



General Election Opinion Poll

2nd March 2008

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included



RED C interviewed a random sample of 1012 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 25th to 27th February 2008. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 2nd March 2008 Opinion Poll

Are Fianna Fail and Bertie Ahern now on different paths?

The results from today's Sunday Business Post/RED C poll further reinforce the notion muted last month that support for Fianna Fail is no longer intrinsically linked to the fortunes of Bertie Ahern as it used to be. The poll results indicate that Fianna Fail's share of the first preference vote increases by 1% since January, to leave the party support at 37%. While not a significant gain in itself, this level of support is very similar to where Fianna Fail poll ratings were in the run up to the 2007 General Election. As such it suggests that the party as a whole certainly doesn't appear to be suffering, as a result of the focus by the opposition on Bertie Ahern and his testimony at the Mahon Tribunal.

This is not to say however that support for Bertie Ahern himself is improving in line with the party. In fact, the public appear to be even less convinced a month on, in how much they can trust the Taoiseach. In today's poll half the electorate (50%) now don't trust Bertie Ahern to run the country after hearing his version of events at the Tribunal. This is a further 4% increase since last month and means there has been a 15% swing against the Taoiseach on this factor since September last year, in stark contrast to the fortunes of the party.

This swing against the Taoiseach is heavily driven by the views of opposition voters, with three quarters (75%) of those who voted Fine Gael in the last election now stating that they don't trust Bertie Ahern to run the country, up from just over half (53%) back in September. At the same time, perhaps of most concern to Fianna Fail is that their own supporters are also less confident in the Taoiseach, with this poll showing that a third (33%) of Fianna Fail voters now don't trust Bertie Ahern to run the country.

Bertie Ahern's problems don't end there, with over half of all voters (53%) still continuing to state that they don't believe his version of events, and over two thirds of the electorate (69%) now stating he should resign if he is shown to have lied to the Tribunal.

For Fine Gael these results must be very frustrating. The party sees their overall share of the first preference vote fall back by 1% in direct response to gains for Fianna Fail. This leaves the party support at 31%, which is still a strong performance when compared to the election result. The hardening of opinion among their own supporters against Bertie Ahern is another indicator of why their support now seems more stable at over 30%, and does suggest that their claimed voters may now be less likely to change their support in the event of an election. But there is no doubt that seeing the gap in support between the parties widen at this time, with the pressure that has been put on the Taoiseach, is the opposite of what the Fine Gael strategists were expecting or hoping for.

Labour will also not be encouraged that their strategy of attacking the Taoiseach is benefiting the party. For the second month in a row they secure just 10% of the first preference vote, and judging by this it appears that they have not as yet managed to broaden their appeal. It could be that any message about changes in the party are being somewhat swamped by the campaign against the Taoiseach.

The Green Party, as government partners, should on the other hand be wary in the strength of support they show for the Taoiseach. Across the three polls from September 2007 to February 2008 the majority of their own voters have consistently stated that they do not believe the Taoiseach version of events to the Mahon Tribunal (60%), while almost half do not trust him to run the country (47%). At the moment this doesn't impact on their own support with the party again securing 7% of the first preference vote in today's poll, which keeps them at the same level as last month after a fall in support at the beginning of 2008. This appears to be very much where support for the party now lies, and the higher level seen back in November last year seems to have been more in reaction to Green Party ministers claims that they would not take pay rises proposed by the government.

Sinn Fein support falls back slightly in our February poll, but only by 1% and this leaves the party pretty much where they have been since the election last year. Support for Sinn Fein has again fallen off among younger voters since last month, and again this emphasises the need for the party to extend their support more among middle and older age groups which are perhaps more loyal once they say they support a party.

