

Polling in the EU Referendum: An Overview

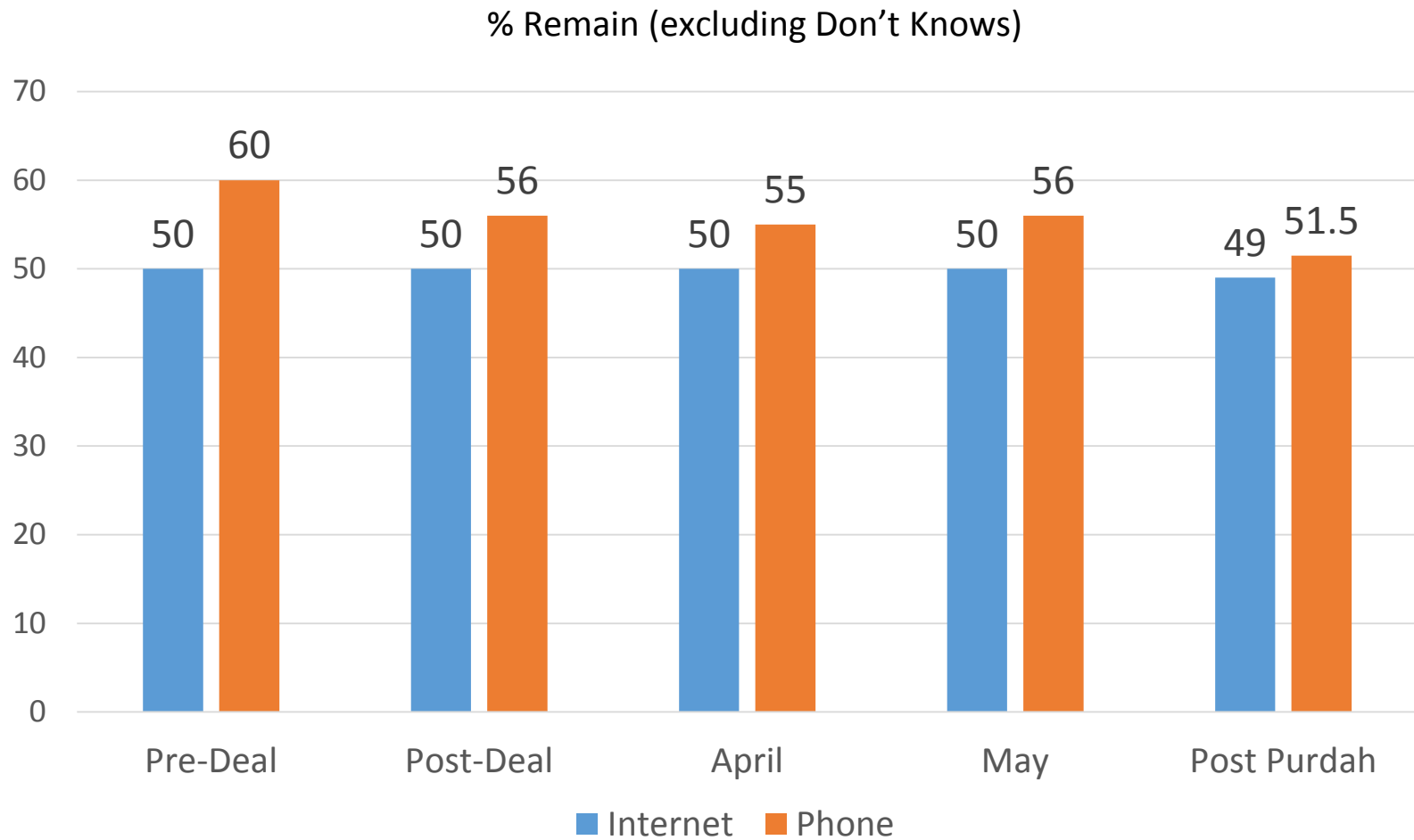
John Curtice

President, British Polling Council

The Structure

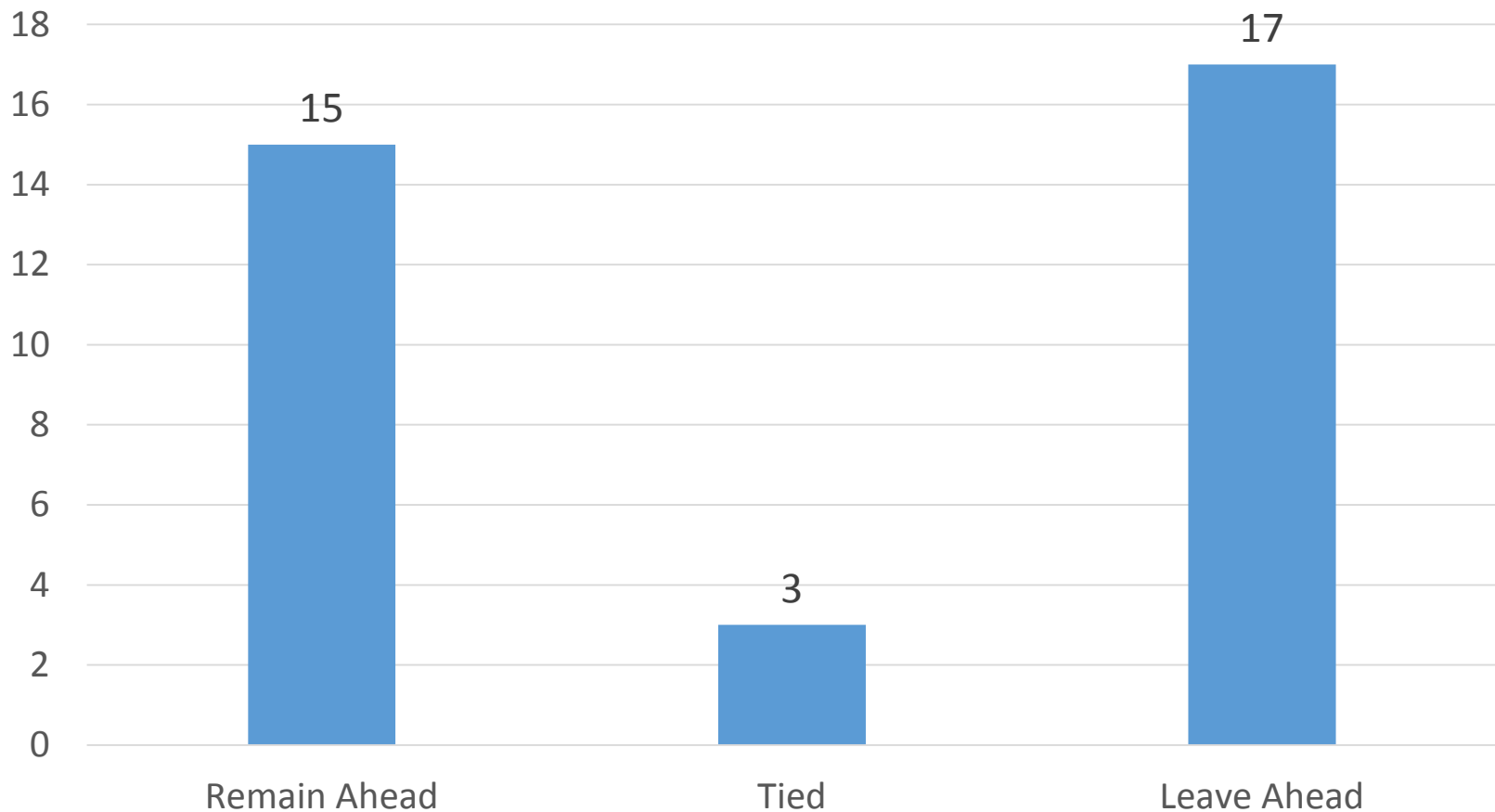
- What did the polls say?
