

MEASURING ANTI-GAY PREJUDICE

The Prop 8 Polling:

Why it underestimated
the Anti-Gay Campaign

3 DISTINCT ERRORS

- 1. No on 8's internal polling **underestimated** the effectiveness of an appeal to **anti-gay prejudice** to power the anti-LGBT campaign.
- 2. No on 8's internal polling **overestimated** the effectiveness of a **de-gay** message both to win support and to compete with the anti-gay message.
- 3. Most polls and the election results **implied more support for same-sex marriage than existed**; they failed to measure and correct for wrong-way voting.

DAVE FLEISCHER

- Director, the LAB at the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
- Author, the Prop 8 Report, www.Prop8Report.org
- Involved in 38 ballot measure campaigns on LGBT issues

Prop 8

- November 2008 state-wide vote in California
- Amended state Constitution to ban same-sex marriage
- Passed by 52% to 48%, a margin of 600,000 votes

Why examine the Prop 8 campaign?

- **1. It's typical:** 1 - 34
- **2. It's unique:**
 - Daily tracking +
A dead heat six weeks out +
Both sides relied on TV (Yes on 8 69%, No on 8 82%) =
 - Greater ability to associate campaign choices with changes in voter opinion

Problem 1: “Kids” tested poorly . . .

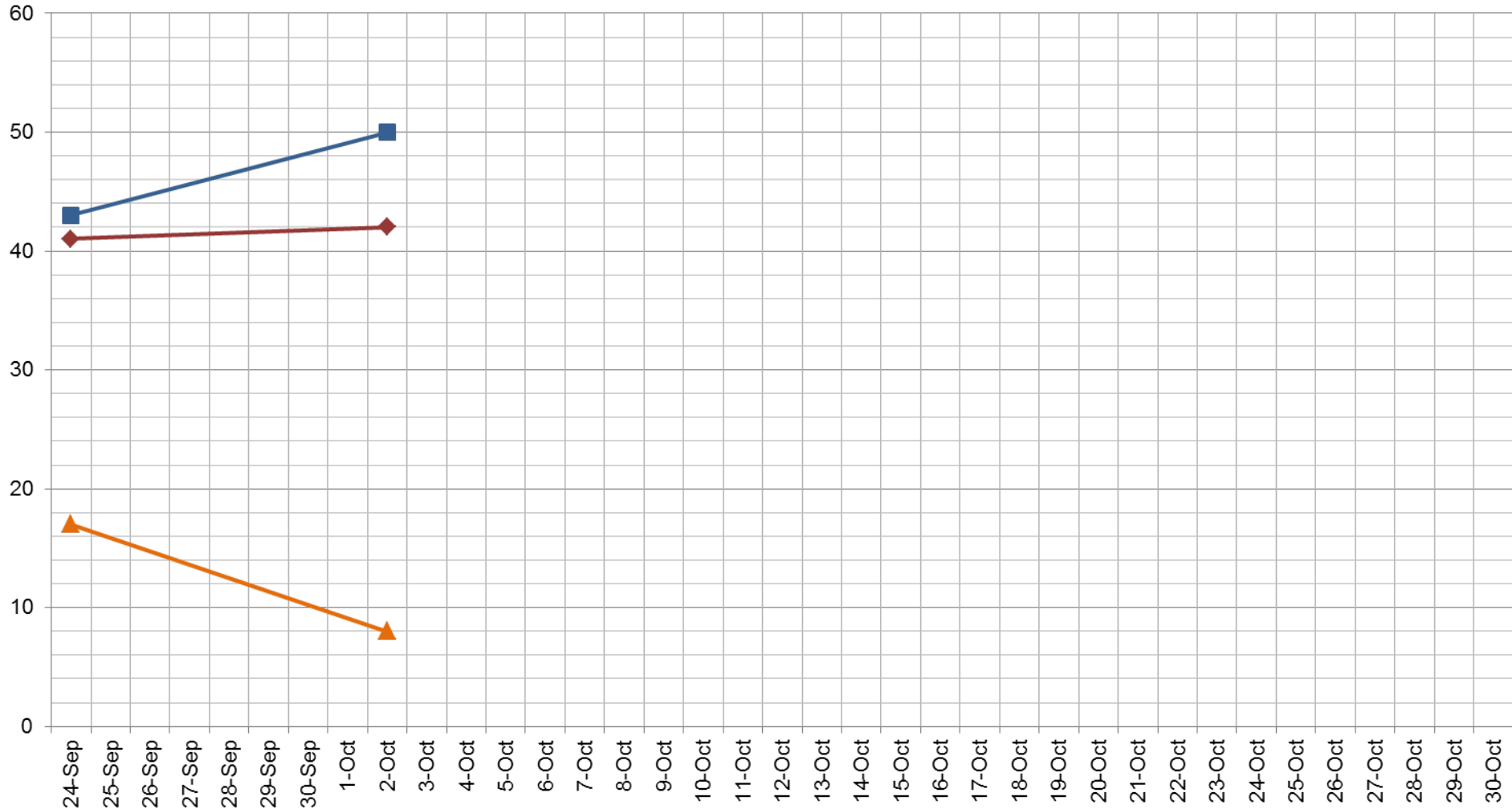
- The anti-LGBT argument that tested worst in May 2008:
 - “It is getting harder and harder to raise kids these days, and the [court] decision only makes it worse. That is why we need a Constitutional amendment. Children are too impressionable. Now, we will be forced to discuss these issues with them at too early an age. That might even lead some of them to think that homosexuality is okay, and they may experiment to see if they are gay.”
- 44% convincing, 53% unconvincing, 4th out of 4

... but in real life, it worked

- The “Princes” ad introduced Yes on 8’s main message, about children.
- It was the single most broadcast ad; voters were exposed to it and reinforcing spots 20-40 times.
- Once “Princes” penetrated, No on 8’s position deteriorated and never recovered.
- Changes in support for No on 8 were particularly marked among some voter subgroups.

