



## **Voting Intention Tracking Poll**

25<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011

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



## Methodology and Weighting

RED C interviewed a random sample of 1010 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

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.

## Is the honeymoon over?

Fine Gael in particular, but also the Labour Party, have spent the time since the general election in February, enjoying the kind of support that both have been very happy about. In Fine Gael's case the party's share of first preference voting has been trending above 40%, which is majority territory and well above that they achieved at the election; while Labour has retained support levels since then.

Those heady days of basking in the election victory look like they could now be coming to an end, based on the results of today's poll. The first Sunday Business Post/ RED C tracking poll since the summer break sees Fine Gael losing a massive 8% of first preference support since May. This leaves the party securing 33% of the first preference vote in the poll, which is actually just 3% less than they achieved at the election itself. Labour too are not spared by voters, with support falling back 3% since May, to leave then securing 16% of the first preference.

What can we read into this significant fall over the summer months for both government parties? Having spent some time with American pollsters over the past two weeks, on an exchange programme organised by Boston College and the US State Department, it was interesting to note that there is significant concern in the Democrat camp that President Obama may not get re-elected next year, with approval ratings among the public in the 40's.

This is a situation that we in Ireland may be surprised about, given his popularity at the last election. Central to his quick decline is the fact that, in the current economic climate, the public's readiness to give him time to implement policies was short lived, and he is very quickly being blamed for not solving their problems. The key insight is that in the current climate honeymoon periods are short lived for those elected, no matter how popular they seem at the time.

Back in Ireland, recent pre-budget announcements that the government parties will have to dole out more harsh medicine to the Irish public, appear to have brought their short honeymoon to an end. Blaming those who caused the problems, only holds sway with the public for a short time, and it appears from today's poll results that the electorate now want to see real actions on the issues that they canvassed on.

Fianna Fail might have hoped to have gained from the losses seen for the government parties, but they remain toxic to a large proportion of the electorate. Coupled with recent unrest in the party, and the mess over the selection of a presidential candidate, and their support continues to fall back. This leaves them securing 15% of the first preference vote, down 2% since the election.

Sinn Fein on the other hand is reaping the dividends of a weak Fianna Fail party in opposition, coupled with the media attention drawn to the party by Martin McGuinness standing for the presidential election. As a result they increase their share by 4% since May, and now match Fianna Fail by also securing 15% of the first preference vote.

## Is the honeymoon over?

The only other place for disaffected Fine Gael and Labour supporters to go are Independent candidates. This means that despite initially losing share after the election, Independent candidates now secure a huge 21% of the first preference vote, up 8% since May and 4% since the election. This leaves them as the second largest group after Fine Gael, with 18% supporting Independent candidates, 2% the Green Party and 1% other parties.

With Fine Gael and Labour likely to come under further pressure in the coming year ahead, and Fianna Fail stagnant, are beginning to see the emergence of Sinn Fein as a more robust force in politics in the Republic of Ireland? The possibilities of this can be analysed by looking at the support that Martin McGuinness achieves in the presidential election part of this poll. In the ballot of those already nominated he secures 20% first preferences, while this falls back when the likes of Norris and Scanlon are added, it still suggests that there is head room for the party to grow support in Ireland. Added to this is the fact that a further 8% would give him there second preference votes. This is not the best transfer rate for the candidate, and means he will find it difficult to get elected. However in the context of the acceptability of the man that represents the party, it means that up to 28% of the electorate are prepared to give him some support, and are therefore potentially open to conversion to support the party in the longer term.

Outside of Sinn Fein, the presidential poll gives an interesting backdrop to the party results. Gay Mitchell is struggling to break through, and this must be a concern for the party that their supporters are not strongly wedded to “tow the party line” – albeit the party has not yet really started to campaign heavily, which may well make a difference. Higgins does much better among his own supporters, but even here the desire for an independent candidate appears strong, and while he is in the driving seat for the post, his support has been waning somewhat. Davis is the dark horse who appears to be growing her support base, and doing well in potential second preferences. The apparent mood or desire for an independent candidate could well help her, and she has some low momentum at the moment.

Should Norris get the chance to enter the race it does appear that he will do well. This poll suggests he will lead the first on first preference, but the revelations about his past life and the in-out flip flop of the campaign means his support has been eroded, both in first choice but crucially in second preference, where it looks like he will get very low transfers and as such be overtaken by others such as Higgins and Davis, and even possibly McGuinness.

With just over four weeks to go, and campaigning proper not really started, there is still an awful lot to play for. But the message from this poll is to watch out for the vote for Independent candidates that could yet take the prize away from party candidates whose support is waning.

