



General Election Opinion Poll

27th April 2008

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included



RED C interviewed a random sample of 1010 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 21st & 23rd April 2008. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 27th April 2008 Opinion Poll

Rise in Reform Treaty “No” vote is Cowen’s first big challenge

Two different voting intention questions in today’s Sunday Business Post tracking poll, provide two very different outcomes for Fianna Fail and their new leader Brian Cowen. The first, our standard general election vote intention question, provides good news for both leader and Party, in that it confirms the bounce in support for Fianna Fail in our interim poll when Cowen was confirmed as leader. However, the second measure, which determines likely voting intention at the Reform Treaty, sees a significant shift in favour of the No camp, and as such presents Brian Cowen with his first big challenge.

The Reform Treaty result poses problems for all the political parties that support the treaty being ratified, but must be of particular concern to Fianna Fail and their relations within the European Union. Before campaigning began at the start of the year the yes vote appeared to be relatively solid. In February of this year, 43% of Irish citizens suggested that if the referendum were to be held the next day then they would vote to ratify it, and just 24% said they would vote against it, with the remainder undecided. Two months later and campaigning has begun in earnest on the referendum, but the result of today’s poll suggests it is the No vote campaign that has cut through to the public at this stage. The proportion of Irish citizens who now say they would vote to ratify the treaty has fallen by 8%, leaving just 35% supporting the treaty. At the same time support for the No campaign has increased by 7%, leaving the No campaign securing 31% of the vote, just 4% behind the Yes vote.

Assuming those who currently Don’t Know how they will vote eventually fall out in the same proportions, this would leave the referendum result a much closer call than had been anticipated, and a far cry from the apparent easy win suggested at the start of the year. However it doesn’t necessarily follow that those who are currently undecided will follow the lead of those that do. The undecided voters still make up a significant block of 34% of all Irish citizens, and this in turn means there are plenty of people that can be won over for either side of the campaign.

Today’s poll result, and the significant shift towards the No vote, should then act as a warning to Yes campaigners, that the referendum is not a foregone conclusion and much more needs to be done to ensure the Irish population ratify the treaty in June.



In contrast to this, party support figures from today's poll is a more positive result for Fianna Fail. They secure 38% of the first preference vote in the poll, an increase of 3% since the last full sample tracking poll taken a month ago. This is not quite the high seen for the party in our interim poll taken immediately after Bertie Ahern resigned, which saw support bounce to 40%. However, it does represent the highest level of support for the party in our main tracking polls taken over for the last six months.

Fine Gael may however take comfort from the fact that support for Fianna Fail has not risen as much as had been reported in our interim poll, and this suggests that the party's assertion that Brian Cowen's honeymoon period would be short lived, may well be true. The party will be somewhat disappointed to see their own share of the first preference vote fall again this month to 29%. While this only represents a 1% fall in support since March, it means that support for the party has been in a downward trend for three months in a row. It also means that it falls below the 30% support level for the first time since October last year. However, this isn't as low as evident immediately after Bertie Ahern's resignation.

