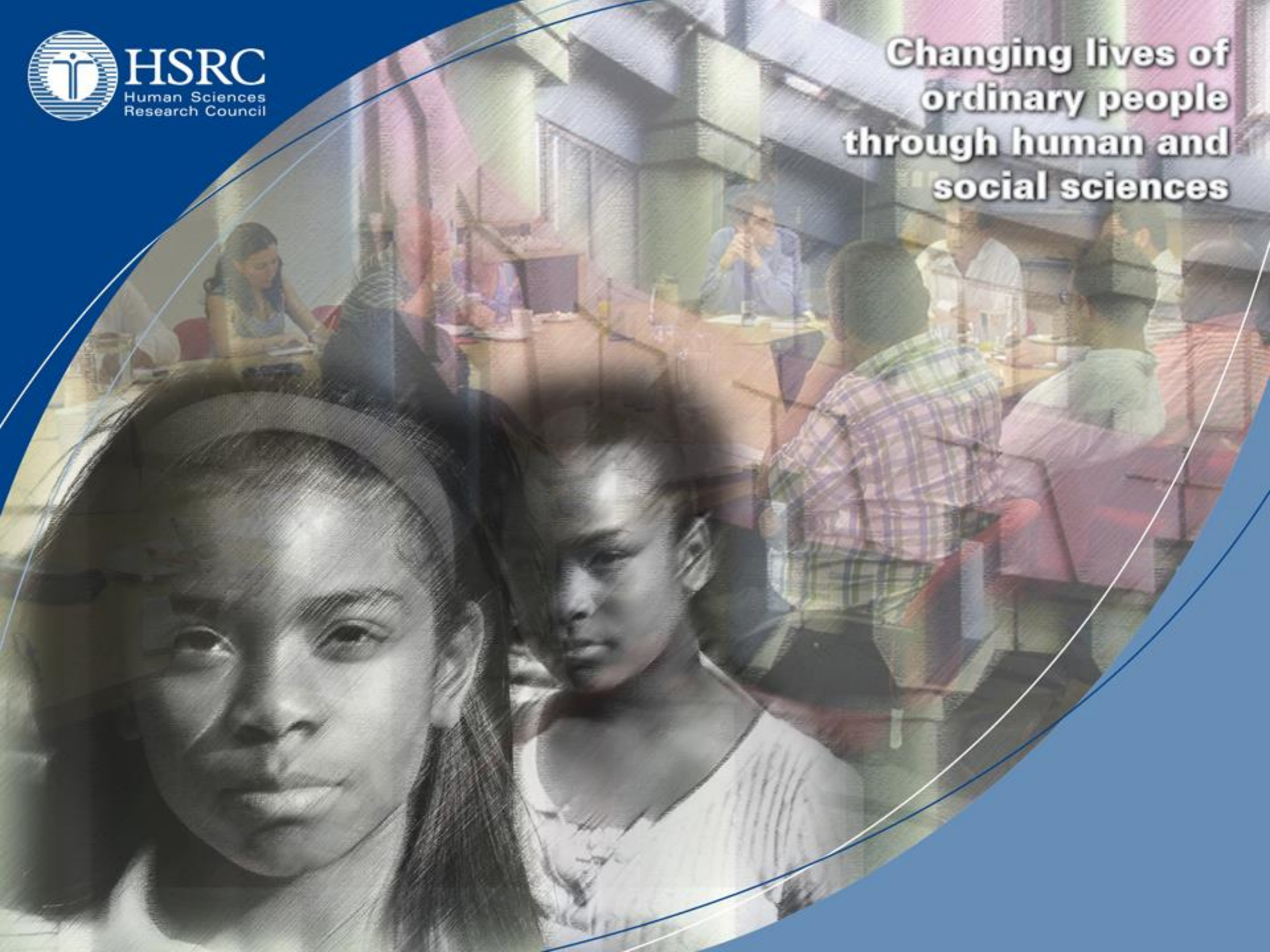




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**Changing lives of
ordinary people
through human and
social sciences**



DGSD Elections 2019 Seminar

Young Lions revisited: Youth, democratic evaluations and electoral predispositions

Ben Roberts, Jarè Struwig, Steven Gordon, Yul Derek Davids,
Thobeka Radebe, Ngqapheli Mchunu and Samela Mytingizane, DGSD, HSRC

Venues: Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town

Time: 12:30 –14:00

Date: 28 March 2019



Background

- Election 2019 and commemoration of **SA democracy@25**
 - Important to reflect on generational change
 - Much global and local discussion of democracy in crisis; democratic recession
- Why **youth participation in elections** matters
 - Arend Lijphart: In 1997 warned of challenges that unequal participation in voting would pose for democracies
 - Unequal participation could lead to unequal influence
- Two **prevailing social representations of youth**
 - A) Politically engaged, #FeesMustFall
 - B) Politically disillusioned and disengaged generation; narrative of democratic decline
 - Russell Dalton: 2017 – “The good news is, the bad news is wrong”- Millennials / born frees: potential to expand the democratic process: citizens becoming more politically active.



DGSD and election studies

- DGSD team: more than 15 years of experience with national representative surveys
- South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)
- IEC commissioned research
 - ***Voter Participation Surveys***: official, nationally representative pre-election survey series
 - ***Election Satisfaction Surveys***: representative sample of voters conducted on Election Day to provide insight into the electoral experience; used as an input into declaration of elections as free and fair



SASAS Survey design

- Responses to the survey **voluntary** and **confidential**, collected by **face-to-face interview**
- Nationally representative of adult population living in private residence
 - Primary sampling units: 500 **census small area layers** (SALs)
- All protocols and instrumentation will be submitted for approval by the HRSC REC
- Of 3,500 **addresses** will be issued –we have an average **realisation rate** of more than **75%**.
- Data **weighted** to yield a **nationally representative** sample of adults.
 - Benchmarked to the latest Mid-Year Population estimates produced by Statistics South Africa





Results I

Prevailing political mood

- + *Satisfaction with democracy*
- + *Political trust*
- + *Confidence in political leaders*



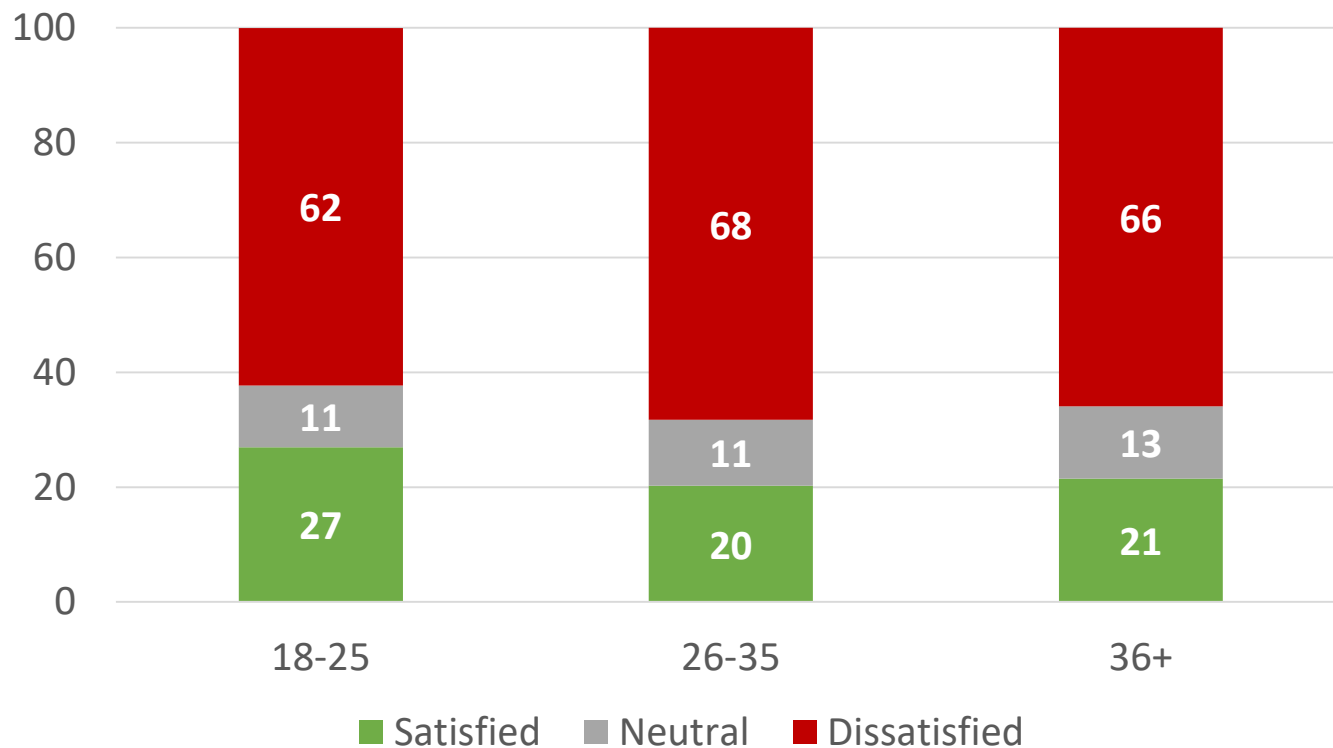
01



Satisfaction with democracy

By age group, 2017 (%)

