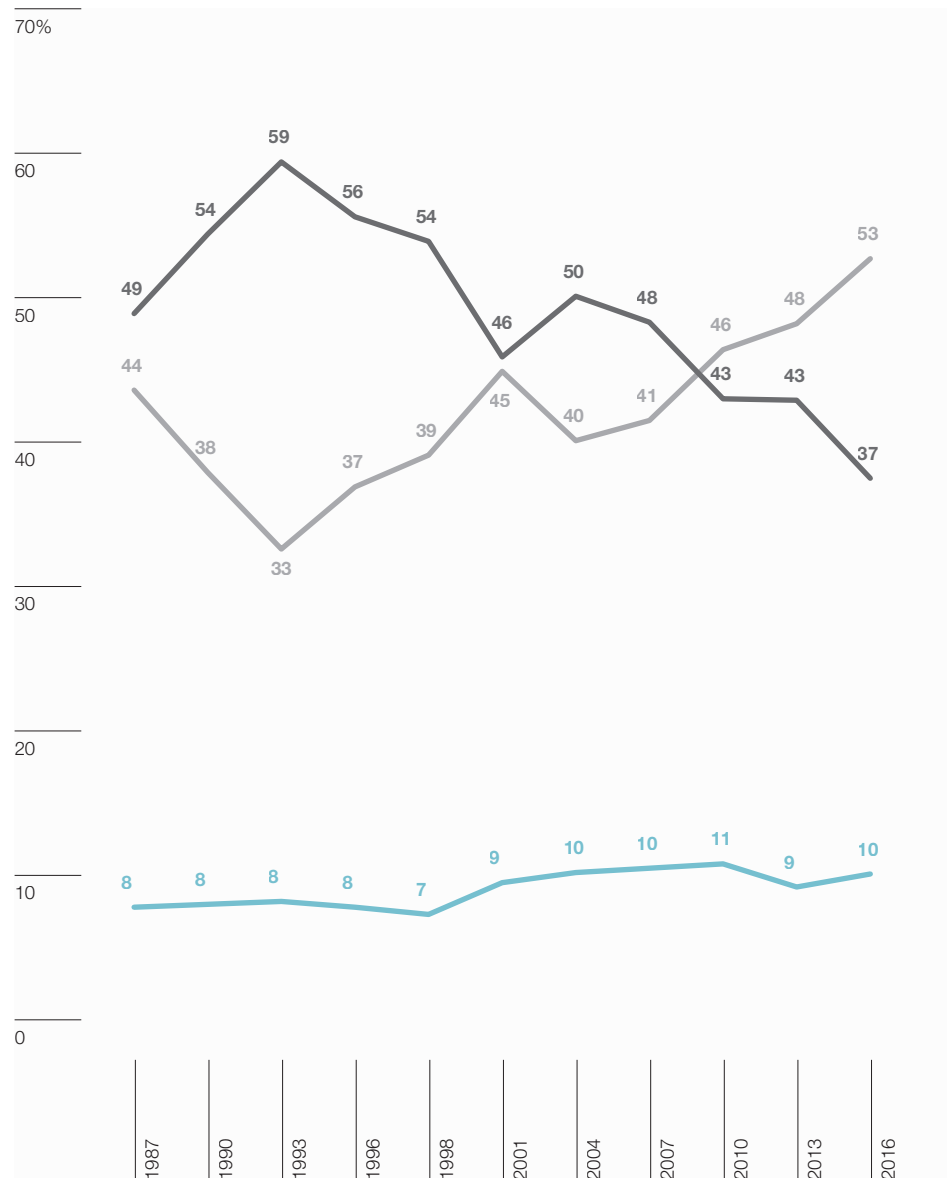'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

**High tax makes people
unwilling to work**
'Agree' combines 'strongly agree'
and 'agree'. 'Disagree' combines
'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'.

Attitudes towards sex and nudity in films and magazines

— Gone too far
— Not gone far enough
— About right

70%
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Gone too far: 49, 54, 59, 56, 54, 46, 50, 48, 43, 43, 37
Not gone far enough: 8, 8, 8, 8, 7, 9, 10, 10, 11, 9, 10
About right: 44, 38, 33, 37, 39, 45, 40, 41, 46, 48, 53

1987 1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

Attitudes towards abortion

— Obtain readily
— Special circumstances
— Banned

80%
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Obtain readily: 46, 39, 53, 61, 56, 53, 61, 59, 61, 63, 66, 69
Special circumstances: 49, 55, 41, 34, 39, 42, 35, 37, 35, 33, 30, 27
Banned: 5, 6, 6, 5, 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4

1979 1987 1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
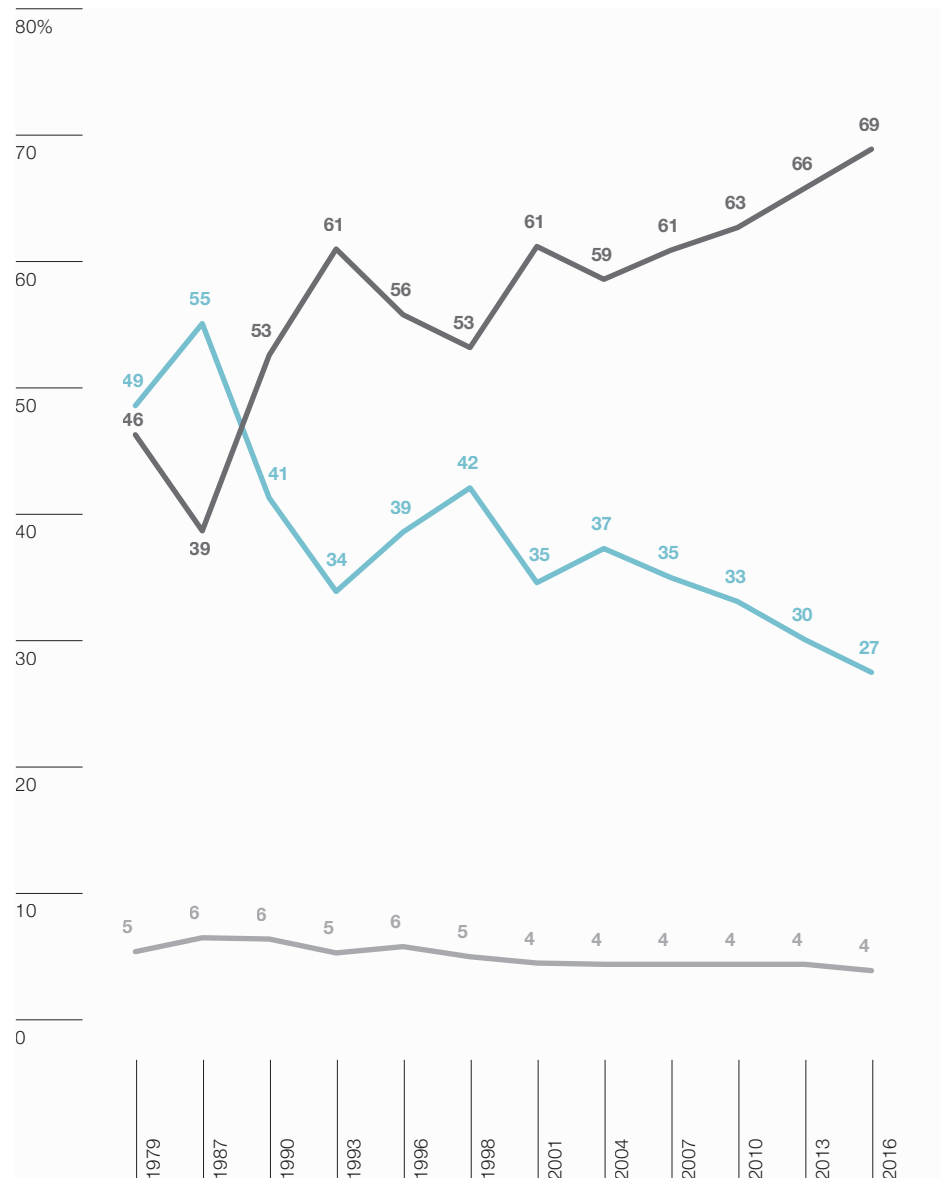
Attitudes towards the legal status of marijuana

— **Marijuana should be a criminal offence**
— **Marijuana should not be a criminal offence**
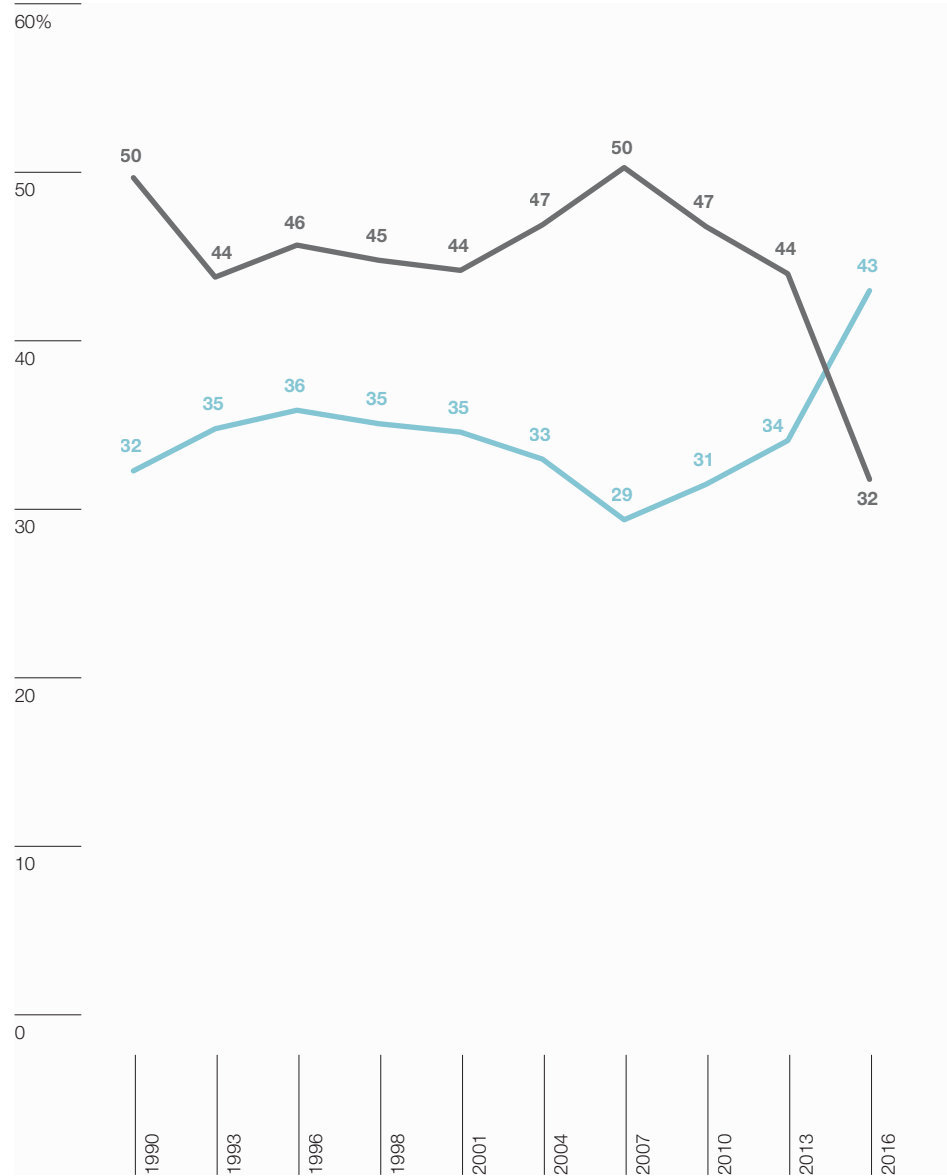
Attitudes towards jail sentences and capital punishment

— **Stiffer sentences for criminals**
— **Reintroduce death penalty for murder**

Attitudes towards policies on Indigenous Australians

— **Government help for Indigenous Australians gone too far**
— **Transfer of land rights to Indigenous Australians gone too far**

