



General Election Opinion Poll

29th March 2015



Methodology and Weighting

- RED C interviewed a random sample of 1,003 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 23rd – 25th March 2015.
- 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.
- In all respects the poll was completed to the opinion polling guidelines set out by both ESOMAR and AIMRO.



Is a second term a possibility for the Government?

When Fine Gael and Labour took power in 2011, most commentators were talking about a likely minimum of two terms for the government, with Fianna Fail support decimated and the old order of politics out the window.

The subsequent tough economic reality of getting Ireland out of recession and free from the Troika, has meant that recent polls suggest the likelihood of that same government being re-elected just 4 years later is far lower than many had predicted at the time.

Instead there has been a shift in support away from the government parties towards both Sinn Fein and Independent candidates, with many voters citing annoyance at broken promises, and struggling to see any personal benefit of the having brought the current government into power.

While have been seeing signs of a recovery for the Irish economy for around 6-9 months, the reality is that the majority of voters have not the seen the impact of this personally. It is also clear that a delayed impact of declared positive budget announcements also annoyed many voters, while the introduction of water charges has been a final straw for many in terms of austerity.

It light of all these circumstances it is striking that we now see a renewed upward trend in support for government parties. While last December was something of a low point, there is clear evidence across the Sunday Business Post/ RED C polls that since then it is the government parties that have reaped the biggest rewards so far this year. Todays poll continues that trend, with a further gain in support for both Fine Gael and Labour, which together see an increase in support of a substantial 6% of the first preference vote.

In itself this is a newsworthy shift. But when put in context of gains for both parties in the previous two polls it is a clear indication of a longer-term trend in voters returning to the current government. Fine Gael on their own have seen an increase in their first preference vote by 6%. While Labour have also gained 4% support since December, and moved back to double digit first preference support for the first time since May 2014.

It has for some time been the considered opinion of both RED C and the Sunday Business Post commentators that this shift was possible and likely, but it appears to be happening somewhat more quickly than expected. So how far can this growth in support go and is there a possibility that the government parties could be re-elected?

Is a second term a possibility for the Government?

In this month's poll we asked some additional questions in order to better understand the stretch limits of potential support for government parties.

Firstly we returned to a measure of economic competence. In the past we have uncovered a very close correlation between the perceived economic competence of a party and how likely people are to support them. Today's poll sees 42% of voters now agreeing that they trust Fine Gael and Labour to manage the economy, up a significant 9% since just after the budget in October last year. This means there are now 3% of the electorate who trust the government parties on the economy, over and above those currently prepared to give them first preference support. In fact, almost a third of both current Fianna Fail and Independent voters now agree that they trust Fine Gael and Labour to manage the economy.

Secondly we asked people whether they were worried that a change in government might stall the economy. In order to better understand the level of possible floating voters, who currently say they might vote for other parties, but could end up switching back to the government if they became more worried about the impact of a change in government on the economy. Almost a quarter (24%) of voters, outside of those already voting for the government parties, agreed with this sentiment.

While it is unlikely that all of these will switch allegiance to government parties come Election Day, it is clear that some of them are open to being persuaded to do so. Perhaps more relevant is that a third of both Fine Gael and Labour "lapsed" voters are worried about stalling the economy with a change in government. These voters are far more likely to go back to who they voted for at the last election, if concerns over the economy drive them to do so, potentially adding up to a further 7% support to government parties current levels.

This potential extra support must however be taken in context of the reverse sentiment, where a large proportion of the electorate also believe that with a more secure future for the economy, a change in government is needed to provide more fairness in society. The two measures together clearly show the push and pull factors currently determining choices in support among voters, and the battleground for their votes over the year ahead.

In the context of this battleground, for voters this poll is very positive for the Government. It shows them further regaining lost support, but crucially also provides evidence that their own improving economic credibility combined with fear of the alternative, may yet help push more lapsed voters to return, and who knows maybe even potentially lead to them winning a second term.

First Preference Vote Intention – March 2015

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

27% +3

Labour

10% +3

Fianna Fail

18% =

Sinn Fein

17% -4

Independent/
Other

28% -2

Undecided Voters

13% =

REDC

First Preference Vote Intention – March 2015

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)

