

General Election Opinion Poll

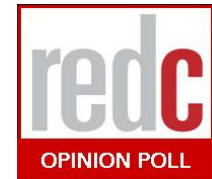
January 2006

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

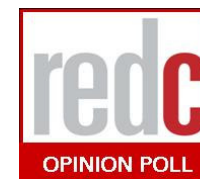
RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included



RED C interviewed a random sample of 1005 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 20th – 25th January 2006. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.

It's the economy, stupid!

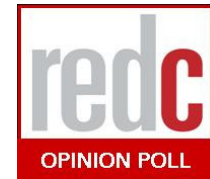


The most recent Sunday Business Post/RED C poll appears to be very bad news for Fine Gael, with support falling dramatically back to just 22%, the same level seen at this time in 2005, and suggesting that the support they saw towards the end of last year is particularly fragile. For Fianna Fail however the message of this poll is clear, keep the electorate happy with regard to their economic status and a third term in office is a distinct possibility.

In this, the first Sunday Business Post/ RED C poll since the budget, Fianna Fail records its highest level of support since this time last year at 37%, this is founded on the base that even those who are very likely to go and vote, appear to have switched their support away from the possibility of voting for Fine Gael and back to Fianna Fail.

During 1992 Bill Clinton and George Bush were fighting for the presidency of the United States. Bill Clinton was barely holding on to his place in the opinion polls. James Carville, one of Bill Clinton's top advisers decided that their push for presidency needed focusing. Drawing on the research he had conducted he came up with a simple focus for their campaign. Every opportunity he had James Carville wrote four words - 'It's the economy, stupid' - on a whiteboard for Bill Clinton to see every time he went out to speak. It worked and Clinton won the election.

It's the economy, stupid!

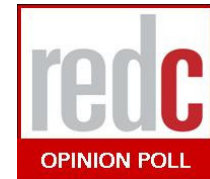


Since then economic competence has been seen to be a deciding factor in a number of elections held across Europe and the USA. It now appears the same core issue may be a deciding factor in the upcoming elections in Ireland, with this poll showing a clear correlation between voters opinion of the opposing parties economic competence and their claimed voting behaviour.

Running up to the budget at the end of last year Fianna Fail appeared to be in freefall, with Fine Gael consistently closing the gap, particularly among those most likely to vote. One good budget later and opinion has reversed, with the successful handling of the economy apparently all important to the Irish electorate.

In the last two Sunday Business Post/ RED C polls, one before the budget in December and one after the budget in January, RED C asked the electorate how much better or worse they believed a Fine Gael/Labour coalition would be at handling a number of core issues such as health, value for money and crime/law and order. The one area where we see a significant change between December and January is the proportion who believe that Fine Gael/Labour coalition would do a better job with the economy which has fallen from 36% in December to just 29% in January.

It's the economy, stupid!