Government help for Indigenous Australians gone too far: 59, 44, 55, 54, 47, 45, 31, 35, 34, 30
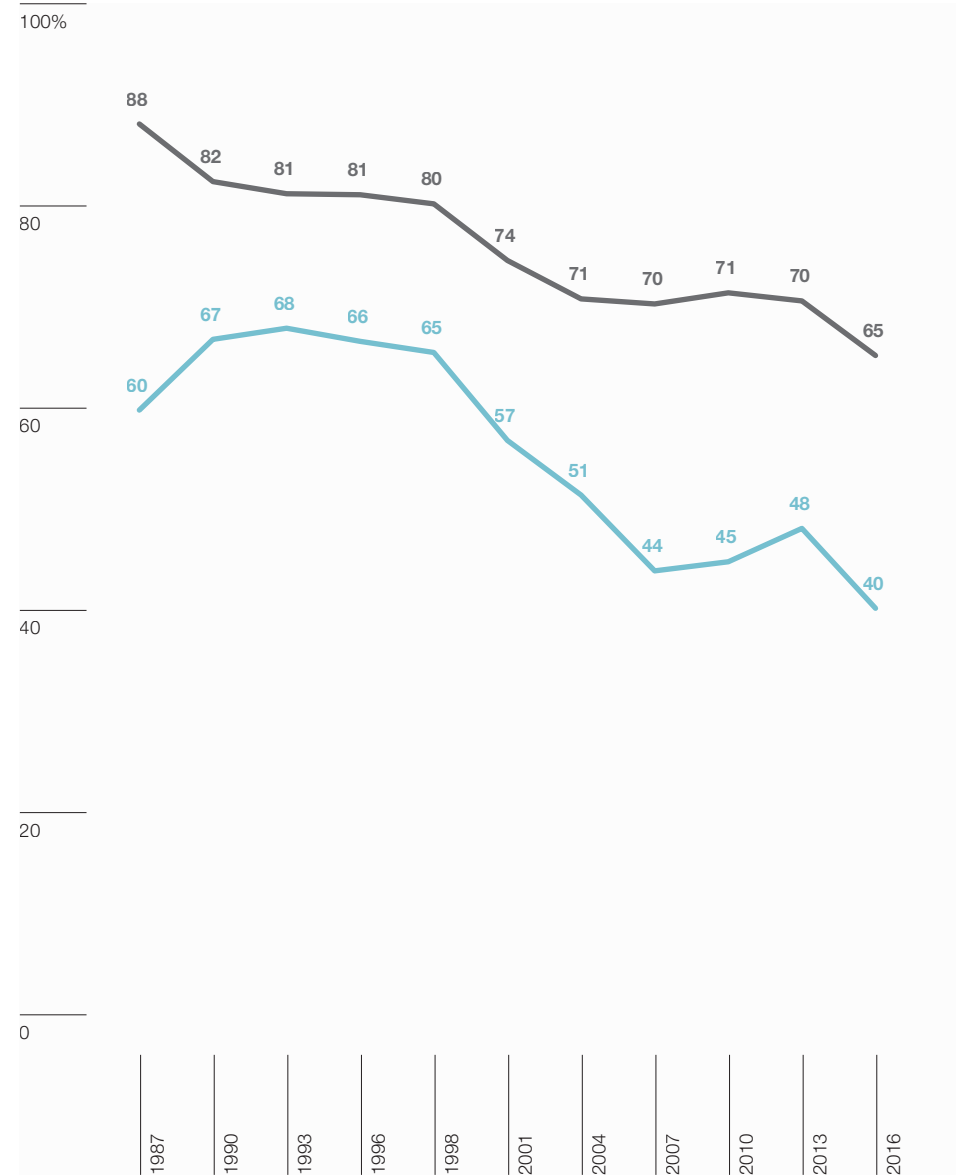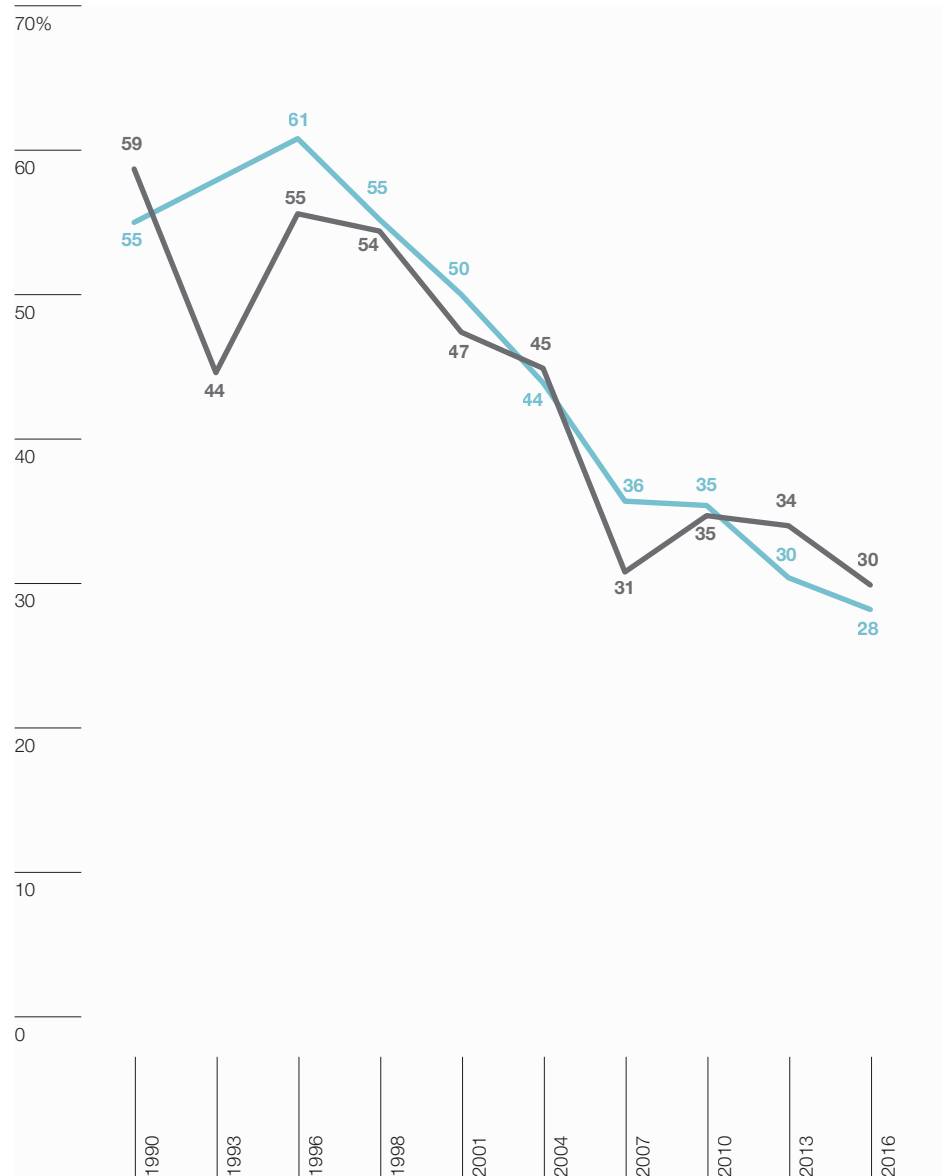
Transfer of land rights to Indigenous Australians gone too far: 55, 61, 55, 50, 44, 45, 36, 35, 30, 28

Years: 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016

Attitudes towards gender equality

— **Equal opportunity for women gone too far**
— **Women should be given preferential treatment**
— **Should increase business opportunities for women**

Should increase business opportunities for women: 41, 39, 42, 43, 44, 40, 46, 51, 50

Equal opportunity for women gone too far: 21, 18, 18, 12, 11, 10, 6, 7, 8, 10

Women should be given preferential treatment: 9, 9, 8, 9, 11, 11, 11, 10, 10, 9

Years: 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016
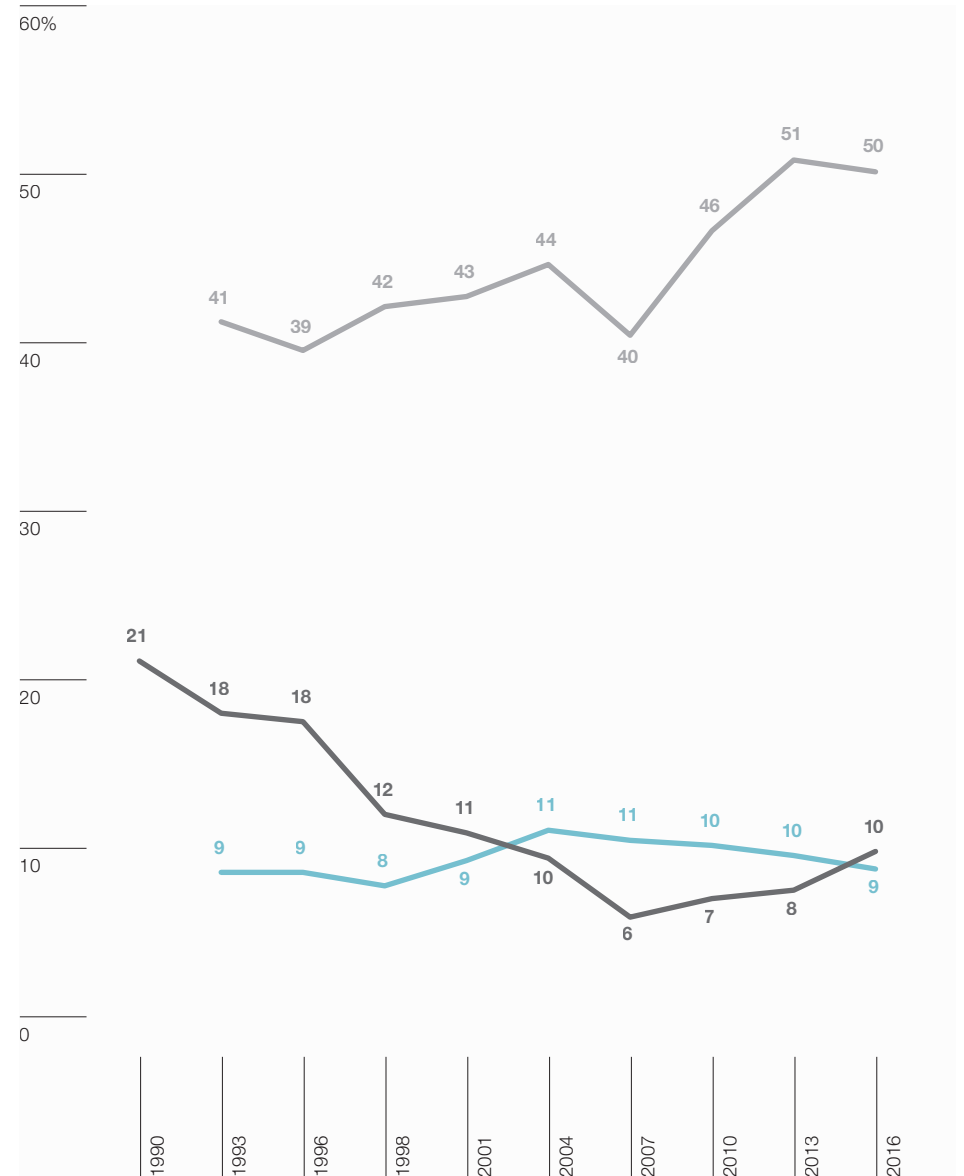
Attitudes towards asylum seeker arrivals by boat

