



General Election Opinion Poll

25th May 2008

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included



RED C interviewed a random sample of 1005 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 19th & 21st May 2008. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



Cowen honeymoon continues, but Yes camp struggles to gain a clear lead

For the second month in a row since Brian Cowen succeeded Bertie Ahern as leader, Fianna Fail make gains in first preference support among the public. If only Dail debates were as easy! Today's Sunday Business Post/ RED C poll was taken between Monday and Wednesday this week, and therefore is unlikely to have been overly influenced by Brian Cowen's Dail expletive, or the parties apologies the next day. It will however bring welcome respite for the new leader from this controversy.

Since our last poll most of the parties have launched their campaigns for the Lisbon Reform Treaty. The majority of these appear to resemble party political posters with startling similarities to those seen at the last election, but with a Yes or No tagged to the bottom. If this is an attempt by the parties to garner support in the process of their campaigns, not many have succeeded.

Fianna Fail do however secure 40% of the first preference vote, an increase of 2% since last month, and 5% since Cowen was officially anointed as the new leader. This means that the party has also all but re-gained the support lost during the year since the last election, and leaves it in a very strong position.

The story is not such good news for Fine Gael, who have acknowledged that they expect a bounce in support for Fianna Fail after Cowen's election, but might have hoped this had started to wane at this point. Instead it is Fine Gael's own share of the first preference vote that continues to wane. The party's share of the first preference vote falls by 1% for the fourth month in succession, and this leaves them securing 28% of the first preference vote overall. This trend in support is certainly moving in the wrong direction, and must be of concern for the party, however it still leaves the party with a larger share of vote than they secured at the last election.

Labour on the other hand appears to be permanently marooned at 10% share of the first preference vote, which is exactly the same as they achieved at the last election. It appears that the parties Lisbon Treaty poster campaign, launched just this week, has as yet failed to benefit the party, even though at first glance it appears to have little to do with the referendum and more to do with promotion of the party and its new leader.



In contrast Sinn Fein, the only party to actively support the No vote in the Reform Treaty referendum, do appear to make gains on the back of their campaign. Given that a third of the electorate suggest that they are going to vote No, it is perhaps not a surprise that some are as a result drawn to Sinn Fein the only party actively backing their view. In today's poll the party regain 9% of the first preference vote, an increase of 2% from last month. The biggest gains in support for the party are among young men under 25, who are also the most likely demographic group to vote No at the forthcoming referendum.

The Green Party on the other hand see a relatively dramatic fall of 3% in support, which leaves the party securing just 5% of the first preference vote. This is the same as they managed at the last election, but is well below the level they have become used to since they started work in government in earnest. It is apparent of course, that the Green Party have been relatively subdued in terms of campaigning for the Reform Treaty, when compared to other parties, very little coverage of what the party even feels about the treaty. It is perhaps this lack of obvious presence, at a time when the others are so active, that has impacted on their fortunes in today's poll. On further investigation however, it does also appear that a large number of those who voted for the party at the last election have now swelled the ranks of the undecided voters which reach 18% in this poll. In fact almost one in five (18%) of those that voted Green at the last election now say they are undecided how they will vote, almost twice as high as for any other party.

The PD's hold on to 2% of the first preference vote in the poll, and appear to have consolidated support following the election of a new party leader, having been close to meltdown just a couple of months ago. Independent candidates secure 6% of the vote, also the same as they achieved last month, and the same as the last election.

So while the individual party campaigns for the Lisbon Reform Treaty Referendum appear to have had limited impact on party support, the question is what impact this much stronger and more visible Yes campaign is having on vote intention at the referendum itself. Today's poll taken just two weeks since our last Sunday Business Post/ RED C referendum poll appears to suggest that both the campaigns have been relatively successful in driving an understanding of the treaty and helping people to decide how they will vote.



