

Independents and the Election: The Party Crashers

Liam Weeks

Few books on elections make any reference to independents, let alone have a whole chapter devoted to them. That it should be the case in this volume of *How Ireland Voted* is testimony to the performance of independents at the February 2016 Dáil election. A record 23 independent candidates were elected, beating the previous high of 16 in June 1927. This was not just a national record but also one of international standing, as it was proportionally the most independents elected to any national parliament in a mainstream democracy since 1950. It is not surprising then that ‘Independents’ Day’ was one of the more common newspaper headlines dominating post-election coverage. As is detailed in Chapter 11, independents also had an extensive role to play in the formation of government, following which three independents were appointed to cabinet and another three became ministers of state. Although non-party technocrats are a feature of some Mediterranean democracies, it is highly unusual from a comparative perspective for an independent member of parliament (MP) to be a member of cabinet.

Detailing and explaining the election outcome for independents is the aim of this chapter, as well as placing it in both a national and an international context. The year 2016 was not the first time that independents had

L. Weeks (✉)
University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

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