



# General Election Opinion Poll

21<sup>st</sup> February 2016



# Methodology and Weighting

- RED C interviewed a random sample of 1,010 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016.
- 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.
- Vote intention results are based on those who will actually go and vote weighted to voter turnout profiles, using a 10 point scale, where 1 is not at all likely and 10 is very likely, those rating 8 to 10 are included as being those who will definitely go and vote.
- In all respects the poll was completed to the opinion polling guidelines set out by both ESOMAR and AIMRO.

# Predicting Voters who simply haven't made up their mind

I suspect many readers will be wondering why the polls have been so volatile during the course of this campaign. Today sees Fine Gael re-gain much of the vote share it had lost in the polls published over the previous week and a half, with a 4% gain in less than a week. So what on earth is going on?

The reality is that many voters are simply not clear how they are going to vote, even at this late stage, and have been changing their minds over the course of the campaign. Very rarely have RED C seen the level of undecided voters fluctuate so much from one poll to the next.

The normal process is for people to gradually make up their minds as the election campaign progresses, but that simply isn't the case so far in this election. This in itself makes a big difference in the vote share for one party or another, as those people who "partially" make up their minds from being undecided in one poll, are not doing so uniformly and up to now have tended to move in between the undecided and Independents/other party groupings.

This volatility among the undecided or "partially decided" voters gives us pollsters a major headache! Despite only small shifts in core vote share for parties, shifting undecided voters can have a far greater impact on the overall final vote share of those expressing a preference.

Having told us who they were going to vote for, in today's poll we asked voters how sure they were about this choice. Only just over half (56%) of those certain to go and vote were completely decided in their choice, with a further 27% pretty sure they wouldn't change their mind. This however means that almost 2 voters in 10 (17%) who were telling us they would vote for one party or another are suggesting they may well change their mind. In fact 12% claimed that they thought they would vote for the party they told us, but hadn't really decided yet, while 5% were totally unsure of their choice and had just suggested who they might vote for.

Add those who say they are unsure of their choice to those who wouldn't even make a decision at this stage and that leaves about 1 in 4 voters who could change their mind. As you can imagine, it is a major problem predicting an election with that much possible variance going on! So what can we garner from those possible switchers current or past vote behaviour?

The most secure vote is for Sinn Fein who have very few voters (10%) who suggest they will change their mind. On the other hand it is clear that those who currently say they will vote for Independent Candidates and smaller parties are much more likely to say they may change their mind, with over 20% of these voters suggesting they were unsure of their choice. This further backs up the volatility of this broad grouping that we have witnessed during the campaign polls, switching between this grouping and being undecided.

Current Fine Gael voters are also more unsure, which makes sense given we have seen their vote also fluctuate more than others. Finally those who voted for Labour in the 2011 General Election also very likely to be unsure of their current choice, with 1 in 4 (24%) suggesting they may change their mind, and these voters are currently most likely to have moved to Independents/Others.

This suggests there is still plenty of potential for fluctuation in vote share between now and the election, with the most likely movement in either direction between Labour/Fine Gael and Independent candidate/other parties.

# First Preference Vote Intention – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2016

If the general election was tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote to? (Past vote weighted)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



Fine Gael  
**30%** +4

Labour  
**8%** -1

Fianna Fail  
**18%** -1

Sinn Fein  
**16%** -1

Independent/  
Other Party  
**28%** -1

Undecided Voters  
**11%** +2

**REDC**

# First Preference Vote Intention – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2016

If the general election was tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote to? (showing impact of past vote weighting, and likely voter filters)

(Base: All adults 18+)

CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT						
	Core figures	Impact of Past vote Weighting	Likely Voters (8-10)	Excluding Undecided	Prompting on Other Parties	2011 Election Results
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fine Gael	25	24	26	30	30	36
Labour	5	6	7	8	8	19
Fianna Fáil	15	15	16	18	18	17
Sinn Féin	17	17	15	16	16	10
Independent candidates	15	15	16	18	14	13
Green Party	4	3	4	4	4	2
Renua	1	1	1	1	2	-
AAA-PBP	2	2	2	2	3	1 (socialist party)
Social Democrats	1	1	2	2	4	-
Workers Party	-	-	-	-	-	*
Other	*	*	*	1	1	1
Undecided	16	16	11	n/a	n/a	n/a