Satisfaction with democracy, by age group, 2017



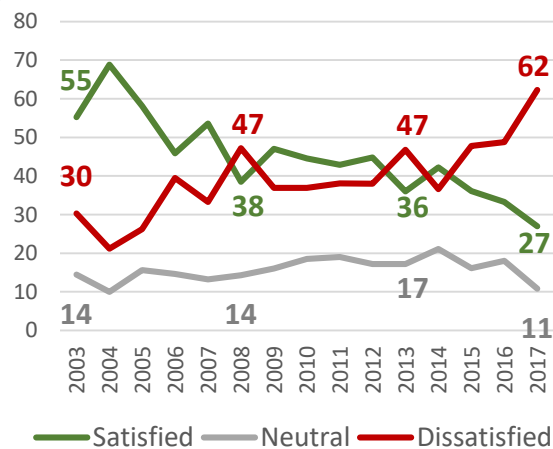
“How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy is working in South Africa?”



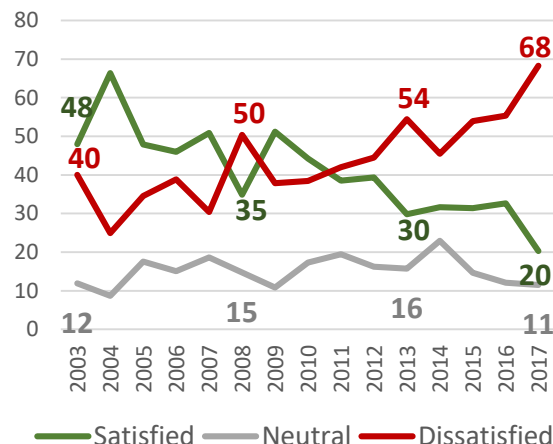
Satisfaction with democracy

By age group, 2003-2017 (%)

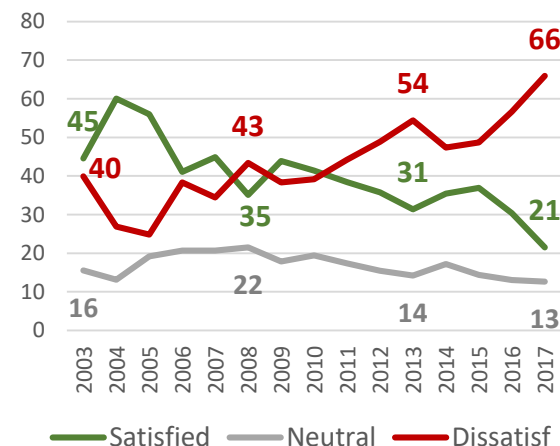
18-25 years



26-35 years



36+ years



Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017

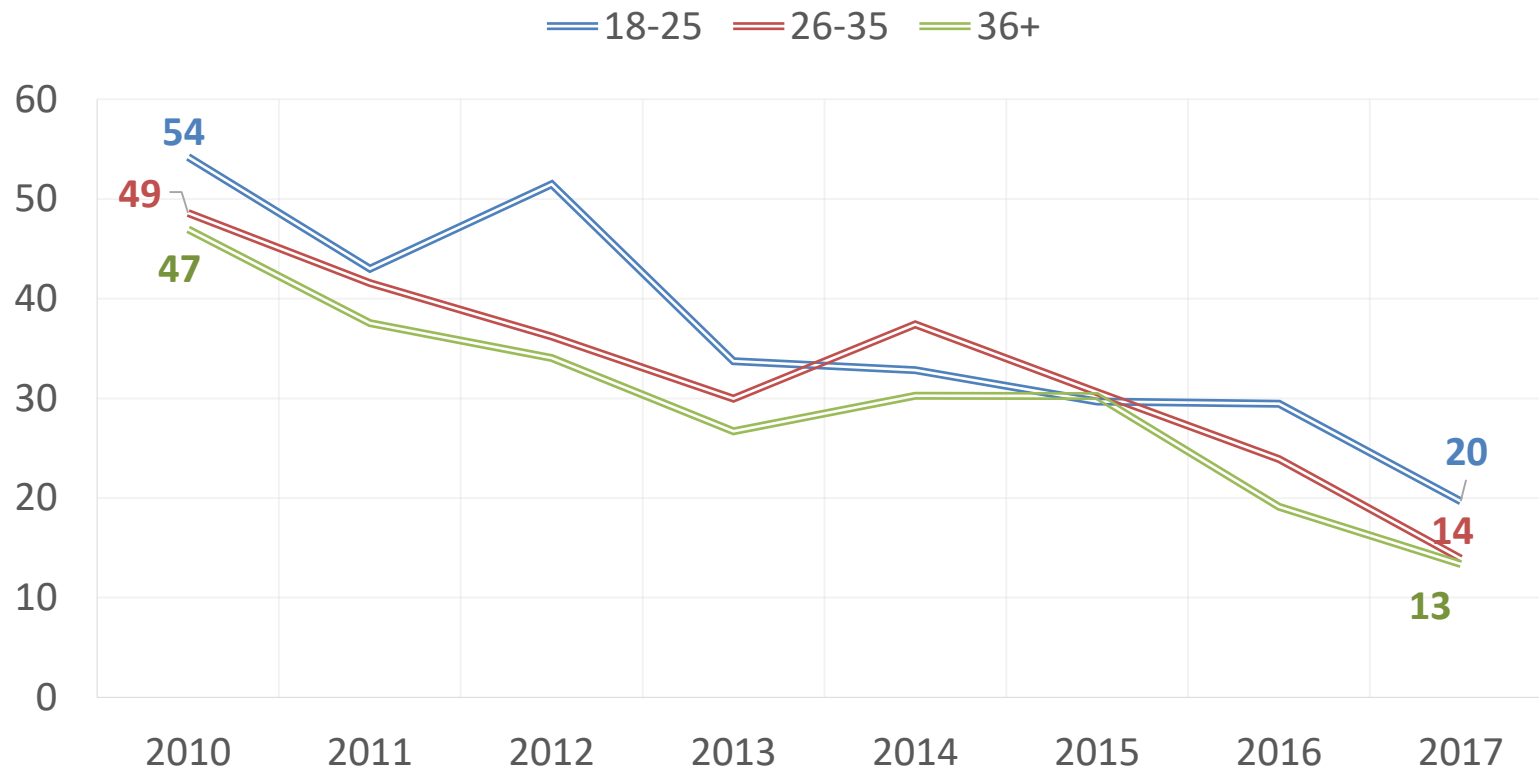
- General consistency in trends irrespective of age
- Growing concern about the functioning of democracy
- Late 2017: most negative view for all age groups; unless it improves in coming months, the political mood ahead of the national election is the most sombre seen over last 25 years.