— **Boats should be turned back**
— **Boats should not be turned back**

```
70%
        62
60      54
             51
                  49   48
50
40             34   33
                29
30        28
20
   20
10

0
   2001  2004  2010  2013  2016
```
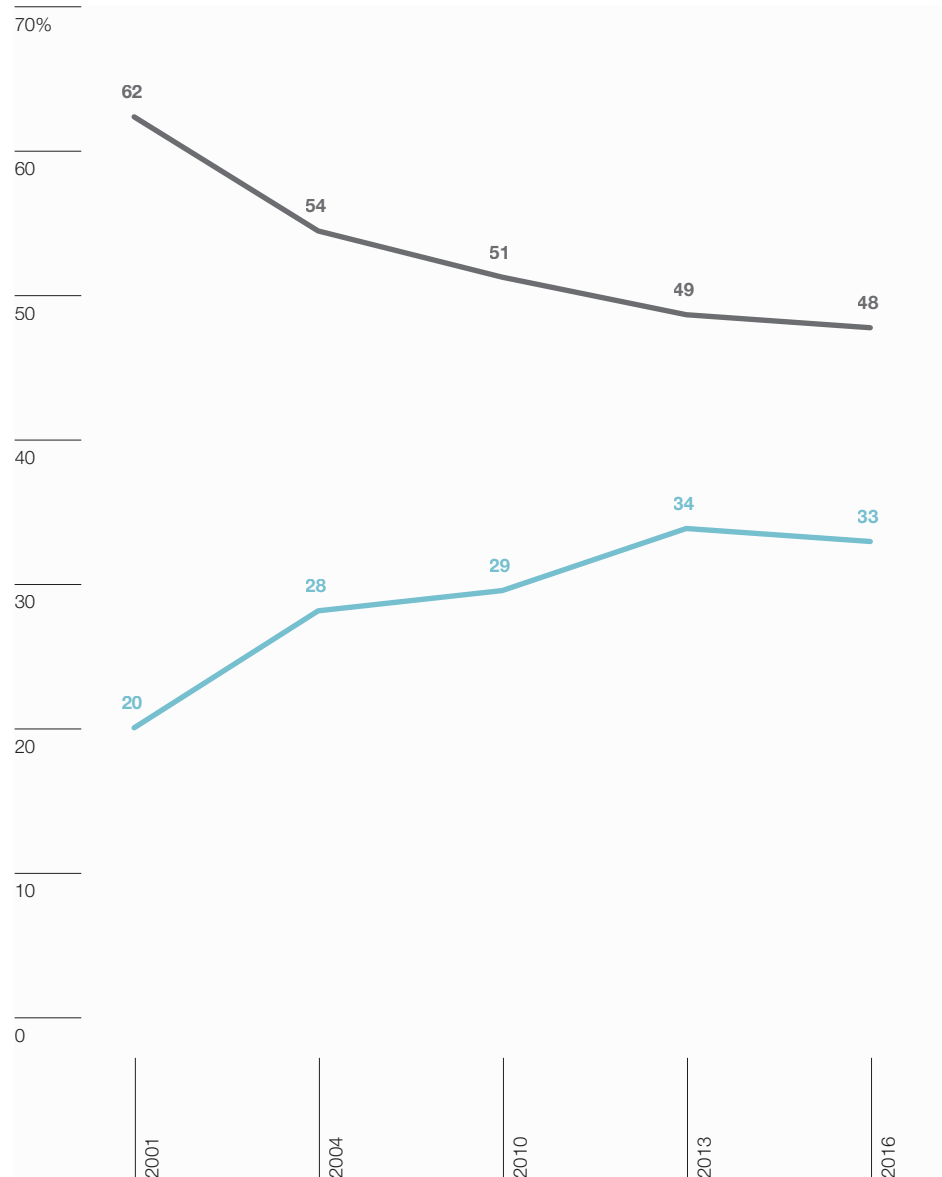
Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration

— **Equal opportunity for migrants gone too far**
— **Number of migrants allowed into Australia gone too far**

```
80%
             70
70                63
60   58                      52
                       44         42
50              44  44        40      40
         44                37   37
40                  35         35
              34  35     31
30                  27  28
            21
20

10

0
   1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
```
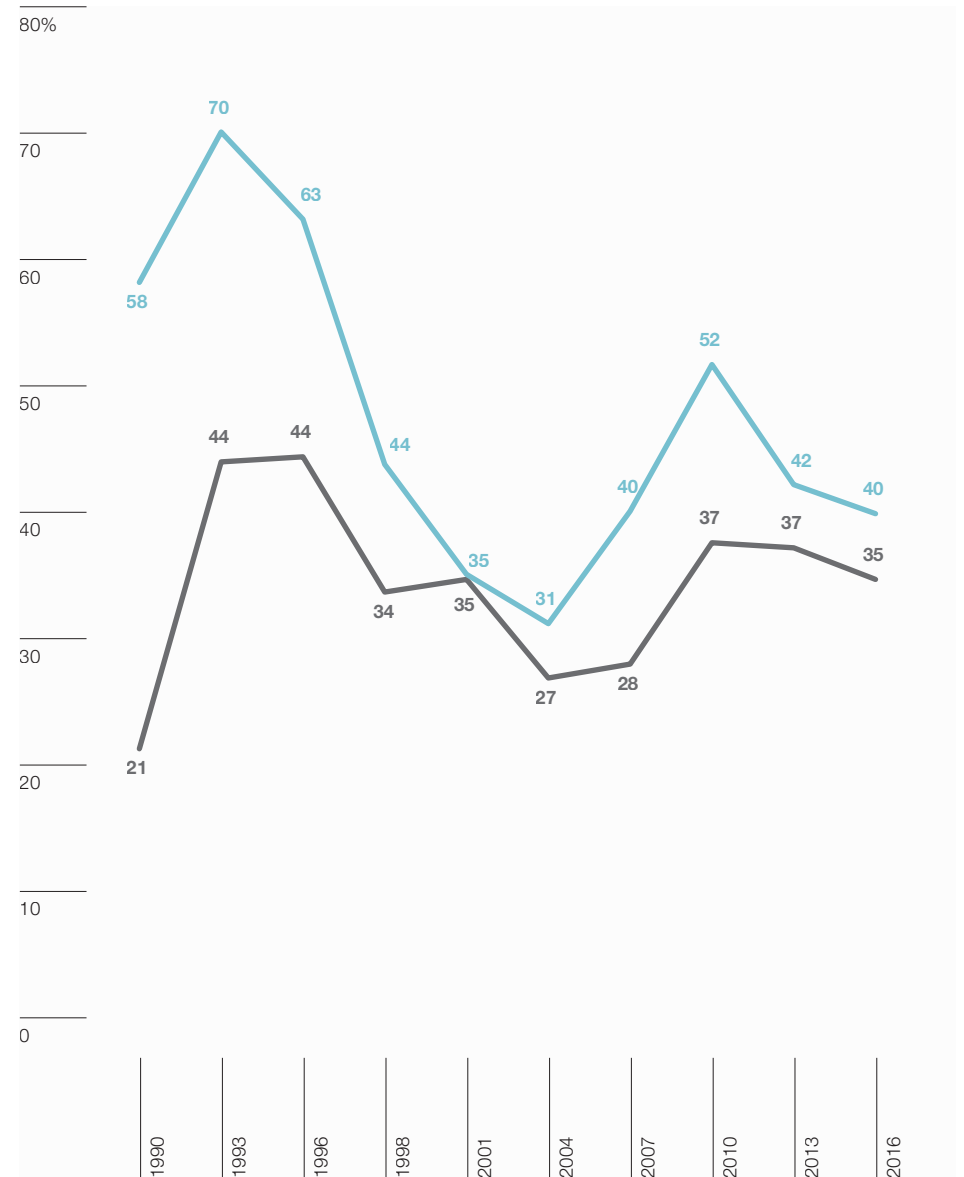
Attitudes towards the level of immigration into Australia

Increase immigration
Keep immigration levels the same
Reduce immigration

70%

63
48
38
38
41
39
52
41
42
28
37
35
32
35
32
25
24
46
24
26
14
16
15
16
8

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
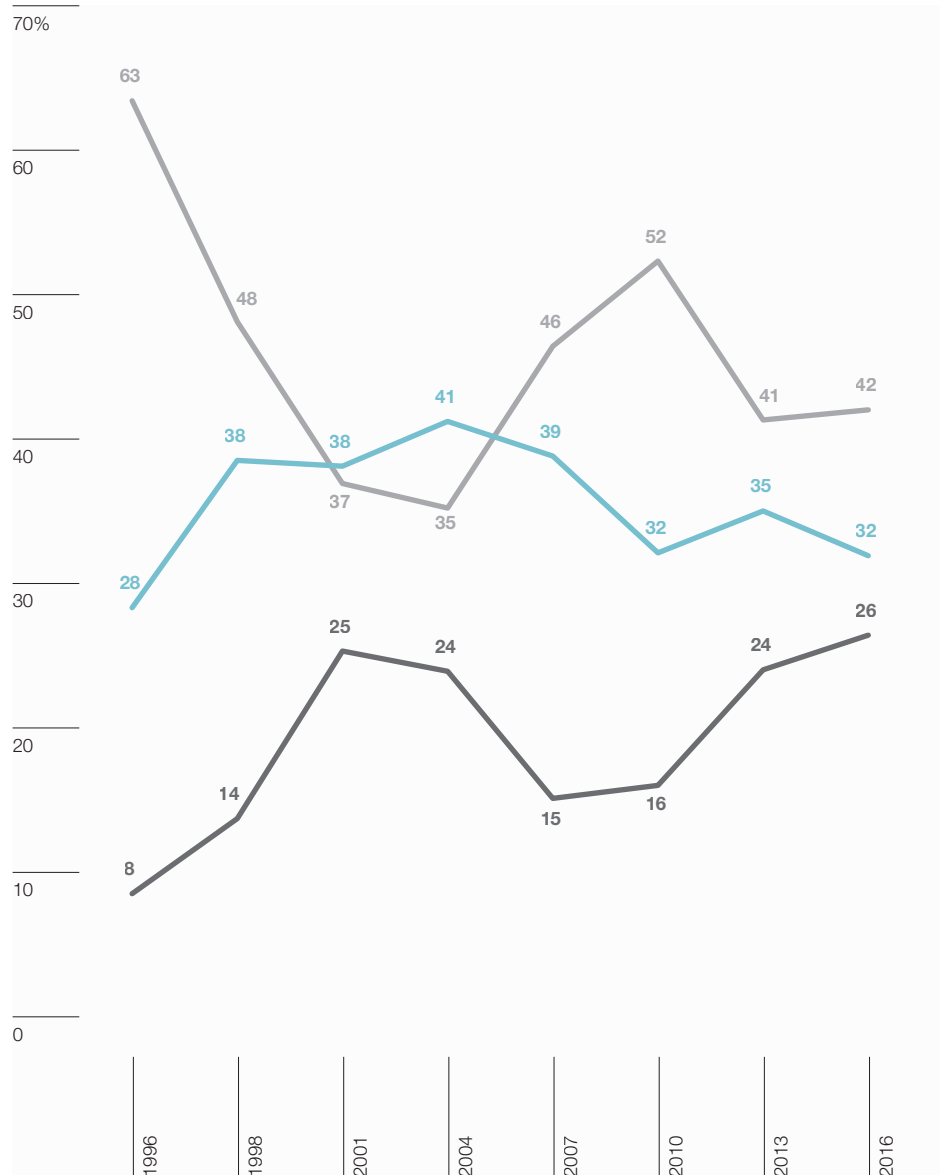
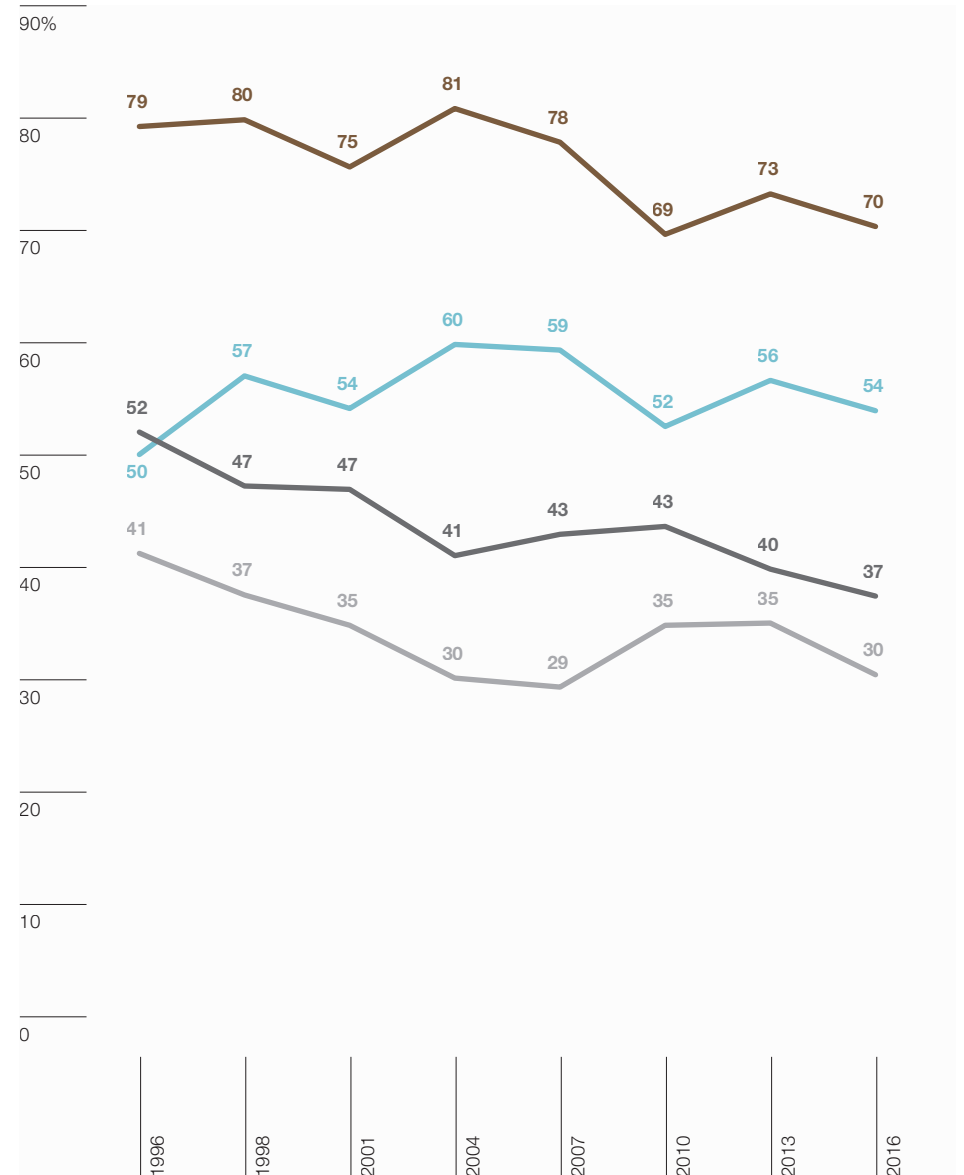## The consequences of immigration

