

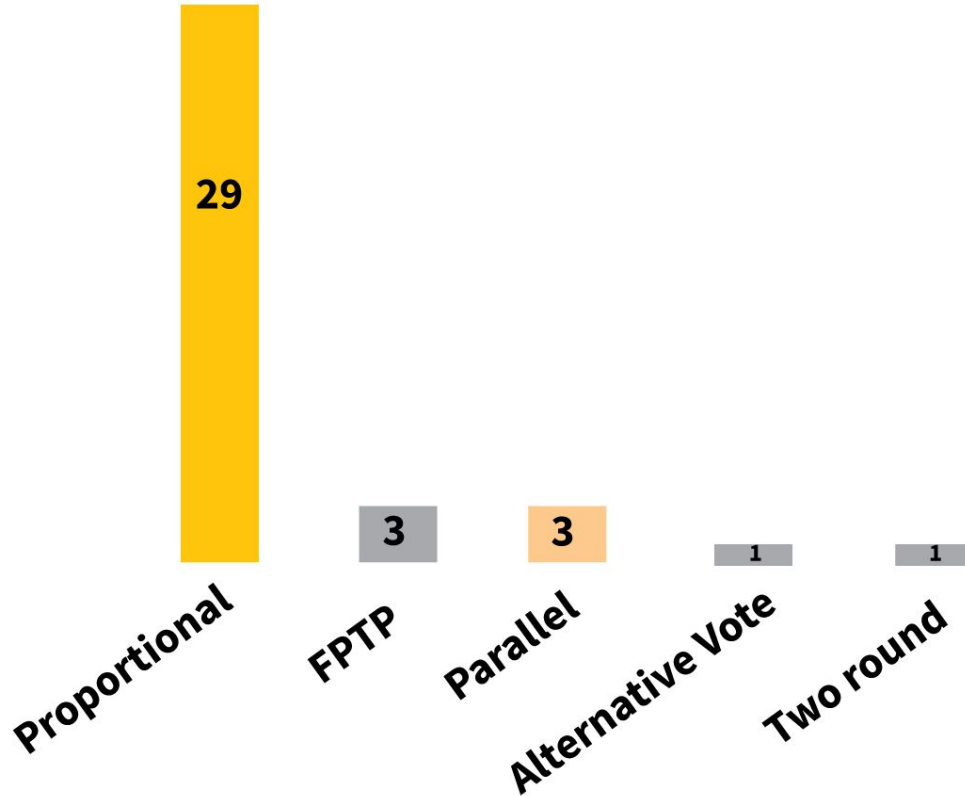
Informed decision-making on electoral reform

A look at
the research

What will be covered in this presentation

- A closer look at referendums
- The evidence for Citizens' Assemblies
- Recommendations

Electoral systems in use in OECD countries



**Only 2 of 29 used
a referendum to
adopt PR**

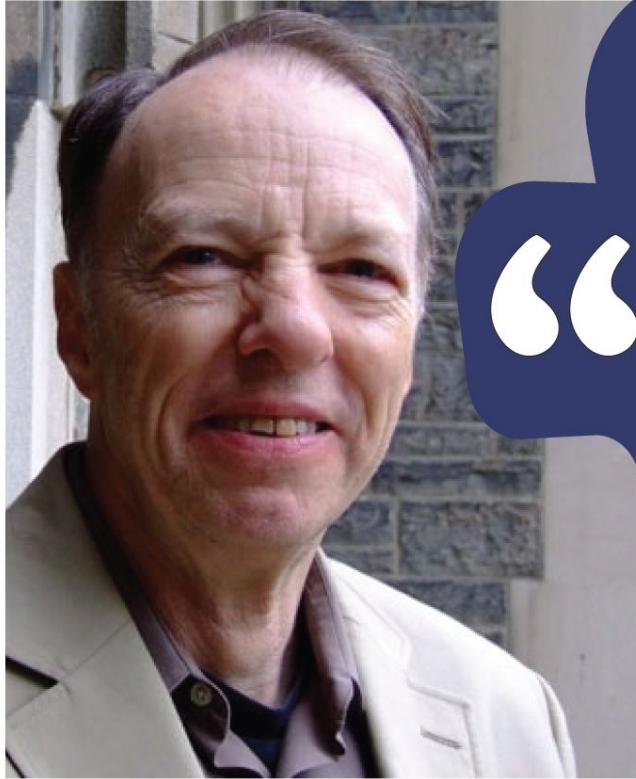


“

A referendum is not necessarily a politically neutral choice.

”

Associate Professor Yasmin Dawood, Canada Research Chair in Democracy, Constitutionalism, and Electoral Law, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto. Testifying to the federal electoral reform committee in 2016.



“

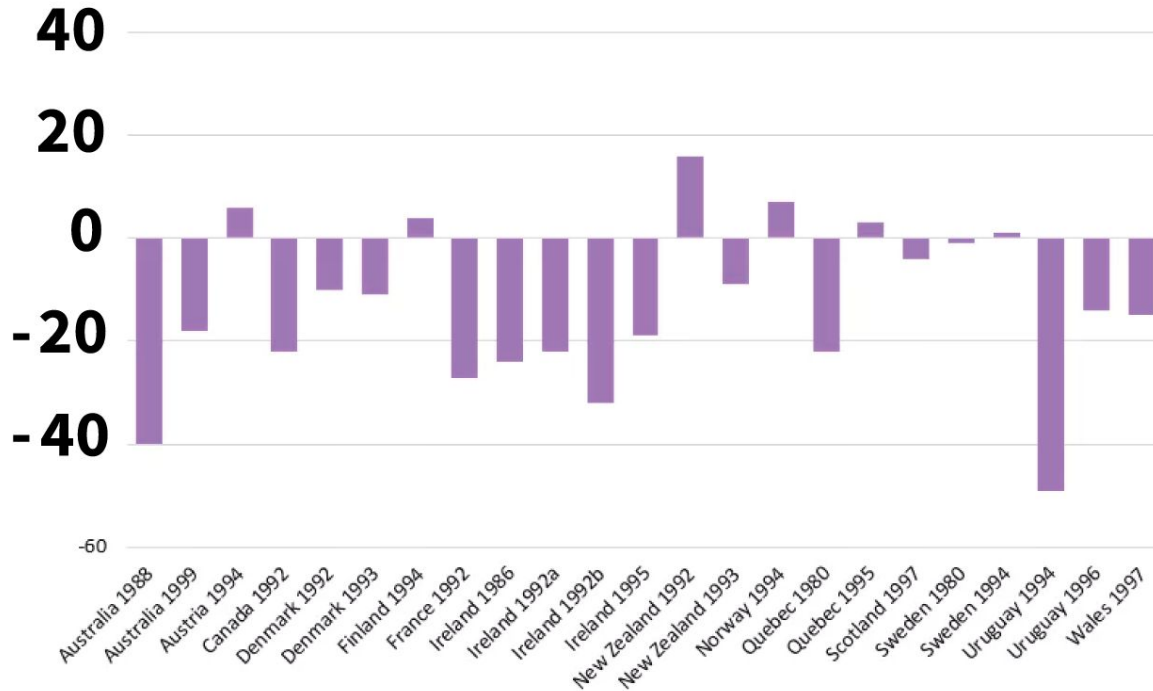
While democratic values may dictate a view that “the voters are always right”, it appears increasingly to be the case that institutions that are intended to provide solutions to difficult problems may just as readily act to block them. The “playing field” in many referendum campaigns is far from level. The NO side possesses a powerful advantage, while the YES forces tend to face an uphill struggle.

