



General Election Opinion Poll

29th Jan 2012

Prepared for:

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

Job No: 48911

Methodology and Weighting



- RED C interviewed a random sample of 1008 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 23rd to 25th January 2012.
- 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, using a 10 point scale, where 1 is not at all likely and 10 is very likely, those rating 4 to 10 are included as being those who will actually go and vote.
- Finally, some people tell RED C that they intend to vote, and have a good past voting record, but say they don't know who they would vote for or refuse to answer the question. Whenever such people say which party they voted for in the last election, RED C ascribe 50% to the party they voted for previously. We have seen from analysis of past elections that this is the most likely outcome and this reallocation tries to overcome the effect of the “spiral of silence” where voters are do not want to admit who they will vote for.
- In all respects the poll was completed to the opinion polling guidelines set out by both ESOMAR and AIMRO.

Possible European Treaty Referendum puts further pressure on government parties



- Government parties will need to think very carefully how they manage the introduction of a new European Treaty to Ireland, based on the results of today's Sunday Business Post/ RED C poll; which suggests it could be difficult to win, among an electorate already slightly disenfranchised from the government parties
- Despite what appeared to be some small respite to their gradual declines in support post Christmas, both government parties see further small declines in this poll, perhaps because the impact of decisions taken in the Budget are only really being felt in peoples pay packets now.
- For Labour the downward trend has been a long one. Although there have been some small upward shifts from one poll to another, the overall trend has been downward since the highs the party achieved in October 2010 a while before the last election. In today's poll they only fall by 1%, which on the face of it is not significant. However, this now represents a fall of 5% since the last election, less than a year ago, and 11% since October 2010. It also means that first preference support for the party has now fallen to just 14%.
- Fine Gael is not much better off, apart from the fact that they started with a higher share of the vote in the first place. They also remain the largest party by some distance and this makes the losses perhaps a little easier to bear. Support for the party drops by 2% in this poll, again not significant in itself, but this does also leave them 5% behind the share achieved at the last election, and 10% behind the highs they saw in the run up to that election.
- With their support under pressure, the last thing the Government needs is a European Referendum to push through. Particularly when voter attitudes towards that referendum in today's poll are taken into account, as they suggest it may be quite hard to get it passed. Firstly, the great majority of voters (72%) believe that the government should hold a referendum on the new Treaty. This makes it far more difficult for the government to push through without one.

Possible European Treaty Referendum puts further pressure on government parties



- At the same time, current vote intentions on a possible European Treaty referendum, albeit before arguments have been made, suggest winning the referendum could be a struggle. Only just over half of all those who expressed a preference (52.6%) say they would support the referendum. Historically this is a very low start point to push any referendum through, as it is far easier to fight on the reason not to do something and keep the status quo, than fight for change.
- This is further emphasised when we look at likely voting patterns by age, and see that in fact among those most likely to vote in the 35+ age groups, currently 52% of this groups suggest they would vote No. In fact, it is only those who are far less likely to vote (the 18-35 year old age groups) that suggest they would support the referendum. It is of course early days and there are still a quarter (24%) who are undecided, but it still seems that the vote would be very tight, and defeat would cause the government a whole host of problems.
- So who has already gained and could take further advantage if the government were to lose a high profile Referendum campaign?
- Sinn Fein has probably taken the most advantage from the government losses to date. In today's poll they secure 17% of the first preference vote, some 7% ahead of what they achieved at the last election, and 2% higher than the last Sunday Business Post/ RED C poll before the Budget. This is the highest level of support that the party has ever achieved in polls conducted by RED C.
- These gains are certainly helped by some switching from supporters of all the other parties, but in particular Labour. In fact, 12% of those that voted Labour at the last election now appear to have switched to supporting Sinn Fein. Labour also loses support to Independent candidates and those who now claim to be undecided in how they will vote, while making small gains elsewhere.

