



Voting Intention Opinion Poll

November 2009

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST
IRELAND'S FINANCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC NEWSPAPER

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included

RED C interviewed a random sample of 1001 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 16th & 18th November 2009.

A random digit dial (RDD) method is used to ensure a random selection process of households to be included – this also ensures that ex-directory households are covered.

Half of the sample are interviewed using an RDD landline sample, with the other half conducted using an RDD mobile phone sample, this ensures 98% coverage of the population reaching landline only households, mobile only households and those with both a landline and a mobile.

Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults. A further past vote weighting is included that takes the current recall for how people voted at the last election, compares this to the actual results, and weights the data to halfway between the two.

Finally vote intention results are based on those who will actually go and vote, using a 10 point scale, where 1 is not at all likely and 10 is very likely, those rating 5 to 10 are included as being those who will actually go and vote.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 22nd Nov 2009 - Opinion Poll

Extensive media coverage for Budget depresses Fianna Fail share

Never before have we seen so much advanced discussion concerning the contents of the budget as this year. In recent weeks Fianna Fail has repeatedly raised flags concerning their possible intentions with regard to different parts of the budget, in order to gauge public reaction. The impact of leaking this generally negative news on their political support is to depress their share again, following a slight uplift in the wake of the passing of the Lisbon Treaty. The party slips back 2% since last month, leaving their share of the first preference vote sitting at 23%. Fianna Fail's fortunes have been closely linked to the economy, and today's poll suggests that whatever their successes on Lisbon and NAMA, the public have not changed their opinion on whether the party really can handle the economy. Just 18% of all voters now have confidence that the government can manage the economy out of the current downturn. This has actually declined since October 2008, when 19% had confidence in them, and means that almost a quarter (22%) of their own supporters don't have confidence in the party on economic issues.

What becomes apparent in today's poll however is that Fianna Fail are possibly not in as bad a position with regard to the economy as we might think. The reason for this assumption is that voters are not that much more confident that a Fine Gael/ Labour coalition is able to manage the economy out of the current downturn. Just 23% of all voters agree that they have confidence in the likely next government to manage the economy out of the downturn. This is only 5% more than have confidence in the current government, and means that a shocking 57% of all those who say they will vote Fine Gael or Labour don't have any real confidence in their economic management. In fact 28% of current Labour supporters and 23% of Fine Gael supporters actually state that they don't think the two main opposition parties have the ability to manage the economy out of the recession.

Given the historical importance of economic confidence on any party to secure and hold on to power, these figures make grim reading for the opposition parties. The facts appear to be that the public don't really trust anyone to "get us out of this mess", but the lack of confidence in the opposition, suggests either that their support may still have a weak underbelly and indeed that potentially some of their supporters are really protest voters as there is no alternative at the moment, or economic competence is no longer the main driver for winning elections.

This is particularly interesting, as despite this apparent weakness on the economic front, support for both parties remains high. Fine Gael secure 36% of the first preference vote, a further increase on last month of 1%, and the highest recorded for the party by RED C. While at the same time Labour secure 17% a slight dip in first preference share of 2% since last month, but still in the high teens.

Given this high share of the vote, should the opposition parties really worry about the lack of economic competence afforded them by their supporters? Perhaps - as there is an argument that the reason for this apparent lack of correlation between economic competence and voter support, is the fact that voters currently have nowhere else to turn. Voter anger has to be directed somewhere, and when most voters (68%) have either had pay cuts or lost their jobs in the past year, Fianna Fail are at the front of the queue. Certainly it is clear that the majority (62%) blame the government for the current economic crisis, and only a small proportion still (22%) believe Ireland's economy will improve during 2010.

The danger for the opposition is if the economy does begin to improve in 2010, and how this may impact on voter's anger with the current government. Even now there are 38% who do not directly blame the government for the crisis, and given the current lack of credibility on the economy among the opposition, how quickly might voters be persuaded that Fianna Fail is again a safer option? One thing that is clear is that for the opposition to really solidify their support among voters, they must convince more strongly on their economic credentials and competence.

One way to do this is to try and meet the public's expectations with regard to the budget. To do this our research suggests that a level of "fairness" in this regard is vital to win over voters. The reality is that while a small proportion of the workforce do contribute a large majority of the tax, this argument fails to win over the majority, who see the injustice of fat cat salaries as a slap in the face to ordinary working people. It certainly does not help when they see salaries of bankers "pegged" at €500,000 a year, a figure that remains so high that most ordinary voters simply cannot comprehend it. In light of this, it is no surprise to see that almost half (47%) of all voters would implement further tax cuts for middle and high income workers above any other, and three quarters (76%) would probably implement these taxes if they were formulating the budget.



