



Voting Intention Opinion Poll

Oct 2008

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included



RED C interviewed a random sample of 1002 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 20th & 22nd October 2008. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 26th October 2008 Opinion Poll

Fianna Fail support collapses on the back of poor voter reaction to the Budget

A month is certainly a long time in politics if today's Sunday Business Post/ RED C tracking poll is anything to go by. The past month has seen continued concerns over the economy fill the media agenda, with the Government initially appearing to act strongly by being the first country to react to the banking crisis in Europe. More recently however the first budget for Brian Lenihan, brought forward from the normal timetable of December, has angered many and resulted in demonstrations outside Leinster House by both the Grey vote and students in the week when the poll was being conducted.

If Fianna Fail were in any way complacent about the impact of their actions in the budget, they certainly won't be after digesting the findings of this month's tracking poll. Support for the party nosedives to 26%, a massive fall of 10% compared to a month ago, the like of which we have not seen for any party since RED C began polling for the paper in 2004. Many commentators have talked about the core underlying support for the party being at around this level, and it appears that now this is all the party has left to depend on in the current climate. With falls in support also seen last month it means that party support has fallen by 14% since June, and puts enormous pressure on Brian Cowen.

In contrast support for the opposition parties increase substantially. Fine Gael and Labour both make very strong gains since the poll taken a month ago. Fine Gael secure 33% of the first preference vote in the poll today, this is an increase of 5% in a month, and is an 8% increase since June. These strong gains now mean that Fine Gael's poll ratings are 7% ahead of Fianna Fail. The Labour Party also benefits very strongly for the lack of trust now placed in Fianna Fail. Labour also takes a much higher share of the first preference vote, with support also increasing by 5% on one month, leaving the party securing 15% of the first preference vote again a first since we began polling in 2004.

Further analysis suggests that the gains for both opposition parties are based on a drop in confidence for Fianna Fail and their ability to manage the economy. Some of the gains are based on defections from Fianna Fail to either Fine Gael or Labour, and some are also based on the fact that there are now more undecided voters than we have seen for some time making up 20% of all likely voters.



When we analyse the collapse in Fianna Fail support more closely, declines are seen across all demographic groups, but are most pronounced among Farmers – who appear to have deserted the party, while larger falls in support are also seen among women and those in the 35-54 year old age groups. One staggering statistic is that only 58% of those that voted for the party at the last election claim they are certain to do so again if there was a General Election tomorrow.

At the last election our analysis suggested that many voters clung to Fianna Fail, sometimes against their better judgement, because of their desire to protect their own economic status. Now it appears that the failure to deliver the economic security desired, as far as voters are concerned over the past few months, has made the backlash that much stronger. Just 1 in 5 of all voters (20%) now state that they have confidence in the Government to manage the public finances, down from 39% who felt this was the case last month. At the same time almost 3 in 5 (59%) now state that they don't have confidence in the Government. Most worrying for the party is that almost half (47%) of those that voted for Fianna Fail at the last election, now claim they do not have confidence in the party to manage the public finances.

At the same time it appears to be the specific decisions that the party have made, rather than being tough generally, that has impacted on their support. When we asked voters if they believe there has to be cut backs in public services to save money almost half agree (49%), with only 31% disagreeing. Over 2 in 5 also feel that the government should borrow more money and increase the budget deficit rather than cut back spending on health and education. However, the majority (63%) feel that payments such as pensions, child benefits and medical cards should be made available to all, irrespective of cost.

When we examine the fortunes of the other parties there is little significant change in their support this month. The Green party will be happy to see that they are not nearly as adversely affected by the public shift in opinion against the government as their coalition partners. The party takes 6% of the first preference vote, and while this is a decline of 1% since last month, it certainly still suggests that as yet they are not being blamed for the economic crisis to the same extent as their government partners.



Sinn Fein don't gain as much as the main opposition parties, but in today's poll they do see support increase back up by 1% since last month to secure 10% of the first preference vote overall. After the PD's flirtation with non-existence which saw them gain support on the back of the media coverage last month, their share of the first preference vote falls back again this month now they are no longer in the limelight, leaving the party securing 2% of the first preference vote in today's poll. Independent candidates retain the 8% in support they received last month.