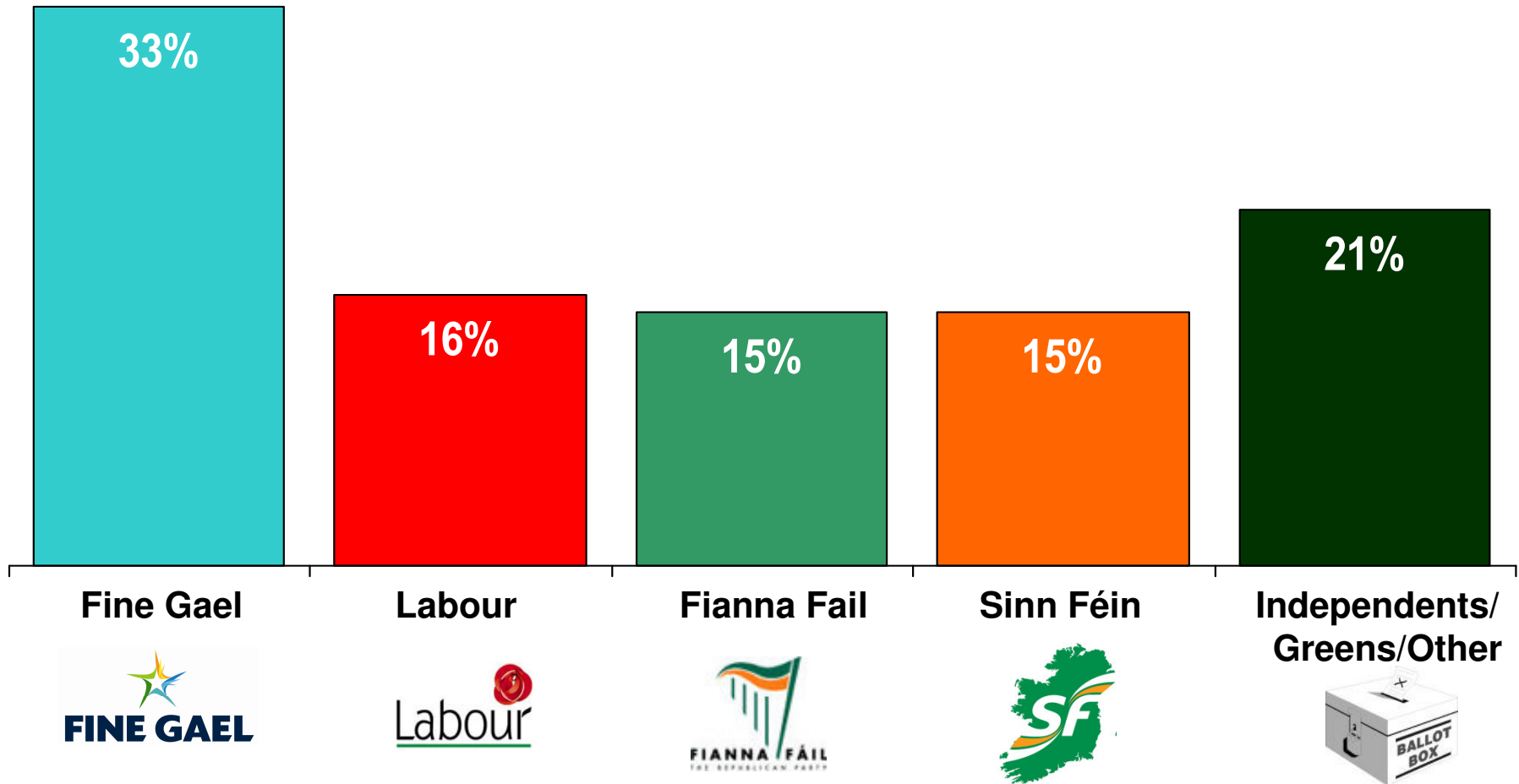
# General Election

# 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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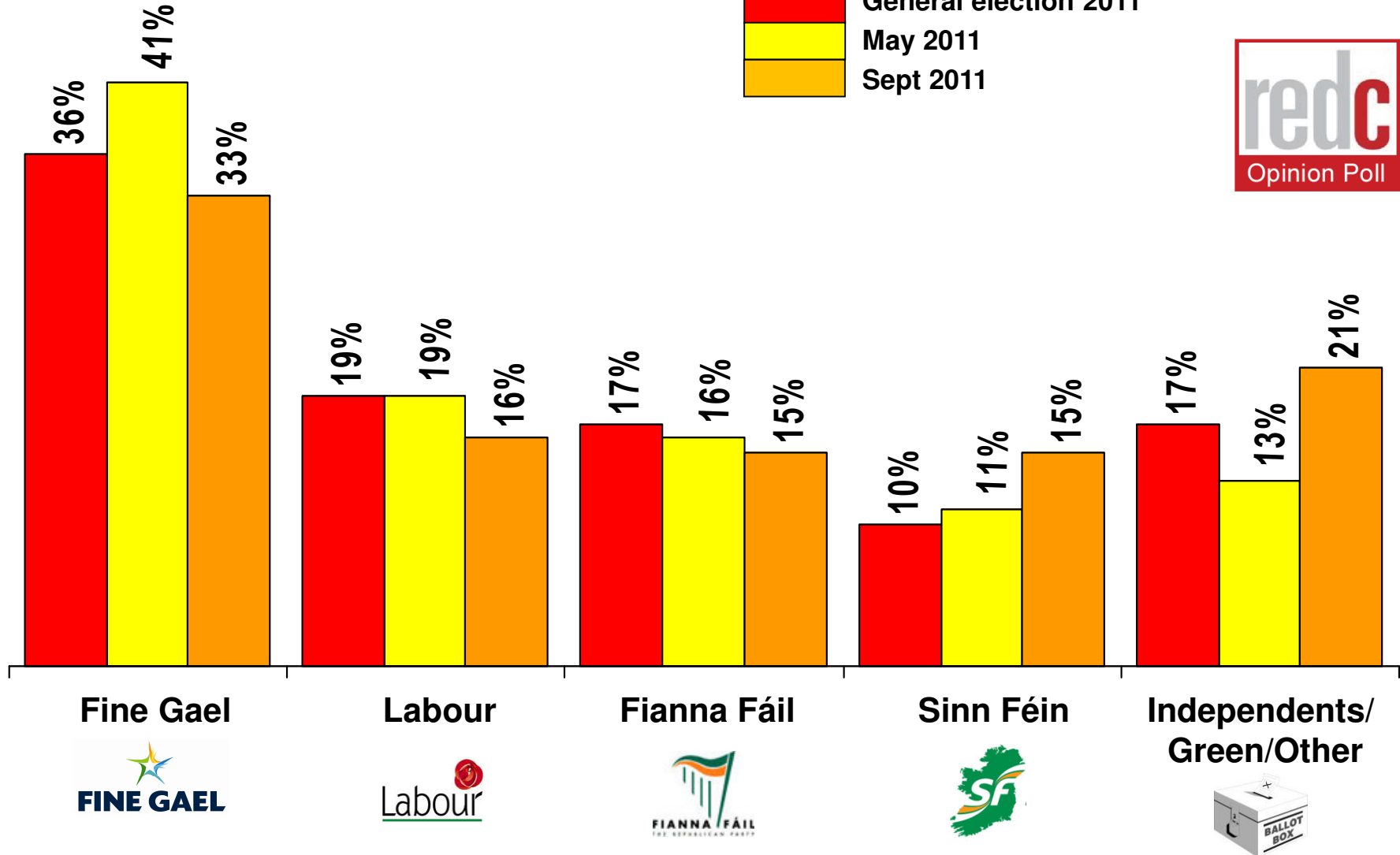


