



# Voting Intention Opinion Poll

January 2010

Prepared for

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

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**



## Methodology and Weighting

RED C interviewed a random sample of 1005 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 25<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

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 – 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010 - Opinion Poll**

### **Fianna Fail bounce for the start of 2010**

The first Sunday Business Post/ RED C tracking poll of 2010 delivers some good news for Fianna Fail following what must have seemed a very difficult winter. Since our last poll, which was taken immediately before the budget, the party have seen their share of the vote rise by 4%, and so secure 27% of the first preference vote in this poll. Given the very negative reaction to the budget by many commentators, particularly among those within the public service movement who labelled the budget unfair, this improvement in fortunes will come as a welcome boost for the party.

One possible explanation for this may be the fact for many outside the public sector, perhaps the worst suggested measures that were being suggested for implementation prior to the budget did not come to pass, and anecdotally there is also appears to be a growing belief that Brian Lenihan is regarded as someone who does know what he is doing with the economy. This is crucial for Fianna Fail as we know historically that there is a strong link between assumed economic competence and voter support. It is also the that this link was seen to be missing for Fine Gael and Labour in our November poll, when their high share of the vote was not supported by a belief that they could handle the economy any better than Fianna Fail

It also appears that other negative events over the winter break, such as the poor weather and criticism around the government's reaction to this, have also failed to impact significantly on the results. Perhaps the more human face of the party, shown through the reaction to Brian Lenihan's illness and the support for his actions to carry on while fighting it, has helped to offset criticism of the party as a whole.

It is too early to tell whether this bounce is the start of an upward trend in support for the party, even if Fianna Fail strategists may hope it is a springboard for growth in voter support. A 27% share of the vote for Fianna Fail is still a long way behind where they would like to be, and leaves the party still in and around the baseline share identified by many for the party at 25%. We have also yet to see the a significant reaction to the budget in the form of visible strikes by civil service unions, who have mainly kept their powder to date, but have mentioned a start to major action in February, and this may yet impact on party support in the future.

It is also worth noting that Fianna Fail does historically get a bit of a bounce at the start of each year with 3-4% gains in support in each of 2006, 2007 and 2008, while 2009 saw a small decline. However, as consumer sentiment begins to track back upwards there will be those on the opposition benches that may have some concern that Fianna Fail's own fortunes will follow this trend.

For Fine Gael the year ahead may prove to be somewhat tougher than might have been expected. The fact that the party already secured record levels of support during 2009, suggests that there is little room for the party to gain further. Instead they will need to work hard to back up their claims to be able to do the job better than those in power, without being able to prove it. As many leading brands are discovering in the changed economic world, it can sometimes be as hard to retain share in a competitive market as it is to build it in the first place.

At the start of 2010, Fine Gael remains the largest party in the state, despite a small decline in share of 2% in today's poll. This decline means the party secures 34% of the first preference vote, which is still some way ahead of the other parties. However, the small declines in share for Fine Gael, coupled with the gains for Fianna Fail in the same poll, means the gap between the two parties has been significantly reduced, from a gap of 13% in November last year, to a gap of just 7% in January. The party perhaps needs to build a stronger foundation for its support by persuading the electorate that it has the capability in economic and other matters, a difficult task for any opposition party given that it can't prove this competency through actions.

Labour's share of the first preference vote also remains slightly depressed following a fall off at the end of last year. The party retains 17% share of the vote, but this is certainly below the desire and expectations of the party, particularly as they had been hovering around 19% share, and even managed over 20% at one point in 2009. With this share of the first preference vote it remains unlikely that the party can come to power as the majority partner in any coalition, and during 2010 it will be interesting to see how much closer the party gets agreeing policies in principle with Fine Gael, if its own prospects don't improve. The party's strength remains focused in Dublin, where they consistently secure around a quarter of the first preference vote, but outside Dublin the support is more patchy, particularly in Connaught and Ulster.

After gains at the end of last year, support for Sinn Fein falls back again in today's poll. The party secures 8% of the first preference vote. But given relatively negative press Gerry Adams and his family has received over the Christmas and New Year, and the renewal of problems in Northern Ireland this week, the results could have been worse for the party.