- Why the referendum posed particular challenges
- How were those challenges met?

The Long-Term Record



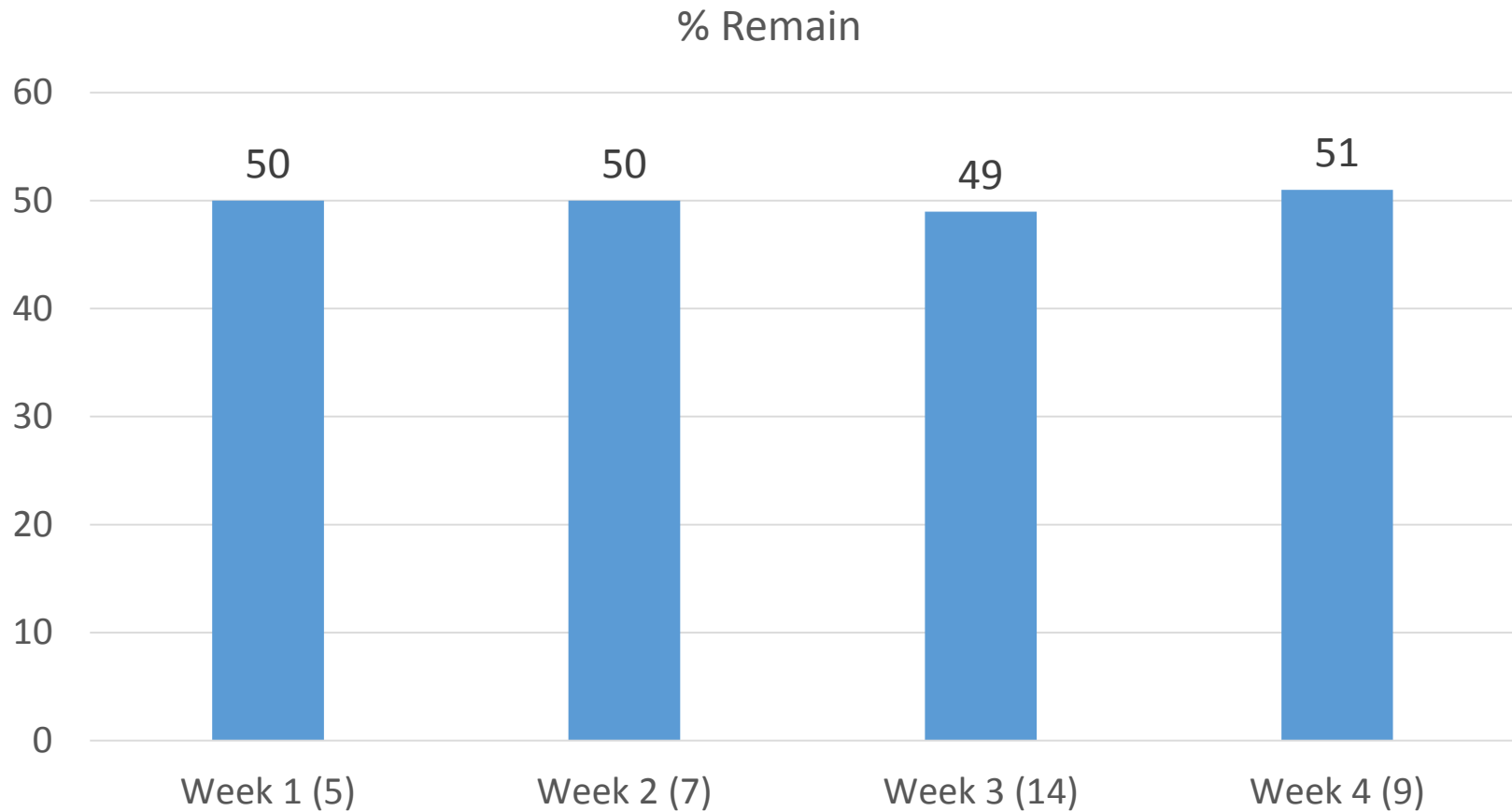
Based on all polls 1.12.15-13.6.16. Deal = 19.2.16. Purdah 27.5.16