”

Lawrence LeDuc

TREMENDOUS ADVANTAGE OF THE NO SIDE

Support for YES in the vote compared with a poll taken one month earlier (Leduc)



TREMENDOUS ADVANTAGE OF THE NO SIDE

Data considering referendums since 2000 shows the same pattern (Renwick).
Support for YES in the vote compared with an average of polls conducted between six months and one month previously.



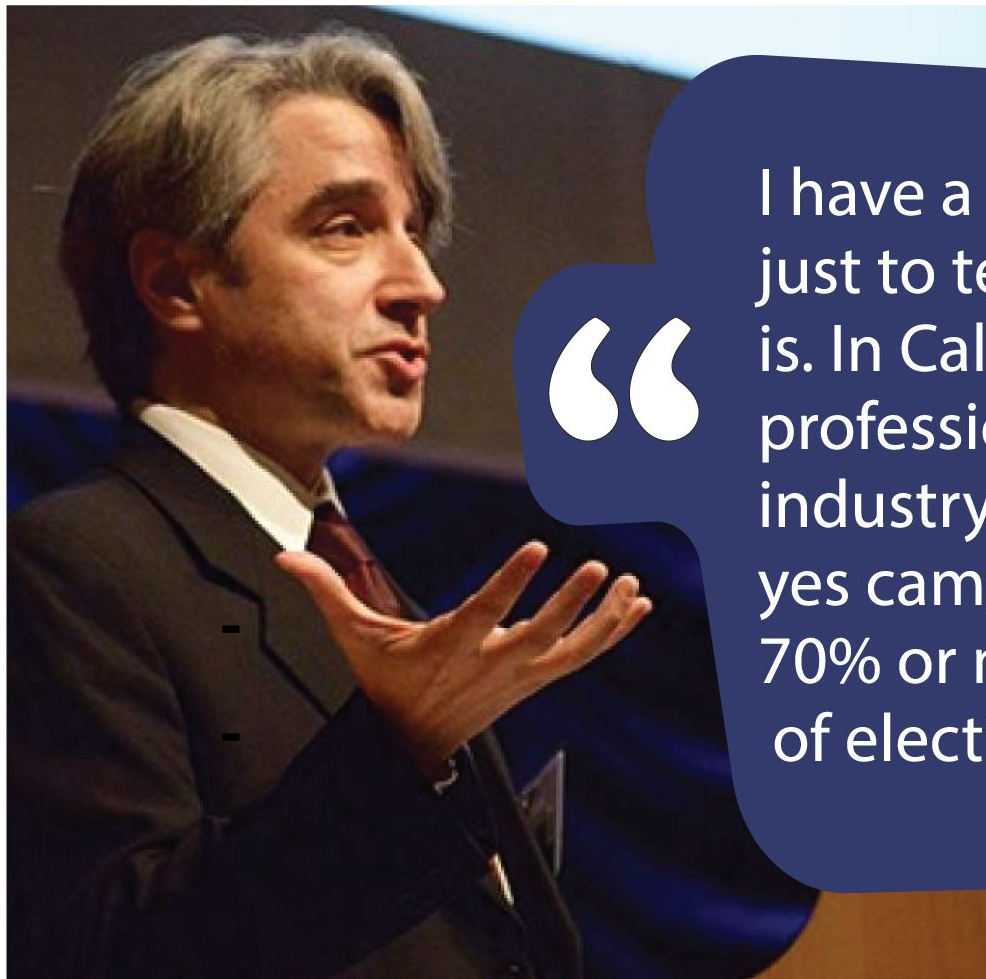


“

In a referendum if you don't leave the gate with at least 70, 80% support, you're unlikely to be successful because whatever you put forward will be under criticism from all the other players and it inevitably loses steam.

”

Frank Graves
President, EKOS Research



“

I have a statistic that I use just to tell you how skewed this is. In California, where there's a professional referendum industry, most will not touch a yes campaign unless it's polling 70% or more a year in advance of election day.

”

Arthur Lupia

THE CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP

STRATEGY | DIGITAL | MAIL | TRAINING

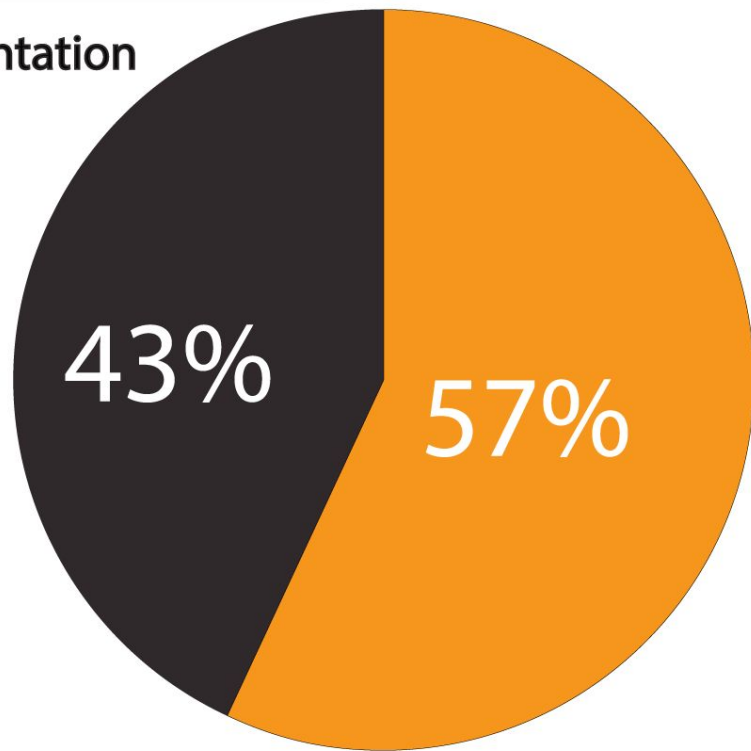
“ If your proposed ballot measure doesn't have at least 70% support, with a good 55% of that being strong support...don't waste your time and money. A losing ballot measure does not make for a good voter education tool. ”

WHERE IS THE YES SIDE STARTING FROM?

Support for principle of proportional representation

BC, ANGUS REID, MAY 2018

"Based on what you know, please indicate which of these two broad options you prefer for B.C."



 A new system of proportional representation

 The current first past the post system

WHY THE NO SIDE ADVANTAGE: THE RESEARCH

The “no” side has a huge advantage, **regardless of the legislation.** This is true throughout the world. You're running against change, and people don't know what life is going to be like under that change. **A typical no campaign is when you think about a worst-case scenario, and you make the whole campaign about that.**

With a “yes” campaign, you have to describe this new world and convince people that even though there are scary possibilities, their life is going to be better.

