



General Election Opinion Poll

24th Feb 2013

Prepared for:

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IRELAND'S FINANCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC NEWSPAPER

Methodology and Weighting



- RED C interviewed a random sample of 1,004 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 18th and 20th February 2013.
- 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.

Understanding Fianna Fail Gains



The main mover in this month's Sunday Business Post / RED C poll is Fianna Fail increasing support by 5% in one month, after a number of months of gains prior to this. In total it means that support for the party has increased from 18% in September 2012 to 26% in 2013, a rise of 8% in six months.

There are two key questions of interest with regard to this rise in support, the first being where has it come from, and the second being who has suffered as a result? Analysis of vote intentions by smaller demographic groups and within region is a somewhat dangerous science, as the margin of error is far greater than on the total sample. For example the sample in Dublin is around 300 interviews, which has double the possible sample error of the total sample. What helps with this however is the frequency of the polls we conduct for the Sunday Business Post, which allow us to look at the trends over the short term within different demographics and so smooth out any errors of one individual poll.

This analysis provides some interesting insight into where the gains for Fianna Fail have come from. The first thing to note is that there have been some gains across almost every demographic group, apart from mid age 35-54 year olds, who have in fact seen a slight trend in support away from Fianna Fail. The big jumps in support are seen in the age group on either side, with significant upward trends among 18-35 year olds and those older 55+ age groups. The other two main areas where the party has seen significant gains are among those in more downmarket social groups, and also those living in Munster, perhaps as a response to the leader of the party coming from that location. There are also some relatively good gains for the party in Dublin, where they currently have a dearth of TD's on the ground to take advantage of this.

While Fianna Fail have obviously been benefiting at the expense of the government parties, this is perhaps not at the same level as had been seen in polls published recently in other papers. There are several reasons why this might be the case.

Firstly, this poll was taken sometime after the deal on promissory notes was completed, and people have possibly had more time to take this on board. It is also the case that the government has now clearly reacted and apologised to those that suffered in the Magdellen Laundries. The apology itself came in the middle of this poll, but it was clear that it was coming even at the start. Finally, it could be argued that some feel the government is taking the right route in taking on public sector workers pay in the renewed negotiations on the Croke Park agreement

Understanding Fianna Fail Gains

Another interesting factor is the level of undecided voters in this poll (among those likely to vote), which has reduced significantly in the past four weeks, from 20% last month to just 15% this month. This means undecided voters are at pre-election territory, and suggests that events of the past four weeks have certainly made people more sure of who they might vote for. Whether that is because of the success of the government in dealing with issues, or alternatively the desire to keep Fianna Fail from securing an even stronger level of support is unknown.

Of course, we have still seen Fine Gael and Labour support drop significantly over the last six months, most notably in October/November time. We know from in depth work we have conducted online among switchers that the main reason people are giving for moving support away from the Government parties to Fianna Fail; revolve around a perception of Broken Promises, on a range of issues including really standing up to Europe, tax increases, and changes to the way politics works. Only 1 person out of 250 switchers mentions abortion as a reason for switching, despite this often being given as a reason for Fine Gaels decline in support. Many switchers do however suggest that they do not see the current government as any different to the old, and they might as well have what they perceive as the “balls” of Fianna Fail doing the same job; with some suggesting Fianna Fail would be work harder and be fairer to all groups in society.

More recently, it is Sinn Fein and Independent candidate support that falls back as Fianna Fail continue to make gains, with both falling by 3% to leave both securing 16% of the first preference vote. Part of the reason for this is the reduction of undecided voters. We have seen in the past that if you will vote for Sinn Fein, you say you will and are very unlikely to be undecided. As such when the undecided voters decrease other parties benefit, in turn reducing Sinn Fein’s share. This is why as we get closer to elections the Sinn Fein share of the vote has often been seen to decline in the past. The drop in Independent support is also likely to be for the same reason, with previously undecided voters changing to a party rather than an Independent candidate.

Overall it appears that the political landscape is changing again, with Fianna Fail extending gains they have been making over the past few months, and this in it helping them to gain further credibility as an option for voters. At the same time, Fine Gael and Labour are fighting back to try and rescue or retain lost ground in the past few months. It is clear that for the government to convince voters it needs to be seen to keep to its election promises, and portray a real single minded purpose to get the best for the country. It is also evident that there will be real competition at the next election, particularly if Fianna Fail can make its gains in support in opinion polls come through into real votes at the Local and European Elections.