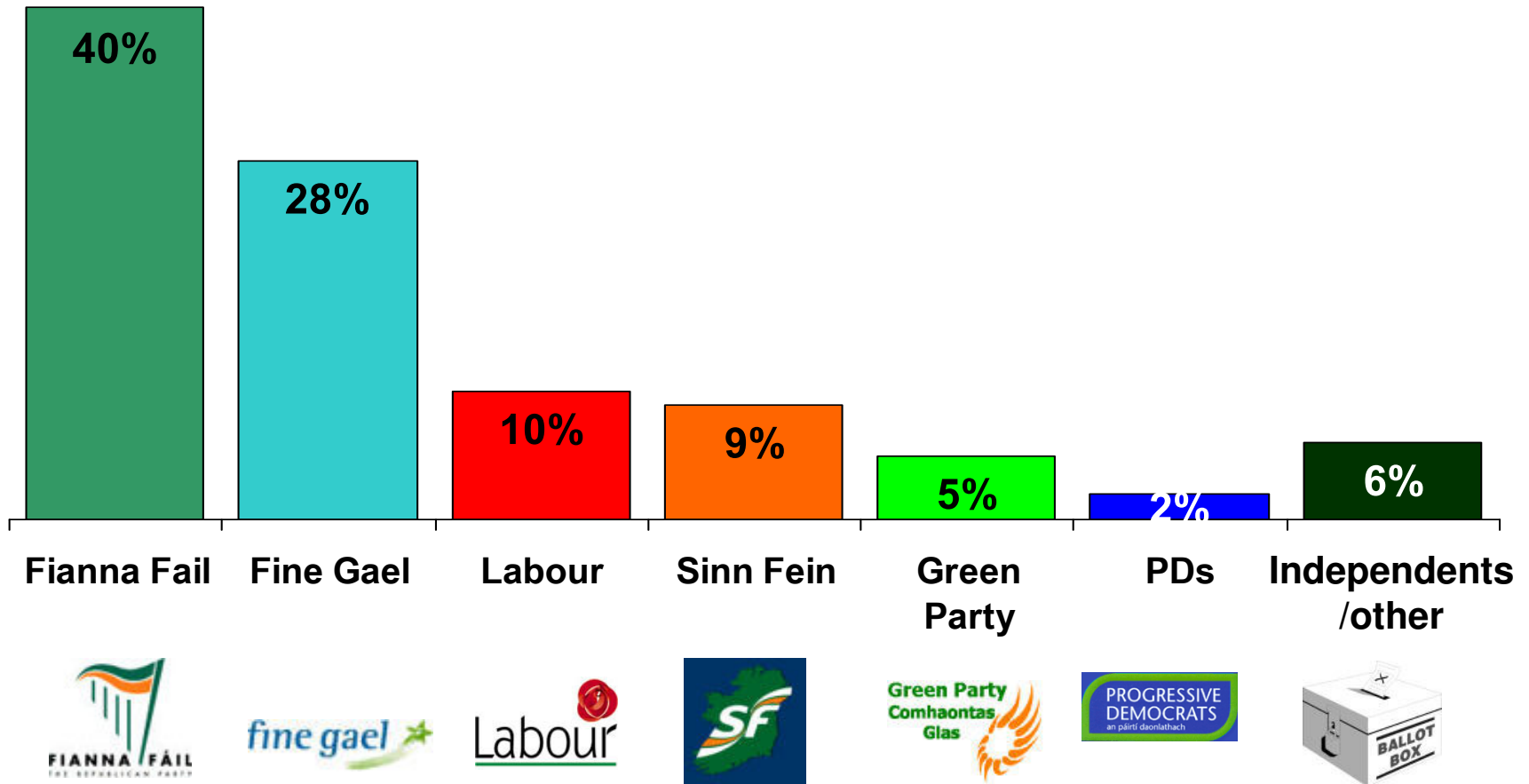
The main change in the past two weeks has been the reduction in the number of people who are unclear how they will vote. In fact just a quarter (26%) of all Irish citizens now state that they don't know how they will vote, a fall of 8% in just two weeks. On the back of this more informed electorate, both sides of the campaign make gains, but it is the No camp that move slightly further ahead. This is perhaps surprising given the weight that has gone behind the Yes campaign over the past two weeks, and serves a further warning that the referendum certainly isn't won yet.

Over two fifths (41%) of all Irish citizens now state that if the referendum was held tomorrow they would vote Yes. This is an increase of 3% from that seen two weeks ago. But a third (33%) of all Irish citizens now suggest that if the referendum was tomorrow they would vote No. This is an increase of 5% since two weeks ago, and means that if those who are still undecided were to fall out in the same proportions, the Yes camp would just sneak through at the poll with 55% of the vote. In contrast two weeks ago the outcome was more clear cut with the Yes camp looking like taking more like 58% of the vote.

The one aspect of the poll that will bring some relief to the Yes supporters is that when vote intention is analysed only by those who say they are very likely to vote (8 or more out of 10), they do secure a slightly higher 42% of the vote. This is 1% more than among all voters, and gives the Yes campaign a little more breathing space as they fight to ensure the treaty is passed in just under three weeks time. At present it will be vital that the Yes camp mobilise supporters to make the effort to actually vote on polling day.

