



**The Sunday
Business Post**

General Election Opinion Poll

September 2017



Methodology and Weighting

- ✓ RED C interviewed a random sample of 1,004 adults aged 18+ by telephone between the 18th – 22th September 2017.
- ✓ 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 recall for how people voted at the last election and weights this to the exact result at the last election.
- ✓ 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 8 to 10 are included as being those who will definitely go and vote.
- ✓ In all respects the poll was completed to the opinion polling guidelines set out by both ESOMAR and AIMRO.



The Centre Holds – as both of the largest parties make gains

Summer often sees the main parties do well, as while the Dail is not in session, it is far harder for smaller parties to get the public's attention. That certainly appears to be the case in this poll, where both the main parties extend their support to the detriment of smaller parties and Independent candidates, but this is further than we have seen before and may be the first signs of a return to a political landscape not seen for some time.

There is little doubt that Leo Varadkar, as the new leader of Fine Gael, has probably received the most coverage during the summer break. Some commentators and opposition parties have described coverage of his first 100 days as Style over Substance, but it doesn't appear that voters particularly feel that way at this point. Fine Gael makes good gains in this first RED C / Sunday Business Post tracking poll since July, driving the party back up above even the most recent highs seen during the leadership campaign. The party ends up securing 30% of the first preference vote – which on first reflection appears to suggest that coverage of Mr Varadkar certainly appears to appeal to some voters.

What makes this a bit different to trends seen in the past however, is that support is not at the expense of Fianna Fail, which had been the case in July. In fact, Michael Martin and his fellow TD's also make gains when compared to their position in July, driving support up by 2% to take 26% share of the first preference vote in this poll. A significant bulk of the interviewing for the poll was taken during the Fianna Fail think in held on Mon/Tues of this past week, and we normally see parties get a bounce from the attention this helps them to receive. Despite this possible underlying factor in Fianna Fail gains, it is promising for the party that they can achieve their own gains, even when their main competitor is also on the rise. It certainly raises the prospect that the two parties are not entirely fishing from the same pool of potential supporters.

The gains for Fianna Fail, in tandem with those for Fine Gael, means that the two main parties remain within spitting distance of each other, and there isn't the clear water developing that Fine Gael may have hoped for. It is also a possible sign of a return of the political landscape in Ireland to the middle ground. It is too early to say of course if the smaller parties have lost out just due to a lack of coverage, or if this is a real move back towards a largely two party system that Ireland used to have. However it is important to note that between them Fine Gael and Fianna Fail now hold 56% of the first preference vote, based on this poll. A position not seen since before the 2011 General Election.

Sinn Fein will surely have something to say about any return to a political landscape dominated by the two main parties. They do fall back in support in this poll, and will need to do more to get their voice heard as the other two parties fight for support. The party secures 16% of the first preference vote, still ahead of the votes they achieved at the last election and only 2% down on their standing in July. The threat to the party comes from the appeal that Leo Varadkar appears to have with younger voters, who historically have been strong supporters of Sinn Fein.