\*Less than 1%



REDC

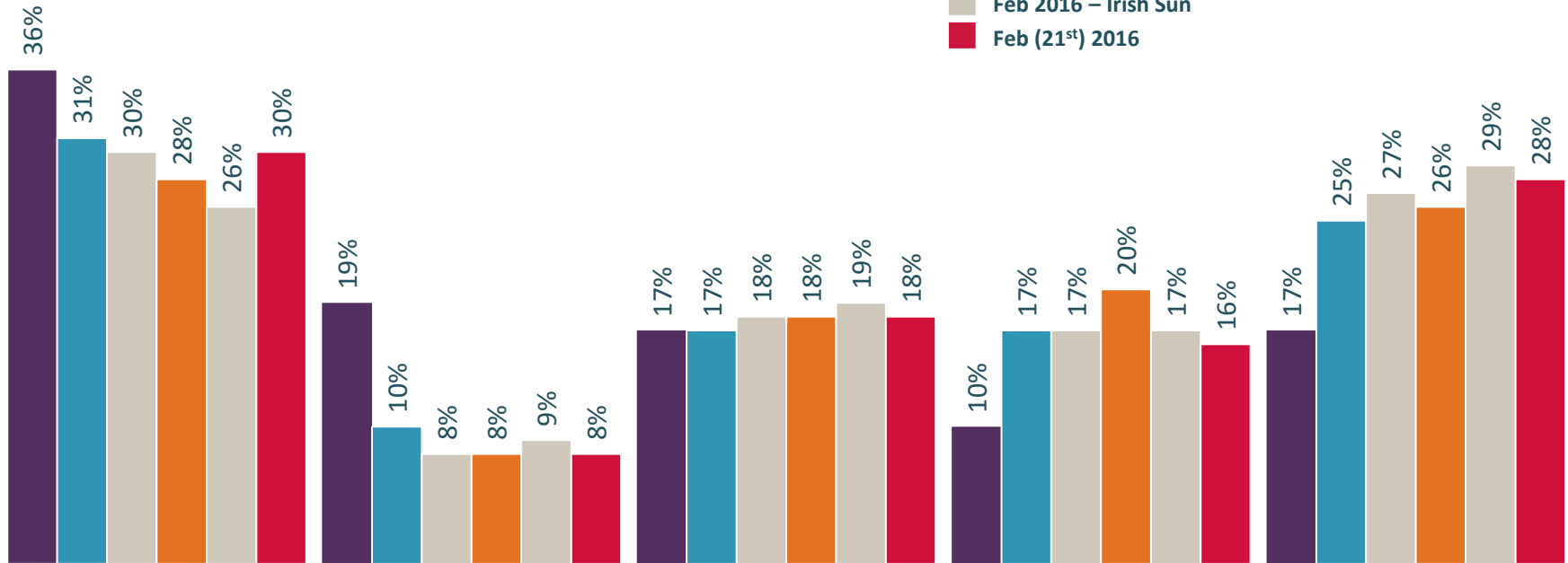
# First Preference Vote Intention – Feb '16

If the general election was tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote to? (Past vote weighted)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



- General election 2011
- Feb (7<sup>th</sup>) 2016
- Feb 2016 – Paddy Power
- Feb (14<sup>th</sup>) 2016
- Feb 2016 – Irish Sun
- Feb (21<sup>st</sup>) 2016