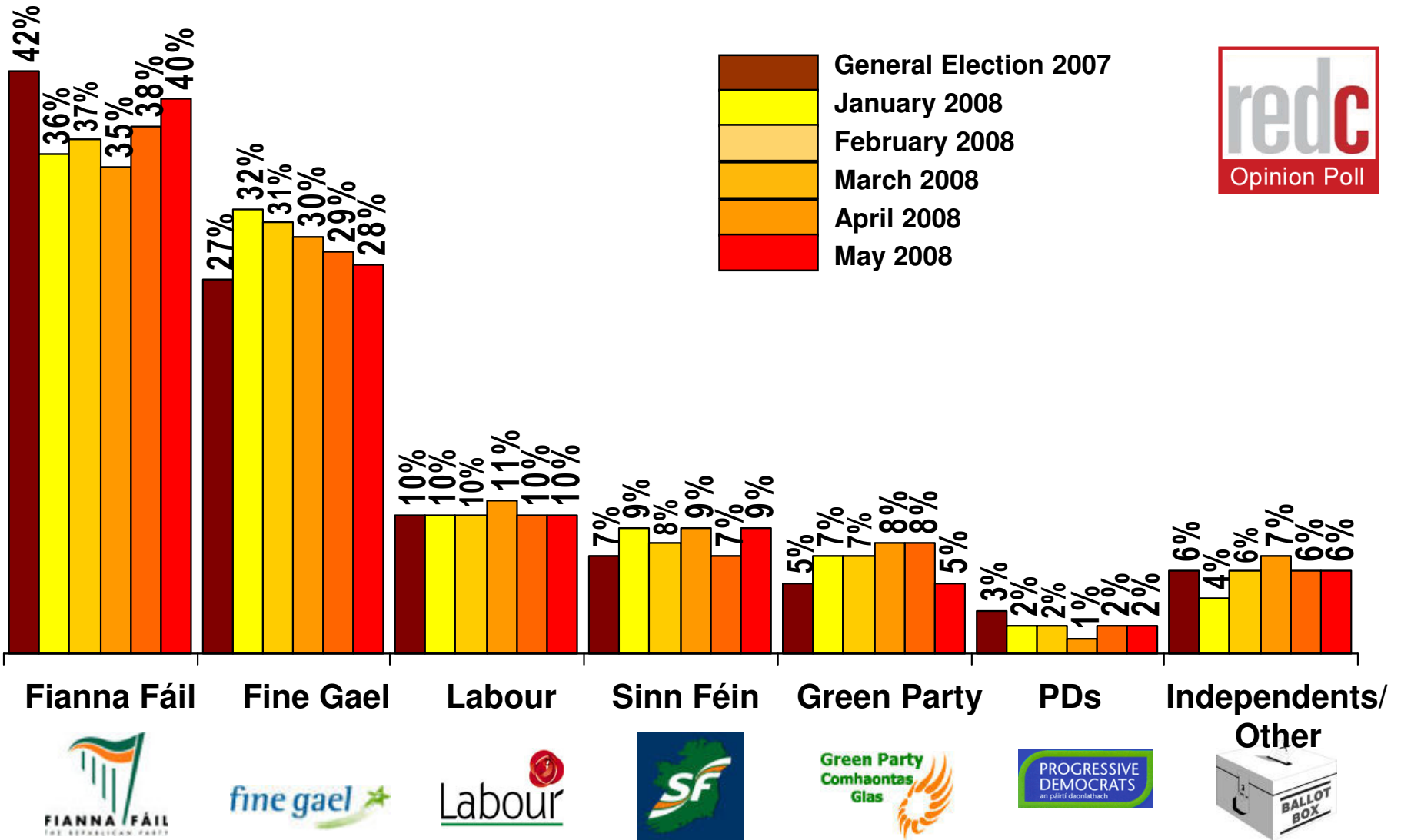
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



