

Northern Ireland Assembly elections

March 2017

Voter Experience

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This document should be read in conjunction with the Commission's briefing paper published on 16 May 2017. This can be accessed here:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/226970/Northern-Ireland-Assembly-election-March-2017-report-briefing-paper.pdf

Methodology

1,000 telephone interviews were conducted with adults (18+) in Northern Ireland between 3 and 16 March 2017. Quotas for age, gender, socio-economic grouping and geographic area were applied.

This research was conducted by Kantar TNS.

In this report, results are compared with those of the equivalent surveys conducted following the May 2011 and May 2016. In 2011 research was conducted by ICM and in 2016 by BMG.

Full data tables are available in the [Research Report Library](#) on our website.

Summary

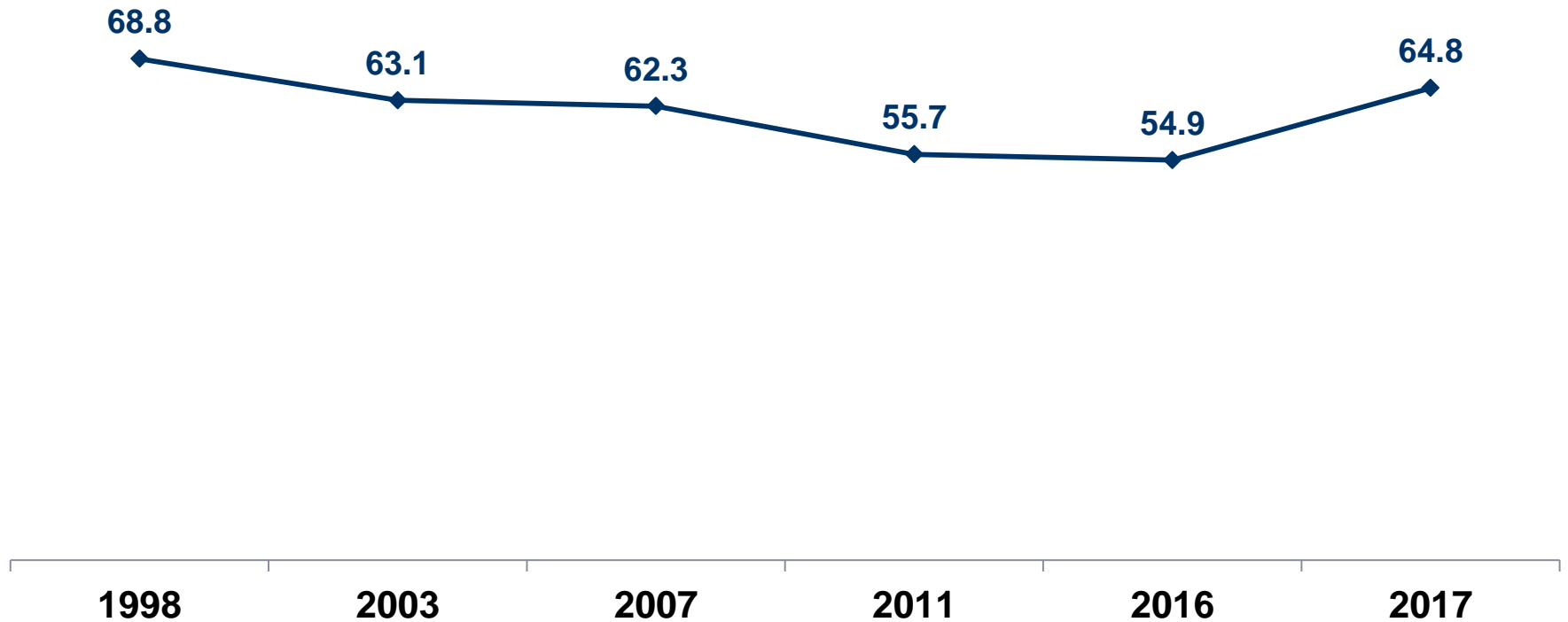
This report summarises the key findings of the Electoral Commission's public opinion research conducted directly after the poll was held. The results suggest that;

- those that voted at the March poll found their experience of the electoral process to be positive and felt confident that the election was well run.
- there is clearly an appetite from the public to move to an online electoral registration system: 77% of respondents agree you should be able to register to vote online
- as in May 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly election, the most common reason given for voting at the March 2017 election related to civic duty; however there was a significant increase in the proportion voting to 'get change', which potentially contributed to the increased turnout compared with 2016
- While just over a quarter said they believed electoral fraud took place at the March polls, the majority attributed this belief to a general impression that fraud is a problem as opposed to direct experience.