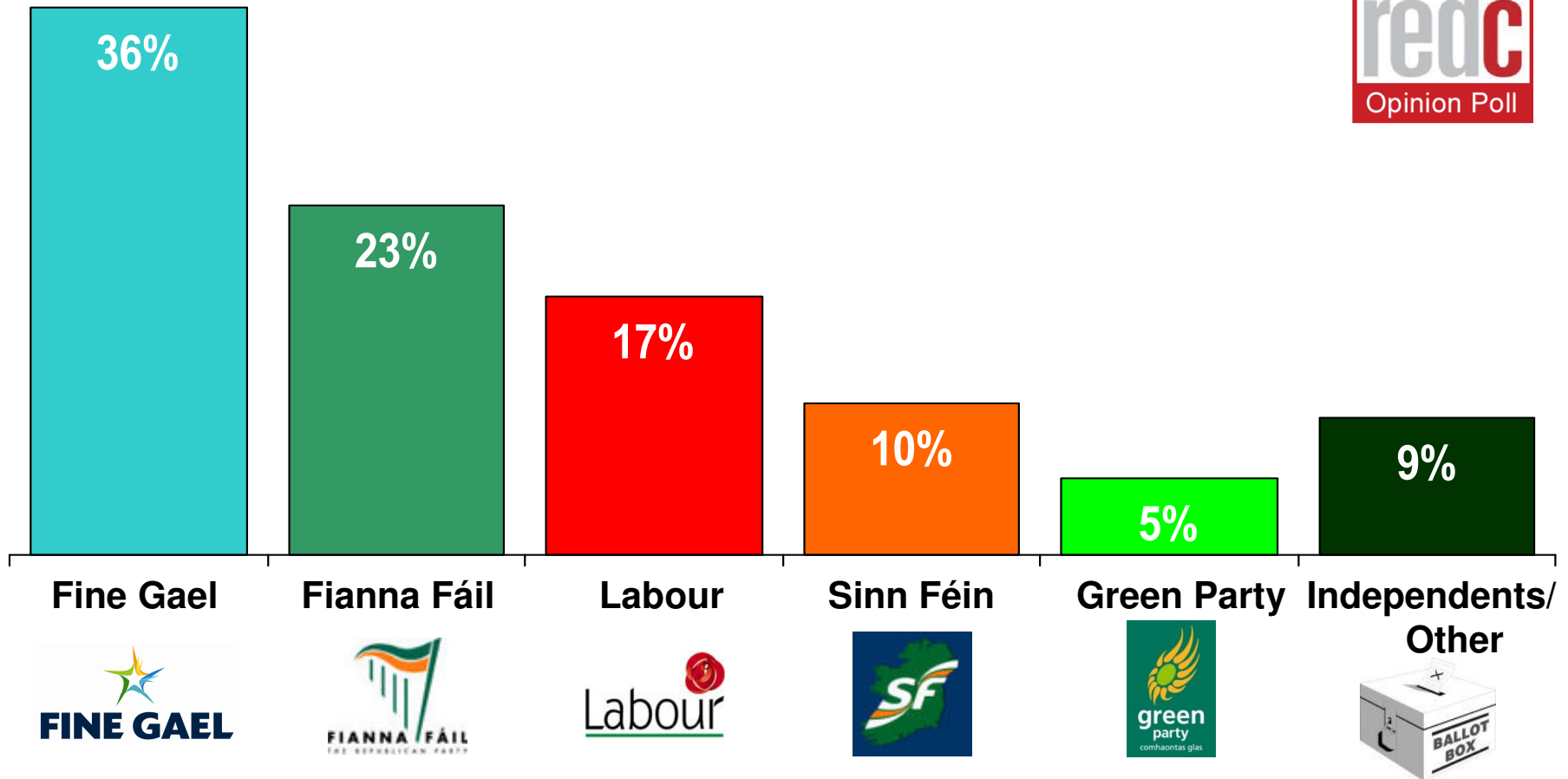
Secondary to this is the idea of implementing public sector pay cuts, suggesting that this action is perhaps more appropriate to voters, if done in conjunction with taxes on higher income earners. Less than a third of voters (29%) would implement this cut first, but over half (56%) suggest they probably would implement some form of public sector cuts. That inherent desire for fairness is evident again in those actions that voters would rather not implement at all. These include a significant proportion (47%) who would avoid cutting child benefit and pensions if at all possible, and a similar number (44%) who want to avoid cuts in spending on health and education.

Finally, it is noteworthy that both Sinn Fein and the Green Party improve their share of the vote in today's poll. Perhaps another sign that there are some voters who are simply not sure who to support and that voting intention for some is fluid. Sinn Fein takes 10% of the first preference vote an increase of 1% since last month which is an upward trend for the past two months. The Green Party will be relieved to see that the backlash over keeping Fianna Fail in government appears to have abated somewhat since last month, with support at 5% of the first preference vote, an increase of 2% since last month. Independent candidate secured 9% of the vote again, and this depressed figure for mid way between elections, perhaps reflects the fact that public assessment is that it is unlikely that Independent candidates on their own can do much to steer Ireland out of the current economic position.

If there were a *general election* tomorrow, to which party or independent candidate would you give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults WHO WILL VOTE 18+)