Satisfaction with democracy

Right/wrong direction, by age group, 2010-2017

Country going in the right direction (%)

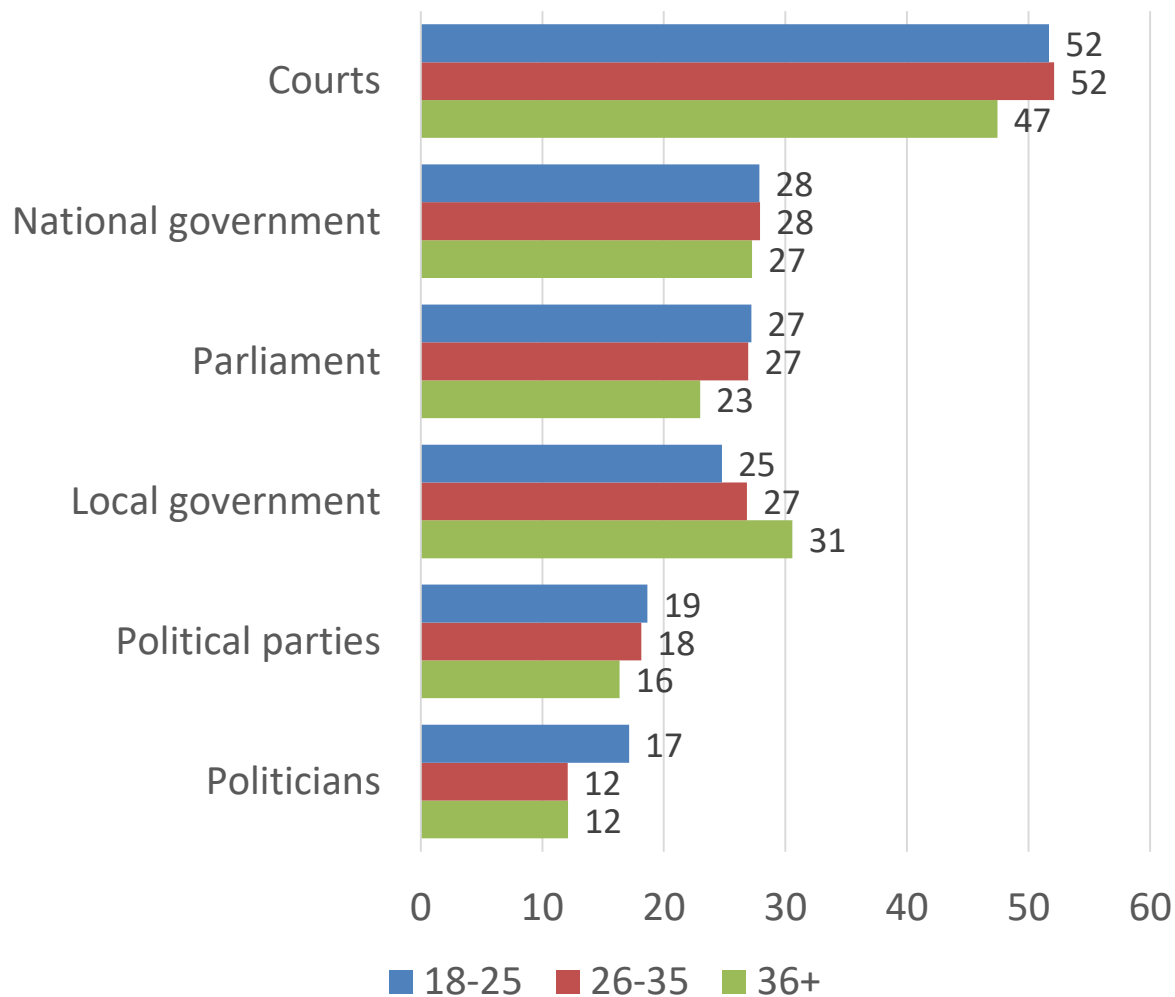


Source: HSRC SASAS 2010-2017



Political trust

% trusting key institutions 2017

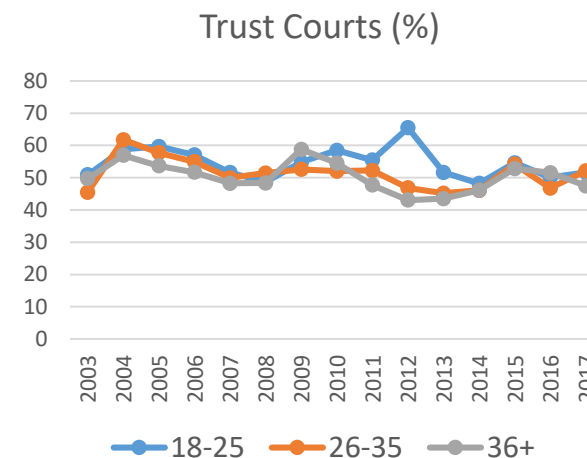
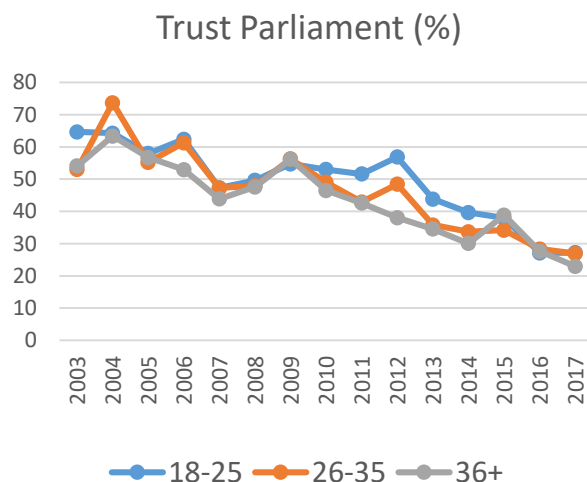
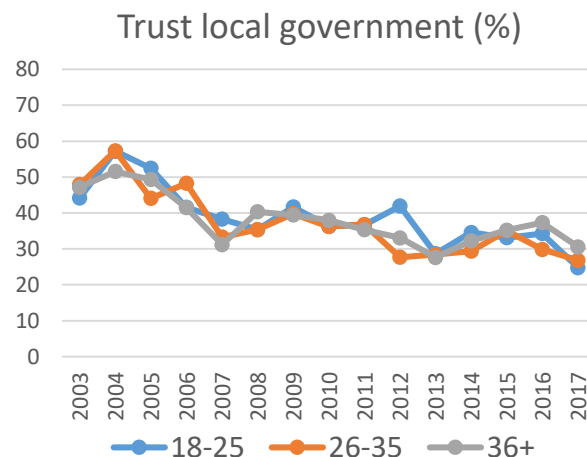
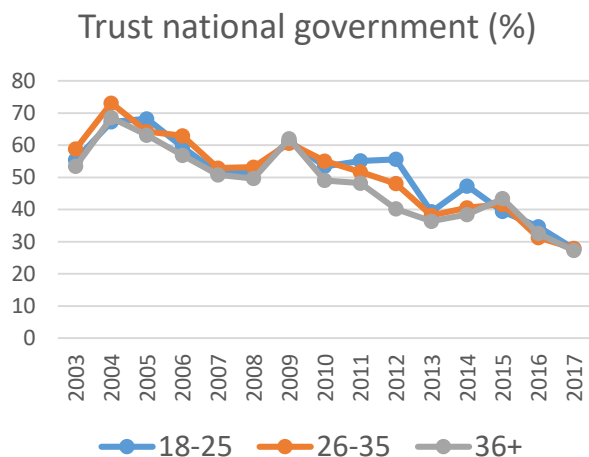


Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017



Political trust

% trusting key institutions 2003-2017

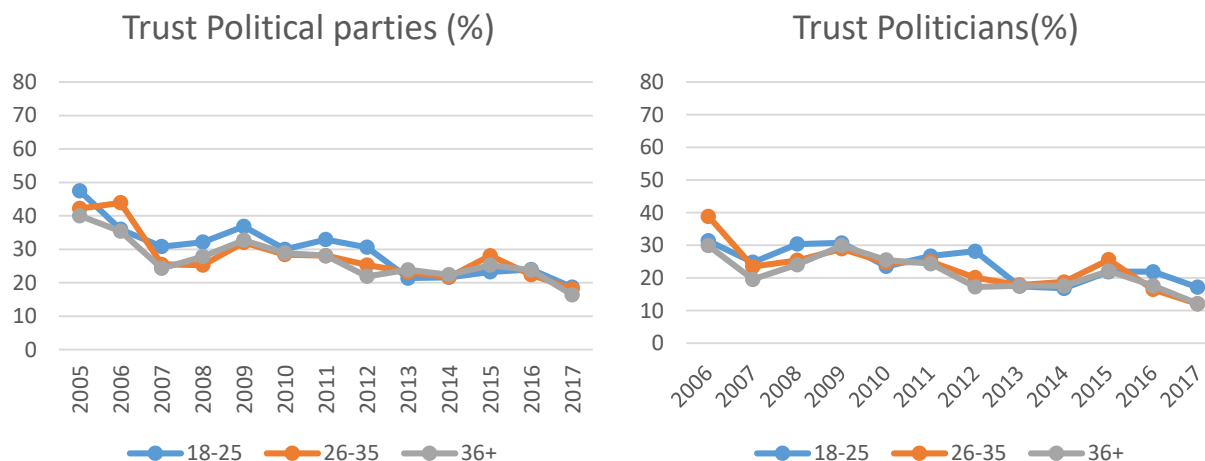


Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017

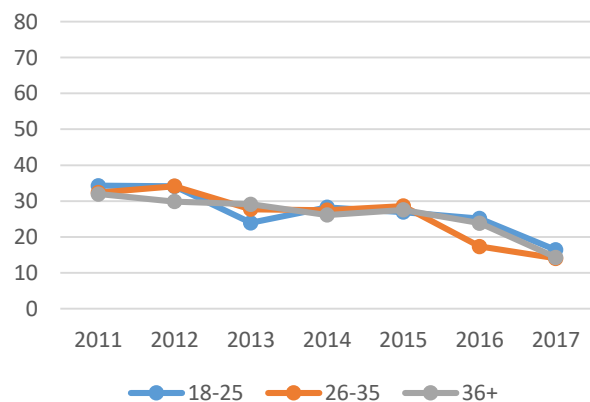


Political trust

% trusting key institutions 2003-2017



Satisfied w/ political leaders (%)



Source: HSRC SASAS 2003-2017



Results II

Psychological involvement in politics

- + *Political interest*
- + *Duty to vote*
- + *Personal political efficacy*
- + *External political efficacy (responsiveness & accountability)*

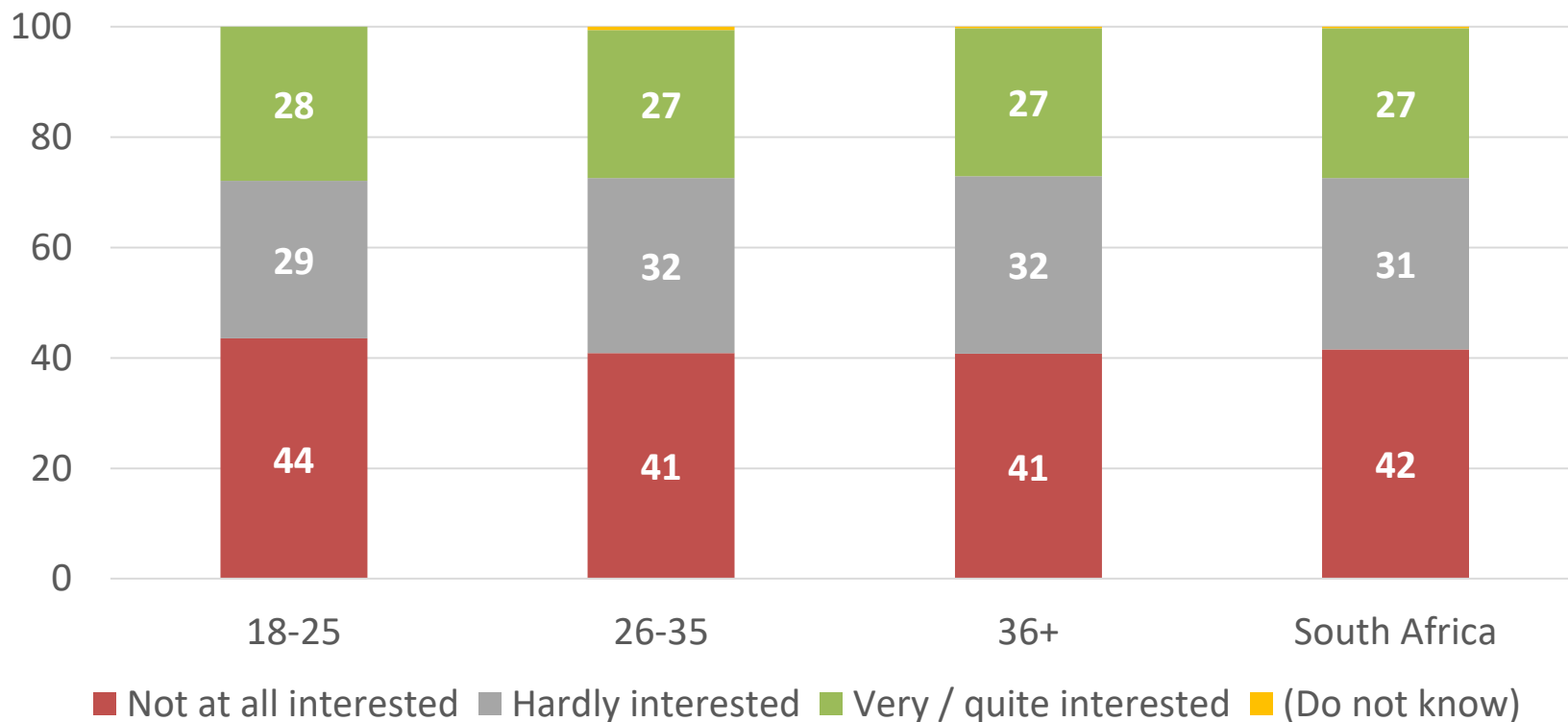
02



Political interest

Assumption of life-cycle model that young are less politically engaged

Political interest by age group, 2017



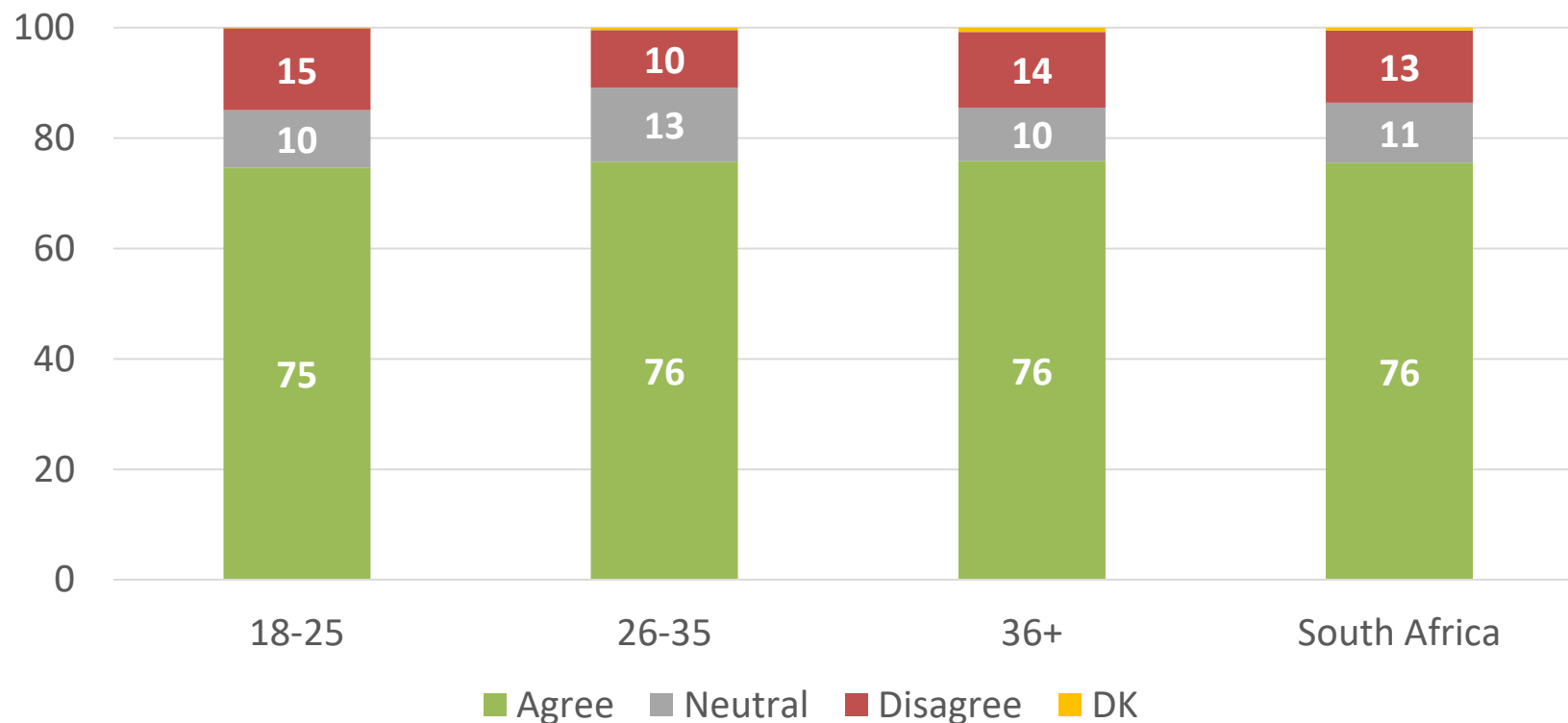
- Commonality in levels of political interest across age groups
- Levels of interest quite circumscribed