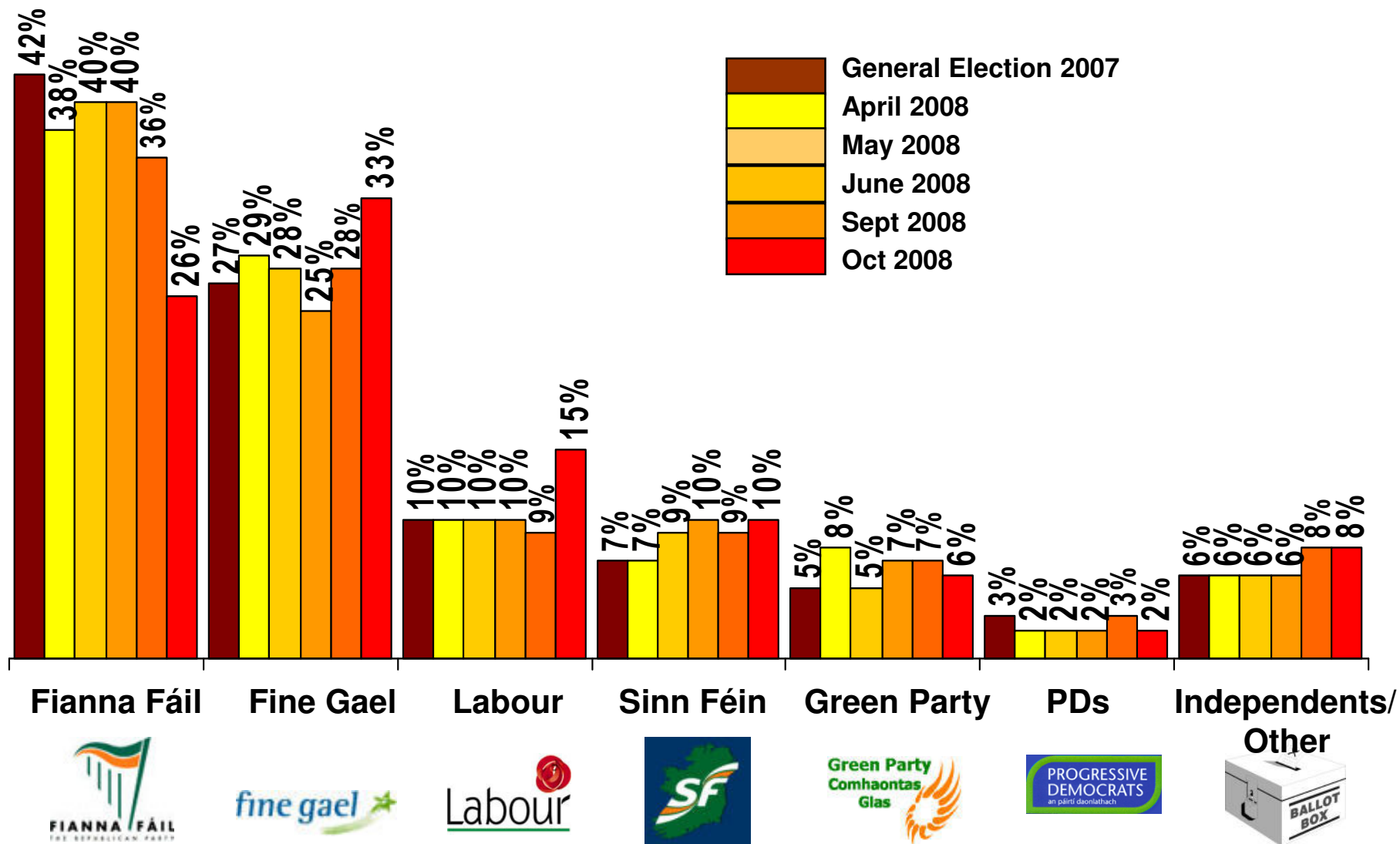
Where then does Fianna Fail go from here? Firstly it should be noted that this poll has been taken at possibly the worst time for the party in the same week as marches against the government. On this basis there is of course the potential for some of these losses to be regained when the immediate reaction wears off. Over and above this, it appears that the party needs to reassure voters that they are the best people to manage the Irish economy within the context of a world economic crisis, without making decisions that appear to impact so heavily on what many see as less well off groups in society. This is no easy task when the fortunes of the party are intertwined with the current worldwide economic downturn, and they will have to hope that the current poor economic situation improves itself across the next two and half years before a possible General Election raises its head.