Turnout

Turnout on 2 March 2017 was 64.8%, a 10 point increase on 2016 and the highest turnout since 1998

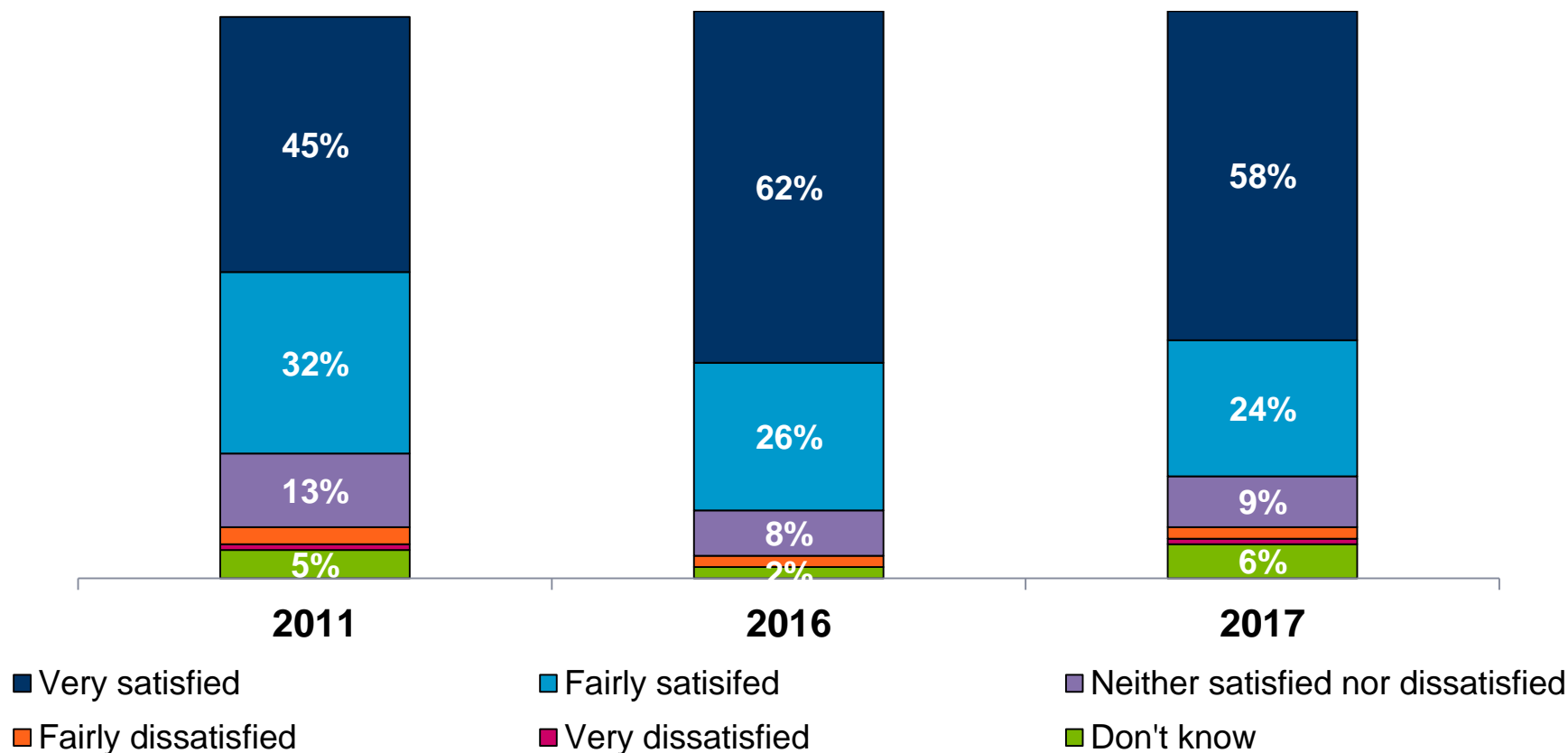
Turnout at NIA elections 1998-2017



Registering to vote

The majority say they are satisfied with the procedure for getting their name on the electoral register

