



# RETHINK Webinar Series

Episode Two: Peering into the looking glass – NZ Election 2020

PRESENTED BY:

**DOUG HAINES**  
BDO Wellington  
Partner

**SPIRO ANASTASIOU**  
SenateSHJ  
Partner

**BDO**

August 2020

# Peering into the looking glass: Election 2020

Prepared for BDO: RETHINK Webinar Series



STAY HOME  
SAVE LIVES  
COVID19.GOV.T.NZ

100

100

# Labour well positioned ... but

Stratospheric approval ratings for Jacinda Ardern

Right direction ratings are unchanged

Unemployment – well below the OECD average

The promise of the first border relaxation

BUT

The COVID cloud is looming





# National starting a long way back

The leadership change was not about winning – it was about not losing (too badly)

Stopping the bleeding and securing the base

Ensuring a viable opposition

An alternative Government for 2023

Time not on its side

BUT

COVID 19 will change the game



# Long, long time ago ...

Six months ago, the public opinion polls were telling a different story. Pre COVID polling showed a change of Government was possible.

Party	February	May	June
Labour	41.0%	59.0%	50.0%
NZ First	3.3%	2.9%	1.8%
Greens	5.0%	4.7%	6.0%
National	46.0%	29.0%	38.0%
ACT	1.7%	2.2%	3.3%