Duty to vote

A key factor informing citizenship norms in South Africa

Duty to vote, by age group, 2017



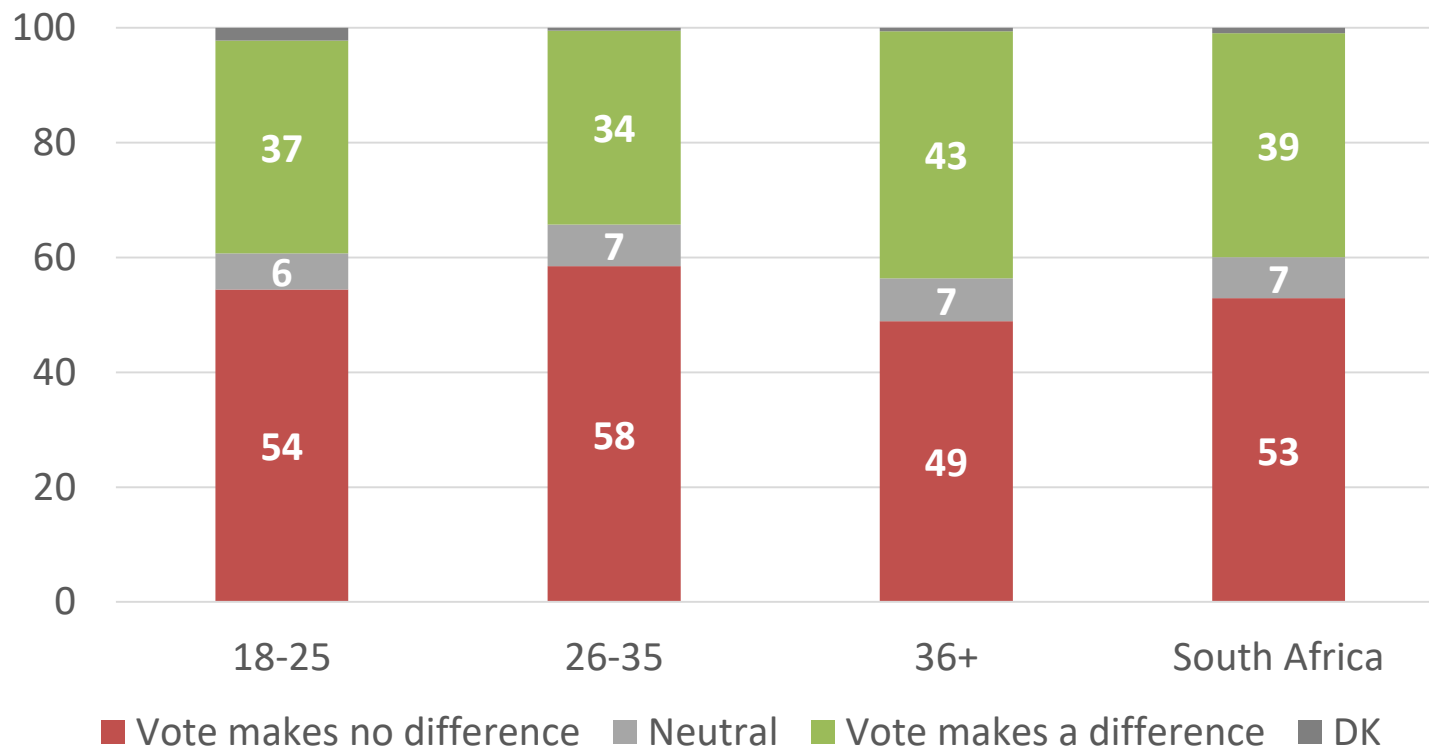
- Robust belief that “It is the duty of all citizens to vote”
- Distinguishes RSA from other European and N. American countries



Personal political efficacy

Critical determinant of intention to vote

Vote makes a difference, by age group, 2017



"Whether I vote or not makes no difference"

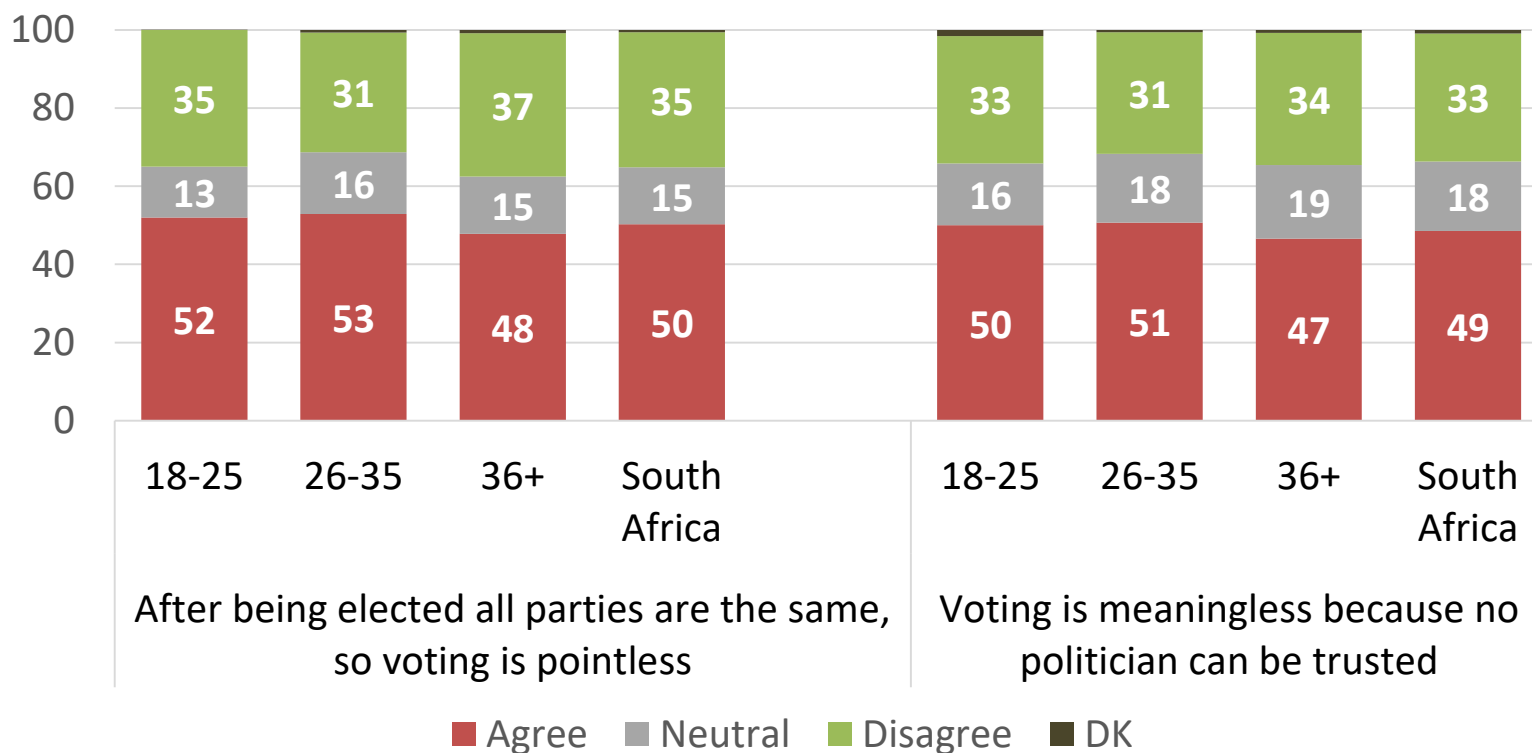
- Fairly critical assessment of the contribution one's vote makes.
- Patterns again similar across age groups