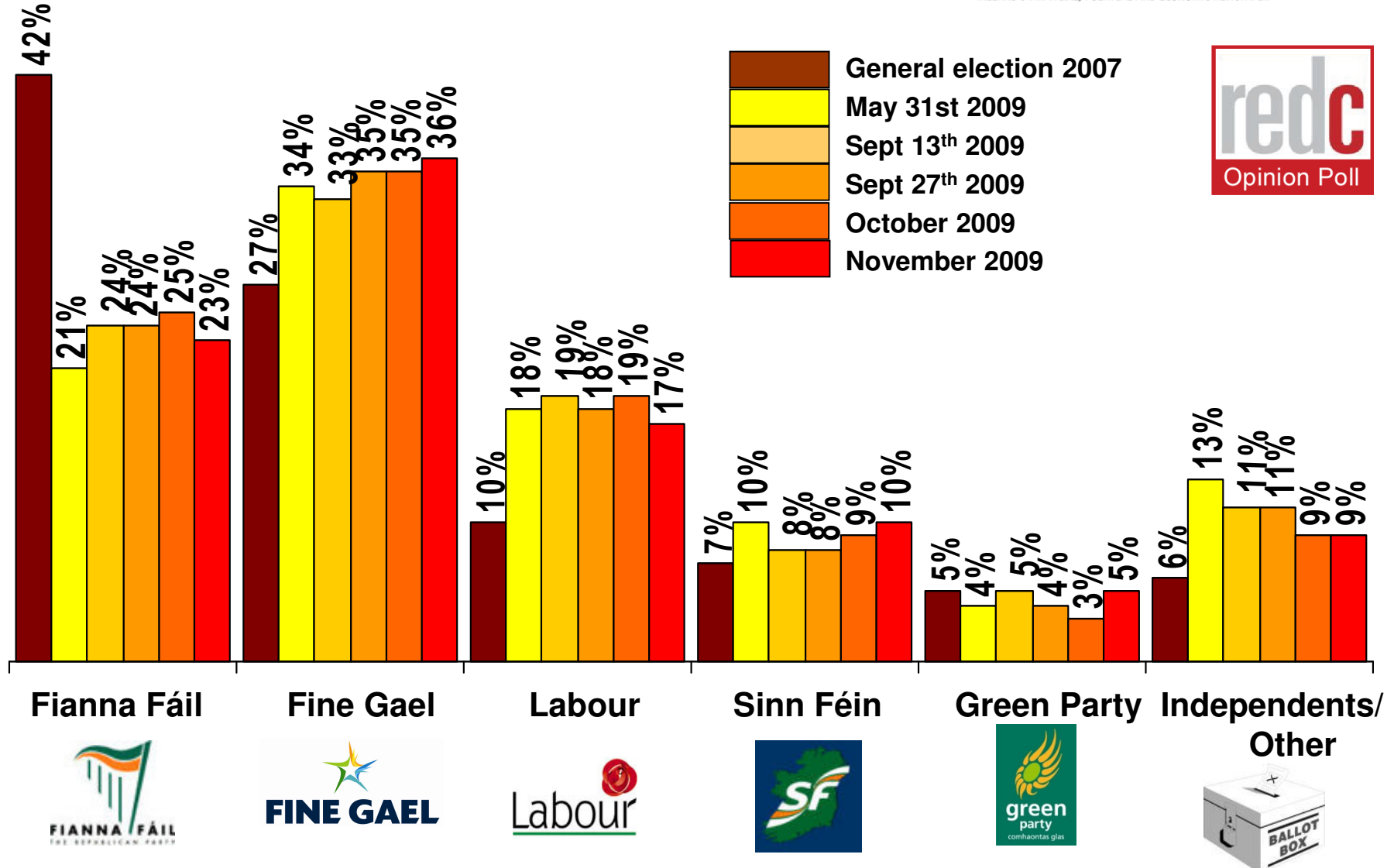
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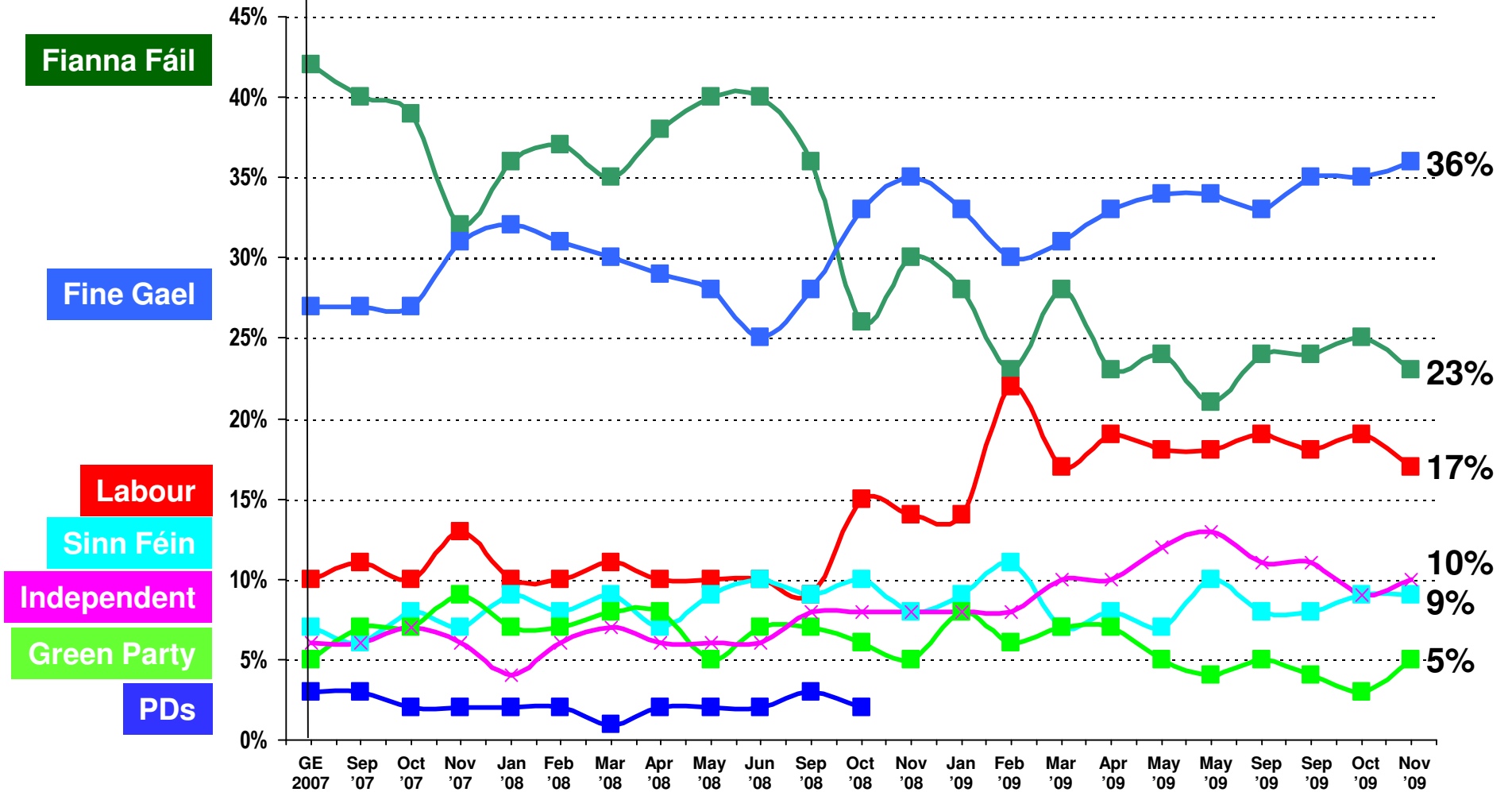


