



General Election Opinion Poll

27th January 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 21st to 23rd January 2008. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 27th Jan 2008 Opinion Poll

Fianna Fail party regain lost ground, despite voters turning on Bertie Ahern

The most interesting finding of today's opinion poll, is the evidence that the previously close link between Fianna Fail and Bertie Ahern's fortunes appears to be diminishing, with the party gaining ground in support even though voter opinion is seen to be turning against the Taoiseach.

Fianna Fail TD's will take some comfort from the poll results, the first of the year in the Sunday Business Post/RED C tracking polls; as it suggests that there is life for the party without Bertie Ahern, but this may also place more pressure on him to step down and make way for a successor. Fianna Fail will be delighted that they have regained some lost ground, after the worst poll result for the party in several years in November last year. The party have now put distance between themselves and the pay rise controversy which hurt them so much at the end of 2007, and it appears that to a certain extent this has now been forgotten. In today's poll Fianna Fail secure 36% of the first preference vote, up 4% since last November when they secured just 32%.

The gains in support are despite the continued attacks on Bertie Ahern from the opposition with regard to his tax compliance and evidence at the Mahon tribunal. January could therefore be the tipping point when the party fortunes begin to take a different path to those of their leader. When quizzed directly on their views of Mr Ahern's affairs with regard to the Mahon Tribunal, public opinion is seen to be hardening against the Taoiseach. Over half of all voters (54%) now state that they simply don't believe the account that Bertie Ahern has given to the tribunal, an increase of 12% since the same question was asked in September 2007.

At the same time, almost half (46%) now state that they don't trust Bertie Ahern to run the country, an increase of 11% since September 2007. And for Fianna Fail the most worrying aspect of this is that 31% of those who voted for Fianna Fail at the last election now state they don't trust him to run the country. Two thirds of the electorate also now believe he should resign if he is found to have lied to the tribunal, including more than half (52%) of those that voted Fianna Fail at the last election.



The very positive news for Fine Gael is that their support has not suffered on the back of gains for Fianna Fail. In fact Fine Gael register increased support in today's poll securing 32% of the first preference vote, an increase of 1% since November last year. This means the party retains a very high proportion of the first preference vote, relative to that they have secured in the past few years and appears to be a positive result of the continued pressure they have placed on the Taoiseach.

Labour on the other hand will not be happy to see a fall off in support from the highs they achieved last November, with the party securing just 10% of the first preference vote, the same that they managed in the general election. Once again this suggests that the party need to do more to hold on to support and remain top of mind among voters, particularly when the Dail is not sitting. But it is disappointing that support has fallen after the highs seen during the party conference in November.

Sinn Fein in contrast regains lost ground in today's poll, securing a 9% share of the vote. However, once again the core of this support is seen to be among more fickle younger voters, and the party will be conscious of the fact that this apparent support somewhat left them when people came to vote in the polling booths last year.

The Green Party support, which had risen on the back of their opposition to the proposed pay rises in contrast to the declines seen for their government partners, has now begun to fall back again. The party secure 7% of the first preference vote in today's poll, a fall of 2% and back to levels seen before the pay rise controversy towards the end of last year. Independent candidates also suffer, securing just 4% of the first preference vote in today's poll, their worst level of support for several years. The PD's remains rooted on 2% support, the same seen in the last two polls conducted in 2007.