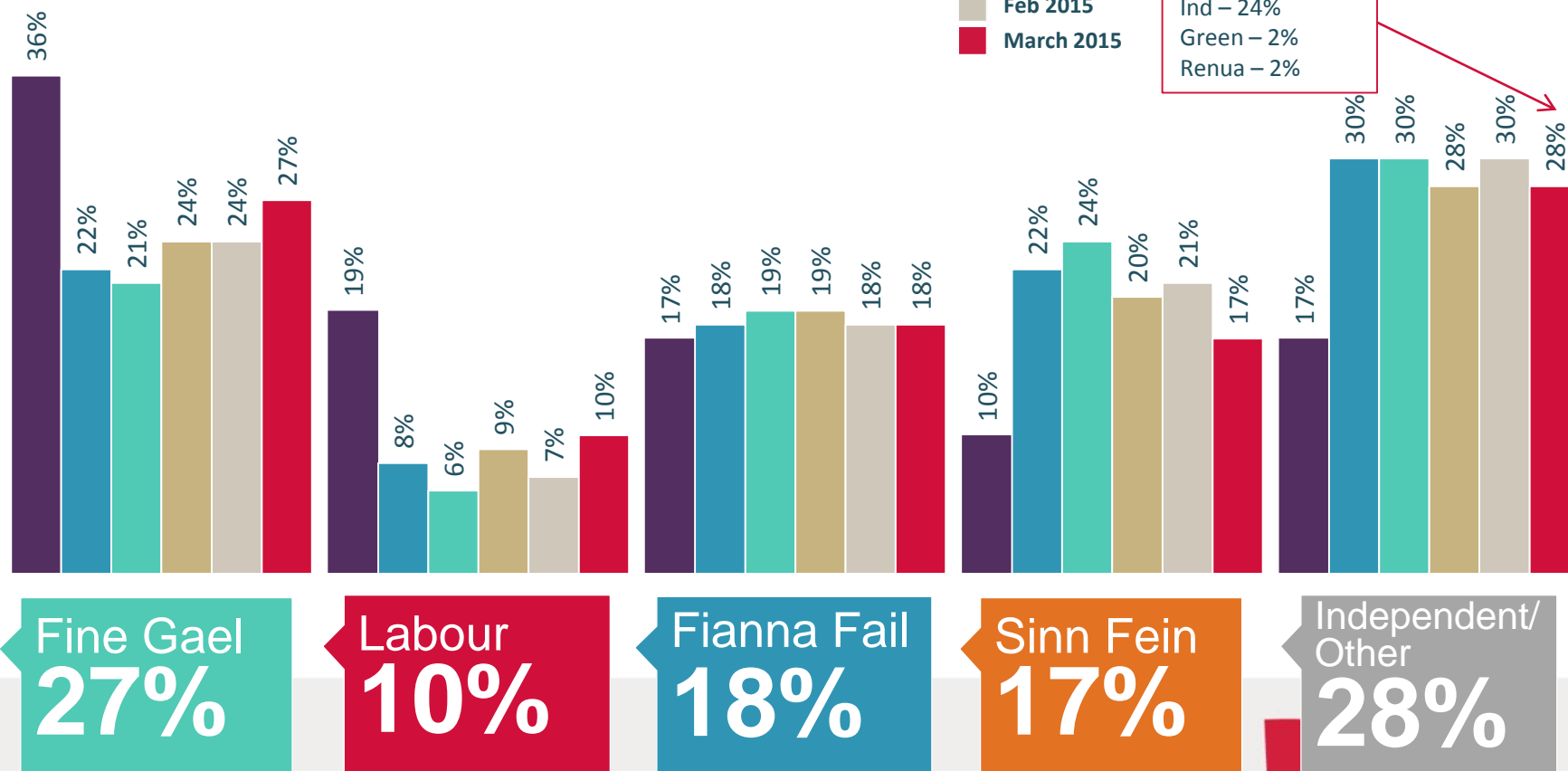
(Base: All adults 18+)

CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT					
	Core figures	Impact of Past vote weighting	Likely Voters	Excluding Undecided	2011 Election Results
	%	%	%	%	%
Fine Gael	23	22	23	27	36
Labour	8	8	9	10	19
Fianna Fáil	15	15	17	18	17
Sinn Féin	16	16	15	17	10
Independent candidates	20	20	21	24	13
Green Party	2	2	2	2	2
Renua	1	1	1	2	n/a
Socialist Party	-	-	-	-	1
Other Party	1	*	*	*	1
Undecided	14	16	13		

First Preference Vote Intention – Nov 2014 – March 2015

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)