Satisfaction with the registration system



Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: ICM (2011), BMG (2015), KANTAR TNS (2016)

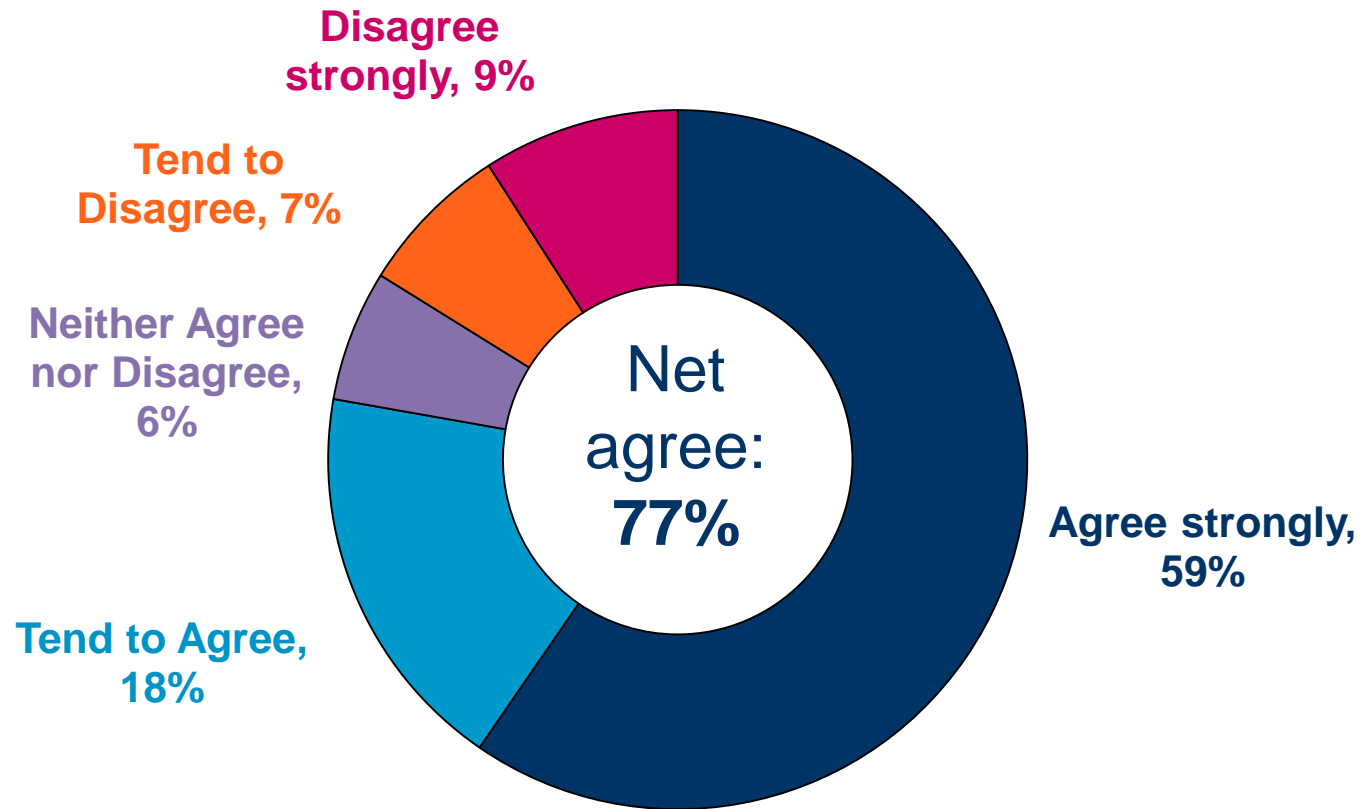
Base 2017 (unweighted): 1,000

Q: How satisfied are you with the procedure for getting your name on the electoral register?

