



Voting Intention Opinion Poll

Jan 2009

Prepared for

THE SUNDAY BUSINESS POST

RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION **CLARITY**

Must be Included

RED C interviewed a random sample of 1001 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 26th & 28th January 2009. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results weighted to the profile of all adults.



SUNDAY BUSINESS POST – 1st February 2009 Opinion Poll

Fine Gael fail to take further advantage, with Fianna Fail support down

The first Sunday Business Post/ RED C poll of 2009 provides us with further evidence of Fianna Fail's relatively poor standing among voters today when compared to the general election just a year and a half ago. However, it is also somewhat disappointing for the main opposition who have consolidated rather than made further gains as the pressure mounts against the Government.

The discussion among commentators and political hacks prior to this poll appears to have centred around how low support for Fianna Fail might conceivably be, with many suggesting that the damaging events of recent weeks may well see support for the party fall to its lowest level ever. However, the reality is that the party support, while still very low compared to what they are used to, has not perhaps suffered quite as much as many have been expecting. In the poll Fianna Fail secures 28% of the first preference vote, down 2% from that achieved at the end of last year. This is one of the lowest ratings the party has recorded, but is not as low as they were back in October of last year when they secured just 26% support, at a time when the seriousness of our situation first appeared to register strongly with voters. This means that the party's core loyal voter support, of close to 30% of all voters, remains pretty much intact despite the extreme circumstances. It also suggests that the opposition has perhaps not yet convinced those who have been loyal to Fianna Fail in the past, that it is time to jump ship just yet.

Fine Gael does successfully maintain a 5% lead in support over Fianna Fail, maintaining their position as the dominant party in the current climate. However, I suspect that strategists will be perhaps slightly disappointed not to see support for the party grow, given the current sequence of economic crises that the Government has had to deal with in recent weeks. The party still retains 33% support of all likely voters in today's poll, down 2% since November, but within sample error of the last two polls. The positive news for the party lies in the retained level of support across voters over the last three months at around the 33%-35% mark, a position they were nowhere near before last Autumn, and one which leaves them in a very strong position should a General Election become a more likely prospect during the year.

Labour leader Eamonn Gilmore has been vocal recently calling for the need for a General Election, suggesting that a possible “sea change” in attitude among Irish voters over recent events, may see Labour become the dominant party in Irish politics. Today’s poll suggests that there is still some way to go for Labour to achieve this eventuality. The party does retain 14% of the first preference vote, the same as evident in the past two polls, and again a significant improvement on the 10% support they were stranded on for some time. However this consolidation in support doesn’t yet suggest that a “sea change” in political opinion is happening among Irish voters, and like Fine Gael the Labour party may be somewhat disappointed by not making further gains in today’s poll.

The Green Party will have been worried about the results of today’s poll, following high profile defections from the party in recent weeks that have put pressure on the party to justify its role in the current government. However the public appear to have clearly voiced their support for the Green Party’s leadership position, which appears to be to try to make a difference on environmental issues from within government, rather than siding with the defectors. The party will be delighted to see support rise to 8% this month, having seen steady declines in support over the past two polls. For any relatively smaller party there is of course the old adage that “any news” is “good news”, and perhaps part of the lift in support is perversely down to the increase in media coverage afforded to the party over the defections. However, the size of the gains does still represent a positive response among voters, particularly after the falls recorded in recent months, and does suggest that the stance taken by the party is understood by voters. The success of this position evident among voters in today’s poll does also make an early General Election, triggered by the Green’s leaving power, perhaps less likely in the months ahead.

Sinn Fein makes small gains in today’s poll, taking 9% of the first preference vote, which is a 1% improvement on their position at the end of last year. The party will be pleased to see something of a reversal in the declines recorded at the end of last year, while at the same time leaving them still behind the 10% support the party had reached in previous polls. Finally, support for Independent candidates remains at 8% in the poll, a share of the vote they have retained now for the past four months, and relatively strong compared to the 6% achieved at the last General Election.

So today’s poll shows a consolidation of support by Fine Gael and Labour over recent months, which in itself is very important springboard for the year ahead, but not the gains that perhaps they were hoping for, based on the current economic position of the country. For Fianna Fail the results are bad, and a long way from the levels the party has been used to, but again not as bad as they



might have feared. This in itself may give the party hope that they turn their fortunes around in the longer term, particularly as the strength of the Green Party support in today's poll suggests that a General Election is perhaps less likely now, in the short term.