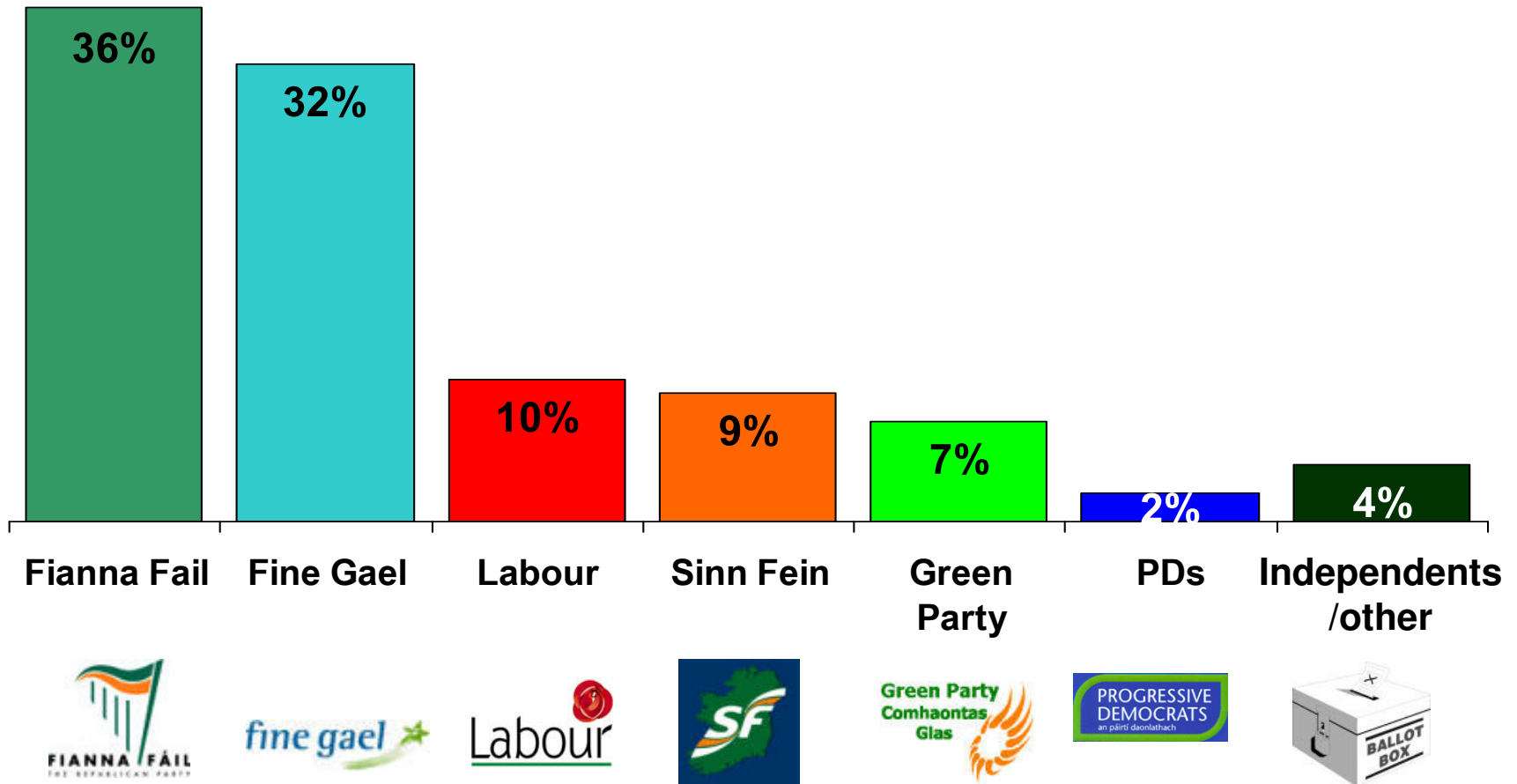
The overall findings from the poll appear to suggest that the longer the tribunal and related bad press go on, the more public opinion is turning on the Taoiseach, while at the same time Fine Gael support is strong. The dilemma for Fianna Fail strategists and TD's is how long they can continue to support Bertie Ahern if this continues, and whether they would be better or worse off with a new leader at the helm.



Finally, in order to provide us with a benchmark from which to track likely voting behaviour on the forthcoming referendum on the European Union Reform Treaty, we asked voters how they thought they would vote if the referendum was to be held tomorrow. Given that the debate around the Reform Treaty has not really begun yet, it is no surprise to see almost a third (31%) of all voters stating that they simply don't know how they might vote. The positive news for the government is that 45% suggest they will vote "Yes" at the moment, while just a quarter (25%) currently feel that they would not vote for Ireland to sign up to the Reform Treaty. Over the coming months we will track changing opinion to the treaty as the debate progresses to track intentions in the run up to the vote itself.

