



General Election Opinion Poll

31st January 2016



Methodology and Weighting

- RED C interviewed a random sample of 1,005 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 25th – 27th January 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, 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 it... the economy stupid? - I

The final poll before it appears the election will be announced, and polling day itself likely to be only 3-4 weeks away, yet no one party or grouping appears to have any real momentum right now. It appears to still be all to play for, and the campaign is certainly going to be very important. Because one thing is certain, that there is a relatively small but important number of floating voters who remain very unsure of exactly how they will vote.

Clear trends emerged towards the end of last year, with Independent voters' moving support towards Fine Gael. This was very much in line with perceived wisdom that Fine Gael was likely to gain share as the election approached, and people had to think more closely about how they would vote. Particularly as the possible impact of the budget began to be seen in people's pay packets. In fact, back in December the decision to hold off the election until the spring rather than in November appeared to be an inspired move.

Move forward to the two polls taken so far in January and the picture is not quite as positive for Fine Gael. For two polls in a row support for the party has slipped back to levels last seen before the decision to delay the election was finally made. This second poll in January sees Fine Gael secure 29% share of the first preference vote. As a result, at first glance, the party appears to have completely lost the momentum they had built up in the final months of last year.

So what is going on here? Are voters really falling away from the party again, and what does it mean for the weeks ahead? The first thing to review, is who is gaining support at Fine Gael's expense. Labour sees support increase by 1%, and you could argue that this might be the simple answer to Fine Gaels' small decline. The theory being that voters who support the current coalitions return, are support moving from Fine Gael to Labour, perhaps concerned about the possibility of an overall majority? But Independent candidates also see support increasing by 2%. And this in turn could represent a reversal of the trends we saw at the end of last year.

The next thing to look at is the level of undecided voters. In December and early January we saw undecided voters increase by 4%. Today's poll sees this 4% of unsure voters appear to be making up their minds again, and apparently breaking back more for Independent parties and possibly Labour. As a result, some of the gains in December and the declines in January for Fine Gael support are not necessarily about more or less voters. Instead these fluctuations are more to do with shifts in levels of undecided voters, which don't benefit Fine Gael when they make up their minds. The proof of this is the fact that the core support for Fine Gael before undecideds are excluded remains at 24%, the same as seen in the previous poll. As such rather than a real decline in numbers of voters, this drop looks more like no further gains in numbers of voters for Fine Gael. Still in itself not very positive for the party, but not as bad as a real underlying voter decline.

Is it... the economy stupid? - II

However, if the old adage of the importance of the economy still stands in this election, there is much better news for Fine Gael in the poll. We asked voters to tell us, putting their first preference support to one side, which party they trusted most to manage the economy for the next five years. The results are very telling. Of those that expressed a preference 38% would put their trust in Fine Gael. This is a significant 9% higher than the current first preference support. If you further exclude those who wouldn't trust any party or candidate, trust in Fine Gael to manage the economy rises even further to 40%.

But perhaps even more telling is the fact the no other party comes close to challenging them in the economic arena. Fianna Fail is the next most trusted party. However, with only 16% suggesting they would most trust Fianna Fail with the economy over the next five years, this means less people trust them than would give them a first preference vote. Sinn Fein is next most trusted with just 12% saying they trust them most with the economy, significantly behind their vote share. While Labour are trusted by 7% and Independent candidates 9%. Finally 1 in 10 say they don't trust any of the parties or groupings!

It's clear then that some voters who say they will support other parties with their first preference vote are still more likely to trust Fine Gael with the economy. In fact a third of those who say they will vote for Labour, state that they trust Fine Gael most with the economy. While roughly 1 in 6 of those saying they will vote for Independent candidates and the same proportion of those who are undecided, also trust Fine Gael most with the economy. Certainly a ripe recruiting ground in the final weeks of the campaign.

So does today's poll signal the end of the upward trend for Fine Gael and a less likely re-election? Of course the topline figure suggest yes. But dig a little deeper, analyse key voter attitudes towards the economy lying behind the numbers, and the reasons behind topline decline, and the picture is not nearly so negative. All will depend on how important the economy is to voters, and the past has taught us that whatever voters say, it usually is in the final reckoning.