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General election 2011  
 May 2011  
 Sept 2011



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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<b>CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT</b>			
	<b>Core figures 25<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011</b>	<b>Excluding undecided</b>	<b>2011 Election Results</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Fine Gael</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Sinn Féin</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Independents/ Green / Others</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>20</b>		

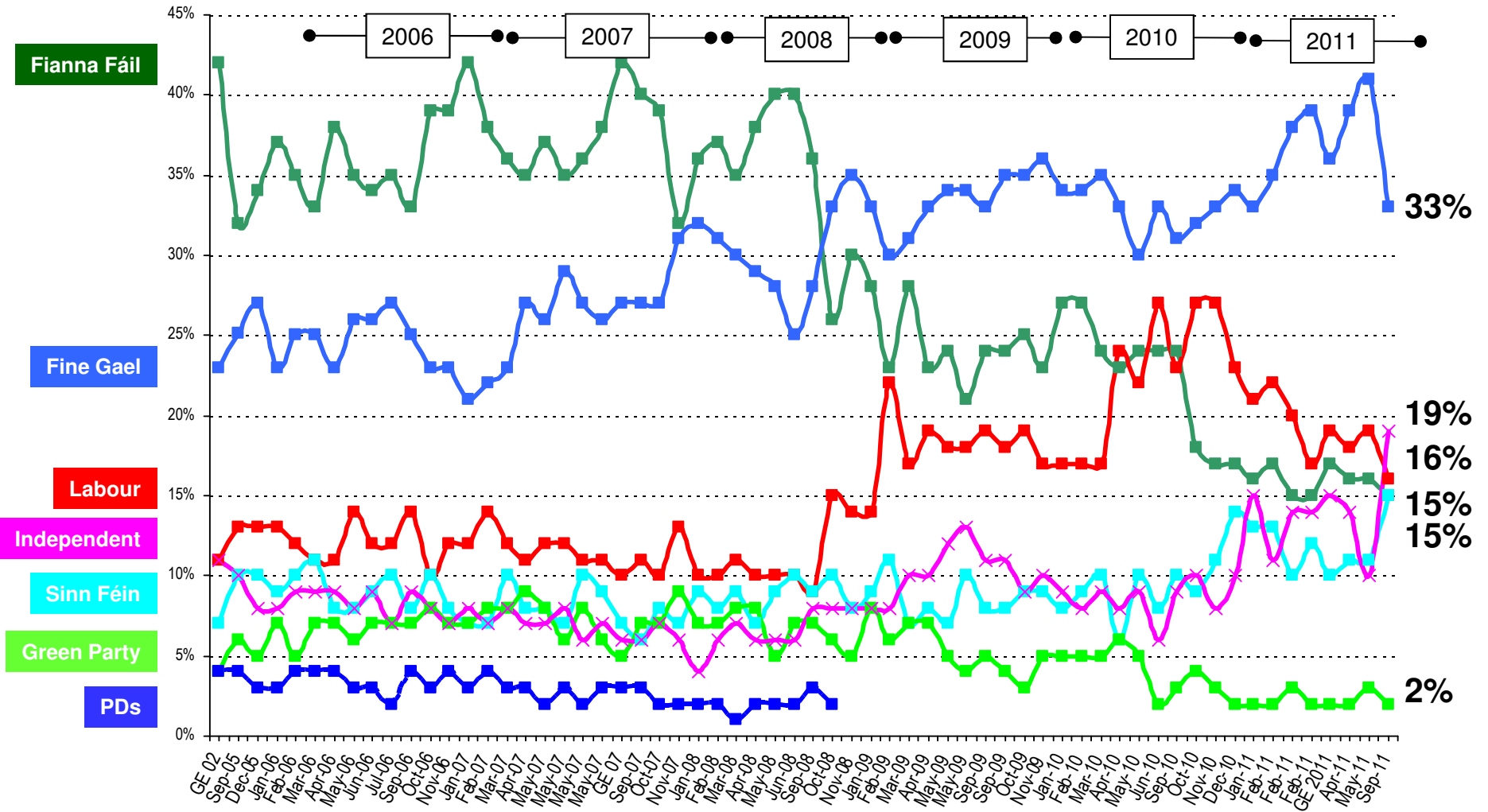


# If there were a *general election* tomorrow, to which party or independent candidate would give your first preference vote?

