

Change and the Political System in the Aftermath of Ireland's 2011 Election

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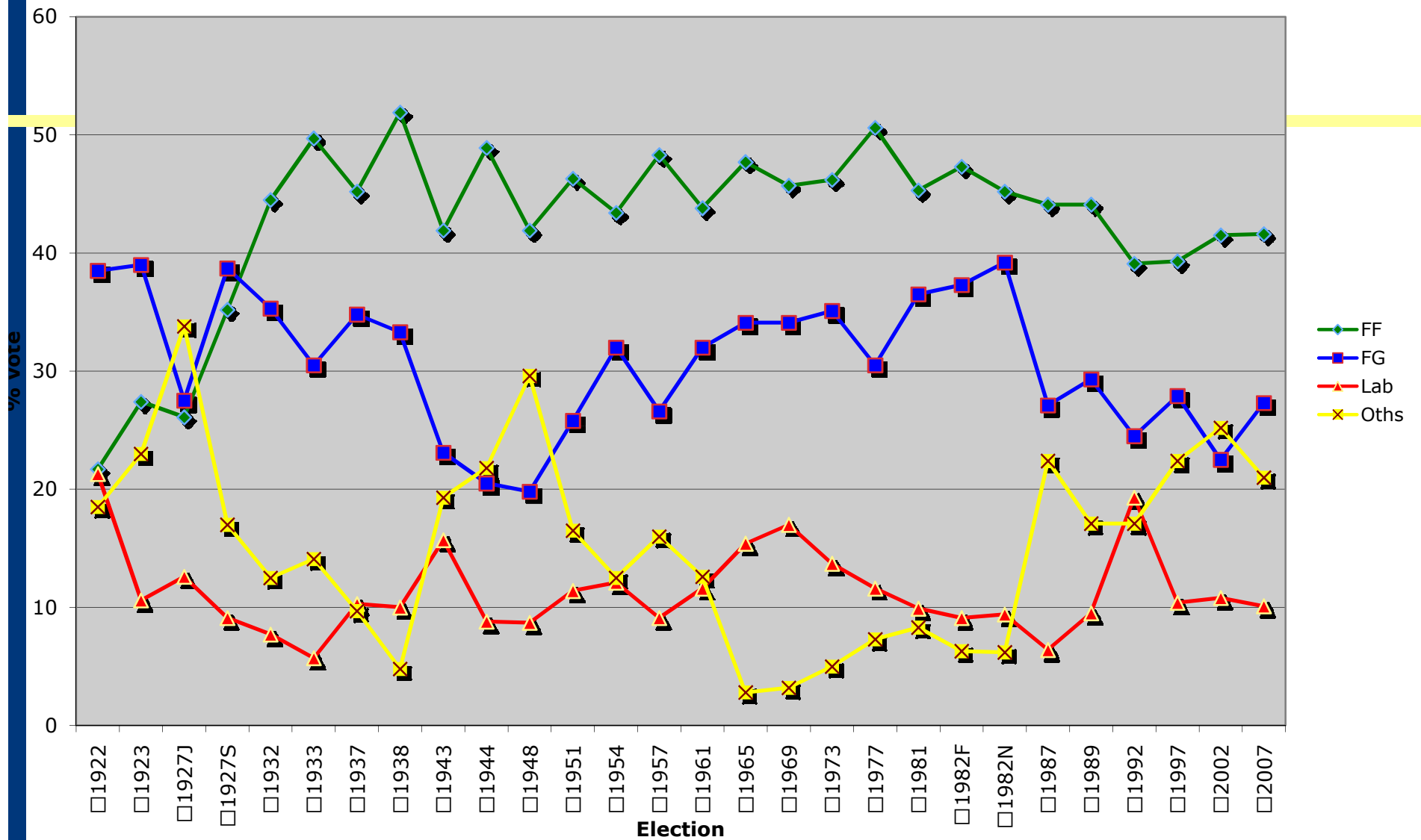
Organisation *Trinity College Dublin*