Source: 1 NEWS Clomar Brunton Poll

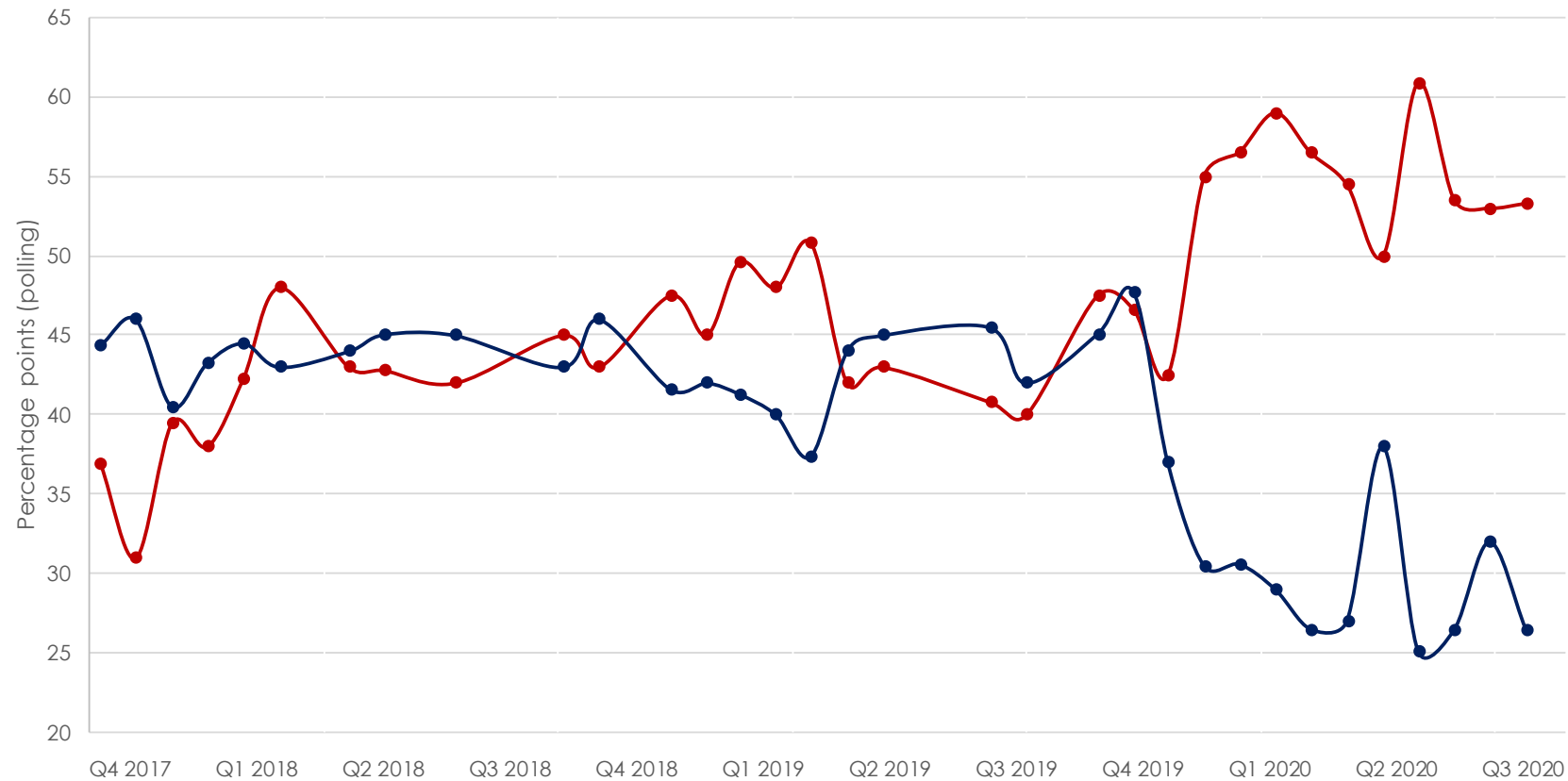


# July a month of damage control



# Looking behind