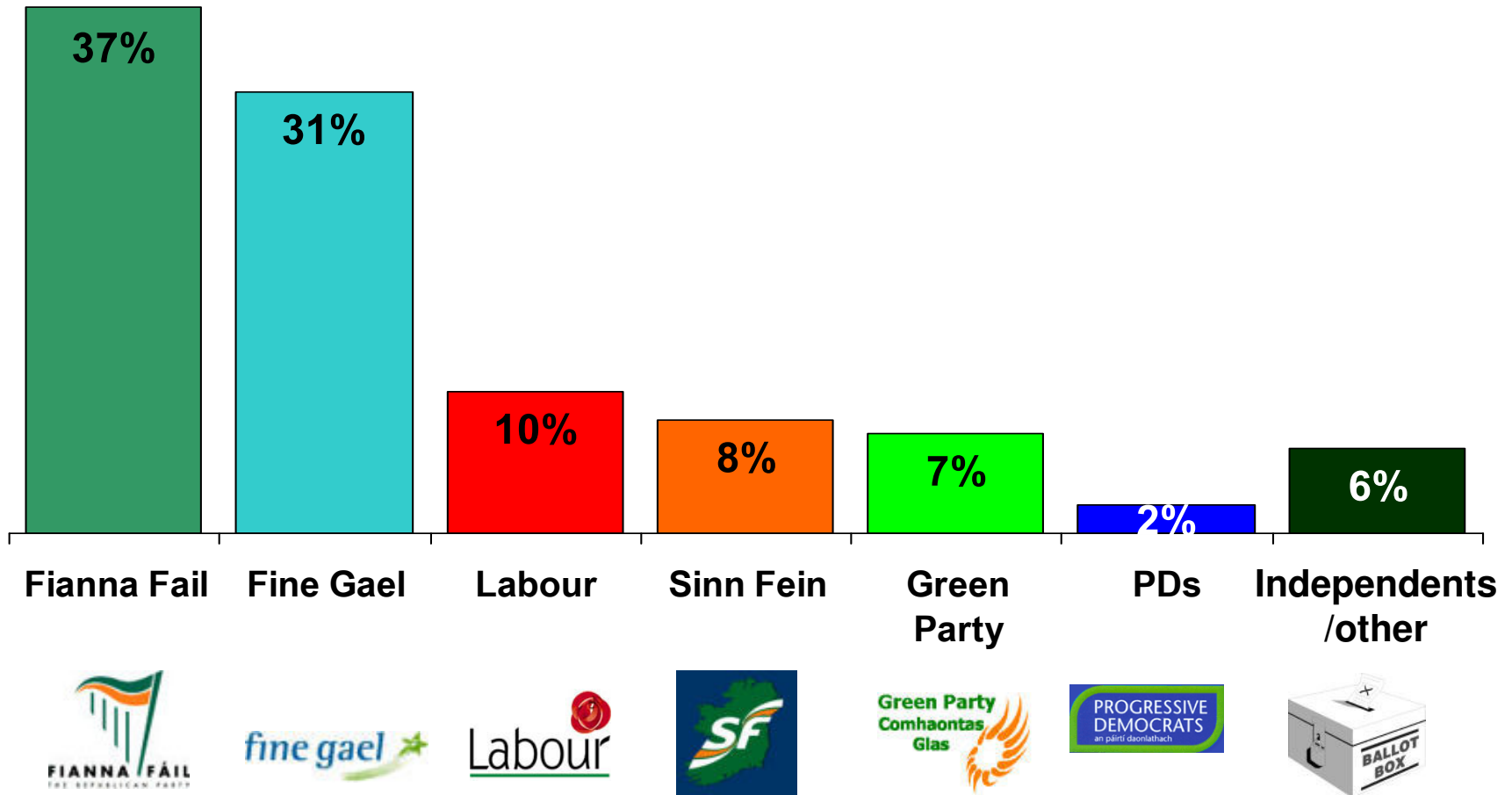
Independent candidates regain ground from last month, taking their support back up to 6% of the first preference vote which returns them to the same level as they achieved at the General Election. The PD's again remain rooted on 2% support, the same seen in the last three polls conducted in 2007.



