

POLL RESULTS

Why the voters said 'No'

What did the voters mean when they said No to the Lisbon Treaty? **Michael Marsh, Cees van der Eijk and John Garry** examine the results of *The Sunday Business Post/Red C* poll for answers

Finding the answer to this question seems simple and straightforward: ask them and listen to their answers. This approach is indeed simple, but unfortunately it does not lead to helpful answers. Most people have experienced, albeit in different circumstances, the difficulty of putting into words why they did something.

Why did you take tea rather than coffee? It is often difficult to answer for those who enjoy both. Moreover, even if they do formulate a reason, this may be only part of a cluster of reasons, the rest of which remain unexplained.

We asked everyone – irrespective of whether they voted and of their choice – their preferences about a variety of important policies, what they expect the consequences of the treaty to be and so on. From the answers to these questions, we can highlight what differentiates the Yes and the No sides. This brief report comprises the first findings from our study, carried out in collaboration with *The Sunday Business Post* and Red C.

Let us start with the campaign. It was highly visible in the form of posters and billboards and in the media. However, at the same time, it was subdued in terms of canvassing. In Dáil elections, party work-

ers go out in force to mobilise support for their parties. In the most recent Dáil elections, more than 50 per cent of voters were contacted in person.

In this referendum campaign, although five out of six Irish parties, with a combined support of 85 per cent at the last national elections, supported the treaty, only 9 per cent of voters were contacted in person by the Yes side. The No side reached 8 per cent. A small group was contacted by both sides (3 per cent), but 86 per cent were not contacted at all.

It seems difficult to maintain that the government or the other parties on the Yes side went all out to secure a victory. Moreover, it is indeed remarkable that the No side, lacking the established infrastructure of party organisations, reached about the same number of voters as the Yes side. But do these contacts matter? We will take up this point later.

First, we will look at what people thought would be the consequences of approving the Lisbon Treaty. We presented respondents with a number of statements made in the campaign about the consequences – most of them contested – of a Yes vote.

We asked what they thought would have happened had the public voted Yes. We wanted to know, first, who had won the argument



Declan Ganley, leader of Libertas's No campaign: those contacted by the No campaign were more likely to believe the arguments of the No side

and second, the impact each of those arguments appeared to have on voting Yes or No.

We asked whether Lisbon would have compromised Ireland's neutrality; made the practice of abortion more likely in Ireland; led to a change in tax on businesses; reduced Ireland's influence on EU decisions; strengthened the protection of workers' rights; caused even more unemployment; lost us our European Commissioner for some of the time; and finally, simplified decision-making in the EU.

The results indicate that the No arguments seemed to have won the

campaign. Substantial majorities agree with their interpretation over the interpretation of the Yes side. Even on abortion, where their arguments were rejected by the Electoral Commission, a significant minority (39 per cent) was concerned that abortion could be brought closer had Ireland voted Yes.

Clear majorities agreed that neutrality would be threatened (85 per cent), that tax on businesses would be changed (57 per cent) and that Ireland would lose influence within the EU (56 per cent).

In contrast, the Yes side won the argument only on the assurance

that Lisbon did not threaten jobs (52 per cent), but could not convince a majority on workers' rights (43 per cent each side). There was widespread agreement that the treaty would simplify decision-making, 61 per cent thinking that it would and even more thinking that Ireland would lose its commissioner (80 per cent).

Which of these appears to have had most impact on vote choice? This is important to the debate about what should happen next. If the roots of the No vote lie in particular objections to the Lisbon Treaty, perhaps a set of protocols

could address concerns. If, however, the roots of the No vote are to be found in a general discontent with government, in Ireland and the EU, that is much more difficult to address.

The argument has been made that the chief cause of the No vote was that voters did not think they knew enough about the treaty. We found little evidence of that. Almost 90 per cent of those who voted were able to agree or disagree with the statements offered to them; few said don't know.

It has also been argued that the No vote was based largely on general dissatisfaction with the government and mistrust of politicians. Our survey indicates that those with less faith in their party's leadership were inclined to vote No, as were those dissatisfied with the government.

Those most uncertain about their economic future, due to perceived decline in their own living standards in the last year, also tended to vote No.

These factors are outside anyone's immediate capacity to address, although dissatisfaction with the government – equally high at the time of Nice II – is not necessarily associated with a rejection of an EU treaty, at least to the degree it is associated here. Nor is it the case that voters were simply rejecting Europe. Over 40 per cent of No voters supported even more integration over protecting our independence from the EU.

Most of the responses on the consequences of approving Lisbon were strongly associated with voters' choices. Those thinking a Yes vote would threaten neutrality, our low corporation tax or Ireland's influence in the EU or bring abortion closer and increase unemployment

were in each case about 40 percentage points more likely to vote No than to vote Yes.