The Lisbon Treaty

What a difference a year makes to public opinion on the Lisbon Treaty. Today's poll sees support for the Treaty surge, with 67% of those who say they are likely to vote in the Treaty rerun later this year, and expressing a preference, saying they will vote Yes. This leaves just 33% of those likely to vote stating that they vote against the treaty.

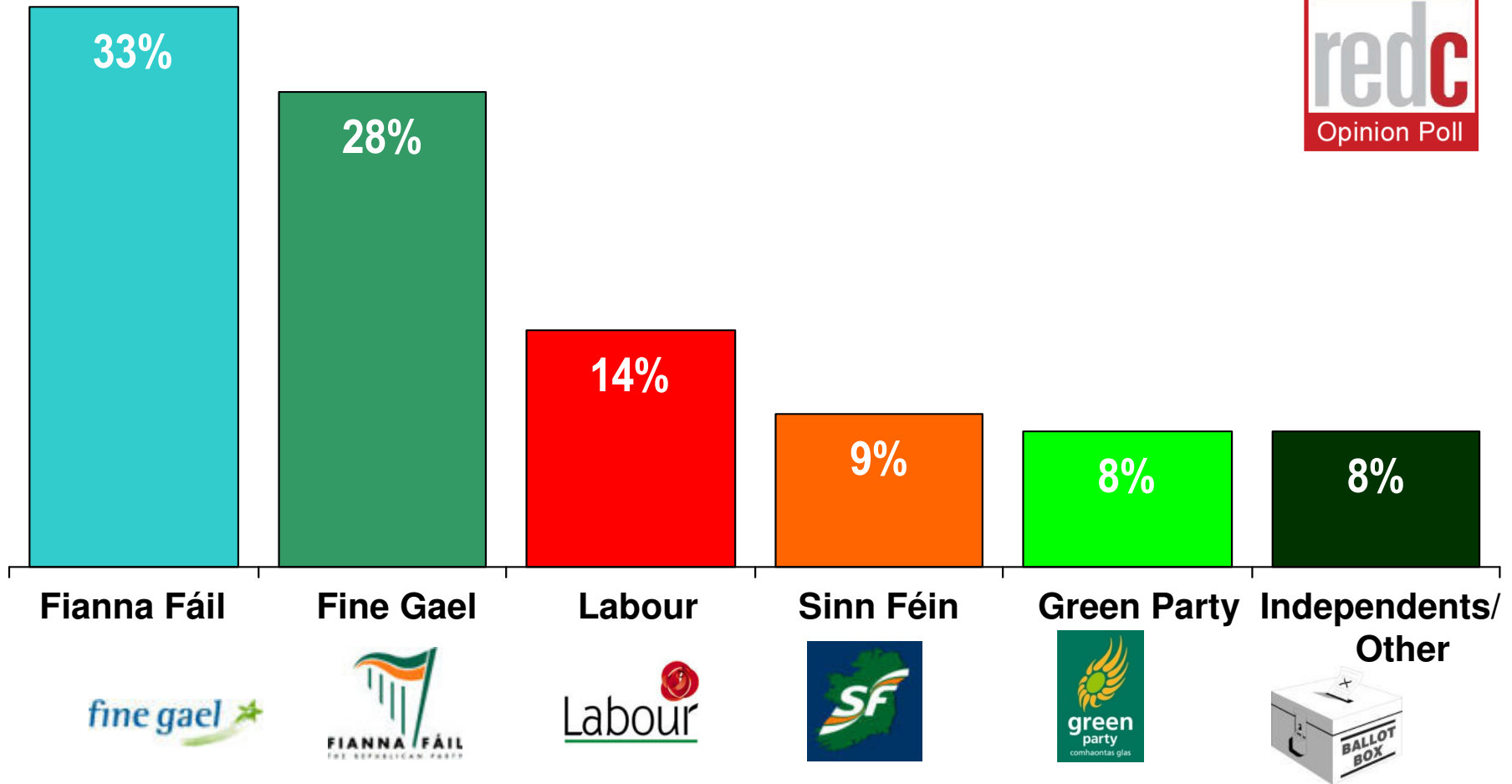
In analysing the results it is apparent that 20-25% of those who voted No against the Treaty last year, now state that they are unlikely to vote again in a second referendum; whereas those who voted Yes last time are much more likely to turn out and vote again. A further 20% of those that voted No last time, now suggest that they have changed their mind and will vote Yes when the referendum is held again.

This current voting intention is taken however before any campaign has been run, and before the public are clear on what guarantees, if any, the Government has secured with relation to the issues that citizens had at the last referendum. It should also be mentioned that in January last year 64% of those who had made up their mind also stated that they would vote Yes at that time, albeit with a much higher proportion undecided.