First Preference Vote Intention – 31st Jan 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
29% -1

Labour
10% +1

Fianna Fail
17% -2

Sinn Fein
19% =

Independent/
Other Party
25% +2

Undecided Voters
12% -4

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First Preference Vote Intention – 31st Jan 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	Excluding Undecided	Prompting on Other Parties	2011 Election Results
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fine Gael	24	24	26	29	29	36
Labour	8	8	9	10	10	19
Fianna Fáil	15	14	15	17	17	17
Sinn Féin	18	17	17	19	19	10
Independent candidates	15	15	16	18	18	13
Green Party	2	3	2	3	3	2
Renua	*	*	*	*	1	-
AAA-PBP	2	2	2	3	3	1 (socialist party)
Social Democrats	1	1	1	1	2	-
Workers Party	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*	*	*	1
Undecided	15	15	12	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Less than 1%

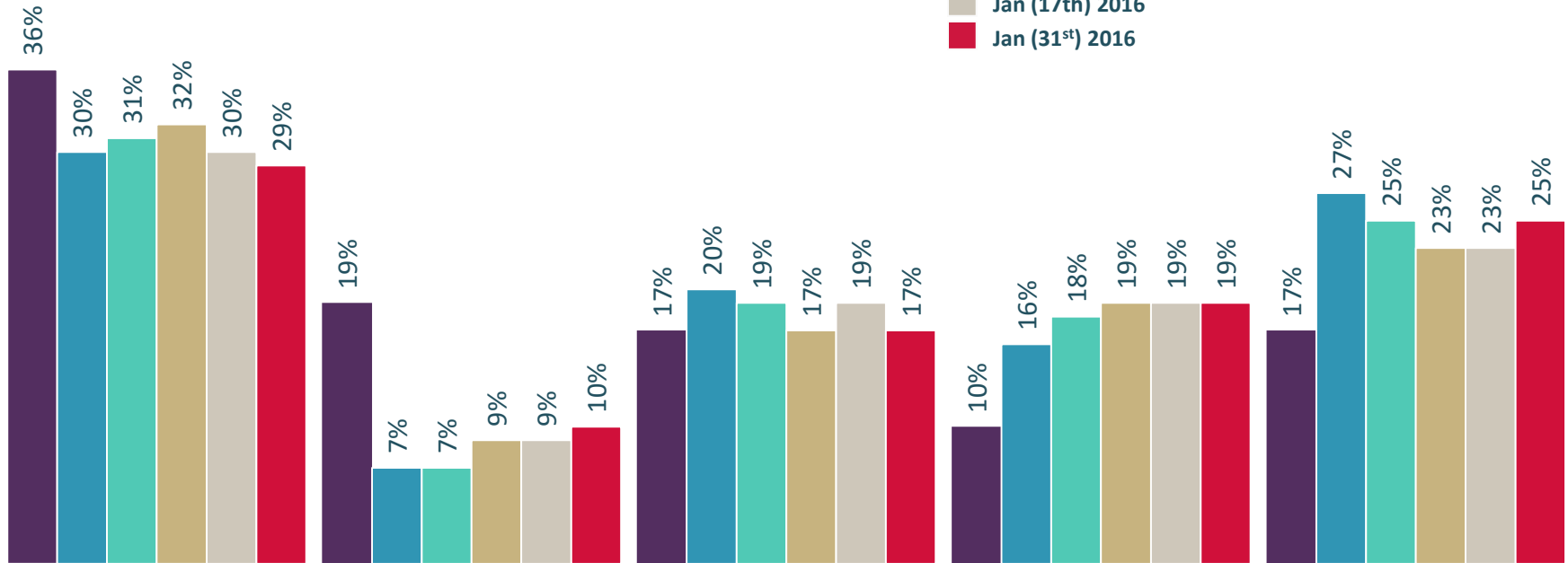


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First Preference Vote Intention – Oct '15 – Jan '16

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)