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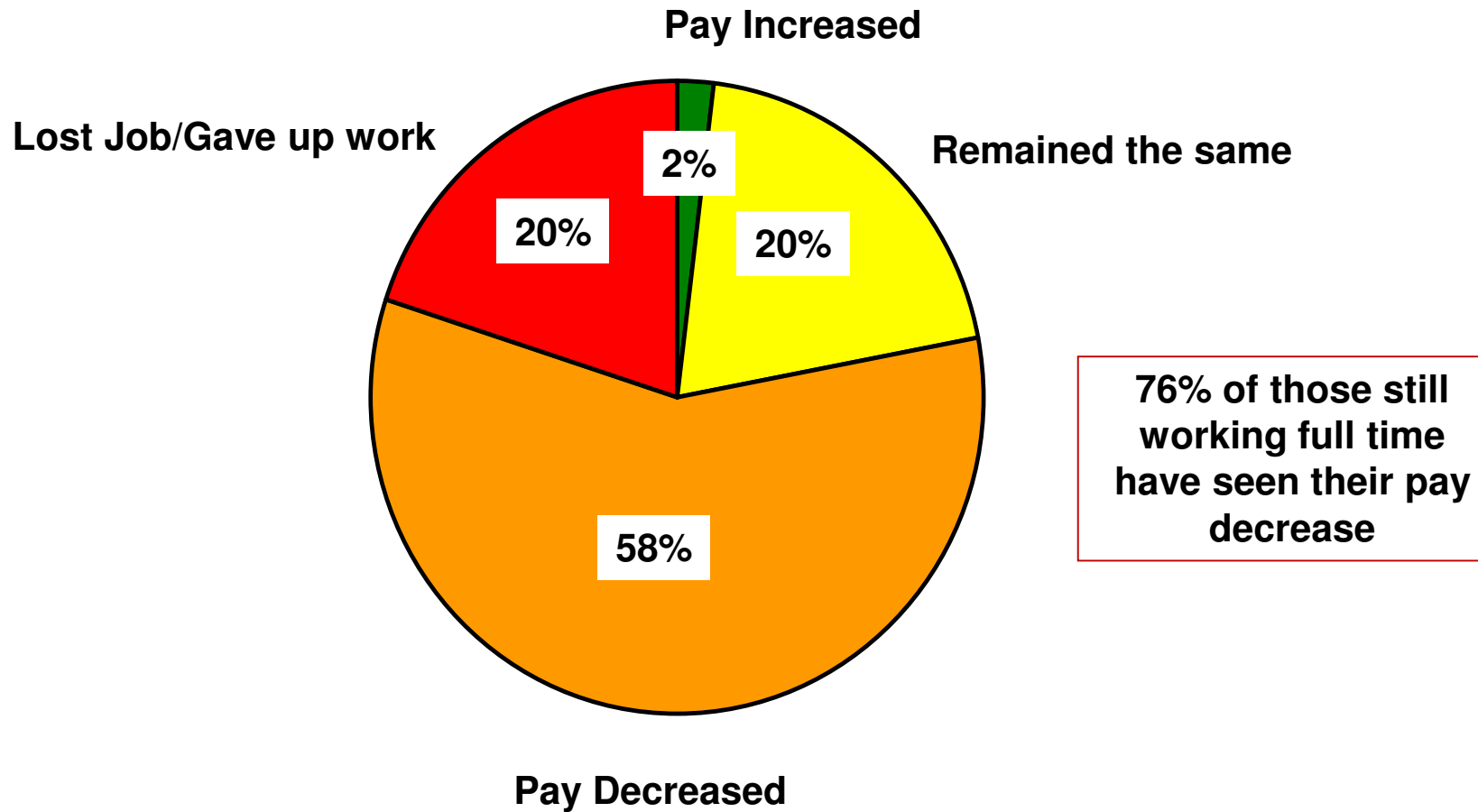
CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT			
	Core figures 25th Oct 09	Excluding undecided	2007 Election Results
	%	%	%
Fine Gael	30	36	27
Fianna Fáil	19	23	42
Labour	14	17	10
Sinn Féin	9	10	7
Green Party	4	5	5
Independents/Others	8	9	6
Undecided	16		

Impact of recession on Pay/Package in past year

(Base: All adults 18+)



