

## Voting Behaviour: Continuing De-alignment

*Michael Marsh and Gail McElroy*

As we saw in the previous chapter, this election was notable once again for the size of the swing against the governing parties. As in 2011, the incumbents lost very heavily at the polls, and unlike the 1970s and 1980s, when all governments ‘lost’ elections without suffering huge losses, the scale of the defeat was again massive. The collapse of Fianna Fáil in 2011 was hardly a surprise given the scale of economic collapse, but the Fine Gael–Labour defeat this time is more unexpected given the extent of the economic recovery. The electorate is, clearly, in an unforgiving mood, and it now seems easier to win support at one election than to keep it at the next one. While 2011 might have been the first step towards a realignment of Irish politics, 2016 suggested that it was rather a sign of de-alignment with voters abandoning their old partisan affiliations and failing to find new ones. The scale of volatility indicates that there is now little binding voters to particular parties. However, there was also no shortage of new parties and new candidates looking to establish themselves and with the growth of Sinn Féin, AAA–PBP, the Social Democrats and some left-wing independents there was arguably a shift on the left to more radical alternatives. Some have viewed this as evidence for a clearer left–right, class-structured politics: a realignment of sorts.

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M. Marsh (✉) • G. McElroy  
Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

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