

# **Irish Elections 1948–77: Results and Analysis**

Sources for the Study of Irish Politics 2

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## Introduction

This book is the second in the series *Sources for the Study of Irish Politics*, which is published by the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI). The aim of the PSAI ([www.psal.ie](http://www.psal.ie)) is to promote the professional study of politics in and of Ireland, and the aim of the series is to make more widely available material that is at present difficult to obtain. The first volume, published in 1993, covered the elections of 1922–44, for which no officially published results existed. This volume is being published jointly with the major international publisher Routledge, extending the cooperation between Routledge and the PSAI established in the co-publication of the three most recent editions of *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (5th edition 2010).

The first election for which an official result was published was the by-election in Kerry South in November 1944, and the results of all subsequent by-elections and general elections have been published by the Stationery Office, Dublin, based on figures collated by the Department of the Environment (formerly the Department of Local Government). However, the need for a volume such as the present one has remained, because these official publications are long out of print. Moreover, until 1973 they did not contain national summaries of party vote totals, merely supplying the results for individual constituencies. The period since 1981, in contrast, is very well covered by a range of publications, both official and unofficial (see list of references at the back of this volume), which is why this book covers in detail elections only up to 1977, although it also includes summary results of the nine general elections of the period 1981–2007.

As was noted in the introduction to *Irish Elections 1922–44: results and analysis*, the names of candidates can vary somewhat over time. Some candidates have switched between the Irish-language and English-language versions of their names, while others (an O'Connor, for example) might drop an 'O' so that their name would appear in a higher position on the ballot paper, on which names are listed in alphabetical order. Thus an O'Connor outside political life might be Connor on the ballot paper, while the prolific author 'O'Brien, Conor Cruise' became 'Cruise-O'Brien, Conor' on the ballot paper. The proscription on non-party candidates' using labels of their own choosing has led some to change their names to incorporate part of their message, such as 'Alderman Dublin Bay Rockall Loftus, Seán D' in 1981 or 'Gregory-Independent, Tony' in 1981 and 1982. The forenames deployed on the ballot paper, too, can change over time, as middle names are added or dropped while the main name becomes either more homely or more formal. The list of all TDs of the 1921–2008 period at the end of this volume, along with the Oireachtas on-line database (see last page of this book for details), should eliminate any confusion. Candidates' belief that having a surname that begins with a letter early in the alphabet, incidentally, is not without substance. During the 1922–2008 period 4,372 seats were filled, and 1,271 (29.1 per cent) of these were taken by candidates whose surnames began with the letters A, B or C, with 2,332 (53.3 per cent) being taken by candidates whose surnames began with a letter in the range A–H.

During the period 1922–2008, Dáil Éireann was elected at contested elections held under the PR-STV electoral system (proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote). The parliament elected in 1922 was the third Dáil; the first two Dála were elected during the struggle for independence from Britain. Members of the first Dáil were elected in December 1918 under the single-member plurality system and constituted themselves as Dáil Éireann in January 1919, and while the second Dáil was nominally elected under PR-STV in June 1921, in practice there were no electoral contests because in every constituency the number of candidates nominated exactly matched the number of seats to be filled.

Since 1979, the Republic of Ireland has held 5-yearly elections to the European Parliament (EP), for which the country has been divided into 4 constituencies. Between 1979 and 1999 these were: one consisting of the greater Dublin area (Dublin city and county), one comprising the rest of the province of Leinster in the east of the country (the counties of Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow), one corresponding to the province of Munster in the south (the counties of Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford), and one based on the province of Connacht in the west (the counties of Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo) and the three Ulster counties in the north-west that are part of the Republic (Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan). Although the constituency boundaries have been amended for EP elections since 1999, the standard practice of presenting voting figures for these four provinces/regions is followed in the aggregated tables in this book. During the period covered here, Connacht and the three Ulster counties in the Republic, comprising the western and north-western part of the country, were characterised mainly by small-scale subsistence farming, carried out primarily by owner-occupiers employing little outside labour. Dublin, as the capital city, was the most industrialised part of the country. The counties in the rest of Leinster and Munster varied markedly, but these provinces could be broadly characterised during the period covered as areas of large farming, albeit with growing urban centres.