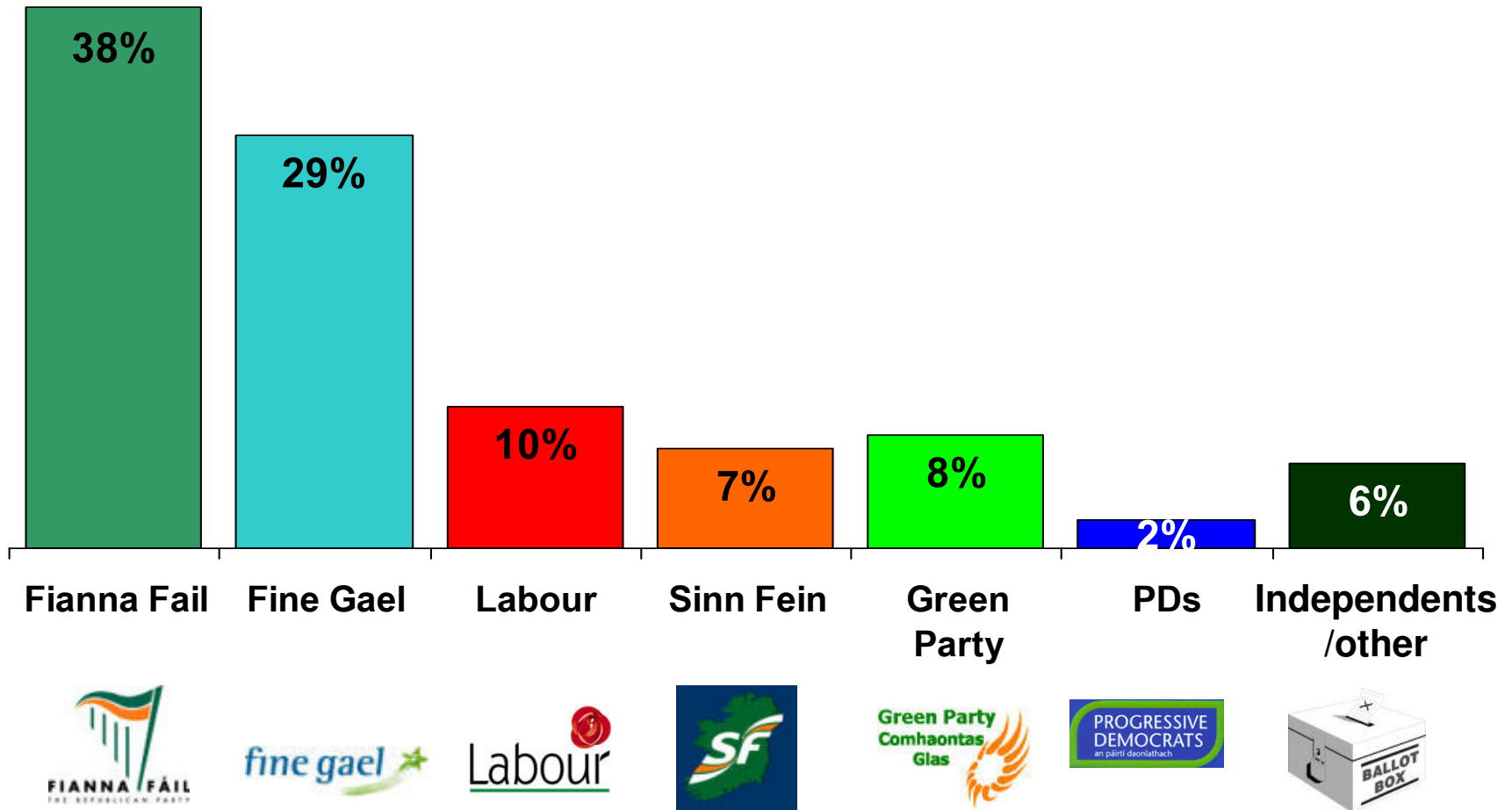
Labour's support falls back 1% again in April, returning their share of the first preference vote to 10%, the same that they achieved at the last election, and where they have been on average across 2007. But it is Sinn Fein who appear to suffer more as a result of gains for Fianna Fail. Their share of the first preference vote drops back to 7%, a fall of 2% since last month, and again returns the party to the levels of support they also achieved at the last election.

The Green Party on the other hand retain gains they made last month to keep 8% of the first preference vote, significantly above the share of vote achieved at the last election. The PD's will also be glad to see that their support has risen back up to 2%, having spent just a month with support at 1%, this will be a welcome boost for new party leader Ciaran Cannon. However, given the extra media attention the party has enjoyed over the election of their new leader, it is perhaps what they would have hoped for, and the coming months will determine the long term impact the new leader can have on party support.