- Arthur Lupia

RESEARCH: ADVANTAGE OF THE NO SIDE



Referendum becomes about something not on the ballot



Misinformation campaigns



Party divisions



Media bias



Low information

	Second order effects	Party divisions	Low info	Misinfo	Media bias
PEI 2005 (MMP) 36%		✓	✓		
ON 2007 (MMP) 37%		✓	✓	✓	✓
BC 2009 (STV) 39%		✓	✓	✓	✓
UK 2011 (AV) 32%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BC 2018 (2-part) 39%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PEI 2019 (MMP) 48%		✓	✓	✓	

ISSUES NOT ON THE BALLOT DRIVE THE VOTE

In the UK, the NO campaign focused on dislike for Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg and his party's policies. Lib Dems are a small party.

A similar tactic was used successfully in BC to suggest a YES vote would mean the Greens would hold the balance of power indefinitely.

AV LEADS TO BROKEN PROMISES

Nick Clegg is unpopular because he broke his promises:

- job cuts
- VAT increase
- tuition fees
- public spending cuts

That's why he's pushing for AV to save his party. One of his top MPs described it as 'a shield against the unpopularity we would suffer.'

AV would give the Lib Dems extra seats. That would mean more hung parliaments in which the Lib Dems get to choose who forms a government – by making back-room deals after the election's over.

The only vote that would count under AV would be Nick Clegg's.



Promoted by William Norton on behalf of NO Campaign Ltd, both of 3 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SP and printed by Innovative Output Solutions Limited, Evolution House, Choate Road, Dagenham RM9 6BP. The paper used comes from responsible sources.

ISSUES NOT ON THE BALLOT DRIVE THE VOTE



**She needs a
maternity unit
~~NOT~~
an alternative
voting system.**

Say NO to spending £250million on AV.

Our country can't afford it. ~~NO to AV~~

ISSUES NOT ON THE BALLOT DRIVE THE VOTE

The Province

IS
DAVID EBY
TRYING TO
MANIPULATE
YOU?

British Columbians deserve a referendum process that is transparent, free of bias, and that doesn't favour a particular outcome.

FAIR
referendum

www.FairReferendum.com

"NDP stacks expert panel on electoral reform"

- Vaughn Palmer, Nov 23/17

Todd Stone
October 28, 2018 · 🌐

Another article that outlines how this entire referendum has been engineered so the NDP get the result they want - all to pay off the Greens. Please SHARE this post to help get this message out, especially for those of us who live in the Interior and Northern BC.

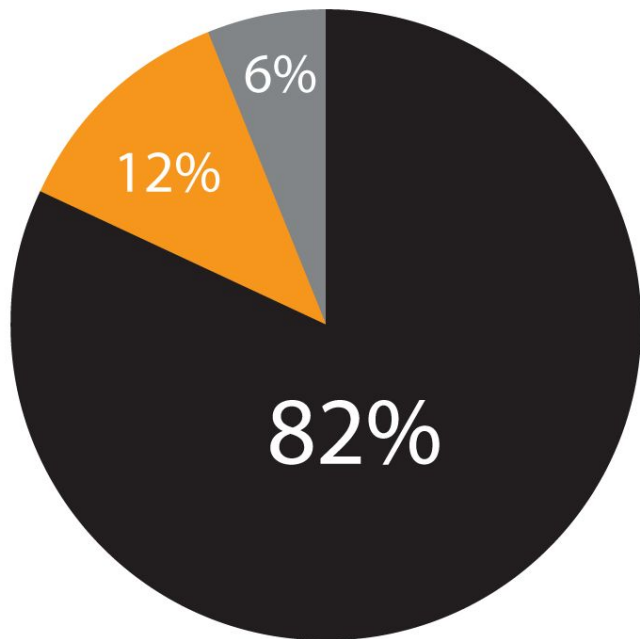
PARTISANSHIP AS A PRIMARY DRIVER

Partisanship is the **strongest predictor** of votes in referendums in California at both the aggregate and individual levels... **With governance-related questions, partisan voters are particularly able to respond to their party's interest over the course of a campaign.**

Smith and Colbert, "Partisanship and Ballot Initiatives in California"

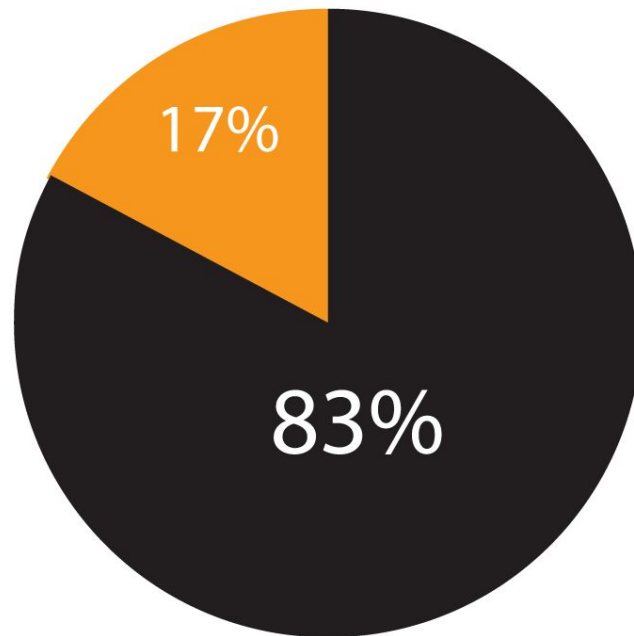
PARTISANSHIP AS A PRIMARY DRIVER

BC Referendum 2018 - Lib voters



YES NO DIDN'T VOTE

UK Referendum 2011 - Con voters



YES NO

MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS



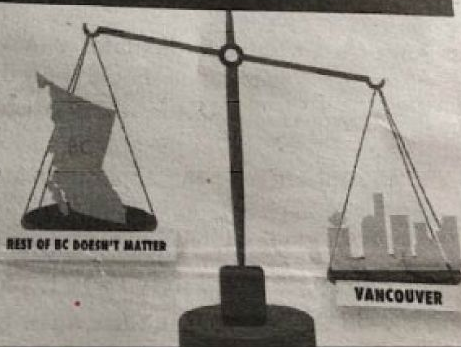
MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

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TIME TO SAY FAREWELL TO YOUR LOCAL MLA

With Proportional Representation,
the population concentration would ensure
Vancouver sets the agenda for all of BC.

Proportional
Representation
strips many rural
communities of their
locally-elected MLAs,
giving them no voice
in government or
the decision-making
process.



VOTE NO
TO PRO-REP

**KEEP OUR
ELECTORAL PROCESS
SIMPLE, STABLE
+ SUCCESSFUL**

NoBCProRep.ca
Authorized by
No Proportional Representation Society of BC,
Registered Opponent,
PO Box 71014, 3552 West 41st Ave



MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS



WHY YOU NEED TO SAY **NO** TO PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

The NDP and the Green Party have created a rigged referendum.

Everything decided in secret.

Unfair rules make it easier for prop-rep to pass.

Why? So that the NDP and Greens can lock themselves into power.