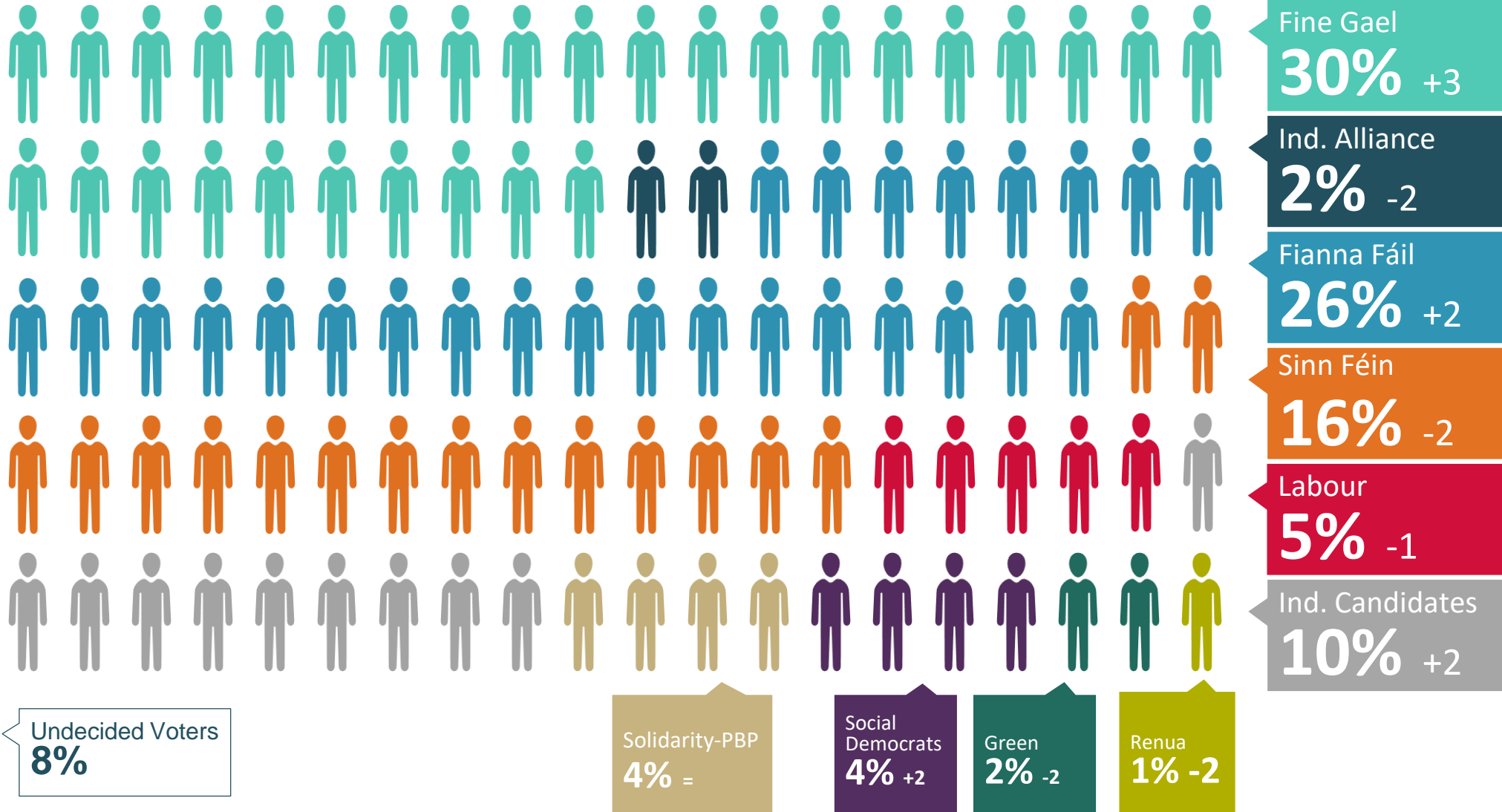
Others also suffer as the two largest parties make gains. Labour (down 1%), the Independent Alliance (-2%), the Green Party (-2%) and Renua (-2%). Many of these movements are actually slightly less than they appear, but are enough to see the topline figure rolled down. Labour for instance only actually falls back by 0.5%, but it is enough when rounding is taken into account to mean a 1% drop in the topline support.

It is also worth noting that while the Independent Alliance support falls back, the total vote share for all Independent candidates actually remains stable overall at 12%. Given that the biggest beneficiaries of the decline in support for the two largest parties were Independent candidates, this might suggest that growth in today's poll is simply a summer effect. Only time will tell if September 2017 marks a real start of a return to two parties dominating the political scene in Ireland, and the Centre re-asserting its hold on the electorate.

First Preference Vote Intention – 22th September 2017

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)