Fine Gael
29%

Labour
10%

Fianna Fail
17%

Sinn Fein
19%

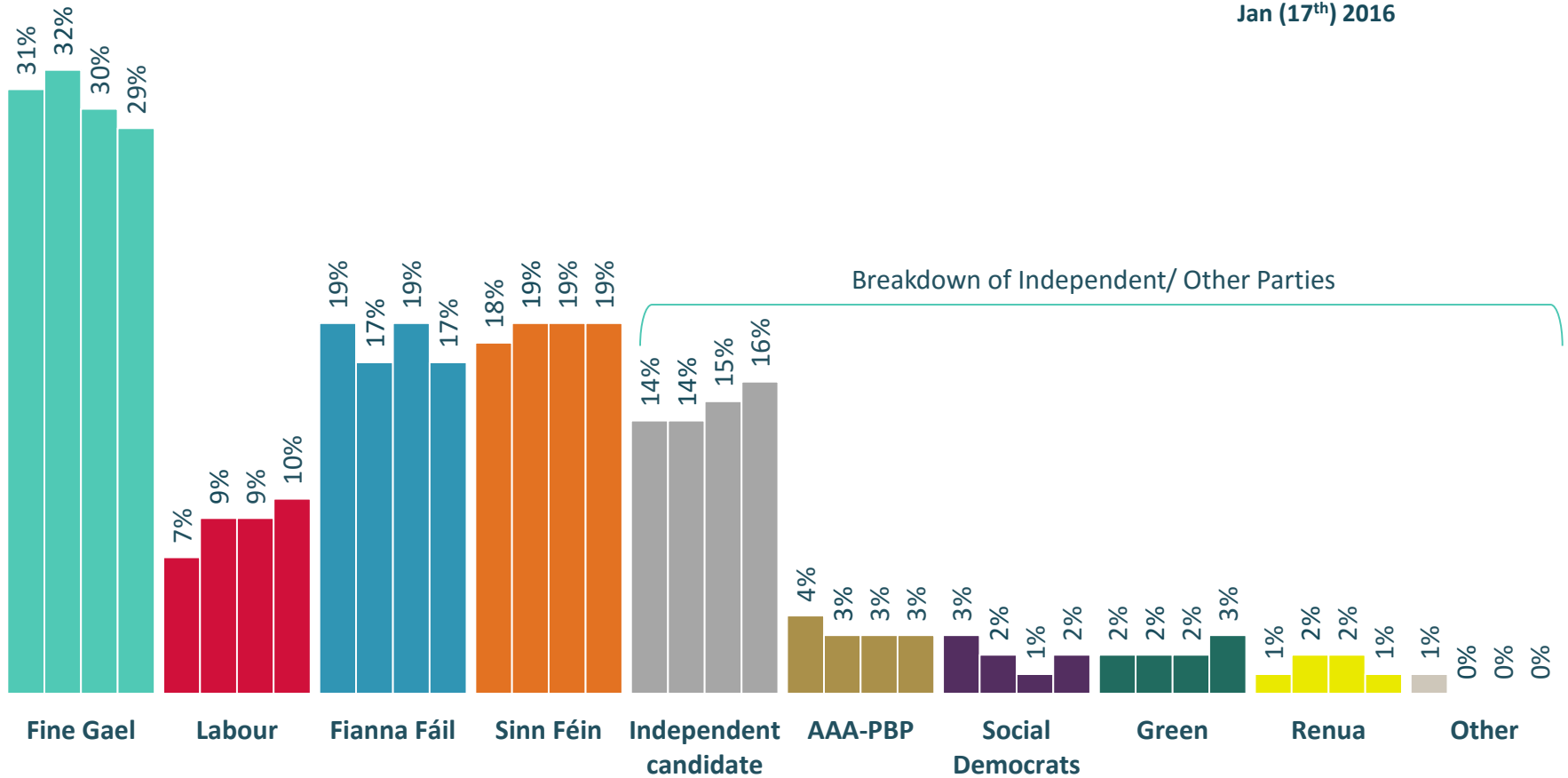
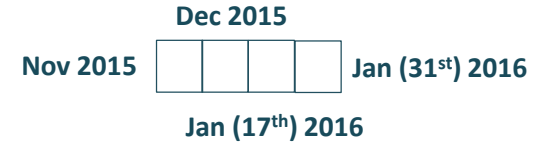
Independent/
Other Party
25%



First Preference Vote Intention – Nov '15 to Jan '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)