(Base: All adults 18+)

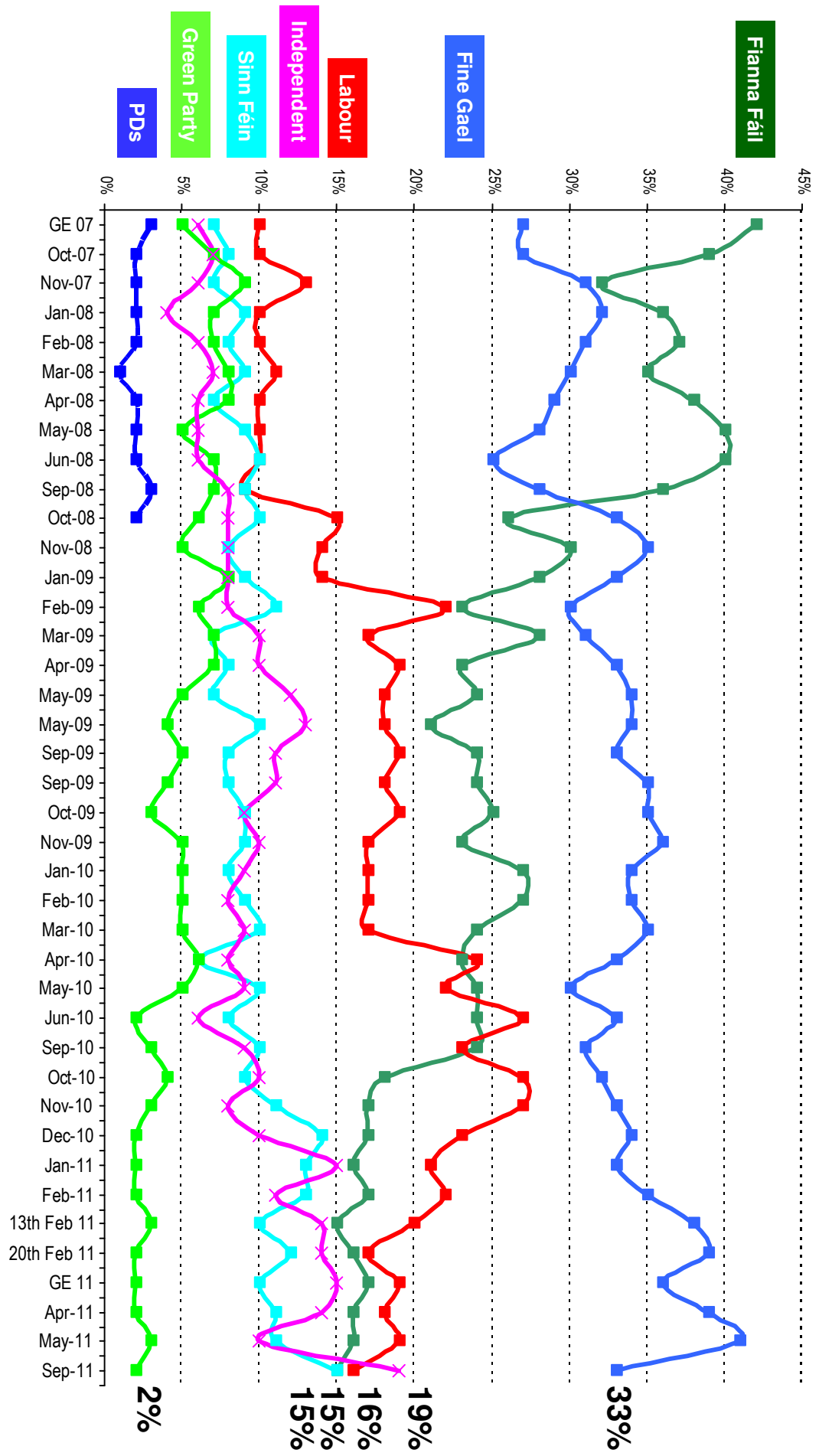


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**If there were a general election tomorrow, to which party  
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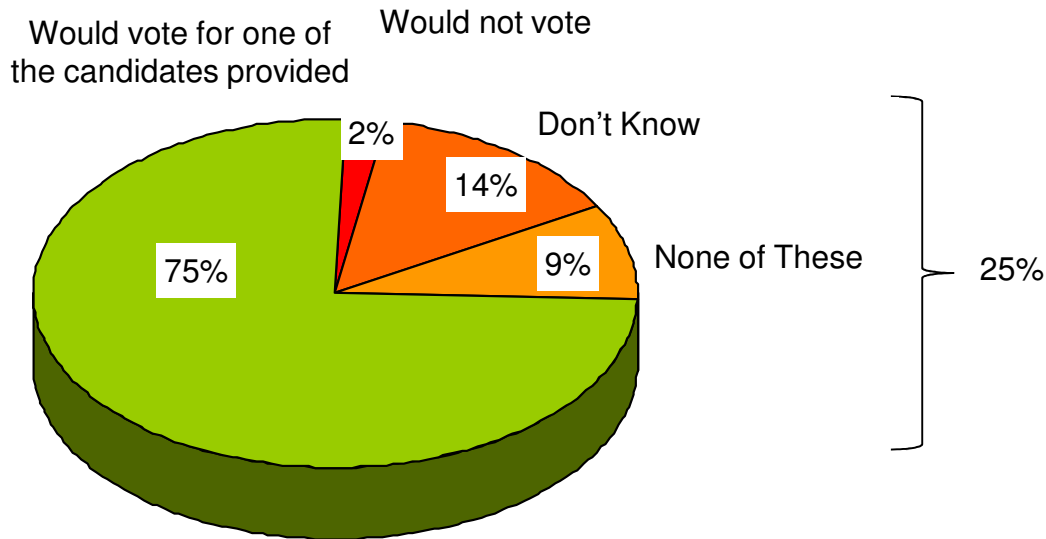


# Presidential Election

# **1<sup>st</sup> List Of Candidates**

# Likelihood to vote at Presidential Election

(Base: All Irish Citizens – 934)