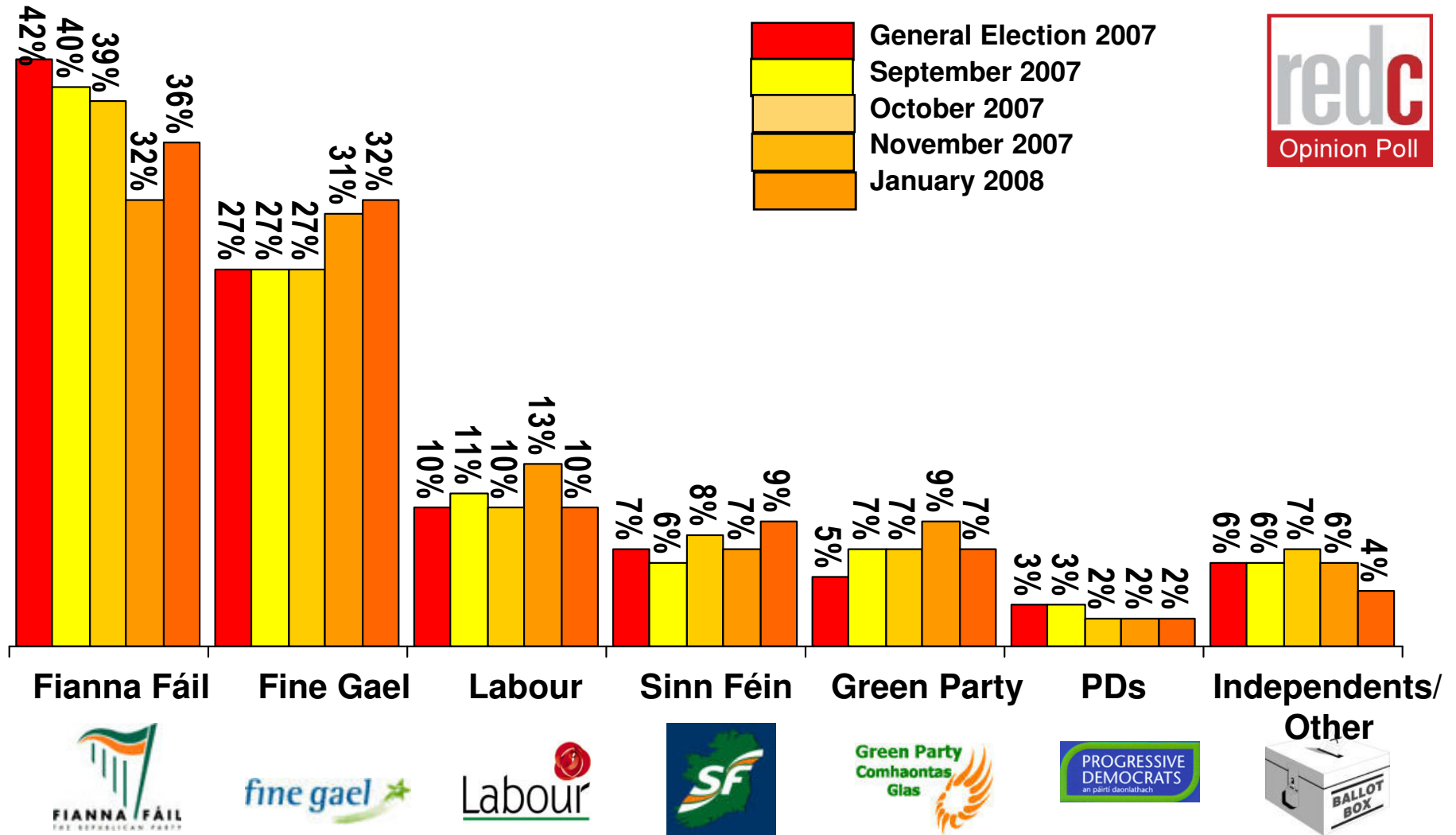
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