## A guide to the PR-STV electoral system in Ireland

Voters are given a ballot paper containing the names of all candidates, in alphabetical order. Candidates' party affiliations, if any, have appeared on the ballot paper at elections since 1963, and since 1997 candidates have been entitled to include their photograph on the ballot paper beside their name. Voters write a '1' beside the name of their favourite candidate, and can rank as many of the other candidates as they wish (by placing '2', '3' and so on beside their names).

The first step in the counting of the votes is to ascertain the total number of first preferences cast. From this figure, the Droop quota is calculated. This is calculated as the lowest integer greater than  $\frac{vv}{s+1}$ , where  $vv$  is the number of valid votes and  $s$  the number of seats. This number has the property that it is the smallest number that only  $s$  candidates can all attain. Thus in Cavan in 1948, where there were 34,727 valid votes and 4 seats to be filled, the number the quota had to exceed was  $\frac{34727}{4+1}$ , or 6,945.4, and so it was set at 6,946. All candidates whose total of first preferences equals or exceeds the quota are declared elected. On rare occasions, all seats are filled on first preferences, with  $s$  candidates (in other words, as many as there are seats to be filled) attaining the quota on the first count, as in Dublin South-East in 1951 or Kerry South in 1957.

Almost always, at least some seats remain unfilled after the counting of the first preferences, and now the count proceeds through a number of stages. Each of these involves either the distribution of the votes of eliminated candidates, or the distribution of the 'surplus' votes (that is, the votes they possess over and above the quota) of elected candidates. Thus, in Cavan in 1948, the second stage of the count was to distribute the 4,222 surplus votes of Smith in accordance with the next preferences marked on all 11,168 votes that bore a first preference for him. These surplus votes are distributed among the continuing candidates (i.e. those still in the count, having been neither elected nor eliminated), in proportion to the next 'live' preferences marked (a live preference is defined as one for a continuing candidate). The precise number of votes transferred from an elected candidate A to another candidate B is given by the formula:

$$\frac{(\text{number of A's surplus votes}) * (\text{number of A's votes that contain a next live preference for B})}{\text{total number of A's votes that contain a live preference}}$$

Thus, in Cavan in 1948, we can calculate that among the votes cast for Smith that contained at least one live next preference, the proportion carrying a next preference for Sheridan was  $\frac{2955}{4222}$ , or 70.0 per cent.

The returning officer is not obliged (though is entitled) to distribute a surplus if this (together with any other undistributed surpluses) could not alter the position of the bottom two candidates or make any other salient difference, which is why in Cavan in 1948 Patrick O'Reilly's surplus was not distributed on the seventh count. At all elections from 1923 to 1989 inclusive candidates had to pay a deposit of IR£100 (€127), which was returned to those candidates whose vote total at any stage exceeded a third of the quota. Sometimes the surplus of an elected candidate was distributed solely because of the possibility that this might have enabled a trailing candidate to save his or her deposit, even if it could not make any difference to the overall result. In Cavan in 1948 both Dolphin and Thornton lost their deposits, but Thomas O'Reilly saved his because his vote total came to exceed a third of the quota (2,316), even though he received fewer than this number of first preferences.

If a candidate is elected on the first count, all his or her votes are examined for their second preferences, but if the candidate is elected on a later count, only those in the last package received are examined. Thus, when Sheridan's surplus was distributed on the fourth count in Cavan in 1948, the distribution was based entirely on the 1,555 votes that Sheridan received from Dolphin to take him over the quota, and not on all 8,010 votes then in Sheridan's possession. In some cases (Davern's surplus in Tipperary South in 1951, Reynolds's surplus in Sligo-Leitrim in 1954, MacEoin's surplus in Longford-Westmeath in 1961, Calleary's surplus in Mayo North in 1965, perhaps McLoughlin's surplus in Sligo-Leitrim in 1969) this rule can affect the result of the count, because the votes in the last package received, having been received from a candidate of another party, are not representative of all the votes in the elected candidate's possession.