External political efficacy

Critical determinant of intention to vote

External political efficacy, by age group, 2017



- Public equally critical of the degree of responsiveness of the elected to the electorate
- Little variance by age



Results III

Intention to vote

-
- + *Intention to vote*
 - + *Reasons for non-voting*
 - + *Electoral responses to unfulfilled expectations*

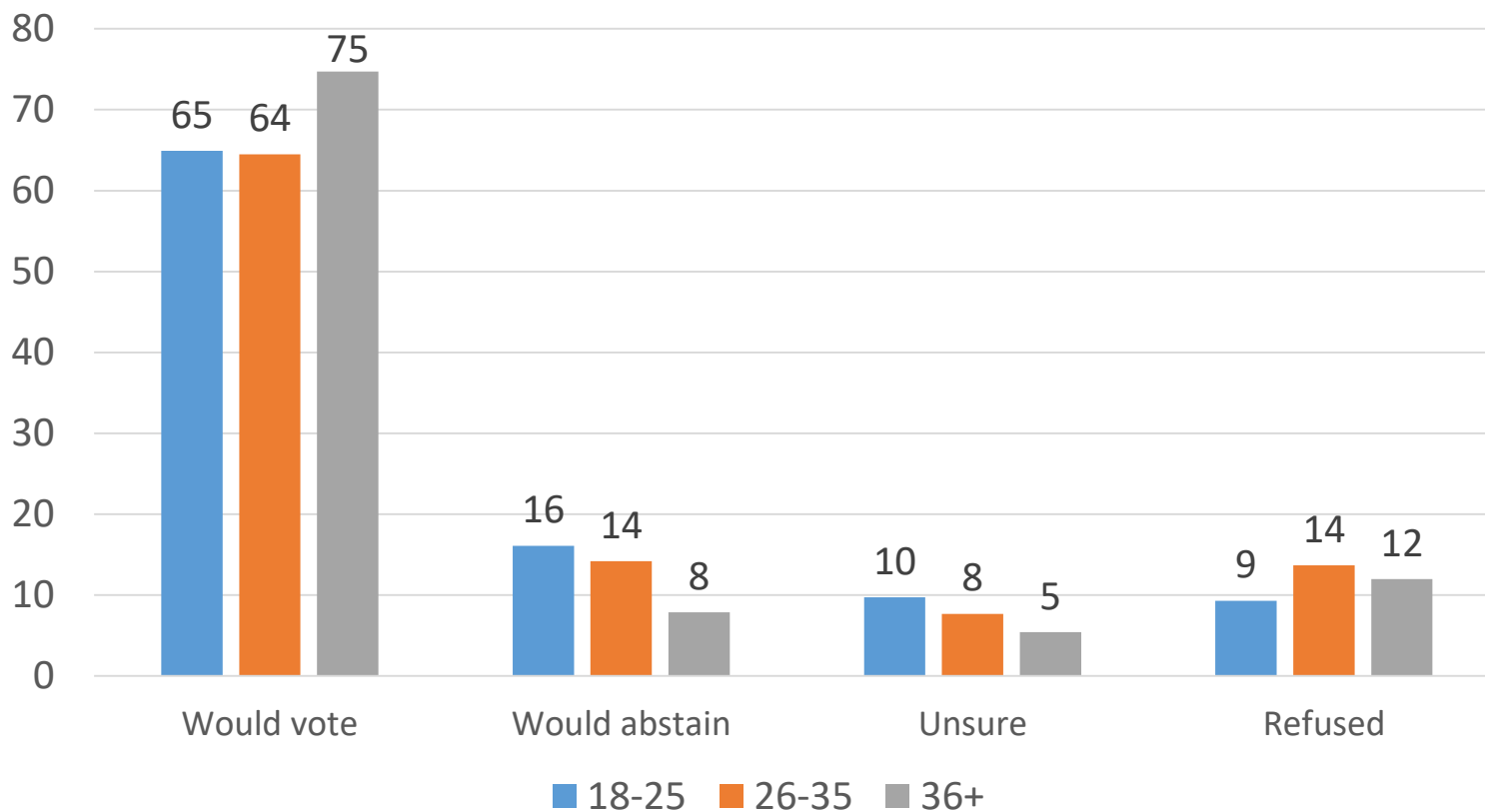
03



Intention to vote

(...if there were an election tomorrow)

Intention to vote, by age group (2017)





Reasons for not intending to vote (2017)

Predominance of disinterest, disillusionment

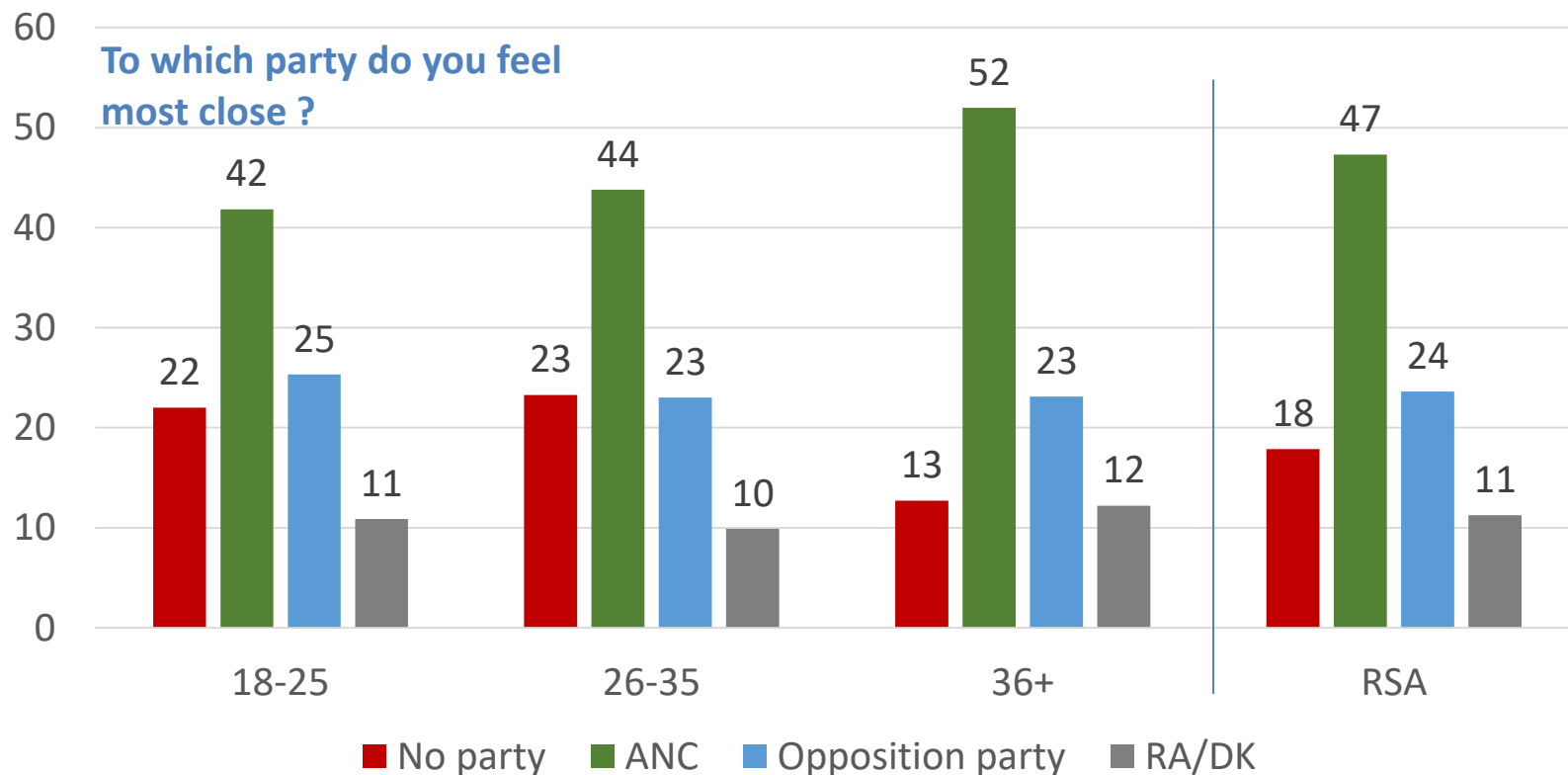
Reasons why would not vote if was an election tomorrow	18-25	26-35	36+	RSA
Administrative barriers	22	17	12	17
Not registered	10	11	2	7
Do not possess necessary documents to register	12	6	11	9
Polling station too far away	0	1	0	0
Disinterest and disillusionment	65	68	67	67
Not interested	55	55	53	54
Disillusioned with politics	8	10	13	10
Too much effort required	1	0	0	0
Only one party could win	0	3	1	2
Intimidation	0	0	1	1
Individual barriers	0	0	1	0
Health reasons	0	0	1	0
Other	14	14	19	16
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: HSRC SASAS 2017