Finally, Independent candidates see their support fall back by 1%, again leaving them taking the same share of the first preference vote as at the last general election.

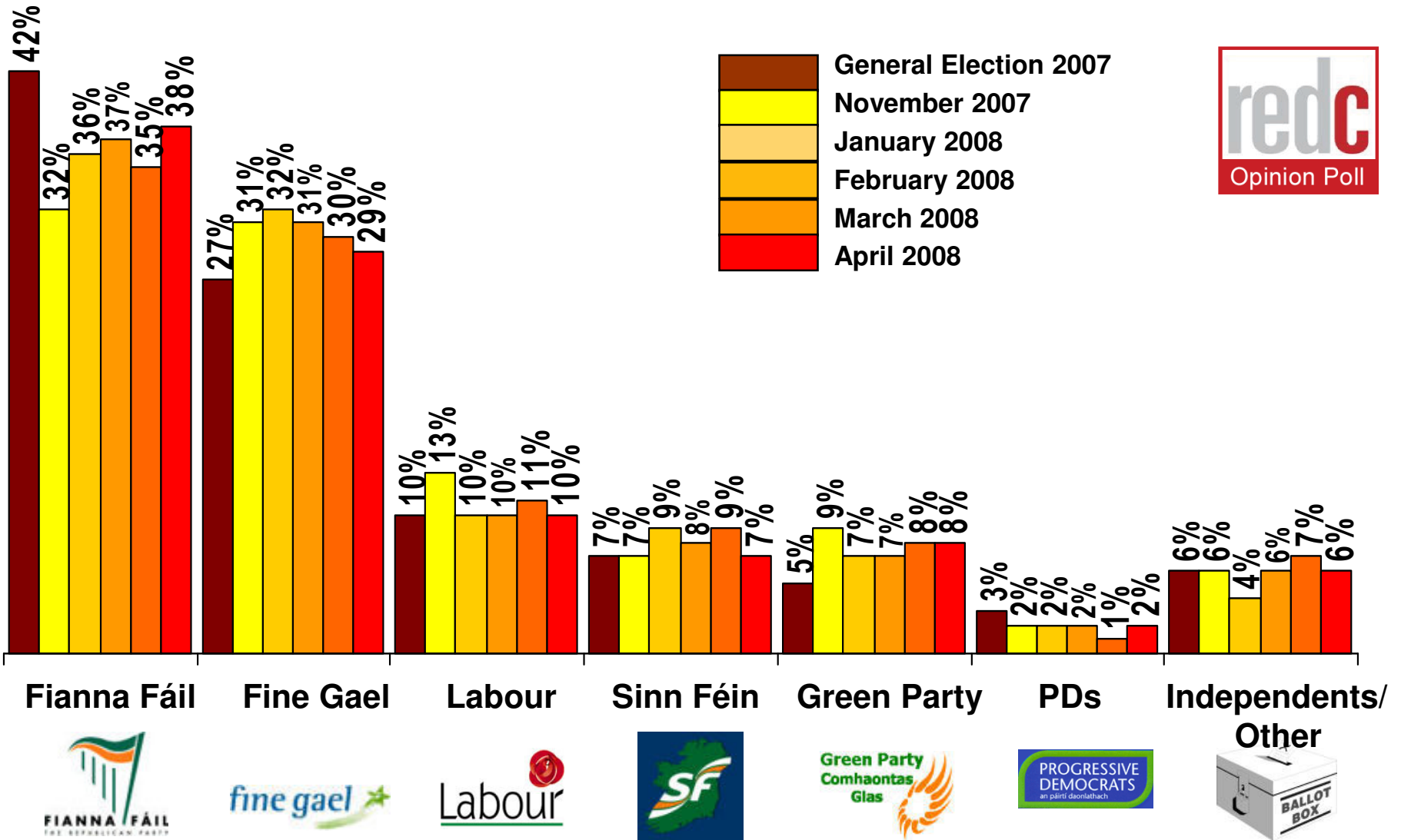
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