General Election

First Preference Vote Intention – February 2013

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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – February 2013

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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote (including undecided))



CURRENT FIRST PREFERENCE SUPPORT AMONG THOSE LIKELY TO VOTE

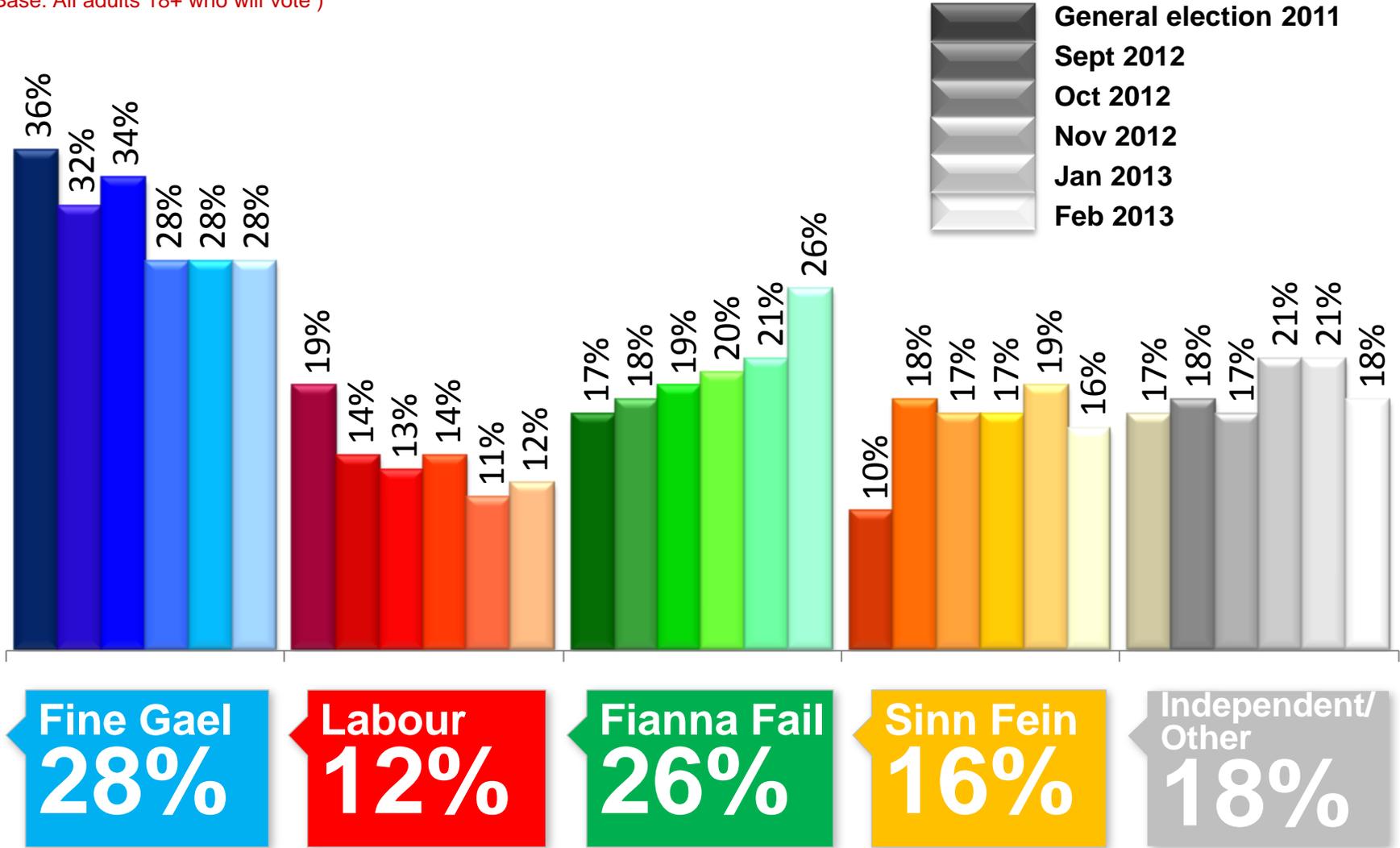
	Core figures 24 th February 2013	Excluding 50% undecided, and weighting back 50% undecided to how they voted in past elections	2011 Election Results
	%	%	%
Fine Gael	24	28	36
Labour	10	12	19
Fianna Fáil	22	26	17
Sinn Féin	14	16	10
Independent candidates	12	15	13
Green Party	2	2	2
Socialist Party	1	1	1
Other Party	*	0	1
Undecided	15		