For the second month in a row we have tracked current opinion on the Reform Treaty Referendum. The results suggest that a month on any campaigning or media coverage has still yet to connect with voters. In our question on the Referendum we push people into a decision, by asking voters if the referendum was tomorrow how they would vote, but despite this, 30% still claim they do not know. At the same time just under half (46%) say they would vote Yes, leaving under a quarter (23%) who currently state they would vote No. The job of informing people needs in particular to target women, who are twice as likely as men to say that they don't know which way they would vote. Support for the treaty is currently strongest among 18-24 year olds (60%) and those that currently support Fianna Fail (57%). While those least likely to support the Treaty are in the 45-54 year old age groups where a third (33%) state they will vote No.

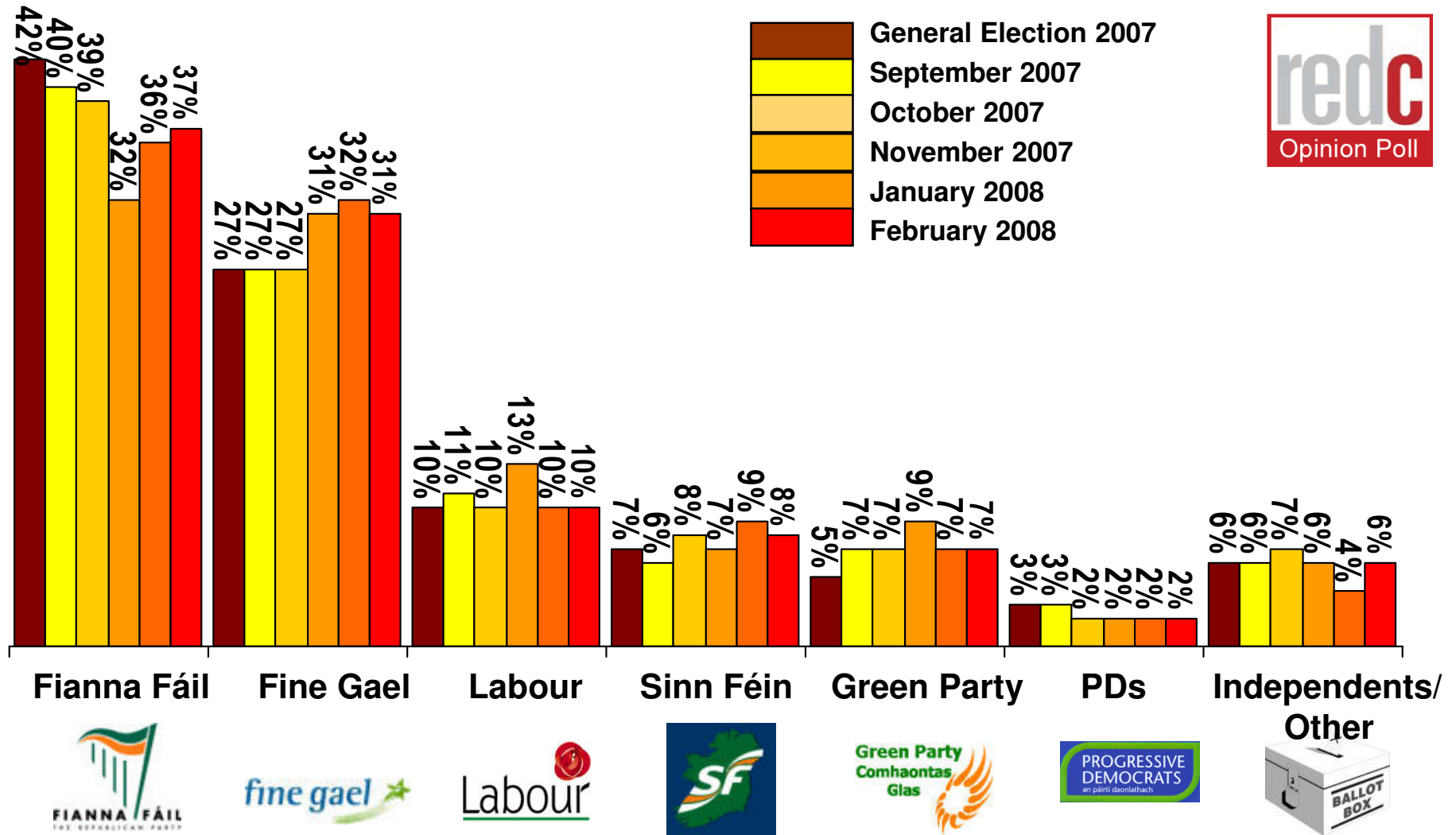
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