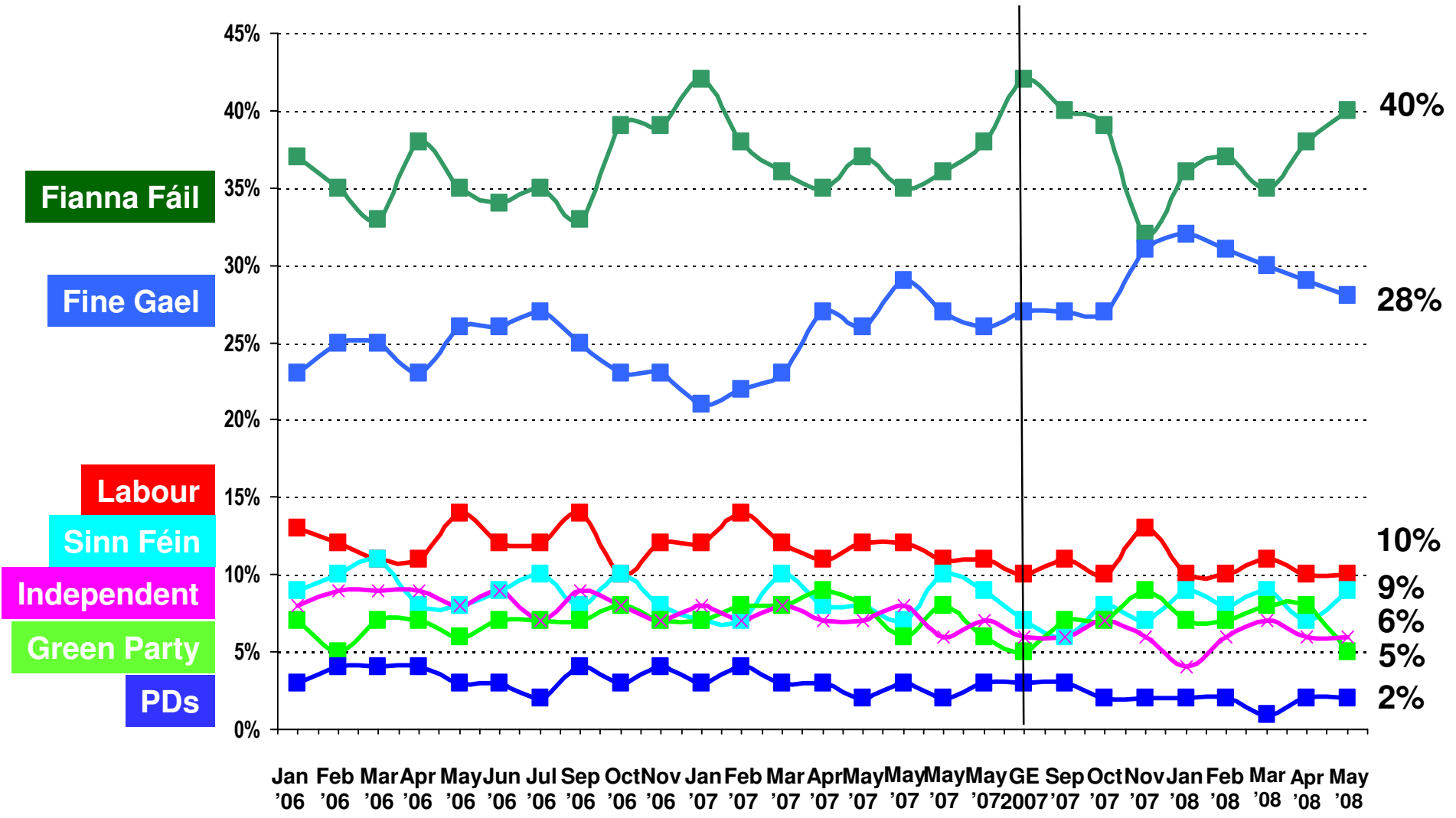
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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 | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Core figures | Excluding undecided | 2007 Election Results |
| | % | % | % |
| Fianna Fáil | 33 | 40 | 42 |
| Fine Gael | 23 | 28 | 27 |
| Labour | 8 | 10 | 10 |
| Sinn Féin | 7 | 9 | 7 |
| P.Ds | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Green Party | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Independents/Others | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Undecided | 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)**

| | May 2008 | April 2008 | March 2008 | Feb 2008 | Jan 2008 | Nov 2007 | Oct 2007 | 2007 Election Result |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Fianna Fáil | 39 | 37 | 36 | 38 | 36 | 33 | 40 | 42 |
| Fine Gael | 28 | 29 | 30 | 30 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 27 |
| Labour | 10 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 10 |
| Sinn Féin | 9 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| P.Ds | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Green Party | 5 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 5 |
| Independents/ Others | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 |

In 2008, Ireland will hold a referendum to ratify the European Union Reform Treaty. If there were a referendum tomorrow, would you vote for Ireland to sign up to the Reform Treaty or not?

(Base: All adults 18+)

