

Principles and Characteristics of Single Member Plurality

(also known as First Past the Post)
or FPTP



Those who think that FPTP is legitimate might say...

- it is consistent with our experience as Ontario voters
- voting is simple and transparent

Those who think that FPTP is not legitimate might say...

- it does not reflect the true wishes of voters in terms of wasted votes and surplus votes
- it does not allow for choice of *party* and *candidate*

Those who think that FPTP allows for fairness of representation might say...

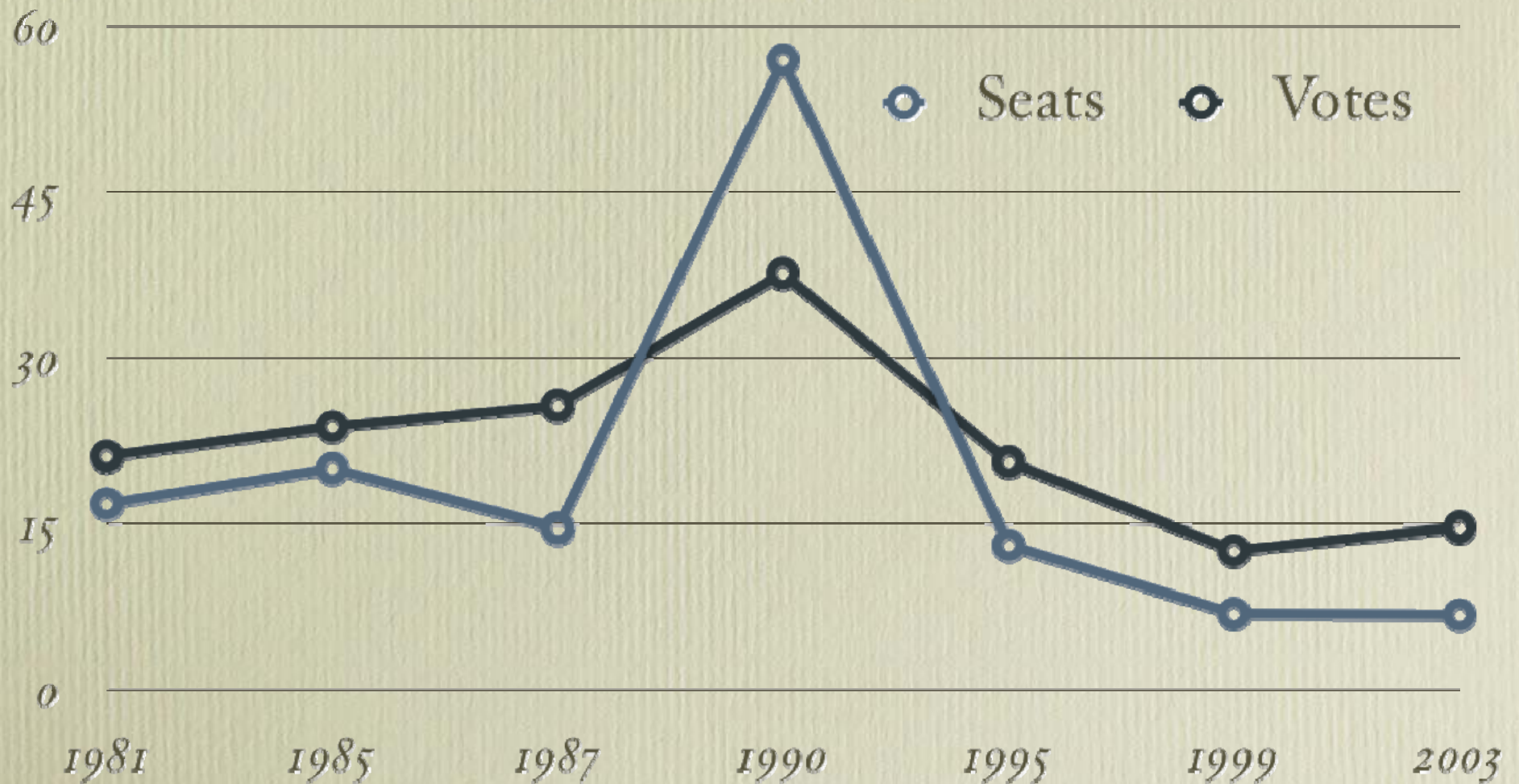
- it puts a premium on geographic representation
- it allows for representation of regionally concentrated groups

Those who think that FPTP does not allow for fairness of representation might say...