For Fine Gael and Labour the opportunity has arisen to really change the face of Irish politics, by further consolidating their appeal to voters disaffected by Fianna Fail over the coming months. Again key to their future must be the need to portray themselves as a safer pair of hands to manage Ireland out of its current economic woes.

The question then is whether this poll marks a watershed in the history of the Irish political scene or if Fianna Fail have the wits and the ability to bring the party back from the brink where they currently find themselves.

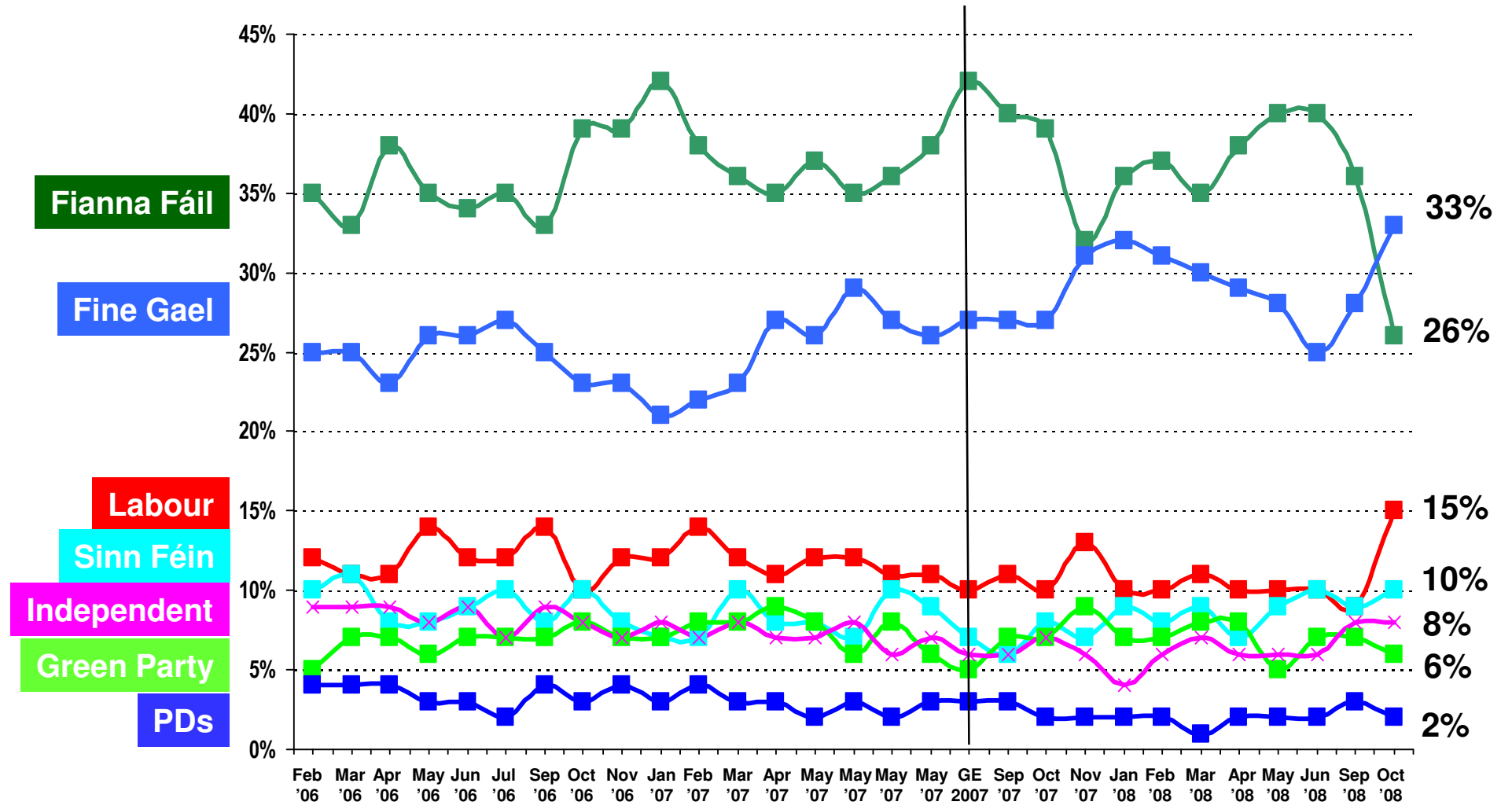
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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+)