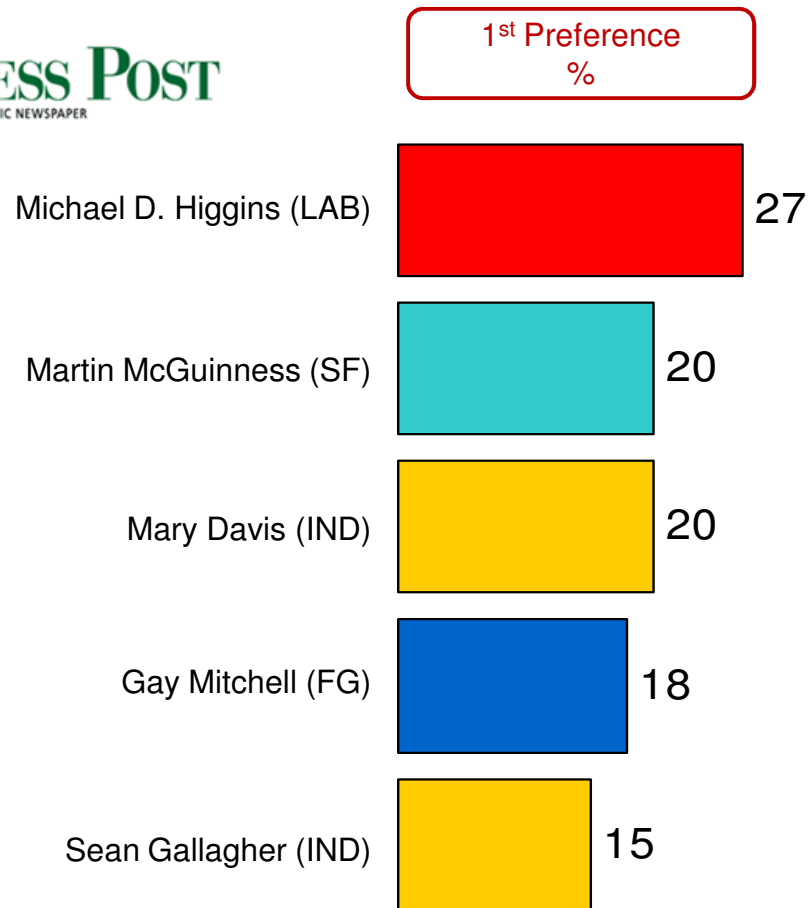


<i>Who are more likely to say Would not vote/ Don't Know / None of these?</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>25%</b>
Male	21%
Female	28%
18-24	28%
25-34	24%
35-44	23%
45-64	26%
65+	23%
ABC1	24%
C2DE	25%
F	24%
Dublin	24%
ROL	28%
Munster	25%
Conn/Ulster	20%

1 in 4 voters (25%) claim they wouldn't vote for one of the candidates put forward or don't know who they would vote for – much higher among females, younger age profile and those residing in ROL.

# Share of first preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 628)



Michael D Higgins tops the poll securing 27% of the first preference vote, with McGuinness and Davis tied 20%. Mitchell follows not too far behind, with Gallagher trailing.

(Q5a)

# Share of first preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland x Demographics

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 628)

	Total	Gender		Age						Region			
		Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/ Ulster
Michael D. Higgins (LAB)	27	29	25	34	24	17	29	34	29	31	24	24	27
Martin McGuinness (SF)	20	25	15	11	26	28	20	12	17	20	21	19	23
Mary Davis (IND)	20	13	26	13	18	17	19	22	26	14	21	19	25
Gay Mitchell (FG)	18	19	17	29	16	16	14	15	22	23	16	19	13
Sean Gallagher (IND)	15	14	17	13	15	21	17	18	6	13	17	18	12

1. Although Higgins performs well among 18-24 year olds, this groups are also less likely to vote.
2. McGuinness performs well among males and those aged 25-34, but struggles among females and older age profiles.
3. Davis has strong support from females, Conn/Ulster as well as those aged 65+.
4. Similar to Higgins, although Mitchell has positive support from those aged 18-24, will they come out to vote?
5. Gallagher underperforms among those aged 65+ but strengths lie in 35-44 year olds.

Q5a)

## Share of 1<sup>st</sup> preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland X party voted for in last general election



(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 628)

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	Total 1 <sup>st</sup> Preference %	Fianna Fáil %	Fine Gael %	Labour %	Sinn Féin %	Independent %
Michael D. Higgins (LAB)	27	18	24	44	3	30
Martin McGuinness (SF)	20	10	12	14	86	28
Mary Davis (IND)	20	28	19	19	6	21
Gay Mitchell (FG)	18	16	32	9	1	5
Sean Gallagher (IND)	15	28	13	14	4	17

McGuinness not only performs well among Sinn Féin voters, but also has strength in Independent supporters. Higgins has strong party support from Labour, while Davis and Gallagher gain from Fianna Fáil voters. Mitchell performs well among Fine Gael supporters, but little other party support.