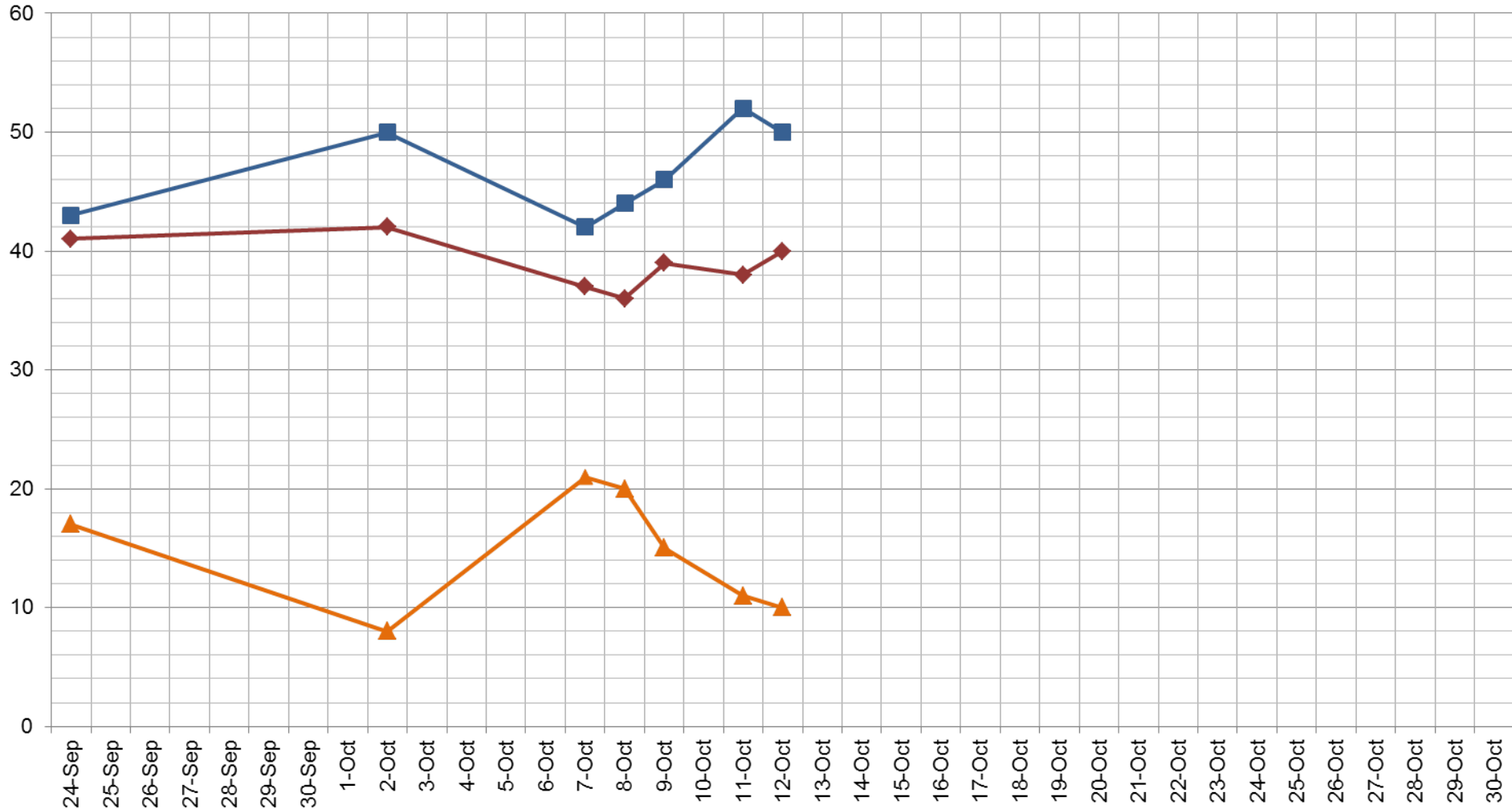
Mothers – Lake Research's Standard Horse Race "Princes" Penetrates, Mothers Switch Sides: A Clearer Look

Mothers, Voting Yes Mothers, Voting No Mothers, Undecided/Don't Know/Refused

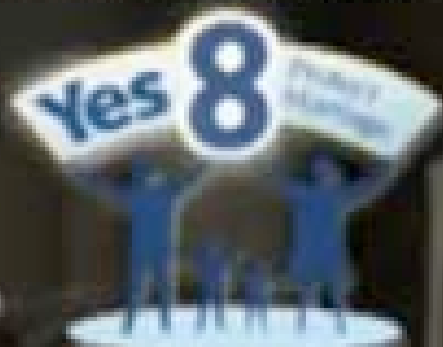


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ProtectMarriage.com



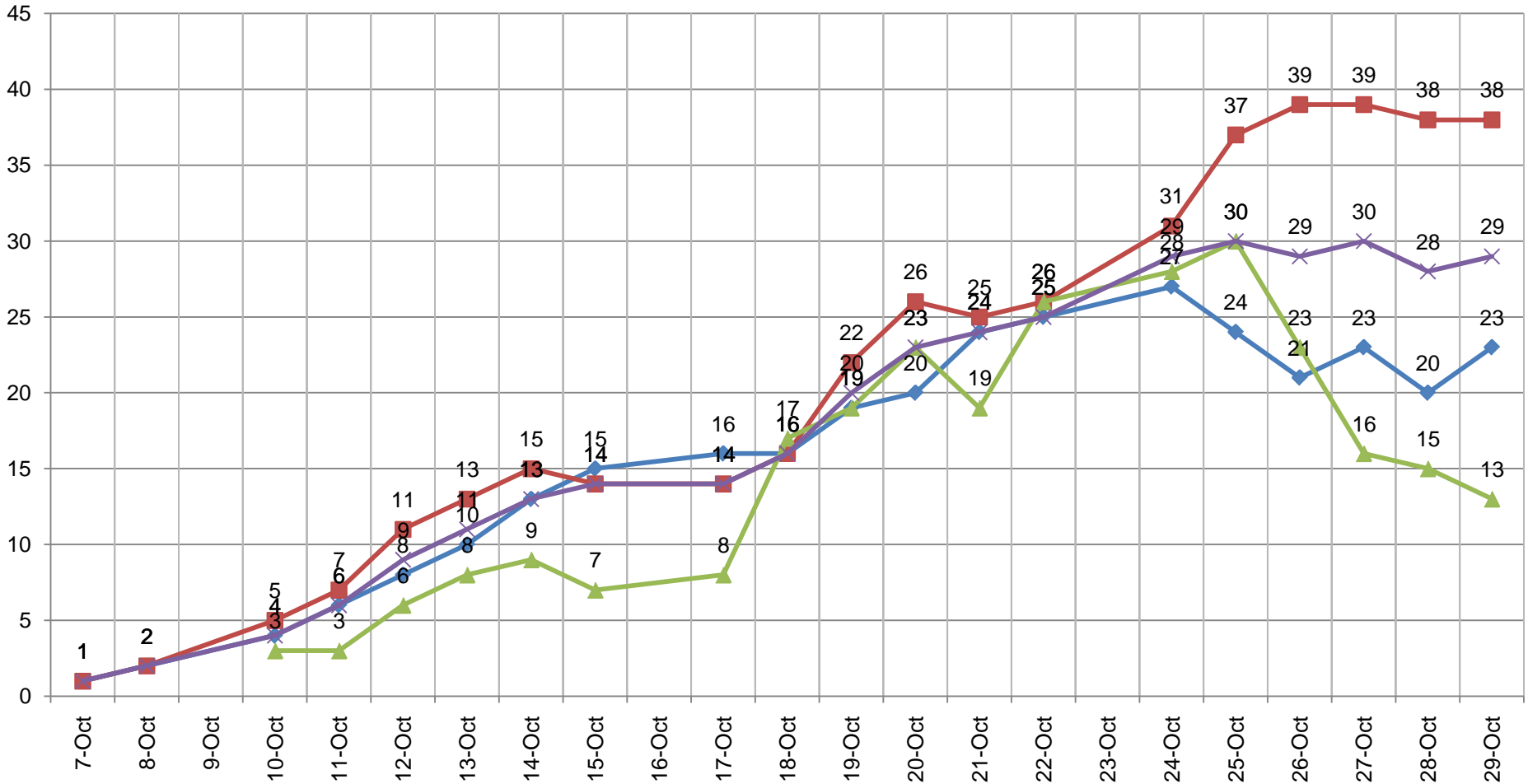
**Protect Our Children.
Restore Marriage.**