the curtain – annual polling trends

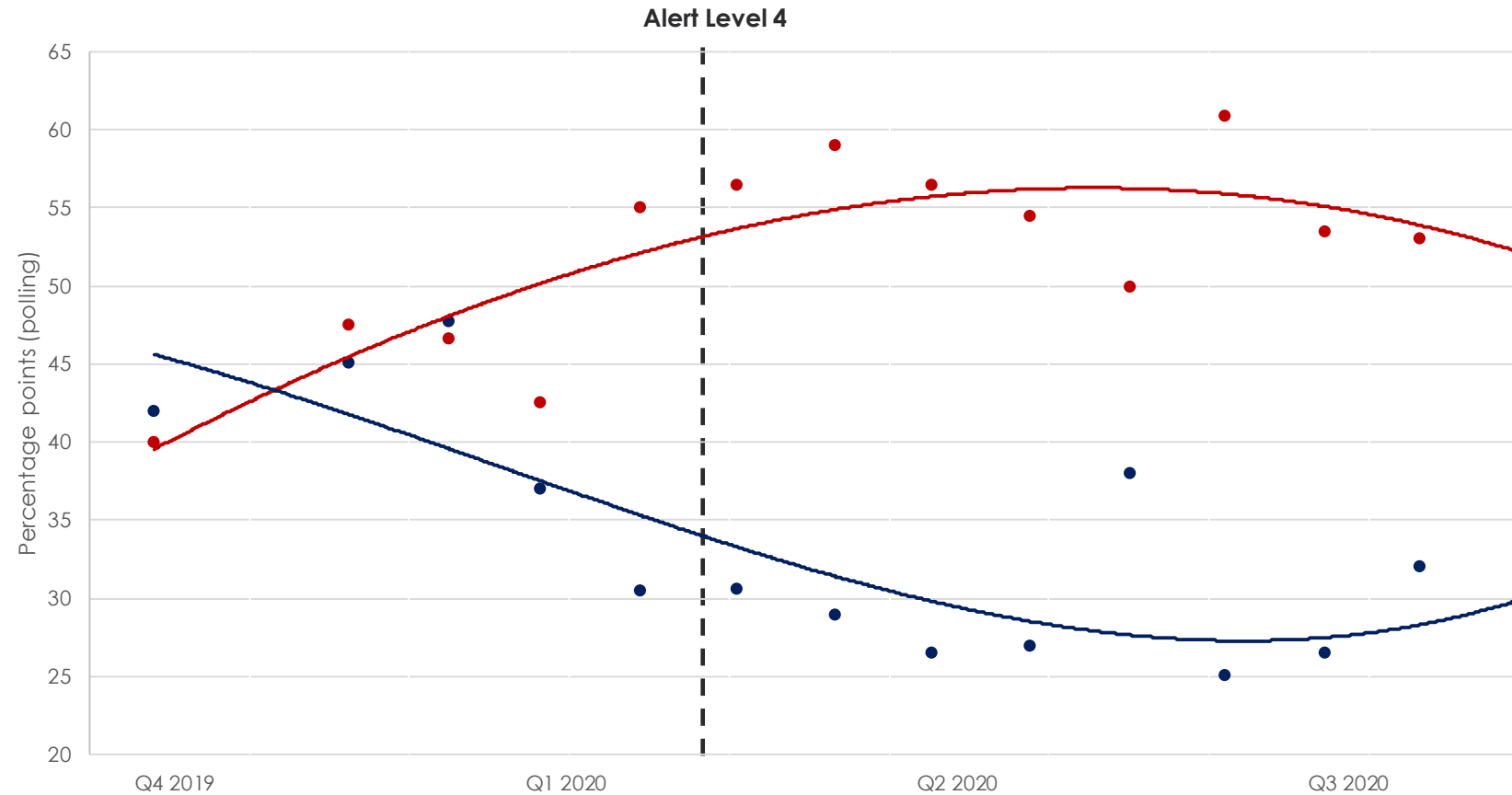
## Labour vs. National September 2017 to August 2020





