



Voting Intention Opinion Poll

Sept 2008

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included



RED C interviewed a random sample of 1004 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 15th & 17th September 2008. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 21st September 2008 Opinion Poll

Economic slowdown bites into Fianna Fail support

Some might say that the summer recess has perhaps not been kind to Fianna Fail, dominated as it has been by the fallout from the Lisbon Treaty rejection and the economic slowdown in Ireland and across the world, both of which have put tremendous pressure on the Taoiseach. Today's Sunday Business Post/ RED C tracking poll is the first measure of just how much impact these factors have had on party support since our last survey immediately after the Lisbon treaty defeat.

The poll's main finding, is that Fianna Fail support has suffered during the summer, with a significant 4% decline in support since June. This is in spite of the fact that the poll was taken at the same time as the party's conference, which has been seen in the past to give a party some sort of bounce in support. Given the fact that Fianna Fail did not appear to suffer any negative impact on its share of the first preference vote immediately after the Lisbon Treaty defeat, it does suggest that this decline is perhaps more to do with concerns over the economy than anything else.

This analysis is reinforced by the somewhat damaging finding from the poll that half (50%) of the electorate now do not have confidence in the Government to manage the public finances in the current downturn. With over a third (36%) of those who voted for Fianna Fail at the last election also holding this view. Our analysis of why voters returned Fianna Fail to power at the last general election suggested that one of the main reasons given by voters was the desire for a "safe pair of hands" with regard to the economy. The apparent shift in attitude then seen in this poll, to a more negative image of the party with regard to the economy, must therefore be of particular concern for the party strategists with Local and European elections on the horizon.

Fine Gael have been making a concerted effort to ensure that blame for the current economic situation is levelled squarely at Brian Cowen's door, and this appears to have worked well for the party. They see gains of 3% in first preference support since June 2008. After three months of declining share, this gain will be warmly welcomed by the party, and may constitute something of a reprieve for party leader Enda Kenny, who has been under pressure himself in some parts of the media over the summer break.



Labour on the other hand will be disappointed to see support for the party fall below the 10% level they have held at for the last three polls. In today's poll they manage to secure just 9% of the vote, and as such haven't benefitted at all in the same manner as their previous coalition partners.

Sinn Fein, who appeared to garner support for being the only political party to oppose the Lisbon Treaty, also sees their share fall back in today's poll. They also secure 9% of the first preference vote, down 1% on the level of support they secured immediately after the Lisbon Treaty referendum. This is still relatively positive for the party, as they had 7% share at the last election, and it therefore appears they have done well out of their stance at the Lisbon referendum.

It has been a difficult week for the Progressive Democrats, with the party finally deciding to wind up on Wednesday night. In the circumstances it will be a bitter pill for the party to see its best level of support for a long time in today's poll. The PD's secure 3% of the first preference vote, the same as achieved at the last election and hasn't seen in polling since then. The gains are perhaps on the back of the heavy media coverage the party has had this week, or maybe this was the party's supporters way of showing they care just a little too late!

The Green Party secures 7% of the first preference vote in today's poll, meaning the party has maintained its share over the summer. In this regard the Greens will be pleased that they do not appear to have suffered in the same manner as its government partner Fianna Fail, perhaps because its positions on the cabinet do not directly relate to the running of the economy and maybe because the problem in voters' minds lies with what has gone before this coalition came to power?

Gains in support are also seen for Independent candidates in today's poll. In total 8% of the electorate say they would give their first preference vote to independent candidates, an increase of 2% since June. This is a trend often seen mid way between elections, as people become unsure of who they will vote for and so default to independent candidates. However the poll results will be welcomed by those Independent candidates currently in the Dail, as it helps them to fight the case for their agenda to be heard.



So what should Fianna Fail do in the early budget, in an aim not only to combat the worsening economic situation, but also to halt the decline in support for the party? In a range of questions we aimed to find out the opinions of the electorate on how they feel the government should act. Three fifths (60%) believe the government should do something to stimulate the housing market, those most in favour of this action include those in younger 18-34 year old age groups and also those based more in the suburban sprawl around Dublin. Just over half (52%) believe there should be an immediate public sector pay freeze, even if this leads to strikes, with those in older age groups and based outside of Dublin more likely to hold this view.

