



# General Election Opinion Poll

February 2006

Prepared for

**THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST**

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

## **Must be Included**



**RED C interviewed a random sample of 1007 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2006. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.**



## **SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 25<sup>th</sup> February Opinion Poll**

The Fianna Fail revival in support seen across The Sunday Business Post/RED C tracking polls since September appears to have come to a halt as we move further away from the influence of the budget. In the latest Sunday Business Post/RED C poll conducted this week Fianna Fail support has dropped back to 35%, just above the support level recorded before the budget was announced.

In contrast Fine Gael activists will be pleased that their apparent fall from grace in January was somewhat short lived, and perhaps a reaction to the budget and the lack of Dail sitting, rather than a long term switch away from the party. In the latest poll Fine Gael support reverts back to 25%, the same as recorded in September last year, and more in line with their desired upward trend as we move towards the election. While slightly below their highest rating last year, this will give Fine Gael activists cause for quiet satisfaction, in light of the fact that they were in a significantly worse position at this time last year, and have held on to much of the gains made during the year, to provide them with a strong base for increased growth in support this year.

Of the other parties Labour will probably be the most disappointed in this months poll, having been stuck on a 13% support over the past few polls, rather than increase as we move towards the election, they record a minor fall in support to 12%. The Green party also sees a fall back in support from a high rating seen in January, which sees their support at 5%.

At the same time Sinn Fein on 10%, the PD's on 4% and the Independent candidates' at 9% all achieve minor gains in this poll. While these small shifts do not tell us much from one poll to another as they are so small, they will be more interesting as we track the long term trends in support each month across the year.



Over the past few polls RED C have also identified those who give a score of 7 to 10 on our ten point likelihood to vote scale, essentially those who are certain to go and vote when the election is called, and effectively stripping out the somewhat apathetic voters who perhaps can't be relied on to come out and vote. When we do this to our poll data we end up with the equivalent of around 60% turnout – much closer to reality in the last general election.

When we focus just on those “very likely” to vote, which can be seen as a more accurate measure of what will actually happen at the election itself, the gap between the main two parties does close by 2%, with Fianna Fail support on 34% and Fine Gael on 26%, but this is not as close as was evident at the height of consumer anger shown to the government during the “Rip Off Ireland” coverage in 2005.

It is also interesting to note that the proportion of undecided voters has also risen again to 20% since that time, suggesting that there is still a relatively large number of potential voters who appear to be unconvinced as yet by the policies of any of the parties. Further analysis of the floating voter suggests that they are more likely to be female, come from the 25-44 year old age groups and are disproportionately more likely to come from the Munster region.

The recent shifts in support, first during the Rip Off Ireland campaign last year and more recently as a result of a positive budget, also suggests that the floating voter is relatively fickle and that there is an opportunity for any of the parties still to convince them to vote with clear and appealing policies before the next election.