The Balance of The Campaign Polling Evidence



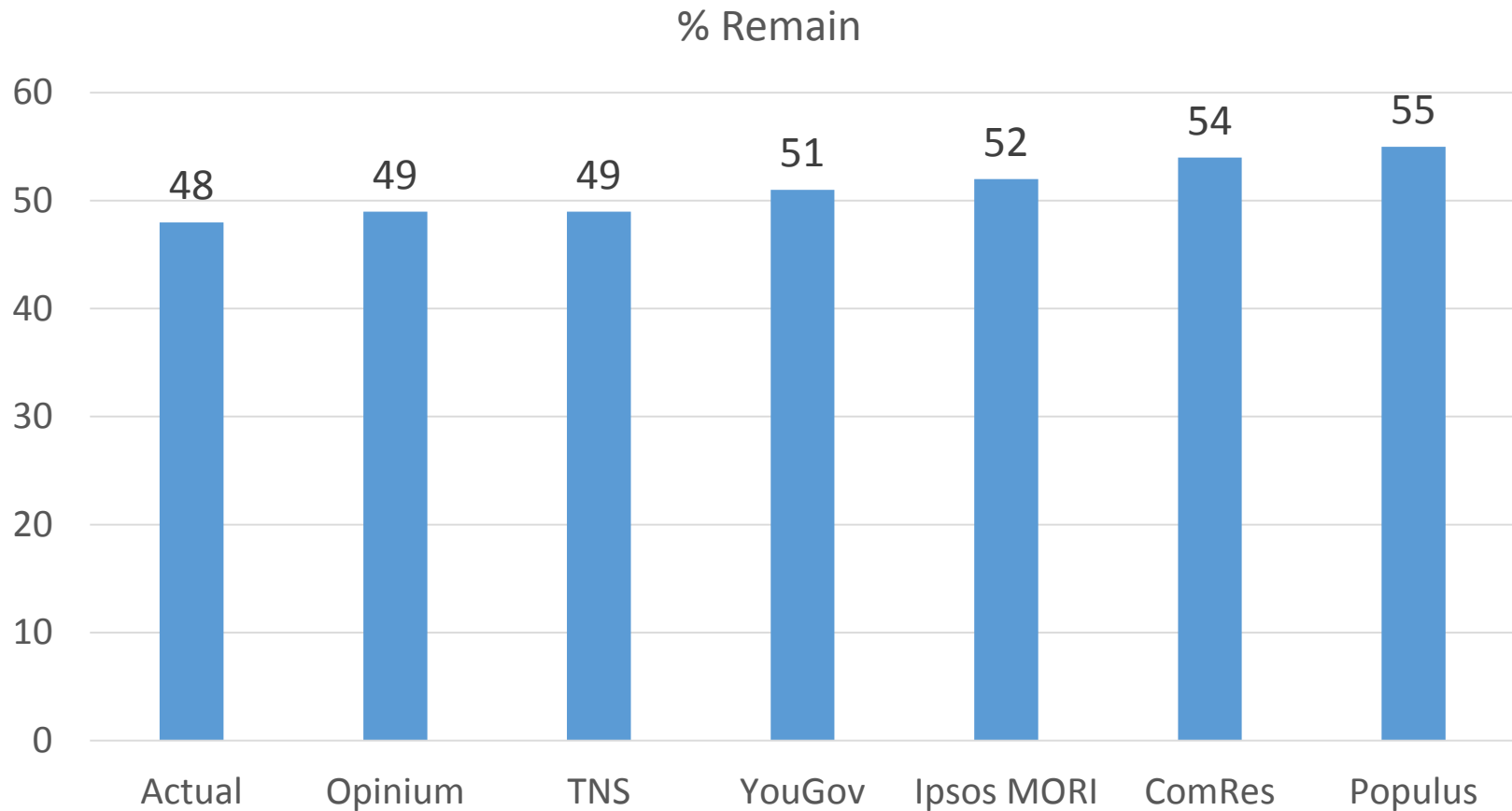
Based on all polls conducted 27.5.16 to 22.6.16 by BPC companies

