

# GENERAL ELECTION 2016: POLITICAL ANALYSIS

3<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2016

## Political Overview

Taoiseach Enda Kenny has called the 2016 General Election today, for a vote on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February. The post-election landscape is predicted to change dramatically, with the current coalition government of Fine Gael-Labour predicted to lose seats.

A combination of a reduced number of Dáil seats, a redrawing of constituency boundaries, a relative recovery by the main opposition party (Fianna Fáil) and the introduction of gender quotas is expected to impact the governing coalition.

The decisive issue in the upcoming election is expected to be the economy – with the Government emphasising its economic performance to date and the opposition suggesting economic hardship/benefit was unevenly spread throughout society. The winner will largely be the party who can frame this issue.

The following document provides analysis of the following for CIF members:

- Polling Data Trends;
- Constituency Changes; and
- Select Comparison of Party Positions on construction issues.

## Polling Data Trends

- **Fine Gael** – Polling has fluctuated heavily for Fine Gael, particularly in the first half of its term, peaking at 44% in September 2011 and sinking to 19% in December 2014. Support has steady picked up throughout 2015 to c.30%, with the most recent poll (Red C Research; 31 January 2016) placing them at 29%.
- **Labour** – Consistently fell from General Election result of 19.4% to record lows of 5-6 in 2014, prompting a change of leadership. The party enjoyed a short-term bump in support as a result of its ‘new’ status under the new leader, Joan Burton, before ebbing again to 6% in June 2015. Since then, a slight upswing sees them on 9-10%, dissuading some media of a potential wipe-out scenario in the Election.
- **Fianna Fáil** – Enjoyed a remarkable boost in popularity in the immediate aftermath of its 2011 decline, becoming the most popular party in Ireland temporarily in mid-2013 (26-29%). After a successful 2014 Local Election, receiving the most votes in the country, the momentum has flat-lined close to 20% in the past two years.
- **Sinn Féin** – The party has consistently hovered between 16-20% in most polls since late 2011. Throughout late-2014 and March 2015, the party hit highs of 26%, averaging at 22%. Polls point to a huge increase on their General Election tally of 9.9%.
- **Independents** – Support has fluctuated over the past five years from 10% in 2011 to 32% in June 2014 and July 2015. Following steady decline in latter 2015, they currently stand at closer to 20%. Support was boosted at times by high-profile ejections from the main parties, but will have been diminished as many high-profile independent TDs have formed new parties.
- **Renua/Social Democrats/AAA-PBP** – None of the new smaller parties or alliances has alone gained any traction exceeding 4%, excluding an October 2015 poll for the AAA-PBP party of 7%.

## Constituency Changes

The number of Dáil seats has been cut from 166 to 158 and the number of constituencies from 43 to 40. In the process a number of long established three-seat constituencies were consolidated into larger county based five-seaters while there were significant changes affecting all of the Dublin constituencies. Most of the existing constituencies have been changed to a greater or lesser degree, with 11 remaining unchanged. There are now 11 five-seat constituencies, 16 four-seaters and 13 three-seaters.

Constituency	Overview of Change
<b>Cavan-Monaghan (4)</b>	Drops from a five- to a four-seater, with a chunk of west Cavan moving to Sligo-Leitrim.
<b>Cork North-Central (4)</b>	Gains a significant portion of neighbouring Cork South-Central, while losing a third of that number to Cork North-West. Remains a four-seater.