Overview

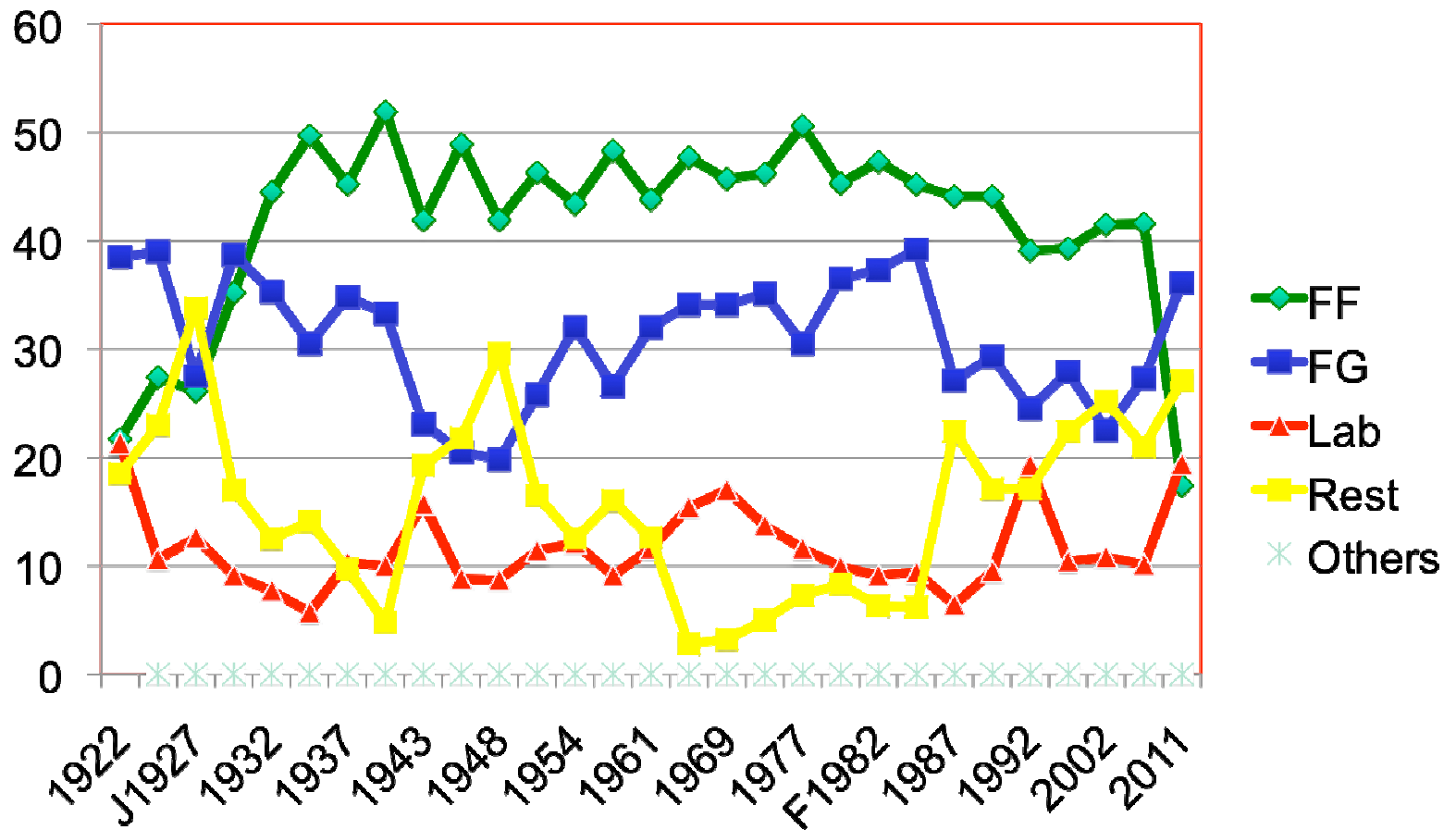
- 1 The election as dramatic event
- 2 Explaining the result
- 3 Implications for political reform

The election as dramatic event 1

- Earthquake elections
 - Denmark 1973
 - Canada 1993
- But not in Ireland
- incremental change from election to election
- long-run stability (Lipset & Rokkan)



The election as dramatic event



The election as dramatic event 4

- Volatility: 29.6 per cent
- third most volatile election in postwar western Europe
- lengthy list of records broken