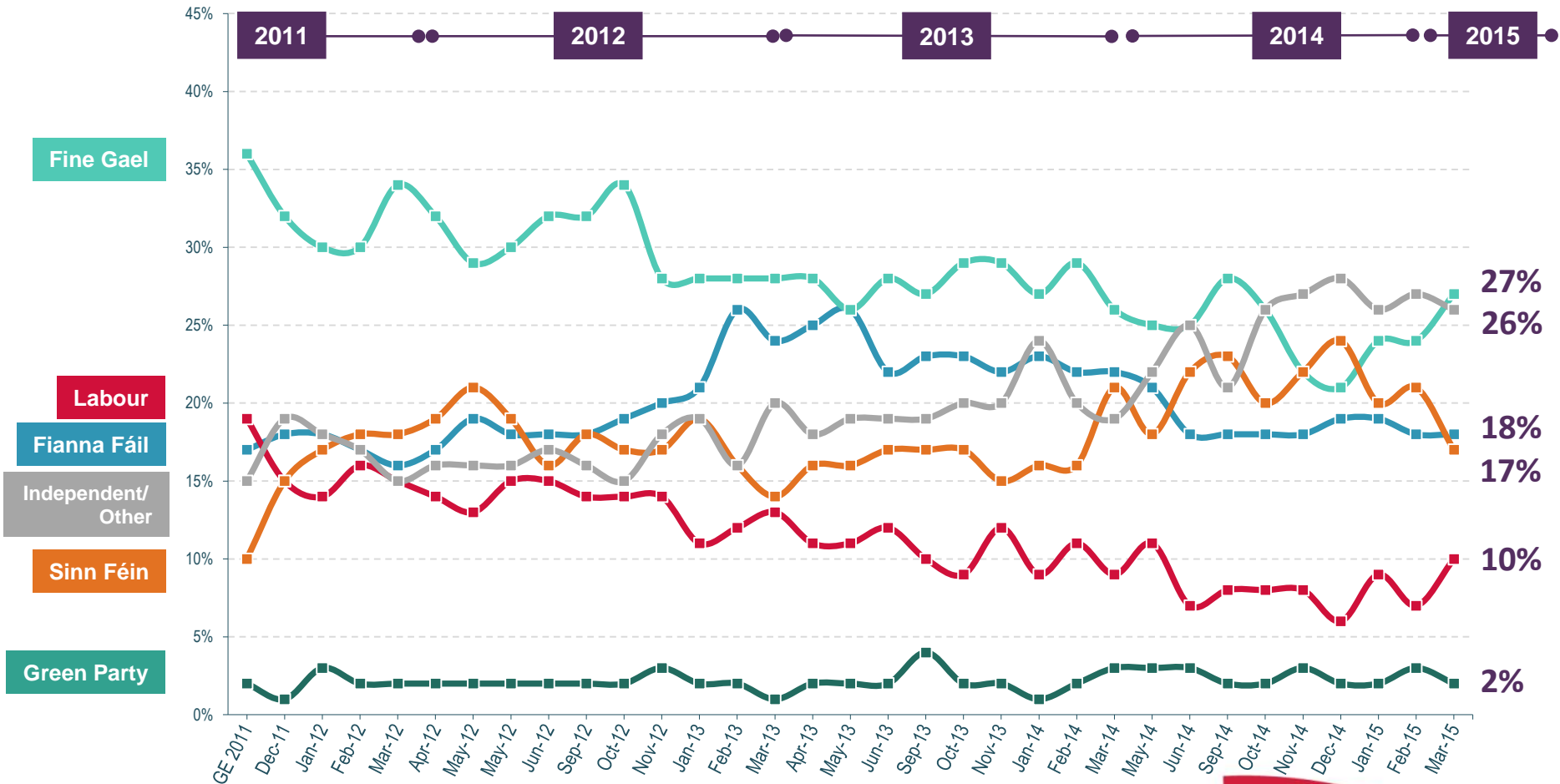


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First Preference Vote Intention – 2011-2015

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)

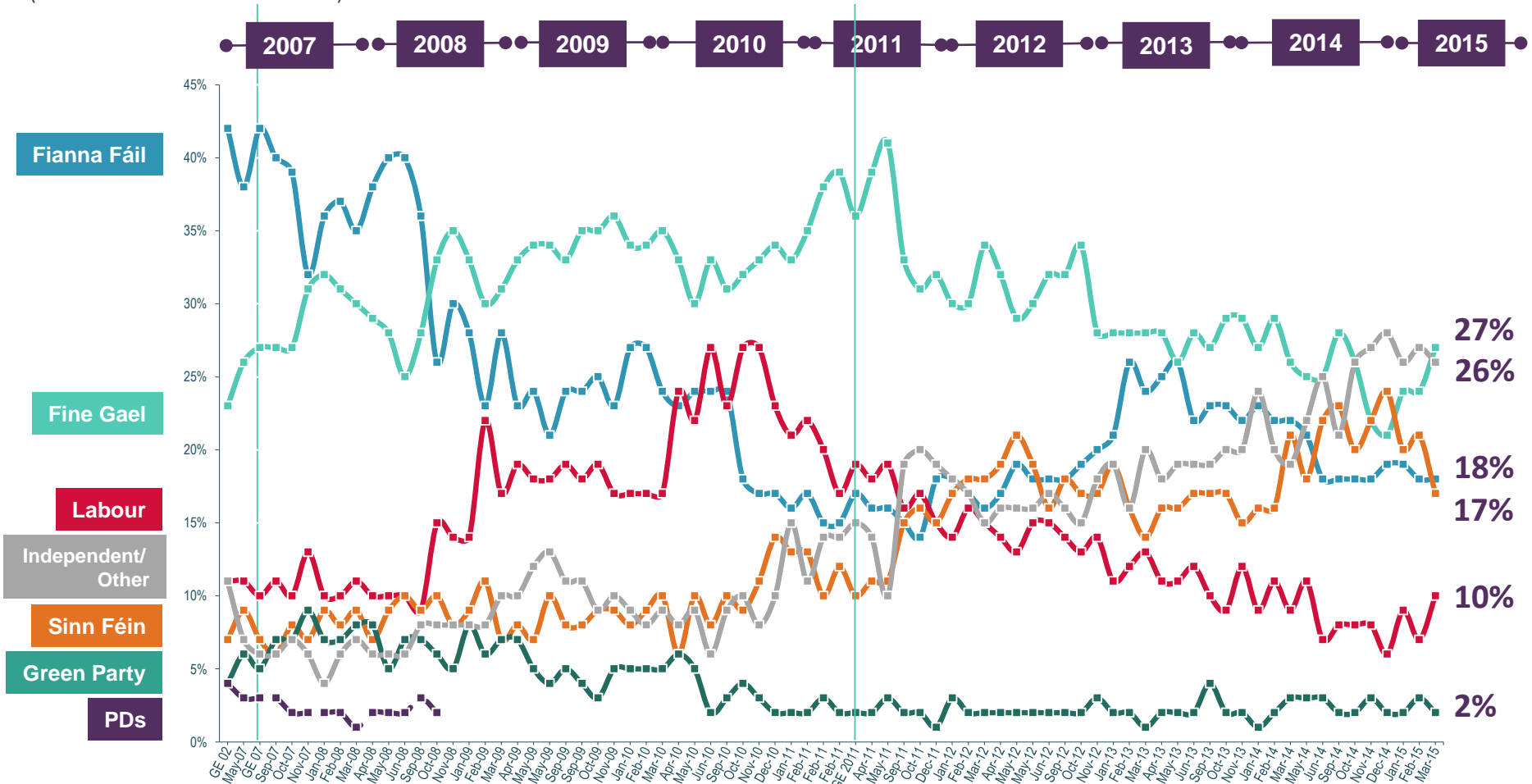
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – 2007 to 2015