Paid for by ProtectMarriage.com – Yes on 8, a project of California Renewal. Major funding by Knights of Columbus, National Organization for Marriage California Committee and Focus on the Family.

TV AD Penetration

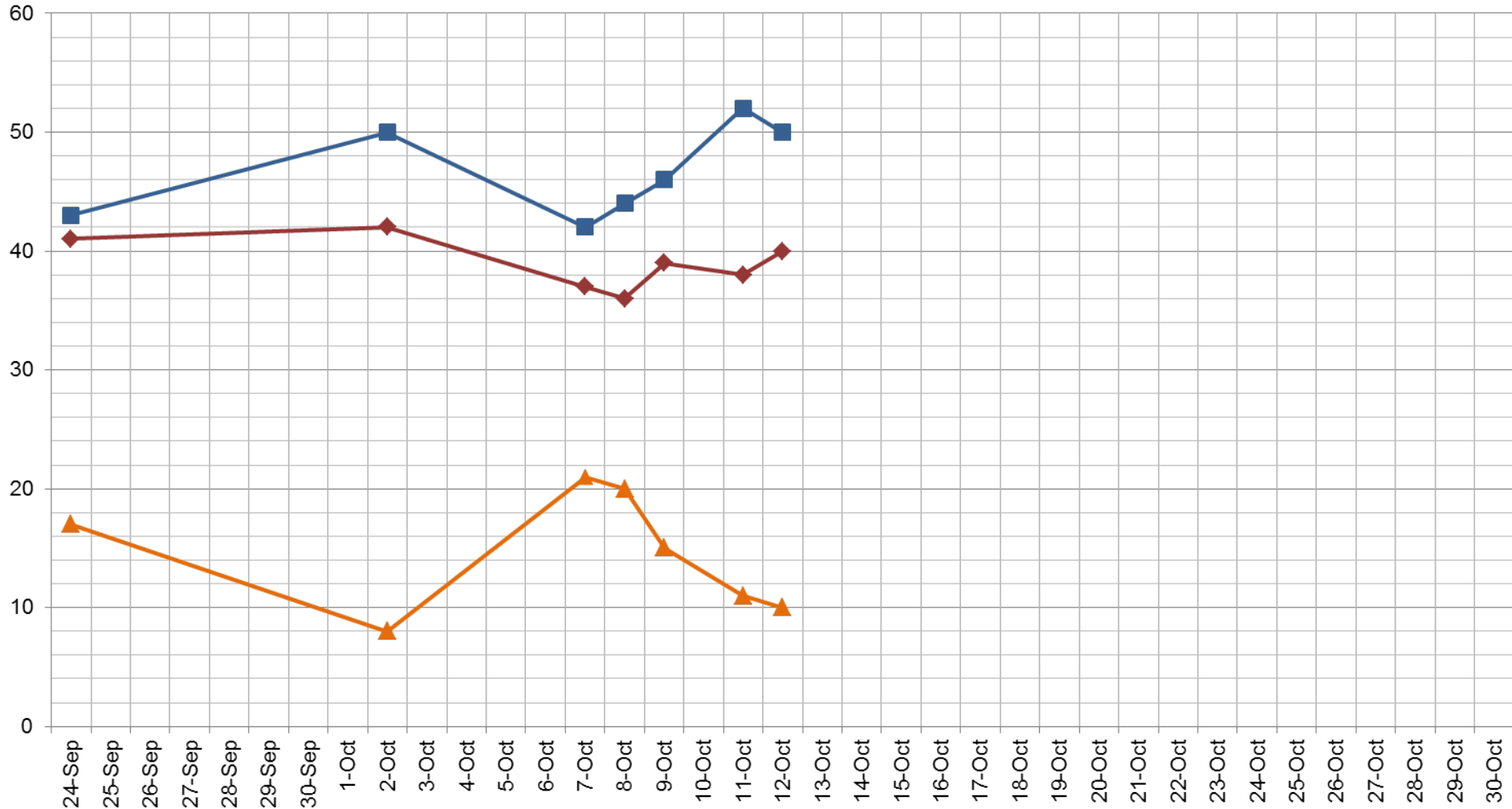
Voters Recalling Yes on 8 "Gay marriage taught in schools..." Message Over Time