Party identification

Party attachment, by age group (2017)



- ANC remains the party most identified with across age groups
- Higher shares of youth report no party attachment than those older than 35 years; also higher level identifying with no party



Electoral choice

(If there were an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?)

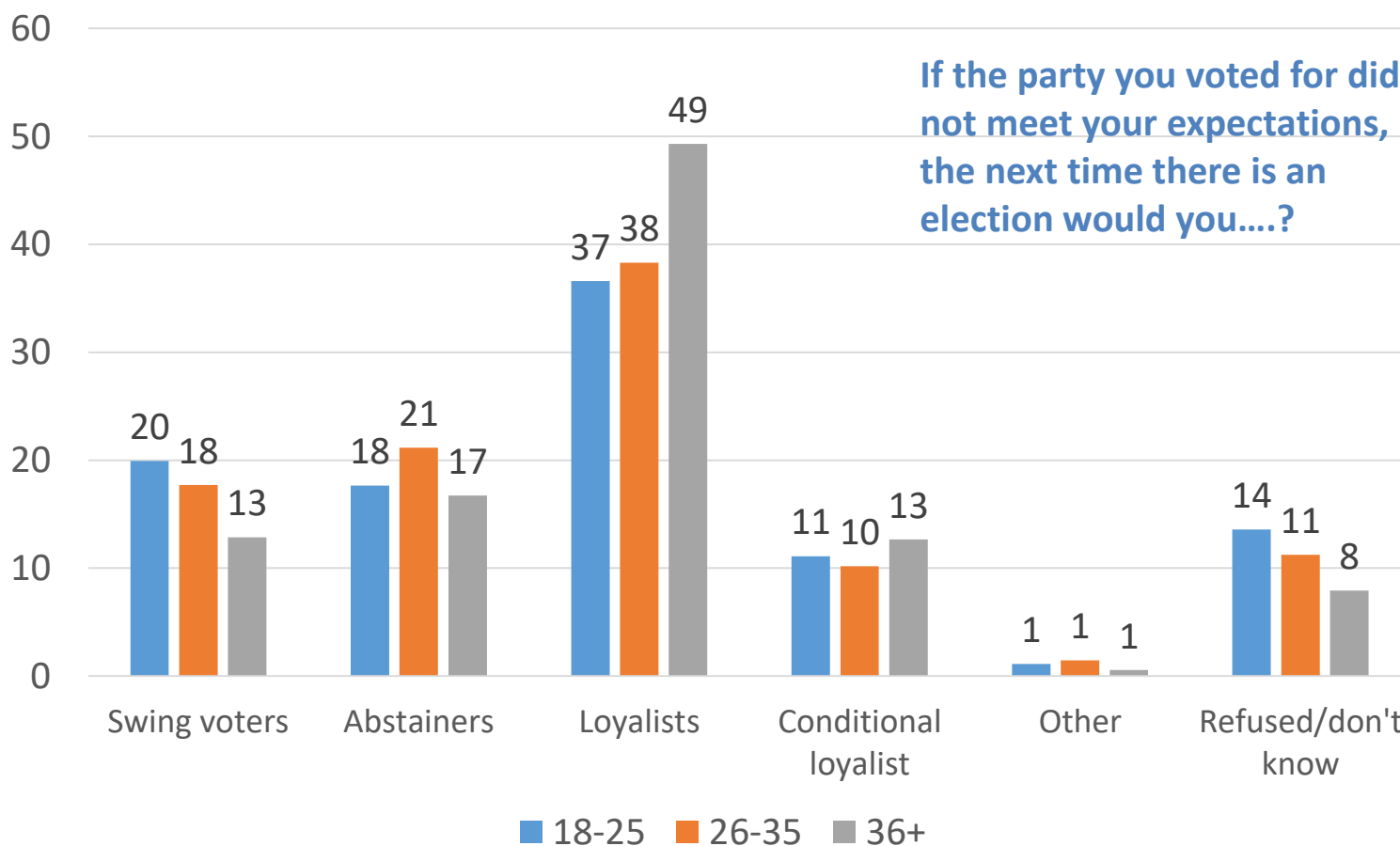
	18-25	26-35	36+	RSA
ANC	38	40	51	45
DA	9	16	17	15
EFF	13	6	3	6
Other party	5	3	4	4
Abstain	16	14	8	12
Unsure	10	8	5	7
(Refused)	9	14	12	12
Total	100	100	100	100

- ANC again dominates across age groups; support increases with age
- EFF more popular among 18-25 year-olds
- Abstention higher among youth cohorts



Electoral responses to unfulfilled expectations

Swing Voters, Loyalists and Abstainers (2017)





Results IV

A unified or divided generation?