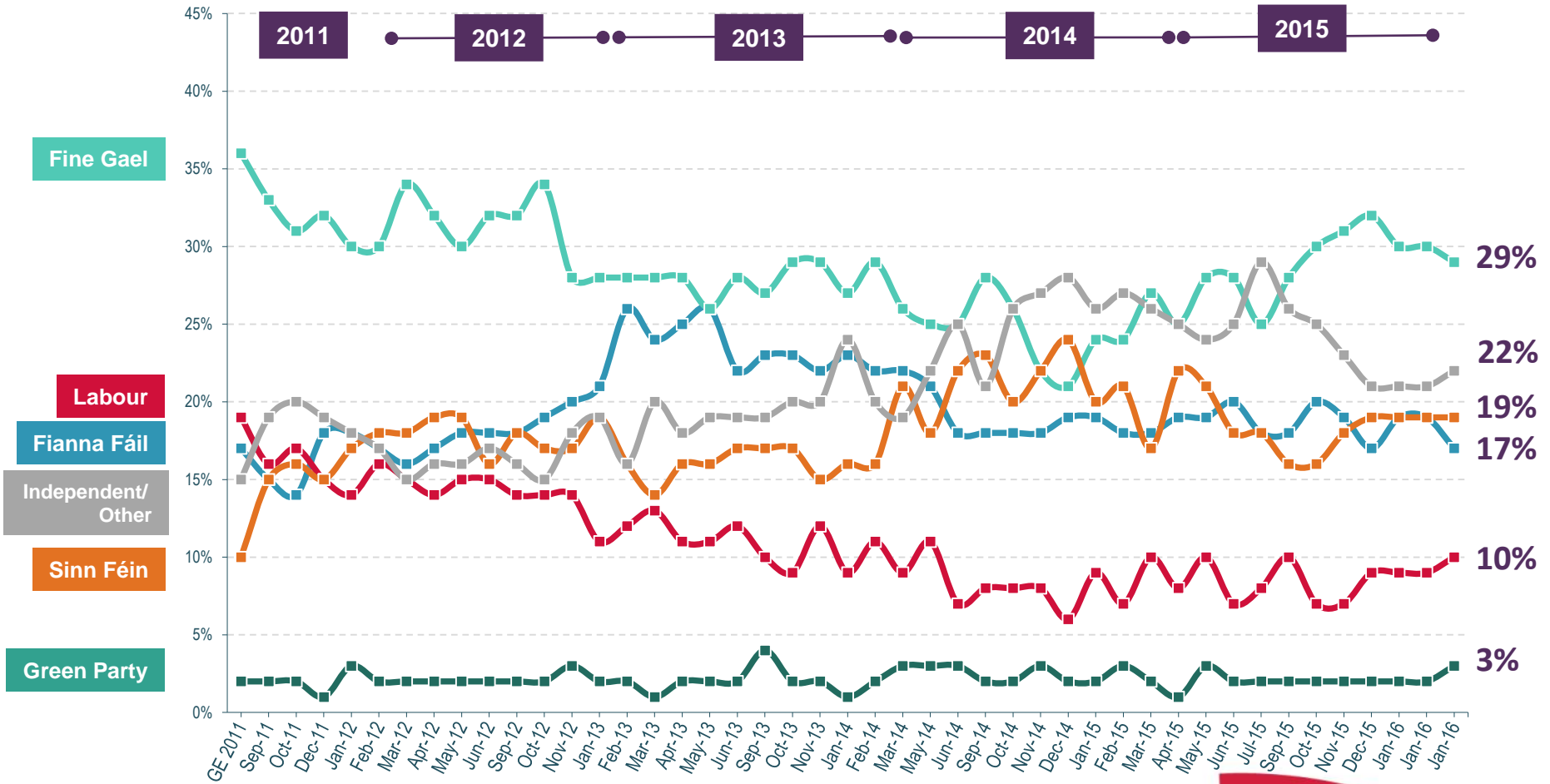
(Independent Alliance 2%)



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)