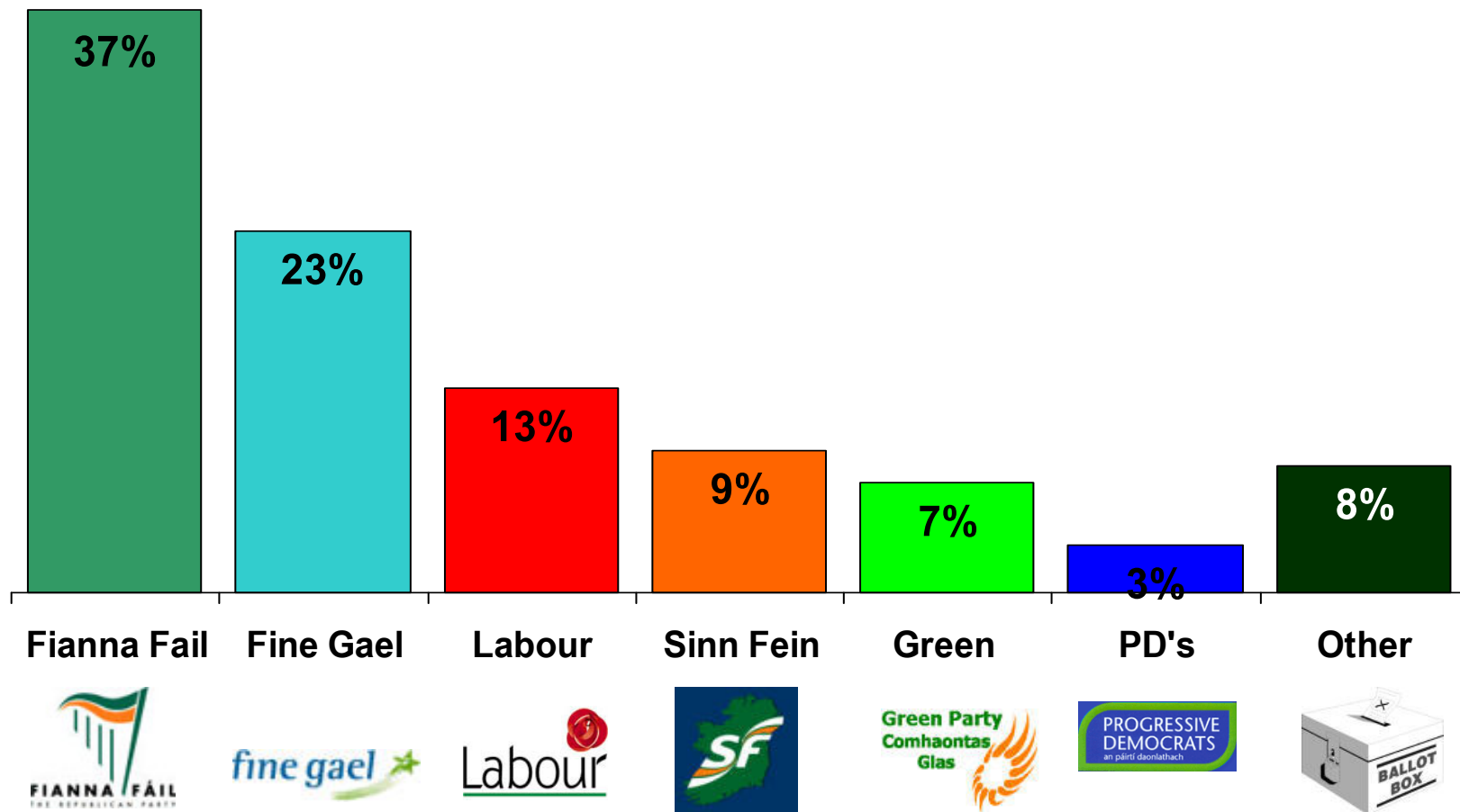
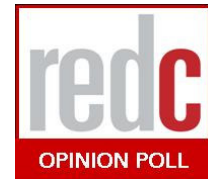
The relevance of the economy in the electorates voting behaviour must of great concern to Fine Gael strategists, in the face of a good economic outlook and with the prospects of a large proportion of voters having SSIA accounts that will mature between now and the election. The poll does however indicate who the key targets may be that the party needs to persuade about their economic competence, the first of these are men, who appear to be much more likely to believe that a potential Fine Gael/Labour coalition will do a worse job with the economy than Fianna Fail, with 29% of men believing they would do a worse job as opposed to just 13% among women. Those in older age groups of 55 and above are also more likely to believe that a possible fine Gael/Labour coalition would do a worse job.

For the other parties this latest Sunday Business Post/RED C poll sees few changes, with Labour stuck on 13% support, the same as seen in the previous three polls, Sinn Fein down 1% at 9% support , and the Greens the only party to increase support again to similar levels seen at the beginning of 2005.

There is still plenty of time to go until the next election, and this poll simply reflects opinion at a point in time after budget and without the Dail having being in session, however in light of what was a consistent upward trend for Fine Gael before this, it certainly provides evidence that support for an alternative government is fickle at best, and the opposition parties will need to do a lot of work over the next 12-14 months to convince the electorate not to give a third term to the current coalition.