The Campaign Trajectory



Based on Polls conducted by BPC companies 27.5.16-22.6.16

Final Brexit Polls

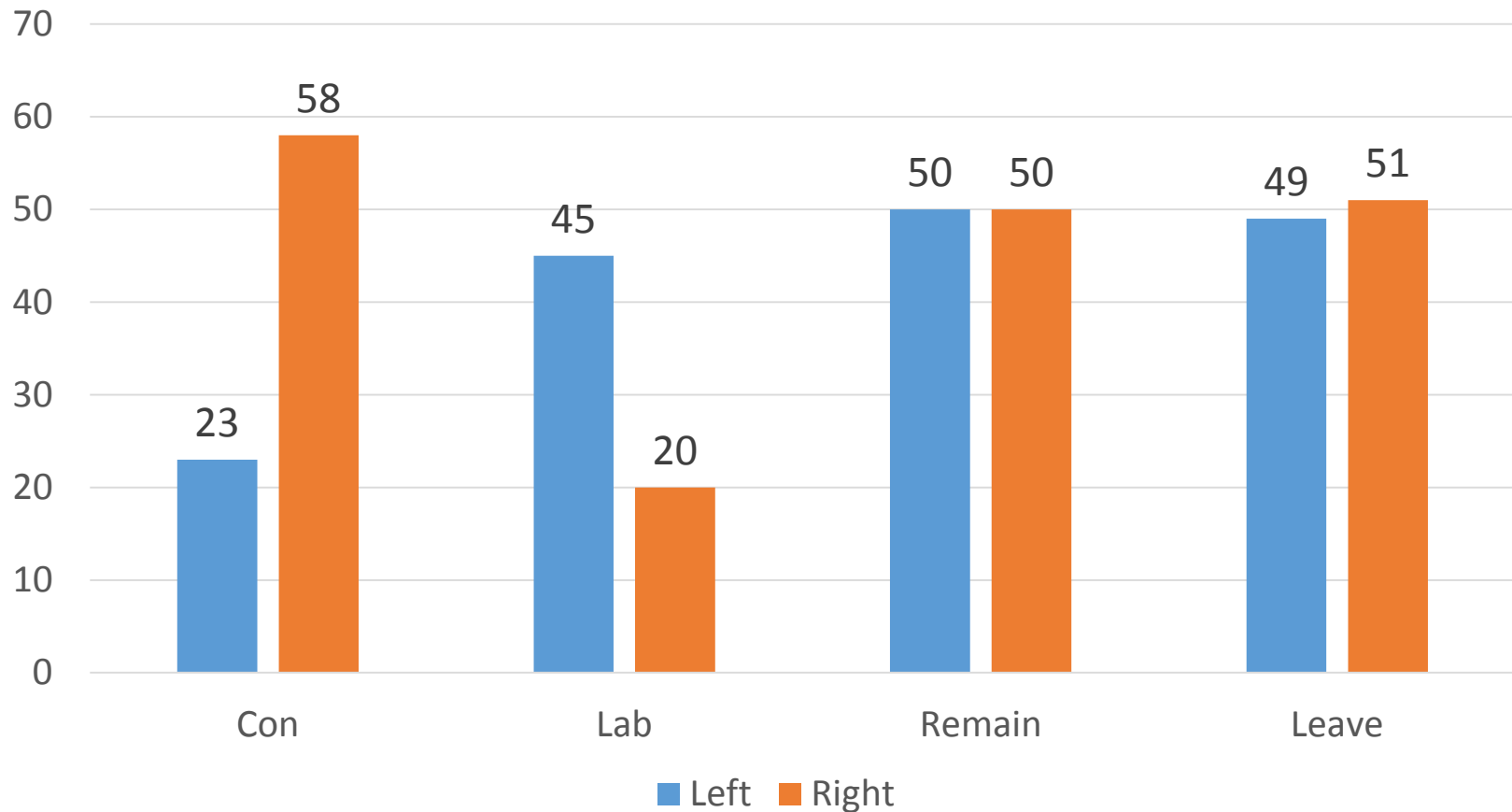


Based on polls conducted up to 22.6.16 by BPC companies. On the day polls by YouGov and Ipsos MORI gave Leave 48% and 46% respectively. Average error = 4 points; average error on lead in 2015 was 7 points.

