



A Preliminary Weighing of Principles: Report Back to Members

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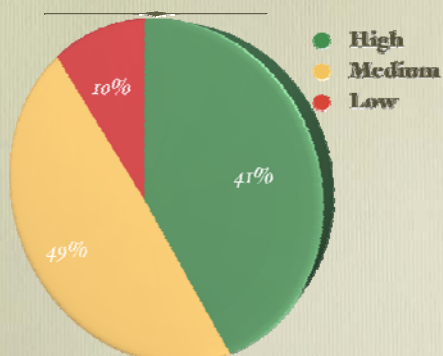
Taking the temperature of the members: What Assembly members thought



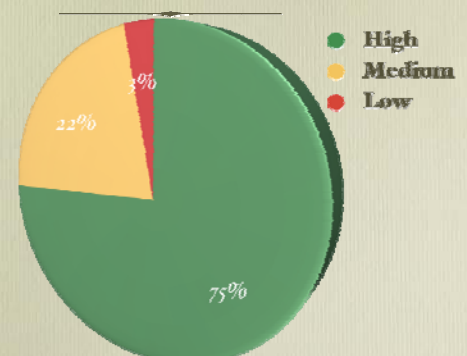
Objectives

- To report the findings of your preliminary ranking of electoral principles and values

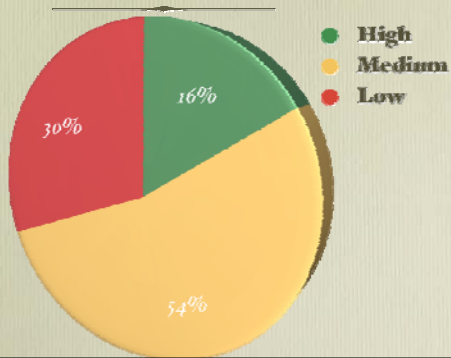
Demographic Representation



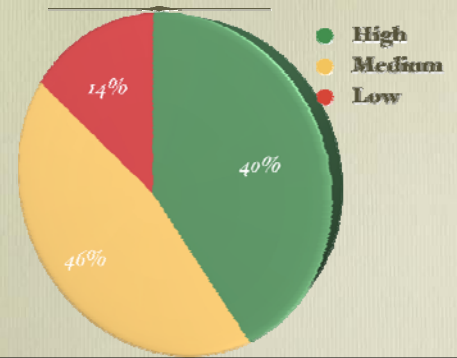
Proportionality