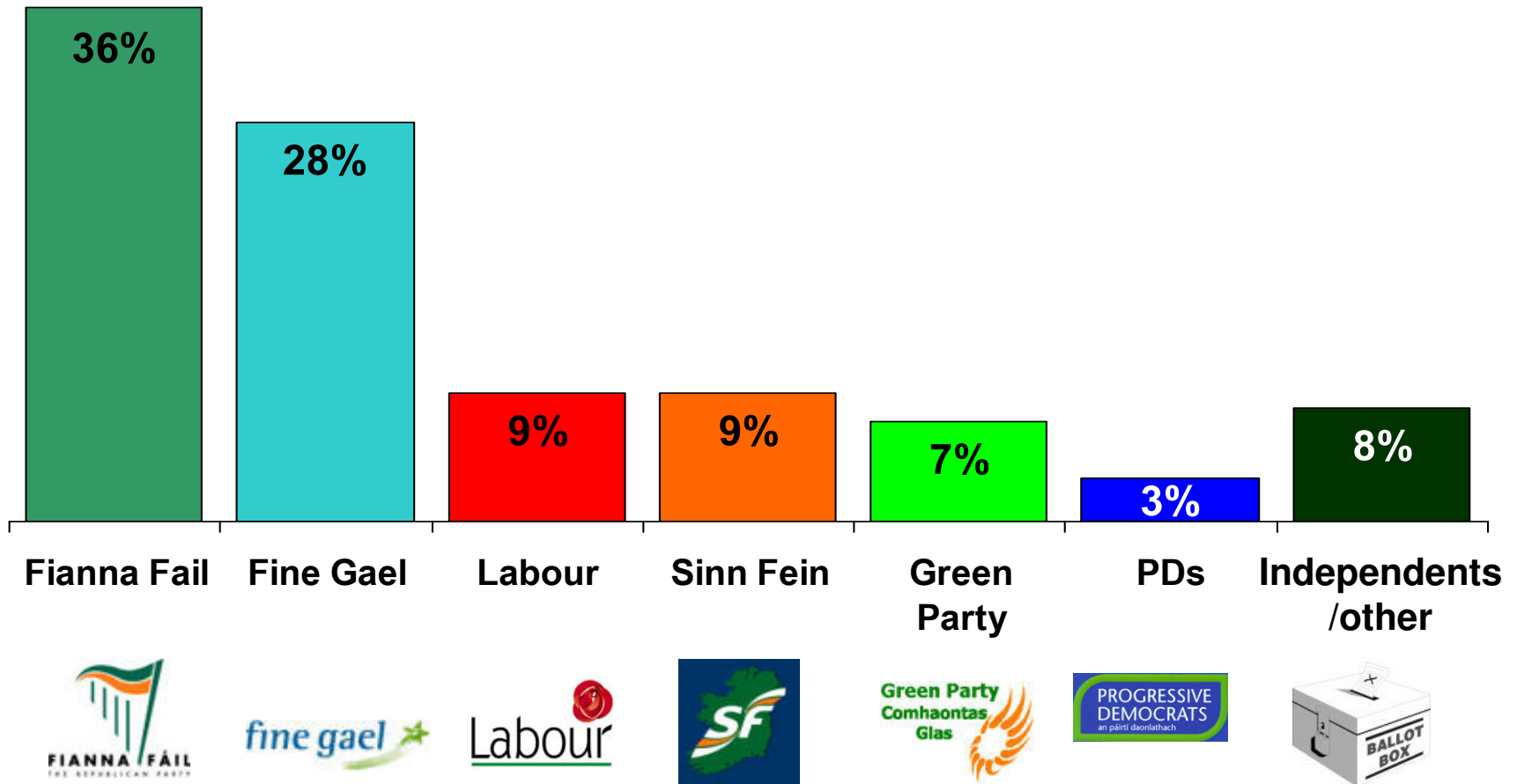
When asked about taxes three fifths (62%) state they would be prepared to pay more taxes rather than see cuts in the health and education budgets. This view is more strongly held by older age groups over 45 years of age, perhaps as they are more likely to need the health services in the future, and can also afford the tax increases more so than younger voters.