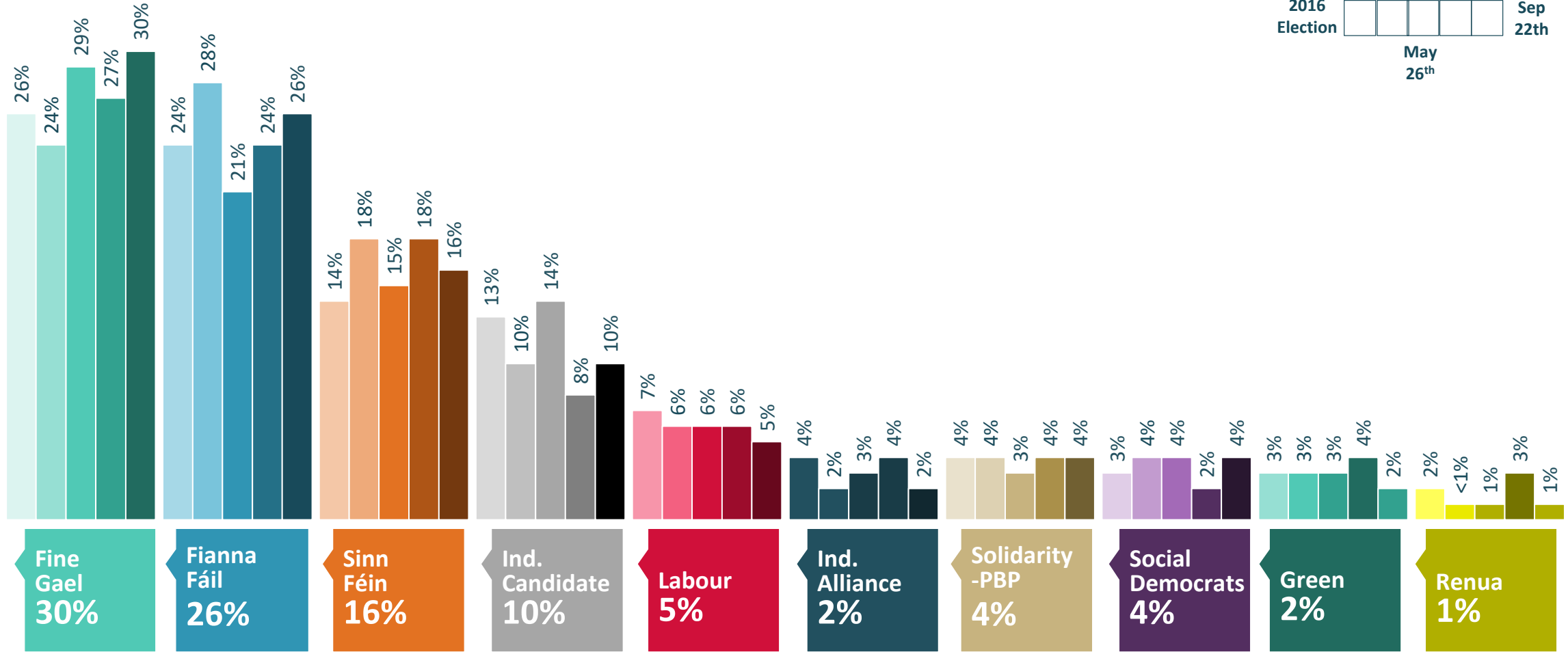
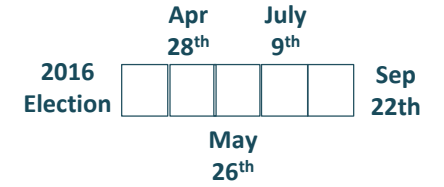
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – September '17

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)

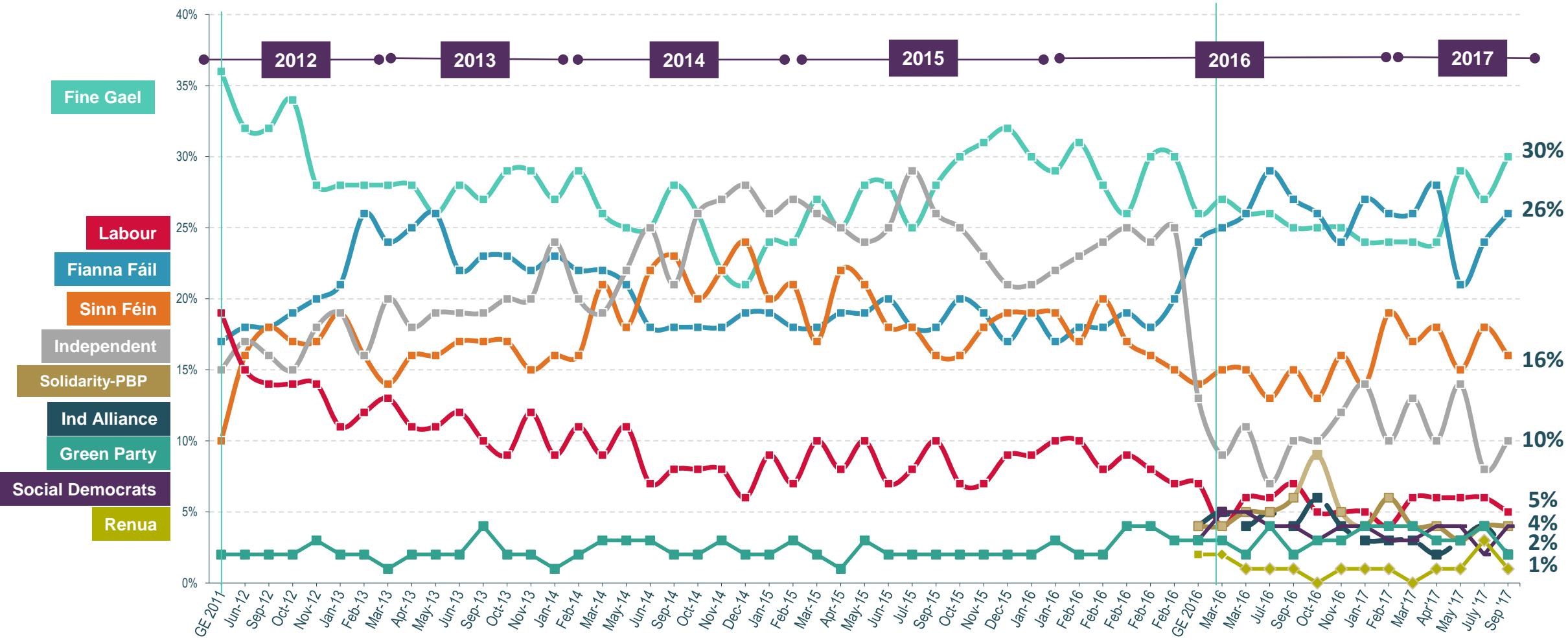
(Base: All adults 18+ who will vote)