Immigrants increase crime rate
Immigrants good for economy
Immigrants take jobs away from Australian born
Immigrants make Australia more open to ideas and cultures

90%

79 80 75 81 78 69 73 70
52 57 54 60 59 52 56 54
50 47 47 41 43 43 40 37
41 37 35 30 29 35 35 30

80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

Materialist and postmaterialist values

- **Materialist**
- **Mixed**
- **Postmaterialist**

Mixed: 61, 64, 62, 64, 62, 62, 59, 62, 62, 66

Materialist: 26, 21, 19, 18, 22, 21, 30, 27, 24, 18

Postmaterialist: 13, 14, 18, 18, 16, 17, 12, 11, 14, 16

80%
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

1990 1993 1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
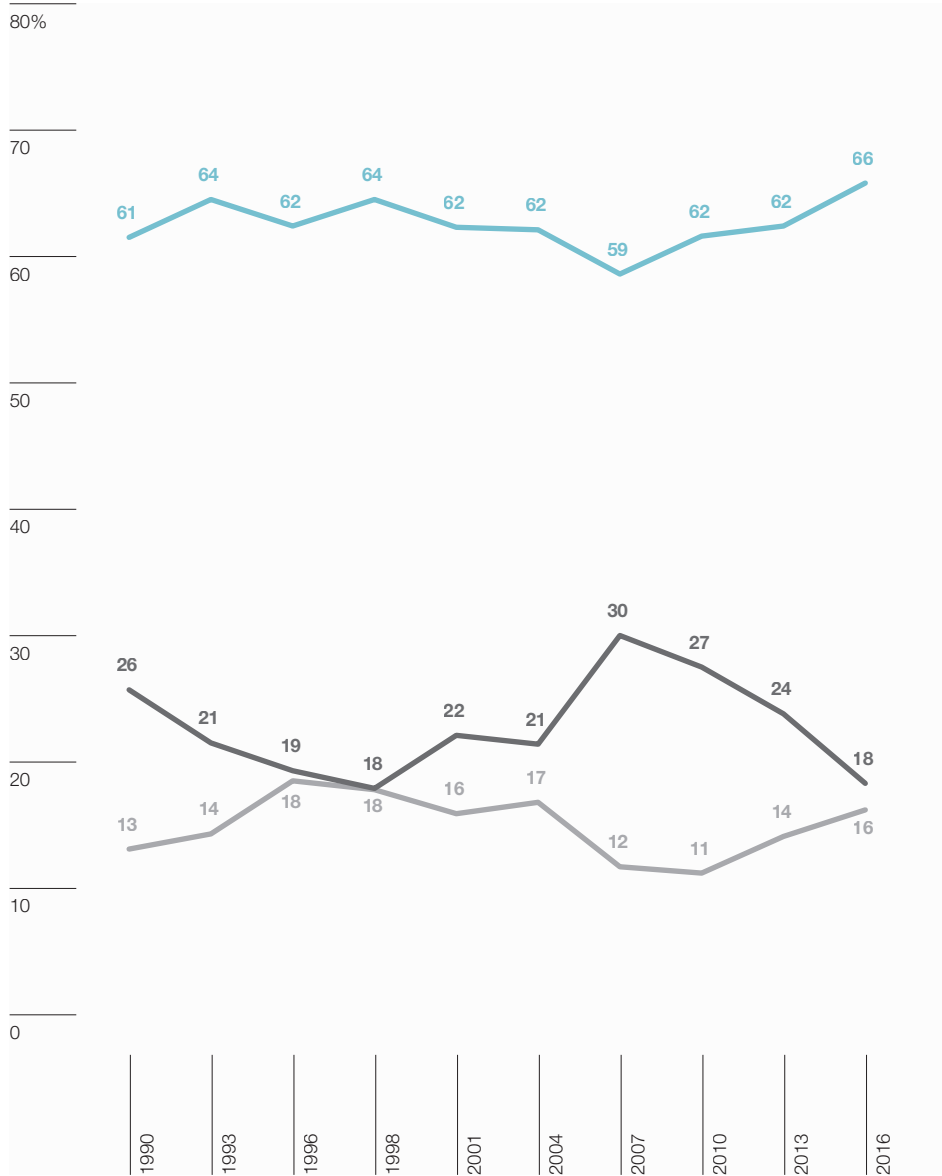
Threat of global warming

- **Serious threat**
- **Not a serious threat**

Serious threat: 55, 56, 62

Not a serious threat: 45, 44, 38

70%
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

2010 2013 2016

Notes

Attitudes towards nudity and sex in films and magazines
For nudity and sex in films and magazines gone too far, estimates for 1990–2016 combine 'gone much too far' and 'gone too far'. For nudity and sex in films and magazines not gone far enough, estimates for 1990–2016 combine 'not gone far enough' and 'not gone nearly far enough'.

Attitudes towards abortion
From 2010–2016 'Don't know' was included in the list of responses and percentages adjusted accordingly.

Attitudes towards the legal status of marijuana
For marijuana should not be a criminal offence, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For marijuana should be a criminal offence, estimates combine 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Attitudes towards jail sentences and capital punishment
For stiffer sentences for criminals, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For reintroduce death penalty for murder, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Attitudes towards policies on Indigenous Australians
For government help for Indigenous Australians gone too far, the estimates for 1993–2016 combine 'much too far' and 'too far'. For transfer of land rights to Indigenous Australians gone too far, the estimates for 1990–2016 combine 'much too far' and 'too far'. Transfer of land rights to Indigenous Australians was not included in 1993.

Attitudes towards gender equality
For equal opportunity for women gone too far, estimates combine 'much too far' and 'too far'. For women should be given preferential treatment, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For should increase business opportunities for women, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Attitudes towards asylum seeker arrivals by boat
For boats should be turned back, estimates combine ' strongly agree' and 'agree'. For boats should not be turned back, estimates combine 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'. This question was not included in 2007.

Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration
For equal opportunity for migrants gone too far, the response categories are (1990–2016) 'much too far' and 'too far'. For number of migrants allowed into Australia gone too far, the response categories are (1990–2016) 'much too far' and 'too far'.

Attitudes towards the level of immigration into Australia
For increase immigration, estimates combine 'increased a lot' and 'increased a little'. For keep immigration levels the same, estimates are for 'remain about the same'. For reduce immigration, estimates combine 'reduced a little' and 'reduced a lot'.

The consequences of immigration
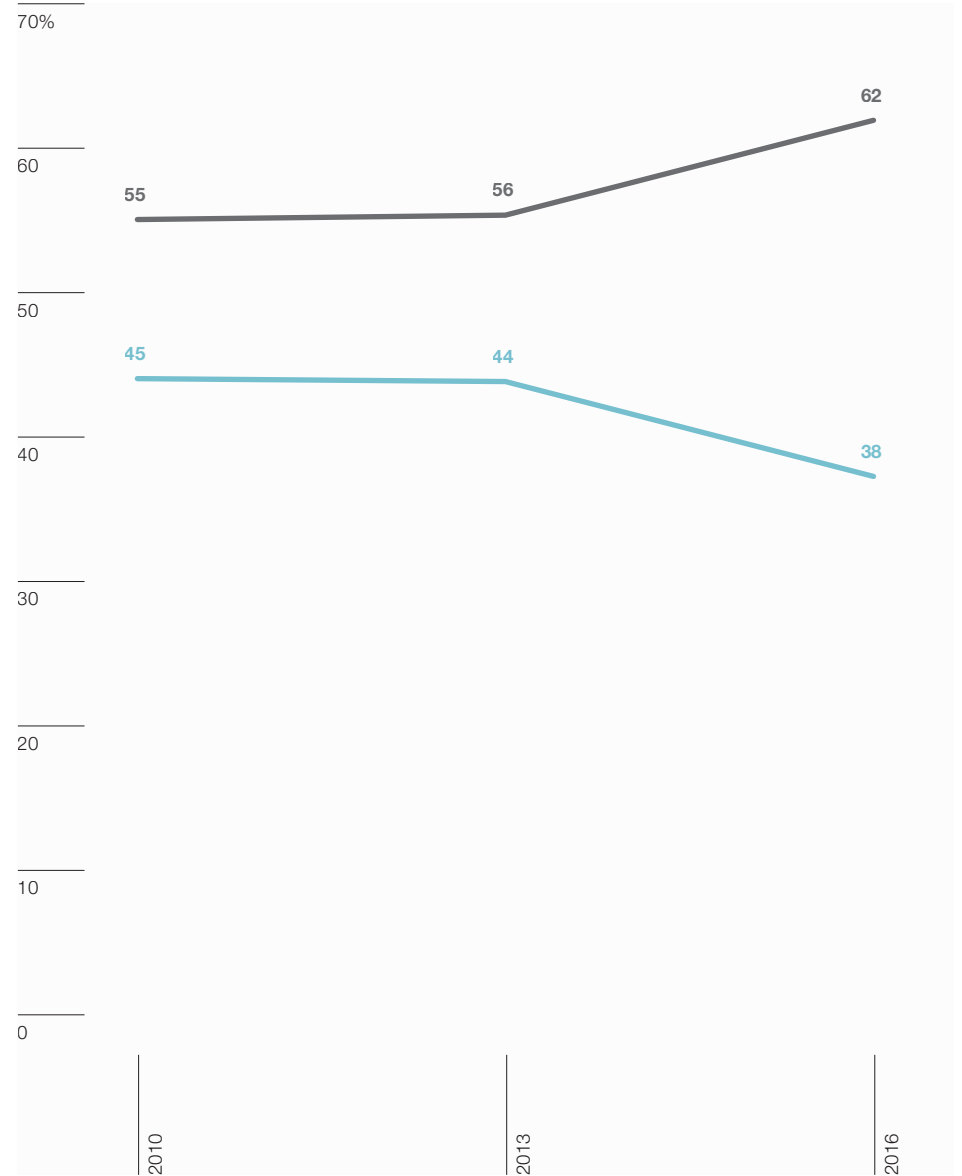For immigrants increase crime rate, immigrants good for economy, immigrants take jobs away from Australian born, immigrants make Australia more open to ideas and cultures, the response categories are (1996–2016) 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Threat of global warming
Question asks 'How serious a threat do you think global warming will pose to you or your way of life in your lifetime?' 'Serious threat' combines 'very serious' and 'fairly serious'. 'Not a serious threat' combines 'not very serious' and 'not at all serious'.