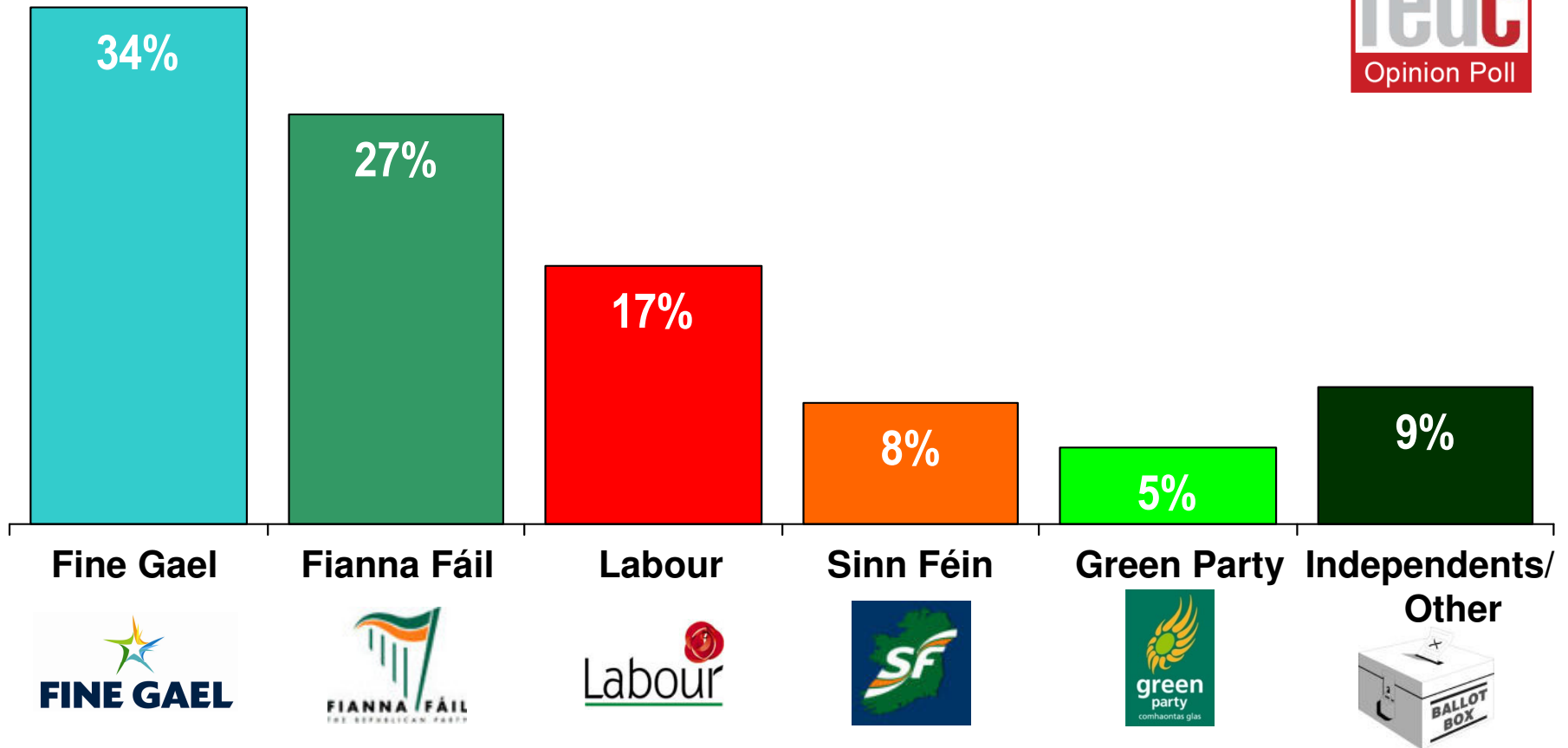
The Green Party will also be happy that they have retained 5% of the first preference vote in today's poll. This steadies the ship for them after some worrying results in the autumn which saw the party witness a consistent downward trend in support. Given John Gormley's role in co-ordinating the response by the government to the poor weather, this could have potentially turned out worse for the party.