If no candidate has a surplus, then the count proceeds by the elimination of the candidate with fewest votes. This candidate's papers are transferred according to the next live preference marked. Any paper without a preference for any of the continuing candidates becomes 'non-transferable'. Thus, in Cavan in 1948, the elimination of Thornton on the third count entailed examining the 1,119 votes carrying a first preference for him and the 109 votes that he received from Smith on the second count. Each of these votes was transferred to the continuing candidate ranked most highly on these ballot papers. Forty-three of the ballot papers contained no preference for any of the continuing candidates, and they thus became non-transferable – the voters who cast these papers were, in effect, declaring themselves indifferent as between the remaining candidates.

The counting process continues until all the seats are filled by candidates attaining the quota (as happened in Dublin North-Central in 1948, for example), or until the top  $s$  candidates are declared elected because they can no longer be caught by any other candidate – as happened in Cavan in 1948, where Tully was declared elected after the seventh count, despite not having reached the quota, as he could not possibly be overtaken by Cole, the only other remaining candidate.

In the results presented in this volume, an asterisk (\*) before a candidate's name denotes that the candidate was an incumbent TD.



## The 1948 general election

Fianna Fáil's crushing victory at the 1944 election, when it had won 76 seats out of 138, could have ensured it a further five years in office, but in the event the next election came when the twelfth Dáil still had fifteen months to run. The main trigger was the rise of Clann na Poblachta (Party of the Republic), which had been founded in July 1946 under the leadership of Seán MacBride, a charismatic lawyer who was a former leader of the IRA. The Clann combined the traditional if limited appeal of militant republicanism with an emphasis on its social programme, including a commitment to tackle unemployment and emigration and to support an expansion of the welfare state. It also inveighed against 'the low standard of political morality' being displayed by Fianna Fáil, which had become by 1947 tainted by a number of affairs that, though mild by later standards, were embarrassing in that era.

The Clann won two by-elections in spectacular style in October 1947. Éamon de Valera, who had been Taoiseach since 1932, might have reacted cautiously, reasoning that the factors that had led to disappointing Fianna Fáil performances in the by-elections would also count against it in a general election. Instead, he seems to have decided that the Clann would only grow stronger and better organised if allowed time to develop and that in the long run it would be best for Fianna Fáil to tackle the challenge head on and as soon as possible. Accordingly, the Dáil was dissolved and election day was set for 4 February. The election was fought on new boundaries following a redistricting scheme that, *inter alia*, reduced average district magnitude (the number of TDs elected per constituency) from 4.1 to just 3.7 and, for the first time, did not provide for any constituencies that returned more than 5 TDs.

Clann na Poblachta was widely expected to do well at the election given the problems that all the established parties were facing. The Fianna Fáil government, after such a long period in power, appeared tired, jaded, immobile, and over-fond of the sweeping powers it had acquired during the 1939–45 'emergency'. The main opposition party, Fine Gael, seemed to be subsiding into oblivion. Its component parts had won almost 40 per cent of the votes at the 1933 election, but by 1944 it was barely above 20 per cent. It was unable to find candidates to run in four of the five by-elections held during 1945. The Labour movement was in difficulty. The National Labour split, dating from early 1944, remained unhealed, and the Labour party itself still found itself required to deny claims (also now levelled against Clann na Poblachta) that it was 'infested by' communists.

The Clann represented something new and dynamic in what appeared to be a stagnant party system, and in this pre-opinion poll era was both expected and expecting to overtake Labour and Fine Gael and perhaps even to challenge Fianna Fáil itself for first position. The results of the 1948 election, though, like those of many other elections, testified to the underlying durability of the structure of the Irish party system. While Fianna Fáil did sustain losses, its vote share did not fall below its 1943 level of support, and it won one more seat than it had then. Fine Gael and Labour both virtually held their vote shares – though Fine Gael did fall below the 20 per cent mark for the first (and so far only) time – and, in the expanded Dáil, both gained seats. Fine Gael's vote slippage disguised a striking sign of renewal, though: it had 11 new TDs elected, compared with only four at the previous three elections put together. Clann na Talmhan, which had won 10 per cent of the votes in 1943 and 1944, now lost about half of its support and was henceforth little more than a peripheral party.