Possible European Treaty Referendum puts further pressure on government parties



- Fianna Fail are also now consistently polling slightly ahead of that support they achieved at the last election. In this poll they have retained 18% of the first preference vote. There also appears to be quite a high proportion of voters (17%) that supported Fianna Fail in 2007, who now claim to be undecided. Suggesting that the party could potentially persuade some of these to return to the fold, and increase their share further.
- In fact loyalty to the parties is relatively poor across the board, apart from Sinn Fein. Fianna Fail manage to retain 64% support among those who voted for them in 2011, likewise Fine Gael retain 61%, and Labour just 48%. At the same time Sinn Fein retain 86% of their support. This suggests that the political upheaval of the last few years has left many voters without the strong ties they perhaps once had to a party that had been in the family for years, and as a result there appears to be plenty of opportunity for change in the future.
- Finally, Independent candidates are also making the most of this flux in support, as many, unsure of which party to support, suggest instead that they will back an independent candidate. Support for Independent candidates and others parties now stands at 21%, split with Independent candidates taking 17%, 3% for the Green party, and 1% for the Socialist Party.

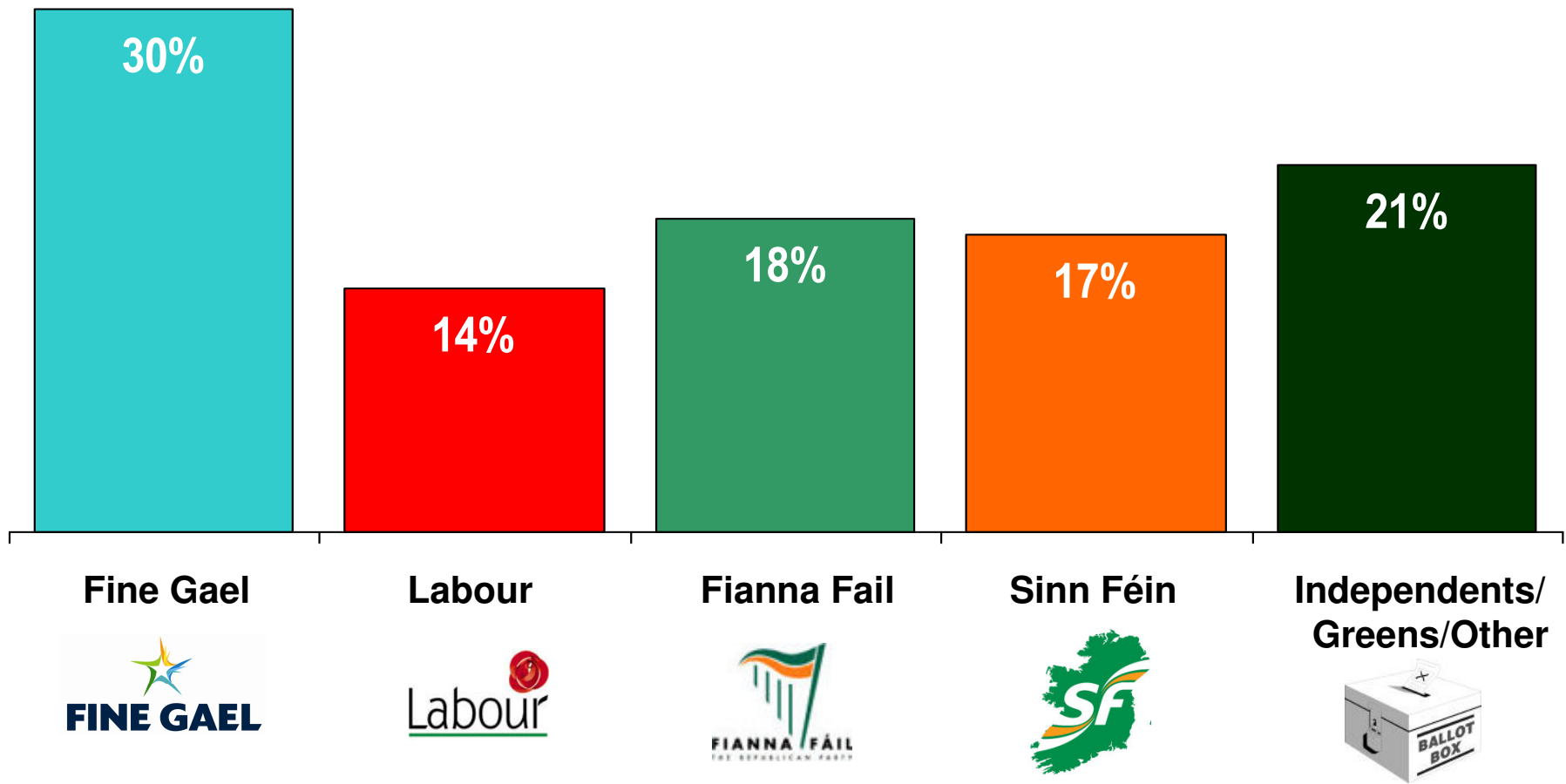
General Election

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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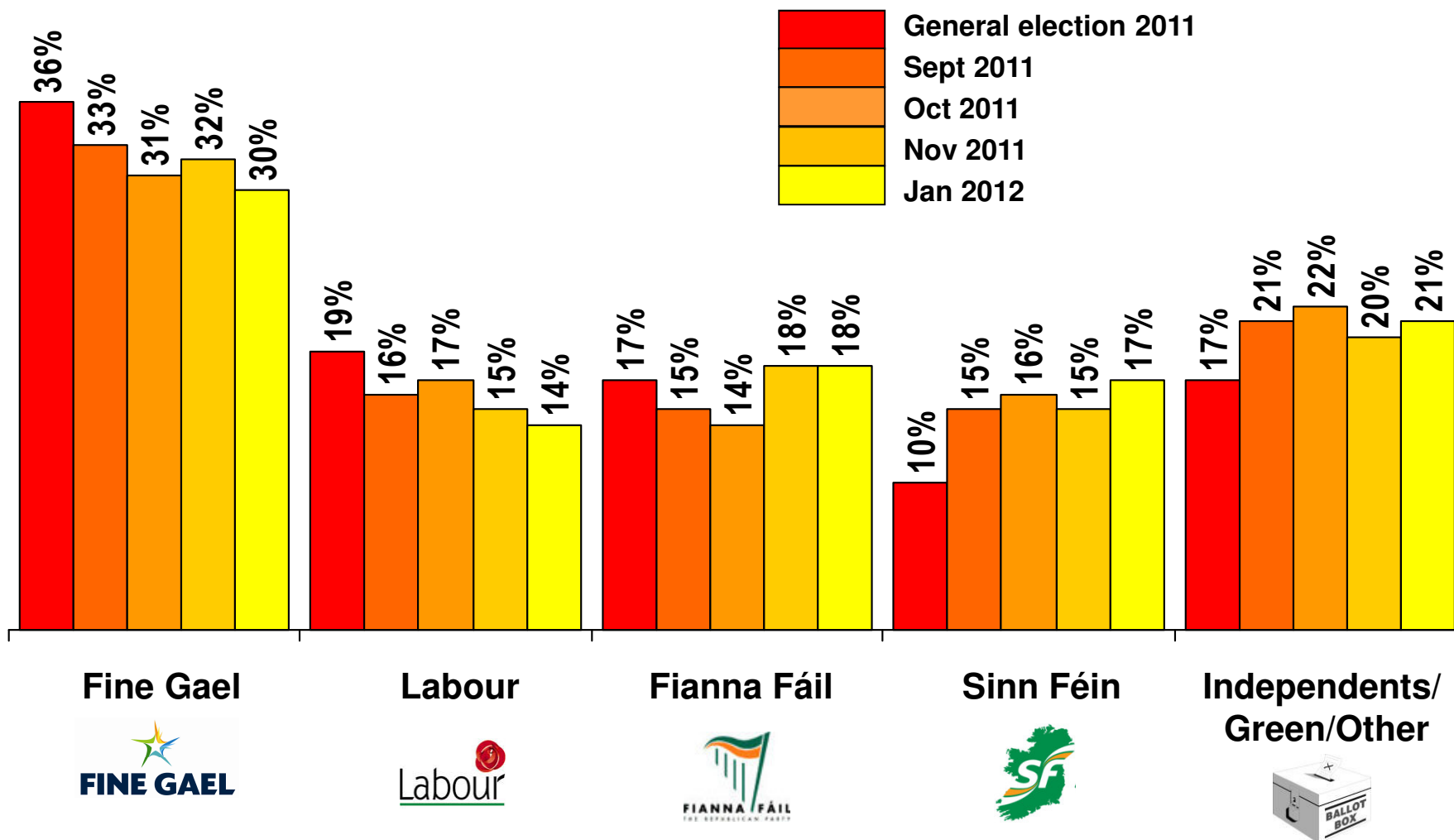