Under prop-rep, our current riding boundaries will be replaced by huge electoral districts with politically appointed MLAs that don't know you or your community.

免費網站獲得更多資料
www.bcliberals.com/proportional-representation



- 新民主黨和綠黨秘密預設公投規則，讓比例代表制容易通過，這樣他們可以繼續執政。
- 新民主黨和綠黨完全沒有提供三個比例代表制投票模式的資料，卻要選民背書空頭支票。
- 在比例代表制下，卑詩省的省選會更加頻密，政黨之間會出現幕後交易，並出現更多單一議題（如反移民、鼓吹大麻）的選綠政黨，造成政局和經濟不穩，早晚會像歐洲一些國家每一至兩年舉行選舉，勞民傷財。
- 選區範圍擴大，選民對選區劃分和議員人數毫不知情。而政黨還會空降省議員，他們並不熟悉您的社區。

加入我們共同捍衛現有選舉制度
www.bcliberals.com/noproprep

不想卑詩省永無寧日
不想陷入無政府狀態
不想被迫逃離家園

向比例代表制說：

不

SAY NO TO PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

卑詩正處於危急存亡之際
何去何從？由你決定！



BC is at a crossroads

“Don't want BC to never have peaceful days

Don't want to fall into anarchy

Don't want to be forced to flee your homes”

10-year study on false information



False information reaches **many more people**, penetrates **deeper** into the **social network**, and spreads much faster than true stories. For example, **falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted than the truth**, and reach their first 1,500 people six times faster. These effects were especially pronounced for **political** posts.

2020: Biggest study ever on the spread of false information by social media. Looked 126,000 stories distributed on Twitter by 3 million people from 2006 to 2017.

Those who voted NO did so based on misinformation

Exit Poll, BC 2018

RESEARCH
Co.

“Affected my decision a little or a lot”

MLAs might be appointed from party lists

53%

Voters from rural areas might lose
local representation

45%

The government might have rigged the
process for partisan gain

41%

10-year study on false information

“ False information online is often really **novel** and **frequently negative**. We know those are two features of information generally that grab our attention as human beings and that cause us to want to **share** that information with others—we’re attentive to novel threats and especially attentive to negative threats. ”

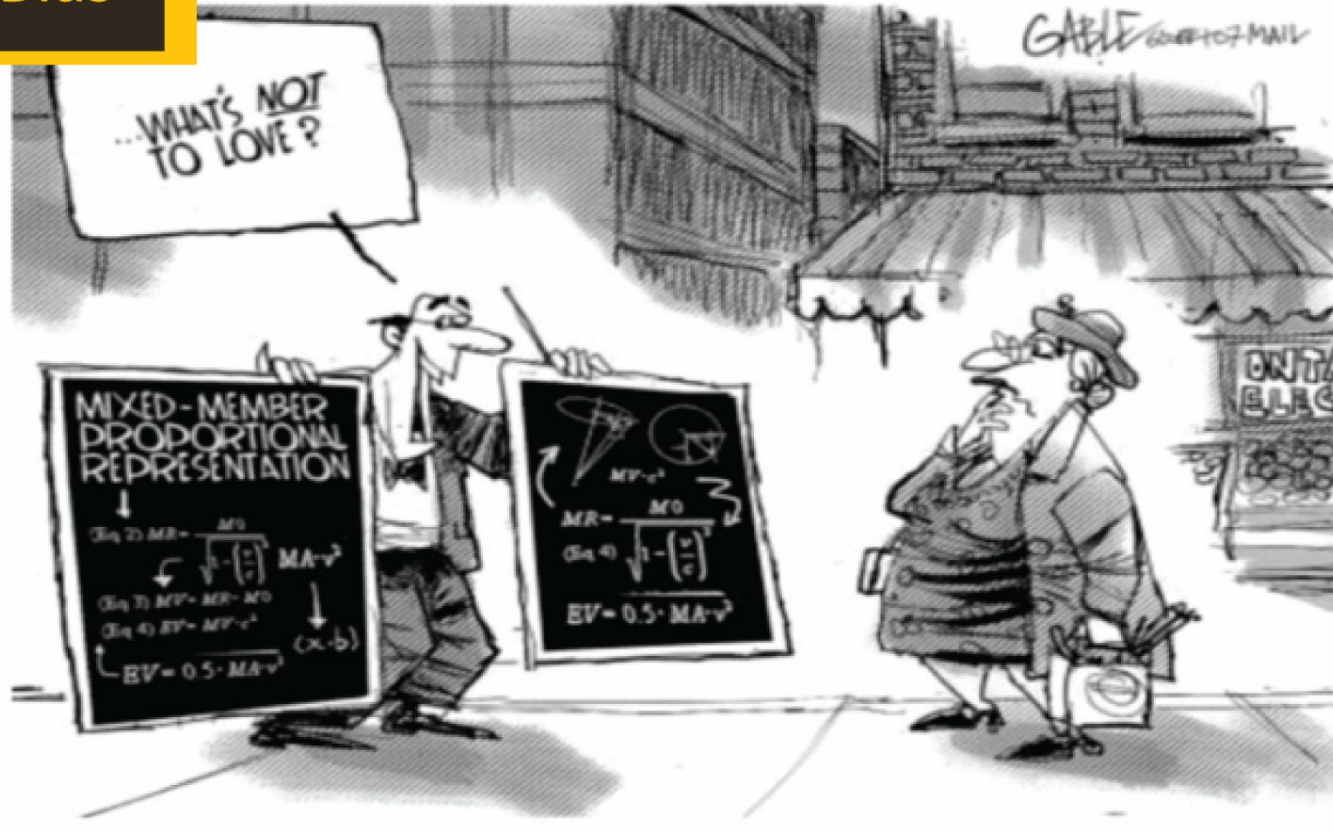
Brendan Nyhan, Professor of Government,
Dartmouth College

“YES” side parties divided

What surfaced partway through our educational program was that I think both of the mainline parties realized the ramifications of mixed member proportional. **We began to get undermined by the very folks who put us in place.**

Leonard Russell, Chair of PEI's 2005 Citizens' Commission on PEI's Legislative Future, testifying in 2016 about what went wrong in the 2005 referendum

Media Bias



Globe and Mail. October 6, 2007.

Media Bias

After the referendum on Mixed Member Proportional in Ontario in 2007, three separate research papers demonstrated that the mainstream media were **almost unanimously opposed**.

Examples from the Toronto Star:

“Electoral reform fraught with risk”

“And how far would weak premiers go, making obnoxious deals to keep their struggling governments in power?”