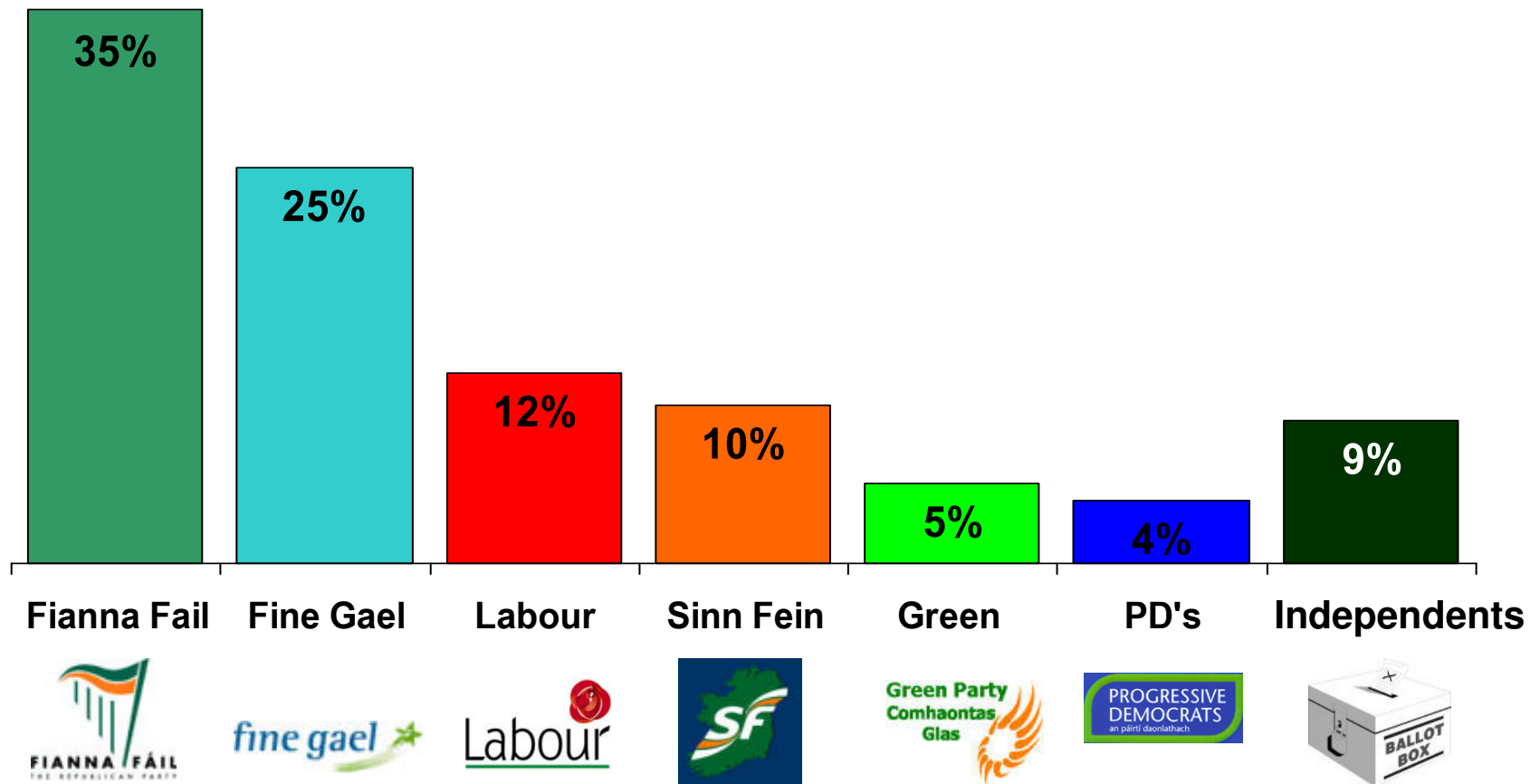


This poll also saw us update our consumer confidence measures at a similar time to those conducted in the past two years. It is interesting to note that consumers are generally confident in the economy, but not to the same degree that we saw at the start of 2005. Consumers appear to be particularly less likely to believe that employment opportunities will improve during 2006. There is also a third of the electorate who feel that the economy cannot sustain the current flow of immigrant workers to Ireland throughout 2006, a view more likely held by women in middle and older age groups.

In light of expected future interest rate rises over the year, this drop in consumer confidence may be a something of a bad sign for the government whose support is historically linked to confidence in the economy, the governments hope must be that maturing SSIA's may in themselves counter this effect and keep consumer confidence high.