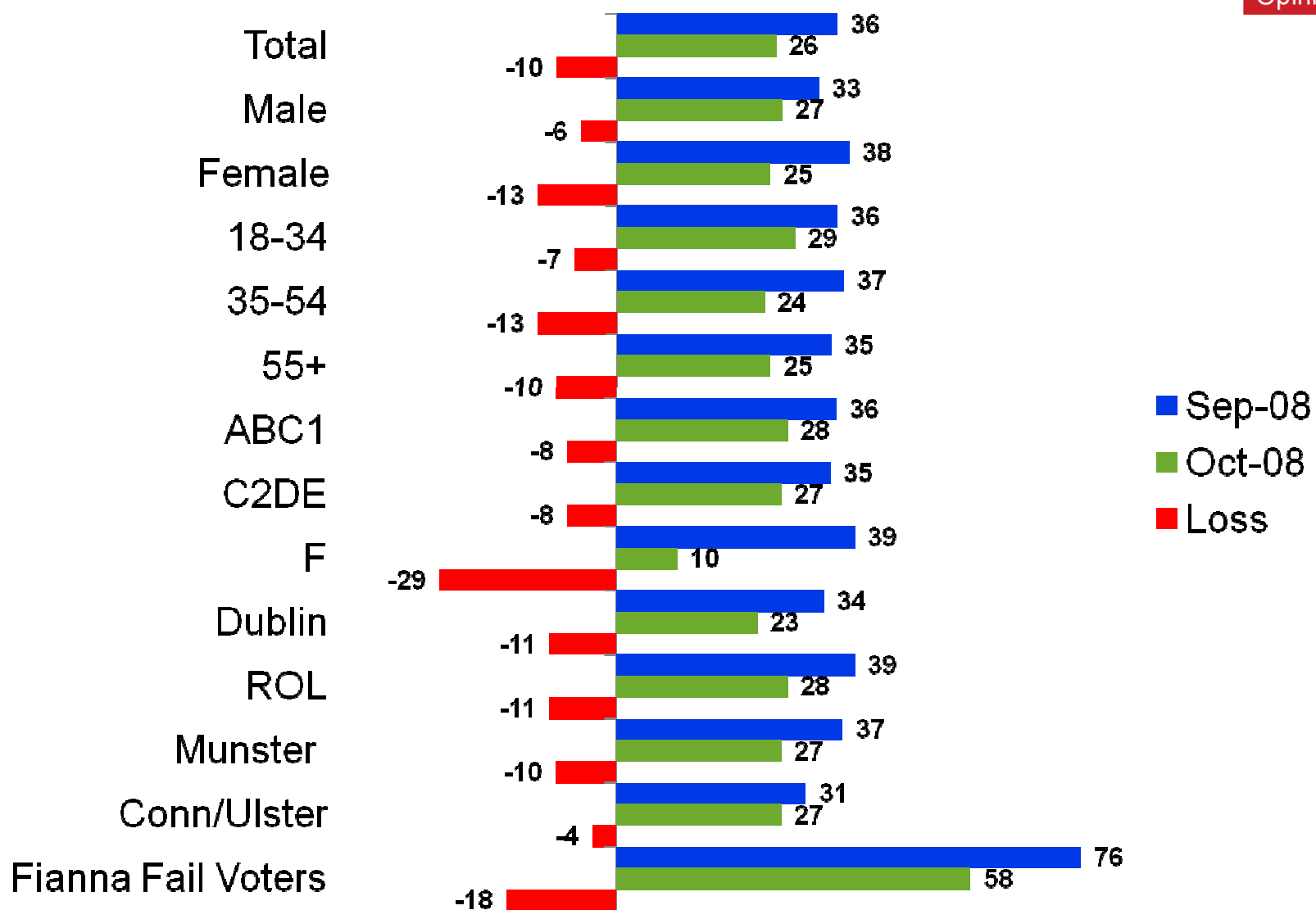
CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT				
	Core figures Sept 08	Core figures Oct 08	Excluding undecided	2007 Election Results
	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	31	21	26	42
Fine Gael	24	27	33	27
Labour	7	12	15	10
Sinn Féin	8	8	10	7
P.Ds	3	1	2	3
Green Party	6	5	6	5
Independent s/Others	7	7	8	6
Undecided	14	19		