First Preference Vote Intention – Sep 2012 – Feb 2013



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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

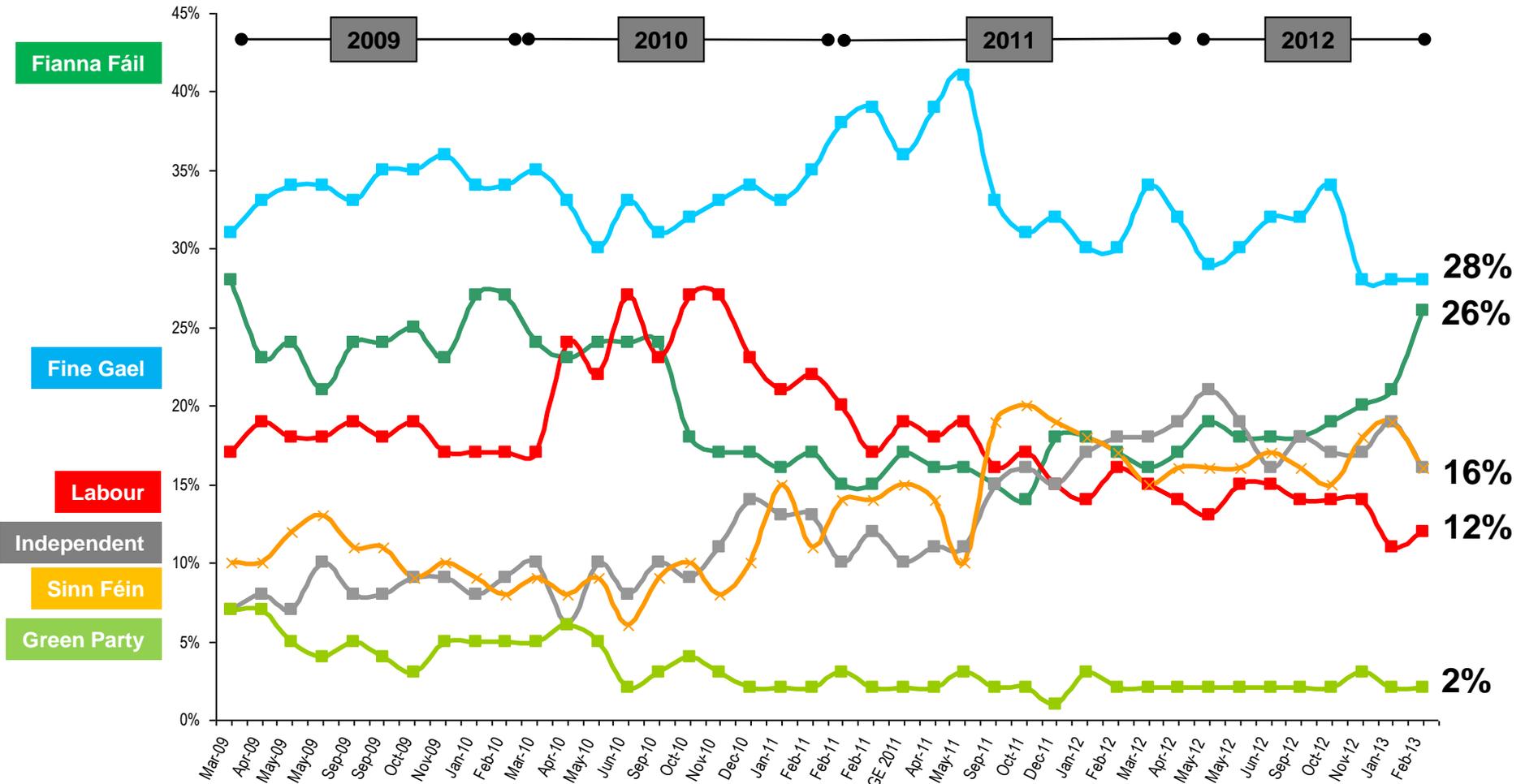
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – 2009-2013

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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