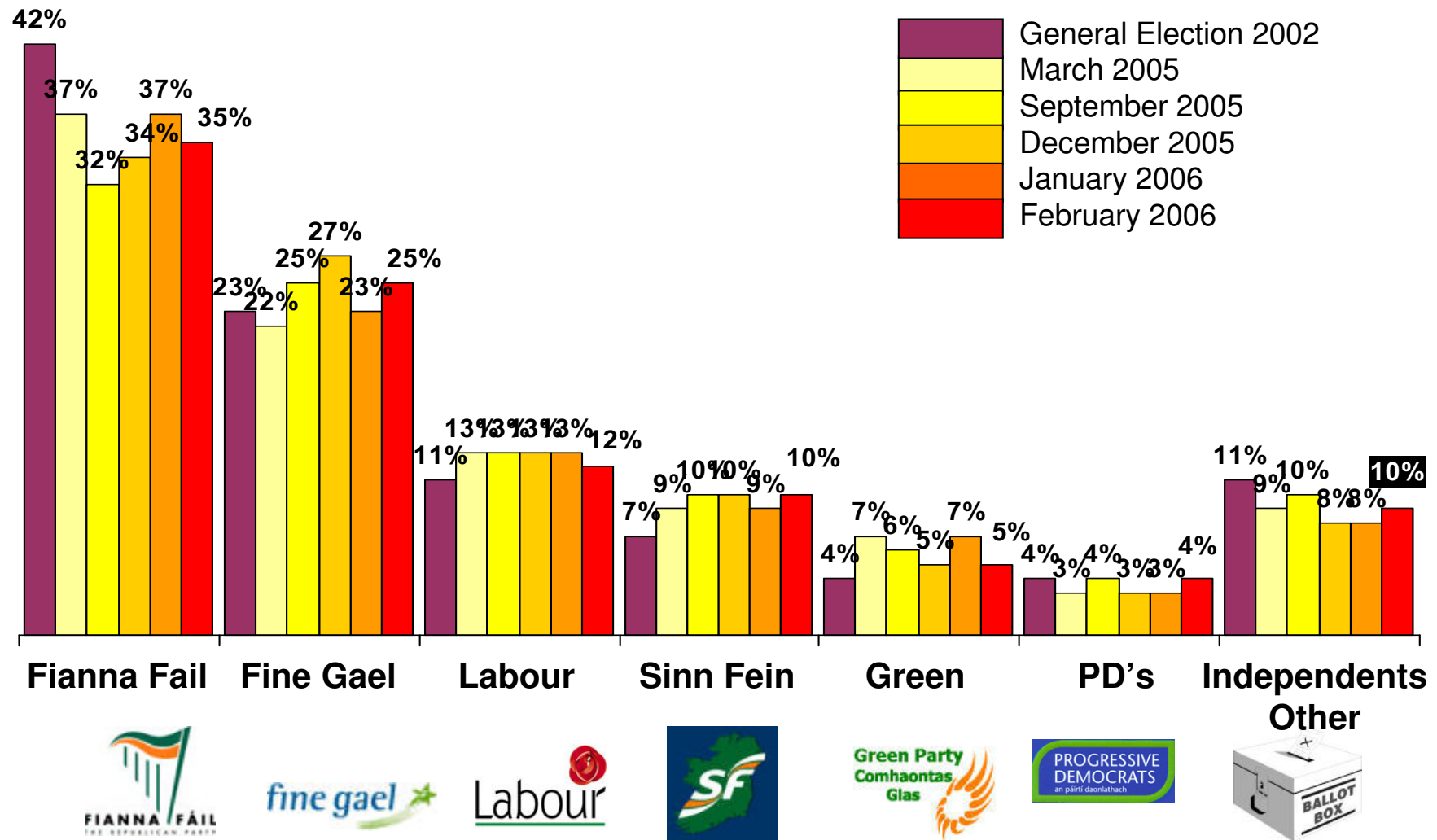
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