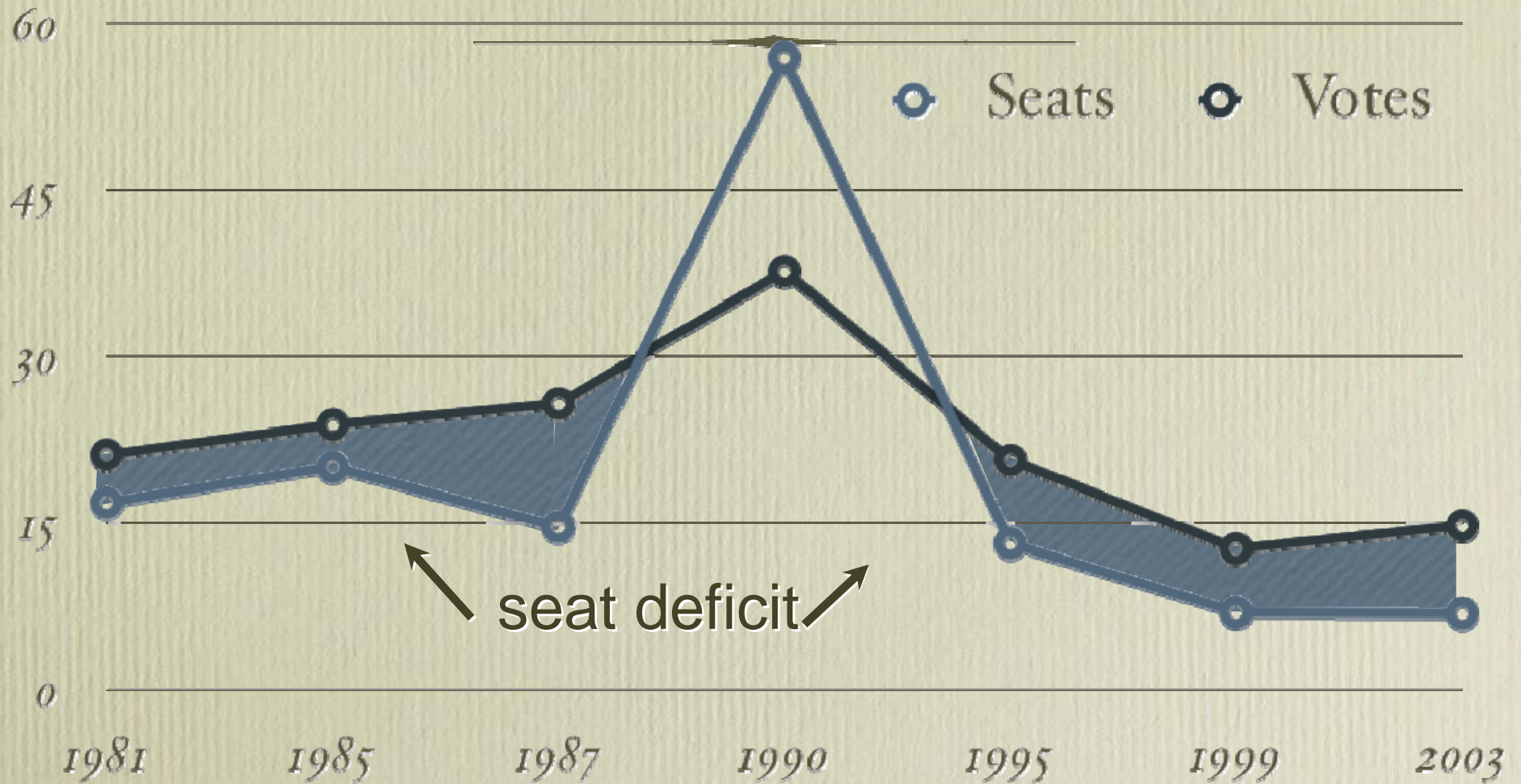
- it usually does not produce results that are proportional
- historically it has not provided for strong representation of women and minority groups