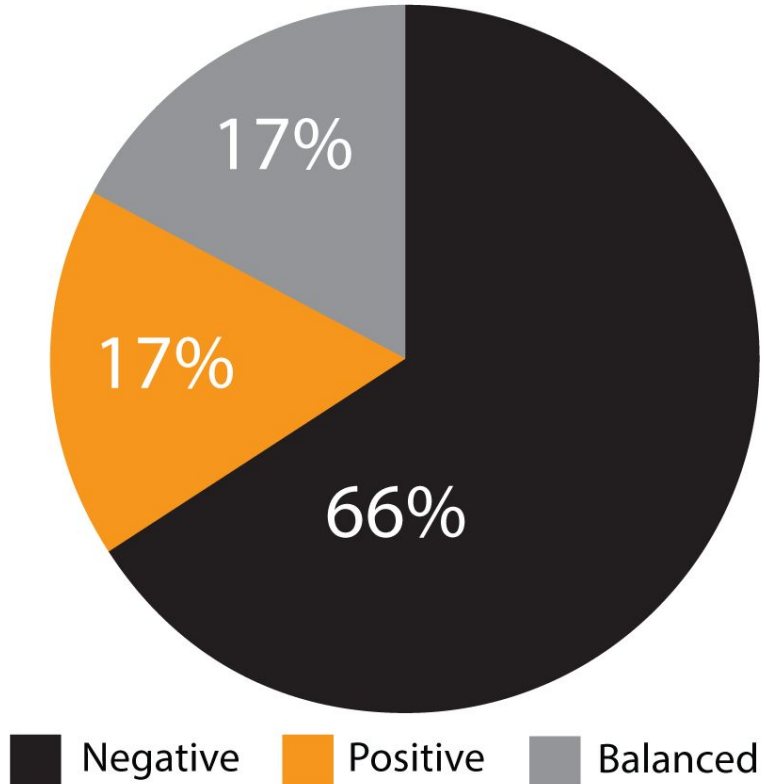
“The voters will be making their referendum choice out of ignorance.”

Media Bias: UK Electoral Reform Referendum

Coverage was **predominantly hostile to change**. There were just over twice as many articles in favour of the status quo as in favour of reform. The papers with larger circulations were more likely to oppose reform. While most offered some space to alternative viewpoints, that space was often limited. **Readers of many newspapers received strongly biased impressions of the referendum debate.**

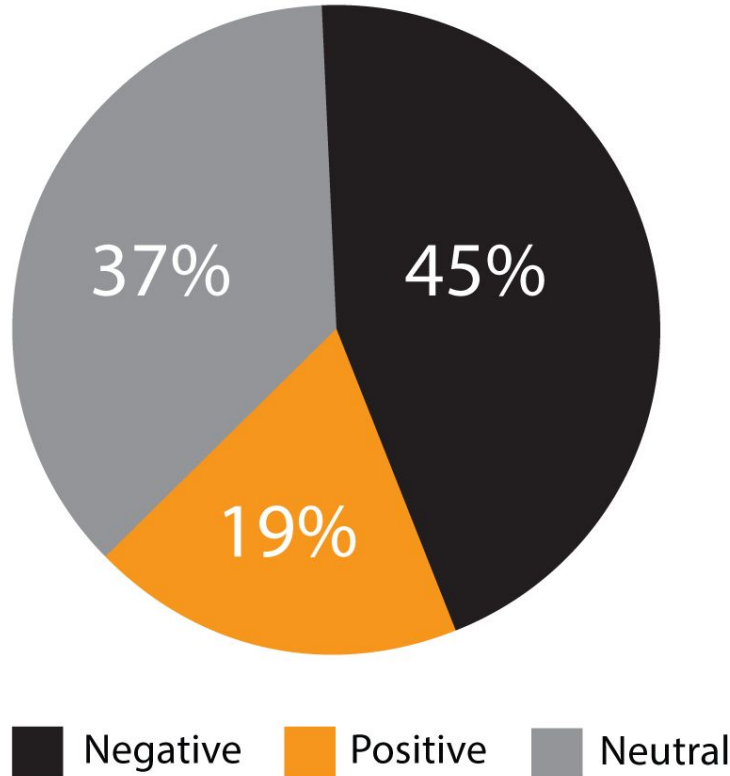
- Alan Renwick

Media Bias: BC Electoral Reform Referendum 2018



A study of opinion columns in all major print media in BC, including Postmedia owned papers, Globe and Mail, Glacier Media (owns 15 local newspapers in BC), Black Press (owns about 75 local newspapers in BC)

Media Bias: ON Electoral Reform Referendum 2007



Coverage of the Ontario PR referendum in the National Post, Toronto Star and Globe and Mail (124 articles).

“When the press did choose to write on the Assembly process, the electoral reform recommendation, or the referendum, its tone was overwhelmingly negative; the editorial boards of the major newspapers were aligned in opposition from the beginning”.

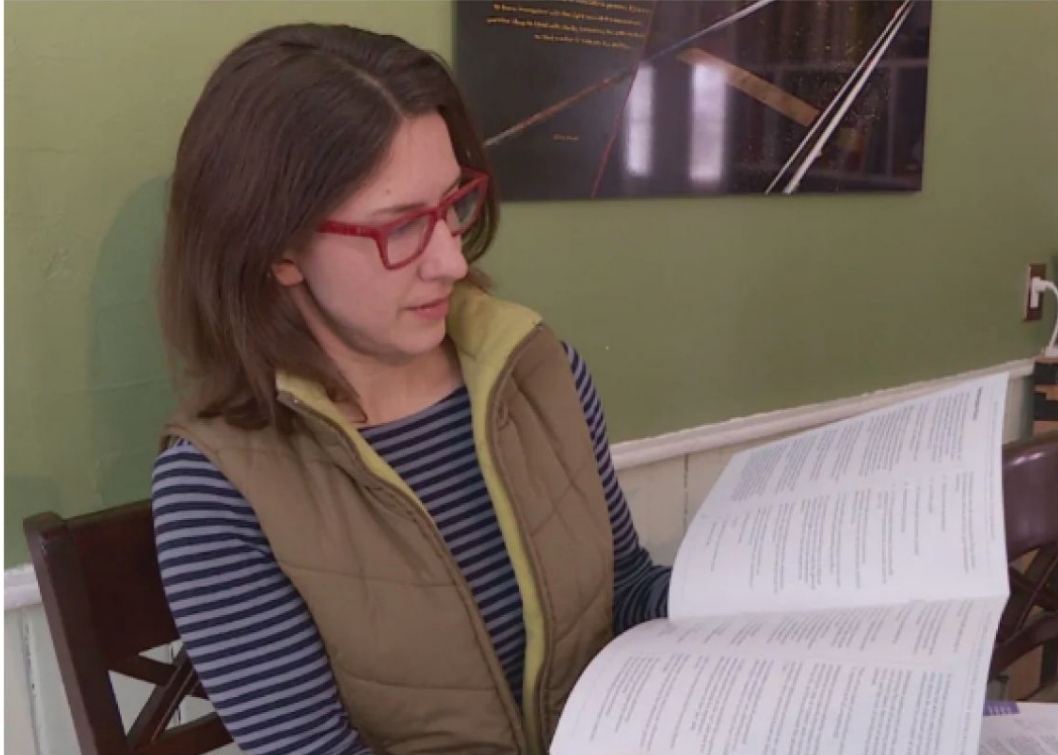
- Lawrence Leduc, “The failure of electoral reform proposals in Canada” (2009)

UNINFORMED AND CONFUSED VOTERS

“Leaflets from the electoral commission, which were designed to explain what the reform would mean to every household with **meticulous neutrality**, ended up making the system look horrendously complex. The blurb summed up first-past-the-post in just three sentences, while describing the new system with an excessively complex example election, which required three diagrams and text that spilled over four pages.”