◆ Yes on 8 Voters
 ■ No on 8 Voters
 ▲ Undecided Voters
 ✕ All Voters



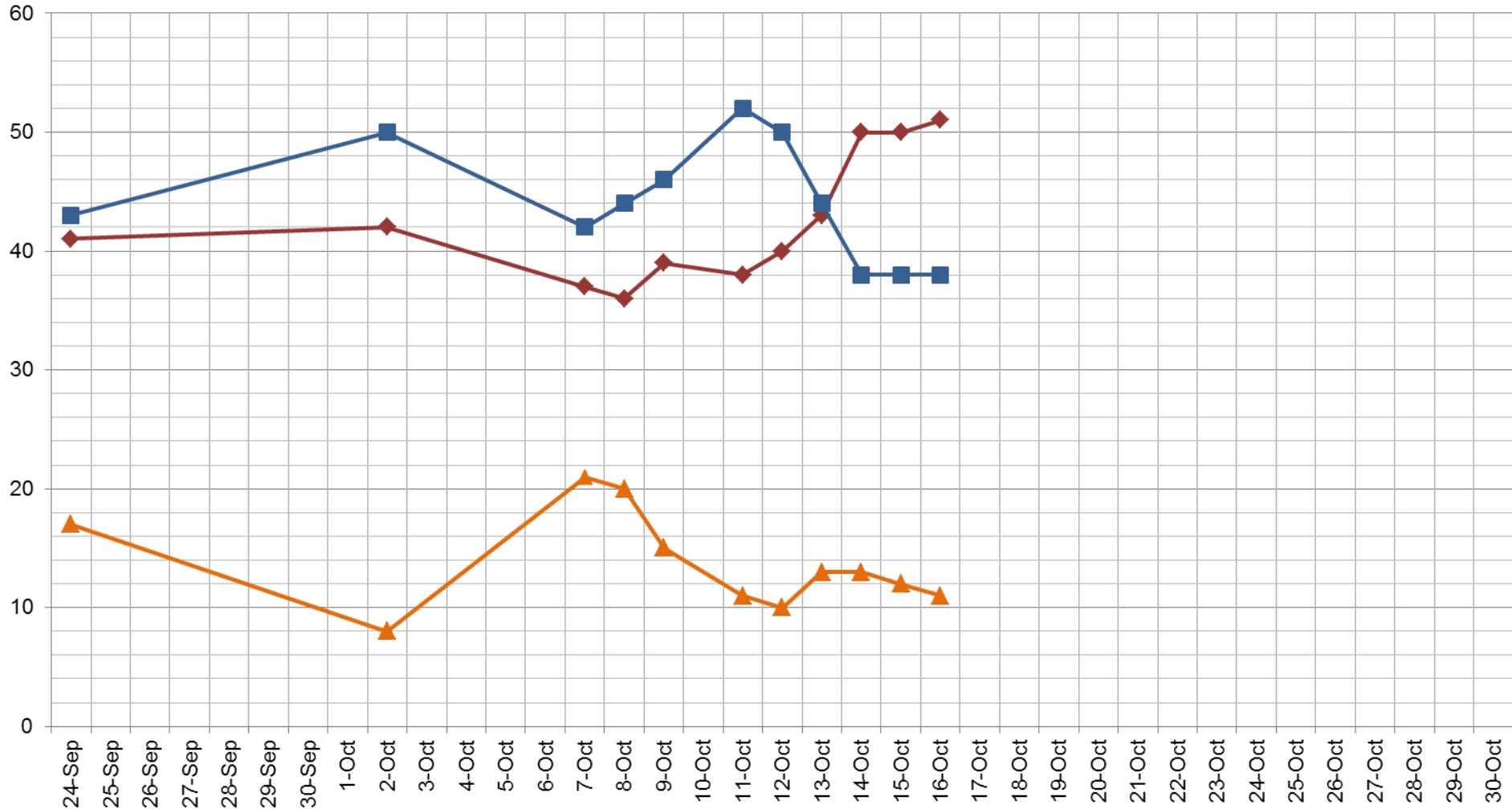
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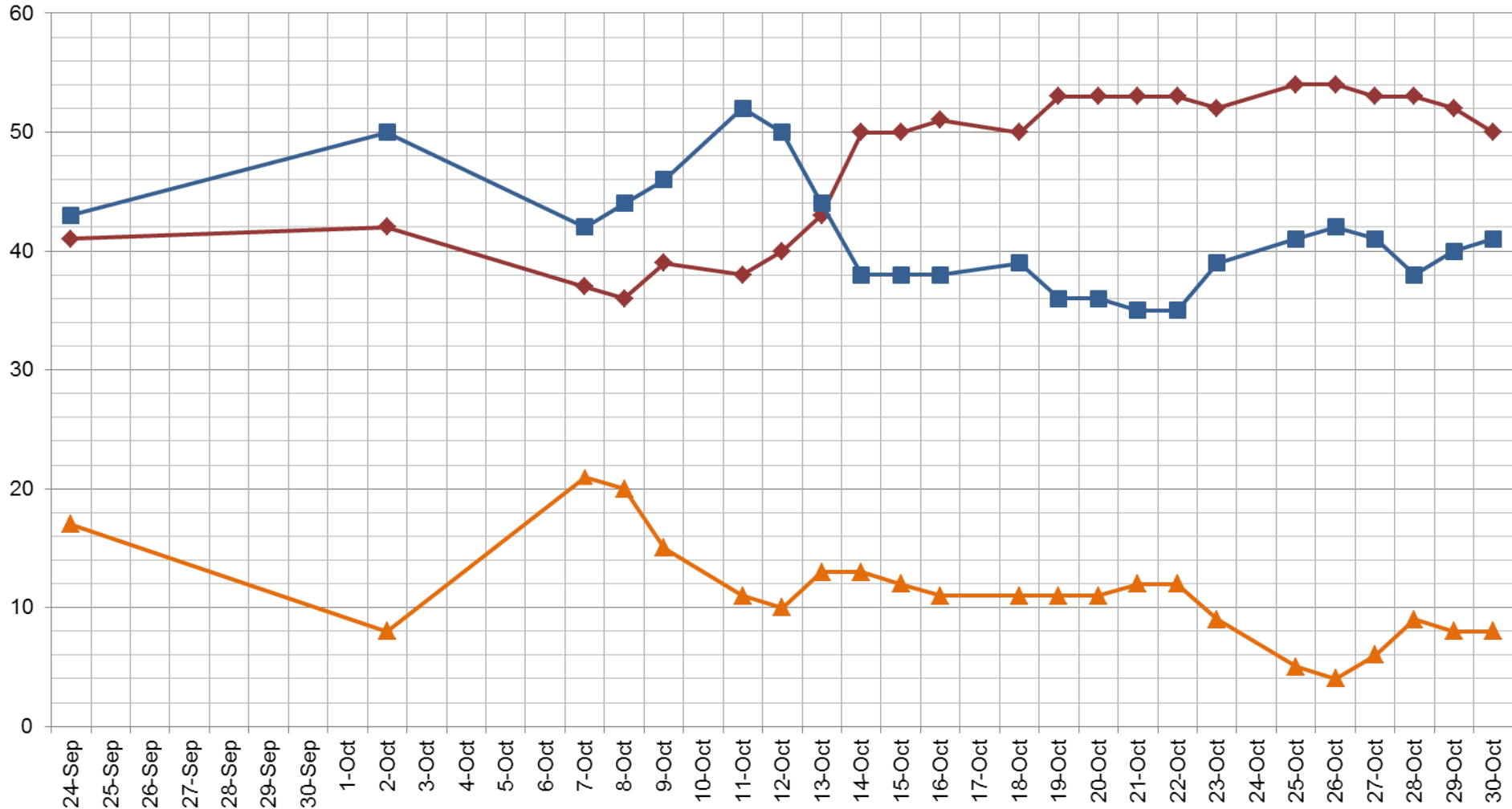