RESEARCH EVALUATION DIRECTION CLARITY

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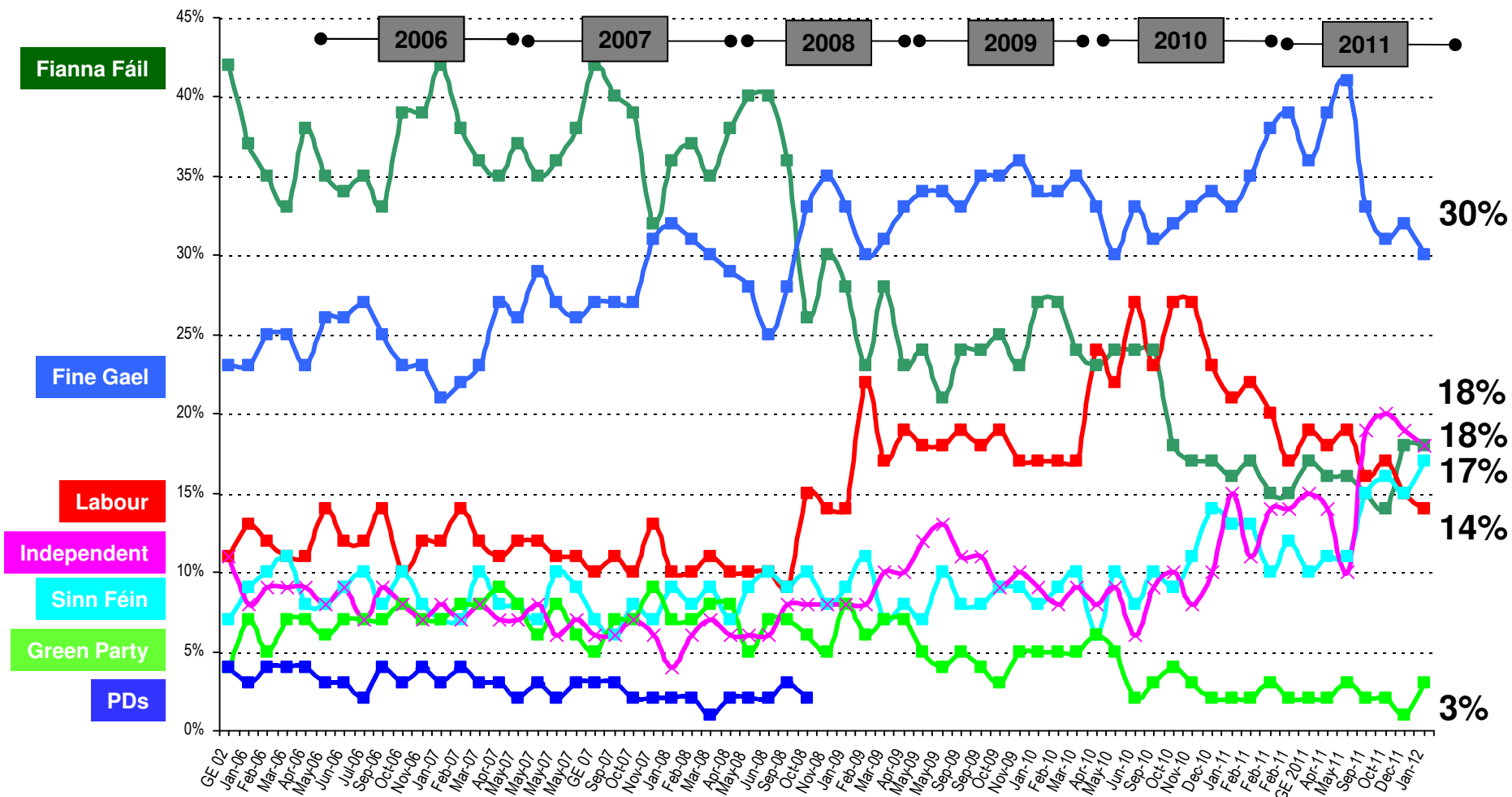


CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT			
	Core figures 29th Jan 2012	Excluding undecided	2011 Election Results
	%	%	%
Fine Gael	25	30	36
Labour	11	14	19
Fianna Fáil	15	18	17
Sinn Féin	14	17	10
Independents/ Green / Others	17	21	17
Undecided	18		

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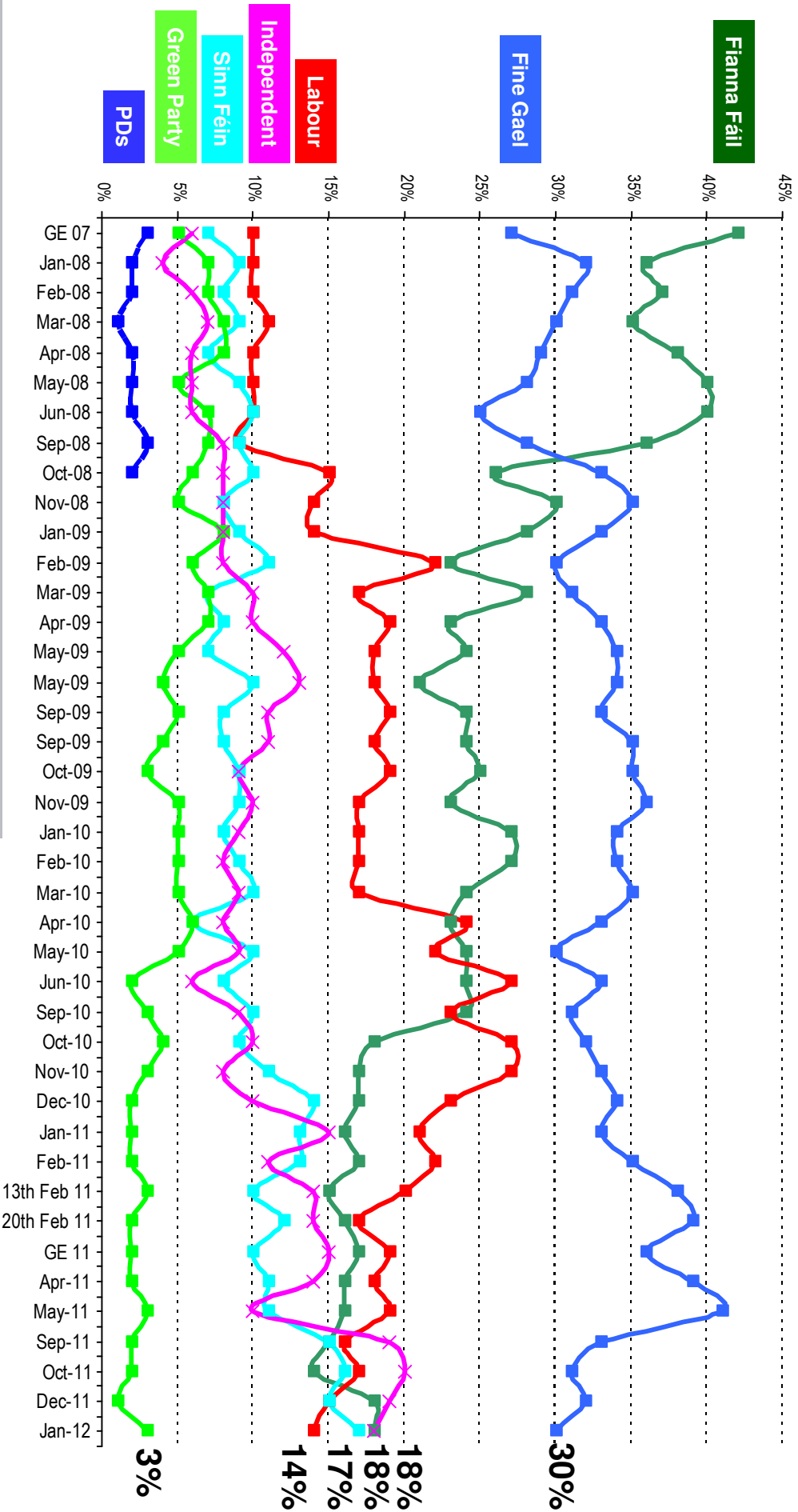
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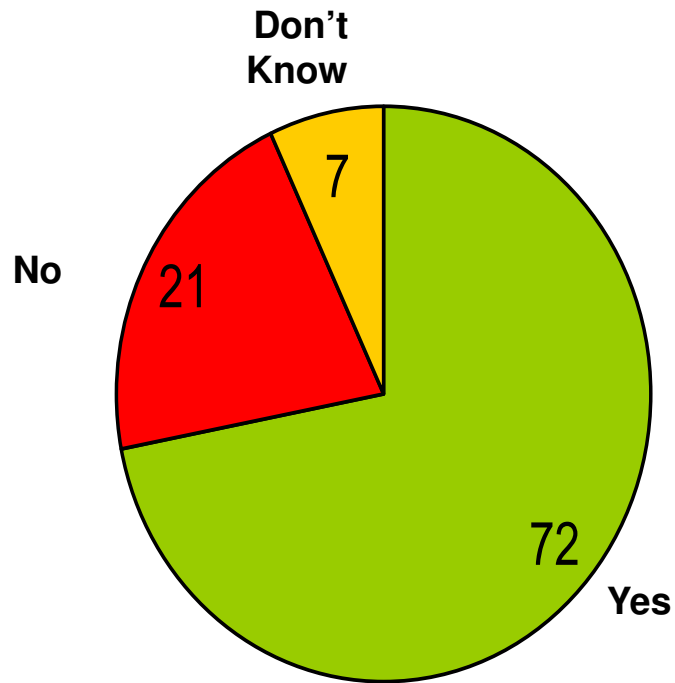
European Treaty