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)

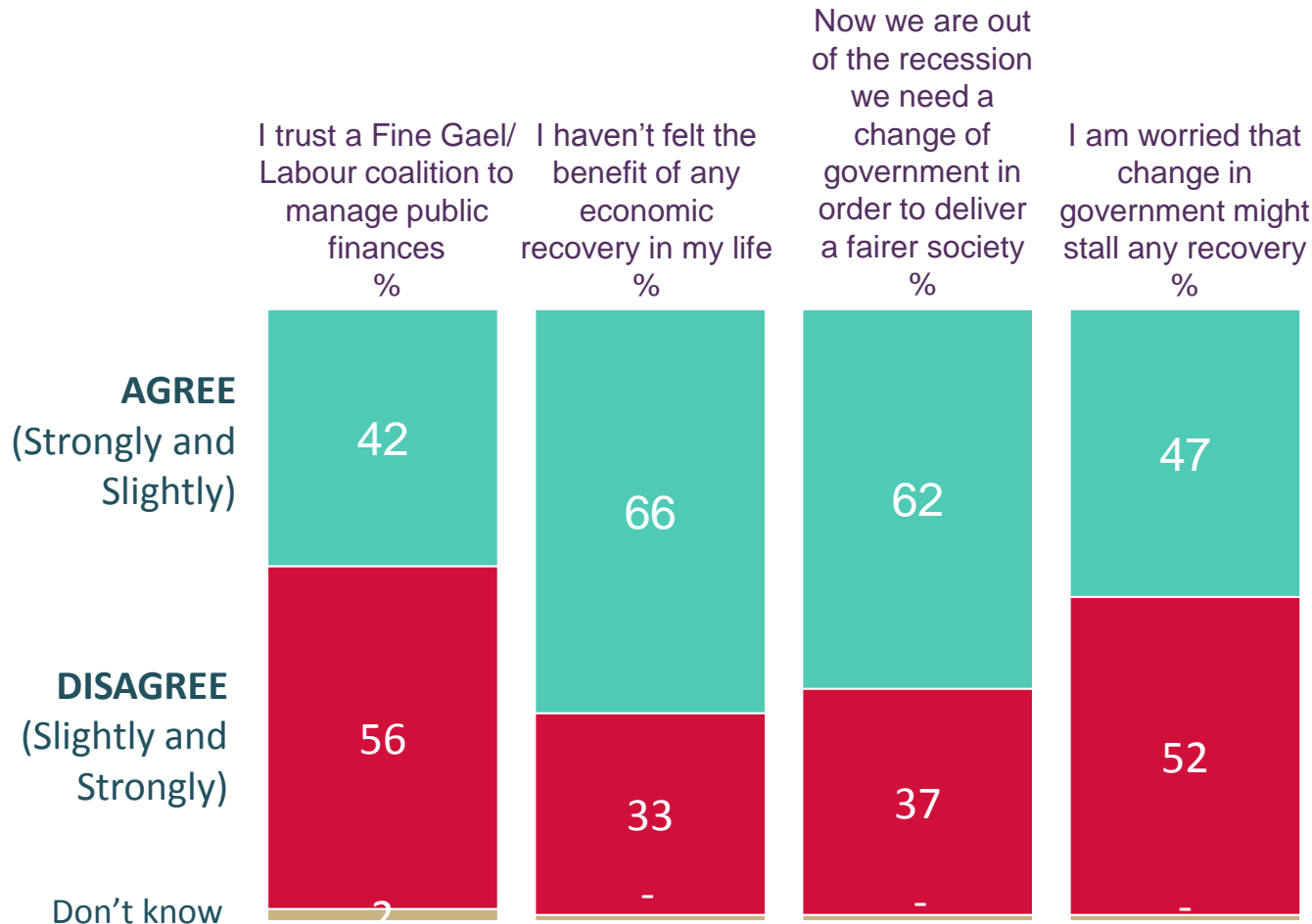
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