The results today therefore suggest that the treaty is likely to be ratified, as long as the Government gain some assurances on the issues which concerned the public so much at the last Treaty, and do not become complacent on the back of poll results such as today's.

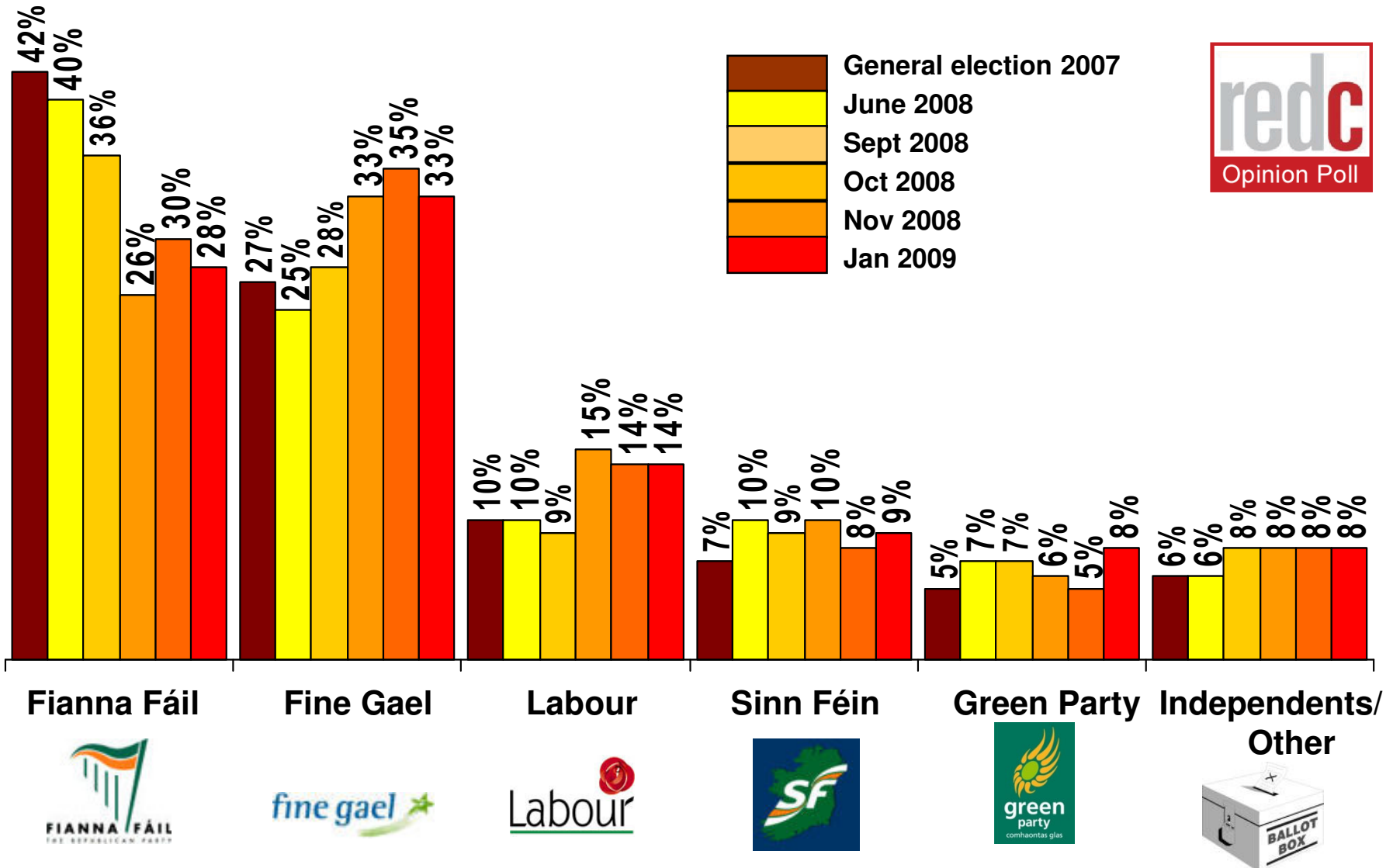
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)