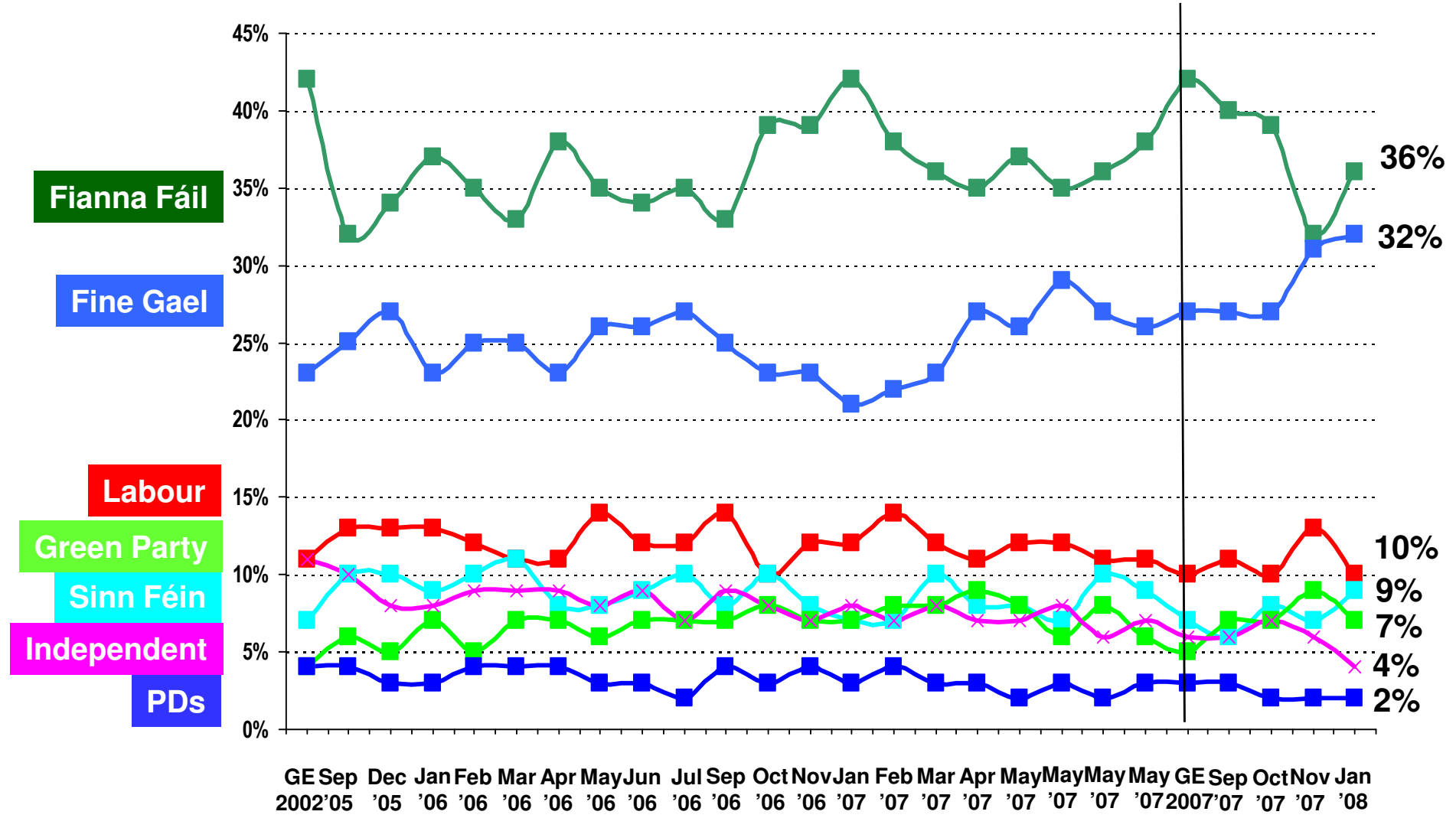
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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+)