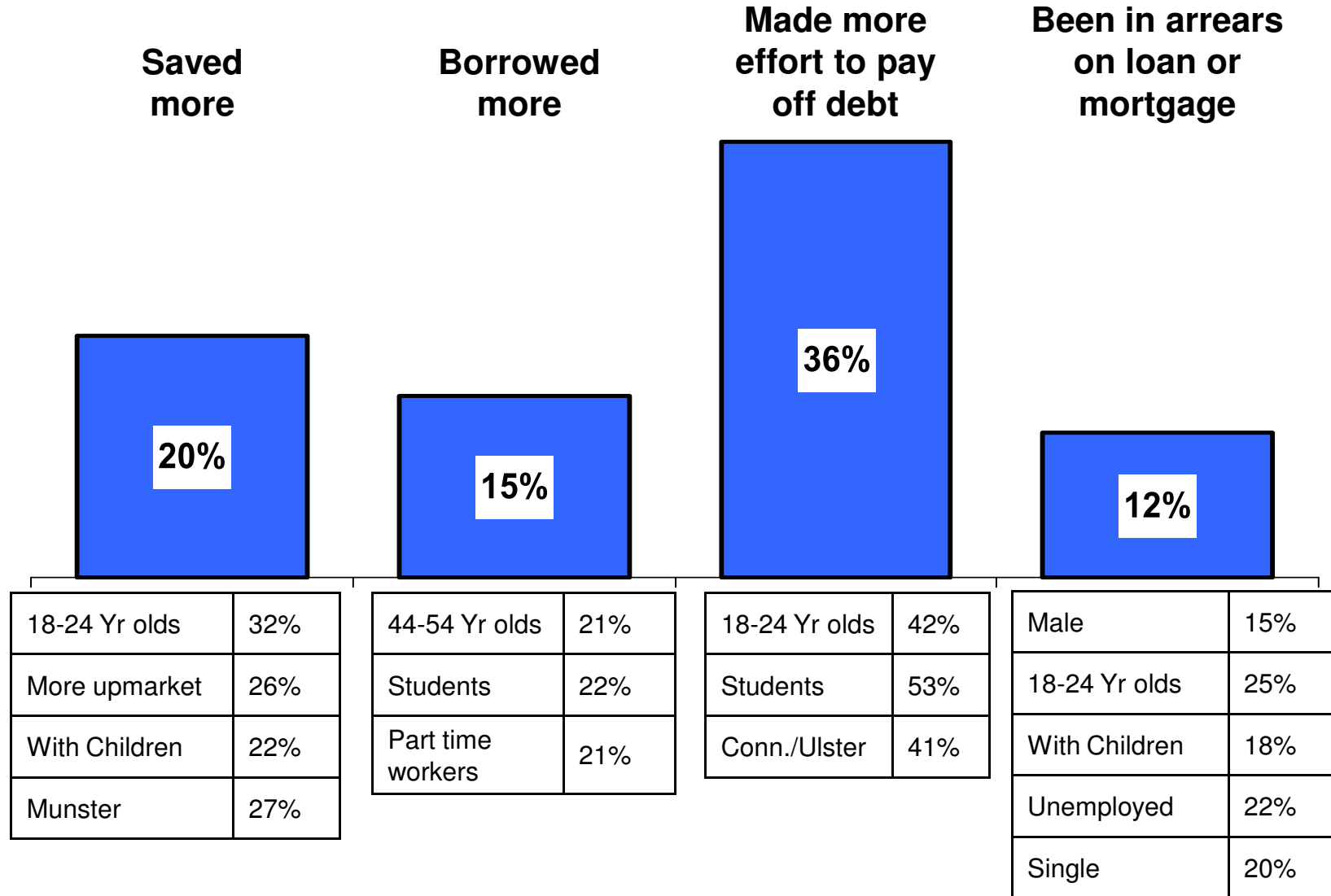
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Financial actions taken as a result of the recession

(Base: All adults 18+)

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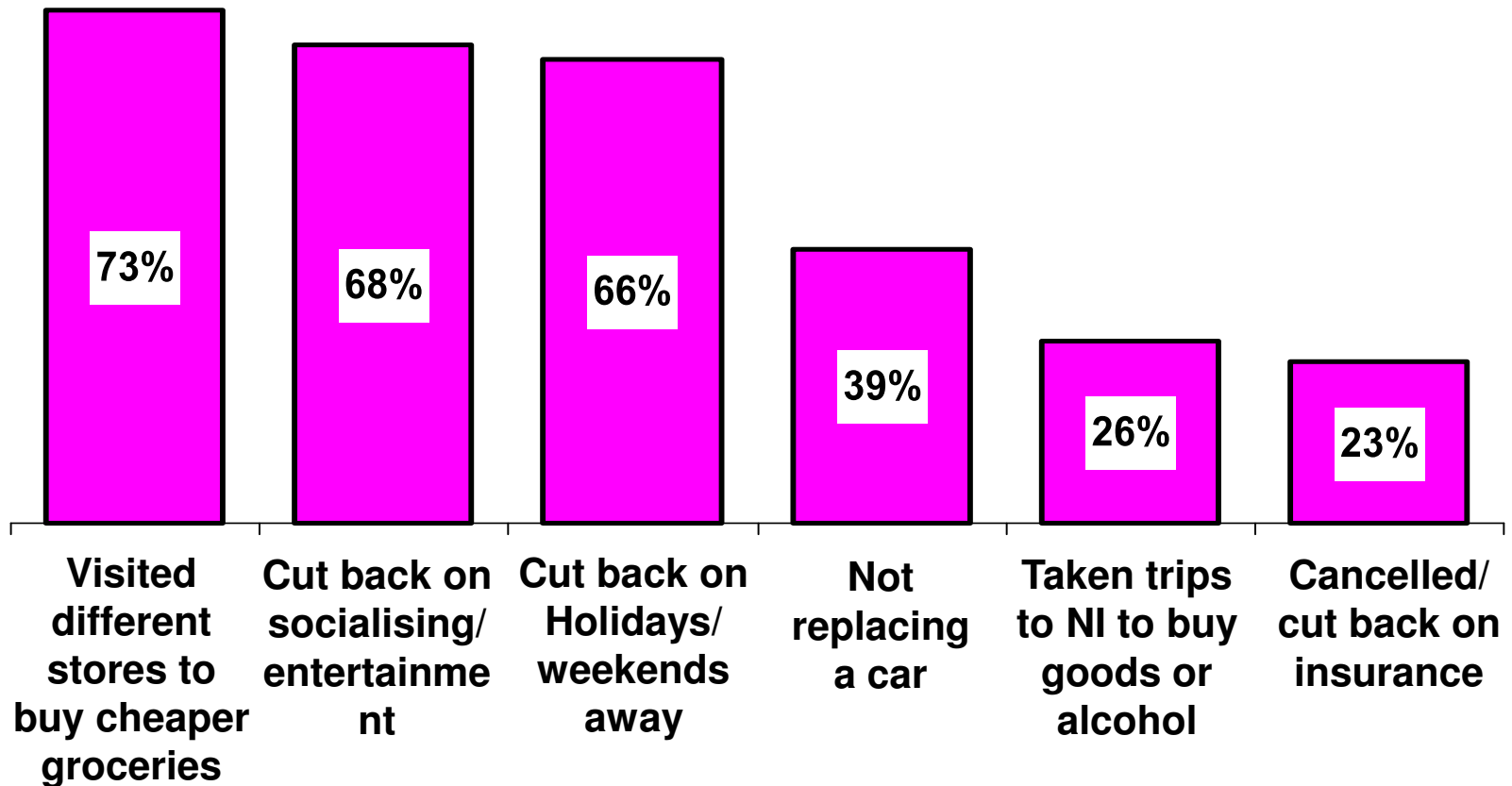