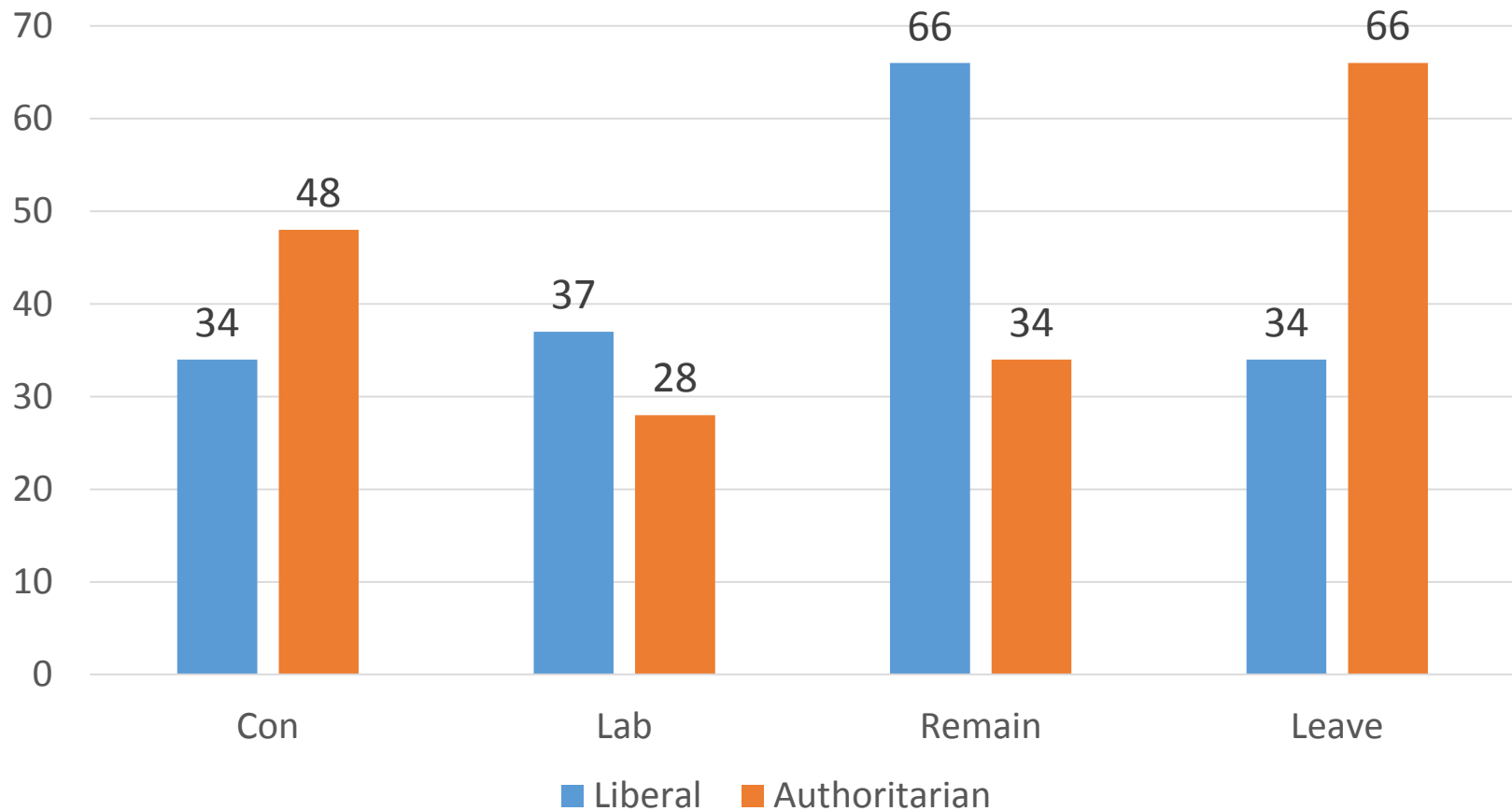
The Challenges

- A Different Dimension of Politics
 - Social liberal/conservative rather than left/right
 - Meant support cuts across party lines
- Potentially different pattern of turnout
- And no prior guide to the Don't Knows
- Late swing (back to the safety of the status quo?)