Fine Gael  
**30%**

Labour  
**8%**

Fianna Fail  
**18%**

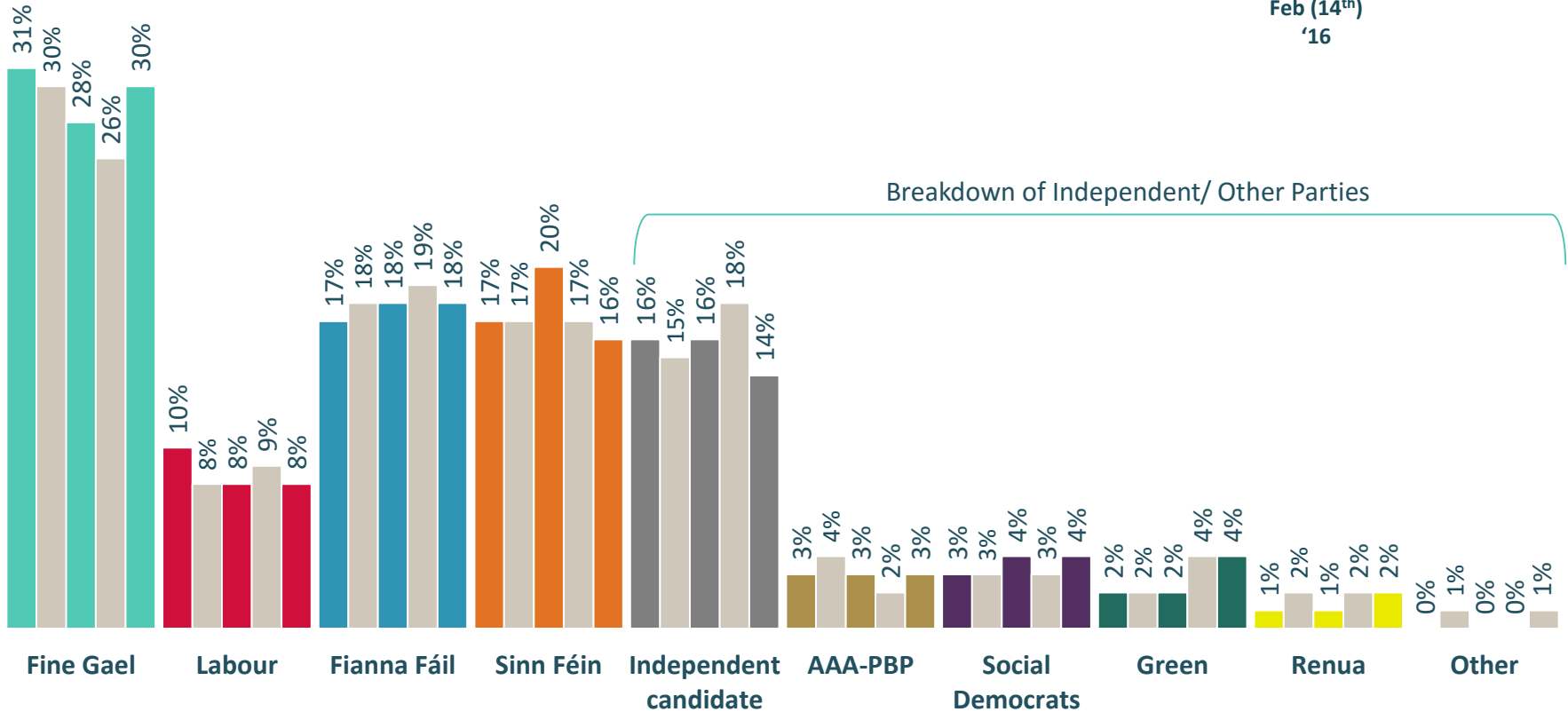
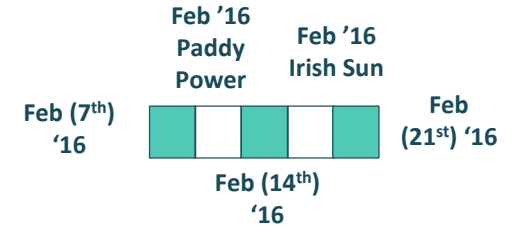
Sinn Fein  
**16%**

Independent/  
Other Party  
**28%**

# First Preference Vote Intention – Feb '16

If the general election was tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote to? (Past vote weighted) + PROMPT If Independent Candidate for party.