**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)**

	Oct 2008	Sept 2008	June 2008	May 2008	April 2008	March 2008	Feb 2008	Nov 2007	Oct 2007	2007 Election Result
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	26	36	40	39	37	36	38	33	40	42
Fine Gael	34	28	25	28	29	30	30	31	28	27
Labour	15	9	10	10	11	10	10	13	10	10
Sinn Féin	9	9	10	9	7	8	8	7	6	7
P.Ds	2	3	6	2	2	1	2	2	2	3
Green Party	5	7	6	5	7	8	7	8	7	5
Independents/ Others	9	8	2	6	7	7	6	5	7	6

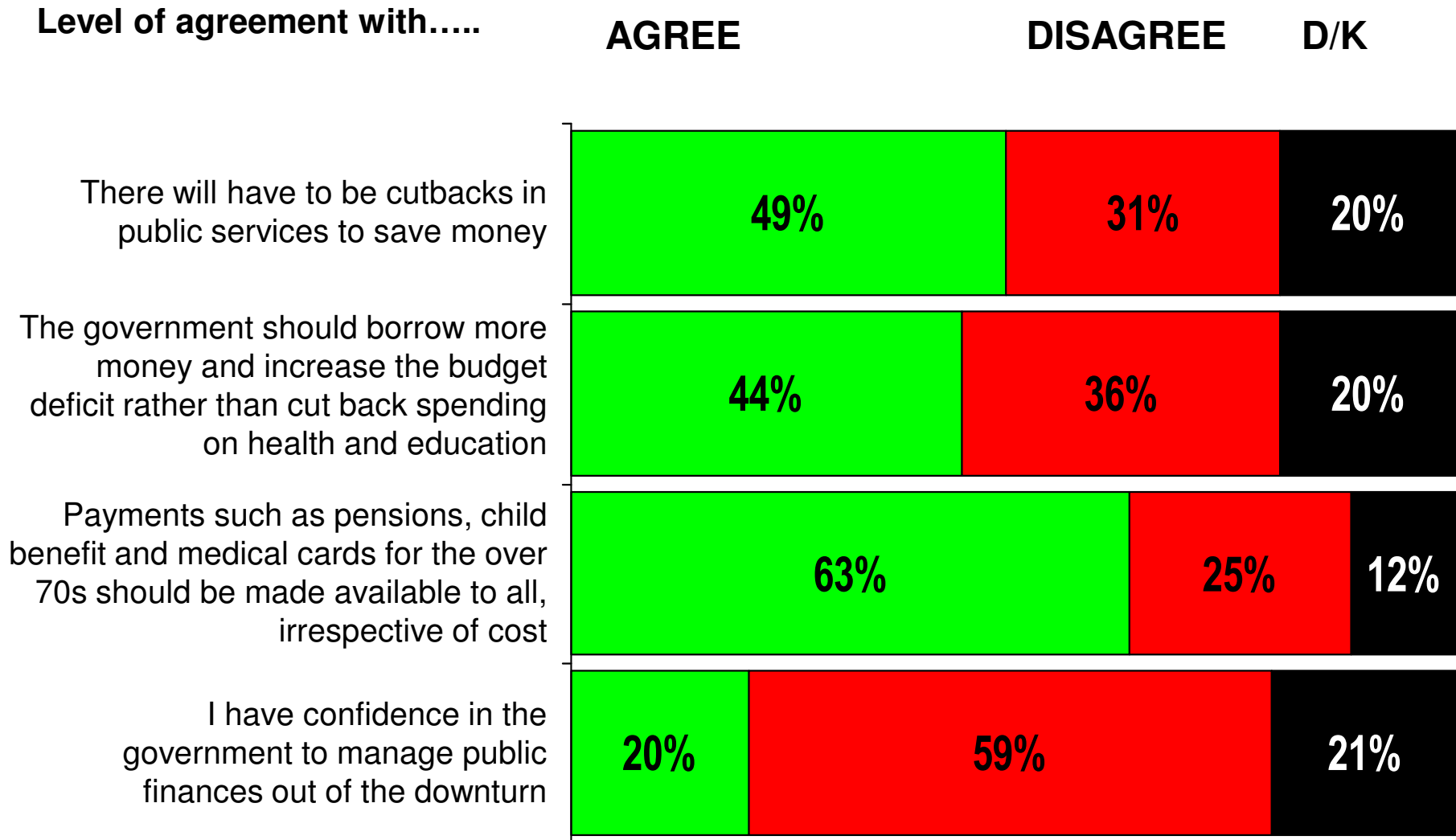
Decline in Fianna Fail vote by Demographics