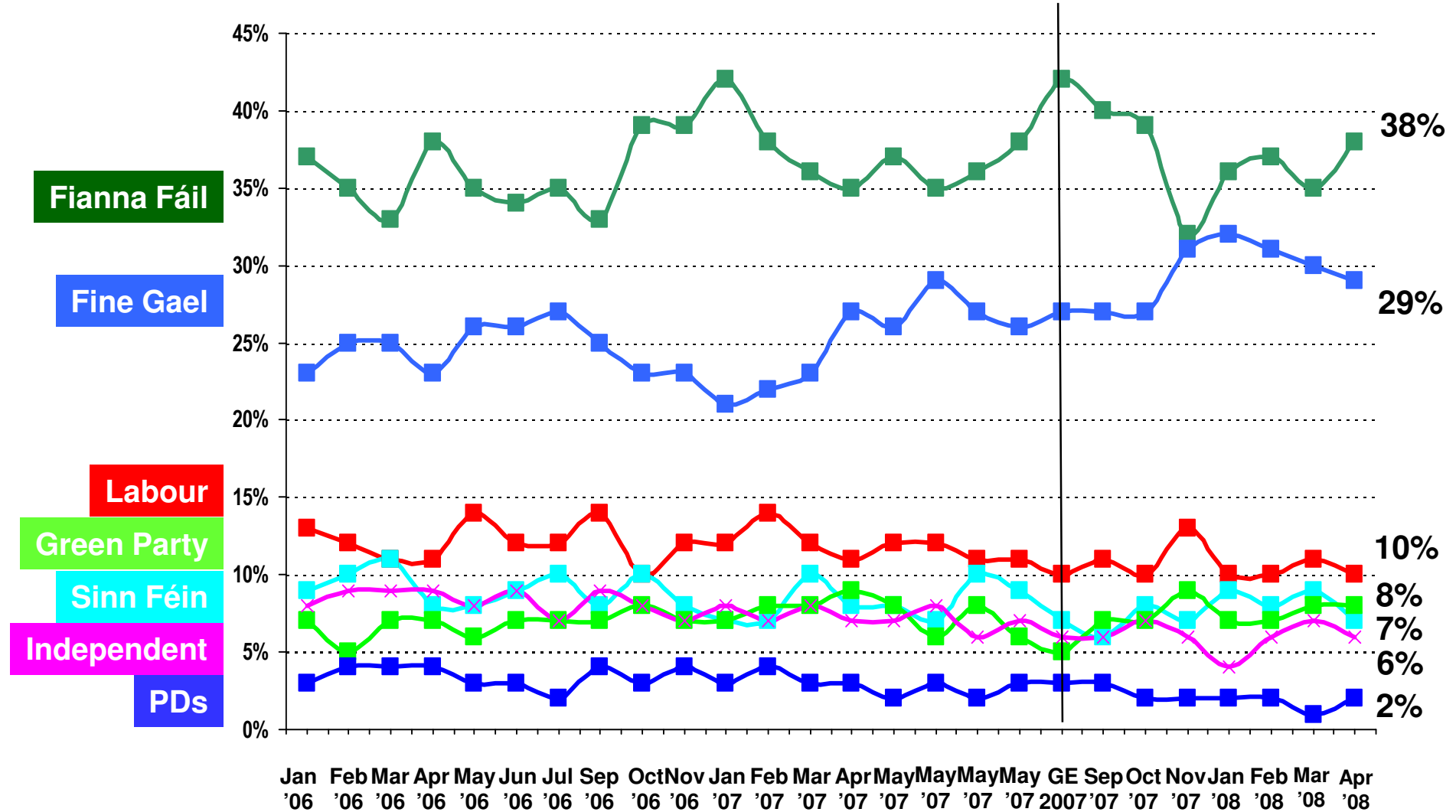
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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+)