Attitudes towards Government and the Economy

(Base: All adults 18+)

Now I would like to ask you some questions about the economy in Ireland. On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is disagree strongly and 4 is agree strongly can you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

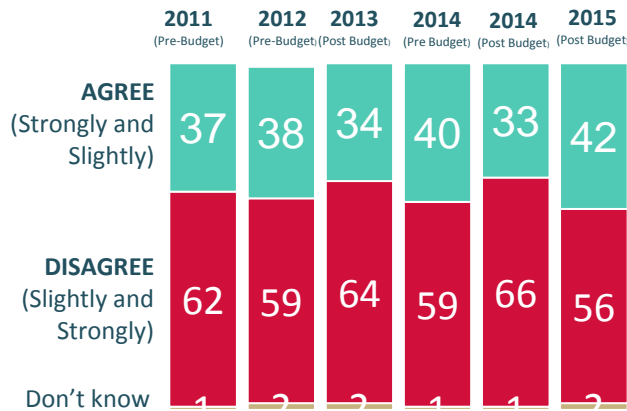


Who trusts Fine Gael/ Labour to manage public finances?

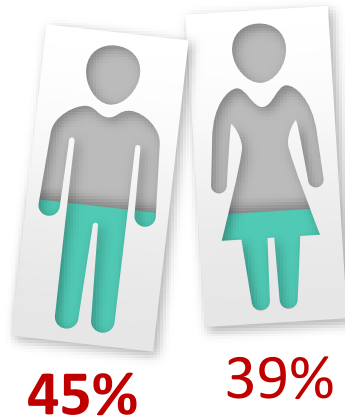
Now I am going to read out some statements that other people have made regarding the economy. On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is disagree strongly and 4 is agree strongly can you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements . READ OUT

I trust a Fine Gael/ Labour coalition to manage public finances

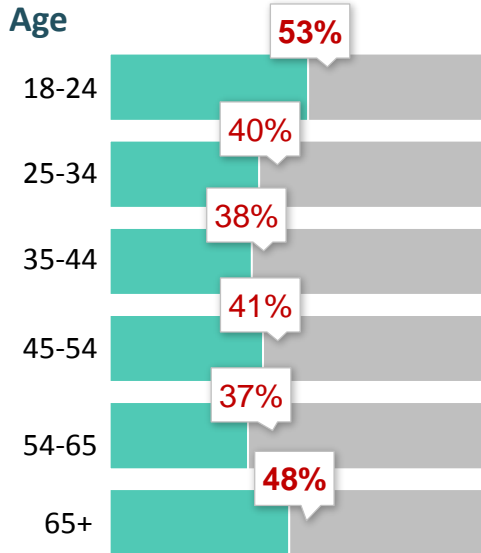
(Base: All Adults 18+)