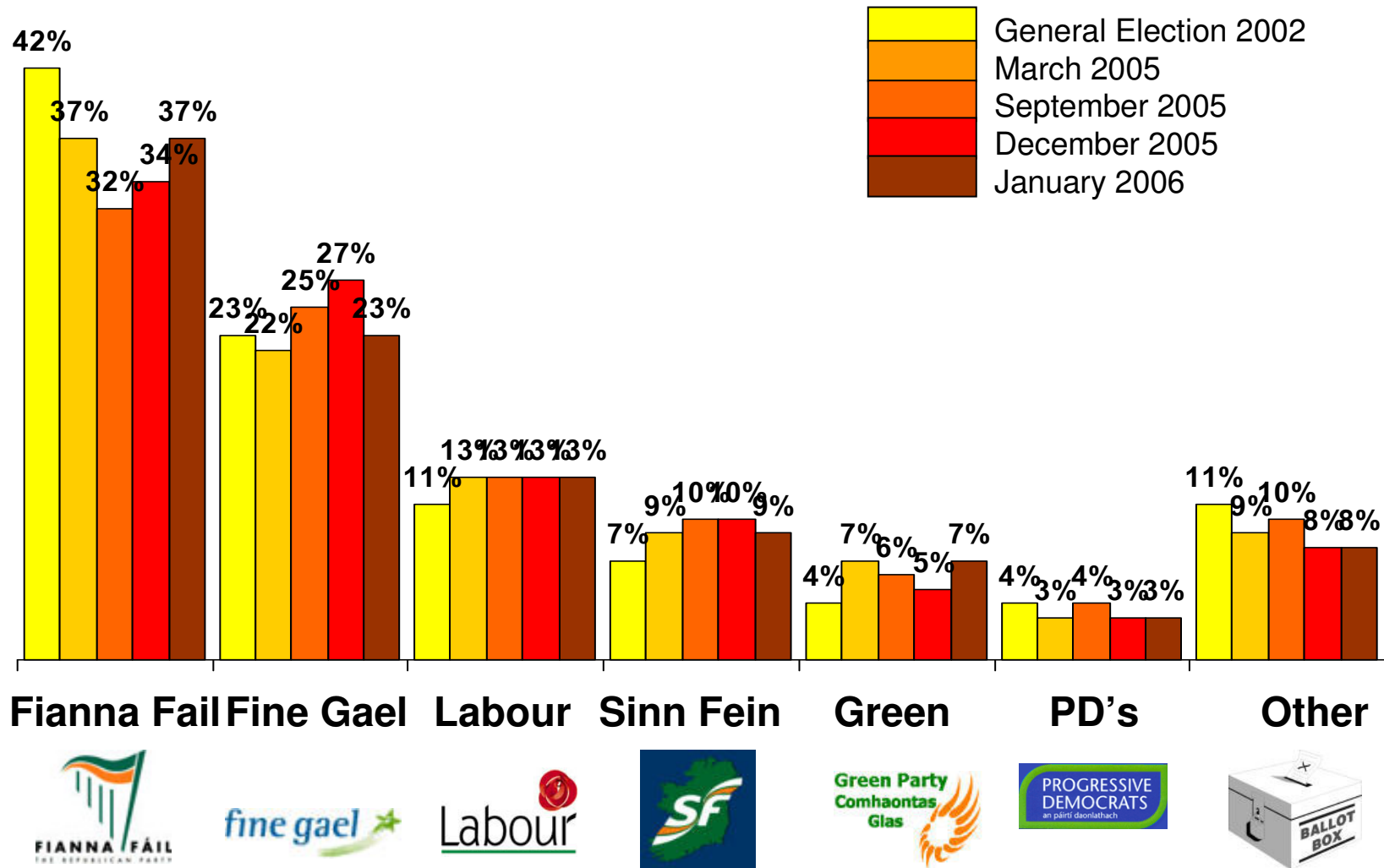
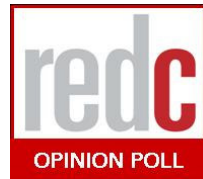
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