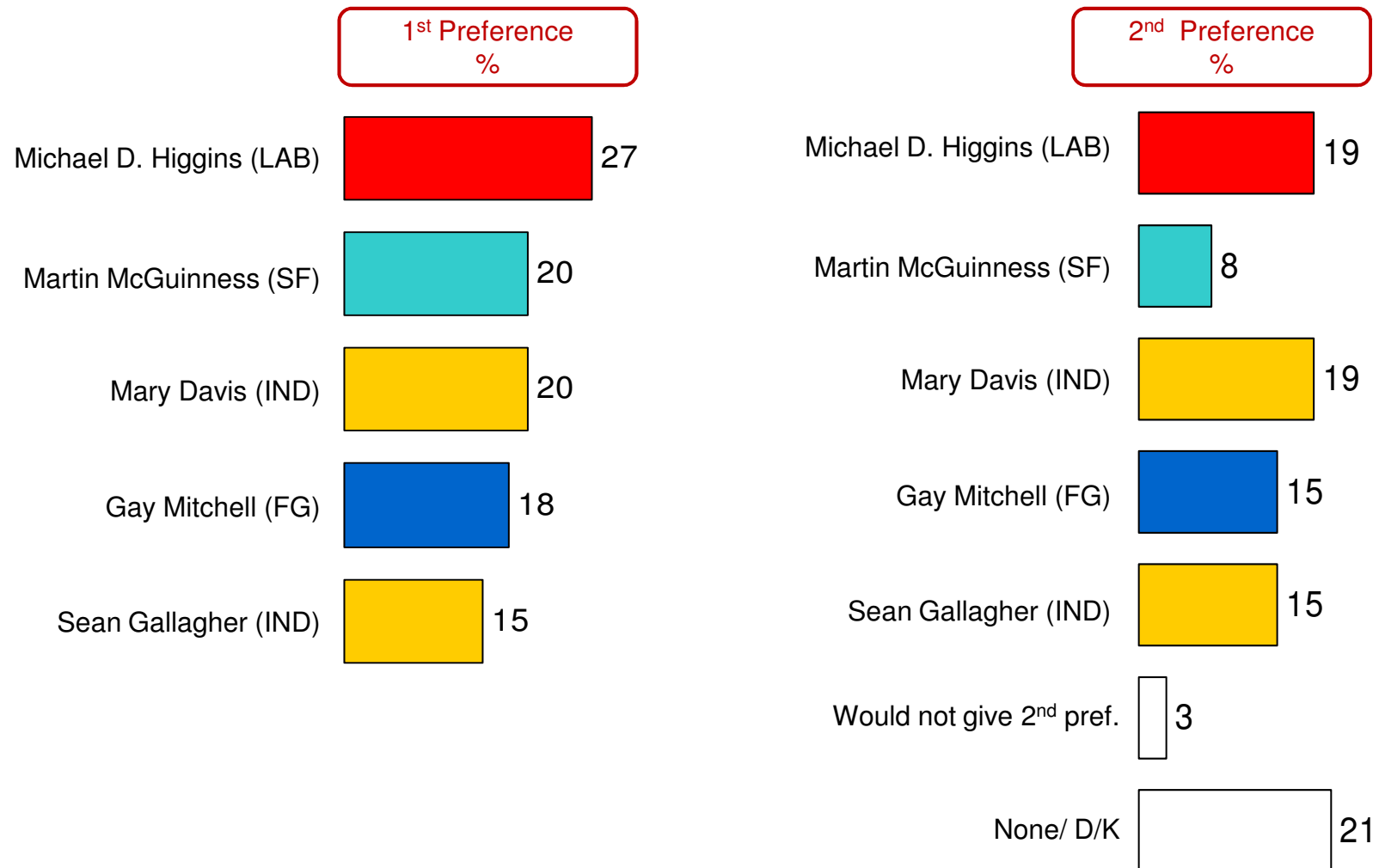
\* Caution - Base size small for Sinn Féin (57) and Independent (62) & too small to show those who voted for Green Party (10)

(Q5a/3)



# Share of first and second preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 628)



Perhaps not surprisingly, McGuinness fails to make second preference votes. Higgins and Davis both share similar amounts of second preference votes.

(Q5a/b)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Preference Vote x 1<sup>st</sup> Preference Vote

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 628)



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		1ST PREFERENCE VOTE				
	Total 2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference %	Michael D. Higgins (LAB) %	Gay Mitchell (FG) %	Sean Gallagher (IND) %	Mary Davis (IND) %	Martin McGuinness (SF) %
Michael D. Higgins (LAB)	19	0	29	23	28	23
Martin McGuinness (SF)	8	12	6	18	4	0
Mary Davis (IND)	19	20	30	29	0	19
Gay Mitchell (FG)	15	25	0	13	25	9
Sean Gallagher (IND)	15	13	13	0	26	20

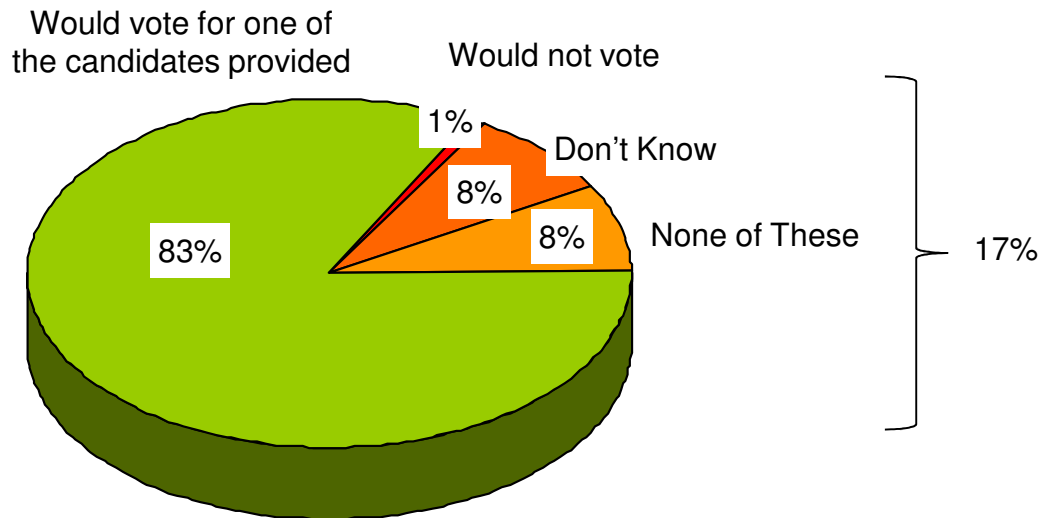
Higgins can make greatest gains from those giving first preference to Mitchell or Davis. McGuinness only second preference support comes from those voting for Gallagher as their first choice.