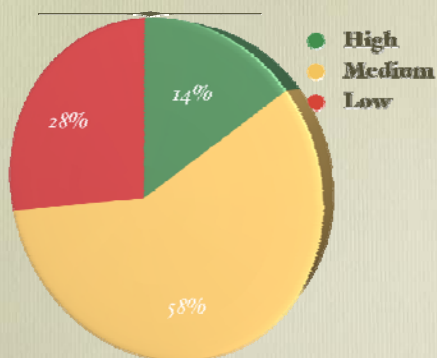
Representation by Population



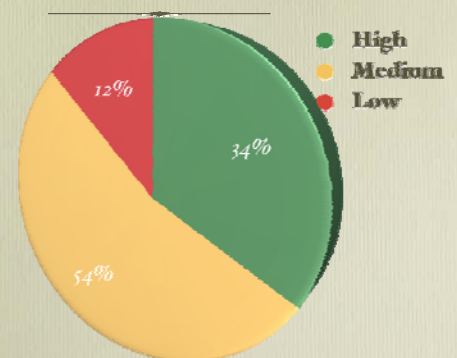
Voter Choice

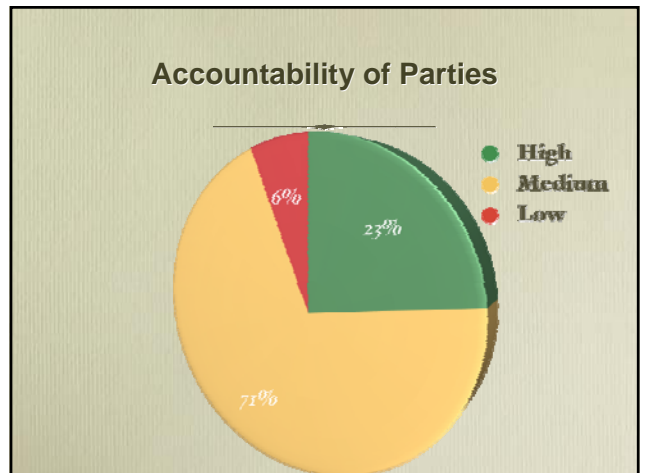
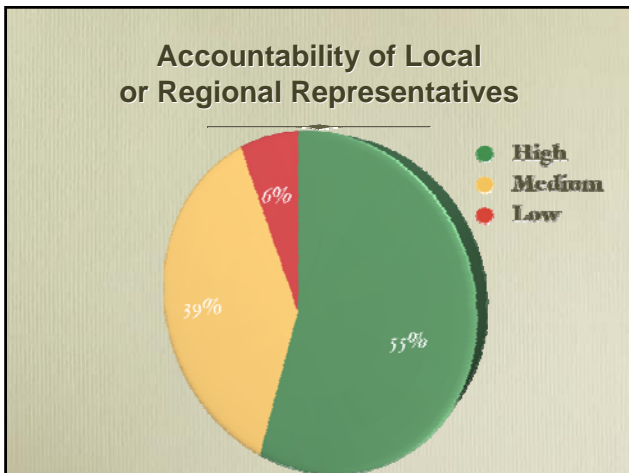
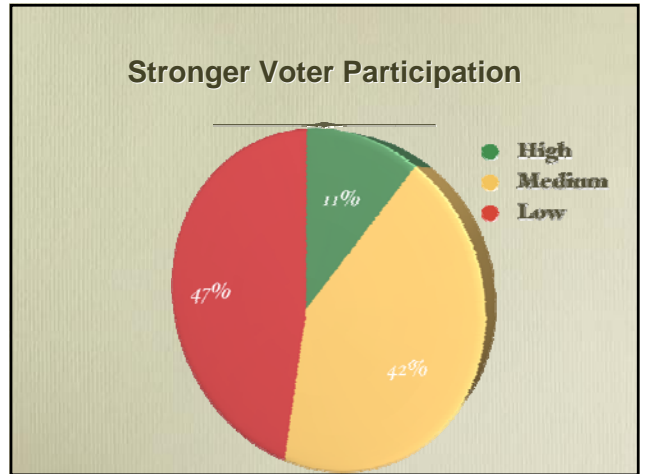
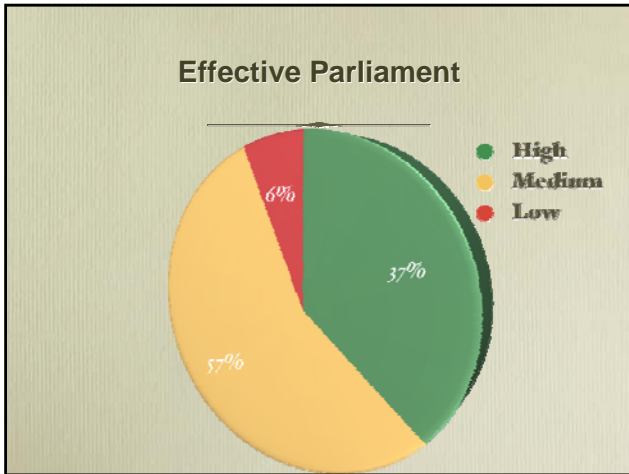


Effective Parties

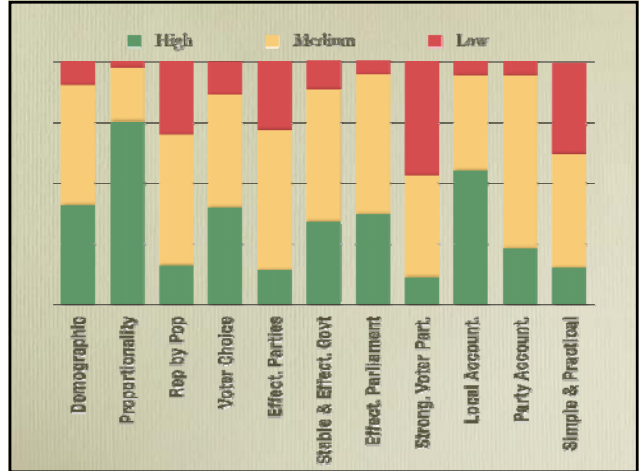
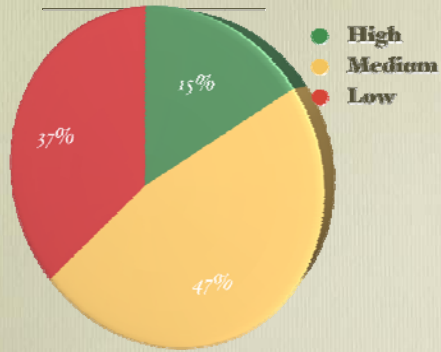


Stable and Effective Government





Simplicity and Practicality



What are *your* observations?