Clann na Poblachta itself won 13 per cent of the votes, the best showing ever for a new party, but it fell foul of the small district magnitude characterising the new constituency configuration and ended up notably under-represented. On a proportional basis its vote share should have earned it 19 seats, but it received only 10 – fewer than Labour won, even though it won 60,000 more votes than Labour, and less than a third of the total of the supposedly moribund Fine Gael. Though it was not apparent at the time, de Valera's gamble had succeeded, in the long term at least: the Clann, having failed to make the dramatic breakthrough expected, was never remotely the same force again.

The 1948 election turned out to be a significant landmark in the development of the Irish party system – not because of the way the votes were cast but because of what happened afterwards. Government formation had hitherto been a straightforward matter for which no-one needed to consult complex models of coalition-building: the largest party formed a single-party government, with the tacit support of a smaller party or independent TDs if need be. In the immediate aftermath of the 1948 election, it was expected that the same thing would happen again: Fianna Fáil, which still had more seats than all the other parties put together, would carry on in office, probably with the support of National Labour and with the consent of some of the Fianna Fáil-leaning independents.

These expectations were shattered by the construction of Ireland's first coalition government, which consisted of five parties – all parties, in fact, except Fianna Fáil – and some independents. Fine Gael took the initiative in forging this administration, and though the party's leader, Richard Mulcahy, was ruled out as a potential Taoiseach by some of the other parties, the position went to another Fine Gael TD, John A. Costello. Of the thirteen posts in government Fine Gael received six, Labour and Clann na Poblachta two each, and Clann na Talmhan and National Labour one each, the other going to the independent TD James Dillon, who had a small following among the independents. In a nod of deference to Fianna Fáil's familiar trope to the effect that coalitions were inherently indecisive, ineffective, internally divided and unstable, the participating parties shrank from the label 'coalition' and instead declared that they had put together an 'Inter-Party government', an altogether different thing apparently. If it carried any meaning, it indicated that the parties in the government would be operating with a degree of autonomy, and indeed this proved to be the case, with a picture of disunity being presented on occasion. However, despite Fianna Fáil's predictions that this multi-party administration could fall at any moment, the next election did not take place until May 1951.

1948

## CARLOW-KILKENNY

Electorate:	61,031						
Valid votes:	45,652						
Turnout:	74.80%						
Quota:	7,609	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4	Count 5	Count 6	Count 7
Seats:	5	Derrig	Carroll	Gleeson	Cleere	Sheehan	Burke
Candidates:	14	surplus	votes	votes	votes	votes	votes

**Fianna Fáil**

*Derrig, Thomas	<b>8787</b>	-1178					
*Humphreys, Francis	4301	+418	4719	+ 51	4770	+ 15	4785 + 42 4827 + 10 4837 + 11 4848
Rice, Joseph	1506	+267	1773	+ 9	1782	+ 20	1802 + 20 1822 + 16 1838 + 2 1840
Walsh, Thomas	4468	+332	4800	+ 4	4804	+ 15	4819 + 77 4896 + 36 4932 + 13 4945

**Fine Gael**

Burke, David	1543	+ 3	1546	+ 3	1549	+ 8	1557 + 31 1588 + 34 1622 -1622
Crotty, Patrick J	5438	+ 11	5449	+ 28	5477	+ 78	5555 + 110 5665 + 97 5762 +1078 6840
Hughes, Joseph	6055	+ 30	6085	+ 33	6118	+ 33	6151 + 27 6178 + 38 6216 + 369 6585

**Labour**

Bergin, Patrick	2537	+ 4	2541	+ 29	2570	+ 7	2577 + 329 2906 + 38 2944 + 12 2956
Cleere, William J	991	+ 7	998	+ 28	1026	+ 16	1042 -1042