Attitudes towards Australia's defence capability

——— Australia able to defend itself if attacked
——— Australia's defence stronger than 10 years ago

70%
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

28
23
20
15
16
19
32
55
54
50
23
31
39
28
45
31

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
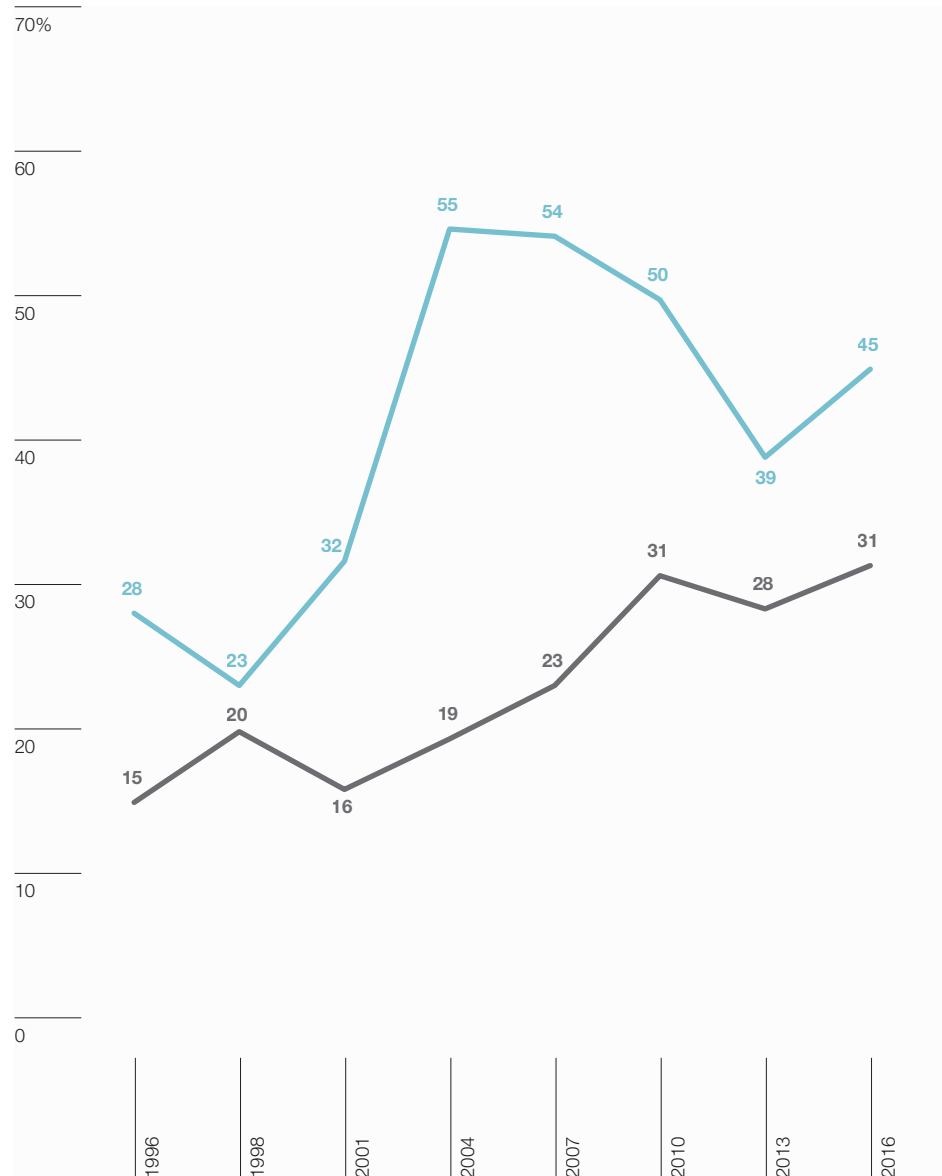
Support for war on terrorism

——— Agree
——— Disagree

80%
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

69
57
52
53
44
52
13
20
21
21
25
20

2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
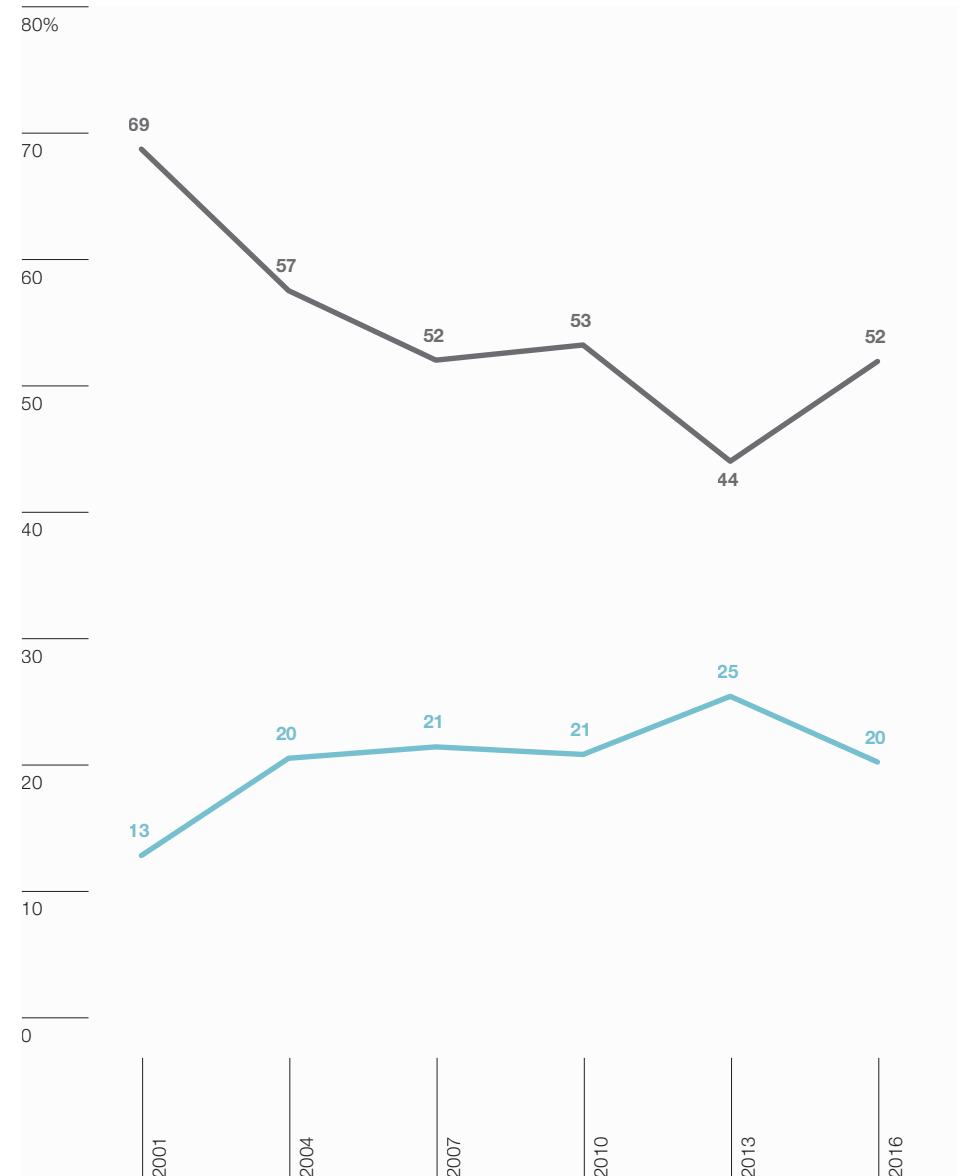
Indonesia as a security threat to Australia
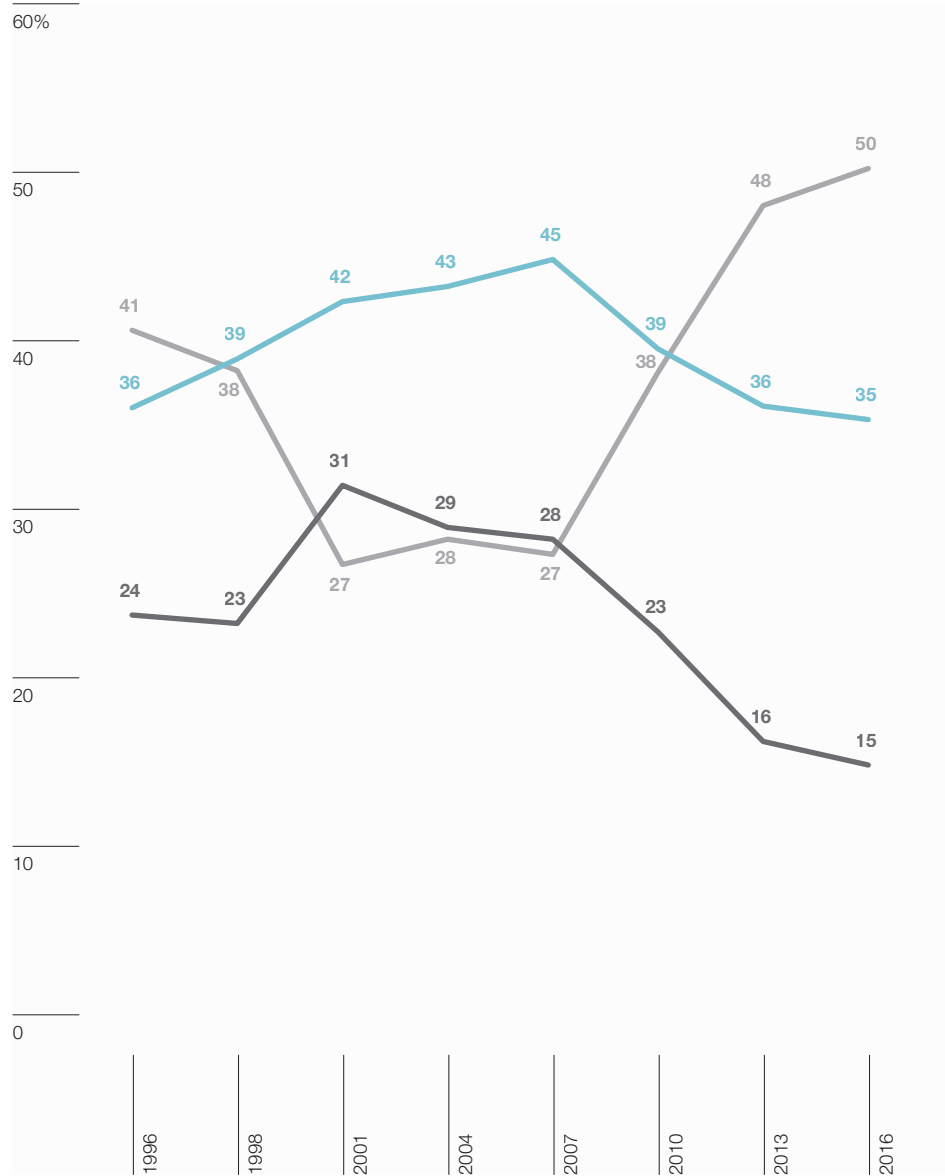
60%