How a party fared -- the NDP in Ontario

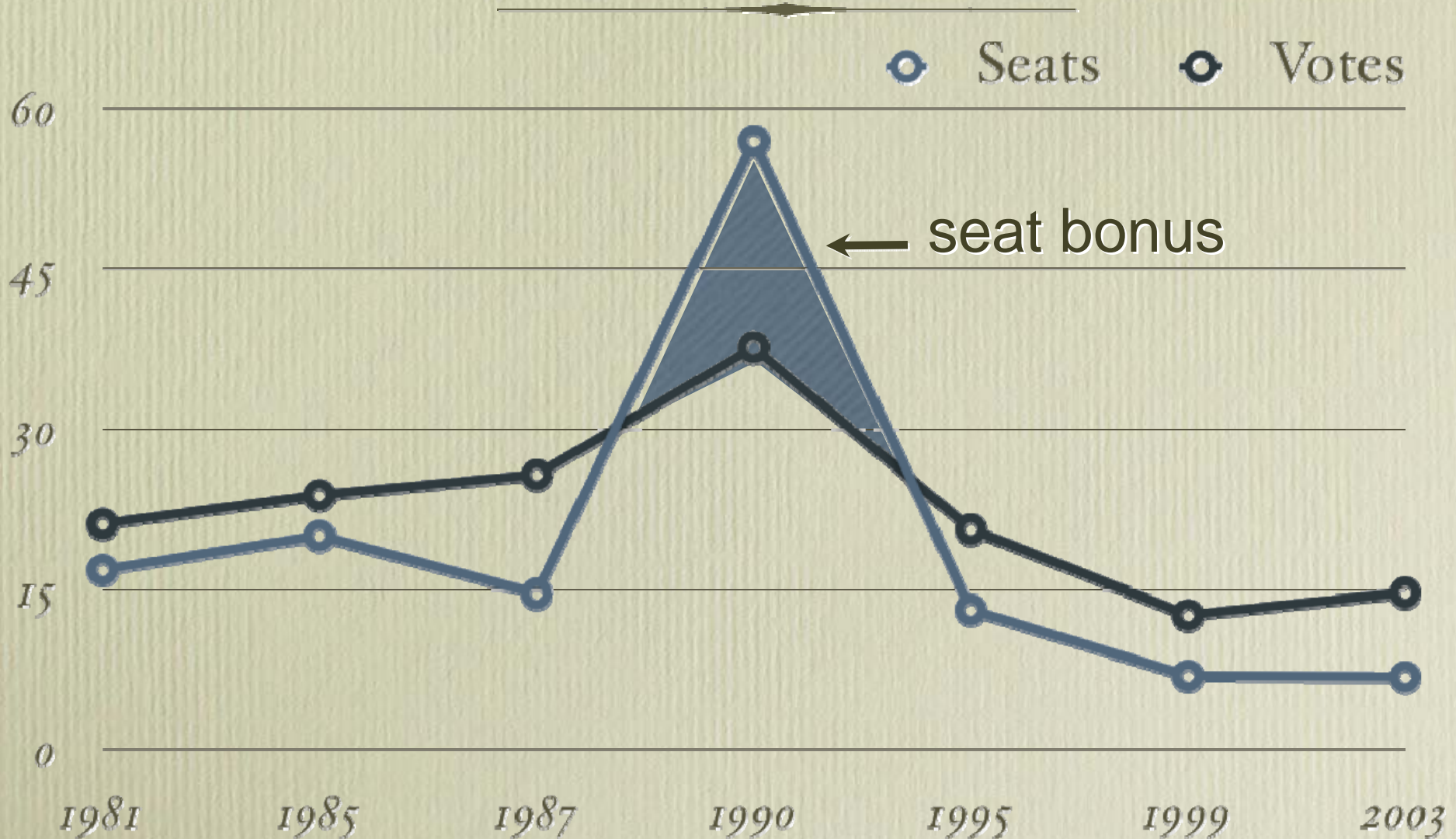
Seat bonuses and deficits



Seat deficit = percentage of seats less than the percentage of seats



Seat bonus = percentage of seats greater than percentage of votes



Those who think that FPTP allows for voter choice might say...

- it allows for a clear choice among competing candidates
- independent candidates can run

Those who think that FPTP does not allow for voter choice might say...

- independent candidates rarely win
- you cannot separate a vote for a party from a vote for a candidate
- the ballot does not allow for a full expression of voters' preferences

Those who think that FPTP allows for effective parties might say...

- it supports stable and strongly disciplined parties
- it strengthens 'umbrella' parties and weakens 'niche' parties

Those who think that FPTP does not allow for effective parties might say...

- it weakens 'niche' parties and strengthens 'umbrella' parties
- voter allegiance to parties is weak

Those who think that FPTP allows for stable and effective government might say...

- it is associated with one party majority governments
- it allows the government to carry out its policy agenda
- there is no confusion about the composition of the government

Those who think that FPTP does not allow for stable and effective government might say...

- it can produce major policy shifts from one government to another
- other systems also produce stable government

Those who think that FPTP allows for effective parliament might say...