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



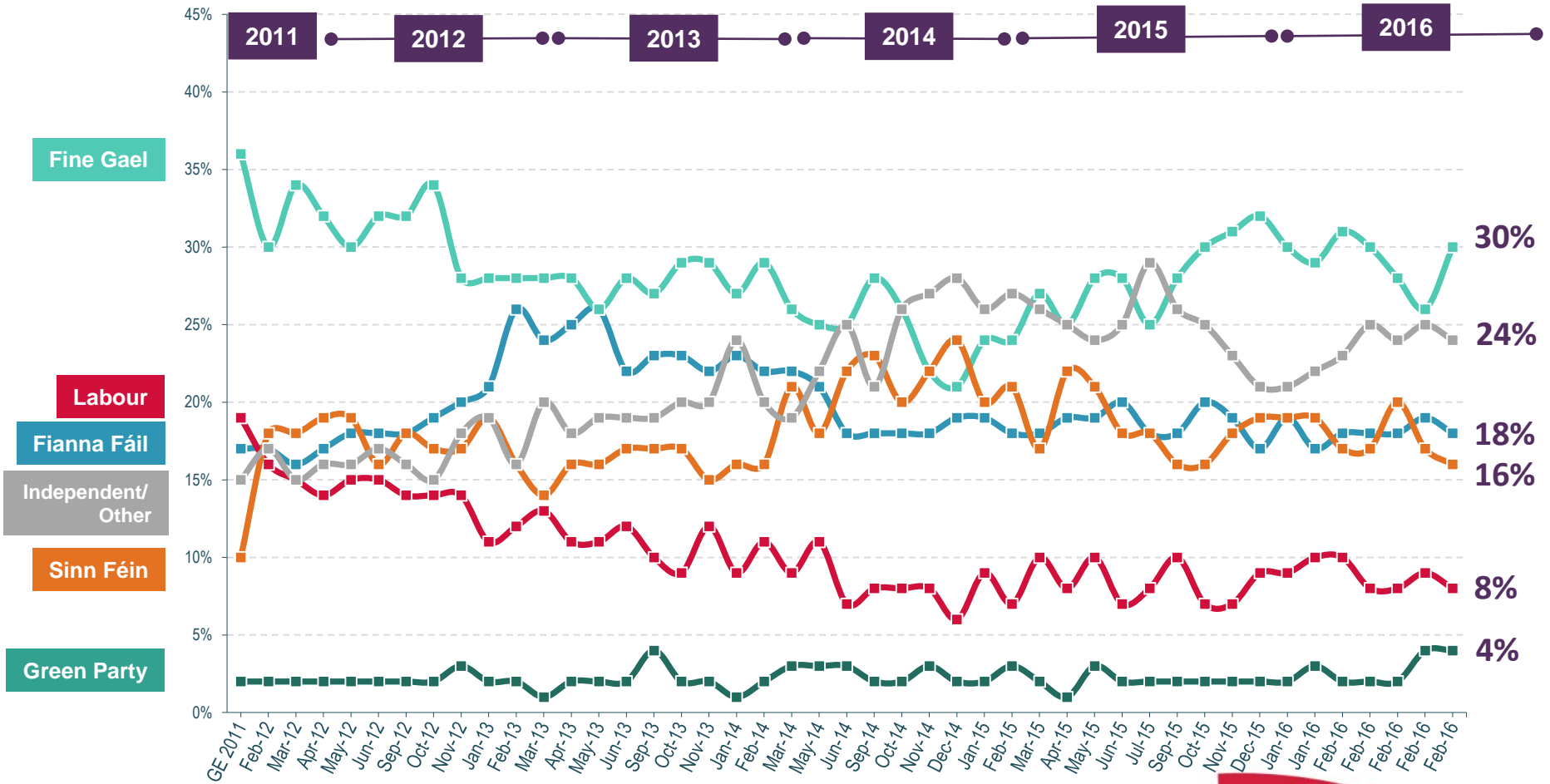
(Independent Alliance 3%)



# First Preference Vote Intention – 2011-2016

If the general election was tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote to? (Past vote weighted)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote )

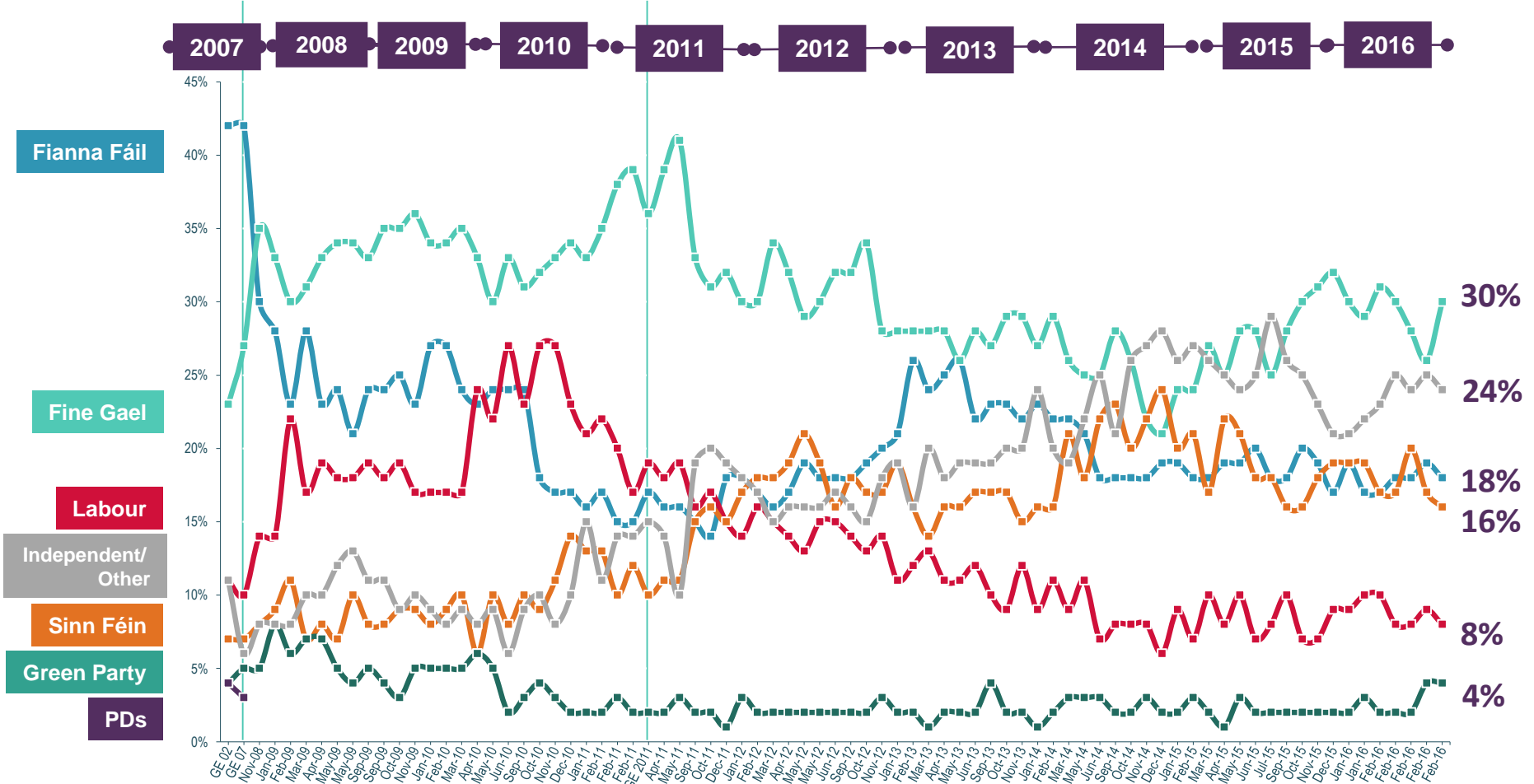




# First Preference Vote Intention – 2007 to 2016

If the general election was tomorrow which party or independent candidate do you think you would give your first preference vote to? (Past vote weighted)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote )

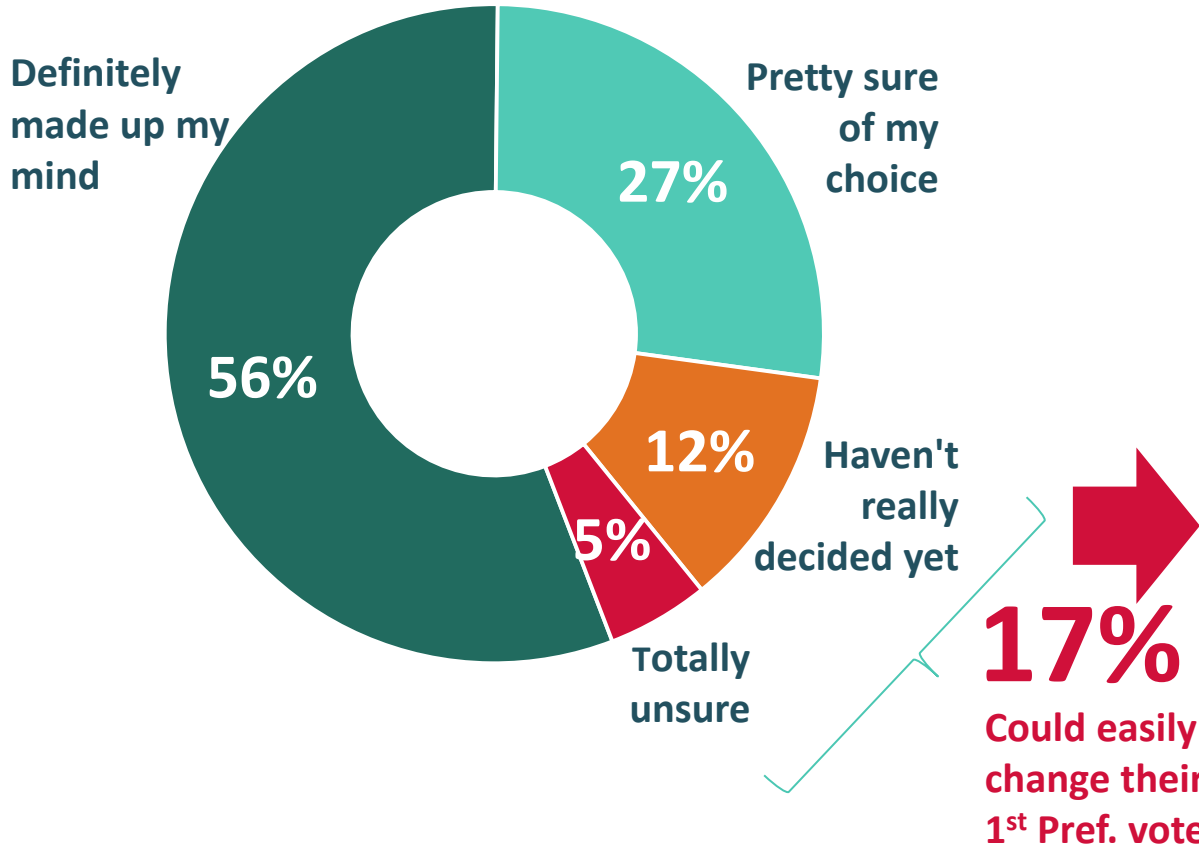


# The “Unsure” Voters of 2016

You told us earlier that you plan to give your first preference vote to XXXX. Which of the following best describes how certain you are to vote this way? (Past vote weighted)

(Base: All Likely Voters, 8-10, aged 18+ expressing a preference)

## How sure on 1<sup>st</sup> preference?



## Unsure Voters x Current and Past Preference

	Current 1 <sup>st</sup> Pref.	2011 1 <sup>st</sup> Pref.
Fine Gael	18%	18%
Labour	16%	24%
Fianna Fail	14%	12%
Sinn Fein	10%	3%
Independent	21%	20%
Other party	22%	24%

# Wisdom of Crowds – Are there “Shy voters” in GE16?

Much has been made of the possibility in the UK of shy Conservative voters in the recent UK Election, who didn't tell the pollsters they were going to vote Tory. This phenomenon was also identified as being at play most recently in Ireland during the Same Sex marriage Referendum, where it was clear that people who ended up voting No felt under pressure not to admit this to pollsters in the run up to the campaign.

In that referendum RED C used a process called the Wisdom of Crowds in order to try to get behind the shy voter issue. The process involved asking people, who by then had spent time with family and friends discussing how they would vote, what they thought the outcome would be, rather than how they would vote. This allowed us to identify the fact that people felt the No vote would be higher than voters were telling us in the standard polls. In the end the process was incredibly accurate, and predicted the outcome of the referendum with 100% accuracy, while the standard polls, while predicting a clear Yes vote, were actually on average 7% wrong.

There isn't any particular evidence in this General Election that any Shy voters exist, but they certainly have done so in the past, when voters at the last election clearly didn't tell us they would vote for Fianna Fail in quite the numbers they did. It is quite conceivable that there may be some “shy” Fianna Fail voters still out there, or even some shy Labour or Fine Gael voters, as both parties have had the brunt of media negativity having been in government for the past five years.

In order to try and see if this might exist, as well as asking how they would vote, over last weekend we asked voters to predict the outcome of the election. Firstly we reminded them what the vote share was in 2011, and then we asked them what they thought each party would achieve in terms of first preference vote in this election, based on the conversation they had been having with friends and family.

The results are very interesting in analyzing the difference between projected and claimed vote share. They firstly suggest that people expect Fine Gael and Sinn Fein to achieve pretty much the same vote share it obtained in this poll at 30% and 16% respectively. The big differences appear to be for Labour and Fianna Fail. The crowd predicts that Labour will secure 13% of the first preference vote, significantly above where they currently stand in the polls at 8%. At the same time the Crowd predicts that Fianna Fail will secure 21% of the first preference vote, again significantly above their current standing of 18%.