In which ways have people cut back on spending?

(Base: All adults 18+)



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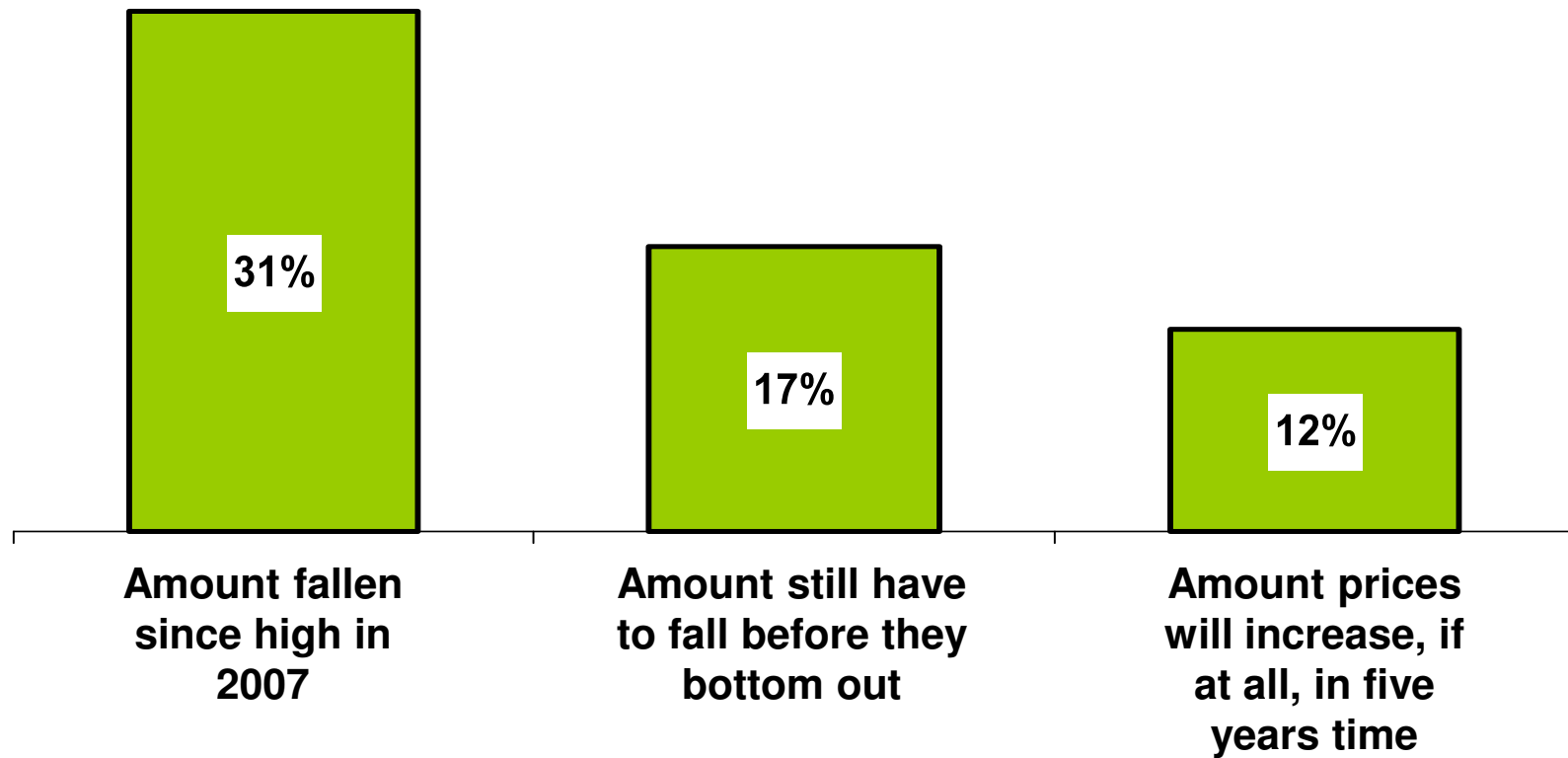


The publics perception of house prices

(Base: All adults 18+)