Conversely, a similar proportion (61%), believe that government should cut public spending rather than increase taxes. This view tends to be held by those in slightly younger age groups, those in more downmarket social class groups and those living outside of Dublin. Overall, this similar support for both questions on tax and spend, appears to suggest the public want spending on the core services of health and education protected, but aren't prepared to pay more for other services.

In summary today's poll puts more pressure on the success of the government's early budget, which as much as dealing with the financial situation itself, also needs to reassure its supporters that they can, once again, trust the party to manage the economy in the current downturn.

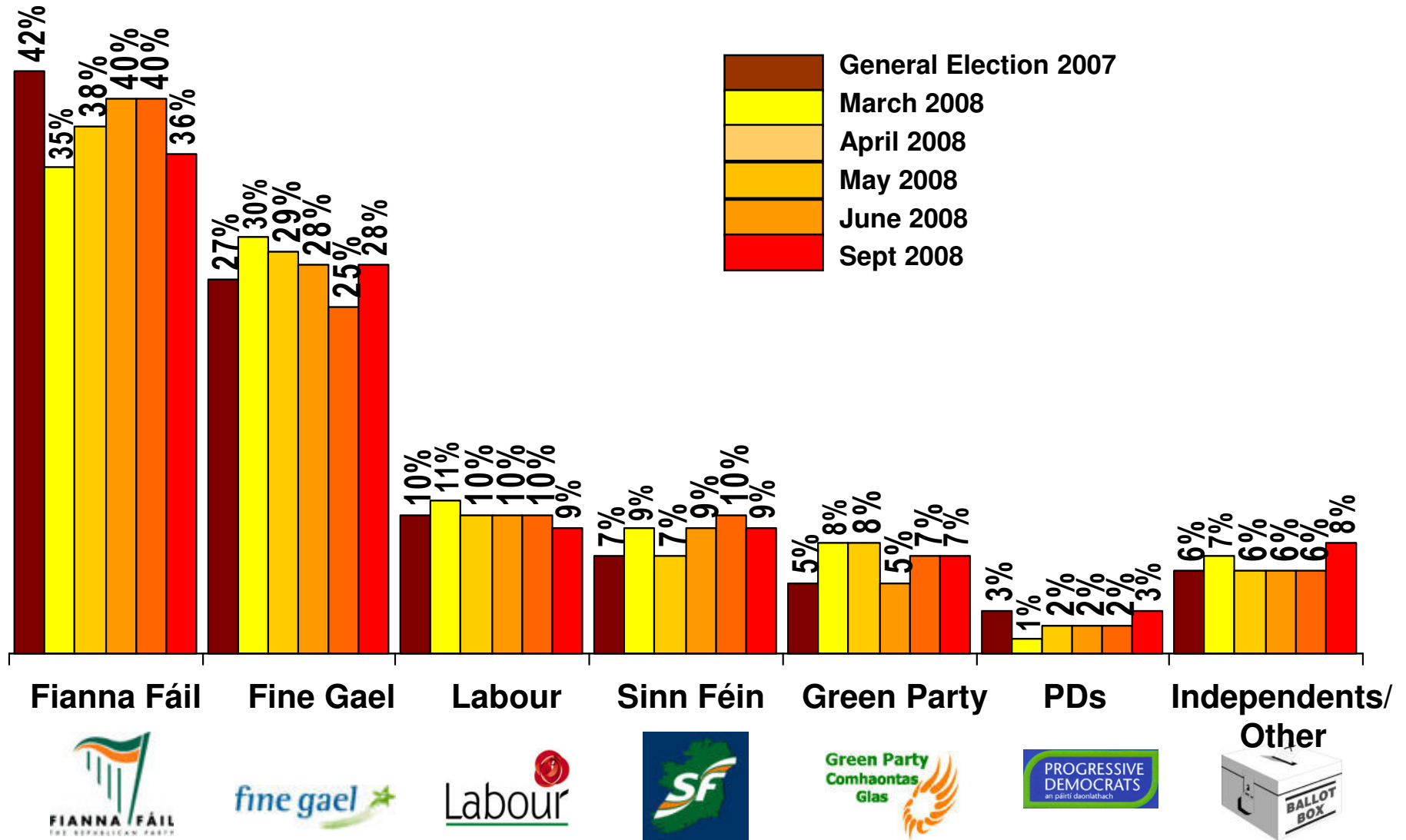
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