Those who thought the treaty would simplify decision-making and safeguard workers' rights were about 40 percentage points more likely to vote Yes than to vote No. To some degree, what we are seeing here is those who voted No accepting what various parts of the No campaign forecast, rather than factors producing a No vote.

There is a tendency for No voters to accept the No campaign's arguments on neutrality and abortion, regardless of their own position on whether or not such a change would be a good thing or not. If we adjust for this and estimate the unique effect of voters' expectations on their vote, we find the strongest effect in the case of workers' rights, followed by jobs and neutrality. Concerns about tax, Irish influence in the EU and abortion were weaker again in their impact.

Back to the question: do contacts matter? Do they sway opinions and possibly votes? When comparing people who were contacted by the Yes and No campaigns respectively, we see strong differences in their expectations of the consequences of the Lisbon Treaty. Those contacted by the No campaign were more likely to believe the arguments of the No side, particularly on neutrality, suggesting that being contacted in person does matter.

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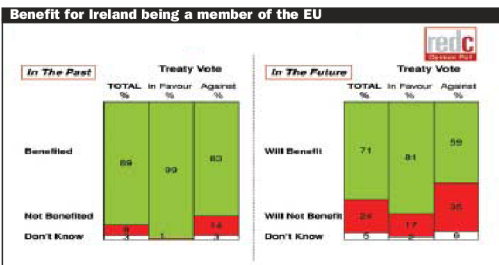
Even 'No' voters positive on EU

By Pat Leahy

There is a strong consensus that Ireland has benefited from EU membership in the past, and will continue to do so in future.

This consensus spans all social groups and political preferences, and is also strong among those who voted against the treaty – 59 per cent of those who opposed it say that Ireland will benefit in the future from EU membership. Among all voters, some 71 per cent say they expect Ireland to benefit from the EU in the future.

Asked which is the closest statement to their views, there is strong support for the proposition that "Ireland should do all it can to unite fully with the EU", with 59 per cent supporting this view.



Even among those who voted No, 39 per cent said they agreed with this view.

Sixty-one per cent of No voters agreed with the opposite statement – "Ireland should do all it can to protect its independence from the EU".

Asked how they saw themselves, 41 per cent of voters said they were "Irish only", while 52 per cent said "both Irish and European". Among No voters, 51 per cent said they were Irish

only, though 45 per cent said they were both Irish and European. The sense of European identity is stronger among Yes voters – 70 per cent of whom said they felt Irish and European.

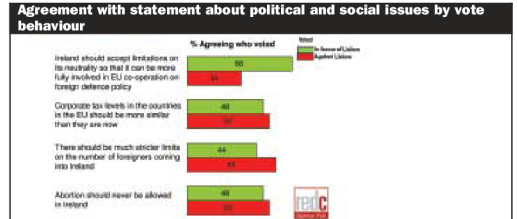
Immigration new major concern

By Pat Leahy

A clear majority of people say that there should be "much stricter limits on the numbers of foreigners coming into Ireland".

Support for this view is much stronger among those who voted No to the Lisbon Treaty – among whom 65 per cent agree, and most of them agree "strongly" – supporting the contention that immigration was an issue in the recent campaign. However, the view is held across all demographics and political allegiances; half of all those who voted for the treaty also support this view.

This belief is strongest among working-class voters and those who voted for Sinn Féin in the last general election – 78 per cent of whom share this view, compared with 60



per cent of Fine Gael voters, 60 per cent of Labour voters and 57 per cent of Fianna Fáil voters.

Voters are divided on whether Ireland should accept limitations on its neutrality so it can be more fully involved in EU cooperation on foreign and defence policy. While half of voters disagree, almost as many (46 per cent) agree.

There is a marked difference between Yes and No voters on the topic, with twice the proportion of Yes voters (59 per cent) willing to accept limitations as No voters.

The country is also divided on the question of abortion. Forty-three per cent say that abortion "should never be allowed in Ireland"; 52 per cent disagree. Among those who

hold the strong anti-abortion view, however, only a slight majority (52 per cent) voted against the treaty.

Despite the political unanimity and the consensus between Yes and No sides that Ireland should retain low corporation tax – half of all voters believe corporate tax levels in EU countries should be "more similar than they are now".



Inset: Crough Patrick, Mayo

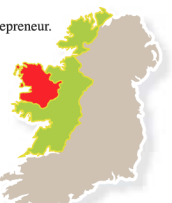
'We can have a service engineer from Mayo to the UK or anywhere in Ireland within two and a half hours'

Tommy Griffith, owner and MD of PEL Recycling Equipment, Balla, Co Mayo.

PEL Recycling Equipment is an award-winning market leader in the design, manufacture and supply of bottle crushers, oil filter crushers, food disposal units and other recycling equipment in the UK and Ireland. Location is irrelevant once support structures are in place. "Transport and distribution are what's important," attests Tommy. "We're fortunate, we have three airports all within 45 minutes."

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