**Clann na Poblachta**

Barry, Michael J	2797	+ 6	2803	+ 35	2838	+252	3090 + 66 3156 +1101 4257 + 42 4299
Gleeson, Patrick	809	+ 15	824	+ 7	831	- 831	
Sheehan, Charles	1186	+ 3	1189	+ 1	1190	+276	1466 + 89 1555 -1555

**National Labour**

Carroll, Stephen	527	+ 3	530	- 530			
*Pattison, James P	4707	+ 79	4786	+274	5060	+ 92	5152 + 174 5326 +106 5432 + 32 5464

*Non-transferable* + 0 0 + 28 28 + 19 47 + 77 124 + 79 203 + 63 266

*Note:* the election in this constituency was not held until 10 February (every other constituency voted on 4 February) because of the death after nomination day of Éamonn Coogan, a Fine Gael candidate and outgoing TD.

Count 8	Count 9	Count 10	Count 11
Rice	Bergin	Barry	Hughes
votes	votes	votes	surplus

**Fianna Fáil**

*Derrig, Thomas	Elected						
*Humphreys, Francis	4848	+307	5155	+ 459	5614	+373	5987 + 117 6104
Rice, Joseph	1840	-1840					
Walsh, Thomas	4945	+1174	6119	+ 108	6227	+224	6451 + 69 <b>6520</b>

**Fine Gael**

Burke, David	Eliminated						
Crotty, Patrick J	6840	+ 73	6913	+ 189	7102	+782	<b>7884</b>
Hughes, Joseph	6585	+ 46	6631	+ 543	7174	+838	<b>8012</b> - 403

**Labour**

Bergin, Patrick	2956	+ 2	2958	-2958			
Cleere, William J	Eliminated						

**Clann na Poblachta**

Barry, Michael J	4299	+ 16	4315	+ 836	5151	-5151	
Gleeson, Patrick	Eliminated						
Sheehan, Charles	Eliminated						

**National Labour**

Carroll, Stephen	Eliminated						
*Pattison, James P	5464	+170	5634	+ 248	5882	+709	6591 + 158 <b>6749</b>

*Non-transferable* 266 + 52 318 + 575 893 +2225 3118 + 59 3177

First preference summary	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats	(Change from 1944)
Fianna Fáil	19,062	41.76	n/a	2.51	2	n/a
Fine Gael	13,036	28.56	n/a	1.71	2	n/a
Labour	3,528	7.73	n/a	0.46	-	n/a
Clann na Poblachta	4,792	10.50	n/a	0.63	-	n/a
National Labour	5,234	11.46	n/a	0.69	1	n/a

1948

## CAVAN

Electorate:	44,068						
Valid votes:	34,727						
Turnout:	78.80%						
Quota:	6,946	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4	Count 5	Count 6	Count 7
Seats:	4	Smith	Thornton	Dolphin	Sheridan	T O'Reilly	Donohoe
Candidates:	9	surplus	votes	votes	surplus	votes	votes

**Fianna Fáil**

Dolphin, Francis	1794	+304	2098	+ 81	2179	-2179	
*Sheridan, Michael	3221	+2955	6176	+ 279	6455	+1555	<b>8010</b> -1064
*Smith, Patrick	<b>11168</b>	-4222					

**Fine Gael**

O'Reilly, Thomas P	2081	+ 139	2220	+ 87	2307	+ 94	2401 + 157 2558 -2558
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**Labour**

Thornton, Edward	1119	+ 109	1228	-1228			
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**Clann na Poblachta**

Donohoe, Peter A	2253	+117	2370	+126	2496	+109	2605 + 74 2679 +541 3220 -3220
Tully, John	2970	+118	3088	+471	3559	+120	3679 +132 3811 +370 4181 +2489 <b>6670</b>

**Others**

Cole, John James	4982	+119	5101	+ 84	5185	+ 37	5222 + 67 5289 +175 5464 + 192 5656
O'Reilly, Patrick	5139	+361	5500	+ 57	5557	+203	5760 +344 6104 +1243 <b>7347</b>