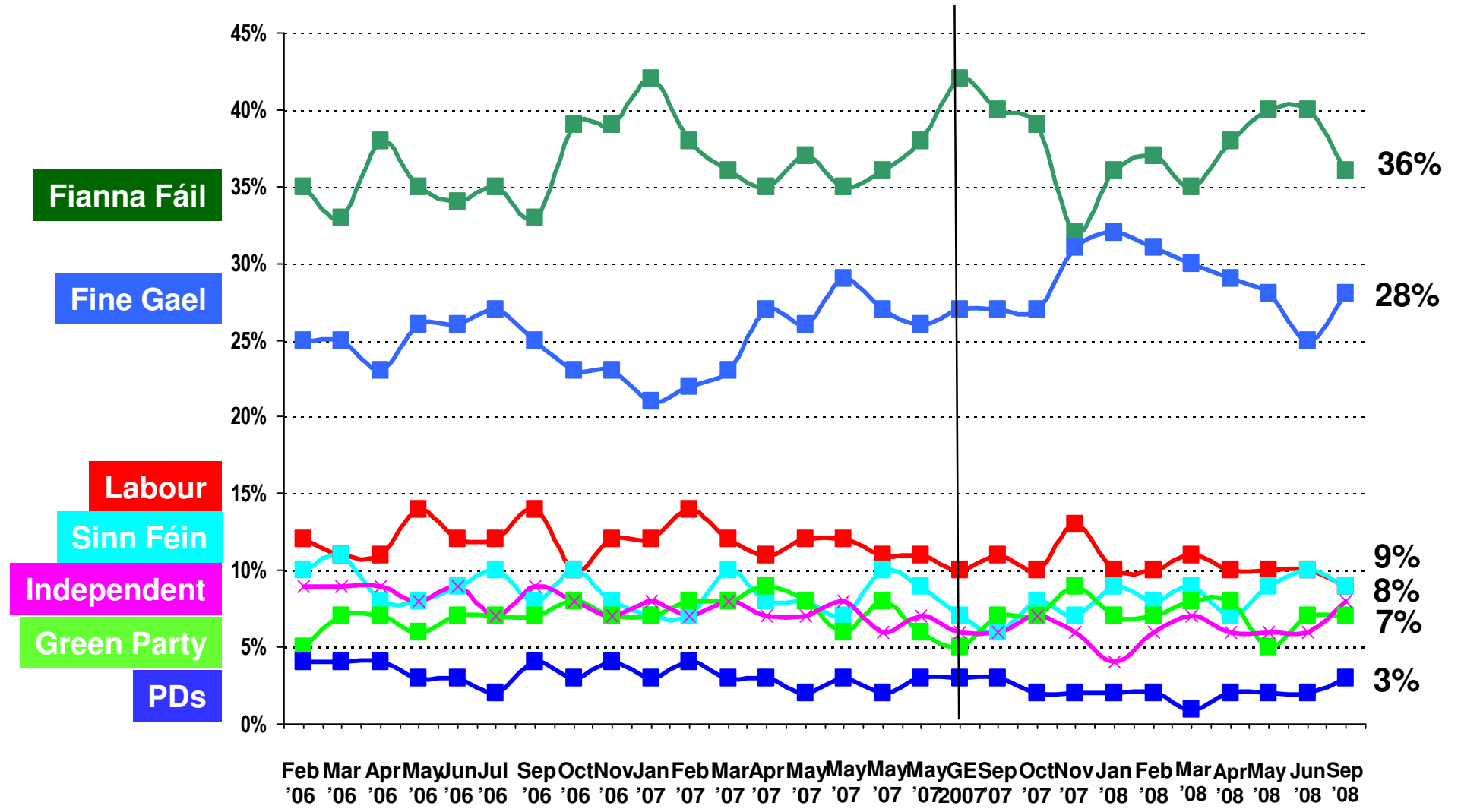
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults WHO WILL VOTE 18+)



If there were a *general election* tomorrow, to which party or independent candidate would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)