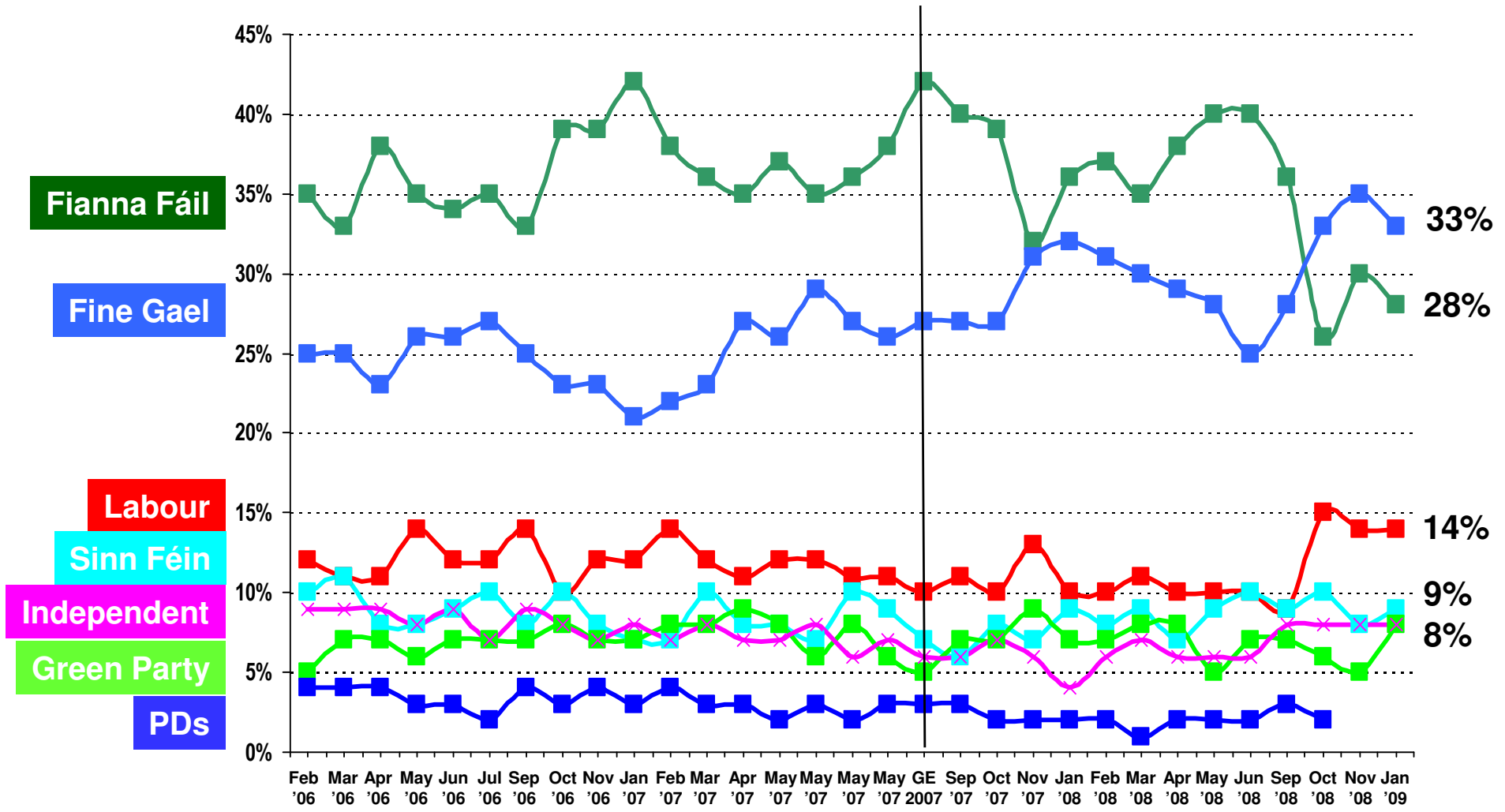
If there were a *General Election* tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote?

(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 Jan 08	Excluding undecided	2007 Election Results
	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	23	28	42
Fine Gael	28	33	27
Labour	12	14	10
Sinn Féin	8	9	7
Green Party	7	8	5
Independents/Ot hers	6	8	6
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 2009	Nov 2008	Oct 2008	Sept 2008	June 2008	May 2008	April 2008	March 2008	Feb 2008	Nov 2007	Oct 2007	2007 Election Result
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fianna Fáil	28	29	26	36	40	39	37	36	38	33	40	42
Fine Gael	33	36	34	28	25	28	29	30	30	31	28	27
Labour	15	14	15	9	10	10	11	10	10	13	10	10
Sinn Féin	9	7	9	9	10	9	7	8	8	7	6	7
Green Party	8	5	5	7	6	5	7	8	7	8	7	5
Independents / Others	7	9	9	8	2	6	7	7	6	5	7	6

How you will vote in the Lisbon Treaty referendum to be held again this year?



(Base: All adults 18+ likely to vote)