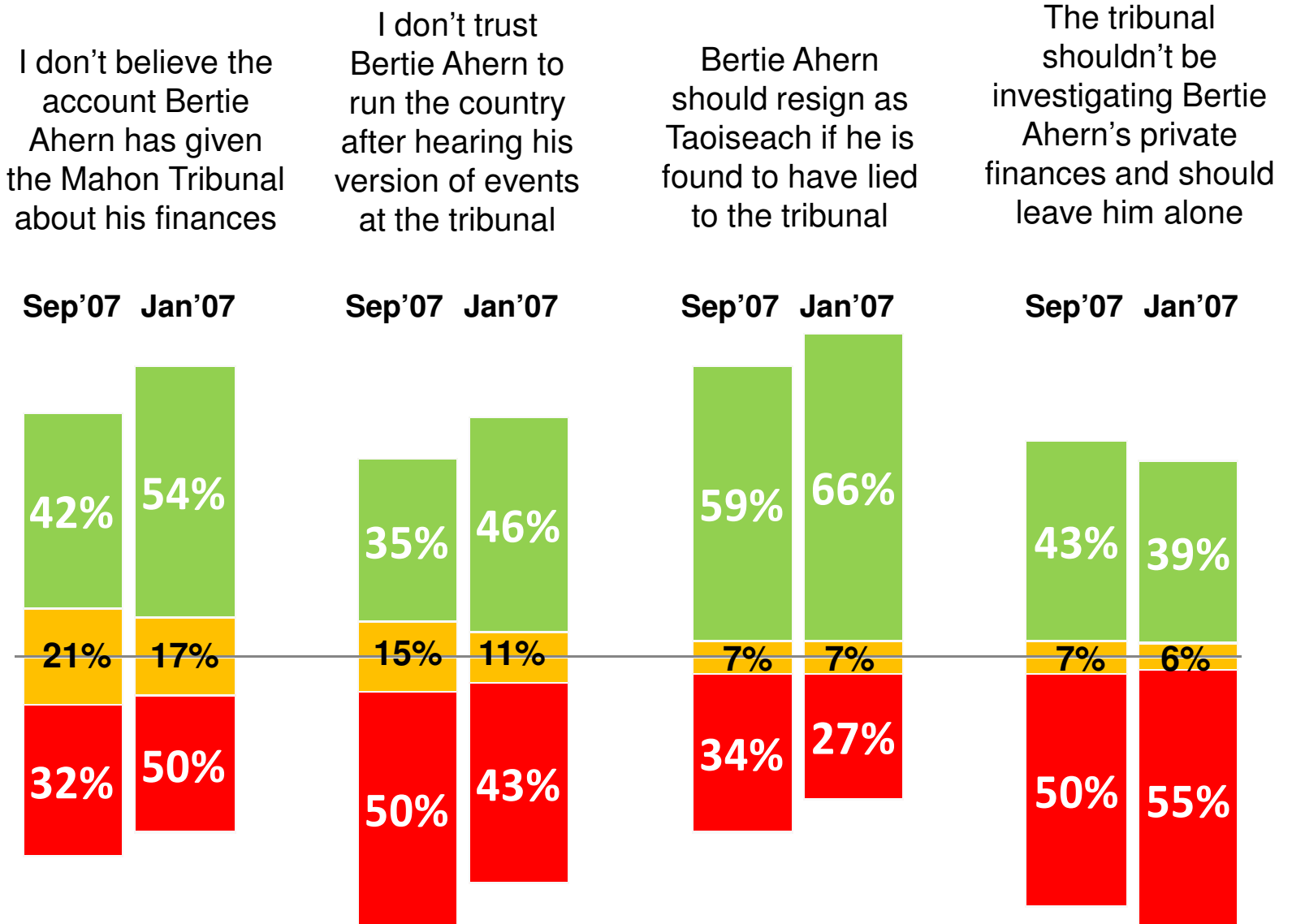
CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT			
	Core figures	Excluding undecided	2007 Election Results
	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	31	36	42
Fine Gael	28	32	27
Labour	8	10	10
Sinn Féin	7	9	7
P.Ds	1	2	3
Green Party	6	7	5
Independents/Others	3	4	6
Undecided	15		

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)

	Jan 2008	Nov 2007	Oct 2007	Sept 2007	2002 Election Result
	%	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	36	33	40	42	42
Fine Gael	33	31	28	27	27
Labour	10	13	10	11	10
Sinn Féin	8	7	6	5	7
P.Ds	2	2	2	3	3
Green Party	7	8	7	6	5
Independents/ Others	4	5	7	6	6

Attitudes towards Bertie Ahern and the Mahon Tribunal

(Base: All adults 18+)



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+)