The year of 2010 in politics starts therefore with a poll therefore that suggests much could happen over the months ahead, depending on the actions and fortunes of each of the parties. By taking regular tracking polls throughout the year it will soon become clear as to whether voter sentiment in this poll provides a new start point for Fianna Fail, having made it through the three major hurdles they set themselves in 2009, or is instead simply a period of calm before the storm continues.

# 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+)

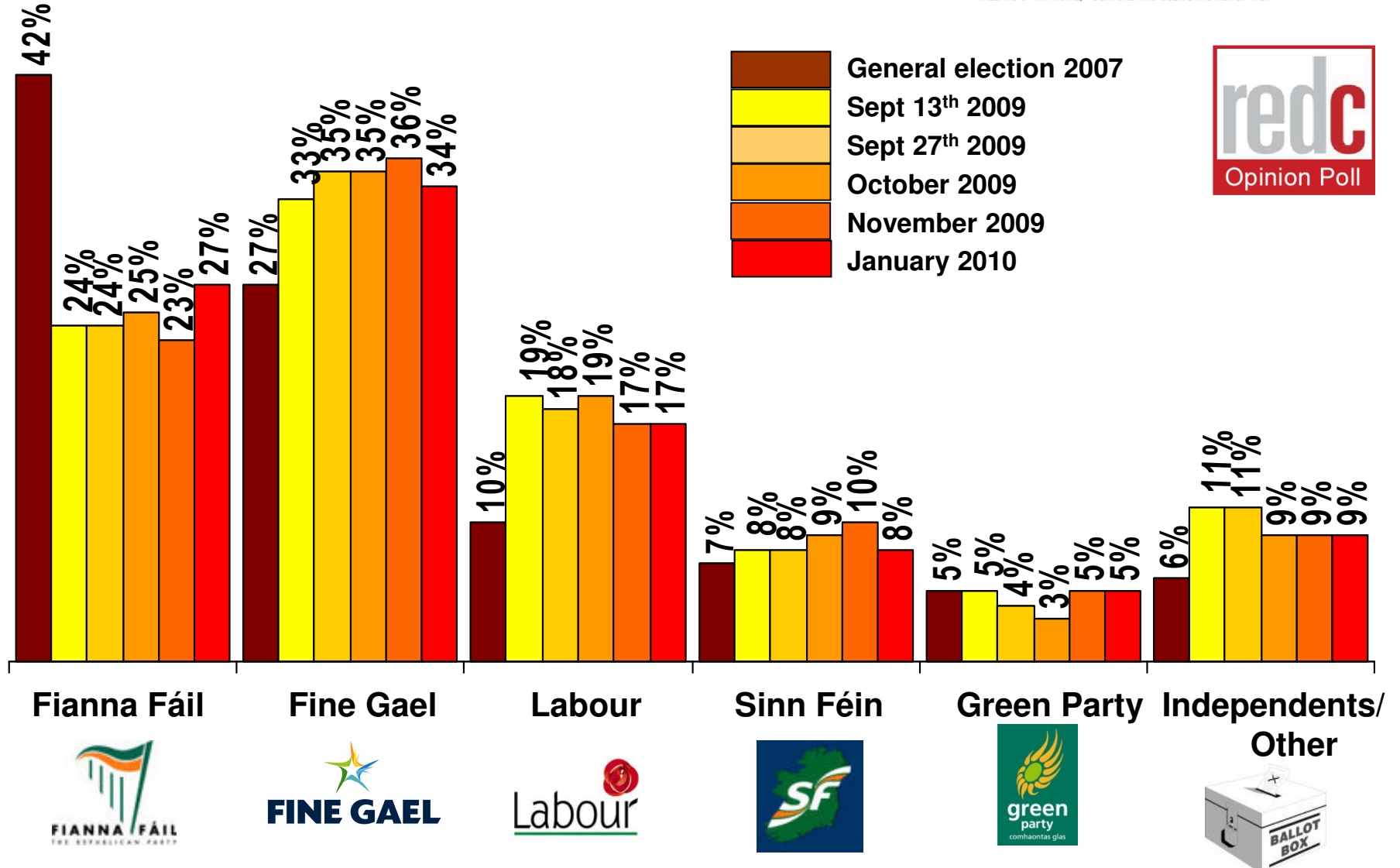