Registering to vote

However more than three quarters believe that it should be possible to register to vote online

Should you be able to register to vote online?



Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: KANTAR TNS (2016)

Base 2017 (unweighted): 1,000

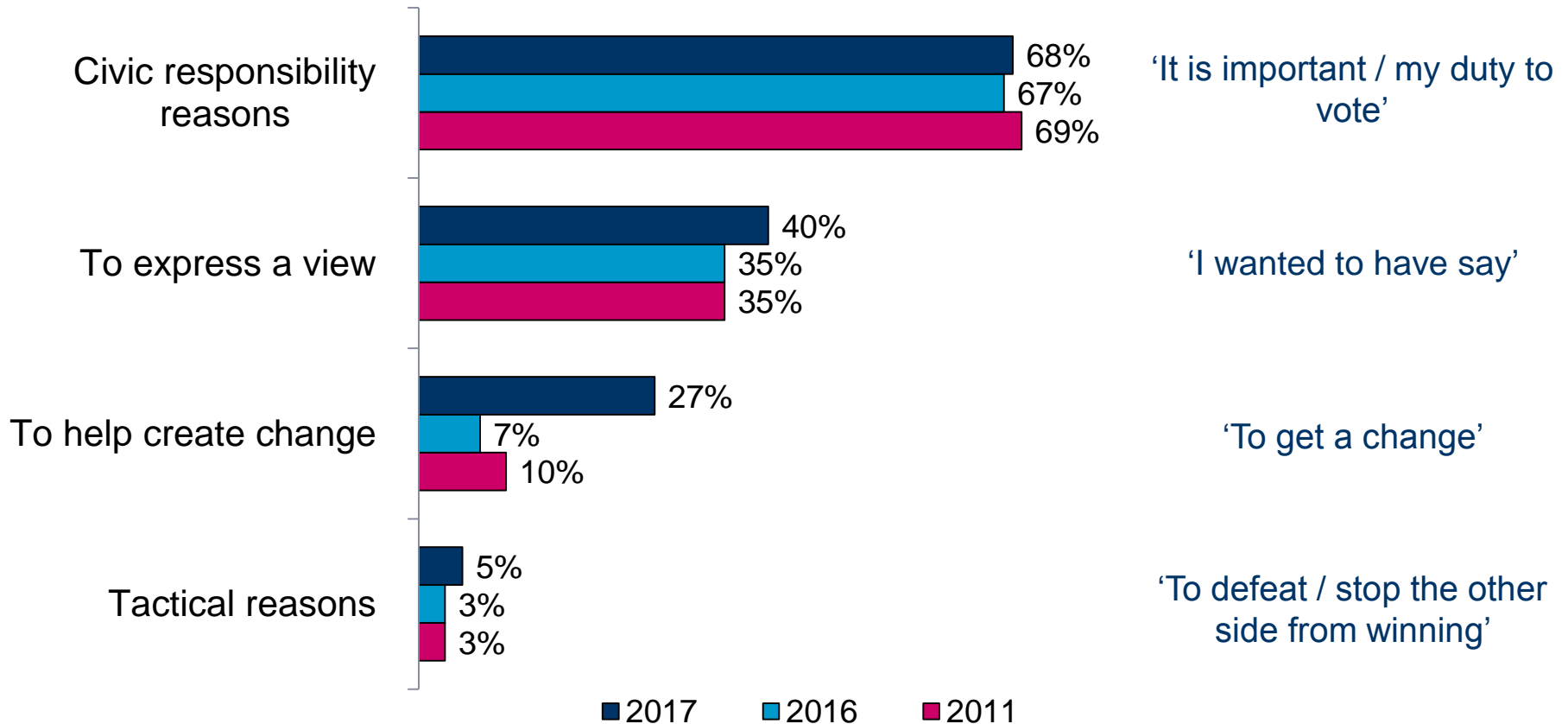
Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: you should be able to register to vote online