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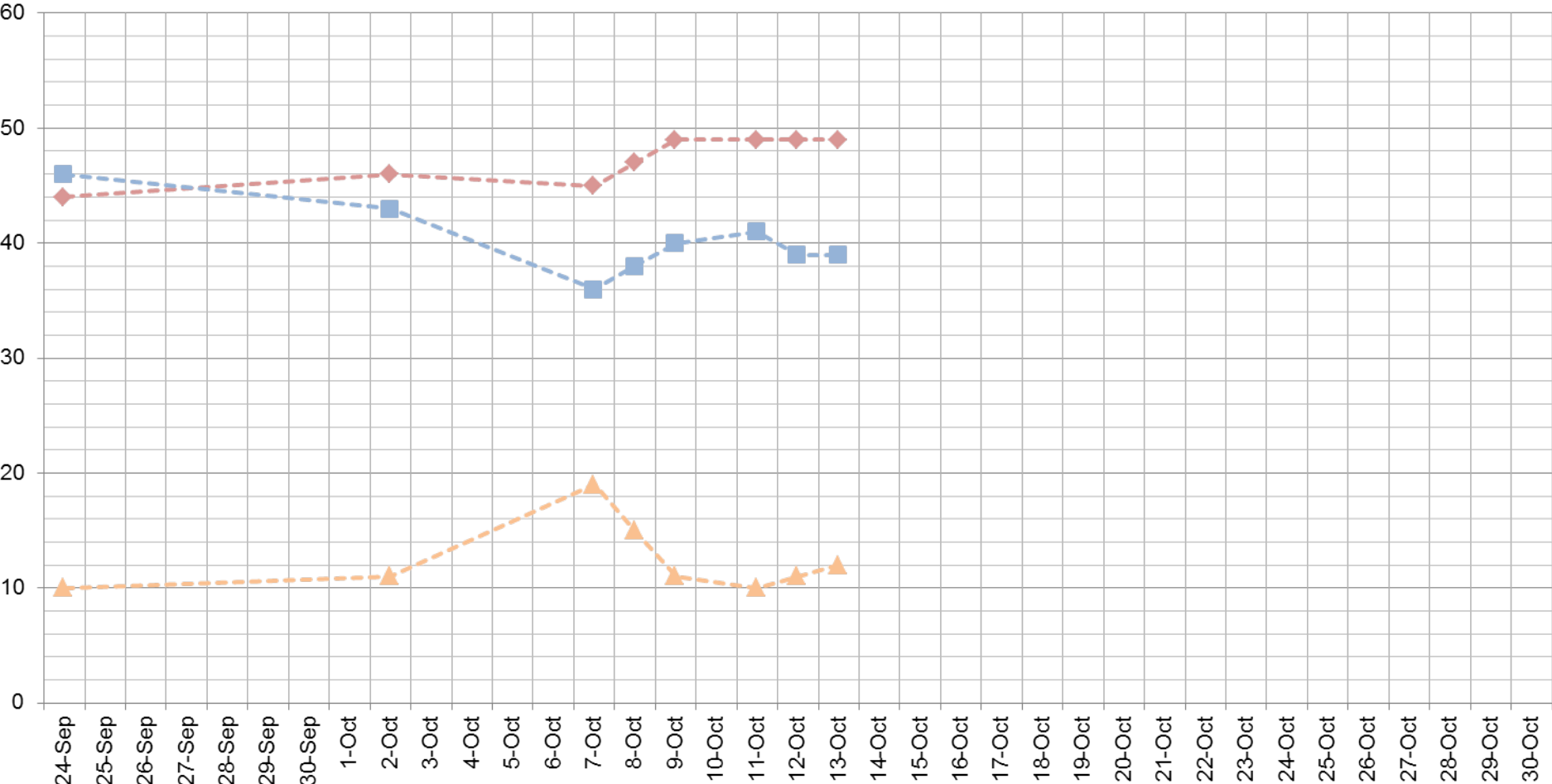
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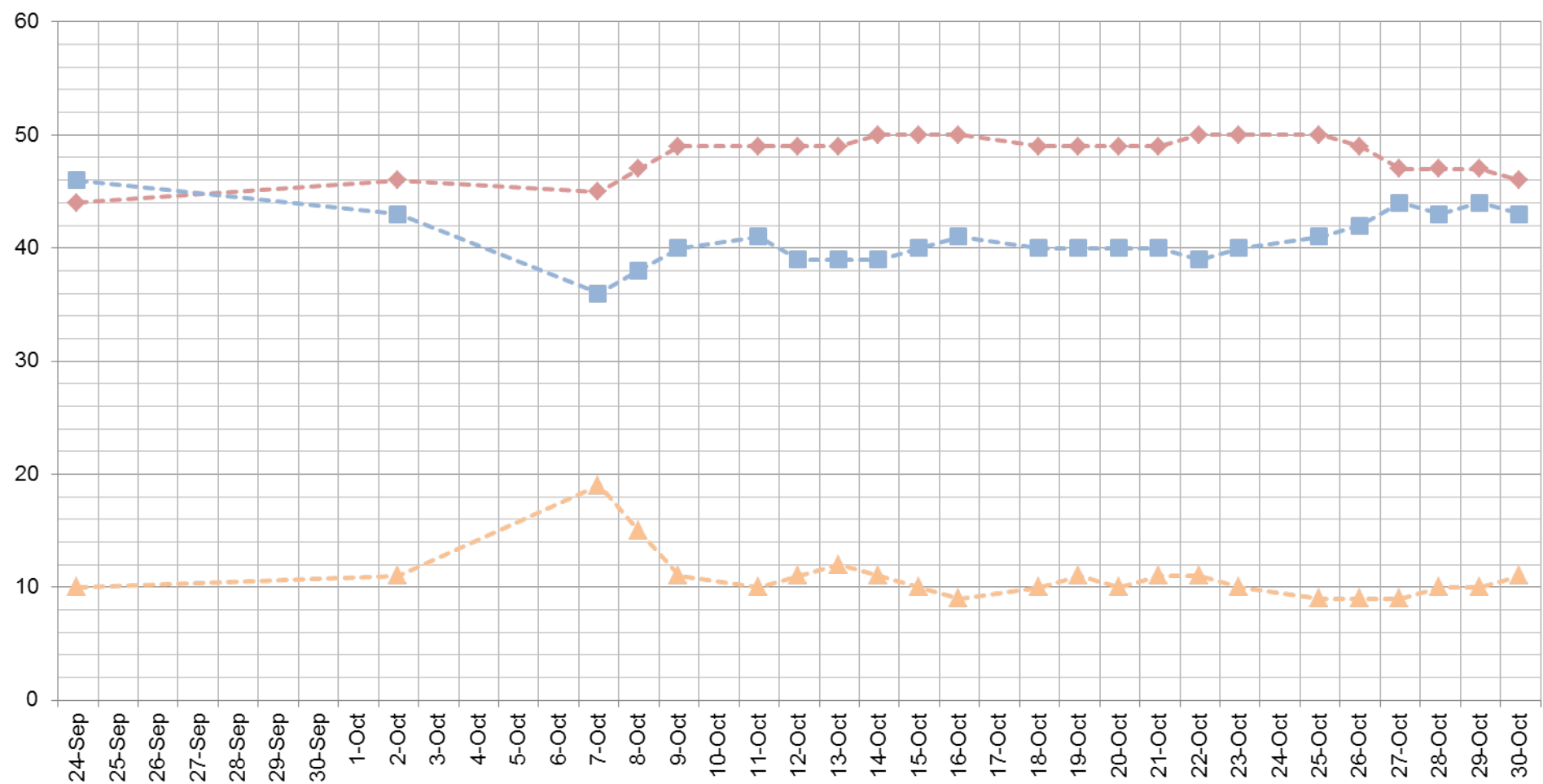
Parents – Lake Research's Standard Horse Race "Princes" Penetrates and Peels Away Parents