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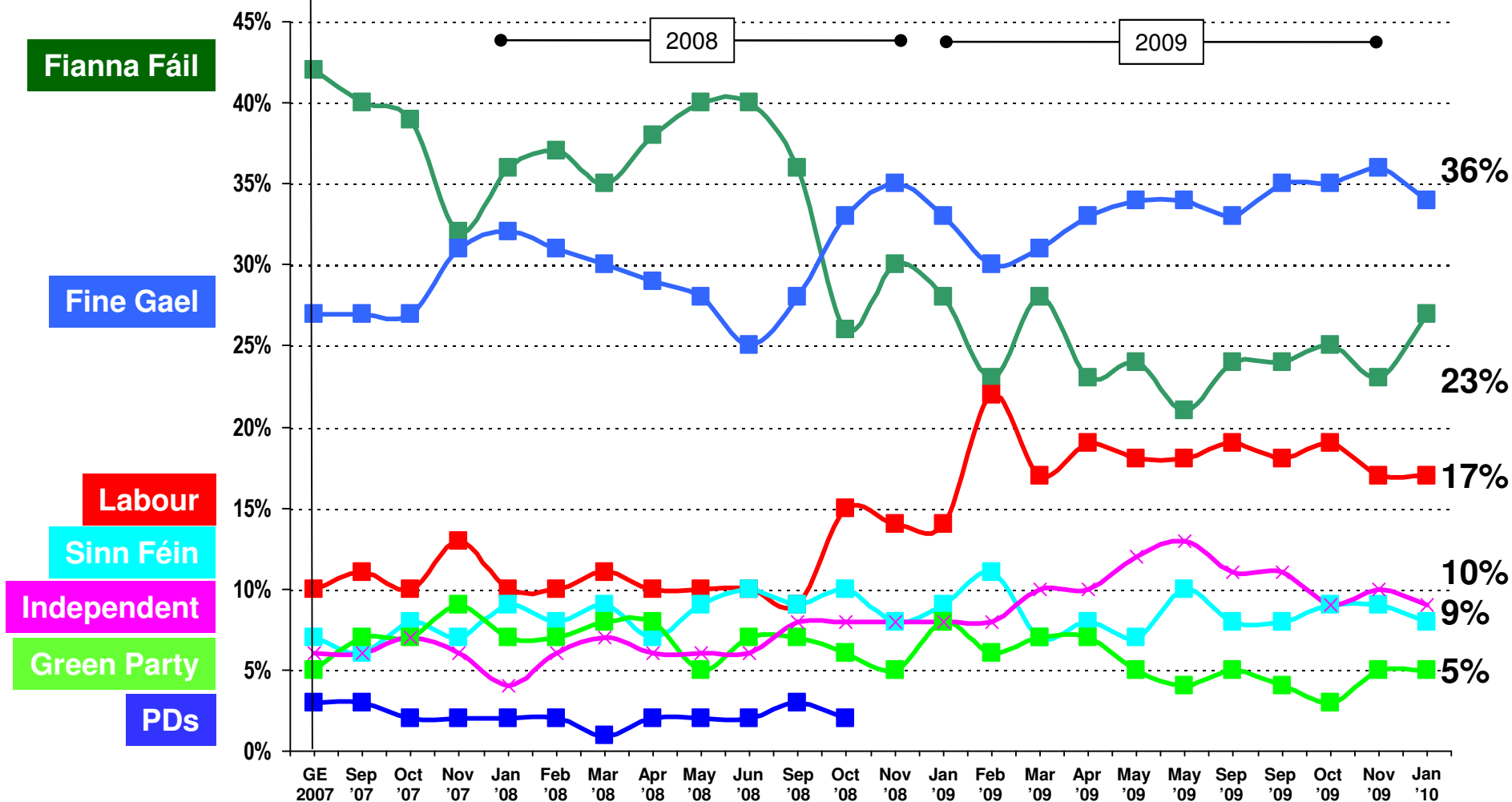


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<b>CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT</b>			
	<b>Core figures 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010</b>	<b>Excluding undecided</b>	<b>2007 Election Results</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Sinn Féin</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Green Party</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Independents/Others</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>16</b>		