<b>Cork North-West (3)</b>	Gains 5,048 people in four electoral divisions from Cork North-Central to keep its current status as a three-seater.
<b>Cork South Central (4)</b>	This constituency loses a seat as a result of a large slice of territory being transferred to Cork North-Central.
<b>Donegal (5)</b>	Creation of a new five-seater replacing the existing two three-seaters, while a small section of South Donegal has been transferred to Sligo-Leitrim.
<b>Dublin Bay North (5)</b>	A new constituency created by the merger of two three-seaters, Dublin North Central and Dublin North East.
<b>Dublin Bay South (4)</b>	The old Dublin South East constituency with parts of Terenure and Kimmage being transferred to keep it a four-seater.
<b>Dublin Central (3)</b>	Reduced from a four to a three-seater with parts being transferred to Dublin West and Dublin North-West.
<b>Dublin Fingal (5)</b>	The old Dublin North constituency with an extra seat.
<b>Dublin Rathdown (3)</b>	The old Dublin South constituency which has been reduced from a five-seater to a three-seater.
<b>Dublin South Central (4)</b>	Reduced to a four-seater.
<b>Dublin South-West (5)</b>	Gains a seat following the reduction of Dublin South.
<b>Galway East (3)</b>	Loses a seat, with a big part of the constituency moving to the new Roscommon-Galway constituency.
<b>Kerry (5)</b>	The previous two three-seaters are merged into a new five-seat constituency.
<b>Laois (3)</b>	The old Laois-Offaly constituency has been redrawn and Laois becomes a constituency in its own right.
<b>Mayo (4)</b>	Loses a seat to become a four-seater.
<b>Offaly (3)</b>	Becomes a constituency in its own right with parts of Tipperary included.

<b>Roscommon – Galway (3)</b>	The change here is that a portion of east Galway has been attached to Roscommon in place of south Leitrim.
<b>Tipperary (5)</b>	Tipperary North and South have been amalgamated into one five seat constituency.

## Select Comparison of Party Positions

**FINE GAEL**  
Labour

**FIANNA FAÍL**  
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

**Sinn Féin**  
BUILDING AN IRELAND OF EQUALS

**RENUA**  
IRELAND

**Social Democrats**

<b>Housing Output</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAMA to build 20,000 houses by 2020, using existing lands / funding</li> <li>Increase housing output to 25,000 p.a</li> <li>Social housing allocation increased by €69m to €414</li> <li>€10m for an affordable housing pilot scheme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase rent supplement ceiling by 5-15%</li> <li>Social Housing: State (€150m), €1bn (ISIF) and €200m (NAMA) for social housing</li> <li>€150,000 new homes built by 2021.</li> <li>First-time buyers scheme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€400 Second home charge</li> <li>€300m housing investment</li> <li>Abolish property tax</li> <li>2016 – 2021, will deliver 36,500 social and affordable houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-billion PPP schemes to resolve undersupply</li> <li>Pension funds to fund development in return for rent roll</li> <li>Waive income tax on rental income on +5yr rental units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€300m investment into housing, including incentives to open up vacant premises</li> <li>Invest NAMA assets into housing</li> <li>Scrap double-taxation of 'accidental landlords'</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€42bn infrastructure plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accelerate job-friendly aspects of the capital plan.</li> <li>98% of all capital expenditure to be spent on goods and services provided by domestic Irish contractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit extra €2.2bn for capital expenditure</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match the capital funding provide for in the October 2015 Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Vacant Sites/ Development Levies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a vacant site levy to prevent land hoarding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Propose a vacant site levy in urban areas.</li> <li>Review all development levies across every Local Authority to re-assess development levy rates based on re-evaluation of cost levels following the removal of water provision from local authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 3% levy on all land idle for 12 months preceding, set in 2016 excluding land held by local authorities with a higher band of 5% for land greater than 1 acre. Increase levy in annual increments for sites which remain idle in areas of high need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vacant land banks should face levies where they are being hoarded by state or private-owners</li> <li>Empty commercial sites should be levied with additional charges until they are de-rated and used as residential property or re-let as commercial properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a development site levy as early as 2019.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamline the planning process.</li> <li>Examining the possibility of a 'use it or lose it' clause in new planning legislation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain Part V in full and establish Part V teams in local authorities.</li> <li>Establish a National Planning Portal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine the introduction of a Strategic Planning National Housing Agency</li> <li>Establish an Office of the Planning Regulator</li> <li>Strengthen Part V legislation</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Housing / Planning Minister and new body Housing Ireland to replace Housing Agency to coordinate procurement, design and planning of new houses.</li> <li>Reinstatement of Part V.</li> <li>Change planning laws for development of new houses that accommodate all stages of life-cycle.</li> </ul>