- it allows for parliament to pass laws easily
- it tends to allow for identifiable, effective opposition in parliament

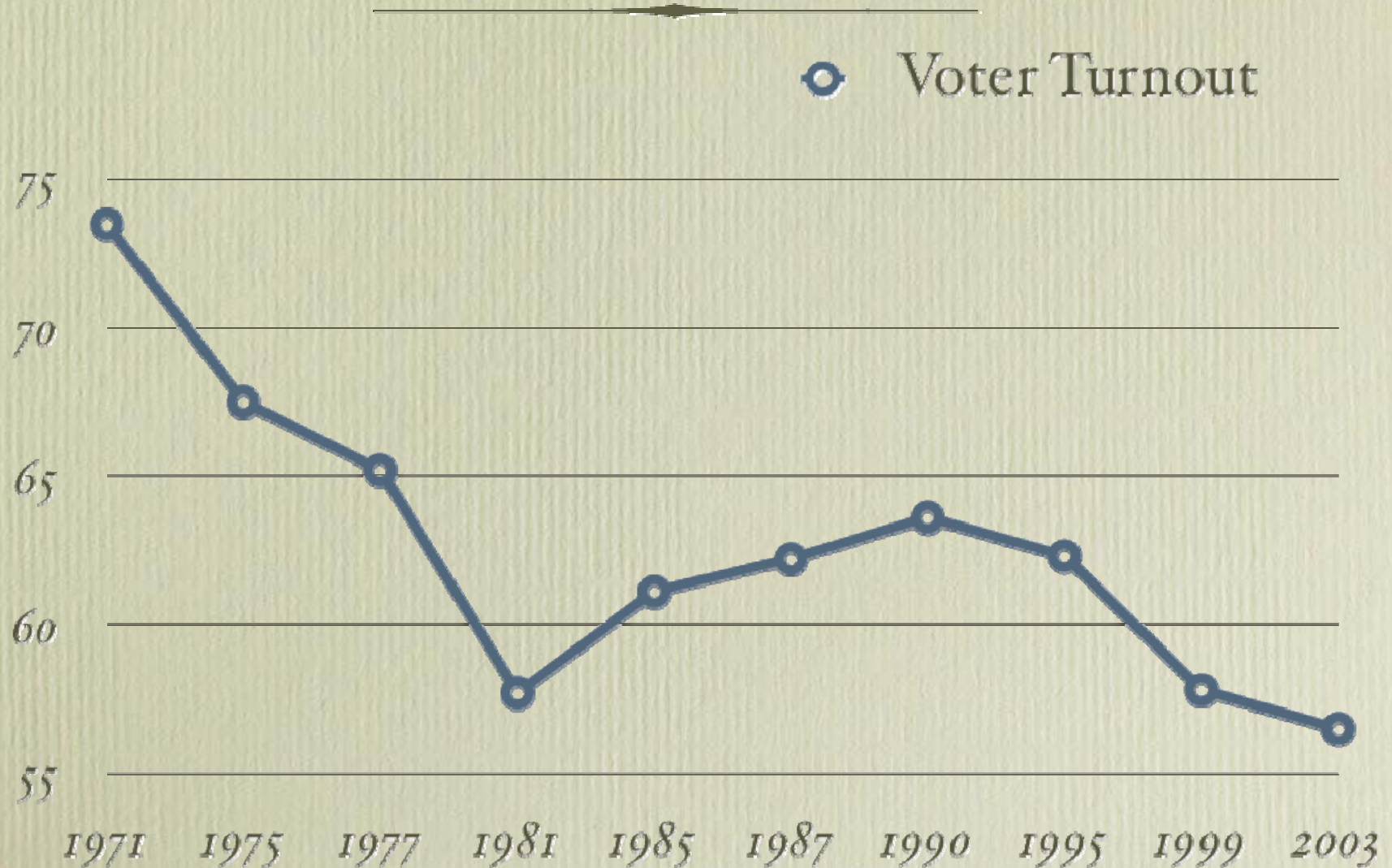
Those who think that FPTP does not allow for effective parliament might say...

- it is associated with adversarial environment and lack of cooperation among parties in parliament
- the objective is not to work with the government but to replace the government

Those who think that FPTP discourages voter participation might say...

- voter turnout is steadily declining
- the electoral system is a cause of declining rates of voter participation

Voter turnout in Ontario provincial elections



Those who think that FPTP does not discourage voter participation might say...

- voting is declining everywhere
- that declining rates of participation is a result of many factors

Those who think that FPTP allows for accountability might say...

- because there is a single representative per electoral district, it is easy to hold him or her to account
- citizens can identify the government and hold them to account

Those who think that FPTP does not allow for accountability might say...

- you can't separate support of your *local representative* from support of the *party*
- party discipline limits what a local representative can do

Those who think that FPTP is simple and practical might say...

- it is easy to vote

Those who think that FPTP is not simple and practical might say...

- the final results of the election can be difficult to explain and understand