- Tom Clark, “Why the AV referendum was lost”, in the Guardian

UNINFORMED AND CONFUSED VOTERS



“Sometimes it takes more words than people care to deal with.”

Gerald Mitchell, PEI’s
Referendum Commissioner,
commenting on the **lengthy,
technical and text-heavy**
brochure for voters.

UNINFORMED AND CONFUSED VOTERS

“The most persuasive argument of the ‘no’ side (in Ontario) was the ‘lack of sufficient information’... The public’s frustration at a lack of information would continue to bedevil proponents of MMP right through voting day. It was in the end, for many, a sufficient reason to vote against the proposal.”

- Lawrence Leduc

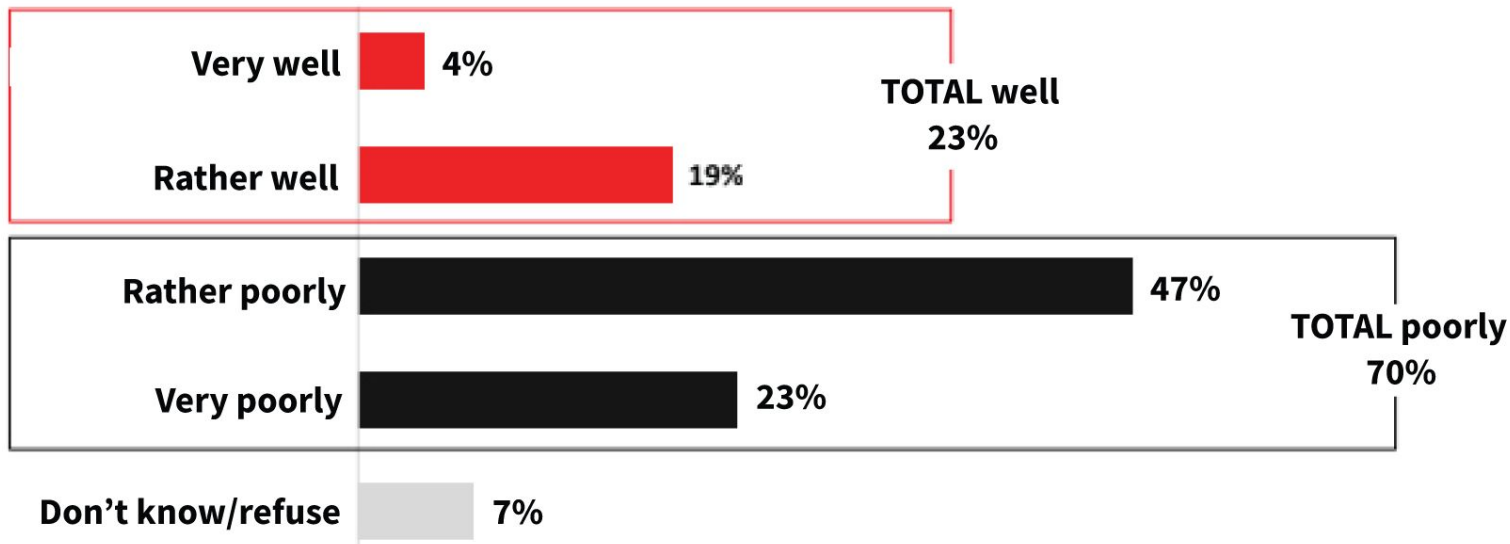
“Academic research on the provincial use of referendums in voting system reform processes has found chronically low levels of public knowledge and engagement, excessive partisanship in the debate... When voters have rejected different options, it's often because they have no clue as to what they're being asked.”

Dennis Pilon

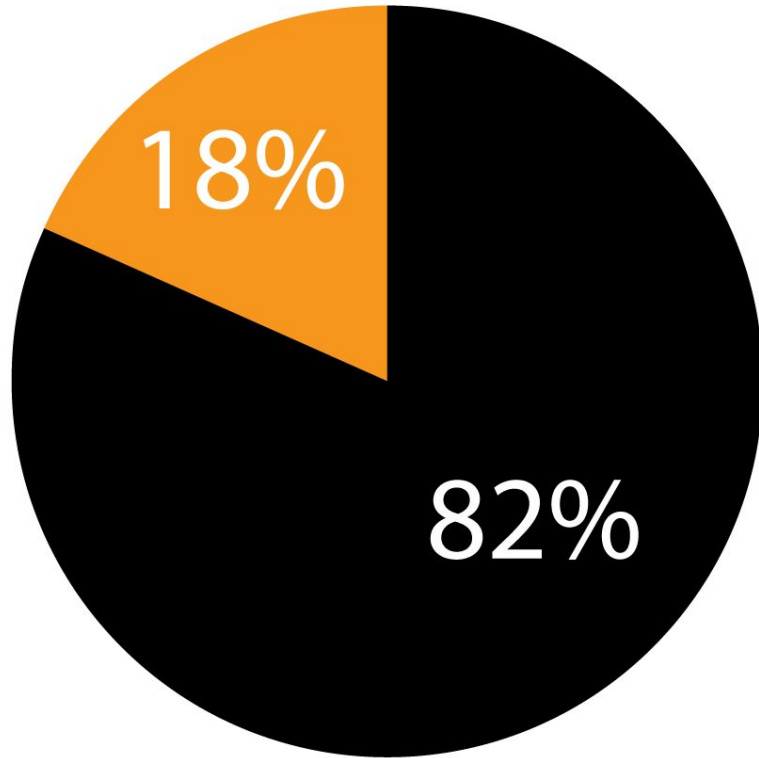


UNINFORMED AND CONFUSED VOTERS

Would you say you are familiar or unfamiliar with the Quebec government's plan to reform the voting system?



AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION STUDY



Australia has had 44 referendums on constitutional issues.



“I would not put the issue of an alternate voting system to a referendum. It's unnecessary, it's a waste of money, and it will almost certainly fail. You may as well recommend not changing the system and save Canadians the cost.”

Nelson Wiseman



FAIRER CONDITIONS....

AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION STUDY

What made the difference for the 18% of referendums that succeeded?

- ✓ 1) Strong support for the proposal by all major political parties
- ✓ 2) A sense of ownership of the referendum issue by citizens (rather than only partisans and elites)
- ✓ 3) An educational campaign that ensures citizens understand the issue

Citizens' Assemblies: Backed by evidence, powered by people



What is a Citizens' Assembly?

A citizens' assembly is a representative body of ordinary citizens, gathered to deliberate on an important policy issue.

Citizens' assemblies are based on evidence that when **given the knowledge, resources and time, citizens can find solutions to complex and controversial issues.**

Who is on a Citizens' Assembly?



- A “mini public”.
- Citizens selected **by sortition** (a civic lottery, like a jury)
- Demographically **representative** of the population
- **Remove obstacles** to participation (members compensated for expenses and/or time)

Scottish Climate Assembly

“

Our mini-Scotland of
over 100 citizens from
all walks of life...