(Base: All adults 18+)

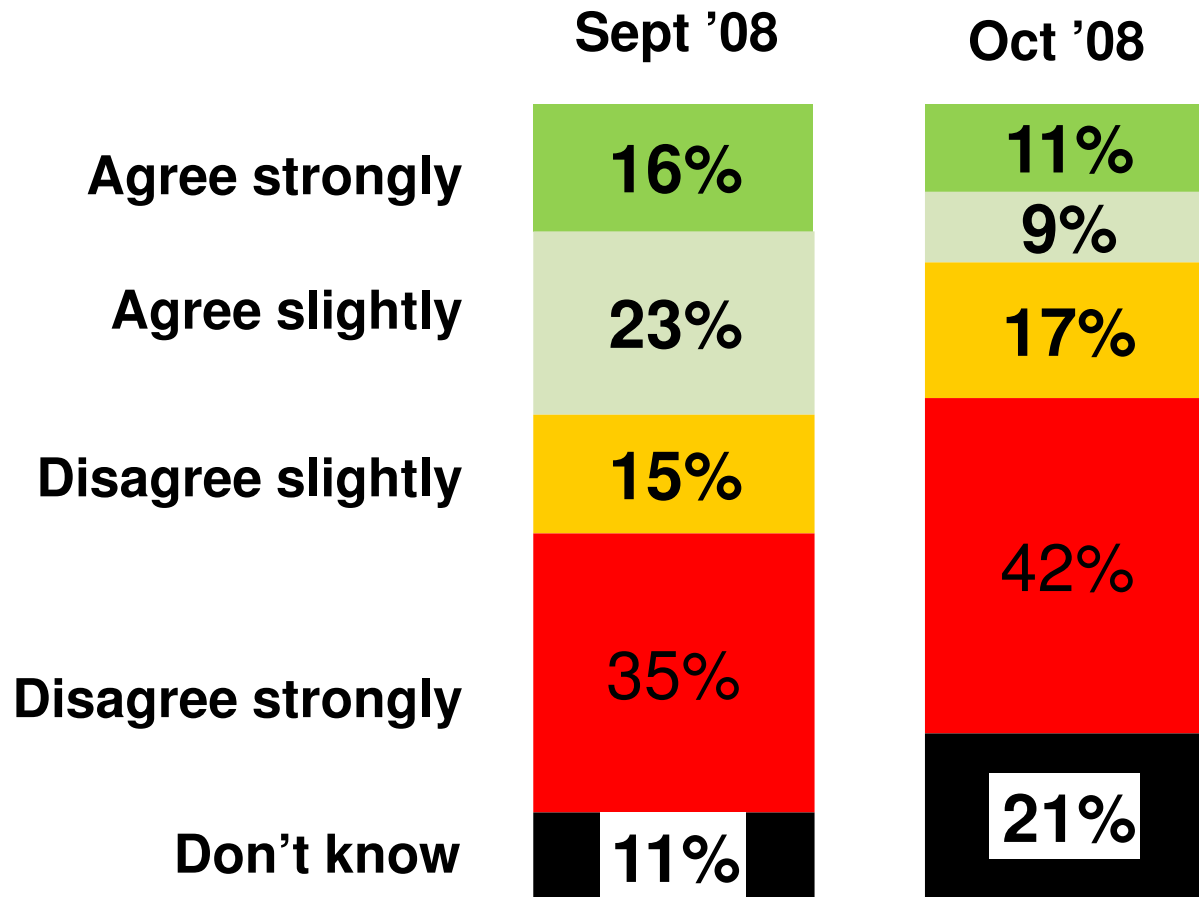


Attitudes to the Taxes and the Budget

(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		
	Sep 08	Oct 08
Total	50%	59%
Fianna Fáil	36%	47%
Fine Gael	68%	73%
Labour	67%	73%
Green	57%	78%