The Disappearing Left-Right Dimension

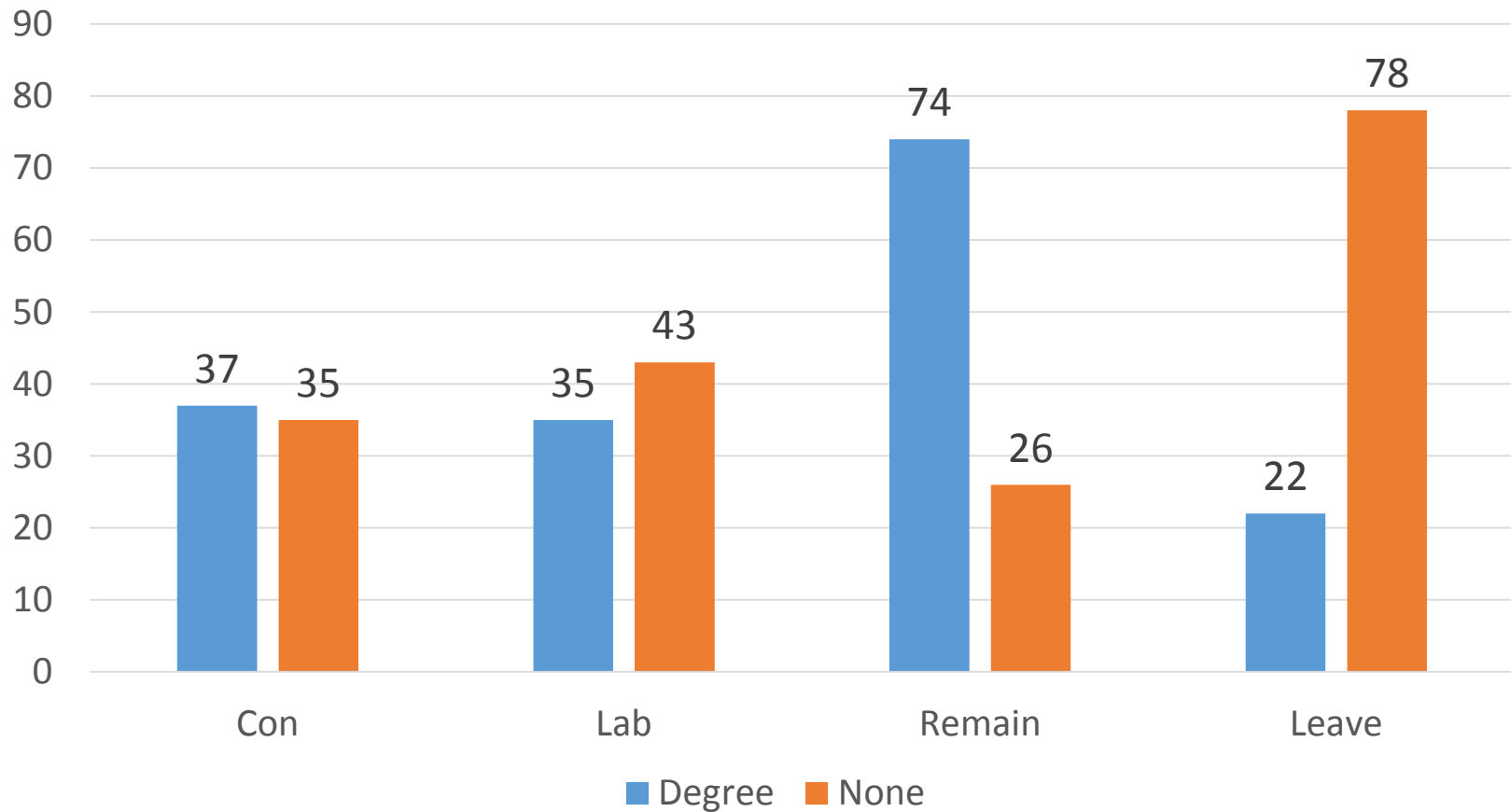


The Strengthened Liberal-Authoritarian Dimension



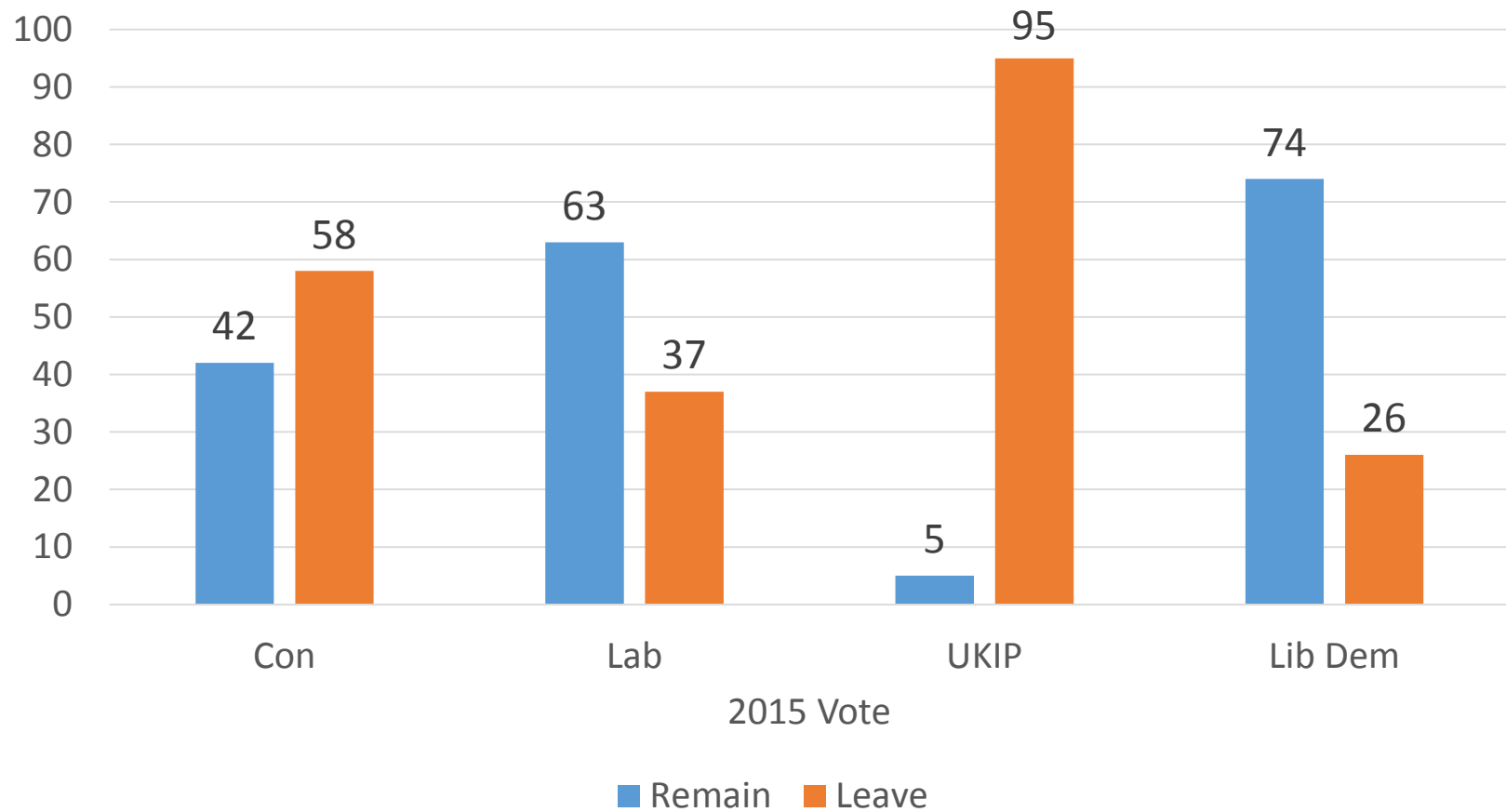
Source: British Social Attitudes 2015: NatCen Mixed Mode Panel Sept/Oct 2016