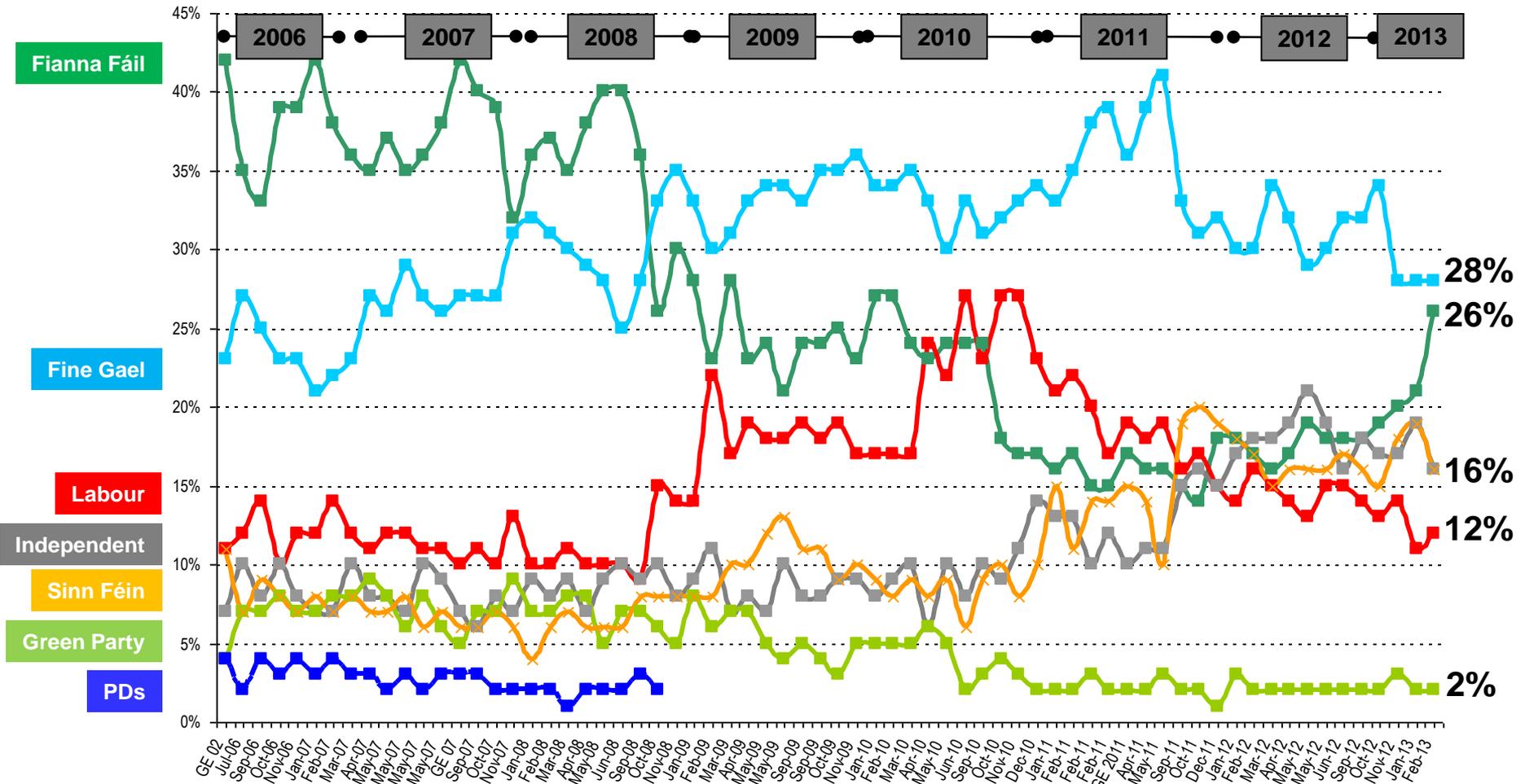
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – 2006 to 2013

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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – February 2013 x Demographics

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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote (including undecided))



	Total	Gender		Age			Class		Region			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Dublin	ROL	Munster	Conn/Ulster
Fine Gael	28%	27%	30%	18%	31%	35%	28%	24%	24%	32%	29%	29%
Fianna Fail	26%	26%	26%	25%	19%	35%	21%	29%	22%	25%	32%	23%
Sinn Fein	16%	22%	11%	21%	16%	12%	15%	19%	15%	16%	14%	22%
Labour	12%	11%	13%	14%	14%	7%	17%	10%	19%	12%	9%	5%
Ind./ Other	18%	14%	20%	22%	20%	11%	19%	18%	20%	15%	16%	21%

Fianna Fail First Preference Vote Intention – Sep 2012 to Feb 2013



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 and adjusted for Spiral of Silence)

(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)

■ Sep-12 ■ Jan-13 ■ Feb-13

%