Motivation for voting

Civic duty was the most common reason given, but there was a significant increase in the proportion voting to 'get change'

Why did you vote? (Top 4)

Top reason within category



Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: ICM (2011), BMG (2015), KANTAR TNS (2016)

Base 2017 (unweighted): All that claimed to have voted– 798

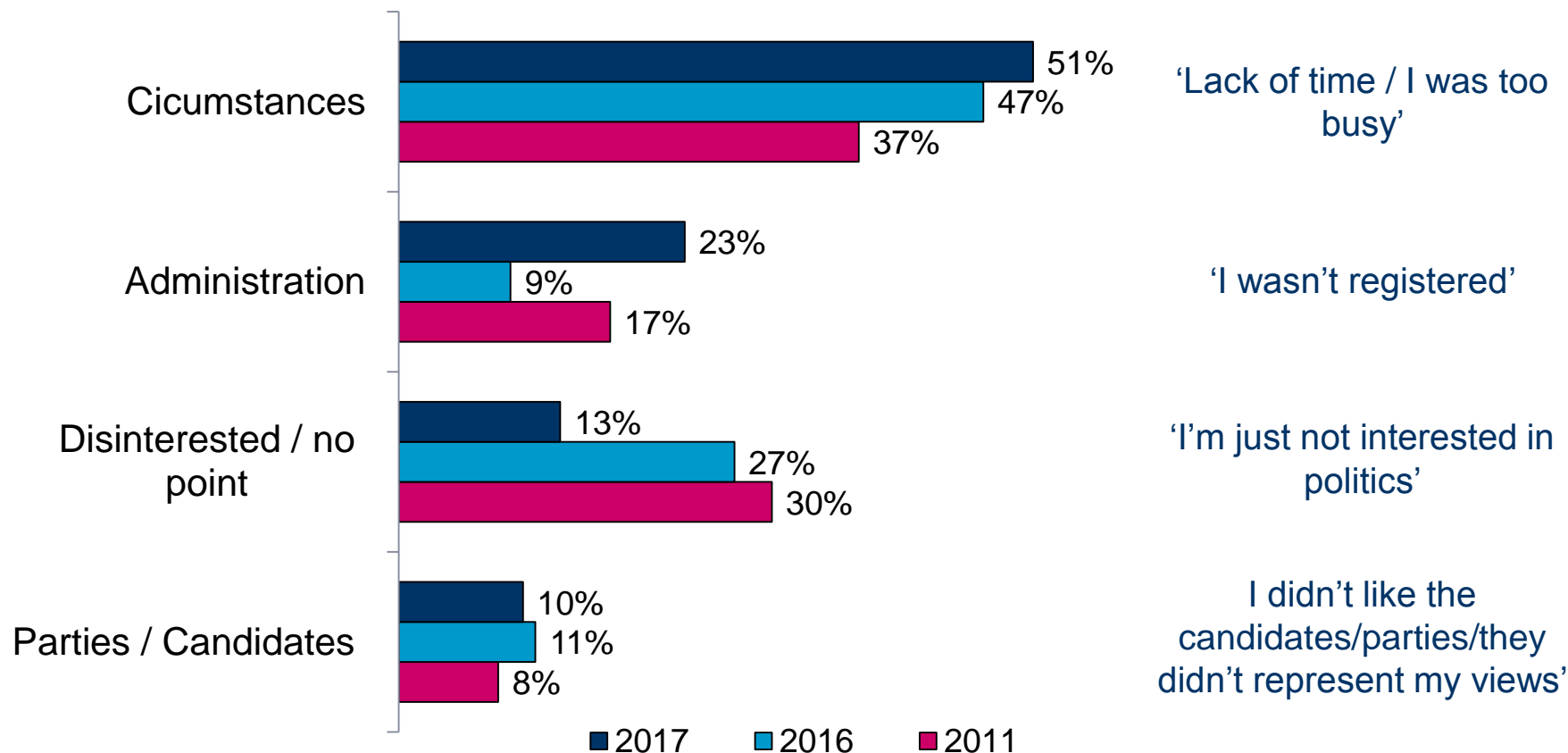
Q: People have different reasons for voting in elections and referendums. Why did you vote on Thursday 2 March?