”

- Scotland's Climate Citizens'
Assembly convenors



Citizens were representative of Scotland by age, gender, household income, ethnicity, geography, rurality, disability, and attitude towards climate change

What happens at a Citizens' Assembly?

Participants move through the following stages:

- learn from experts and evidence
- consult the public
- hear from stakeholders
- discuss the evidence and carefully weigh the options (deliberation)
- Come to a **consensus recommendation** (not necessarily unanimity).



Who runs a Citizens' Assembly?



A citizens' assembly may be commissioned by the government but it is run by an **independent, non-partisan body** that specializes in deliberative processes.

Who runs a Citizens' Assembly?



Photo credit: Citizens' Dialogues on Canada's Energy Future

In Canada, most processes like this are run by MassLBP, which has run hundreds of processes for various levels of government and other organizations.

On a federal level, they ran the Citizen's Reference Panel on Pharmacare in 2017.

Role of the government

- **Fully fund the assembly**
- **Publicize it** so the public knows the process is happening, that it's made up of “people just like me”, and they can engage in the consultations and follow the Assembly's work closely if they choose.

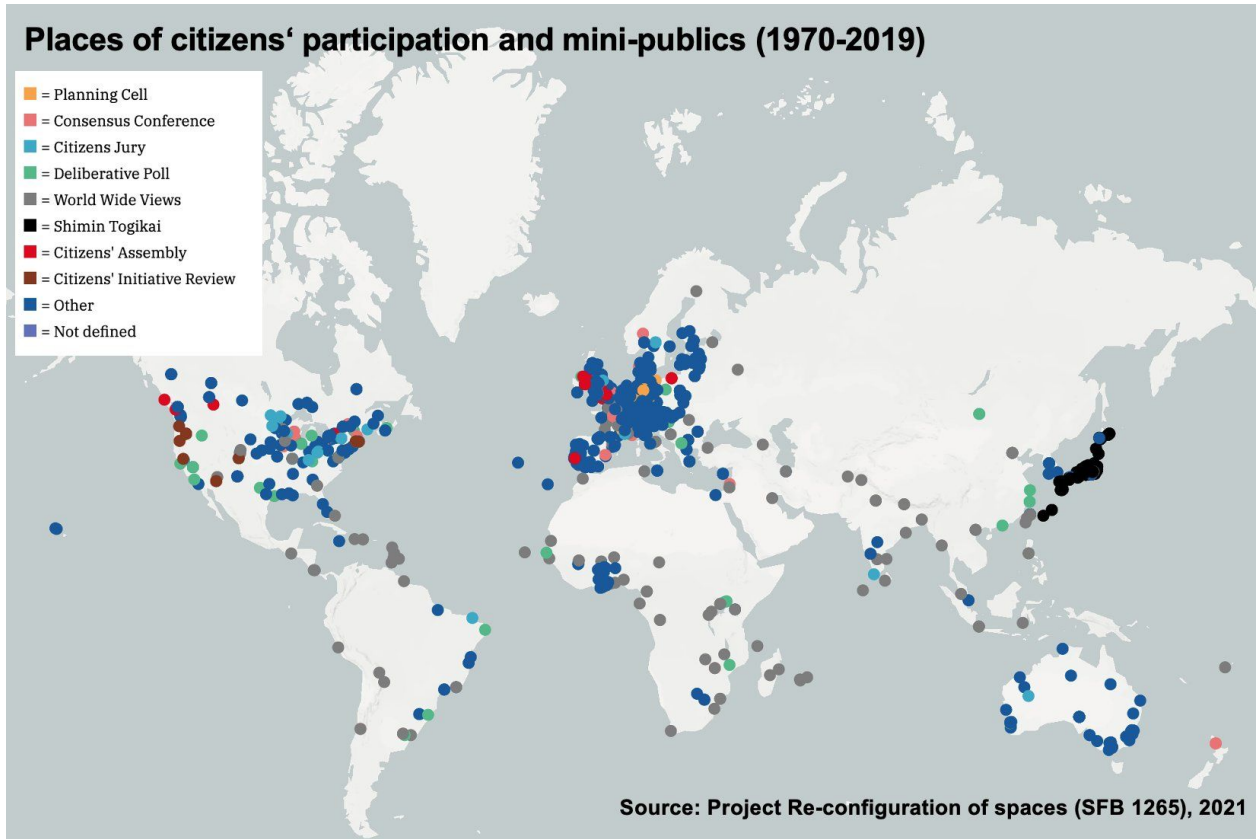


Spreading around the World



- **Ireland** - many issues including abortion, climate change, drug policy, gender equality
- **France and UK** - climate change
- **EU** - Conference on the future of Europe
- **Scotland** - future of Scotland and climate change
- **Belgium and Paris** - permanent assemblies, topics chosen by citizens

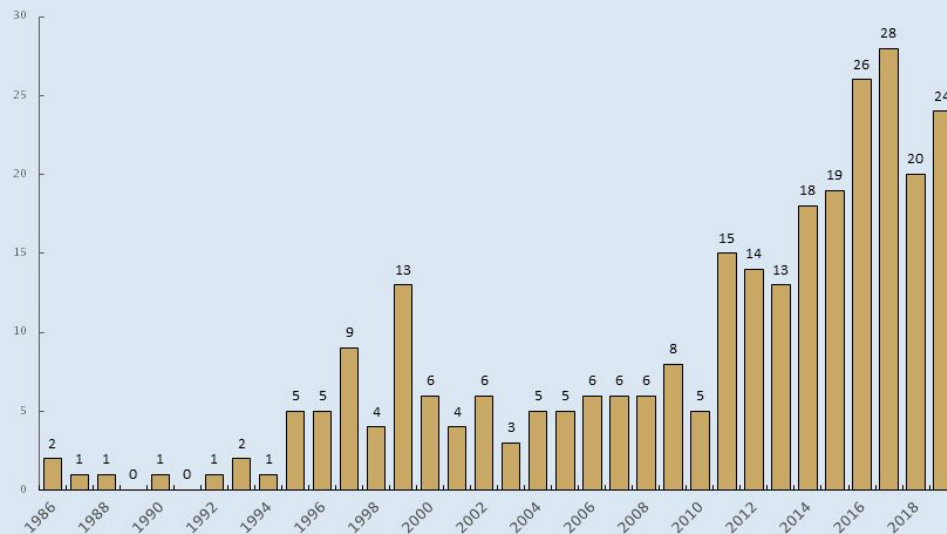
Spreading around the World



Citizens' processes in the OECD

The
“deliberative
wave” has
been building
since the
1980s,
gaining
momentum
since 2010

*Number of representative
deliberative processes per year,
1986 – October 2019*



Notes: n=282; Data for OECD countries is based on 18 OECD countries that were members in 2019 plus the European Union. Processes that spanned over multiple years are noted by the year of their completion (except for permanent ongoing processes).

Source: OECD Database of Representative Deliberative Processes and Institutions (2020).