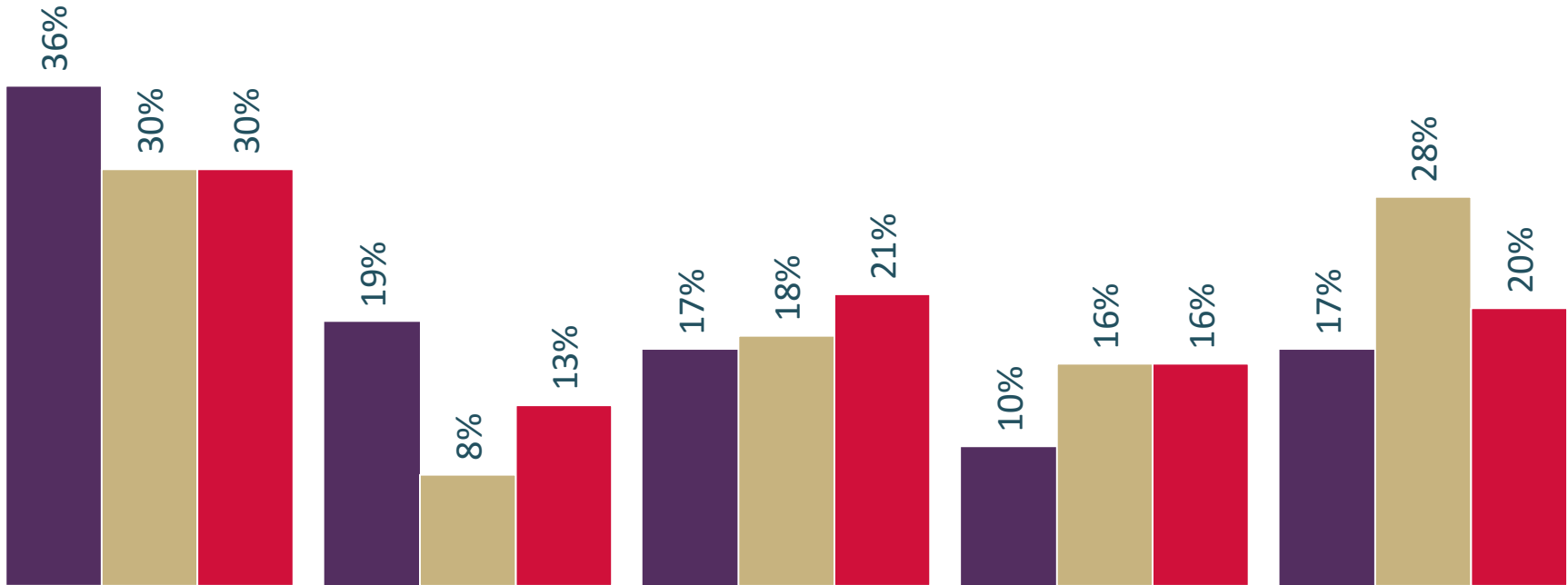
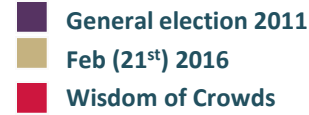
This would suggest that if anything, there may well be shy Fianna Fail and Labour voters, with Independents/other parties losing out. More importantly this potential for gains among those parties is underlined by the fact that undecided voters are even more likely to believe there will be higher Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and Labour share of the vote come Election Day.

Time will tell if the Crowd are wise enough at this stage of the campaign to predict the election better than the collation of the preference of voters themselves, or if this is the same as predicting the outcome of a referendum, but the findings do at the very least suggest that there might be a shy voter effect at play.

# First Preference – Wisdom of Crowds Analysis – Feb ‘16

At the last General Election in February 2011, Fine Gael won 36% share of the vote, Labour won 19% share, Fianna Fail won 17% share, Sinn Fein won 10% share and Independent candidates/smaller parties won 17% share of the vote. Knowing this, please tell me what percentage share of the vote you think the following would win if there were a General Election tomorrow?

(Base: All adults 18+)



Fine Gael  
**30%**

Labour  
**13%**

Fianna Fail  
**21%**

Sinn Fein  
**16%**

Independent/  
Other Party  
**20%**