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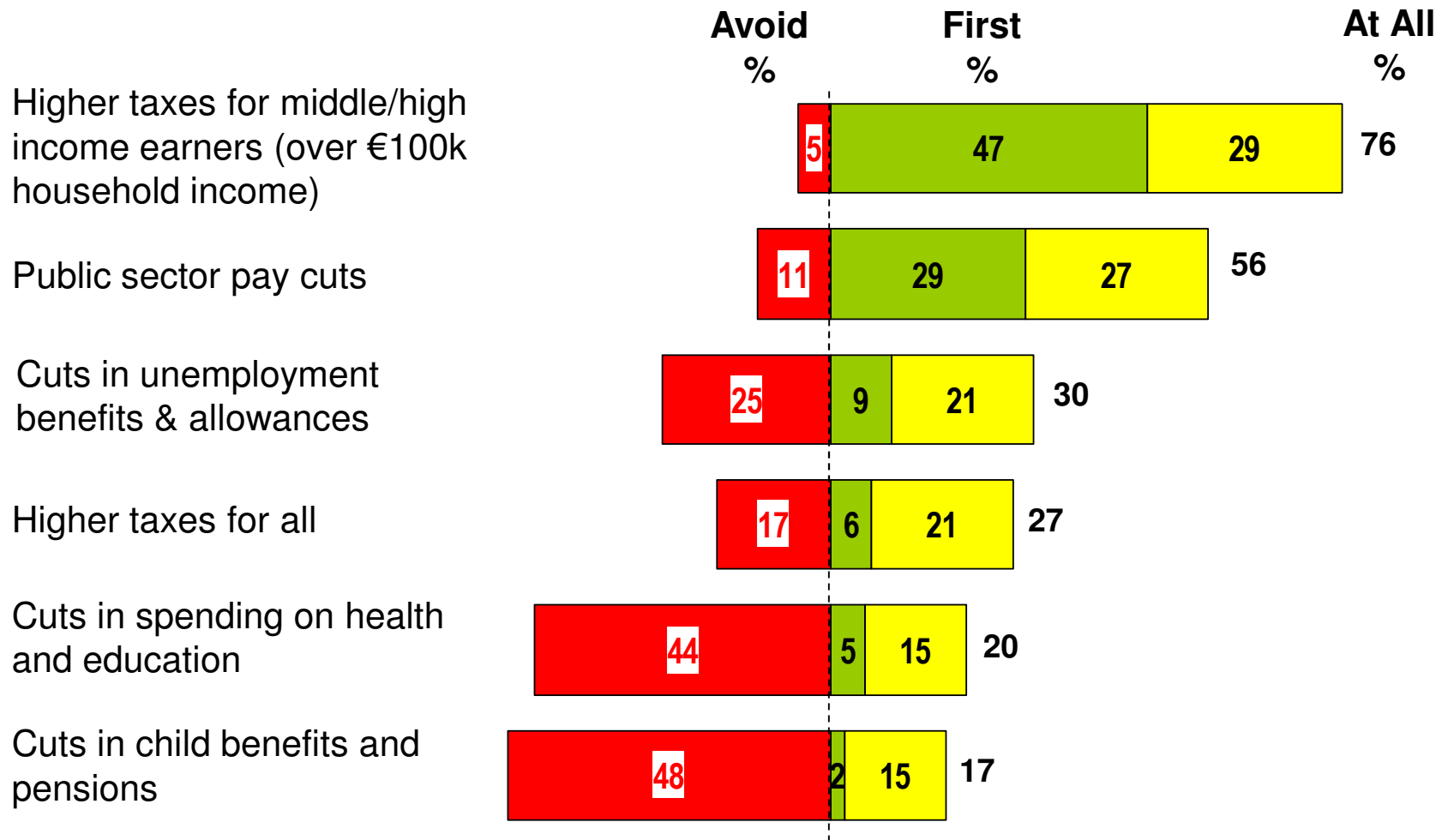


What the public would prioritise for implementation in the budget?

(Base: All adults 18+)