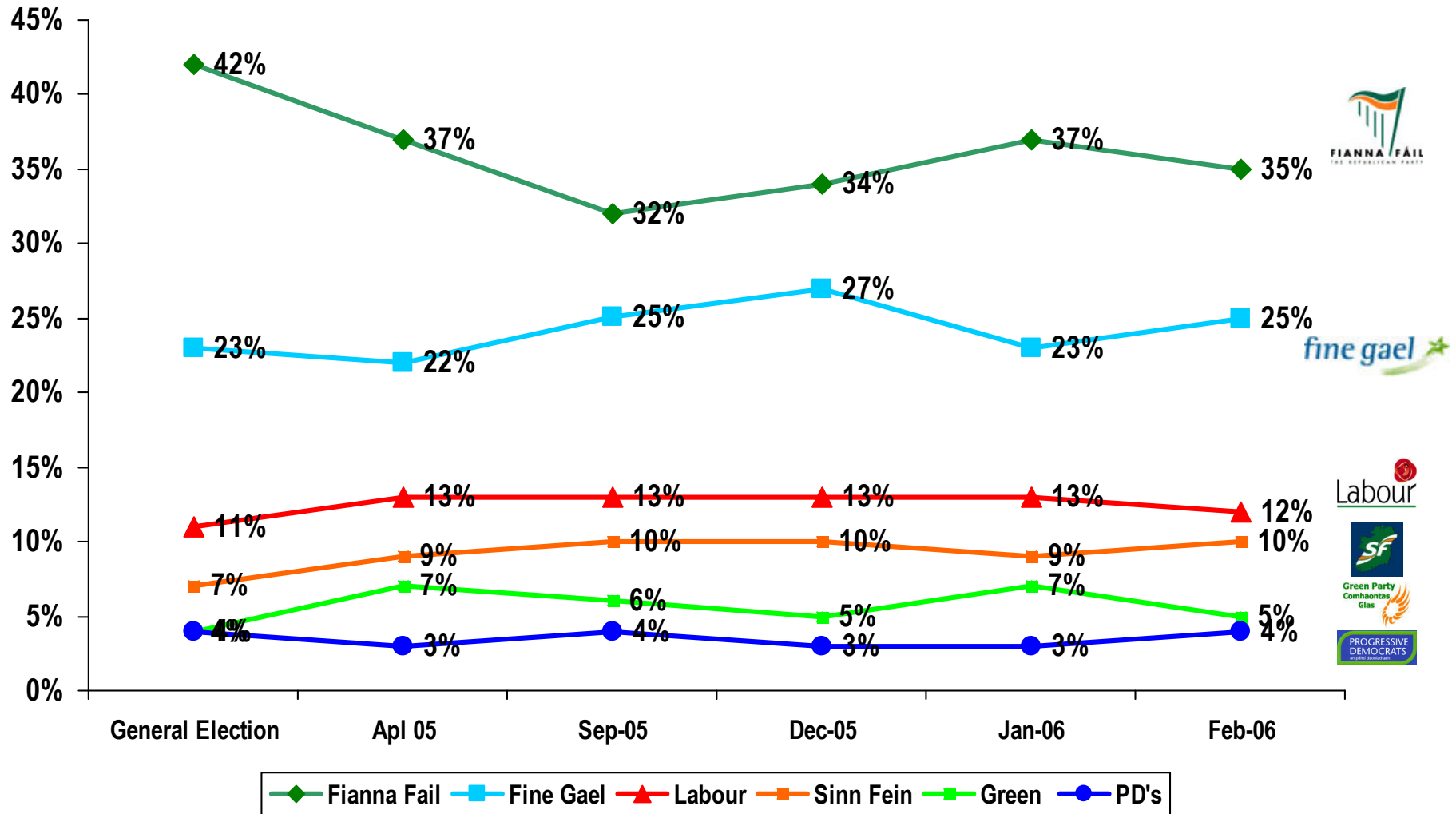
# If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 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 18+)



<b>CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT</b>				
	<b>Core figures</b>	<b>Excluding undecided</b>	<b>Adjusted</b>	<b>2002 Election Results</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Fianna Fail</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Sinn Fein</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>P.D.s</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Green Party</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Independents /Others</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>20</b>			

**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)

	<b>Feb 2006</b>	<b>Jan 2006</b>	<b>Dec 2005</b>	<b>Sept 2005</b>	<b>2002 Election Results</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Fianna Fail</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Sinn Fein</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>P.D.s</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Green Party</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Independents/Others</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>

# Thinking about the economy, how confident are you that.....

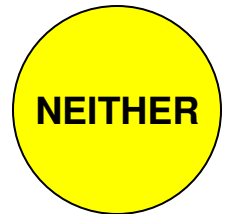
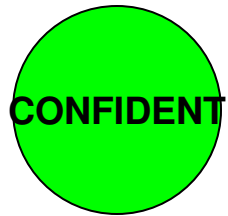
(Base: All adults 18+)



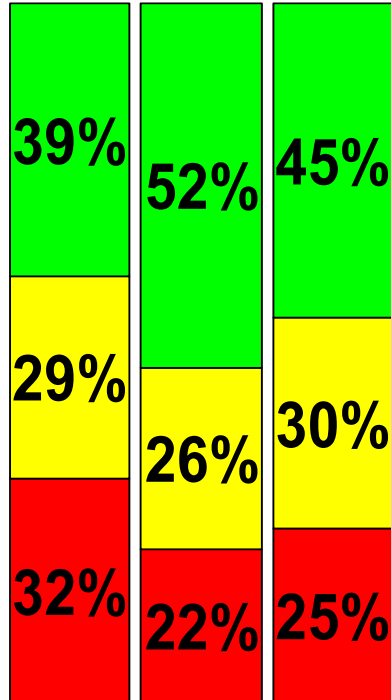
**The country is on the right track for the future?**