- ◆— Parents, Voting Yes
- ▲— Parents, Undecided/Don't Know/Refused
- Parents, Voting No
- ◆— Childless, Voting Yes
- ▲— Childless, Undecided/Don't Know/Refused
- Childless, Voting No



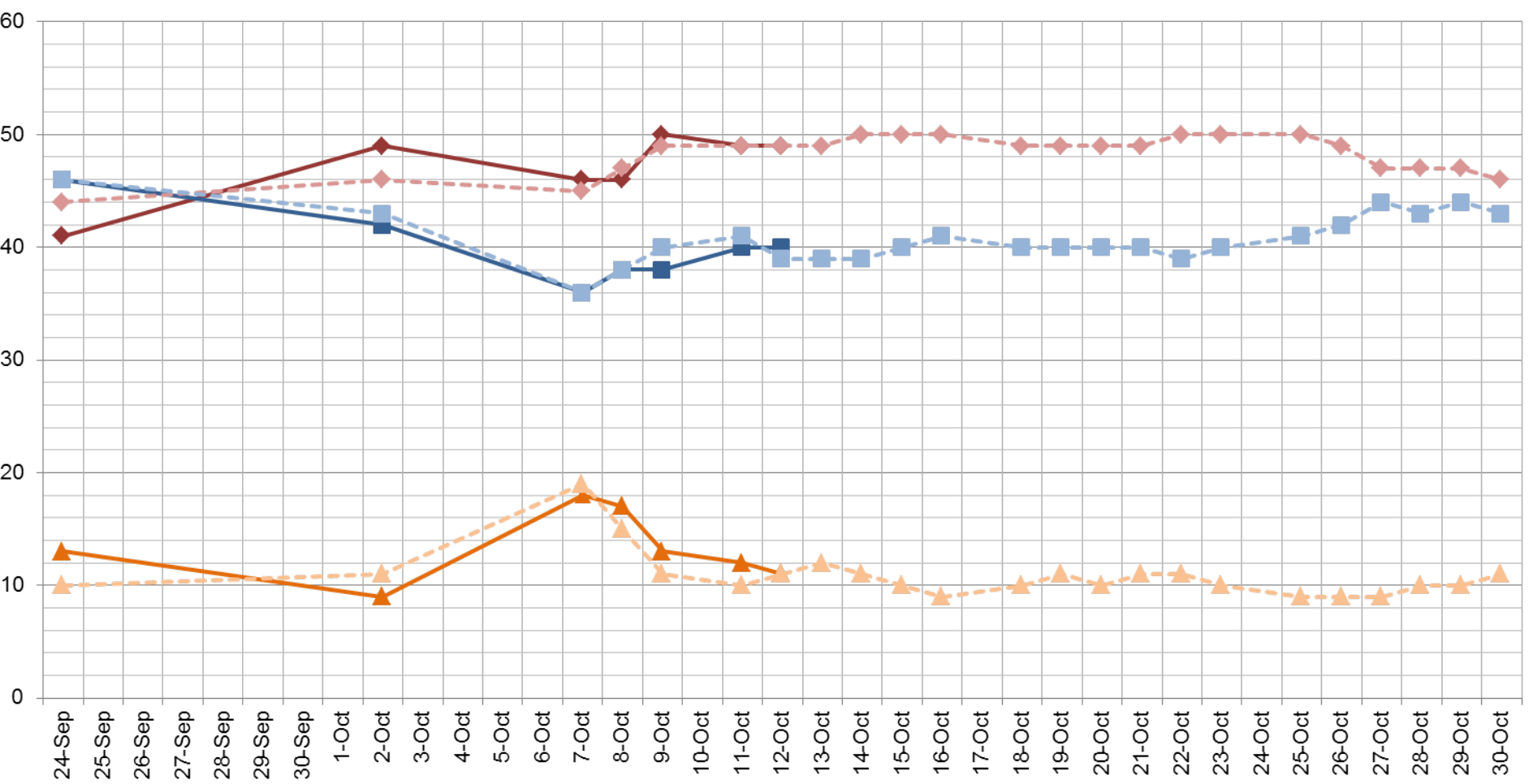
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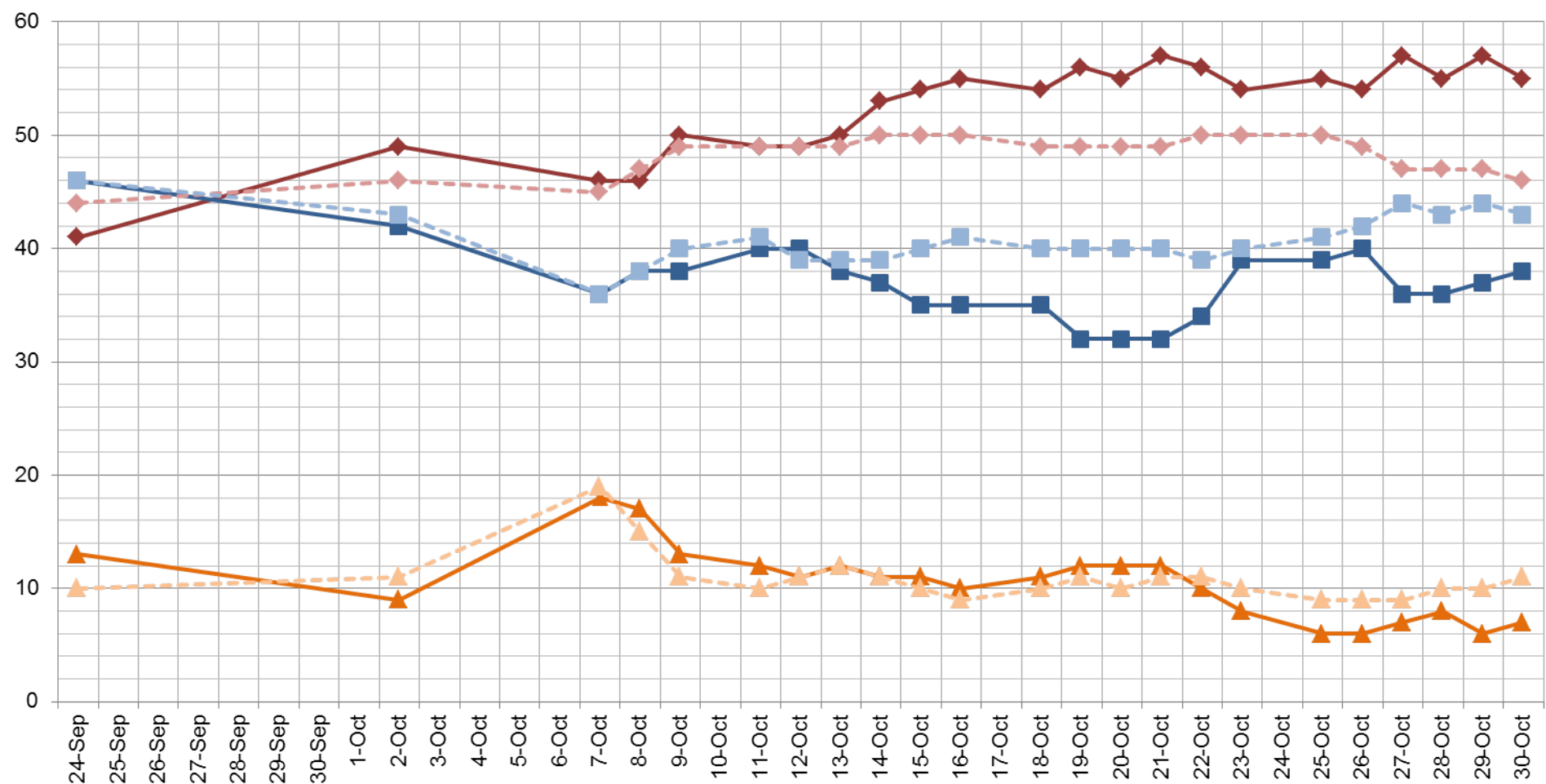
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In the final 6 weeks

- Net of almost 700,000 voters changed their mind to oppose same-sex marriage
- > 500,000 parents with kids under 18 living at home

Hypothesis 1: Polling underestimates the emotional punch of prejudice.

- Error may be an artifact of telephone polling methodology.
- A phone call conducted in a neutral tone of voice fails to evoke the emotional power of “Princes” even if the survey question clearly states the idea behind the ad.
- Voters may not be lying when they say the idea behind “Princes” doesn’t affect them; but when they see the ad on TV, some voters react strongly to it.

Polling has a blind spot.

- It needs to be remedied by doing additional types of research, and not relying so heavily on polling.

Problem 2: De-gay arguments tested better than they worked.

- The pro-LGBT argument that tested best in May 2008:
- “We do not need more government in our lives. The government has no role telling two committed and devoted adults who they should marry. Government has no business telling people who can and cannot get married just like it cannot tell us what we can read or say or do in our private lives. We do not need a Constitutional amendment that gives the government more say in our lives.”
- 72% agreed

Hypothesis 2: It's a mistake to assume we can keep voters ignorant.

- We are not the sole source of voter information. We can de-gay our campaign, but that does not affect what voters learn from the opposition, earned media, or in the world.

We need to omit loaded questions.

- Instrument design that assumes that we can keep “gay” out of the campaign discourse is not realistic.
- It generates misleading findings.
- We should not test messages that omit the word “gay.”

Let's stop making this mistake.

- *“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.”*

• *Rita Mae Brown*

Problem 3: Prop 8 looked close . . .

• Yes on 8	7,001,084	52.3%
• No on 8	6,401,482	47.7%
• Margin	599,602	4.6%

... but it wasn't,

- because > 10% of voters were confused about how to vote and they voted in opposition to their actual views on the issue of same-sex marriage.

Polling reveals wrong-way voters.