PUBLIC ATTITUDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

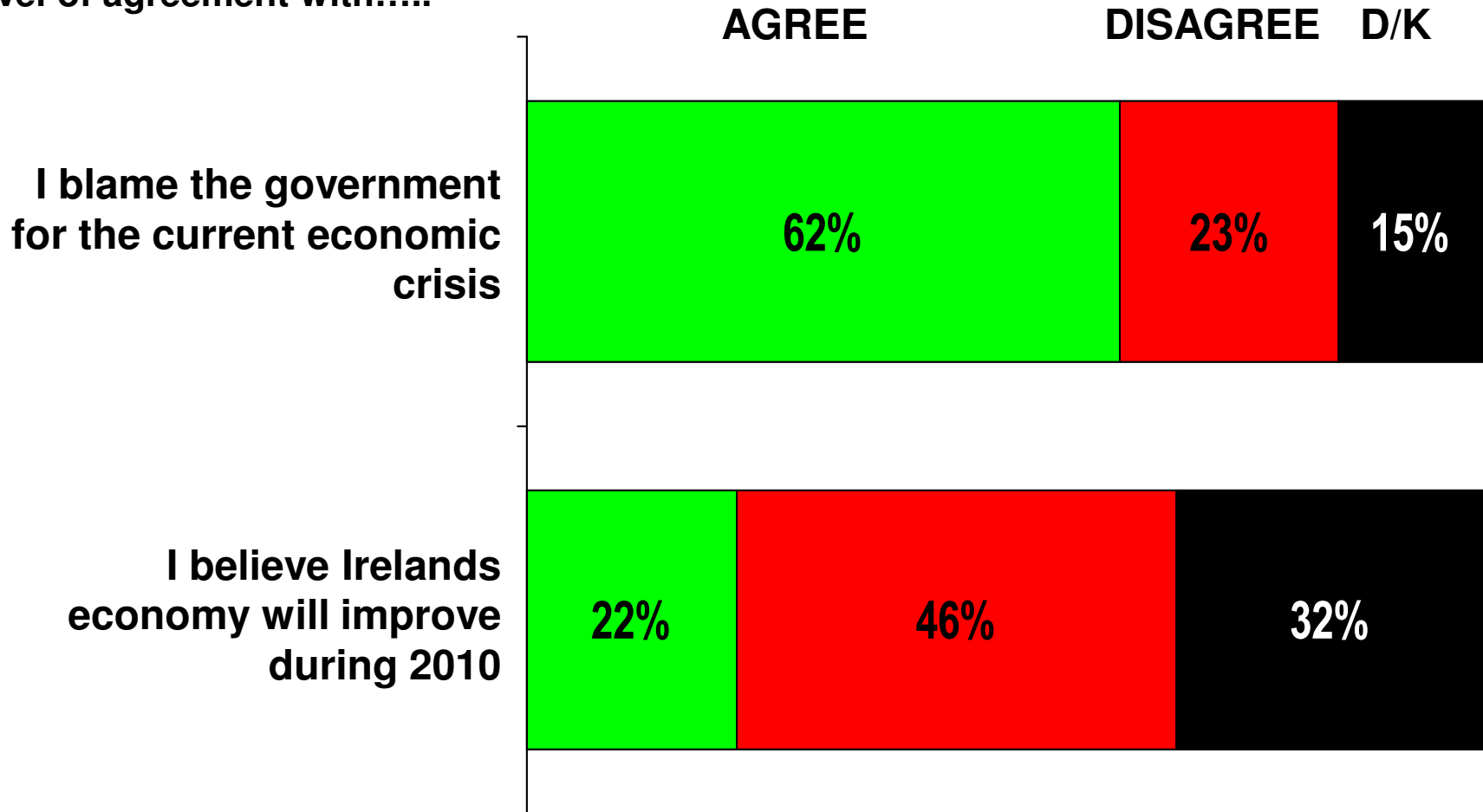


Attitudes to the economic crisis

(Base: All adults 18+)



Level of agreement with.....



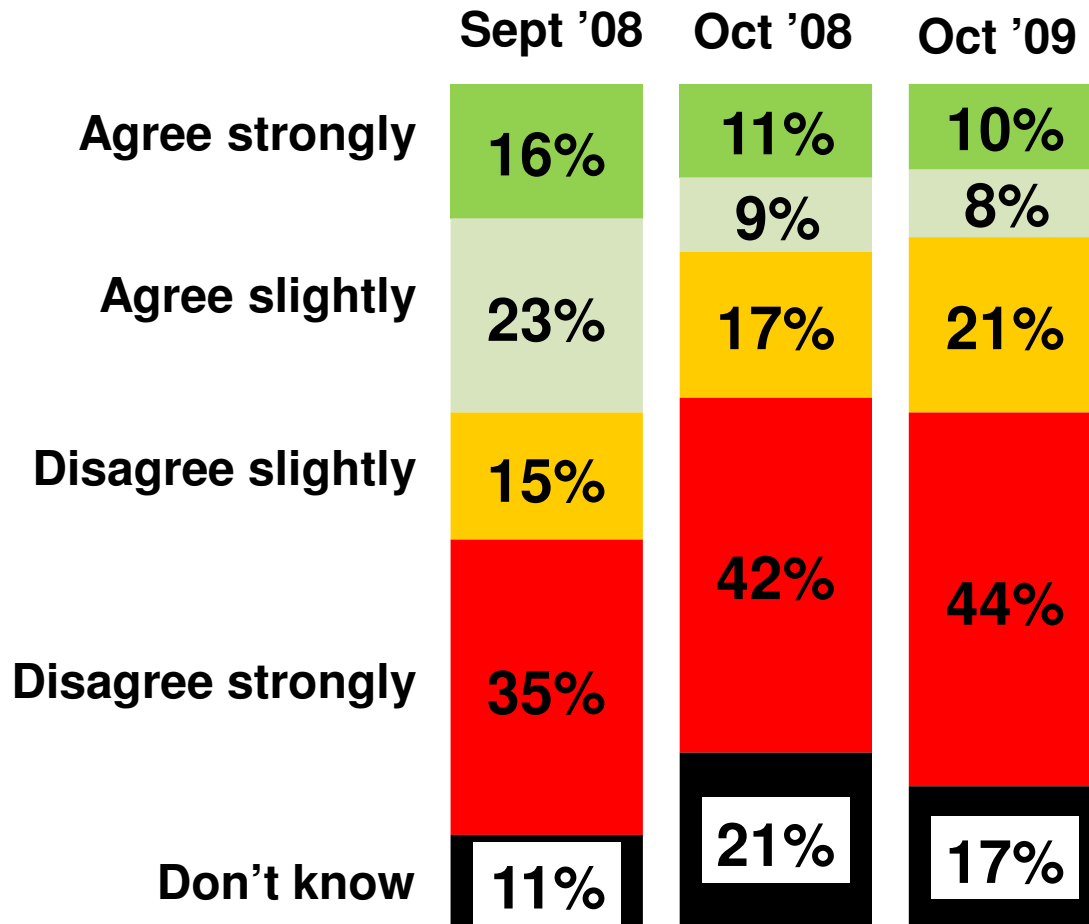
Confidence in parties to manage the public finances out of the current downturn

(Base: All adults 18+)



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Government



Opposition Fine Gael/ Labour

Oct '09