**My personal financial situation will improve in 2005?**

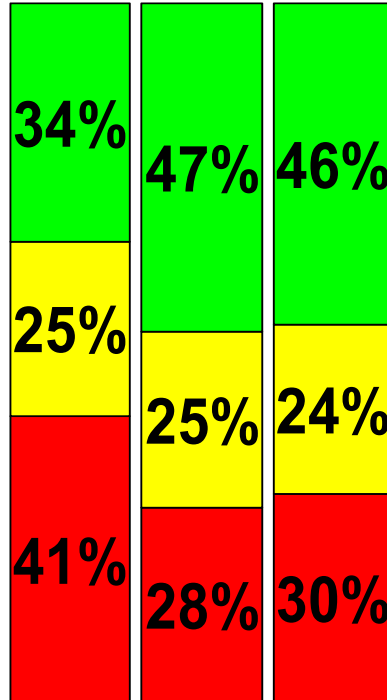
**Employment opportunities in Ireland will improve in 2005?**



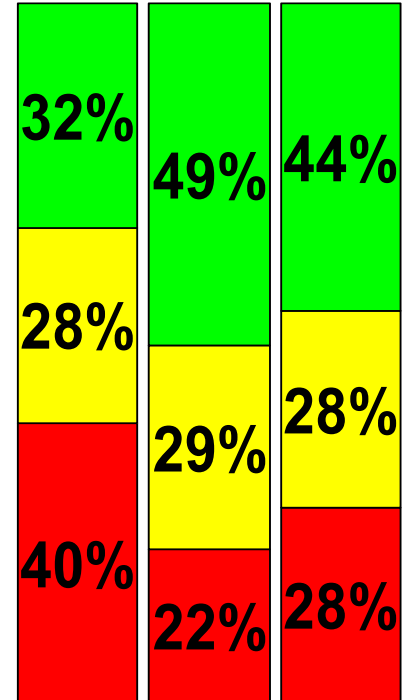
Mar'04 Mar'05 Feb'06



Mar'04 Mar'05 Feb'06



Mar'04 Mar'05 Feb'06



**NET CONFIDENCE**

+7

+30

+20

-7

+19

+16

-8

+27

+16

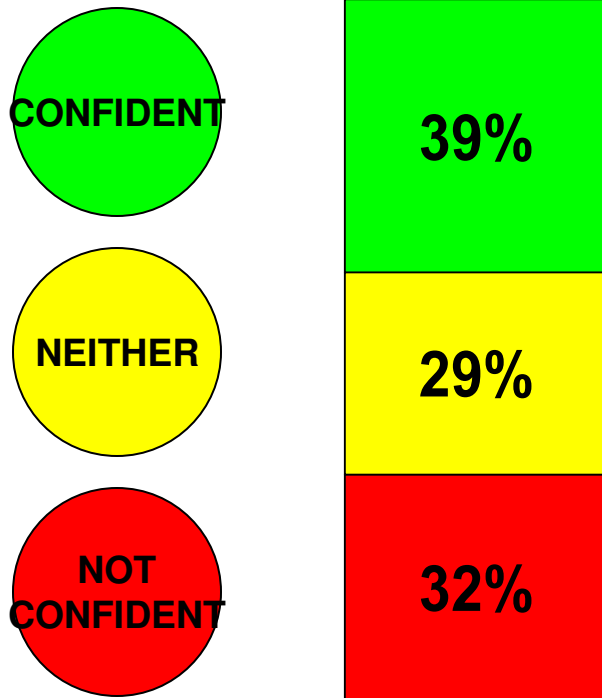
# Thinking about the economy, how confident are you that.....

(Base: All adults 18+)



The economy can sustain the current flow of immigrant workers to Ireland throughout 2006?

Feb '06



<b>NET CONFIDENCE</b>	<b>+4%</b>
-----------------------	------------

<b>NET CONFIDENCE</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	+4%
<b>AGE X GENDER</b>	
Male 18-24	+14%
Male 25-44	+11%
Male 45+	+15%
Female 18-24	+8%
Female 25-44	-1%
Female 45+	-14%
<b>SOCIAL CLASS</b>	
ABC1	+6%
C2DE	+1%
<b>REGION</b>	
Dublin	+5%
ROL	+9%
Munster	+7%
Conn/Ulster	-6%