(Q5b/3)

# **Second List of Candidates**

# Likelihood to vote at Presidential Election

(Base: All Irish Citizens – 934)

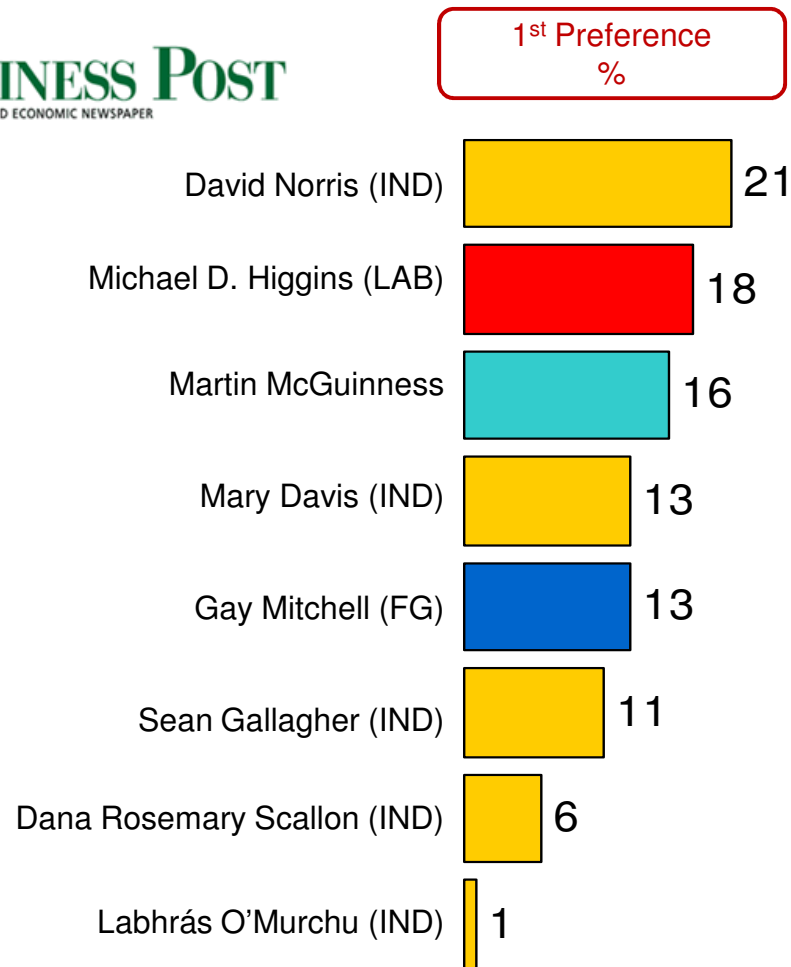


<i>Who are more likely to say Would not vote/ Don't Know / None of these?</i>	
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ABC1	15%
C2DE	18%
F	14%
Dublin	18%
ROL	22%
Munster	14%
Conn/Ulster	13%

With a different list of candidates in the mix, likelihood to vote increases. However, there remains a proportion who will not - again, the 18-24 year olds and Rest Of Leinster.

# Share of first preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 689)



Despite recent revelations, Norris holds strong support - topping the poll in terms of first preference. This has pushed Higgins into second spot, and McGuinness into third. Dana gains little support at this stage in the poll.

(Q6a)

# Share of first preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland x Demographics

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a 1<sup>st</sup> preference for a candidate-612)

	Total	Gender		Age						Region			
		Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/ Ulster
David Norris (IND)	21	18	24	32	25	14	24	20	13	30	18	19	16
Michael D. Higgins (LAB)	18	21	16	13	18	12	22	23	19	16	17	19	21
Martin McGuinness	16	20	13	13	18	24	14	11	14	16	18	14	19
Mary Davis (IND)	13	10	16	9	9	14	12	14	20	10	16	13	14
Gay Mitchell (FG)	13	14	11	13	11	14	10	12	18	14	13	13	10
Sean Gallagher (IND)	11	11	12	10	13	18	9	10	5	7	12	15	11
Dana Rosemary Scallon (IND)	6	4	8	8	5	2	8	6	8	6	6	4	8
Labhrás O'Murchu (IND)	1	2	*	2	-	1	*	4	3	*	2	3	1

1. Norris performs well among the 18-34 year old age groups, but again are perhaps less likely to vote, suggesting he may need to work harder among the older age categories.
2. Higgins had performed well among the younger age group, however with Norris in the mix has lost among this group, however he dominates the older age categories.
3. McGuinness maintains strong male support, but dwindles among older age groups.
4. Both Davis and Mitchell perform well among 65+.

## Share of 1<sup>st</sup> preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland X party voted for in last general election

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 689)



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	Total 1 <sup>st</sup> Preference %	Fianna Fáil %	Fine Gael %	Labour %	Sinn Féin %	Independent %
David Norris (IND)	21	16	22	26	3	30
Michael D. Higgins (LAB)	18	11	18	33	6	12
Martin McGuinness	16	8	9	10	76	16
Mary Davis (IND)	13	21	14	14	2	15
Gay Mitchell (FG)	13	12	24	5	2	1
Sean Gallagher (IND)	11	19	9	9	4	15
Dana Rosemary Scallon (IND)	6	7	4	3	7	9
Labhrás O'Murchu (IND)	1	6	1	-	-	2

Norris support comes primarily from Labour and Independent voters. Despite Norris' strength among Labour, Higgins has maintained his party support. McGuinness performs well among Sinn Féin supporters only. Gallagher not only gains support from Independents, but also Fianna Fáil voters.