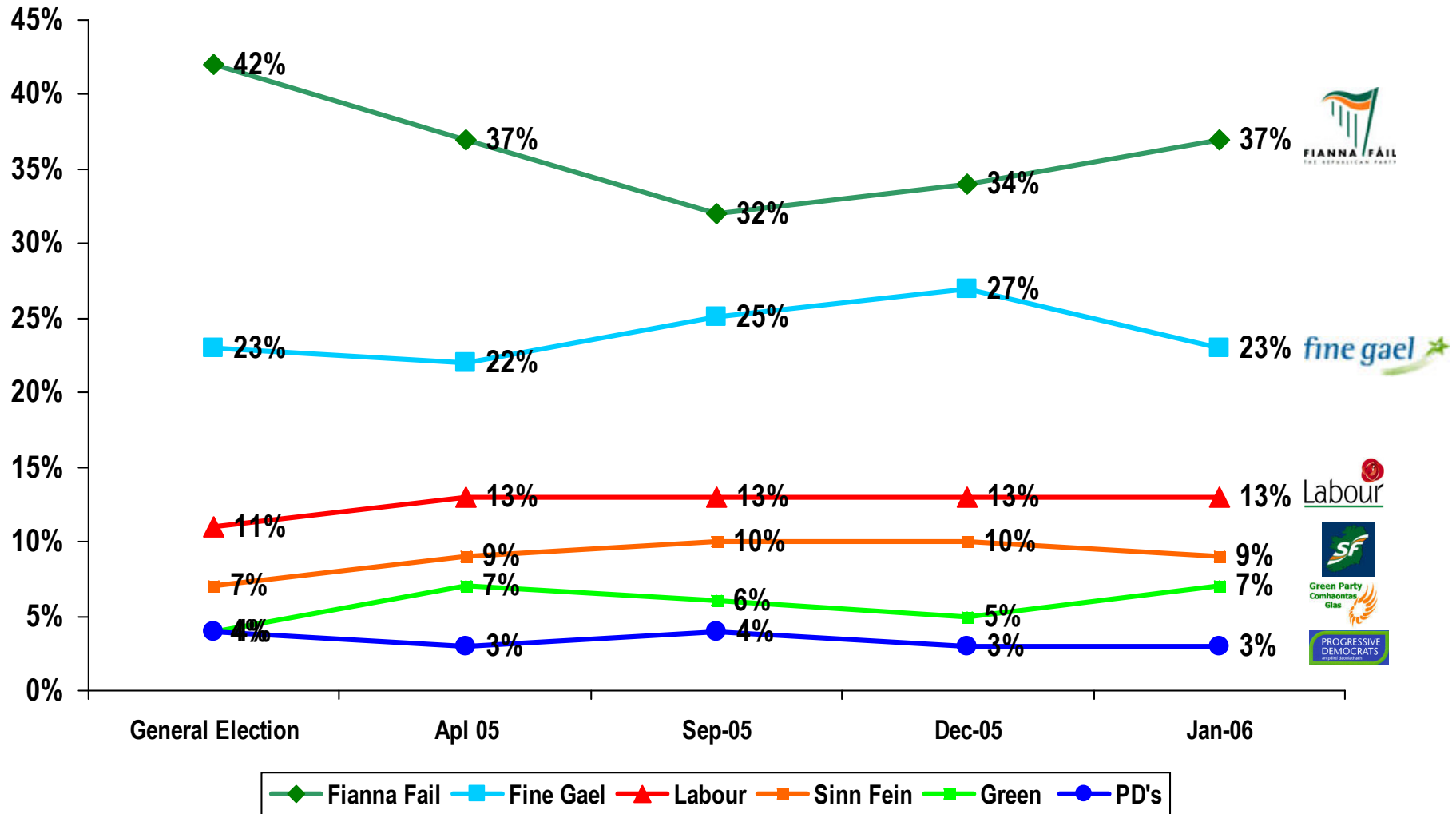
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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?