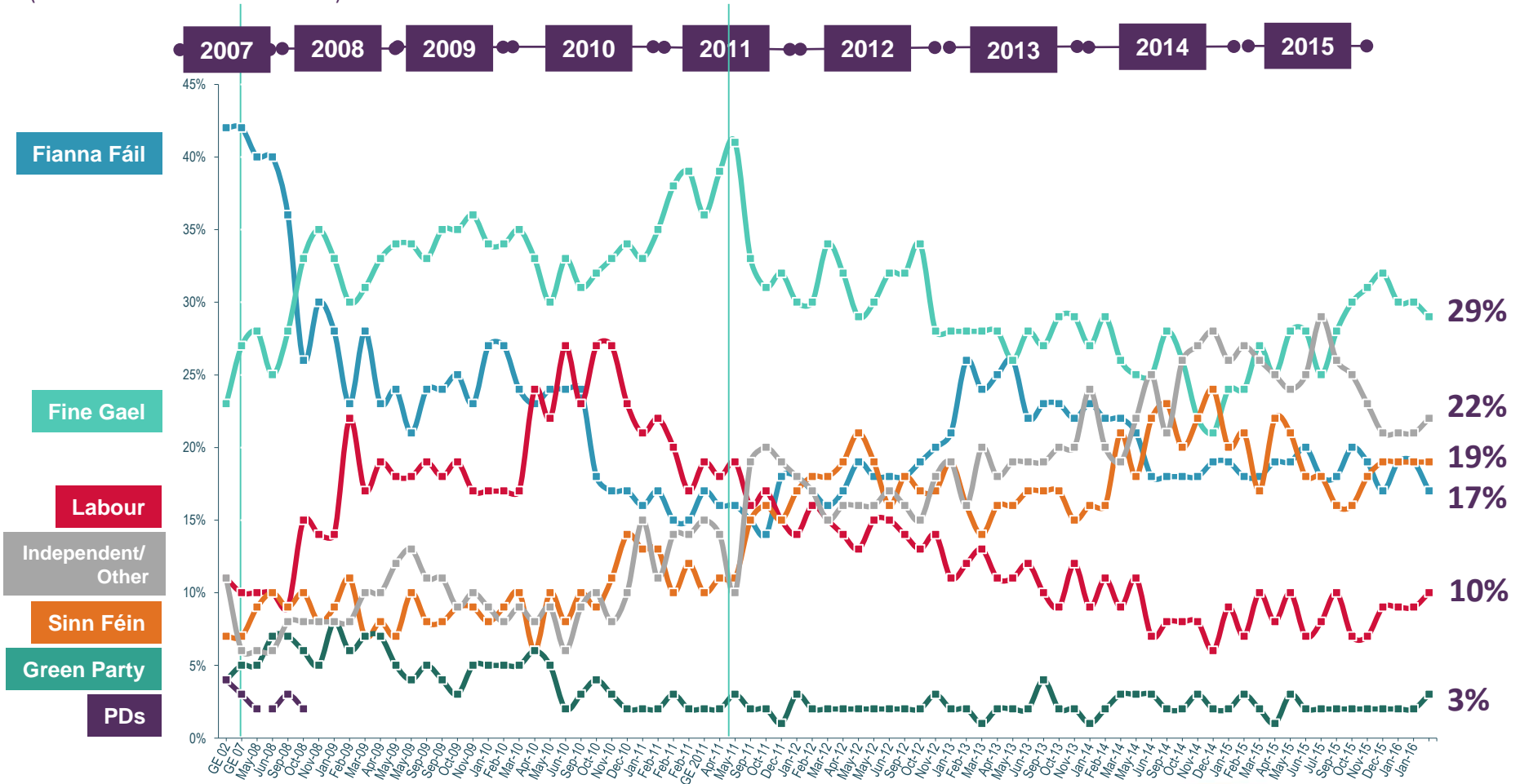
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



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)