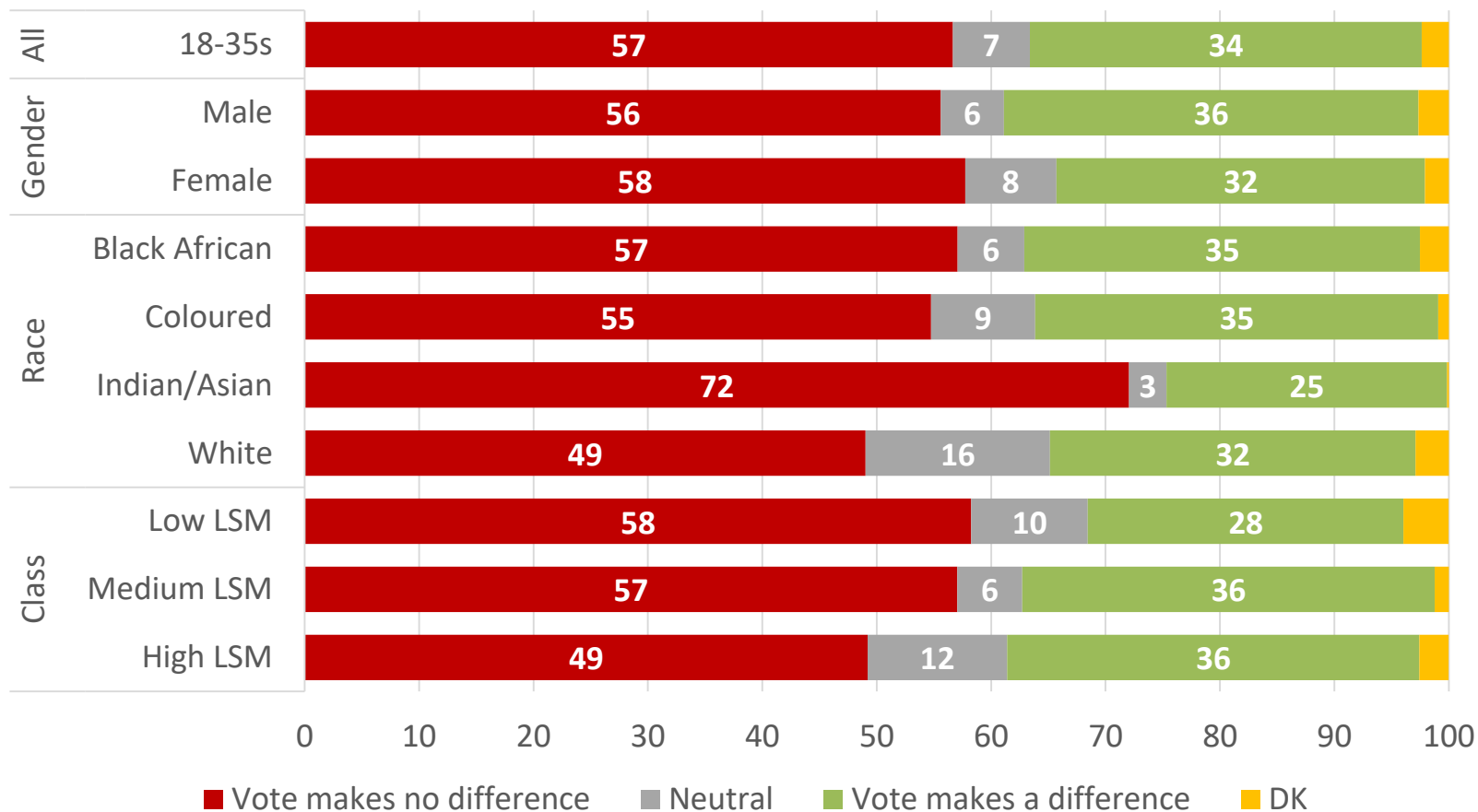
-
- + *Internal political efficacy*
 - + *Intention to vote*
 - + *Electoral choice*

04



Internal political efficacy

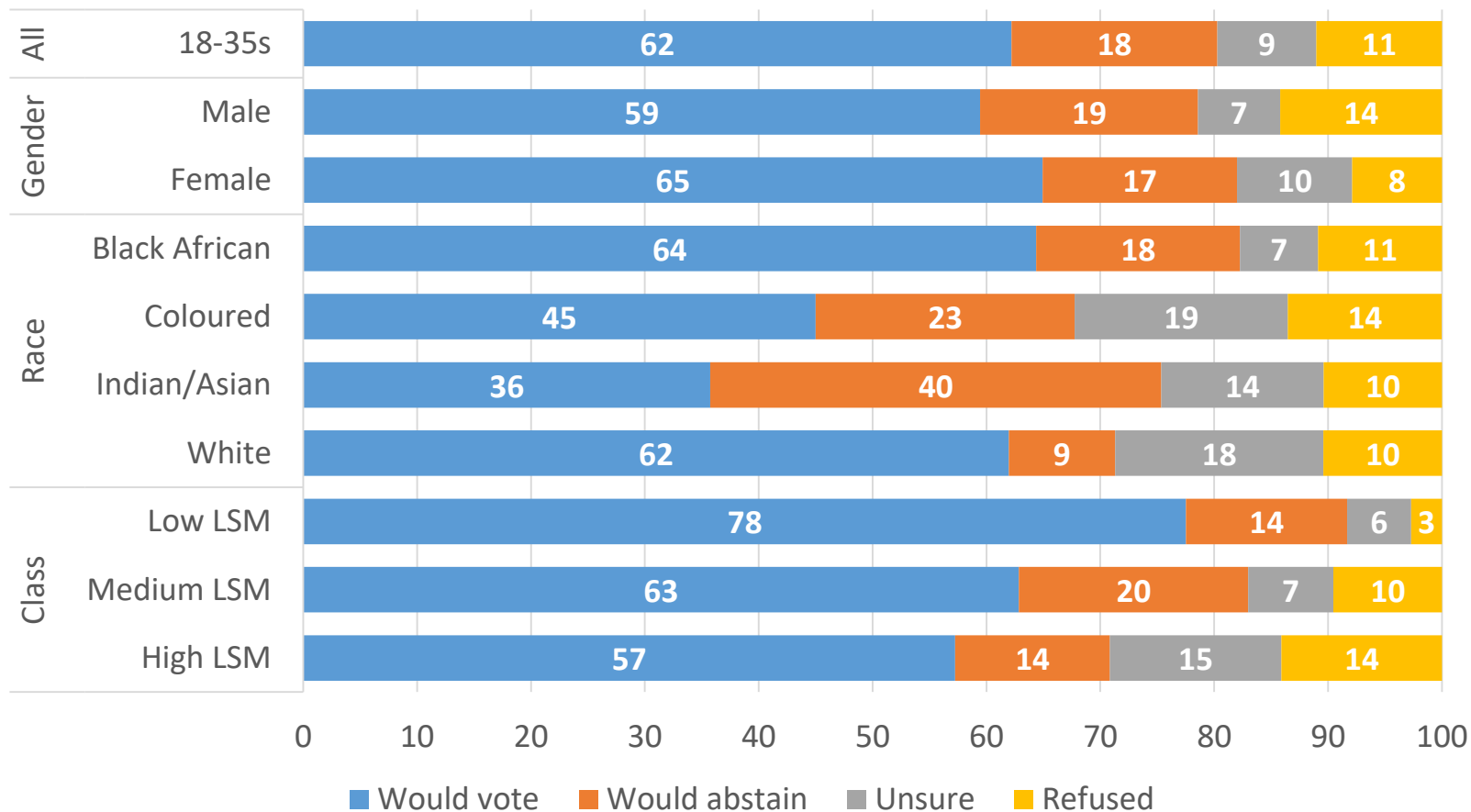
Within-youth differences (%)





Intention to vote

Within-youth differences (%)





Electoral choice among youth

(...if there were an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?)

	ANC	DA	EFF	Other party	Abstain	Unsure	(Refused)	Total
Male	34	11	11	3	19	7	14	100
Female	43	12	6	4	17	10	8	100
Black African	45	5	10	4	18	7	11	100
Coloured	8	33	3	1	23	19	14	100
Indian/Asian	1	34	0	0	40	14	10	100
White	0	58	2	2	9	18	10	100
Low LSM	62	5	6	5	14	6	3	100
Medium LSM	41	8	9	3	21	8	10	100
High LSM	19	26	9	3	14	15	14	100
All	38	12	9	3	19	9	10	100



Conclusions

- **Myth of a generation apart?**
 - **Substantive areas of commonality** between youth and older cohorts
 - **A growing climate of discontent**
 - Significant declines in public confidence in the state
 - Need to understand how such declines influence behaviour
 - **But also points of divergence:** especially policy choice...
 - **Swing voters and political change**
 - **Much more substantive support** for the EFF amongst the youth
 - Youth more likely to **switch political party** when unhappy
- **A politically heterogeneous generation**
 - Significant variation among young citizens
 - Need for an intersectional approach



Conclusions (cont.)

- **Revisiting the disengaged youth and democratic crisis hypotheses**
 - **Emergence of critical (young) citizens**, who want to hold the elected to account
 - **Dalton: potential vs risk**
 - Positive signs for democracy: more engaged young citizens
 - Cautionary note: Political inequality (voice) if electoral turnout declines due to administrative factors and growing disillusionment with state of accountability and responsiveness
- **Need to strengthen voter efficacy through civic education**
 - Low levels of both **personal and external voter efficacy** bad for democracy accountability
 - Over the long-term **voter efficacy** will undermine **civic duty** to vote
 - **Civic education** can arrest low voter efficacy and ensure commitment to **democratic norms** amongst youth
 - **Electoral reform** may also lead to improvements in attitudes towards voting –**recent proposals** for new representative elections.



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thank you

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