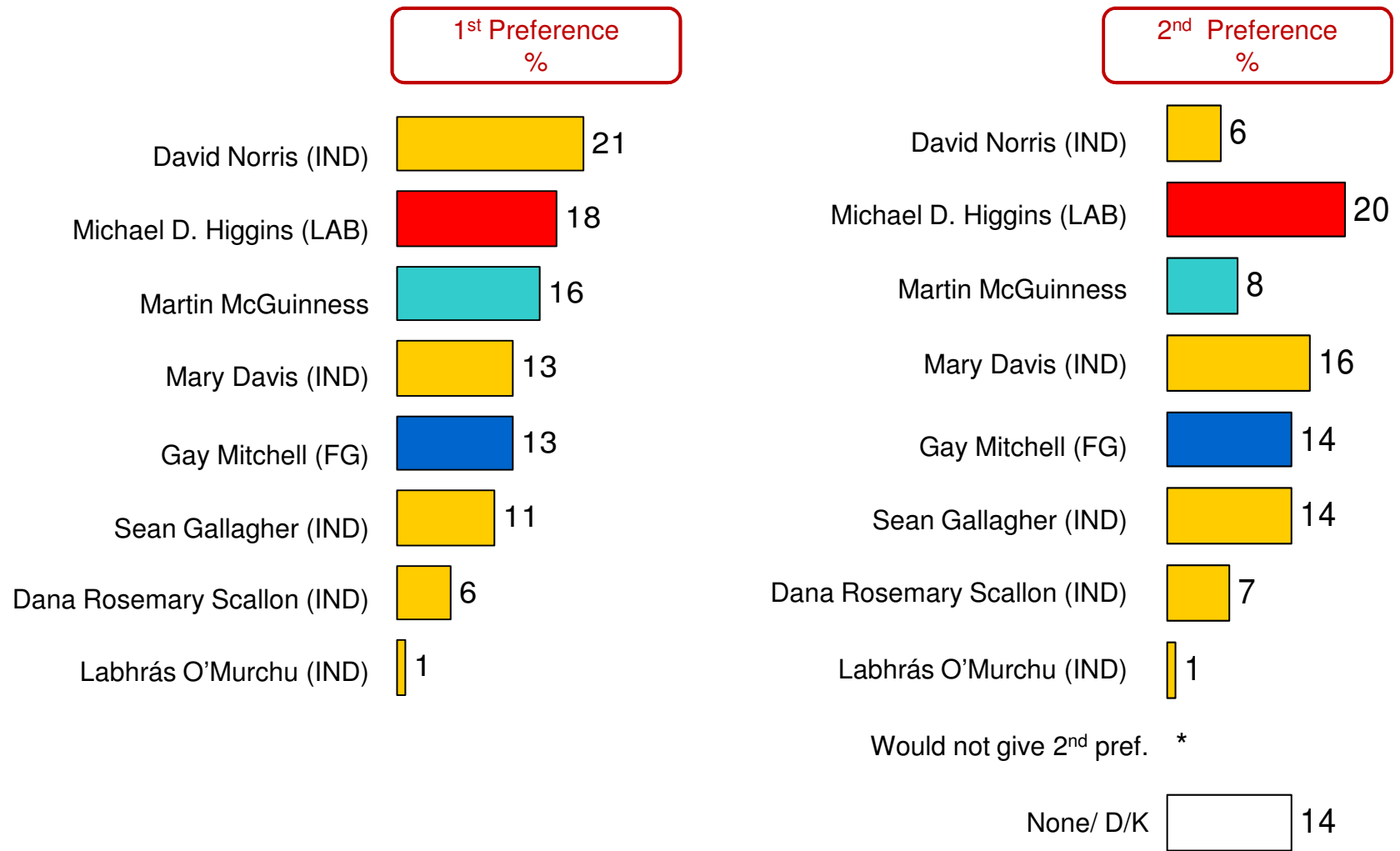
(Q6a/3)

\* Caution - Base size small for Sinn Fein (62) and Independent (73) & too small to show those who voted for Green Party (9)

# Share of first and second preference vote across candidates for the next President of Ireland



(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a preference for a candidate and are likely to vote - 689)



Both Norris and McGuinness fail to make gains in second preference support - it seems that they have a core group of supporters but little transfer from others. Higgins is a strong second preference option among voters.

(Q6a/b)



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Preference Vote x 1<sup>st</sup> Preference Vote

(Base: All Irish Citizens 18+ who gave a 1<sup>st</sup> preference for a candidate-716)

		1ST PREFERENCE VOTE						
	Total 2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference %	Michael D. Higgins (LAB) %	Gay Mitchell (FG) %	Sean Gallagher (IND) %	Mary Davis (IND) %	Martin McGuinness (SF) %	David Norris (IND) %	Dana Rosemary Scallon (IND) %
David Norris (IND)	6	11	1	5	5	9	0	10
Michael D. Higgins (LAB)	20	0	20	30	28	18	27	21
Martin McGuinness (SF)	8	9	8	16	3	-	13	14
Mary Davis (IND)	16	21	24	17	0	20	10	27
Gay Mitchell (FG)	14	26	0	17	21	8	13	14
Sean Gallagher (IND)	14	10	19	0	21	16	14	5
Dana Rosemary Scallon (IND)	7	6	5	7	11	9	8	0
Labhrás O'Murchu (IND)	1	-	4	2	-	2	1	-

Norris only gain in second preference is among Higgins supporters. It appears the greatest gains to be made if Norris were not elected would be Higgins and McGuinness - although unlikely at this stage.

(Q6a/b)

\* Caution - Base size small for Dana Rosemary Scallon (41))& too small to show those who voted for Lábhras O'Murchu (10)