Motivation for voting: not voting

As in 2016 many of those who didn't vote gave circumstantial reasons for not making it to the polling station

Why didn't you vote? (Top 4)

Top reason within category



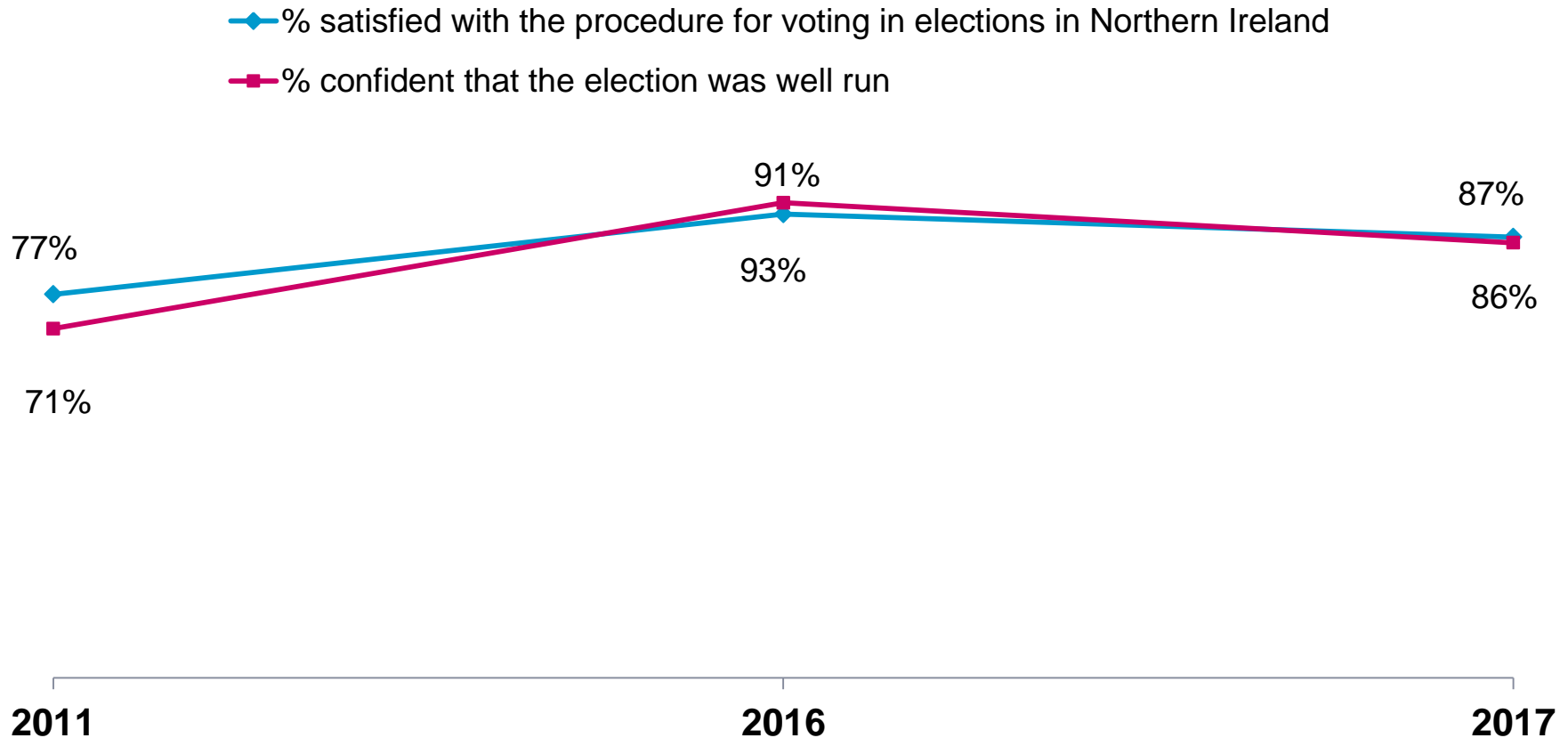
Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: ICM (2011), BMG (2015), KANTAR TNS (2016)

Base 2017 (unweighted): All that claimed not to have voted– 202

Q: People have different reasons for voting in elections and referendums. Why did you not vote on Thursday 2 March?