# The impact of COVID-19 on polling

**Labour** vs. **National** November 2019 to August 2020



# Labour

- Election date benefits Labour
- Labour riding a wave that should carry it through
- Threats to Labour:
  - lack of delivery and policy
  - economic pain from COVID-19
  - doesn't connect well with business community
  - Second COVID-19

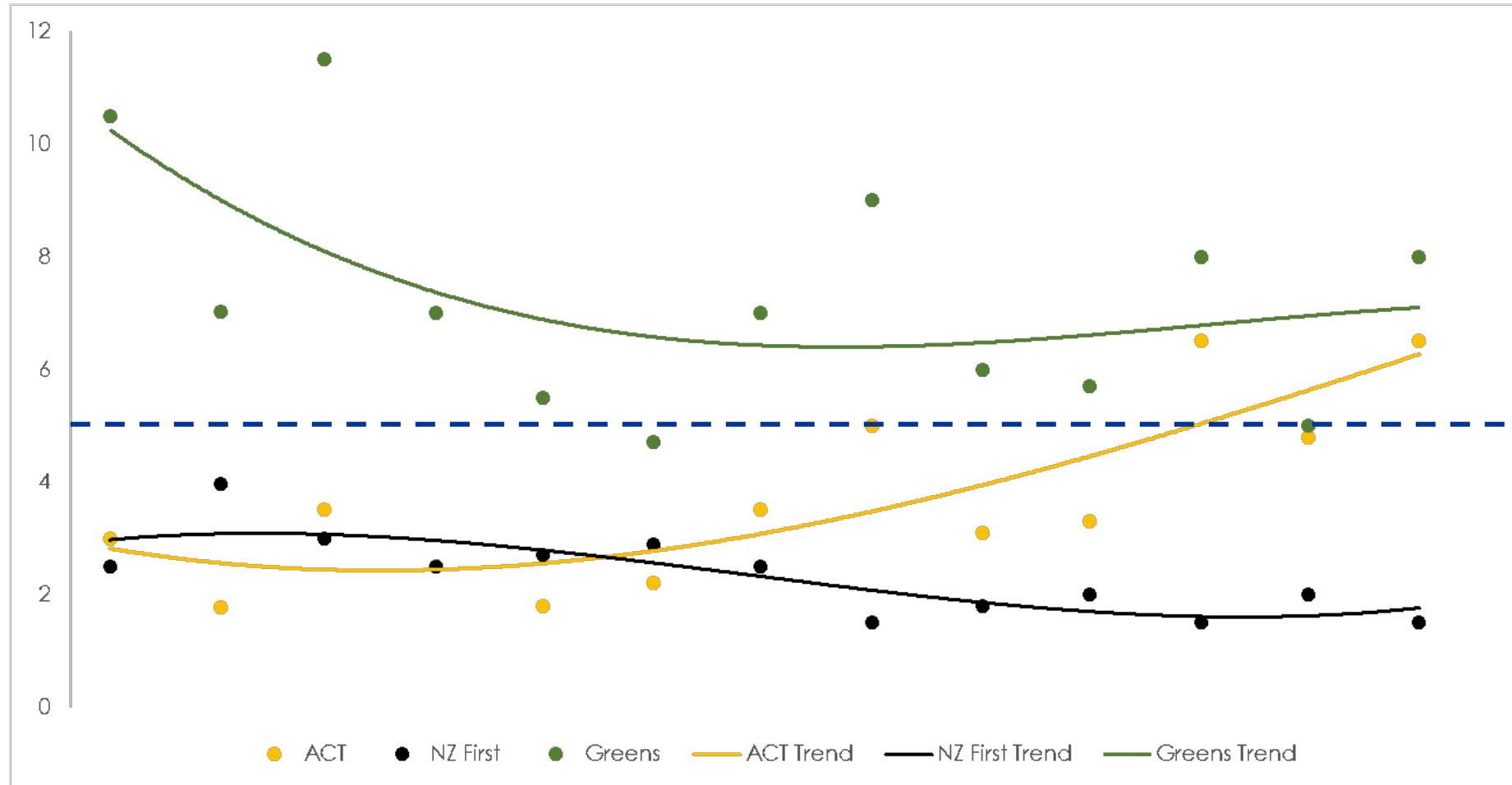


# National

- A new style and head-to-head
- The current gap in the polls with Labour likely a bridge too far and not enough time (but will that change?)
- Should see support rise as questions about the response and the economy increase
- The importance of brand and Judith Collins' profile



# Minor parties





# The Green Party

- Will benefit from a strong Labour
- Election timing does not help the Greens, but they have a comfortable margin
- People are not as terrified of the Greens as they used to be, but ....
- Historically, on average lose 0.8% during campaign period. In each of the last two elections have lost over 2%