Meant Education Mattered Much More



Source: British Social Attitudes 2015: NatCen Mixed Mode Panel Sept/Oct 2016

A Divisive Contest

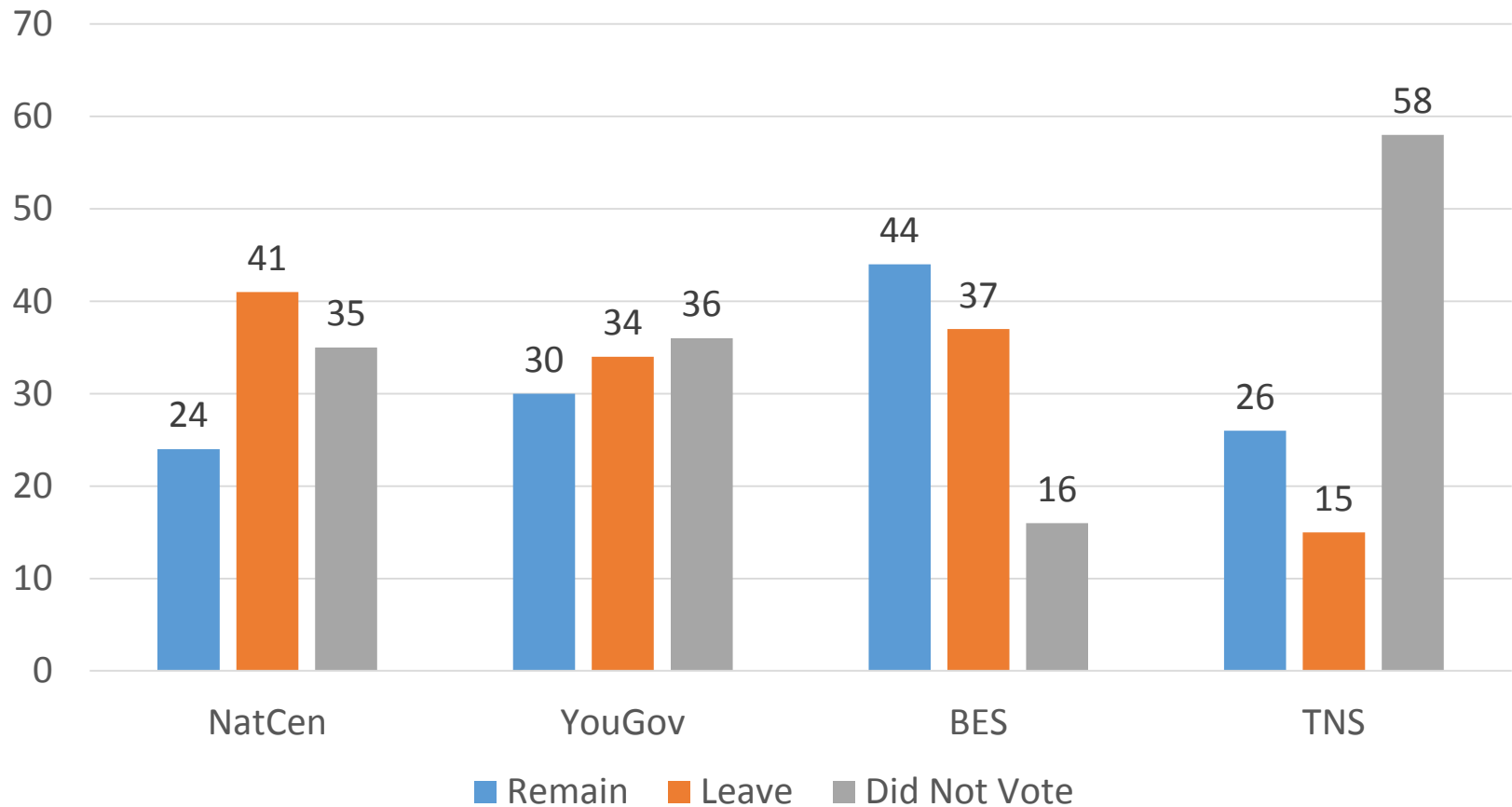


Source: British Social Attitudes 2015: NatCen Mixed Mode Panel Sept/Oct 2016

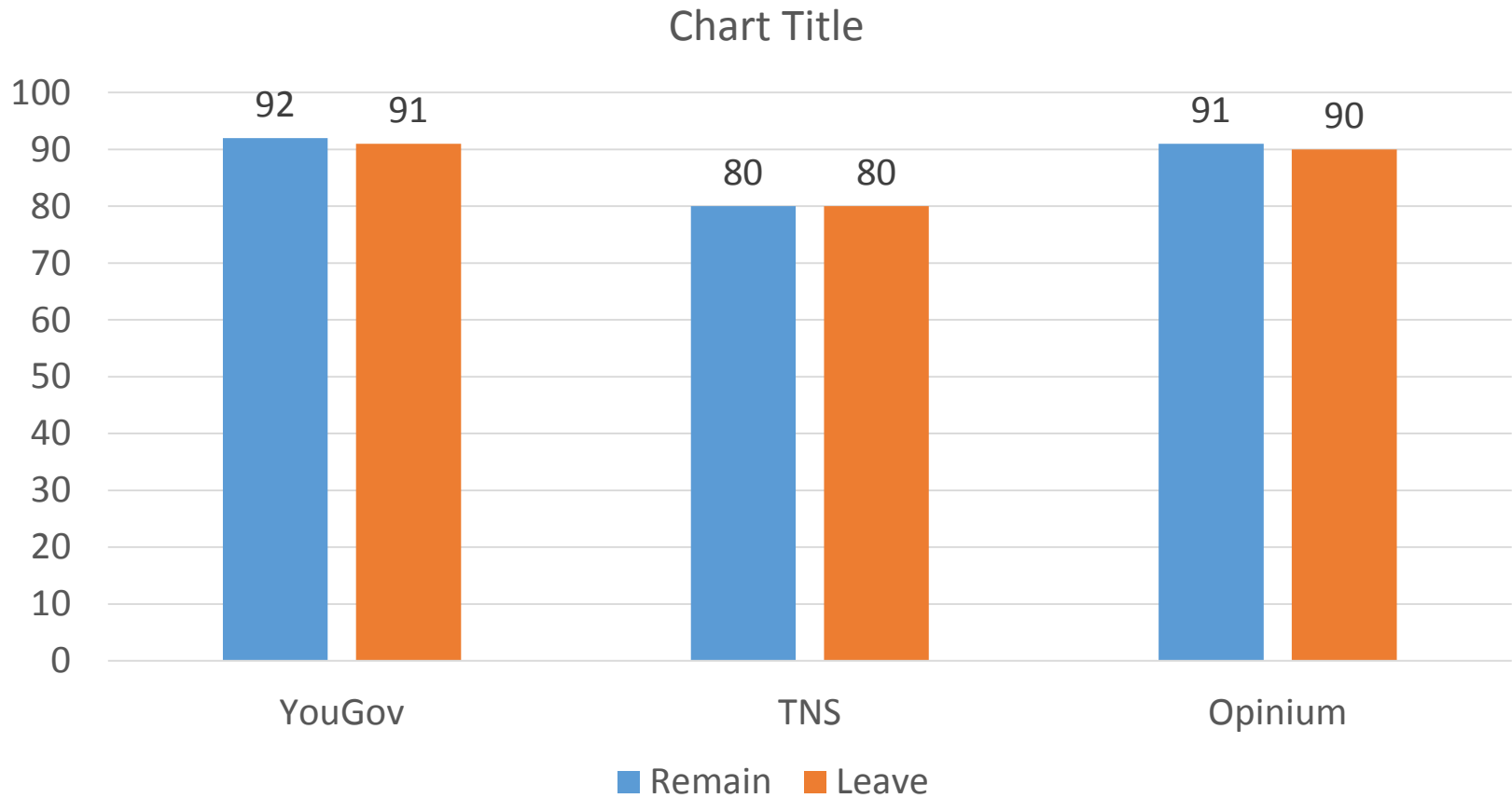
With the benefit of hindsight

- 54% of those who did not vote in 2015 voted in the EU referendum
- 6% of those who did vote in 2015 did not vote in the referendum
- Of the 'new' voters 60% voted Leave, 40% Remain
- Of the new abstainers 65% said they would vote Remain, 35% Leave

Contradictory Evidence on What the Don't Knows Did



No (Very) Late Swing



Source: Recall of Opinium, TNS and YouGov respondents to final poll

Meeting the Challenges

	Education	Attitudes	Past Vote	Turnout	Don't Know
ComRes (P)	N	N	Y	GE model	N
MORI (P)	Y	N	N	Ref Prob +	Squeeze
Opinium	N	Y	Y	N	N
Populus	N	Y	N	GE model	Impute
TNS	Y	Y	Y	N	Squeeze
YouGov	Y	N	Y	Ref Prob	Squeeze
BMG (P&O)	N	N	Y	Ref Prob	Squeeze
ICM (P&O)	Y	N	Y	Ref Prob	N
ORB (P)	Y	N	Y	Ref Prob	Sq + Imp
Survation (P)	N	N	Y	Ref Prob	Squeeze

Based on company's last published poll. Some companies changed one or more aspects of their methodology for this last poll.

Raw Sample and Final Result

% Remain	Unweighted	Reported	Difference
Ipsos MORI	54	52	-2
YouGov	51	51	0
ComRes	53	54	+1
Opinium	47	49	+2
Populus	52	55	+3
TNS	45	49	+4
AVERAGE	50	52	+2

Earlier Last Samples

% Remain	Unweighted	Reported	Difference
ICM	53	47	-6
ICM (P)	53	47	-6
Survation (P)	52	50	-2
BMG	44	44	0
BMG (P)	52	53	+1
ORB	53	54	+1

Conclusion

- The referendum posed some novel challenges for the polling industry.
- The polls were not so bad as is often thought – and never pointed clearly to a victory for Remain
- If the referendum had been on June 16th ...
- There was considerable methodological pluralism
- For the most part decisions on weighting etc. reduced the accuracy of the final polls
- But the bugbear of the 2015 election – unrepresentative samples – may still be (somewhat) with us