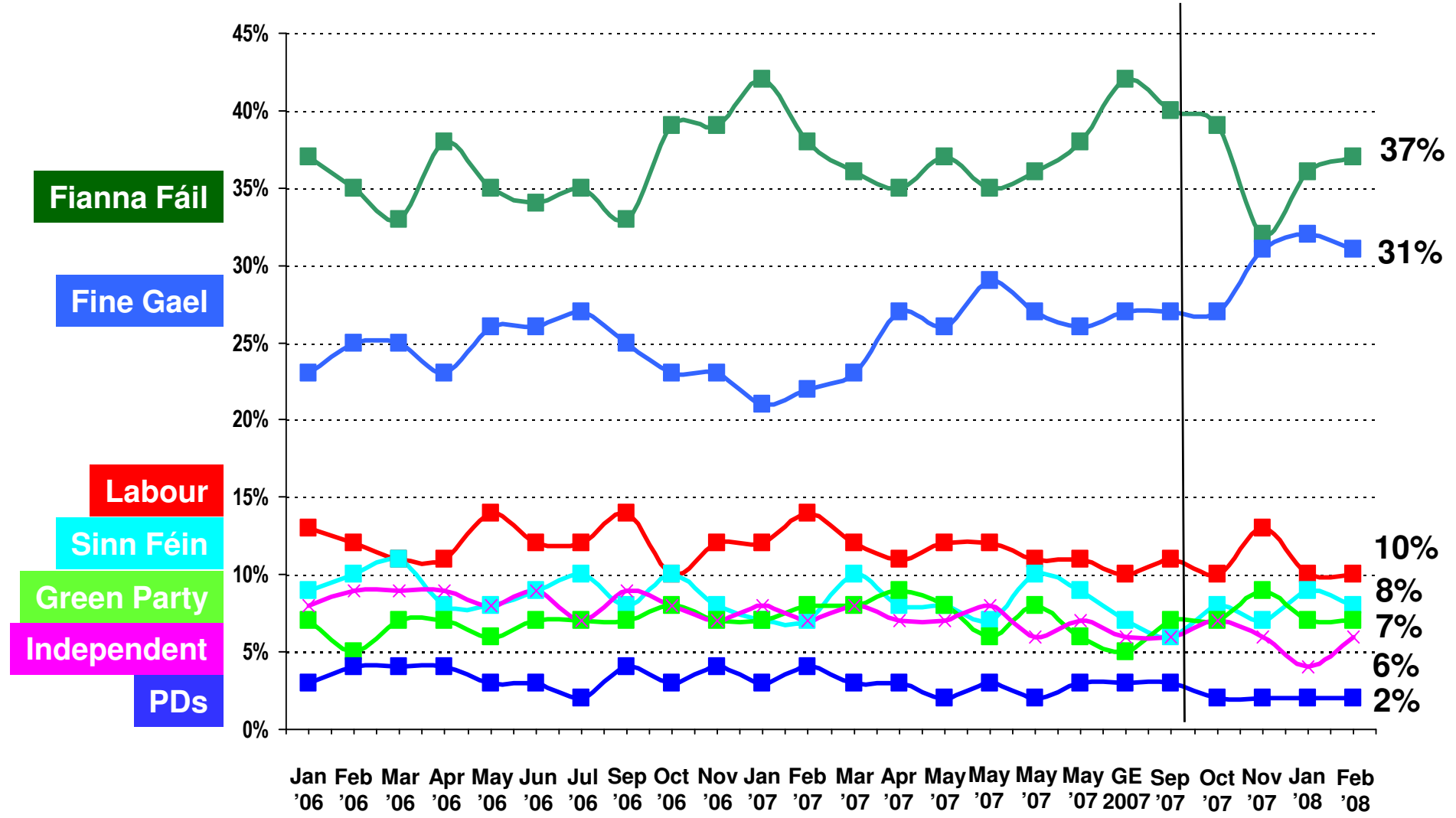
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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	37	42
Fine Gael	25	31	27
Labour	8	10	10
Sinn Féin	7	8	7
P.Ds	1	2	3
Green Party	6	7	5
Independents/Others	5	6	6
Undecided	17		