# New Zealand First

- NZ First was in trouble the moment it chose Labour
- PGF has not helped NZ First and the SFO could hurt
- The legend of NZ First electioneering performance
- Has to convince the electorate National is a lost cause and only NZ First can stop Labour and the Greens destroying the economy
  - “The only insurance you’ve got – you’re looking at.”
- Good political instincts, great timing and a good performer in Parliament





# ACT

- David Seymour will likely win Epsom
- Support has climbed due to euthanasia referendum debate and opposition to gun control measures
- Looking like an alternative to NZ First
- As National's support climbs closer to the election, ACT will likely lose some support
- Won't get a chance to influence the election outcome unless National can almost completely close the gap with Labour



# Other factors

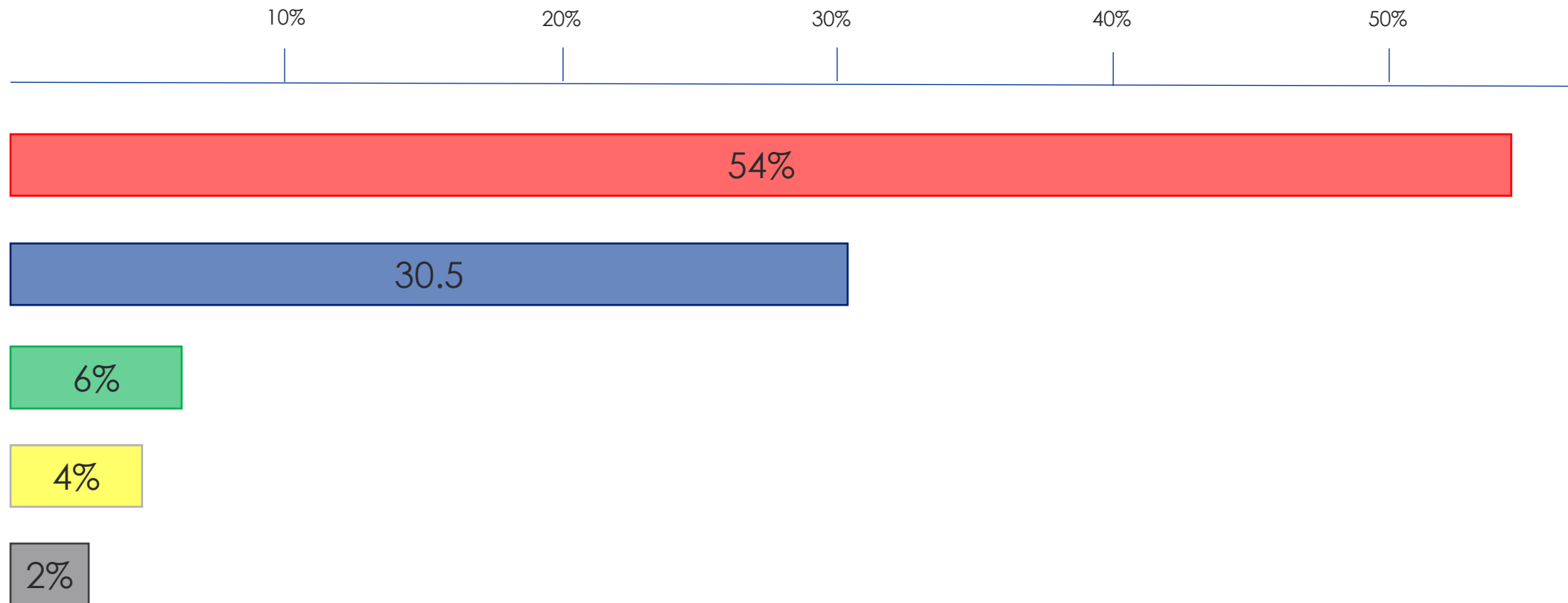
- Youth tsunami?
- Referenda
- Early voting