Research: Benefits of Citizens' Assemblies

Innovative Citizen Participation and
New Democratic Institutions

CATCHING THE DELIBERATIVE WAVE

HIGHLIGHTS

2020

OECD study of 279 deliberative processes around the world

Benefits of Citizens' Assemblies for governments and public



1

Better policy recommendations arise from informed citizen judgments based on quality information and deliberation



2

Greater legitimacy for hard choices because the recommendations come from the people themselves



3

Enhanced public trust when citizens see 'folks just like us' having an effective role in decision-making

Benefits of Citizens' Assemblies for governments and public

4

Independence - no “special interests” means a focus on the common good (remove undue influence of money or power)

5

Diversity of views leads to better policy making

6

Evidence-based process helps **counteract polarization and misinformation.**

Why a Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform?

When to hold a deliberative process



Values-
driven
dilemmas

Complex
problems
that require
trade-offs

Long term
issues that go
beyond short
term incentives
of electoral
cycles

From OECD study of 279 deliberative processes around the world

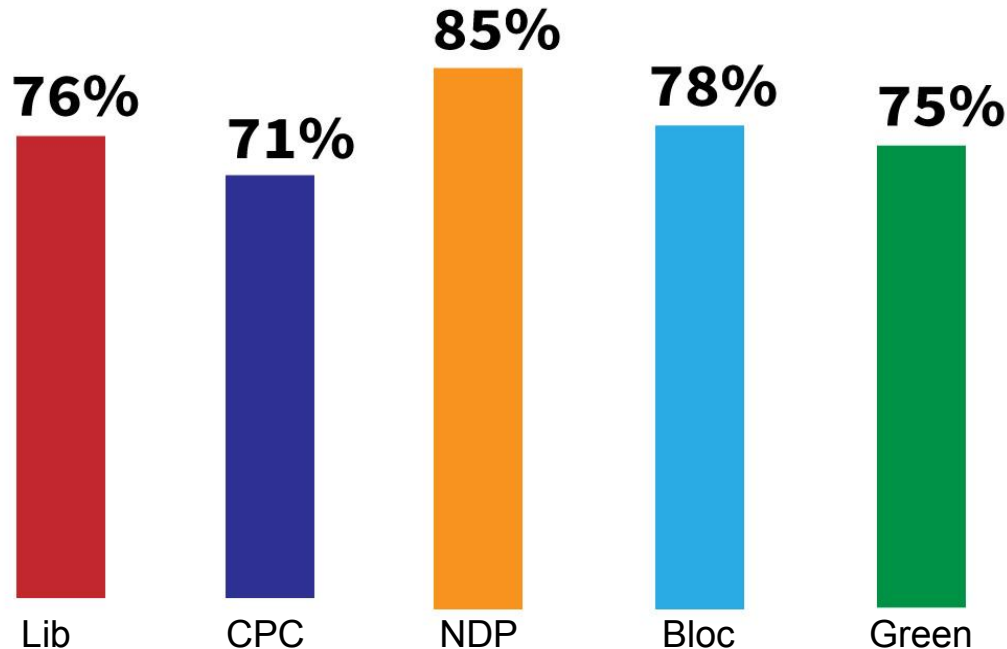
Support for a National Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

National poll by Leger
September 2020
commissioned by
Fair Vote Canada



Support for a National Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

By voters for different parties



PEI Citizens' Assembly on PR



MASS MASS LBP
LBP @masslbp

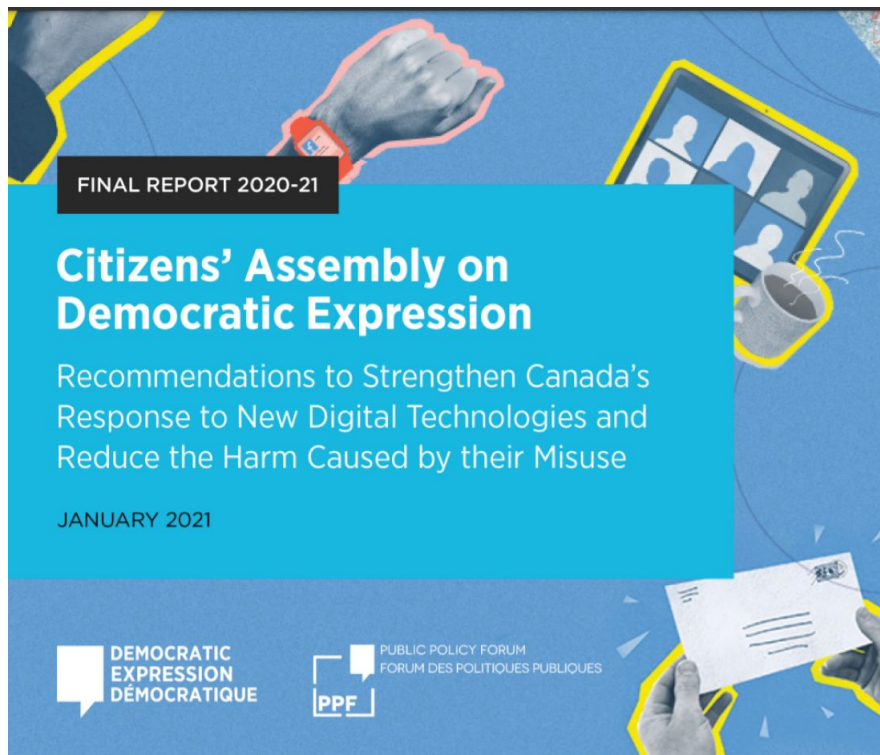
"Citizen assemblies have been used as a tool to overcome the partisan politics that might muddy the waters."

cbc.ca

P.E.I. Legislature approves citizens' assembly to design electoral reform system...

A Green Party MLA who wanted the design of a proportional representation voting system in Prince Edward Island to be placed in the hands of Islanders ha...

Citizens' Assembly on Democratic Expression



Over three years, more than 120 randomly selected Canadians served on one of three national Citizens' Assemblies on Democratic Expression.

Referendum vs Citizens' Assembly

Referendum

- Decision-making based on low information or misinformation
- Self-selected participants
- Partisan motivations can be strong
- People with different opinions spend months yelling past each other
- Process ends with a “winner” and a “loser”
- Decision slams the door on the conversation for a long time

Citizens' Assembly

- Thoughtful decision-making by fully informed citizens
- Citizens representative of Yukon
- Partisan motivations taken out
- People with different opinions spend months listening to each other
- Process ends with a consensus based on the common good
- Recommendations are a step to more conversation, progress

“Governments see proposals for institutional change as threats to their position or as opportunities to advance a partisan agenda. Proposals put forward by organizations are easily ignored... When governments do decide to act, they often do so from a perspective of gaining a political advantage over their opponents.”



Lawrence Leduc

Our process recommendations



1

Recognize that process matters—a lot. Follow best practices to generate informed, evidence-based input from citizens.



2

Avoid choosing a path that leads to a referendum. Research shows that they are inappropriate for complex policy decisions. Their use reveals a preference for maintaining the status quo.



3

Establish an arms-length, sortition-based process to create a legitimate, representative “mini-Yukon” to learn about the options, deliberate, and find consensus on reforms to be implemented.