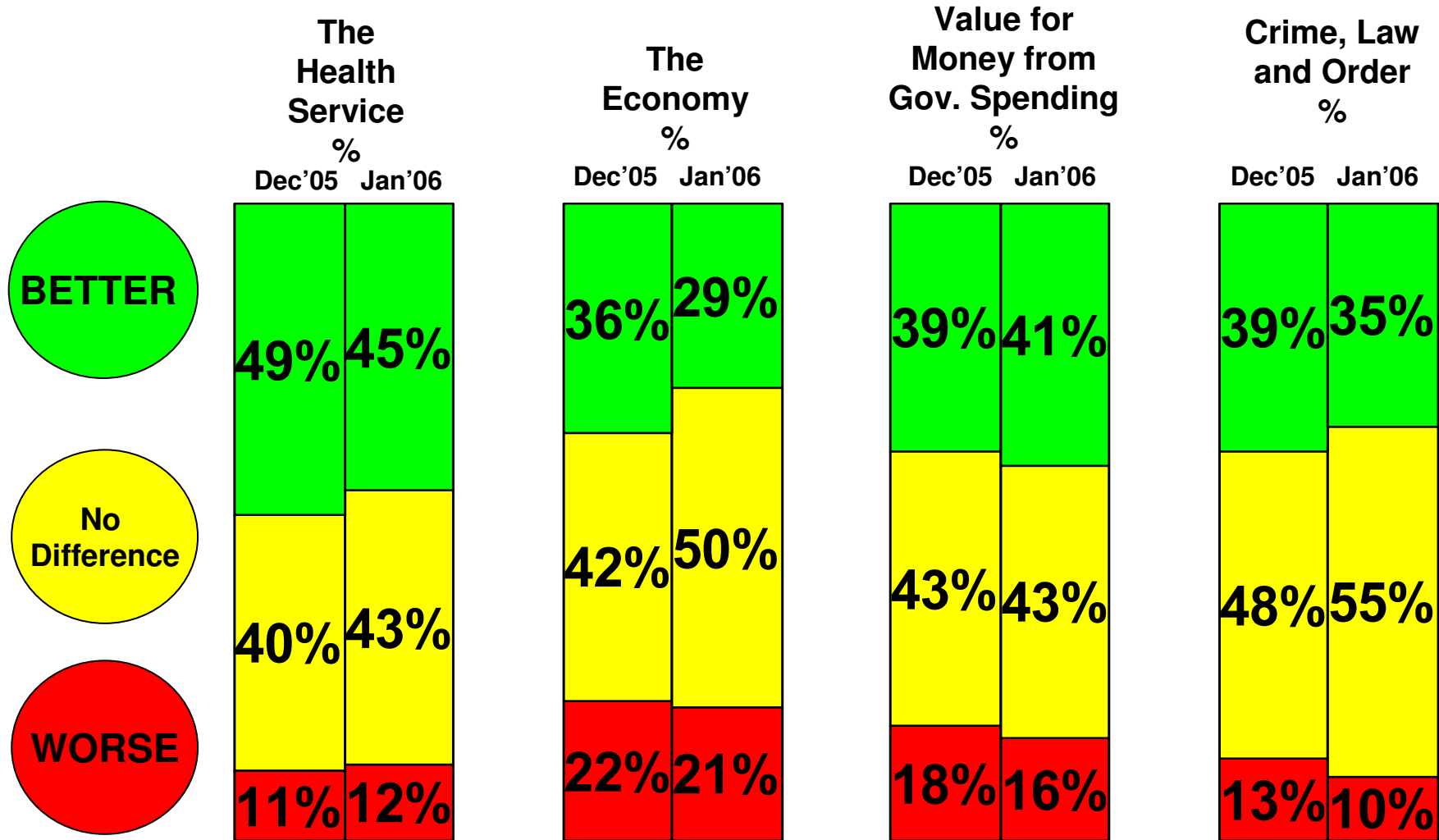
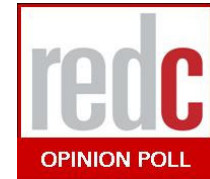
(Base: All adults 18+)



CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT				
	Core figures	Excluding undecided	Adjusted	2002 Election Results
	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fail	31	37	37	42
Fine Gael	19	22	23	23
Labour	11	12	13	11
Sinn Fein	8	9	9	7
P.D.s	3	3	3	4
Green Party	7	8	7	4
Independents /Others	6	7	8	11
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 2006	Dec 2005	Sept 2005	
	Likely Voters (score 7 to 10)	Likely Voters (score 7 to 10)	Likely Voters (score 7 to 10)	2002 Election Results
	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fail	36	32	32	42
Fianna Gael	23	31	28	23
Labour	12	12	12	11
Sinn Fein	10	9	9	7
P.D.s	3	3	4	4
Green Party	8	5	5	4
Independents/Others	8	8	9	11

How much BETTER or WORSE would a Fine Gael/ Labour coalition be, compared to the current government, at looking after each of the following



How much BETTER or WORSE would a Fine Gael/ Labour coalition be, compared to the current government, at looking after THE ECONOMY

		GENDER		AGE					
	TOTAL	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Better	29	24	34	41	26	25	29	27	25
The same	50	47	53	44	57	53	49	45	50
Worse	21	29	13	15	17	22	22	28	25