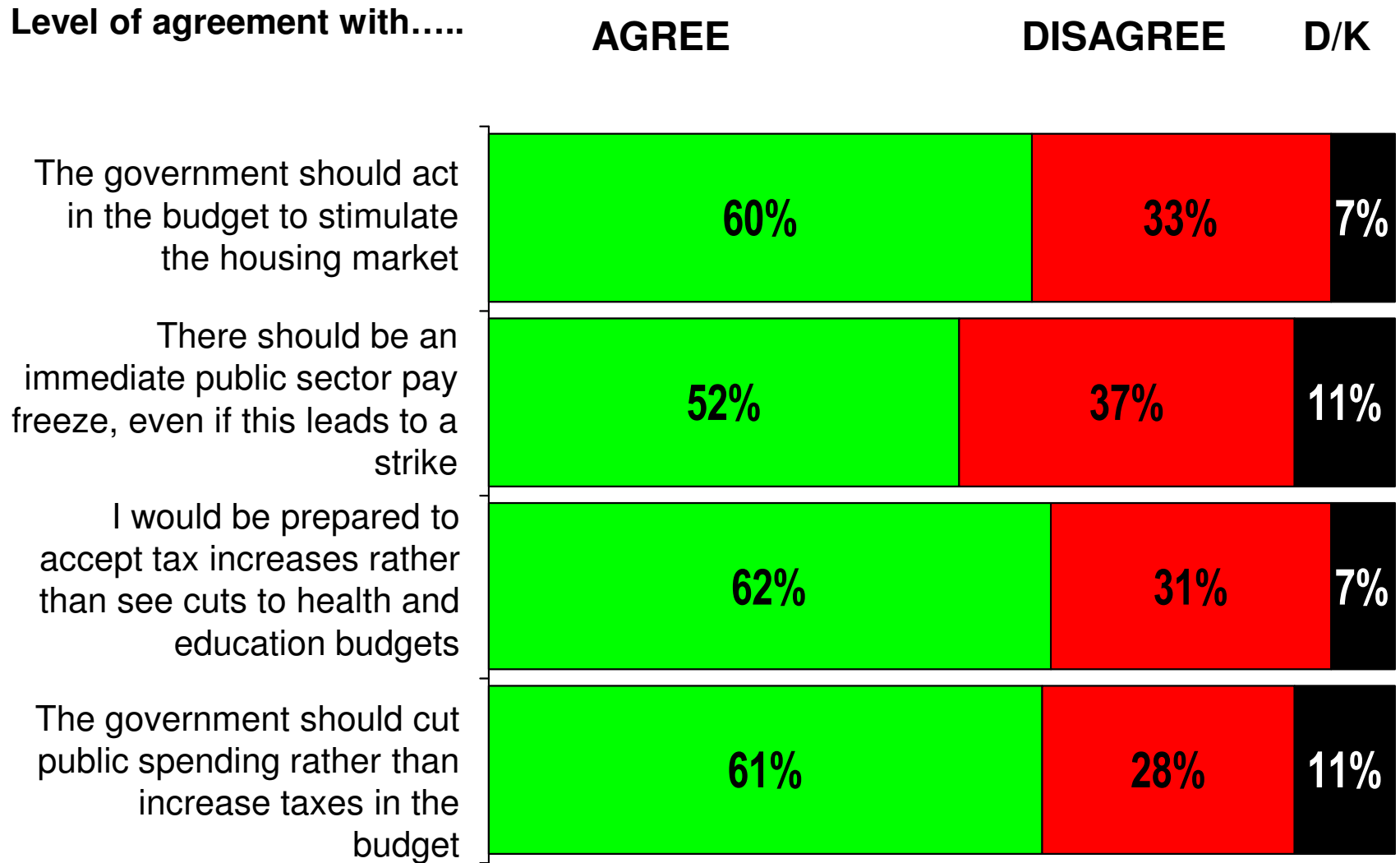


**CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT BY THOSE MOST LIKELY TO VOTE
(those who give a score of 7 or more out of 10, on a scale where 1 = Definitely will not vote and 10 = Definitely will vote)**

	Sept 2008	June 2008	May 2008	April 2008	March 2008	Feb 2008	Nov 2007	Oct 2007	2007 Election Result
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	36	40	39	37	36	38	33	40	42
Fine Gael	28	25	28	29	30	30	31	28	27
Labour	9	10	10	11	10	10	13	10	10
Sinn Féin	9	10	9	7	8	8	7	6	7
P.Ds	3	6	2	2	1	2	2	2	3
Green Party	7	6	5	7	8	7	8	7	5
Independents/ Others	8	2	6	7	7	6	5	7	6