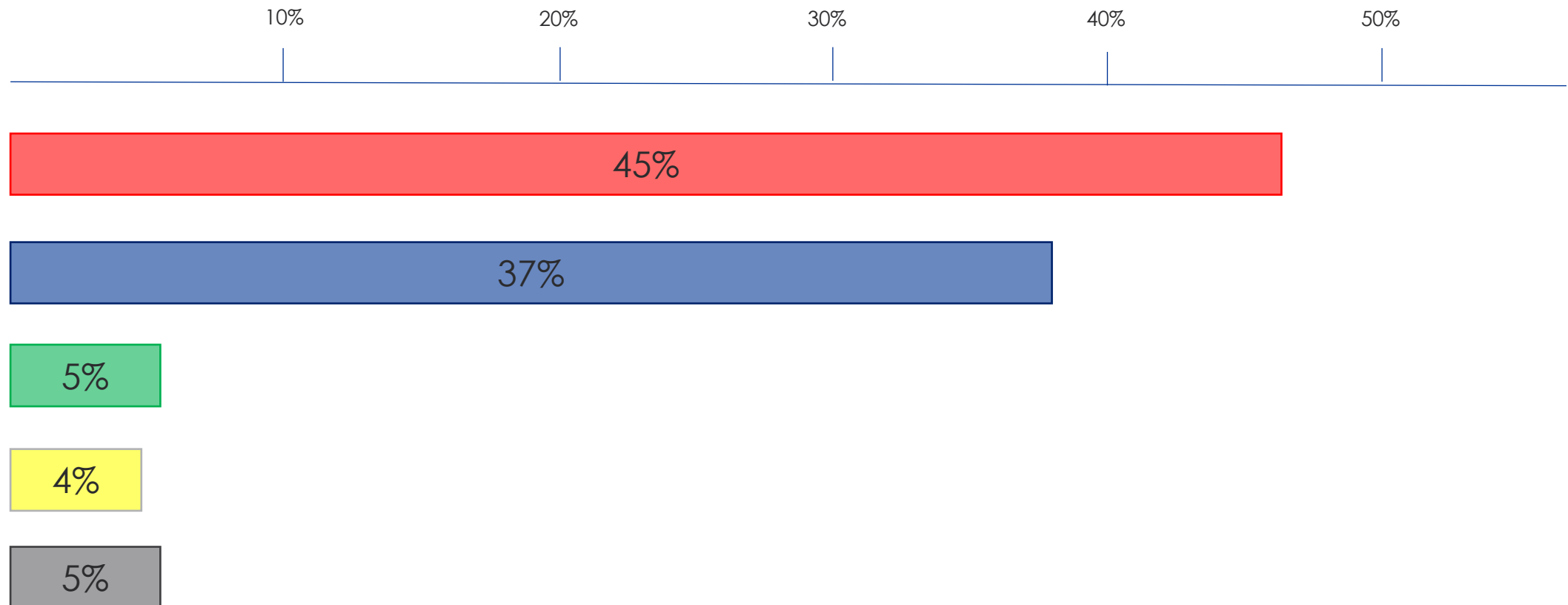
# Election 2020: the arithmetic

**Scenario one: on an average of the last four polls Labour can govern alone**



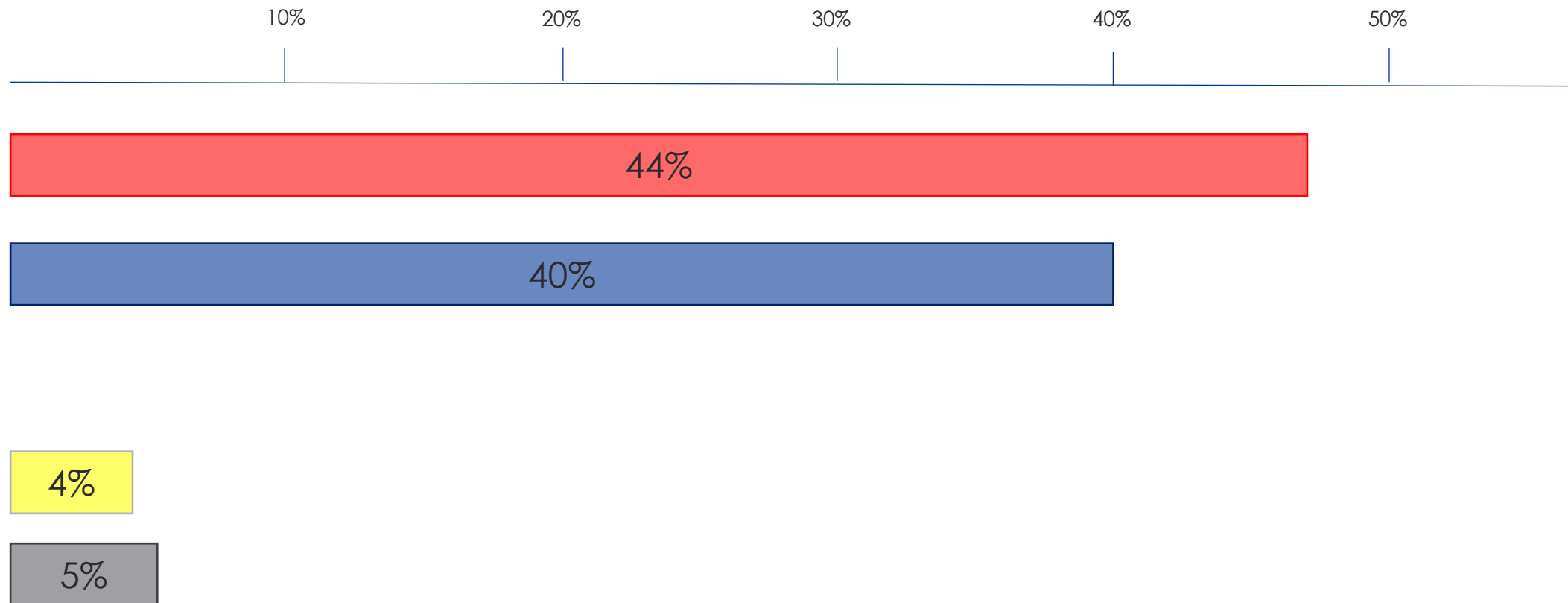
# Election 2020: the arithmetic

## Scenario two: things get tighter but Labour has options



# Election 2020: the arithmetic

## Scenario three: a National revival



# Election 2020 predictions

- Labour will be the largest party in Parliament, with more votes than National and ACT combined
- Greens likely to be included – even if they are not needed
- Same could also be said for NZ First, but its wings would be clipped
- ACT will get enough votes to get four or maybe five MPs
- No parties outside Parliament will get in
- Plenty of qualifiers

Party	2017	Today	Sep 20
Labour	36.9%	54.0%	45.0%
NZ First	7.2%	12.0%	5.0%
Greens	6.3%	6.0%	5.5%
National	44.5%	30.5%	37.0%
ACT	0.5%	4.0%	4.0%

Source: 1 NEWS Clomar Brunton Poll



# Labour or Labour / Green

- Key Ministers remain, but a number of new inexperienced Ministers
- Unlikely to be 'transformational' – the Prime Minister and Finance Minister are too centrist for that
- No NZ First to blame for holding up a reform agenda – expect stronger emissions reductions targets and a focus on reducing transport emissions
- Greater Government involvement in the economy – but not necessarily ownership
- Much will depend on who gets what portfolio – an interventionist like David Parker can make a huge difference to a sector
- Early engagement will be key – BIMs and meetings can help set the tone



# Parting thought

- September election?
- October election?
- November election?



# Thank you.

To discuss this presentation further, please contact  
[spiro@senateshj.co.nz](mailto:spiro@senateshj.co.nz) or call 021 450 599



Senate Communications Ltd