Weighing of Principles

A Few Themes

- Generally, you felt the task was difficult but useful. Sample quote: “This is difficult ranking only 3 or 4 high. Why can’t we rank them all high? That George!”
- There seemed to be two approaches to the exercise: rank principles’ importance based on their own merits, or rank them in relation to other principles. For example, are some principles consequences of others? The second approach was more common, particularly in the second round.
- Members identified at least four reasons for ranking some principles lower than others:
 - You felt some principles were not as important as others. Most groups said they would give up some **simplicity & practicality** to achieve other goals. Sample quote: “We don’t want to eliminate systems that are more complex, yet more appropriate.”
 - You thought some principles were consequences of others. Thoughts included: **demographic representation** may be a consequence of **proportionality**; **stronger voter participation** may be a consequence of greater **accountability**.
 - There seemed to be no direct link between the electoral system and the principle. The most common example was **stronger voter participation**.
 - All systems seem to be generally the same when it comes to the principle. Ideas included: all systems in established democracies can produce **stable & effective government**; all systems can produce **effective parties**.
- You thought some of the principles were closely connected or overlap—for example, **effective parties**, **stable & effective government**, and **effective parliament**.
- You felt some principles needed further definition or clarification (see following pages).

Clarification of Principles

Representation by population

Representation by population means that each vote carries an equal weight in electing MPPs. Put another way, each MPP represents roughly the same number of people.

Four principles are considered when electoral district boundaries are drawn:

- the community of interest or community of identity
- the historical pattern of an electoral district
- a manageable geographic size
- extraordinary circumstances.

Generally, there shouldn't be more than a 25% difference—up or down—in the populations of districts.

Effective parties

This principle focuses on *political parties*.

What “effective” means is a bit like beauty: it's in the eyes of the beholder. An effective party system can be one with a few large parties, or one with many smaller parties.

The Citizens' Assembly regulation describes “effective parties” this way: “Political parties should be able to structure public debate, mobilize and engage the electorate, and develop policy alternatives.” In other words, effective parties:

- promote public discussion about important issues
- get voters involved in elections and politics more generally
- are able to attract and hold on to supporters
- offer voters different policies or platforms to choose from.

Electoral systems affect the number and type of parties that are likely to win seats. This has an impact on how effective parties can be at doing their job.

Issues such as party financing rules and how parties choose to nominate candidates fall outside the Assembly's mandate, although the electoral system may have an influence on the choices parties make.

See Jonathan's slides from Weekend 2 (Item 3), “Political Parties & Electoral Systems,” for a review of parties.

Stable and effective government

This principle focuses on *governments*.

As members pointed out, “stable” and “effective” are two different things. A stable government can be effective or ineffective, but it is unlikely that an unstable government will be effective.

Stability can be thought of in different ways:

- whether a government serves its full term
- how often elections are held
- the degree of policy continuity between one government and the next; for example, does a government try to reverse many of the policies of the previous government?

An effective government can manage the affairs of the province or country and carry out the policy platform that the party (or parties) set out during the election campaign.

The former Select Committee on Electoral Reform (which recommended the eight principles that appear in the Citizens' Assembly regulation) said this about effective government:

Effective government is difficult to define, but most agree it includes being able to take decisive action when such is required.... measuring the effectiveness of governments is already a... difficult and value-laden exercise, without taking the further step of connecting it with electoral models.

Effective parliament

This principle focuses on parliament or the *legislature*.

What takes place in the legislature goes beyond the government or individual parties. If you think of governments in terms of decision-making and outcomes, you might think of the legislature in terms of process and relationships. What's important is not just what decisions are made but *how* they are made. For example, is there an opposition? Can it be heard? What is the nature of the debate? How do parties work together (e.g. on legislative committees)?

See Jonathan's slides from Weekend 2 (Item 2), "The Structure & Function of Legislatures," for a review of the legislature's four key functions: hold the government accountable, provide different views, pass laws, and represent us.

Issues such as party discipline, the role of backbenchers, and the rules of the legislature are outside the Assembly's mandate, but may be affected by the electoral system.

Accountability: local/regional and party

Often when we think about accountability, what comes to mind is the quality of political leadership and whether we can trust politicians. Unfortunately, no electoral system can guarantee us these things. The Assembly's mandate is to look at systems, not individuals, although the system may have some influence on how political players act.

The Citizens' Assembly regulation defines accountability this way: "Ontario voters should be able to identify decision-makers and hold them to account."

This means looking at how the lines of accountability change depending on the type of electoral system. For example, should voters be able to hold a **local/regional representative** to account or a **party**? What are the trade-offs of each?

Simplicity and practicality

As members noted, simplicity and practicality are two different things. Simplicity itself can refer to a range of things: the format of the ballot, how easy it is to understand the system, how easy it is to understand the election results.

Practicality seems to be more about workability or acceptability, which links back to the principle of legitimacy. Practicality might involve questions such as:

- How big should the legislature be?
- Should we have a ballot as big as a tablecloth? (This gets us back to simplicity).
- How feasible would it be to put a new system into operation?

A question related to acceptability might be: “how would Ontarians react to the Assembly’s recommendation?” This is a question the Assembly will need to consider later on in its deliberations.