**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)**

	Feb 2008	Jan 2008	Nov 2007	Oct 2007	Sept 2007	2002 Election Result
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	38	36	33	40	42	42
Fine Gael	30	33	31	28	27	27
Labour	10	10	13	10	11	10
Sinn Féin	8	8	7	6	5	7
P.Ds	2	2	2	2	3	3
Green Party	7	7	8	7	6	5
Independents/ Others	6	4	5	7	6	6

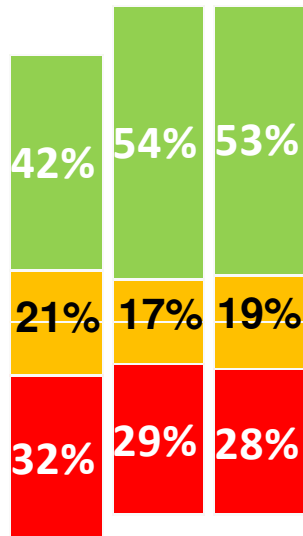
Attitudes towards Bertie Ahern and the Mahon Tribunal

(Base: All adults 18+)



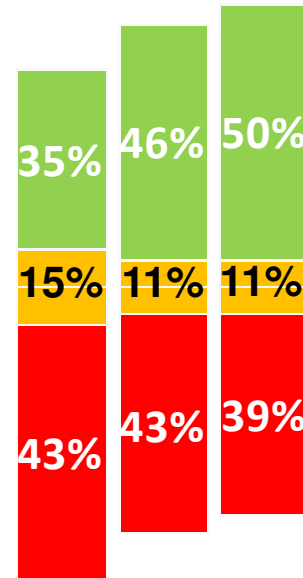
I don't believe the account Bertie Ahern has given the Mahon Tribunal about his finances

Sep '07 Jan '08 Feb '08



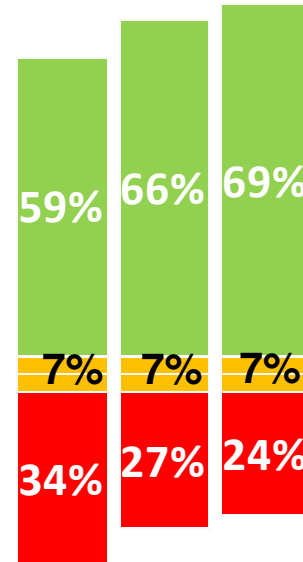
I don't trust Bertie Ahern to run the country after hearing his version of events at the tribunal

Sep '07 Jan '08 Feb '08



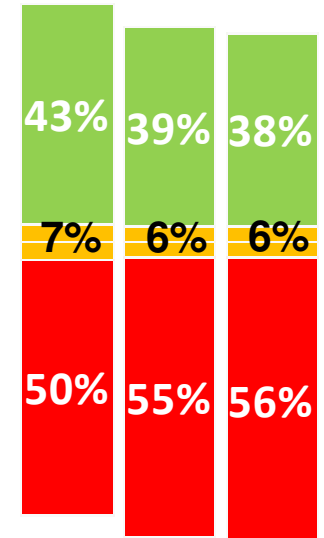
Bertie Ahern should resign as Taoiseach if he is found to have lied to the tribunal

Sep '07 Jan '08 Feb '08



The tribunal shouldn't be investigating Bertie Ahern's private finances and should leave him alone

Sep '07 Jan '08 Feb '08



Agree

Neither

Disagree

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+)