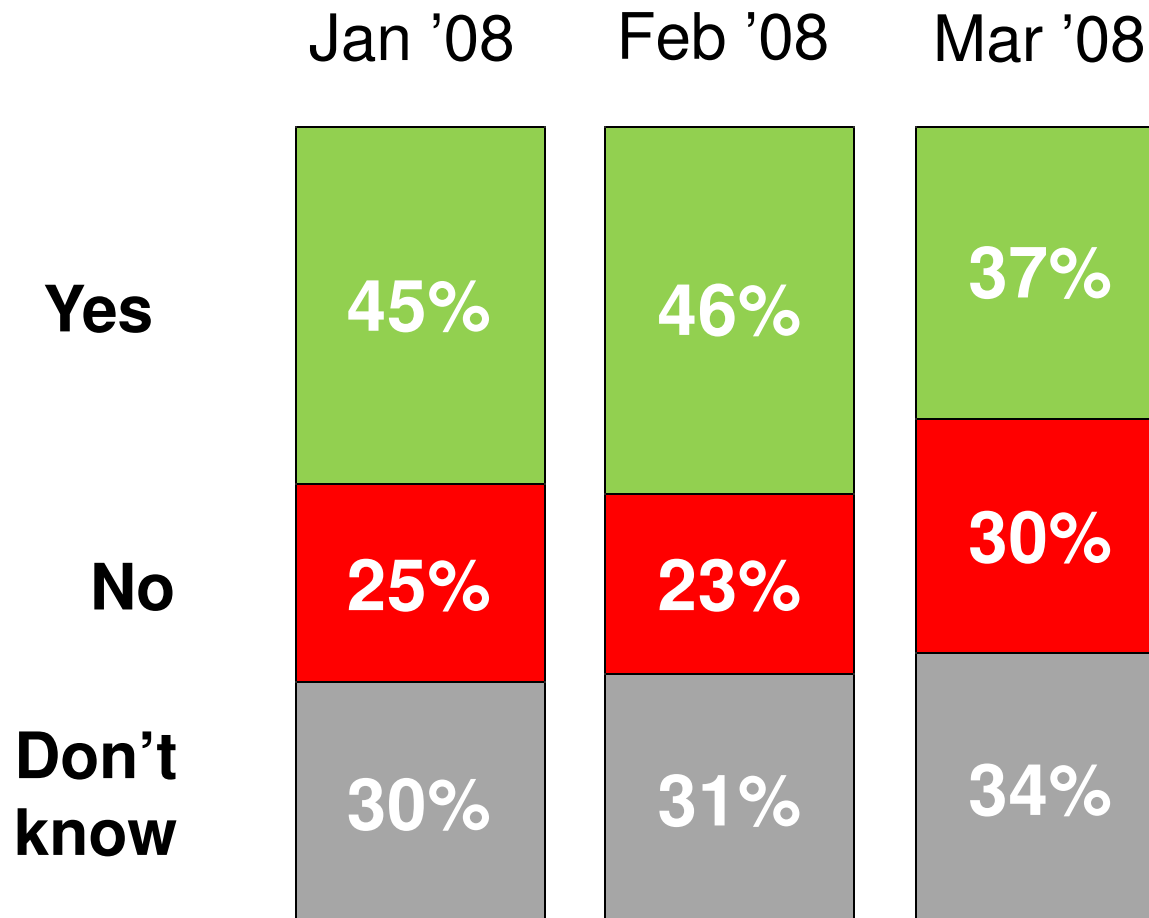
| CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Core figures | Excluding undecided | 2007 Election Results |
| | % | % | % |
| Fianna Fáil | 32 | 38 | 42 |
| Fine Gael | 25 | 29 | 27 |
| Labour | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Sinn Féin | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| P.Ds | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Green Party | 7 | 8 | 5 |
| Independents/Others | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Undecided | 15 | | |

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)

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



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