Gender



Age



Social Class

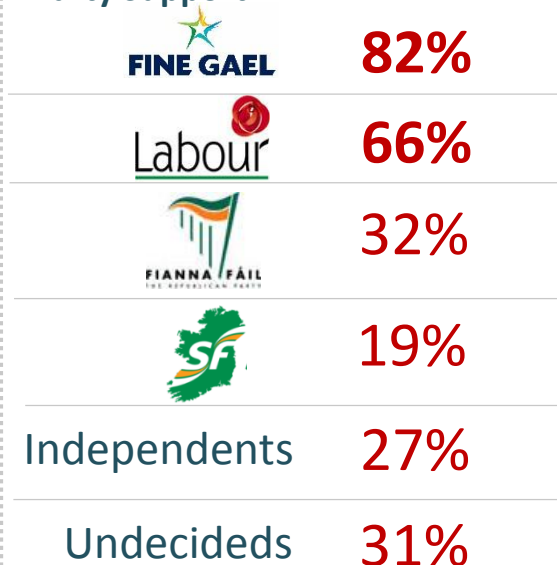
Higher Social Grades: **45%**



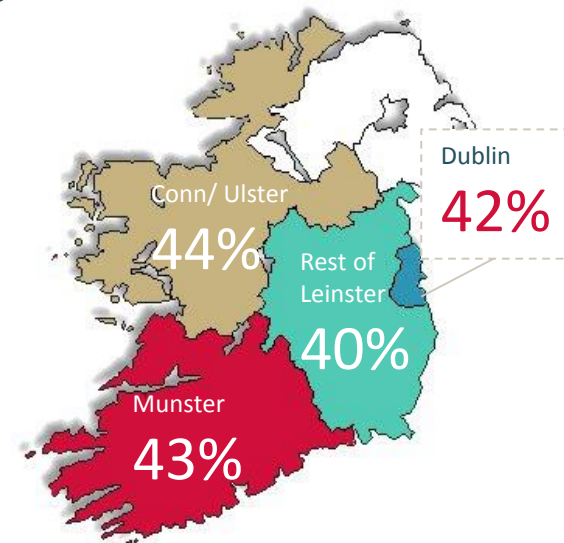
Lower Social Grades: **37%**



Party Support



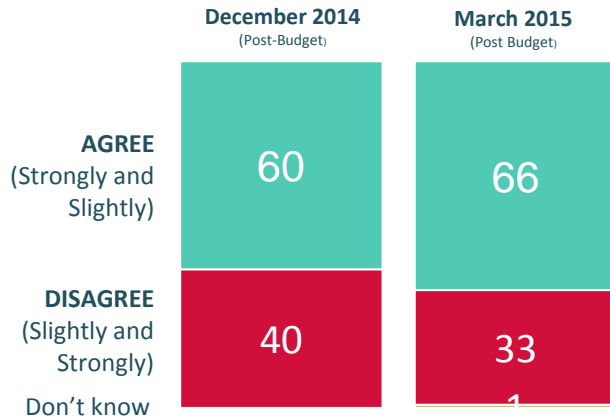
Region



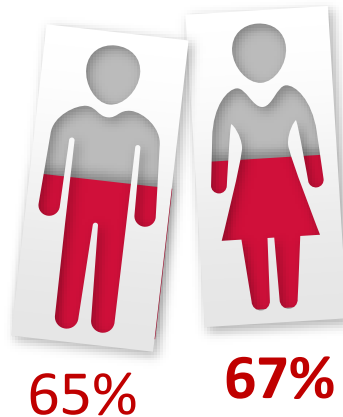
Who has **NOT** felt the benefit of any economic recovery in their life?

Now I am going to read out some statements that other people have made regarding the economy. On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is disagree strongly and 4 is agree strongly can you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements . READ OUT
I have NOT felt the benefit of any economic recovery in my life.

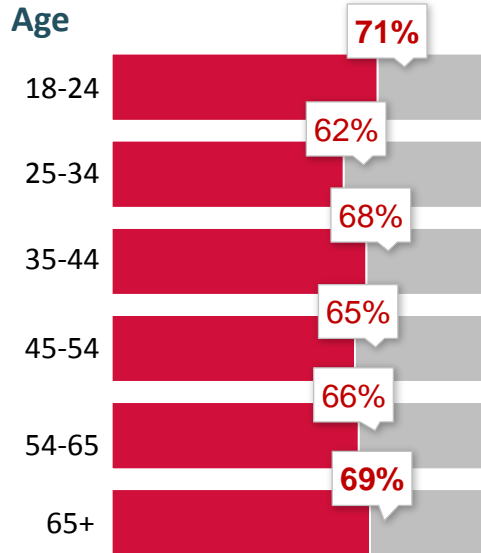
(Base: All Adults 18+)



Gender



Age



Social Class

Higher Social Grades: 65%



Lower Social Grades: 67%



Party Support

FINE GAEL 52%

Labour 66%

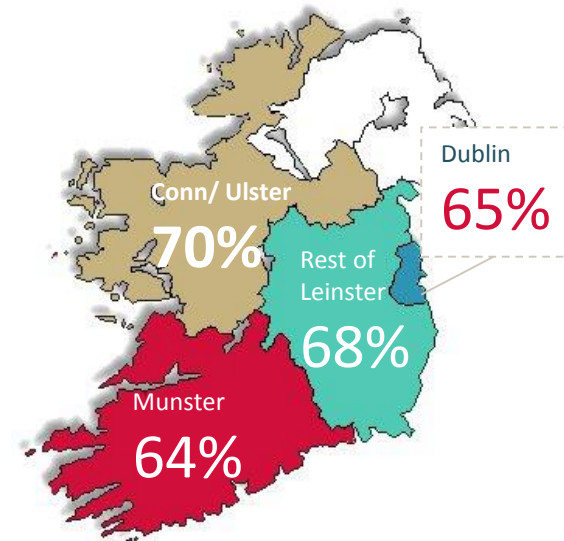
FIANNA FAÏL 66%

SF 78%

Independents 70%

Undecideds 75%

Region

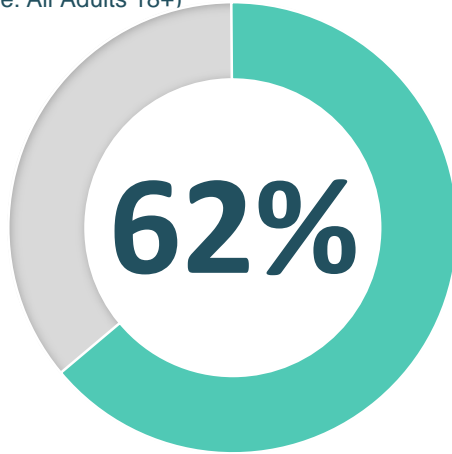


Who believes now we are out of the recession we need a change of government in order to deliver a fairer society?