<i>Non-transferable</i>		+ 0	0	+ 43	43	+ 61	104 +290 394 +229 623 +539 1162
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<b>First preference summary</b>	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats	(Change from 1944)
Fianna Fáil	16,183	46.60	-4.24	2.33	2	0
Fine Gael	2,081	5.99	+5.99	0.30	-	0
Labour	1,119	3.22	+3.22	0.16	-	0
Clann na Poblachta	5,223	15.04	+15.04	0.75	1	+1
Others	10,121	29.14	-20.02	1.46	1	-1

## By-elections to the twelfth Dáil, 1944–48

1 10.11.44

### KERRY SOUTH

Electorate:	35,940		
Valid votes:	22,603		
Turnout:	62.89%		Count 2
Quota:	11,302	First	O'Connell
Candidates:	3	preferences	votes

<b>Fianna Fáil</b>				
O'Donoghue, Donal J	10986	+ 785	11771	
<b>Fine Gael</b>				
O'Connell, Eoin	4822	- 4822		
<b>Clann na Talmhan</b>				
Horan, Edmond	6795	+2553	9348	
<i>Non-transferable</i>		+1484	1484	

*Cause:* resignation of Finian Lynch (FG), 3 October 1944, to take up a judgeship

First preference summary	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats
Fianna Fáil	10,986	48.60	-3.89	0.97	1
Fine Gael	4,822	21.33	-2.72	0.43	
Clann na Talmhan	6,795	30.06	+6.60	0.60	

2 4.12.45

### CLARE

Electorate:	60,993		
Valid votes:	29,825		
Turnout:	48.90%		
Quota:	14,913	First	
Candidates:	2	preferences	

<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	
Shanahan, Patrick	21526
<b>Fine Gael</b>	
Monahan, Edward	8299

*Cause:* death of Patrick Burke (FG), 7 February 1945

First preference summary	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats
Fianna Fáil	21,526	72.17	+15.49	1.44	1
Fine Gael	8,299	27.83	+14.35	0.56	

## 3 4.12.45

## DUBLIN NORTH-WEST

Electorate:	70,331	
Valid votes:	19,900	
Turnout:	28.29%	
Quota:	9,951	First
Candidates:	2	preferences

<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	
de Valera, Vivion	<b>13503</b>
<b>Labour</b>	
Breen, John	6397

*Cause:* resignation of Seán T O'Kelly (FF) upon election as President of Ireland, 15 June 1945  
*Note:* This represented the lowest turnout at any Dáil contest of the 1922–2008 period.

First preference summary	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats
Fianna Fáil	13,503	67.85	+16.33	1.36	1
Labour	6,397	32.15	+14.16	0.64	

## 4 4.12.45

## KERRY SOUTH

Electorate:	36,029	
Valid votes:	18,501	
Turnout:	51.35%	
Quota:	9,251	First
Candidates:	2	preferences

<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	
Crowley, Honor Mary	<b>10483</b>
<b>Clann na Talmhan</b>	
Horan, Edmond	8018

*Cause:* death on 5 May 1945 of Fred Hugh Crowley (FF), husband of the Fianna Fáil candidate

First preference summary	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats
Fianna Fáil	10,483	56.66	+4.17	1.13	1
Clann na Talmhan	8,018	43.34	+19.88	0.87	

## 5 4.12.45

## MAYO SOUTH

Electorate:	57,775	
Valid votes:	31,838	
Turnout:	55.11%	
Quota:	15,920	First
Candidates:	2	preferences

<b>Fianna Fáil</b>	
Gilmartin, Charles	14861
<b>Clann na Talmhan</b>	
Commons, Bernard	<b>16977</b>

*Cause:* resignation of Michael Cleary (FF), as from 10 October 1945, upon appointment as Dublin County Registrar

First preference summary	Votes	%	(Change from 1944)	Quotas	Seats
Fianna Fáil	14,861	46.68	-3.40	0.93	
Clann na Talmhan	16,977	53.32	+17.58	1.07	1