Attitudes towards the European Treaty

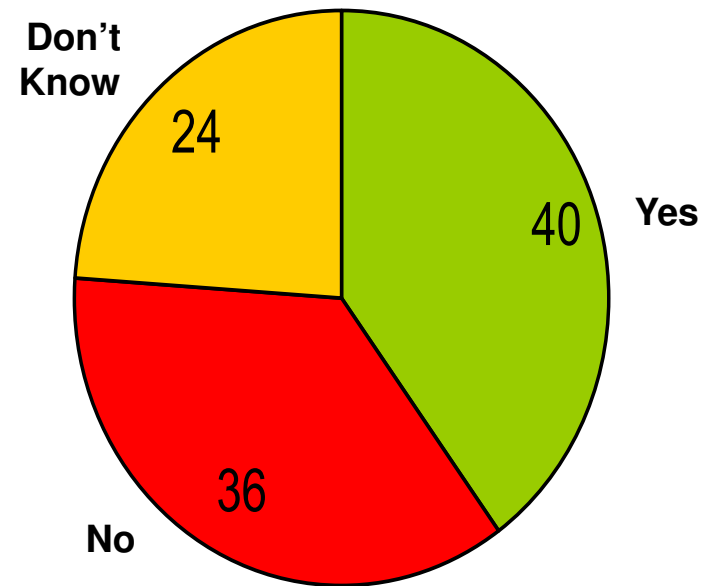
(Base: All adults 18+)