The election as dramatic event 5

- New records:
 - new FF lows
 - new FG highs
 - new Labour highs

The election as dramatic event 6

- But also elements of stability
 - no new party
 - FG and Labour did not break existing moulds
- hence, rearrangement rather than overthrow of party system
- 2011: FG 76, Lab 37, FF 20
- 2002: FF 81, FG 31, Lab 21

The election as dramatic event 7

- Magnitude of change exaggerated by electoral system effect:

	% vote	% seats	Actual seats	Seats in proportion to votes
FF	17.4	11.5	20	30
FG	36.1	46.1	76	60
Labour	19.4	22.4	37	32
SF	9.9	8.5	14	16
ULA	2.6	3.0	5	4
Green	1.8	0	0	3
Inds/others	12.6	8.5	14	21



The election as dramatic event 8

- Main cause:
- Small district magnitude (TDs per constituency)

Explaining the result 1

- Does it need an explanation?
- obvious why voters left FF
- but where did they go?

FG	Labour	SF	Green	Inds/others
42	24	10	2	22

	FF 07	FF 11	FG 07	FG 11	Lab 07	Lab 11	SF 07	SF 11
<i>All</i>	42	15	26	36	10	20	7	10
<i>Male</i>	42	17	27	36	10	18	8	12
<i>Female</i>	42	13	25	36	10	24	6	9
<i>18-24</i>	35	10	24	32	12	23	11	11
<i>25-34</i>	39	13	23	32	9	24	10	12
<i>35-49</i>	40	14	25	36	10	20	8	11
<i>50-64</i>	45	16	28	39	9	20	6	9
<i>65+</i>	49	23	31	43	10	19	2	6
<i>ABC1</i>	39	13	26	37	11	23	4	7
<i>C2DE</i>	43	15	22	32	9	23	10	14
<i>F</i>	44	25	44	49	6	2	4	10

National or local factors?

- Which of these was most important to you in making up your mind how to vote in this election?

	2007	2011
<i>Choosing a candidate to look after the needs of the constituency</i>	39	37
<i>Choosing the set of ministers who will form the government</i>	12	12
<i>Choosing between the set of policies set out by the parties</i>	24	41
<i>Choosing who will be Taoiseach</i>	22	7

Leader effects

- **Who would you prefer as Taoiseach: Enda Kenny, Éamon Gilmore or Micheál Martin?**

	All voters	FG	Labour	FF	SF
<i>Kenny</i>	39	74	15	13	22
<i>Gilmore</i>	23	8	59	6	24
<i>Martin</i>	21	9	10	73	13
<i>None / DK</i>	17	10	16	9	41

TV debates

- **Did you watch any of the televised leaders' debates or not? Who do you feel came out best?**

	All voters	FG	Labour	FF
<i>Martin</i>	32	22	23	68
<i>Kenny</i>	29	50	18	10
<i>Gilmore</i>	14	9	34	5
<i>Other / none</i>	24	20	25	17

Tax vs spend – by class

- In order to reduce the budget deficit, do you think the incoming government should concentrate on (a) reducing spending on health, social services etc and not increasing taxes, or (b) increasing taxes and maintaining spending on health, social services etc?

<i>Social class</i>	Increase taxes	Reduce spending
<i>All</i>	41	43
<i>AB</i>	33	52
<i>C1</i>	41	44
<i>C2</i>	41	42
<i>D</i>	48	33
<i>E</i>	49	38
<i>Farmers</i>	39	45

Tax vs spend – by party

- In order to reduce the budget deficit, do you think the incoming government should concentrate on (a) reducing spending on health, social services etc and not increasing taxes, or (b) increasing taxes and maintaining spending on health, social services etc?

<i>Party vote</i>	Increase taxes	Reduce spending
<i>All</i>	41	43
<i>FF</i>	45	38
<i>FG</i>	35	51
<i>Labour</i>	44	39
<i>SF</i>	40	39
<i>Green</i>	49	39
<i>Other / Ind</i>	45	36

Political reform 1

- Structure or agency?
 - the fault of the political system?
 - or of specific political actors?

Political reform 2

- 10 pages of undertakings
- eg abolish Seanad
- redress imbalance between government and Dáil
- score: 68.4 out of 100
- opposition zeal to be maintained in government?