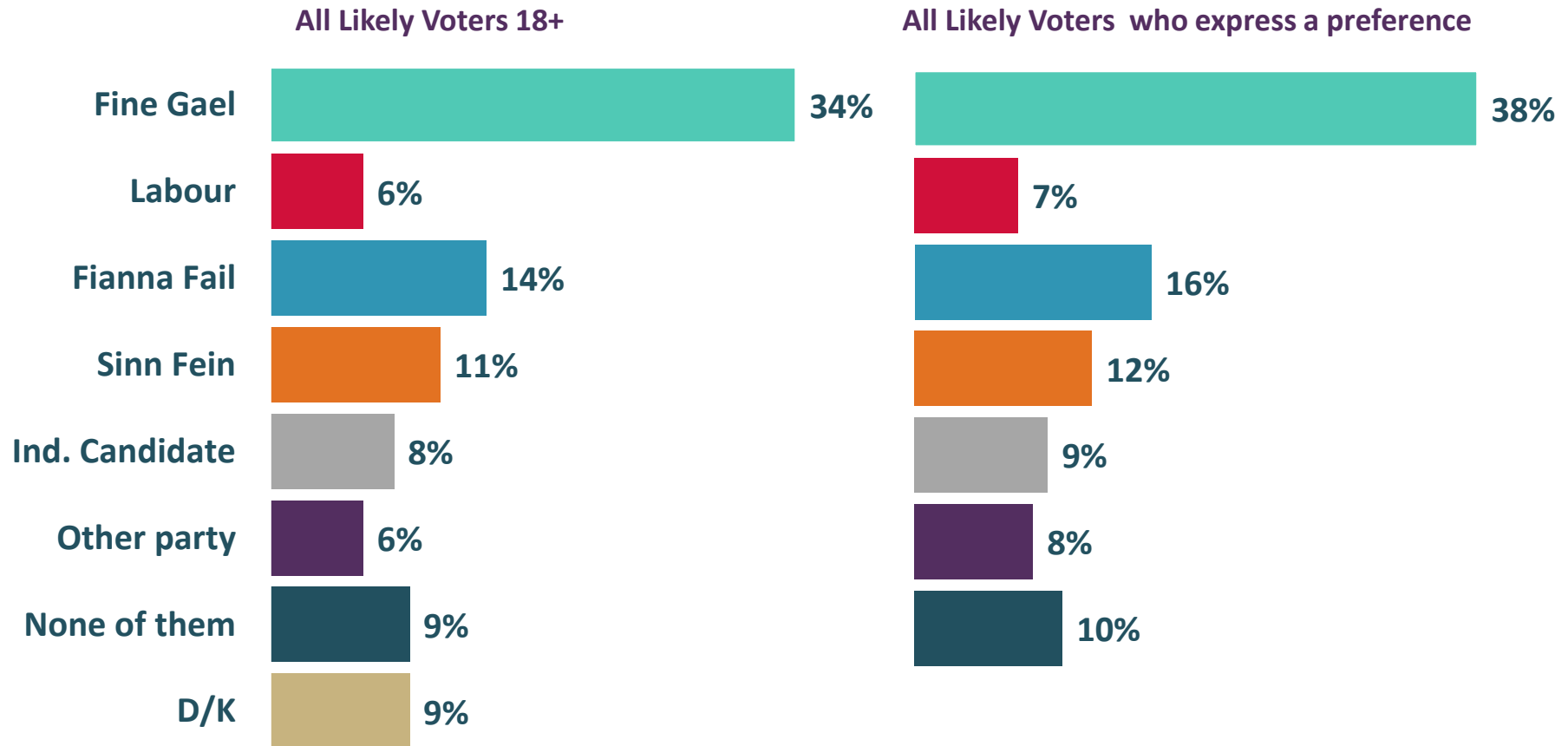




Managing The Economy

Most Trusted Party or Candidate to Manage Economy for next 5 Years

Regardless of whom you would give your first preference vote to, which party or Independent candidate, if any, do you trust the most to manage the economy over the next 5 years?



Most Trusted Party or Candidate to Manage Economy for next 5 Years x Current Vote Intention

Regardless of whom you would give your first preference vote to, which party or Independent candidate, if any, do you trust the most to manage the economy over the next 5 years?

		Current 1 st Preference Vote Intention					
Trust Most ↓	Total	Fine Gael	Labour	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein	Ind.	Undecided
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=1,008</i>	<i>n=245</i>	<i>n=83</i>	<i>n=145</i>	<i>n=167</i>	<i>n=152</i>	<i>n=101</i>
Fine Gael	30%	83%	33%	9%	7%	18%	17%
Labour	6%	2%	48%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Fianna Fáil	13%	2%	0%	69%	5%	7%	6%
Sinn Fein	12%	0%	2%	2%	61%	3%	7%
Independent Candidate/ Other	15%	4%	2%	5%	10%	44%	7%
None/DK	23%	9%	15%	14%	15%	25%	61%

Potential for Fine Gael to make further gains

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Who does the 'Floating Voter' Trust Most to Manage the economy?

Defined as; Those who voted for Fine Gael or Labour in 2011, AND currently say they would vote for an 'Independent Candidate' or is Undecided

(Base: All Floating Voters 18+ - 98)

Could current government make even further gains by focusing on the economy?