Do you think that the Irish people should be asked to ratify any proposed treaty change through a referendum?
%



How do you think you would currently vote in such a referendum?
%

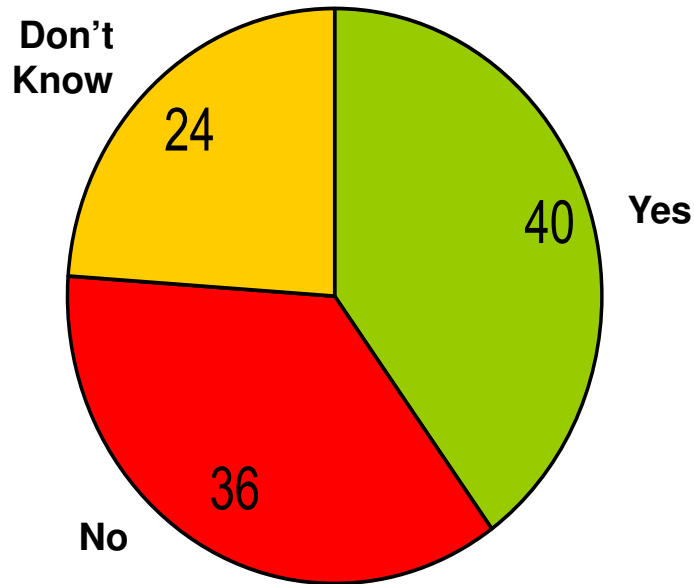


Attitudes towards the European Treaty

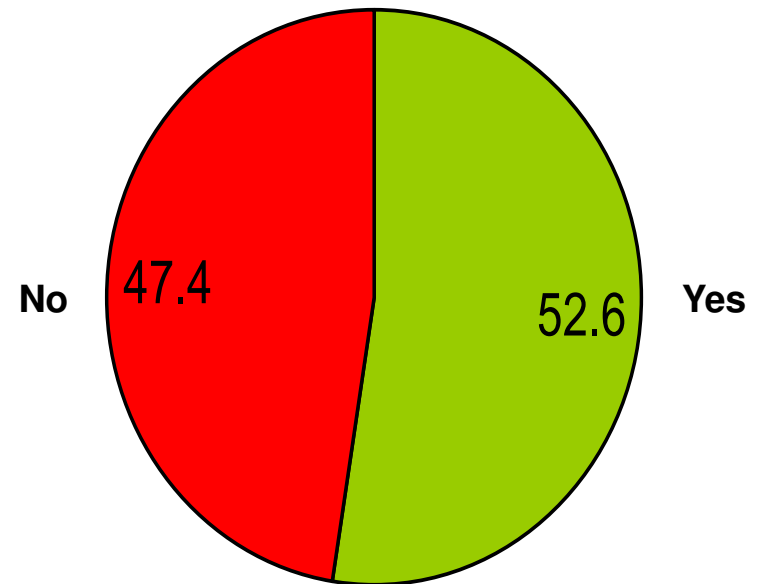
(Base: All adults 18+)



How do you think you would currently vote in such a referendum?
%



Treaty Vote Intention
(excl Don't Knows)
%



How do you think you would currently vote in such a referendum?

(Base: All adults 18+)



How do you think you would currently vote in such a referendum?	Total %	Gender		Age			Class		Region			
		Male %	Female %	18-34 %	35-54 %	55+ %	ABC1 %	C2DE %	Dublin %	ROL %	Munster %	Conn/ Ulster %
Yes	40	45	34	43	37	38	44	36	36	39	46	37
No	36	38	35	29	40	39	44	36	38	35	32	43
Don't Know	24	17	31	27	23	23	24	25	26	27	22	20

How do you think you would currently vote in such a referendum?	Total %	PARTY SUPPORT					
		Fianna Fail	Fine Gael	Labour	Sinn Fein	Ind.	Undecided
BASE SIZE:		(139)	(228)	(109)	(142)	(120)	(166)
Yes	40	44	49	48	33	32	38
No	36	38	31	30	46	41	27
Don't Know	24	17	20	22	21	27	36