- Two types:
- voted Yes & supported same-sex marriage: 651,757
- voted No & opposed same-sex marriage: 876,987
- Net benefit to No on 8: 225,230, which narrowed the margin by > 400,000 votes
- If all had voted in accordance with their views, Yes would have prevailed by 54% to 46% and by > 1 million votes

Summary: Polling was

- **valuable**, e.g. the daily tracking, and the combination of the horse race and the be clear questions
- and
- **misleading**, e.g. the message batteries

Let's augment polling

- The leadership LAB is experimenting with field testing:
 - * 1-on-1, face-to-face conversations
 - * where we simulate the likely campaign environment
 - * we begin with “Princes”; then play a rebuttal spot
 - * after the brief survey, we attempt persuasion

If you're interested

- Video footage of field testing: what happens when we show “Princes” and our new rebuttal ad, “Marki”
- Video footage of voter persuasion: we have started to gain insight into what helps some voters change their mind on same-sex marriage
- www.Prop8Report.org for the full report

Most polls showed No far ahead

- Sept. 2008

	Yes	No	Margin, Yes-No
Field (9/5-14)	38%	55%	-17 points
PPIC (9/9-16)	41%	55%	-14 points
Binder (9/2-4)	42%	52%	-10 points
Lake (9/8-11)	44%	47%	-3 points

And, though closer, ahead at the end

- Last poll by each firm

	Yes	No	Margin, Yes-No
Field (10/18-28)	44%	52%	-8 points
PPIC (10/12-19)	44%	49%	-5 points
Binder (10/29-11/4)	48%	50%	-2 points
Lake (10/28-30)	49%	41%	+8 points

... as did a de-gay-ed rebuttal

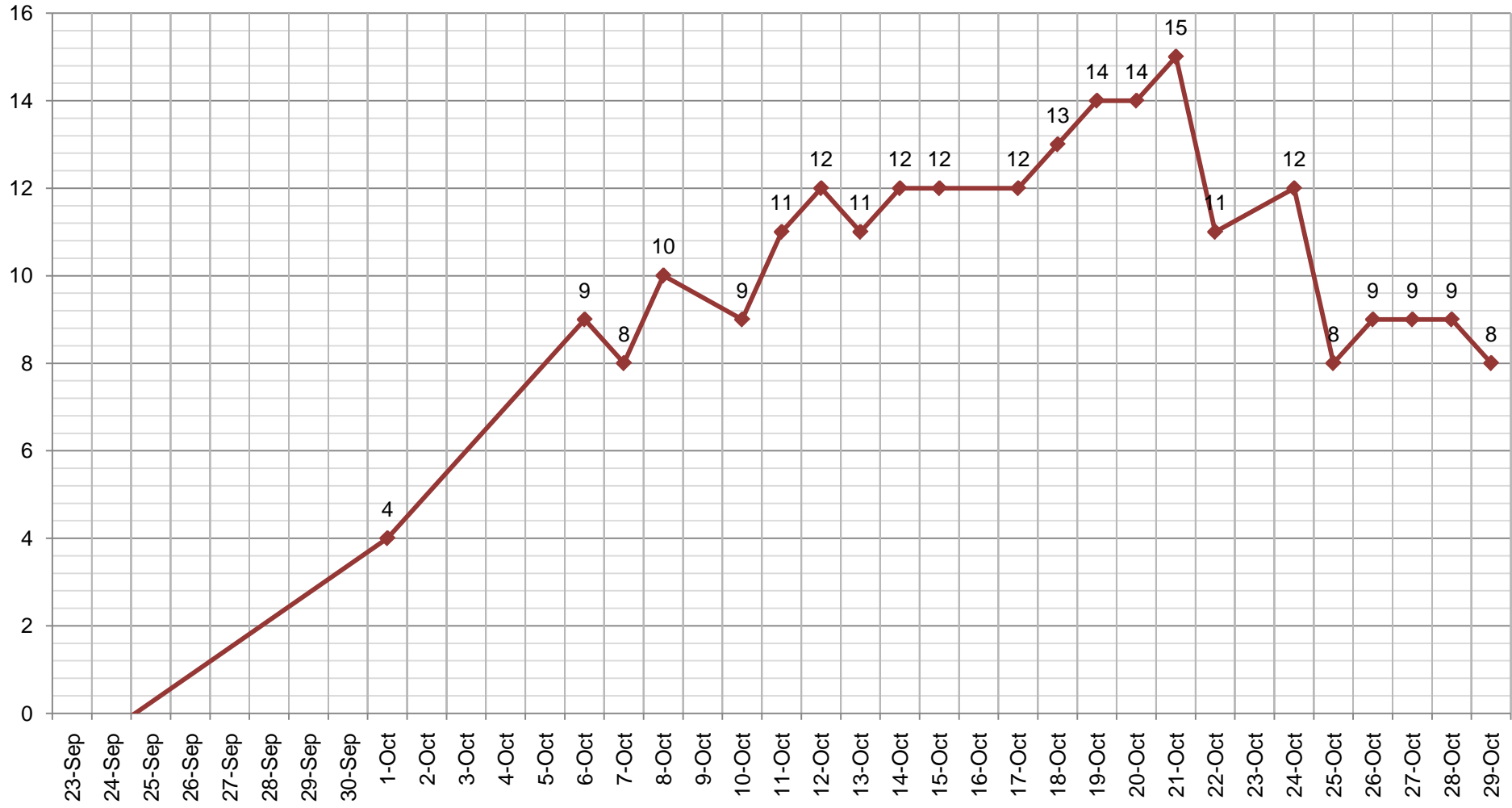
- Against this anti-LGBT argument:
- “Some/ other people say we should vote Yes on Prop 8. Voting yes will ensure that children—as young as kindergarten—will not be required to be taught, even against the will of their parents, that gay marriage and traditional marriage are the same, but that is what will happen if we don’t put this definition in our constitution.”
- Pro-LGBT rebuttals polled as more convincing by an average of 4%, and among parents by an average of 13%. The kids argument ranked last among all tested in the ability to win over persuadable voters.

Here were the 2 tested rebuttals:

- 35B. Some/ other people say this is just a scare tactic. There is nothing in Prop 8 on education. Children as young as kindergarten will not be required to be taught anything. . . It is just a scare tactic.
- 36B. Some/ other people say we should vote no on Prop 8 because there is nothing in our education code that requires children to be taught anything about gay or traditional marriage in schools. . . This is nothing but a scare tactic. . .

All Voters – Lake Research's Standard Horse Race Measuring Yes's Lead—The Margin of Yes Minus No

◆ Yes on 8 support - No on 8 support



All Voters Swing Away from Same-Sex Marriage

(Lake Research's "Be Clear" Question)

◆ Eliminate Marriage ■ Don't Eliminate Marriage ▲ Undecided