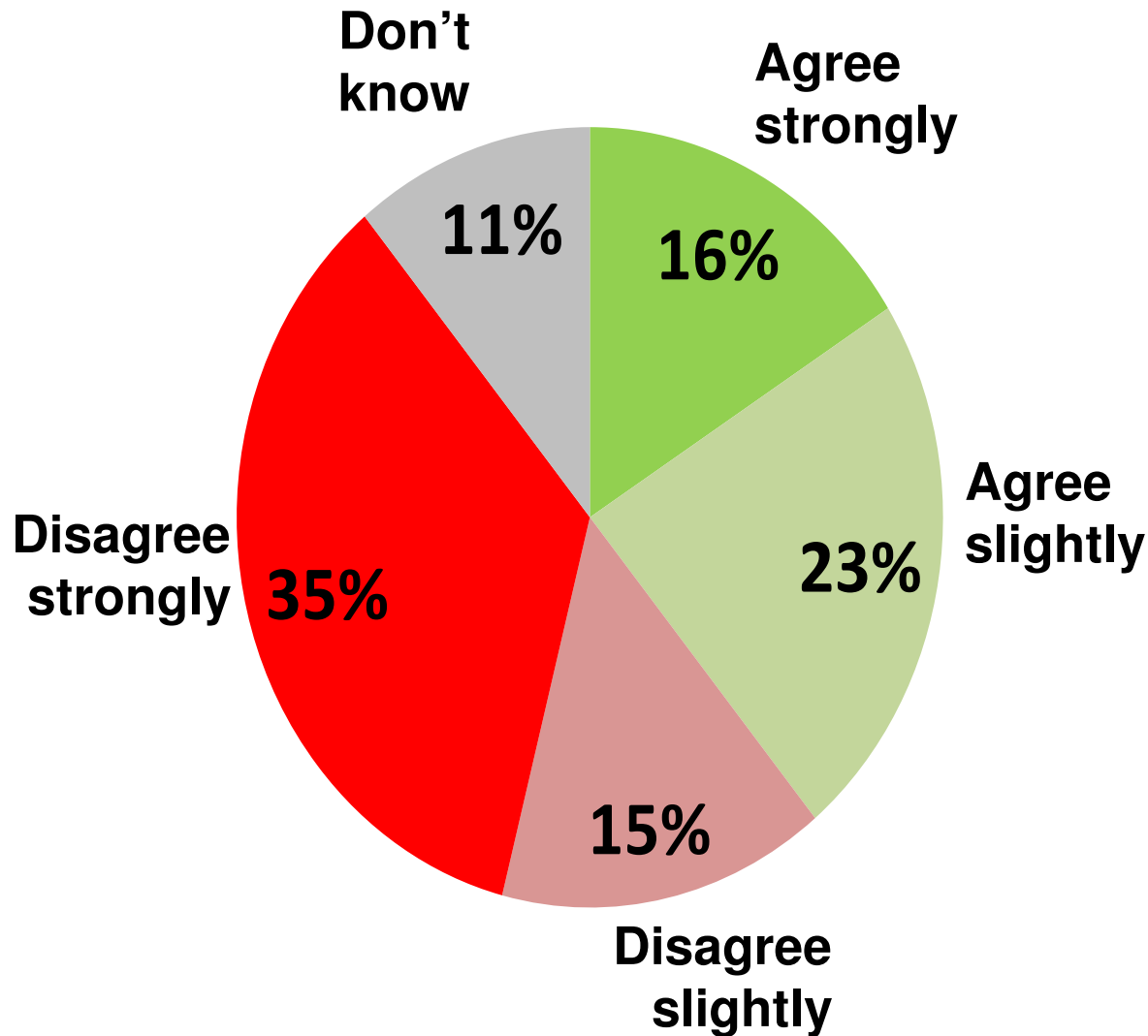
Attitudes to the Taxes and the next Budget

(Base: All adults 18+)



I have confidence in the Government to manage the public finances out of the current downturn

(Base: All adults 18+)



% Disagree by party voted for at last election	
Total	50%
Fianna Fáil	36%
Fine Gael	68%
Labour	67%
Green	57%