50

41
36
39
38
42
43
45
31
29
28
39
38
48
50
24
23
27
28
27
36
35
23
16
15

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

108 Defence and foreign affairs

China as a security threat to Australia

— **Very likely**
— **Fairly likely**
— Not very likely

70%

61
58
54
48
44
49
41
40
38
33
32
35
42
42
38
41
19
14
9
8
10
15
14
18

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

109 Defence and foreign affairs

Japan as a security threat to Australia

- **Very likely**
- **Fairly likely**
- **Not very likely**

Not very likely: 68, 69, 80, 86, 82, 79, 81, 86

Fairly likely: 21, 21, 15, 10, 14, 17, 14, 11

Very likely: 11, 9, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3

100%
80
60
40
20
0

1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016

Malaysia as a security threat to Australia

- **Very likely**
- **Fairly likely**
- **Not very likely**

Not very likely: 66, 63, 65, 62, 66, 70, 76, 76

Fairly likely: 26, 30, 29, 31, 27, 24, 19, 19

Very likely: 8, 8, 7, 7, 7, 6, 6, 5

80%
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

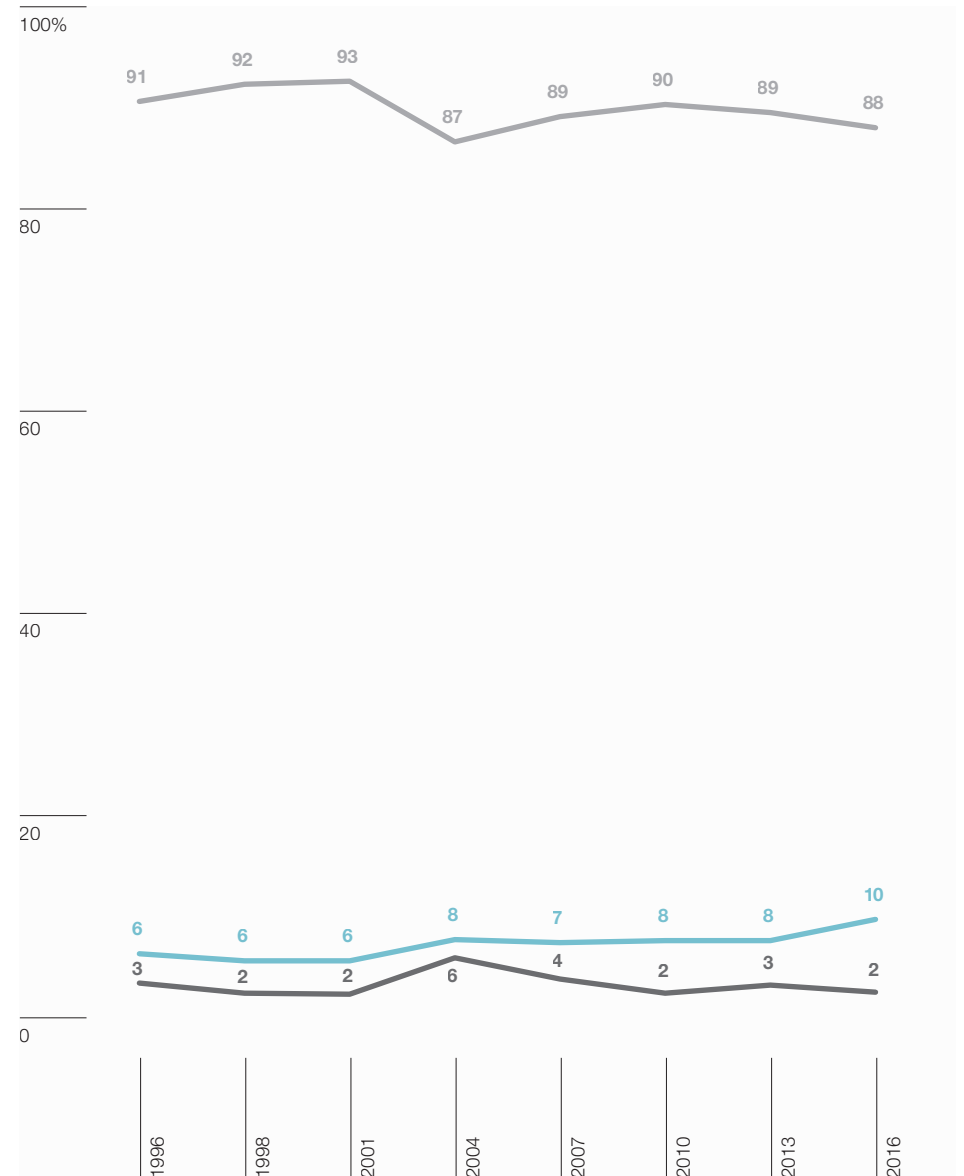1996 1998 2001 2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
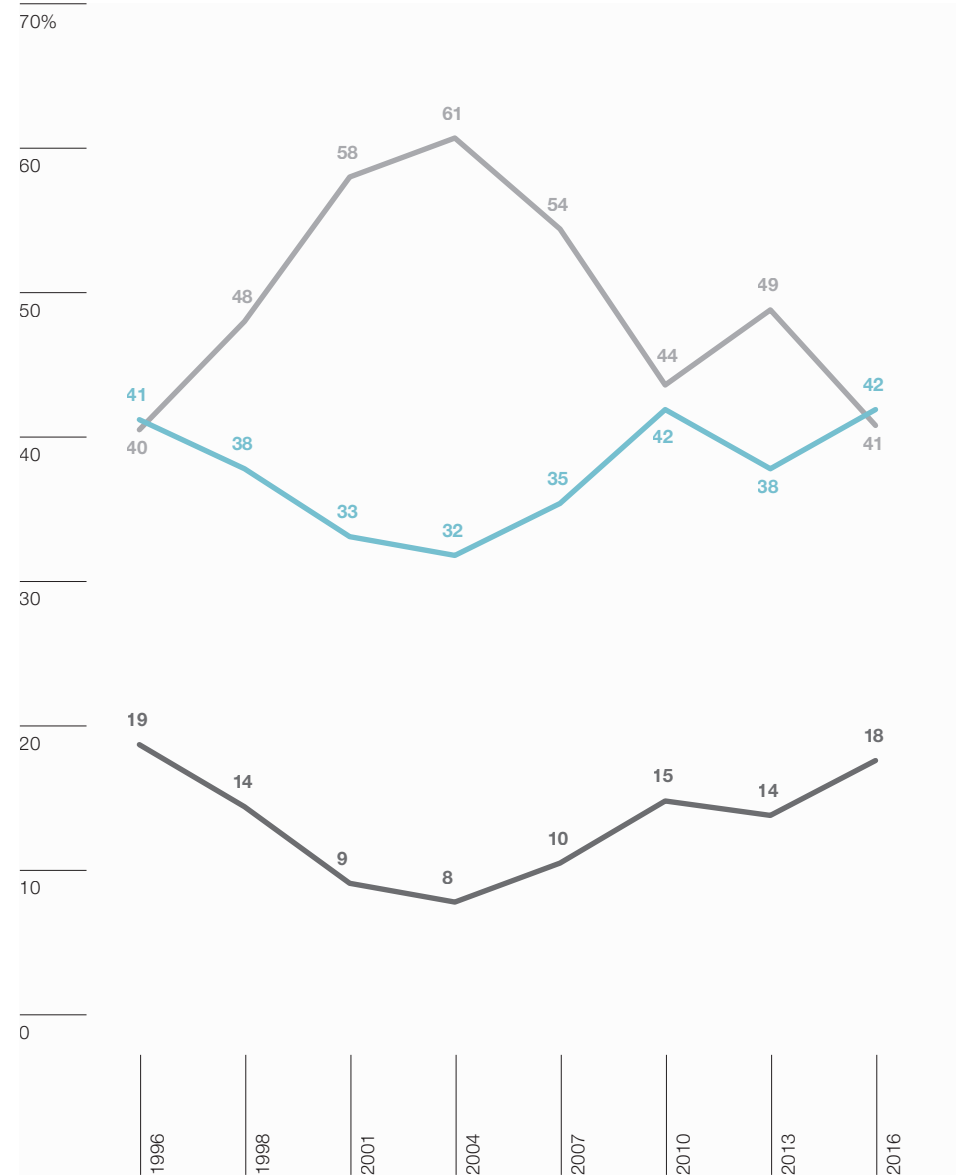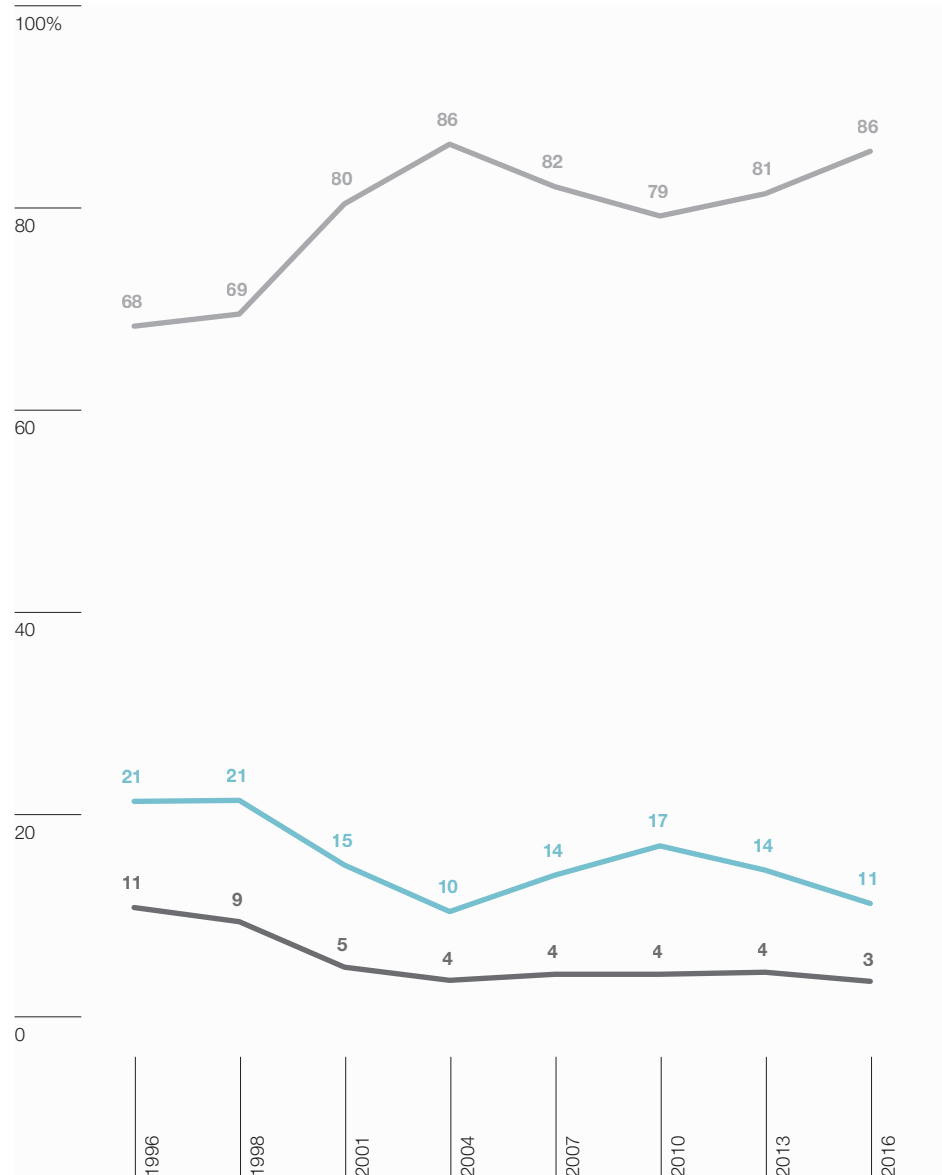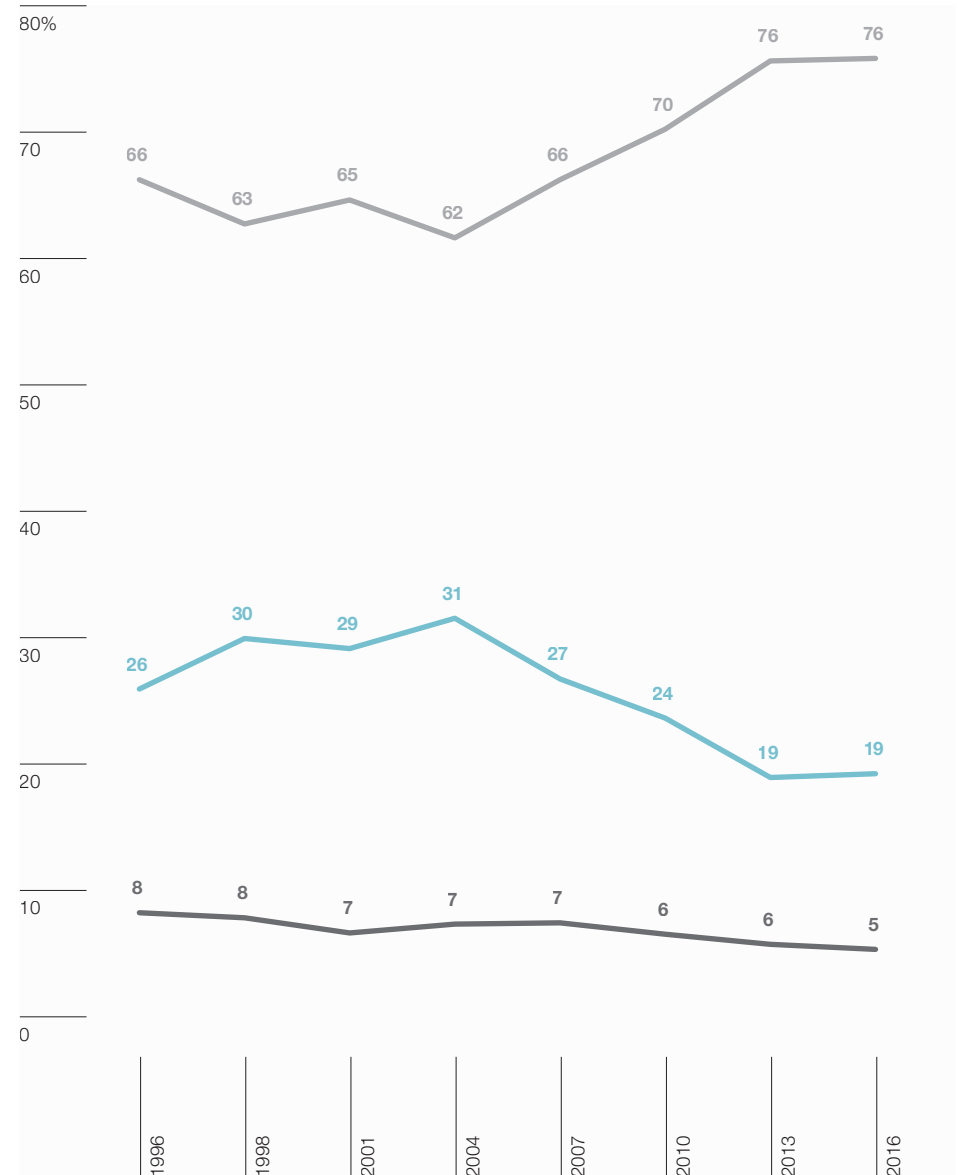
Vietnam as a security threat to Australia