First Preference Vote Intention – 2012-2017

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)

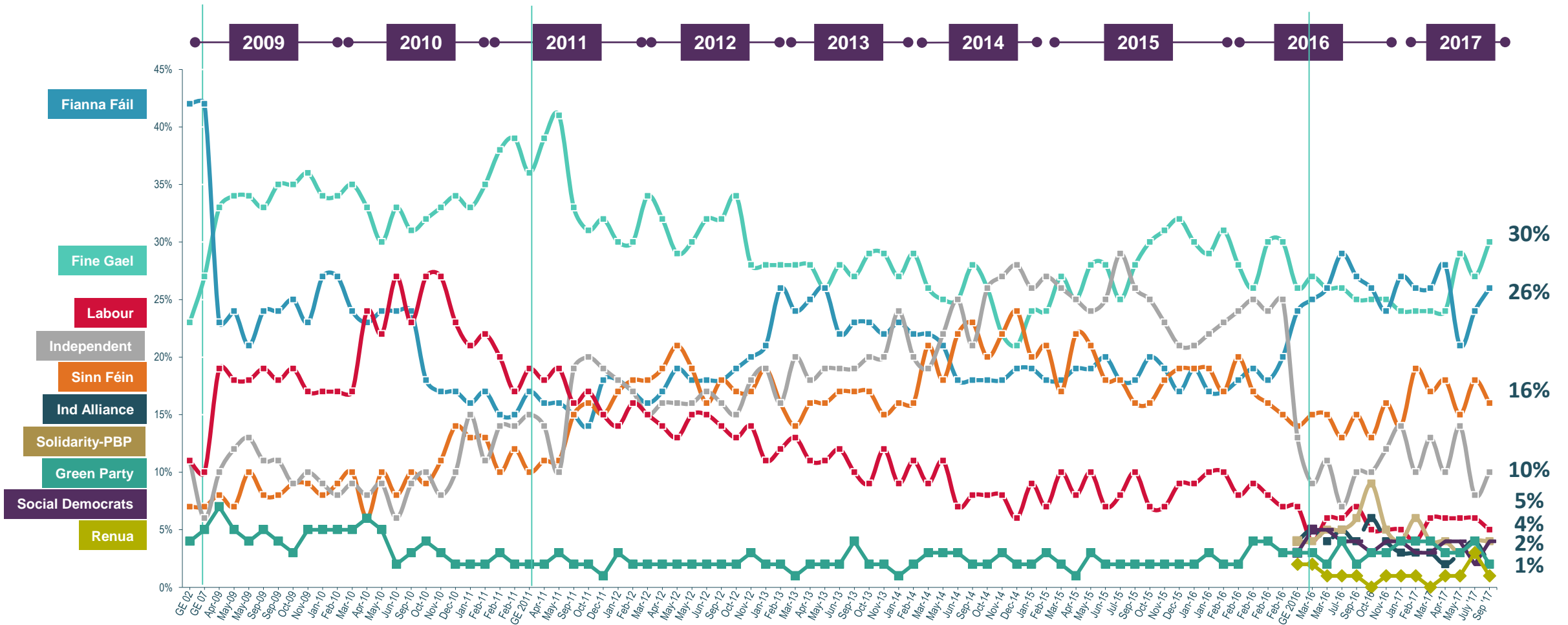


Note; From GE 2016 Onwards, 'Independents/Others' split out to show Solidarity-PBP, Social Democrats & Renua separately

First Preference Vote Intention – 2009 to 2017

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)



Note; From GE 2016 Onwards, 'Independents/Others' split out to show Solidarity-PBP, Social Democrats & Renua separately

**THANK
YOU**

REDC