Voting experience

86% of voters were confident that the election was well run – slightly lower than in 2016



Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: ICM (2011), BMG (2015), KANTAR TNS (2016)

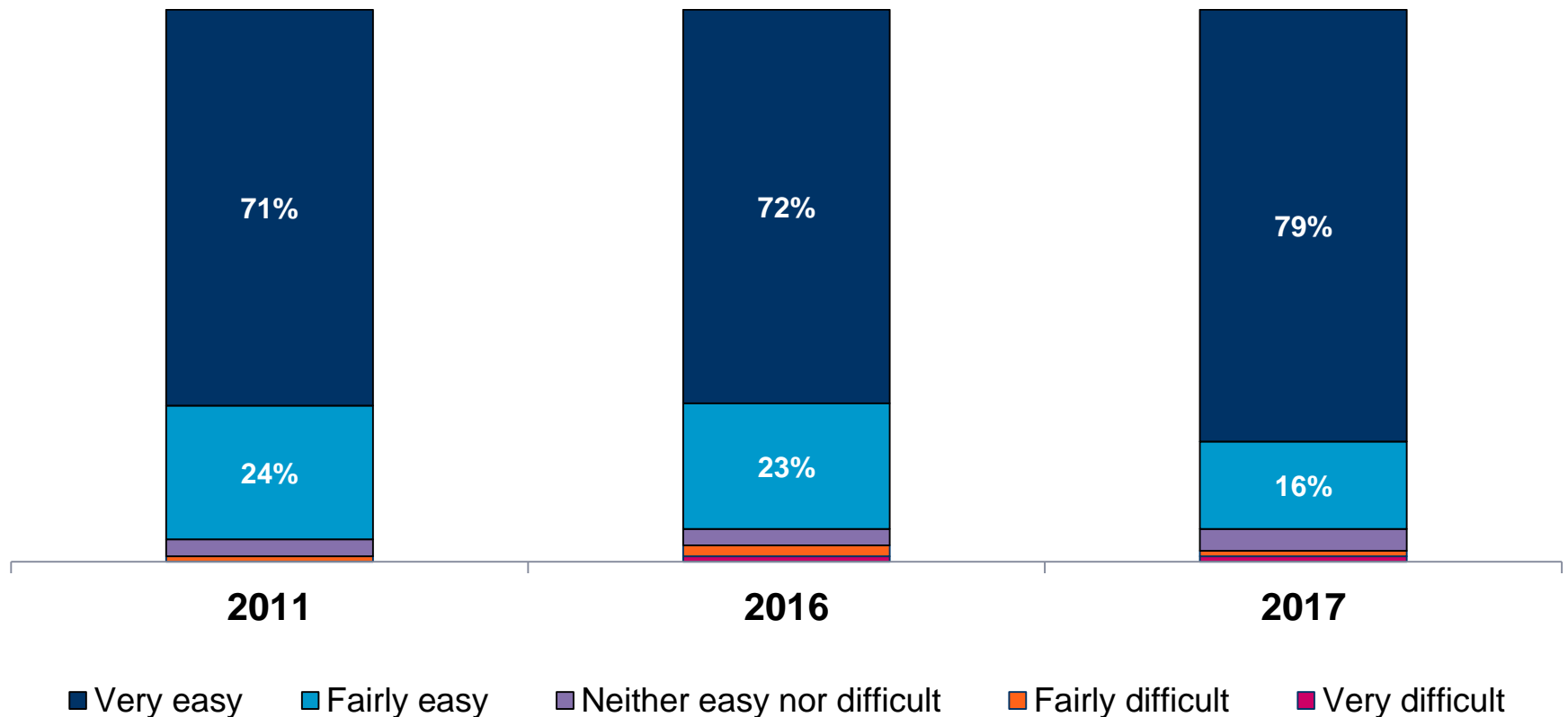
Base 2017 (unweighted): 1,000

Q: How confident, if at all, are you that the election on March 2nd was well run? / Generally speaking, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the procedures for voting in elections and referendums in Northern Ireland?