— **Very likely**
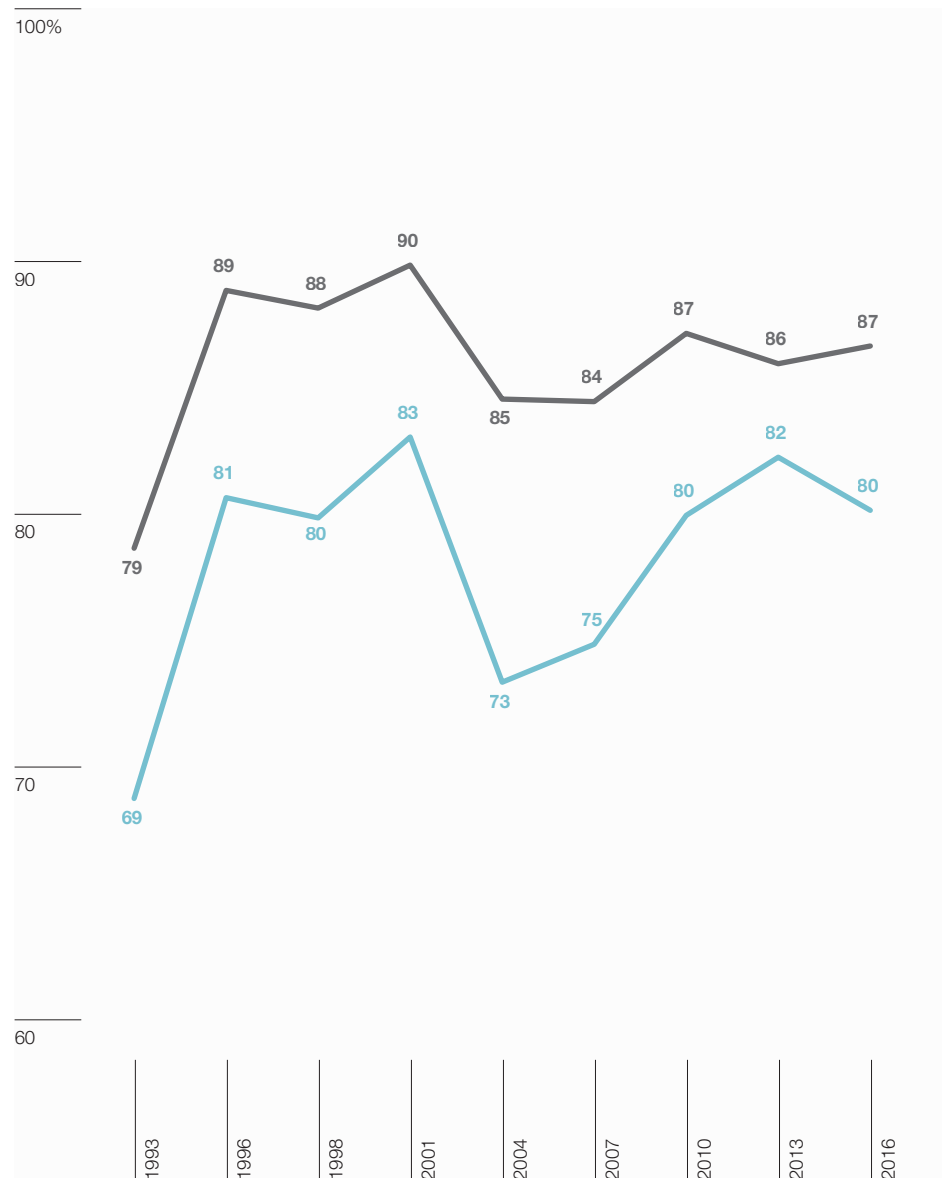— **Fairly likely**
— Not very likely
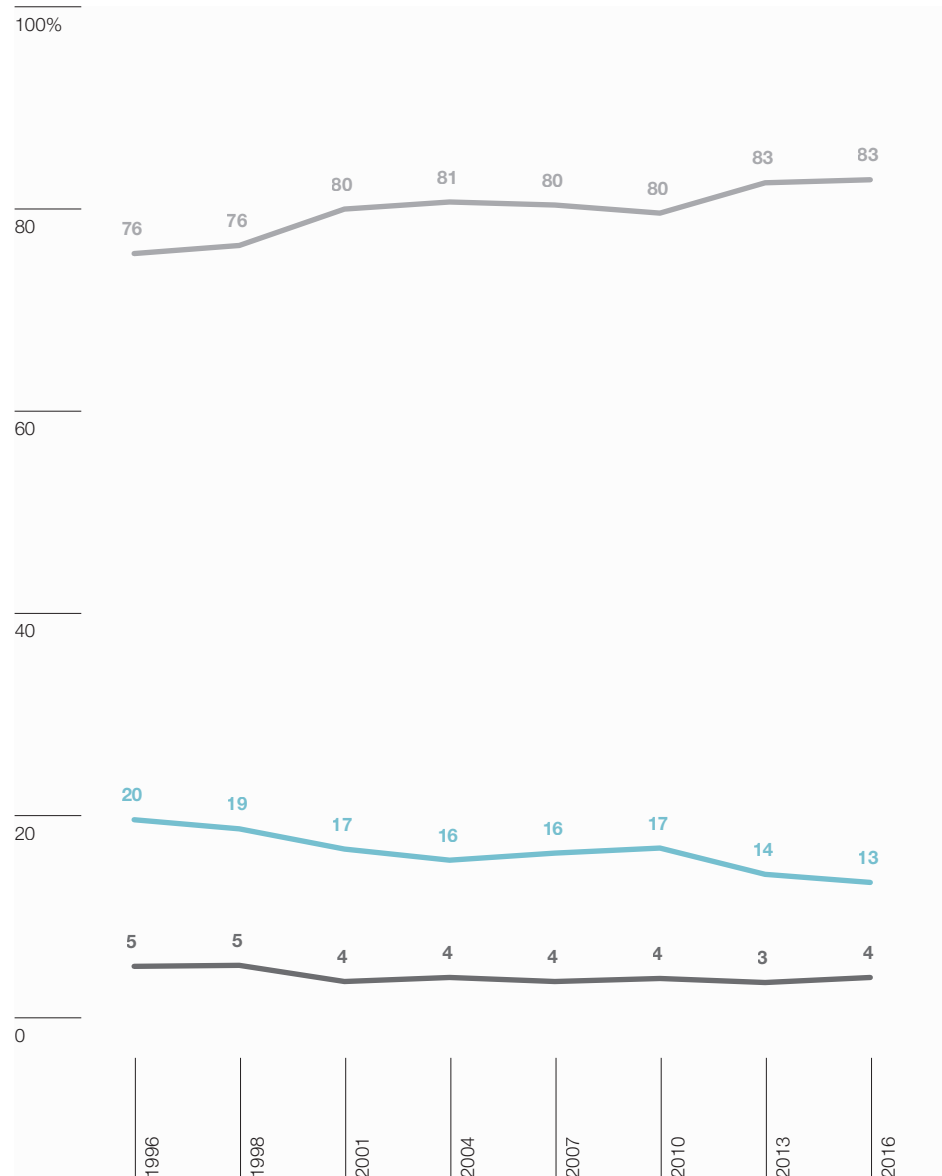
The United States as a security threat to Australia

— **Very likely**
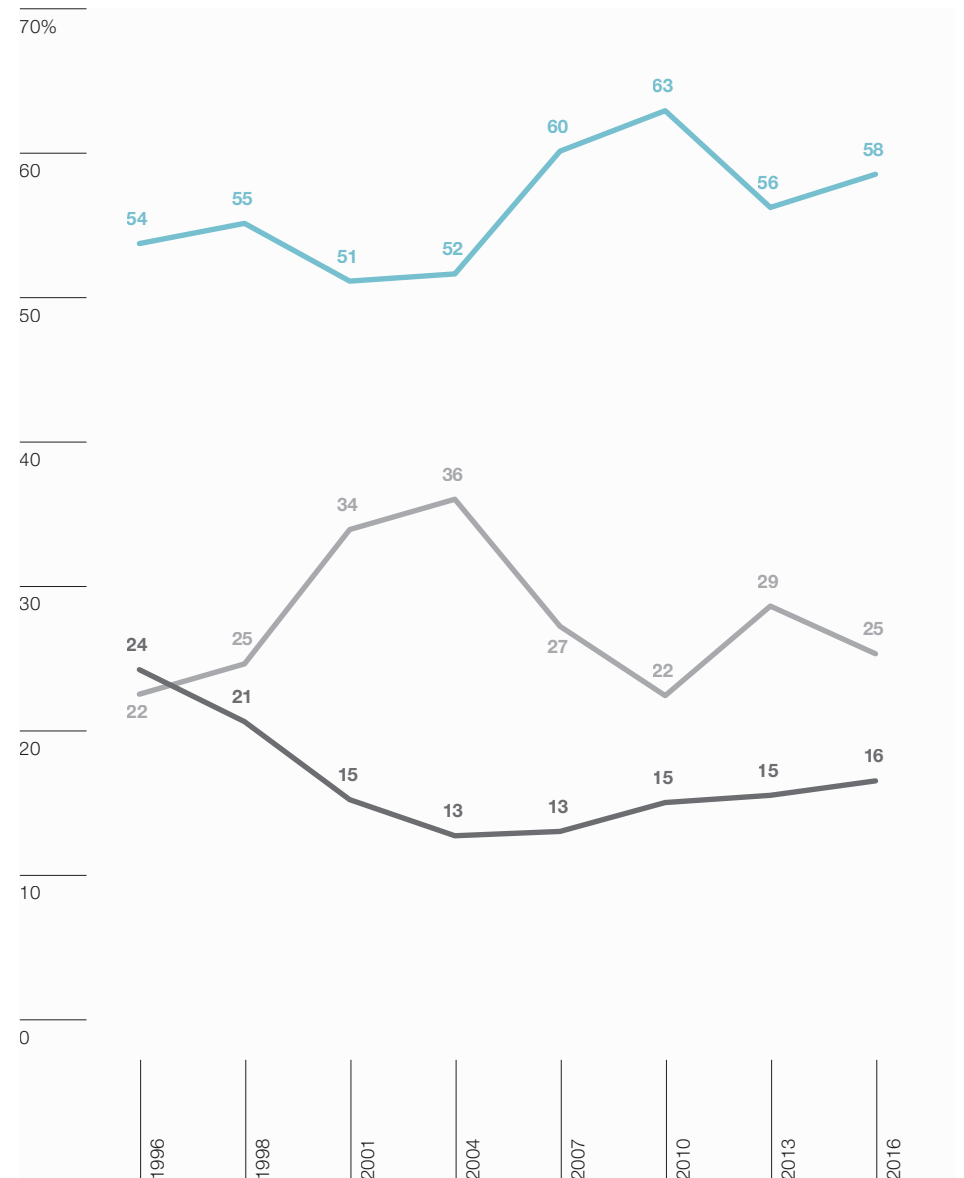— **Fairly likely**
— Not very likely