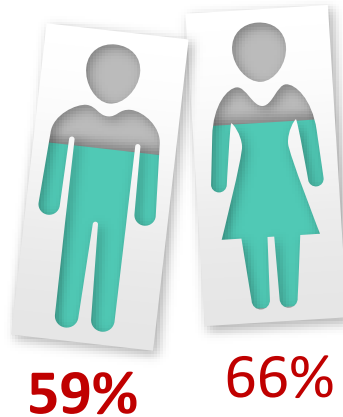
Now I am going to read out some statements that other people have made regarding the economy. On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is disagree strongly and 4 is agree strongly can you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements . READ OUT

Now we are out of the recession we need a change of government in order to deliver a fairer society

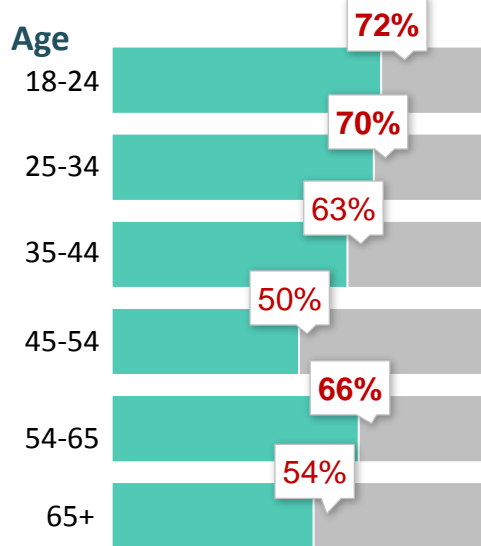
(Base: All Adults 18+)



Gender



Age



Social Class

Higher Social Grades: 60%



Lower Social Grades: 60%



Party Support

 FINE GAEL 30%

 Labour 44%

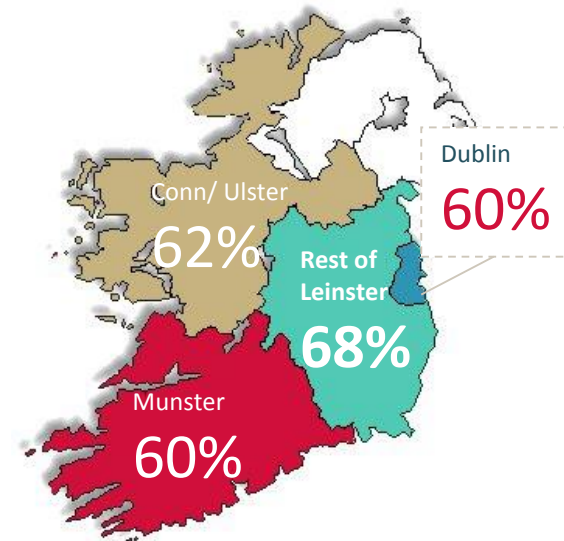
 FIANNA FÁIL 76%

 SF 83%

Independents 74%

Undecideds 69%

Region

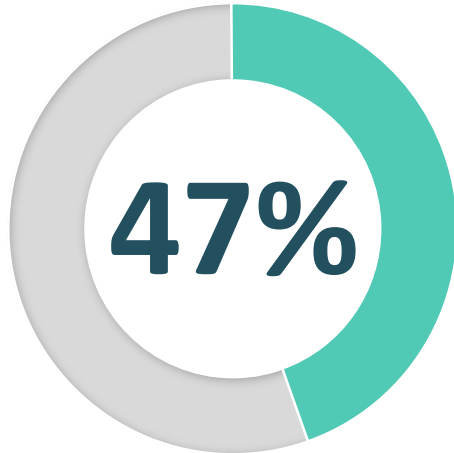


Who is worried that change in government might stall any recovery?

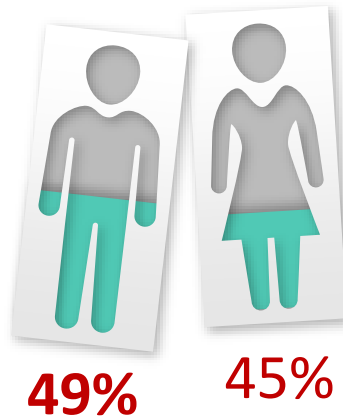
Now I am going to read out some statements that other people have made regarding the economy. On a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is disagree strongly and 4 is agree strongly can you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements . READ OUT