Voting experience

As in May 2016, almost all (95%) said it was easy to fill in the ballot paper

How easy did you find it to complete the ballot paper?



Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: ICM (2011), BMG (2015), KANTAR TNS (2016)

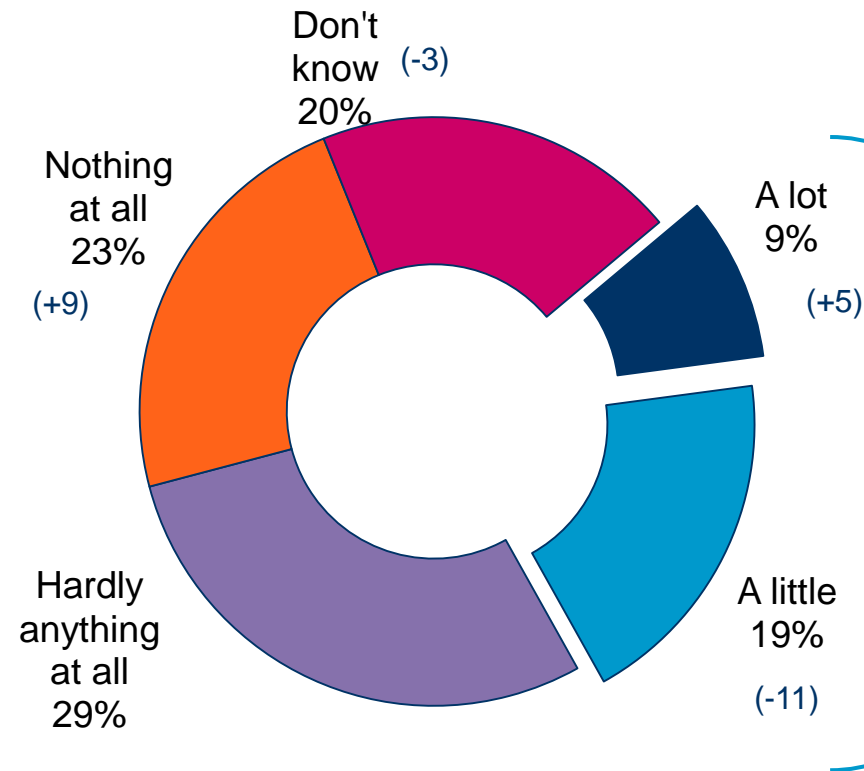
Base 2017 (unweighted): ALL THAT CLAIMED TO HAVE VOTED – 798

Q: How easy or difficult did you find it to fill in the ballot paper(s) for this election? Was it....

Electoral integrity

While over a quarter believe that fraud took place, for most this is not as a result of direct experience

How much electoral fraud took place on 2nd March?



Among those that thought fraud took place...why do you think electoral fraud took place on 2nd March? (Top 4 responses)

- A general impression that fraud is a problem – **46%**
- Identity fraud is on the increase – **22%**
- Postal voting is not secure – **21%**
- I saw stories in the media about electoral fraud – **17%**

Bracketed figures indicate change from 2016

Electoral Commission Post-elections opinion surveys. Source: ICM (2011), BMG (2015), KANTAR TNS (2016)

Base 2017 (unweighted): 1,000

Q: How much, if at all, do you think that electoral fraud took place at the March 2 elections? Would you say that it happened...

Q: Which one of the following best describes why you think electoral fraud or abuse took place on 2nd March? (multi response)

Further information:

For the accompanying Briefing Paper see:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/226970/Northern-Ireland-Assembly-election-March-2017-report-briefing-paper.pdf

For the full dataset see our Research Report Library:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/research-report-library#opinion>