Attitudes towards defence links with the United States

- **United States alliance under ANZUS important**
- **Trust in the United States to come to Australia's defence**

Data points (United States alliance under ANZUS important): 79 (1993), 89 (1996), 88 (1998), 90 (2001), 85 (2004), 84 (2007), 87 (2010), 86 (2013), 87 (2016)

Data points (Trust in the United States to come to Australia's defence): 69 (1993), 81 (1996), 80 (1998), 83 (2001), 73 (2004), 75 (2007), 80 (2010), 82 (2013), 80 (2016)

Attitudes towards closer relations with Asia

- **Relations with Asia gone too far**
- **Relations with Asia about right**
- **Relations with Asia not gone far enough**

Data points (Relations with Asia about right): 54 (1996), 55 (1998), 51 (2001), 52 (2004), 60 (2007), 63 (2010), 56 (2013), 58 (2016)

Data points (Relations with Asia not gone far enough): 22 (1996), 25 (1998), 34 (2001), 36 (2004), 27 (2007), 22 (2010), 29 (2013), 25 (2016)

Data points (Relations with Asia gone too far): 24 (1996), 21 (1998), 15 (2001), 13 (2004), 13 (2007), 15 (2010), 15 (2013), 16 (2016)

Attitudes towards more trade relations with Asia

- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree

Agree:
- 1993: 69
- 1996: 66
- 1998: 55
- 2001: 57
- 2004: 63
- 2007: 57
- 2010: 67
- 2013: 71
- 2016: 62

Not sure:
- 1993: 24
- 1996: 26
- 1998: 30
- 2001: 33
- 2004: 28
- 2007: 20
- 2010: 26
- 2013: 22
- 2016: 29

Disagree:
- 1993: 8
- 1996: 8
- 1998: 15
- 2001: 11
- 2004: 9
- 2007: 23
- 2010: 7
- 2013: 7
- 2016: 9
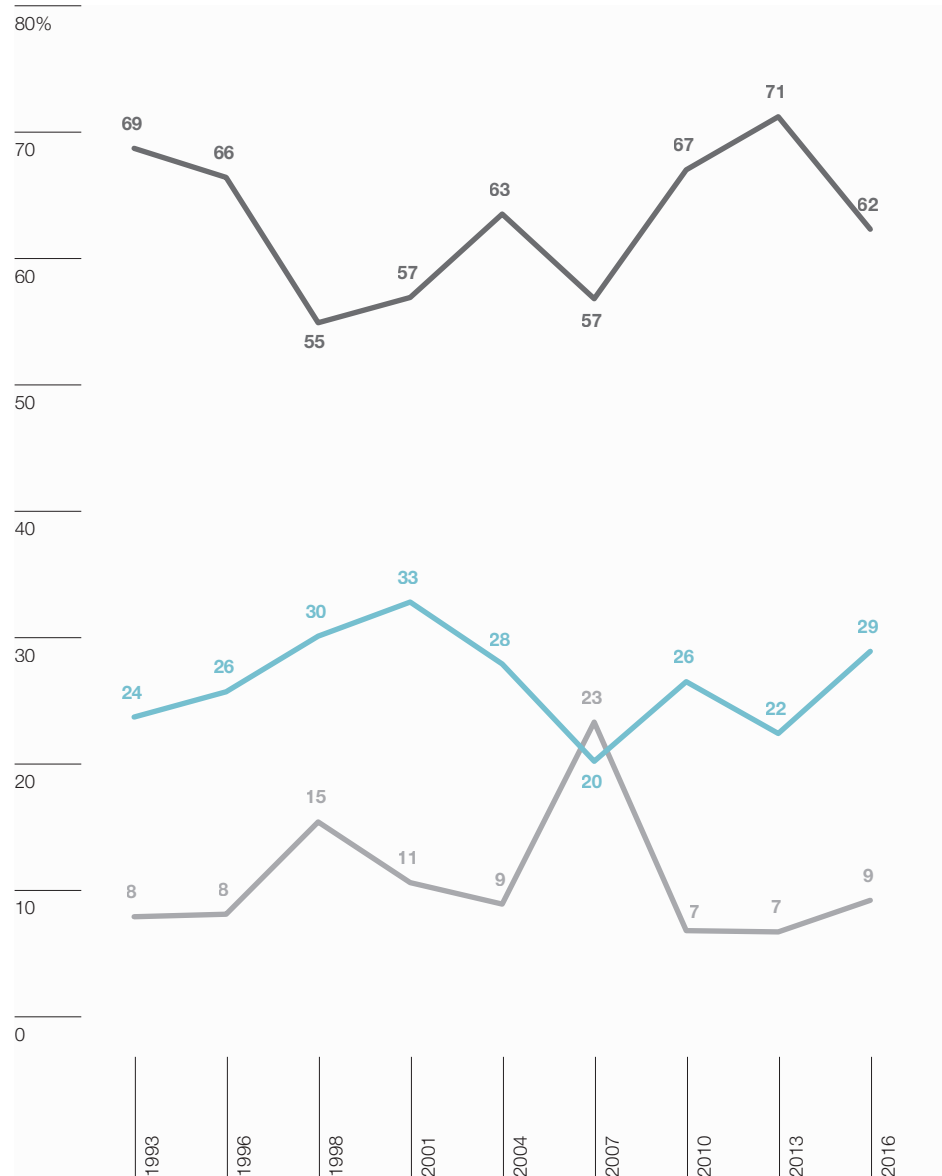
Notes

Attitudes towards Australia's defence capability
For Australia able to defend itself if attacked and Australia's defence stronger than 10 years ago, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Support for war on terrorism
Question asks whether 'Australia should provide military assistance for the war on terrorism'. 'Agree' combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. 'Disagree' combines 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'.

Attitudes towards defence links with the United States
For United States alliance under ANZUS important, estimates combine 'very important' and 'fairly important'. For trust in the United States to come to Australia's defence, estimates combine 'a great deal' and 'a fair amount'.

Attitudes towards closer relations with Asia
For relations with Asia gone too far, estimates combine 'gone much too far' and 'gone too far'. For relations with Asia not gone far enough, estimates combine 'not gone far enough' and 'not gone nearly far enough'.

Attitudes towards more trade relations with Asia
Question asks whether 'Australia's trading future lies in Asia'. For agree, estimates combine 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. For disagree, estimates combine 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

Appendix: Methodology

The Australian Election Study (AES) surveys are designed to collect data during federal elections for academic research on Australian electoral behaviour and public opinion. Since 1998 the AES has been a member of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) group (see www.cses.org). The AES commenced operation in 1987 (although three academic surveys of political behaviour were collected in 1967, 1969 and 1979, respectively, but they are not strictly speaking election surveys).

The AES routinely collects data among a nationally representative sample of voters and among major party candidates standing for election. Both the voter and candidate instruments combine a common set of questions. The AES is mounted as a collaborative exercise between several Australian universities. The 1987 and 1990 surveys were funded by a consortium of universities and the 2007 survey by ANU; all of the intervening and subsequent surveys have been funded by the Australian Research Council. Each of the eleven surveys conducted to date has had a central theme:

1987
The economy

1990
The environment and environmentalism

1993
Political culture

1996
National identity and citizenship

1998
Constitution, rights and minorities

1999
Constitutional referendum

2001
Challenges to governance

2004
The decline of political parties

2007
Democracy and representation

2010
The dynamics of political choice.

2013
Volatility and electoral change

2016
Political engagement among the young

Australian Election Study Overview, 1987–2016

Year	Principal investigators	Funder	Study number
1987	Ian McAllister, Anthony Mughan	University of NSW, ANU	ASSDA 445
1990	Ian McAllister, Roger Jones, David Gow	University of NSW, ANU	ASSDA 570
1993	Roger Jones, Ian McAllister, David Denemark, David Gow	ARC/ A79131812	ASSDA 763
1996	Roger Jones, Ian McAllister, David Gow	ARC/ A79530652	ASSDA 943
1998	Clive Bean, David Gow, Ian McAllister	ARC/A79804144	ASSDA 1001
1999	David Gow, Clive Bean, Ian McAllister	ARC/ A79937265	ASSDA 1018
2001	Clive Bean, David Gow, Ian McAllister	ARC/ A00106341	ASSDA 1048
2004	Clive Bean, Ian McAllister, Rachel Gibson, David Gow	ARC/ DP0452898	ASSDA 1079
2007	Clive Bean, Ian McAllister, Rachel Gibson, David Gow	ACPSRI/ACSR	ASSDA 1120
2010	Clive Bean, Ian McAllister, Rachel Gibson, Juliet Pietsch	ARC/DP1094626	ASSDA 1228
2013	Clive Bean, Ian McAllister, Juliet Pietsch, Rachel Gibson	ARC/ DP120103941	ADA 1259
2016	Ian McAllister, Clive Bean, Toni Makkai, Rachel Gibson	ARC/ DP160101501	ADA 01365

>

ada.edu.au

All of the data are publicly available from australianelectionstudy.org as well as from the Australian Data Archive (ada.edu.au). In the case of the candidate data, demographic variables are removed so that individual respondents cannot be identified.

Voters

All the studies are national, post-election self-completion surveys. The 1987–2013 surveys were based on samples drawn randomly from the electoral register. The 2016 survey used a split sample method, with half of the sample coming from the electoral register, and half using the Geo-Coded National Address File (G-NAF). The 1993 AES oversampled in some of the smaller states and because of this the sample was weighted down to a national sample of 2,388 respondents. The overall response rates have varied, and are listed below. In 2001 and 2004 an online survey was conducted in parallel with the regular AES. In 2010, 2013 and 2016 an online option was available to the survey respondents, and in 2013 an additional sample was collected online in order to correct for an under-representation of younger voters. The 1993, 2010, 2013 and 2016 surveys are weighted to reflect the characteristics of the national electorate.

Candidates

The Australian Candidates Study (ACS) surveys are conducted in parallel with the surveys of voters. In 1987 all candidates for the House of Representatives and Senate were sampled. Since 1990 the surveys have been restricted to samples of all major party candidates, plus identifiable Greens and other environmental candidates. This restriction was designed to cut costs, since about half of the total number of candidates were minor party or independent candidates, almost all of whom lost their deposits. In 1993 the criteria were broadened to include other candidates whom it was anticipated would obtain more than 10 per cent of the first preference vote.

> Full technical details of the sampling methodology is available in the survey codebooks, available at www.australianelectionstudy.org.

Australian Election Study voter response rates, 1987–2016

Year	Total sample	Valid response	Effective response (%)
1987	3,061	1,825	62.8
1990	3,606	2,020	58.0
1993	4,950	3,023	62.8
1996	3,000	1,795	61.8
1998	3,502	1,896	57.7
2001	4,000	2,010	55.4
2004	4,250	1,769	44.5
2007	5,000	1,873	40.2
2010	5,200	2,061	41.9
2013	12,200	3,955	33.9
2016	12,497	2,818	22.5

The response rate is estimated as: valid responses /(total sample–moved or gone away). The 2010 response rate is the figure for the initial self-completion sample.

Australian Candidate Survey response rates, 1987–2016

Year	Election candidates			Australian Candidate Study		
	House of Representatives	Senate	Total	Total contacted	Valid response	Effective response (%)
1987	613	255	868	868	612	70.5
1990	782	223	1,005	631	410	65.0
1993	943	266	1,209	593	415	70.0
1996	908	255	1,163	672	427	63.5
2001	1,039	285	1,324	840	477	56.8
2004	1,091	330	1,421	998	535	53.6
2007	1,054	367	1,421	952	470	49.9
2010	849	349	1,198	543	247	45.5
2013	1,188	529	1,717	556	192	34.5
2016	994	631	1,625	591	182	30.8

The 1987 and 2016 elections were double dissolution elections for the Senate. Other elections are half-Senate.
The response rate is estimated as valid responses/total contacted.

australianelectionstudy.org

> Access complete data files and
documentation to conduct your
own analysis

> Download a PDF of this report
including a full online appendix with
question wording and data tables

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