I am worried that change in government might stall any recovery

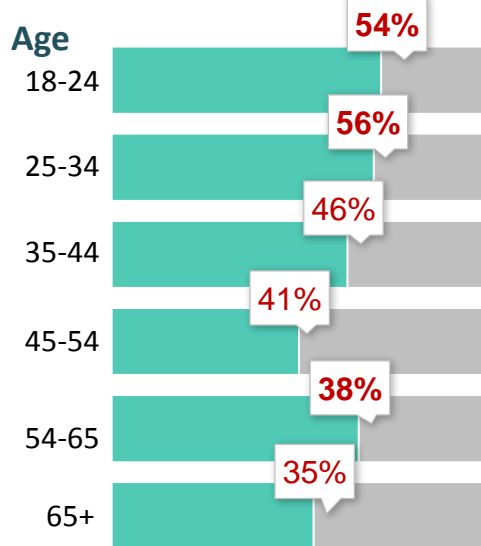
(Base: All Adults 18+)



Gender



Age



Social Class

Higher Social Grades: 48%



Lower Social Grades: 45%



Party Support



76%



55%



40%



29%

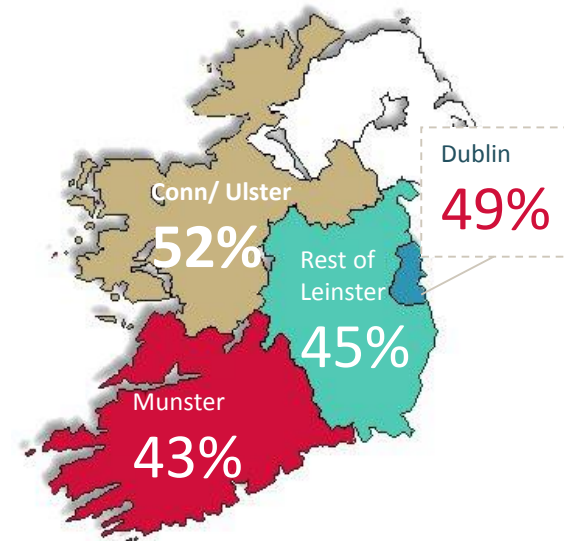
Independents

34%

Undecideds

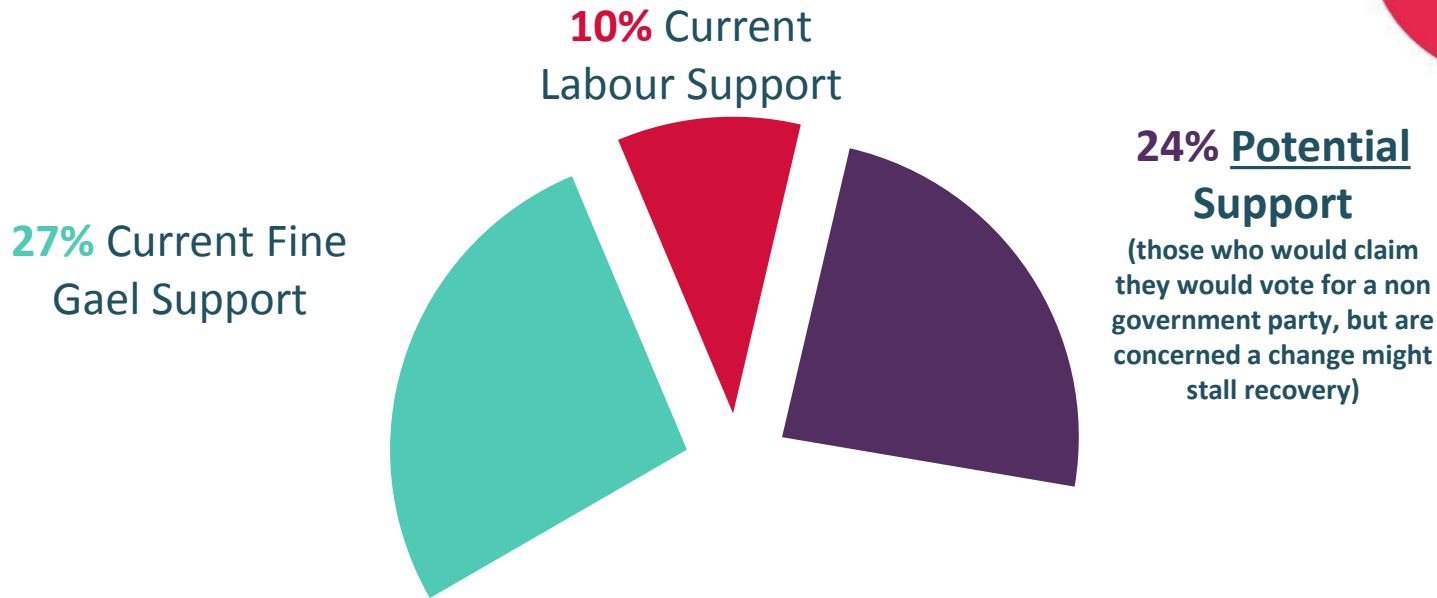
47%

Region



What effect might the worry of stalled recovery in changing government have on claimed non-government supporters?

(Base: All Likely Voters 18+)



There is clearly concern among non-government supporters that a change in government may stall recovery, suggesting support for government parties may increase at election time.

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